

Landscape design critics program

Patricia R. Allen

In 1981 and again in 1983, UCLA Extension received grant awards from the Elvenia J. Slosson Endowment Fund to present a series of landscape design study courses in cooperation with the California Garden Clubs, Inc. The series consisted of four courses at six-month intervals over a two-year period. It was designed for members of the California Garden Clubs who wished to become Landscape Design Critics or to renew their certification and for the general public, including representatives of several municipal organizations.

This continuing education program was part of an ongoing nationwide effort by the National Council of State Garden Clubs to develop and sustain a group of critics within their clubs and to make the public aware of issues pertaining to the natural environment. Landscape Design Critics serve their communities in various capacities on park boards, civic committees, highway commissions, and similar public review organizations that are concerned with environmental and design decisions.

Besides making program information available to all eligible California Garden Clubs, we contacted municipalities in Los Angeles County, including planning, park and recreation, and design committees; horticultural societies; Los Angeles Beautiful; the Los Angeles Conservancy; and the design and horticultural programs of the Los Angeles Unified School District and Los Angeles County community colleges. Publicity was designed to reach horticulture clubs, and design professionals, design conservancies, and colleges, in addition to the large and varied audience reached by the UCLA Extension quarterly bulletin that is mailed to well over 200,000 individuals and groups.

The intent of the 1982-83 study series was to present the basic principles and practices of good landscape design and land use. Topics covered ranged from the principles, techniques, and history of landscape design (both residential and urban) to issues and procedures of planning and zoning. Each topic was presented through lectures, slides, and field trips organized by experienced practitioners. The instructional staff for all the courses consisted of recognized experts in the field, including landscape architects and urban planners. A three-hour exam concluded each course. On the average, 18 California Garden Club members and 32 of the general public participated in each of the lecture/study series. Fees were low, in keeping with the mandate of the Garden Clubs for such courses of study.

The first course, held in fall of 1981, addressed the following topics: history of landscape architecture to 1840; the profession of landscape architecture; shaping the future of the urban environment; theory and basic principles of landscape design; plant ecology and the environment; design aspects of plant materials in landscape; design of home grounds; and designing both safety and beauty in roadside development. The course also included a guided tour of the J. Paul Getty Museum garden by one of its designers.

The second study course, presented in the spring of 1982, included: history of landscape architecture; art and nature appreciation; landscape graphics: interpretation; plants in composition; execution of landscape architectural design; the professional landscape architect; urban design; elements of landscape architectural design; site design: ground form; architecture and related arts. The associated guided tour of the UCLA Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Gardens drew a large number of attendees.

The third course was presented in the fall of 1982. Topics were: accessories in the landscape; standards for evaluating landscape design; design for easy maintenance; small parks/playgrounds; history of landscape architecture from 1930 to the present; conservation of natural resources; public works; color in landscape design; plants and design. A short tour of urban design and landscape architecture in Santa Monica was substituted for the scheduled residential tour, because unexpected heavy rains had damaged portions of the gardens to be visited.

The last in the series was offered in the spring of 1983. Topics addressed were: planning and zoning; subdivision and land development; herbaceous materials in the landscape; contemporary garden design; redesign of areas; review of principles of landscape design; historical preservation and the landscape. Highlighting this course was a lecture on planting and design conducted in a recently completed garden of a well-known landscape architect, and a half-day guided tour of selected examples of domestic and public landscape architecture in the Pasadena area. This study tour was designed to test the landscape evaluation and critical skills acquired by participants during the study course series. A special evening lecture, open to the public, focused on historical preservation and the landscape in several southern California projects.

As a service to the California State Garden Clubs who were hosting the national meeting of the National Council of State Garden Clubs in Los Angeles, the UCLA Extension Landscape Architecture Program designed and conducted an all-day guided tour of outstanding examples of Los Angeles landscape and garden design, including the Doheny Estate, the J. Paul Getty Museum grounds, the Bel Air Hotel grounds, the UCLA Japanese Gardens, and the Schindler House.

While our audience was smaller than anticipated, the courses and materials developed for this series can serve as a basis for future public education programs. In fact, based on the suggestions of our study course audiences, we developed two later one-day conferences of interest to the public as well as to practicing designers: *Private Places: New Directions in Garden Design*; and *Uncommon Plants for the Intimate Residential Garden*.

In November 1983, the Professional Designation Program in Landscape Architecture, UCLA Extension, received the annual American Society of Landscape Architects Award for the most outstanding extension landscape architecture program in the United States. We wish to acknowledge the support of the Slosson Fund grant in our efforts to provide high-quality courses on the natural environment to the public.

Patricia R. Allen was formerly with University Extension, Department of the Arts, University of California, Los Angeles.