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# Between Research and Design: The Evolution of the *Journal of Landscape Architecture*

*Entre recherche et conception : l'évolution de Journal of Landscape Architecture (JoLA).*

Kamni Gill and Bianca Maria Rinaldi

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*The authors would like to thank both the anonymous referees and the CRAUP's editors for their valuable comments. Both authors contributed equally to the paper and are listed alphabetically. This article is dedicated to the memory of Karsten Jørgensen, a founding editor of JoLA.*

## Background and Introduction

- <sup>1</sup> The *Journal of Landscape Architecture* (JoLA) is the peer-reviewed academic journal of the European Council of Landscape Architecture Schools (ECLAS). The aim of JoLA is to provide a platform for outstanding landscape architectural scholarship and research innovation, linking theory to practice. This ambition is cultivated through an editorial strategy rooted in both academic and professional discourse in landscape architecture and related fields, as well as a unique emphasis on the graphic design of its content.<sup>1</sup> JoLA has a European base, but is internationally-oriented both in terms of submissions and readership. Indeed, even as JoLA seeks to define the particular theories and practices that constitute landscape architecture, it also endeavours to cultivate the field's diversity, recognizing landscape architecture as a shifting terrain that overlaps with other spatial design fields, such as architecture and urban planning. At the same time, the journal acknowledges both traditional and new disciplinary convergences with research in the fine arts and the natural and social sciences, encouraging the examination of how allied fields might enhance research and design approaches in landscape architecture.

- <sup>2</sup> JoLA gives space to the reflective practitioner and to design research. While publishing articles following established research conventions and written modes of communication, JoLA also encourages and publishes unconventional and emerging forms of research enquiry. These include those employing practice-based methodologies, having their origins in visual and artistic practices and media, and espousing new methods and rigour for the developing field of landscape architectural criticism. In order to accommodate and cultivate these modes of research, the journal is structured in four primary sections: ‘Articles’, ‘Reviews’, ‘Under the Sky’ – dedicated to the scholarly review of built works as well as to promoting the thoughtful review of canonical projects – and ‘Thinking Eye’ – which explicitly valorises creative imagination and representation as forms of thinking equivalent to scientific endeavours.
- <sup>3</sup> JoLA produces three issues a year, with the exception of the period from 2006 to 2012, in which two issues were published per year. It is published in full colour and in both print and digital editions. It is available through subscription with an ECLAS membership and through Routledge Taylor & Francis. Currently over 2 500 academic institutions have access to JoLA, its download rate having steadily increased from approximately 6000 articles in 2012 to over 40000 article downloads in 2020. The journal is listed in the Web of Science and Thomson Reuters Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. The first JoLA cover and a more recent one.



Cover Designs: Oliver Kleinschmidt

- <sup>4</sup> In this article, we recount the landscape architecture publishing milieu that gave rise to the foundational principles of the journal. We examine the ongoing evolution of its editorial programme and how it reflects and occasionally prefigures broader disciplinary developments in design practice and academic research, through two thematic threads: the fluid relationship between academic research and design, and visual argumentation. Finally, we identify the editorial tensions central to JoLA as it seeks to explore new intellectual and physical territories, to encapsulate research methodologies specific to landscape architecture, to shape, change and expose

landscape architectural thinking,<sup>2</sup> and to catalyse areas of concern for academics and professionals.

## The landscape architecture publishing context and the founding of JoLA

- 5 JoLA was first published in 2006, after a 6-year long process. As recalled by Karsten Jørgensen, one of the founding editors of JoLA, the journal was the result of two simultaneous and favourable circumstances.<sup>3</sup> The first, Jørgensen explains, was related to the ambition of ECLAS to widen its scope and evolve from an agency that organized annual conferences into the preferred platform for fostering dialogue, exchange, and forms of cooperation among schools of landscape architecture in Europe. The new desired role of ECLAS as a base for the European academic community involved in landscape architecture teachings and research was formalized in 2000. The idea of founding an academic journal that could serve the new purposes of ECLAS emerged from this context (Fig. 2).

Figure 2. Editorial team meeting, Hannover, 2009



Left to Right: Catherine Dee, Bernadette Blanchon, Karsten Jørgensen, Martin Prominski, Malene Hauxner.

Photo: Oliver Kleinschmidt

- 6 Simultaneously, there was a recognition for the need for “a specific publishing platform for landscape architecture studies and research”<sup>4</sup> and for expanding the publishing milieu in landscape architecture, which, at that time was primarily characterized by a density of regionally-based professional journals and a limited number of scholarly, peer-reviewed journals specifically focused on landscape architecture.<sup>5</sup> There was also

- an interest in consolidating landscape architecture as a design discipline and in legitimizing research in landscape architecture based on design approaches.
- 7 In the early 2000s, landscape design culture in Europe was reflected in a variety of national editorial efforts. Such publications included, but were not limited to, journals and magazines promoted by regional professional associations and characterized by high print runs that ensured widespread circulation, even outside the professional community. Some examples include: *Garten+Landschaft* established in 1948 as the monthly journal of the German Landscape Architecture Association (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Gartenkunst und Landschaftspflege e.V.*, DGGL); the bilingual journal of the Swiss Federation of Landscape Architects *Anthos: Zeitschrift für Landschaftsarchitektur/Une revue pour le paysage*, published since 1962 in German and French; *Landskap*, a professional magazine published since the late 1960s that crossed national boundaries to reflect the cultural *koinè* of the Nordic countries and was “jointly produced by Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland”;<sup>6</sup> *Landskab*, published since 1981 eight times a year by the Danish Landscape Architecture Association; and the Dutch magazine *Blauwe Kamer*, published since 1999, which included landscape architecture, urban design and architecture projects. Characterized by long histories and an established tradition, such magazines played an influential role in the development of landscape architecture and landscape culture at a local level, becoming significant resources for research on the regional historical development of the profession. However, the publication languages often precluded a wider circulation outside of national boundaries.
- 8 While professional magazines often had a distinctive regional focus, some journals aimed to reflect a broader European perspective. An example is *Architettura del paesaggio*, established in 1988 as the official journal of the Italian Association of Landscape Architects (*Associazione Italiana di Architettura del Paesaggio*, AIAPP). While its current editorial strategy focuses mostly on the promotion of landscape and garden design culture in Italy, the journal’s initial approach was directed towards a review of Italian, European and global projects for an Italian-speaking readership.
- 9 Current issues related to landscape architecture practice were covered by the influential German-based *Topos*, which first appeared in 1992 as *Topos – European Landscape Magazine*. Published in both German and English, until issue 51 when it appeared only in English to appeal to a broader public, *Topos* aimed at presenting relevant projects and topics in landscape architecture from around the world. In 2017, the magazine changed its identity, removing ‘landscape’ from its title and shifting to a broader focus on urbanism and planning, characterized by its new editor as “open space culture”.<sup>7</sup> A global review of relevant projects, designers, and design approaches was also offered by the Dutch-based *scape – The international magazine for landscape architecture and urbanism*, first published in 2006. Produced in full colour and characterized by a journalistic tone and by the absence of a blind peer-review system, such magazines and journals tended to focus on individual, recent design projects, often described by short texts and illustrated through an extensive visual narrative. Such a focus does not diminish their importance, however, as demonstrated by *Landscape Architecture Magazine* (LAM), the publication of the American Society of Landscape Architects, which is a significant scholarly resource because its contents mirror theoretical and design practices developed over its 100-year history.
- 10 *JoLA* positioned itself within a tradition of professional landscape architecture journals and magazines focusing on advancements in design practice accompanied by

compelling images. At the same time, it coupled the format of professional publications with an academic tradition rooted in the peer-reviewed publication of research in landscape architecture history, theory and criticism as well as design practices, methods and pedagogies that encompassed broad themes in landscape architecture. There were significant academic journals committed to landscape, published both in Europe and North America, at the time of JoLA's foundation. Journals privileging garden and landscape architectural history were well represented. These included the long-established *Garden History*, for example, published by the British Garden Trust from 1972; the German *Die Gartenkunst*, first published in 1989; the prestigious *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes*, which was established in 1998 as an evolution of *The Journal of Garden History*, first appearing in 1990; and the journal of the Swiss Society of Garden Art, *Topiaria Helvetica*, published since 2010. However, JoLA had a broader ambition "to address the heterogeneity of landscape architecture, to participate in the making of new intellectual ground by actively exploring the relationships across disciplines."<sup>8</sup> This emphasis on the diversity of landscape architecture and the interest in a breadth of research methods aimed to distinguish JoLA from those academic journals in the humanities with a strong focus on history.

- <sup>11</sup> At the same time, the design focus of JoLA and its interest in developments in professional practice was formulated to distinguish it from other academic journals that address landscape from multi-disciplinary perspectives and valorise scientific approaches. Examples include: *Landscape and Urban Planning*, first established in 1972 as *Landscape Planning*, "aimed at advancing conceptual, scientific, and applied understandings of landscape in order to promote sustainable solutions for landscape change,"<sup>9</sup> and *Landscape Research*, founded in the 1970s, intended 'landscape' "as an integrative concept from the very beginning of the journal and recognised as the subject matter of many disciplines and professions."<sup>10</sup> In particular, *Landscape Research* aims to "foster multidisciplinary discourse by disseminating the results of 'research studies' on landscape"<sup>11</sup> and still "covers a range of disciplines, including environmental conservation, geography (human and physical), landscape architecture, archaeology, history, anthropology, urban studies, planning, design, herniate studies, ecology, countryside management, cultural studies and forestry."<sup>12</sup> Among this wide variety of disciplinary contributions that *Landscape Research* includes, "landscape architecture represents a very small part of journal content."<sup>13</sup>
- <sup>12</sup> Extant academic journals focused on landscape architecture thus simultaneously appeared too narrow and too broad to serve as a publishing platform for the ECLAS community. In contrast, the North-American *Landscape Journal*, founded in 1982 and published by the University of Wisconsin Press, had a sharper disciplinary focus. As the official journal of the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA), *Landscape Journal* is specifically committed to publishing research in landscape architecture, but recognizes that "the mission of landscape architecture is supported by research and theory in many fields,"<sup>14</sup> welcoming articles from allied disciplines. Both *Landscape Journal* and JoLA were founded as the official organs of associations representing the community of educators and researchers in landscape architecture. As such, "their content and editorial approach reflects this role"<sup>15</sup> in providing a substantive, landscape architecture-specific route to academic publishing that addressed the breadth of the discipline. One of the principal aims of JoLA is to provide a publishing platform that reflects the diversity of approaches to landscape architectural studies, research, and design practices from within its European base and internationally. Its

founding gave academics in landscape architecture a new, geographic and discipline-specific peer-reviewed option for publication, strengthening the profile of landscape architecture as a field capable of theory development and worthy of research.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, it recognizes the importance of contributions from other fields for the development of the discipline.

- <sup>13</sup> Though *JoLA* was established as the European counterpart of *Landscape Journal*, its format reflects a stronger interest in the communication and dissemination of design research in landscape architecture. Its graphic design was specifically developed to appeal to both academics and practitioners and “to avoid the limitations of conventional academic publishing in realizing the journal’s distinctive interest”<sup>17</sup> in the relationship between the practice of landscape architecture and theory building. A series of journals associated with prominent design schools equally provide compelling forums for scholars in landscape architecture, demonstrating a similar attention to visual presentation. *Places*, founded by Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the University of California, Berkeley in 1983 and dedicated to all the disciplines that shape the built environment, is now published online and in full colour. Published since 1998 and endowed with an abundant and colourful iconography, *Les Carnets du paysage*, supported by ENSP Versailles, is the main French language magazine devoted to innovation in landscape. Like other landscape journals, it is resolutely multidisciplinary: design knowledge and practices work alongside contributions from humanities, literature, and the arts, providing a cross-cutting critical view of the culture of contemporary landscape in terms of projects and practices, experiences, and theoretical reflections. Such journals allied to design schools are instrumental in defining the questions and themes arising out of particular pedagogical traditions. While they have a rigorous intellectual agenda and review process, they are often outside of the conventional scholarly journal and double-blind peer reviewed system of academic journals.
- <sup>14</sup> *JoLA*, however, provides an academic peer-reviewed venue for creative expression and design in landscape architecture. Indeed, commenting on then 6-year-old *JoLA*, the editors of *Landscape Journal* acknowledged that this specific focus on graphic design and communication had the potential to broaden both readership and contributions most notably from younger academics who were interested in design and alternative modes of research.<sup>18</sup> *JoLA* is currently one of only a handful of scholarly journals published by Routledge, Taylor & Francis that employs its own graphic designer and is published in full colour. (Fig. 3 and 4)

