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# Sitelines

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# Welcome to the happiness issue

hap·pi·ness  
/'hæpɪnəs/

noun

1. The term happiness is used in the context of mental or emotional states, including positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy. It is also used in the context of life satisfaction, subjective well-being, eudaimonia, flourishing and well-being.

## Artist's statement

### Daisy Garden, 2015

By Goya Ngan

"I captured this image during a street photography workshop, when I was switching from landscape architecture to photography. Reflecting on these two disciplines, I realize that people are so important to the urban landscape. Our interactions with strangers are what give us emotions in the space, whether one feels threatened or happy. Street photography takes a boatload of courage, but when in the zone (completely present and connected), it is quite a thrilling experience. What I saw on this day was a contrast of new and destroyed buildings and then these young people doing something curious in the foreground. Later, I learned that the Daisy Garden Restaurant had burned down; they must have been paying their respects. For me, it is also a picture of hope, that the younger generation cares about Chinatown, in spite of the planning and social disaster that it has become."

See more of Goya's work on her Instagram account @goyangan.

Happiness. What is it and how can it be obtained? Does its value and definition differ among individuals or depend on its cultural context?

Can planners, urban designers, architects and landscape architects design happiness into the fabric of communities? If so, how? And, whose happiness is being designed for? How can the happiness experienced as a result of design be measured?

There is mounting evidence that the built environment, including streetscapes, parks, trails, and natural areas, have the capacity to increase a sense of happiness, health, and well-being for both individuals and

communities. This seems to be ever more apparent with restrictions surrounding COVID-19 and a commensurate increased use of outdoor space for people seeking a sense of happiness, health and well-being through recreation, connection with nature and each other.

This issue of *Sitelines* is an exploration of what happiness is and its relationship to public space, landscape design, horticulture and culture. We invite readers to join in this investigation of happiness through analysis of its definition, whether or not happiness is achievable through design and, if so, whose happiness we, as design professionals, are targeting.

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## “Sunrise Hill”

Artwork by Gustavo Manzano, BCSLA Intern

### Artist's statement:

This image represents the idea of the earth as a living entity with a consciousness, a mother figure that protects and nourishes. It is an ancient archetype, related to Gaia for the ancient Greeks, Pachamama for the civilizations developed in and around Peru and the Andes, Tonantzin for the Mexicas and other groups in Central America, among others. In my take on the subject, I add elements that imply the presence of humans: agricultural fields and an ascending path. Agriculture is represented by five different crops. First, the agave with its characteristic turquoise colour, used to prepare tequila, as a symbol of joy and celebration. Next to it are marigolds, a flower used to celebrate life in the traditional Day of the Dead in Mexico. The two crops below are sugarcane for all that is sweet, and leafy greens for all that gives us strength. At the base, there is corn, which for the ancient cultures that inhabited Central America represented the raw material from which humans were created. The ascending path connects the world of humans with nature. The sun and the moon represent balance, and next to the moon there is ruby, symbolic of love, courage, health and passion... the good stuff in life.

*Gustavo Manzano is a Mexican artist and landscape designer enjoying life in Vancouver. He has a bachelor's degree in architecture from ITESO university in Guadalajara, Mexico, and a master's degree in landscape architecture from UBC. His work includes street murals, photography, illustration, architectural design, landscape design, 3D modelling and visualization. View more [www.chromatoma.org](http://www.chromatoma.org)*

## IN MEMORIAM

My dad spent his entire adult life working around trees. When I was a child, he designed the grounds of the Vancouver Unitarian Church at 49th and Oak and had trees planted along the main sidewalks. Some of the new trees were scraggly-looking things then but 50 years later they've grown and given the church and its grounds maturity and substance. After his house is gone, the trees and the grounds on the northeast corner of 49th and Oak will be a fitting way to remember him—as “a man of the trees.”

— Charles Justice

Without Clive, Park & Tilford Gardens would not be the jewel that it is. He created a beautiful oasis that is cherished by people worldwide.

— Ann Pentland, past president of the Friends of Park & Tilford Gardens

Clive, your travels spanned continents, from a childhood on Saltspring to English landscapes in the war years, to studies at Berkeley with Thomas Church, planning at UBC and a doctorate in landscape at Simon Fraser University. Thank you for inventing the BCSLA. And you have revised history to cast Vancouver as a minor character in the voyages of Archibald Menzies. As Menzies' contemporary Burns would say: Weel are ye wordy o' a grace as lang's my arm.

— Cameron Murray, BCSLA Landscape Architect, Topographics Landscape Architecture



## “Man of the trees” 1926–2021

## Clive Justice

Clive Lionel Justice was a landscape architect, icon, trailblazer, planner, author, garden historian, lifelong scholar, teacher, mentor, adventurer, wearer of great hats, boots, and kilts, and much, much more. He was one of the first registered landscape architects in British Columbia, founding member of Vancouver Rhododendron Society, and active in protecting local parks and Vancouver's heritage trees. Clive will be remembered for his insatiable appetite for knowledge, sartorial flair, and irrepressible energy, but especially for his service to the community and indomitable force of personality. Clive will be greatly missed by his friends, family, colleagues, and BCSLA members who had the honour of meeting him.

To plant a tree in memory of Clive, please visit:  
[bit.ly/TreesForClive](http://bit.ly/TreesForClive)

# The nature of happiness

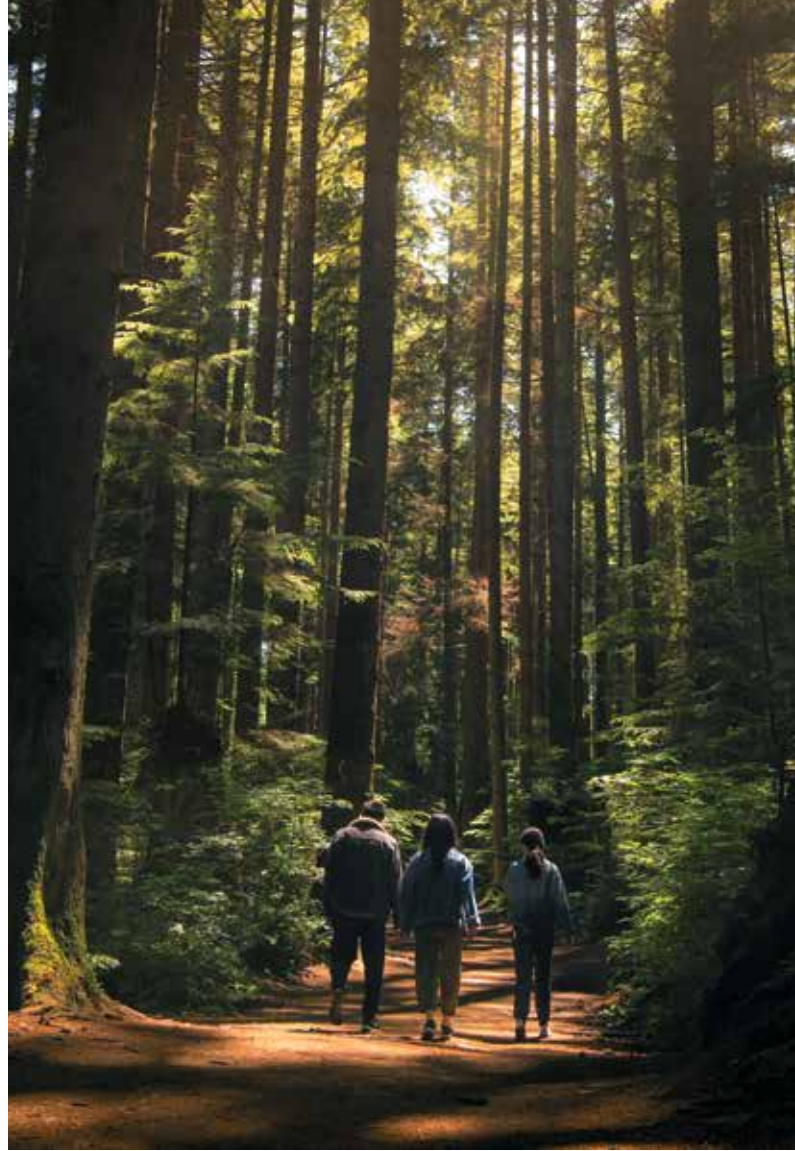
By Shauna Beaudoin, BA, LiveRoof® manager, & Green Roof Professional (GRP)

**To explore the relationship between humans and happiness, consider the simple, yet deep and reflective, moments spent in nature and recognize that happiness may be inspired by connectivity and a sense of place. Those embodied experiences—when the sun touches the forest floor and the smell of earth rises; when light flickers through the first leaves of spring; when we venture beyond the smog where city lights turn to twinkling stars—are often inspired by nature. As we reflect upon a year derailed by a pandemic, isolation, social inequality and climate change, the need to reimagine spaces that encourage happiness becomes more important. Over-development in urban areas has contributed to dislocation between people and a rich, biodiverse habitat. The disjointedness between humans and nature has been exacerbated by lockdowns, isolation and few opportunities to connect with one another during the pandemic.**

Landscape architects are addressing the question of whether happiness can be encouraged by increasing public access to nature through an interdisciplinary design approach. Informed design, which places people in touch with local ecosystems, native plants, wildlife habitat and biodiversity, has the potential to champion the social, economic and environmental conditions that lead to happier cities.

