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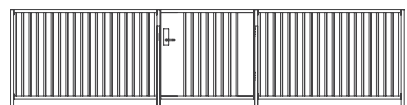
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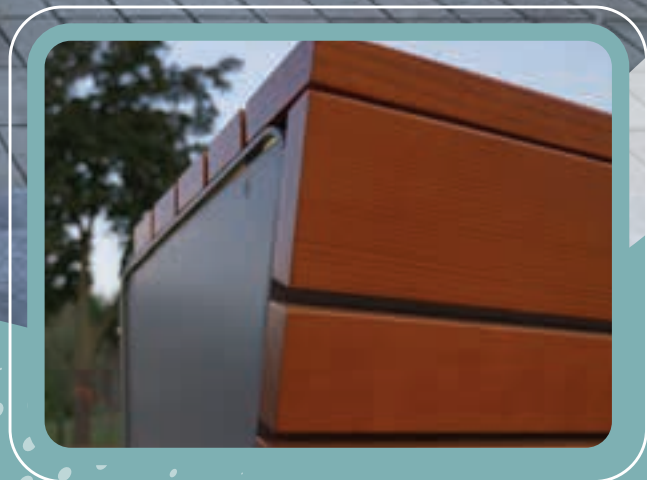
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Hope Parnham, Manager, Advocacy and Strategic Affairs |  
Gestionnaire de la promotion et des affaires stratégiques

## Translation | Traduction :

Christian Caron | [tcmaron@outlook.com](mailto:tcmaron@outlook.com)  
Matthew Sendbuehler | [letraducteur@gmail.com](mailto:letraducteur@gmail.com)

Editor | Rédactrice : Laurie J. Blake

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This issue is  
dedicated to  
Claude Cormier,  
1960–2023.  
Ce numéro est dédié  
à Claude Cormier,  
1960–2023.



## upcoming issues

summer 24 | awards of excellence

**deadline 25 march**

fall 24 | decarbonize design

**deadline may 13**

## prochains numéros

été 24 | prix d'excellence

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For submission guidelines |  
Pour connaître les normes  
rédactionnelles :

**Laurie J. Blake,**  
**Editor | Rédactrice**  
**lp@csla-aapc.ca**

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YARMOUTH MAIN ST. PHASE 2  
PHOTO HARRISON JARDINE



GUEST EDITORS | RÉDACTRICES INVITÉES  
VALERIE MANICA + GRACE YANG

## PLAYFUL DESIGN + SERIOUS ISSUES

**INSPIRATION COMES FROM** many places: our own experiences and biases; the history of the places in which we work; long-told or untold stories; social observations and hypotheses; or from the fascinating ecological processes that happen all around us, to name only a few.

A lighthearted approach can result in spaces that encourage interaction and play. As a profession, we are well aware of the importance of play for children and adults alike, as well as the challenges that exist in accessing meaningful play opportunities in our cities. Engaging in play contributes to our overall health and well-being, our physical and cognitive development, and our sense of connection.

For some, these types of elements can feel unproductive, silly or superfluous. Play does not often have a tangible result – its benefits can be difficult to illustrate compared to other social, environmental and economic priorities that must be addressed in project work. However, playful design can sometimes provide the best solution to a difficult problem. For instance, the 200-metre-long bench of Calgary's West Eau Claire Park is a prime example of a creative response to the serious issue of flood protection in a constrained site. (*See L|P Summer 2020.*) If a flood wall can become an amusingly long bench where people from all over gather, what are the possibilities for other urban, transportation and climate-adaptive infrastructure that we interact with on a day-to-day basis? How can we better communicate the benefits of playful design to clients and stakeholders that may find it to be an extravagance?

Based on learnings from each of the incredible practitioners and artists who contributed to this issue, what stands out the most is the impact of the design process on the end result. It is apparent that fostering a culture of experimentation, playfulness, humour and inquisitiveness within the design practice is key to developing stand-out built works that present themselves to the world with a mischievous smile, or a wink. Equally important is the ability to approach unexpected uses of the constructed landscape with unbiased curiosity.

CCxA describes laughter as fundamental to their working method, often “starting with a joke and ending with something more serious.” How can we foster a professional culture that promotes playfulness in design? We may take a cue from CCxA and explore opportunities within our own practices. Are our offices and collaborative spaces places where people are allowed to be messy? Tell jokes? Make up stories? Share sketches? Is there access to the outdoors? Round tables for conversation? Are there opportunities for team members to share alternative solutions and ideas that may be a bit out of the ordinary or from a different perspective?

These types of physical and organizational shifts toward embracing humour and messiness have the potential to alter our creative processes and increase the social benefits of our work. And besides, who doesn't love a good joke? **LP**

## CONCEPTION LUDIQUE + ENJEUX SÉRIEUX

**L'INSPIRATION PROCÈDE DE** multiples sources, notamment de nos expériences et concepts, du contexte historique dans lequel nous travaillons, des récits anciens et récents, des observations et des hypothèses sociales, ou encore des processus écologiques étonnants qui se déroulent autour de nous.

Une approche inspirée permet de créer des places qui favorisent les interactions sociales et ludiques. En qualité de professionnels, nous comprenons l'importance du jeu pour les enfants et les adultes, et la problématique de l'accès aux espaces ludiques au sein de nos villes. Le jeu contribue à notre santé et à notre bien-être en général. Il participe au développement physique et cognitif, et favorise le sentiment d'appartenance.

Pour certains, ce type d'éléments peut sembler improductif, ridicule, voire superflu. Le jeu n'a pas de résultats tangibles – ses avantages ne sont pas toujours apparents par rapport aux autres priorités sociales, environnementales et économiques d'un projet. Toutefois, la conception ludique représente parfois la meilleure solution à une problématique. Prenons le banc de 200 m de long dans le West Eau Claire Park de Calgary, il s'agit d'un aménagement créatif contre les inondations dans un site restreint. (*Consultez L|P – été 2020.*) Si un simple mur d'endiguement en forme de banc peut devenir un lieu de rencontre, quelles autres possibilités nous offrent les infrastructures urbaines, de transport et d'adaptation climatique de notre environnement quotidien? Comment pouvons-nous communiquer aux clients et aux intervenants les avantages d'une conception ludique que certains considèrent comme extravagante?

Selon les professionnels et artistes exceptionnels qui ont contribué à ce numéro, l'essentiel, c'est l'impact du processus conceptuel sur le résultat. Il va de soi que la promotion d'une culture ludique, expérimentale, humoristique et de curiosité intellectuelle au sein de la pratique du design est essentielle à la création d'ouvrages remarquables qui se présentent en nous faisant un clin d'œil. Il est tout aussi important de pouvoir aborder l'aménagement avec une curiosité impartiale.

CCxA considère le rire comme un élément essentiel de sa méthode de travail, qui consiste à « commencer par une blague avant de traiter des choses sérieuses ». Comment pouvons-nous favoriser une culture professionnelle qui encourage le caractère ludique du design? Nous pouvons suivre l'exemple de CCxA dans notre propre pratique. Nos bureaux et nos espaces de collaboration sont-ils des lieux qui autorisent le désordre, les bonnes blagues, l'imaginaire et le partage? Y a-t-il un accès à l'extérieur et des tables rondes pour les échanges? Les membres de l'équipe ont-ils la possibilité de partager des solutions et des idées qui sortent de l'ordinaire ou qui s'inscrivent dans une perspective atypique?

Ce type d'évolution spatiale et organisationnelle vers l'humour et le désordre a le potentiel de modifier nos processus créatifs et d'accroître les avantages sociaux de notre travail. Et d'ailleurs, qui n'aime pas une bonne blague? **LP**





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## OUR GUEST EDITORS | NOS RÉDACTRICES INVITÉES



### VALERIE MANICA

Valerie Manica, OALA, CSLA, is a landscape architect at BENCH Site Design in Kelowna, BC. Valerie has experience in diverse facets of landscape architecture, including research, public engagement, vision planning, and ecological restoration in Alberta and British Columbia. She enjoys learning from and engaging with stakeholders in an iterative design process, creating spaces that are rich in meaning and support the needs of the end-users.



### GRACE YANG

Grace Yang, AALA, OALA, CSLA, is a landscape architect at O2 in Toronto. She brings her artistic and collaborative approach to designing and managing projects ranging from art installations to park and public realm comprehensive plans. She has a strong interest in cultural landscapes that evoke hidden histories and stories. Grace enjoys composing music and loves public pianos, and seeks to animate public spaces through artful, musical and creative expression.

## OUR WRITERS | NOS COLLABORATEURS



### MARC HALLÉ

Marc Hallé, MLA, BEng, OALA, FCSLA, ASLA, is co-president at CCxA (formerly Claude Cormier et Associés). Trained in both civil engineering from the University of Saskatchewan and landscape architecture from the University of Toronto, Marc's technical and creative backgrounds combine to guide projects from concept to built form. Working back and forth between large-scale and minute detail, Marc maintains continuity and consistency between the elements of a project and their conceptual origins.



### YANNICK ROBERGE

Yannick Roberge, BLA, AAPQ, CSLA, Partner and Studio Director-Design at CCxA. Trained in both anthropology and landscape architecture from the Université de Montreal, Yannick's multidisciplinary background informs a sensitivity for both the concrete and the intangible that attest to his understanding of humanities and design. His gift for innovation and unique solutions are grounded in rigorous research and insights into the specificities of each project, giving him clarity and confidence to translate the poetics of a design into built form.



### LOGAN LITTLEFIELD

Logan Littlefield, MLA, B.Env.D., OALA, CSLA, Landscape Architect at CCxA. Having studied environmental design at the University of Manitoba and landscape architecture at the University of Toronto, Logan is passionate about creating a public realm that responds to the needs yet challenges the expectations of the general public. He believes in the power of good public space to foster social cohesion and that a design's success and resonance is never separated from its social and political context.



**VINH VAN**

Vinh Van is managing the PFS Studio in Toronto, where he is working on a number of high-profile waterfront and urban parks, cultural, institutional and development projects. He conceptualizes design through the identity of place and often this identity is abstractly expressed through playful and whimsical experiences, like Mirvish Village Park. On his daily commute on the GO Train, he often reads the cooking and travel section in *The New York Times* and wonders about his next meal or getaway.

**BILL PECHET**

Bill Pechet, BA, BFA, BArch, received degrees in Geography and Visual Arts from the University of Victoria, in 1979 and 1981 respectively, followed by a professional degree in Architecture in 1987 from UBC. In addition to his leadership at the Pechet Studio, Bill has been a faculty member at the UBC School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture since 2000, and a frequent lecturer on issues of the urban built environment and the critical role that public space can play in the development of healthy and vibrant cities. In 2018, Bill won the Carter Wosk Award, the highest award from the Province of British Columbia, for his creative achievements in local, national and international milieus.

**LIZ WREFORD**

Liz Wreford, MALA, OALA, SALA, AALA, CSLA, is the co-founder and Principal Landscape Architect of Public City Architecture. Her work is known for its vibrant recasting of urban folklore, history, and the stories of people and place. Liz has over 20 years of experience in the profession and she has worked in Canada, the United States and Australia on public, commercial and institutional commissions. The work of Liz's sole proprietorship, Plain Projects, was published in *The New York Times* and *Azure* and the firm quickly became identified for its much loved Hygge House installation on the frozen Red River of Winnipeg. Committed to high-quality design and equity across city-building professions, Liz established the Prairie chapter of Building Equality in Architecture. Alongside practice, she is a business owner, teacher, public artist, mother and mentor to those who lean into her experiences. Liz has taught at the Universities of Manitoba and Toronto and is frequently invited to lecture at universities and institutions across Canada. Liz currently sits on the Board of the Winnipeg Arts Council and is the Chair of its Public Art Committee.

**PETER SAMPSON**

Peter Sampson, OAA, MAA, AAA, FRAIC, is co-founder and Principal Architect of Public City. He is an award winning Canadian architect of Swedish descent and grew up in Montreal and Toronto. He studied literature at McGill University, graduating in 1991, and, after living in Spain and Haida Gwaii, went on to study architecture at the University of Toronto where he graduated with the Lieutenant Governor's Medal, the AIA Medal, and the Canadian Architect Student Award of Excellence. In 2022, he received the Governor General's Medal in architecture for design excellence. Peter's work has been published in *Canadian Architecture*, *Macleans*, *Canadian Architect*, *The Globe and Mail*, and *Azure*. He has worked with a number of distinguished firms including Joe Lobko Architect and Levitt Goodman Architects of Toronto and taught architecture design studios at the Universities of Toronto, Waterloo, and Manitoba. In 2008, he established his own practice committed to innovative approaches to public infrastructure and in 2016, he merged his practice with Liz Wreford's. Through Public City, Peter is interested in how approaches to land, architectural landscapes, urban design, ecological building science, technology, and architecture as a single transdisciplinary act of implementation shapes modern practice and the public realm.





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# PROLOGUE

01\_

## WHIMSY AND THE UNEXPECTED IN YARMOUTH

DEVIN SEGAL

**WHEN INDIVIDUALS ENCOUNTER** playful surprises, their curiosity is piqued, leading to more profound engagement of the public space. Yarmouth, Nova Scotia's Main Street redevelopment is an example of how whimsy and the unexpected can elevate an otherwise ordinary streetscape project to foster a strong connection between people and place, while bringing a sense of ownership and pride.

Yarmouth is a small town on Nova Scotia's southwestern shore and this project offers a quintessential, yet distinct, coastal theme. The most notable nod to the importance of the town's fishing heritage and main industry, is the contemporary interpretation of vernacular "lobster cars," which are floating live wells (shed and platform) used for fishermen to store their catch before going back out to sea. Their vibrant colours and playfulness transform the formerly vehicle-centric and hostile-to-pedestrian environment into a welcoming and enjoyable place to spend time.

Fathom Studio deconstructed two lobster cars into several freestanding structures and dispersed them along the street as focal points in each of the nine new sidewalk bumpouts. Individually, the pieces function as public art, a photo backdrop, a sun and rain shelter, a bus shelter or any combination of these. Stepping back, or while traveling the length of the street, they read as parts of a greater whole; relating to each other and unifying the three-block streetscape experience.

Playing off the "homey" feeling of the lobster car, we designed modular seating clusters in each space as an invitation for engagement

and conversation between strangers. We developed three types of movable cast-aluminum chairs modelled after the traditional wooden chairs that are fixtures in rural Nova Scotian homes and synonymous with the "kitchen party." It is a nod to the region's musical heritage and the good cheer of the hearth and home with family and friends – both old and new.

