

Letting Los Angeles Go: Lessons from Feral Landscapes*

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY DARREN ANDRE

Los Angeles is home to numerous feral landscapes: designed gardens no longer receiving intentional care. These are cultivated gardens, usually composed of plants from myriad global climate types, which have been abandoned or neglected and have adapted to native rainfall or unintentional water sources such as broken irrigation systems. They are found in canyons and ridges swept by fire, along rights-of-way where properties were condemned for freeways, in once-glorious neighbourhoods fallen on hard times, and in places where speculation places properties on hold. They are found in all regions and are particularly vivid in Los Angeles, proclaimed as “Lurch City” by Cuff (2000), where disruptive urban convulsions are frequent. These sites are rich with information pertinent to conceivable futures in which supplemental resources and care may not be reliable. This article portrays selected feral landscapes, briefly describes their responses to pervasive urban forces over time, and extracts design attributes to consider when creating future resilient landscapes. Scrutiny of these landscapes’ decline and tenacity reveals a telling view of a region’s volatility and global context and reminds us to take into account probable neglect when shaping future landscapes.

LOS ANGELES, LIKE CITIES EVERYWHERE, is littered with designed landscapes that have been ‘let go’, ‘have gone to seed’, or, more politely, have been released from the intended maintenance regime. The sites are places where humans shaped a vision for themselves in the landscape, but the forces assisting this vision (usually irrigation, pruning and plant replacement) have been interrupted unexpectedly, leaving imported plant species to adapt to ambient conditions. This often means that gardens with plants from ‘there’ must inadvertently become gardens of ‘here’.

Over the past year, my assistant Darren Andre and I have employed Pierce Lewis’s landscape interpretive method of “looking, and reading, and thinking, and then looking and reading again...” to sift and study 30 such landscapes in Los Angeles, California, that were designed but released from intended maintenance between two and 70 years ago (Lewis, 1979: 27). I think of them as feral landscapes because many were once reminiscent of the tamed golf course developments described in John Sayles’s 2002 movie *Sunshine State* as “nature on a leash”. But now the leash has been removed and the plants are surviving by adapting to pervading conditions, as feral pets do.

These landscapes concern us because, in Grady Clay’s words, they “contain the makings of many futures: we need to accustom our eyes to futures aborning so we can come to grips with what comes next” (1989: 3). Through surviving neglect, resource withdrawal, competition with weeds, air pollution, and other stresses affiliated with land left on hold, these landscapes are instructive for potential future

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periods when resource disruptions may cause a higher proportion of designed landscapes to be released from irrigation and maintenance. This article addresses the presence of feral landscapes in cities, gives two brief examples of the 30 landscapes that were explored in Los Angeles and the repeated factors that may contribute to their function and survival, and suggests ways of applying these in design.

Los Angeles is a good place to look for what comes next. It is often held up as a cautionary urban crucible from which to learn. A brief review of the literature reveals little neutrality of opinion: Los Angeles has been described as Lurch City, Fugitive City, Dead City, Extended City, City of the Future, Sixty Suburbs in Search of a City, Exopolis, Megalopolis, Cosmopolis, Heteropolis, God-awfulis, utopian, dystopian, myopian, and “a bright guilty place” where “anyone who gets around on foot is a suspect” (Cuff, 2000; Weinstein, 1996; Deverell, 2001; Soja, 1997; Davis, 1998 and 2002; Scott and Soja, 1996; Welles, as cited in Davis, 1990: 18; Cendrars as cited in Molotch, 1996: 231).

One aspect of Los Angeles is that it seems to want to be somewhere else. It is dynamic in that it erodes, floods, burns, and literally shifts elsewhere along fault lines. People want it to be somewhere else as well. Cultural geographer Homer Aschmann (1997) describes Los Angeles as being a place that remained unsettled by Europeans for two-and-a-quarter centuries after it was first visited and publicly reported. After it was finally settled for missionary and strategic purposes, its population stayed constant until 1870 as immigrants replaced Native Americans. Then, in the following hundred years, the population increased two hundred times. Aschmann conjectured that the natural landscape, as modified by long-term Native American residents, simply did not appeal to immigrants of European origin. “Only after the modern cultural landscape had been implanted to some degree and the Southern California way of life had begun to evolve did its appeal to the immigrant express itself with such overwhelming and self-invigorating force” (Aschmann, 1997: 19).

