

An aerial photograph of a coastal city, likely Venice, showing a dense, intricate network of buildings and narrow streets. The city is built on islands and peninsulas, with a large, irregularly shaped lagoon or bay in the center. The water is a deep blue-grey color, and the buildings are a light tan or beige. The overall impression is one of a complex, organic urban form that has evolved over time, with a strong relationship to the surrounding water.

BIRKHAUSER

# INTERMEDIATE NATURES

THE LANDSCAPES OF MICHEL DESVIGNE

INTERMEDIATE NATURES

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THE LANDSCAPES OF MICHEL DESVIGNE

With a foreword by James Corner  
and a contribution by Gilles A. Tiberghien

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## AGRICULTURE, TEXTURE, AND THE UNFINISHED

JAMES CORNER

Long fascinated with aerial photographs of the earth's surface and various land patterns, especially those that depict a moment in time in an otherwise shifting and changing ecology, Michel Desvigne approaches landscape architecture as a form of earth marking that is inevitably provisional, staged and cumulative. This provisional condition is not simply a marking or a form, however, but more a material environment that effects and propels its own development.

Desvigne's landscapes seek to propagate new sets of conditions, to grow and body-forth more complex environments over time. Inspired by agricultural fields, tree farms, and, more broadly, ecosystems such as forests and deltas, Desvigne considers landscape architecture as a living artform that is more about cultivation, process, and change over time than it is with more familiar landscape architectural practices such as formal composition and representation. With a farmer's pragmatism and a landscapist's eye, Desvigne is able to create extremely sensible, rational, and strategic projects that at the same time approach the poetic.

A large part of Desvigne's education and professional development over the years has been concerned with agricultural, geomorphological, and cartographic practices. Here, a sense of the land as both *terroir* and territory imbues his approach with a special sensitivity to the peculiarities of place, scale, and local nuance. Adept at working across both large, regional scales as well as with more intimately scaled spaces, he demonstrates a great gift for understanding how smaller units of space are tied to large geographical contexts, and vice-versa. Once the lay-of-the-land is understood, specific agricultural themes follow—themes such as site modification, improvement, planting, cultivation, and management over time. Here, a talent for technique informs

the work—soil amelioration techniques, planting and transplanting techniques, land management techniques, and other technically specific practices, each often highly specific to the local environment, guide how the design strategy takes shape.

Less concerned with formal composition and design stylization, this agricultural emphasis allows Desvigne to infuse his landscapes with the capacity for growth, change, and adaptation over time, allowing for a loose flexibility rather than an overly deterministic regime. His idea of substitution is particularly relevant to this point, as he easily adapts by substituting one material for another while retaining the original cartographic lay-out—the organization and trace remain the same, but the material substitution creates a host of new or alternative possibilities. Importantly, these possibilities are less formal or aesthetic than they are active effecting transformation, as in a sort of viral agent or life-force. Practices of organizing processes and catalysts for transformation involve skills with orchestration, choreography, management, and cultivation, all time-based practices that differ from the typical static, formal compositional mode of physical design.

This process-based emphasis allows Desvigne to ignore typical landscape architectural interests in design as formal composition and representational content. If Le Nôtre, for example, concentrated all of his attention upon shaping landscape space to produce remarkable spatial, formal, and experiential effects, each portending symbolic and metaphoric meaning, Desvigne believes more in the dissolving of spatial and referential clarity, perhaps as an eschewal to the “high culture” elitism associated with “design” and seeking instead a more pragmatic, straightforward land-based approach.



More at home in a hedgerow or thicket than in an alley or parterre, Desvigne's practical landscapes seek to immerse the visitor in a sea of pure texture. Gently swaying trees, shimmering leaves, blustery grasses, and changing dapples of light and shade, add up to often very beautiful tactile fields of coarse and fine, near and far—landscapes without edge or boundary, lacking clear definition and shape. As with Monet or Van Gogh, or, in a different vein, Andreas Gursky, the emphasis upon generating complex field-like textures from a myriad of small multiple elements radically breaks with both Classical and Modernist notions of figure-ground and hierarchical spatial composition. Instead, freed from the rigid constraints of perfect objectified geometry, Desvigne's landscapes allow for a looser, more open, and porous matrix. Here, erasure and voiding might be just as valid as filling in and adding, as he would argue that emptiness can allow for a greater sense of legibility and possibility—a “texture,” if you will, of site clearance.

In this light, what is perhaps most striking in Desvigne's work is his fascination with the unfinished. He does not seem at all bothered that a landscape architectural project may appear raw, young, still-in-development. First, there is of course a certain aesthetic appeal to unfinished landscapes, followed by an excited sense of anticipation of things yet to come, especially with young landscapes where a palpable sense of growth and change is most pronounced over relatively short timeframes. But, more deeply, Desvigne simply does not believe that any landscape—no matter how manicured and mature—is ever really finished. As with the earth artist Robert Smithson, Desvigne views landscape architecture as a work in process, never really attaining an ideal state at any one moment in time, but always exceeding expectations when set in motion over time, when viewed as an active palimpsest accruing new properties, qualities,

and potentials in time. Here, his understanding of landscape as active infrastructure suggests new ways of validating investment in landscape in cities, as these green living infrastructures can be the catalysts for new forms of development and new lifestyles, new armatures for more complex forms of urbanism to grow and evolve.

Clearly, Desvigne's work is still itself a work-in-progress. It exists more in text, images, and ideas than as a significant oeuvre of built work. Many of the claims described above are pointing to what is at stake and significant as more built projects emerge in the coming years. But there is no denying the wide influence Desvigne's ideas have had on a younger generation of landscape architects around the world, where issues of territory, geography, agriculture, cultivation, management, and time-based development have been foregrounded. The difficulty in advancing this work in practice lies with convincing society that there are very real and important alternatives to the static pastoral and the merely scenic, where landscape may be more instrumental in its effects (harvesting rainwater, improving air and water quality, enhancing species biodiversity, maturing complex ecosystems, providing space for new public uses and programs, catalyzing sustainable forms of urban development, and the like—technical performance criteria, shaped with an artistic twist that plays on site legibility and cultural forms of content) than when landscape is simply painted as a benevolent scene, perhaps beautiful but inevitably passive in its effects.

## INTRODUCTION

MICHEL DESVIGNE

Having reached what one architecture critic described as the midpoint in my career, I feel I have nothing to show. Or at least nothing that resembles the seductive images in architecture books, nothing reminiscent of photogenic models, nothing that could be compared to the paradisiacal computer-generated images that clutter the trade journals. My work requires few objects—ideally none at all—and only ordinary materials. It does not entail any heroic feats of execution or any extravagance. So it is distinguished by a certain poverty. It is not a deliberate desire for an *architettura povera*, but rather the option of rusticity. It is a rigor that stands out in my mind. A structurally unrewarding youth. I do not feel any frustration about it. This was not always the case, and I sometimes resorted to appurtenances that were likely to give my efforts the status of works of architecture: the use of layouts or familiar objects, for example. This provided me with a very fleeting reassurance. The demanding architects with whom I work take over a significant part of my budgets, compelling me to the aforementioned poverty, and I am strangely grateful to them for this.

I like the way our materials defy “outcomes,” as if a young landscape could not be “picturesque,” could not resemble any model image. The saplings, which are reminiscent of nothing and yet cover the ground with their dead leaves, immediately transform the most artificial materials into dusty undergrowth. Poverty requires innovation, in the sense of an architecture that is, at the least, visible. To commandeer farming techniques and practices suddenly makes a space legible. This does not entail any theoretical minimalism, but rather a kind of patience and resistance: to stand fast and refuse to give in to easy opportunities. To refuse to get bogged down needlessly or prematurely give an illusory “polish,” out of a lack of confidence about the “landscapes in development.” To refuse to destabilize, sully, or upset the stages of these maturation processes. Also, and above all, to refuse to show this work through stereotyped images.

Having arrived at the midpoint, I note that I have observed and analyzed hundreds of hectares, planted tens of thousands of trees, moved small hills of earth, aided in setting up kilometers of roads, railways, and canals. I see an overabundance of projects. More than 40 sites are now being transformed, including some that have been in the works for more than 17 years. They must be considered with rigor and serenity—patience. They are not objects, but some are already settings that are developing and that escape, to a certain extent, from their creator. They are living organisms—the vegetation, the environments of course, but also the works of architecture and their successive states. In my contribution to this production, there is a primitive pleasure that differs from the pleasure of construction and that consists of combining, domesticating, and directing living systems. It is a pleasure well known to gardeners. And then, to cap it all, to build up districts and participate in the organization of cities can seem like pure perfection.

We landscape architects believe that the transformation of the landscape is a precedent or a phase in the creation of neighborhoods. Enhancing a site does not mean prefiguring the road network or the traffic islands. I like this idea of intermediate nature, of a transformed landscape whose primitive characteristics of spatial orientation, incline, and moisture are the preconditions with which town planners and architects will transform the city. I like the long time frame of landscapes and cities. I especially like the play with time: the highlighting of successive phases, the emphasis on early phases, the coexistence of different stages of development that concentrate and condense, in a short period, processes with historical rhythms. Several experiments entail devising vast vegetal structures comprising tens of thousands of trees.

The dimensions of these “organisms” exceed those of cities. This is architecture on the scale of the site, on the geographical scale. Farmers and forest rangers work with areas that are, in a different way, much larger, but those areas are not architectural. These intermediate natures are architecture—rough, temporary architecture under

development. How can this be shown? I think it is important to hold out against clichés, to play with the multitude, with the successions. There is no “beautiful” image, nor should there be, except by accident. Each of the images is taken in a larger series and a larger space.

We are interested in the *res publica*. Much more than a distortion or a specialization, it is almost a necessity. We contribute to the formation of a common territory. We transform landscapes produced by society. We draw inspiration and sustenance in the traces of society’s activities. Above all, we aim to help this society envision other ways of occupying and constituting the area. I aspire to give an area meaning, or at least legibility. Would it be worth it to make the environment intelligible and understandable?

I am fascinated by the people who know their land perfectly, who take obvious delight in mastering the precise physical reality but also the history and the processes at work—unlike those who navigate the abstract space of technocracy and signalization, and who consume the images. No nostalgia, however, because what fascinates me is above all their ability to change.

I am thinking of the architects from Ticino and the way in which they knew how to play with vernacular architecture and agricultural practices in order to introduce Germanic modernity with great accuracy, over 50 years ago. To see, to make legible—this is a necessary precondition but one that cannot take the place of a kind of “interior necessity.” The showcasing of traces is not enough. To content oneself with that would be like doing restoration work. But to commandeer these traces, to invert or distort them—therein lies the innovation.

I like poplar groves, orchards, artificially planted forests. I like to perceive these spaces whose conventional order is forgotten so that they are only densities, variations on density. Neither full nor empty, these squared spaces are sieves of a sort, where paradoxically life moves in—traps for an intermediate nature.

# LANDFORMS

THE NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURES OF CITIES



- 1 Biesbosch Stad, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
- 2 Var Plain, Nice, France
- 3 Lower Lea Valley, London, Great Britain
- 4 Burgos, Spain

Some sites, by their size, their location, or by the loss of their historical structure, are an invitation to refer to the geographic scale. The forms of the neighborhoods planned here are determined by the larger landscapes, which are themselves the product of miniature, transposed systems. There are no formulas that are systematically applicable to the development of cities, just individual examples. In these particular situations, the components from nature—the river for the Var Plain, the delta flood zone for Rotterdam—are real and powerful props. Despite their differences, what these cases have in common are the absence of stereotyped connotation and the full range of the proposed landscape structures. The reference to the American park systems, those vast continua forming the framework of cities, has value mainly for the large scale of those examples. In the 19th century, they were able to offer some remarkable qualities of composition and contextual pertinence. The parks created by Frederick Law Olmsted have succeeded, thanks to the subtlety of his observations, in revealing so much about landscapes. However, parks designed in the same era by talentless imitators detract from the general fascination with this typology, which, in the United States, also produced a collection of excruciatingly deficient works. The examples proposed here are linked to specific situations.

In the case of the Var Plain, as in that of Rotterdam, the areas to be transformed stretch over dozens of kilometers. Very often the practices adopted in this type of configuration are built up without regard for the overall vision. To create physical structures that have the dimensions of the sites under consideration constitutes an unusual challenge. The role of the infrastructures should be clearly understood here. Today there is a kind of paradoxical caution that leads to the carving up of gigantic works, with the idea of returning them to the “human scale.” We think this attitude

seems to ignore their distinctive qualities. The size of a highway or of railroad tracks is reduced when compared with that of a valley. Conversely, the form of these infrastructures shows many similarities with that of the rivers and reliefs. To consider the infrastructures like rivers is logical in terms of the dimensions and makes possible the transposition that arises from the observation of natural processes. The shapes produced are recognizable and familiar in that they evoke for everyone the geographical scale and its physical application.

If the river is large, the size of the parcel should also be taken into account. The examples presented here form a valley-sized ensemble. However, the material that is encompassed inevitably plays with the reality of the land and its dimensions, which are linked to the historical traces of the property. These traces, long forgotten, neglected, or obliterated, have over the last few decades drawn the attention (theoretical attention, at the very least) of landscape architects. Some think that, to constitute a project, it is enough to work within the context of these traces, to sublimate them. With this manner of seeing and working, one falls into another form of academicism. In fact, it seems to me that equal attention should be paid to the geographical nature of the site and to the components that bring to mind its history. In the case of the Var Plain, the large landscape that was conceived, evoking the meanders of the river, can be made up of small farms playing with the traces on-site. If a hierarchy is established, the two concerns coexist and are not opposable.

Whatever the scale envisioned, the point is not to imitate forms found in nature. The dimensions, material, and texture of the proposed designs should plainly reveal the artifice. By taking into account the size of the river, but also the size of the parcel,



it is possible to consider both a vast horizon line and the texture given to the composition. In the case of the Rotterdam project, the goal is once again to attain the dimensions of nature: the game that consists of playing with the imprint of the water nevertheless arises from complete artifice. The former rivers become embankments, the embankments are transformed into residential areas: the ensemble derives from forms in nature that are not copied or brought back, but transposed.

How does the reading of a large area concern the transformation of contemporary cities? What are the stakes of this exercise? Our landscapes today are often the product of technocratic regulations. Consolidation of farmland and extensive farming have led to the disappearance of physical elements (embankments, hedges, and drains) that gave the landscape its legibility. This indetermination, this absence of status, this vagueness creates a feeling of malaise and absurdity. It is difficult to put up with the disregard revealed by this loss of definition of our lands, which is accompanied by a more widespread wastefulness. The understanding of a landscape, of its logic, and the sense that there are systems at work are necessities. The proposals presented here pertain to the desire to give modern-day landscapes a geographic anchorage, for the cities that will settle in there.

Yet these two cases are unusual and terribly fragile situations. The proposed examples are an infrequent kind of commission. But these two studies show that, within the context of a high-level thought process, it is possible to go beyond the administrative carving up that produces the quasi-virtual landscape mentioned above. These proposed instances of sweeping physical coherence could determine many necessary technical and administrative decisions for the transformation of the area.

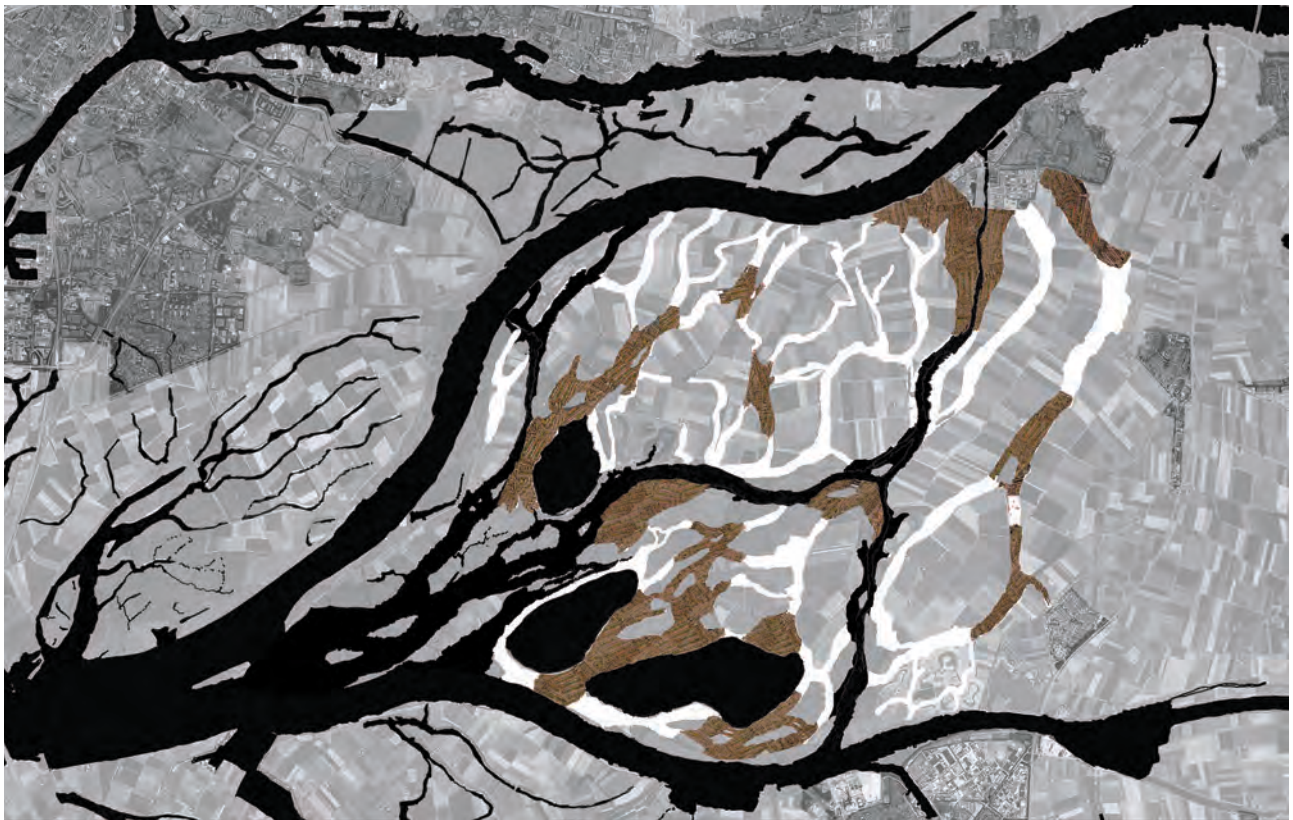


## **BIESBOSCH STAD, ROTTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS, 2005**

- 1 At the Architecture Biennale Rotterdam, in 2005, we were invited to consider a large site to the south of the city, and its future. Potentially dangerous because it was liable to flooding, this area constitutes a valuable land reserve for the necessary development of Rotterdam. It was a paradoxical assignment: make room for water in a kind of re-naturalizing of the delta and, at the same time, create scenarios for the massive construction of residential neighborhoods. This site, at the confluence of the Rhine and the Meuse rivers, is under constant threat from possible climatic disturbances and heavy floods. Already turned into polders, it is surrounded by dikes, which define large dry units used for farming. A very unusual phenomenon is at work here: as these vast parcels were drained, streams that were part of the delta branches were covered up. The boggy ground, deprived of its water, sank down around these former meanders, which, because they were made of incompressible, non-compactable sand, are today located at a higher level than the banks, in a curious sort of inversion.



2

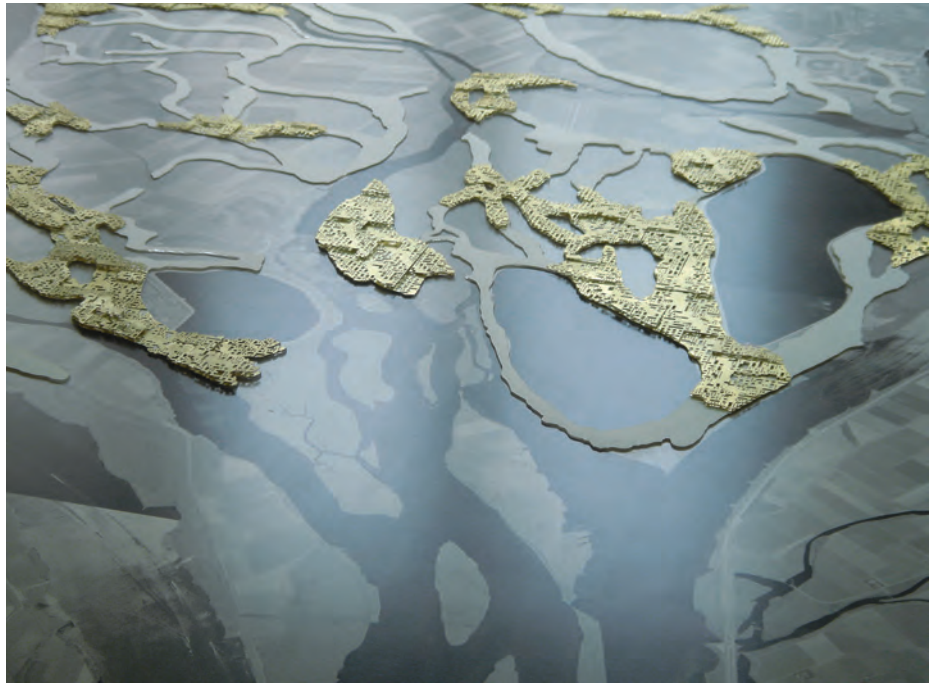


3

- 2 Our idea is to break the dikes to allow the water (which appears in dark gray) to spill out unhindered in case of flooding. The materials from the dismantled dikes would then be placed on the imprint of the former rivers. Their sandy, incompressible beds are thus raised, accenting the observed inversion and forming areas that are out of the water (indicated in light gray and white). The widest surfaces are spaces on which to build (in white). Thus people live *on* these strangely shaped dikes, not *behind* them. The raised streams also form a communications network. The resulting landscape, liable to flooding, would continue to be farmland. It is like a negative cast of the area. The project grew out of observation and proceeded by distortion, by transposition. The archipelagos are defined by the design, which creates new areas standing in for the traces of the geography.
  
- 3 The challenge of this exercise is to make possible the formation of a city by proposing arrangements that result in devices that are at once archaic and playful. One could recall here the archipelagos of Stockholm, where magnificent games are set in motion, from one façade to the next, separated not by avenues but by the presence of water. In the same way, the Rotterdam project, unlike the sadly homogeneous urban sprawl, is built on dense neighborhood units, indicated on the plan in brown; on circulation paths (in white); but also on parks, which look out on one another above the farmland that is liable to flooding.



4



5

- 4 Three basins on this site supply potable water for Rotterdam. Today they are cut off by polders. We believe it is essential to create new pathways for the water flow, in case the water level rises around these “lakes,” whose branching rivers can, moreover, be linked to the new city via built embankments. Once again, various visual plays on the opposite side, across these basins, will be set up.
  
- 5 Farmland, with a bird’s-eye view of the basins—the planned neighborhoods are thus located in a quay-like arrangement. These neighborhoods, because they occupy a small portion of the land, leaving room for increases in the water level and for farming, are necessarily dense. They are little islands of urbanity creating a playful archipelago, a constructed and inverse memory of the old delta.





## **VAR PLAIN, NICE, FRANCE, 2006-2007**

- 1 This geography exercise—a “digesting” and reformulating of aspects of nature that are today broken up—is at the heart of the Var Plain project, developed in conjunction with OMA architects Rem Koolhaas and Xaveer de Geyter. The Mediterranean coast as a whole is entirely built up today. But here, near Nice, a large flat area, roughly 20 kilometers in length, remains fallow. It is quite impossible to envision a landscape there. The existing green space is extremely dilapidated, poor, studded with small spaces occupied by tire vendors or the vestiges of abandoned greenhouses, but also by sporadic settlements. This area is partially unbuildable owing to the caprices of the river and the risk of flooding. Dikes were added to the Var in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and plot divisions appeared between the dikes.

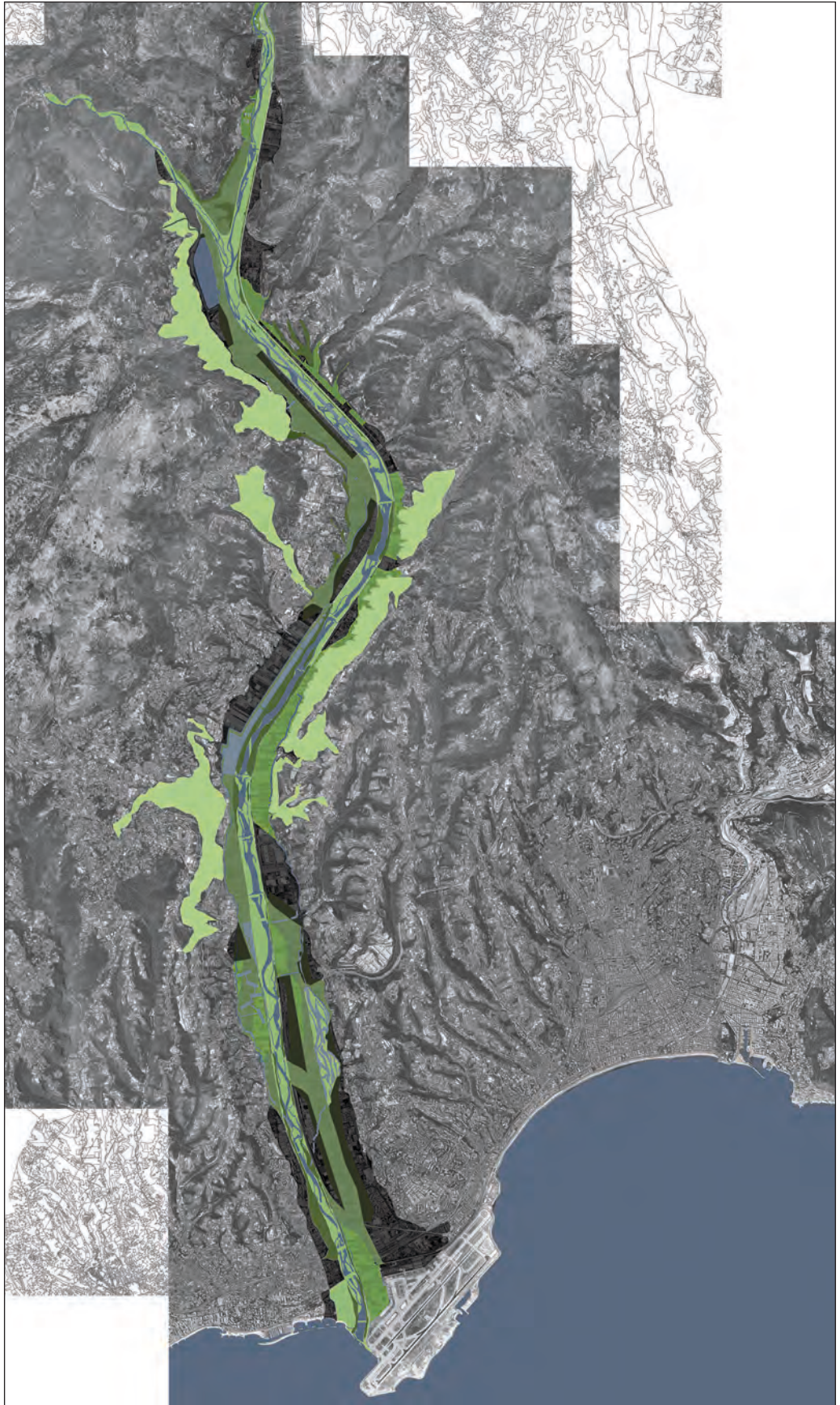


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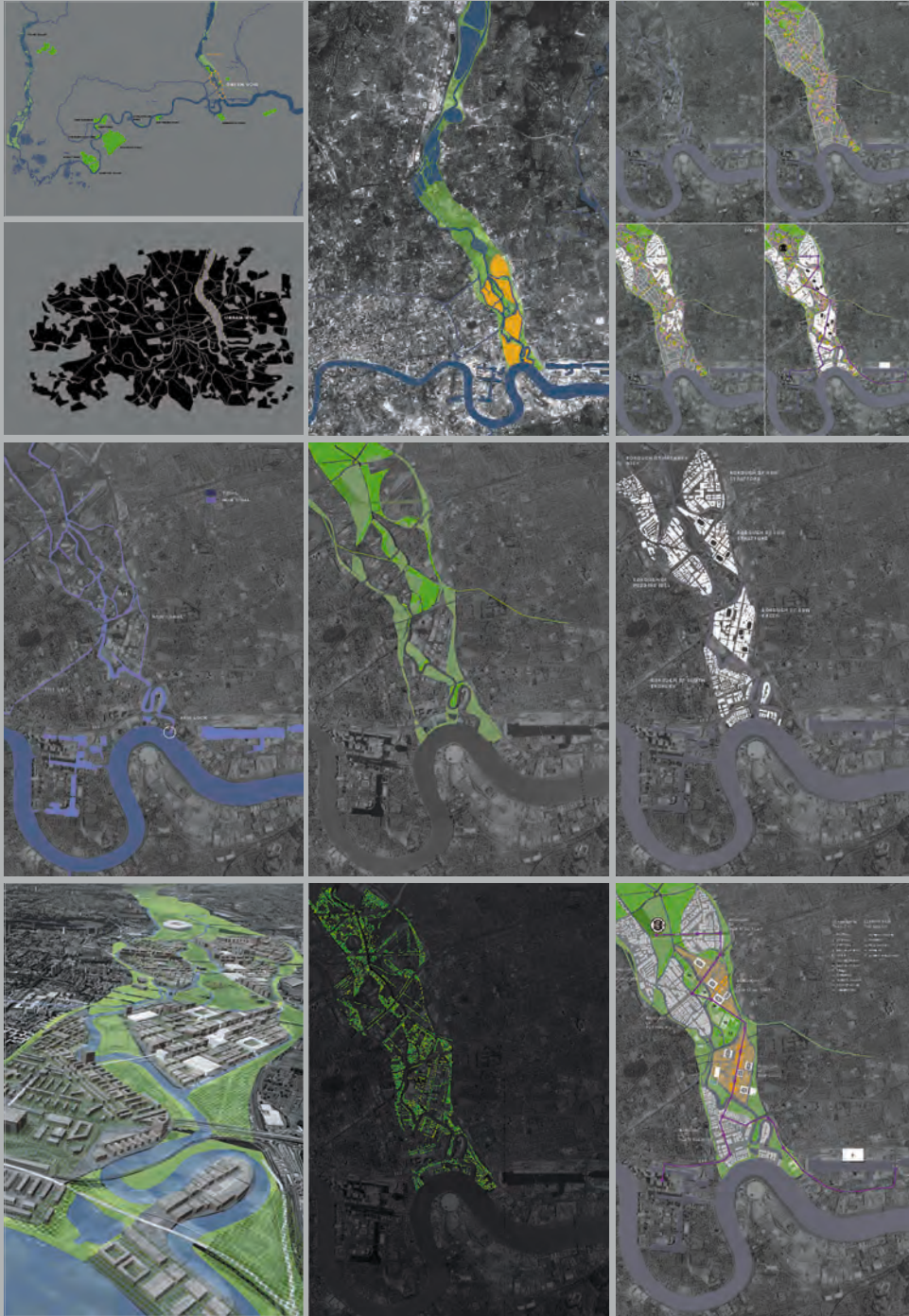


3

- 2 The challenge today is to take hold of this huge, terribly fragmented space and develop on it a landscape capable of giving coherence to what should be added there, namely, the developments necessary for settlement.
  
- 3 The determining factors at work in this valley were the movements of the river, the alluvium deposits, the alluvial terraces, and the vegetation that accompanies them. While this geography linked to the river is significant and stimulating, the plot divisions, which correspond to property ownership, are, on another level, an unavoidable fact. The project begins with the idea that the regrouping of land is conceivable: The farming can change and can be more closely linked with the city, while retaining the truck-farming work. The transition spaces, which are agricultural, are indicated here in green. They form large continuous stretches in the traces of the old meanders. The project takes into account the existing forms, both natural and cultivated, those left in neglect or already built, and integrates the hydraulic movements and the topography linked to the flow of water.

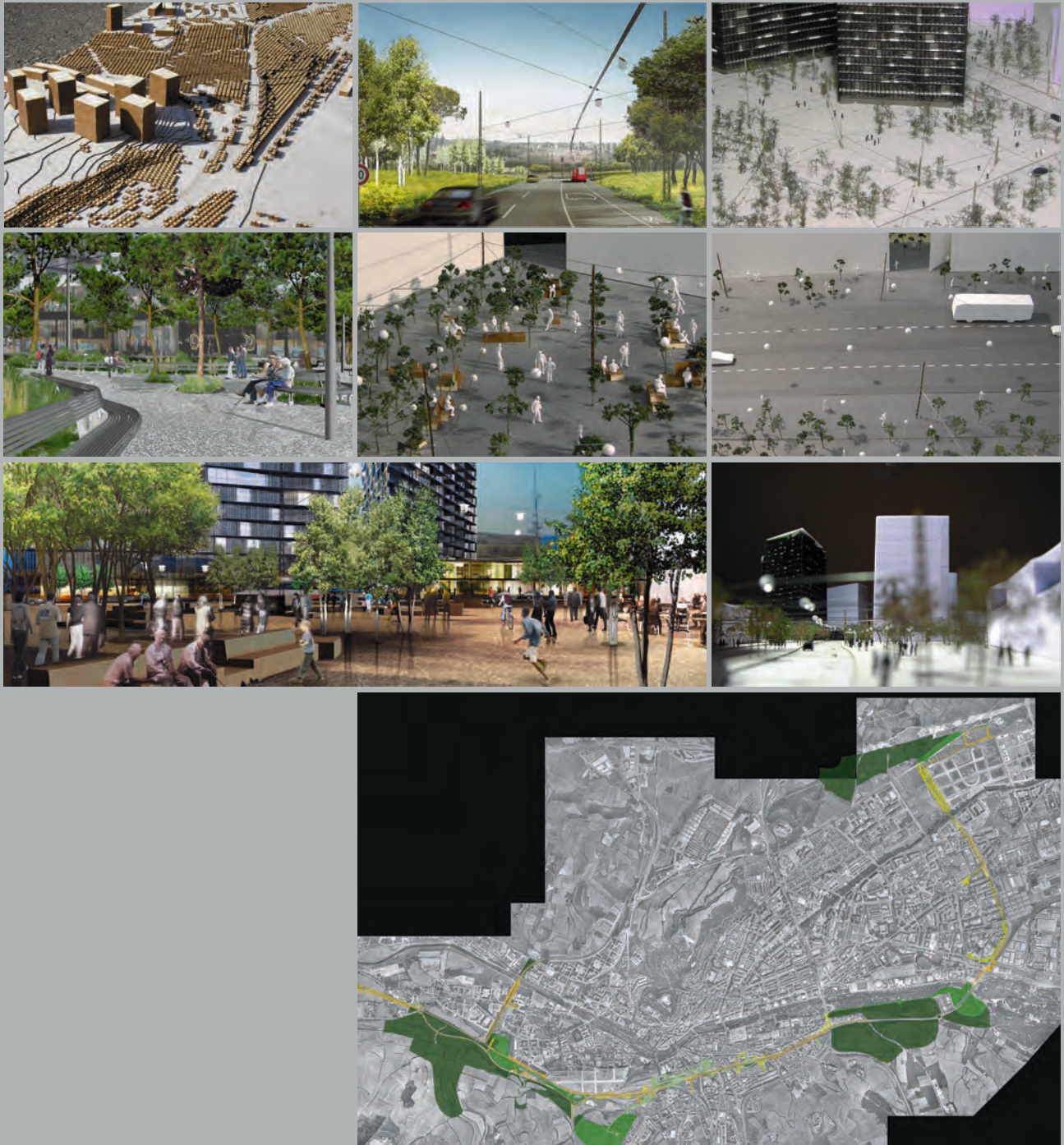


- 4 It was never our intention to make the context a blank slate: We wanted to embrace the entirety in a broader geographical vision capable of making the proportions of the river and its alluvial valleys perceptible and noticeable once again. The dikes, in particular, are retained; then, on either side, small developable islands (in black) are placed, incorporating the existing habitat. The system of transposing elements from nature creates another reality, of substantial, reassuring bulk and shape, which gives meaning to the void. By creating densely built little islands—located in quay-like arrangements, such as those that are described for Rotterdam and that result from the natural configuration of the site—it is possible to give the area a readily understandable image and a coherent physical presence, while also taking into account the infrastructures, for very urban uses. The crumbling areas are thus approached through a broader view of the natural forms, understood in their entirety and their outmoded mechanisms.



