

LANDSCAPE DESIGN

A discipline focused on understanding and shaping the landscape, developing on the basis of interdisciplinary knowledge of terrain, geology, soil, hydrology, botany, ecology, chemistry and physics. It covers planning, design and protection issues. In Poland it is identified with landscape architecture.

For thousands of years, people have been influencing the landscape to improve transport, access to raw materials, safety and comfort of living. In the course of civilisation development, people have increased their ability to transform the landscape in order to better serve their needs, both in terms of utility and aesthetics. Nowadays, the possibilities of subordinating the landscape to the designers' visions are so great that we are often not able to predict all the consequences of these interventions for life and the environment.

Landscape design is an experience close to everyone who works with nature (e.g. by planting trees or growing plants). As a field of research, but also artistic and practical, it takes into account more factors than just aesthetic and functional aspects. The basic components of the designers' work are topographical elements (terrain), vegetation and soil, water, buildings (small and large architecture), the sky and climate. When creating a landscape based on them, the shape of the landscape is negotiated, harmonising natural and cultural qualities.

Design is considered primarily according to the degree of usefulness, improving the character, quality or experience of the landscape, which varies in time and is appreciated differently depending on the culture. Initially, according to Eliot (1859-1897), landscape design was to shape and protect beauty. Until recently, functionality and aesthetics were the overriding objectives of landscape design, but today more and more attention is being paid to designs that care about sustainable development or try to influence the regeneration of changed sites, e.g. post-industrial landscapes. For this reason, two main design objectives can be mentioned: (1) creation and maintenance of a useful, beneficial and interesting landscape; and (2) protection and enhancement of the quality of the cultural and ecological landscape.

The term "landscape architecture" comes from the book *On the Landscape Architecture of the Great Painters in Italy* (1828) by Gilbert L. Meason, and began to gain wide recognition since the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) was founded in 1899. This domain derives from garden art, architecture and planning, including the eighteenth-century English landscape school and the development of landscape gardening. The training of landscape architects at the universities began in 1900 in Harvard; in Europe it was first undertaken in 1919 in Oslo, and in Poland in 1928, when the Warsaw University of Life Sciences established the Department of Landscape Architecture and Park Science. Until the Second World War, in the United States the area of designers' activity was mostly home gardens, residential gardens and public parks. Nowadays, the subject of activities are mainly urban, recreational and historic areas, as well as large projects implemented in regions, cities or national parks.

It concerns more often material forms and processes of vegetation, water, structures, soil and topography than public policy or urban legislation.

Among the first projects of modern landscape design are American parks, such as Central Park in New York or *Emerald Necklace* in Boston, a green chain of five parks with a total length of eight kilometres, running along three rivers flowing through the city (by Fredrick L. Olmsted and Charles Eliot).

Designers use different landscape typologies. One of them is the division into open landscapes (rural areas, but also areas under special protection, such as national parks) and closed landscapes (urban, strongly urbanised). Another is the distinction between harmonious and disharmonious landscapes (also known as degraded landscapes), which is made for reasons of ecology and transformation of the areas concerned. Landscape architecture also focuses on the identity of places and regions, distinguishing as a consequence of these interests historic landscapes (finite spatial structures, created at a certain time, e.g. an architectural or rural complex) and historical landscapes (a combination of activities of nature and humans in the course of history). Landscape, depending on the preferred approach, is described or assessed in terms of its use (e.g. rural, sacral, tourist, park, etc.), potential (e.g. tourist), spatial composition (relation of the whole to the part), lines (linear strings, edges, borders), colour, texture or layout of landscape interiors and architectural and landscape units. In this respect, guided by the division in terms of the arrangement of solids and space, one can speak of an overlapped, closed, ephemeral, peculiar, axial or panoramic landscape. Designers care about the visual impact of architectural and landscape assumptions, therefore scale, balance and contrast, proportions and dominance of elements, number and quality of panoramas, as well as stretches and view planes are important variables in the process of analysis and creation.

Landscape design is currently more strongly connected with urban planning, which leads us to a new theoretical approach called *landscape urbanism*. It emphasises thinking about the city through the prism of landscape design (and not buildings), which are the basis for further development. Kongjian Yu lists five forms used in practice and theory that dominate the history of Eastern and Western culture: feng shui and geomancy (close to the assumptions of landscape urban planning, but prescientific), *greenways* (landscape as a recreational infrastructure and mediator of aesthetic experiences), *greenbelts* (green belts surrounding the city), ecological landscape network (biological protection function) and ecological infrastructure and ecosystem services (serving to maintain the stability and identity of the landscape).

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