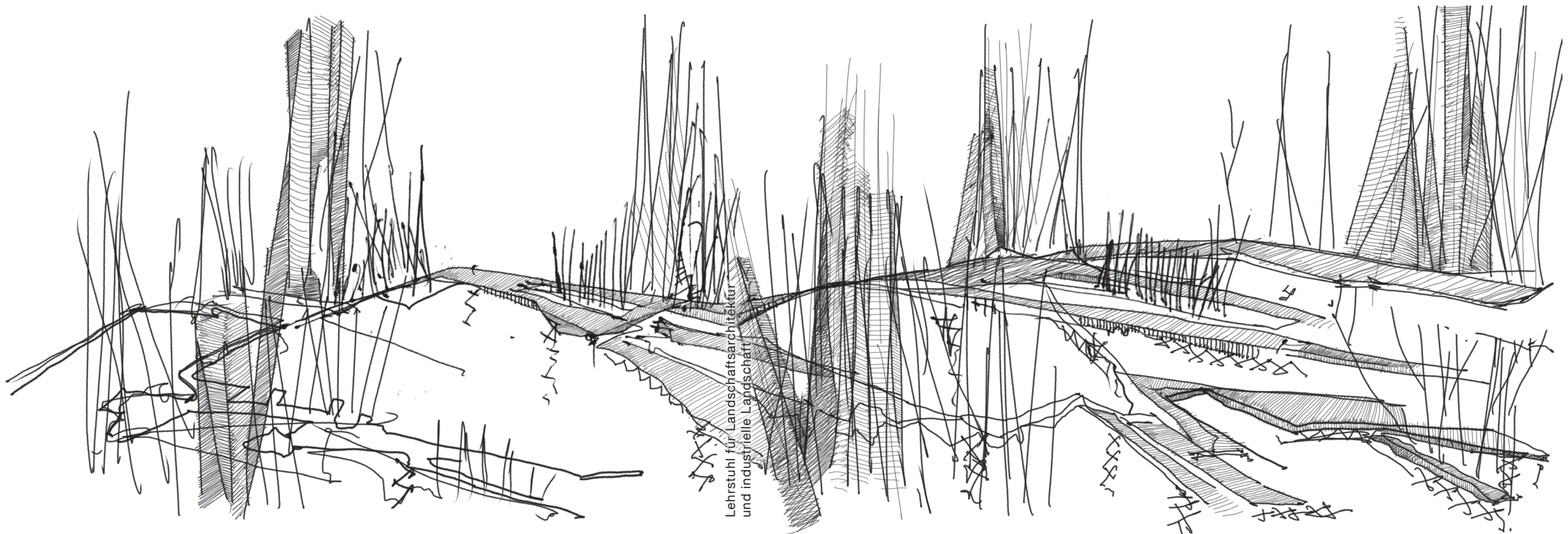


INSPIRATION HIGH LINE

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Lehrstuhl für Landschaftsarchitektur
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LAI

Success is Sexy

Dietmar Straub

The whole world wants to be as cool as New York with its buildings that seem to grow straight into the sky. Other cities try to copy the “Manhattan Model”, but New York manages to always stay one step ahead. With the development of the High Line, the city refused to copy its own model of vertical mobility and created a radical horizontal movement.

As a designer, you always hold on to the hope that you will one day shape a space with a strong essence and powerful aura, a place that exudes some degree of courage and audaciousness which you hope people will experience as a physical sensation. But you have to be prepared to jump at these fleeting chances, and James Corner snatched his opportunity.

The High Line is not trendsetting, the High Line is avant-garde. Trendsetting merely initiates short-term phenomena generated by individuals or the market. The impulses and transformations resulting from avant-garde thinkers are more fundamental and achieve a greater long-term impact on design, aesthetics and environmental ethics. The avantgardist’s High Line design has instigated a pioneering role and stimulated groundbreaking perspectives and ideas.

For more than a decade now I have worked in Winnipeg, Canada as a landscape architect. My architect colleagues show their respect for “landscape” by referencing the High Line in New York. This trendy citation is intended to create mutual understanding. However, it highlights the persistent gap between the profession’s rhetoric and the reality of everyday practice. Nevertheless, the great merit of the High Line is that it works, as the paving sand to tie the community of spatial

designers together. Without a doubt, the High Line strengthens the reputation and identity of landscape architecture and is, in my opinion, an undisputed success.

This great achievement also generates a significant risk – success is sexy. The High Line project has been followed by many luxury towers and prestige buildings designed by star architects. Processes of gentrification have reached their peak in the revalued urban area. Only a few of the original butchers and meat traders are still there supplying meat products and authenticity for the district. The “slaughtering” is going to continue. The real estate market is addicted to prime ribs.

I would love to visit New York’s buildings, parks and squares. I want to walk the High Line hovering three stories above the city’s ground. I look forward to encountering the grasses, the flowers, and enjoying the bella vistas. I hope the High Line remains a habitat for the flâneurs and the globetrotters, the passionate shoppers and stressed-out business people, the bankers and the prostitutes, the locals and the inquisitive tourists, the beggars and the pickpockets... to linger in this state of thriving urban diversity. •