

OCULUS

an eye on new york architecture

RESTORING CITY PARKS

The New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects

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Photo: Joel Greenberg

Staten Island: Figure Eight Lake, Greenbelt

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Oculus

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RESTORING

The Continuing Design of

by Jean McClintock Gardner

Photos by Joel Greenberg

Volume 48, Number 7, March 1987



The New York Chapter of
 the American Institute of Architects
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The following article and photographs are the result of a Ten Year Survey of New York's Natural Areas conducted by Earth Environmental Group, a non-profit environmental education and design collaborative dedicated to increasing public awareness of the Earth. The Survey will be published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., and has been funded by grants from the Exxon Corporation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the J.M. Kaplan Fund, the Astor Foundation, the New York State Department of Parks, Consolidated Edison, Manufacturers Hanover Trust, and others.

New York City possesses the most diversified natural landscape of any city in the United States.

Three hundred years ago this magnificent water-bound city was a colonial outpost. Today it is one of the world's most powerful urban centers with a population of over seven million people as well as an extraordinary number of natural habitats. The familiar images of Times Square, the Statue of Liberty, and the World Trade Center are superimposed on a living ground of great complexity.

Hills, valleys, bedrock, bluffs, ridges, beaches, plains, woods, fields, and meadows burst forth within the city. Threading its way through, around, over, and under these unexpected land forms is the city's extensive water system. Fjord, estuary, bay, cove, inlet, river, stream, lake, spring, sound, ocean—all can be found. There are places in the city that are both land and water, those rich transitional zones of wondrous salt and fresh water marshes.

CITY PARKS

New York City's Natural Landscape

Jean Gardner is an environmental theorist and consultant currently teaching in the graduate program of Architecture and Design Criticism at Parsons School of Design. She is co-director of the Earth Environmental Group.

Joel Greenberg, photographer, is co-director of the Earth Environmental Group and teaches photography at New York University.

Staten Island, Wolf's Pond Park



Yet, inevitably, more than 150 years of rapid urbanization, including the development of an extensive park system, have taken their toll on New York's segment of the earth's surface. The years of neglect of public education about appropriate uses for natural park areas, the consequent mis- and over-use of parks, the accumulated impact of the Robert Moses era of treating parks principally as recreational facilities, extremely restricted maintenance, and landscape deterioration caused by natural forces have all contributed to the destruction of New York City's rich natural landscape.

Time for Revitalization

By the 1970s public concern about the condition of this landscape triggered interest in revitalizing it. Adrienne Bresnan, now Director of Planning for New York's Department of Parks and Recreation, and Joseph Bresnan, now Director of New York's Landmarks Preservation Commission, took first steps. By 1973 they had drawn up a Master Plan for Central Park and by

1980 a Preservation Plan for Prospect Park. Today these parks have Administrators — Elizabeth Barlow in Central Park and Tupper Thomas in Prospect Park — whose offices have drafted additional plans for guiding the difficult process of park restoration.

In both parks the intrusion over the years of vegetation, facilities, and uses not intended by the park designers, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, along with years of limited maintenance, are complicating efforts at what might be called true historic restoration: strict adherence to the park's original plans. Ironically, such an adherence is impossible to achieve in Central and Prospect Parks because their original park plans are incomplete.

These two parks indicate the central issue in revitalizing New York City's natural landscape. Given the background of their design, what do we mean when we talk about revitalizing them? Do we mean taking

a park back to its presettlement form, or perhaps back to the first years of its transformation by human design, or perhaps back to a selected point in its history as a park when its design is judged to be mature, or possibly into the future with an inspired combination of all the latter.

What is emerging, instead of true historic restoration, is a curious blend of: artifacts from many different periods in each park's history, landscaping that is beginning to be more grounded in ecological principles than Olmsted's and Vaux's was, and uses that reflect the habits of twentieth century urban residents. A clear definition of this type of hybrid park, which is like nothing Olmsted and Vaux ever imagined, has yet to appear.

Currently, the city's Department of Parks and Recreation is budgeted to spend \$154,000,000 in capital projects to revitalize the land under its jurisdiction. It comprises about 13 percent of the city's total area.

Restoring City Parks

Manhattan: Central Park

1. *The Pond at 59th St. and Central Park South*
2. *The Loch Waterfall*
3. *The Pool at 102nd St. and Central Park West*
4. *The lake south of The Ramble*



1

Consequently, just as we are asking ourselves in the city's architectural areas whether we should save certain buildings or neighborhoods from the bulldozer, so in our parks we are faced today with similar questions: which park areas should be restored, which renovated, and which changed completely? We are also asking ourselves what this new system of revitalized green areas within New York City's complex natural landscape will look like.

The Natural Geology

The dramatic diversity of land and water within New York City results principally from the ancient impact of the city's special geology. The transforming forces that laid the city's foundations were fire and water. Intense heat produced an extraordinary mountain range 400 million years ago. When we encounter bedrock in The Bronx, Upper Manhattan, and Central Staten Island today, we come into direct contact with the worn-down stumps of these ancient mountains. Four different



2

"Just as we are asking which buildings in neighborhoods should be saved, so in our parks we are faced with similar questions."



3



4

Restoring City Parks

Brooklyn: Prospect Park

1. *Near the Vale of Cashmere*
2. *Forest near the Vale of Cashmere*
3. *Lake in Prospect Park*



1

times intense cold buried the city area under a mile-high glacier; the last one began about 75,000 years ago. This continental ice sheet left across Central Queens, Northern Brooklyn, and Staten Island at its line of maximum southern advance a series of low hills and shallow depressions known as the terminal moraine. The flat, sandy coastal plain that forms Southern Queens and most of Brooklyn resulted from the outwash of the melting glacier. Boulders from distant lands tell the story of the ice sheet's path as well. The ice wrenched them from their homes, dragging them across the earth's bedrock in patterns still apparent today in the city's natural areas. Now these ancient gypsies reside throughout New York, silent testaments to the powerful forces released by the cooling of the earth.

As the glacier advanced and retreated within what would become New York City, its geological setting developed into habitats for plants and animals. After the glacier melted, wind-blown



2

"... the three words most frequently used to describe design efforts in parks today: rehabilitation, restoration, and redevelopment."



Botanic Gardens

1. *Japanese Garden, Brooklyn Botanic Garden*
2. *The Bronx River, The New York Botanical Garden*

Manhattan

3. *Inwood Hill Park, Hudson River and Palisades*
4. *Indian Cave, Inwood Hill Park*

seeds from distant plants landed here and began to grow. Gradual warming of the climate continually changed the local flora that could survive, which in turn affected the animal types that could live here.

