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## Places

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Jacobs, Allan B

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# The Chandigarh Rock Garden

Text and Photographs  
by Allan B. Jacobs

## Unexpected, Delightful Places:

The Rock Garden comes as a wondrous surprise. On a hot, hot summer day, after you leave the broad-spaced, cubist, formal structure of the complex of government buildings in Chandigarh and the relentless, shimmering heat of the open-air business center, you can find, if you are lucky, a whimsical wall and behind it a maze of outdoor rooms and spaces, of landscape, of sculpted people, animals, musicians, and abstractions that look at you as you pass. Suddenly, you are unaware of the heat. Every landscape scene, every combination of figures and shapes that invites visual dialogue is new. Yet most of the materials—bricks, discarded electric fixtures, broken bathroom fixture ceramics and pipe tiles—are old, reused.

When Indian officials “discovered” the Rock Garden of Chandigarh they wanted to tear it down. They failed and so the garden remains, a small pause in the still growing city. Designed and built in secrecy by Nek Chand, a maintenance-yard worker, the garden is an expression of individuality within a strong cultural context. It may be one of the most creative urban landscapes of the past 50 years.

