



# Garden

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## **Garden** Yuichi Yokoyama

A group of friends is attempting to enter a garden just beyond a wall. When they succeed, the garden they finally enter is no Eden, but rather a massive landscape of machines, geometric forms and all manner of nonorganic objects. In Japanese comic-book artist Yuichi Yokoyama's newest and longest (at 328 pages) work of graphic magic, his characters become enmeshed in a fantastic wonderland of distorted mirrors, photographic equipment, massive libraries and complex pathways. To his signature vivid visual style, Yokoyama has added more dialogue than in past works, fleshing out the characters and allowing them equal billing with his spectacular architectural creations, thus yielding a reflection on the myriad ways human interact with the complex mechanical world we have created. Douglas Wolk, writing in the *New York Times Book Review*, declared that few cartoonists of the moment are "weirder or more original than Yuichi Yokoyama."

## **Garden Details**

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Author : Yuichi Yokoyama

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# From Reader Review Garden for online ebook

## Jeff Jackson says

I really like his other books of (call 'em) structuralist architectural manga (with occasional fight scenes), but I'm gonna say this is Yokoyama's masterpiece (to date) and the best place to make his introduction. It starts a bit slow but then plunges you into a pleasuredome that rivals the worlds of Raymond Roussel. The introduction of language doesn't puncture the wonderfully inhuman quality of the work, but merely adds clarity to this strange theme park of intoxicating wonders.

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## Flossie says

I liked Travel much better. Garden tried to accomplish too much, I think. And the dialogue wasn't very helpful.

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## Eddie Watkins says

The other day, while looking down upon a construction site from a bridge, I saw a heap of discarded sections of sod, punctuated by shattered wood pallets and various types of gravel, and it made me think of Yuichi Yokoyama's *Garden*. Though it was a meaningless pile of generic rubbish I saw a certain beauty in it. The heap had been carefully shoveled into place, as evidenced by all the smoothed out dirt surrounding it, and being as its components were building and landscaping materials they brought to mind imaginary structures, even as they evinced rubbish and even destruction. There was beauty, structure, destruction, pointlessness, a touch of soulless poignancy, and projected imagination in this heap. These elements are all very much in evidence in Yokoyama's *Garden*.

It is the story of a seemingly ever expanding group of friends who enter a closed garden and have one strange encounter after another with things such as rivers, cascading balls, mountains composed of mattresses, artificial trees, organo-mechanical landscapes, etc. It is very much like a Rube Goldberg contraption or Fischli and Weiss' *The Way Things Go*, and even Roussel's *Impressions of Africa*, with its flow and interconnectedness of pure invention. As this ever growing group of friends proceeds further into this dimensionless garden a strange and subtle menace begins to intrude in the form of unidentified observers, as the friends encounter real-time projections of themselves on features of the landscape and piles of photographs of everything they have done up to the very point of finding the photographs. There is also an aura of menace in the friends themselves as while each is radically different (on the surface) from the other – different heads, different hands – each is also little more than automaton, so that as a collective they give the sense of a radically heterogeneous yet ominously homogeneous mob; an idea I found particularly creepy.

Facelessness masquerading as a multitude of different masks, precise beauty wedded to destruction, surveillance, and endlessly self-generating pointless novelty add up to a gripping and disquieting experience that has more than a few echoes in our current culture.

The book ends in a whirring blur of self-referentiality and ever-accelerating destruction.

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## Leif says

I have the wrong kind of imaginative reading practice to get much out of this, unfortunately.

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## Mia says

4.5 I liked it a lot more than I did *Travel*. Mechanical, unemotional, with too much movement and, like *Travel*, I found it hard to follow at times. BUT the illustrations are hypnotic, futurist-esque (?), and quintessentially Yokoyama's. And the ideas in *Garden* are so dream-like and weird that it's hard to stop reading.

I especially loved the library bit. I "re-read" that section a few times. I always love surreal stories involving books. Like Borges' *The Library of Babel* and *The Book of Sand*.

4.5 because of the ending. Didn't really understand what happened. I'm not sure whether too many people do??? Maybe I'm being unfair. Did I expect a coherent ending after reading and seeing over 300 pgs of nonsensical and surreal ideas and images in a plotless gn? I guess I shouldn't but I still found the ending meh.

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## Courtney says

With all the repetitive dialogue it felt like I was being hit in the head with what the visuals were supposed to be rather than letting the graphics speak for themselves. Also due to the seemingly endless movement the pacing seemed rushed.

'Travel' is fast paced, but there is an urgency and emotion behind it. In 'Garden' it comes off as a novel visual word where the point of view never rests and the observer/reader is just rushed along to view one possibly interesting sight after another without the chance to take any one thing in. It was like sprinting through a museum.

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## dust says

a closer visual representation of my brain on paper as rendered by another artist has yet to be found

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## Nate D says

As with the totally brilliant *Travel*, Yuichi Yokoyama's world here is almost autistic in its focused, mechanical detailing of variations and possibilities, in this case those offered by an inexplicable "garden" of design concept detritus, an unending architectural sculpture park of impractical ideas. Mirroring the logically-illogical landscape, the group of explorers we follow seem to be a series of incomprehensible

variations in their own right, baffling humanoids ranging from the maybe-human to the insane sculpture-bodied airplane-heads and what not. In the mouths of these odd automata, the equivalent of the endnotes of *Travel* -- mechanical observations and non-explanations. ("There are many moving parts here." "The have the appearance of trees." Possibly it's partly just a matter of freshness, but, despite the greater allure of the unknown here, I think I liked the groundedness and the journey-purpose of *Travel* rather more. This feels a little less meticulous and focused. But certainly filled with wonders and totally unique.

