Landscape Aesthetics,Models And History

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ABSTRACT: In the past decade or so architects have been arguing for more performative , practice-oriented and non-representational accounts of the ways in which people encounter, move through and inhabit landscapes, spaces and places. In this paper I argue that these theoretical concerns should also prompt architects to explore the fairly long history of critical commentaries and aesthetic interventions by writers, artists, and landscape practitioners who have shown a sensibility to movement and embodied practices in the landscape. The paper then examines how landscape architects focused their attention on the movements, speed and visual perspective of vehicle drivers in their arguments for the landscaping and design of motorways. The paper examines how landscape architects pushed for a functional modernism to be constructed around the movements and speed of motorists.

Keywords: Architect,aesthetics,model,landscape

Introduction

Changes in the disciplines of ecology and history imply changes in how we define the "nature" and "history," and therefore in how we "preserve" natural and cultural features as cultural landscapes. But what happens to nature and history when we try to preserve them (in other words, what are really trying to preserve? The term "cultural landscape" was coined by cultural geographer Carl O. Sauer in the 1920s, and much of the fundamental literature and research (although interdisciplinary by its nature) has been done by geographers, such as W. G. Hoskins, J. B. Jackson, John Stilgoe, Jay Appleton, D. W. Meinig, Denis Cosgrove, and others.(Relph,981)

Much cultural geography has taken the "vernacular landscape" as its subject—that is the everyday landscapes of countryside, towns, and (less often) cites. How has cultural geography analyzed and transformed the meanings of "landscape," and how has this research affected the management and the design of what we call cultural landscapes, or more simply.

Some scholars are describing "new paradigms," or theoretical constructs, in ecological science that recognizes the importance of history in understanding and managing ecosystems. What are new paradigms (in both ecology and public history), and are they related? How does the (relatively new) idea of the cultural landscape fit into these intellectual developments?

The hypothesis that landscape architectural education is more effective if it has a philosophic foundation of meanings and values revealed through a comprehensive understanding of landscape aesthetics and an environmental ethic generated this study.

The study of landscape involves a paradox. Landscape is all-embracing - it includes virtually everything around us - and has manifest significance for everyone. Most scholarly disciplines and practical enterprises impinge on it one way or another. Indeed, we all make our homes, do our work, and experience life in what we term landscape. It would be difficult to imagine a topic of greater importance than our relations with the world around us, and in all it's natural,altered, and man-made variety.Yet nothing is known of landscape as a totality (.Lowenthal, 1986,)

Landscape architects encounter the landscape asprofessionals daily. They create practical expressions oflandscape aesthetics through their preservation, emulation and construction of landscapes. As professionals, their work reflects contemporary theories of landscape aesthetics which encompass whatever meaning and value the society hasof the landscape. Thusly, the landscape architect plays both an active and a reflective role in the definition ofa landscape aesthetic.

The professional schools of landscape architecture must prepare their graduates for professional practice as well as provide them with the substantive knowledge that the field employs. Access to a theory of landscape aesthetics which reflects the meanings and values which contemporary society gives to the landscape would aid communication between the landscape architect and his clientele. It would make the practical expressions of the landscape architect both an expression of and a reflection upon the landscape

of human experience. It would set the landscape architect apart from those who merely landscape, however noble that endeavor.

Landscape architects, and many landscape architectural students, have an intuitive knowledge of landscape meanings and values; moreover, theories of landscape aesthetics are taught within the historical survey courses offered in all professional degree curricula, and environmental ethics are taught within course offerings on professional practice.

Perhaps it is true that the practical and ordinary concerns of human need, economics and politics bring about most designed environments; it may be that statements of aesthetics and ethics are added to designed environments afterward as a form of rationalization; but it is also possible that what designers bring to these environments is the power of an idea made concrete and visible, an idea that may alter human need, question economics and change politics. While contemporary landscape architects often think of themselves as pawns of financial and real estate moguls, they have at their disposal an immensely valuable tool - the ability to conceptualize and guide construction of a yet unseen landscape which gives to an idea a physical presence.

Landscape aesthetics encompass a means of making this tool of conceptualization and implementation more obviousand integral to the practice of landscape architecture. Atheoretical foundation for practice which increases thesocial value of landscape architectural services throughthe advocacy of aesthetic theories and ethical practice canproduce professional landscape architects who are moreaware of their potential contribution to the designedenvironment. A group awareness of the potential of theprofession, combined with the individual, substantive skills needed for efficacy, will do much to empower thosewho design the landscape.

