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DO YOUR TREES MEET THE STANDARD?
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026 — Beneath the rail line
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051 — Local agenda
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057 — Beyond resiliency II
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066 — Grassy woodlands
This issue’s Field Trip examines the eucalypt woodlands of Australia’s south-east, once home to a diversity of species. Essay by Sue McIntyre with photos by Carolyn Young.

074 — Janet Laurence: After Nature
A recent survey of the work of environmental artist Janet Laurence is a salient reminder of the large-scale consequences of human activity. Review by Emily Wong.

078 — Agency and instrumentality
A review of the 2019 Landscape Australia Conference held in Melbourne in May. Article by Claire Martin.

081 — Remembering Ian Oelrichs
Ian Oelrichs was pivotal in the development of the Australian profession, nurturing advocacy, organizational development and community. Reflection by Catherin Bull.

083 — Endnote
A tiny sidewalk project in Melbourne’s inner north is experimenting with local biodiversity. Words by Mark Gillingham.

Cover image: Scarborough Foreshore Redevelopment by TCL and UDLA. Photo: Douglas Mark Black.

Strategic International Partners
Landscape Architecture Europe foundation (LAE), Barcelona International Biennial of Landscape Architecture, Landscape Review journal
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Carolyn Young is an artist specializing in photography that shares knowledge about nature.
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This issue of *Landscape Architecture Australia* came together amid extensive commentary on the release of the United Nations report on biodiversity in May. The report’s grave findings – that unprecedented numbers of species are now under impending threat of extinction – present an alarming picture of the earth’s trajectory, and call for an extremely urgent rethink of opportunities and priorities in how we design with the environments around us. These thoughts are reflected in several articles in this issue.

That landscape architecture can have a significant and meaningful impact continues to be explored in our August project selection. Jane Irwin Landscape Architecture’s cliff-top garden in Sydney focuses on form and materiality in the creation of an intimate space for living (page 42). Hansen Partnership’s design for a new square in the Victorian town of Kerang catalyses new relationships between the town’s residents and its once-car-dominated main street (page 35). And TCL and UDLA’s redevelopment of Scarborough foreshore in Perth reinvigorates and diversifies an iconic urban beach for an expanded demographic of users (page 18).

Following on from articles by Ian Woodcock and Craig Guthrie in the May 2016 issue of *Landscape Architecture Australia* that looked at the public realm possibilities presented by the Victorian government’s level crossing removal project, we feature two reviews that offer different perspectives on the built outcome of the Caulfield to Dandenong Level Crossing Removal Project – Aspect Studio’s much-anticipated linear park and open space transformation in Melbourne’s south-east. The project’s potential to bring together communities previously separated by the ground-level rail line is evaluated by Beau Beza and Ricky Ray Ricardo.

Our conversation about designing resilient infrastructure for cities continues with the second part of Rosalea Monacella’s interview with prominent practitioners including Chris Reed from Boston-based firm Stoss Landscape Urbanism and Lisa Switkin and Richard Kennedy from New York-based James Corner Field Operations (page 57).

The next instalment in our Field Trip series is a collaboration between photographer Carolyn Young and woodland ecologist Sue McIntyre. Over a period of ten years, Young has documented native grasslands associated with eucalypt woodlands in New South Wales, seeking to convey changes in plant diversity through evocative imagery (page 66).

Janet Laurence’s recent retrospective at Sydney’s Museum of Contemporary Art Australia takes on particular significance in light of the UN’s biodiversity findings. Since the 1990s, Laurence – an enduring figure in Australian environmental art – has created installations, sculptures and site-specific interventions that draw attention to the impacts of human activity on our environment. Her work has engaged with the logging of old-growth forests in Tasmania’s Styx Valley and ocean acidification and its effects on the Great Barrier Reef. We reflect on Laurence’s exhibition on page 74.

The call-to-action embedded in Laurence’s practice continues in Claire Martin’s round-up of the proceedings at the recent Landscape Australia Conference held in Melbourne (page 78). Among the many discussions the program brought to the fore, one of the most impassioned and enduring honed in on the personal politics of practice. We hope that those who joined us for the event were struck by some memorable and inspiring presentations.

On page 81, we pay tribute to AILA fellow Ian Oelrichs who is remembered as one of the pioneers of the Australian landscape architecture profession. Catherin Bull reflects on Ian’s significant contributions to the organizational evolution of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects and his role in carving out a place for Australian practice within the broader international design scene. Reflecting on Catherin’s words, what seemed particularly resonant in Ian’s life was a heightened sense of the importance of community. Increasingly, and particularly in our cities, we feel the need for connection – with nature and also with each other. We hope the articles in this issue offer some thoughts on how we might work to unfold and sustain greater networks, within the profession and related disciplines, and beyond.

– Emily Wong, editor
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MASTERPLAN FOR HEIDE MUSEUM

The Heide Museum of Modern Art has appointed London-based architecture studio Carmody Groarke and Melbourne-based landscape architecture and urban design practice Openwork to create a masterplan for its six-hectare site. Ahead of the museum’s fortieth anniversary in 2021, the masterplan will explore the museum’s ambitions for refurbishments, a new international-quality exhibition gallery, as well as expanded education, public and members’ facilities. The property currently houses three public gallery spaces – one comprising a renovated late nineteenth century farm house – a café, and a garden and sculpture park.

Image: Wolfgang Sievers

heide.com.au | openwork.info

INDIGENOUS ROOFTOP GARDEN OPENS

Mirvac and cultural start-up Yerrabingin have launched Australia’s first Indigenous urban food production farm on the rooftop of Yerrabingin House in South Eveleigh, New South Wales. The farm aims to celebrate the area’s rich Aboriginal culture and heritage by engaging workers, visitors and the local community in an event program, including workshops and tours relating to Indigenous culture, native plants, permaculture, environmental sustainability, and physical and mental health. Produce from the farm, including native bush foods, will also be on sale.

Image: courtesy Mirvac

yerrabingin.com.au

AILA FESTIVAL 2019 LAUNCHES

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) has launched the website for its 2019 International Festival of Landscape Architecture, which will take place in Melbourne from 10 to 13 October. The 2019 festival which will be themed “The Square and the Park,” is being curated by Cassandra Chilton of Rush Wright Associates, Kirsten Bauer of Aspect Studios and Jillian Wallis of the University of Melbourne. Through an extensive program of talks, panel discussions and events, the conference will investigate two landscape typologies – the square and the park – through the lens of contemporary landscape architectural concerns including design, politics, ecology and management.

Image: courtesy AILA

aila.org.au/2019festival
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WELLBEING GARDENS OPEN

Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria has launched three meditative wellbeing gardens. Designed by landscape architect Andrew Laidlaw, the garden designs – the Bird’s Nest, the Grotto and the Moss Garden – translate the personal stories of the project’s three donors into the landscape. The new spaces form part of the ongoing restoration of the Fern Gully precinct of the Royal Botanic Gardens, which began in 2016.

Image: courtesy Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria

MELBOURNE ARTS PRECINCT GARDENS

University of Sheffield landscape architecture professors Nigel Dunnett and James Hitchmough will work in collaboration with Hassell and New York-based architecture practice SO-IL to create seasonal, minimal water-use plantings for the planned upgrade to the Melbourne Arts Precinct in Southbank. Dunnett and Hitchmough previously lead a two-year trial and research for the United Kingdom’s largest man-made wildflower meadow ahead of the 2012 Olympic Games in London.

Image: Hassell

DARWIN PUBLIC SQUARE MASTERPLAN

A consortium led by TCL will develop a masterplan for Darwin’s major civic spaces, as part of a project agreed to under the Darwin City Deal. The $200 million deal, announced in November 2018, includes plans to refresh and redesign Darwin’s public spaces in an effort to cool the city. This includes the $37 million redevelopment of State Square, which will replace bitumen car parks with a landscaped park. A new multi-level car parking structure buried beneath the square will replace the lost parking space.

Image: TCL
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MINISTER’S AWARD FOR URBAN DESIGN

One award and two commendations have been given to projects in Queensland that “challenge the status quo [and] demonstrate leadership and design excellence.”

The renewal of the high street of Barcaldine, in rural Queensland, has won the top award at the 2019 Minister’s Award for Urban Design.

Fifteen nominations were received for the third iteration of the program, which recognizes contemporary Queensland urban design projects of the highest quality, with one project winning an award and two others receiving commendations.

Main Street Barcaldine by M3 Architecture and Brian Hooper Architect (architects in association) with Barcaldine Regional Council was named the sole award winner. The long-term redevelopment involved two major architectural projects – the Tree of Knowledge Memorial and The Globe Hotel.

“The Main Street of Barcaldine is an exemplar project,” said the jury in its citation. “This targeted investment in high-quality urban design values the distinctive qualities of place and has delivered an exceptional and revitalized main street in a small country town setting. The scheme has cleverly reinvigorated the main high street, ★★
Oxley Creek Transformation Master Plan by Lat27 and Oxley Creek Transformation in association with DesignFlow, Hydrobiology, Jacobs and Deloitte received a commendation. Image: Lat27.

A commendation was awarded to the Gold Coast Building Height Study – An Approach to City Image together with the Gold Coast Urban Ground Project, by the City of Gold Coast with Urbis and the City of Gold Coast with Archipelago. Image: Archipelago with City of Gold Coast.

working with the existing built fabric of the town to create a successful tourist destination that reflects Barcaldine’s rich social, built and cultural history.

“Anchored by the Tree of Knowledge Memorial at one end and The Globe Hotel at the other, the utilization of these cultural and tourism attractions when combined with a narrowing and slowing of the highway successfully has created a high-quality experience for both locals and tourists.

“The relocation of car parking away from the Tree of Knowledge Memorial is a key strategic move that prioritizes pedestrians who can now engage more closely with the memorial and the town’s broader heritage setting. The success of the Main Street Barcaldine demonstrates the ability for urban design to underpin broader economic activity. Both the Tree of Knowledge Memorial and The Globe Hotel represent exceptional built form outcomes that are inspiring and visionary.

“Main Street Barcaldine is an excellent exemplar for regional towns across Queensland, looking to re-imagine their main streets through adaptive re-use of their historic buildings and high-quality urban design outcomes to create unique and enduring legacies for their communities and visitors.”

A team comprising Lat27 and Oxley Creek Transformation in association with DesignFlow, Hydrobiology, Jacobs and Deloitte won a commendation for the Oxley Creek Transformation Master Plan. The masterplan for the redevelopment of Oxley Creek would see the fifteen-kilometre waterway between Brisbane River and Larapinta reimagined as both a sanctuary for wildlife and an “urban playground.”

The jury praised the plan for laying out an “innovative governance model that is likely to set a new benchmark in the revitalization, management and maintenance of urban waterways.”

The other commendation was awarded to the Gold Coast Building Height Study – An Approach to City Image and the Gold Coast Urban Ground Project, which together offer a set of documents to guide the future built form of the Gold Coast. The documents, by City of Gold Cost with Urbis, and City of Gold Coast with Archipelago, were cited by the jury as setting “a benchmark for other councils across Queensland experiencing rapid growth and urbanization.”
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THE NEW GROOVE

The transformation of Perth’s Scarborough foreshore by TCL and UDLA reimagines the site’s vibrant history, offering a “delightfully upbeat” destination for a diverse range of visitors.

Text Tinka Sack

Along the upper promenade, arbours by Chaney Architecture that feature a colour pattern developed in collaboration with Aboriginal artist Sharyn Egan provide a flexible space for events. Photo: Douglas Mark Black.
As much of coastal Australia, beach culture is ingrained in the psyche of Perth. Those born in the city seem to inherit their beach preferences, while imported residents test the varied sand strips via proximity and activity – the linear development of Perth has put the beach within cooee of everyone, just head west. Whether it’s for swimming, surfing or snorkelling, the beach remains a highly egalitarian place, with beachgoers quite literally stripped bare of most class peripherals, shark net or not.

That interstitial space between surf and suburb – the foreshore – is, however, a more contested space. Large expanses of carpark graded horizontally into vulnerable dunes have been acceptable in Perth, yet the vertical development of buildings remains contentious. At odds with contemporary tourism and the state’s desire for density, residents of beachside neighbourhoods continue to offer strong resistance to development, seeking to protect their enviable lifestyles. The local beach is a cultural landscape, steeped in sentiment and tradition. Locals seem to have no desire to change this beloved space into a destination for others from farther afield.

In the context of Perth, the demographic and vibe of Scarborough Beach, to the city’s north, has always been a bit different. Dominated by cars since the 1930s, Scarborough’s foreshore has at times resembled an airport runway. With the arrival of rock and roll in the ’50s, Scarborough Esplanade’s vast concrete terrace became known as the Snake Pit, as throngs of bodgies and widgies gathered to dance and eat burgers, the adjacent carpark perfect for car drags. With all the youthful humanity flocking there at the time, the culture of “Scabs” (as it’s more colloquially known) was about more than the beach, and was a home for drag racing, bikies, beer, dancing and tourists. In the ’80s, the late Australian tycoon Alan Bond’s desire to view his America’s Cup yachts sailing from Two Rocks to Fremantle made Scarborough the ideal

“... the beaches ran north and south, white and broad as highways in a dream, and men and babies stood in the surf while gulls hung in the haze above, casting shadows on the immodest backs of the oilslicked women.”– Tim Winton

Scarborough Foreshore Redevelopment
Scarborough, Western Australia
TCL (Taylor Cullity Lethlean) and UDLA

... Bond’s desire to view his America’s Cup yachts sailing from Two Rocks to Fremantle made Scarborough the ideal...
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location to build his Observation City hotel. The eighteen-story building of uninspiring architecture but commanding ocean views was, and remains (in its present incarnation as the Rendezvous Hotel Perth Scarborough), Perth’s only beachside highrise. The bogan-meets-rebel repute of “Scabs” lingers into the present.

The recent ambitiously programmed redevelopment of the Scarborough Esplanade has now quite certainly transformed the foreshore and its accompanying demographic of visitors. With the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority and City of Stirling as client, landscape architecture firms TCL and UDLA together took the lead role in designing a landscape that could house a new municipal swimming pool, skate park, climbing wall, playground, cafes, future development and, of course, parking. Their masterplan is underpinned by two robust and well-executed moves. Firstly, the Esplanade – the historic north–south dragway – has been rejigged to provide pedestrian priority while maintaining road legibility. This has delivered a very welcome reduction of the formerly prominent entry roundabout, slowed vehicular movement and created an entry plaza.

The landscape architects’ second defining move was engaging the existing terrain to create two north–south promenades on different levels; the upper promenade is tied to the level of the Esplanade, while the lower provides casual access to the beach. The building program has been sited within this datum. At the southern end, the new swimming pool and surf club are built into the terrain. Here the upper promenade becomes a landscape balcony, offering views and connections to the pool swimmers below. The lower promenade opens into a piazza framed by the pool’s entry and the surf club’s lower facade – with this, the buildings have become part of the landscape, more sculptural than architectural. Posses of visitors scoot through or linger; often accompanied by the added pleasure of delighted cackles of laughter spilling from the restaurant above the pool.

To the north, the promenades flow across the terrain, moving alongside the new skate park designed by Enlocus, past a well-scaled Sunset Hill, and finally converging at the new Whale Playground. Logical in plan and rhythmically executed on the ground, these promenades define a vibrant and encompassing cadence for the entire foreshore. The terrain flows between upper and lower promenades, in and around, past people-watchers and skaters, seamlessly flowing around structures and play zones; even my teenage companion is compelled to note: “the flow, it works ... I like it.” The hips loosen, the saunter relaxes, the effortless grooves of Perth’s own...
psych-rock band, Tame Impala, would make a fitting soundtrack.

Sunset Hill is a delight for any number of reasons. No matter how hot or cool the weather is, the grassy knoll, with its generous scale, front row position and casual gradient, seemingly causes visitors to indulge in an instant lie-down. Built for viewing the sunset, this happy hill, rising above the Esplanade, makes a terrific spot to watch both surfers in the sea and toddlers on the ground negotiate the thrills of a decent wave/slope without fear of collision.

The best of the redevelopment’s public art integrates the Whadjuk Dreaming story of the whale that delivers the spirits of the dead back to the mainland after death. It was this story that inspired the creation of the Whale Playground. Embedded in the beautifully resolved concrete whale bones are the drawings of the three Maslin children who lost their lives in the MH17 airline tragedy in 2014. The images speak to the children playing among the bones, celebrating the lives of Mo, Evie and Otis Maslin, while relaying the tale of a family’s profound loss.

At the redeveloped Scarborough foreshore, parking areas are still substantial, but the car has released its hold. Now parking is intersected with functioning, simple but handsomely designed rain gardens and access paths. Throughout the foreshore, elements and details are strong yet humble, made from ordinary materials but exceptionally executed. This includes, most notably, the ample, low-slung concrete lounging pads, the lower limestone wall of Sunset Hill and the inviting timber and concrete beach benches. Overall the spaces are cheerful, balanced and welcoming.

The one break in the design’s overall rhythm is the retention of the existing beachfront amphitheatre in the centre of the site, a remnant of a previous masterplan. This was the client’s imperative; the structure’s dated turret landings are one of the few clunky impediments to the flow of the promenades and its new and fluidly inscribed topographies. Presently, this “heart” of the Esplanade remains vacant, with bespoke shade structures by Chaney Architecture with Sharyn Egan serving as placeholders for the future promise of more building infrastructure. The area is a bit open and hot as autumn turns to winter, however, sunset markets and food trucks have made vibrant use of the space over the summer months.

There is no longer a concrete heaviness nor patina of tattiness at the Scarborough foreshore. The adjacent shopping centre along the West Coast Highway is still in need of an invigorating upgrade and the area’s cafes and bars still attract tourists and locals looking for an uninhibited night out. But the foreshore redevelopment has brought the return to Scarborough of a long-missing demographic – the multicultural, multi-generational family. From observation and commentary, Perth families are delighted with the redevelopment’s design, returning to the Esplanade in gaggles. The pool has been thriving, growing in attendance and membership far beyond expectation. Even on a rare rainy and cloudy day in Perth, the tourists, grandparents and teenagers here are grooving; Scabs’ Esplanade, now a
Rising eleven metres in height, grassy Sunset Hill offers an elevated perch from which to enjoy sunset views over the Indian Ocean. Photo: Douglas Mark Black.

The Whale Playground engages visitors and children with Whadjuk Noongar Dreaming stories of spirits returning to the land after death. Photo: Dion Robeson.
**PROJECT**
Scarborough Foreshore Redevelopment

**DESIGN PRACTICE**
TCL (Taylor Cullity Lethlean) and UDLA

**PROJECT TEAM**
TCL: Scott Adams, Perry Lethlean, Elly Russell, Jim McGuinness, Jonathon Chan, Sokkhay Ke, Anne-Marie Pisani, Neha Juddoo, Jennifer Lynch, Justine Carey

UDLA: Scott Lang, Daniel Firns, Shea Hatch, Caine Holdsworth, Pierre Quesnel, Christie Stewart

**CLIENT**
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**ARBOURS**
Chaney Architecture with Sharyn Egan

**SURF CLUB ARCHITECTURE**
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Material Thinking

**TJUNTA TRAIL (ARTWORK)**
Neville Collard, Richard Walley, Jahne Rees

**ENTRY STATEMENT**
Bevan Honey

**WHALE PLAYGROUND**
Jahne Rees

**ART INLAYS**
Jahne Rees, Evie Maslin, Mo Maslin, Otis Maslin

**WELCOME HAND**
Kylie Graham

**CONTRACTOR**
Georgiou Group

**TIME SCHEDULE**
Design, documentation: 2 years, 6 months
Construction: 1 year, 6 months

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The fluid terrain of the redeveloped Esplanade and foreshore accommodates both intensive as well as more extensive activities. Photo: DG Imagery.
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BENEATH THE RAIL LINE

The public realm benefits of an elevated rail line were the subject of much commentary in the lead up to the recent removal of nine level crossings in Melbourne’s south-east. Here, Landscape Architecture Australia presents two perspectives on the built outcome of the much-anticipated Caulfield to Dandenong Level Crossing Removal Project.

Texts Beau Beza and Ricky Ray Ricardo
Vibrant sporting courts offer active recreational opportunities; a unified colour palette lends dynamism and a sense of identity. Photo: Peter Bennetts.
Attention to scale and a coordinated approach to colour have created an inviting series of spaces, well-suited to individual and collective inhabitation.

Text Beau Beza

Living near the Caulfield to Dandenong Level Crossing Removal Project and having seen (and heard) its construction, I was curious to experience this project’s outcome. The $1.6 billion project has involved the removal of nine level crossings, the realization of five new train stations and the creation of 22.5 hectares of public space for the community in Melbourne’s suburban south-east. At the heart of the project has been the design of a linear park stretching 8.4 kilometres from Carnegie to Hughesdale, Clayton and Noble Park, twelve kilometres of new shared-use pathways and thousands of new trees. With the project spanning a wide range of residential, commercial, transport and parkland settings, the question of how to establish a unified theme over kilometres of distance presented the consultant landscape architects, Aspect Studios, with a challenge.

