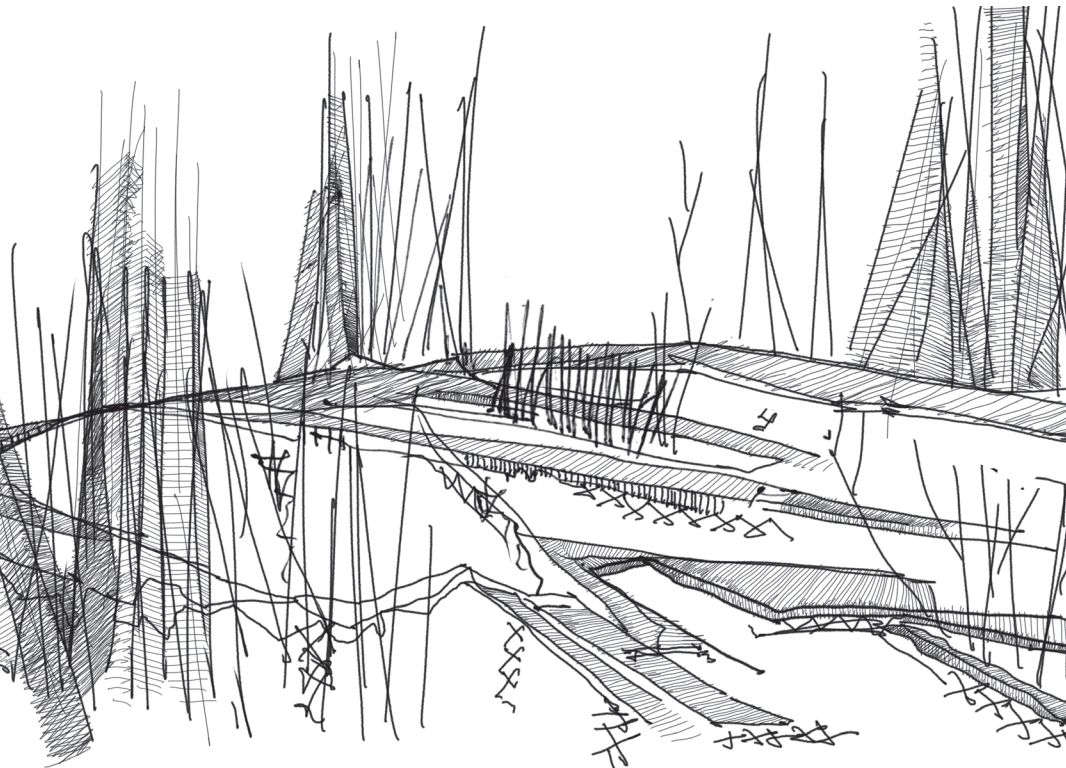


# INSPIRATION HIGH LINE



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Kommentare internationaler Experten zu James Corners populärem  
Projekt in New York City

Comments of international experts on James Corner's popular  
project in New York City

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### Gezähmte Wildnis im 3. Stock New Yorks

Udo Weilacher

Seit 1905 verlieh die Technische Universität München (TUM) die Würde eines Doktors ehrenhalber an 37 namhafte Architekten für herausragende wissenschaftliche, technische oder künstlerische Leistungen. 2018 wird erstmals einem Landschaftsarchitekten diese besondere akademische Ehrung zuteil. Der Brite James Corner, geboren 1961, zählt weltweit zu den renommiertesten Landschaftsarchitekten. Er studierte Landschaftsarchitektur in England und in den USA an der University of Pennsylvania, wo er 1986 seinen Masterabschluss erwarb. Nach erfolgreicher Mitarbeit in international führenden Landschaftsarchitekturbüros wurde er 1988 als Professor an die renommierte University of Pennsylvania berufen und leitete von 2000 bis 2012 als Dekan das Department of Landscape Architecture an der School of Design in Philadelphia. Corner ist Gastprofessor an zahlreichen internationalen Universitäten und stellte seine mehrfach ausgezeichneten Arbeiten bereits in vielen Museen aus.

Er ist Autor, Co-Autor und Herausgeber von vielen Fachpublikationen, die in Fachkreisen höchste Wertschätzung erfahren, weil sie weitsichtig das Wirken der Landschaftsarchitektur im Anthropozän untersuchen. Zu den erfolgreichsten Veröffentlichungen zählt *Recovering Landscape: Essays in Contemporary Landscape Architecture* (Princeton 1999), in welchem wichtige Erkenntnisse zum Umbau und zur Revitalisierung ehemals industriell genutzter Landschaften zusammengetragen und weiterentwickelt werden. Corner publiziert jedoch nicht nur erfolgreich, sondern erregt mit seinem 1998 in New York gegründeten Büro „Field Operations“ auch durch vorbildliche Arbeiten, bevorzugt in urbanen Transformationslandschaften, die Aufmerksamkeit der Fachwelt sowie der allgemeinen Öffentlichkeit. Hochkomplexe, langfristig angelegte Landschaftsprojekte, wie

die Sanierung der etwa neun Quadratkilometer großen Mülldeponie *Fresh Kills* vor den Toren von New York City, gelten aufgrund ihres prozessorientierten Entwicklungsansatzes als besonders richtungsweisend und versprechen in Zukunft wichtige Erkenntnisse.

Zu einer Ikone aktueller Landschaftsarchitektur und zur populären Landmarke in New York City ist bereits der 2009 eröffnete High Line Park geworden. Die 2,5 Kilometer lange Anlage entstand in neun Metern Höhe auf einer ehemaligen Hochbahnstrecke, beginnt im Meatpacking District an der West Side von Manhattan und endet in Hell's Kitchen. James Corner ist weder der Entdecker der High Line noch der Erfinder von Parks auf stillgelegten Bahnstrecken, aber er sorgte mit seinem ausgezeichneten entwerferischen Können dafür, dass die High Line heute in New York zu den zehn beliebtesten Touristenattraktionen und weltweit zu den bekanntesten Projekten aktueller Landschaftsarchitektur zählt.

Wie entstand die High Line? Um 1900 dominierten noch etwa 250 Schlachthäuser und fleischverarbeitende Betriebe den Meatpacking District am Rande des Hudson River, und ebenerdige Eisenbahntrassen durchzogen die Straßen von West Chelsea. Güterzüge und Lastkraftwagen sorgten rund um die Uhr für die Verteilung von Rohstoffen und Waren, und das Straßenleben wurde immer gefährlicher. Die 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue war aufgrund zahlloser tödlicher Unfälle schon bald als „Death Avenue“ bekannt. Selbst der Einsatz der „West Side Cowboys“, die mit roten Warnflaggen jedem Zug auf Pferden voran ritten, konnten die Lage kaum verbessern. Deshalb entschloss man sich Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts zu einem massiven Umbau der industriellen Verkehrsinfrastruktur und eröffnete 1934

eine auf neun Meter aufgeständerte, stählerne Hochbahntrasse, auf der die Güterzüge die oberen Stockwerke der zahlreichen Fabriken und Lagerhäuser der West Side direkt erreichen konnten.

Ab 1950 nahm der Schienenverkehr allmählich ab, weil die Industrieproduktion aus der Stadt verlagert wurde und sich ein neues Transportsystem durchsetzte: der Gütertransport per Lastkraftwagen. 1960 riss man erste Teile der Hochbahn ab und legte die Strecke 1980 endgültig still. Lange Jahre blieb das Monument der urbanen Industriegeschichte New Yorks ungenutzt und setzte Rost an. Auf dem Gleisschotter wuchs mit den Jahren nahezu völlig ungestört eine faszinierende, wilde Ruderalvegetation, urbane Wildnis im 3. Stock der Millionenmetropole und ein Paradies für all jene, die für eine Weile aus dem Blickfeld der reglementierten Stadtöffentlichkeit verschwinden wollten – abenteuerlustige Kids, verliebte Teenager, experimentierfreudige Aussteiger oder schutzsuchende Obdachlose.

Als Grundstückseigentümer im Interesse der Wertsteigerung ihrer Liegenschaften die Tilgung des „Schandflecks“ aus der Stadt forderten, keimte Widerstand auf. 1999 machten sich zwei Anwohner aus Manhattan, Robert Hammond und Joshua David für den Erhalt der Hochbahnstrecke stark. Sie waren fasziniert von der wilden Schönheit der Bahnbrache, erkannten den stadtgeschichtlichen Wert des rostigen Monstrums und gründeten den Verein „Friends of the High Line“. Obwohl Bürgermeister Rudolph Giuliani bereits erste Abrissgenehmigungen unterzeichnet hatte, gelang es dem Verein in kurzer Zeit so viele aktive Unterstützer aus Kunst, Kultur und lokaler Wirtschaft für ihre Idee zu gewinnen, dass schließlich auch die neue Stadtverwaltung von New York die Initiative unterstützte.

2002 unterzeichnete Bürgermeister Michael Bloomberg den Beschluss zur Umwandlung der Hochbahn in eine öffentliche Parkanlage.

Im Jahr danach gewannen den internationalen Wettbewerb zur Umgestaltung der High Line James Corner mit „Field Operations“ in Zusammenarbeit mit Diller Scofidio + Renfro Architekten und dem niederländischen Gartenarchitekten Piet Oudolf. Das Wettbewerbsmotto des Teams: „Keep it simple. Keep it wild. Keep it quiet. Keep it slow“. Als gestalterisches Vorbild diente unter anderem die etwa 4,5 Kilometer lange *Promenade plantée*, in Paris auch als *Coulée verte René-Dumont* bekannt. Auch dieser lineare Park, eröffnet 1993, entstand auf der Trasse einer stillgelegten Bahnlinie des 19. Jahrhunderts, die auf Viadukten das 12. Arrondissement von Paris durchquerte. „In the case of the High Line“, erläutert James Corner, „a very close reading was made of the site’s history and urban context. Two readings were particularly formative—one was the singular, autonomous quality of the transportation engineering infrastructure (its linearity and repetition, indifferent to surrounding context, and its brash steel and concrete palette), and the other was the surprising and charming effect of self-sown vegetation taking over the postindustrial structure once the trains had stopped running—a kind of melancholia captured beautifully in earlier photographs made by the artist Joel Sternfeld.“<sup>1</sup>

Zwischen 2006 und 2014 wurde nach den Plänen des Designteams um James Corner in drei Phasen für insgesamt etwa 260 Millionen US Dollar ein lineares Stück urbaner Brache in einen populären Park verwandelt, der wie eine Zündschnur einen Bau-, Kommerz- und Kultur-Boom in den angrenzenden Stadtquartieren auslöste.

Das blieb für die gewachsene Sozialstruktur im Umfeld und für die urbane Wildnis nicht folgenlos. Wenn Brachflächen der Öffentlichkeit zugänglich gemacht und für die alltägliche Nutzung erschlossen werden, verändern sie zwangsläufig ihren Charakter – so auch die High Line.

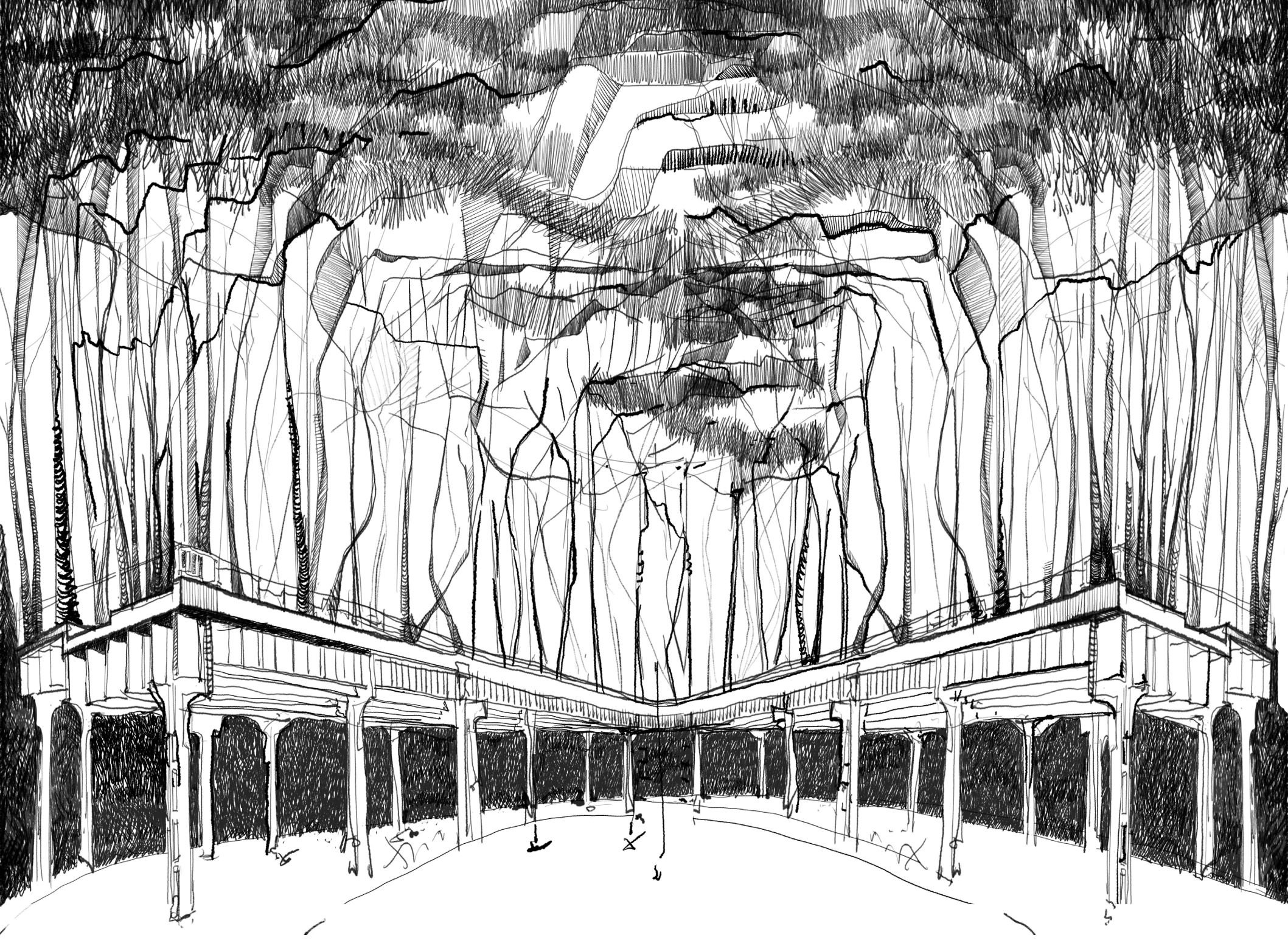
Field Operations verwandelte die Hochbahntrasse in einen begehbaren Park mit einer multifunktionalen, modular aufgebauten Oberfläche, und im Zuge der Neugestaltung mussten Schotter, Schwellen und Schienen samt wilder Vegetation zunächst völlig entfernt werden. Um dem Erscheinungsbild der wilden Pioniervegetation möglichst nahe zu kommen, komponierte der Gartenarchitekt Piet Oudolf ein Pflanzschema aus Präriegräsern, Wildstauden und typischen Pioniergehölzen wie die Birke. Schienen und Schotter wurden wieder in weiten Teilen eingebaut, und um eine bequem nutzbare Oberfläche mit Sitzgelegenheiten, Beleuchtung und Aufenthaltsbereichen zu schaffen, entwickelten die Planer zehn unterschiedliche Plankenmodultypen aus Beton. Die Planken montierte man passgenau auf die stählerne Tragkonstruktion, und es entstand das Bild eines feinen Webteppichs, der in sein Gewebe verschiedene Lebensbereiche für die Vegetation integriert.

Der High Line Park kann als beispielgebendes Projekt gelten, weil es auf die Veränderung von urbaner Infrastruktur mit einem technisch ausgefeilten Entwicklungs- und Gestaltungskonzept reagiert. Natürlichkeit und Künstlichkeit stehen hier nicht im Gegensatz zueinander, sondern verbinden sich zu einem neuen landschafts-architektonisch-technischen Organismus, der die Stadt in neun Metern Höhe durchzieht. In Fachkreisen wird der High Line Park aber nicht nur

mit Begeisterung, sondern teilweise auch mit gewisser Skepsis betrachtet. Und um die Sondierung dieses Spannungsverhältnisses aus internationaler fachlicher Perspektive geht es in dieser Publikation.

27 renommierte Professorinnen und Professoren der Landschaftsarchitektur aus 12 verschiedenen Nationen beleuchten in kurzen Essays aus ihrer persönlichen Sicht das populäre New Yorker Konversionsprojekt und leisten damit aufschlussreiche Beiträge zum fachlichen Diskurs über den zukünftigen Umbau innerstädtischer Infrastrukturen im Allgemeinen und James Corners landschaftsarchitektonischen Ansatz im Besonderen. •

1 Corner, James: „Hunt’s Haunts“ in: Lindner, Christoph/ Rosa, Brian (Hrsg.): Deconstructing the High Line. Postindustrial Urbanism and the Rise of the Elevated Park. New Brunswick 2017; S.24





## Expanding the Field

Thorbjörn Andersson

Teaching landscape architecture in the 1980s was sometimes difficult — it was hard to find books that were relevant and contemporary to give the students. It is true, there were books available on the natural sciences, on planning, and on urban sociology, but compared to the intellectual acuity of architectural writing of the time, we were short on inspiration to draw upon. It was as if landscape architecture was no more than what you could see with your eyes — a practice lacking sufficient theory.

Two decades passed, and the beginning of this century saw a great number of significant landscape projects in the urban realm being realized. Teaching landscape architecture became somewhat simpler, at least there were far more contemporary references to discuss. Brick-thick picture books, websites, competitions, and numerous awards supplied us with an avalanche of photogenic projects, not only from Europe and the USA, but from all over the world. Occasionally we had a hard time interpreting what all these projects stood for. Had we just exchanged an overdose of planning and science for an overdose of imagery?

Thus, the 1980s meant a constant thirst for absent theory. On the other hand, the early 2000s displayed an abundance of practice. Of all the projects, probably the most published was the High Line in New York, beginning before it was even built.

Thirst is a stronger driving force than satisfaction, which is probably why I rate James Corner's endeavors as a writer as the most influential of his many undertakings. During the time between the period without theory and the period with abundant built projects, he took action in writing, thinking, and presenting aspects that supplied us with theory,

provoked us with insults, and soothed us with clever conclusions. Three books made an especially deep impression: In the first, *Taking Measures Across the American Landscape* (1996), Corner examined new territories afresh with the help of aerial photographer Alex MacLean. Writing such a book was bold, almost a form of crusade and an act of reverse colonization.

The second book is an anthology that Corner edited, entitled *Recovering Landscape* (1999). It contains sixteen disparate essays, that together served as a powerful defense for the profession and a method for action. The book was a way to crack open the riddle of the idiom itself, to go beyond the iconography. Corner's own text is full of references. He had opened *Measures...* with a poem by T.S. Eliot. Here, landscape architecture was related to Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Marcel Duchamp and even Martin Heidegger. We suddenly became part of a "critical cultural activity", to use Corner's own re-definition of landscape architecture.

The third book, *The Landscape Urbanism Reader* (2006), is another anthology, edited by Charles Waldheim, with fourteen essays, with one by Corner that serves as an offensive maneuver. He seems to be saying that since architects have appropriated our concept of landscape and reduced it to mere background, we must make it clear that they understand only a fraction of its complexity. We should bring landscape into the city, and prove obsolete the belief that landscape belongs in the countryside. Landscape urbanism came to be influential as an attitude, although the concept ran into some definition problems when seen as a technique. Landscape and urbanism had been oil and water to many architects; now they were unified. •

## Inspired by the High Line: Dutch Examples

Adri van den Brink

Since its opening in 2009, the High Line has been acclaimed as a showcase of how unused derelict infrastructure can be transformed into a high-quality urban environment. The public landscape that was created on the former railway line in West Manhattan is firmly rooted in the city's sustainable growth agenda. From the very start it has formed an oasis for locals who want to escape from busy city life, and also a popular tourist attraction that plays a prominent role in the contemporary image of the city. The different spheres and biotopes that the Dutch garden designer Piet Oudolf created along the promenade in collaboration with James Corner have been a major contribution to the High Line's success.

Apart from the praise it receives, the High Line has also been criticised for having a stronger focus on profit than on planet and people, resulting in, for example, gentrification and social exclusion. Such effects are difficult to measure but should be weighed against the effects of alternative solutions. A more serious objection may be that the park is rather disconnected from the surrounding urban environment; it is more a refuge from city life than an integrated part of it. One of the lessons that might be drawn from the project is that urban transformation of this kind should contribute to creating different kinds of connections: connections between the various parts of the city, between different users of the park and between the three P's: people, planet and profit of the sustainability development triangle.

Several Dutch architects and landscape architects have made a substantial contribution to cultivating the seeds that were planted by the High Line. One example is the *Seoulllo 7017* project in Seoul by MVRDV and Ben Kuipers. In this case a motorway flyover in the heart of the city that no longer met safety standards was converted into a

“skygarden” that would become a lifeline for local inhabitants and an icon of sustainable urban development. Like an octopus, the elevated promenades connect different neighbourhoods across the main railway station. With two million visitors per month it is not only a passage but—with nearby cafes, shops and office buildings—also a place to stay, to meet and to take a walk.

Other examples can be found in the Netherlands. The *Luchtsingel*, designed by ZUS, is a 400-m-long pedestrian bridge that reconnects three downtown districts in Rotterdam. The *Luchtsingel*, too, has proven itself as a catalyst for urban renewal and economic development. Based on what is called “permanent temporality”, it combines a series of green public spaces, including Europe's first urban farming roof. The fact that the project is completely crowdfunded illustrates how it is embedded in urban social life. The *Oosterspoorbaanpark*, designed by OKRA, is situated in the outskirts of Utrecht, connecting the downtown area with the countryside. Rails have been maintained as a historical reference. This “low line” park, developed with strong civic participation, contains footpaths, a section of a long-distance cycling route and urban farming sites. Perhaps not so interesting for tourists and architecture magazines, but all the more so for the locals who regularly use the park.

These examples show how Dutch professionals have taken up the challenge set by James Corner's pioneering design. Building on what may be called the “Dutch approach”, they have transformed single land-use infrastructure lines into green liveable areas that contribute to urban sustainable development in multiple ways. •

For more information, see: [www.mvrdv.nl](http://www.mvrdv.nl) (Seoulllo 7017); [www.zus.cc](http://www.zus.cc) (Luchtsingel); [www.okra.nl](http://www.okra.nl) (Oosterspoorbaanpark)

## Entrelacement

Paolo Bürgi

A few years ago, during a masters-level course at the IUAV in Venice, we asked our students to re-read Ludovico Ariosto's epic poem *Orlando furioso* and find inspiration for a landscape project that was to be located in the Province of Modena, as a remedy we thought, to more literal strategies we often find in landscape architecture education. The interest from the students surpassed all expectations. For the first time, a limit to the number of students had to be introduced, whittling the number of enrolled students down to fifty.

While reading Ariosto, the sixteenth-century world with a rich tapestry of poetic fantasy and beautiful dreams (that have meanwhile lost nothing of their freshness and irony) many unexpected inspirations came to the students'. Out of these, one idea was agreed as being the most fascinating: that of "*entrelacement*", a literary technique in which several stories are simultaneously interlaced in one larger narrative; mixing heterogeneous materials to give implicit as well as explicit meanings. As such, the narrative sequences are interrupted, separated and recombined with other narrative sequences later on.

Since the very early beginning of Corner's High Line Park project publications, the first design that captured the observer is for sure the now so famous pattern: a game of paving and planting, full and empty, hard and soft, rock and grass that traverse this linear park. It is a recurring theme; coming and going, appearing and disappearing, regenerating itself like an invitation to merge into interlaced stories: *entrelacement* in its most intriguing form.

In teaching landscape architecture at university, desk critics in studio are the mirror of students' most current interests in landscape

architecture. The books on their tables and the places they visit and navigate through reflect where they focus their attention, searching for inspiration on the move. It is mostly in contemporary references that they search for ideas and topics for tomorrow's visions.

So in the students' design process, an attempt to reformulate the idea of the High Line as *entrelacement* is often a recurring theme, but the results are not always what we expect to be a visionary proposal. After all, copies usually are inferior to the artist's original, yet there may still be creative potential hidden in a ravishing reinterpretation.

