

5

YEARS LATER

drar
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vlan



1 VLAN PAYSAGES : WETLAND 2 NIPPAYSAGE IN 2007 / ÉCOLE GADBOIS / MONTRÉAL / 2000M2 / ASPHALTE, PEINTURE, MODULE DE JEU, MOBILIER, PRUNIER, FÉVIER, ARBUSTES DIVERS 3 ESPACE DRAR : FLORA MONTREAL
PHOTO 1 GABRIEL JONES 2 NIPPAYSAGE 3 ©FLORAMTL

5

YEARS LATER



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in full bloom

IN THE WINTER of 2005, LP dedicated an issue to the 40th anniversary of the AAPQ. Espace Drar, Nip Paysage and *vlan paysages* were featured prominently — three exciting « emerging firms » which were rapidly forging a unique identity and carving out a creative space in the province, and beyond (LP7:1). Each office has matured differently but in all three instances, the same passion that made them noteworthy five years ago is still burning today. Granted — they are a little older — and perhaps a touch wiser. They invite you to join the conversation as the next half decade takes shape.

drar

ESPACE DRAR 5 YEARS LATER PATRICIA LUSSIER, AAPQ

It has already been five years since our last update. I feel as though an eternity has gone by, because the time spent working on competitions, in order to master the practical aspects of the profession, stimulate our thought, and push the creative envelope, has coalesced into confidence and experience. For nearly 15 years now, I have been satisfying my thirst for professional fulfillment with a wide variety of projects. In recent years I have had the opportunity to take on some interesting challenges that allowed me to achieve even greater satisfaction. These included an international landscape architecture festival, Flora Montreal; an interior landscaping project called Forestarea in the federal government's Terrasses De la Chaudière complex in Gatineau; the restoration of the Jamaica Pavilion from Expo 67 in Montreal's Parc Jean-Drapeau; and, more recently, the redesign of outdoor spaces at a Montreal housing project, the Complexe d'Habitations Rosemont. There is a certain beauty in completing a landscape architecture contract rather than entering a competition: a contract brings tangible recognition of accomplishments that express our daily work and thought.

However, after more than ten years running Espace drar—landing contracts, managing teams, executing projects—it seems useful to take a step back. When I look at the screen and see my ideas, struggles to get ahead, and efforts to build a tight multidisciplinary team, one inevitable question arises and nags at me: "Can I really make a difference in the world of landscape architecture, from my base in a company stretched to the limit, grappling with fundamental existential questions?" If I sound disillusioned, rest assured that I am not. I am simply full of desire and motivation to try to find our place and drive our business forward.

There was a time when the slate was clean, and our role was to invent, think, and organize, then to build a garden, park, or landscape. But the landscape architect's role has changed. We are now more involved in reinventing, rethinking, renewing, and repairing the landscape. All of those activities are grounded in a moral and environmental conscience, for the benefit of future generations. In my view, the Highline project in New York City (www.thehighline.org) is a prime example of this inspiring new era we are entering. Those contemporary projects that respect the remains of the past, while melding different eras, reaffirm the importance of



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the landscape architect's role in the creation of iconic and coherent places in our cities. We have a duty to avoid taking the path of least resistance.

I therefore believe that today's landscape architects deserve a much higher profile and greater recognition. For just over a year, I have taken new paths in search of the avant-garde creators of astonishing spaces all over the world. I am in close contact with energetic people who are creating completely novel spaces. Of course, this has allowed me to renew my own approach, and infuse my projects with a global consciousness by focusing on the forest rather than the trees. The world of landscape architecture, in Quebec and everywhere else in the world, is brimming with talented, creative people deserving of recognition and admiration. That is why I am now trying to channel my energies—formerly devoted to earning prestige through competitions—into engagement with ideas and talent, with the aim of fostering productive exchanges and the spread of ideas. Are we up to the challenge?

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nip NIP PAYSAGE 5 YEARS LATER PAUSE/REWIND/PLAY/FASTFORWARD/STOP MATHIEU CASAVANT, AAPQ

PAUSE

Over the course of ten years in business, our firm has earned a certain reputation that makes our everyday operations easier, and helps us keep our order book filled with exciting, often unusual, projects. The firm's relative maturity has allowed us to refocus our efforts on major projects.

Today, people recognize the NIPPAYSAGE approach and actively seek it out. Our vision has allowed us to carve out a place for ourselves. We deliberately do

not confine ourselves to a single "niche," preferring a "no-formula" approach that engages people and fits with a playful, plural definition of contemporary landscape architecture. Our multidisciplinary collaborations throughout that last decade have also made a significant contribution to projects by invoking a dynamic, integrated design process and by bringing different perspectives, skills, and knowledge bases to the table.

