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Title

Forms, Transitions, and Design Approaches: Women as Creators of Built Landscapes

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Abstract

Gender issues in the landscape, for a long time, have belonged to the fields of social and political science, which remain relatively unfamiliar to both practitioners and students in the discipline of landscape architecture. Previous scholars have put effort into examining questions of gender, culture and landscape in order to clarify the issues that researchers may encounter in today's field of study. Among these gender classifications, questions in feminist inquiry have provided a historical setting to this study: what are the forms, transitions and design approaches that women employ as creators of the built landscapes?

Through reviewing the past literature and surveying today's practitioners, an understanding emerges of how female landscape designers think about their gender identity as a variable in the design process. In addition, several issues are further identified, including the female awareness of their gender identity in the workplace, types of female work, transitions in design approach since the 1899 American Society of Landscape Architects was founded to the present day, cultural discourse in female landscape forms, and so on.

The major goal of this study is not to build a description of history that asks how women may design differently than men, but to reexamine the idea that has made such stereotypes invalid; gender may influence design approaches but not outcome. Furthermore, this study also attempts to identify the potential gender issues in today's profession, and to provide a viewpoint to landscape designers of any gender: How does our innate gender identity potentially influence design thinking? Finally, as a designer who is drawn to the cultural dimension of landscape architecture, I hope this study will be helpful to landscape professionals in developing a more complex approach and critical eye for looking at designed landscape forms as cultural vehicles for gender construction.

First Advisor

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