In Search of a New Aesthetic

by

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
IN
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

APPROVED:

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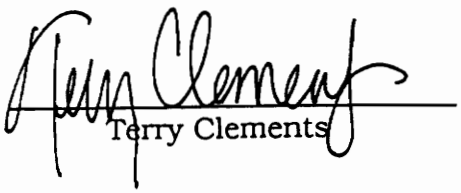

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July 28, 1995

Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: Aesthetics, Art, Ecology, Landscape Architecture

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(ABSTRACT)

The study of ecology is having profound effects on society. It has begun to cause a shift in western culture. People are becoming aware of their impacts on the environment, and are changing their behavior. This shift is now affecting aesthetics in landscape architecture. The validity of the dominant landscape aesthetic in the profession of landscape architecture is being questioned on the grounds of its ecologic impacts. As a result, a new landscape aesthetic is being called for. Five articles published in *Landscape Journal* between 1986 and 1990 outline the argument for a new aesthetic. These articles provide a theoretical framework that is then applied to a body of artwork. The artwork is the result of a 1992 art exhibit that gathered together many "ecological artists". Just as the study of ecology is affecting change in landscape architecture, it is also affecting change in art. The theories from landscape architecture are applied to the physical forms in art to see if connections can be made between the idea and its implementation. Art and landscape architecture are related so that they allow for this type of comparison. The results can be used to inform landscape architecture in its search for a new aesthetic.

Dedication:

I am truly endebted to my parents Gary and Cindy Freeeman for giving me the support and encouragement over the eight years of my collegiate education. They have made me, and all this possible. An education is the greatest gift a parent can bestow on a child; and they have done more than their share. Thank you Mom and Dad for allowing me the opportunity and freedom to know no bounds.

Acknowledegments:

I would like to acknowledge Paul Kelsch as my chair, for all the help and guidance he has given me for this paper. This process has taken many twists and turns, some expected, some not. Without his patience and knowledge I would have floundered even more. I would also like to thank the other half of this team effort, Terry Clements for her tenacity and attempting to keep both my feet on the ground. Also R.G. Brown and his class that provided nourishment and encouragment in those early formative stages of this perplexing area of study.

Also my roommate and long time friend Monica Wright, whom at the time was completing her undergraduate thesis. Those of you who have ever lived with a graduate student when they were writing a thesis know why such thanks is needed.

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Chapter 1- Introduction

A new aesthetic is emerging in the profession of landscape architecture. It is being driven by the growing knowledge of ecology and ecologic systems. This new aesthetic is the first fundamental change in design theory since the mid-eighteenth century. An aesthetic is defined by Webster's as "of, relating to, or dealing with the beautiful."[1] Specifically related to landscape architecture, it is what helps you determine how to design beautiful landscapes and what they should look like. Not everyone has the same aesthetic, but in general the aesthetic of landscape architecture falls under some notion of "landscaping." This aesthetic or dominate "style" of landscaping is changing due to the new understanding of ecology.

Simply said, what is currently considered beautiful is changing. It is changing, from what we once thought was beautiful, to what we now think is beautiful. Broadly viewed we can assume that what landscaping exists in the landscape today, is what most people consider beautiful. It is assumed that people for the most part do not intentionally design, create, and pay for landscapes that are not beautiful. This design of landscape, and landscaping is not the sole realm of landscape architects, and includes anyone that changes the landscape with the intention of improving it, or making it more beautiful. Not everyone's sense of beauty is the same, but when looking across the United States, a general pattern of similarity is noticed. This does not require any special testing, or scientific research, it just requires observation.

Homeowners, developers, and others across the country "landscape" in similar ways. Regardless of where you go in the United States the dominant idea of "landscaping" seems to be placing exotic trees and shrubs in curvilinear beds amidst a sea of lawn. This form of landscaping can be traced directly to its root in the English Landscape School and a romantic Victorian residential landscape aesthetic. These landscape features are not just in suburbia or urban America, but have spread into the countryside. Even people living in the desert feel compelled to plant similar things, so that in their climate it takes immense effort, chemicals, irrigation, and fuel to maintain this perceived landscaping aesthetic. In other parts of the country maintaining exotic trees, shrubs, and lawn is not as labor or chemical intensive, but neither is it beneficial to the environment. At best it is benign. At its worst, it pollutes, destroys habitat, and creates an environment where people are detached from the natural world. With today's growing knowledge of environmental degradation the old way of landscaping seems irresponsible.

The old aesthetic is the one that dominates American landscapes today, and can be traced directly to the development of the English Landscape School. That movement professed a "naturalistic" style of

[1] *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1976. p. 19.

garden design. This style broke from the more rigid constraints of the Italian and later French garden designs. The objective was to perfect the "view", so that the landscape was composed in a "picturesque" way. The influence of landscape painting on canvas was being applied to the landscape. Trees, shrubs and lawn were composed in ways which had little to do with the ecologic systems they altered, they were merely arranged to achieve a picturesque affect. This is not to suggest that sensitivity to the environment was not taken into account, for certain areas of the landscape demanded appropriate plantings. What it did not take into account was the ultimate health of the system being altered. The change from the idea of "garden" design as in France and Italy changed with the English Landscape School to the idea of "landscaping". This did not just involve a change in scale; but involved a matter of what is natural, and what is not.

Formerly, gardens were places to plant and grows things either for food or for beauty, or both. Gardens began in walled enclosures that defined what was "garden" and what was not. Functionally this kept animals, or people out of the garden; but actually defined the realm of man and the realm of nature. Early Italian and French gardens were cultivated places. The English Landscape School broke from the rigid structure of "garden" and "not-garden" and developed a "naturalistic" style that suggested some possible connections between man and nature; and between gardens and their surrounding acreage. Now the differences between garden and not-garden became less distinct. The goal was to bring nature "up to the very walls of the mansion."[2] But the result was not "nature" in a natural state, it was a carefully constructed landscape that was meant to "perfect" nature. All that was actually being considered was the view one had when moving through the landscape, not ecologic integrity, or health. As mentioned previously, this approach is not inherently wrong or bad. It is just that with today's knowledge of ecology, we can do much more to help the environment in how we construct landscapes today. The fact that we are still dominated by a landscape aesthetic from that earlier time period suggests that nothing has challenged that aesthetic. Today the growing knowledge of ecology is challenging that aesthetic.

The result of the English Landscape School is today's dominant landscape aesthetic. We plant trees and shrubs amidst a sea of lawn and we consider this improving the pre-existing natural landscape. We consider this beautiful and advantageous. This idea of beauty has existed now for several hundred years, but now appears to be changing as the result of new information.

Within the last half century, the study of ecology has begun to affect change in most professions and fields of study. It is changing landscape architect's perceptions of the landscape, and is therefore

[2]Rosenberg. p.77.

challenging the dominant aesthetic. Ecology is defined as "the totality or pattern of relations between organisms and their environment."[3] Seeing the landscape as "patterns of life" is causing the profession of landscape architecture to re-evaluate its role and its potential impacts on the environment. We can no longer design only for the visual enjoyment of human beings. We need to consider all other life and attempt to provide for it as well. We are inherently connected with the natural world, and have disregarded this fact for many years, and subsequently done a lot of damage. We have a responsibility to reverse that trend. One way is through how we landscape.

It is being argued by some landscape architects that the current landscape aesthetic does not provide for the optimum health of the natural systems of a particular location. It may suggest certain plant material for wet or dry locations, etc. But traditionally the current aesthetic is concerned with showy aspects and involves the use of plant material, and not necessarily what is best for the site. Maintaining the dominant landscape aesthetic is worsening our relationship with the earth, by its heavy dependence on chemical and mechanical means. Even in organic landscape situations the current aesthetic may not improve the health of a place, due to its structure. Trees, shrubs, and grasses do not naturally grow as distinct objects, they grow together, and into one another. The current aesthetic deems this "weedy" and undesirable even though it may be best for native flora and fauna.

In response to increasing environmental pollution and destruction, a call has arisen for a new, beneficial, potentially healing, way of landscaping, and hence a new aesthetic is being developed to guide us. The old aesthetic was based almost entirely on the "view". As mentioned earlier it expanded from the way a painter looks at a landscape when painting on canvas. Light, form, color and texture, were considered the most important aspects, not the health of the trees, habitat, or wildlife. The increasing knowledge of ecology, our impacts on the environment, and degradation of natural systems is evoking growing concern for protection and care of the earth.

Five articles in *Landscape Journal* from 1986 to 1990 suggest that landscape architects are truly interested in transforming the dominant aesthetic on the basis of our emerging ecological awareness. The authors of these articles discuss issues that inform the developing landscape aesthetic. The articles take very large and complex ideas and focus our attention on specific issues. In some instances physical examples are given to help clarify their discussion. Although due to the cutting edge nature of the ideas being expressed, few examples of this new aesthetic exist in landscape architecture.

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[3] Webster's. p. 360.

A recent environmental art exhibit suggests that the environmental art world is also exploring ways in which ecological awareness can be expressed in built work. Since artists are often less constrained then landscape architects by pragmatic concerns, they are often more able to quickly explore ideas and have more time to engage ecologic issues.

A 1992 exhibit at the Queens Museum of Art, in Queens, New York entitled *Fragile Ecologies*, gathers together cutting edge artists that are exploring the idea of "environmental art". Twelve artists were grouped as "ecological artists" and they provide insight into some of the issues raised by the landscape scholars. Since both professions are concerned with creating form in the landscape, extensive overlap occurs, and the potential exists for an exchange of ideas.

