

CAPEDRO: John Giudici

John Giudici came to California in 1912 from Italy. In 1930, he settled in a frame house in Menlo Park. He built a garden in his backyard that included a small fish pond. Shortly after it was completed, one of his sons fell into the pond. The possibility that his child might have drowned so frightened Giudici that he filled in the pond with cement and embellished it with rocks and shells, thus beginning Capedro.

Over the next forty years, John built a fantasy world of concrete structures embedded with thousands of found and given objects; tiny ornaments, shells, marbles, stones, pieces of pottery, dishes, porcelain figures, jewelry, etc. The cement structures wind all around the backyard forming facades, rambling walls, tiny rooms, small caves and mountains, as well as waterfalls and ponds and sculpture of his own invention. In addition to all the intricate cement work, there are spaces in the garden that John has left very sparse and simply painted with abstract shapes. At the very back of the yard, the cement forms give way to a more traditional garden of walkways, shrines and other statuary.

John Giudici worked on the garden into his late eighties. He died in December, 1976, at the age of 89, leaving the garden and house to his daughter, Mary Young.