

Contrast as an aesthetic proceeding for vegetation organizing in landscape structures

Stănescu Anca

Faculty of Horticulture, USAMV, Bucharest, Romania – Department of Landscape, Biodiversity and Ornamental Horticulture

*Corresponding author. Email: anca_stanescu2001@yahoo.com

Abstract Contrast is one of the most used criteria in landscape designing, not only in historical gardens but also in contemporary landscape arrangements. The overall distribution of vegetation along with detail composition offers numerous possibilities for realising particular aesthetical effects using the criterion of contrast. The solid understanding of the way in which contrast can be used by landscapers is particularly important for the final image of the arrangement, in order for it to benefit by superior aesthetical-qualitative valences and offer the competent or amateur spectator a spatial-volumetric impression which corresponds with the character of the work.

Key words

landscape arrangement, aesthetic criterion, vegetal composition.

Throughout the history of garden art and in contemporary landscape designing, one of the most frequently used criterion of vegetation composition is contrast. It is recurrently used as a mean of emphasizing areas or details of the overall vegetal composition, intending to obtain certain special aesthetical effects (1).

In the case of natural landscape contrast may be defined by the presence of engineering works and constructions of great spread such as viaducts and bridges, which are realized in open grounds on natural landscapes which on which they bring a heavy contrast, offering spectacular sights. The imposing forms of these constructions made of metal or concrete contradistinguish with the natural landscape and vegetation.

Another example of contrast in the landscape is given by the “Waterfall House” work signed by the famous American architect Frank Lloyd Wright (Fig. 1). The construction is realized out of concrete, being characterized by the simplicity of volumes reduced to essence level, which strongly contradistinguishes with the surrounding natural landscape, the natural stone, the wild cliffs, the water and vegetation. The entire architectural-landscape composition is complete and it is based on the composition criteria of contrast (3).

Materials and Methods

By definition contrast is the strong opposition between two or more elements. In landscape compositions contrast – as an aesthetic criteria – is especially used as regards vegetation distribution and organization (2). In

the vegetal assemblies contrasts may be found under various aspects:

- Contrast of the plants' shapes (*habitus*); this type of contrast is very diverse and offers a wide range of association possibilities of the plants with the contrasting *habitus* (Fig. 2). Therefore compositions of plants may be realized with forms ranging from columnar (branches pointing upwards), round, prostrate to long-haired, conic, flaunted (5)

- Height (*stature*) contrast which also offers spectacular association possibilities of tall, medium and short stature plants (Fig. 3). Particularly in the case of arbor vegetation, height contrasts may emphasize various details within the vegetal composition, creating images with a strong visual impact (4).

- Color contrast (Fig. 4): may occur in the case of leafage, flowers and fruits or in the case of stem and branches bark – as it is the case of *Betula* and *Platanus* species. The combinations based on contrast of leafage colors in red-garnet with the silver color of *Prunus pissardii* with *Elaeagnus argentea* species are very spectacular.

Density contrast of foliar mass: aerated foliar masses, as the case of *Betula*, and compact foliar masses of *Quercus* or *Acer platanoides* may be associated in order to create contrast effects (2).