Christian Norberg-Schulz has written in his book,Genius Loci, that the existential purpose of building isto make a site become a place," and in doing so to uncover the potential meanings of a site. He calls this processthe "self-realization" of a site; meaning is uncovered ,illuminated and "kept" through man's intervention. (Norberg-Schulz, 1978, 18) Perhaps in the idea of "geniusloci," as interpreted by the existential genius of thedesigner, is the foundation for a synthesis of theories oflandscape aesthetics and environmental ethics into thebuilt environment. Such a built environment wouldilluminate" the potential of each natural environment.

This would in turn produce an authentic landscape architecture, a built landscape which reflects the values of those that have created it, and inspiration to those whoin turn "care" for it.The stance that a. society takes toward an aesthetic determines the appearance of the physical artifacts that it produces, preserves and leaves as its legacy. It is through aesthetic objects that historians attempt to reveal the culture of a society in much the same way that anthropologists speculate on the tools and functional objects found at an excavation site. Since antiquity much of what constitutes our theories of aesthetics is traced from the ancient Greeks who are attributed with interest in the essential harmony of objects, a sense of proportion and reflections upon the purpose of art and art works.

Platonic reflections on the nature of truth and its relationship to beauty led the Greeks to the god-like ideal" which serves as the basis of both truth and beauty.Logic and aesthetics become a means of relating god and man. The "ideal" emerges from the very "idea," or initial conception of an object. Kocklemans writes with regard to Platonic theory, "The beautiful elevates us beyond the sensuous and bears us back into what is true - the idea".

Aristotle linked knowledge, skill and talent in the production of art works differentiating art from science.Again Kocklemans writes, "art is distinguished from science by the fact that the former is concerned with what comes to presence, whereas the latter deals with what is."
Here aesthetic theory attempts to deal with the issue of essential being or essence versus utility. The art work was not only considered to be separate from the utilitarian object, but also of a lower purpose since it only hinted at its true presence, the "ideal".

An aesthetic theory developed among the ancient Greeks, nature and the landscape became more prominent in their thinking. The Stoics contributed much to theincorporation of unaltered nature into aesthetic theory asa reflection upon the relationship between aesthetics andethics. Beauty was linked to morality and virtue.

Plotinus is credited in the Enneads with the idea of beautybeing an absolute and permanent quality without relativity.The source of beauty is spiritual with art objects reachingout toward this spiritual, natural ideal. "Thus the artshave a inherently religious character; art objects express the wisdom of the divine." Landscapearchitect and author, Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe writes,

The temple was the pure manifestation of thesearch for proportion, secure and serene in its
sense of cosmic order. It was a microcosm of theorder of heaven brought to earth, and in its aloofness was primarily an object to be seen andnot used, except by priests. No Greek building attempted to dominate

the landscape, but ratherto be associated with it as though the elements,wild though they might be, yet had someunrecorded harmony. (Jellicoe, 1975, 117)

The classical ideal of the Greeks remains important tothe present, not only as the foundation of Romanarchitecture and Renaissance art, but also as thephilosophical basis for the subsequent development ofseventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century aesthetictheories in the West. The Ten Books of Architecture byVitruvius remains an influential work. The relevance ofthis work to the present can be seen in the followingreflection on the plight of the architect as a generalistin a world of specialists, Still, it is not architects alone that cannot inall matters reach perfection, but even men who individually practice specialties in the arts do not all attain to the highest point of merit.

Therefore, if among artists working each in asingle field not all, but only a few in an entiregeneration acquire fame, and that withdifficulty, how can an architect, who has to be skillful in many arts, accomplish not merely thefeat - in itself a great marvel - of beingdeficient in none of them, but also that of surpassing all those artists who have devoted themselves with unremitting industry to singlefields? (Morgan, 1960, 11)

Indeed it was the logic and thought of the Greekswhich were often synthesized in the writings of the greatthinkers of the Middle Ages including Augustine and ThomasAquinas. However, it was in the works of the Renaissancethat the Greek ideal reached expression in the concreteforms which survive until today, delighting tourists aswell as scholars. This universal attraction and sense, orfeeling, of beauty which is associated with the viewing ofRenaissance art and architecture introduces the major epochin the evolution of a landscape aesthetic in the West, thegreat gardens of western Europe.

