



Landscape Symphonies

Further Paths Forward: Landscaping for the Future



As a result of this study, I have come up with what seem to me some of the most important reasons why we could build landscapes. Throughout almost every tradition, landscapes can be built as an image of heaven, paradise, nirvana. Which means that people design outdoor spaces to reflect our highest desires: to find peace, ourselves, god, restore the inner and outer balance of the world. We create places where we can perform daily rituals that reinforce our beliefs and views of the world.

Another reason, we could postulate, as to why we build landscapes is because they can be a reflection of our life's journey: a journey into self-discovery, change, and self-realization. Most oriental landscapes suggest that the passage through the garden should be a journey of discovery, offering different experiences at different stages of our passage through it. Making the places we design and build a canvas of opportunity for real experiences, which means as well, that it could offer the possibility of change through time. Growing with the seasons, and as we change and mature in life, a landscape can become a companion in the journey as well as a reflection of it. If, as I have been trying to propose, landscapes truly are a reflection of our deepest self, then it is part of their essential function to change with us throughout time.

Having said this, we can also conclude that one reason for our building and designing of landscapes would be to create opportunities for real experiences. Real experiences, from my point of view, means that a landscape should create possibilities for self-knowledge and development of three aspect of one's life: the individual, other individuals, and our communities. Applying this to different scales, we can go from the home, to the neighborhood, city, state, country, continent, planet, cosmos. Outdoor spaces have the potential to create opportunities for sharing multi-sensory experiences, as well as creating spaces for experimentation with arts, exchange of ideas, recreation, and health. Landscapes are, in themselves, full of possibilities.

There is a common saying that states that man does not live on food and water alone. Some oriental traditions take this idea much further, they refer to there being several kinds of food that nourish man on different levels. Very broadly, these traditions assert that the first kind of food, ingested through the mouth, feeds the basic functions of man, the body; the second food is air, a finer kind of food, which feeds a different part in man; and the third, and the one I am trying to get to, is impressions, which are taken in through the senses. by environments which can provide the nourishment we need to aid us in restoring a sense of peace, happiness, joy, balance, and harmony.

According to this study, it is apparent that this kind of food, impressions, is probably the most important of all, since we could do without the first two for some time. But it has been proven that a man would die almost immediately if he was deprived completely from impressions.
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This brings me to the point that probably one of the hidden reasons to build landscapes is for nourishment, nourishment of higher parts that we instinctively recognize as part of being alive, something that gives nourishment to the soul. It is curious to me that although this kind of food is so important, most of us literally starve for this kind of food. In relation to landscapes being nourishment, we could also say we build landscapes for mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health, being that, in many ways, we are what we eat. If we consider the well-being of all of those parts within ourselves, intelligently designed landscapes can provide spaces for exercise to keep our bodies fit, and at the same time give exercise to the senses to feed our bodies, minds, and soul.

These are but a few of the reasons why throughout history we have probably built landscapes the way we have. Which brings me to a very interesting question: which direction could we move towards? What are the current values we base our landscapes on? What drives our purpose? Can these values change? We live in a society where information is readily available, which is actually changing views and values very fast. As a Landscape Designer, ideally, the way we design and build will influence and change the values and way of life of our society. It seems to me, that as professionals we have the responsibility to aid in this as part of our service offering. Landscapes should be designed with purpose of service to our customers, by improving the lives of all the members, at all levels, residence, community, city, and state. By providing spaces that work as mirrors to the highest standards of ourselves, spaces will provide us with different experiences in the moment, in space and time, and through our lives, making the journey and not the destination the most important experience; spaces that will nourish us; spaces that will enable us to be healthy physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually; spaces that will be a canvas of opportunity to share ideas, art, and music; spaces that act as gathering hubs of culture, for the interaction of all the members of society from all ages, where experiences can be shared, gathered and multiplied, making the life's of all members of society, fuller, more real, richer; spaces that will improve the experience between ourselves, our neighbors, communities, cities, states, country, planet, macro cosmos and micro cosmos; spaces that improve the way we live, think, feel, and act.

Ideally, landscape design could change society by creating spaces where the enrichment of our cultural, intellectual, emotional and spiritual life is made possible. Landscape design can create more complete men and women, hopefully becoming the hubs around which our society grows and matures. It is to this end that we strive to design, build, and cultivate landscapes for our clients. On large and small scales, the intentional cultivation of a garden in turn is the intentional cultivation of a world.

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