

Groundswell : [brochure] constructing the contemporary landscape

Date

2005

Publisher

The Museum of Modern Art

Exhibition URL

[www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/117?
high_contrast=true](http://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/117?high_contrast=true)

The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition history—
from our founding in 1929 to the present—is
available online. It includes exhibition catalogues,
primary documents, installation views, and an
index of participating artists.



MoMA

Constructing the Contemporary Landscape

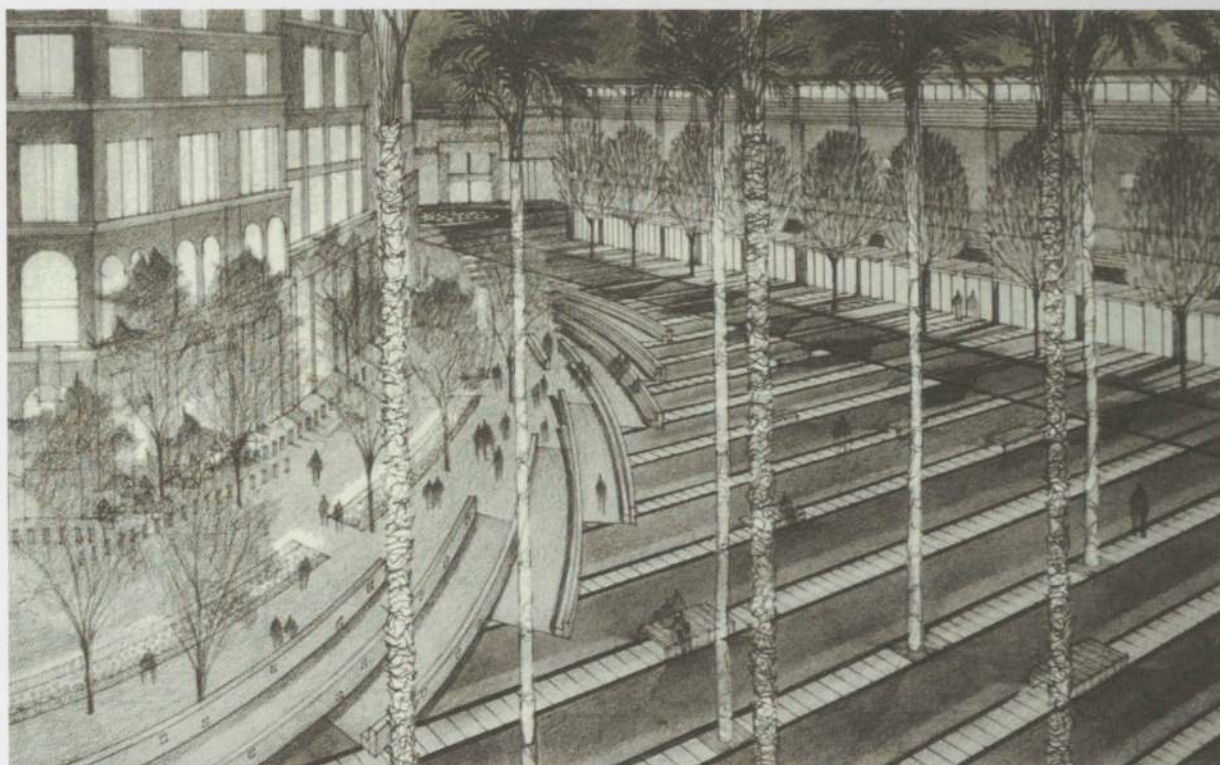
groundswell

We need to grasp the truth that our landscape is a built artifact and, as such, must be designed, and therefore is an opportunity and an appropriate place for the expression of personal aesthetics and ideas. The visual quality of our environment defines us as individuals and citizens of a certain place. It becomes internalized and part of our self-image. It defines who we are individually and collectively and ultimately becomes what we are remembered by as a culture.

My definition of landscape is not limited to our natural environment, or to just parks, waterfronts, and plazas, but more importantly focuses on the landscapes we are building for ourselves in which we work, live, shop, commute, and generally exist. In spite of my reputation as a nature-hater, I am simply misunderstood. I am protesting this disjuncture between word and deed as it concerns nature and interferes with our ability to create positive environments for both man and beast.

—Martha Schwartz

Exchange Square, Manchester, England 1998–2000



Martha Schwartz, Martha Schwartz, Inc., Cambridge, Massachusetts

Competition drawing with artificial palm trees.
Image: Michael Blier

Schouwburgplein (Theater Square), Rotterdam, the Netherlands 1991–96



Adriaan Geuze, West 8 urban design & landscape architecture bv, Rotterdam, the Netherlands

Modern-day citizens can use landscape and nature as one way of defining their place in the world. They identify with the landscape, which is an essential basis for urban design. The elements of landscape become the source material from which the structure and soul of the city is derived.

