

Westergasfabriek Park, Amsterdam

Gustafson Porter

In 1981, the Westergasfabriek halted operations as a territory for the creation of power and was re-zoned as a recreation space. The site's proximity to the centre of Amsterdam and its historic structures gave it potential for cultural re-use. As a result, the landscape that surrounded the buildings was not only required to provide a green recreational park for local residents, but also spaces that could transform and become the location for open-air events.

Gustafson Porter won the commission competition with 'Changement' in 1997. 'Changement' offered diverse spatial and temporal experiences, with an axial promenade that links a formal urban plaza at the east end to an open, naturalised framework at the western end. The concept suggested the delicate balance between society and landscape, the city and nature, and order and freedom.

Gustafson Porter and the Projectbureau of the

Westerpark District Council, headed by Evert Verhagen, masterplanned and developed a refined plan that is faithful to the original proposal in its creation of park zones that relate specifically to existing site features, the future use of the buildings and the needs of the local population, who were consulted throughout the design development process. The resultant park is a testament to the landscape architect's clarity of vision and negotiating skills.

Gustafson Porter used its trademark technique of modelling landform in clay, creating the elevated spine of woodland known as Broadway that defines the territories associated with the buildings and the Haarlem canal to the south, and the water gardens and event space to the north, with a mound protecting the park from the movement of trains on the main railway connecting Amsterdam to Rotterdam. The designers further articulated the sculpted landforms with stone ridges, concrete retaining

walls, paved surfaces and timber boardwalks.

The earliest development of the scheme had to take account of the cut and fill balance required to move polluted soils and the new, clean layers required to develop a lush planted environment. Budgets and environmental concerns also required that existing industrial paving materials and structures, such as the gas holders, were incorporated into the design, while reed beds and reservoirs ensure the park is self sufficient in its water needs.

The Westergasfabriek Park is recognised as a model of brownfield reclamation, sensitively responding to the needs of stakeholders. At the time of construction, few precedents existed apart from the IBA Emscher Park, Germany, and perhaps Bilbao Ria 2000. Gustafson Porter's vision creates a robust landscape – a coherent expression of the synergy that can be created between industrial artefacts and a redefined natural and cultural context.



WESTERGASFABRIEK PARK, AMSTERDAM

BRIEF

Masterplan and design of a culture park on the west edge of Amsterdam city centre.

BUDGETS

Construction budget, including remediation, €21,500,000

CONTRACT

Standard RAW engineering contract

PROGRAMME/ PHASING

Competition phase: completed June 1997

Design phase: October 1997 – November 1998

Production information: December 1998 – January 2000

Tender: March 2000

Construction: June 2000 – September 2005



WHAT
THE
JUDGES
SAID

WINNER

A great achievement by a client and landscape architect in taking a competition-winning design through to completion. The concept of 'Changement' sits well within the Dutch post-industrial context. This project demonstrates how landscape architects can work a heavily contaminated site into a poetic yet pragmatic design.

