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The Inhabited Landscape

Introduction

Frances Halseband

Understanding the relationship of man to nature is not a new concern, and the relationship of architecture to landscape is also not new. What is new, and constantly renewed, is what we bring to this relationship, how we understand it, and what we make of it.

Landscape may be defined as the human view of nature, a portion of land that the eye can comprehend. "Inhabited Landscape," a phrase used by the philosopher Martin Heidegger, is defined by Christian Norberg Schulz as the world that is disclosed by architecture. He tells us that a work of architecture makes certain aspects of the world visible. The building is not "added" to the place as something foreign, but, "standing there, first makes the place emerge as what it is."

Closely related to this is the idea that a piece of architecture domesticates a wilderness—a concept denoted as "borrowed landscape" by Maggie Keswick in her book on Chinese gardens.

Reuben Rainey notes that the "view" of nature changes in each culture. Nature may be seen as a transcendent power, or as a collection of scientific processes to be understood or adapted to human needs.

Although we are architects, or because we are architects, we were inspired to mount this exhibition not by our love for buildings, but by our love for gardens, parks, and the broader natural landscape.

As architects, we have recently begun to relearn the skills of contextualism—skills that allow us to relate individual buildings to the larger built fabric of towns and cities. But our colleagues—the landscape designers, critics, and analysts—have begun to teach us a broader kind of contextualism. They bring us new understandings of the history of landscape design, new appreciations of the importance of ecology, and new appreciations of both physical and cultural geography. Together, we approach the creation of the inhabited landscape with the goal of making meaningful form, of translating cultural values we share into visible forms in which we can dwell.

The projects exhibited here are presented not as definitive solutions, but rather as works that themselves pose questions and suggest new directions of thought. We have sought built works rather than theoretical drawings, and we have even eliminated from consideration projects under construction, because our objective is not the presentation of abstract ideas, but the presentation of real works in which the ideas are made physically manifest.

We hope that you, the audience of this exhibition, will not merely observe what is shown here, but will also be inspired in the creation of new designs of your own to make still other habitable places in the inhabited landscape.