

UNIT 3 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

[1] From the city council rooms to corporate boardrooms, there is increasing demand today for the professional services of landscape architects. This trend reflects the public's desire for better housing, recreational and commercial facilities, and its expanded concern for environmental protection. Residential and commercial real estate developers, federal and state agencies, city planning commissions, and individual property owners are all among the thousands of people and organizations that will retain the services of a landscape architect this year.

[2] Landscape architecture is one of the most diversified of the design professions. Landscape architects design the built environment of neighborhoods, towns and cities while also protecting and managing the natural environment, from its forests and fields to rivers and coasts. Members of the profession have a special commitment to improving the quality of life through the best design of places for people and other living things. In fact, the work of landscape architects surrounds us. Members of the profession are involved in the planning of such sites as office plazas, public squares and thoroughfares. The attractiveness of parks, highways, housing developments, urban plazas, zoos and campuses reflects the skill of landscape architects in planning and designing the construction of useful and pleasing projects. Depending on the scope of the project for clients, ranging from a local developer to the federal government, landscape architects may plan the entire arrangement of a site, including the location of buildings, grading, storm water management, construction and planting.

[3] The origin of today's profession of landscape architects can be traced to the early treatments of outdoor space by successive ancient cultures, from Persia and Egypt through Greece and Rome. During the Renaissance, this interest in outdoor space, which had waned during the Middle Ages, was revived with splendid results in Italy and gave rise to ornate villas, gardens, and great outdoor piazzas. These precedents, in turn, greatly influenced the chateaux and urban gardens of 17th-century France, where landscape architecture design reached new heights of sophistication and formality. The designers became well known, with Andre le Notre, who designed the gardens at Versailles and Vaux-le-Vicomte, among the most famous of the early forerunners of today's landscape architects. In the 18th century, most English "landscape gardeners" such as Lancelot "Capability" Brown, who

remodeled the grounds of Blenheim Palace, rejected the geometric emphasis of the French in favor of imitating the forms of nature.

[4] Landscape architecture today cannot be described in a few simple terms. A variety of interwoven specializations exist within the profession. One of these is landscape design, the historical core of the profession, concerned with detailed outdoor space design for residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and public spaces. It involves the treatment of a site as art, the balance of hard and soft surfaces in outdoor and indoor spaces, the selection of construction and plant materials, infrastructure such as irrigation, and the preparation of detailed construction plans and documents.

[5] Site planning focuses on the physical design and arrangement of built and natural elements of a land parcel. A site-planning project can involve designing the land for a single house, an office park or shopping center, or an entire residential community. More specifically, site design involves the orderly, efficient, aesthetic and ecologically sensitive integration of man-made objects with a site's natural features including topography, vegetation, drainage, water, wildlife and climate.

[6] Urban/Town Planning deals with designing and planning cities and towns. Urban planners use zoning techniques and regulations, master plans, conceptual plans, land-use studies and other methods to set the layout and organization of urban areas.

[7] The years ahead promise new developments and challenges to the very-broadening profession. With environmental concerns becoming increasingly important, landscape architects are being called upon to bring their expertise to the table to help solve complex problems. Rural concerns are attracting landscape architects to farmland preservation, small town revitalization, landscape preservation, and energy resource development and conservation. Advances in computer technology have opened the field of computerized design, and land reclamation has become a major area of work for members of the profession. Landscape architects have even begun to use their skill within indoor environments (e.g. atriums) and enclosed pedestrian spaces have been incorporated into commercial development projects.

From: American Society of Landscape Architects, *What is Landscape Architecture?* 2003,
(http://www.asla.org/nonmembers/publicrelations/What_is_ASALA.cfm).

GLOSSARY

city council = consiglio municipale
corporate boardroom = sala del consiglio d'amministrazione
demand = richiesta
landscape architect = architetto del paesaggio
environmental protection = protezione dell'ambiente
real estate developer = costruttore edile
city planning commission = commissione urbanistica
property owner = proprietario
***to retain the services of** = ingaggiare
site = sito, posto
office plaza = piazza con uffici
public square = piazza pubblica
thoroughfare = arteria di grande traffico

highway = autostrada
housing development = area di sviluppo urbano
scope = ambito, portata
grading = trattamento dei dislivelli
storm water management = gestione dell'acqua piovana eccessiva
Renaissance = Rinascimento
to wane = calare, diminuire
forerunner = precursore
land parcel = lotto di terreno
site design = progetto del sito
man-made = fatto dall'uomo, industriale
drainage = scarico delle acque
farmland = terreno agricolo
land reclamation = bonifica del terreno
skill = capacità, abilità

NOTES

Note the differences in spelling: *favor* (AmE) and *favour* (BrE); *neighborhood* (AmE) and *neighbourhood* (BrE).

Do not confuse *to retain* ('conservare', 'trattenere', 'impegnare') with *to think, consider* ('ritenere').

Note the use of the suffix *-ness* to form an abstract noun from an adjective, e.g. *attractive* → *attractiveness*. Other examples are *soft* → *softness*, *weak* → *weakness*, *sharp* → *sharpness*.

COMPREHENSION

Exercise 1

Match each paragraph in the passage with one of the summaries below, numbering the boxes 1 – 7.

The future of landscape architecture



The complexity of landscape architecture today



- Why is the landscape architect so important today?
- Site planning – a definition
- What does the landscape architect actually do?
- The history of landscape architecture
- The role of urban planning

VOCABULARY

Exercise 2

The passage describes the role of the landscape architect today. Following is some of the most frequent terminology used when talking about the landscape. Complete the sentences using one of the words below from the reading passage.

environmental	man	thorough	property
real	farm	site	land

- Investments in _____ estate have shot up considerably over the last months.
- The current housing crisis may lead to a reduction in _____ land.
- _____ protection has become one of the most foremost issues in architecture today.
- _____ reclamation is the process of transforming land that is unsuitable for farming or building so that it can be used.
- A _____ fare is a main road in a town or city. There is usually a considerable amount of traffic.
- _____ owners now outnumber those renting in the town of Preston.
- _____ planning concentrates on the physical design of built and natural elements of a land parcel.
- _____ -made lakes in the suburbs of London have led to a considerable increase in recreational possibilities.

Exercise 3

Which of the following words is not:

- an agency that deals with landscape design?
 - real estate developer
 - city planning commission
 - environmental agency
 - federal government
- part of the natural environment?
 - reservoir
 - field
 - river
 - forest

3. an outdoor area?
 a. campus
 c. school
 b. highway
 d. plaza
4. a natural feature of a site?
 a. topography
 c. wildlife
 b. drainage
 d. thoroughfare
5. an instrument used by urban planners?
 a. zoning techniques
 c. commercial analysis
 b. master plans
 d. land-use studies

FURTHER VOCABULARY

Exercise 4

English gardens are an important aspect of landscape tradition. Match the following words to the corresponding definition.

alley	arboretum	arbour	grotto
ha-ha	knot garden	mount	topiary

- _____ : the ancient art of training and clipping of trees and shrubs into ornamental shapes, popular in Elizabethan gardens.
- _____ : a raised place or small hill, usually man-made, designed to give a view of the estate.
- _____ : a broad walk or path cut through trees. A feature of formal French gardens in the 17th century.
- _____ : a bower or shady retreat, usually covered with climbing plants grown over trellises.
- _____ : a boundary to a park or garden in the form of a wide, sunken ditch; it was not visible from the surrounding landscape except at close quarters and prevented animals from coming in or going out.
- _____ : a series of small beds laid out in a formal manner, sometimes on a terrace, and edged with dwarf hedges.
- _____ : a collection of trees planted together in one area, either to act as a feature in a landscaped garden or as a grove of special botanical interest.
- _____ : a cave-like structure, a favourite feature of 18th-century gardens, often used to house collections of shells, minerals or fossils.

CENTRAL PARK, NEW YORK

New York's Central Park is the first urban landscaped park in the United States. Originally conceived in the salons of wealthy New Yorkers in the early 1850's, the park project spanned more than a decade and cost the city ten million dollars. The purpose was to refute the European view that Americans lacked a sense of civic duty and appreciation for cultural refinement and instead possessed an unhealthy and individualistic materialism that precluded interest in the common good. The bruised egos of New York high society envisioned a sweeping pastoral landscape, among which the wealthy could parade in their carriages, socialize, and "be seen," and in which the poor could benefit from clean air and uplifting recreation without lifting the bottle.

After years of debate over the location, the park's construction finally began in 1857, based on the winner of a park design contest, the "Greensward Plan," of Frederick Law Olmsted, the park superintendent, and Calvert Vaux, an architect. Chosen by the city and the park planners because its terrain was unsuitable for commercial building, the site for the new park offered rocky vistas, swamps which would be converted into lakes, and the old city reservoir. These varied elements would be refined, enhanced, diminished, and eradicated to create a park in the style of European public grounds, with an uncorrupted countryside appearance. To this end, Olmsted and Vaux's plan included four transverse roads to carry cross-town traffic below the park level. Architectural structures were to be kept to a minimum—only four buildings existed in the original plans for the park—and the design and building material of the bridges were chosen to assure that they were integrated as naturally as possible into their surrounding landscapes.

In the first decade of the park's completion, it became clear for whom it was built. Located too far uptown to be within walking distance for the city's working class population, the park was a distant oasis to them. Trainfare represented a greater expenditure than most of the workers could afford, and in the 1860s the park remained the playground of the wealthy; the afternoons saw the park's paths crowded with the luxurious carriages that were the status symbol of the day. Women socialized there in the afternoons and on weekends their husbands would join them for concerts or carriage rides. Saturday afternoon concerts attracted middle-class audiences as well, but the six-day work week precluded attendance by the working class population of the city. As a result, workers comprised but a fraction of the visitors to the park until the late nineteenth century, when they launched a successful campaign to hold concerts on Sundays as well.

As the city and the park moved into the twentieth century, the lower reservoir was drained and turned into the Great Lawn. The first playground, complete with jungle gyms and slides, was installed in the park in 1926, despite opposition by conservationists, who argued that the park was intended as a countryside escape for urban dwellers. The playground, used mostly by the children of middle and working class parents, was a great success; by the 1940s, under the direction of parks commissioner Robert Moses, Central Park was home to more than twenty playgrounds. As the park became less and less an elite oasis and escape, and was shaped more and more by the needs of the growing population of New York City, its uses evolved and expanded; by the middle of the century, ball clubs were allowed to play in the park, and the "Please Keep off the Grass" signs which had dotted the park meadows were a thing of the past.

In the sixties and seventies the park's maintenance entered a decline; despite its growing use for concerts and rallies, clean-up, planting, and general maintenance fell by the wayside. A 1976 evaluation by Columbia University found many parts of the park in sad disrepair, from the low stonewall which surrounded it to the drainage system that kept the transverses from flooding. During the early 1980s there was a massive attempt to involve New Yorkers in the upkeep of their beloved park, including the "You Gotta Have a Park" campaign and the formation of a private fundraising body, the Central Park Conservancy to fund repairs projects. Today, as the major site of most New Yorkers' recreation, the park hosts millions of visitors yearly engaging in such activities as roller blading, fine dining at the Tavern on the Green, watching free performances of Shakespeare in the Park, and relaxing and sunbathing in Sheep's Meadow.

From: Sarah Waxman, *The History of Central Park*, 2003,
(<http://www.ny.com/articles/centralpark.html>).

GLOSSARY

salon = salone
to span = abbracciare, durare; attraversare
***decade** = decennio
bruised = ferito, offeso
pastoral landscape = paesaggio bucolico
uplifting = edificante
to lift the bottle = darsi al bere
terrain = terreno

rocky vista = panorama roccioso
swamp = palude
reservoir = lago artificiale
transverse road = strada trasversale
located = situato
trainfare = biglietto ferroviario
expenditure = spese
playground = parco giochi
to drain = prosciugare
lawn = prato all'inglese

jungle gym = castello (attrezzatura per bambini)
slide = scivolo
urban dweller = abitante della città
parks commissioner = sovrintendente dei parchi
ball club = società per giochi con la palla
meadow = prato
rally = manifestazione

to clean-up = rassettare, mettere in ordine
planting = piantare
maintenance = mantenimento
to fall by the wayside = venir abbandonato
in disrepair = in sfacelo
fundraising body = un ente per la raccolta di fondi

NOTES

The term *decade* means ten years ('decennio'), not to be confused with the Italian 'decade' which is generally used to refer to ten days.

In English, *country* has several meanings:

He lives in the country ('campagna').

It was done for the good of the country ('nazione').

Care must be taken with the translation of 'paese':

Italy is a country.

Asolo is a village.

Note the difference between *1960*, the exact year, and *the 1960s* – from 1960 to 1969.

See Appendix III for information on writing dates.

Note the use of *but* in a formal context, with the meaning of *only*:

Workers comprised but a fraction of the visitors ('soltanto una parte').

COMPREHENSION

Exercise 5

Are the following statements True or False according to the text?

- | | T | F |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The aim of the passage is to encourage people to visit Central Park. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. The author believes the conception for the park was influenced by European models. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3. Although created for the upper classes, the park was initially used more by the working classes.
4. The introduction of playgrounds was not originally planned.
5. What do these dates refer to in the reading passage?
 - a. 1850s
 - b. 1860s
 - c. 1940s
 - d. 1980s

VOCABULARY

Exercise 6

Find words in the reading passage that mean:

1. a person responsible for the work carried out in a large public green open space (par. 2).
2. an area of very wet land with lots of wild plants (par. 2).
3. a piece of land or in a public area where children can play (par. 3).
4. a piece of equipment with a steep slope that children can slide down (par. 4).
5. a structure made for children to climb and play on with metal or wooden bars (par. 4).
6. the work necessary to keep a building or place in a good condition (par. 5).

Exercise 7

Which of the following words...

1. is not an area of green vegetation?

a. swamp	b. lawn	c. meadow
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2. is not usually found in a playground?

a. slide	b. reservoir	c. swing
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3. cannot be used to describe 'landscape'?

a. wealthy	b. pastoral	c. lush
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4. would you not find in a park?

a. lake	b. car park	c. playground
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5. Who is not involved in park planning?

a. park superintendent	b. landscape architect	c. politician
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FURTHER VOCABULARY**Exercise 8**

Match the objects commonly found in parks, on the left, with the corresponding definition, on the right.

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 1. gateway | a. rubbish. |
| 2. shrub | b. the material on the surface of the earth in which plants grow. |
| 3. path | c. an area of ground that has been specially prepared to grow plants. |
| 4. fence | d. a row of bushes or small trees. |
| 5. hedge | e. a long strip of ground leading from one place to another. |
| 6. soil | f. an opening or entry, usually made of metal. |
| 7. flowerbed | g. a barrier between two areas of land. |
| 8. litter | h. a woody plant that is not as big as a tree. |