THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
DIVISION OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
ANNUAL
2013 — 2014
# Table of Contents

## Bachelor of Arts in Landscape Studies Program
- **Overview**
  - Overview – Bachelor of Arts in Landscape Studies Program ................................................................. 6

## Master of Landscape Architecture Program
- **Overview**
  - Overview – Master of Landscape Architecture Program ................................................................. 8

## Master of Landscape Architecture
- **MLA Design Thesis** ..................................................................................................................................... 12
- **Landscape Design Studio 1** ..................................................................................................................... 28
  - Support Structures: An Introduction to (Mostly) Western Design Fundamentals in Landscape Architecture
- **Landscape Design Studio 2** ..................................................................................................................... 32
  - Shifting Sites: Yangon – systems, scales and strategies in the urban landscape
- **Landscape Design Studio 3** ..................................................................................................................... 36
  - Site Design: West Kowloon and the Cultural Landscape
- **Technology in Landscape Architecture: Site Engineering** ....................................................................... 40
  - Landscape Technology: Site Engineering
- **8 Kinds of Ecology (Ecology and Design)** ............................................................................................. 42
- **Landscape Planting 1** ............................................................................................................................ 44
- **Landscape Planting 2** ............................................................................................................................ 46
- **Landscape Professional Practice** ........................................................................................................... 48
- **Digital Media for Landscape Architecture** ............................................................................................. 50
- **Landsplaces Past and Present** .................................................................................................................. 52
  - (History and Theory of Landscape Architecture 1)
- **Strategic Landscape Planning** .................................................................................................................. 54
  - (History and Theory of Landscape Architecture 2)
- **Thesis Preparation** ..................................................................................................................................... 56
  - (Independent Study in Landscape Architecture)
- **Design Analytics: Surfaces and Ecologies as Spatial Matrices** ............................................................... 58
- **Scales of Environmentalism:** .................................................................................................................... 60
  - Waterworks and Environmental Conservation in China (Special Topics in Landscape Research)
- **Changing Perceptions** ............................................................................................................................ 62
  - (Special Topics in Landscape Architecture)
- **Landscape Engagement and its Representation in Film** .......................................................................... 64
  - (Special Topics in Landscape Technology)
- **MLA Prerequisite** ..................................................................................................................................... 66

## Bachelor of Arts in Landscape Studies
- **Introduction to Landscape Design Studio** ............................................................................................... 70
- **We Refugees: Sanctuaries, Enclaves, Archipelagos** ............................................................................... 74
- **Mapping Pokfulam Village: Growing Space** ............................................................................................ 78
- **Site and Context (Landscape Design Studio 2)** ....................................................................................... 82
- **The Campus Model (Landscape Design Studio 3)** ................................................................................... 86
- **Thailand’s Water Economies (Landscape Design Studio 4)** .................................................................... 90
- **Technology in Landscape Architecture: Site Engineering** .................................................................... 96
- **Particulate Matter (Visual Communication for Landscape Architects)** .................................................. 98
- **Plants and Planting Design 1** .................................................................................................................. 100
- **Plants and Planting Design 2** .................................................................................................................. 102
- **Ecology and Sustainability** .................................................................................................................... 104
- **Landsplaces Past and Present (History of Landscape Design)** ................................................................. 106
- **Environment, Community and Design** .................................................................................................. 108
- **Articulate Form and its Discontents: Histories of Landscape Architecture’s Immediate Past (and Present)** (Theories and Practices of Contemporary Landscape Architecture) ................................................................................. 110
- **Chinese Landscapes and Design** ........................................................................................................... 112
- **Strategic Landscape Planning** .................................................................................................................. 114
- **Sustainability and the Built Environment** ............................................................................................... 116
- **Drawing Landscapes** ............................................................................................................................... 118
- **Landscape Practicum** .................................................................................................................................. 120

## Common Core Curriculum
- **Mapping Pokfulam Village: Growing Space** ............................................................................................ 123
- **Shaping the Landscape** ............................................................................................................................ 124
- **Designs on the Future: Sustainability of the Built Environment** .............................................................. 126
- **You, Food and the City: Local and Global Food Networks** ...................................................................... 128

## Disseminations
- **Public Lecture: Walter Hood** .................................................................................................................. 131
- **Degree Show** .............................................................................................................................................. 132
- **Career Discovery in Landscape Architecture** ............................................................................................ 133
- **Italian Terrain** .............................................................................................................................................. 134
- **Seeing Pokfulam** ........................................................................................................................................ 135
- **Shaping the Landscape Exhibition** ........................................................................................................... 136
- **Landscape Dim Sum** .................................................................................................................................... 137
- **Hong Kong Platforms** .............................................................................................................................. 138
- **Contingency Plans** ...................................................................................................................................... 139
- **Staff List** ..................................................................................................................................................... 142
Landscape architects have a leading role to play in addressing some of the most pressing environmental and community problems that face the world today, and in helping to achieving a balanced, sustainable future. In addition to our abilities in planning, design, construction and management, we have unique skills in being able to see the context, in navigating a huge range of scales and geographies, in understanding both the natural and man-made, and how they change over time.

The discipline of landscape architecture has been taught at the University of Hong Kong since 1993. The Division of Landscape Architecture offers a four-year Bachelor of Arts in Landscape Studies (BA(LS)) undergraduate degree, a two-year taught postgraduate Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) degree, and MPhil and PhD research postgraduate programs.

These research-based programs are multidisciplinary and integrate technical and theoretical studies of ecology, earth sciences, geography, sociology, cultural studies, the fine arts, architecture, urbanism and engineering. They train young landscape architects to address the complexities of today’s built environment through spatial design, sustainable solutions, and effective development practices. The programs encourage students to have the broadest conception of what landscape is, and to foster an innovative and dynamic vision of what landscape architecture could be.

The Division is committed to teaching and research that further the discipline and practice of landscape architecture within our unique cultural and geophysical context. We engage with topical landscape issues in Hong Kong, China and Southeast Asia, and advocate sustainable development and balancing communities with their environments. Students learn the skills involved in designing, building, planning and managing natural and built environments of different sizes and contexts, working on a wide range of projects from urban parks to nature reserves, from residential communities to infrastructure, from wilderness areas to the reclamation of landfills or mines, and from the scale of small gardens to entire nations.
The Bachelor of Arts in Landscape Studies (BA(LS)) program at the University of Hong Kong equips students with a multidisciplinary curriculum that emphasizes design, landscape technology, history and theory, and visual communications. We aim to give students a comprehensive grounding in the knowledge, concepts and skills which landscape architects commonly require to deal with complex community, ecological and developmental issues within diverse urban and natural environments. The BA(LS) program is studio-based, allowing students to work directly with instructors in design projects and guided research studies that integrate both theoretical exploration and practical implementation. Design studio is integrated with concurrent theoretical and technical courses that reinforce the core knowledge of landscape architecture and broaden students’ perspectives across related disciplines.

The program starts with an interdisciplinary view of the built environment training students in critical observation skills and visual communication. In the second year, students experiment with making, scale, experiences, and materials, acquiring a foundational vocabulary in the phenomenological, material, and spatial aspects of landscape. The final two years expand in complexity as students are confronted with ecological, sociological, urban, and infrastructural aspects within the design studio while building theoretical and technical competency to complement studio. Students are exposed to a wide range of environments through site visits and field trips, and the Division actively collaborates with other leading landscape programs overseas to offer opportunities for students to engage their peers from around the world. In addition, our Shanghai Semester gives students the opportunity to live and learn in an international setting and to study the rich landscapes and urban environments in the Yangtze River Delta.

The 2013–14 academic year is a milestone for the program as we celebrated the first graduates from a brand new curriculum that emphasizes experiential learning, internationalization, and collaboration across institutions and disciplines. Studio projects ranged from building devices that manipulated natural process, a youth camp in Cape D’Aguiler, and shrimp framing in Thailand to the political space of sanctuaries, working with communities in Pokfulam village, and critiquing urban campus typologies in Shanghai. Spanning geographies, scales, and disciplines, the BA(LS) program continuously strives to contribute to our environment.

