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• act as an advocate for interior design/interior architecture undergraduate and postgraduate degree programs;
• support the diversity of degree programs;
• provide recognition for excellence through refereed citations awarded to academic staff of the above programs;
• publish and disseminate results of research and refereed work carried out in member Institutions;
• foster and encourage collaboration within and beyond the membership of IDEA;
• foster an attitude of lifelong learning; and
• encourage academic exchange within the membership of IDEA.

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Each IDEA member university is asked to publicise the scheme and encourage submissions from its academic staff and post graduate students. Expressions of interest are called for and an abstract outlining title and a concise summary of the project or paper is required in the first instance. Following receipt of the completed paper, the Editorial Chair arranges for its anonymous assessment by at least two referees. Referees are selected for their acknowledged expertise in the matter to be refereed.

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Cover – Stuart Geddes – detail from INSIDEOUT poster.

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# Contents

Introduction 3  
*Suzie Attiwill and Gini Lee*

Chaos, Territory, Art. Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth *(Invited paper)* 15  
*Elizabeth Grosz*

Absence of Structure 31  
*Joanne Cys*

Rhetoric of Landscape Architecture and Interior Design Discourses: Preparation for Cross-Disciplinary Practice 41  
*Gill Lawson, Jill Franz and Barbara Adkins*

Spaces of Architectural Overcoming 51  
*Cathy Smith*

Pacific Space: The Pacific Conception of Building 61  
*Bill McKay and Antonia Walmsley*

Interior Bowers: The Dormant Wilderness of Nineteenth-Century Boudoirs 75  
*Mark Taylor and Julieanna Preston*

The Potential of the Window in ‘Framing’ Landscape Meaning 85  
*Jill Franz*

AFK – Away From Keyboard, Place in The Sims Online 97  
*Kathy Waghorn*

Interiors in the Land of the Great Outdoors 107  
*Sam Kebbell*

Living Outside with the Sun 117  
*Christina Mackay*

The Aural Eye: Soundscape Practice and Pedagogy in Design Education 129  
*Lawrence Harvey*
‘rO:Om’, spatial and material transmissions
*Julieanna Preston*

Navigating the Labyrinthine
*Laurene Vaughan*

From Bus Driver Dreaming to Tjukurpa – the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre
*Jillian Walliss*

Being Nowhere: Distraction, Disintegration and Spatiality
*Gillian Swanson*

The Question of the Trip
*Linda Marie Walker*

Changescapes (*Invited paper*)
*Ross Gibson*
Introduction


The symposium INSIDEOUT was held in Melbourne Australia from 22 to 24 April 2005. Its focus was to encourage new thinking, research and teaching between interior and landscape discourse and practice. Papers by national and international academics, practitioners and postgraduate students in the disciplines of interior design, landscape architecture, art and design were presented and published in this issue of IDEA Journal. All papers – except the invited papers by Elizabeth Grosz and Ross Gibson – have been refereed in accordance with the IDEA Journal refereeing process. The symposium was supported by IDEA (Interior Design/Interior Architecture Educators Association), RMIT School of Architecture and Design, The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, the Louis Laybourne Smith School of Architecture and Design at the University of South Australia, and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. In keeping with the concept of bringing two sides together – insides and outsides – this introduction is composed of two views.

Composing forces

Suzie Attiwill

This publication of papers on matters of interior design/interior architecture and landscape architecture, and insides and outsides, is another manifestation of INSIDEOUT, a symposium held in April 2005 at Domain House in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. The idea of holding a symposium where landscape and interior were brought together emerged during a conversation at SAHANZ, Brisbane, 2002. I remember feeling a sense of mischievous glee at the idea of holding a conference where what is usually so dominant in the fields of landscape and interior and, in a literal sense, the middle bit between them – architecture – would be absent. I wondered what kinds of conversation might be had without a dominant voice and referent.

The title for the symposium was initially in(side)out. As a lens for the symposium, this bracketing had for me the effect of heightening the ‘side’ and hence siding of the disciplines and practices. This changed to INSIDEOUT when we developed the graphics for the symposium. As a lens, the possibilities of turning something inside out came into focus, with the invitation to presenters/authors to ‘address the coincidences between interior and landscape disciplines and practices’. The symposium took place ‘to encourage new thinking,
Thinking about it now, a number of decisions were made which were critical in terms of the symposium. The first was that there was no stated theme, aside from bringing the two disciplines together, nor a series of thematic threads which preceded the submissions of abstracts. We wanted to see what would be produced through the call for abstracts outlined above. To do otherwise would have been a contradiction of sorts – in that we were encouraging ‘new thinking, research and teaching’ and for the new to emerge, the possibility of not knowing in advance of the symposium was vital. Another important force was the site. While this is not surprising given the nature of the disciplines involved, the choice of a venue is often made according to quantitative requirements and audiovisual technical facilities. For us, however, the selection of the site for the symposium was inspired by qualities of inside and outside. INSIDEOUT took place inside a building that was once a house surrounded by grass and a courtyard, adjacent to the Royal Botanic Gardens and The Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. The house was built for the first Government astronomer (someone whose practice was the observation of outer space!). It later became a gallery for contemporary art and its current life is as a venue attached to the education program of the Royal Botanic Gardens.

Elizabeth Grosz was invited as the symposium’s keynote speaker. Her writings, in particular her text ‘Architecture from the Outside’, foregrounds thinking and its relation to doing and making. In her opening paragraphs, Grosz poses the question ‘How to think architecture differently? How to think in architecture, or of architecture, without conforming to the standard assumptions, the doxa, the apparent naturalness, or rather the evolutionary fit assumed to hold between being and building … to think while making or rather while doing: to think as doing’ (Grosz, 2001, p. 59). The invitation as the keynote to INSIDEOUT was an invitation to ply her thinking to the disciplines and practices of landscape and interior design, and to encourage thinking and experimentation with ideas during the symposium.

Another important composing force was Ross Gibson. Invited also as a guest of the symposium, his brief was ‘to listen and collect emerging threads and errant ideas to be raised during dedicated discussion times’. This collection coalesced into what Gibson referred to as ‘an endnote paper’ – which he presented at the end of the symposium. His sensitive analysis of John Ford’s film The Searchers which he filtered through a reading that highlighted the dynamic relation of insides and outsides expressed on the surface of the screen was a powerful and moving moment of closure to the three days of the symposium. The publication
of his paper ‘Changescapes’ in the journal as an endnote paper has a similar effect in that it offers up another collation of composing forces from the symposium as both reflection and a point of departure.

In publishing the papers in the IDEA Journal, we felt it was important to keep these composing forces in movement. The grouping of papers in the journal therefore reiterates the symposium structure and does not cohere to IDEA’s convention of alphabetic listing. It must be noted however that this shift to publication has also brought changes – three papers presented at the symposium are not included here. This in turn has atrophied some trajectories. With the publication of the papers, the journal becomes an archive, continuing a past event which also becomes mobile as a vehicle and continues the symposium’s potential.

Thinking about the symposium as we prepare the journal, the concept of the frame continues to resonate for me as a powerful idea. Grosz in her paper for the symposium spoke/writes of the outside as chaos and that art (inclusive of design) is a process of producing frames – as a process of composing chaos. ‘The frame is what establishes territory from out of the chaos that is the earth. … the constitution of territory is the fabrication of the space in which sensations may emerge, from which a rhythm, a tone, colouring, weight, texture may be extracted’ (Grosz, 2005, p. 19). This is a poignant concept in relation to interior design as it focuses a process of interiorisation. This reinvigorates design (all arts) as a process of composition – an act of framing which produces a territory (an interior) which is composed, in a sense ordered as distinct from chaos, and where sensations become apparent. Re-reading each paper and engaging with this concept makes apparent the creative aspect of practice as one of extracting sensations through a dynamic relation between inside and outside.

There is also a link to the mischievous glee I experienced – over three years ago – at the thought of taking out the middle bit, taking architecture out of the composition. In the first session of the symposium, Grosz raised the question as to the very possibility and desirability of taking architecture out of the equation. Her point was that in a sense the frame is architectural and without it, there is no frame and hence no inside/outside. This provoked me to rethink – and I realised that it was not architecture per se that was problematic but its associated concepts of permanency and, in particular, from an interior design point of view, its already thereness. Architecture in relation to interior design is a structure that exists in advance; a schema, something supplementary to the process. In relation to the symposium, I was interested in thinking about insides and outsides, where this relation is dynamic and not determined in advance – a relation which can then also afford a turning inside out.
The symposium was composed in this way – without a schema or set of themes in advance of it happening. The groupings of papers were organised by a gut feeling about potential connections; and like any curatorial arrangement the action of arranging produced connections, repetitions and differences. The motivation was experimentation with an approach which privileges the encounter as distinct from the pre-existing where inside and outside are in continual process of production.

It was, in many ways, like the Australian rainforest bird’s performance referred to by Grosz, with reference to Deleuze’s writing (Grosz, 2005, footnote 8, p. 27). The bird turns leaves over on the forest floor, ‘so that the paler internal side contrasts with the earth’; it then goes to an overhead branch and ‘sings a complex song’. The leaves below become a stage for performance. The symposium was a similar event in that the papers were a collection of leaves turned inside out which were then arranged and composed a stage from which a number of refrains were performed.

Through the privileging of thinking as distinct from knowing and providing a vehicle for thinking differently, and the generosity of the presenters/authors – a unique collection of upside-down leaves has been produced. The discussion panel at the end of second day observed that the dominant refrain was process and a distinction between process and product. The question was posed as to forms of inventiveness and how one can move away from the immutability of the product. Spatial and temporal dimensions were highlighted as composing forces, these forces are vital to interiors and landscape, insides and outsides. In a sense, it is not surprising that they were such dominant forces yet the presence of architecture may have had the effect of organising these forces into minor and peripheral zones. During INSIDEOUT (and now here in the journal), with the middle bit taken out, an opportunity was and is provided for insideout forces to compose and other refrains to be performed.

A topographical reflection
Gini Lee

In 2003, on a drizzly spring Adelaide afternoon, the Surface Colloquium³ was in its closing stages. I had been scheduled to present the final paper, and we had all left the University lecture rooms for the soft space of Angela and Hossein Valamanesh’s garden. It is a rambling suburban space; both a location for being in a gardened place and also a moment where homely domesticity and creative studio practices intersect and coincide. This middle space intervenes between the artists’ studios that grow out of the side and rear boundaries and the house, firmly sited in the middle of the block.
My reflection on the INSIDEOUT Symposium is positioned around this afternoon spent in the Valamanesh garden. While it is an account of the various qualities and activities in this particular garden, it also implicitly refers to the ideas raised by the contributors to INSIDEOUT, located in another house and garden nearly eighteen months later, in an event that invited speculations from other academics and designers across different spaces and times. Yet the coincidences abound; spaces of living and working and the thresholds between; discourses across disciplinary boundaries and practices, cross-infection of knowledge and ideas; and this journal as a medium for publication and dissemination.

At the end of an intellectually and sensorially challenging few days, it seemed to me that what could be offered to the Surface Colloquium was to situate the garden as a possible site for collaboration; a moment to reflect upon those ideas/discussions that had been provoked by the gathering together of artists, architects, designers, makers, musicians, poets, writers and so on. So, an invitation was made to the assembled gathering to walk and record the garden as a reflection upon ‘surface’. The torn and marked pages from my notebook were worked on by the group and I subsequently placed them on the wall as an exhibition piece at INSIDEOUT, with the accompanying text:

While walking (in the garden) you may notice

Responding to an invitation to record the Valamanesh garden over the course of a Spring afternoon some artists, writers & designers, participants in the Colloquium: Surface, marked the surface of paper torn from a notebook to react materially, immaterially, literally and laterally, to the garden.⁴

The resulting works, collections of drawings, markings and material remains, while seemingly slight and ephemeral, express something of the coincidences of thought between inside and outside and between interior and landscape that also surfaced from our INSIDEOUT invitation to speculate on new and other connections and to re-look at conceptual spaces through the involvement of many disciplines (Figure 1).

Making : locating

In his INSIDEOUT symposium end-note conversation, Ross Gibson offered the garden as a site of performance and collaboration, where, in etymological terms, ‘garden’ refers to a place where a making and crafting process is possible through a physical and intellectual enclosing.⁶ This allows the garden to be situated as a conceptual and metaphorical site where relationships are worked out and dualities and/or oppositions are blurred.
Figure 1: Four Valamanesh garden recordings (various authors)
Elsewhere, I have written about Gibson’s thoughts:

For him, the concept of the garden, in forms both expansive and miniature, expressed in both realised and more conceptual ways, as an identified entity and as a philosophy of making and of exchange, pervaded the weekend. The garden is a definitive place that is at once cultural and ecological, theoretical and practised, inside and outside, a situation where both interior and landscape coincide, was memorably described during one presentation as being contained within the interiority of the collection of objects on the mantelpiece (Lee, 2005, pp. 5–6).

Many terms that arise through examining the concerns of the contributors to INSIDEOUT are pertinent here: enclosure, porosity, incompletion, framing/not framing, travelling, transformations at boundaries, instability and mutability are concepts that are layered through many writings and infer the qualities of changescaping, a term and a condition introduced by Gibson in this journal. In essence, the garden is conceptualised as a changescape based upon the notion of landscapes that resonate with ‘transformations [that occur at] boundaries, at the limits between the inside and the outside of their systems’, as a place where relationships rather than finished works are created and where contemplative engagement is facilitated (Gibson, 2005, p.195).

Michel Foucault describes gardens in his third principle of heterotopia and the contradictory location. For him the garden is a place of superimposed meaning. ‘The garden is the smallest fragment of the world and, at the same time, represents its totality…’ (Foucault in Leach, 1997, p. 354).

This superimposition of scale and locus is evident in many of the spatial practices described during INSIDEOUT that dealt with meaning and making within prescribed sites. Often these concerns encompassed locating oneself within a landscape or interior space, real and/or imagined and as a site for experimentation. Processes of making and unmaking, transforming and expanding points of view, framed by deeply held convictions regarding site specific experiences, are here located in spaces as diverse as the domestic back yard and interior renovation, the New Zealand bach, Uluru-Kata Tjuta, the Coorong and the condition of being nowhere.

Coinciding: positioning

Drawing upon Plato’s choric space in the Timaeus, Elizabeth Grosz has asked us to consider ‘what does it mean to reflect upon a position, a relation, a place related to other places but with no place of its own: the position of the in-between’ – the space that ‘falls between
the ideal and the material’ (Grosz, 2001, p. 91). She suggests that the in-between, despite lacking an identity and a form, ‘… it is that which facilitates, allows into being, all identities, all matter, all substance’ (Grosz, p. 91).

The Valamanesh garden is in many ways an in-between space; physically it provides the locus between home and studio, between creative living (the domestic) and creative making (work). It facilitates the work and yet sits beside the work as a place of respite and of another making; that of gardening and responding to site and the circumstances of such elements as weather and visitors, in many guises. Yet while physically positioned as an in-between space, this garden is where much thinking coincides, and in the space of that Spring afternoon, these coincidences were made material through the marking of paper as a record of conversations engaged upon while walking.

Conversations sponsored across people and across practices can also happen where invitations to propose and present current and speculative research and practice, act to transform disciplinary and spatial boundaries. Throughout the symposium we learnt of experimentations between the personal and domestic realm and the sometimes discomforting relationships that evolve between the architecture (built and practised) and the other inhabited spaces (interior and landscape imagined) inside and outside the walls (framing). Ways of overcoming such distractions are demonstrated in visual, virtual, sonic and sensory realms in the writings contributed. In reflecting upon our disciplinary concerns it seemed there emerged many navigatory approaches towards operating in ill-defined space, while at the same time siding with approaches that are realised through paying close attention to material and surface qualities.

**Collaborating: collapsing**

My reflections upon INSIDEOUT, as an event that might be judged as a topographical process through collapsing geographical and conceptual concerns, have been informed by Nikos Papastergiadis’ recent work on writing as a creative practice (Papastergiadis, 2004). He relates the site specific experiences that occur in everyday settings (in relation to art practices) to an expanded concept of topography. Papastergiadis makes the useful distinction between the Greek *topos*, the place in which events occur and *tropos*, the method by which events occur, as dual affects of the collaborative process (Papastergiadis, p. 160). For him, an engagement in the topography of a site or an event involves a number of actions that may include observation, detailed analysis, mapping, storytelling, and the excavation of material layers. Such is the work of the designer, the educator, the theorist, the maker, and these works were the stuff of INSIDEOUT, the event, and have resurfaced again in this journal.
In the garden, the notebook pages torn from my exercise book became the medium for collaboration between maker and site and maker and maker, simultaneously. The acts of marking the sheet, passing it on, then reworking and re-noticing through the act of walking around and around, expanded the garden as both a practised and imagined place. The processes that engage the conditions in which we operate and the environments with which we interact and transform, are also facilitated by collaborative occasions; such as the afternoon’s work in the Valamanesh garden and the performative operations that took place within the constraints and opportunities of the INSIDEOUT symposium.

The invitation to contribute is also a provocation to exchange ideas and enable transformations of initial readings and opinions about and of a place. When I attempt a review of the notebook pages, the multiple voices are obvious, yet those voices fade as the authors’ initials become obscured or were absent from the start. Authorship is not the primary concern here, where simple marking, collecting, rubbing, writing and watering result in postcards of an afternoon, in a place, of a time to be remembered fleetingly. This is both collaboration with place and also a place of exchange across disciplinary boundaries, and transcends familiarity with location and co-author. And when I recall the conversations and responses to the papers at INSIDEOUT, I am also struck by the open-ended and inclusive sharing of ideas across unfamiliar territory.

Papastergiadis suggests that ‘...communication does not proceed when the boundaries of exchange have been predetermined by either party’ (Papastergiadis, p. 162). Working across the boundaries of exchange is evident in the emerging languages of INSIDEOUT that deal with the textual and visual tactics that position, frame, transition, filter, shift and travel across disciplines and practices. As demonstrated in the accompanying exhibition, (through such representational media as soundworks, installations and performance works), experimental forms arise, particularly where means of exchange traverse disciplinary boundaries and techniques.

The INSIDEOUT symposium achieved an exchange of writings, presentations, exhibitions and discussions in the interactive spaces of the symposium program. Beyond the event, the topographical process is verified in furthering these exchanges; through editing the markings that make up this issue of the IDEA journal; through our subsequent conversations with the participants across geographical and conceptual landscapes and ultimately through our ongoing collaborations and discourses that travel across design communities.
References


Endnotes
1 These quotes and any further quotes relating to the symposium which are not referenced are taken from text written by Gini Lee and myself, and used in the symposium program.

2 These papers were:
Dr Jenny Lowe ‘The Forming and IN-forming of Space Itself’.
Julian Raxworthy ‘Labour, Tactics: Inside and Out’.
Yael Reisner ‘Emotional Environments, spatial depth and beauty’.


4 The verbal invitation that later appeared in the INSIDEOUT exhibition

5 There were multiple authors for these works. My thanks to John Barbour, Paul Carter, Loene Furler, Greg Hainge, Paul Hoban, Teri Hosken, Aldo Iacobelli, Angela Valamanesh, Hossein Valamanesh, Linda Marie Walker, and others.

6 Ross Gibson’s endnote address on Sunday April 24, 2005.

7 My thanks to my co-convenor of the INSIDEOUT Symposium and guest co-editor of this IDEA journal Suzie Attiwill, for her collaboration and her patience.
Chaos, Territory, Art. Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth

Elizabeth Grosz, Women’s and Gender Studies, Rutgers University, New York

The art of sensation

This paper is about the ontology, the materiality and logical structure of art. While I am not trained in the visual arts or architecture, nonetheless I see there are many points of overlap, regions of co-occupation, that concern art and philosophy, and it is these shared concerns that I want to explore. I want to discuss the ‘origins’ of art and architecture, but not the historical, evolutionary or material origins of art – an origin confirmable by some kind of material evidence or research – but rather, the conceptual origins of art, what concepts art entails, assumes and elaborates. These of course are linked to historical, evolutionary and material forces, but are nevertheless conceptually, that is to say, metaphysically or ontologically separable from them. Art, according to Deleuze, does not produce concepts, though it does address problems and provocations. It produces sensations, affects, intensities, as its mode of addressing problems, which sometimes align with and link to concepts, the object of philosophical production, the way philosophy deals with problems. Thus philosophy may have a place, not in assessing art, but in addressing the same provocations or incitements to production as art faces, through different means and with different effects and consequences.

In my previous work, I focused on the ways in which bodies, and the forces of space, time and materiality, that is, nature, have enabled rather than inhibited cultural and political production.¹ In this paper, I would like to address how these forces cohere to enable the productive explosion of the arts from the provocations posed by the forces of the earth, (cosmological forces which we must understand as chaos or material and organic indeterminacy) with the forces of living bodies, bodies by no means exclusively human, which exert their energy or force through the production of the new, and which create through their efforts, networks, fields, territories that temporarily and provisionally slow down chaos enough to extract from it something not so much useful as intensifying, a performance, a refrain, an organisation of colour or movement. The arts produce and generate intensity, that which directly impacts the nervous system and intensifies sensation. Art is the art of affect more than representation, a system of dynamised and impacting forces rather than a system of unique images.² By arts, I am concerned here with all forms of creativity or production that generate intensity, sensation or affect: music, painting, sculpture, literature, architecture, design, landscape, dance and so on. What distinguishes the arts from other forms of cultural production are the ways in which artistic production merges with, intensifies and eternalises,
monumentalises, sensation. Material production – the production of commodities – while it may generate sensation is nevertheless directed to the accomplishment of activity, tasks, goals or ends. Art is the submission of aims and ends to intensity, the subordination of intensions to sensation. This is not to say that art is without concepts; simply that concepts are a by-product or effect rather than the very material of art. Art is the submission of its materials – paint, canvas, concrete, steel, marble, words, sounds, bodily movements, indeed any materials – to those constraints and forms through which these materials generate and intensify sensation, through which they impact on bodies, nervous systems, organs.

What can philosophy contribute to an understanding of art other than an aesthetics, that is, a theory of art, a reflection on art? Instead of supervening from above, taking art as its object, how can philosophy work with art or perhaps as and alongside art? Only by seeking what it shares with art, what common origin they share in the earth and the living body, what ways they divide and organise chaos to create a plane of coherence, a field of consistency on which to think and to create. In other words, what common debt do art and philosophy share to those forces, chaos, that each in their own ways must slow down, decompose, harness and develop (through the construction of the plane of immanence in philosophy, and the construction of the plane of composition in the arts)? How, in other words, do the arts and philosophy (‘theory’) create? With what resources? Techniques? Counterforces?

I want to start at the ‘beginning’. In the beginning is chaos, the whirling, unpredictable movement of forces, vibratory oscillations that constitute the universe. Somewhere in this universe, in a relatively rare occurrence, this chaos, through chance, generates organic proteins, cells, proto-life. Such life can only exist and perpetuate itself to the extent that it can extract from the whirling chaos that is nature, materiality and force, those elements, substances, processes that it requires, that it can somehow bracket out or cast into shadow that profusion of forces that engulf and surround it so that it can incorporate what it needs. And such life can only evolve, become more, develop and elaborate itself to the extent that there is something fundamentally unstable about both its milieu and its organic constitution. The evolution of life can be seen not only in the increasing specialisation, elaboration and bifurcation or differentiation of life forms, but above all, in their becoming-artistic, in their self-transformations which exceed the bare requirements of existence. Sexual selection, the consequence of sexual difference or bifurcation – one of the earliest evolutionary upheavals in the evolution of life on earth – is the opening up of life to the indeterminacy of taste, pleasure and sensation. Life comes to elaborate itself through making its bodily forms and its archaic territories, pleasing, or annoying, performative, which is to say, intensified through their integration into form and their impact on bodies.
There is much ‘art’ in the natural world, from the moment there is sexual selection, from the moment there are two sexes which attract each other’s interest and taste through visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile and gustatory sensations. The haunting beauty of birdsongs, the provocative performance of erotic display in primates, the attraction of insects to the perfume of plants, are all in excess of mere survival: each attests to the excessiveness of the body and the natural order, their capacity to bring out in each other what surprises, what is of no use but nevertheless attracts and appeals. Each attests to an overabundance of resources beyond the need for mere survival, which is to say, to the capacity of both matter and life to exchange with each other, to enter into becomings which transform each other. They attest to the artistic impact of sexual attraction, the becoming-other that seduction entails. This is not a homeostatic relation of stabilisation, but a fundamentally dynamic, awkward, mal-adaptation that enables the production of the frivolous, the unnecessary, the pleasing, the sensory for their own sake.

Art-proper, in other words, emerges when sensation can detach itself and gain an autonomy from its creator and its perceiver, when something of the chaos from which it is drawn can breathe and have a life of its own. Philosophy, like art and like science, draws on and over chaos. The chaotic indeterminacy of the real, its impulses to ceaseless variation, give rise to the creation of networks, planes, zones of cohesion, which do not map this chaos so much as draw strength, force, material, from it for such provisional and open-ended cohesion. If philosophy, through the plane of immanence or consistency, gives life to concepts that live independent of the philosopher who created them yet participate in, cut across and attest to the chaos from which they are drawn; so too art, through the plane of composition it throws over chaos, gives life to sensation which, disconnected from its origins or any destination or reception, maintains its connections with the infinite from which it is drawn and which it expresses.

The various arts are a consequence of the (historical) construction of a plane of composition, a plane of shared and differentiating techniques, methods and resources, a plane transformed and reoriented through the upheavals in art production, the revolutions in sensation that art history has wrought. Art is only possible insofar as such a plane precedes any particular work; and each particular work of art finds its place, even the place of disruption, within this plane, without which it could not function as a being of sensation, a sensory variety. The plane of composition, which cuts across, and thus both plunges into and filters and coheres chaos through the being of sensation is thus both an immersion in chaos, in nature and materiality, but also a mode of disruption and ordering of chaos through the extraction of that which life can glean for itself from this whirling materiality – sensations, affects, percepts, intensities.
– blocs of bodily becoming that always co-evolve with blocs of the becoming of matter or events.

Art and nature share a common structure: that of excessive and useless production, production for its own sake, production for the sake of profusion and differentiation. Art takes what it needs – the excess of colours, forms, materials – from the earth to produce its own excesses, sensations with a life of their own, sensation as ‘non-organic life’. Art, like nature itself, is always a strange coupling, the coming together of two orders, one chaotic, the other ordered, one folding and the other unfolding, and it is because art is the inversion and transformation of nature’s profusion that it too must participate in, and precipitate, further couplings:

...if nature is like art, this is always because it combines these two living elements in every way: House and Universe, Heimlich and Unheimlich, territory and deterritorialization, finite melodic compounds and the great infinite plane of composition, the small and the large refrain (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 186).

Thus the first gesture of art is not, as Nietzsche believed, the exteriorisation of one's own bodily forces and energies, the transformation of flesh and blood into canvas and oil but a more primary gesture that requires the body’s prior separation from the earth, from nature, from its world. Deleuze understands, and on this point is in remarkable agreement with Derrida, that the first gesture of art, its metaphysical condition and universal expression, is the construction or fabrication of the frame: ‘Art takes a bit of chaos in a frame in order to form a composed chaos that becomes sensory, or from which it extracts a chaoid sensation as variety...’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 206).

Architecture and the frame

The first artistic impulse in this metaphysical reconstruction is thus not body-art but architecture-art. Art is, for Deleuze, the extension of the architectural imperative to organise the space of the earth. Art, developed alongside of the territory-house system, and the house-territory system, is what enables the emergence of pure sensory qualities, the data or material of art. This roots art, not in the creativity of mankind but rather in a superfluousness of nature, in the capacity of the earth to render the sensory superabundant, in the bird's courtship song and dance, or in the field of lilies swaying in the breeze under a blue sky. It roots art in the natural and in the animal, in the most primitive and sexualised of evolutionary residues in man's animal heritage. Art is evolutionary, in the sense that it coincides with and harnesses evolutionary accomplishments into avenues of expression that no longer have
anything to do with survival. Art is the sexualisation of survival; or equally sexuality is the rendering artistic of nature.⁶

Art is linked not to some intrinsic relation to one's own body but to the processes of distancing and the production of a plane of composition which abstracts sensation from the body. The emergence of the ‘frame’ is the condition of all the arts and is the particular contribution of architecture to the taming of the virtual, the territorialisation of the earth. It is the frame that constitutes painting and cinema just as readily as architecture.⁷ The frame is what establishes territory from out of the chaos that is the earth. The frame is thus the first construction, the corners, of the plane of composition. Territories here may be understood as surfaces of variable curvature or inflection which bear upon them singularities, eruptions or events.⁸ It is to this extent that architecture, and all the arts that follow from it, are linked to the bird's song, the dance of insects, the performative displays of vertebrates, including humans: they are each the constitution of a territory, a sexualised territory, the space that is one's own in which one can enact sexual seduction and extract sexual satisfaction. But perhaps more significantly, the constitution of territory is the fabrication of the space in which sensations may emerge, from which a rhythm, a tone, colouring, weight, texture may be extracted. And equally, insofar as its primordial impulse is the creation of territory in both the natural and human worlds, art is also capable of that destruction and deformation that destroys territories and enables them to revert to the chaos from which they were wrenched. Framing and deframing become art's modes of territorialisation and deterritorialisation through sensation, framing becomes the means by which the plane of composition composes, deframing its modes of upheaval and transformation.

At its most elementary, architecture does little other than design and construct frames; these are its basic forms of expression. Even in its most sophisticated contemporary forms, architecture is the constitution of interlocking frames, frames that can connect with, contain and be contained by other frames: architecture is the creation of frames as cubes, interconnecting cubes, cubes respected or distorted, cubes opened up, inflected or cut open.⁹ The frame separates. It cuts into a milieu or space. This cutting links it to the constitution of the plane of composition, to the provisional ordering of chaos through the laying down of a grid or order that entraps chaotic shards, chaoid states, to arrest or slow them into a space and a time, a structure and a form where they can affect bodies. This cutting of the space of the earth through the fabrication of the frame is the very gesture that composes both house and territory, inside and outside, interior and landscape at once, and as the points of maximal variation, the two sides, of the space of the earth. Qualities are now loosened onto
the world, no longer anchored in their ‘natural’ place, but put into the play of sensations that departs from mere survival to celebrate its means.

This is why the frame’s most elementary form is the partition which, projected downward generates the smoothness of a floor, which ‘rarefies’ and smooths over the surface of the earth, creating a first (human) territorialisation. The floor, ever acquiring smoothness, suppleness and consistency makes of the earth and of horizontality a resource for the unleashing of new and more sensations, for the exploration of the excesses of gravity and movement.10 The partition projected forward induces the wall, which constitutes an inside and an outside, dividing the inhabitable from the natural (the chaotic), transforming the earth itself into a delimitable space, a shelter or home. The wall divides us from the world on one side, though it provides new connections, new relations, social and interpersonal relations, with those on its other side (‘The wall is the basis of our co-existence’ (Cache, 1996, p. 24)). The wall destabilises and reinflects the territory created by the floor; yet within and through the wall, another reterritorialisation of the earth is always immanent.

While its most direct and perceptible function is to separate or divide, the wall equally functions to select and bring in. In this case the frame can be converted into the window, which selectively envisions its natural exterior, now a ‘landscape’, no longer beyond its partition but within the enframed space of the room. The wall darkens, keeps out light and natural forces; the window selectively enframes them again to return them to the interior, to bring illumination inside. The wall, floor and windows each enframe, that is, divide and select both each other and their collective outside; and together – ever approaching the form of the cube even as they eventually come to deform it – they entail a final partition, a roof. The roof, like the floor, though, is more than a horizontal wall, more than a box presented in any orientation whatever. As Cache argues, the roof follows a logic of form more than function: it belongs to a formal, even geometric register – prism, dome, cone or pyramid (1996, p. 26), each with their own lines, figures and singularity, with their modes of inflection and curvature.11

Within the architectural frame, in miniaturised form, the frame re-enacts itself and its territorialising function through furniture, an architecture on the inside of architecture: ‘Though classified as objects in our everyday language, furniture can be seen as an interior replication of architecture. The closet is a box in the box, the mirror a window onto the outside, the table another floor on the ground’ (Cache, 1995, p. 30).

It is hardly surprising though, that, as Cache emphasises, because furniture is that which most intimately touches the body, it is the mediating of the architectural frame into
direct contiguity with the body and its activities: ‘For our most intimate or most abstract
endeavours, whether they occur in bed or on a chair, furniture supplies the immediate
physical environment in which our bodies act and react; for us, urban animals, furniture is
thus our primary territory. Architecture, object, geography – furniture is that image where
forms are fused together…’ (Cache, 1995, p. 30).

The real, the outside, nature, matter, the cosmos, geography – all terms that we can
understand as more or less stable expressions of chaos – are that which incites, from the
outside, the productive proliferation of resources that reveals, envisions, an element, force
or section of the chaotic in the form of sensation. This real, the outside, chaos, demarcated
through the constitution of a (finite and provisional) territory, the marking of eruptions on the
closed surface of the plane of composition, makes possible the more calculable, measurable
and mappable features that characterise a site; and the built frame, produced through a
regulation and partitioning of orientations in the site, divides and selects that which of the
territory, now configured as landscape, a view, can directly mark, and illuminate, the inside,
the divisions and selections of a community. And within the built frame, as a frame within a
frame within a frame, is the co-existence of our bodies and their bodily supports, furnishings
that make of our bodies an abundance of sensations and actions. Furniture brings the outside
in, but only to the extent that it is itself from this outside, yet stripped down, reworked,
refined, in short, constructed. In this process of territorialisation, deterritorialisation and
reterritorialisation, the body becomes intimately connected to and informed by the peristaltic
movements, systole and diastole, contraction and expansion, of the universe itself. Body and
universe, entwined in mutual concavity/ convexity, floating/ falling, folding/ unfolding are
directly touched by that outside it enframes, creating sensation from their coming together.12

**Art and the earth**

Architectural framing produces the very possibility of the screen, the screen functioning
as a plane for virtual projection, a hybrid of wall, window and mirror. Painting can be
understood as the transitional passage from the frame to the screen, a movement of growing
dematerialisation, a movement where the image becomes less and less dependent on a
milieu and location, and is itself the complex and enfolded second-order constitution of the
frame, this time no longer for the mixed purpose of usefulness and pleasure, but for the
generation (and never the reproduction or representation) of sensations.

Like architecture, art is not only the movement of territorialisation, the movement of joining
the body to the chaos of the universe itself according to the body’s needs and interests; it
is also the converse movement, that of deterritorialisation, of cutting through territories,
breaking up systems of enclosure and performance, traversing territory in order to retouch chaos, enabling something mad, asystematic, something of the chaotic outside to reassert and restore itself in and through the body, in works and events that impact the body. If framing creates the very condition for the plane of composition and thus of any particular works of art, equally art itself is a project that disjars frames, that focuses on the intervals and conjunctions between frames. In this sense, the history of painting, and of art after painting, can be seen as the action of leaving the frame, of moving beyond, and pressing against the frame. Art thus captures an element, a fragment, of chaos in the frame and creates or extracts from it, not an image or representation but a sensation, or rather, a compound of a multiplicity of sensations, not the repetition of sensations already experienced or available beyond or outside the work of art, but those very sensations generated and proliferated only by art.

This is, precisely, the task of all art and, from colors and sounds, both music and painting similarly extract new harmonies, new plastic or melodic landscapes, and new rhythmic characters that raise them to the height of the earth’s sound and the cry of humanity: that which constitutes tone, health, becoming, a visual and sonorous bloc. A monument does not commemorate or celebrate something that happened but confides to the ear of the future the persistent sensations that embody the event… (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 176).

The artistic release and propagation of sensation, which is itself always a mode of resonance or harmonious vibration, an oscillation extracted from the fluctuating, self-differentiating structure of the universe itself in which nothing is self-identical, all substance is a mode of contraction/dilation or difference/repetition, does not just generate perceptions, that is auditory and visual images, but above all, rhythm. Rhythm explodes auditorily in and as music, and visually, in and as painting and the visual arts. Rhythm is what connects the most elementary and primitive bodily structures to the movements of the universe itself: art, as music, as sculpture, as painting resonates force through every structure, and this force is a non-human ‘unliveable Power’ (Deleuze, 2003, p. 39) that runs through all of life and connects it to the non-organic forces of materiality itself (Darwin discusses the soothing effects of music on crustaceans which have no auditory apparatus; Lingis (1984) outlines the dazzling coloured luminosity of fish who are blind and inhabit only the darkest regions of the ocean). ‘Sensation is vibration’ (Deleuze, 2003, p. 39).

The visual and sonorous arts capture something of the vibratory structure of matter itself; they extract colour, rhythm, movement from chaos in order to slow down and delimit within
them a territory that is now capable of undergoing a reshaping and a new harmonics that will give it independence, a plane of stabilisation on which to sustain itself. The refrain is how rhythm stakes out a territory from chaos which resonates with and intensifies the body. Territory is always the coming together both of spatiotemporal coordinates (and thus the possibilities of measurement, precise location, concreteness) and qualities (which are immeasurable, indeterminate and open-ended), that is, it is the coupling of a milieu and a rhythm. A refrain is the movement by which the qualities of a specific territory or habitat resonate and return to form it as a delimited space, a space nonetheless always open to the chaos from which it draws its force.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that music, and literature, can be represented as readily on the model of territorialisation and framing as the visual and architectural arts. Music too is framed, and involves the extraction of a vibratory rhythm from chaos which is then placed into the frame constructed of the interchange between the harmonic and the melodic. Vibration becomes harmonic; melody comes to regulate the bringing together, the construction of a ‘sonorous’ house, of an interchange of vibratory movements:

*The situation of music seems no different and perhaps embodies the frame even more powerfully [than in the visual arts]. Yet it is said that sound has no frame. But compounds of sensation, sonorous blocs, equally possess sections or framing forms each of which must join together to secure a certain closing-off. The simplest cases are the melodic air, which is a monophonic refrain; the motif, which is already polyphonic, an element of melody entering into the development of another and creating counterpoint; and the theme, as the object of harmonic modifications through melodic lines. These three elementary forms construct the sonorous house and its territory* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 189).

A territory is established only once qualities/ properties come to have their own resonances, their own forms of repetition and reconstruction; territory is the spatio-temporal configuration and containment of these rhythms and forces. Territorialisation is ‘the act of rhythm that has become expressive, or of milieu components that have become qualitative’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 315). At one and the same time, a quality comes to be abstracted from its milieu and a geography comes to be defined as property or habitat: in the constitution of the frame, the cosmos is directed, through constructed planes of cohesion, to material transformations and becomings, to remaking the body, intensifying its forces, investing its milieu in a new configuration of closure and opening. Chaos is forestalled, framed and welcomed within in a regulated dose.
If painting aims to make every organ function as an eye, if it aims to make the very entrails see and look, and if music makes every organ and pore of the body function as an ear attuned to rhythm and melody, if, as Deleuze suggests, painting ever more deeply materialises the body while music spiritualises it, this is because, through the various arts, the body is, for a moment at least, directly touched by the forces of chaos from which it so carefully shields itself in habit, cliché and doxa.14 What painting, music and literature elicit are not so much representations, perceptions, images that are readily at hand, recognisable, directly interpretable, identifiable: rather, they produce and generate sensations never before experienced, perceptions of what has never been perceived before. The visual arts render visible forces that are themselves invisible; the musical arts ‘render non-sonorous forces sonorous’ (Deleuze, 2003, p. 48), in short, they extract something imperceptible from the cosmos and dress it as in the sensible materials that the cosmos provides in order to create sensation, not a sensation of something, but pure intensity, a direct impact on the body.

Painting is about rendering the invisible in visible form, and music about sounding the inaudible, each the expression and exploration of the unrepresentable.15 Art is not the activation of the perceptions and sensations of the lived body – the merging and undecidability of subject and object, seer and seen in a common flesh as suggested by Erwin Straus (1963) and later elaborated by Merleau-Ponty (1968), but about transforming the lived body into an unliveable power, an unleashed force that transforms the body along with the world.16 Cosmological imponderables – among the most obvious, the forces of temporality, gravity, magnetism – which are equally the objects of scientific, philosophical and artistic exploration are among the invisible, unheard, imperceptible forces of the earth, forces beyond the control of life that animate and extend life beyond itself. Art engenders becomings, not imaginative becomings – the elaboration of images and narratives in which a subject might recognise itself – but material becomings, in which these imponderable universal forces touch and become enveloped in life, in which life folds over itself to embrace its contact with materiality, in which each exchanges some elements or particles with the other to become more and other. It is for this reason that art is not frivolous, an indulgence of luxury, an embellishment of what is most central: it is the most vital and direct form of impact on and through the body, the generation of vibratory waves, rhythms, that traverse the body and make of the body a link with forces it cannot otherwise perceive and act upon. This explains art’s cultural or human universality and ubiquity: it is culture’s most direct mode of enhancement of the body.