## LOWER LEA VALLEY, LONDON, GREAT BRITAIN, 2004

This proposal for the design of the site of the Olympic Games in London, developed in coordination with Herzog & de Meuron, involved the invention of a powerful geographic unit for this vast area in the London suburbs, formerly devoted to industry. In this proposal, the neighborhoods develop in archipelagos, thus comprising a number of quay-like arrangements.



**BURGOS, SPAIN, 2006-2011**

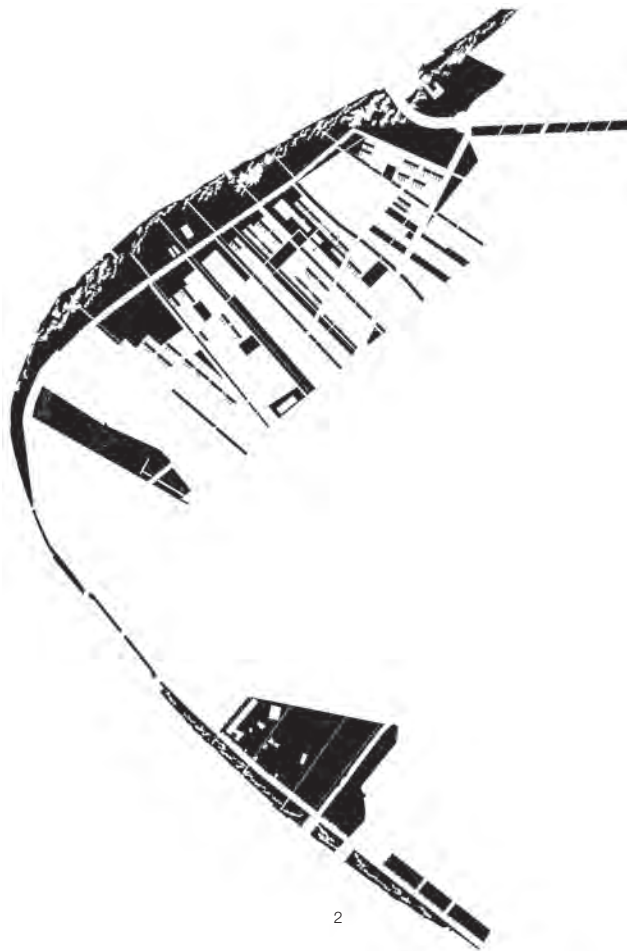
The commission involved replacing a defunct railroad line in the center of Burgos with neighborhoods organized around a boulevard. Herzog & de Meuron conceived hubs of intensity, separated by voids, with the ensemble slipping into the existing city. Conversely, the landscape acquired a quality linked to its geographic aspect. The forest structure, vast or miniature, is superposed on various public spaces in stone.

# TERRITORIES AND SHAPES OF TIME

URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS AND LANDSCAPES IN COUNTERPOINT



1



2



3



4

0 500 1000 m

- 1 Lyon Confluence, Lyon, France
- 2 The Right Bank of Bordeaux, Bordeaux, France
- 3 Millennium Park, Greenwich, London, Great Britain
- 4 Marianne Park, Montpellier, France



Currently most projects affecting the land are obviously projects that involve transformation. Our cities exist, our land is occupied. It is a question of making them denser, changing their allocation, embellishing them. We know empirically the duration of these transformations, whether they involve large landscapes or bits of the cities. We know from experience that 30 or so years are needed to form a neighborhood, and that, in addition, these relatively long processes undergo permanent corrections. The initial vision should also be able to adapt to the hazards of the economy and to changing requirements. Hence the need to design tools and methods that make it possible to integrate this idea of duration in the way sites are transformed.

When the only representation of the real eventually replaces the real, we lapse into simulacrum. Often fascinated by the beauty of maps produced one after another, people settle for creating a project that they think is satisfying. What is necessary, on the contrary, is to safeguard and control the management of the proposals, in order to avoid an unchanging, and therefore false, representation of the real without giving in to an uncontrolled and dangerous attraction for this cartographic accumulation.

The transformation of landscapes must be considered case by case. What authorizes the play with these successive states is the project material itself, which is the product of practical work. To acquire the land, change the nature of the soil, give this area positive attributes, plant trees, control the development, and change the density: this is a set of physical practices applied to a reality. In Bordeaux, the proposed forest entity led us to work around the landed propriety restriction, hence the texture of the plantings and their specific density. The physical result that was obtained will give the sense of time that is necessary for this design.

If the landscape is a structural frame, it also offers the possibility of temporarily occupying some parts of the city undergoing transformation, in which many unknowns remain. While waiting for construction, these intermediate natures immediately provide positive attributes to the sites. Of course, this is an artifice: this provisory, fulfilling landscape is liable to be destroyed one day to make room for buildings. We see how this idea differs from the concept of *préverdissement* (plant today, build tomorrow), which developed in the 1970s. It cannot be a question of producing the negative of a site plan, but rather of giving the land an immediate status, maintaining it, and accepting its transformation. This falls in the category of management, maintenance, and respect, even though the qualities and uses are only temporary.

This is far from the idea of vagueness, which in the city shows evidence of the disdain mentioned above. In the romantic fascination for the abandoned center of the city, we rediscover the idea of reclaiming nature's "divine" right over bad human industry. There is no doubt that, in these processes of recolonization, there are observable phenomena of great interest. But one should be careful about offering a polished image of the world. These *terrains vagues* also reflect indetermination and indicate a kind of failure of man's establishment in the city.

The endeavors and experiments detailed in this chapter represent variable time commitments. The case of Lyon shows an eight-year commitment that makes possible the collective mastery of our land. This assumes that the land is considered a common good, which only a democratic system is able to guarantee. Very often the administration wants to acquire regulatory plans to control the development of its public spaces over the long term. The proposals made in Bordeaux, Aubervilliers, and Anvers are for small projects that sometimes play the role of prototypes. These case studies

make it possible to have an almost exhaustive vision of the problems that could arise in an area. They provide the opportunity to design a vocabulary, materials, and modalities, possibly verified by prototypes, that can reach the level of regulatory statutes. Thus the ideal plan would resemble an experimental method, such as scientists use. From a given situation comes the sense of a possible transformation, transposed into the real. The elements that are corroborated become regulations that can be applied on a large scale and over time.

Designing a relevant structure on a given site falls under this concept of permanence. To circulate easily, to receive sunlight, to get one's bearings, to find shelter from the wind—these physical needs are not destined to change rapidly. Inside these permanent structures, various occupancy scenarios can be planned and can follow one after another. It is conceivable that the constituent elements, inalienable and permanent, will be defined just like the changing components. In order for a city to endure, for it to develop, and for its inhabitants to live well there, it must have a relationship—a permanent relationship—with its soil, its rivers, and its reliefs. An area, with its invariables, must have this practical aspect.

Within the framework of studies on the geological scale, such as those involving the Var Plain and Rotterdam, we had to compress into a few decades mechanisms that have endured for several millennia. In the case of urban transformations, very long construction time for our landscape structures paradoxically corresponds to very short times when compared to other historical periods of city building. In both cases, taking time into account led us to shorten it, thus strangely giving the feeling of a site anchored in its history and on its site.



## LYON CONFLUENCE, LYON, FRANCE, 2000-2005

- 1 The Lyon Confluence is a 150-hectare site stretching south of the Perrache train station, between the Rhône and Saône rivers; pushed between a railroad siding is a multimodal interchange, a highway, a wholesale market, and a whole series of industrial plants that are destined to disappear. This site, in the center of the city, has fascinated generations of elected officials and architects: a previous study delimited a common park, to the north of which a rather dense neighborhood would be built. Although the project was adopted, there remained the widely held awareness of great impossibility. In order for the site plan to be realized, it was in fact necessary to wait several decades for all the land to be freed up, for the industrial sites to be transformed, and also for the railroad lines to be abandoned and a highway bypass to be put in place, and so forth. Thus it was necessary to think of a “ruse,” a way to take control of this site, despite these difficulties, and to begin its transformation.



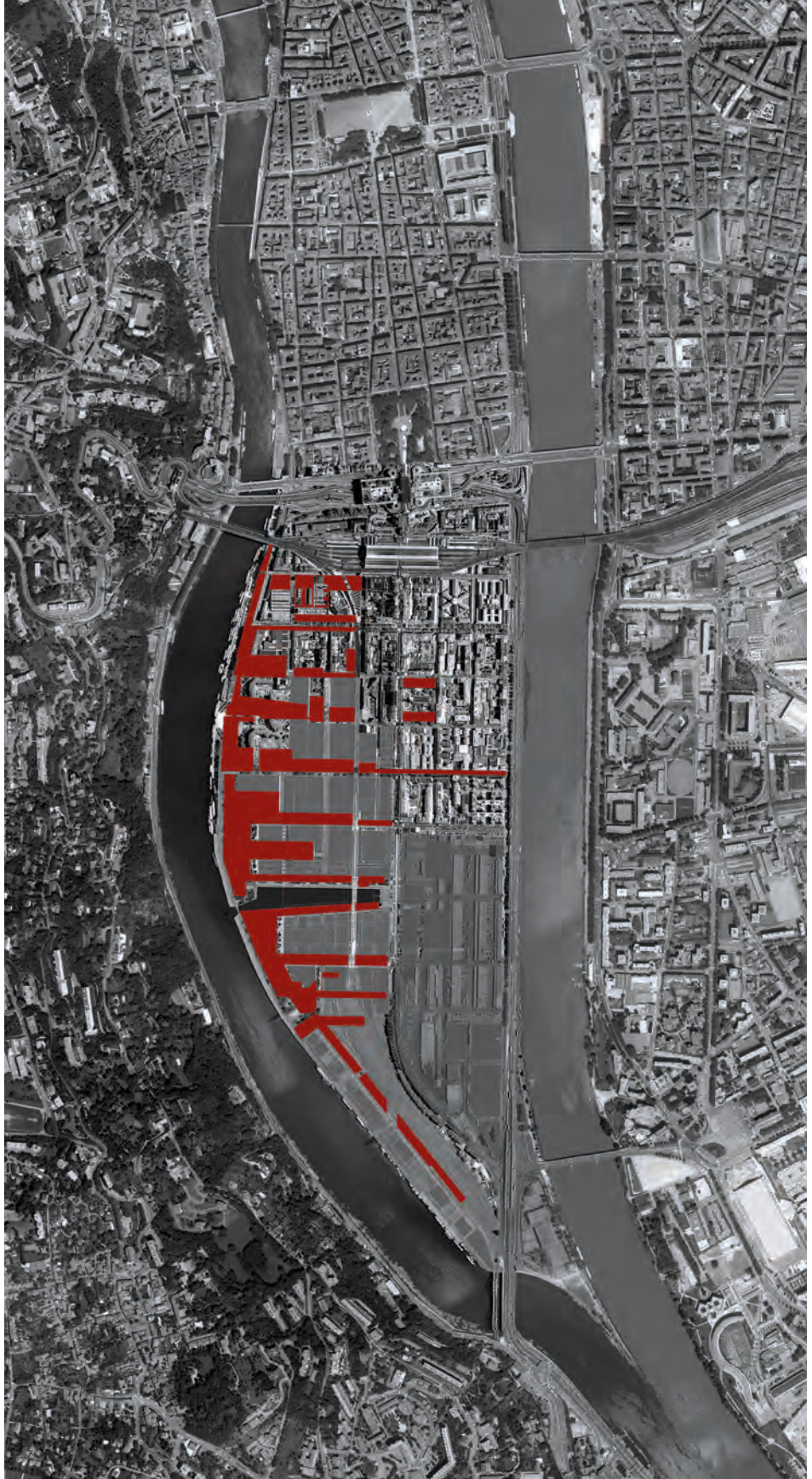
- 2 The ideal city, as it has been proposed, does not correspond in any way to the reality of a built city. The danger lies in solidifying in a site plan the future of our cities and our landscapes. Of course, it is impossible to predict what type of city will be built thirty years from now. This is how the concept of time—the focal point for the project design—was present when the authorities adopted the plan. The idea of implementing an “intermediate nature,” including a visible prototype in the form of a 2.5-kilometer promenade along the Saône River in 1999, gained support.





- 3 We prepared a map of probable changes and of the possible release of public lands. Thus we understood why it was necessary to replace a unitary project, as initially conceived, with a project that progressed by successive steps and changes, for this could give the area concerned an immediate landscaped quality.

The map of planned changes makes it possible to consider a particular landscape structure, which, necessarily following the lot divisions, corresponds to a series of branches running perpendicular to the rivers. These branches are both temporary and enduring. This device will accompany the transformations. This intermediary nature gives a status to the site and positive qualities to each of the parcels as they are gradually freed up, so that the landscape added there will accommodate the future neighborhoods and their buildings.



- 4 We are not content with *terrains vagues* lacking any defined function. The fabric that gradually emerges—consisting of parks and public spaces that are shared, private, or semi-collective—is an urban fabric. The main challenge of this initiative is to make the citizens want to live in the center of the city, in this concrete relationship, necessary for everyone, with the ground, as certain neighborhoods, notably in London (South Kensington, for example) and Switzerland (in the 1950s, with the works by Atelier 5), have suggested so convincingly. The idea of transformation over time thus leads one to imagine urban forms that are not superposed on the site but that draw their substance from these changes. By proceeding in an organic way, forging relationships between the public space and the built components, it is possible to consider other ways of making the city.

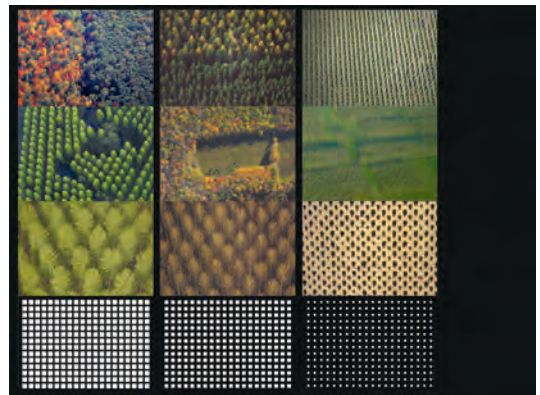
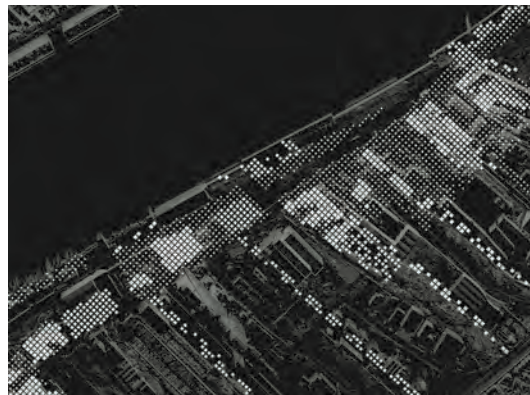
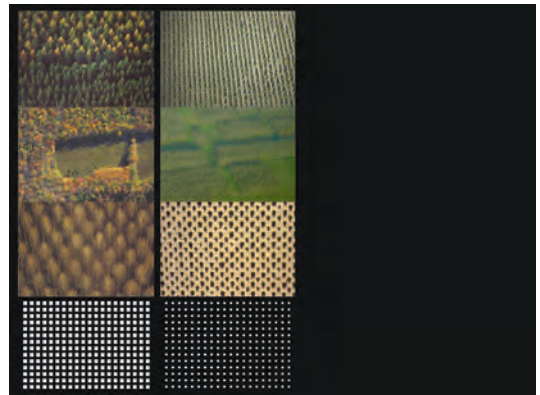
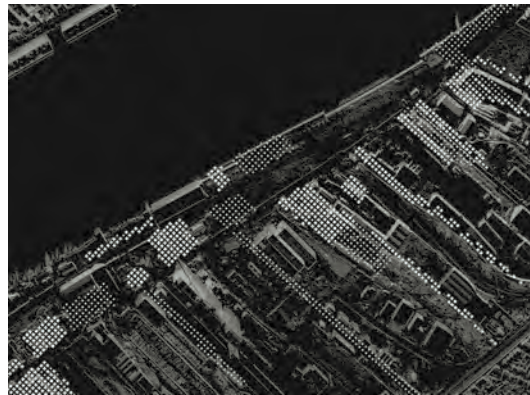
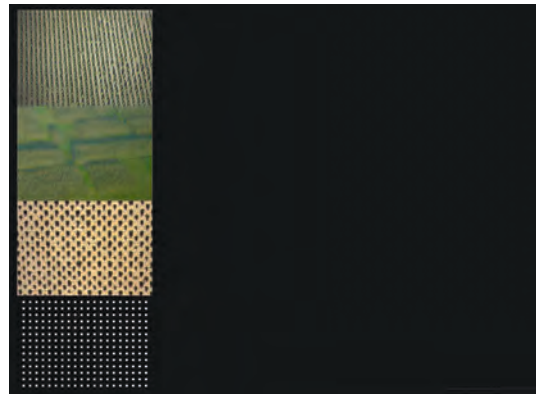
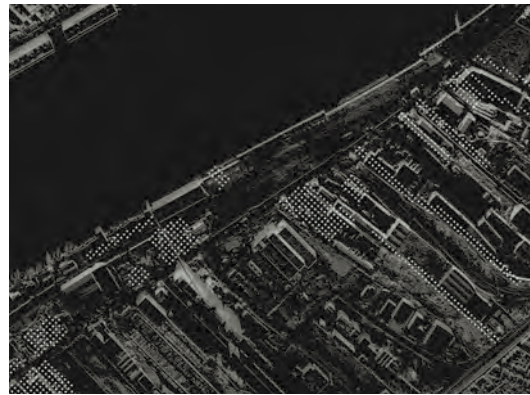


## THE RIGHT BANK OF BORDEAUX, BORDEAUX, FRANCE, 2000-2004

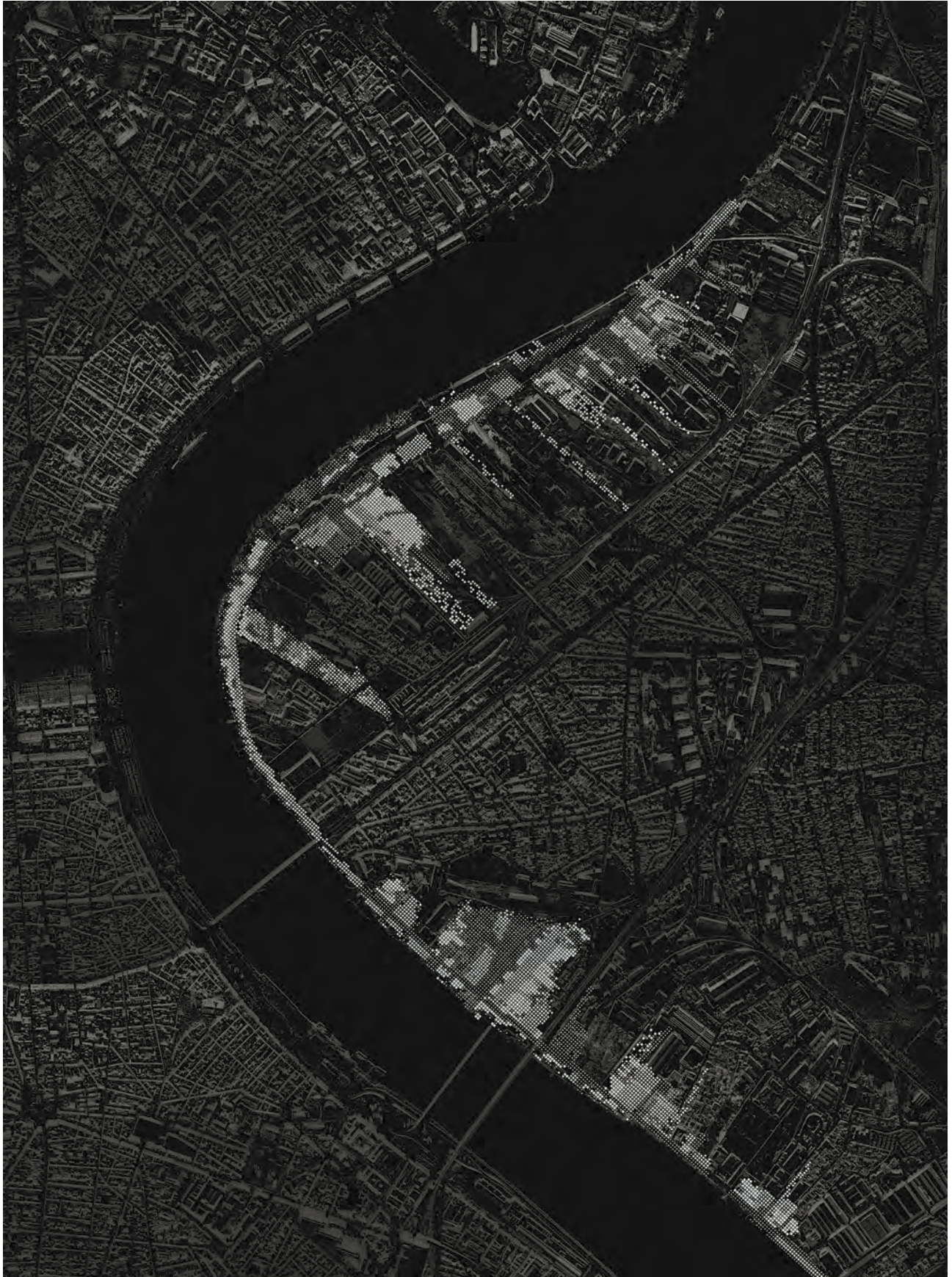
- 1 In the design for the right bank of Bordeaux, there appears once again the process of transformation over time. What should be noted here, above all else, are the very large scale of the area in question and the considerable importance of the river.

The right bank of the Garonne River, long occupied by factories that are gradually changing and moving away, is quite different from the left bank, which features the historic city and the former port of Bordeaux. Today, with the disappearance of the port, its fences, and most of its entrepôts, and with the sweeping changes to its quays, the eye stretches much further, toward the right bank, itself in the process of transformation. Our proposal creates on its banks a new vegetative horizon line, closely linked to the river and its bed. The creation of a landscape consisting of two successive horizon lines—one that underpins the project, but also the existing one, with the hill in back—is a determining factor.

We find it pointless to think of shifting, to the right bank of Bordeaux, the homogeneity of the left bank and its famous historic façade. Once again, it would probably take many decades for this site to find coherence, which could not but be different from that which is found on the left bank.

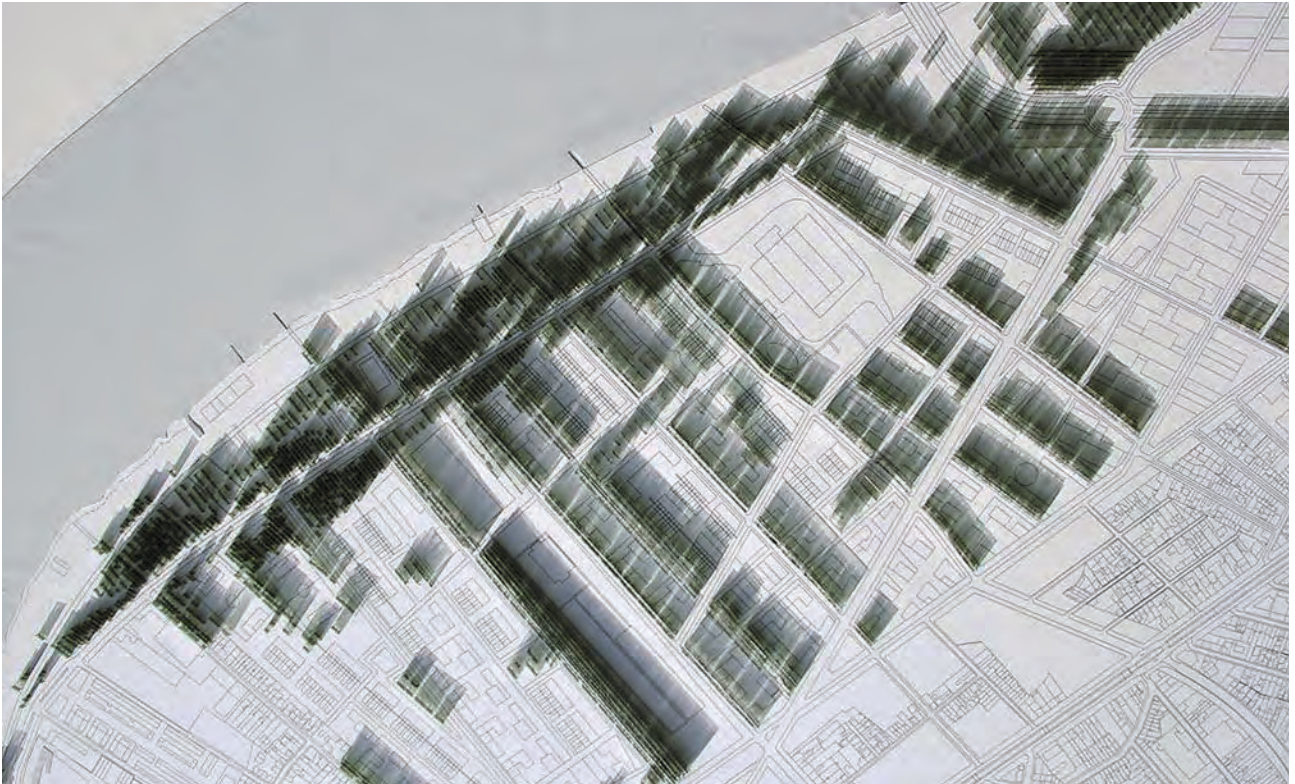
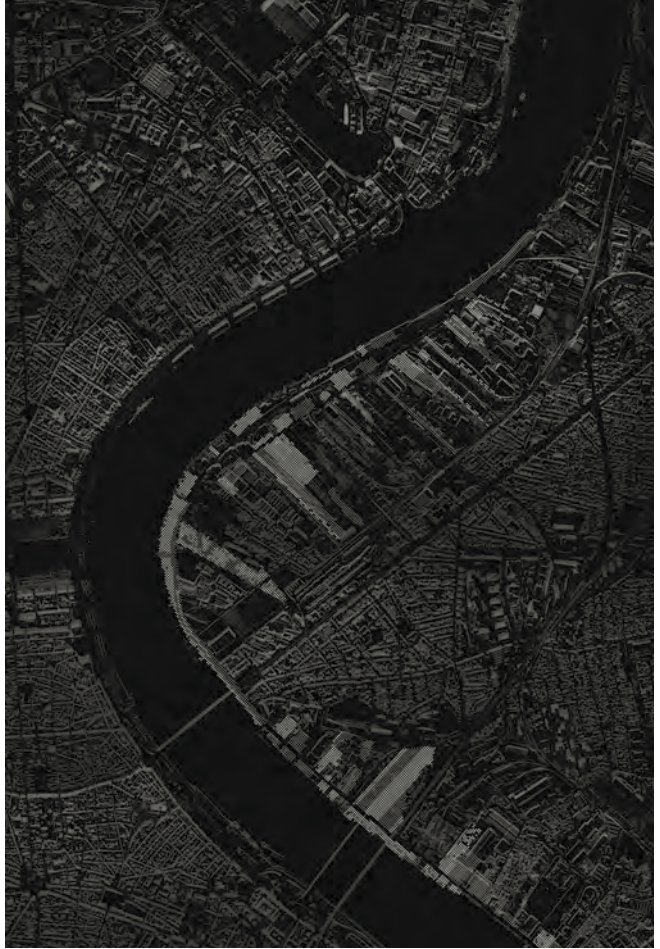
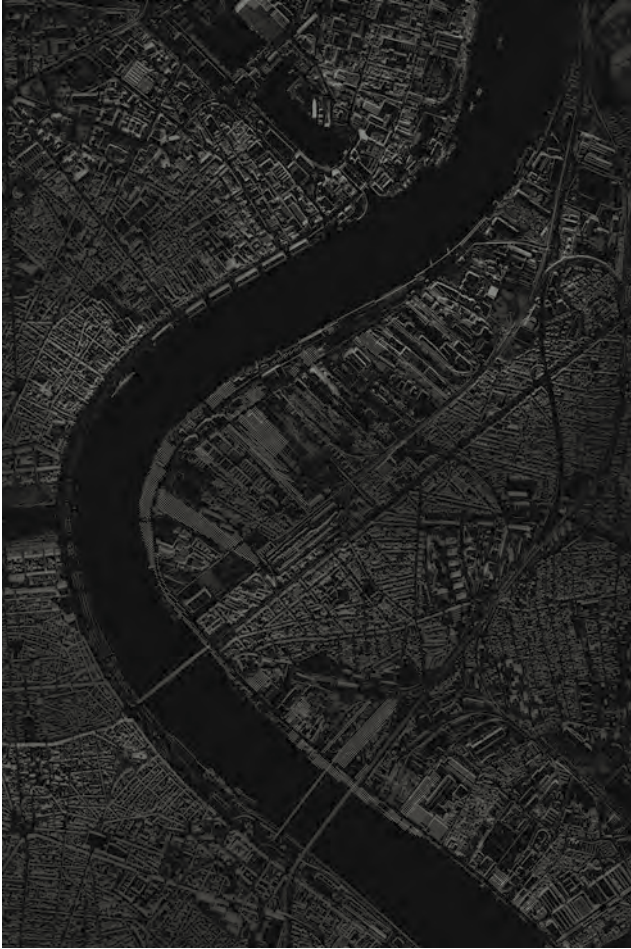


- 2 As in Lyon, the process of transformation takes into account the concept of time. The project involves a set of actions based on, and playing upon, the existing parcels, the industrial areas, the abandoned parking lots, and the roads. The image opposite shows three successive states, as the land was gradually acquired by the City and then planted. The proposal for the landscape consisted of building up the forest, which necessarily bears the mark of time. To this is added the introduction of diversity which, in Bordeaux, given the very large scale of the project, takes on its full meaning. The progressive transformation of the land will remain visible. There is great satisfaction in the contemplation of the countryside, which allows a perfect intelligibility of the work under way. The size of the plantings envisioned in Bordeaux, varying from one parcel to the next, will again return to this kind of process. A stand of young trees is already the image of a possible future, and the permanent construction sites that are the landscape projects can also aim for a form of beauty. We never invent a false nature: We are indeed in a kind of artifice that anyone can grasp.

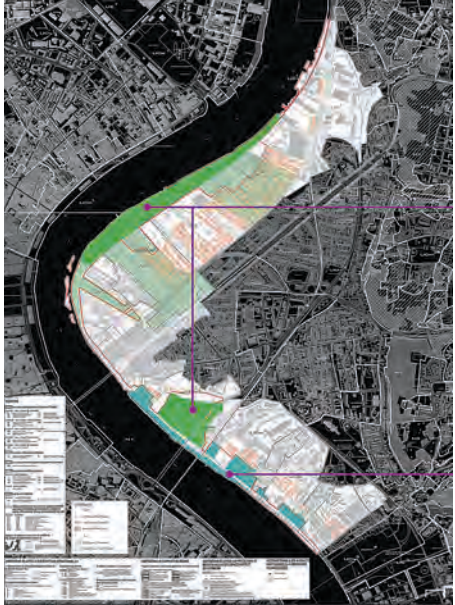




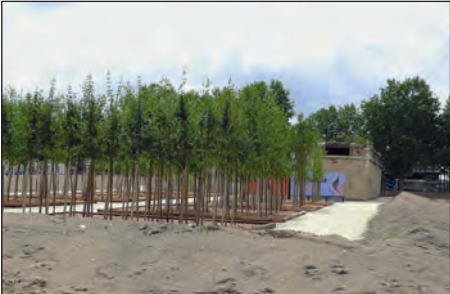
- 3 The scale of the area we were working on led us to imagine the implementation of a very large park along the lines of the famous American models of the 19th century, examples that find their full meaning here. Bordeaux, more than other cities, confronts an enormous problem of urban sprawl. Once more, it is a question of making the center of the city attractive again, combining density and landscape. The parks created in the built-up areas, especially in the 1970s, were located on the periphery. Few green spaces exist within the city walls. Yet the first urban projects involving the right bank accorded little place for this essential component. Why not create a continuous park in the center of the city, linked to the river and forming a lasting framework necessary for the development of this riverbank? Perhaps the whole would be at the scale of this area and would involve more than 100 un-built hectares. Creating this public space intended for a park along the river would not mean accentuating the urban sprawl. On the contrary, giving the landscape its unity is precisely what makes it livable.



- 4 These images show the importance of the frame in the future urban development. The landscape, both public and private, determines the shape of small, buildable islands, without setting down the contours in an absurdly strict manner. Moreover, the planned horizon lines and the geographic dimension of the project introduce the idea of excess, from which comes the beauty born from the loss of prosaic reference points. The very large park takes its materials and its shape from the land—its reliefs and its river. Rather than reducing the site by dividing it up, which would create an obstacle, we preferred to clearly affirm its identity.



