CULTURE: URBAN HEALING

“Half a capital and half a country town, the whole city leads a double existence; it has long trances of the one and flashes of the other; like the king of the Black Isles, it is half alive and half a monumental marble.”

Robert Louis Stevenson

This project aims to Mend and Connect all:
- Old City & New
- Nature & Culture
- Aspects of the Gardens
- Urban Life & Natural Land
- All diverse Activities

Butterfly / Pavilion

The word ‘pavilion’ is from the Old French for butterfly - pavilion - parsed through the pictogram of a highly decorated tent, and calling to mind the fluttering canvas and heraldry of a held campaign with the glorious connection of nature and humankind.

The butterfly is symmetry and organic form, lines that can be traced and followed, eager to denote meaning. Occasionally alighting, it is of the air but connects with the ground. It delights and draws you in.

And so it is with this new “pavilion”. Pleasure will be drawn from rock and fold, from seam and segue. There are glimpses of history and the promise of a performance. People will connect through their common story and shared song. There is music in the air.

This is a place for people, and their perpetual delight.

“Here I put a comma, there, when it’s necessary to cut the view, I put a parenthesis; there I end it with a period and start on another theme.”

Lancelot “Capability” Brown
ACUPUNCTURE: CATALYSE THE CITY

Nothing here is singularly new, but everything can surprise you. A process of transformation is in train; from something camouflaged to something spectacular. From the chrysalis we emerge. Pathway and parade, hidden vistas, layers of heritage and a boguiling sense that we all face forward. When a volcanic rock resists a glacier, a different kind of landscape is hewn. This new Pavilion and Princes Street Gardens will crown the glory of the Royal Mile with a different, and natural, urban experience of space, time, culture and geology. A terrace, amphitheatre and ascending steps will create places for communities to come together across an increased ‘cultural footprint’ for Edinburgh, a city that worldwide is synonymous with stagecraft.

Multiple views, pathways, plantings and domains will make this a place that demands that you return. Our objective is to create the flows of energy and dynamic interruptions that will immediately denote an international city of culture. Our touchstone is the tranquility that this space already gives in the heart of the city, even if you’re doing nothing more than waiting for the Number 26 to Transent. Light, space, sound and poetry. Castle, rock, garden and fountain. Without nature, the city is lifeless. Without culture, the city is denuded. And without people, the city is pointless. This place is the perfect complement, to this most refined of global cities.

Context, Masterplan & Place-Making
We propose a refresh to the character of the West Princes Gardens through a reimagining of the Ross Bandstand from an theater in a garden to a garden theater. Reclaimed stone seating sits in a meadow of grasses and perennials. A new arrangement of picturesque pathways meander throughout the gardens, which are increased three-fold, bringing the space to life and creating a botanical loop from the embankment to the Royal Mile.

Our commitment to biodiversity and resilient landscapes will follow on and consult the road map: Biodiversity Strategy: 2020 Challenge for Scotland’s Biodiversity. For example, butterflies provide insights into the state of biodiversity and the ecosystem services that depend upon it. Restoring butterfly populations in gardens, urban green spaces and the countryside, is likely to bring substantial benefits to other species and to the health, wealth and well-being of the human population.

“This profusion of eccentricities, this dream in masonry and living rock is not a drop-scene in a theatre, but a city in the world of reality.”
— RL Stevenson

“West Princes Gardens will have a long season of botanical interest, whilst avoiding the cliched ‘green cement’ look of much Scottish public planting.”