Art is the opening up of the universe to becoming-other, just as science is the opening up of the universe to practical action, to becoming-useful and philosophy is the opening up of the
universe to thought-becoming. Art is the most direct intensification of the resonance, and
dissonance, between bodies and the cosmos, between one milieu or rhythm and another. It
is that which impacts the body most directly, that which intensifies and affects most viscerally,
from the lowliest crustacean body to the human body. Through the plane of composition it
casts, art is the way that the universe most directly intensifies life, enervates organs, mobilises
forces. It is the passage from the house to the universe, from territory to deterritorialisation,
‘from the finite to the infinite’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 180). What philosophy can
offer art is not a theory of art, an elaboration of its silent or undeveloped concepts, but what
philosophy and art share in common – their rootedness in chaos, their capacity to ride the
waves of a vibratory universe without direction or purpose, in short, their capacity to enlarge
the universe by enabling its potential to be otherwise, to be framed through concepts and
affects. They are among the most forceful ways in which culture generates a small space of
chaos within chaos, where chaos can be elaborated, felt, thought.

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Endnotes

1 See in particular, Grosz (2004) and Grosz (2005).

2 Sensations, affects and intensities, while not identifiable, are clearly closely connected with forces, and particularly bodily forces, and their qualitative transformations. What differentiates them from experience, or from any phenomenological framework, is the fact that they link the lived or phenomenological body with cosmological forces, forces of the outside that the body itself can never experience directly. Affects and intensities attest to the body’s immersion and participation in nature, chaos, materiality: Affects are precisely these nonhuman becomings of man, just as percepts – including the town – are nonhuman landscapes of nature (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 169, emphasis in the original).

3 See Chapter Three of Grosz (2004) for a discussion of the indeterminate, sometimes even deranging, effects sexual selection has on the relentless operations of natural selection, and its place in the generation of music, language and the arts.

4 Deleuze elaborates the concept of sensation as it was developed in Erwin Straus’s The Primary World of the Senses (1963), where it designates a primary relation between a subject and the world, preceding rationality and knowledge, perception and intellection, in which there is always a mutual transformation between them:

The sensing subject does not have sensations, but, rather, in his sensing he has first himself. In sensory experience, there unfolds both the becoming of the subject and the happening of the world. I become insofar as something happens, and something happens (for me) only insofar as I become. The Now of sensing belongs neither to objectivity nor to subjectivity alone, but necessarily to both together. In sensing, both self and world unfold simultaneously for the sensing subject; the sensing being experiences himself and the world, himself in the world, himself with the world (p. 351).

Following Straus in seeing sensation as that which becomes and that which forms one of the links between the subject and the world, Deleuze takes sensation as that which subject and object share yet which is not reducible to either subject or object or their relation. He differs from Straus’s more directly phenomenological reading by insisting that the subject side or face of sensation is not the phenomenological subject of lived experience, but the neurological and physiological subject of action and passion, and the object side or face is not a pure thing-in-itself but a complex event:

Sensation is the opposite of the facile and the ready-made, the cliché, but also of the ‘sensational’, the spontaneous, etc. Sensation has one face turned toward the subject (the nervous system, vital movement, ‘instinct’, ‘temperament’ – a whole vocabulary common to both Naturalism and Cézanne), and one face turned toward the object (the ‘fact’, the place, the event). Or rather, it has no faces at all, it is both things indissolubly, it is Being-in-the-world as the phenomenologists say: at one and the same time I become in the sensation and something happens through the sensation, one through the other, one in the other. And at the limit, it is the same body that, being both subject and object, gives and receives the sensation. As a spectator, I experience the sensation only by entering the painting, by reaching the unity of the sensing and the sensed (Deleuze, 2003, p. 31).

Sensation, for Deleuze, is the zone of indeterminacy between subject and object, the bloc that erupts from the encounter of the one with the other.

5 Art indeed struggles with chaos, but it does so in order to bring forth a vision that illuminates it for an instant, a Sensation…Art is not chaos but a composition of chaos that yields the vision or sensation, so that it constitutes, as Joyce says, a chaasmos, a composed chaos – neither foreseen nor preconceived…Art struggles with chaos but it does so in order to render it sensory… (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, pp. 204–205).

6 Perhaps art begins within the animal, at least with the animal that carves out a territory and constructs a house (both are correlative, or even one and the same, in what is called a habitat). The territory-house system transforms a number of organic functions – sexuality, procreation, aggression, feeding. But this transformation does not explain the appearance of the territory and the house; rather, it is the other way around: the territory implies the emergence of pure sensory qualities, of sensibilia that cease to be merely functional and become expressive features, making possible a transformation of function (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 183).
Deleuze & Guattari follow Bernard Cache in seeing architecture as the primordial impulse or form of all of the arts, their modes of forming a plane:

…it is possible to define architecture as the manipulation of …the frame. Architecture, the art of the frame, would then not only concern those specific objects that are buildings, but would refer to any image involving any element of framing, which is to say painting as well as cinema, and certainly many other things (Cache, 1995, p. 2).

Deleuze & Guattari illustrate the carving out, or framing, of territory through ethological examples as much as through cultural and representational illustrations. For example, territory is that which is produced by the elaborate, if apparently useless activity, of construction, attention grabbing and display that marks most of sexual selection:

Every morning the Scenopoetes dentirostris, a bird of the Australian rain forests, cuts leaves, makes them fall to the ground, and turns them over so that the paler internal side contrasts with the earth. In this way it constructs a stage for itself like a ready-made; and directly above, on a creeper or branch, while fluffing its feathers beneath its beak to reveal their yellow roots, it sings a complex song made up from its own notes and, at intervals, those of other birds that it imitates; it is a complete artist. This is not a synesthesia of the flesh but blocs of sensations in the territory – colors, postures, and sounds that sketch out a total work of art. These sonorous blocs are refrains; but there are also refrains of posture and color, and postures and colors are always being introduced into refrains: bowing low, straightening up, dancing in a circle and a line of colors. The whole of the refrain is the being of sensation. Monuments are refrains. In this respect, art is continually haunted by the animal (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 184).

…strictly speaking, architects design frames. This can be easily verified by consulting architectural plans, which are nothing but the interlocking of frames in every dimension: plans, sections and elevations. Cubes, nothing but cubes… In a text called ‘Déblaiements d’art’, Henry Van de Velde pointed to a parallelism between the historical evolution of the shapes of the frames and that of architectural forms. Paintings would finalise, as it were, the series of frames that make up a building. Through successive unframings, we would pass from the canvas of the painting to the fresco on the wall, to the mosaic on the ground, and finally to the stained glass window in the window frame. Thus the frame of a painting would be residual, or better yet, a rudiment of architectural framing (Cache, 1995, p. 22).

It is the flatness of the stage that makes choreography probable, just as it is the flatness of the stadium that increases the probability of athletics. The ground plane rarefies the surface of the earth in order to allow human activities to take shape (Cache, 1995, p. 25).

The wall delimits and the window selects: such is the frame of probability within which we find the rarefied interval of the floor. It belongs to the regime of causes and of the interval. The roof is of another order: it envelops an event; it is the effect of singularization (Cache, 1995, p. 28).

Cache makes it clear that although what is described above may be regarded as a kind of genealogy of the plane of composition and the art-events that erupt on its surface, it is not the only genealogy, nor the only (historical, cultural) reconstruction of the origins of art. If Western architecture and art, following the claims made by Wöfflin and Worringer, observe this genealogy of planar construction, the construction of order from substance, then it may be that the genealogy of non-Western art follows an entirely different logic:

The first architectural gesture is acted upon the earth: it is our grave or our foundation. A plane against a surface of variable curvature, the first frame is an excavation. But perhaps this is just the bedrock of Western thought. Unlike our Western architecture whose first frame confronts the earth, Japanese architecture raises its screens to the wind, the light, and the rain. Partitions and parasols rather than excavations: screens emphasize the void (1995, p. 64).

As Bogue suggests, ‘Art, as the disposition of expressive qualities, is the active agent in the formation of territory and the establishment of the occupant’s proprietary identity’ (2003, p. 20).
[Music] strips bodies of their inertia, of the materiality of their presence: it disembodies bodies ... In a sense, music begins where painting ends, and this is what is meant when one speaks of the superiority of music. It is lodged on the lines of flight that pass through bodies, but which find their consistency elsewhere, whereas painting is lodged farther up, where the body escapes from itself. But in escaping, the body discovers the materiality of which it is composed, the pure presence of which it is made, and which it would not discover otherwise. Painting, in short, discovers the material reality of bodies with its line-color systems and its polyvalent organ, the eye ... When music sets up its sonorous systems and its polyvalent organ, the ear, it addresses itself to something very different from the material reality of bodies. It gives a disembodied and dramatized body to the most spiritual of entities (Deleuze, 2003, p. 47).

...artists are like philosophers. What little health they possess is often too fragile, not because of their illnesses or neuroses but because they have seen something in life that is too much for anyone, too much for themselves, and that has put on them the quiet mark of death. But this something is also the source or breath that supports them through the illnesses of the lived (what Nietzsche called health) (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, pp. 172–173).

Deleuze's response to phenomenological readings of the lived body as the site for art production is highly critical, although it is clear that he owes a debt, not so much to Merleau-Ponty but to Uexküll and his understanding of nature as the patterned counterpointing of phenomenologically selected environments: the spider carries within its web a complex picture of the prey it is to capture. Nevertheless his criticism of phenomenology is clear:

...in short, the being of sensation is not the flesh but the compound of nonhuman forces of the cosmos, of man's nonhuman becomings, and of the ambiguous house that exchanges and adjusts them, makes them whirl around like winds. Flesh is only the developer which disappears in what it develops: the compound of sensation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 183).
analysis, architecture, collaboration, design, discourse, interior, landscape, Maori, overcoming, pedagogy, practice, rhetoric, transversing, unfolding
Absence of Structure

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Abstract: In mainstream design practice, the disciplines of interior design and landscape architecture most commonly come together in the context of an architectural project. In a typical project team, the two professions will not readily intersect or overlap as the architecture is always in-between, and although they may consult with each other, the two disciplines may not necessarily collaborate.

Collaboration is more than simply teamwork and the necessary consultation that takes place amongst members of a project team. True collaboration between disciplines occurs when practitioners consciously step beyond their professional boundaries and engage in a new process of design that is informed by their collaborators from other professional areas.

Focusing on the experiences of the interior design and landscape architecture members of two teams in a recent design competition the paper investigates what can occur when interior and landscape practitioners work together as members of multi-disciplinary team to address a series of design briefs that are not necessarily architectural, but are deliberately open, experimental and address a multitude of scales.

Keywords: collaboration, interior design, landscape architecture

The dominant mother

In the hierarchy of creative professions concerned with the design of the built environment and the forms, objects and materials that fill it, the practices of interior design and landscape architecture share some characteristics, yet rarely intersect. In mainstream commercial design practice, interior design and landscape architecture practitioners most commonly come together as members of a project team in the context of an architectural project. The development of the design professions in this country has most closely followed and been significantly influenced by the British traditions of exclusive knowledge and institutional control, regulation and protection. Within this paradigm, both landscape architecture and interior design historically developed from occupational areas relatively separate from architecture (Bell, 1999 and Saint, 1983), yet in contemporary practice they both frequently occupy a position under architecture’s professional primacy.

Saint (1983) presents a history of architecture as a profession that has struggled with the attribution of authorship where collaboration has always been a problematic proposition due to the contradiction implicit in architectural practice, as both individual and collective.
Architecture as the *mother* has simultaneously nurtured and dominated the practices of landscape architecture and, to a greater degree, interior design. As it has with other occupational areas the architecture profession has provided great opportunity for the development of the two professions, while at the same time imposing a certain degree of anonymity upon them. When a project brief is primarily architectural and utilises any of the common forms of project procurement, landscape architecture and interior design practitioners are usually appointed as secondary or sub-consultants to work under the direction of the primary architectural consultant. Previous research undertaken by the author indicates that some architects only work with interior designers when they need additional resources, or when specialist skills are required. This arrangement is more akin to the hiring of services, with various team members acting under instruction without a significant shared contribution to the design process (Cys & Ward, 2003, p. 5). In some cases, landscape architects and, more frequently, interior design practitioners are employees within the architectural practice that is the primary consultant. This situation can further exacerbate the obscurity of the contributions of landscape and interior practitioners in contemporary design practice.

In the highly competitive area of architectural commissions, with relatively short time allowances and low fee percentages for the design phases of a project, it is not uncommon for interior design and landscape architecture consultants to supply their design expertise (as a provisional sum) after the bulk of the architectural, engineering and services design, development and documentation is complete. Such a situation separates the interior and landscape practitioners’ design contribution into ‘packages’ that do not occur in concert with the rest of the project.

Physically and professionally, architecture stands between the landscape and the interior, contributing to lay recognition of landscape architecture as being only concerned with the space immediately outside of [someone else’s] architecture and interior design (or ‘fitout’) as being only concerned with the space inside of [someone else’s] architecture.

**The c-word**

It is architecture that brings the practices of landscape architecture and interior design together, yet the characteristics of this architectural context can in fact prohibit the overlapping and intersection of the two disciplines and arrest design collaboration. Landscape architects and interior designers may consult with each other as members of a project team, yet collaboration is not promoted. Although concerned with mainstream practice as its subject, this paper does not subscribe to a mainstream definition of collaboration. The words
‘cooperation’, ‘consultation’ and even ‘partnership’ are more accurate descriptors of the processes that occur in mainstream design practice. The term ‘architects-in-collaboration’ for example, more often than not describes complimentary partnering that occurs between practices to become more competitive in the qualification and selection process for commissions. Some practitioners describe the collaboration that occurs in this situation as a division of responsibility for certain stages of the project based upon the expertise of the partnered practices (Cys & Ward, p. 1). In response, this paper considers collaboration as a multi-disciplinary design endeavour that may occur at the conceptual and development stages of a project and defines collaboration in terms of both process and outcome.

Collaborative design is not just a collective or teamwork methodology, nor is it simply the necessary consultation that occurs amongst members of a project team. ‘True collaboration between disciplines occurs when practitioners consciously step beyond their professional boundaries and engage in a new process of design that is informed by their collaborators from other professional areas. A collaborative design process requires designers to recognise, understand and practise a way of designing that is not necessarily their own. In successful collaborations, the designed outcomes will reflect this process by embodying the extension of skills beyond the collaborators’ individual disciplines’ (Cys & Ward, p. 2). This type of collaboration is consciously chosen, deliberate, often marginal and highly experimental. As a result, true collaboration rarely enters commercial interior design and landscape architecture practice in the context of architectural projects. The structure of standard project procurement processes do not provide opportunity for such collaboration and the inflexible nature of submission and selection processes for large projects, particularly public projects, do not readily allow for the deliberate commissioning of collaborative design practice.

In published literature, collaborations occurring within the visual arts disciplines are well documented. Green (2001) acknowledges the deliberate nature of collaborative practice suggesting that collaboration must be intentionally planned and equally desired by the collaborators. Green also recognises the sensitive issue of authorship for artists who, as with architects have been traditionally represented as singular figures where the emphasis is on the individual. Most pertinent to this discussion on design collaboration is Green’s observation that the collaborations of modernist art ‘were often linked with the marginal’ (p. xvi) and developed from within an alternative stream within the visual arts. Other commentators such as de Freitas (2004) propose that art (and design) collaboration “…has changed the nature of cultural production and spawned new, hybrid practices’ (p. 2). These positions suggest that visual arts collaborations generally develop outside of more stable and conventional modes of practice.
Another revealing interpretation of collaboration, this time between architecture and the visual arts, is provided by Fernie (2003) who identifies collaborations that represent a shift away from individualistic practice by some contemporary architects who work with artists ‘...on an equal footing, making buildings, conversations, exhibitions and books together from the initial stages of a project's life’ (p. 102). Fernie acknowledges that the success of these collaborations is linked to the recognition by both the architect and artist that their respective disciplines are distinct. ‘What is important about these collaborations is the fact that the artists involved are not, and have no interest in being, architects and vice versa. There is no da Vinci-like desire to blur boundaries and morph from artist to architect to engineer’ (p. 102). Such an approach to collaboration is perhaps difficult to apply to the relationship between architecture and its two kindred disciplines of landscape architecture and interior design, where there exists an ever-present desire from both parties to blur professional boundaries, if indeed they are recognised in the first place.

Unlike collaborations between visual artists and collaborations between designers and artists, literature concerned with multi-disciplinary collaborations within the various design professions is scarce. Carter’s *Material Thinking* (2004) is possibly of most direct relevance although it too focuses largely on his collaborations with artists rather than on practitioners from the design disciplines. Carter’s discussion of collaboration recognises the need for the collaborators to engage willingly in a deliberate practice that is free from the constraints of traditional professional structures and ‘...to abandon the statuesque poses associated with orthotic thinking and to be light-footed’ (p. 179). There is also a suggestion of the potential of the collaborators to combine their knowledge and skills to create with new and different processes, just as the materials that are the stuff of their making may combine to ‘rejoin themselves in different ways’ (p. 187).

There appears to be more literature about collaborative design practice in educational research, particularly in relation to design studio pedagogy. The majority of published material in this area however, describes collaboration in studio projects predominantly in terms of the problematic nature of teamwork and communication between students from different disciplines. It rarely addresses the nature of the collaborative design process that occurred or the qualities of the studio outcomes. (for example Russ & Dickenson, 1999 and North, Stirling & Ellis, 2000). Literature that is far more revealing about the collaborative process and its effect on design outcomes describes studios in which the project brief falls outside the immediate professional territory of the participating students. Magee (2000) discusses an urban design project for an architecture and interior design collaborative studio and Samuels (2001) discusses a set design project involving the collaboration of architecture students...
with a photographer, a video artist and two actors. Dealing with a design brief outside their immediate area of specialisation required students in both of these studios to step beyond their ‘professional territory’ and reportedly encouraged students to appreciate the issues on which other disciplines placed emphasis, therefore allowing them to learn about other ways of designing.

The practices of landscape architecture and interior design do not readily come together in a truly collaborative sense in the context of the early conceptual design and design development stages of mainstream commercial practice. It could be suggested that in fact there is no need for the two practices to collaborate as the architecture physically separates the professional and physical territory of the two disciplines. The historic characteristics of architecture as the dominant profession and the restrictions of project flexibility in mainstream commercial practice may also restrict opportunities for design collaboration. In addition, it is possible that the closeness of each of the two professions in question, to the architecture that is the common catalyst for their involvement on a project team, also limits collaborative creativity amongst all three disciplines.

**Unowned space**

What then occurs when landscape architects and interior designers participate willingly in a multi-disciplinary team to address open and non-architectural project briefs which require them to propose conceptual design outcomes?

During 2004, a multi-disciplinary collaborative design competition was held in Adelaide, South Australia. The competition, called the *match* tournament was conceived and organised by the South Australian Collaborations Steering Committee, a committee comprised of representatives of eleven of South Australia’s arts and design based organisations: Applied Ideas, ArtsSA, Australian Graphic Design Association (SA Chapter), Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (SA Chapter), Community Arts Network SA, Contemporary Arts Centre of SA, Craftsouth, Design Institute of Australia (SA Chapter), Planning Institute of Australia (SA), Planning SA and the Royal Australian Institute of Australia (SA Chapter).

Entry to the tournament was open to members and associates of each of these organisations (that is, design and arts practitioners). The registration process required participants to nominate their own discipline area as well as up to three other disciplines with which they would like collaborate. Once the registration period closed, participants were placed by the organisers into multi-disciplinary teams of four based upon their discipline preferences. All teams represented a range of disciplines and no team had more than one member from a
Between April and November 2004 the teams competed in four ‘Design Challenges’ that required multi-scaled conceptual responses to Adelaide-focused design briefs.

- **Design Challenge 1** was for teams to use a restricted list of food-stuffs to parallel building materials and demonstrate a reference to built forms/structures.

- **Design Challenge 2** required teams to design an illuminated piece of street furniture to be located under Adelaide’s Morphett Street Bridge, an acknowledged blighted inner city public space.

- **Design Challenge 3** was to design a transportable shelter for a person without a home. The proposal required teams to address a specific location within the city for their shelter.

- **Design Challenge 4** required teams to propose creative ways of maximising community and economic activity within Adelaide’s Riverbank area, a prominent public space regarded as Adelaide’s arts and cultural precinct.

Teams were given six to eight weeks to develop their design solution for each Challenge. At the conclusion of each Challenge, the team proposals were judged, scored and publicly exhibited. The core judging panel consisted of three judges – an architect, a landscape architect and an interior designer. Each had demonstrated significant experience in collaborative practice and judged all four challenges. A different specialist guest judge with expertise specific to each brief was invited to judge each Challenge.

104 practitioners initially registered to participate in match and represented a range of design and visual arts disciplines including planning, urban design, metal/jewellery design, graphic design, new media, theatre and set design, furniture design, exhibition design, sculpture, painting, architecture, landscape architecture and interior design. Of the 104 participants, eleven were landscape architects and eight were interior designers. An analysis of preferred team member discipline that participants wished to be placed in a team with showed: the landscape architect practitioners’ most frequent request was to work with exhibition designers, followed equally by architects, interior designers, lighting designers and new media designers. Interior design practitioners most frequently nominated graphic designers as the discipline they would most like to be placed in a team with, followed in equal frequency by landscape architects, urban designers, metalwork/jewellery designers and new media designers.
Of the original twenty-six teams, four contained both an interior designer and a landscape architect. Two of these four teams (Team A and Team B) completed all of the tournament’s four challenges. Team A comprised of a landscape architect, an interior designer, an architect and a sculptor (installation and public art). Team B comprised of a landscape architect, an interior designer, an architect and a glass/ceramic designer. At the conclusion of the tournament, the author invited the landscape and interior practitioners from both of these teams to complete a written questionnaire evaluating their experience of working collaboratively with a practitioner from the other discipline. The questionnaire asked the interior and landscape practitioners to describe the collaboration that occurred with the member of the other discipline in their team; to evaluate their experience of this collaboration; to identify how this collaborative process was evident in the design outcomes produced for each challenge; and to comment on how this collaboration was different from they way they normally practised.

The respondents’ descriptions of the collaborative process within the two teams commonly referred to ‘numerous team discussions’, ‘collective working sessions’ and ‘equal contribution’. The interior designer and the landscape architect from Team A both commented that the collaboration they had with each other was equal to the collaboration that they experienced with the other members of their team. ‘The collaboration between us was always part of the team effort’ (Team A interior design respondent). The landscape architect from Team B commented that the interior design practitioner in his team ‘… didn’t fall into the typecast interior design bias’ he had before participating in the match tournament and that he had been ‘motivated’ by his contact with the interior designer in a positive sense (Team B landscape architect respondent).

*Figure 1: Team B, Design Challenge 3 (transportable shelter).*

*Figure 2: Team A, Design Challenge 3 (transportable shelter).*
All respondents evaluated their experience of collaboration with the member from the other discipline as a successful experience from which they felt they learnt a great deal. The landscape architect from Team A commented she and the interior designer in her team ‘...were able to discuss ideas without feeling like we were stepping over the line all the time’ (Team A landscape architecture respondent). The respondents commonly described the enthusiasm and commitment of their fellow team members as contributing to the success of the collaboration.

When asked how the collaborative process was evident in the design outcomes proposed by their team, two of the four respondents described their design proposals as reflecting the fact that the collaboration encouraged team members to move beyond their individual professional boundaries. ‘The group was cognisant of the key elements of each other’s respective design fields – so we did not just contribute to the final result based on our particular discipline. At times though we did share our approaches to design and our respective “tools” of trade or philosophies…’ (Team A interior design respondent). The landscape architect from Team B provided a specific example of the manifestation of the collaboration in their team’s design proposal for the second Challenge (Figure 3): ‘Challenge 2 had a strong sculptural element. None of us are sculptors but we were talking a lot about form and shape and the proposal is based on the human hand’ (Team B landscape architecture respondent).

All respondents saw the collaboration as being different from the way they normally practised. Two of the respondents identified the activity of all team members (from different disciplines) responding to exactly the same brief at the same time as being quite different from the way they would normally participate in a design project. Another respondent
described his normal experience as a project team member in commercial practice as being highly influenced by fee and contractual structures that resulted in the project consultants ‘...trying to keep their professional territory to themselves’. He described his team’s collaboration as ‘...generally operating across the board – straddling across all areas – rather than sticking to our professional areas’ (Team B landscape architect respondent). This respondent also described the conceptual design and making process that occurred within his team as being quite different from his everyday practice. ‘It was more workshoppy. We actually did things in the group together rather than have a meeting and then run away to work on our own’.

**Absence of structure**

The *match* tournament provided an environment that was relatively artificial compared with most participants’ everyday professional practice. As indicated by the tournament aims, this was quite deliberate and attempted to encourage the innovation and experimentation of practice (process and outcome) that comes from multi-disciplinary design collaboration. Despite the high attrition rate, teams such as Team A and Team B that completed the tournament were highly successful in their collaborative working processes as well as in the innovation and experimentation demonstrated by their design process and outcomes.

For the interior designers and landscape architects who participated in the competition, the collaboration provided an alternative way of thinking and making; a different way of practising design. The responses of the landscape architects and interior designers from the two *match* teams confirms much of what has previously been discussed about creative collaboration. The potency of experiencing a multi-disciplinary, collaborative, non-architectural project for interior design and landscape architecture practitioners, however, should not be overlooked. Such collaboration offers practitioners from these disciplines respite and freedom from what can often be a subjugated professional position in mainstream practice. It may also nourish their creativity and build their confidence to seek practice opportunities removed from conventional physical and professional structures.

**References**


Rhetoric of Landscape Architecture and Interior Design Discourses: Preparation for Cross-Disciplinary Practice

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Abstract: The rhetoric of the pedagogic discourses of landscape architectural students and interior design students is described as part of a doctoral study undertaken to document practices and orientations prior to cross-disciplinary collaboration. We draw on the theoretical framework of Basil Bernstein, an educational sociologist, and the rhetorical method of Kenneth Burke, a literary dramatist, to study the grammars of 'landscape' representation employed within these disciplinary examples. We investigate how prepared final year students are for working in a cross-disciplinary manner. The discursive interactions of their work, as illustrated by four examples of drawn images and written text, are described. Our findings suggest that we need to concern ourselves with our pedagogic discourse that brings uniqueness and value to our disciplines, alongside shared discourses between disciplines.

Keywords: rhetorical analysis, disciplinary discourse, pedagogic practice

Introduction

At the border of ‘insideness’ and ‘outsideness’, interior design and landscape architecture teachers/practitioners deliberate over their territorial claims to the ‘landscape’. While both landscape architecture and interior design disciplines have a strong intrinsic relationship to ‘landscape’, little empirical evidence has been offered in the literature as to whether or not our students might share an understanding of this concept. Before students from each of our disciplines begin working together on a cross-disciplinary project, it is important for educators to explore the nature of the pedagogic discourses of each group. These disciplinary discourses may offer some insight into how the two disciplines might collaborate on inside and outside spaces in the future.

The study is framed by the theoretical work of Basil Bernstein, who aimed to explain ‘the inner logic of pedagogic practice’ (Bernstein, 2000). Bernstein argues that strong, clearly bounded disciplinary identities insulate themselves from other disciplines while weaker, less specialised disciplines struggle with dominance and subordination.

Rationale for the study

This study involved two groups of students: graduate diploma landscape architecture students and graduate diploma interior design students. The focus of the study for both
these groups was their understanding of ‘landscape’. Underpinning this was a concern for identifying common as well as differing representations of ‘landscape’. We speculated that any common representations could be viewed as a type of shared knowledge while differing representations could be regarded as revealing points of resistance. This may not be necessarily negative. Points of resistance could reflect disciplinary uniqueness, something to be reinforced because of its potential to provide for a complementary view of the world.

Practices in the disciplines

An exploration of ‘landscape’ in the ‘interior’ context

For seven interior design students, the study focused on ‘landscape’ representation undertaken in a research unit that involved the students developing an understanding of and basic skills in using creative practice as a research strategy. In this component, students were asked at the beginning and end of the semester to externalise their own understanding of ‘landscape’ through writing and drawing. Their written responses and drawings, together with those from the landscape architecture students, were analysed by their interior design teacher.

An exploration of ‘landscape’ in the ‘exterior’ context

For the nineteen landscape architecture students, this study focused on a landscape planning unit that aimed to assist students to integrate their understanding of ‘landscape’ in a planning context, alongside their experiences of landscape design. Students were encouraged to reflect on this understanding at the start and the end of the semester through drawings and text. Their written responses and drawings, together with those from the interior design students, were analysed by their landscape architecture teacher.

Looking at drawings and words

The drawn and written data were analysed to capture the rhetorical or persuasive qualities using the model of dramatism devised by Kenneth Burke in 1945 (Stillar, 1998). He defined rhetoric as the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents (Burke, 1945, p.41). In addition to emphasising the audience orientation of language, Burke’s perspective studied the properties of language that produce its rhetorical orientation. A central focus in this study is the discovery of human ‘motives’. In the Burkean sense, ‘motive’ refers to the motivating aspects of language in the movement between different elements that produce specific meanings.

This method emphasises the symbolic and cultural aspects of effective discourse and it is helpful in studying the student language of drawing and words, not merely in terms of the
substantive focus, but also in terms of the students’ orientations and motives in relation to their audience. Burke’s model consists of five elements: act, scene, agent, agency and purpose. Act refers to ‘what happened’; scene focuses on the context or background setting of the act; agent is the person or thing producing the act; agency refers to how the act was done; and purpose identifies why it was done (Burke, 1945). These elements are used to identify how the students construct representations of the notion of ‘landscape’ with reference to the practices and terminologies of the pedagogic context. Drawings and words combine these elements in different ways, each leading to a different construction of motive. Burke called these various combinations, ratios. These ratios assist in revealing the dominant element in the rhetorical text and provide some insight into the most important philosophical dimension of the situation as seen by the rhetorician (Foss, 1996, p.460).

Although the work of all students in each class was analysed, the work of four students is discussed in this paper as examples of the distinctly different ‘texts’ produced by students and their implied representational ‘motives’ – where ‘text’ is understood as the analytical object consisting of either drawing or writing or both.

**Persuasive elements in the disciplinary discourses**

**An exploration of ‘landscape’ in the ‘interior’ context**

In the two interior design examples, the students have reflected on and represented the salient elements of ‘landscape’ to be read by their viewer, understood here to be their teacher/practitioner in research. Each conveys a different ‘motive’ or persuasive quality in the pedagogic discourse surrounding this concept. So in Figure 1, a student depicts the juxtaposition of ‘exterior’ and ‘interior’ as two parts of a whole, with the boundary seen as a ‘barrier’ placed left of centre and the framing left open. A further dimension is added to the ‘exterior’ element, being composed of foreground and background.

![Figure 1: An interior design student’s representation of ‘landscape’ at the beginning of the semester.](image-url)
We suggest that the agent could be the producer of the text or the viewer of the text, positioned out of the picture, in an abstract, neutral (on the border) viewpoint. The act is understood as ‘seeing the relationship’ between inside and outside, something that is ‘happening’ in the drawing. The agency is the way the ‘marks on paper’ depict ‘interior’ using two parallel lines, a convention of interior design, and an everyday depiction of ‘exterior’. The scene is what is depicted in the representation of ‘landscape, a juxtaposition of the inside of a (built) structure on equal footing with the outside foreground and background, a division between the insideness and outsideness of ‘landscape’. The purpose suggested by the producer of this image is that ‘landscape’ is the complement of ‘interior’, an equal partner in the discourse concerning the world around us.

In addition to the drawing, words offer alternative potentials for a rhetorical view of the concept. In the first example, the student represents ‘landscape’ as:

*exterior surroundings that may vary in scale eg. a backyard versus a mountain range.*
*The exterior part of an inside/outside relationship.*

Here the agent again becomes the viewer/reader of the text positioned in *exterior surroundings*, the objectified ‘landscape’. The text persuades us that the agent operates in two ways. It relates ‘knowable’ outside places to one another, as well as relating inside and outside ‘unknowable’ places. This offers us greater insight into ‘seeing the relationship’ expressed in the drawing. The agency is how ‘landscape’ varies in scale, operating as part of a relationship. The scene is both ‘this’ space and the ‘other’ space, distinct from interior: the exterior part of an inside/outside relationship. The purpose is to distinguish ‘landscape’ from ‘interior’, while at the same time bringing outside and inside together as a whole entity.

In a second example in Figure 2, a student uses centrality to depict a horizon bounded by a frame slightly right of centre in their drawing. The detail associated with each element here is more ambiguous than the first. Outside the frame, the boundaries of the drawing are left open. In both examples, space is represented as an abstraction or theoretical concept, simultaneously close to and distant from the viewer on the two-dimensional page. It is not represented as the everyday lived experience of ‘landscape’.

*Figure 2: An interior design student’s representation of ‘landscape’ at the end of the semester.*
We suggest that the agent is again the producer of the text or the viewer of the text, positioned out of the picture, on equal eye level with the horizon line and the framed viewpoint. The act is understood as ‘experiencing the relationship’ between ‘self’ and the ‘other’ that lies beyond the viewer as a person, something that is both sensed and understood conceptually. The agency is the way the frame commands the viewer to gaze at a part of the horizon while knowing that more can be seen and understood. The scene is an abstract, minimalist representation that both distances the viewer from and invites the viewer into the ‘landscape. The purpose conveyed by the drawing is that ‘landscape’ is open to interpretation, bounded in some ways by a particular viewpoint but with the potential for multiple meanings.

In this example, the student also describes the concept as:

- highly personal; to be experienced; to be viewed in section/parts; hint of horizon;
- 5 senses especially sight, colour and visual texture.

We argue that the agent here remains the producer or viewer of the text, extending what is expressed in the drawing. ‘Landscape’ becomes the act or process through which something is experienced, viewed or sensed. It is the very personal, highly subjective experience that becomes the agency. It includes viewing in section, in parts, in colour and as visual texture, conventions employed in interior design. The scene is both the internal world of the person and the external world of the perceived landscape. The purpose conveyed in these words is that ‘landscape’ is a phenomenon of personal interpretation from sensory experience.

**An exploration of ‘landscape’ in the ‘exterior’ context**

In Figure 3, a student depicts three representations of ‘landscape’: a realist view with foreground and background, a three-dimensional view with symbols leading the eye to the background and a plan view, juxtaposed on a two-dimensional page.

![Figure 3: A landscape architecture student's representation of 'landscape' at the beginning of the semester.](image)
The agent is seen as the producer or the viewer of the text, positioned above the observed landscape. The act consists of ways of representing ‘landscape’ as an object using numerous symbolic conventions employed in landscape architecture. The agency is the depiction of a range of features comprising the whole but drawn from three distant viewpoints. The scene is a naturalistic place: of trees, hills, mountains, but not of people, buildings, or cars. The purpose suggested by the drawing is that ‘landscape’ should be considered as a represented object connected to an observable, natural place.

The pentad model can also apply to the written component of the student’s text:

*The terrestrial in which we as humans live, see and use.*

The agent could be the ‘terrestrial’ object or ‘we as humans’ existing within it. The act may be either the way in which we as humans actively live, perceive and operate in this object or how the ‘terrestrial’ is passively colonised by us as humans. The agency is the positioning of ‘terrestrial’ and ‘humans’ as co-existing entities. The scene is an interactive world where humans are dominant. The purpose of the words here suggests that ‘landscape’ is an object to be utilised for ‘our’ human requirements.

In the final example in Figure 4, a student uses words to form the elements of the drawing; ‘inclusive ideas dreams possibilities hopes relevance wholistic lasting meaningful’ form ‘hills’ and ‘information communities’ form ‘trees’. Here the boundary between written language and drawn image becomes blurred.

*Figure 4: A landscape architecture student’s representation of ‘landscape’ at the end of the semester.*

The agent is considered to be the producer *and* the viewer of the text, as one. The act is a subtle collaboration where the representation by the producer and the interpretation by the viewer are interconnected. The agency is the way in which words compose the image and
The written text:

*Landscape is inclusive of all our surroundings / environments – including our personal perceptions which are future landscapes*

persuades the reader that the agent is ‘us’, the viewer and producer of the text and future landscapes. The act is the ‘inclusiveness’ of ‘landscape’. The agency is how we use this concept to consider our perceptions of our surroundings / environments. The scene is an abstract, all encompassing view of our present and future environments. The purpose suggested by these words is that ‘landscape’ is conceptualised as an entity that transcends physical and conceptual notions of the world, open to personal and collective interpretation.

**Blurred boundaries in the ‘interior’ and ‘exterior’ contexts**

Identification of the five elements gives us an overview of how these students have chosen to represent this concept to their teachers. The most common dimension of these representations was the agent, the person or thing producing the act, frequently conveyed in the data as the viewer and/or the producer of the text. In contrast, the act varied from the objectification and experience of ‘landscape’ to the interconnection and collaboration between ‘self’ and other’. The agency – how the act was accomplished – and the scene where the act took place were different in each student example. ‘Landscape’ as object and experience was often expressed in distinct disciplinary language while ‘landscape’ as an interconnected and collaborative concept was expressed in abstract ways open to interpretation. The purpose, why each act was performed in a particular way, differed between disciplines. In both the interior design examples, the viewer was persuaded that ‘landscape’ is much more than the everyday ‘lived’ perception of our surroundings. In both landscape architecture examples, the viewer was persuaded that what is important to ‘us’ is the connection between human action and the objectified ‘landscape’ as well as the symbolic view of the physical and metaphysical ‘landscape’.

**Key elements of the disciplinary discourses**

The drawn and written texts represent examples of what their producers understand to be a valued concept of ‘landscape’ by their viewers. Of interest here is how students of interior design and landscape architecture choose to represent a shared concept that should convince their teachers of their disciplinary and cross-disciplinary ‘competence’.
The producers of the first, second and fourth drawings ordered the elements of each visual interaction in such a way that it was the agent, the viewer of the text, which dominated how the concept was understood. The agent was offered control over what was seen in the drawing. In the third drawing, however, agency was the dominant element in the representation. Here, the agency brought objects together in one drawing, showing they all belonged to the concept of ‘landscape’ and the agency controlled how the concept was to be understood. The written texts pointed to similar elements in the students’ representations. In the second and third written texts, the agency was the dominant element in that the words carried an action-oriented connotation. Interestingly, the first written text presented a different rhetorical position. Here the dominant element was the scene where the author gave precedence to exterior surroundings as a backyard and a mountain range, setting up an understanding of exterior as a visible setting.

According to Foss (1996), Burke suggested that the dominant term in a discourse might be used to identify the corresponding philosophical system. If the dominant element in the pentad reveals what a student regarded as the most appropriate response to the pedagogic situation, then the agent as the controlling factor may reflect an idealist viewpoint. We suggest that here a student’s text could reveal an understanding of ‘landscape’ that allows the action of the agent to determine the ‘truth’ or ‘reality’ of the concept. Where the agency is offered as the primary feature of the concept, the text could reveal a pragmatic approach, an understanding that focuses on ‘landscape’ as a useful ‘tool’ in the student’s practice. Where the scene is the most salient aspect, the text could propose an understanding that sees ‘landscape’ in terms of its physical presence, something that just ‘is’.

**Conclusion**

The study highlighted common as well as differing representations of ‘landscape’. The most common dimension in the drawn and written representations was the agent, the person or thing producing the act, frequently conveyed in the data as the viewer and/or the producer of the pedagogic discourse. This led us to a conclusion that our students demonstrated an understanding of ‘landscape’ that allowed the action of the viewer to determine the ‘truth’ or ‘reality’ of the concept. We suggest that for cross-disciplinary practice, this is a valuable understanding in preparing practitioners to transgress the boundaries of their discipline and communicate with others on the same conceptual level. This idealism corresponded to texts that were abstract highly metaphoric and acting like a universal language.