Spending time in nature reduces physiological stress-indicators such as heart rate and negative mood-states such as anxiety, anger, and fear. Nature supports us in establishing a sense of self and encourages social bonding. It puts people in touch with their ancestral roots, traditions and rites of passage. Since our primordial beginnings, humanity has looked to the natural world for insights about what it means to be human, particularly in relation to a much wider ecosystem. While the mechanisms mediating these positive effects remain obscure, they are important contributors to human fulfilment and happiness.

There is increasing evidence that artificial urban environments elicit a high degree of stress on the human body and psyche. Conversely, it is hypothesized that the natural environment has the opposite effect and enhances human well-being. These findings support new concepts such as nature therapy, which aims to reduce the environmental stresses on people who live in highly urbanized environments. For example, in Japan, the practice of *Shinrin-yoku* or “forest bathing” has gained attention for its proven physiological and emotionally therapeutic benefits. In Finland, health officials are recommending citizens spend five hours per month in the woods to stave off depression. In the built-environment, research even articulates that hospitals that provide access to vegetation have a positive correlation to human health impacts, as patients whose rooms had access to a natural view had an 8.5 per cent shorter hospital stay than those without. When multiplied by the number of surgeries across the United States, these figures resulted in fiscal savings of US \$93 million per year.



The well-being of urban communities is further impacted by the availability of biodiverse native plant ecology. By 2050, 70 per cent of the world's population will live in urban areas, which will reduce the richness of native plant and wildlife biodiversity. Urban forests, green roofs, living walls, and infrastructure that utilizes biophilic design principles provide opportunities to move beyond novelty landscapes toward genetically colourful, resilient ones that extend human connectivity to wider ecosystems. Native plant landscapes in the built environment create healthy habitats, support local pollinators and attract wildlife. Self-propagating native plant ecosystems contribute to the longevity and durability of green infrastructure. Additionally, the presence of green space improves air quality, storm-water management, noise pollution and mediates the urban heat island effect. Biodiverse plant palettes inspired by eco-regions support design that caters to a wide range of functions and ecological stressors.

Supporting biodiversity in urban spaces encourages connection to ecosystems that inspire a positive human-nature connection and lead to greater happiness. Successful projects that contribute to well-being will be the result of an evolving, interdisciplinary and concerted effort, supported by the conviction that humanity and nature are not separate.

*Shauna works for NATS Nursery in Langley, BC as a LiveRoof representative.*



# What is landscape architecture anyway?

## The Black landscape – part 2

By Divine Ndemeye & Shaheed H. Karim

**In part one of this article, we showcased how *landscape* has predominantly been defined as White landscapes, which have historically been driven by displays of dominance, power and wealth. In part two, we highlight some of the diverse intentions behind Black landscapes, which we have found to be focused on cultural expression and formation, community orientation, and reciprocal relations between people and the landscape.**

What quickly becomes evident when studying the history of landscapes, both those explored in formal histories of landscape architecture, and histories of landscapes that have typically been subjugated by a “Western” preference for the former, is that *landscape* is more than physical space. One layer of the landscape is the physical: the composition of materials that is drawn in plan and section. The other layers of the landscape are not always so visible. There is a layer that lives beneath the physical: the intentions behind the design, creation, and/or formation. Another sits above: the network of relationships, interactions, expressions, and experiences that are constantly building within and around the physical landscape. Holistically, one might describe the landscape as a living medium that mediates social exchange and, through time, not only bears witness to but plays an important role in cultural production and reproduction.

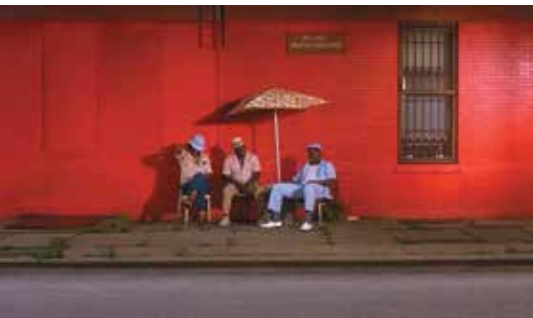
This is not unique to the landscapes in which Black communities live, create, and shape, but is often easily perceptible in depictions of these spaces through film, music, and art created by Black creators reflecting on their experiences and lived realities. One such example is Spike Lee’s film “Do the Right Thing” (1989).<sup>1</sup> The entirety of the film takes place over a single day and within the physical space of what seems like only a couple blocks in Brooklyn. Within this constrained space, both physically and temporally, the audience is exposed to the reciprocal relationship between culture and the landscape. The landscape shapes the culture, and the culture shapes the landscape. Contestations over space, whose roots transcend the physical bounds of the site, punctuate a hot summer day and draw all the layers of the landscape into focus, challenging what we might consider typical functions and uses of urban spaces and the way a community can transform space through means that are outside the reach of the landscape architect.

These scenes from “Do the Right Thing” highlight the landscape as a stage for contestation and continuous reformation. The landscape forms and deforms under the pressure of struggles for cultural representation and identity affirmation. The physical landscape that is the city block was not originally designed by Black people, but their cultural impact is itself an act of design that has made the physical space their own. The profound social impact of this film transformed the landscape of the city, as the street on which it was filmed was later renamed “Do The Right Thing Way.” The culture and the landscape continue to evolve, each impacting the other.

Looking beyond the depiction of landscape shaping in film, music and art, we can also turn to the lived spaces and histories of Black communities. An example from precolonial Bunyoro, Uganda exemplifies the reflexive nature of the relationship between landscape and culture where flowers were not only used for decoration, scent and as metaphor but also as a unique communication method. Flower arrangements were exchanged as a mode of communication, whereby each flower was coded with meaning. “The flower code was not only a significant means of communication but also an example of the classification and application of botanical knowledge.”<sup>2</sup> The flower code required an ecological knowledge of plant species and their growing conditions, as well as an understanding of ordering these to communicate effectively. One can speculate on the myriad of ways in which the landscape was manipulated and used to enable this form of direct communication, an act that contrasts the historical White landscapes as ones that are inherently tools to demonstrate power and wealth. This flower language, which involved the assigning of meaning to different flowers not only allowed for codified communication but also added a new reading to the landscape, showing that Bunyoro’s society used the landscape as a way to mediate social relations.

The use of landscape as a means to exercise agency and cultural expression can also be observed in the ways in which enslaved Africans adapted to the new territories they were forced into, where they reassigned values they held to new plants. This is demonstrated within the Winti religion in which magical plants are the core of religious rituals practiced by African slaves and their descendants. In this context, the





"Do The Right Thing" 16:51

An umbrella, three chairs and a sign reading "NO BALL PLAYING ALLOWED HERE" allow three men to carve out of piece of the public realm for themselves to enjoy on a recurring basis.



"Do The Right Thing" 22:32

Youths occupy the semi-private spaces existing between the sidewalk and the brownstones creating a backdrop to the theatre of the street and blurring the lines of what is public and private.



"Do The Right Thing" 26:58

A fire hydrant is co opted allowing the street to transform into a temporary waterpark - the repurposing of municipal infrastructure demonstrates the needs of the community and the flexibility of rigid norms and urban design.



"Do The Right Thing" 33:19

Radio Raheem asserts himself and his culture on the street, turning up his boombox to drown out the competition.



"Do The Right Thing" 19:40

A "Wall of Fame" featuring solely Italian Americans inside a pizzeria supported solely by non-white patrons becomes a running conflict through the film. An ongoing conflict between a community member and business owner exemplifies issues that can arise when the physical landscape does not reflect the socio-cultural landscape.



"Do The Right Thing" 1:44:28

Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcom X eventually make their way on to the wall.

African communities in Suriname assigned magical status to various plants based on "a connection with ancestors; a remarkable growth form, shape, scent or color; its habitat; relation with animals; an associated medicinal use; or a sacred status among other ethnic groups."<sup>3</sup> The importance of particular flora and fauna promoted a reverence for the landscape in general. When enslaved Africans found themselves in unfamiliar landscapes, they maintained their cultural practices and values by rebuilding relationships with these new landscapes. Their acquired botanical knowledge and relationship with the landscape also served in the liberation of African slaves, as religious leaders and skilled herbalists were known to use their botanical and spiritual powers to consult spirits for the best escape plans from slavery. In fact, "plants that once helped escaped slaves to survive in the forest (e.g. water-containing herbs, inflammable resins or seeds for ammunition) are now considered sacred by their descendants" in Suriname's Afro-communities.<sup>4</sup> This exemplifies how the maintenance of culture can require a deep association with the landscape and that while landscape and culture might shift in relation to each other the interdependency is mutually sustaining.