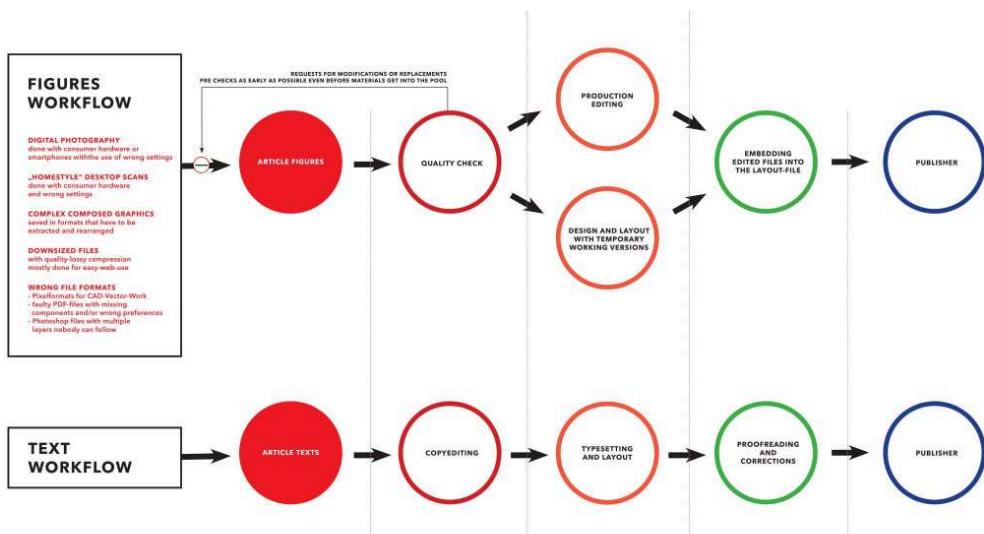
**Figure 3. JoLA production workflow**

Illustration: Oliver Kleinschmidt

**Figure 4. Collecting image proofs**

Image: Oliver Kleinschmidt

15 JoLA thus emerged to fill a perceived need in the landscape publishing milieu for a European-based, academic, peer-reviewed journal that addressed both the specificity and the breadth of landscape architecture. JoLA was notable in its distinctive approach “towards expanding the scope of research in landscape architecture”<sup>19</sup> by blurring the boundaries between academia and practice. It aimed to foster critical discourse in the material culture and profession of landscape architecture through a commitment to publishing innovative and exploratory work in each of its four key sections, and through an emphasis on visual materials that were critical and interpretive rather than illustrative. JoLA embraced an experimental, instigating role in landscape architecture. Through its criticism and visual methods sections, it explicitly explored landscape architecture research as an expanded field. The journal’s uniqueness lay in its ambition

“to expose the hybridity that has always characterized landscape architecture. [...] to undo disciplinary and geographic boundaries between landscape architects, artists, ecologists, urban planners, environmentalists, scientists, historians, architects, indeed all.”<sup>20</sup> At the same time, the journal also reflects the core concerns of the discipline; its straightforward title encapsulating a certain gravity and ambition: this is landscape architecture.<sup>21</sup>

- <sup>16</sup> The hybrid programme of the journal would prove to offer a compelling vision of landscape architecture both to members of the European Council of Landscape Architecture Schools and to the larger scholarly community. In a consultation launched by ECLAS in 2020, *JoLA* emerged as one of the most significant activities of ECLAS and as one of the most valued aspects of ECLAS membership. Its contents are considered highly relevant by ECLAS member schools.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the international professional community of landscape architects recognized the value of *JoLA*’s carefully thought-out format and editorial programme. In 2009, *JoLA* was presented with an Honor Award in Communication by the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA). The journal was recognized by the awards jury as an “A must-read for today’s practitioner... A real contribution to the profession.”<sup>23</sup>

## The fluid relations between research and design

We are for gentle and abrasive scholarly reflection, for scientific, cultural, applied, or “grey/blue sky!”<sup>24</sup>

- <sup>17</sup> The editorial in the first issue of *JoLA* set forth an ambitious agenda for the new journal; aimed at dismantling the boundaries between theory and practice, visual and textual modes of research, as well as culture and nature. At the time of writing, 15 volumes of *JoLA* have been published, amounting to 166 research articles, 45 project critiques, 46 visual essays; thus, a critical mass is building, “reflecting the diversity of the discipline.”<sup>25</sup> Various forums for examining how the founding aims and principles of the journal have been interpreted by contributing authors were organized, including an anniversary issue (n° 2, 2016), and in conferences taking place in Europe and North America. Here, we examine how the fluid relation between research and design, deemed essential to the *Journal*, has been articulated in the research article section and in the ‘Under the Sky’ section, dedicated to scholarly reviews of built projects.
- <sup>18</sup> The ‘Articles’ section is perhaps the most traditional part of the journal in terms of the methodologies used by contributors to explore the relationships between research and design. It receives the highest number of submissions and constitutes the core of the journal, with between three and five illustrated articles being published in each issue. Martin Prominski, a founding editor of *JoLA*, surveyed the articles published between 2006 and 2016, categorising them according to a trinity of design research types: *research about design*; *research for design*; and *research through design*.<sup>26</sup> Prominski expected to receive submissions focusing on *research about design* that considers design from a distance, from a historical or theoretical lens. Such articles deployed well-established research methods which ensured a consistent flow of articles. Most notable in this category and one of the most frequently cited papers of the journal is Elizabeth Meyer’s essay “Sustaining beauty. The performance of appearance”,<sup>27</sup> which was subsequently revisited in a 2015 essay appearing in M. Elen Deming’s book *Values in Landscape Architecture and Environmental Design: Finding Center in Theory and Practice*.<sup>28</sup> It

