



THE NEW deYOUNG MUSEUM

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Final Project By Kira Becker
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History of the Designed Landscape

Golden Gate Park, 1894

The origins of the de Young museum date back to the late 19th century, when it was constructed as the Fine Arts Building for the California Midwinter International Exposition of 1894. The building was designed in a unique Egyptian Revival style, decorated with hieroglyphics, goddess-headed columns, and a pyramid-style roof above the main entrance. The stairs that led to the entrance were lined by a pair of granite sphinx statues, and the landscape was designed in a symmetrical baroque fashion.

Post exposition, the building was designated as an art museum, named after San Francisco newspaperman M. H. de Young. In order to serve its growing audiences, several additions were constructed throughout the first quarter of the 20th century. A Spanish-Gothic style building, designed by Louis Christian Mulgardt (who also served as the architecture coordinator for the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition) was added in 1919, as well as a central tower. In 1929 the original Egyptian-style building began to fall apart and was therefore declared hazardous, leading to its removal.

The remaining Spanish style building and defining tower remained until 1989, when the Loma Prieta earthquake completely ravaged the museum's structure. A temporary fix was put in place while the Fine Arts Museums' board searched for a long-term solution. In response to an open architectural competition in the late 1990's, the Swiss architectural firm Herzog & de Meuron, in collaboration with Oakland-based Landscape Architect Walter Hood and local architecture firm Fong & Change, orchestrated a modern yet natural feeling design that was selected for the final redesign. The new de Young opened its doors in 2005 and 15 years later its unique and artistic structure is still standing strong.



Original Egyptian Revival style Fine Arts building built in 1894



Renovated de Young Museum prior to Loma Prieta earthquake



Temporary tower replacement post-earthquake in 1989

Historic Analysis



ANCIENT EGYPT

As mentioned previously, the original building was constructed in an Egyptian Revival style, some of the historic elements being two sphinx sculptures that flanked the entrance steps, a Pool of Enchantment, and a row of palms at the forefront of the building. The design of the new building and surrounding landscape celebrate the history of the site by integrating these elements into its design.

The building itself appears natural yet dramatic with its use of perforated copper, similar in a way to the great structures of Ancient Egypt. The juxtaposition of the grand geometric tower with the row of palms in the foreground is a subtle nod to the Ancient Egyptian landscape, or even to Mesopotamian city-states. Inspiration from this period is even found in the details of the design, such as the use of sandstone paving or the unique sphinx sculptures at the front of the building.



Route to the Giza Pyramids



Hand drawing of the rows of palms lined up in front of the building, drawn by Kira Becker



NEOLITHIC EARTHWORKS

Located in the Osher Sculpture Garden, adjacent to the de Young Cafe on the southwest side of the building, is a James Turrell installment called "Three Gems". A small tunnel allows visitors to enter the round subterranean chamber lit with L.E.D. lights, where they can sit and gaze up through an oculus cut in the roof towards the sky.

This piece is cut into a grass-covered hill reminiscent of Neolithic Earthworks from over 2,000 years ago, such as Ireland's New Grange Passage Tomb, or the Normanton Barrow Downs on England's Salisbury Plain.

As mentioned previously, architects Herzog & de Meuron selected materials that gave a natural feel, such as copper, stone, wood and glass, for the facade of the building. The intention was to create a more organic looking structure that would blend in to its surrounding woodland environment within the park.

The use of natural materials and sculptural form resembles prehistoric landscape works of our ancestors, such as Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain in England.



New Grange Passage Tomb in Ireland



Aerial view of the Normanton Barrow Downs

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The Great Sphinx of Giza

The original sphinx sculptures mysteriously disappeared after the 1906 earthquake, and were replaced by a new pair of white Art Nouveau-style sphinxes designed by American sculptor Arthur Putnam. These sphinxes were refurbished during early 2000's redesign of the building and can be seen today at the front of the museum.

Hand sketch of the Putnam-designed sphinxes in front of the museum, drawn by Kira Becker



View of the de Young Museum Cafe with "Three Gems" by James Turrell in the background



Alternative view of outside of "Three Gems" installation



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Panoramic view of San Francisco from the new de Young tower

moorish

One of the most prominent features of the museum structure is a 144-foot spiraling tower on the northeast side of the building. The tower is situated strategically to showcase panoramic views of the Bay Area to museum visitors.

The concept of a viewing tower dates back to 13th century Spain, when royal leaders began to build the Generalife palace as an extension of the Alhambra. One of the most significant features of this palace was the mirador, an observation tower that provided compelling views over the gardens and beyond. The observation floor provides views of the Bay area.

