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Revisiting Philosophy and Education in Landscape Architecture

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I completed a PhD in 1997 titled 'Philosophy and Design in Landscape Architecture'. My thesis was divided into two significant parts. The first dealt with approaches to and the content of education in Landscape Architecture, emphasizing the role which could be played by a more robust input of philosophy. The second part demonstrated one way in which philosophy could be used to interpret landscape students' work and the work of landscape practitioners. Nine years have passed in which time I have been teaching in a program of Landscape Architecture at a Canadian university in an interdisciplinary Faculty of Architecture. In this paper I propose to reflect upon the Conclusions to my doctorate work that were presented as a list of twelve salient points, reproduced below, to discuss the state of research in Landscape Architecture and the implications to the discipline and to education. I will first define landscape architecture and provide a context for the ensuing reflection.

I once believed that landscape architecture had much to offer (and learn) through critical inquiry and subsequent collaboration with others to help increase awareness of values on personal, societal and global levels. I believe a crisis in meaning exists at the core of landscape architecture, though many educators and practitioners do not agree. The unrelenting question from within and outside of the discipline - what is landscape architecture - is an indication of the extensive nature of this crisis. How can the discipline answer other fundamental questions regarding its role toward society if there is debate with regard to what landscape architecture does, or if it should even exist? I thought that a re-evaluation of landscape architecture was necessary from within the discipline to clarify to ourselves and to others how the profession is central to discussions concerning environmental and cultural welfare. However, I now ask where is the leadership in landscape architecture? And are we remaining true to ourselves as designers, if we have become complacent with that which exists?

Landscape architecture is difficult to define. A lack of consensus within the profession and within the international population on a definition of the discipline has caused it to embody different things in different places. Here, landscape architecture "shapes environments that sustain human life and enrich the human



experience” (Riley, 1992)ⁱ. Varied meanings and values from distinct cultures often result in quite different emphases in the discipline. However, I believe that Riley's premise remains valid.

A fundamental question in landscape architecture, and I am quite sure in other design disciplines, is whether practice is just the execution of a series of projects of a different and unrelated nature or whether there are philosophical, cultural, aesthetic and ethical threads which tie them together. I believe that landscape architecture is an act of mediation between culture and nature. “Landscape architecture in the sense of ‘the architecture of landscape’ therefore seems an almost impossible concept. Landscapes are not normally based on overall design concepts, but are the outcome of an interaction between natural factors – soils and climate, for instance – and the decisions, activities and interventions of a great many people.”ⁱⁱ As western society becomes less sensitive to 'who we are' and 'where we are', the sense of belonging to a place that is home, city, region, country, and culture is being eroded. Environmental warming, global communication and travel have radically altered public and personal perceptions of space. Cognizance of attitudes toward the land is central to the development of an understanding of the creative arrangement of spaces and objects that serve society by 'sustaining life and enriching human experience.' How are these attitudes and values being understood, taught and interpreted in our world of collapsed time and space?

Landscape architecture developed as a *profession* at the turn of the nineteenth century in an attempt to respond to issues facing society and the environment. The industrial revolution had brought about changes to society that created many problems in urban and rural, and in social and physical environments. The theoretical basis of the profession followed a rational approach similar to architecture as the first educational program of landscape architecture developed in a school of architecture at Harvard University. The changes in attitudes toward epistemology throughout the past century have been extensive. There has, however, been very little change in the theoretical approach to landscape architecture and to the education of landscape architects. The past decades have seen a rise in the number of landscape architects who are expressing dissatisfaction with the poverty and inadequacy of discourse in this profession (Schenker, 1994; Treib, 1993; Walker & Simo, 1994; Hunt, 2000; Corner, 2002). There seems to be a difficulty in moving past the desire for discourse toward new perspectives that may satisfy unexamined or unexplained aspects of the discipline. Recurring themes can be identified that demand resolution both conceptually and physically. While physical questions are studied and resolved through technical and ecological investigations, the 'conceptual or intellectual questions are problematized in the manner of philosophy' (Nesbitt, 1996, 16). The practice of landscape architecture is both an extremely simple yet enormously complex endeavour. The discipline is frequently thought to be about creating spaces that give people pleasure (Treib, 1995). However, the state of many urban and rural environments can lead one to ask what level of sustenance *sustains* life, and the 'sameness' of many places does not give confidence that human life is being enriched (Kohte, 2005). “The present is always invisible because it’s environmental. No environment is perceptible, simply because it saturates the whole field of attention.”ⁱⁱⁱ The seemingly simple act of designing a space on and in the land which gives people pleasure can become extremely complicated when all of the issues related to our cultural constructs and ecological systems are considered. The issues that led people to believe landscape architecture as a profession was relevant and important have not gone away. They have increased and intensified.



