An aerial night photograph of a city square in Turin, Italy. The square is filled with a large crowd of people, illuminated by warm, orange-red lights. In the background, a large, modern building with a prominent white facade and a blue light beam is visible. The surrounding city is lit up with various lights, creating a vibrant urban atmosphere.

submittal for the competition

PUBLIC SPACE SYSTEM TURIN

WEST 8
urban design
&
landscape
architecture

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cover photo: Schouwburgplein, Rotterdam

Design Philosophy West8

The West 8 urban design & landscape architecture office was set up in 1987 as an international team of architects, urban designers and industrial designers. West 8 designs landscape interventions, urban plans, squares, parks and gardens. The philosophy of West 8 is deeply rooted in an optimistic attitude towards the contemporary landscape, in which it expresses both the vulnerability and the euphoria of mass culture. Landscape, infrastructure, nature and archaeology coalesce to form vital constituents of the city. Arcadian landscapes coexist alongside the dynamic, mutable and sprawling city unimpeded by architectural doctrines or history, the city stretches towards the horizon or shoots skywards. Space has acquired new dimensions that constantly put the sense of scale and proportion to the test. West 8 draws inspiration from the poetic beauty of the artless and the mundane. The urban dweller is no pitiful victim needing compensation in the form of green and nature; today's urbanite is a self-assured, exploratory, creative individualist. He is well informed and affluent, and equipped with the most up-to-date technology. He is an explorer and manipulator of his surroundings. The design of this environment demands a sensitivity that goes beyond the creation of mere decorative nature. The city produces its own wastelands. Severed from the traditional center by railway lines, motorways and fly-overs, new dispersed centers are created. That their identity is not fixed in advance is neither good nor bad.

In its urban design work West 8 seeks to devise powerful building typologies that are attuned to the landscape and public space. A sharp line is drawn between private and public space in order to engender a sense of contrast. West 8's designs for public spaces reveal the office's fascination for emptiness as a condition. Within the urban fabric, West 8 creates quasi-unprogrammed spaces that can be colonized at will by urbanites. Potential play of surfaces are demarcated in a two-dimensional, graphic design by different materials such as steel, glass, wood and rubber. The sparsely distributed objects in public spaces acquire the quality of totems or icons. They furnish the location with identity and lure the urbanite. Large wooden benches boldly face the sunshine. Bridges evocative of reptiles ask to be climbed. The lighting in public spaces often creates the sense of the surreal through the use of large movable spotlights or colored lamps shining from tree stumps.

The knowledge that the contemporary landscape is for the most part artificial and made up of different components, both designed and undesigned, allows West 8 the freedom to respond by positing its own narrative spaces. The basic ingredients are ecology, infrastructure, weather conditions, building programs and people. The aim is to incorporate the awareness of these various aspects in a playful optimistic manner that stimulates the desire to conquer and take possession of space. Gardens form the only exception. The organized world of commerce, functionality and efficiency finds its necessary counterpart in specific spaces that appeal to uncertainty, mortality, desire and perversity. The gardens are enclosed and withdrawn from the world. It is here that the human dwellers can literally retreat into themselves.

The realization of large-scale interventions in a city requires a strong and understandable concept in order to carry a unique identity. They always refer to the local context, the history, the landscape, or the surrounding ecology. West 8 urban designs take advantage of market criteria and political realities. In this approach the design is not always the dominant issue.

Research, exploitation of parameters and social political implementation enrich the design, and give it a multi-level quality. The aim will be the development of an urban identity, which carries spirit that will guide the commercial investments. Urban design can make a valuable contribution to cultural heritage and through this, the values of cultural heritage, site context and modern design can be distilled into a place.

We understand the technical issues that can surround various site conditions and our multidisciplinary approach of architects and engineers working within the same firm, allows the entire design from engineering to plant materials to be seen as a complete palette leveraging each dollar to make one unique design statement. We have designed and implemented public spaces (as seen in our portfolio) internationally and understand that a key to success is finding local firms to match our technical and design expectations. Though we have currently not collaborated with a local design firm in Houston as of yet, we fully intend, with the guidance of the Houston Conservancy, to seek out a local consultant and establish a highly-skilled team to ensure an excellent realization of the project.