It was stated earlier that the study of ecology is affecting change in many disciplines. The five articles show how it is affecting landscape architecture and this exhibit shows how it is affecting art. Just as the articles represent the cutting edge of landscape aesthetic theory, the exhibit represents the cutting edge of ecologic art. Examining the two together clarifies issues raised in both disciplines and points to questions that need to be addressed to develop an ecologically responsive aesthetic.

This paper takes the ideas and theories raised by the landscape scholars and uses them as a lens through which to examine the art exhibit. It is hoped that with this approach greater clarity can be given to the ideas and issues being raised by the landscape architects. Landscape architects tend to be visually oriented so by using actual examples of a developing aesthetic, this will speed the use and interpretation of a new aesthetic into practice.

Chapter 2 - Review of Literature

"Current Thought in Landscape Architecture"

Introduction

These five articles appeared almost sequentially in *Landscape Journal* .

1. 1986 -"An Emerging Paradigm for Landscape Architecture" byAnn Rosenberg
2. 1987 - "Systems, Signs, Sensibilities: Sources for a New Landscape Aesthetic" by Catherine Howett
3. 1988 - "Form, Meaning, and Expression in Landscape" by Laurie Olin
4. 1989 - "The Expression of Sustainable Landscapes" by Robert Thayer
5. 1990 - "Responding to the Call for New Landscape Metaphors" by Marcia Muelder Eaton.

Together these articles provide a theoretical framework for a new aesthetic. They were not collectively written for this purpose, but by pulling them together, connections can be drawn, and a framework for viewing the art exhibit can be the result.

Ann Rosenberg lays the foundation on which the other authors build. She recognizes that western culture is shifting its entire thought process; this shift is being caused by the growing knowledge of ecology. Rosenberg realizes this has dramatic implications for landscape architecture. Catherine Howett builds on the assumption that a change is now occurring in the dominant aesthetic in landscape architecture, and offers three areas of study that must be looked at to guide us in developing a new aesthetic. These areas are ecology, semiotics, and environmental psychology. Laurie Olin fears a rejection of our historical landscape architecture form vocabulary in favor of returning everything to a natural appearance. He adds to the discussion that these new forms must be drawn from nature, not copied, but abstracted. He offers historical examples of good form as precedent for a serious discussion of formal issues. Robert Thayer explores how these ideas may actually be implemented in the landscape. He offers "sustainability" as a tangible solution to the theoretical discussion. Marcia Eaton questions some of the earlier foundations for this movement. She feels that before this new theory can be applied we must wait for society to change its attitude or these forms will have no affect. Eaton offers the use of metaphor as a way of helping the new aesthetic have an affect on society.

Individually each author has specific goals in mind when writing their articles. They are alike in their perspective that change needs to occur but when grouped together, differences appear on how that change should proceed. The few discrepancies do not hinder the association of these authors. Rather they provide needed balance. The critical importance of this new aesthetic necessarily needs input from all sides of an issue.

Rosenberg - "An Emerging Paradigm for Landscape Architecture"

Ann Rosenberg attempts to use the concept of a paradigm "to focus thinking and research in landscape architecture...into a conceptual framework."[4] She begins by defining a "paradigm" then gives us historical background for the existing paradigm, discusses the paradigm shift, and explains the new paradigm. She suggests applications for this new paradigm in landscape architecture, and describes the new aesthetics developing from it.

Definition of a Paradigm

A paradigm as defined by Thomas Kuhn is "a scheme or model for understanding and explaining aspects of reality."[5] Rosenberg then goes on to say that "landscape architecture does not yet have a paradigm or framework in the sense that Kuhn define[s] the term,"[6] but develops the thesis that one is emerging. What she means is that we as landscape architects have had multiple, smaller, (somewhat) unrelated paradigms previously. The new one being developed, based on ecology has the potential to be broad enough to encompass all landscape architects. She sees a paradigm as a framework, something to guide professional research. To possess one shows maturation in a field and allows people to tackle problems that were formerly unmanageable.

> The shifts from one paradigm to the next are not like the swings of a pendulum from one opposite to another, but rather, they incorporate the old paradigm and go beyond it with a new dimension, a new way of 'seeing' the older knowledge.[7]

When Rosenberg says we do not have a paradigm, she is referring specifically to that framework of understanding in the realm of environmental design. She blames this not on the lack of thinking of landscape architects, but the "general cultural world-view (which) has created a dichotomy between humans and the environment, and between art and science as ways of understanding reality."[8] We as landscape architects, have suffered from this division and a new paradigm emerging in landscape architecture will help to rectify this situation. She hopes that the new paradigm will help to bring together two aspects in landscape architecture that have traditionally existed side by side in an uneasy relationship: "fitting the land for human use and enjoyment,"[9] and meeting the needs of the environment. This separation of Man and Nature is prevalent in Western thought and has caused the lack of an overall paradigm in landscape

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[4]Rosenberg, Ann. 1986. "An Emerging Paradigm for Landscape Arhitecture." *Landscape Journal* 5(2):75.
[5]Rosenberg, p. 75.
[6]Ibid.
[7]Ibid .
[8]Rosenberg, p. 75.
[9]Ibid.

architecture. The needs of the environment and the needs of humans should not be thought of as separate, but as united.

The paradigm developing in landscape architecture is from the physical and social sciences. "This view depends on dynamic interrelationships and patterns, and is far more applicable to environmental design."[10] We can use this shift in the sciences to influence our own paradigm. Landscape architects are fond of claiming to unite science and art, so that if science is changing, so will landscape architecture. Rosenberg then offers an historical account of our development as landscape architects and shows how we have brought on the problems we now face in order to explain the paradigm shift. The new challenge is how to design appropriately in an era of environmental degradation.

Historical Background

Three themes run throughout history that trace our division and separation from nature. They are "1. that intellect is used to master and control nature, 2. to perfect nature, and 3. to care for nature."[11] Rosenberg begins with the Bible and states that man's dominion over nature was given to him by God. The Greek Stoics had previously deemed nature 'alien' because of its irrationality and saw it as something to be used solely for mankind's use. The Christians expanded upon that notion and felt that it was given to them by God. The Renaissance brought about new scientific revelations that increased man's "intellectual processes over the forces of nature"[12] and increased his dominion. This encouraged the period of Italian garden design which was geometrical and attempted to perfect nature and was later "reinforced by the Scientific Revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries."[13]

Rosenberg continues a line of thought through Francis Bacon, Descartes, and Isaac Newton and exposes a world view based on machines and mechanistic, predictable events. Everything could be explained by logic. This philosophy further separated Man and Nature. As a result "gardens and parks were axially centered on the house or palace so that rational Man lived at the center of his rationally planned world."[14]

The Paradigm Shift

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[10] Ibid.
[11] Rosenberg, p. 76.
[12] Rosenberg, p. 76.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

In the 18th century in England landscape design switched to a naturalistic way of designing. The landscape was designed as if it were a painting- "an aesthetic concept that persists today."[15] This is a shift in the paradigm that had the potential to reconnect man and nature. "During this period the Romantics were rediscovering the Old Testament view that everything is good as it comes from the hands of the Creator, and thus began the cult of the enjoyment of nature." This is the time period of Kent, Brown, and Repton, who were the forerunners of Olmsted and modern day landscape architecture. But inherent in this new thinking was still an attitude of ultimate control over nature, albeit in a "softer" more naturalistic way.

> Contemporary landscape architecture arises from this dialectic between the technological and scientific control of a mechanistic nature - the use of nature as a storehouse for human benefit, the concept of arranging deterministic environments for people that will guide them to better morals, better health, and better productivity - counterbalanced by the beginnings of an ecological, relativistic view of nature as a context within which humans fit.[16]

The result of the old paradigm is a world based on technology and industrial machinery, where land is seen as a commodity. The damages wrought by this framework of understanding is causing us to re-evaluate our relationship with the earth.

A New Paradigm

Rosenberg then goes on to define a new paradigm, or framework for understanding.

> This new understanding of the applicability of ecology, in concert with the expanding comprehension of quantum and relativity physics, is revealing a new understanding of the human relationship to the natural world.[17]

This new understanding attempts to reconnect mankind with nature. She says that this new paradigm "is really an expansion of the humanism inherited from the Renaissance."[18] Instead of an alien feeling of nature, the new paradigm expresses a sense of integration and relationship. Humans are still atop the pyramid of life, but that the needs of humans and the needs of the environment converge in what is called "ecological humanism".

> Total objectivity is not possible - science has never actually been practiced that way - and the emphasis is shifting from a preference for abstract quantitative models that work well on closed systems to an understanding of the necessity to study wholes and contexts in open systems.[19]

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[15] Ibid.
[16] Rosenberg, p. 77.
[17] Rosenberg, p. 79
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

This produces a concept of the environment as a larger self. She refers to people not as stewards but within the continuum ourselves, not above it. That which is good for the environment is good for people as well.

Rosenberg uses a chart to clarify the difference between the new and old paradigms. These are not meant to be line for line comparisons.

Comparison of the Old and New Cultural Paradigms:

OLD CULTURAL PARADIGM

-The importance of Man
-The uniqueness of the human mind
-Separation of mind and matter
-Reality is matter as particles, obeying fundamental laws, and moved by the force of gravity
-Absolute dimensions of space and time
-The universe and the organism as machines composed of analyzable parts
-Knowledge through the reduction of phenomena to their basic elements and logical re-ordering
-Reliance on *certain* scientific knowledge
-Objectivity
-Causality, predictability, and determinism

NEW CULTURAL PARADIGM

-The integration of human systems and the environmental continuum
-Interaction and interdependence
-Indivisibility of mind and matter
-The dual nature of the human function in the biosphere-entropic and negentropic [one adds to the health of the system the other takes away]
-Reality is an "interconnected web of relations" that is dynamic and can be understood only in terms of movement, interaction, and transformation
-Relative dimensions of space and time as a continuum
-Emphasis on understanding wholes and systems
-Complementarity
-Complexity and diversity
-Cooperation and synergy
-The fundamental uncertainty of human observation and scientific knowledge
-Multiple or a-causality

Ecology is no longer a part of something to be considered, but is providing the foundation and "guiding principle [for landscape architecture] at the deepest conceptual level."[20] The simplicity of everything being connected with everything else can be elaborated to any level.

Applications of the New Paradigm for Landscape Architecture

Rosenberg then brings up the question of relevance of the new paradigm to the practice of landscape architecture. She states that a design should enhance the integrity of an ecosystem which includes human systems. It is not merely an artistic statement, and should go beyond the designer's ego. It should also "foster an awareness on the part of the users of their own place in the environmental continuum, and a sense of 'connectedness' to both the human and natural elements of their environment."[21] As expressed earlier, morality is changing from "do unto *others*, to do unto *oneself* "[22] in this expanded ecological concept of self within this new paradigm.

The New Aesthetics in Landscape Architecture

She suggests participation in the design process, and participation in the landscape as ways of achieving a new paradigm. She mentions an "alternate design language" and quotes Michael Hough in suggesting edible landscapes, urban woodlots, wildlife habitats and water resources as possible aesthetic expressions of this new paradigm. These places need to be complex but provide clarity- something which is desirable in a humanized landscape.

Rosenberg feels that the role of landscape architects can be defined better as interpreters, organizers, and facilitators, though still artists. She feels that we can no longer make personal statements about design and forms without respect for natural systems. Quoting Michael Laurie 1983 and Jusuck Koh 1981 as saying "ecology becomes the matrix for all environmental design and quality is judged by ecological 'fitness'."[23]

Rosenberg concludes by saying,

> The new paradigm will not be an answer to the massive problems that confront us, but will rather serve as a convergence, a healing of the schisms opened by the Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm that have exacerbated present problems.[24]

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[20] Rosenberg, p. 78.
[21] Rosenberg, p. 80.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Rosenberg, p. 81.
[24] Rosenberg, p. 82.

To this end the existing technology can be absorbed and used by the new framework and create new ways of living. The landscape architect has the best potential as a holistic thinker and synthesizer and can best serve to confront the problems of today.

Howett - " Systems, Signs, Sensibilities: Sources for a New Landscape Aesthetic"

Catherine Howett highlights three areas that have the potential to be sources for a new landscape aesthetic.

> These key source areas for a late twentieth-century aesthetic are (1) the new ecology, which over the last two decades has fundamentally recast our vision of the natural world and humankind's places within its complex systems; (2) semiotics, which in proposing analogies between language and architecture has forced a fresh understanding of the expressive meanings of built form and the devices of architectural communication - sign systems as critical to the designer of landscapes as natural systems; and finally, (3) environmental psychology, including the work of human and cultural geographers on the nature of place experience and the profound conscious and pre-conscious affective bonds that make us respond in specific ways to the various environments through which we move.[25]

Together these three areas can counter the old landscape aesthetic.

Currently we are bound by the aesthetic of the English Landscape School. Howett not only states this but strongly emphasizes it. Even though we like to think we are original designers, we are haunted by "Olmsted's vision of an idyllic pastoral park, quintessential emblem of a civilized world."[26] No movement since the English Landscape School has challenged our idea of what is beautiful and therefore we are stuck.

She states that Americans have a need for a "pastoral retreat" feeling to be conveyed in their landscape designs and that the current dominant landscape aesthetic answers some deep need to pretend we are escaping from the city. This is not said to defend the aesthetic though, it is to show why it is so ingrained. Quoting Leo Marx, most of suburbia is designed in

> an effort to invest [people's] lives with a sense of order and meaning that is lacking in the world of the machine. The curious tendency to find more significance in the seemingly haphazard dispersal of trees, animals, and hills than in the relatively deliberate patterning of streets, buildings, and parks, cannot be wholly attributed to the actual physical character of the two settings.[27]

Howett suggests the study of visual resource assessment is an area where the old aesthetic has had dramatic implications. This area of landscape study is sometimes given "scientific" credibility and objectivity, when in actuality the whole thing is slanted by the dominant aesthetic. She quotes Neil Evernden saying,

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[25]Howett, Catherine. 1987. "Systems, Signs, Sensibilities: Sources for a New Landscape Aesthetic." *Landscape Journal* 6(1): 1.
[26]Howett, p. 3.
[27]Ibid.

> the presumably 'scientific' character of these evaluative techniques actually disguises a 'quest for the picturesque' not very different from that of the nineteenth-century Romantics, with their penchant for seeing nature as a series of 'views' worthy of being made into a picture. 'To ask a viewer what scene is beautiful or admirable,...is really to ask which scenes are of the type defined as 'the beautiful' by cultural tradition.[28]

Howett argues that this is a problem and it must be overcome. The word "scenic" comes from theatrical usage and "implies a separation, a distancing between the spectator and the environment." This undoubtedly exacerbates the Man/Nature division.

Another problem with the old aesthetic is that it gives priority to visual criteria in landscape design. When in actuality the experiential criteria may be of more importance, and that our designs have been needlessly lessened by remaining loyal to the old aesthetic.

> The priority historically given to visual experience as compared with all other possible kinds of human responses to the landscape [is wrong]. We trust our eyes...to form a judgment about the quality of a landscape.[29]

This promotes a disinterested objectivity about the landscape and stands in the way of the development of a new aesthetic. She ends her argument against the current aesthetic with a quote from Reverend Joseph Spence in 1751 that she feels could easily serve as a handout in a modern day planting design class.

> Determine a principal point of view and 'all secondary points of consequence' in disposing the various parts: conceal whatever appears disagreeable and open views to what pleases the eye; conceal the boundaries of the grounds; unite the different parts together; make distant objects appear to be nearer by planting that unites them with the intermediate ground: 'study variety' in the materials at hand to work with - topography, land and water, light and contrasting shadows - breaking up lines of trees, mixing species into little groves; observe how colors relate and only put compatible ones together and so forth.[30]

After criticizing the old aesthetic, Howett offers three areas which can help with the creation of a new, more appropriate aesthetic. Those are: 1. the new ecology, 2. semiotics, and 3. environmental psychology. She stresses that until we engage these areas of study and the issues they raise, it would be absurd to ask what the new aesthetic and its resultant forms might look like.

> These forms will emerge from the play of mind and spirit, from risk taking experiment, and painstaking work. Our task right now is to lay the groundwork, seeking to discover what characteristics such a new art ought to have.[31]

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[28] Howett, p. 4.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Howett, p. 6.

She does state that these forms should reflect "the awakening of our generation of **ecological consciousness**"[32] and defines this quoting Del Janik. Environmental consciousness-

> values all living things and the organic environment on which they depend, recognizing that all life and the conditions that sustain life are interrelated. It asserts that man can be, if he abandons his anthropometric assumptions, a contributor to, rather than the destroyer of, the pattern of nature.[33]

Howett cites an author in England that describes a new way of planting the landscape that may help us visualize a new landscape aesthetc. Nan Fairbrother describes the patterns of a forest edge: the grass gives way to taller herbs, then shrubs and brambles, then small young trees, and eventually the forest itself. When we plant a tree amidst a lawn in the balding sun, we are acting incorrectly according to Fairbrother and promoting the "park-and-garden style."

New Ecology

Howett warns there is a danger in simply wanting to replicate nature though. One should avoid "the monotony so often seen in these ecological landscapes."[34] In the winter when these ecological landscapes take on a less than picturesque appearance, this should not be seen as a disadvantage. She feels there is an opportunity for us to reconnect with nature and be aware of its "desiccation, death, and decay that are part of [the] natural cycle."[35] Quoting Lucy Lippard describing Alan Sonfist's *Time Landscape;*

> It is an image of wild pre-Colonial land in the midst of a colonized and exploited human site. I live near it, and can vouch that it's not one of those unreal projects that has forgotten death. In winter the *Time Landscape* is a tangle of brush, its beauty ravaged and hidden. In spring you watch it awakening, and in summer it's green and lush - though in some ways more conventionally parklike.[36]

Howett argues that it is not necessary to sacrifice composition, or design in the landscape in favor of returning everything to a wild, untamed landscape. Rather we should expand what is currently deemed acceptable.

> Even the range of possibilities for visual stimulation and pleasure have been needlessly narrowed. And we have deprived our other senses and, indeed, our minds and souls, of a potentially richer and more profound delight.[37]

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[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Howett, p. 7.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

Over time we can come to appreciate qualities in a landscape that had previously confounded us. But this will not happen on its own. A cognitive element is needed that will enhance our pleasure in an ecologically grounded aesthetic. Aesthetic values can no longer be isolated from ecological ones, and every work of landscape architecture regardless of scale has to respond to the entire range of natural systems. Only then can the true beauty be revealed.

Semiotics

Semiotics, or signs and symbols, is the next source for a new aesthetic that Howett addresses.

