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# Aesthetic creation theory and landscape architecture

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## Abstract

In recent decades the landscape architectural discourse has tended to eschew ideas of aesthetics while focusing instead on notions of functional and sustainable design. We offer the view that Aesthetic Creation Theory, whose principal exponent is the philosopher Nick Zangwill, has the potential to redress this imbalance by interpreting landscape architecture as 'art'. Zangwill's account of 'art' differs, however, from many other definitions found in philosophical aesthetics: it holds that works of art have aesthetic functions that are essential to them, but also allows that they have other, non-aesthetic functions, for example practical or ecological ones. It thus removes the strict distinction between fine art and the useful arts. After introducing Zangwill's theory, we discuss some rival theories of art and then explore the virtues of Aesthetic Creation Theory for the theory, practice, and pedagogy of landscape architecture.

[Aesthetic Creation Theory / criticism / landscape architecture / philosophical aesthetics / theory](#)

'Landscape architecture is [...] a blend of science and art, vision and thought. It is a creative profession skilled in strategic planning, delivery and management. Landscape architects bring knowledge of natural sciences, environmental law and planning policy. [...] And they create delight with beautiful designs, protecting and enhancing our most cherished landscapes and townscapes' (Landscape Institute 2012: 1).

## Redressing an imbalance in landscape architectural theory

Searching for a contemporary definition of landscape architecture, this text by the Landscape Institute is rare in that it mentions art, vision, creativity, delight, and beauty. Many other definitions avoid these words, such as the one offered by the International Federation of Landscape Architects (2003). This is symptomatic: in an age which values science and rationality, landscape architectural discourse has tended to eschew ideas of aesthetics in favour of notions of functional and sustainable design. This seems to apply particularly to some influential movements in North America and Europe, such as Landscape Urbanism (for example, Waldheim 2006; cp. Herrington 2010; Thompson 2012).

These positivistic and technocratic tendencies have been criticized by some authors within the discipline—criticism that has gained momentum in recent years (Dee 2012; Gustavsson 2012; Herrington 2008; 2010; 2011; Meyer 2008; Treib 2011). Sharing the concern that landscape architecture theory has fallen seriously out of balance, and that this does not serve the discipline well (Hunt 2000: 6), we suggest that recent work in philosophical aesthetics, particularly the Aesthetic Creation Theory proposed by philosopher Nick Zangwill (2007) in his book *Aesthetic Creation*, has the potential to redress this imbalance. The wider field of philosophical aesthetics is concerned with the aesthetic appreciation of both works of art and our environment. While environmental philosophers like Arnold Berleant (1992) and Allen Carlson (2002) concentrate on our appreciation of the natural and vernacular environment, Zangwill primarily engages our appreciation of works of art. Zangwill's theory is an aesthetic theory of art following Monroe Beardsley (1958/1981), whose book *Aesthetics* is the first systematic and critically informed philosophy of art in the analytic tradition (cp. Wreen 2014). Other proposals have been made, on the one hand, by Arthur Danto (1964), who first proffered an institutional theory of art in which members of the artworld, such as curators, critics, and gal-

lery owners, define what is to be considered as art. Aesthetic theories, on the other hand, focus on the characteristics of the work, rather than on the context in which the work was produced.

Both our agenda and our approach, that is an emphasis on the essential role of aesthetics for a sounder theory and richer practice of landscape architecture, as well as our turn to analytic philosophy, tie in with previous work by authors from landscape architecture. For example, many studies have explored the aesthetics of gardens (Miller 1993; Ross 1985; 2001; Cooper 2006), but we suspect that the explicit restriction to ‘gardens’ may have hampered the reception of this work within broader landscape architectural discourse. Hoping to reach a wider audience, we are thus explicitly addressing the aesthetics of ‘landscapes’, which implies an exploration of the contributions that landscape architects make to urban renewal, development of new nature, work on infrastructure, flood defences, etc. Susan Herrington’s book *On Landscapes* has a similarly comprehensive understanding of landscape, using various theories and analytic approaches to explain the limitations and potential of landscapes. In one of her book chapters, she also deals with aesthetic experience (Herrington 2008: 111–130). Here, the author argues elegantly against evolutionary theories and the conflation of the aesthetic with the visual. Other seminal contributions to landscape architectural discourse, from Laurie Olin, Marc Treib, Jean Gillette, and (again) Susan Herrington, focus on the question of what gardens mean (Treib 2011). However, while questions of meaning and aesthetics are intimately linked, as Eva Gustavsson (2012) urges us to see, they are nevertheless distinct from one another. Our paper thus adds ‘to a conversation that is endlessly ongoing’ (Gillette 2011: 171), recommending a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between meaning and aesthetics.

It is precisely here, in thinking through the structure of aesthetic theories, that we believe turning to the philosopher Zangwill could be fruitful because Zangwill emphasizes—in the tradition of analytic philosophy—clarity, rigour, argument, theory, and truth. The landscape architectural discourse of recent years has tended to eschew ideas of aesthetics. We believe that this is partly a consequence of the structure of older theories of art. Zangwill’s Aesthetic Creation Theory allows us to see landscape architecture (again) as an art, but without the lofty pretensions of art for art’s sake. Zangwill’s theory holds that works of art have aesthetic functions, which are essential to them, but also allows that they have other, non-

aesthetic functions, such as practical or ecological ones. Aesthetic Creation Theory focuses on the creation side of art, which is why it is called Aesthetic ‘Creation’ Theory. While this is not unproblematic for an understanding of landscape architecture that wishes to consider its users, it may tie in with what Gillette (2011: 172) refers to as the New Aestheticism, a recent shift ‘from theories that validate the user towards arguments that validate the maker of the artefact’.

