



Dennis Scott

Life Membership Citation

Dennis is past President of the TPO NZILA - from 2009-2011. He began his career as a landscape architect in 1971 as one of the first students of the Lincoln landscape programme. Like many landscape students worldwide, Dennis avidly read McHarg's seminal 1969 book, *Design with Nature*. This influenced his dissertation on developing an integrated catchment management methodology and profoundly influenced his practice throughout his professional life.

After university, Dennis started working with the Ministry of Works and Development (MWD). The post-war period was a golden age for the MWD as they planned, implemented, and operated large-scale infrastructure projects like dams, roads, power stations, and community housing. Dennis worked at MWD throughout the 1970s and 1980s, analysing, mapping, and planning predominantly rural landscape interventions and developments. Dennis carried the McHargian methodology into his practice with the MWD working with soil and plant scientists to plan and plant large-scale revegetation projects.

The New Zealand Governmental reforms began in 1984. The creation of a neo-liberalist economy by Roger Douglas caused a seismic shift in the public sector with the abolition of government departments like the Ministry of Works and Development (MWD). The subsequent boom in the urban economy was paralleled by the removal of all agricultural subsidies, causing a collapse of the rural economy.

With this fundamental economic change, landscape architecture practice in NZ was transformed by the transfer of large-scale planning practice from the state to the private sector and the creation of a new national planning instrument, the Resource Management Act, in 1991.

Against this backdrop, Dennis left the MDW in 1987 to set up DJ Scott Associates Ltd (DJSA) and was employed to assist in the formulation of the Waiheke County Council's District Scheme. Dennis's long apprenticeship with MWD, where he had developed the McHargian design methodology with large-scale projects and multi-disciplinary teams, came to fruition. This experience gave Dennis the skills to put his ideas into practice by creating a large-scale long-term plan to transform what we now know as Te Huruhi, The Waiheke Western Headland Landscape, the western gateway to Waiheke.

In the late 80s, this 430-hectare landscape comprised four farms that embodied the traditional kiwi pastoral monocultural landscape. Dennis used McHargian mapping and analysis and worked with the community and mana whenua to radically reconfigure the landscape. The result after 30 years has been a socio-ecological transformation resulting in a rich social mosaic of housing, restaurants, public open spaces, recreational walkways, vineyards, and other productive land uses within restored indigenous landscapes. This attractive, socially, and ecologically engaged landscape has created an abundant, peri-urban community life in which human activities and the processes of natural organisms form a mutually supporting symbiosis.

The importance of the project has been acknowledged both nationally and internationally. In 2017 Te Huruhi won the enduring category in the Resene NZILA Pride of Place Landscape Awards. In 2020, The University of Pennsylvania invited DJSA to show the Te Huruhi project as part of the 50th anniversary symposium and exhibition of the publication of Ian McHarg's *Design with Nature*. Te Huruhi was recognised as one of 25 landscapes from around the world inspired by the writing of Ian McHarg.

Since the Waiheke project, the focus of the practice has been on the large-scale macro-landscapes in Northland, Hauraki Gulf Islands, Auckland, Waikato, Coromandel, Bay of Plenty and Hawke's Bay regions. Numerous individual private projects and developments have also been undertaken, including rural/coastal subdivisions, marina developments, personal/private jetties, other coastal structures and marine farms and quarry and mine projects, all with a regenerative design focus.

Dennis has also acted as an expert witness before District and Regional Council Hearings and the Environment Court. His expertise is based on his continued involvement in various landscape, environmental and community issues. These include the interpretation of community

aspirations, policy documents and instruments, private landowner interests, and landscape and ecological design analysis at integrated spatial and temporal scales. The project work has ranged from site-specific to sub-regional and regional landscape scales and from site-specific landscape management plans to district and structure plans.

Dennis's knowledge of Integrated Catchment Management in urban, rural coastal environments and extractive industry projects has led to his involvement in significant development projects in the North Island. Dennis was selected to be a member of the national Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) steering committee (1995 – 2002) for the Ministry for the Environment's Sustainable Management Fund. The group established the terms of reference and administration framework for NZ Landcare Trust in 1996.

Dennis has been involved in landscape education, specialising in rural and coastal landscape planning, management and design. Starting as a part-time lecturer in Rural Land Management at Auckland University Town Planning School (1987 – 1989), he has been a lecturer in the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture programme at UNITEC since the degree's inception in 1995. In 2007, he was appointed Adjunct Professor. Dennis is a natural teacher. His unabashed enthusiasm for his belief that landscape architecture can change the world has endeared him to all his students. His ebullient personality and undiminished passion, deep knowledge and clarity of vision have been an inspiration and a fantastic asset to the BLA programme.

And last but not least, Dennis has had a long association with the NZILA becoming an Associate Member in 1978, a Fellow in 2004, and the President of the Institute from 2009-2011

Looking back at Dennis's long and distinguished career, we can see how Ian McHarg's words have guided his practice; Dennis was and still is influenced by McHarg's vision of the role of landscape architects to restore the compromised, often polluted landscape through an understanding of the underlying ecological process. But Dennis has taken Mcharg's insights, and over 30 years of practice, has included the community into his landscape practice, something Mcharg was reluctant or unable to do. Dennis's insight is that a landscape architect's responsibility goes beyond the environment to encompass how we must respond to the world.