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2011 ASLA NATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING & EXPO
October 30 – November 2 (San Diego, CA)

More than 6,000 landscape architecture professionals from across the U.S. and around the world will gather in San Diego, to earn up to 21 professional development hours, to enjoy the fellowship of our profession, and to reconnect with the fundamental elements of design.

ASLA continues to reduce the carbon footprint of the annual meeting. The hotels, convention center, show decorator, transportation company, and other vendors with whom ASLA contracts services each maintain an ongoing commitment to sustainable practices. ASLA’s printed materials, signage, and decorations are recycled, recyclable, and printed with soy ink. The meeting handouts are distributed electronically.

For more information please visit http://www.asla.org/2011meeting/

ASLA COLORADO DESIGN AWARDS CALL FOR ENTRIES
Deadline: November 1, 2011

The Professional Design Awards Program is open to all ASLA Colorado members; all entrants must have an active ASLA Colorado membership to enter. All categories must be entered by a licensed Landscape Architect who resides in Colorado or Wyoming. Awards will be presented at the 2011 Awards Event in downtown Denver. This event will be on December 1, 2011 at the Four Seasons Resort Hotel in downtown Denver.

For more information please contact Robb Williamson at 303-883-8359.
It is hard to believe that there is only one month left in my tenure as president. It has been a great year and I am very happy with all that was accomplished. The experience is enriching and it has been an honor to represent the landscape architects here in Colorado over the last 12 months. I am even more excited about the future and what ASLA Colorado is planning to do over the next three years and beyond.

We have just put together the slate for 2011-2012 Executive Committee, the ballot will be coming out in the next few weeks. Brian Koenigberg will be president and will be implementing some exciting new changes. Brian has some amazing energy and we can all look forward to his leadership over the years to come. One of the biggest changes is that we will be putting together a number of new committees for the chapter that we will be reaching out to the general membership to help fill. We want to get these committees in place and effective in time for the 2014 ASLA National Convention in Denver.

On August 17th we participated in the DATE, it was the first event organized by ASLA National that works to inform the general public about what we do as landscape architects. It was very successful here in Colorado as a number of our members went out in their communities and talked to their community about what we do as Landscape Architects. National will focus on public awareness of the profession over the next 10 years as they have focused on licensure for the last 10 years. What a great use of our membership dollars! Wouldn’t it be great to have your neighbors understand what you do, as easy as they understand what engineers and architects do? It is a simple grassroots concept and with participation from a majority or our membership we can all work together to further our share of the design market.

On August 19th we had another great golf tournament at Raccoon Creek in Littleton. Attendance was up from last year by nearly 40%. A big thank you goes out to Vivian Kovacs and Jim Pokorny for organizing and putting this on for the chapter over the past 15 years.

One of our biggest events of the year is coming up on December 1st at the Four Seasons in Denver. We are calling it the ASLA Colorado Design Awards/JSR Event and Holiday Celebration. The event this year is meant to be a celebration of the chapter for all of our members, sponsors and supporters. The event will feature a keynote address by Auden Schendler the 2011 JSR Award recipient (he will also receive the JSR Award), the Annual Awards recognitions, the always fun JSR silent auction, as well as great food, atmosphere and music. We would love to have a large percentage of our membership attend to celebrate our profession and catch up with colleagues.

The tag line for ASLA Colorado is BE CONNECTED. BE INFORMED. BE BETTER. Let’s all work together to secure the future for ourselves and the next generation of Landscape Architects!

Thanks,

Kurt Munding, RLA, CID, CLIA, ASLA Colorado Chapter President
Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is the governing body of ASLA Colorado and is chaired by Kurt Munding, Chapter President. The committee meets monthly to provide guidance and direction relating to the activities and finances of the association. Meetings typically occur on the first Wednesday, beginning at 4:30 pm, and are held at member offices along the Front Range. Attendees typically include voting and non-voting board members, and all chapter members are welcome to attend or to participate in person or by teleconference.

The July, August, and September meetings were held at the Governor’s Center Building at 600 Grant, Denver.

At the July meeting, a report was made on ASLA’s Midyear Meeting, held in Washington D.C. Mark Tabor reported that the ASLA trustees deliberated a requirement to tie licensure to ASLA membership. After a careful consideration, it was decided that the profession is much broader than licensed practitioners, and the current requirements of membership should remain.

At the August meeting, Courtney McRickard provided an update of the Public Relations Summit in Washington, D.C. The main focus of this event was the August 17th PR campaign to raise awareness of landscape architecture. Chapters across the nation were asked to participate by engaging the public at local events throughout the area (e.g. charrettes, temporary installations, etc.). A number of members, including student representatives, volunteered to participate, and pictures documenting the campaign are posted on the chapter’s social media pages.

At the September meeting, details of the Awards Competition and upcoming Awards Event were discussed. The “Call for Entries” has gone out to all members, and the submission period is open until November 1, 2011. Winners will be revealed at the December 1 Awards Event, to be held at the Four Seasons Hotel in downtown Denver. There are big plans underway to make this a memorable evening.

The committee also discussed operational changes to the ExComm committee. Proposed changes include extended term length for executive leadership (e.g. President and President Elect), greater reliance on member committees for activity planning, and the addition of at-large members to better represent geographic groupings of members. The committee will consider these changes and vote on implementation at the October meeting.

Volunteer opportunities for interested members are always available. If you are interested in volunteering for a committee or an event that is hosted or supported by ASLA Colorado contact Judith Ward, Volunteer Coordinator, at jward@criticalhabitats.com. For more information on current ASLA Colorado events, be sure to visit www.aslacolorado.org and review the “Calendar” tab located on the website’s title bar. If you have a design event you would like listed on our Chapter’s social media pages, please email details to social@aslacolorado.org. To be placed on an upcoming agenda contact Kurt Munding, Chapter President, at KurtM@dcla.net. Contact information relating to Executive Committee members can be found by clicking on the “About Us” tab on the main title bar.

Government Affairs

A top priority for Government Affairs/Advocacy Committee is promoting compliance by municipal and county government agencies with the “Landscape Architects Professional Licensing Act”, as passed by the State in 2007. The law was passed at the State level, but, to be effective, the provisions must be administered by hundreds of the local government public works and planning agencies. So far, understanding and implementation of the state law by city and county government agencies is sparse and inconsistent. If we can improve local compliance it will not only open up new opportunities for our profession, but will also significantly benefit the public health, safety and welfare.

We have identified several areas where policy changes may be warranted by local government agencies:

1) Implementing provisions requiring landscape architects to sign and stamp contract documents. With exceptions for “residential landscape design, consisting of landscape design services for single and multi-family residential properties of four or fewer units, not including common areas”, a landscape architect’s stamp and signature should be required to establish a record set of contract documents for landscape designs.

2) Accepting site plans for review that are signed and stamped by licensed landscape architects. Many jurisdictions still require an engineer or architect to stamp site plans submitted for review by landscape architects. According to the state law, landscape architects can now sign, seal and be in responsible charge for site design and construction plans. Prohibiting one licensed profession from sealing plans, while allowing another to do so, when they are equally qualified to do so, is professional discrimination. It also restricts fair competition, and can add unnecessary time and expense to the approval process.

3) Requiring that all decisions made and actions taken that fall within the defined practice of landscape be performed under the responsible charge of a licensed landscape architect. The LA Practice Act has no exemption for local governmental entities, be they cities, counties, or special districts. If such a body is performing activities within the practice of landscape architecture as defined in 12-45-103 (8)(a), a licensed landscape architect should be in responsible charge.
Are your city and county government agencies in compliance with the state law? Let’s help them understand and implement the State Licensing Act.

With a grant from ASLA National, ASLA Colorado has created an advocacy package to educate local government agencies about the Licensing Act and to help persuade them to update their codes and procedures to be in alignment with provisions of the State Law. The advocacy documents can now be download ed from the advocacy page of our website, under the heading “Licensure Compliance Materials.” If you would like hard copies of the advocacy package to promote compliance in your community, please let us know.

Our advocacy campaign got a big push when the Colorado Municipal league (CML) published an article in their newsletter outlining our efforts to educate local government agencies. CML represents 97% of Colorado municipalities and is precisely the audience we need to target for our municipal compliance efforts. The CML Newsletter article is available for downloading on the advocacy page of the ASLA Colorado website.

