

MAPPING ENVIRONMENTAL ENGAGEMENT AND PRACTICE IN AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE: A REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL AWARDS PROGRAM

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1 ABSTRACT

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA), founded in 1966, was borne out of environmental concerns, particularly the perceived widespread visual and environmental degradation of the Australian landscape. While similar concerns were being expressed in other countries, Australia was experiencing an influx of population, which triggered rapid and widespread urban expansion and the attendant fragmentation and/or outright loss of habitat throughout metropolitan areas. Simultaneously, a heightened appreciation and articulation of an Australian identity arose in the built environment professions. Previous research in Australia has traced the landscape profession's response to these issues by examining national AILA conferences. (Saniga, 2006) This paper takes another angle on reading the development and growth of the profession by analyzing the national awards program. We focus on changes in the award categories—as well as the winning projects—as the categories are manifestations of contemporary ideals and/or formative debates occurring within the profession, revealing thematic patterns of professional concerns over time.

The analysis was developed by reviewing the AILA National Awards programs from their commencement in 1986, through to the 2012 awards, focusing on categories related to “environment” and/or “infrastructure.” When considered in the context of key environmental projects in Australia, this analysis illuminates the degree to which the national awards program has served the promotion of the landscape architecture profession's standing in relation to environmental issues and values. From this desktop survey, a picture emerges of a profession whose engagement with environmental issues could be better served by the awards program of the institute.

1.1 Keywords

Australian landscape architecture, professional awards programs, environmental practice