Local folk art largely inspired our use of bold, solid colours – the most influential being the colourful paintings of Yarmouth-born Maud Lewis, one of Canada's most renowned artists. These colours also connect to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia's Western Branch and reinforce the central blocks of Main Street as the town's Arts & Culture District. The bold colours also provide a contrast to the grey of winter, the region's frequent and intense fog and add a feeling of warmth when illuminated at night.

Fathom designed the planting scheme to be evocative of the local shoreline's structure, texture and color, and to increase the lobster cars' legibility. A broad diversity of planting was used to increase habitat for pollinator species and capture and treat stormwater runoff. Planting is intermixed with pieces of reclaimed granite curb and arranged to slow down stormwater, add to the winter interest of each space, and reference the striated rock formations found nearby at Cape Forchu.

The once unwelcoming, car-oriented street has become a comfortable, vibrant and whimsical place where locals and visitors can gather or enjoy moments of solitude. People

spend time here when they didn't before, whether waiting for the bus, reading a book, snapping a family photo, sharing ice cream with a friend or simply taking shelter from the rain or the sun. The playful and unexpected nature of our design makes people curious in the moment and the thoughtful references to the community will make it engaging for years to come.

**Devin Segal, APALA, OALA, CSLA**, is a Partner and Landscape Architecture Director at Fathom Studio, an interdisciplinary design firm based in Dartmouth, NS. Over the past 12 years, he has focused on enhancing public spaces in small Atlantic Canadian communities, demonstrating that they too can have nice things.

**1,2 YARMOUTH MAIN ST. PHASE 2**  
**PHOTOS 1+2 HARRISON JARDINE**







1



2



3

## 02\_ THE BENTWAY'S BOOM TOWN

5468796 ARCHITECTURE + OFFICE IN SEARCH OF

**TORONTO HAS BEEN** called the most multicultural city in the world. There are unique opportunities here to design public spaces aimed at facilitating connections to embrace this diversity, celebrating an urban environment in perpetual growth. The densification of Toronto results in an increasing amount of residual infrastructural spaces that remain key thoroughfares for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. The Bentway was initiated to transform a stretch beneath Gardiner Expressway from a commuter's passageway into a site for art, culture and urban imagination.

5468796 Architecture (Winnipeg) and Office In Search Of (Toronto) designed Boom Town with a curiosity for fun, analyzing the existing site for a deeper story behind the Gardiner – finding inspiration in the anthropomorphic nature of boom lifts and staging potential of the highway supports known as “bents.” Imbuing imagination into the ordinary, the project introduces a childlike sense of wonder to a site where people might least expect it.

Boom Town welcomes the public to Toronto's waterfront with a cast of playful characters that animate the Lake Shore Boulevard and York Street intersection with personality and delight. Beneath the expressway, on concrete islands of this aging infrastructural giant, a trio of boom lifts are repurposed as “Bent Buddies” named Trekker, Tinker, and Trouper, bringing whimsy and humour to the daily commuter's experience.

Boom lifts are necessary to inspect, maintain and repair the existing concrete and steel infrastructure and have a ubiquitous presence under the Gardiner. They move along largely unnoticed, always in a supporting role but never the main act. Inspired by their figural nature, the lifts are transformed from observers to actors in the theatre of the street. The ordinary machines are brought to life as ambassadors for The Bentway.

After years of working in the city, the boom lifts are revitalized with a distinctive vinyl wrap and will be dressed throughout the year in seasonal costumes. Trekker can compete with ghosts, witches and pirates for the best costume during Hallowe'en. Tinker will join the cheerful festive decorations installed during the winter holiday season. Trouper gets draped in wisteria vines to celebrate the hunt for chocolate Easter eggs. Celebrating Canada's largest Pride event, the summer costume is a colourful cascade of overlapping pool noodles.

As a backdrop to their antics, like curtains drawn back on the stage, the bents are painted a vibrant electric blue and covered in a chrome gradient pattern – a reference to The Bentway icon – that creates the illusion of the concrete structure disappearing. During the day, they glisten when sunlight touches the metallic surfaces and in the evening, they have a soft glow from the lustre of streaming lights cast from passing vehicles.

Boom Town, designed for Waterfront ReConnect, a collaboration between The Bentway, the City of Toronto, the Waterfront Business Improvement Area, and the Toronto Downtown West Business Improvement Area (BIA), taps into the latent potential of existing infrastructural elements and allows for a continuous reinvention of the site through community programming. With a strong visual presence that is legible whether you are passing through as a pedestrian, cyclist, or motorist, it enhances The Bentway's civic identity with a simple message: finding joy in the everyday.

When we wink, joy supersedes intention, design becomes a conduit for play, and a project's value can be measured in smiles. Come visit Boom Town at York Street and Lake Shore Boulevard – the Bent Buddies look forward to meeting you, and will even dress up for the occasion.

**5468796 Architecture** is a Winnipeg-based design studio established in 2007. They have collaborated on projects ranging from advocacy efforts to branding, objects, installations, civic and cultural spaces, with specialized expertise in multi-family housing and urban design grounded in practice-based experience and ongoing research.

**Office In Search Of (OISO)** is a Toronto-based interdisciplinary and collaborative design practice founded by Brandon Bergem and Jeffrey Garcia. Projects include architectural visualization, exhibitions, and installations. They are Sessional Lecturers at the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design.

**1** TREKKER, TINKER, AND TROUPER UNDERNEATH THE BENTS. **2** SUMMER COSTUME CELEBRATING TORONTO PRIDE. **3** BLUE BENTS COVERED WITH A CHROME GRADIENT PATTERN.

PHOTOS 1 SAMUEL ENGELKING 2 ADRIAN YU 3 RÉMI CARREIRO

JOHANNA HURME,  
5468796 ARCHITECTURE

KELSEY MCMAHON,  
5468796 ARCHITECTURE

SHANNON WIEBE,  
5468796 ARCHITECTURE

BRANDON BERGEM,  
OFFICE IN SEARCH OF

JEFFREY GARCIA,  
OFFICE IN SEARCH OF





# 03\_

## HOW DID THE PIANO GET ON THE ROOF?

MICHAEL SCATLIFF

1

**IN THE HEART** of downtown Winnipeg's Cultural District sits the Mere Hotel, with a piano on the roof! Completed in 2014, this boutique hotel sits between the Red River and the CSLA award-winning Waterfront Drive just north of Stephen Juba Park. This playful rooftop has an audience of hundreds of eyes; eyes that belong to urbanites who have chosen to live, work and play in the heart of Winnipeg's concert and theatre district. We believe those people deserve better than to look down on a flat gravel roof, so Scatliff + Miller + Murray (SMM) looked to music for inspiration. We put a piano on the roof.

Few developers promote fun and creativity in design like Bill Coady and Sunstone Boutique Hotels. Bill challenged SMM to make this roof a visual landmark, an inspiration and a sight that belonged in this culturally important viewshed. The team considered the cost-benefit of many green roof options and other outdoor uses, but landed on a simple piano keyboard that could be seen (but not heard). While the idea was whimsical, visually it



2





connected the hotel to the surrounding neighborhood, via the sky-view above from the numerous apartment and condominium buildings infilling Winnipeg's historic Exchange District.

Creativity need not be expensive. It is amazing what is possible with paint and a roofing membrane when a creative developer, and a resourceful builder (FWS), open the door for the design team. Like the Mere Hotel itself, the concept is simple, minimal and nothing more than what you need, yet still visually engaging and in keeping with the vision of Bill Coady and the project architect, the late David Penner.

As an aside, David Penner was also a friend, a collaborator (he designed my cottage!) and one of the finest architects that Winnipeg has ever produced. In designing the Mere Hotel and landscape, we talked about the native Aspen trees and the nearby Stephen Juba waterfront park. David translated those discussions into an

**Creativity need not be expensive. It is amazing what is possible with paint and a roofing membrane when a creative developer, and a resourceful builder (FWS), open the door for the design team.**



3

Aspen-inspired building façade of multi-coloured steel tubes, which, in collaboration with my colleague Cheryl Oakden (FCSLA), we re-integrated into the site plan. Our team introduced several live stands of Aspen that over time will blend with the façade and solidify the fit of the building to its quasi-natural surroundings. Together, the team also championed an agreement with the City of Winnipeg to enable underground geothermal loops within the adjacent public park to accommodate an innovative and sustainable heating and cooling system.

The simple keyboard pattern on the roof also reminds people they, too, are the heart of the cultural district. Placemaking occurs at many scales and from many perspectives, including the sky above. With regard to nature, from time-to-time birds do fly by and look amused. Artistic birds will land, and they are sometimes seen bouncing on the keys with an attitude, expecting to hit a note or two. They often leave something behind.

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**Michael Scatliff, MALA, FCSLA**, founded the multi-disciplinary firm Scatliff + Miller + Murray in Winnipeg in 1989 and served as Chair of the 1999 Pan Am Games Construction Committee and Chair of Economic Development Winnipeg from 2014-2017. He achieved nothing without the team, but together they thrived on "visionary urban design and planning."

**1** MERE HOTEL AERIAL VIEW FROM NORTH. **2** MERE HOTEL BIRD'S EYE VIEW WITH ORNAMENTAL GRASSES (BIRD ON GROUND LOOKING FOR WORMS). **3** MERE HOTEL EAST FAÇADE FROM STEPHEN JUBA PARK. **4** MERE HOTEL SOUTH FAÇADE THROUGH ASPEN TREES. **PHOTOS** SMM/DAN HARPER



4



# 04\_

## LAKE WILCOX PARK – BALANCING ECOLOGY AND CULTURE

LISA GREGORY, IAN DANCE, LEIGHANN BRAINE + KIRAN CHHIBA

**LAKE WILCOX PARK** is a 5.48 ha community park with a rich ecological and cultural history, nestled on the shores of the largest kettle lake on the Oak Ridges Moraine in the City of Richmond Hill, Ontario. The park's rejuvenation was culturally and ecologically driven, balancing a desire for enhancing and protecting the site's unique ecology while paying homage to its cultural history, and offering an exemplary array of new waterfront and recreational amenities for the growing community. It brings to life the story of its Indigenous and European heritage through creative and engaging storytelling throughout the site.

Dillon Consulting Limited's landscape architects and the City of Richmond Hill undertook the challenge for the redesign of the park and coordinated a multi-disciplinary team in the preparation of the award winning comprehensive plan followed by detailed design and construction administration services to oversee their vision come to life. Consultation with the municipality, regulatory agencies, Indigenous

communities and local residents informed the integrated design approach and inspired the design elements.

The park features an ecologically restored shoreline involving the removal of a vehicular roadway along the lakeshore in support of a 450m pedestrian promenade that provides park visitors with a continuous water's edge experience and further integration with the amenity areas. The promenade is brought to life through various thematic elements artistically interwoven into the built features, that are slowly revealed to the user as they experience the site. Artistic markers celebrate this heritage through captivating sculptural treatments along the route. Rendered through artistry in corten steel figures, these elements bring a powerful sense of place to Lake Wilcox.

The history of this space is portrayed in places of rest and gathering. Each of these points of reflection and pause provide a "wink" to the cultural heritage of the site and its geographic context. Indigenous

storytelling is ingrained in the landscape, through references to the wampum belt and woven baskets within the paving and bridge details, as well as floral and planting design using tobacco and sage. These spaces constitute intimate outdoor rooms for classroom venues, inviting people to submerge and educate themselves on the history of the land. Details within custom design treatments stitch together this powerful story.

The recreation areas echo the spirit of the surrounding natural environment through both form and features. The interactive splash pad includes aquatic themed elements while the accessible playground is designed along a contrasting forest theme and provides traditional and natural play experiences. The main terrace with a large pavilion and expansive lawn accommodates group picnics and large social gatherings surrounded by existing mature white pines. An accessible path system links all park areas and connects to the adjacent community centre and neighbourhood beyond and includes a 130m long wood and steel boardwalk that extends into the lake, providing an exciting over-water experience.



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The history of this space is portrayed in places of rest and gathering. Each of these points of reflection and pause provide a “wink” to the cultural heritage of the site and its geographic context.

Today, the park is enjoyed by residents of Richmond Hill and visitors throughout the Greater Toronto Area. The park allows visitors to experience the present day shores of Lake Wilcox while recognizing the significant natural and cultural history of the site. Visitors have expressed that their experiences of Lake Wilcox Park are enriched by the extensive interpretive storyline of the site’s natural and cultural history embodied within the park design. The park has been the recipient of a number of awards including the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects’ Regional Award of Merit in 2012. **LP**



3

**Lisa Gregory, OALA, CSLA,** is an LA at Dillon Consulting in Toronto. Originally from the prairies, Lisa has a passion for creating inviting public spaces within diverse landscapes.

**Ian Dance, OALA, FCSLA, ASLA,** is an LA at Dillon Consulting whose career has focused on the design and implementation of spaces for people to use and enjoy as a core part of creating healthy and sustainable communities.

**Leighann Braine, BLA, OALA, CSLA,** is an LA with Dillon Consulting in their Guelph office. She has participated in a variety of projects encompassing parkland open space and trail development, waterfront development, environmental restoration, urban streetscape renewal and community design throughout Ontario.

**Kiran Chhiba, MUD, BES (Planning), MCIP, RPP,** is an associate, urban designer and planner at O2 Planning and Design in Toronto. His career has focused on large scale plans and the integration of public realm projects. While O2 was not involved in the design and implementation of Lake Wilcox, as a former collaborator at Dillon, Kiran provided his perspective on the theming of the park.

**1** INDIGENOUS BRIDGE RAILING MOTIF. **2** ELEVATED BOARDWALK EXTENDING OUT OVER THE LAKE, WITH RESTORED SHORELINE AND SCULPTURES OF LOCAL WILDLIFE (CORTEN MONARCH BUTTERFLY BY HAMMERSMITH METAL WORKS). **3** CORTEN PUBLIC ART PIECE OF A BOAT FRAME CREATES WINDOW TO THE LAKE.

