

Altering the User's State of Mind Through Good Landscape Design

■ Ted Spaid

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Ted Spaid, ASLA and principal of SWT Design, shares his design perspective on how landscape architecture allows a visitor to immerse themselves into a landscape environment through unique plantings and site amenities. Hear him speak during the 2006 WESTERN Annual Meeting and Trade Show.

Today's savvy consumer desires more than just paved parking lots and masonry blocked buildings. They care about what is being built in their communities and are more environmentally aware than ever. This is evident through the increase of municipality guidelines, zoning ordinances and tree preservations requirements instituted and enforced by the residents. Consumers today want to feel their surroundings alter their minds. They want to escape the burdens and stress of everyday life and find tranquility and peace, or energy and motivation through their new found environments.

Landscape Architects have an important role to play in shaping a consumer's environment and transporting them from their everyday lives to an environment that is unique to a particular client while at the same time imprinting that experience in the consumer's mind to relive forever.

The immersion design technique is well established in themed park resorts and restaurants but is just recently being introduced to zoological parks, retailers and universities.

Zoos have radically changed how visitors view animal exhibits. Today they are incorporating natural habitat and plantings into the designs of exhibits. For example, the St. Louis Zoo's Cyprus Swamp exhibit allows the zoo visitors to be surrounded by an ecosystem that historically has been found along the Mississippi.

In addition, retailers have extended their image and themes beyond the architectural walls to attract and retain



St. Louis Zoo 1904 World's Fair Flight Cage

customers. Bass Pro Shops' Outdoor World excites the outdoor enthusiasts with using native plants, streams and even incorporating deadfall trees as habitat enhancement.

Universities also are realizing the importance of competing beyond the academic realm. The University of Missouri-Rolla is known around the country as a premier engineering school; however, the aesthetic appeal was missing. The campus lacked the green design and pedestrian-friendly walkways found in many universities around the country. SWT Design completed the planning and design of a plaza entrance and pedestrian walkway to the Electrical Engineering building allowing students walking across campus to find delight by



Ranken Jordan Pediatric Specialty Hospital Site

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immersing themselves into a university-like atmosphere of green lawns and colorful drifts of perennials and annuals.

As more communities, public and private institutions realize the importance of immersing the consumer within their environments, they will become more successful in attracting, entertaining and retaining their visitors for generations to come.

— Ted Spaid is co-founder of SWT Associates Landscape Architects/Planners as well as a member and former Chapter President of the American Society of Landscape Architecture (ASLA). He graduated cum laude from Kansas State University with a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture.