

Editorial: languages of landscape architecture— theory into practice

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IN THIS ISSUE WE EXPLORE THE PROPOSITION that 'Language embodies vocabulary and syntax, which are arguably concepts shared by design' (Bowring 1995, p.62). The articles are all drawn from the Languages of Landscape Architecture conference held at Lincoln University in March 1995, which also supplied the articles for our preceding issue. Three reports are included, featuring material that was originally presented as posters at the conference.

There appears to be little dissent amongst our contributors that the metaphor of language is of some theoretical relevance to the understanding of design. Quite how this may be translated into practice, however, is more problematic. Kim Sorvig opens the debate with a review of some basic linguistic concepts, and then systematically examines their potential application to the process of design. At first, it appears that there are some notable parallels. Yet he concludes that whilst design may be like a language, it is not the same as language. Although the metaphor of design as language can be a useful heuristic device, we should not confuse language with design.

Katrina Simon uses linguistic analogies to help unravel and interpret the design and management actions and intentions of earlier generations. Using a case study of a colonial settlers cemetery in Christchurch, New Zealand, she traces the changing design vocabulary of the cemetery, with the clear implication that such understanding could become the basis for future action. The potential link between linguistic metaphor and design is made more directly by Richard Hertz and Pamela Burton, who apply the concept of a theatrical or film script to the design of public space. In doing so, the parallels between design language and contemporary social theory also become apparent.

The somewhat ironic allusion to Landscape MacArchitecture which follows reinforces the sense of connection with the broader directions of postmodern critique. However, in the substance of his article, Simon Rackham focuses upon more prosaic matters, using linguistic metaphor to comment upon material choice in design. Dave Mansergh also grounds his contribution in design implementation, examining the way in which shared meaning is constructed within contract communication. He returns us to a theme explored by George Seddon in *Landscape Review* 1(2): the connection between words and intentions. As Seddon noted, 'The words we use both reveal and influence our perception of environment, reflect our objectives and interests, and affect our actions, including the way we design' (1995, p.14). The circle is thus complete.

REFERENCES

- Bowring, J (1995) Pidgin picturesque. *Landscape Review* 1(2):56–64.
Seddon, G (1995) Words and weeds: some notes on language and landscape. *Landscape Review* 1(2):3–15.

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