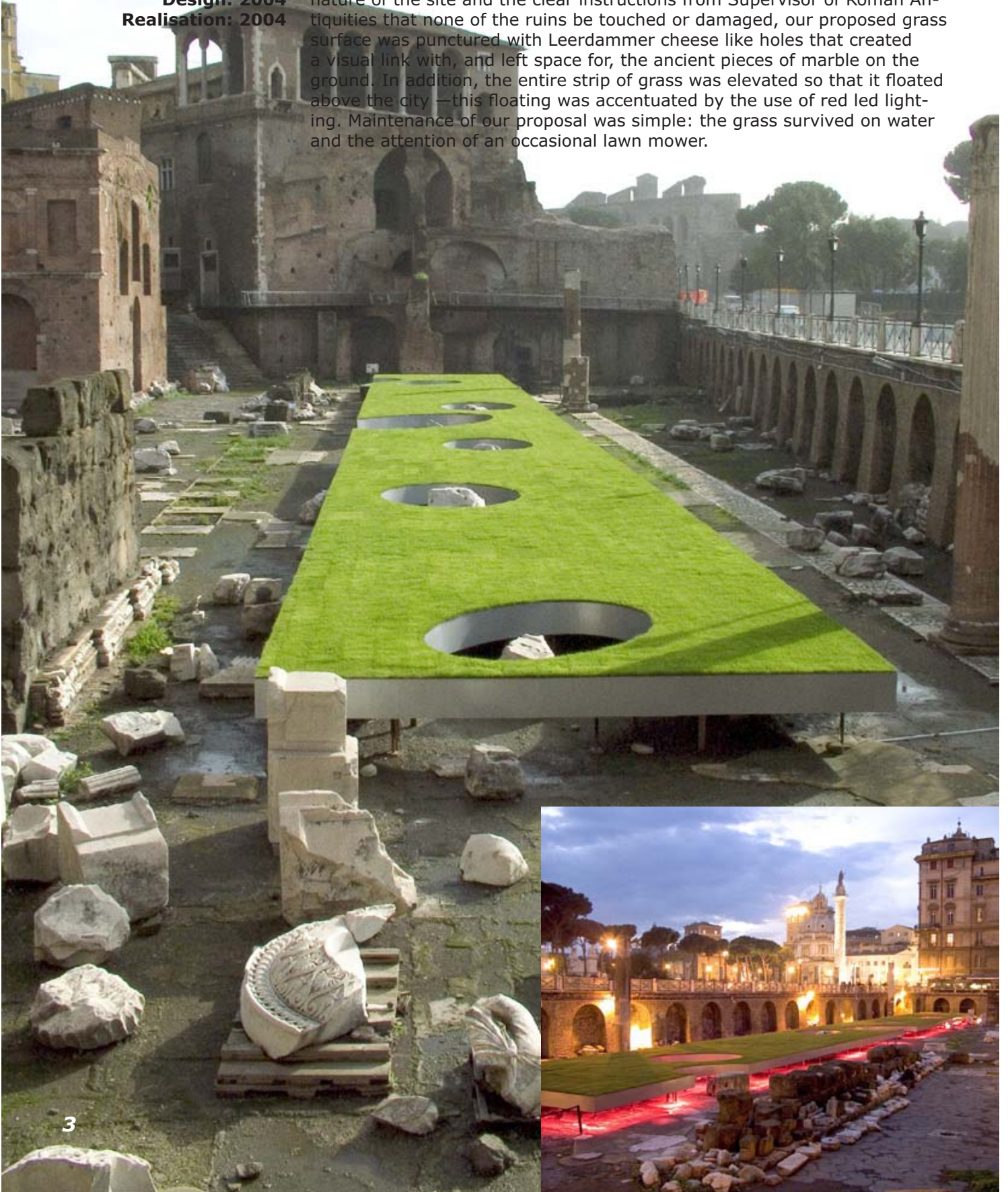
WONDERHOLLAND, Rome (IT)

HOLLAND AWAY FROM HOME

EXHIBITION

Client: Dutch Embassy
Design: 2004
Realisation: 2004

In an attempt to revitalise the ancient Mercati di Traiano, we imagined a flat, virgin carpet of fresh Dutch greenness, a small and temporary piece of Holland away from Holland in the middle of old Rome. Due to the sensitive nature of the site and the clear instructions from Supervisor of Roman Antiquities that none of the ruins be touched or damaged, our proposed grass surface was punctured with Leerdammer cheese like holes that created a visual link with, and left space for, the ancient pieces of marble on the ground. In addition, the entire strip of grass was elevated so that it floated above the city —this floating was accentuated by the use of red led lighting. Maintenance of our proposal was simple: the grass survived on water and the attention of an occasional lawn mower.



