

ARCHITECTURE



PHOTOS BY STEVEN BROOKE

common ground

TWO NEW MIAMI BEACH PARKS CONFIRM LANDSCAPE'S POWER TO TRANSPORT US

Two public spaces conceived as gardens — one finished and the other just getting under way — show us the enormous potential of landscape architecture to make our cities civilized and pleasurable. The transformation starts when we respect the people who inhabit our cities rather than assume the worst about them.

Landscape is our common ground, the connection to the known world and the unknown. Our public spaces bring us closer to the land, to nature, to buildings, to each other, but too often they are designed out of fear and caution, out of the dimmest possible view of human nature. (Will kids skateboard down the paths? Will the homeless sleep on benches? Wouldn't people pick that fruit? Won't kids splash in the fountain?)

Too often, the message is clear: go away.

But there is another, better way, one in which we give our cities back to their rightful owners (all of us), and these urban gardens will lead us there. Welcome to earth, they say, and the design assures us that the experience is ours to have and to hold.

WATER GARDEN

The first, by the talented Miami landscape architect Raymond Jungles, is newly completed and ready to be enjoyed — and it is a spectacular achievement, stunningly beautiful (even to eyes of the passing motorist) and already lush and inviting. Conceived as a water garden, it occupies the westernmost block of Lincoln Road Mall between Alton Road and Lenox Avenue in front of the new, not-quite-finished 1111 Lincoln Road parking complex by the Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron.

The other — by Adriaan Geuze of the Dutch design firm West 8 — is to be the front yard to Frank Gehry's New World Symphony Campus; the building is scheduled to open on Jan. 25, with the park to follow.

The "Urban Glade" that Jungles created is an exquisite, even magi-



SERENE SETTING: Top and above, 1111 Lincoln Road Mall's 'Urban Glade' landscape design by Raymond Jungles uses native plants and watery backdrops.

cal, space. Pause there for just a few minutes, and you might see a bird take a quick, cooling bath in one of the pools. There are overarching specimen oaks draped with Spanish moss and low pools with water that moves ever so slowly. Jungles used only native plants, an array including swamp and water lilies, grasses and rushes. The pools are free form with infinity edges that let the water spill over and circulate. Benches are boomerang-shaped in direct homage to the late, legendary Morris Lapidus, who turned Lincoln Road into a mall a half-century ago.

In another homage to Lapidus and another legend, the late landscape artist Roberto Burle Marx of Brazil, the pavers are patterned black and white stripes made of small, sparkly Pedra Portuguesa stones. An enigmatic public art piece — another ode to Lapidus and the era of the kidney-shaped pool — by Dan Graham completes the composition.

"Water is always central to my gardens," Jungles said. "And, of course, Morris Lapidus had fun with it, but I also wanted to do a garden that really talked about what's best here."

This block, flanked on the south side by the large-scale home of the Lincoln Cinema building and the 1111 Lincoln Road complex posed challenges of scale and relationships — and tree placement to maximize sun in the winter and shade in the summer. In all of his work, Jungles says, he concentrates on creating habitats, "bringing back what was once there in terms of indigenous wildlife."

ONLY ON PAPER

The second garden exists only on paper, but even at this preliminary point, it likewise shows the promise and potential of landscape to transport us. It has already had a bit of a saga: The first conceptual plans were done by Gehry and Jungles, but, ultimately, the con-

tract went to widely regarded West 8, which has just two other major projects in North America — the Toronto waterfront and New York's Governors Island.

Geuze began with the basic thinking of his predecessors, namely that the pattern of the park would reflect the dramatic interior forms of Gehry's building, thus a design that offers "a sense of mosaics."

