

Landscape Architecture's Big Questions

JACKY BOWRING

With this issue, a new era begins for *Landscape Review*. Now an open access, subscription-free, digitally published journal, *Landscape Review* is taking up the challenges and opportunities involved in the sharing of knowledge in the 21st century. The journal began 16 years ago and, since 1995, 26 issues have been produced, which includes the proceedings of the two Languages of Landscape Architecture conferences and the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture conference, all held at Lincoln University.

Perhaps the two most important developments are the geographical realignment of the journal and the establishment of the Editorial Advisory Board. The geographical home for the journal is now the southern hemisphere, recognising the need to elevate this area of the globe into the international landscape architectural discourse. *Landscape Review* welcomes submissions from around the globe, but at the same time aspires to amplify the voices from the south. The Editorial Advisory Board membership reflects this alignment, including representatives from the southern hemisphere, as well as others who have a special interest in this area or a particular focus on publishing. The board members are listed at the end of this article and will also appear on the *Landscape Review* homepage.

This issue also seeks to fuel landscape architecture's research and publication engine by asking board members to respond to the question, 'What are the big questions for landscape architecture now?'. The responses provide a vivid image of the diversity of thought within landscape architecture, offering a spirited rallying call to academics and professionals alike. The breadth of landscape architectural thinking is represented within these short essays, with topics ranging from artistic practice to experience to education to the health of the discipline and the need to engage in meaningful communication.

Founding editor of *Landscape Review* Simon Swaffield asks a big question for the discipline – why? While many of us might quickly make a presumption about our discipline's indispensability, it is vital to pause and carefully interrogate just why landscape architecture matters. Swaffield reminds us of the underpinnings of landscape architecture, and its delicate yet strategic position within a web of disciplines. And, most of all, the why question resides not simply in the land itself, but in the people – landscape architecture's 'why' is firmly rooted in humanity.

As the chair of the International Federation of Landscape Architecture's Education and Africa Committee, James Taylor is uniquely placed to respond to the why of landscape architecture in the most challenging context of all – the developing world. Taylor maps out important initiatives that link education and

Jacky Bowring is an Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture, School of Landscape Architecture, Environment, Society and Design Faculty, PO Box 84, Lincoln University, Lincoln 7647, Canterbury, Aotearoa New Zealand. Telephone: +64-3-325-3838, extn 8439 Fax: +64-3-325-3857 Email: jacky.bowring@lincoln.ac.nz

KEY WORDS

*Landscape architecture research
Landscape architecture publication
Landscape architecture discourse
Landscape architecture knowledge*

EDITORIAL

the developing world, demonstrating the potency of landscape architecture in the improvement of wellbeing through design. Also, landscape architects have other skills to bring to such a setting, such as using drawing to find out children's perspectives on the environment, which in turn provides cues for how to better enhance their future prospects through landscape interventions.

Gloria Aponte manifests graphically the issues the southern hemisphere is facing. Aponte's images show that the dramatic contrasts between the two hemispheres in terms of biodiversity and technology are in themselves worth a thousand words. She goes on to highlight the nature of the problems that these imbalances create, asserting the need for locality as the core to an effective response. Within the local connections to landscape, Aponte argues, we can find the kind of wisdom that is needed to address the issues the profession faces. One of the keys to ensuring the questions are answered effectively is to work together, sharing knowledge at the same time as respecting distinctive differences.

The integration of knowledge is also a concern for Beatriz Fedrizzi. Concerned about the ways in which landscapes offer health benefits, Fedrizzi calls for knowledge sharing. This needs to happen, she argues, between disciplines and because of better client input into the design process. Paula Villagra demonstrates how such exchanges might take place. Villagra describes how a recent seminar in southern Chile on landscape architecture provided a focus for asking many questions – including those at the core of the profession. Echoing Swaffield's 'why' question, Villagra reports that the questions in southern Chile are fundamental, such as the core challenge, 'What is landscape architecture?'

Implied in these questions is the urge to examine very nature of landscape architecture, including the enormous breadth of the discipline. Bonj Szczygiel's piece amplifies the role of art in landscape architecture. While we might often be attentive to concerns about environmental health, Szczygiel argues that the critical component is art. In reminding us of the legacy of publishing in landscape architecture and the fields of research that have been identified as important to the discipline, Szczygiel explains how without aesthetics we cannot make the link between the environmental aspects of what we do and the central concern with 'everyday human experience'.

As a manifestation of the concern with art, Richard Weller's graphically arresting piece raises many points while saying little in conventional language. As Weller has suggested, his 1,000 word graphic is like 'a bunch of flowers'; a fitting analogy for a work that references landscape architecture, a profession whose language is often that of plants. The graphic has an ecological sensibility, resonating with notions of order and diversity, and it manifests the kinds of ruptures that come with mutation or natural disasters. However, it is also provocative, on one hand highlighting the absurdity of writing merely 1,000 words on such a weighty topic, and on the other hand meeting the challenge with something that is in itself *designed*. We often forget, as researchers in landscape architecture, that we are nothing without design.

It is in experience, echoing Szczygiel's point, where Mick Abbott finds his questions for landscape architecture. The very design of the landscape as an 'array of behaviours' puts a different spin on the notion of aesthetics as core to the profession. While on one hand, aesthetics is about art, it is also at its very

root about experience, with its original sense (*aisthesis*) being connected to the multi-sensory nature of existence. It is within this rich terrain that Abbott places landscape architecture, pointing to the potentiality of phenomenology as a way in which to frame this engagement with our surroundings. Through this, we can be *within* the environment that sustains us, not observing from the objective distance of the scientist.

All of the pieces prompt reflection. They might resonate with readers' perspectives or they might raise more questions and debate. The point is, of course, to stoke the fire that is the discourse of landscape architecture. We look forward to your contributions and responses, and hope that the next phase of *Landscape Review's* publication will be as fruitful as its founding years.

A very warm welcome to the Editorial Advisory Board:

Mick Abbott, Department of Applied Sciences, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand

Gloria Aponte, School of Architecture and Design, Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Medellín, Colombia

Beatriz Fedrizzi, Faculdade de Agronomia, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brazil

Gini Lee, Melbourne School of Design, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

Simon Swaffield, founding editor of *Landscape Review*, School of Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Environment, Society and Design, Lincoln University, New Zealand

Bonj Szczygiel, editor of the new journal *As Built: A journal of design critique*, Department of Landscape Architecture, Stuckeman School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, Pennsylvania State University, United States of America

James R Taylor, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development (Landscape Architecture Programme) and chair of the International Federation of Landscape Architecture's Education and Africa Committee, University of Guelph, Canada

Christopher Vernon, School of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts, University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia

Paula Villagra, Instituto de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Universidad Austral de Chile, Valdivia, Chile

Richard Weller, Winthrop Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Western Australia and Director of the Australian Urban Design Research Centre, Perth, Australia