MARKET SQUARE, Seregno (IT)

REDESIGN MARKETPLACE

Client:

**Azienda Municipale
Servicci Pubblici
Seregno**

In collaboration with:

**Dominique Perrault
architects, Luca Bergo,
@@-architects**

Design: 1998

Realisation: 2002-2003

Design of a marketsquare, bridge and entrancebuilding for an underground parking.

The multiple assignment from AMSP Seregno was for a new office for the AMSP, a parking garage, a marketsquare and pedestrian bridge.

The market demands a square with as less elements as possible on the square. Because of the enormous open space this generates the elements on the square are somehow overdimensioned to be in pace with the large scale of the site; lamp posts of 20 m. with lamps of 1x1 m., a pergola with an average height of 15 m. and huge rocks. The square is designed with two 'families' of street furniture; one family is of big elements; the pedestrian bridge, entrance of the parking garage and the pergola, and another one of smaller scale elements; fences, gates, lamp-posts and tree grids.



GARIBALDI PARK, Milano (IT)

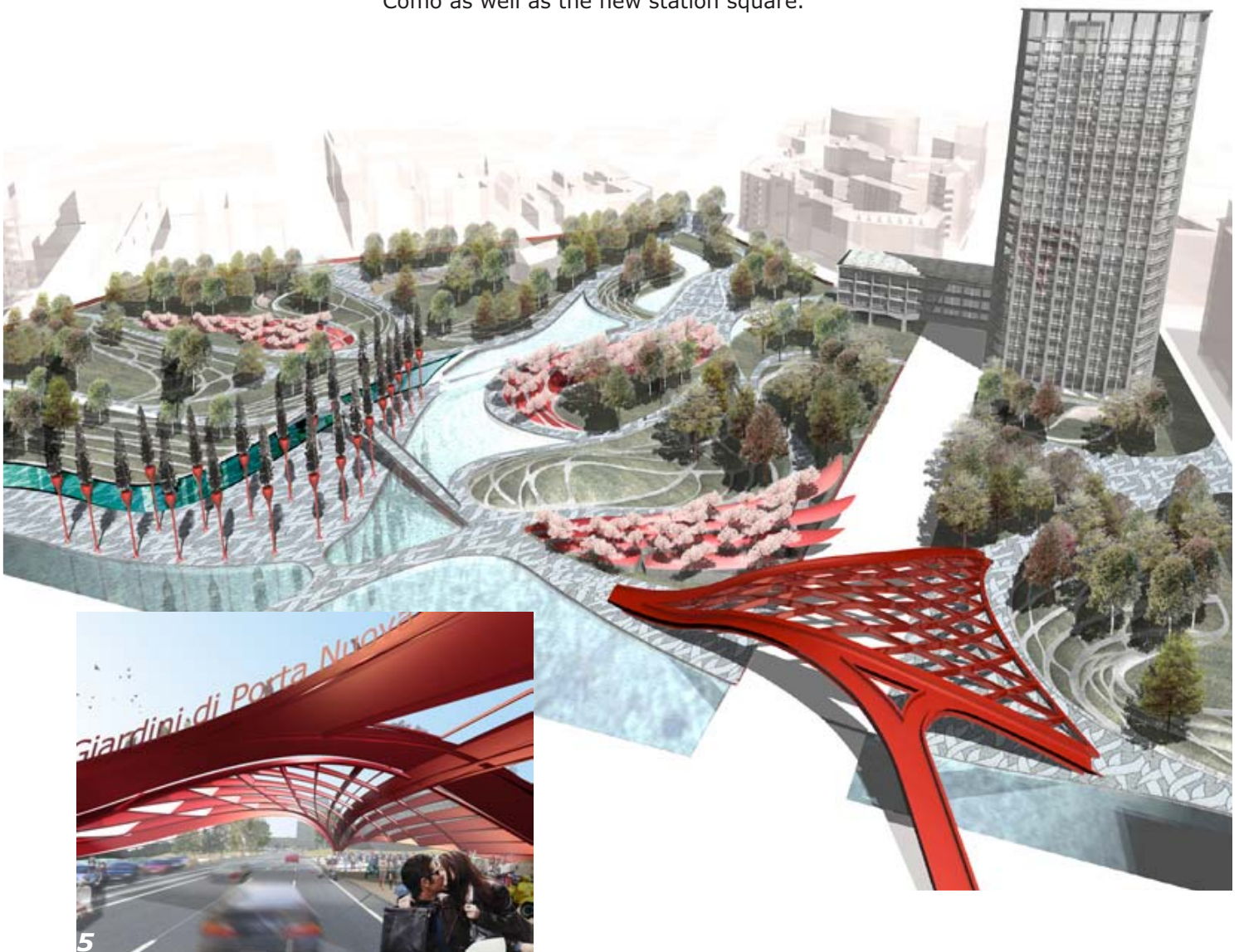
COMPETITION PARK AND STATION AREA

Client: Municipality of Milano

Design: 2003 - 2004
In association with: Studio Power; Paolo Pomodoro; Studio Trafico Gelmini

