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# LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE MAGAZINE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN  
SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

## MYKD

With 30 years at the helm,  
Mikyong Kim looks ahead

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### PLANT MEDICINE

Chasing *Ficus septica* in the lab

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### TERESA MOLLER

The designer's perch in Chile

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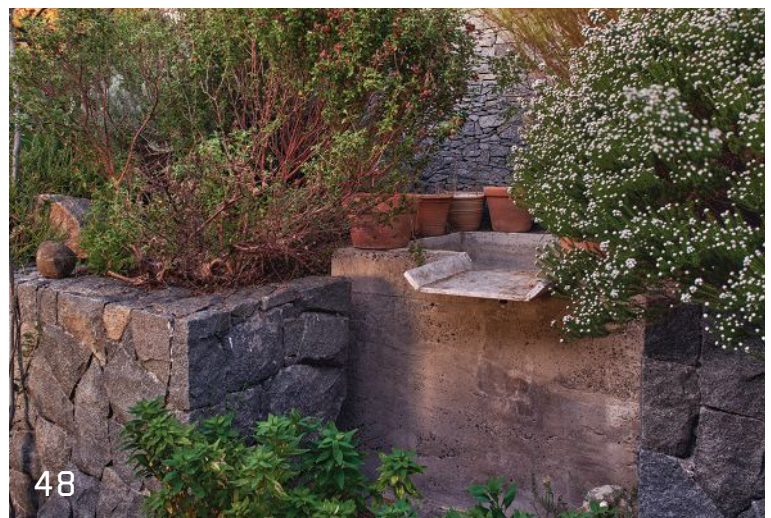
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## APRIL 2024

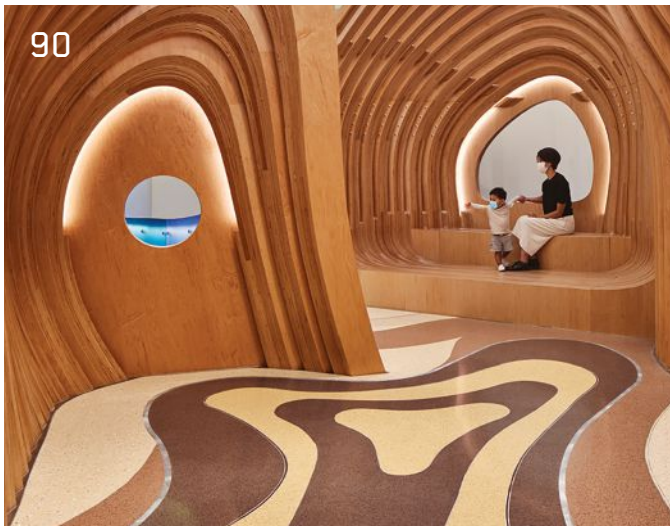
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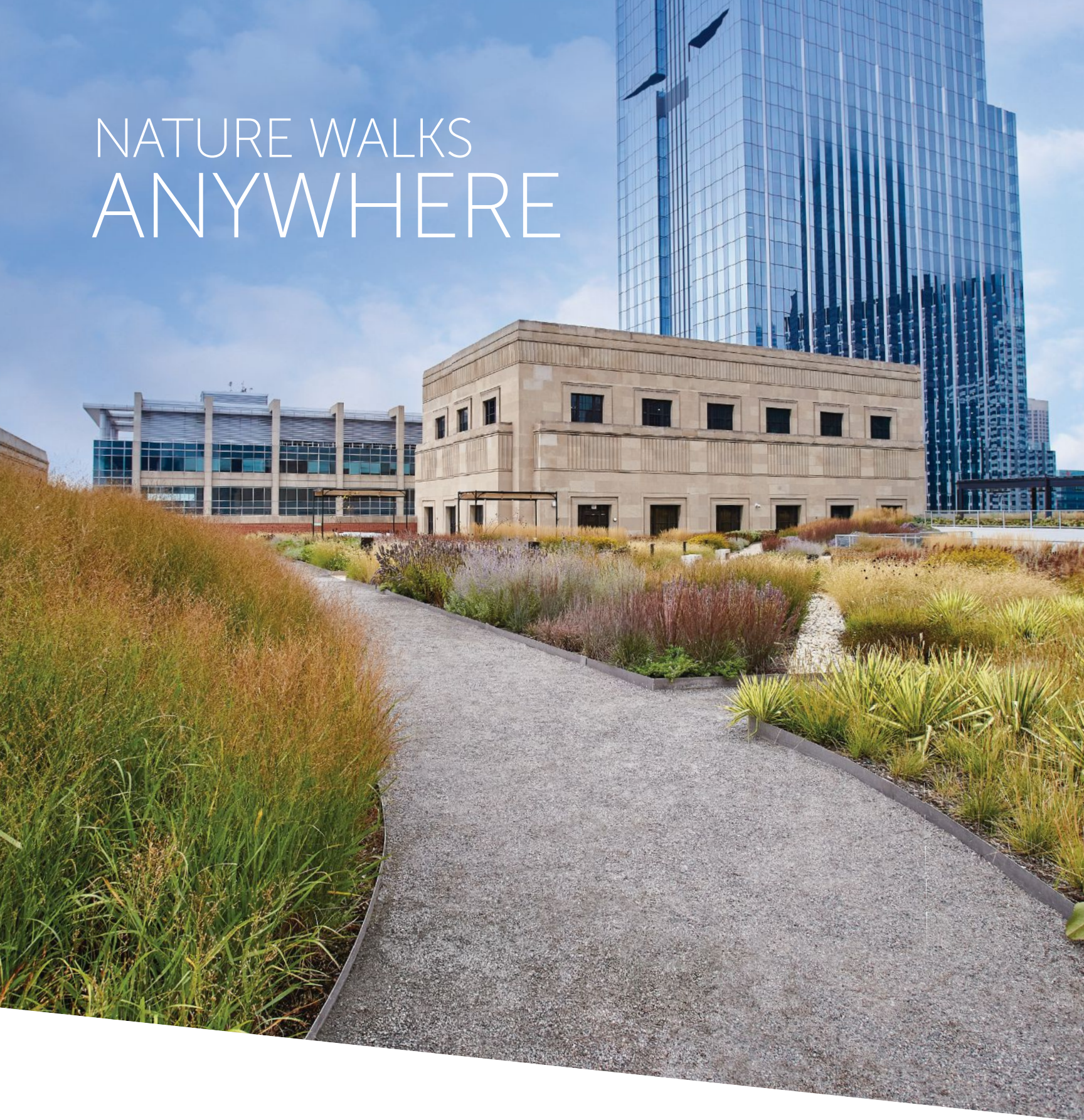
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Hardscape at the Wishingstone Garden at Boston Children's Hospital by Mikyoung Kim Design, page 90.

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## CONTRIBUTORS

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**GARETH DOHERTY, ASLA**, (“Far and Wide,” page 116) is an associate professor of landscape architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. You can follow him on Instagram [@garethgerarddoherty](#).

“Heartfelt thanks, not just to the Department of Landscape Architecture and the various research initiatives at Harvard University that supported my fieldwork, but to so many people I met on my travels who helped me with astonishing acts of kindness and hospitality.”



**CLARE JACOBSON** (“Coming to a Shoreline Near You,” page 26) is a San Francisco-based design writer and editor. You can see her work at [www.clarejacobson.com](#).

“I wish I could have included the Illinois Beach State Park Shoreline Stabilization Project—the first work to be verified under WEDG 3.0 and the first WEDG freshwater project—but the announcement postdated my research.”



**STEPHANIE ONWENU, ASLA**, (“Michigan Central Station,” page 102) is a Detroit-based visual artist and landscape designer with a background in social justice and community design. You can follow her on Instagram [@stephanieonwenu](#).

“I really appreciate the [station’s] adaptive reuse aspect and ecological landscape design focus, which call attention to the impact this project will have for local Detroit residents.”



**JUSTIN PARSCHER** (“Most Important Questions,” page 130) is an assistant professor of practice at The Ohio State University. You can follow him on Instagram [@rhymepaysage](#).

“Robert B. Riley’s original ‘Most Important Questions’ survey is fascinating—someone should do it again today.”

## GOT A STORY?

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SHOP  
TALK

If you run into me out in the world, you're likely to hear me gripe about the fact that we never get letters or emails anymore (it's truly crickets most months), or that I wish we heard from readers more, but that doesn't mean people aren't talking.

It doesn't happen on social media, where you might expect at least a dashed-off comment now and then, but on the outskirts—in comments made in other publications, on Reddit, and in conversations outside our offices. It's a bit disappointing—I genuinely believe a vigorous professional dustup or two belongs in these pages, and that the magazine, and landscape architecture, would be better for it out in the open.

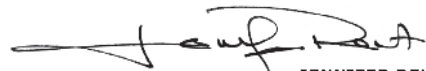
**THE GOAL WITH EVERY ISSUE IS TO PUBLISH EXCELLENCE. AT EVERY SCALE AND BY EVERY MEASURE.**

So, what have I heard? I've heard that some readers were offended by the June 2023 cover\* and feature story on the ups and downs of LGBTQIA+ landscape architects at work, and that many others were proud of the profession for stepping forward. I've heard some readers don't agree with the way *LAM* presents the profession generally: that we are too progressive, or too conservative and boring. I've heard we cover the big firms too much and ignore the striving small firms that make up the majority of the profession. And I've

heard we are not presenting the profession as the alpha at the table, and we focus too much on small projects and small firms, on people rather than projects. What I've learned is that you don't have to be particularly polarizing to polarize your readers, but that isn't a bad thing. Strong responses are interesting. They are worth investigating. They can bring growth.

April is a time I often take stock of this talk. It's a big, diverse issue, in part due to World Landscape Architecture Month, and it's one of the most widely read outside the profession. Into it we try to pack new voices and perspectives as well as strong examples of evolving thinking on what might be termed traditional projects. The goal, with every issue, every year, is to publish excellence. At every scale and by every measure.

Although landscape architecture has always had its arguments, it is a long way from the monolith it may have once sought to be. As the profession becomes more multifarious, more accomplished, more diverse in practice and expression, and landscape architects become more sure of themselves, *LAM* is bound to find itself bumping (maybe throwing?) elbows with some constituency in the profession. I see that as a good sign.



**JENNIFER REUT**  
EDITOR

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# FOREGROUND



## PUNTA PITE, CHILE

A scar on a coastal bluff is an invitation for Teresa Moller, in [HOUSE CALL](#), page 48.

EDITED BY TIMOTHY A. SCHULER

**BELOW**  
TEN x TEN's vision for the trail treats the former monorail as part of the cultural landscape.

## A VIEW TO THE ZOO

**TRANSFORMING A DEFUNCT MONORAIL INTO AN ELEVATED TRAIL WAS AN EXERCISE IN CREATIVE FRICTION.**

BY TIMOTHY A. SCHULER

For some designers, a zoo may not have the same appeal or design potential as, say, a postindustrial site. But for the Minneapolis-based designers at TEN x TEN Landscape Architecture and Urbanism, a project to repurpose a former monorail at the Minnesota Zoo as a 1.25-mile-long elevated walking path was as rich as any historic site.

“We really saw this as a cultural landscape. We found these logs that the monorail drivers would post. We were getting into monorail design. Those are the kinds of things that we get obsessive about,” says Ross Altheimer, ASLA, a founding principal at TEN x TEN, which collaborated with Minneapolis-based Snow Kreilich Architects on the project.

Situated 20 miles south of Minneapolis in Apple Valley, the Minnesota Zoo has a landscape pedigree. Opened in 1978, the zoo was designed by Roger Bond Martin, a founder of the University of Minnesota's landscape architecture program. With 500 acres of naturalistic environments and the





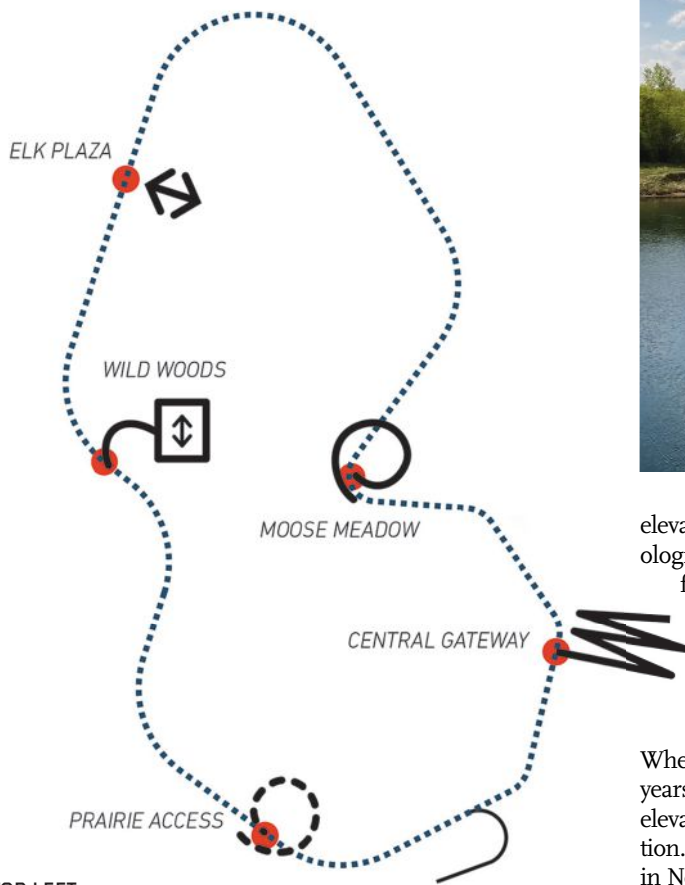
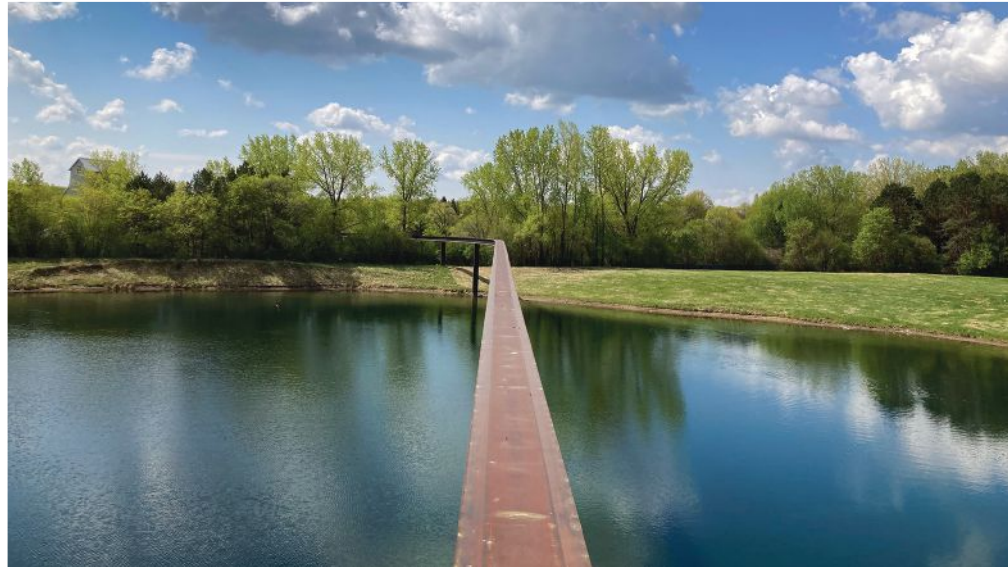
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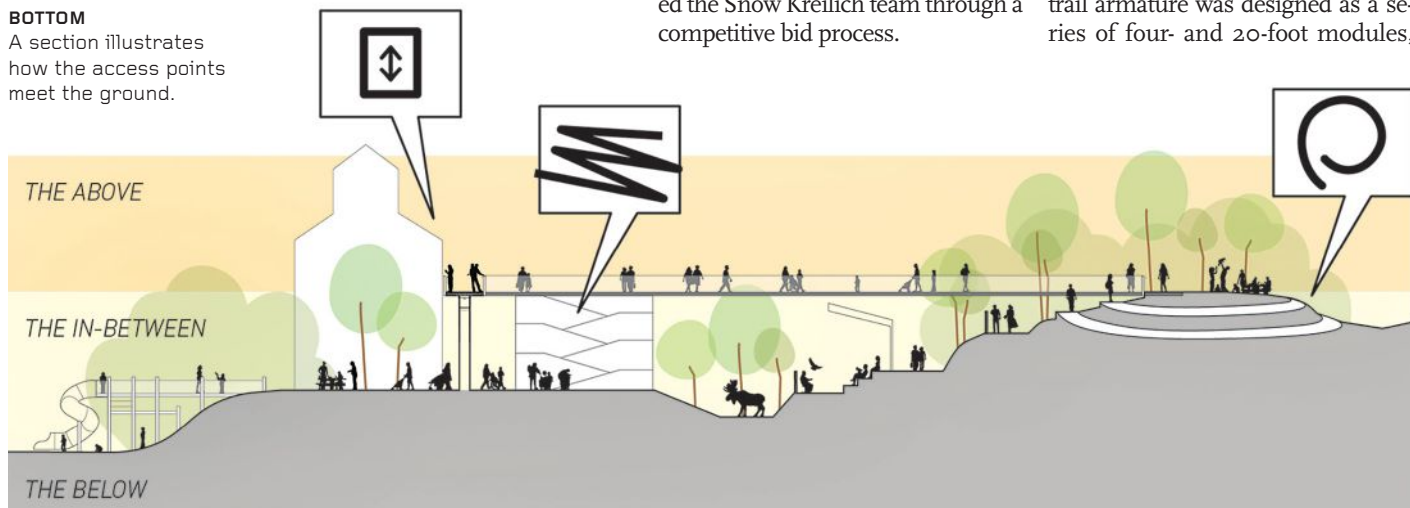


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**TOP LEFT**  
A series of new access points were added, each with their own distinct form.

**BOTTOM**  
A section illustrates how the access points meet the ground.

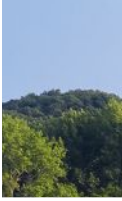


elevated monorail, Minnesota’s “zoological gardens” were a departure from more conventional zoo design at the time. “They wanted the animals to be in a natural setting, and so the scale of this thing is huge,” Altheimer says.

When the monorail closed after 34 years in operation, the future of the elevated rail line was an open question. It was a visit to the High Line in New York that gave John Frawley, the zoo’s president and CEO, the idea to convert it into a trail. Following a 2016 feasibility study and successful fundraising campaign, the zoo selected the Snow Kreilich team through a competitive bid process.

The final design repurposes the monorail line to create an elevated walkway that takes visitors over animal enclosures, across lakes, and through woodlands. Accessed through a variety of new and repurposed touchdown points, the trail is divided into four sections with interpretive elements that highlight different ways of connecting with nature, such as through scientific observation or creative inspiration. (TEN x TEN also served as a consultant for the interpretation and wayfinding.)

To minimize disturbance to the animals and existing ecosystems, the trail armature was designed as a series of four- and 20-foot modules,





**ABOVE**

Rest points, seen here in the middle ground, were inspired by the logic and visual language of monorail track design.

**OPPOSITE INSET**

A preconstruction photo taken from a monorail maintenance vehicle captures one of many dramatic vistas along the route.

which were constructed off-site, lifted onto the monorail line, and pushed into place by a reconstituted maintenance car.

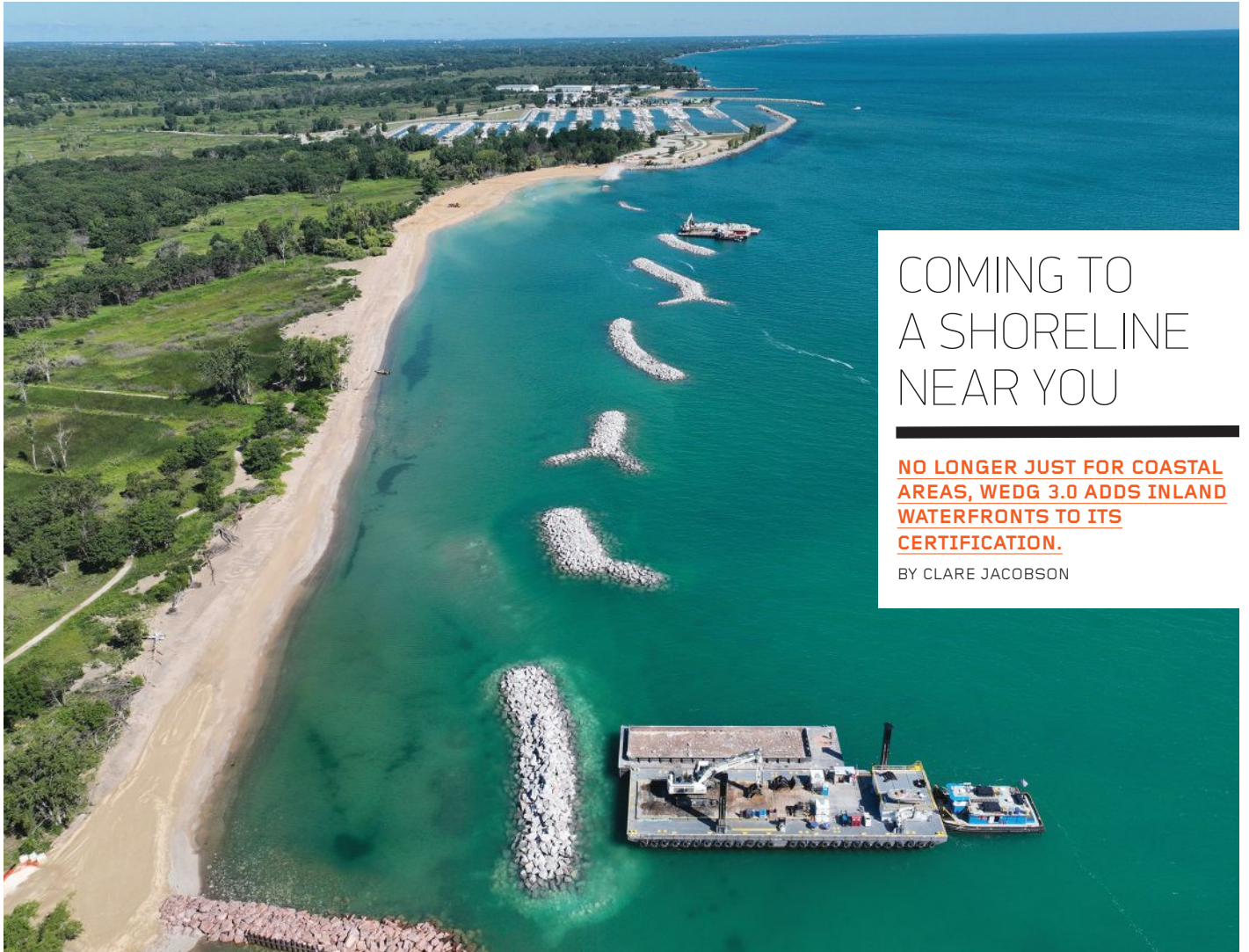
Snow Kreilich and TEN x TEN are frequent collaborators, and yet members of both teams say the project blurred the lines between disciplines to an unprecedented degree, partly because of the project's commencement during the pandemic. The intensive design process wasn't always without conflict. "A lot of times we talk about collaboration as this natu-

ral thing where [everything] is rainbows and butterflies. But sometimes there are moments of tension," says Egle Vanagaite, ASLA, the director of impact at TEN x TEN.

Altheimer recalls "extensive conversation" about how to incorporate rest areas and interpretive points along the trail. "In their mind, it was basically a line that would thicken [in places]. And we're like, well, no, because the whole logic of this thing is about the monorail, and actually, they have these little platforms and switches," he says.

"You can't just apply a language—I mean, you obviously could, but it made less sense to us."

Mary Springer, an associate principal for Snow Kreilich, says these moments ultimately benefited the consensus-driven approach to the project. But they're only possible when teams have mutual trust. "What's encouraging to me about the relationship is that nobody's holding back," Springer says. "Everybody's participating fully. And it means that there's going to be friction." ●



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**NO LONGER JUST FOR COASTAL  
AREAS, WEDG 3.0 ADDS INLAND  
WATERFRONTS TO ITS  
CERTIFICATION.**

BY CLARE JACOBSON

**ABOVE**  
A shoreline stabilization project in Illinois is the first project certified under the new WEDG standards.

In October 2023, the New York–based nonprofit Waterfront Alliance launched version 3.0 of its Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines (WEDG) and revised its WEDG Professionals Course, which the group describes as “tools for sites building resilience, ecology, and access at the water’s edge.” WEDG was updated in part to maintain best practices and to surpass regulatory codes, says Joseph Sutkowi, the chief waterfront design officer at the Waterfront Alliance. He notes changes to benchmarks for community engagement, long-term maintenance planning, and protection for flooding beyond a site’s property line.

The most noteworthy update to WEDG is its inclusion of lake and river environments. Version 1.0, released in 2015, applied only to the New York and New Jersey harbor; version 2.0 was launched in 2019 for coastal sites across the United States. Version 3.0, Sutkowi says, was developed in response to overt demand. “We had conversations with folks in inland cities—Nashville, Muskegon, Detroit, Toronto—about the idea of expanding into freshwater systems,” he says. “And when we started to look into the applicability of the standard, we saw that there was more overlap than we expected.”