Last year, while walking through an elegant neighborhood in downtown Bogota, I surprisingly and unexpectedly found a garden that was clearly a close relative of part of the High Line in New York: interlaced lines in the paving that merged out from the ground into a folded bench, while stripes of a shy vegetation vainly tried to gain some space within the narrow bounds. Whether this was indeed inspired by the High Line project, I cannot say. This, like many other questions, is one left for future historians. •

## Premonitions

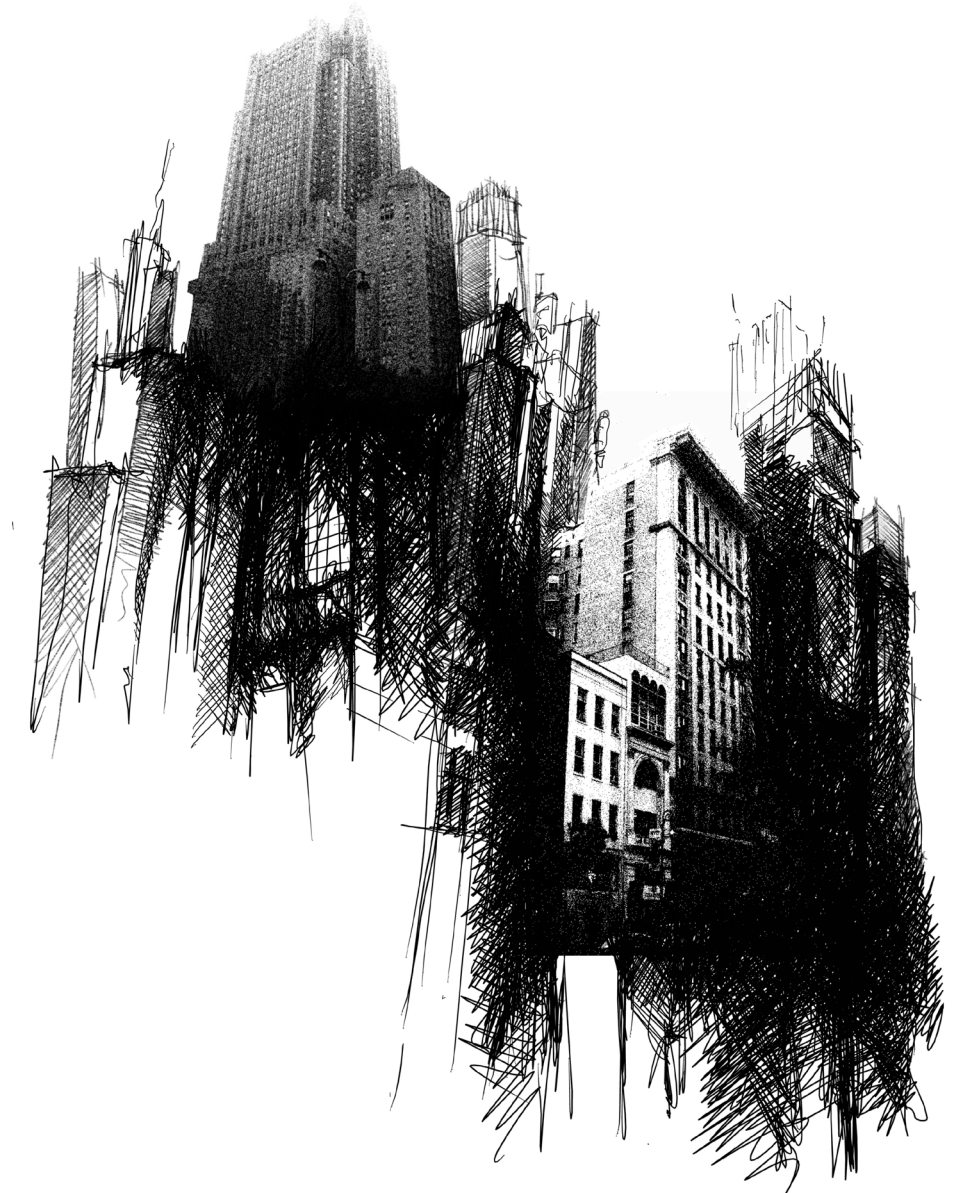
Michel Desvigne

At the turn of the century, I was living in Boston. Occasionally James Corner and I would participate in studio review exchanges between our respective universities, Harvard and Pennsylvania. During one of my visits to Philadelphia, in his small university office, James showed me a number of drawings he was working on for a quite improbable project in New York.

I was stunned by it, and for good reason. To begin with, by the representational technique alone. James had greatly impressed me before, as he had everyone, with his maps in *Taking Measures Across the American Landscape*, but the precision and realism of these perspectives was of a quality completely unprecedented at the time.

Above all though, I was stunned by the project itself; which was, needless to say, the High Line. Of course, a newly planted but antiquated Parisian promenade came to mind. But here, visible already in his drawings, the play between the new development and the existing structure was of an unbelievable refinement and modernity. With much anticipation, James proudly showed me the famous tapering concrete section ensuring the transition between the plantings.

Twenty years and numerous morning walks along the High Line later, this fleeting vision continues to haunt me. I can only see this landscape superimposed over this sudden image of anticipation. •



## Tuning the Weed

Jörg Dettmar

Der High Line Park geht zurück auf starkes bürgerschaftliches Engagement. Ein Auslöser für dieses Interesse war die Sukzessionsnatur auf den ehemaligen Gleisen. Die weitere Geschichte ist bekannt; der Park wurde mit gewaltigen finanziellen Mitteln in der Zusammenarbeit der Stadt NYC und den „Friends of the High Line“ auf der Basis des Entwurfs von James Corner realisiert. Es ist sicher eines der interessantesten, teuersten und bekanntesten landschaftsarchitektonischen Projekte der letzten 20 Jahre. Insofern ist der Park ein großer Erfolg und bei vielen New Yorkern und Touristen sehr beliebt. Er ist allerdings auch Auslöser für eine massive Gentrifizierung in West Manhattan.

Dies soll hier aber nicht im Fokus stehen, sondern mich interessiert die Frage nach den Naturbildern und der Rolle von Natur, die hinter der Gestaltung stehen. Die spontane Vegetation der fünfundzwanzigjährigen Verwilderung wurde bei der Sanierung der Gleistrasse entfernt, diente aber bei der Neubepflanzung als Inspiration. Piet Oudolf als ausführender Vegetationsplaner hat verschiedene vorher hier vorkommende Arten in die Neubepflanzung integriert und insgesamt ein Vegetationsbestand geschaffen, der an die „Wildnis“ erinnert aber gärtnerisch optimiert ist. Neugebaut hat man ein Bild von wilder Stadtnatur oder anders ausgedrückt das „Unkraut“ wurde getunt.

Interessant ist daran für mich die Frage was diese Form der „Natur“ nun eigentlich symbolisiert? In Europa symbolisierten Parks und Gärten seit der Aufklärung lange eine ideale Landschaft außerhalb der Stadt als Sehnsuchtsort des Städters und Gegenwelt zur Stadt. Damit verbunden war die klare Trennung von Stadt und Landschaft. Stadtnatur als eigentliche, wilde, nicht gärtnerisch angelegte und gut an die Stadt angepasste Natur ist auf der symbolischen Ebene Ausdruck der

städtischen Lebensbedingungen und in gewisser Weise der Gegensatz von sehnsuchtsbeladener Natur der Landschaft. Sie ist immer auch bedrohlich für die städtische Ordnung und Ausdruck des Zerfalls, dieses Phänomen kann man in schrumpfenden Städten erleben.

Spätestens in der Postmoderne und seit den Diskursen über die Rolle der Natur in der Stadt hat sich etwas verändert in dem Verhältnis von Stadt und Landschaft, der Gegensatz wurde mehr und mehr zu einer hybriden Gesamtheit. Es gibt viele Versuche originär urbaner Grünflächengestaltung, die aber meist nicht als „Sehnsuchtsorte“ sondern mehr als Kunst- oder Kulturorte funktionieren. Die „Ruderalparks“ in Berlin und besonders im Ruhrgebiet bei denen man die spontane Natur als Element eines Parks erhalten und teilweise auch landschaftsarchitektonisch inszeniert hat, thematisierten großflächig die Stadt- beziehungsweise „Industrienatur“. Bekanntestes Beispiel ist wahrscheinlich der *Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord*. Allerdings sind dies Reservate und extensiv kontrollierte Räume einer kulturell aufgeladenen aber immer noch authentischen, weil originären Stadtnatur.

Der Nachbau der wilden Stadtnatur, das gärtnerisch kontrollierte und intensiv gepflegte Abbild – wie bei der High Line – hat es bislang zumindest in der Dimension und mit dieser Bedeutung nicht gegeben. Was bedeutet es nun also auf symbolischer Ebene wenn wilde Stadtnatur gärtnerisch imitiert und mit extrem hohem Aufwand kultiviert wird? Aus europäischer Sicht würde ich sagen, dies ästhetisiert und inszeniert die von der Sukzession eigentlich ausgehende Bedrohung städtischer Ordnung, es signalisiert eine beherrschbare Stadtnatur und eignet sich damit als Sehnsuchtsraum für deren ungefährlichen Genuss. Sie symbolisiert ästhetische Funktionalharmonie zwischen Stadt und Natur. •

## A New Paradigm for the Promenade

Sonja Dümpelmann

With the project of the High Line, James Corner and his firm Field Operations have provided a landscape of landmark quality and a new paradigm for the promenade. In New York City, the High Line could be considered the twenty-first-century equivalent of the nineteenth-century Mall in *Central Park*, or even of the entire iconic *Central Park* designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. Like Central Park, the High Line has attracted both the attention of a large public and of city officials, urban and landscape designers in the United States and abroad. It ranks among the biggest tourist attractions in the city and—while itself modeled loosely on the *Promenade Plantée* in Paris—has been and is being emulated by other cities. For example, Chicago has implemented the three-mile long *Bloomingtondale Trail*; Philadelphia has begun to build the *Reading Viaduct Rail Park*; and St. Louis has envisioned *The Trestle* following the High Line model.

The High Line also parallels nineteenth-century public urban park developments in terms of its aesthetic strategies, design vocabulary, iconography, symbolism, and its economic effects on the surrounding neighborhoods. For example, once the plans to turn the former elevated freight line into a linear park gained traction, the surrounding area began increasing in value, facilitating and further accelerating the gentrification of the former meatpacking district. Yet, if Central Park was designed as a secluded, introverted pastoral and picturesque antidote to the city, with the High Line the designers have provided a green promenade that enables visitors to both detach themselves from the street and still be a part of it. In contrast to Central Park which was envisioned by its nineteenth-century designers as a green oasis within which the surrounding dense urban fabric was often veiled, the

character and layout of the High Line celebrates and embraces the experience of the city. A variety of designed platforms with seating direct and frame views onto the street life below and into the street canyons, evoking a sublime effect, similar to that described by turn-of-the-century writers when they wrote of New York City's streets framed by high rise buildings.

Much of the High Line's planting consists of species common in the city's hinterland. Imitating the spontaneous vegetation that had established itself between the deserted tracks, the plants provide a lofty ambience and a colorful picturesque frame for vistas between buildings and across roofs. Recalling the structure's former transportation use in the paving and furniture design, the High Line aestheticizes the site's industrial past, but it does not hide it.

The lofty promenade is both set apart from and united to the city through these devices. Its design has turned a disused industrial railroad into an amenity. It both highlights and veils the former industrial character of the site and its development into a high-end tourist destination and a setting for the homes of wealthy residents. In this sense, then, the High Line can perhaps be considered a less duplicitous and more explicit landscape than the nineteenth-century design for *Central Park*. By recalling the site's history, the design for the adaptive reuse of the former freight line has set a precedent for the improvement of urban landscapes. •

## Look Back in Admiration

Marcella Eaton and Alan Tate

Our first experience of Jim's work was his two discourses on theory in *Landscape Journal* in 1990 and 1991. Those papers preceded his presentation at the (questionably-named) *Recovery of the Landscape* conference at the Architectural Association in March 1995. This was followed by two of Jim's books that have become academic staples—*Taking Measures Across the American Landscape* (1996) and his collection of essays on landscape theory, *Recovering Landscape* (1999). These publications prompted us to invite him to come and talk—to a full house—at the University of Manitoba in Fall 1998, before the winter became too bleak for a peripatetic Mancunian.

That visit was a wonderful, funny, wine-filled (and emptied) weekend—with multiple references to the movie *Fargo*—during which Jim stressed that his theoretical work could only be justified through built landscape works. And subsequently, in an achievement evocative of the infamous line from the movie *The Italian Job*—“you're only supposed to blow the bloody doors off”—he and his firm Field Operations announced their practical credentials with the High Line and then followed it with projects like the post-Games concourse at *Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park* in London, *Navy Pier* in Chicago and numerous other high-profile designs. As we noted in the chapter about the High Line in *Great City Parks*, his colleague Lisa Switkin has commented that Jim has “dedicated his career to demonstrating the scope, and elevating the profile of landscape architecture—as both a theoretical and a practical discipline”. And Lisa would surely also note Jim's generosity as a mentor in academia and in practice.

Our own observation about the High Line is that it demonstrates a landscape architecture-driven approach that turns the park outside-

in, presenting surprising panoramas of the surrounding city. And we concluded that “it exemplifies parks being seen as integral components of cities and their processes of change rather than as bucolic escapes from them. It demonstrates the importance of seeking new futures for all types of unwanted industrial site. It shows that design based on intelligent integrity is an effective alternative to lamenting abandoned authenticity.”

Daniel Biederman, Executive Director of Bryant Park Corporation, noted in 2013 that after the success of the High Line, Jim and Field Operations would be justifiably considered eligible for every landscape project in New York. And Phil Askew, client representative for the *London Olympic Park*, noted that Jim knows exactly what he wants to achieve in his work and he is determined to achieve it. The High Line would not be what it is today without that kind of determination.

Now, nearly twenty years after our conversations with Jim about his intention to explore the symbiosis between his theoretical work and his design practice, we can all look back in admiration at his portfolio—at his projects and his publications. We can also admire Jim's sense of humour, his generosity of spirit, his scholarship, his mentorship in academia and practice, and the lucid graphic representation of his ideas that has influenced a generation of designers. An accomplished and admirable landscape architect. •

## Walkway – Paradise – Babylon

Adriaan Geuze

Since its opening in 2009 the High Line has become the international reference for contemporary landscape architecture and parks. How should we understand the High Line? Is she a park or is she a boulevard? Is she an attraction for raising real estate values?

### Walkway – Paradise – Babylon

On first glance the High Line is an elevated urban walkway, a passage, a journey which explores the skyline, excludes the daily congestion, and liberates itself from the pains of life. The seasons fly unchained from gravity high above Manhattan's bedrock. This walkway does not need to meander, the city vibrates. She is manicured like a super model, sophisticated, smooth, well drained. She will keep your polished shoes shiny. People walk proudly and firmly on their journey to nowhere.

