

The Cultural Landscape Foundation

Cornelia Hahn Oberlander International Landscape Architecture Prize

JULIE BARGMANN

ORAL HISTORY

REFLECTIONS

Ross Altheimer

Ross S. Anderson

Anita Berrizbeitia

Mel Chin

Alexandra Dimitri

Julie Eizenberg

Alex Felson

Adriaan Geuze

Kristina Hill

Philip Kafka

Katie Kelly

Stacy Levy

Kate Orff

Elizabeth K. (Beth) Meyer

Joan Nassauer

Joe Ragsdale

Garth Rockcastle

Maura Rockcastle

Jeffrey Scherer

William (Bill) Sherman

Steve Stimson

Jen Trompetter

Matt Urbanski

Michael Van Valkenburgh

Jane Wolff

Thomas Woltz

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Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Ross Altheimer

April 2023



I feel incredibly grateful to have had the chance to both be a student and collaborator of Julie's. I can't think of another landscape architect who has had as significant an impact on me and who has been as honest and supportive as a mentor and friend. The rawness, honesty, and passion she brings to all facets of her teaching, practice, and friendship is one of the most amazing things about her. I had the fortune of meeting her in graduate school at the University of Virginia.

One of the most memorable moments with Julie was a community event she facilitated as part of her D.C. studio where the students mixed with community members and leaders in Watts branch with the goal of planting daffodils along the neighborhood river corridor. In the studios that Julie taught, she believed that the students needed to directly engage with community and land, and that projects should emerge from people and places. The questions she prompted were "how do we really see what is there?", "how do we remain open, honest and non-judgmental about what is emerging?", and "how do we translate that into the beginnings of what would become a design framework?". Witnessing Julie's process, many times she starts with some kind of photographic exploration and a dense drawing of existing conditions. But the magic would always happen in a simple plan drawing of a proposed condition, some mix of these deep ways of seeing and reading sites, and some genius that played out while she was translating that into a process-based design and into all the raw details.

At the mention of Julie Bargmann's name, I hear her laughter, a string of things she nicknamed, and a bunch of f-bombs that she dropped in our last conversation. JB proved to us all that you can have a design process and practice that is simultaneously rooted in the grit and honesty of places, culture, people, and ourselves. She continues to be a source of inspiration for me every day.

Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Ross S. Anderson

April 2023

Julie Bargmann is a bright light. She finds incendiary humor and relentless intelligence in all of her projects. They are often the result of worlds in collision: the art world, the architecture world, landscape design, and, of course, the landscape itself. We met at the American Academy in Rome in 1989. I was there to study the Etruscans and their relationship to the specifics of the site and the larger landscape. It turned out that the Etruscans, their choice of locations for their cities, and their buried tombs were of interest to Julie as well. There was little left of their cities, but the landscape spoke of their continued presence and the latent power of the landscape to be read.

She pursued what information could be gleaned and appreciated and valued from even degraded sites. The remaining dirt was full of magic. Her sculpture, *Angle of Repose*, was a perfect summary of that experience. Composed of lead and dirt, it spoke of tombs and long-gone architectural memories.

Two years later Julie formed D.I.R.T. Studios... Dump It Right There!

Since then she has focused on contaminated, neglected, forgotten, dangerous, and forgotten sites that address the complexity of the landscape.

Nicknamed “The Queen of Slag,” she and I were able to collaborate on the reconfiguring of a stone and gravel quarry in Sonoma, California for Ravenswood Winery. It was to be a production facility that processed and crushed grapes while the quarry continued to function and crush rocks. The choreography of large trucks delivering grapes to the facility as well as equally large trucks removing stones and gravel from the quarry itself- a Ballet Mechanique! She expanded on the concept of “the crush” to include grapes and rocks while planning for the future lake which would form once the quarry was abandoned. Boulders were placed to define vehicular paths and drainage was installed in a trench that focused on a distant Mt. Diablo. The immediate site as well as the larger, borrowed landscape were included in the overall complexity of the landscape. Julie was able to make a once-degraded site both legible and valued.

An educator as well as a practitioner, she would give a lecture or make a site visit in a yellow hardhat and a white HazMat suit. It was all about getting dirty and celebrating the post -industrial landscape. She can

find value where others saw none and in fact celebrate the once-buried site history.

For her, toxic brownfields, abandoned asphalt expanses, radioactive waste, cracked concrete, and neglected plant life were part of a palette that is uniquely her own. She can resolve the needs of a client's program with clues from the local environment and the site's unique history. She is a practitioner, an activist, an eco-warrior, and an artist. As the first recipient of the Oberlander Prize I can think of no one more deserving.



Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Anita Berrizbeitia

April 2023

It has been my great fortune to have met Julie soon after we both arrived as MLA students at the GSD in the fall of 1984. An intense camaraderie and friendship developed, and we shared many moments of deep soul searching, laughter, and optimism for the years ahead. I can say without fear of exaggeration that when we arrived at the GSD Julie was already fully formed as a designer. All the influences that have shaped her work ever since had been already internalized, guiding her choice of courses and studio work. Two of these are especially salient in my memory. First are the work and the writings of the earthwork artists, specifically Robert Smithson. It was as though she had come to school only to see how to expand their ethics, aesthetics, and theories of site, process, and history into the broader scope that the discipline of landscape architecture would afford her. The second influence in her work were the industrial landscapes of New Jersey where Julie had grown up, some of which were also poignantly described by Smithson. Where most saw blight, she saw poetics and design potential. The sway these two held in her imagination were such, that she was—simply said—never interested in the so-called ‘art’ of landscape, that is, the art of hiding its artificiality, to make it appear effortlessly finished and natural. To the contrary, her work then and to this day has been about the effort of landscape, “about restless sites always at work,” in a continual state of formation that is the result of conflict and compromise, neglect and care, and of the effects of different speeds of time on its systems and processes. And it is these that are most vividly rendered and left bare for all of us to see in her projects.

Not surprisingly, Julie did not follow a traditional path after graduation. Hers was a meteoric rise, fitting for the precocious designer she was. Barely three years after graduation she won the Rome Prize. Five years after graduation, she opened her own studio in 1992. By then her research had taken her to an estimable number of places of many historical periods, cultures, and functions, from Stonehenge to Etruscan burial sites and native American mounds, to copper mines and polluted post-production landscapes in ruins. The kind of work she wanted to do required not only a new imagination but new institutional contexts, types of clients and, most of all, advocacy. Working on derelict landscapes was almost exclusively in the realm of engineers then, who were invariably charged with clean up, with erasure. Julie pursued the EPA, city agencies, politicians at Mayors’ Institutes, community leaders, arguing that there are other approaches that do not entail obliteration of a site’s histories, but that can nevertheless redirect their future while embracing the past fully and without regret.

It would not be a complete tribute to her without mentioning that, at the same time, Julie has been very vocal about the uncritical fetish toward the postindustrial in recent approaches to landscape architecture, as well as the unnecessary extravagance of some recent and much publicized parks. Economy of means and an unfiltered directness about the work and its representation have been enduring hallmarks of her design. Indeed, what I have found most extraordinary in her work is the consistency of her intellectual project—in her practice as well as her teaching—over the span of more than three decades, and the ongoing relevance of her vision.



Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Mel Chin

April 2023

A selected Poem and some prose for Julie Bargmann on the occasion of her honor

The Emperor of Ice-Cream

By [Wallace Stevens](#)

Call the roller of big cigars,

The muscular one, and bid him whip

In kitchen cups concupiscent curds.

Let the wenches dawdle in such dress

As they are used to wear, and let the boys

Bring flowers in last month's newspapers.

Let be be finale of seem.

The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.

Take from the dresser of deal,

Lacking the three glass knobs, that sheet

On which she embroidered fantails once

And spread it so as to cover her face.

If her horny feet protrude, they come

To show how cold she is, and dumb.

Let the lamp affix its beam.

The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.

Four years before Julie Bargmann was born, the poet, Wallace Stevens, wrote a poem describing a wake for a gnarly dead woman, yet churned the words to shine upon the one that really mattered, “the Emperor of ice-cream.” Harvard-educated Stevens offered that the point of his poem was to make people conscious of “the excitement of reality.”

If we held a wake today, in the company of those who shape and care for the earth, it could be for some abused and forsaken landscape, for all practical purposes, dead to us.

Today we have a most-definitely-living landscape designer, born in 1958, who in the course of her lifetime reviewed industrially embalmed corpses of dirt and rejected any mourning for them as an impractical waste of time and capacity. She has regaled us to immediately dispose of highfalutin formal designs as inadequate masks for the fabricated messes still buried. She has encouraged us to get serious about the reality of contemporary pollution and excited about a worthy confrontation. Perhaps we should most jubilantly and ceremoniously declare Harvard-educated Bargmann: the Empress of DIRT or Dump it Right There!

What about Queen of Slag, as the press once called her? I try to imagine her a robed presence, bringing on track hoes and massive earth movers with a slight beckoning of her hand. But, Bargmann is a hands-on designer, a boss in jeans; she has already been there and done that, waking many a dozer to do her bidding.

She is Garden Stately, New Jersey bred, with an earthy humility likely to dust off any suggestion of nobility. She is a champion for the equality that a creative life can yield. She dumps loads of imaginative joy to fertilize the youthful minds of her students, seeding in their *gyri* and *sulci* the delicious folds of possibilities; working the rows with them, demanding professional rigor to yield brilliant and wild, executable plans, revealing history and renewing lost perspectives.

Unlike Stevens spooning into *kitchen cups concupiscent curds* of ice cream, Bargmann drives her shovel deep into the toxiferous-tumerous turds of a slag heap. She would not be content just discussing or condemning who caused it, but engages in unflinchingly fearless toil in order to dig out misery, to better a desperate condition.

Julie Bargmann is imbued with a disarming level of human kindness and an idiosyncratic humor dispelling any possible intimidation presented by her acres of knowledge and experience. She demands of herself excellence in the craft of landscape with the physical ferocity of a devotee. Julie would exhaust

herself in pursuit of concepts if they would energize and nurture others. She'd damn herself before giving up her commitments to a community or friend.

Julie Bargmann could be anointed the Saint of the Soil that we would do well to worship.

But I don't know if she'd accept any such holy deification, as she is a no-nonsense artist. She'd be more curious and critical about the holes we have historically dug for sanitation and the holes in our societal makeup that challenge our collective sanity. I've witnessed her deliver a sermon of breathtaking, believable actions to bring a whole mountain of mud to smother the tragedy of soil-borne childhood lead poisoning.

All said, I imagine she would be fine with Julie, one of us, however, more youthful and energetic in her comportment than anyone in the room.

