

QIANG SHAN
MARK VAN DER ZALM

LANDSCAPE SONATA

CREATING A MASTER METAPHOR FOR THE YINGKOU OPERA HOUSE & LIBRARY



1

FR_ SONATE PAYSAGÈRE

En Chine, tous les grands projets gouvernementaux ont pour ordre de marche « en avant toutes ». C'est spécialement évident dans la ville portuaire de Yinkou dans le nord-est de la Chine, avec l'initiative Cinq Points – une ligne qui développe rapidement cinq ports le long de la côte est pour la distribution mondiale des produits chinois. Fidèles à la pratique chinoise contemporaine, les villes développeront non seulement leur industrie, mais aussi leur infrastructure culturelle. VDZ International conçoit le terrain de l'opéra Yinkou et de la bibliothèque centrale, complexe situé en plein cœur du quartier des affaires. Pour créer les liens et séparations harmonieux sur ce site achalandé et varié, VDZ a utilisé la métaphore d'une sonate.

IN CANADA, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS are accustomed to a methodical pace of project development. This can vary from project to project with the economy, market dynamics and political motivation, but the process is most often deliberate with key check points along the way.

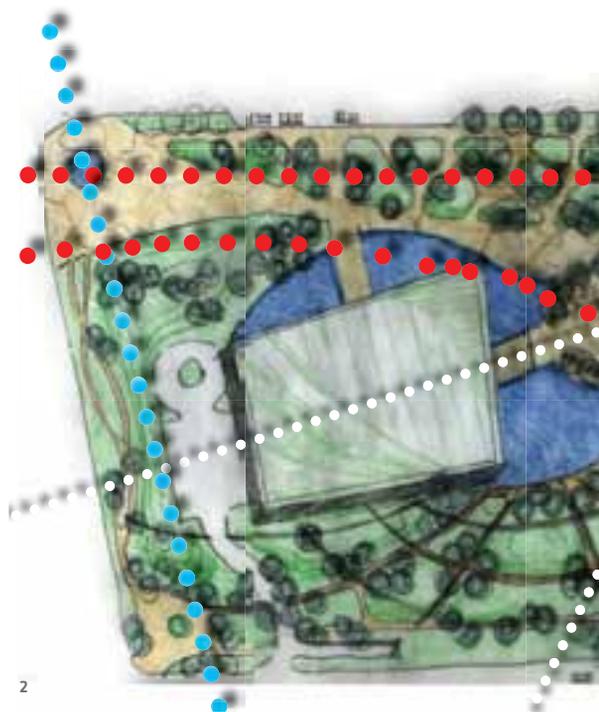
FULL STEAM AHEAD

In China, the overwhelming timeline for large government-funded initiatives is “full steam ahead.” Nowhere is this more evident than the port city of Yingkou in northeastern China. In 2005, the Communist ruling party announced a dramatic initiative, “Five Points, One Line”, for rapid expansion of the five major ports along the eastern seaboard, to create a powerful line for distribution of Chinese goods throughout the world.

With modernization would come population growth and expansion of infrastructure. The cities were to become not only industrial hubs, but also cultural centres supporting social well-being and advancement of fine arts. This has not always been the case in China. Previous industrial cities which focused solely on commerce have failed or become less-than-attractive islands of mechanized efficiency. Contemporary China has a new philosophy, which was on display at the Beijing Olympics 2008 and Shanghai World Expo 2010. The city of Yingkou, born at the Treaty of Tianjin 1858, and a relatively 'new' urban centre by Chinese standards, displays this industrial/cultural duality.

A year after the “Five Points, One Line” policy was announced, van der Zalm + associates inc. established a Chinese branch office in Beijing city to support our extensive work in China's northeastern provinces. In 2009, VDZ International was invited to participate in a design competition for the Yingkou Opera House and Central Library, which would serve as a centre for cultural awareness, performance and exhibition for the eastern seaboard.