View from the mirador tower at the Generalife palace



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Looking up at the mirador tower



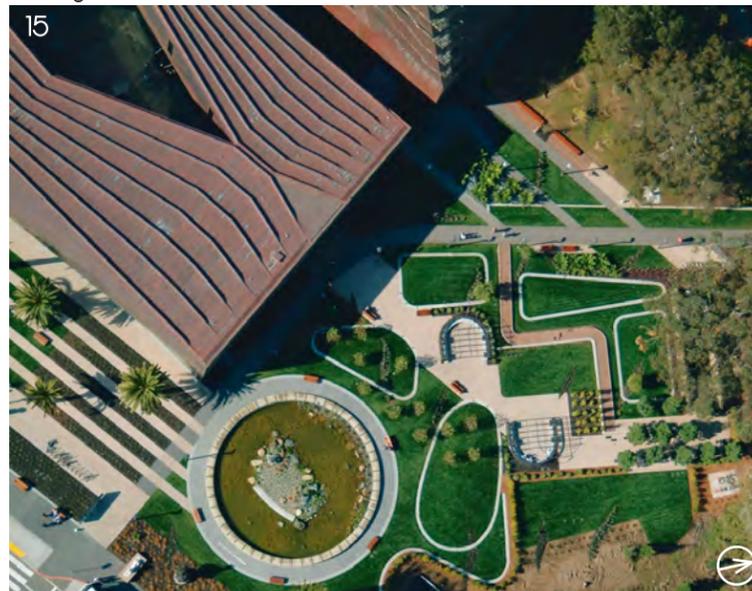
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BAUHAUS

Inspiration from the Bauhaus movement of the 20th century runs throughout the entire design of this site. However, there is a particular resemblance in the Garden of Enchantment on the northeast side of the building. There is a playful tapestry-like quality to this design that brings to mind the great artist and landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx. The use of biomorphic forms and curves, in combination with a prominent water feature, certainly ring a bell to his designs.

To elaborate on this theory, I created an enlargement of the park in his style (see right), inspired specifically by Marx's never-executed 1948 design of a Santa Barbara beach house garden. While the de Young design may be slightly more contemporary and less biomorphic, the likeness is hard to deny.

Bird's eye view of the Garden of Enchantment



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Roberto Burle Marx at work in the studio



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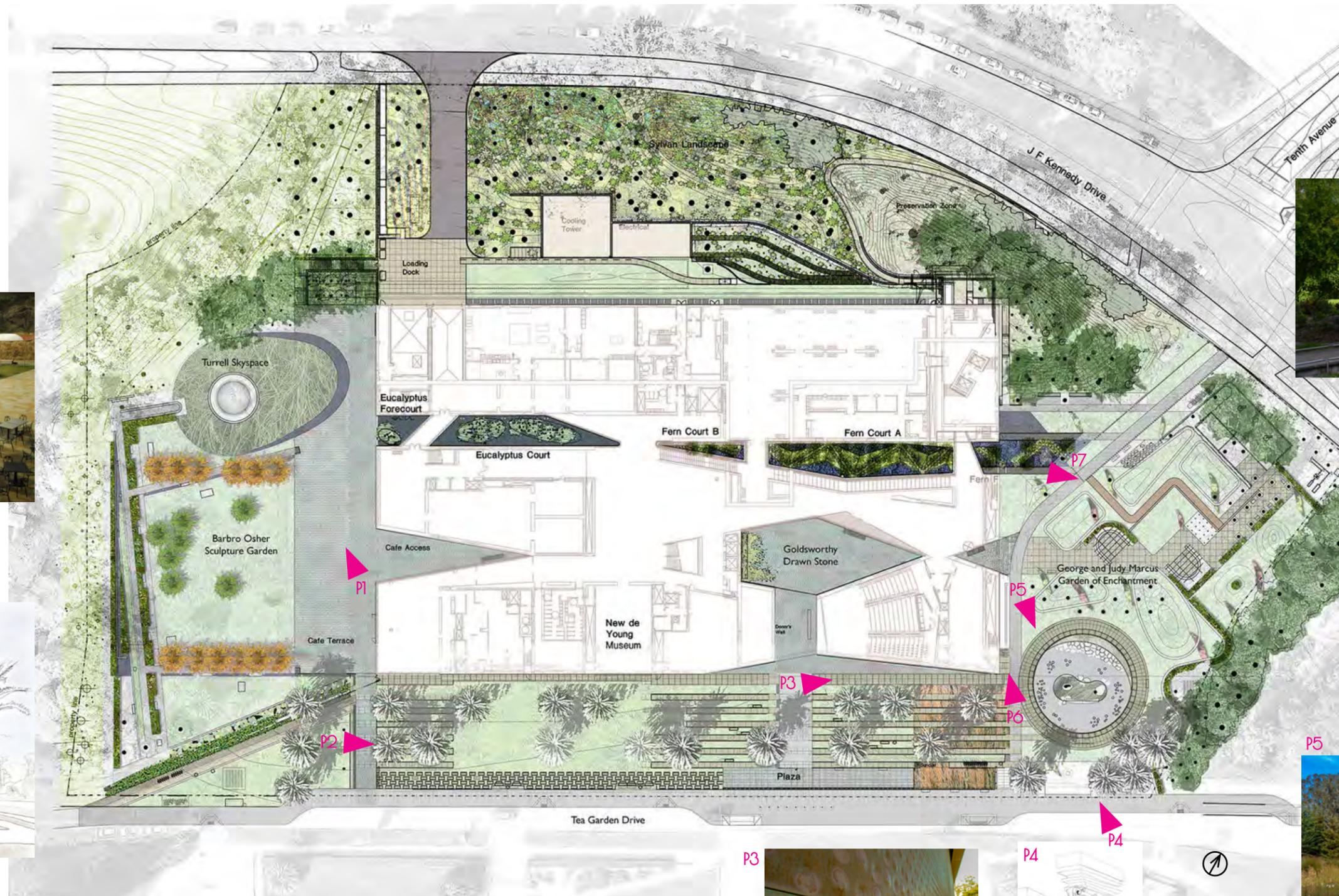
Burle Marx-style enlargement of the Garden of Enchantment, drawn by Kira Becker

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Burle Marx's never-executed Santa Barbara beach house design

Site Plan



P1



P2



P7



P6



P5



P3



P4



Designed & drawn by Hood Design Studio, <http://www.hooddesignstudio.com/deyoung>

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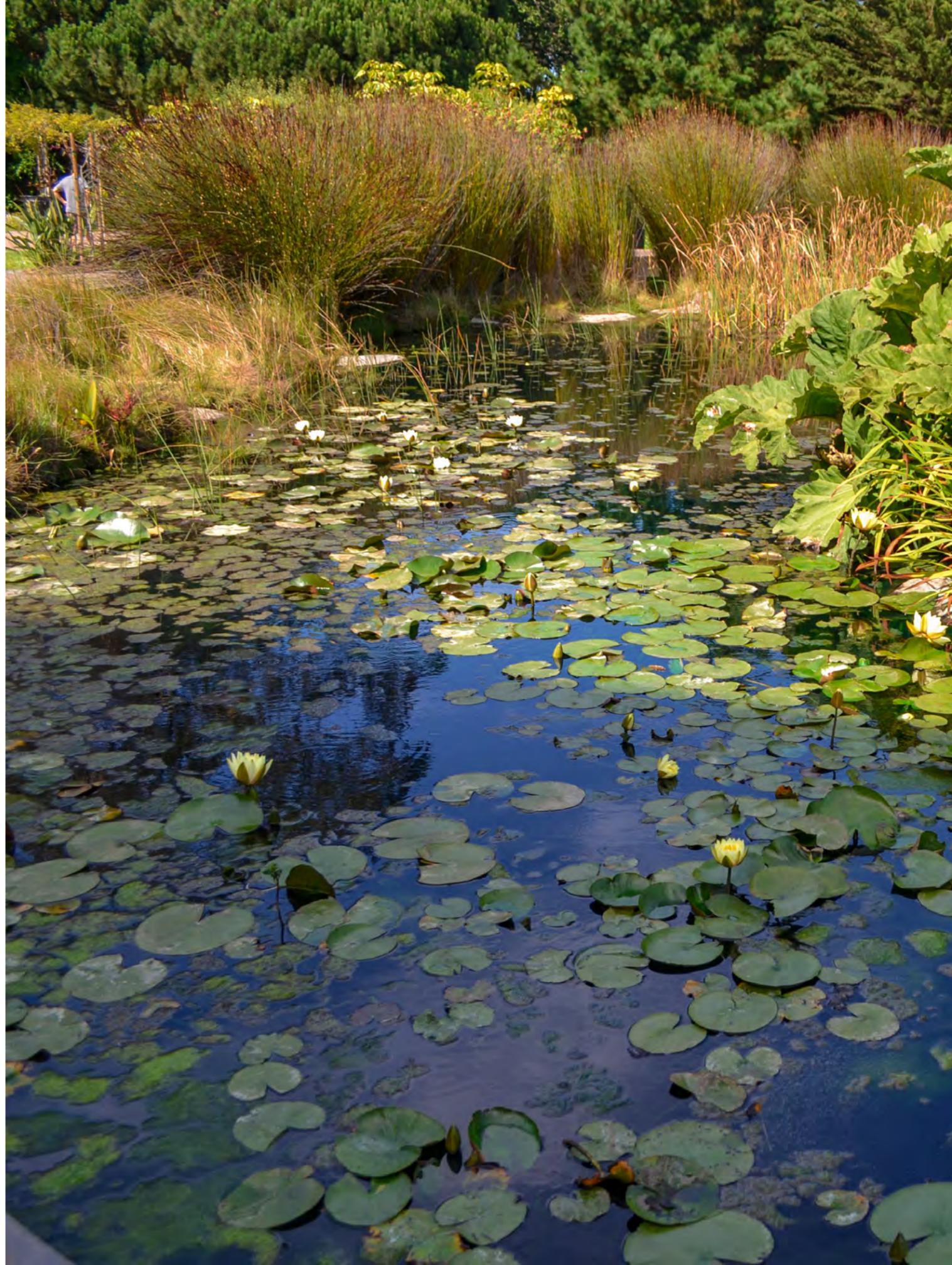


World's Fair-esque Ferris Wheel, newly added to site adjacent to de Young Museum
Photo taken by Kira Becker



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Pool of Enchantment
Photo taken by Kira Becker