

# SITELINES

Bimonthly Publication of The British Columbia Society of Landscape Architects



## LEARNING

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October 2007

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The purpose of Sitelines is to provide an open forum for the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to the profession of Landscape Architecture. Individual opinions expressed are those of the writers and not necessarily of those of the BSCLA.

# ACADEMIA CAN... “Open” Doors!

UBC, SALA Summer  
Sketching Course in Iran

BY DANIEL ROEHR, ASST. PROFESSOR,  
UBC, SALA

... In a time of serious climatic change and political diplomatic stagnation with certain countries, it is academia which needs to take on the responsibility to be more rigorous, having a strong and clear opinion and concept as well as an open eyed stand or point of view towards countries and cultures which have been deemed dangerous or even “evil” by Western eyes. It needs “US” in the West, being free nations, to open our hands, hearts, eyes and ears to the people who cannot do this so easily in those countries with us, even if they would like to.



Claire Wood, David Guenter, Sara Kasaei, Daniel Roehr at Esfahan, Abbasi Jam-e- Mosque (Emam)

There is currently an immense amount of talking, writing and discussion to develop and create sustainable architecture in architecture schools, the public and political circles. But before we change our whole design, urban planning and building process, should we not first look and learn from the experiences old cultures have made over thousands of years with “sustaining” themselves before we try to invent new ways, methods, policies and materials to deal with current serious climatic problems, declining fuels and diminishing water resources?

Sadly, humans rarely learn and take advantage from the historical past. Therefore, I had the wish to contribute, with my available academic means, to this situation by exposing a small group of the next generation of planners to one of the oldest sustaining cultures, and the best way to initiate the process of gaining knowledge and understanding other cultures is by



Esfahan Naghsh - e -Jahan Square  
Photo by Tilo Driessen

visiting them, learning about them first hand and getting an understanding through meeting the inhabitants of that culture and country.

I therefore took the initiative to take some of my graduate landscape architecture and architecture students from The University of British Columbia, School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture program to Iran to teach the course...

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# Open Doors

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## “Sketching Iran”

This was the overall mission of this studies abroad experience when I, together with one of my Iranian MLA students, started the idea to organize a sketching class. My main wish for this course was to expose students physically to one of the oldest and most well-preserved cultures on this planet; a culture, moreover, that many in North America are often reluctant to see, think, discuss, and show an interest in due to the complex political images that are presented about it in the Western Media. Nevertheless, the best way to make up one’s own mind about any place and its situation is by traveling to the country and experiencing the people, spaces, cities, landscapes, climate, religion, language, and aura. Therefore I used academia as a door to enter Iran, with universities acting as international platforms to exchange information, knowledge, research, findings, and ideas, as well as being a source for discussion. This method was, for my course, the most accepted, open and useful tool to facilitate first-hand cultural exchange. A publication is currently under way which central purpose it is to show a glimpse of all the different experiences, impressions, thoughts, observations, opinions, and ideas that we had as members of the course, concerned with this kind of travel and cultural experience. Each traveler’s work has been showcased individually to reflect their own personal perceptions about how they observed and experienced Iran.

The main goal of the course was to expose the students to actively-used architecture and landscape architecture spaces so that they could learn about “precise observation” of architecture and the surrounding built and natural landscape through the process of hand-sketching those spaces at the scale of details or of broader spatial atmosphere. The central task was to give students mental balance, along with the actual physical space experienced according to their own time to develop a sketch-



*Image Top: Fin Garden (Bagh - e Fin), Kashan, individual instruction session by Daniel Roehr with Sara Kasaei and Elizabeth Laing*

*Image Right: Photo by Daniel Roehr*

ing approach, method and style. Especially in today’s unified, digital world, hand sketching can be seen as one last way to express ones personal style of drawing and signature. The course objectives culminated in the task of getting students to a point where they felt confident enough to draw and interpret the spaces they saw during the day at any other time or situation--free out of their own mind. The pedagogy behind this was to stimulate the three dimensional thinking and spatial expression of the student on paper, as well as nurture skills for future design processes and development.

Over the past years teaching landscape and architecture students, I realized that three dimensional understanding and thinking was one of the weakest points I observed in the design process during studio projects, and even with recent graduates from architecture and landscape architecture

*Drawing 1: Jameh Mosque in Yazd, Sketch by Reza M. Davani*  
*Drawing 2: Jameh Mosque in Yazd, Sketch by Sara Kasaei*



programs working in my former office. Sketching is therefore one fast way to train and stimulate spatial thinking and understanding.