**ASLA Colorado** meets regularly with the GreenCo Legislative Committee (and their lobbyists) to keep apprised of ongoing and upcoming issues of legislative and regulatory importance. When an urgent issue of importance arises it is conveyed to the membership as an advisory in the bi-monthly E-News Bulletin. ASLA Colorado is represented in the legislature and before state agencies by the Colorado Council of Landscape Architects. Gregory Williams of Redpoint Resources LLC, and Scott Meiklejohn of Meiklejohn Consulting LLC are under contract from December-May to monitor state legislative activity and regulatory developments. Scott Meiklejohn They also represent ASLA Colorado at meetings involving other allied organizations on new and ongoing issues of mutual concern. Neil McLane is Vice President of Government Affairs and chair of the ASLA Colorado Government Affairs committee. This committee also oversees the activities of the Colorado Council of Landscape Architects. Neil can be reached at neil@mclaneassoc.com.
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By Sarah Chase Shaw

Architect Muscoe Martin loves his swimming pool. It’s sixty feet long and four feet deep, perfect for swimming laps. Surrounded by a water garden and perched over the valley below, it looks like it belongs there. The best part: It’s a natural swimming pool (NSP) which means no chemicals and minimal maintenance.

“The idea of having chlorinated water that would seep into the surrounding landscape didn’t seem like the right thing to do, so we built a natural swimming pool” says Martin, who lives with his wife in a rural area outside of Philadelphia. Instead of chemicals, Martin relies on an ultraviolet light disinfection system to control bacteria and algae buildup. An adjacent shallow pond covered with a dark gravel-like substance provides a medium for a smaller wetland garden, adding an additional cleaning agent. “The pool isn’t perfect,” says Muscoe, “like a chlorinated pool would be. Algae accumulates on the sides and bottom, making it a bit slippery, but brushing helps keep that under control. We vacuum and skim it on a regular basis, and we don’t have to pay for chemicals.” In winter, the Martins cut the plants to water level, drain and cover the swimming pool, and turn off the pump and filter system.

Muscoe worked with Mick Hilleary of Total Habitat, a Kansas-based company who’s “Total Guide to Natural Swimming Pools” begins with the premise that a natural swimming pool is a balanced, self-contained, and self-cleaning ecosystem. “We start with a hole in the ground and add a liner so it holds water. We establish a swimming zone and a filtering zone. We add skimmers, filters, plumbing and a water pump to constantly turn over water through the system. Throw in a UV sterilizer for added security and some means of aeration, add plants and an army of friendly bacteria to get the system started, allow a little time for these to establish, and there you have it—go swimming.”

Designs vary from rural ponds to modernist water features. The central swimming zone is contained and separated from the adjacent wetland garden by a wall that prevents swimmers from venturing into the regeneration zone where the plants are tenuously rooted in gravel. An overflow gutter or skimmer cleans debris from the surface of the water while simultaneously returning it to the wetlands or regeneration zone. Energy-efficient pumps then draw the water through a network of perforated pipes spanning the length of the gravelled regeneration zone, ultimately returning it to the swimming pool.
Says James Robyn of BioNova, a New Jersey-based custom pool company whose NSP filtering systems are reliant upon wetlands regeneration zones, “We’re doing it just like Mother Nature has done it for millions of years, only we’re doing it in an efficient and optimal process.”

Erin English is an Associate Engineer with Natural Systems International in Santa Fe, New Mexico.”We have always believed that there are alternatives to chemical treatment methods. Using nature to clean water is highly effective and natural swimming pools are just one application that has come out of that process. If we can circulate water through constructed wetlands and out-compete the algae, then our system has succeeded.”

In Germany, France and Italy, 5-10% of all new private swimming pools are NSP’s, however, municipal pool systems are gaining in popularity. The first public NSP was built in Austria in 1990. In 2008, there were 100 such public pools throughout Europe. Currently, 20% of new pool installations in Germany are NSP’s and in 2010, Scandinavia built its first public NSP. The real difference between public and private NSP’s is that the regeneration zones are treated as production wetlands and fenced off from the public. And, according to Robyn, size is not an issue. The more people that are in a pool, the more productive the system can be in reducing actual bacterial counts.

Costs per square foot are comparable between NSP’s and traditional swimming pools. Significant cost savings can occur in municipal pools over the long term, but for residential pools the savings are negligible because water gardening and plant propagation costs are almost equal to the cost of chemical applications. According to Robyn, that’s not why you do it. “You do it because it’s good for the environment. It does have a low carbon footprint, so there are some significant energy savings involved.”

Can a system like this work year-round in the Rocky Mountains? The answer to that question says Robyn, is easy. “These pools got their start in the Alps. They will work anywhere that plants will grow in water.” However, BioNova’s system, which relies on plant materials to clean the water, dictates a shorter swimming season. In autumn, the wetland perennials must be cut back before the water freezes so that they don’t overtake the regeneration zone. In spring, after the ice has melted and the first plants begin to emerge, the algae blooms. That lasts only a few days and is a common occurrence in all natural bodies of water, but it is one of the factors that tends to make users squeamish.

Instead of using plants as cleaning agents, Total Habitat’s system uses a biologic filter. According to Hilleary, the product - a man-made expanded shale - is totally inert. Hilleary’s pools tend to be deeper because the product must be applied at a minimum of 9” deep on the bottom of the pool to be productive. “We build adjacent wetlands gardens because they are in keeping with the natural concept, however, the true filtering benefit from plants isn’t really felt for at least ten years. A biological filter allows for larger surface areas for year-round swimming. We even like to recommend a few fish because they are fun to watch.”

Says Robyn, “One of the issues that we like to make clear with clients from the beginning is that this product is living pond water with lots of creatures in it. The reason to build a natural swimming pool is because it’s chemical free, but this system is certainly not for everyone. We do believe, however, that people should have a choice.”

As the next decade unfolds, landscape architects are uniquely positioned to help battle a life-threatening crisis snowballing through the country: obesity. According to a five-year study by the Robert Wood Johnson foundation:

Obesity is one of the most challenging health crises the country has ever faced. Two-thirds of adults and nearly one-third of children and teens are currently obese or overweight, putting them at increased risk for more than 20 major diseases, including Type II diabetes and heart disease. It’s not just our health that is suffering: obesity-related medical costs and a less productive workforce are hampering America’s ability to compete in the global economy. http://www.rwjf.org

Live Well Colorado was formed to battle this crisis and their website is full of pertinent information, including a 2010 Report to the White House that begins with the following:

The childhood obesity epidemic in America is a national health crisis. One in every three children (31.7%) ages 2-19 is overweight or obese. The life-threatening consequences of this epidemic create a compelling and critical call for action that cannot be ignored. http://about.livewellcolorado.org

The increased health risks and costs associated with obesity are not only felt by those overweight; but by everyone who has experienced the rising cost of health insurance and health care, as well as, the increase of nonproductive days in the workplace and school. Why is America so fat? There are many reasons, but most studies have pointed two major causes:

1. The built environment not being conducive to regular activity and exercise as part of day to day living habits.
2. The high cost and decreased availability of good food vs. the low cost and increased availability of poor food.

As designers of the outside environment, we have a lot to consider as we enter into the next decade—and the obesity crisis should affect our design decisions. The good news is we can look back and learn from our mistakes and see how past decisions have “largely” shaped our society:

- Community designs that have favored car transportation over bike or foot, making it too easy and convenient to jump in the car for errands and activities. Raising children who want to do the same and becoming a society that either can’t or won’t walk or bike even a few blocks to school, store, or a community neighbor’s house.
• Development patterns, zoning and economic practices that have located most activities away from housing areas—requiring us to drive to work, parks, open space, health clubs, restaurants, and other venues (only a brave few will tackle the traffic and bike).
• Houses designed with attached garages that enable us to completely avoid our neighbors.
• Out of doors safety issues that make it hard for kids to play outside without supervision; with working parents, they fill their boredom with TV, video and computer games.
• Food produce that has traveled long distances, been picked too soon, and sprayed with pesticides to have much flavor convincing kids that vegetables “don’t taste very good.”
• A hurry, competitive mentality where it is faster, easier, and cheaper to grab drive-thru food than to spend time shopping and cooking healthy food at home (or even walk to a restaurant).

The Landscape Architect’s Role in Healthy Communities

From planting design to regional planning, landscape architects have the knowledge and ability to design projects that both encourage and increase daily activity habits and provide places to plant and grow good quality fruits and vegetables.

Many movements and organizations have formed over the last decade to encourage movement and the design of pedestrian/bike-friendly communities: Complete Streets (see Exposures 2010 Planning Issue); New Towns; Multiuse and Form Zoning; Bike to Work; Rails to Trails; improved bike routes and designations; stronger pedestrian and bike connections to activity areas for shopping, work, and play; walk to school; traffic calming; and many others (though retro designing car oriented suburban communities still needs to be encouraged).