The Southern California way of life entailed importing plants from every climate in an effort to create beautiful and productive farms in the Jefferson tradition, to provide economic security, and, later, to create an image of paradise and power. Irrigation networks were employed to support these images and a look now dominates that poet Charles Keeler in 1904 dubbed “ordered luxuriance”, in defiance of its winter green/summer brown Mediterranean climate patterns (Keeler as cited in Starr, 1973: 406). Native scrub vegetation, with its propensity to burn, was thoroughly removed to make way for the conversion of Los Angeles from ‘here’ to ‘there’. Now, ecological restorationists face difficulties converting the landscape back to ‘here’ because of excess nitrogen deposition from automobile exhaust and altered fire frequency (Allen *et al*, 2000).

Dana Cuff’s (2000) description of Los Angeles as “Lurch City” is indicative of current thought that cities can no longer be described in terms of one era neatly giving way to another; cities are in fact increasingly convulsive, with disturbance and erasure of previous uses the norm rather than the exception (Klein, 1997). Land use changes are prevalent and pronounced in Los Angeles, but so is the



pause, the fermata, the holding on as an under-described yet growing aspect of urban provisionality. Even in the midst of an economic boom in Los Angeles, periods of pause are increasing, with public participatory planning expanding the negotiation time for changing land use. There is a high probability our designs will be on hold as they await their fate. In our survey of the 1554-square-mile Los Angeles basin (Figure 1), we repeatedly saw both ordinary and extraordinary reasons for properties going on hold. For example, properties are not maintained in disinvestment areas because the owners cannot afford irrigation (Figure 2). In many neighbourhoods, landowners releasing properties are elderly and infirm and physically incapable of maintaining lawns and flowerbeds. Properties in between owners while sales are pending are consistent sources of released landscapes. Agencies with large-scale plans, such as the highway department that proposed a freeway linkage through a historical neighbourhood, are frequently, if temporarily, stopped by civic and neighbourhood groups, with the result that properties are not irrigated (Figure 3). Speculative landscapes are often not maintained while owners patiently wait for the right buyer. Frequently, financing and permits for the redevelopment of large parcels of land are not in place, as in the case of the new resort proposed for the 104-acre former marine amusement park site – one of the world’s most valuable properties (Figure 4). Land becomes unsuitable for development either

Figure 1: Los Angeles, California region, highlighting three of the thirty feral landscape sites: 1. Stuart Pharmaceutical Building, Pasadena; 2. Roberts Home, Malibu; and 3. La Presa design site, unincorporated Los Angeles County, Darren Andre.

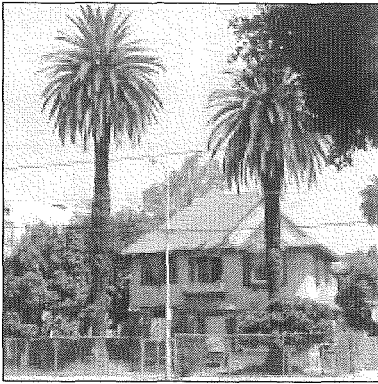


Figure 2: West Adams district unirrigated garden, Los Angeles, CA, 2004, author.



Figure 3: CalTrans property with house removed, Pasadena, CA, 2003, author.