The design team’s decision to go “up” with the rail line (rather than sinking the rail below ground – an option that was available at the project bidding phase) has shaped the fundamental design of the works. Following from this initial decision, four design considerations helped structure the development of their response. These revolved around demonstrating performance, functionality, value (why this and not that) and the maintenance of the intended project outcomes. A significant aspect of the design process also involved managing and integrating the concerns of the project’s very large number of stakeholders – a task Aspect acted on by engaging a full-time landscape architect whose function during the design development process was primarily to facilitate stakeholder approvals while allowing the physical design process to continue to progress.

From both a practitioner, academic and visitor perspective, the resulting built outcome is worth experiencing both over the course of the day and into the night. With the rail line going “up,” it is not intrusive, and when walking through the space one hardly notices it overhead. I was more struck by how noticeable the cars on the adjacent roadways, such as Dandenong Road were – on the times of my visits (a Sunday afternoon and weekday evening) the high level of noise was both intrusive and unpleasant. Anecdotally, the sections of the linear park framed by hard edges and vertical features seem to exclude much of the noise of the surrounding urban environment, making it easy to have a normal conversation in the space. However, when the parkland is unframed and interrupted with, for example, a T-intersection, one is reminded by the sounds of the cars (and on one day I visited, the howling wind) that this is metropolitan Melbourne! The framing of the parkland (often achieved through plantings) helps to humanize the more open spaces.
This resulting human scale has been further reinforced through the strategic placement of various benches and furniture elements, plant pallets and a coordinated use of colour across the park’s different spaces.

These spaces regularly punctuate the linear park and range from small focused interventions (for example, revegetation areas) through to larger activation nodes (including Ross Reserve Activation Node), with each providing passive and/or active areas for the community. The type and distribution of spaces work well and have been seamlessly integrated into the park’s linear framework through the reuse of materials such as trusses (used to form seating enclaves), and the insertion of new and colourful sporting areas and courts, where, on the day of my visit, I observed numerous pick-up games of basketball and table tennis underway. It is a testament to the project’s design and execution that these areas appear to be consistently used well into the evening.

Accompanying these more intensively programmed areas are plantings that run the length of the park corridor. What is particularly appealing about these plantings is that despite them still being, at the time of my visit, at the stage of establishing themselves, their effect in the setting is immediate. Interestingly, Kirsten Bauer, director of Aspect, explained that the tree planting constraints provided the opportunity to search for and use a new dwarf tree cultivar, *Corymbia citriodora* ‘Scentuous,’ (dwarf lemon-scented gum) that complemented the site’s existing plantings but whose height would remain below that of the rail viaduct. These new native woodland plantings complement the indigenous plantings currently on site, and in time will match these already established areas in terms of scale and, hopefully, the native fauna they attract.

At the moment, these areas are watered naturally by rain. A system of rain gardens that run the length of the linear park also collects rain runoff, allow swater to percolate into the soil and directs excess runoff into the local stormwater system. These rain gardens form part of a larger catchment system that harvests water captured from the overhead railway line and distributes it via downpipes to swales in the park below.

Overall, my biggest concern for this project relates to maintenance; I assume this is in the hands of the various councils along the length of the project. When walking through the project during the day, for instance, I could already see weeds taking root in some of the more prominent areas of the new plantings and rain gardens. If not kept in check these will challenge the design integrity of the project. At night when I strolled through the linear park, several of the overhead features intended to light up the Djerring Trail walking and cycling path were not functioning. The lack of light in these specific areas made me feel quite uncomfortable.

Putting aside these concerns, which are largely outside the design team’s control, Aspect Studios has done a remarkable job of managing and integrating the concerns of the project’s large number of stakeholders. The end result is a series of hard and soft-scaped spaces that present a casual but inviting feel and offer open space for both resident communities along the rail line and casual commuters disembarking at the station. The Caulfield to Dandenong Level Crossing Removal Project is an exceptional demonstration of design thinking, visioning and realization of works. In essence, it is a fantastic outcome for the local community.
Dedicated basketball courts, in addition to bike repair points, skate parks and gardens, form activity nodes along the linear park. Photo: Peter Bennetts.

Graphic furniture and play spaces invite visitors to embrace the challenges presented by the parkour equipment. Photo: Dianna Snape.

Shared cycling-pedestrian paths and picnic areas improve connectivity along the rail corridor. Photo: Peter Clarke.
The Caulfield to Dandenong Level Crossing Removal Project demonstrates how integrated urban design thinking can shape progressive built outcomes.

Text Ricky Ray Ricardo

Eleven MCGs of new public open space – this was the promise delivered to Melburnians in the city’s preferred metric when the Victorian state government announced that the method of removing nine level crossings along the Caulfield to Dandenong rail corridor would be to go up, rather than down.

While the public space promise wasn’t enough to offset all displeasure among locals, who would have their mostly low-rise suburban skyline interrupted by twin nine-metre-high concrete rail viaducts, it did spark some fruitful discussion about the merits of each method (rail under or rail over) and the urban design and landscape architectural opportunities they offered.

Now that the $1.6 billion project is more or less complete, the opportunities offered by “rail over” are just as compelling in the flesh as they were in theory – a testament both to the efforts of the project’s design team led by Aspect Studios and Cox Architecture, and to the benefits of having a government client that, from the outset, understood that good urban design outcomes would be critical to the project’s success.

On the final day of autumn I rode my bicycle from Caulfield to Dandenong along the Djerring Trail, a new cycle route created by the project that runs below the twin elevated rail lines. Along the journey I pass dog parks, basketball courts, parkour equipment, fitness stations, bike repair points, skate parks, wetland swales, new gardens and tree plantings a war memorial, new car parks and bus turn-around lanes. The level of amenity this corridor now accommodates is staggering.

The first thing that hit me was that the “stitching” effect is real. Where neighbourhoods previously existed separately, on either side of the rail line, they have now been united by welcoming train stations, generous and well-detailed plazas, brightly coloured recreation nodes and expansive green parklands.

While each station appears similar on the surface, their design was complex. Kirsten Bauer, director of Aspect Studios, explains that the design team had to work closely with local councils along the route to draft urban design frameworks for each of the neighbourhoods, which meant they were able to integrate a lot more into the project and that its contributions extend well beyond the immediate site.
Unlike other underline parks around the world, the Caulfield to Dandenong parklands were fully integrated from the outset rather than built subsequently as an afterthought, and it shows in how the landscape, architecture and engineering have come together seamlessly. Even the concrete viaduct pillars were designed by the Aspect and Cox team, optimized for easy graffiti removal and to be sympathetic to the linear park below.

The five station forecourts use a similar language to one another, but with slight site-specific nuances. Glazed tiles are used in the urban furniture to bring colour and warmth to otherwise grey spaces, and their colour palette of yellows, oranges and greens references the artwork of celebrated painter Arthur Boyd, who grew up in nearby Murrumbeena.

At points along the route, artefacts from the site’s recent history can be found reused in garden and seating details. Historic steel trusses from the demolished stations have been remade into boomerang-shaped seats, while rail tracks have been relaid in some planting beds to mark the alignment of the former line.

Bauer explains that finding places where trees could grow was a challenging task, with so many services running beneath the ground as well as conservative vegetation restrictions near to the rail lines. With planting difficult, Aspect used graphic surface treatments, designed in collaboration with graphic design practice Double-A, as an effective way to introduce colour and a sense of fun to the new public spaces. My favourite instance of this is at Noble Park, where a parkour course made from unsawn logs sits atop a soft-fall field of radiating graphic circles that extend up the concrete pillars.

The only head-scratching moment I had came from attempting to navigate the train station signage. At each station forecourt, three large white letters are intended to mark the name of the station – “HUG” at Hughesdale, “CNE” at Carnegie, “NPK” at Noble Park, “CLA” at Clayton and “MRB” at Murrumbeena. But these three letter abbreviations are hardly obvious and read more as curious public artworks, particularly at “Hug Station.”

About halfway through my ride I pass Springvale Station, an earlier level crossing removal that followed the “rail under” model. While the open sky has been preserved – which is no trivial concern for many – the urban design contribution of this method of removal is less positive in my mind. There are improvements at and around the station, but these soon stop. Ride or walk a little further and the downside of “rail under” becomes clear – a long strip of featureless lawn sits adjacent to what looks like a very lengthy razor-wire cage. The rail pit needs to be secured for safety and security, resulting in a hostile interface that extends (and divides) for hundreds of metres.

Victoria has come a long way in the past decade when it comes to how urban design outcomes are considered in major infrastructure projects. The wider Level Crossing Removal Project that encompasses the Caulfield to Dandenong section (by contrast with earlier level crossing removals, including Springvale Station), has its own dedicated urban design framework, developed in collaboration with the Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA). Projects within this Level Crossing Removal Project umbrella are to be presented to the Victorian Design Review Panel at key milestones, ensuring a high level of design scrutiny.
Community fears that elevated rail would create unsafe graffiti-covered spaces were taken seriously in the design process, and a recent article published in The Age suggests that many locals who originally opposed the project have now embraced it. Yet it’s likely too early to say whether these concerns were entirely unwarranted. Ongoing maintenance along the Caulfield to Dandenong underline is clearly a real concern, with $15 million of the project budget set aside for this in 2017. I spotted two private maintenance contractors washing graffiti off on the day of my visit and one wonders how long this level of care will be kept up.

The Caulfield to Dandenong Level Crossing Removal Project demonstrates that big ticket infrastructure projects can deliver huge public benefits when urban design thinking and outcomes are fully integrated from the get-go and aren’t value managed out along the way. With many removals yet to come within the wider initiative, this project will serve as an important reference and hopefully allay some remaining fear in the community toward so-called “skyrail.”

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The design of Victoria Square transforms a town’s main street into a pedestrian-friendly gathering place and thoroughfare.

**FAIR SHARE**

This reimagining of a town’s main street elevates the pedestrian experience while acknowledging the continuing role of cars in regional life.

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**Text** Julian Bull  
**Photography** Andrew Lloyd
The pace changed a hundred years ago along the main streets of Australian country towns as automobiles proliferated, demanding and obtaining better roads. The roads became sealed, increasing the automobiles’ speeds and making claims for their own space, for the sole purpose of parking convenience. Each parking spot on the ground was delineated by white paint outside the shop or business one had driven to visit. The adjoining sidewalk became a stepping stone between car door and shop door, rather than a promenade.