The landscape architect should protect cities from the horrors of junk space and ersatz nature by utilizing simple but clear landscape elements. In addition, he needs to create enclosed spaces; condensed, spiritual oases that allow escape from everyday life by offering the sublime illusion of a fantastic other world.

—Adriaan Geuze

Aerial view at night. Image: Jeroen Musch

Christophe Girot, Atelier Phusis, Paris, France

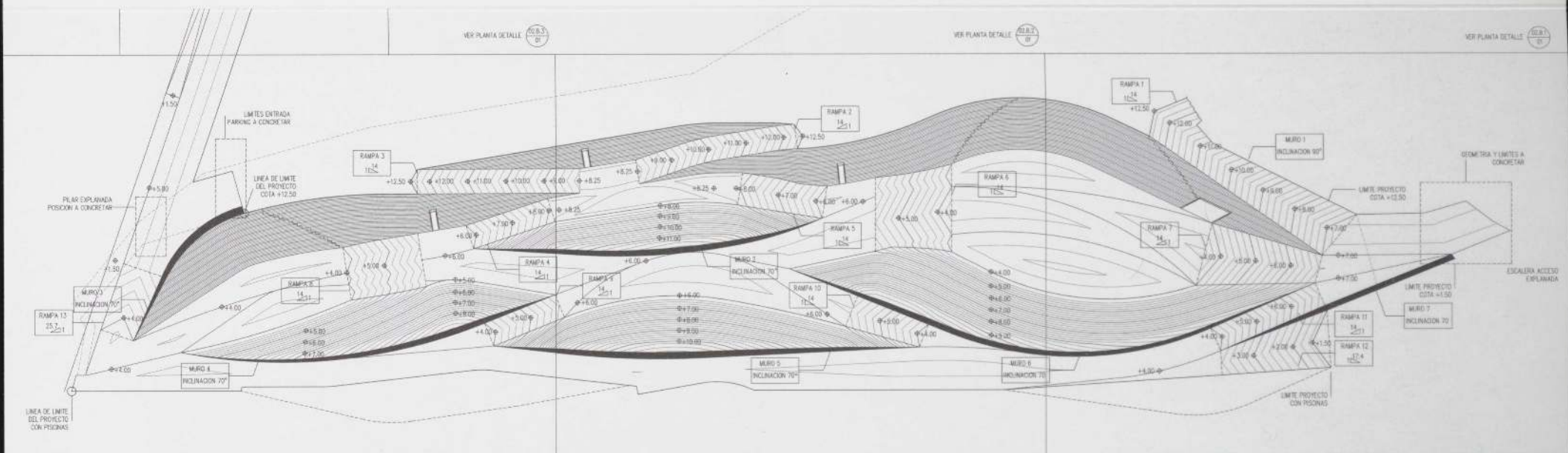
In a history of rapid transformations that typifies our modern mega cities, landscape has become an ambivalent field of experimentation, ranging from the exquisite garden sanctuary to the despicable peripheral wasteland. There is, therefore, no longer a single approach to landscape design, but rather a multifaceted response to ambient conditions and history. My job as landscape architect is to assess to what extent I may add a new layer to the strata already in place. A landscape vision requires patience. The inherent meaning sown in each project, still dormant, probably needs another couple of decades to reveal its full potential.

—Christophe Girot



View from northeast toward Invalidenstrasse.
Image: Christophe Girot

Invalidenpark, Berlin, Germany 1992–97



Southeast Coastal Park, Forum 2004, Barcelona, Spain 2000–04

Topographic plan. Image: Foreign Office Architects

Farshid Moussavi and Alejandro Zaera-Polo, Foreign Office Architects, London, England

The opposition between the rational and the organic that structures the history of landscape design has characterized the history of several disciplines, from philosophy to urbanism. It is in the overcoming of this opposition that we think the possibility of an emerging landscape—and city and architecture—may exist. We do not need to resort to “pure” artificial forms, to detach geometry from the contingencies of the topography, wind, or vegetation; we can adjust them through computer modeling of the forces. Only by applying these techniques rigorously will we be able to meet the challenge of creating a new discipline across the natural and the artificial, the rational and the organic.

—Farshid Moussavi and Alejandro Zaera-Polo

Marion Weiss and Michael Manfredi, Weiss/Manfredi Architects, New York, New York

We design to clarify the physical and cultural identity of a site, opportunistically integrating the disciplines of landscape, architecture, and infrastructure engineering. The integration of these disciplines has been central to how we design. We do not believe in the customary distinction between art and nature, design and ecology, but believe that art and nature are bound together in reciprocity. Selective removal, tactical excavation, and strategic additions transform the perception and experience of architecture and the site. Our goal is to avoid the pretense of imagining architecture only on a neutral site or the confused agenda of imitating natural forms.

