



private plots & public spots 08

[www.privateplots.at](http://www.privateplots.at)

*Concept, Organisation and Realisation*  
*DI Robert Froschauer, Architecture*  
*DI Dr. Karin Standler, Landscape Architecture*  
*Conceptual cooperation 2008:*  
*Dr. Gisela Steinlechner, cultural theory*

*Awarding Authority and Host:*  
*Verein für Lebensqualität*  
*Land Niederösterreich*  
*2008*

## **Private plots & public spots - The idea**

Garden culture has been a popular pursuit in recent years, yet while the media like to feature it as a topic for lifestyle articles and do-it-yourself manuals, nuanced expert discussion of private gardens and outdoor spaces remains rather rare in the German-speaking countries.

It was this situation that led to the emergence, in the course of an interdisciplinary debate, of the idea for private plots & public spots, initiated by landscape architect Karin Standler, horticultural scientist Andrea Heisteringer and architect Robert Froschauer. The idea was to find ways of raising public awareness of private outdoor spaces, and focusing on the latter and their cultural, ecological and social context, by means of expert discussion as well as by drawing inspiration from other cultures and disciplines.

In the association Verein Lebensqualität of the province of Lower Austria, the team found a partner that made it possible, starting in autumn of 2006, to hold an international competition and a symposium on the topic of private gardens. The positive response on the part of the audience and the specialized media, the productive nature of the discussions and, above all, curiosity for further garden projects and interdisciplinary investigations encouraged the organizers to pursue the project of continuing the format of private plots & public spots in the subsequent years.

The Loisiium hotel and visitor center, built by New York-based architect Steven Holl, in the Lower Austrian town of Langenlois was chosen as the venue of the event. It provides a comfortable and contemporary ambience for the participants of the event in the midst of the cultural landscape of a traditional wine-growing region.

A special feature of private plots & public spots is that the members of the jury for the international competition also act as speakers at the symposium. The audience, which includes many participants in the competition, is thus granted an opportunity to get an insight into the jury members' projects, design ideas and theoretical considerations, and to discuss these with them in person. The schedule of events also leaves plenty of time for talks and meetings outside the plenary session.



logo private plots 06



logo private plots 07



logo private plots 08

### best private plots 06 - Die besten Gärten 2006

A total of 63 project teams from Europe, Asia, Australia, North America and South America entered projects in the competition best private plots 06 - Die besten Gärten 2006. The invitation to participate went out to professional designers and architects as well as project owners; projects completed within the 10 previous years were admitted. The call for entries particularly stressed the creative ideas, aesthetic expression, inspiration and functional logic of garden design.

**First place in 2006** went to a small, poetic urban garden designed by artist **Cécile Daladier** and architect **Nicolas Soulier (Assai)** in the courtyard of their residential building in Paris. The jury praised the both sensitive and playful way in which they had addressed the difficult initial situation, the care taken in execution and maintenance, and the transformational qualities of the resulting small garden universe.

### Jury members and speakers in 2006:

- Art historian Anette Freytag (ETH Zurich) has contributed research and publications on the recent cultural history of gardens.
- Australia-based landscape architect Vladimir Sitta (Terragram) has become known in particular for his stage-like garden compositions.
- New York-based landscape architect Ken Smith explores the artistic aspects of landscapes and gardens in his teaching and his projects.
- Tokyo-based landscape architect Ryoko Ueyama blends elements of Japanese philosophy into her designs and projects.
- Swiss landscape designer Günther Vogt teaches at ETH Zurich, and frequently cooperates with architects and artists on his international projects.

### Presentations at the symposium "public spots on private plots 2006":

In her presentation, Anette Freytag discussed the complex design task of private gardens in cultural history and in the contemporary context. From an Australian perspective, Vladimir Sitta explored the potential of private gardens as innovative experimental areas in an increasingly bureaucratic environment. Under the heading "No Bushes", Ken Smith focused on the symbolic content of his garden and landscape designs, and on the (artistic) influences and ideas they are based on. Ryoko Ueyama presented her idea of "cosmophilia" - landscape design that explores the "memory of the land" and blends into the existing fabric as a further layer. Günther Vogt's presentation raised the question of potential strategies for contemporary garden and landscape design, torn between idealized images and the problems and contradictions of a postmodern landscape.



