



CIVIC HORTICULTURE CONFERENCE

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PRESENTED BY: THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE FOUNDATION & PENNSYLVANIA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

WITH SUPPORT FROM: LANDSCAPE FORMS

Abstracts

Setting the Stage: History and Issues

David B. Brownlee

Green (Gridded) Town

For more than three centuries, Philadelphia has been defined by its strong landscape geometries, and these changing shapes have reflected our ideals. Today's city is a palimpsest of what we have thought in the past. Still visible are the imprints of the Enlightenment anti-medievalism of William Penn, the more traditional preferences of the settlers he recruited, the physiocratic notions of the founders of the American republic, the picturesque tastes of the Victorian era, the progressivism of the City Beautiful Movement, the abstraction of the International Style, and the contextualism of the "Philadelphia School." Today, as Penn's "Green Country Town" embraces another kind of greenness, the powerful forms of its planning history and the ideas that inspired them are still alive, in both our memories and everyday experiences

Panel 1: The Street

Moderator:

Harris M. Steinberg, FAIA

The Street

The relationship between streets and open space enjoys a privileged place in Philadelphia's history - dating to William Penn's and Thomas Holmes' seminal *Portraiture of the City of Philadelphia* first published in London in 1683. The Enlightenment-era portraiture, or plan of the city, depicted a rational grid of streets across two square miles which was punctuated by five public squares. These streets and squares gave Philadelphia its ineffable character and distinctly human scale - together they established the template for the best of Philadelphia's urbanism for over three centuries.

Today, Philadelphians are building on this legacy of the interrelationship between the street and horticulture. From the recently completed Race Street Pier, an early action of the recently-adopted master plan for the Central Delaware, to *Green2015*, an action plan to add 500-acres of open space to Philadelphia by 2015 to meet a sustainability goal of the current mayoral administration, streets are increasingly understood as integral players in linking people, communities, economies and ecologies in a post-industrial city working to redefine itself for the 21st century.



This presentation will provide an overview of recent and current planning initiatives in Philadelphia led by PennPraxis – the applied research arm of the School of Design at the University of Pennsylvania. From the landmark 2006-2007 *A Civic Vision for the Central Delaware* which proposed the extension of a street grid and series of parks and trails across 1100-acres of waterfront property to a current project designed to animate civic life along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, PennPraxis' civic visioning work is supported by robust civic engagement designed to cultivate a culture of informed stewards of the built environment at the confluence of politics, policy, philanthropy and civic values.

Speakers:

Raymond Jungles, FASLA

1111 Lincoln Road, Miami Beach, FL

Something wild happened on this historic street, one of America's first pedestrian malls. Originally the western terminus of Morris Lapidus's historic Lincoln Road Mall, the 1100 block was converted back to four lanes of parking and traffic congestion in the 60's. Visionary developer, Robert Wennett, paired Herzog & de Meuron with Raymond Jungles, Inc. in a spectacular effort to give the space back to the people and plants. My point of departure was to bring the wilds of the Everglades, mere miles to the west, back into the city, for the public's benefit. Nicknamed "the Urban Glade," by the City of Miami Beach's Planning Department, both humans and local fauna find a healthy habitat for living.

Water, the central ingredient in the public plaza/garden, takes the form of placid reflection ponds, tied into one living system, using biofiltration and UV filtration with minimal energy requirements. The water invites the sky, architecture and living things into the garden through reflected light and shadows. Gentle sounds emanate from five different sources, as cascades pull the surfaces taut. Native Live Oak, Bald Cypress, Pond Apple and Lignum Vitae trees thrive due to advanced soil placement techniques. Movement and participation are encouraged, and people have the freedom to mingle or find sanctuary.

Programmed events are commonplace, and the central portion of the site is protected from commercial exploitation, a restriction the developer placed on himself. Robert Wennett's lofty ideals have created a vibrant, educational urban garden. Property values and the highest retail rates on Lincoln Road have provided clear testimony that horticulture in the civic realm is relevant.

