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*When Modern Was Green: Life and Work of Landscape Architect
Leberecht Migge* (review)

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offers a powerful timeline that predicts capital commodities as future junk making room for the future capital resources of renewables, or as he puts it, a “biofuel bonanza” and “wind rush.” As evocative as these propositions are, certainly more would be welcome to contextualize the *New Geographies* agenda relative to design applications and speculations.

At the heart of the issue, though, remains a core group of writers and thinkers on energy’s agency as a spatial product. From a talk in 1983, Ivan Illich is given the first word, and true to task, his enquiry is with “the social construction of energy,” in particular the distinction of “E” as it pertains to physicists from “energy” in other fields. Illich writes that “the word energy functions as a collage of meanings whose persuasiveness is based on the myth that what it expresses is natural.” Illich also positions energy in terms of its relationship to work and labor, as he is ultimately interested in the superstitions of energy. John May uses the representation of the urban heat island effect as a means to document the shift from optical representation of energy to territorially deployed instrumentation. May cites this single phenomenon as a larger condition by which energy is understood and quantified as a catalyst for design response. In a similar manner, Gavin Bridge identifies the significance of the seemingly simple pre-condition of producing a hole from which energy is extracted, what he calls extractive spaces. Bridge identifies these sites as “portals, wormholes between two worlds in which time and space work differently.” Mirko Zardini closes out the issue with possibly the most architecturally-scaled contribution, as well as the only submission that contextualizes landscapes of energy directly to sustainability—though with refreshing criticality. He successfully debunks the conclusiveness of green regulations, organizations, and practices.

Lingering throughout this issue is the question of how a repositioning of the spatial agency of energy might be relevant to design. What role might architects, landscape architects, or urban designers and planners play within its current and projected trajectory? This is a question that was articulated in the first issue (volume #0) by Harvard GSD Professor Hashim Sarkis when he identified that a central question for future issues of *New Geographies* would be “what could be the impact on architectural form of the new scale of problems being placed on the design table, of the combination of tools of landscape, ecology, and planning with those of architecture.” As interdisciplinarity becomes more commonplace, questions of *how* the disciplines intersect and respond become urgent. Equally,

precedents and projects that demonstrate the medium of “the geographic” and its larger impacts become essential to the cause. *New Geographies* has the mandate and the evidence to position a new design agency at the territorial scale, but to further its inquiry it needs the projects, something no doubt its growing readership will continue.

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When Modern Was Green: Life and Work of Landscape Architect Leberecht Migge

By David H. Haney. 2010. New York and London: Routledge. 344 pages, 98 black and white halftones, 25 colour illustrations, and 77 black and white line drawings. \$150 / \$50.36 hardcover and paperback. ISBN 978-0-415-56138-9 hardcover, 978-0-415-56139-6 paperback

Reviewed by Janet Waymark

Leberecht Migge (1881–1935) had been left on the fringes of recent discussion about landscape architecture until David Haney decided to unravel the often-controversial thinking of this original and versatile man. While England discussed whether architects or gardeners should be in charge of making gardens, and the USA and Germany were considering the merits or otherwise of modernism in the construction of parks and public housing, Leberecht Migge was contributing to the making of all three landforms, and arguing about the meaning of his activity. He strongly supported modernist architects in the 1920s, and equally supported the conservative landscape architects in the 1930s. He also rejected the term “natural.” All landscape is man made, he claimed, and therefore should be called “cultural.” However, he was in search of a third way of looking at his activity, which was more of a synthesis of biological and ecological thinking that linked house and garden together. Many of his ideas appear to have been borrowed from other thinkers. Haney therefore set out, “to use Migge as the starting point for a more comprehensive history of ecological design, and to initiate a partial reappraisal of the predominant histories of German modernism” (2).

