

An aerial photograph of a concrete pier extending into the ocean. The water on the left is a deep, dark blue, while the water on the right is a lighter, turquoise blue. The pier is a light grey concrete, showing some texture and a small crack. A semi-transparent white rectangular box is overlaid horizontally across the center of the image, containing the text 'ANNE WHISTON SPIRN' in a white, serif, all-caps font.

ANNE WHISTON SPIRN

National Design Award 2018

ANNE WHISTON SPIRN

Ten Projects



National Design Award 2018

Design Mind

Whatever impact my ideas have had on design theory and practice, on public policy and public awareness has been achieved through several media. Tens of thousands of readers have bought my books, but that number has been augmented by millions of people from more than 90 countries who have visited my websites to view and download material — writings, maps, videos, course syllabi. This portfolio book contains ten projects that place my published books in the context of this larger body of work, including essays, experimental demonstration projects, and innovative use of the Web.

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Anne Whiston Spirn

STATEMENT

Human survival depends upon adapting ourselves and our landscapes—cities, buildings, and gardens, roadways and rivers—in new, life-sustaining ways, designing places that are functional, sustainable, meaningful, and artful, places that help us feel and understand the relationship of the natural and the built. I want to transform the way people see the world, to inspire them to create places that enhance life. My career as author, scholar, teacher, practitioner, and activist is dedicated to this goal.

Design is for me the habit of looking for opportunities where others see problems and then devising solutions that address seemingly unrelated concerns, such as polluted water, impoverished neighborhoods, and troubled schools.

Action is at the heart of my work. I use design practice to develop and test theory, and theory to critique practice, alternating between engagement and reflection. As a scholar, I document the design tradition within which I think and act.

BIOGRAPHY

Anne Whiston Spirn is an award-winning landscape architect, author, photographer, and teacher. Her books include *The Granite Garden* (1984), *The Language of Landscape* (1998), *Daring to Look* (2008), and *The Eye Is a Door* (2014). Spirn is Professor of Landscape Architecture at MIT and previously taught at Penn and Harvard. Prior to teaching, Spirn worked at Wallace McHarg Roberts and Todd on landmark projects, including Woodlands New Community and the Toronto Central Waterfront. Since 1987, she has directed the West Philadelphia Landscape Project, which integrates research, design practice, teaching, and community service. In 2001, she was awarded Japan's International Cosmos Prize, "for contributions to the harmonious coexistence of nature and humankind."

For more than forty years, Anne Whiston Spirn has been a visionary and an innovator as an educator, author, designer, scholar, artist, and public intellectual in the fields of landscape architecture, urban design and planning, and photography.

Her first book, *The Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design* (1984), launched the field of ecological urbanism and spoke to the general public about nature in cities and the role of design. In 1985, she devised a bold plan to expand, renovate, and integrate urban open space in order to detain storm water, stop the overflow of combined sewers, and thus to simultaneously improve regional water quality and rebuild communities. In her manifesto of 1988, "The Poetics of City and Nature," Spirn challenged designers to embrace dynamic form, integrate ecology and art, and reclaim urban infrastructure as a domain for design. In Philadelphia, 20 years of Spirn's teaching, writing, and design proposals for the integration of open space and water management inspired Green City, Clean Waters, a \$2 billion program launched by the City in 2009, now hailed as a national model.

Spirn's institutional base has been the university, where she has educated and inspired generations of architects, landscape architects, and urban designers and planners. But her theater of action has been the urban landscape as a whole and the inner-city neighborhood in particular. Since 1987, in the West Philadelphia Landscape Project, Spirn has developed an internationally recognized model for community-based design research. The project was also a laboratory for generating, testing, and refining the theory of a design language equally applicable to design by masters and by ordinary people. Her second book, *The Language of Landscape* (1998), which integrates the insights of a practitioner and scholar, is a key text in landscape theory, and the book has had broad influence in fields outside design, from history to choreography to poetry.

Visual thinking drives Spirn's research. Her innovative use of photography as a form of inquiry introduced new methods to design- and arts-based research. Her insights as a practitioner-scholar have overturned misconceptions about the work of masters of design and photography.

Spirn is a champion of open access to information. She writes for a general audience as well as for designers. She pioneered the use of the Web as a design medium for education and advocacy, and her award-winning websites offer free access to her research, publications, and courses.

In the best tradition of design, Anne Whiston Spirn looks for the interrelatedness of multiple problems and synergistic solutions. She embodies the design mind, which she has made broadly available to students, colleagues, officials, and the general public. She and her work are best evaluated by distinguished leaders in and observers of the design arts in the following pages.

Testimonials

“I consider Anne the most important theorist of landscape architecture in the United States of the past 40 years, both in terms of the quality of her work and its influence.

The Granite Garden... pioneered the field of landscape urbanism by examining the role of natural ecosystems in urban design. This study continues to influence the development of this important field today, which is at the forefront of professional practice. *The Language of Landscape*... set forth the essential categories for the analysis of both natural and designed landscapes, categories that continue to influence the teaching of landscape architecture... and the way professionals conceive and evaluate their own work. What makes her work so influential... is her ability to synthesize natural and social science with aesthetics, much in the mode of John Dewey, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., and Charles Eliot.”

REUBEN RAINEY

Emeritus Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of Virginia

“As one of our country’s leading design thinkers, Anne Spirn... has a global reputation as the preeminent scholar working at the intersection of landscape architecture and environmental planning. Her seminal scholarly research and elegant writing applies ecological principles to urban settings, and she has also developed a parallel community-based research agenda that has gained national and international attention. Her work creatively bridges across design, community and economic development, and environmental policy. She has been exceptionally effective in conveying her ideas to a broader public, both through web design and her insistence on open access publication.”

LAWRENCE VALE

Professor of Urban Design and Planning, MIT

“Taken together, as a related body of work, *The Granite Garden*, the *West Philadelphia Landscape Project*, and *The Language of Landscape* have no equal in value and significance to the city-building professions. ... Anne was

preoccupied with the ecological health of cities and well-being of disadvantaged communities at a time when prominent academics and practitioners were not. Her emphasis on the poetics of design as an integral aspect of urban health, too, preceded mainstream practice.”

IGNACIO BUNSTER
Principal, AECOM

“The most impressive aspect of Anne’s accomplishments has been the amazing diversity of disciplines in which she has excelled—including scholarship, design literature, teaching and, in professional practice, urban design, planning and landscape architecture. She has ... been a leader in the fusion of teaching and practice. Anne has been a major force in humanizing the cityscape with a quality of innovation that is economical, subtle, rational and infinitely satisfying.”

JAMES WINES
President of SITE

“As a guide to a coherent, intricate and transformative approach to landscape architecture and urban design, Anne Whiston Spirn is a visionary of the first order whose innovative work on the ground has transformed and enhanced the quality of life in low-income urban neighborhoods in deep and lasting ways.”

CHARLOTTE KAHN
Boston Foundation

“Over the past three decades Anne has been the world’s preeminent educator, theorist, and public figure in the field of landscape architecture. She is a major intellectual force who has changed the way the world regards the role of nature in cities, enhanced the quality for all who live in them ... [and] changed the way that an entire generation of landscape architects and planners think about design.”

ALAN BERGER

Professor of Urban Design and Landscape Architecture, MIT

“Spirn’s voice as a designer and scholar has reached far beyond the university and the professional design community ... to the broad public. Like Rachel Carson and Jane Jacobs, she has made specialized information compelling to diverse audiences and played an important role as an environmental educator. At a time when landscape literacy is an urgent matter, her ability to speak to so many people makes her a powerful advocate for design.

My work — and the trajectory of my entire generation of landscape and urban designers and scholars — would not have taken its current direction without Spirn’s contributions. Her integration of practice and theory, her intellectual rigour, her innovative subjects, and her generosity as a scholar have made her a model, a mentor, and an inspiration for our discipline.”

JANE WOLFF

Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of Toronto

“It was through her groundbreaking work that the City of Philadelphia can now boast being the Greenest City in America.”

HOWARD NEUKRUG

Commissioner, Philadelphia Water Department

“The legacies of Anne’s acclaimed practice and scholarship inhabit cities across the United States. Some are the result of her own labors in Philadelphia and Boston, but others are the steady accretion of her ideas: creeks liberated from concrete culverts in Seattle, verdant bikeways in Denver, urban gardens in Chicago and Detroit. An entire generation of scholars, planners, designers, environmental activists and urban leaders have benefitted from Anne’s visionary and courageous leadership. Her lasting mark upon the landscape of American urban design is as indelible as it is inclusive.

I sit on the editorial board of *Environmental History*, the field’s foremost journal. Every year, legions of scholars cite Anne’s work in their articles — a testament to her influence beyond architecture and planning. Her work elevates the value of design for people previously unaware of its importance and ubiquity.”

MATTHEW KLINGLE

Professor of History and Environmental Studies, Bowdoin College

“I consider Spirn... one of the greatest thinkers and artists of our time. Spirn’s abilities, through her artistry, design, teaching and scholarship, to create bridges between the ecological, cultural, ethical, technological, spiritual, philosophical and poetic aspects of human experience... place her in the rare category of world-leading thinkers and designers/artists.”

CHRIS AIKEN

Choreographer, Director of MFA Program, Smith College

Part I

“The Harmonious Coexistence of Nature and Mankind”

International Cosmos Prize (2001)

*The Granite Garden: Urban Nature
and Human Design* (1984/2018)

Reclaiming Common Ground:
The Future Shape of Boston
(1984–1986)

The West Philadelphia Landscape
Project (1987–present)

The Language of Landscape (1998/2018)

In 1984, I published *The Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design*, a book that demonstrates how cities can be designed in concert with natural processes rather than in conflict. Since then I have applied this approach to the redesign of existing cities, seeking integrated solutions to environmental and social challenges. I have worked in real neighborhoods with real people to build real projects, have had successes and failures and have made surprising discoveries. This action research was a laboratory for my second book. *The Language of Landscape* argues that landscape is a form of language with its own grammar and metaphors and calls for changing the way we shape our environment.

In recognition of this body of work, I was awarded Japan's International Cosmos Prize in 2001 for “contributions to the harmonious coexistence of nature and mankind.”



Artist Misaki Hisatani designed this case for my Cosmos Medal with a motif that recognizes specific themes of my work: life, water, and time.

2001

International Cosmos Prize

In 2001, I received the International Cosmos Prize from Japan for “contributions to the harmonious coexistence of nature and mankind” for my life’s work. The Cosmos Prize, established in 1992, was conceived as the “Nobel Prize” for the environment with a generous monetary award. I was the youngest person, the first woman, and am the only designer/planner to receive the award.

The Cosmos Prize Foundation described the grounds for this recognition:

Professor Spirn’s basic principal... has been that cities must not conflict with nature: it is possible to build a city that is harmonious with the natural environment around it, existing as part of nature. Based on this principle, she wrote and published a remarkable book, The Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design, in 1984. This publication won international attention in that it shed a new light on the relationship between urban areas and natural environment.

In 1998, she published another noteworthy book entitled The Language of Landscape. She emphasizes that it is important to catch and understand what individual landscapes can tell us, so that mankind can sustain and create beautiful environments through better interactions with nature. This is a new approach for studying the relationship between nature and mankind.

She has directed various projects around the world. Since 1987, she has directed the West Philadelphia Landscape Project which is highly evaluated as one of the best practices of urban planning in the U.S.

Consistently underlying all of her achievements is her philosophy, ‘urban areas harmoniously coexisting with nature,’ and new approaches aiming at the integration of nature, urban areas, and art. These achievements, in agreement with ‘Harmonious Coexistence of Nature and Mankind,’ the concept of the Cosmos Prize, have contributed to the future of human society in the 21st century.

THE GRANITE GARDEN

Urban Nature and Human Design

ANNE WHISTON SPIRN



THE GRANITE GARDEN

S

1984/2018

The Granite Garden

President’s Award of Excellence,
American Society of
Landscape Architects,
1984

**One of the
“Essential Books of
Planning,”
which “touched
off the ecological
urbanism
movement.”**
American Planning
Association, 2009

“If you care about cities, as they are or as they might be, don’t miss *The Granite Garden*. I am filled with admiration for this book—for its truly remarkable practicality, its uncommon precision, its unique scope and sweep. Fascinating reading for anyone, this is required reading for professionals. It is also an invaluable reference work. Never before has anyone pulled together such a wide range of environmental information and applied it in a coherent and practical way to the situation of the city. At the end of her book, the author offers us something of a utopia, but, unlike earlier visions of the city, hers seems possible. Anne Whiston Spirn has made a splendid contribution and here emerges as a leading spokesperson for the city.”

JANE JACOBS, author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

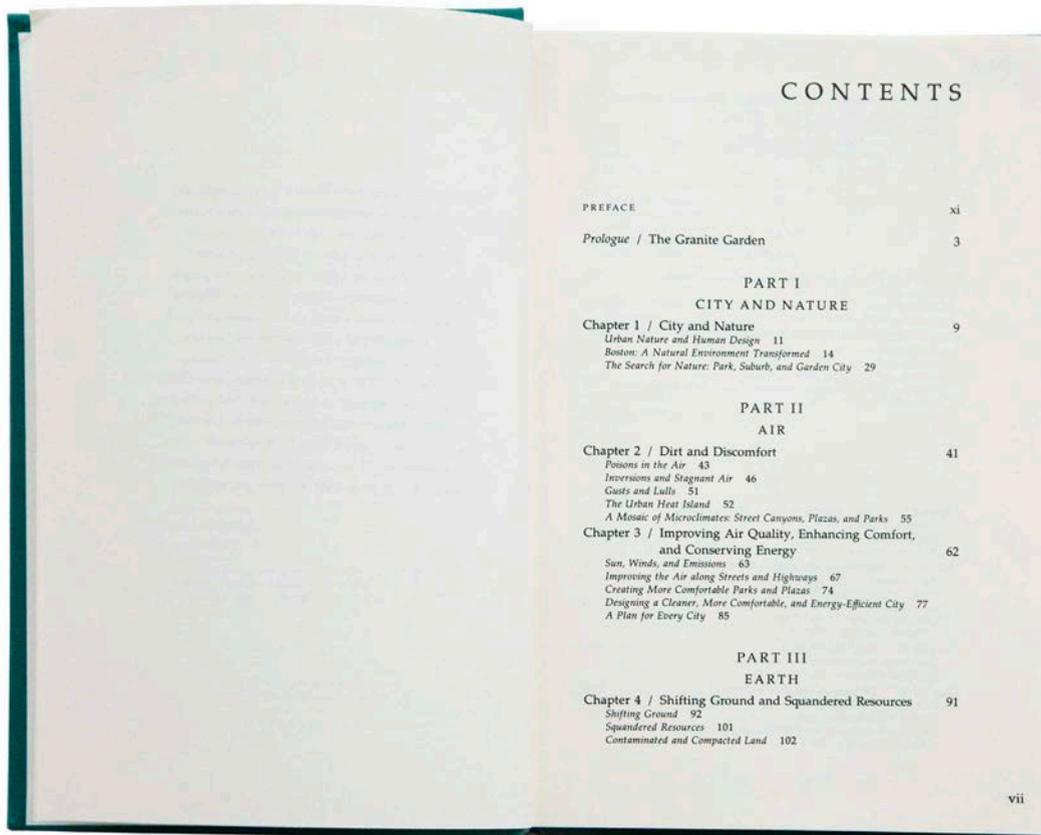
The Granite Garden “touched off the ecological urbanism movement,” according to the American Planning Association. *The Granite Garden* is a book about nature in cities and what the city could be like if designed in concert with natural processes, rather than in ignorance of them or in outright opposition. It presents, synthesizes and applies knowledge from many disciplines to show how cities are part of nature and to demonstrate how they can be planned and designed in concert with natural processes rather than in conflict.

My goal was to transform the way people think about cities and thus to change the way cities are designed and built. So I wrote the book for a broad audience—for journalists, politicians, developers, and city dwellers, as well as for designers and planners, for practitioners as well as academics. The book was widely reviewed in the general press, such as *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*, and in professional journals. It inspired editorials and provoked public debate about urban nature and city design.

Historians credit *The Granite Garden* as the first example of urban environmental history; it inspired a new generation of scholars whose books on the environmental history of particular cities are now winning awards. Others cite the book as the way they first learned about landscape architecture and urban design and the reason they entered their profession.

The Granite Garden is still in print. It has been translated into Japanese, Chinese, and Portuguese, and excerpts have been published in books about design and design theory. Widely read by a general audience, it is still a standard university text in many subjects, from architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design and planning to urban and environmental studies, geography, and history. A new, expanded electronic edition (2018) features new cases and reflects on changes since 1984.

Left *The Granite Garden* is still in print, and the 2018 electronic edition invents a new kind of reading experience.



The Granite Garden is organized by sections on air, earth, water, life, and ecosystems. The book describes comprehensive strategies for sweeping change as well as incremental solutions.

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“*The Granite Garden* (1984), single-handedly reinvigorated the urban ecology movement and its connection to design and planning, and is widely regarded as the most important book authored by a landscape architect in a generation.”

ALAN BERGER, Professor of Urban Design and Landscape Architecture, MIT

“Nearly three decades after its original publication...*The Granite Garden* remains one of the clearest, most cogent meditations on the power of landscapes as metropolitan systems.”

JANE WOLFF, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of Toronto

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"The Granite Garden inspired myself and other practitioners in the fields of watershed health, urban design, and land use planning in our region. It also informed much of the work that both the NGO community and government agencies have pursued over the intervening twenty-eight years to provide access to nature, manage stormwater in more ecologically sustainable ways and generally do a better job of integrating nature into the urban environment." **MIKE HOUCK**, Executive Director, Urban Greenspaces Institute

"The Granite Garden, quite simply, shaped much of my research and practice. I ... read her book and was convinced that urban design needed to be at the center of the work colleagues and I were developing to connect Penn with the West Philadelphia community. That work, significantly inspired by Spirm's work and writing, led to the creation of the Netter Center for Community Partnerships... Its work has been adapted across the United States and around the world."

IRA HARKAVY, Associate Vice President, University of Pennsylvania

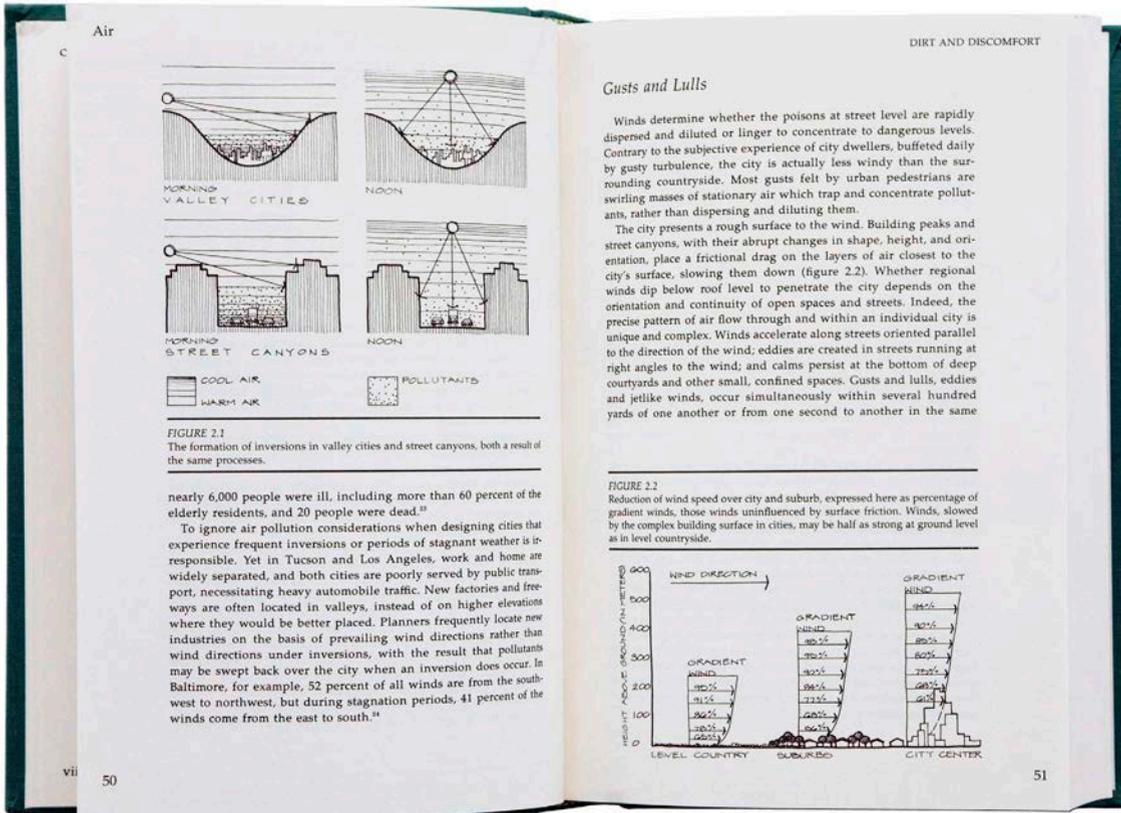


FIGURE 2.1 The formation of inversions in valley cities and street canyons, both a result of the same processes.

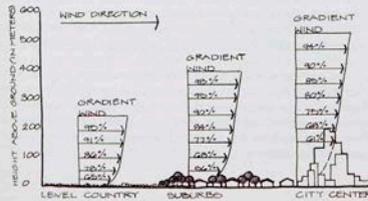
nearly 6,000 people were ill, including more than 60 percent of the elderly residents, and 20 people were dead.³³ To ignore air pollution considerations when designing cities that experience frequent inversions or periods of stagnant weather is irresponsible. Yet in Tucson and Los Angeles, work and home are widely separated, and both cities are poorly served by public transport, necessitating heavy automobile traffic. New factories and freeways are often located in valleys, instead of on higher elevations where they would be better placed. Planners frequently locate new industries on the basis of prevailing wind directions rather than wind directions under inversions, with the result that pollutants may be swept back over the city when an inversion does occur. In Baltimore, for example, 52 percent of all winds are from the southwest to northwest, but during stagnation periods, 41 percent of the winds come from the east to south.³⁴

Gusts and Lulls

Winds determine whether the poisons at street level are rapidly dispersed and diluted or linger to concentrate to dangerous levels. Contrary to the subjective experience of city dwellers, buffeted daily by gusty turbulence, the city is actually less windy than the surrounding countryside. Most gusts felt by urban pedestrians are swirling masses of stationary air which trap and concentrate pollutants, rather than dispersing and diluting them.

The city presents a rough surface to the wind. Building peaks and street canyons, with their abrupt changes in shape, height, and orientation, place a frictional drag on the layers of air closest to the city's surface, slowing them down (figure 2.2). Whether regional winds dip below roof level to penetrate the city depends on the orientation and continuity of open spaces and streets. Indeed, the precise pattern of air flow through and within an individual city is unique and complex. Winds accelerate along streets oriented parallel to the direction of the wind; eddies are created in streets running at right angles to the wind; and calms persist at the bottom of deep courtyards and other small, confined spaces. Gusts and lulls, eddies and jetlike winds, occur simultaneously within several hundred yards of one another or from one second to another in the same

FIGURE 2.2 Reduction of wind speed over city and suburb, expressed here as percentage of gradient winds, those winds uninfluenced by surface friction. Winds, slowed by the complex building surface in cities, may be half as strong at ground level as in level countryside.

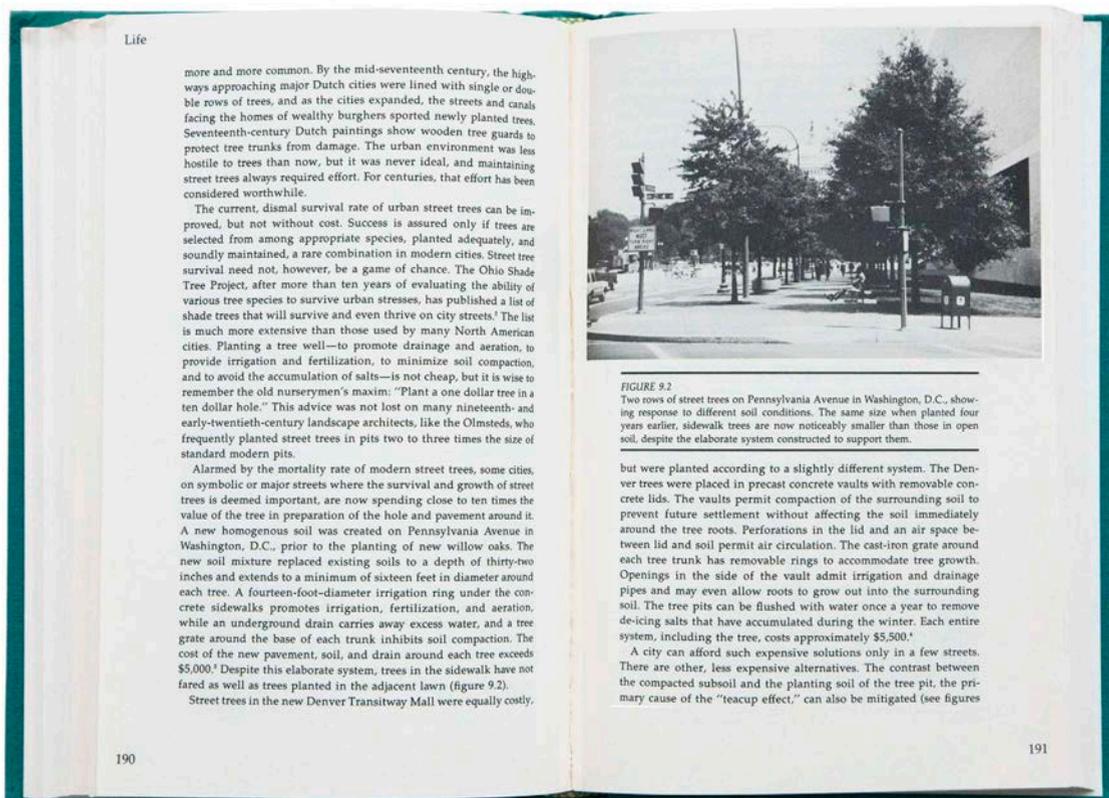


Diagrams demonstrate how natural processes shape the city and interact with the urban fabric. Photographs and drawings illustrate successful designs from scales of house and garden to city and region.

“The Granite Garden ... pioneered the field of landscape urbanism by examining the role of natural ecosystems in urban design. This study continues to influence the development of this important field today, which is at the forefront of professional practice.”

REUBEN RAINEY, Emeritus Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of Virginia

“In *The Granite Garden*, [Spirm] launched a revolution in thinking about the relationship between nature, the urban environment, and we who inhabit these realms ... the kind of thinking that today underlies Landscape Urbanism, Ecological Urbanism, Sustainable Urbanism Anne was the first to understand and articulate these concepts to a broad audience. And she was among the first to practice and teach it.” DENNIS FRENCHMAN, Professor of Urban Design, MIT



Life

more and more common. By the mid-seventeenth century, the highways approaching major Dutch cities were lined with single or double rows of trees, and as the cities expanded, the streets and canals facing the homes of wealthy burghers sported newly planted trees. Seventeenth-century Dutch paintings show wooden tree guards to protect tree trunks from damage. The urban environment was less hostile to trees than now, but it was never ideal, and maintaining street trees always required effort. For centuries, that effort has been considered worthwhile.

The current, dismal survival rate of urban street trees can be improved, but not without cost. Success is assured only if trees are selected from among appropriate species, planted adequately, and soundly maintained, a rare combination in modern cities. Street tree survival need not, however, be a game of chance. The Ohio Shade Tree Project, after more than ten years of evaluating the ability of various tree species to survive urban stresses, has published a list of shade trees that will survive and even thrive on city streets.¹ The list is much more extensive than those used by many North American cities. Planting a tree well—to promote drainage and aeration, to provide irrigation and fertilization, to minimize soil compaction, and to avoid the accumulation of salts—is not cheap, but it is wise to remember the old nurserymen's maxim: "Plant a one dollar tree in a ten dollar hole." This advice was not lost on many nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century landscape architects, like the Olmsteds, who frequently planted street trees in pits two to three times the size of standard modern pits.

Alarmed by the mortality rate of modern street trees, some cities, on symbolic or major streets where the survival and growth of street trees is deemed important, are now spending close to ten times the value of the tree in preparation of the hole and pavement around it. A new homogenous soil was created on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., prior to the planting of new willow oaks. The new soil mixture replaced existing soils to a depth of thirty-two inches and extends to a minimum of sixteen feet in diameter around each tree. A fourteen-foot-diameter irrigation ring under the concrete sidewalks promotes irrigation, fertilization, and aeration, while an underground drain carries away excess water, and a tree grate around the base of each trunk inhibits soil compaction. The cost of the new pavement, soil, and drain around each tree exceeds \$5,000.² Despite this elaborate system, trees in the sidewalk have not fared as well as trees planted in the adjacent lawn (figure 9.2).

Street trees in the new Denver Transitway Mall were equally costly,



FIGURE 9.2

Two rows of street trees on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., showing response to different soil conditions. The same size when planted four years earlier, sidewalk trees are now noticeably smaller than those in open soil, despite the elaborate system constructed to support them.

but were planted according to a slightly different system. The Denver trees were placed in precast concrete vaults with removable concrete lids. The vaults permit compaction of the surrounding soil to prevent future settlement without affecting the soil immediately around the tree roots. Perforations in the lid and an air space between lid and soil permit air circulation. The cast-iron grate around each tree trunk has removable rings to accommodate tree growth. Openings in the side of the vault admit irrigation and drainage pipes and may even allow roots to grow out into the surrounding soil. The tree pits can be flushed with water once a year to remove de-icing salts that have accumulated during the winter. Each entire system, including the tree, costs approximately \$5,500.³

A city can afford such expensive solutions only in a few streets. There are other, less expensive alternatives. The contrast between the compacted subsoil and the planting soil of the tree pit, the primary cause of the "teacup effect," can also be mitigated (see figures

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"Anne pointed the way towards a sustainable future long before sustainability entered the professional lexicon... *The Granite Garden* has since served as a foundation for new vital strands of practice, such as Landscape Urbanism."

IGNACIO BUNSTER, Principal, WRT

"*The Granite Garden* is unique in offering a broad audience some of the ways landscape architecture can creatively apply its tools and techniques to improve the quality of urban life. The author has placed the book in context with earlier efforts by Halprin and McHarg within our profession. Beyond that, it ranks as a contribution to national design dialogue along with the works of Jane Jacobs and Lewis Mumford, Anne Whiston Spirn brings honor to the profession and the profession is honored to count her as one of us." ASLA AWARD JURY COMMENTS, 1984

THE GRANITE GARDEN: URBAN NATURE AND HUMAN DESIGN

PRESIDENT'S AWARD OF EXCELLENCE/ *Communication*

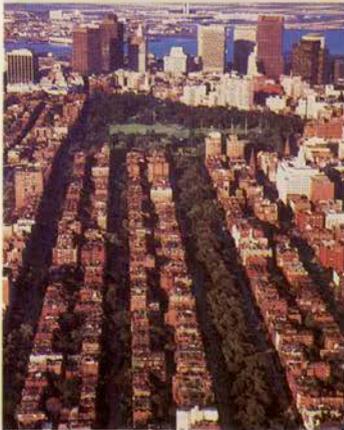
Landscape Architect Anne Whiston Spirn

JURY COMMENTS

The jury was fortunate to have a publication of this quality, originality and significance to which to respond. *The Granite Garden* is unique in offering a broad audience some of the ways landscape architecture can creatively apply its tools and techniques to improve the quality of urban life.

The author has placed the book in context with earlier efforts by Halprin and McHarg within our profession. Beyond that, it ranks as a contribution to national design dialogue along with the works of Jane Jacobs and Lewis Mumford. Anne Whiston Spirn brings honor to the profession and the profession is honored to count her as one of us.

THE GRANITE GARDEN Urban Nature and Human Design



THE PROJECT

This is a book about nature in cities and what the city could be like if designed in concert with natural processes, rather than in ignorance of them or in outright opposition. It reviews comprehensive strategies for sweeping change most readily implemented in rapidly growing cities, as well as incremental solutions more appropriate to the gradual redesign of existing cores. It focuses on the look and shape of the city, especially the open space in which buildings are set.

The basic philosophy that underlies the book is that the city is a part of nature, rather than antithetical to it. This idea has profound implications for how the city is designed, built, and maintained for the health, safety and welfare of every city resident. The book surveys what is currently known about the natural environment of the city: its air quality and climate, its geology and soil, its water dynamics and quality, its plant and animal communities, and the processes of the urban ecosystem. The book describes the consequences of disregarding nature in urban design and offers potential solutions.

The Granite Garden summarizes what we know about urban nature and demonstrates how this knowledge can

be applied to the design of parks, plazas, buildings, streets and highways, and other public works. There are other books about nature in the city, but this is the first book by a single author that provides a comprehensive overview of the subject. If we are to address the problem of the city in any meaningful way, we must look beyond narrow solutions to short-term problems and strike at the heart of the problem with long-term, comprehensive strategies.

The rewards for designing cities in concert with nature apply to all cities across the globe, old and new, large and small. Opportunities for change are most sweeping in new settlements, but even old and dense cities are constantly being redesigned and rebuilt. The investment required to upgrade the infrastructure of older cities will require billions of dollars in North America alone. The opportunities for a fresh approach to resources and waste are enormous, but the potential for costly blunders is vast. This book outlines how cities in general and landscape architects in particular can take advantage of this effort to design cities that are safer, healthier, more economical to build and maintain, more beautiful, and more memorable.



Nature in the city is rain and the rushing sound of underground rivers buried in storm sewers.

Urban wilds represent an aesthetic alternative to formal parkland and an opportunity to provide more parks on reduced maintenance budgets. The Boston Redevelopment Authority has inventoried the city's remaining natural areas. This study identified 2,000 acres of urban wilds, nearly seven percent of the city's land, as natural areas worthy of conservation.





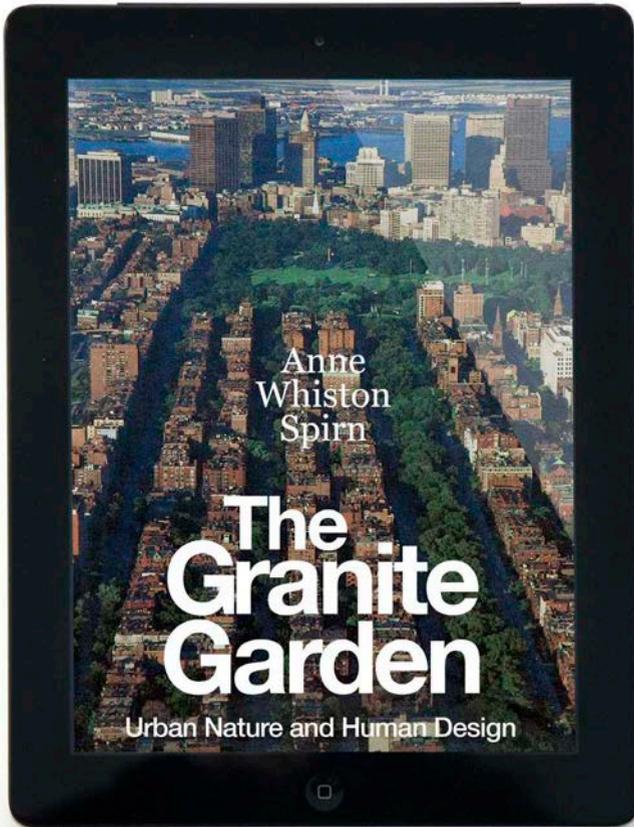
“30 Years after The Granite Garden: Where Do We Stand?” Panel at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the ASLA. Ignacio Bunster-Ossa, Anne Whiston Spirn, Frederick Steiner, and Elizabeth Meyer.

New E-book Edition and Website

2014 marked the 30th anniversary of the book’s publication. The occasion was celebrated by numerous publications and events and by the production of a new and expanded electronic edition of the book (2018).

The book’s original publication in January 1984 coincided with the release of the first MacIntosh computer to use a graphical interface and mouse. Although puny in capacity, those early personal computers ushered in a revolution in visualizing, collecting, and processing information, which led, in turn, to a transformation of knowledge about the relationship between the natural environment and the design of cities. The new edition reflects upon that transformation, about what has changed and what has remained the same over the past 30 years. It describes new trends and new cases of successful adaptation of city design to urban nature.

The new e-book is designed to be read in two ways: through verbal text (with links to images and captions) or as an essay of images and captions (with links to the book’s text). This is a new kind of reading experience.



A new e-book edition reflects on what has changed since 1984, reviews new research and describes new cases of successful design. Publishing it as an e-book makes possible the affordable price of \$4.99.

Left New electronic edition of *The Granite Garden* (2018).

Below A new website (www.granitegarden.net) features successful cases of ecological urbanism, which are searchable by keywords.



“Reclaiming Common Ground” laid out a vision now being realized around the world. It links issues often seen as unrelated and as competing for scarce resources—polluted water in Boston Harbor, deteriorating inner-city neighborhoods, and degraded public open space—and designed a solution that addressed all three.

Top Boston Harbor. The vision cited design precedents, including (below) Detention Basin/Skyline Plaza, Denver and Wastewater treatment and Werribee Farm, Melbourne, Australia.

1984–1986

Reclaiming Common Ground: The Future Shape of Boston

**“The Future
Shape of the City”
Lecture,** American
Institute of Architects,
1985

“If cities are to be healthful, vital and delightful places, they must be considered part of the natural environment. So says Harvard’s Anne Whiston Spirn, a pioneer in the field of urban ecology and one of the most acclaimed visionaries to emerge in America this generation.”

STEVE CURWOOD, *Boston Globe*, 1985

**“Shaping the City
to Nature’s Laws,”**
Boston Globe, 1985

“Reclaiming Common Ground” opened up a new approach to urban design and planning, one which exploits urban vacant land as a resource and which links community development in inner-city neighborhoods with environmental restoration. Built designs for neighborhood open space were catalysts for community development, which today are beloved local landmarks. This vision helped launch, sustain, and advance public dialogue, which changed the course of Boston’s future and laid the foundations for the Shrinking City and Green Infrastructure/CSO movements, which came into vogue 20 years later.