The differing representations were also of interest in that they were regarded as potential points of resistance to integrative practice. While we have only four examples to consider
here, the data does illustrate the potential for individuals in one discipline, interior design in this case, to persuade us of the value of the abstract ideal while at the same time confessing to the importance of tools such as scale, section and visual texture in a pragmatic material world. In another disciplinary context, landscape architecture in this case, an individual may reveal their pragmatic conviction that the meaning of their symbolic action lies in its observable consequences, while another individual conveys their idealistic view that the mind or spirit of each person experiences something fundamentally real. We suggest that in applied design disciplines, there is a point of resistance to the esoteric, introspective view, where we seek to persuade our audience of the importance of a concrete perceptible view of our disciplinary discourse and practice.

Faced with integrative practices, we need to concern ourselves with that part of our pedagogic discourse that makes each of our disciplines unique and valuable, as well as that part that should be shared between disciplines. We should continue to develop the verticality of our discourses, with further research into the power and control relations of our pedagogic practices.

References

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Spaces of Architectural Overcoming

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Abstract: This paper reflects an interest in how interior and landscape sites are connected in their capacity to exceed or ‘overcome’ architecture and practice conventions of designing, making and use. In professional architectural practice, these conventions are generally treated as distinct and hierarchical steps. This reflects a view of life that is ordered, controlled and deterministic. Referring to ideas that affirm the unpredictable and evolutionary nature of life, I argue for more experimental, improvised spatial practices. I have drawn from Elizabeth Grosz’s writings about space and time to show how we can use change and spontaneous making in everyday life as designing. This has helped me to question how spaces are produced, and the singular design ‘authority’ of the architect or building designer. I have found that working in interior and landscape sites provides more opportunities for unplanned construction connected to the lives of those who inhabit space: opening up architecture and architectural practice to unpredictable forces repressed in professional practice. This paper, part of my doctoral research, explores the conceptual and practical dimensions of experimental interior projects.

Keywords: overcoming, unfolding, transversing

Introduction

Rather than focusing on disciplinary definitions of architecture, landscape architecture and interior design, I will speculate on those qualities and elements of interior and landscape spaces that disrupt the striated, hierarchical methods of architectural production. I believe interiors and landscapes can create what I term ‘spaces of architectural overcoming’, open to possibilities beyond finite architectural form and function. I use the term ‘architecture’ to evoke the conceptual and physical dimensions of building and, in particular, the methods of production frequently associated with professional practice. I do not want to suggest that interiors and landscapes are dependent on architecture for their existence: rather, that when specifically practised as outside architecture, interior and landscape projects reveal that environment-making is an open-ended and speculative process for projecting possibilities of how we might live. My experience in making and thinking about landscape spaces, however, is currently limited, thus biasing my writings towards interior spaces. In previous IDEA publications (Smith 2003a; Smith 2004b), I have written about the betweeness of interior space in consolidating my doctoral research and focusing on a particular experimental design project, Avebury St. ‘Betweeness’ is a notion embodying a dynamic view of people’s
continual coming to terms with their place in the world (Titchkosky, 1996). This paper forms an important and final part of this trilogy of writing, and I use it to speculate on the experimental nature of interior and landscape sites. I have collaged architectural images of Avebury St by photographer-architect Graham Meltzer (Figure 1), with images of occupation and building (Figure 2), to reinforce the blurring of time and physical space.

In this paper, I begin by developing a conceptual overview of three concepts: ‘unfolding’, ‘transversing’ and ‘spaces of architectural overcoming’. These concepts express a view of life that is dynamic, creative and evolutionary. They support open-ended and speculative thinking. I desire to avoid specifying singular design processes, rules, materials and forms. To argue that a particular project or design process represents these ideas may discourage others from developing practices and projects different to the examples I discuss, paradoxically denying the evolutionary spirit of the concepts. I refer to Avebury St. as a research project, to show how my understanding of practice – and specifically the concepts of unfolding, transversing and overcoming – has evolved. Avebury St. is an attempt to produce environments in reciprocity with the ever-changing, unpredictable social and material conditions of life. In the final section, I speculate on the implications for design practice. Grosz (2003) speaks about the power of philosophy to generate questions about life, not simply to represent and explain life. So too might we think of built spaces as generating questions about how we might live, not simply just resolving our functional needs and desires.

**unfolding, transversing and overcoming**

There has been much written about the concept of the fold in architectural and design literature (Lynn 2004), focusing largely on the physical forms architects have produced while inspired by this idea. The fold is associated with philosopher Gilles Deleuze (2001) through his seminal text *The Fold, Leibniz and the Baroque*. The concept of the fold allows Deleuze to develop philosophical thinking beyond issues of human perception, subject-object dualisms and ideas of representation. Deleuze believes life is made up of continuously changing forces and events, rather than parts/wholes or subjects/objects: folds refer to the many worlds or possibilities that develop in life (Badiou 1994: Colebrook 2002, pp. 54–55). Unlike most Western philosophy, Deleuze's writings are not human- or subject-centric. Deleuze’s thinking affirms the creative potential of life to evolve in a myriad of ways (Colebrook, 2002, p. xxiv), challenging the idea that life develops according to preconceived plans or human perception alone. We can think of all animate and inanimate life as creative acts: for example, ideas do not represent or explain life, but ‘transform and act upon life’ (Colebrook, 2002, p. xxiv; refer also Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 11). Many architects have used the idea of folding
in their buildings: literally using physically twisting forms to make buildings which symbolise motion and flow from inside to outside (Jormakka, 2002, p. 41; Capro, 2004, p. 15). I argue it is limiting to translate this philosophical idea directly into physical forms that mimic or represent interior-exterior movement alone, as this both fails to engage with Deleuze’s non-representational thinking and represses other kinds of interior-exterior relationships. This may contribute to the segregation between time and space often found in Western philosophical writings: a separation that I believe limits the way we might embrace change and spontaneity in thinking about and making built environments. Space, unlike time, is often seen as fixed, immutable, and hierarchical. Furthermore, many architects emphasise the making of building elements as part of a unified, formal continuity (Lynn, 2004, p. 11). How might we conceptualise the interconnections between interior and landscape spaces in terms of how environments are part of the change and unfolding of life itself, rather than simply re-presenting folded shapes in fixed physical form? The term ‘unfolding’ refers to the unpredictability and difference that underpins all life. Unfolding does not imply evolution according to a pre-determined plan, but rather the potential of things to develop and become different over time (Grosz, 2004, p. 24).

‘Transversing’ is another term that I believe invokes time and change, through an emphasis on movement. Transversing is an idea associated with both Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari through their use of the terms ‘transversality’ and ‘the transversal’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 239; Massumi, 1992, p. 106). To be provocative or inventive, we must constantly ‘sidestep’ (Massumi, 1992, p. 106) established paths and approaches, always moving between different courses of action. Transversing does not necessarily refer to physical movement. For example, we can think of transversing as a way of moving beyond established legislative and professional dogma affecting architectural space, particularly by working with sites perceived to be inconsequential to architectural structure: such as interior furniture and decoration, and garden cultivation and structures.

The third concept ‘overcoming’ is associated here with the nineteenth-century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. It invokes a movement beyond established norms. ‘Life is a form of self-overcoming, a form of affirmation, an excess or superabundance of opposing forces, whose internal will, what Nietzsche describes as the “will to power”, interprets and thereby transforms itself and its world’ (Grosz, 2004, p. 10). Nietzsche is interested in our drive to overcome or transform our lives and, in doing this, move beyond the average, normative forces that oppress our potentiality. The concept of ‘overcoming’ suggests openness to difference and that which has been excluded from dominant cultural and scientific discourses (Grosz, 2004, p. 11).
discovering unfolding, transversing and overcoming at Avebury St

How can we think of buildings as part of a constantly evolving world of unfolding, transversing and overcoming rather than discrete, complete objects? How can design practice reveal the change and spontaneity underpinning everyday life? These questions have evolved through my practice-led research, focusing on the maintenance of and installation made in an inner-city cottage in which my partner, son and, at times, mother reside. Both my research intent and the Avebury St. project itself have unfolded through the blurring of people, materials, spontaneous making, living and designing on-site. Sidestepping conventional methods of production, we have built upon the dynamic approach of the experimental and somewhat spontaneous alterations by the house’s previous occupants and student tenants. Our designing unfolds through available and inexpensive materials – recycled from the existing house, discarded in construction bins and local recycle shops – and through the capacity to manipulate materials as they appear. Without a budget to alter or extend the existing building structure, our work has been focused on interior material replacement, built-in furniture and decoration, and landscape maintenance.

Figure 1: Avebury St: Inside-outside environment in the rear garden. (Photography: Graham Meltzer, 2004)
The concept of ‘unfolding’ has helped me to rethink how interior and landscape environments can be made differently to the structured modes of production associated with professional architectural practice. To do this, I accept that designing is a force of everyday life rather than the making of a product that facilitates or organises life. Yet professional practice downplays changing needs and circumstances to prioritise financial and legal concerns. The RAIA (Royal Australian Institute of Architects) produces documents that govern the professional practices of a registered architect, with an emphasis on controlling and limiting changes during the construction process. This ensures that the client receives a building that is planned, both financially and functionally, in advance – and most importantly, reduces the likelihood that the architect might be sued for creating a building that differs from the drawings, financial costings and time schedules.

Once occupied, the dynamic life of buildings and their occupants is revealed in the many changes which happen both inside and outside the architectural shell. Working with non-structural interventions has enabled us at Avebury St to respond to uncontrollable, external forces that would have made a design master plan redundant: forces such as transient...
neighbours and an expanding family. Replacing existing surface materials and installing
built-in furniture can be done progressively and spontaneously in response to our lives on
the site as this work does not require prior building approval, even if it requires some insight
into safe construction processes to avoid injury. Fences, screens, awnings, soft landscaping
and site maintenance can also be constructed or demolished as part of daily life. We tend to
describe these activities as home maintenance or occupation rather than designing, so that
they remain largely unregulated. Yet these tactical interventions can have a fundamental
impact on both spatial quality and how we live, enabling us to respond to unpredictable
changes in our lives such as relationships, the weathering of building and seasonal variation.
I would be naive to suggest that professional practice change to include and, by association
legalise, experimental, spontaneous construction – that is, to make these activities norms of
designing. The normalisation of these marginal activities would also make static their dynamic
nature. I think it is more provocative and interesting to ask: how do building maintenance,
experimental living and making help us participate in the dynamic dimensions of life? How
do these activities rupture the conventions of our professional, academic and educational
practices, suggesting new potentialities for how we live and make built environments? And,
importantly, where might these activities occur?

The concept of ‘transversing’ has helped me to re-evaluate the importance of interior and
landscape sites often considered secondary to architectural space and structure. In feminist
and cultural theory, architecture and architectural monuments are often associated with
control and order, and the interior with being contained and oppressed (Irigaray 1999, p. 95).
Ironically, by sidestepping architectural structure and conventional methods of production at
Avebury St, I have found that working in interior and landscape sites has provided a freedom
and spontaneity denied in architectural practice. While a gendered reading of practice
might see my inability to manipulate architectural structure as oppressive, I experience the
unexpected challenges associated with making my intimate, family dwelling a spatial practice
ultimately rewarding and architecturally liberating: transversing the limitations of practice as
much as physical building. The concept of ‘transversing’ has also reinforced a challenging of
material and functional norms during the design process. At Avebury St., we use materials
and details associated with the interior in external courtyards and fences, rather than worry
about material appropriateness and convention. Similarly, we did not use spaces in they way
they were originally conceived. For example, we have slept in all spaces in the house, to see
which spaces would provide the best sleeping conditions: we could not, however, fit the bed
in the bathroom!
Finally, how might we rethink practice in terms of ‘overcoming’? My experiences of Avebury St. reinforced the importance of design opportunities alongside and beyond mainstream commercial practice. I would like to term these projects ‘spaces of architectural overcoming’: referring to the physical and conceptual dimensions of spaces produced experimentally, and often communally, as part of everyday life. These spaces are designed, made and occupied spontaneously, without conventional building plans, in response to the different site, material and social forces acting upon life: representing an overcoming of architecture and its associated legal, professional and commercial forces. Spaces of architectural overcoming are already visible in vernacular and socio-political traditions of building – for example, shed builders and squatters. In these experimental backyards and rooms, ever-changing resources, needs and circumstances ensure that established design approaches must be constantly challenged, changed and overcome. Avebury St belongs to this tradition of everyday, and arguably unremarkable, practice!

We have accepted that at Avebury St, we are but one of the many forces within a dynamic design process and, as such, participate in rather than control and order the built environment. We change our space in response to the suggestions made by many designer and non-designer visitors to the house. By avoiding design drawings and models, we open up our project to forces other than our own ideas and experiences, thus allowing the project to unfold in unpredictable and exciting directions. We bring materials and tools to our home before developing both design needs and responses over time, through available materials, our capacity to build and our imagination; and our minimal construction sketches (and the ideas contained within them) are easily discarded! My partner Mat describes our approach as ‘recycled material liberation’ (Dixon 2004), as we invent new functions and applications for discarded materials. Working with others’ ‘garbage’ allows you to be more experimental and open to change – especially as it is cheap and accessible. If our work had not been restricted to landscape maintenance and interior fitout, I would have failed to see the unfolding, transversing and overcoming characteristic of DIY (Do It Yourself) projects. By working experimentally and ephemerally, we have overcome the hierarchical distinctions between those who design, make and occupy space. Popular reality television shows like Changing Rooms and Backyard Blitz capitalise on our desires to appropriate and change space over time and as part of our occupation of homes. These shows focus on lifestyle, decorative themes, value-adding and resale values, rather than understanding the forces that drive change in our environments. We might see these programs as symptomatic of the inevitability and precedence of time over space.
speculations on practice

How might others expand upon, challenge or overturn my experiences of architectural overcoming? I do not want to suggest approaches that represent concepts like ‘unfolding’ or ‘becoming’, but rather provoke other practices for making environments and changes to our orientations towards design process and production. I would therefore like to suggest three tendencies or orientations to the conception and making of built space as a starting point. These tendencies reflect the change and spontaneity embodied in philosophies of unfolding, transversing and overcoming.

provoking

Treat designing as a provisional activity, whereby environments are provisional and ephemeral. Instead of regarding built environments as solutions to problems of spatial inhabitation, treat them as provocations about how we might live, requiring constant adjustment and adaptation, and generating further questions. Projects such as DIY projects, and garden and furniture maintenance may provide more opportunities for exploration and discovery beyond the financial and legal frameworks of mainstream professional practice. It would be easy to think about, make and inhabit interiors and landscapes in ways consistent with professional architectural practice. However, this thinking may limit the potential for interior and landscape sites to generate a more experimental practice.

shifting

By constantly shifting our design approaches, materials, practices and projects, we might open up designing to forces downplayed or excluded in mainstream design practice. As designers embracing forces outside our normal conceptual frameworks and methods of production – peoples, ideas, materials, labour – our projects will develop in unanticipated directions, open to other possibilities and change throughout the design processes.

blurring

I argue this is the most important, overall tendency for reconnecting environments and their production with the dynamic nature of life: the blurring of many forces normally treated as hierarchical project stages. New sites, ideas, materials, labour and living might mix into one continuous, ongoing activity that produces unpredictable, ephemeral environments embedded in the fabric of everyday life.

These approaches demand courage, and more time and energy than commercial practice generally allows, hinting at the temporal life beyond space, in all its complexity, divergence
and potentiality. Developing practice as part of family life has been relentless, physically and financially exhausting, and at times downright depressing, particularly when we have been ‘doing it, then (un)doing it and finally (over)doing it…’ (Rendell, 1998, p. 246). We grow tired of dismantling walls, only to find we need to re-assemble rooms to accommodate our expanding family. I may dream of living in a minimalist apartment but, in the end, our constant making and remaking has shown us how we can reinvent our worlds and overcome our frustrations with life, the universe and all things architectural.

References
Pacific Space: The Pacific Conception of Building

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Abstract: In the West, architecture, landscape and interior are seen as separate disciplines, with the latter two subordinate to architecture’s concern with object, form and structure. This paper explores the extent to which buildings of the Pacific subvert this Western model using the examples of a Maori dwelling made from raupo reed, the Maori Meeting House (or whare nui) and the Pacific Island falé.

We review certain Pacific indigenous buildings, not in terms of architecture, but through looking at the garment and the body. It is doubtful if the people of the Pacific share the Western notion of architecture as something separate from craft, art, ornament, interior, landscape or other European notions, and we suggest that the disciplines of interior and landscape design can be useful in exploring the concepts on which building in the Pacific are based.

This paper proposes an understanding of architecture more appropriate to a South Pacific milieu, which in turn can open up the possibilities of new architectural form.

Keywords: Maori, design, architecture

Introduction

In the West, architecture, landscape and interior are seen as separate disciplines, with the latter two subordinate to architecture’s concern with object, form and structure. This paper explores the extent to which buildings of the Pacific subvert this Western model using the examples of a Maori dwelling made from raupo reed, the Maori Meeting House (or whare nui) and the Pacific Island falé.

Since European contact, architectural critics have debated the extent to which some indigenous buildings can be considered architecture. Banister Fletcher’s History of Architecture, for example, characterises them as not much more than shelters, and not worthy of inclusion in a survey of world architecture.

The aborigines of Australia were neither settlers or builders. Their history is one of nomadic hunters, consequently not an architectural topic. Their shelters were always temporary and minimal, just personal shelters of bark or branches leaning against tree or stake … (Maori) were more settled than Australians and more inclined to construction, but produced no more than villages with simple houses and community halls (Fletcher, 1987, p. 1181).
This example from the ‘revised and modernized’ nineteenth edition of 1987 was published under the trusteeship of the Royal Institute of British Architects. In more recent years, architectural historians have given these buildings the attention they deserve, but what if those earlier writers were correct? What if these indigenous structures are not architecture and have more of an affinity with the crafts such as weaving, binding, carving and painting? What if these buildings are closer to clothing or furniture or even floral arrangement than they are to building? What if the buildings of Oceania are not so much a topic for architectural history as one for the disciplines of landscape and interior design? This paper explores the possibility of an indigenous Pacific intersection between the creation of a sheltered interior and the landscape that is not architecture as it is understood in the West. Instead it suggests a new understanding of architecture more appropriate to a South Pacific milieu.

Where the virtues of Western architecture can be broadly characterised as solidity, security, permanence, functionality, climate-resistance and durability, then the buildings of the Maori and wider South Pacific region could be said to underperform in these areas. Historically, Western appreciation of these buildings has acknowledged this perspective; they have often been described as architecturally crude and temporary, albeit sometimes finely decorated. However the buildings of the South Pacific could also be described as open, flexible, mutable, adaptive and responsive. And here they share something with interior design and landscape. The interior and the exterior worlds can be characterised as the domains of the temporal, changeable and mutable, places of experience and encounter between living things. These spaces are subject to change, in contrast with the permanence of the static architectural object (Attiwill, 2004).

We have previously explored time and mutability in Maori architecture (McKay & Walmsley, 2003) and this paper now explores the material differences between Maori and Western building. Mike Austin suggests:

"Pacific architecture can be argued to be another set of formal paradigms involving the architecture of openness … the platform (marae) and the pavilion (the fale, whare, bure, etc) (Austin, 2004, p. viii)."

While he asks if this might be an architectural type, we would further argue the raupo hut for example is more akin to a garment or arrangement of flora, than a building. Indeed although Austin refers to the eighteenth century theorist Quatremere de Quincy’s three primitive architectural types as cave, hut and tent, Austin has himself previously argued that the architecture of Oceania, settled by voyagers, may well derive from the form of the upturned boat or canoe (Austin, 2003).
The *whare raupo*

From Vitruvius to Rykwert, the simple wooden or grass hut is seen as the origin of architectural evolution. In turn, Samoan *falé* or Maori *whare* were seen as primitive shelters by European arrivals. To Westerners such shelters were justifiable because the tropics were a region of benign climate, a paradise, where little was required in the way of protection for the human body or agriculture. Today we see these buildings as functionally well adapted to climate, but no longer appropriate to today’s social, cultural and physical conditions. These however are not primitive structures. Just as the Polynesian canoe, on closer examination, is not a humble dug-out log but a complex, highly crafted machine for navigating long distances, so too the ‘grass hut’ is a highly crafted work.

![Whare raupo at Whangaruru.](image)

One version of the Pacific grass hut is the *whare raupo*, a small dwelling made out of *raupo*, a marsh reed. Rau Hoskins and Carin Wilson from the School of Architecture at Unitec New Zealand run the Centre for Maori Architecture and Appropriate Technologies, and constructed a *whare raupo* at Whangaruru in 2002/03 with student labour and the advice of *kaumatua* (elders) on traditional techniques (Figure 1). This project introduces another approach to the study of indigenous forms; the experiential, through learning by doing rather than objective analysis. This approach develops a more holistic understanding as it contextualises architectural form into the environment (the source of materials used) and the cultural protocols (tikanga) of construction and building techniques. It also demonstrates how the process of construction is enormously important, both socially and physically, to the understanding of Pacific buildings. While this aspect has been addressed in previous papers (McKay & Walmsley, 2004), it is worth reiterating how the mutability or impermanence
of these structures can be related as much to the nature of tribal society as it can to the nature of climate or availability of materials. Maori were familiar with a constant process of seasonal building and rebuilding, a process which also provided the ongoing opportunity to practice and pass on construction skills to the next generation. The timber and other organic materials, from which Maori buildings were traditionally constructed, compelled a constant process of reconstruction to avoid decay. This constant renovation and rebuilding had the effect of galvanising support from local communities and cementing relationships as Maori worked together on building projects.

The experience of actually constructing the whare raupo revealed more than can be shown in photographs; for example, how the dwelling was woven and knitted together from a variety of reeds and bark, draped over a timber ridge. Architecture students commented how the construction more closely resembled the craft of basket weaving than it did building, due to the primacy of the woven skin and the lack of a pronounced structural skeleton. The finished structure is organic in form and the enclosure is nest-like and curvaceous, the walls responsive to human movement like a sleeping bag (Figure 2). The entire form appears draped and enveloping like a garment, rather than the rigid uprightness and solidity that we associate with Western building. The interior of the whare seemed strangely connected and responsive to the outside through the organic nature of the cladding.

The feeling inside a traditional whare built entirely of natural materials is quite unlike the experience of being within any form of modern shelter…the senses are alerted to a strong sense of connection with the surroundings…wind announces itself by rustling the outer layers of the walls and roof while the air remains still inside. The soft bounce of the floor and gently filtered light of the whariki at the door contrive with the faint smells of the materials to heighten sensory awareness. This is indeed a protective cocoon that gently reveals multiple layers of subtle character as one adjusts to its ambience (Hoskins and Wilson, 2004, np).

The whare raupo was built ‘by feel’ (Hoskins and Wilson, 2004) without the use of plans or drawings and an as-built cross section (the tool of architectural dissection) doesn’t in any way encompass the reality of the beautiful woven raupo structure. The cut of the section means the bag falls apart and the organic, haptic experience evaporates. These dwellings also lack Western elements such as separate walls and roof or windows and here the door is a flap of weaving. Historically commentators have remarked on the rich diversity of Maori crafts and decorative arts and the comparative paucity of architectural achievement. Perhaps the whare raupo is more elaborate rain cape or communal garment than it is primitive architecture.
The New Zealand bush and forest is referred to as *The Cloak of Tane* (the forest god) that drapes the bare earth. Again the *whare raupo*, in the way it employs materials from its immediate environment, like a bivouac, and deploys the broad-leafed *raupo* to shed water is more akin to the natural forms of the native bush than to building. The Maori concept of the *paepae* is relevant in this regard as it could be seen as blurring the distinction between interior and landscape. *Paepae* can mean threshold and in the *whare nui* (meeting house) this piece of timber could be seen to accentuate the distinction between in and out. But then *pae* can mean step, the cross-bar of a canoe (on which one sits), any transverse beam, any perch or resting place, and even the horizontal ridge of a hill or the horizon. This seems to indicate that the *paepae* concept is not so much threshold in the sense of division, rather the *paepae* is a step or resting place for the body or eye, and is present in a number of locations across the landscape. This is a notion that sees the whole landscape as a place of habitation, rather than the architectural object as dwelling, a retreat from the landscape.

Hoskins and Wilson claim the *whare raupo* was in use up to the 1950s in some places, providing warm, weatherproof, culturally appropriate, affordable and sustainable shelter for Maori. It is now outlawed by the stringent New Zealand Building Code. Certainly its return as a viable, inhabitable structure would be more easily achieved politically if it were construed as a casual garment or bivouac, a skin between interior and landscape, rather than a building. The disciplines of interior design and landscape architecture are well placed to contribute to the study and resurgence of indigenous dwellings as they deal with the temporal, the transient, the impermanent and the mutable. And this is appropriate in Auckland, since this city is often said to be the largest Polynesian city in the world due to its large population of Pacific Islanders (not that this fact is architecturally reflected).
The *falé*

Jeremy Treadwell, another member of the School of Architecture at Unitec New Zealand, attempted to have a Samoan *falé* built by Samoans using traditional materials in the grounds of Unitec (Figure 3).

The *falé* is a form of building common to many South Pacific islands. Usually located in the centre of villages it is larger than other dwellings and serves as a space for communal activity or to host visitors. In 1924, New Zealand’s colonial administrator of Samoa wrote in a descriptive handbook:

> Of the useful arts, house-building is probably the most important survival. Though of skilled workmanship, Samoan houses are, generally speaking, mere sun-shelters, the roof is of thatch and they have no walls. Such structures whatever their defects, have the supreme merit of being conformable to the climate and the needs of the inhabitants (Richardson, 1925, np).

![Figure 3: Falé at Unitec New Zealand, Auckland.](image)

Again, these indigenous structures are assessed as something less than architecture. And the interior of a *falé* *tele* in the centre of a village is a shaded, ornamented, highly-crafted interior poised in open space. This structure uses traditional binding and weaving methods to secure timbers. What is initially startling is the smell of this building. It is like being in a
woven basket, and provides a more haptic experience involving all the senses. The sense of vision dominates Western architecture and this structure reawakens the senses to the whole-body experience of the architectural interior. The effect of thousands of meticulously worked bindings gives the building an aura of highly crafted beauty that is not often encountered today (Figure 4).

![Figure 4: Interior of falé at Unitec New Zealand, Auckland.](image)

At the centre is a forked timber post, cut from a specially selected tree, which supports the tower of tie beams. The curved ends, or tala, are constructed from laminated, circular purlins that were prefabricated but on erection have failed to achieve the correct degree of curvature. Here we see how difficult it is to realise this kind of construction using organic and unprocessed materials in modern New Zealand. The Building Code again could be seen as a political document that marginalises other cultures by discouraging the pursuit of indigenous architectural authenticity. This falé was permitted as a form of experimental building but still had to run a gauntlet of heritage concerns about its site adjacent to a Category 1 Historic Building, Ministry of Agriculture concerns about the imported thatch and two attempts to set it on fire by a zealous arsonist.

Treadwell describes his attempt to have a Samoan falé built by Samoans, using traditional materials, ‘as a continuing negotiation between the authority of tradition and modern
pragmatism’ (Treadwell, 2004). It was largely built by *tufuga fai falé* (master builder) Kaitano Smith. Treadwell has characterised his *falé* as somewhat of a compromise, which it is, but this can be seen as its success. It is neither an isolated specimen of tradition nor a traditional form subsumed by the Building Code. It is the kind of hybrid that marks our path into a future Pacific architecture, rather than the purely Western forms and techniques we currently employ here. Treadwell and Smith were happy to depart from tradition; for example, the thousands of canes to which the thatch roof are bound are in fact a few kilometres of dowel. Many would have a problem with this inauthenticity, but this isn’t necessarily the triumph of Kiwi pragmatism. Rather the *falé* project is infiltrating our building methodology, opening up new possibilities and teaching us wonderful things we can do with dowel and string. Here, the interior of the domed, thatched roof seems to dissolve into a delicate and finely wrought screen rather than the flat sheet of ceiling we are used to. And it still keeps out water better than some Auckland houses.

Our discussion of the Samoan *falé* has centred on architectural form but whereas the *whare raupo* dwelling could be characterised as rain cape, the *falé* is a more complex structure than a simple sunshade and its form is not driven purely by a logic of construction or materials. The several layers of ties that tower up into the interior of the dimly lit roof space have a symbolic importance and the building has a metaphysical role in Maori culture. Albert Refiti describes the *vā* as a concept of Polynesian space that allows an ambivalence or duality at the heart of the *falé* that governs the relationship of the individual to the group, the community and cultural beliefs (Refiti, 2004). The *falé* of Samoa is often seen by Westerners as a simple pavilion form, but Refiti has written about it in terms of a body-oriented duality, inside and outside, interior and landscape. The permeability and openness of the *falé* suggests the building is not so much functional architectural object but a mediation, a screen or skin between the two worlds of interior and landscape.

**The Meeting House**

The Maori *whare nui*, or meeting house, which is much more enclosed and cave-like than the *falé* (and thus of a different type if we believe Western taxonomy) displays the same duality. With its four walls it is obviously much more ‘a building’ than ‘a pavilion’ but the meeting house is not intended to be seen as an object in the round, as has been discussed in other papers (McKay and Walmsley, 2003). One does not walk around it; one approaches it, on invitation, then enters. The Meeting House has a facade, a face, and is often metaphorically a body, the personification of an ancestor, with the ridge beam and rafters perceived as spine and ribs. The house is often directly acknowledged by Maori in the same way one would
address a person: it is not simply a building, a container for human activity. As Michael Linzey has phrased it:

*the fundamental understanding that the meeting house is a living presence is richer than any mere simile; it is beyond the idea of a metaphor or a representation in the European sense* (Linzey, 2004, p. 13).

It too contains a rich interior, which is not merely decoration. Many of the carvings or illustrations within depict ancestors. The representations of ancestors are the crucial feature of the building and contrast the ancillary position of ornament within most Western architecture. Both Albert Refiti and Deidre Brown have discussed how ‘decoration’ is essential to the *falé* and *whare nui* respectively and make analogies to *moko* (traditional tattoo). *Moko* is not adequately described as decoration of the face; rather it is inseparable from the *mauri* (life) of the person. This correlates with John Scott’s observation, in relation to Maori architecture, that it is not the building that is important, it is the *mauri* which is achieved through the detail, the art, the craft.

*The wharepuni (Meeting House) has a spiritual basis and the building itself is unimportant. The Maori will not worry about buildings but he will worry about those particular kinds of things he has around – the carvings, the teko-teko (sic. tukutuku, woven panels) work* (Scott, 1973, p. 290).

The open space in front of the Meeting House is essential to the protocols by which one is welcomed onto the *marae*. This primacy of interior and outdoor space, combined with the
notion of the human body, would seem to collapse Western notions of architecture as the three-dimensional object and reduce it to a skin or face mediating the two profound poles of human existence: inside and outside, a duality that mirrors the human body and its relation with the world, the in and the out, the interior and the landscape.

It is important to remember the Meeting House is a post-contact structure. As mentioned earlier, the whare raupo does not have conventional Western architectural elements such as a distinct roof, walls and windows. But the whare nui, or Meeting House, does. This is a nineteenth century Maori building type that is a response to pakeha (New Zealander of European descent) building. The Meeting House uses Western tools and techniques, but if we look at the sole window and door that characterise most Meeting Houses it is interesting to note that the pre-contact chiefs’ houses, from which the whare nui developed, had a door for entry but no window. Instead they had a hole at the top of the wall under the ridge to let out smoke from the dwelling. The window is a Western invention for looking through walls and traditional Maori dwellings did not have them. European buildings had chimneys but no element for smoke-hole. Thus the traditional wall smoke-hole has been translated into ‘window’ rather than rooftop ‘chimney’ in the limited repertoire of architectural elements that Maori found they had in the late nineteenth century. This warns us to look at indigenous buildings from a historical and cultural perspective rather than from a system of Western architectural elements or types that can stereotype or homogenise that which is different.

However despite its ‘architectural’ appearance (roof, walls, door, window) it is interesting to note how the whare nui continues to be referred to as a body rather than as a structure. Deidre Brown has noted a number of references that have couched the house as cloak rather than building (Brown, 2005). Discussions surrounding the rebuilding of the Wairoa whare nui Te Poho O Tahu for instance are couched in terms of body and garment, rather than in architectural terminology:

... the earlier Te Pohu O Tahu had not had carvings, and the current one had only kowhaiwhai (painted designs) on the maihi (gable barge boards). Whaanga’s answer was that it was ‘time the old chief had a cloak’ (Whaanga, 2004, pp. vii).

To summarise, this paper has looked at three Pacific indigenous building types, not in terms of architecture, but in terms of the garment and the body. It is doubtful if the people of the Pacific share a Western notion of architecture as something separate from craft, art, ornament, interior, landscape or other European notions. The methodologies of the disciplines of interior and landscape design can be used to explore the conception of building in the Pacific and, in turn, a knowledge of Pacific buildings can infiltrate a sense
of ‘architectural’ form and release us from the dominance of architecture. This can enrich our understanding of how one can live in this part of the world and the possibilities for habitation.

References


Interior Bowers: The Dormant Wilderness of Nineteenth-Century Boudoirs

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Abstract:

I know a rural bedroom with a paper representing a trellis and Noisette roses climbing over it; the carpet is shades of green without any pattern, and has only a narrow border of Noisette roses; the bouquets, powdered on the chintzs, match, and outside the window a spreading bush of the same dear old-fashioned rose blooms three parts of the year. That is a bower indeed, as well as a bedroom (Barker, 1878, p. 11).

In Bedroom and Boudoir (1878) Lady Barker describes a number of bedrooms and boudoirs furnished with ornamental linings derived from the natural landscape. As the most private, internal and intimate interior spaces in the Victorian home, such spaces are likened to bowers - clearings in the forest, retreats or nests. Surrounded by surfaces composed of vegetal patterns and colours, the boudoir shows signs of reclaiming vestiges of the outside, not as the manicured garden or the cultivated landscape, but as foreign wilderness.

Barker's remarks critique the notion of the interior as tectonically distinct from the exterior. In contrast, the room is shown to be derivative of the exterior through its use of ornament, furnishings and linings.

This paper examines the relationship between boudoir and bower as established by Lady Barker. It then traces the physical description through theoretical positions of the time on the relation of ornament and nature, in order to position the boudoir as an interior space of decorative and tactile envelopment.

Keywords: interior, decoration, boudoir

Introduction

In the latter half of nineteenth century England there emerged a growing interest in the decorative ‘artistic’ interior. Period theory captured and reflected subtle shifts in aesthetic appreciation and ideological positions announced through advice manuals and social exchange. Some were driven by aesthetics, seeking to argue the body and its beauty at a time when ‘masculine’ culture tended to distain and denigrate the sensual. Many British critics and writers such as Lady Barker (1878), Mrs Loftie (1876), Lucy Orrinsmith (1876),
Mrs. Haweis (1881) and the Misses Agnes and Rhoda Garrett (1876) exercised this new form of expression on architectural issues. They no longer followed the historical canons of architecture; instead they offered decorative advice and narrative descriptions of exemplary houses and fashionable abodes. Their advice manuals argued the merits of different approaches to furnishing, colouration and decorative effects. Many consisted of subjective observations more interested in the immediacy of space – its emotive and psychological effects on the body – rather than any subscription to traditional transcendent metaphors. It was a period when many upper and middle-class women were empowered to decorate and furnish their homes as a reflection of individuality and social status. However, despite this aim, current literature tends to focus on the Victorian interior as a site of entrapment conditioned by ‘separate spheres’ ideology, rather than a moment when women began to gain some control over their property.

These alternative perspectives on architectural space emerge at the same time that interior design as a professional design activity was wrestled from the auspices of the upholsterer. While advice manuals provided overall standards, room design, particularly decorative decisions, became a manifestation of personal taste. Decorating one’s home was added to a myriad of activities focused on ‘appearances’ such as dress, hair style and make-up as instruments for inscribing individual difference and freedom. Fashion began to challenge the canons and doctrines of taste and open the way for aesthetic individualism in the spirit of modernity (Lipovetsky, 1994). Under this conception rooms are presented as collections of space, objects and experience. Spatial qualities extend beyond the view; the formal apprehension of display and style accentuating a moment of interiority with full-surround experience. Heavily reliant on a combination of good hues and careful furnishing, these rooms are portrayed as seductive spaces deliberately orchestrated for affect. Behind this image is a reflection towards nature and its potential to conjure up the suppressed wilderness through the use of vegetal ornament and an immense accumulation of detail. Such spatial extension, from outside to inside, is nowhere more prominent than in Lady Barker’s boudoir, the interior bower.

**From bower to boudoir**

The links between ‘boudoir’ and ‘bower’ are well-established. Etymological enquiry reveals the ‘bower’ as a clearing in a wood or a landscape garden feature, a secluded place enclosed by foliage such as a rose-scented arbour, a gazebo, pergola, or alcove. In medieval times, the house acquired a room called a bower, a room reserved for the exclusive use of women, and a ‘precursor of the boudoir’. Furthermore, later citations describe the bower as ‘a
dwelling, an inner apartment, or a lady’s apartment’. While the purpose and use of such rooms are various, this is the first evidence of a meaningful link between the bower of the landscape and the boudoir, the bower of the house. These definitions lead us to theorise the connections between interior space and natural landscape space.

Many theorists working across disciplines acknowledge the difficulty in trying to define Nature. Landscape theory on the matter establishes definitions relative to particular historical periods or a precisely claimed stance (Shepard, 1997). While it is beyond the scope of this paper to contribute to this cause, its development is particularly dependent on a certain framing of Nature, landscape and garden that assists a speculation on the vacillation of bower between inside and out. In this case Nature is a cosmic force or environmental agency (Bourassa, 1991, p. 21). In its most raw and primitive form it asserts itself as the wilderness, what Jackson (1980, p. 21) has described as wild, dark, un-tamed, un-known, uncharted, lawless and un-harnessed. Cultivated by the power of vision to apprehend and extend beyond immediate physical boundaries, concepts of what defines landscape include the appropriation and acculturation of everything within the framed view as familiar, owned or at least understood. The view forms the room. In addition, landscape’s historical alliances with painting and pictorial space enunciate a distance between subject (viewer) and object (world). The picturesque landscape represents the epitome of efforts to control lands, plants, water, flora and fauna as a means of domination. Making landscape is a physical and metaphorical act of clearing away the wilderness to make it habitable. Closer to home, a garden represents a greater degree of cultivation, domestication and enclosure. It reaps the benefits of daily management, maintenance and manicure. Whereas the first pastoral gardens, essentially defensible areas for livestock and crops, were attributed masculine characteristics, the garden immediately adjacent to the house, particularly those dedicated to growing flowers, were the domain of women (Jackson, 1980, p. 21). The boundary of the garden, typically taking the form of a wall, fence or hedge keeps the territories of cultivation and wilderness from mixing. It marks the limits of the orderly and civilized and the chaotic and unwieldy. The wilderness is kept at bay from reassuming its former hold. Emerging as a subset of landscape, the garden and its interface with the spatial interior, offers a point of intersection between the house and the landscape at large. A primary intention of this essay is to explore the effect and residue of this exchange.

The issue of the painterly condition of picturesque landscapes of the time is significant to our inquiry, especially as Lady Barker does not describe the view of the world beyond as a picture or natural scene, but instead she acknowledges how the roses just outside the window are reflected in the interior decoration. In this case, Nature, masquerading as a garden, breaches
the interior wall and assumes a guise of designed artifice. Hunt states, ‘the main concern of the picturesque was how to process the unmediated wild world, how to control it or make it palatable for consumption by sanitizing it with art’ (Hunt, 1992, p. 288). Early landscape theorists conceive the picturesque as a tool for conceiving and exploring meaning within landscape design, in the same way as painting. They rejected landscape gardening as an pictorial medium only so much as it allowed their students to study formal properties of planning and the realities of light and shade (Hunt, 1992, p. 192).

Architectural and landscape theory has long flirted with sensory aesthetics. Experience, as a spatial event engaging all the senses, is concerned with material rather than form, and involves ‘pleasurable experience that is essentially unmediated by any learned associations’ (Bourassa, 1991, pp. 23–24). Because the body is not simply a viewer but a variable in spatial relations, formal constructs of subject and object become superfluous. Bourassa credits Edward Relph with the notion of existential insideness – the goal of immersing one’s self in a spatial (landscape) experience (environment) ‘without deliberate and selfconscious reflection’ (p. 3). Evocative of phenomenology and resisting most forms of reproduction, landscape spatiality surrounds us in limitless ways which reconnect with Bachelard’s reference to Nature as ‘immediate immensity’ (Corner, 2002, p. 146). In this way Corner affirms Shepard’s statement that the wilderness is everywhere (Shepard, 1997, p. 9), when he writes of spatiality as a condition of material medium, ‘a lived-upon topographical field, a highly situated network of relationships and associations…’ (Corner, 2002, pp. 147–149).