Whereas the dominant discourse of White Landscapes and "Landscape Architecture" imposes itself on other worlds and cultural identities, and closes the door for different discourses, this exploration of the Black Landscape emphasizes the value of alternate conceptions of and intentions behind landscape formation. Landscape is more than physical space. It can be a mode of communication, a mirror to the

needs of a community, or a point of reference in attempts to maintain cultural heritage through changing times.

An acknowledgment of the intentions behind Black landscapes like the ones discussed above not only opens the field to new voices but is certain to further our ability as landscape architects to have positive, meaningful contributions to the communities we live in.

*Shaheed H. Karim is a recent Master of Landscape Architecture graduate with a background in Urban Studies and Environmental Science. His work aims to challenge common landscape design practices to make spaces for more inclusive practices.*

*Divine Ndemeye, BCSLA Intern, is a recent Master of Landscape Architecture graduate with a background in Political Science and Human Geography. Divine was recently awarded the Landscape Architecture Foundation Graduate Olmsted Scholar Award. She seeks to engage in critical discourses and explorations of decolonized design paradigms which centre marginalized communities.*

<sup>1</sup> Spike Lee, producer & director, 1989. Do the Right Thing. United States: Universal Pictures.

<sup>2</sup> Doyle, Shane. "The Language of Flowers: Knowledge, Power and Ecology in Precolonial Bunyoro." *History in Africa* 30 (2003): 107-16.

<sup>3</sup> Andel et al. "What makes a plant magical? Symbolism and Sacred Herbs in Afro-Surinamese Winti Rituals" in *African Ethnobotany in the Americas*. Springer New York, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



# Reflections abroad: happiness in the profession

**Happiness is a feeling of joy, pleasure and a sense of well-being. We define happiness as an overarching quality of life that fuels our sense of purpose and meaningful contact with others. Most of us spend a great deal of our lives working, so it is inevitable that work plays a key role in shaping our level of happiness. Though we may struggle to balance work and happiness at times, we all want to feel that what we do is meaningful, not just a means to an end.**

Elements of working life drives well-being and where one lives also matters, as culture, social norms, and quality of life vary according to the country. We reached out to landscape architects and designers abroad to hear about their working lives and their reflections on balance and happiness.

Watch this space for *Sitelines'* recurring "Reflections Abroad" profiles, where we dig a little deeper and explore the profession and practice abroad. In the next issue we sit down with Kevin Connery to learn about his experiences teaching in New Zealand.

## Shelley Long | Rotterdam, The Netherlands



Shelley on the river Rotte in February 2021, enjoying the most ice NL has seen in five years.

### **Tell us a little bit about yourself!**

Shelley Long. From Calgary, Alberta, now working in Rotterdam, The Netherlands at West 8 urban design and landscape architecture as design manager for our Canadian portfolio.

### **Why did you choose to work abroad?**

I chose to work abroad to gain insight into living and working in another culture, namely a country that has a long history of cultural landscapes.

### **How would you describe working abroad compared to Canada?**

The irony of my move is that I focus now almost entirely on Canadian projects, so the project processes, language, and standards are all quite familiar. However, West 8 is a very international practice, so the biggest difference is being in a studio environment with incredible projects all over the world, and hearing colleagues speak Russian, Spanish, Italian, French, Chinese, German, and Dutch all at the same time. It's actually a more multicultural environment than in Canada, and a very lateral and collaborative process.

### **What's most challenging about working abroad in landscape architecture?**

The most challenging thing has also been a result of working internationally: there were times when I would fly to London once a week or Toronto every six to eight weeks. Thankfully, that has serendipitously come to an end through the global pandemic, and we now have more face time with clients than ever over the internet!

### **What do you find most satisfying, enjoyable, and fun about your current work?**

One of my main focuses is continuing the legacy of building out the public space in the Toronto central waterfront. We have a very comprehensive master plan with its own logic and details, but at the same time continue to innovate and research best practices to apply them to ongoing work. It is enjoyable to have oversight of a masterplan and the defining details at the same time. We hope to one day have a project in British Columbia as well!



## Erik Mustonen | Vernon, Canada



Erik, ca. 1996, with some Punjabi musicians at the ground-breaking ceremony for Putrajaya, which was intended to become Malaysia's new capital city.

### Tell us a little bit about yourself!

Erik Mustonen, B.Arch, MLA, BCSLA President-Elect, and RLA California with over 40 years' experience as a landscape architect, urban designer and planner. Of this about 50 per cent has been in Canada, 25 per cent in the United States and 25 per cent abroad in Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Germany and Tunisia. American by birth and Canadian by choice, I am a dual citizen. I'm now the Parks Planner for the City of Vernon, BC.

### Why did you choose to work abroad?

European travel, summer work with an architecture firm in Helsinki, and U.S. Peace Corps service sparked my interest in foreign cultures, languages and environments.

### How would you describe working abroad compared to Canada?

Very different. In Europe, as in North America, there is a complex array of standards, bylaws and regulations, but also a good work-life balance. In developing nations, there may be no standards, and you must be extremely flexible and resourceful. For a Saudi urban renewal project, on a team with five engineers and a planning technician, I was effectively project manager of architecture, landscape architecture, urban design and environmental planning (referred to as "Mr. Urban" by the client.) It was a peak professional experience, but it meant working 80+ hours per week.

### What's most challenging about working abroad in landscape architecture?

First, getting the work: personal connections are vitally important, perhaps through attending international conferences and, as a firm, getting a local representative; then getting paid whether by the client or a foreign employer; and finally, it may be many months or years between projects.

### What do you find most satisfying, enjoyable, and fun about your current work?

Working abroad can be exhausting, and I am now leaving it to others. My current job is rewarding in creating joy for others—including immigrant communities—through park projects.

## Chaitrali Salvi | The Netherlands



Chaitrali, off the coast of France.

### Tell us a little bit about yourself!

My name is Chaitrali Salvi. I am a Landscape Architect currently based in the Netherlands. Having been brought up in a vibrant city of Mumbai in India, I was always conscious of how people interact with the landscapes around. I wanted to explore such aspects of landscape architecture in a different setting. Therefore, I decided to pursue my masters in Canada, a landscape of wilderness. After my successful stint in Canada, I moved to the Netherlands to learn the Dutch outlook towards landscape design. Now, I am engaged in curating landscapes that have a balanced mix of built and natural environment.

### Why did you choose to work abroad?

It is my study that brought me abroad and I had to work to better understand how the lessons learnt are applied within the profession.

### How would you describe working abroad compared to Canada?

I had equal opportunities to grow as a professional at every place I worked at. Daily grind/work pressure is constant, but it follows with your work responsibility and willingness to grow, I think. However, the work life balance did make a lot of difference in my living in Canada and the Netherlands. It is a good breather as I am able to focus a bit on myself, replenish my forgotten hobbies and spend more time outdoors—definitely a mental and a physical benefit.

### What's most challenging about working abroad in landscape architecture?

The challenge for me was that I had to quickly adapt to a new setting and new working environment. Dealing with an entirely different scale, new approaches towards landscape architecture added to it. It took me a few months to get acquainted with the new way of working.

### What do you find most satisfying, enjoyable, and fun about your current work?

I currently work at Delva Landscape Architects in Amsterdam. It's a studio full of young, like-minded professionals who are finding ways to dig deeper into the field of landscape. At Delva, I am being given a freedom to grow my interests within the field which I enjoy the most.



## Jaclyn Kaloczi | London, UK



Bike tour with her Canadian bike on Isle of Wight.

### Tell us a little bit about yourself!

I am a landscape designer and researcher working in London, UK. I am originally from Ontario and British Columbia, Canada, and moved to Europe to join Martha Schwartz Partners in 2019. With MSP, I work on a range of projects from large-scale masterplans to environmental planning, community-scaled parks, and climate positive strategies.

### Why did you choose to work abroad?

To grow. I wanted to expand my personal understanding of a larger world, and to evolve my perception and experience of landscape architecture in different geographies, cultures, applications, and histories.

### How would you describe working abroad compared to Canada?

Working abroad instigates exploration. Being in a new place, I find myself inspired and curious to explore and discover it. For me, being in a new or unfamiliar environment heightens my perspective, wonder, and ability to expand how I see the landscape in new ways. This sense of exploration is something I have always known and felt back home too but has amplified while abroad. For me, this ongoing re-discovery of landscape is directly linked to my daily work and understanding of the profession.