**PHOTOS 1** LEIGHANN BRAINE **2** JEFF MCNEILL PHOTOGRAPHY **3** TOM ARBAN



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Solid Surf Isle



Heavy-Heavy Block Seats  
 Lava Grey (recyclate)



Hug a Tub Rough&Ready  
 cylindrical



High Grass Pillars





1

MARC HALLÉ, YANNICK ROBERGE + LOGAN LITTLEFIELD

# NECESSITY BREEDS HUMOUR

## > FR\_LP+ LA NÉCESSITÉ ENGENDRE L'HUMOUR

La créativité est une forme de jeu qui touche tous les sens. Chez CCxA, le rire est un élément exploratoire de la créativité qui permet de déconstruire la résistance aux nouvelles idées et d'intégrer tous les participants dans une expérience de joie partagée.



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2

**CREATIVITY IS A** form of play that touches all the senses, and laughter at CCxA is one of our favourite agents of creative exploration. Laughter helps tackle the logic of resistance to new ideas and brings everyone into a shared experience of joy. Humour also helps uncover unusual and surprising connections between objects, concepts, and constraints, fostering new insights and hybrids. When there is a pile-up of constraints for things you *can't* do, sometimes the most irrational approach becomes the key to unlocking what you *can* do. Humour and laughter inspire a leap of faith beyond the limits of logic, informing a working method in our





office that some have described as starting with a joke and ending with something serious. The following are a few anecdotes from our studio that show how we strive to transform 'Ha-Ha' into 'A-Ha!', and reveal that playful elements do not come out of nowhere; they are bred from necessity.

### **Square Dorchester**

The 1980s were not kind to Montreal's Square Dorchester. This quintessential Victorian park had experienced creeping encroachments when adjacent roads were widened and an underground parkade was constructed under the northern part of the park. This included two descending vehicle

access ramps that heedlessly severed the classic 19th Century Union Jack layout of pathways. One of the revitalization goals was to restore the integrity of the original park motif. However, those parking ramp trenches were not going anywhere. The only apparent solution to leap over these incursions was inspired by the arching back of a cat, refined into two Venetian-styled stepped-arch bridges. Detached from the context of gondoliers and canals, these bridges edify the parking trenches into something picturesque, creating lookouts and a tiered perch over the park that are scaled to prioritize pedestrians over cars.

A classic tiered fountain was also incorporated into the revitalization of Square Dorchester. A nod to fountains in other classic Montreal squares, a water element was always an intended part of the original park plan. The fountain was conceived to activate a new pole aligned with the monuments and structures elsewhere in the park. Sight lines and symmetry pointed to only one location where the fountain could physically be situated: on top of a structural support

**1** BERCZY PARK, TORONTO. **2** SQUARE DORCHESTER, MONTREAL. **3** CONCEPT, SQUARE DORCHESTER.  
**PHOTOS** 1 INDUSTRIOUS PHOTOGRAPHY 2 JF SAVARIA 3 CCXA





**Humour in design is not about cheap laughs. It is continually informed and nurtured by a fine understanding of a site's context and its multiple layers. Only then can the laugh become serious.**

column of the parking garage below the northern edge of the park. Red flags were raised when the diameter of the fountain encroached into the public right-of-way, conflicting with space allocated for vehicles such as double decker tourist buses. Relocating the fountain was not an option due to structural constraints, and getting rid of it was out of the question. The absurdity of this impossible scenario generated an idea of slicing the fountain along the park's northern limit. The final outcome created a surprising nuance that elevates an unadulterated Belle Epoque fountain on the park side, and curiously highlights an abstracted 2D fountain silhouette from the street, winking at the irreverent logic that truncated the park and launched its gradual demise (until restoration efforts by the City of Montreal began in 2008).

#### Love Park

The idea of tattooing a giant heart into the urban grid of downtown Toronto was at first received with an eye-roll by some. The move was inspired by the need for a



4 FOUNTAIN, SQUARE DORCHESTER. 5 SQUARE DORCHESTER.  
6 CLAUDE CORMIER AND ASSOCIATES. 7 LOVE PARK, TORONTO.  
PHOTOS 4,6,7 CCXA 5 R THIBODEAU

6







classic park feature with a strong universal symbol that could launch a new identity for a district defined by a skyline of sameness. Its audacity stemmed as much from its size as its form. Originally deemed too large for a small park (the designers jested that the pond could have been even bigger), the heart makes space instead of taking up room. It holds the park together, affirming a triangulation that unifies the experience of the park's diverse visitors.

What may have started with an eye-roll eventually revealed itself to be a serious 'A-Ha!' move in public space making. The red mosaic seat perimeter around the heart pond creates a 170m long front row love seat where the neighbourhood can see and be seen. Formerly a place on the margins, this gargantuan heart structures the public realm for a neighbourhood that was in need of a town square. At the same time, it becomes a signature crossroads in the district and a metropolitan reference point that everyone can recognize and name: 'Let's meet up at the heart'.

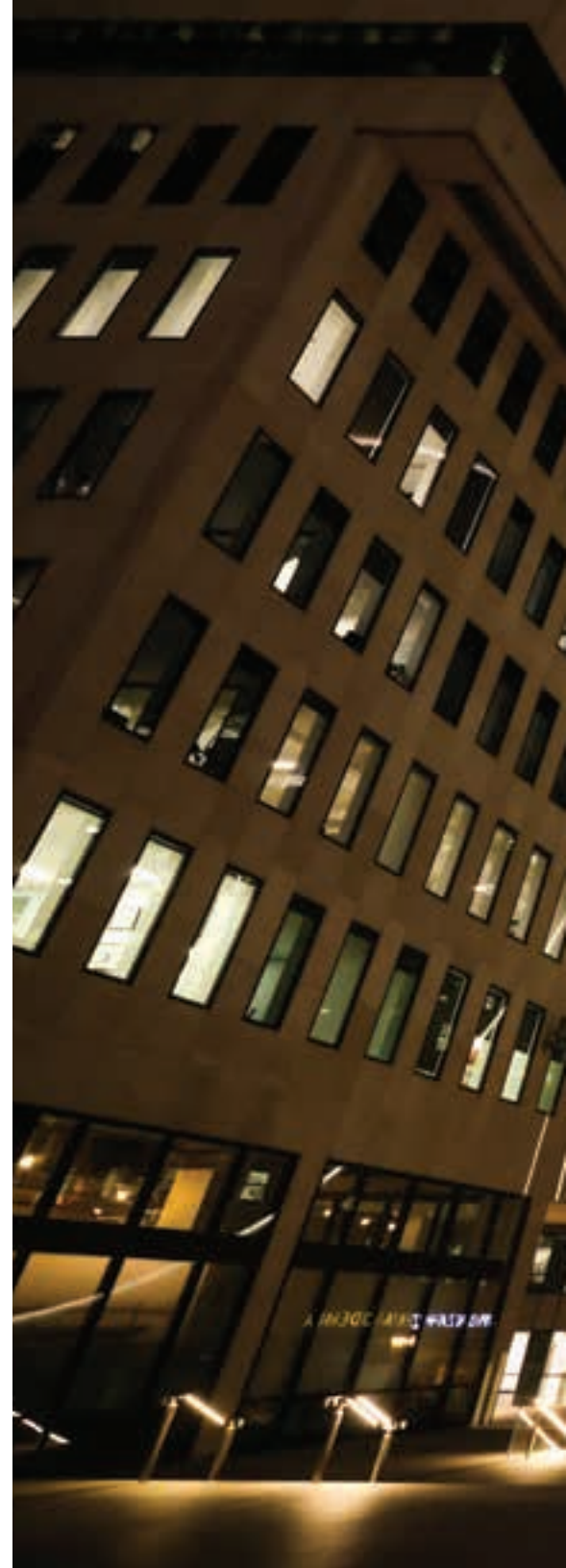
### The Ring/L'Anneau

The modernist plinth of Place Ville-Marie had just undergone a massive transformation, realizing at last the original 1958 vision of I.M Pei & Partners for a transitional stair gateway connecting the complex to rue McGill College. The owners of Place Ville-Marie wanted something bold to reclaim their iconic office complex as the epicentre of downtown Montreal. There was only one problem for the landscape architect: the lack of a ground plane (i.e., land!). With only walls to work with and no terra firma, this was an ambitious landscape with literally no feet on the ground.

The orthogonal modernist context of the architecture generated a linear logic of ideas, none of which stuck at first. Setting the scene for something to click, construction lines were laid out in the drawing to play with the geometry of the gateway and frame an exploration for other scenarios. Suddenly, like the all-encompassing circumference of



8



9

8 LOVE PARK, TORONTO.  
9 THE RING/L'ANNEAU, MONTREAL.  
PHOTOS 8 CCXA 9 JF SAVARIAUX





Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man, a basic layout of construction lines sparked an epiphany to inscribe a circle arching nine stories into the air and descending just above the heads of pedestrians on the stairway below. An anxious hit-and-miss brainstorm turned into an 'A-Ha!' when the form spontaneously emerged from mapping the site's geometric constraints.

The Ring succeeds in revealing a dialogue with the historical postcard sight line along

the McGill College axis to the illuminated cross atop Olmsted's Parc du Mont-Royal. The humility and monumentality of this solution kicked off an "out of our comfort zone" working process, where daily challenges were tackled with an enthusiasm rooted in a deeply felt conviction that this was the right solution for this situation.

This realization is a reminder that when reason gets stricken by doubt, the body

can become a well of conviction. It is where laughter lives, nourishing insights that can see beyond the limits of a given reality. Humour in design is not about cheap laughs. It is continually informed and nurtured by a fine understanding of a site's context and its multiple layers. Only then can the laugh become serious. **LP**



VALERIE MANICA + GRACE YANG

# DAILY TOUS LES JOURS – INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE HUMAN SPIRIT

**DAILY TOUS LES JOURS** leads an emergent field of practice that combines interactive art, storytelling, performance and urban design to reinvent living together in the 21st century. Since 2010, the award-winning Tiohtia:ke/Montréal-based studio has been producing projects in more than 60 cities around the world, bringing strangers together in a spirit of play and cooperation. They want citizens to play an active role in the transformation of their cities, engaging the public with ideas about mobility, resilience, social connection and civic engagement. Daily's work has been described as "infrastructure for the human spirit."

We chatted with the firm's co-founder, Melissa Mongiat, to discuss the power of play music, and dance, as well as the role of humour in their work. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

**Valerie:** Can you share with us a bit about yourself and what drew you to interactive design?

**Melissa:** I'm one of the two co-founders of Daily tous les jours. I did my MA in Narrative Environments in London, while Mouna (Andraos), my partner, did hers at the Interactive Telecommunication Program, ITP, at NYU – exploring to see how technology can be used to bring people together.

**Valerie:** I noticed that this was a big part of your mission statement as a firm. Could you expand on the importance of storytelling and sensing? Are there projects that come to mind where those themes are especially prevalent?

DAILY TOUS LES JOURS CO-FOUNDERS  
MELISSA MONGIAT + MOUNA ANDRAOS. |  
FR DAILY TOUS LES JOURS CO-FOUNDERS  
MELISSA MONGIAT + MOUNA ANDRAOS.  
PHOTO QURE AGENCY



# DAILY TOUS LES JOURS – INFRASTRUCTURE POUR L'ESPRIT HUMAIN

**DAILY TOUS LES JOURS** dirige un domaine de pratique émergent qui combine l'art interactif, la narration, la performance et le design urbain pour réinventer le « Vivre ensemble » au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Depuis 2010, le studio primé Tiohtia:ke de Montréal a réalisé des projets dans une soixantaine de villes dans le monde, rassemblant les gens dans un esprit ludique et coopératif. Ils veulent mobiliser les citoyens pour la transformation de leur ville dans le cadre d'atelier sur la mobilité, la résilience, les liens sociaux et l'engagement civique. Le travail de Daily a été décrit comme une « infrastructure pour l'esprit humain ».

Nous avons discuté avec la cofondatrice de l'entreprise, Melissa Mongiat, du pouvoir de la musique et de la danse, ainsi que du rôle de l'humour dans leur travail. Cet entretien a été édité afin de le raccourcir et de le clarifier.

**Valerie :** Parlez-nous de vous et de ce qui vous a intéressé dans la conception interactive.

**Melissa :** Je suis l'une des deux cofondatrices de *Daily tous les jours*. J'ai fait une maîtrise en Environnements narratifs à Londres, tandis que Mouna (Andraos), ma partenaire, a fait la sienne à l'Université de New York (Interactive Telecommunication Program) sur la façon d'utiliser la technologie pour rassembler les citoyens.

**Valerie :** J'ai remarqué que c'était un élément important de votre mission d'affaires. Pourriez-vous nous expliquer l'importance de la narration et du ressenti? Quels projets reposent essentiellement sur ces thèmes?





1

**Melissa:** One of our big projects that had a lot of influence in how the studio developed is the “Musical Swings.” These are a group of swings that make music as you move on them. The higher the swing, the higher the note. And when people swing in synchronicity, they trigger special melodies. When we interviewed participants, we learned about the power of making music with your entire body. It’s a multi-sensory experience that is quite unique. We all remembered the last time we were on a swing – for most of us it was when we were fairly young – and how good it feels when you’re in synchronicity with someone else. A lot of research has been done on dance and synchronized movements, studying how they release different “happy” hormones that reduce the barrier between the self and the group.

Another project is the Giant Sing-along, a field of microphones that invites people to sing their hearts out in public space, karaoke style. There is also a lot of research on how singing together creates a strong bond between people. I remember a moment that really moved me at the Giant Sing-along: It was morning, and the song was Amazing Grace. There were only a few of us, a mix of older and younger people who may never have

had a moment together, yet we were sharing this experience. Singing together or making music together made us feel closer to one another. Collectively performing music or dance has been proven to impact dopamine release. And so why not bring that to a public space?

**Grace:** There’s a lot of humour in those projects that help people lose their inhibitions, like the Giant Sing-along. Could you share a little more about how humour plays a role in the design process or the project outcome?

When we interviewed people, they’d say, “When I’m sad, I come here.” There’s something therapeutic about those [Musical] Swings. We need more spaces like this in cities that calm us in a collective way.

**Melissa:** Through the years we’ve been integrating what we do into urban infrastructure. A client we were working with came up with the term “infrastructure for the human spirit,” which spoke to us a lot. Much is said about bringing a human scale to cities primarily built for cars, in a very practical sense. But what if we also focus on what makes us human? Like our capacity to be creative and tell stories. Humour is a big part of the human spirit and brings people together and creates a sense of shared moments that goes beyond just talking about the weather.


**Grace:** Daily’s tagline that “strangers need strange moments together” is quite fascinating. Can you elaborate on this and share some examples of projects that facilitated these strange moments?