The continued visibility today of this geologically based nature within New York City, however, stems from visionary work that was accomplished during the 19th century by another of nature's most powerful forces—humanity. Such civic-minded individuals as the editor William Cullen Bryant and the writer and landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted joined forces to develop an urban environment that would, in their judgment, be suitable for human habitation.

Olmsted and the people who worked with and for him envisioned countless human activities occurring in a nature ordered into three major urban features:

1. Relatively small green spaces for a variety of human purposes,
2. medium-sized "scenic parks," and
3. larger reservations for encountering "wild" nature.

To a remarkable degree, this vision of urban nature continues to be the popular idea of the relationship between nature and a city. In places like New York City Olmsted advocated small neighborhood spaces for strolling, open-air nurseries, and playgrounds. He also favored frequent sites throughout the city for locating "field games, athletic exercises, parades, open-air concerts, political or social gatherings, fireworks, flower shows, botanical and zoological collections, decorative gardening," historic buildings, landmarks, and exceptional land forms.

For most of these recreational and cultural facilities, he provided designs that formalized nature. When the areas preserved an outstanding natural place, he applied to it his characteristic pastoral and picturesque styles of composing nature. The former emphasizes green



1



2

"Olmsted . . . envisioned . . . nature ordered into three major urban features: small green spaces, medium sized 'scenic parks,' and larger reservations for encountering 'wild' nature."



3



4

meadows and placid water bodies while the latter favors rugged, forest-like areas and flowing or tumbling water.

Olmsted and his partner, the architect Calvert Vaux, developed Tompkins Park in Brooklyn specifically as an outdoor space for promenading, while they designed Fort Green Park to preserve a historic site. In Manhattan they laid out Riverside and Morningside Parks to take advantage of unusual topographic features.

His sons, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and John Hull Olmsted, advised on the design of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, which the landscape architect Harold Capron laid out to contain outstanding botanical collections. Olmsted Jr. developed Manhattan's Fort Tryon Park both to preserve a historic site and to display a major topographical feature. They planned Sakura Park in Manhattan for strolling.

cont'd. p. 16

Policy, Consensus and Times Square

by Randolph C. Croxton

The second most frequently asked question after "How much time does it take to be President of the Chapter?" is "What do you do?" The recent process of responding and testifying to the proposed zoning test changes for the Times Square Special Use District provides a clear insight into one aspect of that question.

The quick answer to the question, of course, is that while presidents may have specific programs or goals to pursue in their year, the central, ongoing responsibility is as a participant in the formation of policy. Policy is not determined by the president, but grows from the consensus of the Executive Committee and thereby (hopefully) the membership at large. Committees, members, and past Chapter officers and directors of the Chapter freely contribute their opinions to the Committee when an issue of common interest hits the monthly agenda.

The first "look" at the Times Square issue came out of the Zoning Committee following their review. Although generally supportive of the efforts of the City Planning Commission (CPC), it raised numerous questions and called for further review.

Shortly thereafter an analysis of the impact of the proposed text was prepared by Ted Liebman (Chapter President 1983-84) on behalf of a client pursuing a new project within the district. In an analysis of existing vs. proposed degree of change under the text, change was highlighted.

Since some of the members of the Zoning Committee were also working on projects that would be affected by the changes, their perspective could not fail to address the practitioner.

Paul Segal (Chapter President 1985-86) and George Lewis (Executive Director 1969-86) articulated the other side of the coin. George recalled the Chapter's role in organizing the first Black-out of Times Square four years ago and the consistent record of the

Chapter in support of specific zoning action to strengthen and protect Times Square. Paul traced the coordinating and supportive role that existed between CPC and the Chapter in the evolution of the proposals in both his year and Terry Williams's (Chapter President 1984-85).

Another complicating factor was that the proposed text changes constituted anything but light reading and demanded much more than a casual review. All in all I felt very confident that the handling of this issue had the potential to be a mis-step of childhood nightmare proportions.

A few questions and comments at that time were:

1. How can you represent your members if you ignore the real demands of practicing in the City of New York?
2. How can the Chapter break from or even appear to break from a consistent pattern of support on the issue of Times Square?
3. Won't our objections to specific parts of the text be interpreted as a negative response to the whole?
4. The forceful presentation of the practitioner's point of view will help make this a better piece of zoning law.

The consensus was reached (for the CPC hearing in December 1986) to support the text changes and frame our additional comments in the manner of "ways to further strengthen" the proposal. These further comments included observations on the amount of illumination required, the further need to confirm the feasibility of combining signage and windows as explored by CPC in a prototype and a call for more flexibility in the zoning, so that the wide range of geometries and sign visibility from site to site could still be creatively addressed if in the spirit of the zoning.

Our statement supported the concept of basing illumination and signage

goals on a prototypical block that embodies Times Square at its characteristically intense use rather than an average of what currently exists.

CPC responded to the various positions expressed in the hearing in written form and a number of restrictions were adjusted or removed. The proposal then went to the Board of Estimate for review and action.

In testifying before the Board of Estimate our statement was brief, clear, and in full support. We, along with numerous others appearing in support (no one appeared in opposition!) felt that this was a good first step and would be refined through use and/or the next text change.

The story is worth repeating because it gives an insight to the process of gaining consensus, the difficulty thereof, and the inherent dilemma posed by a profession active in the physical implementation of the built environment and yet called upon to channel, restrict, and define that very process in the common interest.

