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LAND MARK



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01

shifting perspective and practice— putting a value on landscape

Paul Harding, AILA National Councillor

Introduction

First of all, congratulations on a great job by the 2009 AILA national conference team, who are probably now overburdened with platitudes. The choices of both venue and the conference format were excellent with the single stream of presentations avoiding the time wasting and inevitable regret that goes with trying to choose from a selection of competing conference streams. The location at the Melbourne Docklands offered a unique example of an adapted and reused landscape on the edge of the city.

After settling back in at the desk with time to reflect and digest the range of views and subjects presented and discussed over the two days I am thinking and hoping that the debate has now begun in earnest. Much of what was presented reinforced current thinking such as the importance of including communities in the design process and the need for landscape architects, as project leaders, to advocate for the importance of natural systems, however, there were some revelations which did, in fact, prompt a shift in my thinking and offered perspectives to our rapidly changing world.

What follows below is a summary from my notes on the proceedings and is by no means an exhaustive account of all that was discussed. Sometimes I found it better to listen than to record.



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www.aila.org.au

Conference Summary

Thursday

Having the tours on day one was a great way to start the conference and offered a chance to unwind in the great outdoors and wash away the deadlines and email traffic of the working week. The tour of Cranbourne Botanic Gardens was excellent. Back at the Main Theatre that evening Jason Prior gave an overview of the Leeds Olympic Masterplan and highlighted the need to alter Government policy for effective change and identified the importance of having an effective champion for the cause, in this case, the Lord Mayor. Leon van Schaik followed with the recognition of the ability of a 3 point debate to reconcile polarized arguments and proposed the existence of four, 10 year stages of professional reflection over a lifetime of practice. This caused me some concern due to my late start in the profession allowing me only time for 2 stages! Day one was wrapped up with cocktails and networking in the Atlantic Room.



an interdisciplinary future
AILA NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2009
MELBOURNE DOCKLANDS 7-9 MAY

Friday

Following the customary welcome and introduction, Friday was a day of presentations and question times. Walter Hood led the charge with a presentation that included hybrids, community ideas, coastal environments, culturally specific challenges and solutions and allowing 'the overgrown' in suburban development. Bring back the bush! He also raised the need to 'find the opportunity and get in early!' with proposals and design intervention. One comment the Walter made that I thought was refreshingly honest and revelatory was that 'it's all about us'. I took this to mean that what we do and engage in, as human beings, is all about survival of our species. After all, planet earth is not likely to actually explode, but it may not support life as we know it in the not too distant future!

Francesca Galeazzi then followed with a comprehensive presentation of the unified process that ARUP uses in their projects which, unfortunately left little time for the jewel of the presentation. Ladakh—The Druk White Lotus School resonated with everyone in exhibiting sustainable solutions which melded traditional and western design approaches in the absence of modern infrastructure.

Anuradha Mathur and Dilip da Cunha then set about shifting perspectives in a big way as Dilip presented the sea as 'other' and pondered the prudence of defining a coastal edge of tidal estuaries and mangrove habitats with a single line. They alerted us to alternate ways of representing such as privileging section over plan and sea thinking vs land thinking and proposed that landscape architecture is about initiating ideas and discussion and not so much about planning the solutions.

Alma Du Solier painted an evolving scene of complex projects and problems, sophisticated clients and the need to understand site, local culture, agendas and values while working with diverse collaborators and idiosyncratic construction materials or processes. Alma suggested that landscape architects are not experts but rather, they are explorers in search for the real order and ways to interweave seemingly disparate solutions.

Kirsten Bauer, director of Aspect, then presented a detailed and animated, 'donut' analysis of her smaller Melbourne based design practice and posed the question—what is the value of the small stuff? This led to the observation that streets are for people and as such, streetscapes are the coalface of innovation.

Beth Meyer then took to the stage and suggested that beauty and aesthetics should engage the mind at a cognitive level and not just be a feast for the eyes. Beth outlined 11 tents of design and proposed that landscape architecture should focus on constructing events not forms.

Her observation that beauty is enduring but not stable was a poignant one as, although an image of the acid mined river was a vivid and colourful one, is was a far cry from its pristine state. I wondered if there could be a danger in preferring beauty over the need to place a (\$\$) value on the landscape to reflect ecosystems services the environment can provide. There seemed to be a reluctance to treat nature as providing support services for the human race but I would argue that placing a value on the landscape underpins the viability of any climate change adaption strategy.

Wrapping up the day's events Adrian Mcgreggor painted a gloomy, and unfortunately, realistic scenario of future water and fuel shortages and proposed 12 biocity principles to address this.

Then it was off to the opening of the 'Sunburnt' and 'Unlandscaped' Exhibitions at Docklands Shed 4 in the shadow of the Bolte Bridge where the winner of 'Unlandscaped'—'Diepsloot Environmental Masterplan' was announced.

Saturday

There was a buzz in the air as we gathered in the Main Theatre and discussed Fridays presentations over coffee. Following a welcome back from the IFLA President, Di Menzies, Saturdays format was a little different to the previous day with presentations followed by responses from other speakers and questions from the floor.

Elizabeth Mossop took to the stage first with a moving account of the Lower 9th Ward community's effort to rebuild their suburb after the devastating floods in New Orleans following Cyclone Katrina in 2006. Three years after the event the suburb lies in ruins and government agencies seem to have no interest in rebuilding. The presentation was a demonstration of the power and tenacity of the community, working without the aid and/or hindrance of governance to seize the opportunity to replan and rebuild their neighborhood.

James Rosenwax drew attention to not just the provision and control of water in cities and towns but the huge amounts of energy involved in moving it around. He spoke of the importance in embracing the concept of ecosystems services and to promote the multifunctional use of open space and the public realm and the need to provide for 'authentic' experiences of nature.

Linda Corkery and Catherine Evans then presented an audit of the characteristics and activities of landscape architectural practice in Australia which revealed that although 81% of practices are located in urban areas and there appeared to be an absence of landscape architects involved in metro planning strategies. A comment was made that perhaps we are too busy congratulating ourselves to contribute to strategic planning and the 'practice of practice' needs to be replaced by the 'product of practice'? An examination of past landscape awards revealed that the 'environmental category' had dropped off the radar in recent years which raised the question, was it because it has become a 'given' that the environment is acknowledged in all projects?

A series of responses and comments followed, some of which are captured below;

Dilip suggested that convergent and divergent problems required very different ways of thinking which led me to wonder if it could be the role of landscape architects to convert divergent issues to convergent solutions.

Anuradha Mathur asked if the use of the word 'environment' implies a presence or absence and proposed the need to dissolve professional boundaries.

Alma Du Solier observed that green infrastructure is interdisciplinary by nature and that function should be considered over form in developing design solutions.

Linda Corkery suggested that landscape architects should set the discussion table and be the host. Dilip added that in India landscape architects need to make the table.

Catherine Evans posed that perennial question, what is Australian landscape architecture all about?

Alun Chapman proposed that landscape architects need to understand their strengths and weaknesses and acknowledge their previous, positive contributions to our built environment, evidenced in the successful push for residential allotments to face open space and the added value this arrangement provides.

An examination of art in the landscape followed with Francesca Galeazzi, Tanya Court and Walter Hood presenting examples of their arts practice.

Francesca drew attention to the 'green washing' of CO₂ emissions with her provocative release of CO₂ into the Arctic environment which had been offset through the purchase of carbon credits. Tanya showcased her installation 'Helmet' and proposed that billboards as gateways are often regarded as the new 'monument'. Walter then spoke of his arts practice as a way of exploring his other brain, art as empowering the 'student' practitioner and the ability to activate fallow spaces through art.

Stephen Loo's presentation on ethico-poetics in an age of uncertainty left most of us a little dazed but I found his comment that the concept of immanence leads to landscape architecture being part of the process and not separate from it an interesting observation. Stephen also suggested that while non aboriginal notions of 'landscape' tend to be visual Aboriginal notions of 'country' are cultural. An important distinction, I thought, and one that is crucial to the debate on the importance of the 'landscape' to our survival.

