



A Case Study Report

Umlauf Sculpture Garden

Austin, Texas



By
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Introduction

Case studies are widely used in most of the professions. This practice is also becoming increasingly common in landscape architecture. Case studies provide the primary form of education, innovation, and testing for the profession. They also serve as the collective record of the advancement and development of knowledge in landscape architecture. (Francis, 1999)

This report summarizes Umlauf Sculpture Garden project and is utilized to bring out various kinds of information related to the project. The case study report identifies key issues involved in case study analysis and discusses critical dimensions of a case study project.

This report briefly touches upon:

Background information/Context, project history, role of key participants, political policies, financial issues and budget, various processes involved, problem identification and response, goals, design program, design, site analysis, usage, maintenance and management, perception and meaning, future plans, constraints, community involvement, environmental sensitivity and impact, impact on profession. The report elaborates on how change in time, constraints, political policies, functions and key personnel effect the original design.



Methodology

The methodology involves:

- Literature review
- Archival research (project records, newspaper articles, websites)
- Interviewing the key participants such as the designer/project manager, the museum director, maintenance crew, users and non-users.

Scope and Limitations:

The case study gives an insight on a project done under severe budget constraints, a project which could only be realized and is still functioning efficiently because people sharing same vision and mission came together and joint forces to over come all odds.

This case study is not the study of the place over time. For various reasons this report does not contain interviews of some key participants such as board members (responsible for the policy making and mission and vision of the Umlauf Sculpture Garden), sculptor Charles Umlauf and his wife Mrs. Angelina Umlauf (donors of the sculptures and property owners) and Mrs. Roberta Crenshaw (involved in the development of the garden).



Project Information

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| Project Name: | Umlauf Sculpture Garden |
| Location: | 605 Robert E Lee Rd, Austin, TX 78704 |
| Date Designed/Planned: | Land and sculptures were donated in 1985; design process started in 1989 |
| Construction Completed: | 1991 |
| Construction Cost: | Not specified but estimated between 30,000-50,000 |
| Size: | 4 acres, after demise of Mrs. Umlauf the remainder of 2 acres land and house property will be merged into present garden site |
| Managed By: | The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department, friends of Umlauf garden organization and Volunteer members |
| Client/Developer: | The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department, the Umlauf trust and foundation |
| Landscape Architects: | Aan Coleman and John Murphy, Coleman & Associates, Austin |
| Awards: | Award of Excellence: ASLA Award (Texas Chapter), National award for most accessible garden, winner of 2003 Austin's Date Spot |



Umlauf Sculpture Garden

The Umlauf Sculpture Garden & Museum is a non-profit organization founded around the work of American sculptor Charles Umlauf. Their work is dedicated to providing educational experiences that encourage the understanding and appreciation of sculpture.

Mission

Umlauf Sculpture Garden's Mission is to provide educational programs and experiences that encourage the appreciation and understanding of sculptures in a setting of beauty and serenity.

Vision

The Umlauf Sculpture Garden will maintain the museum buildings and gardens to provide an appropriate setting for the appreciation and display of sculptures, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Umlauf Sculpture Garden and Museum will use its collection and facilities to increase the awareness, appreciation, and understanding of sculptures through educational programs and community events. Targeted audience include school children, people with special visual, hearing or mobility needs, and groups with an interest in the arts, particularly sculptures.

The Umlauf Sculpture Garden and Museum envisions the lower and upper sculpture gardens being connected by an accessible trail and/or elevator system so that Charles Umlauf's home, studio, and grounds become an integral part of the Umlauf Sculpture Garden and Museum. The home and studio will be accessible to those who are seriously interested in the study of art, who are doing research in art history, sculpture, drawing or painting. Special guided tours of home and studio will be available to the public at least once a month.



Project Background and History

The garden was originally purchased by Umlauf and his family in 1944, when Austin was undeveloped. In 1985 internationally acclaimed sculpture Charles Umlauf and his wife Angeline, gifted 250 of his sculptures to be exhibited in a garden located below their home to the City of Austin. This garden is one of the few gardens around the world dedicated to a single sculptor. The narrow tract of land that is now a 4-acre sculpture park was acquired as a result of a land "swap" with the state (Texas).

