

LANDSCAPES IN TIME

Landscape History Chapter Symposium 2012

April 18, 2012

9.00 am – 5.00 pm

Westin Book Cadillac Hotel

1114 Washington Blvd Detroit, MI 48226

Moderators

Susan Herrington, University of British Columbia

Sonja Duempelmann, University of Maryland

REPRESENTING TIME IN LANDSCAPES

Anita Berrizbeitia, Harvard University

Deep Time Made Visible: Charles Eliot and the Metropolitan Park System, Boston (1892-93)

“We find no vestige of a beginning, no prospect of an end” declared the Scottish geologist James Hutton in 1788. With this phrase Hutton introduced the concept of deep time, a time scale far larger than the human imagination can grasp, along with the notion that the present is the key to the past. During the next one hundred years geologists would describe the material constitution of the earth, its underlying structure, and the processes of its ongoing formation. However, if geology brought light into the past it also took us into the future. Modern societies at the brink of industrialization placed increasing demands on resource extraction and therefore heavily depended on the geological sciences for more efficient access to minerals and fuels.

For Charles Eliot, in 1892 geology provided universal principles that explained hidden aspects of visible reality. These principles gave him the conceptual framework for his proposal for a Metropolitan Park System for Boston, and for its future. Furthermore, Eliot adopted representation techniques from geology to break away from plan-driven design processes, and he invented the overlay method later famously used, and expanded by Ian McHarg and Carl Steinitz. He also borrowed cartographic tools from the natural sciences to understand the scale of the metropolitan area, of its novel elements, and its newly understood thick landscapes.

Yet Eliot did not discard all traditional landscape architectural modes of representation. Rather, he used them for new purposes: to reveal deep time. Cutting views through the forest toward the hills and valleys beyond, Eliot made visible a time scale and geological structure previously

unseen by the citizens of Boston. The purpose of my research is to explore the invention of the overlay method in landscape architecture and the role that geological principles played in Charles Eliot's project for the Metropolitan Park System. Based on archival research at the Loeb Library, the Houghton Library, and Pussey Library of Harvard University, as well as materials at Fairsted, and the M.D.C. Boston, this paper will frame Eliot's geological notion of deep time as both methodological frame and eidetic operation.

Margot K. Lystra, Cornell University

Models and Scores: Interdisciplinarity and Conceptions of Time in 1960's-70's Landscape Architectural Representation

In the 1960's-70's landscape architects became increasingly concerned with community participation and ecological change over time. As a result, a variety of process-oriented design strategies emerged. Two of these have been particularly influential in landscape architectural practice. Ian McHarg's "layer-cake" analyses established a scientific basis for landscape design and management. Lawrence Halprin's score based participatory events defined methods for community decision-making. McHarg and Halprin are often credited for significantly influencing their field. Indeed, they both introduced new ways for landscape architects to engage the temporal, uncertain, and multiplicitous qualities of landscape.

McHarg's and Halprin's contributions notwithstanding, much can be gained by shifting attention from the individuals towards the representation practices they espoused. McHarg's models and Halprin's scores were in fact crafted, iterated, and accumulated over time by multiple individuals in various fields of study. Ecological models were linked to the rise of statistical ecology. They employed quantitative methods to chart landscape change, prioritizing predictability and systematic manipulation. In contrast, scores were largely developed in postmodern music, dance, and visual art. Using them amplified uncertainty, creating circumstances in which stasis was unachievable and indeterminacy was embraced. These two forms of representation were conditioned by the assumptions and values of the disciplines in which they evolved. Accordingly, they manifested markedly different approaches to designing landscapes.

The respective histories of models and scores reveal how representation practices adopted from other disciplines brought new notions of time and agency into the landscape architectural profession. Resulting from these introductions, differing attitudes took root regarding landscape's uncertainties and the designer's power to direct change. By charting the concurrent evolutions of models and scores, we can perceive how interdisciplinary representation practices introduced new conceptions of landscape temporality into landscape architecture, thereby altering the field in the 1960's-70's and beyond.