There have been many changes to landscape architecture and to all design education in the past decade. Computer technology including the internet, GIS, CAD, desktop publishing and mapping programs have radically altered how landscape architecture is taught. Some may argue that perhaps because of these massive changes, philosophical discussions about the discipline and education specifically are not important. I believe however that these discussions are significantly more important because of the recent changes to curriculum. The conclusions to my doctorate work which are embedded within this document^{iv} reflect the state of education on the verge of this massive technological change. I now think that another conclusion should be added. Landscape architects need to discuss and debate their practice with other design disciplines. The insularity of a relatively small profession often stifles differing ideas. I believe that landscape architecture has much to add to discussions on the state of design, design research, and most importantly global environmental issues.

The conclusions to my doctorate work are listed as discussion points – as they were in my final document. I include them here as a way to initiate a conversation with others.

1.

Landscape is process not object. Students and practitioners are only ever intervening in a process; creating a new point in a process rather than a fixed end stage. Indeed, that intervention can be a quite remote activity; particularly in effecting change in agricultural or forestry landscapes. Too often students are tempted to go to pattern books and regard landscape architecture as product. True, landscape architecture involves the giving of form - but not finite form. The generation of designs by the use of pattern books reduces landscape architects into consumers of other people's ideas rather than the creators of new ideas specifically developed for the particular place and time where they are working.

While this may seem abundantly clear to many, it is surprising that there are still those who believe that everything we do as landscape designers is about the object. Some may view this as simply a semantic difficulty but it is exceedingly important when teaching students that they understand this point. The use of precedents in design is extremely important yet many students and dare I say, some professors and practitioners often use precedents as *object* patterns. Naylor and Ball (2005) argue that “what we do not need and should not accept is replacement by formally, materially or conceptually inferior versions of the same thing. This inferior form of replenishment is, however, a significant phenomenon in the contemporary furniture world. Neo-Modern ‘repro’ is everywhere ... You will generally see translations of that which you have seen before, but often these translations are devoid of any notable, contemporary interpretation.”^v Though discussing chair design, their points are very applicable to landscape architecture as many landscapes are ‘inferior versions of *similar places*’. There has been an ongoing debate on the over subscription to ‘picturesque’ landscapes. Most urban parks in the Western world can be seen as ‘repro-picturesque’ versions of the English estate landscapes created by Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton. The competition for Parc de la Villette in Paris in 1982-83 saw a shift away from this model, and Bernard Tschumi, an architect, won the commission with his design that has been described as “an essay in the architectural theory of ‘deconstruction’ or ‘disjunction’ ... It derived more from postmodern literary analysis than from landscape architecture or architectural design precedents. And it



reflects the emergence of computer technology capable of representing this type of layering ... Tschumi stated that ... his park 'could be conceived as one of the largest *buildings* ever constructed.'^{vi} This too led to a plethora of 'repro-*la Villette*' in most schools of landscape architecture throughout the world, as most students get seduced by *deconstruction*, red follies and the *architecture* of it all. The competition and winning submission also led to a renewed interest in landscape architecture by architects. This has continued and become much stronger in the past decade. Leatherbarrow (2004) argues that "if in the past landscape turned to architecture for ideas and methods, more recently concepts and techniques that were (thought to be) proper to landscape design have been appropriated by architecture: phenomena of process or temporal unfolding, 'registration' prompting articulation, 'mapping' as a survey technique and so on. "^{vii} The interesting point in the interpretation of process by architects is that they most often move to *objectify* process. The result can be quite beautiful as a graphic representation but when implemented the process becomes pattern and the object reappears. And students copy this. The understanding of process as form generator is complex and perhaps one of the biggest challenges to landscape architecture.^{viii}

I believe that landscape architecture should question what is good and what is true. However, a decade of teaching landscape architecture, attending conferences, and conversing with many designers has changed my views. I do not think that a critical evaluation from within will occur. The state of research in the discipline has not advanced beyond peer-reviewed papers that are produced to support tenure and promotion obligations for faculty members. Where I once believed that the impasse of advancing a discussion in the theory of landscape architecture might be overcome by a philosophical approach that could embrace the fundamental issues while providing a base from which the examination of issues might emanate, I now believe that without strong leadership from 'interdisciplinary design' doctoral programs, these discussions will not take place. Architectural theorists seem to be more interested in the theory of landscape architecture however their starting point is from the building as object. Research that attempts to situate landscape architecture within the context of the environmental design professions might lead to collaborative work that could inform how we teach design, and how design is crucial to leading society through our global crises.

2.

Landscape architecture is a contextual discipline. It does not conform very closely with the styles used in architectural theory and criticism. In a sense landscape architecture has always been 'a post-modern' discipline whether we use Pope's description of 'consulting the genius of the place', or Jencks' recognition of the significance of context in 'post-modern' architecture.