REWIND

Five years is a very short time in the life of a company. Nevertheless, the last five years have seen a whirlwind transformation of our small shop. We have completed dozens of projects, added new team members (growing from four to nine people), established productive new partnerships, produced numerous publications, and so on. Above all, these last few years have allowed NIPPAYSAGE to perfect and disseminate its distinctive approach to landscape architecture in a critical yet forward-looking mode.

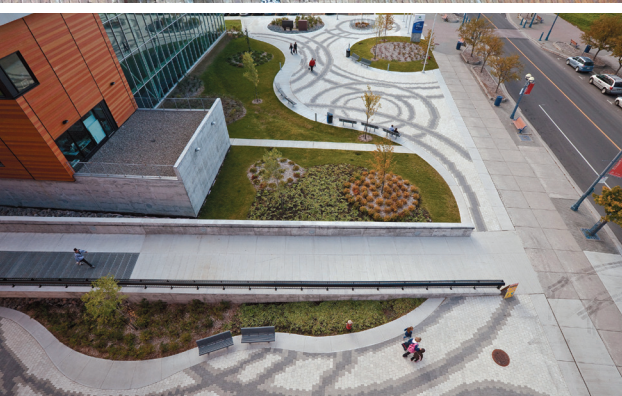
PLAY

NIPPAYSAGE advocates spontaneous exploration of the unifying potential of landscape architecture projects in their many forms. The firm has always made a point of taking on widely varied projects, from the scale of the individual object to the city and region. This range of scales contributes to the diversity of the firm's approaches and guarantees that we have an "anti-routine" approach. Our explorations and reflections for micro-scale projects feed back into our work on macro-scale ones. The small serves the big, and vice versa.

The firm has developed an experiential practice, incorporating deliberately ephemeral narrative threads. This instinctive approach rapidly found expression as a language of shapes, materials, and functions that has left its mark on projects and their scale. Landscape features and playing fields (created shortly after the firm's founding) gave rise to a colourful iconography that remains remarkable to this day. For a long time, NIPPAYSAGE's work has been described as "playful." If that is so, a definition of a playful, pleasure-centred approach emerged gradually:

- Visual and sensory pleasure: destabilize the gaze and physical experience of people using a site, making them active contributors to its definition. Explore →

1 PAVILLON DE LA JAMAÏQUE 2+4 ZONE BOISÉE AGORA
3 FLORE MONTRÉAL 5 NIP EN 2005 / PAUSE / MONTRÉAL /
100M2 / PLANCHES DE PIN, PEINTURE TURQUOISE
PHOTO 1 ©FRÉDÉRIC SAIA 2+4 ©GERRY KOPELON 3 ©FLORAMTL
5 AGENCY STOCK PHOTO



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and reshape the conventional relationship with space and provide unexpected formal expressions. Spark the imagination and challenge the user.

- Pleasure in materials: use uncommon materials and combinations of materials, explore the range of tactile sensations, from synthetics to raw materials, used out of their usual context and in contrast with one another;
- Pleasure in reinterpretation: question uses, processes, and shapes, thus leaving the space open to multiple readings and appropriation by the public. The act of reinterpretation invites questioning, surprise and, ultimately, the sharing of individual and group experiences.
- The pleasure of experiences: offer reasons to appropriate the space (as a social act), to take pleasure in seeing the landscape in new ways, often with a slight disconnect (like a poetic moment), and to question the shape of the landscape and everyday habits. Be open to the full range of emotions, reinvent the urban experience, integrate with a continuously renewed living environment.

FAST-FORWARD

NIPPAYSAGE was born of a rethinking of the profession, of the desire to innovate in the face of relative uncertainty. Today, we look to the future with enthusiasm and openness. In 2010, 50% of our work was devoted to projects outside Canada, allowing us to take advantage of the opening up of practices and widespread enthusiasm for landscape architecture. The landscape architect's work now readily incorporates environmental, technical, and artistic concerns.

While our practice is breaking out of traditional theoretical and territorial boundaries, NIPPAYSAGE continues to work to promote the profession's potential as a unifying force. Thanks to proposals that put each creation's enthusiasm and legibility front and centre, the firm tries to demystify the role of a profession whose raison d'être is still unclear in the public mind.

When it comes to major projects, the landscape architect remains in a privileged position, the hub for all other participants, the integrator and catalyst for the systems that comprise a living environment: public spaces, infrastructure, road networks, ecosystems, architecture, urban plans, and so on. In that context—one in which NIPPAYSAGE's projects are increasingly ambitious—the vision and approach must adapt to new scales, new cultures, and new realities. All of which helps keep the team at the top of its game.