**“The Future
Shape of Boston,”**
Boston Atheneum, 1986

My goal in *Reclaiming Common Ground* was to demonstrate how the approach advocated in *The Granite Garden* could be applied to an existing city. The work was conducted as a research project and in my landscape architecture studio courses at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. In 1985, the AIA invited me to present this work as one of three lectures, nation-wide, on the future shape of the American city. *The Boston Globe* reviewed it in a feature article, which prompted further public debate. Fifteen years later, the lecture was reprinted as the concluding chapter of a book on *The American Planning Tradition*.

***The American
Planning Tradition,***
2000

The ideas first proposed here were more fully fleshed out in the West Philadelphia Landscape Project and are now being realized in Philadelphia and other cities, more than 30 years later.

SPONSORS

National Endowment for the Arts
American Institute of Architects
City of Boston
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
Johns Hopkins Press

Water, Neighborhoods, and Public Places

The project's single most important discovery was the correlation between buried floodplains and vacant land. Thirty percent of the land in Boston's Dudley Street neighborhood, once covered by houses, was vacant by 1985, but most of the abandonment was concentrated in the valley bottom, where a stream once formed the boundary between Roxbury and Dorchester. People believed that the vacant land was caused by riots and arson, but my research demonstrated that vacancies on the former floodplain appeared within a few decades of construction.

An important discovery was the strong correlation between the valley bottoms of buried floodplains and vacant land (in orange), shown below in this map of 1985. The discovery led to my proposal for linking inner-city community development with the improvement of regional water quality.





Vacant land on buried floodplain

Damage and abandonment on buried floodplains is a national problem. In the nineteenth century, streams were put in sewers, and now vacant land marks the course of former streams in distressed neighborhoods, where houses were demolished after the ground beneath them subsided due to underground water movement and settling landfill. Such conditions pose a threat to health and safety. My research identified and called attention to this pervasive national problem.



Boston Harbor (Alex MacLean/Landslides)

In 1985, Boston Harbor was polluted by overflows from the city's sewers, which carried a combination of sanitary sewage and stormwater runoff. These combined sewer overflows occurred after heavy rains, when there was too much sewage for treatment plants to handle. At the time, Boston planned to build a massive new sewage treatment plant to solve the problem.



Vacant land on buried floodplain

In 1985, Reclaiming Common Ground demonstrated how vacant land on buried floodplains could be restored as landscape infrastructure designed to carry and detain stormwater, in order to protect property from flooding, to serve as a framework around which to rebuild the community, and to solve the regional water quality problem of combined sewer overflows.

There are precedents for landscape infrastructure to manage stormwater. At the time, this approach was aimed at reducing floods, not combined sewer overflows. This plaza in Denver, Colorado, built in the 1970s, was designed as a detention basin to hold water for hours or days after storms in order to reduce flooding in the South Platte River.



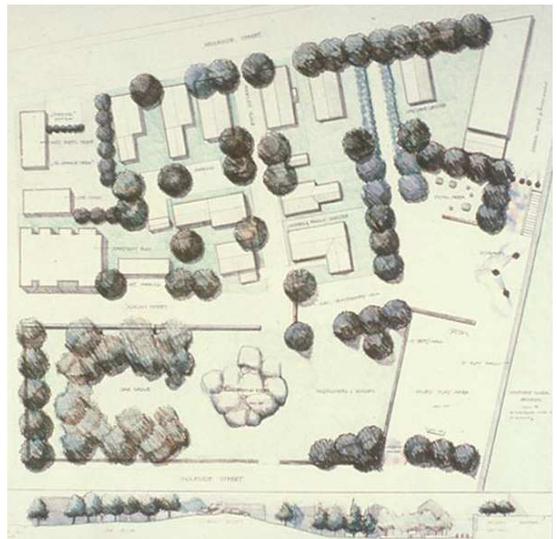
Skyline Plaza, Denver

There are also precedents for landscape-based wastewater treatment. This wetland in Melbourne, Australia was constructed as both a bird sanctuary and as part of one of the city's sewage treatment facilities.



Werribee Farm, Melbourne, Australia

My 1985 landscape architecture studio at Harvard proposed a strategic landscape infrastructure as a frame for rebuilding housing on the largely vacant "Dudley Triangle," much of which lies on the buried floodplain. They presented their ideas at a public meeting amidst heated debate. The studio alerted the community to the danger of rebuilding on the buried floodplain. The award-winning housing project, built in the late 1980s, incorporated the students' proposals, thereby averting future disaster.



Student design, 1985

A14 Boston Globe, 1985 Mar. 20, 1985

SOME PROPOSED SOLUTIONS TO WHAT AILS BOSTON

Flight urban blight with water management. In the single-solution-for-single-problem routine, such a notion sounds crazy, but Anne Whiston Spirn's arguments for such an approach seem altogether rational.

To explain her views, she draws on the history of the Dudley street neighborhood of Boston that straddles the border of Dorchester and Roxbury.

Totally built upon at the turn of the century, the area is now over 30 percent vacant. Social and economic changes have caused part of the change.

This low marshy area, now vacant, was the last to be developed. It was a less attractive location environmentally, and the homes built upon it were doubtless plagued by wet basements, and were of lower quality.

The lesson is clear to Spirn: "When this area is rebuilt and repopulated, most of the land now will be built upon again. Some of it should remain open."

One way to cut the demand for sewage treatment is to slow down the rainwater in Boston so it doesn't cover when the metropolitan sewage treatment system. Spirn argues that Boston and Denver, which suffer with restrictive roofs, plazas and using the stormwater

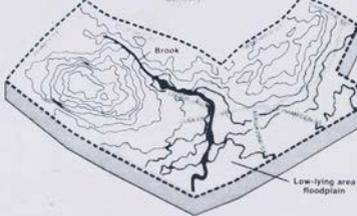
employs a linked system of parks, which have to hold stormwater, says Spirn. "These managed for both recreation and flood control."

owntown Boston, there is former water runoff on an opportunity to that, in Spirn's view, is. Thus, naturally wet in the Dudley neighborhood became linear parks ways through the id beyond.

neighborhood parks make more desirable it of the new devastation, just as Olmsted's re-entailed developer Bay and Fenway valleys along the Jay Park has been best to rise during Boston, along with some face the parkland. —STEVE CURWOOD

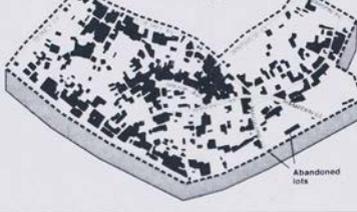
Missed wetland promotes urban decay

Area topography
The Dudley street area, first built on the high terrain, was totally built up by the turn of the century.



Abandoned housing lots

Higher land is the occupied, while extensive abandonment occurs elsewhere, especially where natural floodplain affects foundations in low-lying areas.



ANNE SPIRN ON THE CITY, ITS FUTURE

"Something is wrong when sewage from Framingham and Woburn is transported 20 miles to sewage treatment plants in Boston Harbor, thereby concentrating an entire region's sewage into a small basin. Something is wrong when water is imported from a reservoir 60 miles away (Quabbin), whose level has been falling, slowly, but inexorably, while groundwater resources within the very same region are permitted to deteriorate with depletion and contamination. These are life-threatening problems that in coming years will affect the health of millions of people linked to the metropolitan water and sewer system. Reports of increased cancer in communities like Woburn are an early warning of the consequences of disregard for our water resources."

"Boston's inner neighborhoods are riddled with vacant lands (15,000 housing lots that total 800 to 4000 acres) and abandoned buildings and are poorly served by basic public services. The deterioration of these neighborhoods is invisible from downtown, but downtown wealth, symbolized by gleaming new towers, is clearly visible from the neighborhoods, providing a stark and profoundly disturbing juxtaposition. In the face of unemployment and declining funds for social services, the looming destruction of towers are a daily reminder to the neighborhoods that they have not shared in Boston's economic growth."

"Even downtown, the boom has been a mixed blessing. Most of the new buildings that have transformed Boston's skyline in the past two decades have consisted of private projects in a vacuum of public vision. Rather than contributing to the public realm, they have often disregarded or degraded it, creating dark, windy canyons and barren plazas. Some, ostensibly public, are in reality guarded enclaves of richness and exclusivity of materials lavished on their interior in vivid contrast to the impoverished streets and sidewalks surrounding them."

"Design is a powerful tool to forge consensus for major public investment. Design can be a process of spinning out alternative visions of the future Boston, which, in their number and variety, pose a means of evaluating what the city might be like under diverse scenarios. With out a concrete description of the future city, it is not only difficult to evaluate alternatives, it is next to impossible to agree on their merit."

"The cumulative impact of sewer reconstruction, economic growth and the redevelopment of vacant lands within the city will have a profound impact on the future shape of Boston. It is for us to decide before it is too late, whether they shape the city by design or by default. For how we resolve these issues will determine the quality of the future, not just for the next generation, but for many generations to come." —STEVE CURWOOD

The Boston Globe
Sunday, May 26, 1985



Anne Whiston spirn: a vision rooted in the past.

PROFILE

Shaping the city to nature's laws

Harvard's Anne Whiston Spirn has breathed new life into urban landscape architecture

By Steve Curwood
Globe Staff

If cities are to be healthful, vital and delightful places, they must be considered a part of the natural environment. So says Harvard's Anne Whiston Spirn, a pioneer in the field of modern urban ecology and one of the most acclaimed urban visionaries to emerge in America this generation.

Central to Spirn's solutions to a variety of urban ills is her view that nature does not end at a city's edge. City dwellers, she says, are just as dependent as country folk on natural forces that supply air and water and support life. When the potency of those forces is ignored, she says, modern cities court ecological disaster.

By example, she notes that Boston, after a century of ignoring ecological planning, now gages on its sewage allows more ugly open space downtown and suffers abandonment in its poor neighborhoods.

Piecemeal approaches to such problems are not only prohibitively expensive, they are usually doomed to ultimate failure, Spirn says. On the other hand, she argues, by keep-

ing natural systems in mind, such diverse and seemingly intractable problems as water and sewage overload, ugliness and decay can be alleviated.

Solutions proposed

Her solutions, she says, "harness the forces of nature, rather than squander energy in trying to overcome them." To detain storm water and prevent sewage system overloads, for example, she recommends the strategic placement of parkland. To make downtown open space more pleasing, she advises planning public space as the framework for private development. To reclaim abused vacant land, she urges the use of composted sewage sludge to make new topsoil.

For these changes to work politically, she urges neighborhood decision making linked to metropolitan area coordination.

While there is much new in the scientific content of Spirn's approach, her vision is rooted in the past. The ancient Greeks and Persians built great cities in harmony with the forces of nature. More recently, Frederick Law Olmsted in the SPIRN, Page A14

ners, who has worked neighborhood projects to bid land me a bridge for a museum on related issues such other before. She rating the primacy of culture as an approach to id. It's fallen into secondary place in most scholarly articles and planning really, really should be such for setting the development. Boston is a e because of that ap the past was used by

ecologist wife of Gov. Michael S. in a "super designer ability to urban prob-

blems also have become "vision." To engaged in last year that she in a number of officials out when she spoke at Library last month to the lecture of the Boston (reel). Staff Kenneth reate commissioner of re-commerce with the state to for issues that are large news. one of the dis that people don't talk beyond the environ- sites of specific pro-

Spirn got into landscape architecture by accident. She was a graduate student in art history at the University of Pennsylvania when she heard about landscape architecture, took a course and then changed her field of study to become a student of Michael, later, whom she shared a design practice with him, she became frustrated at the lack of up-to-date information about urban ecology.

"Everybody would see their job isn't research on that," she recalled in a recent interview. So she began to find out just how much was known.

What she thought would be a one-year project turned into a five-year one as she correlated the work of hydrologists, architects, historians, ecologists and those in other disciplines for a book that would be understandable to the general public.

In her book, Spirn argues that city planners too often act as if pavement and buildings can erase the forces that create the topography, including stream beds and flood plains, and that rain-bankings do not affect air quality.

When nature is ignored and abused in cities, it retaliates in countless ways, she says.

"Ignoring the natural cycle of water leads to drinking water shortages, polluted water supplies and toxic algae on the beaches."

"Failure to consider air mechanics has resulted in tall buildings that change surface winds, sometimes trapping exhaust fumes that add to air pollution at other times creating harsh winds on plazas."

Ignoring real neighborhood needs can result in projects that are built without consideration to maintain them. In working with her students, for example, she asks them to spend a night with a family in the Roxbury neighborhood where they are designing a park to get a sense of their needs and values.

"Ignoring active earthquake faults means cities run the risk of sharing the fates of San Francisco in 1906 and Managua in 1972. Yet, Boston, which suffered major quakes in the 1700s, today does not require earthquake-resistant construction."

"The potential hazard is particularly great in cities like Boston and Charleston, S.C., where the risk of earthquakes is unrecognized and unplanned for," Spirn warns.

But when humans work in concert with natural forces in the city, they can create both beauty and utility. Not only was Boston's Fenway Riverway (a man-made area designed for aesthetics, but Olmsted devised it to handle a sewage problem that threatened to stink out the whole back Bay, especially on hot, humid summer days.

"As an added bonus, Boston got a transportation corridor for trains and trolleys that remains a lovely approach to the city."

"Somewhere," writes Spirn, "a visionary may persuade his or her city to take on the challenge of managing the entire natural urban environment. The reasons are compelling. At issue is not just the creation of a more secure, more beautiful, more efficient and cost-effective city, but survival itself."

This 1985 article in *The Boston Globe* hailed my proposals for the future shape of Boston as pioneering and visionary. Three decades later, many of these ideas are being implemented in Philadelphia and other cities.

Cooper's Place

My 1984 landscape architecture studio at Harvard's Graduate School of Design studied the open space potential of Boston's vacant urban land. Designing Cooper's Place Community Garden in Roxbury introduced the students to the residents and the neighborhood. The challenge was to design a meeting place adjacent to the garden and to propose a use for this vacant lot.



Cooper's Place: Before

Each student designed a version of the garden and presented their design to the gardeners. The design chosen by the gardeners for construction was inspired by their favorite Boston open space, the Fenway Rose Garden, with its white trellises. The garden was built by unemployed youth enrolled in a landscape management program at Roxbury Community College, as part of their on-the-job training.



Students present their designs

Cooper's Place quickly became a neighborhood landmark and was a catalyst for other improvements to properties around it. There have been weddings there and many important community events. The striking design has played an important role in the garden's success. Three decades later, it continues to thrive and is now the site of a new environmental education center. Investment in good design paid off.



Cooper's Place: After



Back Bay Fens, Boston, 1904. This seemingly natural environment is in fact the creation of Frederick Law Olmsted, who in the late 19th century transformed a polluted mud flat into a park that combines the beauties of a natural salt marsh with the urban functions of flood control and sewerage. (Francis Loeb Library, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University)

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Reclaiming Common Ground Water, Neighborhoods, and Public Places



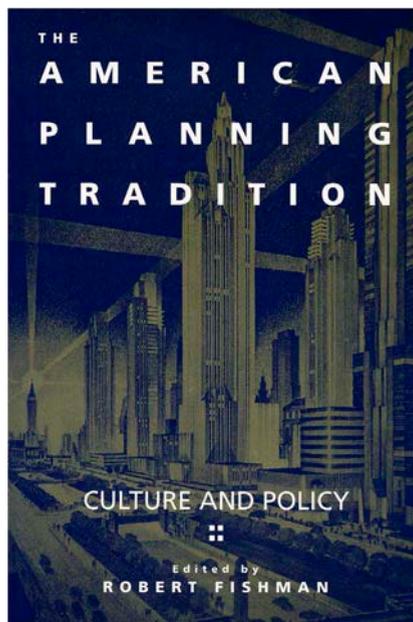
ANNE WHISTON SPIRN

If cities are to become more livable, it will be by design: not just through the design of built projects—homes and workplaces, gardens and parks, streets and sewer systems—but also through visions that may never be realized. Urban design is a process of envisioning and describing the shape of the future, of posing alternatives from which to choose. Without visions to guide their development, cities will be shaped by the politics of expedience.

For hundreds of years, Bostonians have proposed visions for their city that, built and unbuilt, contributed to the public debate about its future.¹ This chapter was conceived and written in that tradition, at the invitation of the Boston Society of Architects.² In its original incarnation, it was an illustrated public lecture given at the Boston Public Library in April 1985, then again in February 1986 at the Boston Athenaeum. The lecture and the responses and reflections it provoked were a bridge between my book *The Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design* (1984), my subsequent work in Philadelphia, and the ideas advanced in my most recent book, *The Language of Landscape* (1998).³ Today some proposals described here have been realized; others remain unfulfilled. My lecture was part of a larger public discussion to which many people contributed. Their efforts over the past two decades have improved greatly the environmental, social, and aesthetic qualities of Boston's public realm.

My proposals were shaped by the some of the most urgent issues of the time—the pollution of Boston Harbor and shrinking water supplies, the deterioration of Boston's inner-city neighborhoods, and the decline in quality of public space downtown. The 1970s had wrought great changes in Boston's built environment, transformations fully felt by 1985. High-rise office buildings, huge parking structures, and

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My lecture was published in 2000, accompanied by reflections on the political barriers to the acceptance of the ideas. By then, I had been working for 13 years on similar design proposals in Philadelphia, where they are now being implemented.



WPLP pioneered the use of the Web in design, planning, education, and community development. Since its launch in March 1996, millions of people from more than 90 countries have visited the WPLP website.

Left Screenshots from the current WPLP home page (www.wplp.net), which convey the WPLP mission: to restore nature, rebuild communities, and empower youth in synergistic ways.

1987–present

West Philadelphia Landscape Project

Model of Best Practice, “Imagining America: Scholars and Artists in Public Life,” White House Millennium Council, 1999

Model of community-based planning efforts, National Housing Institute, 2000

Model project for ecology, history, and design, Harvard University, Institute for Cultural Landscape Studies, 2004

Community Service Award, American Society of Landscape Architects, 2004

Model for a “fully integrated, comprehensive approach,” Innovative Designs for Education, NYU’s Institute for Civil Infrastructure Systems, 2004

“[Spin] became a local hero, educator, leader of change, communicator, and a connector of people from all walks of life — taking her vision and making it a reality in the lives of residents, students, the design community, and government . . . It was through her groundbreaking work that the City of Philadelphia can now boast being the Greenest City in America . . . leading the effort to green America’s cities through programs like our Green City, Clean Waters initiative.”

HOWARD NEUKRUG, Commissioner, Philadelphia Water Department

The West Philadelphia Landscape Project (WPLP) is a landmark of urban design and design education, environmental sustainability, and community engagement. WPLP built real projects in partnership with community residents. It inspired middle schoolers to design changes to their neighborhood and taught them HTML in order to tell their story on the Internet. It transformed their chronically failing school. It forged relationships between inner-city kids and privileged university students. And it started a chain of events that contributed to a revolution in water-quality management represented by Philadelphia’s billion-dollar “green” infrastructure project. All this was the product of design thinking.

Uniquely valuable is WPLP’s engagement over 26 years with a single place, the Mill Creek watershed and neighborhood. Known as “The Bottom,” the neighborhood is one of many such “Black Bottoms” in the U.S. They are at the bottom, economically, socially, and topographically. Here, harsh socio-economic conditions and racial discrimination are exacerbated by health and safety hazards posed by a high water table and unstable ground. Teaching landscape literacy, which entails both understanding the world and transforming it, has been a means for recognizing and redressing those injustices, just as verbal literacy was a cornerstone of the American civil rights movement of the 50s and 60s. Literacy in landscape enabled youth to read the environmental, social, economic, and political stories embedded in their local landscape and gave them a way to design new stories, to envision how to transform their neighborhood.

WPLP has designed and built dozens of community gardens on vacant blocks, which have enhanced life and stimulated tangible community development; some have won awards.

WPLP has been recognized internationally, nationally, and locally. It has been featured in newspaper articles, professional journals, national radio and television broadcasts, and international conferences and symposia, including a 1999 meeting at the White House.

WPLP's Mill Creek Project, an environmental design curriculum, transformed a middle school that was considered one of the worst in the city. Our teaching partners have founded similar projects in other schools, and the curriculum has inspired schools around the U.S. and abroad.

WPLP's pioneering digital database, created in the 1980s, helped push Philadelphia to create a Geographic Information System (GIS) database for the entire city. The City hired a former WPLP research assistant to help lead this effort.

WPLP has pioneered the use of the Internet for planning, implementation, and education. The first WPLP website was launched in early 1996 and won seven awards for design excellence. The site has received millions of visits from more than 90 countries.

WPLP has no client in the conventional sense. We work with partners who wish to collaborate—community gardeners, teachers and children, public officials—and make the results freely available.

PRINCIPAL PARTNERS

Philadelphia Water Department (1999–present)
 Aspen Farms Community Garden (1988–present)
 Sulzberger Middle School (1995–2002)
 Mill Creek Coalition (1998–2000)
 Philadelphia Green (1987–1991)

SPONSORS

University of Pennsylvania, Netter Center for Community Partnerships
 Massachusetts Institute of Technology
 J.N. Pew Charitable Trust
 Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
 Ford Foundation
 Philadelphia Urban Resources Partnership
 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
 Kellogg Foundation
 John Simon Guggenheim Foundation

Model for how environmental history can demonstrate how the urban environment affects and shapes city life,

Environmental History, 2005

Model for applying Internet-based learning activities for K-12 classrooms, American Association for the Advancement of Science, 2004

Person of the Month, Philadelphia School District, November 1998



Screenshots from the WPLP home page at www.wplp.net.

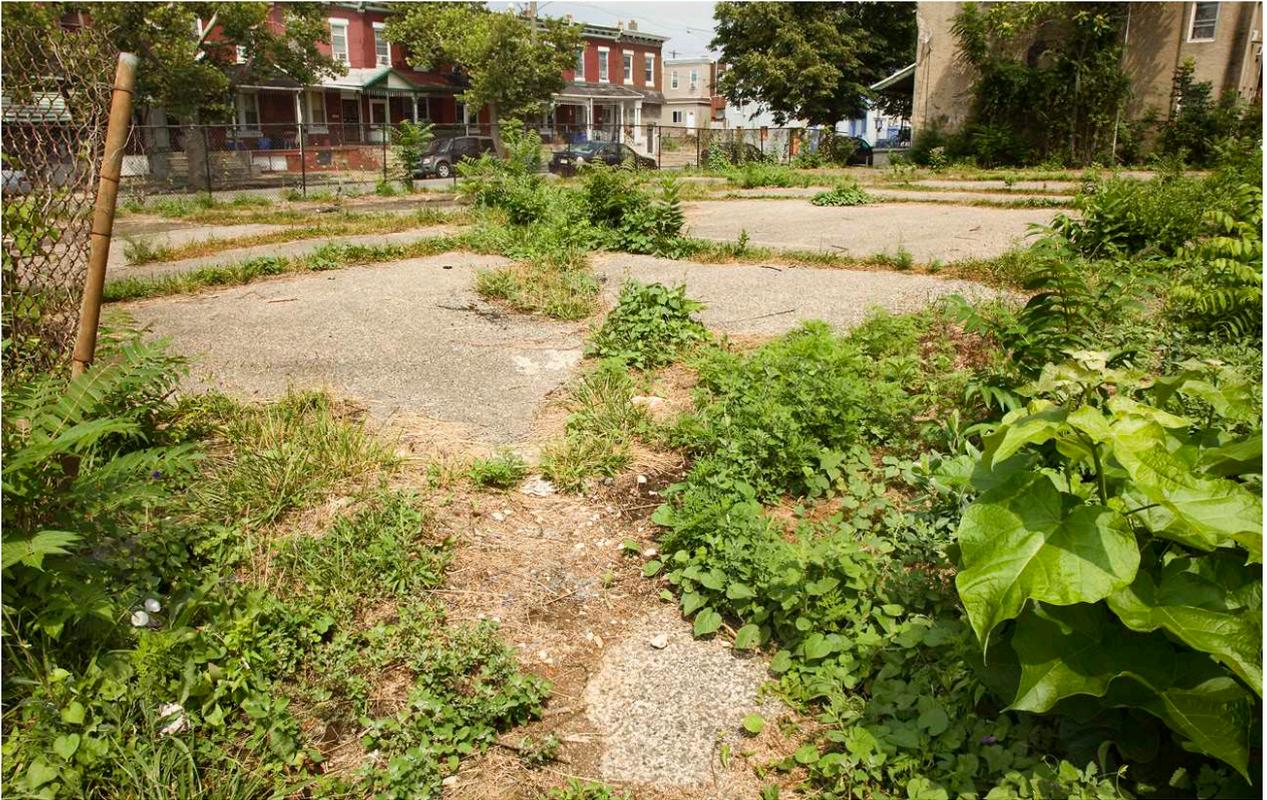


“This project [WPLP] demonstrates the links between environmental issues, education and heritage, and is a model for Ottawa as it seeks to comprehensively implement a “green city” strategy.”

CITY OF OTTAWA, Canada, Growth Management Plan (2003)

“The West Philadelphia Landscape Project [is] one of the most extraordinary projects of ‘social design’ of the last two decades.”

ROBERT FISHMAN, Professor of Urban Planning and Design, University of Michigan



Design Opportunities: Buried Floodplains and Vacant Land

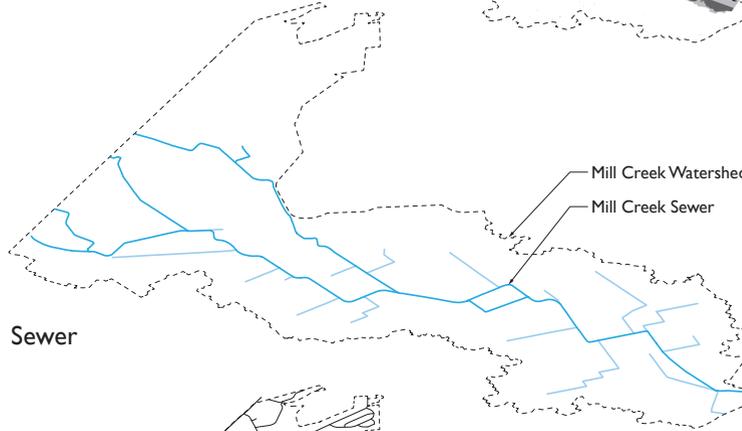
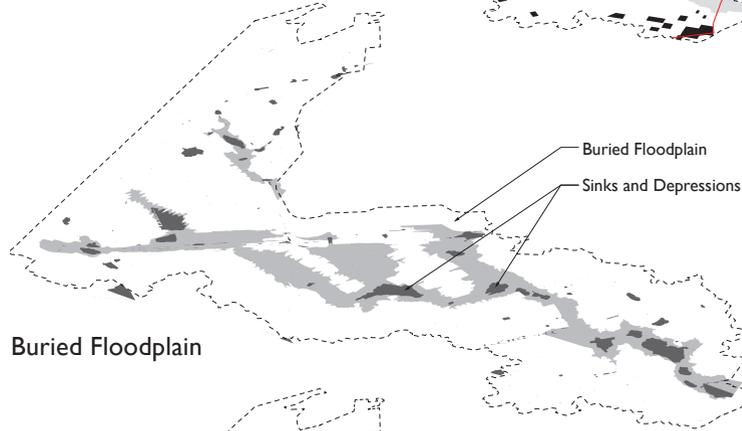
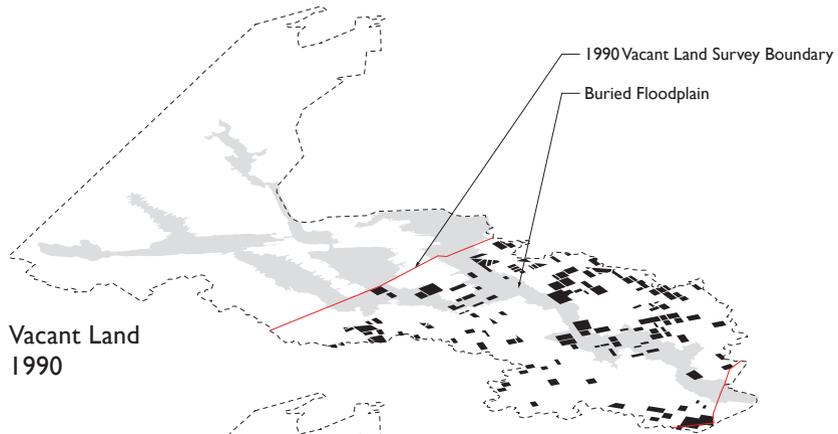
Much vacant land in West Philadelphia lies on the buried floodplain of Mill Creek, a correlation common to many other cities, including Boston, where I first discovered the phenomenon. The Mill Creek once drained two-thirds of West Philadelphia. Now, buried in a sewer, it carries all the stormwater and sanitary sewage from that area. Like most older U.S. cities, Philadelphia has a combined sanitary and storm sewer system, which overflows into rivers and streams after heavy rainfall and produces a flow that exceeds the capacity of sewage treatment plants. Since 1987, WPLP has demonstrated how a “green” infrastructure could use vacant land to hold stormwater in landscape projects that simultaneously restore water quality (by reducing combined sewer overflows) and rebuild neighborhoods.

First with hand-drawn maps in 1987–1988, then with digital maps, we analyzed the Mill Creek watershed, its topography and drainage, sewer system, and vacant land, as well as its land use and demographics.

Since 1987, WPLP has identified concentration of vacant land in valley bottoms as an opportunity to restore natural systems and rebuild inner-city communities.

Above Vacant land on the buried floodplain.

Right Mapping the Mill Creek watershed. During WPLP’s first phase (1987–1991), the focus was on the southern section and included territory outside the watershed.





Work with Aspen Farms Community Garden, which is on the buried floodplain of Mill Creek, has spanned 30 years.

Left Aspen Farms (1990) after construction of redesign.

Right Aspen Farms, before (1988); Student's redesign proposal (1988); Aspen Farms as an outdoor classroom (1997, 1998); Students propose new additions (1998); MIT students at Aspen (2010).

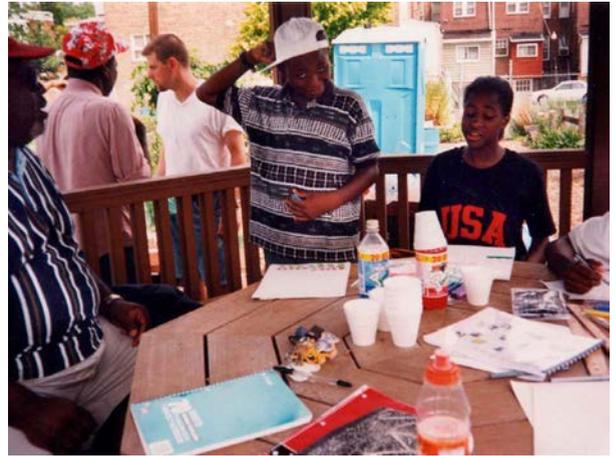
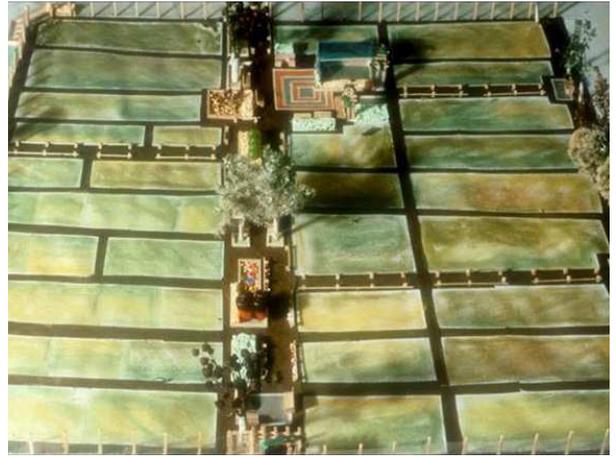
Designing Frameworks for Action

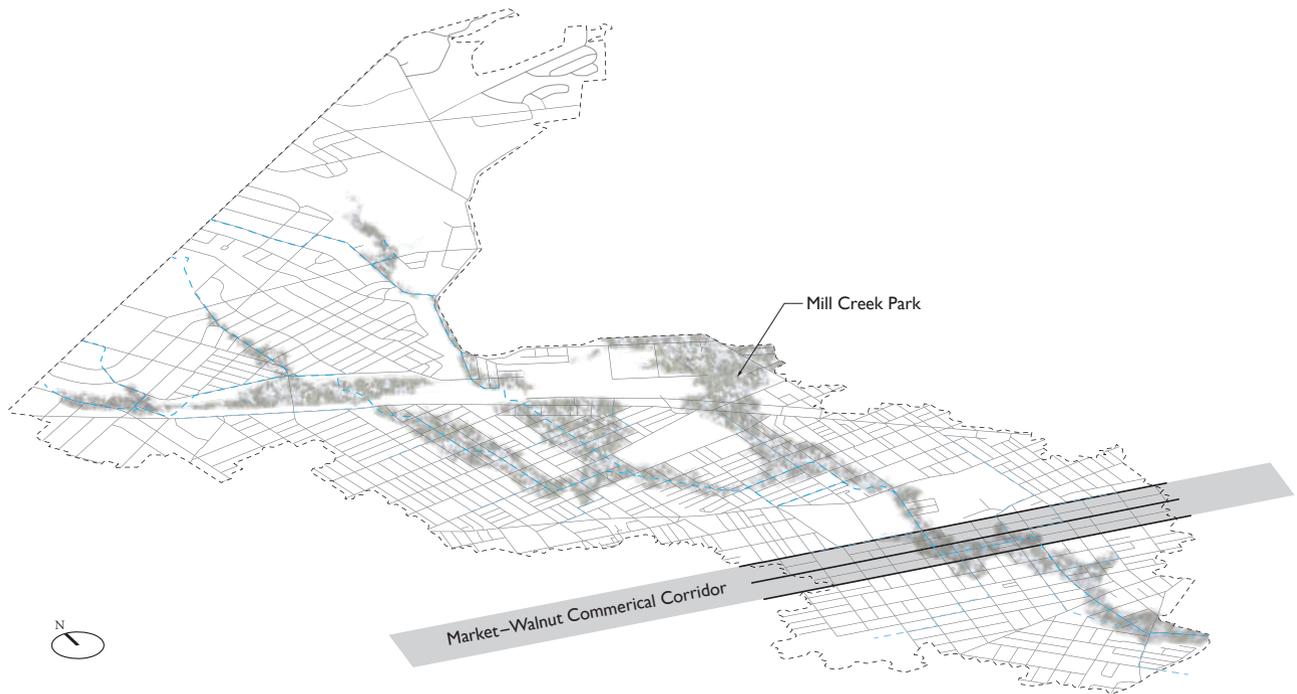
From the very beginning of the project, design and construction have gone hand in hand with mapping and planning. From 1987–1991, WPLP designed and built dozens of community gardens as models for how to build a sense of community and how to approach the design of larger neighborhoods. Many were catalysts for community development and many of these gardens survive today. Design had a strong influence on survival. The most successful designs were those that offered an open structure, which invited people to embellish. This approach has informed WPLP's design work since 1988.

These models of success have evolved over the past quarter century, within the frameworks we designed. One community garden, Aspen Farms, has been at the heart of WPLP's work since 1988. That year, the task was to incorporate a meeting place for a garden for fifty people without displacing anyone. One student's design, built in 1989, features a "Main Street" created by shaving off a few feet from many garden plots along the central path. The design made Aspen Farms a neighborhood showpiece and provided a framework that accommodates change.

From 1994–2002, as part of WPLP's Mill Creek Project, Aspen Farms served as an outdoor classroom for a Sulzberger Middle School, which is down the street. In the late 1990s, my students designed and built a new water garden and outdoor classroom for the middle school.

The partnership between Aspen Farms, the middle school, and WPLP was the subject of a TV special on NBC Nightly News.





The *West Philadelphia Landscape Plan: A Framework for Action* (1991) combines a top-down (comprehensive) and bottom-up (grassroots) approach. It does not prescribe a particular method or outcome, but is instead an open-ended guide that identifies opportunities for change and potential actors. Like the Main Street of Aspen Farms, it is meant to be filled in by the actions of a host of individuals, groups, and public agencies.

At the heart of this design framework is the buried floodplain of Mill Creek, to be designated as “Mill Creek Park,” a special district in which low-lying vacant land would be used to hold stormwater. It would not be a traditional park, however; some vacant land could be redeveloped for commercial uses. The design also calls for revealing and celebrating the presence of the buried creek.

The Walnut–Market Corridor, which includes the main east-west traffic arteries, is the second part of the framework. In 1991, this corridor was full of vacant land, and portions still are. Other parts of the proposal include: The Urban Forest, Redesigning Small Neighborhoods, and a Digital Data Center.

WPLP proposals inspired changes in public policy and led to new opportunities for urban environmental planning and landscape design.

Above A framework for action: Mill Creek Park and the Market-Walnut Corridor.

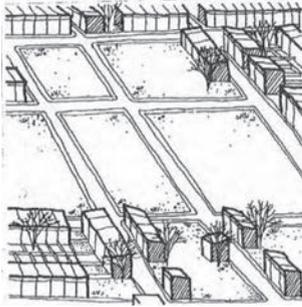
The proposed “plan” is a framework for action, which invites participatory improvisations by diverse actors, from individuals to public agencies. The plan is therefore presented in diagrams and a fictional text.

Right Proposal for Mill Creek Park (1991).

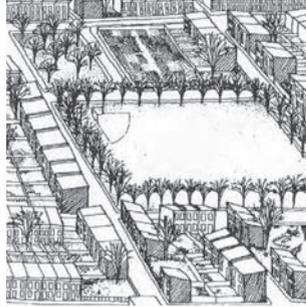
Following pages Proposals for the Market–Walnut Corridor and The Urban Forest (1991).