- also informed a conference session organized by *JoLA* editors at the 2017 ECLAS Conference in Greenwich, UK, and a themed issue of the journal.
- 19 Prominski was equally confident that *research for design* would garner submissions with articles examining, for example, technical and social science knowledge that might inform design. Articles that fall into this category are, for instance, those exploring the development of infrastructural guidelines for climate adaptation or determining the aesthetic performance of stormwater.
- 20 The capacity of *JoLA* to garner articles in the final category, *research through design*, was less clear. Nevertheless, through his survey, Prominski crafted a classification of how *JoLA* articles have contributed to discourse in design research through academic authors who develop their own design projects to test spatial and conceptual possibilities, as well as through practitioners who reflect on their professional work to develop research interests, noting in particular those in PhD-by-practice programmes.
- 21 Prominski's final category of research through design that was published in *JoLA* was student work, explored through studios and workshops. Kelly Shannon, who edited *JoLA* from 2010 to 2015, also makes an eloquent argument about the alliance between teaching and design research and its increasing importance in a digital, consumerist world.<sup>29</sup> Defining and exploring research questions in a well-conceived, sustained design studio, (through repetition, revision and deployment) enables substantive explorations of innovation through the sharing of research and design practices. For Shannon, design research confronts a specific geography and the "messiness and contested realities of the everyday."<sup>30</sup> Over time, teaching and the work of studios offer a sustained exploratory mechanism for understanding the complexity of landscape and responding to fundamental questions. *JoLA* routinely publishes design research originating in the studio or professional practice with a clear exegesis and contextualization of the formulation of design studio methods, processes, and results. *JoLA* thus offers a unique milieu for the synthesis of teaching, research and practice in landscape architecture.
- 22 Not all design is research, nor is all studio work. Publication of design work as a legitimate form of knowledge production in a journal requires contextualization in theory and practice, along with a conclusion about how the specific knowledge gained in a particular project might be judiciously transferred to other scenarios. Like other modes of research, articles employing a design method require originality and the advancement of knowledge, and must demonstrate a critical contextualization and broader implications. *JoLA*'s dedication to design research was recognized by the academic community: in his book *Research in Landscape Architecture: Methods and Methodology* (2016), Adri Van Der Brink explores the research dimension of design and noted that *JoLA* is one of the few forums to publish landscape architecture design research. The role *JoLA* has played in developing design research, also by means of visual methods, and in establishing a mode of reading, writing and interpreting built projects has equally been validated in seminal texts on landscape architecture methodologies, such as M. Elen Deming and Simon Swaffield's *Landscape Architecture Research: Inquiry, Strategy, Design* (2010).<sup>31</sup> Swaffield and Deming noted that *JoLA*'s particular contribution to theorizing landscape architecture knowledge is in publishing research that incorporates creative production, offering a way of formalizing such knowledge through peer-reviewed publication.

<sup>23</sup> More recently, Jackie Bowring's *Landscape Architecture Criticism* (2020)<sup>32</sup> elaborates on the contribution *JoLA* makes in articulating the relationship between practice and research in 'Under the Sky'. The unpacking of built projects as a mode of scholarly research forces a consideration of the interdependencies between practice and theory, offering a common ground to professionals and academics. Bernadette Blanchon, the founding editor of the section, notes that "design activity produces knowledge as much as academic studies do."<sup>33</sup> At the time of its founding, *JoLA* was one of the few academic journals in landscape architecture to explicitly solicit scholarly critiques, thus giving voice to a widespread (and ongoing) recognition for the need to develop an internal culture of critique and to theorize landscape architecture within wider political and intellectual discourse.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>24</sup> The basic format of each article remains consistent, with the same information provided for each case study: project name, location, client, designers, construction period, costs and area. Blanchon is specific in her approach to landscape architecture criticism, arguing that any designed open space, as successful as it appears, cannot be acknowledged or used as a source of inspiration without understanding the relationship between a formal resolution and its reasons, context, commissions, and ideas.<sup>35</sup> Guidance to authors demands actual visits and assumes that projects have evolved over time, upholding a certain longevity that enables richer readings of the project.

<sup>25</sup> Blanchon and current 'Under the Sky' editor Sonia Keravel, both of ENSP Versailles, discussed the motivations behind 'Under the Sky' and conducted an inventory of the section in a paper presented at the 2011 ECLAS conference on *Ethics/Aesthetics*. Blanchon recounts a tradition of French landscape architecture criticism, particularly noting the importance of the journal *Le Visiteur*, created in 1995 by Sebastian Marot, which is based on the principle of site visits to "accomplished productions" rather than the recently constructed projects that are the purview of professional magazines. Both of these dimensions of critique – an emphasis on the site visit and the role of time – are seen as essential in encouraging a landscape architecture-specific approach to criticism. Noel van Dooren, who edited the section from 2014-2016, also identifies time as being of primary importance to the reading and interpretation of built projects, observing that,

Many landscape architecture projects take years to be fully realised, and very often they are not recognised as pieces of art, so that changes are made without consulting the design. Building an argument that starts with the idea of the design can help to unravel this. In such cases, it is not done because reality is too banal, but to explain the tension between its actual state and its idea. These two difficulties meet each other in the question of what preceded the design, in terms of an assignment, the original landscape, or the history of a design process.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>26</sup> 'Under the Sky' begins to encapsulate necessary dimensions of critique along with a range of methods. There is the visit that enables a description of the site, *time* which enables a consideration for the original commission, along with construction and the afterlife of the project, but there is also *graphical discourse*. Both Blanchon and van Dooren valorise the use of analytical drawings and photographs as tools of critique, though perhaps this aspect of landscape architecture and of scholarly criticism remains underdeveloped. In landscape research, there exist episodes where drawings completed as part of surveying and site observation are followed by analytical drawings, uncovering the graphical territory of a project and giving critical interpretations

richness and weight, but these are not widely used modes of research. In ‘Under the Sky’, landscape researchers and designers are encouraged to examine, decipher and appreciate the complex structures and processes that constitute a given landscape or site through reading, writing, drawing, and eventually through design and site transformation.<sup>37</sup>