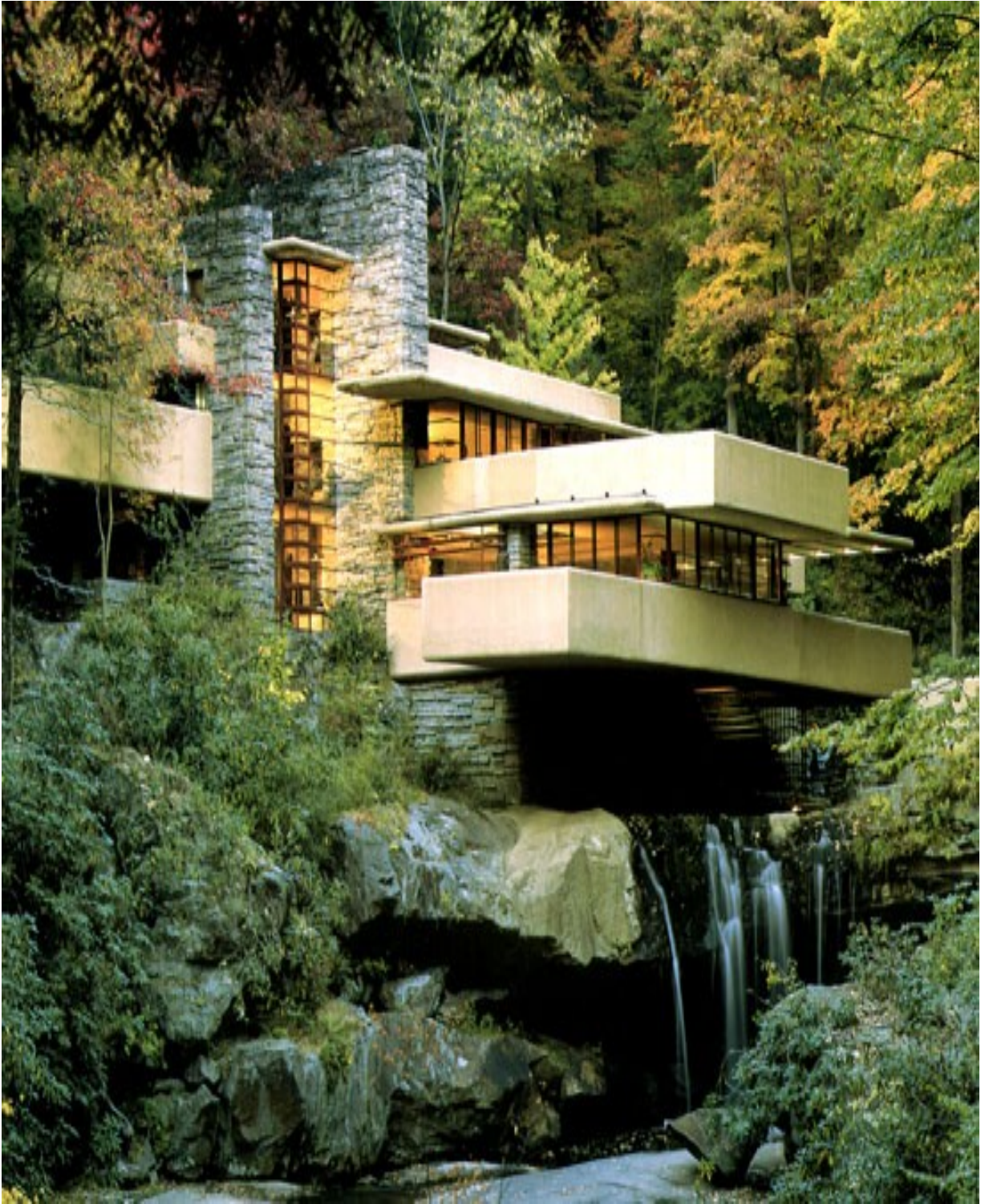


Figure 1 – Waterfall House, USA (3)



Figure 2 – Le Petit Fontanille Park, France (5)



Figure 3 – Herrenhausen Park, Germany (1)



Figure 4 – Courances Park, France (5)

Contrasts of forms and especially of colors realized on ground level through floral decorations are inexhaustible and assure spectacular effects to the entire vegetal composition.

Results and Discussions

The numerous association possibilities of vegetation specimens in contrast lead to equally numerous possibilities of creating visual-aesthetical effects in landscape compositions. Using the contrast criterion in vegetal compositions requires that a vegetal specimen or group of specimens dominates the rest of the vegetal mass for the contrast to be efficient and to offer the expected image. Depending on the extent of the project or the development itself, the contrast criterion must be used with plenty of judgment and only in the cases in which it is truly necessary and justified. Landscapers must keep in mind that excessive usage of contrasts in the vegetal composition ensemble may generate negative effects of compositional disorders.

Conclusions

The understanding of the contrast criterion by professional landscapers offers them the possibilities of realizing some interesting, attractive and spectacular vegetal compositions. The essence of this aesthetic criterion must be well possessed and entirely understood when elements that are in contrast with each other must be highlighted.

The criterion of contrast in landscape design is a factor of dynamism and expressivity.

References

1. Enge T.O.; Schröer C.F., 1990, Benedikt Taschen Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, Garden Architecture in Europe, p. 132-136;
2. Kluckert E., 2007, Tandem Verlag GmbH, European Garden Design, p. 59-99, 186-197, 396;
3. McCarter R., 2001, Phaidon Press Inc., Frank Lloyd Wright, p. 203-212
4. Pool Mary Jane; Albrizzi A., 1991, Rizzoli International Publications, The Gardens of Florence, p. 99, 123;
5. Valéry Marie-Françoise; von Schaewen D., 2008, Taschen GmbH, Gardens in France, p. 37, 166, 252.