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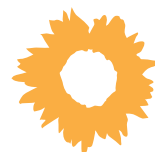
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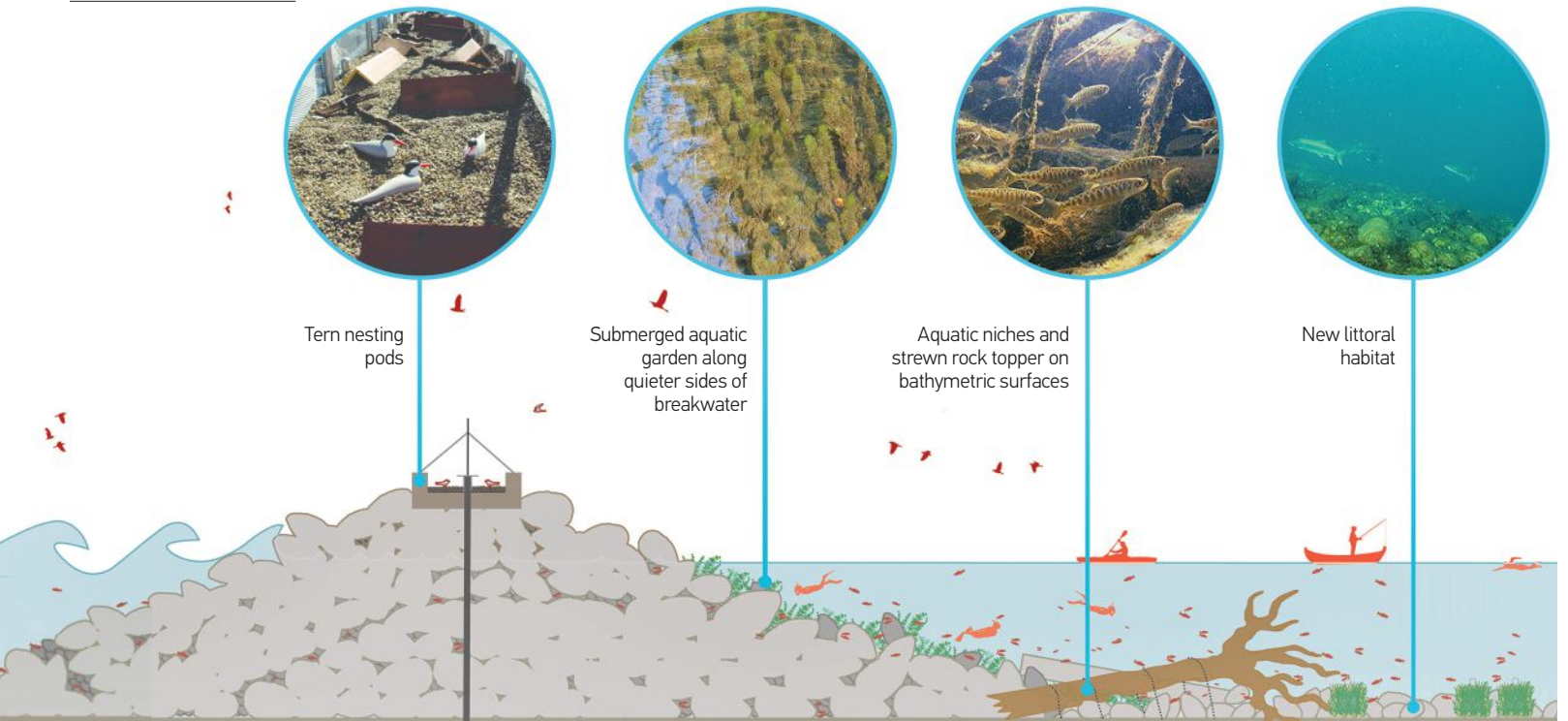
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Elvis Wong, an associate at SWA's Laguna Beach office, also sees this overlap. He says that while East Coast waterfront projects—the work WEDG initially addressed—are often large-scale brown-field developments, his office on the West Coast typically shapes greenfield projects on suburban scales. “Regardless of the types of work,” he says, “the requirements for things like designing for flood elevation, designing for community access, and creating adaptive management plans are things that we’re seeing throughout California.” Since 3.0 was released, SWA Laguna Beach has started to plan out projects to submit for WEDG verification.

Expanding from New York to California and all points in between is part of the Waterfront Alliance’s plan. “The goal is that WEDG is on all waterfronts everywhere in the U.S.,” Sutkowi says. “That’s an awfully lofty goal for a small team.” To help grow the program, the group concentrates on a few target cities where it has made inroads

and employs “WEDG associates”—people who have taken the WEDG Professionals Course—as advocates. Wong is one such advocate.

Tom Klein, ASLA, a project manager at Wenk Associates, is another. Klein previously worked in New York City and brought WEDG with him to his Denver-based firm. “I was excited when I heard that WEDG was going to expand to the non-coast realm,” he says. “As a proud midwesterner, I think that it’s a prescient tool for us to use.”

Klein notes that WEDG’s focus on waterfront design has helped it find a space within landscape architecture. Whereas larger certification programs cannot go into detail on subjects such as at-risk species, plant habitats, and ecology, WEDG does. “For me, it exposes an opportunity for other niche frameworks for verification,” Klein says. “And I wonder if there’s something to the idea of trying to stay small and nimble and be a little bit more qualitative.” ●

**ABOVE**  
Funded through the Rebuild Illinois capital plan, each breakwater features new below- and above-water habitats.

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## DOUBLING DOWN



### **HOBOKEN, NEW JERSEY, INVESTS IN SUCCESS WITH ITS RESILIENCY PARKS.**

BY TIMOTHY A. SCHULER

**I**n 2017, five years after Superstorm Sandy, Hoboken, New Jersey, opened its first “resiliency park,” a single acre of open space that could manage 200,000 gallons of stormwater through a sophisticated network of subterranean pipes and densely planted rain gardens. In the seven years since, the city has completed two more resiliency parks and is at work on a third. Together, these parks encompass 10 acres and manage more than three million gallons of water, enough to make a measurable difference during heavy rain events.

“News crews come to Hoboken to film the flooding and are leaving empty-handed,” says Caleb Stratton, the city’s chief resilience officer.

Now, the city is expanding that first demonstration site, known as Southwest Resiliency Park, to more than double its existing stormwater capacity. It’s a clear indication that, from the city’s perspective, the strategy is working. It’s also a testament to the continued impact of Rebuild by Design, initiated by the Obama administration’s Department of Hous-

ing and Urban Development in the aftermath of Sandy. “We had ideas, [but] those ideas were in disparate locations,” Stratton says. “Rebuild gave structure and deliberateness to how we were trying to approach this type of development.”

Designed by Starr Whitehouse Landscape Architects and Planners, which also led the conception of its predecessor, the expansion of Southwest Resiliency Park is partially funded through a \$6.24 million FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant. It repeats many of the same stormwater strategies while adding new features, such as a playground, splash pad, and basketball

**ABOVE**  
With pickleball courts and a playground, the second phase of Hoboken’s Southwest Resiliency Park complements its more civic predecessor.

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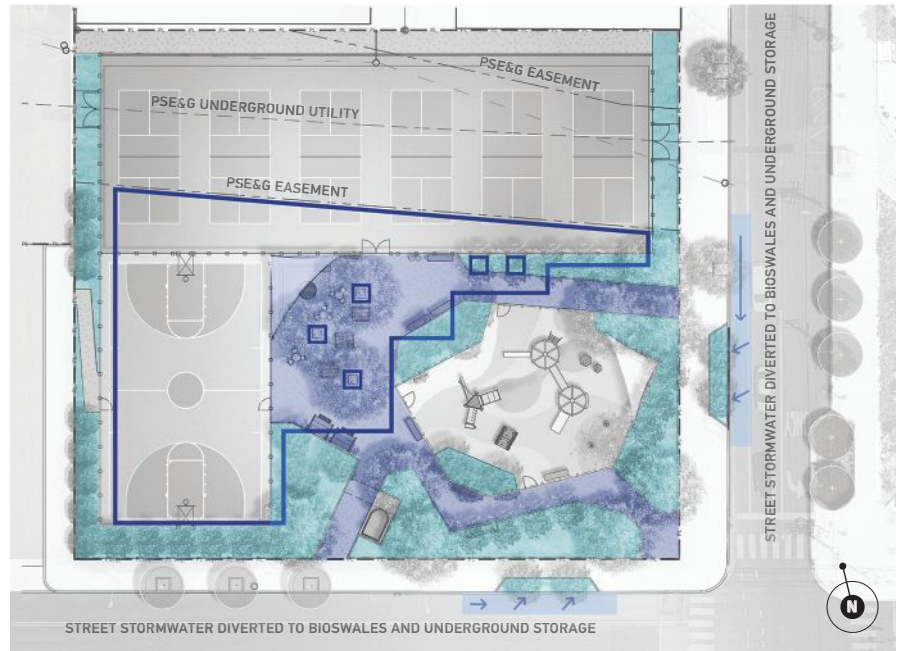


STORMWATER STRATEGY

**LEGEND**

**Total Storage Volume: 260,000 gallons**

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**RIGHT**  
Underground water storage had to be configured around a utility easement, sport courts, and play equipment foundations.

**BELOW**  
Southwest Resiliency Park's second phase repeats most of the resilience strategies of the first but also adds more shade.

and pickleball courts. In a sense, the second park is a completion of the first. Stephen Whitehouse, ASLA, a principal at Starr Whitehouse, says that for the earlier project—which predated Sandy but evolved into a demonstration of the city's “Resist, Delay, Store, Discharge” strategy—the community opted for a scheme heavy on civic space, which left no room for recreation amenities. “That was never supposed to be the only piece of the Southwest Park,” he says.

Located across the street on a former parking lot, the park's expansion interweaves ball courts and play areas with surface and subsurface stormwater infrastructure. A challenge in both

cases was the area's low elevation and high water table. “Weirdly enough, the high ground in Hoboken is next to the river. The low ground is behind it,” Whitehouse explains. “We have elevations of, like, five to seven feet above sea level that we're working with,” which means that the “whole detention system is within this narrow strata between the surface of the park and the top of the groundwater, [which] is about five feet.”

Complicating the expansion was an easement for the utility company PSE&G that runs diagonally through the site's northern portion, which limited where any structural foundations or underground storage pipes could go. Material tests subsequently determined that pervious pavement was incompatible with pickleball, leading the design team to locate the pickleball courts on the north side of the property and focus water storage in the south and central areas.

As a densely populated, low-lying city, Hoboken is still highly susceptible to flooding. But experts and observers are beginning to recognize that its efforts could represent a winning strategy. For Whitehouse, the challenges represented by that first resiliency park constituted a “perfect zone for landscape architecture,” he says. “There was this aspect of flood protection, but also this original aspect of transformative open space. To reconcile those two in a design solution was a wonderful challenge.” ●





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## MATERIAL MILESTONES

### **GRACE FARMS GROWS AN INITIATIVE ON ETHICAL SUPPLY CHAINS WITH THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE.**

BY KAROLINA HAC

Recently, the U.S. Department of State has become more invested in increasing transparency in built environment supply chains. Curtis Clay, the director of architecture at the department's Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO), cites a particular incident as the spark: An architect had specified a stone from a quarry local to a project, but because of "procurement regulations which limit sole source product selections," the contractor selected a stone from "halfway around the world," Clay recalled in an email. "This prompted OBO to explore why this was a feasible option for the contractor, and it was primarily due to the labor costs."

This moment led OBO to Grace Farms Foundation in 2021. Grace Farms, headquartered in New Canaan, Connecticut, established the Design for Freedom initiative in 2020 to "[reimagine] architecture by raising awareness and inspiring responses to disrupt forced labor in the building materials supply chain," according to the website. Some of the principles championed by the initiative include relying on material circularity to minimize mining raw materials and adopting internal ethical sourcing policies (see "Breaking Bonds," *LAM*, December 2022).

In 2022, Grace Farms, SHoP Architects, and the Department of State presented "Design for Freedom: Equity in the Material Supply Chain" at the American Institute of Architects conference in Chicago. Later that year, OBO invited Grace Farms's CEO and founder Sharon Prince to give the keynote at OBO's annual Industry Advisory Group meeting.

Clay, a member of the more-than-100-person Design for Freedom Working Group, says the most recent ethical supply chain workshop hosted by OBO, Grace Farms, and Turner Construction Company in November 2023 was a step toward implementation. (The author's employer, Eric Höweler, is a member of the Design for Freedom Working Group.) The workshop brought together public- and private-sector experts to discuss strategies for creating more transparency in supply chains and the importance of linking climate and economic justice.

Incorporating the Design for Freedom framework and tool kit into OBO's procurement process could still be a long way off, in part because of federal procurement laws and regulations. OBO does not currently have a Design for Freedom pilot project on the boards, as new projects "require advance financial obligations from Congress," Clay says. In the meantime, OBO and the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons have created the Responsible Sourcing Tool, available on their website to assist in addressing forced labor in global supply chains.

In March, Grace Farms held its third Design for Freedom summit, titled "Accelerate the Movement," which brought together a cohort of leaders from architecture, academia, banking, nonprofits, and industry to discuss topics including ethical decarbonization, new and existing pilot projects, and mapping technologies for material supply chains. ●





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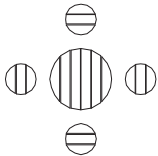
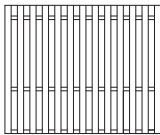
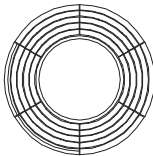
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## CHANGING COURSE

### A NEW URBANIST ENCLAVE IN FLORIDA GROWS TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY WITH HELP FROM EDWINA VON GAL AND DEPT.

BY TIMOTHY A. SCHULER

The landscape of Windsor, Florida, a well-known and wealthy New Urbanist enclave north of Palm Beach, seems to consist of exactly three components: an uninterrupted carpet of St. Augustine grass, geometric hedges, and pom-pom-topped *Washingtonia* palms. This biological homogeneity is in stark contrast with the abundance found just a few thousand feet north, in the brackish wilds of Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge, the first federal bird sanctuary in the United States. Now, a new addition to Windsor will bridge the chasm between the two.

The site design for Windsor's North Village is being led by Isaac Stein, ASLA, and Maggie Tsang of Dept. Landscape Architecture and Urbanism, alongside Edwina von Gal, the landscape designer whose clients and collaborators include Maya Lin, Frank Gehry, and Richard Serra. The project represents an evolution for the residential community and the beginning of a broader shift in how Windsor governs and maintains its landscape.

Founded by W. Galen Weston and Hilary M. Weston in the early 1990s, Windsor was planned by the New

Urbanism evangelists Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, founders of DPZ CoDesign. The North Village, also planned by DPZ, is primarily the vision of the Westons' daughter, Alannah Weston, who until recently led Selfridges department stores. Alannah Weston launched the project with a vision statement that outlined the project's environmental ambitions. "We call it the manifesto," says Beth Dowdle, a planner who spent years with the Conservation Fund, who is also consulting on the project. Dowdle recommended von Gal, who agreed to join as a sustainability consultant but not the lead designer. "I said, I don't do that kind of work and am mostly retired anyway. We're going to look around and find the right landscape architecture team for this job," von Gal recalls.

Stein and Tsang were invited to interview based on their sensitive yet contemporary refresh of a roadside motel in Seaside, a New Urbanist community on the other side of Florida. But initially, they weren't sure about the project. "We knew of Windsor, so we honestly were a bit hesitant when Edwina and Beth interviewed us," Stein says, describing the community's tight control over landscape management. "We were like, is this the old Windsor? Because that doesn't seem like the right fit for us." But they were impressed by Alannah Weston's manifesto and equally encouraged by Windsor Properties' willingness to listen to their ideas.

**BELOW**

A wilder, more biologically rich landscape will distinguish Windsor, Florida's new development from its predecessor.



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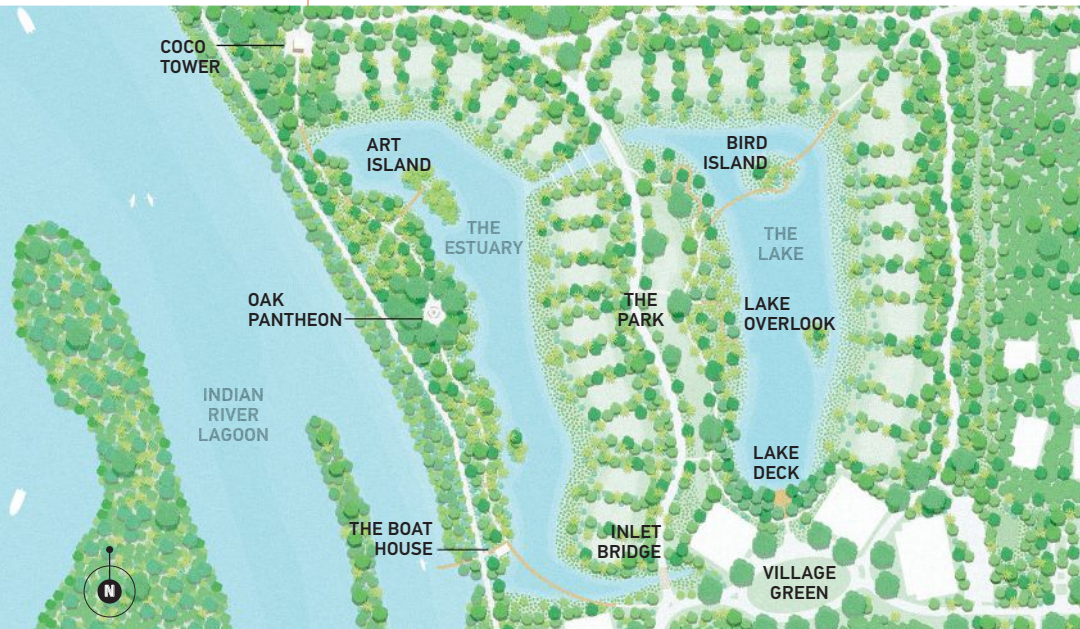
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WINDSOR'S NORTH VILLAGE



**ABOVE**  
Dept.'s plan for the community establishes a hydrological connection between its lakes and the adjacent Indian River Lagoon.

**BOTTOM**  
The design team regraded the entire site, creating niches for specific Florida plant communities.

"They'd gotten pretty far down the line with urban design and civil engineering, and we took the risk of saying, 'Let's rethink these major hydrological connections. Let's rethink what it means to cultivate a habitat.' And we were shocked that they were like, 'Okay, let's do it,'" Tsang says.

Current plans call for 34 residential lots and six row houses on 47 acres of former citrus plantation. Dept. regraded the entire site and established new connections to the Indian River Lagoon, one of the most biodiverse estuaries in North America. "We basically said, if you want ecology, you have to get the hydrology right," Stein

says. The plant palette reflects the lush, naturally biodiverse Floridian landscape and the ecologies that assert themselves at Windsor's edges. "Looking closely at what was growing in the margins was really the big inspiration for the plant communities," he says.

Whether the designers say as much, the vision is a referendum on Windsor's past approach to landscape hegemony. "The Windsor community is a very high-end and very demanding audience, and they pride themselves on a landscape that is pristine," says von Gal, whose Perfect Earth Project advocates for nontoxic and low-carbon landscape mainte-

nance practices. "But how have they historically achieved 'pristine'? I call that the world of noise and poison." At the North Village, a full-time, in-house landscape manager will ensure that the native plants are cared for properly and also advise owners on their private gardens. Von Gal and Stein have also written a landscape code, which will apply not only to the North Village but to all of Windsor.

There are those—including the late Ruth Durack, director of the Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative—who have argued that New Urbanism is incompatible with sustainability. And certainly one can question whether the heightened landscape performance at Windsor's North Village goes any distance in offsetting the disproportionate carbon emissions associated with the ultrawealthy residential communities. But Dowdle says it's critical that humans find ways to live that support natural ecosystems. To her, Windsor's North Village is part of that pursuit. "Tangible examples," she says, "are the greatest form of advocacy." ●



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## A CERTAIN SACRIFICE

### **ON A LEFTOVER SITE IN PUNTA PITE, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT TERESA MOLLER'S HOUSE IS A STUDY IN GIVE AND TAKE.**

BY JIMENA MARTIGNONI/PHOTOGRAPHY BY CRISTÓBAL PALMA

**ABOVE**  
Teresa Moller scans the view from the rooftop of her house in Chile.

Nestled into steep cliffs that face the Pacific Coast of Chile, the landscape architect Teresa Moller's house combines a small-scale rewilding and a site for the study of seacoast plants. The experimental gardens at Moller's house, in the residential development Punta Pite, are part of a 27-acre property that follows the contours of a bay between Zapallar and Papudo, two sea towns

located about 100 miles north of Santiago. Started more than 15 years ago, the gardens seem to have realized their full potential, though they are also, fundamentally, an evolving work in progress.

Facing a record-breaking drought that has lasted more than a decade, Chile is going through its worst water crisis. At her home in Punta Pite,

Moller has created a place where a wide range of native and nonnative drought-tolerant plants coexist and complete a positive ecological feedback mechanism. In a coastal environment, with the necessary daily humidity provided by the ocean, the plant communities have managed to survive the extreme conditions that are affecting most ecosystems on the planet.



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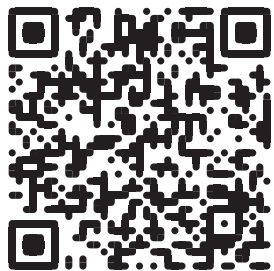
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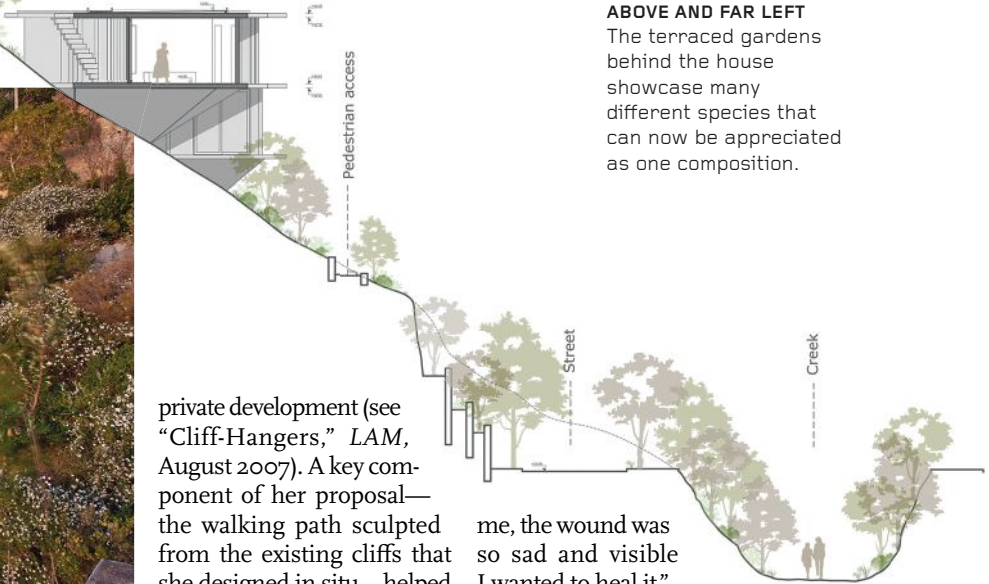
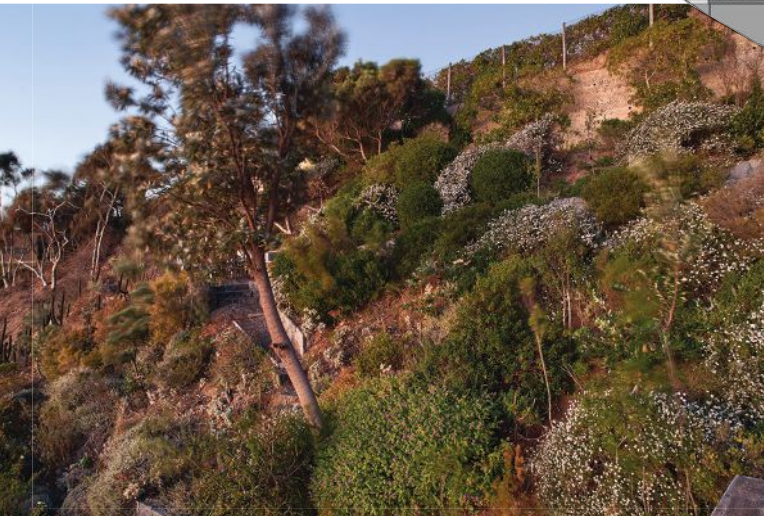
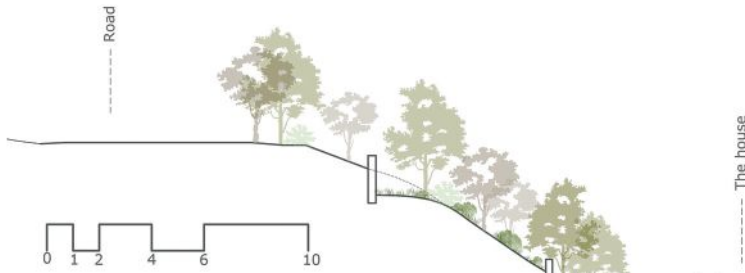
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**ABOVE AND FAR LEFT**  
The terraced gardens behind the house showcase many different species that can now be appreciated as one composition.

private development (see “Cliff-Hangers,” *LAM*, August 2007). A key component of her proposal—the walking path sculpted from the existing cliffs that she designed in situ—helped Punta Pite become one of the

me, the wound was so sad and visible I wanted to heal it.”

Moller’s reputation is well-established. A Chilean landscape architect based in Santiago, she was chosen by *Gardens Illustrated* as one of the world’s most interesting designers. Recently, she received the 2021 Global Award for Sustainable Architecture sponsored by UNESCO, and was also included as one of the 50 featured landscape architects in *250 Things a Landscape Architect Should Know*.

In 2005, when Moller acquired the lot in Punta Pite, she was working on the design of the public spaces for the

designer’s landmark projects, one that has been published worldwide. As to how she herself came to own a piece of property at Punta Pite, Moller says she fell in love with the site after so many visits and long days working with the stone craftsmen. “There was this very steep piece of land that was not for sale because it was at the very back of the development and part of the hillside that had been cut in order to build the upper public road,” she says. “So the owners offered me a great deal if I was able to restore this wounded landscape. For

While working on the final pieces of the landscape plan for the site and the pathway along the coastline, Moller began construction on the first retaining walls, which strengthened the once-shattered hillside. The stone retaining walls consist of a series of sections of varied heights at the edges of which grow trees, shrubs, herbs, cacti, and ground covers.