Matthew Urbanski

A Street is a Landscape is a Park is a Trail

Although there are certainly still new mega-parks projects in the works, it is becoming increasingly impossible to envision any city committing, or even being in possession of, the land and economic resources to create something like Central Park: a vast uncontaminated land trust in the middle of a city. Instead, we are increasingly working with sites that have been left behind, either by the retreat of industry, or by virtue of an irregular size. This evolution of "existing conditions," and the



drive for greater resourcefulness in the way we develop urban green space, has resulted in a generation of landscape architects who are optimistically disposed to look at practically any site and see in it the potential to support improved urban life, economic vitality, ecological health, and civic purpose.

This is particularly true of the truly innovative way that we now look at the human experience of the street. No longer a narrow nuisance of dirt and offal, no longer an echo of the roadway, distinguished as pedestrian space through liberal application of the 5 Bs (banners, bollards, benches, bricks, and Bradfords), the city street has come into its own as part of the landscape of the city. A greater degree of overlap is developing where the street is both an oasis from urban life and an important part of civic infrastructure – the very thing that allows the city to continue to grow and thrive.

A few projects that MVVA has worked on in the last several years will be used to illustrate this trend. Among these, the security-proofing of Pennsylvania Avenue at the White House stands out as being the most classically “streetscape” in its definition and resolution, despite the fact that one of the major premises of the project was that this stretch of Penn Ave would no longer carry car traffic. The most hybrid example of this recent work is Hudson Park and Boulevard, which is being developed specifically as public amenity that will catalyze economic growth through the development of a mid-block boulevard that is much wider than your average city sidewalk, and much narrower than a traditional park. Other projects used to illustrate the development of new ideas about the synergistic relationships between streetscapes, trails, plazas and linear parks will include the Bloomingdale Trail in Chicago, the North End of Union Square Park in New York, the Boston Children’s Museum Entry Plaza in Boston, Bailey Plaza at Cornell University, and the upper level of Allegheny Riverfront Park, in Pittsburgh.

Henry M. White, III **The Biophilic Street**

How are our cities and communities perceived in the public’s mind? Our streets emerge as the primary influence in establishing a sense of place. When we think of cities with strong visual identities, we often recall their signature streets and boulevards. What would Paris be without its Champs-Elysees, Barcelona without its Paseo de Gracia and Ramblas, Washington, DC without its Pennsylvania Avenue, or even Philadelphia without its Ben Franklin Parkway? These “green streets” cultivate a consistent linear spatial experience that provides valuable structural ordering, human comfort, sense of safety, and an increase of sense of spiritual well being. Often labeled as the “lungs of the city,” the scale of trees and their systematic layout become the primary street element that calms inherent urban visual chaos. The view of trees being an essential part of the city’s infrastructure – the equivalent to the street light, curb or traffic sign - still remains remote to many. My discussion will focus on the seen and unseen benefits of street trees in building a healthy and economically viable community.

In order for street trees to fulfill their spatial impact in defining a grand boulevard or leafy residential neighborhood street, there is a host of subsurface conditions required to establish their



sustainable and healthy state. The essential “invisible” street tree components will be explored within the context of the evolution of horticultural provisions and accommodations that address contemporary economic, regulatory, realities of maintenance and the influence on street tree planting intelligence.

Panel 2: The Productive Garden

Moderator:

James F. Lima

The Many Forms of the Productive Garden

After WWII, food production as integral to cities disappeared with the growth of globalized industrial food systems. But increasingly across the country, the “agropolis” is back.

This presentation will set the stage for this panel discussion by looking at how productive gardens take many forms, considering the various entity structures that operate and maintain them. Productive gardens are public, private or quasi-public places. Some are small neighborhood plots designed and maintained in a participatory process. Others have emerged within formal campus settings overseen by universities or public housing authorities. Elsewhere, planting beds on the rooftops of sprawling industrial warehouses are a prized local source of fresh produce, eggs and honey for locavore restaurants and farmers markets. The entities that operate and maintain these gardens range from traditional public parks agencies, to conservancies, Friends of groups, to BIDs and land trusts.

With this established framework, the panel will engage in a discussion of what public policy issues are raised by this fairly recent proliferation of productive civic landscapes? What lessons have been learned to inform shifts in economic, social, environmental, land use and educational policies at the federal, state and local levels? Recognizing that much has been written about the personal and community benefits from increased food security and other sustainable aspects of local food sourcing, this panel will be asked to consider how best to demonstrate that productive gardens are also very much in our regional and national interest.