Names and News

The Ehrenkrantz Group & Eckstut have been commissioned by Samuel LeFrak to design a new master plan and buildings for his 560-acre Jersey City development across the Hudson River from Battery Park, for which Eckstut and his former partner Alex Cooper designed the plan. The Jersey City site "has five miles of water frontage, more than any project I've ever seen," says Eckstut . . . Arthur Rosenblatt has been elected a Fellow of the National Institute for Architectural Education "for his distinguished service to both architecture and education." Rosenblatt was recently named Director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington . . . Gunter Standke and Michael Palladino have been named Partners of Richard Meier & Partners Architects . . . The Building Systems Integration Handbook, sponsored by the AIA and published by John Wiley & Sons, was given a Citation in *Progressive Architecture's* 34th Annual P/A Awards program . . . Stephen A. Kliment is giving an evening course on Marketing Promotion for Design Firms beginning March 4th at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design . . . Voorsanger & Mills, Architects, have announced the appointment of two new Associates: Tom Brashares and Lewis Jacobsen . . . Haines Lundberg Wachler are the subject of an industry profile entitled "Anatomy of a perfect marriage" in the September, 1986 issue of *Building Design & Construction* . . . The New York City Public Development Corporation (PDC) in cooperation with the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs is soliciting proposals for the cultural facilities component of its South Ferry Plaza development. PDC is looking for a performing arts organization, or a consortium of organizations, capable of developing a cultural facility to enhance the South Ferry complex. March 13 is the deadline for proposals. For more information: James Kelly, Department of Cultural Affairs, 974-1150 . . . The Division of Historic Preservation of Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture Planning and Preservation is sponsoring a series of

Coming Chapter Events

- Tuesday, March 10, 6:30 pm. Auditorium of the Time & Life Building, 1271 Avenue of the Americas. The Art & Architecture Committee is sponsoring a panel discussion on the historic collaboration of artists and architects in the design of Rockefeller Center. Richard Guy Wilson, associate professor and former chairman at the school of architecture, the University of Virginia, and co-curator of *The Machine Age in America*, the Brooklyn Museum exhibition that just closed, will be the moderator. Panelists will be Dr. Carol Krinsky, professor of fine arts at NYU and author of *Rockefeller Center* (Oxford University Press, 1978); Alan Balfour, professor of architecture at Georgia Institute of Technology and author of *Rockefeller Center, Architecture As Theatre* (McGraw Hill, 1978); and Walter Kilham Jr., who worked for Raymond Hood and was part of the Rockefeller Center project team. Seating is limited to 200 and reservations must be obtained from Cathanne Piesla 838-9670. Only those whose names appear on the reservation list will be admitted.
- Tuesday, March 10, 6 pm. The Urban Center. Computer Applications Committee is sponsoring an open seminar on Legal Aspects of Computers in Architectural Practice by Gerald Walpin, partner with the New York law firm of Rosenman and Colin. Architects, engineers,

consultants, and attorneys are urged to attend. For more information: Tom Hernandez, 309-9500.

- Wednesday, March 11, 6 pm. The Steelcase, Inc. Showroom, 245 Park Ave. The Interiors Committee has been asked to participate in a symposium concerning the impact of the electronic office environment on people. Besides Steelcase, sponsors of the event are the Metropolitan Solar Energy Society, Inc. and *Interiors Magazine*. A reception will follow the discussion.
- Monday, March 16, 6 pm/7:15 pm. The Members Gallery. The Legacy of the Masters: Student Work Under Gropius, Mies, Kahn is the latest show organized by the Exhibitions Committee. There will be a panel discussion featuring James I. Freed, John C. Harkness, Alexander A. Messinger, and James Stewart Polshek moderated by Bartholomew Voorsanger followed by a reception.
- Tuesday, March 24, 5:20 pm. The Urban Center. The Architecture for Education Committee is sponsoring a dialogue including the architects, owners, and users of Public School 380 (NYC Board of Education), Boys Club of Jersey City, St. Albans Recreational Center (NYC Parks Dept.) Jewish Theological Seminary, York College (CUNY). Participating architects: Richard Dattner; Oppenheimer, Brady, Vogelstein; Medhat Salam Associates; Gruzen Samton Steinglass.

lectures beginning March 2 (see calendar) on "Preservation in a Changing World." Besides James Marston Fitch and Antoinette Downing, the speakers will include John Brinckerhoff Jackson, landscape historian, and Charles D. Breitel, former Chief Justice of the NYS Court of Appeals, who upheld the NYC Landmarks Preservation Law in writing the majority opinion in Penn Central Co. vs. The City of New York. The 1972 case involved the landmark status of Grand Central Terminal . . . Beyer Blinder Belle have prepared plans to restore the exterior of the 1920s Life Saver building in Port Chester, New York, and convert the interior into a 198-unit condominium . . . Among those selected by the American Institute of Architects to receive 1987 Institute Honors at the AIA Convention (June 19-22) are: Artist Jennifer Bartlett who "has successfully collaborated with numerous architects to produce public works of outstanding quality." Her ideas are "relentlessly visual, artistic, and urban." Carter Wiseman who

"writes with clarity and verve about both architecture and urban affairs, and always backs up his strongly held opinions with facts." Jules Fisher & Paul Marantz Inc., who were cited for "their understanding of light as an architectural material which supports the ideas of architectural space and the variety of human activities it contains." Rizzoli International Publications Inc., for its "support of current architectural ideas, whether established or just emerging, for the craft and care which it has shown for its leadership in proving that architecture can be appealing to the general public." Lewis Davis was chairman of this year's jury . . . "Metropolis 87" World Congress will be held in Mexico City May 19-21 with the purpose of "working for a better life in all the metropolises." For more information: Richard T. Anderson, Regional Plan Association in New York, 398-1140 . . . The American Society of Interior Designers will hold its 1987 National Conference in Toronto, July 22-25, with the theme of

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OCULUS NYC / AIA MAR 87

*Send Oculus Calendar information to:
New York Chapter/AIA, 457 Madison
Avenue, N.Y. 10022.*

*Oculus welcomes information for the
calendar pertaining to public events
about architecture and the other design
professions. It is due in writing by the 1st
of the month for the following issue.*

*Because of the time lag between
information received and printed, final
details of events are likely to change. It is
recommended that events be checked
with sponsoring institutions before
attending.*

MONDAY 2

PRESERVATION IN A CHANGING WORLD

James Marston Fitch on "Historic Preservation: Its Impact on Contemporary Design" in lecture series at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture Planning and Preservation. 6 pm. Wood Auditorium, Avery Hall. 280-3414.

MONDAY 9

SEMINAR

Stone in Contemporary Architecture moderated by Paul Goldberger with panelists John Burgee, Malcolm Holzman, Cesar Pelli, and Henry Cobb. Co-sponsored by NYC/AIA and the Italian Marble Center. 5-7 pm. The Puck Bldg., 295 Lafayette St. 980-1500.

CONTINUING EVENTS

EXHIBITION

The Architecture of Alvaro Siza. Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture Planning and Preservation. 100 Level, Avery Hall, 280-3414. Closes March 27.

CRYSTAL PALACES

Views of Crystal Palaces in London and New York. Cooper-Hewitt Museum. 860-6868. Closes April 26.

