
Editors' Introduction

To whom it may concern; I was disappointed in the quality of writing (or perhaps lack of hard editing) in the latest issue of *Landscape Journal*. It is filled with platitudes and obtuse, sometimes incomprehensible and meaningless, pronouncements. Such puffery damages our profession by obscuring important concepts and practices.

My editor at Random House, the distinguished Jason Epstein . . . made it painfully clear from my first meeting with him that he would not tolerate writing that includes so-called "professional" jargon. He would only accept clear and direct writing that all intelligent readers could easily understand.

Why can't more landscape architects express ideas clearly, concisely, and without the latest buzz words and jargon? Perhaps *Landscape Journal* needs a few tough editors from the literary world—including some who are removed from academia and our profession—to help make its important articles more legible and useful for practice and research.

Sincerely,

James Anthony van Sweden,
FASLA, President—Oehme,
van Sweden & Associates, Inc.

Constructive Criticism

The editors of *Landscape Journal* thank James van Sweden for his letter (8 June, 2005) regarding the Spring 2005 issue (24:1). Though he is probably not alone in his assessment of parts of that issue, we are rarely approached with such generous directness. And although we were sorry to learn van Sweden was disappointed with the quality of writing (and our editing) in the spring issue, we did enjoy hearing his thoughts on what might constitute "more legible" and useful articles for practice and research. Yes, perhaps! And if only!

In this issue of *Landscape Journal*, we want to press the point that by demanding more and better writing, critical readers like James van Sweden are essential to the development and maintenance of our discipline. In principle, our editorial team here agrees with van Sweden's comments about writing, and in every issue we debate certain articles at great length. "Puffery" in an article is indeed a problem, and we tend to regard sophistry as an obfuscating tactic for evading criticism. However we are less offended by a certain level of jargon because it is often unavoidable in specialized professional communications. *Landscape Journal* is not *Newsweek* (nor is the latter jargon-free). Language, especially professional language, is alive. An important part of what a discipline does is to build a shared language, however messy and annoying that process may be. Many useful terms are compromised: at times, "sense of place," "community," and "ecological design" may become jargon, equally as questionable as "expanded field" and "phenomenological picturesque." Though each term has a valuable place in academic discussions, none of them is completely safe from abuse. The main difference is that the former terms have entered the mainstream language of *Newsweek*, and the latter have not—not yet anyway.

Editorial Agenda

Landscape Journal purports to be an open discursive community. While we try to hold prospective authors to the highest standards of evidence, argument, and communication, we also feel we have a responsibility to be inclusive, generous, and fair to their positions, whether or not we personally like their style of writing, or the design of their research. We want to make room for the best scholarship that landscape architects and our colleagues are producing—

in *all* of its glorious variety of framing constructs and languages. Individually, we may each be biased in our belief that one approach or another may lead to higher quality articles, but as an editorial team we always try to identify the best work that each approach, or author, has to offer.

The content of our Spring issue (24:1) satisfied several dimensions of our editorial agenda: to publish emerging concepts/techniques that stimulate design practice as well as education; to invite work from landscape scholars in related fields; to extend and develop specific themes initiated by previous contributors/editors; to reach out to a more diverse subscriber base; to experiment (a very little) with our tedious format. While some of these articles were a bit chewy, we anticipate that publishing more articles about new approaches to site design and representation will gratify and attract non-academic practitioners as well as educators. It might stimulate greater diversity of content in future issues. It's a gamble we are certainly willing to take.

As editors we rely heavily on input from peer reviewers for critique and guidance on what is suitably rigorous, original, and useful for the *Journal* to publish. Peer reviews are not always conclusive or consistent, however, if an article receives generally favorable peer reviews, we feel it is our responsibility to help an author take it to the highest level that s/he can, within normal and reasonable demands and constraints. Obviously, the selection of an excellent team of peer reviewers is crucial to the success of this agenda: ideally, our teams comprise one CELA member, one editorial board member, and one 'outside reader' expert in a supporting/related area of practice or research method. To the point: if any of you are, or have been unhappy with the quality of the papers published under our watch, we warmly

invite you to contact us to serve as a peer reviewer for articles in your area of expertise, and strongly urge you to communicate your viewpoints directly to potential contributors.