The Giardini di Porta Nuova will firstly offer the Milanese a green public space, a necessary new asset for the city and eventually will develop into one of the urban parks of Milan. The Giardini have the potential to become a contemporary urban landmark, a new symbol in the city. It will strongly refer to the tradition and worldwide reputation of Milan as the city of fashion and cultural extravagance. The projected City of Fashion will contribute to this.

No good park can exist unless it is well connected to the adjacent neighborhoods. The introduction of a traffic tunnel in the Viale Luigi Sturzo results in an easy and direct connection between Corso Como and the Station Square. By demolishing a part of the parking deck on top of the railway tunnel of Stazione Garibaldi, an acceptable hurdle is created. At the south end of this deck generous stairs will be built to take pedestrians from the Station Square onto the plateau, which will become a new piazza, approximately five meters higher. This piazza, on the roof of the railway tunnel, creates new addresses for the two 'twin towers', as well as for espresso bars, small shops and a new entrance to the parking. From the piazza, the route reminiscent of the Old towns of Europe, continues down some steps into Isola to Via Pietro Borsieri. By introducing a tunnel under Viale Luigi Sturzo for through traffic, the northern facades of the City of Fashion are directly facing the park, taking maximum benefit from it in all aspects. The new City of Fashion is directly connected with Corso Como as well as the new station square.



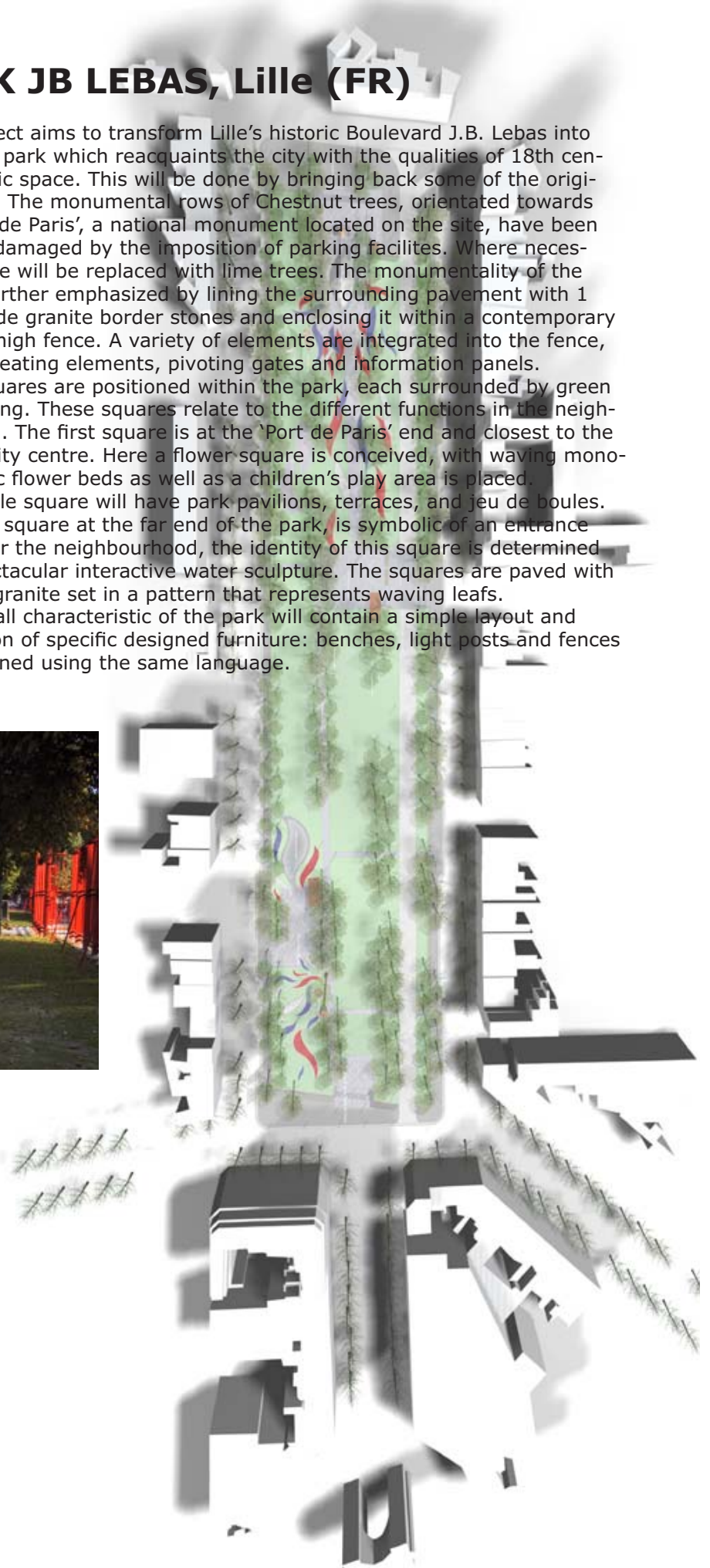
PARK JB LEBAS, Lille (FR)

