

The development from pop landscape to Post Pop landscape

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Abstract: Pop Art, which emerged in the 1950s, has had a subtle yet profound impact on landscape design. By the 1990s, a distinct Pop Landscape style began to appear. Over time, many believed that Pop Landscape was gradually fading away. However, evidence suggests that since the beginning of the 21st century, Pop Landscape has been evolving into a more integrated Post Pop era. This paper reviews and introduces the origins of Pop Art, the trends of Pop Landscape, and the characteristics of Post-Pop Landscape. It also explores the direction of landscape development in the Post Pop era through discussions of various controversies surrounding Pop Landscape and analyses of practical case studies. The aim is to draw the attention of landscape designers and the general public to Post-Pop Landscape, encouraging it to continuously bring novelty to people and add a vibrant hue to the landscape industry.

Keywords: Pop Art, Post-Pop Art, Pop Landscape, Color, Mass Culture

1. Introduction

Pop Art is one of the most popular forms of modern art. In an era dominated by the pretentiousness and ubiquity of abstract art, Pop Art emerged triumphantly as a counter-movement to abstraction. Pop Art is an artistic form that reflects the material realities of everyday life. It signifies the return of popular culture, hence its name “Pop Art,” which is transliterated into Chinese as Pop Art.

2. The origins of Pop Art

Pop Art originated in the mid-1950s in the United Kingdom and was popularized by the United States in the late 1950s. Challenging tradition, Pop Art asserts that the visual elements of popular culture in mass media can be considered as manifestations of art. A common technique used in Pop Art is to extract and isolate materials from their original contexts or to associate them with unrelated elements in order to provoke contemplation.

Pop Art is the art of popular culture. Compared to the more subjective and metaphorical British popular culture, American Pop Art is more symbolic and aggressive. During its development, Pop Art coincided with the popular music of the 1950s and 1960s, which amplified its influence and linked it with the fashionable image of London at the time. For example, Peter Blake's album covers for The Beatles and Elvis Presley are iconic examples. American Pop Artists primarily used visual elements representing American society and culture for replication, superimposition, and combination. Andy Warhol, the most famous American Pop Artist, focused on using movie stars as his creative material. His 1962 Marilyn Monroe series (Figure 1), which became a global sensation, is a prime example. Warhol summarized the Pop Art movement and the role of media within it by saying, “In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes.” Because the media constantly disseminates popular culture, everyone can become a part of it.

3. Characteristics of Pop Art

Pop Art is defined as a genre of art derived from themes and techniques of popular, vogue, and kitschy culture. For example, sources of Pop Art can range from the diverse everyday consumer products on supermarket shelves to the advertising-filled pages of magazines, and from movie star posters in cinemas to

advertisements, television, and comic books. Pop Art is a reaction to Abstract Expressionism. Through the use of irony, Pop Art maximizes the expressive power of even the most mundane popular culture images.

A key characteristic of Pop Art is the use of clear lines and symbols to reinterpret people and objects from popular culture. The visual style of American comic books in the 1950s and 1960s became one of the main sources of inspiration for Pop Art. A representative figure, Roy Lichtenstein, developed a style based on visual comics. Its main features include the bold use of primary colors as the main hues, outlined with black contours, and the addition of dots to achieve tonal transitions.

During the Pop Art movement, artists often emphasized objects by enlarging their scale. Logos and product labels are known for their strong Pop Art sensibility. While all art appeals to people emotionally, Pop Art captures interest through experience, as its elements are derived from our everyday lives. As Pop Art master Andy Warhol famously said, "Everything is art." The essence lies in the idea that art originates from everything in life, including the most ordinary consumer products. The characteristics of Pop Art are still widely applied in print design today, and its artistic features, especially the bright colors and dots, never fade away.

Master Sculptors: Jeff Koons and Claes Oldenburg are known for using everyday consumer products as creative elements. By employing exaggerated magnification, they enlarge objects that are usually perceived as insignificant, making them so large that they highlight human insignificance, thereby achieving an inversion of scale. In terms of materials, they either imitate the textures of real objects or use colored stainless steel to create a sense of wonder for viewers as they experience the sculptures.

