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Reporting the Cultural Landscape
A GUIDE FOR LAND MANAGERS

If you are charged with restoring a section of a historic farmstead in a national park, or preserving the fragile landscape of an ancient Native American pueblo, your landscape architecture training might take you only so far. The site could already possess a cultural landscape report (CLR) to guide its management, but more than likely, you might be tasked with creating one from scratch. A new guide from the National Park Service (NPS) can clarify the process.

The material accomplishes three main objectives: 1) to illustrate the purpose of a CLR and how it is used, 2) to define the content, process, and format of such a report, and 3) to provide technical information about the process. The main document, A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques, provides a complete overview of the CLR process, including a model outline and discussion of site histories, existing conditions, analysis, and treatment.

The package also features Landscape Lines, a new collection of technical documents about cultural landscape research and treatment. The initial set of fourteen documents includes subjects such as graphic documentation guidelines, geophysical survey techniques, and compliance with preservation law. Rounding out the package are appendices that provide general reference materials.

“The cultural landscape program is one of the newest programs in the Park Service, beginning in the early 1980s and becoming formalized in the 1990s,” says Robert R. Pago, ASLA, manager of the NPS Cultural Landscape Program and one of the guide’s three coauthors (with Cathy A. Gilbert and Susan A. Dolan). “As a new program, the need for technical assistance to ensure the protection of these resources was great. [The CLR] is the basic tool for identifying the most appropriate treatment and use of a cultural landscape.”

Although the guide was designed specifically for NPS managers, it is quite useful for others doing similar work. A wide range of land managers provided input into the documents—including contractors, academics, and preservationists.

Page notes that, while the guide is widely applicable, managers must be careful not to simply copy the CLR outline. “It’s not meant to be a prescriptive cookbook,” he says. “Because of the nature of these resources—and they are so diverse—you really need the professionals who judge how the guide should be interpreted and applied to an individual project. A CLR might address a comprehensive restoration of an entire landscape; that requires an exhaustive level of research. In other cases a CLR might address the stabilization of a portion of a landscape or an individual feature, requiring research focused on that portion or feature.”

The overall package garnered an ASLA award in communications last year. The ASLA jury considered it a “very well-done methodology” that would offer a consistency of approach and still allow interpretation.

The guide and Landscape Lines are available for $28 from the Government Printing Office, Order No. 024-005-01187-1; call 202-512-1800. (The appendices are not included, but a list of contact information to obtain them is provided.)
the way men do, [but] every once in a while you need that
detail person to come in and tie up all the loose ends.” As CELA
president, Westphal plans to lead an extensive strategic
planning effort.

“It does make a difference
to have women in leadership
roles,” says Paine, a landscape
architecture professor at the
University of Guelph, Ontario.
“It makes it that much easier
for the next set of women to be
leaders. It opens the doors. Peo-
ples see other people doing it,
and it seems more natural.” As
president of CSLA, Paine will
work to encourage all facets of
the membership—from all
over Canada—to get involved.

Not all glass ceilings have
been smashed, however. Of the
women in the profession, the
number of minorities—espe-
cially African-Americans—
is still abominably low. This
phenomenon of women in
power is certainly welcome,
but it is only the beginning.

Getting
Your Veggies
AN INSTALLATION OF PLANTS
BY TOBIAS REHBERGER

This summer, the Museum
of Contemporary Art in
Chicago will be host to a back-
yard garden on a grand scale.
In one of the most ambitious
presentations of his burgeon-
ing career, German artist Tobias Rehber-
ger will create a large living
sculpture out of vegetables
and herbs.

The MCA exhibit is des-
dined to make dynamic use of
the museum’s architectural
space. Rehberger’s installation
will feature circular patches
and walking paths that will
create abstract swashes of color
through the use of various
plants. More than twenty
species will be planted along
the museum’s front plaza
and staircase, through the second-
floor lobby and atrium, and
out onto the terrace at the
back of the museum. Plants
will include purple sage, pars-
ley, Swiss chard, thyme, fennel,
and sunflower.

Rehberger is best known for
creating works of art that
study the gray areas
between fine art and
design, says associate
curator Dominic
Molon. The MCA
exhibit is a larger
version of an exhibition
staged at the Berkeley
Art Museum last year.
MCA is working with land-
scape architects—Scott Byron,

ASLA, of Chicago, and the firm
of Marvin Hermann and Asso-
ciates—to construct the piece.
Planters will be, on average,
nineteen inches high to
accommodate the proper
amount of soil and a drainage
system. Pathways will be
raised to a height of eight to
ten inches to avoid creating
too much of a barrier between
plants and visitors who might
want to take a closer look.

And this is allowed. The ex-
hibit is somewhat experi-
mental, Molon says, offering an
opportunity to judge human
nature. Will visitors treat the
work as art and keep their dis-
tance, or will they actually
lean over to sniff the basil or
pluck a strawberry?

The installation opens on
July 1 and closes September 2.
For more information, call
MCA at 312-280-2660 or visit
www.mcachicago.org.

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