The lot’s full length is 315 feet and the width is approximately 115 feet, but the slope was so high that by shaping narrow paths and horizontal

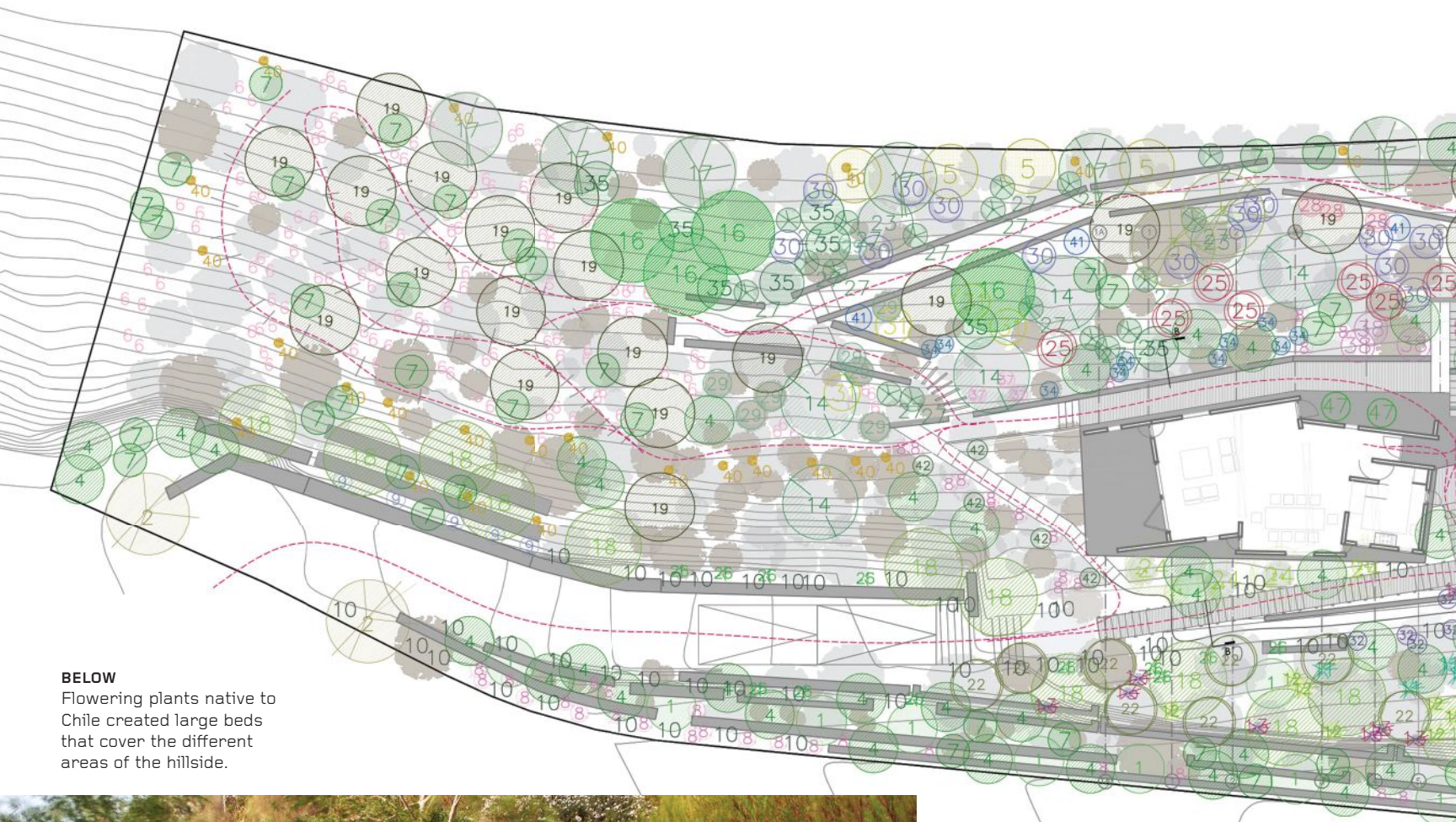
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## TURN THE LIGHTS ON!

# FOREGROUND / HOUSE CALL



**BELOW**  
Flowering plants native to Chile created large beds that cover the different areas of the hillside.



surfaces out of the available land, she made it appear wider. These paths were planned as intimate walkways connecting the linear spaces and flatter areas that would receive the new planting and provide the raw land for the house. Completely adapted to the existing slopes, hanging across the land as a bridge, and respecting the location of all the existing trees found on-site, the shape of the house reminds Moller of “a caterpillar going forward, toward the ocean.”

Moller was closely involved in the house’s architectural layout and established the main guidelines for its design, which was led by the Chilean architect Bernardo Valdés. But it was the landscape of stones and plants that she felt was her professional duty and something that, over time, turned into a personal project. Facing a creek whose restoration and



## NATIVE SPECIES

### TREES

- 1 *Maytenus boaria* (Mayten)
- 2 *Prosopis alba* (Argentine mesquite)
- 3 *Prosopis chilensis* (Chilean mesquite)
- 4 *Schinus latifolius* (Molle)
- 5 *Senna candolleana* (Quebracho)

### SHRUBS

- 6 *Alstroemeria aurea* (Peruvian lily)
- 7 *Baccharis concava* (Vautro)
- 8 *Calandrinia* sp. (Redmaids)
- 9 *Nolana* sp. (Chilean bellflower)
- 10 *Libertia chilensis* (Chilean iris)
- 11 *Puya × berteroniana* (Blue puya)
- 12 *Puya chilensis* (Chagual)
- 13 *Puya venusta* (Chagualillo)

## INTRODUCED SPECIES

### TREES

- 14 *Banksia integrifolia* (Coast banksia)
- 15 *Ficus carica* (Edible fig)
- 16 *Hakea suaveolens* (Sweet hakea)
- 17 *Lagunaria patersonia* (Cow itch tree)
- 18 *Melaleuca nesophila* (Showy honeymyrtle)
- 19 *Olea europaea* (Olive)
- 20 *Pyrus pyraster* (Wild pear)

## LARGE SHRUBS

- 21 *Arbutus unedo* (Strawberry tree)
- 22 *Laurus nobilis* (Bay laurel)
- 23 *Leptospermum laevigatum* (Australian tea tree)
- 24 *Psidium guajava* (Guava)

## SHRUBS

- 25 *Billardiera heterophylla* (Bluebell creeper)
- 26 *Diets iridioides* (African iris)
- 27 *Eriocephalus africanus* (African rosemary)
- 28 *Eriogonum cinereum* (Coastal buckwheat)
- 29 *Eriogonum giganteum* (St. Catherine's lace)
- 30 *Escallonia rubra* var. *macrantha* (Redclaws)
- 31 *Gnidia squarrosa* (Saffron bush)
- 32 *Lavandula angustifolia* (English lavender)
- 33 *Lavandula dentata* (Fringed lavender)
- 34 *Lavandula stoechas* (French lavender)
- 35 *Metalasia muricata* (White bristle bush)
- 36 *Nerium oleander* (Oleander)
- 37 *Polygala nana* (Candyroot)
- 38 *Rhaphiolepis indica* (Indian hawthorn)

- 39 *Searsia crenata* (Dune crowberry) (Potted)

- 40 *Rosa × bracteata* 'Mermaid' (Mermaid climbing rose)
- 41 *Rosmarinus officinalis* (Rosemary)
- 42 *Salvia taraxacifolia* (Dandelion leaf sage)
- 43 *Watsonia borbonica* (Cape bugle-lily)

## HERBS

- 44 *Mentha* (Mint)
- 45 *Origanum vulgare* (Oregano)
- 46 *Thymus* (Thyme)

## CACTI

- 47 *Echinopsis pachanoi* (San Pedro cactus) (Potted)

**RIGHT**

The plant arrangement provides intimate spaces and paths, as well as a butterfly- and bird-friendly landscape.

**BELOW**

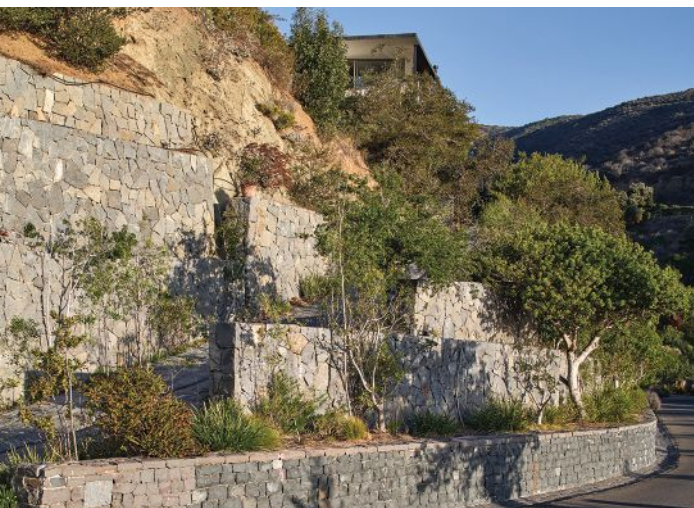
A series of retaining walls strengthen the once-wounded hillside.



replanting Moller had overseen as part of her initial work at the site, the hillside was planned as the recipient of the typical plant species of this sheltered, marshy ecosystem. Re-creating this natural landscape as an

area that could reconnect fragmented patches and habitats throughout the site was Moller's main objective. The new regenerated landscape would be an offspring of the creek, growing side by side until it developed into an integrative natural system.

are cut and differentiated in planes of diverse proportions, increasing in number and presenting a more dynamic layout that alternates with the remaining spaces filled with greenery.



To stabilize the slope for construction, the initial stages of the plan focused on the stepped retaining walls that reinforce the eroded slopes and create a stable pad where the house would rest. The height and width of every wall section respond to its location and, therefore, to different structural, functional, and formal needs. At the bottom, longer and lower walls create a first row that demarcates the full extension of the lot and follows its original curved shape, offering a strong base and providing room for smaller ornamental plants. At the intermediate areas, the walls

In the early years of the restoration process, Moller began to plant the area. She created linear spaces or terraces that provide enough room for plant combinations, especially behind the house. A subtle but significant difference between the front of the site, mainly characterized by the multiple stone walls, and the area behind the house was that the latter is a more private place to be enjoyed as a visual composition and as a sensory experience. Made up of many different planted spaces, the site can be appreciated as one single composition, with the terraced gardens bordered by very narrow paths. Sauntering up





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and down these terraces and having the chance to enjoy the many colors, perfumes, and textures displayed is an intimate and peaceful moment of connection with nature.

Approximately six or seven years after Moller first started planting, she ran into an unexpected problem. Originally, the hillside had been planted with more than 30 eucalyptus trees that, as part of a decision made in the early stages, were left untouched; even the house's architectural layout was adapted to the trees' locations. But this seemingly environmentally conscious choice didn't take into account that these invasive, nonnative trees—extensive water users with root systems that can disrupt natural water flows and cause soil erosion—would

inhibit the growth of the rest of Moller's landscape. "These trees were sucking up the water provided by the drip irrigation system and leaving all other plants thirsty," she says. "They basically were not growing while the eucalyptus trees seemed to be conquering the land."

In a controversial but, in Moller's mind, necessary decision, she cut down every one of the eucalyptus trees. Not long after, things changed.

Native species from the region and those planted in the creek sprouted and started to grow into a dense young woodland. Three native trees iconic in arid and semiarid coastal

zones in Chile—mayten, molle, and Chilean mesquite—rapidly propagated and established small glades throughout the site. Native shrubs also typical of the Chilean coast such as vauto, chagalillo, and chagal started to poke their heads above the soil as well.

**TOP**

An ecosystem in balance, the site can be described as a plant community or a natural system.

**INSET**

The roof is connected to the rear areas with a small wooden bridge.



# PROVEN ADAPTABLE



LANDSCAPE  
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**ABOVE LEFT**  
Stone pieces, including steps, runnels, short walls, and framing structures, are key in Moller's designs.

**ABOVE RIGHT**  
A perspective from the northernmost piece of the site, looking at a projecting balcony that provides open views toward the ocean.

Many flowering plants also arrived on the scene and created large beds that now cover different areas of the hillside. *Alstroemeria*, one of the most diverse groups of vascular plants endemic to South America, usually blooms after the rainy season, and Moller noticed it for the first time after the trees were removed. Also known for its flowers, native *Calandrinia* produces masses of blooms. Combined, these colorful compositions attract small birds and butterflies—a sign of success on the recovery path originally traced.

“It was magic and very moving, seeing how these plants I knew so well were feeling at home and growing spontaneously,” Moller says. “It was

“IT WAS MAGIC AND VERY MOVING, SEEING HOW THESE PLANTS I KNEW SO WELL WERE GROWING SPONTANEOUSLY.”

—TERESA MOLLER



something to celebrate, especially because they grew very fast. With new shady areas, other plants began to naturally grow too. It was a victory of nature and the result of healthier conditions.”

Not only native species were planted in the beginning, and with more adequate general conditions, many of the introduced trees and shrubs appeared naturally in different places or grew much larger. Australian coastal species she had found at local specialty nurseries in some of her plant-gathering expeditions turned out to be another great revelation after the eucalyptus trees were removed. Showy honeymyrtle, coast banksia, and sweet hakea are three of the Australian species that grew spectacularly. At the present time, she is working on a “Mount of Olives,” as she calls a corner of the site,

far away from the house and more exposed to the sun, where she has planted a cluster of young olive trees that so far are also growing happily.

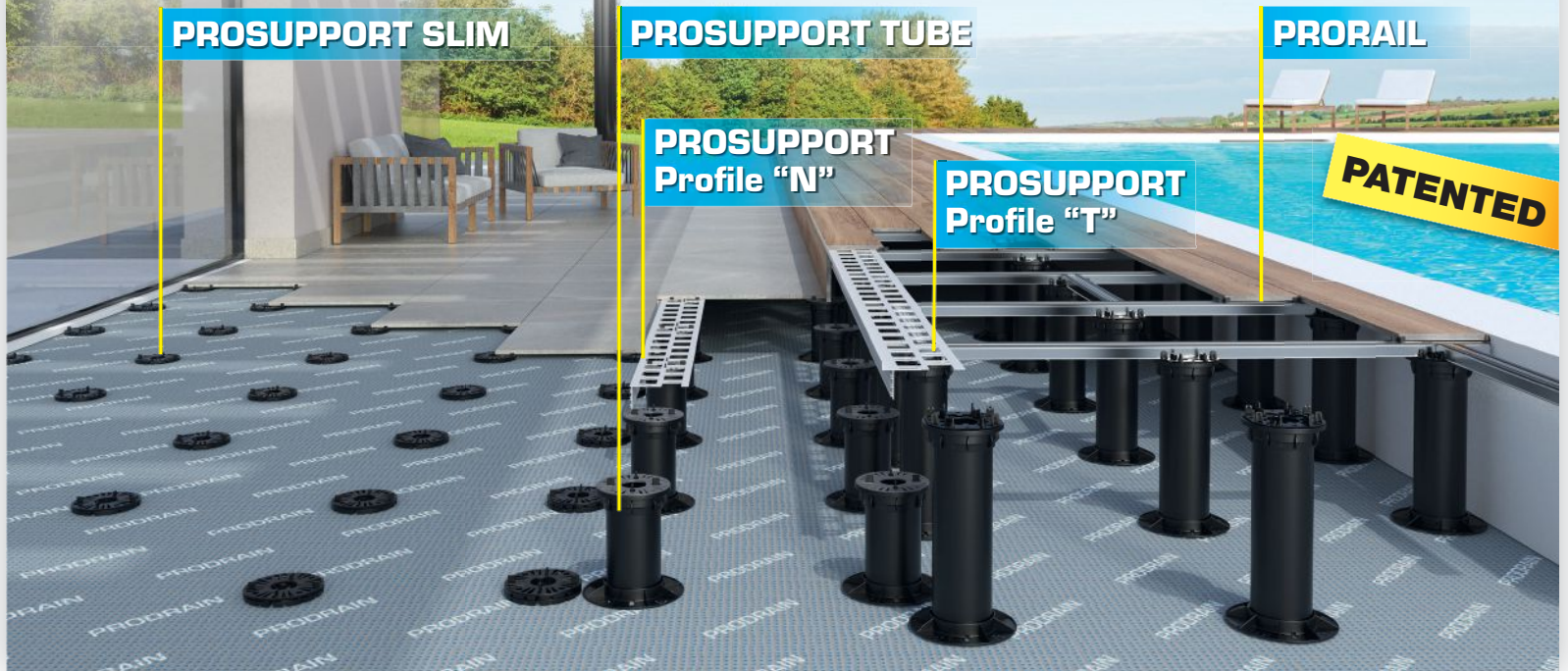
When talking with Moller about how the results of the rehabilitation, the experience of going from a wounded land to a flourishing ecosystem, finally balanced—and surpassed all expectations—the word “garden” seems an ill fit. Instead, a natural system or plant community feels more appropriate and (redundantly, perhaps) more natural. Only then do words seem to find their right place, just as, under the right conditions, the plant species at Punta Pite found their place and thrived. ●

JIMENA MARTIGNONI IS A CURATOR AND FREELANCE WRITER SPECIALIZING IN URBAN AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN PROJECTS IN LATIN AMERICA. SHE IS BASED IN BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA.



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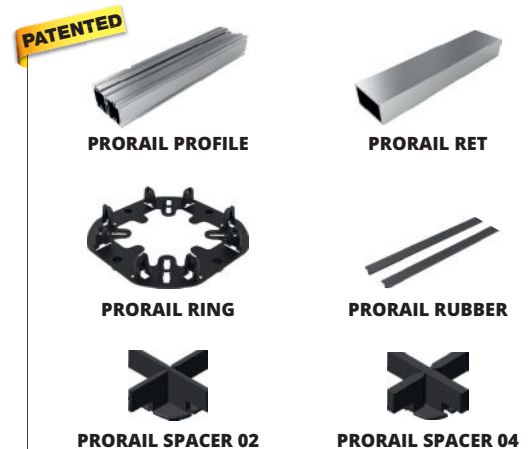
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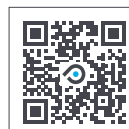
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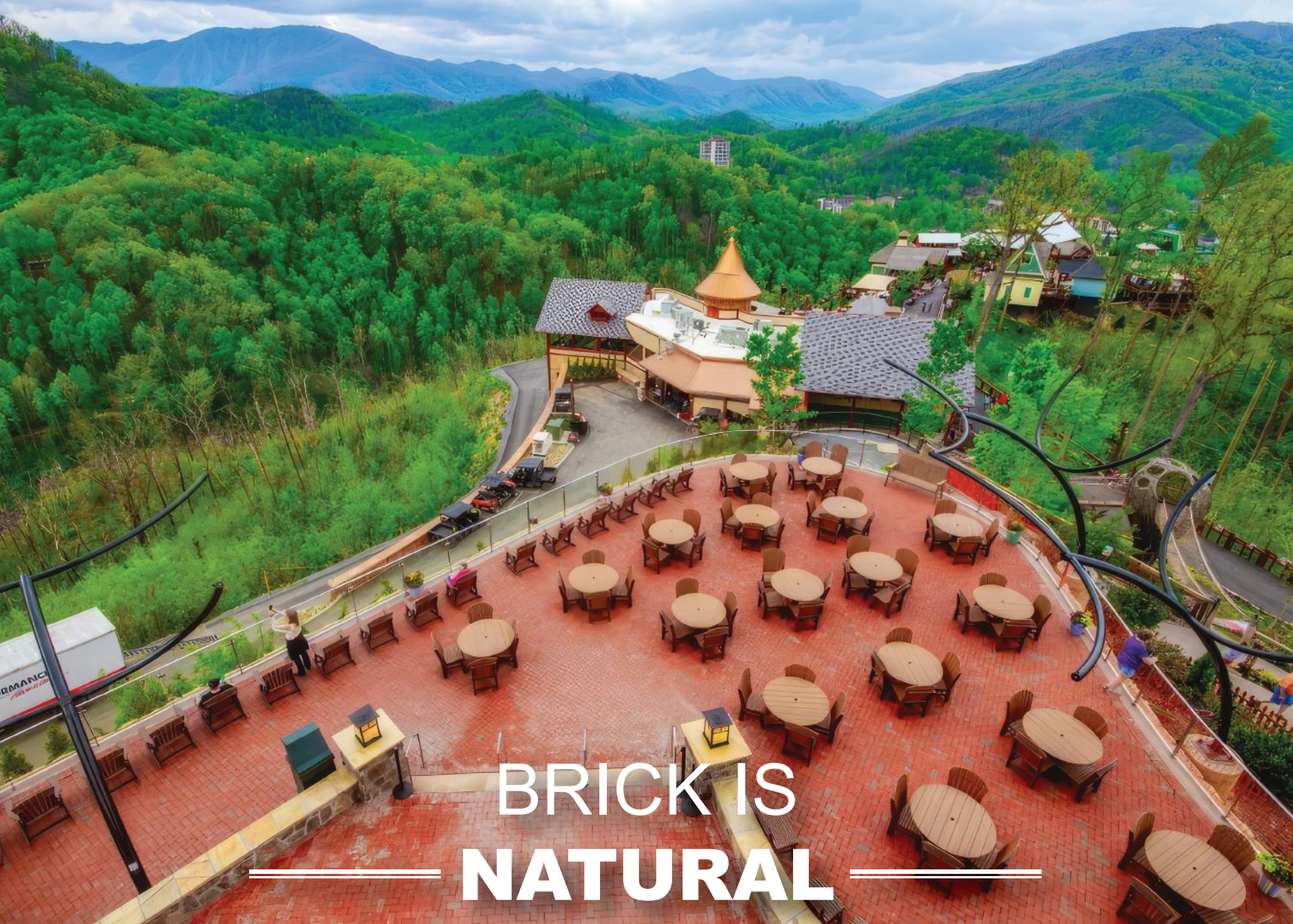


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Vista Plaza at the peak of Anakeesta features a firepit, event space, shops, and a bar. Photography: Austin Martin

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◉ **GILDED HEARTS *CERCIS***

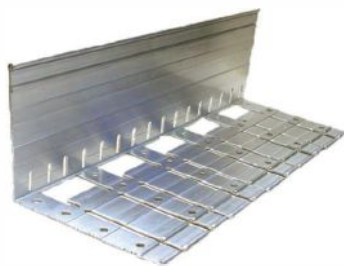
This small tree from Star Roses and Plants—*Cercis canadensis* var. *texensis* ‘NC2014-10’—is native to the Southwest and Texas and attracts pollinators. Heart-shaped, golden-toned leaves keep their color and form despite direct sun and high heat, while characteristic pink blooms draw the eye. This redbud variant will grow 15 to 20 feet high and is best in full sun in USDA Zones 6–9. ●

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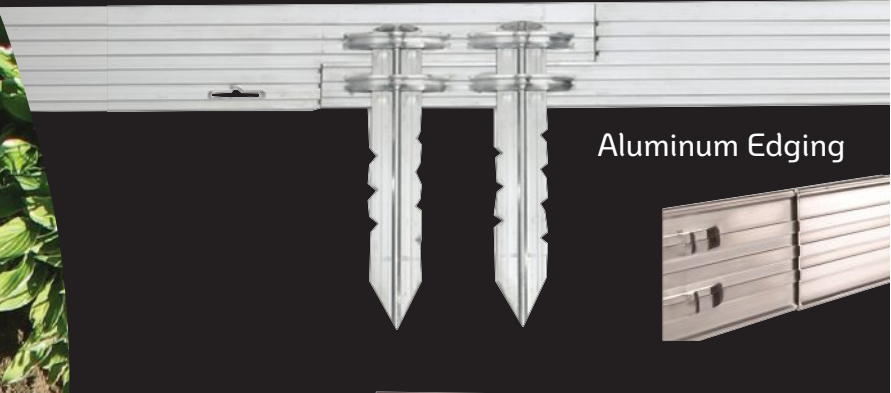
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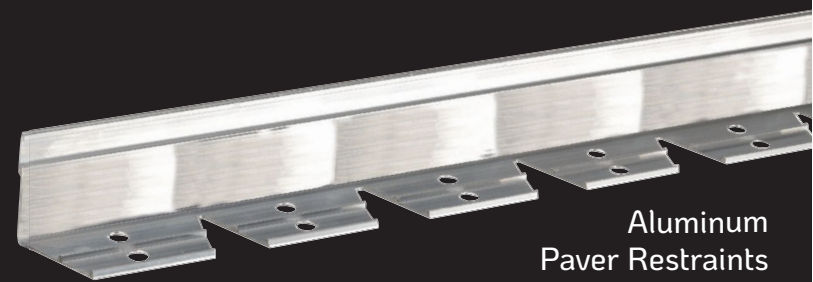
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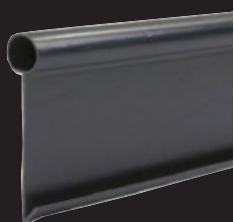
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# FEATURES



CHRISTOPHER BAKER

## LINCOLN, MASSACHUSETTS

Mikyong Kim Design shapes a dynamic path through landforms and native plants, page 90.



# THE KEW AND THE CURE

**IN THE SHADOW OF THE MULTIBILLION-DOLLAR  
BOTANICAL WELLNESS INDUSTRY,  
SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH INTO TRADITIONAL  
MEDICINAL PLANTS MOVES AHEAD.**

BY MICHAEL DUMIAK

ANDRÉ SCHUTEMAN/ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, KEW



**LEFT**

Deep rainforest in New Guinea: The world's largest tropical island holds more than 13,000 plant species, two-thirds of which are found nowhere else in the world.

W

**WALKING TO TOM PRESCOTT'S**

London laboratory off the Kew Road, through Victoria Gate, means passing through the Agius Evolution Garden. The city's double-decker traffic sounds are gone, and there are roses paired with nettles, marked as surprisingly close in their genetic relationship (if not outward appearance). This is a small corner of the vast Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, as these grounds are officially known, and its Victorian elements feel earned. Now and then giant iron and glass houses rise up, great and rational in build, and yet so well placed in perspective they sometimes disappear whimsically from view.



Prescott's workplace evolved differently—the Jodrell Laboratory building shows visible signs of the 1990s and mod 1960s. Its lines of scientific inquiry radiate outward. Two connect back to Prescott's lab: One leads to the nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer in the basement, and the other to the riotous subtropical highlands of Papua New Guinea, to forests that are, themselves, astounding evolutionary gardens.

Prescott and his colleagues, on this bright afternoon, are analyzing anti-septic properties of a particular species of *Ficus* found in Papua New Guinea and the broader South Pacific.

His inquiry began decades ago, as he was a young biochemistry undergrad at the rain-shrouded University of

**ABOVE** Kew has moved to classify its collection using genetic data; the Agius Evolution Garden is a living outdoor illustration of 350 million years of evolutionary history.



STEVE LANGFELD/ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, KEW, TOP; COURTESY ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, KEW, TOP; ATTELIER TEN, BOTTOM LEFT; ATTELIER TEN, BOTTOM RIGHT

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP** Hard at work at the scientific benches in Jodrell Laboratories; the ponds outside are a good spot for dragonflies and damselflies; Tom Prescott, a biochemist and plant collector.

Edinburgh. There he spotted a tiny paper notice on a bulletin board by chance in early 1997. A small grant offer. An expedition fund.

“I came up with this harebrained scheme that I was going to Papua New Guinea. I was going to go and study medicinal plants,” says Prescott,

at ease, a Londoner with salt-and-pepper hair and a heartfelt laugh, and sometimes quirky timing.

His scheme may have been naive, but New Guinea has a grip on naturalists and researchers: Its ecosystems support perhaps the world’s most diverse, dense, and unique flora. The grant meant Prescott could do fieldwork. “They would never do this now. It would be seen as wildly irresponsible



**FUNGI**  
(WORLD)

BANBOW COEN  
21 JAN  
10  
1842

## FILLING IN THE FLORA

### RIGHT

There may be 40,000 plant species on the island of New Guinea. Each yellow dot in this tracking map represents a specimen identified in the Kew collection.

### OPPOSITE

Spore store: Kew's fungarium files hold 1.25 million specimens, including a patch of Alexander Fleming's original penicillin mold.



to let a 21-year-old head to Papua New Guinea by themselves to go and collect plants. Back then I think people were slightly less concerned. So, yeah. I did it. I learned to speak their language.”

Prescott arrived at a monsoon deciduous forest on the volcanic tip of the Williamez Peninsula, reached by outboard-powered dugout canoe up a thin strip of land encircling the huge, steely blue caldera called Dakataua.

