

The Cultural Landscape Foundation

CLAUDE CORMIER ORAL HISTORY RECOLLECTIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Julie Bargmann

Sophie Beaudoin

Nate Cormier

Michelle Delk

Juan Du

Gina Ford

Chris Glaisek

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Reflections on Claude Cormier from Julie Bargmann

May 2024

BAD BOY CLAUDE

thoughts about him. Julie B.

I didn't get to spend enough time with Claude. Yet he and his work were often on my mind. I relied on his adventurous spirit to give me a push from afar. The irreverence. The generosity. When I would see Claude at one of those conferences or silly events, we'd spot each other across the vast neutral zones and we'd magnetize. Bad boy, bad girl. We'd huddle. Are you kicking some ass? Are you having fun? Serious check-in. Devious smiles.

Not long before we lost him, Claude came to my lecture at the University of Toronto. He charged the mic during the Q&A, passionately quizzing me about the real purpose of the work. You know you little devil, I said. The term of endearment dodged the question, saving the answer for another day between us.



MLA group dinner with Julie Bargmann (second on left) and Claude Cormier (second on right) (Photo courtesy Julie Bargmann).

At the group dinner after the talk, Claude scrambled to sit opposite me. Bad boy, bad girl. The banter ensued and our solidarity thickened. I shared stories about my Airstream Bambi named Cornelia. Claude shared his fantasy of buying an Airstream, the model called Flying Cloud. He dreamed of putting one on the roof of his studio, a place to retreat into the sky. Claude, in a big aluminum bubble thinking up his next beautiful provocation.

That was the last time I saw Claude. Now I picture our dear, bad, joyful boy aloft in his Flying Cloud.

Julie Bargmann, Founder and Principal, D.I.R.T. studio, Charlottesville, VA

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Sophie Beaudoin

May 2024



(left to right clockwise) Au Grand Dam (Photo courtesy CCxA); Sophie Beaudoin and Claude Cormier at the Office (Courtesy TUX); Dorchester Square (Courtesy J.F. Savaria); The Ring with Sophie Beaudoin and Claude Cormier (Courtesy Michel Lambert); Place d'Youville (Courtesy Raphael Thibodeau); The National Holocaust Monument (Courtesy Double Space Photography).

Claude has left behind him an immense legacy. With his insatiable curiosity, thirst for life, presence, intelligence, courage to act, vivacity and humor, Claude will forever remain in the category of exceptional human beings. He was my dear friend, a mentor, my second head and alter ego. Professionally he was a highly valued colleague, a tireless ambassador for landscape architecture, an attentive teacher and a generous lecturer.

From the first moment we met, I was immediately impressed by Claude's energy, boldness and tenacity. Our collaboration spanned more than 20 years, a journey defined by clear skies, punctuated now and then by storms, with countless high points and moments of deep intense joy.

CLAUDE AS A PURE CREATIVE

Claude possessed an inspirational leadership style that never left us guessing where we were going. He had a gift for bringing innovative and surprising projects to fruition. But what always amazed me most about Claude was his ability to read and decode a site or landscape and its context, with its multiple layers of history, culture, social dynamic, use and site-specific issues (he loved complexity). Claude carried out his reconnaissance with such accuracy, flair, and intuition that ideas would emerge almost instantaneously on a first visit. He was always one step ahead of everybody else, heading into directions that no one could have ever foreseen. For Claude, there was no small or large project. He gave each his complete focus and effort, customizing a complex response through the deceiving simplicity of a singular idea.

A VISIONARY WITH PUNCH AND COMMON SENSE

Claude had a real talent for surprising people by creating new experiences that connected them with their surroundings, each other, as well as themselves. Simple without being simplistic. Bold without being too much. Moving without being nostalgic. Joyful and colorful, his projects bring a smile while remaining anchored in the pragmatics of everyday life, both feet on the ground and rooted in common sense.

A REAL DYNAMO

Claude loved collaborations, with colleagues from all disciplines, clients, students, peers. He loved sharing ideas, communicating with enthusiasm, a provocateur of discussion and debate. He always knew

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how to motivate the people around him to be their best, just as he constantly did with himself. He made everybody feel like they had a place in his ecosystem.

Thank you Claude for all these years of close collaboration, cogitating, creating, debating, laughing and being moved, and above all for delivering emblematic public realm projects that speak to your generosity, and express your joie de vivre. You knew how to share your beauty and transpose it into action in our lives.

Sophie Beaudoin, Landscape Architect and Co-President, CCxA, Montreal, QC

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Nate Cormier

May 2024

Claude Cormier was my first encounter with a punk rock landscape architect. I met Claude in the spring of 1997. It was during my second semester design studio at Harvard's GSD and our instructor, Paula Meijerink, invited Claude to join a jury and give a brief presentation to our studio. Up to this point, we'd been exposed to heavy doses of design, ecology, history, theory, and art. I was quite young, having entered the MLA program at 22, and was frankly intimidated by the seriousness of it all. We all love big ideas, but the exposure to so many big egos and big words in our program could sometimes be discouraging.



Nate Cormier during his time at Harvard's GSD was inspired by Claude Cormier to "up his suit game" (Photo courtesy Nate Cormier).

Meeting Claude was a welcome relief. First of all, he arrived in a three-piece white leather suit to a building where 95% of the population was dressed entirely in black. His example demonstrated the importance of following one's own path at a crucial moment for me.

It was over a quarter century ago, so I don't recall the specific design advice he gave us, but I do remember his quick smile, contagious laughter, and the general lightness he brought to our design dialog. Claude's way of concentrating his attention on the most humane and joyful aspects of our work stood out. The presentation of his own early work was nearly all nightclubs and art installations, reflecting a boundless and audacious landscape imagination.

He would later call his approach Serious Fun, which perfectly captures the point of view he embodied from the start. When we crossed paths over the years at landscape events, Claude's smile, laughter, and other-focused curiosity were undiminished even as his career took off and his portfolio grew. His legacy

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lives on in the captivating built work, but also in each of us that was uplifted and encouraged by his generous spirit along the way.

Nate Cormier, Managing Studio Director, RIOS, Los Angeles, CA

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Michelle Delk

May 2024

A Letter to Claude

My dear friend, I do miss you

I think about you most mornings, making French press in my kitchen. How mundane, right?

I don't know why, it's not as if we ever made coffee together. I know it sounds odd, but it's true, you are there. And it's no matter, because there's no better way to start the day than with your voice, reminding me to live with intention and joy.

For so long, I've admired your work, from Lipstick Forest to Sugar Beach and so many others.

And then we met.

Sometimes it's not great to meet people who you admire.

Sometimes we have expectations that are unreasonable or just not real.

But that's not the case with you.

I was invited to show you around Denver the day before you had a nearby speaking engagement. We visited the Clyfford Still Museum and gazed at the ceiling for an exceptionally long time - talking about the craft of the building more than the art on the walls. You wanted to see the infamous Brown Palace. I think it was even more beautiful in your mind than in reality.

I don't know exactly when that was.

2010, maybe before, maybe after.

You know I don't really have a good sense of time passing.

A couple of days?

A few weeks?

Several months?

Too many years.

What's the difference?

I can hear you laugh as I ponder this.

The work you've created and shared with this world stands so boldly and purely on its own. As I came to know you over the years since our initial wanderings, my admiration for you, as not only an artist and landscape architect but as a person, expanded exponentially. Your work so truly expresses who you are and is grounded and inseparable from the beautiful human that I came to know.

Our friendship, and the gentleness with which you push me, has meant so much. I appreciate every moment that we shared together.



Group photo with Michelle Delk (far left) and Claude (center).

From lunch in Toronto where you showed me early sketches for the Berczy Park fountain - I almost didn't believe you. We then spoke for quite a long while about the story you wanted to tell, and it all seemed so inevitable. You then laughed about my love of cats.

Cheering on our karaoke-singing friends in Chicago with so much devotion that I had no voice the next morning.

Kevin and I visit you in Montreal. You share with us your transformer-like living space while it was still under construction. It's so rare to see Kevin's jaw drop. We visited many of your built projects together. To see them through your eyes and by your side was invigorating and almost surreal. I think you went dancing after dinner - we went home to bed. You always have so much more energy than me!

But there was that time we were dancing into the night at Kevin's whimsical cocktail bar along with friends we picked up on our way.

Sitting in on reviews together for student design studios at the GSD in Boston.

Introducing me to Charles Birnbaum for the first time over cocktails in a bland hotel lounge at an ASLA conference.

Visits in New York, brunches in the West Village with Ian, a New Year's Day gathering in my humble apartment in Dumbo Brooklyn.

And more... but beyond those memories-

You are the most genuine person I have ever known. I don't know what others might think when they hear someone described as genuine. But there is no better word I can call up to describe how I know you to be. Your devotion to wonder and honesty has offered an endless benefit to this world and is a true inspiration.

The hours we spent together, and our phone calls over the years, were full of laughter and joy alongside moments of seriousness. You gently push me to be me to be honest in my search for what matters. To set aside others' expectations and wants. Why do you see this so clearly? Is it because you have searched for the same?

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Of course, I wish we had more time. I've never known anyone who so selflessly touched my heart and my mind, to gently push and always remind me, to look inside. You are so true to who you are. You are, simply, you - kind, joyful, thoughtful, intense, passionate.

You see directly into my heart and my mind. You see me more clearly than I see myself and I know I have not yet fully seen what you saw. You inspire me to be better. What I have learned from our friendship is to be genuine, to be honest, and to nurture what is in my heart. I still haven't fully gotten there. But don't you worry, I won't give up.

Thank you for your love

Michelle Delk, Partner and Landscape Architect, Snøhetta, New York, NY

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Juan Du

May 2024



Maintenance of The Ring (Photo by Claude Cormier).

“Merci Monsieur!” Shouts Claude Cormier as he waved towards a silver-bearded man atop an elevated platform midair, adjacent to the Ring, a large circular sculpture that sublimely floats above a public plaza. The worker was conducting maintenance works on the installation and he waved back while giving Claude a thumbs up. *“He is amazingly detail-oriented and has been taking such good care of the Ring since the installation last year,”* Claude enthused to me while characteristically adding, *“I am so grateful.”* On that sunny June afternoon, Claude met me at Montreal’s Queen Elizabeth hotel where he had recommended for my one night of stay, *“do ask for room with a view on the Ring, our latest art intervention at Place Ville Marie.”*

As we crossed the René Lévesque Boulevard towards the plaza, the Ring beckoned our approach. Its circular structure glistened in the sun and framed the greenness of the distant hilltop of Mount Royal

backgrounded against a cobalt sky. The power of this simple and sophisticated geometry stands out against the flow of cars and people, the flurry of tree canopies, and the imposing forms and materials of the adjacent mixed-height multiple-era office buildings. With the sheen of the stainless steel and the slenderness of the profile section, the Ring exemplifies a designed balance of lightness and monumentality.