—Marion Weiss and Michael Manfredi

Olympic Sculpture Park, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Washington 2001; projected completion, 2006

Rendering of night view from Elliott Bay. Image: Weiss/Manfredi Architects



James Corner, Field Operations, New York, New York

Contemporary urban projects demand a new kind of synthetic imagination—a new form of practice in which landscape, architecture, planning, ecology, engineering, social policy, and political process are understood and coordinated as an interrelated field. The synthesis of this range of knowledge bases and its material embodiment in public space lies at the heart of strategic landscape practice. Creative strategy, process, temporality, and strong physical design are crucial for generating new natures, new publics, new programs, new forms, new urbanisms.

—James Corner

Fresh Kills *lifescape*, Staten Island, New York 2001–05; projected start of construction, 2007

Rendering of interior of park. Image: Field Operations



Wetlands area before restoration. Image: Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy



Tidal wetlands after restoration. Image: Hargreaves Associates

Crissy Field, Presidio National Park, San Francisco, California 1994–2001

**Georges Hargreaves, Hargreaves Associates,
San Francisco, California, and Cambridge, Massachusetts**

Site is the fundamental building block of any landscape. Typically abandoned and/or contaminated, however, today's sites often require vast transformations in order to be returned to the public realm. At issue in these transformations, then, are the conscious qualities of site character, human activity, sustainability, and site-making. In developing site character we are asked to engage in notions of place, form and pattern, spatial volume and surface character. And through site design we must bring to life the delicate balance of efficiency and theoretic ideal that is sustainability and natural process. Emergent from all these considerations is the ultimate concern: to engender in the public realm those great places that capture the minds and hearts of humanity, and over time reflect the soul of our civilization.

—George Hargreaves



Duisburg-Nord Landscape Park, International Building Exhibition (IBA), Emscher Park, Duisburg, Germany 1990–2002

Peter Latz, Latz + Partner, Kranzberg, Germany

In my projects I am always interested in the “genius of the place” rather than in the genius of my office. Even motorways or industrial wastelands can be filled with a new spirit and can be made worth living by keeping visible the spirit of the existing site. Landscape and open space contain a wealth of information layers. These layers of information can exist physically, they can be visible or invisible, they can be abstract like cartographic grids, or remembrances—lying within or out of the place. The challenge is to make the right selection, to liberate our senses and to be open to new impressions.

—Peter Latz

Path cut through ore bunker walls. Image: Atelier 17/Christa Panick

The new urban landscapes that comprise this exhibition did not exist as public space half a generation ago. Nearly every significant new landscape designed in recent years occupies a site that has been reinvented and reclaimed from obsolescence or degradation as cities in the postindustrial era remake and redefine their outdoor spaces. *Groundswell: Constructing the Contemporary Landscape* portrays the surge of creativity surrounding the contemporary designed landscape by presenting a diverse selection of plazas, public parks, and urban sectors that have recently been completed or are in the process of being realized. The survey reveals the diverse ways that cities confront change by revaluing and reprogramming their spaces, ranging from a small urban square created in the aftermath of a terrorist bombing to the daunting task of transforming America’s largest landfill—where as many as 29,000 tons of garbage were dumped daily—into a wildlife sanctuary and place for recreation.

The projects in the exhibition illustrate many kinds of sites, a multivalent term that includes the physical properties of the ground, its history, and a program for the new landscape. **Designing the Urban Stage**, the first section of the exhibition, explores innovative reinterpretations of the traditional town square. The designers of these projects have endeavored to create unique visual and symbolic identities by various means, such as the selection of materials, trees, and plants with meaningful associations, the incorporation iconographic elements, and the recovery of historical traces. Projects in **Simulations of Nature and New Topographies** explore the relationship between artifice and nature in various ways, including the sculpting of new topographies that are inspired by natural environments. Examples of such simulations range from a prairie garden constructed over an underground parking garage to a new coastal park inspired by dunes built on landfill. Among the most pervasive landscapes encountered in our postindustrial era are abused and polluted sites that present challenges ranging from the remediation of toxic environments to the

defining of new programs for these inhospitable places. The compelling transformations of a number of such sites, which include a defunct steel mill, a former military airstrip, industrial waterfronts, and sanitary landfills, are explored in the exhibition’s final section, **The Bad and the Beautiful**. Their former uses exhausted, architects, landscape architects, and urban planners are asked to envision their postindustrial transformation into places for leisure activities and redevelopment.

