

Jon Bryan Burley, "Design for the Future," in Marilyn K. Alaimo (Ed.) *Stewards of the Land, a Survey of Landscape Architecture and Design in America* (St. Louis, Missouri: National Council of State Garden Clubs, Inc., 1999) pages 270-275.

## 1. Introduction

- a. To comprehend the future of landscape architecture, it is helpful to review the past 100 years.
  - i. A variety of design ideas and movements flourished in the twentieth century.
  - ii. Neo-classicism and eclecticism predominated at the beginning of the twentieth century.
    1. Landscape Architects copied elements of Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Gothic, and Baroque traditions to create eclectic designed landscapes.
  - iii. In addition to these ancient traditions, the informality of both the English landscape school and the far East provided an alternative approach.
  - iv. The designer copied from the classic traditions or the English Romantic.
  - v. Landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted designed the landscape of the Biltmore estate at Ashville, North Carolina, combining various historic garden styles across the landscapes.
- b. The beginning of the twentieth century signaled the beginning of a new design approach.
  - i. Modernism was established as Avant Garde, illustrating the plasticity and fluidity of materials, form, and space.
  - ii. Modernism was an explosion of design creativity that extended from the early twentieth century through the 1960s.
- c. Modern landscape architecture was led by pioneers such as Roberto Burle Marx, Thomas Church, Daniel Kiley, Garrett Eckbo, and numerous others.
  - i. Many landscape architects carry the modernist banner today, but can be stylistically outdated, brutal in character, and nonsensical intrusions in the landscape.
- d. Post-Modern replaced modernism with added classical motifs, return to classical (geometrical) formality, and applied decoration.

## 2. Landscape Architecture in the Twenty-first Century

- a. Several emerging trends suggest the future of landscape architecture.
  - i. Landscape solutions that are regionally based and imbedded in local culture.
    1. This is based upon local cultural precedent, what some scholars call the “Cultural Precedent Approach.”
    2. This is new to landscape architects in North America, but it is the dominant approach in the United Kingdom and France, and it has been practiced for millennia in China.
- b. “The Cultural Precedent” does not limit creativity, but challenges consideration of
  - i. Neighbors
  - ii. Historical character
  - iii. Site context
  - iv. Ecology of place
  - v. Environment issues
  - vi. Society issues
- c. Students of landscape architecture seek the “Way” to design.
  - i. Unfortunately, like all art forms, the hard and fast rules are blurry.
  - ii. Every design contains a unique range of opportunities and constraints.
- d. Our cities and suburbs were consumed in the twentieth century by ubiquitous design that make them almost identical.
- e. The twenty-first century some landscape architects are revolting against the homogenization of the American landscape into repetitive, strip mall environments.
  - i. There is interest in understanding, expressing, preserving, and enhancing the unique context, character, and properties of each individual site.

1. This concern, respect, and interest was expressed at the turn of the century by landscape architect Jens Jensen.
- ii. A few communities have zoning ordinances that protect mature trees, require preserving vegetation diversity, and the use of regionally adaptable plants.
  1. Broad acceptance of these ideas has been slow and contentious.
  2. How many people in Southwest Florida from the temperate northern states would accept a yard composed of ground covers rather than turf?
    - a. Nevertheless, interest is growing and important.
  3. Interest in creating a nature landscape for songbirds is not uncommon.
    - a. Mina and Thomas Edison worked with landscape gardener Henry Nehrling to naturalize Seminole Lodge for birdlife.
    - b. Clara and Henry Ford similarly worked with Jens Jensen to naturalize their Fairlane Estate.
    - c. As the landscape architect for Westinghouse Electric Corporation developing Pelican Bay, I planned and guided the development of the entire Oakmont neighborhood to preserve nature.
    - d. Creating pesticide-free landscapes preserve bees, bats, and butterflies.
    - e. The concept is slow to catch in the urban landscape.
- f. There is growing international concern and interest in the combined ecological effects of many sites together.
  - i. The study of these effects is termed landscape ecology, concerning
    1. Patterns, structure, and chemical/physical phenomena and biodiversity.
    2. For example, habit of the Florida panther, and red-cockaded woodpecker, demand regional considerations to recognize, map, and protect natural habitat and linkages between them.

- ii. It is necessary to accommodate the integrity of a networked landscape within land development activities.
  - g. The future of landscape architecture in Southwest Florida was heralded in Pelican Bay at the turn of the century with the environmentally sensitive practice of Xeriscape.
    - i. This trend gained broader acceptability in the so-called Florida Friendly practice.
  - h. While landscape architects learn to preserve and make sustainable landscapes, emerging social change makes it possible to live anywhere, accelerating the consumption of nature.
  - i. State land use zoning has the benefits of controlling suburban sprawl, if wisely planned.
  - j. Economic stratification, such as at Aspen, Colorado, and currently Naples, Florida, may reflect what is happening to much of North America.
  - k. Landscape architects are learning to accommodate mobility challenged populations, providing universal accessibility to all people to all places.
3. This concludes chapter 36.