Six years later, in 1991, a new museum was built on adjoining city property with private funds raised under the leadership of Austin arts patron Roberta Crenshaw. Roberta Crenshaw, Umlauf Garden's original visionary genius gathered a group of people and embarked on the journey of creating a garden setting with very unrealistic budget constraints. However, through her incredible network of friends, her stepson Ben Crenshaw's golf course contacts, and sheer will power and dedication, Ms. Crenshaw accomplished this miraculous transaction. She encouraged and stretched the skills of the design team to meet the goals of the project.

In a successful partnership between Austin's private and public sectors, the Friends of the Umlauf Sculpture Garden organization funds, manages, and maintains the Museum while the City's Parks and Recreation Department maintains the xeriscape garden. During the hours that the museum is open to the public, it is staffed entirely with volunteers. The Friends of the Umlauf Sculpture Garden organization continues to seek out additional funds for the Umlauf Sculpture Garden Endowment, a fund set up within the Austin Community Foundation. The interest generated by this fund makes up a significant part of our operating budget. The full range of Charles Umlauf's incredible work can be seen in both permanent and changing exhibitions inside the museum as well as outside in a wheelchair accessible garden.



Genesis of the Project

The property owner, Mr. and Mrs. Umlauf, Mrs. Roberta Crenshaw and designer Aan Coleman set the main goals of the project. The main goal was to create appropriate setting to display 1168 sculptures donated by sculptor Umlauf. Objective was to create serene and shady spot for escaping the Austin summer heat while still communing with nature and art and to place sculptures in natural outdoor setting establishing a visual relationship with natural elements such as water, plants, sky, air, sunshine for dramatic impact on the visitors.

The project goals remained intact throughout construction and as the design naturally evolved due to various constraints. The designer along with her team was successful in meeting the challenges offered by the site and creating a memorable experience for the visitors. The result was unique in experience and was very close to the main goal of creating comfortable setting for the Umlauf sculptures. The arbor of trees that shades the entire garden gives shelter to visitors strolling from statue to statue, taking time to linger on each work. Whether it is animals symbolizing fertility - such as the sculpture of a rooster - or an exhilarating kiss of lovers on an island in a pond, the entire garden speaks about the passion of Umlauf and his work.

Design Development Process

The key design concept of the project was to create a natural setting for sculptures by Mr. Umlauf. The design is not a personal expression of the landscape architect but preservation of land that housed Umlauf house and sculpture garden. Dearth of funds acted as an important deciding factor inspiration came from the site constraints. A design process was established that stated that keep on moving and meet the challenges as an when they come. Use of native plants that were already there on the site or were donated by members was how most of the planting was established. Naturalized and no maintenance planting was desired and used. The provision ADA ramps were a response to the changing policies.

Decision-making Process

The decision making process involved the key personnel in the project. The city of Austin, board members of Umlauf Sculpture Garden, Mrs. Umlauf, Mrs. Crenshaw and landscape architect Aan Coleman and John Murphy were the primary decision makers. Mrs. Umlauf helped to set the guidelines as to what outcome was desired with the landscape architect. Any changes to the design that needed to take place, depending on the availability of resources and funds were discussed and implemented with the landscape architects approval. Since the landscape architect was also the project manager the implementation went on smoothly and without major problems.

The political process involved getting approval of the homeowners association for the concept plans and obtaining municipal building permits for the drainage and electrical work. Since all of them worked as a team the responsibility of taking permits was shared by landscape architects and board members and landscape architects oversaw the procedures to assure all municipal building codes were met

Budget Constraints

If not for donations of money and labor, this project would not have happened. These constraints resulted in a site plan that is dependant upon the natural features of the site and a circulation pattern that 'offers variety of visual experience.