While today automobiles remain vitally important to rural life, the digital age has bypassed the main street with only a couple of exceptions: cafes thriving on the nation’s coffee addiction and post offices surviving on Ebay’s back amid dwindling piles of letters and paper bills. Local merchants not dealing coffee have given way to national corporations parked in shopping centres on town outskirts, leaving “For Lease” signs plastered across main street storefronts in scenes reminiscent of Russell Drysdale paintings, full of buildings but empty of people.

It was this type of ecosystem that presented to Hansen Partnership in 2016, when they were commissioned by Gannawarra Shire Council to undertake a landscape and public realm works plan for Victoria Street in Kerang, a rural town 250 kilometres north-west of Melbourne, with the aim of transforming the town’s main street into a more pedestrian-orientated place. Following extensive community consultation, Hansen Partnership’s proposal to concentrate...
on delivering their concept to only the middle part of the street was adopted – and Victoria Square was born.

Making eloquent use of three adjacent civic buildings framing the site – the Post Office (1886), Courthouse (1912) and Memorial Municipal Chambers (1927) – the project was built in-house by Gannawarra Shire Council staff and local contractors and delivered in 2018. It received both state and national Australian Institute of Landscape Architecture awards in urban design that year, the jury citing Hansen Partnership’s successful incorporation of “regional realism” within their design, and their successful efforts to extirpate the overriding kowtowing to vehicular traffic on Victoria Street through the establishment of a shared-space precinct centred around Kerang’s historic public buildings.

Hansen Partnership identified four local narratives found in the agricultural district surrounding Kerang on which they based their design – the veranda, farmhouse, paddock and garden. Collectively, the three public buildings have been contextualized within the farmhouse narrative as a site of central refuge and community-gathering, while the veranda design narrative seeks to unify the heritage buildings’ forecourts through the insertion of a platform that wraps around the buildings’ facades. This platform aims to encourage north-south pedestrian movement along the length of the historic building frontages. The “veranda” is also designed to be a gathering place overlooking the square and to precipitate foot traffic across the space, an outcome aided by the design of chamfered garden beds that feed pedestrian desire lines through to the “paddock,” the pedestrian zone on the other side of the street. The use of graded coloured pavers in the “paddock” is suggestive of the vast flat irrigated patchwork geometries of the agricultural landscapes of the region. Unique robust red gum seating structures, some lying under directional shade umbrellas, are also aligned to
facilitate pedestrian flow between both sides of the street, in addition to providing attractive meeting places. Though these abut the area used by vehicles, the designers have almost entirely mollified the sense of sitting kerbside, next to the street, helping accomplish Hansen Partnership’s objective of enhancing pedestrian experiences.

The “garden” narrative introduced into the square also contributes to the community’s enjoyment of the shared space. The discrete, raised concrete-edged garden beds designed to emulate those areas of lawn and shrubs attached to farmhouses, in particularly the insertions of swards into the hard landscape, are strikingly effective juxtapositions of elements. Two ash tree varieties, *Fraxinus pennsylvanica* ‘Lednaw’ and *Fraxinus americana* ‘Chamdell,’ are planted side-by-side in three of the grassed beds, enhancing the articulation of the design. Together with these garden beds guarding the approaches and channelling vehicles into the square, inclined cobbled strips line the immediate road entrances to the shared space, visually and haptically informing motorists of their imminent arrival, immediately alerting them to the square’s presence. Gannawarra Shire Council should be encouraged to lay new bitumen at the interfaces between the street and the square as the current poor surface distracts from the crisp finished lines of Hansen Partnership’s design.

Another issue arose following the square’s completion when an existing hundred-year-old manna gum
(Eucalyptus viminalis), originally retained as an integral design element, was removed in February 2019 on the advice of arborists who deemed the tree too great a risk to public safety. The manna gum, though not native to the Kerang district, had long been a familiar landmark on Victoria Street, providing welcome shade outside the Memorial Municipal Chambers’ forecourt. Current plans are to replant the bed with lawn and two juvenile spotted gums (Corymbia maculata).

The loss of the manna gum from Victoria Street square does not detract from what is an exemplary example of shared-space design transforming a regional centre. Removing vehicles altogether has not been a success in the CBDs of regional towns; malls in Ballarat and Shepparton the latest in a growing list of places actively seeking to reinvigorate their centres by allowing them back in. Victoria Street’s new square represents the visual and functional benefits that can be gained for rural communities by removing the kerb but not curbing the car.
The heritage buildings’ forecourts are unified by a platform that wraps around the historic buildings’ facades and offers a central meeting place for the community.
ARINI
FOR THE URBAN JUNGLE OF TODAY AND TOMORROW
LIGHT, DESIGN and MULTIFUNCTIONALITY
Perched on a clifftop in Sydney’s Vaucluse, this garden by Jane Irwin Landscape Architecture favours intimacy and materiality over grand gestures.

Text David Whitworth
Photography Dianna Snape
Suburbs in Sydney come burdened with associations. Vaucluse, in Sydney’s east, is no exception. Poised at the entrance to Sydney Harbour, and edged on two sides by clifftops boasting jaw-dropping views of either the Tasman Sea or the harbour, Vaucluse is a place perhaps more renowned for its trophy homes than for sensitive, introspective spaces such as gardens. Visiting a garden designed by Jane Irwin Landscape Architecture (JILA) and perched on these very eastern clifftops, however, I’m refreshed by what I find.

Prior to JILA’s engagement by the current owner, both the shape of the house and the physical dimensions of the garden had been predetermined, with the house designed by the late Australian architect Paul Pholeros. The garden’s design is an exercise in contextualizing the house, grounding and orienting its relationship to an extraordinary position. In relation to the landscape the house acts as a windbreak, separating the exposed, east-facing rear yard from the sun-drenched west-facing front. With the house and natural pool completed prior to engagement, Jane Irwin, principal of JILA, describes the design of the garden spaces as an exercise in stitching.

At the front of the house, the tired tropes of the suburban front yard are unpicked. Defying a stark boundary between the private and public realms, the garden spills streetward. Scented geraniums colonize the footpath, releasing perfume with the contact of passers-by, and in their rapid growth hold space while slower-growing plants, including correa and westringia cultivars, establish themselves, acting as subtle reminders of the site’s lost ecology. In place of the usual
Rather than framing ocean views, the design directs attention inwards, highlighting the clifftop’s unique geology and form through exposed rock faces.

A moving garden: from the designer’s initial plan, planting has been encouraged to adapt and evolve in response to the site’s dynamic conditions.

uninspiring and thirsty lawn, clumps of fragrant herbs and edible groundcovers – oregano and thyme matted with native violet and kidney weed – create a soft, wild carpet underfoot. Here, the processes of succession have been invited in to transform a spatial typology often expected to provide a static frame to the street.

JILA has designed both front and rear spaces to perform – to provide. The house’s owner mentions that neighbours and walkers en route to the area’s nearby clifftop parklands often slow to admire the garden, commenting on its abundant planting. This is hardly surprising. In contrast to the gardens of neighbouring houses, (which are often bare and denuded for fear of obscuring precious views), this landscape is full, generous and alive. Facing the street, small trees work both as screens and producers, with guava and citrus trees nudging the edges of the space and local native species jumping the boundary. Banksias supply nectar and shelter for local wildlife and a coastal tea tree offers dappled shade and the promise of a future gnarled and greyed trunk. I ask Irwin a dull question about maintenance, and the question is reshaped in her answer, becoming an anecdote about how the garden teaches, with decisions about pruning, removal and maintenance weighed against the course the garden itself wants to take – a process of watching and learning.

As the three of us – writer, owner and designer – sit in the house’s rear space, partially blinded by the morning light blinking off the Tasman Sea, the owner claims the garden is, despite appearances, “not about the view.” This is at least partially true. Despite its ocean outlook, the design of the house’s rear landscape shuns the usual strategies of view-framing, tumbling downward from a square of lawn toward exposed rock faces that reference and reinforce – through form and materiality – the site’s clifftop location. The garden’s current form reflects a “starting point” planting plan (from which planting has continued to change and evolve), with individual specimens selected and positioned according to the fall of the site. Space has been defined by an artful placing of stone. Rock orchids sprout adjacent to a stair at the end of the house’s natural pool, while common tussock-grass captures the morning light, bending romantically in the wind.
The intimate scale of the house’s rear garden counterbalances the immense drama of the ocean panorama. Photo: Jane Irwin

Sandstone rough backs – waste material sourced from a Sydney stoneyard – bridge the garden’s spaces, nestling into the site in a balancing act that melds the existing with the conceived. At the garden’s base, a trickling rill gently filters water through aquatic plantings that is later fed back into the pool. The folded landscape echoes the Japanese influence in the house’s architecture, filtered through a uniquely Australian lens.

This corner of the rear garden also functions as a clever counterpoint to the site’s sublime view, which, framed by the floor-to-ceiling glazing of the house’s rear, requires little embellishment. In contrast to the immense expanse of ocean that unfolds behind the building, the garden exists at a micro scale, rewarding more intimate forms of engagement. A sunken seating area turns inward, using stone recycled on site to anchor sitters in place. This most intense part of the garden also subverts expectations of usability, with the owner recalling that her most enjoyable moments have been watching her grandchildren playing, not on the lawn overlooking the ocean, but hopping between the stones, spotting lizards.

Our discussion creates curiosity about the brief. An initial impetus was to live in the landscape, not just admire the view – a preference for experience over appearance. This has presented a refreshing challenge for JILA. The result is a garden that highlights natural phenomenon and the elemental over the pictorial, something we experienced that day as swallows skimmed the natural pool and a visiting kookaburra inelegantly snacked on a blue-tongued lizard.