- <sup>27</sup> In her essay published on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *JoLA*,<sup>38</sup> Blanchon identified and defined four methods of landscape architecture critique: “descriptive”, which is rooted primarily in observed experience; conceptual, which is primarily linked to a political, intellectual context; “monographical”, in which a project critique leads to the derivation of general principles; and “comparative”, which examines equivalent projects. In her recently published volume on criticism, Bowring draws upon this classification, situating it in the context of the works of other theorists, such as Wayne Attoe and Alexandra Lange.<sup>39</sup> It is worth noting that such categorizations are fluid, and even the articles that Blanchon uses to unpack this range of methods hybridize them. Ultimately, the ‘Under the Sky’ section encourages an interpretive approach to criticism, rooted in time and site experience and employing both written discourse and visual argumentation in a way that reveals new ways of situating constructed works. The subject of ‘Under the Sky’ has broadened from when Deming and Swaffield first noted that the focus of the critiques was primarily on urban infrastructure, five years after the journal’s initial publication.<sup>40</sup> Projects discussed in the section have ranged from large parks, gardens and plazas that are traditionally in the purview of landscape architecture, including seminal works such as Downsview Park or Parc de la Villette, to examinations of larger scale agricultural or cultural landscapes. The utility of such an approach is widely recognized. In *Landscape Architecture Research: Inquiry, Strategy, Design* (2010), Deming and Swaffield note that the section resulted in a series of project case studies that follow a broadly similar format and emphasize the comparative value of such a collection. The particular approach to critique propagated by *JoLA* has been examined in a number of contexts and venues, beginning in 2012 with a conference on *Writing Landscape: Criticism Now*,<sup>41</sup> held at Syracuse University School of Architecture, New York, and at the 2011 ECLAS conference on *Ethics/Aesthetics*, held at the University of Sheffield. It was further reflected upon in *JoLA*’s own 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue (n° 2, 2016), and in the themed issue of *JoLA* on landscape architecture criticism (n° 3, 2018). Most recently, the above-mentioned book *Landscape Architecture Criticism* (2020) by Jackie Bowring traces the history of landscape architecture criticism, situating the work of *JoLA* within a much larger textual production of critical assessments of landscape architecture that draws on resources from within the discipline as well as from related fields. In her summation of the history of criticism, Bowring considers the analysis by architectural critic Hélène Jannière, who observed that connections to literary theory and analogies to art criticism became strained when it was recognized that architecture could not be boiled down to the visual arts, given the multiple frameworks (aesthetic, technical, social, economic) it falls within. Bowring extends Jannière’s observation to landscape architecture, noting that for the discipline “the connections become even more tenuous, given the embeddedness within contexts that are not social and economic, but also ecological and hydrological,”<sup>42</sup> highlighting that the particularity of landscape architecture demands its own modes and methods of criticism. Bowring’s observations underscore the role of *JoLA* as a necessary and preferred platform for scholarly criticism in landscape architecture, one that enables a high degree of rigour and methodological specificity. A definition of what constitutes

landscape architecture criticism arises from a significant mass of published work, both within *JoLA* and beyond. However, the explicit framing and solicitation of landscape architecture critiques in *JoLA* has anticipated and still catalyses new forms of criticism, forming the backbone of robust disciplinary debates on what could constitute originality and rigour in landscape architecture criticism. ‘Under the Sky’ emerged in 2006 as a response to a lack of discipline specific critique. Fifteen years later, the section coalesces a burgeoning interest in criticism and is a testimony to the capacity of interpretive readings of built work to invigorate design thinking and research.

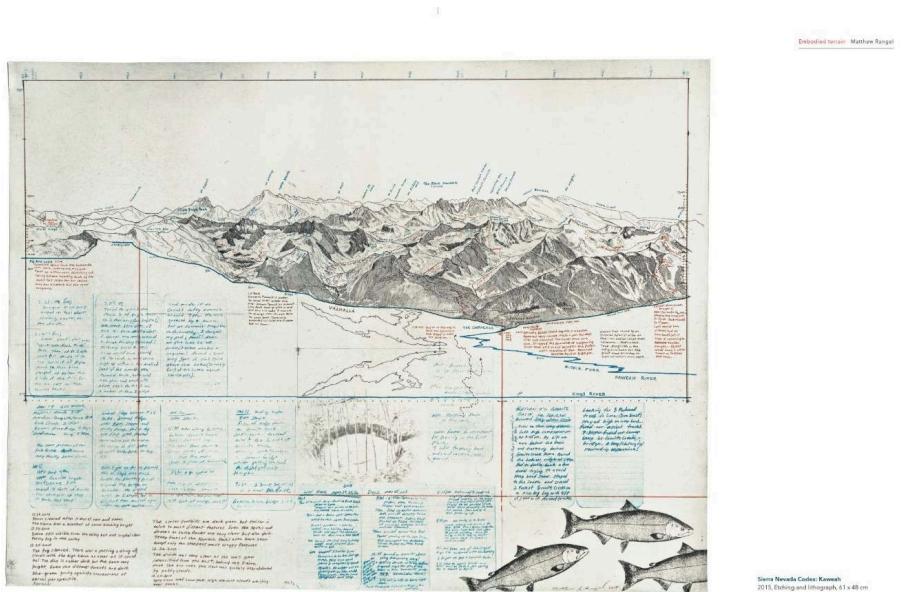
## Visual Discourse of Landscape Architecture

- 28 Creative work and design research in *JoLA* is accompanied by explicit, written texts found within the more traditional academic papers in the ‘Research articles’ section, or through project critique in ‘Under the Sky’. Art-based research can also consist entirely of creative practice, with no explicit critical exegesis deemed necessary: emphasis is placed on creative exploration and innovation in the given artistic practice as well as in the tacit knowledge embodied through acts of making. Visual methodologies and creative practice offer alternatives for both the conduct and the communication of landscape architecture research. Throughout *JoLA*, it is recognized that art and design-based methods present an alternative way of thinking through landscape that offers interpretive knowledge of how materials, forms, processes, and temporality embody spatial ideas through the making of drawings and artefacts.<sup>43</sup>
- 29 Since the beginning, ‘Thinking Eye,’ the visual methodologies section of *JoLA*, offered a specific milieu for the scholarly review of visual works and how their production embodies new knowledge or has implications for the theory and practice of landscape architecture. Submission guidelines for the section eschew the treatment of drawing and making as simply technique. Instead, contributors are urged to be “critical, rather than merely illustrative” and to demonstrate new visual means for practice or new making methods that might contribute to fresh thinking. Catherine Dee, the founding editor of ‘Thinking Eye’, points out that one of the section’s crucial roles has been to publish studies about how visual media changes the perception of actual landscapes, and about topics that enable the imagined to gain credence in the making of future landscapes.<sup>44</sup>
- 30 At the same time, visual methods in landscape architecture tend towards sameness; expressing a disciplinary instrumentality as well as conventions in drawing production and design research. However, theorists like James Corner argue: “Any recovery of landscape in contemporary culture is ultimately dependent on the development of new images and techniques of conceptualization.”<sup>45</sup> The elucidation of new relationships between natural phenomena and people through exploration, engagement, and invention with art-based methodologies can reframe broader social and ethical concerns about a particular place or environment. Dee refers to this capacity of aesthetic exploration to redefine ethics, and notes that cultural production is not limited to subjective, embodied knowledge that has no bearing on social or ecological questions. Rather, aesthetic production can become the means of instigating dialogue about the social and political dimensions of landscape architecture.<sup>46</sup> One way of acknowledging that the landscape itself is an eloquent, sensorial medium is through

landscape research inquiry rooted in the creative arts practice, allowing for an interrogation, analysis, and reconfiguration of broader cultural values.

