

UC Berkeley

Places

Title

Introduction [The Inhabited Landscape: An Exhibition]

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/46b930x2>

Journal

Places, 4(4)

ISSN

0731-0455

Author

Halsband, Frances

Publication Date

1988-01-15

Peer reviewed

The Architectural League of New York invited designers from across the United States to submit recent works that emphasized the creation of habitable places in the landscape. The result is this exhibition, a small compendium of both current practice and future trends. The designs were selected by a jury composed of Frances Halsband, President of the Architectural League; Gerald Allen, a New York architect; Catherine Howett, a historian of landscape at the University of Georgia; Deborah Nevins, a landscape designer and historian; and Reuben Rainey, a landscape architect and teacher at the University of Virginia. Rosalie Genevro, Executive Director of the Architectural League, and Christopher Flacke, Project Director, aided substantially in the realization of the exhibition.

Frances Halsband

Understanding the relationship of man to nature is not a new concern, and the relationship of architecture to landscape is also not new. What is new, and constantly renewed, is what we bring to this relationship, how we understand it, and what we make of it.

Landscape may be defined as the human view of nature, a portion of land that the eye can comprehend. “Inhabited Landscape,” a phrase used by the philosopher Martin Heidegger, is defined by Christian Norberg Schulz as the world that is disclosed by architecture. He tells us that a work

of architecture makes certain aspects of the world visible. The building is not ‘added’ to the place as something foreign, but, “standing there, first makes the place emerge as what it is.”

Closely related to this is the idea that a piece of architecture domesticates a wilderness—a concept denoted as “borrowed landscape” by Maggie Keswick in her book on Chinese gardens.

Reuben Rainey notes that the “view” of nature changes in each culture. Nature may be seen as a transcendent power, or as a collection of scientific processes to be understood or adapted to human needs.

Although we are architects, or because we are architects, we were inspired to mount this exhibition not by our love for buildings, but by our love for gardens, parks, and the broader natural landscape.

As architects, we have recently begun to relearn the skills of contextualism—skills that allow us to relate individual buildings to the larger built fabric of towns and cities. But our colleagues—the landscape designers, critics, and analysts—have begun to teach us a broader kind of contextualism. They bring us new understandings of the history of landscape design, new appreciations of the importance of ecology, and new appreciations of both physical and cultural geography. Together, we approach the creation of the inhabited landscape with the goal of making meaningful form, of translating cultural values we share into visible forms in which we can dwell.

The projects exhibited here are presented not as definitive solutions, but rather as works that themselves pose questions and suggest new directions of thought. We have sought built works rather than theoretical drawings, and we have even eliminated from consideration projects under construction, because our objective is not the presentation of abstract ideas, but the presentation of real works in which the ideas are made physically manifest.

We hope that you, the audience of this exhibition, will not merely observe what is shown here, but will also be inspired in the creation of new designs of your own to make still other habitable places in the inhabited landscape.