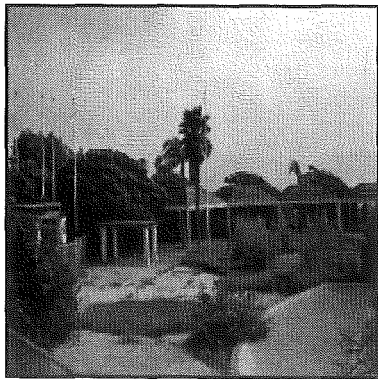


Figure 4: Marineland Aquatic Park of the Pacific, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA, 2003, author.

temporarily or permanently, such as in Superfund cleanup sites, or sites affected by earthquakes, liquefaction or subsidence: these once-maintained landscapes adapt to new conditions behind chain-link fences (Figure 5). If these development fermatas are present in times of economic boom, they will certainly be more prevalent in times of economic hardship or resource shortages, such as during an extended drought or after an earthquake, both common occurrences in Los Angeles.

As landscape architects we ought to find these sites interesting, because in our discussions, case studies and built work critiques we hear of constant disappointment about designs not being maintained as intended. Most design methods we employ assume ongoing maintenance. Even one of the profession's heralded, regional park design examples that best demonstrates, according to John Beardsley, "holding the line against the drift toward randomness and disorder" is also described thus: "Entropy still marks Xochimilco: the park has not been maintained as it should be" (2000: 5). We landscape architects rely on the following maintenance approaches when sending designs out into the world:

- 1 We prepare maintenance manuals and hope they are followed beyond the warranty period.
- 2 We become activists, as Charles Birnbaum (2003) is for modernist landscapes threatened with demise, whereby we demand prioritised preservation and maintenance of key properties.
- 3 We educate and advocate critical design, as Joan Nassauer (1997) does with her cultural sustainability approach that seeks to harness people's sense of care in maintaining their properties neatly while providing ecological function such as habitat and water treatment.
- 4 We rely, as a fallback, on civic enforcement to ensure weed and trash removal.

However, since there is a probability that funding, prioritised preservation or care will be absent, a fifth approach is appropriate: we can design so that properties can be let go in ways that serve our ecological and aesthetic health better than does the typical vacant lot. The following two examples from the 30 sites we explored demonstrate aspects that might enable landscapes to undergo release from maintenance in better ways in the future.

In 1958, architect Edward Durrell Stone and landscape architect Thomas Church collaborated to design Pasadena's Stuart Pharmaceutical suburban corporate factory (Figure 6). Dubbed the "Palace for Pills" by *Time* magazine, the building combined "beauty, efficiency, and the atmosphere of a country club" and workers had equal on-site access to a recreation hall, swimming pool, and library (1958, 70). Church created a simple, elegant design. The broad panels of lawn and mondo grass (*Ophiopogon japonicus*) composed the public neighbourhood space and extended a clear vista of the building, hinting at the amenities behind Stone's signature concrete lace screen. These panels were enclosed by Victorian box trees (*Pittosporum undulatum*) at the property edges and marked by Australian tree ferns planted in a moat in front of the lace screen (*Cyathea cooperi*), and focal points of ginkgos (*Ginkgo biloba*), olive (*Olea europaea*) and palm (*Chamaerops humilis*).

Focal point plants were deep-watered by hand on a weekly basis and the sprinklers carried the rest of the landscape through two extensive drought periods until 1993, when the property was sold to a transit authority as part of a prospective transit-oriented development (Richards, Michael, 2004, Principal, Landscape Maintenance, personal communication 17 June). Boarded-up windows followed and the water main was turned off. The lawn desiccated and blew away, the mondo grass failed, and someone stuck a house plant in the moat. Yet the enclosure and focal points persisted largely without irrigation. A landscape contractor having coffee across the street decided to take action, secured a contract to repair the irrigation system and replace the former lawn with a Xeriscape design: drought-tolerant perennials and native cultivars (Wagoner, Robert, 2004, Principal, Branch Out Landscape, personal communication 27 January). Within three years, however, the irrigation system broke again and most of the new plants died, leaving the site to be weed-mowed occasionally and still marked by Church's conspicuous enclosure plants and focal points holding on (Figure 7).