In the Renaissance, landscape became the subject ofart evolving away from its perception as the arena ofnatural peril to the site of the pleasantly mysterious andundomesticated. This delight in the vagueness of nature was in counterpoint to the mathematical order of architecture. Sir Bannister Fletcher writes of Alberti's contribution as "an architectural aesthetic based on order and proportion, extending Pythagorean whole-number musicalratios to the visual arts." (Musgrove, 1987, 848(However, even the natural landscape of art was in control.

Finally we come to the pictures...anyone wholooks at them in a receptive mind must surely betouched by their exquisite poetry. They are aperfect example of what old writers on art usedto call "Keeping." Everything is in "Keeping"; there is never a false note. Claude (Lorrain(could subordinate all his powers of perceptionand knowledge of natural appearances to thepoetic feeling of the whole.

Couched within the Renaissance accomplishments of theintegration of architecture and site, proportion, order andKept" nature is the seed of several influential treatiseson aesthetics. In 1735, the German philosopher A.G.Baumgarten suggested a new discipline by the name ofaesthetics. He offered the following as an explanation:aesthetics is the science of sensuousknowledge... it is a logic of an inferior kind; yet it does address truths which are notcontradictory to those discovered by philosophyand, thus, these truths can be added to those brought to light by reason... (Kockelmans, 1986,)

In Great Britain David Hume and Edmund Burke developedtheir ideas of the perceived world, the psychology of artand the creative process. Burke's treatise, APhilosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of theSublime and the Beautiful, published in 1757 can becombined with the essay by Uvedale Price, Essay on thePicturesque. published in 1794 as a theoretical basis forthe English Landscape Movement. Indeed, Price's essayincludes critiques of the landscapes created by bothWilliam Kent and Lancelot "Capability" Brown. (Appletonر) 1975)

Indeed, the criticism of the works of hispredecessors encouraged Sir Humphrey Repton to publish hisfour works on the theory and practice of landscapegardening.William Kent emerged in England as the landscapegardener who "saw that all nature was a garden." In hiswork for the artist and poet Alexander Pope, Dorothy Stroudwrites that,the poet's dictum that "all gardening islandscape painting" was one which Kent made hisown, freeing garden design from the last tracesof formality, and in doing so creating three dimensionalpictures in which woodland and lawn, water and the contrasts of light and shade, werehis media. (Jellicoe, Goode and Lancaster, 1986, 310)

With regard to Brown, Dorothy Stroud writes that he had noserious rival as the successor to Kent. While notpublishing, letters give insights into the theories behindhis practice. He described good landscape design as "placemaking," and he asserted that attention to details wouldensure a garden "exactly fit for the owner, the Poet andthe Painter." (Jellicoe, Goode and Lancaster, 1986, 74).

The evolution of the built landscape into the aestheticlandscape was complete. Landscape and the arts were unitedas in the words of Alexander Pope so often quoted bylandscape architects.

Islamic view

Most literary sources seem to suggest that in the vew of Islamic architecture ,the individuals andteams in charge of developing architectural designs did notnecessarily possess technical knowledge related to building.Architectural design, as a series of decisions aimed at definingforms ,appears to have been developed independently of any of the tech-nical knowledge that was ultimately necessary for theconstruction of the proposed buildings. Of course, such a designprocess would have been viable only to the extent that theplanned projects were technically possible to construct. It thusseems more reasonable to assume that the client-patron; theindividual or team in charge of the supervision of works; and masons and other artisans all collaborated and participated tovarying degrees in the conceptualization of the architecturaldesign. Such a relationship would account for the well-knownclaim of so many rulers that they were the authors of theirbuildings.

The architecture, in Islamic view , must express unity as its existence: one God, one truth, one existence.The architecture must express Prophetic tradition and Islamic law as its path: the framework for functional programming.

The architecture should be expressive and understandable to all. It should employ a form language that for the immigrant Muslims evokes a sense of belonging in their present environment and hope in their future. To indigenous Muslims it should represent a linkage with Muslims from other parts of the world and should underscore the universality and unity of Islam. To non-Muslims it should take the form of clearly identifiable buildings that are inviting and open, or at least not secretive, closed or forbidding.

The architecture should be ecologically appropriate; embellished and reinforced [by] the natural context; … energy conserving and climatically sensible."