These paths were constructed of decomposed granite (due to the budget constraint) that was donated by the City of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department. Since stone or steel edging was an expense that could not be afforded, the trails were lined with common liriopse, gathered from Mrs. Roberta Crenshaw's garden. The resulting effect is amazingly organic and functional.

In order to create the placement "nooks" for the many sculptures without plazas, walls, or extensive plantings, the path meanders and crosses itself several times among the existing vegetation, resulting in many spaces along the trail for sculpture placement. The pretzel-like trail offers the visitor several options for circulation throughout the garden. It makes the garden appear and feel larger than it actually is because the path is not linear or sequential. As told by the Garden's Administrator, the primary circulation patterns in the Garden create a "peace sign". Although accidental, it is very reflective of the intent of the experience as we designed it. (ASLA Archive and Interview of Ms. Aan Coleman)

Role of landscape architect

Landscape architect Aan Coleman and her partner John F. Murphy were involved in all facets of the project which included designing and planning all path layouts, water feature design, sculpture placements, tree and site lighting, entry feature, signage and pedestrian bridge design. According to Ms. Coleman “despite the economic downturn at the time the project was implemented, the team, including volunteers, overcame the lack of resources and successfully completed the project. People were brought together for a purpose. Each individual was an integral part of the project and played an important role in the genesis of the project.”

All sculptures placement was coordinated and directed by the sculptor and his wife. As the artist, Charles Umlauf knew exactly how his work was designed to be viewed -from above, below, an angle, the side, etc. He also had definite feelings about the type of background that each piece should have - plantings, sky, water, structure, etc. Our role was to not only offer our creative input but to also assist in the decision process. The cooperation and coordination between the Board of Directors, the Sculptor and his wife, and the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department was instrumental in the success of the project. (ASLA Archive).

The project holds an important place in Ms. Coleman’s life, for her it was her time of soul searching, and according to her there is a magic in that place, the place has a spirit. She is emotionally attached to the project and loves it for several reasons. Working on this project amidst the sculptures of Madonna holding body of Christ and mother and child, she felt helped her to deal with the death of her son. She said she was also attached to this project because of the people involved, especially Mrs. Crenshaw. Ms. Coleman states, “I was in awe of Mrs. Crenshaw, she was an inspiration. She made people reach deep and was the spirit behind the project.” “Out of stress and lack of resources we got something really surprising out of it, and we preserved and kept it all very natural. It was a pleasant surprise for everyone.” Many of the existing trees were saved, plants from Roberta Crenshaw’s personal garden were brought to the site. The group effort was noble and the experience has created a special memory for Ms. Coleman.

This was a Probono work and landscape architect were paid for Stationery and printing of the drawings.

Management and maintenance

The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department owns and maintains the Garden however it has reduced the maintenance time from 40 hrs per week to now just 3-5 hours per week.

Todd William, the maintenance in charge and the city of Austin employee said that he comes once in a week to mow the lawns and do other maintenance works. Most of the time garden is managed by volunteering members. The curator of the garden Ms. Nelie is actively involved in the maintenance of the garden.

Due to limited manpower and maintenance budgets, the design has minimized lawn areas, irrigated areas, annual color changes and extensive plantings. Preservation of the site's native vegetation proved to be the ultimate success to its relatively low maintenance demands on the overall budget.



A volunteer doing the weed cutting



A city employee is taking care of the maintenance work

Multiple Functions and Activities

Originally intended as an sculpture garden to exhibit sculptures by sculptor Charles Umlauf, garden developed into an venue for multiple activities. These activities were introduced to generate funds for the maintenance and development of the garden and to keep the garden active throughout the day. Following are the various activities:

Garden parties including weddings
Educational purposes
And
Musical performances etc.