As reported by Monica Evans in *Think Landscape*, monsoon forest is one of the most threatened of all the major forest types, a transition zone between humid and drier tropical vegetation. Here, Prescott started with his plant pressing: finding his

choices for collecting by observation and being with local people over an extended period of time; meeting with them in deep forest clearings to talk sap, but avoiding leading questions; picking samples, preserving them in methanol, and drying them out for storage. Plant material for lab tests went into dry silica gel for preservation, and plant sap was collected into tubes and placed in a cold box.

He also picked up his first tropical ulcer. Beginning with any small scratch or insect bite on the legs, these lesions are common in tropical climates. Painful, chronic, and slow to heal, they can grow to several centimeters in diameter. In children they can lead to dire complications.

In the deep forests of New Guinea, one treatment for ulcers is plant sap—in particular, saps that may have specific antiseptic properties, as those taken from the small figs produced by *Ficus septica* seem to do.







TOM PRESCOTT/ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, KEW

**LEFT**

Antiseptic sap is seen coming from *Ficus septica*.

Prescott first tried Savlon antiseptic cream to deal with his ulcer. That didn't work. "Then I tried what I was collecting my plants into, which was the methylated spirits, and that hurt like hell," Prescott says. He started taking notes.

Now, after more than two decades of sporadic study and collaboration with Papua New Guinean scientists, public health officials, volunteers, and researchers based at Kew and other European institutions, clinical efficacy trials are set to get started this year on saps collected from highlands in the Whiteman Range. The group has already successfully conducted a small trial. This one will be bigger.

Progressing with this kind of research, for this particular kind of ailment, is rare. It takes sustained and dedicated time and resources to get this far. As with many malevolent infections in isolated places, there quite simply isn't any money

# EIGHTY PERCENT OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD DEPENDS ON TRADITIONAL MEDICINES FOR CARE.



in tropical skin ulcers (also known as jungle rot). As economies work now, contemporary drugs and therapies are so expensive and difficult to discover, develop, and manufacture that they demand mass markets—or at least mass enough that wealthier parts of the world can subsidize access in the poorer. But tropical ulcers affect people in lightly populated, remote, and inaccessible regions. The ailment is so out of the mainstream as to be left off the official list of neglected tropical diseases. The New Caledonia-based epidemiologist Camila González Beiras is heading the *Ficus*, or fig, trial enrollment and protocols, working with Papua New Guinean health authorities and ethics panels to vet the studies.

They see benefits to Western science, Beiras says. Papua New Guineans sitting on trial panels are likely to have experienced tropical ulcers themselves. Beiras is part of a team working with

the World Health Organization in the South Pacific to eliminate the more serious complications associated with infectious tropical ulcers in children, including terrible facial disfigurement caused by yaws disease. Yaws is caused by bacteria that can pass into the body using ulcers as a gateway.

If forest residents can reliably turn to antiseptic saps growing right next to their villages to help stop these ulcers from progressing to begin with, then so much the better for the eradication drive.

About the time Prescott was first arriving at the Dakataua caldera, the forester and ethnobiologist Sarah

## TOP

The Jodrell lab came into its own in the 1930s, when it established a reference collection of permanent glass microscope slides.

## OPPOSITE

*Ficus septica* from the Kew Herbarium; this sample was collected by Richard Oldham, 1864, in Formosa (now Taiwan).



BOARD OF TRUSTEES, ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, KEW; ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, KEW, OPPOSITE



Laird was working on a project with Jennie Wood Sheldon, an ethnobotanist, and Michael Balick, a writer and botanist and the vice president for botanical science at the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG). The project was a collaboration between the NYBG and the Rainforest Alliance's Periwinkle Project, named in a nod to the *Catharanthus roseus* alkaloids isolated in 1958 and now used to treat leukemia and Hodgkin's lymphoma.

The three researchers eventually produced a 1997 publication called *Medicinal Plants: Can Utilization and Conservation Coexist?* George Milne, at the time the research head at the pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, reported in the foreword that less than 1 percent of the Earth's higher-order plants had been analyzed for chemical and genetic composition and for biomedical potential, while the remaining 99 percent is disappearing at an alarming rate.

# NOT MANY BOTANICAL GARDENS ARE ABLE TO SUPPORT ACTUAL LAB WORK ON THESE PLANTS, GIVEN HARD CHOICES AND LIMITED RESOURCES.

It's hard to tell if it's improved much, since one count in 2012 reported that only between 8 and 16 percent of the Earth's 435,000 species had been screened for medicinal use. Other estimates still cite that 1 percent number. It is difficult to find a consistent and reliable survey taken over time.

One thing that has not changed is an overwhelming reliance on traditional and plant-based medicines for primary health care. Figures from 1997 reported that 80 percent of the developing world depended on traditional medicines for care; of those, 85 percent used plants or their extracts as a medically active substance. Those figures haven't changed. Plants or their extracts remain the main source of medically active substances for much of the world.

So why do we know so little about them, or not do more to protect and conserve them?

Research into medicinal plants for the past century or so has moved in waves, with successes in the field boosting interest—and sometimes inflated

narratives about untapped miracle cures hidden in the rainforest. Technological advances, however, tend to funnel research efforts away from medicinal properties found in nature and whole plants. Medical products above all need to be safe. To produce them in mass quantities, the active agents need to be pure.

Many plant chemical properties are made potentially useful because picking up and running is not an option for plants, so they rely on alternatives to defend themselves against pathogens. A plant is not necessarily pure, though—the way a synthesized industrial molecule would be in a vat. And plant sap is a complex mixture of chemical compounds.

## Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*)

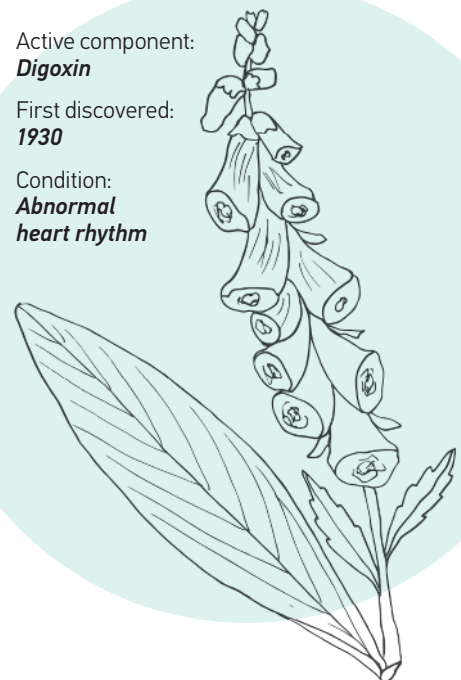
Foxgloves make a deadly poison called digoxin. However, with just the right dose, it can be used to treat heart conditions.

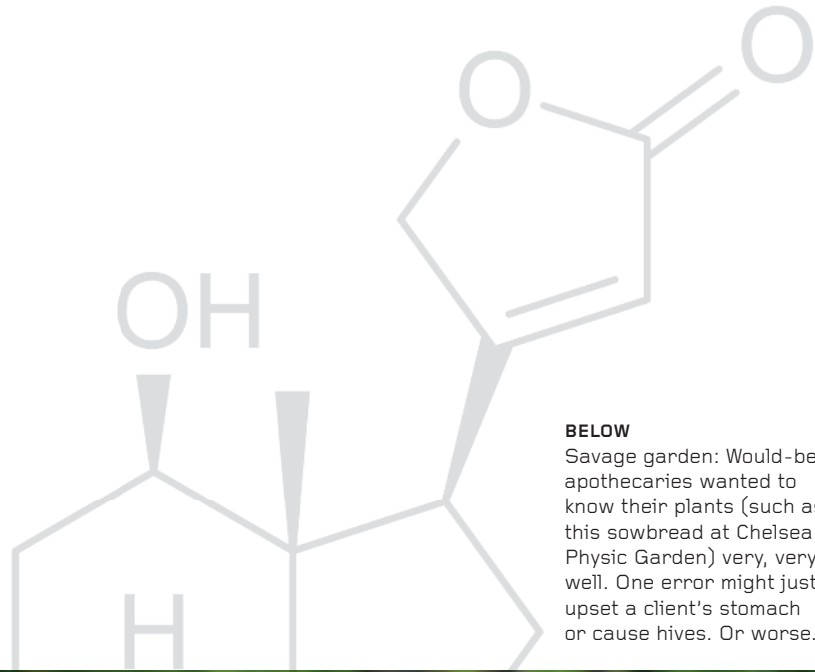
It is on the World Health Organization's List of Essential Medicines, showing its global importance.

Active component:  
***Digoxin***

First discovered:  
**1930**

Condition:  
***Abnormal heart rhythm***





**BELOW**

Savage garden: Would-be apothecaries wanted to know their plants (such as this sowbread at Chelsea Physic Garden) very, very well. One error might just upset a client's stomach or cause hives. Or worse.



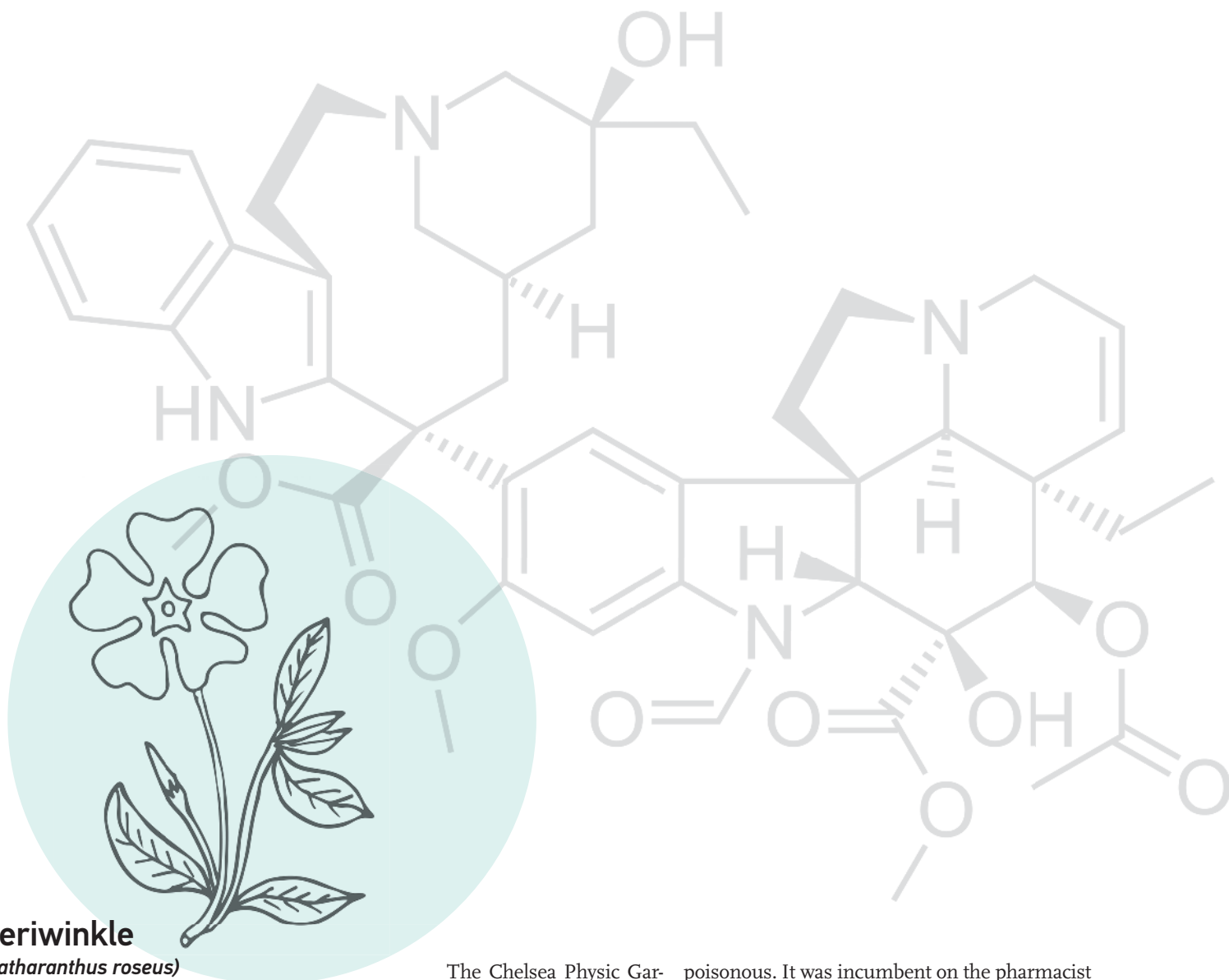
“Sometimes nature evolves incredible molecules, with great selectivity. That’s a key parameter for something to be a medicine,” Prescott says. Penicillin is a classic: It’s great at killing bacteria but doesn’t kill human cells. That is selectivity. Evolution sometimes favors it. “The flip side,” Prescott says, “is that plants are also perfectly content to make crappy molecules.”

A pharmacoeconomist or developer might linger on inefficiencies and large expense: Why track down and analyze plant molecules when you can combine gazillions of theoretical compounds in a model? On the other hand, there those analog molecules in the forest sit, unknown (or worse, burned and cleared). Hundreds of thousands of species.

But the idea of even a modest dedicated garden for medicinal analysis and inquiry is an enduring one.

The story of medicinal plants is the story of human domestication, of cultivation. Neanderthal remains—60,000 years old—have been found set among plants with medicinal properties such as yarrow, genus *Achillea*, used as a wound astringent.

The first botanical gardens, at Padua, Italy, were planted around 1545 as a living classroom. Farther south in Salerno, the medical writer and botanist Matthaeus Silvaticus created the Minerva Garden in the early 1300s, dividing it into four quadrants for the four Galenic humors—blood, yellow bile, phlegm, and black bile—and their associated elements. And so, you can still find mandrake, the *Mandragora* of myth and legend, by the Amalfi Coast.



## Periwinkle

*(Catharanthus roseus)*

Vinca alkaloids stop tumors getting larger or spreading.

Two of these chemicals have been isolated from periwinkles.

Vincristine and vinblastine are used to treat leukemia and Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Active ingredients:

**Vinblastine & Vincristine**

First discovered:

**1958**

Used for:

**Leukemia & Hodgkin's lymphoma**

The Chelsea Physic Garden is a centuries-old walled botanic garden, cloistered near the rolling Thames. Founded by the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries to train novices, its pretty four-acre expanse dates to 1673. Novel plants from the world's far-flung places arrived by the garden pier. "The apothecaries would grow things next to each other: You would have *Myrrhis odorata*, sweet cicely, growing next to *Conium maculatum*, which is hemlock," says Nell Jones, the Physic's head of plant collections. Cicely can be used to soothe gout or as a salad herb, and it looks like hemlock. Hemlock is, famously,

poisonous. It was incumbent on the pharmacist to know the difference.

The contemporary Physic is certainly interested in presenting phytochemical properties with its dedicated medical plant collection, Jones says—but the overall focus is more on how people use plants. "You've got your traditional systems. Then the pinnacle is the pharmaceutical. We've tried to change that narrative," she says. So, a label describing an iris root describes folk use as a stimulant for liver and gallbladder, applied externally for rheumatism—and as a protective charm against snakes. (There will be little in scientific literature about the use of iris as a snake charm.) In this way, the Chelsea Physic is a place of beauty and a contemporary human story—one that envelops medicinal and botanical history.

## Poppy (*Papaver somniferum*)

Morphine is a pain killer extracted from the seed and bud of poppies.

It works by blocking pain signals from traveling along the nerves to the brain.

Active component:  
**Morphine**

First discovered:  
**Ancient times**

Chemically isolated:  
**1804**

Used for:  
**Pain relief**



### BELOW

It's light lifting for Irene Hallyburton, seen here moving snowdrop bulbs (*Galanthus nivalis*) from the University of Dundee Botanic Garden to WeeCAIR.

A set of different plants in a small garden of medicinals far to the north serves a slightly different purpose. The WeeCAIR Medicinal Garden, tucked in a university courtyard by the thrumming Wellcome Centre for Anti-Infectives Research, is a bridge between science and the public in the windswept Scottish port of Dundee.

Irene Hallyburton started as a parasitology lab tech in 1999 at the University of Dundee, eventually becoming a researcher in the drug discovery unit working on malaria prevention and treatment. Now working on a doctorate in Scottish agricultural history, the plain-spoken and purple-haired native of nearby Perth—a cat lover who has represented Scotland at international powerlifting meets—spotted an opportunity outside a set of newly built life sciences labs on campus. The opportunity was an uninspiring square of grass that by 2019, as she saw it, wanted sprucing.

Working with Dundee's public outreach team and Kevin Frediani, the campus groundskeeper and curator of the university's botanic garden, Hal-





## Sweet wormwood (*Artemisia annua*)

Sweet wormwood has been used for centuries in traditional Chinese medicine.

Active component:  
**Artemisinin**

First discovered:  
**1972**

Used for:  
**Malaria**



lyburton sought grant funding for a small quadrant of raised medicinal beds: a kind of garden signal to the public about the work going on behind the lab walls, and a reminder to researchers of the threads between plant and pill.

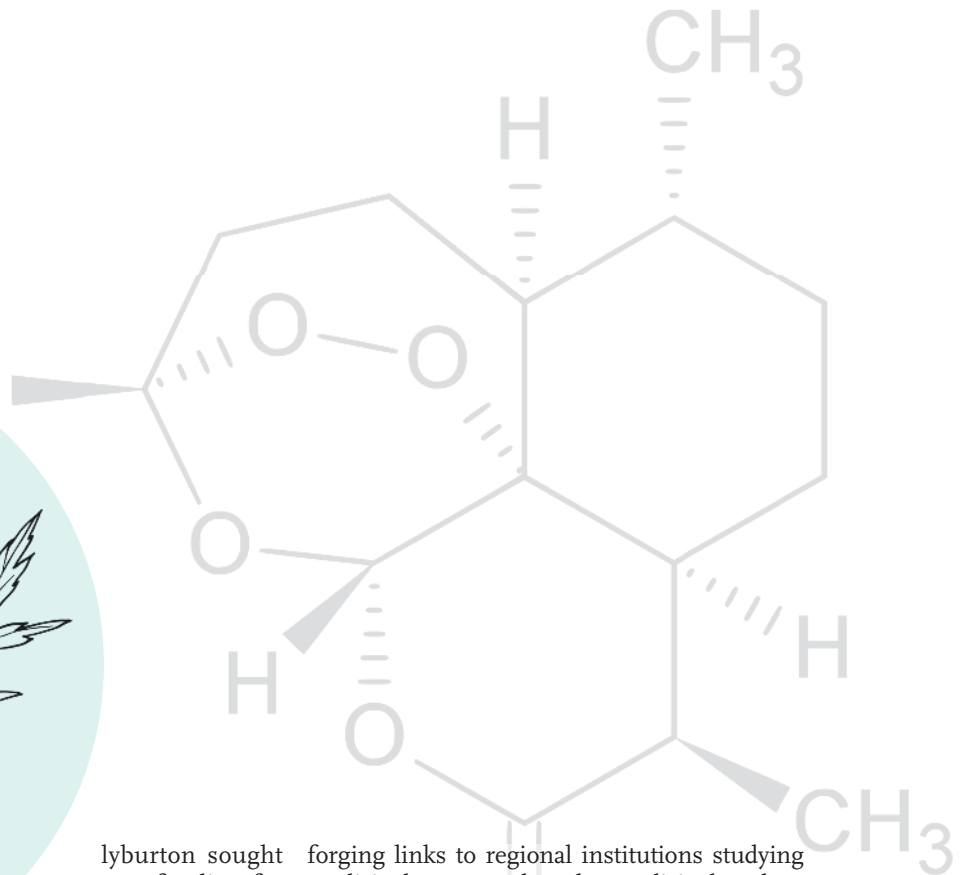
Three years later, WeeCAIR is thriving: a hardy lot of 16 species, most of which have isolated chemical active ingredients. A small contemplative place for Dundonians, it draws volunteer caretakers from the labs and from exchange programs for research trainees from Malawi and Ghana. This in turn promotes deeper links with peer institutions such as the Ghana Centre for Plant Medicine Research, which is itself

forging links to regional institutions studying medicinal compounds and to medicinal gardens in Barbados.

Botanic gardens like WeeCAIR and the Chelsea Physic are ideal for presenting the human field of interaction with medicinal plants.

But not so many botanic gardens are able to support actual lab work on these plants, given hard choices among limited resources. Basic research happens most often behind closed lab doors. The results don't necessarily bloom in public. Those that do harder science, as with Munich's state botanical collection in Germany and the NYBG with its Pfizer lab, are rare. Of those that do it, often the focus is on plant evolution, genomics, and DNA taxonomies.

At Kew, though, downstairs from Prescott's labs are two remarkable rooms: One is Kew's vast fungarium, a collection of 1.25 million fungi samples, about which volumes could be written. (Prescott



# KEW'S RESONANCE INSTRUMENT APPLIES HIGH-INTENSITY MAGNETIC FIELDS TO PURIFIED PLANT MOLECULES.

joined many of his colleagues in doing so: Look up *Fungarium*, or *State of the World's Fungi*.) Another is the room containing the Bruker nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer.

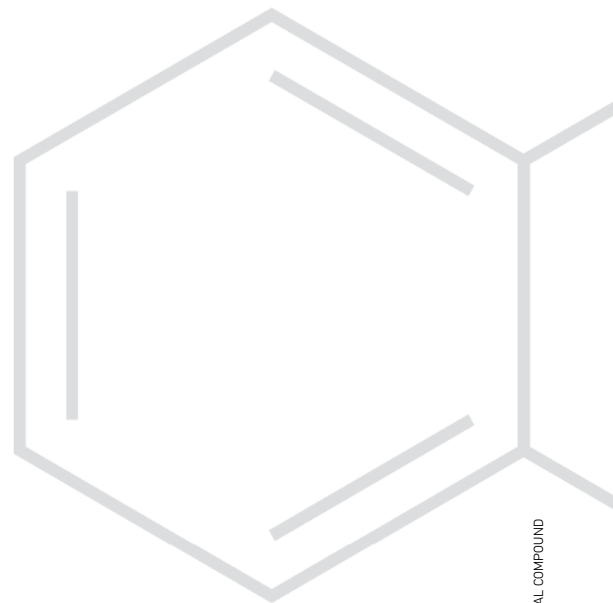
Kew's resonance instrument applies high-intensity magnetic fields to purified plant molecules. This causes the nuclei of individual atoms to flip, and the recorded resonances are used to piece together how the atoms are attached together in the molecule. Upstairs, the lab uses liquid chromatography and a mass spectrometer—instruments and techniques for separating and isolating complex samples—to characterize and analyze the structures and build up Kew's molecular database.

Molecules are important to Kew. Along with the fungarium, the garden also maintains an herbarium of 330,000 type specimens, classified by structure and form. When Darwin or Humboldt were collecting and sketching plants, they were doing formal classification in their ways: Morphological taxonomies go back to the first days of botany. But Kew created its Evolution Garden to show how plants can also be classified genetically through molecular analysis. And small molecule

screening—along with traditional knowledge—is what's advancing the trials with fig sap from the White-man Range in Papua New Guinea.

By testing fig saps in biological assays relevant to wound healing, Prescott and his colleagues identified several variants of fig sap that show promise in stemming tropical ulcers better than—or at least as effectively as—soap and water or antiseptic lotions. Working with the botanist Tiberius Jimbo of Papua New Guinea's Forest Research Institute—a man who describes himself as always out in the field, collecting—the group continues to find rhizomes and fig saps for analysis.

This is research work that could raise eyebrows in some circles, given both Papua New Guinea's wondrous nature and its tangled history with mining, commerce, and natural resources. Medicinals in this view could be



## Willow

(*Salix alba*)

Willow is famous as a source of salicylic acid, the precursor of aspirin; it is mentioned in ancient texts from Assyria and Egypt.

Modern aspirin tablets are more practical than chewing bitter willow bark.

Active component:

**Salicylic acid**

First discovered:

**Ancient times**

Chemically isolated:

**1828**

Used for:

**Pain relief, fever, inflammation**

just one more product to extract. Jimbo doesn't see it like this.

And there is no huge potential pharma product in *Ficus septica*. An antiseptic cream could stop most of these infections, and daily soap and water would help. But in the deep forest, this is not always an option, and a network of health centers to distribute antiseptic cream through the vast jungle doesn't make sense.

"There's no point walking five to 30 miles barefoot through difficult terrain in swampy, muddy rainforest to get your tropical ulcer treated," Prescott says. "Once dressed it would then be submerged in mud."

Beiras says at this point community knowledge, knowledge that is being lost, would be more valuable than industrial distribution of a plant sap product. "For kids to know if they

have a wound, they can use this product just as it comes from nature directly," she says. "If it works, we would like to encourage the use of it." That encouragement carries more power coming as medical advice—backed by clinical findings, with specific substances fully identified and tested.

Public health workers have been trying to do away with yaws for 70 years now, as outlined by the reporter Sam Jones in a recent issue of the science journal *Nature*. The effort is chronically hamstrung by lack of resources and the effort it takes to reach remote areas.

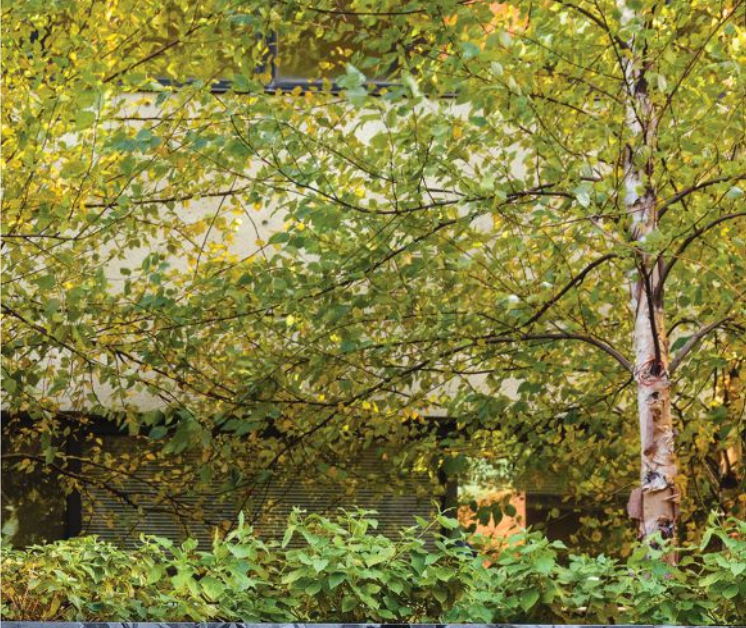
But maybe the medicinal plants, as with the people, are already there. Papua New Guinea's National Department of Health is interested in backing this notion with research: It wants Beiras and Jimbo and Prescott to analyze more options.

