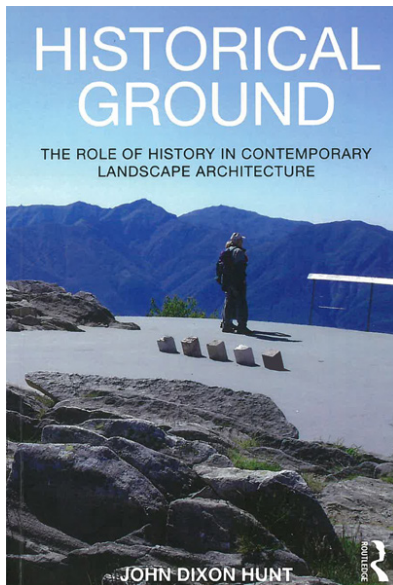


# Historical Ground: The Role of History in Contemporary Landscape Architecture

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English-born John Dixon Hunt is an internationally renowned expert in the study of landscapes. His book 'Historical Ground' advocates the idea that history of a particular site may be invoked and used in a new intervention. Hunt informs future designers to place importance on history as a driver for design rather than a modernist approach that ignores the past and a sense of locality.

'Historical Ground' details a collection of existing landscape architecture designs and ideology reflecting Hunt's studies of continuously changing landscapes and their relationship with the past. The beginning of the book explains how geology, typography and the weathering features can provide natural history markers in a design process. 'The Geological Observatory' in Cardada Switzerland is an example that explores geology through local rock strata formations that are directly embedded in the design. The book then discusses the broader theme of the history of people to place. Some examples included are 'Parc André Citroën' in Paris and 'Invalidenplatz' in Berlin. The examples used from the United States and Europe show the designers' intentions of revealing historical connection and how individuals apply their own personal account of history to a location. Hunt writes, "Accretion of event and personal occupation, the sense that some otherwise anonymous place has a life that is longer than the moment when a visitor is there".

Hunt shows the contrast between landscapes with a rich historical background like 'Palatine Hill' in Rome and leading contemporary landscape design, Les Jardins d'Eole, Paris for example. Although they differ in form and programme, both landscapes follow a similar system of reflecting the role of history, contemporary design usually being more abstract. The various examples of landscape interventions, plants, and garden forms are all showcased with detailed descriptions and analytical remarks from Hunt and other internationally recognised landscape critics, Bernard Lassus, Peter Latz and Udo Weilacher to name a few. This gives credibility to Hunt's assertions of the need for better historical reflection and locality in the design process. Hunt uses a number of black and white images to reinforce the examples, however additional knowledge is needed to fully grasp the concept and receptive comments. Hunt leads to a coherent denouement, proving that landscape designs exhibiting historical connections portray a stronger sense of substance when in context.

'Historical Ground' serves as a reference for landscape designers, it reiterates the unwritten law of attaching importance to the past in order to create a meaningful design that can be received positively by users. Different from others with similar content, this book is short with 165 pages, a precise approach providing a sufficient amount of insight on a vast topic. Readers with a strong landscape background such as avid landscape historians and landscape students will profit from reading this.