The education of a landscape architect is a complex process and full of contradictions. On one hand, the professional landscape architect should always ensure the health, safety, and welfare of the public, on the other hand designers are expected to be innovative and creative where we tackle difficult issues and speculate fearlessly. Now, as a teacher, I realised that these aspects of the discipline are not necessarily in conflict, but merely reinforce my commitment to landscape architecture as a material practice grounded in messy contexts, multiple scales, and difficult locales.

The discipline of landscape architecture is complex, much of the information can only be found in the nuances of the physical environment and interaction with people. Every project is unique and it is impossible to teach students with a ‘standard’ scenario. Experiential learning then is a critical component of my teaching as each ‘real-life’ project allows students to recognise complexity, synthesise, and respond in tangible ways. Extensive fieldwork exposes students to discrepancies and contradictions between data collected remotely and realities on the ground, necessitating skillful information gathering and decision-making. This prepares students to enter into the profession with discernment, conviction, and confidence to take design risks.

My teaching strives to create a safe learning environment for students to experiment with difficult problems, so they may build confidence in the knowledge they have gained and its application to real issues. While it is important to set students up for success in the classroom, I believe that unsuccessful attempts are equally rewarding. Perhaps students should not be evaluated by the success of their final projects, but rather the process in which they set up the problems and execute solutions. Even if the ultimate experiment fails, students learn through identifying why the project did not work. The University is the last safe place for students to innovate and experiment before they enter into practice.

Ms Dorothy TANG Shun Wai
鄧信惠女士
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Throughout the semester, Dorothy was very helpful and patient with our class. We collaborated with the Faculty of Engineering for a part of our project, a field trip was organised to the area of Guangxi. We had the first-hand experience of working on a real site, making real measurements, getting to know the site circumstances and working with colleagues from different discipline.

It was, in my opinion, a successful trip as it was very realistic and down to earth, making it easy for us to move on to the next phase of our project – designing for the site. Apart from being well-organised, Dorothy is also a very considerate tutor, as she would try and understand our circumstances and perspectives before giving us any comments or constructive criticism.

Dorothy set up a great and solid fundamental for our lifelong landscape journey, by thorough and comprehensive course planning throughout our curriculum. Without being to forcefully impose personal ideas or experience, she is willing to point out ‘keywords’ for us to further explore and develop our projects, when we need further guides on our difficulties. It promotes self-learning and growing, as we can actually learn from solving the difficulties by further research or development. Dorothy allows the studio members to display and showcase own concepts and ideas in projects. Therefore, it allows the flexibility on our creativity. When reviewing our pin-ups, everyone will be fascinated by how broad the types of outcome that the whole studio has reached. It promotes communicative learning from other studio members as well, as we all were having different concepts and research outcome.

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BA(LS) 2011

STUDENTS’ WORDS OF APPRECIATION