

An isometric illustration of a landscape made of green and brown blocks. In the top right, there are stylized purple and white mountains. A large forest of green trees sits on a raised platform in the center. To the right, a suspension bridge crosses a gap. In the lower left, there are some tan-colored blocks. A small bridge with yellow supports crosses a stream-like gap. Another bridge with grey supports is further down. The background is a solid blue.

FEBRUARY 2017

SITELINES

Landscape Architecture in British Columbia

PRESS START
TO PLAY

CELEBRATING RISK-TAKING

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The purpose of Sitelines is to provide an open forum for the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to the profession of landscape architecture. Individual opinions expressed are those of the writers and not necessarily of those of the BCSLA.



By Robin Rosebrugh, B.Sc., CID, cSBA, LEED GA

— CELEBRATING — Risk-taking

“You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.”

— Richard Buckminster Fuller

This quote can be found twice in the June 2014 issue of Sitelines that discusses the past and future of the profession. And for good reason! The role of the landscape architect has evolved tremendously over the decades. It is no longer just about aesthetics or even environmental sustainability; landscape architects play a role in community cohesion, restoration and resilience, and personal well-being.

When BCSLA approached me about being the guest editor for Sitelines, I was hesitant. How could I contribute to this profession that I have come to admire so much? This profession that, selflessly, has one of the largest impacts on people's every day and our futures, yet goes unnoticed by many.

As Symmetry Lighting's Marketing + Communications Manager, it would be easy for me to say let's create an issue all about lighting public spaces for play, wayfinding, safety, etc. But who likes 'easy'?! It would be incredible if this issue, the first one of 2017, could inspire people. Let's encourage them to push boundaries, break moulds, challenge the norm. Let's Celebrate Risk-Taking.

The cover art for this issue was designed by Vanessa Goldgrub, who was asked to do something different, to take a risk, to create a landscape image without using traditional tools. To me, it represents the freedom to take risks and to play when we begin new projects.

Each of the articles in this issue references following one's passion, staying true to one's values, and exploring the freedom of taking risks in design, in business and as a profession. I encourage you to read them and then to reflect on the ideas that they have shared. The conversation with landscape architects was filled with great tidbits and it was hard to reduce it down to the article that you find here. Watch for more releases of this conversation on our website. [SL](#)



Cover Image: Simcouver, Vanessa Goldgrub
For artist statement, see page 11.

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Revisiting the Primitive Hut

by Imu Chan,
Architect AIBC, LEED AP
Certified Passive House Designer
Principal, FSOARK

Some time during the first year in design school, we were taught the theory of the primitive hut, a concept postulated by Marc Laugier in his *Essai sur l'architecture* (2nd ed. 1755). The details of the writing have since been lost in the dim light of my memory. What retains, however, is a slide projecting the frontispiece of the publication. In the illustration engraving, a young woman — presumably the personification of architecture — leans upon the ruins of the classical orders. Her right arm outstretches and points towards an unadorned shelter made out of tree branches, admiring its simplicity and truthfulness, while an angelic child looks on.

To a class of young, aspiring students eager to showcase their creative talents, the very sight of a rustic shed was somewhat disenchanting. It is obvious that the primitive hut lacks the fashion of our time. The pugnacious ones among us may even argue that, virtuous as the hut may be, there is no design in it. Woe betides students who present their projects made of leafy branches.

But what kept me pondering back then was not Laugier's concept of his primitive hut, but that of his primitive man, who presumably created a masterpiece out of scraps while strolling leisurely on a stretch of fragrant grass. The easy success acquired by our architect forefather did not correspond with my naïve prejudice that recognitions in our honorable profession had to be hard earned. Besides, none of us ever see inspirations rain down from