A world in miniature Assai - winner of best private plots 06



Ken Smith



Vladimir Sitta

## **Competition and symposium 2007**

Another group of internationally renowned garden and landscape designers and theorists was invited to sit on the jury of the competition best private plots 07 - Die besten Gärten 2007:

- Topher Delaney heads SEAM Studios in San Francisco, and works with artistic and social references in her projects.
- Dutch-born Eelco Hooftman is a member of the landscape architecture office GROSS.MAX in Edinburgh, which won the European Landscape Award in 2006.
- British-born garden architect Christopher Bradley-Hole is the author of "The Minimalist Garden", which counts among the definitive books in the industry.
- Cultural theorist and literary scholar Gisela Steinlechner from Vienna explores the cultural significance of gardens in the present day in her work.

The Assai team members, the winners of the previous year's competition, were invited to join the jury as guest judges.

Chosen from among 60 entries, the winning project by Swiss landscape architect Jane Bühr-de Salis won the jury over on the strength of its minimalist clarity and its poetic humor: a garden with out-of-the-ordinary, musically structured hedge screens, its spatial openness redefining ideas of privacy.

## **Symposium 2007:**

The presentations at the symposium public spots on private plots 2007 stressed different approaches to the design of outdoor spaces, and explored private gardens with a view to aesthetic, architectural and cultural correlations. In her project review, Topher Delaney explained how she derived essential design input from talking with the project owners and asking them questions about the first six years of their lives. Christopher Bradley-Hole described his aesthetic exploration of grids and frames, which "mediate" between architecture, landscapes and vegetation in the minimalist gardens he designs. Eelco Hooftman used images to illustrate structural and historical interrelations between garden aesthetics, architecture, urban planning, art, technology and design. Gisela Steinlechner addressed the design focus on privacy and order in gardens, and explored imaginary as well as traditional cultural garden models.



Christopher Bradley-Hole: The Minimalist Garden



Eelco Hooftmann: Favourite Garden



Jane Bühr-de Salis: winner of best private plots 07

## **private plots & public spots 2008**

### **The competition**

The call for entries in the competition best private plots 08 - Die besten Gärten 2008 emphasized gardens as places of innovation and transition, and as fields for experimentation, not only as regards the plants chosen. It addressed the artistic and conceptual qualities of the garden designs entered, as well as the contemporary blending and interpretation of gardens, architecture, landscapes and technology.

71 teams hailing from a total of 17 countries, including European countries as well as India, Japan, Brazil, Ukraine, the USA and Taiwan, entered projects in the competition. The jury's preliminary evaluation resulted in nominations for 28 projects, all of which were documented by exhibits at the symposium public spots on private plots in Langenlois, Austria, and published in the catalog best private plots 08 - Die besten Gärten 2008. At the symposium, the five members of the jury selected three winning projects from among the 28 entries nominated, and the winners were announced by provincial councilor Wolfgang Sobotka at the awards ceremony on September 27th, 2008, at Grafenegg Castle.

### **The winners in 2008:**

#### **1<sup>st</sup> prize: Albéric Moreels - Belgium | Hotel Verhaegen**

The young Belgian garden designer's project is not afraid to work with a classical environment. Its very subtle intervention respects the historical constraints, but also uses a fresh vocabulary. The former hotel garden in Ghent is balanced delicately between formal conventions and wild abandon. A freestanding, wooden landscape overgrown by climbing roses has become a living sculpture. Underscored by a striking lighting plan, the intervention's effects include references to indoor and outdoor spaces, and present different aspects in summer and winter.

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> prize: Hager Landschaftsarchitektur - Switzerland | Private Garden J. in Berlin**

In the middle of the city of Berlin, an abandoned gas station has been turned into a poetic, private garden. A place of calm, in stark contrast to its hectic, urban surroundings, it nevertheless engages in subtle interactions with the outside world. The design leaves open a variety of uses, and stands to develop continuously in the course of colonization by new plants.