TUESDAY 3

GOthic REVIVAL LIBRARY

Inaugural installation of the final 19th-century period room to be installed in The American Wing. The room comes from an 1859 Gothic Revival house by Clarke Withers. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. 879-5500.

TUESDAY 10

NYC/AIA PANEL

The Historic collaboration of Artists & Architects in the Design of Rockefeller Center sponsored by the Art & Architecture Committee. 6:30 pm. Auditorium, Time & Life Building. Jane Cohn 696-8789.

NYC/AIA SEMINAR

Sponsored by the Computer Applications Committee on Legal Aspects of Computers in Architectural Practice. 6 pm. The Urban Center

PAUL KLEE

Museum of Modern Art. 708-9400. Closes May 5.

EXHIBITION

The Golden Age of Ottoman Architecture: Sinan, Sultan Suleyman's Court Architect. The Octagon Museum, Washington, DC. 626-7467. Closes May 24.

WEDNESDAY 4

ADPSR LECTURE

Jim Morgan on Architecture and Planning in Nicaragua. 6:30 pm. Room 300, NYU Main Building, 32 Waverly Place. Contact: Magda Salvessen 334-8104

LECTURE SERIES

"About Architecture" by Jose Oubriere, Assoc. Professor of Architecture. Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture Planning and Preservation. 6:30 pm. 280-3414.

WEDNESDAY 11

NYC/AIA SYMPOSIUM

The Electronic Office Environment concerning the impact of the electronic office environment on people, sponsored by the Interiors Committee. 6 pm. The Steelcase Showroom, 245 Park Ave.

SEMINAR

Preservation of Stone in Architecture moderated by Norman Weiss of the Center for Preservation Research, Columbia University. Co-sponsored by the Italian Marble Center and New York Landmarks Conservancy. 5-7 pm. The Puck Bldg., 295 Lafayette St. 980-1500.

EXHIBITION

A celebration of Architectural Heritage Year sponsored by MTA's Art for Transit office and the Preservation League of NYS. 42nd St.-Ave of the Americas subway station. 878-7178. Closes May 29.

EXHIBITION

Gaudi in Context: Building in Barcelona, 1873-1926. Cooper-Hewitt Museum. 860-6868. Closes June 9.

THURSDAY 5

THURSDAY 12

EXTERIOR STONE SYMPOSIUM

Focusing on advanced technologies for the use of natural stone on building exteriors, organized by Tishman Research Corporation. 8 am-5 pm. McGraw-Hill Auditorium, 1221 Avenue of the Americas. 512-2815.

EXHIBITION

Harlem Renaissance: Art of Black America. The Studio Museum in Harlem. 144 W. 225th St. 864-4500. Closes Aug. 30.

FRIDAY 6

CONFERENCE

The American Institute of Architects Interiors Committee is hosting a one-day conference on interior design education. Boston Design Center. Ravi Waldon: 202-626-7429.

EXHIBITION, MARCH 7-15

"Marble: Italian Culture, Technology and Design" highlighting 20th-century Italian and international design and craftsmanship in stone sponsored by the Italian Marble Center. 12-4 pm. daily. The Puck Bldg., 295 Lafayette St. 980-1500.

FRIDAY 13

SEMINAR ON SAT. MARCH 14

Sculpture in the Landscape moderated by Patterson Sims, Associate Curator, Whitney Museum of American Art. Co-sponsored by the Italian Marble Center and the Architectural League. 2-4 pm. The Puck Building, 295 Lafayette St. 980-1500.

MONDAY 16

EXHIBITION/DISCUSSION/ RECEPTION

The Legacy of the Masters: Student Work Under Gropius, Mies, Kahn. NYC/AIA Members Gallery. Discussion 6:00 p.m., Reception 7:15 p.m.

GAUDI AND JUJOL

On film and video by Dennis L. Dollens, editor, SITES Magazine. 6:30-8 pm. Cooper-Hewitt Museum. 860-6868.

MONDAY 23

LECTURE

Stanley Abercrombie on "George Nelson's Design Legacy." 6:15 pm. Cooper-Hewitt Museum. 860-6868.

MONDAY 30

EXHIBITION

The Architecture of Hiromi Fujii. Introductory talk by John Whiteman. 6:30 pm. Columbia Graduate School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation. 280-3414. Exhibition closes April 24.

PRESERVATION IN A CHANGING WORLD

Antoinette Downing, Chairman, Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, in lecture series at Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture Planning & Preservation. 6 pm. Avery Hall. 280-3414.

TUESDAY 17

WORKSHOP IN DRAWING

Six-week course in Pictorial Arrangement sponsored by Classical America (March 17-April 21). 6:30-9:30 pm. National Academy School of Fine Arts, 5 E. 89 St. For more information: PL3-4376.

TUESDAY 24

NYC/AIA SEMINAR

A dialogue including the architects, owners and users of Public School 380 (NYC Board of Education), Boys Club of Jersey City, St. Albans Recreation Center (NYC Parks Dept.), Jewish Theological Seminary, York College (CUNY). Sponsored by the Architecture for Education Committee. 5:30 pm. The Urban Center.

EXHIBITION

Louis Sullivan: The Function of Ornament. Cooper-Hewitt Museum, 860-6868. Closes June 28.

TUESDAY 31

DEADLINE

For submissions in the 1987 Architectural Photography Competition sponsored by the St. Louis Chapter/AIA (see *Oculus*, January, pg. 14). St. Louis Chapter/AIA, 911 Washington Ave. \$225. St. Louis, MO 63101-1203. 314-621-3484.

WEDNESDAY 18

LECTURE SERIES

Robert A.M. Stern on The City as a Workable Work of Art in New-York Historical Society series on New York: Past, Present and Future. 6:30 pm. 170 Central Park West at 77 St. 873-3400 ext. 46.

WEDNESDAY 25

WESTWEEK 1987

Theme: Structures: Style and Substance. Pacific Design Center, West Hollywood, CA. 213-657-0800.

SEMINAR

"Water Penetration is Preventable." 11:30 am. To register: Glen-Gery Brickwork Design Center, Amster Yard, 211 E. 49 St. 319-5577. No charge.

LECTURE SERIES

"Kasimir Malevitch and the Critique of 'Objectivity'" . . . by Rainer Crone in Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture Planning & Preservation. 6:30 pm. 280-3414.

WEDNESDAY 1 APRIL

ADPSR EVENT

"The Women of Greenham Common." video and talk by Susan Kleckner, discussion on civil disobedience. 6:30 pm. For location and information: Magda Salvesen 334-8104.