Now, for those of you who may be wondering: yes, we actually *do* intervene in the writing, quite pointedly at times (ask anyone who has gotten published recently), though not always as assertively as either we (or our readers) might like. There are certainly authorial “voices” that make each of us uncomfortable. But, being good liberals (and we say that without a *trace* of irony), if and when we err it is usually on the side of editorial inclusion, not exclusion. Yes, we often struggle to find a balance between content, language, and style. We also need to address a range of readers with widely disparate needs, interests, attention spans, and tastes. While admirable, the editorial policy of Random House serves a different purpose, and audience, than ours. At *Landscape Journal* we ask: is this content and level of writing accessible, original, and useful to a graduate student (or scholarly practitioner) doing research on advanced topics in landscape architecture? Does this paper argue, illustrate, or develop an idea of lasting and cumulative value that builds the discipline (as overlapping but distinct from the profession) of landscape architecture? If answers to both questions are yes, we are likely to try to work with the author and see what we can do to help them succeed.

About This Issue

Size does matter, so we are happy to note that the girth of our last few issues has been steadily increasing. For Spring 2006, we present a robust issue of eight articles contributed by an impressive array of authors. We’d also like to think that, for the most part, they are well-written.

Featured Paper. “Fragments of a Poetic of Gardens,” is a featured paper by Michel Conan (Director of Garden and Landscape Studies at Dumbarton Oaks). Conan’s article abstracts and interweaves many points discussed more fully in his recent French-language book *Essais de*

Poétique des Jardins (2004). As a synthetic reflection on the intersubjectivity of landscape design/intention, the experience/reception of gardens, and broader processes of social and cultural change, this article continues to develop certain themes touched upon in our Spring 2005 issue (*Landscape Journal* 24:1). It will no doubt be valuable reading for those engaged in teaching design, as well as history, theory, and criticism. Beyond the list of international references cited, this article also offers a selected bibliography of Dumbarton Oaks’ publications from the past 15 years with which *Journal* readers might wish to become familiar.

Peer-Reviewed Papers. “Framed Again: the Picturesque Aesthetics of Contemporary Landscapes” by Susan Herrington (University of British Columbia), is the first of seven peer-reviewed articles in this issue. Despite their formal and ideological differences from eighteenth-century designs, Herrington argues that many celebrated works of contemporary landscape architecture “still tread upon the familiar territory of the Picturesque.” Analyzing selected works including Barrier Park, London and Emscher Park, Duisburg Nord, and print works such as *Taking Measures Across the American Landscape* (1996) and *Mississippi Floods* (2001), Herrington identifies those residual, critical dimensions related to the experience of the sublime, and the viewing pleasures that persist when artists and designers render dramatic visual patterns in non-traditional types of landscape.

Tangentially linked to Herrington’s article by content—but not by method—Mary Myers (Temple University) presents “The Power of the Picturesque: Motorist’s Perceptions of the Blue Ridge Parkway.” This is the second part of Myers’ major study on the aesthetic dimensions of the design of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Based on her analysis of the writings of Hogarth and Burke, “The Line of Grace” (*LJ* 23:2, Fall 2004, 121–140) established a theoretical foundation for understanding the BRP as an expression of its designers’ training in picturesque principles.

The current article reports the results of an empirical survey conducted to measure public experience/reception of the Parkway. Not surprisingly, public perception seems to maintain the principles of visual and sensual pleasure claimed by the Picturesque.

In an excellent interdisciplinary article dealing with visual perception and agricultural practices, Shelley Egoz, Jacky Bowring, and Harvey Perkins (Lincoln University), describe changes in the New Zealand landscape brought about by “exponential” growth in organic farming over the past decade or so. “Making a ‘Mess’ in the Countryside: Organic Farming and Threats to Sense of Place,” explores how “messy-looking” landscapes may confront and possibly threaten communities that “traditionally” value order and legible patterns in their land management practices. Ironies abound in the tension created when alternative, sustainable practices meet aesthetic and social conservatism.

An article by Lake Douglas (New Orleans and Louisiana State University), “‘To Improve the Soil and Mind’: Content and Context of Nineteenth-Century Agricultural Literature,” is a well-documented study of how agricultural ‘traditions’ may be created in the first place. The role of popular, regional agricultural periodicals becomes especially important in this carefully-documented history of the emergence of agricultural institutions in nineteenth-century America. The author argues that the elevation of horticultural and agricultural discourse was closely accompanied, possibly even generated, by the rise of print media (Figure 1). The most important of these publications helped to shape environmental heritage, particularly in the northeast, southeast, and midwestern regions of the United States, and therefore serve as a useful resource for improved historical scholarship in those places.

Another historical study addresses the concept of regionalism in a different way. In “Patrick Geddes and the Edinburgh Zoological Garden: Expressing Universal Process through Local Place,” Catharine

F. D. GAY,
SEEDSMAN, FLORIST, & C.

139 St. Charles Street,
 (LAFAYETTE SQUARE.)

NEW ORLEANS.



In presenting the following general list of articles, F. D. GAY would merely remark, that all are of the BEST QUALITY to be procured, and are sold at prices as low as such can be honestly offered.

DETAILED CATALOGUES sent gratis to applicants who prepay their postage.

LANDRETH'S GARDEN SEEDS,

AT PHILADELPHIA PRICES,

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL,

PUT UP UNDER LANDRETH'S OWN LABELS.

Customers preferring these seeds can be supplied with them perfectly pure.

EXOTIC & IMPORTED SEEDS,

THE USUAL GENERAL ASSORTMENT,

Grown expressly for

F. D. GAY,

And which are WARRANTED FRESH AND GENUINE, also on hand.

Customers forwarding orders will please specify which they prefer.

The above seeds are put up for EVERY MEASURE, in their own selection, by the dozen, hundred, or thousand paper; or in bulk, by the pound, bushel, or barrel.

At the Lowest Wholesale Prices.

Ward-Thompson (Heriot-Watt University and Edinburgh College of Art) draws on archival writings and drawings by the eminent planner and philosopher, to tell a compelling story. First, we are convinced that Geddes' concept of the 'Valley Section'—essentially an interactive transect linking the inner city with its supporting region—formed the narrative logic of the layout of the Zoo. Ward-Thompson then argues that the Zoo project helped Geddes develop a model for the regional landscape, the place of humanity within it, and the evolution of the human mind through natural education.

A statistical study entitled "Soil Volume and Tree Condition in Walt Disney Parking Lots," co-authored by environmental consultants Donald Kent, Scott Shultz, Tom Wyatt and Deborah Halcrow, offers an excellent example of research projects being conducted by practitioners working outside the university setting. The authors analyze growth and survival rates for trees planted in parking lots in Florida—practical field problems—and show how prevailing wisdom about planting guidelines may be "imperfectly applicable." They conclude that when planting guidelines are recommended and/or applied in the field, they should be presented as cost/benefit probabilities to assist a client in determining initial capital investment (soil area, depth, planting configurations, etc.), rather than offering guarantees of success.

Last but not least, Christian A. Tschumi (ETH, Zurich) offers a condensed rendering of his recent book on the modernist Japanese garden designer Mirei Shigemori (2005). His article "Between Tradition and Modernity: The *Karesansui* Gardens of Mirei Shigemori" is notable for its clarity, and for the way it helps to fill certain gaps in the literature on the Japanese garden in the twentieth century. Shigemori is interesting as a transitional figure, trained as an artist who turned to landscape design; like Burle-Marx and Noguchi, he tried to reconcile his deep respect for heritage with his desire to revitalize modern life and cultural identity, especially after World War II. For its many virtues, we anticipate that this article will be immediately and broadly cited in landscape history courses.

We have enjoyed working with all the authors included in this issue, and are pleased to present these articles to you now. Write to us and tell us what you think.

Finally, we want to take this opportunity to thank Stephen Kearney for two years of exemplary service as our Assistant Editor. Stephen has graduated and moved into the professional ranks of landscape architects. We wish him only the best. We are pleased to welcome Marcy Denker to our editorial team as the new Assistant Editor.

MED & JFP

Figure 1. F. D. Gay's full-page advertisement from *Affleck's Southern Rural Almanac*, 1854, page 83. Gay, a leading horticultural supplier and a colleague of Affleck's, was a regular advertiser in the *Almanac* and local newspapers. The Historic New Orleans Collection. From Lake Douglas (New Orleans and Louisiana State University).