Context is what landscape architecture is about. This is where it takes quite a different turn from many of the other environmental design disciplines.^{ix} "In site design, the notion is derived from the Latin *contexere*, it is associated with coherence and the activity of weaving. The design of an outdoor space never takes place in a vacuum: there is always an existing environment. Events and materials, forms and patterns can be woven into their context. In this way they become part of their surroundings ... Context and place are related notions."^x Some might argue that an enclosed garden could ignore context but the social, cultural, historical context would probably influence even the most 'alien' designs if not only by atmosphere, light, climate, winds,



humidity and weather. If then an argument is put forward that it could be shielded from such a *context*, I would suggest that it has moved from the realm of landscape architecture to building or interior architecture. This is one of the very exciting aspects of the design of landscapes. If the significance of context in landscape architecture was further understood and shared, perhaps designers could *slow* the sameness of place that is increasingly common on a global scale.

Norman T. Newton (1971) wrote that landscape architecture operates first as a social art, serving human values. How have values and attitudes changed and how have they been reflected in the design of exterior spaces? Has landscape architecture reflected changing values or has it generally been caught in the anomalies between everyday reality and inherited notions from, in particular, modernity? Landscape architects could contribute to the dialogue and resolution of the 'post modern dilemma' by strengthening and acting upon its intention of purpose - 'landscape architecture is the deliberate act of arranging the land to shape environments that sustain life and enrich the human experience'. It is surely reasonable to believe that this discipline should continue to constantly examine and be sensitive to people's attitudes and values to society and to the land. This premise highlights many issues concerning the discipline. These include: why the role of the landscape architect is often marginalized; whether landscape architects should merely reflect society's values or whether they should attempt to modify them; what are the values that professional associations espouse; whether some overriding values in multicultural and pluralistic societies, and concerns for the environment can be articulated without becoming vague and meaningless. Moreover, there are parallel issues within education: whether students are aware of their obligations to society; whether students are exposed to the complexities confronting the profession; whether students are encouraged to understand notions of community, particularly in terms of shared political traditions, values, attitudes and senses of place and belonging; whether educators are sufficiently cognizant of their own values and of their political nature; whether landscape architectural education is reliant on rules and methods to meet accreditation requirements at the cost of sufficient theoretical discourse; and what is the state of theoretical discourse in landscape architectural education. These issues raise many questions within landscape architecture that current research and publications (Riley, 1994; Corner, 1991; Sitta, 1993, Hunt, 2004), suggest are not being addressed within an overall view of the discipline. The complexity of landscape architecture is often simplified in an attempt to understand specific situations or elements. Universal issues that concern all landscape architects need to be reconciled in particular situations to develop an integrative approach to the discipline. Within an age of increased specialization, recognition of the importance of integration and collaboration is crucial.

3.

It is a contention of this thesis that hermeneutics and neo-pragmatism can provide a vehicle for the delivery of a landscape architectural education which will fulfill the remit of 'creating spaces that sustain life and enrich the human experience'. The pragmatist aesthetic asks that we learn to value the everyday experience. An ethics of dissemination insists that we exhibit authenticity, humility and compassion while we operate in a community, developing local strategies for local action. Both hermeneutics and neo-pragmatism promote an approach to life that encourages attempts to



understand ourselves and others with the hope that we can both enjoy and celebrate living. This is seen as being fundamental to both education and practice in landscape architecture.

4.

The study of aesthetics and ethics - which this thesis argues are related - provides an invaluable understanding of the role of the landscape architect as mediator between society (culture) and the land and other lifeforms it supports (nature). There is a danger that both aesthetics and ethics in their application to landscape architecture will be too narrowly defined. Aesthetics is about much more than an understanding of art; it is not purely a visual phenomenon - it encompasses all experiences which affect physical, psychological and social comfort. The understanding of aesthetics forwarded by individuals like Santayana, Berleant, Spirm or Howett raise germane issues that could be discussed in landscape architecture. Equally the definition of ethics should be widened to encompass issues of behaviour towards *all* life forms, their habitats and their sources of food and energy. Landscape designs should recognize even distant effects, beyond the boundaries of the specific site. The notion of biophilia and issues within environmental ethics would serve as excellent vehicles for informing a way of seeing the world that moves from guilt and reaction to humility and action.

A philosophical approach to conscious reflective thought and education seems inevitable. How else could anyone live and move through life? Design education has much to do with helping the student to develop new approaches to learning and to seeing. If it seems reasonable that strong educational theory underpins curriculum, then surely learning from each other should be valued. The emphasis on the individual in society, in education and surely in design, runs counter to much of the knowledge that is currently presented in landscape studios. In our institution design students quickly learn that working in collaboration, that sharing ideas, that learning from each other in various situations is the mode of working in design studio – and in practice. We speak of studio culture, and we speak of multi-disciplinary practice. There is of course also the desire amongst many teaching design students to inculcate them within the narrow scope of architecture that often attracts many to the disciplines. In hushed tones we still hear of that illustrious figure, the design superstar. The tendency for design educators to attempt to have students emulate their education, their work habits, and their idols is widespread. Without a coherent educational theory behind the curriculum, design education quickly becomes inculcation. Evidence of it surrounds us all.

