



Kelley Forsyth, *Model by Makenzie Gilvey*, 2020

GRADUATE STUDENT
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PROJECT STATUS
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Where have all the flowers gone? A call for color in public open spaces.

In this time of quarantine, many have developed a profound appreciation for the world outside their window. When we return to a new normal, just as many may find a renewed appreciation for public open spaces. Color as expressed through flowers can create and maintain an emotional attachment to the spaces beyond our doors. In this new normal, landscape architects should embrace this expression to viscerally connect us to the outside as we move from a world apart to a world we are part of.

This thesis sets out to address the paucity of flowers in public open spaces

A transregional analysis of landscape architecture’s professional attitude towards flowers through an assessment of projects recognized and awarded by the ASLA and Landezine points towards a strong cultural bias amongst firms from different countries regarding flowers. While a review of the work of landscape historians, such as, Mark Laird, Susan Herrington and Marc Treib; as well as ecologist Norbert Kühn and designer and practitioner Rosetta Elkins traces a historic trajectory of the profession’s loss of plant knowledge.

As a result, flowers are resources rarely utilized by landscape architects.

The design component follows up the analysis of past and present in order to explore a future with flowers. To this end I am currently “designing” and planting a beautiful vegetable garden (or a nutritious flower garden) on Cook’s Campus. My design methodology, inspired by Sol LeWitt’s conceptual art, specifically his wall drawings, attempts to engage in communal place making by providing specific instructions and tasking others to implement the design. I taught the first segment of Planting Design for Juniors of Rutgers Landscape Architecture program and they became my first test subjects. The results of their designs, even while following my strict instructions, were kaleidoscopic and highly individual. The final pin up was unlike any final review I have experienced. The students described their designs using words evoking emotions, color and senses. These were spaces of poetry rather than program. In a pre-pandemic world, we explored the possibility of creating a garden, a space that engaged the senses, a place that we were a part of.

Many of the flower and vegetables in our plant palette are unique and rare cultivars, currently we are attempting to grow them from seed. The goal is to plant a garden inspired by these student’s designs in the new normal. It is my hope that this fall the garden will be in full bloom and there will be lovely stories and photographs to grace the pages of my completed thesis.

For full thesis: <https://www.tbd.com>



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Kelley Forsyth is a 2020 MLA Graduate of Rutgers University. As the owner and principal designer of a design build firm, she has created installed and cared for hundreds of open spaces. Pursuing a Master's degree in Landscape Architecture has deepened her commitment to create thoughtful and inspiring landscapes.