

From Landscape to Architecture and Architecture to Landscape

Using the urban park as a site and framework, this studio will critically investigate the interrelationship between architecture and landscape. In the 19th century, urban parks were envisioned to offset the negative effects of rapid industrialization and urbanization, and provide democratizing social, hygienic, and moral benefits to the public. Charles Waldheim has argued that the emergence of the discipline and professional title of landscape architecture in fact coincided with efforts to "remediate the social, environmental, and cultural conditions" in the development of cities at that time.¹ However, in the 1960's through 1980's, urban parks were subject to institutional neglect, defunding, illicit activity, crime, and imagined crime. Starting in the 1980's in the U.S., non-profit park conservancies became responsible for restoring urban parks, and increasingly replaced the role of government in the stewardship, maintenance, and operation of urban parks through public-park partnerships. Since then, in the late 20th and early 21st century, the regeneration and creation of new urban parks have become increasingly important devices economically and culturally in the transformation of cities, as in, for instance, Bryant Park in New York, Parc de la Villette in Paris, Millennium Park in Chicago, the High Line in New York, Zaryadye Park Moscow, West Kowloon Cultural District Art Park in Hong Kong, etc. As in earlier periods, the rhetoric of the design and investment in urban parks and green spaces has been based upon their social, physical, and environmental benefits to the public. However, in reality, the regeneration and creation of new urban parks, often influenced by private interests, have most benefited those interests, and accelerated forces of displacement and gentrification.²

This studio will focus on Downing Park, a 35 acre historic urban park located in Newburgh, New York. The park was opened in 1897 and was designed in collaboration between Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., and Calvert Vaux. The park itself was named after Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-1852), a Newburgh resident, mentor of Olmsted and Vaux, and figure who arguably constructed the modern understanding of landscape architecture in America. The park contains a 2.5 acre pond (the "Polly"), sloped meadows, curved pathways, and a diverse variety of trees, shrubs, and flowers. The park also contains several small structures, some of which have subsequently been demolished. A bandshell was demolished in the 1920's, and an observatory, designed by Downing Vaux (Calvert Vaux's son), was demolished in 1959 or 1961 as part of "urban renewal." Another structure, the Shelter House, was added in 1934 alongside the pond, abandoned for some period, but recently re-activated in 2018 as a café. Based on a critical understanding of urban parks as a type, the studio will consider how additional programming, landscape adaptations, new components, and the re-introduction of the observatory and a bandshell or small performance space might further revitalize the park. Moreover, could Downing Park catalyze larger social and economic changes for Newburgh, and how could it do so to confer those benefits to the most inclusive definition of the public?

Through an understanding of the park as an artificial and constructed nature, and the design of a dispersed series of interventions, the studio will speculate on the relationships and connections between architecture and landscape. The studio will examine contemporary design practices (Junya Ishigami, Ensemble, Anne Holtrop, LCLA Office, etc.) that operate at this intersection, and often productively conflate strategies across different disciplines. The studio will speculate upon the relative

¹ Charles Waldheim, 2013.

² Scott M. Larson, 2018. Of course, one could also argue this has always been the case, as in for instance Seneca Village, a 19th-century settlement of African American landowners, who were displaced for the construction of Central Park in New York City.

autonomy of each discipline and the possibility for translations of techniques, forms, and materials from landscape to architecture and from architecture to landscape.

The design of the observatory and a small performance space will be developed as a temporal and spatial argument relative to the design of the park. In other words, how will architecture frame and construct an understanding of this landscape? To grapple with this question, the studio will also interrogate the late 18th century and early 19th century aesthetic theory of the Picturesque³, which was instrumental as a conceptual framework for Vaux and Olmsted. The 20th century re-reading of the Picturesque by Robert Smithson as a non-pictorial “dialectical landscape,” and aesthetic mode experienced temporally and peripatetically, will be considered. As Smithson noted, “the contradictions of the ‘picturesque’ depart from a static formalistic view of nature. The picturesque... is based on real land... [and] a park can no longer be seen as ‘a thing-in-itself,’ but rather as a process of ongoing relationships existing in a physical region.” Smithson further describes the picturesque as related to “chance and change in the material order of nature.”⁴ In general, land and environmental art of the 1970’s may also provide an entry into what has been termed by Rosalind Krauss as the “expanded field.”⁵

Finally, the studio will consider how tree and plant species within the park will adapt for a future climate⁶ and operate with specificity relative to tree species, soil, landscape material, wildlife, ecology, hydrology, drainage, water detention, site grading, section, and topography. New interventions within the park may also include paving, seating, water fountains, and lighting, as necessary.