The point of our paper, however, is not to prove that landscape architecture is intrinsically an art and only an art—if one understands art as being fine art. Neither do we believe that Zangwill’s theory holds the key to all questions within the aesthetical discourse in landscape architecture. We advance it in a spirit of experimentation, asking several questions: How far can the theory be taken? How good is Aesthetic Creation Theory as an explanation for what happens when landscape architects design landscapes? What are its implications for landscape architecture? But, most importantly, we assert that theorizing landscape architecture as a practice that strives for the creation of aesthetic values (alongside other values), provides a richer and more truthful account of the discipline.

### Art and design

A distinction has often been made between the fine arts, such as painting, sculpture, music, and poetry (and latterly new forms like conceptual art, film, photography, and printmaking), and the applied or practical arts, such as furniture making, industrial design, glass-making, metalwork, ceramics, embroidery, and so on (Kristeller 1978; Herrington 2007: 307). Nowadays, gardening and landscape architecture are seldom viewed as art (Scruton 1979: 5; Winters 2007: 4). In fact, the entire debate around high art versus low art may sometimes seem obsolete, especially with regard to landscape architecture. Indeed, neither practitioners nor scholars within the field use these phrases very often. However, first, we would argue that framing the discourse through the lens of this dichotomy and showing how it is overcome within Zangwill’s Aesthetic Creation Theory may help to understand the reasons why landscape architecture has eschewed aesthetics, as well as how to move beyond this tendency. Second, the legacy of the high art / low art debate still informs, explicitly or implicitly, some strands within landscape architecture theory discourse. On the one hand, David Cooper (2006: 25) asserts, for example, that some gardens could certainly be con-