When it Comes to Food, However, we are Just Beginning to Think Outside the Box

The time is ripe to incorporate edible plants into the majority of our landscape architecture projects—single and multi-family homes, senior centers, schools, parks, restaurants, shopping centers, urban plazas—by providing space for urban farms and community gardens, and as part of the planting design pallet. If more landscapes included edibles, more people will have access and the opportunity to eat convenient, plentiful, and low cost organic fruits, vegetables, and herbs.

Urban Agriculture

Community gardens and small backyard garden plots are typically thought of at the mention of urban agriculture; but in the last few years, the concept has blossomed. CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture) are being developed all over Colorado. The Colorado Department of Agriculture defines a CSA as follows:

A CSA is a relationship between farmers and community members who pay annual membership fees to help cover the production costs of the farms. In return for being a member, individuals and families receive a weekly “share” of the farm’s production during the growing season. CSAs provide farmers with direct outlets for farm products, strengthen local economies by keeping food dollars in local communities and provide a fun way for producers and buyers to connect.

A “farmer” today has a new look. All types of people, with other main jobs, are becoming farmers by organizing and changing front/ back yard landscapes and vacant land into vegetable gardens. The new urban farmer works with neighbors and other community members to collectively farm the gardens and share the produce. Homeowners dedicate a portion of their landscaping to the farm for a share of the crops. Additional memberships are sold to people who might not have land to farm, but want a share of farm, fresh produce. Members are usually required to do a small amount of gardening and pay approximately $400-500 for twenty to twenty-five weeks of fresh produce.
most who start CSA’s. She is motivated by a passion for gardening combined with a desire to make a difference in the health and well being of her community.

“Farm Yard CSA is an urban farming adventure in the heart of Denver, primarily in Washington Park. Our produce is grown on a collection of front and backyard plots owned by local residents. Farm Yard harvests travel few miles from the ground to your table. We provide you with fresh, healthy vegetables from our beautiful, bountiful gardens adorning our neighborhood yards. We offer our community fresh, new vibrant connections with food, farmers, land, and each other. Farm Yard CSA models a feasible way to bring much needed change to our increasingly ineffective and wasteful ways of producing and distributing food. Your membership and volunteering in this sustainability movement will be a voice for overall community health.”

www.farmyardcsa.com

Other urban CSA’s have taken larger contiguous vacant space and converted it to a vegetable farm. The Chatfield site of the Denver Botanic Gardens was started by a grant from Kaiser Permanente in 2010 with one acre, increased to three acres in 2011, with plans to expand more in future years. The farm is run by two fulltime employees, two seasonal assistants, two intern assistants, and volunteers. The Chatfield farm supports approximately 50 families per acre. Member shares are sold at $475 for a bushel and $375 for a peck—for twenty weeks of fresh produce. Another larger contiguous farm is Star Farm CSA in Arvada, Colorado. Star Farm was started in the spring of 2011 by two women with a passion for gardening and a vision for using vacant land to provide good food for their families and community. Volunteers have helped prepare the ground, plant, and harvest. A video explaining this project can be viewed on the City of Arvada’s website under sustainability.

Using Edibles as Part of the Planting Design Pallet

CSA’s are one way urban agriculture is “growing,” another is using edibles as part of the planting design pallet. John Lanterman, ASLA, Principal of Studio Urbanista and a landscape architecture professor at the University of Colorado Boulder practices what he teaches and preaches. John has transformed his once typical suburban landscape—bluegrass, planting beds with shrubs and trees—into a designed urban farm nestled into the landscaping. Former bluegrass has been replaced with a courtyard like area bordered by a decorative, open wood fence. A small planting bed surrounding the outside of the fence is filled with perennials, roses, and ground cover. Inside the fence, brick paver pathways surround vegetable gardens and a central herb garden with a water feature. Bordering the inside of the fence are plantings of thyme, raspberries, and strawberries. To incorporate fruit trees, he is espaliering bare root stock he cut back eighteen inches above the ground. As new branches form, he trains them to grow sideways on wire attached to the fence. Eventually they will grow along the fence, providing a great source of fruit. John has also developed a website and project to promote urban agriculture (www.urbanagricultureproject.com).

Incorporate Vegetables into Annual Planting Displays

Edible plants are showcased in many of the demonstration gardens at the Denver Botanical Gardens. Containers surrounding an outdoor patio are filled with the usual annuals and enhanced with vegetables. Squash and cucumbers cascade down the planters and burgundy peppers and chard add a great color and texture. Incorporating vegetables into annual planting displays, is not only a good source of food but adds texture, interest, beauty to the typical annual bed.

The kitchen garden displays all types of vegetables and combinations of vegetables that would be very attractive as part of a planted landscape. The bright red stalks and thick leaves of chard could be back dropped by the delicate flow of maiden grass, or climbing tomatoes could drape over a sculpture and combine with morning glories, or dark purple and green peppers could...
enhance annual flower borders. The Denver Botanic Gardens not only displays this produce in attractive arrangements, but harvests and donates it to homeless shelters. Volunteers use the fresh veggies to cook up wholesome meals.

Once I have added edibles to my landscaping, I will encourage clients to do the same. And perhaps, like John Lanterman experienced, neighbors will be encouraged as well.

Design decisions that help trim our waistlines, not build them is the way of the future. A great example of this type of decision making is happening in the design and planning of Sterling Ranch, a new 3400 acre development in Northern Douglas County. The developer is “creating a community for people not yet born” and is passionate about meeting their needs for daily activity, water harvesting and conservation, food production at or close to home, sustainability, and adventure.

Susan McCabe is a licensed landscape architect with over 30 years of experience. She has been self-employed for 18 years and has a BLA from the University of Illinois and an MA in Urban Design from the University of Colorado. Susan is also a Master Gardener and fitness instructor. Her sweetest and most challenging “projects” are her three children: Conor, Grant, and Megan.

Most Herbs are Low Growing, Colorful, Perennials

The Denver Botanic herb garden displays hundreds of plants that can easily be incorporated into planting plans. Most herbs are low growing, colorful perennials that are perfect for the front layer in a typical planting bed, with the added benefit of fantastic flavor and aroma.

I am inspired after researching this article and see a great opportunity for changing my own landscaping. The shrub and perennial plantings are attractive but the sickly looking bluegrass would make a great urban farm front yard. I visualize vegetables growing along a path leading to the back, herbs planted in front of the shrubs, and some type of sculpture with tomatoes and lemon cucumbers cascading over it. All my previous hesitancies about incorporating a vegetable garden into my landscaping have been alleviated:

• It doesn’t have to be in the back yard where it is baking hot and easy to forget.
• I don’t have to work hard digging up the blue grass in order to plant vegetables.
• It doesn’t have to be a rigid shape.
• I don’t have to use my current irrigation system. I can use a portable drip system run on a timer from my garden hose, so it can be a separate zone from the established landscaping.
• It can be an attractive addition to the front of the house if I incorporate some winter interest: sculpture, rock, ornamental grasses, evergreen groundcover, and a nice pathway.
Q&A WITH KATHRYN GUSTAFSON

By Brian Koenigberg

Following her presentation at the Denver Botanic Gardens this summer Exposures’ own Brian Koenigberg sat down with world renowned artist and Landscape Architect Kathryn Gustafson. Here’s what she had to say about design, technology and clay.

EXPOSURES: Is there an architect or landscape architect that you admire or feel that you have patterned yourself after? Do you have a design “hero”?

GUSTAFSON: I’ve got a lot of heroes, a lot of heroes. I think there are a lot of really good people out there. In the architectural world, Renzo Piano and Norman Foster are the two that I absolutely adore. But there are also a lot of other really good architects. Whether it’s David Adjaye or Brad Cotefield. Tom Mayne is amazing. The list is really long.

In Landscape Architecture obviously Peter Walker is exceptional. There are many really good people. Obviously Martha Schwartz, Michael van Valkenburgh, Andrew Grant (Great Britain), Michel Desvigne (French). These are exceptional and really talented people.

Some past designers that inspire me are Noguchi and Igor Mitora. In the world of the Arts, I think Dennis Oppenheim I think was extraordinary. Richard Tuttle, Ariel Lumour. These are people that are older, I could go on and on about the younger generation of designers. Miekyoung Kim out of Boston is an Artist and Landscape Architect that is extremely talented. There are a lot of good people out there.

EXPOSURES: I know that we Landscape Architects that are less well known certainly draw inspiration from designers such as yourself. Does that happen at your level as well? Do the designs of your “design heroes” effect what you do?

GUSTAFSON: Not really. It’s a little bit different because we are always on the forefront about technology and creative thinking. But what does happen is the collaboration with these people. We share design ideas, we influence each other, and we carry each other further along in our thinking. That is also true about people who aren’t even in our same world—like Robert Israel who is a fabulous theatre set designer or Piet Oudolf who is plantmen—who have a totally different view on things. So they influence us and we influence them; that’s what the collaboration is all about.