### What is most challenging about working abroad in landscape architecture?

Comparison. For me, working abroad naturally leads to the comparing of geographies, cultures, developments, histories, policies, etc. This challenge is equally rewarding. The more I learn about English Landscape Architecture, the more I understand, appreciate, and miss my Canadian roots. Practically speaking, standards, conventions, and professional registrations vary across continents. This means learning two versions of the profession, in parallel. (It is a challenge and a reward!)

### What do you find most satisfying, enjoyable, and fun about your current work?

All of it. I am currently working on several projects within London, UK. Each is radically unique and presents its own opportunities and challenges. I enjoy the diversity of project types and scales, working within the local context, and with local consultants. Through these professional experiences, I am also building a better understanding and appreciation of London, England, and my second home here.

## Weirong Li | Hangzhou, China



Weirong (left), at Fujian Earth House in Fujian Province, China.

### Tell us a little bit about yourself!

My name is Weirong and I am originally from Tianjin, China. I came to Canada in 2012 to pursue my undergraduate degree in Toronto and eventually settled in Vancouver to attend the Master of Landscape Architecture program at UBC. I am currently working freelance in Hangzhou, China. Before that I spent the summer and fall in France and Greece. I was part of a personal housing development project back in France, and then initiated a small ecological glamping project with friends in Crete, Greece. My key passion is travelling, while collecting unique and nostalgic objects from my travels.

### Why did you choose to work abroad?

I wanted to see how design projects are approached and carried out in different countries/cultures.

### How would you describe working abroad compared to Canada?

It is interesting working in France because you get to see or have chances to be part of projects all over Europe. Potentially be in Paris one day and Luxembourg the next day! There are also a lot of opportunities related to heritage protection and integrating historical sites/elements into new designs, which I really enjoyed. Working in China puts slightly more pressure on me, given that everything moves fast. However, the good thing is that there are so many new things happening in China on a daily basis that are very exciting if you enjoy the fast pace.

### What is most challenging about working abroad in landscape architecture?

The most practical challenge is getting your landscape architecture licence while working in different countries. Different countries might have different procedures of obtaining one.

### What do you find most satisfying, enjoyable, and fun about your current work?

I love the flexibility of doing freelance work that allows me to move from place to place and explore different cultures and projects at the same time.





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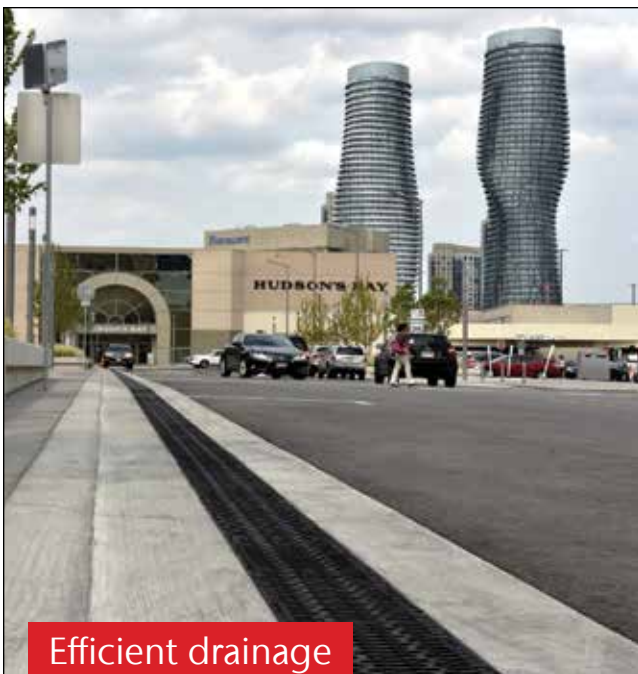
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# A discussion on happiness and Indigenizing design with Sierra Tasi Baker

By Divine Ndemeye, BCSLA Intern



"A lot of people don't realize or recognize that they themselves are actively colonizing our territory, especially architects, landscape architects and planners and developers. That's literally what you're doing. If you're not working with the Host nations, you are colonizing my territory."



One of the hats that Sierra Tasi Baker wears is that of Lead Design Consultant at Sky Spirit Studio, which operates on the unceded territory of the hənqəminəm and Skwxwú7mesh Sníchim speaking peoples of the xʷməθkʷəy̓ (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) and səliłəilwətaʔɛ (Tsleil-Waututh) (MST) peoples and is located in the Squamish Nation village of Slhá7aṇ (Eslhá7an). Sierra has developed an etiological design practice; a process of centring Indigenous oral history systems of storytelling and memory keeping. This ensures that legends and storytelling shape the entire design, landscape, sense of place, public engagement and processes of design so that the final design reflects the stories and the people who originate from the land. Sierra centres etiological design in her work in urban design, architecture and landscape architecture. In the following interview, we talk about happiness, MST stewardship, sovereignty and futurism. You can follow Sierra's work on MST futurism on Instagram: @MSTfuturism. You can also find the full interview on the *design unmuted* podcast by Divine Ndemeye.

**Divine:** Today, my guest is Sierra Tasi Baker. I am very happy to be talking with her today, she's a friend of mine and she holds many identities so I will let her introduce herself.

**Sierra:** <speaks in Skwxwú7mesh sníchim> Huy Chexw, O'siem, and K'ayáchten. My name is Sierra Tasi Baker, my Kwak'waka name is Gesuqwaluck which means "creator" or "creative one" or, I recently found out, Gesuqwaluck means "one who creates wealth," which I thought was really beautiful.

Our family have been stewards of these territories for over 809 generations, since time immemorial, and we are very grateful to continue doing this work for our future generations.

I am from the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), I am also Kwakwaka'wakw/Musgamaḡw Dzawada'enuxw, xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), ɬingit and Xaayda and also part Maḡyar/Hungarian on my mother's side. And all the nations I'm from are on my dad's Indigenous side. My father is Wade Baker; he's a well-known public artist and traditional carver, oral historian and my mother is Mary Tasi, who is, in her own words, an old-school urban planner. I have a family practice, Sky Spirit Studio + Consulting, so I work with my mom and my dad and we work to decolonize design practices and, essentially, to Indigenize urban spaces. But, actually, we're just taking back our city, our territory, one project at a time. A lot of what we do is reclaiming agency for our own Indigenous peoples and our own territories through design.

I have many identities, I'm also queer, I identify as bi-queer, and am part of many incredible communities here in what is currently known as Vancouver. I have my Masters in Sustainable Urbanism, from the University College London Bartlett School of Planning in London, England and my undergrad in Environmental Design from the University of British Columbia in Musqueam Territory. I am also a choreographer and a dancer; I dance for the MMIWLGQT2+ Butterflies in Spirit dance group that raises awareness for murdered

and missing Indigenous women and girls and LGBTQIA missing Indigenous peoples. I also, with Divine, have been doing a lot of Black and Indigenous solidarity work.

**Divine:** To start off, I just want to ask, what is happiness to you?

**Sierra:** <laughs> That's a really intense question!

**Divine:** I know! It's so deep, but also so simple.

**Sierra:** Especially to an architect/artist, where happiness isn't the motivating thing! But it's funny because today, we're having this interview, I actually feel really happy today! But it's taken almost, well, it feels like years of time to get [to that]. After the death of George Floyd, and seeing so much energy and education from different Black educators on Black Lives Matter, I've been listening and learning and seeing who I am amidst all this. Our communities often experience extreme adversity as Indigenous people. We're constantly dealing with ongoing genocide. I've been honoured and inspired to see the Black Joy movement and a lot of academic thought, social thought and influence from Black creators in Afro-futurism, talking about how important it is to celebrate joy.

After reading and listening to a lot of different creators on why it's so important to centre joy and celebration, that really clicked for me. I wondered, "What does that look like in my own Indigenous communities?" We, as Indigenous people, have this incredible sense of humour. I don't know if any of you are on Instagram much, but the Indigenous meme lords reign supreme. Realizing that, in the face of all this adversity, in the face of colonization, in the face of white supremacy, we still manage to laugh, and find community and find solace in each other.

And what I've started learning is that happiness, for me at least, comes in these community spaces that we create ourselves. It's hard for me to walk around Vancouver and see a city and a future that my people never agreed to and that was really forced on us. I often find myself in a lot of distress, but then I go to community events, put on by Black and Indigenous Queer people, and I find myself exorbitantly happy.

I started realizing that much of my happiness is where my identity is celebrated and where other people's identities are celebrated. I realize that the role of an architect is to create space for those spaces. Creating space for people's identity, being aware of that proximity to whiteness, that proximity to white supremacy, and how we can create spaces that are solely celebrating Indigenous identity, Black identity, Queer identity, and how that benefits people that aren't those identities either.

