

# landscape

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS 11/2008 • \$7

# architecture



## FAST FRIENDS

# Designing a Network

*New site helps deskbound landscape architects share ideas.*

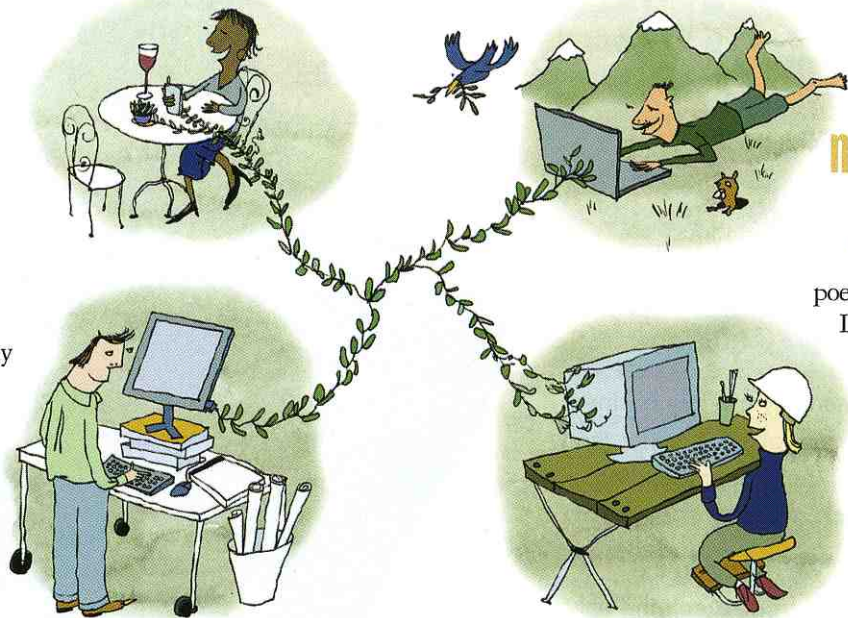
**S**O YOU'RE a digitally inclined landscape architect and you're trying to reach out to like-minded professionals. But Facebook is more college administrator than designer. MySpace is nothing but bands anymore. And the likes of Michael Phelps and Miley Cyrus are dominating the dialogue on both sites.

Now there is a social networking site, Land8Lounge, just for you. Social networking, for the uninitiated, is a recent online phenomenon that allows

diverse and far-flung users to become "friends" and keep up with one another by perusing home pages sprinkled with favorite songs, photos, video,

Now there is a social networking site just for you.

poetry, and random shout-outs. Land8Lounge is a place for landscape architects to do the same. Created in March 2008 by Andrew Spiering, Student ASLA, of Merrill Morris Partners in San Francisco and Connecticut-based Kevin Gaughan, Associate ASLA, of Graham Landscape Architecture (the two met online), the site includes biographies of its more than 1,200 members, a gallery where anyone can post (and receive comments on) images and



GABE

drawings, a forum for asking questions of the populace, and even an e-mail-like inbox for sending and receiving messages.

During a recent online chat (creation of this article employed neither phones, in-person conversations, nor e-mail—just the subject web site itself), Land8Loungers weighed in on why they're members. Kylene Van Wambeke is a San Francisco-based EDAW recruiter who scouts the site for potential employees. Jessica Wolff, Associate ASLA, a landscape designer in EDAW's Alexandria, Virginia, office, prepared for the Landscape Architecture Registration Examination by joining in on forum discussions. Bogotá, Colombia, landscape designer Victoria Solis says there is little to inspire her in Colombia, so she mines the photo gallery and work portfolios for ideas. Though the chat format was an unusual way to conduct an article interview, it certainly did allow mass participation (imagine a room full of gregarious young designers all talking at once and not realizing it), which is perhaps the core benefit of social networking.

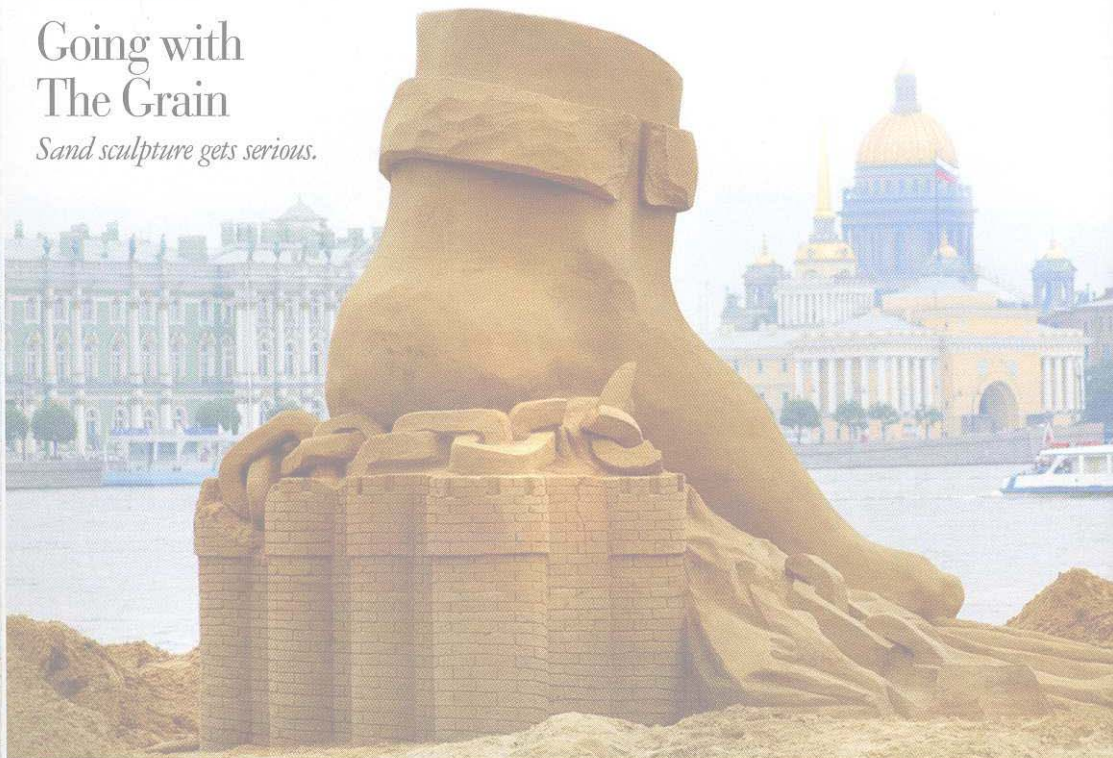
Another benefit, paradoxically, is making real-world connections. "Now," says Spiering, "I am acquainted with about 1,300 landscape architects from around the world." "[This site] allows an initial contact," says Van Wambeke, "with someone you may not have had access to before." So think of social networking as a gateway to real-world networking. And that might happen sooner than you think: A Land8Lounge happy hour took place during the national ASLA gathering in Philadelphia.

—ADAM REGN  
ARVIDSON, ASLA

## BUCKET BRIGADE

Going with  
The Grain

*Sand sculpture gets serious.*



**I**F SUMMER IS a time of passing frivolity, then its mascot should be the sand castle. Crafted on a whim and consigned to the incoming tide, the sand castle is glorious and ephemeral, like summer on the beach. Each July since 2001, St. Petersburg, Russia, has lent a little gravitas to the field of sand sculpture, hosting an international festival and competition at Petropavlovsk Fortress, on the bank of the Neva River. Unlike the typical bucket-built chateaux, this year's ambitious entries remained on display for a full month, in defiance of time and tide.

St. Petersburg's Sand Sculpture Festival is part of the city's annual Bastille Day celebration, an expression of post-Revolutionary solidarity with France's peasant uprising. This year's competition attracted 22 teams from 15 different coun-

**Sand castles aren't kid stuff anymore—competition is keen in St. Petersburg, Russia, a key stop on the international sand sculpture circuit.**

tries, who shared 300 tons of specially selected sand. Teams had five days to complete their sculptures, which could reach a maximum height of three meters.

Like other seemingly innocent pursuits—ballroom dancing, hot dog eating—sand sculpture has taken on a more serious attitude. St. Petersburg is just one stop on a circuit of sand sculpture competitions, some local, some drawing an international array of players. Sand sculpting events are promoted to corporate clients who host team-building exercises and sand-centric retreats.

Rich Varano is one of the doyens of sand sculpture. The Florida native boasts that he's

been working with sand for 43 years—though he's including the time prior to his first competitive success, at 11. Varano's knowledge of sand is encyclopedic, and his company, Sultans of Sand, is sort of a meta-clearinghouse for all things beachy. According to Varano, much of his medium isn't technically sand. "Sand is a particular thing in geological terms," he explains. "A lot of times we're using stuff that's more like river silt, clay, occasionally a mixture of clay and sand."

Varano had a team at St. Petersburg, and he's got big plans for Sandtopia Gardens, a resort-type theme park complete with a "sand academy." It seems certain that it will feature only the finest grainy sculpting media. Still, though it might not be technically accurate, according to Varano, "Sand is sand, wherever you go."

—JOSHUA GRAY