**Melissa:** We frequently ask ourselves – why are we working in public space? Because it’s not the easiest place to



2





**Les citoyens interrogés nous ont dit « quand je suis triste, je viens ici ». Il y a quelque chose de thérapeutique dans ces balançoires musicales. De telles installations doivent se multiplier au sein de nos villes, car elles sont apaisantes.**

3

**Melissa :** Les « Balançoires musicales » ont été l'un des projets phares de notre studio. Il s'agit de balançoires qui produisent de la musique en se balançant. Plus l'amplitude est importante, plus la note est aiguë. Si plusieurs se balancent en synchronicité, des mélodies se font entendre. En interrogeant les participants, nous avons compris le pouvoir de produire de la musique avec son corps, une expérience multisensorielle tout à fait unique. On se souvient tous de la dernière fois qu'on s'est balancé – pour la plupart d'entre nous, ça remonte à l'enfance – et de la sensation agréable d'être synchronisé avec quelqu'un d'autre. La danse et les mouvements synchronisés ont fait l'objet de nombreuses recherches sur la production de différentes hormones du « bonheur » qui brisent les inhibitions.

Il y a aussi « Giant Sing-along », un champ de microphones qui invite les gens à chanter dans l'espace public, à la manière d'un karaoké. De nombreuses recherches ont démontré que chanter en public crée de forts liens entre les gens. Je me souviens d'un moment qui m'a vraiment ému. C'était le matin et la chanson était Amazing Grace. Nous n'étions que quelques personnes

de différentes générations qui ne se connaissaient pas, mais qui vivaient une expérience commune. Chanter ensemble nous a rapprochés les uns des autres. Il a été démontré que les interprétations sociales dans un contexte musical ou de danse libèrent de la dopamine. Alors, pourquoi ne pas l'introduire dans l'espace public?

**Grace :** L'humour est présent dans les projets qui nous aident à briser nos inhibitions, comme le Giant Sing-along. Selon vous, quel rôle joue l'humour dans le processus de conception ou dans le résultat des projets?

**Melissa :** Au fil des ans, nous avons intégré ce que nous faisons dans l'infrastructure urbaine. Un de nos clients a proposé l'expression « infrastructure pour l'esprit humain », que nous avons trouvé significatif. On parle beaucoup d'humaniser au sens pratique nos villes qui ont été érigées autour de l'automobile. Nous devons aussi penser à ce qui nous rend humains! Comme notre capacité à être créatifs et à raconter des histoires. L'humour fait partie intégrante de l'esprit humain, il rassemble les gens et crée un

sentiment fraternel au-delà des simples échanges sur la météo.

**Grace :** Le slogan de Daily selon lequel « les étrangers ont besoin de moments étranges ensemble » est tout à fait fascinant. Pouvez-vous préciser votre pensée et nous donner des exemples de projets qui ont favorisé ces moments étranges?

**Melissa :** On se demande souvent pourquoi nous travaillons dans le domaine public, car ce n'est pas le domaine le plus facile, surtout lorsqu'il s'agit d'infrastructure permanente. Les contraintes sont nombreuses, notamment les conditions météorologiques, le vandalisme et les questions fondamentales comme l'isolement, l'accessibilité et l'inclusion. C'est un environnement très riche en soi, mais les gens n'y sont pas abonnés. Il est donc très difficile d'attirer leur attention. C'est probablement l'environnement le plus difficile en terme de mobilisation.

Au fil des ans, nous avons étudié l'impact de nos interventions étranges. Pour certain, notre travail semble superflu, mais nous en avons mesuré l'impact. Malgré que nous vivions tous ensemble, nous sommes si éloignés les uns des autres dans nos vies



work, especially when you're working on permanent infrastructure. There are a lot of constraints, whether it be the weather, vandalism, plus really important issues including isolation, accessibility and inclusivity. It's a super-rich environment for us to work in, but it's also where people don't buy a ticket so it's very difficult to grab their attention. It's probably the most difficult environment to get people to do something.

Through the years, we've looked at the impact of our strange interventions. Our work can be perceived as kind of superfluous, yet we've measured deep impact through the years. There is something about the fact that we are all so far apart in our individual lives, yet living this life together. As strangers, we need a kind of strange event to break the ice and shake us off our individual path.

Some years ago, we had a chance to do a third-party impact study on our Musical Swings. They were on tour in three cities in the US. One of our favourite anecdotes happened when we were in West Palm Beach. There was a young man who had been spending a lot more time than others around the swings. He said, "You guys are not from around here, but we know the

codes, we know where people come from. West Palm Beach is between Palm Beach, the richest zip code in America, and some very poor neighborhoods. And it's very rare that you see people from different demographics like this mixing right out in public space." The space felt accessible and inclusive to him. That gave us hope about how the Musical Swings can have a deep social impact and slowly transform neighbourhoods.

**Valerie:** When you're monitoring or just watching people use the installations, are there any data points you're gathering to measure the impact?

**Melissa:** Because the work is technological, we know that the swing goes through 8000 oscillations in a day on average, and we can count sync mode occurrences. We also correlate that data with the weather and other data points. What has helped us most is not only understanding that our work was used a lot, but how it was used, through surveys and interviews. For example, for the Musical Swings, we learned 1 in 3 people interacted with someone they did not know. The words most used to describe the artwork were "happy" and "therapeutic."

**Valerie:** It's nice that you can get that type of qualitative feedback through surveys. I'm sure it's very helpful.

**Melissa:** Definitely. There are words that were not part of our language initially when we started the studio. One of them is pride – how people reported feeling proud that their city had this type of environment. You can go a long way with pride.

**Valerie:** Do you use the feedback you receive from previous projects to generate new ideas? What's your process for coming up with new ideas as a team?

**Melissa:** The feedback helps us identify the elements that work well and that we can build from. That's why through the years we've created a lot of musical installations. We saw how music brings people together, beyond languages, so we've been exploring different ways of playing with an environment to create music. Looking at our Musical Pavement project, we saw how people moved in ways that we rarely see in public space. We have a Musical Pavement installation in Arizona and in Dubai that makes music to people's shadows. Different sensory units are embedded in the pavement, and people start stretching and waving their shadow to trigger music, as if by magic, lost in the moment. They are present in their bodies and pay attention to one another because they're making music with others. Those kinds of behaviours have been insightful for us.

**Valerie:** You get to collaborate quite a bit with other professionals. What's your process for working on multidisciplinary teams and specifically with landscape architects?

**Melissa:** More and more we're collaborating with landscape architects, and we like it because it enables us to work at the beginning of the overall process. When we started, it was very much, "there's this corner, can you do something here?" Often it has already been decided what to do with a space, even sometimes the medium we should use. Working with landscape architects has enabled us to go deeper in the understanding of the site and, as a team, really see the best place for public interaction. It's integrated into the whole site concept rather than just an add-on at the end.



4 CIMBALOM CIRCLE. 5 MUSICAL SWINGS.  
PHOTOS 4 BERTALANSOOSCOLLOC 5 LEAH TRIBETT



individuelles. En tant qu'étrangers, nous avons besoin d'une activité étrange, pour ainsi dire, afin de briser la glace et nous ouvrir aux autres.

Il y a quelques années, nous avons eu l'occasion de réaliser une étude d'impact sur nos balançoires musicales. L'initiative était en tournée dans trois villes des États-Unis. L'une de nos anecdotes préférées s'est déroulée à West Palm Beach. Un jeune homme passait beaucoup plus de temps que les autres autour des balançoires. Il a déclaré : « Vous n'êtes pas du coin, car nous connaissons les codes et nous savons d'où viennent les gens. West Palm Beach se situe entre Palm Beach, le code postal le plus riche d'Amérique, et des quartiers très pauvres. Il est très rare de voir des gens de différentes origines se mélanger ainsi dans l'espace public ». L'espace lui a semblé accessible et inclusif. Cela nous a donné l'espoir que les balançoires musicales puissent avoir un impact social profond et transformer peu à peu les quartiers.

**Valerie :** Lorsque vous observez les utilisateurs de vos installations, collectez-vous des données pour en mesurer l'impact?

**Melissa :** Comme il s'agit d'une œuvre technique, nous savons que les balançoires oscillent en moyenne 8 000 fois par jour et nous pouvons calculer les occurrences synchrones. Nous les corrélons également aux données météorologiques et autres. Nos travaux ont été grandement consultés, notamment dans le cadre de sondages et d'entrevues. Par exemple, pour les balançoires musicales, une personne sur trois a interagi avec une personne qu'elle ne connaissait pas. Les mots les plus utilisés pour décrire l'œuvre étaient « heureux et thérapeutique ».

**Valerie :** C'est intéressant que vous puissiez obtenir ce type de rétroaction qualitative au moyen de sondages. Je suis certaine que c'est très utile.

**Melissa :** Absolument. Il y a des mots qui ne faisaient pas partie de notre langage lorsque nous avons créé le studio. L'un d'entre eux était fierté – les gens ont déclaré être fiers que leur ville dispose d'un tel aménagement. Vous pouvez faire beaucoup de chemin avec la fierté.

**Valerie :** Utilisez-vous les commentaires sur les projets précédents pour alimenter de nouvelles idées? Comment procédez-



5

vous pour trouver de nouvelles idées en équipe?

**Melissa :** La rétroaction nous aide à déterminer les éléments sur lesquels nous pouvons nous appuyer. C'est pourquoi, au fil des ans, nous avons créé de nombreuses installations musicales. Nous avons constaté que la musique rapprochait les gens, au-delà des langues, nous avons alors exploré différentes façons d'interagir avec l'environnement pour générer de la musique. Dans le cadre de notre projet *Musical Pavement*, nous avons constaté que les gens se déplaçaient d'une façon unique. Nous avons une installation *Musical Pavement* en Arizona et à Dubaï qui fait de la musique avec l'ombre des gens. Différentes unités sensorielles sont intégrées dans la chaussée. Ainsi, les individus se déplacent pour étendre ou diminuer leur ombre, ce qui, comme par magie, déclenche des sons. Ils sont présents dans leur corps et attentifs aux autres, car ils composent de la musique en commun. Ce type de comportement a été très instructif pour nous.

**Valerie :** Vous collaborez souvent avec d'autres professionnels. Comment travaillez-vous au sein d'équipes pluridisciplinaires et plus particulièrement avec des architectes paysagistes?

**Melissa :** Nous collaborons de plus en plus avec des architectes paysagistes, ce que nous apprécions, car nous pouvons travailler dès le début du processus créatif. Au commencement, on nous demandait

de faire quelque chose dans un espace donné. On connaissait d'avance les travaux et les matériaux que nous allions utiliser. La collaboration avec les architectes paysagistes nous a permis d'approfondir notre compréhension des sites et de déterminer en équipe le meilleur endroit pour une installation interactive. Nos interventions sont intégrées à l'ensemble du concept plutôt que d'être un simple ajout.

Je pense que nous ajoutons une dimension au concept original, une « infrastructure pour l'esprit ». Une nouvelle compréhension des interactions dans l'espace public modifie notre façon d'aménager, d'interrelier les allées, etc.

**Valerie :** Oui, il serait agréable de voir des détails conceptuels plus fantaisistes intégrés dans les matériaux et les paysages de rue. Que pensez-vous des possibilités et des défis que représentent les installations temporaires par rapport aux installations permanentes?

**Melissa :** Les installations temporaires sont importantes, car elles stimulent notre imagination quant aux diverses possibilités d'un site. Lorsque les balançoires musicales sont installées temporairement, on nous demande fréquemment d'en faire une installation permanente. Les infrastructures interactives permanentes offrent beaucoup d'avantages, car les collectivités évoluent avec elle. Ainsi, nous mettons l'accent sur les installations permanentes, tout en développant des





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I also think that there's an "infrastructure for the human spirit" layer we bring to the table. Understanding new models for human interaction in public space benefits other components, such as how we lay out public spaces, how we connect sidewalks together, etc.

**Valerie:** Yeah, it would be nice to see these more whimsical design details integrated into everyday materials and streetscapes. Could you expand on the opportunities and challenges that are related to temporary versus permanent installations?

**Melissa:** Temporary installations have been important for us because they spark imagination as to what can happen on a site. Often, where the Musical Swings are presented for a temporary duration, people ask for them to come back permanently. We see a lot of benefits to having permanent interactive infrastructure because communities grow with it. Hence, we're becoming more focused on permanent installations, while still developing temporary artwork. Our Walk Walk Dance installation is being implemented all over the planet. It's nice to see how it can hijack different spaces and push the potential of human interaction.

When we did the Musical Swings survey, the third party who led the impact study

said they were not sure this would work permanently. They thought the impact would fade away. However, when we installed the first permanent Swings in Lawrence, Indiana, we saw how they became an extension of people's living rooms. When we interviewed people, they'd say, "when I'm sad, I come here." There's something therapeutic about those Swings. We need more spaces like this in cities that calm us in a collective way. In this case, Lawrence was also known as a drive-through city with no reason for people to stop. It became a place to stop, bringing all the economic impact that goes with this dynamic.

**Valerie:** Are there any kind of everyday spaces, e.g., bus stops, blank walls, that you see potential for engaging people in this type of way?

**Melissa:** Walk Walk Dance was created for transit areas, to transform a sidewalk into a music-making exercise. I'm fascinated with bus stops because they are places where people wait, and they're often places you just can't wait to get out of. We like to turn those bleak moments into something more meaningful and collective.

**Grace:** I understand that you'd love to see every city have a dance strategy. Can you elaborate on that?



7

**Much is said about bringing a human scale to cities primarily built for cars, in a very practical sense. But what if we also focus on what makes us human? Like our capacity to be creative and tell stories.**

6 HELLO TREES. 7 DAY DREAMER.  
PHOTOS 4 MORRIS MALAKOFF 5 LEAH TRIBETT





œuvres temporaires. Notre installation Walk Walk Dance parcourt le monde. Il est intéressant de voir comment elle s'approprie les différents espaces et repousse les limites interactionnelles.

Le tiers qui mena l'étude d'impact sur les balançoires musicales doutait de l'intérêt à long terme d'une telle installation. Toutefois, lorsque nous avons installé les premières balançoires permanentes à Lawrence, en Indiana, nous avons constaté qu'elles étaient prisées des citoyens. Les personnes interrogées nous ont dit « quand je suis triste, je viens ici ». Il y a

quelque chose de thérapeutique dans ces balançoires musicales. De telles installations doivent se multiplier au sein de nos villes, car elles sont apaisantes. De plus, Lawrence était connu comme ville de passage, il n'y avait aucune attraction particulière. C'est devenu un point d'arrêt, avec l'impact économique conséquent.

