

Chris van Uffelen

Waterscapes

contemporary landscaping



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Preface

Hydraulic engineering is one of the oldest activities of urban culture. Before the initial phase of the advanced cultures (coinciding with the development of writing in about 3000 B.C.) waterworks, consisting of drainage channels with inlet and outlet pipes became the precondition for agriculture, which in turn provided the conditions necessary for the emergence of urban cultural structures. The Codex Hammurabi, named after the king of the same name (1700 B.C.), passed down knowledge of the maintenance of irrigation systems, and the terraces of the so-called “hanging gardens” of Semiramis (about 600 B.C.) were certainly irrigated artificially.

Hydraulic engineering originally meant a system for hoisting water, which later included guiding it through a conduit system. The Dutch, who for hundreds of years have practiced landscape conservation with the aid of polders, brooks, locks and pumps in order to create useful land, have the longest tradition of extensive experience in dealing with water. Evidence from Nero’s palace, the Domus Aurea shows that hydraulic engineering began in ancient times with water wheels and the Archimedean screw pump, also used at the time for the operation of trick fountains, wells and cascades. At the very latest this could be called the beginning of the history of “waterscaping”, or landscape architecture with water. The Roman facilities, which fell into ruins after the collapse of the Empire, have been reconstructed in modern times. Various popes had the great “waterways” from the antique period, reconstructed and in place of the original Asclepeion, commissioned the construction of huge fountains as a demonstration of their power. For instance, the 50 meter wide Fontana de Trevi was built under Clemens XII from 1732 to 1762 according to a design by Nicola Salvi at the termination of the Aqua Virgo aqueduct. In the modern period many elaborate trick fountains

were built in parks, belonging to the nobility, like the Bergpark at Schloss Wilhelmshöhe in Kassel (built by Giovanni Francesco Guerniero, expanded in 1785 by Heinrich Christoph Jussow). The brooks, cascades, aqueduct, waterfalls and the 52-meter-high shooting fountains all work without resorting to water hoisting, relying entirely on natural gradients and a 40,000-cubic-meter capacity reservoir. Today the technical effort of trick fountains is much easier to operate than was the case in the past. In contrast, the actual artistic task has remained constant: the water should be a source of joy for the visitors and liven up the landscape. But waterscapes are more than just trick fountains. As an aesthetic or contemplative moment in the design of the environment, the calm surface of a pool, which serves as a mirror for the surroundings or the sky, is also a waterscape. The construction of embankments and the seemingly inconspicuous renaturalization of bodies of water also belong to the disciplines of the genre.

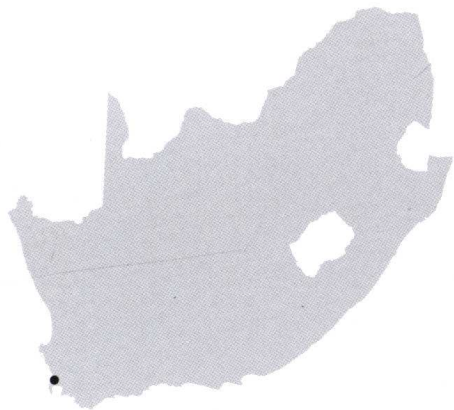
This volume presents the most diverse forms of water that appears in landscape architecture. In addition to large landscape designs there are waterfalls, and fountains emerging from the pavement, without any trace of green, water surfaces with rigorous contours, rainwater diverted from the roof and even planned puddles. It shows how water caresses, contradicts or continues the architecture, how it creates calm or excitement, attracting the attention of the visitors or guiding them along their way. Water – with some of these buildings it can be a very small amount – is one of the most decisive elements of these designs.



Jacob Isaacksz. van Ruisdael: Mill at Wijk at Duurstede, 1670 (Detail).



