SUN-A03 The Making of 30 Landscape Photographs

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Alan Ward FASLA, a principal at Sasaki Associates, has photographed landscape designs for over thirty years. He is the author and photographer of the award winning book American Designed Landscapes: A Photographic Interpretation. He has written articles on landscape design, history and photography in professional journals such as Landscape Architecture, Land Forum, and View Camera. His photographs have appeared in over 200 periodicals and books including The Miller Garden: Icon of Modernism, The Rebirth of New York City’s Bryant Park, The FDR Memorial: Designed by Lawrence Halprin and Beatrix Farrand’s American Landscapes: Her Gardens and Campuses.

Overview

This session shares the circumstances surrounding the making of photographs of the Miller Garden, Naumkeag, Bryant Park, the World Trade Center Memorial and other landscapes by Pete Walker, Martha Schwartz, Reed/Hilderbrand and others. A process that is both highly rational in understanding the limitations of photography, but also quite intuitive in the making of emblematic images, will be explored.

Learning Objectives

1) Learn about the distinct limitations and opportunities in representing designed landscapes through photography.
2) Learn from these examples how a photographer interprets a designer’s intentions.
3) Understand how a photographer sets out to make lasting and emblematic images of designed landscapes.
4) Gain an appreciation of the significance of photography in how we perceive and evaluate works of landscape architecture.

Presentation Outline

More works of landscape architecture are known through worldwide publication of photographs than are actually experienced. Through repeated publication, certain works attain significance to reach iconic status as the frequently reproduced images become engrained in our consciousness. This session explores how 30 or so of these photographs were made, including stories of working with designers such as Pete Walker, Martha Schwartz, and Reed Hilderbrand. Certain technical aspects in the making of these images will be presented, especially as it relates to the abstracting tendencies of photography to edit and amplify the distinctive characteristics of these designed landscapes. This session will reveal the complex process - that is both highly rational in understanding the limitations of the medium but also very intuitive in making emblematic and lasting images that effectively represent these designs.

Space and the Landscape: The Miller Garden, Columbus, Indiana
Bringing Kiley to the forefront, making photographs for the exhibition Dan Kiley: Classicist in the Modern Landscape
Walking the site with Dan Kiley and Pete Walker to hear and understand Kiley’s vision
Representing space and using light and to amplify Kiley’s modern spatial sensibility
Using the frame and its geometry to reinforce the ordering geometries of the design

Interpreting Martha Schwartz’s Unique Vision: Experimental Gardens, Whitehead Institute and Javitts Plaza
Preserving and making known experiments that are the ephemeral landscapes of Martha Schwartz
Composition as a way to make simple configurations out of complex environments
The value and precision of large format architectural photography applied to a landscape
The expressive opportunities of color versus black and white photography
Making Gardens Significant: Working with Michael Van Valkenburgh on *Built Landscapes: Gardens of the Northeast*
Representing Fletcher Steele’s varied intentions over time at Naumkeag
Leveraging the abstracting tendencies of photography to simply express Steele’s designs
Why was *Birch Walk* in black and white so frequently reproduced?
The challenge of representing AE Bye’s design work

**Depicting a Designed Sequence: Beatrix Farrand’s Dumbarton Oaks, Rockefeller Garden and Princeton**
Working with Diana Balmori to create emblematic images representing Farrand’s work on gardens and campuses
Representing an integrated relationship of architecture and landscape architecture
Interpreting landscape experience at eye level and connecting distinctly different design expressions
Landscape architecture, photography and the value of subdued light

**Time in the Landscape: Places Designed and Redesigned in Britain**
Showing layers of design
The advantages of a large format panoramic camera to express landscape space
The simplification of complex places: Black and white photography to show space and light

**The Landscape of a City: Rome**
Interpreting the historic development of a city: Topography, water, streets and spaces
Street photography with a large format panoramic camera
A new point of view: Reinterpreting iconic places
Editing out the unessential to transform chaos into a composed configuration

**The Contemporary Garden: Interpreting the Designs of Reed Hilderbrand**
Understanding the designers’ conceptual framework
Showing relationships to architecture and the subtleties of plants
Depicting a designer’s palette: the land, lawns, meadows and stone walls

**Illustrating How People Use Landscapes: Bryant Park, FDR Memorial and The World Trade Center Memorial**
Working with Pete Walker on the Spacemaker Press books
Theatrical compositions with people
The interaction of people with a landscape at Bryant Park, FDR Memorial and World Trade Center Memorial

**Summary**
Limitations of the medium – complexity edited and simplified through the frame
Depicting the experiential point of view and the abstracting tendencies of photography
Representing designers’ intention through photographic interpretation
Role of photography in helping make certain works of landscape architecture attain iconic status
Photographs as a surrogate reality and viewing images with a more critical eye