For landscape architects, the opportunity to work at the garden scale is often dismissed in favour of grander public gestures. Noting this, I ask Irwin for her thoughts on the benefits of working at this smaller scale. Her answer centres on the chance to establish and maintain a relationship based on observation, consultation, continuity and care – a compelling argument for maintaining a critical voice in shaping gardens as intimate places in which we live.
PROJECT
Clifftop Garden, Vaucluse

DESIGN PRACTICE
Jane Irwin Landscape Architecture

PROJECT TEAM
Jane Irwin, Dan Harmon

NATURAL POOL AND POND
Puddleton Gardens

CONTRACTOR
Bates Landscape

ARCHITECT
Paul Pholeros

TIME SCHEDULE
Design, documentation: 2 months
Construction: 1 month

PLANT LIST (INDICATIVE)

FRONT AND SIDE GARDEN
Ajuga reptans (bugle), Banksia integrifolia (coast banksia), Banksia robur (swamp banksia), Begonia scharfii (elephant ear begonia), bromeliads, Citrus limon (lemon), Cordyline stricta (slender palm lily), Correa alba (white correa), Correa reflexa (native fuchsia), Cymbopogon citratus (lemon grass), Daphne odora (winter daphne), Dichondra repens (kidney weed), Dietes robinsoniana (Lord Howe wedding lily), Eremophila glabra (tar bush), Eriostemon australasius (pink wax flower), Fatsia japonica (Japanese aralia), Fragaria vesca (wild strawberry), Geranium nodosum (knotted crane’s-bill), Grevillea ‘Moonlight’ (grevillea), Helichrysum italicum (curry plant), Helleborus spp. (hellebores), herb mix, Hibiscus splendens (pink hibiscus), Iris japonica (fringed iris), Lamium maculatum ‘Album’ (spotted dead nettle), Liriope ‘Silverstar’ (liriope), Lygodium microphyllum (climbing maidenhair fern), Lysimachia paridiformis (loosestrife), Matricaria chamomilla (chamomile), Passiflora edulis (passionfruit), Pelargonium crispum (lemon-scented geranium), Pelargonium gibbosum (gouty pelargonium), Pelargonium graveolens (rose-scented geranium), Pelargonium odoratissimum (apple geranium), Plectranthus argenteus (silver spurflower), Plectranthus fruticosus (forest spurflower), roses selected by client, Rosmarinus officinalis (rosemary), Salvia officinalis (sage), Thryptomene saxicola ‘Payne’s Hybrid’ (thryptomene), Thymus vulgaris (thyme), Viola hederacea (native violet), Westringia fruticosa ‘Smokey,’ Westringia fruticosa (coastal rosemary)

REAR GARDEN
Actinotus helianthi (flannel flower), Alyssum spinosum (spiny madwort), Banksia robur (swamp banksia), Bracteantha bracteata (golden everlasting), Brunonia australis (blue pincushion), Chrysocephalum apiculatum (yellow buttons), Conostylis candidans (grey cottonheads), Correa glabra (rock correa), Crassula multicava (faery crassula), Dichelachne crinita (longhair plume grass), Dichondra ‘Silver Falls’ (dichondra argenta), Dichondra repens (kidney weed), Disphyma crassifolium (rounded noon flower), Lobelia alata (lobelia), Lomandra ‘Little Con’ (mat rush), Poa labillardieri (common tussock-grass), Scaevola calendulacea (dune fan-flower), Scleranthus biflorus (two-flowered knawel), Soleirolia soleirolii (baby’s tears), Westringia fruticosa (coastal rosemary)
The physical and aesthetic qualities of concrete make it a highly flexible construction material, ideally suited to Australia’s harsh climate. When combined with robust and imaginative design and construction practices, concrete can be used to sculpt visually pleasing and exceptionally durable landscapes in both urban and coastal environments.

Concrete is available in a wide range of colours and treatments and is suitable for a vast array of uses, ranging from bespoke interior artworks to expansive public infrastructure. The strength and malleability of concrete render it a popular choice among designers in search of a material with a reputation for durability, efficiency and architectural flexibility.

**Port Coogee**

Hassell designed the public domain for the Port Coogee marina and residential estate, an extensive coastal renewal project in a coastal and parkland setting, south of Perth’s CBD.

The harsh and corrosive coastal environment required the selection of an aesthetically pleasing, robust yet flexible building material. Concrete of varied colour, strength and finish has been strategically deployed in the project’s construction to form the estate’s beaches, foreshore, pocket parks and play areas.

The estate’s residential area features prefabricated concrete seating, reminiscent of wharf bollards, and a water playground with colourful, exposed-aggregate shell motifs sensitively set within a concrete splash pad area. Shared pedestrian-cycling paths made of concrete, etched with sea-grass motifs, reference the rhythm and tides of nearby Cockburn Sound.

At the marina, prefabricated undulating walls, raised planter beds and small seating elements demonstrate the flexibility and resilience of concrete. The colours and finishes of the area’s low seating walls, formed in situ, reflect the site’s maritime surrounds. They range from exposed aggregate to honed white walls.

The use of concrete at Port Coogee has enabled the delivery of a dynamic, functional public realm that requires little maintenance. Small-scale elements offer delight and intrigue, while the larger structural components provide a resilient urban fabric that responds to the site’s coastal environment, as well as the area’s industrial heritage, for the enjoyment of the growing community.
**Hamer Hall**

ARM Architecture’s design for the redevelopment of Melbourne’s iconic Hamer Hall has transformed a previously inward-looking building into a more outward-facing venue, and has activated a critical riverside connection for the Melbourne CBD. The invigorated building, which features improved acoustics, seating, stage technology and back-of-house facilities, integrates new accessible public spaces and engages the public with the dynamic character of the adjacent Yarra River.

The project creates a new terrace over the existing riverbank promenade that includes a “civic stair” that connects the nearby river to St Kilda Road. The transformed Hall now includes a second entry that allows direct access from the lower Southbank Promenade to the building’s well-known circular foyer.

At the river’s edge, the face of the Hall has been transformed. A new terrace and podium with an entry into the Hall function as elegant counterpoints to the original architect Roy Grounds’ iconic geometry. Inspired by open-ended and dynamic spatial systems, the form plays on Grounds’ original concept of excavation through the act of carving.

A desire to retain designer John Truscott’s original interiors drove the design and planning of the Hamer Hall redevelopment. The reimagined Hall melds a deep understanding of the technical processes of concrete production with the textural and material qualities of concrete to create an evocative and iconic structure with poetic overtones. The Hall has become a landmark of the city and a destination for the whole community.

Both projects were award winners in the CCAA Public Domain awards of 2013.

For more information:
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**01** Water playground areas sculpted from concrete in the Port Coogee estate designed by Hassell. Photo: Peter Bennetts

**02** Wave-like retaining walls that double as seating elements evoke the maritime surrounds at Port Coogee marina. Photo: Peter Bennetts

**03** Concrete’s sublime textural qualities on display at Hamer Hall, redeveloped by ARM Architecture. Photo: John Gollings.

**04** The transformation of Hamer Hall has opened up new connections to Melbourne city and the Yarra River. Photo: John Gollings.
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Holcim
Decorative Concrete
Athens-based landscape architect Thomas Doxiadis strives to nurture a wider appreciation of the native Greek landscape through the sensitive integration of existing narratives with new uses. Landscape Architecture Australia caught up with Doxiadis to talk balancing tensions and the politics of practice.

— Interview

In Landscapes of Cohabitation (LoC) by Doxiadis Plus, planting is approached as a gradient, with higher density near the residences giving way to less intensive planting in the distance. Photo: Cathy Cunliffe.
Landscape Architecture Australia: Your Landscapes of Cohabitation project considers the integration of a residential estate into a highly sensitive environment. How did that project begin?

Thomas Doxiadis: It began with me coming back [to Greece] from [studying landscape architecture in the States] with a head full of ideas, but not a lot of practical experience, and being faced with a problem. A friend, a developer, had decided to buy property on a completely pristine part of the island of Antiparos. My first reaction when visiting the site was that the development was going to destroy this amazing place. The landscape of Antiparos is not natural, it’s a synthesis of nature and culture and has been cultivated and influenced by humans for a long time. We were about to go in there and start bulldozing. [I felt] pain and this dichotomy, because as landscape architects we’re called upon to do beautiful things, but at the same time, this often involves destroying something. The project started a process that was both intellectual and emotional about how we might introduce new uses into such historic places, without destroying what is already there.

LAA: How did you approach this work?

TD: We began by identifying quite carefully through a lot of observation and analysis, what were the characteristics of the site and both the historic and ongoing natural and man-made processes that had shaped and were still shaping the site. It was about getting a very deep understanding of what was there before making the first mark. Fortunately, in the meantime the developer had been convinced that he wasn’t selling square metres of villas just anywhere – he was selling this particular place. And that the place had to be respected and developed correctly. That had to do with everything from placing the houses in the right locations, to laying out the roads in a way that [did not] scar the landscape, to selecting and working with plants. [In 2001, when the project started] native plants were not available in the market, so our initial response was to find plants in the trade that were drought tolerant and approximated the local plants as much as possible. And then through the years we’ve been identifying native vegetation and working with a small local nursery on the [nearby] island of Milos to propagate those species and use them in the project.

LAA: In Australia, the general appreciation for native vegetation is still relatively new. I was wondering whether an appreciation for the native Greek landscape was more common over there?

TD: No, it was not at all. [Two decades ago] there were very few sensitive people doing the right thing. People were still thinking in terms of versions of an English countryside – lawn and a few big trees – or a Miami landscape [brought over in the 1980s when American television shows such as Dynasty become popularized]. They were the two paradigms at the time. Wealthy families in the north of Athens were building “dynasty” villas, and then people on the little islands were making copies of them, which makes absolutely no sense.

LAA: Is the idea of the native Greek landscape being pushed more in the private or public realm?

TD: In my experience, [the interest in native vegetation] started with private projects, where it was easier to explain
to people what was going on. And then it has blossomed into tourist resorts – although there are still a lot of things that are done with lawns, things that are not really native. But [the idea of native landscapes] is gaining ground because, interestingly, the same kind of upper-income people who earlier brought in the English garden paradigm are now setting the trend of native gardens. So you have the very top end resorts going native and then that’s slowly spreading down to the rest of the tourist economy. In parallel, certain public infrastructure projects such as maintaining highways have been specifying the use of native plants, and an overall shared thinking is developing.

**LAA:** The challenge of balancing new uses with existing qualities seems to be at the core of your practice. How do you achieve that balance?

**TD:** Part of the problem, in our view, is utopian thinking. Humans have these great ideas in their head about how the world should be, which desensitizes them to how wonderful the world actually already is. We have to realize that this utopianism is very deeply ingrained in our cultures if we are to deal with it. In our practice, we try to come to a site with a relatively empty mind, without any presuppositions about what should be there, and spend time understanding what the place is about. We see our work as giving value to what already exists.

Our Amanzoe project [in Porto Heli] was the first high-end tourist resort [in the Mediterranean] that was landscaped according to these principles. [Unfortunately, in that case] preserving the actual landscape wasn’t an option, because the resort is relatively dense. [Our approach] was about seeing the landscape as it was before the resort came in, and reading the surrounding landscape – identifying not only individual plants but also whole landscape typologies there, such as the Greek plant communities, pine forests and olive groves. We convinced the clients that the most wonderful way to landscape the resort was to bring those existing landscapes in, to make the wider landscape part of the hotel itself. Fortunately, Adrian Zecha who created the Aman group got it immediately and it actually fit their mentality, because they’re not about [generic] experiences but about getting in touch with the special place to which you have travelled. The resort later found that their clients were giving the most positive feedback about the landscaping, rather than about the buildings. So it woke them up to the value of the landscape, and has become something that is helping [the appreciation of native landscapes] establish itself more deeply.