Because of her humility and self-effacement, I suppose she'd be okay simply designated as the person who created a Studio called DIRT. But I would have to amend, this is a person who chose the worst of dirt as an expressive medium, who sicced science and art on its badness, plowed it into forms and artistically reshaped its composition; a person who has no problem dealing with problems she didn't make, but is excited about the reality she can make out of problems; so that I can just be another person to tread on her constructions without trepidation, maybe even contemplate other things. In the history of landscape design, such original visionary efforts can be physically poetic while seeming effortless and without human signature.

Without her we would be unable to marvel at the wonder of a toxic landscape reborn, teeming with mycelial networks, tiny earth-breaking shoots and roots, emerging tendrils of plants, grubs and bugs of microbial activity, rolling deep within it, unable to comprehend the musicality of the elegant thoughts and orchestration of the army of workers behind it. All because a person named Julie Bargmann would not let the *finale* (of a landscape) *be...* but had put her oversized heart and muscle into it and whipped it into being so.



Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Alexandra Dimitri

April 2023



Julie Bargmann is a force, and one that pulled me back to the University of Virginia. As a graduate student, I saw a fearless practitioner. A thinker with a skepticism for jargon. A teacher who appreciates the tangible, real implications of landscape architecture. In her studios, I often found myself in situations I never would have imagined. I explored dark, wild patches of woods in Gentilly. Surrounded by wild palmettos, I chatted with neighbors about their relationship to their neighborhood. In Detroit, we visited unoccupied hospitals and abandoned schools in the afternoon and mingled with locals in the evening, soaking in the place.

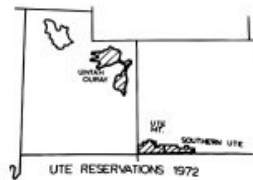
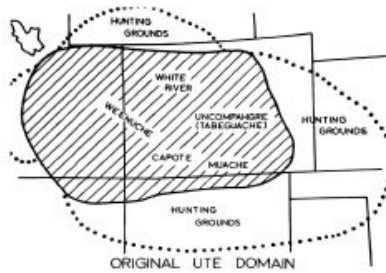
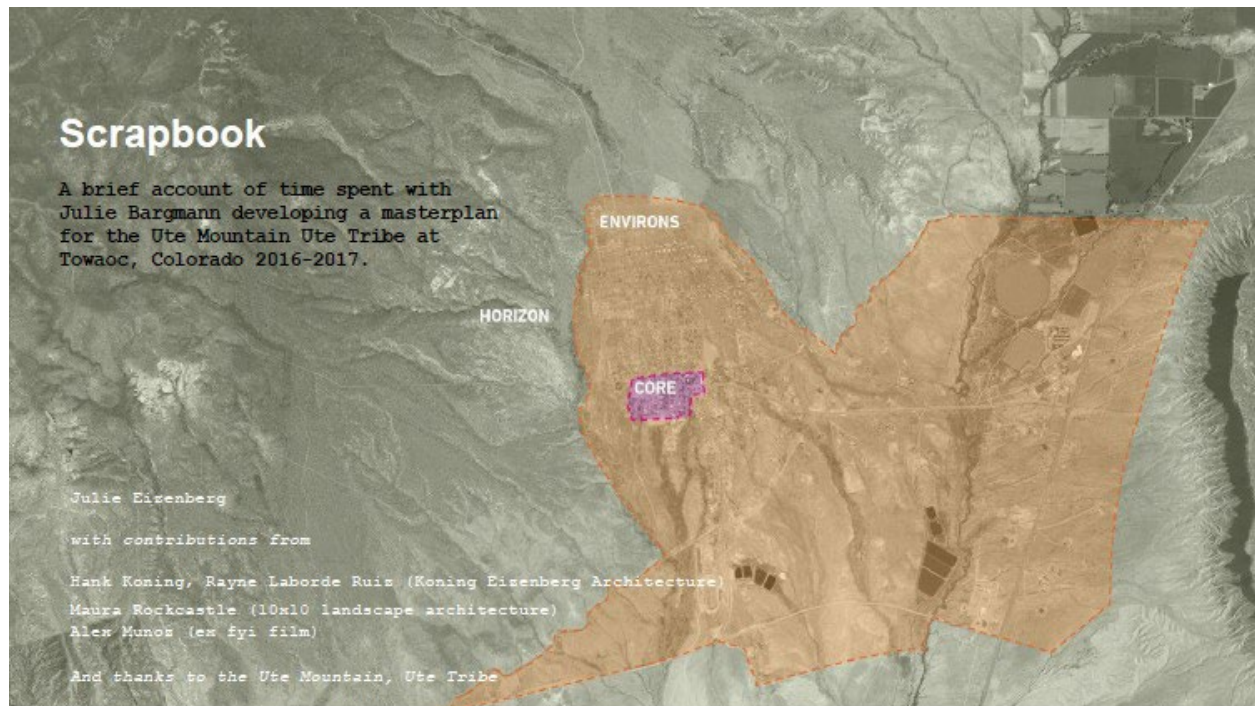
Julie distills complex ideas into comprehensible scales. She has the ability to break questions apart, questions about living with contamination and how to build communities in the face of abandonment, and makes it possible to consider how design can put forth answers. This skill is what makes her such a great professor. She doesn't allow students to linger too long in stages of analysis or research. Early in a studio, she will assign a $\frac{1}{2}" = 1'-0"$ scale section, demanding specificity in the language of materiality and design.

Julie is also a master at designing with plants and teaching others how to learn that language. I remember the collective head-explosion in one of her classes when she put forth an assignment where students could *only* design with plants - no hardscape, no built structure - only plants. I then watched it "click" for dozens of students after hours of drilling down the essential characteristics of species. We debated the particularities of hedgerows (how far apart can the shrubs really be to still be a hedgerow?) and discussed the nuances between pruning, pollarding, and coppicing. We admired the zig-zag wiggle of the branches of *Nyssa sylvatica*, often using interpretive dance to hash out the subtleties of plant architecture.

At the heart of Julie's work is a deep love: a love of plants, a love of materials, and most of all a love for people (colleagues, students, and communities). This combination makes her both an exceptional designer and an exceptional teacher. She taught me to respect the embedded knowledge of places, to respect the labor of people in our communities, and to respect the traces of that work on the landscape itself. I learned from her that a site is never a blank slate, and there are stories to be uncovered in every place and every project as long as you do your homework and pay attention. She opened my eyes to the potential of landscape architecture, and she reminds me how truly enjoyable this profession can be. I am so grateful for my time with her.

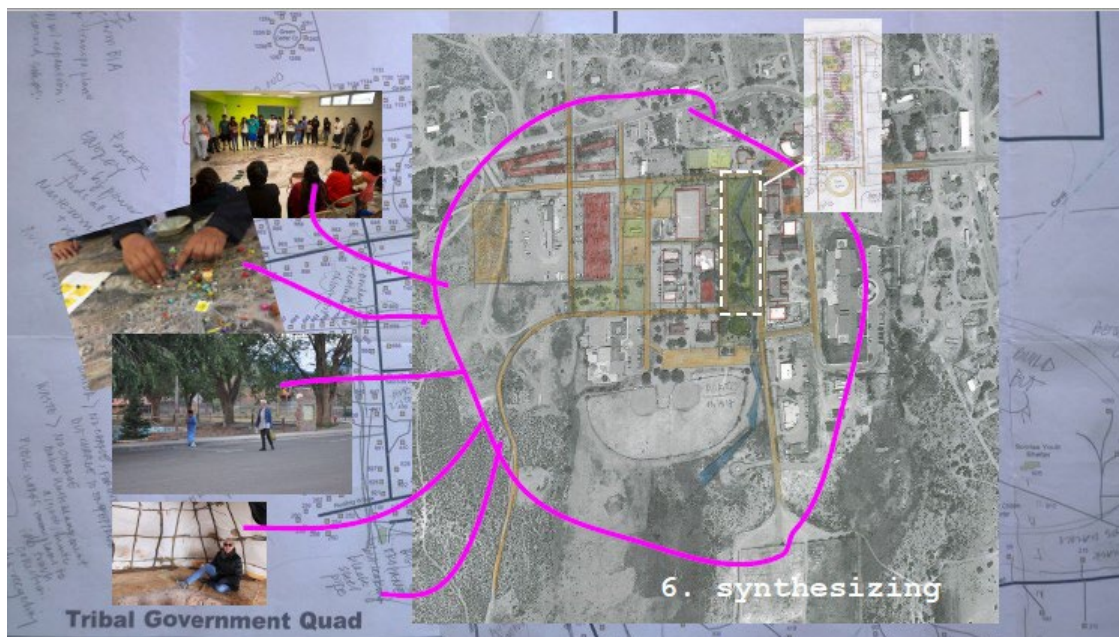
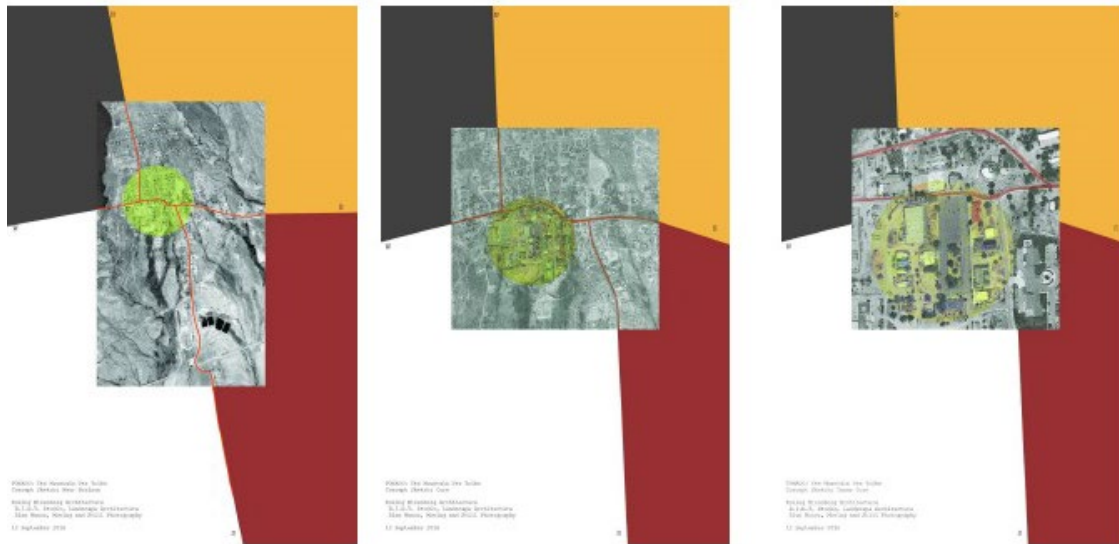
Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Julie Eizenberg

April 2023





photos by scott smith



Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Alex Felson

April 2023

Julie has been a presence as an educator, mentor, and champion throughout my own progression as a landscape architect. I have cherished her leadership in landscape architecture and enjoyed her personal vision and steadfast conviction to a combination of design vision alongside local responses to the site and context. She works through geography, cultural layering, creative uses of plantings, and ecological succession with recycled materials. She creates narratives as part of her design process that are embedded in her project identity when built. Julie is always inspiring and refreshing. I remember once when I was presenting in front of an audience about the design process, she commented to me from the back of the room, stating that “we all know the design process is never linear.” Her comment rounded out the lecture and provided an essential perspective for the students.

I love Julie’s projects. It is a treat to sit in the audience with her on stage, describing her projects to enthralled audiences. I revel in the combination of site discoveries that she makes, the care she takes with material processing, and her approach to working with the contractors to influence their own understanding of the materials and the unique approach to design. Julie weaves stories through her projects that stitch the physical site with processes such as the movement and uptake of nutrients and chemicals as they move across the site, or successional plantings as they grow. Her projects combine carefully imposed geometries and earthwork with existing artifacts and remnants that help to articulate how the site is working. Spinning her stories through labor and processing as well as planting elements, she montages the landscapes into meanings with past, present, and future coming together. I continue to share her projects with my own students through my lectures.

Julie is a champion for many of the best parts of landscape architecture. Her work with MVVA on the Highline exemplifies her steadfast approach. The proposal for the Highline included important concepts around working with ecological succession as a component of the design. While it was not built, the concepts are critical approaches that landscape architects are actively seeking to achieve today in the face of climate change. She pushes remediation in the very early stages of development. She encourages reuse of materials, contributing to an early expression of sustainability and resilience in her projects. She develops compelling design projects that lead to new kinds of spaces for people and urban ecology. The history of industry and urbanization on the land is celebrated through her designs. Her own unique literary and design voice comes through in her designs, providing subtle legibility and meaning.

The Cultural Landscape Foundation®

Pioneers of American Landscape Design® Oral History Series: Julie Bargmann Interview Transcript

On behalf of myself and my students over the last 20 years I want to thank Julie for her many contributions to landscape architecture and to society.

Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Adriaan Geuze

2021



TCLF Landscape Architecture Prize Committee members, including Adriaan Geuze fourth from left.

[Click to view Adriaan Geuze's recorded Reflection on Julie Bargmann.](#)

Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Kristina Hill

April 2023

Although we have different ways of working, Julie is one of the primary reasons I stayed in landscape architecture after feeling like a misplaced scientist / anti-capitalist in my first year of graduate school.

When I arrived at Harvard's GSD in 1986, I had the modest goal of using landscape architecture to undermine American social hierarchies and destroy capitalism from the inside. Fresh from a year in Berlin, I had a very large poster of Rosa Luxemburg in front of my desk as a warning to critics that I was an agent of the revolution. Julie walked into the fourth-floor studio tray as our teaching assistant during her third year in the master's program demanding to know, "Whose plan drawing is this German expressionist one?" It was mine, and I was hooked.

Over the course of our first semester, Julie would arrive in our space under the trays at any hour of the day or night, all angles and energy, bleached hair askew, hand gestures and elbows flying. She emphatically showed us how to shape wire into trees; she drew all over our plans (if we were lucky) and explained Michael van Valkenburgh to us when we had no idea what he was saying. She can talk plants, sculpture, and trash with anyone. She can take one look at a drawing and instantly know how to push it to be something better. If our passion flagged for a project, Julie would show us Eva Hesse's work like it was the secret answer to our problem. We weren't sure what the secret answer was, but we were convinced that Julie knew. She even explained to us that the purpose of the lockable fourth-floor bathroom at the end of the tray was to be the space where you could have a knock-down, drag-out fight with your design teammates while respecting everyone's mutual privacy, because obviously design mattered that much. When Julie left it all on the floor during a project of her own, we learned to care that much, too. When AIDS stalked our studio, Julie rose to the occasion. After his diagnosis, she reminded my best friend, Merrick Zirtzman, that taking care of our health is something to be fierce about – but still we should never compromise, never give up.

Fifteen years later, I had the opportunity to teach with Julie at the University of Virginia. I wondered what she would be like there, whether she would have toned down her fierceness because, as she herself seemed surprised to note, she lived in "a small Southern town." And then the very first semester I worked with her, she interrupted my studio review to ask the class where their passion was. All their drawings were fine, but (she demanded to know) "WHAT REALLY BURNS YOUR ASS ABOUT THIS??" A day later, I found her gently explaining to her planting design students how subtle layers of groundcover could carry meaning in a forest. On another day, she might be talking about a contaminated industrial

site as an expression of the dignity of its workers, something meaningful and proud – in contradiction to its assumed stigma. I don't think Julie Bargmann has ever walked into a room without changing the conversation to something fiercer and more meaningful than was happening before she walked in.

Around that same time, I brought students from UVA to join up with the European Masters Workshops. I wanted to benchmark our students' skills against theirs, but of course I also wanted to impress them, so I persuaded Julie to come. We biked all over a very flat part of northern Germany, on paths over dikes and through apple orchards, talking about future sea level rise with Antje Stockmann of Hamburg and Pepa Moran Nunez from Barcelona. I made Julie laugh by welcoming her to the "Bikes on Dikes" tour of Europe.

While she did indeed make a striking impression, my sense is that Julie is not a natural fan of European landscapes that are valued through an elite sense of artistic taste. I remember once she was invited to speak and teach in France and tried to say yes, but finally said no after a lot of back and forth, joking that she was not a good fit for the gig, forever after pronouncing it "Fr-AY-ance," with an exaggerated American drawl and the clear message that she was not ever going to invest herself in anything that could be interpreted as fussy or fancy. Julie seemed to prefer beauty as rawness and integrity, the dignity of work, subtle patterns you had to really look for to see, and fierce authenticity. Everything else was, as she said, "lipstick on the pig."

On other days in Charlottesville, she would announce that "Aunt Julie" was coming over (in a big faux fur collared coat) to create an art experience for my three-year-old, with whom she shares a birthday. They painted networks of lines on newsprint and glued cherry flower petals on to the paper in patterns a little person could understand. Then they ate corn on the cob and laughed like pirates, and I saw Julie in my mind's eye capturing everyone's imagination as she stalked the trays at the GSD, demanding authenticity and fierceness from everyone she met. There is no one who is more interesting or original working as a designer in our profession than Julie Bargmann.

Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Philip Kafka

April 2023



Julie had been suggested to me as a potential collaborator and landscape architect by Maurice Cox. At the time, I was a young developer in the City of Detroit looking to construct my first public space. I gave Julie a call and we immediately connected over our mutual skepticism about the profession of the person on the other side of the phone.

As a developer who is interested in ideas that push a conversation to places it hasn't gone, I am often jumped by design professionals looking to use me as their conduit to an interesting project.

As a landscape architect on a truth-seeking mission, I'd imagine Julie's magic is often sought, and rarely for the right reasons.

Julie pays very little mind to things most designers painstakingly obsess over: networking, the professionalism of their proposals, and agreeing with the client (or potential client). Julie pays the utmost attention to what matters most: existing conditions - all of them - the history of a site, the strengths of the hired trades, and eventually, after a lot of digging - historical and physical - Julie is a soldier for the idea that the team, site, and existing environment help to unearth.

As Julie taught me, great ideas emerge, they don't descend. I call my work with Julie a "truth seeking" process. With Julie, there is a "correct" project for a site. Julie's work - in my opinion - aims at an objective truth - that truth is a project that considers absolutely everything that it can that is native to a site and project and figures out the path of least resistance to achieve it. Julie works like nature.



We both decided that after just twenty minutes on the phone, we had to meet. Julie was in Detroit ten days later, washing her hands in puddles, and working with our excavators to unearth the historic fire station that was buried on site back in the 1970s.

This first public space we produced together has been the kick starter for an inspired and educational collaboration for everyone in my office. I am not exaggerating when I state that Julie's philosophy has become our philosophy and why is that? Probably because it's nature's philosophy - emerge, don't descend.

Julie is a renegade and a ballerina. She can dance ever so deftly around the finer nuances of elevated design work and then courageously defend ideas as reality often tries to rob an inspired design of spirit or soul. Julie knows what matters and defends these points. On everything else, she is flexible, willing to negotiate, and extremely skilled with how she manifests her unique point of view. That's why in just four years of working together we have produced five award-winning landscapes, with more underway, and are developing a neighborhood in the philosophy that Julie has helped emerge from my development work in Detroit and Texas. All of this great work has been accomplished without any construction documents, a lot of fun days on site digging together, and has materialized into a distinct philosophy that continues to keep me excited about the work we produce and the relationship we continue to develop. Julie is a teacher, friend, and inspiration.

Thank you, Julie Bargmann!



Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Katie Kelly

April 2023

For several hours every Tuesday morning in the spring of 2017, the second year MLAs inhabited Julie's world: Planted Form and Function (PFF II). This was my first of several classes with Julie, including a research seminar titled, Urban Wilds (in which we, the pupils, were affectionately and consistently called 'Wild Thangs'), and my final semester thesis with Julie as my advisor and champion. On review days in PFF II, we would pin up our planting plans. The "form" in PFF was never prioritized at the expense of "function," and she would earnestly question the viability of a plant in soils that wet or sun exposure that intense, even though this was a hypothetical site of her creation. Blanche DuBois, Julie's sidekick and miniature poodle, announced the end of each student's review with a tiny bark.

Like a job site with unforeseen conditions, Julie would announce new challenges to our hypothetical sites, like this announcement mid-assignment when too many of our plant lists had become monocultures:

NOTE: All the nurseries east of the Mississippi are sold out of the species listed below. Please select another plant.

Ilex verticillata

Betula nigra

Amelanchier (all species)

Cornus sericea

Julie proudly claims to dislike writing, but so much of her vision is wrapped up in language. *Name it and Claim it.* A phrase we (at TEN x TEN) borrow heavily from Julie, which I take to mean that we are only limited by our ability to imagine what something can become. To name and claim is to bring into existence what did not exist before. It is also getting a contractor to say, "where would you like me to dump this Betty Rubble?".

PFF II was a study in the vast nuances of our medium (plants, ecology, soils, time) and the lexicon of Julie's invention that redefined the tools and materials of landscape architecture. Her lectures shared the conventions of planting design and how to completely flip them on their heads. Never again could the meaning of a hedge be taken for granted – there were "hip-hop rows," "living palisades," and the "fedge" (a fence hedge, of course), to name a few. With rich, evocative slides she revealed the great potential

and playfulness of the understory—a "red mist" of dogwoods, a sycamore dressed in "tutus" of blooming shrubs. "Trompables" were plants with the resilience to be walked on. "Perverse palettes" and "transgressive trees" were to be celebrated and cultivated, not feared.

Back in the "real world," I've had the great privilege of working with Julie as a colleague on her turf in Detroit. And in my office, I'm grateful to be working amongst friends and enthusiasts of JB.

Julie is the gal who shows up to the small department party with a cake for 100 decorated with a section of tree roots; she is the one who exudes excellence and playfulness, rigor and humor, and seriousness and unpretentiousness in equal measure. She has created a new world for us to inhabit that is made of all the bits and parts discarded and devalued, misunderstood, and overlooked, rendered magical through her language and craft. It seems so obvious now, but the way we see and experience the landscape would be remarkably different and less inspired without her vision.

Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Stacy Levy

April 2023

Julie was the first out onto the bony pile, a mountain of coal mining refuse. She climbed up the steep grey slope, surveyed the site from above the Blacklick Creek and said, “Toxic Beauty.” And she was so right. The site was an acid mine drainage site in abandoned coal mining region in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Here in these green, folded hills, ordinary rainwater soaks down into the miles of tunnels of abandoned mines and lays against the abraded walls of coal seams, creating a toxic cocktail of a super acidic liquid. When this Acid Mine Drainage solution flows into the creeks, it sheds its iron and magnesium onto the bed of the creeks, covering them with a sticky mustard-colored iron precipitate known as Yellow-boy. The landscape surrounding the coal mines are covered in technicolored minerals: day glow mustard “Yellow-boy,” deep maroon “red dog” bright orange runnels, clumps of teal algae. It was the first time I saw the industrial sublime: scary and beautiful. And it was Julie who opened my eyes to this toxic beauty.

Though the land was wounded it was also a place like no other, with colors and forms that were a strange blend of human endeavor and natural process. The jumbled remnants of the industrial heyday of this coal mining region could be off-putting— but these industrial leftovers were compelling to Julie. She showed me that this landscape was not broken, nor should it be ignored. It was the product of extraction: nature chewed by the maw of industry, but a place where people worked and lived and where some people refined the process making a tidy profit from the rough materials under the ground. It was a damaged place, but it was a place that needed healing and celebration. Julie is brilliant at seeing the story behind the site. She has a grip on the parallel narratives of the past and the present. She dug into the historic mining and refining processes that generated the destruction. And she dug into new methods for creating future possibilities in this ravaged place.

Julie was an essential part of the team with historian T. Allan Comp and hydrogeologist Robert Deason and me, Stacy Levy, an ecological artist. We brought our various points of view and expertise together and made a powerful (and sometimes contentious) team. Julie led the way in embracing the toxic beauty straight on. There was no “prettifying” this landscape. She knew we had to wrestle with the dirty reality of the site and to redirect the opportunities from abandoned and hidden-away to lively and in-your-face post-industrial engagement.

And that is Julie’s brilliance: to give a site the means to express itself. Letting the materials of the site and the history of the site work together to make a place in the now. She knows that our landscapes are filled

with contradictions of the terrible and the wonderful. She finds a way to bring the toxic beauty of our world as an opportunity for change. In all of her work, there is no pretending to cover up the landscape—Julie designs with reality to jump-start regeneration.

Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Kate Orff

April 2023

“Don’t you just luuvv Dallas”

Julie’s accomplishments as a teacher and practitioner are so well known, I’d like to add a few words about how she has been a generous and modest mentor and a fabulous friend. I met Julie through recommending that OMA (where I worked at the time) partner with D.I.R.T. studio on an RFP for a New York waterfront parcel known as the ConEd Site. At the time, I was a few years out of graduate school and Julie was just coming onto the scene with a stated love for toxic beauty and a desire to shake up the landscape architecture profession. And she was doing it! Her earthy attitude, her love of sites and landscape, her focus on the histories of site – that – rather than be smothered by “landscaping” needed to be revealed and choreographed were *where it was at*. After I left OMA we began to work on an important project together – the Turtle Creek Pump House. I had a Dell dial-up modem, a drawing board, and a T-square, and we faxed, chatted, traveled to Dallas together and basically had a blast developing a project worthy of that great site.

As we envisioned the Turtle Creek Pump house together, I learned a lot from Julie. Her obsessive love of the “water line,” a zone of faded blue paint. From the incredible book that was handmade to celebrate this water line – to the ultimate form and sensibility and ultimate feel of the overall built project. Her desire to remediate every piece of the site, griping about the psychological toll of seeing so many goddam hot pink crepe myrtles across the city looking like teens dressed for the prom (agree!), and her willingness to get tough and show disappointment with decisions that she didn’t agree with. Days in Highland Park were spent chalking out dimensions, tromping along the creek trying to trace pipes, studying old water company maps. Late afternoons were spent sipping Diet Coke n’ lime with the client Deedie Rose, talking about how much we luv Dallas, and Julie and I hitting the off-beat vintage clothing shops in search of retro-treasures. Julie loves old vintage stuff of the era of manufacturing and making that left the legacy of contamination she fights. And I’m right there with her. Julie embodies that spirit – that landscapes tell stories, that our role is to respect and bring all our creative power to bear on learning these stories and carrying them through, not covering them up. I can’t remember if I heard her say it, or if I read it, or both, but a quote I attribute to Julie is – “good design does not descend... it emerges.” It is a statement for the ages.

My work with Julie back then, and I hope ever since, was grounded in - yes - the DIRT - but also grounded in a spirit of grim determination, a love of the landscape, and just plain fun. Don't ya just luuv Julie. Thanks hon!

Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Elizabeth K. (Beth) Meyer

May 2023

Thirty years ago, I moved to Charlottesville to join the UVA School of Architecture faculty. As a new Department Chair, I was fortunate to be building on the innovative pedagogical foundations established by Harry Porter, Reuben Rainey, Warren Byrd and Elissa Rosenberg. But I also realized the necessity to infuse the Landscape Architecture program, and the profession, with a broader scope of concerns and a greater sense of urgency about designing landscapes. Within three years, Julie Bargmann accepted our offer to join us. That recruiting and hiring decision catalyzed UVA from a very good graduate program into one that was educating designers to take on industrial landscapes through an array of approaches that spanned the scientific, the forensic, the material and the affective. When I think about the faculty and students Julie attracted to UVA, and those who stayed in town for a few years to work with her through DIRT studio, I marvel at their contributions in private practice as designers, in academic practices as faculty, in public practices at the national and local levels, and in alternative practices with non-profits and design centers. Julie changed our profession through her teaching and her design practice, no doubt. But she also changed it through her gutsy, take no prisoners attitude towards her medium and canvas—the forlorn, neglected and marginalized sites created by the processes of modernizing and industrializing the American metropolis and countryside.

I often think about the random way that I came to know of Julie's work, and what a difference those two early encounters meant to my life, and the academic community I have called home for decades. When I was a newly hired Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Design, I was assigned to curating an exhibition of student design work for our LAAB accreditation review. This was tricky as I had only been on the faculty for a short while. I did not know what studios had occurred over the past few years, who taught them or what student work was remarkable from those studios. My colleagues pointed me to the file cabinet of studio syllabi and a closet full of *poorly organized* models and drawings. As I sorted through the closet, one model jumped out from the others. It was not happy green but a somber dark grey to black. Nails represented the bosques and rows of trees. That model had an attitude as well as an unexpected but compelling spatial organization. Punk. Rebellious. Ironic. Iconoclastic. I turned the model over to look for any identifying information. Bargmann. Of course, I thought.

A few years earlier, I had attended an interim studio review at the GSD in Piper Auditorium. It was Peter Walker's studio, and he had invited a few external critics who were design practitioners in town. They were all men, and since it was the mid-1980s, that was not unusual. I was sitting on the Piper bleachers

when a student began her presentation by assembling a very large model. She crawled deliberately around the floor to align all the model's components. Her performative act—taking time to present her work and attending to its orientation—shifted the power in the room from the older men there to review her project to her. Of course, the blond spiky hair, Doc Marten boots and short skirt also shifted the gender dynamics in the room. Julie was in command despite the many ways her sensibility, interests and preoccupations challenged the norms of the profession these men represented. It was thrilling to all of us in the audience to watch Julie manipulate the atmosphere of the studio review (still called *juries* back then). Thinking about that brief encounter a few years before while rummaging in a GSD storage closet assisted me in curating an exhibition, and foregrounding the inventive student work that had been happening in studios taught by Cherie Kluesing, Linda Jewell, Alistair McIntosh, Laurie Olin, Michael Van Valkenburg, and Peter Walker. But it also spurred me to find an excuse to meet Julie, to learn more from, and about, her.



We spoke a few times while I lived in Cambridge between 1988-1992, particularly as Julie was considering leaving private practice for a faculty position at Minnesota. Then in the fall 1994, when I was invited to lecture at the University of Minnesota, Julie was my host. During that visit, we had long conversations over meals together. She taught me how to make *pasta puttanesca*, a dish she had learned at the American Academy [in Rome]. Over dinner, I revealed how I was still grieving the death of my

mother. We spoke of our work and our lives, our aspirations, vulnerabilities and hurts. We became friends that weekend. When I returned home, I felt the fog of grief lifting. The last thirty years have only deepened by regard and love for Julie as a kick-ass designer, an advocate for the feral, the wild and the unruly landscapes of American, a catalyst for expanding the scope of landscape architecture to include site forensics and landscape management, and as an unparalleled friend. Because of Julie, the profession is different in profound ways. Because of Julie, the UVA Landscape Architecture department attracts, and encourages, students and new faculty colleagues who are operating on the margins of our field. Because of Julie, I know the meaning of fearlessness and loyalty in a friendship that has inspired me to live fully, to love unconditionally. And to think it all started with a moody bosque of nails.

Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Joan Nassauer

April 2023

When I served as head of the University of Minnesota Landscape Architecture Department, I saw an opportunity to infuse the curriculum with an interdisciplinary approach to ecological design. Julie Bargmann was the first new faculty member we hired. Her commitment to addressing derelict landscapes by design was clear even then, in 1992, and she brought enormous energy and insight to “making” as a way of ecological thinking. In 1993, wetland ecologist Susan Galatowitsch joined our faculty. The two of them collaborated to bring an inspiring interdisciplinary chemistry to our Ecological Informants of Design studio. Working between science and design is not easy. Julie’s probing curiosity about the landscape functions she was affecting by design paired with her exuberant but exacting sense of formal possibility led her and her students to thrive in this studio.

When Julie joined the Minnesota faculty, we had only recently forged a new College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (CALA) from departments that had historically sat in colleges of engineering and agriculture. CALA faculty had advocated for this new college for years, and we celebrated the potential for our work together. At the same time, shared understanding across disciplines – even among design disciplines – can be difficult to achieve. Julie communicated across the design disciplines with great facility, building working relationships that helped realize the promise of the new college.

During the three years when Julie was at Minnesota, the department was bubbling with intellectual energy around advancing ecological design. Faculty were conducting research and developing new syllabi around several related topics including theory, history, stormwater management, agricultural landscapes, and urban forests. Earlier, I had developed ecological design studios and seminars that reflected the profound influence of the International Association for Landscape Ecology (IALE) upon my work. With the arrival of Julie and Susan, we were able to dig deeper and do more. By 1992, a new endowed H.W.S. Cleveland visiting professorship allowed us to invite international leaders in ecological design and planning to the program. Diedrich Bruns of Kassel University visited in 1993, and I vividly remember Diedrich and Julie exchanging opinions about how to introduce new design knowledge into practice. Both cared deeply about making change.

In 1995, we hosted the national US-IALE meeting. The theme we chose, “Working in a World Dominated by Humans” called landscape ecologists to recognize the Anthropocene, looking beyond pristine, uninhabited nature as the focus of ecology. Along with Susan and others, Julie served on the Steering Committee for that meeting. An unforgettable keynote speaker at that meeting was ecologist Henry

Lickers, a member of the Turtle Clan of the Seneca Nation. Henry has spent a lifetime working with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne to link indigenous cultural frames with scientific frames for environmental understanding, and more specifically, to prompt action toward remediation of industrial contaminants on Akwesasne lands. Henry reminded us that, on this continent, nearly everyone at our meeting was a weed – a nonnative occupying and changing the environmental niches of native peoples.

I like to believe that these experiences contributed to the insight that Julie has brought to her work. Certainly, Julie contributed to what we were able to accomplish.

It was a real loss for the Minnesota program when Julie left in 1995 to join the faculty at the University of Virginia. Recognition of the significance of Julie's landmark career by the Cornelia Hahn Oberlander International Landscape Architecture Prize was in some way foreshadowed by events at the University of Minnesota. In 1996 Minnesota's HWS Cleveland Visiting Professorship was held by Cornelia Oberlander and her husband, internationally recognized planner and early proponent of sustainability, Peter Oberlander. Recalling Cornelia's visit and Julie's service on the faculty, it's easy to identify similarities between the two. Both studied the ecologies and people of a place deeply and were compelled to authenticity in their representations of place. Both loved to draw. I can easily conjure images of each of them drawing, concentrating, with visible pleasure at bringing pencil to paper. And both used science as a springboard to imagination.

Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Joe Ragsdale

April 2023

Perpetual Motion

To engage with Julie Bargmann is to be swept up in the concept of perpetual motion. Julie introduced me to this concept firsthand on an early winter-morning slow drive through the backroads of Virginia, en route to a site meeting. Packed in her beloved ‘Clyde,’ a 1962 Ford Mercury Comet, I huddled on the front bench seat close to the warmth of the heater, while the fieldwork supplies – colored flags, surveyor’s tape, work boots, and disposable cameras were packed away in the trunk. Clyde was running rough after 40 years on the road, but still retained his shiny black paint, white interior, and ‘three on the tree’ manual transmission. That morning with Julie at the wheel, Clyde was not to be stopped – or more correctly, could not stop, for if he did, the engine would stall. So, the backroads, with few other cars and fewer stop signs, became a journey intertwined with the laws of physics and the pursuit of perpetual motion. And for two plus hours, we did not stop. We slowed, ‘California-rolled,’ and swerved, but we did not stop until we coasted into the parking lot. No time to rest in the parking lot, however. Julie was out of the car and on to the next adventure, slipping under locked gates and into the fallow site.

I met Julie three years earlier as a graduate student in her ‘D.I.R.T. Seminar: Doing Industrial Research Together.’ In retrospect, the first class embodied energy like that car ride – an arrival with an armful of models, plans, and portfolios; a direct presentation of the class agenda: acknowledge our industrial legacies and use fieldwork as design research; and of course, striking images and provoking words from her “DANGER:MINE” slide show. Infectious challenges were thrown to the class – embrace industrial legacies, see beauty in the toxic, and engage the art and craft of making to understand. By the end of the semester, I was assisting with projects for the other DIRT – the Dump It Right There studio that was perched in the rafters of a four-story barn on the gritty side of the tracks in Charlottesville.

Over the next four-plus years, I had the honor to learn from and work with Julie as she engaged with epic sites, mixed art and landscape, and pushed, pulled, researched, and designed projects both for her clients and, more importantly, for landscape architecture education and practice. I did not fully appreciate the force she was until I moved away to forge my own path in the profession. On that winter car ride, Julie mischievously described perpetual motion as we rolled through an intersection - how we could not stop, for if we did, we would not make our goal. Today, I comprehend this conversation as Julie’s approach to landscape architecture – a resolve to push and pull boundaries, to test limits, to not stop moving the work forward. From Julie, I learned that project implementation must be both stealth

and like a bulldozer at times. More importantly, I learned that putting your efforts into well-grounded research, developing compelling conceptual ideas, and representing them with fun, often retro, graphics could be extremely convincing. I continue to be inspired by and in deep awe of the will, determination, and energy required to push up against the laws of physics.

I hold most dear, however, Julie's underappreciated efforts to educate her students, clients, stakeholders, and fellow designers. Her deft tactics to reach an audience through straight talk, direct graphics, researched facts, and inspired designs are worthy of further study. While in practice at D.I.R.T., I realized the need to be a far better educator and arrived in academia soon after moving back west. In my classrooms and studios, I still often channel Julie's teaching tricks. To keep engaged with their peers, I have students write 'love notes' during project reviews. To advance site observations, I have students craft tactile responses. To advance design ideas, I have students see design as testing potentials instead of satisfying programmatic concerns. Although I shy away from its regular use, I can still dish out the 'kick in the pants' that Julie provided as needed and as deserved. My time as student, assistant, co-worker, and friend continues to be formative and fulfilling. Like the field of landscape architecture, I have been moved deeply by the nonstop energy, endless curiosity, and the perpetual motion that drives Julie Bargmann forward.

Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Garth Rockcastle

April 2023

Memories and Gifts

I still remember the first day I met Julie at the University of Minnesota, she being a new faculty member in landscape architecture, and I a tenured “veteran” in architecture of 8 years. I had first heard of her by colleagues William Morrish and the late Catherine Brown, who said “YOU are really going to like Julie, she is what this Landscape program has needed for decades. Bill was involved in the faculty search she was hired in and couldn’t be more excited about her candidacy. She was young, smart, vibrant, and ...oh so *idiosyncratic*, ...just like you!” A week or two later, we were introduced and from that day onward, we became fast, close friends both as teachers and practitioners of our related disciplines. I regularly invited Julie to my design reviews, and she to hers, always appreciating each other’s contributions and insights. It was never because we saw things exactly alike, but rather because we often saw things the other didn’t. But ALWAYS appreciated the insights we shared and discovered, and eventually... put into actual play and practice.

The architecture firm I co-founded in 1981 with Tom Meyer and Jeffrey Scherer, MSR Design, based initially only in Minneapolis, had begun to grow significantly by then and I regularly invited artists and idiosyncratic thinkers or experts to work with us on our projects, compelled me very soon to invite Julie to work on our first major national project Sahara West Library and Art Museum, in Las Vegas, NV. At the time, she had worked on larger projects only while working with other bigger, established firms. Since now having become a faculty member, Julie was gaining the confidence to go out on her own and established her firm DIRT (“Dump It Right There” she told me at first, with a smirk on her face) so had never done a project independently of this scale. Neither of us worried about that, though my colleagues at MSR were initially less confident. She soon overcame all trepidation by producing a narrative and schematic vision for the site far ahead of its time... A desert Xeriscape landscape for the desert climate that also helped us wed the idiosyncratic (Ying/Yang) building, a Hybrid Public Library and Public Art Museum, into a logical and dynamic whole. She was never (and still rarely) concerned about projects being too large, too complex or outside her “range” of experience, and this was no exception as she helped the entire team acclimate to ideas and details they were unaccustomed to... especially the more conservative Nevada Civil Engineers on the team. This project went on to earn many local and national design awards for both the landscape and the building, and the ways the two ideas hung together and complemented each other.

After several other smaller projects over the years, and shots at design competitions we toyed with, she eventually took a teaching position at UVA, and I, several years later, was appointed Dean at nearby University of Maryland. I thought doing so would give us another opportunity to collaborate, and we did reacquaint ourselves again by exchanging design crits and invitations to lecture on our work at each other's academic institutions, another significant practice opportunity emerged when I got a call from Dick Hayne, CEO of URBN, to come to interview for their recent acquisition of five buildings to adaptively redesign in the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Without hesitation and/or trepidation, after calling my colleagues in the Minneapolis office, I called Julie, and she was more excited than I had ever seen her. Her insightful work on this project was transformative, for me personally, for our office broadly, and for the client Urban Outfitters, who instantly fell in love with her ways of inspiring and risking ideas that most clients would be skeptical of. Her longer-term relationship with URBN speaks for itself, and her career, already stratospheric, continued to grow and transform not only the many neglected landscapes of urban America, but the discipline of landscape more broadly. I couldn't be prouder to still know Julie as a dear friend, a spiritual guide, and so well deserving of The Cultural Landscape Foundation's recognition.

Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Maura Rockcastle

April 2023



Photo from first site visit to Mill 19 in 2015. This project kickstarted TEN x TEN and we were proud and beyond excited to partner with D.I.R.T. Studio to imagine the future landscape.

I have known Julie since I was nine years old. I knew her as my dad's FUN work colleague during their shared tenure at the University of Minnesota's School of Design in the early 90s. When I was a teenager, I wanted to go to art school. I did not identify comfortably as an artist then and was unsure of that direction, so my dad introduced me to Julie, this incredibly cool and hip woman who had gone to art school at Carnegie Mellon and was teaching in the landscape department at the U. At that time, Julie offered me a way of seeing art school as a critical foundation for many other things, as a way of thinking and investigating critical curiosity, and I have never looked back.

Julie wrote me a letter of recommendation to the BFA program at Carnegie Mellon and, while I chose not to move to Pittsburgh then, little did I know that our paths would cross in that same city in the future, marking our first of several professional collaborations. I saw Julie on and off during graduate school and we stayed in touch as my early career in NYC wove in and out of hers. Julie never held back from telling

me what she thought about my choices during that time in NYC. She was honest and straight forward and I have always been thankful for her perspective even if I might have gone in the opposite direction.

So much of Julie's power comes from her spirit – she emits a raw, vulnerable, accessible, honest, and creative light that sees and honors the world for what it is. She is feisty and confident in a discipline dominated by white, male leadership. She represents hope and an alternative for women in landscape architecture. She is an icon that allows us to dream of a different future for ourselves.

Over the last seven years as a collaborator, Julie has helped me build confidence and told me that I have something to say that is worth listening to. She supported my perspective on team phone calls, in front of clients, in front of colleagues, on juries, and lifted me up in moments when I was not so sure about my place in this field. She pushed me to speak louder, to keep reaching, and to trust myself. This simple feedback had an incredible impact on me. To have someone whom you admire so deeply offer that kind of input is incredibly rare. I have never received that kind of care from any other mentor, collaborator, boss, or teacher and I am deeply grateful for her generosity and support.