STOP

Next update: 2015.

 www.nippaysage.ca

1 NIP IN 2006 / UNITY : DANSE EN LIGNE / MONTRÉAL / 600M2 / 2X4 ET 2X6 DE CÈDRE, STRUCTURES D'ACIER, GRILLAGE MÉTALLIQUE, GALETS DE RIVIÈRE, AMÉLANCHIERS, ARBUSTES DIVERS, ÉCLAIRAGE **2** 2009 / CENTRE SPORTIF DE GATINEAU / GATINEAU / 22 000M2 / BUTTE DE TERRES D'EXCAVATION, BASSINS DE RÉTENTION PLANTÉS, SENTIERS, ROCHERS, ESCALIERS DE PRUCHE, TROTTOIRS DE BÉTON, PAVÉ-UNIS, MOBILIER, SCULPTURE, ARBRES, ARBUSTES, GRAMINÉES, COUVRE-SOL, GAZON, ÉCLAIRAGE **3** 2008 / QUÉBEC 2008 SENTIER BATTU / QUÉBEC / 150M2 / BON MENUISIER, RONDINS D'ÉPINETTE, PLANTES MÉDICINALES, STRUCTURE MÉTALLIQUE, ÉCLAIRAGE **4** 2010 / M3M GOLF ESTATE / GURGAON / INDE / 300 000M2 / PLACES PUBLIQUES, PLACES D'ENTRÉES, PROMENADES, 10 000 HABITANTS, JARDINS PROGRAMMÉS, RUES, ARBRES, ARBUSTES, GAZON, AIRES DE JEUX, FONTAINES, DÉBARCADÈRES, TROTTOIRS, ÉCLAIRAGE, PISCINES, TERRAINS SPORTIFS, TERRASSES, TOITURES VERTES, PISTES DE COURSE. EN CHANTIER
PHOTOS 1 NIPPAYSAGE 2 MICHEL BRUNELLE 3 JACQUES BOURDAGE 4 ARCOP/NIPPAYSAGE



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vlan

VLAN PAYSAGES 5 YEARS LATER

JULIE ST-ARNAULT, AAPQ + MICHELINE CLOUARD, AAPQ

Micheline Clouard and Julie St-Arnauld founded *vlan paysages* in 1999 and quickly dove into several projects: the Jardins de Métis competition (Grand-Métis, 2000, coll. Atelier In Situ), Jardin des curiosités (Lyon, 2001, coll. Daoust Lestage and M. Goulet), a site for the Beijing Olympics (China, 2002, coll. ABCP), and Théâtre des Deux-Rives (St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, 2004, coll. Atelier In Situ). These projects earned their firm many awards, publications, and distinctions from the professional industry. Their projects are both simple and bold, the result of a unique approach to design. Since its inception *vlan paysages* has been focusing on the meaning of the location and creating spaces that pull out of the woodwork the inner value of a landscape.

Through its achievements, and more acutely in the last few years, *vlan paysages* is reflecting on the landscape as consistently redefined by its heritage, environmental, and social issues. The firm is also trying to rethink sites in an innovative way, suggesting a contact with the artwork as sensitive and unique as the contact with the space hosting it. The firm has proposed the design for Milieu humide, a spatial, technological, and sensible apparatus at the entrance of Île-des-Sœurs (Montréal, 2008, coll. Atelier In Situ), which received a mention from Art et la Ville in 2009. Milieu humide suggests a diurnal and nocturnal kinetic experience of water and light matter to create for Île-des-Sœurs an entrance door to match its waterfront. The project consists in a built and "living" apparatus that reacts to its environment and transforms according to biophysical and human factors. Made of a series of architectural "sensors", the roundabout is designed as a filter of thin translucent rods with various properties, and set in motion by wind, water, humidity, and light. The brightness of its components, the reflections and lightplays on those components, the changes the apparatus goes through all forming a scintillating and moving background.

vlan paysages also experiments with urban structure recuperation, hijacking, and creation. The firm has worked on studies for the Bellechasse area (Montréal, 2008, coll. Atelier In Situ and N. Luka). The interventions

it has suggested, in the spirit of recycling, are aimed at reassessing the area's natural environment as a heterotopia within the city and at strengthening existing public, green and commuting spaces, and creating new ones. Within that context, the team has proposed to transform an overpass into an actual urban belvedere that would provide exceptional views on Mount Royal.

Similarly, the company has been asked to redevelop and redefine E. Saint-Viateur Street (Montréal, 2010). It is designing an urban landscape in a transforming industrial setting, so as to provide the area with a new life cycle while suggesting textile, the original vocation of the industries on site. The vegetation reveals the fallow industrial land and livens up the path in a unifying and ecological linear gesture. The urban furniture, with its simplified shapes, lets materiality express the urban and industrial environment.

In the near future, *vlan paysages* hopes to expand its local and Canadian engagements while continuing to pursue its applied research in landscape, constantly moving back and forth between built projects, studies, installations, and education.

 www.vlanpaysages.ca

1 ST-VIAEUR 2, 5 MILIEU HUMIDE
3 ORATOIRE 4 BELLECHASSE
1, 3 GABRIEL JONES 2, 5 GABRIEL JONES 4 VLAN