**Bower as amorous space**

As a garden and private sanctuary formed by woven vegetal growth, the bower also references the nest construction and habits of the Australian and New Guinea Bowerbird (Figure 1). Unlike most other bird species where the female builds a nest for laying eggs and raising young, the male Bowerbird constructs a separate nest to facilitate the mating relationship. With a protective screen partition used as a de-stimulating device during courtship, Collaise & Collaise (1984, p. 82) suggest that this nesting behaviour and construction is similar to the human aesthetic sense. ‘Bowerbirds decorate their courts and bowers with often highly coloured fruits and flowers, shiny objects such as insect exoskeletons, bits of glass or plastic, and a great variety of other materials – leaves, moss, feathers, lichens, stones, bones, snail shells, and bits of charcoal’ (p. 79). These treasures frame the nest entrance and provide soft insulation, recalling Barker’s description of the boudoir being ‘snug as a bird’s nest’ (Barker, 1848, p. 42), and her recollections of ‘lovely little nests of chintz and muslin, with roses inside and outside the wall, with low chairs and writing
table, sofa and toilet all in the same room – a bedroom and bower in one’ (p. 33). Spatial enclosure of the boudoir as room and nest is one of protective privacy towards the goal of visual and sexual seduction.

Figure 1: Painting of Bowerbirds.
(von Frisch, 1974, p. 243)

The description and purpose of this space is reminiscent of the boudoir in Jean-Francois de Bastide’s La Petit Maison (1879). In the preface to the 1996 edition, el-Khoury establishes that petit maison (little house) is not a reference to building size but a place for scandalous liaisons and sexual indulgence. Often referred to as ‘folies’, these houses were initially concealed behind foliage to afford discretion. Merging an architectural treatise with an erotic novella, carnal delight is explicitly played out in the decorative, psychological and tactile affect on Mélite as she succumbs to Trémicour’s seduction (Bastide, [1879] 1996, p. 22). Throughout the text, decorative motifs reflect their origins in the natural world despite their artifice, each time reinforcing the symbolic and spatial references between Nature, landscape, bower and boudoir. The dialogue between characters mimics territorial transgressions between the room of the orderly proper house and that of the untamed wilderness. In recalling the first boudoir encountered, Bastide draws from Le Camus de Mézières’s 1780 description of the sleeping space as a grove; architecture as clearing:
The walls of the boudoir were covered with mirrors whose joinery was concealed by carefully sculpted, leafy tree trunks. The trees, arranged to give the illusion of a quincunx, were heavy with flowers and laden with chandeliers. The light from their many candles receded into the opposite mirrors, which had been purposely veiled with hanging gauze. So magical was this optical effect that the boudoir could have been mistaken for a natural wood, lit with the help of art … Mélite could scarcely contain her delight (Bastide, [1780] 1996, pp. 75-78).

Just like the Bowerbird’s cleverly constructed space of allure, Trémicour’s cunning interior decoration establishes the boudoir as a room of illicit sexual liaisons also designed by a male, typically one’s husband or lover, located within the overall domain of the house, yet situated in the margin between house and garden. In the words of Ed Lilley (1994, p. 193), the boudoir was a room for ‘amorous dalliance’ but at the same time it generated ‘discourse about sexual power relations and was at the centre of discussions about morality’.

**Bower as solitude space**

Although the boudoir has licentious associations, it can also be understood as a place for female privacy. Lilley recognises it as a private room for retirement and sulking where women went to isolate themselves during periodic ‘black moods’ (Lilley, 1994, pp. 194–195, 197). Barker confirms this by declaring the boudoir to be ‘a place to idle and sulk in’ rather than somewhere to be busy and comfortable (Barker, 1878, p. 84). The boudoir may equally have emerged in response to a woman’s need to claim a space of her own, to carry out her individual freedoms of expression. Whether or not this freedom was of the creative and decorous manner or that of the political suffrage sort is unclear – both are implied.

In either case, the gender-specific boudoir is an insular part of the house with physical and symbolic adjacencies to the garden and the natural landscape. Its inhabitant was known to write, read, and paint as a means of self-education. The mention of the boudoir having a bed may also suggest the accommodation of private sleeping quarters more for facilitating solitude than in the provision for sexual interludes. More importantly, such individualism propagated an awareness of one’s inner self, that of interiority.

Once again, the parallel between garden and boudoir are vetted through prescriptions of the feminine and what is assumed to be the nature of women (Labbe, 1998, p. 66). Jacqueline Labbe recognises the garden as a similar state of enclosure to the interior room. Each house is a state of internal liberty in the guise of, or in spite of, the enclosure of domestication/domesticity in the proper genteel manner; ‘[the] garden can also open up a less decorous
space structurally designed to subvert, obstruct, or transgress gentility’ (p. 66). The boudoir’s adjacency to the garden and its investment of ornament derived from nature may prove to be the way out (of entrapment), to the way in (of self-empowerment).

**Spatial effect**

Recall the description of the boudoir written by Lady Barker. In a few short sentences she highlights the role of chintz curtains, wallpaper, carpet and a bloom of roses beyond the window. And although the room is an extension of the landscape and the natural environment both its decorative motifs and its temporal provisions are constructed artefacts of artifice. The window, while not overtly prominent in Barker’s text, is conceptually and spatially critical to our speculation. It operates as an experiential valve to limit and welcome Nature into the room. Citing a collection of material elements, Barker not only describes the room but alludes to its spatial experience as one of envelopment, what Olalquiaga (1999, p. 289) calls a cycle of extreme acculturation.

Lady Barker’s reminiscences ‘paint’ a spatial and atmospheric sense of the room conditioned by the garden infiltrating the interior, not just through the visual aid of the window, but through mimesis of patterns, scents of flowers, healthy ventilating breezes, texture and vegetation colour. As such the spatial boudoir is revealed by the intersection of landscape and surface pattern. And having enveloped the interior in vegetal ornamentation, the window is not for picturesque viewing but is used to reflect exterior roses back into the interior. In this case Nature, in the appearance of a garden, envelopes the interior wall and carpet in the guise of designed artifice.

In her description of the boudoir, Barker establishes a direct connection between the inside and outside. Noisette roses are the agent to a spatial reading that sees the room as an extension of landscape. It connects the female occupant to Nature in a more empowered manner than the traditional prejudicial assertion that equates women with Nature as a sign of weakness. That is, the room described by Barker breaks the traditional reading of interior architectural space as discrete rooms conforming to a greater architectural concern governed by, for example, proportion and style, or reason and consistency. Moreover it is unconcerned by psychological readings or questions of confinement, sulking or sexual encounter. There is the notion that the interior bower, the boudoir, is the place where wildness/wilderness reasserts itself despite and with the assistance of mechanised decorative artefacts – like the forest regaining its foothold. Landscape is utilised to create an interior environment rather than as a pictorial display. Le Camus de Mézières insists that the boudoir ‘is regarded as
the abode of delight; here she seems to reflect on her designs and yield to her inclinations’ (1996, p. 115).

Like many advice writers of the period Barker plays scant regard to the existing architecture, noting only doors and windows pertinent to her observation. The existing architecture is neither regarded as a structure/substrate for surface ornamentation, nor a proportioning system to be enhanced with decorative motifs. It is clearly disassociated from the physical and spatial system, and in this case is constructed in relation to the exterior landscape and from the emanation of interior expression. It is concerned with experience as a spatial event engaging all the senses.

What we note is that the decorative interior as part of a cultural phenomenon has a vital role in that it provides an aesthetic medium for the expression of ideas, desires and beliefs circulating in society. Interior furnishings and linings of the boudoir, because of their extreme individuation, are not tainted by the kind of thoughts and imagery that govern traditional canons of beauty and ‘good taste’. They are the result of self-searching for individual self-expression; one reason why furnishings as a whole take on the quality of excess, or exhaustive overwhelming decoration. One can not immediately see any order; it is only when individual parts are closely observed that this act of envelopment begins to coalesce freely and unencumbered in a manner akin to the wilderness returning. Barker’s boudoir, despite the many claims outlined in this paper, is the place where wildness establishes itself in an ‘uncultivated’ manner.

References


Endnotes

1 The authors have made several unsuccessful attempts to locate the copyright holders for the image. Original citation:

Plate 99. Bower of the orange-crested gardener in the rain forest of New Guinea. The two openings in front of the hut are connected inside by a semicircular passage. The bird has covered column between the two openings with dark moss. It is decorated on one side with blue iridescent beetles, in the middle with yellow flowers, and on the other side with broken shells. In front of the bower is a fence plaited from twigs and decorated with brightly colored fruits (sometimes with flowers as well), which forms boundary of the ‘garden’. The male (left) has just rushed out of tunnel and greets the female by displaying his nuchal crest. (See von Frisch, 1974, p. 243.)

Credits

Credits on von Frisch p. 294 read:

‘99. Painting of Bowerbirds by L. Binder, based on color photographs and descriptions of Heinz Sielmann, Munich. Photo: Dr. Max Renner, Munich’.
The Potential of the Window in 'Framing' Landscape Meaning

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Abstract: frame. 1. v.t. & i. Shape, direct, dispose, adapt, fit, devise, express, articulate, conceive, plot. In this paper a preliminary report on the study of landscape meaning and how it is shaped, expressed and so on by windows is described. Landscape is conveyed as being understood in at least four different ways: perceptually, politically, experientially and existentially. The framing quality of windows is shown to be complicit in these understandings. Using a contextual and inter-textual approach, a case for the consideration of the philosophical possibility of framing is presented. Through the model of linguistics used in a hermeneutic way, it is shown in this study that ‘aesthetic experience is not a solitary monologue... but an integral part of a shared discourse concerning the realisation of meaning’ (Heywood & Sandywell, 1999, p. 10).

Keywords: framing, interior design, landscape

Introduction

This paper focuses on the phenomenon of ‘landscape’, speculating about the role of windows in perpetuating specific conceptions of landscape. Central to this is the articulation of the meaning of landscape into descriptive categories and an alignment of these to decisions designers make about windows. In this respect, it locates the ‘viewer’ in the interior position emphasising the interconnectedness of landscape architecture, interior design and architecture. Implicit in this is a greater respect for how the decisions we make as designers in one design field influence the meanings people have of concepts central to another discipline (such as the actions of interior designers and architects in relation to ‘landscape’) and of the reciprocal role of these meanings in affecting the overall quality of the dialectic relationship of people and the world.

Context

Theoretical context

An overview of recent landscape research of significance to this study reveals a substantial body of work that deals with landscape meaning. Rather than provide an overview here, the paper integrates this in the substantive sections in line with the study’s contextual and inter-textual methodology. What is worth pointing out here is that in landscape
research, such as Dakin (2003), there is increasing support for the holistic nature of person-environment interaction. While the study described in this paper adopts a similar stance, it offers something new, first in its attempt to identify and describe the various conceptions of landscape evident in formal literature, popular literature and everyday understandings, and second, in its adoption of an interior design perspective to examine a phenomenon central to landscape architecture.

Methodological context

To identify conceptions of landscape the study employed a phenomenographic approach. According to Marton (1988) who coined the term, the approach is aimed at ‘...mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualize, perceive, and understand various aspects of, and various phenomena in, the world around them’ (pp. 178–179). For the study, a cross section of academic and popular literature dealing with the concept ‘landscape’ was analysed using a contextual approach informed by the work of Lennart Svensson, one of the co-founders of phenomenography. Part of the data also comprised graduating interior design students’ written descriptions about their understanding of landscape; some of which were anonymously conveyed in a survey and some of which were contained in written reports.

Four conceptions of landscape emerged from the analysis:

- Landscape as a perceptual phenomenon
- Landscape as a political phenomenon
- Landscape as an experiential phenomenon
- Landscape as an existential phenomenon

To understand the potential of windows in mediating these conceptions, the study was informed in part by visual semiotics, in particular the work of Kress & van Leeuwen (1996). Notwithstanding the visual focus, their work is relevant because it is grammatically oriented as distinct from being concerned with vocabulary and the significance of people, places and things depicted in images. In other words, it is more concerned with how people, places and things combine in visual statements (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 1). In terms of this study, the visual statement is the building window together with what it is framing of the surrounding landscape as experienced from inside the building; the experience being described in terms of a conception or to use a linguistic term ‘the signified’.
Landscape meaning and the role of the window in its framing

Landscape as a perceptual phenomenon

In this conception, landscape is understood as a picture; that is, as something viewed (Figure 1). Associated with this then is a notion of landscape as an image. In other words, what is understood is not environmental actuality but rather a representation and an enduring image and experience of landscape quality. In the built environment, windows reinforce this extension of representation in various ways, the most persuasive through the mechanism of framing. Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) in their exploration of the two dimensional image identify the frame as one of the aspects of interactive meaning, in their case referring specifically to the size of the frame and its relation to the human body. While the distance of elements in a landscape from a building is determined by a variety of factors; the size, shape, position and articulation of a window reinforce physical and social distancing. As some designers appreciate, large expanses of glass do not put us more directly in touch with our surroundings, rather they alienate us from them. The smaller the windows and their panes the more intensely windows connect us to what is on the other side (Alexander et al, 1977) (Figure 2).

In addition to establishing a relationship between landscape and people, framing also contributes to meaning through its role in composition. While the placement of windows affects the information value of the view, framing disconnects or connects elements of the view, signifying that either they belong or do not belong together (Kress & van Leewen, 1996, p. 183). An example of connection is the way the frame halts the continuity of the horizon line and reinforces the role of the horizon line in conjoining earth to sky; in the

![Figure 1: Landscape as a picture; as something viewed.](Picnic Point Lookout, Toowoomba)](musée Rodin, Paris [left]; Café, Paris [right])
process, a sense of grounding is produced for the viewer. The significance of the horizon line and its association with landscape is reflected in art and design through the landscape format that privileges the horizon through its horizontal orientation (Figure 3).

Sometimes this horizontality is reinforced through vertical elements such as mullions, sometimes it is fractured creating a sequence of compositions challenging the view’s quality of wholeness although ironically at the same time contributing to it (Figure 4). Windows, then, can be complicit in presenting our surroundings as a perceptual construct that we label ‘landscape’ and, as with landscape painting, designed from the view point of a single viewer (Cosgrove & Daniels, 1988).

For researchers like Appleton (1975), the interpretation of environment as landscape possessing the features just described gives it strategic value related to human survival. This value is highlighted in two theories, ‘Habitat Theory’ which draws a relationship between the semantic nature of the visual environment and survival, and ‘Prospect Refuge Theory’ where the focus
of interest is on the environmental conditions that are deemed to provide opportunities for both prospect and refuge; that is, opportunities to see without being seen. Other theories such as ‘Information-Processing Theory’ and ‘Humphries Theory’ also highlight the agency of the environment; the former through its tenet that people prefer environments that facilitate and stimulate the acquisition of knowledge; the latter proposes that we are attracted to the patterns and rhythms of nature because we like to classify (Bourassa, 1994, p. 99).

While these theories are limited in their downplay of the role of other social and cultural factors such as the classed, racialised and gendered subject (Rose, 2003, p. 166), they do invite attention to the ‘...formal visual qualities of a landscape image, for it is the visuality of an image that is the seat of its actancy’ (Rose, 2003, p. 167). For Rose, they beg questions like: ‘How exactly is a particular image organised? What does it display and what does it hide? What are its colours, spaces, volumes, dynamics? How are these arranged and what are their effects?’ (p. 167).

**Landscape as a political phenomenon**

While there is obvious merit in asking and responding to these questions, this can be problematic when they are the only questions asked. We know this only too well where in our design fields prominence is given to a formalist approach to design associated with a rationalist understanding of the world. Dakin (2003) describes this detached position as an expert-based position which is characterised by an understanding of landscape in terms of ‘...physical features such as water and topography, properties such as diversity of extent of view and formal abstract elements, expressed in design terms such as forms, lines and textures’ (p. 3).

In Corner’s (1996) words, ‘...visual regimes – such as perspective and aerial views – are extremely effective instruments of power, enabling mass surveillance, projection, and camouflage. Synoptic, radiating vision extends a gaze that makes the viewer the master of all prospects; a scopic regime of control, authority, distance, and cool instrumentality’ (p. 155) (Figure 5). In this process, other qualities such as smells, textures, tastes and sounds are often de-emphasised, even devalued. For Rose (2003), this represents a ‘masculinism of seeing landscapes’ producing in turn ‘a passive’, and as such, ‘feminised landscape’ (p. 165). For Corner (1996), it equates to what Heidegger refers to as ‘loss of nearness’ (p. 156), one which interestingly enough is not experienced by everyday inhabitants of a ‘landscape’ (p. 155). For these ‘insiders’, Corner suggests, there is no clear separation of self from scene, rather theirs is an eidetic relationship characterised by an ‘acoustic, tactile, cognitive, intuitive as well as picturable’ connection to their surroundings (p. 154).
Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) also refers to the politics of perspective suggesting that frontal angles invite involvement while oblique angles (Figure 5) contribute to detachment; high angles reinforce viewer power compared with eye level angles that situate us in a more equal way. In contrast, low angles give the participant in the scene more power (pp. 134–146).

From an architectural and interior design perspective, one has to question the extent to which windows are complicit in, as Corner puts it, ‘concealing the agendas of those who commission and construct the landscape’ (p. 158) beyond the building. Sometimes, of course, the agenda is quite overt for example office designs where senior management offices are located at the perimeter of the floor minimising the eidetic potential for the remaining employees in terms of the surrounding environment; or where in reception areas skylines are hijacked to reinforce the firm’s social, economic and political status (Figure 6).

For Corner, accepting a design role concerned with improving the human condition demands an emphasis of the ‘experiential intimacies of engagement and participation’ and a situation where ‘performance and event assume conceptual precedence over appearance and sign’, where ‘the emphasis shifts from object appearance to processes of formation, dynamics of occupancy, and the poetics of becoming’ (p. 159).

Landscape as an experiential phenomenon

Central to an understanding of landscape as an experiential construct is a belief that people are not passive viewers of the landscape but in a multi-faceted way actively participate in its construction of meaning (Dakin, 2003, p. 4). The painter William Robinson provides an evocative perspective on this in an interview where he says: ‘I tried to describe the feeling of being in the landscape and walking around it … to look up and down almost at the same time; to have a feeling of time; the beginning and the movement of the day and night; to be
aware of the revolving planet ... I did not paint these works as a visitor to the landscape, but as one who lived in it and experienced it everyday’ (Robinson in Seear, 2001, p. 85). Forming these experiences is what we bring to it, our ‘...own subjectivities, histories and geographies’ (Rose, 2003, p. 167).

Windows that encourage an experiential relationship with the environment are those that enable the occupants of dwellings to participate in the cycles and rituals of life. Daisann McLane writes in relation to her study of hotels: ‘The first thing I do when I enter any hotel room for the first time is open all the shades and curtains. The room is my first window on a new place, an unexplored culture, and I want to make sure I can see as much as possible... Parades, religious processions, clanging gongs, rhythmic chants and unexplained animal noises have all, at one time or another, enriched my hotel room experience’ (McLane 2002, p. 23).

In design terms, the potential for this type of connection is heightened with windows that can be fully as well as partly opened to the elements such as side hung casement windows; corner windows which dissolve the sharp edge of the building and the single viewpoint of one point perspective; windows and window bays that project beyond the face of the building forming their own alcoves; windows that frame a part of the environment where everyday activities occur; low window sills, deep reveals and window seats (Figure 7); the location of windows where people undertake a range of activities including passage areas (Figure 8); interior windows that interconnect rooms and frame inside activities; portrait shaped windows and so on.

Figure 7: Casement windows with low sill height positioned in alcove with side lights. (Casa Mila, Barcelona)
Landscape as an existential phenomenon

The data analysed also implied an understanding of landscape that went beyond perceptual and experiential meanings while also incorporating them. Pollock (2004) for instance describes how ‘Landscape painted representations have offered poetic means to imagine our place in the world ... Represented land is more often than not a reflection of the human subjectivity which projects itself on to a space either of its sheltering habitation or its sublime otherness’ (p. 1). She proposes that this is possible through the middle ground which is generally characteristic of landscape image; a ground that presents itself as ‘...the possibility of space, and hence of imaginative entity’ (p. 10). ‘Its absent centre is always the spectator, the human consciousness reflected in this brilliant exercise of formal invention coupled with a field of dreams’ (p. 10). Similarly, Amidon (2001) in citing the work of Jeffrey Kastner and Brian Wallis, writes: ‘Subject both of science and art, the landscape functions as a mirror and a lens: in it we see the space we occupy and ourselves as we occupy it’ (p. 80). It would appear then that whether one is producing a representation of the environment through paint or words or design, an opportunity exists to enrich the meaning of our relationship with the environment.

Alexander et al (1977) describes this in relation to the archetypal Zen view, one which is enduringly engaging. It is also one I argue that encourages a respectful and humbling relationship with nature. If the view must be visible inside a room, Alexander et al suggests making it a definitive act in its own right by creating its own room around it, perhaps even
giving it a window seat. Such is the case in the Alhambra in Grenada, Spain. In situations where windows open on to the surrounding hills and mountains, these are generally located in transition spaces, with the main reception and living areas facing inward to landscaped courtyards and gardens. Of particular note is the Mexuar Palace where windows open from The Golden Chamber waiting room to the woodlands beyond. Two seats facing each other are inserted in the window alcove but placed so one’s position is tangential to the window opening (Figure 9).

In this case, the window mullion and other elements are heavily decorated as are many of the surfaces in the various palace interiors of the Alhambra (Figure 10). As their designers realised, ornamentation provides a crucial and very potent means by which one can facilitate transcendence beyond the literal and, in the case of this study, contribute to landscape as an existential phenomenon. Highly ornamented windows and window openings create a unifying seam ‘...between the elements of buildings and the life in and around them’ (Alexander et al 1977, p. 1150). The existential quality is heightened further by the use of pattern, its reiterating rhythms moving one towards infinity; infinity being a metaphor of eternity (Nunez, 2000, p. 72). Central to this is the role played by light, with windows and various window treatments playing a dominant role in its movement from outside to inside, and vice versa.

Conclusion

This paper suggests that we understand environment as landscape in four qualitatively different ways: as a perceptual phenomenon, as a political phenomenon; as an experiential
phenomenon; and as an existential phenomenon. Common across all conceptions is an
appreciation of landscape as a construct. Complicit in this is the window through its role
in framing. Rather than ‘construct’, Corner (1996) uses the term ‘image’. ‘Landscape and
image are inseparable; without image there is no such thing as landscape, only unmediated
environment’ (Corner, 1996, p. 153). Unfortunately most designers appear to be unaware of
the constructive potential afforded the image, for as one of the students writes: ‘Sometimes
we become so complacent with our surroundings that like a painting we don’t notice the
brush strokes that intricately weave the scene together on the canvas and instead step back
and critique the picture as a whole from afar’ (Walters, 2004, p. 7). As this paper illustrates,
the window is a place where people and environment merge and overlap. More often
than not, however, this is purely as viewer and picture rather than participant and image
interwoven experientially and existentially.

This existential phenomenon invites us, interior designers and landscape architects, to
consider the philosophical possibility of framing; to consider, for example, the proposition
made here that without framing there is no landscape. The model of linguistics that has
been used in a hermeneutic way in this paper also shows us that aesthetic experience is not
a solitary monologue but an integral part of a shared discourse concerning the realisation of
meaning (Heywood & Sandywell, 1999, p. 10).

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AFK – Away From Keyboard, Place In The Sims Online

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Abstract: The Sims Online computer game engages ideas of place where construction of a place is contingent on the conceptual fusion of space and experience. This paper discusses the ways in which this fusion occurs in this exceptionally popular digital environment. I explore how both the space and the subject (required to mediate, record and name experience) are represented. Two familiar architectural devices are used to construct space in the game; the map and the axonometric, as historical tropes that remain active in digital space. An avatar or Sim operates as the experiencing subject in the game and the oscillating relationship between the body of the Sim and the body of the player is teased out. Finally, the place that results from the fusion of space and experience in this particular environment is described and analysed.

Keywords: online computer games, Sims, place

Introduction

In early 2003 Electronic Arts launched The Sims Online, a massively multiplayer online game known by gamers as TSO. Unlike other popular online games such as Everquest, TSO has attracted female players and other traditional non-gamers in record-breaking numbers. TSO is described by its creator Will Wright as ‘a game about real life... you have to make strategic decisions about how to spend your time, and when you make those decisions you try to maximise your happiness, either long or short term’ (Terdiman, 2003). Some players attend to the competitive aspects of the game, attempting to become the most popular or wealthiest Sim, while others focus on developing interpersonal relationships. Computer games form the largest part of the entertainment economy and are recognised as ‘subtle yet powerful methods of enculturation by which social values, interaction styles and everyday activities are practiced’ (Flanagan, 2003). In TSO the site of this enculturation is not a place of fantasy or mythology, wizards, dungeons and dragons, but is instead the familiar domestic, the suburb, the neighbourhood; it could be argued that it is a game in which the lines between fantasy and reality are more than usually blurry. Whatever their motivation, the place that is TSO is attractive to over one million players.

Place is a slippery concept. How does a generic sense of space shift to the significant identification of place? J. Nicholas Entrikin, in his humanistic engagement with place, approaches this shift through the lens of cultural geography and describes the specificity
inherent to place. Space becomes place due to ‘the conceptual fusion of space and experience that gives areas of the Earth’s surface a “wholeness” or “individuality”’ (Entriken, 1991, p. 6). To experience something firsthand one must feel immersed in, in fact be the subject of the action, and the action must unfold around oneself in a convincing fashion. Further, to construct place the experience must be enacted in such a way that limits or boundaries can be identified and recalled in order for the individuation, the ‘wholeness’ of a place, to be achieved. For identification and recollection of any place naming is also essential.

Different computer games utilise different methods of representation to encode the generic space of the software with a specific and identifiable ‘whole’ sense of place. In TSO the historic tropes of cartography and axonometric projection construct the initial location of the player in what I call the game-place. As with many computer games, the player experience is mediated via an avatar and through text. This paper investigates the braiding of the constructed game-place and the experiential place of the player/avatar.

**Entering the game-place, entering the experience**

To give a sense of the game I will briefly describe my initial foray into TSO. The first step is to create a Sim and there are many options to consider. There is a choice of two hundred and thirty five heads, each of which can be modified by the alteration of hairstyle and skin colour. The next step is to browse TSO universe from above and to descend somewhere into it. Hovering above, in far zoom mode, I experienced a strange sensation of floating similar to the liminal space of air travel. I felt nervous, after all this was unfamiliar territory and I was to be a foreigner. Eventually I decided to take the plunge in a town called Tropical Falls Paradise.

![Figure 1: The Sims Online, the far zoom view. (Image supplied by Electronic Arts)](image)
Browsing over gridded land, known in TSO as ‘lots’, textual information appears indicating who is ‘at home’ – places inhabited by Sims whose players are currently online. I found Taz, home alone. I entered his house and introduced myself as a new player. He offered to show me around his house and introduce me to the workings of the game, prefacing his offer with the warning ‘but no kissing – I’m taken’. I asked if he (at least the Sim presented with male gender attributes) meant in real life or the game. Both, was his reply.

Taz instructed me to keep ‘greening’. A player must attend to aspects of performance in order to maintain the health and wealth of a Sim. My food area needed greening. Taz made us a meal in his kitchen and as I ate, by clicking on the animated meal, my Sim made animated actions that resembled eating. Sitting in front of my computer, I watched my food bar become green. Taz kindly showed me the bathroom, where we both used the toilet, and then he had showered while I had a bath, taking care of two areas that needed greening, bladder and hygiene. Later our Sims slept, more greening, and then we played pool in order to green up our fun category. Our Sims did all these actions in their animated ways but became pixelated at certain, more private times. All the while we were talking via the chat function, comic-like text bubbles appearing above our Sims’ heads.

After two and a half hours I did feel familiar with Taz, just as though I had met him in the flesh and had conversed in a concentrated fashion. It was time to get the dinner, to literally green up, and I was reluctant to say goodbye. Strangely, I didn’t feel as though I could just get up from the computer and leave my Sim frozen and speechless in Taz’s presence. I had to say goodbye properly, remove my Sim and shut the machine down.

**Constructing the game-place: the map and the axonometric**

I have described the process of entering the game; the movement from a construction of a bird’s eye view of the landscape – termed the ‘far zoom’, placing the gamer in outer space – to the edge of the interior via the axonometric view. Both these graphic systems come replete with a history of representing, perhaps constructing and certainly naming places.

The Western cartographic system is a mastery of place through sight. Maps are codified objects and their reading and authority lies in an understanding and acceptance of this code. The map is a tool of the coloniser. Simon Ryan argues that the first step of the explorer, who represents the colonial power, is to construct the space of the land as new, unknown, under-utilised and empty, as available for inscription. Any other non-Western system of mapping, must therefore be seen as unreliable and as having no authority, in order for this clean slate, a *tabula rasa*, to be available for and in fact require, colonising. As Ryan explains ‘the space
of empire … is understood as objectively being “out there”, a natural state, alternatives to which are difficult to imagine’ (Ryan, 1997, p. 4).

Mapping in TSO is used to represent both spatial and social relations. The use of maps, bird's eye views and map-like spatial diagrams doubly orientate the viewer. They codify the space as place, but also codify the place as ‘real’. The use of the familiar language of mapping asserts not only that there is geography there, but further, that it is a landscape to be colonised and settled upon; a space in which empires might be inscribed.

![Figure 2: The Sims Online, the near zoom view. (Image supplied by Electronic Arts)](image)

Paul Carter describes the anxious doubling that occurs as cartographic inscription meets the realities of surface: ‘As a mapping device the linear net, the survey throws over the land creates a set of ideal locations. Anxiety occurs when it is found that these ideal representations do not correspond to the environment we inhabit. Then the fantasy of access to endlessly multiplying squares of land turns into its opposite: an experience of being hemmed in or isolated’ (Carter, 2004, p. 86). TSO game-place provides ‘ideal representations’ of the earth devoid of this anxiety. Players may endlessly appropriate, demarcate, name and occupy places; the fantasy of endless access is lived out as the game-place provides an infinite frontier.

However, one more click and we come down to ground; a ground that is, in TSO space, duplicitous. In the game-place, buildings and their environs are represented through axonometric projection. The axonometric is a vexed architectural drawing. Yve-Alain Bois, in his essay The Metamorphosis of Axonometry, describes the uncanny liberation of the eye produced by the axonometric. In the axonometric ‘there is no negation of depth; instead it is geometrically rendered “infinite”: the eye is no longer fixed in a specific place, and the view is no longer trained and “petrified”‘ (Bois, 1981, p. 46).
In viewing the axonometric, the roving eye – positioned outside and above, never in a specific place – takes in this infinite depth. Consequently, interiority in axonometric representation can never be enclosing, it can only be presented at a distance by allowing planes of walls and roofs to become transparent or cutaway. Bois describes the drawing’s fundamental ambiguity: ‘the axonometric image is reversible; it tears free of the ground … facilitating aerial views’ (Bois, 1981, p. 56). In the axonometric rendering of architecture, cladding and roofs are shorn away letting the outside in, revealing all interiority to the passing and limitless gaze. Although axonometric renderings are drawn to scale, they do not represent scale in relation to a horizon as in perspective drawing. Consequently, the representation of scale is measurable but not experiential. Schneider says that the axonometric ‘depict[s] only one side of the object, indicating neither the distance from the viewer nor the object’s height in relation to the viewer’s eye level’ (Schneider, 1981, p. 81).

This lack of horizon, denial of ground and reversibility of solid and void produces in TSO a domestic space that evades enclosure. It might simulate the domestic but it can never surround and suffocate the player in the way the actual domestic might. Perhaps this in part explains why a simulation of the familiar domestic might still make an engaging place for a game. This lack of spatial enclosure, of interiority, however, is complicated, and effaced by the experience of the placement within multiple bodies, an effect which will be discussed further.

**Inside and outside, the porous boundary of the game-place**

Why is it relevant to talk about space, place and landscape in relation to a computer game in this particular forum that brings together discourse concerning the interior and the landscape? Spatial relations within the constructed TSO game-place simulate a real world binary system – internal versus external, public versus private, the domestic spaces equating interiority and the landscape equating exteriority. And, as I have identified, the design of the game-place utilises familiar architectural tropes. However, the actual experience of playing of the game renders these boundaries complex, testing concepts of interior and exterior inhabitation.

In TSO, internal and external states are multiple and nested rather than singular and opposed. Within the game-place, modes of behaviour and language are specific, marking it with a boundary determined by a shared culture and codes of practice.

The player’s actual corporeality is of course external to the game but, as seen by Taz’s edict regarding the propriety of kissing, it may also spill over into the game-place. In a reversal of this, the game-place spills out, interacting with ‘real’ world systems of commerce and
communication. For instance, players create website diaries where the life of their Sim is documented and ‘fleshed out’. Others have started up web-based newspapers, reporting events from their particular place within the game. Commercial transactions also breach the porous boundary of the game-place. Johnny Lace, recently retired from the game, designated himself the occupation of Sim architect. On his website he advertised his business. Players could contract Lace to design houses for them with payment in Simoleans, the ‘local’ currency. While Lace’s transactions remain within the boundaries of TSO economy, others bleed out into actual commerce. At the online Mall of the Sims, players purchase accessories such as clothes by the designer Ralph Lauren. These items can be downloaded into the game-place, but are purchased via credit card transaction with hard rather than soft currency.

In all of these examples, actions, events and transactions are recorded and named. As I have pointed out, naming allows for the specificity inherent in place. Allucquère Rosanne Stone, in her early investigations of cyberspace, identifies the powerful transaction that occurs through naming; ‘… to enact naming within the highly charged world of surfaces that is cyberspace is to appropriate the surfaces, to incorporate the surfaces into one’s own. Penetration translates into envelopment. In other words, to enter cyberspace is to physically put on cyberspace” (Stone, 1991, p. 109). Invoking Toyo Ito’s description of architecture as ‘mediasuit’, this concept of place as something that can be worn upsets any easy demarcations of inside and out.

![Figure 3: The Cukoo Zoo, a Johnny Lace Design from The Sims Online. (Image supplied by Johnny Lace)](image)

**Experiential place, unlimited body**

Stone and other influential theorists of cyberspace such as Donna Haraway and Sherry Turkle, have discussed the many seductive and complex qualities of the avatar at length.
The narrative of leaving the body/meat behind is central to much cyber fiction with William Gibson’s novels the most cited examples. In TSO the player creates an avatar called a Sim. Is there a distance between the player and the Sim or do they collapse into the same entity?

The official Electronic Arts Games website for TSO takes both positions, simultaneously flipping between the personal you and the possessive your when talking about the Sim. The following quote is indicative of this fluctuation:

There’s a special category of actions called ‘Attitudes’, where you can set the way your Sim idles, meaning they’ll keep doing that action until you tell them to do otherwise. For example, you make your Sim act like they’re ‘In Love’ while they’re pouring their heart out to a potential date. Or you can set them to ‘Arrogant’ if they’re starting a fight with someone. Either way, these are all tools for your amusement. So explore your options and express yourself (Trottier, 2002).

In this text, there is an oscillation between you, using the various settings to further your communication, and your Sim expressing its own feelings. Agency is bought into question. Your Sim might perform animated actions that portray a state of being in love but it is the player who is pouring their heart out because actual communication in the game can only occur via the text functions produced by real flesh fingers pressing on a keyboard. In Elizabeth Grosz’s view the particular allure of virtual technologies is the ‘half formed promise ... of the ideal of a world of one’s own that one can share with others through consensus but that one can enter or leave at will, over whose movements and processes one can exert a measure of control, and that brings with it a certain guarantee of pleasure without danger’ (Grosz, 2001, p. 82). The action of oscillating in and out of the body of the Sim produces a distance that allows the fantasy of ‘pleasure without danger’ for TSO players.

Figure 4: The Sims Online, Sim taking a bath. (Image supplied by Electronic Arts)
This corporeal fluctuation was apparent to me in playing the game. The strangeness I felt when using the bathroom at the same time as another Sim, and the fact that the propriety of pixellation is activated, indicated a degree of immersion in the corporeal state of the avatar. However, at other times, this was effaced. We could keep communicating and our vision remained active and mobile although our Sims slept. The relationship between the two bodies, one physical and one representational, is complex.

I have already examined the distancing effect of the axonometric, as it detaches the eye from the ground/horizon and positions it outside and above, allowing it to roam. In contrast to TSO many other computer games use one-point perspective views to render space, binding the eye of the player to the eye of the avatar. Known in film as the ‘point of view shot’, this is the moment when the viewer/player, the camera and the character collapse into one identity, easing the moment of the suspension of disbelief. In TSO the player’s eyes are everywhere, all at once, and not fixed to the viewpoint of the Sim. In the production of place the body plays a central role, mediating the environment through the filter of the senses, which in turn activate recognition and memory. These perceptual mechanisms are mostly absent in TSO. The production of place therefore is disconnected from the body but reinforced in other ways. The space constructed is not the enclosing place of architecture but is instead the fluctuating place of a conversation.

**Conclusion**

In TSO two modalities create a place in the space of the machine. In the first, the modality of the game-place, pre-digital, spatial representational devices construct a ‘scene’ in which to demarcate a place of specificity. As I have demonstrated, the historic conventions of the map and the axonometric carry into cyberspace. The game-place is thus constructed by the map as a place ripe for inscription, a frontier without anxiety. This inscription is formed through modelling the axonometric – the ungrounded projection lacking true enclosure, exposes interiority to the passing gaze and produces a domestic that does not contain and lacks limits.

The second place-making modality is that of the experiential place of the player as he/she is immersed, or not, in the body of the avatar and subject to the shared cultures and conventions of the community. If places are constructed through the conceptual fusion of experience and space, a subject is required to mediate, record and name the experiences. In computer games the avatar acts as the player’s agent, some have used the term ‘puppet’, through which such experiences are sought. In TSO this agency oscillates; the official game literature never clearly positions the Sim as either something the player owns and directs or something the player is. The player can transcend the body of the Sim, can leave the body
of the Sim at will, but remain within the game and can carry on communicating with other players while the Sim sleeps; all of this points to a fluctuating relationship between the agent and the player. The result of this oscillation of agency, in combination with the lack of interiority in the game-place, is a subject-hood that is easily accessed and released, allowing for Grosz’s ‘pleasure without danger’.

The place constructed in TSO through these two modalities is, to borrow Louis Marin’s terms, a topic rather than topographic place. Marin defines the two terms: the topographic place is a ‘fragment of space possessing its own unity’, while the topic place is ‘rhetorical and poetic’ (Marin, 1984, p. 115). In TSO, the body, digital and real, is a place-making device for this rhetorical, poetic space. The biological needs of the body, for filling and emptying, are parodied in the game to punctuate the spatially located but disembodied conversation. TSO can be seen as the extension of a chat-room, a neologism that neatly provides a spatial referent for a text based conversation. However, and as I have argued, TSO provides a far more complex spatial referent: a body in which the conversation can, sometimes, be housed.

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Endnotes


2 Interestingly Marin locates all utopian projects as topic rather than topographic and others have read TSO as a utopian experiment.
Interiors in the Land of the Great Outdoors

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Abstract: In the context of an expanding economy around the so-called creative industries, many cities are searching for theoretical models to guide urban development. Theoretical models from early post-modernists are being regularly re-examined, in part, because of their relevance to models for the contemporary city. This paper investigates situationist theory as a lens through which to explore alternative pockets of culture. Using situationist theory as a lens to observe the culture of the New Zealand bach, or the myth that it left behind, this paper exposes the paradox of bach culture as an urban model: the paradox of institutionalising a creative culture of resistance and of escaping the city only to find oneself at its centre.

Keywords: New Zealand bach, Situationist International, urban design

Paradox one: creative capitalism

In the last ten years there has been much public discussion on cultures of innovation, play and the so-called creative industries. Cities are currently competing to attract the big business that comes with these industries. Richard Florida's book, The Rise of the Creative Class (2002), outlines his research on this new demographic and what its members want from a city and a workplace. In the United States, Florida counted 38 million members of this new group and credits them for 30% of the economy. He says, 'If you are a scientist or engineer, an architect or designer, a writer, artist, or musician, or if you use your creativity as a key factor in your work in business, or education, you are a member' (Florida, 2002, p. ix).

Florida builds many of his arguments on the work of Jane Jacobs and her book, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (1961). He extends, or transforms, her arguments for diversity, interaction and play into capitalist terms. Sociological models are being re-examined in this context too, including Charles Landry's The Creative City (2000). These ideas are not...
only important for the well-being of the city but, according to Florida, they are a central
tenet of late capitalist production. His book and the associated lecture tours are being taken
up by city councils and business leaders on this basis. Writing directly about his consulting
work, Florida says, ‘I often tell business and political leaders that places need to have a people

Florida might well have included Situationist International theory and practice in his
discussions with the urban establishment had it not been so blatantly anti-capitalist, anti-
bureaucracy and even anti-class. Their work is similarly enthusiastic about the creative and
experiential city and is also built on the rich diversity of constructive play that is being called
for by Florida’s Creative Class; ‘…we increasingly demand a lifestyle built around creative
experiences… the new lifestyle favours individuality, self-statement, acceptance of difference
and the desire for rich multidimensional experiences’ (Florida, 2002, p. 13).

Situationist International is receiving attention from academics and artists but not from
Richard Florida, city councils, or business leaders. The Drawing Center in New York hosted
an exhibition, a symposium and produced a book around Constant’s New Babylon in 1999
(Wigley & de Zegher, 2001), and there have been many others. But situationists and city
councillors alike would surely feel uneasy if situationist theory became an agenda item for any
city planning department. It is anathema to that kind of institutionalisation as it opposed top
down control and any form of establishment. In a speech on Paris, Guy Debord, a founding
protagonist of Situationist International, bluntly put forward that ‘…from any standpoint
other than that of police control, Haussmann’s Paris is a city built by an idiot, full of sound
and fury, signifying nothing’ (Sadler, 1998, p. 16).

The situationists could barely institutionalise themselves, without destroying something of
their potency. The first edition of Internationale Situationniste even denied its own labelling
when it said ‘There is no such thing as Situationism, which would mean a doctrine of existing
facts’, and ‘The notion of Situationism is obviously devised by antisituationists’ (Sadler, 1998,
p. 3). Despite the impossibility of avoiding some form of institutionalisation, Florida would
still have to destroy an important attitude if he attempted to re-package situationism for the
urban establishment that has become his audience. Yet this kind of resistance is important,
even economically necessary, for the contemporary city. He acknowledges, in his polite
language that, ‘Creative work in fact is often downright subversive, since it disrupts existing
patterns of thought and life. It can feel subversive and unsettling even to the creator’ (Florida,
2002, p. 31).
This imaginary dialogue between Florida and the situationists opens up an important paradox. Florida argues convincingly that the Creative Class is fundamental to contemporary capitalism, but also that the same Creative Class must resist capitalism. Florida himself refers to this paradox when he cites Joseph Schumpeter arguing ‘the “perennial gale of creative destruction” was the very essence of capitalism’ (2002, p.31). Berthold Brecht explained it more vividly when he wrote, ‘Capitalism has the power instantly and continuously to transform into a drug the very venom that is spit in its face, and to revel in it’ (Brecht, 1967, p. 593).

This paper is not a campaign for the simple application of situationist theory to the contemporary city on Florida’s behalf, it could not be. To maintain its potency, situationist thinking must remain farther out of view than Florida’s well publicised campaign trail. Situationist theory described the city more like a Creative Class-room, than the home of a ruling creative demographic: a place for play, but also for playing up. Situationists necessarily worked in the blind spots of culture. Members of Florida’s Creative Class apparently work in these blind spots too. They are attracted to what culture has not yet delivered, not yet discovered. They find gaps in culture and business. If we take Florida seriously, then these gaps form the nerve centre of culture and the economy, and it is here where Florida and the situationists meet. The reactor that keeps our constructed world boiling is, in a sense, a blind spot. This paper peers into one of these blind spots looking for situationist thinking; a logic that has leaked between the cracks. It is the cracks in culture and the economy that, paradoxically, provide strength.

**Paradox two: bach city**

![Figure 2: Motuketekete.](Photography: Marti Friedlander, Brownson, 2001, p. 142)
The typology of the modest New Zealand holiday house, called the bach, began its life as a way to avoid the city, avoid work-life and even, for many men, avoid the family. Indeed, it was a place to avoid much of what New Zealand culture was seen to be, and instead indulge in a supposedly uncultured landscape. The mythical New Zealand bach, now remembered mostly in its 1950s and 1960s version, occupied the cracks. Not just cracks in the landscape, which they often occupied too, but cracks in the economy, social hierarchy and law of the land. But in another paradox, the myth has become a crucial component of New Zealand society. It is not only a component of the coastal landscape, but also a significant component of the economy, social hierarchies and, indeed, the law of the land. The bach became a place that symbolised the liberties, explorations and earthiness of life in a land of the great outdoors. Yet it may also become an emblem for the successful city as a key component in cities for the Creative Class. Bach dwellers may have been rushing from the city, only to find themselves at its conceptual centre.

Paul Walker introduced the bach to Australian audiences like this,

*The ‘noun’ bach (sounds like ‘batch’)… denotes a small, usually rather informal, habitation located near the kinds of places people like to spend their spare time: harbour and ocean beaches, the banks of lakes and rivers, and so on. It is the equivalent of the Australian ‘weekender’, but with an extra degree of picturesque dishevelment… Baches are... often considered by New Zealanders to embody principles of egalitarianism: having shed the inhibitions, formalities, and status distinctions of everyday life – and much of the clothing – everyone is the same at the beach/bach… Made from inexpensively acquired materials, often put up on pieces of land to which the builders had no clear title, baches were constructed outside of the usual economic determinations of the built environment (Walker, 2001, p. 44).*

Bach culture was, at least mythically, a non-hierarchical liberation that existed outside of routine urban life. The bach was not watched with the same institutional eyes that watched other parts of culture. Bach dwellers stepped out of the roles defined by their professional lives and met fellow enthusiasts of coastal leisure. Their baches were jerry-built on crown land, out of government view and invisible to the economy. They occupied the blind spots. This concurs with a popular version of the same story in which baches were something to ‘Build... yourself on land you don’t own, out of things you’ve pinched’ (Wilson, 2004, p. 23). Baches were built in the cracks of a tight New Zealand society. These cracks provided a place to drift, literally and mentally: people drifted in and out of their own identities, days drifted from one to the next, interiors drifted outside, and sand drifted back in. People drifted...
between baches to sample the ambience. Bach dwellers were liberated from a bureaucracy who had largely handed over public control. Even for bach dwellers with the means to build professionally it was a place to Do-It-Yourself: a culture of anti-design.

The bach was in many ways, anti-urban. Yet at the same time, many of the habits and values at the bach correspond with both situationist and Creative Class views of urban life. The bach is paradoxically an escape from urban culture and the very essence of urbanity; bach dwellers are a virtual opposition to the situationists, but also their kindred spirit.

Without too much imagination we can see Guy Debord in a coastal drift drafting his late submission of a French colonial map of New Zealand’s South Island. Indeed the last bach building boom, in the 1950s, coincided with the founding of Situationist International. Situationist International might well have begun on golden sand under an old Pohutakawa tree; such was their disillusionment with work in the city. In fact,

In July 1957 eight delegates, ‘in a state of semi-drunkenness’, met in a remote bar in Italy... The benign professionalism of architecture and design had, in their opinion, led to a sterilization of the world that threatened to wipe out any sense of spontaneity or playfulness (Sadler, 1998, p. 5).

Situationists engaged in their environment much like their bach dwelling cousins. They both objected to the modernist city, they both took the built environment into their own hands, they both were sympathetic to common people, and they both took their play seriously. Perhaps more importantly, situationists and bach dwellers were both batting for mental health and the creative spirit from the underbelly of culture. In this, they unwittingly shared the construction of a theoretical platform for the contemporary city.

Simon Sadler’s book, The Situationist City, reports on this theoretical platform. There is no suggestion of the great outdoors in his book, but Sadler’s account helps us understand the bach as the site of some important attitudes. This is not to suggest that all attitudes at the bach are noteworthy, and they are by no means exemplary, but simply some attitudes are important, and they are more important to the city than is commonly recognised. Sadler focuses on ideas that emerged in their newsletter, Potlach, during the early years of Situationist International: ‘derive’ (drift), ‘psychogeographie’ (psychogeography), ‘detournement’ (diversion), ‘situations’ (situations), and ‘urbanisme unitaire’ (unitary urbanism) (Sadler, 1998, p. 11). Elements of the bach come into focus when we read them through these lenses.
Drift

Think of the bach dweller drifting in the landscape, only not so aimless in his wandering. Think of the bach dwellers as drifters: skirting amongst the shadows, hunting the new. Think of them telling stories, drawing maps, revealing unexplored territory for the first time. Think of them all revelling in the ‘flip side of modernisation’. ‘The drift’, Debord explained, ‘entailed the sort of “playful-constructive behaviour” that had always distinguished situationist activities from mere pastimes’ (Sadler, 1998, p. 81).

Think of the bach dweller’s activities. Fishing, reading, writing, painting, and walking are pastimes, but they are often more than that too. Think of Bob Jones’ famous right hook delivered to the over zealous journalist who interrupted his day fishing in Turangi during the lead up to the 1984 New Zealand general elections. Didn’t that blow come as much for fishing as it did for politics? There is a sense that these pursuits were not merely pastimes. Drifting at the bach was important, and the practice of drifting that was so fundamental to the situationist city is in the bach dweller’s blood. Think of that blood running through the city, seeping through the cracks. Drifting is symptomatic of a lack of capitalist productivity, it is drifting despite the modern city yet it is equally vital to it.

Psychogeography

Ask the bach dweller for a map. Not a chart of ocean depths or walking tracks of which they will likely have drawers full, but their own map. A map of the best fishing spots, the best camping spots, or the strongest northwest wind. Ask for the story of that headland, how it changed, when it changed, who changed it and who it changed. Ask for a psychogeography of the great outdoors. For the situationists, psychogeography was, in a sense, a method of exploration through drifting. It resulted in maps of the city organised not by circulation paths but by ambience. It was a form of geography that included what Debord describes as ‘active observation’ and the ‘development of hypotheses’ (Sadler, 1998, p. 81). But it was also a form of escape. ‘From the outset psychogeography was regarded as a sort of therapy, a fetishization of those parts of the city that could still rescue drifters from the clutches of functionalism, exciting the senses and the body’ (Sadler, 1998, p. 80).

It was a fetishization of the cracks. Life at the bach was also a kind of therapy through escape, or rescue, from the city. It was about local knowledge: a form of psychogeography. And life at the bach was perhaps the ultimate venue for daydreaming and speculation, the central tenet of Florida’s capitalism in the new city.
Detournement

Look at the bach itself, and look for the origins of its walls, its roof, and its furniture. The Do-It-Yourself culture that produced the bach aesthetic was also a pillar of situationist strategy. The idea of ‘detournement’, or ‘diversion’, aligns with baching strategies of re-employing discarded structures out of their original context. Farms and cities alike had their stockpiles depleted by enthusiastic bach builders. Is this far from the situationist dream? Sadler (1998) writes,

Detournement would provide a stockpile of aesthetic elements from which anyone wishing to contribute to the revolutionary city could freely borrow. Once the drift had identified choice features of the existing environment, they could be freely diverted for situationist use (p. 110).

It does not seem far from here to, ‘build[ing]… yourself on land you don’t own, out of things you’ve pinched’. The use of vinyl flooring on kitchen bench tops, a kitset garage, or a redundant tram as the bach’s structural core, was as obvious to the bach dweller as it is to Florida’s Creative Class. It skirts the edges of the economy, but it was clear free trade, utterly urban. It was common situationist sense.

Constructed situation

Think of the bach as a total work of art. According to Sadler (1998), the constructed situation is best thought of in this way too. ‘Each constructed situation would provide a décor and ambience of such power that it would stimulate new sorts of behaviour, a glimpse into an improved future social life based upon human encounter and play’ (p. 105).

The point of a constructed situation is not too far from the whole point of the bach itself. The bach was a constructed situation with the intention to alter behaviour and stimulate one’s sense of play. Bach dwellers enjoyed the décor and ambience of the detourned and natural environment because it did encourage different behaviour. Like the constructed situation, life at the bach was a temporary suspension of urban life; it framed an event waiting to happen. These events are cultural fuel for Florida’s Creative Class.

Unitary urbanism

Imagine the bach dweller in context. Sadler (1998) explains that ‘situationist unitary urbanism was a vision of the unification of space and architecture with the social [and individual] body’ (p. 118). It was a merging of social, architectural and environmental space, or a compounding of one into the other. Baches were often sited with an enthusiasm for this kind of conflation,
even if the means to achieve it were relatively crude and the results not always successful. Imagine the bach dwellers, half outside, half inside in the great outdoors. Imagine their stories. Imagine them as a group. With everybody on a level playing field, if you will, it was expected that bach dwellers would share bedrooms, if not beds, and everybody was expected to participate in the maintenance and production of household necessities. Imagine the culture of conflation at the bach: a unitary urbanism in the great outdoors.

Figure 3: Drifting through Lagos.
(Photography: Uche Isichei and Medua Izegbu)

Postscript: Lagos and the superbach

Bach culture was very much about leaving the city behind, and situationists were obsessed with the city. But the myth of culture at the bach resonates remarkably with the situationists and through them it resonates with the city. While bach and situationist cultures existed at opposite ends of the road to the beach, they have much in common.

Is it an urban version of the bach we see in the Koolhaas-led study on Lagos? Does the bach provide the perfect shelter in the extremely fluid, vaguely anarchic, African city which Koolhaas puts forward as an advanced capitalist metropolis? Koolhaas writes, ‘…we argue that Lagos represents a developed, extreme, paradigmatic case study of a city at the forefront of globalising modernity. This is not to say that Lagos is catching up with us, but we may be catching up with Lagos’ (2001, p. 42).
Perhaps the bach is an emblem for the future? Could Lagos be the ultimate metropolis for bach and situationist culture: a metropolis for an extremely Creative Class? Perhaps, but Uche Isichei cautions that the cracks in Lagos’ infrastructure maybe too wide to provide strength. He explains what most people probably assumed, that a ‘succession of coups and political mismanagement [has] crippled the economy’ (Isichei, 2002, p. 11). The Lagos bach may simply be a symptom of urban failure. Perhaps it is both a monument to the potential, and failure, of the capitalist metropolis?

Likewise, the obsession with bach culture today might signal its failure as much as its success. While elements of bach culture have gone to town, elements of urban culture have gone coastal. There is a general consensus that bach culture in the New Zealand landscape is not what it was. There will be survivors, but they are not the majority. They have become over-crowded and over-exposed. The same bach culture that might have been attractive to anti-capitalist situationists, turns out to be equally attractive to the wealthy classes of late capitalism. Drifting has become big business. Accordingly, baches appear more and more like beached super yachts. While the bach we have mythologised may be endangered, the new superbach is booming. It appears elements of the ‘soul-crushing and wicked city’ that bach dwellers and situationists were ducking, has settled on the coast and in the hills. Interiors of the glass walled superbach are self consciously urbane. Hierarchies are clear, status is signposted, work is proudly catered for, and territory is guarded. The fences are up and the security cameras are rolling. The success of the bach brought its own demise. The cracks have all but closed up.

It seems there is currently a curious cross-dressing between urban culture and the old bach culture. Old bach culture, at the beach in particular, has transformed into something more and more like a city of superbaches and highways: as if CIAM architects had their way at the beach. At the same time, the fluid, subversive, and explorative culture of the situationists, the mythological bach, and its urban manifestations in the advanced metropolis, may become a key typology of the new city for Florida’s Creative Class. Perhaps our understanding of interiors in the land of the great outdoors can offer as much to the contemporary city, as elements of the CIAM-born modern city have already offered the superbach?

References


Living Outside with the Sun
A Reflection on Outdoor Living Space Design in New Zealand

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Abstract: This paper reflects upon the history of design of outdoor living spaces, a typology that blends interior directly with landscape. In Australasia, outdoor living is a symbol of contemporary life style but it must adapt to the danger of over-exposure to the sun’s ultraviolet rays. Tempering openness to the summer sky is not just a choice but rather a survival strategy.

The relationship of European descendents to the Antipodean sun has fluctuated over time. In Victorian times, hats, copious clothing and villa verandahs protected prized pale complexions. Tanned skin branded the labouring classes and the native population. In the 1920s, the ancient Greek practice of heliotherapy was hailed as beneficial for the treatment of tuberculosis. Concurrently architecture clipped verandahs and proposed open sun terraces, sometimes scantily clad by a pergola. The negative consequences of this sun-worship were not known until the 1980s when the relation between ultraviolet rays and skin cancer was made and the recognition that one in three Australasians will be affected. Living outside with the sun therefore requires modification. Sunscreen is prescribed for application every two hours; hats, clothing and sun-glasses protect the body but hinder communication between people and their surroundings. Traditional solid shade shields direct rays, but deny the warmth of the sun, which is often so welcome in temperate New Zealand. Open shade sails fail to acknowledge the fact that ultraviolet rays scatter. Living well outside is not simple.

Keywords: outdoor living, ultraviolet, sun-shade structure

Introduction

This paper seeks to understand changes in design of New Zealand outdoor living spaces with regard to social attitudes towards the health effects of sun exposure, to gain a better understanding of local climates and new material technologies.

Firstly, the paper reviews key New Zealand architectural texts and selected international design precedents for examples of and references to outdoor living spaces; spaces open to the fresh air and relating strongly to the surrounding landscape. This time-line is then discussed alongside general historical references to health and the sun. Recent research findings into UVR over-exposure and the design of shade as a means of protection are
presented. Finally, in light of this understanding, successful solutions for living ‘outdoors’ with the sun are identified.

Maori traditions

The Maori, who migrated to New Zealand around 800 AD, were accustomed to the very high ultraviolet levels encountered near the equator and therefore, their skin offered good protection for the lower levels experienced at more southern latitudes. The principal family dwelling of the Maori was the whare, a low single roomed gabled structure of wood and thatch. It is an example of an adaptation to climate. The dark interior, illuminated by a single window opening, opens to a mahau, a deep porch at the gable end. This is accessed via a sliding door. The whare opens to the east to welcome the sun, but this orientation is also pragmatic as it allows the morning sun to warm the earth floor of the mahau and give comfort for the remainder of the day. Cooking is done in the open or, during wet weather, in a lean-to made of manuka frames thatched with raupo. Food was never consumed inside any whare, but in wet weather it could be taken in the porch (Shaw, 2003, p13). The mahau, therefore, is a practical day-time living space, sheltered from the wind and rain, and open to the daylight.

![Figure 1: A lithograph of a mahau by J.W. Giles (1822–86). (Photography: Auckland City Art Gallery Collection)](image)

Early European imports

The first European settlers of the early nineteenth century imported sunshading philosophies in their architecture with mixed success. The deep verandahs wrapping three sides of the Mission House, Waimate North (1831) were styled on the architecture found across the Tasman, in Sydney. These styles were based on the English Georgian vernacular of the late
eighteenth century (Toomath, 1996, p. 14), but tempered to suit the hotter climate with
the addition of deep verandahs, often on three sides. This design was well suited to the
sub-tropical climate in Northland. However, in the south of New Zealand, Scottish and
English settlers drew on their cultural heritage and built plain cottages devoid of eaves
so as to capture all the sun for the interior. This design provided no shade from the hot
‘Mediterranean’ climate of the central South Island. As settlers gained wealth, verandahs
were commonly added to a simple cottage as a display of style.

Alberton, a house located on the slopes of Mount Albert, Auckland, was initially built as a
two-storied gabled farm-house in 1862. Then, in 1870 the architect Matthew Henderson
added elaborate verandahs which wrapped around three sides (Shaw, 2003, p. 41). These
copious verandahs were to reflect status rather than provide amenity.

The design of the verandahs of Victorian villas were based on United States west coast
precedents – standard plans which included narrow six foot wide verandahs with a variety of
highly decorated extras (Toomath, 1996, p. 133). Irrespective of the sun, the verandah faced
the street. Along with lace curtains, timber blinds and copious drapery, the verandah became
another layer to ensure privacy of family life. The resulting shady interior was welcomed, as
exposure to sunlight was considered unhealthy and tanned skin regarded as a branding of
the lower working class.

New overseas fashions

After 1910, the villa was usurped by the Californian bungalow. Verandahs were brought
under the main roof or reconfigured as a porch; usually the front porch where location and
thoroughfare frustrated use for outdoor living. In this era, the architects of the wealthy often
traveled to the homeland Britain and to America for inspiration. W. H. Gummer’s design for the grand Tauroa (1916) includes both square columned balconies and pergola verandahs reflecting an interest in Edwin Lutyens’s neo-Georgian houses and in Californian Spanish domestic architecture. In Gummer’s own house, Stoneways (1927) ‘the subtle Spanish inflexion is again used; the architect obviously realized its appropriateness to the New Zealand indoor-outdoor lifestyle’ (Shaw, 2003, p. 91).

![Figure 4: W. H. Gummer Tauroa (1916) Havelock North. (Photography: Robin Morrison)](image)

No allowance was made for outdoor living in the first State-commissioned houses built by the 1935 Labour Government and designed in an English rural cottage style. This policy may have been an economy measure, or perhaps reflected a perception that an outdoors lifestyle was considered a luxury for the idle rich and not for the working majority. One outcome was that living room interiors were orientated to the north for sun and light (Shaw, 2003, p. 132).

**Modernism**

In Europe, sun-bathing for health was well established, when in his *The Manual of the Dwelling* Le Corbusier recommended for a bathroom: ‘One wall to be entirely glazed, opening if possible on to a balcony for sun baths’ (Le Corbusier, 1927, pp. 114–115). No outside relationship is prescribed for the living space. However, in the *Villa Savoye* (1929), Le Corbusier not only introduced the interpenetration of outer and inner space, now regarded as a *locus classicus* of Modernism, but promoted an open roof terrace. The adjacent interior living space, by the opening of large sliding doors, is effectively transformed into a verandah onto the roof terrace.
In 1937 architect/academic Richard Toy designed the first communal roof terrace to be built in New Zealand – for the Berrisville Apartments, Auckland. Unlike the traditional pitched roof, the Modernist flat terrace roofs invites occupation. Returning from overseas, architect Humphrey Hall designed an open sun-deck for the Corbusian style villa, Park Lane (1938), Timaru. It was accessed from the upper level bedrooms, creating a private sun-bathing spot (Lloyd Jenkins, 2004, p. 77). Following European health trends, sunbathing was promoted by The Sunlight League of New Zealand (Saleeby, 1934). These examples of European appropriation of life style and design, failed to consider that ultraviolet levels in New Zealand were over twice as intense as in Europe, thus limiting the summer use of open terraces.

The case for Modernist architecture was also promoted by an influential group of European architects seeking refuge from anti-Semitic and Fascist Europe. In a New Zealand Government publication, Ernst Plishke condemns the traditional verandah as a ‘show piece’ that ‘tak[es] all the light away from the living room’ (Plishke, 1947, p. 38). In Corbusian style, the living room of his model modern house faces north, opening with full-height glass windows and generous sliding doors onto a garden court. The facade is sheltered by a substantial eave and a seating-width ledge at floor level. The perspective indicates outdoor furniture suggesting that sun-bathing was actively advocated. In parallel, fashion of this time also opened up to the sun; for example, swimwear, which covered the body, now exposed it and sun-tanning became ‘almost an ideology in its own right’ (Warpole, 2000, p. 48).

Local style

During the 1930–50s, a group of New Zealand born architects sought to design a Modern house using a local vernacular style. A typical example is Vernon Brown’s style of simple low
pitched shed-like forms with ‘cut-out’ patios and porches. At 1.8 metres deep, the outdoor living space of the verandah of Brown’s own house in Arney Road, Auckland (built in 1939) was little different to the Villa Savoye verandah discussed at the beginning of this paper (Shaw, 2003, p. 146). However there were distinctions: the up-tilting roof and large areas of glass permitted much more light to the interior, and the living area opened to the verandah with glazed doors. The verandahs of the firm, Group Architects, who took the barn and the whare rather than the Villa Savoye as their starting point, were of similar proportions. Their Second House (1950), nick-named the Pakeha House, placed a verandah along the gable end of its whare-like form. However, the proportions of their mahau fail to shelter and accommodate a social group as successfully as its cited precedent. In the Malitte House (1954), the Group Architect Bill Wilson introduced clerestory windows to admit sunlight to the interior of the deep floor plan (Chaplin & Mitchell, 1984, p. 35) with the verandah roof remaining at a width of 1.8 metres. This reinforced the shed reference and produced a definite boundary to the garden. The verandah shaded the full-height glazing and sheltered the doorways, but did not invite use..

These simple building forms became passé in the late 1960s, when young New Zealand architects, Ian Athfield (Melling, 1980) and Roger Walker (Melling, 1985) rejected the intellectual constraints of modernism to freely create intimate and romantic environments. They looked nostalgically to the nineteenth century colonial past for inspiration and decoration. French doors opened once again to narrow cottage verandahs complete with pastiche cross-bracing on balustrades. Although the form remained, the roofing material often became glass, transmitting light and heat to both the adjacent interior and the verandah itself. Transparent shading materials suited the New Zealand climate. Over the next decades, roof glazing and conservatories became a common feature of local architecture.
New strategies

The Kelly House, built in 1988, is architect Nigel Cook’s first ‘wind-rain’ house (Cook & Kerr-Hislop, 1988, pp. 53–56). It is a glasshouse with a computer controlled ventilation system into which the rooms of a traditional house are partially inserted. The resulting environment questions the nature and boundaries of inside versus outside living. Although 6mm toughened glass cladding offers some ultraviolet (UV) protection, Cook does not promote this benefit. The need for sun-screening was just beginning to be recognised. In reaction to high levels of skin-cancer, the Cancer Society of New Zealand ran the first high-profile skin-cancer public education programme in 1988. Following in 1992, in response to Agenda 21, the World Health Organization (WHO) established INTERSUN, the Global UV Project to disseminate information concerning UV radiation and its health effects.

During the 1990s, outdoor living spaces feature in both new homes and renovations. The Clifford/Forsyth House (1991–95) by architect Patrick Clifford featured dramatic double-height verandahs at each end, providing a variety of shelter to suit the time of day and season. Typically this form alone provided little UV protection, but the cantilevered decks received shade from surrounding trees (Shaw, 2003, p. 207). The Rickets House (1999), by Fearon Hay, exploited the new fashion of the glass-walled to open pavilion (Shaw, 2003, p. 224). Large glass sliding panels shielded winds from either direction or retracted to leave an indoor/outdoor space simply shaded by a solid roof.

Figure 8: Double height verandahs of Clifford/Forsyth House (1991–95).
(Photography: Robin Morrison)

Figure 9: Rickets House (1999), Northland transforms the interior into an open pavilion.
(Photography: Paul McCredie)
The first guide for shade planning and design, *Undercover* (Greenwood, Soulos & Thomas, 2000) was published in New Zealand in 2000. *Undercover* defines effective shade as being of sufficient size, in an appropriate location, providing 94% protection from direct ultraviolet radiation (UVR) as well as controlling indirect UVR and creating a comfortable environment in both summer and winter. Even if direct sun is shielded, significant levels of UV are reflected from the atmosphere, the open sky. (In an open field situation 50% can be received from each source). Research found that many sunshade structures have UVR protection factors of only 3–6 (Green, Neale, Parsons & Wolski, 1998), sufficient to provide protection for less than one hour. This understanding was not common knowledge. Even the sophisticated revolving umbrella design by pHd3 (Craill, 2001, pp. 36–38), which cleverly shields direct UVR, fails to acknowledge the dangers of indirect and reflected UVR.

**A need for warmth**

Research also confirmed that providing both thermal comfort and UVR protection is complex. In central New Zealand, the ultraviolet index (UVI) is over 2 for eight hours a day in summer, but 69% of the time the air temperate cooled by sea breezes is too cool for comfort. (Mackay, 2003). In these conditions laminated glass and polycarbonate provide excellent UV protection while transmitting the warmth of the sun.

*Figure 10: Stout/Mitchell house (1995). (Photography: Mitchell Stout Architects)*

*Figure 11: Outdoor living area of Ross Steven’s container house (2004). (Photography: Ross Stevens)*

After extensive travel in the Pacific and Asia, architects Julie Stout and David Mitchell designed their own house with enlightened sensitivity to the climate and the goal to achieve comfort by simple means (Bohling, 1995). The outdoor room is shaded with a sequence of lapping layers of corrugated iron, polycarbonate, trellis and vines, filtering UV and heat from sun. The quality of living space is reminiscent of the mahau of the whare. In a second
example, industrial designer Ross Stevens, in reaction to his childhood sunburn, has designed a fully UV protected verandah for his ‘urban bach’ (Strathdee, 2004). Polycarbonate cladding and shielding of the west sun and open sky by a cliff-face create a year-round outdoor play-space for his young family.

**Conclusions**

The most striking revelation from this literature review is the complete absence of any mention of UVR protection for building users. For over a century, outdoor living followed designs imported from Australia, Britain, America and Europe without considering compatibility with the local climate. Verandahs were more a buffer zone between interior and landscape, a narrow linear space where a couple might pause to contemplate the outdoors. Communal outdoor space exemplified in the *whare* is rare in the architecture of Anglo-Saxon New Zealanders.

There is little discussion in the literature of the quality of inside-outside space. As this has not been a central focus, the design possibilities of considering outdoor living as exemplified in Cook’s ‘wind-rain’ house have not been yet fully explored.

This review does however identify a number of shade strategies for outdoor living. Despite its origins from a time when sun-tanning was considered healthy, the Modernist strategy of opening living spaces with large glass sliding doors onto an open courtyard or roof terrace is still valid. The open court can safely be used in the winter and summer mornings and evenings. In the mid-day sun, the use of the house interior as a ‘verandah’ is an economical solution. A more expensive solution is the provision of different spaces for different times of day and seasons. Sun-shading requires consideration of potential collaboration between built and natural landscape where land-form, cityscape and trees can shield both direct and indirect UVR. Translucent materials, laminated glass and polycarbonate are ideal materials for the New Zealand temperate climate.

On my summer holiday, lunch was taken on a non-architecturally designed folksy verandah clad in clear polycarbonate. On the clear sunny mid-day noon, it might be expected to be too hot, but the open sides allowed in the trusty sea breezes. The restaurateurs in attending to their customers comfort as well as culinary needs had over time developed an ‘outdoor’ dining experience that suited their micro-climate very well; a step in the evolution of outdoor living in the New Zealand sun. The challenge for architects and designers is to tune into the local climate and need for summer UVR protection to heighten and refine the sensation of outside.
References

design, education, interdisciplinary, labyrinth, landscape, matter, practice, room, soundscape, space, studies
The Aural Eye: Soundscape Practice and Pedagogy in Design Education

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Abstract: Human aural experience can be equally considered along spatial and temporal continuums. We hear at all times of the day and night, and within all places and spaces: built, natural, public, private and virtual. The territory – both physical and philosophical – between music composition for interior listening and traditional sound based research within environmental acoustics is gradually being occupied by the listener-centred approach of soundscape studies. Soundscape design is emerging as an interdisciplinary field within design education, and one that not only challenges the ocular-centric nature of most design education, but one that could provide a useful mode through which to investigate the coincidences between different design disciplines.

This paper draws on the author’s own practice as a sound designer in a variety of spatial sound projects in built and virtual contexts to discuss ideas of landscape, interiority, space and place as experienced through listening. This will include aspects of Canopies: chimerical acoustic environments for the Southgate soundscape system, Ecstasis: human presence in digital environments for an interactive VR system and stereoscopic projections, and The Occupation of Space: Soundsites project with the Melbourne blind community.

The ideas and technologies underpinning these projects also form the basis of a new pedagogy of sound and listening housed in the Spatial Information Architecture Laboratory’s (SIAL) Sound Studios at RMIT University. The place and role of the Sound Studio’s program in providing an aural perspective that compliments the visual methodologies of co-located design disciplines is discussed.

Keywords: soundscape studies, design education, interdisciplinary practice

Introduction – on the term ‘aural eye’

Sub-vocalisation is a necessary skill developed to varying degrees by score based composers and musicians. It is an ability to ‘hear’ or conjure up in one’s aural imagination, the sound of individual instruments and their combinations into extensive orchestrations as represented by a printed score. The skill can be equated with learning to read written words where children first read aloud, then more frequently to themselves until their aural memory develops and they can silently recall the sounds of words. I use the invented term ‘aural eye’, as personal shorthand for a process of looking and internalised listening, of translating between a visual
field and engaging the aural imagination. Ihde (Bull & Back, 2003) discusses the related phenomena of auditory imagination familiar to musicians and composers, but one that focuses purely on music and sound and not its intersection with visual perception of the world.

With particular compositions I experience sound as a surface, a veil, a terrain over a substratum that is the actual composition, which is energy distributed in time. When looking into a visual field, static or dynamic, for the purpose of realising an allied sound design, this soundless sub-vocalisation becomes a means to unearth this energetic substratum. I experience this a priori sensation of sound as a highly physicalised one, where sound(s) appear within my imagination, embodied with qualities such as weight, presence, degree of ephemerality, rugosity or turbulence. This process of translation lies beneath each of the sound based projects discussed here that engage visual fields in different ways and contexts.

**Soundscape design and composition**

Notions of landscape and interior appear in the theoretical discourses of soundscape practices and electroacoustic music. In the *Handbook for Acoustic Ecology* (Truax, 1999), soundscape design is defined as a:

> …new inter-discipline combining the talents of scientists, social scientists and artists (particularly musicians)… [who attempt]…to discover principles and to develop techniques by which the social, psychological and aesthetic quality of the acoustic environment or soundscape may be improved…

Closely related to soundscape design is soundscape composition, which is a type of electroacoustic composition where sounds from and about a specific context, usually a specific place, are the primary material for the work. The sense of the ‘…original context and associations of the material play a significant role in its creation and reception’ (Truax, 1999). Soundscape composition is ‘…context embedded, and even though it may incorporate seemingly abstract material from time to time, the piece never loses sight of what it is “about”’ (Entry for soundscape composition at *Ears*, 2005).

The difference between a soundscape composition and soundscape design can also be one of scale of endeavour. The composer of a soundscape composition is concerned with the creation of a work usually for concert or broadcast presentation and limited duration, between a few minutes and one hour. The soundscape designer is usually occupied with the integration of a complex weave of relationships to create an aural experience in an everyday environment.
The two types of endeavour might be two realisations of a larger project when, for example, a soundscape design is the basis of a soundscape composition or a soundscape research project is later ‘applied’ in a soundscape composition. Two examples from my own practice illustrate these definitions. Material from the first manifestation of the soundscape design Canopies: chimerical acoustic environments for a 160 loudspeaker soundscape system along a riverside cultural precinct in Melbourne, was later re-worked for a twelve-minute composition for concert presentation. And in the case of The Occupation of Space: Soundsites, an eight-month process of interviews, workshops and research into how the blind community of Melbourne use sound to negotiate physical space, resulted in an exhibition of twenty-four acoustic moments, or small soundscape compositions based on the findings and observations of the preceding research phase.

**Interiority: Canopies, chimerical acoustic environments**

In electroacoustic music practice, the term ‘interiority’ ‘...designates the qualities of sound that do not refer to external causes/sources’ (Entry for interiority at Ears, 2005). It is the perceived qualities, without concern for what the sound is, or what might have brought the sound into being e.g. a hand striking a metallic bowl, or wind entangled in a mesh of pine needles. When attention is drawn away from a sound’s exteriority, or reference, the reduced experience can be at least as full and complicated in its own way, and words such as mass, grain, turbulence are used to describe these qualities of sounds, in and of themselves.

The interior qualities of a sound impart to a listener a sense of energy, both received and embedded. Received energy is also explained as a gestural activity that brings a sound into being. Embedded energy appears to be an insertion of energy after an initial or source sound is in motion. In his seminal paper on Spectromorphology, composer Denis Smalley proposes that the qualities of energy within a sound reveal the level of human agency related to the production of that sound (Smalley, 1997). A sound with unvarying qualities appears unnatural, in the sense of not appearing in nature, or lacks an envelope of energy with onset, build-up, sustain and dissipation. It is the flat-line sounds of machinery and electronic devices that in listening theories quickly produce conditions of informational redundancy.

In contemporary software-based sound design, the interior of a sound is crafted by signal processing that is controlled directly by a datascape of real-time interaction, automation, or combinations of both. Real-time interaction provides one method by which traditional human music performance gestures might be mapped onto a sound, with the possibility the sound will maintain some degree of a musically referential character. While this allows a composer/sound designer to make, for example, a more convincing string sound by ‘bowing’ the sound,
it can also be used to create atypical sonic events such as ‘bowing’ a bell or flute sound. Automation allows super-human qualities to be mapped onto a sound: durations much longer than could be sustained through muscular effort or the breath, speeds of articulation beyond the fifteen to twenty attacks per seconds possible through human muscular effort, or simultaneous changes in many parameters effecting a single sound.

This practice of synthesising or processing a sound is to design or redesign its interiority, a process sometimes referred to as micro-composition, and is one that occupied by far the greatest amount of production time in the creation of Canopies. The basic sounds for Canopies were built from a series of studio improvisations, to design detailed and intricate material as a contrapunctal response to a site inundated with low frequency or flat-line sounds, which included a constant low frequency din from traffic and plant equipment (mainly air-conditioners), transportation sounds from Flinders Street Station and the throb of diesel engines of tourist boats passing by and idling at the wharf adjacent to the promenade. The intended effect was to create a lattice of sounds in an urban environment, hovering just above the threshold of aural perceptibility, as a virtual acoustic environment subtly present to the listener.

Canopies intersects with the notion of interiority in electroacoustic practice through the introduction of substantially more elaborate sounds than those in the existing conditions into the acoustic environment of the site. A new auditory plane is opened on the site through sounds whose timbres are in the middle to high range of human auditory perception (400–8000 hertz) and are richly textured and varied. The sound sources for the work that were processed included a set of wood-chimes, a collection of shells, a set of beads, small brass bells, cymbals and processed vocal improvisations. With no obvious visual reference on site to the external source of these sounds, the attention of the listener is drawn, even if momentarily, into a strange world enveloping an otherwise ordinary urban precinct (Harvey, 2000).

**Landscape: Ecstasy, human presence in digital environments**

Aural landscape – encapsulates sound’s inherent propensity to suggest physical space (both real and imagined) in playback (Entry for aural landscape at Ears, 2005).

The (indoors) listening space encloses and may either confine or expand the composed space. This ultimate space where the listener perceives is therefore a superimposed space, a nesting of the composed spaces within a listening space (Smalley, 1991, p. 121).
In the chapter devoted to sound landscape in On Sonic Art Wishart (1985) defines one aspect of ‘...the landscape of a sound image as the imagined source of the perceived sounds’. Source recognition is often a problem for sighted listeners who tend to favour visual verification of a sound’s location, proximity and type, while unsighted listeners must rely mainly on their aural experience and possibly on tactile or olfactory senses. Sighted listeners tend to experience disorientation if they are unable to identify the source of a sound. The term ‘source’ is used here both as a physical location in space and ‘thing’. From our earliest years, discovering the link between sounds and their source helps us to explore the aural aspects of our environment, while the uncoupling of sounds from their source is the basis of a large majority of electroacoustic concert and installation works. Wishart further proposes that this disorientation and the sense of strangeness is the reason why so much electronic sound was used in early science fiction films. He gives three components of a sonic phenomenon that defines a sense of a landscape as aurally perceived:

1. The nature of the perceived acoustic space.
2. The disposition of sound-objects within the space.
3. The recognition of individual sound-objects (Wishart, 1985, p. 76).

Ecstasis is ‘a multi-user “experiential” installation [which] involves up to four participants that simultaneously explore the virtual environment by use of a multi-user head tracking system. The work is determined not only by one’s own decisions for movement within the environment but also by the sum of the activities of all participants. The work consists of a large wrap-around screen with blended output from six separate projectors producing a panoramic stereoscopic 3D image, 7.8 metres wide. Combined with an 8 channel 3 dimensional sound field the work powerfully envelopes the participants who are moving between their perceptions of the virtual environment and the actual environment’ (Entry for Ecstasis at http://www.beap.org/2004).

In designing the soundscapes for Ecstasis I developed a software environment to dynamically modulate the first two landscape-forming phenomena listed by Wishart, and present a myriad of individual sound objects to the listener throughout the twenty minutes average duration that an audience experiences the work. The visuals for Ecstasis involve stereoscopic projections which constantly modulate with images appearing inside and seemingly outside the bounds of the screen.