Mill Creek Park

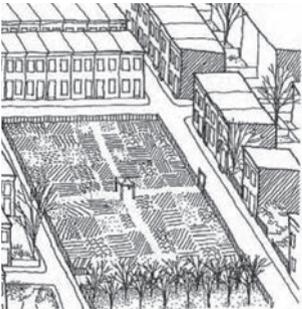
1. Vacant blocks in the floodplain
2. Vacant blocks in the floodplain reclaimed for community gardens, orchard, and playfield
3. Outdoor market and community garden in the floodplain
4. Flood control and park



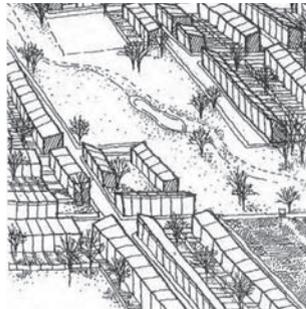
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From *The WLP—A Vision for the Future* (1991)

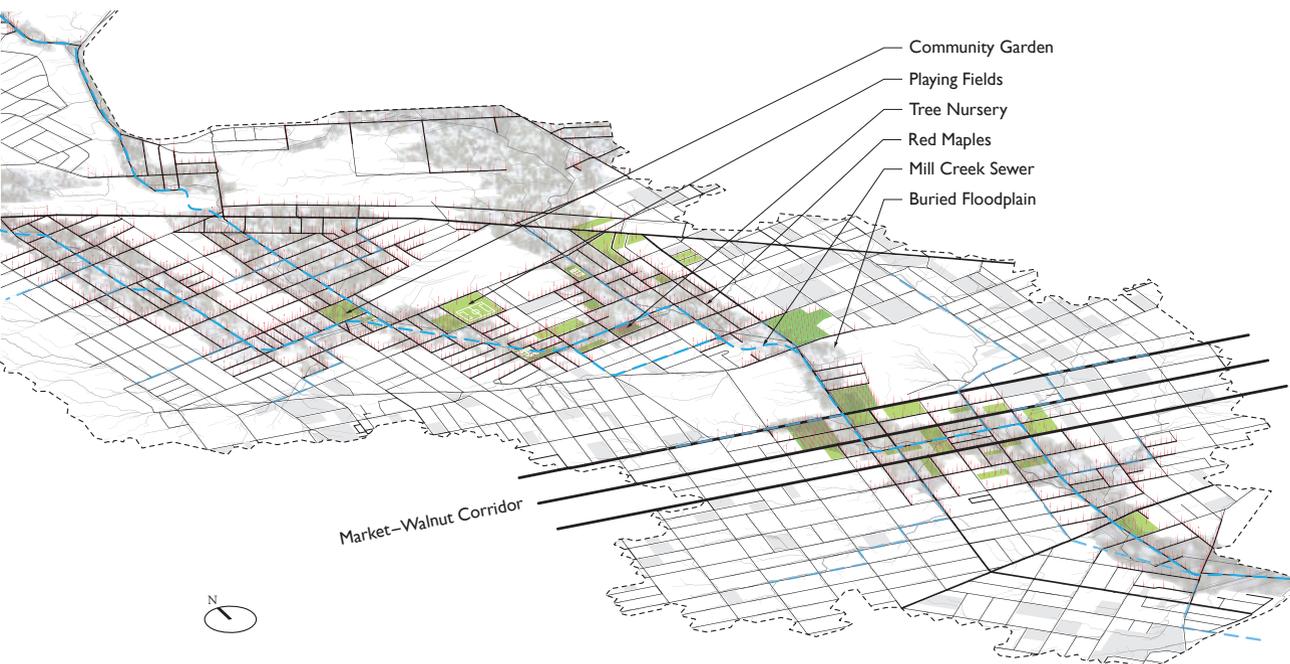
Mill Creek Park flows across West Philadelphia, winding its way through several neighborhoods, from the Mill Creek neighborhood on the north, through the Market Walnut Corridor to Spruce Hill, and along West Shore.

Every schoolchild knows the story of Mill Creek and the Park. How the creek once flowed on the land, and how it was then buried in a sewer and built upon. How the force of the creek's waters broke through the sewer and flooded basements, crumbled foundations, and caved in streets. How the land above the sewer became open once again, a gash of vacant land, trashed and abandoned. How Mill Creek Park was built and how rain now runs off rooftops, streets, and sidewalks into ponds in the park. How these ponds hold the water and slow its passage to the sewer, the treatment plant, and the river. Every schoolchild knows the connection between park and river.

At first glance, Mill Creek Park does not seem like a single park at all, but many disconnected bits of local open space (ballcourts, playgrounds, playfields, community gardens) and businesses (garden centers, tree nurseries and permeable parking lots). The thread that connects the whole—Mill Creek—flows beneath streets and park through an enormous, underground sewer.

In early spring, carpets of blue scilla bloom in grass and groves throughout the park. Red maples with their haze of red flowers in spring and scarlet leaves in fall and sycamores with their white trunks, grow in the damp soil of the old floodplain.

The character of each part of the park reflects the needs and values of residents in adjacent neighborhoods.



The Market-Walnut Corridor

From *The WPLP—A Vision for the Future* (1991)

After many years of planning and waiting, new buildings are being constructed in the Walnut–Market Corridor. The “renewal” promises jobs and educational opportunities for West Philadelphia. This was a long time in the making. During all those years, the “temporary” landscape established in the early 1990s grew and matured into an attractive setting that drew private investment. The new buildings were designed to fit within that landscape.

Double rows of trees were planted along the sidewalks on most vacant lots, and the interiors were planted in lawns, cloverfields, and meadows.

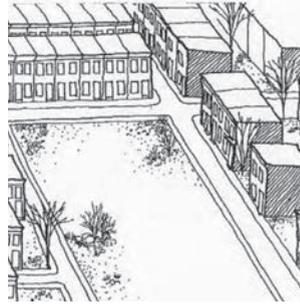
Another large lot was planted with a grid of small trees—a nursery for street trees. Every three to five years, the trees are transplanted to city streets and replanted with new trees. All this created a landscape framework for future redevelopment.

The Mill Creek Garden Center and Nursery occupies several large properties between 42nd and 47th Streets. The main retail center is designed like a garden; this is where the flowers, vegetables, and garden supplies are displayed and sold. Small trees and shrubs are in outlying lots nearby.

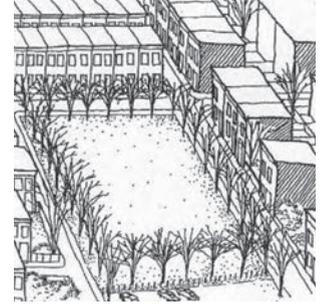
The Art Folk Park is a large, open meadow, visible from passing cars and buses, where artists construct and display their works. The works change continually. There is no formal selection process.... Many of the works are quite whimsical; others are more serious.

The Market–Walnut Corridor is recognized nationally as a model for attracting reinvestment and guiding long-term community development.

1. Vacant block
2. Vacant block reclaimed temporarily for playfield
3. Nursery for street trees
4. Landscaped parking lot



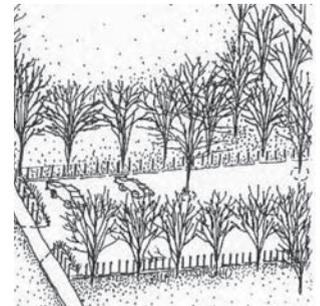
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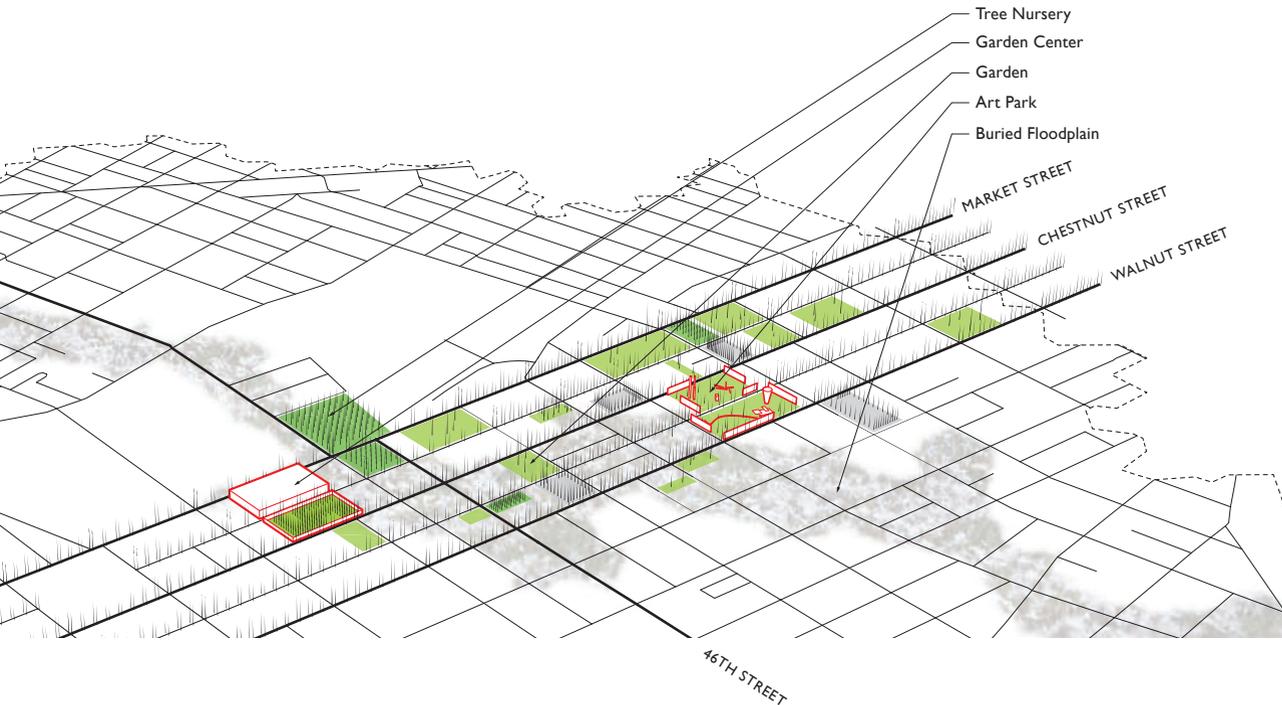
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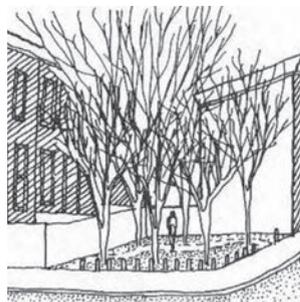
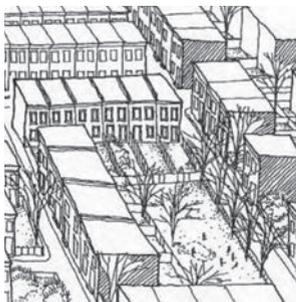


4



The Urban Forest

1. A block of rowhouses with street trees
2. A block of rowhouses with street trees
3. Playfield, trees, and parking
4. A nursery for street trees



From *The WPLP—A Vision for the Future* (1991)

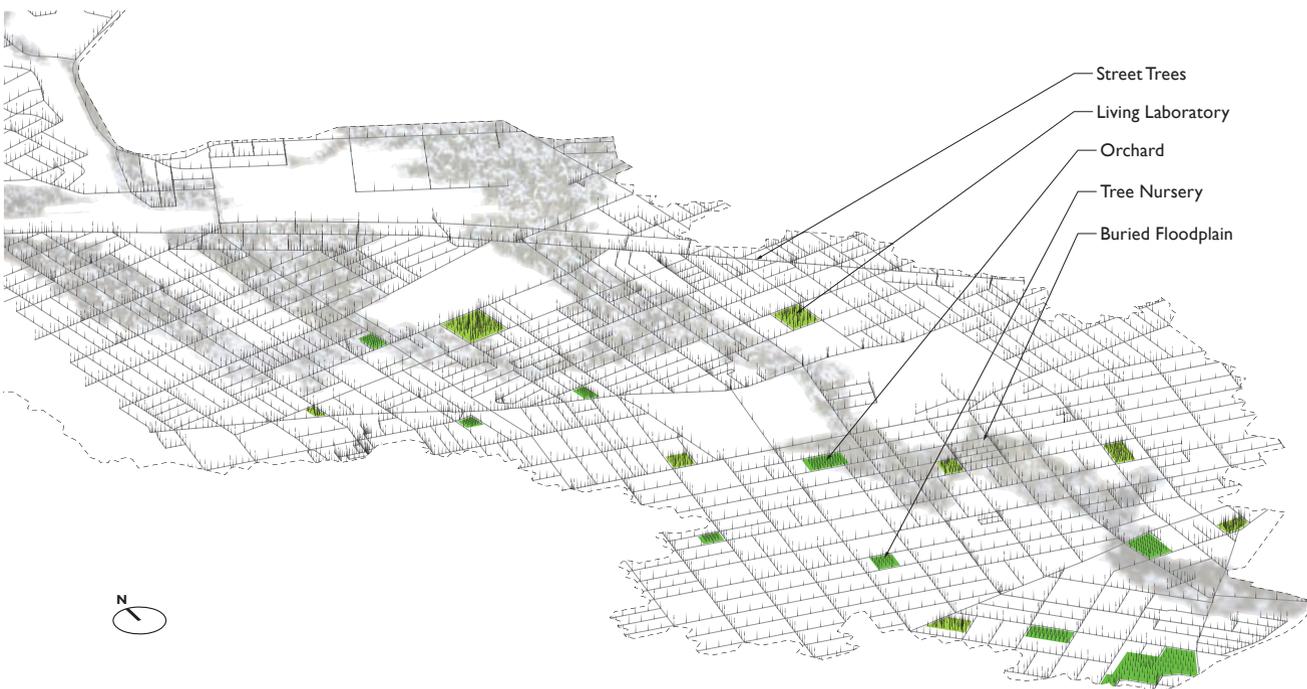
From the air, much of West Philadelphia looks like an urban forest. On the ground, Spruce, Walnut, and Chestnut Streets are shady, green corridors through which traffic flows. Off the major streets, within the neighborhoods, a massive reforestation has occurred. Even the narrowest streets are planted with trees. The new trees have made an enormous difference to comfort on streets and in homes on summer afternoons and evenings. The sound of traffic seems softer.

The new trees for West Philadelphia streets were grown right in the neighborhood on large, open lots. The trees start out as small whips, densely planted, and the weaker trees are thinned out as they grow to make room for the more vigorous. Every three to five years, the trees are transplanted to city streets and parks, and a new cycle of planting begins again.

Many West Philadelphia schools have living laboratories—successional meadows and wooded groves that the children care for and study as part of their science class.

There are groves of fruit trees on other formerly vacant properties. Apple Day is now celebrated every year on a summer Sunday; a day when the apples are ripe and everyone comes to pick their own.

West Philadelphia has been the focus of a twenty-year study on the effects of trees on urban microclimate. The Urban Forestry Project has brought international attention to West Philadelphia. The dramatic aesthetic results of the forestation program prompted many other cities to imitate it even before the results of the microclimate study became known.



Redesigning Small Neighborhoods

From *The WPLP—A Vision for the Future* (1991)

Many neighborhoods in West Philadelphia look very different than they did a century ago or even a decade ago. There are now gardens, outdoor workshops, playlots, and small parking lots between houses on blocks of rowhouses where once there was no outdoor space at all besides the street, sidewalk, and porch, and where ten years ago trashed vacant lots formed gaping holes between houses. Trees now shade the sidewalks on most residential blocks, where sun once baked them like an oven every summer.

Walking or driving through neighborhoods north of Market Street, the visitor is struck by the diversity among the blocks, despite their basic similarity.

Community development started small and proceeded block by block. While the interest of most residents remained focussed on their own block, many individuals emerged who were interested in working to improve the larger neighborhood. This has produced a cadre of leaders who have been influential in a host of projects within their neighborhood, as well as in the larger West Philadelphia community.

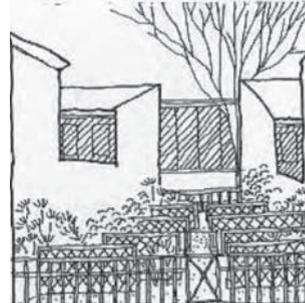
Changes to blocks range from the minimal—street trees and window boxes—to more extensive improvements—new houses, gardens, or parking lots on former vacant lots.

The neighborhoods south of Market Street don't look much different than they did tell years ago. They have received a more subtle renewal.

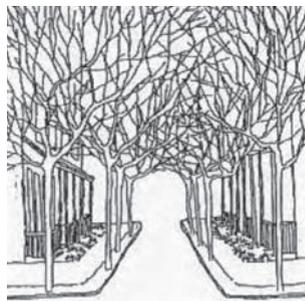
1. New houses
2. New gardens
3. Shady streets make new meeting and sitting spaces
4. A neighborhood reshaped for different uses: new houses, private gardens, community gardens, meeting places, playlots, offstreet parking, and orchards



1



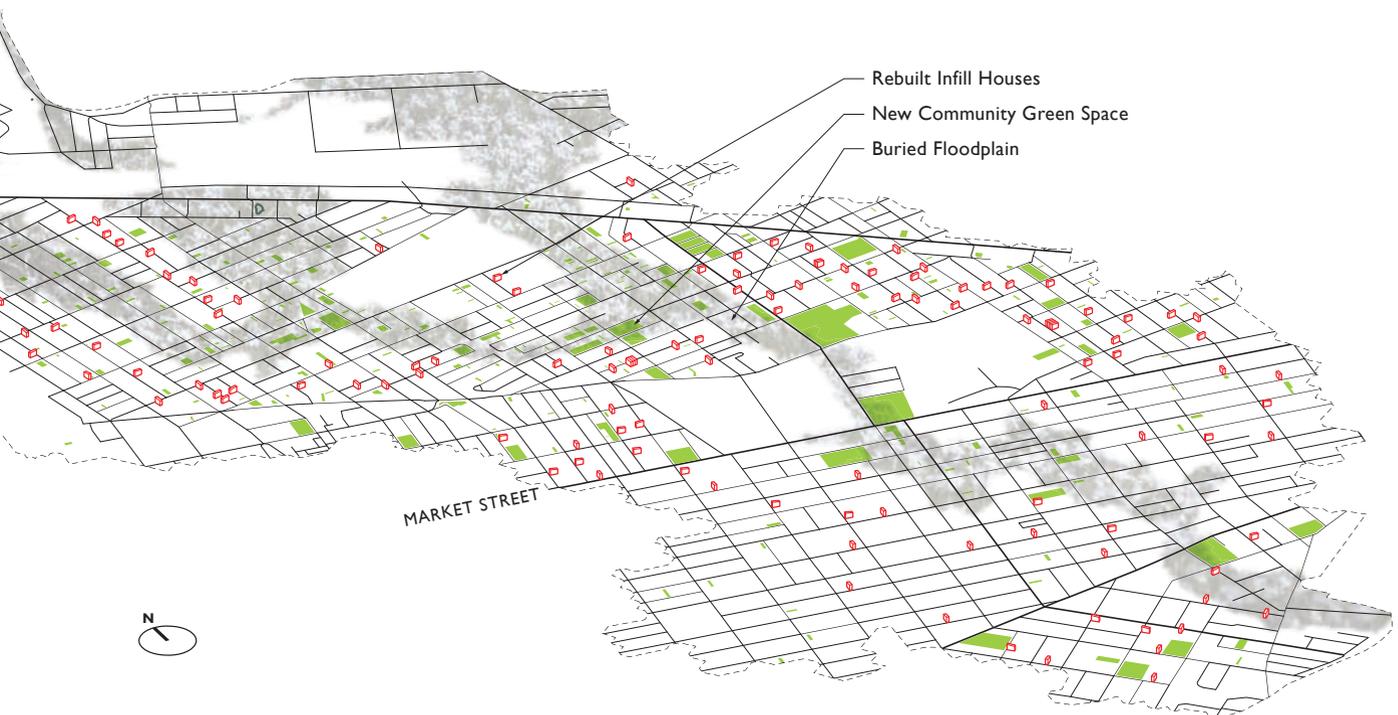
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Left Proposal for Redesigning Urban Neighborhoods (1991).

My courses are designed to produce work that provokes public debate and informs actions by public agencies.

Above Penn students' designs by Eric Husta and Steve Sattler (1996). These designs were among dozens that explored how the urban drainage system could be redesigned to capture and detain storm water on vacant land in the buried floodplain in projects that also rebuild community.

Following pages MIT students' designs for the Mill Creek Watershed (2010). These designs were among many that verified the feasibility of the City's plan to capture the first inch of rainfall and prevent it from entering the sewer.

WPLP continues to design within this framework for action. What would Mill Creek Park be like? What about a water garden that is also an outdoor classroom and a stormwater detention basin? How can we design a process by which such projects can be supported, designed, built, and sustained over time? Hundreds of students in my classes at the University of Pennsylvania and MIT have designed answers to these questions over the past 25 years.

These classes challenge students to be pragmatic visionaries: grounded in an understanding of people, place, and politics, yet never losing sight of visions of what might be. Students' proposals range from detailed designs to strategic landscape plans. Working in a real neighborhood with real people on a real project, they put theory into practice, and some of their designs have been built.

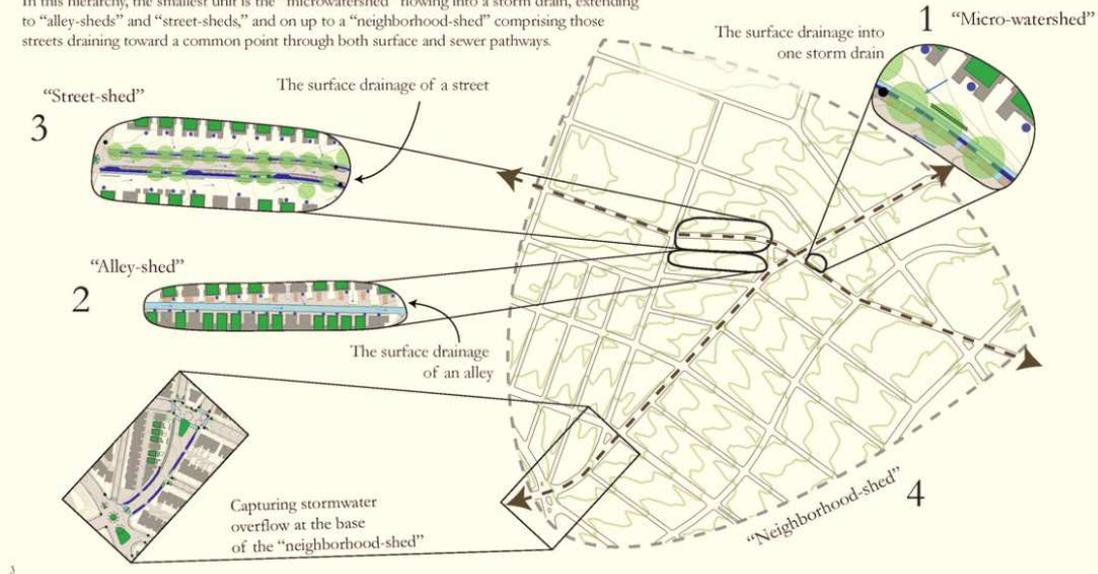
Starting in fall 1996, all student work is presented online and archived and featured on the WPLP website. Students' design proposals have been viewed by thousands of visitors to the website, and they helped persuade public officials and community residents that it is feasible to redesign and rebuild the existing urban drainage system so that it is functional, economical, and beautiful.

Watershed "Order" in the Wynnefield-Overbrook Neighborhood:

An Analogy to Stream Order Classifications*

Applying the concept of nested watersheds at the neighborhood scale, we identify and rank "sheds" using a classification scheme inspired by stream order classifications in hydrology. In this hierarchy, the smallest unit is the "microwatershed" flowing into a storm drain, extending to "alley-sheds" and "street-sheds," and on up to a "neighborhood-shed" comprising those streets draining toward a common point through both surface and sewer pathways.

*See Ward, D'Ambrosio, and Mecklenburg, 2008, "Stream Classification," The Ohio State University Extension. Available at: <http://ohioline.osu.edu/aex-fact/pdf/AEX44501StreamClassification.pdf>



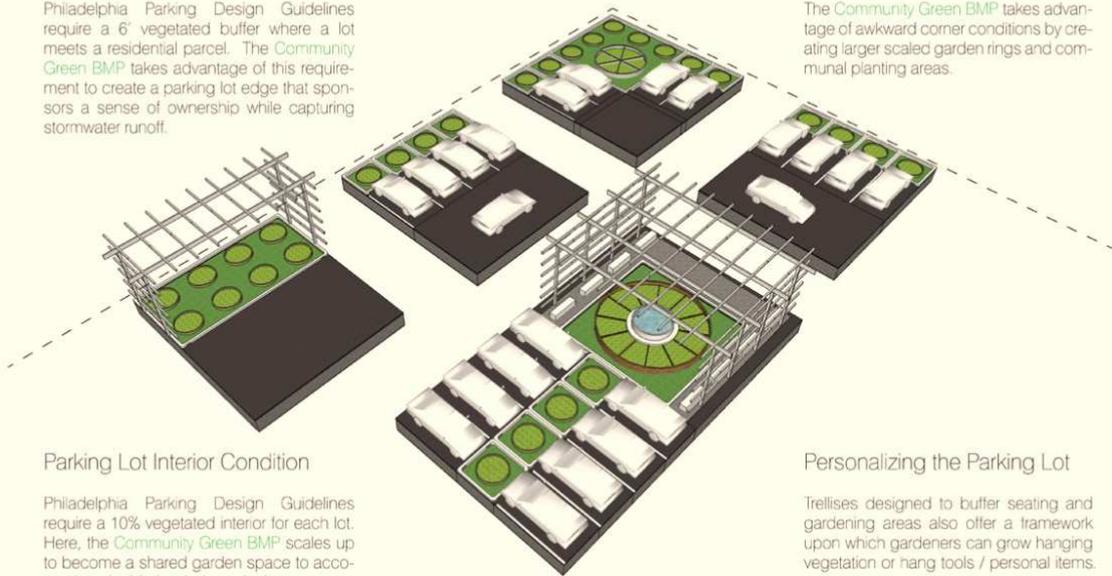
Creating Community Care and Conforming to Code

Parking Lot Edge Condition

Philadelphia Parking Design Guidelines require a 6' vegetated buffer where a lot meets a residential parcel. The Community Green BMP takes advantage of this requirement to create a parking lot edge that sponsors a sense of ownership while capturing stormwater runoff.

Parking Lot Corner Condition

The Community Green BMP takes advantage of awkward corner conditions by creating larger scaled garden rings and communal planting areas.



Parking Lot Interior Condition

Philadelphia Parking Design Guidelines require a 10% vegetated interior for each lot. Here, the Community Green BMP scales up to become a shared garden space to accommodate double-loaded, gardenless spots.

Personalizing the Parking Lot

Trellises designed to buffer seating and gardening areas also offer a framework upon which gardeners can grow hanging vegetation or hang tools / personal items.

CONCEPT

BMP DESIGN

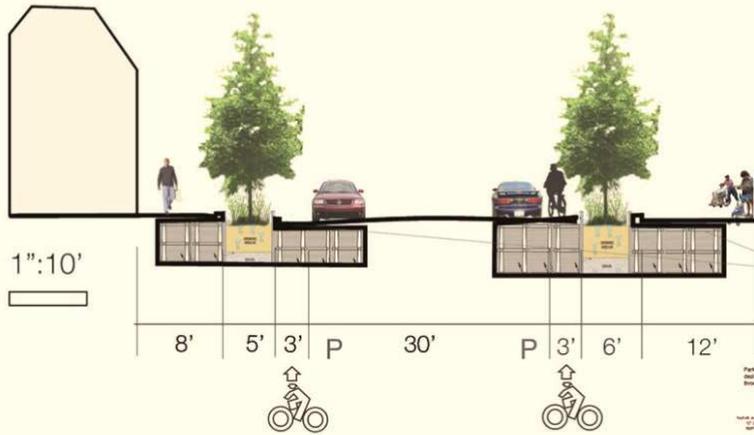
IMPLEMENTATION

DEMO PROJECTS

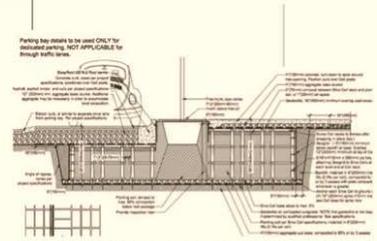
IMPLEMENTATION I Phase 1 Street Detail

In the first stage, the city will repave the street, adding wide tree trenches that expand under the sidewalk and into the street. Pervious paving over the bike and parking lane will both allow water into the tree trench and marks the lanes.

- ①
City
- ②
Institutions
- ③
Residents



Underground structure allows for uncompacted soil and weight-bearing pavement



The city would keep the travel lanes, but repave the parking, bike lanes and sidewalks in a permeable material. This would visually slow traffic, making streets safer for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Structures underground allow for uncompacted soil, promoting healthy street trees and providing space for water detention. Tree pits and trenches have flexible designs that can be adapted by institutions and residents.

Diagram of the Silva Cell, by DeepRoot (www.deeproot.com)

4.214/11.314 WATER, LANDSCAPE AND URBAN DESIGN | DECEMBER, 2010 | STEPHANIE STERN & SHOKO TAKEMOTO



MILL CREEK WATERSHED - LANCASTER TRANSECT
Allison Hu & Florence Guiraud Daughtry
Water, Landscape, & Urban Design Workshop
2010

Conceptual View

A view conceptualizing a linear transformation of Lancaster Avenue, with a widened Northern pedestrian routes, an elevated path, an embankment actively treating stormwater with the help of artists, strategic trenches, and a climatic approach toward the "Grotto"



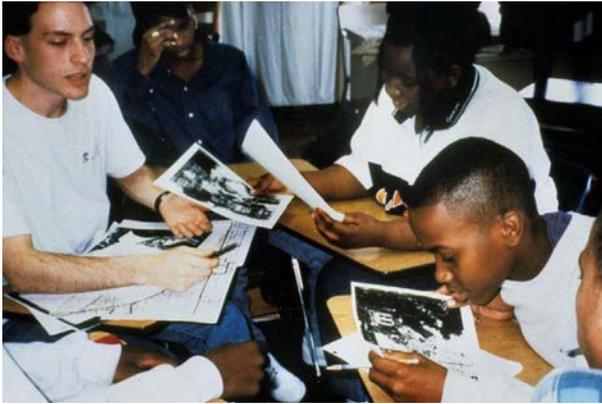
The Mill Creek Project transformed a school, changed lives, and became a model for educational reform.

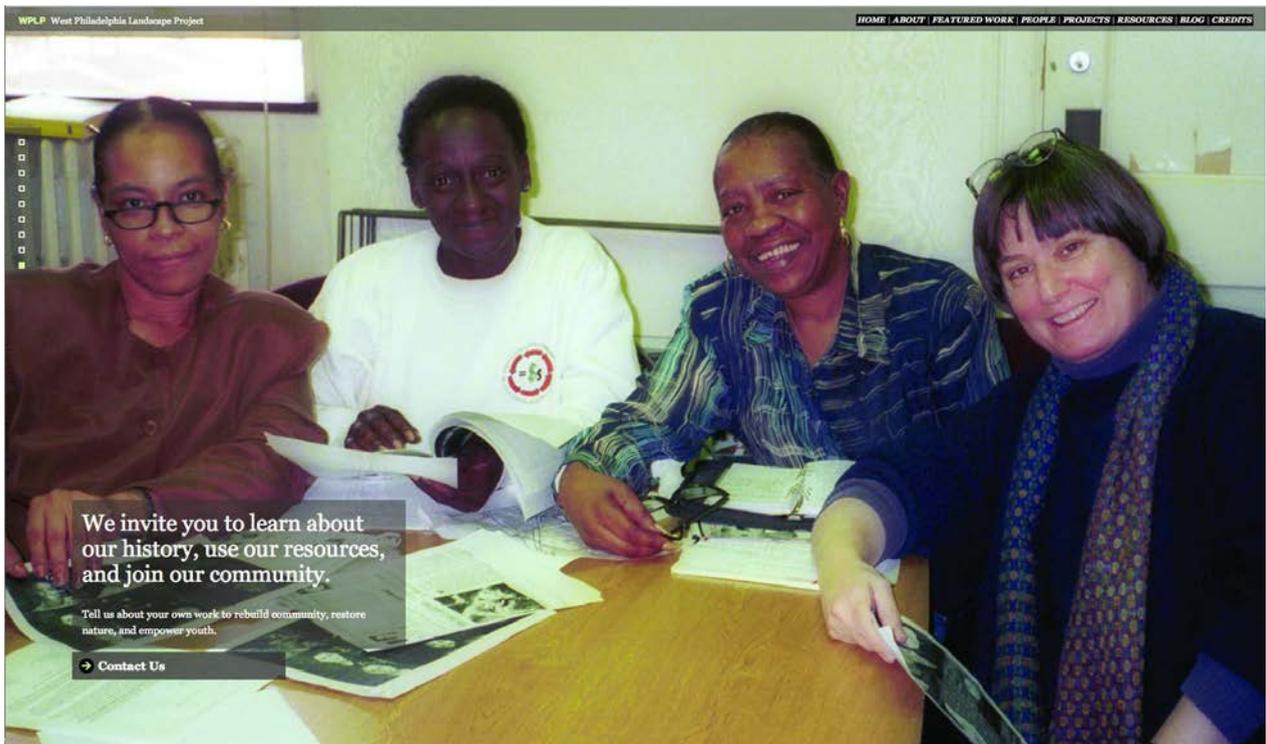
Above and right Middle school students learned how to read the landscape of their neighborhood, to understand how it came to be, and to envision designs for its future. They also learned HTML, which prepared some for future careers in Web design.

The Mill Creek Project: Environmental Design Curriculum

In 1994, confronted with skepticism about the existence and danger of Mill Creek's buried floodplain, I launched a program on landscape literacy and community development in partnership with a local middle school, where hundreds of 11–13 year-old children learned to read and tell the landscape of Mill Creek. They traced its past, deciphered its stories, and described their visions for its future. The tools they used were their own eyes and imagination, the place itself, and historical documents: maps, photographs, letters, and newspapers. The program had four parts: reading landscape, designing landscape change, building landscape improvements, and documenting these proposals and accomplishments on the Internet.

In 2012, I interviewed children (then 27 years old) and teachers from the middle-school. What they told me was revelatory. A girl told how it had led her from homelessness to a career in Web design. The teachers described how the project had transformed the entire school and their careers. These reflections are featured in a series of short multimedia videos for the Web.





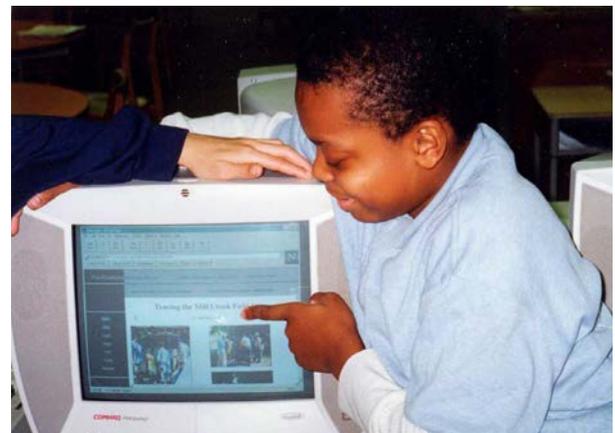
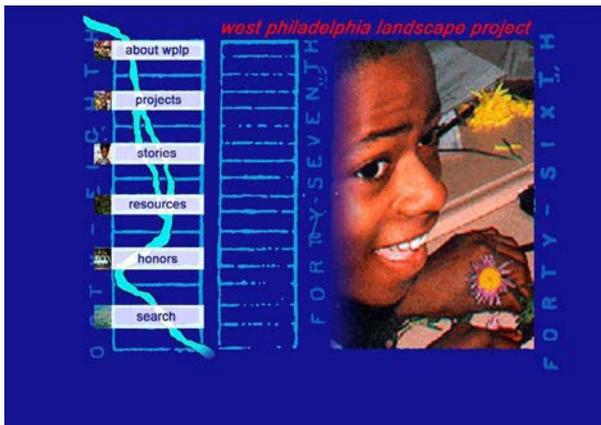
WPLP's Web Design: Another Framework for Action

The Web has been an integral part of WPLP since early 1996, when our first website was launched. That first version featured my students' designs, a digital database, design reports, and built projects of 1987–1991. In 1997, it was enlarged to include the middle school students' website. Over the years, the website has evolved, and it continues to be a showcase and a forum (www.wplp.net). The WPLP website has received millions of visits from over 90 different countries since 1996, and has been a significant factor in WPLP's widespread impact. WPLP inspired a computer curriculum at the middle school, which introduced hundreds of children to Web authoring and computer programming, some of whom have gone on to a career in those areas. Web design can also be a framework for action.

WPLP pioneered the use of the Web in design, planning, education, and community development. Since 1996, millions of people from more than 90 countries have visited the WPLP website.

Above Screen shot from the WPLP home page (www.wplp.net).

Right WPLP website in 1997 (top), 2002 and 2008 (middle), from 1997–2002, middle-schoolers learned HTML and designed their own websites (bottom).





“This project [WPLP] brilliantly and uniquely integrated research, teaching, learning, and service in ways that resulted in benefits to scholarship, education, and improvement to communities. It is an exemplary model of how a place-based project can have wide applicability, as it works to solve a universal problem manifested in a local community.”