"Local types of honey might be worth looking at," Prescott says. And Kew may have the tools to do so. ●

MICHAEL DUMIAK WRITES ABOUT SCIENCE, DESIGN, AND CULTURE. HE IS BASED IN BERLIN.



# WHERE WE GET STRONGER



**LEFT**

The lush, layered design of the new entrance wall at Boston Children's Hospital creates a sense of invitation and discovery.



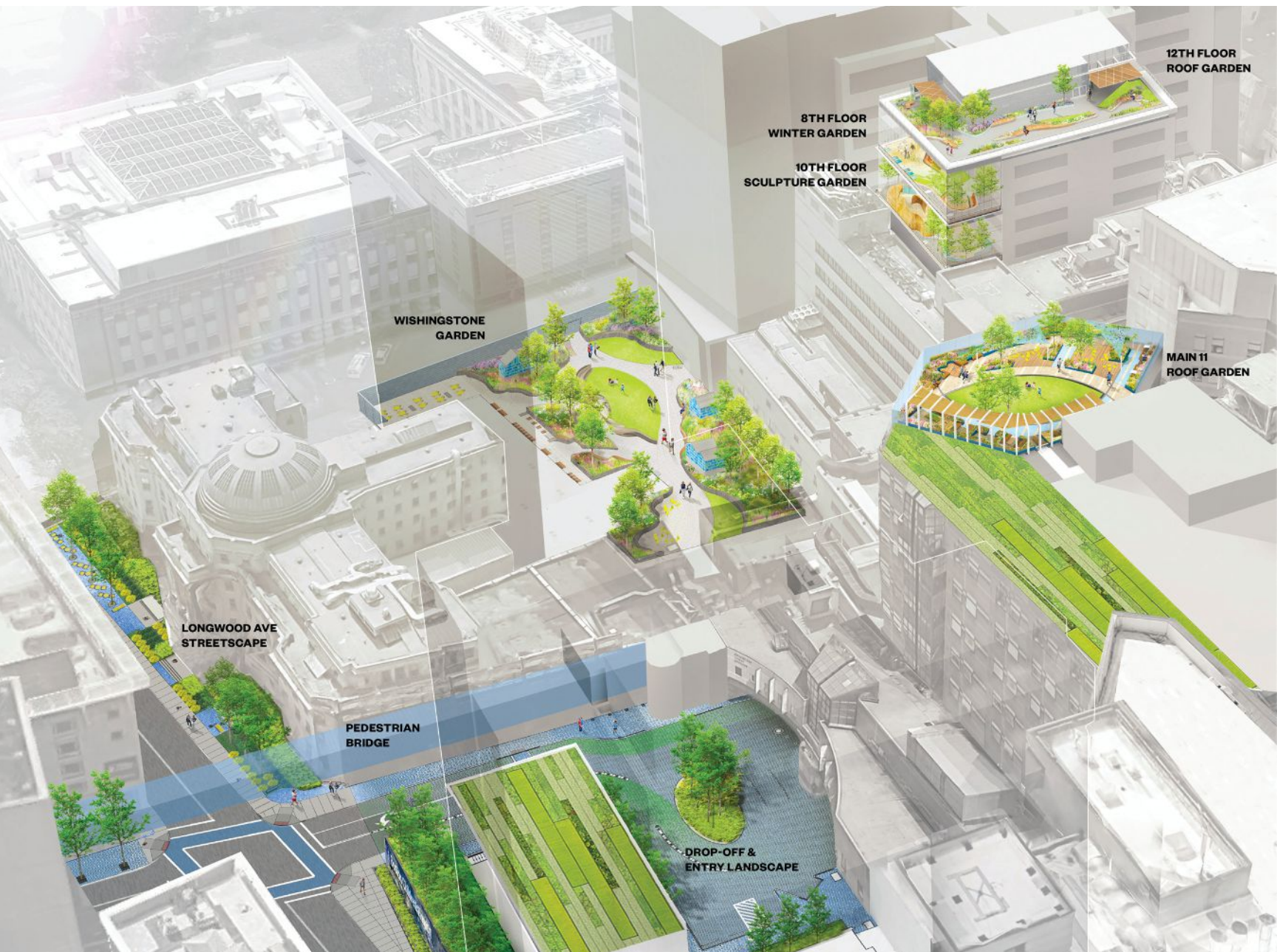
ANTON GRASSL

## AN EXPANDING RANGE OF PROJECTS CAPS A YEAR OF MILESTONES AT MIKYOUNG KIM DESIGN.

BY KIM O'CONNELL

**IN THE HEART** of downtown Boston, only a few blocks from Fenway Park and the Charles River, Boston Children's Hospital feels like a world unto itself. Hospitals often feel this way because of their nature as places where some of life's weightiest events happen—births, deaths, life-saving surgeries and treatments. At Boston Children's, these things are infused with the deep concern that attends this special population, where the stakes are as high as they could ever be. Each family, each patient, each story feels unique and profound.

In developing a series of gardens for the hospital, it was important to the landscape architect Mikyoung Kim, FASLA, that the designs reflected all the complexities intrinsic to this environment. For Kim, it was not a place for conventional thinking about



childhood, where a designer could include bright colors and animal pictures and call it a day. Instead, Kim and her colleagues at Mikyoung Kim Design (MYKD) applied their many years of studying human behavior. The hospital gardens manifest the firm's long-held practice of conducting its own scientific research and collecting evidence as an underpinning of design. Informed by the firm's study of biology, neuroscience, and human emotion, the hospital gardens are not just places for play and release, where children and their families can push away the hardest emotions, but also for fear and grief. Because humans live in those emotional realms, too.

“What patients have told us, and we’ve done three different hospital projects across eight years, is that history is a great comfort to people, because they feel like there’s some things that are durable, that are stable,” Kim says. “And then there’s other kinds of systems, like ecological systems, which are comforting as well, even though they’re changing. Their very changeability, like the seasons, also brings comfort to people.”

Mikyoung Kim Design, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, has a diverse portfolio of public and private projects at a range of scales, including the restoration and daylighting of the

**ABOVE**  
The design for a series of gardens at Boston Children's provides spaces for solace, gathering, and play for patients, families, and caregivers.



**ABOVE**  
Circulation and free-form play areas were essential for the hospital's Main 11 roof garden.

Cheonggye River in Seoul, South Korea; a new 37-acre park in Houston; the first LGBTQIA+ senior living community in Massachusetts; and an undulating landscape of discovery at the Chicago Botanic Garden. Underscoring much of this work, and the dozens of other master plans and built projects the firm has helped, is a commitment to healing, especially in a post-pandemic world. In recognition of this, ASLA awarded MYKD the 2022 Firm Award.

"The entirety of the practice centers community engagement at all scales," wrote Deborah Marton, the executive director of the New York-based Van Alen Institute, in a letter nominating MYKD for

the award. "Ultimately the compelling work that emerges from this intellectual rigor and depth has set a new standard for human centered placemaking."

To do this work, the firm draws together relevant research in the neurosciences before every project and seeks to gather original data as well, often partnering with academics and subject matter experts. For Boston Children's, the firm worked with researchers at Cornell University to do post-occupancy studies and is currently examining the project's inclusiveness for neurodiverse populations with Gareth Doherty, ASLA, an associate



professor of landscape architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. Both for the hospital and in preparation for future work, the firm is also researching the impact of noise on the health and well-being of urban dwellers with Carl Giegold at Threshold Acoustics, among other initiatives.

On a recent sunny afternoon, I met Kim in MYKD's downtown Boston headquarters, where around 35 associates work in a historic brick building on a street crowded with foot traffic. As we talked, she advanced through a slideshow of her firm's recent projects, but she stopped on a slide devoted to the work of the late Estonian American

neuroscientist Jaak Panksepp, who has become something of a guiding light for the practice. Best known for coining the term "affective neuroscience," Panksepp identified seven primary emotional systems that drive much of human (and other mammalian) behavior. Play is one of them, but the others are seeking, care, lust, fear, sadness, and anger. Numerous scientists have found that imbalances in these emotional systems are tied to depression and other clinical disorders.

The idea that parks and open space exist just for play, Kim contends, misses huge swaths of what neuroscience has to tell us about what humans

**ABOVE** Mikyoung Kim, FASLA, helms what she calls an "ethical practice," one that combines social responsibility, scientific research, and empathy.



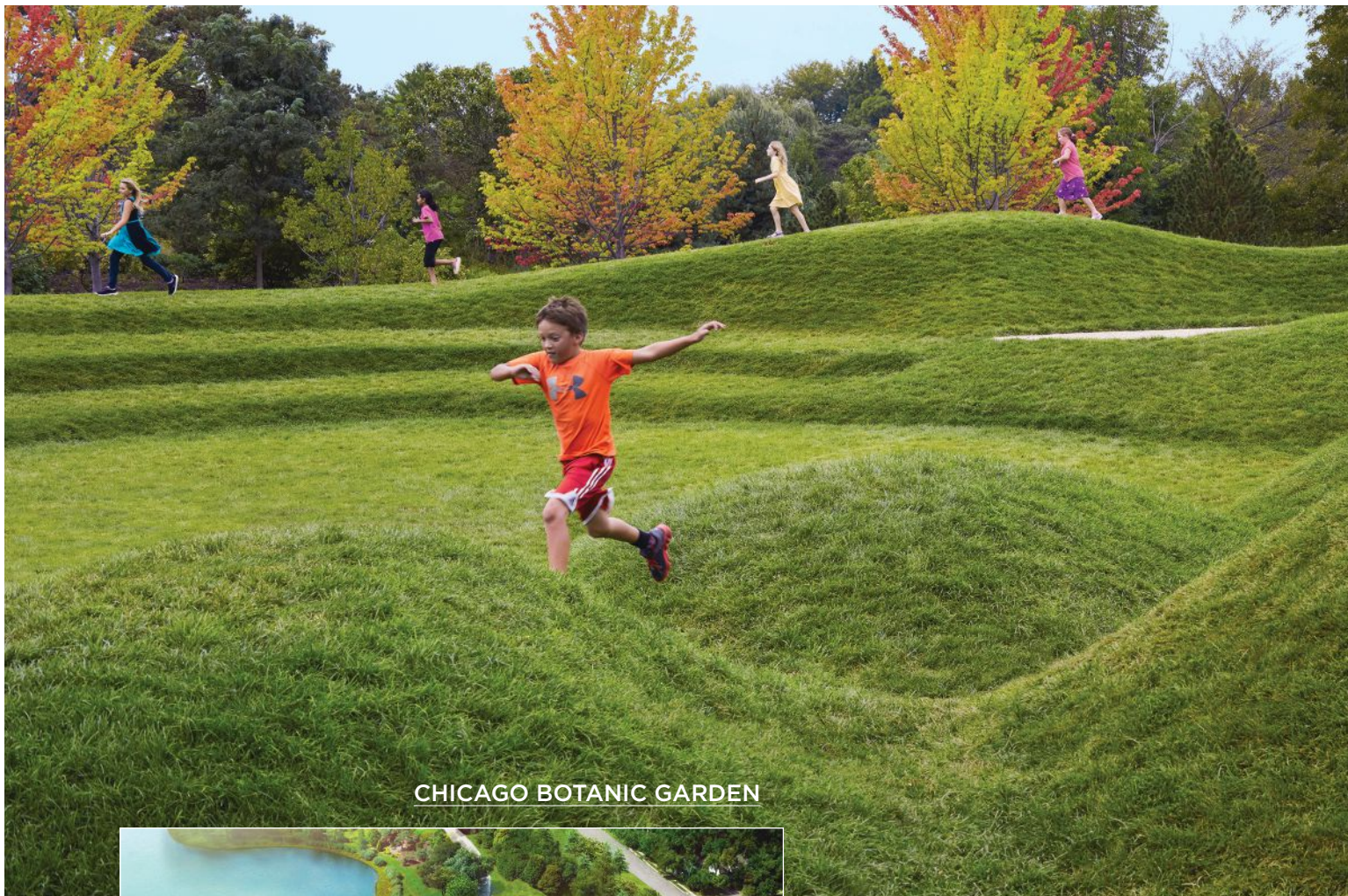
**RIGHT AND BELOW**  
Whether a garden is outdoors or inside, the firm incorporates color, shape, and fluidity to encourage exploration and emotion.



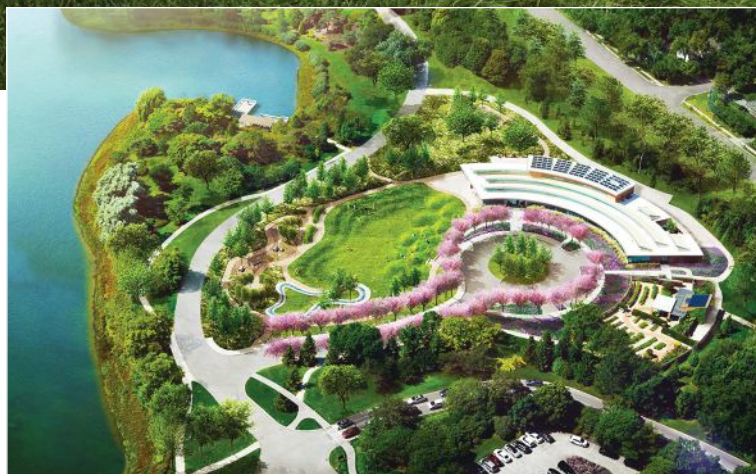
derive from their environments. Kim and her team have developed tool kits for their designers with suggestions of the types of places that satisfy all these emotional systems. Places for seeking might include customizable spaces; places for grief might require active or interactive memorial spaces.

“A lot of our public parks are the result of a more standard process, you know, thinking about parks as places of entertainment,” Kim says. “We believe that you should play and have fun, but play is just one of the seven emotional systems that drive how we perceive space, how we perceive the world. We experienced this a lot over the last three years [with the pandemic], right? Seeking and grief and all these things. We’re trying to understand more deeply what the neurosciences are telling us today in order to understand how it can be translated into landscape architecture.”

Kim often refers to her studio as an ethical practice, meaning she has intentionally sought to



CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN



considered and built upon today,” she says. “But that was a very different America, where inclusion wasn’t really considered part of the process. [These parks] were really designed for a certain demographic [and] very narrow standard of deviation. As a society in the United States, we are at this crossroads, and I think COVID has punctured that [approach] like a bubble, which is to say maybe we should start to think about that standard of deviation being wider.”

**ABOVE AND INSET**  
The design for the Chicago Botanic Garden includes both upland mound areas for free play and lowland areas that connect to the adjacent lake.

do research and build public spaces that restore and strengthen communities. When Kim talks about diversity as a goal for her practice, she is talking about ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic diversity, but neurodiversity, too. To use a mathematical term, Kim is driven by a desire to widen the “sigma curve” of standard deviation in public spaces, to reach a broader swath of society.

“If we think of Olmsted and the work that he did, the foundations that he set up are still being

Later, as scullers rowed on the Charles River and cyclists crowded its shores, Kim and I toured several of the eight gardens and open spaces that MYKD has designed for Boston Children’s. The hospital complex is located only a couple blocks from the famous Back Bay Fens, and ↘



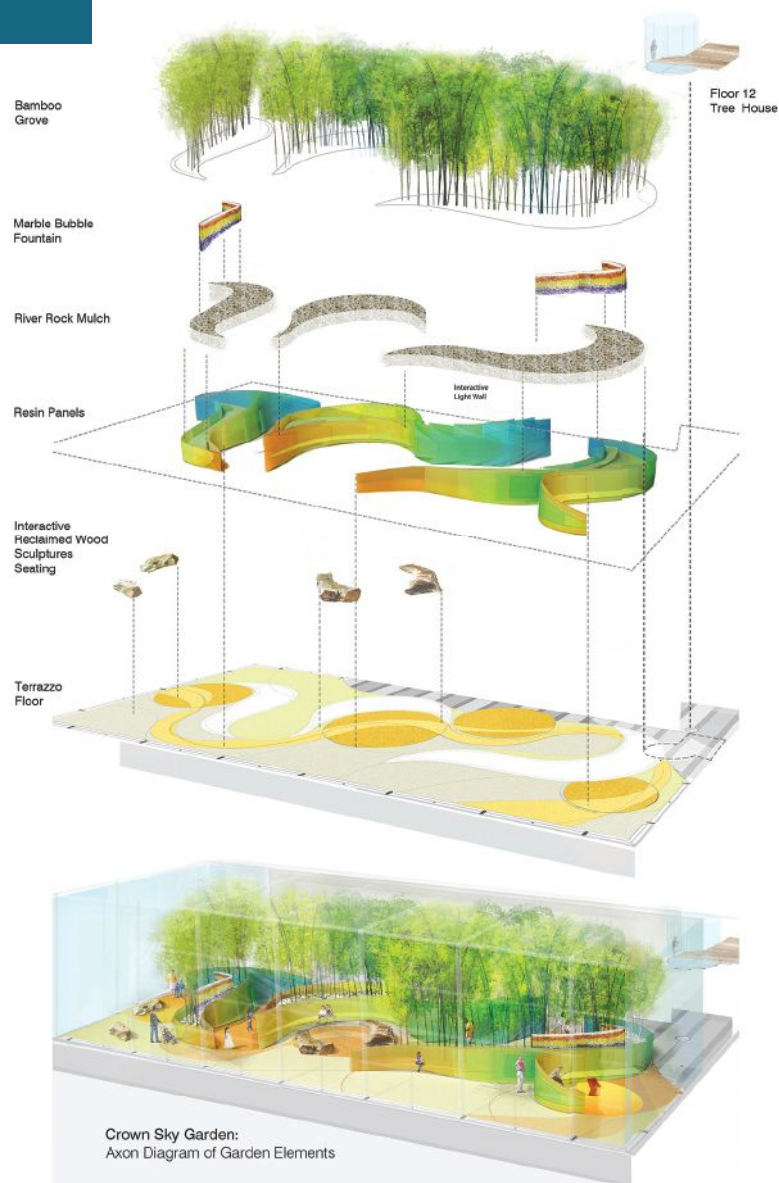
## PIVOTAL PROJECTS

### The Crown Sky Garden at Chicago Lurie Children's Hospital

BY RON HENDERSON, FASLA

**PLAY. MIKYOUNG KIM DESIGNS PLAY.** Her Hartford playground at the Moylan School was the first project of hers that I visited. It was a remarkable exercise in turning a line into a space that brought surprising experiences to the children whose playground it commanded. The playground was her master's thesis at the Harvard Graduate School of Design working with Professor Elizabeth Meyer, FASLA—and it was built. Kim's career has thrived by exploring such landscapes—places of experiential richness, spatial density, material layering, and kinesthetic energy; places of neurodiversity where play is ethically presented as an essential part of life. In her work, bumpy ground invites the body to explore, wiggly walls softly embrace spaces, and active illumination enlivens chromatic sensations.

The Crown Sky Garden, an early career-defining garden, is an aerial volume on the 11th story of the Lurie Children's Hospital in Chicago that sits at the intersection of public life in the hospital. Parents, children, staff, and both admitted and outpatients converge on this floor for the cafeteria, the gift shop, and the respite that is the sky garden. Play. Touch long, rustic, live-edge logs. See the color-shifting lights as they dim and brighten. Hear softened footsteps playing hide-and-seek among the flock of complex curvilinear walls that construct secrecy, privacy, and surprise. Swoops of colorful lines of terrazzo pavement flow through low walls that periodically diverge to accommodate living plants (the original tall bamboo has unfortunately been replaced with lower subtropical houseplants), and a constellation of log benches, tables and chairs, and platforms invite rest. Play as if our health and wellness require it. They do. ●



## Play



**solitary play**  
*teens, autism, anxiety*



**parallel play**  
*ASD, child development*

## Seeking



**musical elements for emotional expression**  
*nonverbal, ASD, youth*



**memory-evoking reused materials**  
*Alzheimer's/dementia, PTSD, caregivers*

## Care



**multisensory experiences**  
*PTSD, ASD, ADHD, youth, seniors, anxiety, burnout*



**wilder, unstructured spaces**  
*youth, depression, burnout, teens*

## Fear



**clear wayfinding**  
*Alzheimer's/dementia, foreign language speakers, caregivers, seniors, youth, anxiety*



**accessible pathways**  
*Alzheimer's/dementia, seniors, youth, limited mobility, caregivers*

## Grief



**positive distractions**  
*PTSD, depression, burnout, caregivers, seniors, teens*



**horticultural workspaces**  
*PTSD, seniors, caregivers, communities, youth, teens, burnout*



**group play**

*teens, seniors, caregivers, ASD*



**repetitive movements**

*ASD, seniors*



**unsupervised play**

*children, teens*



**customizable spaces**

*ASD, youth, burnout*



**contemplative spaces**

*seniors, youth, ASD, burnout, anxiety, teens, caregivers*



**opportunity for self-sufficiency**

*youth, nonverbal, ASD, seniors, caregivers, teens*



**boundaries**

*ASD, youth, seniors, teens, caregivers*



**noise modulation**

*depression, PTSD, ASD, seniors, youth, caregivers, burnout, anxiety*



**varied intuitive streetscapes**

*Alzheimer's/dementia, seniors, youth, foreign language speakers, caregivers*



**low-stimulation retreats**

*seniors, youth, ASD, burnout, anxiety, teens, caregivers, PTSD*



**elements of consistency**

*ASD, seniors, youth, anxiety*



**muted, calm colors**

*seniors, youth, ASD, burnout, anxiety, teens, caregivers, PTSD*



**observation markers**

*PTSD, seniors, youth, communities, caregivers*



**communal spaces**

*PTSD, seniors, youth, communities, caregivers*



**active memorials**

*PTSD, seniors, youth, communities, caregivers*

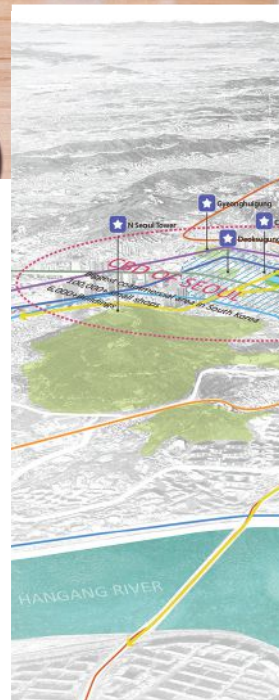


**ABOVE**  
Mikyoung Kim Design's open and airy office in a historic building in downtown Boston.

↳ incorporating elements of the urban nature surrounding the buildings was important. Our first stop was an 8,000-square-foot rooftop garden on the hospital's 11th floor. With spectacular views of the Boston skyline, an inviting central grassy mound, an oval pedestrian pattern, and varied seating, the garden is a space for patients, caregivers, and family members. Even with so much visual stimulation, what is immediately striking about the garden is that it feels calm, with the Richard Scarry-esque sounds of a busy city largely muted. Kim pointed out that Boston Children's includes a teenage population as well, so the space is designed to be engaging for various age

groups. For instance, young and old alike might delight in finding all the animal statuary hidden around the garden, which was salvaged from the former Prouty Garden, a healing garden designed by the Olmsted Brothers that was demolished in 2016 when the hospital underwent an earlier expansion.

Later, we visited another rooftop garden on the 12th floor that can be closed off for families of terminal patients. Kim has had a long, ongoing relationship with a constituency group for the hospital, one that includes staff and parents. In both large-format community talks and one-on-one



MAGGIE HALL PHOTOGRAPHY, TOP

## CHEONGGYE RIVER SOURCE POINT

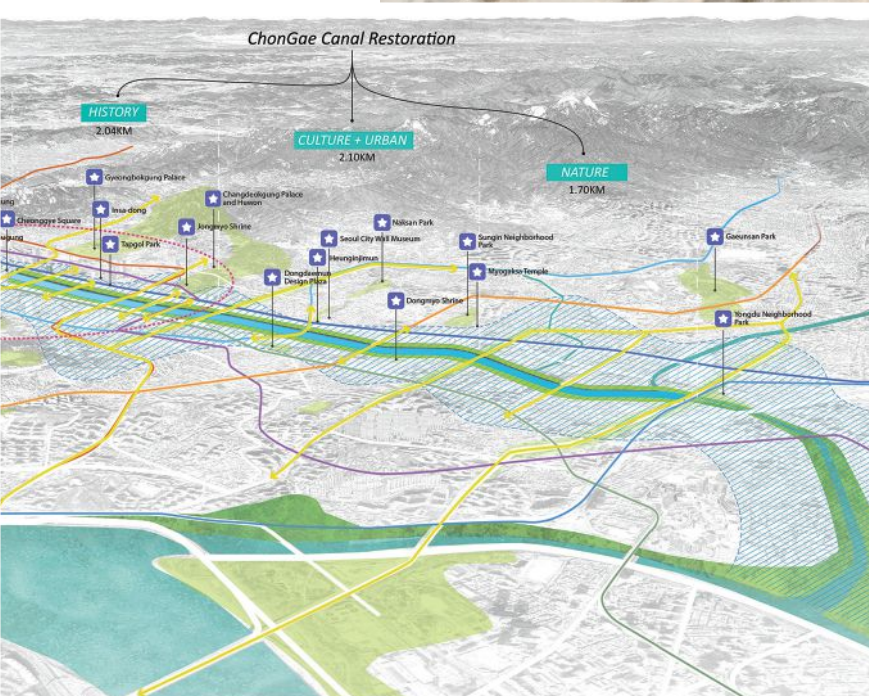
### RIGHT

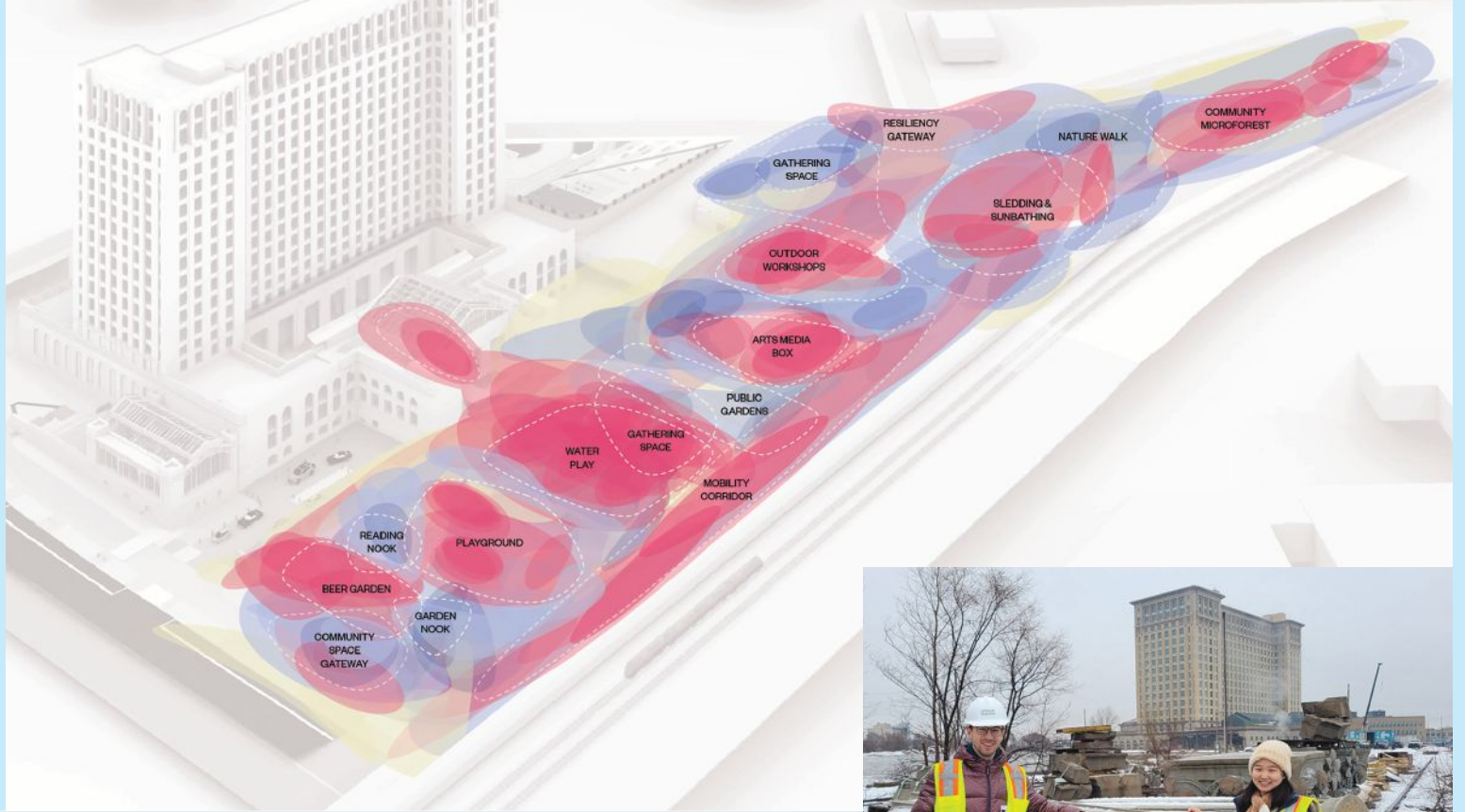
The transformation of a former freeway in Seoul, South Korea, brings people away from the urban bustle to a restored waterway.