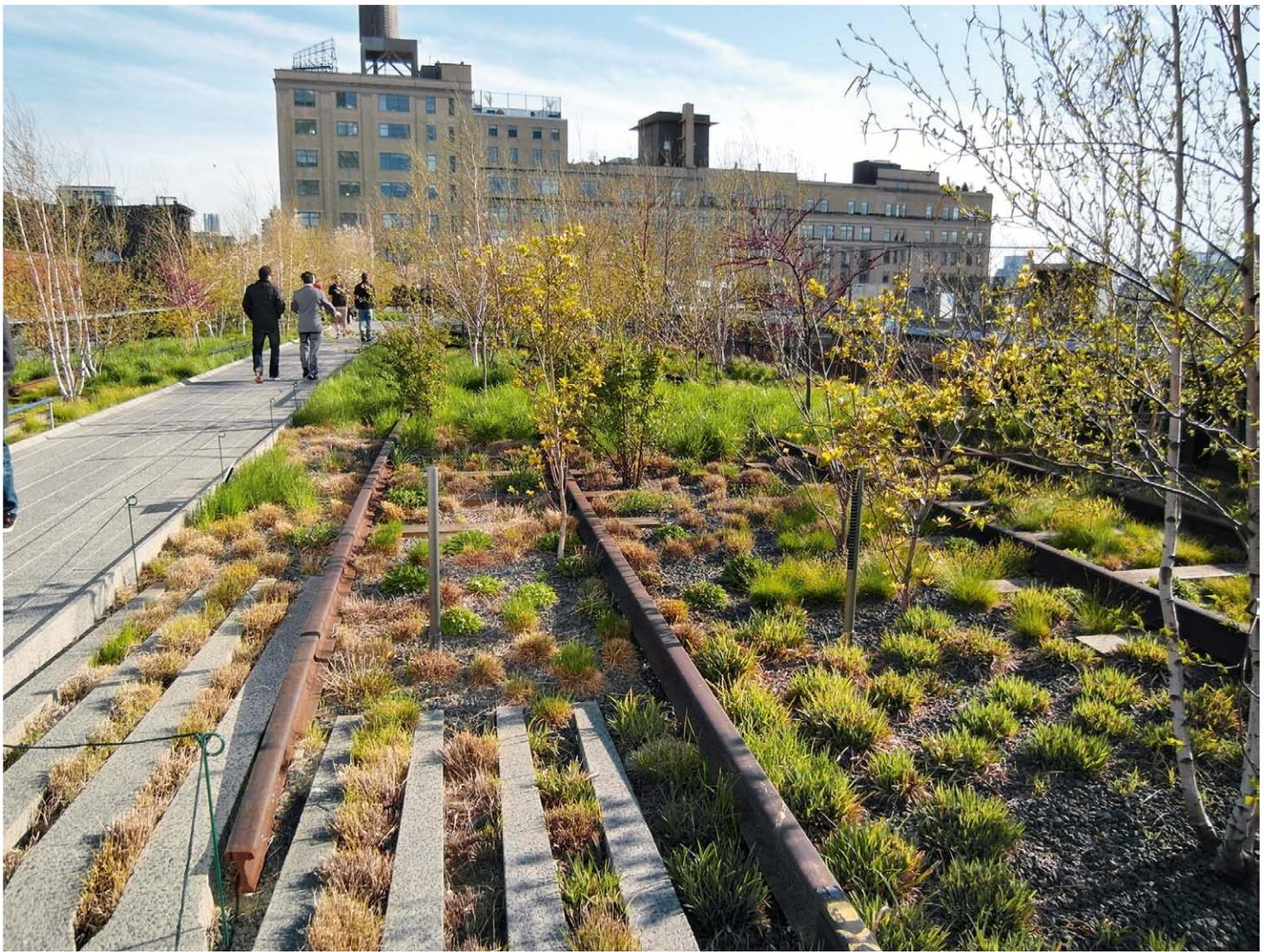


Figure 1 Aesthetic qualities have obviously been relevant for the design of the High Line Park in New York City, created by James Corner's firm Field Operations.

sidered art and that the artworld and the garden-world overlap. Similarly, Geoffrey Jellicoe writes in the opening sentence of his introduction to *The Landscape of Man*: 'The world is moving into a phase when landscape design may well be recognized as the most comprehensive of arts' (Jellicoe & Jellicoe 1975: 7). On the other hand, Ian Thompson (2000: 73–89) has shown that only a small number of landscape architects believe that landscape architecture should aspire to be a fine art, with a much larger group navigating by the beacon of 'good design', a position which would place landscape architecture in the applied arts category.

Theorizing landscape architecture as an art should, however, not be seen as an attack on functional design; we are all in favour of designed landscapes that are aesthetically attractive and serve practical purposes. However, we do take issue with the doctrine of functionalism in its weak or strong forms. Weak functionalism states that good aesthetics will come about automatically by producing functionality. However, as several authors have pointed out (Pye 1978; Scruton 1979: 38; Winters 2007: 47), functionality does not determine form. The need to meet functional criteria alone

would "underdetermine" the final product', as Zangwill argues accordingly (Zangwill 2007: 148, original emphasis). Strong functionalism, on the other hand, holds that aesthetics are simply irrelevant to landscape practice. The point of landscape architecture, according to this view, is to produce landscapes that function and perform well, for instance, in an ecological sense, with no thought given to their appearance. This attitude can be said to inform, for instance, some of the programmatic writings of Landscape Urbanism (cp. Herrington 2010: 8; Thompson 2012: 12). Strong functionalism, however, is at odds with the way most landscape architects see their work (compare the definition of landscape architecture provided by ECLAS 2014; Kapper & Chenoweth 2000) and how they practice it. To assume that aesthetic concerns were irrelevant, for instance in the design of a project like the High Line Park in Manhattan by James Corner's office Field Operations—one of Landscape Urbanism's flagship projects—is utterly unsatisfactory (Figs. 1 & 2).



Figure 2 The train tracks of the High Line no longer serve any functional purpose, but do add to the distinctive quality of the project.

### Zangwill's Aesthetic Creation Theory

#### Aesthetic creation theory as rational explanation

Art theory is often in the position of having to catch up with, and account for, developments in practice. So-called formalist theories of art were a response to the arrival of abstract modernism. Arthur Danto's institutional theory, further developed by George Dickie (1974; 1984), was a response to works by Duchamp and Warhol, who appropriated everyday objects and somehow turned them into art. The driving force of these developments, in theory, is extensional; that is, they attempt to (re)cover all of the objects considered as art. Zangwill rejects these extensional theories in favour of a theory of rational explanation; that is, a theory that makes our interest in art intelligible (Zangwill 2007: Chapter 1). Thus, he offers a theory that describes, but moreover explains, the practice of art. This may not deliver a theory which meets all extensional demands but it explains why we produce art and why we care about art. Zangwill's is a theory in the sense that it offers a framework under which we can assess landscape architecture as an art (Deming & Swaffield 2011: 32-33).

Zangwill starts by stating that artworks are artefacts—they are made by human beings. Human beings do not produce objects randomly, but for

reasons and with intentions, and in this sense they are functional objects (Zangwill 2007: 98). Of course, it is important to remember that not all artefacts are works of art. Starting from the question of why we produce art, Zangwill proposes that we do so because artworks provide us with pleasurable experiences. These pleasurable experiences are of a special kind—they are aesthetic pleasures. Aesthetic pleasures are, following Kant, distinct from the pleasures of emotional well-being, existential insight, intellectual clarity, or the fulfilment of some sensual appetite. Zangwill means by this a pleasure that is 'derived from making or contemplating particular works of art' (*Ibid.*: 25). A landscape-related example would be the pleasure we feel, for instance, if we contemplate a particular garden scene that features, say, a red-leaved tree in autumn against a clear-blue sky and enjoy the sound of its leaves rustling in the wind. Zangwill emphasizes that even though the aesthetic pleasure is of a special kind, it is nevertheless pleasure. And the 'pursuit of pleasure is an intelligible and rational pastime' (*Ibid.*: 11). The point of art is to provide these kinds of experiences (*Ibid.*: 98-99).



Figure 3 The lower part of the garden of the Villa Lante in Bagnaia, Italy: Its constricted and rigid appearance is due to the symmetry of its design, which rests, in large part, on the straight lines of the box-hedges.

