

Creative Planet

National museum of Science and Industry,
Wroughton, England

Campbell & Campbell 2001-2004

Campbell & Campbell is commissioned by the National Museum of Science and Industry in London to restore and re-vision the landscape of a historically and culturally significant mile-square tract of land in southwestern England near the ancient monuments of Stonehenge and Avebury. We are charged to build on the site's ancient natural, cultural and spiritual heritage to create a landscape paradigm that will set a new global standard for sustainable environmental reclamation, restoration and stewardship. The site and landscape design embodies the Museum's identity as an institution as well as addresses its complex operational needs, including the periodic accommodation of very large public events.

Concept

Early in the last century in response to military threats to this Nation and her Allies, the rolling fields, pastures and woodlands of this Wiltshire landscape were reconfigured into a Royal Airforce Base. As the topography and vegetation were leveled to serve this single vital purpose, the landscape lost its ecological, aesthetic, qualitative and functional diversity and fruitfulness. Fortunately now redundant, the airfields lie empty, stark reminders of dangers past.



The global range and magnitude of this new millennium's growing ecological crises present indiscriminate threats to all earthly life. To meet these dire challenges, NMSI intends to bring these airfields into usefulness once more through re-visioned landscapes, which embody a paradigm shift in the relationship between humanity and the rest of nature from extracting to sustaining.

Drawing from the creative wellspring of nature and the achievements of human ingenuity, their design is authentically based on the palimpsest of natural and human made landscapes of this specific site and region. Both developed from and experientially expressive of past, present and experimental sustaining science and technology as well as rigorous aesthetic, moral, ethical and theological discourse, these landscapes shall once again be put into service of the wellbeing and safety of this Nation and all living beings.

Works of landscape are unique artefacts in that they speak about nature through nature, and that they are, like us, alive. Neither entirely human-made nor wilderness, they describe a middle ground whose unfolding realisation depends upon an ongoing collaboration between people and nature. The landscapes of Creative Planet intend to embody a new paradigm of collaboration, one based not on the non-renewing extractive mandate of the past two centuries, but on ever-renewing organic processes. As advances in science and technology

make increasingly clear, there are not two worlds – the wellbeing and survival of humanity relies upon the wellbeing and survival of nature.

As the enduring heritage of the human made landscapes of the North Wessex Downs vividly portray, landscape lies at the nexus of science and culture. Its physical form, features and composition are the result of technological advances. Its aesthetics and symbolic meanings reflect contemporary worldviews regarding myriad aspects of humanity and nature from politics to theology, from ethics to social standing.



Landscapes offer not only extraordinary opportunities but carry singular responsibilities in expressing the vision, concept and values of Creative Planet's sustainable development for they not only propose or recommend but also authentically manifest a way of inhabiting the world. As immersive environments for experience, landscapes are extraordinarily accessible, communicating simultaneously to the whole person on multilevels: perceptually, kinaesthetically, emotionally, intellectually, morally, ethically, spiritually and intuitively through memory and imagination.



To augment the stream of once-removed information available from print or electronic sources to the 'literate' individual, these landscapes offer places for intimate, immediate, personal observation; experience; guided instruction; scientific experimentation; recollection and reflection within and of nature. Direct observation of nature is of course one of the fundamental tools of science and art specifically and of all human creativity in general.



Ancient Coppice – Clout's Wood



By offering inviting places which reveal, emphasize and poetically articulate authentic organic systems and cycles, these landscapes intend to re-connect people with the multifaceted touchstone and unfathomable wellspring of the creativity of nature.

The Brief

"I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future," Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed. "The spirits of all Three shall strive within me."

-Charles Dickens

Within the overall rubric of sustainable development, the scientific, cultural and economic opportunities and constraints presented by this site and region, and the project budget, this landscape brief forms a nexus of intersecting polarities. These include: preservation and restoration contrasting with retrofit and innovation; undomesticated ecological processes and patterns of use contrasting those of humans; rediscovered and state-of-the-art materials and systems contrasting with experimental ones; contextualism contrasting with identity and power of place; neighbourhood requirements contrasting with those of the larger region, nation, and world; initial resource and funding allocations contrasting with long term uses and costs, etc.



To resolve these and complexities this landscape master plan has been developed from the past and present; natural and humanmade; utilitarian, aesthetic and symbolic landscapes of this specific site and region. Simultaneously, the plan seeks to embody sustainability technically, physically and poetically while weaving together contemporary and future human needs and sensibilities and those of wild species. At once practical and visionary, this master plan intends to provide an integrated, comprehensive yet flexible framework for responsible development over time.