5



6

- 5 The project was approved and included in the regulations of the City. Buildable land was reclassified and is now intended to accommodate parks. Studies are under way to design neighborhoods that will be set up adjacent to the parks. The overall importance of such a decision should be measured, in terms of economics and urbanism. The decision to build a very large park in the center of the city is a crucial choice, one that is rarely witnessed. The type of commission generated here is unprecedented. It involves following various phases of work that, on a large scale, will stretch over several decades; to do this, it is necessary to invent a way of supporting all the design processes arising from actions that are, above all else, public.
  
- 6 The role of the management of the works is quite unusual, and its missions, defined gradually and in constant dialogue with the City and its departments, are multiple, complex, and sensitive. Because of the size of the project and the time necessary for its completion, only a public structure could ensure completion. The resulting aesthetic is rather "rustic," with an economy of means brought about by these constraints.



**MILLENNIUM PARK, GREENWICH, LONDON, GREAT BRITAIN, 1997-2000**

This park was intended to accommodate the events accompanying the millenary celebration, near the building designed by Richard Rogers. The planned site preceded the installation of future neighborhoods. Immediately usable, it would be managed like a forest landscape, creating diverse and evolving scenarios.

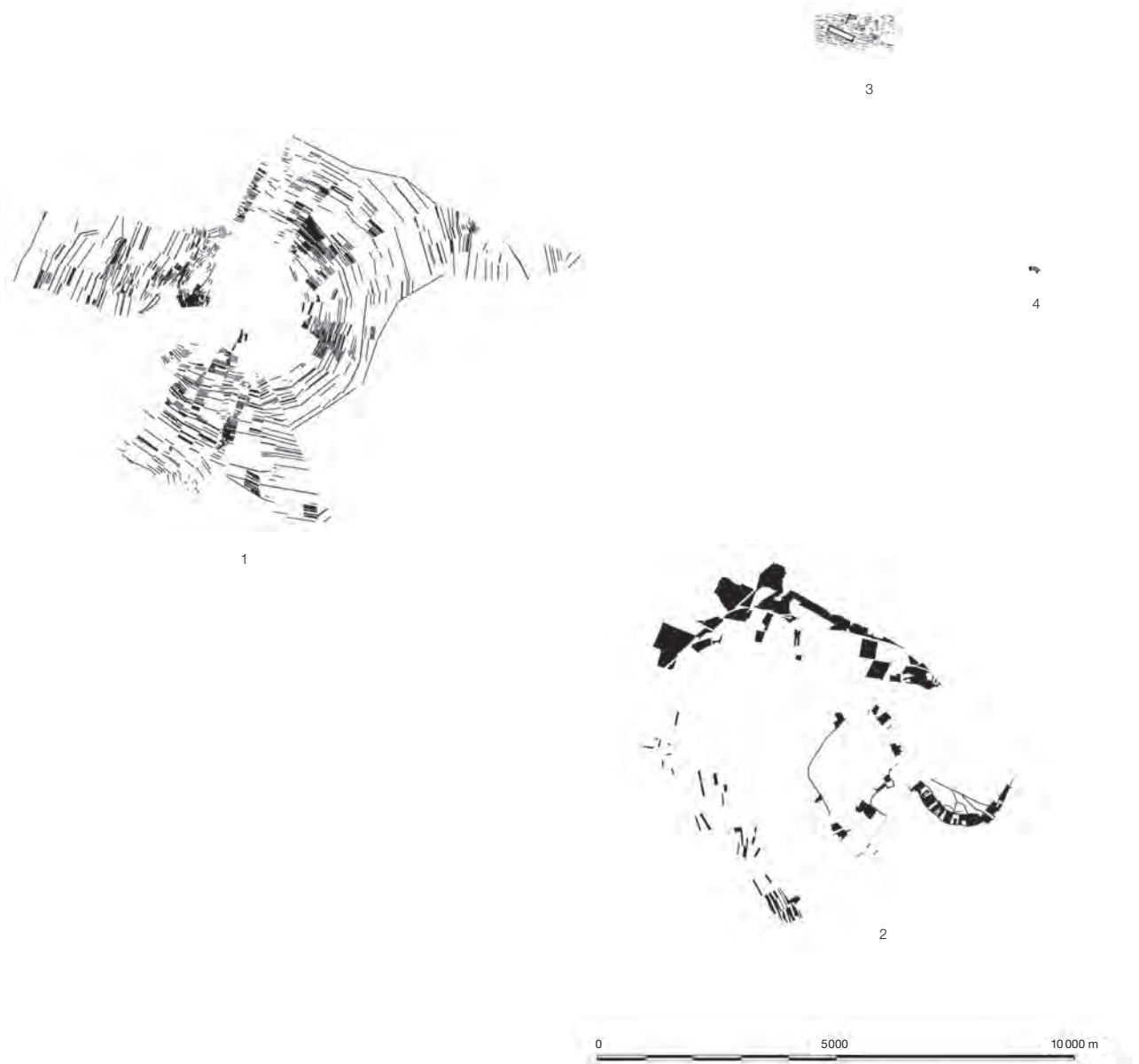


**MARIANNE PARK, MONTPELLIER, FRANCE, 1998-2002**

Work was carried out here on a predefined space, reserved for the expansion of the city. The meadows, the grasses, and the woods make use of agriculture and forestry techniques, without romanticism or sophistication. This landscape in gestation, in its intermediary state, evokes the patiently formed countryside.

# LANDSCAPES BEHIND THE SCENES

A LINK BETWEEN LANDSCAPE AND URBAN SPRAWL



- 1 Issoudun District, Issoudun, France
- 2 Cergy-Pontoise, France
- 3 TGV Station, Avignon, France
- 4 La Théols Park, Issoudun, France



The usual catastrophe of the city outskirts is embodied in that terrible line separating the housing environment from the vast swathes of land that were created by the consolidation of lots and are used for modern-day extensive farming. Today, 65 percent of the housing built in France is for detached houses, spread out on building lots that operate like enclosed areas—a familiar occurrence. As for the farms, the large-scale mechanization mentality has turned them into so many human deserts. These two worlds—the housing and the vast stretches of farmland—coexist in overwhelming mutual ignorance. People who make the choice to live “in the country” are in fact totally cut off from it. These “rurbanites” usually have to take the car to reach the neighboring woods. The housing lots often lack any direct connection with their natural environment, and we are all acquainted with the distressing image of a wire fence separating the little garden from the empty field.

This absence of connection, of public space, is unacceptable. Certain changes in agricultural practices can be studied to support other types of solutions. But above all we must create a place for the city to develop, and we must set up a structural frame for the city. Giving positive features to the peripheral landscapes makes it possible to create this public space, to invent a framework for the existing pieces of the city. The geographical components, but also those inspired by farming practices, can be transposed and reused. But how can we make these superimpositions produce a readable architecture? This assumes that selections will be made and hierarchies established. The landscape is never a blank page from which the unexpected will spring. It is always heavily marked by the practices and natural structures that exist or that existed: without necessarily “stitching together” the past, it is possible to make a composition using these different strata.

There is, however, in the observation and transposition of existing landscapes a characteristic that could be deemed deductive. The creative work of superimposing all these strata makes possible the organization of an architecture that is required, determined, and controlled by the design. We do not go back to a preexisting agricultural landscape, nor do we make do with an extension of the natural or urban landscape. It is an artifice, an invention that in part borrows from farming practices, but without simply restoring them. These fields, prairies, orchards, and groves—the product of observation—already create a possible urban space that evokes the country, but that, when overtaken by the city, will assume another meaning. The agricultural forms are not reproduced exactly; nor is the stereotypical model of the public square simply imported: the transposition, pushed to the extreme, generates quite a few new public spaces for the developing city. Why should we insist, at all costs, on moving away from the stereotypes offered by historical center cities? Essentially because this kind of recourse seems indifferent to the city and the countryside. To import into a landscape whose structures are not known components taken out of their original context amounts to offering a grandeur that does not really have any meaning. Instead of helping to describe the periphery, to articulate two worlds that face each other, this approach exacerbates the discrepancy. A curb disappearing between two fields, a line of stunted trees and sometimes streetlights floating in the middle of the crops—these are not an alternative. Similarly, the restoration pure and simple of farming structures does not in itself allow for the creation of public spaces. This act of transposition can be satisfying only when it leads to a certain level of invention.

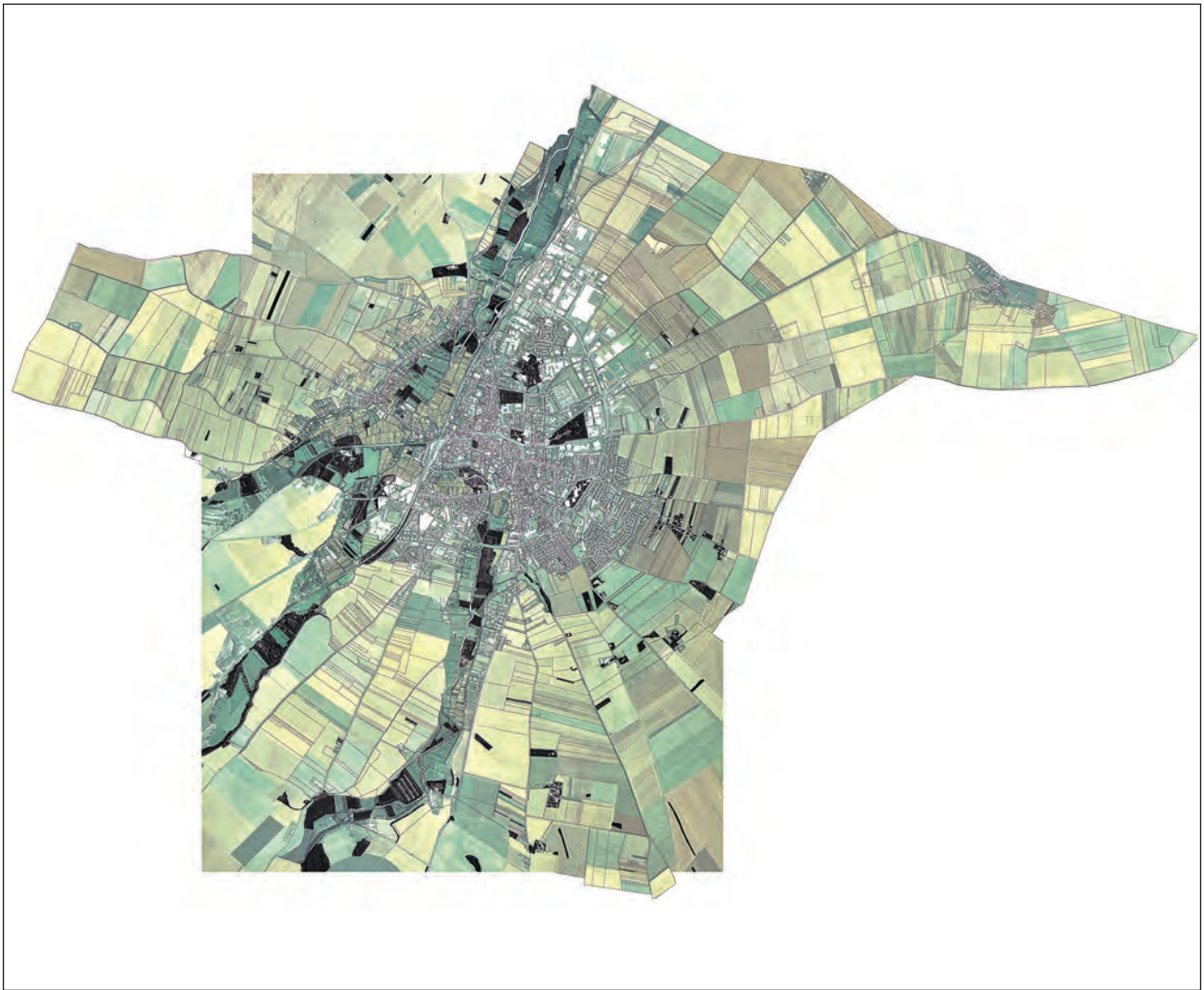
It is important to go beyond this research phase. As opposed to the tactic of repetition, the idea is to invent public spaces whose form and power can encourage richer kinds of neighborhoods through the very constraints, physical constraints, that these public spaces would effect. The point is to give these spaces a meaning that is suggestive enough so that future scenarios respond naturally to these guidelines. The concentric, radiating structure of the Issoudun farmland is no longer readable, except when seen from an airplane. The idea is to create a fabric of public spaces by picking up the traces of these lots in order to create a particular form of city, partly inherited from the agricultural structure, but one that goes far beyond it.

How can we find a common physical environment between the fields, the farmland, and the future city? The proposed plans aim at replacing the greenbelts that are still frequently programmed by urban planning agencies. The idea of a belt does not mean seeing the city as a living organism, in which one cannot predict where or when it will end. This landscape on the periphery is not filled up; on the contrary open spaces are left. The point is not to create a container that is simply to be filled. To avoid the violent superimpositions, cynically economic and imposed by technocratic reasoning, we will suggest possible collisions. Urban planners and architects will then have good reasons to upset the proposed framework, but it is desirable for the landscape itself to effect these disruptions, if necessary by eliciting these reactions. In the areas “without issues,” creating a context, with strong physical constraints, is a stimulating challenge.



## ISSOUDUN DISTRICT, ISSOUDUN, FRANCE, 2005

- 1 In Issoudun, like almost everywhere in France and in other countries, the periphery of the city consists of the brutal juxtaposition of residential neighborhoods, shopping centers, warehouses, and industrial buildings, with the vast swathes of extensive farming. With complete indifference, and without any indication that there was ever a precondition to man's installation in this area, mobile homes and low-quality sheds bump up against a thin wire fence that separates them from the ploughed fields. The medieval structure of the towns and cities forms gradually, from the center toward the outside, in a succession of parcels stringing out the house, courtyard, garden, vegetable garden, orchard, and open countryside, with all of the land, agricultural and urban, organized on a shared basis. Today, this overall way of structuring the land has been abandoned, and there is no attempt to articulate the surroundings, which are ignored, in an incomprehensible poverty that brings to mind a kind of precarious human occupation, as in camps. This terrible break between the built environment and the farmland is the product of a technocratic regulatory system responsible for the loss of any connection, such as the old roads that led from the town to the country, and, even more, for the absence of any shared public space.

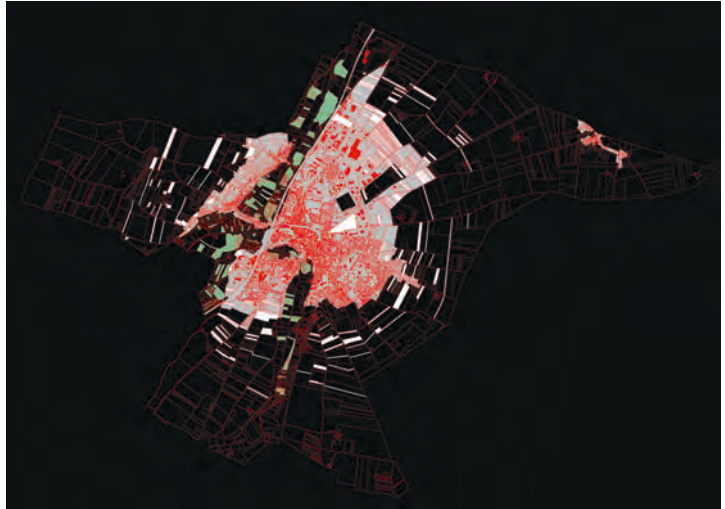


- 2 The goal here is the creation of a landscape plan for the whole city and its possible developments. A survey of the land available for building shows fragmented slabs: fallow land, unused parcels, building lots plunked down in the fields without any transition. No readable physical structure exists outside the medieval center, which has itself become less important compared with the large volume of the contemporary buildings.

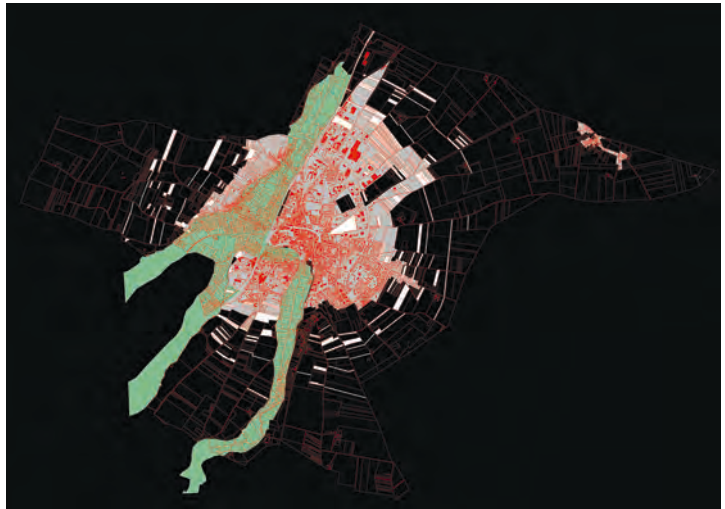
The thinking originates in the larger context of the French landscape school and its capacity for observing preexisting land. The parcel radiating from Issoudun is not easily decipherable at present. The successive land consolidations make it hard to read the original physical structure, which is today a virtual one. The proposal is not to restore a reality that has disappeared, but rather to move forward using substitution, as in the little public garden created in the center of town in the 1990s, which made use of the potential of the land worked by generations of farmers to plant flowers in place of the former vegetable gardens. Thus, everything remains in place, but its nature changes. On the scale of the city as a whole, the process is the same: begin an urban landscape from the almost unreadable traces, which are transposed and transformed.



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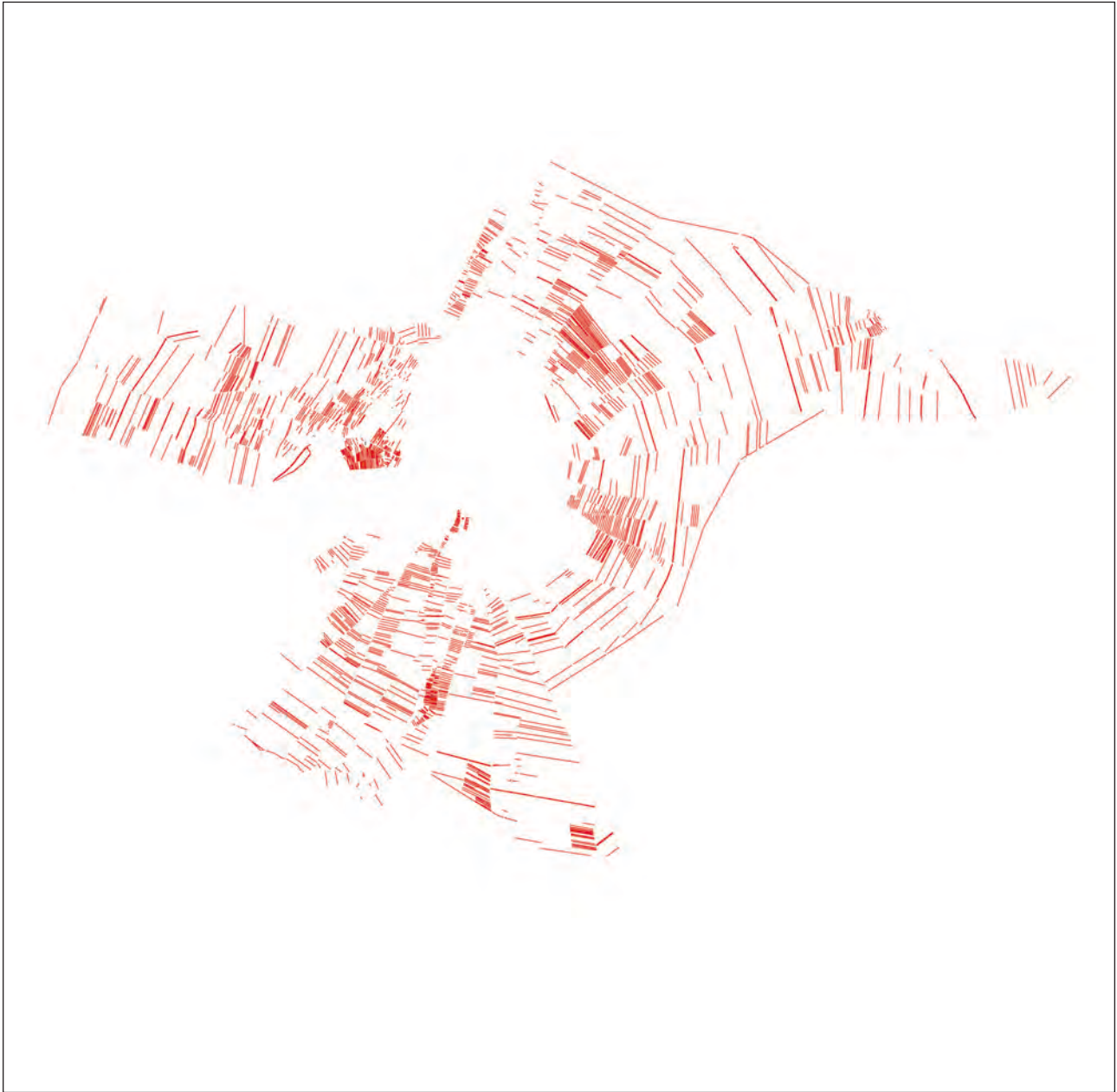
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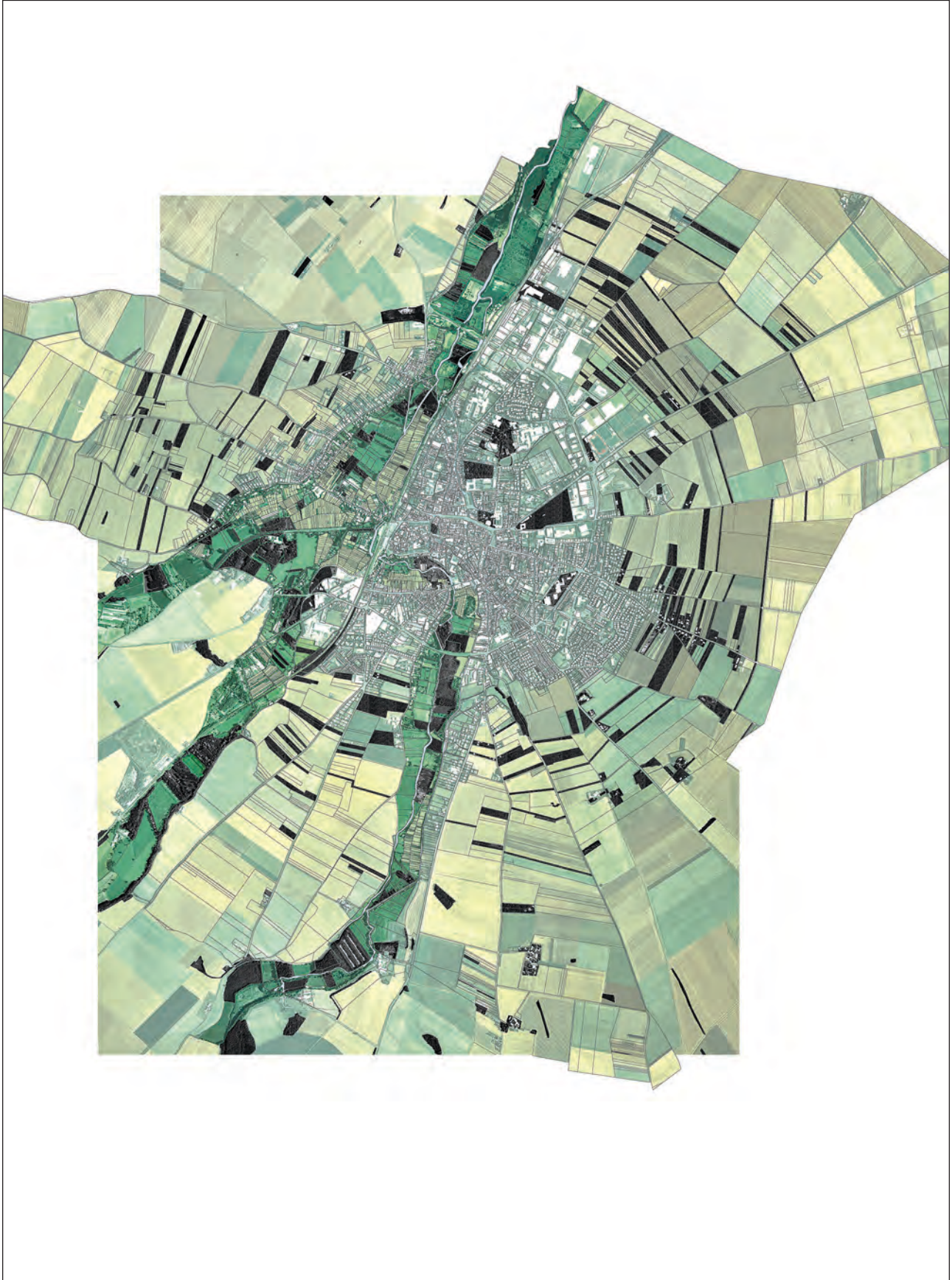


- 3 The first map, shown on the facing page, brings to light the gray patches corresponding to the areas likely to be preempted by the City. This point is of fundamental importance. When it comes to restoring to the land a globally readable physical structure, the role of public institutions is essential.
  
- 4 The second map reveals a certain number of boundaries between the parcels that surround the city.
  
- 5 The third map shows the presence of the valleys that run through Issoudun. These valleys, which are uninhabited today, could—if they were bought by the City, which controls the riverbanks, and thus the risk of possible floods—make a strong framework capable of structuring the Issoudun landscape.

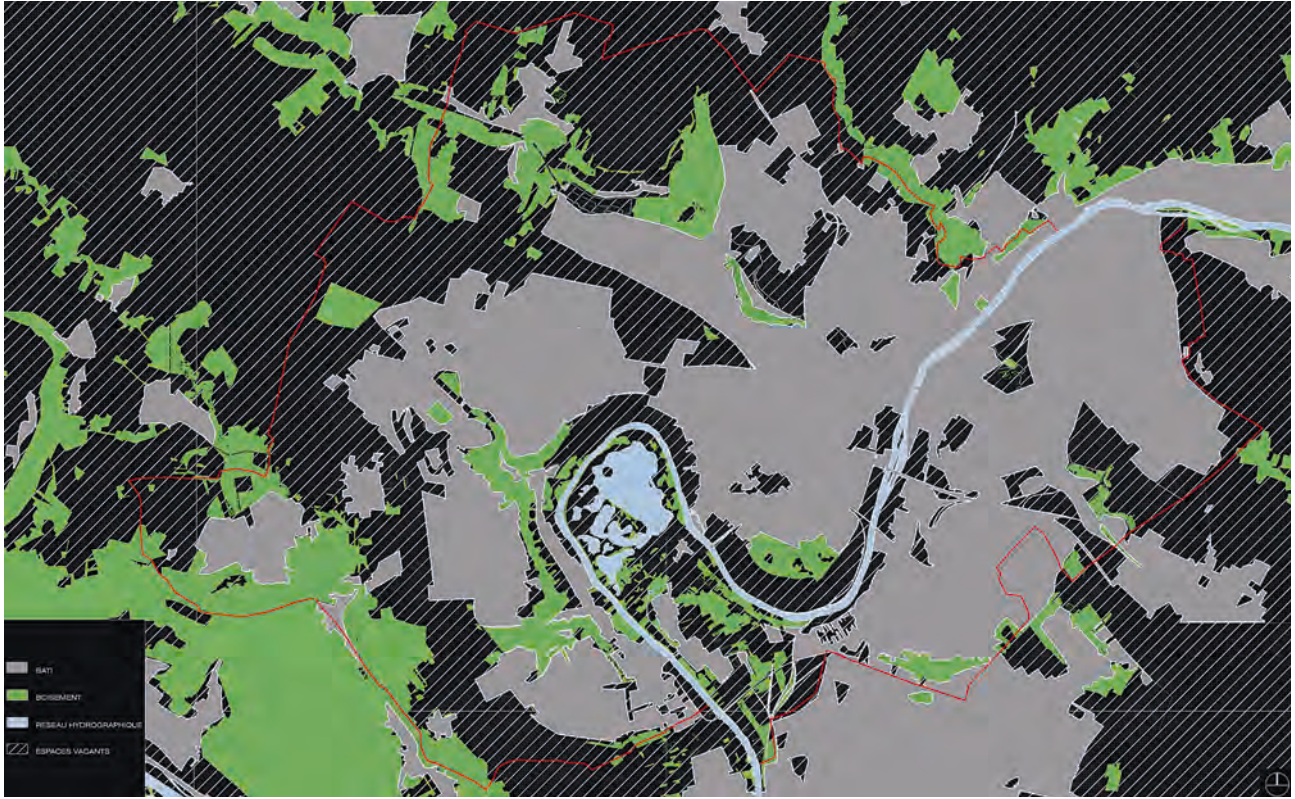


- 6 This map is a land survey, around the city, showing the shape of the agricultural parcels that could be transformed. The plot layouts developed concentrically, including the radials, in a perfectly understandable logic with regard to the topography. The proposal involves using this structure—following the preemption of the few meters that separate the parcels from one another—to insert thoroughfares, determining a shape likely to support the developments of the city. These routes could be accompanied by ditches, formerly present but gone today, which would make it possible to control the flow of water. Our goal is thus relatively modest; of course, some land could be added to this fabric to create public spaces, rudimentary at first, consisting of fields, orchards, even poplar groves that, later, when the city became more dense, could be turned into true common spaces. This network of thoroughfares would make it possible to install landscape structures, essentially wooded, reconnecting with the now-obiterated sequences that ensured the transition between the city and the open countryside, in an obvious and familiar form that is still found in Germany and in Belgium.

Dozens and dozens of kilometers of orchards are envisioned in order to situate this city in its landscape, or to put it back into its setting, on another scale. Once again, the management of time is a crucial factor. Gradually, as the vegetation grows and the city becomes denser, certain surfaces will become sites for various activities. Fields and facilities for sports and games, as well as schools, would be inserted into this initially modest fabric, and true public spaces would come into being.

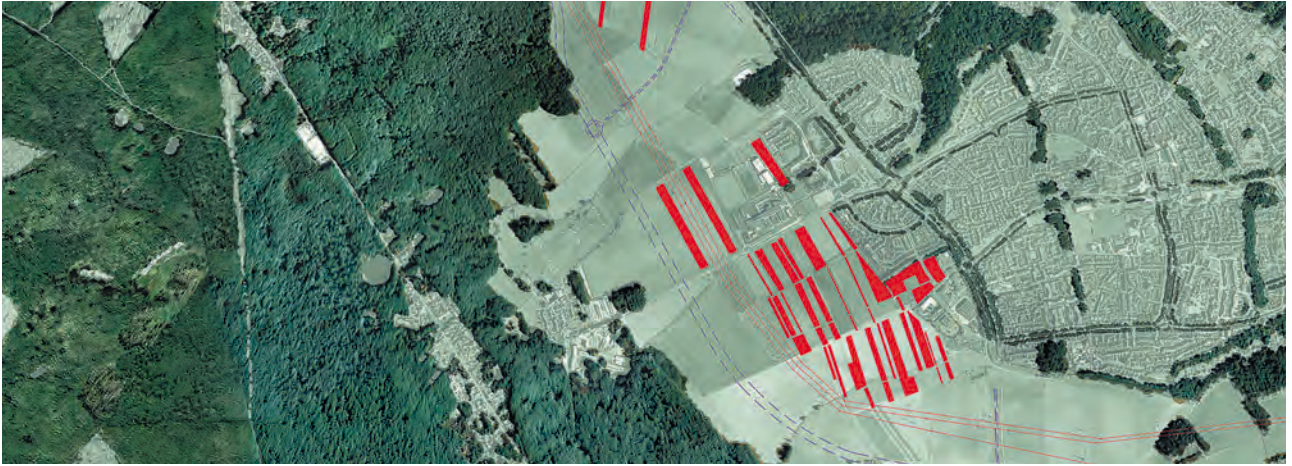


- 7 We are not making a ring or a rampart for the city. It would be quite unsatisfactory merely to set up a sort of peripheral screen designed to distinguish the “ugly” city from the countryside. These lines, concentric or radiating, but also shifting, create a vegetative framework, a landscape structure able to accommodate new developments while providing quality to the existing settlements. The physical locations of the thoroughfares and adjoining structures go beyond the scale of the house to form horizon lines shared by all the inhabitants. The landscape plan for Issoudun thus comprises valleys that rediscover their presence and become once again accessible to the public. Once planted, these valleys play the role of the main geographic units in the city. Selected peripheral parcels, with their slight shifts, are relatively spread out, but in perspective they will create continuous masses or surfaces—without ever suggesting a route or a ring that would indicate the end of the city, which is clearly intended to grow. This means there are gaps between the existing buildings, inhabitable gaps. The plan works according to a series of corridors among which it will be possible to circulate, and it also carefully handles the rich and complex transitions between the farming world, such as it is, and the inhabited world.