Geuze also started with hand sketches, with "intuition about the shape and scaling of things," then created scale models and computer renderings. He was driven, he said, by "a big desire for a green park, not a square" and thus sought to create a subtly undulating topography punctuated by paved paths. The paths will be shaded by bougainvillea wrapping its thorny way around metal pergolas, and veitchia palms (among other trees) will provide shade. The veitchias were chosen because they have thin trunks (the better to see the

building beyond) and broad-enough frond canopies. The plantings are intended to provide "both shade and botanic pleasure," Geuze said. "It's a park at a garden scale."

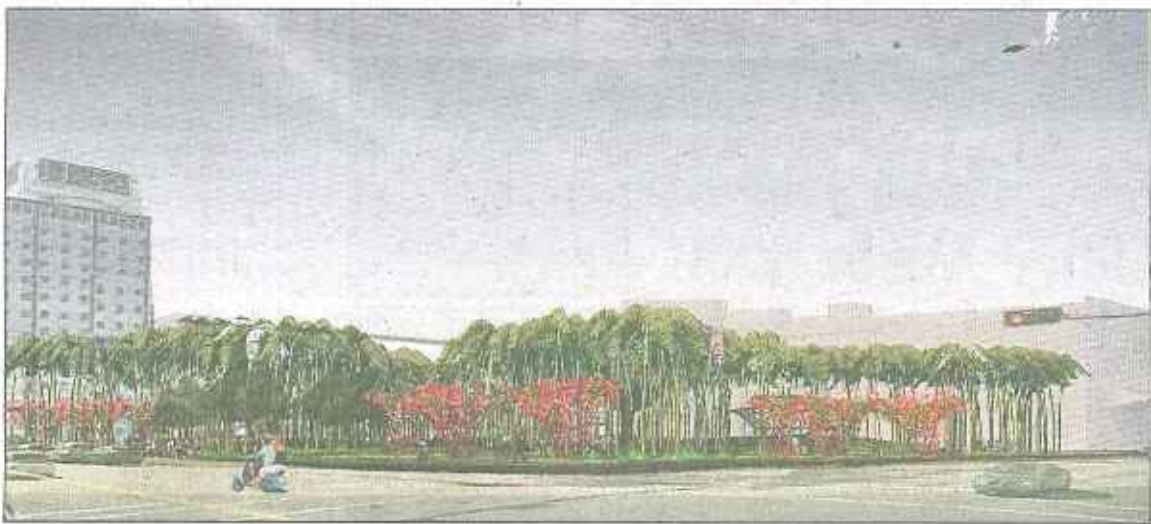
That these public landscapes are not-quite-symmetrical bookends to Lincoln Road is fitting. More than 5 million pedestrians traverse the mall in a given year (an amazing statistic, really), and it seems fitting to show our best face to the most people and, further, set the bar high. Already, there are other potentially great landscaped spaces in the works.

OTHERS IN WORKS

The architect Laurinda Spear, a partner in Arquitectonica, has become a licensed landscape architect, founding ArquitectonicaGeo, which was selected to do the landscape for the new Miami Art Museum and the Miami Museum of Science. And just this past week, the New York firm Field Operations, which did the astounding landscape for that city's High Line reclamation project, was selected to design the remaining plaza space in Museum Park. And one should not forget Hargreaves Associates' South Pointe Park done with Miami architect William Lane. Nor should we fail to celebrate the great historic landscapes of William Lyman Phillips, who gave us Greynolds Park, Matheson Hammock and Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, among many others.

It is in the landscape that we can best express our shared visions — our link to the past, to our figurative and literal roots and our hopes and dreams for the future. And yet the landscaped world is really much about the moment, the here, the now.

Think of it: a building can be made of materials that are far from indigenous, and it will stand and endure, no matter what it tells us about itself. But a garden has to grow. And to grow, it must fit the climate, the soil, the terrain, the geography; it must be somehow sustainable. It must be of its place and time. And, best of all, once it's there, it's ours.



PALMS AND PATHS: Renderings for the front yard to Frank Gehry's New World Symphony Campus are by Adriaan Geuze of the firm West 8.