

Materialer er en oplevelse på byens gulv

Susan Herrington er keynote speaker på konferencen Byens Gulv til april. Susan er professor i landskabsarkitektur ved University of British Columbia og underviser i blandt andet bygningsarkitektur, landskabsarkitektur og miljødesign. Derudover arbejder Susan som landskabsarkitektonisk konsulent i Canada og USA. Vi har spurgt hende om, hvordan hun ser på materialitet og brug af byens gulv.



Why is it interesting for you to participate in this conference?

Denmark is known for its high quality design, materials, and craftsmanship in the urban environment. I couldn't think of a better place to converse about materials and design other than this Danish conference about the city floor.

“Materiality is to landscape architects as words are to writers.”

What is your main interest considering the ‘city floor’ - Materials?

Yes, materials, but more specifically materiality. As a theoretical lens for design, materiality goes beyond an understanding of material as only matter – its substance, shape, volume, and surface – to the way materials serve as an intermediary between the present and the future, and importantly how materials communicate and express ideas,

such as the site's history or cultural traditions. Materiality is to landscape architects as words are to writers. Like a writer, a landscape designer must not only understand the properties of materials and their ecological impact, but also their communicative dimensions. Materiality is important because it constitutes the physical matter that people interact with long after the design project is completed. Materials are touched, walked upon, or sat on – to name a few interactions – and anticipating the specific experiences arising out of these interactions are often key objectives for designers.

How are the use of the floors/ people's behaviour shaped by materials?

Traditionally, materials dictate how an urban floor can be used – if it can be walked on, skateboarded on, sat upon, or driven on.

What are your professional interests at the moment?

I just published a book with the architectural historian, Marc Treib, on the work of Canadian Architecture de paysage et Design urbain, Claude Cormier + associés (CCA). Their work consistently pushes the boundaries of material usage in landscape architecture. The book is called *Serious Fun: The Landscapes of Claude Cormier* and in it I write about the beauty I find in the firm's work. The word beauty may

appear naïve to some as during the last half of the twentieth century beauty as an aesthetic value became problematic in the art and art-related worlds. Yet, philosophers have recently expanded the concept of beauty beyond formalist definitions (based on colour, line, or form etc..) to include people's interpretations and expressions of feelings from a work, whether it is a painting or a landscape or sculpture. Beauty is experienced when we interpret something and we want to know more about it, and CCA's work consistently prompts us to ask why, and this is often achieved by the firm's unusual choice of materials.

What is the most important ‘job to be done’ for landscape architecture as a professional field now and in the future?

I think landscape architects have done a good job at finding materials for urban floors that are going to have the least detrimental environmental impacts. In North America there are standards and guidelines to help guide this important step in material selection. But I think the selection of materials should not only include ecological impacts, but also the experiences that the installed material affords. COVID-19 has resulted in a renewed interest in outdoor environments and their materiality, particularly how the environment can enhance people's health and well-being.