

the "natural" landscape | yahalom-zur landscape architects

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Our perception of the "natural" landscape is to a large extent based on the man-made work of landscape architects who reinvented the countryside of the newly established country. This continuous work over the last six decades, nostalgically referred to in poetry and stories, has yielded a sequence of identifiable landscapes that serve as a platform for future reference

Established in 1953, Yahalom-Zur Landscape Architects, was one of the most influential offices in the area of Israel landscape formation. Dan Zur, who died in December 2012, and his partner Lipa Yahalom, were involved in the creation of some of the most important national parks, many of the kibbutzim, memorial sites and some of the main university campuses.

The two legendary partners met in 1946 when Lipa, who was head gardener for the Natanya Municipality at the time, hired Dan after he graduated from the "Mikveh Israel" agricultural school.

Lipa was an intellectual thinker, capable of observing Man in Nature, who knew how to express his thoughts and generate an open discussion about the role of landscape architects.

Dan was a modest, unpretentious, diligent man engaged in constant inquiry. A man of action, he knew how to manifest abstract concepts with earth, stone and plants, thereby creating a new reality hidden within the topography, waiting to be revealed by the spectator.

The special connection between spirit and creativity yielded a rich variety of projects throughout the country: scenic corners at the heart of which is always Man. Modest design without the pretentious forms and false sophistry that too often characterize contemporary landscape architecture – work

for which in 1998 the two were awarded the Israel Prize for Landscape Architecture.

Although the design world only became conscious of sustainability in recent decades, it is worth mentioning that it was prevalent in their work from the beginning. For example, the Gestetner Garden at the Weizmann Institute where rainwater is collected and preserved in reservoirs to be injected into the ground by drilling; drainage basins at the Kfar Saba Park; and the use of succulents that survive the summer to establish a green skeleton at the Open University campus in Ra'anana.

The simple, modest creation of the two usually found expression in harmonious composition and a subtle definition of space by means of topography. In this respect, the office's most powerful work was "The Valley of the Communities" at Yad Vashem.

In 1992, aged 79, Lipa retired from the office and at the end of 2010, aged 84, Dan Zur retired and the running of the office fell to Lior Wolf, who came in as administrative partner in 2006. Last month, Dan Zur returned to the land of Kibbutz Nirim, of which he'd been a founder, where he was buried in a modest ceremony under a Pistachio tree, leaving behind impressive green sites across the country.

At the Israel Prize ceremony, Lipa Yahalom said: "...only if we do not abandon the

wonderful values created over the years, what is that came out of what wasn't - no homeland, no independence, no land - only then will we be able to generate distinction."

The founding generation is gradually leaving us, to be replaced by the young. It is important that we preserve and implement the values we inherited, wisely combining them with contemporary needs in the spirit of the times.