Lake Michelle



Cape Town, South Africa

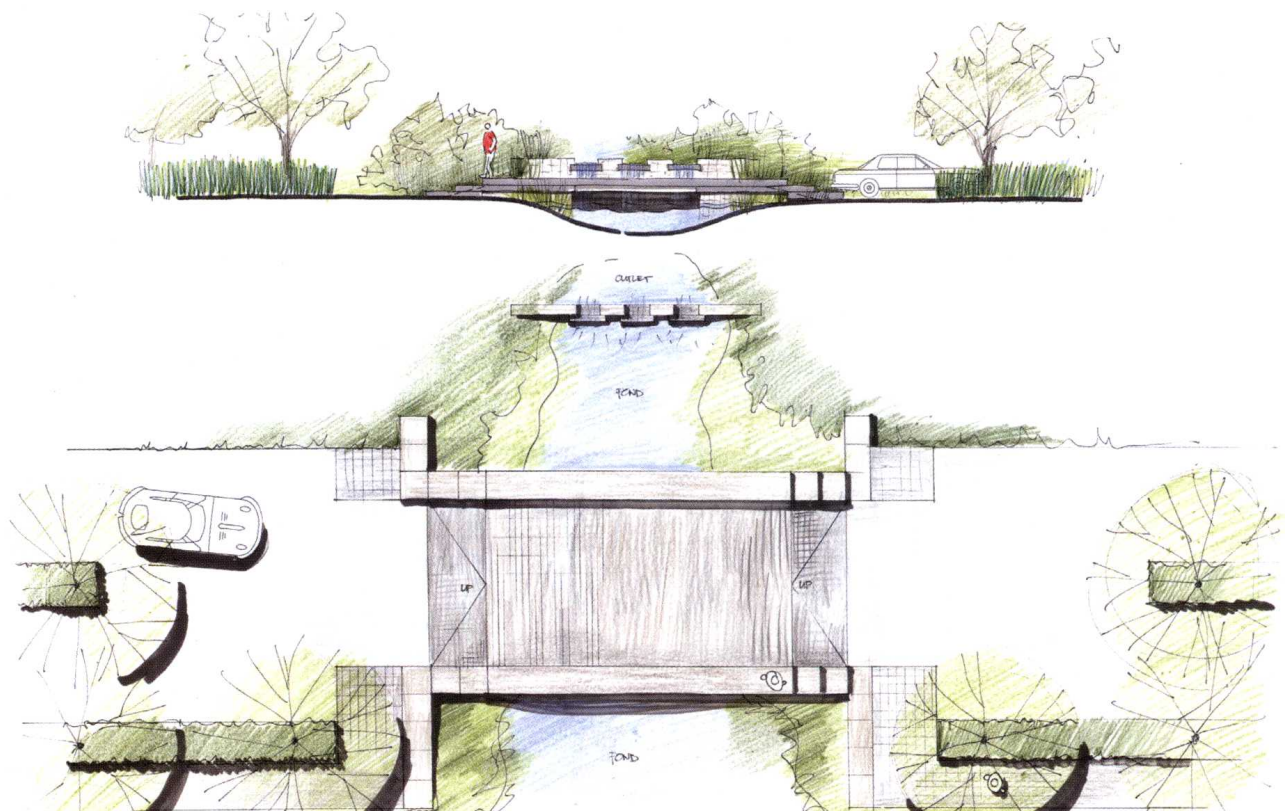
Landscape Design: Tanya de Villiers of CNdV Africa

Completion: 2007

Client: Plan Trust

Photos: Christof Heierli

Lake Michelle is an environmentally sensitive estate, nestled around a 300,000 square meter saline lake in Noordhoek. The landscape architect built in 70,000 square meter of ponds and reed beds, which increased property values whilst aerating and cleaning the lake water. The careful design of roads, bridges, ponds, boardwalks, lighting, signage and green space creates a unique environment. Reed beds, sandy beaches and islands act as bird sanctuaries. The site was covered in non-indigenous species but 50,000 remaining indigenous plants were rescued. This ensures sustainability and links the site with adjacent natural areas.



Left: Entrance bridge and circulation pond.

Right: Concept plan for a bridge crossing.



*Top: The site is entered across a pond which introduces the water theme.
 Bottom: Jetties provide access to the lake for water sport.
 Right: Hardwood, indigenous grass and other permeable surfaces.*