> Architecture can communicate visual and conceptual messages according to the way a vocabulary of meaningful formal signs is ordered, much as a spoken or written language makes sense to us because it follows rules of syntax and grammar in the arrangement of words whose meaning we know.[38]

Through the use of signs and symbols "every landscape we design ought to be in some measure an *icon* of the natural world as we have come to understand it - an ecological sign, or cluster of signs."[39] If we continue to use the same materials and compositions to create a merely pleasant or tasteful scene,

> we earn the scorn of Robert Smithson [an environmental artist] who castigate[s] contemporary landscapes that summon up memory traces of tranquil gardens as 'ideal nature' - jejeune Edens that suggest an ideal of banal quality - as they persist in popular magazines like *House Beautiful* and *Better Homes and Gardens*.[40]

Howett warns us not to start decorating our landscapes with pieces of a Post-Modernist architectural vocabulary either, this is not a way out of our rut, but would drag us deeper in to it. Quoting Joseph Grange, she suggest how we might behave instead.

> When a designer looks at an environment, three principles must be foremost in his mind. First, things are *meanings*, not material objects. Second, these meanings are nodal points of expression that open out into a field of relationships. Third, the goal of environmental design is to knot together these concentrations of meaning so that the participant-dweller can experience the radical unity that binds up these different qualities.[41]

As mentioned earlier, Howett feels that we need to accept death as a natural part of life to fully comprehend the changes that are necessary. Meaning in modern design is lacking for the most part,

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[38] Howett, p. 8
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.

everything is resolved at a glance, the mystery and magic is gone, or actually was never there to begin with. Maya Ying Lin's design of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington D.C. is an example which still has the power and symbol needed to counter much of today's poor design. She quotes Amos Rappaport and Robert Kantor describing what is wrong with design today.

> The problem with much contemporary architecture and urban design is that it has been simplified and cleaned up to such an extent that all it has to say is revealed at a glance. A range of meanings and possibilities has been eliminated. This loss leads to a loss of interest - there is nothing to d ivert or to hold one as a result of lowered rates of perceptual input from sensory deprivation (monotony) to sensory saturation (chaos). In the case of the former, there is not enough to observe, to select, to organize: there is an excess of order. In the latter, there is no relation between the elements, so that one is overwhelmed by multiplicity.
>
> In between, there is an optimal perceptual rate (an 'ideal') which enables one to explore, to unfold gradually, to see, to give meaning to the environment. One needs to roam back and forth - either physically or with one's eye and mind - not taking it all in at a glance. If there is no ambiguity, the eye is attracted only once and interest is lost. If all is designed and settled, there is no opportunity to bring one's own values to the forms.[42]

Environmental Psychology

The third source for a new aesthetic is environmental psychology. Howett defines the realm of environmental psychology as exploring "the affective bond between people and place or setting."[43] All humans, it seems, are affected by certain places in similar ways. Paraphrasing Yi Fu Tuan she says that a child at the beach is much more interested in the physical sensations encountered at the beach than a composed picturesque view.

Howett references Lawrence Halprin as someone who applies these ideas in his work. "Halprin acknowledges the important influence that choreography has had on his designs, affirming process over product, open-ended interactive dynamics over goal-setting and the predetermined channeling of behavior."[44] Environmental psychology has much to do with the flux of ecology and the mental processes that we experience in a specific environment.

Howett sees connections between all three areas in her article and realizes it has in it the seeds of a new cosmology.

> Ecology describes the world to us - great 'nature', including humankind: environmental psychology focuses on the human response to the experience, in Heideggarian terms, of 'being-in' the world: and semiotics analyzes the myriad patterns of communication, including built form, that we

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[42] Howett, p. 9.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Howett. p. 11.

develop in order to express shared cultural understanding of that world - how best to make order and sense of it, to make it our home.[45]

She notes that in history, art expresses new world visions even before the language and thoughts catch up with it. Therefore she feels that the art of landscape architecture has the greatest potential to lead the way.

[45] Ibid.

Olin - " Form, Meaning and Expression in Landscape Architecture"

Laurie Olin builds the argument that landscape forms are limited by cultural norms. He adds that all forms are derived and abstracted from nature, and that the works of Brown and LeNôtre are more successful at this than contemporary twentieth century works. He also puts forth the conclusion that the concern for natural process is paramount in design, not its exact replication, but the adaptation of natural process.

Landscape design gains its strengths from

> the richness of the medium in sensual and phenomenological terms, the thematic content concerning the relationship of society and individuals to nature, and the fact that nature is the great metaphor underlying all art.[46]

Olin sees two incorrect theoretical assumptions in current landscape thought. One is that landscape architects confuse human landscapes and the needs and achievements they embody with natural landscapes and their processes. We are ignorant of formal issues within the field, and we have an anti-cultural stance that disregards aesthetic concerns and their history.

The second assumption is that, that which is considered natural and beautiful has begun to take precedence over all else in the field of landscape architecture.

> Couched in a born-again language of fundamentalist ecology, this chilling, close-minded stance of moral certitude is hostile to the vast body of work produced through history, castigating it as 'formal' and as representing the dominance of humans over nature.[47]

Olin blames not only landscape architecture but Americans in general for a failure to appreciate "formal possibilities, typological repertoire and potential content (allegorical, iconographic, symbolic, and emblematic)."[48] We are blamed for espousing only a problem solving ethic which, although important up to a point, ultimately limits us if ever we are to practice at the level of art. He adds that what we consider possible in landscape design is needlessly narrowed. Olin reinforces this point with a quote from Buckminster Fuller, "the opposite of natural is impossible."[49]

Experimentation in Landscape Design

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[46]Olin, Laurie. 1988. "Form, Meaning, and Expression in Landscape Architecture." *Landscape Journal* 7(2):149.
[47]Olin, p. 150.
[48]Ibid.
[49]Ibid.

Olin begins his section on experimentation in contemporary landscape design by reviewing several modern day designs by people who have attempted to push the envelope of accepted materials. The designs and designers chosen are 1. Martha Swartz's *Bagel Garden* in Boston, 2. George Hargreave's *Harlequin Plaza* in Denver, and 3. Jim Reeves' and Dan Mock's *Williams Square* near Dallas. In reviewing these designs he argues that their materials and imagery in general "will lose their strength and energy over time as they become members of a new class of landscape designs that eschew dependence upon planting or direct reference to natural form for [their] organization."[50] This is a problem. They reference other works of art that were more directly related to nature and in that abstraction and transmission they lose a lot of energy. We in landscape architecture, argues Olin, should be leading a way back towards nature as the source of our designs, not away from it.

Materiality, Imagery, and Composition

In direct reference to materials and materiality he feels that the most gifted designers work with a limited palette. The endless variability of the play of light on leaves alone, could or should, inspire us. In reference to imagery he does applaud the horses in *Williams Square* for their attempt to "rescue rhetoric and imagery"[51] from the past. He equates those horses with Baroque aquatic sculpture, and suggests that designs can include elements that are narrative and figurative, and understandable to laymen. But in this instance the imagery may be too contrived and reduced to the cowboy art that one sees in tourist shops out West. In reference to composition, he feels that *Harlequin Plaza* is not appropriate, for it refers to surrealism and echoes despair, loneliness, and distortion; things which are not to be stressed at the civic level. But all of these things, Olin complains, do not draw their power, their imagery, directly from nature.

Landscape Form

Olin next addresses the idea of landscape form.

> Forms come from form first. Forms do not come from words. They cannot. Words can describe physical forms, but they do not (or did not) originate them; nor can they perform operations upon them. One must be familiar with a repertoire of forms before one can use them. This includes the forms found in nature and the forms of art, our art and that of others - other media, other cultures, and other periods. In nature are all the forms. In our imagination is their discernment and abstraction.[52]

Olin again argues that form draws upon nature as its source. Art and landscape architecture have a body of forms, a vocabulary as such, that we use to design. We put them together in new ways to make something

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[50] Olin, p. 151.
[51] Olin, p. 152.
[52] Olin, p. 155.

new. If we simply put these forms together in the same old way over and over again, we are not advancing the field.

He cites Le Nôtre and Brown as two designers who understood nature as the source of good form. Olin feels that these two men are the greatest designers who have ever lived even though the very aesthetic they ahered too is now being criticized in the field. Their ability to recombine and transform the landscape through changes in scale and to create unexpected juxtapositions is what signifies them as great designers. These two men understood "the fulsome sensual properties of the medium, its expression of the relationship of society to nature, and the centrality of nature as the ur-metaphor of art."[53] Referencing Brown, Olin states

> the meadows, clumps, and belts of trees, lakes, dams, classical pavilions, even the positioning strategies, all existed in the landscape gardens of his contemporaries and immediate predecessors, [but he was able to blend] these elements into cohesive and tightly structured...compositions that were not episodic or disjointed, but plastic and 'whole'.[54]

Olin praises their limited palette of earth, trees, turf, stone, and water. He defends them, saying "if not resembling any natural scene, by [their] very extent, diversity, and texture [they] possess the attributes of one."[55] He knows the criticism of the current aesthetic and adds,

> artificial as they may be, ecologically simplified as they are, the effect is that of being in a landscape larger than oneself and beyond the immediate comprehension or control of oneself, of many of the feelings one has in a 'natural' landscape - of light and space, of amplitude and generosity.[56]

Olin realizes that these designs happened at a time that will never be repeated, but feels their work is truly analogous to natural landscapes because they master the simple detail and have subtle, complex designs. Redundance and proliferation were not part of these designs and are not analogous to nature. It is their abstraction of nature that makes them so great.

Today the world is the opposite of the way it was when these designs were made. Today the world is machined and controlled so that natural forms hold more interest than geometric forms. Previously geometry had magic and power in a world still mostly natural in form.

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[53] Ibid.
[54] Olin, p. 156.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.