The reinvention of the sites surveyed here are a measure of artistic creativity and of our changing attitudes toward natural and man-made environments. The formal diversity in these projects reflects not only each individual designer’s aesthetic and theoretical ideas about landscape—an art of horizontal surfaces and systems, impermanence and change—but also the way a design responds to a particular site. Inasmuch as landscapes are made and remade, the question of whether to reveal or conceal the traces of a site’s history—be it natural, industrial, or political—defines its genius loci and ultimately plays a role in its form, meaning, and cultural significance.

This brochure illustrates a selection of projects exhibited in *Groundswell*. Each illustration is coupled with a statement by the designer that is intended not so much as an explanation of a particular project, but rather to convey a broader range of ideas and concerns regarding the designer’s approach to constructing contemporary landscapes. The matrix of ideas and images reflects some of the ways that designers give shape to inert and living materials—rich in textures and colors and enhanced by light and water—to create meaningful spaces. Because of the role public space plays as a catalyst for urban development and in the quality of civic life, how these spaces are treated is ultimately a reflection of our culture. As such, the constructed landscapes in this exhibition are causes for optimism.

—Peter Reed, Curator, Department of Architecture and Design

Publication

Groundswell: Constructing the Contemporary Landscape presents twenty-three projects revealing the recent surge of creativity and discussion surrounding the designed landscape. This fully illustrated volume includes an essay by Peter Reed, Curator, Department of Architecture and Design, that explores the many approaches taken by today's architects and landscape architects as they create designs that resonate with a postindustrial landscape.

9½ x 11 inches; 168 pages; 233 color and 84 b&w ill.
379. paperback \$34.95 members \$31.50

Public Programs

Groundswell: Constructing the Contemporary Landscape: A Symposium

The Great Hall at The Cooper Union
Third Avenue at 7th Street

Friday, April 15, 6:30 P.M.

Keynote address by David Harvey, Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, The Graduate Center, The City University of New York. Introduction by Peter Reed, Curator, Department of Architecture and Design, and organizer of *Groundswell: Constructing the Contemporary Landscape*.

Saturday, April 16, 9:30 A.M.–5:00 P.M.

In constructing today's urban public landscapes, architects and landscape architects confront a wide range of conditions on sites that have been reclaimed from obsolescence and environmental degradation. In transforming these landscapes, they consider the compelling relationships among social uses, infrastructure systems, ecological concerns, and history. Through individual presentations and a round-table discussion, designers and scholars discuss these issues and innovative projects that expand the definition of the modern landscape.

Participants include James Corner, Field Operations, New York, and Chair and Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of Pennsylvania School of Design; Michel Desvigne, Paris; Kathryn Gustafson, Seattle and London; George Hargreaves, Hargreaves Associates, Cambridge, Massachusetts, New York, and San Francisco; Martha Schwartz, Martha Schwartz, Inc., Cambridge, Massachusetts; Ken Smith, Ken Smith Landscape Architect, New York; and Marion Weiss and Michael Manfredi, Weiss/Manfredi Architects, New York.

The symposium is co-sponsored by The Architectural League of New York, The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture of The Cooper Union, and The Museum of Modern Art.

Tickets for Friday are \$10, \$8 members, \$5 students; for Saturday \$25, \$12 members, \$10 students. Tickets can be purchased at the lobby information desk and at the Film and Media desk. Remaining tickets will be available at the door before each event.

The exhibition is the third in a series of five exhibitions made possible by The Lily Auchincloss Fund for Contemporary Architecture.

Additional support is provided by the Estate of Florene M. Schoenborn, Mimi and Peter Haas, Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, and the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund.

The accompanying publication is made possible by Elise Jaffe + Jeffrey Brown, the Blanchette Hooker Rockefeller Fund, and Furthermore: a program of the J. M. Kaplan Fund.

The accompanying educational programs are made possible by BNP Paribas.

Groundswell: Constructing the Contemporary Landscape, February 25–May 16, 2005, was organized by Peter Reed, Curator, and Irene Shum, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Architecture and Design, The Museum of Modern Art.

Exhibition Design: Jerome Neuner, Director, Department of Exhibition Design and Production **Graphic Design:** Kate Johnson, Senior Designer, Department of Graphic Design **Brochure Production:** Claire Corey, Production Manager, Department of Graphic Design **Editorial:** Libby Hruska, Associate Editor, Department of Publications

Brown Bag Lunch Lectures

Join us for informal lectures on modern and contemporary art on Mondays and Thursdays from 12:30–1:15 P.M. in Education classroom B. You may bring your own lunch. Tickets are \$5, \$3 for members and students, and are available at the lobby information desk and at the Film and Media desk. Space is limited.

April 18 & 21:

Groundswell: Constructing the Contemporary Landscape
Irene Shum

For more information about Adult and Academic Programs, please call (212) 708-9781, email adultprograms@moma.org, or visit <http://www.moma.org/education/>.