### Walkway – Paradise – Babylon

In the Middle Ages, the paradise theme was ever present in art. In the new narrative of paradise Madonna and her Child took the position of Adam and Eve. In *The little Garden of Paradise* by the Upper Rhenish Master, paradise is the subject. The Garden is enwalled and safe, the tree of wisdom drops shade for a reading Madonna. She is accompanied by saints, characters which love, chant, read, garden, cook. Nobody is ageing, springtime lasts forever, trees and flowers blossom, herbs smell, songbirds sing. They know how to live with the devil who is represented in the monkey.

No doubt the High Line flowerbeds easily match this paradise. Due to Piet Oudolf's unique botanic legacy and the unprecedented generosity of rich neighbors who pay for these micromaintained flowerbeds, people are given an illusion of paradise. Of course, this American re-

write of paradise features snake nor monkey. The High Line cultivates innocence. Her scenery is lovely, organized, pre-programmed, and always reasonable. She shares the harmonious world and will protect against strange, non-scripted behavior.

### Walkway – Paradise – Babylon

Babylon is the third metaphor, not the Hanging Gardens, but the Tower of Babylon. Created and built by people who feared to be anonymous and mortal, eager to pretend, to be famous and to be immortal. The Babylonian Tower is the shameless statement of vanity: this is us! Their tower would reach into heaven. Its builders would finally equal God. Due to His interference, from then on people had to speak different languages, they no longer understand each other. Allegorically, New York is definitely the best ever representation of this: freedom, capitalism, culture, euphoria, wealth, power. Its skyline peaks into heaven, its streetscape is full of people incapable of understanding each other. People share, but never meet. Equally, the High Line wants to reach into the sky, sharing the illusion people can climb into heaven. The well recognized Russian artists Ilya and Emilia Kabakov create sculptures, in which monumental ladders reach out into the skies. Human figures climb them and stretch out their hands, in desire of meeting an angel. In these artworks, they ironically link the Babylonian vanity with the Greek myth of Icarus. •



## Back to the Roots

Christophe Girod

Who has not heard of the High Line in New York? Never in the history of landscape architecture was so much owed to so few trees. Between miracle and mirage, the High Line looms defiantly over what used to be the Meat Packing District of Lower Manhattan. For decades, trains used to carry livestock and produce in from the Garden State, to be slaughtered and packed in the adjacent warehouses. Where do these old tracks take us anyway, and does it even matter? It has now become the hippest place in town, attracting countless crowds of city dwellers, seeking day in and day out the attraction of boutiques, museums and cafés that have sprung-out of the once decrepit tenements.

The High Line is a project that stands out on its own, with a unique stature because of its shape, form and function. As an industrial ruin, the refurbished railroad bridge straddling the streets of Lower Manhattan on its cast iron legs comes across differently than any other hanging garden in the world; it works more like the deck of a ship taking us to some place of enchantment. But what exactly makes the High Line so different?

Early inspiration for the High Line came from the iconic ecological, post-industrial landscapes of the *Gleisdreieck* and *Schöneberger Südgelände* in Berlin and the *Zeche Zollverein* in Essen. The High Line drew its substance from the ruderal traits of these earlier German experiments in urban ecology, such as cruddy ballast, rusted tracks, tagged rail ties oozing with creosote, and sprawling bramble with shrubs and crooked trees woven into an impenetrable entanglement of vegetation. These traits are still vaguely discernible in the DNA of the project today, the clusters of birches attest to that. But in

essence the High Line is anything but ecological or ruderal, because of its sheer urbanity; it has metamorphosed into something quite other, akin to a Potemkin of nature, that has become as fashionable as it is fake. It is an extraordinary place to partake in a new cult of nature, a ritual promenade set on some flowery path to OZ, where the mundane Manhattan crowd, amid exquisite blooms and furniture, strives for its own immanent salvation. The High Line is first and foremost a place to socialize, where it is important to be seen and to be well in love with nature. Few of the visitors probably remember how it once was, when dry tundra vegetation covered the abandoned tracks. It was just an indication of the extreme conditions that prevailed up there on deck, with arctic winds and cold down to minus fifty degrees alternating seasonally with sweltering urban heat up to plus forty. This is no anecdote, because even as we speak the roots of the High Line, as few and shallow as they may be, are permanently exposed to the elements like no other landscape in the City. It is therefore quite a feat that Jim Corner and Piet Oudolf have achieved together by bringing back a promise of spring to the High Line year after year. •

## A Neo-Post-Industrial Approach

Wolfram Höfer

The High Line is an extraordinary and successful urban open space. The planting design links horticultural beauty with urban nature, the elevated walkway offers amazing views into Manhattan's urban fabric, making the park a prime tourist attraction. New Yorkers think it is the first of its kind, but for landscape architects the High Line is the final exclamation point on the post-industrial landscape design discourse.

This discourse was opened in 1975 by Richard Haag's design for *Gas Works Park* in Seattle. This was the very first time that industrial relics were preserved and consciously integrated into a design for a park, in fact, against the wishes of local residents. The public considered the gas works at Brown's Point, abandoned since 1956, as a symbol of urban blight, and was in favor of completely demolishing all remaining structures to make way for a Victorian-style park. Haag's aesthetic celebration of the gasification towers marks the beginning of the creative integration of post-industrial relics into landscape architecture.

Although the evolving American environmental movement advocated for addressing contaminated sites, the post-industrial design discourse first gained momentum in Europe a decade later. A growing interest in novel urban ecologies went hand-in-hand with the evolving cultural and aesthetic appreciation of post-industrial relics. The paradigm shift from just cleaning abandoned factories to embracing post-industrial landscapes is marked by the *Landscape Park Duisburg-Nord* in Germany that transformed an old steel plant into a recreational park. It is noteworthy that local authorities made the preservation and integration of the abandoned steel furnace a prerequisite for the design competition held in 1989, only five years after the plant was closed.

By the end of the twentieth century, utilizing abandoned industrial infrastructure was commonplace in landscape architecture. The *Promenade Plantée* in Paris (1993) and the *Südgelände* in Berlin (2000) successfully utilized abandoned railroads as linear parks; existing voluntary growth was the backbone of the planting design. The High Line is designed in this tradition. In fact, the High Line was only possible because three decades of post-industrial landscape architecture had changed public perception of derelict industrial infrastructure. While Seattle residents of the mid-seventies wanted a gas works demolished, New Yorkers of the new millennium were in love with the abandoned elevated railroad in the Meat Packing District. The photographs by Joel Sternfeld supported the perception of crumbling infrastructure as secluded urban nature. When the viaducts were scheduled for demolition, a group of influential citizens successfully lobbied for their preservation.

The High Line marks a new chapter in the tradition of adaptive re-use. The visibly abandoned infrastructure was not preserved, but literally reconstructed. Developing the park design, structural issues of the viaduct were discovered that made a complete removal of tracks and vegetation necessary. However, in order to maintain the post-industrial appeal, the tracks were placed back on new railroad ties. The planting design by Piet Oudolf is inspired by the previous self-seeding landscape, but evolved into a very well maintained example of sophisticated horticulture. With that, the High Line is beyond post-industrial, it opens the door to a new neo-post-industrial approach to abandoned infrastructure. •

## Genius Loci et Sui Generis

John Dixon Hunt

Despite the calls to imitate the High Line across the United States on other derelict infrastructures, it was for the best of reasons implausible. It was so satisfactorily “New York”, better and more acute than perhaps even its designers foresaw – an interesting instance of reception outpacing a designer’s vision. But it also acknowledged a fundamental law of landscape design that it honour place. Some modern French rationalists have argued that *genius loci* does not exist; but to make a site that is completely of itself, in the best of ways unimitable (*sui generis*), is just a new “take” on that ancient concept.

The High Line has proved enormously popular, maybe too much so for some who want to use its neighbourly advantages. Yet it is not just that it is “New York”, for such an imaginative transformation of a derelict rail line was a new concept – some suspected that the *Promenade Plantée* in Paris was a predecessor; but that earlier example was quite different, not least for a being a modern spin-off from Alphand’s 19th-century *Promenades de Paris*.

The High line transformed a derelict infrastructure by celebrating its local condition and aspirations: it acknowledged a former railway line with both actual remains and concrete representations of them; it transformed the weeds and wild growths on derelict sites – something that Jim Corner would recall from the devastations wrought in the UK by Beecham’s cuts to the railway system in the 1950s – with a wonderful array of plants by Piet Oudolf, that recalled without mimicking overgrowth; it enhanced a section of Manhattan, the Meatpacking District, and brought quick and substantial improvements to the area.

And it also pulled in crowds, or did every time I visited it. That was also a key element of any landscape design that it provides its visitors with an urban theatre. The link between gardens and theatres is longstanding, as both a place to perform and be seen as performers, especially for dramas that spoke to their audiences. The High Line did that in at least three ways.

There was, of course, the amphitheatre of seats that overlooked the streets – a structure frequently inserted into parks and gardens; but here the chance was for those seated aloft to gaze down on the pedestrians below.

Equally fascinating, and occasionally a touch provoking, were the ways that visitors were always both looking and being seen, with no certainty as to which anyone was at any given moment. Even the occupants of the buildings that occasionally lined its route were spectators of the slow moving crowds, as well as the objects of *voyeurs* who found they could look into those New York apartments.

And finally, the High Line that took one through a segment of New York eventually turned towards a view of the Hudson: so New York itself became a sufficient play or drama for those who either did not live there or who did inhabit, but lived elsewhere. •

## New Urban Nature

Andreas Kipar

Talking about James Corner means inevitably talking about the crucial role that landscape design or, as he defines it, “landscape urbanism” is playing nowadays. James Corner’s broad vision considers landscape both in social and existential terms: landscape is how we give form to our cities, ultimately how we identify with places, but it also deals with our whole existential condition of “beings that are bound with natural forces”.

James Corner and myself share a common double experience: having grown up in a highly urbanised area severely impacted by industrialization, while feeling a deep need of nature. The need for landscape is to be set in this framework, as landscape is increasingly the recipient for unheeded needs and desires, such as socializing, and getting in touch with a new urban nature. Landscape architects should take on such challenges by deploying place-based as well as people-based policies through punctual design actions impacting people’s everyday life and local identity.

The High Line project perfectly embeds those challenges in a completely new way, bringing people together and raising their awareness of the cultural shift of urban regeneration. The High Line was saved and transformed thanks to a combination of citizens’ engagement, city planning and celebrity support. Design here became a means to provoke the imagination. In James Corner’s words “the High Line provides a stage for the joys, pleasures and dramas of public life. We’ve borrowed the landscape of Manhattan and created a journey”. Walking thirty feet above the street, traversing bridges, and discovering amazing views and surreal insights above Manhattan means being able to perceive the identity of a place just by changing perspective and therefore gaining a

completely new perception. When I first visited the High Line in 2012 I was able to deeply understand what James Hillman meant when he declared: “Postmodern cities need to be discovered using new forms of perception and not only of design”. This experience brings us back to Italo Calvino’s inspiring vision of a landscape seen as a series of stories that people tell about a place. “More than just a state of art, landscape seems to become a narrative in which the complex relationship between human beings and nature emerges in its dimensions of past, present and future”. Urban nature expresses its own need for evasion and continuity, having been suffocated during industrialization and now regaining, little by little, its presence and visibility.

*Central Park* was built in 1859, in the pre-industrial era, mainly out of concerns of social welfare and as a market-driven prospect to increase the economic value of its surroundings. In 2009, in the post-industrial era, the High Line first opened to the public, inspired by the *Promenade Plantee* in Paris and based on the same social and economic reasons that once motivated Central Park’s creation. Both cases represent superlative examples of place-making city transformations, that have had made a deep impression worldwide. What I and my team at LAND are striving for every day is based on James Corner’s lesson: the importance of reconnecting people with nature to create liveable places for the societies of today and tomorrow. •

## Ein geistiger Sprint

Peter Latz

Es gibt ein verrücktes Bild in den Publikationen zur Geschichte der Moderne. Zeigt es wirklich ein Objekt der Moderne, zeigt es ein Gebäude, einen Wasserfall oder ist es tatsächlich nur ein Bild? Eine begeisterte Kraft strahlt dieses Bild aus, signalisiert aber auch die Dominanz menschlicher Technik über die Natur.

Trotz aller Begeisterung regt sich das ökologische Gewissen, denn heute dürfte ein Bauwerk mitten im Wald, direkt über einem Wasserfall, gar nicht existieren. In einem eloquenten Beitrag stellte James Corner *Falling Water* von Frank Lloyd Wright in einer Vortragsreihe an der Architectural Association School of Architecture in London vor. So lernte ich diesen Engländer von der University of Pennsylvania kennen.

Später erlebte ich James Corner als Chair des Department of Landscape Architecture, wo er den renommierten Studiengang mit spannenden Projekten vorwärts brachte. Damals hatte er auch die ersten großen Erfolge mit seinem Büro Field Operations, darunter – für mich bedeutend – die Gestaltung der Mülllandschaft der *Fresh Kills*. Er wurde zu einem der wichtigsten Sprecher für Landschaftsarchitektur, als einer führenden Disziplin für die Gestaltung unserer Städte. James Corner prägte den Begriff des „Landscape Urbanism“ wesentlich mit und formulierte vehement, was im Berufsfeld nur zurückhaltend gefordert wurde: Landschaftsarchitektur muss Verantwortung in Stadtplanung und Politik übernehmen!