Outdoor classes
Courtesy: ASLA Archive

Multiple Functions and Activities

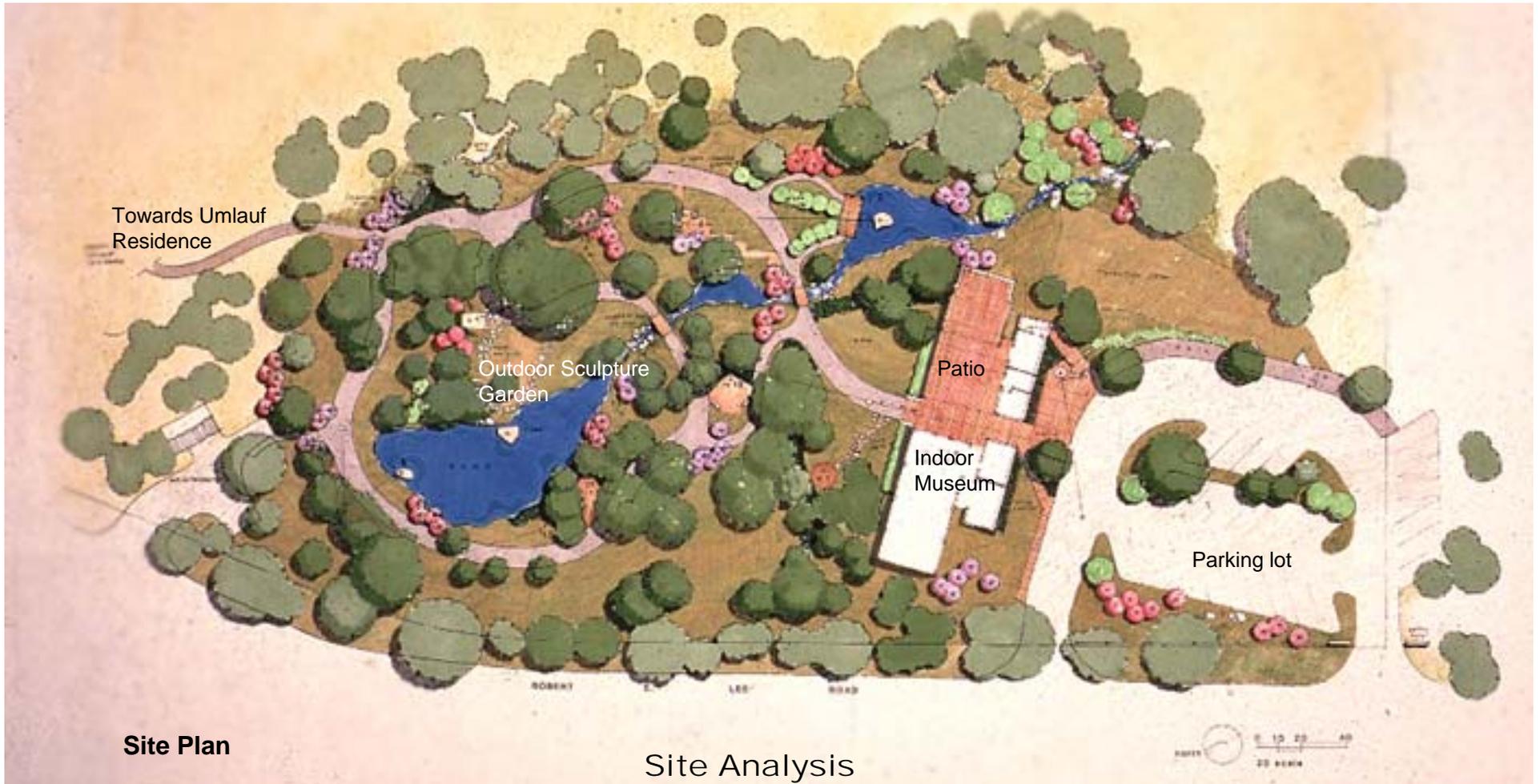
Many of the Umlauf pieces are of a romantic nature like "The Lovers" and "The Kiss", these pieces were prominently placed near a space specifically designed for wedding ceremonies. The outdoor patio was designed adjacent to a multi- function lawn used for receptions and other large events. The original grades in the area were extremely steep, so this area was re-graded to accommodate a flat lawn area and ADA accessibility to the main part of the Garden below. This flexible lawn space is then available for rented tables and tents, as the specific function requires.



View of the Wedding area
Courtesy: Amy Harr

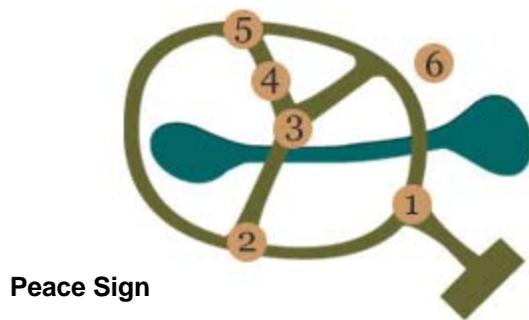


Outdoor Patio for events



Site Plan

Site Analysis



Peace Sign

The garden is crisscrossed by several gravel paths which together form the international peace symbol (according to landscape architect that was accidental). This design is bisected by a brook. There is a pond at each end of the brook, each with a small island in its center with a single sculpture. The path crosses the brook twice, on wooden bridges. Several of the sculptures are set several yards away from the nearest path so you can expect to encounter a variety of surfaces: concrete, brick, grass, gravel, etc. and some slopes, none very steep, in getting from path to statue.

Site Analysis

Museum and covered patio for the events



Well maintained parking lot



Architects intention was to keep the entrance Inconspicuous and then surprise the visitor with lush expanse of sculpture garden on the other side of the entrance



Adjacent lawn to accommodate outdoor events



View of the entrance from the Garden



Museum building



Site Analysis



This pathway originally was paved all over, however the edges were uneven and during rainy season the stones became very slippery making it difficult for wheelchairs. Part of the paving has been stripped down and has been converted into gravel pathway for the convenience of people on wheelchair.



Few of the sculpture are located in such a way that they can not be accessed by people on wheelchair. The future development plans will deal with this challenge.

Site Analysis



Few of the sculptures still have old base of rocks and planting.



With increased funding sculptures are put on new granite pedestals. The planting around the sculptures has been removed as small kids visiting the garden would trample the plants while seeing the sculptures.

Site Analysis



At some places garden has new stone seating. These seats are the result of donations made in the form of design elements. These seats are not very comfortable and Ms. Nelie, the curator said that there is an on going debate on whether to keep these benches or not the board has not reached to a decision yet.



Original wooden benches make for comfortable seating

Site Analysis

Native plant material is used, most of the plants need very little maintenance.



Ferns



Native plants



Palms

Site Analysis

This is a memorial for Ms. Molly Ferguson Gottlieb. This memorial is raising many eyebrows. Though the space created is very soothing and is one of the most used areas. This expression deviates from the Main objective of the Umlauf Sculpture Garden.



The metal plant looked out of place in this Natural setting



Design Elements: Pathways



View from the museum building.

Leaving the tiled terrace, and the sound of the waterfall located behind it, you will go down a sloping concrete path to the sculpture garden.



View of the gravel pathway

From the center of the garden, one can walk along the gravel path, towards the sound of the traffic along the street adjoining the museum grounds, the edge of the pathway is adorned with liriopse. It gives very organic look to the pathway

Design Elements: Wooden Bridge



Wooden Bridge.

Just after one crosses over the hump-backed lower bridge and step back on the gravel path, going towards animal sculptures, there is one of the largest bois d'arc trees in the City of Austin



Shaded inner path leading to sculpture of Icarus

Straight ahead stands the bronze Icarus at the end of a tree edged gravel path

Garden in the Night

Site is used for various events during the night. The museum building is kept illuminated in the night.



Safety Issues

Site is fenced for the safety reasons however the fence is perforated and attracts visitors during the daytime. Fortunately there has been no instances of theft in the recent years. The garden has area lights hung from the trees to provide visibility to the patrolling police.



Users

Since its inception each year Umlauf Sculpture Garden has experienced rise in the number of its visitors. On an average, every year it has 27,000 visitors out of which 6,000 are the kids between 4-16 age group. This garden caters to people from all walks of life. Following are few of the important visitor groups of this garden:

- Children
- People with disabilities and visitors with special needs
- Nature lovers/ Solitude seekers
- Art lovers
- Elderly
- Young couples
- Guests (parties and weddings)



A family with their mentally challenged teenager experiencing nature



A mother explaining the significance and meaning of the sculpture to her kids

Peers Reviews

The sculpture Garden design has endowed Coleman and Associates with an Award of Excellence in Design of Constructed Projects by the Texas Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects in 2002. The garden has also received a national award for most accessible garden in the State of Texas. Winner of 2003 Austin's Date Spot

This is a very user-friendly museum, one for people who don't enjoy being cooped up in a stuffy, hushed space. The lovely native garden displays sculptor Umlauf's sculptures. The museum video is captioned for those who are hearing impaired, and with advance notice, "touch tours" can be arranged for the blind or visually impaired.

Edie Jarolim, Frommer's Review: **Frommer's San Antonio & Austin, 5th Edition** April 07, 2003

Users Reviews

The Umlauf Sculpture Garden is a meditative sanctuary from the busy life of Austin. It is a shady, cozy nook worth exploring. My family and I went recently (for the first time) on the day of my dog's passing, and it was very peaceful. With all the trees, ponds, and water lilies; not to mention the sculptures capturing such emotions as spirituality, defeat, sadness, despair, and indescribable beauty...I couldn't help but to feel introspective and thoughtful walking within the garden. The way the sunlight would shower some of the pieces was down-right awe-inspiring. I highly recommend the Umlauf Sculpture Garden to both the sensitive art-lover, but also to anyone who wishes to steal a few moments of quietness from this chaotic world.

austin.citysearch.com: Immaculate Atmosphere Posted by fairpoet on 07/17/2002

I not only like the very convenient location of this place, but the beauty within as well. It's a nice place for a first date, when you just want to chat and get to know each other in a calm setting.

austin.citysearch.com: **Wonderful sights** Posted by nathanstull_citysearch on 06/26/2002

User Rating: Highly recommended

Up side: Mellow, Inexpensive, self-guided tours

Flip Side: Closes too early for garden visitors



Users Reviews

“Nature meets sculpture at Umlauf’s lovely outdoor sculptures”. You don't need a guide to wander through the landscaped grounds, replete with sculptures made of bronze, cast stone and limestone.

austin.citysearch.com: Citysearch Editorial Review by Robert Bryce

This is my second visit to this garden. Once in a week we go out to visit different places. I come here to appreciate sculptures and beauty of nature. What fascinates me most is how they have combined every thing together. They should open up Umalaufs residence for public viewing to complete the experience.

(Interviewed at 11:10 am on April 14, 2005) Greg Kania, Austin Resident

This is my first visit to this place. I have seen this place many time while driving around this area, my friends have also recommended this place as good education for kids. I feel the environment is very nice and serene. However the noise made by mowing machine makes it little less pleasant. I wish they do all the maintenance work when the garden is closed.

(Interviewed at 11:20 am on April 14, 2005) Juliet, Austin Resident

According to 5 yrs old Isabella who was there with her mother Juliet and 2 years old brother “I liked this place because I can run around and touch things and nobody scolds me”.

(Interviewed at 11:25 am on April 14, 2005) Isabella, Austin Resident

It is a very well maintained garden and very peaceful we should come here to take a nap.

Amy Harr and Jui Gadade, students Texas A&M University, College Station



Criticism

The landscape architect feels that the original purpose of the garden was to create surroundings to exhibit sculptures by Mr. Umlauf, later she felt that board drifted from that and allowed people to dedicate memorials to their loved one and she was not in favor of that. She feels that instead people should just donate money and that money should be used for the maintenance and development of the garden in lieu with its original concept. She is against the idea of people trying to turn this garden into a memorial site. The only criticism management and maintenance crew had that they have to raise funds before they go ahead with any design change however they loved the garden and are very attached to it

Significance and Uniqueness.