Claude Cormier and Juan Du (Photo by Claude Cormier).

When he gave a talk at the John H Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design in Toronto just a year earlier in October of 2022, Claude emphasized the urban and cultural importance of the project to “unify 200 years of the city’s history.” The Ring is sited at an urban threshold that connects a physical and visual access from The Queen Elizabeth Hotel and Esplanade *Place Ville Marie* to McGill University, the former Royal Victoria Hospital, and Mount Royal. During the lecture, Claude noted how the plaza’s visual connection to Olmstead’s planned connection between the city and Mount Royal Park was once

threatened by a development project in the 1980's, and it was Phyllis Lambert who successfully advocated against the development and the obstruction.

For Claude and his team, the challenge of the project called for a design that needed to be singularly powerful and yet able to unite multiple scales of space as well as different historical periods of the city of Montreal. While standing under the Ring, Claude noted many expected and unexpected challenges of the project: *"We actually arrived at the geometry and scale of the Ring very quickly, the difficulties were in the execution of the simple idea."*

The installation is sited in between two newly renovated modernist buildings and above newly constructed grand public steps that followed Henry Cobb's original urban design, 60 years after the plaza's original construction. In addition, there were three new subway lines being constructed underneath the steps and plaza. This meant that the installation could not touch the ground and had to be suspended. Claude and his team worked with Franz Knoll, the same structural engineer who worked on the original PVM design in the 1960's. Their solution was as simple and elegant as the geometry of the Ring itself; the 50,000 pounds installation is to be supported by attaching itself at four points to the two buildings on each side. Like the Ring, the simplicity of the structural solution called for utmost precision in design, fabrication, and construction. Claude shared how nervous he was when the pre-fabricated Ring was finally lifted into place, as the 30 meters diameter Ring had to fit precisely into the 30 meters wide opening between the two buildings. The result on the day of installation was "three millimetres of space."

The outward simplicity and playfulness of the Ring conceals these complexities and demands for precision. In addition to the structural challenges, there were many others such as that of public safety. For example, the smooth surface of the stainless-steel cylindrical form of the Ring also conceals a carefully designed and installed mechanical system. Composed of 6,000 linear feet of electrical wires, the heating systems keeps snow and ice from forming to prevent any potential icicles that may form during the cold winters of Montreal. These ingenious solutions to the set of complex challenges are not visible to the residents and visitors in the city, as they enjoy the concerts and other events enlivened by the installation during the daytime, or as they stand witness to this stunning glowing ring of light against the night's sky. Claude concluded his talk at the Daniels Faculty on the Ring with a note on how the project summed up very well the occasion, which was to launch the book on his work written by Marc Treib and Susan Herrington, aptly entitled "Serious Fun: The Landscapes of Claude Cormier."



The Ring at Place Ville Marie (Photo by Juan Du).

It was an honor for us at the school to host the important event to celebrate the works of Claude, one of Canada's most distinguished Landscape Architects. He graduated from the University of Toronto's Bachelor of Landscape Architecture professional program in 1986. Following further studies at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design and establishment of the practice in 1995, the exceptional projects of Claude Cormier et Associés consistently transcend the siloed definitions of landscape architecture, public art, architecture, as well as urban design and planning. In 2021, we were grateful and proud to announce that Claude gave the largest private gift designated to the University of Toronto's landscape architecture program. The fund covers the annual tuition of a talented MLA student, in their third and final year, who shows promise to pursue creative and pioneering forms or approaches to practice. His spirit of support and generosity inspires the school's students for future generations to come.

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Back on that sunny summer day in June, Claude allowed himself a glass of white wine over our lunch, to celebrate the good progress of his latest round of treatment, *“the medical team is amazing, and I can concentrate on my health while my team at the office is doing a fantastic job. I am so grateful. And I am ready for anything that comes with no regrets. I have had a wonderful life, and I am ready.”* As I learned of his passing a few months after our last meeting, it was Claude’s courage and gracefulness that occupied my mind.

Concluding this reflection on Claude, *“Merci Monsieur Cormier, we are grateful.”*

Juan Du, Dean and Professor, John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, The University of Toronto, Toronto, ON

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Gina Ford

April 2024

I first met Claude on a roof deck in Toronto in 2015. We had both just attended the Cultural Landscape Foundation's Next Wave of Modernism Conference. He had spoken at the Conference earlier in the day and brought the house down, introducing himself as:

"What do you get when Frederick Law Olmsted and Martha Schwartz have a baby?"

I came into the day already a major fan of his work, which I had always admired from afar. And now, here I was on a lovely early evening, sun setting, drinking a glass of wine, fandom stoked by the day's conversation, being introduced to him.

My first impression of Claude was tangible and energizing; I thought, this man is a fountain of joy.

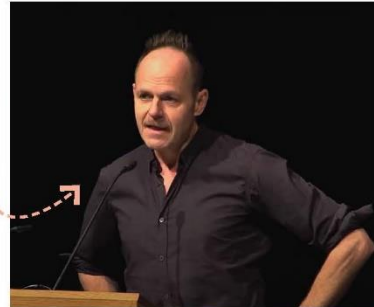
He told me about Berczy Park, his project, then in design and we giggled. I showed him a picture of a bench being installed on the Chicago Riverwalk, my project, then in construction, and we swooned. We talked about design and laughed. It was a few months after that meeting that he walked the Chicago Riverwalk, newly opened, and sent me an email:

"Mon ami, This landscape you made, it is charged with optimism."

It was a few years later I sent him selfies hugging all the dog sculptures in Berczy Park.

Tangible and energizing. It's how every exchange felt in all the years after meeting Claude.

We would find chances to talk. He'd call to talk about a project. We did a panel together along with Mikyoung Kim on Joy and Optimism at the ASLA Conference. We designed side by side in the competition for what would become his magnificent Love Park in Toronto; a competition loss I never lamented once I saw his scheme.



We'd find each other at professional gatherings. He enlisted me to work on the Design Review Panel with Waterfront Toronto, another place we'd spend precious time together.

In 2020, I shared my thoughts about him for a profile on his practice with Landscape Architecture Magazine.

"Claude's work feels like it comes from his heart; it's emotive, romantic; it connects people to the issues in a different way. His 18 Shades of Gay piece really speaks to that—it's something fun, but it's also celebrating something that needs more visibility."

In 2021, Claude asked me to accept his Fellow Medal in his absence. I told him I was deeply honored. He did not share that he was sick. We discussed outfits. I sent photos of my gown options. He sent photos of himself in a well-fitted suit and enormous platform heeled boots,

"It's too bad. I had the perfect shoes for the event."

I want the world to know that he was a fountain of joy. He would not want us to be sad about his passing. I think he truly would want us to revel in the joy and impact of his person and his work. But I feel so heartbroken. For the loss of a great and beautiful light. A magnificent person who brought love and joy into the world and left it far too soon. I feel heartbroken for the loss to the profession of all that we may have seen of his genius. He had so much to give.

We can be grateful that he also gave so much. When I'm in Toronto, as I am frequently thanks to his generosity of spirit, I visit his works. Sugar Beach. Berczy Park. Love Park. They remind us how magnificent a mind he had, how magical a man he was. They are born of that well, that bubbling, sparkling fountain of joy that was him.



Gina Ford, Principal, Agency Landscape Architecture + Planning, Boston, MA

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Chris Glaisek

May 2024

Claude Cormier won the design competition I led for the open space at Jarvis Slip, now known as Sugar Beach. His competition entry won the hearts of the jury members. One element, however, remained somewhat controversial: the pink umbrellas. Many people, including some members of the Waterfront Design Review Panel, found these shade structures too bright, too representational, and, well, “too pink.” Ultimately the decision as to whether or not to go forward with the pink umbrellas was put in my hands, and I found myself at the center of an unusual design debate. Torn between wanting to support Claude’s vision and dealing with the mounting skepticism, I phoned Claude in Montreal with a plea for him to consider some alternatives that might satisfy everyone. Instead, Claude insisted on an in-person meeting and flew right out to Toronto. He arrived with a full slide presentation on the history of umbrellas, architectural precedents of hot tones like pink, and discarded formal alternatives he would not support. During the course of that meeting, his passion, his conviction, and his earnestness persuaded me to take the risk and support his design. I’m so glad I did. Canada has lost a great talent – and advocate – for excellence in landscape architecture with the passing of Claude Cormier.

Chris Glaisek, Chief Planning and Design Officer, Waterfront Toronto, Toronto, ON

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Marc Hallé

April 2024

Tribute from Marc Hallé



Claude at the inauguration of The Ring (Photo by Marc Hallé).

My adventure with Claude Cormier started as an intern in 2003, in his small Plateau Montreal office that doubled as his house. In those days, he slept on a cot in a small laundry room behind the kitchen, leaving the rest of the house as a laboratory for landscape architecture. He had painted the ceiling sky blue, creating a workspace that was almost as pleasant as being outside on a sunny day. This ceiling is a metaphor for Claude, the ‘high pressure system’. Yes, the work environment was at times intense, Claude never stopped until things were perfect. But for those who knew him, he radiated light with a positivity and a proactive outlook that kept clouds far at bay. He took every measure to be sure it never rained on our picnic. Although his sunshine came with its fair share of heat, it

also motivated people to be their best. Faces would light up when he entered a room. People would want to sit next to him at meetings, knowing how good he would make them feel with his wit and laughter. It is the same spirit he brought to his work in the public realm with places of universal appeal that also speak to the wishes of the heart.

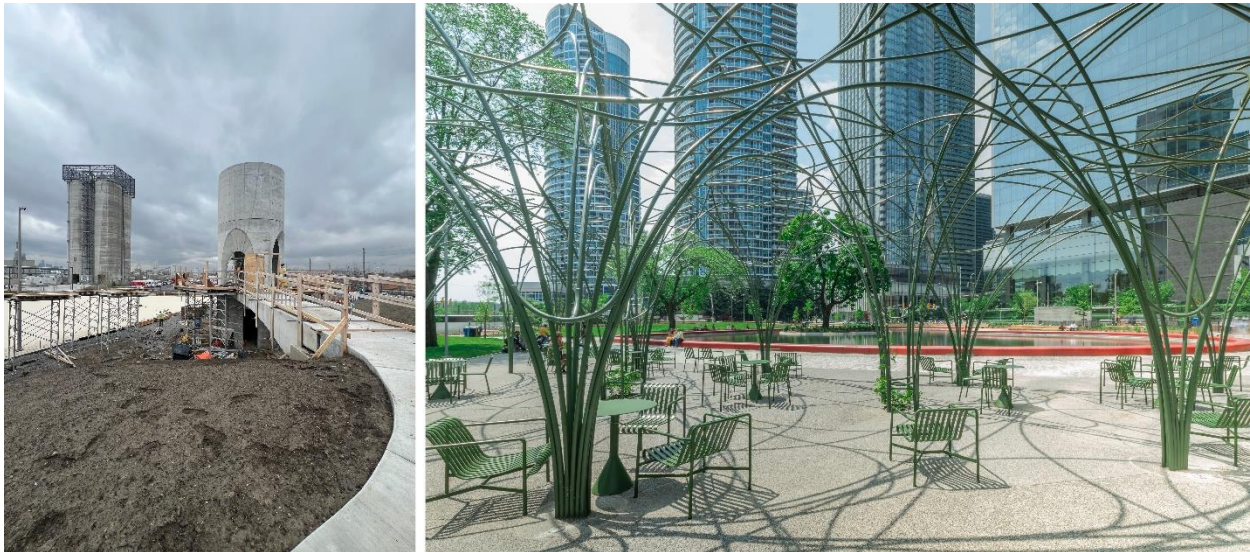
Claude possessed a clear leadership style that always pointed to where you were going. He gave equal focus and attention to issues both big and small, never prone to a dismissive “good enough” or a cynical “why bother?”. He was tirelessly optimistic with a pragmatism that was also firmly planted in terra firma.

Impatient, scrappy, decisive, visionary, courageous - Claude knew how to transform fear of new ideas into excitement for what was possible. Love it or hate it, he evaluated success on a project's ability to stir emotion. When the Journal de Montreal published Lipstick Forest on its cover under the headline 'C'est Horrible!', Claude considered it one of his best reviews. A couple years later, the same project was chosen as the cover for the Ulysse travel guide to Montreal, as a symbol of the city's spirit. This is one of many examples where a project, dismissed at the beginning as a laugh, became something quite profound at the end. From Pink Balls to Berczy Park's fountain of dogs, Claude had a talent for surprising people with an experience of their own humanity, to be moved by beauty, and connected with their inner well of joy.

Marc Hallé, Landscape Architect and Co-President, CCxA, Montreal, QC

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Pat Hanson

April 2024



(left to right) Leslie Lookout Pavilion under construction (Photo courtesy Pat Hanson); Love Park (Photo by Nirmal Gire).

Claude asked me to design a pavilion for his firm's entry for the love park competition. During our first meeting to review the pavilion design he started to laugh, really laugh. I wasn't sure if the response was good or bad but then realized he was delighted. A rigorous discussion followed but it was still intermixed with giggles and laughs. We designed two more pavilions for Claude's parks and each collaboration was similar, much fun and laughter combined with intelligent critiques. My working experience with Claude has made me mindful that lightheartedness and fun elevates the work but also makes living so much better.

Pat Hanson, Founding Principal and Creative Director, gh3*, Toronto, ON

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Gary Hilderbrand

February 2024

I first met Claude Cormier (MDes 1994) when he approached me about being a teaching assistant position in my core studio course, in 1993. What impressed me most in our first meeting: his excitable voice, with an upward-sounding pitch, along with his genial and upbeat manner, which made me feel like I already knew this man. A quick wit, a quizzical intensity. I liked this about him. This was the convivial and always curious guy with whom I enjoyed a warm friendship over the past 30 years.

Claude was a rare landscape architect whose take on common design problems was nothing if not uncommon. I will admit that *fun* has perhaps only rarely been a design motivation for me, but it was almost always this way for Claude. Once he established his firm in Montreal, he immediately made his mark with projects that came to him in the form of the typical kinds of urban problems we face everywhere—but his design solutions always defied expectations, and he was persuasive with concepts that were at times far-reaching though always precise in execution. Painted or wrapped trees, blue sticks, balls and cones, pink lights, umbrellas, fake stones—often ordinary things made dramatically unordinary. His admiration for and friendship with Martha Schwartz surely influenced this way of working, but Claude made it his own. He rather famously used to say he imagined himself as the love child of Martha Schwartz and Frederick Law Olmsted—another of his great influences, and a very different one at that.

Because of the sustained popular appeal of Claude's work, he accumulated recognitions far beyond the many that came directly from the design community—including notice by *Fast Company* and a knighthip with the Ordre National du Québec. But while he enjoyed peer recognition much like the rest of us, these things had little effect on Claude's persona or his ego. What animated him the most was talking about the work, along with the jubilant embrace of his work by those who use the public realm spaces he and his partners and staff designed. Those of us who knew him will remember his love of fashion and design, his uncanny passion for art—high, low, fake, or real—and his unbending joyfulness in life. Amen. Yet his far larger legacy will remain those life experiences by the citizens who inhabit his comic, playful, and highly intelligent parks and squares every day.

Gary R. Hilderbrand, Hornbeck Professor in Practice in Landscape Architecture at Harvard University
Graduate School of Design

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Beth Kapusta

April 2024

Claude was my friend, my collaborator, a mentor, and one of the most talented, funny and hard-working people I have known in my life. As a young editor at *Canadian Architect* magazine in the early 1990s, one of the first things I published was Claude's *Blue Stick Garden* in Metis. From the perspective of a writer, this work was already self-assured, confident of its unconventional brand in the space of Canadian landscape architecture, and that trademark originality would only bloom to make Claude one of the most important landscape forces of his time. Years later, as we became friends and collaborators, I would work with Claude on two competition-winning parks: HTO and Sugar Beach in the early 2000s, and during the last part of his life and career, on the competition for the Canadian Senate in Ottawa.

The recollection I'd like to offer up is about that experience working on the competition for Canada's Senate in 2022, in what I think would be the last major competition Claude worked on. For context: by 2020, Claude had really shifted his energy away from project pursuits and was focusing on succession planning with his partners, on fledging the *Serious Fun* book on the CCxA practice, and on some philanthropic activities aimed at landscape architecture education. This was the result of having survived, barely, treatment for multiple cancers that he learned were caused by a rare genetic mutation that ran in his family, cancers he knew would inevitably return.

So when I texted him in 2021 with "the chance to ruin your summer on a competition with a high-functioning team to solve a design paradox," I was surprised that Claude said yes. Knowing that the team was going to be fun, talented and highly effective and strategic were always Claude's first filter, and our team already had Bruce Kuwabara and Paulo Rocha from KPMB, Wanda de la Costa and Alfred Waugh (two of Canada's most gifted Indigenous architects) at our architectural core. Claude and his partner Guillaume Paradis joined our team as design equals. Claude couldn't resist—work and play were always inseparable for him, from early days on the farm to his last days trying to solve the landscape conundrum of Canadian identity.



Parliamentary Precinct Redevelopment of Block 2 - Rendering by Studio-Sang courtesy of KPMB Architects/TAWAW Architecture Collective/Formline Architecture with Counsel, Claude Cormier et Associés, Taylor Hazell Architects, Transsolar.

This was a project completely done during COVID, so it's a little unusual to remember a team call as the moment everything galvanized as a key inspirational moment in the life of a design. We had all been struggling with the brief of the project, and had decided to take a massive risk by breaking one of the fundamental rules of the competition by incorporating the Assembly of First Nations building (formerly the US Embassy), into our scheme. We were contemplating the idea of floating a bridging structure above the existing structures as a new, non-colonial home for the AFN. Then Claude made a speech about what this raised plane, a new public space across from Canada's parliament, symbolized: a newly equal First Nations presence, embodied in the foreground of contoured park of indigenous trees, the

shaping of the park into a ha-ha (a landscape device with roots in English and French landscape traditions), and the distant vista of Quebec's Gatineau hills. A balanced expression of three solitudes.



Parliamentary Precinct Redevelopment of Block 2 - Rendering by Studio-Sang courtesy of KPMB Architects/TAWAW Architecture Collective/Formline Architecture with Counsel, Claude Cormier et Associés, Taylor Hazell Architects, Transsolar.

This kind of clarity was vintage Claude—he was typically not overtly political in his opinions, and yet he saw his landscape craft uniquely empowered to provide incredibly potent gestures with political vision and with a dexterity in rallying the historic tools of landscape architecture to a higher purpose. It was such a joy to work with Claude and watch him in action, to dissolve the irreconcilable with the strange tools of his craft, and to disarm all of us who had the honour of his wit, his warmth, and infectiously high spirit.

Beth Kapusta, Principal, Beth Kapusta Design Excellence Consulting, Toronto, ON

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Thomas Kerwin

April 2024

I had the distinct privilege of working with Claude on three projects during my career. And what I remember and respected most about him was that of course Claude was talented, but Claude was also wonderful.

It's a rare combination to have both qualities, to bring fantastic vision that turns mundane spaces into centers of public wonder, and to work with such a kindness and warmth towards others that it turns routine partnerships into opportunities for inspiring collaboration.

The first project we worked on together was in 2011 in Toronto, a high-rise housing project called The Selby. It was a tight urban site on the northeast edge of Toronto's downtown, eventually transformed into a 50-story high-rise that balanced the drama of its notched design with masonry that reflected the historic architecture of the neighborhood. But despite the building's commanding presence, the tight space made it an admittedly modest project for a man of Claude's immense talents!

The scope of the work never deterred Claude from delivering excellence (as always). He brought his same positive demeanor, creativity, and thoughtfulness to the landscape design, which included streetscape as well as an amenity deck. What we were most impressed with, however, were his technical abilities. Claude was totally at ease working on a complex project like The Selby, and was able to design within the technical constraints to create a wonderful environment.

My second project with Claude was much more expansive. We had such a positive experience with him on The Selby that we engaged with him again on the IJKL Master Plan, which is a trio of buildings that sits where the Chicago River meets Lake Michigan in downtown Chicago: a 37-story tower called Cascade, a 47-story tower called Cirrus, and one more building still to come.

Claude partnered with bKL on Cascade Park, which is an essential and delightful aspect of the area. It was also an incredibly complicated ask. First off, the park needed to sit over a multi-level parking deck, and it is also bordered by a multi-level roadway system on all four sides. Furthermore, it needed to meet accessibility requirements, and create a strong pedestrian connection between various levels of the infrastructure.