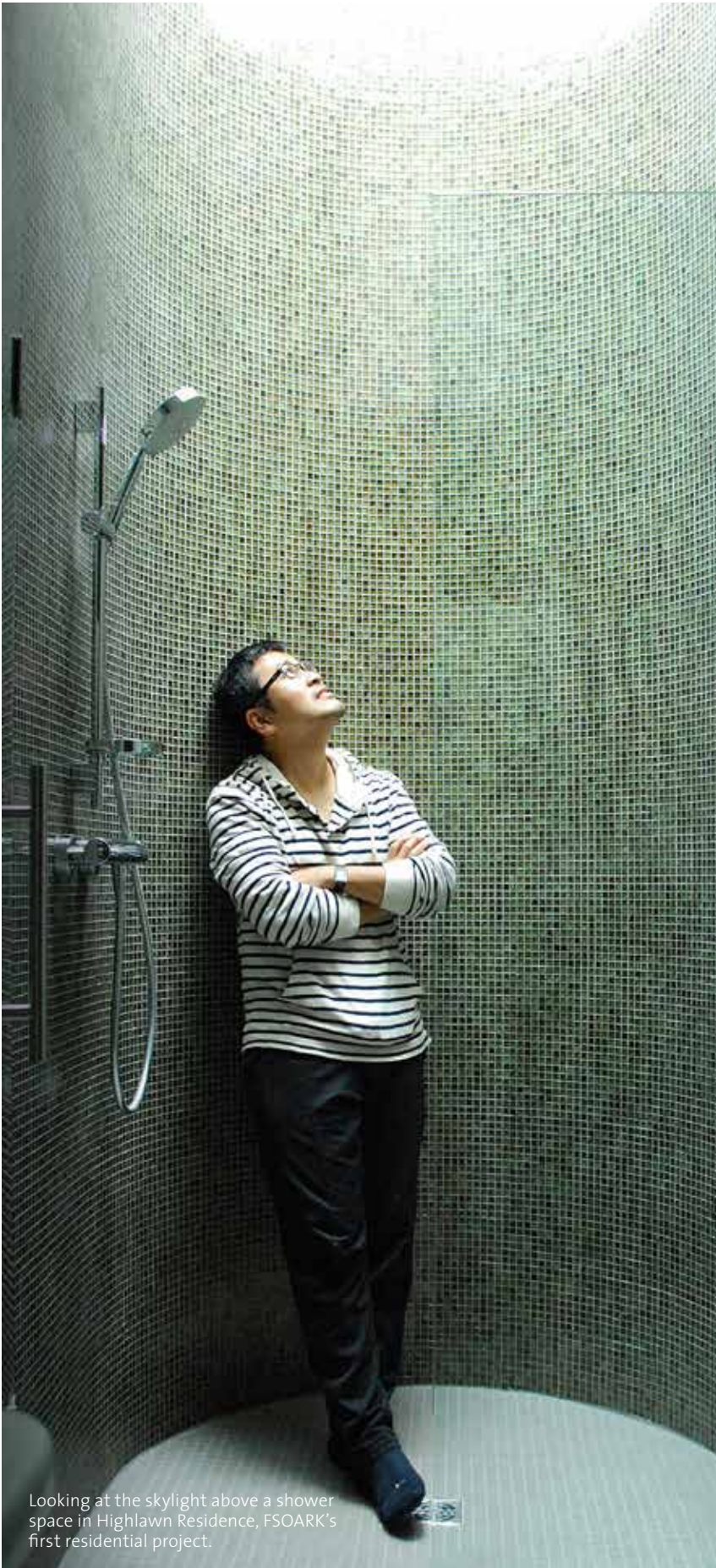


heaven, at least that is not how we confess when defending our projects in front of the jury panel.

Given the liberty of the pen, I feel pertinent here to confide an alternate account of Laugier's protagonist, one that I daydreamed of during my waking hours in class. By this disclosure it is my intent to offer a different perspective that I hope will better resonate with our own experiences. We often hear success stories as singular events, thus ignore the fact that each achievement is merely a dash along an infinite line marked by setbacks and failures. ►

Imu's professional career started in Boston, 2005, when he landed his first project of converting the attic of a warehouse into an architect's office while working there as an intern.

“We often hear success stories as singular events, thus ignore the fact that each achievement is merely a dash along an infinite line marked by setbacks and failures.”