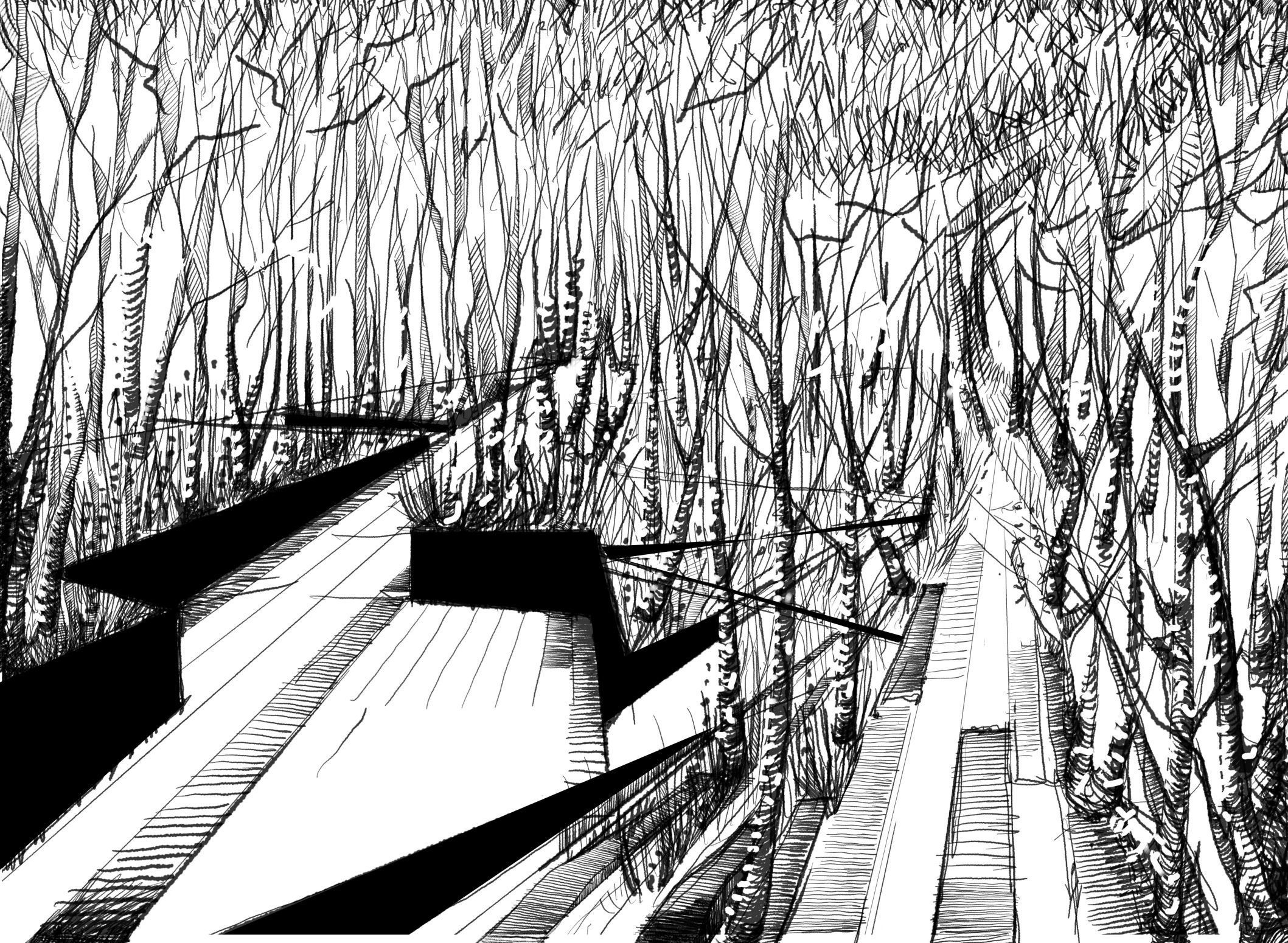
Dann kam die High Line, eine Hochbahn, eingeschnitten in die Blocks des westlichen Manhattan, die mit großer Intensität und Varianz die 34. Straße mit der Gansevoort Street verbindet. Es war ein teures Vorhaben, vielleicht weil es für solche Anforderungen noch

keine Standards gab. Das Projekt hatte Glück, war finanziell durch die „Friends of the High Line“ abgesichert. Diese Gruppe engagierter, vermögender Bürger setzte sich, inspiriert durch die internationalen Erfahrungen im Umgang mit Industrieruinen, insbesondere in Deutschland und Frankreich, erfolgreich gegen den geplanten Abriss der alten Hochbahn zur Wehr.

In einem internationalen Bewerbungsverfahren überzeugte Field Operations mit einem konsequent aus der Formensprache dieses rostigen Stücks aufgestellter Güterbahn entwickelten Design. Es war eine Sensation, dass Field Operations den Rost für ein Modell des Erhalts und der Nutzung in die Hände nahm. Es entstand eines der weltweit bedeutendsten städtebaulichen Merkzeichen und Aushängeschilder für Landschaftsarchitektur des 21. Jahrhunderts. Dabei sollte das Augenmerk nicht nur auf dem einzigartigen Design liegen, das auch Künstler und Architekten inspiriert. Die High Line steht für einen fundamentalen Paradigmenwechsel in Landschaftsarchitektur und Stadtplanung, wie auch im gesellschaftlichen Umgang mit Stadtgeschichte.

Sie beweist zudem, dass ein überkommenes Stück industrieller Infrastruktur hoch geeignet sein kann, einem Stadtviertel einen positiven Stempel aufzudrücken. Die nachhaltige Strahlkraft der High Line lockt Kapital und Kultur und macht die Stadt reicher an Erlebnissen – entgegen romantisierenden und modernistischen Stadtklischees.

Von Frank Lloyd Wright zu diesem Ansatz der High Line – das war ein geistiger Sprint. Aber – sehe ich in einigen Details vielleicht auch noch den Geist von *Falling Water* ... ?? •



## Between Street and Sky

David Leatherbarrow

Cities are always richer than our ideas of them. Poets and writers have described them as mysterious, savage, and dreamlike, thanks to the fact that they always harbor more content than even the best of representations can indicate. This is not only true for old cities, Dublin, Berlin, Venice, or Jerusalem; but also those that have come into their own in the last century or so, Rio, Santiago, and Shanghai. New York is no different. Of course each city has its own character, style, or mood, evident in ways of living as well as durable forms, buildings, gardens, and streets. The greatness of great design projects – surely the High Line is one – is determined not by their suitability to the town's atmosphere, nor their handling of pressing problems, but in their disclosure of unforeseen possibilities for contemporary life. Great projects do not merely affirm, they augment reality, as if by some strange manner of inventive archaeology they help the city become more fully what it had always been.

Before the High Line, who would have thought an abandoned strip of infrastructure in New York City could become a new center for public life? Of course the outcome is beautiful, but its visual quality is tied to concerns for the quality of life in that particular place. Of course it is also useful, but its suitability is apparent in imagery that challenges expectations. And of course it is a new urban form, but its novelty arises out of a deep understanding of historical conditions.

Like the original viaduct it transformed, the High Line represents a single-minded cut through the city's historical fabric, running sometimes with, sometimes against the grain of the famous grid. While productive, its breaks from the existing plan pattern are less significant than those from the typical city section, for a new dimension of

urbanity has been discovered: a line or level between street and sky, nearly as public as the first, but much more open, rather like the second. If the city can be compared to the human body, as so many writers since Plato have observed, the High Line animates neither New York's feet nor its head; instead, its mid-section, its stomach perhaps, possibly its chest, or heart.

Think of the High Line like a boardwalk snaking through a wetland, just a little higher. Instead of a watery world below, its pavings and plantings pass over a grid whose insistent regularity tolerates excessive difference, one property then the next, each a separate owner, interest, and expression. The clear blue above has the opposite quality, unity, for there all the various heights and profiles contribute to a single skyline.

Marginalizing the street and sky, the High Line's mid-level horizon develops a thicker landscape between those two, less varied than the first, not as unified as the second, but intelligible nonetheless, and revealing, especially when the route bends or the section changes (as in the open-air theater), for then another New York, a new city appears: not only congested but coherent, intense yet inhabitable, human enterprise and folly governed by the powers and rhythms of the natural world. •

## Kann Landschaftsarchitektur *zu* erfolgreich sein?

Lilli Lička

Mit dem High Line Park legen James Corner, Diller Scofidio + Renfro und Piet Oudolf ein Projekt der Superlative vor. Selten schießt ein Werk der Landschaftsarchitektur auf der Hitliste der Must-See-Destinationen derart schnell und dauerhaft nach oben. Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts hätte das drei Sterne im Baedeker bedeutet, heute ist die Zahl touristischer Online-Tipps der Beleg des ultimativen Erfolgs. Das ist eine außerordentliche Leistung.

Der High Line Park profitiert in besonderem Maße von dem alten Gefüge. Es ist aufregend, einen gewachsenen Stadtraum in Hochlage zu durchqueren, Ausblicke nicht nur in die Innenräume höhergelegener Etagen der Gebäude zu erheischen, sondern auch die Morphologie der Stadt mit phänomenalen Blicken in die Straßenschluchten zu erfassen. Eine solche Standortgunst haben Philippe Mathieux und Jacques Vergely 1988 für die *Promenade Plantée* im 12. Pariser Arrondissement ausgenutzt, indem sie – angeblich weltweit erstmals – die Trasse einer ehemaligen Hochbahn in einen 4 Kilometer langen Park verwandelt haben. Gestalterisch und gärtnerisch steht das französische Beispiel dem amerikanischen jedoch nach, es ist konventionell und teilweise formalistisch, sogar die einzigartige Hochlage kommt nur an manchen Stellen zur Geltung, während in New York Ausblicke aufwändig inszeniert werden. Die präzise Neugestaltung übersetzt die Atmosphäre der Industriearbeit in eine neue Sprache. Die gestalterische und handwerkliche Umsetzung ist perfekt, vielleicht zu perfekt. Die Rauigkeit der Ruderalvegetation, der vom Gelände abblätternde Lack, die angerosteten Gleise sind ersetzt durch eine exakte Komposition von Belag, Möblierung und Bepflanzung mit akkurat gesetzten Gleisstücken: nichts ist mehr dem Zufall überlassen, der den Charme des verkommenen Objektes zuvor ausgemacht hatte. Es ist sicher auch

diese Perfektion (und die mediale Präsenz), welche die Elemente kopierbar macht. Dem Erfolg will nachgeeifert werden. Zahlreiche Zitate poppen in aktuellen Gestaltungen auf, wenn man die Plagiate denn so freundlich nennen darf. Selten haben diese die gleiche gestalterische Präzision, noch viel seltener haben sie den attraktiven Kontext der High Line: eine ins Stadtgefüge eingewachsene Struktur, die Gusseisenkonstruktion einer arbeitenden Stadt, die Ausstrahlung eines Ortes mit Geschichte. Auch diese materiellen Voraussetzungen tragen zum Erfolg bei, zumal sie zentral im perpetuierten Narrativ des Projektes stehen.

Der neue Park auf der High Line spielt allerdings auch in einem anderen Stück der Superlative eine zentrale Rolle: Sie wurde zum Paradebeispiel der grünen Gentrifizierung, an der die Umwidmung durch Michael Bloomberg und die Stadtverwaltung erheblichen Anteil hat. Der Standort wurde zur ersten Adresse, ikonische Wohngebäude brüsten sich mit ihr. Einer anderen Untersuchung zufolge werden ansässige Erholungsbedürftige vom Ansturm verdrängt: die ethnische Zusammensetzung der Besucherinnen und Besucher entspreche nicht jener der Umgebung und sei auch nicht so durchmischt wie in vergleichbaren Parks. Der bekannte Grafiker Stefan Sagmeister benutzt die High Line begeistert für seine Morgenläufe. Er schwärmt von der natürlichen Pracht der sich ständig ändernden Vegetation. Allerdings muss er um sieben Uhr los, um sich dort noch bewegen zu können. Auch in dieser Hinsicht sei die High Line Opfer ihres eigenen Erfolges. •

Reichl, Alexander J. (2016): The High Line and the ideal of democratic public space, in: *Urban Geography*, Volume 37, Issue 6, 2016, pp. 904–925.  
Quintana, Mariela (2016, August 8): *Changing Grid: Exploring the Impact of the High Line*, <http://streeteasy.com/blog/changing-grid-high-line/> (2018-01-14).



## Über die Hoffnung und das Grün

Frank Lohrberg

Mit Jetlag im *Central Park*. Mein Gott, der *Central Park*. So viel Grün, so viele Menschen. Müdigkeit weicht Leichtigkeit. Ich will eintauchen in das Ganze hier. Hot Dog auf einer Wiese. Ich mag keine Hot Dogs. Aber dieses Gras. Diese endlosen Rasen.

Beklemmungen am *Ground Zero*. Fernsehbilder im Kopf. Gedanken an den ersten Besuch vor 30 Jahren. Und das *Vietnam-Memorial* in Washington, das mich anrührte, weil es so anders war. *Ground Zero* ist groß. Edel. Alles korrekt. Konzept, Ausführung, Details. Kein Fehler nirgends. Habe meine Gefühle im Griff. Bis zur alten Spundwand tief unten im 9/11 Museum.

