

MAKING CIRCLES IN THE WATER

Balmori Associates

2011–

Abstract

Making Circles in the Water experiments with visual perception of space to visually and experientially reconnect the Métis festival site with its surroundings.

Method

To turn our attention back toward the river—which has been separated from the gardens by the growth of shoreline vegetation—the installation uses two framing devices to manipulate how visitors apprehend the space and make the viewer more conscious of the act of seeing.

The first is a row of different-sized truncated plastic cones mounted along the shoreline. By looking through these cones, visitors have limited peripheral vision and a sharpened focus on the river horizon. These hand-held devices restrict the field of vision and allow visitors to experiment with different views, focal points, and even sounds as some visitors put the cones to their ears to magnify the sounds of the landscape.

The second device is a series of frames that offer an enlarged, full-body version of the cone experience. Designed to be walked through and explored, the apertures within the frames get smaller as they move toward the river, so as visitors walk through the frames, the field of view opens itself and the horizon gets wider, actively engaging us in considering the land and the river.

Result

As visitors actively engage with controlling and manipulating views of the St. Lawrence, they are given a clearer picture of the relationship between the river and the garden site and develop a higher awareness of the act of seeing.

Materials

Wooden frames, paint, and plastic cones



Visitors experiment with looking through the truncated plastic cones to create different relationships to the St. Lawrence River.

AROUND-ABOUT

Talmon Biran architecture studio

2015–

Abstract

Around-About transforms visitors from passive viewers into active participants in the creation and evolution of the garden.

Method

Typically, a garden visitor observes a carefully choreographed landscape, designed for the pleasure and delight of the viewer. A design is implemented and begins its cycle of growth, blooming, and decay. *Around-About*, instead, relinquishes control of this process to the visitors by allowing them to actively change, alter, erase, and create new textures and patterns on the garden's surface.

Visitors arrive at a flat gravel field reminiscent of a Japanese Zen garden and are invited to activate one of the three huge steel carousels to create their own patterns as they drag the wheels across the gravel surface. The carousels—inspired by agricultural cultivating machines—range from 1.6 to 3 metres in diameter, and feature tines at different densities to allow varying patterns and textures.

A collection of hand-made wooden rakes, also of varying dimensions and with different densities of tines, encourage visitors to experiment with more free-form patterns and designs. Each new 'designer' must decide how to react to, cover up, or build upon the work of the previous visitor. When they are finished, they must disturb their own work as they walk across it to exit the garden, emphasizing the idea of order and disorder in garden design.

Result

By actively engaging visitors in the creation and transformation of the garden, *Around-About* offers a deeper connection and experience of the garden.

Materials

Gravel and wood chips, steel carousels (1.6, 2.3, and 3 metres diameter), wood and plywood rakes and benches, metal bushings



Visitors are invited to create their own patterns by spinning the large steel carousels.

SENSE OF PLACE VS. TABULA RASA: THE PARTICULAR AT MÉTIS

Tim Richardson



City and Nature Master Garden, Martha Schwartz Partners, Xi'an International Horticultural Exposition, 2011

The proliferation of conceptual garden festivals through the 1990s and 2000s, which began to slow down only in about 2005, begs the question as to their particularity. What makes each festival different, or even unique? How do the installations sit within the landscape? After all, many of these festivals have been situated either in dynamic and stimulating natural environments, or else in the specific context of an historic estate. In the case of *Métis*, it is both.

Rigour is a key point in conceptualist art, in that the artist needs to be strongly disciplined and utterly clear when it comes to expression of ideas or concepts, whatever the medium being used. Conceptualist landscape design ought to be subject to the same level of interrogation. As a result, various questions might be posed with regard to this question of rigour, especially when it comes to the sense of place, or the landscape in which the work is cradled. For example, is there evidence of reverence, of a dialogue or a feeling of interwovenness? Or is there by contrast a sense of irreverence, a decisive rejection of the existing characteristics of the site in favour of the artist's 'unmediated' creativity? Or is it that many of the designers involved have taken neither approach, instead almost taking for granted the physical and conceptual context of the festival?

It must be admitted that in many cases and at different festivals this last path is the one which appears to have been followed most often, with designers working up their ideas in the comfort of the studio and treating the opportunity as an intellectual exercise, or as a way of 'playing' or 'experimenting with ideas'. Perhaps the process of accessing this creative 'freedom', of dreaming up ideas apparently without frontiers, has sometimes led designers and artists working in the landscape milieu to forget or to side-line what is often the greatest strength of their genre: the presiding 'sense of place', people's relationship with it, and how it might be manipulated, enhanced, or modified. The best conceptual designers—Martha Schwartz, Claude Cormier, Ken Smith, Kathryn Gustafson—tend to exhibit evidence of an engagement with the history of the site or locale in their work out in the 'real world'. When it comes to the conceptual garden festival, this sense of context is often eschewed in favour of the idea of the installation site as a *tabula rasa*, a blank page upon which anything might be written. A potentially rich seam of contextual inspiration and information is therefore written out of the equation at an early stage.

