

The Other '56

Charles Waldheim

Landscape urbanism has emerged over the past decade as a critique of the disciplinary and professional commitments of traditional urban design and an alternative to “New Urbanism.” The critique launched by landscape urbanism has much to do with urban design’s perceived inability to come to terms with the rapid pace of urban change and the essentially horizontal character of contemporary automobile-based urbanization across North America and much of Western Europe. It equally has to do with the inability of traditional urban design strategies to cope with the environmental conditions left in the wake of deindustrialization, increased calls for an ecologically informed urbanism, and the ongoing ascendancy of design culture as an aspect of urban development. The emerging discourse of landscape urbanism as chronicled in this book and other venues sheds interesting light on the ultimately abandoned proposal that urban design might have originally been housed in landscape architecture at Harvard. One reading of José Luis Sert’s original formulation for urban design at Harvard is that he wanted to provide a transdisciplinary space within the academy. But urban design has yet to fulfill its potential as an intersection of the design disciplines engaging with the built environment. In the wake of that unfulfilled potential, landscape urbanism has proposed a critical and historically informed rereading of the environmental