Endlich zur High Line. Trübsinn bleibt zurück. Ein lebendiges Viertel. Viele Cafés, noch mehr Touristen. Hier erfindet sich New York neu. Lebendig, nach vorne schauend und natürlich grün. Liest man, sagt man. Sage ich auch.

Wo ist die High Line? Sie will entdeckt werden. Erklommen. Wenige Aufgänge hinauf zur alten Trasse. Stairways to a green Heaven. So funktioniert Grün in der Stadt. Nicht ausgegossen überall. Sondern gezielt gesetzt. Im Kontrast zu Beton und Stahl. Bitte keine Rosen mehr auf dem Mittelstreifen, keine seelenlose Eingrünung am Ortsrand! Schaut her: die High Line ist ein Garten. Wer kommt, kommt mit Absicht. Und Bedacht. Geht hinauf wie durch eine Gartenpforte. Das macht den Ort so wertvoll. Ich mag die Bepflanzung. Üppig. Vor allem Blattgrün, im Juni. Dunkle Seggen unter hellen Birken. Heuchera, Taglilien, Gaura. Routiniert komponiert, bestens gepflegt. Und dann der Perückenstrauch. Wow. Seine Blütenstände leuchten von viel zu weit oben. Kein schöner Wuchs. Zerzaust und stakelig. Zu wenig Blatt am Holz. Aber diese Blüten. Akrobatisch. Googeln Sie mal „Cotinus High Line“.

Das Rost-Rosa der Blüten harmoniert mit den tausendfach genieteten Eisenbrücken. Und den Backsteinfassaden der alten Fabriken, die die High

Line einst belieferte. Cotinus-Blüten als Dampfwolken einer vergangenen Zeit. Hat das die Planer bewegt?

Da sitzen Leute auf Holzpodesten und schauen hinunter auf die 17th Street, West. Autos, Taxis. Viele gelbe Taxis. Stopp und Go. Ab und an dringt ein Hupen durch die mannshohen Glasscheiben. Die Leute schauen. Daheim musste ich mich schelten lassen für einen Aussichtspunkt, den wir an einer Autobahn bauten. Ein Fernsehmoderator warf mir Verschwendung von Steuergeldern vor. Er soll herkommen! Und sich hier hinsetzen und schauen, wie die Leute schauen. Auf Autos. Und Taxis.

Ist die High Line, ist Grün in der Stadt ein „catalyst for investment“, wie es auf der Webseite von field operations heißt? Das wäre schön. Und bestimmt ist es auch so. Wo Grün die grauen Städte kapert, fühlen sich die Menschen wieder wohl, greifen sie zu Werkzeug und Farbe. Und bauen eine bessere Welt. Jemand sagt, die High Line darf nicht mehr überbaut werden. Das verlorene Bauvolumen geht als Baurecht auf die Nachbargrundstücke über. Dort könne man nun höher bauen. Was man auch macht. Das klingt schnöde und berechnend. So darf die Welt nicht sein.

Lange betrachte ich den Bodenbelag. Waschbetonschwellen. Elegant, wie sie sich zu Sitzen erheben. Und wie sie sich verjüngen zum Grün hin. Wie die schmalen zu breiten Fugen werden. Für das Grün! Mir schießt ein anderes Bild in den Kopf. Metallstreifen gleiten aus dem Himmel herab, verjüngen sich über dem Eingang und bilden das gleiche Muster aus Masse und Leere wie hier zu meinen Füßen. Von der Fassade des World Trade Centers blieb nur ein trauriger Rest im Entrée des 9/11 Museums. Sehe ich hier ein Zitat? Es würde zu diesem Ort passen, zumindest zu den ungezählten Gedanken, die er bei seinen Besuchern hervorruft. Über das Leben in einer pulsierenden Stadt. Über die Hoffnung und das Grün. •

## Intestinum New York

Valerio Morabito

Beyond personal opinions about the merits of its design, the High Line most importantly has endowed us with a contemporary, innovative vision of the discipline of landscape architecture. Becoming one of the most visited, popular, and photographed places in the world, the High Line revealed to everybody the capacity of landscape architecture to create democratic places for the present and future identities of our cities.

Some time ago, James Corner gave me a copy of the book *The High Line*, which is an exhaustive telling of the entire gestation of the project, bringing together initial sketches, working drawings, and photographs of the project in use. The day he gave me it, our conversation was focused on the present and the future of the discipline of landscape architecture, what to teach and speculations on who might play a leading role in the future development of cities. Three words, in my opinion, dominated our discussion: imagination, aesthetics, and exactitude. Relationships with arts produce creativity; poetry, painting, literature are all agents for landscape architectural imagination. Aesthetics is the form of imagination that combines experience and intuition, consolidated experimentations and hazardous breakthroughs. The exactitude is the very same exactitude that as a result of which everything has its precise form, technique, material, ecology, and, ultimately, specific representation. Exactitude is the ingredient needed to achieve that alchemical combination of imagination and aesthetics.

There is a certain domestic feeling when entering the High Line from the ground level of New York City, between 34<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Street. The simple and non-monumental entrance brings the visitors along an inclined, gentle, and curved concrete path, engraved by tracks like

lines forgotten by lost generations. From this entrance the High Line starts its ingestion, swallowing and pushing visitors towards the higher level of the park to the south. It is a slow approach that makes you feel you are part of a unique process of urban digestion. The simplicity of the transect of the High Line reveals the intention to change the normal perception of New York City; it introduces visitors to an unreal experience, as if it were an augmented and virtual reality. Passing through it, the visitors' perception is modified and altered, ready to explore an unexpected place, an unknown land of an *intestinum*. Taking photos to protect the memory from being overloaded with impressions, a multitude of complicated spaces appears and disappears along the *intestinum*. The characteristic High Line precast concrete paving produces shades in forms of dynamic signs, painting sophisticated calligraphies in collaboration with the changing sunlight over the day. Benches, curved surfaces, wooden tables and other elements precisely measure the space; rails generate complex combinations of geometric patterns in accordance with vegetation, that establishes relationships with the visitors. Touching the vegetation plays an essential role in the digestion process, soothing souls, improving dreams, and expanding the imagination. Italo Calvino believed that his imagination and creativity were a process of digestion based on knowledge as food and literature as expulsion. The High Line ingests us, the incredible multitude, changing and returning us — perhaps improved — to the “normal” life of New York City. •

## A Contemporary Archetype

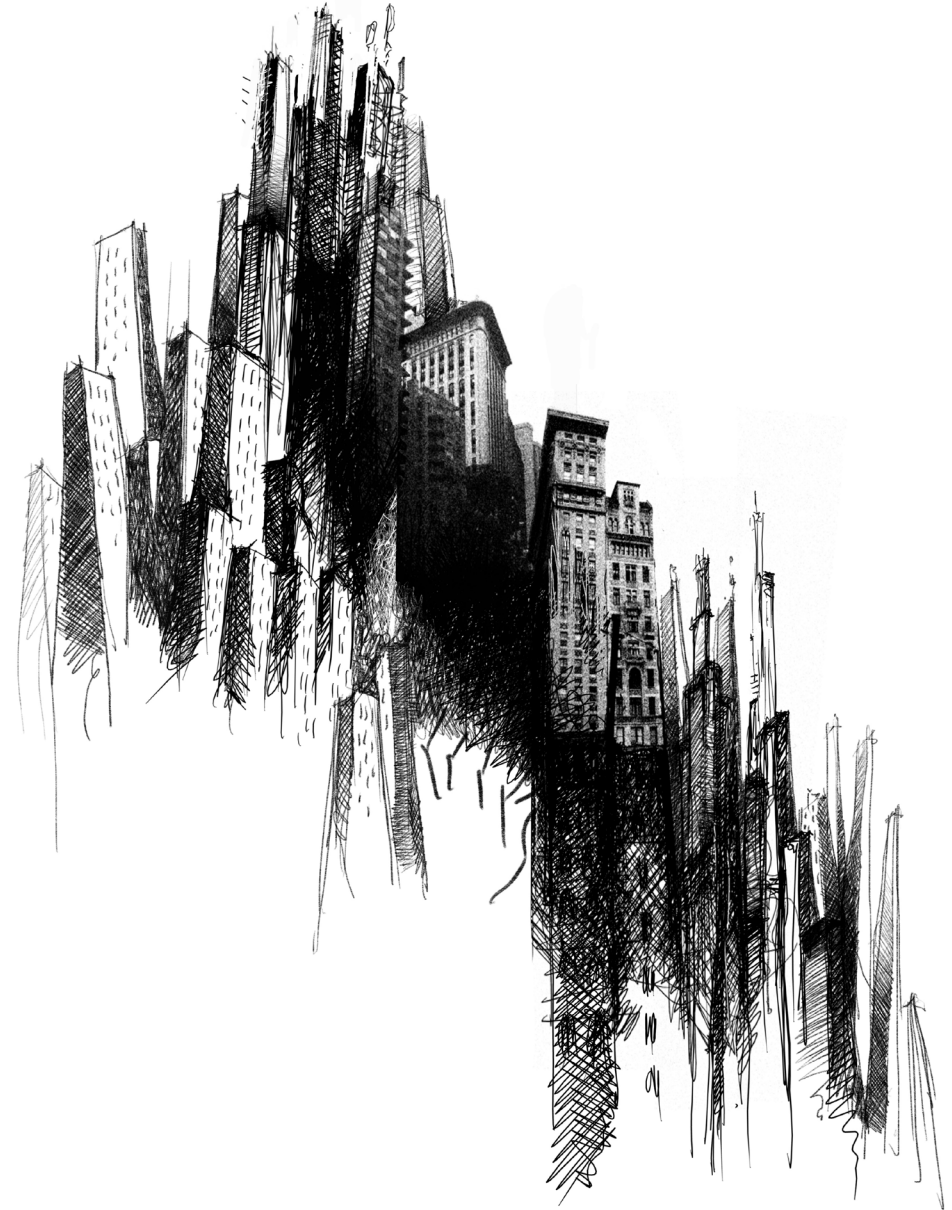
João Nunes

The High Line project became central to any survey of contemporary landscape architecture because it is deeply related to the interests of contemporary culture. It introduced thematic crossovers to a general public which, although they were already an integral part of the landscape culture, had not yet arrived outside of the discipline; the High Line became, therefore, the focus of the spreading of a way of thinking about and making landscape.

The crossover themes clearly constitute a synthesis in such a plain and complete way that the High Line project can now be considered as an archetype, extremely expressive as a didactic tool, but no less interesting as a conceptual model.

The project deals with the themes of re-use, interstice and the structural importance of spatial leftovers that often end up as secondary to other issues; infrastructure as an instrument for constructing landscape; detail, as a design universe celebrating the spontaneous appropriation of human structures by the organic.

The project talks about the overlapping layers in landscape design; about the systemic condition of landscape design, and how it might promote the fusion of spaces (exterior/interior, open/closed, new/old, infrastructural/leisure) once easy to distinguish in clear categories by a culture that schematized the city structure into larger groupings. •



## Comparatively Condensed yet Colossally Relevant

Jörg Rekitke

The High Line project has become a reference that no landscape architect in the world can ignore when faced with an abandoned railway in an urban context. With my landscape architecture students at the National University of Singapore, I led two studios dealing with the former Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM) railway in Singapore, a strip of land twenty-six kilometers long, stretching from the north to the south of the urbanized island. A land-swap agreement between Malaysia and Singapore had come into effect, meaning the Singapore-located but Malaysia-owned land returned to the fold of the Singaporean nation. Host to lush tropical vegetation, the railway corridor connected patches of scrubland, secondary forest, herbaceous grassland, mangroves and mudflats: an urban landscape of fascinating beauty.

In the first studio, the students developed *The Singapore Trail*, later awarded first prize in an open ideas competition launched by the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore. The design was a manifestation of our adamant belief that a park-style trail on the former railway would make perfect sense in land-scarce Singapore. Our second studio looked afresh at the development of a vision for the corridor, which we entitled *The National Mall*. This involved the transformation of the former railway corridor into a barrier-free super connector running the length of the country; a car-free tract for ecologically beneficial commuting and the social interaction of two million people. We had big dreams, but they were burst by the stroke of a pen. An unprecedented opportunity was palpable, but the government did not see this historic chance for global recognition. They cut the continuous corridor into pieces, repurposing the majority of it for building, and half-heartedly launched a master plan competition for the few scraps that remained. In New York City, it wasn't an authority or designer that saved what

remained of the High Line structure from demolition, but the “Friends of the High Line” grassroots movement, initiated by Joshua David and Robert Hammond, who were helped in part by Joel Sternfeld's charismatic photographs that documented the doomed structure over the course of a year. After it opened the High Line project almost instantly became famous and well-loved—guided by James Corner, the city had created what turned out to be the most memorable example of contemporary urban landscape architecture.