Jeff Koons' famous Balloon Dog (Figure 2) brings back the fond memories of balloons from childhood into the adult world, showing that even in the colorful modern consumer society, people can still find their original innocent memories. Claes Oldenburg's "Spoonbridge and Cherry" (Figure 3) in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden is a quintessential Pop Art sculpture. The combination of two common elements—spoon and cherry—with a fountain is highly imitative and humorous. Whether in the snowy winters or hot summers of Minnesota, it has become a must-see destination for visitors to the garden.

4. The Post Pop era

The term "Post Pop" is derived from "Pop Art." The Post Pop era began to emerge in the 1970s. This does not mean that Pop Art was fading away; on the contrary, since the 1970s, the elements of Pop Art have increasingly permeated people's lives and modes of expression. Therefore, the Post Pop era represents a more extensive and inclusive culture.



Figure 1: Andy Warhol's "Marilyn Monroe"



Figure 2: Jeff Koons' Blue Stainless Steel Balloon Dog



Figure 3: Claes Oldenburg's "Spoonbridge and Cherry"

4.1. Globalization

Since the 1970s, with the rapid development of transportation and the swift dissemination of culture, global culture has entered a phase of high integration. Pop Art is no longer merely an art form reflecting British and American culture; it has become an art integrated into world culture. Strictly speaking, Pop Art originating from China should be considered a product of the Post Pop era, as Chinese Pop Art emerged in the 1990s. China missed the period when Pop Art initially rose to prominence, but this does not diminish its presence and expression in China. Looking around, the objects and consumer goods in our surroundings today are imbued with the characteristics of Pop Art. Moreover, with its booming economy, China provides even more fertile ground for the survival and development of Pop Art than Europe and North America.

4.2. Regional characteristics

Due to the distinct regional cultures of each country or area, Pop Art varies according to geography. For example, Chinese Pop Art tends to focus on depicting realistic human figures and emphasizes reflection on contemporary social phenomena. In contrast, South American Pop Art, with its exotic flair, is more inclined to express a relaxed and exuberant attitude towards life. Russia, on the other hand, contemplates how to portray the development of consumer culture within its own context, while clearly distinguishing itself from the cultures of the UK and the US.

4.3. Impact on more domains

Today, Pop Art remains a source of inspiration for artists. It has permeated into more fields, whether we are discussing web design, architectural design, landscape design, or other innovative areas.

5. Pop Landscape

During its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s, Pop Art did not have a very direct impact on landscape design. However, its influence on landscape designers was subtle and gradual, invisibly embedding itself into the creative DNA of certain designers. Martha Schwartz and Ken Smith, two internationally renowned landscape designers born in the 1950s, both experienced the peak of Pop Art in the United States during their childhood and youth. The vivid colors, exaggerated personalities, sense of freedom, and entertainment value of Pop Art left a deep, indelible mark on them, much like a brand.

By the 1980s, Martha Schwartz and Ken Smith began to experiment with incorporating their own Pop Art inspirations into their landscape projects. For example, Martha Schwartz's notable works include the Rio Commercial Center, Disney Avenue, the Swiss Re Bank, London's St. Mary Axe Plaza, Jacob Javits Plaza, HUD Plaza, and the Whitehead Institute Roof Garden. Ken Smith's projects include the Roof Garden of the Museum of Modern Art, TFANA Arts Plaza, and Orange County Airport Park, among others.

5.1. Characteristics of Pop landscape

5.1.1. *Approachability and interactive integration*

Rooted in popular culture, Pop Art is a re-expression of contemporary consumer culture. It reflects whatever is popular at the moment, possessing a sense of timeliness and accessibility that other art styles lack. It pursues integration and interaction with the general public, keeps pace with the times, and coexists with contemporary art.

5.1.2. *Encouraging free emotional expression*

Pop Landscape encourages diverse interpretations of the work itself, without limitation. This is also why few Pop Landscape works have interpretive plaques. Pop Landscape is not a type of landscape with fixed emotions; instead, it tends to express the wide range of human emotions. Generally speaking, most landscapes focus on expressing natural beauty, pleasantness, and a sense of repose. In contrast, Pop Landscape explores spaces with a spirit of entertainment, or those that evoke emotions of joy and sorrow, fear and happiness, and surreal transformations.