Currently, a controversial adaptive reuse plan for this National Register of Historic Places site is moving through city approval processes. Controversy primarily focuses on which semblances of the building's integrity will remain. Although Church's original landscape plans have not been located, Charles Elliot, the landscape architect for the redevelopment, is examining old photographs and conducting interviews with the long-term maintenance company and reports that he will be replacing plants with substitutes of similar visual character. Sago palms instead of Australian tree ferns. Young Victorian box will join their elders. But, he reports, he lost the battle on turf. His recommendation of Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*) was overturned for more elegant fescue (*Festuca spp.*). "I will win in the end, however," he said, "because Bermuda grass will show up anyway" (Elliot, Charles, 2004, personal communication 9 June).

In 1958, when this garden was originally designed, plants were seen as plant materials, objects in space, useful in their role as texture, colour, and focal points. The later layer of Mediterranean perennials and native cultivars represents a currently popular design approach aimed at creating gardens better adapted to Southern California's climate patterns, but proved to be neither resource conservative nor lasting. Elliot's third generation of plants satisfies corporate and historical interests; he has selected plants that replicate Church's aesthetic forms, that are not considered particularly drought tolerant in Southern California inland valleys (Costello and Jones, 1999), but in fact are adapted, long lived and have the potential to be released successfully from maintenance again. In our survey of 30 design sites, we located sago palms slowly reproducing themselves in nurseries that had been abandoned for 15 years. Victorian box survived drought, compaction, and/or fire in each site, and it regenerated itself slowly without becoming a pest. Church's design scaffold could last quite a while; time is a collaborator with this design.

The second site, near Malibu, is located in a canyon with waterfalls and a rare perennial stream. Grocery store owner Fred Roberts hired architect Paul R Williams to design his private home in 1952 (Figure 8). Williams composed an

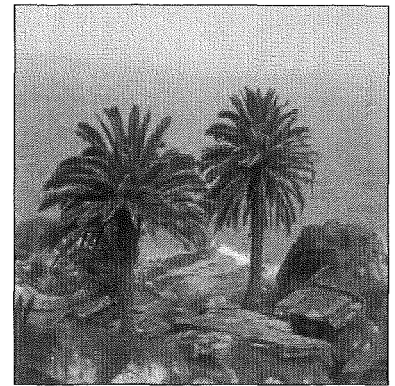


Figure 5: Sunken City, San Pedro, CA, 2004, author.

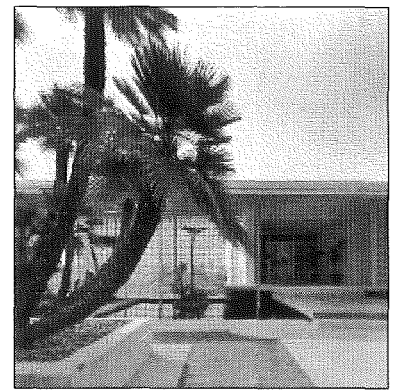


Figure 6: Stuart Pharmaceutical, designed by Edward Durrell Stone and Thomas Church, Pasadena, CA, 1958, Julius Shulman, used with permission

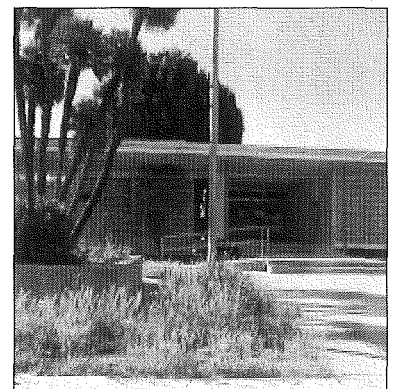


Figure 7: Stuart Pharmaceutical, Pasadena, CA, 2003, author.