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<tr>
<th>YEAR 1</th>
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<td>Sustainability and the Built Environment</td>
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<td><strong>HISTORY &amp; THEORY</strong></td>
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<td><strong>COMMON CORE COURSE</strong></td>
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<td>Landscape Design Studio 1</td>
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All courses are 6-credit courses except Design Studio courses which are 12-credit courses.
The Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) program at Hong Kong University prepares students to engage with Landscape Architecture as an urban, ecological, and technical practice. The two-year course of study leads to a professional degree in landscape architecture that is accredited by the Hong Kong Institute of Landscape Architects. The intense program readies students with the advanced design skills and broad disciplinary knowledge necessary for the rigors of professional practice as a landscape architect.

The program is distinguished by its commitment to teaching landscape architecture as an expanded, interdisciplinary discipline. Core studies include the historic and theoretical origins of the discipline, ecological and bio-physical systems, GIS and mapping methodologies, landscape materials and technologies, and contemporary professional practice. These courses expose students to contemporary discourses relating to the discipline and its allied fields. As a research-based academic degree, students are taught to synthesize, apply, and critique the material introduced throughout their studies and are expected to write and research to an advanced academic standard.

Intense, project-based landscape design studios anchor each semester and allow students to work closely with instructors on a broad range of environmental and contextual challenges. The studios emphasize design as a research-based, interdisciplinary practice focused on communicating and resolving complex problems. Core studios explore themes of landscape typology, form and space, design-thinking, dynamic systems, and strategic planning practices. Advanced studios tackle themes of landscape systems, green infrastructure and public space in the city. Students regularly participate in site visits and field work in the urban laboratory that is Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta region. Additionally, an overseas study tour within China and Greater Southeast Asia actively positions the design program in a region emerging as a center for the greater global discipline. In 2014, MLA students travelled to Yangon, Myanmar for one week to carry out field work and to participate in community engagement exercises. In their final year, students work one-on-one with instructors to produce a landscape design thesis project that articulates their own position in the discipline through an independent exploration of site, theory, and methodology.

Core Courses range from 3 to 6 credits and Design Studio courses are 15 credits. *MLA Prerequisite course begins in mid-August before the beginning of Semester 1.
The MLA design thesis is an original academic research and design project in the field of landscape architecture. Over the course of two semesters, the thesis is framed, researched, tested, and ultimately defended independently by each student—it is the capstone learning experience for the program. Recognizing the potential for landscape architecture to play a greatly expanded role in addressing the social and environmental challenges within Asia, the thesis contributes to the discipline through broadening knowledge, diversifying methodologies, and challenging its accepted limitations. We expect each student to articulate their own critical position within the field and then test this proposition through a rigorously analytical and rational design process.

The thesis project is divided into two parts: the Thesis Prep and the Thesis Design Studio. In Thesis Prep, students prepare a thesis proposal that describes their disciplinary context, theoretical framework, research methodology, and working hypothesis. In the Thesis Design Studio, students develop these proposals through a design and research project. Though framed as an independent project, students work closely with their thesis advisors to shape the approach and outcomes of their thesis. The full process is intended to be iterative and focused, with students given the chance to refine their ideas and proposals through frequent presentations that engage their peers and the larger faculty in discussion about the role of design and the nature of the profession.

Thesis work in 2014 engaged a diverse set of topical issues and was broadly indicative of the students’ awareness of landscape architecture’s emergent capacities and the broad, multidisciplinary approach to the field delivered in the program. Students considered accommodating shifting urban and rural demographics, coastal adaptation under sea-level rise, regional resource management strategies, the role of landscape in brownfield site mitigation practices, urban food security, rural land management practices, flexible planning practices, and the potential for landscape-based infrastructures. Though most theses worked with specific environmental, social, and economic scenarios in Hong Kong and China, many projects articulated their responses to resonate with the discipline’s global challenges and to contribute to the discourse of landscape architecture at an international level.
River Liu HE
(thesis supervisor: Ashley Scott Kelly)

1 - 2

Wendy Zhe WANG
(thesis supervisor: Vincci Mak)

3
3 Aims

1. Connection
2. Sustainability
3. Innovation

Terence Chun Kit CHOW
(thesis supervisor: Scott Jennings Melbourne)
This design studio aimed to provide an introduction to fundamental design methods in landscape architecture. It focused primarily on two landscape types commonly found in Hong Kong: sitting-out areas and engineered slopes. The sequence of projects began with broad investigations of these two types and in particular their role in the city and tectonics. The course then narrowed its focus to the study of one particular engineered slope, followed by the rigorous design of a new sitting-out area on this same slope. The goal of this was to introduce students to a series of design research methods with a view towards implementing them in a highly articulate, critical and comprehensive design proposal for the selected site. As such, students were introduced to the fundamentals of spatial production and the potential agency of landscape architecture in the city of Hong Kong and elsewhere.
This studio introduced the idea of landscape architecture as an environmental practice through an exploration of the fundamental concepts, methods, and challenges of designing within ecological contexts.

The course specifically examined the interaction of landscape structures and systems (geology, hydrology, climate) within urban and peri-urban environments. Students focused on a waterfront site in Yangon, Myanmar (Burma) for the duration of the studio, and engaged in a range of design and research exercises in the development of landscape strategies and consequent site designs.

In addition to strengthening their knowledge and skills within the landscape discipline, students were exposed to issues and concepts that traditionally lie outside of the practice, in fields such as urban planning, engineering, and landscape ecology.

Work in the studio was complimented by a one week-long trip to Yangon to meet with the professionals and officials who are responsible for guiding the development of the city and to gain first-hand experience in field research and documentation.
Jean Mei Yee CHAN
Landscape Design Studio 2

MLA Year 1 students on a study tour to Yangon, Myanmar March 2014
(photo: Scott Jennings Melbourne)
This studio was focused on the development of alternative futures for the West Kowloon Cultural District and adjacent waterfront sites. The project is a government-driven effort to establish a 40-hectare cultural and entertainment district on the north-western edge of Hong Kong’s harbour.

The West Kowloon site is distinctly layered, with historic interventions overlaid by a multitude of current and projected uses that together form a twin pairing of uncertainty and opportunity. Previous planning efforts have been acknowledged during the process of this academic studio while, at the same time, the opening brought about by the recent abandonment of previously-approved plans was recognized as an opportunity to be seized for reimagining potential landscape interventions in West Kowloon.

A number of themes were addressed throughout the semester, including the essential question: can culture be built? A critical response and mindful interpretation of potential answers to this query plays a critical role in the effectiveness of proposed solutions. A follow-up question then was, what is the role of landscape in accommodating, nay, nurturing cultural development? The studio emphasised that a response to this question must not come through rhetoric, but rather through specific design proposals that might prove effective when physically constructed.
Landscape architects operate in the physical realm, helping shape expansive landscapes and more urban environments inhabited by people. If we are to be effective as landscape architects and realize our design goals, we must have a facility with the tools and techniques required for driving these manipulations. Ideas are critical, but not enough on their own.

This course aimed to prepare students with a foundational understanding of the engineering of sites and the ways in which design objectives are translated into built form. The course sequence was organized around topics including: site analysis and responsive site planning; landform; the design of structural elements such as walls and steps; soils and earthwork; storm water management; and finally site layout and road design. These subjects embody essential knowledge and skills at the core of our discipline.
The objective of this part of the course was to develop a broad literacy of ecological ideas and the capacity to recognize and apply different ecological arguments to design thinking. Emphasis was placed on the realisation that all landscape design makes and modifies the ecology of its environment, and is therefore an argument for a specific kind of ecology. Too often this argument is implicit rather than explicit. Landscape design requires a sophisticated understanding of the ecology of landscapes that is also historical and scientifically literate. Course work site visits, field documentation, and analytical drawings.
This course involved an introduction to the use of plants
in landscape design and approaches the subject from two
main areas of study: design and horticulture. On the design
side, the course looked at how plants can be used by the
designer to fulfill the desired functions, and to create spaces
and visual effects in any given design, by examining relevant
aspects of: the history of design and how landscape design
over the centuries reflects its wider social, political and
environmental contexts; types of plants and how they can be
used functionally; the myriad visual characteristics of plants;
and various approaches to designing with plants.

On the horticultural side, the course examined how the plants
themselves function, how they grow, develop, reproduce
and die, and, in particular, their requirements for successful
growth, including: how plants affect and respond to their
environments; their physiology and anatomy; plant production
and plant nursery techniques; how plants are specified
including size categories; planting techniques; and plant
maintenance.

Students gained a practical knowledge of plants targeted at
supporting the creative design process. They were expected to
understand the needs of plants, how they grow and develop,
the space required for various types of plants above and below
ground, and how the environment and human activities affect
their growth. A basic plant list was introduced and students
are expected to develop the ability to distinguish different
plant types and identify key species.
This course had two main components: a more advanced investigation of planting design and the development of technical knowledge of tree management.

The planting design focused on the design process of developing conceptual planting ideas, and understanding how these are balanced with project, site and future maintenance limitations, taking the entire development history of Po Kong Park in Wong Tai Sin as a case study, from initial concept development, through the development of presentation drawings, construction drawings, to site implementation. This study demonstrates some of the successes and failures of a real project and how a design can be lost or saved throughout the process.

The course also reviewed a range of ornamental planting design case studies, including gardens, parks, housing estates and street planting, and engaged in an overview of ecological design case studies, looking at landscape design in global, regional, and local contexts. The technical aspects focused mainly on tree-related issues, including tree management, tree surveys and legal issues related to trees, visual tree assessment, trees and construction, tree transplanting and protection, and landscape maintenance contracts.

At first glance the creative planting design and huge range of scales of development that landscape architects have to be familiar with, on the one hand, and the very technical aspects of tree management, on the other, seem far removed from one another. One of the interesting issues the course examined is how landscape design embraces this diversity between creative, even esoteric issues, and apparently mundane practicalities.
Professionalism underpins the meaningful practice of the landscape discipline. This essential course bridges the gap between the student design studio and full professional life. It introduces students to the fundamental principles, concerns and requirements of landscape architectural practice, and explores the nature of practice, the scope of professional services, project teams and roles, forms and management of practice, documentation of design and construction, through a continuous and wide-ranging dialogue on professionalism, ethical codes and norms of professional behaviour.

The class visited the offices of Belt Collins International to gain first-hand experience of the key procedures and activities required to manage a design office, and then joined professional landscape architects from ACLA Ltd on a major landscape construction site (the Kwun Tong Swimming Pool complex). In both office and site environments, students were challenged to see how concepts of professionalism structure the daily work of practitioners, and to understand how to manage relationships with clients, fellow professionals and contractors to ensure the successful realization of the designer’s vision on site.

Discussions and site visits were structured around core lectures on the role of contract, tort and professional negligence law, environmental and planning law, and common procedures, in the work of landscape architects. Workshop and classroom exercises explored major (non-design) elements of practice, such as marketing and business development, consultancy bidding and agreements, and construction contract procurement and tendering procedures. The course also required students to attend a Construction Industry Training Authority (CITA)-approved basic site safety training course.
Design must be culturally relevant and it must also have form. This two-course sequence developed and refined skills in a diverse range of analytic representation and digital design techniques, including GIS, computational logic, and advanced data visualization and interaction, for landscape research and design. Digital histories from the 1960s through the 1990s digital revolution provided context to make critical design decisions when working with digital mediums. As a parallel to the MLA1 studio during the semester, we focused on agriculture, forestry and development impacted by large infrastructure projects in data-poor central and northern Myanmar. Student project groups followed the now-complete Shwe Pipeline and included: the Chinese-financed Kyaukpyu Deep Sea Port; agricultural development; Irrawaddy Myitsone Dam (as an infrastructural and environmental correlate to the pipeline), Shan-Yunnan border area; and Kunming-Ruili route.

Landscape confronts forms much more complex than the other design disciplines. Students manipulated geospatial data from remotely-sensed and open-source datasets to build a generalist’s understanding of digital media for the range of scales landscape architects confront and in which they collaborate. Automation and iterative, procedural workflows were stressed as part of an efficient design process and problem solving toolset (i.e., design thinking). The sequence was not intended to promote proficiency in isolated software environments but is instead engineered to build dexterity and foundational knowledge in logic, automation, non-destructive editing, precision, and other topics common across all platforms.
This course considered the multiple meaningful ways that landscape is entangled with culture. It took a broad, international and comparative perspective across different historical periods. The course was organized around a series of definitions that continue to exert profound influence on the shape of the landscape today. Particular attention was given to cross cultural and cosmopolitan perspectives. Landscape architecture was approached as a body of knowledge and discourse amongst and influenced by other modes of shaping and understanding the landscape. The readings and lectures asked, and the class collectively attempted to think through: What do landscapes tell us about us? Can we see that we were different in the past? Can we change the future? Can a landscape tell us what a society is? Can it tell us what nature is? Can it tell us how we have been and should be in nature? Is there such a thing as nature and society in the first place?

Examples drawn from across multiple traditions and historical periods were examined in detail with the view of strengthening students understanding of the diverse meaning of landscapes and their culturally generative potential. The course drew on primary and secondary sources and lectures considered both textual and visual evidence. The course readings were a mixture of philosophical, literary, and historical texts, representing the diversity of discursive types pre-occupied with the landscape.

Careful studies of particular local landscape examples were undertaken by students with the view of strengthening their analytical and descriptive skills. Students learnt the primary skills of landscape analysis through a combination of textual and visual materials, while students worked to improved their analytical writing skills through assignments, discussion and exercise-based tutorials, introducing them to informed and critical image analysis. Students then applied the discussions in lectures and the concepts drawn from the readings to images to decode their content and explicate their construction.
This course undertook a critical evaluation of global contemporary practices at large scales within the field of landscape architecture, specifically given shifts in global economic and geopolitical trends that have necessitated a repositioning of landscape planning from an empirical, socially- and environmentally-deterministic practice to one that is operative and catalytic, for which strategy and negotiation prevail over traditional top-down planning methods. Though we understand strategic landscape planning in relation to sites and regions that are manifestly urban, this was not a course about Landscape Urbanism. Though the science of ecology provides many of the conceptual models we use to describe and explore strategic landscape planning, this was not a course about Landscape Ecology. Instead this course aimed to situate a diverse and often contradictory set of ideas about shaping the environment in which and through which we live within a historical continuum and within the tangle of disciplinary identities.
This course prepared MLA candidates for delivering a landscape design thesis in their final semester through the development of disciplinary, intellectual, and procedural investigations that frame each candidate’s thesis proposal. The course engaged with four themes essential for structuring a convincing thesis project: the disciplinary position, research methodology, speculative strategies, and context. These themes were expanded through lectures, case studies, seminars and workshops, and formed the framework on which students built their arguments and structured their process. During this course, students were exposed to a range of contemporary theories and disciplinary practices that support – or critique – notions of the landscape architectural thesis developed in the course. Finally, in addition to underpinning the conceptual body of a thesis, students were also introduced to the skills and practices necessary for completing a thesis, such as data collection and management, working with reference material, and analytical techniques.
Design, as do most disciplines, has a particularly difficult relationship with Nature. It’s also doubly difficult to commit the act of “design” in places detached (farther than simply “distant”) from the urban, such as national parks. This advanced computation-theory seminar seeks to define a set of architectonic languages for the space of environmental conservation. The focus this term was on developing methods to represent the dynamics of densely mosaicikd landscapes in the context of the Peruvian Amazon: forests, logging, degradation, and settlements implicated by a transoceanic highway that crosses coastal desert, highland, montane and cloud forests, and the Amazon Basin.