I feel like innovation in design is speeding up. The materials we have to work with are just extraordinary, but they are changing so fast. The electronics that are affecting lighting and the way
we use and carry energy is changing really rapidly. It’s almost to a point where I think about designing a light fixture and know that it will be obsolete in two years. So how do we design something that we know is going to be obsolete? It used to be that we could design things and they would have a mark of the era. Like the Guggenheim Museum, or a chair, or a piece of art, it marks it’s era in time and is considered “timeless.” I’m wondering if the ability to do timeless design is still there. That’s my biggest question because of how fast we are moving and how fast we are redefining our lives. I find it fascinating, but it is rather hard to keep up. It’s so different than it was twenty years ago.

**EXPOSURES**: **What projects are you working on right now? What is significant about them?**

**GUSTAFSON**: I’m working in the United States on the new National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC. I’m also working on a project with Heinz Development where we are taking six city blocks in the city center of DC. We’re in the ground, the hole is being dug, we’re on site, and it’s very exciting. It’s where the old convention center site used to be; which was a superblock that totally broke up the grid. We’re designing plazas and streetscapes, and even redoing brand new streets—which is really exciting because we’re laying down everything all at once in the center of the city. We are working with the City to define how new tree pits should work that take into account storm water management. Hopefully this will become a standard for DC. I think a lot of what is going on with storm water management these days is fascinating; to really see how it works. It is a very exciting project to see built.

The other project that I’m working outside of the States is in Valencia, Spain, where we recently won a large competition for a park that is 25 hectare (or about 75 acres) and another 30 hectares of urban planning which will be a brand new neighborhood. It all used to be train tracks and the buildings associated with repairing the trains. The train tracks will now be routed underground, and they will be building a whole new park on top of them, and a whole new neighborhood. We will be doing all of the urban planning and the design of the park. That is sort of my baby right now, with the museum in DC which is also very exciting. They’re different scales but about the same amount of political pressure.

**EXPOSURES**: **You originally studied fashion design at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. How has that affected or influenced your career as a Landscape Architect?**

**GUSTAFSON**: I think that’s interesting. A lot of people believe it has affected me because they think that my land movement comes from the texturality of fabric. Actually, I’m from a place called Yakima, Washington, where there are no trees; just naked hills that are beautiful with land movement. I think my land movement comes from there. **My love of water comes from being raised in a desert that has channels everywhere and irrigation everywhere, so conducting water was a must. The preciousness of water, being raised in the desert, I’m sure that had more to do with my career. I think the fashion actually affected the way I look at detail and geometry because when you construct a piece of clothing it is a very, very precise piece. It is also a very complicated piece because it is turning corners all of the time. I think that precision and that ability to do fluidity came from there.**

**EXPOSURES**: **Why did you decide to study Landscape Architecture after you were in fashion?**

**GUSTAFSON**: I met somebody who was looking for a profession so I asked them what they thought they would like to do and they said, “Landscape Architecture.” It felt as if someone had taken a bat and had hit me on the head, and I wondered why I had never thought of that before. It was this immediate light bulb going off and I wondered, “What am I doing”. After that it took me about four years to figure out a way to go back to school, and then I just did it; I went back to school. I think that my original schooling choice actually helped me because I started out in art, and then I went to fashion design. I have always been in the design industry. Landscape Architecture is just a new material for me. My ethos as a designer was already established. My basic “hand” was done, I didn’t have to reinvent it—I just carried it from fashion into the landscape.

When I had started out in art at thirteen I preferred modeling clay. I was doing clay sculpture by the time I was seventeen; so clay has always been my medium of choice. When I studied Landscape Architecture at Versailles I discovered that I could use clay again for the landforms. I remember one time that I had prepared a clay model that was about the size of a coffee table and very ambitious. It was a grey color and I had used turquoise glitter to represent a river running through it. I was presenting the model to Michel Courdioux, he was my teacher and a famous architect.
Landscape Architect in France, but we didn’t always get along. When I presented it the clothes I was wearing were a shiny grey and turquoise. Michel looked at the model and then he looked at me, and then he looked at the model and to me again. He finally said, “But, it is the same.” I said, “Yes, it is. It is the same hand. It is going to be the same. One is for the body and one is for landscape.” The basic style is not going to change.

EXPOSURES: Do you still work with clay?

GUSTAFSON: I still do some sites in clay; I have two models sitting on my desk waiting for me to finish. The thing about a clay model for the landscape is that you can’t cheat. It shows you every piece, there are no hidden corners that you’re not looking at, that you’re not solving. On any sort of grading plan there is often that corner that you forgot about where you have that three foot drop. With clay, that three foot drop is staring you in the face.

EXPOSURES: Do you use the clay only to represent the landforms, or do you bring hard-edged architectural models to be a part of it?

GUSTAFSON: We always have the architecture there so we can see what the relationships are. The final model, however, only shows the landform. I don’t do it for every single project anymore because computer aided design obviously is doing a lot. Certainly the big sites, like the waterfront in Singapore where we worked on 130 acres, couldn’t be done in clay at that scale, it would be too small. There is another project I’m working on, Novartis in Switzerland along the Rhine River. That is one of the models I’m working on right now.

My team on their computers is now moving faster than I am. It probably will become just a pleasure thing at some point. I do, however, insist that we use the 3D technology, but I don’t think that you can truly see the 3D through a 2D screen the same way that you can see a physical model.

EXPOSURES: Because you can touch it?

GUSTAFSON: No, it is something about the eye; understanding the total vision. It’s not so much that you can touch it, but with a model you can take your time with it, pan up and down or move around with it. You’re not having to readjust views on a screen, your body is just fluid with it and you can see things at a much more natural pace than you can with a computer. It does take a whole lot more time to build such a model though.

EXPOSURES: Do you have a favorite project, client or project locale?

GUSTAFSON: I fall in love every time!

EXPOSURES: How about a project type or client with whom you would greatly like to work?

GUSTAFSON: I like museum work and I like big parks. I’d like to do more big parks—with a budget though. If it’s just grass and trees, I’m not interested. I like doing big cultural parks; I think they are really interesting. They are really essential to the city. We should look at a project and find something in it that can move things forward. I just finished a Master Plan for the Nashville Centennial Park, which was really interesting because it is an historical park that had been totally denuded—it had lost all sense of existence; it had been filled with parking lots and cars. It did have this fantastic history, however. But it was a history that was not appli-
We're also doing a lot of archaeology in the United Arab Emirates and in Lebanon, which I really like. I didn't think that I'd ever like archaeology, but bringing it to the public is really interesting. Finding out how to tell the story, or what is the story, or how to protect the archaeological sites so they don't get destroyed. We're doing a conservation project as well, it's the first desert park in Abu Dhabi. We're restoring a huge portion of the desert. There are tombs there from 2000 BC!

EXPOSURES: You are a part of two offices, Gustafson Porter in London and Gustafson Guthrie Nichol in Seattle, and I imagine that much of your professional life involves travel not only between offices but also to project locations. How do you manage such a workload and find time for yourself?

GUSTAFSON: I have four partners that are excellent; two partners in each office that are really good at design and really good at management. I don't design everything and I don't manage everything—I just happen to be the first name on the door. We have great principals and associates that run the jobs, too. It's really a culture more than because of me as a person or designer. I work really hard at making the office a culture; making sure that there are ethics in the work and an aesthetic in the work that is about us. I do travel a lot, but I do also really carve out private time for design and for myself—and I'm very protective of it. Both of my homes have separate studio spaces in them that are big enough that people can come and work with me if need be… and they do. We do a lot of retreats and charrettes. I also think that an important element of design is to turn off the phones. I'm very organized as a person and that certainly helps as well. I plan very far out in advance. If I don't, then it's chaos. I remember one time that Adrian Geiss wanted to do a park without planning what was going to go one there and let people figure out the program. I said, “Adrian, if you did that in your life, then you'd be homeless”. Why were we given intelligence, if we're not going to use it?

EXPOSURES: Nearly ten years ago you told the BBC that you “try to create spaces where people can shelter from the incessant barrage of information that fills our daily lives, creating places of serenity and clarity.” I think it is safe to say that there is infinitely more data and digital intrusion in our lives now, do you think the landscape still plays an important role in distracting us from these busy lives? Can the profession lead the world down a path towards a more civilized state or is that another affiliated profession’s role?

GUSTAFSON: Or as human beings, or as parents, not just as Landscape Architects. What do we do for our children? What do we do for our family? What do we do for our neighbors? What do we do for ourselves? How do we figure out a way to navigate this and still have time to reflect on what we should be doing? The basic act of thinking takes time, and if we don't think, then we don't move forward, we don't evolve. How are we going to find that space; a space that is diferent for everyone—we do best and when we do it best. Morning people. Night people. Do they lie down in bed and stare at the ceiling, or walk in a park and sit on the grass? Age groups are also very diferent. Everybody has a diferent way of doing it: Thinking. We do have to carve out that time and actually sort through problems and not try to only do it our car on the freeway on our way to work. We have to create spaces that are very diferent for those diferering personalities of the users. While I really thrive on serenity and quiet, we also have to create those spaces which are loud and noisy and fun which I call the hip-hop spaces. I just created a plaza in Beirut that is all black and white. It is really hip-hop, it's in your face.

I think the role of landscape in cities, the urban landscape like Central Park, has always been to give you that place that is away from work. How we use landscapes is now rapidly changing. When you look at the landscapes of the turn of the 20th Century they were about fresh air, promenades, picnicking, and the bucolic. When we reached the 1950s, parks became more about sports and recreation. Whereas, the 70s brought about a lot of safety issues and concerns and reduced our parks to just grass and trees so we could easily see across them. Now we have come full circle and parks are heavily planted, have ecological systems, are cultural, and are programmed. Millenium Park in Chicago is a very good example. These places have become the “architecture of landscape”.
EXPOSURES: You have had great success collaborating with artists, architects and engineers on some quite spectacular spaces. Is pushing the envelope on what can be built an important part of your design process or does it come about in other ways?

GUSTAFSON: You never start out just to innovate. There is no point to innovate something that doesn't need it. You basically always problem solve. If the problem can be solved with something that already exists, and it does a very good job with it, then you don't need to innovate. Many things are not solving the problem very well, so we need to change them to make it better. Lighting is a really good example. One of my goals is to do lighting that is off the grid. I don't want any cables. Can we do that? Probably not right now. Can you imagine how much we would save on infrastructure, if we weren't having to carry all of this electricity everywhere?

There is always this big battle over infrastructure about cost versus efficiency. On any infrastructure project we could probably come up with a better way to do it, but it will certainly cost more money over both the short- and long-term. So is there a benefit to that expenditure of doing all of the necessary studies when we don't know if there will be a positive result? There is an inherent risk factor. I think infrastructure is the worst: Whether it is our roads, our dams, our electricity, it's sucking up our resources. Within the realm of what is acceptable, it unfortunately works. I don't find it acceptable at all. I feel like I'm in shackles; I'm powerless when I look at our infrastructure system. Take storm water management, the infrastructure as we know it can't handle it. We as landscape architects know that there are different ways that can handle it better.

EXPOSURES: Do you have a research and development component to your practice to study some of these issues?

GUSTAFSON: Yes, in both offices. We have education classes all of the time. People come in and talk to our employees about different subjects. We have a number of different opportunities available. Everyone also has a continuing education fund so they can take seminars or classes, get licensed and certified. It's to make sure that we are all professionally moving forward.

EXPOSURES: Our upcoming issue of Exposures magazine is focused on design, what does design mean to you, and where do you think it is going?

GUSTAFSON: This is the best question; the most difficult. Design is problem solving. Problem solving in a way that makes life better. Better is an interesting word here that means more efficient, more agreeable, less conflict, responsible. Again I think of ethics and aesthetics here. It is evolutionary. Design should be evolutionary; moving something forward. If not, then there is no point in designing. If we're just designing to repeat something that has been done before, then we're not really contributing; we're just paying the bills. I think our job is to design for people. A lot of Landscape Architects forget that we are supposed to create spaces for people. We're not just doing stormwater management or urban ecologies; we actually have a role of designing cities and spaces “for” people.

I like to say that “the sky is mine”. Walk out the door, anything not under a roof is our responsibility. Everything! From the moment you put your foot on the sidewalk, that IS Landscape Architecture.

Kathryn Gustafson is a founding partner of Gustafson Guthrie Nichol in Seattle and Gustafson Porter in London. Kathryn’s award-winning landscapes can be found throughout Europe, North America, and the Middle East. Her diverse span of prominent works, ranging from one to 500 acres in size, are known as ground-breaking, contemporary designs that intuitively incorporate the sculptural, sensual qualities that are fundamental to the human experience of landscape.

Kathryn is an honorary fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architecture, an honorary Royal Designer for Industry, and a medalist of the French Academy of Architecture. She is the recipient of The Chrysler Design Award and of London’s Jane Drew Prize. She is active in lecturing.

Kathryn’s recent work in both firms may be found in such projects as the Westergasfabriek Culture Park in Amsterdam, the National Botanic Garden of Wales, the Seattle Civic Center and City Hall Plaza, and the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain in London.
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A CROWDED CACOPHONY

By Ian Brighton

Recordings by scientists have documented icebreaker ships in the Antarctic interrupting the vocal chatter of beluga whales. Low-flying aircraft have been known to silence the croaking of spade-foot toads near Yosemite National Park in California. Background noise in cities like New York have been clocked above safety standards set by the World Health Organization. At a time when our world seems to be growing louder, researchers are uncovering a disturbing truth: Noise pollution is impacting our environment more than we once realized. Try as we might to tune out the new chorus of noise makers, sound will continue to affect our lives. By addressing sound pollution through design, we can reconnect with a soundscape that harkens back to our earliest days of existence.

Noise pollution has become so widespread that even our vast wilderness areas aren’t immune from it. In the continental United States flight paths carpet the skies, making practically every primitive wilderness area susceptible to jet engine noise. The non-profit One Square Inch of Silence (OSI) is one of the few groups addressing this issue. Led by self-described “sound tracker” Gordon Hempton, OSI’s mission is to “protect and manage the natural soundscape in Olympic National Park’s backcountry wilderness.” Hempton argues that a single square inch of space permanently protected from human-induced noise will create a buffer of quiet that benefits the entire area. It helps that Olympic National Park is more than twice the size of Denver, and covered by a temperate rain-forest that filters noise. Frequent cloudy days also keep low-flying aircraft from buzzing the area, a major source of noise pollution in other National Parks. Nonetheless, commercial flights still criss-cross the park, piercing a natural soundscape that has been ongoing for centuries.

To ensure a quiet environment, the organization is asking for a no-fly zone over the park. Hempton explains that the inconvenience of a no-fly zone would barely be noticed stating, “It would cost less than a dollar per passenger and less than a minute of travel time to avoid a National Park.”

Despite this seemingly small price to pay to preserve the aural integrity of an ancient ecology, many question the harm done by jet engine noise passing by at 18,000 feet. Unfortunately for quiet seekers, one such entity is the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Hempton states, “Very simply the FAA does not feel that low level noise, that is sound levels below those of the human voice, are significant.” Although the National Parks have implemented noise ordinances designed to protect natural sound, it limits them to areas below 18,000 feet. Hempton argues that the FAA and National Park Service are following the letter of the law more than the intent. “The FAA just doesn’t get it and the real problem (preserving natural quiet), isn’t adequately addressed. Unless specific legislation is enacted to make our most pristine National Parks off limits to all aircraft, just as many areas of the United States are off limits to aircraft for military purposes, we will most certainly lose this precious natural resource.”

In fact, many are pointing to evidence that invasive noise may be changing the ecological makeup of places that have existed for thousands of years. Research has shown that animals use sound frequencies much like radio stations use bandwidth. Just like an orchestra is comprised of a range of frequency-producing instruments, animals find their own unique sound that fits within the wilderness soundscape. These sonic signatures become learned assets for survival, and are likely passed on through genetic selection. Mice, for instance, use extremely high frequency “squeaking” to communicate, inaudible to humans and predators. The introduction of a new persistent sound may drown out a particular frequency range, rendering it useless for animals.

Human Costs

For humans, the stakes may be even higher. Hearing loss is an irreversible process and even the most expensive hearing-aids can’t restore perfect hearing. Hempton warns that urban noise is reaching epidemic proportions, “Noise pollution is so widespread that Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) has become the number one occupational illness. And hearing loss among children has doubled in recent decades. The medical community is now calling noise pollution the new second hand smoke that is stealing our health.”

Studies are showing that hearing loss can occur through repeated exposure to loud noise over time. This means that the majority of people who live and commute in urban environments could be at risk. Dr. Deanne Meinke, Associate Professor of Audiology at the University of Northern Colorado, explains, “The reality is [that] it depends on what you do throughout the day, every day of your life.” A daily bus ride with the headphones on isn’t going to create instantaneous hearing loss. With time however, sounds are likely to lose their luster. But physical hearing loss due to loud noise is just one part of the problem. As Dr. Meinke explains, “The leaf blower may be hazardous to the operator’s ear, but it’s also annoying to the person across the street.” It’s been proven that the psychological effect of unwanted noise can raise blood pressure, disrupt focus, and...
interrupt sleep. When taken into account over an entire lifetime, these seemingly small events can add up to create a stressful environment.