Migge’s career moves between what he calls the architectonic garden, from 1900–1913, the social garden, from 1913–1924, the technological garden, from 1924–1930, and finally

the biological garden, from 1930–1935. “Architectonic” was Migge’s term for the modern garden which was not influenced by the picturesque landscape movement of the nineteenth century. The term “garden” was used to cover every landscape feature from allotment to park and the metropolitan spread.

Born in Danzig (now Gdańsk) in 1881 to a middle-class butter merchant, Migge had to leave home after his father’s death in 1890, and took up work in a nursery in Langfuhr. He then trained as a gardener and absorbed much of his technical knowledge at the Gardeners’ School at Oranienburg in Berlin. Haney suggests that Theodor Lange’s practical teaching at the School, that firmly separated the functional from the aesthetic in the making of gardens and recommended the use of all waste from the household as compost, was behind Migge’s own biological approach to gardening (15). Lange’s teaching also agreed with the Garden Reform Movement, which looked to replacing the landscape garden that Peter Lenné and later Gustav Meyer had made popular, with a form of functional garden, where cutting gardens, vegetable beds, and orchards indicated a move towards modernism. But Migge disagreed with Lange’s rejection of aestheticism, “styles,” human perception of the garden, and his adoption of phytogeographical principles which based his garden design on plant communities as found in the natural landscape.

Leberecht Migge’s garden designing career was next influenced by his introduction to Hermann Muthesius, for whom he designed gardens between 1909 and 1912. Haney shows that it was Muthesius’s thinking that the country house (landhaus) and its garden should be fully integrated, one with the other, which influenced Migge to personally believe in this functional form (29). Villa gardens were not big enough for the “functional” features of play areas and fruit and vegetable growing; but space for functional features in country house gardens led to their division into hedged areas or rooms, and their regular, geometric structure. This could be seen as an old-fashioned landscape architectural approach, which contradicted what Migge was trying to achieve. But Migge himself realized that he needed to use hedges and “rooms” from the architectural garden to give it a functional purpose, on which all good design was based.

In 1908, Hamburg’s City Park competition brought out Migge’s latent skills in park design and his interest in their social value. His guiding lights were “simplicity” and again “functionalism,” and that parks should be socially acceptable, that is, they should be inexpensive to make. Artistic expression

was achieved through good planting composition. About this time he joined forces with economist Werner Hegemann. As Haney points out, Hegemann introduced Migge to the design of American parks seen in the Olmsted’s and Charles Eliot’s works, and Burnham’s Chicago plan (64, 66). Migge liked the concept of interconnected park systems, giving them a variety of social functions and spatial expressions. Migge adopted the American way of taking in meadows and woodlands as part of the cultural landscape of the park, and spaces that could be used for public gatherings.

By 1920 he had made several public parks, including Oldenburg and Schönefeld in Leipzig. Trees and shrubs were placed around a central space to separate it from the city, lakes were made, and trees clipped to make pergolas and drives which were cheaper than building architectural features. Migge borrowed the American concept of the community house for art, literary events, and sport. By contrast, Mariannenpark was not completed until after World War I, and involved spats with Carl Hampel, the City Architect for Leipzig. However Migge’s inclusion of a lake and sledging hill, and many indigenous, colourful trees, provided the community with opportunities for healthy exercise.

Leberecht Migge moved house twice, to Hamburg in 1910, and Wörpswede in 1919. Haney explains this restlessness was a result of Migge’s need to mix with intellectuals who inspired his striving to create a new form of settlement, “joining the body to the land through the act of gardening” (92). As war arrived, he turned to housing as there was little work with parks and gardens. His interest lay in independent communities such as the Garden City Movement and Allotment Garden Movement; all wanted to end overcrowding in cities and to resettle the inhabitants at lower densities—including the *Siedlungen* (settlements), with their garden plots. The writers Ernst Fuhrmann and Raoul Francé, and the anarchist Peter Kropotkin, who focused on self-sufficient small communities, influenced Migge’s philosophy of settlement. Putting together his ideas in *Everyman Self-sufficient!* in 1918, Migge made clear that his settlements would grow their own food and make the goods they needed. A family of five could live on 400 square metres of land, which could be intensively or extensively cultivated. Allotments or gardens would use an electric pump if possible to move household waste water for cultivation, and dry toilets would supply compost heaps so human waste could mature and be used as fertiliser. Such activities would in any case help the dire economic situation