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## **frankie says**

very pleasing to look at

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## **HBalikov says**

This is my first Yokoyama book. Over 300 pages, but a fast read manga.

I don't get much from it. What look like a small group of friends want to get into a garden. They are told it isn't open, but they find a way in through a crack in the wall. The "garden" is full of constructs, many geometrical.

The group becomes a crowd of hundreds or thousands of "people." There is no leader, none have any consistent personality, and their only purpose seems to be to explore this garden of seemingly infinite dimensions. There are other "beings" in the garden but our crowd wants no interaction, instead hiding from them.

Yokoyama is inventive with his constructs. I was enchanted by his mountain of boats and water, for instance. Yet, there is no point or resolution to this exploration, no indication whether there a difference of proportion that might make some sense and it ends more with a whimper than a bang.

Too bad.

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## **David Schaafsma says**

A group of friends--humanoids? Oddly and futuristically dressed characters?--clearly in some fantasy of the future, explore a "garden" made of machines, geometric forms and all sorts of objects. Sometimes there are actually flowers and trees, too. But it's mainly a fantasy of a continuous journey into the mind's complex pathways.

Visually, it's mechanical and abstract, black and white drawing. On an emotional continuum of its effects, it would be very cold, definitely not warm. The way I think of it is that it is more like the geometrical Mondrian than the watercolors of Renoir, just to make an obvious contrast. Compared to other works I have read from Yokoyama, it is quite a bit longer, with more dialogue, though whatever the friends say to each other are mostly observations anyone could make themselves of what is going. We don't get to know them, or see them differentiated from each other except in the way they look. They don't give us or each other any insights into what they see, really. But I guess to have Yokoyama have the characters speak to each other

about the objects in the garden, it is in a way how people interact with things.

There's really very little in the way of narrative or any of the traditional notions of what one would associate with a graphic "novel," though there is something visually dramatic that happens near the end. Strange and original, this Yokohama. As with his other works, it feels kind of an amazing technical accomplishment, but not something you "like" in the same ways as narratives with interesting characters that develop. It's kind of a mechanical world with very little emotion. But like his other works, Garden kind of stays with you.

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### **Jordan West says**

Part Raymond Roussel in comic form, part Dr. Seuss picturebook for grownups, this is essentially a guided tour through a semi-rationalized dream landscape, and as such is pretty much plotless with thoroughly perfunctory dialogue; despite such caveats, (and the semi-abstract art that borders on the minimal at times) I still found this fascinating. Yokoyama takes banal objects and takes them to pieces, literally and otherwise, transforming these everyday materials into delightfully otherworldly environments that all but beg the reader to come explore them- and indeed, I was often reminded of my own (admittedly far less complex) dreamscapes while reading.

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### **Sheena Carroll says**

I have no idea how the hell to explain what I just read, but I was enthralled the whole time.

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### **Kirsten says**

Despite the middling score I'm giving this, Garden is far from average. I've read a fair share of manga, but have yet to see anything else quite like it, and the atypicalness of the thing makes it difficult to rate.

As for the actual plot: Some characters break into a garden and explore. Granted, it's not a normal garden: instead of trees and various shrubbery there are huge, inorganic structures. But that's it. There's no drama, no mystery, no conflict beyond "how do I cross this river made of balls?" or "why is there a mountain made of glass?". Though the story is barebones (to say the least), the bizarre things that the characters encounter usually provide adequate entertainment. It's clear that the mangaka had a lot of fun coming up with ridiculous buildings and landscapes to fill this book with, and absolutely nothing that pops up is expected.

### **ART**

The illustrations mirror the sparse narrative. Screentones, shading, and anything more than the bare minimum of detailing is almost non-existent, and the clean geometric linework gives the whole thing a sterile feel. The character designs were interesting and extremely varied, perhaps to make up for the characters' lack of personality.

### **CHARACTERS**

Calling anything a 'character' in Garden is a bit of an overstatement. 'Hive mind' would be more appropriate.

There are oodles of humanoid... things that wander around occasionally offering opinions, but oftener explanations of their surroundings. Their numbers fluctuate anywhere from five to thousands depending on the situation, and once a character has been shown, they may or may not show up ever again.

## OVERALL

The end effect is akin to watching someone else play a videogame. Not one of those story-fueled, action-filled rpgs, though- more something like Katamari Damacy (with a smidge less lunacy). There's no reason to watch/read, you have absolutely no stake in what transpires, and yet it's strangely mesmerizing.

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## Printable Tire says

Enigmatic figures explore the Disney World of conceptual design. The continuing onslaught of strange discovery that makes up for a narrative, as well as the unexpected breaks within the usual patterns of the "story" made this an addictive reading experience. Reminded me of Last Year in Marienbad.

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