**LAA:** You completed a study that looked at the protection and upgrading of the Greek landscape as a tourism resource. How much of an impact has this had?

**TD:** That was a policy document we did for the Ministry of Tourism that was quite significant, partly because landscape assessment and preservation wasn’t part of the local culture and the local practice [at the time]. It was about taking some of the lessons of doing work in the field and proposing a national policy. The report had everything from establishing templates around the importance of landscape and landscape preservation to ways of doing landscape assessments and proposed a legal framework for landscape preservation and regional planning in relation to the tourist economy, which sells the beauty and history of places. Some of that has slowly found its way into other levels of government and practice. »
including the latest plans for the thirteen Greek regions that have an important landscape assessment and landscape planning element. So [the ideas are] slowly filtering through.

LAA: The landscape architecture profession is quite small in Greece. At present, where is the majority of work located?

TD: It’s in private practice. I would say that 80 percent or more of that is in tourism-related projects, because that’s what is driving the economy, and the part of the economy that requires landscape design. Within tourism we have two big markets – one is private homes and the other is resorts of various scales. There is some public realm work, but it’s limited – the economy is destroyed and the public sector has no money, so there’s much less of that than there used to be. There are also a few mega projects, for example the new Hellenikon Metropolitan Park that we’re involved in, which is partly to do with tourism, because it’s being developed with private funds [but is also] a public park.

LAA: Could you tell us about the archaeological park you’re currently designing for the ancient city of Milos?

TD: That’s a very interesting project, and beautiful beyond belief, because you have a gorgeous landscape of terraces, stone walls, fields, olive groves and churches, surrounded by three late medieval villages, all of which sit atop the ancient town of Milos. With Milos, the historical settlement happened outside the walls of the ancient city, so the city is still there [buried but] intact. Our work is about creating an overlay that identifies the ancient elements that are there and establishes a connected system [of access points], so that ultimately everything from the medieval castle all the way to the ancient harbour will be a beautiful series of walks. It’s a long-term plan to change a place that is illegible and extremely difficult to visit into a very beautiful [and accessible] archaeological walk through minimal and very sensitive means.

LAA: Where is the main fight happening in landscape practice in Greece today?

TD: Even though there’s been a lot of progress, I think the challenges remain the same. [We’re still fighting] for native landscapes, native plants and historical places, fighting to get them valued and for them to have a status in the culture. A second fight which has been added to our thinking – and we are still struggling with it in terms of what it could mean – is the fight for humans and society. Especially in southern Europe, we’re extremely challenged in economic terms – and this brings out a lot of social problems. We keep asking ourselves what landscape can do about it. This is more about the public realm and about changing policy. And the third [challenge] which is rolling in and that we’re starting to get our head around is climate change. We’re involved in the Greek national strategy for climate change adaptation and through that, trying to understand what in fact might happen and what we [as landscape practitioners] could conceivably do about it.
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BEYOND RESILIENCY II

In the second part of our interview with leading practitioners from the US and Australia, we further explore the agency of landscape architecture in responding to climate change urgencies through the design of the public realm.

—

Interview Rosalea Monacella
Rosalea Monacella spoke with Chris Reed from Stoss Landscape Urbanism (Boston), Lisa Switkin and Richard Kennedy from James Corner Field Operations (New York), Bryna Lipper of 100 Resilient Cities (New York) and Sacha Coles of Aspect Studios (Sydney). See Landscape Architecture Australia issue 162 for part one of the interview.

Rosalea Monacella: Who or which organization do you think is in the best position to catalyse change?

Sacha Coles (Aspect Studios, Sydney): Previously, responsibility lay with the government to make policies that encourage and enable the private sector to implement resilient designs in a cost-effective way. However, this has not happened fast enough. Although rare, there are recent examples of committed private sector organizations driving change, for their own reasons: for branding, market definition or whatever else. Landscape architects working for these “new Medicis” – the city-makers, developers and urban regenerators – have the opportunity to test and implement progressive projects. I still believe, however, in the strong role of government to incentivize and/or show leadership around achieving societal health. A resilient environment is central to this.

Bryna Lipper (100 Resilient Cities, New York): Mayors and city managers have extraordinary opportunities to increase the resilience of their cities. They can formulate progressive policies and incentives about how land is used, and can leverage their investments to broker partnerships with the private sector, based on environmental impact. They can commission reviews of the impacts of new development on resilience. By implementing some simple moves across many cities, real outcomes can be achieved.

Chris Reed (Stoss Landscape Urbanism, Boston): The central question here is, “How do you design for change?” That is, change that is predictable, but also unpredictable change. If you [begin] a project with that mindset, you’re going to come out with a different result: not a stage set [that] people [only] move in and around, but a shifting set of structures and armatures which themselves can be changed over time. At the plaza at Harvard University we created a structure that can be fitted out in many different ways. The surface is embedded with many different structural hook-ups, utility hook-ups and connections, so that any number of different events can be accommodated over time. What we have observed over the life of this project is that we invent new ways to configure and reconfigure the site every time they
set up for a new kind of event. This is the idea, that we can put in place the means that allow and encourage landscapes to change and shift over time.

A couple of years ago we started an experimental landscape in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, along a tidally influenced river that creates an undulating topography. Different plant communities were installed with the idea that if the environmental conditions shifted, there would always be reserves of plant communities that could become dominant depending on what shifts occurred. In that landscape, [we made sure that] there was always a very high and sheltered area and a very low and wet area, so that there would always be reserves of plant materials available to seed the site as it evolved over time.

Lisa Switkin and Richard Kennedy (James Corner Field Operations, New York): It is not a single organization that will take the lead on resiliency issues. The key to change is inventing new multi-jurisdictional, collaborative, equitable and cooperative models, that will require organizations at all levels to adapt their standards and practices. To make a difference and to truly innovate, we need to invent new processes of design, communication, governance, funding and implementation. [It’s been said that] all authentic change is revolutionary, not evolutionary. Before being widely adopted, change usually has a breakthrough moment, which unfortunately typically comes to light after a crisis. Many would argue that we are in crisis right now, but for individuals who aren’t touched by it every day, it seems distant. [Landscape architects] are skilled at having visions, building consensus and bringing a holistic view, all of which are essential for true transformation. We need to share our skills and help shape the message to spur the revolution.

There are great opportunities, of course, for new cities in Asia and Africa being built from the ground up to have a resilient agenda and mandate, and there are equally compelling examples of proactive cities reimagining their futures through transformational infill projects. Sidewalk Labs’ vision for a new district in Toronto combines “cutting-edge technology with people-centred urban design.” The challenge is inherent in their vision, and we, as landscape architects, can help to ensure that data and efficiency-driven systems don’t produce mundane, repetitive and banal environments.

RM: How do your projects enable us to consider the DNA of the city differently? How can we retrofit our current cities?
CR: In many of our projects, we are looking to adapt cities and urban fabrics that are already in place. The former industrial waterfronts that are lying fallow in many of our cities right now are definitely on the frontline of the impacts of climate change. There are opportunities there—some of our work in East Boston deals with these districts. They encompass not only built-up areas, but also places that are yet to be built up, and so there are opportunities to begin to imagine what those places might be like. We’re only just beginning to do this, and the hard work of translating what you might call conceptual ideas or vision plans into reality is still in its infancy.

LS and RK: Our focus is on cities and urban regions. We believe a creative merging of nature and cities is the solution for continued growth and increased environmental sustainability and resilience. We imagine a future where nature and technology work together to improve the resiliency of our cities and towns, our social fabric and our collective health and wellbeing.

The natural and built worlds are becoming more and more interwoven, resulting in a new urban nature. [In terms of design approach], there’s an opportunity here to evolve a new DNA or form that goes beyond mimicking nature. This could be thought of as moving away from designing an object or form (Kant’s Beauty) to designing formless complex and dynamic systems (Kant’s Sublime). Of course, there is form in complex and dynamic systems, it just may not be obvious. We are moving toward designing landscapes of time, regeneration, production, and process where the dynamic staging and process of making, remaking, and reclaiming is part of the design. In this way, the form of the city could be structured and defined by its assets and resources—whether natural, historical or otherwise.

RM: If the DNA of the city is changing, does this require a change in citizen, a change in its occupants and a change in the way we consider the relationship between human and non-human actors?

SC: Potentially, yes. This, however, relies on people deciding what kind of city they want—hot and rising, locked by traffic, with a dense centre and fringe sprawl, or an alternative to that which will require an investment in green infrastructure. In order for the latter to thrive, it will need a commitment by citizens to change their attitudes and habits. While this can be an incredibly hard thing to do, it will ultimately offer the opportunity for people to re-engage with their environment.

CR: It requires a change from the standpoint of conceptualization, changes to regulation and code, and certainly changes in the relationships of humans to their non-human environment. The aim is to promote strategies for creating new kinds of adaptive ecosystems and environments in the heart of cities. These environments will then incubate different creatures, new forms of wildlife that can cohabit with humans and each other, and provide opportunities for us to rediscover nature in the heart of cities.

In Toronto, we have proposed a learning laboratory that uses experiments and temporary installations to explore new forms of social life in the city and to build physical landscapes around some of the tendencies that have emerged. [The landscapes] allow for future retrofitting based on both predicted and unexpected change.

LS and RK: Yes! Increasingly we are trying to contribute to greater “social resilience” within places, neighbourhoods and communities. This notion of social resilience can take many forms, from an increase in communities’ capacity to respond to and cope with environmental threats, to an increase in understanding the relationship between built form and the natural environment, to an increase in participation and responsible action, to an increase in access to assets and resources. Design processes, at their best, should foster participation and responsible action and produce more engaged citizens.

Communication, engagement and advocacy are key to changing attitudes about the environment, but so too is exposure to nature and the joys and pleasures of being in immersive environments. This type of thinking supports the emerging concept of the “urban wild” as a visual and formal language rooted in nature, biodiversity and ecology. As wilderness landscapes are vanishing and being depleted, there seems to be a growing longing for the wild—for raw and perhaps less curated environments and experiences. “Wildness” is further reinforced by a current lifestyle that craves flexible, casual and loose ways of working and being, which is impacting the types of environments that people are drawn to and is likely to impact the qualities and character of future cities.

RM: Innovation seems to be key when designing for resilience and adaptation. What are some of the crucial innovations that have occurred, or need to occur, in the way design is approached?