LECTURE

"The American Sources of Architecture and Urban Form in Stalinist Russia" by Jean-Louis Cohen, Ecole d'Architecture, Paris-Villemin. Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture Planning & Preservation. 6:30 pm. Avery Hall. 280-3414.

THURSDAY 19

CONFERENCE

Roof Problem Analysis and Reroofing Options, sponsored by the National Roofing Contractors Association. New York Marriott Marquis, 1535 Broadway. To register and more information: NRCA Education Dept., One O'Hare Centre, 6250 River Rd., Rosemont, Ill. 60018. 312-318-6722.

THURSDAY 26

RICHARD KELLY LUNCHEON

Robert A.M. Stern will be the keynote speaker. The University Club, 1 W. 54 St. For more information: Peter Golden 777-4400.

FRIDAY 20

EXHIBITION OPENING ON SUN., MARCH 22

Edward Larrabee Barnes: Museum Designs. The Katonah Gallery, 28 Bedford Rd., Katonah, NY 914-232-9555. Closes May 24.

FRIDAY 27

CONFERENCE

The Society of Environmental Graphic Designers Regional Conference will address "Styles of Environmental Graphic Design" (March 27-29). The Friday evening reception is on Regional Style with John Margolies. 6:30-9:30 pm. The Urban Center. For information: Sue Gould 645-0550.



Beyer Blinder Belle: The Lifesavers Building in Port Chester.

Names and News

Call for Recommendations

Letters

cont'd. from p. 11

"The Pursuit of Perfection" . . . *Oculus* deeply regrets the death of **Arthur Drexler**, the Museum of Modern Art's curator and director of the Department of Architecture and Design. In 1982 he was the recipient of NYC/AIA's Award of Merit, which stated that "His medium of communication—exhibitions—has been encyclopedic."

Awards, Scholarships

Harvard University has announced that the \$25,000 **Prince of Wales Prize in Urban Design** will be awarded biannually to the designer or group of designers responsible for a completed urban design project. For more information: Ann LeRoy, GSD Communications Office 617-495-4004 Nominations are being accepted for the **AIA Minority/Disadvantaged Scholarship Program** "to encourage and assist students, primarily recent high school graduates, from minority and/or disadvantaged backgrounds, to pursue a career in architecture." April 1, 1987, is the deadline for nominations, for which forms are available from: The American Institute of Architects, 1735 New York Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20006.

Le Corbusier Tour

In celebration of **Le Corbusier's 100th birthday** this year, the **American School of Fine Arts, Fontainebleau France**, is reserving 30 places for an architectural tour of **Le Corbusier's** principal works in France for architects and educators. The tour leaves Fontainebleau on July 26 and returns on August 2. April 15 is the deadline for reservations. For more information: Fontainebleau Schools, Inc., 150 W. 85 St. 580-2010, or **Alan Schwartzman** (president of the organization) 599-7290.

New Addresses

Alexander Kouzmanoff has announced the removal of his firm's office to 323 W. 39 Street, 12th floor . . . **Carl Meinhardt** has opened his office at 520 Broadway at Spring Street . . . **Joyce Roy** is opening her facilities and three-level store-front space, **Space Constructs, Inc.**, at 219 W. 85 Street to other architects or allied professionals.

The Chapter committees on **Nominations and Fellows**, and the **Jury for the Medal of Honor and Award of Merit** will begin the process of selection within their respective areas and solicit input from Chapter members.

Once the ballots for those to become the **Nominating Committee** are tallied, a meeting schedule is put in place and the Committee reviews lists of member names for individuals to fill open positions within the elective committees of the Chapter. Elective committees are **Fellows, Finance**, and the **Jury for the Medal of Honor and Award of Merit**.

The **Fellows Committee** meets to develop a list of Chapter nominees for advancement to **FAIA**. The committee makes its selection through a review of eligible (as per Institute criteria) Chapter members. You may know information about a particular member that qualifies the individual for consideration. Be sure to write the **Fellows Committee**, and include a brief outline of the member's outstanding contributions to the profession.

The **Jury for the Medal of Honor and Award of Merit** meets to select individuals and organizations to receive annual Chapter awards bestowed at our Annual Meeting in June. You can let the committee know of some worthy ideas and ask for their consideration by writing to the "Chairman, Jury for the Medal of Honor and Awards of Merit" at Chapter headquarters.

Member input is a valuable resource we want to hear from you!

Dear Editor:

I must register my great concern over the appearance of conflict of interest in the 1986 Architectural Projects Awards.

That one third of the awards were given to members of the Awards Committee should be a source of embarrassment for the Chapter. The Awards Committee selects and invites jurors, and pays their expenses. Should it not be restrained from submitting work as well?

The jury has expressed a strong stylistic stand in Mr. Frampton's remarks, published in *Oculus*. Is it appropriate for the AIA to take a polemical stand on style?

The Executive Committee should set appropriate standards for the conduct of future awards programs.

Frances Halsband, FAIA

R.M. Kliment & Frances Halsband Architects

Dear Editor:

There are times when, as a practicing architect, I feel I really should be an AIA member. As I slowly forget middle-brow marketing ploys like "Value Architecture," and fiascos like "Architectural Technology" from the national organization, I begin to think that maybe the New York Chapter does in fact serve a useful purpose.

It now seems that not only would membership be worthwhile, but being on the Chapter's Awards Committee (or perchance being a co-chair) would qualify me for between one and three "what might be" awards. Actually, this is unfair. It seems I need only be a former Museum of Modern Art employee to win three awards.

Therefore, please send me a membership application as soon as possible. I would not want to miss out on the annual Stern/Meier awards for built projects.

Alan Orenbuch

Samuel J De Santo and Associates Architects Planners

Licensing of Interior Designers

by Lenore M. Lucey

The New York Chapter/AIA endorses the certification of Interior Designers rather than licensing. The basis for our distinction in opposing the legislative initiative of the Interior Designers for Licensing in New York (IDLNY) is outlined below.

The sole basis for the licensing of any profession is the protection of the public health, welfare, and safety. Licensing establishes education and experience requirements, which must be met before a professional may apply to be examined in their area of expertise. In architecture the accepted candidate may then sit for the licensing exam, and upon passing, is authorized to use their license number, and a stamp or seal as visible proof of their demonstrated competency.

The interior designers' proposed legislation does not meet the criteria established for licensing: that it protect the public health, welfare, and safety.

