



Foreword

GILL LAWSON

Technological change! We have witnessed its broad-scale impacts before. The first industrial revolution of the late 1700s and early 1800s overturned working conditions and the global environment; the second industrial revolution of the late 1800s and early 1900s set up global transport, telecommunications and trade; the third industrial revolution of the mid 1900s saw computational electronics creating knowledge-based global economies; and most recently the fourth industrial revolution of the late 1900s and early 2000s used cyber systems, robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) to transform global production and distribution processes. Will human–AI collaborations be next?

This issue of *Landscape Review* looks at some of the current debates over impacts and challenges in the field of *visual representation* that landscape architecture professional practitioners, graduates, students and academics are currently experiencing at a more local level. In 2026, the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA) commissioned two landscape architecture companies, Isthmus and Boffa Miskell, to update its *Best Practice Guide: Visual Simulations BPG 10.2* (BPG 10.2) (NZILA Education Foundation, 2010). These guidelines were the foundational standard for producing accurate, transparent and replicable visual simulations that are photomontage-based.

Technological tools and processes have moved on dramatically in the last 25 years. We thought this transformation presented a good opportunity to invite speakers from Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand to join a discussion, face-to-face or online, about the use of AI in landscape architecture, on-site construction tech tools, digital twins, digital cultural narratives and digital evidence for court proceedings. That idea led to a symposium at Lincoln University on 4 September 2026 that drew 40 attendees with expertise in both landscape architecture and information technology from Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, China, the Philippines, Switzerland and the UK. We asked our speakers to write a paper to complement their presentations and we present four of those papers in this issue.

Jillian Walliss, Associate Professor from the School of Design, University of Melbourne, starts by stating that landscape architects love to talk about visual representation. And she is right, of course! She argues that we are experiencing a second digital turn in our profession, where technology is altering our ways of thinking, particularly through our use of AI. That means we must now focus on processes of formation, which requires a high level of critical thinking and curation. Creativity and imagination have become more important than ever.

Hamish Clarke is a technical support representative at Trimble Inc. in Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand. He explores the benefits of digital tools for landscape architects, their clients and construction teams. Hamish focuses on the transition to the integration of digital designs with cloud-based collaboration platforms and high-accuracy, augmented reality applications. Interestingly, while he extols the virtues of on-site visualisation and digital workflows to increase productivity and enhance coordination and collaboration during the design and build process, he also recognises that print-based design and plans will remain the staple, legal and tactile backbone of the industry for some time yet. But how to hybridise the best of both?

Lingwei (Kris) Tong is a postdoctoral research fellow with the Human Interface Technology Laboratory New Zealand (HIT Lab NZ) at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch. His paper provides a detailed explanation of a cultural narrative project

Gill Lawson is an Honorary Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture, School of Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Environment, Society and Design, PO Box 85084, Lincoln University, Christchurch 7647, Canterbury, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Email:

gillian.lawson@lincoln.ac.nz

KEY WORDS

landscape architecture publication;
landscape architecture discourse;
landscape architecture divide;
landscape architecture knowledge

focused on bespoke spatial storytelling using cinematic virtual reality, which he developed respectfully with kaikōrero (Māori storytellers) at Te Rau Aroha marae in Motupōhue Bluff, Aotearoa New Zealand. This project is a valuable example of how co-designing digital stories with kaikōrero revealed unexpected technological requirements that challenged rigid, conventional, digital storytelling to produce a more authentic give-and-take of face-to-face spatial storytelling for visitors to the marae.

Finally, from Boffa Miskell in Christchurch, Rhys Girvan, an associate partner and technical lead for landscape planning, and Corey Murray, a visualisation specialist, provide a critical overview of what BPG 10.2 got right, what has changed since 2010 and how clients' expectations have dramatically increased. They critically explain the implications of developments in high-resolution spatial data, everyday digital devices, screen-based viewing, realistic rendering, augmented and virtual reality immersion, and generative AI. Finally, they recommend eight guiding principles to provide a trust framework across a broad range of digital outputs that will keep evolving. We look forward to the launch of the updated NZILA's best practice guidelines on visual simulation later in 2026.

We hope that the papers in this issue will provoke other authors to have their say!

REFERENCE

NZILA Education Foundation (2010) *Best Practice Guide: Visual Simulations BPG 10.2*, New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects.