Land&Scape Series: Landscape + 100 words to inhabit it

Daniela Colafranceschi
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Daniela Colafranceschi
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Border
At the same time, though, a border is a common place (cum-finis) that can become a passage (for example, the via adriana that divided one agricultural property from another were borders): a threshold that permits both pausing (a threshold is "base, foundations, ground" and also "house, village") and relating. The boundary area between an inside and an outside, between us and the world. A place capable of placing us—-in the sense of putting us, positioning us but also of giving us—in a particular condition for thinking about how we are in the world.

In the words of a poet like Andrea Zanzotto, landscape becomes precisely this, "a great offering; an immense gift," as wide as our horizon and as necessary as "the breath of our psychic presence, which would implode into itself if we did not have this corroboration." It is something that lives and changes, which "pricks and again pierces us and of which we are only a sort of bobbin, turning on itself, sewing, or something that cuts." Landscape leaves a mark; it becomes impressed inside us. It receives our signs, our marks. It is essential for drawing the complex welts of our existence. The horizon is the limit—"to sight" and "of sight"—that constitutes us: we are the border, with our body and the entirety of the places we are made of. In this sense, the attention we pay to landscape (as relations with the world we inhabit) and the attention we reserve for the borders that we produce (as relations between different worlds) are, at the same time, a measure of the attention we have for ourselves, as human beings.

Piero Zanini

Choreography

The essential nature of landscape is that it changes. Landscape is not static. Light, colour and plantings vary over time. Water can sparkle and vibrate, sounds shift, and smells, like perfume or the rotting odour of fungus, emerge at different times. Plants grow and flower, and many reach out hundreds of feet—or stay small and inconspicuous. In aggregate, landscapes are formed of communities of plants or deserts of sands or fountains which flow and move. Landscape can be both vertical and horizontal, and variations as time passes can create mountains and valleys. Earthquakes and volcanoes can create chaos. Mountain landscapes erode as melting snows wear down their pinnacles into canyons, valleys into bays, and eventually into choked wetlands. This is the dynamic nature of landscapes! We inhabit these landscapes and our presence within them involves us in the changing process. That has been the case since primitive times. From hunting and gathering to channelling rivers and building highways, man’s imprint continually affects the landscape. Whatever we do, we ourselves cannot remain static. We move within our constantly moving environment.

As a young man and the husband of a dancer, I began to realise that all forms of movement are choreography. All our activities are choreographed either consciously or unconsciously. For that reason, I realised that the designed landscape should not be thought of simply in its visual form. The landscape is not graphic; it is multidimensional, just as our lives within the landscape are multidimensional. In addition, our lives and our landscapes are also sensory. Therefore, to adequately design in a rich and creative way, we must choreograph not only for the movement of the body in space, but also the rich interaction of all the senses: sound, smell, touch, as well as the visual.

Like a theatre set, the landscape wants to be designed interactively with the movements and activities of people within it. The two are mutually interdependent. The idea of using choreography as a way to design for movement within the landscape demands a special attitude and special tools. As we think about a plaza within a city, for example, we need to consciously think about its activities. Movement through the space requires analysis of speeds; sitting, strolling, bicycling and skateboarding.

We must contemplate how the plaza itself will react to these movements during the day,
Collage

"Collage is the juxtaposition of disparate things and the 20th-century mode of manifesting paradox : par excellence."

Lebbeus Woods

In art, collage is the process of gluing down fragments of paper onto a surface, often unified with lines and colour. Invented by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque during their Analytical Cubist phase, it involved introducing cut-out pieces of newspaper and pre-printed material into their painted compositions. The technique was later adopted by Dadaist artists such as Kurt Schwitters and Max Ernst. However, this latter use was associated more with notions of chance and randomness. For example, Hans Richter recounts the apocryphal moment when a frustrated Hans Arp tore one of his paintings to shreds and, before leaving his studio, threw its pieces into the air. On his return, Arp realised that the chance abstract pattern created by the fallen fragments had achieved a power of expression that his earlier efforts had failed to achieve and glued all the pieces to the floor. The Dadaists also used "found" images to create irrational conjunctions, deliberate spatial disharmonies and incongruities of scale. Siegfried Giedion questions the idea that collage was invented by the Cubists. He describes Antoni Gaudi’s mosaic of broken pieces of glazed tiles on Barcelona’s Guell Park sitting as exemplifying a form of collage that predated that of Picasso and Braque by more than a decade. However, the use of collage in architectural design is widespread. Here, exploiting both chance and deliberation, it is used to heighten visual engagement in the presentation of an idea and, more importantly, to release hidden associations in the issues of a design project. Also, the manoeuvring of painted paper elements, their trial arrangement, and ultimate sticking down in the manner of Henri Matisse, has been associated with those architects who exercise a type of free-form planning. The ability of collage to transform old meanings into new ones has, in the words of Lebbeus Woods, become a convention. "[...] permeating consumer culture, advertising, fashion, movies, and postmodern architecture."

Tom Porter


Connections

The Jungian psychoanalyst, Dr. Joseph Henderson, has written about archetypal images, which he classifies into two types. The first is a centred image, and the second is the image of liberated movement. Centred designs have a fixed point from which everything else is placed at a suitable distance. Linear design always moves beyond any fixed point in the search for new and different opportunities. Centred images are typically mandala forms, somewhat like the plan for a walled city. Linear images, on the other hand, reach out and form networks, linkages, and connections to long vistas and provide, as

Dr. Henderson says, "new and different levels of experience." My own practice is devoted to this aspect of landscape design that I call the landscape of experience. Linked to the choreography of landscape, it accepts the basic attitude of people in motion as the germinator of life in a landscape of extensions, rather than a landscape of fixed certainty. (See Choreography)

In an urban situation, the movement of people through streets and thoroughfares provides a typical example of landscape connections and networks. To my eye, the most exciting and beautiful cities are those whose linkages through streets, past fountains and squares, along rivers, and between neighbourhoods, deliver deep and profound experiences. These progressions can be linear, zigzag or spiral, but to me they all signify life. That is what I aim to achieve in my own designs. Paris and Florence are perfect examples of networks that extend through remarkable urban experiences—running beside rivers, through squares and sculptured architecture, zigzagging over bridges. These cities both provide remarkable experiences connecting us both to the past and the present and giving us a variety of opportunities along the way.

The old city of Jerusalem, a centred mandala design.