URBAN PARK

Client:
Ville de Lille

Design: 2002
Realisation: 2004

This project aims to transform Lille's historic Boulevard J.B. Lebas into an urban park which reacquaints the city with the qualities of 18th century public space. This will be done by bringing back some of the original spirit. The monumental rows of Chestnut trees, orientated towards the 'Port de Paris', a national monument located on the site, have been lost and damaged by the imposition of parking facilities. Where necessary these will be replaced with lime trees. The monumentality of the park is further emphasized by lining the surrounding pavement with 1 metre wide granite border stones and enclosing it within a contemporary 4-meter high fence. A variety of elements are integrated into the fence, such as seating elements, pivoting gates and information panels. Three squares are positioned within the park, each surrounded by green landscaping. These squares relate to the different functions in the neighbourhood. The first square is at the 'Port de Paris' end and closest to the historic city centre. Here a flower square is conceived, with waving monochromatic flower beds as well as a children's play area is placed. The middle square will have park pavilions, terraces, and jeu de boules. The third square at the far end of the park, is symbolic of an entrance square for the neighbourhood, the identity of this square is determined by a spectacular interactive water sculpture. The squares are paved with Chinese granite set in a pattern that represents waving leaves. The overall characteristic of the park will contain a simple layout and application of specific designed furniture: benches, light posts and fences are designed using the same language.



DE NEUDE, Utrecht (NL)

URBAN SQUARE

Client:
Gemeente Utrecht

Design: 1996
Realisation: 1998

The design for the Neude square in Utrecht was a winning entry for a limited design competition.

For the city of Utrecht the principal concern was the layout of the square. Public opinion was in favour of a retrospective design which would include brick paving and 19th century lighting.

West 8 won this competition with a design for a flat and empty square made of broken Belgian stone with a monumental statue on the crossing of all sight lines. On the north side of the square there are 10 horse-chestnut trees and specifically designed contemporary benches and a flagpole. These objects are rich in details and are embraced as classical elements on the square. Their scale is appropriate for the square, and at the same time they articulate the square within the wider urban context. The flagpole is 22 metres high and is constructed from a single larch tree from the Hoge Veluwe. It is mounted on a steel tripod structure. The benches are made from oak slats and metal flanges. They are shaped to promote active sitting, adults can lean on them and children can sit on the backside. Unlike standard street furniture the benches and flagpole for the Neude have a character that defies anonymity.