Stephen Parry then took us on an exploration of the powers of fractal geometry to generate design outcomes. Stephen had observed that the incidence of fractal dimensions is higher in natural than built forms and proposed that Euclidean geometry provides solutions whereas fractal geometry generates processes. The freefall into the Mandelbrot visualization was a meditative end to the presentation.

The final event, Future Practice was presented as a challenge forum 'in the round' and at this stage I was more interested in following the debate than in making notes but some key points I did take included;

Colin Fudge's comment about the ability of landscape architect to provide transformative capacity

Di Menzies' Malauri story illustrating the need get out there and promote!

Catherine Bull asking how we promote green infrastructure such as;

- where we act?—domains/ fields
- how we act?—thinking/ values/ doing
- who we act with?—

When asked for a concluding comment, Jim Sinatra, the recently acknowledged elder Statesman of landscape architecture in Australia proposed that by 2011 in Brisbane that every local council should have a landscape architect. Let's work toward that!





Putting a Value on Landscape

Photographs by Petra Wiesner





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- 1 Kirsten Bauer
- 2 Anuradha Mathur
- 3 Dilip da Cunha
- 4 Mark Frisby
- 5 Neil Hobbs
- 6 Bruce Mackenzie
- 7 Jim Sinatra and SueAnne Ware
- 8 Jason Prior and Leon van Schaik
- 9 Walter Hood
- 10 Francesca Galeazzi
- 11 Alma du Solier
- 12 Elizabeth Meyer



05

Kebun Ramuan—Edible Garden

John Easthope FAILA—AILA's IFLA Representative

Recently I had the privilege to be invited to attend the opening of the Kebun Ramuan—Edible Garden by the Prime Minister of Malaysia. As an official representative of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, I had great pleasure in accepting. This paper briefly outlines what I saw.

The garden is located in the grounds of Seri Perdana, the official residence of the present and future Malaysian Prime Ministers. Located in the business capital city of Putrajaya, it is both impressive in its location and the quality of design and construction. It is used for official receptions and banquets and has some excellent public galleries and tours. Generally, construction of the buildings was complete ten years ago. The garden is the latest embellishment to this grand complex.

Putrajaya, a planned city located just south of Kuala Lumpur, is the new federal administrative capital of Malaysia.

Kebun Ramuan loosely translated means 'garden of ingredients'. Several years ago, the Prime Minister's wife Datin Seri Jeanne Abdullah decided that plants, once popular as naturopathic remedies or for seasoning in meals was not being grown by nurseries and gardeners. The garden is now an excellent display of these plants supported by landscape infrastructure that is both contemporary in design and superbly constructed.

The design process involved searching out plants that were known, or had the potential have, naturopathic qualities. Historic villages throughout rural Malaysia were targeted with the elderly interviewed to recall no-longer-used remedies for poor health and wellbeing. Use may have been influenced by the clearing of the forests from which the plants were once sourced, the availability of alternative remedies or the cultural shift to western medicine. Whatever, this garden is not only a delight to be in, it also has an important purpose.

There are many gardens with names such as the Bamboo Garden, the Art Garden, the Hanging Garden and the Reed garden implying the design theme. Each is connected with the main garden spine. The gardens are set within a strong architectural framework of walls and paths punctuated with a cascading water feature. The only criticism is circulation throughout the entire garden is restricted with some paths leading to a dead end. Perhaps this is the first phase of larger garden surrounding the official building complex?

Plant material selection is diverse with such species as The Misai Kuuching or Cats Whiskers which can be eaten as a raw salad or the Garuda, Herb of Grace used for its medical value. Plants are displayed in rows separated by concrete and gravel paths.

The photographs on the following pages illustrate a clever design with superb attention to detail.





About IFLA—International Federation of Landscape Architects John Easthope FAILA, the AILA IFLA Delegate

At the most recent conference in Melbourne Diane Menzies (President of IFLA) said 'IFLA is you'.

This raises the questions what is IFLA and what does it do for you? Many AILA members are probably not aware that as members of AILA, we are also members of IFLA.