When I ask my students how long they thought the project is, they can't say for sure, but some reckon up to fifteen kilometers. In fact, the redesigned tranche of the High Line is just over two kilometers long. Considering the global prominence of these precious meters of urban infrastructure, we have to acknowledge that a well-designed, well-executed, comparatively compact project, can achieve colossal relevance. The story of the High Line is great because it demonstrates that the quality of urban public space can be successfully determined by its friends and users. Administrators and designers might have failed without the essential inspiration provided by those that live in the city. •

## Die High Line – ein Narrativ

Robert Schäfer

Das Narrativ hat sich eingeschlichen in unser Planerleben. Es bedeutet: eine Geschichte zu erzählen. Ein Narrativ soll eine spannende Geschichte formen, die erzählt oder vermarktet werden kann. Der Inhalt ist die Ware, die an die Konsumenten gebracht werden muss. Storytelling nennt man dies heute auf Englisch gerne im Marketingsprech. In diesem Kontext ist das Projekt High Line in New Yorks Meatpacking District eine Fundgrube für Geschichten, die die berühmten Märchenerzähler des Djemaa el-Fna in Marrakesch für lange Zeit glücklich machen würden.

Fester Bestandteil des High-Line-Narrativs sind die West Side Cowboys, die auf der 10., genannt Death Avenue, vor den Güterzügen her ritten, um andere Verkehrsteilnehmer zu warnen. Am 29. März 1941 begleitete der 21jährige George Hayde auf seinem Pferd *Cyclone* den letzten Güterzug auf der Straße. Die Fracht: nicht Fleisch, sondern Orangen.

Field Operations mit den Architekten von Diller Scofidio + Renfro gewannen den Wettbewerb für einen Park auf der stillgelegten Hochbahn 2004. James Corner führte ein neues Narrativ ein: agriculture. Natürliche und programmatische Gegebenheiten sollten in unterschiedlichem Verhältnis den Charakter der High Line prägen, also Betonelemente zum einen und Gräser, Stauden und Gehölze zum anderen. Hunderte von Pflanzenarten machen den linearen Park zu einem Unikum, zum teuersten Garten Nordamerikas – aber auch zu einer der größten Attraktionen der Stadt, zugleich zum effektivsten Investitionsmotor in Chelsea. Zu den gerühmten Aussichten auf den Hudson und die Sonnenuntergänge gesellen sich zwangsläufige Einblicke in die Wohnungen der dicht

herangerückten Gebäude wie Ten23 oder 245 Tenth. Manche reden schon von der Pry Line, dem Voyeur Park quasi.

Die Pflanzen bilden eines der beiden wichtigsten Narrative der High Line. Joel Sternfeld fotografierte im März 2000 die Spontanvegetation, die sich auf der ein halbes Jahrhundert stillgelegenen Hochbahn angesiedelt hatte und brachte das Buch *Walking the High Line* heraus. Diese, stets bei grauem Himmel aufgenommenen, romantischen und völlig unverhofften Bilder trugen maßgeblich zum Erhalt der High Line und deren späteren Renovierung und Neugestaltung bei. Die meisterhaften Pflanzungen von Piet Oudolf, unterstützt von Patrick Cullina auf der Baustelle, bilden im Sinne von Corners *agri-texture* Ökosysteme nach, tragen jedoch das ephemere Ruderale nur noch im Geiste in sich.

Nun habe ich das Pferd von hinten aufgezümt und komme erst jetzt zum eigentlichen Narrativ des Erfolgsprojektes High Line. Hierbei geht es um Zufall, Phantasie, Beharrlichkeit, Hingabe. Es geht um Robert Hammond und Joshua David, die den Stein ins Rollen brachten, den schon beschlossenen Abriss der Hochbahn abwenden konnten, alle Register der Medienarbeit zogen, den Verein „Friends of the High Line“ gründeten, Sponsorengelder eintrieben, immer mehr Unterstützer fanden, einen Ideenwettbewerb auslobten, der mehr als 700 Einsendungen brachte und schließlich den Realisierungswettbewerb, der James Corner und seinen Architektenkollegen die Urheberschaft an einem der bekanntesten Landschaftsarchitekturprojekte aller Zeiten brachte. Eine wahre Erfolgsgeschichte! •

## The Urbane Naturalist

Frederick Steiner

Before the High Line made New York City even more irresistible to the world's culture seekers and sparked a design renaissance in downtown Manhattan, James Corner was an influential academic and provocative theorist. His ideas emerged from the rich seedbank promulgated by his mentors, colleagues, and rivals at the University of Pennsylvania—none other than Ian McHarg, who advocated designing with nature; Anne Whiston Spirn, who advanced urban ecology; and Laurie Olin, who maintained a deep involvement in architectural culture and practice. When you keep this kind of company, every design move is subject to intense scrutiny, and intellectual honesty isn't optional.

Whereas Corner's theories challenged many of the ambiguities of applying ecology within design, his practice reveals the great prospects for urban nature. These prospects are especially apparent in the unlikely abandoned rail site of the High Line in lower Manhattan. Of course, the High Line is not the result of a single genius, but the brilliance of Corner's vision elevates every aspect of the project. Of course, there were precedents: notably *Promenade Plantée* in Paris and *Gas Works Park* in Seattle. However, like Manhattan's other iconic landscape, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's *Central Park*, the High Line eclipsed its predecessors in both ambition and influence. Like Central Park, city leaders everywhere wanted their own High Line. Suddenly lost urban space was found.

As with Central Park, a new landscape aesthetic emerged, one closely linked to Corner's deep readings of design theorists such as Rem Koolhaas and Stan Allen. Corner's work is "informed and inspired by the ecologies of place, people, and nature." With the High Line, new interactions between people and their environments and other living organisms have been created.

A walk along the High Line is a joy in any season, a fixed course through an ever-changing sea of urbanity. A prospect and refuge, the walkway offers views of the city not to be found anywhere else. The plants, selected by the master Piet Oudolf, compete for the flâneur's attention with the billboards and street scenes in found landscapes curated by Corner and his team. Our minds act like street photographers as we stroll aloft.

The High Line connects us to humankind and puts us on the stage of human history. We are connected to the other physical stuff that surrounds us outdoors: an ocean breeze, the wetness of the morning dew, a convention of birds. The challenges of landscape design include how to envision that clearing in the distance and how to frame the imperceptibility of changes. Nature plays by laws—gravity, for instance—but plays out in marvelous complexity.

James Corner, the High Line, and the subsequent work of Field Operations have redefined the trajectory and the potential of landscape architecture. Corner's leadership has placed landscape architecture center stage in discussions and plans for the future of the 21st-century city. The High Line illustrates how safe, beautiful, urban landscapes can promote human and economic health. The recovery and transformation of an abandoned corridor provides hope and inspiration. •

## Kurswechsel

Antje Stokman

Die High Line ist für mich ein wegweisendes Projekt, da sie in ikonischer Weise dafür steht, dass wir inmitten eines historischen Umbruchs stecken – dessen Konturen sich immer deutlicher abzeichnen und der einen Kurswechsel für unser Selbstverständnis als Landschaftsarchitekten bedeutet.

Das menschliche Verhältnis zur Natur hat sich seit Beginn der Industrialisierung in dramatischer Weise verändert: Ingenieurbauwerke wie die High Line sind Relikte unserer Industriegesellschaft, die seit Beginn der industriellen Revolution unter Einsatz enormer Material- und Energieressourcen eine beispiellose Umformung von Natur mit sich gebracht haben. Das extreme Wachstum der Städte wirkte als Motor der Landschaftszerstörung und führte zu einer Positionierung des Menschen im Anthropozän als maßgebliche erdverändernde Kraft. Seitdem werden die gesellschaftlichen Vorstellungen zum Verhältnis zwischen Gebautem und Natur beherrscht vom kategorialen Gegensatz zwischen dem „bösen Bauen“ und der „guten Natur“: Auf der einen Seite die durch Architekten und Ingenieure gebaute, technisch überformte Stadt – auf der anderen Seite die Gestaltung der nicht bebauten Freiräume bzw. Unterschutzstellung naturlandschaftlicher Relikte durch Landschaftsarchitekten und -planer.

Wie die High Line zeigt, bietet die Transformation der gebauten Strukturen des Industriezeitalters ungeahnte Möglichkeit für die Entwicklung und Gestaltung einer landschaftlichen Infrastruktur für unsere Städte. Aufgegebene Gleistrassen, Kiesgruben, Flughafenareale und Industriebrachen, ungenutzte Dächer und rekultivierte Müllberge stellen eine spannende Herausforderung und wichtige Raumressource für die Neustrukturierung städtischer Landschaften dar. Dabei steht

die Gestaltung der High Line sinnbildlich für eine neue Sichtweise, die die Unterscheidung zwischen Natur, Infrastruktur und Architektur aufhebt. Natur ist nicht mehr das Gegenüber von Architektur, Landschaft ist nicht mehr der unbebaute Freiraum. Die Transformation der High Line von einer Gleistrasse zum Park ermöglicht eine spannungsvolle Beziehung zwischen dynamischen Landschaftselementen, technischen Systemen und menschlichen Lebenswelten.

Damit wird die Landschaftsarchitektur zum führenden Impulsgeber für die Abkehr vom naturvergessenen Prinzip des Bauens hin zur Einbettung von Bauten in natürliche, landschaftliche und stoffliche Ressourcenzusammenhänge, wo einige Jahrhunderte lang die Abkopplung von diesen im Vordergrund stand. Da Menschen weltweit zunehmend in urbanen Agglomerationen leben, haben Projekte wie die High Line als Experimentierfelder und Schaufenster für die exemplarische Demonstration von positiven Verbindungen zwischen Mensch und Natur eine herausragende Stellung. Der Mensch als erdverändernde Kraft formt und gestaltet die gesamte Natur, genau wie er Architekturen formt und gestaltet. Auf dieser Basis können bauliche Eingriffe im Sinne einer produktiven Durchdringung von „menschgemachter“ und „natürlicher“ Architektur und Landschaft gedacht, entworfen und realisiert werden – als zukunftsweisender Ausdruck einer Landschaftsarchitektur im Anthropozän. •

## Success is Sexy

Dietmar Straub

The whole world wants to be as cool as New York with its buildings that seem to grow straight into the sky. Other cities try to copy the “Manhattan Model”, but New York manages to always stay one step ahead. With the development of the High Line, the city refused to copy its own model of vertical mobility and created a radical horizontal movement.

As a designer, you always hold on to the hope that you will one day shape a space with a strong essence and powerful aura, a place that exudes some degree of courage and audaciousness which you hope people will experience as a physical sensation. But you have to be prepared to jump at these fleeting chances, and James Corner snatched his opportunity.

The High Line is not trendsetting, the High Line is avant-garde. Trendsetting merely initiates short-term phenomena generated by individuals or the market. The impulses and transformations resulting from avant-garde thinkers are more fundamental and achieve a greater long-term impact on design, aesthetics and environmental ethics. The avantgardist’s High Line design has instigated a pioneering role and stimulated groundbreaking perspectives and ideas.

For more than a decade now I have worked in Winnipeg, Canada as a landscape architect. My architect colleagues show their respect for “landscape” by referencing the High Line in New York. This trendy citation is intended to create mutual understanding. However, it highlights the persistent gap between the profession’s rhetoric and the reality of everyday practice. Nevertheless, the great merit of the High Line is that it works, as the paving sand to tie the community of spatial

designers together. Without a doubt, the High Line strengthens the reputation and identity of landscape architecture and is, in my opinion, an undisputed success.

This great achievement also generates a significant risk – success is sexy. The High Line project has been followed by many luxury towers and prestige buildings designed by star architects. Processes of gentrification have reached their peak in the revalued urban area. Only a few of the original butchers and meat traders are still there supplying meat products and authenticity for the district. The “slaughtering” is going to continue. The real estate market is addicted to prime ribs.

I would love to visit New York’s buildings, parks and squares. I want to walk the High Line hovering three stories above the city’s ground. I look forward to encountering the grasses, the flowers, and enjoying the bella vistas. I hope the High Line remains a habitat for the flâneurs and the globetrotters, the passionate shoppers and stressed-out business people, the bankers and the prostitutes, the locals and the inquisitive tourists, the beggars and the pickpockets... to linger in this state of thriving urban diversity. •



## The Curious Gardeners

Anna Thurmayr

For six long months, about the time of a Canadian Winter, the story of an inquisitive little boy named Liam and his courageous quest to transform a rustic railway into a flourishing garden captured my children's attention and imagination. They were fascinated by Liam's heroic efforts to transform a big grey city into a lush green place and were lulled to sleep by the boy's humble and curious nature.

*The Curious Garden* by Peter Brown was published in 2009. Liam discovers a dark stairway leading up to a forgotten world of an old rail line. The first thing he notices is a coloured patch of dying wildflowers. Without hesitation Liam becomes a gardener. He has no experience in how to tend to plants and gardens, yet he intuitively knows his help is needed. As he waters and prunes, listening to the grasses and flowers, the garden expands to redecorate the dull city into a beautiful habitat.

The story of Manhattan's High Line project also began with a small local initiative that grew over time. Two local advocates founded the "Friends of the High Line" group and championed the railway's reuse and preservation. The transformation of the rusty railway viaduct resulted in a vibrant public space with a thriving garden flowing and meandering above New York's busy streets. A testament to its grassroots beginnings, the landscape was further enhanced by the many new and eager gardeners who unexpectedly pitched in to help.

