

# Minutes

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**Toronto Society of Architects  
April Meeting**  
11 April, 2007 – 6:30pm to 8:30 pm  
Arts and Letters Club, 14 Elm Street

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**Present:**

Agnieszka Wloch  
Alissa North  
Andre D'Elia  
Antone Frisina  
Antonio Gómez-Palacio  
Bindya Lad  
Brad Golden  
Breck Mcfarlane  
Brian Danby  
Bruce Semple  
Brynn Horley  
Carlo Milessa  
Christopher McCormack  
Danielle Sernoskie  
David Leinster

Debbie Wadsworth  
Diana Birchall  
Elyse Parker  
Eric Pederson  
Ian Chodikoff  
Joe Lobko  
John Harhay  
Jonathan Fligel  
Klaus Dunker  
Lisa Rapport  
Lynne Eichenberg  
Meg Graham  
Michael McClelland  
Michael Than  
Michael Leckman

Nancy Smith  
Naomi Kriss  
Owen Peat  
Peggy Chi  
Perin Ruttonsha  
Phil Goodfellow  
Rafid Kustou  
Scott Sorli  
Soliman Rafael  
Susan Lewin  
Ute Maya-Giambattista  
Wellington Ong  
Zuhal Akman

## 1. Introduction

- Antonio welcomed all in attendance to the meeting and pointed out that it was Heather's due date (as a result, she would not be attending tonight's meeting). He noted that a card would be circulated during the meeting to commemorate the occasion, and encouraged everyone to sign it.
- He acknowledged the new invigorated format to TSA meetings, and then briefed everyone on the meeting agenda.
- 'Around the room' introductions followed.

## 2. Approval of March 2007 Meeting Minutes

- Minutes of the last meeting, held March 6th, 2007, were circulated.
- Phil motioned to approve the minutes, Scott seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved.

### 3. TSA Initiatives

- Antonio summarized the mandate of the TSA. He noted that a handout of the current TSA initiatives had been provided and encouraged everyone to obtain a copy. An invitation was also extended to all to get in touch with the appropriate contact people if they were interested in joining any of the initiatives. A discussion of the initiatives with key dates in upcoming months followed.
- fAd:
  - Antonio asked Elyse Parker to provide more information regarding the Festival of Architecture and Design (fAd). Elyse explained that fAd had been organized to take advantage of the energy from Doors Open, which made it worthwhile to hold events to focus the discussion that surfaced. Elyse informed that fAd was originally a TSA initiative, and has now become a part of the City's cultural calendar.
  - Everyone was encouraged to visit fAd's website ([www.toronto.ca/fad](http://www.toronto.ca/fad)) which would be live as of Friday, and to send their suggestions to [fad@toronto.ca](mailto:fad@toronto.ca).
  - Antonio added that this year there are 75 different events; including a handful which have TSA involvement such as the Film Series. He asked Scott to provide more information about the Film Series.
- *TSA Film Series*
  - Scott advised that this year there would be a \$5.00 admission charge, which would include admission to the ROM. The Film Series will run for four Friday nights over four weeks during May, as follows:
    - **4 May** - "Expo 67: True North Forty": The Canadian Pavilion at expo 67, as seen through the eyes of first nations and of founding nations.
    - **11 May** - Glowing Hearts: A series of progress, overall, and aerial views of expo 67 from the time of construction and of the exposition, as well as a look back at that Canadian experience in the construction and exposition of nationhood.
    - **18 May** - Most Brilliant Exploits: The state of the art in visual communications, involving three multimedia presentations (for the Ontario Pavilion, Chamber III of the Labyrinth, and the post expo Man and His World).
    - **25 May** - Stand on Guard: Famous scenes of romance and adventure screened at the American pavilion at expo 67 precede a documentary of Bucky Fuller, the designer (along with Shoji Sadao) of the geodesic dome itself.

- *Toronto the Good Party, May 15:*
  - Michael indicated that ERA Architects, Spacing Magazine and [murmur] are throwing a party to celebrate urbanism in the City. He noted that TSA is a sponsor for the event. In previous years, there were 800 people in attendance. Michael invited everyone to attend and encouraged volunteers to participate with organizing the party. Interested volunteers should contact [michaelm@era.on.ca](mailto:michaelm@era.on.ca).
  - Michael noted that previous parties included speakers. However, this year no speakers are involved; more interactive activities have been included instead.
  - It was also noted that the party is when TSA will announce the winner of the “Design Matters” competition, entries of which will be on display during the party.
- *Design Matters Competition, due May 10:*
  - Antonio shared that TSA was launching a design competition in conjunction with sister disciplines, to celebrate its 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary and fAd. The aim of the competition is to generate imagery to explore how design matters.
- *“Building Toronto’s Green Future, May 24:*
  - Everyone was invited to the Saint Lawrence Centre for a Forum, 7:30pm, organized in conjunction with Doors Open and fAd.
- *Pecha Kucha, May 25:*
  - Antonio mentioned that Pecha Kucha, will be part of the kickoff party for Doors Open. He advised that the evening will also involve the launch of the Design City Toronto book, and invited all to attend.
- *Twenty + Change:*
  - Meg elaborated on the ‘twenty + change’ exhibition that her firm superkül architect was organizing. She noted that the TSA and Gladstone Hotel were some of the sponsors for the event and that an opening party had been scheduled for June 8<sup>th</sup>. She encouraged all interested to visit the website ([www.twentyandchange.org](http://www.twentyandchange.org)). To date there had been a good response for submissions, and there was a possibility of turning the exhibition into an annual event. The exhibition will be up for a month at the Gladstone Hotel.
- *Guide Map:*
  - Joe advised that the Guide Map was a work in progress. He noted that this year’s map will: follow the same format as the previous map and focus on Open Spaces in the City including 24 ‘classic’ spaces and nine regional scaled spaces. A publication date has not been set.