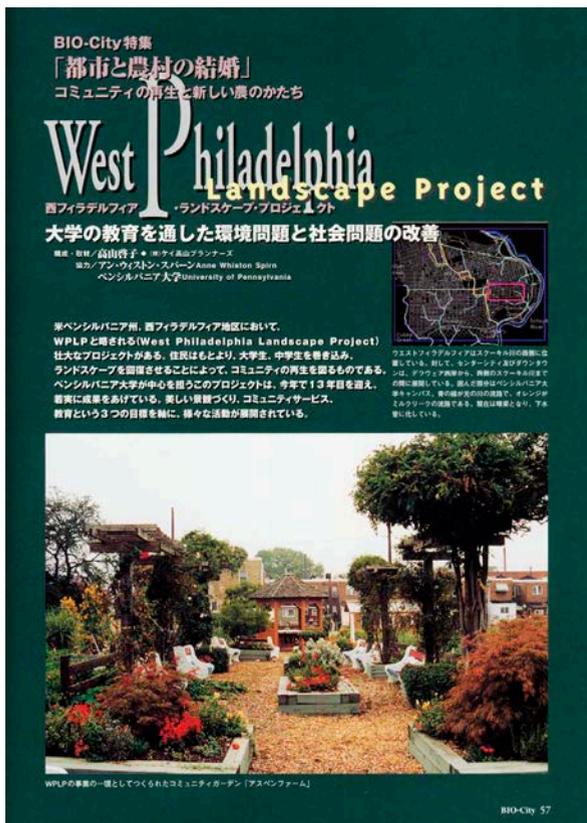
IRA HARKAVY, Associate Vice President, University of Pennsylvania

“The West Philadelphia Landscape Project was twenty years ahead of its time: it anticipated today’s concerns with urban water management, sustainability, and the relationship between physical and social infrastructure.”

JANE WOLFF, Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of Toronto

“Anne Spirm’s work is that of a visionary for a world where design allows people to occupy earth with care and love. Furthermore, her tireless dedication to education and community design has effectively promoted the enhancement of the quality of both environment and life.”

ANNE VERNEZ MOUDON, Professor of Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Urban Design and Planning, University of Washington



Above WPLP has been featured in international journals and national media, such as NBC Nightly News. Middle school students were invited to present their work as part of Governor Tom Ridge’s Budget Speech on February 3, 1998.

Left In 2000, President Bill Clinton visited the middle school and learned about the Mill Creek Project.

“As a guide to a coherent, intricate and transformative approach to landscape architecture and urban design, Anne Whiston Spirn is a visionary of the first order whose innovative work on the ground has transformed and enhanced the quality of life in low-income urban neighborhoods in deep and lasting ways.”
CHARLOTTE KAHN, Boston Foundation

“While at Penn, ... [Spirn] constructed the intellectual gateway between McHargian Ecological Planning and what would later become known as Landscape Urbanism. The project most critical to this process was her West Philadelphia Project. This complex participatory action project showed how ecological systems not only underlie but erode and reshape cities through decay and economic impacts. Through it, she moved the department beyond mapping and reports to engaging communities in creating a future in which disparate and fragmented neighborhoods could meet their own needs while playing a role in creating a more robust urban ecosystem.”
KATHRYN GLEASON, Professor of Landscape Architecture, Cornell University

Dig These Gardens

Nature in the city is making a comeback, with the help of a few good friends.

By Ruth Eckdish Knack

Not so long ago, community gardeners were routinely dismissed in the same way that historic preservationists used to be—as “little old ladies in tennis shoes.” Yet this month, the Seattle city council is reviewing the draft of a new comprehensive plan whose land-use element considers community gardens as permanent open space. Like historic preservation, this movement is finally being taken seriously.

It’s about time, says Anne Whiston Spirn. Spirn, a professor of landscape architecture and regional planning at the University of Pennsylvania, is one of a growing number of people around the country who are pointing to the importance of urban gardening as a community development tool.

Spirn is the movement’s academic guru. In 1990 she and her students produced the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan, which is based on her work with community gardeners near the Penn campus,

where she has taught since 1986. “I’m interested in the gardens as a vehicle for reshaping entire neighborhoods,” she says.

Students in two of Spirn’s studios analyzed local gardens and redesigned one, Aspen Farms, later carrying out the improvements. Their “greening project,” which concluded with a set of recommendations for the area, was undertaken in collaboration with Philadelphia Green, the community gardening group attached to the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, and the Organization and Management Group, which seeks to develop leadership capacity in low-income neighborhoods. The Pew Charitable Trusts provided grants totaling about \$750,000.



In the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan, Anne Spirn and her students proposed alternatives for reclaimed vacant land; here, an orchard on a vacant block. Below, Spirn is being interviewed in Aspen Farms by Steve Curwood, host of “Living on Earth” on National Public Radio.



“Anne’s West Philadelphia Landscape Project is a classic effort to improve the relationship between nature and neighbourhood. She began by discovering that declining and abandoned homes in the area tended to follow the route of the former Mill Creek, a stream buried in the 19th century ... She then worked with local residents, middle school children, and the city to reclaim these lots for community gardens, open spaces and amenities, forming a green armature through the neighbourhood. After decades, her work not only transformed West Philadelphia, but also transformed hundreds of kids who learned to discover nature in the urban scene.” **DENNIS FRENCHMAN**, Professor of Urban Design, MIT

“Deeply influenced by American Transcendentalism and Pragmatism, her insights are grounded in her work as a professional, especially in such projects as the West Philadelphia Landscape Project, which still is a model for similar efforts today to revive inner-city communities.”

REUBEN RAINEY, Emeritus Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of Virginia

WPLP has been hailed by national and local media. Above, *Planning Magazine*. Right, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

The Philadelphia Inquirer

View

Sunday, November 15, 1992

The long-buried Mill Creek in West Philadelphia

CREEK from F1
of the fast-moving creek. Later, she and some of her students assisted in the design of a garden by residents of a block where the garages are inaccessible because the land has settled into the buried streambed. And she has determined that many of the areas of greatest housing vacancy in West Philadelphia are above the buried Mill Creek, which rises in Lower Merion and runs diagonally through the area, creating valleys near 47th and Fairmount and 43d and Walnut, then flows into the Schuylkill near 43d and Woodland.

"People in the neighborhood find the existence of Mill Creek and the problems it causes far more believable than people from the City Planning Commission, or developers or architects, or for that matter, anybody who doesn't live in the neighborhood," she said.

Mill Creek was one of many concerns of the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan, which was done by Spirn's department at Penn, with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's Philadelphia Green program and the West Philadelphia Partnership, funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts. The project's most visible results to date are a series of community gardens and open spaces that were created with neighborhood groups, both as improvement projects in themselves and as ways to help people organize to improve neighborhoods.

It's worth emphasizing the literal grass-roots nature of this plan, which was highly collaborative and involved a great deal of listening to residents' ideas about what their neighborhoods ought to be. Having listened, the students who were involved helped people build things, and thus created successful examples of many of the approaches rec-

along and do something, while this plan contained the message that residents should define their goals and work to achieve them. Community gardening has a solid record of success throughout the country, and especially in Philadelphia. It fosters an energetic form of optimism.

This small-scale, person-to-person effort was supplemented by a level of thinking that is even rarer in most city planning — an analysis of the landscape of West Philadelphia as a whole. Mill Creek runs through the very heart of this concern, though the city has been built to suppress its reality.

Philadelphia is hardly unique in burying its rivers. Spirn, who taught at Harvard before coming to Penn, first became interested in the relationship between building vacancies and buried waterways in Boston. Nearly every 19th-century manufacturing city sought to suppress nature and maximize developable and taxable land. The trouble is that it doesn't quite work.

Now the industrial economy for which these areas were built is extinct, and desirable locations for both working and living tend to be gardenlike. It seems very worthwhile to take a look at whether this bit of nature that was buried more than a century ago might generate more wealth and happiness if its presence were recognized on the surface.

The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan does not see the Mill Creek watershed as a linear park like those along the Wissahickon and Pennypack Creeks. It does not recommend the radical step of moving Mill Creek out of its sewer. Instead, it argues that the buried river still exerts a strong impact along its path, and that, although no river is evident on

SURROUNDINGS

A long-buried creek in West Philadelphia

By Thomas Hine
INQUIRER ARCHITECTURE CRITIC

Most people probably don't think of Philadelphia as a landscape, but rather as a sprawling abstraction, a great expanse of graph paper made concrete. The monotony of Philadelphia is most evident when you drive through it, though it's easy even for the walker to believe that the city has no real topography — except in some oddball places such as Manayunk and Roxborough. Cyclists are more likely to think about Philadelphia as a place of hills and valleys; they can feel it in their calf muscles.

This featurelessness is an illusion. While Center City, South Philadelphia and the Northeast are a relatively flat coastal plain, the hills of West and Northwest Philadelphia signal the beginning of the piedmont. A boundary of continental scale slashes through the city, but the pattern of streets suppresses our

awareness of it.

For Anne Whiston Spirn, who chairs the department of landscape architecture and regional planning at the University of Pennsylvania, Mill Creek epitomizes the problem the city has understanding itself.

Mill Creek is one of the city's principal watercourses. It's probably not quite as large as Wissahickon Creek, in terms of the volume of water it carries, but its watershed does encompass most of West Philadelphia.

But if you're not familiar with Mill Creek, you're not alone. For most of its course, Mill Creek is invisible, channeled into an immense sewer.

Spirn recalls that when she was a student at Penn about 20 years ago, a piece of the street collapsed and she was able to look into the hole and get a view

See CREEK on F5

One proposal is to construct ponds to hold storm runoff above ground so that the water would flow more slowly into the sewer system. Now, after heavy storms, the rainwater overwhelms the city's treatment facilities, and results in the release of raw sewage into the Schuylkill. This idea has been successful in Denver, Spirn said.

Plantings of wetlands trees and bushes on the ground atop the buried creek would provide a subtle marking that would contrast with the vegetation found on higher ground in the neighborhood. This would be one part of the educational mission of the corridor, which would include elementary and secondary school programs to help students recognize nature in the city.

The creek's path would also define a corridor of community open space offering activities compatible with the flood plain: baseball diamonds, community gardens, sitting parks. Mixed among these would be horticultural businesses that would benefit from the presence of so much water and add an element of variety to the neighborhood — and jobs.

One idea is to create a nursery for growing street trees to supplement or replace those that are nearing the end of their lives. Trees grown in such urban conditions would probably have a greater chance of survival. A related idea would be to start a garden center that would sell appropriate plants for city gardens.

I hasten to note that Spirn and the others who worked on the plan are not seeking to displace the people and businesses along the waterway, although she says that they may be eligible for federal flood insurance. There are few things that can discourage homeowners more than a plan that calls for a lake where their

Rather, the plan calls for a recognition that this important natural feature exists and should be used, rather than fought, as opportunities become available. And it should be recognized that while much of this land has proven unsuitable for the uses to which it has been put in the past, there might be new uses that would work and add a new dimension to the lives of those who live in the area.

City plans are driven by the need for economic development, and there is an understandable reluctance to forfeit what appears, on paper at least, to be land that can be developed and taxed and would produce jobs. Spirn fears that large tracts of vacant land might tempt developers or public officials to place dense new developments.

One important piece of the West Philadelphia plan is a computerized database that was created for it. It brings together for the first time data on the land, its history, topography, uses and problems. The database, which can be loaded into a laptop computer, is available to help community groups do their own planning. Such an accessible integration of ecological, physical, social and economic information is, Spirn believes, a first for any city.

The final draft of the document has long been complete though it has not been published, nor have hearings been held.

It would be a pity if the West Philadelphia Landscape Plan were allowed simply to remain an academic exercise. Its concern with matters that are often viewed either as too small or too large to be considered by conventional planning offers a powerful and surprising way of thinking about the city.

The plan provides a reminder that

Anne Whiston Spirn and Michael Waldrep (MCP 2014) Present

BURIED RIVER, OPENED LIVES

Reflections on People, Place, and Practice

Six short multimedia videos

- The Buried River
- A Way to Fix Things
- When Learning Is Real
- Green City, Clean Waters
- Fatima's Story
- Coming Full Circle

Wednesday,
September 10
5:00-6:30 PM

MIT 7-429
(AVT / Long Lounge)

West Philadelphia Landscape Project

An action research project devoted to restoring nature,
rebuilding community, and empowering youth since 1987.

Buried River, Opened Lives: Reflections on People, Place, and Practice

In 2012, I began to record oral histories from people who have participated in WPLP over the past three decades. Among those interviewed were teachers and children (now 30 years old) from the middle-school. What they told me was revelatory. Their stories are captured in a series of short multimedia videos: *Buried River, Opened Lives*. In “When Learning Is Real,” three middle-school teachers describe how the Mill Creek Project transformed Sulzberger Middle School and how it changed their understanding of what education can and should be. In “Fatima’s Story,” one of the middle-school students relates how the project changed her life. In “A Way to Fix Things,” a community activist describes her lifetime experience in the Mill Creek neighborhood and her collaboration with WPLP. In “Green City, Clean Waters,” the Philadelphia Water Commissioner describes that city’s landmark program in green infrastructure. In “Coming Full Circle,” three WPLP research assistants describe their role on the project and how it has influenced their career. “The Buried River” describes how the Mill Creek came to be buried in a sewer and the consequences; it includes my own reflections and traces the course of the former creek in today’s landscape.

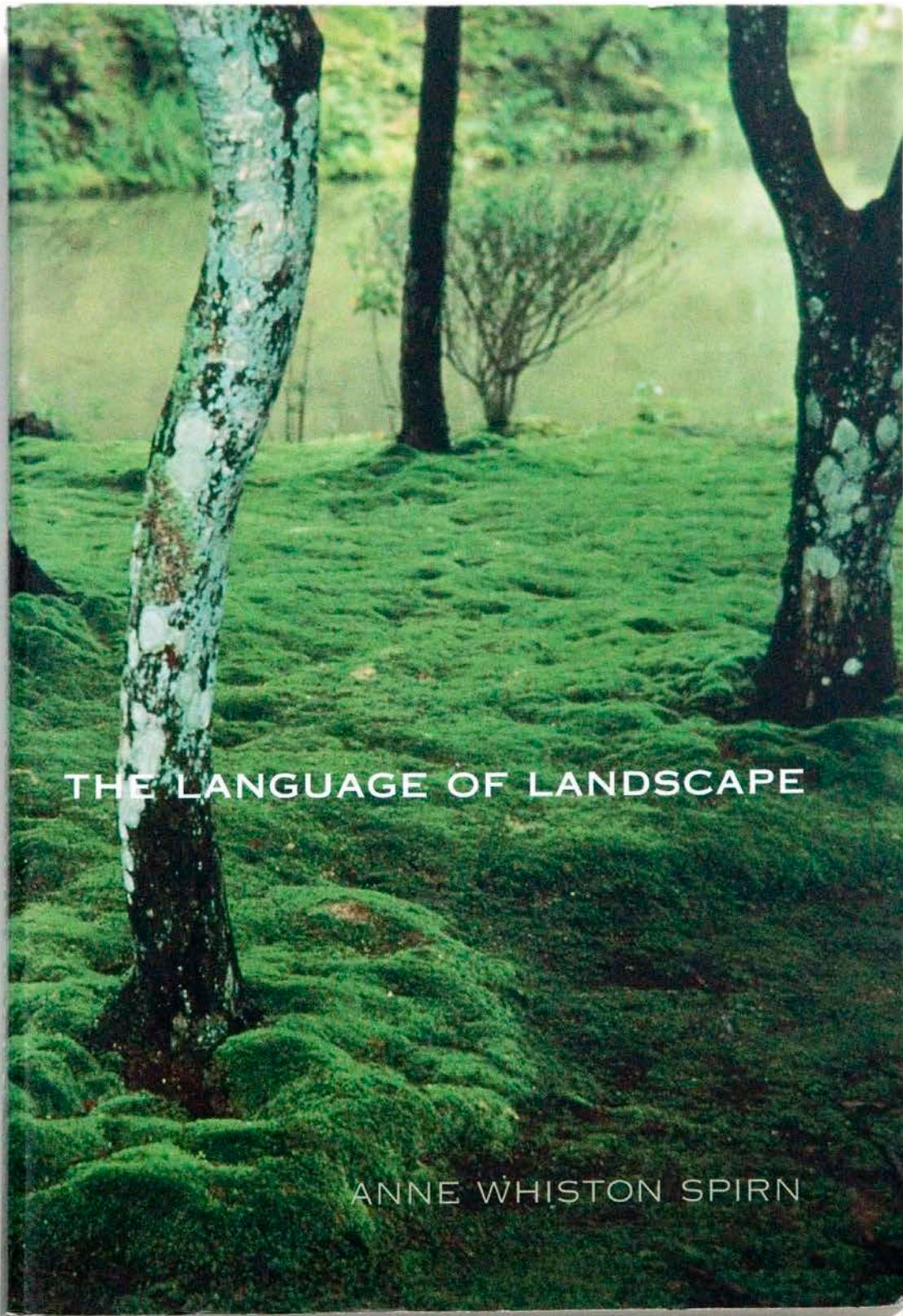
Buried River, Opened Lives premiered at MIT in fall 2014. Since then the videos have been screened at multiple venues. They can be viewed online at www.wplp.net/stories.

Multimedia videos testify to how WPLP has changed lives, minds, policies, and communities. These videos are all online at www.wplp.net/stories.

Above Poster for the 2014 premier screening.

Right Three multimedia videos from the series, “Buried River, Opened Lives.”





THE LANGUAGE OF LANDSCAPE

ANNE WHISTON SPIRN

1998/2018

The Language of Landscape

“Anne Whiston Spirn brings to her reading of landscapes the eye of an artist, the mind of a scholar, and the pen of a gifted writer. What she has produced is nothing less than a field guide for all those who share her belief that the language of landscape is among the vest and most meaningful that any of us can hope to understand. The result is a triumph. There are few books that have the power to change the way one sees the world. This is one of them.”

WILLIAM CRONON, author of *Nature's Metropolis*

The Language of Landscape argues that landscape is a form of language with its own grammar and metaphors and that, in shaping landscape, people express purpose, values, and ideas. The meanings landscapes hold are not just metaphorical and metaphysical, but real, their messages practical; understanding may spell survival or extinction. The book calls for change in the way we shape our environment. Its goal is to help people read landscapes as products of both nature and culture and to inspire them to envision new landscapes that restore nature and honor culture.

The idea of landscape as language is derived from the core activity of landscape architecture: artful shaping, from garden to region, to fulfill function and express meaning. The roots of this theory are deep and varied, grounded in many fields—anthropology, geography, geology, ecology, history, art history, literature, linguistics, and design, among others. It is a radical theory: in the sense of being rooted in the basic elements of nature and human nature; in the sense of offering a fundamentally different perspective than from any one individual root; and in demanding and enabling radical change in how we choose to think and act.

The Language of Landscape has influenced diverse fields, from landscape architecture to history, literature, art history, art, dance, and poetry. Poet Adrienne Rich included a passage from the book in one of her poems. Artist Katie Holten has incorporated the book's prologue into installations at numerous museums. The book inspired choreographer Chris Aiken to create “Dwell,” a dance about the experience and creation of place.

The Language of Landscape was written out of my experience as a scholar, practitioner, and photographer of landscape, out of fieldwork and archival research. The West Philadelphia Landscape project was a laboratory for testing and refining the ideas. Photographs prompted and pushed my thinking, as did the work of colleagues like architect Glenn Murcutt. Research on the theory

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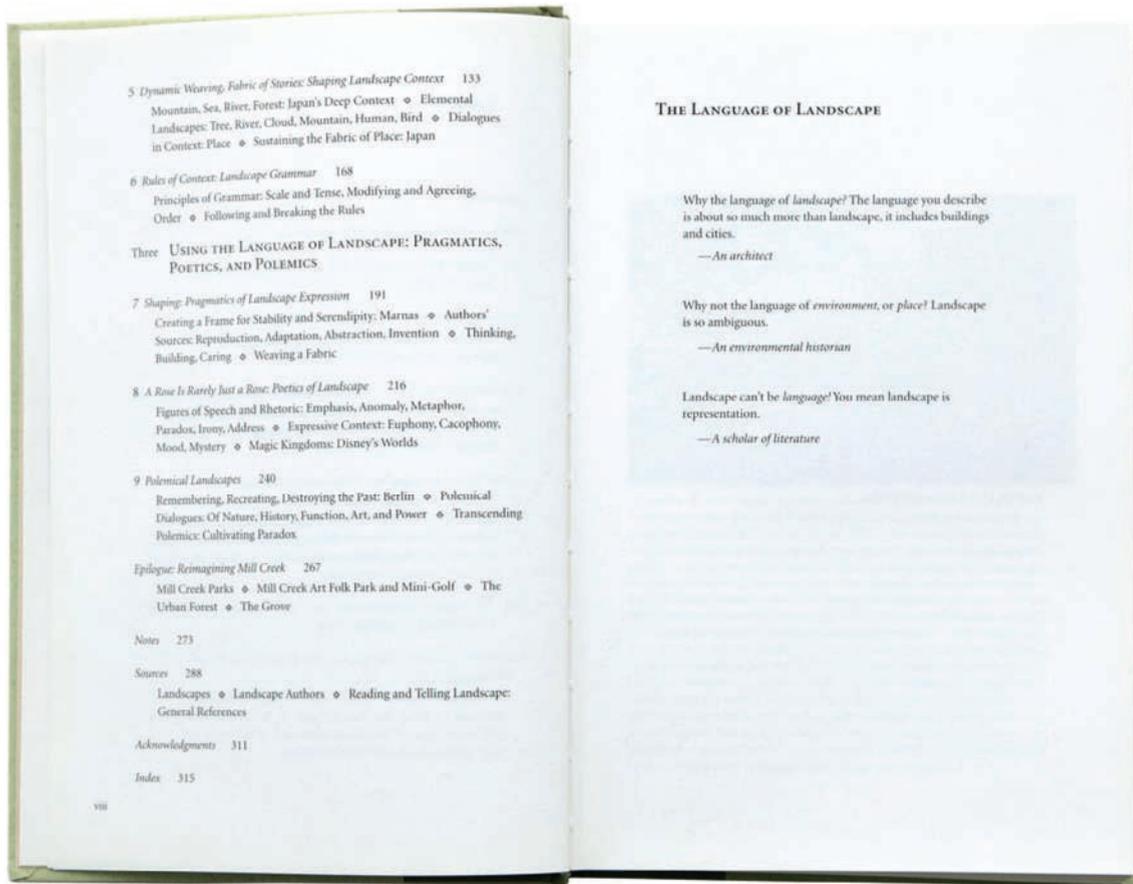
The Table of Contents is a map of the book: from landscape as language and literature, to landscape composition and expression.

and methods of past designers, such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Frederick Law Olmsted, led me to appreciate the larger tradition within which the language of landscape belongs. The pages shown here show how these strands of practice, art, and scholarship contributed to this theory.

An electronic edition of *The Language of Landscape* (2018) features color photographs and new material.

SPONSORS

Bunting Institute, University of California Humanities Research Institute
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
Yale University Press



"*The Language of Landscape*, is a pathbreaking and ambitious attempt to set out a theory of landscape aesthetics that takes account of both human interpretive frameworks and natural processes."

LAWRENCE VALE, Professor of Urban Planning, MIT

"As artists with an environmentally-based practice, reading her book *The Language of Landscape* ... was a revelation for us ... It is apparent that for Anne scholarship is not an isolated, intellectual pursuit, but rather that her practice informs her writing, which in turn informs her practice, which in turn informs her teaching, which in turn informs her practice ... Anne not only teaches but embodies Ecology."

SUSANNAH SAYLOR AND ED MORRIS, Co-Founders, The Canary Project



Embedded knowledge: wind, rain, sun, shelter. Ringie, Australia. (Glenn Murcutt)

weren't noticing which makes you see something that isn't even visible."¹²

Murcutt studies his clients' patterns of living as closely as he studies the processes of sun shining, plants growing, water flowing, and wind blowing, and he designs rooms and rooms' arrangement to correspond to the patterns of clients' lives. When the artist Sydney Ball requested a place of meditation, Murcutt designed an elevated verandah enclosed on three sides, on a wooded slope, facing downslope, with a view of blue, distant mountains. The elevation and the sloping ground beneath living tree branches to eye level, an unusual perspective that lifts one out of the everyday to a transcendent view.

Murcutt works alone, because he is in great demand, clients must wait two to three years for a design of their home, office, or museum. But the period is not fallow; Murcutt meets with them, from time to time, to talk about their lives, habits, likes, dislikes, hopes, and dreams, and, in turn, shares with them his ideas of an ecologically responsible approach to design. He addresses the dimensions of production, construction, and maintenance and relates how materials, site layout, and the design itself conserve environmental resources. He and his clients come to consensus about basic aims, or, if not, he suggests another architect. The product of these dialogues, like the house for Ball and a vacation home for the Magney family at Ringie, along the Pacific coast in southeastern Australia, express the daily and seasonal rhythms of the place and the people who live, work, or come there. The Magneys camped out on the site in tents on weekends and holidays for years



Empathetic imagination: water, light, and life, aligned. Ringie, Australia. (Glenn Murcutt)

before they built the house. Murcutt designed a building like a spacious, sunny tent, with two bedrooms and a verandah facing the water, with windows, doors, and vents that can be opened or closed, and with kitchen, bathroom, and corridor along the back. The roofline echoes the silhouette of a gull in flight, wings spread; the gutter is in the middle of the inward-sloping roof, instead of at the edge, and two downspouts are columns at either end. The shape of the ceiling inside the house and the corridor along which people move reflect the path along which the water flows. Rain drums on the roof, streams into the gutter, swirls down the cylindrical downspouts, visible through glass doors at either end of the hall, and falls into an underground tank—the only water supply for the house. Water is linked to its source in rain and sky and to a reservoir in the ground, necessary dialogues made poetic, everyday experience made aesthetic. Elegant sparseness, a hallmark of Murcutt's work, expresses his environmental ethics.

Murcutt's skill in the language of landscape brings his clients in deliberate dialogue with processes that sustain their lives, and that are often taken for granted. People adjust windows and walls to admit, intensify, or block light and air flow, as one adjusts sails on a boat to catch or avoid the wind, and, in the process, they learn. For those who live in such houses, light changing, wind blowing, rain falling, and reservoir filling become visible, audible, and tangible. Imagine an entire neighborhood or town—buildings, streets, sewers, parks—as at Ball and Ringie, that engage residents in dialogues with natural processes.

Magney House, by Glenn Murcutt, who is fluent in landscape language. To the right: two floodplains revealed, and the effects of ignoring landscape "grammar."

"*The Language of Landscape* ... set forth the essential categories for the analysis of both natural and designed landscapes, categories that continue to influence the teaching of landscape architecture in universities and the way in which professionals conceive and evaluate their own work."

REUBEN RAINEY, Emeritus Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of Virginia

"Spin's re-framing of nature to include human culture and [its] artifacts allows us to draw strength from both and to consider how sustainability might relate to the human body, performance and interactions with audiences. This is design thinking at its finest, not a recipe for creativity, but a pathway towards the integration art, design and sustainable living."

CHRIS AIKEN, Choreographer and Director of MFA Program, Smith College



Water flowing farm in floodplain. (Alex S. MacLean/Landslides)

when the rising sun shone directly through the pillars of the avenue leading to the inner circle of stones." Most landscapes are designed to be sensed through movement, at a particular tempo, for a specific duration, in a rhythm. The vast scale of seventeenth-century French gardens, like Versailles, Vaux-le-Vicomte, and Chantilly, was calculated to impress at a walking pace. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American parkways, like Boston's Riverway and New York's Bronx River Parkway, were meant to be seen at the speed of a horse-drawn carriage, then by automobile. "New vistas unfolded because of elevated freeways," writes Lawrence Halprin. "Fast panoramic views are disclosed which were never seen before. The great vivid skylines of the city can be seen, all of a sudden, not as a static picture, but as a series of constantly changing impressions which move by like the frames in a motion picture." The landscape of the San Jose freeway was designed to be experienced at an even, high speed. The series of framed views of Rousham, an eighteenth-century English garden largely by William Kent, are seen from a path at a rhythm of long, leisurely movements in a single direction, punctuated by occasional stops. In Bowood, also in southwestern England, a garden of the same period by "Capability" Brown, with no single principal path, the rolling terrain, the rounded groves of trees with trunks silhouetted up to the height of browsing sheep, and the architectural monuments pispel walkers through the landscape to the destinations. Bowood, cinematic, not photographic, is experienced through continuous movement, not static views.



Water flowing buildings and vacant land in floodplain, Dudley Street neighborhood, Boston. (Alex S. MacLean/Landslides)

Process Connect: Making Sense of Events and Experience

When I first saw the Dudley Street neighborhood of Boston in November 1984, I was dismayed. I knew the statistics—twice the unemployment rate of Boston as a whole, 30 percent of the land abandoned—but they simply did not prepare me for the place itself: entire square blocks of vacant land, some heaped with big chunks of concrete, piles of tires, and trash; playgrounds with broken equipment, cracked pavement, and smashed glass; wooden houses with peeling paint, sagging porches, roofs with holes, both triple-decker apartments and large, single-family homes with fine architectural details. The waste was overwhelming. With me that day was Hans Klemmelt, a German friend; he said he had not seen such destruction since Germany after the war; how could Americans permit such conditions in peacetime? Our guide, Charlotte Kahn, director of Boston Urban Gardeners, pointed to what was neither waste nor destruction, the many community gardens, not as visible in late fall as they would have been in summer, and also houses under repair, 40 percent of them owned by those who lived in them.

As I lay awake that night, sure I had missed something, I employed what I had seen. The fifteen hundred vacant lots were not scattered evenly, but concentrated. Few were on hillslopes and hillsides; houses there were substantial, most in good condition, some had sweeping views over the city. I got out of bed and pulled out the U.S. Geological Survey maps of Boston. With colored pencils of light to dark

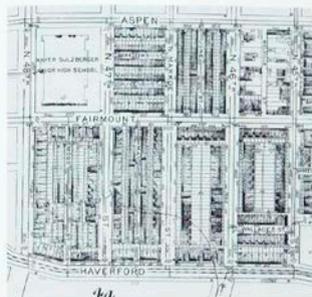


Grassmair ignored burying Mill Creek (others). (Philadelphia Water Department)

there, along the line of the severed stream. A playground was built by the city on the site where, in 1960, several blocks of housing had collapsed and been demolished. Now, sagging streets and sidewalks and cracked walls reveal ongoing shifting and foretell future cave-ins. For many years, the creek has ripped open the grid, undermined buildings and streets, dashed meandering diagonals of shifting foundations, tumbled buildings, and vacant land across the urban landscape. Young woodlands of alanthus, sumac, and ash have grown up on older lots, urban meadows on lots recently vacated.

Most community gardens in this part of West Philadelphia lie within the old floodplain of Mill Creek. Gardeners at Aspen Farms know there is a buried stream in their neighborhood; they see its effects in and around their garden. Houses across from the garden have sunk several feet, and the plots in the back corner, where the garden slopes toward the old streambed, need water less frequently, since the soil there is often moist. The Spruce Hill Garden was built where a house collapsed over a tributary to the Mill Creek. A crack now spans the entire height of a house across the street from the garden; the building has sunk down over that same old streambed, just one block away, and Street, a low point, floods every time it rains.

After a heavy rain, the Schuylkill flows milky brown, the water surface glazed, oily, and lumpy, like a thick soup of sediment and sewage. Normally, rain falls



Grassmair ignored houses built over sewers. (G. W. Bromley, 1927)



Consequences of ignorance vacant lots in Mill Creek. (West Philadelphia Landscape Project)



Deep context: sky, wind, open, dry. High Plains, Colorado.

Great Plains. Denver, a city of trees, is an oasis of irrigated green within the arid landscape, a refuge from this wide open land. It is buffered from the extremes of mountains and Plains by the presence of both: from mountains' steep, rocky ravines by Plain's soft slopes; from Plain's drought by snowpack and mountain streams. To James Michener the South Platte River that flows through Denver is "a sad, bewildered nothing of a river. . . . It's a sand bottom, a wandering afterthought, a useless irritation, a frustration, and when you've said all that, it suddenly rises up, spreads out to a mile wide, engulfs your crops and lays waste your farms."²⁹ A wide river of shallow, braided channels, it is clogged with sediment carried down from the mountains. It flows through willow thickets and cottonwood stands across the high dry plains to the Missouri and on down to the Mississippi and Gulf of Mexico. Long dry periods are punctuated by cloudbursts that swell streams and rivers and, especially when augmented by springtime snow melt from the mountains, swiftly convert dry creek and river beds to wide, raging torrents. These rhythms are part of the deep context of this place; they become part of each life that dwells here.

Rhythms of high peak flows separated by long periods of extremely low flow are a challenge for the designers of storm sewer systems. Denver's sewers were once open gulches; many were converted to underground pipes, but the enormous size required to accommodate peak storm flow made conversion often im-



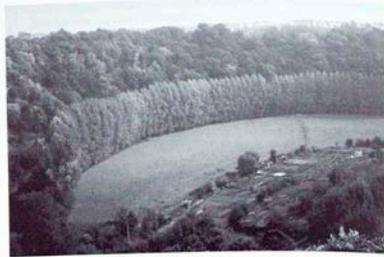
Response to deep context: house in grove. High Plains, Colorado.

practical. Over the past twenty-five years, therefore, Denver has built a new storm drainage system of parks and parkways. The channels through which the stormwater flows are the paths through which people walk, ride, or kayak, the form congruent with the deep context of the region. The channels and the water flowing make this context and its rhythms legible within the city even as they link outlying farmland, suburbs, and downtown. It is a storm sewer/open space system that is not only functional and sustainable, but also beautiful and meaningful. Skyline Plaza, part of a downtown redevelopment project, steps down into a sunken garden that pools water after heavy rains; it prevents flooding downstream by letting the water seep gradually into the sewer. Harvard Gulch, a storm drainage channel and linear park, has replaced the narrow, dirt gulch that once flooded adjacent houses. The original plan called for an underground storm sewer; instead, the water now flows through a park whose sinuous landforms echo the movement of water, even when it is only a small trickle. Where the level of the channel drops, a weir breaks the water's crooked force. At high water the weir is exciting, but even at low flow, its sculptural form recalls the power of water at high flow. Where the South Platte River moves through downtown, at the confluence with Cherry Creek, there is a park and a plaza where people come to watch the kayak races and sit by the river. The plaza has another purpose, designed to absorb and deflect floodwaters, its broad terraces alternately submerged or exposed. At

Photography was an important mode of research, a way to explore ideas about design adaptation to a landscape's deep structure (above) and to reflect on the interplay between Euclidean and fractal geometry in the poetics of landscape expression (right).

"Her work helped ... to reimagine landscapes as a congealed kind of history where the inequities and injustices of the past persist into the present ... to see the ethical and political power that landscapes hold for other possibilities in the future. ... Practice and scholarship blend seamlessly in her work. Her influence upon scholars and designers alike is inestimable because she doesn't fit into any category. She transcends boundaries by bringing fields and people together."
MATTHEW KLINGLE, Professor of History and Environmental Studies, Bowdoin College

"*The Language of Landscape* has established a theoretical framework for landscape architecture that extends into humanities scholarship; it situates landscapes as cultural artefacts and positions design as both a practical and poetic endeavour."
JANE WOLFF, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of Toronto

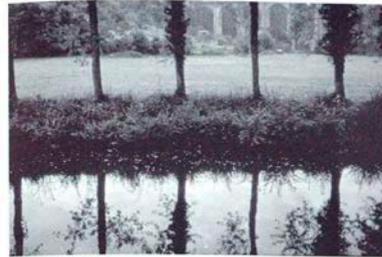


River meander, Dinan, France.

deflected, erodes the shore, carrying sand and silt down river, released to sink in the eddies at the island's tip, a point bar.⁴

A river has form through time. It laps against, flows across land, its shore an elusive line, moving up and down and across the landscape. Swelling, it rises up and rages, cutting earth, dumping mud, then, dwindling, shrinks back within its banks, leaving terraces on the plain to mark the bounds of periodic flood. No rain, and yet the river flows, in drought, drawing underground water from rains of thousands of years ago; trees, still green and living, tell the presence of water underground. Lining the Todd River in Alice Springs, Australia, on a low, broad, meandering band of grey sand are big, spreading eucalyptus trees, the only sign of water for much of the year.

Rivers gather water from sky and land, from within earth and rock, carrying, concentrating, sorting grains of sand, silt, and gravel, the debris of the discarded and the dead. Places of concentration and exchange, fertile, rich in food and water, rivers connect destinations, charting paths into remote territory, their mouth gateways between sea and hinterland. Animals and people gather along them; all principal cities in the world were once on rivers at mouth, confluence, or limit of navigable waters. Some are synonymous with civilizations: the fertile crescent formed by the Tigris and Euphrates, the Nile, the Tiber, the Yangtze. Rivers are boundaries, and can be barriers; bridges and ferries permit crossing and mark passage, real and mythical, like the passage from life to death over the river Charon.



Riverbank, Dinan, France.

In Dinan, France, a monumental arc of poplars marks the sweeping meander of the river Rance, the arc representing the idea of that sweep, smoothing out the irregularities of the riverbank. Through the abstraction and echo of the horizontal form in the vertical dimension, a line inscribed by humans on the landscape, the experience of the river is intensified. Individual trees set in a tight, evenly spaced row along the banks of the river assert their own quirky growth, more apparent in contrast to the regularity of their placement. Dinan's core is a fortified medieval town set on a hill, the river valley, once its trade route, now a park—a green chasm between the old city and its modern suburbs. The riverside is a precinct apart from the old and the new; its form is more sinuous, its tempo more leisurely, yet it is a landscape on the move: flowing, swinging, cutting into rock along the outer arc, laying down a broad terrace along the inner curve. The flat plain, its edge marked by the poplar arc, advances, accreting sediments carved from hillsides upriver. The rough green wall of woods rising beyond the poplars cloaks the steep slopes, cut by water flowing.