Pop Landscape designers do not want to neglect the element of individuality in design by focusing solely on natural ecology and functionality. They do not want their works to be "carbon copies" of others. Like in other design fields, landscape design requires designers to boldly express innovative ideas and representative personalities.

6. Characteristics of Early Pop Landscape

6.1. Early Pop landscape has distinct features

Vivid and Contrasting Colors. Early Pop Landscape often employs bright colors such as yellow, red, orange, and blue as the main palette. These colors are derived from traditional Pop Art advertisements and comic books. There is almost no transition between colors, emphasizing instead the strong contrast effects created by their juxtaposition. Pop Landscape skillfully uses complementary color pairs—red and green, yellow and purple, blue and orange—to achieve this effect. Attention is paid to the differences in brightness, purity, and saturation between these complementary colors. Combined with the shapes of the landscape layout and the forms of structures, this approach not only creates a vivid and cheerful aesthetic but also generates a unique visual impact.

6.2. Color outlining

Early Pop Landscape often employs outlining techniques using paint or different materials to highlight the main forms, achieving unexpected artistic effects. The outlining colors are typically black and white,

though not limited to these. This technique is inspired by the black outlines found in comic books and the decorative emphasis used in advertising light boxes.

6.3. Enlarged everyday objects

One of the signature techniques of Pop Art is to extract and isolate everyday elements from their original contexts and recombine them with unrelated elements to emphasize certain concepts and provoke thought. As a result, many common and familiar household items, slightly altered, become landscape elements with strong symbolic significance.

6.4. Strong composition

Pop Landscape emphasizes accidental and seemingly random layering and composition. Most works use zigzag lines as the basic structural framework, though in recent years, curved lines have also become more prevalent. In theory, the landscape plan, when stripped of color to form a black-and-white or line drawing, should also be a typical work of graphic art.

6.5. No pursuit of expensive materials

Pop culture emphasizes accessibility and integration into everyday life. The creation of works is intended to use the most direct, primitive, common, and simple materials to reshape those things around us that are easily overlooked, prompting a renewed awareness and reflection.

6.6. Spatial simplicity and emphasis on contrast

Pop Landscape transitions abruptly between different spatial experiences: from compressed spaces to open ones, from sunken spaces to elevated ones, and from shaded areas to open, hard surfaces. There is no need for transitional spaces; instead, it seeks strong spatial contrasts.

6.7. Expository plant arrangement

In Pop Landscape, plants, which may seem unrelated to Pop Art, become an integral part of the style. First, plants with distinct geometric shapes are used as the backbone species, such as pencil junipers, tall-trunked palm trees, cacti, and acacia trees. Second, the layout of trees is characterized by clear grid-like, dotted, or geometric patterns. The shrub layer does not emphasize multi-layered planting or groupings of varying heights; instead, it features clean and simple single-layer planting. The herbaceous layer is either planted in patches or arranged in geometric correspondence with the trees.

7. Characteristics of Post Pop landscape

Globalization, regionalism, and interdisciplinarity are reflected in Post-Pop landscape works. The globalization of Post-Pop art represents a shared understanding of Pop Art and landscape design among landscape architects worldwide. Both creative techniques and expressions in their works synchronously reflect the contemporary nature and commonalities of the current era.

However, Pop Art exhibits significant regional differences, which stem from variations in ethnicity and group collective civilizations, political cultures, and ways of thinking. Similar to the differences found in painting and fine arts, Western Post-Pop landscapes tend to lean towards abstraction, while indigenous Chinese Post-Pop landscapes often incorporate some figurative elements. For example, figurative sculptures within the site or figurative collages on walls are common features.



Figure 4: Carlos Martinez's St. Gallen City Lounge



Figure 5: Martha Schwartz's Jacob Javits Plaza

7.1. Cross-disciplinary collaborations in Pop landscape

Cross-disciplinary collaborations in Pop Landscape projects are becoming increasingly frequent. With advancements in technology, landscape designers often collaborate with architects, painters, sculptors, performance artists, lighting designers, and furniture designers. More and more landscape projects are incorporating technological elements to emphasize interaction between people and the landscape. This trend is becoming more prominent in Post-Pop Landscape, further bridging the gap between the site and its users.

7.2. Diverse material exploration in Pop landscape

There has been a significant shift in the materials used in Pop Landscape. Due to the use of vibrant and contrasting colors, traditional landscape materials are no longer sufficient. As a result, exploring new materials has become a crucial part of the creative process in Pop Landscape. Many traditional landscape materials have low color saturation and insufficient brightness, failing to meet the basic requirements for a lively appearance. Additionally, the heavy weight of traditional materials limits the flexibility and interactivity of site arrangements. Consequently, designers are turning to materials commonly used in architecture and interior design. Gradually, unconventional and previously untried materials are appearing in Post-Pop Landscape projects, such as mirrored stainless-steel planters, glass gabions, adhesive glass bead paving, and all-rubber surfaces.

7.3. Inspiration from daily life

The inspiration for Pop Landscape comes from everyday life. Landscape designers must be passionate about life, carefully observe and extract elements from the objects and trends around them, and possess a cross-disciplinary perspective. For example, Martha Schwartz, a renowned landscape designer, has a personal library dominated by books on art and sculpture, with less than a quarter dedicated to landscape design. Successful sculptures are soulful, vibrant, and artistically captivating. She often draws inspiration and nourishment from the perspectives and works of sculptors to enrich her landscape projects. During the early brainstorming phase of a project, she frequently asks designers involved in the project which artists and their works can serve as inspirational sources for the conceptual form. Examples include artists like Jeffrey Koons, Claes Oldenburg, Richard Serra, Henry Moore, Andy Goldsworthy, Robert Smithson, Doris Salcedo, and Louise Bourgeois. She believes that inspiration comes from life, and the most important aspect of a good landscape project is the IDEA. Without it, the project would merely be a soulless replica.

8. Misunderstandings about Pop landscape

There are relatively few works and representative designers in the realm of Pop Landscape, leading to widespread misunderstandings and biases.

8.1. Pop landscape has died out

The answer is no. Just like Pop Art, Pop Landscape has evolved into the Post Pop era. With an increasing number of popular elements in contemporary life, it is difficult to distinguish what is Pop and what is non-Pop. Topotek1, a cutting-edge German design firm, has created numerous works with diverse styles. Among them, the Red Square in Krefeld, Germany, and Superkilen Park in Copenhagen, Denmark, fall within the category of Pop Landscape. Carlos Martinez's work tends to be more restrained, but his outdoor public lounge project in St. Gallen, Switzerland (Figure 4), showcases a vibrant and open Pop style. The Richard Wynne Square designed by the Spanish EMBT studio features distinctive lighting and paving that imbue the site with a unique Pop style, making it a primary gathering place for local residents both during the day and at night.

8.2. Pop landscape focuses only on form, not function

This bias has a long history and is undeniable. Early Pop Landscape was ambitious, seemingly eager to prove its existence to the world. For example, Martha Schwartz's Jacob Javits Plaza (Figure 5), with its strong Pop style, was criticized as impractical. The continuous, elongated seating was seen as merely a formal expression, obstructing people's movement in and out of the building and through the site. The placement of the seating did not fully consider its relationship with sunlight, and the enclosed spaces created by the seating failed to meet social needs, instead attracting local homeless people to rest there.

When the plaza's owner announced a redesign and renovation in 2009, many people cheered, with some even declaring it the end of Pop Landscape. But was it really?

A look at the history of Jacob Javits Plaza reveals that the owner had hoped the landscape would serve as a unifying element for the entire site, a role that Schwartz's Pop Landscape plaza clearly fulfilled. Since its inception, the plaza has undergone three major design renovations. The building and plaza were completed in 1969; Richard Serra led the first redesign in 1979, which was implemented in 1981. The second renovation was commissioned to Martha Schwartz in 1992 and completed in 1997. The most recent renovation began in 2009, led by Michael Van Valkenburgh, and was completed in 2013.

The fundamental reasons for the second and third renovations were to comprehensively maintain the waterproofing of the underground garage beneath the plaza. Although each renovation adopted a different design style, Michael Van Valkenburgh's redesign still considered how to retain the iconic curves of Schwartz's design, ensuring a degree of continuity in the plaza's aesthetic.

Additionally, the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) recognized Schwartz's Pop work with an Honor Award for General Design in 1997. This indicates that the renovation of Jacob Javits Plaza was not due to the failure of Pop Landscape itself, nor does it signify the end of Pop Landscape.

8.3. Pop landscape only reflects Angloamerican culture

The consumer culture and modern artistic views of the UK and the US are the roots and mainstream of Pop Art and Pop Landscape. However, diversity has also become a significant characteristic of Pop Art and is reflected in Pop Landscape. The "pop" elements vary from country to country and region to region, and thus the Pop Landscape that emerges is distinct. Influenced by local cultures, Pop Art takes on unique features. For example, the passionate and graceful curves in Spain; the multi-ethnic integration and diverse activity planning in Nordic landscapes; and the warm red tones in Australia that echo the local soil, reflecting the country's exuberant and unrestrained spirit.

8.4. Strong artistic personality should not be expressed in public spaces

Many people believe that in public landscape spaces, a designer's strong personality should not be revealed in their work. Due to its overly distinctive character, Pop Culture is considered unsuitable for expression in public landscape spaces. However, if we look at the closely related field of architecture, which thrives on communication and competition, it is highly inclusive of diverse personalities, styles, and schools

of thought. Architects, while meeting the basic functional requirements of buildings that have remained unchanged for centuries, continuously innovate in architectural design, creating and expressing different symbolic languages and stylistic schools.

The basic human needs for landscapes have also not changed significantly over the centuries: lush greenery, public gatherings, sports and rest, and picturesque scenery have always been fundamental aspects of how people perceive landscapes. Some designers, however, challenge these traditional perceptions. Based on their artistic sensibilities and understanding of the world, they believe that landscapes should not only be elegant, luxurious, charming, simple, and low-key but also bold, popular, magical, and impactful, creating unique scenery. These works have certain historical significance and representativeness, such as Le Nôtre's Gardens of Versailles, Gaudí's Park Güell, and I. M. Pei's Louvre Pyramid.

There is much debate over how much art and form should be incorporated into design. However, it is undeniable that as times progress, people seek new experiences and aesthetics. Clearly, Pop Landscape, as a unique form of landscape, has distinct contemporary characteristics and brings novelty to the world.



Figure 6: DDON's Sedimentation Garden 1(Image source: Author's own photograph)

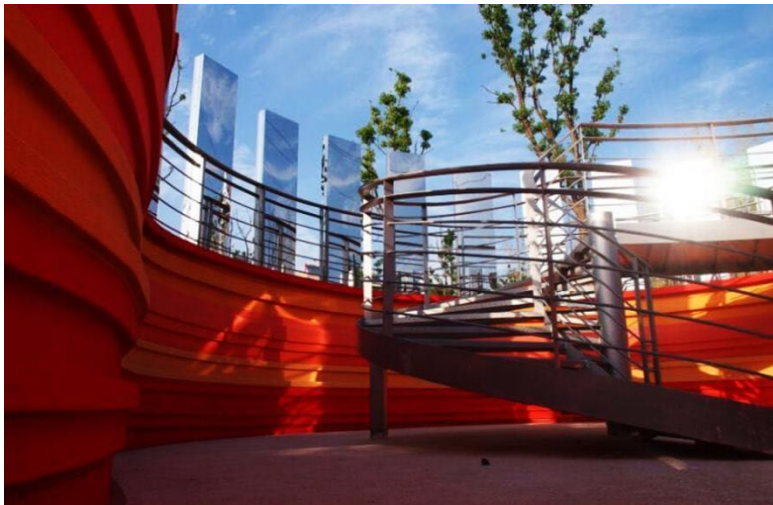


Figure 7: DDON 's Sedimentation Garden 2(Image source: Author's own photograph)



Figure 8: DDON 's Sedimentation Garden 3(Image source: Author's own photograph)



Figure 9: Ken Smith's Orange County Great Park 1(Image source: Author's own photograph)



Figure 10: Ken Smith's Orange County Great Park 2(Image source: Author's own photograph)

9. Post Pop landscape case studies

9.1. Sedimentation garden at the Wu han garden expo

Before even entering the garden, from a distance, a flowing red line is deeply embedded in the green lawn, with clear boundaries: it symbolizes the severe wound cruelly torn from the Earth's natural environment by industrial society. Descending the steps, one enters a deep, enchanting, and gradient orange "tunnel," with a white path and blue sky forming the upper and lower surfaces. The tunnel's textured layers overlap like geological strata (Figure 6). Looking ahead, the curved tunnel seems to have no end, suggesting the unpredictability of the future and prompting an instinctive, urgent search for an exit. Upon reaching the open courtyard, one might think they have found the exit, only to be confronted with illusions—reflections of oneself in the mirrored labyrinth, becoming increasingly disoriented. This reflects the current human condition: eager for instant gratification, we have polluted nature and are now searching for solutions, yet are confused by various circumstances and desires. Eventually, after a slow search, one reaches the exit, looks up, and sees the rotating, ascending exit staircase (Figure 7) enclosed by mirrored stainless steel (Figure 8), with the blue sky reflected down, symbolizing hope for the future.

The design is simple yet profound. The strong spatial composition, vibrant colors, and clear boundary emphasis are all typical characteristics of Pop Landscape. The entire garden uses only four materials: orange-yellow textured stone paint, green lawn, blue glass pebbles, and mirrored stainless steel. The impactful walls of the sunken tunnel are achieved with familiar GRC moldings and textured stone paint. The materials are accessible, and the space is highly interactive, offering visitors a unique sensory experience.

9.2. Orange county great park,los angeles,USA

The Orange County Great Park in Los Angeles is a quintessential example of Post-Pop Landscape. It was established on the former site of a U.S. Marine Corps airbase after local residents campaigned for its creation. During the park's planning process, the designers engaged in extensive communication with the clients through workshops, recreational activities, and music gatherings, incorporating their feedback. As a result, the Orange County Great Park has become one of the most distinctive and multifunctional parks in Los Angeles. It features a sports park, a civic plaza, a military memorial, gardening experience zones, a farm, wildlife corridors, and wooded areas, with sunken green spaces designed for rainwater harvesting.

The park exudes a Pop-inspired impact. At its core stands a bright orange helium observation balloon symbolizing Orange County, which itself has become a massive landscape sculpture (Figure 9). Orange stripes and large arrows on the ground represent the markings from the former airstrip, while a timeline of graphic patterns on the surface records significant events in the park's development. The vibrant orange color, the enlargement of everyday elements, a simple yet striking composition, an expository plant

arrangement (Figure 10), and cost-effective materials all contribute to the park's quintessential Pop characteristics. The Orange County Great Park has won the ASLA Honor Award for its unique, people-oriented, and comprehensive functional design, earning high recognition within the industry.

10. Conclusion

As a type of landscape style, Pop Landscape may not occupy a large proportion, but its distinct characteristics make it an important supplement to modern landscape design, contributing significantly to innovation and development. If the rise of Pop Landscape in the 1990s can be attributed to people's curiosity and fascination with novelty, the emergence of Post-Pop Landscape today is more a reflection of the contemporary public's psychological needs for interaction, integration, and innovation. It increasingly integrates into social sensations and phenomena, drawing inspiration for its development from these sources.

Post-Pop Landscape may no longer be as sharply defined and easily recognizable as its predecessors, but it continues to inherit the features of vivid colors, reflection of mass consumer culture, and clear formal boundaries. The arrival of the Post Pop era offers landscape designers, who seek to express their individuality and ideas, more possibilities for choice and adds a vibrant hue to urban open spaces.

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