Notes:

- The studio meets for desk crits on Monday and Thursdays from 1:30-6:30pm.
- There will also be a weekly all-studio session on Wednesdays from 3:00-5:00pm.
- All studio work will be compiled into a book summarizing the studies and outcomes of the semester. Given the range of different precedents, sites, and ideas explored, it is expected that students coordinate their work into a shared template, format, visual language, etc. so that the work and knowledge can be presented coherently as a single body.
- Teamwork and collaboration are encouraged. Although students may work independently, teams of two are highly recommended. Those working independently will be expected to produce the same quality and quantity of work as those working in teams.
- Detailed schedule and assignment #1 to be issued on 01/23/2020.

³ Uvedale Price, 1810.

⁴ Robert Smithson, 1973.

⁵ Rosalind Krauss, 1979.

⁶ It is likely that the American chestnut (*castanea dentata*) was one of the species of tree planted originally in Downing Park, as it was one of the most common trees in the Eastern US from Mississippi to Maine and along the Appalachian Mountains. However, at the turn of the 20th century, seven years after the opening of Downing Park, nearly 3 billion of these trees died within a period of several years due to chestnut blight, a fungus that was introduced to North America at the Bronx Zoo. This event foreshadows the ecological changes that occurred over the 20th century, as well as those that will be faced in the imminent future.

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Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation
A4104-2: Advanced Studio IV, Spring 2020, "Scales of Environment"
Critic: Adam Frampton (asf@only-if.com)

Bibliography

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Smithson, Robert. "Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape." *Artforum*, vol. 11, no. 6, Feb 01, 1973, pp. 62.

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I. Urban Park Case Studies (1 week)

The studio will start by critically analyzing the urban park as a type, with a particular interest in its form and the possibility of identifying and abstracting strategies. Each individual or team will take one precedent. Through drawing, we will learn from solutions specific to other conditions, places, and times, while also extrapolating essential qualities and formal organizations that might be transferred to Newburgh. The analysis should identify certain ideological agendas vis-à-vis spatial hierarchies, organization, circulation, section, etc.

Urban parks to analyze shall include, but not be limited to:

Central Park, New York, NY	1857–1876	Olmsted & Vaux
South Park, Chicago, IL*	1870-1871	Olmsted & Vaux
Portland Open Space Sequence, Oregon	1965-1970	Lawrence Halprin
Freeway Park, Seattle, WA	1969-1976	Lawrence Halprin
Skyline Park, Denver, CO	1970-1975	Lawrence Halprin
Bryant Park, New York, NY**	1847	
Parc de la Villette, Paris, France	1982-1987	Bernard Tschumi, Colin Fournier
Parc de la Villette, Paris, France (unbuilt)	1982	OMA
Millennium Park, Chicago, IL	1997-2004	SOM, Gehry, Beeby
Downsview Park Competition, Toronto (unbuilt)	2000	Various teams
The High Line, New York, NY	2003-2009	Field Operations, DSR, Piet Oudolf
Biblioteca degli Alberi, Milan	2003-2018	Inside Outside + others
Skanderbeg Square, Tirana, Albania	2008-2017	51N4E
Brooklyn Bridge Park, Brooklyn, NY	2010-	Michael van Valkenburgh
Zaryadye Park, Moscow, Russia	2014-2017	DSR, Hargreaves
West Kowloon Cultural District Art Part, Hong Kong		West 8

