

be something like DS+R's High Line in NYC of course. The reuse of an old elevated train line, which had been abandoned for decades, and turning it into something that is so intertwined with the daily lives of New Yorkers is very impressive. The Goods Line in Melbourne shares many similarities I feel, and it is also a remarkable project. The Vietnam War Memorial remains as one of the greatest works of landscape architecture in the world.

LR: How does Poppy Plaza connect the landscape to the heritage site?

MB: The project has a "built-in" cultural component. Following the First World War, the City of Calgary wanted to honor those from the region who had fallen in battle. So they created Memorial Drive, a long avenue along the banks of the Bow River. Along these banks, one poplar tree was planted for each of the fallen soldiers. After 100 years, the trees have started to pass away and the collective memory of our people have also begun to fade. Our project was initiated to rehabilitate a bridge crossing site along Memorial Drive, while also providing a new public space for both memorialization and reflection. There is one of the last surviving poplar trees on the site, which has now been re-framed in the context of the larger plaza so that it is now a focal point in that space. An existing historical building has been integrated into the design and will be repurposed as a café. This will serve to activate that space and act as a destination point for the extensive bike pathway network that follows the banks of the Bow River. Finally, along all the faces of the weathering steel, we have water jet quotes from times of war that act to provide context to those sacrifices by those soldiers, but also their families during those difficult times. In doing so, we hope to bring to life those sacrifices made so long ago to a generation who have never know that kind of tragedy.

LR: What interests you most in the field of landscape architecture recently? Any new techniques or concepts?

MB: There isn't anything in particular that I can point to necessarily. However, as with any project, I like those that tend to integrate multiple ideas and provide different kinds of experiences through circulation, but also changes through time and day and seasons.

LR: Are there some principles or strategies in the design of landscape architecture with regard to its culture layer in your country?

MB: No, not specifically. It is really dependent on the site itself and the ideas of the design team... in terms of the cultural layer in our country, I don't think there is any overarching ideas that transmit themselves across all regions. Canada is both vast, but also pretty young as a nation; I don't think that part of our history is written.

LR: In landscape design for museums, theaters, libraries or historical heritages, how does a landscape architect accomplish to embed nature in architecture?

MB: I think that landscape architects can play a fundamental role in providing the "canvas" for these buildings. Buildings, by nature, tend to be more specific in terms of their programming, whereas landscaping can be much more open ended. In this sense, the landscaping can act as part of a "journey" of that experience... or it can act as a kind of decompression space after



leaving the building. The notion of nature is again really dependent on a lot of variables. The Palace of Versailles, for example, has very structured gardens, which are not "natural" even though they are organic. I think that landscaping outside of buildings should be somehow connected thematically in order to "extend" that experience.

LR: What are the challenges you faced during the design and realization of your concepts?

MB: Too many to mention! Take Poppy Plaza for example. Primarily, there are a lot of regulatory bodies that need to be consulted at the municipal, provincial and federal level because of our proximity to the river. So coordinating with the environmental stakeholders takes quite a bit of time and expertise. Outside of that, the design challenges usually go back to those that are universally faced by all designers: the shift from schematic to construction and the challenges that come up if budgets are an issue... how to modify or simplify the design without losing the design aspirations and intentions.



Camilla Mileto & Fernando Vegas

Camilla Mileto and Fernando Vegas are architects and professors at the Universitat Politècnica de València (Spain), where they teach architectural composition and conservation both in graduate and postgraduate courses. They have been guest lecturers in the universities of Venice and Palermo (Italy), Cordoba (Argentina) and the University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, USA) and have given lectures in many other universities. They have received several international awards for their research, new projects and built work on architectural conservation, like the 1st European Union Prize (2004, 2011), Europa Nostra Awards (2008, 2013), the Domus Award 2012, among others.

Creating a Genius Loci that Dialogues with a Place

- An Interview with Fernando Vegas and Camilla Mileto

LR: What in your opinion is cultural landscape design? What qualities should cultural landscape design possess?

Fernando Vegas & Camilla Mileto (FV&CM): A cultural landscape reflects the relationship between the territory and man, understood as carrier of his history, culture, idiosyncrasy, etc. It is a symbiosis between use, management and life of man with the territory that surrounds him. The design of a cultural landscape should take into account these human traces, both visible and invisible, and try to bring them into light and promote them in a natural way, without forcing them.



LR: What is the relationship between cultural context and landscape design?

FV&CM: Landscape design needs to find references to give a sense to the project. These references may be found in the local culture, both in the available materials and indigenous vegetation, and the history of use, relationship and human management of this landscape.

LR: Based on your professional background, what do you think the landscape architect can do to contribute to culture-related landscapes?



FV&CM: In our projects, we have especially worked in the relationship between history of the place and the forms of use of the territory, in order to help our project to root itself in the place and the local tradition, in order to create a kind of genius loci which dialogues with the place.

LR: How do you balance the desire to design or structure a site while preserving its existing historical fabric?

FV&CM: Frequently, it happens that, trying to preserve the existing historical fabric in a place and aiming to make our intervention as invisible as possible implies an enormous creative effort. In these cases, creativity is not so to be found easily; it does not appear so evident, as it has to be looked in the details. It should be also remembered that the most creative architecture is generally born from the existence of constraints.

LR: Is there any project you designed (or any other projects which impressed you most) which has made best use of its cultural context?

