



# TASTING THE LANDSCAPE

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## Next Season. Landscape Architecture as Incitement

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*"I don't look for empathy, but rather for shared incomprehension. I try to create a world. Everything is autonomous and exists in that world. There is no such thing as common experience and no explicit or domesticating form of address directed at a spectator. There are only witnesses in a garden. (...) Neither physicality, nor temporality are fixed. The garden comes about as soon as there is a presence and attention".*

Pierre Huyghe, 2011

It's no news, our cities are dissolved, fragmented, globalized. Where still at the end of the 20th century urban ecologists began to classify the degree of turbulence between nature and culture, today, the era of the anthropocene has been proclaimed. Acknowledging the world's near complete human pervasion, this new line of thinking has prompted scientific and artistic statements towards the new perspective. As a cultural topos the garden stands at the interface of these readjustments. Yet, it has all but vanished from the professional discourse in landscape architecture. Where some years ago art historian Brigitte Franzen has postulated a new, fourth nature, that describes contemporary art's new grasp on our understanding of garden, the recovery and widened reactivation of the term could well be a tool and simultaneously a field of work where art, landscape architecture, urbanism, architecture and many more disciplines con-

verge. The garden is, so to say, for all.

This garden is not typological and not an enclosed space, but rather the cultural (and even intellectual) area in which our urban realities and relations to the environment become concretely tangible and palpable. The contemporary city is the acting ground of the landscape architect and the gardener. And it is especially here, that the frequent attempt to categorize the garden along its etymologic roots (as a circumscribed, gated area, etc.) simultaneously limits its conceptual and cultural possibilities. The motific hortus conclusus is cut off from the world, it is decided upon, solved, benignly encased. In the best of all cases such a garden is the proverbial golden cage. I generally believe, that the invaluable concept of the garden is better kept outside of the walls. The garden that I mean is open.

At the same time the garden is concrete, it has and receives a form, it is designable. Much beyond issues of formal design, such „designation“ is part of the communication process that is at the core of the work of defining and shaping open space, its preconditions, processes, techniques and potentialities. This communication can not be merely abstract, but requires aesthetic participation and (re)negotiation. As an age-old topos, garden makes such invention possible. Everyone has an idea about garden, which gives a good chance of conveying underlying concepts such as tools (process and cul-



1. Taking matters in your hand (shredded asphalt material). Vorplatz Rohrdamm. Berlin (D), 1998



2. Making urban space accessible. Garden Bridges. Brussels (B), 2012



part of it, a nature that is integrated in and culturally interwoven with the city, a nature that includes humans, their curiosity and knowledge. This city-garden is not defined primarily by built space, but embraces it. It is free space (the German 'Freiraum'). Its possibilities, however, are never unbound. They originate in and are limited by the properties and condition of place. The urban garden is a joyful search beyond the walls – and always a beginning in itself.

3. A new lead into space. L, Äölle Verte. Lausanne (CH), 2014

4. Microfibre technology as a minimal garden fence facilitating organic farming. Gartenkabinett Lebendig. Theme garden at the state garden show, Landau (D), 2015

tivation), narrative (cultural communication/continuity in time), intervention (sensibility and necessity), politics (apprehension of space). The garden constitutes an approachable and manageable lever for the development and reflection of design – and as such it might prove a tool of increasing value especially for projects in the public realm.

I speak as garden and landscape architect. My understanding of garden represents a tangible reality of giving form within landscape. 'Garden' in this sense is not an exclusive category, but an opportunity. 'Garden' that is urban nature. Designing with such nature is about conceptualizing its complex presence. This means discovering and utilizing for our urban lives as much of the immediate nature as possible: ranging from flower pots on the window sill through neighborhood parks, to the technicalities of micro-climate or water management, to the discourse about how we live together. Such a nature does not constitute an opposition to the city, but is essentially