We had originally thought perhaps the park would just sit elevated a few levels above true grade. But then Claude had the ingenious idea to create a sloping park that connects true grade at the lakefront to the multi-level roadway system with a 50 foot elevation change. It's a 36,000 square foot park—geofoam underneath the soil and plantings creates a lightweight structure that rests on cantilevered concrete, suspended above the roads beneath it. This not only connected the Cirrus and Cascade towers, but it also created a new connection between the lakefront and the Lakeshore East neighborhood.

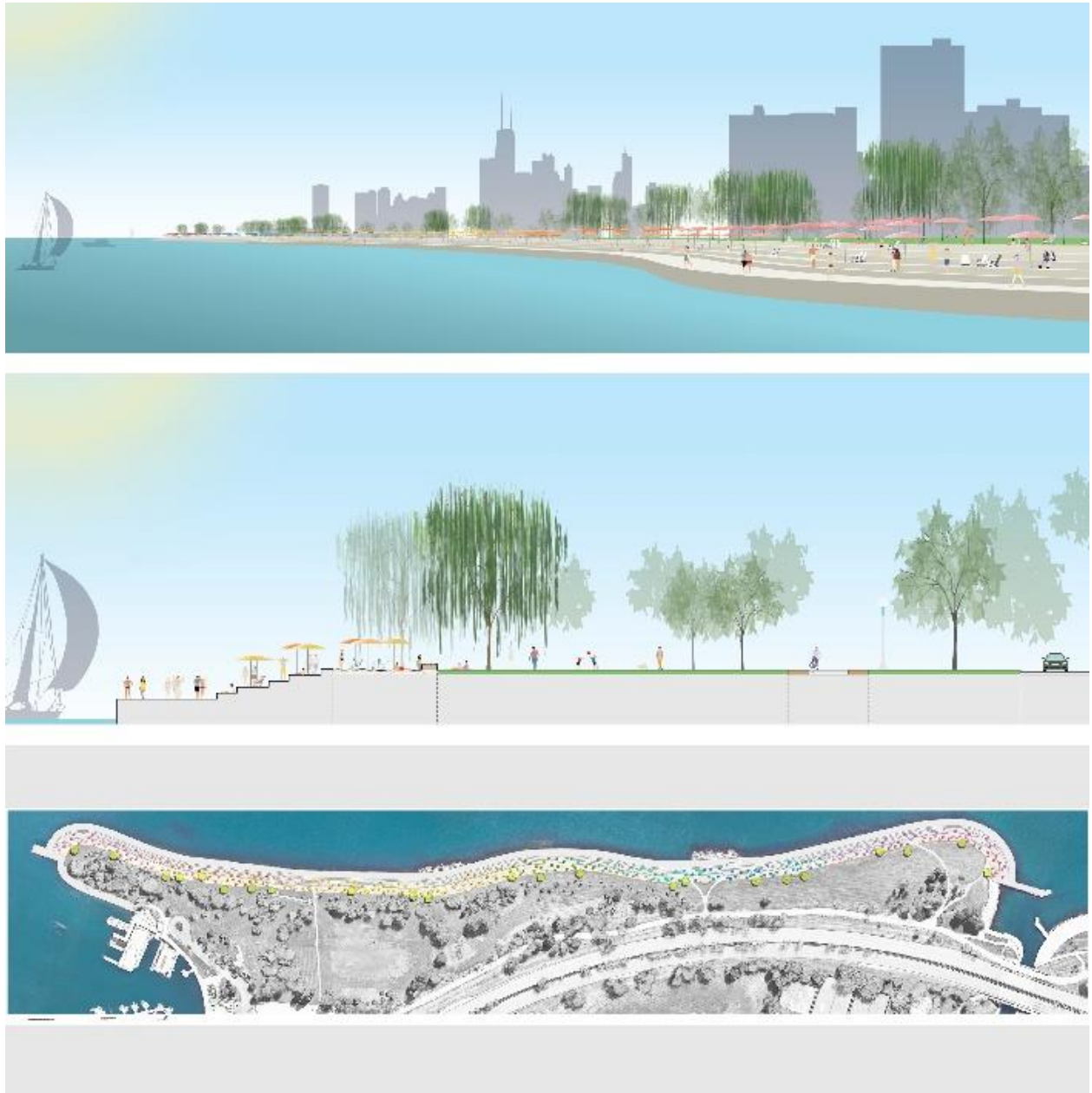
Transformative again.

The final project I collaborated with Claude on was transformation of a different nature.

The 43rd Ward in Chicago is home to Boystown, a historic gay neighborhood that still to this day has a large and thriving LGBTQ scene. But it was also the site of enormous tragedy just a few decades ago, when its community was ravaged by the AIDS epidemic.

The alderperson of the 43rd Ward wanted to memorialize the lives that were lost during the epidemic, and was looking for a partner to design a fitting installation along the lakefront bordering Boystown. When I became aware of the initiative, I immediately thought of Claude and introduced him to the alderperson.

Claude was extremely moved by the project. He created some incredible designs for the lakefront that were, again, transformative—this time in their ability to instill peace into immense grief.



Rainbow Beach - AIDS Memorial, Chicago, IL (Images courtesy CCxA).

The project was unfortunately never realized. Ultimately, Claude's visionary and ambitious designs were beyond what the alderperson was able to take on at that time, although a sculpture by an artist was acquired and installed as a more subdued memorial. I hope someday we get to see Claude's vision come to life.



Rainbow Beach - AIDS Memorial, Chicago, IL (Image courtesy CCxA).

But in the meantime, there are so many meaningful, vibrant, mischievous, and delightful places where we can remember Claude. What a gift to all of us, to know and be changed by someone's beautiful way of seeing the world. His urban landscapes and environments touch people every day, and will for decades. And his warmth, kindness, and humor has forever changed his colleagues and friends.

Here's to Claude, and all his transformations.

Thomas Kerwin, Founding Principal, bKL Architecture, Chicago, IL

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Bruce Kuwabara

April 2024



Claude Cormier and Bruce Kuwabara (Photo courtesy Bruce Kuwabara).

Fun loving, charismatic, and flamboyant, the late Claude Cormier was a unique figure in the field of landscape architecture with unforgettable joie de vivre. Claude had the audience in stitches when, at The Cultural Landscape Foundation event in Toronto in 2015, he introduced himself as the hypothetical child of Frederick Law Olmsted and Martha Schwartz.

Laughter aside, Claude was prescient because his practice and work brought together his knowledge of ecology and agriculture (he grew up on a farm in rural Quebec), and his irrepressible imagination that introduced out-sized iconography and bold color into his projects. While he admitted with a grin that some of his work verged on being tacky, other projects achieved clarity through abstraction.

Claude possessed an unerring way of developing direct planning moves that emerged out of his historical and cultural analysis of every site he reimagined. Upon these pragmatic urban frameworks, he had a special genius of introducing figures as protagonists and fields — gardens of painted sticks, surreal pink tree trunks, dogs and cats from the world of animation, 19th century fountains, urban beach umbrellas, pink and multi-colored balls, a heart-shaped reflecting pool, and a singular beautiful, suspended ring. Claude's knack was to create familiar and abstract images with visual references that resonated with everyone in all the spaces he transformed.

Claude loved Quebec and Montreal, but he had an affair with Toronto. He gave Toronto public landscapes that it could not dream for itself. From Sugar Beach and Berzcy Park to the Mist Garden and Love Park. He gave Toronto the soul it longed for, creating civic landscapes born of his imagination and a mise en scene founded on sustainable environmental practice. His gifts of landscapes to the city enhance its sense of urbanity and the pleasure of daily life with wit and verve.

The soul of the city speaks from the civic heart and this heart must be read in terms of what it aspires to, not just in terms of acquisition. What must be heard is what the civic heart misses, not merely what the citizen has obtained.

Beyond and before economy, the civic heart must be transparent. It must be read. Without reading this heart, joy will not yield itself in the civic realm. Without joy, city soul dies. The salvation of the modern city depends on the notion that a great city is not just a sustainable city, but one that justifies itself to the business of happiness.

-From *Municipal Mind: Manifestos for the Creative City* by Giorgio Di Cicco (Poet Laureate of Toronto)

Claude had a big heart too. He created the Claude Cormier Award in Landscape Architecture to provide unprecedented financial support for promising and creative landscape architecture students at the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design at the University of Toronto. His giving back to the next generation of bold thinkers is inspired by the support he received from Phyllis Lambert, founder of the Canadian Centre for Architecture, when he was completing his studies at Harvard University.

He loved life, family, and friends as much as he loved the creative process itself. He was consistently able to create experiences and places of serious fun, places that make people smile, places that engender conviviality and a vibrant contemporary culture.

Working with Claude was a constant process, focused on achieving and expressing a really big idea that was bold and clear, and brought amenity and delight to everyone.

I chaired the Design Review Panel for Waterfront Toronto from 2004 to 2016 and had the pleasure of having Claude on the jury for several revitalization projects. He was a remarkably insightful and incisive critic, constantly finding ways to support the designers and always exhorting them to focus on the key elements of their projects that would elevate them to a higher level of expression and resolution.

He was brilliant on his own, an exceptional collaborator and an energetic leader of his amazing studio in Montreal. In Toronto, in 2021, Claude and I enjoyed a dinner with lots of hilarious stories and gossip. At that moment, which was a window in the pandemic, we were celebrating our overlapping cancer journeys, and plotting amidst raucous laughter to work together.

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With Claude's tragic passing, we have lost a brilliant light in the field of landscape architecture and urban design. Like so many others, I admired his courage, loved his energy, and cherished his friendship.

Every time we got together, I felt bolder, and every time I am in one of his parks, I feel more alive.

Bruce Kuwabara, Founding Partner, KPMB Architects, Toronto, ON

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Phyllis Lambert

April 2024

When I met Claude Cormier in the 1980s, modernist practice in landscape was not apparent in Montreal. The CCA was then working on the landscape related to its new building, which opened in 1989, and I was delighted to discuss the state of the art with him. Learning of his ambition to advance the art of landscape, we struck a Faustian bargain: if we would support his graduate study at Harvard for a year, he would consult on the health and maintenance of the CCA gardens over time.

Claude was a breath of fresh air in his subsequent work. Among unusual species and unusual forms chosen are the large stout tree-referring pink forms that humanize a municipal convention hall; extensive riverside lawns that make you think of pools of water; small areas of grass and path collages are entrances and connectors — ideas that compose plazas, public gardens, monuments, squares, esplanades, all these in the heart of the city. Cormier's high level of innovation changes the beat of the city.

We had many good moments together on projects in which we were both involved, mostly for the Vieux-Port. However, when Claude proposed painting the lawn of the CCA sculpture garden designed by Mel Charney blue, I said no. I was told that he sought revenge for this. I know of none, but I am sure it would have been delightful.



Phyllis Lambert (left), Claude Cormier and colleagues. (courtesy CCxA)

Phyllis Lambert, Founder, Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, QC



*Claude Cormier, Projet initial d'aménagement paysagé de la Place d'Youville, Montréal, Québec, February, 1997
Collage on vellum paper, 35.8 x 23.6 cm / DR2007:0030:002
Gift of the firm on the occasion of Phyllis Lambert's 80th birthday
Canadian Centre for Architecture © CCA*

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Nina-Marie Lister 2024

Tribute to Claude



(left to right) Claude and the first recipient of his Fellowship at University of Toronto, Oct. 29, 2021; Nina-Marie, Ian MacKay, and Claude; Claude and NML, members of the Waterfront Toronto Design Review Panel (Photos courtesy Nina-Marie Lister).

In no small way, Claude Cormier was the captain of joy and wonder, making ‘serious fun’ for landscape, life, and love, across boundaries and borders. Not one to accept conformity in any guise, in his work and his life, Claude gleefully coloured outside the lines and jumped fences, always for the sake of more diverse, inclusive, and inevitably, vibrant places. His work is often seen as whimsical, perhaps even magical. But beneath the bold surfaces, artful animals, brilliant colours, and layered textures, lie deeply considered principles that guided his designs – for practical longevity, lasting quality, public life and the right to joy. To underestimate Claude’s legacy as merely playful would be to overlook the values and vision that underscore an approach to design that is as rigorous as the practices from which it emerges. His projects are horticultural, ecological, social, and engineered; they are playful, beautiful, and technical. His street trees are a science, as much as a testimony to his capacity for both negotiation and spectacle. Beyond the skillful, diplomatic relations he managed and forged between city departments, Claude was an artful ad-man, deploying campaign and drama to advocate for the fullness of the projects he designed. Not one to be value-engineered, Claude worked from a place of deep belief buoyed by evidence and skill. Two of my favourites, both in Toronto, embody this trait. His *Love Park* is all about heart: a blood-red rim that frames a liquid mirror, not a superficial painted line but a carefully-crafted ceramic edge on which lovers lounge and readers rest. Passion and precision landed here together.

Berczy Park celebrates our love for our dogs, but the City of Toronto balked: so he compiled a canine manifesto and went to the mat for the dogs. The dogs won, and so did we.

Claude's greatest gift to us was to make lasting places that spark urban vitality, unleash civic life and make space for unbridled public joy. Claude preferred to avoid the overtly political, advancing his designs by capturing the public imagination, surfing trends and curating spectacle. But in fact, by any lived experience, I'd say that Claude's legacy of parks is arguably as powerfully political and it is potently playful. From directing our gaze, framing our views, and staging a "ground", his projects ignite the mosh pit of the imagination: jump, dance, gaze through The Ring, celebrate 100 Shades of Gay (aka, ok, "Claude's Balls"), make out in Love Park (for all to see), sunbathe exposed (or not) on Sugar Beach, walk, prance(ercise) the runways of the Dog Show in Berczy Park. He made and gave places for all to parade, pose, preach, play, and pray. Good parks have always been public: they are places to express freely the full spectrum of collective civic life, from celebrating to grieving, recreating to relaxing, protesting to performing. In this, Claude's works are subversively political, engaging – even daring – us to revel in our diversity through a collective expression of individuality. They are unique *places*, not spaces made from nothing, but discovered, unleashed, cultivated, kept, and nourished by the same creativity from which they emerged. They deserve all of us. Let's get in there, keep them alive in a rainbow of living colour, of our cosmopolitan thriving and flourishing.

Claude was my friend, my colleague, my inspiration...and in ways that often surprised me, my champion. He loved to bring out the wild in unexpected ways: he'd frame a landscape vista, but at odd angles, uneven planes, and in unexpected – even unsettling – dimensions, mixing and matching species and habitats, from the pruned, sculpted and artificial (but never fake) to the rambunctious tangle of spontaneous urban plants (yes, even weeds). He loved to bust out, shake off expectations, and burst forth from the confines of control and (very often) surprise his detractors and supporters alike, with jarring juxtapositions of the artful and the mundane. Wig-wearing while fine-dining; nearly-naked pruning of the yard; strutting in 12-inch platforms, speech-making and gift-giving at his alma mater; and courting the Garden while advocating for the Weeds.

On Claude's birthday each June, I will don *Claudine* my hot pink wig, sip champagne in the sun, in a worthy public place. I will toast Claude (Ian assures me he is wearing *Solange*, his practical mother-named wig) and I will laugh-out-loud to celebrate the lasting gift of joy and wonder that dearest Claude's

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designs instill. I know he'd see it as fitting, being feted in fabulous finery, in a stream of tiny bubbles joining sunlight and stars. To you dear Claude, I honour you, an amazing and beautiful human who brought so much brilliance to the world. We are lucky to dance in your sunbeam.

With love,

Nina-Marie Lister, Professor, School of Urban & Regional Planning, and Director, Ecological Design Lab,
Toronto Metropolitan University, Toronto, ON

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Jennifer Luce May 2024



Claude Cormier from his time at Harvard's Graduate School of Design (Photos courtesy Jennifer Luce).

It remains difficult to write about my dearest friend in life as the past tense words etch on paper that he is truly not with us. That said, here I go.

Claude and I met at Harvard in the fall of 1992. We were young professionals with a decade of experience under our belts but, with even more desire to know more. We were enrolled at the GSD, in

the exploratory MDesS program; something quite new for the school. Day 1; Welcome cocktail party. I am shy and was uncomfortable. Eyeing a very handsome man at the opposite corner of the room, dressed in black leather and silver chains, I decided to dive in at the 'radical' end of the spectrum! I approached Claude and his warmth wrapped itself around me; loving, caring, enthusiastic, bold, encouraging, optimistic and oh so smart; I could tell right away. We remained inseparable for the duration of our studies, and for 30 years to the day he passed in 2023.

Claude and I swam at the Harvard pool every evening after classes and shared our thoughts about design. I was studying public space and architecture but his intoxicating view of the landscape drew me to focus on that, and art. I will forever be indebted to him for opening my eyes to a radical yet humane point of view about our environment. Claude and I worked part-time for Martha Schwartz, my mentor and advisor. We spent late night drawing and conversing with Martha. She infused us both with a drive to make practice different; meaningful.

In many ways, Claude grew to be his future self at the GSD. Thinking about it; Claude explored the history that became the foundational reasoning for the work he has done. He honed his critical thinking, establishing his alternate and often controversial approach to designing public space. And finally, Claude sensed the breadth of the design world at Harvard; defining his drive to be the best that he could be; the most compelling landscape architect of our era.

All this said, I am so honoured to share this with you. Claude never stopped working to make public space joyous. He did the same in his personal life, as a friend who always encouraged us to keep our eye on the big idea. He was larger than life.

Jennifer Luce, Principal, LUCE et studio architects, La Jolla, CA

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Ian MacKay

May 2024



Claude Cormier and Ian MacKay (Photos courtesy Ian MacKay).

Many, many better qualified people can talk about the brilliance of Claude’s work. How it often turns convention on its head, and is deeply playful. And how it is always imbued with a tremendous respect (and care) for the people who will use the space. Claude always engaged, listened, thought about it, and found ways to create an experience that was so much more than people could have hoped for, or imagined.

For me, Claude’s work, in all its splendid yet rigorous glory, was but one (very important) manifestation of the man himself. Claude had a knack for making people around him feel included, valued, special. It

could be a server at a restaurant, a person who came up to ask a question at a public meeting, a friend or acquaintance on a dance floor.

Claude didn't do anything by halves. When he focused his attention on you, the sun shone with a generous warmth. Always direct and frank, but somehow playful at the same time. And often with an element of surprise. He could make a staid or serious gathering suddenly erupt in laughter, and the whole mood of the room would change. If things became too heavy, brooding or philosophical, he would exhort people to remember the "Light and Delicious". He loved wigs.

In a profound way, Claude managed to escape the confines of his upbringing while still remaining deeply connected to it. While he (and his siblings) were forced to become full adults at an early age (due to the premature death of his father), Claude never lost the little boy in him. Rigour did NOT take the place of wonder or delight. Together they made an exceptional whole. Always full of love.

Ian MacKay, Toronto, ON

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Michael McClelland

April 2024

Learning from Claude Cormier



Claude Cormier, Michael McClelland and Ian MacKay. (Photo courtesy Michael McClelland).

My first venture with Claude was a commission in 2003 that was seemingly straightforward. Waterfront Toronto had asked us to provide a series of sport facilities on a brownfield site in the Port Lands to activate the formerly industrial lands. As the heritage architect, I dutifully explained that originally the site had been part of a large swampy marsh, a natural environment that the city's early dwellers viewed as insalubrious.

Gradually, the site was infilled and used for a variety of unsavoury industrial activities, including munitions manufacturing, which I explained was also an important part of its history. Our task was to make from this a high-quality park that attracted people to play and relax.

To Claude, the brief was clear: recreate that natural setting where it didn't currently exist and subtly highlight the site's industrial remnants in a way that together partially concealed the new utilitarian sports fields. Claude and Mark Hallé arrived in my office for a design meeting dressed in camouflage outfits, saying the park had to be exactly that: an act of camouflage. The design flowed from this idea of nature as authentic to an understanding of the site and its condition but artificial in its construction. It was an artifice – in other words, artificial but not fake. Acting this out in camouflage gear (I'm sure they changed in the washrooms on the ground floor of our building) was part of Claude's grand plan to create ideas intentionally and theatrically. As a finishing touch, Camouflage Park would be tied together by laying a delicate geometric veil over the site, based on a design by Briget Riley.

Camouflage Park never happened. But its conceptual grounding, and the way in which Claude approached the site, remained with me.

Our last collaboration was The Well, a massive mixed-use project in Toronto that will be completed in 2024, for which Claude was the landscape architect. We discussed the fact that the Royal Military Engineers had laid out the land in the 1830s for public sale. To the south the engineers had dedicated the shoreline as “reserved for the Public as a promenade and pleasure ground.” Exigences of the time made that an impossible dream to realize, but on the north side the engineers were able to create a wide boulevard one block long with small parks at either end. They had meticulously drawn a promenade of small trees onto the 1834 plan to indicate that this was to be a special street.

With this understanding of the site, Claude’s direction was again clear. Simply reinstate that which had been lost and recreate the 200-year-old boulevard with ample benches, elegant pavers, and a single line of trees. Like a chef cooking pasta to *al dente*, Claude knew precisely when he had achieved his goal and I suspect that this elegant boulevard will become one of his most loved contributions to Toronto. Whether an ironic layering of contrasting states or a simple revival of Georgian urban planning, what marks Claude’s work is clear conceptual designs that comment on evolution over time. Design follows concept, not the other way around.

Of course, playfulness was central to Claude’s practice of cohering historical commentary and designs for the present. For example, we once worked together on an ultimately unrealized reimaging of Commerce Court in Toronto. Claude thought carefully about the site as a beacon of Canadian commerce and came up with a design that invoked that economic power in a human and unexpected way. He proposed to mount a full-scale sailboat in the court’s central pool. “The bankers can look down from their offices and wish they were on holiday,” he told me.

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Guillaume Paradis

May 2024

In the spring of 2006, while I was studying landscape architecture at the Université de Montréal, Claude Cormier came to give us a lecture. He presented early works and stunned us by explaining that his creative process was centered above all on the search for meaning & simplicity. From a designer renowned for his audacity, we expected him to unveil the intricacies of complexity and how it was done ! We were even more disconcerted by his assertion that simplicity was the most difficult objective to achieve in a project - requiring to always keep eyes on the big picture. I was intrigued.

Fast forward to four years later and returning to Montreal from a two-year deep dive into the Swiss landscape design culture in Lausanne - a position opened at Claude's studio. I immediately applied, supported by a referral from a close friend then working for Claude – and whom I could never thank enough...



The offices at 5600, rue de Normanville, Montreal (Photo courtesy Guillaume Paradis).

The job interview was set on October 10, 2010. I knocked on the pink front door and we met in the kitchen of Claude's "oblique" apartment, which adjoined his then modest offices at 5600, rue de Normanville in Montreal.

Everything prepared me for this meeting. I had been following his work. The man, his approach and his style inspired me. I loved the energy of his team and the aesthetics of the work. For these reasons, I had already decided that he was the man I wanted to work with. He sensed it, he knew I was still green, but nonetheless our discussion convinced him I was up for the task. I was hyped and remember quickly thinking one day I could even become one of his business partners – in due time of course.

The next 14 years seem to have passed in the blink of an eye.

Since that first meeting, I've discovered a unique personality: multiple, complex yet generous, driven by an unwavering commitment to excellence. He approached each project and task as a unique adventure,

embracing the freedom to express his artistic vision while upholding rigorous standards. Claude was an artist at heart, and a vibrant entrepreneur. He knew what he was worth and didn't work on the cheap.

Humor was always at the heart of our projects and achievements, but rigor and discipline were considered just as important. Claude was a self-assured micromanager: even though each member of his team enjoyed his confidence and a great deal of leeway, he kept a close eye on every one of the firm's projects, every step of the way and beyond. He knew that, ultimately, he would be the one to answer for it.

Like all great leaders, Claude Cormier was a unifier. He knew how to channel the energies not only of the people on his team, but also of the many stakeholders involved in the projects he was entrusted with. Whether it was grand concepts or minor details that only a trained eye can observe, he succeeded in finding the common denominator that brought consensus, and left a lasting mark on urban landscapes through the harmony and aesthetics of his creations.

Is Claude Cormier irreplaceable? That's not the point, nor the way to put it. He was - for me and so many others - a true mentor who created the culture of Serious Fun that will long outlive him, and which essentially consists of exploring ways, often out of beaten tracks, often beyond colored doors, of going further in the creation process and the ever-renewed emergence of beauty. This is the legacy that my business partners Sophie, Marc, Yannick and I intend to successfully preserve and advance with our team of curious professionals. In this sense, even though we miss his physical being, we feel his trust and inspiring presence over our shoulders in every project we undertake.

So I suggest a unique toast to Frederick L. Olmsted and Martha Schwartz— for nurturing a simply magnificent and colorful human-being, the one and only Claude !

Guillaume Paradis, Landscape Architect Senior, Studio Director – Technic, Partner, CCxA, Montreal, QC

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Yannick Roberge

May 2024

Claude first landed onto my radar through his iconic laugh. At the time, I was a landscape architecture student at the Université de Montréal, where I spotted him, half-bent over, laughing and slapping his knees as he often did. I still remember that furtive moment in the exhibition hall when he came to see our student work. It was Claude Cormier, the man who soon would become simply Claude.

Claude's untethered boisterous laugh, which everyone who knows him has heard, is one of the things we miss most. This whole-body laughter, visceral like his approach to design, was one of his 'eureka' tools for conceiving, understanding and recognizing a good idea or concept. Strongly intuitive, he sensed the issues and aspects of a site broadly before formulating a personal interpretation. His commitment was that of the artist who gives the most of himself to reach a truth. His embrace of intuition, without over-rationalizing, yet always well-informed, underlies the important legacy arising from Cormier's approach.



18 Shades of Gay on the boards in the studio (Photo courtesy Yannick Roberge).

Claude's almost "physical" commitment to life was always cultivated through movement (he was rarely seen standing still). He strove to provoke this kinetic momentum in others by offering spaces of surprise that stimulated sensations and aroused emotions. It was during a workout on the treadmill that he had the idea for the balls above Sainte-Catherine Street in Montreal. When he announced it to us upon his return for the office 5 @ 7 happy hour, we could tell by the enthusiasm he felt that he had just come up with a brilliant idea. Claude also didn't hesitate to dress like his projects, through the colour choices of his clothes or objects made to emulate the work. We need only think of the white construction helmets adorned with a panache of two 'Notre-Dame' crosses at the presentation for the Place d'armes charrette in Montreal, or that famous jacket of colourful doggies.

Claude was originally from Princeville, a small town in Quebec very close to Plessisville, my own slightly larger home town. I think this countryside environment

was a source of inspiration for him. Perhaps this rural background was also the source of his pragmatism, for even in his most unusual intentions and creations, he avoided stylistic effects or overly complicated assemblages. He liked to call things by their names, making possible the real out of the surreal: a dog fountain, a sky of balls, a pink forest, a garden of blue sticks, and so on. I was part of the bounce and tumble of these concepts, which resulted from amusing yet sharply intelligent assemblages, contextual without being prisoners to context. I certainly do miss this creative complicity.

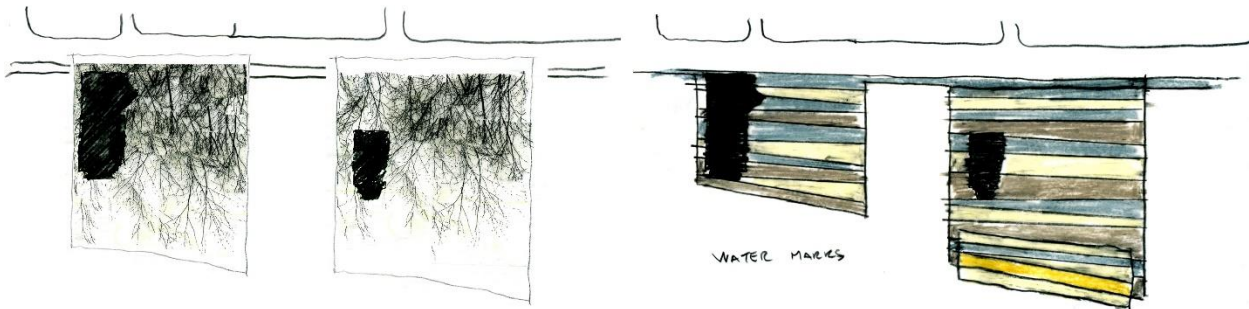
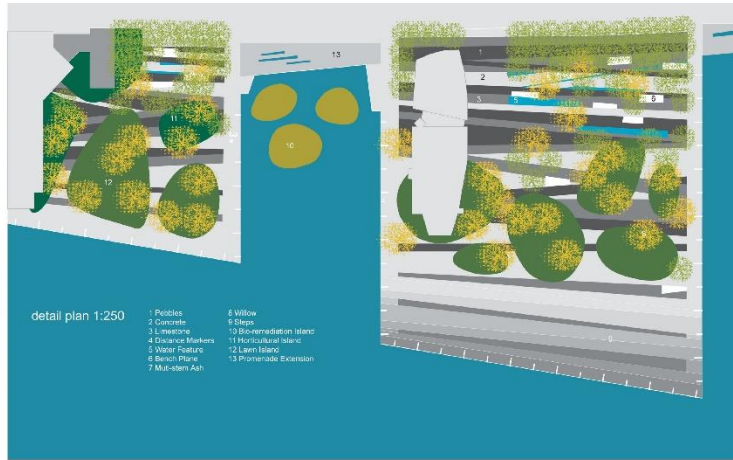
In the studio, the Cormier rhythm was hectic, stimulating and demanding. This culture of rigour and playfulness is probably one of his most important legacies, which we have learned to cultivate every day through the design of our projects. Claude offered us a universe broader than our own, and during the years we worked with him, he shared with us a way of seeing the landscape and the world that we, in turn, try to bring to life at its foundations. It has been, and continues to be, a fascinating adventure.

Merci, Claude.

Yannick Roberge, Landscape Architect Senior, Studio Director – Design, Partner, CCxA, Montreal, QC

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Janet Rosenberg

April 2024



(left to right clockwise) Janet Rosenberg and Claude Cormier at the HtO Park Opening (Photo courtesy Janet Rosenberg Studio, 2007); Plan of HtO Park (Image courtesy Janet Rosenberg Studio); HtO Park Panel 1 perspective (Image courtesy Janet Rosenberg Studio); Water marks diagram (Image by Claude Cormier); Trees diagram (Image by Claude Cormier).

Claude Cormier was truly one-of-a-kind.

He was my friend, my colleague, and a worthy competitor. Despite running different firms, we had the rare opportunity to work together in the early 2000s. The project was HTO Park, Toronto's first urban beach, and it was to become a blueprint for waterfront park development for the city. Claude had just jumped onto the scene at the time of the HTO design competition, receiving much-deserved attention for his Blue Sticks Garden at the inaugural edition of the International Garden Festival in 2000 at Jardins de Métis. The work was fresh and original, and there was the feeling of witnessing something new and refreshing. There was a magic and playfulness to Claude's work that captured people's imagination and set him apart. He was in the early stages of his journey to redefine landscape architecture into an art form.

We reached out to see if he would be interested in collaborating on the HTO Park competition submission. At the time, Claude did not have as much experience in the construction of public realm landscapes and HTO would be his first opportunity to work in Toronto. He accepted, and with our combined skills and experience – together on a team that also included Hariri Pontarini Architects – a unique partnership was born.