Looking at the skylight above a shower space in Highlawn Residence, FSOARK's first residential project.

Imagine a caveman who, caught amidst a tumultuous storm of prehistoric scale, desperately gathered whatever he could find to make a protective covering. He had no foreknowledge or the vocabulary to describe what that something he was trying to make. Out of survival instinct and lacking the manual dexterity of a master builder, he tried in vain to arrange the materials this way and that way, shifting and shuffling, while the cold rain beat on, until finally through countless frustration and fatigue realized that he might have created something sufficient to envelope his body, and barely rescued himself from the tempest. His creation lacked any recognizable form, and from every angle appeared like a DIY bookshelf badly assembled.

Imagine also, in the next morning, his fellow cavemen peeked out from the mountains, and discovered the hideous invention right before their eyes, standing in broad daylight in the open field. Gossips immediately spread like a wild fire. The skeptics



Model making has been an indispensable part of FSOARK's design process. Oftentimes, they were made without clients even being aware of it. In the photograph, an intern is making a model for our first larger scale urban design project using dry moss and cast concrete.

criticized this makeshift construction would never be as cozy as the dark crevice between the rocks. The pessimists dismissed it entirely, claiming that it would not last another storm, let alone how it had already reduced to a shamble from last night.

It was the instigators who drove the nails into the wood. Noticing that there were no hard surfaces for the shamans to chalk their ritualistic paintings, they proclaimed that the novel dwelling as ominous, and prophesized that sleeping in it would bring upon tribulations and suffering to the whole tribe. And finally the conformists, who always said they put the welfare of others in the forefront of their consideration, silently agreed to the verdict. You can imagine how the story would end.

It is evident from the beginning that my tale is no less fictitious than Laugier's. What we do know, however, is that two million years after the primitive man was denounced by his own people, archeologists would find evidence of the earliest habitats made by

our tool-making ancestors, who stacked stones in small circle to hold branches in position. If our tragic hero knew that it would take these many lifetimes to earn his redemption, would it worth the imprudent risk to build his hut in the first place? History has taught us time and again that the ones who dare to make a difference by taking risks — whether it is for good cause or merely out of an unexplainable personal vision — will often be met with skepticism and resistance. We know, in a world where popularity often trumps purpose, the best survival lesson we learn is to stick our heads back in the cave.

But deep in the quiet chamber of our conscience, we know that breakthroughs have been and will always and only be reached by someone like the primitive man and never the indolent bystanders.

Those were the lingering thoughts had left since the architectural theory class that day. As we hustled out of the room, I wondered if my classmates would also felt

a strange inkling that someday our tragic hero would cross path with us again, as inevitably as how his primitive hut would one day resurrect, and would be accepted, adopted, mused upon, and eventually evolved into what we now call architecture. As for myself, it is not until some years later, when I am finally on my own feet, and at times working long into the night under extreme, unshared personal stress, that I realize the primitive man has been bearing witness all this time, reminding us that we have been down that dark cave before and know its foul air. In our collective existence as creative professionals, I believe it is upon us to see light at the cave opening, and through which we were made to walk upright onto greener pasture, breathing fresher air.

Perhaps one day another Laugier would come to unveil some of my humble creations. It is an immodest presumption. But who cares about publicity anyway, if I have to wait two million years to see that day. [SL](#)

Fragments of RISK

By Robin Rosebrugh,
B.Sc., CID, cSBA, LEED GA

Tucked away in a cozy booth at Pourhouse sipping cocktails and nibbling on appies, three landscape architects discussed their views on risk, pushing boundaries, failing and the evolution of the profession. The following dialogue is fragments of the three hour conversation.

RR

How do you define risk?

JOSEPH FRY: It's an interesting topic for discussion in Sitelines because I think it crosses a lot of different topics and aspects of the profession, not just how we do our work but how our work is implicated. We, as a profession, court risk with every project that we get involved in. That is the nature of working in landscape architecture, working in art, working in the public sphere, and we have to embrace it. And we have to dispel this association between risk and fear that sometimes is blended and perceived as the same thing.