> In a world consisting of small towns, irregular construction, straw roofs, and few paved streets, surrounded by farms and wilderness, overlooking broad plains, vast oceans, and dwarfed by mountains, the perfection of a sphere or cube and the order of geometric symmetries were powerful inventions of the human imagination. Today, as an urban culture, housed continuously in a world of crisp Euclidean geometries and surrounded by a surfeit of machined surfaces extending in Descartean order to the limits of the horizon, it is the biomorphic shapes of nature, the blurry, unclear, compound, and complex forms of natural processes that intrigue us with their mystery, promise and atavistic energy.[57]

Perfection in the sense of Roman and Greek architecture, says Olin, has been drained of its energy due to overuse. He thinks Post-modernism remains empty of meaning, as well, and only nature can be the great source of meaning in future designs.

Landscapes and Meaning

Olin next deals with meaning and landscapes. He states that we as landscape architects are interested in non-verbal expressions of meaning. Landscapes

> can express certain things, can possess symbols and refer to ideas, events, and objects extrinsic to their own elements and locus, and in certain circumstances can be didactic and/or highly poetic. How they do this is not well understood. That they do is.[58]

Olin divides meaning in the landscape into two types 1. natural or evolutionary meaning; and 2. synthetic or invented meaning. He uses our National Park System as an example of places that have "natural" meaning. Yosemite, Yellowstone, and the Grand Canyon were saved out of almost religious like reasoning. These places were set aside to provide sanctuary to the public in the full sense of the word, says Olin. He points out that they were established to help heal the country after the Civil War, and have connections to Native Americans. They were also seen as being completely American and non-European, which helped to create and strengthen our own identity as Americans. He reminds us that these "natural" meanings are not inherent in the place, they are projected upon the landscape by people.

The other category, the synthetic or invented meaning of a landscape is exemplified in the Villa Lante and Villa Aldobrandini. Olin notes that the statues and fountains-representative of mythology, invest meaning in the place-"expressing neo-platonic concepts".[59]

> The tradition of depicting and pointing out through the use of recognizable and symbolic elements, combined with the emotive and connotative device of naming things or places to insure the desired

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[57] Olin, p. 157.
[58] Olin, p. 158.
[59] Olin, p. 160.

> association or 'reading' of landscape compositions continued from the renaissance until near the end of the nineteenth century.[60]

Olin discusses the connection between Bethesda fountain in Central Park and the story of healing that occurred in the Biblical story of Bethesda. The healing aspects of Olmsted's park in the middle of a city is exemplified by this fountain and its angel at the center. Olin points out that Olmsted and Vaux did not continue this approach to landscape design but evolved to "a more formal abstraction utilizing landscape structures to connote landscape imagery."[61]

He uses Boulder Bridge in Prospect Park as an example of this. It is "an enormous, crude, and puzzling structure. It is a bridge carrying a pedestrian trail over a stream and a bridal path, unlike anything ever produced by the Olmsted consortium up until then."[62] Also in the park are bridges made of "heavy industrial members, evocative of railways, ships, boilers, and the new heroic machines of the day."[63] These are not the refined bridges of Central Park, says Olin. They have a singular floral motif at the pressure point where the bridge meets the ground, instead of being composed of them as in Central Park. To Olin this represents a new attitude toward life, one that saw "the machine devoted to human and social purpose [and] portrayed as an outgrowth of man and as a creature of nature."[64] A concept of nature and man coming together is suggested by Olin. He quotes Olmsted to this affect.

> When an artist puts a stick in the ground, and nature in time makes it a tree, art and nature are not seen apart in the result...the highest art consists, under such circumstance, (in) making the least practicable disturbance of nature; the highest refinement in a refined abstinence of effort; in the least work, the most simple and the least fussy and pottering.[65]

Olin feels that Prospect Park represents the grandeur and roughness of the American west, the yearnings for peace and prosperity (after the Civil War) and for agriculture and industry to serve the nation to produce gracious livable cities.

Rhetoric and Metaphor in Landscape Design

This leads to Olin's final section, rhetoric and metaphor in landscape design. He defines rhetoric as "those devices that are used to suggest, persuade, or lead an audience to the desired conclusion."[66] But warns Olin, with reference to Aristotle, it is not enough for the artist to demonstrate that a particular feeling

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[60] Olin, p. 161.
[61] Olin, p. 162.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Olin, p. 163.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.

should be felt, "he is only worth his salt if he gets them to have that emotion."[67] He uses gothic cathedrals as one example where the entire design of the structure expresses verticality, of an ascension towards Heaven and God. Olin notes that the discussion of rhetoric in architecture is much more prevalent than in landscape architecture. The problem is that which is being referred to and that which is referring may be the same thing.

> The fact that natural materials, some of them alive, are frequently used to represent aspects of nature and landscape... greatly complicates matters. This is especially so when one turns to the most powerful rhetorical device - metaphor.[68]

Olin defines metaphor as "a figure of speech in which a name or descriptive term is transferred to some object to which it is not properly applicable."[69] It is done in order to see something in new ways, and includes old clichés like using a river as a metaphor for life. Olin points out that metaphors change, grow, and die depending on society, and education, and the knowledge level of those involved. He echoes other's sentiment in the notion that painting and music have come to an end; that which is generally regarded as painting or music has reached a limit of recognizability, in that anything beyond that point is not considered music or painting.

> This is not true of landscape architecture.
>
> In landscape design it would appear that a moment has arrived where many practitioners and students are looking for alternatives to conventions that are perceived to be empty and used up. Some...have turned to the conventions of art. This, however, is to place oneself in a secondary or derivative relationship to the fundamental source of form and imagery in the field, i.e. the world of nature, natural processes, and the cultural landscapes of the past, whether sacred, agricultural, or ornamental.[70]

Richard Haag, A.E. Bye, and Lawrence Halprin are three examples of landscape architects who incorporate natural phenomena into their work. Again Olin reiterates the point of NOT imitating nature, but abstracting it. Olin refers to Bye's design of the Soros garden as being

> truly a composition that could only exist in the landscape medium. It is pared down and yet deeply sensual. Its subject matter is the earth and its surface is delineated by light, the texture of plants and water in all of its forms - mist, water, and snow.[71]

After discussing other examples, Olin concludes in reference to nature, "one should be inspired by it, emulate its logic, generosity, processes, and forms, but eschew attempts or desires to copy it."[72]

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[67] Olin, p. 164.
[68] Olin, p. 165.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Olin, p. 166.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Olin, p. 167.

Thayer - "The Experience of Sustainable Landscapes"

Robert Thayer talks about sustainable landscapes as a product of ecologic awareness, he also discusses their important perception in society. He assumes change needs to occur in our relationship to the earth, and offers sustainability as a positive way in which to achieve that.

Thayer defines sustainable landscapes as

> those landscapes which *tend toward* ideal conditions by *conserving* resources (i.e., soil, energy, water, air quality, wildlife diversity, etc.), as well those which actually *achieve* a long-term *regenerative* capacity.[73]

He arrived at this definition after some discussion of degree and wondered if any landscape influenced by man could ever be considered environmentally benign. Thayer points out in reference to his definition that those landscapes that "tend" toward sustainability are more likely to be products of a designer, where as the ones that actually "achieve" sustainability are more likely to be products of a culture with a long-term relationship with their environment.

Even though we as landscape architects use the term sustainable, it remains a notion that goes against today's culture. "The notion that landscape architects should transcend aesthetics to address issues of biological or geophysical stability is not new"[74] says Thayer. But neither is it the raison d'être of current practice in the profession. Thayer points out that despite our official definition of landscape architecture, our profession "is still dominated by the creation of pleasant, illusory places which either give token service to environmental stewardship values, or ignores them altogether."[75] He says the landscapes we design overuse energy, fertilizer, promote pesticide usage, and waste water. He quotes Michael Hough and Randy Hester saying "they often do more to eliminate the potential for floral or faunal species diversity than to preserve or enhance it. They frequently divide, rather than enfranchise people."[76] Thayer blames clients, developers, and governmental agencies for this fact, but also us, as landscape architects for fear of risking change in expected outcomes of landscape design. The bulk of the work done by landscape architects, scolds Thayer, could not possibly be defined by our own definition of what it is we think we do.

He feels that students have left our graduate and undergraduate programs with skills and desire to make a difference, but have had "their value systems assaulted by public, client, or employer insensitivity

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[73] Thayer, Robert L. Jr. 1989. "The Experience of Sustainable Landscapes." *Landscape Journal* 8(2) p. 101.
[74] Thayer, p. 102.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

to stewardship values."[77] This has pushed sustainability back to it's emerging status of the 1970's warns Thayer, and this is wrong. He blames Reaganomics for some of the problem, but wonders if "we were (are) mistaken to encourage in our students an ethic of stewardship, did we not prepare them for the school of hard knocks?"[78] Thayer answers no, and realizes that environmental problems did not go away in the 1980's but were just ignored and therefore became deeply entrenched. He reiterates that sustainability may help us out of this dilemma but

> it is critical to understand how sustainable landscapes might differ from the normal fare served up to clients, and how the perceptual and affective characteristics of a sustainable landscape may deviate from expectations.[79]

In order to do this, says Thayer, the notion of aesthetics is insufficient. He develops the argument that most of us simply want to make people's lives better with our designs but, "the aesthetic and sensory attributes..are incongruent with other dimensions of human well-being."[80] Thayer points out that a golf course may look beautiful on the one hand, but due to the level of chemicals used to treat such a landscape, may kill you on the other. This actually happened in 1986.