The trip was organized to visit, in a three-week period, different architectural/cultural places and cities over the country with the specific intention of engaging in cultural exchange with local schools of architecture in Iran. We therefore visited different university for meetings, discussions, and interviews to interact with the Iranian colleagues and students. Students from both the Canadian and Iranian schools gave studio presentations and lectures along with the ones that I delivered in our exchanges. With this method we stimulated interest for both cultures and encouraged discussion on both the student's and instructor's level.

The locations of the journey were selected

in such a way that the students received a detailed view of the different spatial design methods and situations built into the urban fabric, and included a wide variety of housing and garden typologies throughout the country. Besides cities, the students were also exposed to different Iranian landscapes and archaeological sites as well as some of the oldest human settlements in the world, still in use by their inhabitants today. Apart from site visits, time was set aside to meet Iranian people and students to discuss with them their views, wishes and desires in a modern Iran. The cities, archaeological sites and ancient settlements that we visited included Tehran, Kashan, Abyaneh, Isfahan, Yazd, Meymand, Shiraz, and Persepolis; the universities that hosted us for academic exchanges included The School of Landscape Architecture, Shahid Beheshti University, The Traditional Architecture

Department Faculty of Architecture & Art University of Kashan, and The Art University of Isfahan.

Personally I would like to say, that this was by far the best travel experience I have ever had with students, their drawing skills benefited immensely through the endless new exciting motives to sketch on the trip. We were also able to fulfill our wish to see and learn about the Persian culture first hand from the Iranian people, students and colleagues. We found them to be some of the most welcoming, friendly, hospitable, gracious and generous people that we had ever met.

*Without communication between nations and their cultures there will be no deep understanding, and without deep understanding there will be no tolerance and acceptances between nations and their different cultures.*

*Therefore always seek communication if you can...*



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## I love Fall.

Fall energizes me in ways that summer can't. The siren song of summer lulls me with warm days and an abundant sense of time. Early light in the morning and late nights fool me into thinking that I have all the time in the world to get things done – especially in my garden. But my garden eventually falls into disrepair and the optimism of spring is replaced by the quiet acceptance that my best laid schemes for botanical wonderment have failed to be achieved, due largely to lack of care on my part, and because I prefer shady spots for reading and light breezes to perspiration and the contortions needed to reach under the shrubs to do battle with the goutweed, again. Inevitably I give up and just enjoy summer, and am only occasionally guilt ridden about what is going on out there where everything seems quite lush and green, from the vantage point of my patio.

Maybe it is the invigorating September chill that forces me to stir to stay warm as I refill the terra cotta pots with fall coloured mums, and sign up for courses. After all fall is also about going back to school.

I have fond memories of UBC from the 70's and my more recent MLA experience. A focus of mine, as editor of Sitelines is to strengthen the connection between what is happening in the MLA program and the profession. It is partly for that reason this issue of Sitelines features education as a theme.

Summer afforded Nancy Paul of the BCSLA CE committee time to travel with her family and expand her knowledge at Versailles, and return to share her experiences with us. It has been a time for Daniel Roehr to teach and learn with his UBC students in Iran. Fall sees the return of the MLA students to UBC, and Cynthia Girling updates us with SALA news. Sustainability by Design at UBC continues to inform us

about our evolving responses to our regional challenges, and Adrienne Brown's Web Atlas inspires by documenting and showcasing design projects by our members. The importance of continuing education for the profession is reviewed in the article from Veronica Meadows of CLARB, along with a reprise of an article from ASLA.

Education continues and is mandated as part of membership in BCSLA, but more than that it is always satisfying to learn new things. I was fortunate to teach garden design with UBC continuing education this spring and summer to a group of adult learners. My own education will be continuing at an editing course at SFU Downtown campus this fall.

I hope you enjoy whatever educational direction you find yourself pursuing this fall, even if it is only reading a good book. I know I will be.

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# Letter from Cynthia Girling, Chair of Landscape Architecture, UBC

Thanks to everyone who came out to the spectacular School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture garden party “TransScape” at the Dr. Sun Yat Sen Garden. It was hosted by the incoming class of Landscape Architecture and Architecture students and their instructors, Ron Kellett and Inge Roecker. This event set the tone and very high standards for creative inquiry and quality, new media work for our School. If you missed it, we will post this work to our new SALA web site, set to be unveiled this fall. (We will send a notice when it is up.)

We have not yet received our formal letter and report from the CSLA Accreditation Council, however all indications are that the UBC Master of Landscape Architecture Program will be fully accredited for another five year cycle. Thanks to everyone in the landscape architecture community who participated in surveys and meetings associated with our accreditation.

Accreditation provides any educational program with an opportunity to take a hard look at itself. We used our accreditation year to do just that, and have heard from faculty, sessional faculty, students, alumni, the professional community and our accreditation team. We intend to spend this fall reviewing the comments we have received through this process and developing an academic plan that will guide us through the next few years of our program's development.