VANESSA GOLDGRUB: What you do and what you choose to design is based on the risk you are willing to take and allowing yourself to follow through with these choices. It is putting yourself and reputation on the line. It's an internal character that influences how you design.

DEREK LEE: We need to take risks in terms of innovating, redefining ourselves before people define us. I think a lot of innovation comes out of really stepping outside of your comfort zone, your boundaries to redefine who we are and what it is that we want to do. I find that in a Canadian context, we are incredibly conservative as a culture. I think that if you look at our neighbors down south, with a very much pioneering mentality in their DNA about striking out and

starting something new and allowing failure. Failure is something that is necessary to progress.

RR

How do you push the boundaries in design?

VG: I think that the best way to take risks is to be uninformed and then later be told that you can or cannot do that. But everyone should at least try to push the boundaries. People are becoming more familiar with the idea and over time the boundaries will keep shifting as long as you keep pushing.

DL: To your point [Vanessa], we need to be used to pushing those boundaries and responding to those boundaries being pushed upon us and I think that it's easy to fall within our own perception about what that frame of reference is.

RR

How are you encouraging both your peers and newer landscape architects to take risk in their designs?

JF: I know I really depend on our crew to explore the things as broadly and as widely as possible. In our office we often run charrettes, we often have our project teams present to the office. Feeling comfortable without it being an overly safe environment to do so. We need people to leap



Derek Lee, MBCSLA CSLA LEED Accredited
Joseph Fry, MBCSLA CSLA ASLA and
Vanessa Goldgrub, MLA in conversation.

forward and to take some chances. To put themselves out there. I hope that contributes to a little bit of freedom to take risks at an individual level without the fear of any repercussions.

VG: Being a designer, you have to be prepared to take risks. You have to be willing to fail. You are not going to learn if you don't fail. I think these failures need to be acknowledged in the profession. As a new landscape intern, I feel like it is my responsibility to push, motivate, and to ask questions. If I propose something and senior architects reject it, it is necessary to challenge them and to question why. This pushes them and maybe they will get to thinking that "actually, maybe we can do this" and take a risk.

DL: The world is changing very quickly right now. We need to have that dialogue. Organizationally, companies are changing. Before it was a very didactic top down structure. We are in an era now where it is the millennials that can't get work. As a consequence they are starting up their own businesses. They are the ones that are innovating. They are the ones that are being the change. And that is really important for us to understand — especially for an organization like ours, a midsize organization. We do get these intrinsic structures that become quite ingrained. Even today in our conversations we were talking about this concept of murmuration, when

you have flocks of birds or schools of fish that create their own entity. There is a self regulating system in place organizationally within that group. In order for that self regulating system to work, there needs to be an understanding of all the tools needed to run the organization so even if you are an incoming landscape architect, you have an understanding of how the business is run and these are the tools that you have to work with, instead of just receiving direction. I think that is much more in line with millennial values. You think like an entrepreneur and you can be part of an organization and you can shape the organization. There is a shift not only in our organization but in all business.

RR

Would you say no to a project if you felt there was no possibility of pushing a boundary? If you could make it profit on it, but there was nothing creative or risky about it?

JF: So, 2017, speaking of a new year, we really want to do a better job at evaluating projects in terms of what they can provide to us as a practice. We need to streamline that criteria. We want to put it out to everybody. We are a small enough group that we can do that. ►

"BCSLA has incredible leverage. We are a small group and if we are all saying "no" for the right reasons, we have the ability to shape, to shift projects, to shift our environment. Saying "no" is probably the most important thing that we can do."

— Derek Lee

“You have to be willing to fail. You are not going to learn if you don’t fail.”

— Vanessa Goldgrub

DL: BCSLA has incredible leverage. Everyone needs a landscape architect. We are a small group and if we are all saying “no” for the right reasons, we have the ability to shape, to shift projects, to shift our environment. Saying “no” is probably the most important thing that we can do. It’s saying “these are our boundaries, not only our firm but a profession as a whole that we represent”.