For me, happiness has had to be consciously created because the world around me that was consciously created without me isn't for me. It doesn't celebrate me. I don't see myself reflected in my own territory. For example, I was one of the guest curators for the



Vancouver Mural Fest last year, and I made a strong stance in only curating Coast Salish artists. And Mural Fest supported me. Having Coast Salish art forms throughout the city honestly improved my mood so much. Now I can walk down quite a few different streets and, even though it's not necessarily *decolonized*, at least there are these murals that reflect myself and my people and my friends and my community and my family. That makes me happy.

I think, "Great, I created space, I can actually just exist and be happy." And it seems like happiness for me is always in tandem with doing work and that's what it is when you're Indigenous: we have to work to create space for ourselves. It's really amazing being able to have those spaces and feel like, I can breathe, I can exist! Then my joy comes just naturally, overflowing, and frolic around being Indigenous in my own territory and being Squamish and Musqueam in my own territory.

**Divine:** I remember watching your event on MST Futurism; you were the moderator, asking questions to the participants on what MST Futurism meant for them, but I don't think you actually got around to answering that question yourself.

**Sierra:** You're the first person who's managed to ask me! Since the event, I've just been in hiding, recharging my energy. I hosted the event because there are very few of us that are really pushing futurism. Krystal Paraboo, the Afrofuturism historian we were working with on MST futurism, said whenever talking about futurism to always honour its Afrofuturism roots, so before I start speaking about it, I feel grateful and choose to uphold and uplift the Black communities that have created and had the ingenuity around Afrofuturism, because a lot of those mechanisms are tools for liberation.

We both face this colonial monster and being able to work with and have solidarity with each other is really powerful. I really want MST futurism to always include and not only honour Afrofuturism but also to honour that we have a lot of Black and Indigenous people in our own nations and their identities need to be at the forefront. Without all these voices, without its roots, futurism is just going to turn into something else that doesn't help anyone.

I've spent my entire life imagining how I want this city to be different. The main reason I went into architecture and landscape architecture and design is around this question of happiness. I've had a really difficult time, mental health-wise, in this city. Meanwhile, my family has lived here for over 809 generations. My family has been here for so long, yet to wear regalia and walk around in this territory just like my ancestors did, exuding who I am, is so uncomfortable and can actually be really unsafe. To see the disrespect, the concrete and glass disrespect, in my territory is hard on me.

It was so hard on me, that it's created my entire career trajectory. What I'm doing today, for me, for the future of this city, my vision is what the elders in the MST futurism event were saying, what some of those youth were saying as well. My vision to root everything in

our ancestral laws and protocols. In our ancestral laws and protocols, you speak to everyone, you listen to everyone, you work together, you find these beautiful commonalities, and if you find differences, you simply speak through them and you honour those differences. A lot of the elders [suggested] putting traditional practices back into the land, putting our natural law, our ancestral Indigenous laws as the basis for building, as the basis for design, as the basis for governance, as the basis for community life, for having longhouses again, having cultural spiritually centred spaces again. Having the city spring up around us in only 200 years is so heartbreaking. My elders used to talk about how the rivers used to be so full of salmon you could walk across them. That's something I want to see again.

It's only taken 229 years for colonization here [...] and 229 years is so short to me. I'm from a people that's been here for over 16,000.... 50,000.... 80,000 years in this one place. I was born in the village site that my ancestors have been born in since time immemorial, and that's so powerful and I recognize how valuable that is to grow up in my own territory, knowing who I am. My grandparents went to residential school and my parents did a lot of work to heal from those things so I didn't have to carry as much of the trauma, as much of the shame. I'm the first generation in my branch of my family, to be really proud to be who I am, to have access to our knowledge, our cultural practices. Obviously, it's still difficult to have access to our entire way of life, but I have those footpaths, I still have those strands that, if I work on them, I can find my way back and bring that into my daily life and ideally back to the city.

The vision is so all encompassing. Centering our ancestral laws, our ancestral protocols, our entire way of life and being able to create not only spaces for our ways to exist but, eventually... I would love it if one day, maybe one of your cousins from Burundi, Africa, decided to visit and the first thing they hear when landing at YVR is Skwxwú7mesh sníchim or hən̓qəmiñəm being spoken.

YVR's done a great job of representation but if the whole city looked like that? Suddenly, there's way more biodiversity. I'd love to get to a point where there's reasons why we should *not* be developing and instead think, "Hey, we should actually take this building down because it would really help the salmon respawn." Working up that, having medicine gardens throughout the city, having foragable areas, like you can walk anywhere and forage your meal for the day, you can hear Skwxwú7mesh sníchim being spoken or hən̓qəmiñəm being spoken as the main languages. If we brought back our ability to travel by canoe in the city. Bringing back our longhouses, bringing back our weavings, all these things that used to underpin our daily lives. Even the terminology "bringing back" isn't quite correct; it's more like, these are the laws of the land, the land that has been here for so long, the land has taught us the best way it wants to be interacted with. It's a way of honouring the land's agency and the land's consent. The land and my family and my ancestors have interacted with each other for so long that we've developed a unique way of interacting. I think when the first European explorers came here, and people like [Archibald] Menzies were trying to figure out what was here before and documenting

this almost prehistoric people, we were like, no, we're literally right in front of you, we're the same, why are you documenting us as we're speaking to you?

And they came in like, "Oh, this is a wilderness," which is so untrue: the reason why this territory is so beautiful, is so habitable is because we created that over thousands of years. The stones are soft because of the many hands my ancestors ran over them. The reason why the shoreline is easy to dock on and easy to pull and beach your canoes on is because we made it that way. The way we sculpted our territory is so subtle that European explorers just couldn't understand it. There's a reason why our forest floors are beautiful and soft, there's a reason why our rivers are beautiful and accessible, there's a reason why some things are *not* accessible, there's a reason why we left things difficult to get to. There's a reason for everything when you've lived in one place for so long. I'd love to be able to honour all the oral stories of this place, honour all the place names of this place, and get to a place where, in my daily life, I can do our daily cleansing practices, our cedar baths, to pray like we always used to. If I can live my life in the philosophy of my people, and not have to come into colonial barrier after colonial barrier after colonial barrier, that's the future I want for myself and my children and my nieces and nephews and all the other people. How incredible would that be, to be able to come to this territory and not just see another Western city?

I think a lot of people think about it as a post-colonial period, that we're in a post-colonial world, and that's so untrue. We are, in this exact moment, experiencing colonization and genocide. It's ongoing. A lot of people don't realize or recognize that they themselves are actively colonizing our territory, especially architects, landscape architects and planners and developers. That's literally what you're doing. If you're not working with the Host nations, you are colonizing my territory.

Stop doing that. Come and talk to us and see how we can figure this out, how we can we centre Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh authority and agency in our own territories again. How we can reinstate ancestral law in our territories. It's not as scary as the politicians are making it out to be; it's actually an incredible way to live, an incredible place of learning, of creativity. The ability to share with each other, save space for each other, the ability to hold space for each other when you're not only being held by us, as your Hosts, we're able to finally host you properly... I don't know how many people feel "well-hosted" in this city—I definitely feel like it's not a lot of people. It's more like you're constantly being evicted. People over history have just stopped expecting to be hosted in a good way and we would love to be able to teach people that again, what it feels like to truly be hosted in our territory. Not only that but if we can ensure right relation to each other, then we, as the Indigenous stewards of this territory, can ensure right relation to the land. If the land is healthy, the people are healthy. If the water is healthy, the people are healthy. That's literally it: that's the answer to climate change in our territory.

*"The way that we sculpted our territory is so subtle that European explorers just couldn't understand it. There's a reason why our forest floors are beautiful and soft, there's a reason why our rivers are beautiful and accessible, there's a reason why things are not accessible, there's a reason why we left things difficult to get to, there's a reason for everything, when you've lived in one place for so long."*



The Storytelling Houses concept was developed as a critique to the Primitive Hut typically taught as a first year assignment in most architectural schools. Sierra argues that the Primitive Hut is a racist tool for upholding Western architectural ideals whilst placing Indigenous approaches to design on a linear timeline. Similar to Darwin's famous theory of evolution image which also upholds white supremacist ideology by placing Black & Indigenous people further back on the evolutionary timeline.

The Storytelling Houses are developed from Sierra's etiological design process and are rooted in the Kwakwaka'wakw story of Dzunukwa as told to her by her father. Sierra chose to create this easily assembled temporary and mobile structure that could quickly take up space in public. Space meant for oral history, storytelling, memory keeping, and intergenerational sharing in urban spaces as a disruptor to colonial urban expansion. It is intentionally open to the elements and is meant as a direct critique of the Primitive Hut and white supremacy in design.

*Listen to the entire interview recorded January 14, 2021 (released March 29) at [www.remeshadesign.com/designunmuted/episode04](http://www.remeshadesign.com/designunmuted/episode04)*











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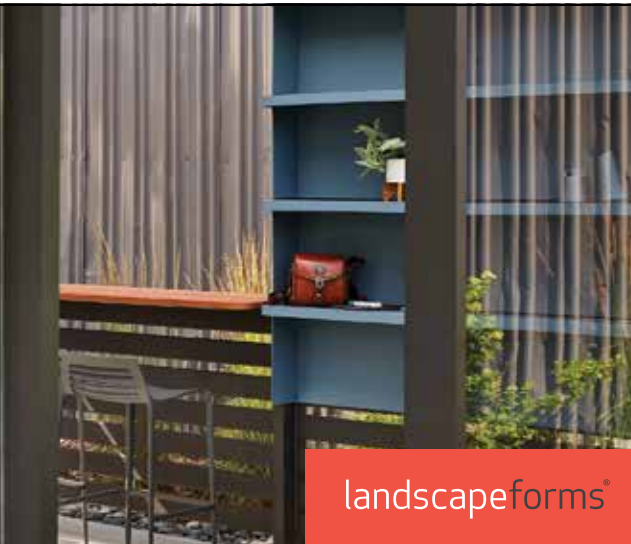
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Horticultural therapy is the participation in horticultural activities facilitated by a registered horticultural therapist to achieve specific goals within an established treatment, rehabilitation, or vocational plan. Horticultural therapy is an active process which occurs in the context of an established treatment plan where the process itself is considered the therapeutic activity rather than the end product.

—cited by American Horticultural Therapy Association



# Horticultural therapy:

## cultivating mental and physical health

By Takashi Tomono

*We approached Takashi Tomono, BCSLA Intern and Landscape Development Planner with the City of Vancouver, who previously practiced horticultural therapy to learn more about the profession and the associated health and wellness benefits.*

I practiced horticultural therapy for two years in Kansas state after being drawn to the profession while completing my undergraduate studies in horticulture. While doing my undergrad, I participated in research on the five senses and horticulture, which made me aware that horticulture has a lot more to offer than cultivating crops (vegetables, fruits, and flowers). Horticultural therapy can help improve cognitive function, task initiation, speech and social skills, as well as aiding in physical rehabilitation.

After my undergrad, I pursued a Master's in Horticultural Therapy, then worked as a practitioner. I engaged with people with physical injuries and challenges, such as wheelchair users, as well as people with dementia, Down Syndrome, and autism. I practiced with youth, seniors, and people with disabilities of different severity at a variety of locations such as schools, retirement homes, commercial greenhouses and hospitals.

Treatment activities and duration are developed by a registered practitioner based on the participant's capacity, needs and goals, however, most sessions are conducted in groups and include planting seeds, caring for plants including watering, fertilizing, pest control, as well as harvesting, transplanting and propagating. Participants receive benefits offered from engagement in a broad range of occupational, educational and social activities; stimulation of the five senses; observing and caring for plant life for a complete life cycle within a short period of time, making it easy to set and realize goals; contact with living materials; and physical activity outdoors.

Given the right context and project, landscape architects can introduce elements to outdoor spaces that support horticultural therapy programs and a deep, hands-on connection to nature through plant cultivation. Whether it be accessible community garden beds, potting benches, or a greenhouse, elements can be incorporated that offer a broad range of people the therapeutic benefits of growing and caring for plants.



# Feeling through the frame:

## Space and place from the margins of an idealized city

By Danya Fast, PhD

**This photo essay is a collaboration with one of the young people with whom I conducted research in Vancouver, BC. Jordan (a pseudonym) was 18 years old when he hitchhiked from Toronto to Vancouver in 2002. Once there, he told me, his addiction to heroin “completely took over,” and he became immersed in cycles of urban poverty, drug use, and crime. He also had big dreams of place in the city, frequently expressing a desire to go to university, rebuild a relationship with his daughter, and find a nice apartment in the West End. He and I met in 2008, when he was 24 years old. He took these photographs approximately four years later. Jordan died of a drug overdose in 2016, before he had the chance to see his photo essay, titled “Two Faced,” displayed as a part of various exhibits. This piece is dedicated to him.**

It looked like it was going to rain as I waited for Jordan outside the entrance to his single room occupancy hotel (SRO) in the Downtown Eastside in the fall of 2012. He rarely invited me inside, and often referred to the building where he lived as a “shit hole.” When he finally emerged, he informed me there was a community garden he wanted to photograph, located several blocks away. This was a departure from our usual itineraries, since we rarely strayed more than a few blocks from his SRO and the handful of other places in the Downtown Eastside he went to on a daily basis.

As we walked east toward the garden, Jordan told me that he was several days “clean” (off heroin). This included the prescription heroin he was receiving as part of a new drug trial. “I don’t want to be a drug addict,” he said flatly in response to my questions about why he had quit the trial (rumor was that the waiting list was several hundred people long). “I don’t want to be labelled as that,” he continued, almost angrily. “As a junkie down here who’s going nowhere.”

Jordan was well known in the Downtown Eastside. Walking that day, we exchanged greetings with nearly everyone we saw, Jordan stopping to make introductions when he felt like it. “I know everyone down here,” he grinned. “But I care what society sees me as. I don’t go to food lines, I don’t go to any shit like that. I eat at home. I buy my own food at a regular store.” He looked at me, possibly assessing whether I was taking his statements seriously. Given the meager amount of his monthly social assistance payments, we both knew that this defiant rejection of Downtown Eastside services for the urban poor was more wishful thinking than something that could be easily enacted in reality.

As we arrived at the garden, Jordan changed the subject. He talked about how much he loved “normal stuff,” like flowers, gardening and being in nature. He snapped some photographs. These would be a stark contrast to the other images he had taken in the weeks prior, which focused on the most degraded features of urban space, such as



the run-down alleyways, concrete alcoves, and empty lots where he had slept and used drugs. The world he captured on camera was polarized between beauty and filth. Jordan later articulated that his photo essay was about what is visible on the surface of an internationally celebrated city like Vancouver, and what is hidden from public view. Through his photo essay, Jordan seemed to be positioning himself as a part of both of these landscapes.

Photos courtesy of Danya Fast



do" in the city diverged significantly from his frequent laments about being irrevocably "stuck" in the Downtown Eastside.

"I pretty much sit at home," Jordan had said dejectedly on more than one occasion, most recently in response to a comment I made that he seemed to take the same photographs over and over again. My well-meaning inquiries about why he did not take pictures of other areas in the city had eventually forced him into a shameful confession. "I don't leave this area," he admitted, cringing. "I think I'm too chickenshit to do it. I haven't left the Downtown Eastside. I'm afraid to get lost." From that point on, Jordan did take more photographs of parts of the city that were foreign to him, albeit usually from his vantage point in the Downtown Eastside.



As part of my ethnographic work in downtown Vancouver, from 2011 to 2016 I worked with a group of 15 young people on creating photo essays related to their sense of place in the city. Some of these individuals referred to themselves as "street youth," although most did not. In different moments, they described themselves as out-of-control "drug addicts," "clean," or in the process of "getting clean"; homeless, "in between places," or in the process of "getting a place"; and doing crime, making money "the honest way," or in the process of "going straight"—all in the context of Greater Vancouver's multiple and diffuse street-based drug scenes. Just as often, young people actively inhabited other social categories and placed themselves within other urban narratives. For example, in many moments they aligned themselves with those they referred to as "normal" urban citizens, pursuing opportunities for work, leisure, and home-making in one of the world's most beautiful and livable cities.



For Jordan and a number of others, the process of creating these photo essays was highly performative.<sup>1</sup> It created space for them to re-engage with the city in relation to particular memories, life events, and dreams for the future. Photo essays often illustrated what was at stake for young people during a particular moment in their lives, but they also illustrated their desires to articulate new stakes in the city. Through their photo essays, young people reimagined the possibilities of place in Vancouver, and asserted alternative forms of belonging in the city beyond those typically ascribed to them.

*Danya Fast is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Medicine at the University of British Columbia. Since 2007, her research in Vancouver, Canada, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, has focused on how young people in the social, spatial and economic margins understand and experience their place in the city. Her research is supported by the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, US National Institutes of Health, and the Vancouver and SickKids Foundations. Danya lives and works on unceded Indigenous territories, including the territories of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), səliłwə7ə7 (Tsleil-Waututh), and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) First Nations.*

That day in the garden, Jordan emphasized, "I haven't always been like this—I've spent a year clean [off drugs] here, too. And I loved it. I love Vancouver. There's so much to see and do here. I'm still a great athlete, I still roller blade along the beach here, all summer long." He looked at me again, perhaps again wondering if I was going to explicitly question the way that he continually reframed his sense of place in Vancouver. His insistence that there was "so much to see and

<sup>1</sup> Irving, Andrew. 2007. 'Ethnography, Art, and Death'. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13(1): 185–208.



# Who has the right to reallocated space?

## Tips for designing with the needs and desires of diverse users at the core

By Mitchell Reardon & Emma Clayton Jones, Happy City

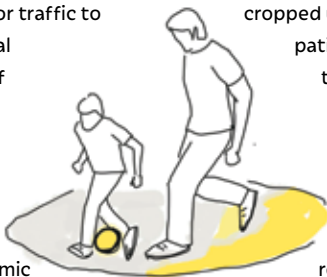
Municipalities around the world are rapidly adjusting policies to make it easy to reallocate main street space from parking or traffic to local business. This rapid, tactical approach is an important part of holistic pandemic recovery for main streets across Canada.

These decisions are hailed as triple bottom line solutions: supporting public health, economic recovery, and people's desires to use outdoor space. But as municipalities move quickly to offer cafes, restaurants, bars—and in some cases, retailers and services—the space to sprawl onto sidewalks and streets, it raises important questions about the right to the city: What are the effects of expanding privatized space into the public realm? At whose cost does this allocation take place? And what priorities do these decisions communicate about aesthetics and activities that are acceptable and valuable in outdoor space?

Rarely is an urban planning decision good for all, and access to main street space has always been contested. At any given time, most streets host an ecosystem of stakeholders and uses: people commuting by car, on foot and by bike; those who shop and consume food and drinks; people who use the street to gather or to exercise; and homeless residents who sleep on the street, to name a few. Reallocating space on streets adds new conflicts to the power struggle. To plan a just recovery from COVID-19, street reallocations initiatives must meet the needs and desires of diverse users, particularly those who are low-income and marginalized.

### Tension in use of space

Tensions between main street users have cropped up as quickly as new outdoor patios. We'll outline a number of them.



Here's a revealing example, seen in a tension between restaurants and patios in Queen's New York. A restaurant owner erupted in rage when a man was playing football with his son beside the owner's new outdoor patio. He angrily told the *New York Post*: "They make me explode!"<sup>1</sup>

**"I say people are trying to eat dinner, can you play down the street or in the park? He say, 'So what?!' Looked at me like I'm nuts," the store owner added. "They are supposed to have a cop here. There is no cop here."**

While opening street space to more uses is widely viewed as a lean, tactical approach, it also risks creating tensions where reallocated space for restaurants and bars displaces, and increases surveillance of racialized, homeless, and other street-involved people.



For example, imagine a curb or street space where low-income or homeless people had previously gathered to drink alcohol or use drugs being transformed into a private patio. While the space might still be used for drinking alcohol, it suddenly serves only more

affluent users. Not only does this reallocation decision mean that low-income or homeless people cannot afford to drink on the patio, but it also might create the conditions to increase surveillance (from restaurant patrons, and in some cases security and police) on the street, further limiting homeless or other marginalized peoples' abilities to comfortably exist in the area. The power imbalances inherent within these tensions mean they are unlikely to be documented and as such, can be difficult to address.



Tensions have also emerged between businesses with conflicting priorities and approaches to attracting customers. In Pacific Grove, California, a widely lauded initiative to allow restaurants to expand patios onto sidewalks and parking spaces was nixed just five days after rolling out.<sup>2</sup> Despite the immediate success of the initiative for restaurant owners who attract customers on foot—one reports her sales immediately shot up by 200 per cent compared to the week before—it received strong pushback from retailers and service businesses worried about losing parking space for customers who drive.

Even within the food service industry, inequity is evident. This can be seen in tensions that arise when reallocation of streets displaces longstanding food vendors. In Manhattan, for example, a halal vendor is fighting with a hotel chain's restaurants about who has the right to use a small piece of sidewalk. A video<sup>3</sup> shows the



conflict between the vendor, attempting to show up for work in the space he has used for 10 years, and the hotel personnel claiming the business now has the right to use the space.<sup>4</sup>

## It's messy. Now what?

While these decisions about reallocating streets are complex and easy to make too hastily, cities must take action to create people-friendly streets that support social, physical and economic recovery from COVID-19. Here are five essential considerations to ensure action is equitable:

### 1. Be careful with what you privatize

Once a business takes over a street space, the area goes from being part of the public domain toward being private, even if just temporarily. This can support business, but comes with two important caveats.

Parking spaces designated for people with disabilities should be completely off limits for reallocation. In fact, consider adding additional disability spaces to promote equitable access to the enhanced public realm. Improving bus stops could also be a way to ensure street reallocation is equitable. For example, Halifax is pioneering "stoplets"<sup>5</sup>—expanded bus stops where people can comfortably relax while waiting—as a way to enhance public space and the transit experience.

Work with local businesses, the surrounding community and transportation planners to determine the extent of the reallocation. Completely removing cars may work well on some streets, like in Downtown Kelowna<sup>6</sup>, but may present too many challenges on others.



### 2. Even when working fast, don't take shortcuts on process

Because each street brings unique complexities, it is essential to ensure the reallocation design process considers the full range of user perspectives. Thoughtful co-creation doesn't need to be time consuming. One of the strengths of tactical urbanism is creating interventions as "real-time renders" to test ideas. Engaging neighbours, visitors and people with diverse abilities, experiences and perspectives can occur directly on-site as people pass by. In a matter of hours, during construction or shortly after, key community insights can be used to enhance an intervention and adjust it to better meet the needs of those around it.

### 3. Expand public space, too

Just as there's a strong economic argument for reallocating street and parking space for local businesses, there's a clear public health case for transforming streets into spaces where people can move or linger, without a private vehicle. This could mean allocating space for public gatherings, programming by community groups, and more.

This double-pronged approach can support community and business in a symbiotic strategy that underlines that the success of main streets and surrounding communities is intertwined. It's an approach that is invigorating patios and the public realm along Lonsdale Avenue in North Vancouver.<sup>7</sup>

### 4. Measure what matters

Welcoming feedback from businesses and residents through online surveys will help take the pulse on ongoing shifts. Online surveying, however, tends to garner the strongest, loudest opinions. It also relies on respondent proactivity and internet connections, both of which privilege wealthier, and typically white submissions. This can make it harder to assess how most people using the sites actually feel about them.

On-site subjective well-being surveys<sup>8</sup> offer a clearer understanding of how people feel while

visiting the sites, whereas behaviour observation offers snapshots of the frequency of use, and what people are doing while they visit. While these approaches have limitations of their own, they help cities look beyond anecdotal hyperbole to better assess how—and by whom—space is being used, and whether it is fulfilling intended goals. And in cases where digital feedback is being solicited, consider on-site placards, encouraging people to share their feedback via phone numbers, QR codes and email addresses, to encourage a broader share of voices to get engaged.

### 5. Focus on impact, not kilometres converted

It can be tempting to throw up some barriers along an extended stretch of underused space and claim to have created a giant new public space. But if people aren't socializing, walking or playing on the street, what has really been accomplished? Public spaces don't have to be big to be valuable.<sup>9</sup> Just as private patios succeed when they create a sense of place, so too can small public spaces when they make people feel comfortable, connected and included.



### Making space for people

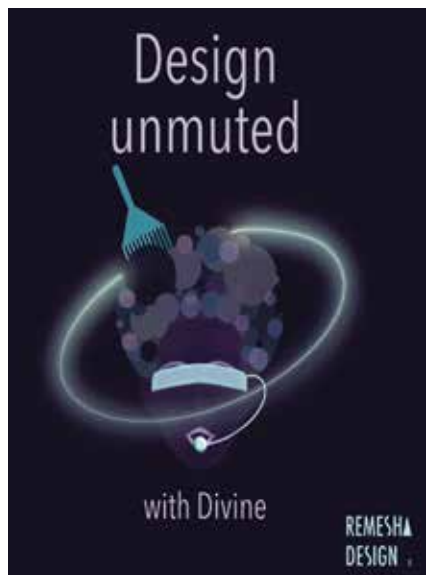
In most cities, car-dominated streets take up nearly 30 per cent of total land. This use of the public realm far exceeds what is allocated for parks and public spaces. Creating more space for people in densifying, space-constrained cities is an important goal. Ensuring that this occurs in a way that supports public health and safety, as well as just pandemic recovery, is vital to the long-term well-being of our main streets, communities and cities.