An education based upon *critical* reflection, communication, argument, and a honing of judgment may help future practitioners to engage in public conversations that could provide a counterculture to the anti-intellectualism of the consumer culture that much landscape architecture is engaged in now. Landscape architects have a role as social critics and we must consciously educate future practitioners to take on this role. I aspire to spark a discussion amongst landscape architecture educators and other design educators who are interested in the pedagogical and philosophical foundations of current practices and experience. Although educators induct students to a hopeful, perhaps idealized version of the future of *place*, generic solutions continue to dominate everyday practice. A radical reconsideration of teaching practices may help to counter



this trend. If students are to become leaders, if they are to take on roles as public critics and agents of change, we must construct a curriculum of resistance and social/political action. Philosophical sources situated in the hermeneutic tradition and the work of critical education theorists can inform this discussion. “Shifts in central concepts and in basic principles are reported, but they appear as pure facts, unscrutinized and not at all understood.”^{xi} Hermeneutics and neo-pragmatism offer an approach to guide ‘theory talk’ in landscape architecture that can move past commentary on perceived problems and work toward informing what landscape architects *do* and *can do* – doing and knowing, imagining and thinking should not be separated in theory and in practice, in lecture classes and in studio. They inform each other. The notion of ‘rediscovery’ that Gadamer (1975, 1989, 1993) forwards as an inherent aspect of hermeneutics – ‘rediscovery of something that was not absolutely unknown, but whose meaning had become alien and inaccessible’ – is extremely relevant to landscape architecture. Because culture and nature are in a continual process of change, landscape architecture must also engage in exchange and mediation. The pragmatist aesthetic asks what experiences ordinary, everyday people find pleasurable. A landscape must provide a full and intense experience, keeping alive the power to experience the common world in its fullness (Dewey, 1934). Students must be helped to understand that they have an ethical responsibility not only to the health of the environment but also to the creation of places that celebrate everyday living, occasions, memorials, “places where individuals can join together to celebrate those central aspects of our life that maintain and give meaning to existence.”^{xii} These are not new ideas. How do we do things well? How do we teach students to do things well? The pandemic fragmentation of meaning and purpose in landscape architecture, and in society, has led to unresolved problems in educational institutions and in professional practice. Many educators will argue that these issues are far too complex to introduce to students, or that there is so much information for them to understand that these messy ideas should just be left for either their personal interest or perhaps for once they are practising. “The professional school which sets its course by the current practice of the profession is, in an important sense, a failure ... the professional school must be concerned in a basic way with the world of learning and the interaction between this world and the world of problems to be solved.”^{xiii} And the professional school must be concerned with leadership. Society places value on professions. The professional school has an ethical and moral obligation to keep the ideas related to the questions ‘what is good’ and ‘what is true’ at the core of their duty to the university as an idea and to society as a reality.

Landscape architecture is in need of leadership - from within the discipline, professionally and in education for these issues to be addressed and for the profession to play a more effective role as 'mediator between nature and culture'. Landscape architecture has much to offer to society and human interaction with the earth's ecosystem because of their knowledge base and goals.

One was left to wonder whether our profession's weaknesses are greatest in the process of communication, the intellectual content of our message or - most disturbing of all yet probably true - the quality of what we actually do. (Camlin & Lonsdale, 1996/1997: 32)

Works of landscape architecture reflect the values and beliefs of the society that they are situated within. The roles and responsibilities of landscape architects to society and to the earth are critical issues. "The crisis of



authority is evident in the refusal of ... governments over the last fifteen years to address the most basic issues of meaning and purpose which link public education to the development of critical citizens capable of exercising the capacities, knowledge, and the skills necessary to become human agents in a democratic society."^{xiv} Lack of leadership in landscape architecture is related to these issues. Many of the problems facing society today, like homelessness, shifting populations, the move from industrialization to the 'age of information' and the infrastructural problems associated with these, are not addressed by the discipline professionally or in education. Landscape architecture often seems to exist in a vacuum resistant to important, relevant issues surrounding life now. Knowledge and education have been narrowly defined in terms of discrete skills and decontextualized bodies of information, ignoring basic issues of meaning and purpose, cultural diversity and complex problems in society, which affect the profession and what it hopes to accomplish (Maxcy, 1991). "The trouble with cheap, specialized education is that you never stop paying for it."^{xv} Choice and diversity in education are increasingly ruled by the marketplace (Rieff, 1993). Leadership can be examined in terms of intellectual stimulation and direction through a participatory approach. I adopt the view that, "by leadership, we have in mind the capacity to interact with self or others in terms of moving a discourse/practice toward an end based upon criteria that are at once rational and moral/ethical. Leading is not so much telling others what is true or false, but rather helping them come to know for themselves the merits or demerits of a case."^{xvi} I believe that there is a lack of leadership professionally and in academic institutions. If this is the case, students, the profession and subsequently society, are the victims of mediocrity. Leadership in this context refers not to a 'heroic figure, but to a notion of human nature and a view of culture in an affair with ideas' (Maxcy, 1991). The aims and purposes of landscape architecture must not be dissociated from academic institutions; education and practice should act together, each enhancing the other. But both require leadership. "A reconstruction and reconceptualization of leadership as enlightened, critical, and pragmatic action - a notion of leadership that looks to everyone who participates in teaching and learning for the kinds of thought and effort that will result in reformed education and practice."^{xvii}

5.