Such a physically engaging and compelling visual experience could easily overwhelm the soundscape of the work. The concept and creation of aural envelopment was critical to establishing a sufficient presence for the soundscape. Envelopment is a subjective impression
by the listener where they experience ‘...the difference between feeling inside the sound and feeling on the outside observing it, as through a window’ (Thompson, 2004, p. 320). This concept arose in the early 1960s through Leo Beranek's studies of concert hall design (Beranek, 1992). It became apparent that an effect of envelopment is created by small time differences perceived by a listener, between the arrival of direct sound from a source and what are called the first reflections of sound off surfaces of the room. Lateral reflections (that is, from side walls) are of particular importance to the creation of envelopment.

A sense of envelopment in Ecstasis is created through the close integration of a number of compositional, physical and software resources. The audience is surrounded by an eight channel sound system, at all times up to three layers of sonic material is positioned either statically and/or in motion around the listeners, and most notably, sounds are processed around the eight channels using small time differences or delays from many locations. For example, audio processing modules were designed to take a single sound, and distribute it sixteen times across eight channels with individual time delays ranging from ten milliseconds to around five seconds. Standard reverberation effects were also used with these delay methods. Depending on the sound source used for this processing, the effect could range from a smearing of the sound around the listener to clouds of rapid specks or sonic points.

As one’s aural focus in the listening moment rapidly oscillates between and fuses all three landscape-forming elements noted above, a technical method was developed that allowed these three elements to be readily accessible during development, as well as the final 'run-time' presentation of Ecstasis. The persistent modulation of sounds in the final design forms a continuum with the visuals of the work and a transforming landscape of sound enveloping the listener continues and completes a sense of visual immersion for the audience.

**Soundsites: sighted and unsighted listening**

But what of listening outside of a formal cultural setting of a concert hall or gallery installation? The three landscape forming components of a sonic phenomenon proposed by Wishart specifically relate to sound-based performance without recognisable performer or source. The electroacoustic music setting Wishart is describing is a particularly non-visual mode of aural experience, usually referred to as ‘acousmatic listening’ and is discussed extensively in electroacoustic literature.

In the Soundsites project, non-visual experience of places by the blind community was investigated, and communicated to a sighted audience by means of a sound exhibition. The project started with interviews with members of the blind community in Melbourne with
ages from eight to seventy, over an eight-month period. Even those people blind since birth or from early childhood struggled to describe their uniquely aural experience of the world, usually due to the ability of individuals, and/or the availability of language, to describe aural experience. Sight-impaired people live in a culture that relies almost exclusively on sighted verification of things, events and ideas.

However, the description by interviewees of their experience of physical space often resonated with Wishart’s three components of aural landscape. For example, several older interviewees described how individual sound objects had changed perceived acoustic space in particular, the ways that vehicle and road construction techniques had combined to change the sound from cars since the 1970s. Other differences in acoustic spaces included how wealthy suburbs sounded different to less wealthy ones, how the subtle changes in ambient sound from a building offset provides navigational cues through the city, or the effect of modern shop-front design in changing the qualities of the ‘sonic shoreline’ in contemporary streets.

The interdisciplinary field of soundscape studies includes aural-centric classifications of a range of events, conditions and listening contexts, often adapting terms from descriptors used for landscape. Although no interviewees were aware of soundscape terminology or formal environmental listening strategies, I observed how blind teenagers undertaking mobility training did gain some training in environmental listening. At the time of Soundsites, there were no formal listening training or aural-specific descriptors in use at the host organisations of the project.

From soundscape practice to design education

The intention in this paper of relating ideas of interiority, landscape and listening to actual sounding projects has been to show how electroacoustic composition and soundscape design can be applied to influencing and investigating complex aural interactions of people within built or virtual environments, and the role of a sound designer in that endeavour.

I find practice is a domain with degrees of autonomy to play. The qualification ‘degrees of autonomy’ recognises the imposition of external or self-imposed constraints on the work. Practice is used to generate and assess knowledge that synthesises technical, conceptual and perceptual aspects of an aural understanding of the world. In choosing to work outside the highly formalised milieu of concert hall music, my practice has intersected with a broad range of human behaviour settings as do other design disciplines. Acknowledging the experience of the listener in these settings, my approach to soundscape pedagogy aims to cultivate in
design students a critical listening ability and an aptitude with sound based concepts further examined in projects using electroacoustic technologies.

The link between spatial sound practice and soundscape pedagogy can be demonstrated with reference to part of the teaching program in the SIAL Sound Studios where the traditional linear stereo soundscape composition has been extended into interactive three-dimensional realisations. By embedding carefully edited sounds of urban environments within interactive design projects based in games engines, students use sound in both communicational and representational modes. Through these projects, students investigate the relationships created between sound, visual form, occupation and usage – albeit at this stage the sound is evocative rather than realistic. Realism here refers to the modelling of complex environmental acoustic parameters such as real-time reverberation through convolution. However, this ‘sound-sketch’ in a games engine maintains useful acoustic phenomena for a listener in physical space such as precedence effects, localisation and distance cues, as well as a programmatic relationship between sound and place.

While design students are visually astute, their listening skills and general awareness of the acoustic environment is often underdeveloped. However, their ability to imagine spaces in three dimensions and consider the motion of an observer through space is an important skill that can be harnessed when researching actual, or designing a virtual soundscape. Listeners experience the acoustic environment as circumambient. Providing a pedagogical resource that can partly replicate this relationship is effective to demonstrating the immersive qualities of a soundscape.

The intention of combining listening, research, presentation and design based activities within the Sound Studio’s program is to make young designers, about to enter professional practice, aware of the aesthetic, social, cultural, health and environmental aspects of the soundscape. The approach locates a basis for the students’ future technical understanding of sound within an empirical knowledge gained through their own critical listening (Harvey & Moloney, 2005). And hopefully inspires the student to integrate into their design practice, their emergent knowledge of aural experience.

**References**


Endnotes

1 This paper was delivered at the INSIDEOUT Conference on April 23, 2005, with a new Max/MSP software environment, enabling as a multi-channel, polyphonic performative sound presentation. Discussion of the environment will appear in the author’s forthcoming PhD exegesis.

2 Canopies was premiered between January 18–April 21, 2000, Southgate Soundscape System, Melbourne. Soundsites was first exhibited October 9–30, 1999 at Span Galleries, Melbourne, 16–28 October, 2000 at the Seymour Centre, Sydney for the Paralympics Arts Festival, October 9–12 2003 at Latvian House, Toronto for SOUNDplay and Tranz-Tech Festival. Ecstasis has been extensively shown at RMIT University’s Virtual Reality Centre Melbourne, and September 8 to December 12, 2004 at John Curtin Gallery for the Biennial of Electronic Arts Perth (BEAP).

3 There are several competing definitions for this term, it is used throughout this paper to indicate ‘…music in which electronic technology, now primarily computer-based, is used to access, generate, explore and configure sound materials, and in which loudspeakers are the prime medium of transmission’ (Entry for electroacoustic music at Ears, 2005).

4 Otherwise described in early electronic music as ADSR – attach, decay, sustain, release.
A sound or sound object whose amplitude [loudness] is relatively unchanging. However, in any natural sound the spectrum is always changing...and there are usually slight fluctuations in amplitude even in what appears to be a steady sound. Mechanical or electrical sounds (e.g. hums) are usually examples of stationary sound that are almost completely unchanging. They may be called flatline sounds or drones because of their steadiness' (Truax, 1999).

Chion (1983) offers the following definition of ‘acousmatic’ as ‘...indicating a noise which is heard without the causes from which it originates being seen...to describe an experience which is very common today but whose consequences are more or less unrecognised, consisting of listening to the radio, records, telephone, tape recorder etc., sounds whose cause is invisible. Acousmatic listening is opposed to direct listening, which is the “natural” situation where sound sources are present and visible. The acousmatic situation changes the way we hear. By isolating the sound from the “audiovisual complex” to which it initially belonged, it creates favourable conditions for a reduced listening which concentrates on the sound for its own sake, as sound object, independent of its causes or its meaning (although reduced listening can also take place, though with greater difficulty, in a direct listening situation).’

‘Shoreline’ is a term used in blind mobility training. It appears to indicate any physical part of an environment where a horizontal meets a vertical, and is useful as a navigational aid. ‘Sonic shoreline’ as adopted here, refers to the acoustic typology created by doors, overhangs and set-backs in the built environment. It is also a section title in Soundsites.

For example, soundmark from landmark. For a searchable lexicon of soundscape terms, see Truax (1999).

Three-dimensional sound, or 3D audio, has at least two definitions. In sound design for games engines, 3D audio can refer to a sound whose loudness will increase or decrease in response to an avatar’s proximity to that sound. The terms are also used for audio systems with speakers circumambient to the audience along x, y and z coordinates relative to a central listening position, usually defined as the origin.
‘rO:Om’, spatial and material transmissions

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Abstract: Architecture’s relation to landscape is often only recognised in its response to topography, views, access, orientation and apprehension of the built work’s own exterior. As an object placed in an environment architecture is an artefact externally enhanced by vegetation as well as a container adorned by an interior. Such architecture relies on the subservience of its surrounding physical landscape and its internal hollows to define what is ‘in’ and what is ‘out’, ‘here’ and ‘there’. Negotiation of these realms is determined by elements other than the dwelling body as a living, experiencing, cultural organism capable of navigating across formal spatial boundaries.

This paper explores the architectural envelope as a porous medium informed by spatial and material transmissions between body and environment. This aqueous notion of inhabitation and material repositions architecture as the concurrence of interior and landscape whereby their localities are distinguishable within a continuum of particularised densities of matter accumulating and disintegrating over time. This theoretical and physical site is explored via the construction of a room.

Keywords: landscape, room, matter

preamble, before walking

This a polemic work directed towards mending the distance between thought and feelings, sense and sensation, body and environment. At the most, it is a supplementary musing to a set of images which themselves originate from a creative work. Completed more than a decade ago, this work remains an enigma. It delves into matters of existential angst and wonder, perhaps with a tinge of essentialism. And as a piece of creative research, its open-ended quality is held in check by its method of inquiry: full-scale construction.

Many architectural treatises outline very specific guidelines towards building in relation to geographical features or cultural rituals. Some recognise the site as a bounded political area. In other texts, it is a situated cultural event within the landscape environment. And, in spite of efforts to formally knit the interior with the landscape/the outside, the exterior, has always been set apart as distinct from the building proper, which has in turn, subsumed the interior.

This essay is directed away from the dichotomous/ didactic impulse. It builds upon a notion of space as a force constantly reforming matter where the architectural envelope transforms from a thin edged delimiting frame to an open valve and filter. As a passage of duration
and thickness, it engages the properties of threshold and instead of occupying the status of object, the architecture becomes a facilitator. The creative work depicted in this essay sought to dissolve the idea of ‘between’ that binds body, building and site as a classical tripartite relation into a fluid dynamic matrix. Between-ness escapes operating as an intermediary, an insertion, a limbo, nothingness or void, and in their absence, hosts multifarious spatial exchange. Discreteness is abandoned for the sake of non-objectivity. Body and place, inhabitant and landscape are all viscera – they are all insides. Here, the aqueous nature of matter reaches such a degree of porosity in all directions that the architecture, the classical boundary of wall, fence or hedge is but a sieve for spatial ingestion and digestion. The architecture constitutes a riparian edge, where the definitions of what is wet or dry, hard or soft, and in or out, are but temporal molecular convergences – spatial and material transmissions. The inhabiting body slips between the pinched points of the grammatical colon, from ‘o’ to ‘o’, casually gathering and disseminating, contaminating and cultivating the environment as a unified territory, in order to make ‘room’.

**dry wetness**

The desert is a place that demands your full attention. Many writers, artists, and scientists have documented how it tests survival skills, how it exposes what is taken for granted, how it measures preconceptions about earthly existence and how it makes small, seemingly insignificant details, a matter of life and death. So, when one ventures out into the desert with just the education of an architect, it is no small wonder that the focus of the experience is the relation between body and site. The necessity for physical shelter promptly overrides aesthetic concerns. Something innately human takes over as if there is some kind of biological narrative embedded within our body mass that stores secrets of how to create shade, collect water, store provisions and eventually find comfort. The severity of desert conditions instigates this hidden knowledge to be perspired. Far from barren, the desert provokes vitality, not of the decadent, flamboyant sort but of the miserly, economic and seriously ingenious type.

The desert is constituted by various sets of extremes, poles not in opposition but in dancing conflation. The greatest of all is the presence or illusion of water. At one point in his book, *Desert Notes*, Barry Hulston Lopez succinctly states the condition of spatial immediacy that the room construction sought to capture: A man drives out into the desert. He stops his vehicle and after removing all but his shoes he starts to walk towards a hot spring …

*He removes his shoes. He lay on his back in the hot water, his toes grazing the shallow, sandy bottom of the pool. He could hear the water lapping at the entrance to his ears,*
the weight of water pulling on his hair; he could feel the particles of dust falling off his flesh, floating down, settling on the bottom of the pool; he could feel the water prying at the layers of dried sweat breaking away from his body. The tips of his fingers wrinkled, and he stared at the water pooling in the cavity of his chest and falling away as he breathed. ...He climbed out of the pool... When his feet were dry he could put on only the linen socks and left. He could feel the wind eddying up around him like a cloak and his feet barely touched the ground. His eyes felt smoother in their sockets and he could tell, without looking, how his fingers were curled; he could see the muscles of his legs tied behind his kneecaps, feel the patella gliding over the knot. He felt the muscles anchored on the broad, flat plate of his hipbones and the wind soft deep in the roots of his hair. He felt the pressure of his parting the air as he walked (Lopez, 1976, pp. 11–12).

Wet and dry, hot and cool relinquish their oppositional trappings. A body is immersed simultaneously in material environment and perceptual consciousness. The defining line between site and inhabitant starts to blur, even if metaphorically through the narrative of soaking in water. The landscape becomes a body and the body becomes a landscape, only differentiated by topographic surface explorations (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Topographic land/bodies.
softened hardness

J.G. Ballard forces the merging of landscape and body in *The Drowned World*, sited in the flood waters of global environmental catastrophe (Ballard, 1962). The process of literally and psychologically becoming one with the land, or the water, is played out amongst the characters as they deny the inevitable despite their scientific expertise. As a testament to the modern phrase ‘all that is solid melts into air’ (Berman, 1988, p. 53), Ballard signals a lapse in ideals of stability and certainty. The divers find architectural monuments rusting beneath the surface of the lagoons as quickly as their bodies are being absorbed by dreams. The spatial continuity provided by fathoms of water erodes material substance as it fosters the growth of algae, barnacles, fish and crustaceans, each with bodies adapted to separating the oxygen molecules from the hydrogen and each well-suited to a viscous sense of gravity. Just as the desert is composed by a collection of parched bits of hard geological matter, the lagoon is made up of thriving but fermenting compost. Both of these fictional sites exert threats and promises of life and death, whereby delineations of inside and outside are muted. As Illich writes,

> The water that we have set out to examine is just as difficult to grasp as space. It is, of course, not the H2O produced by burning gases nor the liquid that is metered and distributed by authorities. The water we seek is the fluid that drenches the inner and outer spaces of the imagination. More tangible than space, it is even more elusive for two reasons: first, because this water has nearly unlimited ability to carry metaphors and second, because water, even more subtly than space, always possesses two sides (Illich, 1985, p. 24).

With all respect towards Illich’s work, two sides are simply not enough. Two-ness is part and parcel to the condition of between-ness from which this work diverts. It does not accommodate the multiplicity of meaning construction or spatial perception documented in Illich’s search for the ‘historicity of stuff’ – water, rock, plateaus, armoires, wallpaper, flesh included (Figure 2). They are complex cultural ecosystems.

far beyond the dew point

This project presents a form of spatial practice whereby the physical properties of matter as substance and the conceptual qualities of the immaterial, such as ether, are cast within architecture’s relation to philosophy and its practice of making space (McMullin, 1963, pp. 1–12). At the end of his fourth metabolic reflection, van den Berg casts a cloud over knowing as something definitive and secure. Throughout his essays he observes the
phenomena of things in a curious mix of acceptance and doubt of scientific fact. All that he witnesses seems to contradict what he has learned. Somewhere within his uncertainty he accepts that conditions are relative and relational along a shifting continuum of time and material:

So I must ask myself: what am I doing when I walk around on the earth in my daily life? Do I rightly view my world as not having barriers or have I been carefully trained to deny barriers? Am I free or only careless? Is the world I know uniform, everywhere and not the same everywhere? Is the space around me full, equally occupied by points everywhere? Or is that space not full but broken, open, discontinuous? Does the world have pores, splits, holes? I wouldn’t dare to answer in the negative (van den Berg, 1970, p. 125).

Van den Berg comes to grip with the dual nature of metaphor to conceptually re-present and empirically illustrate a process which closely approximates research through design, or in the case of the rO:Om project, material research.

**transmissions**

The following images document the process of constructing the room. A single-reflex 35mm camera loaded with forty-frames of black and white film was hung in a trapeze of elastic straps above the studio. Over a period of approximately twenty eight days, a picture was taken once a day using an extension device. Such a recording method denied
Figure 3. Progress images of construction sequence.
visual apprehension of the work below and therefore avoided preconceptions about form, proportion and mass to intervene. At the end of the construction process selected negatives were printed onto 16 x 20 inch photographic paper (Figure 3). The single eye of the camera recorded the following:

A fruit crate, approximately 60” long x 48” wide x 48” high, is transported across the Canadian border to a warehouse studio. Every board is warped and bowed from the weight of past cargos and all surfaces bear pungent stains. It reeks and it leaks. Good for firewood.

As a full but hollow artefact it commemorates its agricultural heritage and its role in an industrial process of shifting goods around the globe to accommodate free-trade and culinary desires. Its crude, practical and modest state references many spatial and political sites. A set of wheels is added to the crate to symbolise and facilitate its former and future mobility.

Its sides are too high to crawl over but the inside space is big enough to sit down. A concrete stoop stabilises a ladder hinged to one side, whose pivot allows the ladder to become a trellised roof to the open top face. Getting in requires going up and then down, fetching this, cutting that, a sequence frequently repeated in the process of establishing site.

The furrows of fields that once grew the produce conspire to form an interior surface of irrigation and urination, both currents of fluid that cross between landscape and interior rooms. The moulded copper sheet deflects the waste to the perimeter where it is collected in blown glass test tubes under the ‘skirt’ of the crate.

The slatted timber sides are more like balustrades than screen and therefore do not provide adequate privacy for previously mentioned eliminations. Nor do they deflect the draughts of cold air coming off the surface of the Great Lakes and under the studio door. A curtain is fashioned from the symbol of architectural wall insulation to defend the inhabitant, its folds filled with sawdust. As a thermal conductor of the best sort, the copper pan is cold from the undercurrents. Shredded paper forms a carpet across the copper terrain, now green from liquid accretions. Both operations serve to dampen sound in the room and muffle the noise of the studio environment.

Much like the desert air in the heat of the day, they also stifle the flow of air necessary for breathing. A vertical field of latex tubes is planted along the side closest to the studio air vent with an inhalation mask at its end. In threat of suffocation, these masks would serve as ventilating gills and one’s face would be drawn to the wall to breathe.
And as the above transmissions start to accumulate there are moments to simply ponder programmatic necessities of inhabitation. Ledges lit by the end-grain of sheet glass serve a collection of insignificant bits picked up off the workshop and forest floors. Far from an altar, the sacred and the profane seem fused in this transmission.

The room assumes a limited state of density. More time is spent reflecting than building. And as such, creature comforts instigate the walls to thicken. Wainscoting made of beeswax and straw line the room against the increasing sub-zero temperatures that creep up through the concrete slab when the boilers go hay-wire. Malt whiskey fills a radiator-like device made of clear tubing folded and fastened to form a comfortable back rest complete with sipping straw. The rungs of the ladder, in-filled with cotton strapping, modify the sharp light and irritating buzz of the fluorescent fixtures above.

The impetus to move inside includes the need to store things. Preservation and conservation occurs in the form of twelve mason jars, each one slipped into stacks of laminated newspapers. A radius of ocular sights is installed on the outside surface of the crate and through the growing wall thickness to the privileged seat of occupation. There is a sense that the stash and treasures require defending. However, the sighting device proves to be a better listening device.

A leak develops in the warehouse roof when the winter snow thawed. The cotton straps serve as a suitable substrate for a light weight concrete. Collecting water in a latex vessel lined with foam rubber seems like a clever idea. However, with the lid shut, the slow absorption of drips accentuates the room as coffin than sanctuary.

The space of the museum exhibition calls. The exterior surface of this constructed room assumes a camouflage by the likes of gypsum board, plaster and white paint. This room would hide in the museum and pretend to be a non-object, a thick wall or stubby plinth upon which to display other stuff. Its secrets of landscape and interior and all its messy and un-aesthetic vulgarities would be secure within the walls of the over-riding authority. The dust of sanded plaster fills the air and chokes the lungs.

The room is wheeled up the road through the gates to the museum gallery space. The concrete stoop serves as head stone to an accumulative and additive process. A drawing of plaster dust honest to the weeks of making lingers on the concrete floor in the absence of the actual room construction.
the out of in

The critic wrote:

In the work entitled ‘rO:Om’, the in-between is enfolded within a ‘neutral’ container, its complexities and densities belied by the white space of the geometrically determined volume. This rupture between the inside and the outside forces a questioning of the abstraction of the white surface. Is it simply a mask for all that is not included in the abstraction? Or is it the final reduction of all that could be inside? The linings of the room accumulate to the point that they suffocate the space that would be inside, in this case a reduction occasioned by a fecund, stifling growth. The troubling aspect of the opposition between the inside and outside of the box and their lack of symmetry opens up a possibility for further questioning of this issue in architecture. Today’s walls have been thinned to the point that no interior can exist within them, materially or conceptually. This dis-appearance of the interior (compared to the monolithic section of a masonry wall) is symptomatic of all that is hidden behind appearances today, all the ‘functional’ layers of a wall section that resist the abstractions and reductions that are possible in the flatness of paint on a flat surface. The opening of the box/room begs the question of the interior. I am certain that with enough time, viscera within will stain the surface, polluting the opposition in the work and rendering it into a space of in-between (Hoffman, 1990) (Figure 4).

A fairly astute critique if only the notion of oppositions was intended to structure the making of the room. One needed to go inside the room rather than rely on an external reading of the object.

Figure 4. Gallery installation.
even deeper matter(s)

Central to the ideas of space and material presented here, Arup Stroll illuminates a proposition on the nature of surface as a condition of unlimited boundary (Stroll, 1988). The Somorjai concept of surface is considered as the aggregation of molecules approaching a limit, which, in mathematical terms, is an unattainable point of convergence based on principles of divisibility. Things just get thinner and thinner until they start thickening again as another concentration of material and entity. Questions of homogeneity are averted by the inherent complexity of molecules making up spatial matter – complexities he has named as kinks, bumps, and pits – names that frequently appear to be describing landscape formations such as terraces, plateaus and air: water interfaces. While Stroll valiantly presents sophisticated ideas on the philosophy of surface, in the end his discussions are bound to metaphors reliant upon the attributes of material and its manipulation. He writes, ‘These operations are, if not identical with, at least analogous to those that nonscientists perform on macroscopic objects – say, when one, using a damp rag, wipes the dust off a table’ (Stroll, 1988, p. 57). And as such, these examples make the concept accessible to those whose hands are more adept than their ability to think abstractly and to those whose practice involves the transference of ideas through stuff. Through Stroll’s speculations, space as provocateur of infinite collection of unbounded and suspended particles seems plausible. That architecture is one of those surfaces, a densification of (c)rusty coarse grains through which fine silts of interior and landscape filter and occasionally settle to form room – this all seems possible.

white light, the last site

The room construction was predominantly made of dry and flammable materials selected for their resonance to the desert and their repulsion to water. For the most part, materials were manipulated and processed with an effort to imbue them with air, to whip them up, therefore increasing their volume via the introduction of air pockets; smaller microscopic rooms. While the conventional space of the room’s interior was exhausted because no more space remained for the body to move, this produced a stifling fear that the space would spontaneously enfold and collapse and combust. To vacate was to escape.

It was a timely move. With no home of my own and no place to store this construction, it was transported one last time to a field where rubbish and materials are stored and disposed. It snowed profusely in the first days of the New Year and despite the damp cold, it only took one match to set the room ablaze. (Figure 5) All of the small air pockets sucked and
gasped. The heat drew dark distraught figures on the white museum-like surfaces. The room harboured by the willow trees and a low bank of grey clouds glowed and crackled violently when the flames penetrated through the volatile layers of sawdust, wax and whiskey. Four hours later the room lay in an exhausted heap of homogenous ashes, just waiting for the next gust of wind to enhance their spatiality and extend their life.

![Burn site](image)

*Figure 5. Burn site.*

References


Credits

All images in this paper are the work of the author.
Navigating the Labyrinthine

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Abstract: This paper presents research undertaken which explored the experience of creative practice by creative practitioners. I was particularly interested to gain some understanding of how people engaged with the space of creative practice, identified as ‘the studio’, and within the project articulated as the labyrinth. A key outcome of the research was the discovery that the space of the studio could be articulated as practised place (de Certeau, 1984) and that engaging with this is a process of navigating the labyrinthine.

Keywords: design practice, space, labyrinth

Exploring the experience of creative practice

What is the nature of the space of creative practice? In particular how do people articulate their understanding of the acts and location of that practice? This paper briefly outlines research which explored the experience of creative practice by creative practitioners. In this project I was particularly interested to gain some understanding of how people engaged with the space of creative practice and the creative process, which was identified as ‘the studio’ and within the project, was articulated as the labyrinth. In this paper I focus on the two key data installations of the project.1

This research evolved from my uncertainty as to what is meant by the term ‘the studio’, particularly as it relates to creative practice. The studio is a term that is used broadly within art and design disciplines. It is used to describe a place of work, creation or teaching. It can also be used to describe an approach to working or creating i.e. to have a studio-practice. Often the studio as a location is a shared space and, at times, it is a collaborative space. Donald Schön refers to the studio as a place of action and problem solving, where the implicit is made explicit, and in educational terms it is ‘an exemplar for learning-by-doing' (1985, p. 6). My intention in this research was to investigate these terms and make them tangible as they related to the experience of creating by doing, particularly by creative practitioners. As the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty argues, it is the voices and reflections of artists and designers and their descriptions of how they make meaning of their processes that provides the real basis for new developments (Merleau-Ponty, 1964).

Many have turned to the labyrinth in their efforts to make meaning of the abstraction of experience. For this project the labyrinth was selected as the model and the metaphor for
conceptualising the space of creativity, particularly the space of the studio and studio practice. Labyrinths have two main forms: the maze that has multiple entrances and paths; and the labyrinth, which consists of a single winding path that leads to a centre/goal, with the only exit being via that same path. Whereas the maze has been primarily used for fun, games and to symbolise complexity, confusion or punishment, the labyrinth has been used for religious or spiritual ceremonies and was designed for reflection and transformation. This research explored the labyrinth of reflective practice; often referred to as the labyrinth of Chartres Cathedral or Ariadne’s golden thread in the tale of the labyrinth of ancient Crete.

Jacques Attali (1999) presents the labyrinth as a frequently used model or metaphor to describe winding or layered processes, as evidenced in the language of literature, town planning and new technologies. In this context, the labyrinth can be seen as a means for conceiving and articulating complexity. Penelope Reed Doob refers to this as the ‘idea of the labyrinth’ (1990, p. 2). Her ‘idea’ is the interpretation of the labyrinth as something more or other than a tangible object or an explanatory device. It is to understand the labyrinth as a concept that ‘encompasses both formal principles … and (has) habitual, culturally shared and transmitted significance’ (p. 2). These formal principles, according to Reed Doob, are the ‘dualities of artistry vs. chaos, order vs. confusion, admirable complexity vs. moral duplicity,’ and they are present in all forms of the labyrinth (p. 5). Within my inquiry I explored how these dualities of the labyrinth related to the complexities of studio practice and creative process: what was conceived of as ‘the idea of the studio’.

**Labyrinths and reflection**

The use of the labyrinth as a tool for reflection and transformation was particularly useful for this research, for an exploration of reflection and creativity. This was in part informed by my
conception of the studio as a site for reflective practice. The labyrinth provided a structure around which discussion and exploration of ‘the idea of the studio’ could take place. Similarities were identified in relation to the language and expectations of engagement with the space of the labyrinth or creative practice and the studio. Early research of the literature on labyrinths and my initial conversations with colleagues about the experience of creativity and studio practice, revealed similarities between creativity as a process of transformation, and reflection as tool for realisation and change. These were ambiguous terms and connections and they sparked my desire to know more about the space and experience of creative practice and the labyrinth.

The historical use of the labyrinth as a physical space of contemplation leading to action was also influential in its selection. This aspect of the labyrinth and the many ways that contemplation occurs (e.g. walking, tracing, crawling or praying), aligned with my interest in the role and potential of physical engagement in relation to creative practice. The creative process does not occur in the mind alone. As a process of sense-making and communication it draws on our many ways of perceiving and being in the world. As explored by Merleau-Ponty (1964), our perception of and interaction with the world is an individual, holistic and kinaesthetic act. It is through our senses that we perceive and we create knowledge. According to Merleau-Ponty, ‘a being capable of sense-experience … could have no other way of knowing’ (Merleau-Ponty 1964, p. 15). This research considered whether the same might be said of the way in which people experience the act of creation.

This research project was designed around three key areas of action and focus: the exploration of creative practice, the construction of labyrinthine installations and the participation of others within these environments. The participants in the research were a selection of fifteen practising artists and designers. Their thoughts, reflections and actions informed the progress of the research.

**From the labyrinth to the labyrinthine**

Within this research project two landscape installations were the prime sources of data, and they have provided the context for working with the participants. Their design and construction was the vehicle for exploring the acts of making and experiencing. As an exploration through practice, of the phenomenon of reflection in labyrinthine space, it seemed appropriate to construct environments rather than to just talk, read and imagine what the potential relationship might be; building the installations and inviting others to engage with them enabled this to be a sensorial and experiential investigation.
The decision to construct landscape installations as models for exploring the space of the studio was based on my desire to work with environments that were free from constraints of similarity (for example an internal working space), so that I could draw attention to features and conceptions of space that refer to aspects of the studio and creative practice in the abstract (containment, expansive space, randomness, physical challenge and the senses). As argued by Anne Whiston Spirn (1998, p. 15), ‘the language of landscape is our native language … The language of landscape can be spoken, written, read and imagined… Landscape, as language makes thought tangible and imagination possible … the meanings of landscape elements (e.g. water) are only potential until context shapes them’. For this research, this has been the role of the landscape installations; they have been tools for facilitating language and reflection and the context for the discussion and consideration of the themes and questions by the participants and me.

The two locations selected for the installations were the forest and the desert and they represented the transition from the labyrinth to the labyrinthine within the research findings. At both locations I constructed an installation, each exploring the specific attributes of the site and aspects of the labyrinthine. The two sites were selected for their contrasting attributes, both physically and metaphorically, within Western cultural traditions. The design of each installation was both a response to the location and my research focus with Desert being a response to my Forest findings.

**Forest**

... travellers who, finding themselves lost in a forest, ought not to wander this way and that, or, what is worse remain in one place, but ought always to walk as straight a line as they can in one direction and not change course for feeble reason, even if at the outset it was perhaps only chance that made them choose it; for by this means, if they are not going where they wish, they will finally arrive at least somewhere where they will be better off than in the middle of the forest (Descartes, in Harrison 1992, p. 110).
Locating the first labyrinth within a forest, with its tall trees and random sense of order, mirrored the aspects of the labyrinth that I wanted to explore. I wanted to draw on the symbolic nature of the forest as a mystical space and the home of many childhood stories. The forest is often presented as a place of the unknown and uncertain; the wild environment that is not controlled by civilized human development such as the tamed city (Harrison 1992). In the forest we can rarely see the horizon, and when we do it is usually when we look out from the forest to clearings and other places. It is difficult to heed Descartes’ advice and to walk in a straight line – the line of reason and certainty across the forest. The apparent sameness confuses us. It is easy to meander and find oneself rambling on circuitous paths through and around the trees, always glimpsing potential paths ahead. To locate ourselves within the forest we must concentrate in the same way that we do within the labyrinth.

According to Descartes anywhere was better than being in the ‘middle of the forest’, so great is its darkness and potential for cultural demise. Just as the forest is a collection of trees and as a resource, represents the potential for change, it also represents the darker and emotional aspects of our beings. These characteristics of the forest resemble the language used to describe creativity and the creative process (illogical, emotional, the unexpected, juxtaposition of ideas and elements etc.). I was interested in these comparisons and apparent contradictions, and wondered how it might be possible to explore and relate them.

*Forest* was an exploration of the labyrinth and its relationship to reflection and creativity through the construction of a fabric labyrinth based on a traditional design. This was the labyrinth as a structure and a space as experienced through the forest and the cloth structure I built within it.

Whilst engaging in and responding to the aesthetics of the structure, the participants in the research expressed a certain fear of the *Forest* structure, finding its winding path and controlled view disorientating, yet at the same time it was a safer place than that of the greater forest. As such, the labyrinth became a safe place within a broader unknown whilst its own characteristics drew them to a cautious engagement with themselves, the space and their memories.
Desert

Desert was the second installation of the project.

Figure 3: Desert, landscape intervention, June 2004, Australia. (Photography: Author)

Desert was a significantly different installation from Forest. Whereas Forest was a literal interpretation and creation of a labyrinth in a landscape, Desert was an exploration of the labyrinthine and endeavoured to work with, rather than on, the landscape. The desert was selected as the location for the second installation as I wanted to explore a location that was vastly different from the forest; a location that was the antithesis of the confinement and ‘mystery’ of the enclosed forest space. The desert with its connotations of openness, vastness and infinite horizon, seemed to have potential as such a space. I anticipated that the more open and exposed nature of the desert environment would suggest and reflect a more ‘open’ understanding of the labyrinth and an exploration of the labyrinthine.

The desert of this research is that of the Flinders Ranges in South Australia. The desert of the Ranges does not conform to the popular image of the desert in the way that flat, open expanses of sand and salt lakes do. This desert is a ragged mountainous formation, hundreds of millions of years old with craggy rock faces, saltbush, cypress trees, waterholes and occasional flowing creeks (Bunbury, 2002). Like the desert of the plains, it is a harsh and isolated landscape with searing heat, an inhospitable nature, breathtaking beauty and a foreboding sense of isolation. Unlike the open expanses of desert sand, there is a sense of life; there are animals, birds, plants, wild flowers and markers of human engagement including roads, signs, campsites and homesteads (used and ruins).
Water is essential to all life and in the desert it is ever present, mostly through its absence. It is the absence of water that most defines the desert space and separates it from the forest. In the Flinders Ranges, trees, plant and animal life mark the presence of water and, for brief periods, it actually flows down creek beds and rivers until finally sinking into the artesian waterbeds. Thus this desert landscape has the markings of ‘life’, however fleeting. The climate is extreme and water is an infrequent visitor yet always leaves traces of its presence and thoroughfares.

The ability of water to define and construct landscape is significant. Spirn (1998) speaks of the language of the landscape, the structures and the stories. This is a language that evolves over time and water (like wind) is essential in its formation. She writes, ‘Water flowing, like sun shining, shapes and structures landscape’ (p. 88). In surveying this landscape, the creek beds were existing thoroughfares or paths across the landscape. Their role in creating the grander landscape narrative seemed to be the most appropriate site for the installation and my exploration into creative practice and location. This time the installation was a marked path along a creek bed. The objective here was particularly to explore the act of ‘noticing’ (Mason 2002) as a tool for engagement with space and subsequently create a sense of location. This was one of the key themes to emerge from the participants from Forest, people noticed things and became aware and engaged with them. This was true of their practice, they felt that they noticed and engaged with people, places and things and drew on them in their own creative work.
Navigating the space of practice

At both locations I constructed an installation that explored the specific attributes of the site (physical and metaphorical) and my perception of the space of practice. *Desert* was a furthering of findings from *Forest*. There I had played with the experiences of confusion, containment and pathways, the themes of noticing and collecting emerged from the participants. This was not only a direct response to the structure but also a reflection on their practices. As I delved into the participants’ comments and on the literature it became apparent that for many of the participants noticing and conscious connection to action was a more appropriate term than reflection for expressing their engagement with their practice. *Desert* was an exploration of this methodology for engaging in transition through space, a process of navigation from one location to another.

As argued by Thrift and Crang (2000), space is a complex term; it has many potential meanings and interpretations. When conceiving or speaking of space as location, we find ourselves also speaking of place; within the everyday vernacular the two words are often used interchangeably. Yet, as Crang and Thrift note, it is space that dominates much of contemporary discourse across the disciplines, stating that ‘Space is the everywhere of modern thought’ (2000, p. 1). Space is an abstract term that can be used to convey an idea or concept, or it can be an actuality referring to a location and/or time. In contrast, Casey (1997) argues that it is place that is everywhere and that our current preoccupation with space has caused us to distort or ignore the importance of place. Place, he states, is ‘as requisite as the air we breathe, the ground on which we stand, the bodies we have’ (Casey 1997, p. ix). Casey’s argument was consistent with the research findings.

Casey, like Tuan, believes that it is not possible for us to exist outside of place, and space is the broader entity in which we, and everything, exists; whether we know or recognise it, space exists (Tuan, 1977, p. 7). Tuan argues that place exists within space, it is what we create through connection to specific locations within space; ‘places and objects define space’ (p.17).

De Certeau (1984) argues that space is not this fixed or empty location, rather it is place that is a fixed position and space is a construct of our practices. Furthermore it is the practices of everyday life (humanity) that facilitate the dialogue between these two entities. Thrift speaks of place as being ‘place space’, a ‘human’ space, which becomes place only through its relationship to the particular rhythms of life (2003, p. 7, 8). Massey and Thrift refer to these as ‘moment[s] in a wider relational space’ (2003, p. 280). Place is defined or defines location
(the map), while space is the construction of the intersections as experienced through the practices of life. ‘Space is a practised place’ (de Certeau 1984, p. 117). From my research it has become apparent that the construction of a sense of place is one way of articulating people’s experience of creative practice. This is practice as transition from one location to another, navigated by points of noticing and connection as was explored in Desert. This is creative practice as a placed practice, and the places of the practice may be physical locations or points of connection and possibility.

![Figure 6: The labyrinthine path from place to place.](Drawing: Author)

This research project explored the labyrinthine experience of creative practice via the landscape. Edward Relph states, ‘Landscape is both the context for places and an attribute of places’ (Relph 1976, in Casey 2001, p. 417). Casey argues that the relationship between body and landscape is reflective of self and place. He claims, ‘both body and landscape are so deeply ingrained in the experience of the human subject as to pass unnoticed for the most part’, and it is through ‘reflective awareness’ that we are able to make conscious connections (p. 417). Through the landscape we are able to identify and relate to place, for the landscape is of place, bound by borders and the horizon. As the body moves across the landscape, the ‘self’ (via the body) transitions from place-to-place. The commentary by the participants in my project supported Casey and Relph’s statements on the relationship between the individual and space and the construction of meaning. In this case, the bodies were those of practising designers and the landscape they referred to, the creative space of their practice, with each project, act or point of noticing taking the form of a place of connection within the trajectory of creative practice.

Labyrinthine space was the prime focus of this research project. Initially, the exploration of the labyrinthine as a model for the experience and form of the studio was drawn from the literal patterning of the labyrinth, an imposed structure on an already existing labyrinthine space (the forest). Over the course of the project and in response to my findings, my interpretation
of the labyrinth evolved to embrace the convolutions of a labyrinthine path full of twists and
turns that acknowledges the individual and works with the external, whilst marking its own
way through the terrain. The labyrinthine space of the studio ideally is organic, responsive
and interpretive and navigating this space is a process of transformation and the subsequent
practise of place.

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Endnotes
1 I use the term ‘data installation’ to refer to the two landscape installations that were part of a phenomenology-
    informed data collection process. In addition to the design and construction of the installations, interviews with the
    research participants as well journal entries and artefacts that refer to their experiences of the installations were
    drawn on in the data analysis.
2 The term ‘labyrinthine’ refers to something relating to, resembling, or constituting a labyrinth. In this case it is
    interpreted as having or incorporating Reed Doob’s ‘idea of the labyrinth’ (1990, p.5).
Aboriginal, Coorong, distraction, domesticity, friendship, interpretation, national park, urban space, writing
From Bus Driver Dreaming to Tjukurpa – the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre

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Abstract: Separated from the surrounding landscape by walls, wiltjas and fences, with strategically framed views back to the rock, the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre offers opportunities for tourists to learn about Anangu understandings of place. Historically, this information has been conveyed through interpretations located in situ within the landscape of the national park or through the narrative of the organised tour. What then is the role of a museum space in a national park? Why go inside to understand what is outside?

