

Sustaining Beauty

The performance of appearance: a manifesto in three parts



Elizabeth K. Meyer

Associate Professor, School of Architecture,
University of Virginia

Sustainable landscape design is generally understood in relation to three principles—ecological health, social justice and economic prosperity. Rarely do aesthetics factor into sustainability discourse outside of negative asides conflating the visible with the aesthetic and rendering both superfluous.

The paper examines the role of beauty and aesthetics in a sustainability agenda. It argues that for culture to be sustainable it will take more than ecologically regenerative designs. What is needed are designed landscapes that provoke those who experience them to become more aware of how their actions affect the environment, and to care enough to make changes. This requires considering the role of aesthetic environmental experiences, such as beauty, in re-centering human consciousness from an egocentric to a more bio-centric perspective. This argument takes the form of a manifest, and is inspired by landscape architects whose work is not usually understood as contributing to mainstream sustainable design.



Public Lecture

Tuesday 19th May, 2009 - 6pm

QUT Gardens Point, Building B, Room B122.