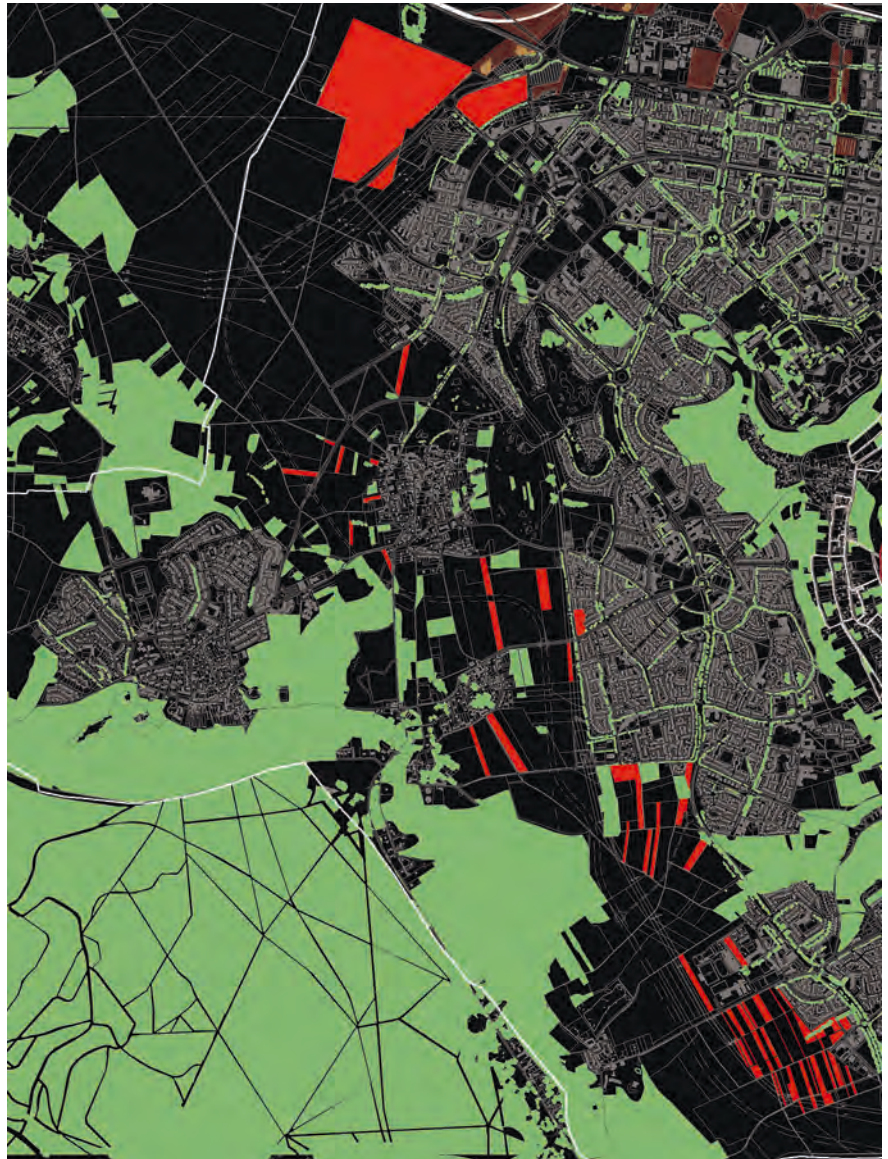


## CERGY-PONTOISE, FRANCE, 2006-2008

- 1 Cergy-Pontoise, a new city created in the 1970s, is, like all of its counterparts, looked on today with some disdain. An object of scorn, almost taboo, the new cities nevertheless account for a significant number of inhabitants, especially in France. Their capacity for development is quite large. The current population of Cergy-Pontoise is 185,000 inhabitants, and one can easily imagine that, in the near future, this figure will approach 350,000. The city was only partially built, and its low density leads to a lack of readability, which explains the commission calling for a master plan for the landscape. The perimeter of the city, indicated by the red line, is 53 kilometers, comparable to that of the city of Paris. But if one takes into account the line on the facing page, between the current buildings (in gray) and the farmland (in black), one gets a ribbon development, four or five times greater.
- 2 Once again, this land offers a banal presentation of plot divisions, warehouses, and shopping centers situated, without preamble and without any transition, in the vast landscape of extensive farming. Again, the goal is to insert landscape structures that quickly improve the qualities of the site, but also create situations or opportunities for future urban development. We are not trying to set up an exhaustive, unconvincing, finished plan, but rather to envision sorts of prototypes and catalysts for development.



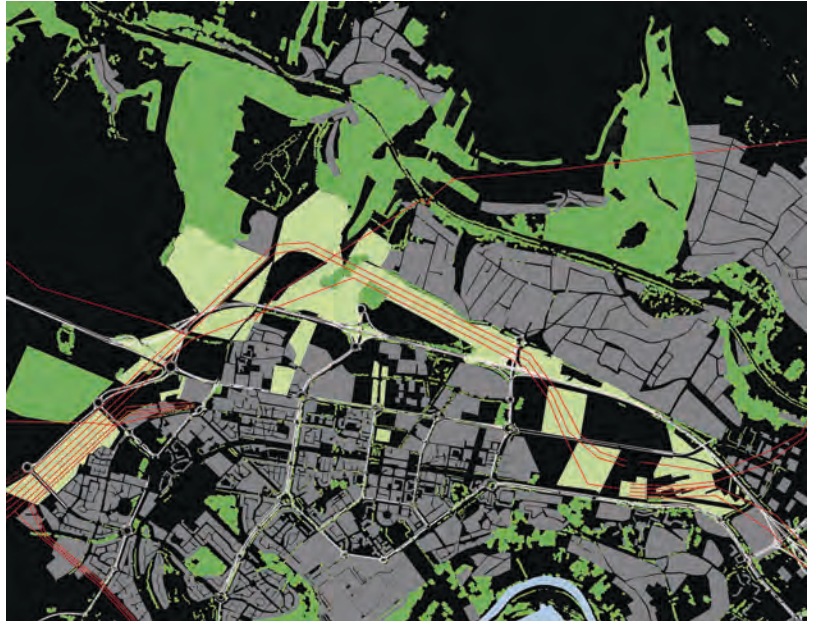
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- 3 Our attitude toward this city that developed as an archipelago—with hubs of intensity but also voids linked to a lack of opportunities—stands in contrast to the position taken by most urban planners. We did not try to fill these breaks in order to acquire density right away. In fact, the fabric created by these voids is interesting. The situation can be likened to the parks systems described elsewhere: This city has what could be called potential landscape continuities on which it is possible to rely when building a framework. Thus it is not a matter of filling in this incomplete system, of making it banal, but rather of giving quality to its boundaries, of intensifying the existing hubs while at the same time preserving the fabric of its voids.  
Three case studies made it possible to develop a general approach. The first involves a small valley, the second concerns a highway running through the city, and the third is related to the river.
- 4 The small valley, which is really a thalweg, or a large clearing in a depression, had a horticultural role, and a few fragments of this remain. The proposal involves creating, on the traces of the land boundaries of these fields, which can be regulated institutionally, orchards and wooded rows. This landscape “on the wings” creates a frame for the current lot divisions but also for future built work. Above all, it forms a fabric of shared routes, promenades, and fields. Finally, those archaic public spaces anchor these neighborhoods in the countryside while also prefiguring those of future developments. Thus the transformation of the landscape would be a precondition for the invention of the form of the city.



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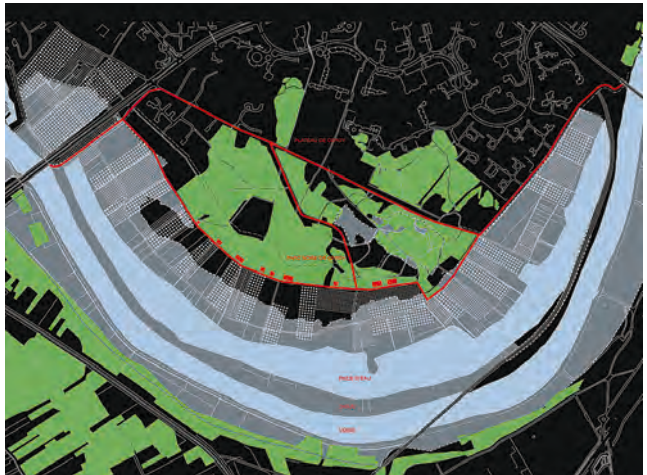


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- 5 The second case involves more particularly the world of commerce. This time, the scale changes. We are at the entrance to the city, along the highway. This land, dotted with warehouses, is enlarged by fairly substantial stretches of forest. Their development (in light green) makes it possible to create glades into which commercial and artisanal activities can be added. Sometimes the highway crosses these glades, and sometimes it dives into the forest.
  
- 6 It is not camouflage: The highway infrastructure, like the shopping centers, participates in the planned landscape, whose design unfolds by observation and transposition. The projected forestation results from the manipulation of forms from neighboring forests, adapted to the specific conditions of this site. It is neither the superposition of an exotic architecture nor solely the laborious stitching together of vestiges and boundaries. The design work, through this strange, miniature mimetism, is the reproduction of practices that shaped the landscape period.

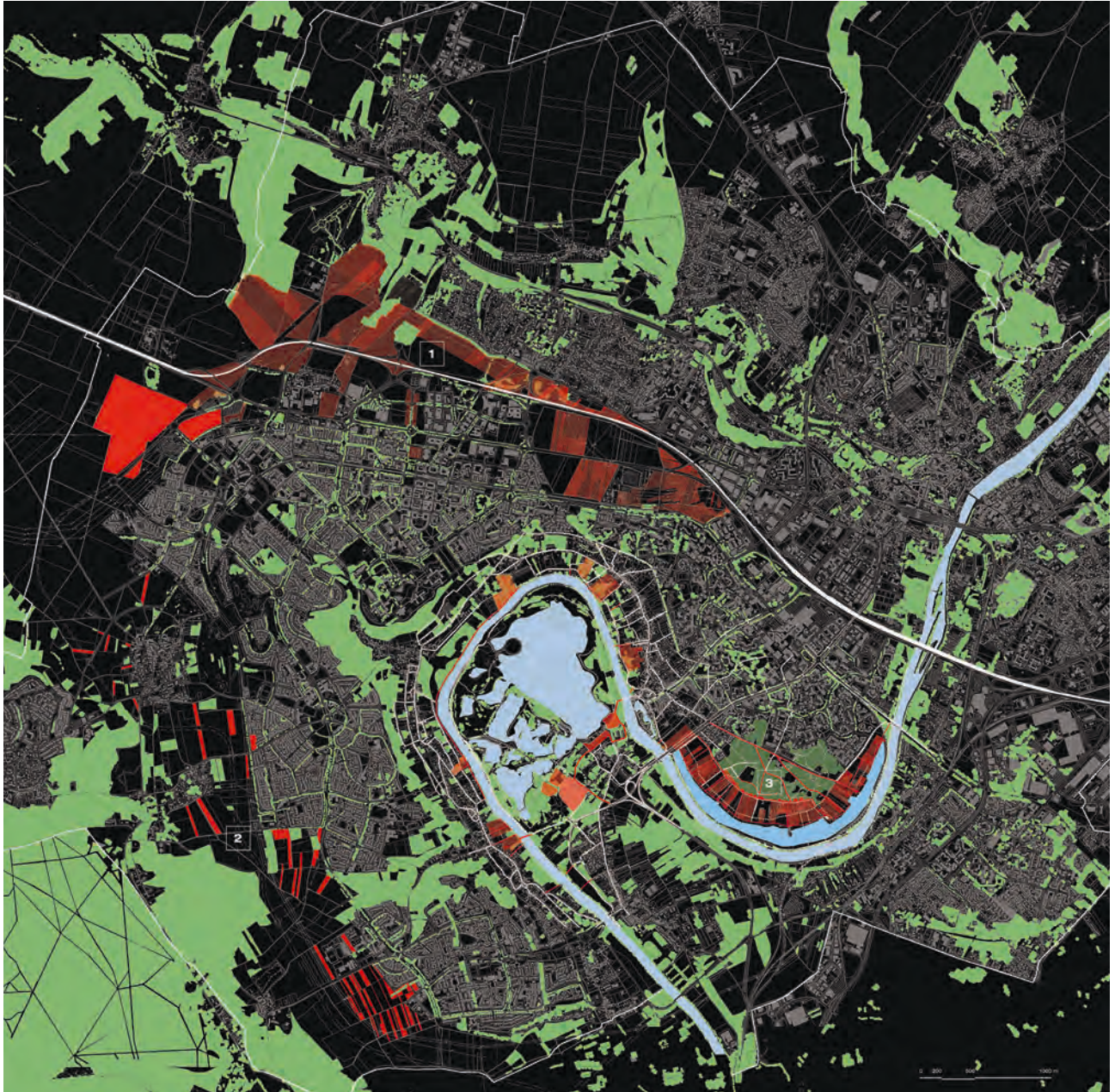


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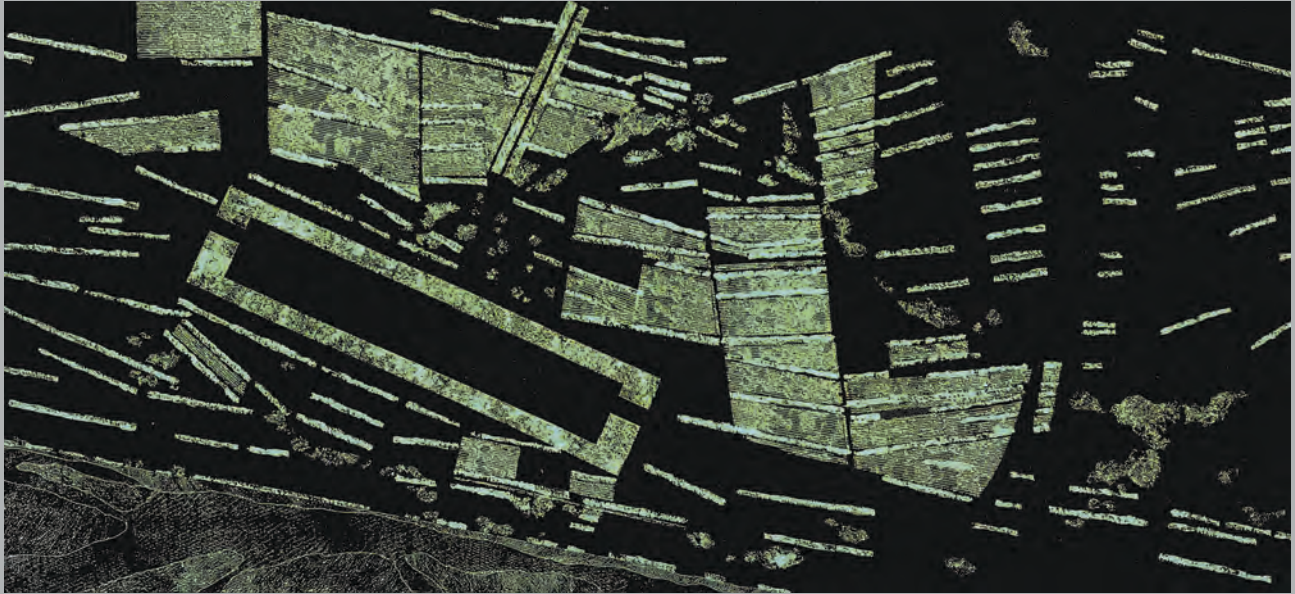


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- 7 Third study: the valley, with the very strong presence of water. Cergy-Pontoise was founded at a turn in the Oise River and created around leisure pursuits. Several superb movies by Éric Rohmer (for instance, *L'Ami de mon amie*, produced in 1987) were filmed exactly within the context of this city, which is linked to the river, the ponds, a landscape that, though not sufficiently thought out by its inventors, assumed a certain importance, in the spirit of the founders of the new cities. There is probably the memory of the Garden Cities by Ebenezer Howard, indeed even the American park systems of the 19th century. Today, paradoxically, the riverbanks, like the leisure activities, have been partially privatized, and the water is no longer accessible. The project involves installing along the Oise a large lagoon using the water of nearby quarry ponds—a sort of parallel river, the setting for water sports, promoting the creation of a landscape structure between the city and the water.
  
- 8 Again, this is a work of substitution: The orchards established in the agricultural plot divisions extend up to the flood zones (in light gray in the upper drawing), toward the new lake. This makes it possible to develop the built neighborhoods while also giving them roots in the currently undefined landscape. The railway line that links Paris to Cergy-Pontoise will follow the embankment separating the river and the lagoon; whereas today one can hardly guess at the presence of the Oise River, future travelers will, for several kilometers, follow an elevated route between two lakes, into the heart of the city.



- 9 One could read, in the very large scale of this project, the expression of a megalomaniacal vision of the landscape. Yet if one compares the proposed parks system with those envisioned by Frederick Law Olmsted in the United States in the 19th century, it is easy to realize that the proposal made here, in the 21st century, remains relatively timid in its scope. The extent of the proposed landscaping is not, however, at a scale that today's city parks could maintain. Thus the transformation of this landscape could go together with a local change in farming. Orchards and forestation, but also the altered parcels that they delineate, could use new practices: the redevelopment of truck farming, the contribution to water treatment, and energy production. With the growth of experimental micro-agriculture, authentic, functional public spaces can be created. Working like passageways and sites of exchange, places where residents can meet and share techniques, these public spaces can ultimately form beautiful areas, like those in certain regions of Europe where houses and crops mix (especially in Belgium or Tessin). Beautiful, not strictly in the sense of an aesthetic quality resulting from the sensational, but because the dispersed city, when it knows how to accommodate this mixture of uses and meanings, can open onto the landscape and the industrial countryside, ensuring a strong transition.



**TGV STATION, AVIGNON, FRANCE, 1994-2002**

The land around the TGV station had to be organized. The plot divisions retain the vestiges of windbreak hedges that follow the meanders of the Rhône and the Durance rivers: Reinterpreted on a different scale, they structure the new landscape around the train station just like alleys of plane trees.





## LA THÉOLS PARK, ISSOUDUN, FRANCE, 1993-1994

In Issoudun, a group of neglected family gardens served as prototypes. For practical reasons, the fertile plot divisions and their system of slopes and drainage were retained. This was a work of substitution, with the food-producing gardening changing to form the matrix of a public space. Although everything has changed in its nature, the inhabitants immediately appropriated this little piece of horticulture in the city.

# URBAN FIELDS

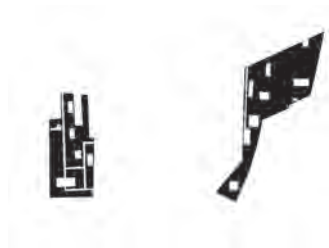
THE MEANING OF A PARK IN THE CITY



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1 Summer Park, Governors Island, New York, USA

2 Cité Nature, Arras, France

3 Extension of Sculpture Park, Middelheim, Antwerp, Belgium

It takes a long time to create an urban park, for obvious reasons of development. Parks that are worthy of admiration and bring to mind a certain nature—Olmsted's parks in particular—were, at their inception, only settings-in-the-making. The images that have been preserved reveal outdated devices. Building in the city, one runs up against the absence of synchronization: the rhythms of the landscape are not those that make up the built neighborhoods. The challenge is to create a young park that has an immediately familiar presence. Three puny trees in the middle of a lawn—this does not conjure up a grove. By using certain techniques borrowed from the world of agriculture, it is possible to attain coherent physical results. The early phases of some rural landscapes are perfectly acceptable, aesthetically and architecturally. This is not to be linked to a facile or vapid connotation, which would refer back to the utopia of the “pretty countryside.” The point is to rapidly create in the city beautiful, joyous settings that can be appropriated. The goal is to make them usable and meaningful, with few resources and in a very short time frame. The envisioned architecture, organized around variable densities and familiar geometries, is likely to give an immediate meaning to these spaces.

These parks are also settings for possible experimentation. The city can seem like a cultural reservoir, where experiments can be shared and are likely to spread. Botanical gardens also have this purpose. Established in large cities, they are open laboratories where specialists implement techniques that can be observed by everyone. Originally, the gardens were organized according to a systematic layout. Like some agricultural structures, these spaces are immediately readable and comprehensible.

If the outskirts of cities are the settings for necessary agricultural transformations, the experimentation is an indispensable precondition for the definition, planning, and development of a micro-agriculture. This does not involve a fascination with today's prevailing subject of sustainable development, nor is it a response to the general panic over the need to save the planet. The idea is not to pit a system of redemption against the panic. These "urban fields" are privileged areas for diverse research: the treatment and storage of water and waste, energy production, fertilization of the soil, recycling, composting, etc. From an agricultural point of view, there are many areas of experimentation, especially agronomic research institutes. But because urban parks are accessible to so many people, they are marvelous settings for training, learning, and testing. This "public architecture" is profoundly different from productive agriculture. It allows for the introduction into the city of an evocative kind of public space, which may possibly spark playful social practices, reminiscent of the new type of shared garden that is developing in Europe.

The main goal underlying the creation of such urban parks is first aesthetic, then scientific. The urban spaces that are produced, made up of micro-forests, are settings where experiments in agriculture and in forestry can intersect and be superposed. It has become common practice for landscape architects to use agricultural references. However, the experiments fall short. The technical experts of the garden world are not prepared for this type of proposal, especially in terms of density. Whereas in other areas, technical research continually feeds creation, this aspect is lacking with regard to landscape, in its developments and applications. Urban parks are just right for reviving this experimental tradition in garden art; their function goes beyond hedonism and consumerism.

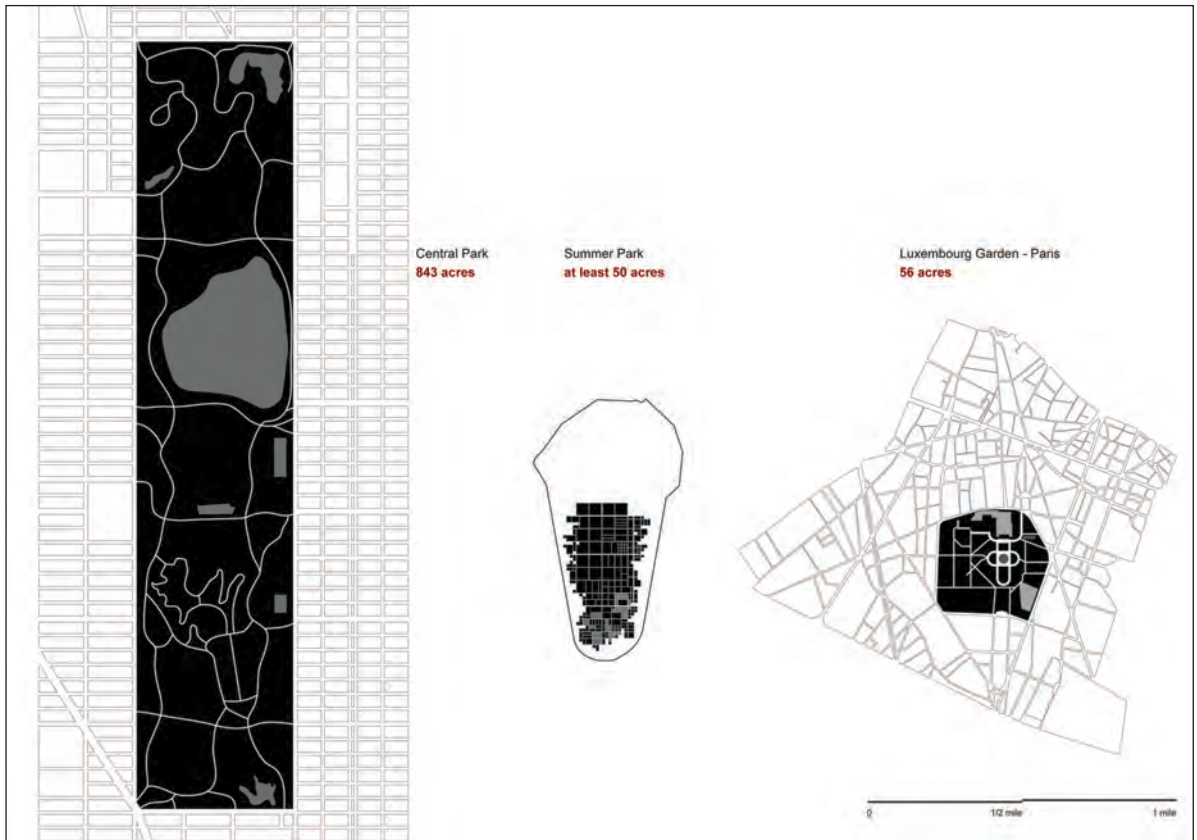


## **SUMMER PARK, GOVERNORS ISLAND, NEW YORK, USA, 2007**

- 1 What meaning is given today to a park created in a city? What uses does it allude to? What connection exists between a park and nature? These questions underlie the reflections on Governors Island. Located not far from Manhattan, Governors Island is an urban island intended for urbanites. What could lead the inhabitants of New York to favor a stay on this island? What could lead them to return, to frequent this area? What role could this park have? One must begin by asking questions about its nature.



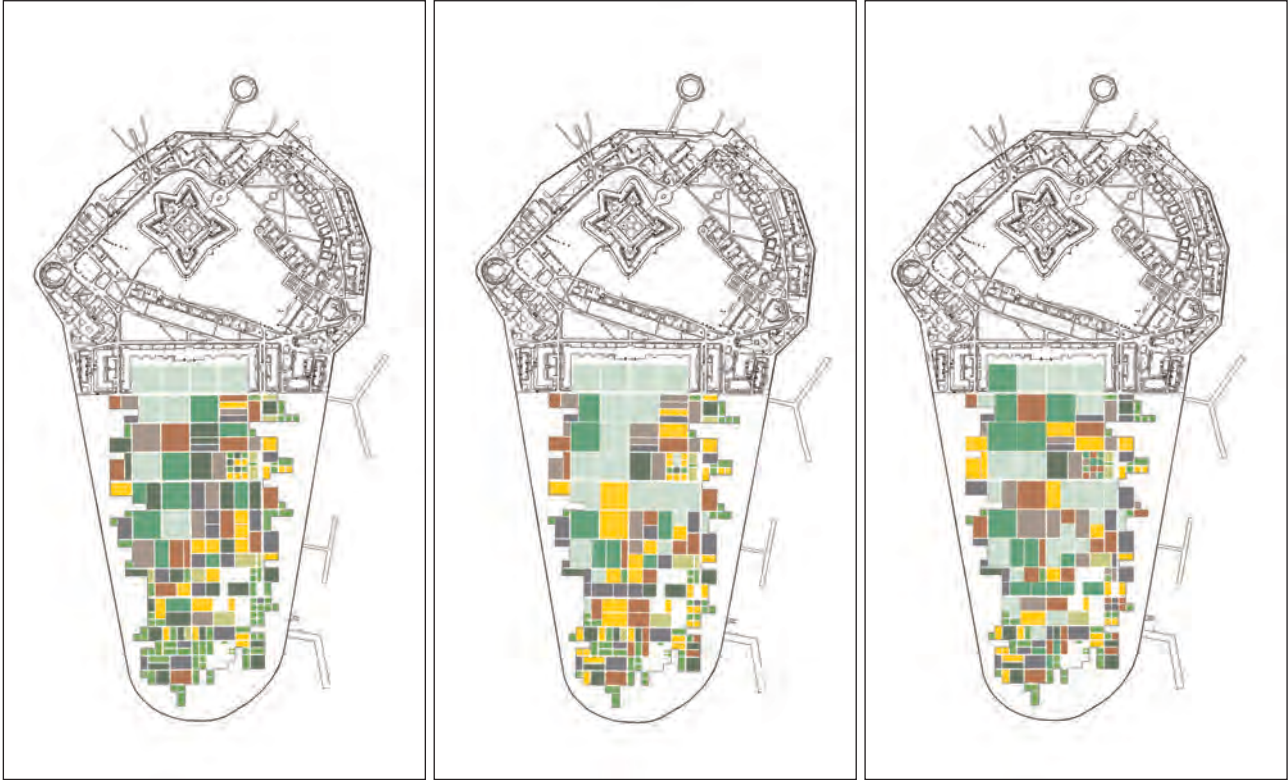
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- 2 Historically, Governors Island was the residence of British governors of New York. The surface area of the island is large (1.5 kilometers by 800 meters), and Summer Park extends over an area that is not insubstantial (1 kilometer by 700 meters).
  
- 3 Still, it is not a gigantic space, as can be confirmed by creating simple comparisons with, on the one hand, Central Park in Manhattan, and, on the other, the Luxembourg Garden in Paris. Summer Park is in fact much closer to the latter in terms of scale, and would be the equivalent of a single meadow in Central Park. The question of the character of this space arises: It has the dimensions of a garden much more than those of a park.  
Thus the project was focused not on the idea of installing a false nature to contemplate, in a passive manner, but rather on the invention of a site for exercise, activities, and exchanges.



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- 4 To create an artificial nature, a decor, would require here, on this site that is a weak embankment, the introduction of large quantities of earth, which is ecologically absurd. Instead, age-old techniques are used at Summer Park, especially techniques prevalent in the U.S.— for example, composting and the rotation of crops. Some of these practices are known to clean up the soil, to fertilize it. The proposal improves the site without turning everything upside down. It is not a matter of moving large amounts of earth, but rather of working the land with economical techniques.
  
- 5 By relying on rudimentary agricultural practices, Summer Park would immediately acquire meaning and coherence, as well as a familiar and playful architectural quality. Right away, the result would take on the meaning of a physically practicable and understandable space.



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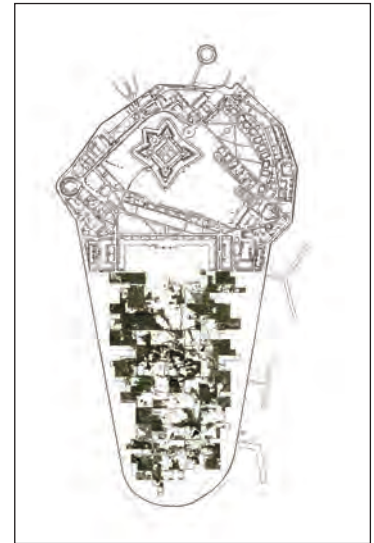
- 6 Botanic gardens always had the role of acclimatizing species, developing experiments that were later widely dispersed. Summer Park can have this same function.

It is in fact urgent and crucial for us to change our practices at urban and peri-urban sites that are in transformation. The land can be upgraded, renewed, and fertilized, simply using ancestral farming techniques. Water management on Governors Island is the second important aspect that could receive a number of simple, relevant applications. In this garden, a permanent structure of canals, lakes, channels, marshes, and ponds could be established, oxygenated and filtered by plants and also by the movement of the water.

- 7 The specific character of the site, which is a place where freshwater and saltwater meet, supports the creation of an entire flora and a dynamic setting that varies according to the degree of salinity. This makes it possible to include some processes and techniques found in other parts of the world. Governors Island can also be the living laboratory for experiments involving energy production in an urban area using certain crops that can make efficient biomass fuel. By uniting these experiments, Summer Park could be at the forefront of changing the way American land is worked.



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- 8 The mosaic of meadows and irrigation canals is immediately spectacular and familiar. Superposed on this mosaic is a stratification of layers, of meanings, of nature, and of different rhythms.
  
- 9 Landscape measures time in decades, or in centuries. But something needs to happen very quickly so that the “inhabitants” of the garden, or the park, can make it their own. At the same time, the spatial structure through the forested areas must be defined. Starting from the Jeffersonian grid, which defines the plan of American cities and districts (everyone has this grid clearly in mind with regard to Manhattan), a matrix is created, which also acts like a development strategy.
  
- 10 Starting from this grid, from this matrix, forested areas of varying density are defined, accommodating solid areas and voids, but also, as an integral part of the project, the many buildings and sports and leisure facilities that will be built on Governors Island. In stark contrast to Central Park, which is a piece of nature contained within a grid, Summer Park stretches its grid to the entirety of the site, and ensures coherence for the whole. This grid is not applied in a strict visual way, since ultimately its contours are destined to blur, even to disappear.





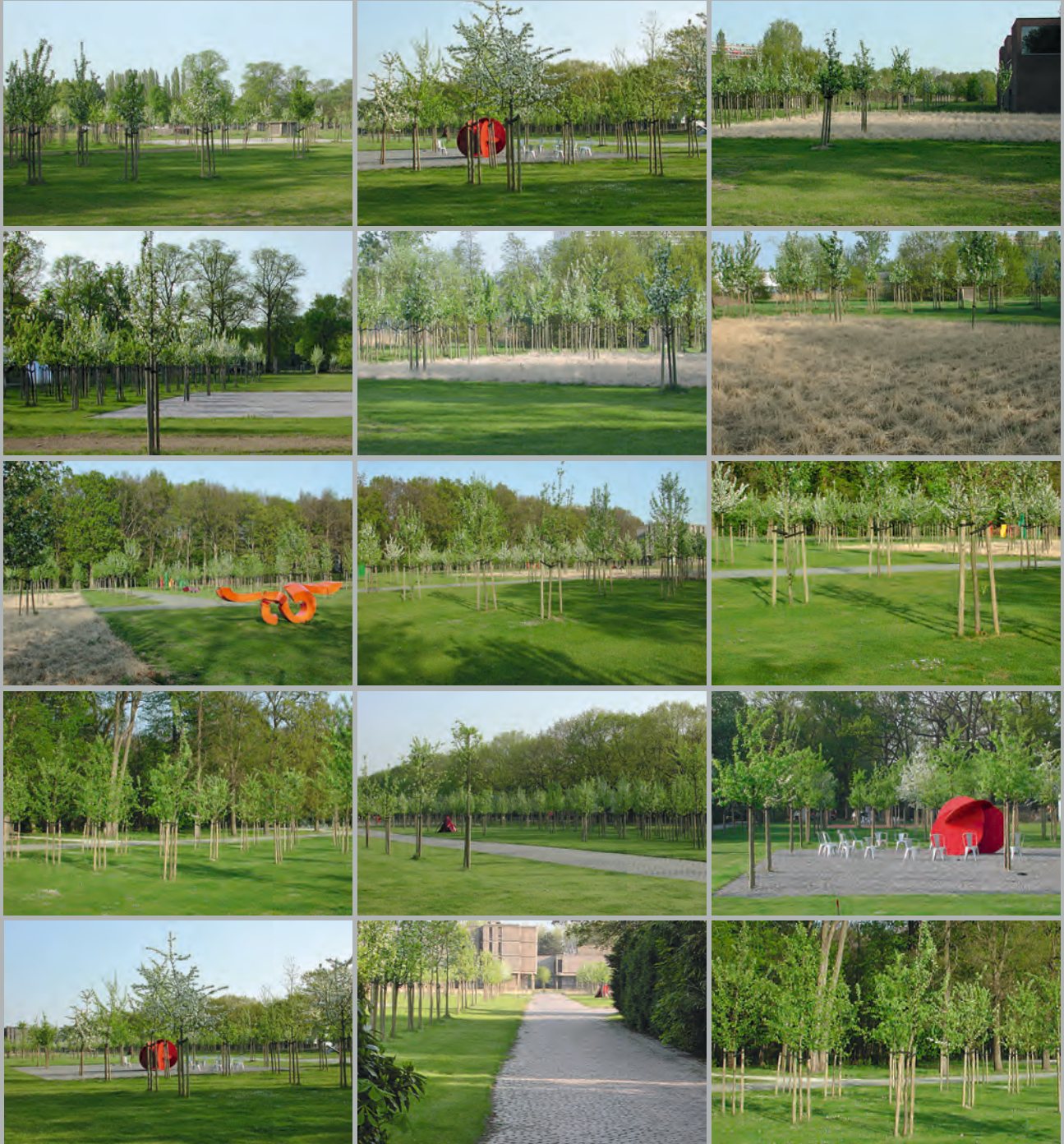
- 11 Summer Park is thus an opportunity to use various layers of experimentation, accessible to everyone, linking the rhythms of urban life to those of nature through a landscape structure that is directly inspired by agricultural vocabulary and processes. These proposals could be developed, especially in the United States, to remedy the critical problem of widespread urban sprawl—to recreate density and reinvent quality on these enormous fringes where, without any transition, gigantic housing developments are juxtaposed with endless stretches of industrial extensive farming.

