



The Thickness of Landscape, horizontally and vertically considered

McMillan Sand Filtration Plant
By GEORGE HAZELRIGG

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Thesis submitted to the faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER
OF
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE**

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14 June 2002
Alexandria, Virginia

Keywords:

Design Theory, Industrial Landscape, Urban Park,
Landscape Geometry, Stormwater Management

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Abstract

The McMillan sand filtration plant in Washington, D.C. is a significant industrial landscape that provided safe clean water to much of the capital during 1905-1985. At the outset, the McMillan Commission chose to make the plant and adjacent McMillan reservoir part of the park system it was mapping for Washington. Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. was appointed to landscape the tract, a task completed in 1920. Closed to the public since WWII, the site was abandoned when its operation ended. This thesis looks at its future by exploring the thickness of landscape and the site's discovered geometry. Peeling back its uniformly level 25-acre surface broken only twice by rows of concrete towers, its horizontal layers, vertical elements and strong grids are revealed, offering clues for new design strategies. Examples of how landscape geometries have been considered and works of landscape built elsewhere are reviewed. Recalling water's historically central role in the site, the latter's potential for demonstrating responsible stormwater management and other sustainable practices is emphasized. Local stakeholder interests and proven ingredients of successful urban parks are noted. A design process is outlined that exploits the earlier exploratory findings to reconcile the transition between old and new, deciding what to remove and what to add. Details are provided on the resulting new "memorial park" that both celebrates its history and responds to contemporary interests and needs of the 21st century urban landscape.

Dedicated to

*my wife, my best friend and partner in life
for your encouragement, patience and love*

Let the journey continue...

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to express my deep appreciation to the members of my thesis committee — Ron Kagawa, Jeremy Foster, David Lever and Ben Johnson — for all their assistance and encouragement during the past year. Their guidance was invaluable in helping me to address the many questions and issues that arose as the project proceeded. They never ceased to challenge me, insisting on the critical rigor the undertaking demanded. Each brought to the table a unique set of experiences and insights that made the process all the richer. I could not have asked for more.

My sincere thanks to Jaan Holt, who always found time to push me to explore yet untested options, to try the unthinkable and to cherish quality materials; to Marco Frascari, who taught me inter alia about follies and supported my experiments with fine slate blackboards, metallic trees and rubber pyramids; to Paul Emmons, who always asked me the right questions and was always ready to answer mine; to Patrick Miller who challenged me to learn and practice good scholarship; and to Margaret Bryant who deepened my knowledge of and concern for the urban ecology. And to all the faculty members both in Alexandria and Blacksburg who willingly gave of their time to give advice when asked and encouragement when needed, I will always remain grateful.

I also want to thank my fellow students at the Center, particularly those who regularly offered new ideas and a helping hand. I learned from them. The Center is a special kind of place with a synergy between faculty and students, and between landscape architects and architects, that is seldom equaled.

I owe a word of special thanks to Teresa Phipps in Blacksburg for all her helpful long distance assistance during the past two and one-half years.

I would also like to thank Derrick Woody and MonaCheri McCoy of the DC Office of Planning who helped me to get off to a fast start in learning about a very complex site; to James Brown and Ken Borden of TV-16 for providing me the tapes of the community and developer meetings; to Raymond Moton and Dennis Fisher at the USACE McMillan Filter Plant and to Dave MacGregor at the Washington Aqueduct headquarters who provided me important assistance as I proceeded.

My gratitude as well to my Spanish friends who thought I was crazy but encouraged me nonetheless to start life anew; to Rebecca Krinke of the University of Minnesota and Craig Dykers of Snohetta (Norway) for their timely nudges; to Iris Miller at Catholic University and David Dibner, FAIA, who urged me to always set higher goals and to live my dream respectively; and again to Ron Kagawa who helped ensure my compass had the right setting and kept me on course whenever the needle got shaky.

And last but by no means least, a special thanks to my daughter and son-in-law, Nadine and David McGinnis, for their invaluable technical assistance in putting the results of my thesis project into final form.

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