One of our newest initiatives in the program is to focus the work of most of our graduating students on a single landscape in British Columbia. This year, 11 of the students in this class will select their individual graduation projects from within the Still Creek watershed, which spans Burnaby and Vancouver. Using several ongoing initiatives as background and fodder to their projects, the students will design parks, greenways, neighbourhoods, streets, and gardens. Many will incorporate goals of the Still Creek ISMP, “From Pipe Dreams to Healthy Streams,” investigating how landscape planning and design can contribute to this long-term vision to enhance Still Creek and its watershed.

In this issue we are featuring both recent program initiatives and one project of the Design Centre for Sustainability. Daniel Roehr, our newest faculty member led a group of students on a study tour of Iran this past summer and his article highlights the important learning outcomes of a unique travel experience such as this. We have also included an article about our recently completed design build project at UBC. This project was a unique collaboration between UBC Plant Operations and our program. Finally, many in our professional community participated in an early Sustainability by Design charrette, run as part of the World Urban Forum in 2006. Jackie Teed's article provides the larger context and goals for this multi-year project led by Patrick Condon and a team of researchers here at UBC.

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# Landscape Architecture UBC Courtyard Design-Build Project 2007



Plan Installed

**D**esign-build amplifies the relationship between design and the materials and methods of construction, essential for success in the professions. For the majority of Landscape Architecture students who typically have little or no hands-on construction experience, design-build enables the unique translation of drawing to structure, something difficult to understand in the traditional design studio.

Detailed learning objectives:

1. engage the students in the complete process from design to construction
2. enable the unique translation of drawing to structure wherein the construction site becomes a drawing at full scale
3. engage the use of “green” materials and processes to give students deeper knowledge of these cutting edge areas of their fields and a deeper understanding of the workings of new approaches and materials
4. gain applied practical experience with project management and the organization of the construction process

*Over this past year, students of the UBC Landscape Architecture and Architecture programs and UBC project partners redeveloped the courtyard west of the Landscape Architecture Annex on the UBC Campus. The project upgraded and improved functionality of the space while providing an experiential learning opportunity for students in the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture. The UBC Office of Sustainability facilitated the project as one of their SEEDS projects. UBC Plant Operations provided funding, significant in kind work, equipment and expert trades people who worked together with the students through the design and implementation phases of the project.*

5. through working within very constrained budgets, learn fiscal accountability in design and construction
6. learn a collaborative and team-based mode of working through the design process
7. enhance communication and professional skills through “professional” interaction with community clients

From January to April, with the instruction of Steve Clark, a team of 12 students worked cooperatively to create a single design and full working drawings for this project. They held workshops with users and Plant Operations, who will maintain the site, underwent numerous reviews by a “design Committee”, went before the UBC Design Review Committee and took the project through the UBC permitting process.

From April to July, under the instruction of David Hohenschau, eight students from Architecture and Landscape Architecture went on to construct the project. They worked closely with the UBC concrete team, the bricklayer, and landscaping crews from Plant Operations to demolish the

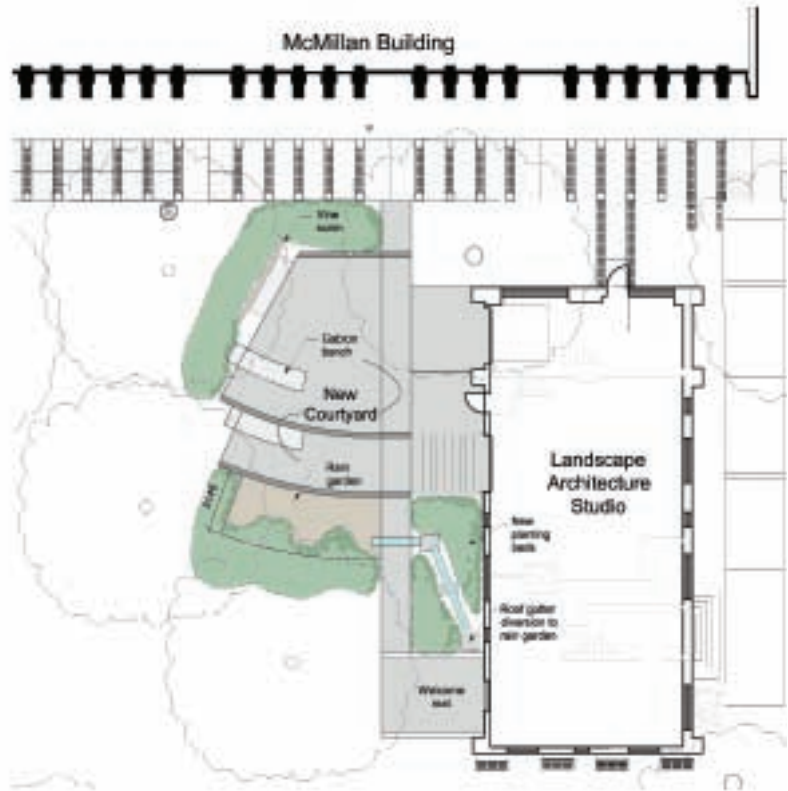
old courtyard and construct the new one. Unending day to day experiences and lessons gave these students an “in the dirt” experience they will never overlook in their future careers.