This project was developed at the same time as the studies of vast peri-urban areas: the Var Plain, Issoudun, Cergy-Pontoise. The same requirement drives these parallel approaches. The spread of experimental micro-agriculture can form genuine, functional public spaces, sites for movement and exchanges, places where inhabitants and techniques come together. The city park—the city—would become the refuge for the redeployment of farming, and the garden, a laboratory dedicated to the land.



**CITÉ NATURE, ARRAS, FRANCE, 2001-2005**

In Arras, a garden was created to accompany Jean Nouvel's reconversion of a factory into a museum that focuses on food processing. The scientists there are forever reinventing educational experiments.

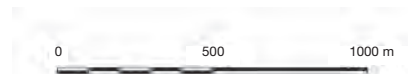
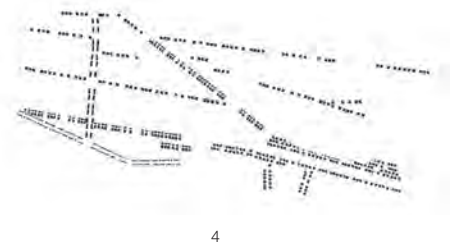
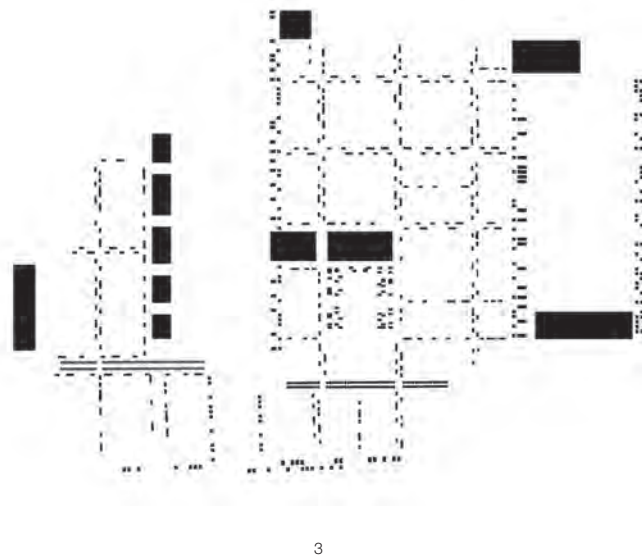
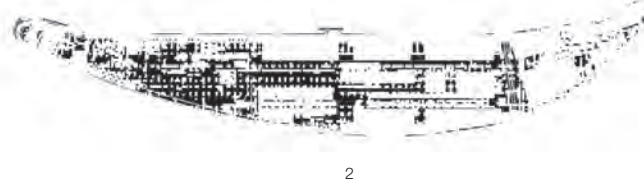
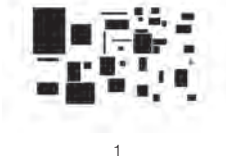


**EXTENSION OF SCULPTURE PARK, MIDDELHEIM, ANTWERP, BELGIUM, 1998-2000**

This expansion of a large park intended to accommodate a collection of sculptures took the form of a big orchard. The varying densities and the contrasting spatial arrangements that it suggests bring to mind a familiar landscape. Visitors and artists are taking over this evolving place.

# TRANSPPOSITIONS

AN INTERLOCKING AND REVERBERATING SYSTEM



- 1 Dallas Center for the Performing Arts, Dallas, USA
- 2 Reconversion of Seguin Island, Boulogne-Billancourt, France
- 3 Reconversion of the Old Port of Eilandje, Antwerp, Belgium  
Kattendijkdok, Antwerp, Belgium
- 4 Aubervilliers Campus Aubervilliers, France
- 5 Almere, The Netherlands

Modern-day cities create new situations, and it does not make much sense to renew the familiar models. Beyond the historical centers, the cities are composed of a range of materials, juxtaposing multiple forms; the built works determine the voids without precise definition. It can be tempting to give these spaces a documented, and therefore reassuring, structure. Often, however, people merely use a contemporary vocabulary, which serves as a sign, without taking the trouble to examine the relevance of this trend.

In these complex and sometimes surprising situations (with different levels, forms, and structures opposite), would it not be possible to play with the attributes of space and landscape to invent a public space based on the unique aspects of this recent heritage? As in any exercise related to landscape, the point is to find a potential beauty in that which exists in order to make it stand out.

The term *embellishment*, used in the 19th century without any pejorative intentions in reference to public squares and other urban settings, has long since become synonymous with disguised complacency. Many architects and landscape architects transport the stereotypes, which they apply from one end of the planet to the other, like so many universal “products.” Rarely are sites wholly interchangeable, however: a modicum of critical thinking makes it possible to understand this and to avoid dressing up the sites and debasing them.

Does the creation of public space fall under the decorator’s art? Do not its positive attributes instead depend on architecture as well as on landscape time, which goes hand in hand with the concepts of perdurance, power, and durability? Ideally, the discovery of a site would thus reflect something comparable with those public squares

in Umbrian cities, soberly surfaced in brick (sometimes in asphalt today), extraordinarily positioned in their surroundings, thanks to the way they are oriented and to the handling of the variations in levels and the water drainage systems.

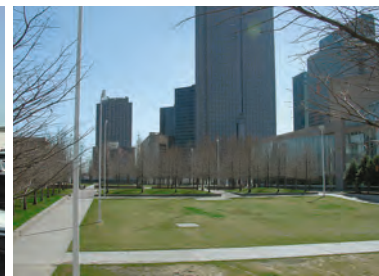
All this does not arise from minimalist prejudice, but rather from an inclination for evidence. The idea is to give back to a public space its character as common ground, as a base on which the city is built. One might suppose that on these basic, undoctored sites people would allow various objects to be placed in succession, according to the styles of the time. But it is difficult to find real satisfaction in this. It is advisable to preempt these random accumulations by creating from the start the basic conditions for the use and development of the areas.

Modern-day public spaces, like those abovementioned sites in medieval and Renaissance Italy, are immediately enhanced when they are connected to a larger geographical context. In the 17th century, the classical city of Versailles was set up in this way, with reference to the garden created by Le Nôtre, who himself “internalized” the former hunting forest of the kings of France. Some 19th-century visions (such as the works by Olmsted) are likewise deeply rooted in a larger landscape, transformed from that time on. Our public spaces can also play with their immediate physical features, in relationship with their surroundings.

Thus the point is to rediscover a scale or system borrowed from an expansive area, making it possible to give roots to smaller spaces. The public square at Almere is connected to the world of underground parking garages (with their entrances and exits designed by OMA/Rem Koolhaas), but facing the lake, the square assumes a concave shape like a reassuring beach, with the view stretching into the distance. The groves planned for this square are, moreover, a miniature transposition of those created by Alle Hosper on the other bank. This larger landscape, itself the product of artifice, is in turn internalized, and the relationship between these two spaces is woven naturally.

This public square, very much inspired by the Beaubourg Piazza, is the first public space designed in the Netherlands almost uniquely from stabilized soil. This compacted sand, like the hardened ground of a polder, is free of any decorative motifs.

The idea that a site could receive only one type of “legitimate” development makes no sense. The use of artificial slopes, which at Almere is justified by the fact that the city is built on a polder, resulted from a decision that can also be made in other cases, all other things being equal. Thus the topography can be upset without giving in to stereotypes but still remaining within the mind-set of a situation newly created to give more visibility to the site itself.



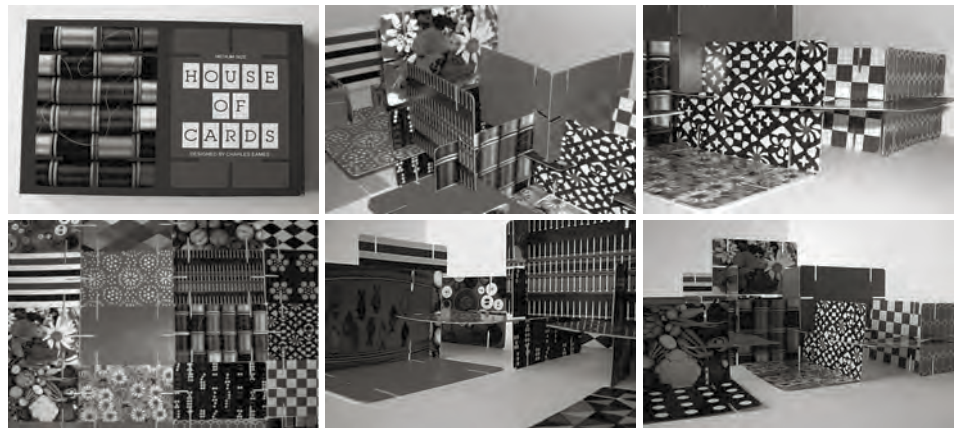


## DALLAS CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, DALLAS, USA, 2004-2009

- 1 The Art District in Dallas accommodates several cultural facilities, notably the theater by Rem Koolhaas, an opera designed by Norman Foster, and a philharmonic hall design by leoh Ming Pei. The clients wanted to give this neighborhood an overarching landscape identity. The stereotype of the European square, a place where people drawn to culture have “friendly” encounters, was very much present in everyone’s mind. One could also imagine changing this space into a kind of American-style campus, following the model at Harvard or in Philadelphia, with the square being one of the components. But this vision, coming from the 19th century, had no basis here, and in addition, the current methods of financing no longer allow for the implementation of this type of work. All the same, the task was to bring coherence to this neighborhood. It is a typically American neighborhood, located at the edge of the infrastructures of a city that is under the sway of the Jeffersonian grid, but that also stands out for its brutal use of the earth.

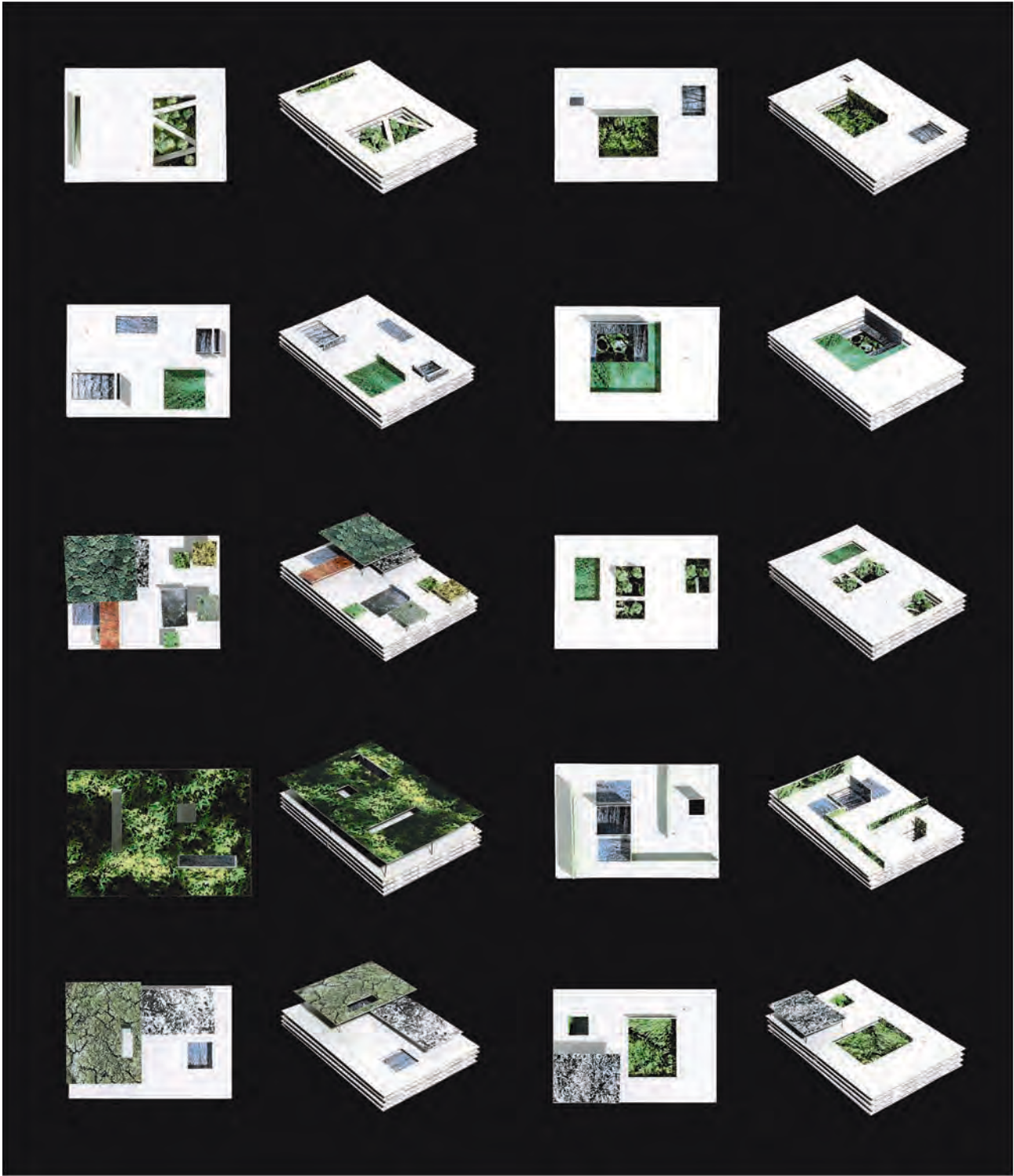


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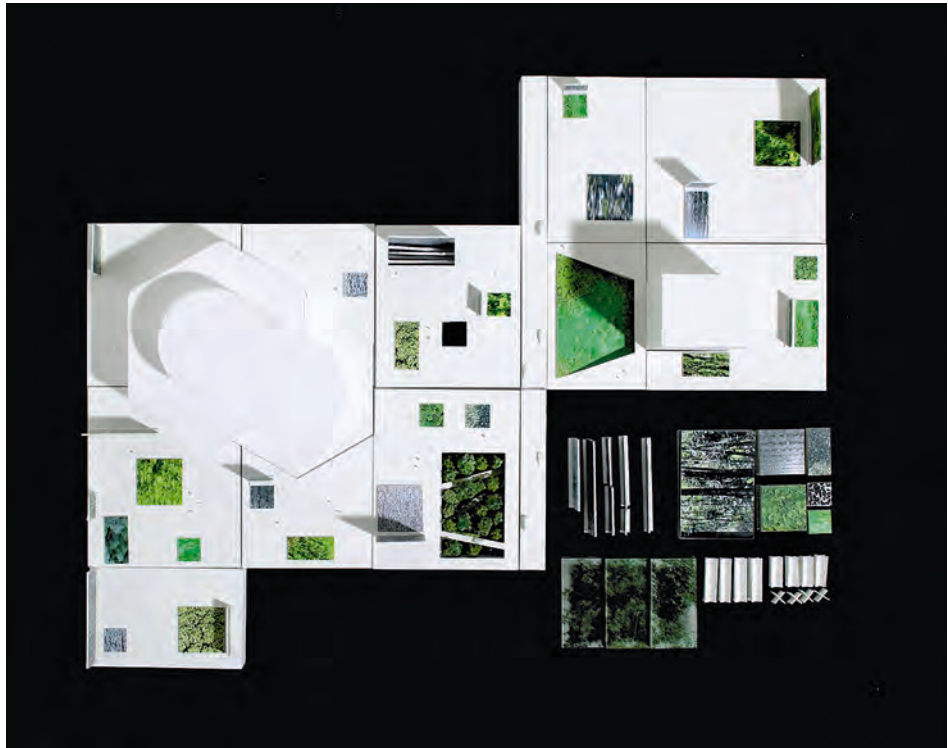
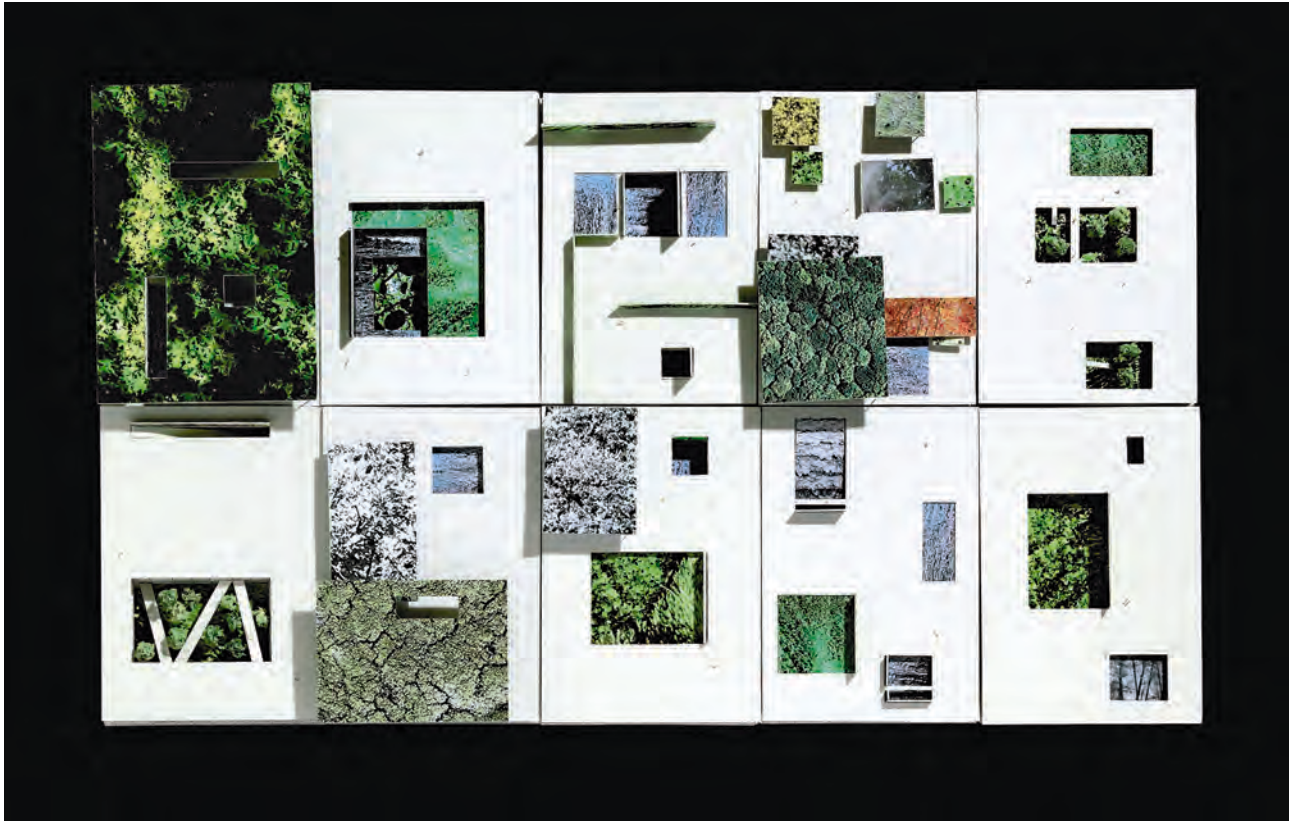


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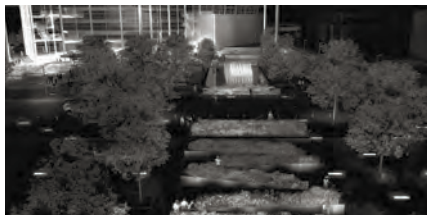
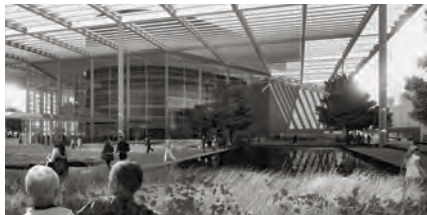
- 2 What distinguishes this space are mainly the large asphalt parking lots, a vast mineral base on which are placed objects undergoing transformation, according to the economic opportunities and their unpredictable rhythms. The project began with the idea that it was meaningless to soften this rough beauty, to make it more palatable. The process of forming and transforming this space is very clear, and by playing metaphorically with these latent qualities, it is possible to imagine a new, intermediary typology.
  
- 3 We found inspiration in the card game invented by Charles Eames. By fitting the slotted cards into one another, children make architectural forms and neighborhoods, according to a basic, orthogonal building method, but with a diversity of textures and an unpredictable richness that evoke the dynamic character of a city. In the same way, we can find something simple, childlike, and playful underlying the structure of this Dallas neighborhood. To organize this assemblage, to immobilize its workings—this would immediately obscure the sort of naïve beauty that, again, obviously derives from its structure.



- 4 Because everything here is movable, thanks to financial opportunities and cultural preferences, a pre-established composition of the envisioned public space would not make any sense. It was possible not only to transpose the physical image of the neighborhood and its method of composition, but also to take into account the decision-making process at work. A model-puzzle was developed with, at its foundation, the large, neutral mineral base, on which a certain number of components were placed, with the possibility of debating the location, the proportions, and the occupancy of these elements. These components were gardens, sets of vegetative or aquatic textures. The surfaces are rectangular, as in the card game by Charles Eames. These thin layers are superposed on the various layers of the base and meet the requirements for access, organization of uses, and light control.



- 5 This “kit” juxtaposing orthogonal rooms, portions of the base, and basic gardens amused and intrigued the clients as a possible project, the advantage being that these slabs could be combined gradually as exchanges and possible competitions were taking place. The public space created in this way also minimizes the power struggles, leading to shifts that are sometimes tiny, or more substantial. This would not have been possible with a pre-established composition.





- 6 The rough concrete base that forms the neighborhood grid accommodates many precisely defined components, translations of a nature that is artificial, vegetative, aquatic, or mineral. These gardens are livable areas in the public space, oases attenuating the ordeal that is the Texas climate. They are areas where people stay put or where they circulate: meadows, terraces, slopes, lakes, performance areas, and also routes accessing underground parking lots. Thus thin layers slide onto the neutral ground, with an essential rigor that reveals, rather than disguises, the primordial roughness. This project came about by observing the urban mechanisms at work. The obviousness of the play made the game possible.



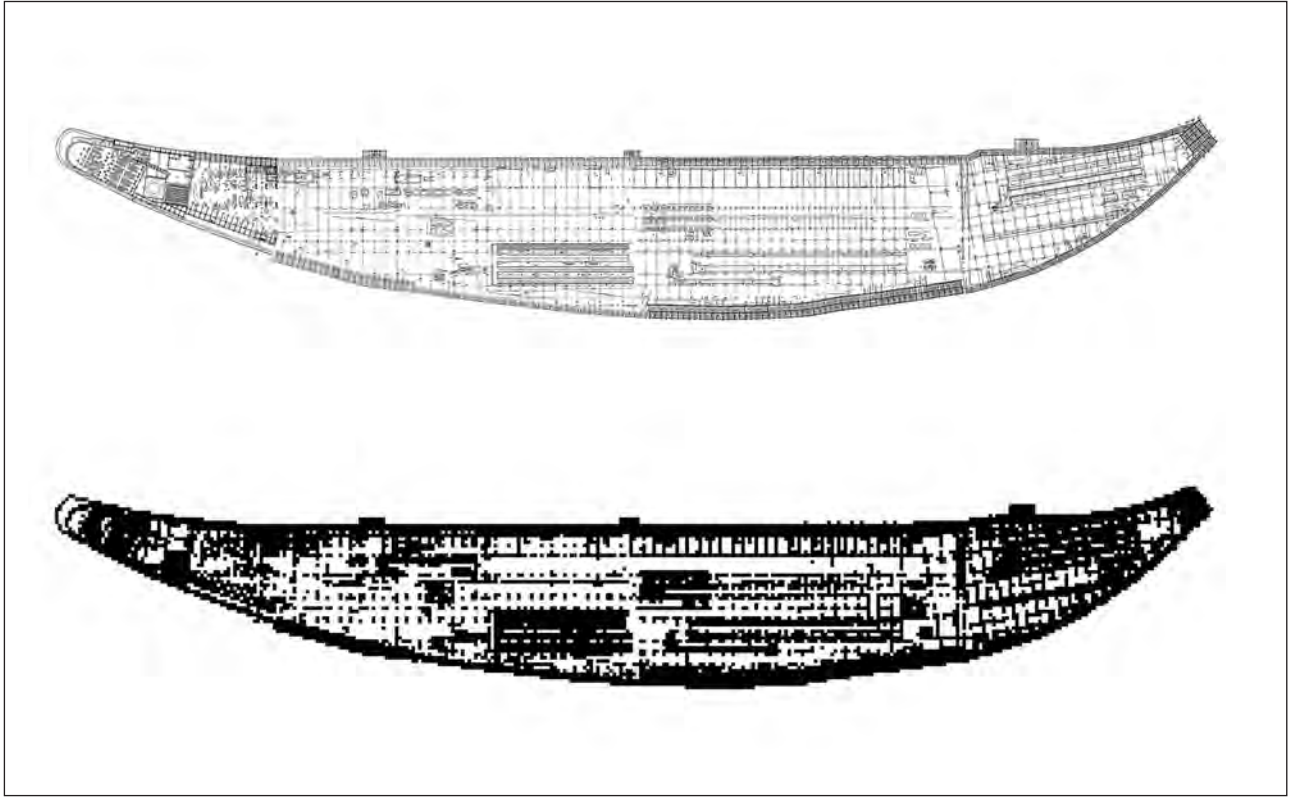
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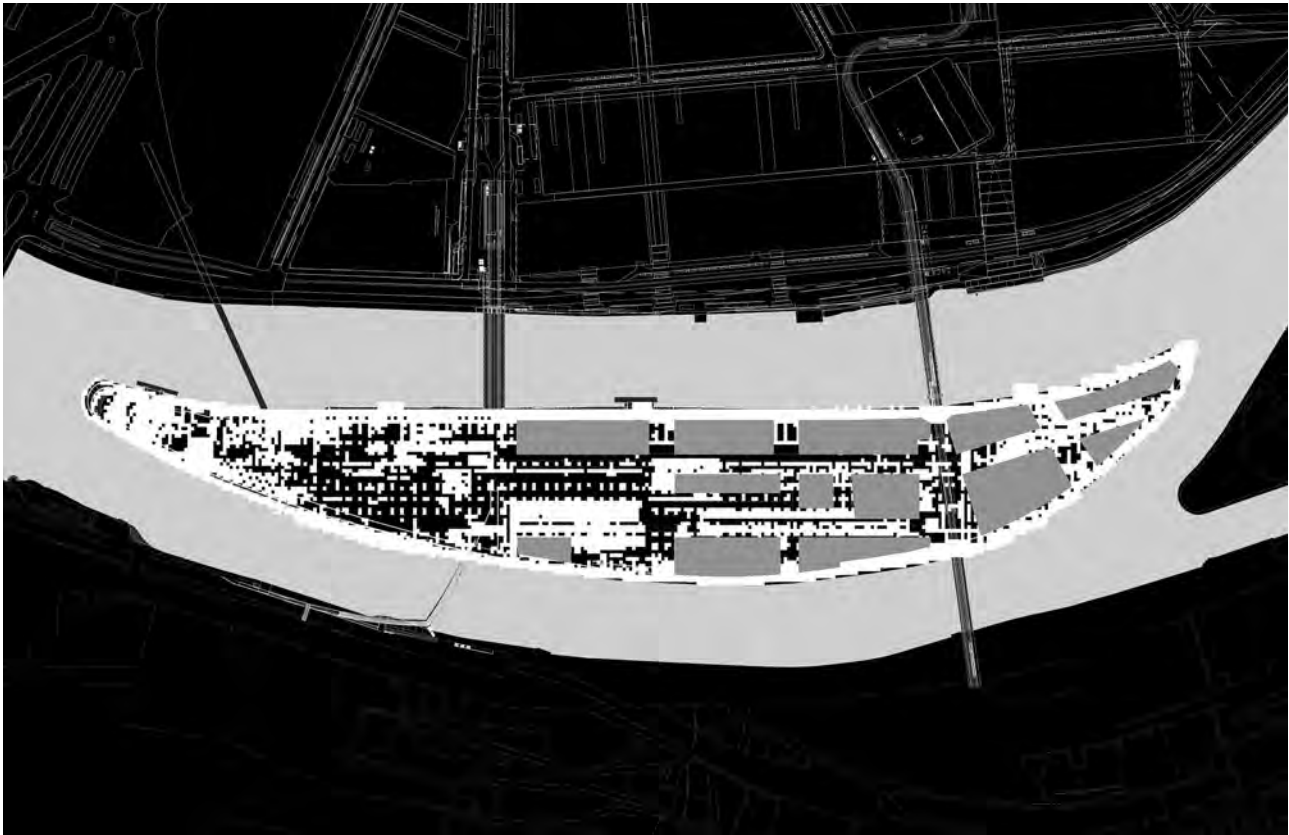
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## RECONVERSION OF SEGUIN ISLAND, BOULOGNE-BILLANCOURT, FRANCE, 2000-2007

- 1 The project undertaken on Seguin Island has a very clear kinship with the Dallas project. The commission here entails defining the composition modalities, the character, and the language of the public spaces. It does not entail setting out a precise, definitive site plan: Not all the future programs have been specified. Only the buildable areas have been defined, and many unforeseen turns are expected as the small islands are built. Thus the public space cannot be planned right away as an immutable space. The proposed plan is conceived as a design process that is likely to come with future changes.
- 2 Seguin Island is an artificial island on which the Renault factory was built. It is, quite literally, a foundation. To prepare the ground for the old structure, a powerful concrete terrace was built, with immense pits for the former presses at the factory. Nothing of the factory remains today, no vestige apart from this base, originally located on a forest of posts. Now obsolete, the ensemble requires complete reconstruction. Two pitfalls had to be avoided: the romanticism of reconquering the factory by the “good” nature, which will erase all traces of it, and, conversely, the neo-archaeological temptation to succumb to a form of passive fascination with the industrial past of the site.

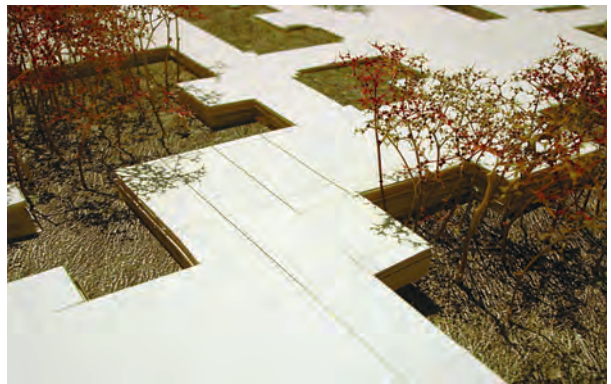
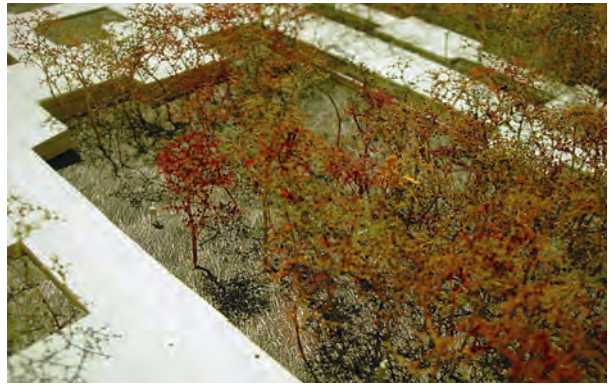


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- 3 Starting from the successive plans for these structures, superposing them on the various states that they experienced over time, the project almost became a flexible interplay of shapes. The “radiography” of all the original components leads to the graphic development of a system of solids and voids, whose coherence arises from observation and from the required manipulation, with the aesthetic result responding, of course, to the program data. This includes buildable footprints, circulation areas, and spaces to linger, which must be inviting. The idea is to conjugate all these requirements into a unified whole.
  
- 4 After a long design phase, the project—produced by integrating and reformulating the old traces—formed around a new base, a terrace-garden pierced with holes of different depths. As in Dallas, a mineral slab serves to support the whole site. In its abstract beauty and its roughness, its reinterpretations without nostalgia for what was, the base determines the buildable areas without prejudging the form of future buildings. A large retaining wall and a new forest of posts support this base. These components are drawn from a reinvented past, which, simply from the richness of their texture, underpin the reconversion of the site in its new vocabulary.

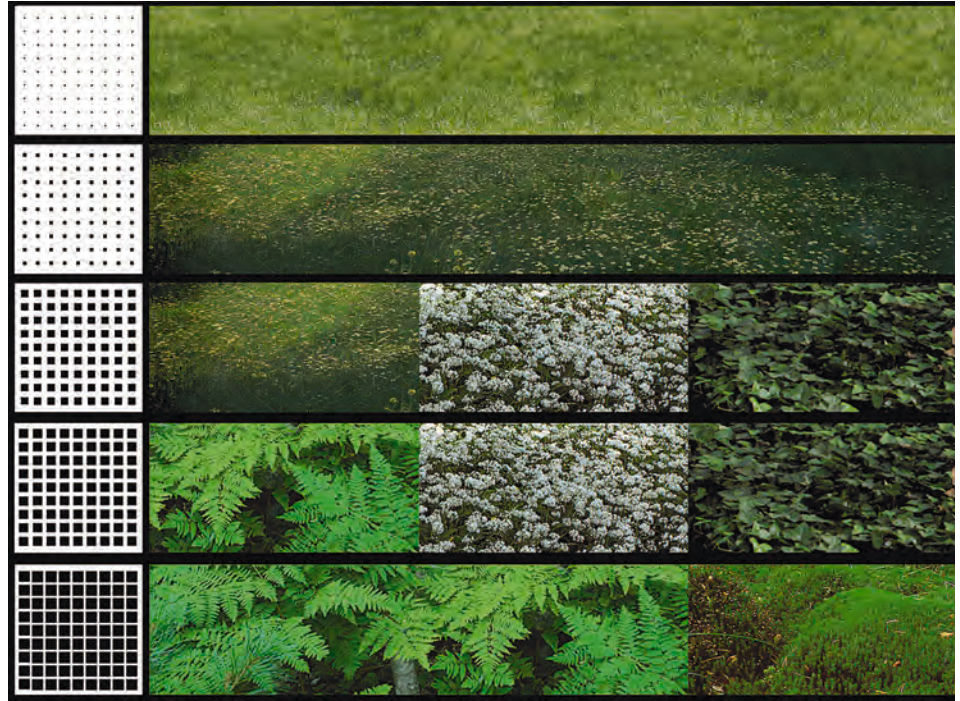


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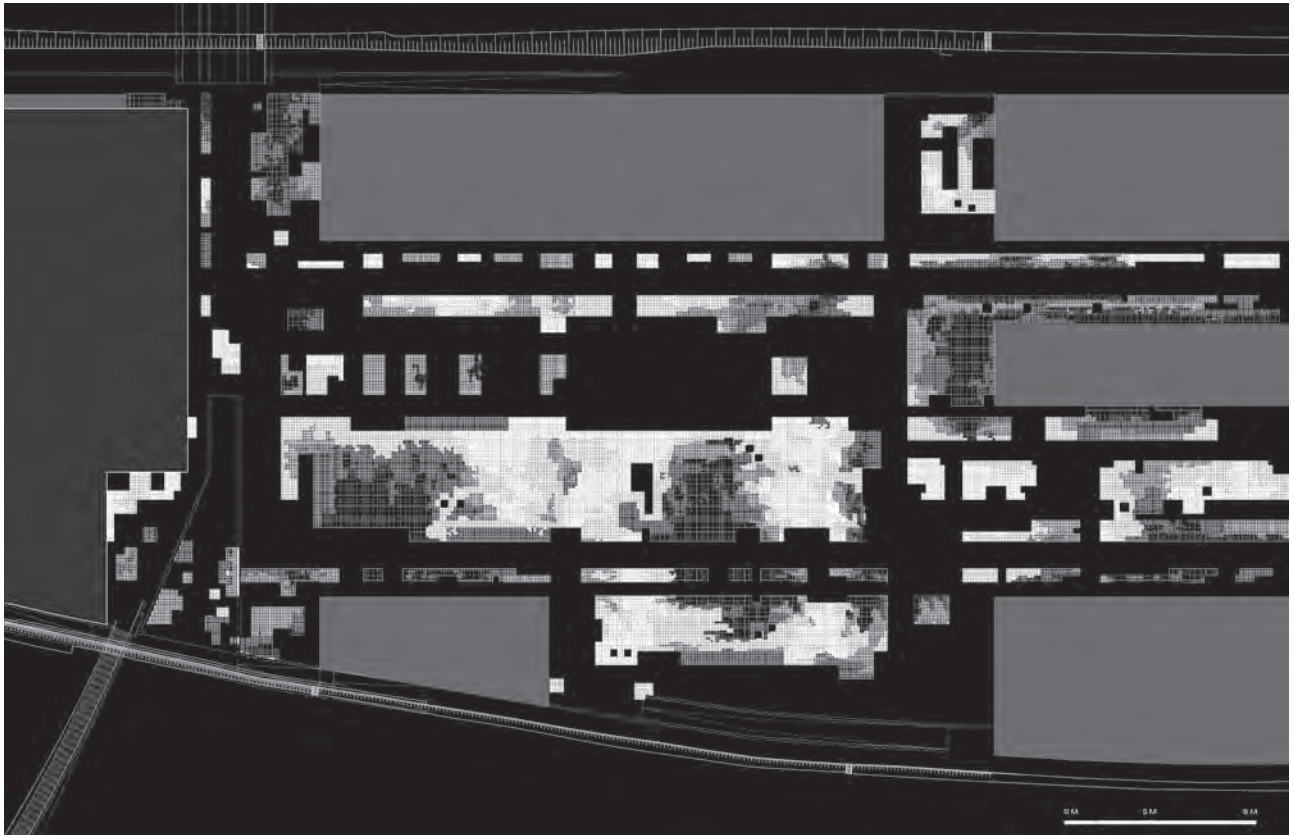


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- 5 This system of sunken gardens—sometimes in the form of actual pits that are inaccessible, or sometimes, by contrast, holes that are practically level with the surface—makes it possible to sidestep the typology of streets with their curbs and sidewalks, and even their street furniture. The gardens themselves become the setting for the paved drives, parking areas, and walking paths.
  
- 6 Together, the gardens form a kind of little architecture that is also artificial, although their material consists of elements from nature. This is a miniaturization of nature that is very contained, but that authorizes juxtapositions and accumulations through the phenomena of growth and competition.



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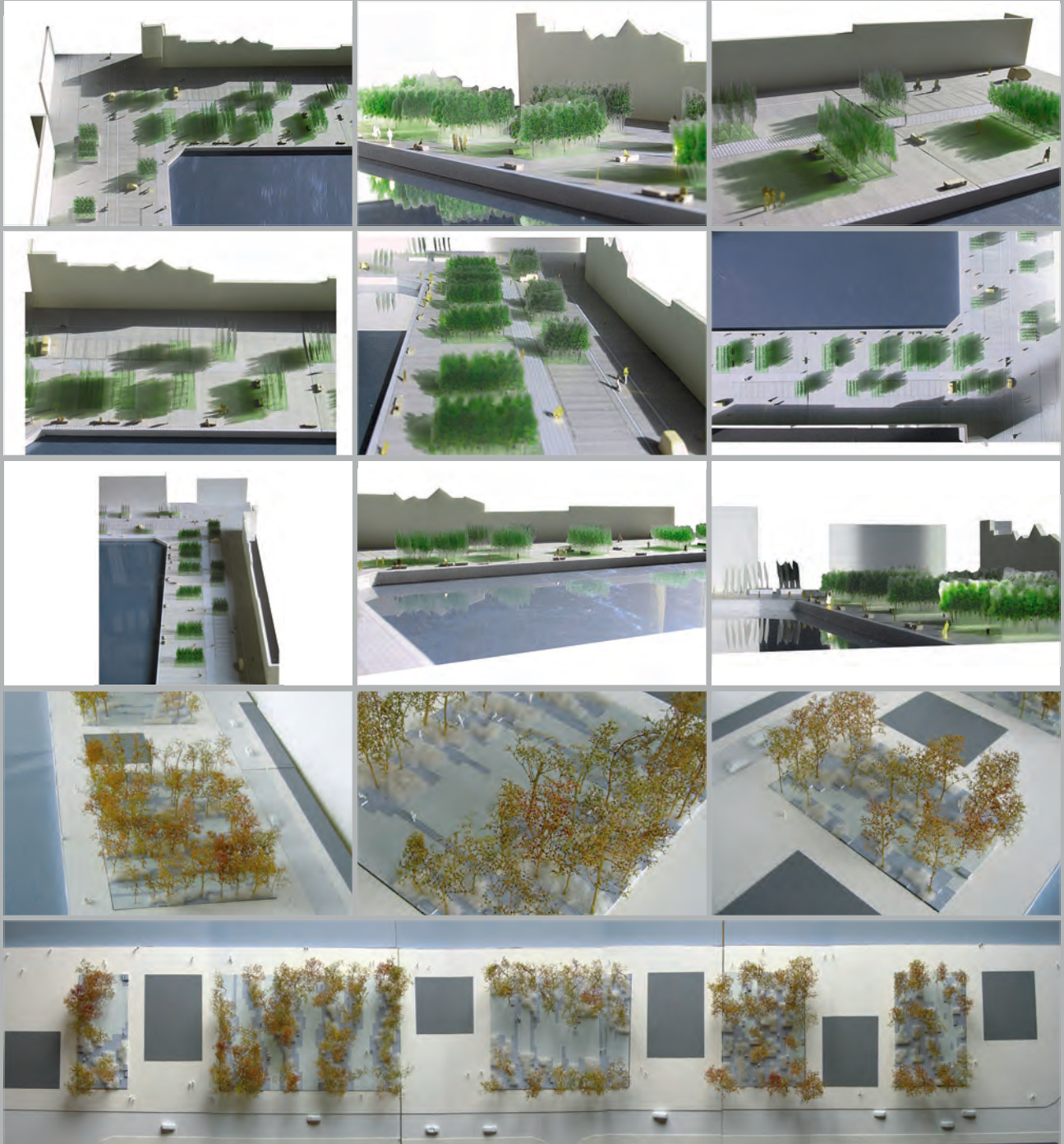
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7 The reconstituted undergrowth, receiving more or less light depending on the depth of the hole and the proximity to the buildings, consists of ferns and grasses. Sometimes people can descend into these niches and get lost, or they can simply contemplate them and use the edges as seating.

8 Their multitude, diversity, and richness create welcoming landscape arrangements, but their beauty also has an abstract quality. There is no clue to indicate the scale of such and such a site—no street furniture or stereotypical road components—and this gives the insular “garden terrace” a kind of disproportion.

In Dallas, as on Seguin Island, the task was to create public spaces linked to cultural institutions and responding to mixed typologies that combine public squares and gardens. The planned systems do not involve a form of contextualism, and even less, the importation of exotic models. Their creation springs from the observation of urban mechanisms, new and old; artistically refashioned, they tend toward a form of abstraction.



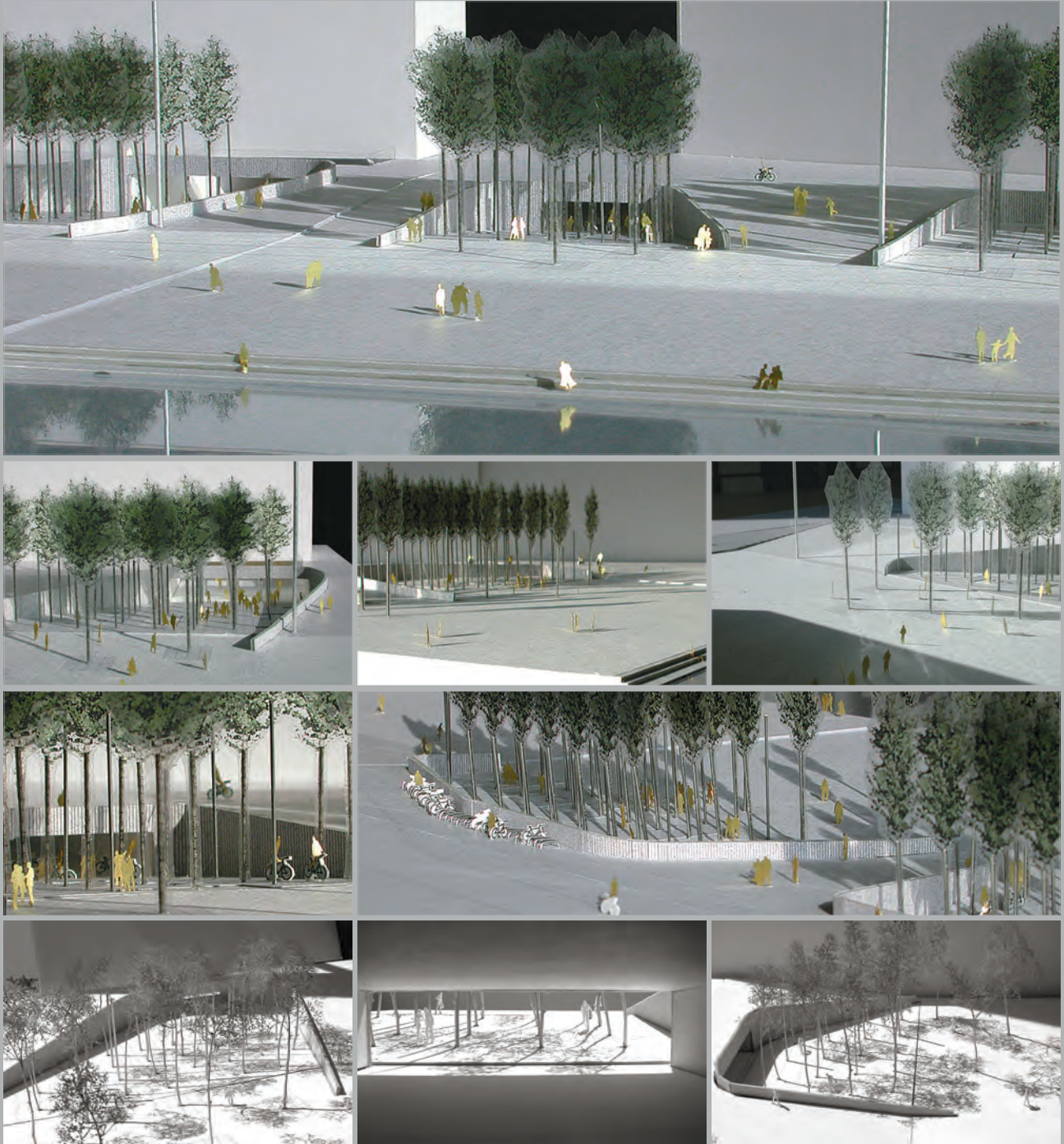
**RECONVERSION OF THE OLD PORT OF EILANDJE, ANTWERP, BELGIUM, 2001-2004**  
**KATTENDIJKDOK, ANTWERP, BELGIUM, 2006-2008**

The wish was to preserve the specific character of these large quays. Only 15 percent of the surface is put at risk by the addition of a vegetative presence, put in perspective through a system of blocks or slideways. The whole maintains the original excessiveness while creating a single public space with alternating public squares and gardens.



**AUBERVILLIERS CAMPUS, AUBERVILLIERS, FRANCE, 2006-2007**

This former river port north of Paris made it possible to develop a similar vocabulary. Here was the opportunity to try out this singular construction of public space. As soon as they were planted, the trees had a presence, despite the scope of the site, and they defined the immediately readable places.



## **ALMERE, THE NETHERLANDS, 2000-2005**

This urban public space is on a beach, linked to its geography and its location facing the lake and the far-off horizons. The proposal, which is atypical, involved installing little gardens on the slopes of this square, which are, paradoxically, the places where all the functions are clustered.

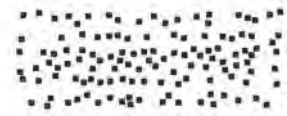


# VEGETATION AS SETTING

LIVING ENVIRONMENT IN MINIATURE



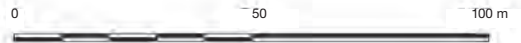
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- 1 Ministry of Culture, Paris, France
- 2 Central Museum, Utrecht, The Netherlands
- 3 Rue de Meaux, Paris, France

Some urban sites are almost abstract, for they are detached from their context. In locations with flagstones or a courtyard, it is sometimes futile and absurd to search for a way to anchor the work regionally. The introduction of a “living” environment—one that is rich, coherent, and spectacular—can give meaning to such isolated areas. This exercise is specific, localized.

Here, the form of the landscape is entirely blurred for the benefit of the richness of its materials and its texture. Of course, it would be a mistake to apply this informal manner of composition in a general way. This response—using vegetation as a medium—is a reaction to the strong, introverted frame whose edges can thus be erased or extended. For the garden at the Ministry of Culture, but also in the cases of the Rue de Meaux and of Utrecht, the proposed projects are situated almost “out of the world.” In these areas with extremely contained, restrictive contours, the creation of a natural setting is justified aesthetically and architecturally. This exploration gives access to a multitude of rich, plastic, complex possibilities. The meaning of our work, its contribution, involves the arrangement of textures, transparencies, light, densities, and permeabilities, and does not reflect any ideology.

Moreover, one can make comparisons with what happened in the past, when Jussieu, Linnaeus, and Buffon introduced and then acclimated certain plants. Those plants have developed to the point of becoming a dominant feature in our environment. The practices that resulted from these contributions are the practices of the collector: like objects chosen from a catalogue, cedars, blue spruces, and magnolias are superposed without hesitation. But one rarely considers the meaning given to these living environments. Today it is possible to envision the planting of landscapes capable of preempting future pressures (climatic changes in particular).

We cannot content ourselves with the ease of gratuitous collage, either in the domain of landscape or in that of architecture. Computer work makes it possible to juxtapose any image with another, even if they have no relationship. The coherence of living environments that we design and their degree of development distance us from this gratuitousness. The game that we propose with the living environment is above all a play on the materials—which are reinterpreted, moreover—and from this we form a structure.

Moreover, the remarks of various botanists and the trends of the moment have led landscape architects and the society as a whole to change their view of the vegetal world. Plants that have always been seen as worthless weeds might today attain the status of a work of art in the world of garden design. This is a major development. We can, however, ask ourselves various questions about these practices. An abandoned landscape, for example, has visual and plastic qualities on a large scale, which would be difficult to shrink down. Straight, unaltered importation is aesthetically unacceptable, as is the hyper-concentration of these plants in a small space. We all have an empirical knowledge of true nature, and the literal artifice that we sometimes confront, in terms of proportion and density, does not conjure up the landscape that served as the model.

Patrick Blanc, with his great knowledge of the living environment, develops magnificent inventions in his vertical gardens. Our collaboration on the garden for the Ministry of Culture was fueled by his botanical learning. As landscape architects, what we can contribute is a composition that can efface the various devices linked to the juxtaposition of areas, of vegetative “tasks.” By mimicking what can exist in nature and



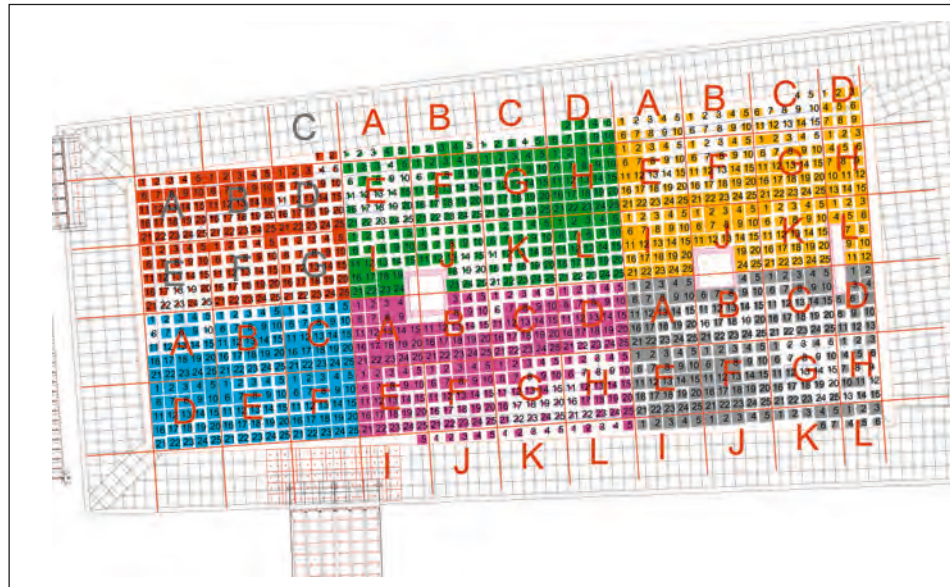
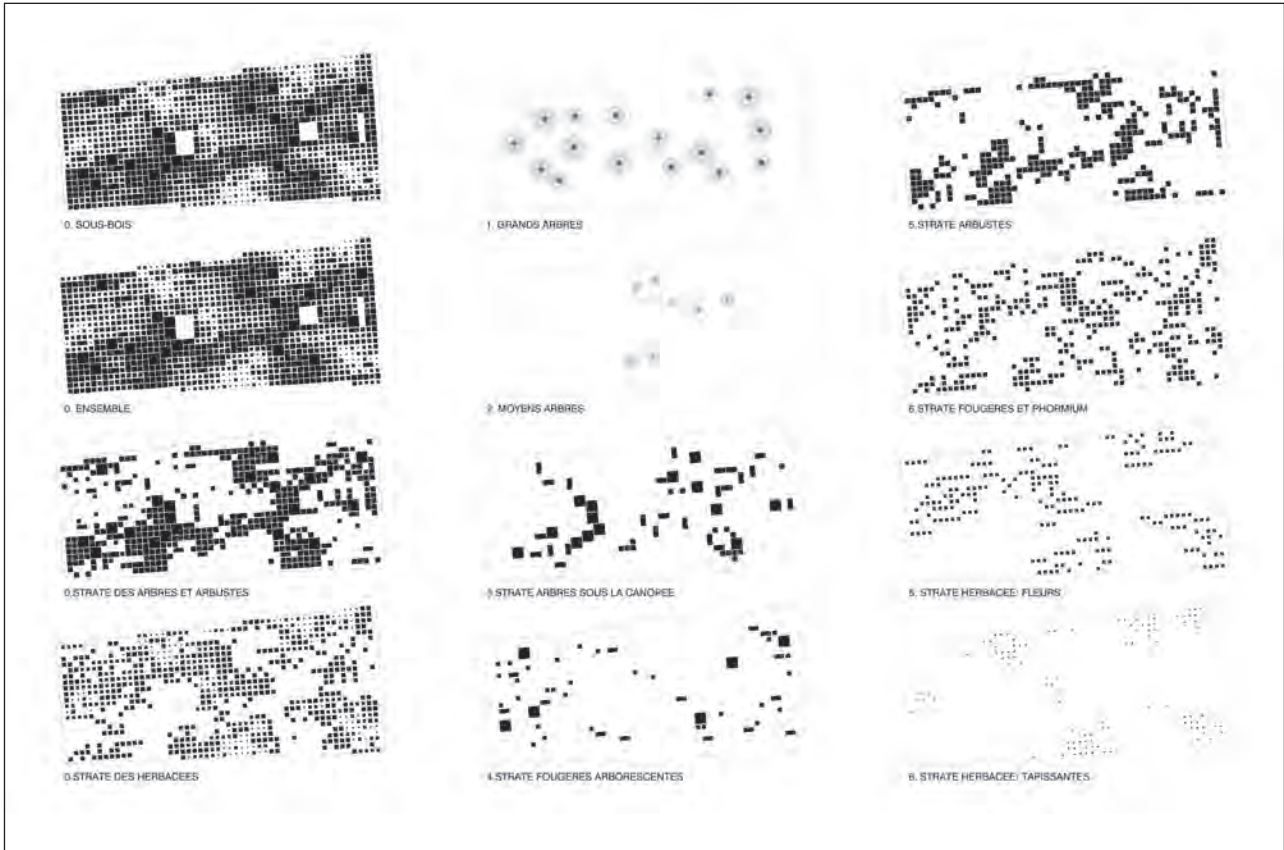
by organizing the strata, the densities, and the textures, we transpose certain volumes and certain spaces that, miniaturized by our moldable methods, make it possible to blur the boundaries between the components.

Unlike the gardens of Roberto Burle Marx, and even those of Isamu Noguchi, the point here is to make the compositional devices disappear through the miniaturization of living environments, using the current methods and insights available to us. It is an atypical work of composition.



## MINISTRY OF CULTURE, PARIS, FRANCE, 2001-2004

- 1 This little experimental garden, designed for the Ministry of Culture in Paris, was conceived with the botanist Patrick Blanc. It is set in a very deep courtyard, which receives only a small amount of direct light. Native plants that were likely to survive under these conditions and that could be planted in this space usually lack texture and color. Patrick Blanc started with the idea that this context, with its limitations in terms of light and temperature, corresponded to the conditions found in the undergrowth of southern high-altitude forests. These environments offer very great richness and vegetative diversity.



- 2 Thus the idea was formed to adapt and miniaturize one of these forests in a small surface area—a box of 170 square meters set within a larger courtyard. Over twelve strata, 1,000 plants from 100 species, selected by the botanist, were brought in.
  
- 3 What is the nature of the landscape work here? First, it entails understanding that if, on the scale of a large area, the coexistence of these many species featuring very different textures, colors, and materials has coherence, their concentration in a small space would be relatively incoherent and aesthetically shocking. Thus the work consisted of making selections from the botanist's list of suggestions, selections that would make it possible to plan the transitions so that the whole would be both readable and palatable. Trees of different sizes, shrubs, herbaceous plants, arborescent ferns, and so on, were chosen, then worked into a composition. It was really about sculpting the vegetative mass, layer by layer, starting from very precise drawings. While the upward growth of the plants was carefully taken into account, their roots were buried deep in the ground, covered by 70 centimeters of soil. The plans show the technical side of this composition, which offers a naturalistic result. The soil and the irrigation techniques incorporate important nuances that respond to the specific need of one plant or another. The very great artifice used here fosters the illusion of an environment that is dynamic, rich, and complex. This atypical experiment, in which a botanist teams up with landscape architects and technicians, is still under way. It is a kind of scientific experiment.



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- 4 This miniature composition of a living environment depends on a landscape approach as well as on research about the vegetation. Of course, botanical richness alone does not lead to beauty. The quality of the results, which is the fruit of scientific knowledge allied with artistic refinement, comes from the coherence of the living environment. Each cubic meter of this material proposes variations in textures and blooms, and offers rich and coherent visual emotions. This composition was not at all intended as a version of a botanic garden design with an instructive aim. The botanical knowledge is used for deliberately aesthetic ends, supported by suitable technical resources.
  
- 5 Is it possible to imagine such an experiment on a large scale? Today there is a political, ecological idea according to which it would be in good taste to return to the local, native, "legitimate" vegetation, at the expense of "exotic" species. Apart from the anthropomorphist dimension of this kind of thinking, which is connected with a certain number of dangerously suggestive ideologies, this inanity must be denounced: the vegetation currently present in our countries has little to do with that which existed in the 17th century. For a long time, quite a lot of intermixing has brought about the juxtaposition and the coexistence, in a single garden, and also in the forests, of plants originally coming from environments that are extremely diverse and geographically distant. Once again, the pitfall that must be avoided remains the same: creative cacophony. In fact, the beauty of a landscape results from the coherence that it is possible to invent for it, and not from the casual accumulation of species. The little garden for the Ministry of Culture prompts us to consider work with materials and with depth. It is indeed a miniature landscape, rich in the diversity of sensations it provides. This result, achieved through the conceptual mastery of botanical knowledge, could be applied to large parks and forested areas, opening up aesthetic perspectives.



**CENTRAL MUSEUM, UTRECHT, THE NETHERLANDS, 1998-2000**

The very limited budget led to a basic treatment for this garden. The content can be summed up by a game between the free-form grasses and the mowed grass. This minimal dialectic is enough to give structure to this small parcel.

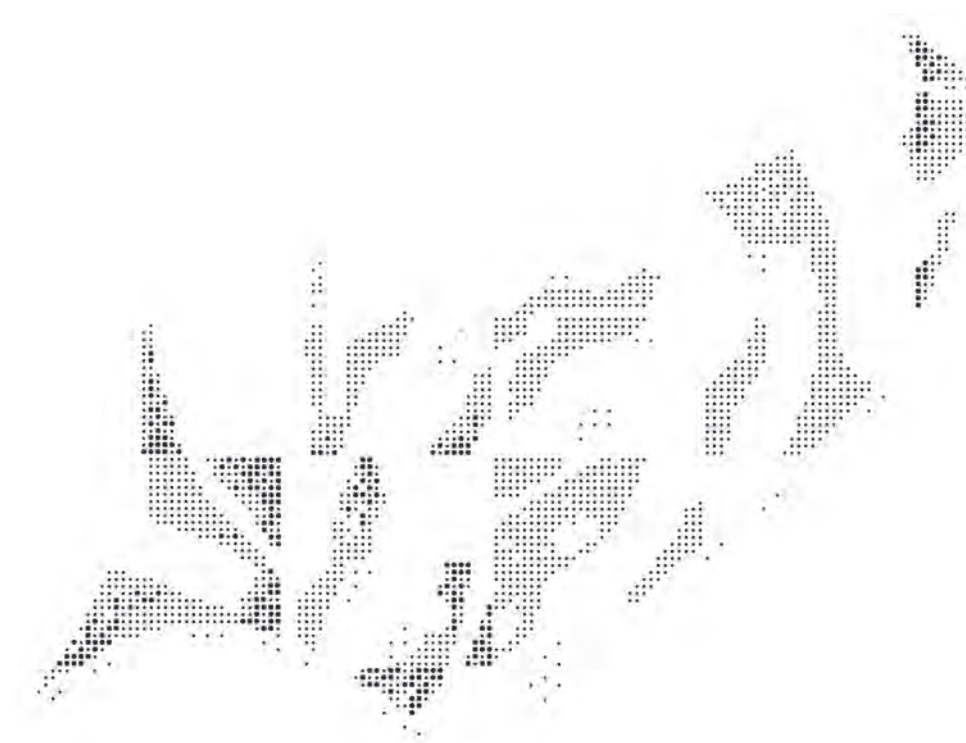




**RUE DE MEAUX, PARIS, FRANCE, 1989-1992**

Once again, the idea at work in this small Parisian courtyard, measuring 24 by 60 meters and set in the center of a building by Renzo Piano, is to initiate a play between living matter and artifice. One hundred ten birches are planted on an uninterrupted ground cover. The vegetation is used to evoke a forested setting, with its material and its textures. In this project with a summary ecology, the goal is above all aesthetic.

# A LANDSCAPE DEFERRED



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- 1 Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA
- 2 Keio University, Tokyo, Japan

## A LANDSCAPE DEFERRED

GILLES A. TIBERGHIEU

There is undeniably an experimental quality in the work of Michel Desvigne, and no doubt this comes largely from his early scientific training, when he studied natural sciences before taking the entrance exam at the École de Versailles in order to become a landscape architect. It is not so much the study of plants that first interested him, but rather the development of living organisms, the formation of reliefs on land surfaces, the harmony of settings. But even more, it was the way these processes were put into action in these disciplines that left an enduring mark on him. The landscape became a laboratory for verifying a certain number of hypotheses informed by the knowledge that had been gained, by the skills of agricultural engineers, by the science of hydrologists, by the projections of city planners, and so on.

The landscape architect is part semiologist, part interpreter: he knows how to discover the signs and how to decipher and interpret them. If he were only that, he would be a keen observer, able to understand the history of how landscapes were formed. But Desvigne is also someone who plans, applying his analytical abilities to transform the realities that he observes. How does he transform them? By giving them legibility. How does he make them legible? By redesigning them, by rediscovering their structural frames, by trying to *tracer les lignes principales d'un paysage, son ossature, sa physiognomie* ("map out the principal lines of a landscape, its bony structure, its physiognomy," translation Elizabeth Kugler), as Baudelaire accurately said of Corot, whom he admired.<sup>1</sup> It is in this way that the very term *paysagiste*—which the French use when speaking of a landscape architect but which until very recently was correctly employed only in reference to a "landscape painter"—is especially warranted if it is not slapped on any old supposedly artistic blurredness.

1. Charles Baudelaire, « Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne » *Œuvres Complètes*, Paris, Gallimard, Pléiade, 1961, p.1166.

Landscape drawing is an important issue. I am not speaking only of the debate between the supporters of computer software and the defenders of drawing by hand. I am talking about the kind of drawing that results—although it does seem to me, without wanting to fight a rearguard action and reject useful technological advances, that it is difficult to entirely overlook work by hand. The drawing plays a role that is at once descriptive and analytical—it is an instrument for visibility that makes it possible to understand how a landscape is made. But at the same time, it plays a *constructive* role since, in revealing this role, it creates the very thing that it unveils. It is the responsibility of the landscape architect to extend his gesture toward a futuristic area that is his alone to understand but that, if it is really made visible, will be clear to everyone in the end.

The designs by Desvigne are very interesting from this point of view. They have the terse beauty of scientific sketches, and they borrow heavily from the conceptual and minimalist aesthetic. Geometry prevails; the lines are rigid; the world is caught in a grid of coordinates that follow the deeper axes, internal veins in the landscape: horographic meridians, road networks, property boundaries, folds in the land, and so on. These kinds of views correspond to those we have from an airplane. The point of view over the earth is from the sky, but it is seen from the earth in some way; this detour, which Ptolemy deemed indispensable to the geographer, is needed by the landscape architect only to allow him to see through the surface of the landscape.

This process of virtual vitrification of the ground guides him toward what is essential. For some time now, Desvigne has been perfecting this method, which consists of resizing the shapes found in nature by playing with their scale. He injects them with colors, like certain radiographs, and uses these “tracers” to make visible the forms in the landscape that would otherwise remain muddled. The result are often drawings with striking graphics; yet at the same time, we sense that they do not fulfill

any decorative concern—which Desvigne avoids like the plague! More than a drawing, one could speak of a diagram, as D’Arcy Thompson understood it: “The form of an object is a ‘diagram of forces,’ in this sense, at least, that from it we can judge of or deduce the forces that are acting or have acted upon it.”<sup>2</sup>

For Desvigne, the form never takes precedence: it is deduced from the processes that he creates on the landscape. The form results from geomorphological, historical, and technical constraints that the landscape architect must face, but these constraints are also a powerful stimulus for the development of what I will call a techno-aesthetic that brings to mind the work by Frederick Law Olmsted, who, in his age, knew how to capitalize on the weighty project contract conditions that accompanied the drainage project on the Charles River in Boston. From this effort there emerged one of the most emblematic landscape parks in Olmsted’s oeuvre, a model for North America and a constant reference for Michel Desvigne, who, during his time at Harvard, closely studied this ecological system design.

If I had to link Desvigne to a mythological figure, I would definitely choose Ulysses. There is nothing Promethean in his work—unlike some others, who work with nature “by moving mountains.” Desvigne, by contrast, uses craftiness. Like Homer’s hero, he is endowed with *métis*, or magical cunning, that ability to grab hold of things at the right place and the right time. His art consists of setting up systems to trap natural movements or man-made mechanisms. Thanks to one or more components, however minimal they may be, this landscape architect suddenly brings about a change that is much more significant in a process of transformation that is both physical and social. In nature, one cannot predict everything, and rather than to resign himself to this, Michel Desvigne plays with the unforeseen, taking it fully into account and assigning it a role in the project.

2. D’Arcy Thompson, *On Growth and Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1942).

This portion of chance, which is always maintained, gives Desvigne's work an acrobatic, risqué, and ever-suspenseful quality. No doubt that is what James Corner meant by unfinished when he spoke of Desvigne's work. Let us say that Desvigne's work involves a completion that is always deferred, like the landscape itself and the cities in perpetual transformation. Desvigne often speaks of the "transposition" of natural forms, of organizational models, of urban structures, and so on. But these transpositions assume very different temporalities, and sometimes what took several dozen years, or even several hundred years, is put forth as a fluid model in a striking chronological shortcut, thus making it possible to contract history in the geography. At the same time, this gives a kind of breathing room to the space, which suddenly finds there an unexpected vanishing point. Thus in the work at Issoudun, the issue is to make legible once again the medieval structure radiating from the city. "The proposal is not to restore a reality that has disappeared," writes Desvigne. "It means using substitution," starting with the traces that have become almost unreadable but which, when thus transformed, produce a new urban landscape so effectively that "everything remains in place but its nature changes."

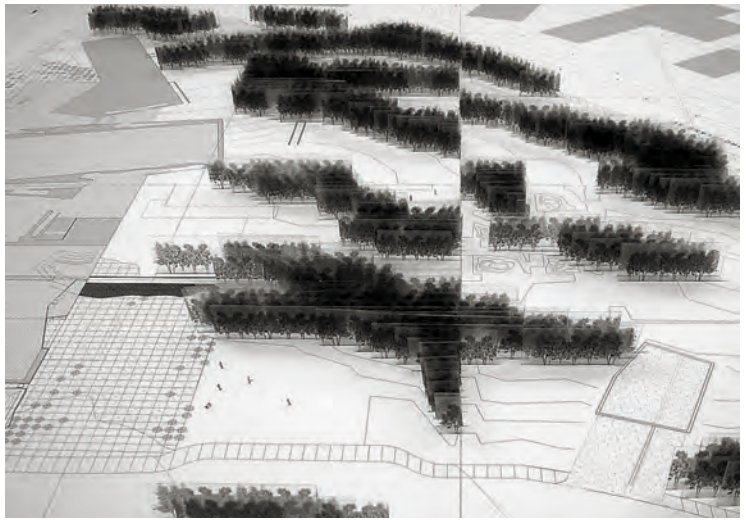
Why is it important to restore legibility to the landscape? Because it is our history, our common possession. It makes us understand better what we are by reminding us of what we were. Landscape is the sedimentation of collective acts, the witness of usages that have often disappeared, the memory of a world that has sometimes lost its sense for those who inhabited it and who now see only a collection of sites, spaces, bits of nature mixed with housing. As John Brinckerhoff Jackson said, landscape "is not a natural feature of the environment, but a *synthetic* space, a man-made system of spaces superimposed on the face of the land, functioning and evolving not according

to natural laws but in order to serve a community.”<sup>3</sup> For the landscape architect, the task is sometimes to give meaning back to this community: a task that is very modest but also extremely ambitious, one that Michel Desvigne knew how to turn into a manifesto.

3. John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).



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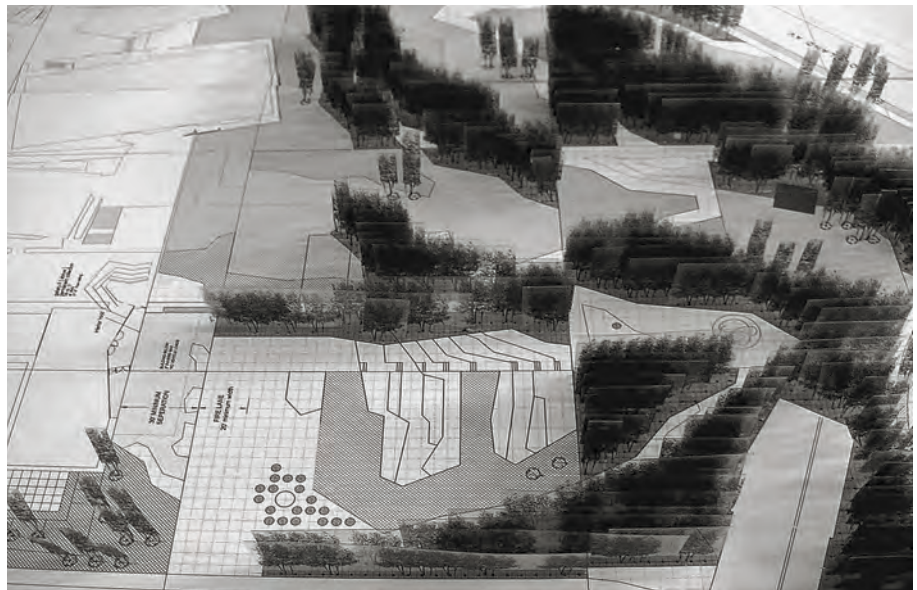


## WALKER ART CENTER, MINNEAPOLIS, USA, 2002-2005

- 1 The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis was recently expanded by Herzog & de Meuron. In connection with this expansion, there was to be a garden where artists might possibly come to work. The ground, with a steep slope shown here, covers three hectares. In the United States, the Walker Art Center enjoys a strong reputation, thanks to its very committed acquisitions policy. The content of the future garden was found by observing the Minnesota landscape. But the transposition that followed gave rise to a succession of intermediary steps, supported by an ongoing dialogue with the clients. In winter, the snow highlights the structure of the Minnesota landscape, which is characteristic of nearly all of the American territory, for the Jeffersonian grid organizes almost every state. At irregular intervals, this checkerboard runs up against geographical elements—slopes that cannot be farmed and built upon—yielding to forests or rivers. In places the forests open onto very unusual linear glades, and this series of solids and voids suggested a very interesting type of space for the Walker Art Center garden. In fact, the new building is similarly organized around a route from room to room, sometimes intruding on the interstitial spaces. The Minnesota landscape suggests a variation of this—paths crossing these woods and glades, but without the appearance of clearly defined boundaries. It is a fluid composition, in which one literally slides from one void to another.
- 2 The garden could thus be conceived as the miniature transposition of this landscape, with the grid, denser here, playing with the topographical elements.

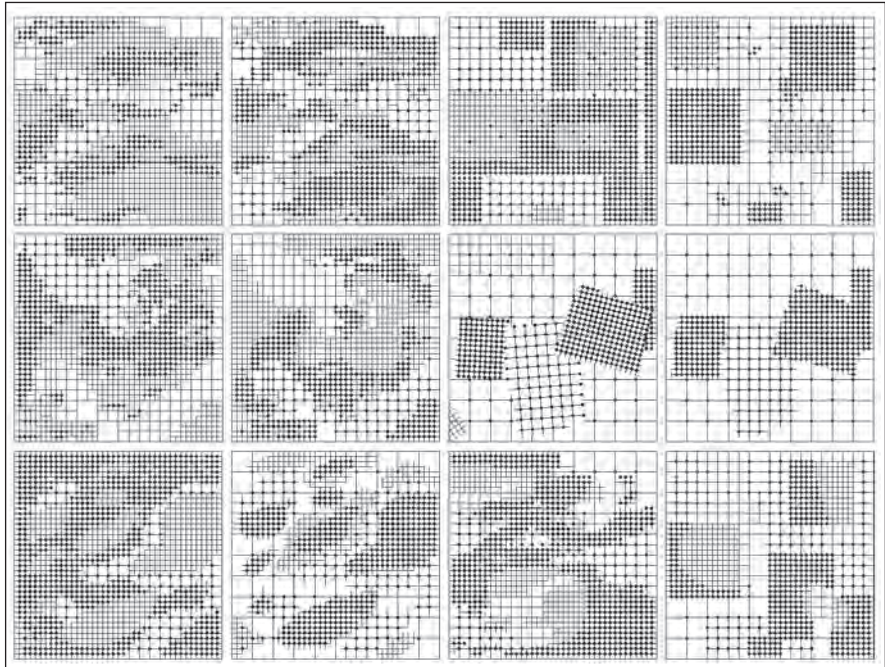


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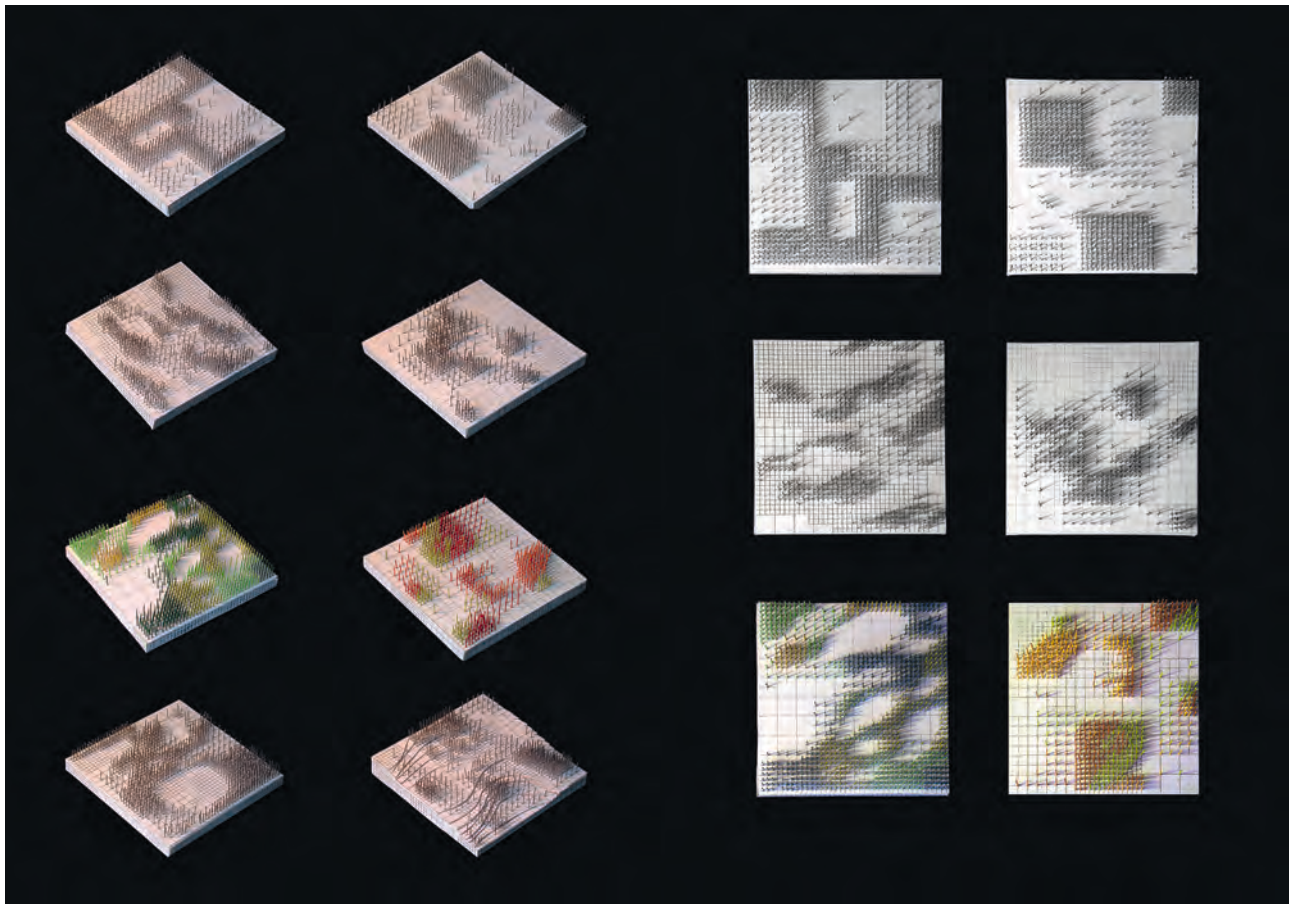


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- 3 Initially, the planned garden was entirely planted, like a sculpted mass of vegetation, with very minor glades hollowed out. From this point, the project evolved. After several years of observation, the ratio occupied by trees was reduced. The garden became mainly a void, broken up by successive curtains formed by the forested areas, which were designed like so many screens, or filters, obscuring the view of the immediate environment, which was wanting. The sense of space, and its practical application, was radically transformed.
  
- 4 As in the museum, the route plays a very important role. Because the ground is sloped, a continuous ramp was necessary so that everyone could have access. This ramp was determined by the grid, but sometimes, because the slope led it there, the route followed a curve, which again joined up with a line, and so on. Thus there was a return to the logic that has determined the construction of the American landscape in the very form of the route. The glades are defined by the grid, the steepest slopes planted with screens of trees. Thus the ramp crosses a glade, then runs along the edge of a micro-forest, goes into it, and comes out in open air, creating very diversified arrangements. Despite the small size, the garden multiplies the spatial experiences and the very number of spaces encountered. The path coincides with the grid only when the ramp rests against an underlying geometric boundary. The task was to sculpt the space. In terms of structure, this allee does not evoke any familiar path or route. It makes perceptible the geography on which we walk. Its dimensions vary continually in terms of width, sometimes shrinking to a very narrow passageway or at other times, by contrast, suddenly widening, spilling into the space of a glade, like a large boulder.



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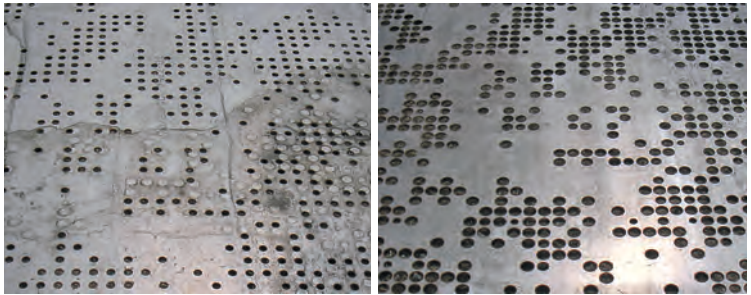


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- 5 Everything is landscape in this project: the mineral surface in its relationship with the vegetal surface, the forested areas in their relationship with the grass—all is controlled by the equilibrium established between the grid and the topography. Each layer, however, is relatively independent; this generates complexity and introduces richness into the heart of the spatial experience.
  
- 6 Birches grow in northern Minnesota, one of the only trees adapted to the very harsh climatic conditions of this area, and thus the materials for the project were defined from the start. Hundreds of trees, planted on a grid that is itself a submultiple of the Jeffersonian grid, make it possible to play on the depth of the field and on the variable densities. These plays on density evoke certain practices in forestry or horticulture: Poplar groves, orchards, and tree nurseries are energizing spaces. The shift among the geometrically organized verticals produces very familiar visual effects. The aim of these little models is the architectural mastery of these effects.

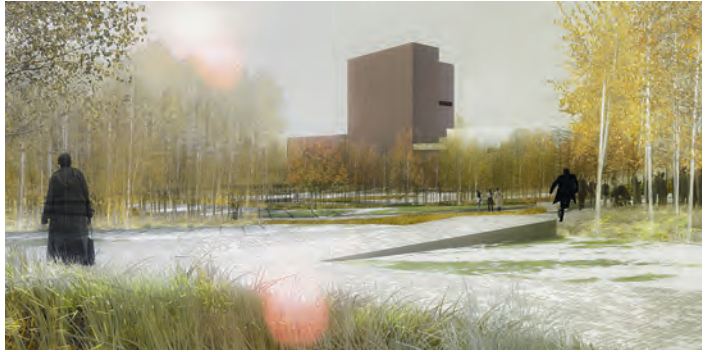


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- 7 The material selected for the ramp is concrete, poured in place, a component now used for the surfaces of American cities. But here, the idea was to make reference to the rocks on which people walk in northern Minnesota; dry or moss-covered, according to their orientation, they are more or less eroded, depending on the slope. In order to artificially restore this quasi-geographic dimension, the technique already used by Herzog & de Meuron in parts of the building was also used here. The concrete was literally carved, using a high-pressure water jet filtered by stencils, producing perforations that take the shape of fictive topography.
  
- 8 The different densities and diameters of the dots make it possible to achieve a patina comparable to that found on certain rocks near Lake Superior that have been pocked by the erosion of many impacts, arranged, by some natural miracle, in a quasi-geometric order. The surface of the ramp is an explicit artifice, the motivation for which is understandable, while the results refer back to a form of nature.



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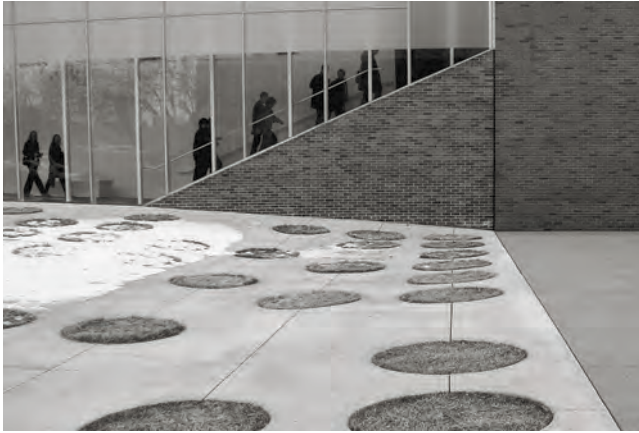
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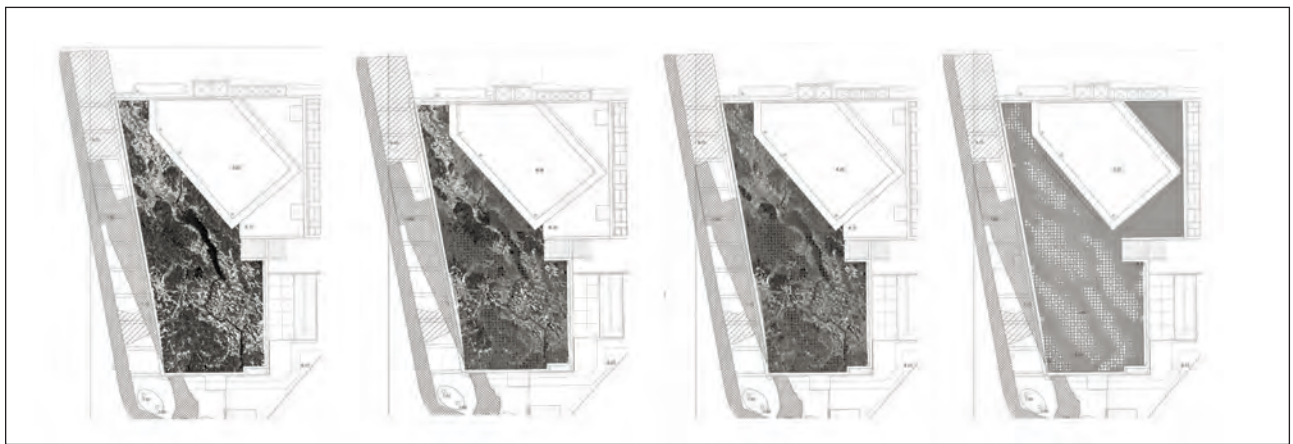
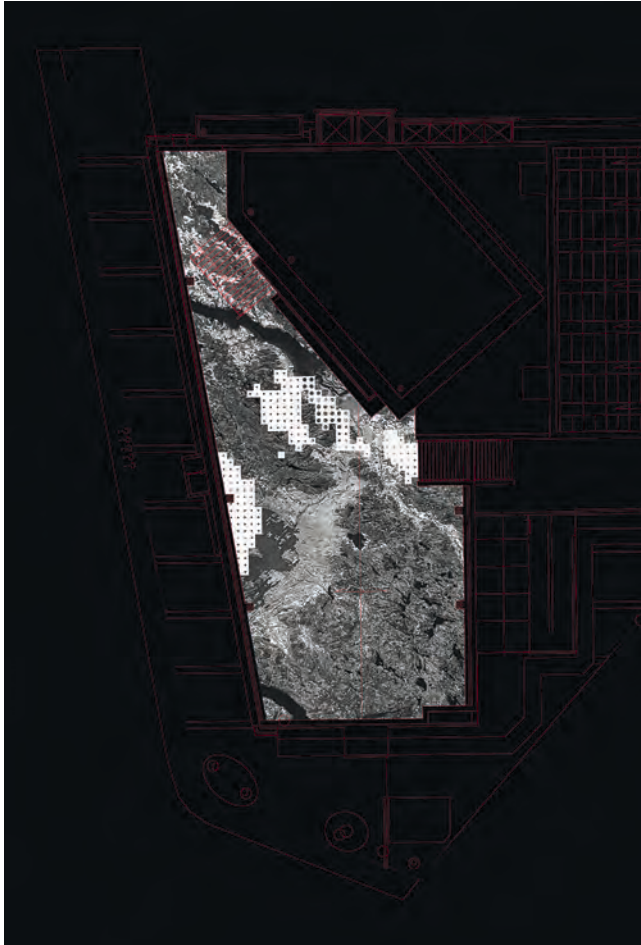
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- 9 From very precise angles of view (such as the large glazed openings) of the Herzog & de Meuron building, one can see this landscape organized in successive planes with great fluidity; the systems of transparency permitted by the curtains of trees allow the eye to make out, behind one glade, the presence of another gap.  
The coherence of the space is thus woven by the system of paths, voids, and solids, by the material of the forested area and that of the ground, with the whole designed down to the smallest detail. Slipping from one glade to the next, the visitor follows a path that sometimes looks like rock.
- 10 Elsewhere, the ramp rises up, forming rocks on which people can sit, so they do not have to search for benches.
- 11 The requested amphitheater is a succession of sculpted concrete slabs, taken over by nature to varying degrees. Furthermore, some of these rocks could be heated in winter, and thus cleared of snow. One of these little geographic footpaths runs into the ground like any sunken path, crosses several forested areas, and after following a lane running on the geometric grid, comes out at an observatory designed by James Turrell. Suddenly, one is in mid-air, in a total abstraction.
- 12 Other works were commissioned from artists, such as a belvedere conceived by Inessa Hansch. Made of wood and built according to the North American balloon-frame technique, this building rises on three levels and will be installed on mid-slope in the garden, offering at its high point a wide view of the Minneapolis skyline. The walls, ribbed on one side, smooth on the other, allude to the presence of interior and exterior spaces. These alcove-boxes, oriented in different ways, are open or closed. Juxtaposed, like walls, these boxes form the rooms of the building, which one crosses while going up the stairs. These entangled boxes maintain a close relationship with the garden.

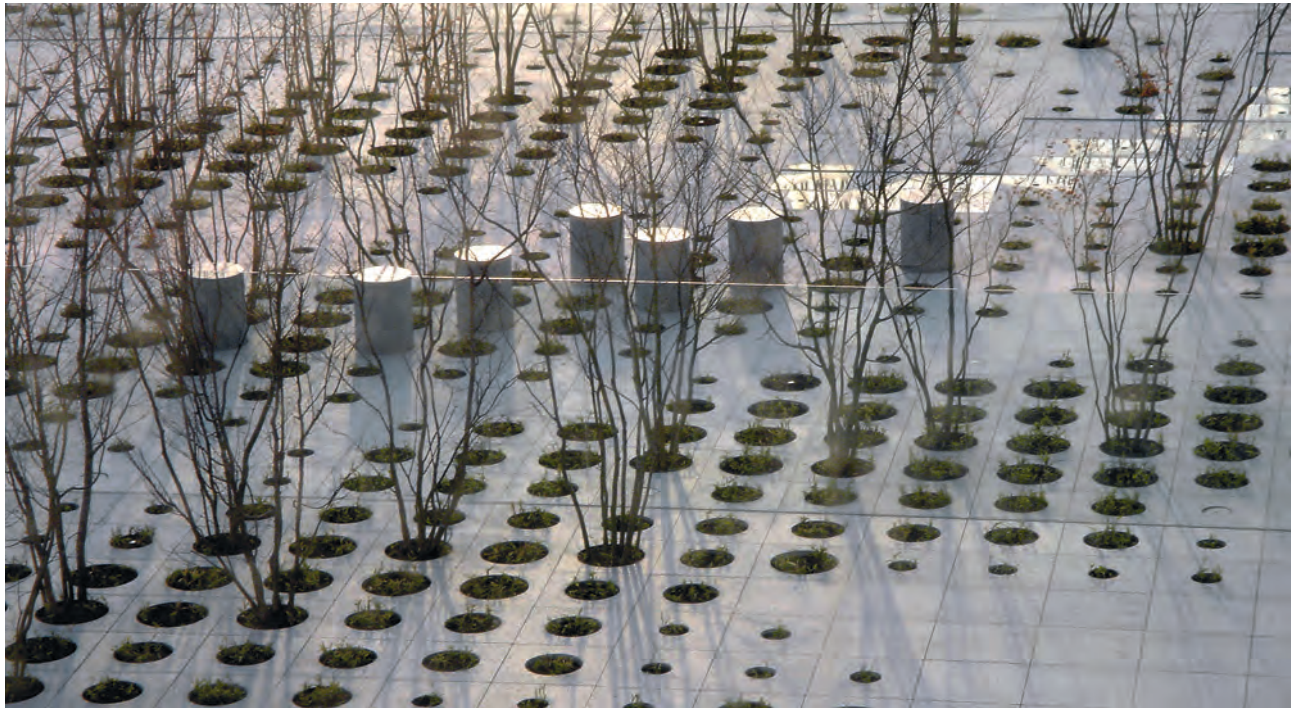
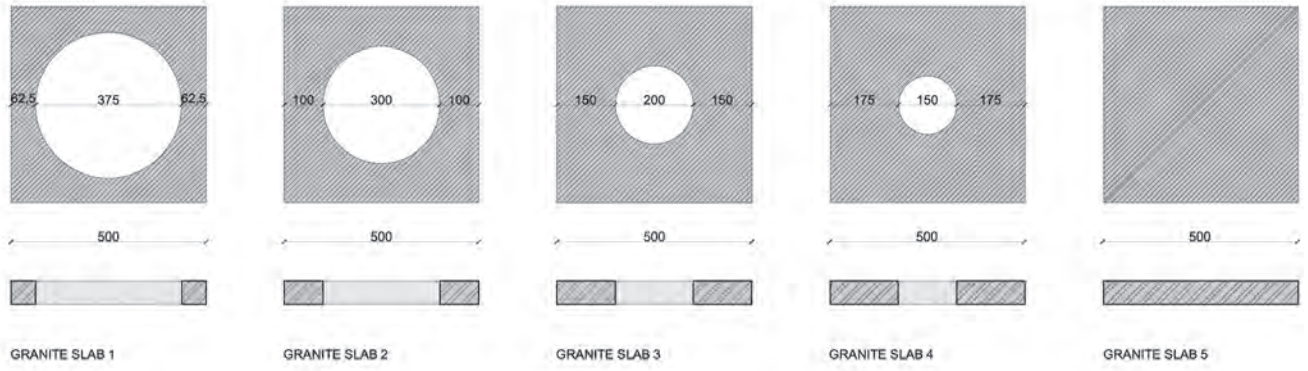


- 13 A portion of the project was completed, as were several prototypes. The heart of the garden is awaiting the demolition of the old theater. With the support of museum curator Kathy Halbreich (later appointed to the newly created position of associate director at MoMA) and also of the architects, the project was an opportunity to do extremely advanced studies, which, with some interruptions, extended over five years. The conditions aligned so that, starting with an obvious fact that appeared immediately, research went further and further along, until a singular spatial result was achieved. The very unusual situation of a long maturation of the vocabulary, following an idea that was immediately conceived, harbored great potential. In the precise results, no remaining component refers to an ordinary connotation or an automatic reflex. The garden is an organism with a basic complexity in the sense that it is the product of the transposition of multiple layers making up a living landscape, observed at a larger scale. Such an abstraction—the essential character of this project, the equilibrium established between the space and all its components—turned this experiment into a radically reformist step.



## KEIO UNIVERSITY, TOKYO, JAPAN, 2004-2005

- 1 The garden designed in Tokyo for Keio University could be read as a miniature version of the project conceived in Minneapolis. On this campus located in the center of the city, there was a garden laid out by Isamu Noguchi, not far from a little temple built by the architect Yoshiro Taniguchi. Both structures were destroyed to make room for a new university building; it was decided that, on the terrace of the new building, the garden and the temple would be recreated. In the beginning, it was to be an exact reconstruction, but, on the advice of the Noguchi Foundation, the project focused on the creation of a new garden, designed in the spirit of the great Japanese sculptor. In-depth study of his work, notably at the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, made it possible to understand the nature of his artistic approach, and of his “representations of nature,” which are anchored in the tradition of Japanese gardens, without necessarily referring to an aesthetic inspired by Japanese art.  
Starting with a small, natural landscape on a scale in keeping with that of the proposed location, the project consisted of transposing some simple forms on an orthonormal grid. The abstract character of Noguchi's works was thus read from the standpoint of 21st-century modernity, and through contemporary mechanisms, allowing for computer technology.  
The initial landscape, which was literally “scanned,” was embodied in a checkerboard made up of slabs, which were themselves pierced with holes of varying sizes. The idea was not to faithfully reproduce a natural setting, but rather an empirical system whose artifice is obvious.



2



3

- 2 Some of these perforations accommodate shrubs or dwarf bamboo. Others, on the edge, seem by contrast to have been extruded, and are occupied by stone cylinders that consist, quite simply, of replicas of many stools designed by Noguchi, such as the prayer stools found in the Taniguchi temple. Thus the space operates like a stone walkway worked in relief, and has a very playful dimension.
  
- 3 The artificial process used to determine the texture of the microglades and forested areas, amid the different slabs, is only a device for reading and transposing. In no way is it intended to become a motif with intrinsic interest. Its function was to create a space that would welcome an improbable, strange, and evanescent vegetative presence, of variable density, in the center of the mineral slab.



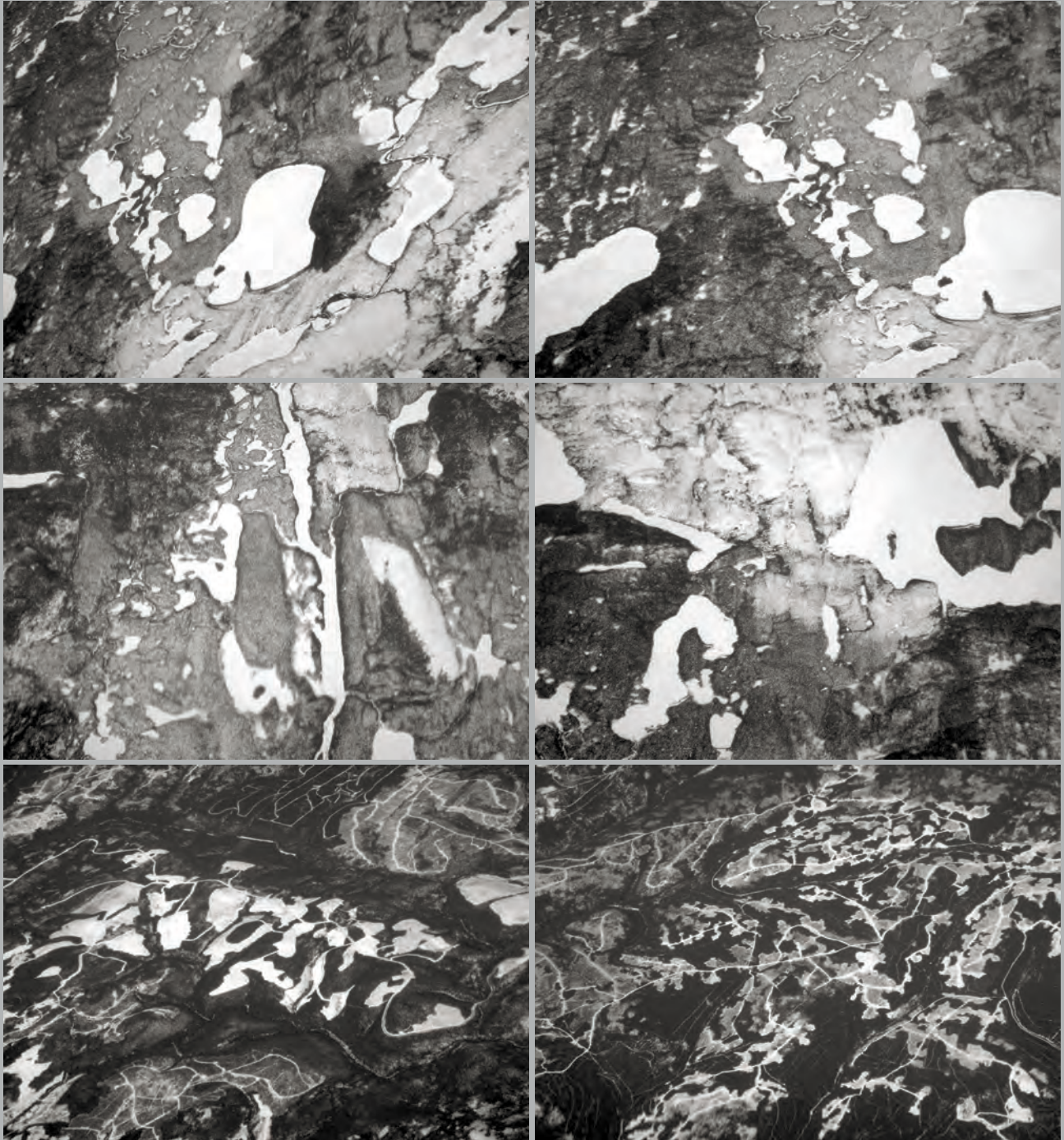
4



5

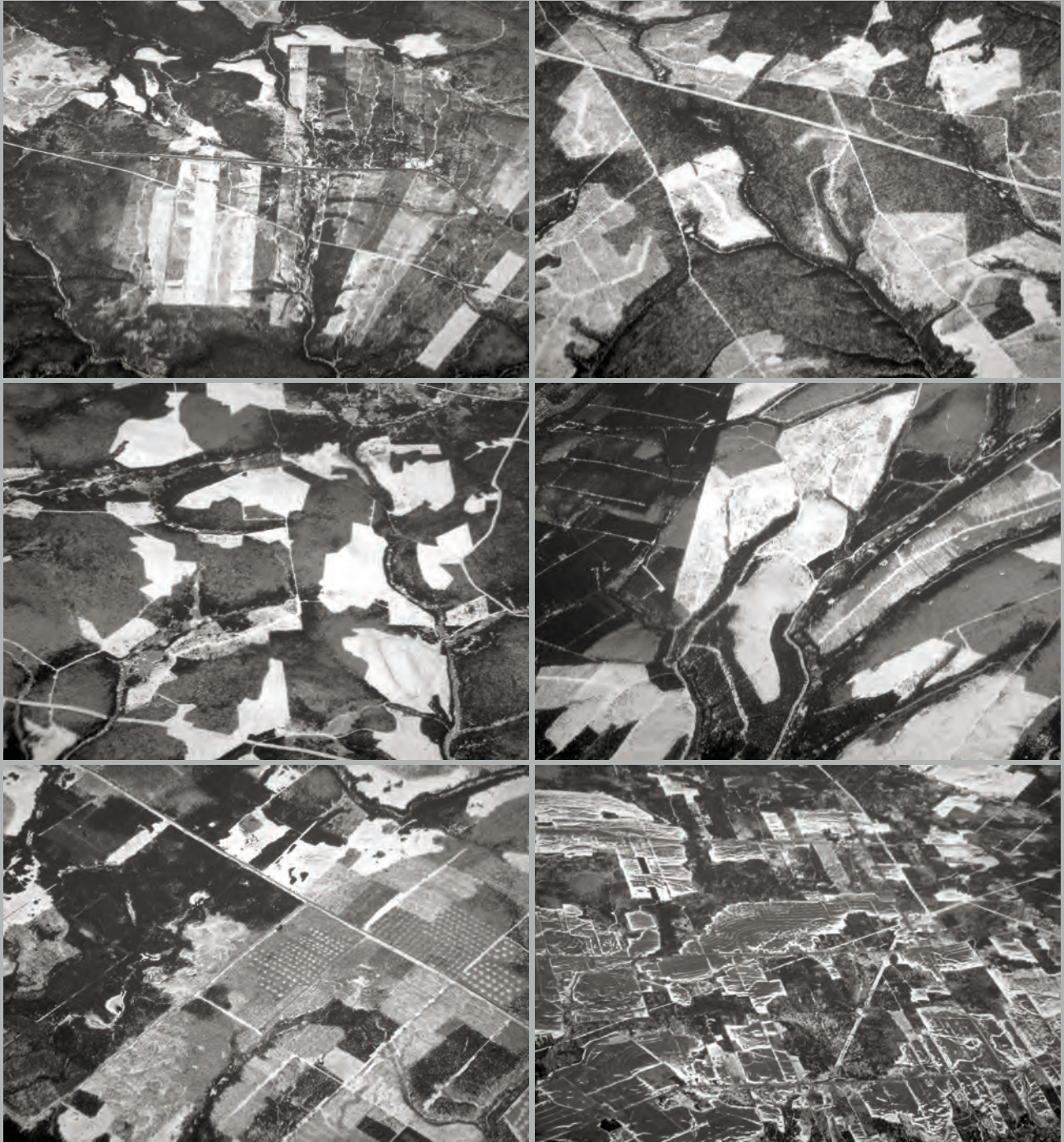


- 4 The project plays on the loss of landmarks: The railing, arranged along the interior of the garden, leads the observer to stay well within the boundary of the garden, and does not allow any views of the city below. The only point where the eye can focus is the sky, in which the “hanging” garden floats as if weightless. The scale of these small glades, through which people wander, remains very close to the one conceived by Noguchi in his work, and the new space faithfully conveys the feeling experienced in the preexisting garden.
  
- 5 One slips into this space, drifting along on the feelings aroused by the water and the light, playing on the same logic. There is no clear separation here (nor was there in Noguchi’s garden) between voids and solids. This composition plays with successive planes and textures of variable densities. The even punctuation of the ground gives cadence to these variations. This is a small structure that organizes textures, porosities, densities, and transparencies—the material and the complex spaces, just as in a natural landscape.

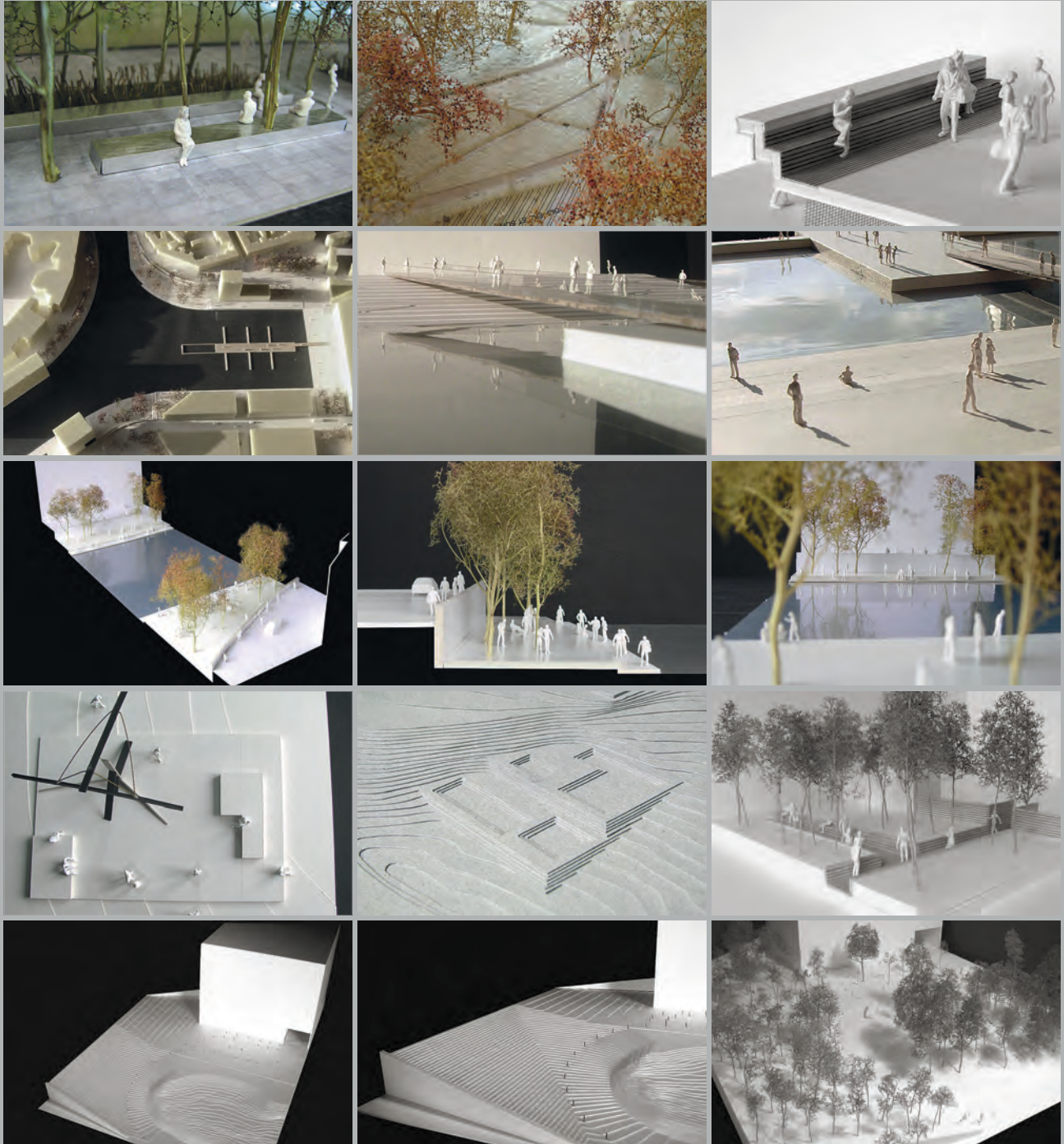


## **AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS**

One must be wary of a ready fascination with aerial photographs. The processes at work—erosion, parcel division, and provision of services—are observable in these documents and in diverse situations, in a way that is so obvious that it is almost a caricature. Shapes can also appear, seen from the sky; they are beautiful precisely because they are strange, and there too is a danger that should be avoided. However, these exercises in observation complete what we analyze on

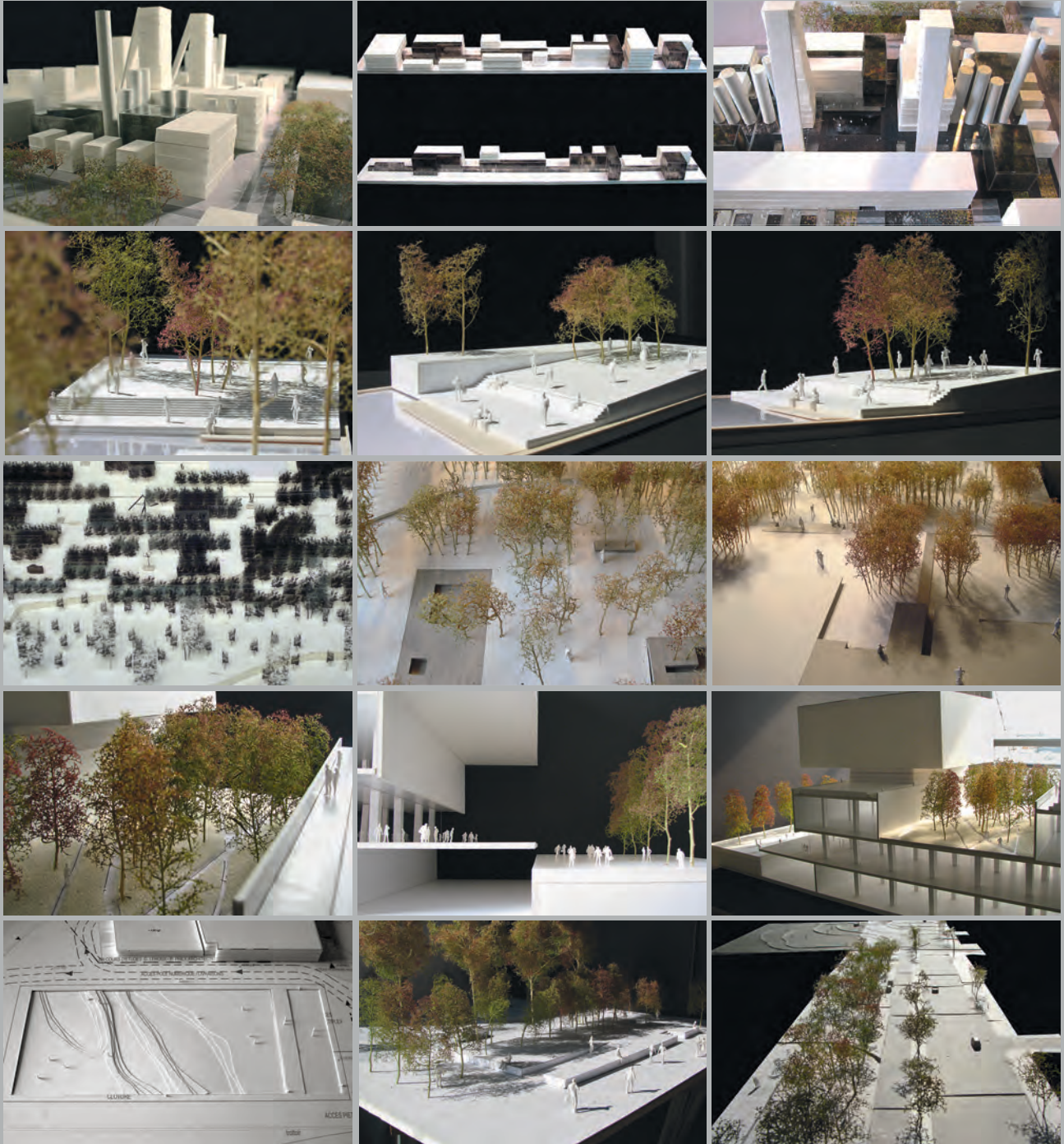


the ground. We need to build up our knowledge, to train our eye to grasp these devices. This “fieldwork,” these “anatomies of landscapes in the planning stages” allow us to dissect complex situations in order to reach simple solutions. And that is why these aerial photographs are valuable.



## MODELS

Each project and each component of the project is developed in the form of a model used for research. It seems necessary to alternate the methods of representation: the drawing often acquires a kind of autonomy, a beauty independent of its object. There is the danger of going adrift and making a mistake: from this formalist trap a false image emerges. We need to check the qualities of the spaces, the proportions, the plays on texture, and this cannot be done using the drawing



alone. Finally, the mockup is a strong alternative to the computer-generated image, which does not work in our discipline. Our compositions organize systems of density and complex spaces, which are subject to the vagaries of light. We should be able to physically project ourselves and move around among these rich organisms that our mockups miniaturize, whereas computer-generated images appear like troublesome phantasms.

# KALEIDOSCOPE

LANDSCAPES IN DEVELOPMENT

The firm currently has more than 40 sites, either under construction or nearing completion, spread out among approximately 20 countries. This large number of sites is sufficient to differentiate the work of the landscape architect from that of the architect. The sites that keep us busy are technically simpler, and they do not tie up considerable sums of money. However, the very number of projects and their scattered locations also reflect other needs and concerns. The very long time frame for the development of these works, which are linked to complex transformations, makes it possible, through the increasing number of posts, to observe simultaneously various stages of maturation and thus to refine perceptions. The attentive management of these successive stages nurtures the landscapes under construction, with various organisms “informing” one another in different situations. This “sampling” of some 40 finished works constitutes a corpus that is large enough for measuring the progress of the experiments. It is not at all about circulating a signature identity. The expansion of areas of research and experimentation led to a calm pleasure, which is continually confirmed: contrary to all of the current fears, the diversity of sites and landscape locations is infinite, as is the variety of cultural requirements to which they respond. The idea is to act like an explorer, not an exporter.

This large group of organisms, analyzed at specific stages of growth, does not lead to the transfer from case to case of the tested know-how. On the contrary, ready-made formulas falter, and formulas that were initially approved can be revised and oriented differently. For a planned landscape, the priority is not the supposedly instant creation of a finished object. The readability of the material being formed is of course an important factor. But to insert furniture components straightaway in a young park still in development saddles it with a premature and tiresome refinement.

Although these gigantic, embryonic organisms can sometimes be unfinished, it is necessary to give them an assurance that leaves aside any incongruous, anecdotal, and quickly dated details. The attention given to the adaptations, to the successive transformations, to the plays on the living material should take precedence over an aesthetic satisfaction obtained by easy opportunities.

The landscapes in development that we create begin with simple materials: grass, several mineral surfaces, aquatic elements, and trees. But these trees number in the tens of thousands, and their abundance, their powerful presence, serves the spaces being created, and at the scale of the areas to be transformed, where arduous devices and ornamentation practices remain ineffective.

This material that we use is not photogenic. The 25 projects presented as “contact sheets” correspond to a multitude of images that make it possible to glimpse the landscapes-in-the-making. Just one of these photographs is not enough to represent these sites in development: if that were the case, it would be enough to show that the step taken is not the right one. The landscape is not read like an object, no matter how architectural it is. Both as a system of representation and in practical terms, this lack of seduction can lead to deception or frustration. Nonetheless, the fact remains that it is an illusion to believe that, when we tackle large dimensions, a park can instantly have a strong identity. Its youth should be accepted and showcased in a pleasing manner, although the resources accorded by the clients are generally poor. The techniques used should remain basic, the lesson being that certain elements which cannot be controlled—because they are incompatible with the allocated budgets, and owing to the scale of the project—should be placed on hold. This makes it possible to avoid two pitfalls: a lack of synchronization and poor quality.

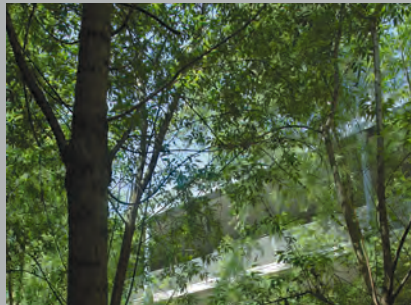
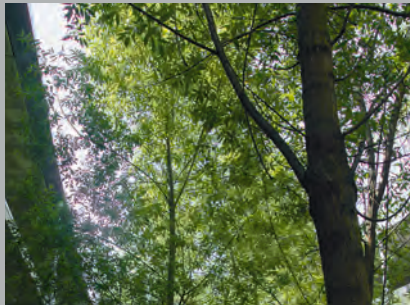




DU LEZ PARK,  
MONTPELLIER, FRANCE

AVENUE MENDÈS FRANCE,  
MONTPELLIER, FRANCE

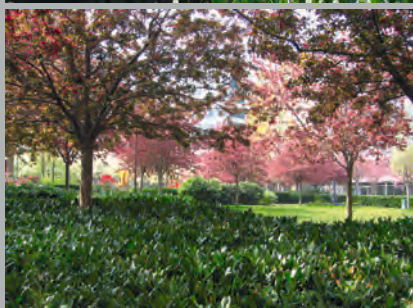
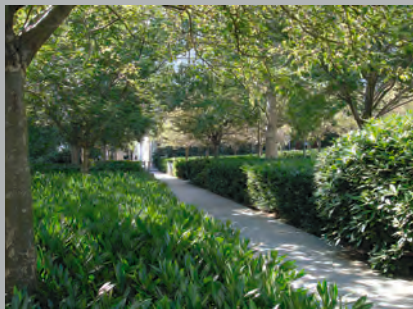
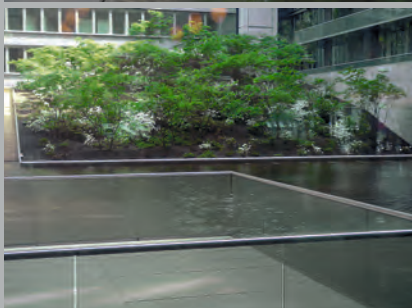
PRESIDENT JACQUES CHIRAC  
MUSEUM, SARRAN, FRANCE



JARDINS DE LA LIRONDE PARK,  
MONTPELLIER, FRANCE

PARKING GARAGE  
ON THE BANKS OF THE AAR,  
STRASBOURG, FRANCE

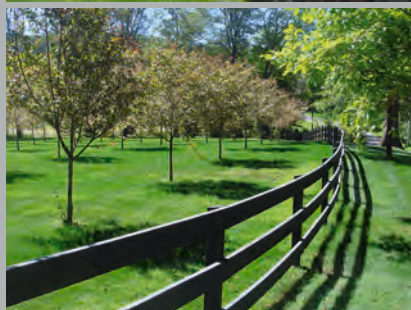
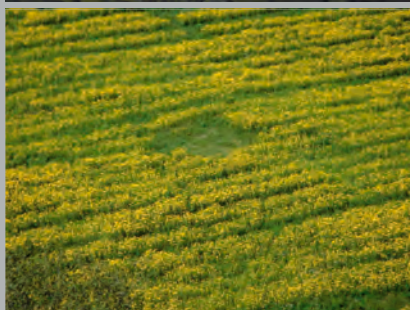
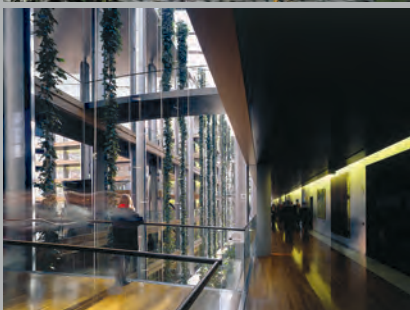
PARKING GARAGE  
ON THE BANKS OF THE AAR,  
STRASBOURG, FRANCE



MAISON DF HOUSE,  
COURTRAI, BELGIUM

GERLING RING,  
COLOGNE, GERMANY

JAMES JOYCE PARK,  
PARIS, FRANCE



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT,  
STRASBOURG, FRANCE

FLYING BROOK FARM,  
CONNECTICUT, USA

FLYING BROOK FARM,  
CONNECTICUT, USA



VACHERON CONSTANTIN,  
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

DOCKS OF PARIS  
(UNDER CONSTRUCTION),  
PARIS, FRANCE

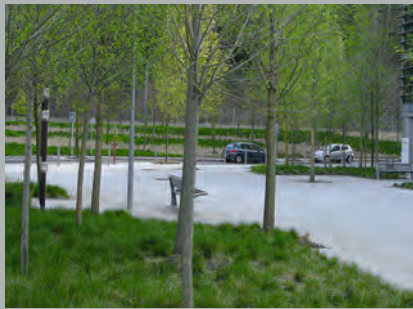
SOUTH ENTRANCE OF *PARC FLORAL*  
(UNDER CONSTRUCTION),  
BORDEAUX, FRANCE



ZAC MONTSOURIS,  
PARIS, FRANCE

TRAMWAY MARÉCHAUX SUD,  
PARIS, FRANCE

TRAMWAY MARÉCHAUX SUD,  
PARIS, FRANCE



VINET PARK,  
BORDEAUX, FRANCE

MEUDON CAMPUS,  
MEUDON, FRANCE

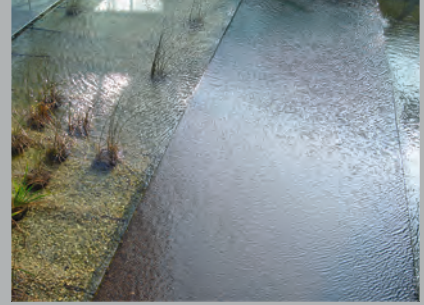
MEUDON CAMPUS,  
MEUDON, FRANCE



ZÉNITH LIMOGES  
(UNDER CONSTRUCTION),  
LIMOGES, FRANCE



PATIO FOR AUBERVILLIERS CAMPUS,  
AUBERVILLIERS, FRANCE



PATIO OF THE COURTHOUSE,  
GAND, BELGIUM

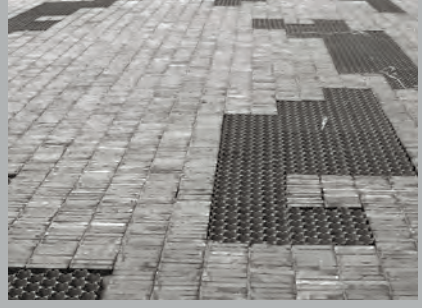




PUBLIC SQUARE  
PLACE DE LA GARE,  
STRASBOURG, FRANCE

PUBLIC SQUARE  
PLACE DE LA GARE,  
STRASBOURG, FRANCE

RABOTPARK, GAND,  
BELGIUM



DRAÏ EECHELEN PARK  
(UNDER CONSTRUCTION),  
LUXEMBURG

DRAÏ EECHELEN PARK  
(UNDER CONSTRUCTION),  
LUXEMBURG

ABC DATA BANK  
(UNDER CONSTRUCTION),  
SHANGHAI, CHINA

# PROJECT CREDITS

## **BIESBOSCH STAD, ROTTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS, 2005**

Study for urban and landscape development

### **Client**

Second International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam (2005)

Adriaan Geuze, curator

### **Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Bas Smets, Sophie Mourthé, Enrico Ferraris

### **Consultants**

Ministry of Transportation / WINN (Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat): Paul Berends  
RIZA (Rijksinstituut voor Integraal Zoetwaterbeheer en Afvalwaterbehandeling):  
Oswald Lagendijk, Michael van Buuren, Arie de Gelder

## **VAR PLAIN, NICE, FRANCE, 2006-2007**

Plan for urban and landscape development

### **Client**

Agglomeration community of Nice Côte d'Azur

### **Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Justine Miething

### **Urban Planners**

Agence de Geyter  
OMA Rem Koolhaas

### **Consultants**

Dominique Boudet, coordinator  
ICADE G3A  
Transversal  
Yan Le Gal Consultants

## **LOWER LEA VALLEY, LONDON, GREAT BRITAIN, COMPETITION ENTRY, 2004**

Plan for urban and landscape development

### **Client**

LDA (London Development Agency)

### **Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Martin Basdevant

### **Architects**

Herzog & de Meuron

## **BURGOS, SPAIN, 2006-2011**

Plan for urban and landscape development

### **Client**

Consorcio para la variante del ferroviaria de Burgos

### **Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Ana Marti-Baron, Caterina Michelini, Catinca Popovici

### **Architects**

Herzog & de Meuron

### **Consultants**

HYDRA, MBG consultants

## **LYON CONFLUENCE, LYON, FRANCE, 2000-2005**

Plan for urban and landscape development

### **Client**

Saem Lyon Confluence, SPLA Lyon Confluence (a publicly owned local development company)

### **Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Pauline Way, Sophie Mourthé, Christina Anllo Naveiras

### **Urban Planner**

François Grether

## **THE RIGHT BANK OF BORDEAUX, BORDEAUX, FRANCE, 2000-2004**

Plan for urban and landscape development

### **Client**

Bordeaux City Hall

### **Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Sophie Mourthé, Luc Chignier, Nam Le Toan, Ana Marti-Baron, Enrico Ferraris

### **Urban Planner**

Bruno Fortier

## **MILLENNIUM PARK, GREENWICH, LONDON, GREAT BRITAIN, 1997-2000 (PARTIALLY EXECUTED)**

Plan for urban and landscape development

### **Client**

English Partnerships

### **Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Christine Dalnoky, Pauline Way

### **Architect**

Richard Rogers

### **Consultants**

Bernard Ede and Nicholas Pearson  
WS Atkins

## **MARIANNE PARK, MONTPELLIER, FRANCE, 1998-2002**

### **Client**

City of Montpellier

### **Landscape Architect**

Michel Desvigne

## **ISSOUDUN DISTRICT, ISSOUDUN, FRANCE, 2005**

Plan for urban and landscape development

### **Client**

City of Issoudun

### **Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Sophie Mourthé, Luc Chignier

## **CERGY-PONTOISE, FRANCE, 2006-2008**

Plan for urban and landscape development

### **Client**

City of Cergy-Pontoise

### **Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Sophie Mourthé, Angèle Levi, Gabriel Wick

## **TGV STATION, AVIGNON, FRANCE, 1994-2002**

Plan for urban and landscape development for the area around the train station

### **Client**

Grand Avignon Metropolitan District

### **Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Christine Dalnoky, François Neveux, Pauline Way, Bas Smets

### **Architect**

AREP, Jean-Marie Duthilleul

## **LA THÉOLS PARK, ISSOUDUN, FRANCE, 1993-1994**

### **Client**

City of Issoudun

### **Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Christine Dalnoky

## **SUMMER PARK, GOVERNORS ISLAND, NEW YORK, USA, COMPETITION ENTRY, 2007**

Plan for urban and landscape development

### **Client**

GIPEC (Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation)

### **Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Justine Miething, Martin Basdevant, Elinor Scarth, Paola Vita

### **Architect**

REX architects

### **Consultants**

Luxigon, images

## **CITÉ NATURE, ARRAS, FRANCE, 2001-2005**

### **Client**

Arras Urban Community

### **Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Iris Dupper, David Borgobello, Rémi Salles, Martin Basdevant, Sophie Mourthé

### **Architect**

Ateliers Jean Nouvel, Jean Nouvel

**EXTENSION OF SCULPTURE PARK,  
MIDDELHEIM, ANTWERP, BELGIUM,  
1998-2000**

**Client**

City of Antwerp, Art History Museum

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, François Neveux, Iris Dupper

**Architect**

Stéphane Beel

**DALLAS CENTER  
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS,  
DALLAS, USA, 2004-2009**

Definition of public spaces

**Client**

Dallas Center for the Performing Arts Foundation

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Martin Basdevant, Bas Smets, Justine Miething, Emanuela Bozin, Enrico Ferraris, Andrea Forapani, Gerwin Gruber, Elisa Levi-Minzi, Giorgio Marafioti, Anna Medeossi, Catinca Popovici, Elinor Scarth

**Architects**

Foster + Partners, REX / OMAJJR, LLC, Deb Mitchell

**Consultants**

TILSTON, lighting, Luxigon, images

**RECONVERSION OF SEGUIN ISLAND,  
BOULOGNE-BILLAN COURT, FRANCE,  
2000-2007**

Definition of public spaces

**Client**

SAEM Val de Seine Aménagement

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Ana Marti-Baron, Alessandro Conti, Karine Donati, Alice Kieffer, Guillaume Proust

**Urban Planner**

François Grether

**RECONVERSION OF THE OLD PORT  
OF EILANDJE, ANTWERP, BELGIUM,  
2001-2004**

Definition of public spaces

**Client**

City of Antwerp

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Bas Smets, Martin Basdevant, Marco Rossi, Gerwin Gruber, Catinca Popovici, Julia Bouvy

**Architects and Urban Planners**

Atelier JPLX, Sylvie Laenen and Dirk Jansen, architects and urban planners, Rob Cuyvers, Architect

**KATTENDIJKDOK, ANTWERP,  
BELGIUM, 2006-2008**

Definition of public spaces

**Client**

P2

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Gerwin Gruber, Karolina Samborska, Elinor Scarth

**Architects**

ELD Architects, Diener & Diener, architects

**AUBERVILLIERS CAMPUS,  
AUBERVILLIERS, FRANCE, 2006-2007**

Definition of public spaces

**Client**

ICADE

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Marco Rossi, Benjamin Pollet, Paola Vita

**ALMERE, THE NETHERLANDS,  
2000-2005**

Definition of public spaces

**Client**

City of Almere

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Iris Dupper, Bas Smets, Marco Rossi, Gerwin Gruber, Liviu Vasiu

**Urban Planner**

OMA Rem Koolhaas

**MINISTRY OF CULTURE, PARIS,  
FRANCE, 2001-2004**

**Client**

Ministry of Culture

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Sophie Mourthé, Albert Castejon, Benjamin Deshouilleres

**Architect**

Francis Soler

**Consultant**

Patrick Blanc, botanist

**CENTRAL MUSEUM, UTRECHT,  
THE NETHERLANDS, 1998-2000**

**Client**

Central Museum

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Christine Dalnoky, François Neveux, Iris Dupper

**Architect**

Stéphane Beel

**RUE DE MEAUX, PARIS, FRANCE,  
1989-1992**

**Client**

Régie Immobilière de la Ville de Paris (the city agency for real estate), Mutuelles du Mans

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Christine Dalnoky

**Architect**

Renzo Piano

**WALKER ART CENTER,  
MINNEAPOLIS, USA, 2002-2005**

**Client**

Walker Art Center

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Anne Gaillard, Martin Basdevant, Justine Miething, Ana Marti-Baron, Christina Anlo Naveiras, Emanuela Bozin, Adrien Cosnefroy, Karine Donati, Lucia Miglio, Catinca Popovici, Claudia Scholz

**Architects**

Herzog & de Meuron

Hammel, Green and Abrahamson, Inc., John Cook

**KEIO UNIVERSITY, TOKYO,  
JAPAN, 2004-2005**

**Client**

Keio University

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Justine Miething, Gerwin Gruber

**Architect**

Taisei Corporation

Kengo Kuma

**DU LEZ PARK, MONTPELLIER,  
FRANCE, 2002**

**Client**

City of Montpellier

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Christine Dalnoky, François Neveux

**AVENUE MENDÈS FRANCE,  
MONTPELLIER, FRANCE, 2002**

**Client**

City of Montpellier

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Christine Dalnoky, François Neveux

**PRESIDENT JACQUES CHIRAC  
MUSEUM, SARRAN, FRANCE, 2000**

**Client**

President Jacques Chirac Museum

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Christine Dalnoky, Iris Dupper

**Architect**

Jean-Michel Wilmotte

**JARDINS DE LA LIRONDE PARK,  
MONTPELLIER, FRANCE, 2004**

**Client**

City of Montpellier

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Pauline Way

**PARKING GARAGE ON THE BANKS OF THE AAR, STRASBOURG, FRANCE, 1998****Client**

Compagnie des Transports Strasbourgeois (CTS)

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Bernard Rouyer, Iris Dupper

**Architect**

Meyszand-Weber

**MAISON DF HOUSE, COURTRAI, BELGIUM, 2000****Client**

Private client

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Iris Dupper, François Neveux

**Architect**

Stéphane Beel

**GERLING RING, COLOGNE, GERMANY, 2000****Client**

Gerling Ring-Karree

**Landscape Architect**

Michel Desvigne

**Architect**

Foster + Partners

**JAMES JOYCE PARK, PARIS, FRANCE, 1995****Client**

City of Paris; Parks, Gardens, and Green Spaces Administration

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Christine Dalnoky, Bernard Rouyer

**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, STRASBOURG, FRANCE, 2002****Client**

Strasbourg Urban Community

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Christine Dalnoky

**Architects**

Architecture Studio

**FLYING BROOK FARM, CONNECTICUT, USA, 2002-2008****Client**

Private client

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Martin Basdevant, Claudia Scholz

**VACHERON CONSTANTIN, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, 2004****Client**

Groupe Richemont SA

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Iris Dupper, Sophie Mourthé

**Architects**

BTUA, Bernard Tschumi / Véronique Descharrières

**DOCKS OF PARIS, FRANCE, 2005-2008 (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)****Client**

ICADE G3A

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Justine Miething, Gerwin Gruber

**Architect**

Jakob &amp; MacFarlane

**SOUTH ENTRANCE OF PARC FLORAL, BORDEAUX, FRANCE, 2005 (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)****Client**

Bordeaux City Hall, Green Spaces and Landscape Administration

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Sophie Mourthé, Julia Bouvy

**ZAC MONTSOURIS, PARIS, FRANCE, 2002****Client**

City of Paris; Parks, Gardens, and Green Spaces Administration

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Christine Dalnoky, François Neveux, David Borghobello, Rémi Salles

**TRAMWAY MARÉCHAUX SUD, PARIS, FRANCE, 2006****Client**

City of Paris, Mission Tramway

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Sophie Mourthé

**Architect**

Antoine Grumbach

**VINET PARK, BORDEAUX, FRANCE, 2005****Client**

Bordeaux City Hall, Green Spaces and Landscape Administration

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Sophie Mourthé, Ana Marti-Baron

**MEUDON CAMPUS, MEUDON, FRANCE, 2006****Client**

HINES France

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Pauline Way, Sophie Mourthé

**Architects**

Pei Cobb Freed &amp; Partners

**ZÉNITH LIMOGES, LIMOGES, FRANCE, 2004 (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)****Client**

Agglomeration Community of Metropolitan Limoges

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Sophie Mourthé

**Architects**

BTUA, Bernard Tschumi / Véronique Descharrières

**PATIO FOR AUBERVILLIERS CAMPUS, AUBERVILLIERS, FRANCE, 2007****Client**

ICADE

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Marco Rossi

**PATIO FOR THE COURTHOUSE, GAND, BELGIUM, 2007****Client**

City of Gand, Government Building Agency

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, François Neveux, Bas Smets

**Architect**

Stéphane Beel

**PUBLIC SQUARE PLACE DE LA GARE, STRASBOURG, FRANCE, 2007****Client**

CUS (Strasbourg Urban Community)

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Justine Miething, Gerwin Gruber

**Architect**

AREP, Jean-Marie Duthilleul

**RABOTPARK, GAND, BELGIUM, 1999-2008****Client**

City of Gand, Government Building Agency

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, François Neveux, Iris Dupper, Bas Smets, Ana Marti-Baron, Gerwin Gruber

**Architect**

Stéphane Beel

**DRAÏ EECHELEN PARK, LUXEMBOURG, 1999-2008 (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)****Client**

Luxembourg, Public Buildings Administration

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, François Neveux, Iris Dupper, Bas Smets, Marco Rossi, Christina Anlo Naveiras, Ana Marti-Baron

**Architect**

Pei Cobb Freed &amp; Partners

**ABC DATA BANK, SHANGHAI, CHINA, 2006- (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)****Client**

Agricultural Bank of China

**Landscape Architects**

Michel Desvigne, Sophie Mourthé

**Architect**

AREP, Jean-Marie Duthilleul, architect

## LIST OF STAFF

**Michel DESVIGNE, associated with Christine DALNOKY  
until July 1996 and since cooperating with her on various projects**

Francesca d'APUZZO	Gerwin GRUBER	Giao PHAN THI KIM
Adeline BARUCQ	Tim de HENAU	Clélie PROTIÈRE
Martin BASDEVANT	Guillaume LEUREGANS	Guillaume PROUST
Giacomo CASENTINI	Angèle LÉVI	Marco ROSSI
Claire COLLET	Anna LUZI	Elinor SCARTH
Alessandro CONTI	Ana MARTI-BARON	Karolina SAMBORSKA
Enrico FERRARIS	Justine MIETHING	Paola VITA
Andrea FORAPANI	Sophie MOURTHÉ	

**also part of the team:**

Christina ANLLO NAVEIRAS	Taro ERNST	Matteo PONIS
Katharina BALDINGER	Emanuela FERRARI	Catinca POPOVICI
Yuu BARRERE	Anne GAILLARD	Erica RATTI
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