- *Urban Affairs:*
  - Phil noted that this was the third monthly discussion and that general themes for the whole year will be released before the summer. He also touched on the goal of the Urban Affairs series, which is to bring experts to the table and have discussion between membership and others.
  - Phil indicated that David Leinster had been invited as the moderator for tonight's meeting.

#### **4. Current Affairs – Landscape Urbanism**

- David introduced the topic for the evening by noting that Phil had mentioned that 'landscape was cooler than architecture these days'. He introduced the evening's speakers:
  - Elyse Parker, Project Manager for the Clean and Beautiful City Secretariat with the City of Toronto;
  - Lisa Rapport, principal in the firm PLANT;
  - Alyssa North, a professor at the University of Toronto; and,
  - Eric Pederson, urban designer at the City of Toronto.
- He supplemented the introduction by providing some facts about landscape in Toronto, which included that there are:
  - 8,000 ha of public parkland in Toronto;
  - 43 linear miles of waterfront;
  - 15% parkland; and,
  - 15,000 linear kilometres of streets.
- David also noted that the notion of landscape in Toronto was influenced by the way the City evolved. It is evident that it's a huge system that has evolved with grand visions. If we were to look back on the creation of the city, initially landscape was thought of as waterfront promenades. Then, in the 1800s the 'a grid of open spaces became an important part of the City's pattern. The 1900s evolved in the same way. In the 1950s, there was a extensive development. From this emerged, a large valley system complete with a network of parks; consequently, a 'bigger landscape' was borne. The 1990s brought about the modern city, with significant development such as Nathan Phillips Square.

#### **Landscape Urbanism**

- The surfacing of the new term 'landscape urbanism' kicked off the discussion for the evening. Everyone agreed that landscape was attracting increasing interest, especially with the Nathan Phillips Square Competition. The power of landscape was noted of importance, given that it forms a much larger system, and along with built form can be woven together to create a quilted fabric. Thinking of

architecture and landscape as a singular discipline, presented a holistic way of designing, and the idea of merging the practice, mandate and disciplines of architecture, landscape, urban design, and engineering was discussed.

### **Public Involvement**

- Elyse Parker spoke about how people have become involved in small landscapes in the City. She discussed the interest in addressing the deteriorating condition of City, through initiatives of the City Beautiful program. The success of the Orphan Space Program was discussed; noting that public space that does not belong to anyone has a tremendous impact on the character of the City. She noted that as the spaces transform, people are transformed and that people become emotional about their ability to have an impact on public space.

### **Scales**

- Eric Pederson addressed landscape on a larger scale. He discussed the role of the government in building the landscape of City. He noted that the 60s and 70s brought about a 'golden age of regionism' with a theme of escaping the city that involved projects including the Island and the Valley System. Eric noted that we have formal ways of looking at landscapes through development, which have produced negotiated, 'gritty', engineered landscapes. Eric noted that we had no real public parks in Downtown Toronto, and this approach has continued through amalgamation. However, with the return of designers participating in landscape, and looking at landscape at a larger scale, Eric noted that landscape has become the bigger structure, which architecture needs to fit into.

### **Intensification Anxiety**

- The visions of government with respect to the Greenbelt Plan and the intensification of existing urban areas to was also discussed, as was the importance of landscape in making this intensified environment livable. Given that Toronto is one of the fastest growing cities in North America and that there is a fear of development and a concern about how we are dealing with growth, there is anxiousness about the environment that will come forth with intensification. The notion of landscape as infrastructure was presented, especially when dealing with intensification.

### **Landscape Romanticism**

- Throughout the evening, presenters often referred to landscape as a new generator of urban form, and associated it with relatively minor public investment when compared to architecture. They praised its ability to grow and change over time, and remediate places in the City. This was opposed by others as they saw such notions as a romanticism that is often associated with landscape. Lisa noted that people often think that landscape can solve problems. However, they fail to understand (and prepare for) the huge maintenance program associated with it, along with the associated investment required. Consequently, caution was associated with landscape's ability to solve all problems, and its

'fashionableness' – greater emphasis was given to landscapes in making our urban realm's more sustainable.

### **Neighbourhood Landscape**

- Klaus pointed out that the City has a good history of urban landscape. He noted that in the past fruit trees were planted in neighbourhoods as street trees, and now when they bloom, they contribute in creating beautiful streetscapes.
- Elyse noted that on the Roundtable on the Beautiful City, discussions arose regarding the need to invest in both large spaces in the City, in neighbourhood scaled landscapes.
- Ian noted that it was the responsibility of the designer to acknowledge community in landscapes. A discussion followed on both the need and the challenge of community involvement through the design process. Lisa noted an interesting example of the City's democratic approach to landscape by acknowledging that residents are allowed to choose trees from a list they want on their front lawn.

### **Closing Remarks**

- Elyse acknowledged the failure of trust of the public in our professions.
- Eric acknowledged that we have huge problems, we always will. However, we are at a very important time, and there is going to be a change. He considered architecture asking what landscape is about, a worthwhile first step.
- Alissa shared Eric's optimism. She acknowledged the expertise of foreign designers and noted that they offered good learning experiences.
- It was noted that April was landscape architecture month.
- David concluded by stating it was good to hear that after 35 years of practice – 'landscape is cool'.
- Antonio thanked the evening's speakers and invited all to next month's meeting which has a "green" theme.

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.**

**The next TSA General Meeting will take place on Tuesday May 1st, 2007, at 6:30 pm, at the Arts and Letters Club.**