The immediate product of these classes is an outdoor space that supports multiple functions including social gatherings, eating, studying, outdoor learning and classes. Concurrently, the space provides a demonstration of sustainable landscape development practices including, low impact construction materials and methods, materials re-use, rainwater capture and re-use, rain gardens, design for sustainable maintenance. Perhaps more importantly, the project engaged design students, users, maintainers and managers of this space in a cooperative design and development exercise.

*Partners: Landscape Architecture Program, UBC Office of Sustainability (Brenda Sawada), UBC Campus Planning (Patrick Mc Isaac), UBC Plant Operations (David Smith and his staff)*



Plan



LARC 503 Design Development Studio  
– Steve Clarke

*Students: Jenna Buchko, Yin Lun Chan, Jeffrey Denney, Matthew Filipiak, Sara Fryer, Yun Gao, Shannon Kavanaugh, Jason Lam, Reza Davani, Miriam Plishka, Ellen Pond, Nalon Smith, Takashi Tomono, Megan Turnock, , Dan Yang.*

LARC 510 Design Build Studio  
– David Hohenschau

*Students: Brooke Dedrick, Farshad Jamali Firouzabadi, Sara Fryer, Shannon Kavanaugh, Chunling Liu, Nelson Rocha, Takashi Tomono, Megan Turnock.*

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# *Sustainability by Design 2007 to 2010:* A Project of UBC School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture's Design Centre for Sustainability

*Submitted by Sara Muir Owen and Sara Fryer based on the Sustainability by Design 2.0: 2007 to 2010 Project Brief prepared by Patrick M. Condon and Jackie Teed*

The Metro Vancouver region has earned a reputation as one of the world's most livable places. That achievement is the direct result of our region's natural assets as well as the visionary long term planning of previous generations. This reputation continues to attract new residents and, by 2025, Metro Vancouver's current population of two million will increase by fifty percent - to three million. It will double to almost four million by 2050. How can we manage demographic and population change in the decades ahead? How will the region accommodate future growth sustainably? How will housing, jobs and transportation be designed, delivered and distributed? How do we ensure continued livability in the region, and do even better? Our challenge, in this generation, is to

transform our livable region into a sustainable one. But how are Metro Vancouver communities able to address questions of such broad scope and time frame in a stakeholder-driven, effective way? And, how can they work collaboratively to develop solutions that can be implemented and result in real change?

Sustainability by Design (SXD) is a project of UBC School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture's Design Centre for Sustainability (DCS). Patrick Condon, the James Taylor Chair in Landscape and Liveable Environments, is the principal investigator. SXD is a collaborative effort to produce a compelling representation of what the Metro Vancouver region might look like in 2050 at the neighbourhood, district, and region-wide scales. Drawing from the significant expertise in sustainable development amassed by the DCS, SXD

developed and published a set of six Guiding Principles and sustainable development targets (see [www.sxd.sala.ubc.ca](http://www.sxd.sala.ubc.ca)). These principles were tested through application in a series of six workshops and three Municipal Case Study Charrettes that generated sustainable development visions for edge, node and corridor sites.



*Cover, Sustainability by Design: A Vision of a Region of 4 Million.*

The findings of the year's research were then applied to the regional scale on 17 June 2006, as part of the City Building Planners Group's Super Saturday, where over 120 participants--including delegates from BCSLA/CSLA, AIBC/RAIC, and PIBC/CIP, plus Vancouver area stakeholders and urbanists--worked all day to detail a practical vision for a sustainable region. Their sustainable region vision accommodates a doubling of our present population, with particular attention to those aged 60 and over--a regional demographic which will increase by 270%, or 400,000 people over the next 50 years. The resulting 50 square metre map was displayed at the UN World Urban Forum III.

The response to SXD's kick-off year has been overwhelmingly positive. The project has garnered regional, national and international attention and has generated requests from other municipalities who wish to participate in future work. In the first year, SXD has generated sustainable development plans that can be implemented for three Metro Vancouver municipalities, and has produced practical and useful research products, including:



*Super Saturday participants*

- The Sustainability by Design website
- Sustainability by Design: Guiding Principles
- Research Bulletins
- Two explicit and detailed visions for a region of 4 million
- The Sustainability by Design: A Vision of a Region of 4 Million publication

This research has greatly impacted the collective discussion about regional development, particularly with respect to recognizing the untapped potentials for redevelopment along the region's 1,000 km of underutilized surface arterial streets, and the need to respond to the demographic tidal wave of a preponderantly grey future resident. These products (all available online at [www.sxd.sala.ubc.ca](http://www.sxd.sala.ubc.ca)) also provide a permanent communications infrastructure between SxD and participating stakeholders, as well as a web-based database for citizens and stakeholders to use as they develop the sustainable development vision into official sustainable community planning documents. The key outcomes of the year's work were worked into a 2006 publication *Sustainability by Design: A Vision of a Region of 4 Million*.

Following on the success of the first phase of the SxD project, the DCS proposes a multi-year, iterative design-research-implementation process that will build on this success. This second phase of SxD includes a number of key components:

- Case Study Charrettes. The Case Study Charrettes develop and test sustainable design principles by examining actual issues and conditions with stakeholder groups (community leaders, citizens, city officials, etc.) in participating communities.
- Research Collaborative. The DCS will partner with local leading scholars in areas such as water resources, housing affordability and accessibility, transportation and global warming to develop scientifically-based targets

to direct charrette processes and to test the sustainable design principles resulting from Case Study Charrettes.

- Sustainable Design Vision Implementation. The DCS will work with Greater Vancouver communities--particularly those participating in case study charrettes--and their consultants to develop their sustainable design visions into implementable plans.
- 2008 Interdisciplinary Conference. The DCS will coordinate and host an academic, issue focused conference with local and international scholars, regional political leaders and local implementers. Papers and case studies presented will examine sustainable community design, research and implementation issues.
- 2010 Regional Charrette. A bookend charrette to close this cycle of the project. This is similar to the Super Saturday regional charrette, but much more extensive and stakeholder focused.

To learn more about SxD and the second phase programs being developed contact Jackie Teed, Project Manager or Sara Muir



*Super Saturday at work*

Owen, Project Coordinator, the Design Centre for Sustainability at 604-827-4073.

The Design Centre for Sustainability (DCS) is a world-class research organization that revolutionizes the way that planning and design are taught and conducted. Located in the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at UBC, the DCS seeks to shift community-based planning and design toward ongoing consideration of sustainability as a matter of course rather than exception. It provides an interdisciplinary research umbrella which fosters and supports the development, synthesis, and dissemination of leading-edge holistic and synergistic approaches to sustainability through the lens of collaborative design.

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# Continuing Education Accreditation

BY VERONICA L. MEADOWS  
CLARB DIRECTOR OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As reported in the September 11, 2007 issue of LANDonline, CLARB and ASLA have resumed discussions on the development of a single system for accrediting continuing education providers and coursework. "We have restarted discussions with CLARB," said ASLA President-Elect Perry Howard, FASLA, "and are very hopeful that the result will be one unified system with all organizations participating."

CLARB President Cleve Turner added: "We are encouraged about these new discussions and will continue to work toward a unified system that is sensitive to the unique and some- times diverse needs of our Member Boards."

Currently there are 30 CLARB member jurisdictions that require continuing education for landscape architectural licensure renewal. There are several additional member jurisdictions that

have enabling legislation in place for future mandatory continuing education requirements. CLARB members agree that establishing a cohesive continuing education system will increase efficiency and eliminate confusion for both the member boards and their licensees.

CLARB will keep Member Boards informed as these important discussions continue.

## ASLA Unveils the Landscape Architecture Continuing Education System *September 11, 2007*

Over the past year, ASLA has been working with its sister landscape architecture organizations to develop a system to establish, maintain, and enforce standards for evaluating professional development and continuing education programs for landscape architects. The following organizations have joined together in support of this system:

- American Society of Landscape Architects
- Canadian Society of Landscape Architects
- Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture
- Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board
- Landscape Architecture Foundation

The Landscape Architecture Continuing Education System (LA CES) is intended to

assure state licensing boards and landscape architects that courses provided by LA CES-approved providers are of sufficient quality to comply with state mandatory continuing education requirements. In addition to approving providers, the system will feature an online, searchable database of courses being offered by approved providers. The LA CES is expected to be operational this fall.

LA CES was initiated by landscape architectural organizations in response to the varied and complex state mandatory continuing education requirements that landscape architects face, as well as the growing burden that state boards face in administering their renewal processes with mandatory continuing education. Modeled after the system currently available for the architecture profession, administered by the American Institute of Architects, LA CES is designed to provide

a reliable means for state licensing boards and landscape architects to determine what course material is appropriate and acceptable for mandatory continuing "education requirements.