Jury session at the Loisium, Langenlois, Austria



Albéric Moreels: winner of best private plots 08



Award Ceremony 08 at Grafenegg Castle

**3<sup>rd</sup> prize: Carlos M. Teixeira - Brazil | Prothesen-Garten**

Though an ethical understanding of plant treatment is irritated at first, the project communicates a new vocabulary for the design of the garden and the treatment of its lush vegetation. The ideas are both innovative and controversial, and embody great poetry. A pink curtain instead of a hedge sets new accents; plants and technological elements forge an intimate bond.

In addition to the award winners, the design qualities of three further projects received a special mention by the jury:

Augusto Calonder - Switzerland | Dinder House

surface design - USA | Erman Residence

Weathers - Sean Lally - USA | Amplification

**Jury members and speakers in 2008**

Renowned experts in the fields of landscape architecture, architecture and design who have explored the topics of gardens and outdoor space design in extremely varied and innovative ways were recruited as jury members for the third year of the international competition.

**Jane Amidon** (USA) studied landscape architecture at Harvard's Graduate School of Design and teaches at Ohio State University. She is the editor of the renowned series Source Books in Landscape Architecture, and has written books on Kathryn Gustafson, Dan Kiley and "Radical Landscape", among other subjects. Jane Amidon is principal of a design and communication practice; in addition to teaching, she works as an exhibition curator and critic.

**Petra Blaisse** (NL) heads the design studio Inside Outside in Amsterdam. One of her trademarks are artistically designed Curtains that experiment with new materials and technologies, which she has installed in locations including the Dutch embassy in Berlin and the Mercedes Benz Museum in Germany. The projects undertaken by Inside Outside range from landscape and garden design to exhibition design, spatial installations, wall objects and furniture. In her designs, Petra Blaisse often addresses the thresholds from indoor to outdoor spaces, and the line between animated and artificial nature.



Petra Blaisse: Dutch House (Holland)



Erik Dhont: Vosselare (Belgien)



Edouard Francois: Flower Tower (Paris)

## PUBLIC SPOTS AND PRIVATE PLOTS SYMPOSIUM ON GARDEN ARCHITECTURE

Belgian landscape designer and garden architect **Erik Dhont** has worked on projects in the public and private sphere. His sensitive designs are distinguished by a clear artistic line, a responsive treatment of landscapes, plants and atmosphere, and a compelling economy of materials and forms. "Gardens. Hidden Landscapes", which details Erik Dhont's internationally acclaimed work, was published in 1991.

French architect **Edouard François** is well known for his unconventional and inventive concept of sustainable architecture that unites poetic, ecological and experimental approaches without reservations. His Tower Flower in Paris, a social housing project with an outer shell seamlessly studded by bamboo plants in large pots, was widely discussed, as was a residential complex in Montpellier composed of archaic looking rock gabions. Edouard François also designs furniture, lamps, labyrinths, tree houses and vegetation sculptures. As important sources of inspiration, he lists Land Art, and artists such as Donald Judd and Rachel Whiteread.

The guest judge on the jury was landscape architect Jane Bihl-de Salis from Switzerland, the winner of best private plots 2007.

### **The symposium "public spots on private plots 08"**

September 27th, 2008, 9.00 am - 5:30 pm at the Loisium Hotel in Langenlois, Lower Austria

The symposium in 2008 raised the questions: what makes a garden a garden? What new challenges and opportunities do gardens face in our changing world?

The spotlight was on gardens as fields of experimentation, as places of creative and speculative exploration of issues of ecology, architecture, life culture, art, public and private space. The discussion addressed contemporary aesthetic and cultural concepts of gardens, their changing functions and meanings in various habitats and contexts, and new impulses from the fields of technology, design, science and art.



Event Location - Loisium Hotel

## **Best private plots - The catalogs**

A bilingual catalog (in German and English) is published in time for each symposium, covering all projects nominated in the ongoing competition, complete with photographs, captions and expert descriptions of the projects by Peter Zöch, managing editor of TOPOS, an international review of landscape architecture and urban design. At the beginning of each catalog, the jury members and speakers at the symposium introduce themselves to their audience, writing about their favorite gardens, their work methods and their design philosophies.

Designed and written with great attention to detail, the catalogs grant fascinating insights into current developments in international garden architecture, while at the same time providing a useful archive of the events of private plots & public spots.