Speakers:

Elena Brescia, RLA

The Productive Garden

How can we imagine a city as an environmental and cultural system? What are the alternatives to strictly formal, economic, and aesthetic attitudes toward urbanism? This presentation will discuss how landscape can generate a critical participatory effect, and help to envision new ways of intervening in city fabric at the local level.

I envision stewardship, grassroots participation, and neighborhood identity as ways to generate community-based change through the designed landscape. The outreach, design, and construction



process for SCAPE's award winning design for the 103rd Street Community garden, in partnership with the NY Restoration Project, will be presented. The idea of the productive garden will be explored through a focus on the garden's various features, from a rainwater barrel that supports community based agriculture, to cultivated plots, to play spaces and the accommodation of very different needs, ages, and activities in a very small space that has catalyzed the revitalization of the block and neighborhood. The park was in part conceptualized to be built by and was largely executed by local volunteers.

Mia Lehrer, FASLA **Reimagining Victory Gardens**

Does ketchup grow on trees? Do strawberries grow on supermarket shelves? Urbanization and industrialization have disconnected us from lands of bounty. This has affected the long and short term health of Americans with increased levels of obesity and diabetes reaching crisis levels. According to the *Journal of the American Medical Association* February 2010 issue, the rate at which US children are contracting chronic health conditions due to obesity and other risk factors has doubled from 12.8 percent in 1994 to 26.6 percent in 2006.

Is the Slow Food movement going to produce more gourmets and foodies? Is it changing how we shop? Is there a substantial change in how we plant our gardens, schools and underutilized lands? Farmer's markets have proliferated across America. The Los Angeles Farmer's Market now accepts food stamps. American wine consumption has escalated 27% since 2000. The attitude is changing radically towards growing food and healthy eating.

Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Detroit, to name a few, have adopted citywide food policies, everything from the regional food distribution system to zoning regulations regarding backyards chickens coops is being evaluated. Can you barter or sell what you grow? Pesticides have to be controlled. Citrus groves planted are for the sweet scent. Olive groves are planted for the "foliage and sculptural trunks." While people have planted fruit trees for decades in their homes, they did not harvest them.

Today Los Angeles based Food Forward harvests excess fruits and vegetables from private homes and public spaces for local distribution in food banks. SAGE (Sustainable Agriculture Education) in San Francisco, a nonprofit supporting regional food systems and multifunctional agriculture, promotes opportunities for beginning, immigrant, and established farmers to grow food at multiple scales providing food access and public education for local communities. School districts across the state are mandating locally sourced food and vegetables with demonstration gardens making their way into school yards and cooking making its way back into the curriculum. In larger tracks of land and utility corridors, farmers are hard at work.

Urban agriculture is a complex story that is not only about gardens, but is also dependent upon scale, the urban environment, distribution systems, policy, and partnerships. As a landscape architecture firm, we are involved in productive gardens on many scales S, M, L and XL; from community and residential productive food gardens to larger distribution systems and commercial



farming enterprises. Presented projects will include Orange County Great Park, a metropolitan park, Jordan Downs, a federal housing project, and the Natural History Museum, an urban laboratory and civic space. Working at multiple scales and with multiple partners, we are able to seek solutions that capitalize on and inspire policy while promoting access to good food and public health continuing to build upon and re-imagine victory gardens as a way for communities to join together and provide for themselves. We take a holistic approach creating an interconnected platform for the built environment.

How do we transform and interconnect people, infrastructure, relationships, policies and sustainability into a new kind of urban ecology that favors urban agriculture? How do we deal with the long term impact of this new urban food model? What will these types of interventions yield; greenhouses perched on the top of every skyscraper, vertical farming mammoths, privatized land banks, or democratized plots of land running through our cities? What IS the future of urban agriculture?

Thomas L. Woltz, FASLA

The Productive Garden: From City Beautiful to City Functional

From the Victorian Era through the City Beautiful Movement and into the Era of Ecology, the productive garden has played a variety of roles from the Ferme Ornee to Victory Garden and on to the Farm to Table Movement. This presentation will posit the next step in Civic Horticulture might be named the “City Functional Movement”, one that operates at the scale of performative urban landscape systems.

The very essence of the word garden conjures fecund visions of productivity, health and abundance but in our current era how we garden can vary dramatically and have serious implications, either positive or negative, for our communities, wildlife, and public health. When studying designed gardens and urban landscapes through the lens of Civic Horticulture, the word productive can take on meaning far beyond vegetables. Management methods, plant choices and design goals can establish new definitions of “productive” in the civic realm that blend concepts of the garden, agriculture and restoration ecology.

My presentation will illustrate this position with a range of projects designed by Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects that view ecological services as a critical part of the productivity of a garden. Central to these projects is a deep commitment to the aesthetic qualities of these landscapes and the importance of narrative to engender within the public a sense of stewardship rooted in the cultural construct of the Garden.

Projects will include a winery tasting room vegetable garden in Sonoma California framed by storm water management, a ‘biodiversity’ garden in Manhattan targeting bird habitat, pollinator gardens in urban settings and a vegetable garden in a Virginia public housing complex. A range of scales and projects will be presented to illustrate new definitions of productivity and performance in the Garden.



Panel 3: Parks and Plazas

Moderator:

Eric F. Kramer, ASLA

Talking Green: The Power of Language from Penn's Greene Countrie Towne to Today's Parks and Plazas

William Penn was selling real estate when he conceived of a Greene Countrie Towne in the city of brotherly love. It was an idealistic middle landscape — country and city — where 5 green squares linked by wide streets and homes with orchards and gardens would provide "a sweet and natural retreat from the noise and talk, and allows an opportunity for reflection." Thanks to Penn's strong foundation, in the centuries since, every time the nature/culture, city/country balance has seemed out of tilt, those who support green infrastructure development have turned to the same rhetorical flourishes about the power of nature in the city to cure larger social, economic, and even medical ills.

Those who promoted Fairmount Park saw bringing green into the city as the cure for the disease and social unrest of a growing city. They said, "in the harmonizing effects of nature, and in those social habits engendered by them [parks] brake down the curse of caste among us, resulting most frequently from habits of isolation." And as the men who supported the founding of a great temple of art at the end of the City Beautiful Movement's Benjamin Franklin Parkway wrote, "Give to that man, when he leaves the factory, the inspiration of art ... let him ... look down the Parkway and see everywhere before him beautiful buildings ... and no matter whether he lives in a garret or in a marble palace, he has the instinct of beauty latent within him and you have fed it and prevented it from being starved." Even those supporting today's greening programs like Philadelphia Green rely on these traditional rhetorical devices. "Horticulture is active, living, participatory and responsive. Working together, neighbors learn about horticulture while they build pride in their communities. A corporate executive who grows orchids in a greenhouse can enjoy the same thrill of growth as an inner city child with access to a small plot to plant a sweet potato vine."

This language is no doubt powerful. It's like a perfect advertising jingle that you can't argue with. And it has successfully rallied public and private forces around great public works of landscape. Yet it is so familiar and easy that we forget to look critically at what we are saying and how we are saying it. Constantly setting up a contrast between the decaying city and the fertility of the country, we demonize the city at its own expense. We build parks, but as a medicine for that which is truly urban, and at the expense of celebrating that which is positive about the city, and as a means of assimilating and quelling the fractious masses. Framing socio-economic benefits of urban horticulture in terms of corporate executives with their orchids and children growing sweet potatoes may well raise funds for urban greening, but it does so by stereotyping and casting even more distance between the two ends of the spectrum.

My challenge for the panelists would be for them to frame their own urban work within and in response to these categories. What are we saying when we build with natural elements in the city? How do you frame the interaction of nature and culture in your work without oversimplifying the categories? And how do you and your clients position the benefits of urban green spaces as a



means of getting them funded and built? And what do you truly believe are the impacts of your work outside of the physical implications of the work? Reflecting critically, have we moved beyond the rhetoric of Penn and his successors? Do we embrace it because we believe it, or because it works? What are the implications of what appears to be a more holistic approach to landscape urbanism and urban ecologies? And what is the potential future for how we frame the landscape of the city?

Speakers:

Keith McPeters

A New Civic Horticulture

Our perceptions of our cities have changed from the 19th to 20th centuries and with it our corresponding views of the roles of the urban and rural, the city and nature. The designed landscape, through architects and landscape architects, responded to these evolving perceptions in a wide ranging, comprehensive and confidently visionary manner through development of urban public parks, by Olmsted and others, the Garden City, the City Beautiful, the Modern Movement, and up through today. All of these visions proposed a renewal of the city and required the redefinition of its relationship to the country, the landscape, and nature.

As we enter the 21st century, our perceptions of the city continue to change. Cities are now considered as necessary places of dynamic change, capital investment and cultural and technological innovation. Cities are considered more vital, meaningful and livable. The potential of cities are increasingly defined in terms of providing “sustainable”, habitable and complete living environments. This potential is most often reflected in wide spread a culture desire for “greening” the city. For the designed landscape this litany of good intentions is poorly understood. A confusing array of design strategies and dialogues speak of nature, landscape, ecology, habitat, natural systems, biomimicry and biophilia as the goal or meaning of design.

As with the Victorian notions of a civic horticulture, earlier landscape and urban design movements and theories could speak from a more centralized or agreed upon definition of what “civic” or “beautiful” or “improved nature” might mean. There was agreement about who would decide which values defined the good intentions of an urban nature and a civic horticulture. Today, the question of who will decide and what will define a “civic horticulture” is not as easily determined. How is the contemporary designer to respond in a civic horticulture?

Through a critical look at some projects of Gustafson Guthrie Nichol, my talk will examine the different roles and definitions plants take on in the designed landscape. The projects will examine a wide range of a few projects to examine the different approaches to the designed landscape and how they might begin to determine a new “civic horticulture.”

The projects will include the Centennial Park Master Plan, Lurie Garden, North End Parks and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Campus.



Susan K. Weiler, RLA, FASLA
Everything Olde Is Nouveau Again

Civic horticulture has always been central to the development and sustenance of the civic and economic life of Philadelphia. William Penn’s notion of the Greene Country Towne was intended to attract buyers of his immense tract of real estate. While the more lucrative sale of grand estates along the Delaware waterfront that Penn had hoped for never materialized, his five great squares – carved out of the wilderness –projected a setting of safety and civility for prospective takers, and made Philadelphia one of the first planned cities in America.

Another generation held that Philadelphia could and should be the “City Beautiful” and created the Benjamin Franklin Parkway which has become iconic and irreplaceable in the hearts and minds of Philadelphians, even though it eventually devolved into a vapid suburban-serving superhighway bifurcating the heart of the City.

Philadelphia’s current cultural, municipal, philanthropic and design leaders have championed the return of urbane life, where living and working in the City has kept and attracted residents and businesses, as well as the attention and envy of visitors. This civic renaissance depends heavily upon the bounty of landscape and horticultural infrastructure set in motion hundreds of years ago. Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter has spearheaded a nationally recognized comprehensive plan to sustain a successful modern green city. Civic Horticulture at its best—the redevelopment, rejuvenation and creation of major parks and plazas in the heart of Philadelphia—is the rightful heir of William Penn’s Green Country Towne.

Peter Wirtz
Civic Horticulture in the World of Wirtz International

Born from a spontaneous interest in nature and its wholesome beauty, a keen and conscious effort to integrate horticulture in our work, has been an essential part of our practice since 1948. Compared to the overintellectualizing and cerebral practice of nowadays’ landscape architecture, the prewar education of a landscape architect was for 50% in horticulture. Half of the day consisted of working outside, learning to grow and to plant, elementary soil science etc.

Also the proximity of very good nurseries and arboreta in our Antwerp region and the daily life in a garden was of an influence. However, it is the practice of a construction firm parallel to a design studio which may be the strongest driving force in practicing and respecting “horticulture”. For “civic” Horticulture, it was a 3 week IDS trip through the Soviet Union in 1970 that created a major boost in confidence, to apply horticulture in our city environments. The abundant plantings of middle strips in cities, the mixed use of fruiting and ornamental trees in public environment, the love of urbanities for their green spaces, it all remained a great source of inspiration.

Through a variety of examples in public and semi-public work, my presentation will show you how we integrated civic horticulture over the years, in a variety of projects. From tiny urban apartment



entrances, over student housing projects to longer suburban parks and corporate campuses that spontaneously became public parks.

List of projects:

- Fruithoflaan, Antwerp
- Camillo Torres Student Housing, Leuven, Belgium
- Ufsia Antwerp Campus, Antwerp
- Ernsting Campus, Coesfeld, Germany
- Carrousel Gardens, Paris