



Alfred Caldwell: The Life and Work of a Prairie School Landscape Architect

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"Compared with the land, everything else is illusion. The cities are the startled thoughts of sleep." -- Alfred Caldwell

Alfred Caldwell is one of the twentieth century's pre-eminent landscape designers. Called a "genius" by Jens Jensen, he corresponded with Frank Lloyd Wright and visited him at Taliesin in Wisconsin. He collaborated regularly with German city planner Ludwig Hilberseimer and worked behind the scenes with Craig Ellwood in California on projects that brought Ellwood prominence. Caldwell taught architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology at Mies van der Rohe's invitation and at the University of Southern California, earning a reputation at both institutions as the most demanding and inspiring professor on the faculty. Yet this radical thinker consistently attacked academic peers and the parks and roads they designed, cried out against the loss of natural prairie lands to unchecked urban expansion, often began lectures with provocative discussions of the atom bomb, and even asserted that capitalism would likely collapse and be replaced by a more just communist economic system.

In Alfred Caldwell, Dennis Domer has collected essays, poetry, drawings, autobiographical writings, and correspondence of this enigmatic figure who has guided and inspired a generation of landscape designers and architects. Caldwell's writings -- on topics ranging from landscape design to the role of technology in the twentieth century to the history of architecture -- offer proof of the creative genius of this passionate individual. He attacked the ideas behind urban renewal and promoted instead an organic, decentralized city that carefully exploited the environmental advantages of placing polluting industries downwind, gave residents ready access to healthful sunlight, separated traffic from pedestrians with green space, made walking to work possible, and formed neighborhoods into new settlement units.

Dennis Domer's introduction provides more than just a complete chronology of Alfred Caldwell's life. Through his exhaustive use of varied sources as well as taped interviews and letters, Domer offers an unprecedented study of Alfred Caldwell that establishes irrefutably his place beside the other giants of twentieth-century landscape design.

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