Thayer feels the dictionary definition of aesthetics (the study or theory of beauty) "seems inadequate to describe the ways in which sustainable landscapes might serve human well-being." There are other ways landscapes can affect people, argues Thayer. These include feeling of community belonging, pride, health, safety, security, sense of self, oneness with nature, and emotional stability over time.

> Sustainable landscapes implicitly affect us by not only *functioning* to preserve our resources and ecosystems, says Thayer, but by simultaneously *symbolizing* that aspect through visual, spatial, and sensory means to induce a positive affective response.[81]

So with the idea of congruency of image and action, sustainable landscapes give us peace of mind. With the golf course example says Thayer, the beauty does not match up with the knowledge of what it takes to keep it that way. He uses *Village Homes* in Davis, California, where he lives, as an example of a place with congruency of image and action. In reference to his home Thayer states "in terms of environmental values, we may practice what we preach."[82]

He suggests that "nature" as an idea is changing. Most landscape design has to do with expressing some idea of what nature is, but that idea is changing. With the increase in ecologic, and environmental

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[77] Ibid.
[78] Thayer, p.103.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Thayer, p. 104.
[82] Ibid.

knowledge, the idea of nature is being replaced by the concept of ecology. He also believes that we are dominated by an idea of landscaping which dates back to 18th century England. He quotes Wohlwill, "Today, we are still largely guided in our collective landscape tastes by a pictorial construct of nature - one composed of 'natural' materials and devoid of obvious human influence."

However, today we know more about our landscapes than our current landscape aesthetic reflects. "As technological society evolves, what we *know* about the condition and operation of the environment is increasingly incompatible with what we are able to *see*." [83] Quarks, radioactivity, DNA, microwaves, the Ozone layer, the Gaia hypothesis, nuclear radiation, pesticide residue, groundwater quality, and endangered species are all invisible to our sensation of the landscape argues Thayer.

> We simply do not yet know how to *visualize* fully this expanded construct of 'nature', which includes a myriad of dynamic, interconnected, and often invisible relationships. In short, we have a crisis of *landscape meaning*.[84]

The 'ecological aesthetic' has been expressed by many, but "the visual and spatial vocabulary to express and interpret the evolving complexity and 'invisibility' of nature in landscape design has yet to fully develop."[85] Even though much has been written about and discussed, the world still seems to operate under the old set of assumptions. He says that we are trying to see a new world with an old mind. We have yet to fully comprehend how to function in a world largely of our own making. Quoting Ornstein and Ehrlich he states that "science and technology now make up at least half of our culture,"[86] yet "America still clings to a pastoral image of nature pictorially represented in a multitude of suburban gardens, shopping centers, and parks."[87]

Even though the notion of ecology may be supplanting "nature" as an idea, there are discrepancies with the notion of ecology. Thayer believes differently than the "deep ecologists". He feels that humans must have an active conscious role. The deep ecologists have a more passive approach. He believes we can not keep operating the way we have; he quotes Mollison.

> The sad reality is that we are in danger of perishing from our own stupidity and lack of personal responsibility to life. If we become extinct because of factors beyond our control, then we can at least die with pride in ourselves, but to create a mess in which we perish by our own inaction makes nonsense of our claims to consciousness and morality.

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[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Thayer, p. 105.
[87] Ibid.

Towards this, Thayer puts importance on emotion, aesthetics, values, and ethics. And calls for end to introspection and debate and the beginnings of informed grassroots action!

His call for action though, does not mean he is not concerned about form. He notes the importance of information content in these new forms.

> A positive experience from the landscape then, is heightened by an ability to 'know' the landscape or to extract the necessary information from it. People who are able to comprehend *how and why* a sustainable landscape functions will respond differently to that landscape than those who are uninformed of unable to 'read' the landscape.[88]

Thayer states it is no longer good enough for landscapes to just be beautiful. They have to interpret their structure and function as well. Thayer notes this is why information content is so important. These landscapes need to be imageable to the public. He thinks the best way to know a landscape is to live there, but realizes this is not possible for everyone. Significant effort is needed, says Thayer to "communicate the information content and multidimensional complexity of these landscapes to the public, particularly those who will not reside on site."[89]

He addresses some potential backlash to his ideas with a quote from Randy Hester. "The conservation-style project looks unkempt or disorderly relative to the machine-efficient look of a project done in the modern style."[90] This feeling is one that will have to be overcome in order to implement sustainable landscapes. He argues that

> truly sustainable landscapes have no singular style but rather express a unique sense of visual and spatial pluralism...no two sustainable landscapes are apt to look alike, particularly if they occur in different regions or evolve within different baseline ecosystems.[91]

The question remains whether any branch of landscape architecture can exist for long without becoming a style. Thayer relies on his earlier argument of spatial plurality to quell their doubts.

What sustainable landscapes do, is violate a sense of context, but this is a good thing. Thayer tackles the "anticipated landscape norms."[92] Vegetable gardens are still unusual features in a front yard, notes Thayer.

> People don't *expect* to see wildlife habitat and drought-tolerant vegetation in downtown parks. Although such violations of expected context at first impede the diffusion of sustainable

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[88] Thayer, p. 106
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.

> landscapes, they will ultimately reinforce that diffusion by creating new associations between place and perception and displacing the old normative meanings of landscape context.[93]

Thayer echoes Olin's and Howett's comments that we should not attempt to copy nature either. To do so ignores the addition of human use into the equation, says Thayer. People change the dynamics of an ecosystem, but they do not have to de-stabilize the system.

> Sustainability requires neither the disguise or elimination of human influence. Quite the contrary; sustainable landscapes merely ask that the forms and spaces we do create be purposeful and supportive of long-term, regenerative values. Sustainable landscapes often explicitly communicate a dimension of human influence, and, in so doing, are occasionally the target of strong reactions by people who consider landscape as a romantic escape from reality- as in the problems encountered with siting modern windfarms.[94]

Art and creativity are critical to this entire process. Landscape architects are important in interpreting the human relationship to the environment. "Art has the ability to anticipate society.".[95] Artistic expression becomes a necessary part of diffusing sustainable landscapes in to society.

Thayer believes the visibility and imageability of sustainable landscapes is critical to how fast these new ideas will be adopted and emulated. A problem is the fact that sustainable landscapes are so complex that they are hard to understand. "They possess inherent inertial resistance to diffusion."[96] But if they are made more observable this will help. Even though solar energy features are deemed ugly by today's standards, they should never be regulated out of sight because they "symbolize conspicuous non-consumption."[97] This conspicuous expression is critical to the spread of sustainable landscapes and demands the expertise of artists.

He concludes that "landscape sustainability is a concept which is philosophically cohesive yet operationally challenging...yet vitally important."[98] Humans are symbolic animals and with form, structure, and process; sustainable landscapes will gain meaning and depth of experience, as we develop a new mind to go with our new world.

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[93] Thayer, p. 107.
[94] Thayer, p. 108.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Thayer, p. 109

Eaton - "Responding to the Call for New Landscape Metaphors"

Marcia Muelder Eaton's 1990 article "Responding to the Call for New Landscape Metaphors" is essentially an attack on Catherine Howett's 1987 article. She feels that some of what Howett says is absurd.

Eaton begins with the fact that languages "reflect and are reflected by the values of the communities that speak and write them"[99], and that differences among cultures show up in their vocabulary and semantics. She uses the example of the Eskimo having many words to describe frozen precipitation falling from the sky, while we in main stream American culture can get by with snow and sleet. Eaton says Howett is applying that same idea to that of landscapes, in that landscapes reflect cultural differences as well, and for them to begin to use a whole new vocabulary is ridiculous.

Eaton feels that Howett believes that the landscape reflects what a culture values. She uses the example of the city dweller finding relief from the city in a park, where the rural dweller might find the city exciting, and reflects two opposite cultures. Eaton uses the ideas previously expressed by Howett for the argument that she is building. She adds that "verbal communication cannot be carried out by private codes; it depends on shared meaning,"[100] and that metaphor can be applied to landscapes only if it builds upon the general public feature of language. She then begins her direct criticism of the ideas expressed in Howett's article.

Eaton begins with Howett's notion that "'pretty' landscapes should be replaced by a preference for landscapes that are ecologically sound."[101] But warns Eaton, "*ought* implies *can*" and "to say that we *ought* to replace the old language with a new one implies that we *can* do this."[102] She says that Howett talks as if there is a choice in the landscape language that we speak. But she argues if these values are culturally determined how can it be a real choice?

Eaton states, "if it is a *fact* that aesthetic values are always culturally determined, then it cannot be wrong to make aesthetic judgments according to them."[103] She feels that Eskimos cannot be blamed for having twenty words for snow. Howett's use of the terms "guilty" and "addicted" bothers Eaton, and she feels that Howett is "morally blaming" us for things beyond our control. Eaton states "one can

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[99] Eaton, Marcia Muelder, 1990. "Responding to the Calls for New Landscape Metaphors." *Landscape Journal* 9(1) p. 22.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Eaton, p. 23.

communicate only within an already existent language and cultural sign system."[104] We cannot understand Howett's demands, argues Eaton, unless we share her meaning. To begin to speak a whole new language argues Eaton, is absurd!

Eaton calls for a much slower, more modest change in values, and notes that Howett mentions this in her own article. "Aesthetic values are founded in cultural systems of meaning and that these change slowly."[105] Eaton's biggest argument is that certain things must be true of our society before we perceive different (new) landscapes as beautiful. And for such a heterogeneous country as the United States, this is problematic. "Heterogeneous nations like the United States face a constant challenge to develop common vocabularies that provide for communication without eliminating the diversity that enriches them."[106]

People must be able to have some control over their environment before they can enjoy it aesthetically, says Eaton. "Someone in a burning house will not likely enjoy the color or shape of the flames."[107] She then uses the example of the prairie. The pioneers had to change it, make it beautiful, so that they could live there. Beautiful and inhabitable were linked for them says Eaton. Then the prairie was made beautiful again by bringing it up to the standards of the picturesque. And today, says Eaton, the prairies are being returned to their natural condition as expressing a new idea of beauty. Eaton argues that control still plays a big role.

Eaton says "theorists and practitioners must work in ways that will allow people to develop new values, such as a preference for ecologically sound environments."[108] And since signs and symbols are a way to do this says Eaton, we must look at how signs actually work and what happens when their meanings change.

Eaton then discusses "Landscape as Metaphor" much as Olin, and Howett did. She agrees with Howett that some landscapes do act as signs, especially the suburban landscape that Leo Marx comments on in Howett's article. The suburban landscapes act as a metaphor for 'pastoral retreat". But Eaton points out that in cityscapes, it is the lack of social order, not physical patterning, that is evidenced by crime, pollution, litter and neglect.

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[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Eaton. p. 24.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.

> The control currently available that permits enjoyment of the wilderness does not exist in cities for many of their dwellers. There seems to be more evidence of an 'invisible hand' at work in a forest than in urban sprawl.[109]

Eaton says it is not her place to show how actual metaphors apply to specific landscapes, but rather to show how the analysis of metaphor might help Howett in her call to "come up out of the mire of the picturesque."[110]

Eaton explains, much as Olin did, that a metaphor exploits the core meaning of a term, but then goes beyond that meaning to express something new. She uses a quote from a poem, "*A Narrow Fellow in the Grass* " by Emily Dickinson, "the wind combs the tresses of the land." She points out that the wind is seen as a force of order, in the sense that it is combing the grass, not simply blowing through it.

Eaton thinks that the "metaphors at work in picturesque landscapes may have become frozen, or at least clichéd."[111] She says this is not to say that they are not enjoyed, for they clearly are. They have just become comfortable and easy. Eaton says even the innovations that might occur in such a picturesque landscape, such as the growth of plant material, are confined by trimming and clipping to keep it within its picturesque aesthetic. The joy of the "a-ha" is missing, she says from this landscape aesthetic. Eaton does feel that Alan Sonfist's *Time Landscape* begins to put back some of that "a-ha" back in to today's landscape designs.

But Eaton asks, in reference to Sonfist's piece; what do you say to someone that thinks it would be better to get rid of that tangle of brush? Her answer is to use metaphor as a way of describing that piece to that person, so that they might see it in a new way. Eaton feels the best metaphors are sometimes the ones we do not get right away. Teachers and critics can educate people, says Eaton, but artists share part of that responsibility as well.

Eaton concludes with a reference to Howett. Landscape designers who would have landscapes change by taking on new meanings have to help make those meanings manifest by providing clues says Eaton. Eaton feels you have to first speak with a common landscape language before you can push the boundaries. "People will look at ecologically sound landscapes when they value ecological soundness"[112] states Eaton. We must wait for people's values to change says Eaton, or the meaning will be lost.

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[109] Eaton, p. 25.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Eaton, p. 26.
[112] Eaton, p. 27.

> For example, people who understand that using chemical fertilizers to make lawns green has consequences on surrounding lakes and groundwater may come to see lush green grass as a metaphor for death, not life.[113]

Eaton does recognize though that the reverse is true, that through art, meanings are stretched that open up possibilities for values to be shifted. She claims that the Gothic cathedral was not only a response to a way of thinking about God, but actually stimulated new ways of thinking. "Artists contribute significantly to a paradigm shift within culture and hence to the development of new social visions" says Eaton. But her argument with Howett is that she is just calling for a new social vision by itself. Eaton says it is just about as helpful as asking Floridians to use more terms for snow like the Eskimo. And says Emily Dickinson did not have to be "urged" to use new mind-stretching metaphors. Before *ought* is useful says Eaton, *can* must be implemented. She feels that as Howett and her colleagues teach what ecological soundness consists of in landscapes, and why it is ethical, than the aesthetic applications will follow.

[113] Ibid.

Conclusion

When the main points of each article are pulled out and reassembled, these articles suggest a theoretical framework. This framework for the new aesthetic has multiple goals and issues. The following summarizes the main points of each article and outlines the framework.

Rosenberg says that designs should enhance the integrity of an ecosystem and they should foster an awareness of one's place in the environment, a sense of connectedness. Howett says every design should be an icon of the natural world, an ecologic sign or cluster of signs. These forms should reflect ecologic consciousness. Olin says that these new designs must refer to nature, not directly, but through abstraction. Thayer says that designs can no longer just look good, they must interpret their structure and function through their design. Through symbols, things can be explained. Eaton says that metaphor is a powerful tool that can help people better understand these designs.

There is considerable overlap among the authors, and many state similar positions in slightly different ways, but three commanalties that outline an aesthetic are noted. The new aesthetic that is being called for must respond to visual, ecologic, and communication goals. This is only realized after reviewing the art exhibit, so that a mention of here will provide a reference for a discussion that will happen later in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3- Review of Exhibit

"Current Landscape Expressions in Art"

Introduction

The art world's history and that of landscape architecture have at times shared similar backgrounds. Certainly art has been much more influential on landscape architecture than landscape architecture has been on art. Currently artists are ahead of landscape architects in the realm of ecological art.

An exhibition in 1992 in New York City entitled *Fragile Ecologies* highlights the work of artists engaged in the evolving art form of "environmental" and "ecological" art. Here is where the line between art and landscape architecture have the potential to blur, and are beginning to blend.

Ecological and Environmental art are defined separately. Barbara Matilsky in her book from the exhibit *Fragile Ecologies*, sees environmental art encompassing ecological art. Ecological art is a subset. She defines environmental art in the following quote.

> Environmental art encompasses a variety of forms that reflect a wide range of approaches to nature. It includes permanent sculptures like the *Spiral Jetty* (1970) by Robert Smithson(1938-1973) [see figs. 1 and 2]. Labeled "earth art" or "earthworks", they are created *in* the landscape and built with the indigenous materials of the site. By contrast, the movement also includes the temporary site-specific sculptures of Christo, who places manufactured materials *on* the landscape in such works as *The Running Fence, Sonoma and Marin Counties, California* (1972-76) [see fig. 3]. Environmental art also refers to indoor gallery installations in which the artist transforms the space into a field of growth, as in Helen Mayer Harrison's and Newton Harrison's *Survival Piece #5: Portable Orchard* (1972) [see fig. 4]. Along with the plant life as art, environmental art can include animals as art, as exemplified by Joseph Beuys's *Coyote. I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974), a performance with a live coyote that dramatized the connection between human beings and other animals. The movement also encompasses works that use elements of nature to interpret specific ecological problems, as did Hans Haacke's *Rhinewater Purification Plant* (1972), and outdoor ecological artworks that introduce flora and fauna into the city, as in *Time Landscape: Greenwich Village, New York* by Alan Sonfist (planted 1978) [see figs. 13 and 14] and Bonnie Sherk's *Crossroads Community/The Farm* (1974-1980).[114]

[114] Matilsky, Barbara C. 1992. *Fragile Ecologies: Artists' Interpretations and Solutions*, p. 36.