**Valerie :** Existe-t-il des espaces communs comme des arrêts de bus ou des murs vierges qui, selon vous, pourraient mobiliser les citoyens?

**Melissa :** Walk Walk Dance a été créé pour les zones de transit, afin de transformer un

trottoir en une expérience musicale. Je suis fascinée par les arrêts de bus, car ce sont des endroits que l'on souhaite rapidement quitter. Nous aimons transformer ces lancinants moments d'attente en quelque chose de plus joyeux.

**Grace :** Vous souhaitez que chaque ville ait une stratégie de danse. Pouvez-vous nous en dire davantage à ce sujet?

**Melissa :** J'ai assisté à une conférence sur les stratégies musicales des villes et la façon dont la musique ou les installations musicales interactives peuvent améliorer la qualité de la vie collective. J'ai constaté





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**Melissa:** I was at a conference about music strategies for cities and how live music or interactive music installations are ways to heighten the quality of public life. I realized during the conference that a lot of our musical installations are also dance installations. It's not just making music together, but moving together. That's how the dance strategy came about. In doing research on the power of dance and social closeness, different Indigenous nations' dances were designed to keep people together through hardship. Scientifically, we know how dance heals and brings people together. Our society is so polarized these days, especially online. I think we undervalue the power of public spaces to help social cohesion. As far-fetched as it may seem, music and dance are a way to disrupt the everyday routines and get people losing themselves together, breaking down divisions one strange moment at a time.

**Valerie:** Do you have any advice for landscape architects to try to integrate more of this whimsical nature or interactivity into projects?

**Melissa:** The key thing is to understand the multigenerational aspect to creating playful spaces for all – not just for kids. That's what we do. You might think that it's not possible, but it is. To dare to imagine moments and believe that nothing is too strange. What's actually strange is concrete cities with no life in them. The more life we have, the better. And what is life? Is life just people walking past each other, or is life people exchanging, talking, laughing, smiling and helping each other? **LP**

pendant la conférence que beaucoup de nos installations musicales sont aussi des installations de danse. Il ne s'agit pas seulement de produire de la musique, mais de bouger ensemble. C'est ainsi que la stratégie de danse est née. L'étude sur le pouvoir de la danse et de la proximité sociale a démontré que les danses autochtones ont été conçues pour maintenir la cohésion sociale malgré les épreuves. D'un point de vue scientifique, nous savons que la danse guérit et rapproche les gens. Notre société est tellement polarisée de nos jours, surtout en ligne. Je pense que nous sous-estimons le potentiel de l'espace public à favoriser la cohésion sociale. Aussi farfelu que cela puisse paraître, la musique et la danse sont un moyen de rompre avec la routine quotidienne et de favoriser l'émancipation en brisant le flux événementiel.

**Valerie :** Avez-vous des conseils à donner aux architectes paysagistes pour qu'ils intègrent davantage la fantaisie et l'interactivité dans leurs projets?

**Melissa :** L'essentiel est de concevoir des espaces ludiques multigénérationnels, et non seulement pour les enfants. C'est ce que nous faisons. Vous pensez peut-être que ce n'est pas possible, mais c'est possible. Oser imaginer et croire que rien n'est trop étrange. Ce qui est étrange, ce sont nos villes bétonnées sans vie. L'idéal, c'est la vie! Mais qu'est-ce que la vie? Se limite-t-elle à des croisements. **LP**

**8 WALK WALK DANCE.**  
**PHOTO 8 PASCAL MOORS**





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VINH VAN

# MIRVISH VILLAGE PARK EVOQUES THE PLAYFULNESS, LAUGHTER + FUN OF ITS NAMESAKE

> **FR\_LP+** LE PARC DU VILLAGE MIRVISH ÉVOQUE L'ENJOUEMENT ET LE RIRE DE SON HOMONYME

La fantaisie est une qualité ludique qui exprime la spontanéité, la créativité et l'imagination.

**WHIMSY IS A PLAYFUL**, or lighthearted quality – a sense of spontaneity, creativity and imagination. It involves a departure from the ordinary or practical and often involves elements of surprise, humour or the unexpected. Whimsy often draws inspiration from the world of fantasy and imagination, incorporating fantastical,

surreal or otherworldly elements. In dense urban centres, we all get caught up in the fast pace of daily life. Whimsy is a break from the mundane – as landscape architects, the public spaces we design can spark a sense of wonder, providing a momentary escape from the daily grind.

Toronto, a city known for its rich history and vibrant culture, has been shaped by a multitude of remarkable individuals.

Among these luminaries, one name stands out with a legacy that spans business, entertainment and community – Ed Mirvish. Born in 1914, Ed's early life was marked by an entrepreneurial spirit and a fascination with the world of entertainment. Mirvish's most notable legacy in Toronto is his impact on the city's entertainment and cultural scene, particularly in the downtown area. He purchased the Royal Alexandra Theatre in Toronto in 1963 and later acquired several other theatres in the city. Under the banner of "Mirvish Productions," he played a crucial role in promoting and supporting live theatre in Toronto, bringing numerous Broadway and West End shows to the city.

Ed's commitment to theatre led to the construction of the Princess of Wales Theatre in downtown Toronto. Opened in 1993, the theatre was designed to host large-scale productions and became an integral part of the city's cultural landscape. His efforts helped establish Toronto as a vibrant theatre destination.

As a dedicated supporter of the arts and culture in Toronto, his philanthropic efforts included contributions to various



1 GARDEN ROOMS. 2 LOOKING BACK ED MIRVISH.  
3 HONEST ED'S.

PHOTOS ALL IMAGES COURTESY PFS STUDIO





3

**The redevelopment of Honest Ed's can be seen as a continuation of Ed Mirvish's dedication to making Toronto a better place to live, and – through great design – an opportunity to pay iconic homage to Toronto's cultural legend.**

cultural institutions and initiatives. He was passionate about preserving and promoting the city's artistic heritage.

#### **Honest Ed's**

Ed Mirvish purchased Honest Ed's Bargain House, a struggling store on the corner of Bathurst and Bloor Street, in 1948 and transformed it into one of the most famous discount stores in Toronto – Honest Ed's. The store offered a wide range of products at heavily discounted prices, attracting shoppers from all walks of life.

Honest Ed's was not just a store; it was a spectacle. The store's exterior boasted a massive and dazzling sign that proudly announced, "Honest Ed's." The sign's flashing lights, bold colours and eccentric design drew the attention of passersby and turned the store into an instant landmark. Along with Ed Mirvish's witty advertisements, the store quickly became a must-visit destination for both locals and tourists.

The iconic shopping centre has been seen around the world in movies such as *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* and countless TV shows. Tourists would journey to the Annex just to witness the beacon of the Honest Ed's sign, like a sign on Broadway – lit up by 23,000 flashing bulbs.

As Eric Andrew-Gee of *The Globe and Mail* wrote, "Even for many who never shopped there, the building became a kind of kitschy landmark, with its Coney Island-meets-Vegas aesthetics and its quirky, improbably cheap merchandise."

Known for his sense of humour and whimsical approach to business, Mirvish injected his unique character into every facet of the store. From the witty signage that adorned the aisles to the unexpected surprises that awaited customers around every corner, the store exuded a sense of playfulness that was a direct reflection of its founder. Mirvish's love for making people smile was evident in

every interaction. He often mingled with customers, sharing jokes and anecdotes that turned shopping into an unforgettable experience. His vibrant personality became woven into the fabric of Honest Ed's, creating an atmosphere that transcended mere commerce and transformed shopping into an adventure filled with laughter and joy.

#### **The Next Chapter**

Ed Mirvish passed away in 2007, and the store continued to operate under the management of his family. Discussions about the future of Honest Ed's gained prominence after his death. In 2013, it was announced that Honest Ed's would close its doors for good.

The closure was met with a mix of nostalgia and anticipation for what would come next for the site. While some lamented the "piece of our collective history lost to progress" (*Streets of Toronto*, 2017), throughout his life, Ed Mirvish's investments and projects played a role in the revitalization of Toronto's downtown core. His commitment to improving the cultural and commercial aspects of the city helped shape the development of key areas, making them more attractive and vibrant for residents and visitors alike.





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... [the] design for the park drew inspiration from the iconic Honest Ed's signage, with its whimsical filigree of swirls, and "projected" them onto the ground plane as a preliminary spatial framework.

oasis with winding pathways and a variety of spaces that support a broad range of programming. The most resounding request from the community was that the historical and cultural significance of Honest Ed's and Ed Mirvish's legacy be reflected in the design of the park.

PFS Studio's design for the park drew inspiration from the iconic Honest Ed's signage, with its whimsical filigree of swirls, and "projected" them onto the ground plane as a preliminary spatial framework. Gradual iteration of the concept resulted in a series of winding pathways, open areas and plantings that abstractly reference the *jardin à la française* and its playful, intricate labyrinths (See image #4).

The winding pathways unravel to create an immersive processional experience where park users are instilled with a sense of wonder and curiosity – mimicking the experience of shopping in Honest Ed's, where Torontonians learned to expect the unexpected. A series of garden "rooms" emerge, where moments of active and passive programs are revealed. The distribution of programs responds to the site's edges – passive programs act as a backdrop to residential units, while active programs synergize with the pedestrian-focused Markham Street and Food

At the discretion of the Mirvish family, the property was purchased by Westbank, whose initial redevelopment plans included a mix of residential, commercial and community spaces – creating a new mixed-use residential community, "Mirvish Village." The redevelopment of Honest Ed's can be seen as a continuation of Ed Mirvish's dedication to making Toronto a better place to live, and – through great design – an opportunity to pay iconic homage to Toronto's cultural legend.

### Mirvish Village Park

Located on the former site of Honest Ed's, the redevelopment consists of mixed-use buildings with community spaces. At the heart of the development is the reimagined "Mirvish Village Park" – a public space that celebrates local cultural identity, for both the immediate neighborhood and broader community to enjoy.

In 2020, PFS Studio was hired by Westbank Corp. to collaborate with Henriquez

Partners Architects, the City of Toronto, the Mirvish Village Task Force and the community stakeholders to develop the vision for the public park. Through the consultation process, it became clear that the community desired a whimsical green



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Hall. Pavers intricately laid in a radial pattern create a sense of movement and direction. The planting is designed to indulge the senses – swirling swaths of fragrant and colourful perennials, grasses and shrubs create rotating displays of showy blooms throughout all four seasons. Plantings are also strategically placed to enhance the landscape experience – framing and sheltering the garden rooms, allowing for moments of contemplation or gatherings.

#### **“For the Birds”**

A central element of the park is a multi-purpose water feature. The water feature's design pays homage to the iconic Honest Ed's signage, abstractly capturing its sinuous form to create a sculptural representation that both commemorates and evokes the site's historical context.

The water feature vessel serves as an informal bird bath, cleverly referencing Ed Mirvish's renowned slogan, “Honest Ed's is for the birds...cheap, cheap, cheap.”

Coupled with bird-friendly plantings, this garden-like setting forms an urban haven for local bird species. During warmer months, the water surface glistens and reflects as it cascades over the edge of the vessel. Water jets arch into the basin, inviting children to frolic through them, while also enlivening adjacent Markham Street and providing acoustic softening for the garden's ambiance. Intermittently, ground-level misters create ephemeral cloud bursts that dissipate and add a sense of enchantment. Approaching the water vessel, one discovers an inscription within the larger basin that offers a playful nod to the famous “for the birds” slogan. Embodying both artistry and interactivity, the fountain will delight visitors throughout the seasons and provide a unique connection to the site's history.

When Honest Ed's closed its doors, it was without doubt the end of an era for Toronto. While the Honest Ed's site will soon look quite different, PFS Studio's Mirvish Village Park, now under construction, will honour the heritage of the site and the legacy that Ed Mirvish left to the city, evoking the playfulness, laughter and fun he instilled in the lives of his customers every day for many decades to come. **LP**



4 PLANS. 5 WATER FEATURE. 6 GARDEN WALK. 7 SCULPTURAL WATER FEATURE.

7



# INVESTING POSSIBILITIES INTO SPACES

## PECHET STUDIO – ILLUSTRATIONS, ART + PUBLIC SPACES

>FR\_LP+ INTÉGRER DES POSSIBILITÉS SPATIALES

**HUMOUR AND WHIMSY** in design are a way to stop people in their tracks and entice them to linger on a moment or an idea. Bill Pechet, BA, BFA, BArch, of PECHET Studio, based in Vancouver, BC, is known for his whimsical sketches, public art and urban infrastructure projects. In collaboration with other artists and professionals, PECHET Studio has developed designs for playgrounds, plazas, public art, cemeteries, houses, memorials, lighting,

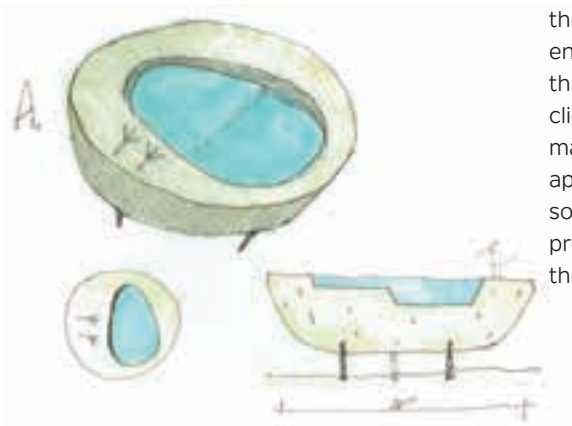
street furnishings, interiors, exhibitions, stage sets, and illustrations. We reached out to Bill with some questions about his inspiration and works.

### LP: Can you describe the role of illustration in your design process?

There is a direct link between my brain and hand drawing that allows me to manifest ideas and iterate options. Sometimes I go on automatic to see what springs forth and so, although it all starts in the brain as a design solution, I try to enjoy the moment of the drawing as a thing in itself. I have also found that my clients really enjoy the drawings (it can make them laugh) and I think that they appreciate that they are not at all generic. I sometimes put portraits of clients into the projects, and they sometimes recognize themselves...I love that!

