

JAN HAENRAETS + ALYSSA SCHWANN

A NON-URBAN APPROACH X3

FR_RESUMÉ

TROUVER L'ESPRIT DU LIEU

Le concept d'une « approche non urbaine » ou d'une « désurbanisation » pourrait encadrer une nouvelle façon d'envisager le paysage et le design urbain. Dans une approche non urbaine « la petitesse » est un élément essentiel de la démarche. Il nous permet de combiner la créativité du design aux connaissances techniques pour aménager des lieux atteignant une connexion optimale avec l'identité locale. Il permet aussi des utilisations techniquement novatrices et avant-gardistes de la matérialité et de l'horticulture, tout en tendant continuellement vers une conscience écologique.

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THE WORLD'S SOCIETIES have become largely urban; nearly everywhere, land has been occupied or colonized. Where once identity and community were linked to the land and to natural systems, the landscape is being stripped away, new layers added. During this process of transformation, society has become accustomed to an “urban approach”: a reliance on interventions that inject lost or absent greenery into our cities.

The degree of green intervention is widely varied. Urban areas in Europe such as Paris, Vienna and Edinburgh are renowned for the green space within their historic centers. Boston achieved similar recognition for the park framework created by Frederick Law Olmsted. These successes, which are often considered

ideal visions for urban areas, were largely a result of visionary long-term planning. They hold significant value, but they are not without shortcomings. The greenery often reflects 19th century park design concepts in what might be classified as urban-style – an over-designed landscape architecture with only a limited connection to the original identity of the pre-urbanized underlying land. These green places are a superimposed idealistic image, far removed from the essential genius loci of the place.

A QUESTION OF IDENTITY

In many urban areas, landscape continues to be addressed as an afterthought or secondary priority. Green space and landscape interventions largely occur as

PROJECT1_RENDERING_ ART GALLERY OF GREATER VICTORIA



short-term mitigation, rather than as sustainable holistic visions. For instance, across much of Asia and South America, the absence of visionary green space in cities continues to result in concretized unhealthy environments with low quality materiality and little attention given to biodiversity or resiliency. The outcome is an attempt to create a new context rather than a condition where urban design springs from the pre-existing context.

It should be noted that globalization, economic integration, media and interconnectivity are increasingly influencing aesthetic design. Will such trends further contribute towards an erosion of the distinctive identity of each place and contribute to potential high levels of 'transferability' in global urban centres? If so, we can expect a steady erosion of local identity.

IS THERE AN ALTERNATIVE IDEAL?

In *Second Nature*, Adriaan Geuze and Matthew Skjonsberg argue that there can, indeed, be a "radical humane

reformulation of the relationship between the urban and rural, amplifying civilization's cultural legacy." Their approach relies on making landscape in advance of the city, and in doing so, safeguarding landscape's link to nature. The idea is to blur the existing divide between urban and natural, urban and local character: "to disavow the destruction of wilderness from this day forward and to create new ecologies – a

second nature that reconciles the urban and rural to the benefit of both." At a large scale, Geuze and Skjonsberg argue, the conversion of sites into a new type of nature is a proven and feasible method.

CONSULTING THE GENIUS LOCI

There is logic in this large-scale thinking, but what of "the small"? How does the small figure in new urban approaches? Small-scale local initiatives can indeed have a major impact. A respect for local identity and place does not necessarily require large and overly obvious strokes in design, urban planning or landscape architecture, but rather small, even abstract references, can achieve these objectives.