The catalogs for the years 2006, 2007 and 2008 can be ordered at: [www.privateplots.at/katalog.html](http://www.privateplots.at/katalog.html)

The chapter headings used by the editors to group the projects give an impression of the variety of approaches and the range of methods used in the garden and landscaping projects entered in the competition. Based on the keywords used, the titles allow the readers to follow contemporary trends and novel ideas in the design of private outdoor spaces.

Introverted gardens or enclaves are terms that describe an increasingly widespread type of private outdoor spaces: gardens of generally small dimensions that are clearly set apart from their surroundings, and cultivate places with their own rules and qualities. An intimate and relaxed atmosphere in the midst of a busy cityscape, for instance, as exemplified by the project entered in the 2008 competition by the landscape design office Hager Landschaftsarchitektur: it is an airy urban garden built on the site of an abandoned gas station in Berlin's Schöneberg district. [Fig.]

In contrast, embedded gardens actually seek to establish close links with their environments. They borrow the topography and plants of their surroundings, and either blur or artfully emphasize the boundaries between the cultivated landscape and the garden's territory. In the high desert climate of Idaho, with its unique wild flora, Ron Lutsko planted a desert garden that appears completely interwoven with the local plant life and landscape (2008 competition). [Fig.] A further case in point is Baron Garden in Sweden, designed by BBUK Studio in London, a contender in 2007 that won third prize. [Fig.]

The category of stage gardens stands for designs that make outdoor spaces accessible and allow them to be experienced as scenic settings. In such gardens, the design encompasses not only the plants and materials, but also "orchestrates" perception, movement and appearance, whether as an



Enclaves: an abandoned gas station in Berlin - Hager Landschaftsarchitekten - CH



Embedded: Desert Garden - Lutsko Landschaftsarchitekten - USA



Garden with Landscape: Baron Garden - BBUK studio - GB

## PUBLIC SPOTS AND PRIVATE PLOTS SYMPOSIUM ON GARDEN ARCHITECTURE

elegant ceremony, or a play on traditions and surprises. In Gregg Bleam's version of a modern Italian garden in Virginia, USA, visitors walk back and forth between finely nuanced spaces, perspectives and moods (2006 competition). [Fig.]

Another feature of many gardens are watercourses: they take up an essential element of traditional garden architecture and place it in new context. Ecological and functional criteria are now put on an equal footing with aesthetic considerations; rather than on representation, an emphasis is placed on poetic consistency, but also on intelligent use. In a farmhouse garden in Austria's Mühlviertel region redesigned by Plant Austria, a filtration basin framed by exposed concrete walls serves a near-natural swimming pool (2007 competition). [Fig.]

Numerous projects entered in the competition have explored garden updates, whether the formal etiquette of historical gardens is reshuffled using interventions and reinterpretation, or existing garden formats are adapted to new uses and perceptions. In southwestern England, a historical garden fragmented due to changes in ownership was reintegrated and reinterpreted on the basis of an elegant double spiral motif by Calonder Landscape Architects (2008 competition). [Fig.]

Catalogue 06 - best private plots 06 - Die besten Gärten 2006 ISBN 3-200-00743-5

Catalogue 07 - best private plots 07 - Die besten Gärten 2007 ISBN 978-3-9502424-0-9

Catalogue 08 - best private plots 08 - Die besten Gärten 2008 ISBN 978-3-9502424-1-6

Catalogue Orders on [www.privateplots.at/en/catalogue.html](http://www.privateplots.at/en/catalogue.html) (Euro 25,-)

Editors: Karin Standler, Robert Froschauer, [www.privateplots.at](http://www.privateplots.at), [info@privateplots.at](mailto:info@privateplots.at)

Published by: Office of the Lower Austrian State Government, Department of Environmental Management and Land Management Support, Landhausplatz 1, A-3109 St. Pölten, Austria

Distribution: Aktion Natur im Garten – Verein für Lebensqualität,

Landhausboulevard Haus 1/Top 1, A-3109 St. Pölten, Austria, [garten@naturimgarten.at](mailto:garten@naturimgarten.at)

180 x 215, Paperback, 140 Pages

© Team private plots



Stage Gardens: Gregg Bleam - USA



Water Courses: Rothnerhof - Plant - A



Update: Dinder Garden - Calonder Landschaftsarchitekten - B