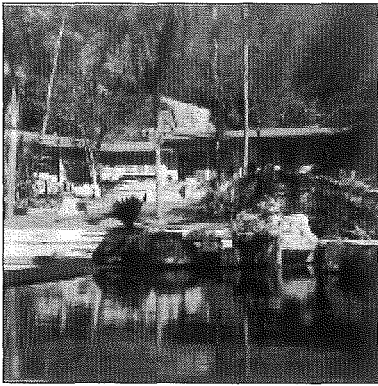


Figure 8: Roberts Home, Malibu, CA, 1954, Julius Shulman, used with permission

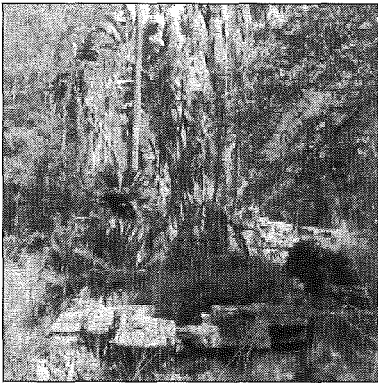


Figure 9: Roberts Home, Malibu, CA, 2004, author.

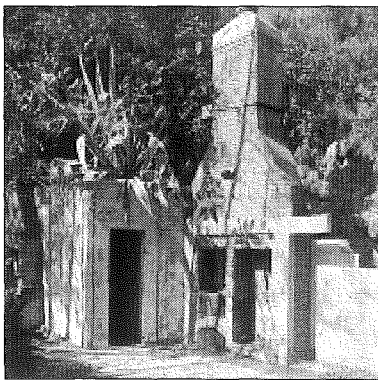


Figure 10: Bomb shelter supports migrating agave, Roberts Home, Malibu, CA, 2003, author.

indoor/outdoor experience that included stone terraces flowing into and out from the house, and waterfalls that appeared to flow through the window. Plants were imported from Hawaii and elsewhere and placed according to natural pooling and irrigation. The site was intended to impress visitors with the success of a humble grocer: exotic animals such as camels, bison, and African deer; terraces, ponds, and striking plants such as birds of paradise (*Strelitzia nicolai* and *S. reginae*), bananas (*Musa acuminata*), Canary Island palms (*Phoenix canariensis*), queen palms (*Syagrus romanzoffianum*), sago palms, (*Cycas revoluta*), ginger lily (*Hedychium spp.*), figs (*Ficus spp.*) and others fulfilled their roles in bringing forth an image of power and paradise (Roberts, Alicia, 2003, personal communication 27 November).

Roberts purchased the land from previous owners after a 1935 fire and understood Malibu's risks. He invested in pumps, ponds, dams, irrigation pipes, sprinklers, generators, and ultimately, during the Cold War, a bomb shelter. Following his death, however, his widow's second husband ceased maintaining the generators, pumps and insurance payments. In the 1980s, the property burned and flooded, was donated to a land conservancy, and then transferred to the National Park Service (NPS). The site, now called Tropical Terrace, is a powerful attractant, pulling people to hike into the canyon because of its symbolic representation of the power of natural forces over human intent, yet human intent survives after all (Figure 9). It is currently in the eye of a NPS natural resource management versus cultural resource management storm because of a plan to remove the terraces and dams in order to restore steelhead habitat. Not unexpectedly, ecologists would prefer the exotic plants removed as well, since a sedge (*Cyperus alternifolius*) and bird-dispersed palms are now creeping downstream after 20 years (Busteed, Gary, 2004, resource management specialist, National Park Service, personal communication 9 June).

The Roberts' Home landscape design is resilient in that it has maintained its structure and processes after significant disturbance. It is persistent in that the plants have filled up available planter space, but only a few are spreading beyond. There is some native plant recruitment and some plants from the original ranch of 80 years earlier have reappeared; for example, the agave (*Agave americana*) atop the bomb shelter (Figure 10). The water table is high here, making the site an anomaly in Los Angeles, but it is instructive for learning what might survive elsewhere next to a broken irrigation head or supported by a neighbour's run-off.