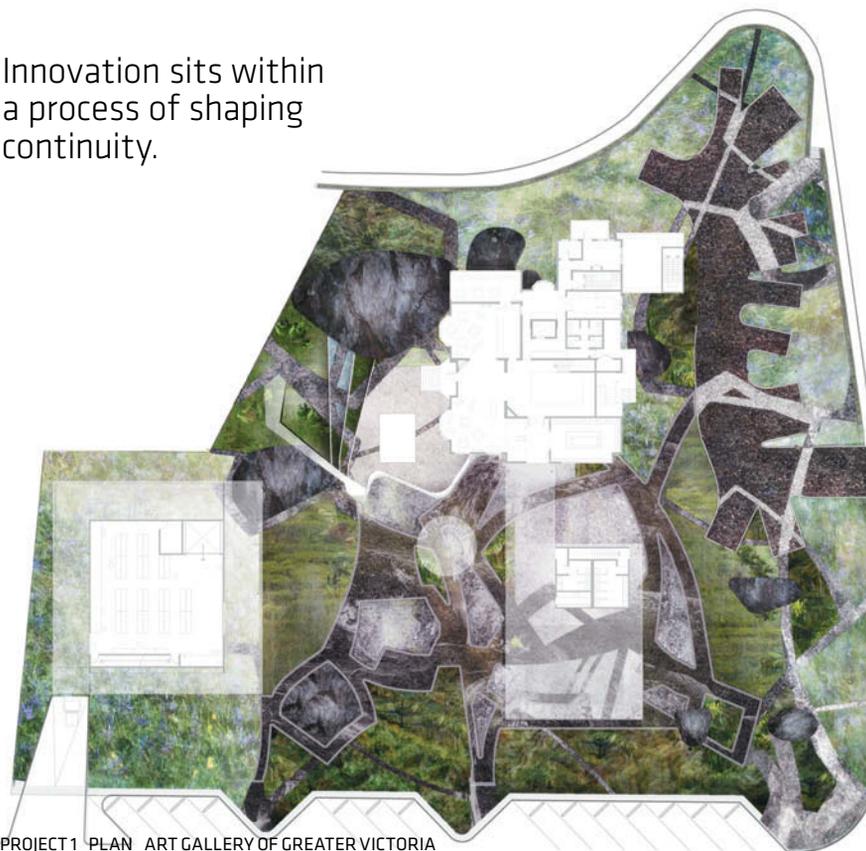
Careful consideration of place and local identity is essential to site-specific design. Through observation and assessment, we engage with the historical continuum of the site, balancing the past, the future and place. Innovation sits within a process of shaping continuity.

Developing landscape strategies that respond to the roots of place demands ongoing experimentation, examination and design exploration. James McKinnon, in his book *The Once and Future World*, speaks of "baseline memory", and champions a reconnection with our pre-urban footprint. If humans subconsciously accept decreased levels of landscape quality and local identity with every generation, then our urban environments will steadily become "de-natural".

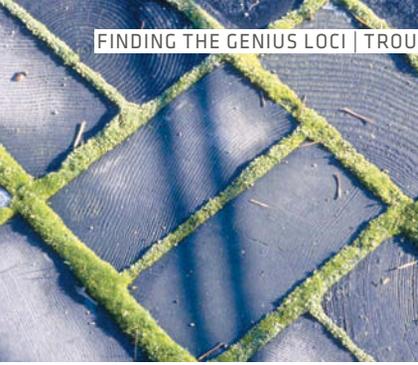


PROJECT 2_RENDERING_62M, WINNIPEG

Innovation sits within a process of shaping continuity.



PROJECT 1_PLAN_ART GALLERY OF GREATER VICTORIA



1 2

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THE NON-URBAN APPROACH

The concept of a “non-urban approach” or a “de-urbanisation” could frame a renewed way of envisioning landscape and urban design. The non-urban approach echoes Geuze and Skjonsberg’s idea to build a *second nature* which reconnects with the genius loci. In a non-urban approach “the small” is essential to the process. It enables us to combine design creativity with technical knowledge to create places that achieve optimal connection with local identity; it allows for technical innovative and cutting edge uses of materiality and horticulture, while continuously striving for ecological consciousness. By re-engaging with place, we can potentially achieve a harmonious co-existence between urban and rural, the natural and cultural, and the past and future.

PROJECT 1

THE ART GALLERY OF GREATER VICTORIA

The Gallery is re-imagined as a village of small pavilions enfolded in a cascade of landscapes: the BC Woodland with rocks and mosses, the Gary Oak and wildflower ecosystem, and the Japanese-inspired garden. Expansive glass walls create external animation, engaging with the surroundings. Paths are fluid and inviting, and the choreography weaves the property back into the fabric of the neighborhood. A dedicated upper level gallery floor rises over the site, nested in the existing dense tree canopy of towering oaks and sequoias.

Winner of Future Building of the Year at the World Architecture Festival. Team: 5468796 Architecture, numberTEN Architectural Group, Atelier Anonymous. Rendering courtesy of 5468796 Architects, 2013. Plan courtesy of Atelier Anonymous, 2013

PROJECT 2

62M, WINNIPEG

The landscape creates a “soft green foot” for the residence. Here, 62 native Jack Pines are set within a bed of mixed pinecones, with ferns planted between the pines. Pinecone-shaped planting beds will be planted with four herbaceous species: wild garlic, wild strawberry, lavender and fireweed. Rendering courtesy of 5468796 Architects, 2013

PROJECT 3

RAILTOWN, VANCOUVER

The recycled wood (burnt) blocks recall the historic wood paving which is layered under Dunlevy Street and is still visible where the asphalt has broken away. Atelier Anonymous used found or readily available materials to establish a plinth to root the building on the site, without distracting from the newly designed window details.