According to Ms. Coleman the greatest success and significance of the project is that they were able to stick to the original purpose of the garden as an sculpture garden and kept their integrity by not using just any thing and everything they got in donation even when the resources were receding and they were desperate. This project is unique as it represents the power of shared vision and perseverance against all odds.

This project is all about what we did not do. Its not a personal expression of anybody. (Aan Coleman)
The contribution this project has made to the professional knowledge base is significant especially as a construction example for the industry. The surrounding community appreciate the success of the project. They are involved in its development and value the garden as a cultural manifestation.



Future Plans

The garden is a result of an evolution over a time, it is still evolving. There are plans for the future development of this garden. There is a new master plan done by another landscape architect. That plan complies with the vision statement of the Umlauf Sculpture Garden and will connect lower and upper (at present it is not open for public) sculpture gardens making Umlauf house and integral part of the museum.

Lessons Learned

- Passion, dedication and shared vision is necessary for the success of a project
- Excellent design standards can be achieved even with limited resources
- Less is more, some times you design by designing less
- Follow the clues provided by site

Visual Character of the Site: 2002



Visual Character of the Site: 2005



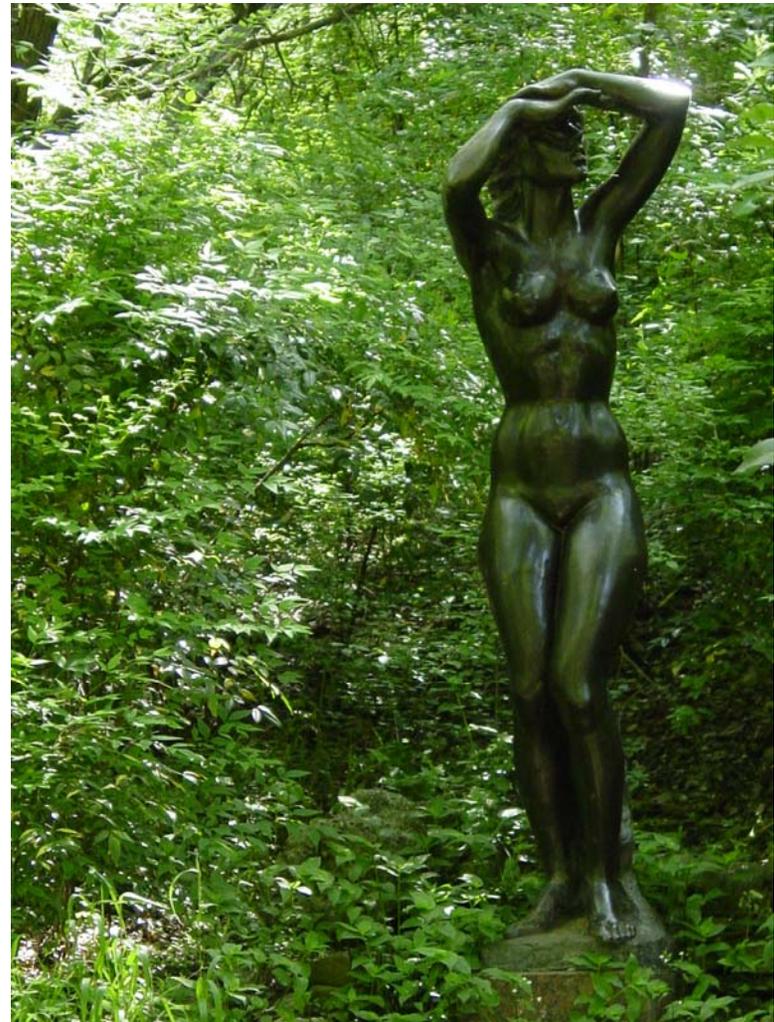
Courtesy: Amy Harr

Visual Character of the Site: 2005



Courtesy: Amy Harr and Jui Gadade

Visual character of the project: 2005



Courtesy: Amy Harr

Visual character of the project: 2005





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- Frommer's San Antonio & Austin, 5th Edition
- Amy Harr and Jui Gadade for some photographs

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