The concept we created together originated with the simple idea of connecting people directly to the water. At the time, Toronto's waterfront was fractured from the rest of the City and the water's edge was hard and industrial. We wanted people to be able to dip their toes into the lake. The concept of the urban beach and the bermed mounds planted with willows evolved from those early design discussions.

As a precedent, Claude brought forward the Georges Seurat painting 'A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte' (1884-1886). It instantly clicked. It resonated with people and was relatable and evocative. Claude created these imaginative and artful little sketches – not technical drawings – that were simple but deftly communicated conceptual ideas and helped to tell a story. I think that was one of his greatest qualities – his ability to tell a wonderful story creatively and playfully.

HTO won the International Design Competition in 2003 and was built on-site from 2004–2007. The new park opened to the public in 2007 – images show our team at the opening ceremony. A unique city beach and the first project along Toronto's waterfront, HTO pre-dated Waterfront Toronto and the

extensive waterfront revitalization that would follow in the next twenty years. It was a major technical accomplishment for both our firms.

As landscape architects, Claude taught us some very important lessons – particularly that not everything has to be serious. Design can be playful. It can be fun. There is room for humour and joy in the built environment. Claude had the passion, humour, and zest to sell an incredible story and would find unique ways to ground his designs in the history and essence of a place. I deeply respected him as a landscape architect, artist, and friend. His last message to me was, in typical Claude fashion, a warm and positive encouragement to keep advocating for quality design in our public realm – a passion we shared and discussed at length. He has left an indelible legacy on the profession and in our hearts

Janet Rosenberg, Founding Principal and Landscape Architect, Janet Rosenberg & Studio, Toronto, ON

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Don Schmitt

May 2024

In Remembrance of Claude Cormier

Claude Cormier was a Canadian original whose contribution to urban place making, community and public landscape was profound. Not only was Claude serious about fun, he was serious about access, inclusion and the importance of provocation to spark imagination and engagement with the human and natural world.

We collaborated often with Claude and his wonderful studio team. In St. Catherines, Ontario working with us on Brock University's School of Fine and Performing Arts and the adjacent civic Performing Arts Centre, Claude began by sketching the landforms and topography of the adjacent Merritt Valley marred by an expressway but with enough landscape to seed an audacious intervention. Claude developed a regional strategic plan that engaged the urban edge, recaptured the power of the valley landscape and created the conditions for the site detail. His willingness to embrace the larger environment and create a place of meaning in the context of possibility was an important lesson. While the institutions failed at the budget stage to realize his vision, his approach remained optimistic. His approach spoke to shaping the world around the project as a way to situate the project itself.

In a sub urban context north of Toronto we developed a master plan on 100 acres for a compact, pedestrian and transit oriented, dense mixed-use neighborhood. At the heart of our plan a central park, linear in alignment with the site was shaped as the heart of the community. Claude embraced the ambition of the park and conceived the path system as pattern making at a super scale, nevertheless creating a varied sense of place and program within that larger order. Lining in large water fountain with gold tile, patterning urban plaza with eye popping paving and using provocative colour delivered an intensity of delight and experience which has animated the response of the new residents. In this way the clarity and elegance of his design vocabulary defined a sense of place which residents have embraced completely defining the character of the neighborhood.



SmartCentres Park at the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (Image courtesy Don Schmitt).

In the redevelopment of a complete urban block in midtown Toronto, a dense mixed-use program was shaped around the three public outdoor rooms. Integrating heritage buildings, a mid-block pedestrian network and transit system access the public realm design was the common ground to unite the diversity of use and scale. Claude's ambition was to extend the network of public space, to connect the ravine systems several blocks away, to redesign street intersections to create enhanced public space, to create a park of deer sculpture emerging from the ravine into the city, to plant trees in large, wheel led pots to allow endless rearrangement of the landscape. The language of pragmatic problem solving with whimsy and delight shaped Claude's approach.



Deer Park on Heath St. at the Yonge & St. Clair development in Midtown Toronto, view from Heath Street Courtesy Don Schmitt).

Claude's ability to deliver clarity with design, to heighten our awareness of public space, and its essential elements and his ability to bring a smile to each user and the public was his gift which he embraced and shared with generosity and with his many communities!

Don Schmitt, Principal, Diamond Schmitt Architects, Toronto, ON

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Martha Schwartz

March 2024

I AM CLAUDE'S MOTHER!

This is exactly what Claude would say- I'm not making this up!

We always agreed that I was his mom – Around 1979 I upturned the profession of landscape architecture by creating the “Bagel Garden”, a self-made, tiny plot, in my front yard in Back Bay Boston. Many people were EXTREMELY UNHAPPY that the “BAGEL GARDEN” was placed on the front cover of the **American Society of Landscape Architecture (ASLA)**, an important organization akin to the AIA. I did this because in those days, I felt that landscape architecture was a boring profession, as MODERNISM was still going on. Although there was a lot of unhappiness, others saw it as an opening that enabled younger people to think about new ways of design in landscape architecture. Claude was one of the younger landscape architects who saw opportunities to design in a way HE wanted and did. This is why he called me his mother. And as I am still his ‘mother’, I am so very proud of him and what he has contributed to the profession of landscape architecture.

Claude and I were very close, especially regarding how we thought, designed, and how we had fun together. We both had moved away from the “BUSINESS-AS-USUAL” of landscape design. Claude shaped his own ‘CLAUDE’ world through the work of his landscapes.

Claude shaped a new landscape, through the world of color and happiness, especially for the people who experienced his landscapes. Claude worked as an artist, with a lot of color. Color was always a large part of his medium. His colors were bright and happy, making places where people, who were lucky enough to experience Claude’s landscapes, feel the fun and excitement of color. Claude’s love of fun and his colorful personality were felt by the people who walked through his landscapes. Inevitably, people always smile when they see his work.

Claude created many critically acclaimed public spaces in Canada. However, his joyous personality created spaces that were loved by many and acclaimed by many public spaces. His artwork will remain in many cities, such as Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa.

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Claude had a deep love of amusing people and leaving them with a remembrance of what they saw. He will also remain in many people's memories, as he was extremely creative, talented, had a love of life and fun, was a leader within the profession of landscape architecture and Gay Rights, and was a particularly lovely man.

I will always remember Claude. He is in my heart, and I will always love him. There is no other Claude, and I feel lucky that I met him, and that I am VERY PROUD, to be his "Landscape Architect Mother".

Martha Schwartz, Founding Partner and Principal, Martha Schwartz Partners, New York, NY



Martha Schwartz by Constantine Manos (Photo courtesy Harvard GSD, Loeb Library, Nov. 1999).

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Elise Shelley

April 2024



(left to right clockwise) Daniel's lecture at University of Toronto; MLA dinner that followed; Claude's kicky boots; Claude and Elise (Photos courtesy Elise Shelley).

Elise Shelley, Associate Professor, Teaching Stream and Director of the University of Toronto Daniels Faculty's Master of Landscape Architecture program, worked with Claude Cormier through the Faculty and in her role as Director of Landscape at the interdisciplinary firm gh3.

"I know I speak for so many when I say that Claude was an inspiration, a pioneer, a mentor and a friend," Shelley says. "His projects, his firm CCxA, and his dedication to this discipline and all of its

students speak to his abundant character, his enthusiasm for life, and his overflowing passion for design. We are forever grateful for the gifts he gave to Daniels, to Toronto, and to the world.”

While these are the words I shared on social media shortly after we heard of Claude’s passing, here I will share a more personal story of my friendship with Claude. Like many, I first knew Claude by reputation for his “larger-than-life” designs and spirit, but I came to know him for his “larger-than-life” heart. I was proud to have him as a colleague but more importantly as a friend over the last few years.

I have known of Claude Cormier ever since I discovered landscape architecture. As an early academic teaching architects in Canada at the University of Waterloo and the University of Toronto, Claude Cormier Architectes Paysagistes (now CCxA) was always featured in the courses I taught, introducing students to the world of landscape conceptualists. When enterprising students made the effort to further their precedent analysis by contacting him, he always took the time out of his busy schedule to speak with them.

Through Claude was based in Montreal, he had many projects in Toronto and he came to reviews and events at his alma mater regularly. He was a fixture at the Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design, as a design critic, guest lecturer, the 2018 recipient of the Hough OALA Visiting Critic Award and most recently in 2021, the generous benefactor of an annual award supporting the third year of MLA education for a student with “originality and an enterprising perspective”.

While I had met Claude professionally numerous times, our friendship did not move beyond collegiality until the successful collaboration between gh3* and CCxA on a new park in Edmonton, known as Warehouse Park. Through design meetings and project dinners (with many bottles of wine), our team produced an amazing public amenity for Edmontonians and as a result, I knew I could count this landscape architectural icon as both a valued associate and sincere friend.

A year after we began working on the project, I was forced to step back. My husband, who Claude knew well from their work together at Sugar Beach, had been diagnosed with cancer. I contacted Claude to let him know that I might be less available and he immediately shared with me his experience with “The Big C”. He opened up to me about his situation, one many people were unaware of at that time, and began a dialogue that helped and supported me through a challenging period. Many months and conversations

later, my husband and I met Claude for lunch the day before the opening of Love Park. We laughed and marveled at the miracles of modern medicine, that at that moment appeared to have triumphed for all. Sadly, we now know that was true just for that moment.

In one of his last meetings for Warehouse Park, Claude presented an idea that the client declared “risky”. Claude went on to explain that when an idea seems risky it really indicates true innovation and it likely means we are on the right track. It means we are moving beyond the typical and it forces us to be even more considered to ensure we enact something really special.

So in Claude’s honour, we need to take risks. We need to embrace originality. We need to be “larger-than-life” in all we do, in design, in friendships and in life (and also in selection of footwear).

Elise Shelley, Associate Professor and Director, Master of Landscape Architecture Program, University of Toronto, Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, Toronto, ON

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Brigitte Shim

April 2024

Claude Cormier is a cultural visionary who has rethought the public realm generating new spaces linking identity and belonging. On a cold February afternoon, a few years ago, Claude Cormier met me and my architecture students from Toronto at the winter garden in Montreal's Palaise des congres. We stood in a forest of fifty-two concrete trees, painted lipstick-pink to celebrate the city's flourishing cosmetic industry and exuding *joie de vivre* that defines Montreal as a city. These hand cast tree trunks straddle over a buried expressway below. Each tree is patterned after the hundred-year-old maples that once line the avenues of the city of Montreal. My architecture students listened to Claude Cormier speak eloquently about the Lipstick Forest as a positive symbol of the reality of nature in our contemporary world. Claude taught my students that Lipstick Forest might be artificial, but it is definitely not fake. How fortunate I was to serve with Claude Cormier for many years on Waterfront Toronto's Design Review Committee where he was a persistent voice demanding that we reshape our city's waterfront for its citizens. He provided Torontonians with new public places full of wonder, delight, and humour. Love Park, Sugar Beach, Berczy Park and H2O Park have brought humanity, compassion and meaning the public realm in Canada and beyond.