HISTORIOGRAPHY'S ROLE

D. Fairchild Ruggles, University of Illinois

The Alhambra's Court of the Lions: From Islamic Palace to Spanish Patrimony

The Court of the Lions was built in 1362-91 when the sultan of Granada (the last remaining kingdom of al-Andalus) added the Lions Palace to the central portion of the Alhambra. The courtyard with its fountain of 12 lions, water channels, and quadripartite layout is widely regarded as an early example of an Islamic chahar bagh, and today the dust of such a garden can be seen at the site. In 1984 the Alhambra received UNESCO World Heritage status on the basis of its excellent state of preservation; however, the entire palace had been extensively restored in the prior century. In particular, from 1660 to the present, the Court of the Lions went through numerous changes: gardened, then paved with marble, tiled, entirely replanted in the nineteenth century, and finally allowed to die off, which is how it now appears. These phases are documented in published texts and images; yet designers and historians—largely outside of Spain—have persisted in seeing the contemporary courtyard as an authentic reflection of the original fourteenth-century garden.

This insistence on an imagined authenticity stems in part from the way that the Alhambra has been asked to stand in for a bygone epoch of Spanish Islamic history. Instead of acknowledging that five hundred years of cultural change produced its most celebrated courtyard, we wish to see it as a simple chahar bagh, thereby telescoping the process by which al-Andalus became Spain, so that all that matters are the two points in time: then and now.

Stephen Whiteman, Middlebury College

From Traveling Palace to Mountain Estate: Recovering Historical Narratives in Qing Imperial Landscape Architecture

Almost from the Qing (1644-1911) dynasty's inception, gardens, "traveling palaces," hunting parks and other designed landscapes played a central role in imperial statecraft. Conventionally, studies of Qing imperial gardens, such as Beijing's Yuanming yuan (the "Old Summer Palace") and Bishu shanzhuang (the "Mountain Estate to Escape the Heat") in Rehe (modern Chengde), have focused on their final states of development, reached under the Qianlong emperor (r. 1735-1795) during the latter half of the eighteenth century. Modern restoration has reinforced these visions of the "completed" landscapes, seeing earlier patterns of design, construction and occupation under the Kangxi and Yongzheng (r. 1722-1735) emperors as intermediate stages of development, rather than fully conceived garden and palace landscapes in and of themselves. The net result is one that denies the essential nature of architecture and gardens as sites of constant transformation, while hindering the engagement of imperial landscapes as meaningful elements in the articulation of historical narratives.

Focusing particularly on Bishu shanzhuang, this paper seeks to recover the distinctive nature of the Kangxi emperor's landscape, which reflected a ruler confronting wholly different political

and cultural challenges than those faced by his grandson, the Qianlong emperor. Through early pictorial and textual accounts of the site, archival records and other sources, the paper traces the distinct phases of architectural development at Rehe under the Kangxi emperor by attending to questions of the presentation and representation of landscape that have been obscured by later history and historiography. Finally, the paper examines several areas of significant transformation under the Qianlong emperor, including subtle shifts in rhetoric and naming and substantial new construction that represented not a completion of the Kangxi emperor's original vision for Rehe, but a fundamental and profound re-envisioning of the site's conceptual narrative.

TIME TRAVELS AND MYTHOLOGICAL LANDSCAPES

Nurit Lissovsky, Technion-Israel Institute of Technology

The 'Gospel Trail' in the Galilee: A Journey through Time and Place

The 'Gospel Trail'—a 70 km long strip of land in the Galilee—runs from hilly Nazareth, Cana and Arbel, to Magdala, Tabgha, and Capernaum on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. It is the cradle of Christianity, where Jesus was born and Christian ideals of grace germinated. While many of the historical, archaeological, and religious sites are concrete and evocative, the route linking them is yet to be recognized as sacred. It is fundamentally different from the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem that is associated with the last day of Jesus and has become the central destination of pilgrimage and Evangelical practice. The Gospel Trail, associated with much of Jesus' life, remains an abstract idea rather than an actual path. The fundamental challenge of my research is therefore to develop a method for the enhancement and planning of the Gospel Trail, converting a conceptual journey into a concrete route, and binding together disparate places and events, myth and memory, historical narrative and visual image into a unified whole.