- <sup>31</sup> Other design journals also include visual essays, recognizing that text is insufficient in communicating certain ideas. For example, the *Journal of Architecture Education* includes a section on design as scholarship, where manuscripts are image-based. *Landscape Research* has a photo essay category, which allows for reduced text (4000 words as opposed to 7000 for other articles) and up to 20 images. Over the past 15 years, 'Thinking Eye' has resulted in an accumulation of visual essays; a significant oeuvre that draws from artists, landscape architects, and designers. Most frequently, contributions were presented in a long format of 4-5 spreads and a maximum of 20 images. Others were solicited, but still peer-reviewed and then curated as 'Selected shorts', a format which encourages brief, cogent visual explorations of a single topic in landscape architecture by different authors.<sup>47</sup> 'Thinking Eye' solicits those visual works that are instrumental in shaping landscape architectural imagination from emerging designers, as well as established landscape architects and from a range of academics from distinctive fields, including fine arts, ecology, construction, history and theory.<sup>48</sup>

Figure 5. Thinking Eye: Embodied terrain layout

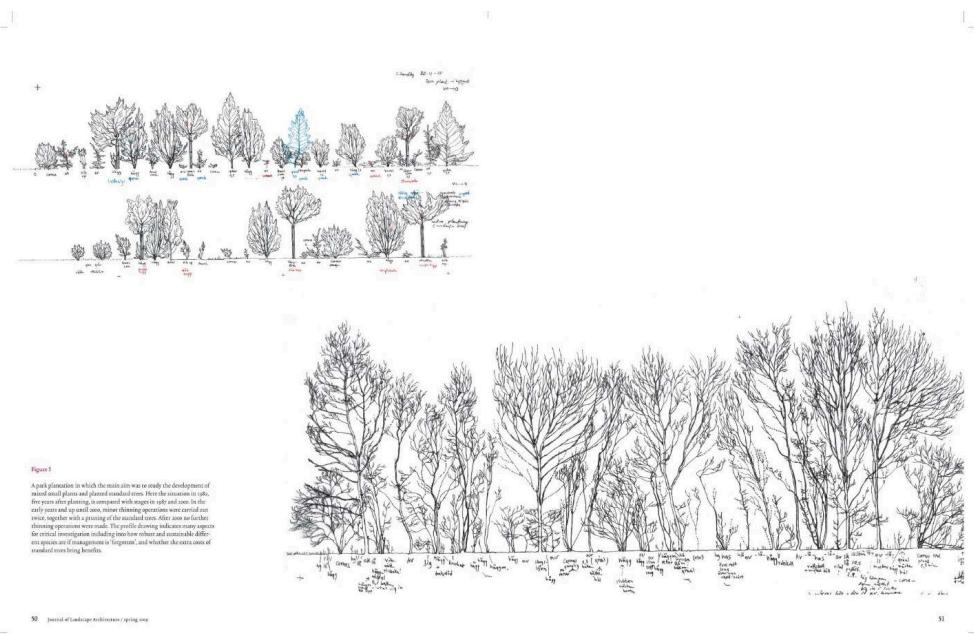


Layout design by Oliver Kleinschmidt  
Source: Matthew Rangel, "Embodied terrain", JoLA-Journal of Landscape Architecture, Vol. 15, n° 3, 2020, pp. 38-51.

- <sup>32</sup> While 'Thinking Eye' aims to solicit exemplars of rigorous creative methodologies, submissions that express a high degree of criticality in fine arts practices related to landscape architecture remain rare. Nevertheless, notable articles demonstrate the value of such an endeavour, including the mappings of Matthew Rangel (Fig. 5). His emphasis on precision, embodied experience of place, coupled with sustained observation and technical prowess make his mountain mappings an evocative means of expressing culture and context in landscape architecture.<sup>49</sup> Roland Gustavson's careful decades-long forest transects project encapsulates the challenge of drawing time and dynamic processes.<sup>50</sup> (Fig. 6) Yet the section also has overlaps and hybridizations with

other sections of the journal. Analytical drawings published as a visual essay could fruitfully support a written project critique. The use of collages as a means of site exploration could be explored differently through a research article. What ‘Thinking Eye’ does, however, with its insistence on minimal text and the primacy of the image and its consistent inclusion in each volume of the journal, is validate modes of communicating landscape architectural ideas through scholarly publication that are not textual. It creates an understanding of images as themselves constituting an alternative discourse, distinct from what can be relayed through text. Visual materials are not subsidiary to text; they themselves constitute a distinctive and valuable form of knowledge. At the same time, the print and online formats of the *Journal* still remain a limited venue for those researchers using media such as film, video and audio, which are growing fields of landscape architecture visual research. While ‘Thinking Eye’ opens a dialogue that recognizes the value of knowledge gained through subjective, dynamic acts of making, the potential to expand the range of art-based methods published in the *Journal* remains.

**Figure 6. Thinking Eye: Forest transects layout**



Layout design by Oliver Kleinschmidt.

Roland Gustavsson, “The touch of the world: Dynamic vegetation studies and embodied knowledge”, *JoLA-Journal of Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 4, n° 1, 2009, pp. 42-55.