Modernism

The movement from modernism to post-modernism has slowly been reflected in a changing approach to design. The modernist movement has encouraged the perception of the designer as omnipotent artist and creator, making decisions based primarily on aesthetic, financial, theoretical, and political concerns. The move to post-modernism has placed a greater em-phasis on issues, such as social responsibility, sustainability, environmental responsiveness, environmental integrity and human health. The complexity of these   issues is encouraging urban and regional planners, architects, interior designers, and landscape architects to identify research as an essential component of responsible planning and design processes.

Architecture experienced a simultaneous upheaval. Thescientific and technological revolution quietly robbedarchitecture of its poetic content, its role as metaphor.Architecture "was reduced to either prosaic technologicalprocess or mere decoration." (Perez-Gomez, 1983, 11) Itwas within this tumultuous period that the aesthetic ofConstructivism was born almost simultaneously in Russia,

Holland, Germany and France. A movement preoccupied withtechnological and philosophical advances, it wasunavailable to the layman and nature, and was for thecognoscente. David Watkin challenged the moral imperative of modernarchitecture as being both arbitrary and self-serving inhis book, Morality and Architecture. He argued that imagemakingand style are vital to architecture and the viewthat architecture is an "inevitable reflection orexpression of something else outside of its creators" is amyth. However, the prominent Europeans whoarose out of this philosophy, such as Le Corbusier, WalterGropius of the Bauhaus in Germany and Ludwig Mies van derRohe found anxious apostles in the United States. strong, new gospel." (Simonds, 1961, 221) In contrast tothe detached, intellectual architecture of these earlymodernists is the work of Frank Lloyd Wright whocountermanded a still radical, but organic architecturegrowing out of nature. However, they all shared afascination with the discarding of all which had comebefore. Architectural historian, Nikolaus Pevsner writingduring this period advocated that every man must approachevery problem with a mind that is a "tabula rasa," or blankslate, bringing to the solution no cultural expectationsnor assumptions; the form of the architect's buildings wereto be dictated entirely by function.

The crusade for environmental responsibility grew outof the industrialization of the nineteenth century. Cityplanning, social reform, fair housing, comprehensivesanitation, historic preservation and wildernessconservation were born out of the excesses of earlyindustrialists who viewed the environment as resources forprofitability.

The landscape architect was now given the thirdimperative that was to define the boundaries of practice inthe twentieth century. To the artistic ideal and socialmission was now added the role of environmentalist orsteward of the planet. Each of these interpretations ofthe landscape implied an exclusivity of purpose or, at theminimum, a hierarchy of meaning and values. Thus landscapearchitecture

gained a multiplicity of meanings,interpretations and uses. Aesthetics, ethics and sciencebecame intertwined but in war with one another.

By the end of the nineteenth century, landscapearchitects had forty years of practice but no formalorganization nor professional recognition. As withnumerous other groups during this period, credibility wasseen to lie in collective recognition. Following the leadof doctors, lawyers, engineers, and architects, the

American Society of Landscape Architects was founded in ١٩٨٩in New York City with eleven charter members.Involved primarily in the design of city parks and privateestates, these original members reflect the roots of theprofession with backgrounds in horticulture, architecture,civil engineering and public service.

One of the challenges of twentieth century landscapearchitecture is the breadth of its practice and theinability to expose students to all the types of designproblems that they may encounter upon graduation. Theeffective use of case studies in the academic environmentcan provide exposure to a wide range of design solutionsthat may relate tangentially to an assigned studioassignment.For example, the design of a multi-family housing sitemay be well-served by case studies of various, suburbanhousing forms spanning a wide range of sites anddevelopment periods. Local case studies may be used forthey provide opportunities for on-site exposure, but theselocal examples should lead to the investigation ofprototypes and earlier models from more distant locales.