SC: Innovation and maintenance are two sides of the same coin! There is such a vast range of ever-improving technologies in building systems and green infrastructure, all of which require ongoing investment and maintenance—which is often neglected. The emergence of connectivity through the Internet of Things provides the opportunity for sensors and monitoring system to alert us when a system is not working and requires maintenance. Of course, plants have their own inbuilt monitoring and alarms and people have the ability to water them. If the landscape design provided the opportunity for the community to get involved and manage a space, it would require less maintenance and provide multiple benefits. Rather than developing the next big thing, the previous big things need to be managed better throughout their life cycle.
CR: If your starting point is that landscapes change and adapt themselves, then we need the tools that allow for change and adaptation to happen through the design process itself. How can data be gathered, not just through digital monitoring but also through using anthropologists and others engaged in social and cultural studies, so that learning can be developed to inform the ways that landscapes can adapt and shift over time?

We are finding when developing new urban projects that [innovation] comes from [embracing] a multitude of voices from diverse social, racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Different starting points [must be] embraced and engaged [in order to create] truly open, inclusive, welcoming, flexible and adaptive urban spaces of the future.

[Today’s] landscape architects are helping solve some pretty serious social, racial and cultural issues – particularly important given where we are politically in the United States today. This is a much bigger role certainly than many of us in the profession may have originally signed up for, but it represents the true potential of what this profession and discipline is capable of.

LS and RK: Innovation is necessary on many levels and at many scales. Innovations in detailing and technology can help to reduce costs, improve efficiency, increase performance and enrich human experience. In our waterfront work we are incorporating new technologies to address resiliency, from filtration wetlands at Muscota Marsh in Upper Manhattan, to light-penetrating surfaces for salmon migration in Seattle, wave attenuating seawalls in Hong Kong, geothermal systems at Shelby Farms Park in Memphis, and large-scale land reclamation, soil composting and seed farming at Freshkills Park in Staten Island.
Innovations in approaches to design and planning can improve the environmental and economic performance of places. Our recent sea-level rise planning work with the Resilient By Design initiative for San Francisco’s Bay Area utilized a rezoning concept to guide future growth by encouraging dense and mixed forms of development in suitable sites while releasing flood-prone areas as a way to support the region’s flood management strategy.

Innovations in communication and engagement can improve community and social resilience. While less documented, social resilience significantly impacts how a community can self-organize, recover, respond to change and learn. This starts with ensuring communities are engaged and empowered and have a collective vision for the future. We aim to convey the specific relevance of our work to each community and each place; to listen, absorb and interact with the community; and to be optimistic, forward-thinking, memorable and fun – all with the aim of fostering greater curiosity, enthusiasm and optimism for planning and design initiatives.

Finally, innovations in governance will be necessary to achieve and implement any large-scale climate adaptation and resiliency projects. In our work with Resilient By Design, we defined a new governance framework across jurisdictions in California’s Silicon Valley. The framework may take the form of a special district that enables a host of funding mechanisms to become feasible. Six regional governments, plus a county water district and NASA would enter a collaborative agreement to define how the region messages, deliberates, prioritizes, acquires funds and implements multi-benefit resiliency projects. While this scale of cooperative agreement is unprecedented, it is necessary to protect the region and increase resilience worldwide.
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Anyone who has driven through south-eastern Australia will be familiar with the green-brown fields of waving grasses and short-trunked eucalypts – signs of a once-extensive but now vanishing landscape.

Text Sue McIntyre
Photography Carolyn Young
Europeans have wrought enormous changes to grasslands associated with eucalypt woodlands ("grassy woodlands") since the nineteenth century. Virtually all of the species that we consider native to Australia have been managed for tens of thousands of years by means of Aboriginal burning and hunting practices. From the mid-twentieth century these same grasslands have been subject to industrial farming and have undergone dramatic changes, which, while striking to a botanist, are often invisible to the untrained eye.

The setting for these photos is south-eastern Australia – the modestly watered tablelands and slopes, which sit between the Great Dividing Range and the country’s semi-arid interior. Here, temperate grassy woodlands once reigned, typified by well spaced eucalypts, with a ground layer of perennial grasses dominated by kangaroo grass and Poa tussocks and many species of forbs. Grassy woodlands, or the remnants of them, are the rural backdrop that most city dwellers drive through when they visit a friend or relative in the country’s south-east. Open paddocks of green or tawny brown, scattered open-grown trees with short trunks and broad spreading crowns are so familiar, yet often so unknown to us. But trees such as yellow box (Eucalyptus melliodora) and Blakely’s red gum (Eucalyptus blakelyi) only represent a tiny fraction of the plant species that grow in these grassy woodlands. Most species are in the ground layer.

In many cases where one now sees scattered woodland eucalypts, nearly all native plant diversity has disappeared – the hundreds of grass and wildflower species that once occupied an acre of grassland reduced to a handful. The changed conditions of industrial farming that have allowed introduced species to replace native ones no longer allow for the establishment of eucalypt seedlings. Thus, where there is an absence of young eucalypts in a paddock, it is an indication of intensive farming’s effects on the ground layer and the risk of a complete loss of native trees and wildlife habitat in the future. Intensive farming practices have led to the endangered status of many types of eucalypt grassy woodlands.

“Reference grasslands” refer to the form the grassy ground layer took before European invasion in the 1800s. These grasslands were subject to regular burning practices by Aboriginal people, with the aim of encouraging fresh grass growth and attracting game for hunting. Native pasture differs from reference grassland through the addition of livestock. Native pasture would have formed the entire extent of grassy eucalypt woodland in the 1800s, and most of it until the mid-1900s after which more intensive land uses started to predominate. In its “purest” form, native pasture would have harboured a high diversity of the more grazing-tolerant native species. Here, the tall luxuriant grasses abundant in reference grassland, would most often have been replaced by shorter-growing species such as wallaby grasses, with many of the more sensitive wildflowers being eaten out by the livestock – the most notable being the iconic murnong (Microseris walteri), whose yam-like tubers were once a staple food source for Aboriginal people.

In adding fertilizer to a native pasture the intent has been to increase productivity for the purposes of carrying greater quantities of livestock. The effects of fertilization on native pasture are dramatic – after only a few years, a native pasture will be completely transformed into an exotic-dominated one. The vast majority of native plant species making up native pasture are not adapted to the conditions of fertilization and will most often be overtaken by faster-growing exotic species.

Even more transformative than fertilized pasture, sown pastures are the result of cultivation and the deliberate establishment of particular varieties of grasses or legumes. Soil erosion and loss of the planted species is an ongoing hazard under these conditions, as the cultivation process destroys the ground cover and the sown grasses are subject to heavy grazing in order to recoup the cost of inputs.

Increasing intensification has proved relentless over the past century, with the result that reference grasslands are now barely a presence in our landscape – somewhere between none and a few scattered hectares here and there. Reference grasslands contain a wealth of plant and animal species that occur nowhere else – and nurture a genetic resource of unfathomed significance. The long-term ecological benefits of reference grassland and native pasture include perennial grass cover to protect soil, foster the regeneration of trees, provide food and habitat for pollinators, capture rainfall and keep the landscape moister and cooler. Less tangible but equally important are their unique links to our biological and Indigenous history.

For native species to survive on the continent on which they evolved they need room to live. In the case of grassy woodlands, intensive land uses (fertilized areas, sown pastures and crops) currently existing on more than a third of the landscape threaten the long-term viability of our country’s native flora and fauna. Intensive and vigorous action needs to be taken to counteract the loss and fragmentation of our remaining grassy woodland habitat, shrinking populations of native plants and the off-site, run-on effects of intensive farming and urban land uses. The future of our grassy woodlands, and the diversity of flora and fauna they harbour, relies on our ability to plan for and regulate how we use the land to achieve this balance.

This essay and the following photographs are an edited excerpt from Grassland in Transition by Carolyn Young and Sue McIntyre, published by Carolyn Young, 2018.
White milkmaids (*Burchardia umbellata*), yellow billy buttons (*Craspedia sp.*) and orange bush-peas (*Pultenaea sp.*) are signs of an intact grassland.
The billy buttons’ brightness fading nine days later.
Flowering in grasslands can be fleeting.
As summer progresses, the grass flower heads (for example, Themeda australis) extend above the sward and eventually mature to gold.
Bungendore, New South Wales
Winter
Reference grassland

The cold and frost have leached all the colour and goodness from the kangaroo grass (*Themeda australis*).
Bungendore, New South Wales
Spring
Reference grassland
Wamboin, New South Wales
Spring
Reference grassland
Janet Laurence: After Nature

Janet Laurence: After Nature, a survey of the work of an artist noted for her three-decade-long exploration of ecological issues, is both timely and of a time. Occupying two galleries within the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, many of the assembled works – and much of Laurence’s wider oeuvre – draw attention to the threatened state of many of the world’s plant and animal species in an era of accelerated anthropogenic change. The exhibition reflects the politically driven nature of much of Laurence’s work that resonates with recent mounting evidence highlighting widespread and accelerating biodiversity loss.

Filling one of the spaces, Theatre of Trees (2018–19) – a new work by Laurence – is the most immersive on display, and offers visitors an alternative perspective, as a step toward reimagining the relationship between human and non-human worlds. Tall swaths of translucent gauze printed with botanical imagery evoke a dim, shadowy maze that flips the more conventional human–environment hierarchy. Floor and wall projections invoke ghostly forms – a twilight world between day and night, this reality and another. In this world, time has slowed, trees are the towering protagonists and humans, mere shadows, cast fleetingly onto the extended panorama of time.

In the larger gallery, other works offer a pervasive sense of life beyond the human. Vanishing (2009), a monochromatic video documenting endangered animals breathing – filmed by Laurence at Sydney’s Taronga Zoo, for instance – is genuinely transfixing, a stark reminder that human or non-human, we all share the same air.

The tension between science as healer, and science as harbinger underscores much of the exhibition. Near the entrance to the main space, Birdsong (2006/2019), Laurence’s interpretation of the traditional wunderkammer cabinet of curiosities, invites visitors to view extinct bird taxidermy through small holes in a tall cylindrical case. While Laurence uses beauty here – the abstract composition of the bird’s shapes and colours – to evoke empathy for the many species lost due to human activity, the enclosed cabinet effects a palpable distancing from the biology so carefully arranged within.

This recurs elsewhere, as in Deep Breathing: Resuscitation for the Reef (2015–16 / 2019), that fills a separate room to the side of the main space. Here, floor-to-ceiling videos of marine life surround a central glass cabinet displaying specimens collected from the Great Barrier Reef. Deep Breathing is indeed wondrous, featuring scores of specimens meticulously arranged by colour – yet there are moments when the glass boxes seem to act more as a barrier to connection, physically and mentally, than as a means of encouraging it. The installation acts as a poignant reminder that the scientific
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gaze can often act on difference and categorization, in ways that can actually divorce us from our surrounds.

