

PREFACE

Weathering marks the passage of time.

Mohsen Mostafavi and David Leatherbarrow, On Weathering

Time is a dimension of all workmanship.

It all fails, to be sure: but it fails either sooner or later.

Durability is thus a preoccupation of every workman.

David Pye, The Nature and Art of Workmanship

Weathering and Durability in Landscape Architecture concerns the weathering and durability of constructed landscapes over time and its relationship to landscape architecture design. This book focuses on four areas of significance in contemporary landscape design and in the conception, development, implementation, and evolution of built landscape work. First, it introduces the range of ideas related to permanence in the built landscape. Second, it describes the range of pragmatic and sometimes not immediately evident factors and issues that acts upon landscape design elements in the broader landscape environment. Third, it illustrates and discusses design approaches to what is considered temporary and what is to be considered timeless in landscape work. In these design approaches aspects of both continuity and change in the built landscape are described and the flexibility of common landscape elements and technological systems are examined as they evolve over the life of a project. This involves an analysis of their materiality, physical form, program, and construction as they change, are enhanced, or degrade over time. Finally, the relationship between the designer's intent and the resulting altered landscape materials and forms is closely examined as a record of creative and responsive design attitudes currently at work in practice, including approaches to stewardship of the landscape. Together these four areas cover the topics of weathering and durability as core issues within professional landscape education and practice.

Purpose of the Book

That being said, the question of why a book on this topic is undertaken at this particular time needs to be raised particularly as the making of built landscapes remains a central activity of the profession. The concerns of continuity and change have been ever present in landscape architecture education, and it is accepted that the materials of landscape architecture, in particular plants, alter, grow, and in some cases die in ways not predicted or desirable. Recently, however, built landscape design works have been deteriorating at an alarming rate. Many projects built over the last twenty years now require intensive redesign, reconstruction, or indeed removal, and it is clear that the landscape work under construction today will fail even faster. Do designers want the results of their work to last? Based on the repetitive nature of these failures, it suggests that they do not. While this is good news for the engineers, project managers, and builders who will profit from this circumstance, it is troublesome for the landscape profession—a profession that has difficulty demonstrating to clients its value as a field of design grounded in the practical realities of climate and the construction site. *Weathering and Durability in Landscape Architecture* is therefore conceived as a textbook to be used in design schools and a reference for young design professionals in offices. It also is envisioned as contributing to the start of a discussion in the field about the way designers conceive and construct built landscape work over time.

Origins

My teaching and landscape research interests are concerned with the making and remaking of landscapes and are focused on landscape technology and the application of technological theories and methods as a core of landscape practice. This overarching subject is interpreted here through a focus on not only how landscapes are initially conceived and implemented but how built landscapes are to be considered over time. This book has been planned as a sequel to a previous examination by the author of built landscape work, *The Art of Landscape Detail: Fundamentals, Practices and Case Studies* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1999). It extends the groundwork established in that book on the relationship between landscape design, technological thinking and the making of built landscape architecture by advancing the technological nature of the site and its context through the issues of time, change and longevity.

The opening chapters of *The Art of Landscape Detail* focused on a few fundamental things in the physical world—gravity, the structure and economy of materials we have, or make, and the way these materials are put

together spatially. Chapter 5 of that book, *Detail Durability*, for example, concentrated on the relationship between landscapes and durability and “the viability of landscape detail as built elements over time.” It focused broadly on the topics of landscape detail and design practices and processes, illustrating the relationships between conceptual landscape ideas and their evolution and development through construction at the detail scale. The subject matter presented there was narrow in scope. This material is a broader consideration of the viability of entire built landscapes over time and in particular to the responsibilities and role of landscape architects in this regard.

It is worth noting that the subject matter and design responses to the transitory nature of so many designed landscapes hides a vast untapped field of endeavor for design students, practitioners, and academics in landscape architecture. Through case studies of contemporary built design projects and in particular discussions with their designers, this book documents a range of landscape design approaches and site strategies taken from current professional practice. The case studies illustrate the specific challenges brought about by weathering and durability within the landscape architectural design process as well as offering a reconsideration of the landscape architect’s role in the stewardship (or otherwise) of past and current landscape projects.

Main Themes

The study of weathering and durability has been long neglected, and this text fills the gap in the current literature on landscape design, technology, and construction implementation. The premise of this book is to link together the way landscape ideas are conceived and implemented with the predictable as well as the unpredictable nature of how they may exist over time. *Weathering and Durability in Landscape Architecture* focuses on the exchanges between the material nature of landscape elements and design construction brought about by the actions of climate and the site processes and patterns of use over time. These exchanges range from instantaneous and drastic large-scale transformations to site installations and built landscape elements, to the more minor and sometimes little noticed daily alterations to landscape materials, forms and surfaces incrementally over long periods of time through the wearing actions of natural processes. No aspect of landscape architecture has such a significant influence on the current physical condition and visual appearance of the built landscape environment or on the success or failure of individual landscape architectural projects.

Weathering and Durability in Landscape Architecture focuses on how current designers must not only be aware of these exchanges during the life of

X PREFACE

a project but must address the inevitable modifications to landscape materials, forms, and details as part of the design, development, and future life of the project. The book is therefore grounded in daily practical design concerns while pointing the way to future research and study by landscape practitioners, students, and critics alike.

In short, the subject of weathering and durability in landscape architecture is presented as a design concern and activity that landscape architects can embrace with enthusiasm or ignore at their peril.

Niall Kirkwood
Cambridge, Massachusetts