The Gospel Trail aims at connecting significant sites, anchoring the historical narrative and image in the physical landscape. It was planned to cater to the special needs of Christian pilgrims due to arrive in Israel in 2000 and after, as well as offering an alternative "Galilee experience" to Israeli visitors and tourists alike. It aims to serve as incentive for a landscape conservation plan, contributing to economic growth and new ways of collaboration between local communities, site owners and governmental organizations.

Such a plan raises many questions, both theoretical and applied: What is the identity of the Gospel Route? How did it assume a particular image and meaning? What disappeared and what remained in the landscape over time? How can we make the layers of this historical-spiritual landscape more accessible and more visible? What periods should be preserved in the landscape and how? Should the landscape be conserved, restored or re-made to represent a particular temporal image? For whom, and based on whose values? This paper presents answers to some of these questions.

Elizabeth Kryder-Reid, Indiana University Indianapolis

Marking Time: The Perception and Representation of Time in California Mission Gardens

Each of the twenty-one missions constructed from 1769-1823 by Franciscans and Native American “neophytes” along the California coast and inland valleys has some form of a “mission garden” as part of the contemporary landscape. These ornamental gardens, in contrast to the more utilitarian uses of the landscape during the colonial era, were first constructed in Santa Barbara in 1782 and continued to be built throughout the twentieth century in the central courtyards and forecourts of the missions. Using historical documentary and visual evidence, as well as analysis of the contemporary sites, this paper analyzes features such as sundials, inscriptions, memorials, and ruins (both real and fabricated) as physical, metaphorical, and metaphysical markers of time. In this construction of time, past, present, and future are implicated both in the gardens’ design elements and in their reception by those who produced and consume the landscape. Specifically, the gardens are cast as peaceful, beautiful oases in which visitors can “step back” to a simpler time. They commemorate the lives lived and lost in the missions, and they signal the biblical associations of the cloister gardens as Edenic sanctuaries and portents of a paradise yet to come. The time markers operate in a recursive way to locate the spaces in a broader historical narrative and to signify history in contemporary commentary. Even as the missions are promoted as iconic sites in the state's origin story, these time markers in the mission garden operate to mediate contradictory meanings of the sites' colonial heritage.

LANDSCAPES, NATURE, AND DESIGN IN TIME

Robert E. Grese, University of Michigan

Time and Change in the Landscapes of Jens Jensen

The landscape designs of Jens Jensen (1860-1951) were intended to celebrate the passage of time, the dynamics of plant growth and natural succession. He emphasized the changing cycles of light over the course of a day, seasonal variations in foliage color and texture, and the successional transitions from open prairie to woodland groves. Yet many of his landscape designs fell victim to changes he could not have anticipated. Some were changed deliberately by owners while others were overly managed to the extent they lost the naturalistic character Jensen tried to emulate. Some parks or gardens were perceived as natural landscapes requiring little or no care and as result lost many of the subtle design features Jensen intended. He also could not have anticipated diseases that killed key plant species such as the American elm or the spread of aggressive non-native species that have invaded many of the quasi-natural landscapes he created during his career.

This study compares the fate of several key projects in Jensen’s career, evaluates changes that have occurred with time, and reflects on future management strategies for preserving the

dynamic qualities of landscape that Jensen intended. These projects include Fair Lane, the Henry Ford Estate in Dearborn, Michigan, designed by Jensen from about 1913 through 1920; the grounds of the Edsel and Eleanor Ford House in Grosse Pointe Shores, Michigan designed by Jensen from about 1926 through the mid-1930s with some modifications by Marshall Johnson, his son-in-law in the 1950s; Lincoln Memorial Garden in Springfield, Illinois designed from 1934-1936 with periodic advice given by Jensen throughout his remaining years; and his family retreat and later school The Clearing in Ellison Bay, Wisconsin which he continuously shaped from his purchase of the property around 1919 until his death in 1951.

Kathleen John-Alder, Rutgers University

Processing Natural Time: Lawrence Halprin and The Sea Ranch Ecoscore

The landscape architect Lawrence Halprin believed that form, like purpose, evolves— emerging via a series of incremental modifications impressed upon the landscape by human action. In notebooks 1959-1971 he compared human settlement patterns to the natural process of erosion, observing that just as a stream of water slowly cuts its way through bedrock until it forms a deep canyon sheltering an intricate biological community, ideal settlements are shaped by “human-helped erosion.” First, a structure is carved from the natural materials of the land, then another, and so on. For Halprin, the ensemble arising from this slow accretion displayed a “sense of inevitability,” and an “alive, almost biological, quality.”

In the *RSVP Cycles: Creative Processes in the Human Environment* (1969), Halprin recast this natural history into a new evolutionary order defined by systems theory. He coined the term “ecoscore” to reference diagrams that illustrate naturally occurring environmental chronologies. Halprin dramatically illustrated this concept using an ecoscore created for The Sea Ranch, which consists of four interrelated timelines that spiral outward from the distant geologic past, through the present, and into an unknown future. One of the most striking aspects of the ecoscore is its linkage of human agency and natural process to an evolutionary subtext through the questions it poses. What environmental path should humanity take? What marks should it leave along the way? And how will these marks influence society’s long-term future?

This essay explores the perception of physical time as represented by The Sea Ranch ecoscore. To do so, it draws upon Halprin’s writing and sketches, archival material, and the personal recollections of several members of the original design team. Emphasis is placed on the contributions of the cultural geographer Richard Reynolds, whose site analysis established the existing landscape to be the dynamic product of contingency and differentiation.

LANDSCAPES AND PERCEPTIONS OF TIME

Michael R. Allen, Preservation Research Office, St. Louis, Missouri
Nora Wendl, Portland State University

After Pruitt-Igoe: Narratives of an Urban Forest as Cultural Resource

This paper historicizes the site of the former Pruitt and Igoe housing project and offers an alternative narrative to its normative architectural history, which holds the dramatic demolition of the towers as the end of the utopian promises of modernism and public housing. In the 40 years that have passed since the start of demolition at Pruitt-Igoe, the site has slowly evolved into an urban wilderness. Of the original 57 acres, 33 are owned today by the city and comprise a dense volunteer forest whose passive naturalism belies its associations with both the demolition—that was filmed for local television, that dramatically appears in the film *Koyaanisqatsi* and that exists still on YouTube today—and with the looming redevelopment plans for the near north side of the city. Though lush and overgrown, the landscape still contains recognizable architectural remnants from Pruitt-Igoe, including original paving, an electrical substation, a mid-century modern school building and a lone streetlight. A recent documentary film, *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth*, opens with footage of the present, and arguably “un-iconic,” landscape, foregrounding the story of the housing complex with an examination of its current condition.

Thus the landscape after Pruitt-Igoe has begun its own journey into filmic iconography. The public tours of the site led by local historians and artists lead to varied cultural interpretations of the site’s current condition. Alongside these present-day incursions is an ideas competition recently launched for the site’s future, “Pruitt Igoe Now,” co-organized by the authors and embracing new cinematic proposals alongside the ideas of other creative disciplines. Taking advantage of this present moment of benign neglect—before the site is altered through development or sale to a private party—the authors explore this landscape in time: past, present and future.

Janike Kampevoid Larsen, Oslo School of Architecture and Design

Geologic Presence in a Twenty-First-Century Wilderness Garden

An interest in geology is re-emerging in the contemporary interpretation of both the human-made and the natural environment. In Norway this interest becomes apparent in the Tourist Route Project (TRP), a project that has established 18 tourist routes throughout the country. Many of the project’s architectural installations stand in a national romantic tradition of viewing nature. In fact, the TRP turns the Norwegian wilderness into one large-scale landscape garden where undulating roads allow for splendid views marked by architectural viewing platforms. Some projects, however, represent a shift to a post-national preoccupation with land, geological presence and materiality.

This paper will show how the proposed plan for a promenade on the inside of the mountain Torgghatten—a project that builds upon the eighteenth-century fascination with geology—deconstructs the TRP as a panoramic project and in contrast to the TRP draws attention to the mountain’s geology. This new attention to geology will be discussed as a post-national design approach using Michael Fried’s notions of absorption and theatricality. The paper will also reveal how some TRP projects embraced the geology of their site, connecting them to the nineteenth-

century expeditions and to the nineteenth-century photographs by William Valentine, Axel Lindahl and Knut Knudsen who photographed glaciers, screes, moraines, as well as the road cuts and tunnels of the early road building projects. At the time travellers were preoccupied not only with beautiful views, but also with geological formations that materialized the passing of time.