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## Competition: Järfälla Login Gate, Sweden

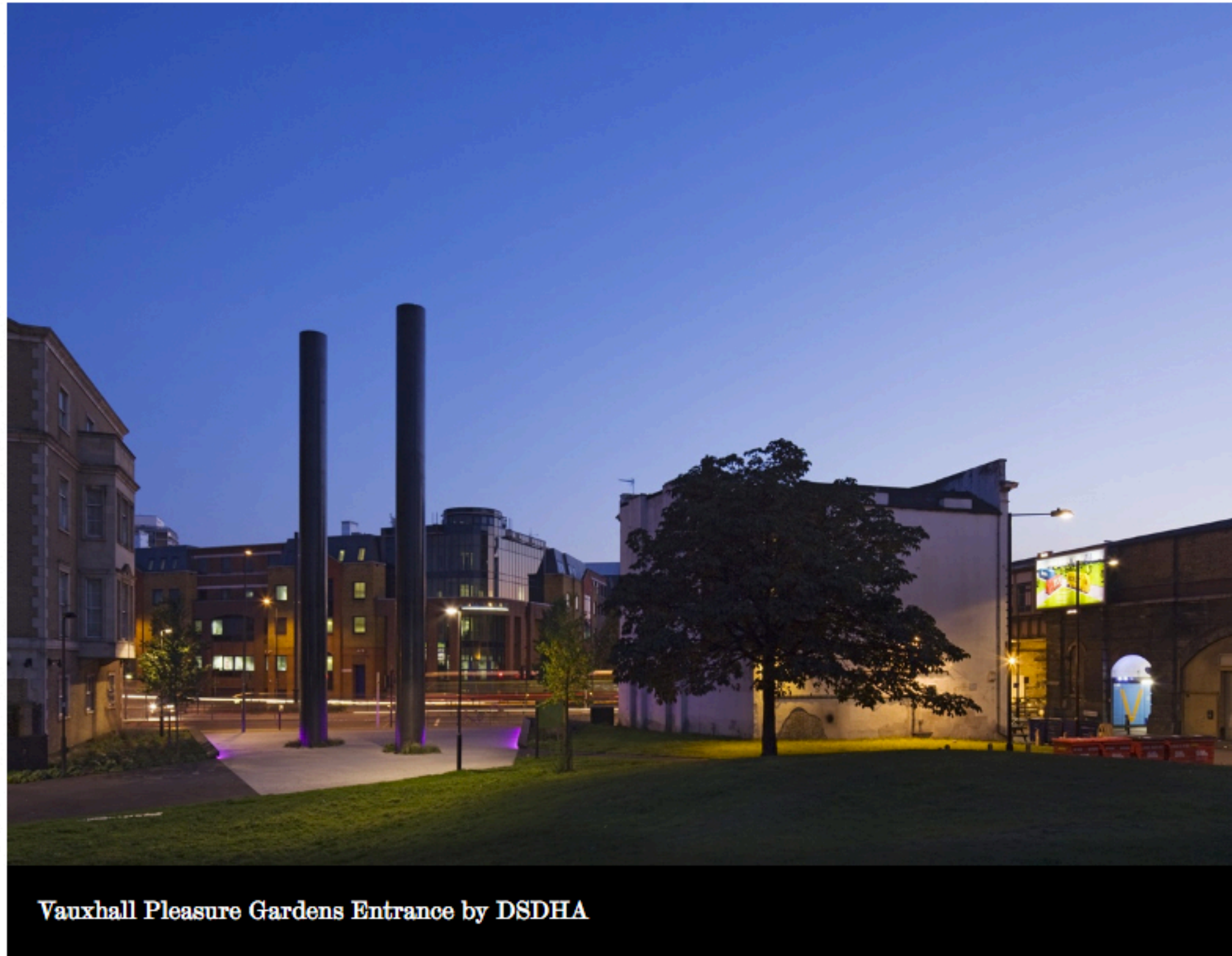
15 MAY, 2016 • BY MERLIN FULCHER

### Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens Entrance case study: Q&A with Deborah Saunt

*The director of DSDHA discusses how the practice went about designing a new gateway to the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens in London*

*What are the core requirements of a 21st-century park gate such as your Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens Entrance?*

In 2005 our Vauxhall-based studio was commissioned by the Friends of Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens and Lambeth Council to develop a long-term Urban Framework Plan for the regeneration of the gardens and environs. Until recently this had been a derelict and poorly maintained wasteland, attracting all manner of anti-social behaviour. The vision was to improve the fabric of the gardens while making reference to the atmosphere of the area's historical pleasure gardens and also signalling a connection with contemporary culture; in this case the Royal Vauxhall Tavern next door, an emblem of London's gay community. The ultimate objective was to raise awareness and pride of place within the local community, who previously saw the gardens as a place to pass through rather than enjoy.