JF: There is an inherent risk in saying “no”. Taking risk is about establishing your values. I think that that is such an important part of what we are trying to do this year in particular.

RR *Where do you think you could push the role of landscape architecture to in the future? Where do you want it to go? How do you want the role to continue to change?*

JF: It’s changing. Landscape architecture in the 80s and 90s was this decorative art and it kinda divorced itself, for whatever reason, from planning and urban design and only now is it beginning to merge back.

This beginning of the new generation of landscape architecture work is multifaceted. It is very broad and very deep. Derek will be working with Field Operations on the park at False Creek and we are working the streetscape with them. There is this incredible richness of opportunity there which is touching on a whole raft of issues, public space, development opportunities, real estate, transportation, title, innovation, sea level

rise. It’s so complex. I’m a little fearful of the knowledge you have to absorb in order to design appropriately. And then there is the politics—which is complex. So I think it is exactly what I would want it to be.

RR *You don’t want to push it in any one way or another?*

JF: We can always be better at promoting our responsibility as prime consultant on a project. Or doing master planning work on development sites. And that is happening too. I think generally speaking, our profession attracts people who are collaborators at heart. As a result we tend to take a backseat when maybe we shouldn’t.

DL: I tend to agree. Things go in cycles. I think that you are right that we are moving back into the realm of urban design vs the 80s and 90s where we were more of a parallel practice. We are very collaborative. I think that is what has really given us strength. We are so used to taking a backseat. We grin and bear it and then we collaborate. I think as we move into a leadership role we are very sympathetic to all disciplines because of being collaborative. We are not here just to lead or to lead by ego. We are working together to find the right solution.

I agree with you Joe, that the trajectory is imminent, we are only going to rise in power and influence. As we rise in power and influence, we may attract egoists along the way. They want to catch that wave.

I think where architects have succeeded,

they have a strong culture of representation and of style. Style has been huge in architecture and in the vocabulary of the consumer. I think that is why it is so easy to understand the profession. Whereas our ethics and our values go a bit deeper than that, they go beyond the consumer and into the intellect. It’s being able to capture people’s imagination at all those levels. Our ability to represent, design with nature and the environment, with the cultural overlay is something we continue to work on. I know you [Joe] have done some stuff very successfully, artful representation in your projects, I think it is a very important part of our profession. We are not here just to be environmental consultants, we are not here to be engineers. We are here as designers and I think the cultural representation is incredibly important in that. **SL**

“...we have to dispel this association between risk and fear that sometimes is blended and perceived as the same thing.” — Joseph Fry



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Artist Statement

“As technology develops, and our design tools become increasingly reliant on the virtual world, how we design is being (or will be) radically changed. As our tools become more virtual, the line between the real world and the virtual one can be blurred; already seen with advancements in augmented realities. The cover art this month reflects this shift. It questions whether landscape architects are more willing to take risks if we view our tools as a sort of game-play. Will the scope of our profession evolve and merge into other disciplines or fields such as architecture or urban planning? It even has the potential to grow into something entirely new, like virtual or augmented spaces.”



Cover image:
Vanessa Goldgrub

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A BRIEF SUMMARY OF

My Career So Far

(Told from the Viewpoint of Risk)

By Bryce Gauthier, CSLA, BCSLA, LEED AP

Some of us like to pretend that design is a magical gift or talent. "Oh, you're a designer," people say, "you must be so artistic."

I like to disabuse people of that notion by telling them that, actually, I don't draw very well. As someone with a political science degree, and no artistic background, design wasn't something that came naturally. Drawing a picture was just about the most foreign thing you could have asked me to do. My first design studio consisted mostly of lollipop trees and stick men. And yet, residing somewhere near the bottom of my class didn't dissuade me from pursuing a career as a designer. If no one thinks I am any good, how badly can I do??