Design Analytics proposed a unique amalgam of computational design and environmental planning. “Myths” of conservation discourse (population and poverty as drivers of deforestation, biodiversity as merely scientific, etc.) frequently decouple the global-regional from the local specifics of place. Building upon previous seminars in environmental conservation and rural development as part of Harvard’s South America Project, we critically returned to the local, organic and ecologic as moments of exception for these myths and the strongest point of entry for the fields of architecture and landscape. The course proposed the spatial matrix as a tool for working between complex vector geometry (e.g., contours, reserve boundaries, agricultural settlements) and heavy data (deforestation, endemic species distributions, etc.), in essence, that which is so complex it cannot be represented by lines and polygons.

The seminar is both a digital methods course and one on complex ecologies; i.e., we aim at the most complex: a self-organizing humid rainforest that in its very homogeneity impedes the devices of analytic categorization and discretization. Scalar inconsistencies, reductions, and resolution remain central, and one must stress the agency (for education and activism) of spatial critique of the methods of conservation science and its socio-environmental implications. Conservation planning, for all purposes here, is largely an act of normalization to ensure “conservation” as a project. Such normalizing attempts have often proved futile in the Amazon. Student projects culminate in highly-articulate plans and 3D-printed surfaces of a one-square-kilometer section of the rainforest.
Large dams are among the most singular, monumental constructions of any modernization project. Many of China’s conservation efforts are rooted in the construction of waterworks, environmental disasters and mass deforestation of the Mao period, which tends to be eclipsed by the surficial acknowledgment that “opening up” and venturing out has caused widespread environmental catastrophe. Issues of rural poverty, underdevelopment, ambiguous tenure, etc., abound in China’s mineral-rich West, where mining operations and plans for hydropower development move hand-in-hand with the delineation and revision of conservation areas and tourism initiatives. A slow-down in dam construction in recent years, despite the high renewable energy targets of the Western Development Campaign, is attributed to local politics.

2013 marked the 30-year anniversary of the first established nature preserve in China’s Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Protected Area (TPR). The UNESCO site proper is constituted of 15 core areas, which, connected by buffer zones, amount to eight contiguous “sub-units” spread over an area of 50,000 square kilometers. This fragmentation is not isolated to the TPR area but characteristic of China as a whole, both physically and administratively, illustrating conservation and the creation of wilderness as a political and economic tool. We use hydropower planning as a lens to understand these processes as not resultant from a central planning mechanism, China at-large, but instead developed out of complex political-economic productions institutionalized within conservation, technology and rural development.

This course expands the repertoire of the design disciplines to extra-urban, extra-social geographies of global, paramount importance. It is Design’s agency to at once navigate the highly physical controls of mapped boundaries (topography, tenure, resources, etc.) and the political motivations, imaginations, and scientific metrics that necessitate their formation and that may potentially offer a platform for ecological resolution and stewardship. The disciplines’ ability to distill complex physical features, coupled with Modernism’s historic interest in development planning, is used to narrate several lines of inquiry, including: Seasonal reconnection of lakes with the Yangtze; Resettlement for both energy and conservation; and Rural development via “small hydropower” in Yunnan.
Much of what is built in the modern world is visually unattractive, and disguising objects is a key (if somewhat under-rated) skill that landscape architects, architects, and urban designers need to make objects visually more acceptable in their setting. Yet what makes an element attractive (or not) derives from the complex inter-relationship between the viewer, the object, and the environmental context.

This new research seminar course looked at concepts of visual preference (in the environment), the different values and qualities we give to the environment around us (psychophysical, cognitive, experiential, phenomenological etc.), the underlying environmental psychology that has been used to explain them, and the different strategies and techniques that designers can employ to mitigate visual impacts and to change views.

The class studied the HK Landscape Value Mapping Study and EIA project case studies for a number of high profile developments in Hong Kong to investigate the range of issues relating to the siting of objects in the landscape and different strategies and techniques that had been tried to mitigate the visual impact. Students then undertook their own siting project based on the scenario of introducing a 180m high chimney and new waste incinerator somewhere within the wider Tolo Harbour catchment area, with the least visual disturbance. Students mapped ZVIs and visually sensitive receivers, and developing landscape and architectural options for mitigating the visual inevitable impact.
Landscapes offer a plane of opportunity, spaces and environs to accommodate the growth and interaction of various species of flora and fauna; of life. It is within and across landscapes – that is outdoor environments more so than interior spaces – that humanity has over the millennia spent the bulk of its waking hours hunting, harvesting, exploring. These activities, and the fundamental relationship between individuals and their surroundings, naturally change over time, most significantly in response to the paired forces of industrialization and urbanization.

This course was focused on better understanding the shifting forms of landscape engagement experienced across cultures, with a particular emphasis on the ways in which these activities and relationships within the Chinese context are represented in film.

These activities, that can range from the collection of drinking water from a stream to the high-tech industrial exploration of mining resources, can be described with words and represented within still images, but the motion picture offers a distinct advantage in more compellingly illustrating not just the details of these activities, but in fact the nature of the relationship between individual and environment.

With an eye toward how this engagement has changed over time, China was presented as an especially compelling case study as its transition from pre-industrial to industrial economy occurred faster than any other major nation, and the timing of this transition conveniently coincides with the rise of the film industry. The result is a significant offering of study material in the form of movies that, while not exclusively documentary in format, have an immediacy of relationship between the time of their subject and creation.

The goal was for students of landscape architecture to better understand the shifting forms of landscape engagement within a historical context, beginning to recognize ways in which expectations of landscape as a medium continue to evolve and, ultimately, ways in which practitioners may more holistically consider the relationship between users and the built environment.
The MLA program started with a specially constructed two week intensive course that introduced students to the research methods, analytical processes and graphic representational skills that underpin an education in landscape architecture at HKU, and marked the beginning of their exploration of the unique biophysical systems of Hong Kong, and the history of its settlement and urbanisation. Amidst a flurry of lectures, workshops, sharing sessions with invited professional practitioners, site visits, and a number of lengthy rambles through the city and the countryside, students engaged in two detailed studies of landscapes in the Territory. In the first they undertook a series of case studies on newly-constructed urban courtyards within the city. In the second, they researched, mapped and analysed examples of common landscape types and their relation to natural and built contexts.

Students were introduced to key issues and principles relating to the natural and built environments within the local and regional contexts, and made aware of projects, people, and practices within the landscape, architectural and urban design disciplines in Hong Kong in order to gain insight into the potential role of the landscape architect in constructing the relationship between communities and their environments.
Bachelor of Arts in Landscape Studies
This studio focused on exposing students to fundamental landscape design skills. The underlying philosophy of the content and flow of this course is that all design disciplines require an understanding of the body, movement, and site, which will allow generation of a design concept and, eventually, its development into a detailed space, based on those understandings. This is a course in which students learnt about broadly-applicable design approaches, but also allowed for the components of landscape design to be discussed and incorporated throughout the exercises.
The title of this course, We Refugees, is taken from a short polemical essay by the mid-20th century German–Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt. For her, living in New York City in exile from Nazi persecution, the position of the refugee was to be affirmed and taken advantage of for its unique perspective on the contemporary world. She affirms the outsider for whom flight and exile create the conditions to take both the risk and responsibility for human (and non-human) social and political action.

This course met Arendt’s invocation not through a study of the figure of the refugee, but the spaces which house her and she traverses. Broadly, this course analysed in detail the interrelated spaces of the refugee: the refuge, sanctuary, enclave and archipelago. In particular, its focus was on the ground that these spaces have shaped and are, in turn, shaped by.