*What material, structural and lighting techniques are available to park gate designers seeking to achieve a similarly impressive visual impact?*

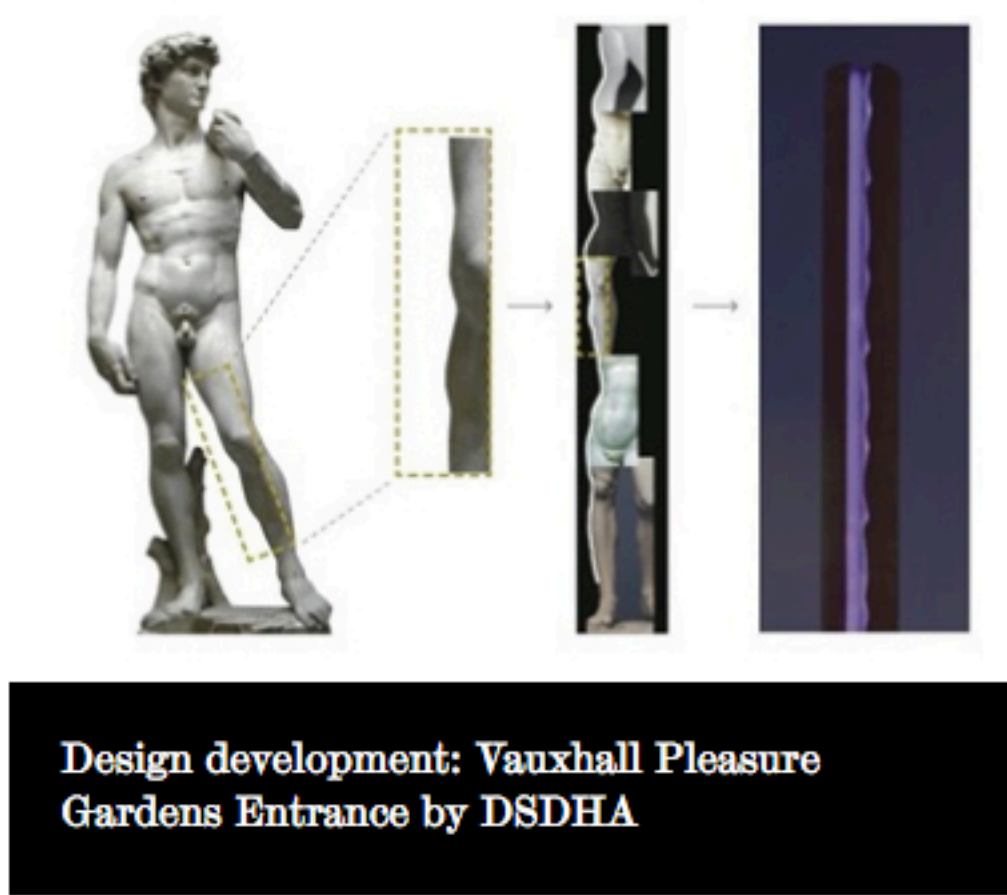
We wanted to recall the historic gardens' masonry grandeur of the ornamental gateways and sculptures, as well as the former factories that inhabited the site after the gardens closed. To this end we employed contemporary black pigmented concrete and an erotic bespoke formwork, which reveals the concealed lighting within.

*How could a gateway signify a site's history, capture public imagination and revive its social benefits in our networked age?*

At the new gateway to the park, two monumental columns affirm Vauxhall's unique qualities, featuring an artwork at the top that, while making reference to the park's sensuous/glorious past, celebrates its present. The columns are purposely forceful and demand attention, as if insisting that the passers-by lift their eyes from their smartphone screens and be present and aware of their surroundings. This attribute might be referred to as 'awkward', but we see it as a contemporary form of beauty, obliging one to engage the senses in the here and now, feeling an emotional sentiment and acknowledgement of wider social issues. Structurally the concrete columns' impressive scale made them demanding to cast. The sculptures, which are now on top of them, are lightweight, in contrast to the massive, almost industrial scale of the gateway.



The combination of a strong architectural statement and improved landscaping has not only greatly benefited local residents and their enjoyment of the gardens, but has also catalysed a cultural renaissance in the area: Damien Hirst's gallery has now opened at the north of the Pleasure Gardens and, on the eastern boundary, the Cabinet Gallery is due to open this year. Furthermore the gardens' relandscaping and regeneration has resulted in an ever-expanding annual programme of free events being staged in the park.



Design development: Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens Entrance by DSDHA

In our work we embed ourselves in the site to observe the way individuals behave. We record their movements at different times of the day, across the seasons; we research the way people employ technology – particularly wearable and handheld devices – as a tool to navigate their surrounding as well as to record and share their personal experience of the environment. We consider the digital traces they leave behind, either knowingly or unwittingly; we look at the density of Twitter feeds and internet usage to see what is really happening on the ground, even analysing the viewpoints from which popular parts of the city are recurrently photographed and posted

on social media. After compiling these data we overlay them to create collective impressions of the public spaces we are working on.

Rather than a faithful reproduction of a specific context, the representations we manufacture by means of these techniques of 'grounded research' evoke a multifaceted reality: a complex landscape which reflects concerns, aspirations and trends of many different individuals – all aspects that may often remain hidden to the generic gaze of statistics and evade the canonical and object-focused photographic representations of architecture.

These images are our starting point to map what we call 'personal landscapes', and understand how individual narratives relate to the urban morphology as well as to the history of a place. From this vantage point we then proceed to speculate on possible future scenarios.



Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens Entrance by DSDHA