We used to ask what would New York be without its *Central Park*? Now we can ask what would New York be without its High Line? And further, what is a garden without its curious gardeners? "Friends of the High Line" successfully raised several million dollars and continues to solicit capital and local volunteer efforts to keep this infectious ideal alive.

In the past, Le Nôtre would have been unable to create the world's most celebrated and influential gardens without the king's orders. Today, however, community involvement in the planning process of a landscape project has become almost standard. Passionate private individuals together with public stakeholders have replaced the traditional client's orders. What's more, the conversion of Manhattan's High Line invoked an even higher communal engagement, and these caring citizens still invest their own time and money, as the vast majority of funding does not come from government or municipalities. This prestigious project marks a turning point in participatory design process and goes far beyond the standard public workshops and hearings.

What we can learn from this masterpiece is that the role of the landscape architect is also being challenged to transform. Community support is necessary and imperative to turn a designer's imaginative drawings into realized designs. It calls for well-versed professionals to use their resourcefulness and critical thinking skills in order to create tangible ideas not just *for* people, but *with* them as well.

One thing remains true. Gardening still evokes the delight of new discoveries. Nature can still thrive in the most unlikely of places. And the hopeful message of Liam and the High Line may in fact triumph over many problems of the man-made world. •

## Walking the Third Path

Christian Werthmann

James Corner is doubtlessly one of the most influential theorists and brilliant practitioners of landscape architecture in our time. When his seminal book *Taking Measures Across the American Landscape* came out in 1996, his splendid collages in combination with the aerial photography of Alex MacLean revealed landscapes as richly layered entities engulfed in complex dynamics on different time scales. It was a clear statement, if not manifesto, that landscape architects are engaged in a subject that is so complex that its traditional means of description are not only utterly inadequate, but cripple our transformative potential.

In the discussion about landscape in the 90s, Corner opened up a desperately needed third path of investigation next to the estranged siblings of landscape planning and landscape architecture. While the still emerging field of landscape planning was finding its footing through a rigid approach based in the natural sciences, its “older” brother, landscape architecture was at the tail-end of an exploration revolving around art. The ensuing explorations by Corner and a growing group of professionals charted an alternate path, addressing questions surrounding the messy processes of medium- to large-scale urban landscapes, which at the time neither landscape architecture nor landscape planning were well equipped to answer. In the first decade of the new millennium the ideas of *Landscape Urbanism* began to be tested in practice when they moved to a buildable scale, perhaps most significantly with the large commissions of Corner’s own practice. As the first projects began making an impact, particularly after the *Downsview Park* and *Fresh Kills* competitions, many began to better understand the value of the *Landscape Urbanism* narrative, while the High Line project introduced another set of questions.

As Corner’s entry to the *Fresh Kills* competition has generally been seen as an exciting testing ground for his earlier writing, the High Line is often perceived as a project more in line with the traditional scope of landscape architecture. On the surface one could speculate that Corner in his High Line project had succumbed to the constraints of budgets, deadlines, and the public desire for a “finished” product. But on a closer look one finds no contradiction in Corner’s conception of these two very different projects.

In his recently co-edited book *The Landscape Imagination*, Corner admits that his essays are “the provisional conjectures of a landscape architect, who is primarily interested in designing and making actual projects, but who is, at the same time, searching for a deeper *raison d’être* and broader cultural relevance for that work.”<sup>1</sup> In this lifelong pursuit, Corner became an expert master in understanding territory. Outside of academia, being forced to navigate an expanded ecosystem of market forces, public desires, and political will, Corner has been expanding his set of strategies. His interest in “the imagination of desire, the poetics of placemaking, and the physicality of design in forging a freshly vibrant public realm”<sup>2</sup> was most prominently revealed in the High Line project. It stands as a remarkable re-investigation and re-investment into the cultural side of landscape architecture. •

1 James Corner, *The Landscape Imagination: The Collected Essays of James Corner*. James Corner and Alison Hirsch, eds. Princeton Architectural Press, 2010. p. 7

2 see Jeannette Sordi’s 2014 interview with James Corner. In: Jeannette Sordi, *Beyond Urbanism*. LISt Lab Laboratorio. 2014. p. 127

## A Manifesto for Corner's New Landscape Declaration

Kongjian Yu

Having visited the project three times, I read the High Line as a manifestation of James Corner's *New Landscape Declaration* which he has made so clearly in June 2016 at the University of Pennsylvania, on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the *Declaration of Concern* signed by Ian McHarg and others in 1966. Corner declared: "Here we have our mandate — a new declaration that landscape architects must take on the challenges of shaping and forming the future city, quantitatively and qualitatively, ecologically and socially, pragmatically and poetically". The High Line symbolizes a return to, or rather a reclaim of, the city as the main battlefield for the profession of landscape architecture. The environmental concern that has grown in the developed world since the 1960s has drawn the profession of landscape architecture away from ornamental gardening in the cities and private estates, city rebuilding and urban development towards the frontier of ecological planning and land stewardship, as declared by the *Declaration of Concern*. This shift has given the profession an unprecedented new leadership role in healing land devastated by industrialization and urbanization. Yet, it has also risked allowing such landscape architecture projects to become invisible, negating the role such interventions might have in defining and reinforcing human identity through our art. Now, in North America and Europe the environmental crisis has been overcome at least locally in the tangible sphere, if not fundamentally with regard to global climate change and beyond. As a matter of fact, though, that crisis has shifted towards developing countries and it has become even worse. The profession of landscape architecture — at least in the case of James Corner and Field Operations — takes the post-industrial city as the main frontier of the battle; this time not only as an art of beautifying and making embellishing artifacts in the city, but as a way of urbanism. This atti-

tude means taking the "city as a garden" in order to "[elevate] experience and pragmatics to poetry and art"<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, Corner's work is deeply grounded socially, economically, and culturally in the case of High Line, and also ecologically in some of his other projects.

The success of the High Line not only inspired the post-industrial cities in the developed world, it is also a glowing beacon to countries now busy with building new cities and suffering with the shortage of potable water; with heavy air and water pollution and with a segregated population. The High Line's success signified how a better future city can be formed through planning and designing landscape as infrastructure from the outset — and that infrastructure can integrate various services for the city, including safe movement for pedestrians, life support for biodiversity, social and cultural integration for a diverse society, alongside recreation and aesthetic experience. The acclaim the project has received has not only reclaimed part of the city that was almost lost, but it has also made the profession of landscape architecture itself at least as visible as when Olmsted's *Central Park* demonstrated the potentially city-scale operations of the profession. It also demonstrated to the world that landscape is perhaps the only medium that unites so many kinds of process, be it social, cultural, ecological or economic, which makes landscape architecture a true art of urbanism that capable of creating deep urban forms. •

1 James Corner, *The New Landscape Declaration*. Landscape Architecture Foundation (LAF), 2017. p. 67

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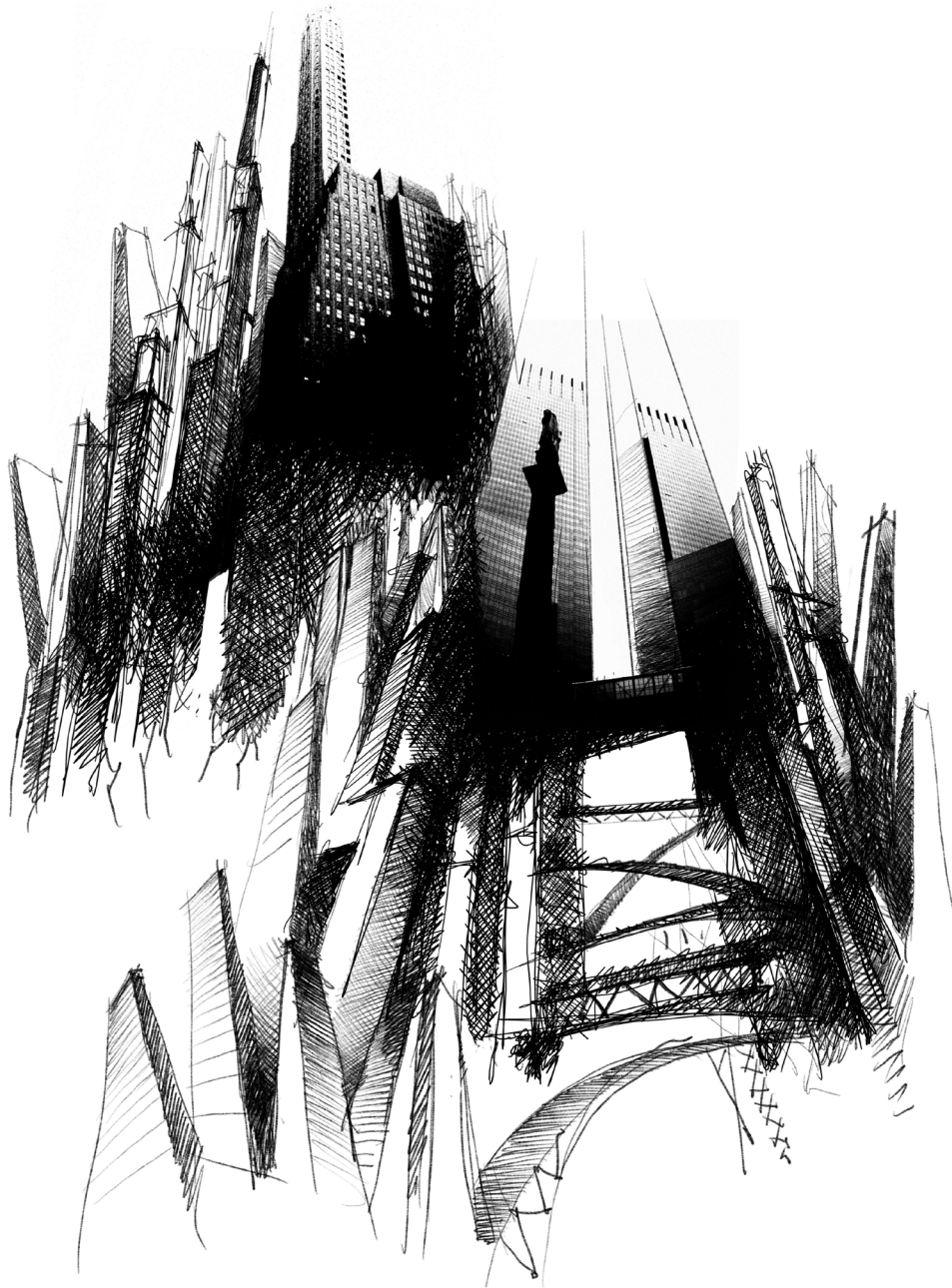
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## Zwischen Kristallnadeln

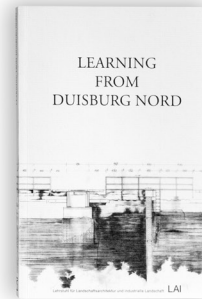
„Morabito’s drawings are wonderful geographic expositions in the tradition of field sketches and annotations. They are fascinating not so much for their representational status (what they depict or what they signify), but more for their status as process works, as scribbled traces-in-action that record the labor and discovery of seeing through drawing.” So kommentierte James Corner die faszinierenden Zeichnungen des italienischen Landschaftsarchitekten Valerio Morabito, die er in seinem Büchlein *Paesaggio New York* 2007 veröffentlichte.

Damals schon lehrte Morabito an der University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia und erkundete immer wieder New York City, um fotografierend und am Computer feberhaft zeichnend, die Stadt als Sonderform von Landschaft mit ihrem komplexen, porösen Raumgefüge zu erfassen. Entstanden sind ungewöhnliche zeichnerische Analysen einer vollkommen anthropogen geprägten Landschaft, deren atemberaubende Vertikalität Erinnerungen an den Bryce Canyon in den USA oder das Huang Shan Gebirge in China hervorruft.

In den aktuellen Zeichnungen von Valerio Morabito, manche eigens für diese Publikation angefertigt, schleicht sich mitten in die radikale Vertikalität New Yorks eine lineare Horizontalität ein, die scheinbar lebendig, ungebunden und suchend im Wald aus Kristallnadeln umherstreift. Morabito lädt dazu ein, seine Protokolle zu studieren und neuen Pfaden, auch im Denken, zu folgen – herzlichen Dank dafür!

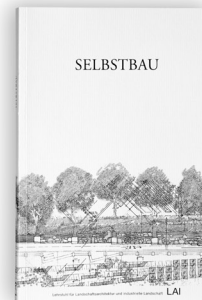
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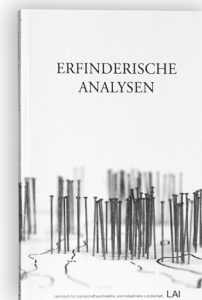
LEARNING FROM DUISBURG NORD  
Anlässlich des 70. Geburtstages von Professor Peter Latz erschien diese Sammlung von Kommentaren internationaler Expertinnen und Experten zu einem der bekanntesten Landschaftsparks des 20. Jahrhunderts.

2009 ISBN 978-3-941370-07-4



SELBSTBAU  
1985 wurde das neue Institutsgebäude der Landschaftsarchitektur und -planung in Weihenstephan bezogen. Die Dokumentation zeigt, welche zentrale Rolle schon damals Selbstbau in der Landschaftsarchitektur spielte.

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