### Aesthetic properties and aesthetic dependence

Zangwill's Aesthetic Creation Theory proposes that '[s]omething is a work of art because and only because someone had an insight that certain aesthetic properties would depend on certain non-aesthetic properties; and because of this, the thing was intentionally endowed with some of those aesthetic properties in virtue of the non-aesthetic properties, as envisaged in the insight' (Ibid.: 36).

To understand this complex sentence, one needs to understand the distinction Zangwill makes, building on work by Frank Sibley and others (for example, Goldman 1990; Sibley 2001), between aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties, and also the way he believes them to be related: 'Aesthetic properties may be purely *verdictive* or *evaluative* properties, such as beauty and ugliness, or aesthetic merit and demerit, if indeed these are different from beauty and ugliness. Aesthetic properties also include substantive aesthetic properties, such as elegance, daintiness, balance or frenzy. Non-aesthetic properties include physical properties, such as shape and size, and secondary qualities, such as colours and sounds' (Zangwill 2007: 37; see Table 1). Talk about aesthetic properties means much more than just beauty or even prettiness; rather it also includes ugliness, as well as the manifold range of substantive aesthetic properties.

It is important to understand how aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties are related. Some people might wonder how landscape architects can bring into being aesthetic properties, like for example elegance in a design. One cannot simply add five metres of elegance, or something like ten cubic metres of beauty, into the specifications or bill of quantities when building a garden, yet we can evaluate the resulting garden as elegant and therefore beautiful.

When we call something 'beautiful' we have grounds for making that evaluation. One may not consider the lower part of the garden at the Villa Lante to be beautiful but, instead, constricted and rigid; that attribution would then rest on the symmetry of the design, in turn resting on the straight lines of cut box-hedges (Fig. 3), particularly in contrast with the more free-flowing forms of trees in the upper part of the garden. 'Verdictive properties depend on substantive aesthetic properties. Something may be beautiful in virtue of being graceful' (Ibid.: 38). Zangwill further states that the aesthetic properties depend, or supervene upon, these non-aesthetic properties (Zangwill 2001). 'Supervenience' is a key term in Zangwill's theory. It is 'best characterized in terms of the existence of necessities running from non-aesthetic to aesthetic properties' (Zangwill 2007: 37). However, the aesthetic properties depend upon non-aesthetic properties in a non-straightforward manner; there is 'dependence without laws' (Ibid.: 38, Footnote 1; Sibley 2001: 46; Goldman 1995: 136). This means that there is no set of non-aesthetic properties which necessarily leads to certain aesthetic properties; but, on the other hand, certain non-aesthetic properties do seem to exclude certain aesthetic properties (Zangwill 2007: 37; 83). A landscape design-related example might be as follows: a garden, like the lower part of Villa Lante, consisting entirely of straight lines and geometrical shapes (as non-aesthetic properties) could not be naturalistic (as a substantive aesthetic property), but conversely, not all irregular plantings are necessarily naturalistic. Also, even though the non-aesthetic properties do not change, the aesthetic properties might change over time, due to changes in our value systems. The straight lines of the French formal gardens were interpreted differently after the advent of the more irregular English landscape style. What had seemed controlled and well maintained suddenly seemed strained and manicured.

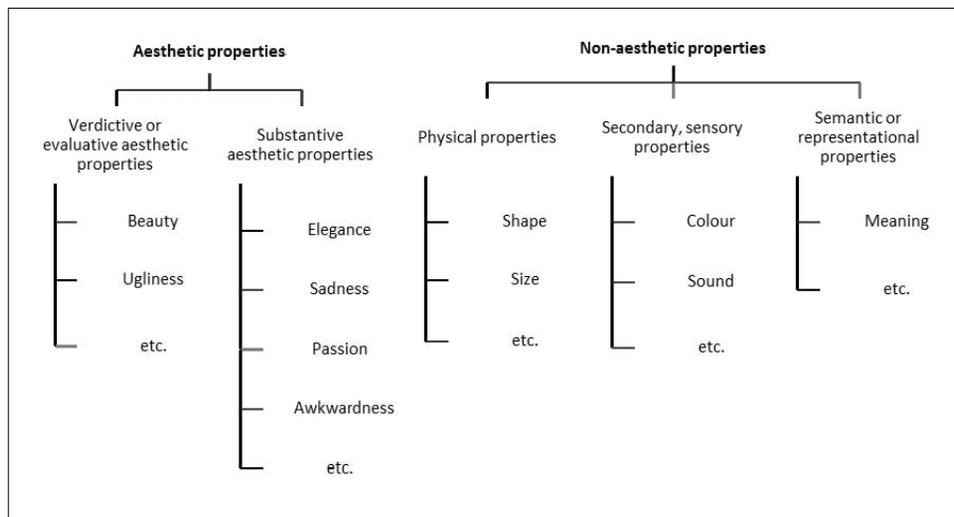


Table 1 Aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties according to Aesthetic Creation Theory (Zangwill 2007: 37-38; 61; 82; 100)



Figure 4 Chatsworth landscape park by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown in Derbyshire, England

### Insight and intention

Two more key ideas in Zangwill's theory are 'insight' and 'intention' (*Ibid.*: 39-45). For an artefact to be a work of art, the designers have to have the insight that certain aesthetic properties depend upon certain non-aesthetic properties. They must believe that if they produce these non-aesthetic properties, the aesthetic properties will also be realized. 'Insight' must be distinguished from 'idea'. An insight happens to a particular person. An idea is something that can be shared between persons. 'Ideas are public, insight is personal' (*Ibid.*: 44).

