



Photo: Amy Barkow

*In co-operation with Louis Poulsen, Tillett Lighting has developed the Bosque bollard as a special fixture. Its most notable feature is a bowl that gathers rainwater, through which the light is projected upwards to dance in the treetops.*

BY IDA PRÆSTEGAARD

# The adventure returns

*Four hundred years ago, Dutch explorers walked through dense forest when they arrived on the shores of what they named New Amsterdam. If they arrived in New York Harbor today, they would stroll through a rejuvenated Battery Bosque.*

New York City's Battery Park is located on the southern tip of Manhattan. The 23-acre park is one of the city's oldest public spaces and it is visited daily by thousands of tourists, office workers and neighbourhood residents. Despite its waterfront location and historic significance, Battery Park had suffered from years of neglect.

## *The Battery Bosque: A park-within-a-park*

At the forefront of the renewal of lower Manhattan is The Battery Bosque. Encompassing 4 acres of Battery Park, this area featured cracked asphalt and rows upon rows of worn, broken benches. After sunset, the area became dark and foreboding.

Warrie Price, The Battery Conservancy president and visionary behind the parks transformation, commissioned a renowned design team, including garden designer Piet Oudolf, landscape architects Saratoga Associates, architects Weisz + Yoes and lighting designer Linnaea Tillett to create a world-class horticultural destination.

## *The Bosque Reconstruction*

Landscape architect Laura Starr, (at the time principal in charge of the Bosque Reconstruction, now of Starr Whitehouse Landscape Architects and Planners PLLC) imagined the verdant forests and marshes that greeted Dutch explorers to the area 400 years ago and asked, "How can we recreate this natural abundance in a place traversed by millions of visitors a year that is also used for events, and picnicking? How can the design provide the experience of meandering and exploring, feeling soft ground under foot – being in a romantic world apart from the surrounding streets – and be sustainable and maintainable?"

With this thought as inspiration, the design team worked together to create a series of garden rooms joined by paths that wander through a grid of 140 London plane trees. In the spring of 2003, The Battery Conservancy presented this plan to The New York City Department of Parks and was awarded \$8 million for renovation.

"The circulation of people was form-giving. At the same time, the interaction

between the ground plane and beds of planting would help shape and create the ways in which people moved through the space and provide opportunity for them to gather," says Jeff Poor, Senior Associate at Saratoga Associates.

Warrie Price, President of The Battery Conservancy, set extremely high standards for the project. The Battery Conservancy's ability to address the city's concerns and its ability to raise funding pushed forward non-traditional park treatments.

"At the time, the project was crazy," admits Jeff Poor. "It was very unusual that things that normally were not allowed to go into a New York City park could go in". The design of the benches, alternative lighting and plantings had never been done in a New York City public park before. "This project helped change the way people looked at parks in New York City," says Poor.

## *Connecting lighting and landscape*

A key part of the reconstruction was a





Photo: Cary Snyder

*Battery Park is on Manhattan's southern point, and offers views of Staten Island and the Statue of Liberty.*

lighting plan that encouraged the use of the park after dark. Lighting designer Linnaea Tillett was brought in early during the conceptual stage to help create an identity for the park through illumination. The existing post-top lanterns along the waterfront would provide way-finding lighting, but there was no connection between the elements – the lighting, the horticulture and the landscape architecture.

"By illuminating elements of the landscape like the plantings, the fountain and the kiosks, we were able to create a sense of place," says Linnaea Tillett. "The bosque bollard knits together the park's elements."

### *The Bosque Bollard*

The bollard fixture grew out of several needs. The space needed a visual attraction that would catch the eye from a distance. The lighting needed to create a sense of intimacy and discovery to draw people into the space as well as complement the plantings and bring them to life at night. It had to function on multiple levels, withstand extreme

weather conditions and be easily maintained.

"Part of the project was to figure out how to take all of the points of view – things that you think ought to be true – and coalesce them into a fixture," says Linnaea Tillett. An enormous amount of analyses was done in order to convince New York City authorities of the feasibility of using bollards. "New York City does not use bollards – fear of vandalism," comments Linnaea Tillett.

Maintenance of the bollard impacted the way they were designed and placed. The fixtures were integrated into the planting beds, creating an "island of safety" that meant you had to walk through the plants to get to them. The bollard was designed to be simple, removable and extremely rugged.

### *Setting new standards*

What would last in a public space? The design team turned to Louis Poulsen with their specifications. It was crucial that a reputable company could manufacture all of the standards set for the

bollards. "We had to vouch for the fact that the company that made them would stand behind them. And that was a significant part of the reason for choosing Louis Poulsen," says Linnaea Tillett.

#### **THE BATTERY BOSQUE PARK**

CLIENT: NEW YORK CITY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT; THE BATTERY CONSERVANCY  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT, TEAM LEADER: SARATOGA ASSOCIATES  
ARCHITECT: WEISZ + YOE  
HORTICULTURAL DESIGNER: PIET OUDOLF DESIGN  
LIGHTING DESIGNER: TILLET LIGHTING DESIGN