From sites such as these, factors to be considered in future design for landscape persistence and resilience stand out. These factors are ripe for ecological testing and include the following:

- Plant establishment conditions matter. Allowing soil to dry between deep waterings during establishment enables persistence in certain plants under later stress. On the other hand, over-watered native species and cultivars die out quickly.
- Walls, curbs, terraces, declivities, pavement cracks and steps hold soil, nutrients and water, creating protection zones and reservoirs. Waterstains such as

impermeable edges are opportunity zones for plant persistence (Woodward, 2000). In one coastal, former Department of Defense site, birds and gravity dispersed a tidy line of palm trees at both the impermeable edge of a Nike Missile silo and along a World War II gun emplacement bunker (Figure 11).

- Many landscapes survive by taking advantage of the neglect of others. For example, throughout the region we noted oases of palms, sedges, and grasses surviving on neighbours' malfunctioning irrigation systems.
- Plants that slowly migrate but do not disperse by seed, like agave and sago palms, and those that entrench or are reductionists, like succulents, when conditions are tough, are good candidates for future resilience. Allelopaths, those plants that exude compounds toxic to potentially competitive plants, may be useful in reducing weed immigration over time.
- Some ruderal species, such as bur clover (*Medicago polymorpha*), move into neglected sites, which along with leaf litter may help immobilise nitrogen that plagues revegetation efforts in Los Angeles.
- Some plants are known invasives and must be avoided at all costs near ecological corridors and patches. Wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*), for example, was growing unimpeded for 30 years in an abandoned canyon plant nursery that was once part of the Los Angeles County Arboretum, its kudzu-like growth habits smothering the forest canopy, albeit with purple, fragrant flowers during the blooming season.
- During our study we found frequent evidence of habitat and wildlife species, since the sites were relatively undisturbed and between two and 70 years old. We saw soil churning by small mammals that might increase percolation in otherwise compacted soils, evidence of reptiles and amphibians, and birds creating layered plant understories wherever there was a perch above open ground.
- Feral sites' habitat value is debated among experts. Areas deemed 'disturbed' or 'developed' in environmental-assessment procedures are assumed to have minimal habitat function and are unaddressed unless government-protected species of concern are involved. A 778-page Environmental Impact Report (EIR) released for the 104-acre Marineland Aquarium of the Pacific site evaluated in detail the 9-acre coastal bluff habitat, but only minimally addressed the 95-acre developed landscape's habitat potential. A casual field visit revealed many bird species gleaned, foraging and nesting within the unsprayed, mature, fruit- and flower-filled ornamental landscape. Avian biologist Walter Sakai (Professor of Avian Biology at Santa Monica College, California) defended the value of remnant cultural sites, especially those containing eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus spp.*) that "chortle with birds" at much higher densities than native woodlands (personal communication, 9 June 2004). Sukopp's longitudinal studies of habitat in post World-War-II-bombed Berlin confirm that lands left to urban successional processes sustain ample diversity (Sukopp *et al.*, 1979). Comparable studies in urban southern California are needed, although from our examination of 30 feral landscapes, we have seen that these on-hold sites provide more niches than do vacant lots, and in some cases may provide

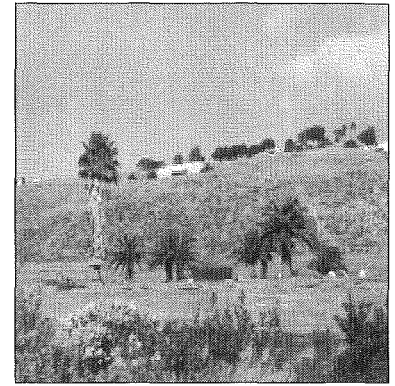


Figure 11: Palms line impermeable concrete edges at the Nike missile site and WWII gun emplacement bunker, White Point Park, San Pedro, CA, 2003, author.



Figure 12: Post-apocalyptic Los Angeles plant signature: palms and agaves, 2003, author.

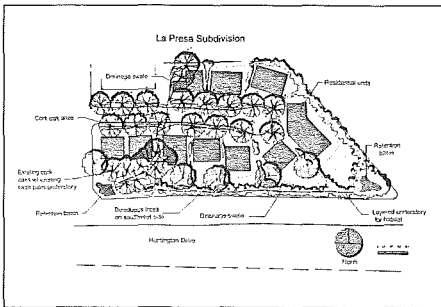


Figure 13: La Presa home site plan, Darren Andre.

- more than native habitats also.
- Vandalism and residentialism cause compaction and excess nutrients, yet occasional fires reduce weed seeds and revive some plants. In 1956, for instance, 195 people were arrested on separate occasions for vandalising an abandoned estate property that contained palms, pines and cypress. Fire-scarred trees still survive today and perhaps experienced the same benefits that occur with controlled burns.
- Fire and goats were found to have reduced weeds in several urban sites, but the sites are largely dependent on civic weed maintenance for minimum acceptability.
- There may be a perceived sameness about these combinations of persistent plants. One common feral landscape plant combination in impoverished sections of Los Angeles was of agaves and palms; these may compose the post-apocalyptic plant signature for Los Angeles someday, but even these provide more aesthetic and ecological function than do vacant lots currently (Figure 12).

We applied these ideas to a former nursery site with large cork oaks (*Quercus suber*) and sago palms, unirrigated for many years, and which will become the site of 10 mansionettes by 2006. The La Presa site (Figure 13) is located five kilometres from designated critical ecological areas. We modified the developer's plans slightly to incorporate subtle changes that may allow this site to be released from maintenance in a way that provides what Nassauer (1997) refers to as the double vision of ecological and aesthetic health (Figure 14). Trees were designated first for microclimate control, and then areas for water concentration and layered habitat were identified. Deep water pipes are incorporated in the vicinity of the trees to supplement water during establishment and to encourage deep root growth. These can remain in place to serve as individual cisterns if needed. Curbs, low walls and terraces collect and hold soil and water. An existing cork oak allée is maintained and supplemented by other oak plantings. Slow migrators, entrenchers and reductionists are used to assure plant presence in the absence of irrigation. Plants affecting soils were also selected: nitrogen-fixers, allelopaths, and those annuals whose seeds can be treated with mycorrhizae to give them an advantage over Mediterranean annuals. Soils support a mulch layer for permeability, mycorrhizal development, and nitrogen immobilisation.

Once established, these plants can be released from maintenance with a greater probability of acceptability and function. One assumption is that civic maintenance will continue through local ordinance. If a severe drought occurs, where winter rains do not resuscitate plants, then only those succulents and other plants adapted to extremely low water would survive. If high precipitation years occur, then these same plants could rot, favouring others more adapted to inundation. Those non-invasive plants that can survive both drought and inundation, like some of the sedges, are considered 'holy grail plants' and are included in the plant palette.

After 20 years (Figure 15) with lower-than-average precipitation, cork oaks would remain shading the understory. Migrators would move forward into available locations. Reductionists would retreat until the next time of plenty.

Deep water pipes, crevices, declivities, terraces and low walls would support the entrenchers. Although not deemed critical as a habitat corridor or native patch, this particular site would provide bird, reptile and small mammal habitat in the tangled shrub screen and water catchment areas.

This landscape design is a slightly modified conventional plan, shaped intentionally to incorporate the lessons in resilience we noted in Los Angeles's lapsed landscapes. It is intended to reduce run-off, provide feeding and breeding opportunities for fauna, and to respond to the expressed desire in southern California for ordered luxuriance. This future feral landscape is filled with time-release capsules based on our best available information, which may help it function longer than restoring the site to historical native vegetation, since the springs of this area disappeared through overdraft 100 years earlier, it no longer burns, and is affected by excessive nitrogen deposition.

Landscape architect Darrell Morrison encourages us to think beyond traditional planting design and consider criteria that shift our work to the realm of "ecological art" (2004). This garden, though designed for acceptability to the mansionette resident, meets his four criteria. First, it has the potential to provide for mystery, complexity, coherence and legibility. Second, plants are fit for their environment, using resources well and not diminishing the natural landscape, the nearest patch of which is five miles away. Third, we know where we are when we are in it: we are in a Los Angeles garden, simultaneously local and global, which responds to its population's apparent need to be elsewhere. Finally, the garden has been shaped for change over time. It is a dynamic place and promises to continue to be so, until further economic decisions are made or until an earthquake or fire causes another trajectory for the site.

This approach is relevant for landscape architectural practitioners because it encourages us to build into our design method adaptable responses for present-day conservation needs as well as for future scenarios in which expected resources and maintenance may be disrupted. It also challenges us to question the resilience of current design approaches that may conserve water in the short term, but fail when employed over time.

Such an approach is also valuable for landscape educators, since it provides guidance for the inexperienced student designer in planning for longevity, persistence and resilience. This approach is in the tradition of University of Washington professor Iain Robertson's 2020 planting design exercise, where students create a landscape design and then analyse it in the year 2020, crossing out the plants they have selected that are not likely to survive for the given time-span. I employ this exercise with my students; their reaction is one of distress on two levels. First, many of the Mediterranean perennials and native cultivars currently promoted as being regionally appropriate for water-conservation design are crossed out. Second, students are frustrated by their lack of experience in knowing the fate of plants over time. They can memorise attributes offered in books, but learning the likelihood of persistence comes with experience and careful field observation over time. Robert Grudin's description of the

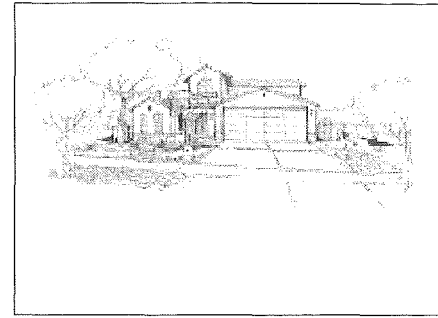


Figure 14: *La Presa home, Darren Andre.*

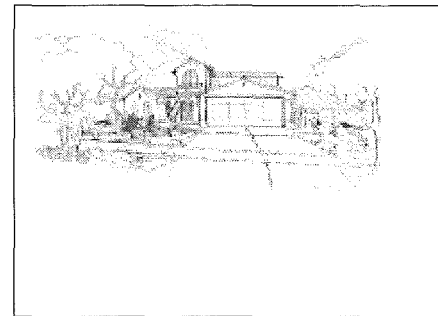


Figure 15: *La Presa home, unirrigated 20 years, Darren Andre.*

inexperienced whitewater boatman versus the experienced boatman is pertinent to beginning landscape architecture students:

The inexperienced boatman alternates between desperate response to immediate necessities and recuperative oblivion during easy sections. The experienced boatman, on the other hand, is always safely in the channel because he has marked the channel from up river. While his arms and torso respond to immediate needs, his eyes look downstream ... There is, simply speaking, *more river* for him than for the inexperienced boatman (1982: 35).

Developing the habit of looking downstream by deliberately incorporating factors of resilience, described above, in volatile urban contexts, gives “more river” to students and experienced designers alike.

John Brinckerhoff Jackson writes in *The Necessity for Ruins*:

There has to be (in our new concept of history) an interim of death or rejection before there can be renewal or reform. The old order has to die before there can be a born-again landscape. Many of us know the joy and excitement not so much of creating the new as of redeeming what had been neglected, and this excitement is particularly strong when the original condition is seen as holy or beautiful (1980: 102).

I conclude from my travels throughout fugitive, convulsive, lurching Los Angeles, often referred to as a bellwether for the world’s rapidly expanding urban areas, that neglect has been neglected. Perhaps it is not holy or beautiful. But these landscapes living in the rubbings of urban erasure have a power to teach us that our optimistic work is Sisyphean unless we deliberately think about, and even surreptitiously plan for them and what they might be when they are let go.

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