Certification is a process whereby a professional organization sets standards of education and experience for its members and provides, through testing, or otherwise as it deems necessary, validation that the professional meets those criteria.

The professional recognition that interior designers seek can be obtained through the certification procedure. Certification gives interior designers control over their profession and provides a method to demonstrate to consumers and other professionals that certificate holders have met stringent requirements and have been judged by their peers to be highly qualified.

The educational and training requirements of the State of New York for the licensing of architects and engineers have been rigorously established. The education and training of interior designers, while in excess of any existing requirements for decorators, does not meet the criteria established for architects and engineers. State standards cover such

subjects as structural, electrical, and mechanical engineering, which are taught in architecture schools but are not addressed in interior designer curricula.

New York State currently has a method in place for interior designers who wish to take prime responsibility for a project, and file drawings before the Building Department, to become licensed. A degree in interior design from an accredited school, and experience working for a licensed architect, may be accepted by the State Board for Architecture as meeting the requirements to sit for the Architectural Licensing Exam. This allows interior designers to demonstrate the competency they claim in the areas that the State has legislated necessary to protect the health, welfare, and safety of the public.

Interior designers have the basis for a method of Certification in place. FIDER, the Foundation for Interior Design Education and Research, administers the National Council of Interior Designers Qualification (NCIDQ) test in order to establish minimum standards for practice as an interior designer. The standards and the test can be upgraded to provide the level of professional Certification desired.

Interior designers speak at length of "their" health, welfare, and safety contribution to the built environment, and this concern is admirable. However, the ability to read the labels on fabrics, wall, and floor covering samples to insure that they meet code requirements requires a literacy test, not a license. The Certification process would give interior designers control over their own profession's public welfare concerns without implying the possession of skills for which they have little or no training.

We take objection to being accused of trying to maintain a closed profession by not permitting interior designers to be licensed in their area of expertise. This could not be further from the truth. Architects value

interior designers, hire them both as consultants and as employees, are among their teachers in interior design schools, and have long supported the necessity to distinguish professional interior designers from decorators, who need have no credentials in order to start a business.

We also take objection to the creation of another level of bureaucracy to monitor a profession that a) is capable of expanding its own current monitoring, and b) has available to it an existing method of professional licensure meeting State requirements.

By the time you read this you will have heard about, or possibly even participated in, a panel discussion held on February 26, 1987. NYC/AIA President Randolph R. Croxton joined a panel consisting of Mario Buatta, Lydia dePolo, Susan Forbes, Edward Mills, and John Saladino, moderated by Charles Gandee. *Oculus* will provide a future for debate on this subject in future issues.

Letter

Dear Editor:

I saw the letter which George Lewis wrote, commenting upon an earlier suggestion by Barry LePatner to limit reproductions of material to Chapter members only. Whereas the former suggestion was parochial, George's wise letter is undisputably right. *Oculus* is truly the eye which does the looking for all of its readers, and it does it well. It is therefore an organ meant to broaden our vision, not to restrict and impair it.

Halina Rosenthal
President
Friends of Upper East Side Historic Districts

Restoring City Parks

The Bronx

1. Pelham Bay Park
2. Erratic Boulder, Pelham Bay Park

Queens

3. Alley Pond Park
4. Udall's Cove, Little Neck Bay

cont'd. from p. 9



1

Although not designed by the Olmsted firm, the Bronx Park also fits these Olmstedian criteria by providing space for the Bronx Botanical Garden and the Bronx Zoo. Similarly, Inwood Hill Park, also not an Olmsted park, includes features advocated by him: historic Revolutionary War battle sites, Native American camping grounds, and notable land forms.

In his extensive writings about parks, Olmsted also argued that cities the size of New York should allocate at least 500 acres for what he called "scenic parks." He believed that every city should offer such parks for "a change of scene and (an opportunity for) contemplation of scenery." He and Vaux planned Central Park in Manhattan and Prospect Park in Brooklyn as "scenic parks."

The third kind of feature that Olmsted helped to develop in order for nature to be an integral part of the modern city was the large "reservation," which he advocated for cities of more than 500,000 residents. He



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"Olmsted also provided carefully integrated plans for public education about park uses, safety regulations, park policing, and rigorous maintenance."



recommended that such cities set aside one or more very large reserves of remote and wild land for public use. Van Cortlandt and Pelham Bay Parks (in the Bronx), the Gateway National Recreation Area (in Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and New Jersey), and the Staten Island Greenbelt meet this requirement. And although they are not as large as Olmsted advised, Alley Pond, Cunningham, Udall's Cove, and Forest parks in Queens and the Clay Pit Ponds State Park Preserve and Blue Heron Park in Staten Island also fall into this category of urban reserves.

Olmsted further proposed that these types of urban natural features be laced together by special tree-lined roads that he named parkways. We can distinguish parkways from other roads because they are developed with pleasure driving in mind and provide separate ways for other kinds of traffic. Ocean and Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn were based on this concept.

Restoring City Parks

Queens

1. *Cunningham Park*
2. *Forest Park*

Along with all these designs for ordering and preserving urban nature in New York and other cities, Olmsted also provided carefully integrated plans for public education about park uses, safety regulations, park policing, and rigorous maintenance. These plans are helping to guide current proposals in Olmstedian parks.

Revitalization of New York City Parks Morningside Park

In their proposal for Morningside Park Quennell Rothschild Associates affirm the original intentions of that park's design as developed by Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., Calvert Vaux, and Jacob Wrey Mould. But because of the changes made in the park, especially during the Moses era, the implications of this affirmation are quite different from their design for Fort Tryon Park.

The future of Morningside Park has been debated perhaps longer than any park design issue in New York City. Scarred by encroachment from Columbia University in 1968, it has languished since then, physically neglected by the Parks Department and hotly contested by community groups. Now the ratification of a Conceptual Master Plan drawn up by Bond Ryder Wilson, Architects, and Quennell Rothschild Associates, Landscape Architects and Architects, promises to break the stalemate.

