Water and Landscape: Telling a Story

Water can tell a powerful story of its place in a landscape. As water becomes more valuable, so does its story and meaning. Using a wide variety of water feature case studies, this session explores the initial inspiration and conscious shaping of water as a dynamic landscape element.

Susan Weiler, FASLA, OLIN
John Loomis, ASLA, SWA
Patrick Baldwin, ASLA, Burton Studio
Chris Cook, PE, Affilliate ASLA, CMS Collaborative (Moderator)

OBJECTIVES
How to tell the story of water in relation to a unique architectural expression.
Using water feature design principles which promote sustainability.
How initial inspirations and site context inform water feature design.
Keeping the water story intact while addressing challenges realized during the design process.
Comparing large versus small scale water features, their design possibilities and challenges.
Susan Weiler, FASLA, OLIN
Since joining OLIN nearly 30 years ago, Susan has risen to prominence in the field of landscape architecture as a designer, speaker, and author. Her familiarity with complex engineering systems and construction technologies has been applied to a wide range of projects. These include Berlin’s U.S. Embassy; Mission Bay Master Plan; LDS Conference Center; and Anne d’Harnoncourt Sculpture Garden. Recently she completed design and construction of the Dilworth Park, a new civic plaza and transit center in front of Philadelphia’s historic City Hall. Susan is a longtime University of Pennsylvania faculty member, and regularly teaches at Pantheon Institute in Rome.

John Loomis, ASLA, SWA
“Less is more” typically holds true unless, “more” is masterfully executed.

A principal at SWA, John’s 35 years of ‘built project’ experience and knowledge has touched a wide range of project types, including mixed-use urban developments, institutional and corporate campuses, retirement communities, themed entertainment attractions, and green architecture. Extensive project experience in Japan has provided John with an understanding that we can ‘influence’, as well as, ‘be influenced’ by cultures other than our own to great success and reward. His ‘maker’ spirit and a strong focus towards design realization through technical expertise and the craft of landscape architecture always strengthens the ‘big idea’ behind each endeavor.

Patrick Baldwin, ASLA, Burton Studio
After graduating from the University of Wisconsin in 1999, Patrick joined Burton Studio and began a career that encompasses resort, clubhouse, retail, community, and urban design projects both domestic and international. Striving to “draw it well,” Patrick’s focus has been on the technical execution of projects and to serve as a fierce guardian of the client’s interest from project conception to completion. Recently completed projects include the Resort at Pelican Hill and The Village at Westfield Topanga. The soon to be complete Msheireb Downtown Doha, a 31 hectare mixed-use development in the heart of Doha, Qatar, is among Patrick’s current projects.

Chris Cook, PE, ASLA Affiliate, CMS Collaborative (Moderator)
During his time at CMS, Chris has combined his engineering training with a fervent interest in the aesthetics of water, to produce some of CMS’ most noteworthy and award winning work. Chris has worked on hundreds of domestic and international water feature projects in the urban, corporate, municipal, federal, and retail sectors. His recent projects include the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Headquarters, the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, and the New York Botanical Gardens.
INTRODUCTION
Chris Cook, CMS Collaborative, Moderator

A. Explain inspiration for presentation
   1. In nature, the element of water can be found in many forms and contexts. Similarly, water feature design uses the different forms and contexts of water to tell a site’s story or simply evoke a feeling i.e. “play” (Irvine Spectrum spray ground), “reflection” (Kogod Courtyard scrim), “wealth” (Singapore Convention Center fountain), and “serenity” (New York Botanical Garden constructed wetland).

B. Introduce panel who will cover the following points through both large and small water feature case studies.
   1. Context of design inspiration and story.
   2. Ideas and challenges revealed through design process.

Water features can evoke a range of feelings when all of the senses are taken into account. One can transfer many elements of water in nature to architectural water feature design.

The surrounding hardscape and light are as important as the water itself i.e. a dark stone basin will show light reflecting on the water’s surface and give a sense of increased water depth.

Consultants can help early in the design process, providing design options through precedent images/videos.

When creating a unique water feature, mock-ups during the design phase are critical and often lead to new possibilities.
A. Design inspiration: water in the public realm
   1. Water is one of the most fundamental elements of our natural and built landscape. Its interpretation is fundamental to the process of design, construction and ultimately use. The inspiration should come from the place and program. Both the place and program can range from restoration to highly shaped.

B. Rethinking the containment of water
   Case Study: Mill River
   1. Removal of a dam and channel walls allowed for the total rethinking of how a river could flow through the heart of Stamford, CT.

C. Water and art in the city
   Case Study: Dilworth Plaza
   1. The redesign of an inaccessible and inhospitable plaza at Philadelphia’s City Hall offered the opportunity to completely transform this heart of the City into a vibrant transit hub and civic front door. As a historic public square and pumping station for the City the relevance of water, transportation and industrialization has inspired the design, including a kinetic artwork of atomized water and light by Janet Echelman integrated into the Park’s 215 foot long scrim fountain built over the city’s three major subway lines.

Revitalizing the river as an amenity, connector and multi-modal greenway

Client and process
Working with the Army Corps of Engineers
Social and ecological sustainability
Client, process and collaboration
Design and construction challenges
Art and collective inspiration
Social, ecological and economic sustainability
JOHN LOOMIS, SWA

A. Design inspiration with water in the public realm

1. The visual effect of water; the cooling effect of water; the playful effect of water; the sustainable effect of water; the sound effect of water; the psychological effect of water; the abstract meaning effect of water; the technological effect of water

B. Case study: Tarrant County College, Fort Worth, Texas

1. The use and the meaning of water as a central design element within the campus spine. The presentation will highlight the inspiration and the design idea of using water as a metaphor for the connection between the city, the campus, and Trinity River.

C. Case study: Guthrie Green, Tulsa, Oklahoma

1. The use and meaning of water as an abstraction of renewable energy, high performance landscape park and sustainable feature. Water is designed to promote an understanding on the connectivity of infrastructure and technology to support the energy demands of an urban park.

Harris and Dines Time-Saver Standards for Landscape Architecture, Section 530-Pools and Fountains remains an invaluable reference with regard to water feature basics.

Maximization of water effect by extension of transit time, aeration, daylighting, and background can minimize operating cost.

Observation of precedent water effects, both natural and architectural, can confirm your concepts, however, specified full-scale mockups with actual finish materials are absolutely necessary for proto-typical water effects.

Expect the unexpected. Allow professional time and construction schedule for field adjustments including the designer, water engineering consultant, and construction professional.
PATRICK BALDWIN, Burton Studio

A. Design inspiration with water in the public realm
   1. The historical references of water in the region and as a part of the project site, the functional aspect of water in the public realm, the considerations of reflectivity, emotion, interaction, sound, and architecture created by water in the public realm.

B. Case study: Msheireb Downtown Doha, Qatar
   1. With Msheireb’s relationship to the Arabian Gulf, the history of the site’s old Wadi, and the historical and cultural value of water to the region, water feature design was a significant consideration for this project.
   2. The master plan uses water in simple forms at Mosques, schools and heritage building courtyards. The Barahat al Nouk, the central gathering space for the city, aspired to use water in a tranquil and reflective way, with the opportunity to also bring play and entertainment based water into the space. The course of the old Wadi was to be abstracted and remembered in a contemporary water element.

The design process in a diverse culture and challenging environment
Representation of history while looking towards the future
Sustainability and efficient water feature design
Water as a cultural reference
Water within the mixed-use public realm
Implementation of concept to reality
Q + A / DISCUSSION

SOURCES
http://www.theolinstudio.com/flash#/profile/landing
http://www.swagroup.com/
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