### BELOW

The canal restoration features a series of urban zones—historical, cultural, and natural.

ROBERT SUCH, RIGHT; MIKYOUNG KIM DESIGN, BOTTOM





## PIVOTAL PROJECTS

### Michigan Central Station

BY STEPHANIE ONWENU, ASLA

**B**ACK IN SEPTEMBER OF 2020, I looped the main roadway (Vernor Highway) that bisected Roosevelt Park while on the Michigan ASLA Chapter Landscape Architecture Ride bike tour, an annual event that provides an “education in motion” outdoor social activity for the Michigan landscape architecture community. Michigan Central Station was one of the bike tour’s notable project sites, with Roosevelt Park as the green space front door to the building.

Roosevelt Park currently exists between two neighborhoods located in southwest Detroit—Corktown and Mexicantown. Considered a bridge between the Mexican and Irish cultures, it was originally designed as a passive park space for rail passengers who rode and got off at the Detroit stop at the iconic Michigan Central Station—a historic landmark building and “gateway to the Motor City.” Many families immigrated to Detroit through the Michigan Central Station in the hope of a better life.

Over the years, Michigan Central Station has endured investments and renovations that brought awareness to the park as a space that preserves

the origins of the area.

A new master plan by Mikyoung Kim Design will transform the station into a 30-acre sustainable, mixed-use mobility hub that connects with the surrounding neighborhoods.

The redevelopment will be a multipurpose park space that transforms the four-lane boulevard into a pedestrian promenade linking the building to the park’s entrance at the intersections of Michigan Avenue and 16th Street. A walking loop with swinging benches and a central flexible lawn space will be great for outdoors activities, festivals, and events. Stormwater infrastructure is an important part of the landscape design of the project, with rain and pollinator gardens accompanying the pedestrian circulation network. Preserved and newly added trees with native plant beds will provide a beautiful and clear view inside and outside the park space.

Detroit is a city rich in history, innovation, and resilience. Roosevelt Park can serve as a centerpiece park and destination space in the neighborhood, bringing together various communities into a multipurpose space accessible for all ages. Newlab, one



of the new organizations at Michigan Central, now hosts Black Tech Saturdays—a community initiative that offers workshops and training to local people of color, building a culture of innovation to support the growth of Black technology businesses in Detroit and redefining the way we work, play, teach, and learn from each other.

This project is a thread that links the history of the area and its surrounding neighborhoods and offers a beautified space that amplifies the importance of making connections in our community. The unified park has the potential to serve as a main focal point and gateway for the past, present, and future residents and the greater community. I am so looking forward to visiting this spring to see what blooms, and the space in activation. ●



## THE PRYDE



**LEFT** Research into the history and needs of the LGBTQIA+ and senior living communities informed the naturalistic landscape of the Pryde, the first development of its kind in New England.

conversations, sometimes at a child's bedside, Kim learned that it was especially important for terminal patients and their families to have an area that could be enclosed but was still open to the sky. Silence and serenity are essential, so this space is marked by its lush, soft planting palette. After we chatted in this space, however, Kim noticed that street noise was still too intrusive; she has since engaged Threshold Acoustics to determine how to make the site even quieter.

Such conversations also informed the design of the hospital's new ground-level Wishingstone Garden, a peaceful open space with undulating landforms and seating, and translucent blue house structures (which cleverly cover utility shafts). During our visit, a toddler was ambling up and down—falling over, getting back up again, reaching for his mother's hand. Seeking, as we humans are prone to do.

As we watched, Kim's thoughts turned to the Crown Sky Garden at Chicago Lurie Children's Hospital [see sidebar]. After the garden opened, Kim received a letter from a mother whose son had been admitted with a life-threatening illness, and she had just given birth to another child six months earlier: "She told us she would go into our garden to breastfeed and look at the sky."

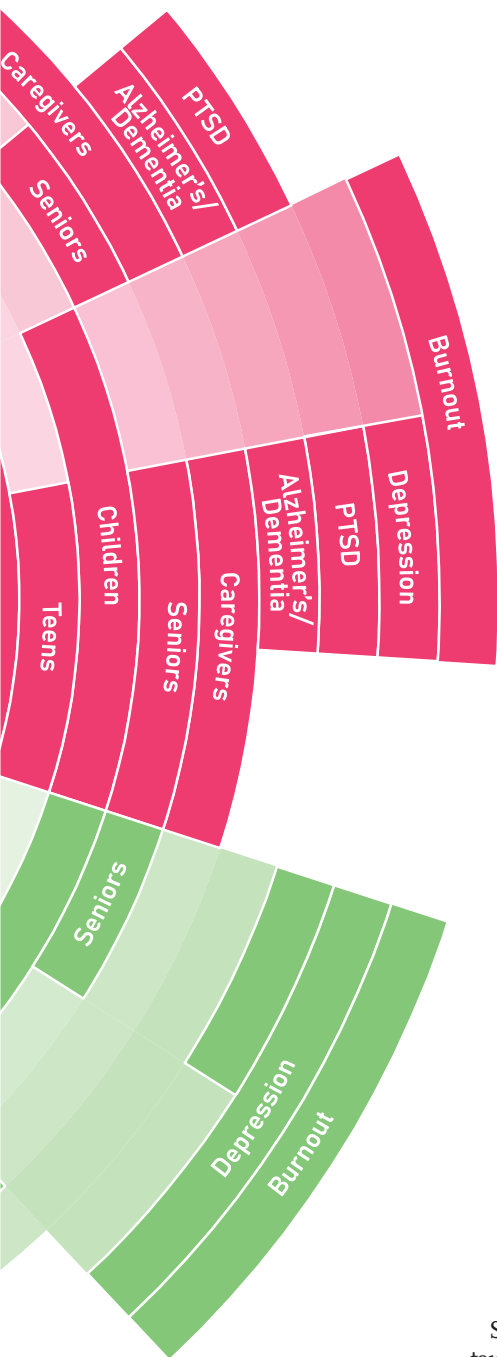
Kim's capacity for empathy stems in part from being the child of Korean immigrants. She became accustomed to spaces where she was the only person of color and where no one bothered to learn her name. "My parents had a very strong ethical kind of stance," Kim says. "So, they gave me a Korean name, and I remember that one of my teachers tried to change my name to Maryanne, and my father went to talk to them. He was so mad. And that taught me that it's okay to be different." Only in the past six years or so, Kim



MIKYOUNG KIM DESIGN

**OPPOSITE**

This neurodiversity design graphic illustrates audience engagement with designed spaces and which emotional systems can be triggered and healed by design.



says, has she walked into meetings where everyone had learned to say her name before she arrived.

After training as a concert pianist at Oberlin College and Conservatory, Kim studied landscape architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and public art at MIT. As a young graduate, she landed a teaching position at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), where she taught for 18 years, even as she simultaneously began her own practice. It was at RISD that she became very interested in collaboration—both among students and with clients and communities. Her first project was

a park in Hartford, Connecticut, her hometown. “There it was really about trying to understand what play means in these underserved neighborhoods. Like, how do we start to create places for them to release and to engage?” she says. “I didn’t know at the time that I was interested in how you go into a neighborhood and start to create a place for them that’s different than any other.”

Kim admits that it took some time for the firm to figure out what was going to be foundational in building an ethical practice that balances sustainability with individuality and community—she looks at the systems that make up the human body as not wholly dissimilar to the larger systems that fuel a city. “It took about 10 years when we started working in health care, where we worked with different hospitals and their researchers to understand that our work is really about something deeper, about the responsive



## PIVOTAL PROJECTS

### 888 Boylston Plaza

BY GARY HILDERBRAND, FASLA

**HAVE YOU SEEN** those whirly rotors on top of shiny poles on a plaza in Boston on Boylston Street, with vivid, fluid colors? Do you know that they tell you how windy it is when you are blown around like a dervish in winter?

Designers who work on any public realm project in Boston are required to test the project for street-level wind impacts. This requirement is now routine: Your design team works with RWDI, a brilliant Canadian performance engineering firm that has perfected a model that tests any Boston building proposal for wind impacts to determine whether—and to what degree—the project’s wind effects meet or exceed parameters for human comfort. Those of us who have gotten little red icons on our plans from RWDI know the challenge of refining measures for human comfort. It usually means adding deflecting canopies on buildings, greater coarseness to facade surfaces, occasionally vertical structures to deflect wind, and typically additional trees in specific locations.

The Mikyoung Kim Design team took this mandate to a new level on its project for a plaza at 888 Boylston Street in Boston’s busy Back Bay



retail district. Rather than the typical mitigation response, the team directly mapped the wind forces, clustering trees and wind instruments together to moderate heightened wind gusts and explicitly register the phenomenon.

On my most recent visit, on a windless, overcast day, just a few of the vanes at the top whirred slowly or sat still, and the poles stood quietly, exhibiting their shiny stainless steel.

On a windy day, it is another thing altogether. The tops spin variably, and the columns exhibit bright green to purple colors, indexing the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration code for wind speed. So you can tell, if you know that code, just what kind of wind speed is affecting your body. The curiously shaped granite planters they stand in are another reflection of the map of the wind effects. The stone is routed in ways that make me think of the cut lines car designers talk about—beautifully carved arris lines suggesting sculpting by the wind.

Artists and writers have advocated for some time that a work can register phenomena like wind. Elizabeth Meyer, FASLA, our astute critic in all things, argues in her acclaimed essay on the role of aesthetics in sustainability that “...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 involves considering the role of aesthetic environmental experiences, such as beauty, in re-centering human consciousness from an egocentric to a more biocentric perspective.”

Will this work? First, will the observant passerby on Boylston Street realize, on a gusty day, that the wind is registering mechanically on lighted poles, and second, will they feel motivated to change their everyday existence? Will they be moved beyond a fascination with lights and propellers on behalf of the planet and its impending crisis? I, for one, hope so. ●



technology of the body,” she says. “It always goes to the brain—the kind of emotional response of the brain to the work that we do. The bigger question is how we can rethink the design of public and civic space considering not only the individual brain, but the emotional brain of the city. Because the city has an emotion to it as well.”

These considerations have led the firm to both smaller- and larger-scale work. For Houston’s Texas Medical Center Helix Park, MYKD conceived a 21st-century “emerald necklace,” a helix-inspired chain of open spaces. The park will provide urban

parkland in one of the nation’s most diverse cities while dealing with rainwater and runoff in a 200-year floodplain. As a resilience measure, the site will be raised by as much as five feet, with the planting of about 650 new trees, to create what Kim calls “an organic sponge” that stores, filters, and repurposes an estimated 2.3 million gallons of stormwater. In addition to these big-picture moves, the firm also considered human comfort in every corner of the campus, creating a variety of spaces for respite and relief that included interactive water features and abundant shade structures.

**ABOVE**  
Kim talks with Senior Associate Jess Hamilton, ASLA, at the Boston office.

## TEXAS MEDICAL CENTER HELIX PARK



One of the firm's recent notable projects is the Pryde, New England's first LGBTQIA+ senior housing development. To design a perimeter landscape for the site, the firm studied the social history of this community and referred again to neuroscience to understand what seniors need and respond to.

"With all age groups, having opportunities for social interaction is one of the greatest things that we can provide as spacemakers," says Jess Hamilton, ASLA, a senior associate who leads MYKD's research efforts. "But there's a lot of research that we've been digging into, about how being able to see the cyclical nature of a more

natural space helps seniors think about life as a cyclical system rather than a finite beginning and end."

Kim says that LGBTQIA+ seniors they talked to were very interested in a biophilic landscape with natural materials like wood that felt comforting and permanent. Native plants allow for nostalgia, and raised garden beds make plantings more accessible. Spaces for intergenerational engagement that appeal to young and old alike are key, too. For LGBTQIA+ seniors, a community that has been fighting for civil rights their whole lives, the fight continues, so to speak, into retirement.

"They were part of the Stonewall riot generation, and now they're trying to find their community in retirement, and it wasn't available in the senior

**ABOVE AND OPPOSITE** MYKD designed Helix Park to be like an emerald necklace for the city of Houston, combining civic and recreational spaces with sustainable measures.





## MIKYOUNG KIM'S RECOMMENDED READINGS

“The Effect of Noise Exposure on Cognitive Performance and Brain Activity Patterns,” by Mohammad Javad Jafari, Reza Khosrowabadi, Soheila Khodakarim, and Farough Mohammadian; *Open Access Macedonian Journal of Medical Sciences*, September 2019.

*How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain*, by Lisa Feldman Barrett; Boston: Mariner Books, 2017.

“Is Noise Pollution the Next Big Public-Health Crisis?” by David Owen; *The New Yorker*, May 13, 2019.

*Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, by Richard Louv; Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Algonquin Books, 2005.

*Restorative Cities: Urban Design for Mental Health and Wellbeing*, by Jenny Roe and Layla McCay; London: Bloomsbury, 2021.

*The Well-Gardened Mind: The Restorative Power of Nature*, by Sue Stuart-Smith; New York: Scribner, 2020.

*Your Brain on Art: How the Arts Transform Us*, by Susan Magsamen and Ivy Ross; New York: Penguin Random House, 2023.



market,” says Bryan Chou, ASLA, an associate principal at MYKD. “Now there’s this new generation [of LGBTQIA+ youth] that has to kind of reopen that civil rights conversation again. That’s not a resolved conversation. I think the community is still trying to grapple with a lot of these issues and really understand it. It’s an interesting accumulation of different cultural influences in this one project.”

Play was also an essential factor with the Pryde, Hamilton says, particularly in the design of a dance deck. “At one point we had a lot of sub-





**ABOVE**  
Heejung Shin and  
Alek De Mott, project  
designers at the firm,  
talk through a model.

dued tones and, you know, it was looking very elegant and lovely,” she says. “Our community partner Aileen [Montour, president of LGBTQ Senior Housing, Inc.] said, ‘You know, these are seniors, but not everybody wants these subdued tones. These are lively people.’ We’ve got a deck that was envisioned as a dance deck where people could have socials and have fun together. Play: At all levels, it’s just so critical.”

It’s no longer enough, Kim contends, to create superficial pockets of green in cities being ravaged by climate change, by health crises, and

by disconnection. “We know that there’s a lot of psychological research out there that says within three to five minutes of engaging with the natural world, our brain function, the electrical function in our brain, our blood pressure, it all normalizes so quickly,” she says. “I want to go the next step, which is, how as a society do we strengthen each other through our urban spaces? Maybe public parks aren’t places for just entertainment. They are places where we get stronger.” ●

KIM O’CONNELL WRITES ABOUT LANDSCAPE, SCIENCE, AND HISTORY FROM ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA.



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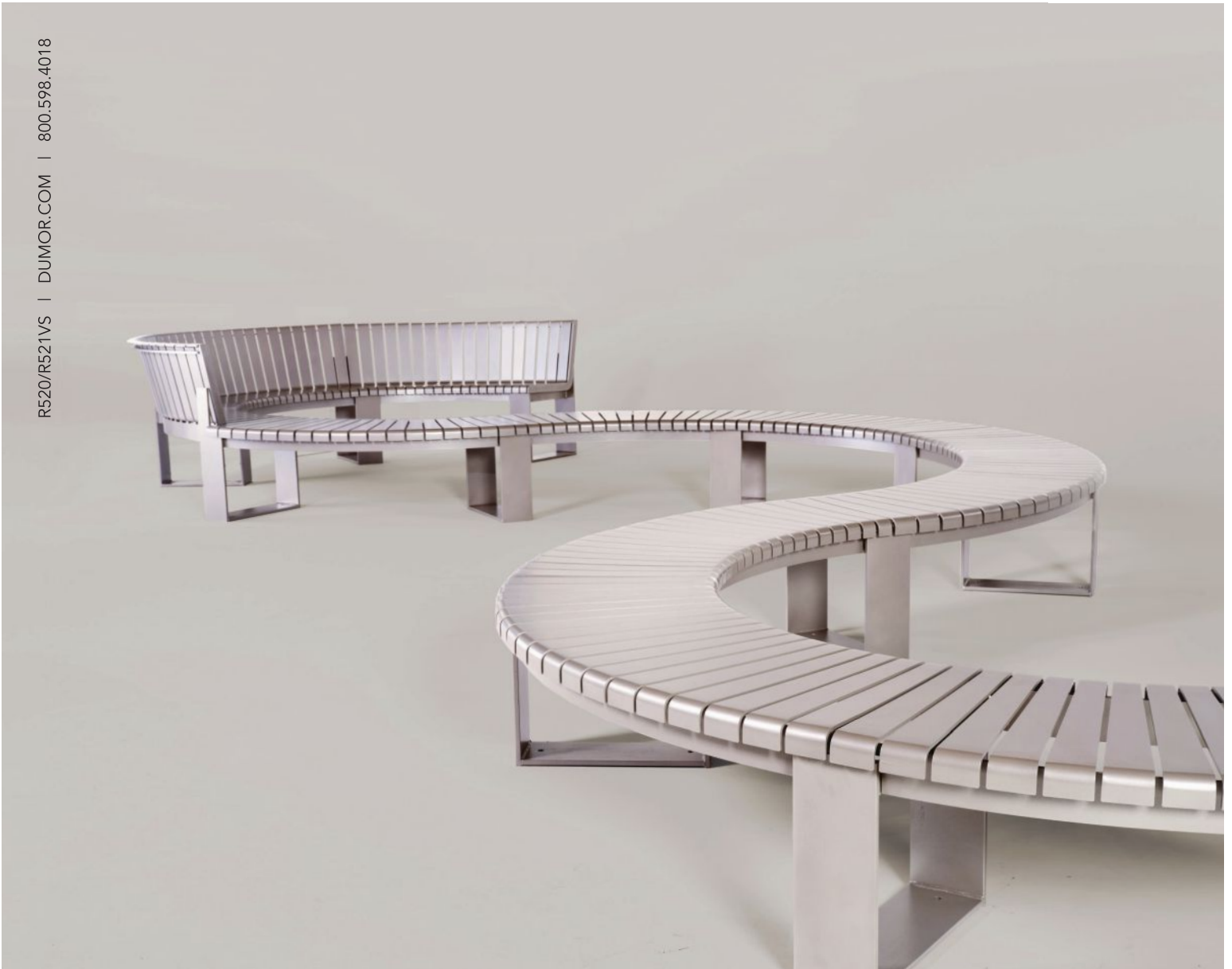
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# THE BACK

## WORLD LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE MONTH

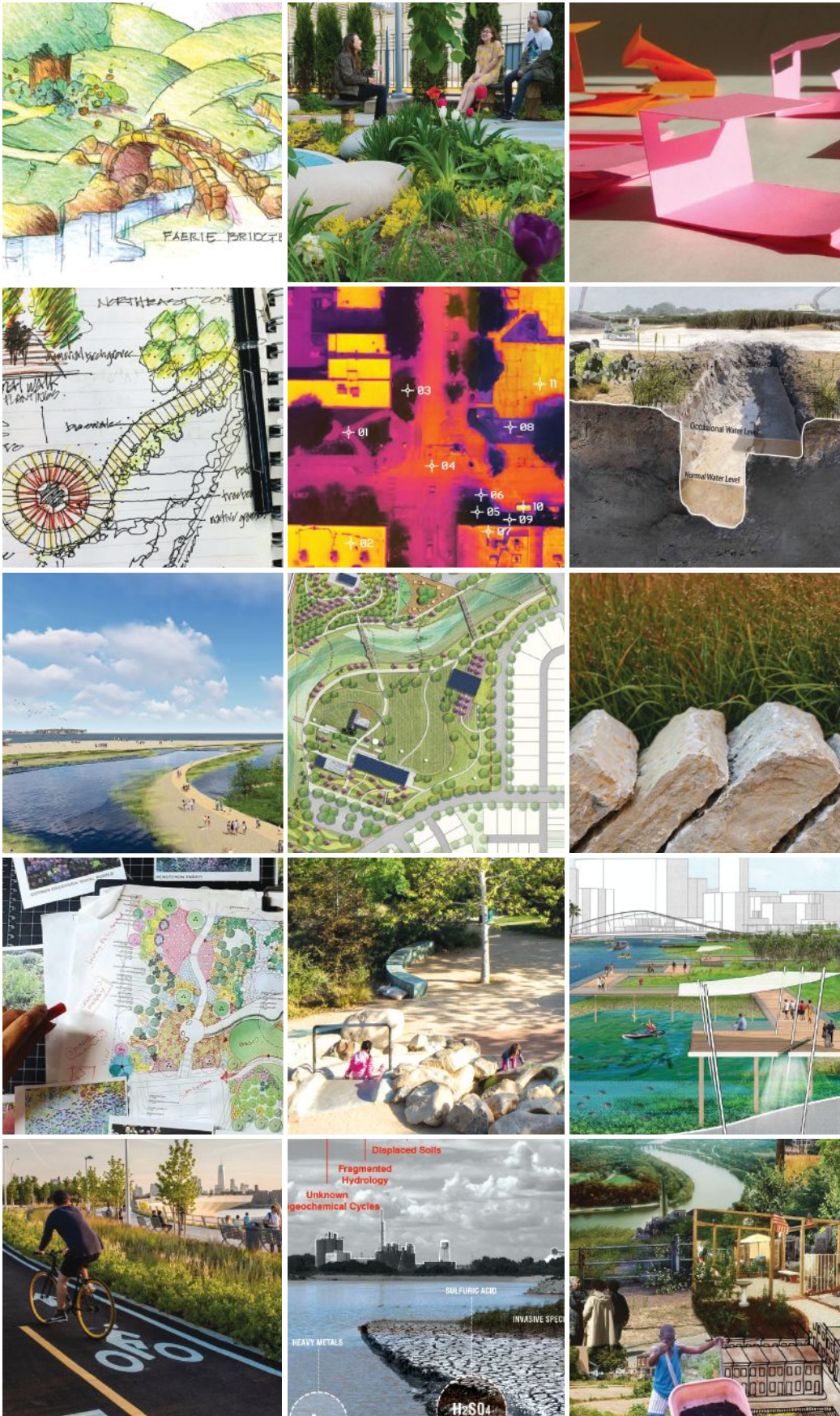
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With more than 3,400 entries, the first annual WLAM Instagram challenge hosted by ASLA National's social media team was a wild success. The winning entry, from Amanda Carmen Bower, Student ASLA, featured a spinner of a trace-paper model from her studio project, an image that evoked both the tactile and the abstract in the designer's process. This year the prompts will be fresh, and the LAM team will be reviewing them all, looking for the one that sparks our curiosity and speaks to the soul of what makes the vision and work of landscape architects unique.

Follow [@aslanational](https://www.instagram.com/aslanational) on Instagram and post your responses tagged [#WLAM2024](https://www.instagram.com/WLAM2024). For more information, visit [asla.org/WLAM2024.aspx](http://asla.org/WLAM2024.aspx). One entry will be selected by the LAM team to be featured in the June 2024 issue.



# FAR AND WIDE

SNAPSHOTS FROM A  
SABBATICAL YEAR IN AFRICA.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARETH DOHERTY, ASLA

**M**y introduction to African landscape architecture came through Afro-Brazilian sacred groves, which I have been studying for several years. These spaces have their origins in Africa and the slave trade: It is estimated that 5 to 11 million enslaved peoples were brought from the African west coast to Brazil. Salvador da Bahia was one of those slavery centers in the Americas. To this day, the city is punctuated with sacred groves, called *terreiros*. The *terreiros* are homes to the *orishas*, otherwise known as energies of nature, deities, and gods. I came to understand that these spaces are heavily designed, just not shaped with a logic we normally teach in design schools. I also came to appreciate the transcendent qualities of the spaces and the fact that trees, plants, and leaves can emit trance-inducing energies as much as they have a physical form, roots, and canopies.

MAAME SERWA OPARE BOAFO, BOTTOM



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP**

Lalibela, Ethiopia, is famous for its rock-hewn churches crafted from the landscape in the 12th and 13th centuries; doing team fieldwork on coastal erosion in Glefe, Ghana; and looking into the Secret Garden, Marrakech, Morocco.



### OSOGBO, NIGERIA

Fantastical sculptures by Susanne Wenger and the New Sacred Art movement in the Osun Sacred Grove, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and one of the last remaining sacred groves in West Africa. The river/orisha Osun flows gracefully through the grove.



### NAIROBI, KENYA

Visiting the work of Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI) in Kibera, a public space project to support watershed management and opportunity in one of the largest informal settlements in Africa.