FV&CM: Some years ago, we designed a garden for the quarter of velvet producers at Valencia (Spain), where we designed the urban furniture in the shape of an enormous and winding

silkworm, which organized and structured the whole garden, and worked with mulberries and other related vegetal species. The garden perfectly integrated in the history of the quarter and reflected its culture and way of living during the last six centuries.

LR: What interests you most in the field of landscape architecture recently? Any new techniques or concepts?

FV&CM: We are interested in landscape architecture that dialogues with the existing nature without imposing itself to it. We are also interested in the introduction of the Time factor in the design of landscape architecture, the Time of seasons, the Time of growing vegetal species, the Time of blooming, the Time of aging, the Time of leaves falling, the Time of the shadow of a tree working as a sundial, the Time of the patina growing on the urban furniture, etc.

LR: Are there some principles or strategies in the design of landscape architecture with regard to its culture layer in your country?

FV&CM: In Spain there is a long tradition of designing landscape architecture. Islamic gardens have taught us to work with water, colors and

seasons. Designing landscape architecture in Spain should always take into account this centuries-old tradition.

LR: With regard to the landscape design for museums, theaters, libraries or historical heritages, how does the landscape architect accomplish to embed nature in architecture?

FV&CM: We try not to make distinctions nor separations between architectural design and landscape design. They are similar works, but working with different elements. The most interesting point while designing landscapes is that many of these elements are alive; they have forms, colors and changing configurations.

LR: What are the challenges you faced during the design and realization of your concepts?

FV&CM: We wanted to keep the spirit of the place and, therefore, it was necessary to maintain the ruins as unaltered as possible, as well as to search for a direct relationship between natural vegetation of the garden and the archaeological rests, as we knew this relationship would have helped both.



Shauna Gillies-Smith

MAUD, BArch, ASLA, LEED AP

Shauna Gillies-Smith is the principal of GROUND, a landscape architecture practice focusing on the creation of artful and sustainable landscapes in urban settings. Trained first as an architect and urban designer, Shauna's shift to landscape practice was motivated by the desire to reveal the potentials of surprise and pleasure in the urban realm.

GROUND's landscapes play a protagonist role in the experience of the city – creating unexpected moments of joy and engagement that craft the stage for the drama of urban life. The work strives to balance exceptional detailing and execution with comfort and openness in use, fully believing that urban landscapes need the dynamic (and unpredictable) participation of the public to be successful. GROUND has been recognized with numerous awards, most recently an ASLA award for the Treehouse Residence at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design.

Landscape Design as a Product of Culture

- An Interview with Shauna Gillies-Smith, GROUND

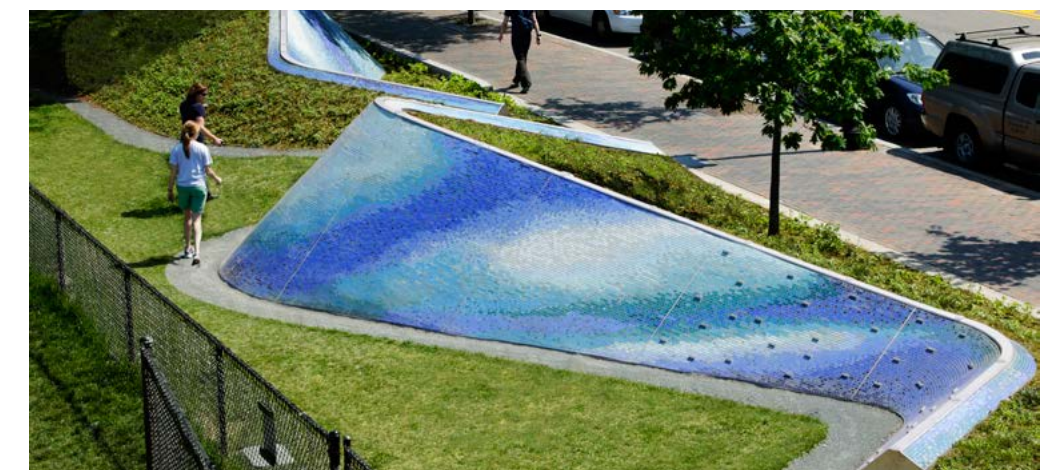
LR: What in your opinion is cultural landscape design? What qualities should cultural landscape design possess?

Shauna Gillies-Smith (SGS): I think this first question is a little bit tricky, because I believe any designed landscape is cultural.

The American non-profit organization, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, defines a cultural landscape as one that's been impacted by human involvement. They discuss four different types of cultural landscapes, and only one of them is designed landscape.

In general I would say that any landscape design is a product of the culture. You can't help but be impacted by the context of the project, and you are working in culture that you've developed in, and through which you've learned to think.

LR: What is the relationship between cultural context and landscape design?



SGS: We can use landscape design to consciously make culture more visible. There's always a subconscious component of design that you can't really help because you've been so completely shaped by your particular culture. But there are other aspects – whether it's the history, the geography, the industry of the place or the people – that present opportunities to bring a narrative forward within the design. That's something we like to do in a lot of our projects at Ground. We want to bring that extra layer of narrative – not in an overly explicit way, but in a way where people can dig a little deeper and understand another layer of stories in their experience of the landscape.

LR: Based on your professional background, what do you think the landscape architect can do to contribute to culture-related landscapes?

SGS: With the exception of a sculpture garden or a museum park, I think that people are rarely looking at the landscape as they experience it.