Water springs from rock and seeps from soil into pools, pools spill into streams, and streams converge to form larger streams and rivers deep and broad. A river flows from sources to sea. Gravity pulls a river down, from high ground to low; water tugs at rocks and roots, rushing streams strip stony slopes, swift currents run through rocky rapids, waterfalls plunge over cliffs. It slows on flatlands, spreads, and swings in broad, sweeping curves. Near its mouth, wide channels di-

"How does Spirn's work relate to the world of dance? Dance, like landscape design, involves designing with the ineffable forces of nature ... Spirn's interweaving of place, culture, biology and technology and aesthetic experience provide a frame for composition which complements the work of choreography perfectly. When I share her work with dancers, I give them access to language and examples of ... eco-poetic relationships and ways of understanding composition that are grounded in the fabric of nature and human experience. Spirn's re-framing of nature to include human culture and [its] artifacts allows us to draw strength from both and to consider how sustainability might relate to the human body, performance and interactions with audiences. This is design thinking at its finest, not a recipe for creativity, but a pathway towards the integration art, design and sustainable living." **CHRIS AIKEN**, Choreographer and Director of MFA Program, Smith College

"Landscape speaks to us. But how? Anne's Spirn's superb and unique achievement is to spell out the "how" so that we can better understand landscape's variant dialects—its distinctive personalities—and respond intelligently, with appropriate emotion." **YI-FU TUAN**, author of *Topophilia*



The Language Of Landscape

*Landscape is art. Landscape is an ecology.
Landscape is political. But is landscape also language?*

BY PAUL BERNETT

Melissa Cooperman is a film student at New York University. By necessity—renting indoor space is expensive—most of her films take place in the streets and parks of the city. In one, a young man smartly dressed in a black suit walks through Bryant Park in Midtown. The camera is held low as he walks by, at knee level, so that we see the park in the background, most distinctly evident by the throng of black fold-up chairs which have become icons for this landscape. The man links a chair and sits down. He takes from his briefcase a tablecloth, a wine glass and a bottle, and a paper figure, which he affixes to the tablecloth on his lap with some tape. He then proceeds to toast his imaginary friend, while lunch hour in this famously popular park occurs around him.

The appearance of Bryant Park in

Cooperman's film helps anchor the viewer, especially if that viewer is a landscape architect. The familiarity of the landscape gives the piece context; it is about a specific year, a specific event, in a specific place. But for Cooperman, Bryant Park is more than background material—it actually generated the story. "I was 'termping' this summer in Midtown and I used to go to Bryant Park for lunch," she explains. "There is really a whole lunch-hour culture there. I always loved the chairs and the texture of the pebbles; it seems very Parisian. So I just sat and watched people having lunch, took in the place, and the story came to me."

"For all these people, lunch is the one hour you're allowed to be a person, instead of an office automaton. I remember when I was there once at lunchtime and there was this guy in a suit and tie standing there practicing his golf swing. But there were no balls or clubs.



RECOGNIZABLE LANDSCAPES, such as Bryant Park, (at above), and Shore Road Park, below, a popular kite-flying spot near the Veranoan Bridge, generate stories that are captured in the work of film student Melissa Cooperman. In Los Angeles, photographer Cassella Jose Vergara discovered a surprising story of remembrance and heritage in the landscapes of Mexican immigrants, above.

The *Language of Landscape* was the subject of an entire issue of the design magazine, *Blauwe Kamer* (Dutch), of a long interview in the Japan journal, *Science*, and a feature story in *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, as well as many other reviews and radio programs.

"This remarkable book urges readers to understand the common language of landscape which speaks to all our senses every day."

LAWRENCE HALPRIN, Landscape Architect

"[*The Language of Landscape*] is a beautiful and original work, a book about everything that matters in our lives, a book that makes me look differently or more intensely at everything around me."

ADRIENNE RICH, Poet

Part 2

Nature, Form, and Meaning

*Landscape Journal: Special Issue on
Nature, Form, and Meaning and
“The Poetics of City and Nature:
Towards a New Aesthetic for Urban
Design” (1988)*

“Constructing Nature: The Legacy
of Frederick Law Olmsted” (1995)

*Marnas: A Journey Through Space,
Time, and Ideas*
www.marnasgarden.com (2017)

My writings have provided a fresh appreciation for how ideas of nature, form, and meaning can influence design theory and action.

Beginning in 1985 with “Urban Nature and Human Design: Reclaiming the Great Tradition,” I published a series of essays that trace the history of ideas and practice of landscape design and planning. My approach combines that of the scholar and the practitioner. As a scholar, I document the tradition within which I think and act, compare what other authors do to what they say, study the context of their actions and writings. As a practitioner, I calculate the difficulty of the designer’s task, judge the intentions implicit in their deeds, applaud or condemn the risks they take, and admire the grace with which multiple demands are fulfilled. The essays on Frederick Law Olmsted, Frank Lloyd Wright, Jens Jensen, and Ian McHarg, among others, are written from this dual perspective of scholar and practitioner.

The Marnas website explores these themes through an interactive, immersive three- and four-dimensional space, where visitors experience the interplay between theory and practice, form, function, and meaning.

LANDSCAPE JOURNAL

Special Issue: Nature, Form, and Meaning

Design, planning and management of the land

Volume 7, Number 2, Fall 1988



1988

Landscape Journal: Special Issue on Nature, Form, and Meaning

Ozzie Award for Excellence in Design, 1989

“‘The Poetics of City and Nature,’ in *Landscape Journal: Special Issue on Nature Form and Meaning*, is still one of the most influential writings in landscape architecture and urbanism. This piece was transformative to my career and work, giving me the courage to embrace the allied fields of fine arts as well as ecology and history.”

WALTER HOOD, Hood Design

This special issue of *Landscape Journal* marked a watershed in the history of the journal. It set a new standard for writing on landscape design theory and practice. Several articles from the special issue, and even the entire issue itself, are required reading in landscape design theory, including my own essay, “The Poetics of City and Nature: Towards a New Aesthetic for Urban Design,” which was reprinted in the journal *Places*.

Landscape Journal is the world’s leading journal of landscape architecture research. In 1985, it was in debt, criticized for its narrow subject matter (mainly environmental analysis), and the publisher threatened to abandon it. To save the journal, I proposed a special double issue and applied for a grant from the NEA to fund it. As guest editor, I solicited new authors for the journal, helped design a new layout, and chose a provocative cover: an image of James Turrell’s *Skyspace*.

The special issue repositioned *Landscape Journal*; articles on design have been a prominent feature of the Journal ever since. It expanded the number and diversity of submissions and increased circulation. The NEA grant paid for a double print run, so a surplus of single copies was sold at bookstores like Urban Center Books in New York. The subsidy from NEA and revenue from sales of extra copies paid off the debt and put *Landscape Journal* on firm financial footing, which persuaded the University of Wisconsin Press to continue publishing it.

Left James Turrell’s *Skyspace* (from Spirn, “The Poetics of City and Nature”) on the cover provoked questions and announced a radical departure for *Landscape Journal*.

Following pages Table of Contents; Spirn, “The Poetics of City and Nature: Towards a New Aesthetic for Urban Design.”

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SPECIAL ISSUE: NATURE, FORM, AND MEANING

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Cover: Skyspace I (day), 1972, by James Turrell. Interior light and open sky. See Anne Whiston Spirn, "The Poetics of City and Nature: Towards a New Aesthetic for Urban Design," page 108. Photograph by James Turrell.

Volume Seven, Number Two

Fall 1988

The Poetics of City and Nature: Towards a New Aesthetic for Urban Design

Anne Whiston Spirn

Anne Whiston Spirn is Professor and Chairperson of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania. Her book, *The Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design* (Basic Books, 1984) received the President's Award of Excellence from the American Society of Landscape Architects. This essay is the subject of a new book that further explores the theoretical and aesthetic issues raised in *The Granite Garden*. She received her A.B. from Radcliffe College and an M.L.A. from the University of Pennsylvania.

Abstract: *This essay describes a new aesthetic of landscape and urban design, an aesthetic that encompasses both nature and culture, that embodies function, sensory perception, and symbolic meaning, and that embraces both the making of things and places and the sensing, using, and contemplating of them. This theory is based upon an understanding of nature and culture as comprising interwoven processes that exhibit a complex, underlying order that holds across vast scales of space and time. This basis in process yields a view of urban form as dynamic, as evolving over time, in predictable and unpredictable ways.*

The idea of dialogue, with its embodiment of time, purpose, communication, and response, is central to this theory. The form of the city is seen as the result of complex, overlapping, and interweaving narratives that, together, comprise the context of place and the storylines that connect the place and all those who dwell within it. The issues of time and change, process and pattern, order and randomness, being and doing, and form and meaning are inherent to this theory. These issues are also central to recent theoretical currents in other fields, including art, music, and science. Although this aesthetic prompts a new appreciation for forms of the past, it also demands new forms, new modes of notation and representation, and new processes of design, construction, and cultivation.

The city has been likened to a poem, a sculpture, a machine. But the city is more than a text, and more than an artistic or technological artifact. It is a place where natural forces pulse and millions of people live—thinking, feeling, dreaming, doing. An aesthetic of urban design must therefore be rooted in the normal processes of nature and of living. It should link function, feeling, and meaning and should engage the senses and the mind.¹

The city is both natural and contrived, a transformation of "wild" nature to serve human needs, an evolving entity shaped by both natural and cultural processes. Urban form is dynamic, ever-unfolding through dialogues of statement and response. These dialogues are articulated by individuals and by groups, who, in transforming the city and nature, are themselves transformed. The form of the city thus records many narratives, all embodying stories: stories about the nature of human society (about the relation of the individual to the State or the Church, for example, or the power of commerce); about the quality of cities; and about the nature of

Nature. These stories are all bound up in one another, their themes interwoven, their plots never complete.²

In those dialogues that engage both culture and nature lies the basis for a new theory of urban design. This theory, which builds on a rich history of antecedents, as well as recent work in philosophy, art, and science, embodies an aesthetic that recognizes both natural and cultural processes and reveals the rhythms and the patterns created by their discourse.³

This theory applies not only to the city, but to rural regions as well. Many examples described here are drawn from non-urban settings, and one could substitute the words "place" for "city" and "settlement form" for "urban form." Still, it is in the city that the challenge is both greatest and least recognized, because the human-built structure seems so dominant, because the contrast between nature's order and human order is particularly acute, and because cultural processes are so densely interwoven and overlain.

This theory is concerned equally with everyday things and with art, with small things like fountains, gardens, and buildings and with large systems

like those that transport people or carry wastes. It connects those who live in the city with those who design these objects, places, and systems. It is a theory that will yield new urban forms, forms that are as revolutionary as those revealed by contemporary science, and that will require new modes of notation and representation and new processes of design, construction, and cultivation.

Dimensions of the New Aesthetic

This is an aesthetic that celebrates motion and change, that encompasses dynamic processes, rather than static objects, and that embraces multiple, rather than singular, visions. This is not a timeless aesthetic, but one that recognizes both the flow of passing time and the singularity of the moment in time, that demands both continuity and revolution. This aesthetic engages all the senses, not just sight, but sound, smell, touch, and taste, as well. This aesthetic includes both the making of things and places and the sensing, using, and contemplating of them.

The idea of dialogue, with its embodiment of time, purpose, communication, and response, is central to

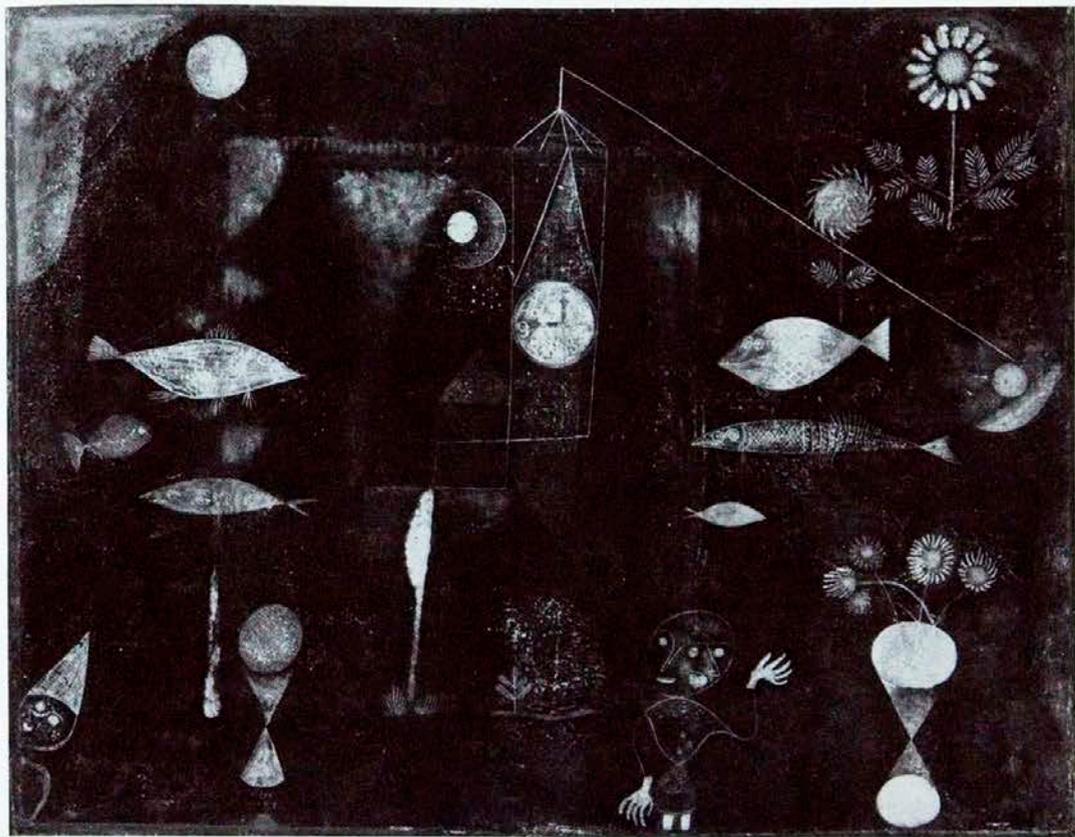


Figure 1. *Fish Magic*, by Paul Klee, 1925. Courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arenberg Collection.

this aesthetic. One form of dialogue, essentially introspective, entails the contemplation of such questions as Who Are We? Where Are We? What Do We Value? Another type of dialogue entails the transformation of the external world for human purposes, including construction of shelter, acquisition of food and water, defense, trade, worship, and play. Through these transformations we express what we, as individuals and as societies, value. Both types of dialogues—the internal and the external—are means of knowing oneself and one's place in the world. Throughout history, individuals and societies have engaged in such dialogues and have recorded them

in poetry, painting, scientific experiments, and the forms of human settlement. Whether their origins are metaphysical or mundane, these dialogues are ultimately aesthetic.⁴

Many different and even contrasting epistemologies have emphasized an ultimate unity and have stressed that that ultimate unity is *aesthetic* (Bateson 1980). John Dewey (1958) characterized the sense of an extensive and underlying whole as the essence of aesthetic experience and even of sanity. Design which highlights nature's processes for our contemplation permits the experience of a sense of unity with a larger whole which is the universe in which we live.

A sense of identity—as both an individual and a member of a group—is an important counterpoint to a sense of unity; both are essential to psychological growth and health (Erikson 1963). Erik Erikson described the significance of identity and its development in the individual (Erikson 1968). Relph (1983) and Norberg-Schulz (1979) both stressed the importance of identity as it is expressed in a sense of place. Design which juxtaposes and contrasts nature's order and human order prompts the contemplation of what it means to be human. Design that fosters and intensifies the experience of temporal and spatial scales facilitates both this reflection upon per-

along the inner curve. The flat plain whose edge is marked by the poplar arc is advancing, built from sediments carved from hillsides upstream. The rough green wall of woods rising beyond the poplar arc divides the steep slopes, cut by water flowing.

The interplay of different processes is also a subject of current research on "chaos." Computer drawings illustrate the patterns that result when several rhythms, such as radial frequencies of planetary orbits, come together (Gleick 1987). Perhaps this is the contemporary version of the "music of the spheres."¹¹ Such patterns appear complex, yet one senses that there are underlying, ordering principles. They resemble a topographic contour map, preventing the realization that land form results from a similar interplay among multiple forces and processes, including gravity, water flow, and weather. Cultural processes also

engage natural processes on the land; the rhythms of food production and transportation, for example, interact with the flow of wind and water to build a landscape. Like natural processes, certain cultural processes—the acquisition of food, disposal of wastes, movement of people and goods, trade, child-rearing, and play—are universal. The patterns that result from those processes vary in response to the specific context of natural environment and culture and to the idiosyncrasies of individuals.

It is nature and culture together, as interacting processes, that render a place particular. Natural processes, operating over time, give rise to the initial form of the land and compose the base rhythms to which cultural processes respond, introducing new and changing themes, and weaving an intricate pattern, punctuated here and there by high points of nature and art.

Every urban landscape is a synthesis of complex harmonies, which, although they can be honored at any given moment, evolve continually in time, in both predictable and unpredictable ways, in response to natural processes and changing human purposes. It is a symphony in which all the dwellers of the city are composers and players.

Making, Caring, Thinking, Dwelling

The process of dwelling, an indelible fact of every culture, is an aesthetic act, containing long and deep, a correspondence between nature and culture. Through cultivation and construction, individuals and societies forge a place within nature that reflects their own identity—their needs, values, and dreams. It is the making of and caring for a place, as well as the contemplation of their labor and their meanings, which comprise the aesthetic experience of dwelling.



Figure 5. Poplars, Dinan, France. Though set in a tight, evenly-spaced row along the banks of the River Rance, the individual trees assert their own quirky growth. In the distance is the rampart from which Figure 4 was taken. Photograph by Anne Spiess, 1978.

This concept, as explored by the philosopher Martin Heidegger (1971), has important implications for designers and planners of human settlements.¹² In his search to define the nature of dwelling, Heidegger traced the roots of the verb "to dwell" in both high German and Old English. In both languages the root word for dwell, *bauen*, also means "to build." In German, moreover, the root word for building and dwelling is also the same as that for all life or "I am": "I am because I dwell; I dwell because I build." "We attain to dwelling, so it seems, only by means of building" (Heidegger 1971, p. 145).

To deny people the opportunity to build, to manipulate their environment, is to deny them the ability to dwell. Furthermore, the word *bauen*, which embodies building, dwelling, and being, not only means to build as in to construct, but "also means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the mind" (Heidegger 1971, p. 147). To dwell in a place, therefore, to make it one's own, one must not only construct, but also cultivate. In this dual sense, house and garden together comprise a dwelling. Of these it is the garden that affords the primary opportunity for dialogue with the natural world.¹³

The garden is a potent and complex symbol; it embodies pleasure, fertility, maintenance, and renewal. Gardening is a life-embracing act, an act of faith and hope, an expression of commitment to the future; it can even be a political act. From ancient cities to the cities of medieval Europe, agricultural pursuits formed a part of daily urban life; orchards and gardens lay within the city walls.¹⁴

How do we account for the strength of this tradition of urban gardens? Is it entirely utilitarian—the need to produce food, a precaution against siege? Heidegger's essay on the quality of dwelling sheds light on the persistence and popularity of urban gardens, as well as their significance.¹⁵ People who can afford gardens in the city do so, even on tiny balconies. Many city residents who rent the apartments or houses in which they live, however, are not permitted to alter them; many also do not have access to a private garden. In Heidegger's sense of the word, these residents are prevented

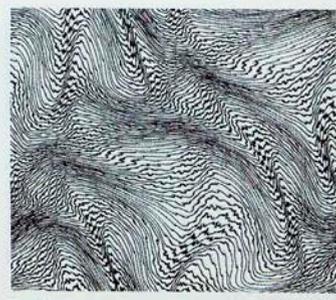
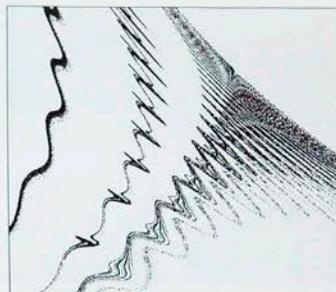
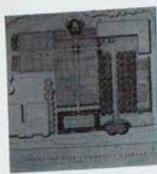


Figure 6. Computer drawings illustrate the patterns that result when several rhythms, such as radial frequencies or planetary orbits, interact. Photographs courtesy of James Yorke, University of Maryland, Institute for Physical Science and Technology, University of Maryland.

Computer drawings illustrate patterns that result from the interaction among multiple processes. A row of poplars contrasts the interplay between Euclidean and fractal geometry.

"The Poetics of City and Nature" called for a fresh approach to design, one that celebrates nature and culture, motion and change, that encompasses dynamic process rather than static objects, and that embraces multiple, rather than singular visions. It prompted a new appreciation for design of the past, even as it demanded new forms, new modes of notation and representation, and new processes of design, construction, and cultivation.

This essay was among the first to draw upon fractal geometry as a way for designers to understand the patterns created by the interplay of natural and cultural processes and to use this knowledge deliberately to create places that highlight the aesthetic experience of the processes that sustain life. It urged designers to take on responsibility for urban infrastructure, such as sewer and water systems, and to invest them with beauty and meaning.



March 1984. Drawing and model by Beth Anshen.



February 1985. Photograph by Randy Palmer.



July 1985. Photograph by Karen Reulinger.



April 1984. Photograph by Beth Anshen.



April 1984. Photograph by Beth Anshen.



July 1984. Photograph by Randy Palmer.



August 1984. Photograph by George Batchelor.

Figure 7. Cooper's Place, a community garden in Boston built and maintained by the gardeners for their neighbors' use.

from dwelling in the houses they occupy, from making them better rather than loaves. Nor do most public parks provide an opportunity to shape one's environment. People are discouraged from altering parks or even from inhabiting them. To alter is to vandalize.

The urban allotment garden movement has evolved to address this need. In Europe this tradition has its roots in the medieval city, and urban gardeners take many forms. In Germany, for example, many apartment courtyards are divided into individual garden plots; each apartment in the adjacent building has a corresponding garden (maingarten). The plots are the size of a small room, their boundaries marked by a fence. The gardens are diverse; some people put up trellises, others have picnic tables, some people grow corn, and others cultivate roses. The result is a delightful, ordered rise of form, color, texture, and use. It is much more engaging and more aesthetically pleasing than the landscape of most apartment buildings, particularly public housing.

Sara Bass Warner (1987) has documented the history of communal allotment gardens in American cities over the past century. Design and planning professionals usually agree: community gardens as an urban land use, if they consider such gardens at all, is an ephemeral land use. The presence of community gardens on any specific site within the city may be temporary, but they have had a remarkably sustained history in urban life and have persisted as a viable and popular urban land use.¹⁷

Recently, the community garden movement has been strongest in inner-city neighborhoods where the well-tended gardens stand in stark contrast to vacant lots and poorly maintained public parks nearby. "Cooper's Place," a community garden in Boston, combines individual garden plots with a separate flower garden open to the public and maintained by the gardeners for their neighbors' use. These gardens were constructed in 1981 on several vacant lots. They were conceived by nearby residents who, with the help of Boston Urban Gardeners, organized the necessary resources and marshaled graduate students in landscape architecture to work on the design.¹⁸

In this and other neighborhoods, the effort—both individual and group—entailed in marshalling resources, securing land, renovating and building and cultivating gardens has had far-reaching ramifications for education, employment, and further community projects. Community gardens are a model of how to care for a place. Without the opportunity to dwell in such a way, it is hard to care for the greater environment of the city as a whole, which is an essential perspective if we are to make the city a better place for all of us.

A major issue for designers is how to relinquish control (whether to enable others to express themselves or to permit nature's processes to take their course) while still maintaining an aesthetically pleasing order. Two paintings by Paul Klee, "Tree Nursery" and "Rhythm of Planning," demonstrate an answer. In both, the artist established a framework (horizontal lines in "Tree Nursery" and a grid in "Rhythm of Planning") within which much variety was accommodated without the overall effect seeming chaotic. The pleasing quality of the "maingarten" in Munich, depends upon a similar framework of divided plots. Each part or garden is a whole in itself, an improvisation on similar themes by different individuals. Yet all are part of a whole unified by materials, structure, and the process of cultivation.

In Granada, Spain, allotment gardens lie within the Alhambra and Generalife, a national landmark. The gardens rest within a highly organized framework of walls and terraces, and within the serene rather than derived from it. They complement the formal gardens and courtyards, where vegetables and nut and fruit trees are planted among flowers and vines. There is no arbitrary separation in this Moorish garden between the ornamental and the productive, between the pleasurable and the pragmatic, between the sacred and the secular.

Just as gardens express the makers' views of their relation to the natural world, so does the form of the city as society creates express that society's values. As such, urban form represents a dialogue between human purpose and nature's processes over time. In the history of a city, the natural setting is a constant that successive hu-

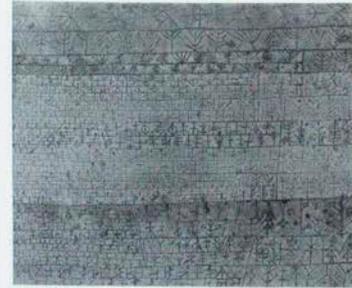


Figure 8. Tree Nursery, by Paul Klee. Courtesy of the Phillips Collection, Washington, DC.



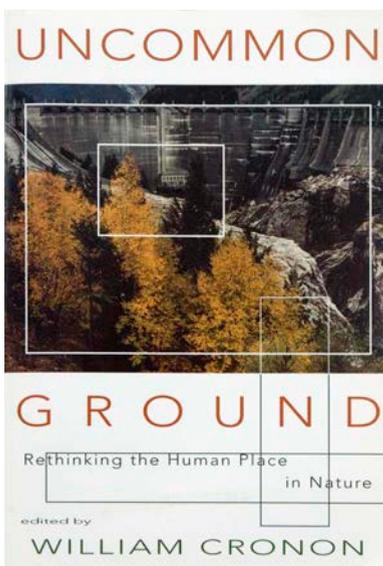
Figure 9. Terraced allotment gardens at the Generalife, Granada, Spain. Photograph by Anne Spurr, 1984.

Tree Nursery, a painting by Paul Klee, embodies a principle of design: a strong framework, like a grid, can accommodate and give order to otherwise chaotic actions and can inspire improvisation. Allotment gardens at The Alhambra illustrate this principle.

The essay's themes of time and change, process and pattern, order and randomness, being and doing, and form and meaning were also central to contemporary explorations in music art, literature, and science. It brought urban and landscape design in tune with theoretical currents in other fields. It also inspired basic tenets of landscape urbanism, which would emerge in the 1990s.



Above The Riverway under construction in Boston, 1892, showing newly-graded floodplain, paths, and streetcar line behind a berm. Most people are blind to the fact that this landscape was designed and constructed, an early example of landscape as infrastructure.



Left “Constructing Nature,” published in *Uncommon Ground*, is a required text in college classes. It demonstrates that many great places are works of design rather than artifacts of nature alone.

1995

Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted

“Uncommon Ground is the best kind of book, one that shocks the reader into entirely fresh ways of seeing. Perhaps the most important work facing us over the next several years involves the reconception of nature and our relationship to it. This indispensable volume makes a bold start on that project, attacking with imagination, insight, originality, and wit.”

MICHAEL POLLAN, author of *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education*

While Olmsted's contemporaries recognized that Central Park and the Fens were designed and built, this popular realization soon faded. Olmsted was so skillful at concealing the artifice that both the projects he so brilliantly constructed and the profession he had worked so hard to establish became largely invisible. Today the works of many landscape architects are not understood as having been constructed, even when the landscape has been radically reshaped. Many landmarks of the profession are assumed to be works of nature. This blindness prevents their appreciation as artful answers to knotty questions of conflicting environmental values and competing purposes.

“Constructing Nature” is the product of twenty-five years of reflection on Olmsted, including research in the Library of Congress in 1971 and 1994 and in the archives of the Olmsted Historic Site in 1985. I am interested in Olmsted as a practitioner, in how he approached problems similar to those faced by designers today, in the methods he used, his line of reasoning, and the risks he took.

“Constructing Nature” opened people's eyes to the power of landscape design. The essay is widely read in college classes across the U.S., from history to environmental studies and philosophy, as well as design. It is part of a book on “Rethinking the Human Place in Nature” and was written in dialogue with a group of scholars at the University of California Humanities Research Institute. I was the only designer in the group, and the fact that landscape architects construct nature, literally, was a novel idea to them.

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Constructing the Riverway, 1892. (Courtesy National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)



The Riverway, 1920. (Courtesy National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)

The Riverway, during construction and 30 years later (above). Even Niagara Falls is not only a phenomenon of nature, but also the product of design (right).

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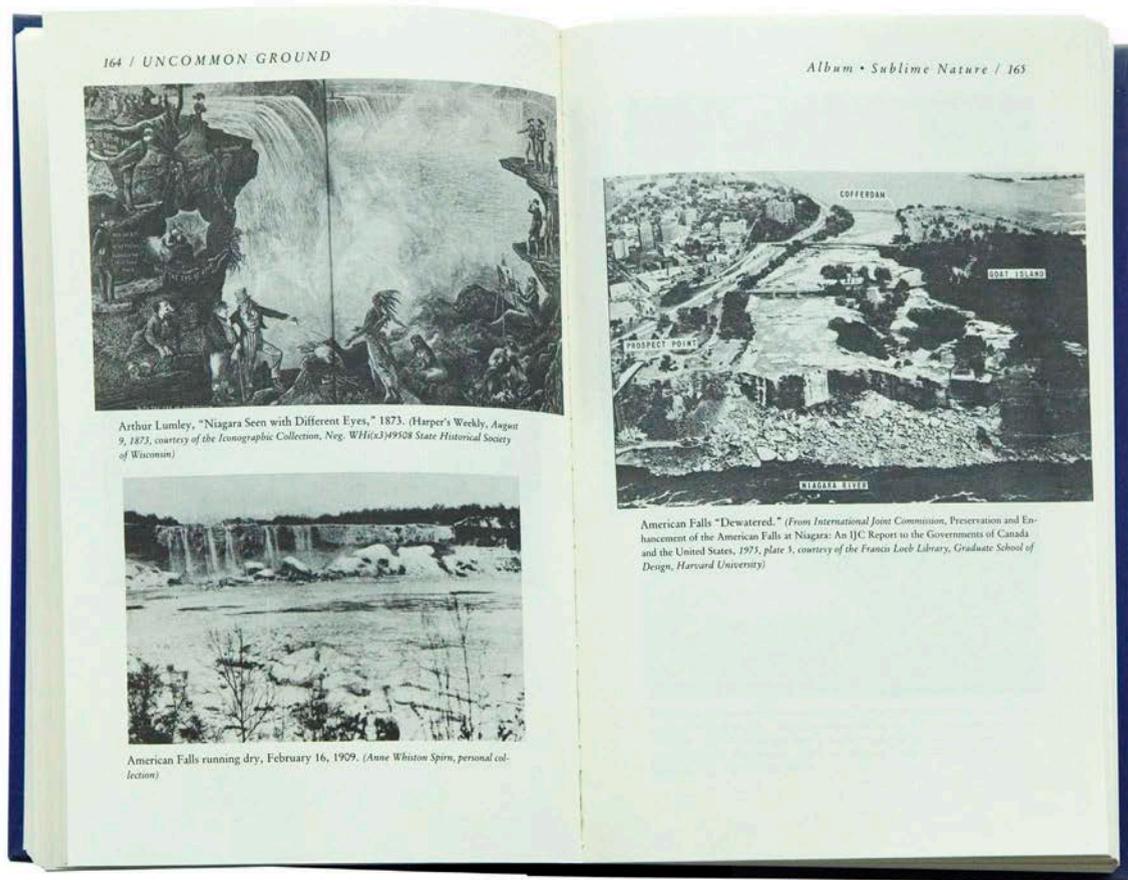
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projects such as that at Niagara, he had no existing models to guide him. Yet he undertook this risky experiment on a project that was in the public spotlight. In collaboration with the city's engineer, he worked out a plan for the basin to receive rising floodwaters and a design for the tidal gate that would enhance water circulation and regulate water exchange between the Fens and the river.⁶¹ Olmsted engaged Charles Sprague Sargent, director of the Arnold Arboretum, to advise him on plant selection and methods for establishing the marsh. In the first phase, in 1883, more than 100,000 plants—grasses, flowers, shrubs, and vines—were planted in a space of two and a half acres.⁶² These included many species, both native and exotic, so that if some died, others would survive. Some plants were also intended as "nurses" to shelter more tender plants from sun and wind until they took hold. Securing the plants and finding a contractor capable of this novel construction proved difficult. Almost all the plants died before the end of the first year and had to be replaced. Furious and mortified, Olmsted wrote the contractor, "The mere loss of so many plants is the smallest part of the disaster. The whole plan is a wreck."⁶³ The Fens were replanted, and within ten years the marshy landscape looked as if it had always been there.

Not only the function but also the appearance of the Fens and Riverway were revolutionary; up to this time, urban parks had been designed mainly in the formal or pastoral styles.⁶⁴ Olmsted introduced this "wild" appearance to bring the advantages of "natural scenery" found in places like Yosemite to "those who cannot travel":

Cities are now grown so great that hours are consumed in gaining the "country," and, when the fields are reached, entrance is forbidden. Accordingly, it becomes necessary to acquire, for the free use and enjoyment of all, such neighboring fields, woods, pond-sides, river-banks, valleys, or hills as may present, or may be made to present, fine scenery of one type or another.⁶⁵

The idea of constructing parks that imitated the appearance of the regional landscape of forest, prairie, and floodplain was pursued later in the early-twentieth-century work of Jens Jensen and the Prairie school. Superficially, Jensen's "Prairie River" in Chicago looked very similar to the Fens, but the aims of the two projects, and the two men, were very different. Olmsted imitated "natural scenery" because he believed that contact with such scenery would improve human health. Jensen used native plants and imitated the scenery of the region for political reasons. Jensen's "Prairie River" and other projects were ideological works with a chauvinistic agenda where "native" plants and the local landscape were seen as superior to "foreign" plants and places.⁶⁶ In this they reflected contemporary ecological theories of plant "communities" as embodying similarities to human communities and, by extension, as justifying certain human activities as "natural."⁶⁷ It was the understanding of landscape processes applied to landscape restoration and human health, safety, and welfare that made the Fens and the Riv-



"This is an intellectually pathbreaking book. Uncommon Ground is loaded with fresh and provocative essays that probe our conceptions of nature... It succeeds brilliantly in showing that 'nature' is a human construction—romanticized in parks and wilderness preserves... It argues convincingly that what we have constructed, we can reconstruct—by ending the divorce and attending to the myriad roles that nature plays in our metropolitan lives."

DANIEL J. KEVLES, Professor of the Humanities, California Institute of Technology

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PHOEBE LICKWAR, FORGE

Marnas provides the first public access to the garden laboratory of the master designer/theorist, Sven-Ingvar Andersson, who documented his experiments there over the course of fifty years through thousands of photographs.

This unique documentation made possible the interactive website (www.marnasgarden.com), designed as an immersive, three- and four-dimensional experience of the place. It is now possible to journey through the garden in space and time: to walk down leafy tunnels, through diverse spaces; to travel across time in successive views of the same space from morning through evening, from winter through spring, summer, and fall, across decades. The goal was to create a visit to Marnas as it existed throughout Andersson’s lifetime.

The website transports the visitor, not only through space and time, but also through a series of ideas, to arrive at new insights. It aspires to evoke the magical quality of Marnas and bring alive the ideas that shaped it. Like the garden itself, it has both a clear formal structure and one that is freely growing, with no one beginning, and no single end. The homepage unfolds via a vertical scroll through a series of gateways. One gateway invites you to take a guided tour of the garden, others, to explore on your own, meet Sven-Ingvar Andersson, or travel in time. The goal was to stimulate exploration and interaction, the viewer an active participant.

Marnas extends my exploration of photography, multimedia, and website design as media of inquiry and expression. In 1995, I was an early adopter of the Web as a creative medium for publishing and teaching. The Marnas self-guided tour takes my prior experiments to a new level. It is no substitute for being in the place, but it permits a peek into gardens that once were, an experience now only possible through digital media.

The homepage unfolds via a vertical scroll through a series of gateways. One gateway invites you to take a guided tour of the garden, others, to explore on your own, meet the designer, or travel in time.



MARNAS:

A JOURNEY THROUGH SPACE, TIME AND IDEAS

Take a tour through the garden with Sven-Ingvar Andersson. Hear the stories behind the garden's many rooms. Watch the garden change through seasons and years. Follow the ideas that drive the form. View the full-length tour above (20 minutes) or plot your own path through the short episodes below.



A Green Den



The Patio



The Gazebo



The Treehouse



The Willows



The Garden Rooms



The Hens



A Path to Renewal



Hawthorns



Flowers



The Portal of Death



Fire



The Pyramid



The Black Eye



Mysteries



Portraits in Time



Transformation

Take a Tour: Multimedia Videos

Take a tour through the garden with Sven-Ingvar Andersson as guide. Hear the stories behind the garden's many rooms. Watch the garden change through seasons and years. Follow the ideas that drive the form. You can plot your own path through seventeen short episodes or view the full-length tour (20 minutes).

The scripts for the videos are in Andersson's own words. I selected and translated texts where he reflects on Marnas, its precedents, origins, elements, composition, plants, and meanings. I composed these excerpts into seventeen parts, which originally were intended to be viewed separately, encountered in the self-guided tour as the visitor wanders around the virtual garden. Ultimately, I realized that the short videos could be sequenced to create a story arc, beginning with the dream of a green den and ending in transformation.

Script in hand, it was then a matter of selecting and sequencing photographs, video, and sound to support and extend narrative and tone, establish rhythm, portray meaning, and evoke feeling. The viewer should feel like SIA is showing them around his garden. Images give substance to the words. Music was used sparingly, the preference was to add sounds, like those of digging, clipping, birdsong, and wind, which were implied or alluded to by the images or text.

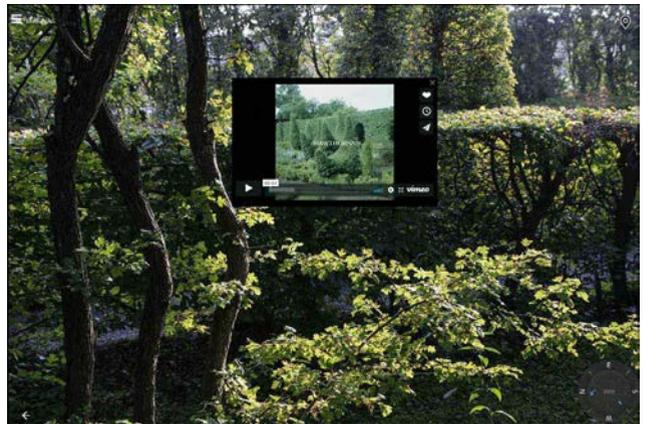
"Marnasgarden.com intertwines two sensitive and reflective "design minds," that of Sven-Ingvar Andersson, the master designer who conceived and developed the garden, and that of Anne Whiston Spirn, who has revealed that world of aesthetics and ideas, interpreting theory, deepening meaning, and evoking feeling."

ELLEN BRAAE, University of Copenhagen

Left Take a tour through the garden with Sven-Ingvar Andersson as guide. Plot your own path through seventeen short episodes or view the full-length tour, which takes 20 minutes.

Right Multimedia videos take you on journeys across time. In "The Patio" (00:30), composed from photos of the 1950s to the 2000s, Sven-Ingvar Andersson constructs the patio wall in 1957.





Explore the Garden: The Self-Guided Tour

The self-guided tour begins at the driveway. Four features draw your attention. Each affords a choice. Touch the symbol at the upper left, and it expands into a navigation bar. The compass on the lower right tells you that the year is 1992. Its three arrows point in different directions. Touch one arrow to choose your path. Touch the pulsing square in the center of the screen and see the same view in 1979: the tall willows that lined the driveway in 1992 are saplings; the hedge at the garden's western boundary does not yet exist.

Touch the symbol at the upper right to call up a plan of the garden, which notes your position. Small squares on the plan mark different locations; touch one to move there directly.

As you wander around the garden, you slip in time, across years. At times, you encounter a pulsing square or rectangle, which provides the same view at an earlier time or different season or a video story about the ideas behind the place where you find yourself. If you get lost, call up the plan in the upper right to see where you stand. Occasionally, you encounter Sven-Ingvar Andersson: planting, weeding, sitting in the gazebo, in his house.

The slippage in time, experienced in the interactive tour, mirrors the experience that I have at Marnas, and which Andersson himself most certainly had. When I look down a passage or into a garden room, I see not only what is there before me in the present, but also remembered glimpses of past appearance.

Left Wander around the garden. Choose your path by clicking on the compass arrows. As you move you slip forward and backward in time. In certain places, you encounter photographs of the same place at a different time or video stories.

Right Meet SIA is a portal to Sven-Ingvar Andersson's work: a selection of his essays, landscape designs, and drawings, as well as commentary by others.



Part 3

The Eye Is a Door

*Daring to Look: Dorothea Lange's
Photographs and Reports from
the Field (2008)*

*The Eye Is a Door: Landscape, Photography,
and the Art of Discovery (2014)*

To see is the root of idea, linguistically and literally: the word *idea* comes from the Greek *idein*, to see. Seeing is a creative act, the eye a door to discovery.

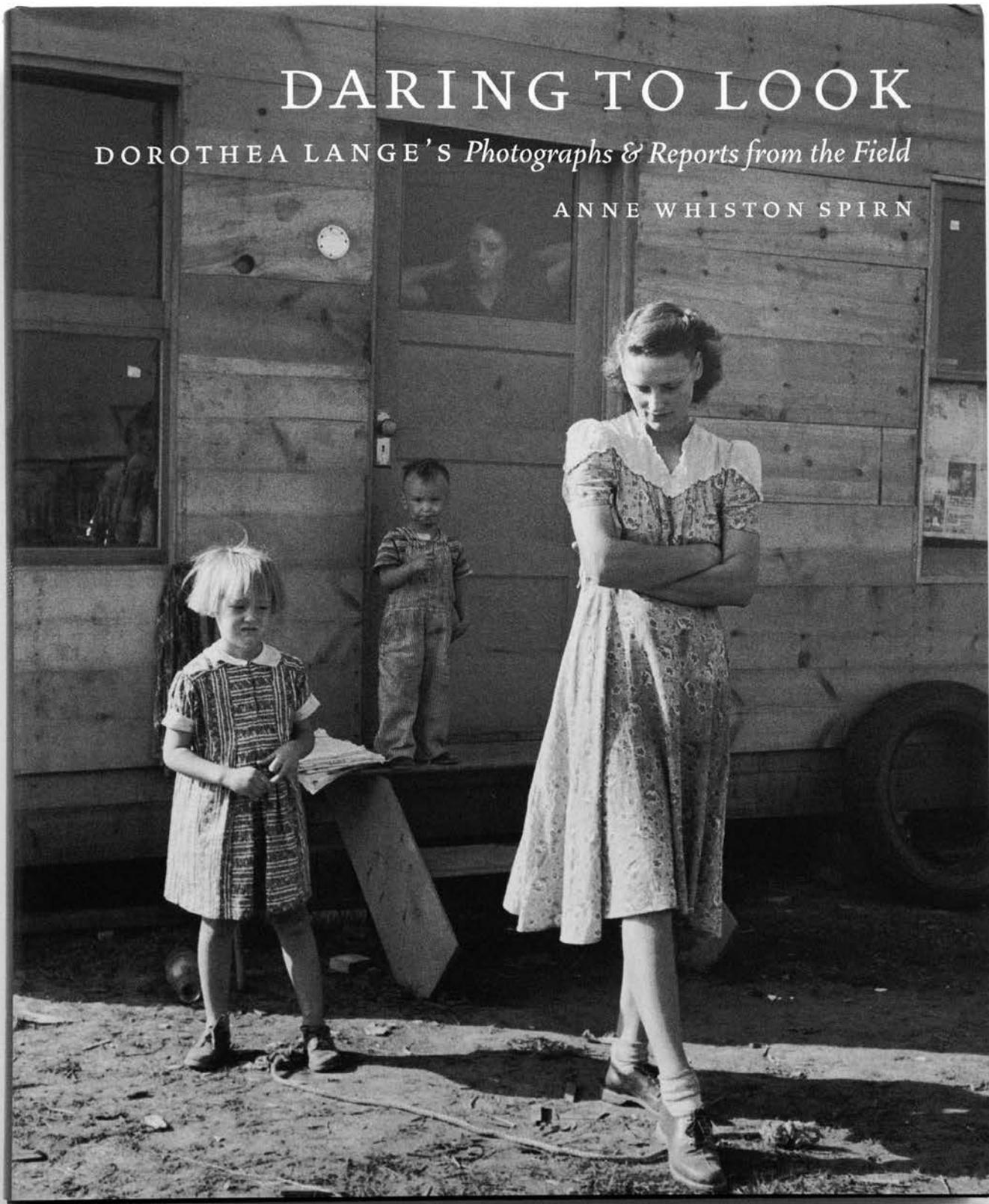
My work on photography as a form of inquiry has opened up new avenues for arts- and design-based research.

Visual thinking underlies all of my work, and it is the focus of *Daring to Look* and *The Eye Is a Door*. The practice of photography, from its roots in science to its flowering as an art form, has been a way of thinking and a method of discovery. A photograph can embody a complete thought or an entire story; a series of photographs can shape a narrative or make an argument. Words tap the ideas that the visual holds and carry them further.

DARING TO LOOK

DOROTHEA LANGE'S *Photographs & Reports from the Field*

ANNE WHISTON SPIRN



2008

Daring to Look: Dorothea Lange's Photographs and Reports from the Field

Honor Award,
American Society of
Landscape Architects,
2011

**Great Place Book
Award,** Environmental
Design Research
Association, 2009

**John Brinckerhoff
Jackson Book
Prize,** Foundation for
Landscape Studies, 2009

**Finalist, Art Book
Award,** Art Historian
Association, 2009

**Honorable Mention,
PROSE Award,**
American Association of
Publishers, 2008

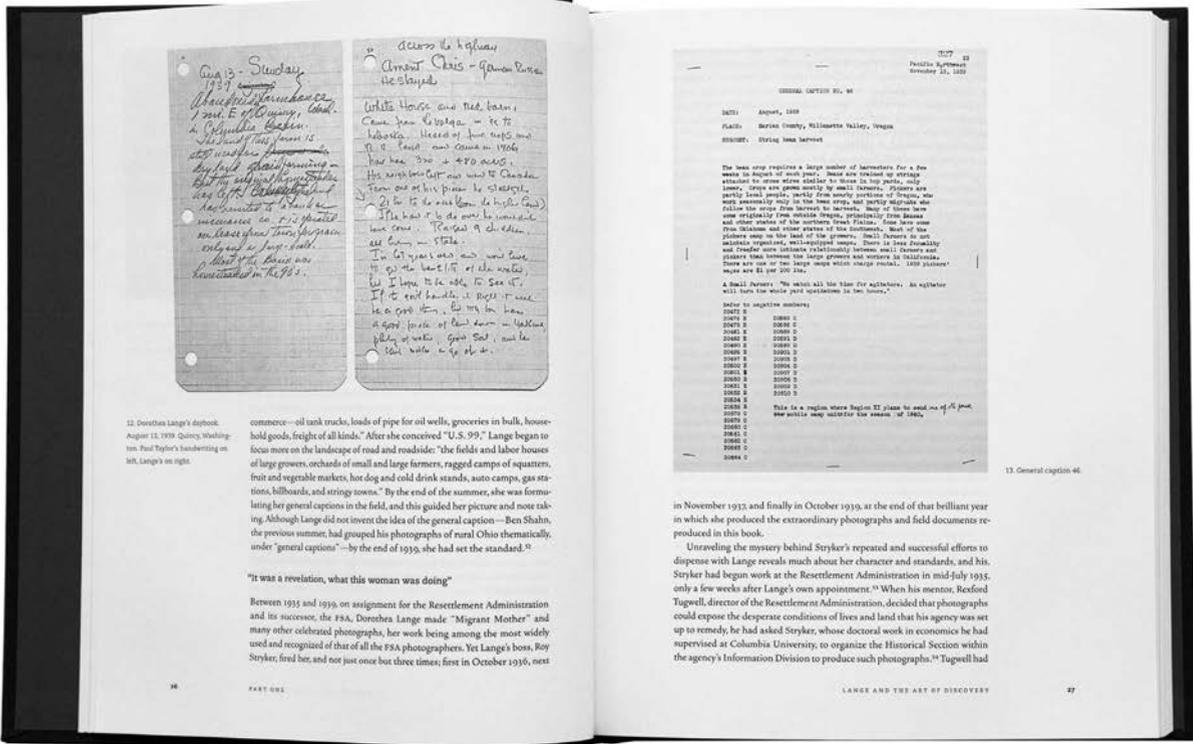
"*Daring to Look* exemplifies Spirn's particular combination of genius, hard work and humility. The idea of following up on Dorothea Lange's field notes, and revisiting and re-photographing the places Lange made into icons of the depression years is ingenious, so simple that one wonders why no one thought of it before, and brilliant because no one has... By mobilizing the passage of time in *Daring to Look*, the book brings out the artistic power of Lange's eye for the landscape and the society shaping it, and the continuing relevancy of Lange's insights as refocused through Spirn's own lens."

KENNETH OLWIG, Professor, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Daring to Look presents never-before-published texts and photographs by the great American photographer, Dorothea Lange. Her images and words of 1939 are a mirror that reflects who we were, how we came to be, and what we were in the process of becoming. In them, one can perceive practices and policies of the past as the roots of today's environmental challenges. "No country has ever closely scrutinized itself visually," Lange said at the end of her life, "I know what we could make of it if people only thought we could dare look at ourselves." Lange did dare to look, and she raised questions that demand answering, still.

Lange ranks among the greatest American photographers, but, until now, her rich architecture and landscape material was virtually unpublished. She has been known almost solely as a photographer of people. Yet, in almost half of the photographs Lange took in 1939, no people appear at all. "Nobody ever gave me any credit for making any landscapes," she declared in 1964. "I did make landscapes, loads of them!" Lange photographed landscape in the original and most profound sense of the word, in the mutual shaping of people and place.

This book is the first to restore Lange's work to its full context by reproducing the text of her field reports (which she called general captions) together with the images she captured on film. Collectively, Lange's words and images reveal her ambition: to document "people in their relations to their institutions, to their fellowmen, and to the land."

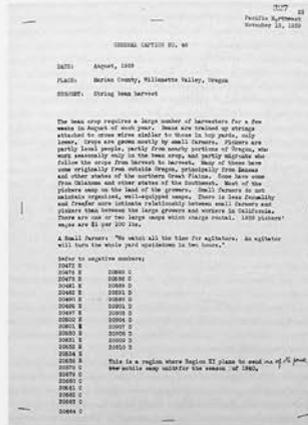


12 Dorothea Lange's daybook, August 23, 1939. Courtesy, Washington, Tom Taylor's bookbinding on left, Lange's on right.

commence—oil tank trucks, loads of pipe for oil wells, groceries in bulk, household goods, freight of all kinds." After the conceived "U.S. 399," Lange began to focus more on the landscape of road and roadside: "the fields and labor houses of large growers, orchards of small and large farmers, ragged camps of squatters, fruit and vegetable markets, hot dog and cold drink stands, auto camps, gas stations, hillboards, and string towns." By the end of the summer, she was formulating her general captions in the field, and this guided her picture and note taking. Although Lange did not invent the idea of the general caption—Ben Shahn, the previous summer, had grouped his photographs of rural Ohio thematically, under "general captions"—by the end of 1939, she had set the standard.¹²

"It was a revelation, what this woman was doing"

Between 1935 and 1939, on assignment for the Resettlement Administration and its successor, the FSA, Dorothea Lange made "Migrant Mother" and many other celebrated photographs, her work being among the most widely used and recognized of that of all the FSA photographers. Yet Lange's boss, Roy Stryker, fired her, and not just once but three times, first in October 1935, next



13 General caption 46.

in November 1937, and finally in October 1939, at the end of that brilliant year in which she produced the extraordinary photographs and field documents reproduced in this book.

Unraveling the mystery behind Stryker's repeated and successful efforts to dispense with Lange reveals much about her character and standards, and his. Stryker had begun work at the Resettlement Administration in mid-July 1935, only a few weeks after Lange's own appointment.¹³ When his mentor, Rexford Tugwell, director of the Resettlement Administration, decided that photographs could expose the desperate conditions of lives and land that his agency was set up to remedy, he had asked Stryker, whose doctoral work in economics he had supervised at Columbia University, to organize the Historical Section within the agency's Information Division to produce such photographs.¹⁴ Tugwell had

Lange made notes in the field, then transformed them later into stories, which she linked to her photographs.

Daring to Look has won awards from diverse organizations: EDRA recognized it as a book that "advances critical understanding of place and helps foster the design of excellent environments"; the Foundation for Landscape Studies honored it for its basis "on original research" and for "breaking new ground in method or interpretation," and the American Association of Publishers for its excellence in scholarship. The book has reached a broad audience, including the entire freshman class of Bryant University who read it for a course required of all freshmen.

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America from the Great Depression to World War II: Black-and-White Photographs from the FSA-OWI, 1935-1945

Number LC-USF34-021415-E to LC-USF346-021423-E-B

*For a larger image, click on the picture.
Click on caption to see catalog record.*

PREVIOUS IMAGE GROUP NEXT IMAGE GROUP

 LC-USF34-021415-E George Clawver, with 7 boys on farm, Malheur County, Oregon, 1939. Large thumbnail.	 LC-USF34-021415-E George Clawver, with 7 boys on farm, Malheur County, Oregon, 1939. Large thumbnail.	 LC-USF34-021415-E George Clawver, with 7 boys on farm, Malheur County, Oregon, 1939. Large thumbnail.	 LC-USF34-021415-E George Clawver, with 7 boys on farm, Malheur County, Oregon, 1939. Large thumbnail.
 LC-USF34-021415-E Farm scene, Malheur County, Oregon, 1939. Large thumbnail.	 LC-USF34-021415-E Farm scene, Malheur County, Oregon, 1939. Large thumbnail.	 LC-USF34-021415-E Sign in old bank building which now houses office of U.W. Fine Rigation District, Malheur County, Oregon, 1939. Large thumbnail.	 LC-USF34-021415-E Sign in old bank building which now houses office of U.W. Fine Rigation District, Malheur County, Oregon, 1939. Large thumbnail.
 LC-USF34-021415-E Woman in overalls, Malheur County, Oregon, 1939. Large thumbnail.	 LC-USF34-021415-E Woman in overalls, Malheur County, Oregon, 1939. Large thumbnail.	 LC-USF34-021415-E Woman in overalls, Malheur County, Oregon, 1939. Large thumbnail.	 LC-USF34-021415-E Woman in overalls, Malheur County, Oregon, 1939. Large thumbnail.

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/b?ammem/haall/LC-USF34-021415-E:collection-fsa> 2/6/2005

214147 October 13, 1939 Lange 29
Malheur County, Oregon
Mrs. Clawver, is raising 7 boys on new Malheur County farm.
See Office Note in File.

214155 October 13, 1939
Malheur County, Oregon
George Clawver, who is trying to develop 177 acres of raw land. Has 7 sons. See Office Note in File.

21416 Subject
21417 "
21418 "
21419 "
21420 "

214228 October 14, 1939
Nyssa, Malheur County, Oregon
See GENERAL CAPTION NO. 70. Sign on old bank building which now houses the office of the Bureau of Reclamation.

214222 Same as 214213

214232 October 13, 1939
Malheur County, Oregon
One of the younger Clawver boys. See Office Note in File.

214242 Subject
21425 "

214262 October 13, 1939
Malheur County, Oregon
See GENERAL CAPTION NO. 66. Side of the Claws' new house.
See Office Note in File.

21427 Subject
21428 "

214297 October 13, 1939
Nyssa Malheur, Malheur County, Oregon
Storage cellar on Clawver farm. Note inscription on top step.
See Office Report in File.

21430 Subject
21431 "

214328 October 13, 1939
Nyssa Malheur, Malheur County, Oregon
Interior of Mrs. Clawver's storage cellar. 800 yards of "feed for the winter." "I miss my chickens so but we're just not find for chickens or does yet." See Office Report in File.

214337 October 13, 1939
Nyssa Malheur, Malheur County, Oregon
Mrs. Clawver arranging her storage cellar. See Office Report in File.

21434 Subject

214355 October 13, 1939
1 1/2 mile north of Nyssa, Malheur County, Oregon
Country slaughter house for use of farmers.

In 2006, I revisited all the places that Lange worked in 1939 and met some of the people she photographed. I assembled notebooks that contained all 3,000 of the photographs Lange took in 1939, along with her captions, and carried these with me in the field.

Lange used her camera as “a tool of research.” To accomplish this, she grouped photographs by subject, then cross-referenced and “buttressed” them with words. She first developed the general caption in 1939 as a framework within which to cross-list individual photographs and field notes and give them context. Each stands as a portrait of a moment, a place, a group of people, a theme; together, they paint a portrait of rural land and society in America and of the forces transforming them at the height of the Great Depression. In all these places, Lange saw and recorded the processes reshaping American lives and landscapes.

Daring to Look has three parts: an analysis of Lange’s innovations and methods and their significance, Lange’s groupings of images and words, and an account of my own journey to all the places she portrayed in 1939 and what I found there.



173. October 14, 1939. Nyssa, Multnomah County, Oregon. Sign on old bank building which now houses the office of the Bureau of Reclamation.

174. May 17, 2005. Nyssa, Oregon. Building in town office of the Owyhee Irrigation District. Anne Whiston Splan.

In Nyssa, Oregon, I found the faded mural that Lange had photographed in 1939. But where businesses were thriving in 1939, many were failing in 2005.

Lange's words and photographs speak eloquently to the present, for the forces she saw and recorded in 1939 are still in play, of that particular moment, but not of a moment only. In my travels to the places she photographed in 1939, I found much that was different, but also much that was the same. Her images have past sources and future manifestations. They reveal the heartrending consequences of shifts in jobs and decline in industry and their impact on the environment, the human stress of migration and resettlement. They show that all large-scale events, policies, and plans have a human face. 'If you see mainly massed human misery in my photographs and decry the selection of so much suffering,' Lange wrote, 'I have failed to show the multiform pattern of which it is a reflection. For the havoc before your eyes is the result of both natural and social forces. These are my times, and they, too, are my theme,' she said. They are mine as well, which is what drew me to Dorothea Lange, to her "lost" photographs and texts, and led me to revisit all the places where she worked in 1939: to discover what the changes between then and now might reveal about the nation.

Most of the stump farms Lange photographed in 1939 are second-growth forest now. Many lasted thirty years or less. Driving north in remote northern Idaho, from Sandpoint to Bonner's Ferry, I pass many guest ranches, including one near where Mr. Denchow, a former mill worker, was clearing stumps in 1939 (figure 135). This transition from farming to vacation spot began in the early 1940s. Nelle Porter Davis reported in *Stump Ranch Pioneer* that, by 1942, few drought refugees remained here; many had abandoned their stump farms for jobs in munitions factories and shipyards. Others came and bought land, but they were mostly middle-aged city folk, "mechanics, truck drivers, office workers, and miners," who bought, then returned to their city jobs with the prospect of retiring some day to this new land. When Davis and her husband sold their stump farm in the 1940s, they moved farther north, near the Canadian border, and bought a guest ranch.⁶⁶ Even before I reached Sandpoint, former home of the Humboldt Lumber Company and now looking relatively prosperous, I noted that the shores of Lake Poyd Oreille are lined with large vacation homes. Sandpoint is a tourist destination, and Priest Lake, north of where the Halleys cleared their farm, is "a premier vacation destination" with "spectacular scenery, unlimited recreational opportunities, a true year-round resort region for both business and pleasure," according to the Priest Lake Web site.⁶⁷ Signs in Sandpoint list the town's population as 6,835 and caution: "Sandpoint is a walking town. Please stay for people in crosswalks."

In Michigan Hill, Thurston County, Washington, where the Arnolds cleared their stump farm back in 1939, the woods are at least thirty years old, possibly forty (figures 123–125, 184, 185). There are few farms now, and I saw no guest farms like those in the Idaho panhandle. Trees have sprung up around barns; old trailers, ramshackle houses, and sheds remain. Dozens of No Trespassing signs are posted, sometimes three or four in a single driveway, perhaps to warn off hunters (there is also a No Hunting sign). There are lots of For Sale signs: too-land-for-sale, old farm houses, and a few new houses. Despite Michigan Hill's location, about twenty-five miles south of the state capitol in Olympia, it does not appear to be thriving. Lending money to people to resettle on infertile land or on farms too small to support a family did not abolish rural poverty.

Down the road from the former sites of government-sponsored family labor camps, such as the one Lange photographed in Oregon's Yamhill County, are modern-day rural shacks with dilapidated cars parked alongside decrepit shacks (figure 116). Building labor camps with improved housing, medical clinics, and day care had met the immediate emergency but failed to address the causes of problems migrant agricultural workers faced; hence, unpredictable and short-term employment, hazardous work, and child labor persist today.⁶⁸ As Lange observed in the early 1960s, the conditions of "migratory labor" she photographed in the 1930s persisted twenty-five years later: "I might have made [those photographs] yesterday. This is a mighty interesting thing. Not many things don't change in twenty years, not many things."⁶⁹



184. August 14, 1939. Michigan Hill, Thurston Co., Western Washington. 184. Shows land which the Arnold family have cleared and planted in strawberries, fence which they have built, unweeded land adjoining.

185. May 15, 2005. Michigan Hill, Thurston County, Washington. Land reclaimed by forest. Anne Whiston Spira.



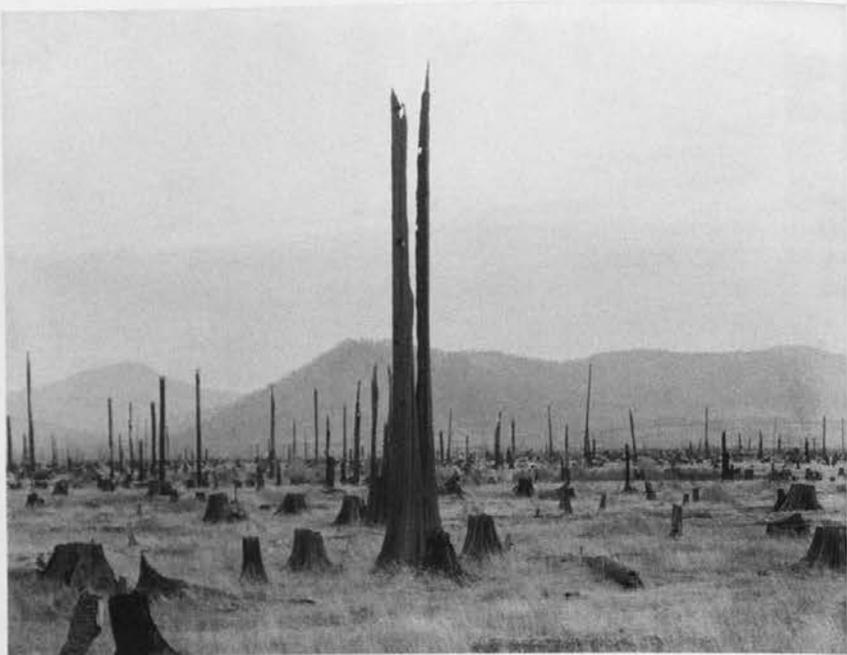
Above Farms that had been laboriously cleared and planted in the cut-over forests of eastern Washington in 1939, were reclaimed by forest by 2005.

Following pages Lange is regarded as a photographer of people, but I discovered that, in 1939, almost half of her photographs were of architecture and landscapes, with no people at all. These three photographs of northern Idaho are part of a much longer series.

"Dorothea Lange is one of America's greatest documentary photographers. *Daring to Look* is a very important book. It provides a fascinating insight into her FSA photographs and writings during that time. Ms. Lange's photographs, especially the work she did for the FSA were a great inspiration for so many photographers, including myself." **MARY ELLEN MARK**, photographer

"As a historian, the first aspect of the book that leaps out at me is the thorough and imaginative research in a variety of sources and the broad contextualization in both public policy and social and economic history. The other aspect that leaps out simultaneously ... is just how beautifully it is produced. It is such a pleasure just to hold and look through. Anne Whiston Spira's introduction makes Lange come alive, places her in her time, and just skewers those who would diminish her achievements.... And the end, returning to find the places she photographed, was a brilliant idea, and Spira draws the circle with great sensitivity."

MICHAEL KATZ, Walter H. Annenberg Professor of History, University of Pennsylvania





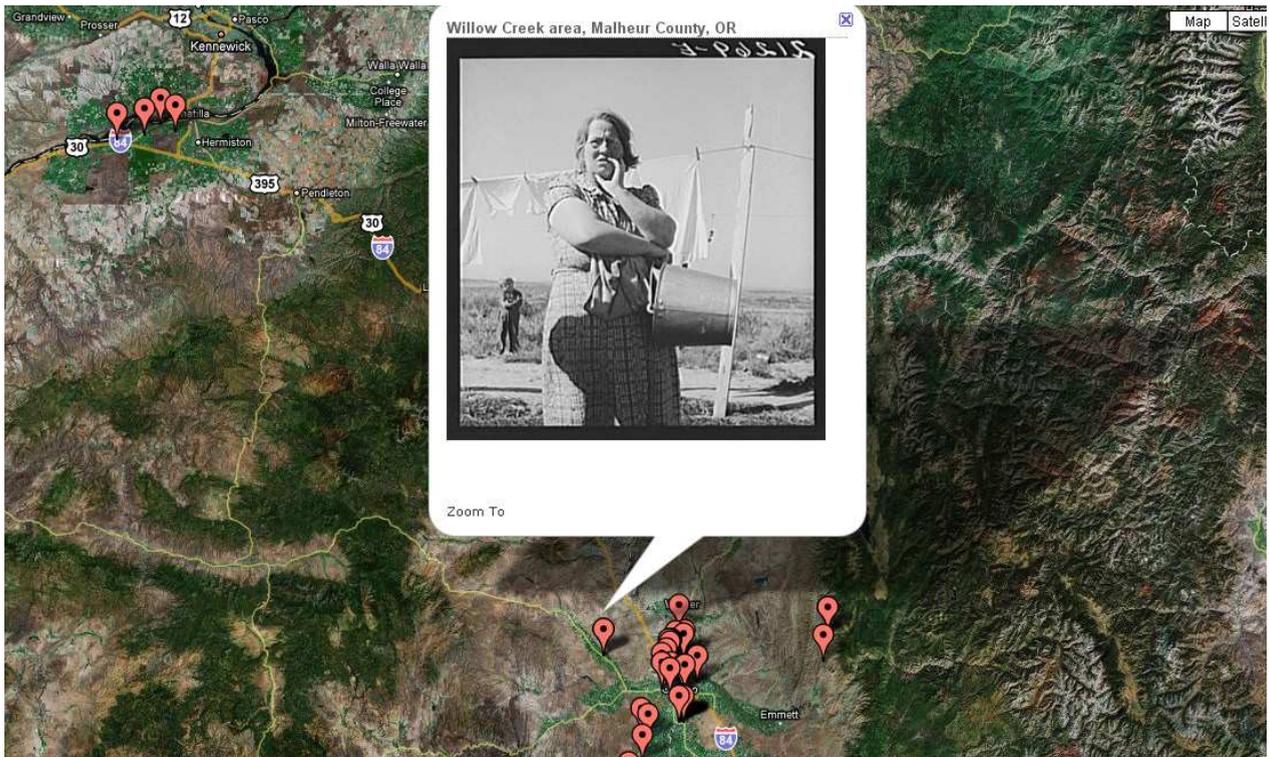
130. October 22, 1939. Bonner County, Idaho. Shows character of land which new settlers are buying in the Priest River Valley.

132. (Facing, bottom) October 22, 1939. Priest River Peninsula, Bonner County, Idaho. Shows log home. Farm established 6 years ago.

131. (Above) October 21, 1939. Bonner County, Idaho. This farm has been occupied by four different families since 1936:

Claude Sargeant '36-37 failed
Lenny Davis '38 failed
Roy Silton '38-39 failed
Davy Walker '39

The soil is sandy and the effort of clearing has been wasted.



Interactive online maps display the locations where Lange took her photographs of 1939. Other pages permit visitors to compare views of then and now.

A website, www.daringtolook.com provides a window into Dorothea Lange's 1939 work and the fate of the places she photographed. "Lange" offers audio clips of Lange discussing her approach to photography. "1939" shows photographs for every day Lange was in the field during that year. "Stories" displays a selection of Lange's General Captions about places and families, along with my stories of those families and places today. "Then and Now" compares Lange's photographs of 1939 with the same people and places today. The website has expanded the audience further, especially among youth, like the high school junior from Maryland who emailed on January 31, 2011:

*"I was so moved by this website that I had to write to you. I just wanted to say thank you so much for doing such important work. It is really inspiring—this website is beautiful and was incredibly helpful for my research project on social boundaries and quandaries during the thirties. I was surprised to read that we share all of these interests—photography, but also environmental design and urban design. I am considering both as a major for undergrad!
Your fan, Zane"*

DARING TO LOOK
DOROTHEA LANGE's *Photographs & Reports from the Field*

LANGE 1939 **STORIES** **THEN & NOW** **SPURN**

THEN AND NOW

FOLLOW THE MAP  VIEW GALLERY 




What became of the places and the people Lange portrayed in 1939?

I decided to see for myself. The journey took me to places I might never have gone, to people I would never have met.

My discoveries are described in the book **DARING TO LOOK**: what I found, whom I met and what they told me, what happened to families Lange photographed, what has and has not changed over the intervening decades, and what significance Lange's work of 1939 holds for the present day.

Here are some of the photographs I took, alongside those Lange made of the same places in 1939.

To see the photographs side by side, select view all. To explore the photographs on a map, choose a region.

[CLICK HERE](#) to view image gallery.

[CLICK HERE](#) to view images located on a map.

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BOOK EXHIBIT EVENTS TEACH SOURCES CONTACT HOME



NOW
ANNE WHISTON SPURR
IN THE FIELD

DATE: May 17, 2005
LOCATION: Nyssa, Malheur County, OR

DESCRIPTION: Across from the vacant Hotel Western, I spotted a sign Lange photographed on the side of the Owyhee Irrigation District Office. The office is still here, but the boxes that once displayed the names of local merchants are blank. Many buildings in Nyssa are vacant, yet well maintained, like the Hotel

◀ ▶



The book was widely reviewed in print (e.g. *LA Times*, *New York Review of Books*), online (e.g. *New Yorker*, *Bookforum*), and on radio (e.g. NPR's "All Things Considered" and "Here and Now"). The book has reached a broad audience: the hardcover edition (5,000 copies) sold out within nine months, and the paperback has sold more than that.

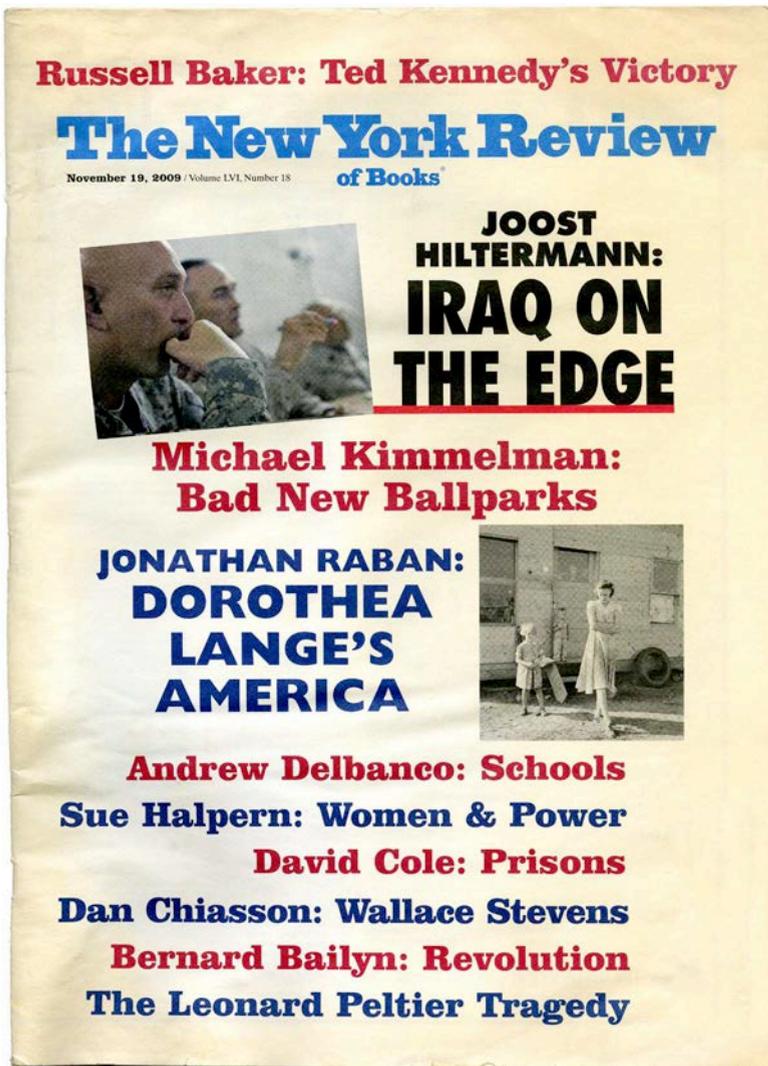
The screenshot shows the NPR website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the NPR logo, a search bar, and various menu items. Below that, there's a date indicator (July 20, 2008) and a row of menu items: PROGRAMS, STATIONS, TRANSCRIPTS, ARCHIVES, NPR SHOP, ABOUT NPR, CONTACT US, and HELP. The main content area is divided into several sections. On the left, there's a 'LOCAL STATIONS' section with 'support public radio' and a 'BROWSE TOPICS' sidebar with categories like News, Politics & Society, Election 2008, Business, People & Places, Health & Science, Books, Music, Arts & Culture, Diversions, Opinion, and Blogs. The main article is 'Barack Obama Tours Afghanistan' with a photo of Obama in a car. Below it is 'Dorothea Lange: 'Daring To Look'' with a quote and a photo of Lange. To the right is 'Military Psychologist Helps To Fight Fear' and 'Health Bills Can Lead To Debt Woes For Insured, Too'. A 'Sunday Soapbox' section is also visible. The bottom of the page has a 'RADIO' sidebar with options for Podcasts, News Feeds, Tools / API, Desktop, and Mobile. The main content area at the bottom features a 'BOOKS' section with 'Daring To Look' and a 'MOST VIEWED STORIES' section.

"Dorothea Lange is known as one of the greatest American photographers, but she was also a remarkable observer whose field notes have largely remained unpublished until now. In *Daring to Look*, Anne Whiston Spirn, a landscape architect, photographer, and writer herself, has edited Lange's field notes, adding her own interpretative essays on Lange's work, and rephotographing some of Lange's sites. This is a very important book deserving wide readership because it provides a wonderful combination of the socially-conscious work of two gifted artists and writers."

DOLORES HAYDEN, Professor of Architecture, Urbanism, and American Studies, Yale University

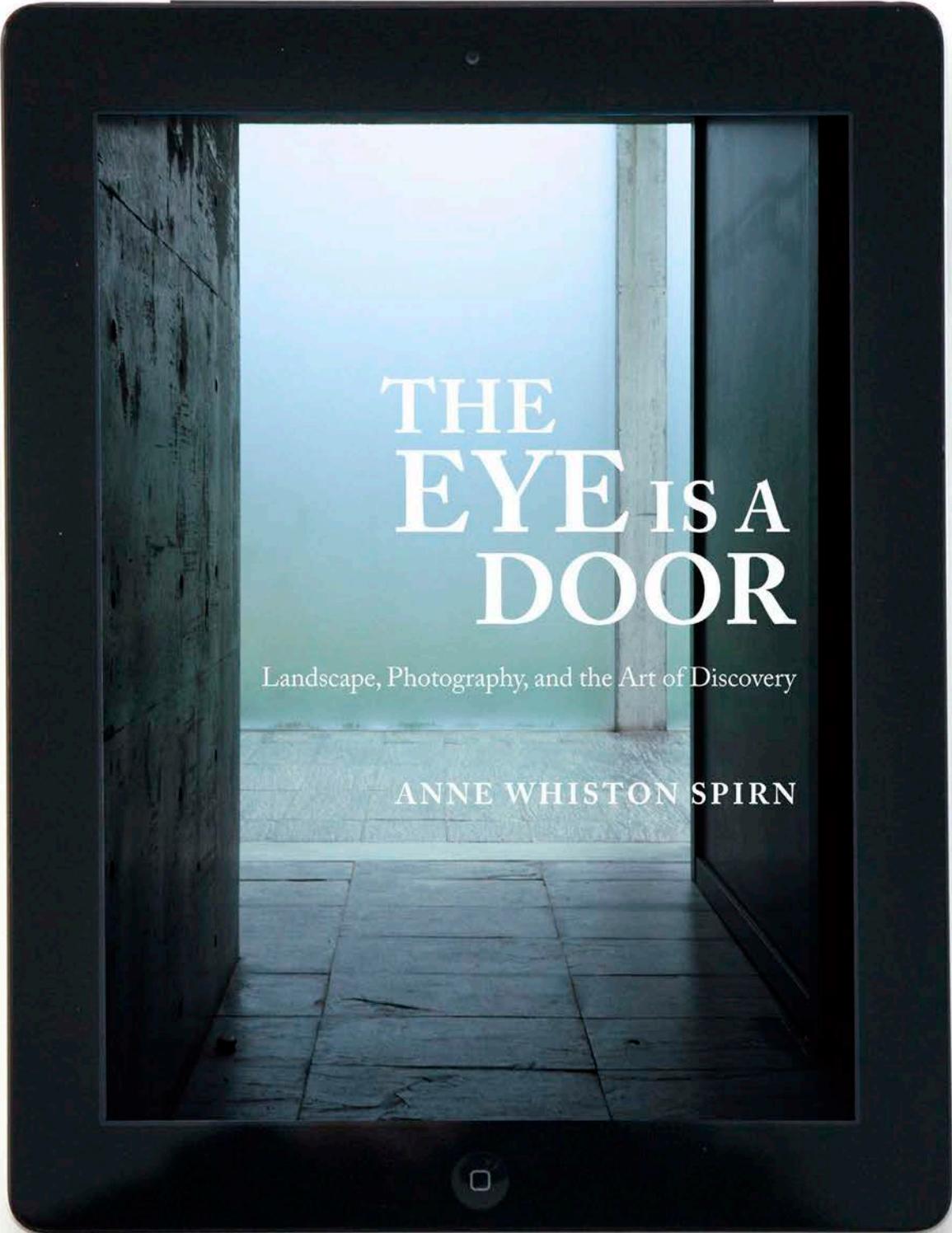
"As a lifelong friend of Dorothea Lange, I was absolutely astounded and thoroughly pleased with *Daring to Look*. Anne Whiston Spirn has hit the nail on the head: she knows the secret of understanding good photography—and of understanding Dorothea Lange's life as well. An astonishing book."

RONDAL PARTRIDGE, photographer and former assistant to Lange



"What a *sui generis* and beautiful imagination (and manifestation) of a book: paean, recontextualization, historicizing, rediscovery, documentation, investigation and collaboration. It is its own genre, and so lavishly produced; the writing is sharp as a bird's beak, poetic and exacting. And Spirn's own photographs make good company beside those of Lange. I loved reading her notes, feeling the picture take on even more weight that way. My wife and I both lived in this book those last weeks of summer."

FORREST GANDER, poet and Professor of Comparative Literature,
Brown University



THE
EYE IS A
DOOR

Landscape, Photography, and the Art of Discovery

ANNE WHISTON SPIRN

2014

The Eye Is a Door: Landscape, Photography, and the Art of Discovery

More than 60,000 visits from around the world to the Sensing Place website, increasing by 19,000 in the past year alone,
MIT Open Courseware Portal, 2011

“Generates an unprecedented dynamic dialogue between author and reader.”

Landscape Journal

“Spirm’s new book is both beautiful to look at and enlightening to read....She draws attention to the potential for design, both for good and for bad purposes. She points us towards the stories that surround us and the patterns which envelop us. In short, she makes us see again....few people have been able to so consistently produce work that changes the lives of people throughout the world. Her ability to direct our attention to that which is both invisible and right before us ... is unparalleled.”

CHRIS AIKEN, Choreographer; Director of MFA Program, Smith College

The book’s topics are central to design: landscape’s stories and the sense of place; lights of day, in season, in place; what color tells; significant detail; the art of visual thinking. There is a growing interest in the practice of design and art as a form of research; *The Eye Is a Door* contributes to this discussion as does my course, *Sensing Place: Photography as Inquiry*, which was an incubator for the book.

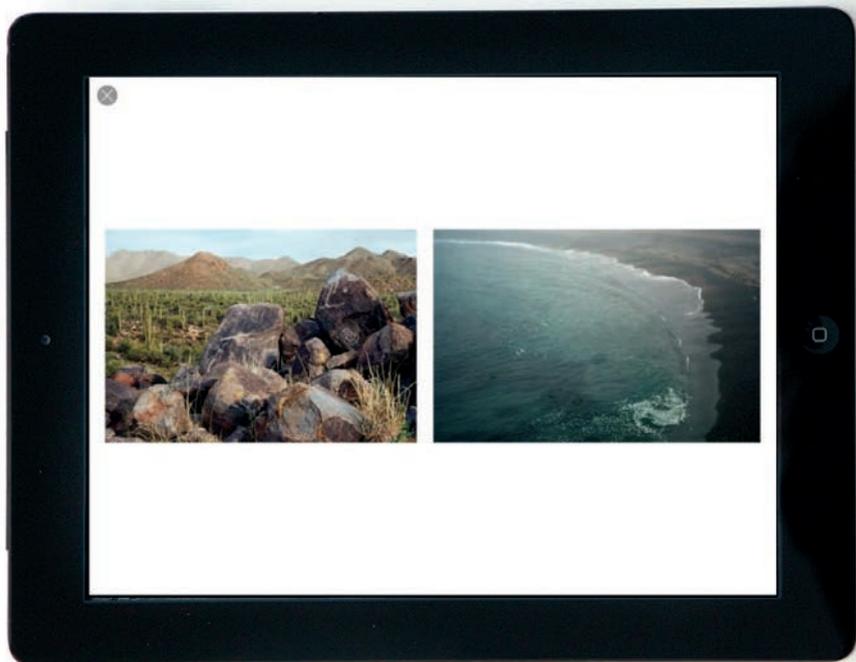
The Eye Is a Door invites the reader to see more acutely and to explore the practice of photography as a tool of discovery. Why a door and not a window? A window is something to look through, but a doorway is to pass through; crossing a threshold, one enters a new place. To see, to really see, is to open a door. To pass through that door is to arrive at a new understanding. Thus the titles of the book’s three parts: Threshold (an essay of photographs), The Open Door (an essay of words), and Passage (an essay of photographs).

The Eye Is a Door is an original e-book. The book’s photographs are the subject of a major exhibition at the Smith College Museum of Art from January–August 2014, complemented by an across-the-curriculum program on photography, landscape, and the art of visual thinking, which is recorded on www.theeyeisadoor.com. The exhibit is traveling to other venues.

SPONSORS

National Endowment for the Arts
John Simon Guggenheim Foundation
University of Pennsylvania
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Smith College Museum of Art

Left Publishing the *The Eye Is a Door* as an e-book made possible the low price of \$4.99



I designed the e-book to permit a new way of reading images and words.

Left In the e-book, photographs can be viewed singly, in pairs, or in photo essays as a sequence of paired images.

Right (above) In the e-book, a single image can appear at different points in the text. Click on the red square and the image appears; click again and it disappears.

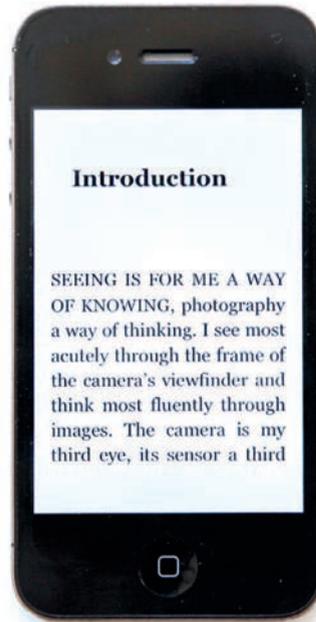
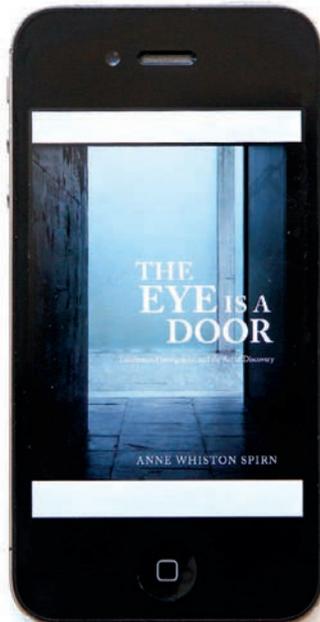
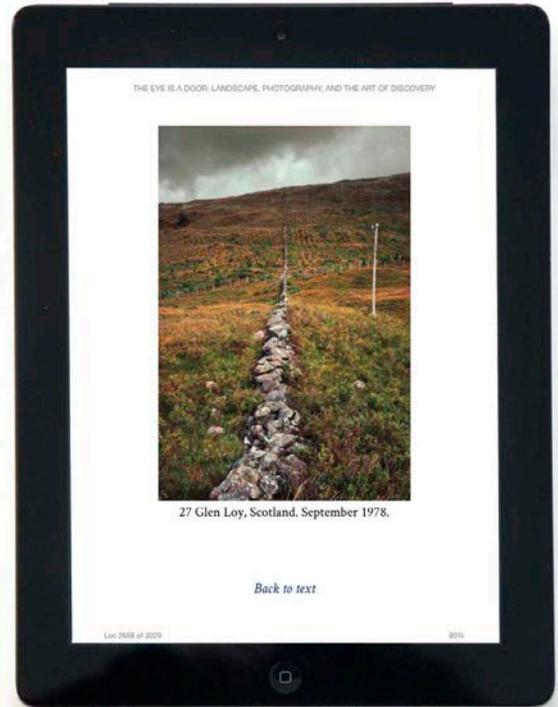
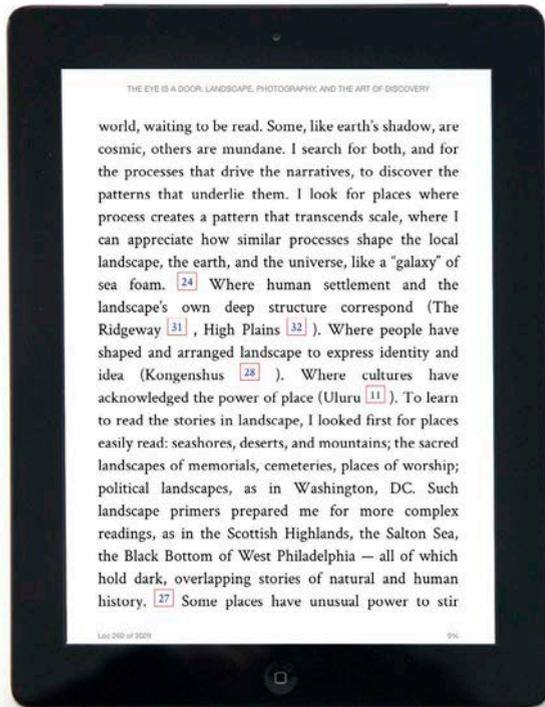
Right (below) The e-book can be read on multiple platforms, from smart phone to tablet to computer. Here, shown on an iPhone.

The Eye Is a Door: The E-Book

The Eye Is a Door is an interplay of images and words. The book's two photographic essays embrace a central text of short chapters. The first visual essay explores the sense of place. The second, which concludes the book, contains more complex photographic pairings that plot a sequence of ideas, an argument for a language of landscape. Eight chapters of text are a counterpoint to the photo essays. Images and words correspond, but a single photograph represents more than a single idea or story, and each photographic pair and sequence of pairs has its own logic.

Designing *The Eye Is a Door* as an e-book permitted a fluid relationship between image and text, where neither dominates the other. The reader encounters the same image within the context of both visual and verbal essays, and a single image may appear in the text at several different points. Rather than paging back and forth, simply touch an icon at the end of a sentence, and the associated image fills the screen. Touch again and return to the text. A new kind of reading. There are additional advantages to the e-book. Move directly from text or image, through embedded links, to referenced websites. Customize font type and size with "reflowable" text. Since *The Eye Is a Door* has reflowable text rather than a fixed format, it works well on a smart phone, easily carried as a reference in the field.

With its many color photographs, a print edition of *The Eye Is a Door* would have been priced beyond the reach of many readers. As an e-book, it is priced at \$4.99.







Above This ditch transformed an entire landscape. Where there was once water, there is now grass.

Left Significant details are clues to deciphering landscapes of place as products of human design and geological and cosmic forces.

The Eye Is a Door explores visual thinking as an art of pattern-seeking, of culling the significant from a welter of the irrelevant or peripheral. Significant detail, alone and in combination, exposes a larger pattern. I look around, alert for anomalies—things out of place or from another time, a break in pattern, clues to a hidden order or a meaning overlooked. Photographers seek significant detail as metaphor to stand for a larger whole, to hint at the deeper meaning beneath the surface, to tell a story. So do designers.

“*The Eye Is a Door* begins a new conversation in a time of artistic volatility when media are being invented, redefined, and combined. Anne Whiston Spirm speaks to us in a unique and magical convergence of images and words seen from an entirely new perspective, and invites us to join the conversation. I promise you, it is not one to miss.” **WILL STEACY**, photographer, 2011 PDN 30 under 30



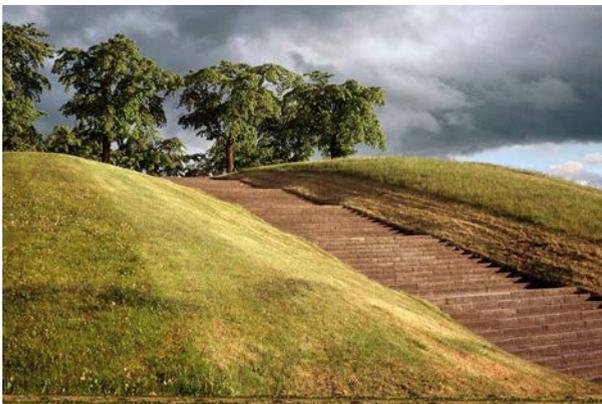
Above To design a dialogue of natural process and built form.

Right Argument: landscape is a form of language through which places can be read and designed to ensure survival, serve human purpose and express ideas.

Visual thinking is an art of pattern-seeking, of culling the significant from a welter of the irrelevant or peripheral. Significant detail, alone and in combination, exposes a larger pattern. I look around, alert for anomalies—things out of place or from another time, a break in pattern, clues to a hidden order or a meaning overlooked. Photographers seek significant detail as metaphor to stand for a larger whole, to hint at the deeper meaning beneath the surface, to tell a story. So do designers.

“Spin shows readers how to make thinking with photographs a do-able, teachable skill. Everyone who works with photographs, no matter how experienced they are, will come away from the book with new ideas and sensitivities.”

HOWARD S. BECKER, sociologist, author of *Telling About Society*

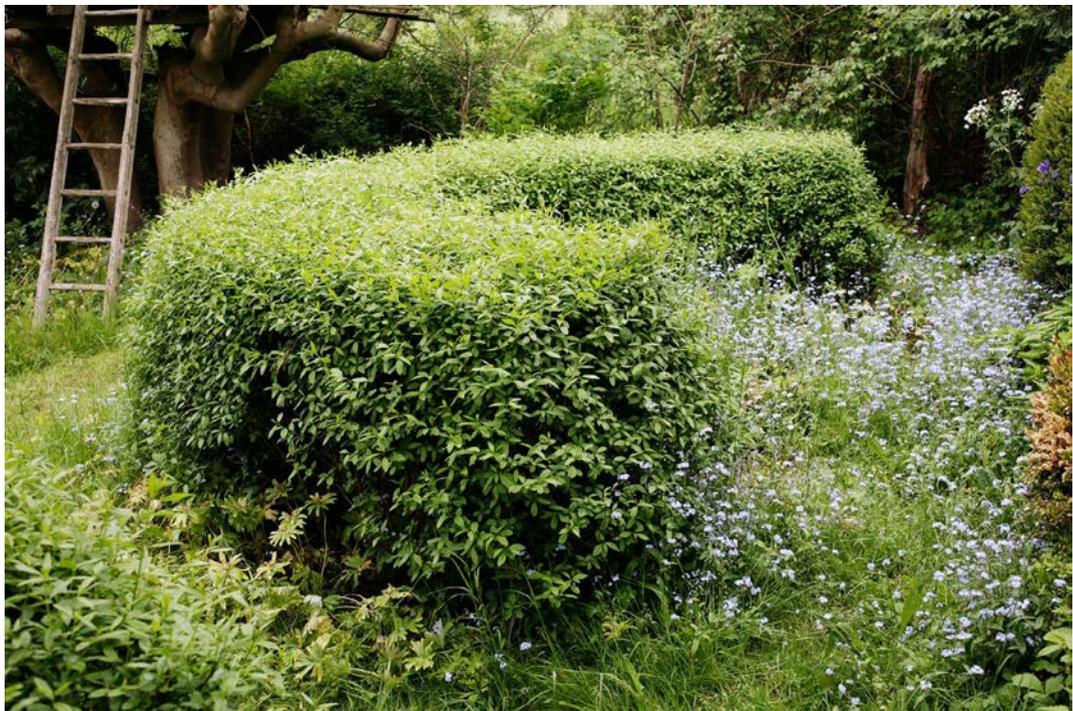




Marnas, a design manifesto in the form of a garden by Sven-Ingvar Andersson.

For every person, the eye is a door. What one finds beyond that door depends on what is there, and what one has the skill to see, but also on what one wants to understand. Beyond my own eye's door are landscapes, the stories they tell, and the ideas they embody. I pass through the eye's door and see: that the natural and the human are one, continuous not separate, landscape a mutual shaping of people and place and a form of language born out of living, a language with which to tell new stories and to envision how to adapt human settlements in life-sustaining ways.

"A series of clear essays and suites of superb photographs ... an aid to understanding and living intensely." LAURIE OLIN, founder of OLIN



The Promise and Problems of the Visual E-Book:

Call for an Alliance between Authors and Librarians

Anne Whiston Spira, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Ann Baird Whiteside, Harvard University

Abstract—This article explores the state of libraries and authorship in response to the evolving landscape of electronic books. The authors discuss the topic through a conversation about the choice to self-publish an electronic book in the visual arts. Issues such as the primacy of the image as argument for research in design and the visual arts, the availability of e-books to libraries, the influence of publishers on the e-book medium and market, and implications for libraries and collection development are considered.

INTRODUCTION

Research and scholarship in the visual arts and design fields requires extensive use of images in order to make arguments about theory and practice. However, the cost of publishing the products of such investigations in the form of printed books and articles is quite high, and, despite digital technology, continues to be expensive. Those costs are passed on to consumers: libraries, students, faculty, and other readers.

Anne Whiston Spira recently produced an original e-book about seeing as a way of knowing and photography as a way of thinking: *The Eye Is a Door: Landscape, Photography, and the Art of Discovery* (Wolfree Press, 2014) (Figure 1). This publication is the result of Anne's desire to find a new way to publish heavily illustrated books, make them rich and useful to scholars, and make them affordable. In October 2010, she attended the symposium *Why Books?* held at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, and, in 2011, she applied for an internal grant at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to explore and develop prototypes for richly illustrated e-books. The project was conceived in three parts: creating three prototypes

Anne Whiston Spira is professor of Landscape Architecture and Planning, Department of Architecture and Urban Studies and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts; spira@mit.edu. Ann Baird Whiteside is librarian/curator for the Information Resources, Project Lead Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Cambridge, Massachusetts; whiteside@gps.harvard.edu.

An e-Bookmaster, *Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America*, Vol. 35, 2014.

The Promise and Problems of the Visual E-Book | 213



Figure 4. The second pair in a series of 13 pairs of photographs that, in sequence, make a visual argument for a language of landscape. From "Physique," a photo essay in Spira, *The Eye Is a Door*, viewed on an iPad. Many e-book readers permit the reader to switch between horizontal and vertical views. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.

nature of the book's ideas and structure. I wanted to experiment with the opportunities the digital medium affords to transform the reading experience itself. Imagine being able to call up images referenced in the text with a simple tap on an icon. Tap the screen, and the image appears, tap again, and it vanishes (Figure 5, Figure 6). That function alone transforms the reading experience. Your eye rests, undistracted, on the image, then returns to the text. No flicking back and forth between different pages, sticking your finger in two parts of the book when an image is referred to more than once. E-books also afford the potential for seamless movement between the book and the web. *The Eye Is a Door* cites works by other photographers, whose images appear in the e-book itself. Tapping on the caption takes the reader directly to that photographer's website; tap again and returns to the book. *The Eye Is a Door* website (<http://www.theeyeisadoor.com>) hosts features that complement the e-book, such as a journey via Google Earth to places depicted in the photographs, where the reader can explore the place on his/her own. Reflowable text is another feature made possible by e-books, the fact that you can change the size of the font and choose the font that is easiest on your eye. You can also select a black or white background. But reflowable text does not permit a fixed layout. For designers, control of the book's



Photographs by:
Anne Whiston Spira,
from *The Eye Is a Door*

ARIZONA
Miguel Hernandez, Tempe, Arizona,
Danmark, May 2009

KIAT
Alan Lammont, Bangalore, India,
Harvard, May 2010

OFFSHORE
Gordon Gray, Saitoh J., Kyoto,
Japan, October 2009 (left),
Baltimore, Maryland, Massachusetts,
March 2009 (right)

BOOKS REDESIGN
THIS FLOW
BETWEEN IMAGE AND TEXT

By Anne Whiston Spira

It was late in 2010, and I had just gotten bad news about my manuscript for *The Eye Is a Door: Landscape, Photography, and the Art of Discovery*. My publisher had asked two people to review it. One, a photographer, admitted the images but wanted no words from the artist. The other, a scholar of visual culture, thought the images "rich" and "provocative" but recommended a more academic text. Perplexed by this mixed response and daunted by the high cost of printing the book's color photographs, the publisher deemed it market too uncertain and rejected it.

The publisher had been encouraging at first, but even then, the terms were daunting. To offset printing costs, they would demand a 50,000-copy subsidy from the author (a common requirement for richly illustrated books), yet the book would still cost \$60 in hardcover. At that price, it would not reach the readership my previous books had enjoyed. A few weeks later, I attended "Why Books?" a symposium at the Radcliffe Institute that examined the fate of the print book in a digital age. Listening to the speakers, I was struck by their focus on words—and neglect of visual images—as a medium of thought. The printed book was an extraordinary invention, which advanced the sharing of knowledge, but the economics of print publishing has stifled the dissemination of the visual argument, where ideas are embodied in, and expressed through, images.

Could the e-book hold a solution to this

conundrum? The technology was there. The first iPad had been released earlier that year. Color on its high-resolution screen was gorgeous, nothing like the dull black and white screen of the Kindle. The iPad, and the tablets that soon followed, greatly expanded the audience for the illustrated e-book. I left the symposium determined to explore the potential of this medium and decided to publish *The Eye Is a Door* as an original e-book, setting the price at \$4.99, a cost that even a struggling student could afford.

The Eye Is a Door is about seeing as a way of knowing, and photography as a way of thinking. I see most acutely through the frame of the camera's viewfinder and think most fluently through images. The book invites the reader to join in this process of seeing, thinking, and discovery, designing *The Eye Is a Door* as an ebook permitted a fluid relationship



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ABOUT

Anne Whiston Spirm is a professor of landscape architecture and planning at MIT. Her books include *The Granite Garden*, *The Language of Landscape*, *Daring to Look*, and *The Eye Is a Door*. In 2001, she received the International Cosmos Prize for "contributions to the harmonious coexistence of nature and humankind."

iPad image: From *The Eye Is a Door*, Anne Whiston Spirm.

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FEATURE

Digital doorway

by Anne Whiston Spirm / *Summer 2014: Books (Volume 18 rd)*

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There are additional advantages to the e-book. To search for a word or phrase, just type it in the search box. Move directly from text or image, through embedded links, to referenced websites. Customize font type and size in books with "reflowable" text. Read the e-book across platforms: from computer to tablet to smartphone. Since *The Eye Is a Door* has reflowable text rather than a fixed format, it works well on a mobile phone, easily carried as a reference in the field.

Despite its advantages, the electronic format imposes constraints. Especially infuriating are those imposed by Amazon's inferior e-book platforms, known as MOBI and KFB, which are far less flexible (especially in handling graphics) than EPUB, an open-source platform used by iBooks and other online retailers. Many authors and publishers of illustrated e-books avoid Amazon and release their works solely on iBooks. But Amazon sells more than half of all e-books, so this isn't an option for the author who wants to reach the widest possible audience.

Amazon may ultimately catch up or lose market share, and other limitations may soon disappear. In the meantime, constraints can provoke a rethinking. *The Eye Is a Door*'s original design called for images referenced within the text to appear when called up, then to vanish. EPUB permits this, but MOBI and KFB do not. Our solution is to treat these images as footnotes, which means that they all must appear at the back of the book in the order in which they were cited: not ideal, since some images appear more than once, and the sequence seems haphazard; and yet appropriate, for those images are, in fact, citations, footnotes of images rather than words.

This solution inspired the design for new e-editions of my books now in production. *The Language of Landscape* and *The Granite Garden*. These new e-books will consist of two parts, where the parts can be read both separately and interactively. In the first part, the reading experience will be similar to the text portion of *The Eye Is a Door*. The second part will consist of all those images cited in the text, composed deliberately as sequenced essays of images and captions, where each image links back to associated text. The reader may then choose whether to start by reading essays of text (with links to the images) or by reading essays of images (with links to the text): a new kind of book that serves both visual and verbal thinkers.

We are in the midst of a Gutenberg moment, with e-publishing comparable to the invention of the printing press. The technology is in its infancy. Design, production, marketing, and distribution—all are being reinvented. For designer-authors, the e-book offers new frontiers: from the publication of visual ideas and arguments to outreach to a wide new audience for those ideas to the design of the reading experience itself. Those who embrace the e-book may open the eye to new visual worlds. ■

FROM THE EDITOR

LETTERS

CONTRIBUTORS

UNSTRUCTURED

FEATURES

END NOTES

FINISH



The Eye Is a Door has been recognized as an important contribution to debates on the future of the book and as an innovative prototype for the richly-illustrated electronic book, which redesigns the flow between images and words.

Facing page (above) Featured in *Art Documentation*, the journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America, fall 2014.

Right and facing page (below) Featured in *Architecture Boston*, summer 2014, in print and on the Web.

The Eye Is a Door: Exhibit

This major exhibition, organized by the Smith College Museum of Art in Northampton, Massachusetts, explores how my photographs “encourage a deeper understanding of the natural and built environment through the development of visual literacy—the ability to read and analyze visual information.”

The museum’s education department has developed a range of educational materials associated with the exhibit in order to teach visual literacy and landscape literacy to a broad audience. A wide range of courses at Smith will use the exhibit: from landscape studies and art to environmental studies and geology, to anthropology, literary studies, history and dance. The museum is also an educational resource for colleges nearby (Amherst, Mount Holyoke, Hampshire, and the University of Massachusetts) and for K-12 schools in central Massachusetts and has an active community outreach program.

The exhibit was funded by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. After SCMA (January 31–August 31, 2014), the exhibit is now traveling to other museums.

“Simultaneously gorgeous and chaste ... There’s a matter-of-fact flawlessness to these photographs.”

MARK FEENEY, *The Boston Globe*

Right and facing page Three excerpts from the six-panel brochure prepared by the Smith College Museum of Art, distributed to all museum members and visitors.



The Eye is a Door

Landscape Photographs by Anne Whiston Spirn

January 31–August 31, 2014

EXHIBITION GUIDE

SMITH COLLEGE
MUSEUM
OF ART
& MUSEUM SHOP

smith.edu/artmuseum

*Seeing is a way of knowing;
photography is a way of thinking.*

INTRODUCTION

This exhibition showcases the photographic work of world-renowned writer, scholar, and landscape architect Anne Whiston Spirn. The author of several important books on landscape, Spirn is known for her multi-disciplinary practice that evolves from her photographic work. Her new book, *The Eye Is a Door: Landscape, Photography, and the Art of Discovery*, features this work and describes her approach.

This is the first major exhibition to explore how Spirn's photographs encourage a deeper understanding of the natural and built environment through the development of visual literacy—the ability to read and analyze visual information. This approach to learning allows people to question and interpret what they see, which has broad implications across many fields of inquiry and design.

Spirn views photography as a tool that helps hone this ability by focusing attention on significant details in the landscape in order to discover the invisible. She has been on the forefront of the movement to make this kind of visual thinking a fundamental part of people's daily lives.

As a teaching museum, Smith College Museum of Art is dedicated to nurturing visual literacy in an interdisciplinary environment.

Produced over the past 35 years, the images in the exhibition capture stories and ideas embodied in places the artist has visited for her research, which range from the volcanic landscapes of Iceland to sacred Buddhist gardens in Japan.

The 46 color images featured in *THE EYE IS A DOOR* connect such diverse topics as geology, biology, astronomy, anthropology, engineering, architecture, history, literary studies, global studies, studio art, and landscape studies.

For further information about this exhibition visit
smith.edu/artmuseum



Why a door and not a window? A window is something to look through, but a doorway is to pass through; crossing a threshold, one enters a new place. To see, to really see, is to open a door. To pass through that door is to arrive at a new understanding.

THINKING VISUALLY WITH LANDSCAPE

Ideas to consider when viewing this exhibition.

Observation

What do you see?

Take a visual inventory and make note of details that stand out to you.

Interpretation

What is going on in the image?

How do the details you noticed connect to create a larger whole?

What patterns or anomalies can you discover?

Building a Narrative

What story does the image tell?

What can the connections and patterns you discovered tell you about the history and life of this place?

What parts of the story do you still wonder about?





Top Smith College Museum of Art. A wide range of courses at Smith used the exhibit: from art to environmental studies and geology, to anthropology, literary studies, history and dance. The exhibit was also used in teaching visual literacy to K-12 classes.

Bottom University of Arkansas, School of Architecture.

Right "...simultaneously gorgeous and chaste. There's a matter-of-fact flawlessness to these photographs," Mark Feeney, *The Boston Globe* art critic, February 25, 2014.

PHOTOGRAPHY REVIEW

Anne Whiston Spirn makes a sense of place visible



PHOTOS BY ANNE WHISTON SPIRN

"Södra Sandby, Sweden" part of "The Eye Is a Door" exhibit at Smith College.

By **Mark Feeney** | GLOBE STAFF FEBRUARY 25, 2014

NORTHAMPTON — Anne Whiston Spirn wants to be clear about her choice of metaphor. "A window is something to look through," Spirn has said, "but a doorway is to pass through; crossing a threshold, one enters a new place." A sense of place deeply informs "The Eye Is a Door: Landscape Photographs by Anne Whiston Spirn." The show runs through Aug. 31 at the Smith College Museum of Art.

Those places range from very near to very far: Nahant, where Spirn lives, Japan, Australia, Iceland, Sweden, Britain, France, the American West. There are 47 color photographs in the show, and at least seven have doorways or entrances in them. Spirn, who teaches landscape architecture and planning at MIT, took the images between 1978 to 2013, yet dates seem irrelevant. All of them suggest a timeless quality. Or, rather, they seem so specifically in the given moment that Spirn took them that they stand outside of time. "Finding the place to stand may be a matter of inches as of years," she's written.

While never making her colors seem unnatural or hyped, Spirn gets the utmost out of them. So many of her images manage to be simultaneously gorgeous and chaste. There's a matter-of-fact flawlessness to these photographs. Declining to call attention to itself, that flawlessness is felt more than seen. The blue in "North Head, Sydney, Australia" is *such* a blue. The subtlety of the interplay between green (vegetation) and red (soil) in "Uluru, Central Desert, Australia" is quite marvelous. A barn, in "Södra Sandby, Sweden" offers its own transporting interplay of those colors: red eaves above, green grass below, and patterning of stone walls and darkness of doors in between.

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Mysterious Ernie Adams is the Patriots' man behind the curtain

Former Patriots quarterbacks, ball boy back Tom Brady

Bill Belichick cancels Patriots' final walk-through

Scott Brown files for Mass. state pension

The many ways we misinterpret animal behavior

INTRO BOOK AUTHOR EXHIBIT VIDEO JOURNEY

PREV NEXT

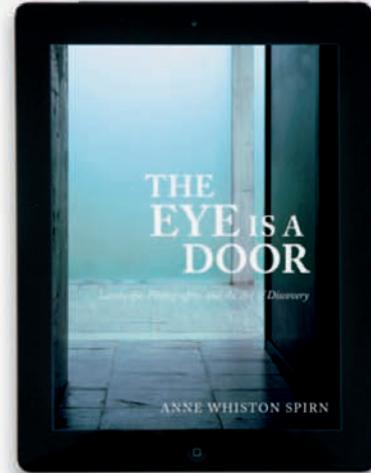
THE EYE IS A DOOR

Landscape, Photography, and the Art of Discovery

Seeing is a way of knowing, photography a way of thinking.

To photograph mindfully is to look and think, to open a door between what can be seen directly and what is hidden and can only be imagined.

Beyond my own eye's door are landscapes, the stories they tell, and the ideas they embody. I pass through that door and see: that the natural and the human are one, continuous not separate, landscape a mutual shaping of people and place and a form of language born out of living, a language with which to tell new stories and to envision how to adapt human settlements in life-sustaining ways.



[Buy the Book](#)

The Eye Is a Door: The Web Site

The Eye Is a Door website (www.theeyisadoor.com) complements the e-book. Read sample chapters. View the photo essays. Visit the exhibit and read the reviews. Watch a video. Take a trip to the places depicted in the photographs. The latter section, Journey, links photographs and associated text with Google Earth. Click on a photograph and be transported to a satellite view of the place, where you can take control of the mouse and explore on your own.

Left Home page
(www.theeyeisadoor.com)

Right An innovative website
pairs text and photographs,
links them to Google Earth,
and invites the visitor to
travel to places described in
the book. Sample journeys,
from top to bottom: Start the
Journey; Uluru, Australia;
Parc de Sceaux, Paris, France.

RETRO BOOK AUTHOR EXHIBIT VIDEO JOURNEY

THE EYE IS A DOOR

Landscape, Photography, and the Art of Discovery

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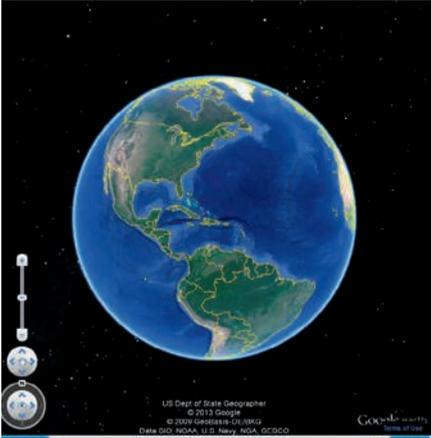
The Eye is a Door
Traveling to Earth Shadows

Join me on a journey to explore the landscapes behind the photographs and words. What I see, what subjects and ideas belong to me and guide my journey, direct my eye, and tell me where to stand. Where would you stand?

Get Started

Prologue. Earth Shadow

"Earth Shadow" describes a wonder that most people never see, one example of the ideas and stories that are embedded in the world, waiting to be discovered and read.



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Story and photographs © Anne Whitman Spivey

Journey platform created by Finesse Designhaus

RETRO BOOK AUTHOR EXHIBIT VIDEO JOURNEY

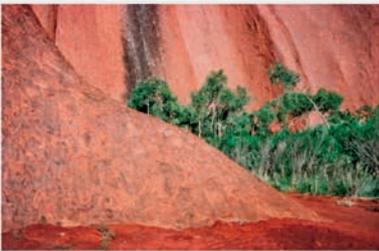
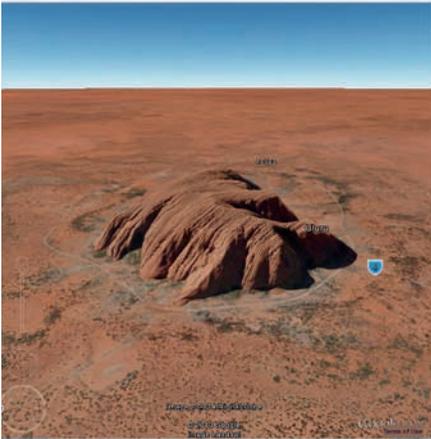
THE EYE IS A DOOR

Landscape, Photography, and the Art of Discovery

Twitter Facebook LinkedIn

The Eye is a Door
Traveling to Earth Shadows

As I see or create, a natural world from a photographical view, because one never sees one's landscape, the camera's divine's rod, and how printing, editing, grouping, and sequencing are also means of drawing out the ideas embodied in photographs.



Uluru Central Desert, Australia | Jan 09

I am drawn to photograph a landscape as if it were a person: to capture its distinctive spirit, reveal its history, and show the contents that shape it. I try to picture a tree or a hill or a wall as a human, because each shapes human lives even as it is shaped by human imagination and human use.

Story and photographs © Anne Whitman Spivey

Journey platform created by Finesse Designhaus

RETRO BOOK AUTHOR EXHIBIT VIDEO JOURNEY

THE EYE IS A DOOR

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Parc de Sceaux, Paris, France | June 08

Sceaux, a private estate from the seventeenth century, now a public park on the outskirts of Paris, is an expression of political power, of advances in military engineering, of a philosophy of Nature and State, and of the debates between France and England embodied in the geometry of designed landscapes. On Sceaux's sloping, flat-placed terraces, I looked east on the rows of trees clipped into conical shapes, then found a tension between clipped foreground and a distant grove growing freely behind a wall of absurd red. I looked again at the cones steady and saw branches growing freely beneath the clipped surface. I heard Anthony Hecht's poem about another garden and saw the paradox of "Controlled diodes at the heart / Of everything ... whose tension lectures / Us on our mental state."