To investigate these questions, this paper looks outside the discourses of museology and architecture, the orthodox methods for analysing the ‘typology’ of the cultural centre, and instead traces the development of the Centre within the spatial history of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. This analysis offers an alternative reading, revealing the Centre as a place of mediation and control, strategically located between landscape and tourist and Anangu and tourist. Further while the Centre fulfills a role in promoting Aboriginal culture, Anangu voices remain filtered through the display techniques of the museum. It is only through the introduction of Anangu tours that the museological driven interior is linked with the Tjurkapa of the exterior.

Keywords: Aboriginal, national park, interpretation,

Spatial transformations

Opening in 1995, the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre differs significantly from other national park interpretative centres, foregrounding Anangu understandings of place as Tjurkapa, a major change from the ‘unpeopled nature’ promoted by national parks since their inception. This paper traces this shift as part of a complex history of spatial transformations, reconfiguring the land from Aboriginal reserve, to national park and national icon and finally to a jointly managed national park, worthy of world heritage listing. Reflective of changing ideologies of tourism, Aboriginality, environmentalism and nationalism, this transformative history established agendas for what and who is considered ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the park.

For the traditional owners’, this history has been one of extreme cultural and physical disruption, beginning with their isolation in 1920 within a vast Aboriginal ‘sanctuary’ in the south west corner of the Northern Territory, conceived as a zone of protection from
detrimental effects of white contact (Layton, 1986, p. 73). Despite this isolation, tourism encroached on the reserve as early as 1936, when Kurt Johannsen drove the first group of tourists to Ayers Rock (Parks Australia, 2000, p. 19). Initiated by Alice Springs tour operators, a successful campaign for white access to the land led to the 1958 decision to excise the area now known as the park, to form the Ayers-Rock Mt Olga National Park.

The National Park, to be managed by the Northern Territory Reserve Board (NTRB) was conceived with limited Aboriginal presence. Justification for their removal to surrounding outstations and missions stemmed from a policy of assimilation, supported by prominent Territorians arguing that the landscape was of declining significance to Aboriginal people. Additionally, Euro-Australian ideals for national parks asserted that ‘people should not live in protected areas or consume their resources’ (Haines, 1992, p. 14). ‘Aboriginalism’, comments Katherine Haines ‘provided the legitimating discourse which enabled the park to be constructed in such a way as to be an instrument of dispossession as much as any other type of European land use’ (1992, p. 13).

Local to national space

Prior to the 1940s, Ayers Rock contributed little to a national imagining of central Australia. By 1941, references in publications such as *Walkabout* magazine promoted Ayers Rock as the ‘Red Heart of the Continent’.² Although claiming Ayers Rock as a white man’s symbol, these descriptions relied on a construction of ‘deep Aboriginality’, emphasising the rock as a sanctuary for ancient Aboriginal tribes and their Dreaming (Cathcart, 2002, p. 216). Together with growth in domestic air travel and the promotion of Ayers Rock as a tour destination, these factors led to significant increases in tourism, rising from 4,000 in 1961 to over 30,000 in 1971 (Cathcart, 2002, p. 218). Paradoxically, this identification of Ayers Rock as a national aboriginal place occurred when most of the Aboriginal population was living outside the park, on the outstations and missions of Docker River, Ernabella and Areyonga.

Increases in tourism, together with poor management, led to a collection of ad hoc tourist infrastructure constructed close to the rock, including a ring road and airstrip (1958), camping areas (1967) and various hotels and motels. Commonwealth investigations questioned the ecological damage associated with this development, indicative of the emergence of conservation within the national parks movement (Alexander, 1987, p. 46). In 1973 a Parliamentary report recommended the re-siting of all visitor accommodation and airstrip outside the Park and the preparation of a management plan (Parks Australia, 2000, p. 22). Consistent with these early reports, was the ‘reconciliation of tourist amenity with
environmental integrity’, with expectations of the traditional owners to hunt, travel and conduct ceremony within the Park given little consideration (Alexander, 1987, p. 46).

By 1976, an area north of the Park was allocated for Yulara, a new tourist village. Despite a Federal government initiative, Yulara was developed by the Northern Territory Government who used the opportunity to further discourage Aboriginal presence in the park, arguing that ‘once Yulara was built, there was no longer any commercial reason for Anangu to live and trade in the Park’ (Rowse, 1987, p. 43). Included in the plans was an Anangu village which, besides providing accommodation, allowed tourists to view authentic Aborigines outside the park. Yulara was conceived therefore as a means for not only emptying Ayers Rock of tourist infrastructure, but also for ensuring no permanent Aboriginal presence – no-one would occupy this reinvented Northern Territory frontier.

National park to joint management

As part of their commitment to the nation’s cultural and natural heritage, the Whitlam government proposed Commonwealth management of all territory parks and reserves, establishing the Commonwealth Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service (ANPWS) in 1975 (Gibson, 1996, p. 42). The title of Ayers Rock was vested in the Director of the ANPWS, creating the Uluru (Ayers Rock-Mount Olga) National Park, repositioning the Park from a Northern Territory to a Commonwealth controlled place. While the ANPWS assumed strategic management for the Park, day-to-day responsibilities remained with the Territory Parks and Wildlife Service. ANPWS management plans were the source of much conflict, with TPWS considering them overly responsive to Anangu, while Anangu rejected the 1981 draft plan, despite a proposal for an Aboriginal advisory committee (Snowden 1987, p. 61). To Anangu, the proposal continued to marginalise them as an external interest group, with their position clear: ‘Aboriginal title with lease back [would] be the only basis of any management scheme’ (Rowse, 1987, p. 42). After years of neglect Anangu, represented by Pitjantjatjara Council and Central Land Council, were now a powerful lobby group.

The election of the Hawke Government in 1983, together with legislative amendments, created the possibility of joint management of the park between the ANPWS and Anangu. The NT Country Liberal Party mounted a heated campaign based on the rhetoric of patriotism and heritage, arguing that hand back ‘places in the hands of just a few a major piece of Australia’s material heritage’ (Snowdon, 1987, p. 61). Central to the campaign was the argument that Aboriginal ownership would limit access to ‘Australia’s best known, best loved, cultural and spiritual symbol to a small group of the community’ (Snowdon, 1987, p. 61).
This campaign, seeking to erase traditional owners from their land by adopting a construction of heritage exclusive of Aborigines failed, fueling animosity between the Territory and Commonwealth. In October 1985, title was granted to the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Aboriginal Land Trust, with the land leased back to the ANPWS for 99 years. Under this arrangement the park is managed jointly between a Board of Management with an Anangu majority, and the Director. The lease conditions protect Anangu rights to enter, use and reside in the Park, and promote Aboriginal administration and management of the Park.

The lease politically redefined Uluru as a site of co-existence, reinforced by the name change to Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in 1993. Aboriginal interests no longer lay outside of the National Park, at best in an ‘advisory’ capacity. Anangu were now physically located inside the National Park, while with the completion of Yulara, the major tourist infrastructure was repositioned outside of the Park. The landscape itself however remains open to a range of appropriations, leading Jacobs and Gelder to describe Uluru as a ‘promiscuous sacred site’, performing as a national icon, a pan Aboriginal place, as of 1987 a world heritage site and increasingly the focus of a global spiritual pilgrimage (1998, p. 115). As one recent tourist study concluded ‘visitors prefer to see Uluru as a blank canvas’ with Anangu understandings undermining ‘their desires to project their meanings on the rock’ (Baker, 2004).

While Anangu can control aspects of site management, this pre-knowledge or imagining of the landscape is beyond control, as is the power to limit tourism. Hand back however provided the first opportunity for Anangu to define their relationship with tourism. In the remainder of this paper I examine how Anangu have used their legislative and cultural repositioning to mediate their relationship with tourism through a cultural centre controlled by Aboriginal people.

**From bus driver dreaming to Tjurkapa**

In 1985–86, the study *Sharing the Park, Anangu initiatives in Ayers Rock tourism* concluded Anangu were ‘culturally confident while resolutely self-protective… [and] keen to derive financial benefit from a tourism accepted as a *fait accompli*’ (Rowse, 1992, p. 249). Prior to hand back, Park interpretation was limited, with coach captain commentary a significant influence given that 50% of tourists arrived on bus tours (U-KT BoM, 1986, p. 52). Anangu were troubled by the many false stories or ‘bus driver dreaming’ in circulation, with the study concluding that coach captain’s ‘anecdotal commentaries are a poor medium in which to convey the contemporary state of Aboriginal traditions and their reactions to Europeans’ (Dunlop & Snowdon, 1987, pp. 74–75).
While Anangu were concerned about increasing tourist numbers, they generally viewed tourism as positive, believing tourists should learn about their culture. As a means of ensuring a better cultural appreciation, it was decided to construct an Aboriginally controlled cultural centre. Conceived as ‘a blend of the needs of Anangu culture and the demands of over 400,000 visitors a year’ (Parks Australia, 2002), the Cultural Centre represents the first constructed place to consciously engage with Anangu perspectives of Uluru.

In September 1990, architect Greg Burgess was commissioned to prepare the design concept. Consultation with Anangu revealed that while they supported a symbolic ‘bringing together’ of themselves and tourists, this interaction needed to allow Anangu control over the level of contact, while not restricting the income earning potential for Anangu tourist enterprises (Burgess, 1990, pp. 13–14). The Centre would be ‘an Anangu place where they invite visitors, not a tourist place which tolerates Anangu’ (Burgess, 1990, p. 4), representing a significant change from historical relationships which ‘not only denied Anangu’s basic human right to assert ownership and control over their home country, but positioned them so deep within it, as to be part of its overall value as a commodity to be exploited within the entrepreneurial discourse of tourism’ (Haines, 1994, p. 15).

**Landscape to country**

Central to the Centre was the representation of Anangu understandings of the park, not as landscape or environment but instead as Tjurkapa. Unlike landscape which ‘signals a distance between the place, feature or monument and the person which considers its existence’ (Rose, 1996, p. 10), Tjurkapa ‘embodies the principles of religion, philosophy and human behaviour that are observed in order to live harmoniously, with one another and with the natural landscape’ (U-KT BoM, 2000, p. 17).

The designers spent almost a month living in Mutitjulu, consulting with the community and commissioning paintings to explain major Tjukurpa stories. These paintings strengthened Anangu ownership of the project, as well as the designers’ appreciation of Anangu’s intentions, given that neither spoke the other’s language (Burgess, 1990, p. 4). Further talks, together with consideration of the fragile environment, led to the siting of the centre in a scattering of desert oaks, two kilometres from the base of the rock. This placed the centre on the same side of Uluru as the fierce battle between Tjurkapa ancestors Kuniya, the female python and Liru, the male brown snake (Burgess, 1990, p. 4).

The building evolved into two separate structures, broken into a series of public and private spaces, clustered around a central courtyard. With walls of mud brick from local soil and
the low undulating roof clad in both copper and blood wood shingles, the centre sits in the foreground of Uluru, mimicking the form and dimpling of the rock surface. Since opening in 1995, the spatial and symbolic complexities of the design have been the subject of detailed critique. I am interested in how the Centre functions in the broader context of the national park and establishes relationships between tourists and Anangu.

A major design agenda was to alter the interaction of the visitor with the landscape, with the car park for instance strategically set back 50 metres from the building, part of a strategy to encourage tourists to look at the desert oak surrounds as they walk towards the Centre. On arrival, visitors are welcomed with the text ‘We custodians of this place are really happy for you to come and look around our country’ but are warned not to take photos anywhere in the complex. This welcoming clearly establishes the tourist as invited guest, however I argue that the restriction on photography, one of the most dominant tourist interactions with the park, represents a more powerful assertion of ownership.

Beginning with a combination of map-like paintings and text translations, Tjurkapa is introduced through the stories of Mala, the hare wallaby; Liru, the male poisonous snake; Kuniya, the female python and Lungkata, the blue tongue lizard. A small audio visual theatre
showing dances and songs is set back from the main area, while exhibits detail the role of women and men in Anangu culture. Text explains the rock’s symbolic importance, aiming to discourage climbing, stating ‘That rock is a really important sacred thing. You shouldn’t climb it! Climbing is not a proper part of this place’.

These opening representations differ significantly from many national park interpretative displays highlighting scientific perspectives of unique flora and fauna. The rejection of the diorama for instance, in favour of Aboriginal understandings of landscape is striking. Instead, the Centre features what Western eyes would consider ‘art’ practices to represent Tjurkapa, a form not easily ‘read’ by visitors and rarely adopted in the National Park. Although meanings of paintings are explained by accompanying text, this approach raises questions of whether the visitor gains primarily an aesthetic appreciation of Anangu culture. For example, Lancashire concludes, in her study of Kakudu National Park, that representations of Aboriginality often ‘provoke an aesthetic response, whether the representations take the form of paintings, dances and dramatic plays or “informative” brochures, national parks and cultural centres’ (1999, p. 318).

Moving from these displays, visitors enter the Nintiringkupai room where more orthodox text and photos explain the European history of the land and political events leading up to hand back, as well as information on Aboriginal habitats of the Park. Smaller exhibits include a collection of sorry rocks, accompanied by apologetic letters, sent back from around the world. Centrally located within the room is the National Park information desk. This foregrounding of Anangu culture, with the relegation of the National Park as secondary, differs from other jointly managed national parks such as Kakudu, which features two visitor centres – Bowali offering a more standard national park perspective, although incorporating Indigenous views and Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre presenting more detailed representations of Aboriginal culture in Kakudu.

The remainder of the Centre is filled by three commercial enterprises clustered around the central courtyard; namely Ininti Souvenirs and Café; Maruka Arts and Walkatjara Art. In 1987 Tim Rowse concluded that in order for Anangu to gain control over mass tourism – the ‘hosts’ must interact more fully with the ‘guests’ (Rowse, 1987, p. 76). Visitors to the Centre expecting interaction with Anangu would be disappointed, as they remain largely absent. Instead, the architecture and exhibition offer a representation of place and culture, mediating between Anangu and tourists and the landscape and tourists. While allowing Anangu respite from direct engagement with tourists, this filtering of perspectives through the display techniques of the museum means knowledge of Tjurkapa may remain abstract.
or viewed primarily as an aesthetic. It is not surprising given the vast number of tourists that many Anangu do not want direct interaction with visitors. Nor is it surprising that many visitors to an Aboriginally owned national park expect to see ‘authentic’ Aborigines in the landscape, a position unchanged since the first tourists to the area in 1936.

The introduction of Anangu Tours into the Cultural Centre therefore provides an important insertion, connecting the museological constructed interior, with the Tjurkapa of the exterior, and allowing the guests personal interaction with the hosts.

**From inside to outside**

An Aboriginally owned tourist company, formed in 19957, Anangu Tours offers walks hosted by Anangu guides speaking in their own language, accompanied by a skilled interpreter. Beginning in the Cultural Centre, the guides adopt story telling to transform the ‘paintings’ from aesthetic ‘pictures’ to maps explaining Anangu knowledge. The tour then moves outside to selected sites around Uluru that are then ‘read’ as physical evidence of these stories.

Through this narrative, the guides introduce a temporal perspective linking ‘history’ with the contemporary. Unlike images, paintings and text, the guide’s stories are not ‘enduring forms,’ but are instead performative; constantly transformed with each telling. The experience is both cross-cultural and instructive, with landscape presented as knowledge, with the visitor constantly reminded of their privileged position as receivers of this knowledge. While placing pressure on the traditional owners to interact with tourists, it is this cultural exchange within landscape, rather than a static representation within a museum space, that offers the best possibility of inscribing the tourist ‘blank canvas’ with a better appreciation of Tjurkapa.

**Conclusion**

After a long history of exclusion, Anangu are now politically, culturally and physically positioned inside the Park, although it remains a place they must share. Despite the intentions of the Cultural Centre and Anangu Tours to foreground Anangu perspectives, the visitor’s experience remains one of mixed messages, reflected in the Park’s major infrastructure such as the ring road, climbing chains on the rock and sun rise and sun set viewing points, reinforcing the landscape as something to be photographed and climbed. Similarly, souvenirs and packaged tours are strategically positioned to cater for those who wish to be culturally sensitive and those who don’t.

No longer privileging Euro-Australian national park ideals, the experience of Uluru-Kata Tjuta in 2005, instead presents a messy co-existence with interpretation, tours, souvenirs and infrastructure producing parallel yet conflicting messages and values.
References


**Endnotes**

1. Traditional owners are the Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjatjara people


3. The Territory Parks and Wildlife Service (TPWS) was the successor of the Northern Territory Reserve Board (NTRB)


5. Design team included architect Greg Burgess, landscape architects Taylor and Cullity and Sonja Peters.

6. Maruka Arts has its origins in Maruku Arts and Crafts which was established at the Mutitjulu community in 1984 to market art and craft for artists living in Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara/Ngaanyatjara land. Walkatjara Art emerged from a group of artists from the Mutitjulu Women’s centre who were commissioned in 1995 to provide ceramic tiles and murals for the Cultural Centre.

7. Anangu Tours was established in 1995 by local Aboriginal people, without government funding. It is owned by the Nyangatatara Aboriginal Corporation and has won many national and international awards, most recently a 2004 World Legacy Award honouring environmental and social leaders in tourism. Anangu Tours is the largest private sector employer of Aboriginal people in the region.
Being Nowhere: Distraction, Disintegration and Spatiality

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Abstract: Concepts of distraction developed in nineteenth century research associate it with transformed urban landscapes in nineteenth century modern cultures. But from the 1930s to 50s Britain, it becomes associated with disorders of domestic spatiality, and a disregard of those design principles of order and hygiene, purpose and function, which were understood to define ‘problem families’. Researchers drew on psychological models of character to propose that these environments produced affective disorders – or defects of sentiment formation – through which adolescent working girls, whose distinctive susceptibilities were formed from the wartime disruptions to familiar landscapes, became predisposed to the lures of distraction. As a disjunctive perceptual disorder associated with transformations in urban spatiality, then, ‘distractibility’ became a symptom of a disruption of the cognitive function associated with that lack of purposiveness, the inability to cultivate ‘homely sentiments’, and the failure of order and demeanour which characterised the environment provided by the problem family. Affective disorders generative of modern forms of female adolescent distraction are seen to bring about a disturbance of perceptual modes that result in psychosis, as the breakdown of consciousness and meaning. As the girls’ immersion in the sensory realm situates them in terms of a ‘dispersal’ across urban landscapes, their attachment to contingent and capricious stimuli is understood to result in a degenerative progression towards the emotional immobility characteristic of the schizophrenic. Within the coordinates of psychological models of distractibility, they become located nowhere.

Keywords: Distraction, urban space, domesticity.

In the nineteenth century, psychological inquiry into states of distraction and attention in the context of new perceptual regimes, proposed a link between the altered environments of urban modernity and states of consciousness. ‘Distraction’ became situated on a continuum of attentiveness demarcating the functionality of the individual subject (Crary, 1999). But in 1940s Britain, psychological models of distraction were adapted to address concerns over the working class girl and her attachment to those sexualised entertainments associated with modern commercial cultures. In this period, the psychology of character transformed the notion of attention in such a way that individual ‘distractibility’ was defined as a separate psychological state, rather than as a failure of attentiveness. Seen as a pathological response to those commercial entertainments which are emblematic of the altered conditions of
modern urban environments, distractibility was seen not just as a perceptual state – a state of consciousness, or ‘mind’ – but one which was based in the affects: a state of being traceable to a pathological fabric of character through which these girls became susceptible to the lures of sensory excitements and ‘thrills’.

**Distraction and sensation: being outside**

In 1942, Pearl Jephcott published a study of young working girls growing up in Britain – elementary educated girls leaving school at fifteen who were mainly employed in factories, small shops or in private houses as ‘domestic girls’, the ‘little, unimportant jobs’ of the cheapest kind, demanding little skill and offering no opportunity to learn a craft (Jephcott, 1942, pp. 73–79). Jephcott’s particular concern was with girls for whom the disruptions of wartime environments had brought an uncertain future and a fragmented present:

*Their fathers have gone away with the Forces, their schools have been broken up and scattered, they have seen the destruction of places which have been known to them all their lives, and some of them have been near to violent death themselves. …What future awaits this … set of girls?* (Jephcott, 1942, pp. 35–6).

In Jephcott’s account of altered conditions and transformed domestic and social landscapes, the question concerning the future of these girls is framed in terms of the effects of a disrupted environment on vulnerable psyches. But the concerns she expresses relate to a particular transformation in habits and tastes, for that ‘susceptibility’ which makes the girls’ futures problematic relates to a discernible attachment to the ‘shallow pleasures’ of modern cultures and popular forms: their enthusiasm for the fantasy world of the cinema is only superseded by an alarming ‘craze’ for the dance hall. These girls, Jephcott suggests, are ‘at the mercy of the commercial world which in the main puts before them second-rate goods, cinemas rather than theatres, trash magazines rather than books, and synthetic foods and materials rather than the genuine articles’ (Jephcott, 1942, p. 38).

The damaged landscape of wartime Britain provides a means, therefore, of articulating the disruption to traditions of culture brought by factors other than war. The girls’ psychic predisposition – a susceptibility to the excitations of the myriad of stimuli inherent in modern urban landscapes – is thus modelled on the texture of urban life: a ‘disconnected’ and fragmented experience of a colliding series of ‘sense impressions’ (Singer 1995, p. 91). Emblematic of these dangers in 1940s’ Britain, cinemas and dance halls offer the pleasures of intensity, ephemerality and abstraction: the cinema provides a dream world of action, colour, emotion and ‘thrills’, and the ‘hot rhythm and syncopated music’ of the dance hall is invoked...
as the ultimate symbol of vulgar sentiment and synthetic excitement which characterises the commercial world's 'sterile recreation' (Jephcott, 1942, pp. 118–9; 120–5). For Jephcott, the effects of factory work predispose young working girls to the repetition and mechanical rhythms associated with the music of the dance hall. Dehumanising and unchallenging, the 'continuous din', speed and mechanical routine, 'drugs' them: their own responses become mechanical, involuntary, unconscious. Suspended in the repetitive rhythms of the dance-hall band, absorbed in the distracted moment of cinema fantasy, the girls' psyches become lifted from the 'grounding' of physical space and progressive spatialised time: they are figured outside spatial and temporal coordinates, in a synthetic world of modern commercial entertainments and the automatic, sensory pleasures of the modern consumer.

'Problem families' and squalid homes: making primitive

From the 1930s, distraction was identified as a distinctive symptom of young girls' predisposition to delinquency. Grace Pailthorpe's study of 200 girls in prisons and preventive and rescue homes at the beginning of that decade brought her to conclude that delinquent behaviour derives from defects in 'sentiment development', as the girls failed to discipline instinctual drives or impulses in ways which demonstrated social adaptation, or adjustment. The girls' maladjustment, their over-attachment to urban entertainments, was seen by Pailthorpe as symptomatic of a distinctive affective disorder deriving from insufficient sentiment training in the home:

_We are dealing with individuals whose dispositions are rudimentary largely because life has been lived in surroundings which have been rudimentary. The surroundings lack ideals which are the outcome of, as well as the making of, sentiments_ (Pailthorpe, 1932, p. 19).

As the familial origin of the girls' lack of social adaptation was linked to the regressive nature of their domestic environments, they became positioned within a grouping identified in the same period as the 'problem family' (see Joint Committee of the British Medical Association and the Magistrates' Association, 1946).

The concept of the problem family itself derived from an attempt to reclassify the nineteenth century concept of 'the residuum', as the Wood Report, inquiring into the incidence of 'mental defect' in 1929, identified what it referred to as the 'social problem group'. For the Wood Committee, 'social problems' (or forms of delinquent behaviour) could be traced to a group of families within which there existed an unduly large proportion of 'insane persons, epileptics, paupers, criminals (especially recidivists), unemployed, habitual slum dwellers, prostitutes, inebriates and other social inefficients' compared to other families (Wood Report,
cited Blacker, 1937, p. 2). Eugenicists attempted, over the following twenty years, to classify this group in the interests of limiting its expansion. Primary amongst the features identifying this group was the squalor and disorder of their homes:

The home, if indeed it can be described as such, has usually the most striking characteristics. Nauseating odours assail one’s nostrils on entry, and the source is usually located in some urine-sodden, faecal stained mattress in an upstairs room. There are no floor coverings, no decorations on the walls except perhaps the scribblings of the children and bizarre patterns formed by absent plaster. Furniture is of the most primitive, cooking utensils absent, facilities for sleeping hopeless – iron bedsteads furnished with soiled mattresses and no coverings. Upstairs there is flock everywhere, which the mother assures me has come out of a mattress she has unpacked for cleansing. But the flock seems to stay there for weeks and the cleansed and repacked mattress never appears … There are sometimes faecal accumulations on the floors upstairs, and tin baths containing several days accumulation of faeces and urine are not unknown. The children, especially the older ones, often seem to be perfectly happy and contented, despite such a shocking environment … the general standard of hygiene is lower than that of the animal world (Wofinden, 1946, p. 128).

The inability of these families to maintain standards of hygiene is linked to a failure of order and functionality, as they show no inclination to assemble the props, utensils and facilities of a purposively-designed environment suited to the rhythms and rituals of privatised family life. Meaning is (literally) turned inside out: objects designed for sleeping and bathing become receptacles of waste; the logic of ‘decoration’ is disorganised and the surface eroded, as walls exhibit only gashes and gaps in plaster and the incoherent markings of children’s play, and floors are smeared with faecal matter; and ‘furnishing’ is disrupted as mattresses are emptied and their interiors dispersed across the house, flock ‘everywhere’. Insidious and permeating, impossible to consign to a distinct place, these ‘innards’ – nauseating, stinking, soiled, stained – become part of the fabric of ‘ordure’ which characterises the problem home and its inhabitants: regressive, disintegrative, dispersed, formless.

These are not just defects of domestic design, or evidence of an inability to arrange and deploy objects according to function and with respect for form, but an orientation to living which is produced as its opposite – in a principle of anti-design. And since this orientation is predicated on the erosion of form and structure and their association with order and purpose, it impacts upon the home as an environment for character formation, as the adolescent’s capacity for disciplined behaviour depends upon the ‘moulding pressures’ of ‘directive discipline’ (Morgan, 1943).
Problem families, and especially, more worryingly, the children of such families, were understood in terms of a failure – or formlessness – of character evident in a pathological contentment with conditions that were now seen as incommensurate with the provision of those moulding pressures relating to the correlation of adolescent character with a modernised family life: ‘these families for one reason or another have not kept pace with social progress and are a brake on the wheels’ (Wofinden, 1946, p. 127). Modern forms of domestic order synchronise the physical and emotional landscapes involved in modernising British character: the making primitive of domestic environments was not only the sign of a socially atavistic character, but created the conditions within which social atavism would become a legacy for the character development of the next generation.

**Serenity, distraction and the self-affects**

The exchange, in the girls’ affective pathologies, between atavism and ‘distractibility’, depended on their subjection to the self-affects. The behavioural features of problem families – ‘fecklessness, irresponsibility, improvidence and indiscipline in the home’ (Blacker, 1946, p. 118; 1952a, p. 16) – were translated into a psychological model of temperamental instability. If individual sentiment-formation – the acquisition of emotional tendencies or structures of feeling that involved directing or channelling the instincts to gain satisfactions which were in line with social aims – was developed through familial training, its aim, above all, was the cultivation of those ‘homely sentiments’ – parental, filial and marital – which provide the coordinates of integrated harmonious character (Blacker 1952b). This, it was argued, provided the basis of a form of ‘demeanour’ in the home which would create an effective environment for children to develop into effective future citizens: regulating conduct according to external demands or constraints and striving towards goals (Blacker, 1952b).

*In this way, the self comes to rule supreme over conduct, the individual is raised above moral conflict; he attains character in the fullest sense and a completely generalised will, and exhibits to the world that finest flower of moral growth, serenity* (McDougall, 1908, p. 404, my emphasis).

Serenity implied an adherence to principles of order that became imbued with moral foundations. The importance of harmony and equilibrium, restraint and discipline, to the making of the modern home, sees the development of a regime of aesthetic order which suggested that physical space should be arranged in terms which relied on an understanding of the appropriate balance between visual and sensory stimuli and their link to those perceptual and emotional responses which would cultivate an effective familial environment. Just as integrated character was understood in terms of an equilibrium – disciplined according
to a hierarchy in which the selfish sentiments were moderated by social sentiments, but also avoiding an over-rigid system in order to allow the satisfaction of the instincts – so too domestic space must be rationally organised: orderly yet harmonious, uncluttered, soothing, serene. Models of interior design developed in the 1940s and 1950s made it clear that homes that created an effective environment for families would eschew the regressive, over-ornamental ‘clutter’ and heavy materials and dark colours of older styles – evidence of the ‘undeveloped mind’ – as well as the ‘insincere’, ephemeral, ‘flippant’ pleasures of superficial visual effect and synthetic garishness, to create instead a balancing of authenticity and the modern which manifested a ‘moral unity’ suited to the building of effective family life and individual character (Hornsey, 2003, pp. 175–204).

The moral reprobation of families, who did not adopt the ascendant regime of order and hygiene in domestic design and management in their homes to ensure the effective development of moral character in children, was clear. If the homes of problem families exhibited a lack of order and propriety, and an eschewing of functionality, undermining the purposiveness which links form with function, so too their characters exhibited a failure of that purposiveness – the capacity to strive towards goals – which was understood as the cornerstone of human character. For problem families were characterised by ‘laziness’, ‘lack of persistence’, ‘indifference to the standards of the community’, a lack of foresight and purpose, and an ‘obliviousness of all but momentary issues’ (Blacker, 1952b). In this respect, the physical disintegration in their homes was a symptom of a much deeper problem: psychic disintegration.

As problem families displayed a domestic anti-modernism and disorder that acted against the development of purposiveness as a central feature of disciplined character in girls, so these same girls’ opposite flight towards the artificial glitter of commercial forms in adolescence suggested a response that took them too freely into the chaos of self-affects offered by an accelerating urban modernism. Lacking a family life based in the delicate balance and tempered merging of styles embodied in domestic modernism and based on the continuity of those principles of sentiment development embodied in ‘serenity’, the girls became immersed in the self-affects, with ‘the gratification of the moment … the limit of their mental horizon’ (Joint Committee of the British Medical Association and the Magistrates’ Association, 1946, p. 7).

**Distractibility and disintegration**

Anthony Vidler argues that diseases associated with new configurations of urban space, such as agoraphobia and claustrophobia – the fear of vast empty space and that of being alone in
a closed space – are predicated on the loss of boundary to the visual field and the collapse of perspectival space – or the collapse of foreground distance and ‘prospect’. The disruption of that spatial positioning of the individual within the visual landscape through which detached vision, and distanced reflection, is made possible, represents a loss of the spatial coordinates which locate an apprehending individual consciousness. As Vidler demonstrates, for critics of urbanism and psychologists alike, the surfacing of a regressive, instinctual fear is a uniquely modern response to the ‘impossibility of stabilizing modern space or sheltering the subject in a world of rootless psyches’ (Vidler, 2000, p. 50). In their link to the fear of the crowd, these diseases also become invested with the unpredictability of a formless mass, spatially connected but dispersed, and the exposure of the senses to promiscuous and capricious sensation. The contingent stimulus, the incidental apprehension, pressing itself upon the individual involuntarily, robs individual consciousness of the purposive force of voluntary attention, just as it is robbed of its centrality in making visual perceptions meaningful by the collapse of spatial detachment.

As ‘modern’ diseases, then, these spoke to a disjuncture between the perspectival regimes of urban modernity and those perceptual modes through which individual consciousness could be anchored. But the problem family proposed a disjunctive principle within those very environments understood to shelter the individual from the dislocating effects of urban space and experience: environments created in the exchange between the spatial regimes of domestic modernity and those modes of sentiment formation that anchored individual character.

Disorders of attention, then, were not produced by the entry of the individual into the urban landscape. Neither did they simply originate in the misdemeanours of problem families, as problems of sentiment formation. Rather, they were woven into the spatial orientations and landscapes of regressive, anti-modern – anti-design – domestic environments. For the ideal of cleanliness embodied in modern architecture and design (which ‘joins the doctor’s white coat, the white tiles of the bathroom, the white walls of the hospital, and so on’) is a ‘cleansing of vision’ itself, ‘bracketing the sensual out in favour of the visual’ (Wigley, 1995, p. 5). While the problem family represents a disturbance to that regime of hygiene – which cleanses not just space, therefore, but the look, perception, consciousness itself – it manifests itself as not only the disintegration of space, surface and order which characterises the squalid home, but in those failures of perception, attention and character which are encompassed by ‘distractibility’.
If, for Jephcott and others, then, the problem of distraction is a *functional disorder*, the distinctive susceptibilities of those girls whom it comes to define – those defects of constitution which allow environmental stimuli to register in ways which create pathological responses – derive not from the urban landscapes from which these stimuli originate, but more intimate ones, the domestic, familial spaces within which their emotional tendencies are formed. Not only, then, is their distractibility a factor that points to that ‘lack of centralised interest’ and purposiveness which is expressed as a failure of attention (Pailthorpe, 1932, p. 94), but it becomes a symptom of that inability to discipline the self-affects which links their ‘craze’ for dance music, the cinema and erotic literature to a sexual instability (Joint Committee of the British Medical Association and the Magistrates’ Association, 1946).

Pailthorpe notes that the delinquent girls she studied exhibited a precociously-developed aesthetic sentiment, evident in their reponsiveness to sensory excitations, a factor she attributes to an ‘undue sexual stimulation’ characteristic of homes in which family members live and sleep in the same room. The distortion of the aesthetic sentiment by the sexual instinct, therefore, allows them to become defined in terms of a primitive, instinctual egoism: ‘their craving to follow fashion … is largely imitative rather than idealistic, exhibitionistic rather than aesthetic (Pailthorpe, 1932, p. 39, 60).

These girls’ cultural attachments demonstrate a sensual responsiveness which functions in the absence of cognition, and so implies a radical disruption to subjective coherence and consciousness. The girls’ absorption in landscapes of distraction, their dependence on the *contingency of external stimuli*, functions as a counterpoint to the processes of voluntary attention which allow them to exercise cognitive ability and so attain the consistency and continuity of coherent subjectivity: they lack the ‘synthesising’ capacity which allows them to move beyond the sensory and the instinctual, to transform sense impressions into coherent, conscious thought. These disruptions to the subject's capacity for synthesis threaten to undermine subjective integration, and render the individual ‘entirely unable at the present time to give her attention to anything’ (Pailthorpe, 1932, p. 60, 94). Pailthorpe identifies beneath their emotional excitability and self-assertiveness an emotional immobility, as the flow of emotions becomes fixed in a more or less degree (Pailthorpe, 1932, p. 102, my emphasis). This is evident in passivity towards the world outside the self, which constitutes a fundamental disordering of the relation of the individual to the external world:

*Extreme passivity … is … indicative of the stifling of all natural functioning … … The mind is absorbed elsewhere and cannot be brought to focus full attention on external considerations* (Pailthorpe, 1932, pp. 95–96).
In their inability to attend to the external world, these intractable cases point to the limits of therapeutic treatment. Exhibiting a failure of cognitive functioning, a prominence of the self-affects, a failure of purposive striving, an antisocial lack of affective relation to others, and the alternating extremes of apathy and excitation, the distinctive features of their pathological responses point to the disintegrative effects of psychosis, a schizophrenia which involves extreme introversion, an excess of the self-affects, and a failure of the capacity for ‘rapport’ (MacDougall, 1926, pp. 382).

**Being nowhere**

‘Distractibility’ is, therefore, a feature indicative of the pathological relationship between character and environment. But in this period, and for this group of girls, it is understood as evidence of a troubling persistence of archaic domestic landscapes ill-suited to effective character formation, as much as it is of an irregular orientation to new urban landscapes. The disintegrative elements of both urban and domestic environments are themselves mapped on to the girls’ subjective formation, in a spatialised interiority. The girls become not just formless and dispersed, in their attachment to the stimuli of the urban commercial landscapes, but fixed outside cognitive experience, without the perspectival locatedness of a purposive consciousness. In the girls’ absorption in the sensory realm and the ‘regression’ or ‘arrest’ of subjective perceptual abilities, their ‘distractibility’ carries the pathological coordinates of modern spatial disjunctions: formless, dispersed, and eventually receding into a psychosis which renders individuals ‘cold, numbed, almost lifeless ruins’ (MacDougall, 1926, p. 384). Immersed in the distracted moment, dispersed across a synthetic urban landscape of contingent stimuli, the girls exist outside the spatial and temporal coordinates of reality, fixed in a realm of chaotic sensation: they are not just suspended in time, they exist nowhere.

**References**


Endnotes

1 See Wolfgang Schivelbush (1979) for an account of the way new forms of travel and new urban spectacles eliminate foreground space, and the close view, creating a visual and psychological dislocation, and destabilising spatial location and temporal rhythms (Swanson, 2000, pp. 138–9).
The Question of the Trip

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Abstract: This paper addresses a weaving-writing; a writing of crooked/uneven lines that make in the midst of no-return, and of failing to constitute a worthwhile consistent thing (object, place, story, room, etc); a writing, a practice, that doesn’t argue or conclude, and that exercises itself little by little (perhaps by attenuating an intensity (toward weakness)); a tending-toward spaces that barely make their presence present, and are, in a sense a letting-come. I take as a landscape/interior, the Coorong (an inland sea in the south-east of South Australia, which lies between where I live now and where I once lived (homes) – a place that’s taking me all my life to see, and that’s in a state of dying. This seeing touches upon an ecology of thinking/making/writing that lightly uses a method of infinity/mood toward inquiry – whereby feeling orients critique or knowing, or letting-it-be, and the said/written is almost-nothing in the hope of leaving-together (the inside with the outside, for instance); and, so as not to embroider too thickly (but rather to pick at/fray threads and unfix views) or cover all the cloth (and stop breathing). This writing, or practice of coming-and-going, is a diminishing writing, perhaps, and a quietness.

Keywords: writing, Coorong, friendship

Setting off

It only takes two hours from one end to the other, but it’s best to do the trip during the day, even then it’s easy to drift-off; depending on your frame of mind you can be in-and-out of it before you know it, but in terms of the overall journey – country to city, city to country – it’s the dreaded bit.

This writing is a movement toward the air and light of the space of those two hours, and about seeing and unseeing (or hearing and unhearing).

I’ve been travelling by car along the same road for twenty-five years. It’s a five hour trip from Adelaide to my home town in the country, and two hours of that drive, the dreaded bit, is alongside the inland sea called the Coorong.

The title, ‘The question of the trip’, signals toward something, rather than about something; this something is something-like a saying, like time flies or far and wide; in this context, here, it’s more an inquiry prompted by the length/breadth of time/space it takes sometimes to see what is there, and to see, in the sense of know, what it might be that one has not seen, or
not known to see; and what it is, what sort of an undertaking it might be, then, to write of this (seeing) as an experience of interiority, and of interiority as a continual be-coming.

I have made these trips through an-interior as if unaware of seeing, and of hearing, and of duration. As if the body of myself had locked itself up as an individual, self-contained; as if its surround of skin, skin-tight, protected it from the inside of the outside, while at the same time living constructed, unacknowledged, inside a lived-present, a turning-instant-present – present with the turning-instant-self; the trip, in a way, was the trap. Yet not really too, not thought as such during most of those years; time did pass, and the trip was prolonged somehow, it became a twenty-five year trip, attenuated; the trap stretched thin, to breaking point.

I’m writing of this un/seeing-while-seeing (not knowing what other name it is) to take note of, or give notice to, the bigger picture of non/unseeing or of what one is doing when one is thinking one knows what is there, or what, in the mode of a practice, should be or is imagined to be acceptable or even wanted (there – visible, tangible), longed for, or praised – that is, what is advised (and taught) in the act of bringing about the something which is not there already, and will be there by my or our actions (writing, space, object, conversation).

The Coorong, is my engine (my outside cause, driven from the inside) to practise, to-write. I am writing to-write; but to do so I need an outside to bring love toward – that’s the Coorong. I am writing toward a landscape, a place, an inland sea, an interior space (for me), named the Coorong.