Knowledge (Tree of Life) (2018–19), a spotlit nook adjoining Theatre of Trees, explores this tension further, presenting a microcosmic cross-cultural library of texts that spans the breadth of environmental discourse, from medieval treatises on botany to Western paradigms of science, philosophy and literature. Knowledge, as presented here, is constantly evolving and sometimes conflicting, yet the message is optimistic. Science, philosophy, literature – the pursuit of knowledge may have separated us from our environment, but it can also offer a path to reconciliation.

Other works in After Nature balance more romantic notions of nature with an exploration of scientific processes. These pieces, while less visually arresting than several others on display, reward more sustained viewing. Solids by Weight, Liquids by Measure from the Periodic Table series (1993), for instance, a grid of wall-mounted panels of oxidized minerals paired with piles of elemental substances (yellow sulphur, pink salt and charcoal included), and Forensic (1991), a wooden box laid with straw, photographs, ash and fluorescent lights, both poetically evoke matter in transformation and the cycle of life in a way that avoids the occasional sentimentality suggested in other works (for instance, Heartshock). In Forensic, Laurence’s alchemy is intuitive yet neutral. Organic matter ferments and transforms. Metals corrode and break down. Elements combine and recombine at the molecular level. Like all species with which we share the earth, we live, we breathe and we die.

The visual centrepieces of the exhibition – Heartshock (After Nature) (2008/2019), a dead eucalyptus tree with gauze-bandaged limbs and Cellular Gardens (Where Breathing Begins) (2005), an installation of intravenously-fed seedlings of endangered species housed in glass vials – while initially eye-catching, are quickly overshadowed by the deeper reflection offered by several of Laurence’s more nuanced works. The grid of images that make up Fabled 1–12 from the After Eden series (2011) for instance, is more ambiguous and perhaps because of this more contemplative and unsettling. The array of images, each depicting a different creature caught in the surveilling eye of the camera, glow luridly, magenta and cyan. The After Nature of the exhibition title is hinted at, here, more strongly than in any other work in the show. What are the possibilities for a post-natural world?

At their best, Laurence’s photographs, sculptures, videos and installations give us pause, are a pertinent and moving reminder that the human and non-human must co-exist, and that our actions, however small, can have far-reaching earthly consequences. Yet nature can also be tenacious, adapting to new and novel conditions in pursuit of its own species-specific ends. In acting “after nature,” we might carefully consider the two.

Janet Laurence: After Nature was on show at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia from 1 March to 10 June 2019.
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“What is your intention for being here?” N’arweet Carolyn Briggs, Boon Wurrung senior elder and chairperson and founder of the Boon Wurrung Foundation asked as she welcomed us to Country on that cool, autumnal Melbourne day. She called on us, the audience, to step away from “unreliable sources and books,” and learn from our environment by engaging with it through our senses. She reminded us that we, as designers of place, are “shaping culture, engaging and informing [it] and celebrating and protecting [it].” But, she continued, “I don’t see me in the city” – a phrase that has stayed with me ever since. While having heard the sentiment shared before, this was about context, about listening in a room full of hundreds of people who through their various engagements with the built environment have the remit and opportunity to contribute to tangible change. Perhaps it was because she knew exactly why we were all there that her words had such poignancy. The tone was set, and throughout the day we were continually reminded of the agency of landscape.

Like Briggs, Walter Hood of Hood Design Studio based in Oakland, California, emphasized the importance of seeing himself in the city, in his case as an African American man. For Hood, this was about the importance of being free to make choices – about “voice and choice.” He asserted that we don’t know how to talk about race and gender in landscape architecture, and that there is a need to get rid of normative values. For Hood, design is about resistance, about being more than just a service industry. His project, Double Consciousness, a columnar sculpture to be erected at Princeton University that reflects on the complex legacy of former United States president Woodrow Wilson, was explicitly about accountability and calling people out. In his practice, Hood seeks to create fictitious landscapes that are also authentic, where people want to question where they are, why they’re there, and the role of government. In a similar vein, Sanitas Pradittasnee of Bangkok-based practice Sanitas Studio spoke of a mythical escapism, a space for the imagination, how we choose to see and not to see, and her desire to create spaces where people are encouraged to think and question. Brisbane practitioner Kevin O’Brien of BVN spoke of the idea of a longer trajectory of practice and the need for Indigenous voices to come through. This was the meta-narrative to his practice, and deeply located in culture.

In her presentation, Jocelyn Chiew from Monash University’s Buildings and Property division offered not just a description of practice, but an incitement to practice, from the client’s perspective. Refreshingly, she elucidated a career pathway that is less well defined and spoken of, attempting to break down what she described as professional isolation. Chiew encouraged us to consider the multivalent nature of landscape practice: the importance of processes of procurement and advocating for design; the enduring influence of strategic design-driven processes; and the importance of access to decision-makers and governance structures.
when to distinguish between the “I” and the “we.”

The third annual Landscape Australia Conference was held at the NGV International’s Clemenger BBDO Auditorium, and the venue’s warmth and darkness lent itself to often intimate and frank discussion. This conference asked us to acknowledge, respect, and recognize; to decolonize and deconstruct; to understand the instrumentality of what we do, while drawing on our own spatial intelligence. A “landscape [practice] is a long road,” Helen Smith-Yeo of Singapore-based STX Landscape Architects emphasized. You need to “find for yourself, things that please you, that keep you going … and to enjoy what you do. Otherwise we might as well be selling donuts!” A measure of a successful conference was the feeling, upon leaving, that I hadn’t simply been presented to, but rather called on – and I had indeed found things to keep me going.

The 2019 Landscape Australia Conference was held on 11 May at the NGV International in Melbourne.
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Ian Oelrichs: Cultivating community

Words compiled by Catherin Bull, with the assistance of notes from Bruce Mackenzie, Mark Fuller, Peter Jacobs, Jacinta McCann, John Van Pelt and George Williams. Photo: Peter Derrett

Ian Oelrichs OAM FAILA ASLA (1929–2019) was pivotal to the regional and international development of Australian landscape architectural practice and worked tirelessly to expand the profession's frontiers.

Ian Oelrichs died two days short of his seventieth birthday in a car accident near Bangalow in northern New South Wales, where he lived and where he and his wife Claire Vaux had, from 1991, restored large areas of previously cleared pastureland to viable habitat.

After initially working as a draftsman, in 1974, Ian was among the second intake into the multidisciplinary design program at the Queensland Institute of Technology (QIT – later QUT), studying under George Williams who Ian credited as having provoked his lifelong commitment to landscape architecture. He saw planning and design capability as vital to environmental and social health generally, and specifically, to retaining a sense of place for his beloved Northern Rivers region.

Ian graduated with a postgraduate diploma in landscape architecture from QIT in 1978 and worked at Wyong Shire on the central New South Wales coast, advancing new thinking and community engagement. In northern New South Wales in 1984, he then established with John Van Pelt and Ken Maher, the multi-disciplinary firm Forsite Landscape Architects and Planners, focussing on problem definition and project conceptualization as well as project design and delivery. At Forsite, and throughout his life, Ian was interested in harnessing human energy in new ways, for environmental and social good.

Unlike those who measure their contribution by constructed projects, Ian concentrated on professional and organizational development. He saw that landscape architecture, a profession in its infancy when he started out, could make a real difference if it understood how to be effective.

With others, including Bruce Mackenzie, Michael Ewings and Ken Digby, Ian was instrumental in the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) hosting its first International Federation of Landscape Architects Conference in 1982.

The conference attracted 600 delegates, including 100 from overseas, and provided Ian with his first opportunity to navigate the national and international stage. Nationally, Ian served as an executive member of AILA between 1985 and 1991, including as vice president and then in 1987 to 1988, president, helping to launch both the AILA National Awards and the Registered Landscape Architect scheme.

Through Ian’s drive, in 1988 Forsite morphed into the Australian arm of the iconic American landscape architectural firm EDAW, which was the world’s largest landscape architecture firm when purchased by AECOM in 2005. As EDAW’s first Australian managing director and in contrast with the previous generation who had focused on the United Kingdom and Europe, Ian consolidated his links with the profession in North America. Internationalization was just beginning and Ian was a driving force, establishing and maintaining a vast network of colleagues and friends locally, nationally and internationally throughout his life.

He chaired the inaugural state-based awards program for the Queensland chapter of the AILA and organized the symposia that led to the establishment of the Design Advisory Panel for the Northern Rivers Region, where he also mentored younger professionals, helping them establish the networks essential to future success. Linking the region’s councils with universities from Brisbane and Melbourne, he brought student studios to explore alternative futures and increase local awareness of how the professions could contribute to a better future. These had community wellbeing at their heart and students loved them.

At his instigation, a group of senior professionals set up the Landscape Leaders Think Tank in 2001 with the goal of establishing, after the USA model, an Australian Landscape Foundation to support students and research in landscape architecture. While the time was not yet ripe, the group did fund and produce a promotional DVD on the profession for use by the AILA (A Passionate Profession). Typically, this brought together like-minded people to work and generate change.

Most recently, given his interest in the future of landscape architecture, particularly at QUT, where in 1994, he was made Alumnus of the Year by the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering, Ian recently pledged a contribution to the university’s new student scholarship fund. Ian was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in 2011 for his voluntary contribution, over twenty years, to the Northern Rivers region. Global in his outlook and reach but also a loyal local, Ian not only worked for landscape architecture but for many a global cause.

With his passing, Australian landscape architecture farewells one of its pioneering spirits – challenging, thoughtful, generous, creative, funny and, in the broadest sense, well-educated. We need more like him.
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At GLAS we like to experiment with gardening, but our inner-Melbourne office has limited space. Fitting out a footpath planter as a veggie box was fun, but a lack of water made it a graveyard, even for succulents. Concerned about urban biodiversity, we decided to transform it into a wetland. We refitted the box with a pond liner and created a series of soil terraces to experiment with different marginal species. A friendly client loaned us some plants. Our first problems were brown water and a mosquito infestation, so we installed a water fountain and four goldfish. Now we have a tiny, thriving urban wetland with seven species of plants engaged in a constant battle for supremacy. Our current favourite is the water plantain (Alisma plantago-aquatica), which, almost every week shoots up a fresh flower spike around half-a-metre tall, with a spray of miniature white flowers. Our tiny wetland has become a local celebrity – kids love the fish, neighbours stop by it for a chat, and bees and other insects hover overhead. We love watching the plants grow and change. Small can be beautiful, social and perhaps ecological.

Instagram @tinywetland