If the designers form the intention to realize the aesthetic properties in virtue of the non-aesthetic properties, based upon the original insight, and if they are able to realize the aesthetic properties through producing the relevant non-aesthetic properties (*Ibid.*: 40-41), the resulting artefact will be a work of art. Once again, to give an example from landscape architecture: 'Capability' Brown had the insight that a beautiful landscape

depended upon a smoothness of texture and the presence of certain qualities of curve (Fig. 4). He believed that if he could create such curves and surfaces, the result would be beautiful. He was, in fact, in possession of the technical skill to be able to create these non-aesthetic qualities and in doing so he brought into being a work of art. Similarly, landscape gardener Humphry Repton predicted the aesthetic visual effects of his proposals to his clients in the form of Red Books (so named for their red bindings), which contained his observations on the present state of a client's property and his recommendations on how it might be improved (Figs. 5 & 6).

### On meaning and multi-functional art

Zangwill admits that his theory might be thought old-fashioned in its re-enthronement of beauty as the goal of artistic creation—though he qualifies 'beauty' with the phrase 'and other valuable aesthetic properties' (*Ibid.*: 11).



Figure 5 A 'before' picture from one of Humphry Repton's famous Red Books shows the state of his client's estate before improvement.

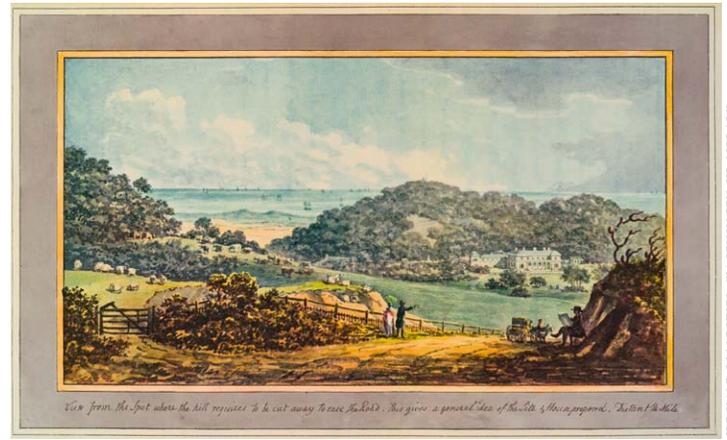


Figure 6 The corresponding 'after' picture shows Repton's suggestions for how to improve the estate. In his drawing, Repton evokes certain aesthetic qualities, which are to be reached by changing selected non-aesthetic properties: a manor house, the clearing of a lawn, the rearrangement of groups of trees, etc.

Beauty lost its primacy during the rise of avant-garde work in the twentieth century, and many might say that it is still a difficult concept to apply to contemporary conceptual art, where the emphasis is not on aesthetic properties but on meaning. Zangwill, however, thinks that 'almost all conceptual art also has significant aesthetic aspirations' (Ibid.: 63) and he cites Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (much admired in landscape architectural circles) as an example of a work which 'has plenty of formal aesthetic values' (Ibid.: 62). He feels that even in cases where the aesthetic is not the most important aspect of the work 'it is still important and indeed essential that the meanings of works are embodied in aesthetically significant ways' (Ibid.: 63).

For Zangwill, meaningfulness and beauty are not mutually exclusive properties in art, but neither do they necessarily belong together. He writes that 'a work of art can have aesthetic values that depend on the meaning of the work, and aesthetic values need not be the only values of a work' (Ibid.: 172).

### Some rival theories

Zangwill identifies his theory as an aesthetic theory of art, but not all theories of art are aesthetic theories. In established philosophical aesthetics, theories of art fall into five categories: imitation theory, expression theory, formalist theory, institutional theory, and aesthetic theory (Carroll 1999); there are variations of these, but these are the main types. The shortcoming of the established theories, according to Zangwill, is that they are all extensional theories; for example, they try to cover all the objects intuitively classified as art (Zangwill 2007: Chapter 1), and they essentially involve a relation to an audience (Ibid.: Chapter 6). That there are complications when looking at landscape architecture as an art under all of these rival theories has been shown by Mara Miller (1993) and Thompson (2000).

We limit ourselves here to a short account of Zangwill's counterarguments to those types of art theory that are most relevant to landscape architecture, namely institutional theories and audience theories.

Institutional theories work well at a sociological level, but less so philosophically. In Dickie's formulation, an artwork is any artefact (including found objects) which has been accepted as such by the artworld (Dickie 1974, 1984). Prominent members of the artworld, such as gallery owners, curators, publishers, producers, and critics, have the appropriate authority to 'christen' these pieces as works of art. These 'passing-the-buck' theories are extensionally successful, in that they cover all works that we consider to be art, including the hard cases like *Fountain* by Duchamp (Lopes 2014: 52). Zangwill (2007: 160–166) rightly criticizes these theories for their lack of explanatory power; they offer no account of the 'qualities' that might interest a gallery director or a critic in the first place. While garden history has its own share of hard cases, probably most clearly illustrated by Martha Schwartz in *The Bagel Garden* (cp. Herrington 2008: 1), we try here first to develop a theory for the majority of landscape designs.

