URBANSKI: Transportation engineers were in charge of the Artery project, unfortunately. The trend that Millennium Park climaxes, which is over, is that of the candy sampler: here's a chocolate with a cherry, and here's one with coconut, and so on. It was a technique developed in the 1980s and brought to its apogee in New York and other places as a response to not being able to reach consensus. All the constituents would be asked, "Well, what do you want?" Millennium Park is a candy sampler, a collection of gardens or follies.

GOLDBERGER: What examples are there in New York?

URBANSKI: Thomas Balsley Associates likes to do that, as in Chelsea Waterside Park. And Battery Park City is a little bit that. Jennifer Bartlett's design for South Park originally was that.

CZERNIAK: Where that can work is when it's built into the design's systemic logic. Think of the "cinematic promenade" in Tschumi's Parc de la Villette, which designs in the possibility for adaptability, flexibility, and difference. And yet the design remains coherent. Field Operations' projects are also noteworthy for their strong organizational structures. Fresh Kills's design is like a pixilated field. It can adapt to changes because its initial configuration is robust.

KRIEGER: Although Rodolfo said this conversation was about architecture, we have talked mainly about parks, not housing or streets. We've talked about the transformative project that requires great design and is in the right place. But there's a contrasting role for urban design in the maintenance of urbanism. A majority of urban designers are engaged on behalf of neighborhood groups in small-scale, local improvements with streets or neighborhood facilities. It makes them seem invisible or less essential. But the sum of all their small-scale work may be quite large, larger than the sum of high-profile public projects.

MACHADO: You're talking about landscape beautification, aren't you?

KRIEGER: No, advocacy for housing, affordability, social services, mixed uses, and transit, the stuff that's important to people at a grassroots level. It used to be called planning; now people refer to it as urban design.