Aesthetics and ethics should form an essential part of any discussion of the purpose and aims of landscape architecture. It is argued that they can be key to the development of meaning in landscape architecture. There is an argument here that educators preach that students need to understand places before they make proposals to change them. Yet, the way the design studio works, changing places is emphasized much more than understanding them. Understanding should begin by realizing that we are at a point in a long history of an evolving relationship between humankind and nature. This relationship also involves factors that remain constant - particularly symbolism, and mythology. Meaning in landscape architecture comes from a place and from the culture of the people who use it. Meaning cannot be imposed on a place. However, as Dewey states: because it is impossible to know what civilization will be in twenty years from now, it is impossible to prepare an individual for any precise set of conditions.

To understand the place and value of beauty in life is one aspect of understanding the 'philosophy' of landscape architecture. Some argue that beauty has no place in the education of landscape architects, but



what then is it that we teach? What is it that landscape architects can offer? The landscapes that we study in history classes have beauty, and they have grace. This is something however, that many students do not understand. The state of current design in many of our communities clearly illustrates that it is not just students who do not understand grace and beauty in design. Much of our built environment suffers from the results of the disposable consumerist engine that fuels our economies. And these environments are what most of our students know as home, as normal. The landscape architects understanding of process and time seems to have little value in this context.

Increasingly schedules of both educators and students seem busier. Students state that they have little time for reflection. Complaints about this situation range from just doing assignments to get them done, to educators wondering if students even read the assignments. In this environment does education happen through osmosis or does it happen at all. Is it perhaps rote repetition? The design studio is in a tenuous situation in this schedule. How can we believe that students will process, and reflect upon their design work? What does design become? What happens to the important time needed to understand place? Clearly not all students will take on the role of designer upon graduation. However, all students must understand the role of design as an important manifestation of all the knowledge that we study. The lack of reflection on this process and lack of personal experience in well designed spaces often leads students to create designs that are in their worst condition object oriented, to pattern making, and to work that is not contextual on any level. In *The Afterlife of Gardens*, John Dixon Hunt states, "Landscape architects are loath to admit how wide a range of reference is endemic to their work; as a result they seem often to have lost control of their full professional territory to planners, engineers, horticulturalists, each of whom has a much more limited agenda (pragmatic, readily achievable and unstrenuously available). It is in fact difficult, even for landscape architects themselves it seems, to persuade people that their best work involves – because they draw upon – a whole nexus of human concerns and activities: these include ideas of the physical world (nature), philosophy and metaphysics, politics and economics, notions of sacred or privileged spaces, social customs and rituals, and play, performance and fantasy."^{xviii} We know that through time, experience leads many to this understanding. But is there some way that by slowing down in education, we can help students to gain this experience sooner? This may seem antithetic to the notion of experience however, "if students were encouraged to think about design, to think about landscape architecture in relation to attitudes and values that people have toward the land, they may gain a fuller understanding that there are no foolproof ways of producing good designs except through a conscious act of critical inquiry and reflection."^{xix} Can the education of a landscape architect be interpreted through aesthetics and ethics without compromising the current curriculum? In my experience existing curriculum is most often seen as sacred ground, and pride exists in the fact that the curriculum has not changed for decades – a very unreflective practice!

6.

The 10 points forwarded by Madison to guide interpretations can be forwarded as an integral part of the *critical* design studio. They provide a relevant practice to reinforce to students as a way for them to understand and reflect upon their own, and others, work. By introducing them to this 'guide' they will have the ability to discuss critically the merits and demerits of specific projects which will then



clarify to those within and outside of the discipline what landscape architecture values and hopes to achieve.

In *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity*, G.B. Madison (1988) explored the notion that there may be principles that could help to ensure coherence in hermeneutics. If theory is the theory of a certain praxis, then hermeneutics or interpretation must have some set of criteria that could be used as a guide to inform the interpretation of knowledge. As Madison emphasized an individual 'cannot test interpretations, they are evaluated.' The first year that I taught after completing my PhD I introduced Madison's 10 points to students as a way of approaching a theory paper. It was not successful. His phenomenological hermeneutics suggests that as a guide to responsible judgment 'coherence, comprehensiveness, penetration, thoroughness, appropriateness, contextuality, two aspects of agreement, suggestiveness and potential' may help individuals to avoid the irresponsibility of *complete* subjectivity. He describes his intentions behind each principle that I believed would help students to become more reflective and critical in their interpretation of others work. As an example "5. Appropriateness: To be considered a valid interpretation of a text (or of a landscape, or of a landscape architect), the questions the interpretation deals with must be ones which the text itself raises; if one claims to be interpreting, one must not simple use the text as an occasion for dealing with questions of one's own that have nothing to do with the questions the original author was addressing. The questions must be appropriate to the situation."^{xx} Students' desire for the right answer, for the right approach is still the normative situation in landscape architectural education. They eagerly wanted to acquire the notes for the 10 points but quickly dropped them when they saw that they were not a checklist but that they required reflective interpretation. It is often said that hermeneutics aims to expose the difficulties in life and that it aims to cultivate the sense of contingency of all things. It aims to open up discussion; to question the unquestioned structures which comprise our communities – and in this case, the community of landscape architecture within a faculty of architecture, and my role in it to help students want to learn.

7.

Students of landscape architecture can be introduced to the principles of aesthetics and ethics through lectures, seminars, readings and written work. But the design studio will, quite rightly, remain the main focus of their education. Instead of giving students the briefing papers for a project and letting them 'go away and get on with it', a 'philosophical review stage' could be instigated. Analysis needs to shift away from an emphasis on obtaining facts to what you do with the facts - the aesthetics side of philosophy teaches understanding and the ethics side teaches responsibility in how it is changed. The difference in approaches is characterized by two different effects - one tries to understand a place in a mechanistic sense sufficient to ensure that a design solution can be grafted on to existing conditions; the other attempts to understand the meaning of the place as a basis for the development of design solutions. The latter approach is fundamental to a democratic education.

We live in a society where life seems to be going faster, and many arguments are forwarded that going faster may mean going further. This may be so, however in institutions of higher education, we also have an opportunity to slow down. The experience of slowing down to reflect on the role and content of education



is very important. Individuals who execute courses often get caught up in the numerous demands of academic duties. As educators, we are encouraged to cover much ground, to be ‘clever’, to be ‘cool’, to be ‘entertaining’, and to be ‘funny’. Often, in this scenario, curriculum gets clouded. If we reflect on the changing understandings of what culture, and what nature are, and how our understandings of them change, then notions of beauty, of place, and of ethics may more critically inform education.

A learning milieu that encourages democratic discourse between teachers, learners and practitioners often frightens educators who see themselves as beyond reproach and who reward the students who best conform to *their* worldview. This is effortless teaching, where educators are merely conduits of prior learning and practice. This form of self-reproductive pedagogy encourages complicity, insularity, and it inhibits cultural evolution. Many problems experienced in the design studio that are very difficult to distinguish immediately may be discovered through an understanding of the idea of the hidden curriculum. “The hidden curriculum refers to those unstated values, attitudes, and norms which stem tacitly from the social relations of the school and the classroom as well as the content of the course.”^{xxi} Dutton explains that ‘compared to the formal curriculum, with its emphasis on knowledge, the concept of the hidden curriculum brings into focus questions concerning the ideology of knowledge, and the social practices which structure the experiences of students and teachers.’ Relationships between knowledge and power, and social practices and power may be revealed through a critical analysis of schools as ‘integral parts of the social, political, economic, and cultural relations of society.’ The knowledge transmitted through the ‘design’ represents a certain view of reality and society that sustains the interests of certain groups over others. These relationships should be exposed to allow students to interact, question, and contribute to the lifeworld of their communities. Students who may seem combative and unruly in this environment, may simply hold different values and experiences. With one dominant view of community, of life or of design, the ‘master’ will most certainly result in unbalanced relationships between knowledge and power, and between instructor and student.

8.

The ethos of any profession is to straddle academic disciplines drawing from the arts and sciences and synthesizing them into a holistic philosophy. Too often students and even tutors of landscape architecture will characterize projects as being on the one hand art-driven, or on the other ecology-driven. But if the practice of landscape architecture is an act of mediation between culture and nature it is argued that an essential role for the profession is to introduce art into ecology and ecology into art.

9.

The profession of landscape architecture lacks the rigor of theoretical criticism. Academics, practitioners and students in the United Kingdom have not developed the ability to do it or the ability to accept it. Theoretical criticism is better developed in the United States but developing a discipline of criticism both in terms of being able to criticize and to be criticized, should be a significant part of landscape architectural education. Only through criticism can we truly test



whether the aesthetic and ethical perspectives which this thesis espouses are being exercised or applied.

10.

There is a crisis of leadership in the profession. Landscape architects too often become subservient collaborators in the process of development, relegated to the position of specifying vegetation to fill the voids left by other designers. The essential point to this thesis with respect to leadership is that including aesthetics and ethics in the education of landscape architects will lead to philosophically more robust graduates who should be then more capable of carrying an argument with respect to environmental change. This would give them possibly unique perspectives as members of environmental planning and project design teams. If the values of landscape architecture are clearly understood, the robustness of the landscape architect as a member of the team will be stronger.

11.