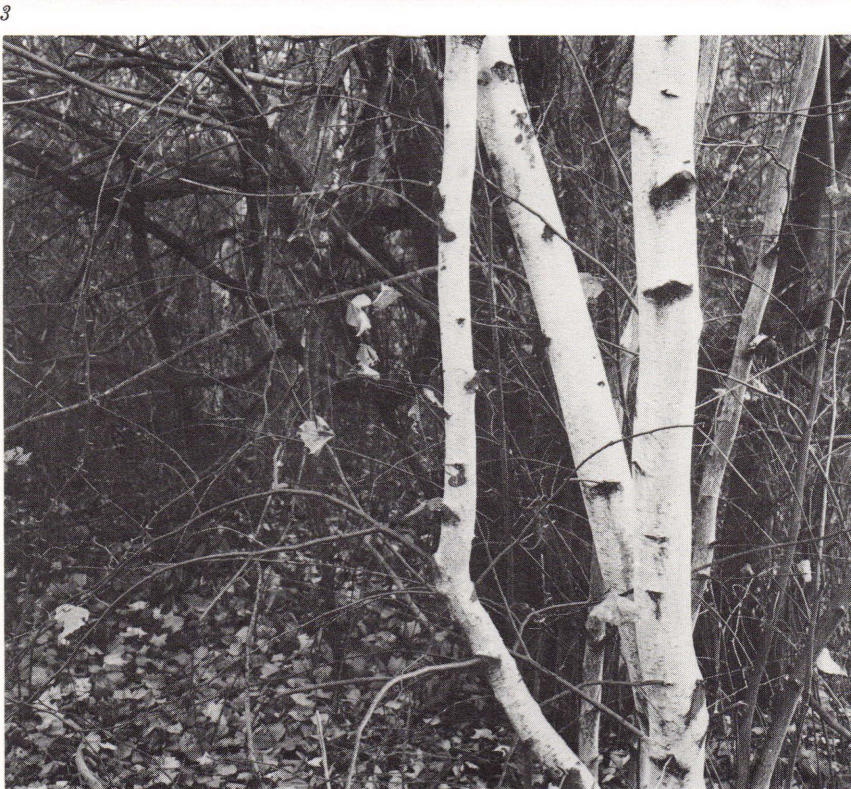
The Plan wisely sets its sights on "identifying an achievable and broadly supported set of goals to guide restoration efforts" and recommends beginning work as soon as possible, despite lingering unresolved issues. Noteworthy are the plan's clearly stated definitions of the three words most frequently used to describe design efforts in parks today: rehabilitation, restoration, and redevelopment.

- Rehabilitation entails repairing an area while retaining the layout and design of each of its features.
- Restoration means reconstruction with historically appropriate materials and details of features built



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Staten Island

3. Egbertville Ravine, Greenbelt
4. Clay Pit Ponds State Park Preserve

or rebuilt well after initial construction of the park.

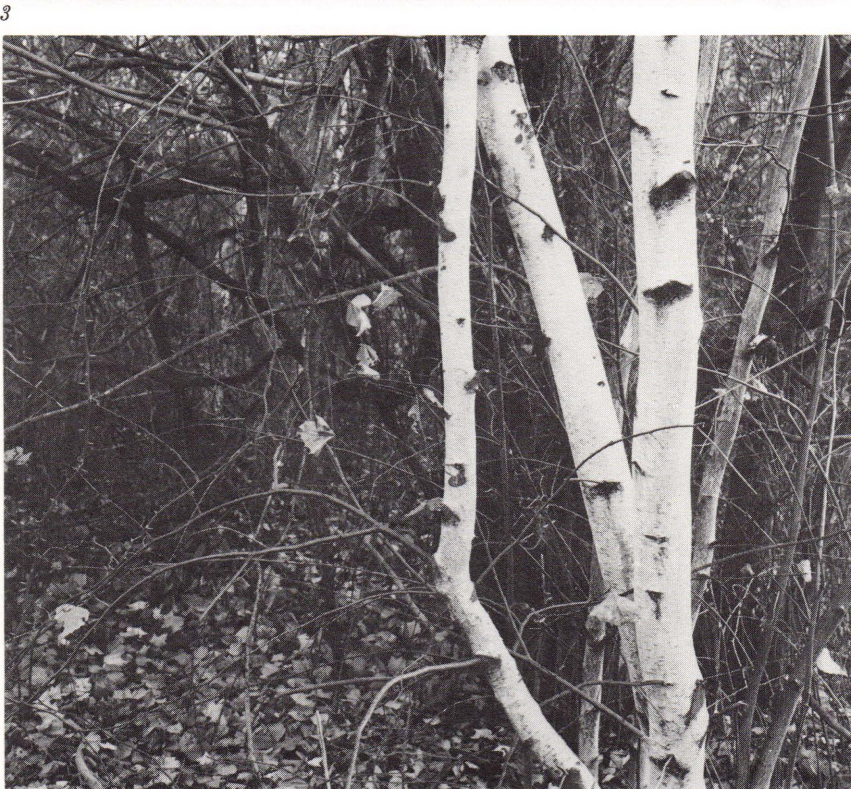
- Redevelopment identifies areas where comprehensive change is necessary because they have been fundamentally changed and are also seriously deteriorated.

These definitions helped guide the plan's design proposals. Because of the careful analysis of the existing park and sensitivity to explosive community issues, the revitalization of Morningside Park promises to reestablish this park as one of New York City's significant historic parks.

The Fort Tryon Park Plan

Fort Tryon Park's 66 acres, designed by Olmsted's son, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. in 1935, have suffered deterioration of its facilities and land similar to that in Central and Prospect Parks. Luckily, no major changes were ever made in it as in the latter parks. In a study commissioned by the Greenacre Foundation, the landscape architects and architects of Quennell Rothschild Associates have determined that the aims and philosophy of the park's planting scheme, which places vegetation according to seasonal uses of park slopes, are still valid today. They recommend, however, that new plantings not follow the original plant list, since many of the 1600 species used are now either too expensive or not suited to the site. Their restoration plan also proposes a "managed" nature philosophy for the park's extensive woodlands. This approach monitors the natural processes of reforestation and takes steps to control destruction of more desirable species and of the critical design character of the park.

The new Fort Tryon plan has modified the original plan design by assessing the latter's advantages and limitations over a 50 year period. Nonetheless, the current plan promises to preserve the design character and intent of the park's original concept as a landscape park fitted to a site of extreme and varied topography overlooking the Hudson River. This is revitalization as



Restoring City Parks

Manhattan: Riverside Park

1. *Summer scene*
2. *The Hudson River*

affirmation of the park's initiating design with modifications based on the lessons of time.

Riverside Park

The ten year draft plan for the restoration and improvement of Riverside Park has a succinct philosophy.