- 33 The value placed on making and visual argumentation is extended in ‘Reviews’, which provides a platform for the evaluation of research outcomes that are published as traditional scholarship (texts) and through public exhibitions (creative works). The section recognizes reviews as a specific form of academic writing, whose methods are directly related to critique in terms of aim, contents, structure, and approaches. Both forms of writing are interpretive rather than descriptive and provide critical assessments based on detailed analysis and careful observation. Visual discourse and innovative practice thus constitute significant themes in *JoLA*, and are considered equivalent to conventional research and worthy of scholarly attention. Swaffield and Deming write, “the relationship of representation to landscape experience and the

creation of systematic knowledge is profoundly complex and central to the future of the theorizing in the discipline.”<sup>51</sup> Attentiveness to visual discourse and argumentation throughout *JoLA* provides a rigorous forum for the understanding of the outcomes and processes of creative works and how they generate new ways of knowing, understanding and making landscapes.

## Disciplinary convergences and divergences

- 34 *JoLA* arose out of European landscape architecture initiatives and an urgency to promote theoretical, material and pedagogical practice. Supported by the European Council of Landscape Architecture Schools, *JoLA* has emerged as an important locus for design research specific to landscape architecture also because of the coherence and consistency of its editorial line, which was carefully formulated in relation to the publishing milieu in landscape architecture at the time of its inception.
- 35 *JoLA* consolidated a European position towards landscape architecture. In its early years, the majority of contributors were European-based academics associated with landscape architecture schools. Its contents were influenced by a growing international profile. The Honor Award by ASLA in 2009 contributed to increasing the importance of the still rather young *JoLA* as a major scholarly publishing venue for landscape architecture scholarship in English. The attention *JoLA* gained in the US resulted in a significant increase in the number of contributions from North America, which currently far exceeds that of other geographies, even if the primary audience for the journal remains European. In the wake of its growing popularity, the journal aimed at raising its profile globally and took a crucial evolutive step: in 2012, *JoLA* changed its publishing house, moving from Callway, the publisher of *Topos*, to Routledge, Taylor & Francis. To expand its audience and consolidate its position, the number of issues published per year was increased from two to three, offering more opportunities for publications. Authors from a wider range of geographies now contribute to the journal, with rising numbers of contributions from Australia, South Africa and China. At the same time, given its original emphasis on European landscape architecture culture, some geographies are underrepresented. European contributions are primarily from Northern Europe, with considerably fewer contributions from Southern and Eastern Europe. *JoLA* continues to negotiate the challenges of appealing to an international audience and representing the particularities of its local European base.
- 36 At the same time, the atomization of the field of landscape architecture means that scholars can and do publish landscape architecture-based research in architecture, urban design, ecology and urban planning journals, among others. Even as the forums for publication of landscape architecture expand, the specificity of *JoLA*’s engagement with design means that there are fewer contributions to the journal from scholars working on landscape topics from allied fields. Attempts to expand *JoLA*’s interdisciplinary perspective include experimenting with themed issues. These allow for the inclusion of articles and commentary by authors from related fields, such as architecture, anthropology, environmental planning or engineering, ecology and social sciences, and demonstrate the relevance of other modes of research related to landscape architecture.
- 37 Such overlaps and convergences enrich the discipline. At the same time, however, themed issues affect the character and selectivity of the *Journal*. As *JoLA* aspires to

define those modes of research particular and necessary for landscape architecture, embracing diversity potentially diminishes the critical formulation of those methods, processes and products that are specific and valuable to landscape architecture. It is challenging to articulate the tensions and relationships across disciplines in a way that also recognizes the unique contribution that landscape architecture makes to the broader arena of landscape. Yet, *JoLA* has already played an important role in both defining the fundamentals of what landscape architecture research is and what it can become. It both reflects and prefigures disciplinary concerns through an experimental peer-reviewed academic journal. Publishing is a necessity for scholars and practitioners teaching in universities, and academics conducting research in landscape architecture can find a milieu of convergence in *JoLA*. The journal has proven to be a critical instrument in the formulation of landscape architectural knowledge and scholarship based on the relationship between theory and practice, as well as in developing a visual culture for landscape architecture. The challenge for *JoLA* has been, and continues to be, cultivating the differences between the local and the global, between research and practice, and between visual and textual, even as it maintains a focus on what constitutes the knowledge essential to the theory and practice of landscape architecture.