arising from the First World War. Migge's "Green Manifesto," produced in 1919, extended his call for community garden-making to become a national people's movement of working gardens. In 1920 Migge and his family moved into a house at Wörpswede, where the artist Heinrich Vogeler had created a self-sufficient colony. There was also the Settler's School, Wörpswede, which was run by Migge and his business partner, Max Schemmel, to teach practical gardening skills to young people. It attracted much attention and students from other countries, and eventually Migge and Schemmel worked from Berlin and Breslau (Wrocław).

At a time of greater postwar stability, Migge became involved in making gardens for large *siedlungen*, working with architects, including most significantly, on Ernst May's and Martin Wagner's *Grosssiedlungen*. This inner colonisation, as Migge called it, provided extremely large settlements for the over-populated cities on their outskirts, with gardens or allotments enabling the inhabitants to be self-sufficient. Rows of similar houses were built without ornamentation. With Leopold Fischer he pursued the concept of interconnection between house and garden, with fruits and vegetables washed in a ground floor room next to the kitchen, and a room of glass facing the garden. Water from the bath and kitchen sink would be taken by underground pipes to the garden, and a dry toilet would take human waste for composting outside. By 1927 there were allotment colonies throughout Germany, and Migge's claim for the "technological or biotechnic garden" could be justified by the provision of sprinkler systems and electric tillers and the attempts to "industrialise" gardening by laying out, with standard measurements, "components" as planting beds, plants, paths, enclosures, and pavilions (all similar to Theodor Lange's earlier ideas) (204).

There was collaboration with architects such as Bruno Taut, Martin Elsaesser, and Ernst May on other private gardens, and his own garden at Sonnenhof. But by the 1930s he became influenced by the conservative approach to landscape of the National Socialists, possibly because their supporters were able to provide work. He had quarrelled with most of his friends before his death in 1935.

Leberecht Migge's life was complicated and contradictory. David Haney's analysis of his work and theory is thorough and well researched, with no source left unexplored. Not only does he achieve his aim of setting Migge's work in the context of modernism, but explains his tortuous pursuit of a third way

between modernism and conservatism, which Migge more or less achieved.

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Botanic Gardens: Modern-Day Arks

by Sara Oldfield. 2010. Cambridge, MIT Press. 240 pages, 200 color photographs.

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Reviewed by Laura R. Musacchio

Landscape architects have always had a curious relationship with plants and botany. Everybody who has pursued a landscape architecture degree remembers professors' warnings not to create planting designs like a "botanic garden" or "arboretum"—an emphasis on single-specimen plants with sometimes unusual horticultural traits (for example, topiary shaped into animals or big trees bred to have plum-colored leaves) that create one of the major sins of landscape architectural design—a cacophony of visual focal points. For those of us who earned degrees in the mid to late 20th century, large mass plantings of a single, usually non-native, species were one benchmark of successful planting designs. This tradition, which some can argue continues today to some degree, has left landscape architects strangely bereft of botanical knowledge whenever they utter the word "plant material" when they cannot identify a plant to the genus or species levels, which is more often than anyone would like to admit. Yet, interest in botanic knowledge and planting design in landscape architecture—and more recently architecture—have experienced a quiet renaissance as projects like the Lurie Garden in Chicago and the Highline in New York City demonstrate why public spaces with rich botanic diversity, which are inspired by each region's native landscapes, can please just about everybody including the public and design critics.

Landscape architects' changing attitudes about plants—meaning plants and botany matter—makes for fertile ground for a book like Sara Oldfield's *Botanic Gardens: Modern-Day Arks*. Ms. Oldfield is based at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew