

Editor's Introduction

To mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of *Landscape Journal*, we are pleased and proud to present "Race, Space, and the Destabilization of Practice," a theme issue guest-edited by Dianne Harris (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign). For most of its twenty-five-year history, *Landscape Journal* has disseminated an eclectic mix of articles showcasing the shifting currents and trends in landscape architectural research, education, and practice. It is therefore remarkable that so very few papers have analyzed the links between environmental design and social justice; in particular, the pressing issues of race and landscape seem to have been overlooked altogether. This is an intellectual and ethical lacuna that hobbles us in many ways. A range of explanations might be marshaled to account—from the methodological strictures of academic writing, to doubts about the centrality of the topic to the practice of landscape architects. For the most part, these are red herrings. To begin to rectify this error of omission, therefore, we inaugurate our twenty-fifth anniversary year with this double issue on the impact of race on spatial practices in landscape architecture, urbanism, and planning.

This is but one of several projects undertaken to celebrate an auspicious milestone. The most recently completed (and perhaps most obvious) initiative is a renovation of our basic page layout. Although the *Journal's* cover design and size remain familiar, the body of the issue you are now reading culminates eighteen months of planning and graphic design refinements commissioned by the editors, approved by CELA, and managed by the University of Wisconsin Press. It features a more readable and efficient two-column format, along with keywords (for improved indexing and searchability), slightly larger text, a new heading structure, and increased flexibility for the layout of images, tables, and captions. We think you will be pleased with the improved clarity of both text and images, and hope this design will stand the tests of time, flexibility, and technical adaptability, at least as well as the original layout.

It certainly must also be acknowledged that many individuals and organizations have been responsible for the vitality and continued success of *Landscape Journal*, including the past editors, their staff, advisory board members, peer reviewers, staff of the Journals Division of the University of Wisconsin Press, and of course visionary CELA leaders. We therefore invite your participation in a retrospective event to recognize the 25th anniversary of *Landscape Journal* at the upcoming CELA annual meeting (Penn State University, August 2007).

Finally, and despite the fact that we failed to include his biographical note on his last review, "Autodesk Maya Complete 7.0," *LJ* 25:2 (Fall 2006), 266–268, Madis Pihlak has very kindly agreed to serve as the new sub-editor for technology and software reviews at *Landscape Journal*. Although there are no reviews as we go to press for this issue, Pihlak is open and ready for business. Please consult the reviews section for additional information.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Development of this theme issue has been underway for more than two years. Shortly after she coordinated the symposium, "Constructing Race: The Built Environment, Minoritization, and Racism in the United States" (March 2004), at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Dianne Harris contacted us about her idea for a theme issue. We have been enthusiastic supporters of the project ever since. The preparation of this issue followed a proven collaborative model that we have developed and are currently pursuing with other theme editors. Harris served as the intellectual leader and recruiter for the theme authors/articles, while the editorial team at *Landscape Journal* managed the peer reviews, editorial decisions, and production processes per our regular standards. It has been a marathon to get this double issue (eleven articles) into print, with a brand-new page template complicating matters even further, but we are proud to present this issue as a testa-

ment to the values of open-mindedness, patience, trust, and collaboration in academic publications.

Race & the Profession of Landscape Architecture.

As Harris clearly points out in her introductory remarks, the content of this issue may seem to stretch the mandate of *Landscape Journal* into new territory. Many of these articles have been contributed by scholars working at the margins of the field of landscape architecture. No doubt some readers will fail to appreciate the polemical intensity of one or two articles; others may feel downright offended. A few may wonder “Is all this really necessary? I don’t face or create these problems in my own work, so this issue doesn’t affect me.” There are readers, however, for whom this issue may crack open hidden or forgotten doors; these articles may help aerate the stuffy or defensive mental confines of closeted modes of thinking and practice. Notwithstanding the expected range of emotional or intellectual reception of this issue, the demographic evidence speaks eloquently: landscape architecture is an overwhelmingly white profession.

This is not to repudiate landscape architects who are, by and large, an earnest and well-intentioned group. But what is significant is the number of landscape architects who feel frustrated by their inability to make a difference, to effect the powerful changes and positive impacts they envision on behalf of constituencies and social structures they don’t understand very well. Because landscape architects have not yet studied the impact of race on landscape practices, our profession is frequently presented with problems not only beyond our intellectual and social ability to comprehend, but also beyond our personal and political courage to confront. We lament the fact that more minorities do not enter the field, but we seem not to understand why. Many of us wish to recruit more underrepresented groups to join our schools and practices, but we don’t know where to begin. Perhaps it is simpler than it seems: let’s study the problem where it starts.

Then perhaps we might begin to apply some of the object lessons of field ecology to the social ecology of our cities and towns—diversity is often more healthy and stable than a monoculture; incremental environmental impacts may damage a population or a community; and, for good and for ill, everything (and everyone) is connected to everything else.

Additional Case Studies. The nine articles in the theme group are introduced in Harris’s introductory essay “Race, Space, and the Destabilization of Practice” (1–12). These theme articles are then augmented by two other case studies submitted independently to *Landscape Journal*—actually, both were submitted before the idea of a theme issue on race was even a gleam in our editorial eye. We are doubly pleased therefore to place these two articles in the context of the larger collection, because they help ground the theoretical exploration of race and spatial practices within concerns and techniques of the profession of landscape architecture, specifically, land use and preservation planning. In turn, the wider-ranging papers on race and space enrich the two case studies.

In “The Image of the Inner Bluegrass,” Krista Schneider (one of that elusive band of landscape architects we like to call “scholarly practitioners”) has detailed an interesting landscape case study within the cultural geography of small rural communities of color in Kentucky. In the Inner Bluegrass region today, where the social histories of labor and race relations have long been occluded by the popular cultural imagination of the thoroughbred horse breeding industry, many of these small extant communities are threatened with suburban creep, cultural absorption, and erasure. Following this, Elizabeth Brabec (Utah State University) and Sharon Richardson (private consultant, formerly with the Low Country Land Trust, Charleston, SC) are given the last word in this issue. Their professional/academic collaboration on the Beaufort County Comprehensive Plan (1997) resulted in “A Clash of Cultures: The Landscape of the Sea Island Gullah.” This article presents a

complex case of a fragile social ecology threatened by development pressures in the American coastal south, on Sea Island, South Carolina.

Taken together, the articles in this theme issue present many examples of the types of cultural landscapes, rural and urban, historic and contemporary, Chicano, Latino, African American, Asian American, and white, that landscape scholars and designers could study, should understand, and perhaps would design and

protect differently, if they were encouraged to. Step one, therefore, is to initiate a serious study of the impacts of race—especially racial and racist attitudes—on our practices in landscape planning, design, and education. While this collection provides an excellent primer on the topic, we hope these reports will encourage others to make the study of social and environmental equity, race, and landscape a priority for future research and scholarship. We have much still to learn.

MED