This short comment brings to our attention the complex nature of IFLA, the scope of activities that IFLA undertakes and the nature of the membership relationship with Australia.

IFLA consists of a Council of delegates from each member country; when Council meets we usually have around 67 delegates. IFLA Council holds an international meeting once a year. The Council consists of an Executive Council (ExCo) which consists of a President, treasurer, secretary General, and three Vice Presidents who represent the four world regions that is the Americas Region, Asia Pacific Region, Africas Region(not fully established) and European Region, the ExCo Council meets more frequently.

AILA is within the Asia Pacific Region; this Council also meets once a year. Most Regions meet on a yearly basis at a different time than the IFLA Council meeting.

IFLA's web site has links to the four regions, however sites are still under construction.

Within the IFLA site there are numerous links that are beneficial to members.

These links elaborate on:

- Members
- Education
- Conferences with links to conferences within each region
- Policy and publications
- Resources

If you click on to Members and then onto Committees there is no mention of a link to the Cultural Landscape Committee. For the benefit of members to access

Cultural Landscape Committee you can click onto associations/Americas/policy & publications/ links, IFLA Cultural Landscape Committee. Once there you will find the IFLA Cultural Landscapes Committee site, relatively new with great coverage of policy, guidance, inventory and best practice.

IFLA usually sends out a News Brief on a monthly frequency however, these news briefs are for current activities and do not cover the exhaustive amount of work undertaken within the EXCO and IFLA Committees. Outlined below are some of the activities that are discussed at meetings, however, this list is only a snap shot.

General

- Reports from the Regions
- Processing of new country memberships
- Potential membership from other countries
- The IFLA Constitution
- IFLA Strategy
- Publishing Strategy
- IFLA News Brief
- World Landscape Architecture Month
- Landscape foundation

IFLA Committees and Working Groups

- Education
- IFLA translation of Technical Terms
- Conferences and congresses
- Cultural Landscape
- Global Landscape Charter

All minutes from these meetings are available on the internet, so it is worth while supporting IFLA by using the information made available from meetings, committees and news briefs.

06

AILA National Council Elections

Call for Nominations AILA National Council 2009–2011

Nominations are now open for all the positions on the AILA National Council for the period 2009–2011. All nominations to be received by COB Friday 31 July 2009. Nominations to be mailed or emailed (as pdf) to the AILA National Office. Forms available: www.aila.org.au/agm2009

Notice of annual general meeting

The 44th Annual General Meeting of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, ACN No 008 531 851, will be held at 4.30 pm, Sunday 20 September 2009.

Hovea Room, Mounts Bay Waters Apartments, 112–126 Mounts Bay Rd Perth

Agenda

1. Meeting attendance, apologies and proxies
2. Minutes of the 2008 Annual General Meeting
3. Business arising from the Minutes
4. Treasurer's Report (including the appointment of the auditor)
5. President's Report
6. Election of National Council 2009–2011
7. General Business

For those not able to attend and wishing to register their vote using a proxy: Proxy forms are available online: www.aila.org.au/agm2009

The proxy form should be emailed to the National Office no later than 4.00 pm 18 September, or handed to the Secretary at the commencement of the AGM.

07

Putting a Value on Landscape The Australian Landscape Principles

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects has recently published the *Australian Landscape Principles*, as part of a broader strategic response to emerging urban design challenges posed by the increasing pace of global urbanization and the impacts of climate change.

The Principles articulate an ethical decision-making framework for landscape planning, design and management within the urban development context. Their purpose is to strategically direct landscape interventions—both in our existing and future built environments—towards more sustainable, holistic outcomes.

The Principles represent the first outcome of AILA's Climate Change Adaptation Skills for Professionals Program 2008–1010, which is assisted by the Australian Government through the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change. They will be used to guide future development of climate change adaptation strategies and professional development programs for landscape architects, as well as increasing the knowledge/advocacy base within the profession when assisting clients and government with this critical issue.

For further information on the Principles, including implementation strategies and case studies go to: <http://www.aila.org.au/landscapeprinciples>



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