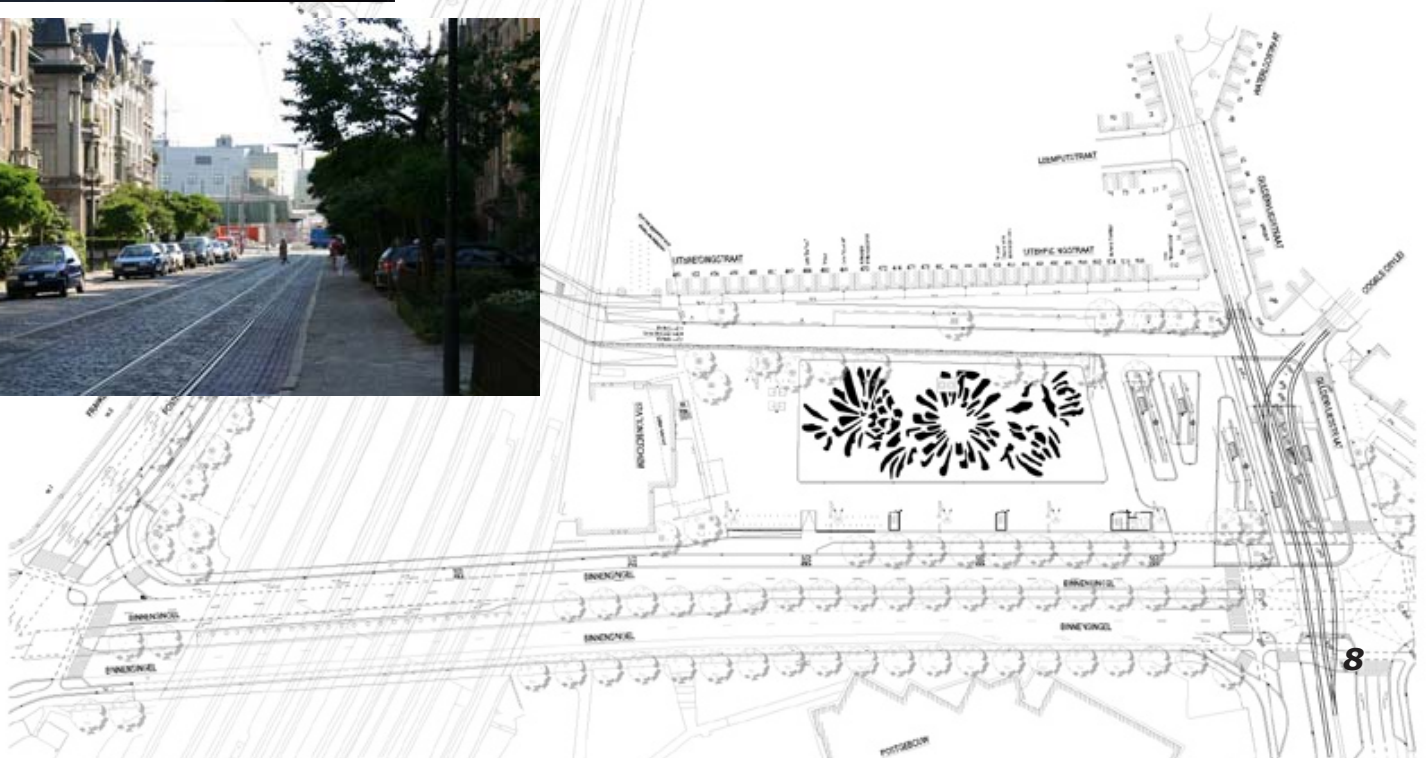
TGV STATION SQUARE

Client:
Stad Antwerpen
Design: 1999
Realisation: 2005
(currently under construction)

BURG RYKCAERTSPLEIN, Antwerp (BE)

The Burgemeester Ryckaertsplein is situated at the edge of the city Antwerp. Characteristic of a square nearby a station, it is not a place to stay but a place for "passing through"; a place for travellers. The surrounding area is a rich mixture of different styles and scales of buildings. The square is 2 hectares in size and has no distinguished borders. During the past years the area has grown into a space with an unorganised mixed use of public transport, taxi and other forms of traffic. The relationship to the surrounding area is bad or non-existent.