This brings us back to aesthetic theories, of which Aesthetic Creation Theory is a version. Zangwill builds upon Beardsley's theory that art's function is to produce aesthetic experiences. Beardsley argued that works of art were 'intentionally endowed with a disposition to produce experiences (in an audience)' (Ibid.: 127), but this is where Zangwill parts company with him. The whole of Chapter 6 in *Aesthetic Creation* is devoted to arguments against audience theories: 'a theory of what art is should not invoke any essential relationship to an audience' (Ibid.). Zangwill's theory is an 'artist theory' rather than an 'audience theory'. This is not to deny the importance of an audience, but 'a way of emphasizing artistic autonomy—a lack of concern for others in making art' (Ibid.: 147, original emphasis).



Figure 7 Dangerous beauty—we can take aesthetic pleasure in scenes of environmental destruction. This is the former Magnasite Works, near Hartlepool, County Durham, England, where magnesium used to be extracted from seawater.

### Congruencies and virtues of Aesthetic Creation Theory for landscape architecture theory

#### Dissolution of high art / low art distinction

Zangwill's theory has the virtue of removing the division between the fine and the decorative arts, which means that the products of designers are eligible to be considered as art (*Ibid.*: 50, 75–78). He states that it is necessary for the work of art to have an aesthetic goal (and landscapes indeed offer abundant aesthetic properties) but it need not be the 'only' goal. Designs for larger landscapes often include areas with specific functions, such as storing water or providing habitats, but as long as the design also has specific aesthetic intentions, it can still be considered a work of art.

Anne Whiston Spirn (1984) and Catherine Howett (1987) attempted, twenty years ago, to build 'conceptual bridges between aesthetics and ecological design' (Meyer 2008: 8), arguing that art, sustainability, and functionality were not mutually exclusive. Our interpretation of Zangwill's theory is meant to support contributions in this spirit, which strive to counter authors who, to paraphrase Elizabeth Meyer (*Ibid.*), do not think that beauty matters. However, relying on Zangwill instead of Danto (as does Meyer) might lead to a less instrumental understanding of the aesthetic dimension of landscape. While experiences of landscapes can indeed be 'vehicles for connecting with, or caring for, the world around us' (*Ibid.*: 18), we agree with Zangwill that there is a certain value in acknowledging the aesthetic

experience for its own sake. Zangwill emphasizes this point because he rejects instrumentalist theories of art (Zangwill 2007: 12). The pleasure we perceive when contemplating works of art can be, but is not necessarily only, a means to an end, for example to raise environmental awareness. This is not to deny that the aesthetic experience of nature cannot enhance this awareness, but this consequence is not a (theoretically) necessary implication of aesthetic features. This is why we can still take aesthetic pleasure in scenes that show environmental destruction (Fig. 7), such as the 'strange, toxic beauty of rainbow-colored water polluted by acidic mine drainage at a coal mine, the site of AMD Park in Vintondale, PA, USA' (Meyer 2008: 8).

#### The production of aesthetic qualities

Aesthetic Creation Theory is not dogmatic about the way that aesthetic properties are produced. This means that it can accommodate aspects of other aesthetic theories. It can relate both to the meaning of Stourhead for an educated audience revelling in references to the Aenean story (Herrington 2008: 74) (Fig. 8), and to that part of the audience which, for instance, relates to the colourful display of the tulip tree in autumn. So, a landscape designer is free to draw inspiration from the natural world, to



Figure 8 Knowing the meaning of a garden scene can add layers to the aesthetic experience but is not a necessary condition for it—a visitor can still take aesthetic pleasure in the gardens at Stourhead, Wiltshire, England, even if the references to the Aenean story are lost on him or her.

imitate jagged mountains, or to borrow from the typologies of cultivation. There is room for the expression of emotions or cultural meaning, such as the planting of a weeping willow or a sombre yew tree in a graveyard. All that is needed for this to count as art is that the designer has had aesthetic insights and intentions to realize the aesthetic properties in virtue of the non-aesthetic properties. Zangwill's position is also generous in allowing for aesthetic qualities other than just beauty (Zangwill 2007: 39), offering room, for instance, for the sublime as provided by the work of Latz and Partners in Duisburg-Nord (Figs. 9 & 10) (cp. Herrington 2008: 78).

At this point, some landscape architects may conceivably object and say that they have never had these kinds of insights while designing. Zangwill, however, maintains that the insights need not be expressed in words, nor even be conscious (Zangwill 2007: 49). The photographer Lewis Hine pointed to this feature of the inexpressibility of insights when he said: 'If I could tell the story in words, I wouldn't need to lug a camera' (Hine quoted in Sontag 1977: 145). The aesthetic insight must be there, but it does not need to be made verbally explicit by the designer or artist. The insight might, as Zangwill says, come forth in the drawing. It can be produced in the activity of sketching. 'One can think in acting and making' (Zangwill 2007: 45; cp. Moore 2010). In landscape architecture the aesthetic intentions are typically very clear, sometimes much clearer than any ideological intent. They are expressed in terms of drawings and written explanations of the design made before execution. Although Zangwill would generally not set much store in what artists say about their work (Zangwill 2007: 49; cp. Herrington 2011: 209), drawings are reasonable indicators of the landscape architect's aesthetic intentions.