Story and photographs © Anne Whitman Spivey

Journey platform created by Finesse Designhaus

4.215/11.309 | Fall 2012

Sensing Place: Photography as Inquiry

Professor: Anne Whiston Spirn

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
School of Architecture and Planning
77 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge, MA 02139
MIT SA + P

Class Information

- Home
- Overview
- Syllabus
- Assignment Synopses

Assignments

- Journals
- Light
- Detail
- Poetics
- Essay

Student Projects

2012	2007	2000
2011	2006	
2010	2003	
2009	2002	
2008	2001	

Resources

- Helpful Tutorials + links
- Comments

This page last updated: Oct 6, 2012

Charlie Byrd Hagen-Cazes
"Z garden (MIT)", 2008. [read more](#)

Web design (2012) by Chris Malcolm

More than 60,000 visits from around the world to the Sensing Place website since 2011, through the MIT Open Courseware Portal alone. Visits through that portal are on the increase: ca. 19,000 in the past year. The website has been online since 2000.

Sensing Place: Photography as Inquiry

“Sensing Place,” a course that explores photography as a disciplined way of seeing, of investigating landscapes and expressing ideas, was a laboratory for *The Eye Is a Door*. Students learn to see and think with both a critical and a creative eye, to reason with images as well as with words, to question dogma and discover ideas. The class website is a framework for learning where students’ insights grow out of their independent and collective work (architecture.mit.edu/class/landphoto). Students post their work online so it can be seen and discussed by others. Since the work of each year’s class is archived online, current students learn from past students too. The website is open to the public, and a version is included on MIT’s OpenCourseware, where it has received more than 60,000 visits from around the world. Many teachers and photographers describe how they have adapted aspects of “Sensing Place” in their own work.

4.215/11.309 | Fall 2012

Sensing Place: Photography as Inquiry

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Resources

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- Comments

This page last updated: Oct 8, 2012

PROJECTS: YEAR 2012

Fall

Cambridge, MA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central Square Central Square Peabody Terrace Echo Backyard Squirrel Brand Community Garden Eastman Court & Adjacent Areas Fresh Pond
Somerville, MA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Near Perry Park
Boston, MA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boston Fish Pier South of Somewhere UrbanSCAPE China Town Charles River

[Flickr Site](#)
[Class Blog](#)

2012
"Echo Backyard" [full image](#)

Web design (2012) by Chris Malcolm

“Anne is one of those rare people who truly works in multiple disciplines and who truly makes vital contributions to each. She is a photographer/artist. She is a landscape architect. She is an author. She is a teacher. It is in this last capacity that we first got to know Anne personally as we took her “Sense of Place” class while Loeb Fellows at Harvard University Graduate School of Design. Her passion, knowledge, discipline and commitment were apparent from the beginning. Anne taught us how to read landscape in a new way—using the tools and vernacular of literary criticism to break down its elements and to see how the historical, political and aesthetic qualities of place inform each other. This technical lesson in how to see ecologically has been transformative in the way we approach our own work. More importantly, however, was the spirit of learning and respect for life that Anne imbued in every student in the class. It was obvious that we were not the only ones that came out changed and deeply enhanced by Anne’s teaching.”

SUSANNAH SAYLOR AND ED MORRIS, Co-Founders, The Canary Project

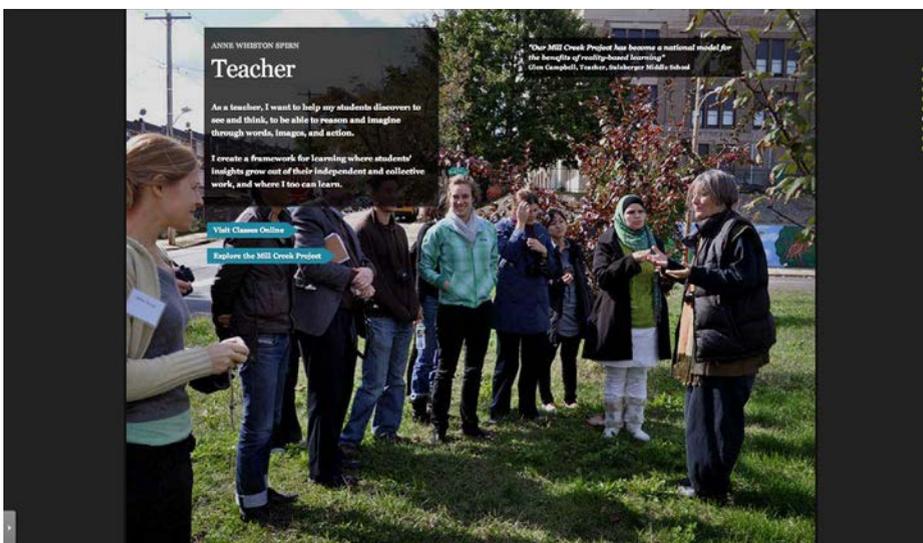
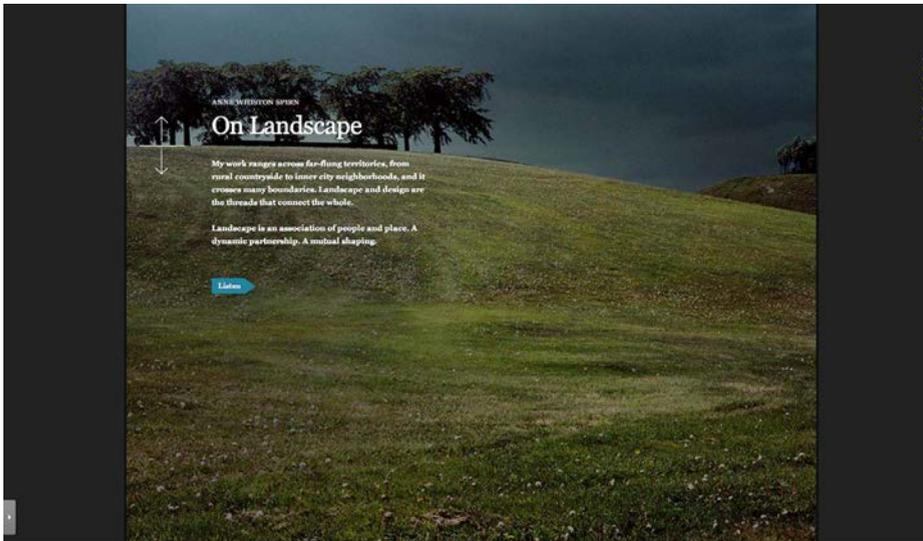
Part 4

The Open Door

annewhistonspirn.com
(2000–present)

Open access to information and knowledge is essential to democracy. The importance of open access cannot be overstated, especially at a time when knowledge (books, articles, databases) is increasingly owned by for-profit corporations.

I was a leader in open access before there was a movement. By fighting to retain the rights to my publications, I have managed to reserve the right to freely distribute my published essays. Since the debut of my first website in March 1996, I have made my work freely accessible online. Millions of people from more than 90 countries have visited these websites to view and download my articles, research reports, maps, videos, and course syllabi.



Screenshots from the homepage (2012). Scrolling down, a series of panels introduces diverse aspects of my work and provides links to material in the archive, such as publications, designs, photographs, radio broadcasts, videos, and course syllabi.

2000–present

annehistonspirn.com

**Millions of visits
to my websites
from more than
90 countries since
1996.**

“As one of our country’s leading design thinkers, Anne Spirn... has a global reputation as the preeminent scholar working at the intersection of landscape architecture and environmental planning. Her seminal scholarly research and elegant writing applies ecological principles to urban settings, and she has also developed a parallel community-based research agenda that has gained national and international attention. Her work creatively bridges across design, community and economic development, and environmental policy. She has been exceptionally effective in conveying her ideas to a broader public, both through web design and her insistence on open access publication.”

LAWRENCE VALE, Professor of Urban Design and Planning, MIT

This website is a gateway to my work and activities. It is an expression of my commitment to make information and ideas freely accessible. Here, one can read my publications, listen to interviews, see exhibits, and visit classes. One can follow work-in-progress and travel back in time to a studio class in 1996. The major sections are Author, Photographer, Landscape Architect, and Teacher.

Teacher The Web transformed the way I teach design. Since 1996, I have crafted for each course a website as a framework for learning, a forum for presenting work, sharing ideas, and extending discussion beyond the classroom. It delighted me when a student in one class used the website for one of my other classes as a resource to explore how people can learn to “see the invisible.” Each class website features the course syllabus and assignments and showcases all student work. Each year’s work is archived on the class site, where it serves as a resource for future classes.

These are public sites, requiring no passwords, so all are welcome to visit; since 1996 there have been millions of visits. Among those visitors are public officials, some of whom have been persuaded by my students’ designs to take a new approach to a pressing problem. The designs produced in a succession of studios in 1996, 1997, and 1999 on “Transforming the Urban Landscape” (all still online), for example, helped persuade engineers at the Philadelphia Water Department to pioneer a revolutionary approach to improving water quality, which is now receiving national attention. Websites also tied together The Mill Creek Project, a collaboration with an inner-city middle school, which was cited in 2004 as a model for Internet-based learning activities.

ANNE WHITTON SPIREN

Landscape Architect

Action is another way of knowing. As a landscape architect, I work with people to design their neighborhood, city, and region, using action to develop and test theory, and theory to reflect on experience.

Making things happen is a messy process full of unforeseen obstacles and opportunities. Unexpected events challenge assumptions.

[Explore the West Philadelphia Landscape Project](#)

[Read About Other Projects](#)

Photography
Planning Magazine, on the Map for Woodlark, Texas

ANNE WHITTON SPIREN

Photographer

I photograph to discover ideas and stories, hidden and real, that are embodied in the world.

As a photographer, I want to inspire others to see the extraordinary in the everyday, to pause and look deeply at the surface of things, and also beyond that surface to the stories landscapes tell, to the forces that shape human lives and communities, the earth, and the universe.

[See the Photographs](#)

[Explore The Eye in a Door](#)

ANNE WHITTON SPIREN

Author

I write to understand why and how things come about and to envision what they might be.

As an author, I want to inspire readers to see their world afresh and to imagine new possibilities.

[See the Books](#)

[Read the Essays](#)

"...a very important book... fascinating insight"
Mary Ellen Mark, on *Seeing as I See: Creative Long-Exposure Photography and Beyond from the Field*

Screenshots from the homepage (2012). Scrolling down, a series of panels introduces diverse aspects of my work and provides links to material in the archive, such as publications, designs, photographs, radio broadcasts, videos, and course syllabi.

Landscape Architect Much of the knowledge of design and planning practice lies in ephemeral publications, which are rarely collected by libraries. This section presents professional reports and research monographs to which I have contributed, which can be downloaded. Starting with *Site Planning Guidelines for Woodlands New Community* from 1973, they include reports from landmark projects conducted by Wallace McHarg Roberts and Todd in the 1970s, for which I was a project director.

Photographer Explorations and reflections on seeing as a way of knowing and photography as a way of thinking are presented here, along with exhibits, interviews, and reviews.

Author My work is published in the journals and books of diverse fields, from landscape architecture, architecture, and planning, to history and geography, science, art and art history. This website brings them together, where they can be read and downloaded. I am able to do this because, over the course of my career, I retained the rights to all but two essays. I also hold the electronic rights for all but my last book (*Daring to Look*), and am publishing them as inexpensive e-books. I established Wolf Tree Press to accomplish this.

Following pages Screenshots from each of the four major sections of the website: Author, Photographer, Landscape Architect, and Teacher. Each section provides links to an archive of my work produced over more than four decades and invites visitors to browse and download.

Anne Whiston Spirn

Author Photographer Landscape Architect Teacher

Philosophy

Books

Essays

Work-in-Progress

Back Story

What Readers Say

Interviews

Field Notes

Events

Press

Links



“The Conquest of Arid America”

Essays

“The Conquest of Arid America”
Topos: International Journal of Landscape Architecture and Urban Design
 2007/59.

It was late July up on Dead Ox Flat in eastern Oregon, just past sunrise. The air cool, no hint of the heat to come (43 Celsius by afternoon). Scent of sage. Sound of water gushing from siphon into canal. This land was desert in the nineteenth century when the wagons lumbered along the Oregon Trail not far from here, and Dead Ox Flat was still desert in 1939 when the great photographer, Dorothea Lange, photographed the Malheur Siphon, built in 1937 to bring the water that transformed sagebrush desert into fields of alfalfa, corn, and sugar beets.

“Six years ago national irrigation was a dream; to-day, the dream has come true,” William E. Smythe wrote in 1905 in the foreword to a revised edition of his 1899 book *The Conquest of Arid America*. Smythe’s “dream come true” was the National Reclamation

Anne Whiston Spirn

Author Photographer Landscape Architect Teacher

Action

Projects

Publications

Interviews

Teaching

Field Notes

Events

Press

Links

Contact



“This project [the West Philadelphia Landscape Project] demonstrates the links between environmental issues, education and heritage, and is a model for Ottawa as it seeks to comprehensively implement a ‘green city’ strategy.”

— City of Ottawa, Canada

Action

Landscape architects design and plan landscape to serve human purpose at scales from garden to region.

[Read more...](#)

Anne Whiston Spirn Author **Photographer** Landscape Architect Teacher

- Vision
- Projects
- Gallery**
- Publications
- Exhibits
- Teaching
- Interviews
- Field Notes
- Events
- Press
- Links



The Eye Is a Door
The Eye Is a Door: Photography and the Art of Visual Thinking is a book and an exhibit. The book of nine essays and approximately sixty images will be published in February 2014. An exhibit at the Smith College Museum of Art opens January 31-August 31, 2014. These photographs provide an introduction.



Daring to Look: The Continuing Story
My book Daring to Look: Dorothea Lange's Photographs and Reports from the Field (2008) is published, but the project refuses to be finished. Since 2005 I have traveled to all the places Lange photographed in 1939. The stories Lange told in 1939 are still unfolding; somehow, in the process of tracing her stories, they became my own



Calendars
Every year, I make a calendar, and, once in a while, someone sends a photo of the calendar in situ. Click on the photographs to enter their worlds.

Previous Screen
Screen 1 of 2
Next Screen

Anne Whiston Spirn Author Photographer Landscape Architect **Teacher**

- Learning
- Visit A Class
- Courses
- Mill Creek Project**
- Field Notes
- Links
- Press
- Contact



*Transforming
the Urban Landscape
Penn*

THE MILL CREEK PROJECT

In fall 1996, my students at the University of Pennsylvania and I embarked on an adventure with teachers and students at the Sulzberger Middle School in West Philadelphia. Our goal was to explore how a new curriculum organized around "The Urban Watershed" could combine learning, community development, and water resource management.

- Read more...** ▶
- 1995. Starting Small** ▶
- 1996. Launching an Experiment** ▶
- 1997 - 1999. "A Curriculum for the Millennium"** ▶
- 2000-2001. Transition** ▶
- Where Are They Now?** ▶

Curriculum Vitae

Curriculum Vitae

EDUCATION

Radcliffe College, Harvard University, A.B. 1969 cum laude
 University of Pennsylvania, Art History Ph.D. program, 1969–1970
 University of Pennsylvania, Master of Landscape Architecture, 1974

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

MIT

Cecil and Ida Green Distinguished Professor of Landscape Architecture and Planning, 2017–present; Professor of Landscape Architecture and Planning, Departments of Architecture and Urban Studies and Planning, 2000–2017

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Professor of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning, 1986–2000;
 Co-Director, Urban Studies Program, 1996–2000; Chairman, Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning, 1986–1993

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Director, Landscape Architecture Program, 1984–1986;
 Associate Professor, 1983–1986; Assistant Professor, 1979–1983

SELECTED HONORS AND AWARDS

Honor Award, American Society of Landscape Architects, 2011
 Honorary Doctorate, Swedish Agricultural University, Uppsala, 2010
 Model Scholar, Urban Studies Program, Stanford University, 2010
 John Brinckerhoff Jackson Book Prize, 2009
 Great Place Book Award, 2009
 PROSE Book Award, American Association of Publishers,
 Honorable Mention, Art and Art History Category, 2009
 Art Book Award, Finalist, Association of Art Historians, 2009
The Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design named one of the past
 century's "essential books of planning," American Planning Association,
 2009
 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, Fellowship, 2007–2008
 National Design Award: Finalist, 2002
 International Cosmos Prize for "contributions to the harmonious coexistence
 of nature and humankind," 2001
 Harvard University: Fellow, Charles Warren Center for American History,
 2004–2005; Noyes Fellow, Bunting Institute, 1985–1986; Bunting Fellow,
 Radcliffe Institute for Independent Study, 1978–1979
 Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC: Fellow, 1995–1996;
 Guest Scholar, 1994

University of California, Humanities Research Institute: Fellow, 1994
 University of Sydney, Australia: Ethel Chettle Distinguished Fellow, 1988
 American Society of Landscape Architects: Fellow, 2004; Honor Award for
Daring to Look, 2011; Community Service Award, 2004;
 President's Award of Excellence for *The Granite Garden*, 1984
 White House Conference, Imagining America: Model Project, 1999
 Philadelphia School District: Person of the Month, 1998
 International Architecture Book Award, American Institute of Architects, 1996
 Ozzie Award for Excellence in Design, 1989
 National Endowment for the Arts: Project Fellowship, 1990–1991, 1981

SELECTED BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

DESIGN REVIEW AND SELECTION COMMITTEES

U.S. General Services Administration, National Register of Peer Professionals, 1998–present; Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1997; Fulbright Fellowships, 1995–1996; National Endowment for the Arts, 1991

DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Expo 2005, Aichi, International Advisory Committee, 2002–2005;
 Task Force on Site Character, Comprehensive Design Plan for the White House, 1993; Design Advisory Committee, U.S. Botanical Garden, 1992–1993

DESIGN AWARDS JURIES

U.S. General Services Administration Design Awards; EDRA Awards, ASLA Design Awards, ASLA Research and Publication Awards; Bruner Award; James Ritchie Award, Jury Chair; Minnesota State Capitol Design Competition; New Orleans Arboretum Design Competition; Hillside Housing Design Competition, Cincinnati

BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

Boston Natural Areas Fund, 2000–2002; Fairmount Park Art Association, 1992–2002

EDITORIAL BOARDS

Landscape History, 2010–present; *Landscape Journal*, 2003–present; *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, 1984–1988, Chairman (1986–1988)

OECD, PARIS

Chairman, Advisory Council, Territorial Development Service, 1995–1998;
 Panel of Experts, Program on The Ecological City, 1993; Chairman, Panel of Experts, Ministerial Conference on the Economic, Social, and Environmental Problems of Cities, 1992

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

Art Commission, 1988–1990; Fine Arts Committee, Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, 1988–1989; Mayor’s Select Committee on Land Re-Use and Management, 1998–1999

**DESIGN
PRACTICE**

West Philadelphia Landscape Project: Director, 1987–present (see www.wplp.net)

City of Boston Consultant on urban design strategies, 1984–1985; consultant to on reuse of vacant urban land, 1984–1985

Registered Landscape Architect: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, CLARB 1979

Firms Wallace McHarg Roberts & Todd, Philadelphia, 1973–1977;
Roy Mann Associates, Cambridge, 1977–1978

**SELECTED
PUBLICATIONS**

BOOKS

The Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design. New York: Basic Books, 1984. Published in Japanese, 1996; in Portuguese, 1995. 1984 ASLA President’s Award of Excellence. New enlarged e-book edition (2018).

The Language of Landscape. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

Daring to Look: Photographs and Notes from the Field by Dorothea Lange. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. 2009 John Brinckerhoff Jackson Book Prize. 2009 Great Place Book Award. 2009 PROSE Book Award Honorable Mention, 2009 Art Book Award Finalist. 2011 ASLA Honor Award.

The Eye Is a Door: Landscape, Photography, and the Art of Discovery, original e-book. Wolf Tree Press, 2014.

Black Bottom: Restoring Nature and Rebuilding Community, work-in-progress.

C.Th. Sørensen: Garden Artist, by Sven-Ingvar Andersson and Steen Høyer. Copenhagen: Arkitektens Forlag, 2001. Introduction and Translation.

SELECTED CHAPTERS IN BOOKS

“The Marnas Digital Archive: Exploring Practice, Theory, and Place in Space and Time,” in *Routledge Companion to Landscape Architecture*, edited by Ellen Braae and Henrietta Steiner (Routledge, forthcoming).

“The Granite Garden: Where Do We Stand.” In *Nature and Cities: Urban Ecological Design and Planning*. Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2016.

“The Nature of Mill Creek: Landscape Literacy, Environmental History, and Ecological Democracy.” In *Pragmatic Sustainability*, edited by Steven Moore. New York: Routledge, 2016.

“Teaching Landscape Literacy: Historic Preservation and Community Knowledge.” In *Bending the Future: Fifty Ideas for the Next Fifty Years of Historic Preservation*, edited by Max Page and Marla R. Miller. University of Massachusetts Press, 2016.

- “Helen and Newton Harrison: The Art of Inquiry, Manifestation, and Enactment.” In *The Time of the Force Majeure*, by Helen and Newton Harrison. Prestel, 2016.
- “Restoring Water, Rebuilding Community, Empowering Youth: The West Philadelphia Landscape Project.” In *Design in the Terrain of Water*, edited by Anuradha Mathur and Dilip da Cunha. Applied Research and Design, 2014.
- “Restoring Mill Creek: Landscape Literacy, Environmental History, and City Planning and Design.” In *Nature’s Entrepot: Philadelphia’s Urban Sphere and Its Environmental Thresholds*, edited by Brian Black and Michael Chiarappa. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012.
- “Ecological Urbanism.” In *Routledge Companion to Urban Design*, edited by Tridib Banerjee and Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- “One with Nature”: Landscape, Language, Empathy, and Imagination.” In *Landscape Theory*, edited by Rachel DeLue and James Elkins. New York: Routledge, 2008.
- “Urban Ecosystems and Urban Planning.” In *Understanding Urban Ecosystems: A New Frontier for Science and Education*, edited by Alan Berkowitz. New York: Springer-Verlag, 2002.
- “The Authority of Nature: Conflict and Confusion in Landscape Architecture and Ecology.” In *Ecology and Design: Frameworks for Learning*, edited by Kristina Hill and Bart Johnson. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2001.
- “Ian McHarg, Landscape Architecture, and Environmentalism: Ideas and Methods in Context.” In *Environmentalism and Landscape Architecture*, edited by Michel Conan. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000.
- “Rebuilding Urban Communities and Restoring Natural Environments.” In *Planning for the New Century*, edited by Jonathon Barnett. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2001.
- “Reclaiming Common Ground: Water, Neighborhoods, and Public Spaces.” In *The American Planning Tradition: Culture and Policy*, edited by Robert Fishman. Washington, DC and Baltimore, MD: Woodrow Wilson Press and Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.
- “Carl Theodore Sorensen.” In *Scandinavia: Luoghi, figure, gesti di una civiltà del paesaggio*, edited by Domenico Luciani and Luigi Latini. Treviso: Edizioni Fondazioni Benetton Studi Recherche, 1998. In Italian.
- “Frank Lloyd Wright: Architect of Landscape.” In *Frank Lloyd Wright: Designs for an American Landscape, 1922–1932*, edited by David De Long. New York: Abrams, 1996. American Institute of Architects International Architecture Book Award.
- “Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted.” In *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, edited by William Cronon. New York: W.W. Norton, 1995.
- “Deep Structure: On Process, Form, and Design in the Urban Landscape.” In *City and Nature*. Odense, Denmark: Odense University Press, 1993.
- “Urban Nature and Human Design: Renewing the Great Tradition.” In *Classic Readings in Urban Planning*, edited by Jay M. Stein. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995.

SELECTED ARTICLES

- “Helen and Newton Harrison: The Art of Inquiry, Manifestation, and Enactment,” *Landscape Architecture* (January 2017).
- “The Language of Landscape: Literacy, Identity, Design, and Planning.” In *Chinese Landscape Architecture* (2016).
- “The Problems and Potential of the Visual E-book: Call for an Alliance between Authors and Librarians,” *Art Documentation* 33 (fall 2014), 206–226. With Ann Baird Whiteside.
- “Digital Doorway: E-books Redesign the Flow between Images and Text,” *Architecture Boston* (June 2015), 48–51.
- “The Language of Landscape: Literacy, Identity, Poetry, and Power,” *Urban* (March 2013). In Spanish.
- “The Conquest of Arid America,” *Topos* 2007/59 (July). Reprinted in *Best of Topos*, 2008.
- “Restoring Mill Creek: Landscape Literacy, Environmental Justice, and City Planning and Design,” *Landscape Research* 30:5 (July 2005): 359–377. Reprinted in *Justice, Power, and the Political Landscape*, edited by Kenneth Olwig and Don Mitchell. London: Routledge, 2009.
- “The City as a Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design,” *Illume* (Summer 2002). In Japanese.
- “Deep Structure: Über Entwicklung, Form und Gestaltung in der Stadtlandschaft,” *Praxis Geschichte* 11:4 (July 1997).
- “Architecture and Landscape: Toward a Unified Vision.” *Landscape Architecture* (August 1990).
- “From Uluru to Cooper’s Place: Patterns in the Cultural Landscape.” *Orion* (Spring 1990).
- “The Poetics of City and Nature: Toward a New Aesthetic for Urban Design.” *Landscape Journal* (Fall 1988), reprinted in *Places* 6:1 (Fall 1989).
- “Landscape Planning and the City,” *Landscape and Urban Planning* 13 (1986).
- “Urban Nature and Human Design: Renewing the Great Tradition,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* (Fall 1985).

SELECTED MONOGRAPHS

- Publications of the West Philadelphia Landscape Project (Graduate School of Fine Arts, University of Pennsylvania): *The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan: A Framework for Action*, 1991; *The West Philadelphia Digital Database: An Atlas and Guide*, 1996, with Robert Cheetham; *Models of Success: Landscape Improvement and Community Development*, 1991, with Daniel Marcucci; *Shaping the Block*, 1991, with Mark Campbell and Michele Pollio; *Vacant Land: A Resource for Reshaping Urban Neighborhoods*, 1991, with Michele Pollio; “*This Garden is a Town*”, 1990, with Michele Pollio.
- Nature, Form, and Meaning: Special Issue of Landscape Journal*. Editor, 1988. Ozzie Award for Excellence in Design.
- Research monographs (Harvard Graduate School of Design): *Air Quality at Street-Level: Strategies for Urban Design*, prepared for Boston Redevelopment Authority, 1986; *Plants for Passive Cooling*, 1981, with Adele Naude Santos.

Professional reports (Wallace McHarg Roberts & Todd): *Environmental Resources of the Toronto Central Waterfront*, 1976, with Narendra Juneja; *Pardisan: An Environmental Park*, 1975, with Ian McHarg, Narendra Juneja, and W. Robinson Fisher; *Woodlands New Community: Guidelines for Site Planning*, 1973.

WORLD WIDE WEB PUBLICATIONS

Anne Whiston Spirn (www.annewhistonspirn.com), 2008–present
The West Philadelphia Landscape Project (www.wplp.net), 1996–present, seven awards for design excellence and millions of hits from over 90 countries.
Daring to Look (www.daringtolook.com), 2008–present
The Eye Is a Door (www.theeyeisadoor.com), 2012–present
The Granite Garden (www.granitegarden.net), 2016–present
Marnas: A Journey Through Space, Time, and Ideas (www.marnasgarden.com), 2017–present

PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITIONS

The Eye Is a Door: Landscape Photographs by Anne Whiston Spirn: Smith College Museum of Art, 2014; University of Arkansas, fall 2014.
Knowing Where to Stand: MIT Museum, 2003–2004; Vassar College, 2004.
Anne Whiston Spirn, Landscapes: Aucocisco Gallery, Portland, Maine, 2002; Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, 2000.
Looking at Landscape: Three Photographers (with Alex MacLean and Camilo José Vergara): Harvard Museum of Natural History, 2006–2007; New York Hall of Science, 2007.
Urban Insights (group show): Kamloops Art Gallery, British Columbia, 2005. Exhibition catalogue edited by Jann Baily and Lon Dubinsky.

SELECTED DOCUMENTARIES AND INTERVIEWS

Jared Green, “Interview with Anne Whiston Spirn on the Occasion of the 30th Anniversary of The Granite Garden,” January 7, 2015, D.I.R.T. (dirt.asla.org).
 “Buried River, Opened Lives,” a series of multimedia videos on the West Philadelphia Landscape Project, 2013–2014, www.wplp.net/stories.
 Dyanna Taylor, “Grab a Hunk of Lightning,” documentary film on Dorothea Lange, 2014.
 National Public Radio, “Daring To Look,” *Here and Now*, March 2009.
 National Public Radio, “Daring To Look,” *All Things Considered*, July 2008.
 Oregon Public Radio, “Memories of the Depression,” September 2008.
 Michigan Public Radio, “The Language of Landscape and the West Philadelphia Landscape Project,” *Todd Mundt Show*, July 2000.
 Public Radio International, “The Language of Landscape,” *Dialogue*, December 1999.
 National Public Radio, “Buried Rivers,” *Radio Times*, August 1999.
 Wisconsin Public Radio, “The West Philadelphia Landscape Project and the Language of Landscape,” *To the Best of Our Knowledge*, January 1999.

Philadelphia School District Cable TV Station, 30-minute feature on my work at Sulzberger Middle School, aired daily throughout November 1998.
 Michigan Public Radio, "The West Philadelphia Landscape Project," March 1998.
 Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, "Frank Lloyd Wright," documentary film, 1998.
 Wisconsin Public Radio, "Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted," *To the Best of Our Knowledge*, May 1997.
 Public Radio International, "The Granite Garden," *Dialogue*, January 16, 1995.
 National Public Radio, "The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan," *Living on Earth*, 1993.

**SELECTED REVIEWS
 IN PRINT MEDIA**

Deni Ruggeri, "The Eye Is a Door: Landscape, Photography, and the Art of Discovery." *Landscape Journal* 34:1 (2015), 101–104.
 Jonathon Raban. "American Pastoral." *New York Review of Books* 56:18 (November 19, 2009). Review of *Daring to Look*.
 Louis Masur. "The Big Empty. Dorothea Lange's Photographs and Reports from the Field." *Los Angeles Times*, May 25, 2008.
 Anne Hammond. "Faces from the Dust Bowl." *Times Education Supplement* (London), September 4, 2008.
 "Listen to the World: Anne Whiston Spirn." Profile and interview. *Landscape Architecture China* 6: 2009. In Chinese and English.
 2001 International Cosmos Prize: Anne Whiston Spirn. Osaka, Japan: Expo-90 Foundation, 2002. In Japanese and English.
 "The Mill Creek: West Philadelphia Students Uncover the Life of Their Urban Watershed." *New Communities* (Winter 2002).
 "Urban Nature and City Design: Anne Whiston Spirn Talks with Kazuhiko Takeuchi." *Science Journal Kagaku* 72:5 (May 2002), 518–529. In Japanese.
 "Building the Urban Landscape: Anne Whiston Spirn Talks with Hubert Murray." *Architecture Boston*, Fall 2001, 43–47.
 Paul Bennett. "Landscape Organism: The West Philadelphia Landscape Project." *Landscape Architecture* (March 2000): 66–71, 82.
 Keiko Takayama. "The West Philadelphia Landscape Project." *Bio-City* 17 (November 1999): 57–67. In Japanese.
 Paul Bennett. "The Language of Landscape." *Landscape Architecture* (May 1999).
 Glenn Campbell. "Learning Gets Real With Service." *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 7, 1998.
 Ruth Knack. "Dig These Gardens." *Planning* 60:7 (July 1994): 20–24.
 Thomas Hine. "Surroundings: A Long-Buried Creek in West Philadelphia." *Philadelphia Sunday Inquirer*. November 15, 1992.
 William Thompson. "A Natural Legacy: Ian McHarg and His Followers." *Planning* (November 1991).
 Anne Raver. "The New Crop." *The New York Times Magazine: Home Design*. October 13, 1991.
 Steve Curwood. "Profile: Shaping the City to Nature's Laws." *Boston Globe*, May 26, 1985.

- Mark Francis. "The Granite Garden." *Journal of Architecture and Planning Research* (1985).
- Reuben Rainey. "The Granite Garden." *Design Book Review* 6 (Winter 1985).
- Jon Lang. "The Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 5 (Autumn 1985).
- Ralph A. Saunders. "The Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 75 (March 1985).
- ASLA Awards Panel. *Landscape Architecture* 74:5 (1984).
- Fred Powledge. "The Greening of American Cities." *Washington Post Book World*. April 1, 1984.
- Sam Hall Kaplan. "A Plan for Peaceful Urban Coexistence." *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, February 25, 1984.
- Richard Bender. "Making the Metropolis Green." *New York Times Book Review*, January 22, 1984.

**INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCES
AND LECTURES**

SELECTED KEYNOTE LECTURES

International Federation of Landscape Architects, The Netherlands; German Historical Institute, Conference on Urban Nature; Cosmos Prize Symposium on my work, Tokyo and Osaka; Japanese Institute of Landscape Architects, Tokyo; International Federation of Landscape Architects, Florence; Conference on Small Cities, Kamloops, Canada; International Conference on "Between Garden Art and Urban Planning," Copenhagen.

SELECTED INVITED LECTURES AND PAPERS

Conference on Landscape in Theory, University of Nottingham; Symposium on Landscape Theory, Burren College of Art, Ireland; Doorenbos Lecture, The Hague; World Park Conference, Nagoya; Landscape of Urban Parks, Osaka; Ordering the Human-Built World, Berlin; The Ecological City, OECD; The Social, Economic, and Environmental Future of Cities, Paris; City and Nature, University of Odense; The Global Environment and the City, Osaka; City Planning Association, Tokyo; World Conference on Landscape Planning, Hannover; The Urban Landscape, Ljubljana; International Union of Architects/Royal Australian Institute of Architects, Sydney; Congres Mondiale des Cités-Unies, Montreal; Green Cities Conference, Liverpool.

UNIVERSITIES

SciencesPo, Paris; Architects' Association, London; Manchester University; University of Nottingham; Royal Danish Academy of Art; Danish Agricultural University; University of Copenhagen; Swedish Agricultural University; Helsinki Technical University; University of Aarhus; University of Sydney; University of New South Wales; Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology; Technical University of Delft; Wageningen Agricultural University; Queens University, Belfast; University of Granada, Spain.

**NATIONAL
CONFERENCES
AND LECTURES**

SELECTED KEYNOTE AND PLENARY TALKS

Planners Network Conference, Minneapolis; International Association of Landscape Ecologists, Tempe; American Society of Landscape Architects Centennial Conference, Boston; Cary Conference, Institute of Ecosystem Studies; Conference on Environmental Quality for Public Officials, Cambridge; Society of Soil and Water Conservation Annual Meeting, Lexington; ACSA Teachers' Workshop, Cranbrook Academy of Art (conference chair); Conference on Ecology and Planning, University of California, Davis; Xeriscape, Sacramento; Urban Air Pollution, Colorado Springs; Leadership Meeting on Urban Ecology, Denver.

SELECTED INVITED LECTURES AND PAPERS

"Imaging Environment: Maps, Models, and Metaphors," Stanford University; Association for the Study of Literature and Environment; "Inventing for the Environment," Smithsonian Institute; "Human Valuation of the Environment," Princeton University; American Historical Association; "Crossing Boundaries," University of Oregon; American Society of Environmental History; "Nature and Ideology" Dumbarton Oaks; Chair, Panel on Environment and Cities, American Planning Association; Dumbarton Oaks Roundtable on Environmental Ethics; Public Art in America Conference; American Academy of Arts and Sciences, "Meanings of the City."

**CONFERENCES
AND LECTURES
AT AMERICAN
UNIVERSITIES**

Harvard University; Yale University; University of Chicago; Massachusetts Institute of Technology; University of Pennsylvania; University of Michigan; Stanford University; University of California, Berkeley; University of California, Los Angeles; University of California, Davis; Cal Poly Pomona; University of Wisconsin; Cornell University; Arizona State University; University of Georgia; University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana; Parsons School of Design; Rhode Island School of Design; University of Miami; University of Virginia; University of New Mexico; Ohio State University; University of Washington; Washington University; University of Tennessee; SUNY Buffalo; SUNY Syracuse; University of Oregon; University of Massachusetts; Catholic University; University of Missouri–St. Louis; Vassar College; Smith College; Mount Holyoke College; Boston College Law School; Tulane University, University of Colorado; American University; Bryant University, University of Arkansas.

“As one of our country’s leading design thinkers, Anne Spirn ... has a global reputation as the preeminent scholar working at the intersection of landscape architecture and environmental planning.”

LAWRENCE VALE, MIT

“I consider Anne the most important theorist of landscape architecture in the United States of the past 40 years, both in terms of the quality of her work and its influence.”

REUBEN RAINEY, University of Virginia

“Taken together, as a related body of work, *The Granite Garden*, the West Philadelphia Landscape Project, and *The Language of Landscape* have no equal in value and significance to the city-building professions.”

IGNACIO BUNSTER, AECOM

“It was through her groundbreaking work that the City of Philadelphia can now boast being the Greenest City in America.”

HOWARD NEUKRUG, Commissioner, Philadelphia Water Department

“The most impressive aspect of Anne’s accomplishments has been the amazing diversity of disciplines in which she has excelled — including scholarship, design literature, teaching, and in professional practice, urban design, planning and landscape architecture. She has ... been a leader in the fusion of teaching and practice ... a major force in humanizing the cityscape with a quality of innovation that is economical, subtle rational, and infinitely satisfying.”

JAMES WINES, SITE

“My work — and the trajectory of my entire generation of landscape and urban designers and scholars — would not have taken its current direction without Spirn’s contributions. Her integration of practice and theory, her intellectual rigor, her innovative subjects, and her generosity as a scholar have made her a model, a mentor, and an inspiration for our discipline.”

JANE WOLFF, University of Toronto

“An entire generation of scholars, planners, designers, environmental activists and urban leaders have benefitted from Anne’s visionary and courageous leadership. Her lasting mark upon the landscape of American urban design is as indelible as it is inclusive. Every year, legions of scholars cite Anne’s work in their articles — a testament to her influence beyond architecture and planning. Her work elevates the value of design for people previously unaware of its importance and ubiquity.”

MATTHEW KLINGLE, Professor of History, Bowdoin College