Funding and the delivery of accredited degrees have replaced reflectivity as the dominant principle for education in landscape architecture. Landscape architects should aspire to critical consciousness. The gulf between a cultural and a technical education is an increasing problem. An apparent increase in the value attached to technical training at the expense of a culturally rounded education, is probably related to course accreditation by professional institutes. This increases the marketability of courses but may limit the breadth of study. This is in part a result of not having a separation between the professional institute and a registration body in the United Kingdom. In the United States and Canada the registration is separate from the accreditation of the course.

Do we teach landscape architecture within an age and society that seems particularly disconnected from the *discipline* of landscape architecture and its capacity to create places of grace and beauty for the benefit of humankind? Within the Faculty of Architecture where I teach, colleagues and students in the other environmental design disciplines consistently make derogatory comments about landscape architecture like 'you just put plants in around our buildings, or you are just landscapers and gardeners, we do the serious work'. These may seem harmless to outsiders but when situated within an educational institution where students are the practitioners of the future, it does not provide fertile ground for a respectful relationship between disciplines. And within popular television culture, a plethora of gardening shows display renovation narratives of home and sometimes self enacted by well meaning, but exceedingly one-dimensional 'specialists'. This is not to suggest that these specialists are personally one-dimensional but to engage the public, narratives of history, theory and meaning while laying down brick pavers and railroad ties, is not necessarily related to instant gratification. It can be argued that these shows help the discipline by raising the profile of *landscape* work, however it does little to advance the aims of the discipline, and to create environments that are sustainable. Are we attempting to educate a new generation of designers who will operate in a society which lacks a sense of propriety and no longer values beautiful places? Do landscape architects value beautiful places? Does sustainability equate to a state of beauty? Have landscape architects become so engaged with trying to maintain their role in the physical alteration of the exterior environment



that the role of aesthetics and ethics truly has no place? The educational theorist David Halpin's (2002) in *Hope and Education: The Role of the Utopian Imagination*, states "...because education is essentially a future-oriented project concerned to bring about improvement, specifically *growth* in the learner's knowledge and understanding, successful teaching requires its practitioners to teach with hope in mind."^{xxii} In Halpin's view 'exemplary' teachers continue to resist the four scions of hopelessness – cynicism, fatalism, relativism and fundamentalism^{xxiii} despite an institutional culture that is administratively demoralizing and undemocratic. Perhaps it is foolish to cling to the ideas related to aesthetics and ethics under such a futile reality, but the landscapes that we study provide an alternative view. Many of these projects still exist today. Value is given and care is taken. These landscapes can provide hope that society does value beautiful places, perhaps there is some way to share this wealth with popular culture and society, let alone with our students.

If we want our students to become leaders within this field, if we want them to take on roles as public intellectuals and critics, we must construct a curriculum of resistance and social/political action. A pedagogy that dogmatically responds to anti-intellectualism and consumer driven banalities will fail to induct emerging landscape architects with the confidence and fortitude to enact change. This is not to say that all positions should not be considered, but rather that is time for educators to stand up to external pressure to educate 'marketable' students who are eager to position themselves as agents of change for contributing to the creation of landscapes that exhibit beauty and elegance even with the increasingly global, corporate state of the world.

12.

Alexander Pope's principle of consulting 'the genius of the place in all', is mirrored in Jacobs' 'three for the twenty first century - equity, integrity and a sense of belonging'. A thorough understanding of culture and nature can best be achieved by the study of ethics and aesthetics. All landscape architecture is but a search for truth and beauty.

Dewey believed that education was the way a civil society reproduces itself. I am not suggesting that educational institutions should "teach values, in the sense of teaching a scheme of separate virtues. What the schools should teach is *the experience of applying intelligence to value questions*."^{xxiv} When values and the choices among alternative values are imposed from the outside, individuals do not make these values their own. Educators must be encouraged, and encourage students, to critically engage with these issues, 'as they begin to understand themselves as both a product and producer of meaning'. Students should be prepared to critically judge how society is constructed historically and socially, and to understand how existing social relations are organized. Educational institutions must be cognizant of what their aims are. These aims must be continually, and critically examined to enable students to be prepared for 'life outside the institution', as a professional landscape architect - a goal which the schools profess to attain.

Is a state of engagement with ideas and places within the discipline of landscape architecture a situation that requires detachment from social reality? As educators do we harbour misguided notions that landscape architects can bring grace to a society that operates in an environment that most often is a manifestation of the antithesis of grace? And what of the role of many practioners in maintaining a state of mediocrity and of



rejecting change? Or do graduates of schools of landscape architecture hold these ideals, and moral and ethical positions, which dissolve when faced with an apathetic society served by design practices based solely on immediate cost cutting economic design makeovers?