Coorong, the word,

*is a corruption of an aboriginal word ‘kurangh’, meaning ‘neck’ or ‘long neck’ or ‘narrow neck’, and it is generally believed that the first usage … was provided by Major Thomas O’Halloran in his journal of a punitive expedition against the aboriginals in retaliation for outrages committed against the passengers and crew of the ill-fated vessel the Maria in 1840* (Doolette, 1997, p. viii).

The tragedy leading to this expedition included the murder of twenty six white men, women and children and the execution by hanging of two aboriginal men on a makeshift gallows in front of other aboriginal people of their tribe who had been brought to watch (as a warning toward them about white law).

The Ngarrindjeri, whose homeland the Coorong was and still is, were a nation with their own country/language, way of life, culture, and physical characteristics (Jenkins, 1979, p. 12).
There were eighteen tribes of the Ngarrandjeri, each with their own territory, government and justice system.

The Coorong is not a past; it’s within the fabric of present-time and future-time, as well as the immense past-time. It’s vital, and, in terms of the appearance of continuous-time, invisible; and lays, as all times do, at the heart of writing (this fragility of language), and this writing now: how to-write the infinitely invisible, the light, the air.

The Coorong is an a/mazing landscape to see; it barely seems to be there. It’s flat, often grey in colour and atmosphere, and housed beneath an enormous sky, which during the winter sits low like a heavy tarpaulin and during the summer rises high like a vast parallel universe – dwarfing the land, making it even flatter (like a pencil line).

The inland sea is over 6,000 years old. It formed after rises in sea-level flooded a passage between sand dunes. It became isolated as a lagoon 3,000 years later. Water comes into the lagoon-sea through rain, through the Murray River and the Salt Creek, through the ocean at the mouth of the river, and through an underground aquifer. It’s listed as a National Park1; it’s part of the National Estate, and it’s included on the List Of Wetlands Of International Importance As Waterfowl Habitat (1975) – this is known as the Ramsar Convention, as well as the International Migratory Birds Agreement. The Agreement is signed by the governments of Australia, Japan, and China to protect birds that migrate between these countries.

Throughout the sand-hills of the Coorong there are ancient middens; the small ones – perhaps 5,000 years old – mainly consist of molluscs, the larger ones – up to 3,000 years old – are huge mounds of shells, and bones of fish, birds and mammals; they are the remains of Aboriginal camps of many generations.

As a writing I’m bringing a few friends to this landscape, to see it and hear it, and to offer to it some of their thoughts (about other things) – to consider the thoughts of others about hearing, listening, thinking, writing, and to consider the place itself as a weave/tangle of material and immaterial knowledges (flora and fauna, stories and histories, land and water and sky) of various forces in relation with each other – as if making a small momentary gathering of friends.

When I come to the southern outskirts of the town of Meningie, to where the Coorong begins for me, I seem to enter a room; besides space, this room is the two hours it takes me to leave it – at the northern outskirts of the next major town, Kingston. For two hours I am in(side) the Coorong. I am inside an outside, I am interior to an exterior. I am trapped in
this part of the *trip*, and an aspect of the *trap* is that this *room* taps (and trips up) thought. I become a fleeting element/thought of the place, abandoned to myself (whether alone or not). For decades this thought-trap was called *boring* – and everyone I knew who did the *trip* found it interminable. There was nothing-to-see, and the road (which runs along the eastern shore of the Coorong, with the sand-dunes of the western shore cutting off the Southern Ocean) was narrow and in bad repair and one had to be on one’s guard.

It’s a place for/of thinking and dreams/nightmares. Colin Thiele, whose writing on the Coorong is extensive, including ‘Storm Boy’, wrote that it’s ‘… a place of solitude so haunting and all-pervading that one can imagine the prophets emerging from it as they did from the desert in ancient time’ (Thiele, 1986, p. 32).

At times, as you pass, it seems a desolate uninhabited place, stirring up an inner taste, or a scent perhaps; an ambivalent desire for belonging, perhaps – to somewhere, to someone – that slides slowly toward the far tremors of one’s self. And, you don’t stop, even though your breath, shallow now, as if in sympathy with the shallow sea, could do with a rest, a brief stroll. An early explorer (1844) described it as ‘… a grand and solemn scene; a dull haze shut out the horizon, and the utter and almost awful solitude was unbroken by any living thing’ (Doolette, 1997, p. vii).
Passing through

A momentary gathering of a few friends is how I imagine writing; one draws upon others whose work has given friendship through the years – a tentative and puzzling friendship. However, in the body-act of writing, of bringing together writings, one can believe that the core intention is friendship. I bring together a landscape, writing (I mean the making of writing, the matter of it), and writers on the Coorong, like Graham Jenkins and Colin Thiele, and writers who’ve never heard of the Coorong, like Jacques Derrida and Luce Irigaray, and make from that a provisional or makeshift work, that is a visitation, an impression upon the Coorong (as both a physical and a written reality).

To touch upon friendship, I use Derrida’s book Politics Of Friendship where his ground, his terrain, his Coorong or engine, is Nietzsche on friendship, on friendship toward the dead, the dying, the other, the self, the world, and where he attempts to think toward a friendship undetermined by proximity, by family, by fraternity/filiation – his project (addressing the issues at stake in re-thinking the politics of the friend/enemy, including the political-being of politics) is one of urgency, of our being-in-the-world, and of how we live that being; for instance, how in that living we might make the world, through thinking and doing, a place of peace beyond violence; violence meant as exclusion, as acceptance of given concepts, ideas, laws, as well as injustice, conflict, war. (Here these are delicate moves between three scenes of love: landscape/place, the work-of-others, and writing).

This is a road-trip (of sorts), a setting-off-all-alone and the resistance to and fear of that; the lovence (to use a tricky uncomfortable word) of the doing of it (both actually going, and actually writing), of the get-up-and-go energy needed to step out there, off-my-tree, and into an acting – into/on loving you, who/whatever. That is, loving (lovence2) is the act; time-taken or time-given, a coming and going. ‘The friend is the person who loves before being the person who is loved: he who loves before being the beloved … One loves only by declaiming that one loves’ (Derrida, 1997, p. 9).

A landscape knows nothing of this lovence, it’s already there, toward me, before I have even thought about it in terms of love; without this thought of love it’s potentially at risk – the difference between the time of non-love and the time of love is incommensurable. ‘One cannot love without living and without knowing that one loves, but one can still love the deceased or the inanimate who then know nothing of it’ (p. 10).

While something knows nothing of its being loved, one’s conducting/attending of oneself toward it makes the place, the thing, the whatever it might be, different, brings it into the
world (with one), somehow, despite its already being there. It’s different (all the difference in the world), for instance, to write with the texts of others in friendship rather than non-friendship (opposition, comparison); to think of the Coorong, and the writing of it, as friendly makes the coming of Derrida and Irigaray less strange or aggressive.

The calling, or naming, of a place friend is still awkward – despite having gazed upon it in awe and impatience for twenty-five years, it has been a friend to me – it’s my rite of passage between two selves, two homes, unreconciled, yet alive-and-well. It is, and has been, the place right under my nose, still and constant (in both effect and appearance).

In a written work, in an act of making – for example, one that moves between various theories and practices, such as art and spatial practices can – this notion of friendship needs a careful approach; one with deep respect for, and regard (devotion) to, distance, one with discretion and tact, as friendship is a situation, a condition, of relations, of chances, of troubles, of powers, and disappointments; for friendship’s sake, one keeps one’s distance to keep from appropriating, from possessing, the other one. This amounts to, in a sense, a re-remembering of the irreducible differences of beings and things, and of their state, or of our possible state toward them, and of their real and virtual appearance in the world.

This distance and re-remembering – is what Luce Irigaray means, perhaps, by the giving of silence, which is a listening:

> This silence is a space-time offered to you with … no pre-established truth or ritual. … It is a silence made possible by the fact that neither I nor you are everything, that each of us is limited … If I am to be quiet and listen to you, without presupposition, without making hidden demands – on you or myself – the world must not be sealed already … And moreover … I do not consider language to be immutable. Otherwise, language itself controls, and hinders freedom (Irigaray, 1996, p. 115).

This silence, this giving, initiates another way of love, of intimacy.³

For Irigaray, to listen is to dwell, to move into sound, as it comes from the other, or whatever it is that comes from the other, its movement, its look, its joy or sadness, its age and well/unwell-being. Here, the inside and the outside are continuous with each other, are ‘with’ each other, together, where we live.

Irigaray (1996) begins her small essay ‘In Almost Absolute Silence’ with a question: ‘Let us begin with: how am I to listen to you?’ (p. 115). The essay speaks directly of a ‘… sort of communication … to weave a web of alliances and histories between two subjects’
This listening listens to hear what is new and unknown of the other, you, it, me; a horizontal-listening to a mystery, rather than a vertical-hearing of an already-known (learned, memorized, believed). A horizontal-listening listens to someone/something that ‘I do not know yet … I encourage something unexpected to emerge, some becoming, some growth, some new dawn, perhaps’ (pp. 116–117).

Derrida and Irigaray, in their own ways, both write of the being of human-beings and their being in the world of infinite animate and inanimate subtleties; I read their speculations to think toward places (familiar and unfamiliar) and our sense of them as here/there and not-here/there – always quite elsewhere to the head-on gaze.

Listening, offering the ear, rather than chewing the ear, is a making of space between other spaces, in which can manifest the unforeseen, the odd and singular appearance or expression of a landscape (here, the Coorong) existing, intricately, numerousy, without it having to call for attention, or to expose itself in a clear and unambiguous sense.

Derrida, in his essay titled ‘Tympan’, writes of the possibility when speaking or writing of or about or on or to something – usually inside a genre, and a topic – of writing on the outside of it, on the other side of it, along its edges, of coming-and-going at the same time, giving (creating) impressions and taking (receiving) impressions, of welcoming (fleeting) impressions of other kinds without putting them to-service, without enveloping them.

Derrida, quoting Nietzsche, asks what it might take to listen in order ‘… to hear with [the] eyes too’ (will it take a puncture, a battering, cymbals or drums) (Derrida, 1982, p. xiii). The tympanum is the middle ear, the tympanic membrane is the obliquely stretched membrane separating the middle ear and the passage to the external ear – it’s the eardrum.

One of the effects of this obliqueness is to increase the surface of impression and hence the capacity of vibration. It has been observed, particularly in birds, that precision of hearing is in direct proportion to the obliqueness of the tympanum (Derrida, 1982, p. xvi).

In other words, the direct route is the least-lasting, whereas the oblique route (the counterpath, the back-road), is quicker (by reputation only), and often dangerous, surprising, and unhinging (sometimes leading to entirely different events and places), and perhaps most-lasting/memorable. In writing, this can mean a blurred text, or an asymmetrical text, a stuttering text, a cracked text, a bodiless text, a passionate and/or impressionistic mad text, and importantly, an infinite text, one that doesn’t wind-up/down to a denouement.
I sense therefore (belatedly), that I have been looking at the Coorong, in passing, front-on, as if it is all-there, as I see it, and not as something mysteriously impressionistically completely other than itself as seen. It’s cavenous, inside with inside and outside with outside.

The visitation of the philosophers is over, nothing-nameable changes, a thought or two has scratched around in the margin (of thought), where it’s endlessly possible to glimpse ‘… a weave of different forces without any present centre of reference’ (Derrida, 1982, p. xxiii). The margin is the place, the landscape of ‘… an inexhaustible reserve … an entirely other ear …’ (p. xxiii), and where the place (Coorong) continues to be (seen or not) – the margin is not outside of an inside; it’s the inside of another inside, or of the inside-continuum.

Moving on

This writing is simply proposed … it enters a space, a place, a landscape, autobiographically, with memory, momentarily; space, place, landscape doesn’t turn itself inside-out for writing; instead only a trace, a faint ember, a glimmer, shows-up, figured and de-figured in the material convention of writing, of letters, signs, more abstract, more distant, than any deliberate intended abstraction (more abstract for being readable, in a sense).

The space/place/landscape entered, a territory of dying-life, comes in fits and starts, over time (with intensities of infinitely complex and connected matters) –

(and being an impression ‘… is made on some tympanum, whether resonating or still, on the double membrane that can be struck from either side’ (Derrida, 1982, p. xxv) (from what might be named outside or inside – or at the same time, and either cancelling/ringing, or as a cacophony), and as woven, or as being a weaving, we remember that ‘… to weave is first to make holes, to traverse, to work one-side-and-the-other of the warp …’ (Derrida, 1982, p. xxviii) and here, now, I hear, remotely, warp as a distortion, where being pulled or pushed it (whatever it might be) becomes less flat and symmetrical and more corrugated and off-centre).

– and not time spent deaf or deafened (aurally and optically), without the ear/eye listening and hearing (shaking); it comes about by being felt/sensed as a limit and a passage, a way of learning reception or welcome; a learning through reading, or goodwill toward it variously, so that it drifts vaguely ever further away by (the fact of) a continual distancing … (it being further away the closer one gets, as if the atmosphere is unbearably thin, and what seems just-there, at my fingertips (under my nose), is a day’s walk away) … (a continual distancing) within oneself, and within the relationship of oneself to the other of it – in its living breathing dying state, and (with)in the relationship with it being called friendship, if that's appropriate
(proper), and even if it’s not, a friendship without basis, without an agreeable starting point
(from which to move-away or set-off from) or commonality, or family, but one based (or
found) on the fact, again, of being in the same time and space (air and light) of the same
world – no more than this, giving an ear, and thinking, and only doing this (perhaps); that is,
producing a thought that passes instantly, that summons a space or a thing or idea unknown,
all at once, in a flash – and lasting, forever.

References
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Endnotes

1 ‘The national park is an area of 46,745 hectares. At a maximum it is five kilometres wide. It is described variously as wild, harsh, gentle, ugly, always beautiful, of many mood, many colours, fickle, wilful, and unforgiving’ (Doolette, 1997, p. vii).

2 ‘Beyond all ulterior frontiers between love and friendship, but also between the passive and active voices, between the loving and the being-loved, what is at stake is “lovence”. You must know how it is more worthwhile to love lovence’ (Derrida, 1997, p. 7). In Derrida’s text one is left to this word, as if at a location. ‘Before even thinking about what loving, love, lovence mean, one must know that the only way to find out is by questioning first of all the act and the experience of loving rather than the state or situation of being loved’ (p. 8).

3 The word sense, and the sense of that word, is an opening onto meditations of meaning; of the phrasing/extracting/requesting of meaning. Jean-Luc Nancy:

_Thus, the world no longer has a sense, it is sense. In this sense, today anew it is precise to say that it is no longer a matter of interpreting the world, but of transforming it. It is no longer a matter of lending or giving the world one more sense, but of entering into this sense, into this gift of sense the world itself is. …_ (Nancy, 1997, pp. 8–9).

4 Sarah Kofman’s philosophical texts move writing around as if time and space are one. Nancy writes of Kofman’s love of anecdote, of stories and comments antithetic to her work and the work of others; responses that move in a contrary direction – that is, as an inquiry, set-off to make work on/from work already made (a writing, a landscape); obliquely bringing it to thinking/speaking/writing without eating it up, aligning it to self, fitting it in:

_The law of the story and its economy is to bury all strangeness with the Stranger, to disguise the fact that the return of the Stranger in the night, like a ghost passing through all the cracks in the house, far from bringing about its destruction and collapse, can alone provide a true foundation for the idyll. The affliction of the story, intrinsic to its Apollonian happiness, is that it deceptively conceals Dionysus in all his glory_ (Kofman, 1998, p. 30).

5 ‘On the one hand, therefore, is the outside; on the other hand, the inside; between them, the cavenous’ (Leiris, in Derrida, 1982, p. xx). Leiris is writing of the eardrum, the outside (so-called) world, the inside (so-called) body; and the vibrations which bring us sound. And all of the outside is an inside, and all of the inside is an outside – it’s impossible to distinguish out and in; hearing comes to us invisibly; waves moving through air strike the thin fragile obliquely stretched membrane and bring us the world.

Credits

Photography by the author Linda Marie Walker.
Changescapes

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Some aesthetic forms ‘dramatise’ change. I call them ‘changescapes’. They help us know mutability by immersing us in it, by letting us be with it. Change is their theme and it is often their matter too, for they are usually of fragile and ephemeral stuff that reacts to altering conditions in the larger world. Transformations happen at their boundaries, at the limits between the inside and the outside of their systems, and then the symptoms of change become manifest in them, palpably available for our contemplation.

These aesthetic forms have become plenteous recently because we are ready now to understand them and because we need now to understand mutability with them. Versions of these forms have been in human cultures for ages. For example, in the Chinese shopping district of almost every sizable city in the world, you’ll find a wonderful shop dedicated to ‘live arts’, where you can buy your aquarium, horticultural and water-fountain supplies. But there’s something about the present historical moment that’s calling changescapes forth in greater numbers and greater variety.

Assaying these developments, this essay will finish in aesthetics and linguistics. But it starts with a story.

In 1992 I spent some wondrous months in the Pilliga Scrub, a vast scree of native forest gone feral in north-west New South Wales. I was working with John Cruthers, Joel Peterson and Eric Rolls, grafting a film out of Eric’s marvellous vast scree of a book, A Million Wild Acres (Rolls, 1981).¹

One afternoon Eric took me unusually deep into the forest, proffering the chance to meet a white man we’ll call Muller, whom I’d heard about and whom Eric had met a couple of times. It had been a parching hot day, breezeless mostly, except for some flukey little gusts and spiralling willi-willies that haggled with the Land Rover whenever we broke out of the foliage-cover and traversed a seared dirt clearing. But by the time we got close to Muller’s compound, the sun was dropping and some humid clouds had climbed out of the river-junction not far away. Before long, light rain was spritzing the dusty pines and eucalypts, releasing into the air a round tang that soothed the soft palate like a lozenge.

Eric drove around for a bit, doing that directional divining of corrugated tracks that mystifies anyone new to the Pilliga. Finally we pulled up at a walking track and ventured in. Ten
minutes from the road, we came upon a clearing bounded on all sides by stacked short bolts of timber that were commercially useless but aesthetically breath-taking, with their knotty convolutions and sappy striations presenting all the colours of blood in sculptural arrays aligned in every which way as if to give shifting volume and spectral tone to the gloaming air. Eric called out several times: a few words, including Muller’s full names, but mostly variants of coo-ee noises that were more like birdcalls or the creaking of timber, as if he was loath to startle the place with too much sociability. But all was quiet, deserted right now except for us, so incursive and puzzled.

I remember padding around the compound awe-struck, alarmed by the noise my boots were generating in the red loamy gravel. I recall calculating how it would have taken one man maybe a thousand mornings of work to make just the timber stacks in this ‘installation’, let alone all the other details of the place. And I recall thinking that this must be all Muller does: tend and change the place each day.

This had been a timber-mill once but it had undergone some slow metamorphosis, till now it was a devotional kind of site. Devotional to WHAT, I still can’t say exactly, but devotional all the same. For it could have been sustained in this serene appearance only by dint of a devoted lifetime spent designing and laboriously maintaining. And such custodial labour had occurred recently, for the entire clearing – about half the size of a cricket field – had been raked so the ground was free of footprints and was linearly pulsating with confluences of curved and rectangular tracts that seemed to be mustering the breezes in cooling little arabesques all around us.

At least, the compound had been free of footprints till we had blundered in. Which makes me think the raking was not only one of the most beautiful aesthetic configurations I’ve ever seen but also some wary means of intruder-detection.

I couldn’t resist exploring, all the time listening for other footfalls and the noise of a rifle cocking. Near the northeast of the clearing, zinging with a keen sensory acuity that had been stimulated by the mystery and the gravelled delicacy of the place, I ventured over to a covered contraption. Under a timber structure that I can best describe as a free-standing rustic car-port in style and proportions worthy of epithets like ‘minimalist’ and ‘zen’, an old wheel-less truck was installed on blocks. From the truck’s unimpeded back axles several heavy drive-belts extended in different directions across the compound, connecting to blade-benches and sawpits. Evidently you could start the truck, slip it into gear and thereby have an entire sawmill humming and zinging, complete with a feature whereby one driver-belt conveyed sawdust out to a fragrant disposal-pit on the southern edge of the site.
Panning to the left, I noticed there was a small wooden shack nearby. Well, it was more like a roofed box, two metres long, one metre wide, the height of a man standing. Peering through the door, I saw that it was an enclosed bed, empty right now but installed there at the centre of the compound, insulated from intrusion by sixty paces across the gravel on all sides. From the bed, one had a direct sightline to the main sawpit. Alongside the bed, a car battery was connected to a radio that sprouted an Alexander Calder type of aerial.

As the sun waned, I had time to discover just one more detail. Out on the western boundary of the clearing, behind a thin stand of gum trees, there was another simple structure that you could barely see from the precinct-proper. It was a smaller version of the ‘car-port’ that housed the truck. As I closed in on it, I could see that it was a kind of miniature temple. Suspended from the rafters or balanced on plinths made from logs, there were maybe thirty ‘relics’ of the forest, startling things, some of which might have been macabre except that their relative placement and scale and the particular qualities of each object all mitigated systematically against repulsion. There was a delicate skeleton of a small marsupial coiled as if about to spring back to fleshy life; there was a split rock showing a fossilised fern-print; a melted bakelite telephone; the bonnet mascot of an old Chevrolet; a shiny clean skull that might have been of a cat but was larger than any domestic feline I’d ever seen. All these things were arrayed like treasures the forest had yielded to a dutiful fossicker. The collection was strange, but it was special.

Devotional. That word came to me again. Each of the roofed structures I’d found were like emotional compression-chambers. Their placement, their volume, their material, their contents, the counterpoint between the cool grey light inside and the sharper, goldening light outside: all these features rendered each structure into a little zone making a great emotional charge inside this larger compound which was already so atmospheric, so deliberately rarefied and intensified in comparison to the rest of the forest. I remember marvelling at how effectively Muller had made and located these three little aesthetic ‘power-plants’ inside the bigger force-field of his compound. He knew something about rhythm, about establishing frames in space, matter and time; he knew how to manage bounds that off-set relaxation and tension, vacuity and intensity, downbeat and upbeat, the one side and the other side. There was something about the wild and the tame in there too, nature and culture itching at each other. I was thinking like this as I daydreamed in the reliquary.

Back at the edge of the clearing, Eric whistled. Having installed himself on a stump near one of the woodstacks, he’d been jotting in his notebook, taking care to be less of a sticky-beak than I. He called out that he was keen to get away before all the light was gone. As we
trudged to the head of the walking path I turned for one last view of the site. In wide-shot I could see how the record of our visit was footprinted all over the clearing. As stark as a surveillance camera report, there was the single track that Eric had made over to his tarrying-spot and you could deduce everything I’d inspected, how snoopy I’d been, where I’d come in and out of the compound, how I’d breached its porous boundary, brought my strangeness in and bandied it about.

Driving back to our base camp in the last half-hour of evening, we could smell recent burning. The tasty aroma of damp ash. Now and then we could see where a gentle fire had knocked back some of the undergrowth but had not taken to the trees. Eric noted the oddness of the burning pattern. As we turned on to a larger track we came upon a Forestry Department truck. As is usual, we stopped for a chat, keeping the engine running. No, they hadn’t been burning. They were on the way back from road maintenance, as the small ‘bobcat’ grader on the trailer behind the truck testified. ‘Hmmmph, funny’, said Eric. ‘Yeah, funny’, said one of the Forestry blokes, who then bunted his truck out of neutral and waved a gesture as they beetled off, as if to say funny’s just ordinary.

Well, I was intrigued. I badgered Eric to go back the next afternoon. This time we tooted the Land Rover’s horn as we approached the pedestrian path and once we were walking, Eric coo-eed ahead. When we got to edge of the clearing, Muller was standing there, his single line of footprints graphic against the freshly raked ground of the entire compound. He was spry, strong, smelly. Maybe sixty-five years of age, but this was indiscernible, truly. He was plainly suspicious, not to say hostile, until Eric spoke and explained how they’d met years before and how they had a couple of mutual acquaintances in town. Muller relaxed a tad, unclenched his jaw and started talking quickly in a soft brogue that was ‘country Australian’ but sometimes had Irish and sometimes Germanic patterns in it. We asked a couple of times if he had any objection to our filming. He hefted the camera, cocked an ear to listen to its gears whirring, showed some interest in the vinyl dust-cover, and made no objection.

After attuning myself to his morse-code verbiage, I understood that a Forestry fella had told him this morning that there’d been strangers about, but he knew this much from the footprints, two strangers, who’d never been here before, yes you two. Eric explained how we were interested in the history of the forest and how I’d been fascinated by his mill. I added that I thought his mill was beautiful. Muller registered that I was genuine, but it was clear the ‘beauty’ topic was not going to sway him much. I added that I was wanting to understand how everything that had happened in the forest was still producing effects there, still hanging around the place.
This seemed to light him up. He quipped, ‘like ghosts, you mean’. Not really a question. ‘Kind of, I replied’. And he was off. He talked at pace about how he’d see things sometimes at night and how the radio tells him stuff you wouldn’t expect it to. Outside of the specific environment we were standing in, this might have been crazy talk, and clearly he was living a hard life, but it seemed prissy to judge him by any standards I’d walked in with. He was functioning in a place that remains aesthetically unmatched in my experience – except perhaps for some gardens in Kyoto – and he was devoted to it somehow. Sustained by it too, not in body so much as in whatever spirit or mania drove him along day by day.

Once Muller had finished the ghost monologue, I seemed to have licence to ask him more questions. Most of the time he ignored them and I noticed that he had no censoring sieve between thinking and speaking. Living alone out here (by Eric’s calculations Muller had been here for more than forty-five years since first leaving the closest town to take over the family mill when he would have been in his late teens) … living alone out here he’d probably always let his thoughts get vocalised as they formed. Decades of solitude had led to this: he didn’t talk to himself so much as he told the place what he was thinking. Anyway, one of my questions elicited a short, lucid response. When I asked him why he continued to work so hard every day making this worthless cache of lumber, he said that the forest is always offering timber ready for cutting. I asked him about the fires we saw yesterday. He wondered out loud if I ever speak much to the Forestry fellas. I responded I never run into them, except for yesterday, which was not at all normal, and besides, I don’t live around here. He countered with a long stream of consciousness, within which there was some information to the effect that yesterday afternoon he had lit out from the compound when the clouds had come up because it was a good chance to do some firing in a nearby tract that needed some heat in it, because he was confident that the rains would contain the burn exactly as it had to go.

I was keen to get him talking more about this, for he had some fire-farming knowledge and an ecological philosophy. But he wanted to start the truck and cut some timber. So that’s what happened. He got the mill going. And it was beautiful, by which I mean there was an elegance and a design to it all, a sense of its rightness in cohesion but also some enigmas that drew you back to consider it repeatedly. It was loud, acrid and dangerous too. But it was beautiful. He had made it so. Or at least it had become so as a consequence of how he’d immersed himself in the place, in the feedback patterning of action and reaction amongst the trees over extensive time. After cutting some timber, he mentioned to no-one in particular that he was keen for us to go now, and it would be good if we didn’t come back. Which
seemed fair enough to me. So I’ve never re-visited, even though the place has stayed vivid in my memory.

Muller features for a few minutes in the film we made but I know I’ve never found the right context to bear witness to what I think is so significant about him. Straight away, I have to emphasise here that these are just my interpretations, perhaps my projections. As far as I could tell, Muller himself cared not one bit about his meaning or about how a stranger might use his mill for rhapsodies and theories. He had no explicit thesis, no evident need for a reader or an audience. He was no local reincarnation of Henry David Thoreau. But he built his compound. And it means something.

I’ve thought about it all these years and I’m just now getting a better grasp of how remarkable it was, that clearing in that forest. I see now that Muller’s compound and the encounter I had with him helped me understand my notion of the ‘changescape’, this idea I have that there are long-established aesthetic systems that are built purposefully to intensify our experience and to enhance our understanding of the complex dynamics that are at play when our natural, social and psychological domains commingle and alter each other in this world so full of mutability. Like Muller’s mill, a changescape is something predominantly aesthetic rather than pragmatic. Productive of understanding primarily, a changescape is designed to produce cognitive wealth rather than material profit. It helps you think and feel so that you are engaged with a changeful world, so that you feel informed about its maintenance and motivated by its momentum rather than distressed by its entropy.

Muller’s clearing was a superb aesthetic system whose matter, method and thematics were the fragility, mutability and fecundity of the world. It was an exemplary changescape, therefore, a predominantly meditative, albeit laborious, construct maintained and evolving in concert with a dynamic environment. By dint of daily work and thoughtful, adaptive design inside the compound, and by occasional actions (the fire-farming and the relic-fossicking, for examples) in the outside environment, Muller produced a complex aesthetic expression of the cohesive energies and the disruptive instabilities that entangled the forest, himself and the clearing. The mill was a zone for intensified perception, reflection and conception. (And for me it has produced some slow-burn understanding, if not a revelation.) Muller marked an edge against predominant, primary energies (which we can call ‘nature’) and produced a system of prevalent design (which we can call ‘culture’). He worked always with the fact that his creation was brittle. He knew that he must constantly improvise reiterated and ever-modifying actions and reactions to keep the compound composed. He knew that alterations come in unbidden from ‘nature’ as weather, as windborne seeds, as fire, as intruders like
us and the Forestry fellas. And from all this contentious knowledge, power, impotence and ignorance, he fashioned a living, habitable meditation on his place in the world.

Muller’s clearing helped me understand better how the edges between culture and the cosmos are porous and how startling pulses of energy surge within and across us so that everything at any one moment is unlike before, even though historically determined tendencies also govern the continuing cohesion of the cultural systems we have made. Muller must have known this too, at some level, when he fashioned the mill into an aesthetic thing, changing it from its previous economic function. So much hard work must have been founded on a belief or a philosophy. Otherwise, why toil so ardently, when money was not the issue? At some stage he ceased being a miller and became a changescaper.

A changescaper is more concerned with systems than structures. A structure is founded on the permanence and solidity of its constituent parts and joints, whereas a system is a set of contingent relationships evolving, shifting yet persisting through time. A structure is mechanistic, deployed against devolution whereas a system is fluid, in slippery balance with mutability. A system finds this balance when its several simultaneous modes of action, information, remembrance and alteration are moderating each other for the purposes of its survival within the host environment. And a system becomes a changescape when all this complexity is marshalled by human care for aesthetic rather than pragmatic ends.

When something is ‘aesthetic’ it is taken out of the explicitly functional realm and offered in the service of contemplation. By dictionary definition, the aesthetic is ‘perceptible by the senses’ (Wilkes and Krebs, 1991, p. 24). Which leads to another definitive characteristic: so they can be informed by the most comprehensive array of sensory stimulus, changescapes require your presence in them, preferably by your physical immersion in the space-time configurations they present, but possibly also by the imaginative projection of yourself into the scenarios they offer. A changescape ignites your sensorium and cerebellum; and you enliven it with your presence so that the instabilities you cause become fascinating, informative and somewhat constitutive of the system. A changescape works best when you know you are inside it and when you know it inside yourself somehow, when you know it because of what you can ‘grasp’ with your inquisitive bodily senses as they get cross-referenced against your memory and imagination. A good changescape can stimulate interplay between sensation and cerebration, a nervy investigation of space, time, energy and self. You can use a good changescape to feel the options as well as the obligations it presents, to speculate about possibility in a world of uncertainty. A good changescape is a system you can use to contemplate dynamics, to be with complexity more effectively.
In Paul Cilliers’ lucid book *Complexity and Postmodernism*, he explains that ‘complexity is diverse but organised’ and that ‘descriptions of it cannot be reduced to simple, coherent and universally valid discourses’. To know a system, it's best to describe it. And ‘to describe a system,’ he observes, ‘you have … to repeat the system’ (Cilliers, 1998, p. 130, 10). You cannot reduce a complex circumstance to a simplified model or to stabilised essences, for complexity is definitively dynamic, relationally intricate and also evolving. You need to experience a complex circumstance, to be with its changes through time, to feel its shifts whilst also being attuned to the historically determined tendencies and feedback patterns of stimuli and responses that organise it. Or as Cilliers explains, ‘complex systems have to grapple with a changing environment. … To cope with these demands the system must have two capabilities: it must be able to store information concerning the environment for future use; and it must be able to adapt … when necessary’ (Cilliers, 1998, p. 10).

In traditional artforms, this sense of complexity and adaptability is often conjured by means of considered absences which goad the perceiver’s imagination and by patterns of ambiguity and excesses of plausible meaning that allow several valid interpretations to contend in different contexts. William Empson’s *Seven Types of Ambiguity* is the classic study of this aesthetic and semantic plenitude in literature (Empson, 1947). More recently, Andrew Benjamin’s investigation of the phenomenon of ‘incompletion’ in painting has added to our understanding of the importance of an organised kind of ‘endlessness’ in an artwork (Benjamin, 2004). In traditional artforms like literature and painting, the adaptability and complexity occur in a ‘space’ between the perceiver’s self and the artwork, in the strummed intellect, memory and senses of the person engaging with the work at a particular instant. In more recent times, digital-computational systems have emerged that enable an artwork itself – not just the relationship between the work and the perceiver – to transmogrify in response to stimuli and at the behest of active and activating codes written into it. (For me the pre-eminent examples are environments such as Gary Hill’s *Tall Ships* or Char Davies’ *Osmose.* ) In such artworks the adaptability and complexity are to be found in the work as well as in the imaginative ‘space’ between the perceiver and the work. Rather than only being implicit and always somewhat opaque inside the ruminations of each perceiver, the play of relationships and repercussions, activated by the perceiver’s engagement with an interactive-immersive environment, can now also be made explicit in the work itself. Whether or not these digital innovations necessarily make for an enhanced aesthetic or intellectual experience, well, the debate is alive and aloud.

Regardless of whether the mode is analogue or digital, traditional or innovative, this drive to understand the dynamics of ‘constrained diversity’ (Cilliers, 1998, p. 127) appears to be
strengthening in contemporary culture. Which brings us back to Cilliers’ thesis about the most effective way to know complexity. Instead of producing a schematised blueprint or a snapshot of complexity, he asserts, you need to generate an interrelated set of narratives that help you speculate about the endless dynamics of the system. You have to propose ‘what if’ scenarios, ways to sense the probabilities of the situation. You have to cross-reference these probabilities against your own history and against the history of action and reaction in the entire system. In other words, you have to get a feeling for the way the system is tending. As fuzzy as this sounds, it is true to the workings of complexity.

‘Complex systems are open systems’ writes Cilliers. Their constituent parts (including yourself, if you are amidst them) and their dominant actions all change from moment to moment, which means often ‘the very distinction between “inside” and “outside” the system becomes problematic’ (Cilliers, 1998, p. 99). Complexity is not especially tractable to analysis, therefore, because the ‘object’ under analysis is altering from moment to moment. In Cilliers’ words, ‘a complex system is not constituted merely by the sum of its components, but also by the intricate relationships between those components’ (Cilliers, 1998, p. 2). If we try to map those relationships as an active network, ‘any given narrative will form a path, or trajectory, through the network. … [and] as we trace various narrative paths through it, it changes’ (Cilliers, 1998, p. 130). If we were to ‘cut up’ a complex system, we would find that our ‘analytical method destroys what it seeks to understand’ (Cilliers, 1998, p. 2).

This aligns well with my concept of changescapes. Like Muller’s compound, they are engrossing, puzzling, active, reactive, systematic, endless. They facilitate contemplative engagement with mutability. They are lively, which is not to say they are necessarily live, although they can be, as in the case of great gardens or aquaria. Therefore changescapes are ‘Romantic’ in the original and radical sense, as witnessed in William Wordsworth’s The Tables Turned:

Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things-
We murder to dissect
(Hutchinson and de Selincourt, 1936, p. 377).

Changescapes are not anti-intellectual; they are extra-intellectual, nimble, cross-disciplinary and curious about the paradoxically unstable ‘status’ of the world. Dynamic and predominantly aesthetic, they are concerned with perception arising through all available senses, perception evolving through inquisitive immersion in the experience that must be
understood. They require the readiness that Wordsworth proselytises later in The Tables Turned:

Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.

Or as Samuel Taylor Coleridge proposed, there is a way to make art based on a ‘mode of knowing’ that might be deemed ‘intuitive apprehension’. Sherman Paul glosses the discourse in his ingenious study of romanticism:

[For the Romantics,] intuitive apprehension ... was man’s creative power, the warrant of his freedom... Not only did its synthesising powers account for the way in which experience becomes meaningful, but being an imaginative faculty as well, it could directly seize reality. And this apprehension of reality, though mystical in the epistemological sense of making the knower one with the thing known, was not the vaporous emotional state usually ascribed to mysticism; it was a cognitive experience, the liberating power of which came from possessing Ideas (Paul, 1958, p. 5).

A poem, a painting, a garden, perhaps a building: any of these can give form to a set of contentions so that an artwork can insinuate its complexity into you even as your own perceptions and preconceptions also push back to give special valency to the work. William Empson’s famous analysis of the seemingly infinite yields in Gerard Manley Hopkins’ The Windhover might be a good example. By the time Empson has shown us the plenteous ways the poem can buckle, pirouette and take evocative flight, it’s clear we are examining a changescape. (By the way, Hopkins’ notion of the ‘inscape’ is certainly relevant to these thoughts too.)

Some of the newest developments in aesthetic form – those facilitated by computers and digital systems of sound, vision and text – are clearly being used by artists to develop better comprehension of complexity. David Rokeby is one of the canniest practitioners in this new field. Being simultaneously an artist and a theorist, he is both creatively inside and reflectively outside the systems he is trying to know. Rokeby suggests that complexity and its dynamics are best understood through interaction, which he defines as a means by which the artist contrives a situation which ‘reflects the consequences of our actions or decisions back to us’ (Rokeby, 1995, p. 133). ‘Rather than creating finished works,’ Rokeby contends, ‘the interactive artist creates relationships’ (Rokeby, 1995, p. 152). I would add that because these artworks and their relationships are not entirely controlled or securely bounded when participants’ interactions bring new elements into the componentry, the artworks are always
becoming something other than (but related to) what they were a moment ago. They perform explicitly as changescapes. And in doing so, they lead their interactive participants toward an improvisational capability rather than to the revelation of permanent, underlying principles. Forget the quest for Platonic ideals.

Changescapes are not products. They are more like projects or processes, because they are made by, through and for the continuous dynamics that get established between themselves and their perceivers. When they help us understand our existence in a world of change, they tend not to finish.

I've used the notion of ‘understanding’ several times already. It seems a simple enough word. It describes the results of acknowledgement: to stand beneath an experience, to be covered by the experience. It’s an aesthetic process. You conceive of the pertinent elements by first perceiving them all relationally and systematically, through the several channels of your integrated senses. (The French word for ‘understand’ is ‘comprendre’ – to take this with this with this, to integrate component elements.) What’s more, understanding is immersive and reiterative. You comprehend an experience cumulatively, by delving into it and being inundated by it repeatedly whilst also reflecting on it. Being inside and simultaneously outside.

Raising this notion of the interactive collection of understanding, I hope it is clear that complexity can be comprehended only incrementally, continuously, until one ‘has the feeling’, ‘gets the picture’ or ‘is tuned in’. And I hope it’s clear that changescapes get made, maintained and understood this way.

I take some guidance from Henry David Thoreau’s famous paradox: his clearing at Walden Pond was both detached from and immersed in the phenomena of nature and society that he yearned to understand. Or as he wrote in his diary on November 1, 1858: ‘You cannot see anything until you are clear of it’, and ‘you cannot sense anything unless you are steeped in it’ (Garber, 1977, p. 2).

Because complex systems have histories which determine the tendencies that brace the systems against changefulness at any present moment, any study of them must also pause now and then to ‘read memory’, to align the interpretations of present culture with the momentum bequeathed by the past cultural forms. Or to borrow Thoreau’s notion of ‘doubleness’ again, one needs to be able to zoom back and forth instantaneously within a depth of field that connects the past with the present, and with the imminent, so that one perceives patterned continuities operating in concert with change.
By steeping ourselves in changescapes and also getting reflectively clear of them reiteratively, we might understand some of our everyday complexity. Incrementally, we might get a better feeling for our place in the world. It was the germ of this kind of feeling that I first sensed in Muller’s compound. A feeling for how we can make contemplative environments. Meditative places. Systems that fold us into our built but ever-unbuilding spaces. And vice versa.

References

Endnotes
1 Ross Gibson, director, John Cruthers, producer, Wild, (1993), 16 mm film, 54 minutes duration, distributed by Ronin Films, Canberra.
2 See the seventh of Empson’s ambiguities.