Students were introduced to historical case studies and a survey of contemporary theories in the humanities and social sciences. Additionally, students were introduced to and required to engage contemporary and often contentious issues surrounding spaces of refuge and sanctuary, such as cosmopolitanism versus nationalism, nomadism and sedentarism, bio-politics, interspecies thriving, entanglement theory, internationalism versus localism, foreigner versus native, essentialisms, orientalism, etc... The spaces studied included, for example, the refugee camp, death camp, cloister, pirate cove, garden, endangered species sanctuaries, women’s shelters, linguistic enclaves, and internment camps. These case studies provided a lens through which students were able to interrogate critically the contemporary world and its archipelagos of sanctuaries, refuges, and enclaves.

It was also a modelling-intensive semester. Model building was the central representational and analytical technique mobilised by the course; drawing was largely used for the exploration of model building. Students were introduced to advanced model-making techniques. Precision, care and clarity were mixed with creativity and experimentation in the explorations of modelling. Iterative processes of trial and error, variations on a theme, diagrammatic versus spatial, tectonic versus representational strategies were explored in each assignment. The model was thus deployed as a vehicle for academic research.
Artichoke, Fallow Flower, Fennel
This studio looked at the relationship between site and community by asking how landscapes and lives are assembled. How can the relationship between people’s lives and the infrastructure of living be addressed by landscape architecture? Further, and perhaps most fundamentally, the studio asks how a landscape can shape the way we live.

Framed by these questions, the studio proposes to look at the assemblage of site and community relations in Pokfulam Village through the lens of urban agriculture. In the original land allocation and layout of the village, each Hakka row house was allocated a plot of land to farm. As the population increased, many of the plots were leased and/or developed for non-formalized housing. Currently, there are only two official farm plots, at the north end of the village. However, many residents grow vegetables and flowers in plots adjacent to their homes or in recently developed (and planned) community gardens.

The studio was composed of a series of cumulative exercises. The first studio exercise asked students to uncover an essential element of the village through their own observations, documenting a phenomena, element, process or idea in the form of a photo diary and short text. The second exercise examined the village’s current food supply and demand through the production of measured orthographic drawings of the village’s markets. The third exercise of the studio asked students to produced detailed maps of the site and systems of the village, integrating the first two exercises and laying the foundation for the final design project. The final exercise of the studio asked students to layout a strategy and site design for a particular issue or set of issues affecting the village and its residents identified through the preceding exercises.

Each exercise of the studio can be seen as a different way to explore the same fundamental questions: how landscapes and lives are assembled, how landscape shapes our lives, and how we shape the landscape. To that end, the studio exercises were conducted in consultation with the local community through engagement exercises designed and executed in the concurrent course, ARCH Environment, Community and Design.
1. Axonometric drawings of grocery stores in Pokfulam Village created as part of a joint class exercise.

2. Long section through Pokfulam Village created as part of a joint class exercise.
This studio aimed to develop students’ ability to research, analyse, conceptualise and present integrated and meaningful designs for site-scale landscape projects. With an enlargement of the scale of a project comes an increased focus on site planning and the integration of multiple factors which shape our physical landscapes, including ecology, hydrology, and climate, with special attention being paid to biophysical characteristics of the site.

In this studio, students were first given a short exercise in the study of geomorphology to examine how and why certain physical landscapes are formed. This aimed to give students an understanding of how natural processes shape the biophysical form of our environment.

Then, students undertook a precedent study exercise, in which examples of built design projects that exemplify an appreciation for, respect of, and integration with natural physical landscapes were closely studied as a reference for students’ own design projects later in the semester.

After the first two preparatory exercises, students were introduced to the prescribed project site, programs, and design conditions, and launched into the design exercise phase of the studio. This phase started with a site analysis exercise that, first, focused on understanding of the geography, geological formation, climatic and ecological conditions of the site.

In the subsequent site planning stage, students were asked to design a site layout according to their findings from the site analysis exercise. At midterm reviews, they presented a comprehensive site layout, demonstrating thoughtful grading/land-forming of the site’s topography, a logical positioning of building massings that responds to the climatic and other natural conditions of the site, a sound hierarchy of programming sequences and flows of circulation.

The final stage of site design zoomed in in scale to further verify if the site layout made sense at a human-scale level. The articulations and aesthetics of the space were further investigated and refined, not only to fit the pragmatic needs of the programmes/functions, but also to bring a transcendent/inspiring spatial experience, allowing users to appreciate the environment through inhabiting the project space.

Also especially emphasised was the question of how, at a human-scale level, designed spaces might facilitate the site’s biophysical conditions and aesthetic qualities.
Since the establishment of Special Economic Zones in Southern China following the market reforms that began in 1978, areas designated for economic development have been critical drivers of investment and urbanization in cities across China. In Shanghai, the creation of Pudong New Area in the 1990s, with its four key zones in Lujiazui, Waigaoqiao, Jinqiao, and Zhangjiang, marked a shift from a manufacturing- and export-based economy to a diversified set of economic priorities including finance and high-tech industries. This policy has produced some impressive results in Shanghai. From 1992 until 2008, the city has maintained double-digit GDP growth every year, with GDP growing from RMB 1.114 trillion to RMB 14.069 trillion in a span of 16 years. In 2009, the McKinsey Global Institute reported that Shanghai accounted for 25 percent of China’s trade and served as the country’s largest trading centre. The transformation of Shanghai into a global city for trade and finance reflects the government’s success in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) into strategically-designated economic zones across the city, where favourable incentives are made available.

The economic expansion of Shanghai coincides with very tangible physical transformations. Massive investments have been made to enhance the city’s infrastructure, including new roads, subway lines, highways, power stations, sea ports, and water treatment facilities. The city’s urban extent has also been expanding around the historic core at an accelerated pace. Former farmlands and rural townships have been subsumed by the urban landscape of shopping malls, apartment blocks, office towers, corporate campuses and factories.

In this period of unrelenting development and pursuit of economic growth, it is critical to examine and analyse existing patterns of urbanization and question its sustainability, function, and contribution to public life. With this approach, the design studio engaged with the city in four projects this semester that resulted in the design and planning of an urban campus in the context of a high-tech park.
Known as the ‘rice bowl’, Thailand’s fertile soils and rich coastal landscapes were the early economic foundations for the nation. However, the Chao Phraya River is a product of post-war infrastructural planning projects that have severely altered the fragile ecologies that maintained traditional productive landscapes of agriculture and aquaculture. During the 2012 studio field trip in the previous year, we stumbled upon the political and economic tensions between flood prevention and the management of limited freshwater resources. The ecological consequence of massive engineered solutions to flood prevention and irrigation is the degradation of productive landscapes such as coastal shrimp ponds and traditional rice fields. Current industrial practices in aquaculture and agriculture have created an ecological collapse in the region – resulting in massive amounts of abandoned shrimp ponds and rice fields.

Currently, there are many grassroots-based NGOs that are working to rehabilitate the coastal landscape along the Gulf of Thailand, including villagers from a fishing community in Samut Sakhon who are aiming to restore mangroves along their coast. On the upper reaches of the Chao Phraya River, other grassroots movements seek to preserve the native Thai rice varieties that are under threat of extinction due to the proliferation of genetically-engineered varieties. ‘Thailand’s Water Economies’ contributes to these efforts through research and landscape planning to insert alternative solutions to the ecological and planning problems that exist within this context.

This studio built upon research from the previous year that examined the role of water in the economic development of Thailand. Agriculture and aquaculture have significant roles in Thai history, but recent industrial development and the 2011 floods have revealed a new relationship between economy and water – one where abundance and flooding is viewed as a great threat rather than resource. What is the role of landscape planning within these conflicting views?
Landscape architects operate in the physical realm, helping shape expansive landscapes and more urban environments inhabited by people. If we are to be effective as landscape architects and realize our design goals, we must have a facility with the tools and techniques required for driving these manipulations. Ideas are critical, but not enough on their own.