Brigitte Shim, Co-Founder, Shim-Sutcliffe Architects, and Professor, Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Marc Treib

February 2024



(left to right clockwise) Claude Cormier at Love Park, Toronto, Ontario (Photo by Marc Treib, October 2022); Claude Cormier at the Donnell Garden, Sonoma, California (Photo by Marc Treib, 2018); Claude Cormier at the University of Toronto, Ontario (Photo by Marc Treib, October 2022); Claude Cormier and Marc Reib, Montreal, Quebec (Photo by Susan Herrington, July 2017); Claude Cormier at Berczy Park, Toronto, Ontario, Canada (Photo by Marc Treib, 2017).

Act One

In 2012 I traveled with a landscape friend to Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal to catch up with Canadian landscape architecture. When we reached Montreal, Nicole Valois kindly organized a lovely dinner attended by several local landscape luminaries—and a guy named Claude Cormier, who showed up late wearing a T-shirt. We liked him immediately, and liked him even more when he offered to spend the following day with us visiting several of his projects. Although hardly my nature, I found his work intriguing and good, rare these days for landscape architects under the age of 80.

Act Two

In 2015 the Landscape Architecture Foundation organized what they referred to as a landscape “summit”, an overcrowded meeting at the University of Pennsylvania with some 75 speakers, of which I was one. Claude also attended, and during a break I came across him sprawled on a bench, seeking relief from the self-aggrandizing presentations that continued within. Our chat reminded me how much I had appreciated those landscapes I had seen, and it got me thinking that maybe it was time to make a book about him. I thought that Susan Herrington, who also attended the meeting would be the ideal partner-in-crime; based in Vancouver, she could provide the Canadian perspective. Would Claude welcome our efforts? Yes, he would.

The following summer, on a road trip worthy of Jack Kerouac, Susan, Claude, a friend of his, and I visited his landscapes in Montreal and Toronto; and on a later trip, Ottawa. The range and quality of the designs was impressive. To intelligently address landscapes that ranged so widely in scale and type, Susan and I first drew up a list of the ideas and issues they raised. Among them: the role of humor in the public sphere, kitsch, the color pink, biography, landscape restoration, vegetation, and respectful practice. We then determined who would write about which—and repaired to our respective corners. The introduction was written together; the two main essays, independently. A non-linear and non-chronological structure seemed appropriate for someone who himself appeared to operate in just that way.

Claude was born on a farm in Quebec and first received a degree in agronomy before spending a pivotal year at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard, thereafter completing academic study at the University of Toronto. Perhaps this background in agriculture guided his values and ideas. While many of his projects may seem light and fun—relying too heavily on imagery, form, and humor—beneath all that lies the respect for the past, for people, and for the environment. If his stuff is fun, it is *serious fun*—hence the name of the book.

In opening my essay I wrote:

“So which of Claude Cormier’s landscapes should we consider to be the most iconic, the most memorable? Might it be—in order of their decreasing subtly—Sugar Beach in Toronto with its pink metal umbrellas that dot and shade the sand? Berczy Park in general, and in particular, the full-size

hyper-realistic dogs spitting water at its central fountain? Or the vivid lipstick-pink tree trunks that thumb their collective noses at the prevailing grayness of Montréal's massive Palais des congrés? ...To some, perhaps many, in the landscape architecture profession and among the general public, there is little room for humor when designing landscapes meant to be environmentally responsible and socially supportive. Delight, they might assert, should be secured by means other than features that border on kitsch. Trees and flowers and grass yes; these support use and please the senses...But do we really need, much less accept, realistically rendered canines whose forms have simply been digital blown up from German toy miniatures and fitted with the necessary technology to spout water? The simple answer: yes; yes we do."

Sugar Beach, Toronto

The site for what became Sugar Beach lies in eastern Toronto, in a neighborhood under development at the time of design. The idea for the park was simple yet original: convert a parking lot into a beach. Sand would be the principal material and would cover much of the site. Greenery would be included only as needed, as well as a digitally activated field of water jets that induce screams and giggles from children and offer them—and any adults who might dare—the water play denied by the lack of physical access to the lake itself.

Facing the site was the massive brick home of the Redpath Sugar Refinery with its periodically emitted whiffs of sugar. The relation of park to water is simple: look, but don't touch. Two gigantic granite boulders, quarried in the Canadian Shield and brought to the site in pieces, accompany the sand and hosts of chairs. Oh yeah, there are also those pink umbrellas that had been questioned at every stage of review along the way.

It is so easy to get wrapped up in the imagery, playfulness, and whimsy of projects such as these that we often overlook or forget the devotion to technical issues that lies behind them. Designs by the Cormier office are always well-resolved and carefully detailed. They are made to last; an image means nothing if its existence is only transitory, unless of course that is the specific nature of the project, like an art installation.

Square Dorchester, Montreal

From the year of its inception, Square Dorchester has served as one of Montreal's most active social hubs. In 1854 the site's purpose turned from its original function as a cemetery to a more active public space known as Square Dorchester. A revised layout of circulation paths made in 1907 guided pedestrian movement through the space on a pattern that resembled the Union Jack. Over the years the state of the square declined; its asphalt paths cracked and chipped, and vegetation intruded on the pathways.

In their designed renewal of the square, Claude Cormier & Associates maintained all its historical traces and imposed no alien order upon it. The process, instead, was “find, replace, and elevate” in subtle ways. Existing the paths were repaved with granite setts, whose visual effect was enlivened by three a mix of thermal, honed, and polished finishes. Periodically, granite crosses set in the granite signal the site's first use as a burial ground. The lawn segments between the pathways were banked and shaped as low berms to give volume to what had been only flat surfaces—which also discourages pitching tents for events. While subtle to an extreme, the resulting hillocks are nonetheless effective for defining the paths and for welcoming those who wish to sit or recline on a grassy surface. Square Dorchester may be Cormier's most subtly designed and executed public landscape, and not incidentally his most sophisticated. In a later addition half a fountain was added—because there was insufficient space for a whole one. In clement weather the square is usually filled with a good mix of human types sitting or reading on its benches or sprawling with lunch or a drink on one of its grassy knolls. Whiffs of alcohol and the noxious weed may also enliven the air.

The Cormier strategy eschews historicism and replication; his is history abstracted, mined for ideas, but completely reworked to function in today's city. Works such as these may first appear to lack the imagery and immediate brilliance of his more witty schemes, but here the brilliance lies at a different level. It appears quietly, graced by sophistication, drawing inspiration from the modern as well as the ancient, the urban as well as the suburban, the staid as well as the humorous.

We miss Claude and what would have been his future contributions.

Marc Treib, Professor of Architecture Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley, CA

Reflections on Claude Cormier from Michael Van Valkenburgh

2024

To everyone who loved Claude, I want to talk about Claude the landscape architect, Claude the plantsman, and Claude the man.

First, Claude the landscape architect: In an earlier life, Claude Cormier must have been a tree. It would explain why his projects go so far in connecting us to the soul of each landscape he touches. But Claude also lives very much in our world, so his work feels exceptionally alive and present. He creates places that feel as good to come back to as they do on the first visit, probably because his own joy is palpable in everything he does. He carried that playful spirit from his upbringing on a farm to his first installations at dance clubs in Montreal to the wide-ranging career that followed. Sometimes the effects are momentarily alarming too, shaking us out of our complacency and challenging us to look at the world a little differently. Others do this sort of thing with judgment; Claude does it with generosity. The pink umbrellas, the dogs, a pond shaped like a heart: Claude's irreverence is also a form of love, helping us find beauty in unexpected places.

Then there is Claude the plantsman. Some might be surprised that I call him that at all, since he is more well known for elevating manufactured materials to a level of sensuousness normally reserved for living things (his Blue Stick Garden immediately comes to mind). But I have seen him settle into a kind of rapture when talk of plants comes up, and I recognize in his landscapes the unmistakable marks of a fellow plant-lover. If he wasn't a tree himself, Claude must have had a distant relative who was, so primal is his love and curiosity about plants. His work seems to draw from a deeper source; Claude's plants always offer a little bit extra, a welcome surprise, as he constantly teases out the ways they trigger emotions the rest of us didn't realize they could reach. His designs remind me of the inherent optimism of our field, which goes hand in hand with Claude's attitude about life. While some insist that the members of a landscape architect's ensemble stay in their assigned roles, Claude celebrates the anomalous and the episodic: a painted stick standing in for a blue poppy, or an exuberant 50-foot catalpa suddenly endowed with equal parts whimsy and gravitas as it is captured in a perfect, circular, tree-sized island. Claude empowers plants (and people) to do their own thing—the way that he has always done his.

Finally, there is Claude the person. After my firm won the Port Lands project in Toronto, Chris Glaisek, the client's Chief Planning and Design Officer, told me a hurdle to get over was that Claude had already

developed a design for part of the site. I didn't know Claude personally then—this was close to 20 years ago—and when I saw his project, I was concerned. It was so good. It was mostly a landscape of paths and plants, and while it had a conventional central clearing, the masses of planted forms caressed its edges. The way they unfolded resembled the way you might pull a wool blanket around you on a cold night. When I finally presented our design to Waterfront Toronto's Review Board, Claude was on the panel. Panel members were expected to give feedback in the order they were seated around the table, but Claude jumped in the moment I finished presenting. He was wildly enthusiastic in his praise, and from then on, we were fast friends.

This past May, after the dedication of his Love Park in Toronto, he found the time to write and tell me about visiting some of my firm's recent Toronto projects, how they have helped bring new life to the city that he knows and cares for so deeply. It is never about Claude when you speak to him, and not about you either, but about the work and the joy it brings to others. I am not sure I know a landscape architect who loves what we do more than Claude. And I love that he always seems to operate at the edge of the circle that describes our profession, but that in doing so consistently enriches and enlarges what is at its core. Is Claude a rascal? Probably. A genius, absolutely. I am going to miss him, and our field will, too.

Sending Claude my love.

Michael Van Valkenburgh, Landscape Architect and Creative Director, MVVA, Brooklyn, NY