Maybe that gave me a sense of freedom out in the real world. When I graduated in 2000, the Olympics weren't yet a thing and Vancouver was struggling through yet another bust cycle the last boom a distant memory. No one was hiring new grads, let alone ones who had tended bar rather than apprenticed in landscape architecture

offices (mostly out of fear of trying). So with few prospects and a desire to travel, I found my first job in China, of all places. I remember my first day: dozens of shining faces staring back at me expecting, I don't know what exactly — design?? Turns out, yes — and by the end of the day, if possible.

It was there that I learned to conquer my fear of drawing, simply because the pace and scale of work would not tolerate hesitation, let alone fear. We worked side by side: literally hundreds of young landscape architects, foreign and Chinese alike, brought together by a mix of risk, opportunity and adventure, helping to bring about a brave new world that seemed to insist on being built overnight.

I came home because if I stayed any longer I might have never left. Once home at a normal job, I worked, got licensed and somewhere along the line things began to change. Work



Sketch by Bryce Gauthier

“...every accomplishment that truly meant something to me had an element of risk to it.”

became less about design and more about management. I no longer asked myself if I was good enough or worried if my projects were interesting enough.

Years passed and then — something crazy. Someone asked me for help. Free design for a good cause? I had a better idea. Could we build it too? 200 volunteers showed up the next a day and I was hooked. It never really occurred to me that one hundred people doing construction was a significant insurance and liability issue, but I didn't care. Risk. Fear. Meaning.

And with this little bit of validation, I knew what I want to do. Go out on my own. Start my own office. Am I crazy?? Better to stay at the firm where it's safe. Wouldn't that be better?? Safer certainly. I'll let you know how it turns out...

On some level we are all afraid, yet we seldom admit it, even to ourselves. But if I have accomplished anything in my career, and life for that matter, it was fear that pushed me. And every accomplishment that truly meant something to me had an element of risk to it. The one thing I tell my staff is to take risks, be it in their life, their career or in design. Try it. Make a mistake. Admit that mistake. Move on. You'll be better for it.

The truth is that none of us, not partners, designers or fresh graduates, truly know whether our careers or the projects that define them will ever actually work out until long after they are complete. I am reminded of that every time I stare down at an empty piece of trace paper, with the new project faded underneath. There is a rush of excitement tinged with trepidation

and I am reminded of the uncertainty of my first days in design school. Partly to stay humble and partly to keep my edge, I like to say to myself:

"Don't screw this up".

If your job is your job, then treat it so, but if your job is your calling, it can only come from embracing fear. And, like the graduate who couldn't draw, I say to myself, "what have I got to lose?" [SL](#)

Shifting PERSPECTIVES

By Carlos Basa, BCom., LC, IES



Eleven workmen in New York sit and eat lunch on this beam in 1932

Risk involves pressure and uncertainty. It can also be uncomfortable. Perspective in how we view risk is what makes the difference. When deciding whether to take a risk or not, we need to be ready from the onset to see it as a stepping stone for something bigger, and not necessarily as the final goal.

Even if our immediate goal is short term in our mind, we may not realize that reaching that goal will only allow us to get closer to something we are not aware of yet. Adaptation and change in a smaller scale is most likely to happen before even realizing that risk has come and gone. Although I would like to think that, most of my personal references with risk revolve around the business world, this is not entirely true. I had to stop and rethink experiences dating back to my

teenage years when I decided to accompany my mother and move to Canada from Mexico. I did not realize it right away but now that I think about it, that was a risk of its own. Back then, when asked if I would consider moving to Canada, it took me a day to make that decision. If someone asked me today to move to another country or another continent it would take me more than a few days to make that decision. I can blame that on the fact that there is more to my life now than when I was nineteen years old. There is a business and a family that I am responsible for. However, the fundamentals of that type of risk have not changed much. It is only my perspective that has changed because I view it as a riskier move.

At our company, Symmetry Lighting, we tend to associate risks to the likelihood of a product making it from the specification stage to installation. Honestly, if our days revolved around thinking about that risk, our lives would not be that enjoyable. We instead decide to concentrate our risk-taking efforts by challenging ourselves to approach business differently. Not only in finding how to engage with external customers with a product sale in mind, but in building relationships that can be collaborative in nature. There is always risk in collaboration. Will both or multiple parties get along? Who gets the credit? This type of questioning is limiting because we would be restricting ourselves to growth. It is not about the credit or the final outcome, it is more about the interactions and conversations along the way that lead to learning and building resilience for tougher risks ahead. In economic terms, there is a lot of talk about elasticity, which refers mostly to the way pricing strategies react to supply and demand. In our daily interactions with different parties involved in projects, being elastic is about being flexible to stretch our current capabilities in how we respond to customers. With our internal staff, we take risks allowing

“Taking other’s perspectives can be daunting because honest input can be shocking to our long cemented beliefs.

Without it, the risk lies in the sense that we remain trapped in our own bubble.”

them to question and challenge the way we do business. Taking other’s perspectives can be daunting because honest input can be shocking to our long cemented beliefs. Without it, the risk lies in the sense that we remain trapped in our own bubble.

Entrepreneur Magazine recently wrote an article about Richard Branson, the highly successful founder of Virgin Group. He is referred to as a daredevil in not only the way he approaches business but in the way he lives his life. Branson quotes “You can be a David versus a Goliath, if you do it right.” Reading this quote, our minds may concentrate on the latter part of the sentence, when instead we should be embracing the start of the sentence. Analyzing how to do it right is a double-edged sword. Mitigating risk is great in avoiding giving large credit to a new account. However, mitigating risk-taking in business, can mitigate business altogether,

thus also mitigating opportunity and success. In my recent MBA studies, faculty kept reminding us their goal is to teach us how to analyze a business opportunity. However, they also reminded us not to get stuck in analysis for too long or nothing fruitful would come out of an opportunity. Without taking risks, there is no learning. Without learning, our vision cannot expand. What if we decided to take risks more often? We are innately prone to risk from the time we learn to walk, yet youth does not perceive risk in the same way a grown adult does. Perhaps we should keep a youthful attitude to risk, and learn to make it work to our advantage along the way. What if after we do it more than a few times we just don’t think about risk anymore and become innate to learning instead? That, just thinking of it, makes me think of risk as an exciting adventure filled with opportunity... and less risk. [SL](#)

Following her **PASSIONS**

By Catherine Berris, RLA, FCSLA, RPP



Catherine Berris (second from right) listening to a First Nations legend on the site of Minette Bay West, a future new waterfront park for the District of Kitimat.

The Early Years

I have always felt a strong connection with nature. Maybe it was the early morning bird-watching excursions with my father at our cottage on Lake Simcoe. In high school, my escape from teenage turmoil was to seek out nature. I used to take the ferry to Ward's Island across from Toronto's harbour. It was best in winter. There was no one around and waves would break and send up spray, coating the lakeside shrubs with casings of ice. During those years, *Stalking the Wild Asparagus* was my go-to book.

Education and Teaching

When I found landscape architecture at the U of Guelph, it seemed like a perfect fit, but the first couple of years were not smooth sailing. Our first real design project was the Widget Gadget factory with Professor Jack Milliken. We had to design an industrial project for a site on the edge of Guelph. I was very proud of the fact that I hand-made a variety of tree stamps from Pink Pearl erasers. After designing the building, parking and pathways, I covered as much of the site as I could with trees, planting a forest



At Fishtrap Creek Nature Park in Abbotsford Catherine's team converted a ditched creek through a farmer's field into a major stormwater management pond/wetland.

with a loop trail at the back. My “crit” did not go well. There wasn't enough design in my design to please the profs.

I've always been glued to airplane windows when I fly. I love observing the natural and human patterns that we can't see when we're in them. Maybe because of that, I was excited about GIS from the beginning. My first use of GIS involved punching command lines onto cards, and feeding the cards into a computer the size of a starter apartment in Vancouver. For our maps, we had to figure out which typed letters to combine to get a series of gray tones.