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## NOTES

1. This text is informed by the journal description on *JoLA*'s web site: "About", retrieved on 20 May 2021, [on line] [<http://jola-lab.eu/www/about.html>].
2. Martin Prominski, "Research and design in *JoLA*", *JoLA-Journal of Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 10, n° 2, 2016, pp. 26-29.
3. On the cultural context that led to the foundation of the journal, see Karsten Jørgensen, "What's in a name? The establishment of *JoLA*", *JoLA-Journal of Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 10, n° 2, 2016, pp. 8-13.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
5. Karsten Jørgensen offers a brief overview of the publishing context at the time of *JoLA*'s foundation, citing the established *Landscape Journal*, *Landscape Review*, *Landscape Research*, *Landscape and Urban Planning* and the brief experience of *Landscape 21*, a scholarly journal edited by the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Ljubljana. Karsten Jørgensen, "What's in a name? The establishment of *JoLA*", *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.
6. Thorbjörn Andersson, "Protecting, planning, and designing: Scandinavian landscape architecture between the 'bookends'", *JoLA-Journal of Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 9, n° 3, 2015, p. 94.
7. Bradford McKee, "The new topos", *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, retrieved on 27 October 2021, [on line] [<https://landscapearchitecturemagazine.org/2017/06/29/the-new-topos/>].
8. Martin Prominski, "Research and design in *JoLA*", *op. cit.*, p. 27.
9. "Aims & scope", *Landscape and Urban Planning*, retrieved on 27 October 2021, [on line] [<https://www.journals.elsevier.com/landscape-and-urban-planning>].
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- 11.** *Ibid.*, p. 390.
- 12.** Landscape Research Group, “*Landscape Research. Our Journal*”, retrieved on 15 May 2021, [on line] [<https://landscaperesearch.org/our-journal/>].
- 13.** Vera Vicenzotti, Anna Jorgensen, Mattias Qviström & Simon Swaffield, “Forty years of *Landscape Research*”, *op. cit.*, p. 399.
- 14.** “About Landscape Journal”, retrieved on 15 May 2021, [on line] [<http://lj.uwpress.org/site/misc/about.xhtml>].
- 15.** Vera Vicenzotti, Anna Jorgensen, Mattias Qviström & Simon Swaffield, “Forty years of *Landscape Research*”, *op. cit.*, p. 404.
- 16.** Barbara Birli, *From Professional Training to Academic Discipline The Role of International Cooperation in the Development of Landscape Architecture at Higher Education Institutions in Europe*, 2016, Unpublished Phd dissertation.
- 17.** Karsten Jørgensen, “What's in a name? The establishment of *JoLA*”, *op. cit.*, p. 13, note 6.
- 18.** “About Landscape Journal”, *op. cit.*
- 19.** Martin Prominski, “Research and design in *JoLA*”, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
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- 21.** Karsten Jørgensen, “What's in a name? The establishment of *JoLA*”, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.
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- 23.** 2009 Professional Awards Jury, “Award of Excellence”, *ASLA 2009 Professional Awards, Communication Category*, retrieved on 15 May 2021, [on line] [<https://www.asla.org/2009awards/021.html>].
- 24.** Bernadette Blanchon-Caillot, Catherine Dee, Malene Hauxner, Karsten Jørgensen, Martin Prominski, “Editorial”, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
- 25.** *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.
- 26.** The discussion that follows is based on Martin Prominski, “Research and design in *JoLA*”, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-29.
- 27.** Elizabeth K. Meyer, “Sustaining beauty. The performance of appearance”, *JoLA-Journal of Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 3, n° 1, 2008, pp. 6-23.
- 28.** Elizabeth Meyer, “Beyond 'Sustaining Beauty' Musings on a Manifesto”, in M. Elen Deming (ed.), *Values in Landscape Architecture and Environmental Design: Finding Center in Theory and Practice*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press 2015, pp. 30-54.
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- 31.** M. Elen Deming and Simon Swaffield, *Landscape Architecture Research: Inquiry, Strategy, Design*, Hoboken, NJ., Wiley, 2010.
- 32.** Jackie Bowring, *Landscape Architecture Criticism*, Abingdon/New York, Routledge, 2020.
- 33.** Bernadette Blanchon and Sonia Keravel, “Under the French Sky”, unpublished paper presented at the *ECLAS Conference, Ethics and Aesthetics*, University of Sheffield 2011.
- 34.** Richard Weller, “The critical landscape architectural project”, *JoLA-Journal of Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 13, n° 3, 2018, p. 20.
- 35.** Bernadette Blanchon, “Criticism: the potential of scholarly reading of constructed landscapes. Or, the difficult art of interpretation”, *JoLA-Journal of Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 10, n° 2, 2016, pp. 66-71.
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- 37.** Bernadette Blanchon and Sonia Keravel, “Under the French Sky”, *op. cit.*

- 38.** Bernadette Blanchon, "Criticism: the potential of scholarly reading of constructed landscapes. Or, the difficult art of interpretation", *op. cit.*, pp. 66-71.
- 39.** Jackie Bowring, *Landscape Architecture Criticism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25.
- 40.** M. Elen Deming and Simon Swaffield, *Landscape Architecture Research: Inquiry, Strategy, Design*, *op. cit.*
- 41.** For a review of this conference see, Nina Marie Andersen, "Writing Landscape: Criticism Now", *JoLA-Journal of Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 7, n° 2, 2012, p. 91.
- 42.** Jackie Bowring, *Landscape Architecture Criticism*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
- 43.** Parts of this exposition are drawn from a recent editorial in *JoLA*: Kamni Gill *et al.*, "Beyond mere illustration", *JoLA-Journal of Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 16, n° 1, 2021, pp. 4-5.
- 44.** Catherine Dee, "To Draw", *JoLA-Journal of Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 10, n° 2, 2016, p. 53.
- 45.** James Corner, "Eidetic Operations and New Landscapes", in James Corner (ed.), *Recovering Landscape Essays in Contemporary Landscape Architecture*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 1999, pp. 153-154.
- 46.** Catherine Dee, "To Draw", *JoLA-Journal of Landscape Architecture*, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
- 47.** See, for example, *JoLA-Journal of Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 11, n° 3, pp. 60-63.
- 48.** Kamni Gill (ed.), "The Critical Visual Landscape", *JoLA-Journal of Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 10, n° 3, 2015, pp. 38-51.
- 49.** Matthew Rangel, "Embodied terrain", *JoLA-Journal of Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 15, n° 3, 2020, pp. 38-51.
- 50.** Roland Gustavsson, "The touch of the world: Dynamic vegetation studies and embodied knowledge", *JoLA-Journal of Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 4, n° 1, 2009, pp. 42-55.
- 51.** M. Elen Deming and Simon Swaffield, *Landscape Architecture Research: Inquiry, Strategy, Design*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

## ABSTRACTS

This article explores the evolution of the *Journal of Landscape Architecture* (*JoLA*). We identify the ambitions that led to the journal's establishment and the ways in which a desire to bridge theory and practice led to a particular editorial programme rooted in research articles, design criticism, and visual methods specific to landscape architecture. Although *JoLA* is a peer-reviewed platform for landscape architecture, its considerations nevertheless overlap with related disciplines, revealing the existence of a recognition for an expanded field of landscape architecture. The journal acknowledges the diversity of the discipline; both as a matter of professional practice and academic research. This tension between defining the theories, practices, and methods that constitute a discipline, and the diversity that gives it richness and enables innovation, continues to inform the conception and development of the journal and presents particular challenges to its editorial aspirations.

Cet article explore l'évolution du *Journal of Landscape Architecture* (*JoLA*). Nous identifions les ambitions qui ont conduit à la création de la revue et les manières dont un désir de faire le pont entre la théorie et la pratique a conduit à un programme éditorial particulier ancré dans des articles de recherche, des critiques de conception et des méthodes visuelles spécifiques à l'architecture de paysage. Bien-que *JoLA* soit un lieu évalué pour publier sur l'architecture de paysage, ses considérations se chevauchent néanmoins avec des disciplines connexes et une

reconnaissance d'un domaine élargi pour l'architecture de paysage. La revue reconnaît la diversité de la discipline; tant au niveau de la pratique professionnelle que de la recherche académique. Cette tension entre la définition des théories, des pratiques et des méthodes qui constituent une discipline et la diversité qui en fait sa richesse et permet l'innovation continue d'éclairer la conception et le développement de la revue

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** Publication de la recherche en architecture du paysage, Recherche et conception, Pensée critique, Méthodes visuelles

**Keywords:** Publishing Landscape Architecture Scholarship, Research And Design, Critical Thinking, Visual Methods

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