

[Radical:] Supporting change  
[Design:] To make or draw plans for something  
[Strategy:] A detailed plan for achieving success in situations such as war, politics, business, industry or sport; or the skill of planning for such situations.  
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# AVOIDING ARCHITECTURE I THE GARDEN II CURTAINS III THE PARK IV DIPLOMACY V SUSTAINABILITY

When one's life's work is avoiding architecture by creating spatial effects with other means; when these effects tend to be more flexible, less costly and easier to realize; when they introduce narrative, tactility and unpredictable, unstable volumes and shapes to a place; when the work connects inside to outside or forms a flexible membrane between the two; when it enhances perspectives and sight lines or creates openings; when it organizes movement, use, climate and acoustics; when it adds softness, color, structure and scale; when it filters, spreads or obstructs light or sound; when it introduces the aspect of time and change, of life and decay; when the work mimics the constructive intelligence of earthworms and the strength and persistence of bumblebees, combined with the social qualities of the ant; when pavilions can be carried by one person and attics are punctured by glass houses at the scale of Philip Johnson's; when walls can float and biotopes can thrive; when gravity and logic are questioned and the wheel is reinvented at every turn; when this work can complement, question, challenge, contradict or extrapolate the program that is offered and the architecture they inhabit, customized to the given context and moment in time; and develop in parallel with architecture differently with each new project, inside or outside of it – or independent from it... then we can speak of a radical design intent.

THE TIME WE LIVE IN  
NEEDS RADICALISM:  
THERE IS NO TIME  
TO LOOSE ON  
'WELLNESS' AND  
'SECURITY' AS  
THESE ONLY GO SO  
FAR IN A WORLD  
THAT IS IN TURMOIL.

All design work needs to be radical and support change; what else! The digital era sucks us collectively into a tunnel of blue light from which streams of non-hierarchical information flow like lava, an endless choice of media networks, apps and data that only few can unravel and digest. No way to discern what is true from false in the mountain of knowledge, experiences, dramas, lies, studies and analyses offered in all fields. Everything is for sale: services, shops, clubs, opportunities, meeting points, digital landscapes, countries, products, shares, bitcoins, people and objects – a global materialistic Valhalla. Nothing is tangible, tactile or true to scale. No smell, no sound, no life – just loads of images to choose from for any purpose, and all up for grabs.

Editors: Sofia Pia  
Belenky, Tobias Hertzner  
Dausgaard,  
Hunter O'Brien Doyle  
Design: anjakaiser.info  
Print: hatopress.net

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due@aaschool.ac.uk

**THE GARDEN:** Paradise (lost?). Feast of color, fragrance, light, water and air. Theatre. Living room. Meeting place. Place for thought and wonder. Representation of the wild.

Home to mammals, insects and birds, with carpets of foliage, fountains of light and waves of fluttering sounds. Place of growth and decay, of seasonal change. Microclimate. Biotope.

Trees for volume, verticality and visibility, protection (shade and wind), health (filter for polluted soil, air and sound), seasonal change (color, scent, shape); for edible fruits and the attraction of birds, insects, fungus, moulds and other organisms for stability (anti erosion), cleaning and fertilizing (soil) and fun (climbing, collecting leaves, flowers, fruit, etc.).

Designed landscapes – taking European tradition as example – are either a synthetic mimicry of ‘wilderness,’ or a form of manicured nature that mimics interiors.

**CURTAINS:** Curtains cover windows for shade, darkening, cooling and privacy. Organize movement, form rooms, divide or define spaces, veil and unveil views, spectacles and objects of value, filter or reflect light. A temporary

presence, sensitive to UV light, drought, moisture, dirt and mismanagement. Dependent on maintenance and human interaction.

Their Achilles heel: fragility. Where plants grow in strength, textiles weaken.

When curtains catch air, they become billowing volumes, changing from one rounded, sensual shape to the next. Never repetitive, always a surprise. In this sense they transcend the ‘blob architecture’ of the 80s and 90s, where computer technology helped architects to design buildings and facades with ‘fluid’ forms, which in fact were frozen.

Frozen and hard!

To talk about curtains is to defend their emancipation from servicing, obedient, passive objects to self-regulating, active and independent actors that improve the performance (spatial, theatrical) and physical (audible, visual, climatic) quality of a space or building. To talk about curtains also triggers a discussion about value: Why? This cannot cost so much? Can it?! No indeed, curtains cost much less than architectural interventions with the same functions would. But curtains need supportive structures, place for storage, smart machinery and a lot of thought, alas!

**THE PARK:** A cultural presence, representing the city and its values; economic tool to augment the value of neighbourhoods and adjacent buildings; social tool, giving free space to inhabitants for encounters, sports and social interaction; connector, to bind different areas to one another; provider of infrastructure, to improve pedestrian flow in urban settings; political tool, to sooth negative emotions of citizens during building developments; strategic tool, to hide underground infrastructures and/or to seal polluted soil and garbage dumps. Planting for the sake of positive emotion, for educational purposes, for consumption or use. Planting used as spatial tool: screen, filter, window, enclosure, boundary, and connection. Planting as organizer of movement, views and experiences. Pavement and topography as facilitator for traffic, drainage, pedestrian flow, parking spaces, way-finding purposes; topography to overcome height differences, boundaries, and to open up views to the surroundings. Typography/graphics

for information, wayfinding, for communicating site-specific regulations and education. Five trash-bin typology ‘bouquets’ for the various trash-types: glass, cans, plastic, paper, and mixed garbage. Fences and gates for control and safety. Lighting for atmosphere and night visibility. Cameras for security. New: low and transparent planting for the sake of overview and safety.

The park is not just for the health and wellbeing of its users, it is also an attractive looking thin layer that hides, and at the same time makes accessible, complex underground infrastructures. The park is co-financed by developers and adjacent business companies because the value of their real estate increases remarkably because of its presence.

We can state that a landscape design – whether for an urban development, a public park or for a private garden – can no longer only be seen as a romantic embellishment of the city or family house – it is truly an architectural, political and economic presence. Where architecture (and the curtain) is on its way to become a ruin from the moment it is born, landscape slowly grows toward an apotheosis that the author will never be able to enjoy!

**DIPLOMACY:** The paradox of the two servicing professions, interior and landscape architecture, is that you need to give your vision plausibility from a situation of relative weakness; of subjugation. Tons of often

contradictory wishes, demands and regulation threaten to compromise a designer’s intent, and thus one needs to develop answers and solutions – like in a puzzle – that transcend the situation to develop an original work of quality and intelligence. So the art in both disciplines is to impose your will – or vision – without making it obvious.

**SUSTAINABILITY:** None of us know exactly how to go about it, all found information and studies notwithstanding, so each of us can only do what we understand and are able to digest and invest. In our profession as landscape architects, we try to create environments that use as little

water and as many varied, local plant and tree species as possible. Preferably, we relocate local plant communities into urban settings, where we create circumstances (soil, moist, nutrients, micro-climates) in which they can thrive. Of course to achieve good results, we need not only to teach ourselves all ins-and-outs of local circumstances and species, but we also need to involve the local specialists and communities: universities, professional laborers, residents. After all, any garden, park or green urban infrastructure needs generations of support and input. The landscape designer or architect and their vision is but the beginning of an endless string of events that need to be defended, financed, realized, continued, and improved for many years to come. What one draws up – and later hopefully builds and plants – is the starting point of an initiative that takes at least 50 years to reach the intention of the designer.