This course aimed to prepare students with a foundational understanding of the engineering of sites and the ways in which design objectives are translated into built form. The course sequence was organized around topics including: site analysis and responsive site planning; landform; the design of structural elements such as walls and steps; soils and earthwork; storm water management; and finally site layout and road design. These subjects embody essential knowledge and skills at the core of our discipline.
Particulate Matter (PM) is a term that refers to any solid, liquid, or gas that happens to be of a certain size (between .01 and 100 micrometres). As a category, it therefore encompasses an enormous diversity of materials. What gives this term specificity is that things reduced to this size generally begin to move through the world in new ways, and, as with Mary Douglas's anthropological definition of ‘dirt’, these flows tend to put ‘matter out of place’. Particulate Matter is therefore a description of a kind of movement, a set of scalar relationships, and an anthropological category of place at the threshold between objects and atmospheres.

In PM students explored this threshold as a representational problem that requires us to imagine new methods of description. Paying particular attention to scale, place, and motion, students were required to design and digitally fabricate particulate matter. This required an engagement with digital fabrication techniques, physical modelling, analytical drawing, notational systems, and animation using Rhino3D and Grasshopper design software. Special attention was paid to understanding the strengths and limitations of each form of representation in relation to the particulate matter being designed. Students was required to pose problems and develop methodologies for testing solutions. Each assignment required the acquisition of new technical skills, the development of an analysis, and the communication of ideas in drawings.
This course was designed to give students a comprehensive knowledge of plants, landscape planting design and management. It focused on learning a core palette of plant species and their characteristics for use in landscape planting in the region and developing students’ understanding of the underlying fundamentals of botany, plant physiology, and taxonomy.

The course also examined techniques in plant propagation and horticultural care. The functional applications of plants including environmental improvement, ornamental, medicinal, cultural and other uses in landscape planting design are explored within both historical and contemporary schemes. Students were introduced to a systematic approach to planting design and some of the basic technical, administrative and management aspects of landscape planting.
This course aimed to provide a structure for students to be able to think in a creative, critical and structured manner about plants, planting and planting design's role in landscape architecture. Fundamental issues covered included a framework for the selection, arrangement, placement of plants in the landscape, and the art of developing a critical eye, work process and tools for planting design. Intellectual ideas and perspectives also explored included various design movements and their influence on planting design, balancing aesthetic creativity with practical function, usability and long term development, and understanding the different roles of different types of planting design from ornamental plantings through to purely functional types. The course also engaged in discussion on the origins of landscapes, what constitutes a 'natural' landscape, and the context of change over time within the landscape. Students then applied this knowledge to their studio projects to experiment with different approaches to planting and to discern various technical solutions for their designs.
This course sought to enable students to develop an understanding of key ecological principles and the concept of sustainability, and to appreciate the manner in which these principles underpin successful landscape design. The course investigated how the concepts of succession, biodiversity, habitat structure and ecosystem stability contribute to the success (or failure) of urban landscapes, habitat creation projects and restoration of degraded landscapes, and how these techniques are an essential tool in successful landscape design. Students were required to apply their understanding to a major design project based on a local case study, and to undertake specific research on a relevant chosen technique related to that project.

1 Ecological analysis of Long Valley wetland area, Hong Kong, by Freda Yiren YU
This course considered the multiple meaningful ways that landscape is entangled with culture. It took a broad, international and comparative perspective across different historical periods. The course was organized around a series of definitions that continue to exert profound influence on the shape of the landscape today. Particular attention was given to cross cultural and cosmopolitan perspectives. Landscape architecture was approached as a body of knowledge and discourse amongst and influenced by other modes of shaping and understanding the landscape. The readings and lectures asked, and the class collectively attempted to think through: What do landscapes tell us about us? Can we see that we were different in the past? Can we change the future? Can a landscape tell us what a society is? Can it tell us what nature is? Can it tell us how we have been and should be in nature? Is there such a thing as nature and society in the first place?

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Careful studies of particular local landscape examples were undertaken by students with the view of strengthening their analytical and descriptive skills. Students learnt the primary skills of landscape analysis through a combination of textual and visual materials, while students worked to improved their analytical writing skills through assignments, discussion and exercise-based tutorials, introducing them to informed and critical image analysis. Students then applied the discussions in lectures and the concepts drawn from the readings to images to decode their content and explicate their construction.
This course operated as an applied research seminar exploring the complexity and interaction between urban environments and their communities, as well as the role of agency in design practice. Though a series of themes which explored key agents of the anthropogenic landscape, the course sought to define the terms of the course’s title, as well as a contemporary role for landscape and the landscape architect in our rapidly transforming, often conflated local-global context. The course included local and international research and case studies that examined the influence of human constructs such as politics, culture and economics on typologies of landscape formation, process and meaning. The course also included a theoretical review and ‘real world’ practice of methods of community engagement, both formal and informal, in a Hong Kong community, Pokfulam Village, that is faced with the possibility of major environmental transformation due to changes in policy and the development and construction of significant infrastructure.
The discipline of landscape architecture has been transformed over the past few decades by the emergence of a new set of theories and agendas amongst landscape thinkers and practitioners. Various protagonists have set out to change how landscape architecture sees itself, and how landscape architecture sees its field of operations.

The first question that must be asked, however, is transformed or changed from what? What was the state of the discipline and the ways in which the discipline thought about landscape architecture prior to these developments that occurred from around the 1990s onwards. Essentially, then, this course was about modernism in landscape architecture, and its aftermath (the title of the course is drawn from a seminal 1939 essay by James C Rose, ‘Articulate Form in Landscape Design’). This aspect of the course introduced students to the idea of historiography in landscape architectural history and theory. In other words, what was the story that landscape architecture told itself about its origins, the boundaries of the discipline, what its role was in relation to society, culture and nature/the environment over time; and how has this story changed over recent decades?

The course, then went on to consider in detail a number of significant ideas, approaches and projects that have shaped landscape architecture over the last century. It also placed these developments in a broader cultural, environmental, social and intellectual context. Students had the opportunity to conduct their own research into a significant modernist landscape project and to research it in detail in order to produce a set of analytical drawings and a research essay.

The course was structured so that more traditional lectures and tutorials were interspersed with workshops designed to foster students’ learning of specific core academic skills required for a sophisticated engagement with the practice of landscape architectural history and theory: specifically, close and critical reading of texts; academic research; analytical drawing; and the formulation of critical arguments and their expression in clear, lively academic writing.

1. Yammi Yik Ming TSANG, study of Jacob Thijsseplein playground, Amsterdam, by Aldo van Eyck

2. Issac Ho Wan CHIU, study of Fulton Mall, Fresno, California, by Garrett Eckbo
The urban population of China has risen from 26% in 1990 to approximately 50% in 2010. This rapid rate of urbanization has greatly influenced the development of landscapes in contemporary China, resulting in an explosion of designed landscapes emerging in urban and rural China. These landscapes – whether public parks, shopping streets, tourist attractions, or infrastructure – all embody cultural values of the modern China, but more importantly play an active role in forming social and political conditions.

This course was run as a research seminar where students were introduced to historic and contemporary landscape issues in China, primarily through case studies. The course consisted of seminar discussions, guest lectures, and student case study presentations. During the seminar discussions, students were exposed to the issues that challenge contemporary landscape architectural practice in China in order to familiarize students with the unique landscape conditions in China at present. Guests from leading landscape architecture firms supplemented this discussion by presenting their design work and participating in dialogues with students. Students were required to conduct a semester-long case study of a specific landscape within the scope of these topics, and to analyse it based on the theoretical framework set up by the course. Most case studies also required field visits for proper documentation.
This course undertook a critical evaluation of global contemporary practices at large scales within the field of landscape architecture, specifically given shifts in global economic and geopolitical trends that have necessitated a repositioning of landscape planning from an empirical, socially- and environmentally-deterministic practice to one that is operative and catalytic, for which strategy and negotiation prevail over traditional top-down planning methods. Though we understand strategic landscape planning in relation to sites and regions that are manifestly urban, this was not a course about Landscape Urbanism. Though the science of ecology provides many of the conceptual models we use to describe and explore strategic landscape planning, this was not a course about Landscape Ecology. Instead this course aimed to situate a diverse and often contradictory set of ideas about shaping the environment in which and through which we live within a historical continuum and within the tangle of disciplinary identities.
This course is a Faculty Core Course taught by the Division of Landscape Architecture to all first-year students within the Faculty of Architecture.

The course examined the broad range of issues confronting humanity’s search for a sustainable future within the built environment. Important issue and topics related to the built environment, such as: population and urbanization; governance and public health; infrastructure; buildings; materials; and waste were explored through contemporary and historical case studies.

Through the various topics, students discovered the interrelationships that exist between the physical environment and prevailing social and ideological contexts, and how this can shape the form and pattern of human settlement. Development of this awareness amongst students aims to foster the development of their own concepts and ideas of the future, and to lay the foundations for them as future designers of ‘exemplary environments’.

1 Timothy Chum-hin WONG, David Ka Wai WONG, Cheuk Ting CHAU
Why do we draw? Why and how do landscape architects use drawings? Why are they so many different representational techniques? What do they convey? How do they influence designers’ understandings of the environment?

This course was not a technical course, but an introduction to and a preparation for future landscape designers. Students were able to discover and experiment with multiple representational tools in order to understand the intellectual processes involved in each of the techniques, as well as how these build their understanding of the environment and the message they intend to convey.

Landscape architects use drawings in three ways: as illustrations, as projections, and as dynamic thinking processes. In order to explore fully the potential, but also the limits, of each of these uses, the course guided students through the experience of multiple drawing practices belonging to each of them.
The Landscape Practicum is an elective course aimed at offering landscape students in their senior years an opportunity to nurture practical knowledge and experience in developing a conceptual design idea into a realized built project.

In this course, students approached a real-life project with an actual site, real-life users/clients, and had to commit to deliver a built project at the end of the course.

Through these real-life engagements, students were required to, first, learn from the theoretical ideas of landscape architecture, and second, apply these learnt theories to practical issues.

Emphasis was placed on translating classroom-learnt knowledge into out-of-classroom learning experience.

In this course, students learnt and gained hands-on knowledge about the issues involved in building landscape architecture, such as site and functions, users’ needs, cost, schedule, materials, construction techniques, on-going site performance and maintenance, etc.

1. Students consulting with village representatives about their designs

2. Students installing a new community garden in Pokfulam Village
Common Core Curriculum
Throughout the history of our civilization, humankind has worked with the environment both as a means for survival and as expression of culture. It has always been a two-way relationship. On the functional aspect, we shape the land to meet the needs of our daily livelihoods. Different environments also nurture different cultures, and these various cultures also shape the landscape in different ways as expressions of their various ways of life.

For a long time, human’s relationship with the environment has been in harmony. However, in recent decades, this balance seems to have tilted. Contemporary culture seems to be more focused on celebrating human’s power to exploit and control the environment rather than to co-exist with nature in a sustainable way.

Land art has a strong reciprocal relationship with nature – on one hand, it is an artistic expression of human culture and how we sculpt the land; yet on the other hand, it also incorporates considerations of how forces of nature may impact on the art piece, and hence reflects how nature influences the way that we express our culture. Nature, in the case of land art, is embedded into the art-making process – a reflection of what is meant by sustainable living, and a demonstration of how the forces of nature can intertwine with our daily life.

Through the prism of land art, students were able to explore the dynamic relationships of how human culture can best work with the natural environment. By examining some successful land art pieces, students were able to become inspired about what a healthy/balanced relationship between culture and nature could be, and were able to examine the inter-relationship and the inter-connectedness between culture and the environment.

Ultimately, students learnt, via the land art case studies, and were able to apply the results of such thinking process, to questions of the healthy reciprocity between human culture and nature in addressing broader issues of how our current society treats the landscape. They were also simulated/triggered to think critically about and to establish their own definitions of sustainability.
This foundational course examines a broad range of sustainability issues relating to population and urbanization; transportation; water; energy; food; community and governance; technology and mobility etc. through the perspective of contemporary and historical examples of how we have sought to perfect built environments as settings for model communities. Hong Kong is used as a running case study throughout the course with the unique history of development in the Territory used to explore and critique key principles in sustainable development and to highlight the enormous challenges that we face in the future.

The pedagogy of the course focuses the investigation of these issues directly through the personal experience of the students, asking them to examine their own lives and communities to identify specific sustainability problems, to research the nature and history of them, and to map these in relation to the relevant global, territorial and local contexts. Students are challenged to identify one issue within their own community and to devise a potential solution and an action plan to address it. The course is intended to inspire thinking about the way we should construct our living environments in future, in order to find a sustainable balance. The student output from the course is consolidated into a course booklet which is given back to students at the end.
What is food? Where does it come from? How does it get to us? Where does it go when we dispose of it and its packaging? What is the sustainable future of local and global food networks?

'You, Food and the City: Local and Global Food Networks' aimed to engage students in a discussion about their relationship to food, both as urban and global citizens. The course introduced central issues concerning networks of food supply, distribution and demand through a series of urban case studies, with a special focus on Hong Kong. The aim of the course was to increase students’ awareness and understanding of the local and global impacts of their everyday food choices. The course examined past and present local, regional, and international food networks, and their environmental, cultural and physical effects. Tracking backward from consumption to distribution to production, the course introduced texts, graphic documentation, and case studies which explore, theorize, and explain contemporary discussions on food issues and sustainability, including environmental and health impacts, food security, urban agriculture and other initiatives to create a more sustainable, equitable and food secure future for the city.

Through lectures, tutorials and course readings, seminar discussions, workshops and a field trip, students investigated and were able to identify key sources, practices and processes that enable the global food chain. Lectures included the presentation of theories, sites, and issues, as well as case studies of nodes and linkages in local and global food networks (e.g., cities, places, structures and infrastructures). The primary assignment of the course involved researching and tracing the impacts of a food item or product back from its purchase in Hong Kong to its source(s). By the end of the course, students were expected to be able to link the physical, cultural and environmental effects of feeding an expanding and demanding population to the everyday practices, processes and policies that determine the past, present and future functioning of the global food system.
The Degree Show is an opportunity for graduating students in the MLA and BA(LS) programs to showcase their design work. In 2013–14, the HKU Landscape Architecture Degree show was exhibited, in conjunction with the Department of Architecture Degree Show, from 20 June – 2 July 2014. The student work amply displayed the diversity and range of landscape architectural approaches to contemporary issues and concerns. The Thesis projects (see pages 12–27) exhibited ranged from a critique of Hong Kong’s green belt policies to landscape design solutions for the Territory’s aging population; from harnessing urban infrastructure as a platform for new parkway systems to the rehabilitation of coastal ecosystems; and numerous other themes in between. Also on display were the capstone design studio projects from the graduating class in the BA(LS) program (see pages 90–95), imagining solutions to persistent problems afflicting the Chao Phraya delta surrounding Bangkok. Overall, the exhibition showcased the continuing engagement by the Division of Landscape Architecture at HKU with topical issues relating to landscape in Hong Kong and the region, and its emphasis on sustainable development that balances the needs of communities with their environments.

As part of the Department of Architecture’s Spring 2014 Public Lecture Series, the Division of Landscape Architecture hosted the distinguished American landscape architect, Walter Hood, former Chair of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning at the University of California, Berkeley. Professor Hood delivered a lecture focussing on his commitment to cultural practice, aimed at creating environments in which people live, work and play. He showcased a range of projects by his firm, Hood Design, that engaged with urban landscapes in which collective densities require inhabitants to share physical, social, political and economic resources. In these multidimensional contexts, Hood’s designs display powerful sculpted expressions, which explore site-specific social and environmental processes. Landscapes and built-elements emerge as improvised acts which are both familiar, yet at the same time reshaped into something new.
Selected students from the BA(LS) Program had the opportunity to visit Italy on a 10-day study tour supported by the Italian Cultural Society of Hong Kong Leo Tung-hai Lee Fund in June–July 2013. Students were encouraged to experience the country’s rich architectural heritage through the lens of the Italian terrain in order to formulate an understanding about the complex relationship between the built and natural environment. This sensitivity is particularly relevant in the fields of architecture and landscape architecture in light of the rising interest in the potential of using landscape systems, such as topography and water, to organize new typologies of architecture and urbanism.

Human settlement patterns in Italy are defined by its unique terrain and hydrology. With the Alps to the north, and the Apennine range as its spine, only approximately 25% of the landscape is flat. Water resources are crucial for shaping cultural and urban development in Italy, resulting in a rich expression of water in its built landscapes. Architecture and urbanism in this particular context are a direct response and adaptation to the diverse geological and hydrological conditions in Italy. This study tour examined the relationship between the Italian terrain and its architecture at multiple scales and functions, ranging from classic Italian Villas to the city of Rome; from sites of extraction and production to places of consumption.

Organised by Dorothy Tang and Vincci Mak

Since 2009, the HKU Faculty of Architecture has been organisng a ‘Career Discovery in Landscape Architecture’ (CDLA) program – an exploration program for high school students who are interested in bringing a more sustainable living environment to our city. The CDLA program offers a 3-week course each summer to young people to experience what it is like to be in the profession of landscape architecture.

Led and guided by tutors and student teaching assistants at the Division of Landscape Architecture, CDLA created a series of landscape design installations on campus from 16 August – 20 September 2013. Students designed and installed the project using traditional Chinese steamers and plants selected according to the following seven themes: verticality, horizontality, gradient, reflectivity, taste, smell, tactility/texture.

1 Students exploring the Sacro Bosco (the ‘Monster Garden’)

1 Installation by high school students participating in the Career Discovery in Landscape Architecture summer program at the University of Hong Kong

2 Students constructing the installation from plants and bamboo steamers
“Seeing Pokfulam” was an exhibition about Pokfulam Village, one of the last remaining historic settlements on highly-urbanized Hong Kong Island. The village and its inhabitants demonstrate an alternative way of living rarely found in present-day Hong Kong. Cultural and historic objects and photographs tell us about their way of living in a place whose history and culture date back almost 400 years. In fact, the village was listed on the World Monuments Watch List 2013 among other historic settlements, including Venice and Yangon, to raise global concern in order to recognize its value as a cultural landscape which is under threat by forces of social and economic change. Staff and students from the HKU Division of Landscape Architecture, with support from the HKU Gallant Ho Experiential Learning Centre, contributed their drawings, photographs and design projects documenting the conditions of the village and share their perspectives about how a sustainable community can be co-built in collaboration with the villagers. The student work in the exhibition was undertaken in studio and history & theory courses earlier in the year (see pp78–81 and 108–109). The exhibition also included a Dragon and Phoenix built by villagers; videos, historical photographs and documentation of events such as the yearly Dragon Dance; documentation of a community workshop led by students, and a collaborative project to paint 50 village roofs in bright colours; and a timeline which summarizes the history of the village and documents the efforts of the community in recent years to protect their core cultural and social values.

Organisers: Melissa Cate Christ, Seth Denizen
Special thanks to: Pokfulam Village Cultural Landscape Conservation Group; Gallant Ho Experiential Learning Centre, HKU; Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture; Nigel Ko, Benjamin Sin; Mr. Siu; Master Ng; Allen Poon; Au Step; Andrew Toland and Mary Ho

Organised by Vincci Mak,
14–20 November 2013
The ‘Shaping the Landscape’ exhibition was put on as part of an undergraduate class at the University of Hong Kong exploring humans’ changing relationships with nature through collaborative and site-specific art. In the process, student-artists became fully immersed in the histories and context of site in order to conceive works of art that arise from this immersion. The series of artworks captured the phenomenological qualities of the site, picking up from local materiality, colour and textures, light and wind, and site histories.

In October 2013, students worked in an old village in Lam Tsuen, Tai Po. Student-artists took sites in this old Hakka village, and created six site-specific art pieces. Documentation, such as hand sketches, photographs and short films, were made to capture the essence of these projects, and this documentation formed the basis of the exhibition, hosted at the Fringe Club in Central.

‘Shaping the Landscape’ was offered as a course by the Division of Landscape Architecture as part of the undergraduate Common Core Curriculum. The exhibition was also funded by the Gallant Ho Experiential Learning Centre.

Website: http://fac.arch.hku.hk/la/shapingthelandscape/
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/shapingthelandscape/
Landscape architecture is a type of spatial design that traverses and embraces all scales. From a small planter to regional ecological planning, landscape is an integral component of our daily lives at multiple scales.

This installation, part of the Hong Kong Jockey Club, HULU Culture Heritage x Arts x Design (H.A.D.) Walk Project at Tai Po and Fanling (18 January – 9 March 2014), took the idea of ‘dim sum’, of which there are multiple options of dim sum sizes eaters can choose, to ‘compose’ their perfect meal.

With the overall theme of this exhibition to explore the farming potential of the North District, a series of student landscape projects from the HKU Division of Landscape Architecture was showcased to discuss the relationships of ‘farming scales design’.

While the regional studies of the North District conducted by the students explored the watershed system and other ‘large-scale’ networks that influence farming patterns in the area, the ‘middle-scale’ landscape designs showed the students’ aspirations for how their designs could be integrated into the local community. The ‘small-scale’ landscape design proposals then showed how farming could benefit residents at an individual level.

Organiser: Vincci Mak
Exhibiting Students: Mei-yee Jean Chan, Mei-sai Macy Chung, Tamsin Thornburrow, Tsz-wai Wong
Design and Research Assistant: Chun-kit Kevin So
Student Assistants: Ho-wan Issac Chiu, Chun-Yin Tony Yuen

Website: http://hongkongplatforms.org/
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/hongkongplatforms
Mobile App beta: http://goo.gl/UkKvgA
‘Contingency Plans: or, Living with Unstable Grounds’ considered how the unexpected forces of the earth are shaping landscapes and ourselves. This unorthodox exhibition drew on understudied cases from overlooked places. Through 19 case studies assembled by over 20 contributors, and exhibiting more than 200 objects, our long held assumptions about nature and culture are overturned. Urgent new concepts are created that navigate the complex entanglements between ourselves and the instabilities of the ground. Each case study was based on an unexpected terrestrial event. Examples included: a landslide in Hong Kong, persistent desertification in China, volcanic eruptions in Indonesia, the seepage of mining waste in West Papua, and the gradual accumulation of the surface of the earth in the UK. As each event unfolded, it entangled social systems in unexpected ways. This is because the instabilities of the earth are inseparable from the social processes which reshaped them. Tracing them, as the cases in ‘Contingency Plans’ did, shows us how new realities have been – and continue to be – fabricated.

Contingency shapes the ground while intervening and interrupting the systems we are threaded through. This exhibition was a tool-kit for how to live with the uncertainty that pushes upon us, not least the uncertain future of the Earth itself.

Contributions by:

1 View of the exhibition at the Faculty of Architecture’s Shanghai Study Centre
2 Opening of the exhibition on 29 March 2014 in Shanghai
Staff List

### Full-time Staff

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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Qualifications / Affiliations</th>
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### Honorary Staff

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### Shanghai Study Centre teachers

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<tr>
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<td>Honorary Lecturer</td>
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