Despite these findings, the urban sound-meter seems to keep rising year after year. Dr. Meinke points out that efforts to regulate noise were largely stymied in the 1980s when President Reagan defunded the Office of Noise Control, part of the Environmental Protection Agency. She says that today we’re significantly limited in our ability to regulate noise, and it has even affected how we label the health hazards of noisy devices. Using the analogy of speed limits she states, “We don’t all drive as fast as we can in our cars, we watch the speedometer.” Allowing such an unchecked sound environment may result in a soundscape that eventually spirals out of control.

**Design Solutions**

Although it may be impossible to create environments completely free from noise pollution, landscape design can help deflect its impact. This is often easier said than done. Dr. Meinke explains that “there are a lot of myths about environmental sound… you could put up a wall that cuts noise right next to it, but it doesn’t do much for the park bench ten feet away.” In a profession that relies heavily on visual communication and experience to sell ideas, noise and sound perception are most often a secondary consideration. Dr. Meinke recommends that, “If you really care about managing the acoustic environment, consult an acoustic engineer early in the process. A retrofit is usually much more difficult and expensive down the road.”

Luckily, a few basic design concepts can help change a landscape from sound propagating, to sound dampening. First off, rigid and smooth materials like concrete and glass are especially good at reflecting sound-waves through the atmosphere. An abundance of these materials placed within a close proximity of each other can actually increase the background noise of a space. Instead, the use of porous and flexible materials placed in a terraced manner can absorb and deflect sound waves. Sound canceling technology is another interesting development. Already being used by some luxury car brands, they work by emitting counter-waves that disrupt unwanted frequencies. Sound cancellers may prove to have significant health benefits where loud noise and public space is inevitable.

Another major impact on noise pollution in the landscape are those maintenance-intense spaces. A heavily manicured public park with an abundance of turf grass and vegetation needs a small arsenal of mowers, leaf blowers and pruning tools that all crank out significant decibels. Keeping our natural spaces as self-sufficient and maintenance free as possible can go a long way to reducing the collective urban hum.

With the shift towards a denser, more centralized urban space, noise issues are only likely to grow with time. Although these changes might seem slight at first, they could be cutting us off from experiencing the world in a healthy and meaningful way. As Gordon Hempton puts it, “When we go to a national park today and hear a passing plane, helicopter, or jet every few minutes, yes we can screen out those annoyances, but when we do we also screen out the very delicate expressions of nature and essentially don’t learn how to truly listen, to truly open up and take it all in.” Allowing for an uninhibited noise environment may put us all at risk of missing out on nature’s grand symphony.

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2. Stover, “Not So Silent Spring.”
5. Stover, “Not So Silent Spring.”

Ian Brighton is a Masters of Landscape Architecture candidate at the University of Colorado at Denver.
By Rick Poynor

In the 1980s, when I began to write about design, its appeal seemed fairly obvious. Things that had received the attention of good designers tended to look better than their more routine counterparts. This improvement was layered with all kinds of meanings tied up with the question of how and why something looked better. Nor could visual appeal be dissociated from the function of an object, graphic, or interior design. If the designer’s visual concerns got in the way of the design’s intended use, then this was naturally a problem. But the crucial point was still that the designed object was attractive and provided a more pleasurable and engaging experience than undesigned or less-designed versions of the same experience.

Even then, some observers worried that designers saw their work as little more than decoration. Style was regularly denigrated for being superficial and empty-headed, usually by designers themselves. Yet the visual nature of design was not seriously challenged and designers continued to argue, as they had argued for decades, that “good design is good business.” By improving the design quality of their products, companies would sell more than competitors that hadn’t seen the light. Still, plenty of companies didn’t seem to get it. In defiance of common sense, or maybe because their leaders lacked a visual education and just didn’t know how to look at things, they really weren’t comfortable with designers or design.

But designers were right. By the 1990s, almost everyone was getting the message. Design had turned out to be as important as designers always insisted, and it was the force of their commitment, imagination, and creativity, as an expression of public need and desire—designers are people, not a breed apart—that had made it so. Design is now so important, it seems, that designers can no longer be trusted with it, and to make it absolutely clear from the function of an object, graphic, or interior design. If the designer’s visual concerns got in the way of the design’s intended use, then this was naturally a problem. But the crucial point was still that the designed object was attractive and provided a more pleasurable and engaging experience than undesigned or less-designed versions of the same experience.

Having written off designers as mere stylists with insufﬁcient egos, whose sole aim is to impose their impractical excesses on long-suffering consumers whom they never trouble to consult, the way is clear for a new breed of intermediary to step up and take business’s hand. They might once have called themselves design consultants—the rhetoric is not so different—but today they are known as design thinkers and innovation experts. For these design-ovationists, everything is subordinate to strategy. Design is one small cog in an elaborate analytical machine intended to dazzle prospective clients into believing that they are dealing with rigorous professionals who work with precise methodologies and deﬁned, quantifiable outcomes. “The great news for designers about the rise of corporate interest in innovation is that it recognizes, more than ever before, the strategic contribution of design to product, service, information, and environmental offerings,” says Larry Keeley, co-founder of the “innovation consulting” ﬁrm Doblin. Doblin has an impressive chart detailing 10 types of innovation it addresses in the areas of ﬁnance, process, offering, and delivery. In the explanations of “business model,” “networking,” “product performance,” “customer experience,” and so on, the word “design” doesn’t occur once.

Design thinkers are masterly at weaving a dense web of plausible-sounding words around their analysis—just read their blogs—and this is where they win out against designers, who generally speak most eloquently through their work. But if we leave aside the self-serving patter aimed at building a would-be design thinker’s reputation and wooing clients, what are the in-
novationists saying? Let’s hear from Ziba, highly regarded in innovation circles, explaining its approach to experience design, in 2008, on its website: “Customers seek beautiful everyday experiences. To be moved. To grow. Laugh. Cry. Discover. Move beyond their basic needs. Surprise them—maybe throw in a bit of suspense . . . inspire, educate, involve and entertain. The right combination creates insane loyalty.” Whether Ziba clients such as Pepsi, Dell, Black & Decker, Starbucks, and Frito-Lay do any or all of this for you is a matter of taste (for me, it’s a “fraud not”). But let’s be clear that the big conclusion about “insane loyalty” is pure marketing hogwash.

If a continuous cycle of vital innovation is going on, why do the mission statements sound so trite and patronizing? And, actually, which is more patronizing: to create something you believe in because you think other people might like it too, and just put it out there? (The old, design, way.) Or to study every facet of consumers’ behavior with the intention of filling them with feelings of “insane loyalty” for your client’s products? (The new, innovation, way.) Lest there be any doubt about the ultimate goal of all this higher-grade design thinking, Fast Company magazine has the lowdown: “It’s taken years of slogging through Design = high style to bring us full circle to the simple truth about design thinking. That it is a most powerful tool and, when used effectively, can be the foundation for driving a brand or business forward.” In other words, good design is still good business. While this view of design remains as limited as it ever was—what else might good design be?—it is becoming harder and harder to keep sight of what is wrong with a culture mediated largely by commercial forces pursuing their own ends. But it comes down to this: Is an encounter with an everyday brand—a bottle of soda, a power tool, a packet of snacks—the place to go if you want to be moved, to seek education, or to grow as a person, and aren’t there better places to find those kinds of experiences?

This brings us back to design’s visual qualities. It is hardly surprising that designers try to put as much distance as possible between themselves and the accusation that they are hung up on making things look pretty. Belittling language of this kind suggests that the visual is inherently trivial, easy to do, and beneath consideration, that form is not a powerful medium of expression and carries no meaning for the viewer. Design thinkers like to talk as though we have somehow passed beyond the stage where the way things look needs to be a primary concern, and designers, browbeaten and demoralized, half seem to believe them. They have been too ready to accept the caricature of themselves as airheaded stylists who care about insignificant niceties of no concern to anyone else. At the very point when designers most need to mount a spirited defense of the visual, many seem to have lost their nerve and fallen silent.

Yet the rhetorical reduction of design to frivolous prettification reveals a willful blindness to the power of expressive form-making, if not a deep, philistine ignorance of the history of design and visual culture. The scale of the oversight is so colossal, and frankly baffling, one hardly knows where to start. Are the great cathedrals of Europe—Reims, Lincoln, Chartres—merely pretty? Are the gardens of Kyoto? Is Alvar Aalto’s Paimio armchair? Was Alexey Brodovitch’s Portfolio magazine? How about Leica cameras? The patterns on Moorish ceramic tiles? Or the Power-Book and the iPod? There is surely no need to go on.

A moment ago I used the word culture, a notoriously awkward concept. According to the critic Raymond Williams writing in Keywords, his classic lexicon, culture is used in two crucial senses. In cultural anthropology—now there’s a word the innovators love to bat around—it refers primarily to material production, while in history and cultural studies it refers primarily to signifying or symbolic systems. Combining these usages, we might conclude that culture is about things (which have a look) and meanings (conveyed by how they look). Whichever way you look at them—so long as you do actually look—these products of our culture tell us who we are. There is bound to be a relationship between impoverished ways of design thinking and impoverished visual form.

Design thinkers set great store by business targets, by driving the enterprise forward, because it is exactly what their clients want to hear and it gets them work. Seen from outside the cozy bond of service provider and client, this is a severely limited way of viewing design, and the total domination of current design discussion by this kind of commercial rhetoric is a worrying trend. Michael Bierut is one of the few designers to call out the design thinkers and question their nostrums, so I asked him whether design has a cultural value beyond its business uses and functional purposes. “The business use—the specific goal that motivated the client or sponsor to initially fund the work—often fades away, sometimes quickly,” he says. “In some ways, you might argue that aesthetic value—for an enduring design, at least—is the only lasting value, since over time functional needs can change and business moves on to the next goal.” Approaching heresy at a time when aesthetic quality is the last thing we are supposed to consider, Bierut goes so far as to modestly propose that “just making something look nicer” or “replacing something ugly with something not so ugly” is an admirable goal for designers.

That probably sounds woefully simplistic to design thinkers. Where is the system? Where are the charts and diagrams, the Capitalized Concepts, the new ways of thinking uniquely suited to market conditions now? To understand why it isn’t at all simple, to appreciate how hard it is to create something special, of lasting quality, you need to know a little about design.

The problem that designers face now is the same problem they have faced all along: how to communicate with clients who lack a basic grounding in the visual arts and don’t seem to think it matters. Businesspeople don’t need to become designers. They need to learn that there are types of awareness and understanding expressed through visual form that even a team of the finest poets would be hard-pressed to summarize as a list of handy PowerPoint bullets. Music, dance, and the visual arts operate on a different plane from words. As Dori Tunstall, design teacher and
anthropologist, says: “There is an inherent intelligence to beauty, which is about the depth and passion we feel for the world.” Design thinkers like to wax lyrical about the elegance of their strategic thinking as a form of design in its own right, as though this could ever be a substitute. They can keep it—in a hundred years, if there are museums then, no one will queue to see a strategy. Give me something tangible, something brilliant and extraordinary that illuminates our perception of what human life can be. For that, we still need designers.

I.D. was America’s premier magazine about contemporary product design and material culture from 1954 through 2009. It has been resurrected in the form of an online curated gallery of some of the latest and greatest industrial and product design work from around the world. F+W Media has partnered with Behance to reboot I.D. as a platform for exposure, discussion, and opportunity for the world’s leading designers in industrial and product design.
GETTING MUDDY IN TZUKIM

By Brianna Weintraub

After finally reaching my destination of Tzukim, Israel, it was clear I was going to be roughing it for the four weeks I decided to volunteer with a mud workshop. The welcoming committee at my first hostel warned me not to fall asleep on the bus; I would miss my stop otherwise. The cautioned, “Bus drivers don’t pay any attention to the Tzukim stop.” It wasn’t any surprise when I was dropped off on the side of the highway in the middle of nowhere. In a matter of minutes however, I was quickly rescued by my host family who kindly drove me two miles up a dune to our humble living abode; mud huts.

Located between the Zofar Cliffs of Israel and the mountains of Jordan, a family living in Tzukim brings volunteers in from around the world to learn about constructing a hut of local materials and the practice of sustainable living. The small settlement is host to an ecological village that uses environmentally friendly materials to construct houses. Waste and any output from the location are recycled through compost, on-site livestock, and wastewater recycling.

Volunteers that had arrived a month or two before me, had begun constructing a hut and had completed erecting the frame, insulation, and applying the first “primer” mud layer. To create the foundation, a mold created by horizontal 2”x4’s is assembled, and filled with concrete. Twenty foot tall 2”x4’s were then placed firmly in the ground to create a structural frame, door frame, and window sills. Straw bales are then stacked using the running bond pattern and holes within the straw are filled with empty water bottles. Once the bales are in place, two volunteers begin applying a mud mixture to both sides of the walls. Keeping the weight from the mud material balanced on both sides of the wall prevents the straw bales from shifting out of place and creating a lean. The first layer of mud acts as a primer for the second layer to attach to. With a small amount of force, the mixture consisting of local earth, water, and broken straw is applied to the bales. Tzukim is located in the Negev desert, and contains soil with a good clay-sand ratio, ideal for construction.

To ensure that the material is at the right consistency, a cement mixer is used. The first layer of mud often leaves the wall with concave and convex areas that are to be straightened out with a second layer of mud. Using force once more, the mud is applied to the first layer, and smoothed out to be on an even plane with a convex area. The mud material is continually placed on the wall to be level with the preceding mud applied. The material for the third layer consists of clay sifted from the local earth, and water. Once the second layer is dry, this thin clay material is applied to now straight walls with a finishing trowel. It is important to keep the material as evenly applied to prevent water from collecting in the wall. Once the final layer has dried, small blemishes in the mud are sanded out to create a fine finish.

Finally a hard wax coating is applied to the outside of the hut to protect it from the occasional rain storm that occurs. The roof of the mud hut is initially constructed out of thick plywood and protected by a waterproofing membrane. Holes in the roof are cut to install appropriate ventilation. Brick walls constructed out of the mud material were used to create small cabinets, as well as divide the bathroom from the bedroom. The bricks were also constructed out of the same mud material and compacted into metal grids. Each hut had the bonus of running water for a shower and sink, as well as a composting toilet.

This short description of mud hut construction is one of many ways people around the world build with mud. These structures have been an ecologically sound way of producing a home in a variety of different ecosystems, for thousands of years; the earliest located in the Netherlands. Many nomadic cultures have used mud construction for protection from the elements and today, mud construction is still being used for housing as well as shade structures, wind barriers, art installations, garden elements, and furniture.

The time I spent in Israel learning about this ancient way of building, was nothing but inspiring. It became very clear to me how local materials, right under your feet, can be used in a variety of projects and with the right ratios, manipulated to create stunning and practical establishments. A space is given a naturalistic feel when using local materials. Instead of building into the ground and moving the earth to a different location, why not construct walls? Bring the local material to eye level and add to the architecture culturally.

Brianna Weintraub is a Landscape Architecture student at Colorado State University. She currently is the president of the student chapter of ASLA.

STUDENT CORNER
Green Industries Data Toolbox: A Comprehensive Guide to Useful Information


The manual was compiled by landscape architecture practitioners in Colorado, Donald H. Godi, FASLA, RCA #444, and Zachary S. Johnson, RLA, CLP, CLT, who also teaches at Colorado State University. They say the “toolbox” name is intentional. “When you need a small Phillips screwdriver, you want to know it’s in your toolbox. You don’t need it everyday, but when you do, that’s where you go,” says Godi. “It’s the same for data. You may not have to convert acres to square feet very often, but when you do, it’s great to have the resource at your fingertips.” This is also why the manual is sized as an 8.5” x 5.5” spiral bound book - it fits on a desk, in a glove box or in a backpack. It also has divider tabs for quickly referencing the data that appears in 11 major categories and an appendix.

Landscape architects and others need bits of obscure information that are exceedingly critical when they need them—and that is especially the case with students just starting up the learning curve. Johnson and Godi have both found that beginning design students won’t necessarily know, for example, that there’s a standard for a turning radius when designing a circle driveway in front of a home. That might be a quick Google search—and maybe not. There’s also a valuable process when thumbing through a book, they say. On the way to getting to that turning radius, you will also run past other categories of information you never knew existed. You won’t get that quick flash of exposure with Google. But even a fast brush against categories of knowledge they will need someday, is good for students.

Godi says the manual came out of many years in practice and the realization that there was no comprehensive book of data that could be accessed almost daily. He knew that over years of practice, most landscape architects steadily expand their personal file of useful information. What in past years may have been a file with bits of paper, details and notes, now is contained largely within the world-wide web. Still, that information may not always be readily at hand, if you’re on a job site, for instance, or easily searched when you’re at your computer.