### LP: What past personal or professional experiences have influenced you to add humour to your work?

I suppose that, ever since I was young, I learned that humour could have a positive effect on human relations, in that it could improve a conversation, bring levity to a relationship and physiologically relax. I used to get into a fair amount of trouble



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at art and architecture school by poking fun at tropes of art and design. I couldn't resist challenging the canons of ideas that governed how things were being made. I worked with Canadian architect Richard Henriquez for a few years and used to marvel at how he concocted fictions for the work to begin design (he is, by the way, a magnificent drawer). Although I don't use his methodologies in my own work, I did appreciate how he invested backstories into his projects.

An example adding a bit of zaniness into a conventional site furnishing is *Infomoji*, a series of sign-stands that reference the forms, colours and materials of industrial elements of the North Vancouver Shipyards. They were also inspired by emojis, with big friendly eyes that beckon the viewer to come and have a

look. They are quizzical and strange, and tremendously visible from a distance.

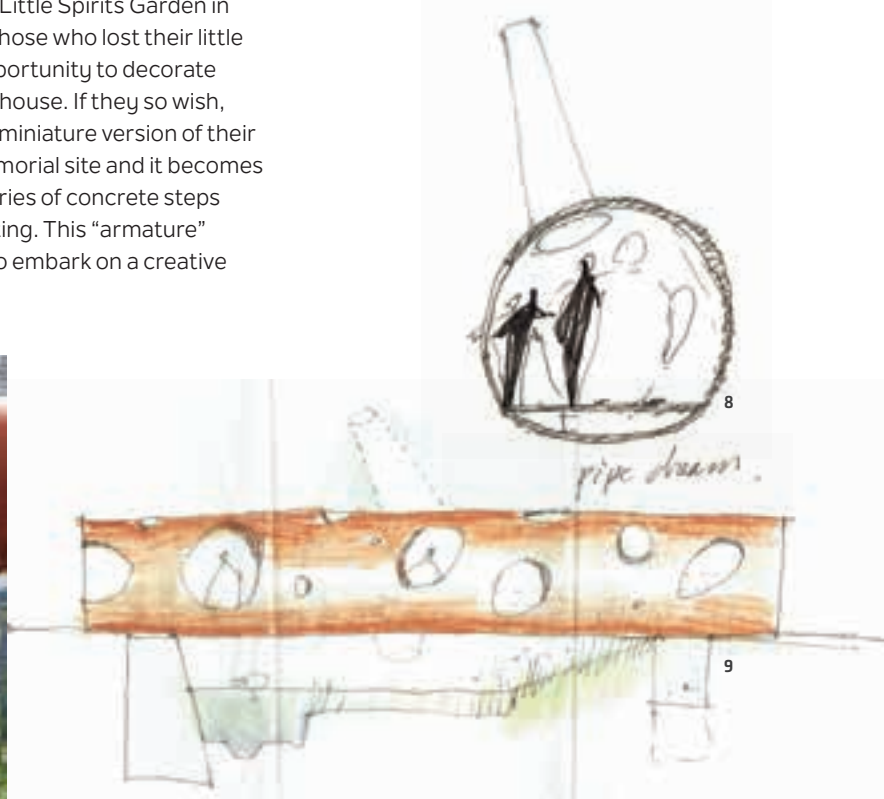
**LP: Your work covers such a broad range of open space types – from spaces for children, to restoration sites, to memorials and cemeteries, to public streetscapes. Are there designs that might be considered whimsical, but not necessarily humorous?**

One the best example of this, and possibly the saddest, is the lost baby memorial and cemetery called Little Spirits Garden in Victoria, where those who lost their little ones have an opportunity to decorate a concrete spirit house. If they so wish, they can bring a miniature version of their house to the memorial site and it becomes anchored to a series of concrete steps in a forested setting. This “armature” exists for them to embark on a creative

act to deal with their sense of deep loss and also gives an opportunity for them to develop their own ritual for the placing of the house. This project is not funny at all but, when one does visit the site, the sum effect of all the little decorated houses arouses associations with many child-like stories, nursery rhymes, Lilliputian villages and such. In this case, the conscious deployment of miniaturization instantly shifts the focus of the mind to a tender sweetness.



7



1 LITTLE HOUSE SKETCH. 2 LITTLE HOUSE PANORAMA. 3,4 LITTLE SPIRITS BIRD BATH. 5 SKETCHES OF INFOMOJI. 6 INFOMOJI IN CONTEXT 7 PONTE BONG. 8+9 EARLY SKETCHES OF PONTE BONG.

PHOTOS 1, 3-6 BILL PECHET 2 BILL PECHET & LORINC VASS  
7 PWL PARTNERSHIP LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS





10, 11

**LP: Your firm bio says “[t]he goal is to expand a space into layers of experience and meaning beyond what is first perceived.” From your experience, how do you think the landscape can hold layers of meaning?**

I think that we all bring a certain set of preconceived associations to a space that are informed by our personal and collective histories. Therefore, it's important to understand that not all people will read and use a space in the same way. This suggests an empathic approach that plays out: at least several scenarios of who will use a space or read an artwork and how they may feel. Of course, we can't provide for all scenarios but at least we can try to play out some of them. So, when thinking about a project, I try to place myself into the heads of many people who could encounter the work. At the same time, it's important to unearth a set of reflections on where the work is located, mining some of the values and conditions that formed the space. These two ideas allow for and anticipate a number of possibilities for the work to simultaneously operate on a number of levels, targeting different kinds of people.

For example, The Watering Garden in Victoria can be read as a pile of goofy fun for a three-year-old, or as a loving, yet somewhat cheeky reference to the storybook tourism of the city. An art historian might see it as a nod to the gigantism of Claes Oldenburg, whereas a garden aficionado might see it as a reflection of the city's amazing cache of public gardens. I think that, because I grew up in a family where consensus was impossible, I learned that there are no absolutes and so a kind of subtle ambiguity is built into each project that allows for layers of meaning.

**LP: What is the common thread between the different types of projects you've designed, and do you find there are similarities in how people interact with their environment in a variety of settings? What drives you to work in these types of environments?**

At my core, I feel that the public needs to have access to spaces that trigger their imagination, encouraging them to play. This is even more important as our cities become denser because, at least on the west coast, we are running out of space and so we need to provide a host of enriching experiences to ameliorate the conditions of smaller residential environments. I try to do this by activating not only their cerebral response, but also their haptic, or sensual, ones. Doing set design with dancers for many years, I witnessed the incredible ways within which they used and delightfully misused the spaces I designed. It was a privilege to see this occur. So, I try to invest possibilities into the spaces and objects that are out there to give permission to anyone to be inventive to the degree they wish. **LP**

**10** PUSHING BUTTONS ACTIVATES THE GIANT CAN AT THE WATERING GARDEN AT BEACON HILL PARK, VICTORIA. **11** EARLY SKETCH OF THE WATERING GARDEN AT BEACON HILL PARK, VICTORIA.

**PHOTOS 10, 11** BILL PECHET





1

LIZ WREFORD + PETER SAMPSON

# FORM FOLLOWS HAPPINESS

&gt;FR\_LP+ LA FORME SUITE LE BONHEUR

**MUCH LIKE THE** structure of a good speech, the design of good public space needs an icebreaker; a hook that draws people in, at any time of day, during any season, to dialogue. And through dialogue, new engagements about place, subject, time, context and people might emerge.

At Public City, we play with ordinary conditions or objects and recast them into the public realm with the purpose of provoking new engagements with place, subject and people. This is what inspires us. We believe play is both a critical territory and an energy for design; it is that space where tension exists between the preconceived condition of the ordinary, and the perceived experience of the extraordinary. As a design methodology applied to landscape architecture, this provokes us to explore new and adaptable opportunities for place-keeping and identity in our seasonal cities.

As a series of projects, High Park, PARK PARK, and FLATPARK infuse design thinking into surface parking spaces that are single-use, homogenous urban voids

that have not maximized their role in the city. Approached with a sense of humour and a bit of cheekiness, these projects bring a broadened view of how parking infrastructure can contribute to the life of a city.

## High Park: Signs as Icebreakers

During the time that we were commissioned to design Calgary's High Park, we found ourselves driving across

the Prairies one weekend. We had pulled alongside a train as it cut the Prairie blue sky from its canola floor. Boxcars and tankers were adorned with graffiti. On one of the boxcars there was a colourful bold message that read, "Happy Birthday, I miss you." This loving message to any someone was just ambling along, waiting to be found without pomp or circumstance. We mused about the author who was behind this gritty analogue social media. It was the height of



2

1,2 HIGH PARK.  
ALL IMAGES COURTESY PUBLIC CITY





3

COVID-19 and we began to think of all those people who were isolated and longing to be with someone, reaching out in whatever way they could. And we fell in love with the idea that heavy infrastructure was this person's carrier pigeon.

We talked about how social media is public space and that we might be able to conceive of High Park as a kind of physical social media site. So, we designed gritty structures to receive loving phrases and vibrant statements of hope and longing and we constructed these on backdrops as virtual postcards. This way, visitors to High Park were offered an opportunity to get up off their lockdown-couches and to venture into public space to reach out to loved ones virtually. And just for fun, we reconstructed standard picnic tables to conform to the 1.8m social distancing rule we had become all too familiar with during the pandemic.

### **PARK PARK: Signs as Activators**

At PARK PARK, the challenge was to transform a surface parking lot in Calgary into a community gathering space but only five of the 35 existing parking spaces could be removed. We knew that we had to find all the space we could to make an impact so we looked at the spaces between cars (the parking lot lines) and wondered how we could make them part of the design. By extruding the parking lines, we were left with walls that gave us enough room to suggest possibilities for activity without designing much infrastructure to actually do them. This made us think of traditional

park signage found in national and provincial parks, which we then fashioned as a trope.

Park signs are typically positive in nature, and they often encourage people to do things. In contrast to the otherwise stern ordinances of municipal signage, park signs encourage positive engagement between person and place. Where to go hiking or camping, where to enjoy a view or where to engage in a communal fire circle. Signs that tell us where to ski, where to swim, where to camp – without always providing much more than that. We turned these types of positive signs into habitable billboards and placed them in a parking lot. We wondered

what those signs would look like in a city and if they could be usable. What are all the activities that could be done in a parking lot? Our suggestions were:

- Hockey (with targets integrated into the sign)
- Basketball (with a hoop)
- Skateboarding (with skateable parking lot curbs)
- Cycling (with a bike pump)
- Resting (with trees to sit under)
- Reading (with a little free library)
- Talking on the phone (with a charging station)
- Eating (with a fold out picnic table)
- Gathering (with a motion activated hand warmer)



4





5

We designed these park sign icons and scattered them around the parking lot between parked cars, allowing the lot to continue to generate parking revenue. The walls around the park were designed to help activate the space and be reflective of their immediate surroundings. A wall of painting garage doors lines the alleyway edge of the park while tall scaffolding defines the urban edges meeting the building heights and allows for signage and lighting to hover over the existing landscaping strips (which could not be disturbed).

PARK PARK aims to nudge visitors to think about a city that is not subjected to the dominance of the car anymore. Instead of parking and leaving your car, you are invited to linger and mingle. Hurry back to your car before the meter runs out, so you have time to shoot some hoops.

#### **FLATPARK: Mini Park, Big Question**

FLATPARK is an 11 square metre (120 square foot) outdoor public living unit the size of a parking space. As private living spaces in Toronto become more restricted and the city continues to densify, there will be increasing pressure on public space. FLATPARK is a question posed (with a



6

wink): how much private and public space for urban living is enough?

True to its name and a cheeky reference to a certain Swedish furniture company, FLATPARK is fabricated off-site, shipped to its address, and installed in under a day. Sheets of welded laser cut steel are unfolded and composed into a bright and fully-furnished urban living unit on the street. Objects and common curiosities are cut-out and display a future of tiny living, especially as it relates to the size of a car.

One such FLATPARK, shown above, was fabricated in Winnipeg, MB, then transported by truck 2000 kilometres to Toronto, ON. The temporary installation,

located on the new King Street Transit Priority Corridor, was completed in under an hour, allowing the streetcars to maintain regular schedules.

Each of these projects illustrates an approach to the public realm as space for optimism and humour: a place where dialogue is unscripted and open. Where engagement crosses definitions and identity, cultures and demographics, it promises new and evolving forms of shared language. The power of play binds people together and so, in our work, form follows happiness. **LP**

**3, 4 PARKPARK. 5 FLATPARK INSTALLATION IN TORONTO. 6 FLATPARK IN MOTION.**



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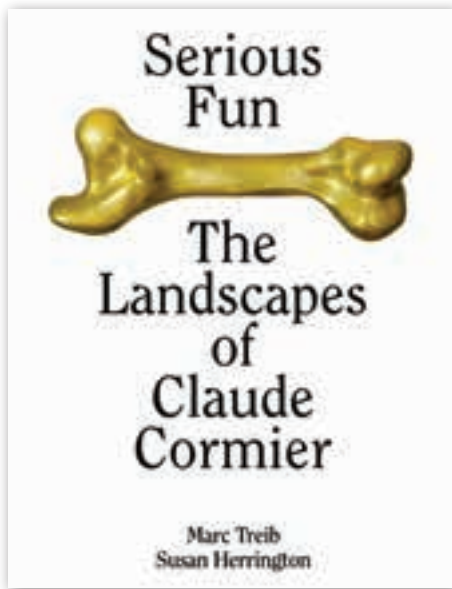
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**Serious Fun: The Landscapes of Claude Cormier**  
ORO Editions, 2021  
ISBN: 978-1-954081-01-7

## CAST IRON DOGS, PINK UMBRELLAS, AND THE HISTORY OF ART

In *Serious Fun*, authors Marc Treib and Susan Harrington celebrate the depth and mirth of Claude Cormier's oeuvre.

REVIEWED BY TIM EDWARDS

**WHEN PLANNING THIS** edition of *Landscapes* | *Paysages* close to a year ago, it was obvious that our Wink! issue – highlighting humour and playfulness in our profession – would be the perfect place to review CCxA's monograph. The work of Claude Cormier and his firm has used levity to a degree rarely seen in contemporary landscape architecture; and rather than dealing in kitsch and novelty, CCxA has produced landscapes of depth and function. Amidst this edition and this review's focus on playfulness, however, the news of Cormier's passing weighs heavy. There is a solemnity now in reading the book reviewed here, which brings Cormier's personal and professional story to vivid life in two essays by its authors.

