



Fractured avenues and meadows in Latitude Nord's park

Garden suburb

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From their inception over 50 years ago, Germany's garden festivals – known as *Bundesgartenschauen* (BUGAs) – have been drivers of regeneration, bringing nature into shattered communities after the Second World War. In 1983, Munich hosted a festival whose legacy is the florid Westpark. But despite an impressive history of park and garden design – the Nymphenburg Palace, the English Garden and the Olympic Park – the city still has a paucity of green spaces as it continues to grow.

The largest expansion is to the east, at Messestadt-Riem – formerly Munich's airfield and the site of this year's BUGA. The new community at Riem will total 16,000 people and is meant to be a model of 21st-century development. The ambition is to create a 'sustainable' district of the city with a new

200ha landscape park as its crowning glory. The park should meet the recreational needs of more than 40,000 people, while enhancing the ecology of the Riem plain.

In 1995, Paris-based landscape practice Latitude Nord won the international design competition for this park with an innovative scheme that some thought was out of keeping with Munich's more traditional green spaces. At the same time, the city applied to host the 2005 BUGA, winning its bid in 1997 and later appointing Munich-based professor Rainer Schmidt to implement the festival.

And therein lies the paradox of Munich's BUGA. The park's uncompromising structure has had to accommodate the festival, whereas on previous occasions the festival has gone on to become the park. As a result, the BUGA appears uncharacteristically disjointed

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Two of the BUGA's temporary interventions. Above left: a pneumatic maze in the sunken gardens. Above right: granite slabs in the 'weather' garden

and lacklustre, upstaged by the élan of the landscape park.

Latitude Nord's angular design incorporates the historic pattern of the airfield and adjacent agricultural fields into a sequence of stylised landscape elements: tree groups, hedges, meadows, avenues and heathland. Familiar features are reconfigured into a tableau of woodlands and meadows stretching southwards to frame views to the Alps. Less familiar are those elements seen close-to: the woodlands are serried monocultures of pine and oak with sharp edges, sometimes perched on embankments. Straight footpaths skirt these aloof trees, occasionally defined by fractured avenues that frame and confuse views in equal measure.

The most dramatic element is the 2km-long stone 'terrace': a monumental gesture running unerringly east-west across the site. Its symbolism is clear – city to the north, country to the south – while it also establishes a single zone of active parkland, which includes pitches, beer gardens and skate parks.

It is within this arresting, almost surreal, landscape that the BUGA aims to introduce a lighter, more festive flavour to the proceedings. But this year's BUGA clearly wants to be taken seriously, so out have gone national-theme gardens, pavilions and other such fairground elements, to be replaced by horticultural events that aim to 'lay a new foundation for the understanding of nature' and make clear the 'guiding theme of sustainability': in brief, a *Perspektiven Wechsel* – a change of perspective.

In order to make visitors experience and not merely look, the BUGA's main event, the 6ha

Cell Garden, attempts to replicate the tissue structure of plants enlarged exponentially. It is 12 separate cells or 'event gardens', defined by embankments, which all aim to stimulate a different sense. The designs are playful, intriguing and educational – an innovative fusion of landscape, horticulture and art.

In The Nest, scale is distorted and the familiar bird's-eye view is actually inverted. The viewer becomes nature in miniature, exploring a sculptural nest – a striking arrangement of 20m-tall spruce columns protecting a clutch of gleaming white stone eggs, each the size of a Smart car.

In the Forest Laboratory a microclimate is created under an arbour of pine bark, where ferns and even fungi can thrive, illustrating the process by which trees die and yet sustain new life. Other cells feature labyrinths through timber pens filled with domestic animals, thereby inverting the traditional relationship (the pigs appear to be on the outside). There is also a scaled-up mole hill, where the visitor plunges underground into a system of tunnels, allowing an appreciation of the dynamics of the earth in a pleasantly disconcerting, if slightly clammy, way.

The most striking event garden contains a concentric arrangement of granite slabs with a scree-like floor, from which emerge wreaths of mist simulating changing weather patterns; the effect is particularly evocative with the interplay of mist and pine trees and willows. Of particular note too is the Kick Cell – an undulating pitch with outside Subutteo footballers, which can be deployed to belt footballs through goal mouths; a classic which must find a permanent home.

Another series of gardens is located in a sunken section of the active zone abutting the terrace. Charming in scale, they are sheltered by boldly coloured rendered walls, and each has a different motif: stands of birch, angled beds of flowering plants and a maze of bright orange pathways looping around organic grass mounds. These more active and fun landscapes, viewed from angled terraces that reflect the path of the old airstrips, will thankfully remain, post-BUGA.

The landscape park and the BUGA cost €100 million (£69 million), which shows Munich's commitment to adding to its stable of memorable parks and gardens. The park's design is uncompromising, and its implementation a brave move, while the BUGA overtly promotes landscape issues and should be applauded. One thinks back to Rostock's waterside esplanades in 2003, however, or Potsdam's Friendship Islands in 2001, and realises that *legacy* is what the BUGAs are all about. It's such a pity that much of this Munich BUGA will be removed to make way for development – only a shadow will remain.

The 2007 BUGA will be at Gera and Ronneburg in the old East Germany, where its central function as an engine of regeneration is even now being pressed into service. Munich broke the post-reunification pattern of awarding most BUGAs to cities in the old East, and now has its new model community at Riem, complemented by a cutting-edge 21st-century landscape park. But the question remains as to how far the BUGA contributed to this happy situation.

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