

**OLLI @CSUMB**  
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**Landscape Architecture Yesterday and Today.**  
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Syllabus

Architecture is a discipline hyper-focused on the individual building, its appearance, its details, its civic presence. It is photographed with the building at its center, and it is argued in written and spoken form on its exterior merits for the most part. Yet structures exist always in a context, built and unbuilt. Where the walls of the building reach the ground, they contain a world of their own and leave out a territory labeled as Landscape Architecture. While its existence is a matter of course, its planning is often an afterthought. Development is laid out on the infrastructure of roads, services, and massing and far less on what happens between the buildings, where in fact most of our lives is spent. Furthermore, and more specific to the formal aspect of this ancient field, planting comes with its own geometry, texture, coloration, and shadows. Its arrangement in space determines a powerful and immersive architecture that precedes the building itself. This class is designed to bring awareness about the impact that Landscape Architecture has on the experience of space, whether a garden for a single-family home, a park, a piazza, an open area. Architecture and Landscape Architecture are inseparable parts of the space we live in.

**Lesson 1. ROBERTO BURLE MARX: PAINTING WITH LANDSCAPE.**

Roberto Burle Marx (1909-1994) was the most revered landscape architect of Brazil. Trained as a painter he treated gardens as canvases to do his most creative work. A favorite of renowned architect Oscar Niemeyer, for whom he designed the landscaping of countless residences, Burle Marx conceived some of the most memorable open spaces of his native country, the outdoor areas of the Ministry of Education in Rio de Janeiro by Le Corbusier, with Lucio Costa and Niemeyer himself, and the Copacabana beach promenade. In this lecture, a new world of forms, paving motifs, tree hierarchies and transitions between hardscape and landscape will be featured in unpacking the signature of a most cherished character in 20th century design.

**Lesson 2. THOMAS CHURCH: THE GARDEN ARCHITECT OF CALIFORNIA.**

Thomas Church (1902-1978) is the Father of Landscape Architecture in California Modernism. A larger than life figure, he authored the open spaces of the General Motors Technical Center in Warren, Michigan (1955) by Eero Saarinen, and gave an original imprint to hundreds of smaller spaces all around California. . Author of books and many articles, Church was a principled designer. This talk will dive into his design universe, his ideas, and what distinguished his approach to garden design in relation to where the discipline was in the United States and abroad. A case study involving him will

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show what happens when the landscape architect designs the garden before the architect does the house design.

**Lesson 3. RUTH SHELLHORN. A MOST TALENTED LANDSCAPE YOU NEVER HEARD OF.**

Ruth Shellhorn (1909-2006) may well be one of the most under-recognized landscape architects in the history of California Modernism. Based in Los Angeles she was behind the site plans and gardens of the Bullock's department stores, devised the comprehensive circulation plan for Disneyland, the Master Plan for the University of California Riverside, and the private gardens of innumerable celebrities. She worked on the iconic Prudential Building of Welton Becket in Los Angeles and many other institutional projects large and small in the area. This lecture dives into her ideas of what a Southern California landscape and how it complements the mythology of its Mid-Century Modern.

**Lesson 4. HARDSCAPE AND NATURE IN CONTEMPORARY LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE.**

Under the rubric Landscape Architecture, the Natural and the Human Made beyond the building enclosure form a continuous environment. The public realm can be understood as a form of landscape, whether planned or contingent to chaotic interventions. This conclusive lecture raises the awareness of the audience that the relationship between buildings and context is the matter of landscape architecture. Whether small or large, the space between the buildings is where placemaking occurs and the quality of the environment, in its ever-changing mixture of greenery and hard surfaces, can be fully appreciated in the community.