One of the objections to considering architects and designers as artists is that they do not, as a rule, create their works with their own hands. They produce drawings and specifications, which are then interpreted by builders and other contractors who execute the works on site. Aesthetic Creation Theory tames this objection by making a distinction between the essential creative phase, the process during which the essential aesthetic

insights occur, and the execution of the design, during which these insights are realized in the production of a work of art (Zangwill 2007: 45–46). For this very reason, Aesthetic Creation Theory can also help us to distinguish the ownership of ideas within the cooperative production of design. Zangwill writes that '[a]esthetic creativity or talent might be defined as the capacity to envisage non-actual things that would have a high degree of aesthetic value' (Ibid.: 44). As his theory differentiates between insight and idea and because the originating insight is experiential, it should always be clear who owns the idea behind the design—it is the person who experienced the original insight. However, as landscape architecture history shows, one designed garden can embody insights from more than one person, in which case we could say that the work of art is a genuine collaboration. Very often, in the sorts of collaborative projects undertaken by landscape architects, the other collaborators will be people like ecologists, engineers, or foresters, who might not see the creation of aesthetic qualities as any part of their role and, thus, not form (and follow) aesthetic insights and intentions.

Some designed landscapes (for example, the gardens at Stowe) have had many owners and several designers. In such a case, new works of art have been made upon the same site as the old, though traces of the former work may still be appreciated.

#### Aesthetic Creation Theory and the education of landscape architects

A clear field of congruency between Zangwill's theory and the praxis of landscape architecture is in the development of a capacity for aesthetic insight. In the discipline it is built up by studies in the field by students and practicing landscape architects and through the study of projects which have been illustrated and described. Field trips form part of the education of landscape architecture students, while the fieldwork included in their studio projects can be understood as an exploration into the relationship between non-aesthetic and aesthetic properties (Fig. 11). The non-aesthetic properties can sometimes be studied more clearly, and certainly more

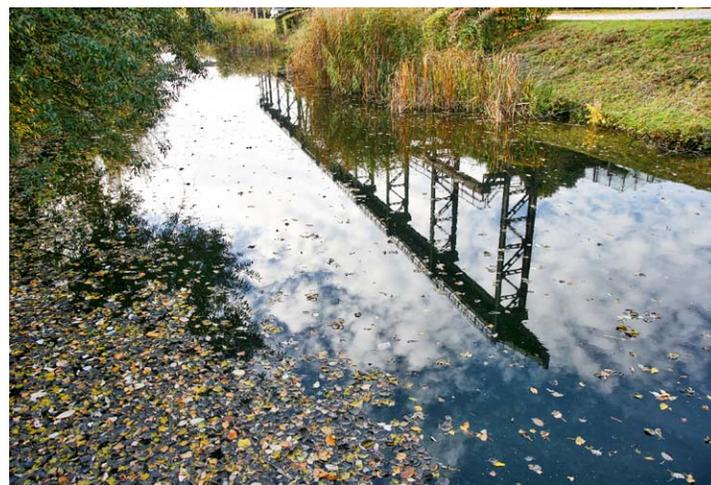


Figure 10 Sublime aesthetic experiences in the Duisburg-Nord Landscape Park

Figure 9 Zangwill's theory allows for other aesthetic qualities than just beauty, for example experiences of the sublime in the Duisburg-Nord Landscape Park, Germany.

easily, in representations like maps and aerial photographs, but it is in the field that the aesthetic properties become apparent. Insights into the relationship between non-aesthetic and aesthetic properties can also be developed in the bureau excursions that many professional offices undertake. In the book *Distance and Engagement* produced by the Vogt office (Foxley & Vogt 2010) we find a description of the exploration of non-aesthetic and aesthetic qualities in trips taken by the office to the Burren in Ireland and to the engineering works of Vauban in France. Foxley and Vogt (2010: 265–266) write that [t]he enormous potential for Vauban's fortifications to inspire landscape architecture remains'. And indeed, in their subsequent design for the European Harbour in Bremen, for example, the stage-like steps are reminiscent of Vauban's fortifications (Fig. 12).

In a high-pressure commercial environment, such excursions might be considered a luxury, or something peripheral to the main business of the office, but Aesthetic Creation Theory makes understandable why such activities are not trivial and why they need to be taken seriously, not just by practitioners, but also by scholarly researchers.

Another prevalent practice, the activity of sketching, also makes good sense within the framework of Aesthetic Creation Theory. In this light, the investigation of different characteristics of a site and possible solutions to a brief can be characterized as an exploration of sets of non-aesthetic properties and the aesthetic properties which they support. Frequently, both map drawings and small perspective sketches will be produced. Whereas the former often represent sets of non-aesthetic properties, the perspective sketches regularly seek to capture the aesthetic experiences to be had.

Aesthetic Creation Theory could help further in landscape architecture education by showing students how to deal with a brief, and making clear to them that a brief still leaves room for artistry, since it never determines all design choices. Social factors, client's wishes, and programmatic constraints 'underdetermine the final product' (Zangwill 2007: 148, original emphasis). In the 'residual space' the designer can act out his or her 'freedom' (Ibid.: 150) and realize 'artistic autonomy' (Ibid.: 147).