CCxA has been a puckish presence in landscape architecture. While many excellent practitioners bring classical details into their projects, CCxA places a Victorian fountain in downtown Toronto and surrounds it with cast iron dogs – some hand-designed, some enlarged replicas of toys, all treated as serious modern sculpture in detail and finish – in near-worship of a golden bone at its top tier. As the book recounts, the Berczy Park design was rejected by some at the City for being frivolous, upon which CCxA prepared a presentation with hundreds of illustrations that demonstrated the canine's place in art history, and its worthiness of such attention. CCxA won the day (as it had, also recounted in the book, when City players balked at Cormier's proposed pink umbrellas at Sugar Beach; a photo of Jackie Kennedy in pink helped shift perception of the colour from low-brow to high class).

While that was the park in inception, the park in execution reveals its true value. As

Treib writes of the fountain, "It is without question a pleasant feature: its constituent elements are magnetic, appealing to people of all ages who are drawn to the dogs and their waters as if by some invisible yet magnetic force. As they pass by, or stop and gaze upon the tiers of canines, virtually everyone smiles; some even laugh out loud. Of all the visitor groups, however, it is the children who seem to experience the greatest enjoyment, as in their eyes the edge between reality and its representation appears soft and indistinct." At Berczy Park, CCxA has created a productive landscape, generating something at once ethereal and plain to see: Joy.

The first half of the book, Treib's essay, examines the context in history for Cormier's work, its wispy place between high and low culture, and the philosophies – both artistic and commercial – that guide it. "Beneath the smile always lies amenity," Treib writes, "and beneath the amenity lies a respect for the context, whether social, environmental, urban, or more natural. These are responsible landscapes first, and humor-inducing sites second. Yes, dogs, and cats, and flowers – and even pink umbrellas and dancing waters – can be fun, but the design thinking behind them is quite serious."

Treib asks in his essay whether these landscapes are necessary – and answers with a resounding Yes. His co-author, Susan Harrington, furthers this Yes. "Not all gardens and landscapes must hold meaning, but Cormier's surely do," she writes. "At times they yell, 'Hey, look at me,' like the Lipstick Forest and Pink Balls. At other times they offer only a quiet hint, such as the place d'Armes and Dorchester Square – but they always have something to say, and this is an important facet of their beauty."







2

**“Not all gardens and landscapes must hold meaning, but Cormier’s surely do...”**

Beauty, as Harrington recounts, is an almost awkward concept in today’s landscape architecture, and the art world at large. Philosopher Alexander Nehamas called it “intellectually embarrassing.” As practitioners in our field increasingly

ponder our responsibility for things like climate change mitigation, biodiversity and ecological services, and societal equity, beauty as a focus may seem at best a secondary element. Harrington helps see the value of beauty among all this, as a force that can interrupt our thoughts and pull us outside ourselves to change our perspective.

*Serious Fun* embodies its title. It is at once a collection of erudite treatises on art and a humorous, behind-the-scenes account of CCxA’s work. It profiles Cormier’s projects, going into some technical detail, laying out challenges and how these were overcome by the design team. To read it, and to experience CCxA’s work in person, leaves one thankful for the dedication of Cormier and his team to the pursuit of joy and beauty. May Cormier’s work, and the memory of him, remind more practitioners and their clients that joy and beauty are worthy aims in and of themselves. **LP**



3

**1,2** BERCHY PARK, TORONTO. **3** TORONTONIANS RESTING UNDER THE PINK UMBRELLAS OF SUGAR BEACH, 2021  
**PHOTOS** 1 CC&A 2 INDUSTRIOUS PHOTOGRAPHY  
**3** VADIM RODNEV/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



## THE HONEYWOOD BOOKS – A CONVERSATION

In which a 50-year-old and a 70-year-old discuss a couple of 100-year-old books using 30-year-old technology.

RYAN WAKSHINSKI + ALAN TATE

*THESE DRYLY HILARIOUS* books provide a great “reality check” for practitioners old and new on the world of design and construction and the process of getting something built from start to finish.

**RW:** Good day Alan! On your recommendation, I recently finished reading *The Honeywood File* (1929) and its sequel, the *Honeywood Settlement* (1930) by HB Creswell. Please tell me how you first encountered these delightful books!

**AT:** They were recommended texts when I was a student in landscape architecture, and I read *The Honeywood File* again as part of my preparation for the (at that time oral) Institute of Landscape Architects Part 4 examination. And I remember them having shed more light on the opaque world of construction contracts – particularly the roles of the principal parties – than anything else I read or heard at that time.

**RW:** It has an interesting approach to telling the story, doesn't it?

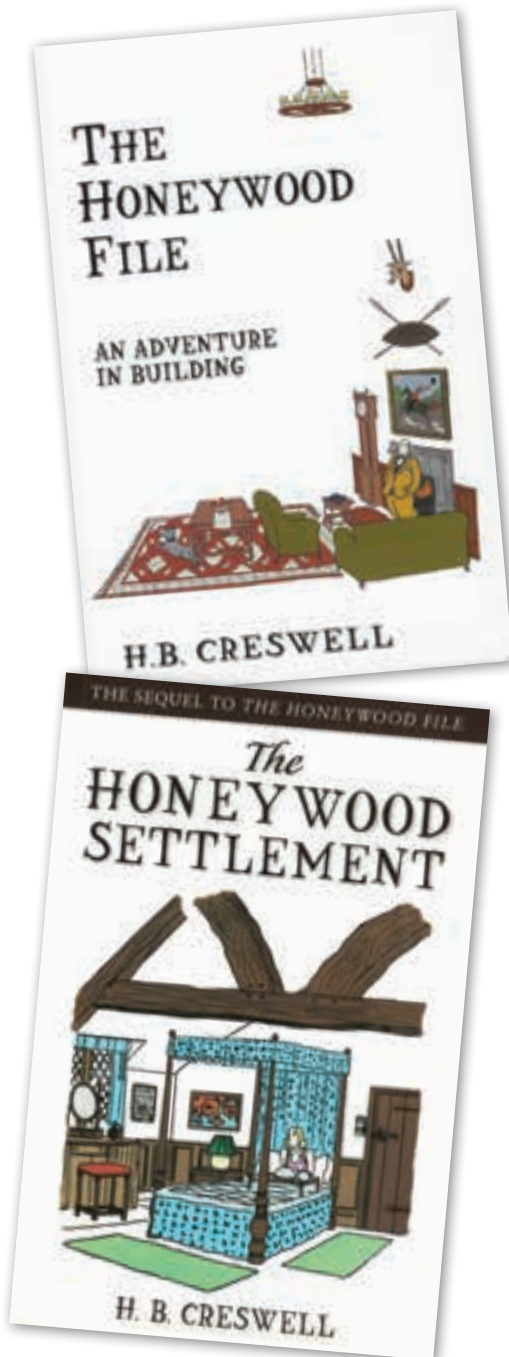
**AT:** It certainly does. It is presented as an architect's file with the correspondence about the project organized chronologically from the beginning of the project onward. The fictional letters are interspersed with wry observations from the author, H. B. Creswell, RIBA (1869-1960).

**RW:** Right, he was an architect. Do you know anything else about him?

**AT:** Not a great deal beyond the entry for him on Wikipedia – which notes that his career included being articled to Aston Webb (designer of the current Neo-classical facade of Buckingham Palace), having designed a turbine factory in Flint, North Wales, and having written (other) novels and two children's books. Apparently he also contributed to architectural journals and to *Punch* – all of which suggests that he had both extensive knowledge (particularly of the building industry) and a fine sense of humour.

**RW:** It's a situational humour, isn't it? Dramatic irony?

**AT:** Yes, I suppose it could be described as situation (or situational) comedy – but not in the same way as, say, “Friends” or “Schitt's Creek.” Its principal purpose is to educate (albeit with wry humour) rather than simply to amuse the reader. And humour is an important device for education – it relaxes people and relaxed people are generally more receptive.



**The Honeywood File:**  
An Adventure in Building (1929)  
**The Honeywood Settlement** (1930)  
H.B. Creswell  
Academy Chicago Publishers  
(2005 Republishing)



**RW:** I feel like the reader can see the mistakes being made by the young architect but is powerless to help. He has to “muddle through”...

**AT:** True! It is very much a series of lessons in how to put into practice the principles learned as a trainee – lessons in how designers should communicate with the two main parties with whom they work; their clients and the contractors who agree to implement their work.

**RW:** What are the key lessons learned? Top 3, 5? More?

**AT:** 1: Clients – you need them ... but they’re not always right.  
2: And contractors aren’t always wrong. Establish a good relationship with them from the outset and they just might look after your interests (as well as their own).  
3: Don’t be frightened of the fact that you don’t know everything ... and don’t be afraid to say, “I don’t know – but I’ll get back to you.”  
4: Seek the advice of people with experience of issues that you have not encountered before.  
5: Keep organised records of ALL communications ...

**RW:** It’s an old book, but the lessons are timeless. Is there anything specific to landscape architecture?

**AT:** The answer to that question is probably “no” ... but “yes.” “No” in that there are no direct references to landscape architecture but “yes” in that there are many issues that arise that might have been less problematic if the architect, James Spinlove, had worked with a landscape architect. These issues include drainage of a steep-sided site (avoiding leaving trial pits open – leading to the horse of the daughter of Leslie Brash, the owner, breaking its leg), views out to a nearby chimney stack, design of the garden terrace and, of course, design of the entrance driveway to Honeywood Grange – of which no mention is made. But the events that Spinlove experienced are certainly relevant – still – for emerging (and for established) landscape architects.

**RW:** Indeed, this particular “pig” would have benefitted from a bit more than “parsley” around it! Is the architect the main source of trouble, or does the client create a lot of the problems?

**AT:** Like most projects, there is more than one person causing problems. Brash, the client, lives up (or down?) to his name. Spinlove, the architect, is a somewhat naïve. Potch, the District Surveyor, and local builders Nibnose and Rasper, are troublemakers. But Grigblay, the worldly-wise general contractor is the most commendable character and resolves most of the problems that the other parties cause.

**RW:** But it all comes good at the end of the warranty period in the *Honeywood Settlement*?

**AT:** ... and beyond that!

**RW:** Without giving too much away! ;-) Thanks Alan! LP

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**Alan Tate, PhD, PPLI, FCSLA**, is a Fellow and Past President of the United Kingdom Landscape Institute and a Fellow of the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects. He has a PhD in Architecture from Edinburgh College of Art. Tate is a Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Manitoba where he was Head of Department for twelve years between 2000 and 2019. His teaching includes the graduate course in professional practice, in which he will be issuing an assignment on the Honeywood File in the Fall 2023 Semester.

**Ryan Wakshinski, MALA, CSLA**, Landscape Architect with Manitoba Parks, studied under Professor Tate from 1998 – 2002 and is currently the head of the Landscapes|Paysage Editorial Board. Please indulge him this review.





## CAROLYN WOODLAND – MENTOR, ROLE MODEL, FOREVER FRIEND

EHA NAYLOR

**CAROLYN HAS BEEN** the most influential person in my professional career. Our relationship spans over four decades and began when she interviewed and hired me into my first job at Hough Stansbury and Associates. Actually, we had met much earlier because we attended the same high school. We shared a love of art and in the high school art studio, I admired a series of beautiful watercolour landscapes that Carolyn painted. I was just a grade 9er and she was an accomplished artist in grade 12 who would be soon heading off to university.

It was five years later when I was accepted into the landscape architecture program at the University of Toronto that I again admired Carolyn's work. Her fourth year thesis was on display in the gallery in the school, and I recognized the artistry in the drawings and was again in awe.

From the early years, the partners of Hough Stansbury Woodland were pioneers of ecological urban design, demonstrating "design with nature principles." The firm advocated a radical shift in how city landscapes are designed, embedding ecological thinking into their work and attracting graduate landscape architects who were interested in exploring those principles. As a mentor, she worked with numerous landscape architects, to infuse design process within an ecological frameworks. She insisted that the site and its underlying natural systems informed how the design evolved.

The firm evolved (later Hough Woodland Naylor Dance Leinster) but remained a testing ground for embedding ecological principles in Canada and internationally. During her final decade with the firm, with Carolyn at the helm (President, 1992-2002), the company's work continued to exhibit the elegant intersection of ecology and urban environments. Increasingly, these principles were adopted by the City of Toronto and its major waterfront agencies.

She has been a role model and leader during her four-decade-long career. She has a talent for pushing professional boundaries and mentoring future generations of landscape architects and environmental planners to infuse design into restoration projects. When she joined the Toronto & Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) as senior director with the TRCA (2002-2019), she oversaw environmental planning within 18 municipalities. She initiated the Toronto Ravine Strategy, participated in the important 2015 Coordinated Land Use Planning Review (led by David Crombie), and she directed the production of the award-winning "Living City Policies for Planning and Development in the Watersheds of TRCA," which took these foundational ecological design principles to a new level. Her outstanding work was increasingly recognized with awards of excellence, including prestigious professional recognition from both the OPPI and the OALA (Public Practice, 2018 and Pinnacle, 2019).

After leaving the TRCA, Carolyn (OALA, FCSLA, MCIP, RPP) added to her volunteer legacy by serving as CSLA President (2021 – 2022). She is a respected facilitator, advisor, competition adjudicator and spokesperson, and a tireless advocate for the profession, working to build its political voice.

She has been my friend for over 40 years, we have shared many birthdays (our sons were born on the same day, in the same year), and she's my oldest son's godmother. She has two wonderful now adult children, Megan and Gregory who enjoy (almost always) their mom's wisdom and guidance.

I can't say that there is a single quote, nor is there a "moment or specific event" that is outstanding. Carolyn's strength and influence comes from her persuasiveness, and leading by example. **LP**

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**Eha Naylor, OALA, FCSLA**, has over 40 years of experience in landscape architecture and community planning. She has been a leader in Dillon Consulting's national landscape architecture and community planning service lines for the past 10 years. She has earned numerous awards recognizing her expertise in environmental and site design for both public and private sectors. Eha is the current president of the Landscape Architecture Canada Foundation.