The concept–test model

The design process is described and defined inmany ways, perhaps reflecting the approaches takenby individuals with varying backgrounds, levels ofexperience, and personalities. Donald Schön has doneextensive research in the area of design concept formulation and function. He theorizes that the creation of new design concepts involves the projection ofold ideas to new problems, followed by the assessmentand alteration of the ideas to allow for situational differences(Schön, 1963). He defines a design paradigmwhereby the individual looks for patterns in phenomena,makes use of past experiences in evaluatingdesign options, and tests concepts according to predetermined criteria (Schön, 1988). Lynch and Hack
)1984 (describe a similar process which involvesincremental adaptation" (p. 130): experiences arecollected to enable a cycle of reframing, testing, andinvention.
03/1/2 The analysis–synthesis model

It could be argued that the analysis–synthesis modelhas been one of the two traditional paradigms in landscape architecture, resulting from the influence ofkey figures, such as McHarg (1969), Marsh (1997,(Lyle (1999), Steiner (2000), and La Gro (2001). Thismodel defines the project as a vehicle for incorporatinginformation collected in various ways whileexpressing design proficiency (Oxman, 1986). It is adidactic approach that defines design as a process inwhich standard rules are applied, general and morespecific data are analyzed, and new ideas are developedand tested (Schön, 1988). Akin (1981) describesthis process as the acquisition of knowledge, the applicationof knowledge, and the assimilation or understandingof knowledge. Applying common landscapearchitectural terminology to the sequence, it becomesthe analysis–synthesis–evaluation model described byZube (1980), Ledewitz (1985), and Dutton (1987), orthe assimilation, general study, development, communicationwork plan described by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) (Lawson, 1980). Thismodel involves several important assumptions: researchinformation is provided before the onset ofthe project; the mind collects this information andstores it until a situation arises where it can be applied(Gelernter, 1988); the problem is broken down intoelements; the information is accessed, analyzed, andapplied to the appropriate elements of the design; theelements are synthesized to create a coherent designor plan; and results are evaluated and stored for futureuse.

The experiential model

An alternative experiential model, which concurrently incorporates the collection and application of information to design, is presented by (Akin (1981)

This process involves experiencing the consequences of specific design decisions, abstracting general principles applicable to design situations, applying general principles to specific situations, and assimilating the knowledge acquired through evaluation of the design.

In this approach, knowledge is acquired through trial and error and information is accessed and applied at all points in the process. The process is cyclical as well as logical, and theoretically incorporates a broad range of research techniques, from 'implicit' or designer generated understanding, to 'explicit' or precedent, behavioral, applied, and experimental research.

The complex intellectual activity model

Ledewitz (1985) presents a fourth model, design as a complex intellectual activity. This model describes the design process as the examination of the design problem through the assessment of a series of complex and inter-related components. The problem is solved as a result of the analysis of information provided through research and scientific activity, thereby producing a design. This model is consistent with Gestalt theories of thinking which, applied to the design process, would suggest that the individual would deconstruct the problem into a series of structural relationships which are then reorganized through reframing of the problem, use of similar situations, and trial and error until an appropriate solution is attained.

The associationist model Ledewitz (1985) identifies design as mysterious artistic inspiration, whereby the design process is personal and unrelated to cognitive analysis. Research information is internalized and informs the content of design without conscious consideration. Unlike the structured heuristic or trial and error approach described by Akin (1981), the artistic inspiration or associationist model approaches design problem-solving as free form exploration or mental association. A form of day dreaming, the associationist approach encourages the individual to relinquish control of their thought process or direction, and allow thoughts to wander (Lawson, 1980). Gestalt theorists contend that new concepts are not simply recombined old ideas, but rather have a separate value greater than the additive value of the parts.

In summary, the models are differentiated by several characteristics:

Source of ideas or concepts

Inclusion of a pre-design research phase

Inclusion of a post-construction evaluation phase; and

A holistic, discrete, or interactive approach to problem solving

Case studies broaden the perception of thepossible relationships of house to site to resident andoffer insights into the fundamental questions thatresidential site design should address. If thisinformation is unveiled through a combination ofconversation and analysis, it may prove a more potentinfluence than if it is simply given to the student in theform of prescribed rules and guidelines issued with theproject assignment.

A broad criteria for the case study method includes the following fundamental categories of landscape analysis:

Environmental Impacts- Physiological Modifications and Changes to the Area

Cultural Determinants- Social Patterns and User Preferences

Contextual Issues- Location Considerations and Time Period

Intentional Decisions- Designer and Client Goals

It is not possible to establish an absolute weight to the above factors, although they are listed in the order in which they may be weighted. The diversity of build landscapes is so great that many examples exist which illustrate every imaginable weighing of the above criteria.

Therefore, an initial response to the personalinterpretation of a build landscape should encourage anopen format for the consideration of the availableinformation

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