L'innovation s'inscrit dans une démarche de modulation de la continuité.



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1 PAVING DETAIL (1989) 2 UNDATED 3 RECONSTRUCTION OF A STREETCAR LINE (1912) 4+5 HISTORIC WOOD BLOCK PAVING
PHOTOS 1-3 COURTESY OF CITY OF VANCOUVER ARCHIVES
4+5 COURTESY ATELIER ANONYMOUS 2014.

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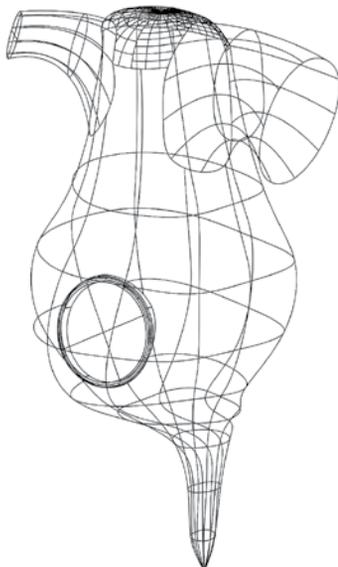
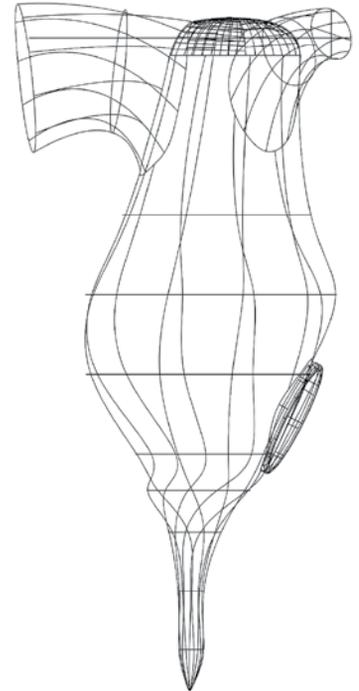
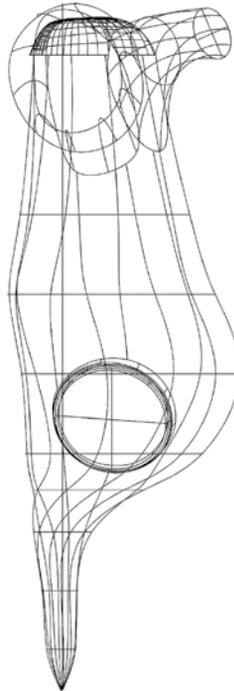
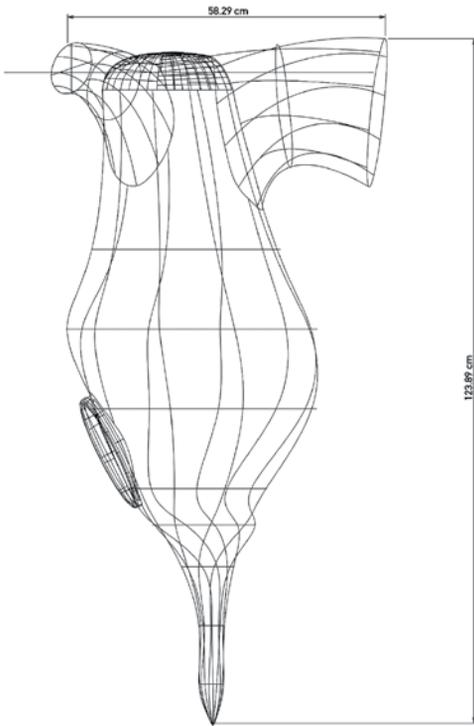
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2015
vol.17_no.1 | 8.00\$



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LANDSCAPES PAYSAGES

ISSN 1492-9600

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Published by | Publié par :



1630 Ness Avenue, Suite 300, Winnipeg, MB R3J 3X1
Tel.: 204.947.0222 | Fax: 204.947.2047 | www.naylor.com

Group Publisher | Éditeur de groupe : Bill McDougall

Naylor Editor | Rédactrice Naylor : Andrea Németh

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Matthew Nobess, Trevor Perrault

Layout & Design | Mise en page et conception graphique : Emma Law

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Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: Naylor (Canada) Inc.,
Distribution Dept., 1630 Ness Avenue, Suite 300, Winnipeg, MB R3J 3X1

Canadian Publication Agreement #40064978
PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 2015/CSL-Q0115/5262

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