The competition bureau expected a strong theme emphasizing the performing arts, and it set an ambitious timeline typical of new Chinese mega-projects. The design competition was to be followed by six months of design development, working drawings and construction start-up. Initially, design teams had one month to create a site concept. A fully-developed plan for the six-acre site would incorporate parking for 550 cars, outdoor performance space and passive areas with pedestrian accessibility throughout, all within a major downtown urban park. As part



2

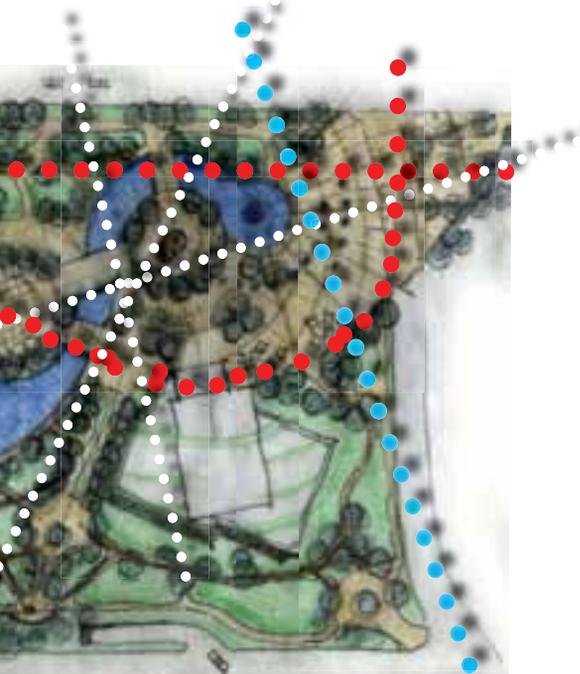


3

of the initial design concept, deliverables included in-depth site analysis (everything from view-sheds and geotechnical reporting to stormwater and slope analysis, sensitive areas review, and microclimate modelling.) Our team, collaborating with the Dalian Zhongwanjian Landscape Design Institute, also proposed LEED Platinum registration for the development. This target put additional emphasis on the site's sustainability and integration with natural systems.

DEGREES OF SEPARATION

Cars posed a major problem. Pedestrians in surrounding parks and plazas needed to be separated from the massive number of vehicles expected to access the site for special events. As well, the Opera House and the Library were very different buildings



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with very different roles. We needed to differentiate the highly programmed spaces from the contemplative ones. How could the design team create linkages and harmony within this challenging environment?

To keep pedestrians well away from vehicles, the design team confined parking to the western portion of the site, giving priority to transit and pedestrian drop-off. The remaining parking requirements were all placed below grade. A dramatic and extensive water feature, which surrounds and reflects the Opera House, acted as a further buffer, separating the vehicular zone from the expansive park and plaza zone. The water feature elements further delineated the space, enclosing activity areas within the quieter library zone with its outdoor reading and teaching spaces.

SONATA IN FOUR MOVEMENTS

For the design team, the harmonious linkages and separations stemmed from a master metaphor, the musical form of the Sonata. This complex form includes four movements, each differing in tempo, rhythm and melody but held together by subject and style. We too had four distinct sections: the vehicular zone, the contemplative zone, the performance zone and the social activity zone. The Sonata vision lent cohesion to the overall form, helping us divide and connect the four zones to create a consistent and enduring rhythm composed of landscape elements. The review panel, which included members of the national ruling party, local

government and representatives from the arts, selected our composition as the winning entry.

IN MUSIC, A MESSAGE

In China, projects of this magnitude are commonplace. In fact, a six-acre [2.4 hectare] site is considered small by most standards. The Yingkou Opera House and Library, however, made a major statement. The complex, located within the heart of the central business district, tells Yingkou people that social and creative endeavour will be as much a part of the new port city as its industrial achievements.

For landscape architects working in China, the Landscape Sonata conveys a second message. The Chinese increasingly appreciate the western design aesthetic, and seek clear, elegant design solutions that convey meaning and respect historic context. Strong concepts that are easily explained and thoroughly reinforced will resonate with decision-makers and users alike. The positive reception from competition officials is indicative of an opportunity for Canadian Landscape Architects to participate in the exciting evolution of public gardens and open spaces throughout the nation.

1 CHINESE OPERA **2** THE HARMONIOUS SEPARATION OF DISTINCT ZONES IN THE LANDSCAPE **3** THE CONCEPT: THE YINGKOU OPERA HOUSE & LIBRARY | **1** L'OPÉRA DE CHINE **2** LA SÉPARATION HARMONIEUSE DE ZONES DISTINCTES DU PAYSAGE **3** LE CONCEPT : OPÉRA ET BIBLIOTHÈQUE XINGKOU
PHOTOS 1 INMAGINE **2 + 3** QIANG SHAN, DAVID DAVIES BCSLA