

ABOUT LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE THIRD MILLENIUM: HALF A CENTURY JOURNEY TOWARDS A CENTRAL STAGE POSITION

DESPRE ARHITECTURA PEISAGERĂ DIN PERSPECTIVA MILENIULUI TREI: O CĂLĂTORIE DE O JUMĂTATE DE SECOL PENTRU O POZIȚIE CENTRALĂ ÎN PROIECTAREA MEDIULUI

*BICA Smaranda Maria*¹

e-mail: smaranda.bica@arh.upt.ro

Abstract. *The paper follows the path Landscape Architecture has travelled during the last decades. The field has gradually emerged from the shadow where it had fallen due to the lack of concordance with the ideas of Modern Architecture. Remarkable designers, through their innovation, new ecological and sustainable approaches and attractive functions, brought Landscape Architecture in the centre of the environmental planning.*

Key words: *landscape architecture, modern movement, new tendencies*

Rezumat. *Articolul urmărește drumul parcurs de arhitectura peisageră în ultimele decenii. Creatori de excepție au scos treptat domeniul din zona de penumbră în care căzuse datorită nepotrivirii cu ideile arhitecturii moderniste. Inovațiile aduse și direcțiile noi deschise de aceste personalități remarcabile au condus proiectarea peisajului către o abordare ecologică, către o gândire bizuită pe sustenabilitate, către introducerea de funcțiuni atractive și au poziționat această disciplină în centru preocupărilor proiectării ambiențelor antropizate.*

Cuvinte cheie: *arhitectura peisageră, mișcarea modernistă, noi tendințe*

INTRODUCTION

At the middle of the 20th century, when the Modern Movement had the most relentless attitude in architecture, landscape designers failed to match the new ideas. The main preoccupation of Modern Movement architects were:

- Progress and function
- Geometry and order
- Technology and prefabrication
- New materials and techniques
- Mashine image etc.

Landscape architecture, romantic, focused on historical examples and on the descriptions of subjective feelings when contemplating a natural scenery or a man made garden, knew a period of crisis.

¹“Politehnica” University of Timișoara, Romania

“Landscape’s organic character was inherently difficult to incorporate into that (the Modern) frame of reference”

“Landscape designers (...) offered no convincing Modernist schema (...). Their practice was (...) too intimately associated with the architecture of the previous (19th) century, against which the Modernists had so radically reacted.” (Lyll, 1991).

The need for poetry always exists, and there were cracks in the hard shell of the new architectural tendencies. Memorable examples of landscape architecture appeared, in spite of the subordinate position landscape architecture had. These paved the way towards a new approach in landscape design and opened new paths. The new conceptions allowed the appearance of remarkable achievements beginning with the last decades of the 20th century.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

No special materials were necessary for the present study.

The methods used were:

- Gathering of documentary evidence
- Observation “in situ” of remarkable examples of green urban areas, street and squares layout
- Application of new tendencies to specific sites in Romanian towns, especially Timișoara
- Launching and guiding of students projects on the topics of this paper.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

THE FORERUNNERS: THE COURAGIOUS EXCEPTIONS

The profound understanding of the tranquil beauty of a northern landscape was masterly shown by Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerenz at the Woodland Cemetery near Stockholm. The design added significance and a sense of reconciliation to the bare, mildly waved local relief (Fig.1.).



Fig. 1 - WOODLAND CEMETERY, 1917-1920

Roberto Burle Marx, the Brazilian landscape architect, was at the same time painter, print maker, ecologist, naturalist, artist and musician. His works

reflected his complex personality and, using the vivid colours and the powerful expressivity of tropical plants silhouettes, he created abstract painting with the diverse and always changing vegetal material. He used his artistic skill in producing ornamental drawings to be seen from above, from high buildings. He is considered one of the first designers to have introduced Modernist tendencies in landscape architecture (Fig.2.).



Fig. 2 - EDMUNDO CAVANELLAS RESIDENCE, PETROPOLIS, BRAZIL 1954

Thomas Dolliver Church was an American landscape architect known as having created the “California Style”. By dividing the landscaped areas, he introduced the concept of outdoor living space or “outdoor rooms” (Fig.3.).



Fig. 3 - MARTIN RESIDENCE BEACH GARDEN, APTOS, CALIFORNIA, 1948

Environmental artists brought poetry in the landscape design and enriched it with significance, meaning and symbolism. They brought a new dimension to the landscape, the unexpected and the bizarre. Two of the best known environmental artists by the scale of their interventions and the magnitude of the requested material means were Cristo and Jeanne-Claude (Fig.4.).

Ian L. McHarg professor at the University of Pennsylvania advocated in his theoretical works an ecological approach in planning and landscape design. In his 1969 book, *Design with Nature*, he set forth the concepts that were to develop later in Geographic Information Systems.



Fig. 4 - RUNNING FENCE, CALIFORNIA, 1976

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CONTEMPORARY TENDENCIES IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

1. A new life is given to historic parks. Not only did they change their beneficiaries in the 20th century, from a limited number of exclusivist nobles to a democratic use, but they house vivid contemporary activities.



Fig. 5 - Jardin du Luxembourg, Paris

In the traditional geometric Jardin du Luxembourg in Paris for instance (Fig. 5.), one can find attractions for every age category: children have playing grounds under the old trees; ponies await the young visitors; tennis courts are organized in the clearings; young people rest on the lawn, in the sun; on the

chairs, employees enjoy their lunch under the trees; older men play “petanque”. Everybody finds a suitable activity in the old park.

2. One can trace the same profound understanding of the landscape Asplund and Lewerenz displayed in Woodland Cemetery, the same subtle use of natural features, the same harmonious integration of architecture in the site, the same understanding of the “genius loci” in the works of Tadao Ando. In his 1985 Chapel on the Water, the building not only is in complete harmony with its surroundings, but the worship space opens widely towards the serene waters of a lake, rendered symbolic by the presence of a Latin cross (Fig.6.).



Fig. 6 - Chapel on the Water, Tomamu, island of Hokkaido

3. The ecological approach did bear fruit. In contrast with the usual concept for urban green areas, which are open ecosystems, needing maintenance, material and energy input, today design of closed ecosystems is encouraged, using local species and allowing a natural succession to occur. The first wild parks appeared in Holland, aiming to recreate local vegetal communities, almost extinct in wilderness. The Amsterdamse Bos was begun already in the ‘30ties, but it reached its full maturity at the end of the 20th century and became a model for many other parks, like the Time Landscape in New York.

In historic centers and residential areas, the concept of “traffic calming” and “mixed use” of the streets surface dethroned the car from its ruling position in the design of urban space. Already widely spread all over the world, the new ideas are essentially a way by which the pedestrian reclaims the streets and squares of his neighbourhood (Fig. 7.).



Fig. 7 - Joint usage streets for pedestrians & vehicles in the United Kingdom

4. Instead of imposing a building onto the landscape, today the landscape plays an essential role in determining the form of a building. Architecture becomes landscape as the greenery conquers and colonizes the buildings. Green roofs (also called vegetated roofs, living roofs and eco-roofs), rooftop ponds and living walls (genuine works of art, as it was designed in Defense, Paris) are encouraged by local and national administrations.

The School of Art, Design & Media of Singapore was located in a wooded valley which was supposed to be left as a green lung in the master plan of the university campus. The artificial relief created by the designer (CPG Consultants), covered by greenery became a powerful statement for the “landscaped architecture” (Fig. 8.).



Fig. 8 - School of Art, Design & Media, Singapore, 2007

Contemporary cities need sustainable and ecological solutions, while their population increases, the rhythm of building activities is alert and a constant rise of life quality is a main goal. The increase of green areas, the creation of pedestrian friendly urban spaces and the harmony between architecture and landscape are a must today.

Landscape Architecture has a central role in future urban environment!

CONCLUSIONS

LANDSCAPE DESIGN IN THE FUTURE

1. New, vivid functions
2. Sensitivity for the character of natural landscape
3. Ecological attitude

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