Discussions with the Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards (CLARB) are underway. "We have restarted discussions with CLARB," said ASLA President-Elect Perry Howard, FASLA, "and are very hopeful that the result will be one unified system with all organizations participating." CLARB participated in the initial development of LA CES, but had chosen to continue work on a separate system that would focus only upon courses that meet a narrow definition of public health, safety, and welfare (HSW) subject areas. LA CES not only meets the need to identify HSW subjects, but also recognizes that states have varied interpretations of the allowable subject matter for mandatory continuing education. The LA CES will meet the needs of all states by identifying the HSW subjects but ensuring that all continuing education coursework meets a standard on which state licensing boards and landscape architects can rely.

In order to be approved under this system, providers must ensure that their courses meet specified criteria, including:

- Each course is planned in response to the learning needs of the target audience.
- Each course has a clear and concise written statement of learning objectives.
- Each course must include a mechanism for assessing participant attainment of the learning outcomes.
- Providers must designate whether primary subject matter (at least 75 percent of the course material) for the course qualifies as meeting the LA CES HSW definition. This definition is based on the CLARB Task Analysis and current regulatory standards for HSW. LA CES has also identified certain areas that will not be designated as HSW (such as marketing and business development).

- Each course is evaluated by the participants.
- Providers must issue a confirmation and verification of completion for each participant who completes the course. Providers must also maintain complete attendance records (that are available to participants on request) for a minimum of six (6) years.

Once a provider has achieved recognition by LA CES, it can register courses that meet LA CES requirements on the LA CES database. It is expected that registered courses will cover a broad range of subject matter. Providers will be required to identify those courses that relate to health, safety, or welfare.

Each of the participating organizations will have the power to approve providers following the mutual standards of the LA CES system; however, providers will only

be permitted to apply to one of the organizations. The LA CES Audit and Standards Committee will provide oversight and ensure that all approved providers are meeting the standards, regardless of the organization that approved the provider. The LA CES Administration Committee will serve as the governing body of the system.

Overall, the Landscape Architecture Continuing Education System is expected to be an important first step in making the labyrinth of mandatory continuing education requirements easier to navigate. However, no system can substitute for the responsibility of each licensee to take care to understand the continuing education requirements that apply in his/her state. For more information, consult the ASLA website for state by state analysis of mandatory continuing education requirements.

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# The BCSLA Web Atlas

BY ADRIENNE BROWN

## Where did it come from, and where is it going?

Three years ago, I enrolled in a cartography course as part of a mid-career upgrade, and the term assignment was to create an atlas for the internet. As the BCSLA is always looking for ways to increase the visibility of landscape architecture, and the many successful built works in the province, it was easy to come up with a subject. When I handed the assignment in, it presented sixty projects contributed by BCSLA members. By the following spring, this number had increased to a hundred and twenty.

From the beginning, it was my goal to present works that span the last fifty years, regardless of whether they since been demolished. Although there are only a handful of such pages so far, the atlas has begun to function as an archive and as a resource for those who are interested in the recent history and evolution of the built landscape in British Columbia. Sites which have been redeveloped include the roof garden at 1500 West Georgia, by Ted Osmundson which existed from 1978 to 2006, and the small park at Georgia and Beatty by Justice Webb and Vincent, which was built in 1973, and was demolished in 2002 to make way for a new multi-use development next to the Georgia viaduct.

The first edition of the Web Atlas included a photo of each project, the name of the designer(s), the date of completion, and the location. In the process of creating the pages however, I soon realized that they would be of more interest to the visitor, if they included a description of the design and its significance. Adding this information has been an ongoing project over the last couple of years, with the number of pages with text now representing approximately 80% of the total.



The Web Atlas currently features five maps which include a hundred and seventy five representative projects, a page each on the history of landscape architecture in BC and the accredited degree program at UBC, and a link to the Awards of Excellence page on the CSLA website. Projects that have received an Award of Excellence from the CSLA are highlighted with gold buttons, and award winning designs located outside the province are noted on the homepage, along with projects that lack a specific physical site.

I have been receiving valuable feedback from BCSLA members, including corrections to firm names, clarifications on the attribution of a design, and additional material for the text. Such input is crucial to the continued evolution of the site, and

represents an invaluable contribution to the long-term goal of creating and maintaining an accurate record.

There are notable changes ahead for both Sitelines and the BCSLA Web Atlas, as Luna Design is currently in the process of creating a new Sitelines.org website. This is a very exciting development for the BCSLA, as it represents a significant addition to the public face of the organization and to

its member services. The Web Atlas will become a part of the new site, and will be restructured in the process. Both the 'History' and 'Education' pages will be relocated, and additional maps will be added, and as these maps will have ample space for new material, there will another call for contributions near the end of the year. In the meantime, please keep the comments and corrections coming. The current collection of projects represents an impressive body of work, and the participation of so many firms and individuals strengthens our sense of community. Many thanks to those who are participating in this project.