The construction of an underground garage under these circumstances gives a good reason to modify and reorganize the area, to create an urban space that has a strong connection with its' surroundings. Two public transport nodes organise the square and tie the infrastructure network to the station area. As a counterpart to the station building a monumental canopy will be built at the end of Cogels Osylei serving as a tram- and bus stop. The canopy will be plated with oxidized copper perforated with a flower design. This street is defined by a majestic art nouveau- and 19th century row houses with marvellous front gardens surrounded by iron fences. In between these two transport nodes, the neo-classicist front along the Uitbreidingsstraat gives rise to a space that reflects the identity, style and the scale of the surrounding environment. Freeform patterns of natural stone, gravel and 80cm high, evergreen hedges create an urban garden, a silent inward turning world interacting with the busy travellers. This public garden is formed by defining arbitrary routes through the station square with several free lines of hedges. This results in a constantly changing perspective effect in the garden for the passers-by. The connection to the inner city is strengthened by a barrier towards the unattractive massive buildings to the south focusing the square to the Old Antwerp. The entries to the underground parking, bicycle-garage and service-buildings for the public transport form the first line of defence. They make an urban built edge, which is strengthened by a wall between the level of the square and the level of the street profile, separating a route along the podium to the city. The buildings are picked up in a transparent metal structure that allows the climbing plants to take over and create an enclosing skyline against the main street. The garden, the barrier and the canopy roof are standing on a surface of Belgian blue stone, accelerated through different textures for different purposes. The whole surface of the square will be enclosed by a 3 to 4 meter wide edge treatment.



JUBILEE GARDENS, London (UK)

PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN

Client: Stadt Zürich

Design: 2003

Realisation due: 2007

The renovation of the Jubilee Gardens will offer London a spectacular green public space on the Thames, a focal point on the South Bank. Elevated from the street level, the park is separated from the BA London Eye, and celebrates the most wonderful view on London: Westminster Parliament, Big Ben, Central London skyline, Thames bridges, St. Pauls.



SEEUFER, Zürich (CH)

PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN

**Client: Stadt Zürich
Design: 2003**

Study for possible developments of the lakeshore of the Zürich See. The design focuses on strengthening three parts of the lakeshore.



Curriculum Vitae West 8

As a leading urban design practice in Europe, West 8 has extensive experience in both large-scale urban planning, urban design and landscaping. West 8 has a history of collaboration with world-class architects such as Richard Rogers Partnership, Steven Holl, Dominique Perrault, Foster and Partners, Rem Koolhaas, Hans Kollhoff, Enric Miralles, Jose Mateo, Maximilian Fuksas, Ben van Berkel and Herzog de Meuron.

Since 1985, West 8 has worked on an international level and has developed projects in Copenhagen, Paris, London, Zürich, Vienna, New York, and Charleston as well as other cities. For the realization of international projects, strategic alliances with local management/engineering firms (such as Bovis, Ove Arup & Partners, Arcadis, Techdata A.G.) have proved to be successful.

West 8 urban planners and landscape architects take a hybrid multi-disciplinary approach as a method of confronting complex design issues. The office consists of a diverse design team, urban planners, architects, designers and landscape architects, totaling 40 members. Under the direction of Prof. Ir. Adriaan H. Geuze, West 8 has developed an interest in relating contemporary culture, urban identity, architecture and the public space within one design. This design approach is always related to the context.

Additional Projects (selection)

- Public Space Luxury Village, Moskou, Russia
- Grand Museum of Egypt, Cairo, Egypt
- Northern Park, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
- Buona Vista Park, Singapore
- Schouwburgplein; public space design, Rotterdam, the Netherlands
- Sculpture Garden Kröller Müller, Otterloo, the Netherlands
- Harbour Development Copenhagen, Denmark
- 'Retired Railway' -12 km linear park and botanic bridge, Gwangju, South Korea
- Amsterdam Eastern Harbour; masterplan, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
- Chiswick Business Park, London, United Kingdom
- Leidsche Rijn Park, Utrecht, the Netherlands
- Schiphol Amsterdam International Airport; landscape design, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
- Expo.02, exhibition site, Yverdon-les-bains, Switzerland
- Park Interpolis; landscape design, Tilburg, the Netherlands
- South Bank Centre development; masterplan, London, United Kingdom
- Kings Crescent; urban design, London, United Kingdom
- Stratford City; urban design and public space, London, United Kingdom
- Chanel Island; masterplan, public space and bridge, Bruges, Belgium
- Station Area Hasselt; masterplan, Hasselt, Belgium
- Monjuïc; masterplan and landscape design, Barcelona, Spain
- Les Halles; masterplan and landscape design, Paris, France
- Siemens City; urban design, Munich, Germany
- Wharf District Parks, Central Artery Project; initial concept, Boston, MA

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