From Afro-Brazil, I went back to the source in West Africa, where I experienced sacred groves such as the Osun Sacred Grove in Osogbo, Nigeria. These spaces are formed by Indigenous knowledge, and they are spiritually, environmentally, and socially important spaces. Yet, when I saw some contemporary projects that are being designed in the name of landscape architecture in Africa, I was embarrassed to be a landscape architect. I

wanted to know more about this tension between the Indigenous and the professional knowledge. I argue that this relationship does not have to be framed as a binary.

How is landscape architecture practiced in Africa? Given that only eight out of 54 African countries have a professional association of landscape architects, how might the profession unfold across the continent, as it





### **GRAND-BASSAM, CÔTE D'IVOIRE**

Documenting the shocking impacts of urban flooding with the photographer and artist Adolphus Opara and a research team from the Harvard Salata Institute for Climate and Sustainability.

probably will? How is landscape architecture taught in the 13 or so African landscape architecture programs? More important, what can we learn from African landscape practices that can enrich landscape architecture in the rest of the world? Does every city need a park?

These are some of the questions that were on my mind as I traveled across the African continent in 2022 and 2023 from four bases:

Cape Town, South Africa; Nairobi, Kenya; Tunis, Tunisia; and Lagos, Nigeria. Armed with a notepad and camera, I met landscape architects, professionally trained and not; experienced landscapes professionally designed and not; and visited almost all of the continent's educational programs, accredited or not. Although in one year it's only possible to scratch the surface of this vast continent, it propelled initial reflections on the profession

# THE ANSWER TO ONE OF THE CENTRAL QUESTIONS OF HOW THE PROFESSION MIGHT UNFOLD IS IN EDUCATION.

and where it might be going on that continent with a surging population and 17 of the fastest-growing cities in the world.

Over the course of my year in Africa, I engaged in what I term “landscape fieldwork.” This is a form of immersive, embodied in situ research that recognizes both qualitative and quantitative data, uses multiple forms of media to record observations, and is constantly asking

how things can be different in the future. Landscape fieldwork is at the core of what landscape architects do, but as a field we just don’t think about it as much as other disciplines do. Archaeologists, ecologists, and art historians have well-established field research methods, but in landscape architecture we often leave our fieldwork to chance. Even if serendipity is a big part of fieldwork—and I like chance encounters because it means we must be open

### ILÉ-IFÈ, NIGERIA

Steps at Obafemi Awolowo University, designed by Arie Sharon, often described as Africa's most beautiful campus.



### CHEFCHAOUEN, MOROCCO

The blue city, an entire urban economy based on blue. People come from all over to bathe in Chefchaouen's blueness.

to the unexpected—chance is not enough. In my own landscape fieldwork, I borrow ethnographic skills from anthropologists, art historians, sociologists, and the like. This requires me to understand a project from the ground up, as it were, as well as top-down. I approach a project from multiple perspectives as designer, resident, user, commissioner. This necessitates gathering as much evidence as possible from as many people as possible. Combining this

evidence with my own observations, I later interpret the data. There is a rule of thumb in fieldwork: For every hour we spend in the field, it takes four hours to interpret it. So, I expect it will take me at least a couple of years to interpret the year I spent in Africa.

As I began my fieldwork in Cape Town, I can recall a huge sense of anticipation and excitement. I recognized some of the complexities

## TUNIS, TUNISIA

Fluttering fabrics shading the narrow streets of the Medina of Tunis. This urban landscape has changed little in centuries.



and difficulties and perils, yet they were outweighed by my daily learning. I was constantly aware of my own positionality as a white European male. Still, I found many companions on the continent who recognized the Irish as friends—having shared colonial histories. To this day, the impacts of colonialism in Africa are palpable. One cannot but weep at the plunder and extraction that the West has done and is still doing on the continent. I

spent my days as intensely as I could, visiting projects, schools, and landscape architects. From South Africa, I traveled to Botswana, Tunisia, Morocco, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria. Even today, to move from one part of Africa to another, one must often travel through a European or Middle Eastern city. So, I also stopped off in Paris, Rome, Istanbul, and Dubai, United Arab Emirates.



### OSOGBO, NIGERIA

The Nelson Mandela Freedom Park is described by the Osun State Government's website as a symbol of development. They say it is "giving the sleepy town a new look expected of a city."



### LALIBELA, ETHIOPIA

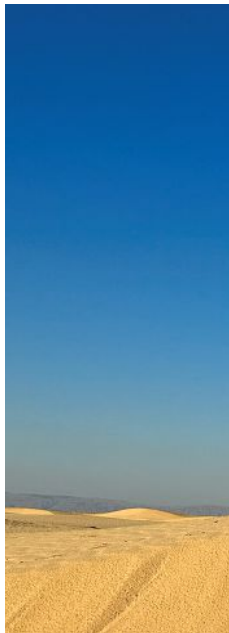
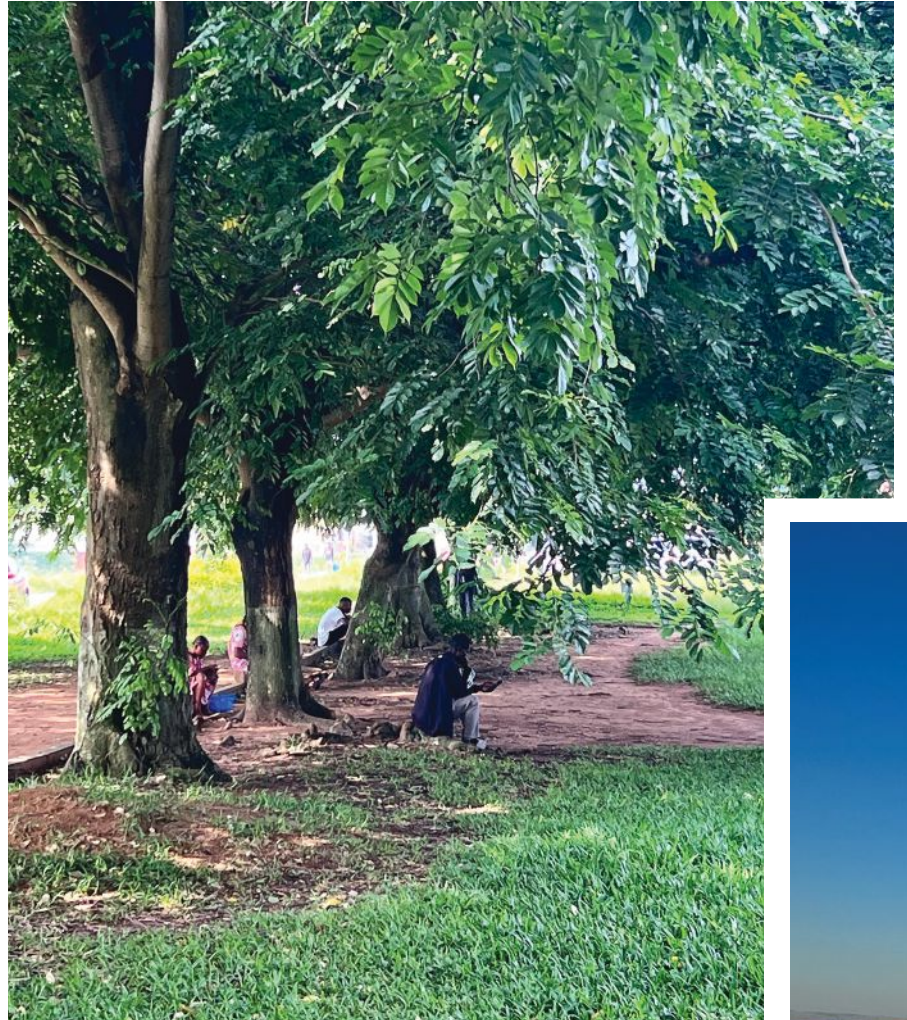
The outdoor Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church contrasts with the plethora of rock-hewn churches in Lalibela in the Amhara Region.

As my fieldwork progressed, I began to focus on educational programs, and it seems to me that the answer to one of the central questions of how the profession might unfold is in education. Given that there are 10 to 15 landscape architecture programs spread across the continent, depending on how you count them, I noticed a direct link on the ground between education and practice, a link that is less obvious in Europe and

the United States, where the field is more established. The dominant colonial powers of France and Great Britain have different ways of teaching landscape architecture. French programs are typically in schools of agriculture, such as the Institut Supérieur Agronomique de Chott Mériem in Sousse, Tunisia, and the Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire Hassan II (IAV) in Rabat, Morocco. Those of British descent are primarily

**ABIDJAN,  
CÔTE D'IVOIRE**

Reading under the shade of the trees between classes at the Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny.



in schools of architecture, including Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Kenya and the University of Lagos in Nigeria. This division is evident in the way the field is taught and physically manifested in projects we see on the ground. Today, the presence of China in education is also palpable, and I anticipate this will be a significant influence moving forward.

At the IAV in Rabat, I met with Professor Noureddine Tlemçani and some of his students. I was impressed with their immersive approach to landscape fieldwork. All incoming landscape architecture students are required to walk 80 kilometers over one week for what they call *stage de découverte de la nature*, which translates as the nature discovery course. One group of students focuses on geology, another on botany, one on zoology,

# I WAS IMPRESSED WITH THEIR IMMERSIVE APPROACH TO LANDSCAPE FIELDWORK.



## SAHARA DESERT, TUNISIA

On a sand dune at the edge of the vast, and humbling, Sahara Desert in the south of Tunisia.

and another on human ecology. At the end of the week, they combine their observations. This leads to a deep knowledge of how to read a landscape. The course was set up in the 1970s with the help of the Moroccan sociologist Paul Pascon. Landscape architects in Morocco have the benefit of two professional associations: the Association Marocaine des Paysagistes and the IFLA-affiliated Association des Architectes Paysagistes du Maroc.

If landscape architecture is to spread across the African continent, as it likely will, we need more experiences like the nature discovery course, but combined with more design awareness. Only through understanding the myriad relationships between people and landscapes on the continent can we appreciate how we might shape landscapes, but also how landscapes shape us. With more reflexive forms of observation, education, and



**DAR ES SALAAM,  
TANZANIA**

Ardhi University is one of the two landscape architecture programs in Tanzania. The other is Mbeya University of Science and Technology.



**KIGALI, RWANDA**

The University of Rwanda's School of Architecture and Built Environment was designed by Patrick Schweitzer & Associés and inspired by the volcanic landscapes of northern Rwanda.

practice, we may design from the ground up, from African know-how, rather than imposing a Western idea of what landscape architecture should be on societies that often have different needs and histories than the West. At the same time, by recognizing African-specific landscape types (such as sacred groves, initiation grounds, and even the cover of trees), we can create the knowledge we need to diversify our own design

canons and broaden our understandings of what landscape architecture is and what it might be.

Back home, I am now teaching a new seminar based on my fieldwork in Africa. "African Landscape Architecture: Alternative Futures for the Field" is crosslisted between the Department of Landscape Architecture and the Department of African and African Ameri-





## OSOGBO, NIGERIA

Getting around on an *okada*, a motorcycle taxi, at the Osun Sacred Grove.

can Studies at Harvard University. Every week, from a classroom equipped for hybrid learning, we engage online with practitioners and academics from across the African continent. Several students join in informally from Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Tunisia, adding greatly to the discussions. Hopefully, this course will be the prototype for a future conference, exhibition, publications, and ways of teaching. It is essential to

research African landscapes in collaboration with Africans so that we can jointly create a new understanding of what landscape architecture should be, being open to the possibilities that come from contexts where the field is not, at least yet, formalized. ●

GARETH DOHERTY, ASLA, IS AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AT THE HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN.



# 2024 HALS CHALLENGE COMPETITION

Briarwood: The Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve - view of footbridge and Wings Rest Pond from the north.  
Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, HALS LA-1.

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To learn more about the competition and access resources to help you document landscapes for the collection, please visit [www.nps.gov/subjects/heritagedocumentation/hals-challenge.htm](http://www.nps.gov/subjects/heritagedocumentation/hals-challenge.htm)

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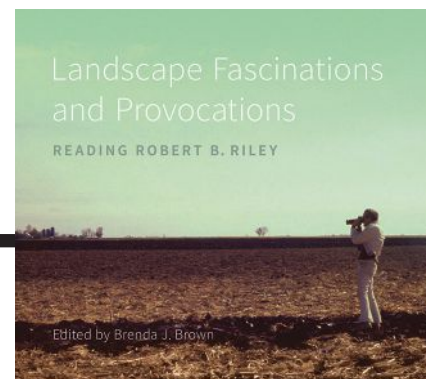
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# MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

## LANDSCAPE FASCINATIONS AND PROVOCATIONS: READING ROBERT B. RILEY

**EDITED BY BRENDA J. BROWN; BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA:  
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2023; 288 PAGES, \$40.**

REVIEWED BY JUSTIN PARSCHER



The *Festschrift*, a collection of scholarly work dedicated to a leader in the field, is one of the most agreeable conventions in the academic world. It embodies the happy ideal of a living tradition passed on from teachers to students. At a time when current scholarship critiques, interrogates, and exposes the bias of its predecessors, such friendly relationships between academic generations can be hard to come by. Though not advertised as such, *Landscape Fascinations and Provocations* fits into the *Festschrift* genre, as it chronicles and responds to the work of Robert B. Riley (1931–2019). A labor of love by editor Brenda J. Brown, ASLA, a longtime friend and mentee of Riley, the book centers around six of his essays, written over the course of his career from 1968 to 2015. Eight new texts from invited contributors respond to his work, accompanied by a series of short reminiscences from peers and students.

Brown successfully makes the case for Riley as deserving a place in today's discourse, on both the strength of his professional contribution and the quality of his writing. His eventful career path would be unlikely today. Riley started out in architecture practice in Maryland, became the University of New Mexico's campus planner, and ended up the head of the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Illinois Urbana-

Champaign, having never earned a landscape degree (or any graduate degree at all). Along the way, he made a name for himself in the written culture of the field, as an associate editor for *Landscape* magazine in the second half of the 1960s and the editor of *Landscape Journal* from 1987 to 1995.

Riley's writing, along with that of J. B. Jackson and the other cultural landscape specialists in his circle, remains a model for any discipline in its common touch and its attention to the overlooked. The pieces in this volume give lively and engaging treatment to unglamorous topics: midwestern agricultural landscape, the role of history in landscape education, the cultural importance of the car in urban planning. Riley's clarity of expression is a frequent touchstone for Brown; the epigraph she chose for the book is "*Eschew Obfuscation*—Bumper sticker, late 1980s." That sentiment also evokes the easygoing college-town idyll, backed up by reminiscences that speak of leisurely conversations and road trips shared between Riley and his students. I found this vignette hard to recognize from my own time as an MLA student more than a decade ago; my own teachers seemed to perennially be on their way to or from the airport, urged onward by expectations that faculty constantly and simultaneously write, lecture, and design.



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**TOP AND BOTTOM**  
Robert B. Riley's photographs of the Ryoanji temple rock garden in Kyoto, Japan, juxtapose the garden itself with the experience of the tourists viewing it.

*Landscape Journal* launched in 1982 as a venue for demonstrating such scholarly productivity in the field. The work featured in that magazine, under Riley's tenure as editor, reflected his own commitment to high standards of study, with a revisionist bent that tested the field's accepted methods and assumptions against a wider perspective on the culture they sat within. Such studies ranged from Heath Schenker's feminist critique of Norman Newton's history textbook *Design on the Land* to Gert Groening and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn's work on the Nazi enthusiasm

for native plants. The journal also displayed a surprising influence from Riley's time under Jackson at *Landscape* magazine, in the form of engaging essays that venture well beyond the cautious summaries typical to academic journal editors.

The lead piece in Brown's collection, "Some Thoughts on Scholarship and Publication" (1990), is Riley's self-introduction to *Landscape Journal* readers. He begins by attempting to bridge a familiar gap between quantitative research derived from the sciences and the more slippery realm of qualitative scholarship. Acknowledging readers who felt that the journal was too skewed toward the wing of the discipline specializing in "behavioral investigations, visual assessment, land planning and analysis," Riley announces his intention to publish "more design philosophy, criticism, and, yes, if you will, theory." As promised, the next issue featured the journal's first entry by James Corner, FASLA, grandly titled "A Discourse on Theory I: 'Sounding the Depths'—Origins, Theory, and Representation."

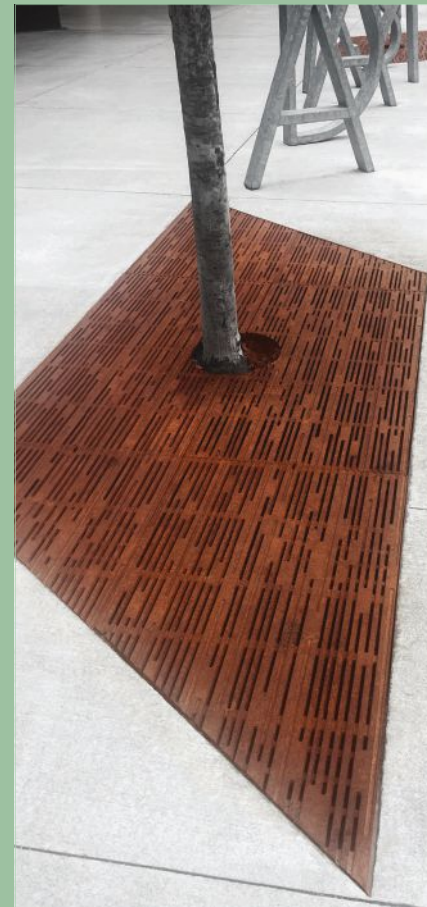
As Riley's tenure went on, titles like "Using Structural Measures to Compare Twenty-Two U.S. Street Tree Populations" became less common, but scholars on the quantitative wing also realized an opportunity to experiment with more unconventional cultural connections in their work. This was a period when Joan Iverson Nassauer's landmark paper, "Messy Ecosystems, Orderly Frames" (*Landscape Journal*, 1995), at its heart a conventional visual preference study, could include a digression on the art of Joseph Cornell.

In "Some Thoughts," Riley specifies that any qualitative work in *Landscape Journal* will be "done with the rigor and clarity of the quantitative work it runs alongside." If the clarity is undimmed in Riley's own work today, the rigor can be harder to judge. As with most of the best-loved writing from Jackson and *Landscape* magazine, Riley's own work tends to speak from a well of personal experience, with little supplied to retrace his steps or check his work. Reading "Square to the Road, Hogs to the East," a 1985 piece from *Places* included in the book, it is striking to not find any of the thorough citations that essays in this journal tend to provide. Riley's observations on cultural shifts and historical trends in corn cribs, woodlots, and hedgerows sound plausible, but he is standing on his honor. By present standards, this is



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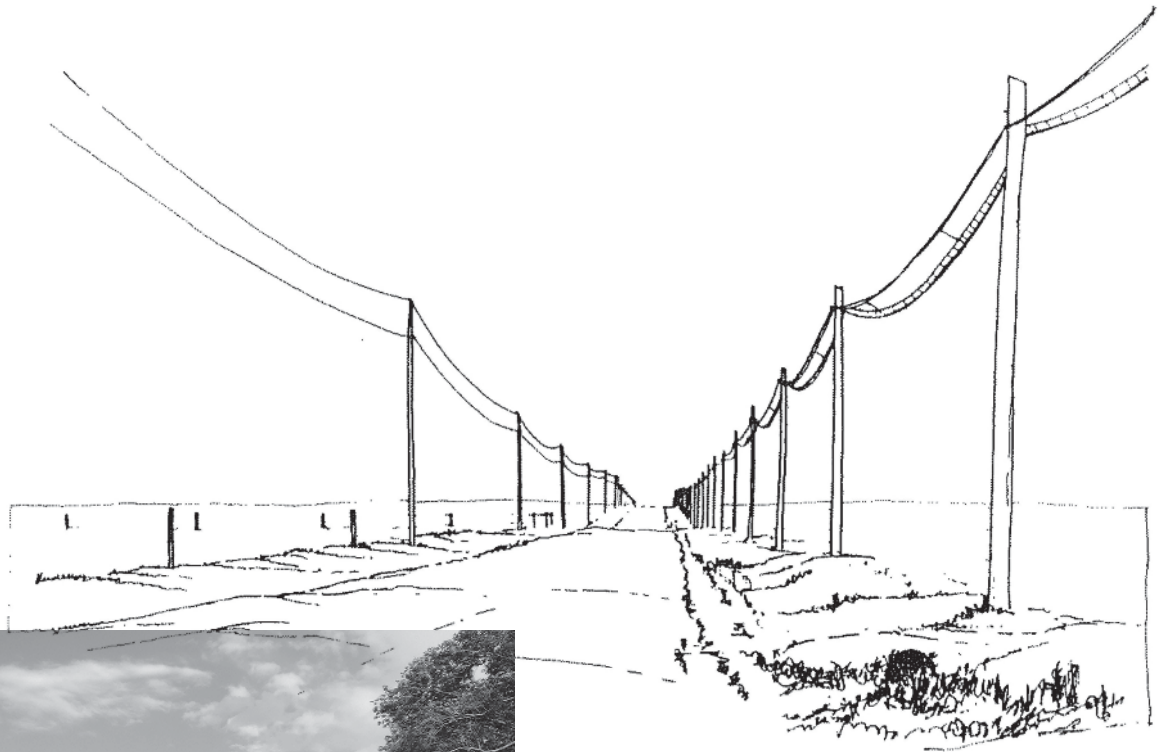


**RIGHT**

A drawing by Susan WYDICK commissioned by Riley, showing a typical rural road in the Midwest.

**BELOW**

A farmer stands between two shelterbelts, from Brenda J. Brown's chapter on the subject.



Manitoba farmers about the shelterbelts on their property with accompanying original drawings, would make a fine template for a new version of *Landscape* magazine—one that foregrounded the experience of participants in cultural landscapes instead of the insights of scholar tourists.

Throughout Riley's writings, the pleasure we might take in what appears as a simpler and less contentious time for scholarship is shadowed by a difficult question. We cannot ignore how a small and unrepresentative group set out to determine the meaning and worth of the landscapes around them. The perspective of M. Elen Deming, FASLA, long a leading figure in the theory of landscape architecture research, is particularly valuable here, since she was present for Riley's era but has also embraced today's critiques. Her contribution looks back to "Most Important Questions," a 1992 survey in *Landscape Journal* (not included in this book) requesting academics in the field to name "the most important question(s) in landscape architecture today." She finds that the piece gives her feelings of "respect, affection, gratitude for the diligence and earnest naiveté of the respondents," a naiveté shown as much in their optimism as their almost entire omission of questions about "social or environmental justice, racial inequality, poverty, migration, or accessibility." "Most Important Questions," later joined by "Most Important Books" and "Most Influential Landscapes," were perceived, even at the time, as elitist, as Brown acknowledges; together, they present a rich self-portrait of an exclusive group.

something that would be easier to take from an active participant reflecting on their own culture; but Riley, despite having perused *Prairie Farmer* magazine and the Census of Agriculture, was no farmer, and he did not include the voices of the farmers he sought to understand in his work. Lewis D. Hopkins's essay for *Fascinations*, "Two Hundred Years of a Farm Landscape," underlines this lack. Hopkins, one of Riley's colleagues at the University of Illinois, contrasts Riley's perspective as "a landscape design intellectual" with Hopkins's own ways of knowing a farm—knowledge handed down generationally through his family. Brown's contribution to the volume, a set of interviews with





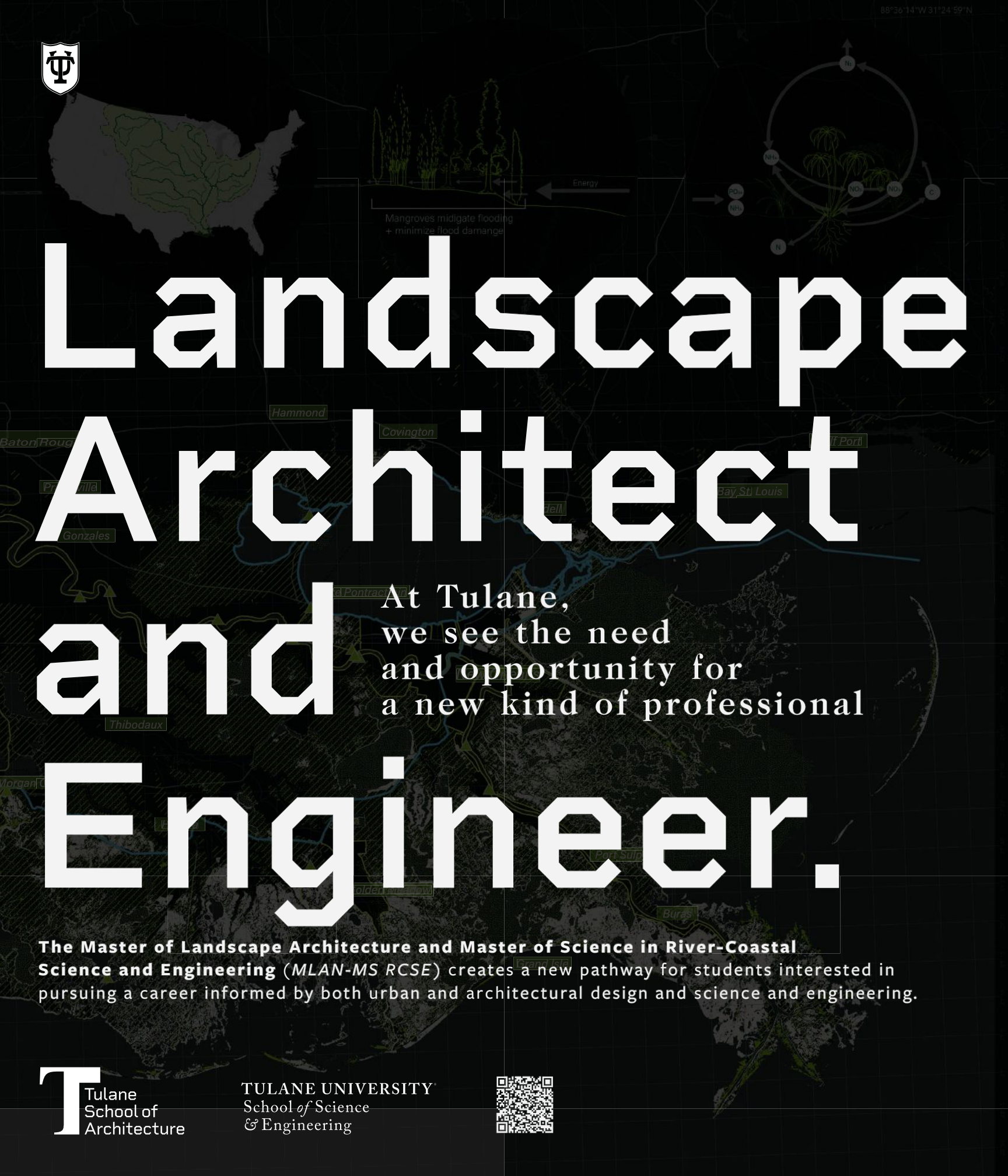
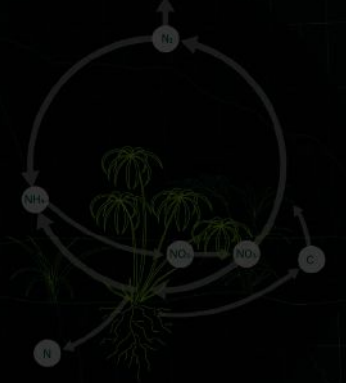
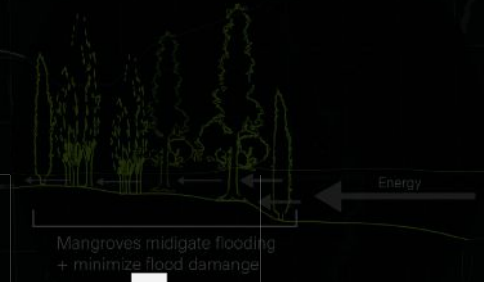
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**ABOVE**  
An archival image from 1971 of firewood gatherers crossing the Pan-American Highway. Recent scholarship by Rosa Ficek challenges tourist narratives of the highway landscape.