In the process of developing the manual, the production manager responsible for research and data gathering was Caitlin Admire, then a student in the Landscape Architecture program at Kansas State University. She spent eight months as a paid intern and valuable member of the production team. Over 90% of her

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The categories of knowledge as part of the data manual and example excerpts are as follows:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Calculations and conversions (p. 11)</td>
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<td>convert from</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Site Inventory and Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>“The general tactics include reducing easily flammable fuels, creating fire barriers and implementing plantings in a safe manner” (p. 64)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Soils</td>
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<tr>
<td>“On expansive soils, the main landscape goal is to minimize fluctuations, in soil water content.” (p.85)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Site Planning and Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Ramps must have a landing every 30” of rise and at the top and bottom of the ramp.” (p. 111)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Planting and Nursery</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Regional nurseriesmen have learned through experience what variables limit their production and what varieties limit their profit.” (p. 121)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Arboriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>“To become a hazard tree, two factors are required:</td>
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<td>- The tree, or portion of the tree, is highly subject to failure…</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The tree will strike a person as a moving or stationary target, or it will fall on structures or other damageable property.” (p. 180)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>“The legs of a right triangle will be in a ratio of 3:4:5, as long as the 5 ratio is the hypotenuse, or leg opposite the right angle, which is always the longest.” (p. 232)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Irrigation and Hydrology</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Always provide a minimum 100% head to head coverage, 110% coverage for sports fields.” (p. 252)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Electrical Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>“LEDs are light emitting diodes. They convey electrical energy into visible light from solid-state semi conductors.” (p. 306)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Lumber, Fencing and Decking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Cupping: The distortion of wood decking or fence cap boards of flat grain when installed “dome” side down. See grain.” (p. 314)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Masonry and Concrete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Strength gain in colder temperatures slows down. 40° F concrete will be at least 35% of its design strength in seven days as compared to 75% for 73° F concrete.” (p. 353)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

PRODUCT NEWS
office time was devoted to the manual. She was one of few students in her class to have an internship when most landscape architecture offices were in a state of staff reduction.

Almost as required in design or construction projects, the manual ‘evolved’ into its present format and content in the preliminary stages and throughout production. Aspects of the ‘design’ of the manual include:

• The introduction to GreenCo Foundation into the process included their willingness to the seller and distributor of the manual. For this service they receive much needed revenue and the editors and staff were removed from the sales and distribution function.

• Near the end of draft production, the decision was made to add one final section considered appropriate to Godi’s experience. That section was Arboriculture and will serve as an introduction to some basic arboricultural consulting. Most readers will get their first introduction to the world of arboriculture from this section.

• The process for developing the manual was segmented very similarly to a design project. In this case, the project was divided into three segments:
  - Research/data collection
  - Production/printing
  - Promotion/sales

• Of all the segments, promotion and sales may become the most difficult because of the niche of manual content and resultant limited reader pool. The expansion of the manual to twelve sections was partly an attempt to widen the reader pool with potential increase in sales.

• Because the available information is always expanding and yearly data was used in some sections, a cut-off date was established that determined the time at which research stopped and final production began. It was a good decision that allowed for printing early 2011.

Whatever the final outcome of the Data Manual as a profitable venture, revenue source for the GreenCO Foundation, highly sought after textbook or other use, its production was a learning experience and a labor of love. As sales increase there will be additional opportunities for advertisers and subsequent printings. Long term goals are to update the manual to a second edition, sometime after a three-year requirement with advertisers and to adapt it to six or eight regional locations throughout the United States.

About the Authors
Donald H. Godi, a Fellow of ASLA, has recently emphasized arboriculture and expert witness services as principal of Donald H. Godi & Associates, Inc. in Lakewood. Zach Johnson is a professor at Colorado State University in the Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture and principal of Green Ink Designs, L.L.C. Both are licensed landscape architects and were able to rely upon years of hands-on practical experience in the creation of the twelve sections of the manual.
ASSOCIATION HAPPENINGS

16th Annual ASLA Colorado Golf Classic

Once again the golf gods were happy giving us a beautiful day to play at the 16th Annual Golf Classic at Raccoon Creek Golf Course. 88 Players enjoyed a round with their fellow Landscape Architects and Landscape Industry Associates. A wonderful Bar-B-Q lunch was provided and a lot of great prizes were handed out. Congratulations to team Phil Sage, Mark Reisig, Shawn Olsen, and Jason Bender for winning this year and getting the traveling trophy for next year. A special thanks to Jim Pokorny at GoodLand Construction and Vivian Kovacs at Landscape Forms for putting on a fantastic event!

New ALSA Colorado Members

Welcome New Members
Fred E. Casey, ASLA – Arapahoe Sign Acts Inc
Darren Duroux, Associate ASLA – Colorado State University
John C. Lanterman, ASLA – Studio Urbanista
Brea E. Pafford, ASLA – McCool Development Solutions
Emily Patterson, ASLA – Belt Collins West
James Atchison, Associate ASLA – Davis Partnership
Dave Foster, ASLA – Eco+Logic Landscape Design
Thomas C. Roberts, ASLA – Parsons Brinckerhoff
Amy Von Thun, Associate ASLA – Denver Square Design
Steve Breitzka, ASLA – RNL Design Corporation
William S. Campie, ASLA – DTJ Design
Ann Christensen, ASLA – DHM Design
Steven Cronin, ASLA – City of Aspen
Ryan Holdorf, ASLA – DHM Design
Scott Jordan, ASLA – Civitas
Joe W. Lunne, Affiliate ASLA – City of Gillette
Kenneth J. Puncerelli, ASLA – Land Architects International
Anthony M. Rugg, ASLA – Landmark Landscaping of South/Central Florida
Andrea Rutherford, Associate ASLA
Robert H. Seashore, ASLA
Deryn Wagner, Associate ASLA – National Park Service
Hello—I'm a Landscape Architect!
By Robin Gyorgyfalvy

When you tell someone you're a landscape architect, have you noticed what a great response you get? It's usually a huge smile with words like "I wish I were one" or "that is the field I wish I had gone into." The creative and impassioned spirit of landscape architecture is alive and well. We have an incredible story to tell. And for the first time ever, we are telling it to the rest of the world together.

The Understory of 08.17.11 was the launching of events that initiated a two-year campaign to create public awareness for landscape architecture. Landscape architects took to the streets all over the country and even across the globe. They placed themselves in outdoor gathering places and talked to people in their communities. Landscape architects everywhere told the public how they designed their environment and showcased many public spaces that were designed to look better, solve environmental or social issues, and restore sites back to natural healthy conditions.

As a sampling of these events, Minnesota landscape architects showed the public how to solve water quality problems by designing floating islands with recycled materials to restore unhealthy lakes. North Dakota landscape architects presented the public with examples of how to improve the environment by creating active and healthy public spaces. New York landscape architects demonstrated how quality of life has improved for urban dwellers both in the past and present by showcasing places like Central Park and High Line.

At Mississippi State University, landscape architecture students generated excitement and interest with outreach to other students. Colorado State University students created an art installation to demonstrate how landscape architects transform places into functional and beautiful environments that engage people. Students at University of Nevada at Las Vegas chalked the talk and UCLA got all those cars to honk their love for landscape architects.

Almost all of the landscape architects in Juneau, Alaska gathered at a waterfront park being redesigned and while receiving lots of press, they successfully engaged the public and their event morphed into a hobnobbing political event. Kentucky had three great events and began to get the word out about landscape architects in their state. More than 60 Illinois landscape architects gathered in three different locations to talk to the public about the parks they designed and in doing so, they strengthened their own volunteer network, re-energized their chapter, and generated plenty of momentum to support the next sequence of public awareness events.

The next step is a public awareness webinar this month where all of the public awareness advocates will evaluate how everything went and brainstorm even better ways and create better tools to help landscape architects get the word out. One of the strategies throughout the campaign is to harness the great energy and creative ideas already being generated by guess who...landscape architects! Stay tuned and be ready for the next public awareness event opportunity.

In the meantime, you can now use the new interactive website at www.asla.org/design to help you do a great job of explaining your profession to the public. Designed as part of the public awareness campaign, the website is exciting because it describes how to become a landscape architect, how to collaborate with others, and how to solve problems in the environment. The site also features a video of a landscape architect taking the steps involved in a design process. Be sure to check the latest August 30, 2011 LAND E-NEWS from ASLA at asla.org for more of the stories told on the day of The Understory 08.17.11.

Creating awareness for landscape architecture is something each of us can do simply by saying "I'm a landscape architect and I design your environment." The power of connecting and collaborating is what we landscape architects do best and what we accomplished in one day was inspirational.

Thank you to all who joined in and to those who plan to next time!
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