* Currently known as Washington Park, Midway Plaisance, and Jackson Park

** Including restorations

Minimum requirements for Thursday 01/30 pinup:

1. One 36" x 36" original drawing (printed) of the selected precedent that reveals its organization and form. The drawing should emphasize linework, clarity, and combine different scales of information and types of information (urban, landscape, architectural). If three-dimensional representation is used, consider plan or section / elevation oblique such that orthographic / flat representation can be preserved in the drawing. It may be useful to explode layers (maximum 2-3) or cut-away to illustrate or reveal.
2. A narrative screen presentation using selected photographs, drawings, and/or diagrams:
 - a. Describing the urban context of the park
 - b. Describing the history of the project, including its commissioning, subsequent renovations / restorations (if any), political context, rhetoric, and effects
 - c. Illustrating layers, insights, and details from the printed drawing
 - d. Illustrating a sectional condition or sectional condition(s) of the park
 - e. Illustrating growth over time, and/or original planning vs. adaptations of the park

Schedule

	Wednesday, 01/22	2-5pm	Studio Presentation and Lottery
	Thursday, 01/23	2-6pm	Studio Opening and Introduction
I. Urban Park Case Studies			
1	Monday, 01/27	1:30-2:30pm 2:30-6:30pm	Discussion of Reading (Scott Larson) Desk Crits
	Wednesday, 01/29	3-5pm	Wednesday Session
	Thursday, 01/30	1:30-6:30pm	Pinup, Ware Lounge Student presentations on Urban Park Case Studies
II. Site Analysis			
2	Monday, 02/03	1:30-2:30pm 2:30-6:30pm	Discussion of Readings (Smithson & Yve-Alain Bois), Wood Auditorium Desk Crits
	Wednesday 02/05	3-5pm	Wednesday Session
	Thursday, 02/06		Visit to Newburgh (TBD)
3	Monday, 02/10		*** No Studio ***
	Wednesday, 02/12	3-5pm	Wednesday Session
	Thursday, 02/13	1:30-6:30pm	Pinup, 115 Avery
III. Park Design			
4	Monday, 02/17	1:30-6:30pm	Desk Crits
	Wednesday, 02/19	3-5pm	Studio Exchange Pinup 1
	Thursday, 02/20	1:30-6:30pm	
5	Monday, 02/24	1:30-6:30pm	Desk Crits
	Wednesday, 02/26	3-5pm	Wednesday Session
	Thursday, 02/27	1:30-6:30pm	Dry run for Midterm, Fayerweather 323M
6	Monday, 03/02	2-6pm	Midterm Review, 115 Avery
	Wednesday, 03/04		*** No Wednesday Session ***
	Thursday 03/05		*** No Studio (Midterm Week)***
7	Monday, 03/09	1:30-6:30pm	Desk Crits
	Wednesday, 03/11	3-5pm	Wednesday Session
	Thursday, 03/12	1:30-6:30pm	Pinup, 504 Avery
8			Spring Break
9	Monday, 03/23	1:30-6:30pm	Desk Crits
	Wednesday, 03/25		*** No Wednesday Session ***
	Thursday, 03/26	1:30-6:30pm	Desk Crits
10	Monday, 03/30	1:30-6:30pm	3/4 Pinup or Review, 114 Avery
	Wednesday, 04/01	3-5pm	Wednesday Session
	Thursday, 04/02	1:30-6:30pm	Desk Crits
11	Monday, 04/06	1:30-6:30pm	Desk Crits
	Wednesday, 04/08	3-5pm	Studio Exchange Pinup 2
	Thursday, 04/09	1:30-6:30pm	Desk Crits
12	Monday, 04/13	1:30-6:30pm	Pinup, 505 Avery
	Wednesday, 04/15		*** No Wednesday Session ***
	Thursday, 04/16	1:30-6:30pm	Desk Crits
13	Monday, 04/20		*** No Studio ***
	Thursday, 04/23	1:30-6:30pm	Dry run for Final Review, 412 Avery
14	Tuesday, 04/28	2-6pm	Final Review, Ware Lounge