Indeed, the conceptualist landscape project seems to have largely 'played' itself out by around 2005, with a sense of the fairground at shows where the exhibits appeared to be beamed in from nowhere into a placeless and unparticularized site, and where the 'play' so relished by the designers involved could easily come across as superficial and/or self-indulgent. For some, the very concept of the 'show

UNEXPECTED MATERIALS AND FORMATS

“The way sod is cut, its uniformity, the hybridization of the plant material, the way it comes on palettes—it really becomes like an industrial building material.”

Murray Legge



For the 2010 edition of the festival, two serpent-shaped beams invite visitors to explore the vertical wildflower meadow.



The turf hills are constructed from soil and sod held together by trucking straps.



“When you see the forest as a timescape, you see that you always have an evolution. Even if you burn everything down, in time a new landscape will come.”

Marc Blume



With time, grasses, mosses, seeds, and ferns begin to colonize the walls.

Mushrooms

- Pleurotus citrinopileatus*
- Pleurotus citrinus*
- Pleurotus djamor*
- Pleurotus eryngii*
- Pleurotus ostreatus*
- Lentinula edodes*
- Hericium ericaceus*
- Ganoderma lucidum*
- Ganoderma luisant*
- Hypsizigus ulmarius*
- Lentinula edodes*
- Stropharia rugosoannulata*
- Agrocybe aegerita*
- Ganoderma lucidum*
- Hericium erinaceus*
- Pietra fungaia*

Mosses

Collected and transplanted on site; species undetermined

Seeds

- Perennials:
- Achillea millefolium* 1%
- Chamerion angustifolium (Epilobium angustifolium)* 1%
- Doellingeria umbellate* 3%
- Oenothera biennis* 6%
- Solidago Canadensis* 1%
- Solidago nemoralis* 2%
- Symphytichum novae-angliae* 2%

Grasses

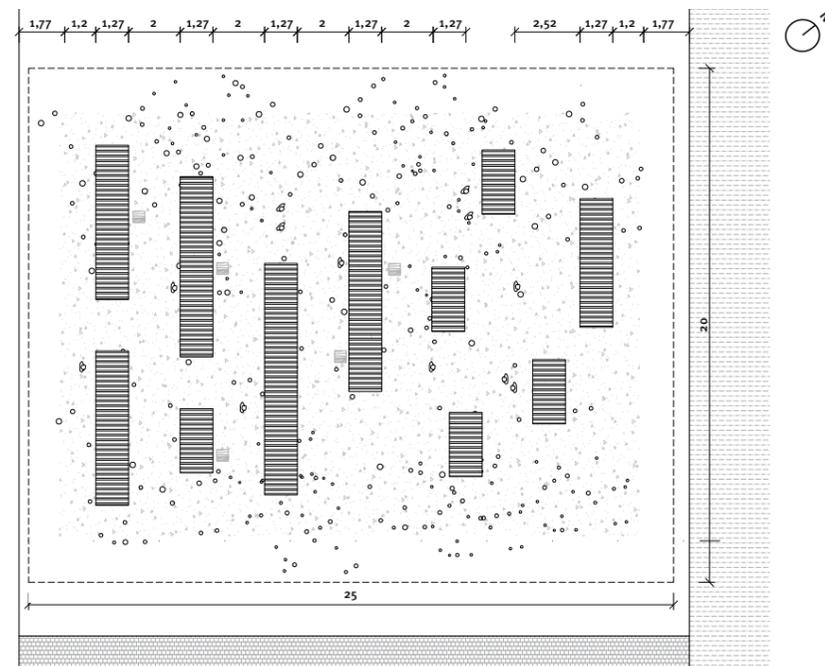
- Elymus trachycaulus* 17%
- Festuca rubra* 30%
- Lolium multiflorum* 11%

Trees and shrubs

- Alnus incana ssp. rugosa (A. rugosa)* 3%
- Betula populifolia* 1%
- Cornus stolonifera* 3%
- Prunus virginiana* 9%
- Rhus typhina* 7%
- Spiraea tomentosa* 1%
- Spiraea alba var. latifolia* 1%



An estimated 50 tons of logs are stacked to form the walls.



Layout plan

