

2024 LACF Annual Grant Final Report

Reclaiming the Passive: Stories of Women Who Leave Landscape Architecture

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Summary

Thanks to LACF funding, *Reclaiming the Passive Voice* was successfully completed. The project explored the missing voices of women in landscape architecture through those who have left, questioned their careers, or found alternative paths within the profession. By seeking out stories that are not directly useful for the visible prosperity of a system, the project contributed to shifting a patriarchal paradigm that sees human value from limited definitions of success to seeing all human stories (including those that are neglected, mundane, and unorthodox) as worthy. As an independent researcher and a woman who has left the profession, I am very grateful that LACF helped make this project possible, supporting its goals to break away from conventional approaches to research and gender equity.

The funding amount provided me, the researcher, a base salary to conduct interviews, complete transcripts, analyze data, write a research report, and prepare, organize, and host an online presentation. Funds for direct expenses included a Zoom subscription for use in conducting interviews and hosting the presentation, and a small budget for honorariums to participants. The total honorarium amount was donated to Plan Canada under the Gift of Hope – Girl Power to offer girls nourishment, education, and protection.

Research Methodology and Results

A call for research participants was initiated in Spring 2024 through social media, personal contacts, and word of mouth. Ten women who graduated in landscape architecture and have either left the profession, questioned their career paths, or found alternative paths within a broader definition of landscape architecture agreed to be interviewed for the project. They were asked to share their experiences in their careers, reflect on their life choices, and ponder over their futures. Due to their varying statuses of legal, practical, and emotional ties with the profession, participants blur the lines between what it means to leave landscape architecture and deepened the psychological and emotional nature of the project study.

Moving beyond traditional social science research and social justice initiatives that aim to represent the marginalized from the lens of the dominant system, the project unfolded in two unique ways. The first was an analysis of the parallels between gender inequality and misplaced opportunities within landscape architecture from an archetypal dimension and the second was an honoring of the multifaceted nature of the research participants through a collection of quotes. In this layering of individual life reflections, shared experiences in landscape architecture, and the ecophilosophy of landscapes, the project examined the link between place-making and self-stewardship.

Project Outputs

An online presentation for the project was held on November 28th that attracted 50 registrants. The event included a 50-minute presentation and a 25-minute discussion period. The recording of the presentation was shared to attendees and registrants who couldn't attend the event live. The landscape architecture community will continue to have access to the project's 38-page research report made available through the researcher and LACF.