From the testimonials in *Landscape Fascinations and Provocations*, it seems as though Riley was genuinely devoted to bringing together a community—a space where all could share, if nothing else, an attachment to landscapes. Beyond the general impression of Riley in the book’s collected anecdotes as being encouraging and welcoming in person, he is cited by a few younger colleagues specifically for his support of women entering the academy. In the early 1980s, when Riley’s faculty at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign featured four women, Ohio State, my home institution and a fellow midwestern land grant, boasted a high of two and a low of one—out of a roster of 12. That said, the idea of progress as increasing the diversity of the community in existing institutions, without substantially changing those institutions, does not seem to have the support it used to.

The most revealing moment in the book comes in a sudden jump in tone between two of the selections. A paper by Rosa Ficek, an anthropologist at the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey, describes the community of self-described “overlanders,” people mostly from the United States traveling the Pan-American Highway as a hobby. Ficek mounts a strong anti-colonial critique of the tourist overlanders, who consistently avoid local residents in order to “shield and remove them[selves] from potentially

uncomfortable encounters in which their wealth and privilege may be the focal point of conversation.” Brown follows Ficek’s paper with a 2015 piece by Riley, which begins like this: “Is it so bad, then, to be a tourist?... I never did understand why bad water, spoiled food, multitudes of insects, thieving merchants, and smelly, dangerous, overcrowded buses were requirements for an ‘authentic’ landscape experience.” The mismatch in outlook, for readers of the present volume, reads as a moment of generational clash fit for a Thanksgiving table.

Following Deming’s lead, we might equally contrast Riley’s era of *Landscape Journal* with where it stands today. A recent issue features “Decolonizing the Language of Landscape Architecture,” by N. Claire Napawan; Linda Chamorro; Debra Guenther, FASLA; and Yiwei Huang, ASLA. The authors recount recent demands from students and emerging professionals to restructure curricula and professional standards. They support these demands through a persuasive argument that finds a settler-colonial taint in the conceptual foundations of the discipline, ranging from nature/culture dualities to the assumed authority of academic research itself. It is hard to unsee such associations in Riley’s worldview, which often took for granted the right of the credentialed to interpret other people’s landscapes, and in consequence impeded the creation of the larger and more diverse community of landscape he would have liked to see. New scholarship that centers the marginalized represents a step forward in scholarly progress, but it is a step that often seems to demand leaving behind much of what came before.

Although I haven’t received a survey, I’ll nonetheless submit my Most Important Questions for the field: What do the Rosa Ficeks of today owe to the Robert Rileys of yesterday? If landscape architecture is a “colonizing discipline,” as Napawan et al. suggest, and broad swatches of it have to be unlearned, what deserves to remain? Is the community that Riley envisioned still possible if the divide is so sharp? To me it seems important to sit with where the discipline has been, but I wouldn’t blame anyone else for getting up and walking on. ●

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**TERRA-SORTA-FIRMA:  
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BY FADI MASOUD; BARCELONA: ACTAR PUBLISHERS, 2021; 324 PAGES, \$45.95.

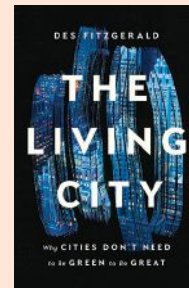
With a focus on waterlogged, marshy, and sandy edges where urban growth meets the sea, *Terra-Sorta-Firma* offers a comprehensive look at coastal edges and the ways they've been manipulated. Fadi Masoud, an assistant professor of landscape architecture and urbanism at the University of Toronto, presents global case studies, his own research, and invited essays that deepen our understanding—infrastructural, economic, or material—of reclaimed landscapes: San Francisco, Kowloon, Beirut. The book's detailed analysis of sand and its use in creating artificial terrain, for example, discusses international fleets of dredging vessels, diagrams of beach management, and a piece by Atelier NL on sand at the granule level. ●



**DESIGNED LANDSCAPES:  
37 KEY PROJECTS**

BY ALAN TATE AND MARCELLA EATON; LONDON AND NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE, 2024; 342 PAGES, \$54.95.

Organized in a dozen categories such as enclosed spaces, private parkland, and campuses, *Designed Landscapes* is an ambitious volume. Authors Alan Tate and Marcella Eaton are both landscape architecture educators, and their mission is pedagogical. They identify a worldwide survey of important projects, which, with a few jaunts to Asia and India, favor U.S. and European examples. (Africa and Latin America are largely overlooked.) Each case study presents an exhaustive history and design analysis and is accompanied by annotated drawings and photographs. ●



**THE LIVING CITY:  
WHY CITIES DON'T  
NEED TO BE GREEN  
TO BE GREAT**

BY DES FITZGERALD; NEW YORK: BASIC BOOKS, 2023; 272 PAGES, \$30.

A counterintuitive argument from the Irish sociologist Des Fitzgerald, *The Living City* disabuses the belief that parks and green spaces make for a better urban environment. *The Living City* is a provocation, especially for landscape architects. Fitzgerald pokes at sacred cows, including Frederick Law Olmsted and Ian McHarg, lamenting an “antiurban polemic.” The text, written in first person with a journalistic bent, is a breezy trip through modernism and its awkward and sometimes failed relationship with nature. His points are valid, but often stop short of or dodge contemporary discourses relating to how urban landscapes connect to social equity and the climate crisis. ●

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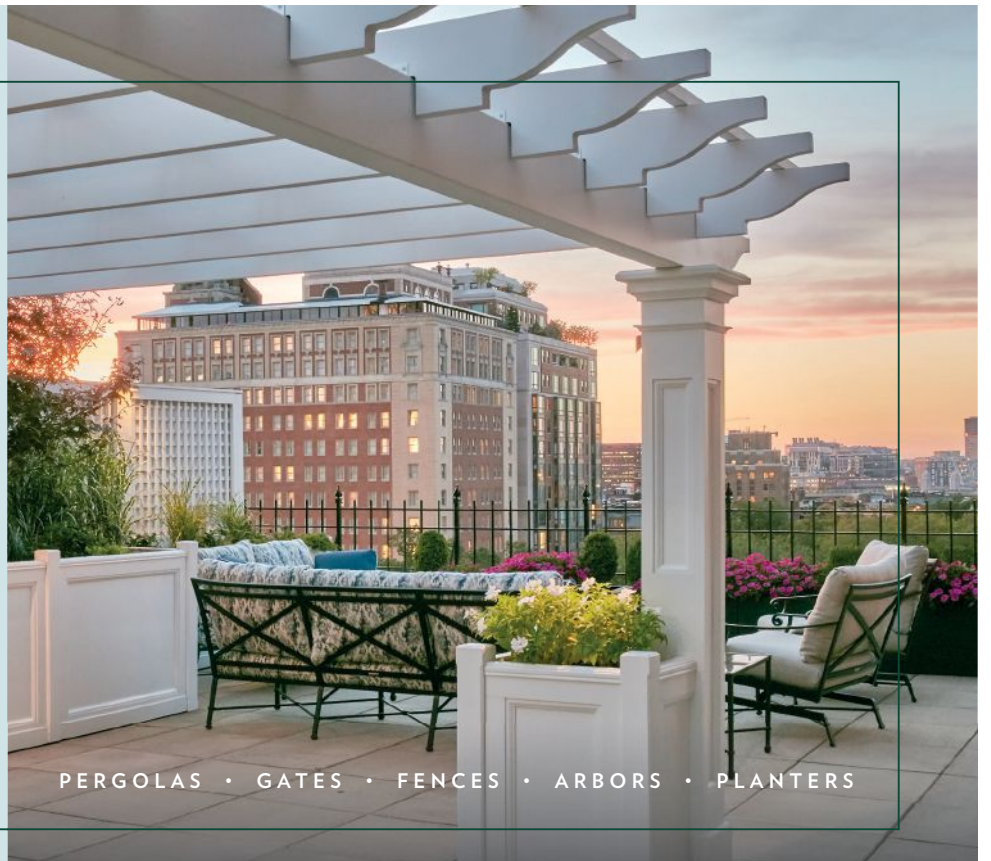
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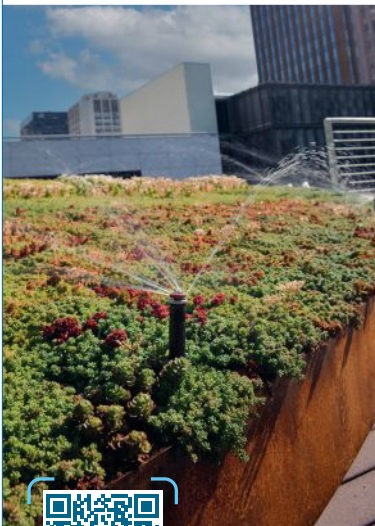
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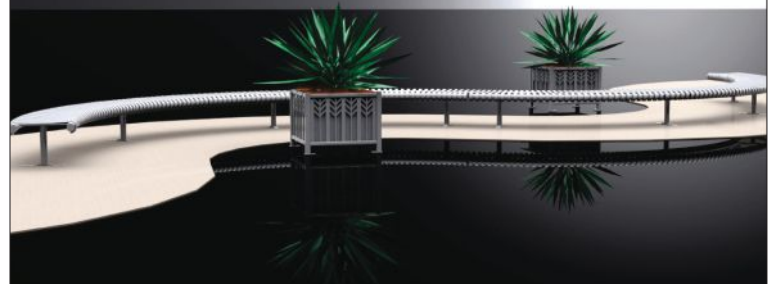


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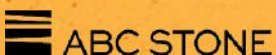
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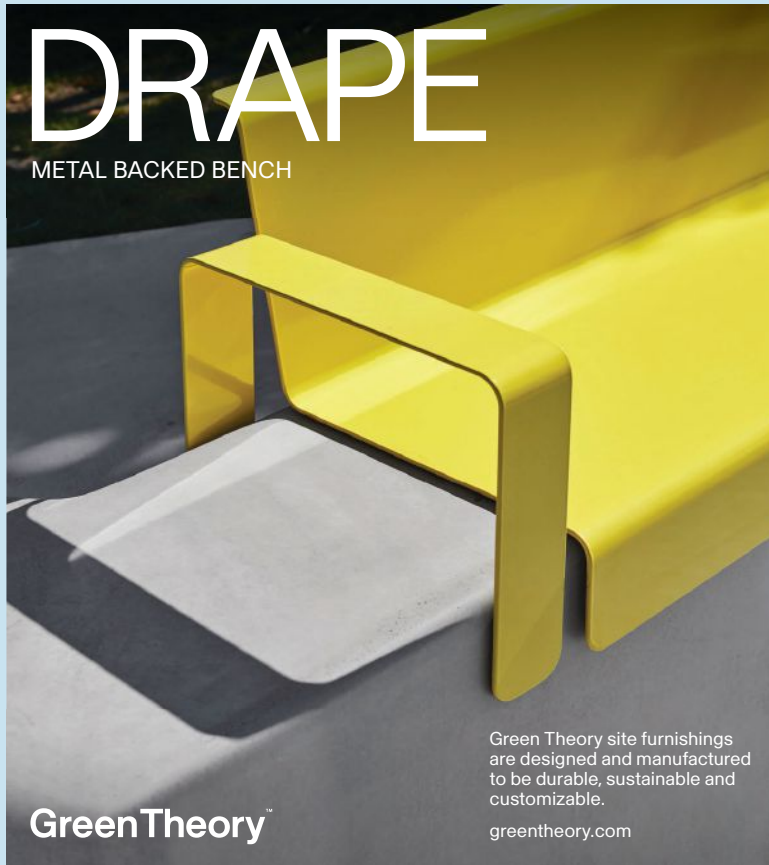


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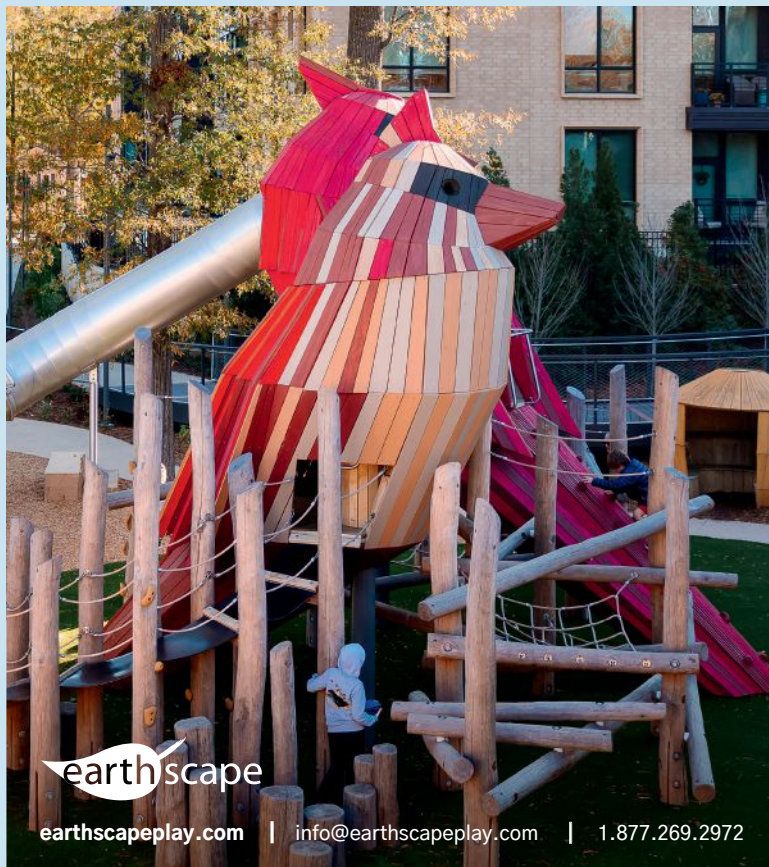


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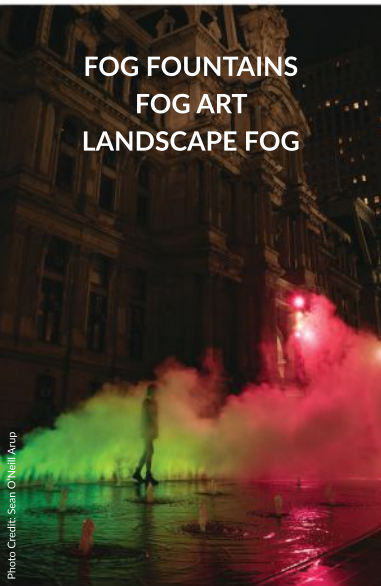



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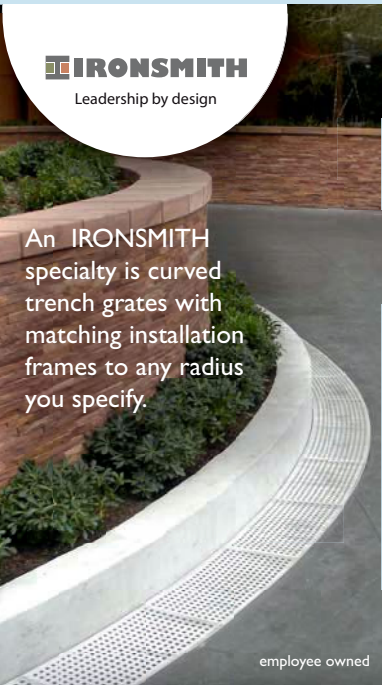
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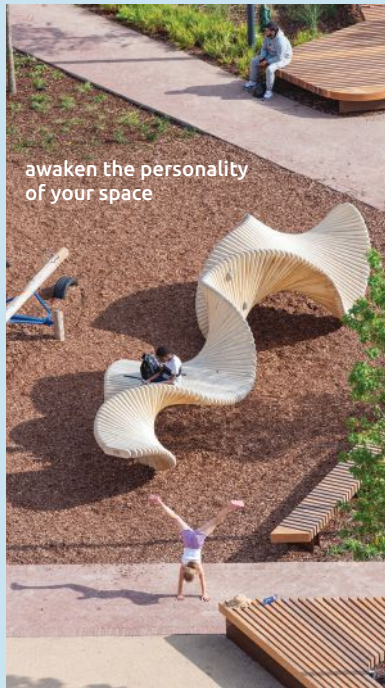
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# THE QUASQUICENTENNIAL CONFERENCE AND EXPO

The 125th anniversary of ASLA this year will give us plenty to celebrate in Washington, D.C. Both inside and outside the convention center the sights and experiences are endless.

BY RUSS KLETTKE

## Executive Summary

- ▶ **The DMV metro area is rich with landscape architecture.**
- ▶ **Students and emerging professionals will get broad exposure to a wide range of specializations.**
- ▶ **So many sites, sights, and one-of-a-kind destinations.**

**T**he ASLA 2024 Conference on Landscape Architecture and EXPO (October 6-9) in Washington, D.C., will be an historic gathering of landscape architects, emerging professionals, students, and suppliers.

The nation's capital—home to ASLA's headquarters and the ASLA Center on Landscape Architecture—is a place where important policies and funding that affect the profession and industry take form. This year is also ASLA's 125th anniversary, meaning, it's time for a big celebration. The region's concentration of population diversity, business growth, colleges and universities that offer landscape architecture degrees, and the talents of local professionals will make this gathering at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center the heart of the landscape architecture universe for the better part of a week.

The ASLA Potomac President, **Matthew Sellers, ASLA**, landscape architect for the **Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute**, understands how the scores of federal museums, parks, monuments, and other landmarks that dot the city predictably draw throngs of visitors. "While some landscape architects in our chapter work on project management and the policy level of the federal government, it's about more than federal work here," he says. "There are many corporate headquarters in the region, as well as trails and greenways, educational institutions, and commercial developments that make this a very busy place for us."

The chapter has nearly 300 members; population density (18.3 million people in a 100-mile radius), federal spending, and private wealth in the Mid-Atlantic region are reasons the DMV metro area—District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia—is so rich in landscape architecture project installations.

### A region bursting with landscape architecture

This metro has the highest median household income (\$95,000 per year) of all large metro areas in the United States. Median home values (average is \$550,000) rank second nationally—only those in California's Silicon Valley are more expensive. There are at least 30 Fortune 1000 companies based here, and as many as 3,000 businesses with annual revenues exceeding \$100 million are headquartered within a 100-mile radius of the Capitol.

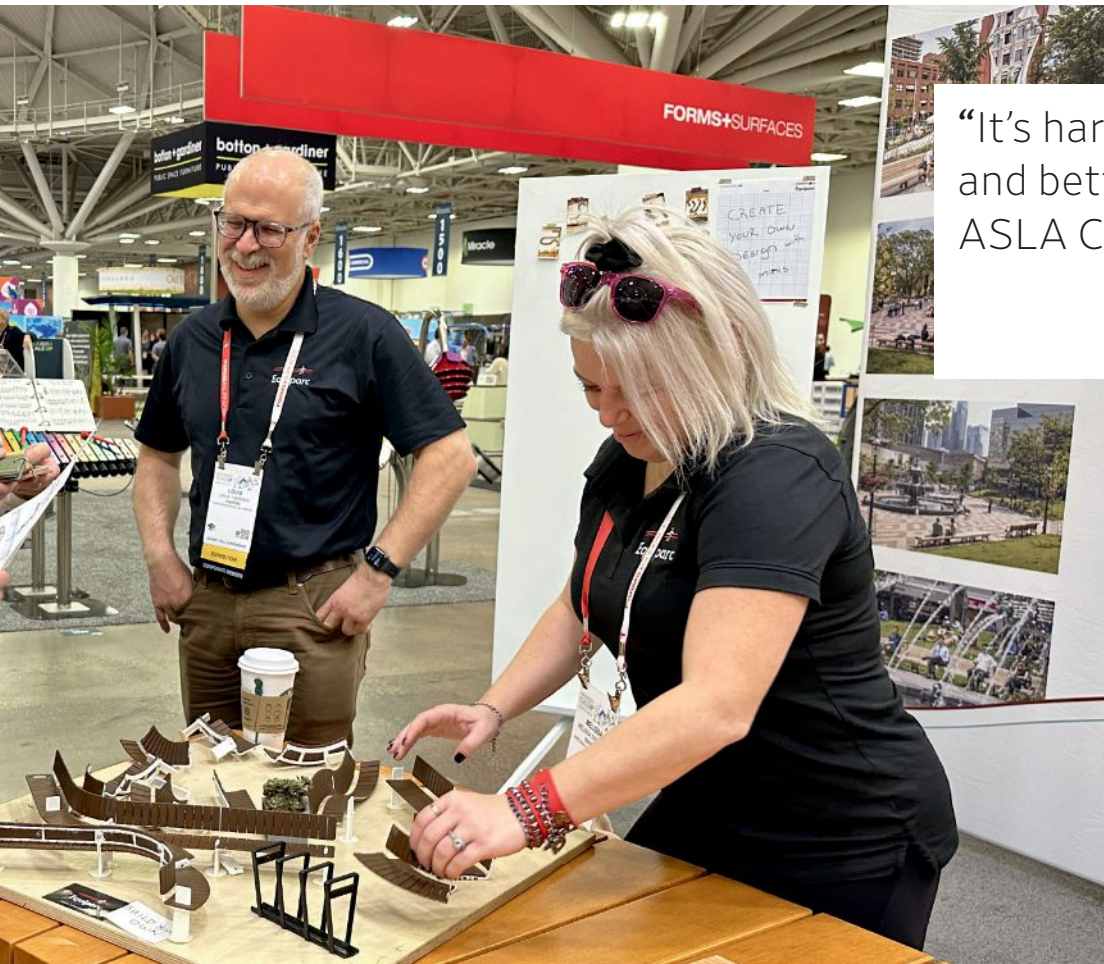


**Katie Riddle, ASLA, PLA, SITES AP** and managing director of programs with **ASLA**, says the switch to a mostly midweek conference doesn't mean the schedule is any less packed. If anything, there will be more going on than in past years.

In addition to 100+ educational sessions and an EXPO with an estimated 250 exhibitors, ASLA will host a 125th Anniversary celebration held on Monday (October 7) at the National Building Museum (presented by **Land F/X**). All conference attendees are invited—and it's free—but the maximum capacity is 1,800 people.

"For students and emerging professionals, this will be a great opportunity to see a broad diversity of what landscape architecture is across many specializations," says Riddle.

Also, the Emerging Professionals Zone on the EXPO floor will be a welcoming space of information and guidance for many first-timers in attendance. "My first ASLA Conference was in Boston in 1999," says ASLA President **SuLin Kotowicz, FASLA, PLA**. "I was a student then



“It’s hard to think of a bigger and better year to come to the ASLA Conference and EXPO.”

ASLA President  
SuLin Kotowicz, FASLA, PLA

Photo by ASLA

and hadn’t comprehended the number of people, companies, and manufacturers that make up our profession. It would take an exponential amount of time and effort to see and experience all these things separately.”

#### Easy to get there, easy to stay a little longer

The ASLA Potomac Chapter planning committees think the stunning nature of their city and region make this the must-attend conference. It’s easy to travel to, regionally (by car or train) and nationally (by air through Reagan National, Dulles, or Baltimore airports). Hundreds of students are expected to attend—and there is no shortage of places to visit outside the conference.

“All three major airports access the city via mass transit,” says **Stephanie Pankiewicz, ASLA, PLA**, and partner at **LandDesign** (Washington, D.C.). “Public transportation, bike infrastructure, and walkable neighborhoods make it possible for more people to attend and tour the area.” Field sessions to local projects will be included in the education program and planned by chapter members.

And lest anyone think that the area is nothing but historic parks and built environments, **Jeff Kreps, ASLA, PLA**, and director of landscape architecture for **VIKA Virginia, LLC** has other ideas to share. A co-chair of the Potomac Chapter conference planning committee with Pankiewicz, he encourages attendees to “experience and contrast the historic character of a place like Georgetown with a visit to a newer community like The Wharf, an emerging mixed-use waterfront district with lots of public art, restaurants, entertainment venues, rooftop bars, and great density.” It’s a 40-minute walk from the convention center and near two Metro stations, a water taxi, and four city bikeshare stations (Capital Bikeshare) that enable two-wheel touring of the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail and the Maine Avenue Cycle Track.

Pankiewicz says she enjoys cycling the Mount Vernon Trail that connects Old Town Alexandria to Mount Vernon along the George Washington Parkway. “Or visit Arlington Cemetery, Annapolis, or The Capital Wheel, a Ferris wheel in National Harbor, Maryland.” By car, she suggests day trips along the Skyline Drive to the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Shenandoah Valley. “And if you can, include a visit to Middleburg’s (Virginia) historic downtown and nearby wineries,” she says. ■

### ASLA 2024 Conference and EXPO checklist

- Commit to attend: Registration opens in early May (visit [aslaconference.com](http://aslaconference.com)).
- Industry partners: Investigate sponsorships (visit [advertise.asla.org/sponsorships](http://advertise.asla.org/sponsorships)).
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—TODD BRIGGS, ASLA

When they got the call about a new hotel in development near Bryce Canyon National Park in Utah, the designers at TRUEFORM landscape architecture studio hopped in their car and drove from Arizona to camp on the site. Despite hosting five national parks, the region has few population centers and scant lodging to support Bryce’s increasing visitation (2.4 million visitors last year), much less the thousands of mountain bikers drawn to the area’s trails. The client, who owned the ranchland where the hotel will be sited, wanted to get away from the fenced, cookie-cutter landscapes they’d seen at other hotels. TRUEFORM deconstructed that format, extending and integrating the hotel’s landscape to take advantage of the trail network and viewsheds. Here, the team works through a few ideas. ●



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