Living in Victoria and Vancouver after undergrad school was bliss. I was Moura Quayle's first employee, and she tolerated having me and my dog at the office (Kuli the Puli had come to the Guelph studio most evenings so he was familiar with landscape architecture). I was living on a converted fishing boat, and I would often kayak to work. In those days, I had no trouble finding someone in Victoria's harbour willing to let me pull my kayak up onto a dock during the work day — “no charge”.

In grad school at Michigan, I had amazing

mentors, Bill Johnson and Rachel Kaplan in particular. I was impressed by the depth and perspective that Bill brought to every project, and by Rachel and Stephen Kaplans' work on understanding how humans respond to the environment.

My first gig after grad school was teaching at Colorado State University. With the need to conduct research as a tenure track prof, I decided to learn more about how people could live in the sprawling sterile subdivisions that were spreading like a plague around Denver. Rachel Kaplan helped with the research methods, and it was somewhat of a relief to find out that the presence of trees was the most significant factor affecting visual preferences. I'm not convinced that this affected any decision-making by developers or residents in that area at the time.

Perhaps that project spurred my interest in urban forestry. With my team we have conducted several urban forest strategies. On the most interesting one, in Surrey, we integrated remote sensing, GIS and ground truthing to identify the patterns of changes (reductions) to the tree canopy, relating this to land uses, neighbourhoods, age of development, and more. The most ►

“I'm also proud of the projects we turned down. Sometimes this was challenging from a business perspective, but it felt good to refuse work that did not fit with our values.”

gratifying result of that project was that it helped to trigger the formation of a neighbourhood group fighting against tree canopy loss in South Surrey.

Consulting

I returned to Vancouver and started Catherine Berris Associates (CBA) in 1985, where at first every call was a cold call. My vision was to combine environmental planning and landscape architecture. One of the first projects was an analysis of the Meager Creek Valley for some developers who had purchased the geothermal rights and wanted to build a resort centred around the hot springs. I wanted to use GIS and searched for a local company. When I reached Dan Lemkow, who had just launched Terrasoft, I asked if it could do 3D visibility analysis in addition to overlay analysis, and he said “yes”. Little did I know that he would be developing the software with my project as a test case. We both spent many nights and weekends getting it to work, which it did finally.

Another early highlight occurred when Dayton and Knight asked us (we had grown to three people by then) to design a path around a stormwater management pond. When I went out to the site, I was blown away by the opportunities, and Fishtap Creek Nature Park in Abbotsford came to be. There was no community engagement. I would bring our sketch plans and designs into the office of the Public Works Manager, Ed Regts, and he would say “okay, looks good”. This was followed by numerous other stormwater management features, including Brandt’s Creek mouth in Kelowna, Willband Creek Park in Abbotsford, the sanctuary in Hastings Park (with PFS), and numerous pond/wetland features in Surrey. It is extremely rewarding to visit these sites now to see people and wildlife enjoying nature in the city.

The next few decades far exceeded my hopes and aspirations. I got to work on community planning, First Nations projects, parks and recreation planning and design, stormwater management, many highway corridors, ESA and environmental policy

studies, cemeteries, and much more. We continued to evolve and refine our GIS applications, while building skills and tools for community engagement.

I’m grateful to the many clients and communities we worked with. I’m also proud of the projects we turned down. Sometimes this was challenging from a business perspective, but it felt good to refuse work that did not fit with our values.

These days, I work at Urban Systems. I enjoy the interdisciplinary environment, the flexibility to pursue what inspires me, helping communities become better places, and mentoring the upcoming generations of landscape architects and planners. My passions continue to include working with and restoring nature, bringing it into everyday life, and listening to and guiding communities through projects. [SL](#)

CLARIFICATION NOTE: From the December 2016 edition of *Sitelines*, the Rejuvenation of the Masonic Area and the landscapes associated with the Customer Service Building, Celebration Hall and Operations Centre mentioned in Paula Jardine’s article “Landscape, Memory and Metaphor”, arose through a collaboration with (then) Philips Farevaag Smalenberg, (now PFS Studio) and LEES+Associates.



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