Julie's strength and fearlessness, her opinions delivered with forthright clarity and humor, her depth of knowledge and steadfast commitment to visionary design that is regenerative and heals is a kind of compass for so many of us. Her work teaches us to honor the stories that existing materials, plants, and topography offer. Her built projects revel in grit and authenticity. They are spaces that emerge from a commitment to ground truthing, deep research, and an intuitive conviction for simplicity, resilience, and the power of scale.

Projects like Core City Park, Urban Outfitters, and Mill 19 literally peel back the surface to reveal unseen layers and stories; they resituate that which would otherwise be seen as waste into artful, authentic, and robust design infrastructure. Julie's work honors decades of human labor and sweat embedded in postindustrial landscapes, where design itself is an act of unearthing and of seeing. Julie can spatialize humanity through empathy and an unwavering design sensibility. She embodies a way of reading and understanding sites and their communities that is unprecedented in our field.

Julie Bargmann's work embodies why our role as landscape architects matters – the importance of regenerative design strategies, of engagement as research, of not scraping sites clean, of design as a series of layered processes in relationship with one another, of revealing site histories and telling stories that have the potential to both heal scared and toxic sites as well as re-connect people to these working landscapes in profound ways.

Her work and approach remain urgent and critical for our profession, now more than ever. I could not be more excited to congratulate Julie on this incredible honor – and to share how much her work, her mentorship, and her spirit has meant to me over the last 30 years.

Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Jeffrey Scherer

April 2023

I have known Julie for more than 20 years—both as an instructor at the University of Minnesota College of Design and a founding principal of Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle, Ltd (DBA MSR Design).

The most significant project that I directly worked on with Julie was the Philadelphia HQ for Urban Outfitters. This project involved the restoration (and saving) of 11 buildings that are located in the decommissioned Navy Yard facility. Since the buildings were built over a time span of over 100 years, there was a lot of infrastructure and extant traces of history. Most of the buildings were connected via surface rail lines that were used to move machinery, raw goods, and finished maritime constructions.

Julie, as the principal landscape designer, brought to the table several important attributes:

- Most memorable was her ability to radically change a landscape through deepening the existing and historical lifelines that then were woven a new pattern. She can project the future without altering the past—since sometimes designers prefer obliteration over observation.
- Julie has an uncanny ability to “see” the past and highlight/discover the traces of history. She is a bit of a sorceress when it comes to discovering embedded signals from the past—and how best to reuse them and strengthen their “signals.”
- Never content with the “easy,” she digs deep into the history, materiality, and human interventions of the urban landscape. These findings enable her to highlight not just physical aspects of the landscape but the human stories embedded in them.
- Many know of her passion to use landscape to “repair” the earth. Her desire to reuse and reconfigure elements of the urban-scape that cannot be saved in situ reveals one of the deep-core elements of her being: save, reuse, but do not confuse. By choosing, for example, old concrete slabs that are then reconfigured into a new place-making strategy, she demonstrates a love of economy and storytelling.
- Finally, Julie is a joy to work with. Her vibrancy, intellect, and curiosity make the design process joyful and revealing. One always learns in her presence. She also has a knack to bring out the best in clients by engaging them not in a traditional client-designer dance—rather a person-to-person conversation about what makes a place and how interventions can enlighten our lives.

Reflections on Julie Bargmann from William (Bill) Sherman

April 2023

Notes on Twenty Five Years of Collaboration with Julie Bargmann



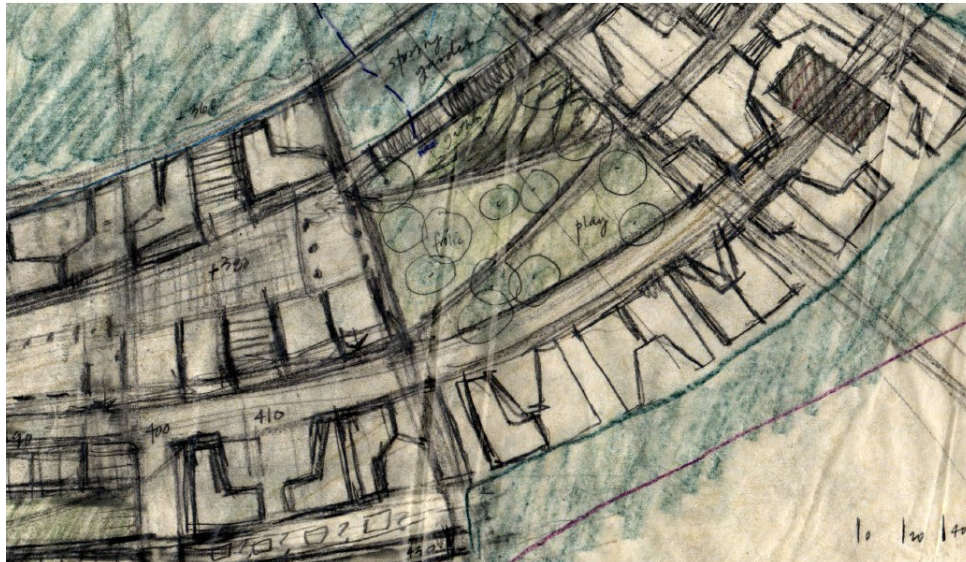
I have been a colleague and friend of Julie Bargmann for nearly 30 years since her arrival as a faculty member at the University of Virginia School of Architecture. During that time, we have collaborated academically as faculty members, administratively during a period when I was Chair of the joint department of Architecture and Landscape Architecture and she was Director of the Landscape Architecture Program, and professionally on a series of small projects around Charlottesville. In each facet of our work together, Julie inevitably raised the level of the conversation, brought a fresh perspective that changed a design trajectory, or served as a constructive critic who clarified the core goals of the

project. While she has been recognized and publicized for her work on contaminated sites, it is critical to recognize that this is just one dimension of her contribution to the discipline, the profession, to the academy, and to her colleagues. Even if she had not built her identity around such an important and timely issue, the creative inventiveness and intellectual precision that she brings to every question would have distinguished her work. To watch her think and draw is to understand the way her mind recognizes patterns, seeks structural clarity, organizes seemingly disparate phenomena, and creates a new spatial order that changes one's perception of the place or issue. Her mantra of "naming and claiming" is more than a superficial design strategy; it is a method for clarifying the salient issues and translating insight into action and is as applicable to finding curricular coherence as it is to the design of the landscape at any scale.

While there are many anecdotes that I could share from our working relationship, I am instead putting together a short portfolio of Julie's sketches that reflect her brilliant work on a set of small, little-known domestic projects. With each conversation and drawing, she redefined my understanding of the landscape in ways that had a profound impact on the direction of the architecture. She mobilized clients to participate in the construction of meaningful places. The resulting joint work was the product of a true collaboration.

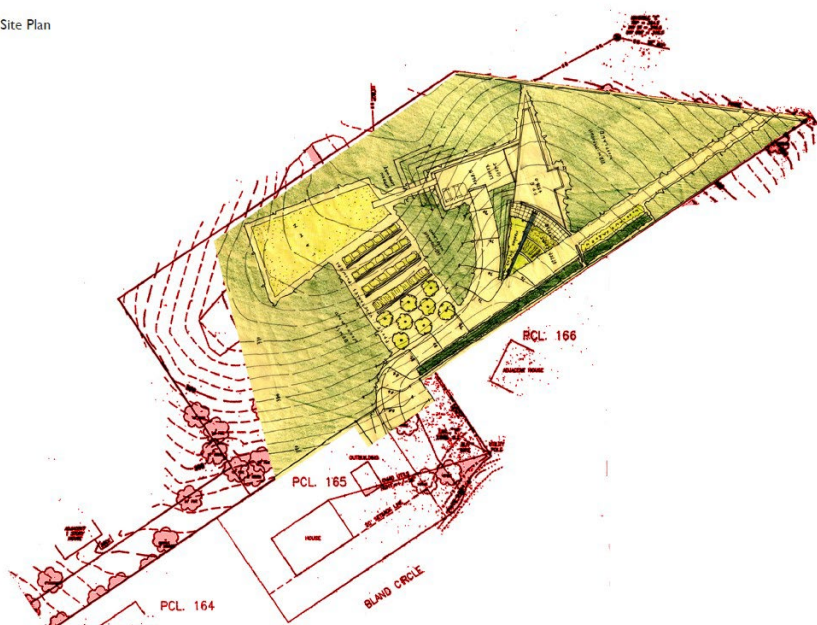
Charlottesville CoHousing
1998

Landscape strategy sketch - detail



Berdel Kinzie Residence
1999

Site Plan



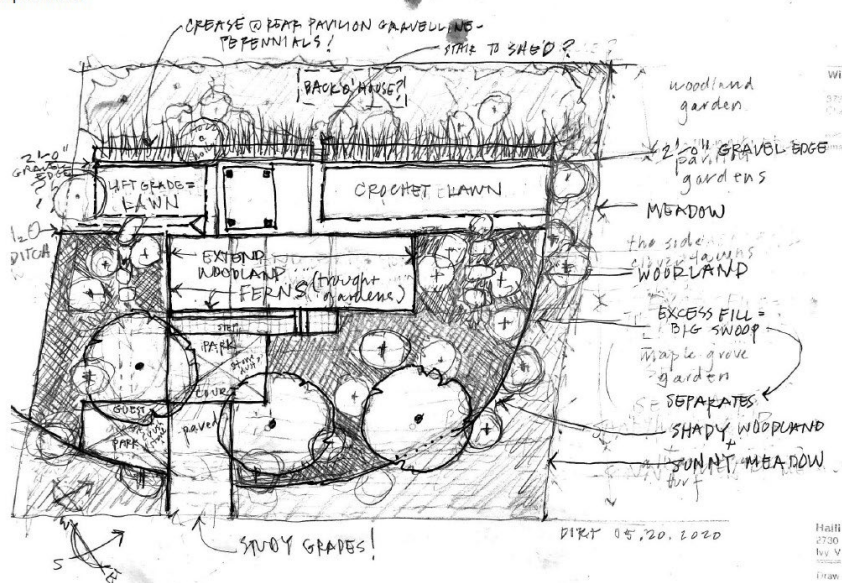
Boonesville House
2005

Site Plan



Halliday Residence
2020

Conceptual sketch



Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Steve Stimson

April 2023



My friendship with Julie started soon after our first day at the GSD in 1985.

