Urban Landscape: New Tendencies, New Resources New Solutions, Cristina Paredes Benitez (ed.), Loft Publications, Barcelona, 2007, Paperback, 255pp., £20.30, ISBN: 978-84-95832-36-8

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This is a compendium book of 37 urban parks and public space projects constructed since 2000. The authors say their themes are the effort by urban designers to counteract the tendency to base city life more and more on the home by creating and adapting public places and to apply sustainability to these urban public place designs. Each project is illustrated generously with between seven and a dozen or so illustrations per project including plans and location plans. The location plans are un-annotated and lack scales and north points. From time to time the editors add captions to the photographs.

The captions say little and sometimes read strangely: for instance a photograph of an empty floodlit sports pitch reads 'The control of the lighting depending on the time of day is to save energy and at the same time provide an appealing ambience that is constantly changing', which seems to suggest that someone thinks it noteworthy that they turn the lights off during the day in this park on the Hai River Embankment. The text accompanying the Hai River Embankment coverage is brief and says very little about the project, nothing about costs or how it was designed, or about materials, or how it is used or what the users think of it. There are brief credits for each project with designer, photographer, location and date of completion.

The selection of projects is mainly European, with one in Australia, the Hai River project in China and a West 8 scheme in Singapore. So this is not a worldwide survey. One also wonders what the market is given the measurements are given solely in imperial dimensions and only two countries still use the imperial system, the United States of America and Liberia?

There is a total absence of explanation and real commentary and critique in this book. Reading (or rather flicking through) a book like this is depressing. Published in Barcelona and prepared presumably by a Spanish team it presents an impression of a Stepford Wives' view of contemporary urban landscape design. Nearly every project is presented as immaculate, as an architectonic composition, as a design for and an image of a perfect world where there is no litter, little road traffic, often unpopulated, unvegetated and ultimately unsatisfactory. Even the multi-story car park building in Murcia is empty of cars. This is urban space and park design viewed as like a form of *coitus interruptus*: unfruitful and unsatisfactory. Cities are treated like theatrical sets with no action, the play has never been performed and the sets remain full of promise of an unchanging scenario, with no beginning and no plot development.

Written without criticism, without humour, as if the world is not one of change of seasons, of the sun shining on a world straight from the pages of some science fiction dystopia, in short ultimately banal and without wit and bite. The team who assembled this book have not done justice to the designers and the places depicted.

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