*This article is part of a larger series published by the Canadian Urban Institute called "Bring Back Main Street." Find out more and join the national conversation at [bringbackmainstreet.ca](http://bringbackmainstreet.ca)*

<sup>1</sup> "De Blasio's 'open streets' rapidly vanishing, causing fights among neighbors." *NY Post*, June 28, 2020. Accessed 3.11.2021 [bit.ly/NYPPost2020628](http://bit.ly/NYPPost2020628) <sup>2</sup> "Pacific Grove City Council nixes outdoor dining experiment just five days after it began." *Monterey County Weekly*, June 18, 2020. Accessed 3.11.2021. [bit.ly/MCW2020618](http://bit.ly/MCW2020618) <sup>3</sup> "SVP Member Waleed Salama, halal cart vendor on 46th & 8th, is trying to return to work" Facebook video, June 25, 2020. Accessed 3.11.2021. [bit.ly/3vj3Qby](http://bit.ly/3vj3Qby) <sup>4</sup> "Tensions are rising over how crowded sidewalks are getting along King West right now" *BlogTO*, July 10, 2020. Accessed 3.11.2021 [bit.ly/BT2020710](http://bit.ly/BT2020710) <sup>5</sup> "Stoplet

on Spring Garden Road" Accessed 3.11.2021 [bit.ly/SpringGdnRd](http://bit.ly/SpringGdnRd) <sup>6</sup> "Kelowna restaurants adapt to the new normal as they move to patio service on this downtown street." *Info News*, July 2, 2020 Accessed 3.11.2021. [bit.ly/Info202072](http://bit.ly/Info202072) <sup>7</sup> "City of North Van OKs slimmer streets, booze in parks." *North Shore News*, June 2, 2020. Accessed 3.11.2021. [bit.ly/NSN202062](http://bit.ly/NSN202062) <sup>8</sup> "Pavement-to-Plaza Wellbeing Assessment." *Happy City*. Accessed 3.11.2021 [bit.ly/PtoPWA](http://bit.ly/PtoPWA) <sup>9</sup> "Can we design more trusting public spaces?" *Medium.com*, June 24, 2019. Accessed March 11, 2021. [bit.ly/TrustingPublicSpace](http://bit.ly/TrustingPublicSpace)





### Podcast: Design Unmuted with Divine

Freshly launched, Design Unmuted is a Vancouver-based podcast that is centered around marginalized voices in design, art, and all things creative. The host, Divine Ndemeye, BCSLA Intern, is a landscape designer, 2020 Landscape Architecture Foundation National Olmsted Scholar, and self-proclaimed social critic. The first three episodes include an introduction, Black Experiences in Space: Beyond Racism, and Unpacking Black Landscapes: Creative Resistance with guests Petros Kusmu, Rumbi Zinyemba, and Kofi Boone. Join Divine as she explores the intersections between landscape, design, culture, identity, social equity all while having fun and listening to great music.

*You can find the podcast on Apple podcast, Spotify, Google Podcast, TuneIn, Podbean and online at [www.remeshadesign.com/designunmuted](http://www.remeshadesign.com/designunmuted). You can also follow the Instagram page at [@remesha\\_design\\_unmuted](https://www.instagram.com/remesha_design_unmuted)*

—Miriam Plishka



### Our Happy Life: Architecture and Well-Being in the Age of Emotional Capitalism

This exhibition catalogue is a beautifully produced graphic artefact and burning critique of the analysis of happiness. In Garutti's introductory essay, he notes that the exhibition "questions how the political formation of the happiness agenda—and the tools of its implementation—is directly and indirectly influencing the design of our built environment." He goes on to note that such analyses are often subjective, yet are used to modify and establish standards, practices and codes that affect all people and the environment. As we in our industry incorporate such metrics into spatial design, this offering by the CCA provokes deeper thinking about the nuances of what well-being actually means, and by whose definition.

*Much of the 2019 exhibition may be found online at <http://bit.ly/CCAOHL>  
Edited by Francesco Garutti  
Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) /  
Sternberg Press*

—Teena Aujla



### Data driven: World Happiness Report results for 2020

The Happiness Research Institute released its eighth World Happiness Report in 2020. The research institute, renowned for its work in qualitative and quantitative research on well-being, happiness, and quality of life, has decided to focus the 2020 report on the social, urban, and natural environment. The report reaffirms the positive correlation between green spaces and happiness, and most interestingly, the same relationship between achieving sustainable development goals and subjective well-being of the current generation. As a landscape architect practicing in a climate emergency, this is incredible motivation to incorporate sustainable landscape practices as much as possible, if only for our own happiness and well-being.

*Helliwell, John F., Richard Layard, Jeffrey Sachs, and Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, eds. 2020. World Happiness Report 2020. New York: Sustainable Development Solutions Network*

—Pearl Yip

## AWARD

# Recognition for Sitelines

The BCSLA is pleased to announce that *Sitelines* was recognized with a gold award in the Association Publishing category of the 2020 MarCom Awards, one of the largest, most-respected creative competitions in the world, honouring excellence in marketing and communication. Congratulations to the Sitelines Editorial Advisory Board and to all of *Sitelines'* contributors.

of course I wish  
for what I do not have  
but I do not let this  
blind me to what  
riches grow in my garden

I am learning how to  
water what is already here  
nurture what is already beautiful  
instead of longing for next year's crop

this is the slow and practiced labour  
of happiness.

—Lindi Nolte



Artwork: "Fynbos"  
By Gideon Nel

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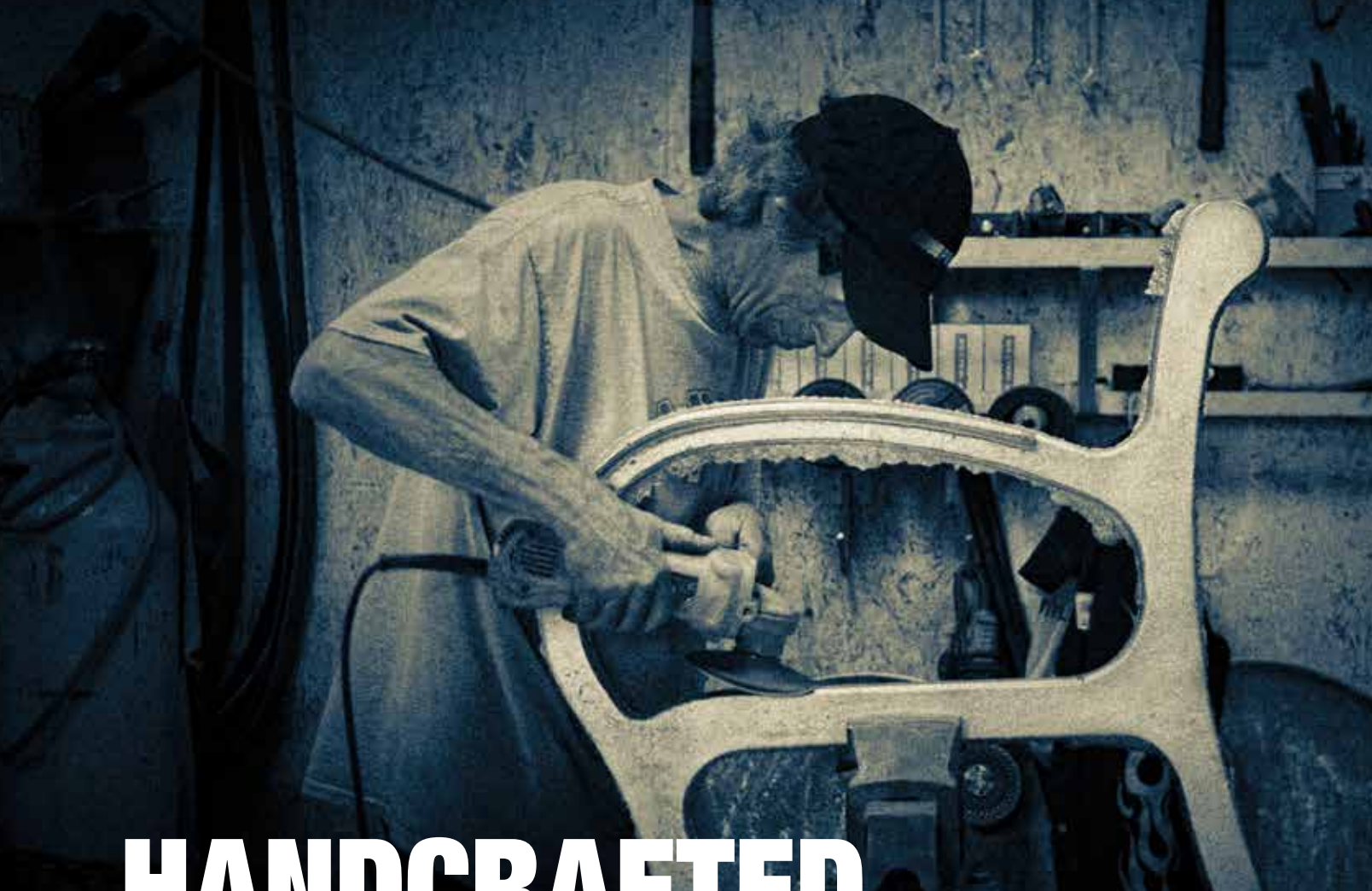


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