I was initially struck by her brash, sometimes crude sense of humor which I'm convinced was shaped by her large family and "growing up in Jersey." We became fast friends in studio and loved to make each other laugh, which was such a great antidote to the stress of the rigors of coursework and studios at the GSD. Eventually we found opportunities to work together jointly on a few studio projects which not only was enjoyable but a real education for me. Julie brought such strong passion and seriousness to her work which was always sculptural (being an art major), and it helped open my eyes and other classmates' eyes to the role of earthwork in design and how plants can shape strong spaces. She was often found pushing clay, real dirt, and sand around in her models - getting herself covered in the process. Julie's resulting projects were always compelling and original. Her fascination with materials stretched the limits of typical studio explorations. One day she brought in a 20-pound roll of lead flashing from a lumber store and began to cut, shape, and even sand it, which I now question the wisdom of given its toxicity! She was fearless, messy, and precise all at the same time.

We both had the good fortune of working for Michael Van Valkenburgh as students in '85-'86 at a time when Michael mostly taught at the GSD and was just starting to build his practice doing a few private gardens and competitions. Julie and I worked very closely on these efforts. Me with rapidograph pens

inking plans and axons in tedious detail onto mylar and Julie working her magic with prismacolor pencils layering colors on BOTH sides of the mylar creating a richness and luminosity I had not seen before. When she wasn't coloring, she was building impeccable models - precisely hand cut chipboard contours and first-generation handmade copper wire trees late into the night - fingers bleeding from wire cuts of her tight grip on the exactor knife.

Since our GSD and MVV days we have remained close friends for over 30 years, finding opportunities to collaborate on projects from time to time. Two worth mentioning in particular are a garden for an artist and her husband in Manchester by the Sea, MA, with Michael Graves, who I think had become acquainted with Julie while she was a fellow at the American Academy of Rome working on her "angle of repose" pieces. The site was difficult, rocky, windswept, and



challenging for Graves who was frustrated looking for a flat table to place his sculptural pavilions. On our site walk the young, happy owners were bouncing from ledge-to-ledge outcrops cheerfully claiming they wanted this view and that view and not to miss that long one out over the cove...Graves muttered to Julie and me under his breathe "Oh how I hate views!". Julie of course had won Graves over and was able to lobby for a strong site design rather than a simple backdrop for the Graves architecture. Considering that the house gobbled most of the client's budget, we did a beautifully crafted project with its own sculptural qualities.

The second one was our collaboration in winning and executing the new 300-acre Hardberger park in San Antonio, Texas which took ten years to realize. Julie and her D.I.R.T. Studio colleagues, with our studio, completed a master plan with city-wide engagement and then proceeded to build out several phases of the park. Julie's strong leadership helped shape iconic and believable goals for the master plan for a city starving for park space and craving for a park with an ecological focus over active recreation. Her ability to invent punchy, memorable catch phrases like "name it and claim it" helped guide the master plan goals where 75% of the park was dedicated to preservation/restoration vs. 25% to careful insertion of park program that included an urban ecology center, themed loop trails and "picnic, park and play" zones, and dog parks.

Working with Julie is always gratifying and an education for me. Her limitless talents and strong convictions in both practice and academia have always led to novel and fresh design solutions and thinking which inspires past and future generations. I am so grateful to know her, have collaborated with her, and have her as my dear friend.

Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Jen Trompetter

April 2023

No sissy landscapes. Lipstick on a pig. Dumb as dirt. These are just a few of the quips I became accustomed to hearing when I was Julie Bargmann's student, her teaching and research assistant, then later her protégé at D.I.R.T studio. Today as the founder of a small practice focused on cultural landscapes and adaptive preservation, I can still hear many of Julie's cheeky-yet-incisive refrains reminding me to dig deeper, be bolder, and keep it simple. Although Julie's reputation preceded her, I didn't become acquainted with her methods until I took her courses and studio while a graduate student at UVA. While she was a gifted and generous teacher, she was also one of few professors-in-practice, one who worked in the real world and had built projects to show for it. As a teacher, she had a way of challenging all our preconceived notions of what a landscape is. She taught us how to really *read* the landscape. To her, every site lived and breathed. Every place had a voice. She taught us to decipher a site's "anatomy," as she called it – not consider it as "one big blob," she'd say. We were told to "name and claim" a site's various components, and understand how it operated, both in the past and the present. We learned to peel back the layers (sometimes literally with shovels and backhoes) and understand a site in all its complexities and contradictions – and that it was those challenges and attendant revelations that made each place truly distinctive and became the groundwork for design. After I graduated with my MLA, I had every intention of returning to California where I grew up to begin my professional career. But Julie offered me a spot at D.I.R.T. studio – an opportunity I would have been a fool to pass up. At that time Julie was working collaboratively with a diverse group of experts on reimagining an approach to Superfund site reuse. For Julie, the charge was not to impose redevelopment scenarios but to reinvent strategies for remediation and regeneration of these often massive and complicated post-industrial sites. She spoke about the landscapes as having *embodied energy*, comprised of the blood, sweat, and tears of the workers who had once toiled there, and the capacity for the sites themselves to relay their own stories rather than having some imposed new identity thrust upon them. It was the same approach she later took at former industrial sites where I worked with her including the Philadelphia Navy Yard, Portland's Centennial Mills, and the grungy North Shore of Staten Island. Despite the fact that these places no longer functioned to manufacture or produce, they still had much to share that was evident in their layered patinas and the materials that had been left behind. Although it has now been twenty years since I graduated with my MLA and since my first stint at D.I.R.T., I still think of Julie as my teacher and mentor, and myself as a "D.I.R.T. girl" (Julie's loving term for female members of her crew). I have remained in Charlottesville, where I've both practiced and taught as an adjunct, and am lucky to be able

to pop over to Julie's porch for a beer and some nourishing conversation. I know in my heart that I am both the practitioner and mentor I am today because of the lessons she taught me - not just through her instruction but primarily by modeling what it means to be authentic, undaunted, and rigorous about the work. To this day when I visit a site for the first time, I think of Julie and am reminded to look beyond the surface in order to unearth the voices of past lives lived and, at the same time, to always keep it simple, or *dumb-as-dirt*, as Julie would say.

Bargmann and Trompetter, UVA MLA Graduation, 2002 (left); Julie Bargmann @ URBN during construction administration, 2010 (right); Bargmann touring MLA students at the construction site at URBN, 2010 (below).



Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Matt Urbanski

April 2023



Julie's maddening approach to making everything harder (and better) than it needed to be.

Julie Bargmann introduced me to a way of thinking that I can best describe as artistic. To me she epitomizes the selfless dedication that a true artist has in the pursuit of their vision. I have a few examples to illustrate how profound this was, to me individually, but also to MVVA's practice, because she really set the standard that we still aspire to follow.

I first met Julie when she was my T.A. for design studio, and then later we worked together in Michael's fledgling office, which was in an upper story space over a head shop in Harvard Square. She had seniority over me and I was really just learning the ropes at that point. I had come to landscape architecture through biology and horticulture, which made me more science-based than most, but I had also grown up around a lot of creative people, so I loved the inventive spirit of the studio. None of this, however, prepared me for Julie Bargmann.

As an aside, I should say that Julie and I bonded over many things (both from New Jersey, for example). In studio, it was really the enthusiasm for exploring ideas through models, and also collages, that put us on the same wavelength.

At the time, there was a definite status quo for professional representation that we were all working to learn. There are many ways to characterize it, but it was epitomized by the book “Architectural Graphics” by Francis Ching. If you used his lettering style, and his drawing style, the work you produced looked professional, even if it was just baby steps in terms of actual creative thinking. Even though it took time to learn and master, it was very comfortable and known. There was a similarly acceptable standard language in model-making that involved sharp contours, lollipop trees, and so on.

Julie was coming at all of this professional product with an artist’s eye, and a fair amount of skepticism. She was never going to settle for the comfortable cover that “graphic standards” gave you as a designer. I don’t recall her pushing this as a T.A., necessarily – mainly she offered encouragement and then would tell me that I needed to tidy up my desk (as a general rule, Julie hates clutter and is an ace at organizing). Once I got into Michael’s studio with her, however, it was clear to me that we were not going to fall back on convention, except to the degree that it suited our purpose.

4th of July Model

A display model that she and I built for Mill Race Park is one example of the kinds of crazy things that Julie made me do. We were working on this over the 4th of July weekend, and I would have been happy to go enjoy the nice summer days and the festivities, and so on. Julie had other ideas, though.

At the time, the professional model-making convention was museum board contours, with wire trees and paper cut-outs of circulation lain on top. These took a while to make, and there was skill involved in the process, but it would have been a relatively straightforward task had it not been for Julie’s insatiable need to reinvent everything.

It started with the contours. We were working with gray museum board, which was normal enough, but Julie wasn’t satisfied with the abstraction of the stepped layers. She wanted to carefully sand down the edges, so that the topography of the mounds actually read through in the model. This would also reveal the compressed cotton that constitutes the core of museum board, giving the surface of the model a more beguiling texture. This was a great idea, but it involved about 5 times as much work, just to make

the base. The sanding itself required additional time, and, more consequentially, we had to rethink the way they layers were adhered, to ensure that the edges didn't simply curl up after they were sanded down. So, instead of willy-nilly spot gluing, which is easy, we needed to carefully trim adhesive transfer tape to the edge of each contour before we could sand it.

For our trees, Julie wanted to maintain the grey tones that we had established with the base. She wanted to use straight metal pins for trunks, with a cloud of steel wool for canopy. When I asked why we didn't just do it the normal way, she said "I like the way that the heads of the pins shine through because they mark the center of the trees." So, that's what we did.

The pathways were the real kicker, though. Most firms would have cut a pathway network from paper, carefully glued it down, and called it a day. What Julie wanted instead was to convey the fluidity, connectivity, and embedded nature of these paths. This was especially important to her because the design for Mill Race Park was simple and elemental – very basic in terms of materials and program, and really focused on getting the right things (paths, trees, topography) in the right places. So, she decided we would use x-acto knives to hand-route pathway networks directly into the model, excavating down about an eighth of an inch. We then went to a hardware store to get sheet lead (typically used for roofing), and we hand sliced this down into smaller pieces that we then painstakingly inlaid into the pathway routes we had cut out.

This work was very hard, not because the client was even expecting it, but because Julie insisted on it. As much as it drove me crazy, the results were quite beautiful and unique, certainly like no other model that was out there at the time. The grey palette brought the design elements together, the surfaces were all rich, and it really helped communicate something about the essence of the park. Was it worth the effort? Julie would have never asked the question, which goes back to what I was saying about her selfless dedication, and also stubbornness, as an artist. If she saw a way to make something better, she just went ahead and did it.

Recipes

This is just one example of Julie's innovations in model-making, but there were many many others. She was always experimenting with new techniques – like working the surface with sanding and fixative for different effects or working pastels into the surface of the model and sanding them down and repeating the process. Going back to the fact that she is organized by nature, as well as intellectually generous

(generous in other ways too, of course), she would record her research in the form of “recipes,” so that others could replicate the technique. It took time and effort to create these recipes, and it wasn’t part of her job description per se, but for Julie this kind of dedication came naturally. She set the pace for others in the office.

In the spirit of constant reinvention, there were many other instances where Julie found the underlying opportunity for material elegance. For instance, around the same time as the Mill Race model, we were working on MVVA’s submission for the Tuileries Garden competition in Paris. We wanted to add color to our entry, which was hand-drawn with Rapidograph pens on mylar. I’ll admit that I was leaning towards just adding colors on top. There was a bright, almost vulgar, use of color that was popular at the time, that I thought we could channel, but do better. Julie wasn’t buying it, though. She pushed us to apply the color the back of the mylar instead, so that it just kind of glowed through and subtly differentiated the different parts of the plan. Simple, but elegant, and just one example of the many ways that Julie brought invention to the way we worked, elevating decisions to the level of artistry, rather than just aiming for something that looked professional.

Why bother?

Despite my initial skepticism, and some moments of frustration, Julie helped open my eyes to the role of unfettered creativity in the very practical profession of landscape architecture. She taught me that to be excellent that you had to try a lot harder in every aspect of your practice. Concentration and invention were both key, and I learned to appreciate the way that many little things add up to make the difference between good and great, or even just average and good. I’ve always been a big picture thinker, and there’s a place for that, but Julie taught me that details matter, and that there’s no room for slack in the relentless pursuit of excellence. Now especially, after more than three decades in the profession, I understand how her exacting process translates into better landscape-making. You need to have a good idea, of course, but art, and the execution of that idea, is reflected in a thousand subtleties. Only by engaging in the hard work will you end up with something that moves you.

Collage was another technique that Julie used very intentionally, and I feel like you can see how this translated into her work. Her knack for honoring what is there while also utterly transforming it at the same time is deeply tied to a stubborn artistic vision that never dumbs things down or settles for the easy way out. If you look at the work she’s doing now, I think it’s very much the same thing, she is still

very much engaged in an artist's reaction to standard practice. Not because she's a reactionary, but because it means something to her.

Looking at a damaged post-industrial site, Julie sees all these qualities that others are blind to. She takes the time to appreciate humble materials like cracked concrete, and leftover pieces of machinery and she is successfully demonstrating that there's a beauty there that shouldn't be discarded. A lot of it has to do with detail, and being exacting about how you design within an environment that is already rich in so many ways. She's often lauded for her willingness to take on contaminated sites, and her insistence on restoring and healing, her recognition of human labor, and so on. As much as all of this is very true and important, many people who are not artists can be just as well-intentioned, but they don't necessarily have the intellectual tools, or the artistry, to make something beautiful out of the chaos of a brownfield site. She makes our profession better just by showing everyone that these things are possible.

Once you commit yourself to excellence on Julie's level, it guides your approach to every question. You don't rush to a "solution," or just do the thing that everyone expects. One of the problems with professionalism is that it standardizes, and it removes difference and subtlety. For instance, when people go tree-tagging, this shows up in the tendency to get the straightest, most regular trees, because they meet the standard. Standardization is the safe bet, and it often becomes the substitute for artistry. Unfortunately, it's hard to prevent this tendency because it takes relatively little time to learn a standard, whereas it takes years of sweat and toil to become an artist. Not to mention the uniformity that computers have created in so many aspects of our work, which is sort of a catastrophe for landscape design. The importance of artistry in the design process has not diminished, despite all the wonders of technology. Which is why Julie's practice, her selfless dedication to invention, and her willingness to work within the intrinsic nature of a place, are as valuable to me now as they were back in the summer of 1989.

Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Michael Van Valkenburgh

April 2023



[Click to view Michael Van Valkenburgh's recorded Reflection on Julie Bargmann.](#)

Back in the 1980s, I taught a class known by landscape students at Harvard's Graduate School of Design as "Plants." The coursework spanned the whole first year of the Master of Landscape Architecture program. I met Julie Bargmann when she was a student in that class in 1984 and, with both of us wearing many different hats since then, we have remained friends. If I ever want an honest answer about anything in the field, Julie is my source of truth.

I had seen Julie's admissions portfolio the spring before I taught her, and it was so good—jammed with gorgeous art from her undergraduate studies at Carnegie Mellon and laced with speculative ideas about landscape architecture. Anyone who has known Julie since the 1980s knows she hasn't changed all that

much: passionate, articulate, writes like an angel, a brilliant designer who has always prioritized innovation and impact over the sheer volume of her built work.

As I explained to Julie in 1984, and to probably every student I have taught since, when designers are able to do something moving with plants, it generally comes from a place deep inside. But why do we even need to say that still? Would anyone say that the genius of Eva Hesse, one of Julie's inspirations, comes from deep inside? It's obvious.

"Plants" was organized around short weekly assignments to help students discover their personal relationship with vegetation, often working with physical models. Julie did very well, as art school had made model-making second nature to her. There was an early assignment where students either talked about or brought in images of things they had made using plants. A former chef shared photographs of his food. In Julie's case, she described working in a florist shop, where for Valentine's Day one year she took long-stem roses and spray painted them black. As a teacher, you encourage students to celebrate their own unique experiences. As Julie described the spray-painted roses, the class squirmed with delight and so did I.

A couple years later, when Julie was the class teaching assistant, she brought in some images of planting models by James Rose from the 1930s and laid them out with her photographs of James's gardens. There was a passion and intensity about Rose and his use of materials that could be felt in Julie's work. Rose remained at the center of her approach to teaching and design as she went on to lead her own plants classes for the next 30-plus years.

In the fall before the COVID-19 pandemic, some officemates and I were wandering around Detroit looking for a diner that had been recommended. We never found it, but in our search, we accidentally wandered across Julie's Core City Park project—all of us unaware of whose design it was. It took about five minutes to be quite sure it was Julie's; there were some stylistic cues, yet it was really intuition based on its overall feel.

Put simplistically, the purpose of art is to delight, provoke, and challenge, while reflecting something about its maker. Built landscapes, especially public ones, have a hard time doing that on top of fulfilling the many practical needs of a place designed for people. Julie does all those things, seamlessly, which was what convinced us beyond a doubt that the project we stumbled upon was hers. There is a joy and madness about her plaza that makes it feel assertive as a piece of art and comfortable as a place to be. It has no narrative, no clearly identifiable devices, and a freeform randomness that is somehow coherent.

You can feel Julie's love of Hesse in the forms that seem to evolve organically from their circumstances rather than being composed; you can sense Rose in the collage-like urgency with which different materials and textures collide. But in the end, it's about the experience of the place. Core City Park, like everything Julie makes, comes from who she is: a designer too enamored with the truth of her medium to dull its sharp edges or present anything less than the full emotional range of a plant or a material in space.

Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Jane Wolff

April 2023

I met Julie Bargmann on the very first day of my adventures in landscape architecture, when she was a studio critic in Harvard's Career Discovery program, and I was a student. I've never forgotten the things she taught me in that capacity: how to use an erasing shield (!); how to make wire trees look like one species or another; how to infer what I didn't know from what I could observe; and, and, and. But her most important lessons have come since then and by example: through her claiming of toxic landscapes as part of our purview as designers—and our responsibility as citizens; through her commitment to the people who live in those difficult places; through her ability to conjure beauty and humour without hiding what's terrible. Always fierce, always funny, Julie has reminded me again and again why (and how) we need to stay with the trouble.

Reflections on Julie Bargmann from Thomas Woltz

April 2023

When Julie arrived at the University of Virginia in 1996, she made an immediate and potent impression on me, as with most anyone she met in the mostly well-mannered Campbell Hall. What struck me most in my first impression of Julie, was that I immediately sensed the kind, nurturing, and gentle person deep inside the bleached top, Jersey-mouthed, and emphatic gesturing force before me. The brash flash of Converse sneaks and vintage dresses stomping and whirling through the design studios might have obscured to onlookers the unexpected terrain that she and I shared despite my buttoned-up button downs and grandpa wingtips.



One thing we shared was a deep and transformative engagement with Italy. I had just moved back to the United States from 5 years in Italy, between college and graduate school, which converted my passion for architecture into a passion for landscape. For Julie, a year at the American Academy in Rome had transformed the sculptor in her into a visionary dedicated to working in earth, inspired by the path of the Etruscans. In our conversations it became clear that exploring their tombs and settlements opened her to a new understanding of the body in the earth, the body made of the earth, and the body on the earth.

The other thing we shared, that established a decades-long bond of camaraderie, was being in the “C-Family,” as Julie called it. While my experience of cancer was through my father’s diagnosis, decline, and eventual death, her experience was immediate and personal as she *was* the patient. We forged a deep friendship in the troubled months of treatments and surgeries, waiting rooms and hospital rooms. Julie inspired me in the way she talked privately and publicly about the landscapes of toxicity as the subject of her work, becoming her journey with the newly toxic terrain of her own body. What a bold and frank, pure and insightful way to face the bleak prospect of something malignant growing inside of herself that required powerful chemicals to overcome. She faced her diagnosis with the same aggressive strength of her bold designs for addressing the most toxic places: healing through disruptive interventions. I recall the celebration of her being cancer-free. A small dinner at her apartment for perhaps eight people. My then wife and I had won a Magnum of Tattinger Millesime Champagne at an event in New York which we opened that night in grateful celebration. The massive bottle sat for years in Julie’s kitchen with a big pink tag that read, “Big Love.”

In the design studio as a graduate student, Julie was a transformative influence on my thinking. Having spent years wielding pen and pencil to fluidly express any ideas that came to mind, I realized this might be a practice that stood in the way of more creative thinking as it came almost too easily. To Julie’s enthusiastic satisfaction, I decided to work for a semester with unconventional tools for “drawing.” I locked away all trace paper and drawing instruments and replaced the May-Line drawing board with a large cutting board, sewing machine, pile of clay, and hot glue gun. Co-teaching the semester with landscape architect Ken Smith, Julie encouraged me to build, and make in innovative ways that continue to inform my design practice to this day. She also pushed and urged me to empathetically envision the human experience within anything I was designing. Anyone who knows Julie, as a student or a professional, knows that the form is paramount and always well considered. But parallel to that focus, and of equal intensity, is a drive toward an empathetic understanding of the human experience in the landscape. In each of her studios, the idea of finding the human within the landscape was consistently and emphatically reinforced as an unequivocally essential element of design. During critique sessions, she would nearly get to the point of shouting at me, “What are the names of the people using this landscape? Where do they live? How did they get to the site? What are their relationships with each other?”. Julie invited me to imagine lengthy stories of family reunions, picnics, breakups, skaters, rebels, musicians, and lovers in the public landscape. Today I always use this thought exercise to assure that the needs and experiences of the people using our public work are an essential factor driving design.

In summary, the Julie I know, and love, is the emotive, kind, and empathetic human, inside the compact fizzy-bluster, who has exerted an outsized positive influence on my creative life and my own humanity.