### Aesthetic Creation Theory for critics

Zangwill's theory also has consequences for the evaluation of designs. Before implementation of a work of landscape architecture there are plans and drawings. In the light of Aesthetic Creation Theory, these drawings are not just there to prescribe the non-aesthetic properties of the work, but can also be used to predict aesthetic effects. This is the moment for reflection on whether these effects are desirable and whether the proposed non-aesthetic properties will give rise to them as predicted by the perspective drawings. After production of the work, judgments can be made about the extent to which the intended effects have been realized. With its emphasis on aesthetic intentions, Aesthetic Creation Theory provides the theoretical basis for differentiating between aesthetic properties that are the result of deliberate design intentions on the one hand and any accidental developments within the landscape that were not part of the original intention on the other.

### A complication: the position of the audience

As mentioned above, Aesthetic Creation Theory is not an audience-based theory; rather, it focuses on the creation of art. For landscape architects, who are generally taught that their work must meet the needs of users, this may seem a strange, even off-putting, position, so it needs some further explanation and qualification.

In landscape architecture there is clearly an audience (Ibid.: 145; footnote 15; Hunt 2004; Treib 2011). Similarly, there are often calls for the kinds of post-occupancy studies occasionally carried out on buildings to be undertaken for designed landscapes. None of this, however, is incompatible with Zangwill's theory, nor does he ignore the audience or user side. Throughout his book, he attempts to make intelligible all of our art activities: why we value art, what it is that drives us to make and to behold it—for example, both the production and consumption of art (Zangwill 2007: 1). However, his theory is, in a sense, a bare-bones account of the essence of art (Ibid.: 159). (It is fair to add here that we are not all equally convinced by Zangwill's bare-bones essentialism and that some of us have previously



Figure 11 During field trips, students of landscape architecture are sensitized to the relationship between aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties, training their capacity for aesthetic insight.



Figure 12 The stage-like steps in the European Harbour in Bremen, Germany, designed by the Vogt office, 2007–2012, seem clearly inspired by the engineering works of Vauban in France (Foxley & Vogt 2010: 265f.).

written from a non-essentialist position.) Thus, Zangwill (*Ibid.*: 140) argues, the ‘minimum that we need for a rational explanation of the creation of art is the existence of the intention to realize valuable properties in the object or event’.

However, while we have great sympathy for Zangwill’s elegant, minimalist, and consistent explanation of art, there is certainly the danger that his reasons for adopting an artist-centred approach may be ignored and his argumentation misused to re-enthron the designer and disempower the user. This is emphatically not our purpose.

### Conclusions

In this paper, we have introduced Zangwill’s Aesthetic Creation Theory into the landscape architecture discourse in an experimental spirit because we are convinced that it has much to offer the discipline. It can contribute to redressing an imbalance in some strands in landscape architectural theory by recovering the aesthetic dimension; it does so by thinking through the structure of those aesthetic theories whose legacy we believe to be responsible for a sceptical, or even hostile, attitude towards aesthetics from some within the field. Zangwill’s theory allows us to see landscape architecture (once again) as an art—yet without the lofty aspirations and pretensions of art for art’s sake and with the explicit possibility of considering useful aspects; for example, social inclusion or ecological performance. We think that the insights provided can add to both substantive and procedural theory in landscape architecture (cp. Lang 1987) as they provide knowledge on how creating aesthetic value might work and what landscape architects can do to improve the aesthetic quality of their work.

There are numerous links to existing studies, both within general landscape architecture theory and, particularly, in aesthetics. Some of these we could at least acknowledge, many others had to remain implicit, but surely all are worth exploring in future research. We welcome any philosophically sound critique of Zangwill’s theory, or our interpretation of it, that might help to better explain works of landscape architecture and their production.

In this paper we have focused on explaining, in outlines, the basic features of Zangwill’s theory and we have begun to demonstrate how it makes intelligible the art-related practice of our discipline. We believe, however, that Aesthetic Creation Theory also provides grounds for further developing sound criticism of works of landscape design—a criticism that is informed by an assessment of the degree to which intended aesthetic experiences are realized through the physical design. While the aesthetic dimension is, of course, not the only one to be considered, we think that the discipline needs a critical approach which does justice to the complete nature of works of landscape architecture by taking aesthetics fully into account.

Furthermore, we believe that Aesthetic Creation Theory provides arguments that may prove useful in various strategically relevant contexts. The argument, for example, that human beings are able to enjoy aesthetic experiences and thus find it worthwhile to invest in them provides reasons why certain jobs should be done by (or with) landscape architects, rather than by engineers (alone). Furthermore, by explaining the role of the relation between non-aesthetic and aesthetic properties, the theory makes certain activities specific to landscape architects, such as extensive drawing practice, bureau excursions, and field trips with students, intelligible. Departments of landscape architecture often find themselves in a position of having to defend their resources for teaching and research activities that can differ substantially from those of the more established disciplines. Being able to give an account of these and other idiosyncratic practices of the discipline as rational, may, we believe, prove extremely valuable in discussion with university deans and leadership boards.

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