*Please send correspondence related to the Web Atlas to Adrienne: [adriennebrown@telus.net](mailto:adriennebrown@telus.net)*

# Visiting Versailles

## – Lessons in Scale

BY NANCY PAUL

My first year in graduate school I had the good fortune to take a required course covering the history of Landscape Architecture; LA 132 taught by Professor Peter Hornbeck. Three mornings a week we sat in a darkened theatre looking at an amazing collection of slides while sipping our morning coffee. Egyptian temples and tombs, the Greek Agora, and Forum Romanum filled the screen. We explored Islamic Paradise Gardens, Oriental Gardens, Renaissance, Baroque, Romantic, Victorian and finally, the modern or 'Democratic' landscape. For one blissful hour I was transported to another time and place, it was my favourite lecture.

The Renaissance got a lot of attention in the course and was broken down into three

major periods; the Tuscan Renaissance which took place in northern Italy from 1450 to 1550, the rise of the Architectural Garden from 1500 to 1575, and the Baroque Period from 1575 to 1700. The slides from the Baroque period were undeniably the flashiest, if ever there was a period of excessive ornamentation dripping in gold this was it.

Louis the XIVth created the quintessential French formal landscape in 1661 when he appointed Andre Le Notre Head Gardener for the grounds at Versailles. What began as a "retreat in the countryside" turned into a luxurious prison for Noblemen. Everything about Versailles, the opulent palace built by Le Vau, as well as the vast orchestrated landscape, was designed to reinforce the hierarchy of the French government. The Sun King was the centre of French life and Versailles was the centre of French government.

In July our family went to France for a holiday and our last few days were spent in Paris, I made a good case for taking the train out to Versailles for "a break" from the city. If I had let on that I was actually excited about going, the trip would have been considered suspect, and it might even have been cancelled. We missed our first train and ended up arriving late in the morning which meant the palace was really crowded. So, we decided to visit the gardens first and see the palace later, when the crowds had died down.



All photos by Jim Paul

The first view you get of Versailles is a bit anti-climactic, beyond the wrought iron gates is a gravel forecourt and the palace sits very close to the gates. There is no build up to your arrival, no anticipation, you're just there. To enter the gardens you pass through a large arch in the building and walk out onto the first terrace. Everything changes once you pass through this arch; nothing prepares you for the vastness of the space. The landscape stretches out before you like a giant sword, an infinite swath of water and fountains punctuated by rows of perfectly manicured trees. It goes on forever and it makes you feel very small and insignificant.

It's worth looking at how Le Notre set up this landscape, and how he determined the size of these outdoor spaces and vistas. The original site was not at all remarkable, the land was marshy and forested, with little in the way of views. Le Notre created three very distinct garden levels that were oriented on an east/west axis beginning with the most formal and open directly in front of the chateau. This open area served a number of purposes; the 'Parterre d'Eau', or reflecting ponds, reinforce the grandeur of the palace and the surrounding two dimensional landscape offers

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## Visiting Versailles

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unobstructed views to the palace as well as out to the scenery. An added benefit of this landscape of parterres is that the King's enemies had nowhere to hide if they wished to attack the palace. Le Notre was utilizing CPTED strategies more than 300 years ago!

The second garden area lies to the north and south of the Latona Basin and the Apollo Basin, magnificent fountains that line the east/west axis. This second area consists of 'Bosquets', formally planted woods with geometric paths leading to monumental sculptures often set in spectacular fountains. Each Bosquet is unique and has a theme from Greek and Roman mythology. Louis XIV identified with Apollo, the god responsible for dragging the sun across the sky with his team of horses and his chariot. The sun is at the centre of the Universe and Louis XIVth was at the centre of France. No argument there.

The Grand Canal runs west of the Apollo Basin and beyond the Bosquets, it is over 2 kilometres in length and 100 metres wide. The distance between the Palace itself and the end of the Grand Canal is 3.5 kilometres; it takes a good hour to walk to the end of the canal and another hour to return. The only people walking these distances when Louis XIV was king were the thousands of gardeners and support staff. The Nobility rode carriages, horses and sailed up and down the canal in gondolas. Flanking the Grand Canal is the forest area



where the Nobility went hunting; this constitutes the third garden area: the wilderness.

The geometry of Versailles is simple: a strong central axis heading west from the palace (the sun sets in the west, the sun is a metaphor for Louis XIV) with radiating allees and 'Bosquets' reinforcing this geometry. What sets this garden apart from the numerous Baroque gardens in Italy is its scale; the distances and vistas are monumental and have been compared to Pope Sixtus V's plan for Rome. With 5,000 members of the Nobility living at the Palace and another 15,000 coming and going it was a city in its own right as well as the centre of government for France.

Of course, something gets lost when spaces get too big. Marie Antoinette obviously felt this way because her husband, Louis XVI, had The Petit Trianon built just so she could escape the grandeur of the





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palace and its grounds. The Petit Trianon is a landscape in miniature that was sited to the north of the Grand Canal where Marie could play at being a shepherdess. These gardens are quite different from the main estate garden with their rock outcroppings and winding paths, they appear to be more of a refuge.

Whether you like the idea of a French formal garden or find the whole thing too artificial is beside the point when discussing the estate of Versailles. Louis XIV, with the expertise of Andre Le Notre and the architect Le Vau, created a man-made world that put him in the realm of the





gods. The grand spaces, vast distances and precise geometric proportions alluded to a perfect world only glimpsed at by the common man. This was not a garden of inclusion, it was a political garden designed to inspire awe, envy and even fear. Fortunately for us, it survived being ransacked during the French Revolution, and it remains today; a national treasure as well as a magnificent example of a French Baroque estate garden.

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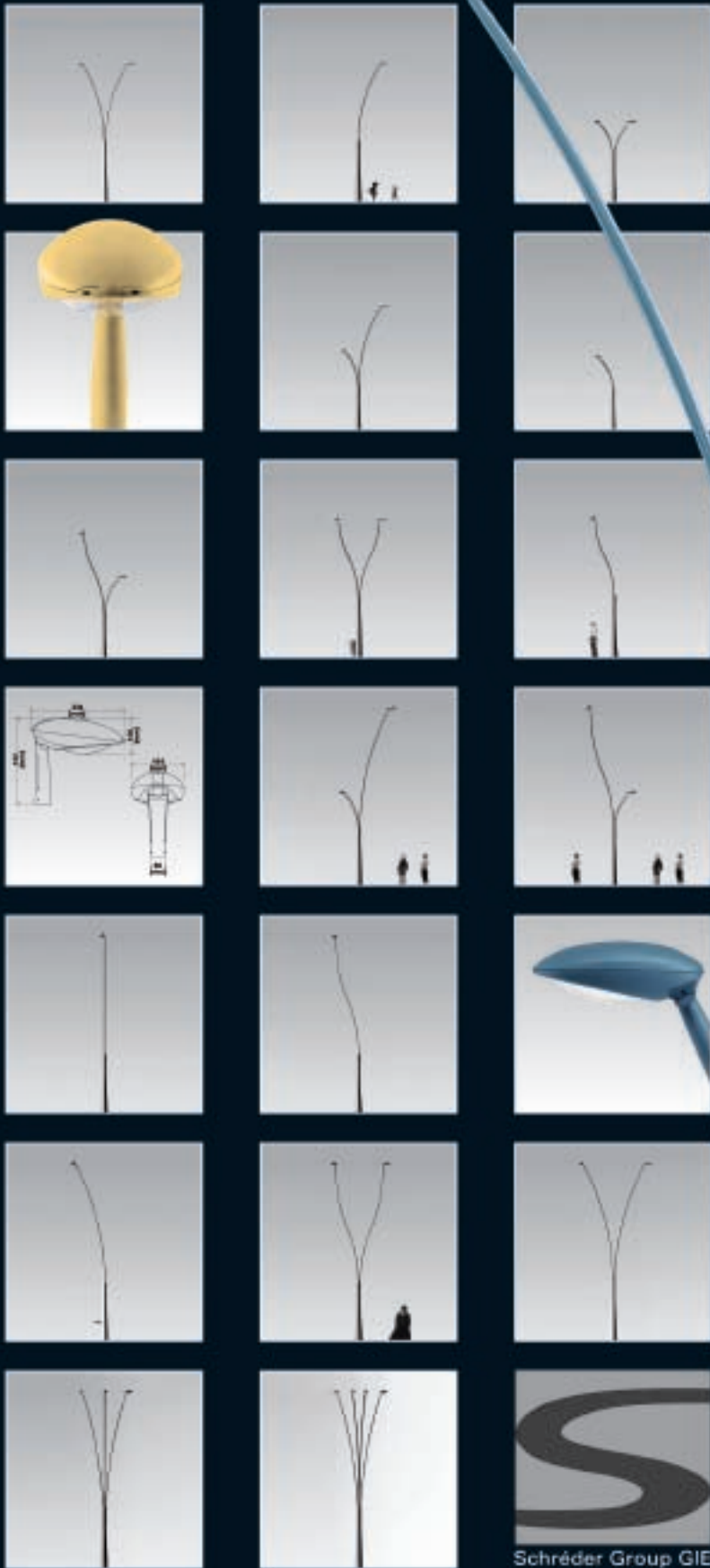
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