

Rapperswiler Tag vom 30. April 2010 | Der grosse Wurf

Realm of the Senses

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Why suffocate on an overdose of chlorophyll if we can boost our level of adrenaline instead? During the seventeenth and eighteenth century Great Britain was the testing ground for many experiments in landscape architecture. Landscape was the topic of intense aesthetic discourse and philosophical enquiry. The essence of British landscape architecture was to reshape nature according to fashion and taste; the cult of the cultivar, the art of the artefact...! Landscape was the domain of dandies, hermits, painters and poets. The folly, the ha-ha, the hot-house, the line of beauty... Aesthetic constructs born out of curiosity and passion. During the nineteenth century nature became the topic of scientific enquiry. The colonial empire became the exotic discovery zone into the dark secrets of nature. Scientists behaved like hyper active squirrels; collecting, dissecting, cataloguing nature into encyclopaedic classification systems. Books became libraries, trees turned into arboretums, wild animals into zoological gardens. In comparison the twentieth century produced landscapes of little or no interest. The specific became general, the norm became rule, landscape turned into environment. A delicate green tissue turned into a monstrous green blanket. By the end of the 20th century mankind's relationship to Mother Nature displayed all the pathological symptoms of a collective Oedipus complex...

How to turn towards a new landscape architecture? Landscape architecture as skilful, accurate, and magnificent interplay of assembled vegetation under light...Landscape not as moral crusade (nature perverted) but, once again, an aesthetic experiment (nature perfected). Landscape architecture as the ultimate public realm of the senses... Ah...we would like to reveal the different layers in the landscape not unlike the sensuous act of striptease. Landscape architects should become as seductive as Mata Hari and as inquisitive as Miss Marple.