

A fresh look at soils generates interest at urban landscape exhibition

Written by Luke

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An exhibit by soil science consultant Tim O'Hare (Tim O'Hare Associates) and landscape architect Johanna Gibbons (J&L Gibbons) generated considerable interest at the opening earlier this month of the Landscape Institute's exhibition 'Rethinking the Urban Landscape'. Their recently published essay 'Below Ground: City sylviculture and the art and science of city soils' was displayed in booklet format alongside five Perspex columns, each containing a different urban soil profile.

Tim and Johanna have worked together on numerous landscape projects over the last 20 years and in this their latest collaboration they have touched on the interests of both landscape architecture and soil science in a discussion on the art and science of soil. The essay is beautifully augmented by poetry from Steven J Fowler. 2015 is the UN's International Year of Soils and the essay is a timely reflection on the importance of urban tree soils, particularly in relation to the establishment of trees for the long-term.

The exhibition, jointly curated by the Landscape Institute and The Building Centre where the exhibition is being held, argues the case for investment in green infrastructure in the early stages of city and regeneration planning. It runs until 10th February.

Tim O'Hare Associates have been involved with many of the twenty or so high-profile projects featured in the exhibition, including the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, The Garden Bridge, Arundel Square, King's Cross Central, Eastside City Park, Valencia Parque Central, and Barking Riverside. Speaking after the launch, Tim said: "Johanna and I were proud and delighted to have our essay selected as an exhibit and hope it will give industry colleagues and members of the public visiting the exhibition food for thought. Urban landscapes are invariably a challenge for planners and architects, not least because their survival is dependent first and foremost on healthy soil. As a soil scientist I relish the challenge and have yet to find a project where a suitable soil couldn't be sustainably designed and created."

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Copies of Tim and Johanna's essay can be obtained by emailing info@toha.co.uk ; an electronic version is available on the exhibition website.