PHOTO VINCENT ASSELIN



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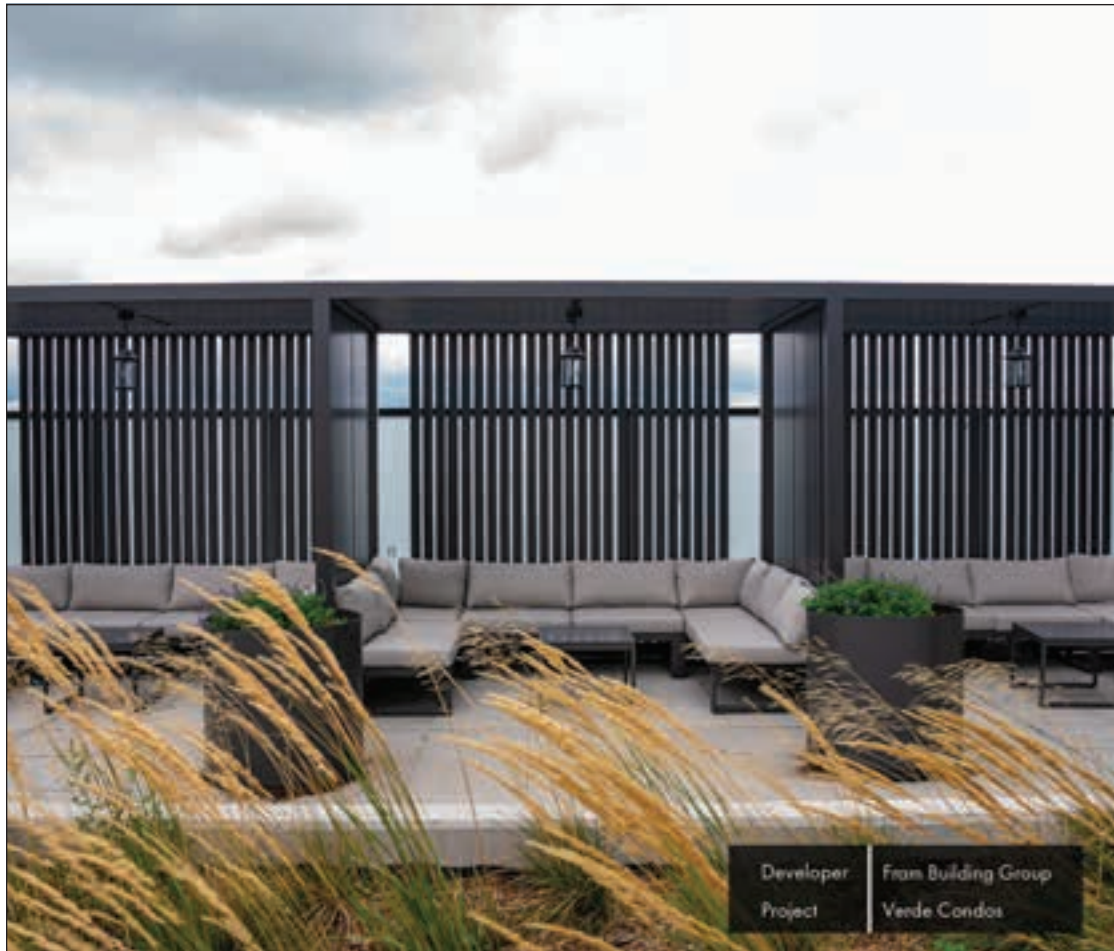
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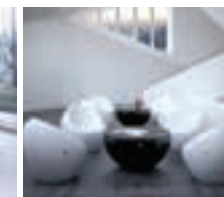
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# MY DEAR CLAUDE

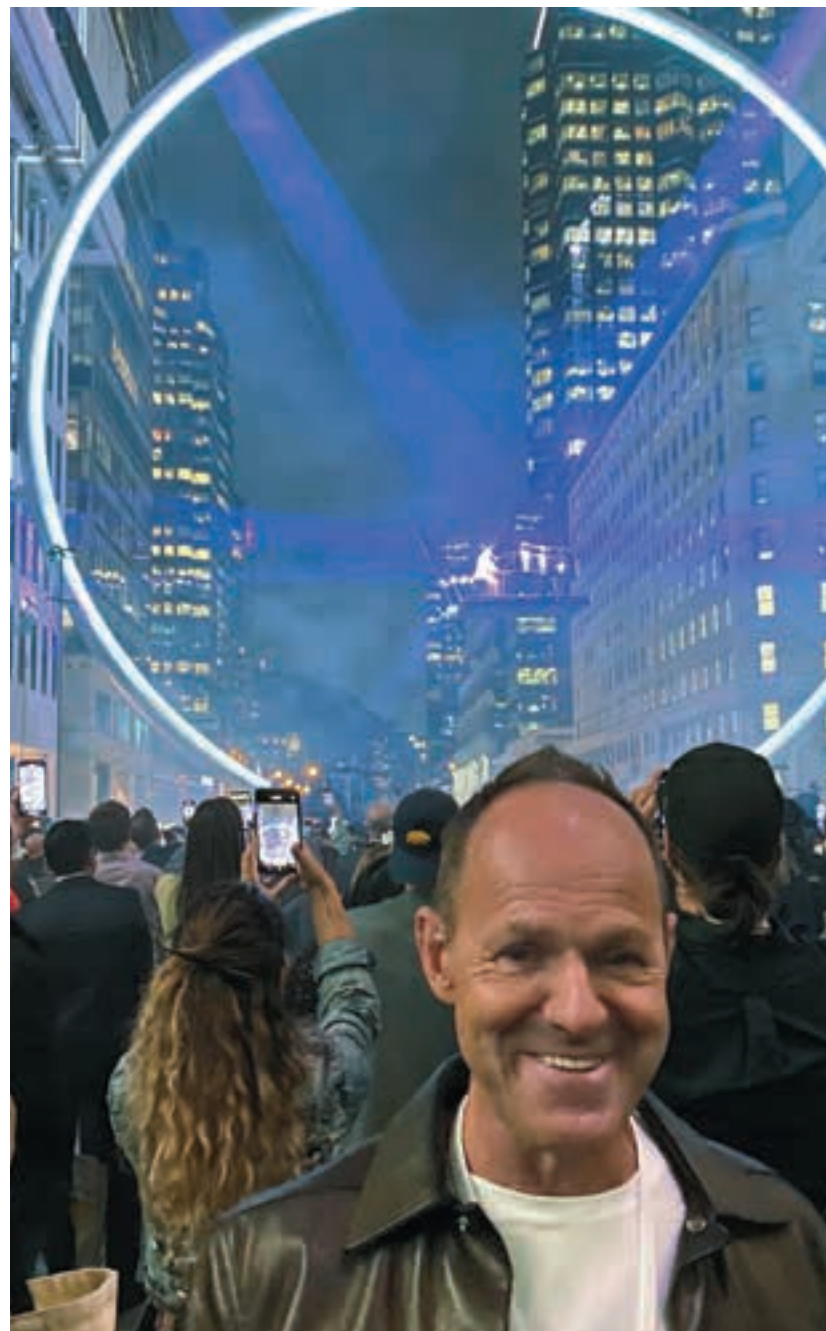
JONATHAN CHA

**CLAUDE CORMIER (1960 – 2023)** leaves an entire profession in mourning. His most recent marquee projects, The Ring in Montreal and Love Park in Toronto, can be appreciated as the final legacy of his work – as gifts to the two cities he called home. By reflecting the maturity of his practice, they make a spectacular cap to his career. They embody his love of landscape architecture, cities, public spaces and the people who live in and experience them every day.

Claude made a profound impression on me and left an indelible mark on my career. We first met at a colloquium, “Existence and Experience In Contemporary Garden Design,” held in 2005 at the Dumbarton Oaks estate in Washington, D.C. I will always remember our stroll through the gardens created by Beatrix Farrand. At the precise moment when we walked under the famous wisteria arbour, I witnessed Claude’s avid gaze and creative spark as he absorbed the chromatic, spatial, typological and experiential qualities that would become, most notably, the inspiration for the following year’s Pergola project (Le Havre). Then, in 2006, as I was just starting out in the profession, Claude generously agreed to make me guest editor of *ARQ Architecture-Québec* for a “Profiles” issue exploring his career and unique approach to landscape. Claude opened the doors of his world to me so that I could immerse myself in his culture and projects. The relationship continued in subsequent years with various editorial projects and the redevelopment of Dorchester Square in Montreal. Hours of discussion on the phone, in the office and at his home drew me into a full communion with his vision, ideas and personality – everything, as one.

All our meetings were at once serious, joyful and profound. We had real chemistry and a special connection from the very start. Claude put his trust in me and assigned projects that were both stimulating and stressful: my mission was to convey in writing the boldness, sensitivity, emotion and conceptual complexity of this man blessed with an unparalleled ability to talk about his work, persuading his listeners with clear proof of his ideas’ solid foundations. I always felt enormously privileged, and duty-bound not to disappoint. I had to be worthy of his trust in my ability to express his creative power with suitable eloquence. These writings are unquestionably the most inspiring of my career; they gave me more intellectual satisfaction than any others because I had fully embraced his philosophy, position and aspirations not only for redefining the limits of landscape paradigms but for renewing them. The end result: well-considered, joyful public spaces that make sense, that are beneficial and that people like.

Among my final encounters with Claude, I am particularly moved by the unique and poignant moment when my wide-eyed, six-year-old son met the artist who had created his favourite work in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, *Peluches* (Stuffed Animals). I am grateful to have been able to collaborate with Claude one last time on the iconic Ring at Place Ville Marie, to put this love letter to Montreal into words, to see it being installed under his watchful and amazed eye, and to appear at his side in the documentary *Montréal : vues du cœur*. A week before



he died, Claude informed me of his diagnosis. He was stoic, but still found a way to deliver the news with humour, telling me he was like an “all-dressed pizza.” I will deeply miss his laughter, his body language, his humanity, his presence, his openness and his creative genius, as will everyone who worked with him or who experiences his works, through which his memory will live on. Your funeral lived up to your originality, your artistic spirit and your great generosity. By leaving us with the unexpected song, Queen’s “We Are The Champions,” you surprised us, moved us and passed along the torch with panache. Dear Claude, our great unifier, I salute and honour you one last time.

I love you, Claude. **LP**



**Jonathan Cha, PhD, AAPQ, CSLA**, has a doctorate in spatial planning and urbanism, urbanology and landscape architecture. He has expertise in public spaces and urban heritage and holds the position of team leader in development and conservation at Parc Jean-Drapeau in Montreal.



# MON CHER CLAUDE

JONATHAN CHA

**CLAUDE CORMIER (1960-2023)** laisse dans le deuil toute une profession. Ses deux derniers projets phares, l'Anneau de Montréal et le Love Park de Toronto, peuvent être appréciés comme des legs ultimes de son œuvre, comme des cadeaux à ses deux villes d'adoption. Ils sont l'aboutissement de sa carrière, le reflet de la maturité de sa pratique, de son amour de l'architecture de paysage, de la ville, de l'espace public, de ceux qui l'habitent et la vivent au quotidien.

Claude m'a marqué profondément et a laissé une empreinte indélébile sur ma carrière professionnelle. Notre première rencontre a eu lieu à l'occasion du colloque « Existence and Experience In Contemporary Garden Design » à Dumbarton Oaks, à Washington en 2005. Je me souviendrai toujours de notre promenade dans les jardins créés par Beatrix Farrand et de notre passage sous la célèbre tonnelle de glycines. À ce moment précis, j'ai été témoin du regard avide de sensation et de l'instinct créatif de Claude qui emmagasinait les qualités chromatique, spatiale, typologique, d'expérience qui deviendraient notamment une inspiration pour le projet Pergola (Le Havre) réalisé l'année suivante. Puis, en 2006, alors j'étais novice dans la profession, Claude a généreusement accepté que je sois rédacteur en chef d'un numéro « Profil » de la revue *ARQ Architecture-Québec* portant sur son parcours et son approche singulière du paysage. Claude m'a alors ouvert les portes de son univers pour que je m'imprègne de sa culture et de ses projets. Cette relation s'est poursuivie dans les années suivantes dans divers projets de rédaction et le projet de réaménagement du square Dorchester. Des heures de discussion au téléphone, au bureau et chez lui m'ont permis d'entrer en réelle communion avec sa vision, ses idées, sa personnalité, de faire un.

Toutes nos rencontres étaient à la fois sérieuses, joyeuses et profondes et une chimie et une connexion particulières nous ont liées dès le premier instant. Claude m'a donné sa confiance et confié des mandats à la fois stimulants et stressants, soit d'être sa plume, de transfuser son audace, sa sensibilité, son émotion et sa complexité conceptuelle à l'écrit, lui qui n'avait pas d'égal à l'oral pour convaincre et démontrer le bien-fondé de ses propositions.



J'ai toujours ressenti un immense privilège et un devoir de ne pas le décevoir et d'être à la hauteur de sa confiance pour exprimer avec finesse sa force créative. Ces écritures, assurément les plus inspirantes de ma carrière, sont celles m'ayant apporté le plus de bonheur intellectuel parce que j'adhérais entièrement à sa philosophie, sa posture, ses aspirations quant à la redéfinition des limites et au renouvellement des paradigmes paysagers. La résultante : des espaces publics réfléchis plein de gaieté qui font sens, qui font du bien et qui sont aimés par les gens.

Parmi les derniers moments passés avec Claude, notons cette rencontre inédite et émotive entre lui et mon fils de 6 ans alors que celui-ci découvrait les yeux tout écarquillés l'artiste de *Peluches*, son œuvre préférée du Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal. Je suis reconnaissant d'avoir pu collaborer une dernière fois avec Claude sur le projet emblématique de l'Anneau de Place Ville Marie, de mettre en mots cette lettre d'amour aux Montréalais, d'assister à son installation sous son regard attentif et émerveillé et d'apparaître à ses côtés dans le documentaire *Montréal : vues du cœur*. Une semaine avant son décès, Claude m'annonçait son diagnostic avec résilience et trouvait encore le moyen de le faire avec humour en me disant qu'il était comme une pizza *all dressed*. Ses éclats de rire, sa gestuelle, son humanité, sa proximité, son ouverture, son génie créateur vont me manquer terriblement, tous comme à ceux qui l'ont côtoyé ou qui expérimentent ses œuvres à travers lesquelles sa mémoire survivra. Tes funérailles auront été à la hauteur de ton originalité, de ton esprit artistique et de ta grande générosité. En nous laissant sur la chanson inattendue *We Are The Champions* de Queen, tu nous as surpris, ému et passé le flambeau avec panache. À nous de le porter bien haut. Grand rassembleur, je te salue et t'honore une dernière fois.

Je t'aime Claude. LP

**Jonathan Cha, PhD, AAPQ, AAPC**, est docteur en aménagement de l'espace et urbanisme, urbanologue et architecte paysagiste. Il détient une expertise en matière d'espaces publics et de patrimoine urbain. Il occupe le poste de chef d'équipe en aménagement et conservation au parc Jean-Drapeau à Montréal.





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