Many individuals have dedicated their lives to establishing, pursuing, practising and educating others to practise landscape architecture. I do not intend to imply that their work has not been beneficial. However, it is argued that landscape architects should seek to avoid being caught in complacency or uncritically accepting practices that do not serve society well. The discipline would benefit from engaging in critical participation both within the profession and with those *outside* of the profession. My recent experience has convinced me that interdisciplinary design doctorate programs are crucial to furthering our understandings of society, of individuals and of education and the important role that design research could challenge accepted thinking in discrete design disciplines. There is much to learn from seeing things from a different perspective. The approach taken to design process by landscape architects is different from many of the other design disciplines. Ecology and sustainability have been an important aspect of the discipline since its inception. I believe that we could learn much by working together. I believe that doctorate education is critical because it generally gives individuals time to reflect – this is important to students at all levels but the doctorate student has freedom from professional accreditation obligations. And that time is difficult to find when entrenched in the academic year or when working in practice. Different design disciplines work together in practice but time is related to economic obligations much more closely than in the space of doctorate work. I hope that all education encourages individuals to examine not only the traditional discipline but to examine themselves and society in the context of this anthropocentric world with the sense of 'equity, integrity and belonging ... if successful, beauty will emerge' (Jacobs, 1990). This, I believe, is philosophy and design in landscape architecture.

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ⁱ This definition has been adapted from Robert B. Riley's, 'landscape architecture is the deliberate act of arranging the land to shape environments that sustain human life and enrich the human experience', (*Landscape Journal*, 1992). I believe that landscape architect's attempt to 'sustain life', not solely 'sustain human life'.



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- ⁱⁱ Vroom, Meto J. (2006) *lexicon > of garden and landscape architecture*. Basel: Birkhauser, 9
- ⁱⁱⁱ McLuhan, Marshall and David Carson. (2003) *The Book of Probes*, Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press, Inc., 364
- ^{iv} Eaton, Marcella. (1997) *Philosophy and Design in Landscape Architecture*, Ph.D. in Landscape Architecture, Edinburgh College of Art, (unpublished), 283-288
- ^v Naylor, Maxine and Ralph Ball. (2005) *Form Follows Idea An Introduction to Design Poetics*, London: Black Dog Publishing Limited, 26
- ^{vi} Tate, Alan. (2001) *Great City Parks*, London: Routledge, 56
- ^{vii} Leatherbarrow, David. (2005) *Topographical Stories, Studies in Landscape and Architecture*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 5
- ^{viii} The international competition for Canada's first national urban park in Toronto was won by a team of designers including OMA and Bruce Mau. This submission was all about process and Mau a graphic designer presented the work, including all of the detailed documentation for implementation beautifully - a very clear, precise breakdown of process. However, once moving to the actual physical implementation of the work *on the ground* the architectural firm OMA withdrew from the project. Landscape architects were hired to work through the package in an attempt to realize form from the winning submission. Ground has yet to be moved for this 1999 competition.
- ^{ix} In *The Guardian* 24.07.06 in "Yacht parking, this way" by Jonathon Glancey, the English architect writes "We live in an events culture in the UK. Architecture, arts and media are all increasingly driven by events agendas. Original thinking and debate have been overwhelmed. So we get a lot of slick and often thoughtless architecture put up at speed." David Chipperfield is then quoted "We see buildings in Britain mostly as freestanding objects ... They are not meant to have a dialogue with anything around them, or with history, or with ideas of any kind beyond the self-referential. What we call regeneration is largely an excuse for building for maximum profit with a bit of sculptural design thrown in to catch the eye of the media.", 22
- ^x Vroom, Meto J. (2006) *lexicon > of garden and landscape architecture*, Basel: Birkhauser, 81-82
- ^{xi} Borradori, Giovanna. (1994) *The American Philosopher*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 145
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- ^{xiv} Blumberg, Baruch, Forward in Maxcy, S. J. (1991) *Educational Leadership, A Critical Pragmatic Perspective*, New York: Bergin & Garvey, ix
- ^{xv} McLuhan, Marshall and David Carson. (2003) *The Book of Probes*, Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press, Inc., 531
- ^{xvi} Maxcy, S. J. (1991) *Educational Leadership, A Critical Pragmatic Perspective*, New York: Bergin & Garvey, 199
- ^{xvii} *Ibid*, 30
- ^{xviii} Hunt, John Dixon. (2004) *The Afterlife of Gardens*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 210-212
- ^{xix} Eaton, Marcella. (1997) *Philosophy and Design in Landscape Architecture*, Ph.D. in Landscape Architecture, Edinburgh College of Art, (unpublished), 31
- ^{xx} Madison, G.B. (1990) *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 29-30. This has been essentially paraphrased, however, relevant interpretations have been inserted to this text.
- ^{xxi} Dutton, Thomas A. (1991) "The Hidden Curriculum and the Design Studio: Toward a Critical Studio Pedagogy" in *Voices in Architectural Education, Cultural Politics and Pedagogy*, Thomas A. Dutton, Ed. New York, NY: Berin & Garvey, 167
- ^{xxii} Halpin, David. (2003) *Hope and Education: The Role of the Utopian Imagination*, London: Routledge Falmer, 27
- ^{xxiii} *Ibid*, 30
- ^{xxiv} Putnam, Hilary. (1994, 1995) *Words & Life*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 229