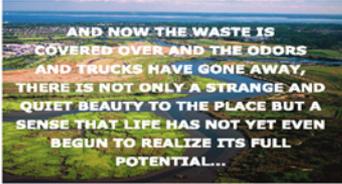
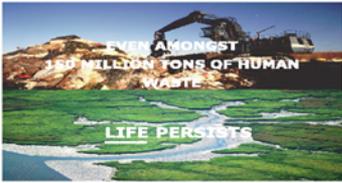


lifescape

- a reconstituted matrix of diverse life-forms and evolving ecologies

fresh kills reserve

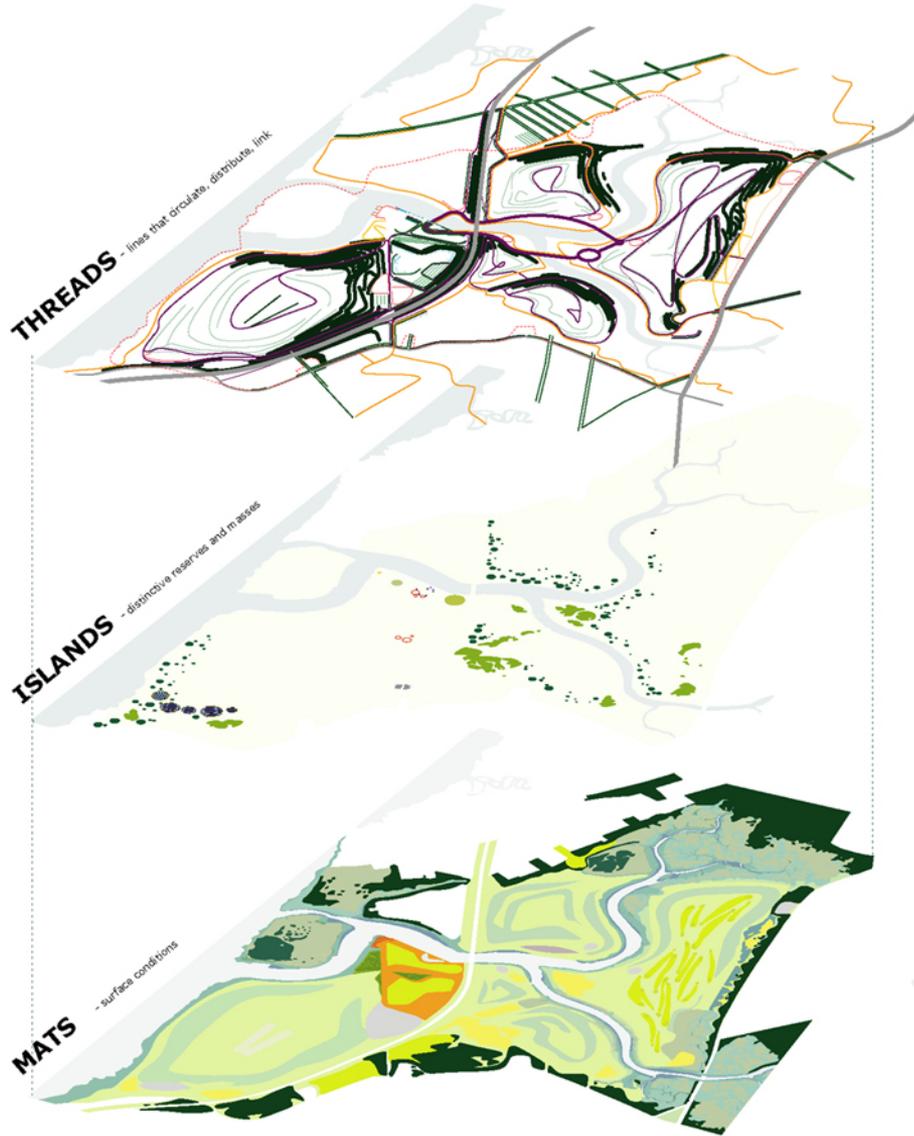
staten island, new york



Visible from the moon, with mounds of waste the size of mountains, Fresh kills remains the most complex land mass human beings have attempted to manipulate. Starkly elegant, the artificial topography offers a unique landscape experience. As such, the site presents an opportunity to develop a new form of public-ecological landscape, an alternative paradigm of human creativity, biologically informed, guided more by time and process than by space and form.

Nature, traditionally conceived as separate from cultural endeavor, can now be fully integrated into the man-made landscape. The result is a synthetic, integrative nature. Nature is no longer the image we look at, out there, but the field we are part of, an active lifescape, where life below ground, on the ground, in the water, and in the air, is continually manufacturing new environments as it reproduces and evolves.

This lifescape is rendered "cultural" to the degree that it is wholly effectuated through human agency - through design. Lifescape is a design strategy that recognizes humanity as a symbiotically evolving, globally interconnected, and technologically enhanced system. Ecological reflection, passive recreation, active sports and exercise, creativity, performance and cultural events; community development, economic enhancement and neighborhood revitalization all take their place alongside the micro-macroscopic processes of lifescape. It is fully integrative. Lifescape is not a loose metaphor or representation - it is a functioning reality, an autopoietic agent.



At present, Fresh Kills Landfill is characterized by relatively homogenous and alien ecologies. To create a more diverse, integrated and healthy series of ecosystems - to redefine landfill as *lifescape* - an alternative process of re-colonization must be set in motion:

We propose a matrix of lines (threads), clusters (islands), and surfaces (mats) to maximize opportunities for colonization and access. Program elements, including biomass and constructed surfaces and objects, are organized according to these three interrelated spatial systems:

THREADS

Linear threads direct flows of water, energy and matter around the site, injecting new life into otherwise homogenous areas. These are organized along existing swale lines, contours, pathways, and connections. They include thicket planting along swale lines on the north and east slopes, hedgerow and allee planting, long-meadow swale lines, roadways, pathways, trails, boardwalk elements, earth-berms, and linear architectural elements.



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ISLANDS

Clusters of islands provide denser nests of protected habitat, seed source and program activity. They include planted islands on the south and west slopes, where it is hot and dry; newly created wetland forest clusters in the lowlands; architectural features and site furnishing.



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MATS

Surface mats create a patch-like mosaic of mostly porous surfaces to provide self-sustainable coverage, erosion control and native habitat. They include renovated salt-marsh, freshwater wetlands, eastern prairie grassland, recreation fields, sports surfaces, and event areas. The eastern prairie grassland would be particularly extensive, although its palette and effects would vary according to water gradient - south and west slopes would be significantly drier than north and east, which in turn would be drier than swales and flatlands. These large scale gradients would provide variety and be extraordinarily beautiful.



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In time, this entangled colony of emergent organisms and communities will render the different ecosystems of the site legible as different meadows, plantings, habitats and programs work with distinct slope gradients, soil-water gradients, solar aspect, and adjacent contexts.