Charles McKinney, Director of the park, has embraced the changes made in the original Olmsted and Vaux park that once stretched along the Hudson River from 72nd Street to only 125th Street. McKinney's plan, done under the auspices of then Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Planning, Joseph Bresnan, clearly delineates the development of the park, which was not known before he pieced it together. F. Stewart Williamson extended the park from 125th Street to 153rd in 1902. This extension shows an Olmstedian inspiration with the insertion of a neo-classical retaining wall punctuated by fanciful entries that evoke castles and other historic structures. At the beginning of the century, buildings like Grant's Tomb and the Soldiers and Sailors Monument were also placed in the lower section of the park. Then in 1937 Park Commissioner Robert Moses expanded the entire park into the river with the addition of 132 acres. His landscape architect, Gilmore D. Clarke, converted most of the lower park into a more regularly structured landscape with geometric architectural features.

McKinney's plan celebrates the resulting contrast between the remaining Olmstedian landscape and the newer Clarke landscape as one of Riverside Park's unique characteristics. At the same time, his plan straightforwardly criticizes the thoughtless additions made since 1938, suggesting ways to ameliorate them. It also seizes the opportunity to link the park more directly to the river. Consequently, the Riverside Park Restoration and Improvement Plan, based, as it is, on observation of the design character of the processes at work in Riverside Park, is a unique example of the power of a unifying design concept to



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Manhattan: Fort Tryon Park

3. Fort Tryon Park and the Cloisters

transform the disparate parts of an existing park into a continuum that balances its historic and modern features. Here revitalization has become unification of the different time periods in the park's history.

Other Park Plans

In contrast to Central, Prospect, Morningside, Fort Tryon, and Riverside Parks, which were all based on an initiating design concept, other city parks were not begun with such a unifying design basis. Many of them such as Van Cortlandt, Pelham Bay, and Crotona Parks in The Bronx and Cunningham in Queens, now also have plans, in various stages of completion, for revitalization.

Van Cortlandt Park is typical of these parks. Originally set aside as a result of 19th-century efforts to preserve lands with scenic beauty, today the park is criss-crossed by three major highways, has a railroad bisecting its entire length, and recreational facilities dotting its perimeter.

According to Park Administrator, Paul Berizzi, in the two parks under his jurisdiction, Van Cortlandt and Pelham Bay, a major effort will be made to enrich their natural assets. Despite their scenic merits, however, the original tracts of land assembled for these parks were actually haphazard conglomerations of natural habitats, not all of which were of outstanding ecological value. Some of the parcels had been neglected estatelands that were returning to more natural states at the time of their preservation.

Consequently, one of the goals today is to enrich not by returning these parks to the states they were in when acquired by the city. Instead, one desire is to diversify their plant and wildlife communities, often on the basis of information about their make-up prior even to their occupation by Native Americans. Such a goal improves park ecosystems and our experiences of them.

This trend away from the monoculture of the Moses era and the exotic plants of the Olmstedian period toward more



Restoring City Parks

The Bronx: Van Cortlandt Park

1. Van Cortlandt Park

varied indigenous natural park areas is evident in other park plans: the winning designs by Miceli-Kulik and Associates and the Delta Group respectively for the revitalization of Cunningham and Crotona Parks as well.

Gateway

Revitalization plans for the 22,000-acre Gateway National Recreation Area also contain a growing awareness of the need to enhance the natural areas in the city. For instance, a prominent park feature in Gateway is the 1,448-acre Floyd Bennett Air Field, which was once a marshy group of islands, known collectively as Barren Island. Today the National Park Service conducts interpretative and recreational activities at the Field. Here the Seatuck Research Program of the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology has developed an ecologically based plan that relies on the design processes of nature to shape the future of the Field's large vegetated areas of mixed grasslands. The Laboratory has recommended to the National Park Service and the New York Audubon Society, co-sponsors of the study, several design choices: either allow the secessional processes of the environment to continue naturally; maintain and/or increase the natural diversity of the area; restore the habitats to conditions similar to those before the European settlers arrived; or manage major portions of the Field as grasslands. All these design alternatives indicate a strong grasp of the benefits of relating human design intent to that of indigenous ecosystems.

What is missing is the integration of mammalian uses into the grasslands. As the design choices stand now, they favor, as might be expected given their authorship, breeding bird populations and they ignore the value of the grasslands for humanity. The thorny question of balance between life forms needs addressing here as it does in all plans for park revitalization.



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A New System of Urban Nature

Taken as representative of parks currently being redesigned, the urban natural areas mentioned in this article present a glimpse of our newly emerging system of urban green spaces. Outstanding in revitalization plans is the commitment to renew and enrich the vegetation and ecosystems of the city.

The recent creation of the Natural Resources Group within the city's Department of Parks and Recreation to inventory an estimated 10,000 acres of undeveloped parkland results from this affirmation. The commitment to nature in the city, in addition, has increased public protection of land within the city, such as the recent acquisition of 80-acre Prall Island, in Arthur Kill off Staten Island, as a wildlife refuge.

Also apparent in the plans is a growing awareness of the advantages of integrating human design with other forces of nature that act on a particular tract of land. This

awareness, which arises, in particular, from our experience of over 100 years of landscape architecture in New York City, is spurring the planting of a greater diversity of native vegetation than previously within a park. The use of diversified local plants is occurring in parks regardless of whether they resulted from a single initiating design like Central Park or arose from an accumulation of independent decisions as at Van Cortlandt Park.

This landscape design approach has a maintenance asset: indigenous plants are often easier to maintain than exotic ones, which are frequently pushed out, unless rigorously protected by from native vegetation. This approach also has a psychological value: native plants, especially when used in relationships typical of this area, help establish a sense of place.

The awareness of benefits when human design corresponds with other forces of nature indicates as well our realization that "wild" nature is not wild at all but actually lawful. This

"Taken as representative of parks currently being redesigned, the urban natural areas mentioned in this article present a glimpse of our newly emerging system of urban green spaces."

**Brooklyn: Gateway National
Recreation Area**

*2. Plumb Beach, Gateway National
Recreation Area*

*3. Fort Tilden, Gateway National
Recreation Area*



2



3

realization has led to greater reliance in park revitalization on discoveries in geology, botany, ecology, human behavior, and General Systems Theory to guide design decisions. We are also learning more about the experiential advantages of "wild" nature to humanity and developing new park uses based on this understanding.

The current situation in park revitalization is creating a unique opportunity to unfold a new art form. It would be one in which discoveries of science infuse a form-making that is consciously based in stimulating evolutionary possibility—balancing the impact of our own and other natural forces on the earth. This art form could create the occasion to symbolize the current understanding of humanity's place within the larger life community.

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