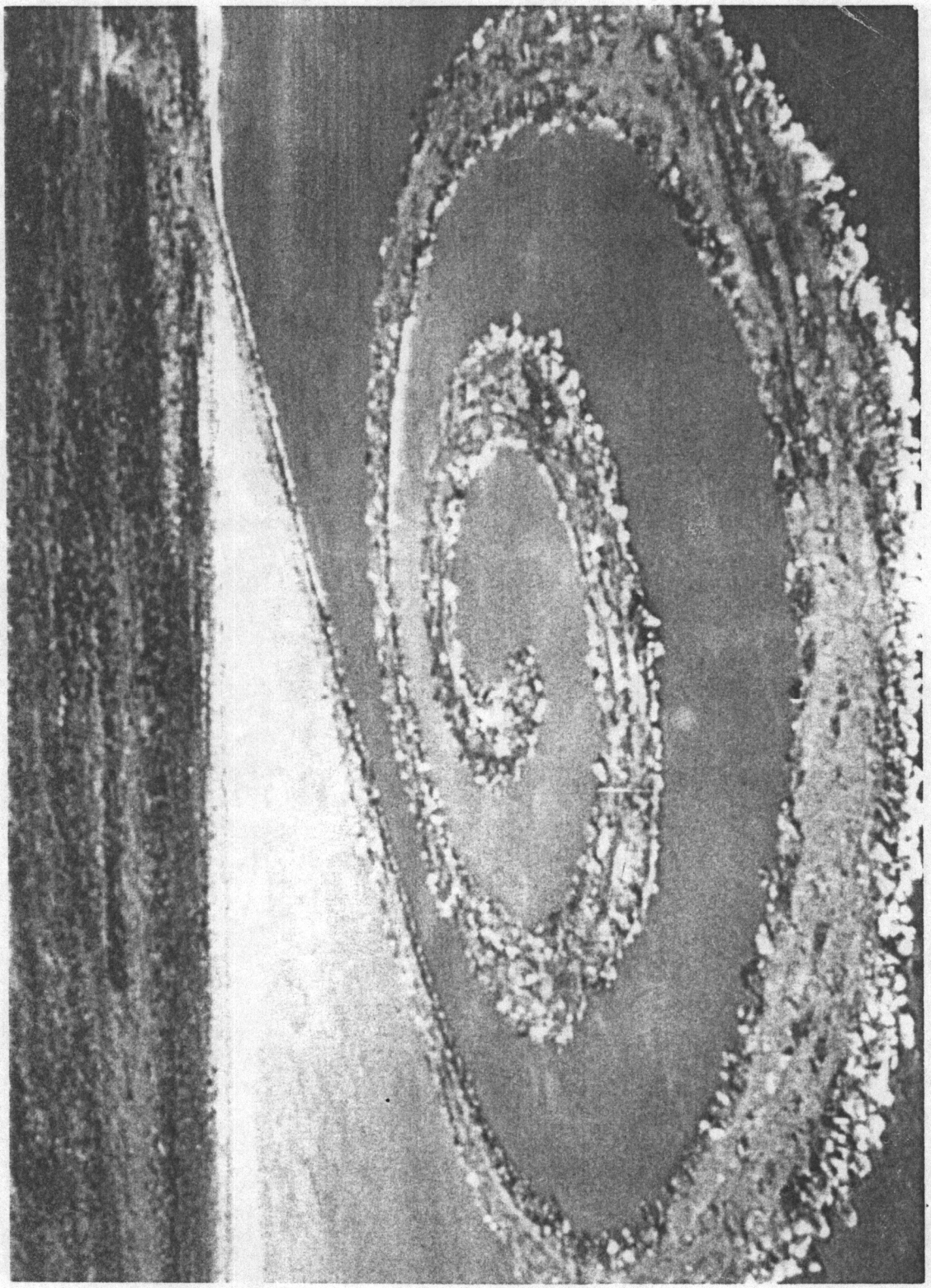

Figure 1. Robert Smithson
Spiral Jetty, in the Great Salt Lake, Utah (now underwater), 1970.

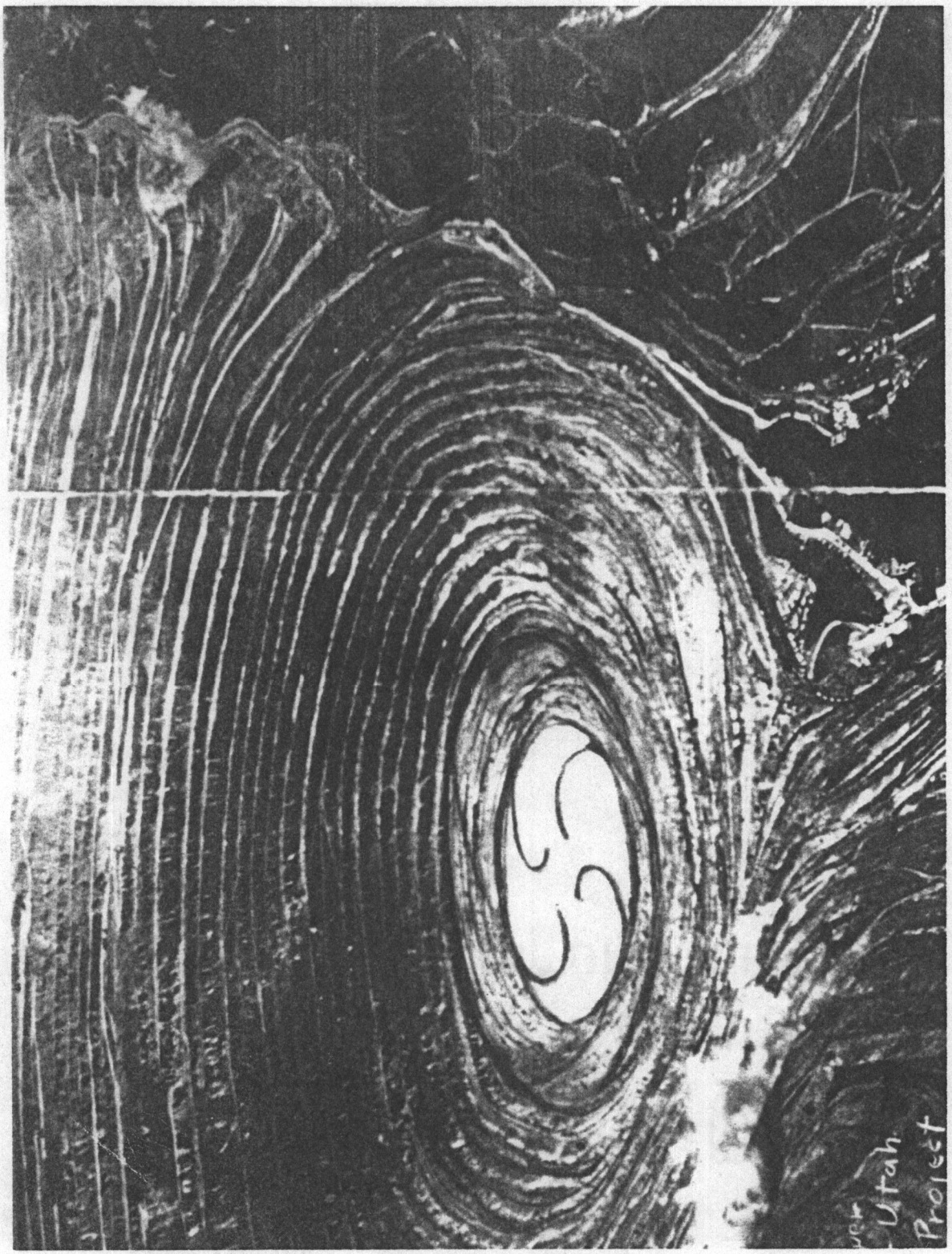

Figure 2. Robert Smithson
Bingham Copper Mining Pit, Utah Reclamation Pit, 1973.

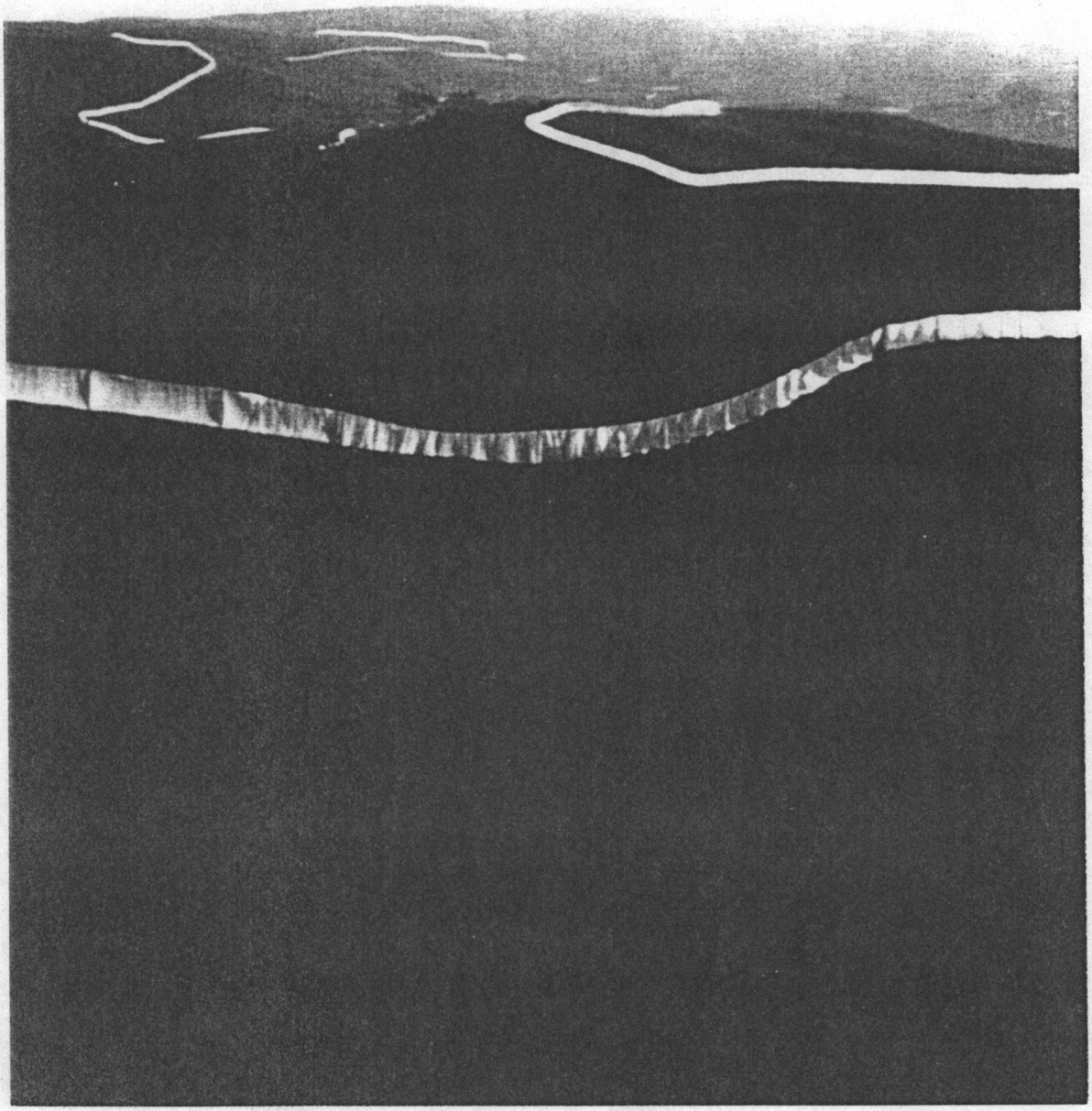

Figure 3. Christo
Running Fence, Sonoma and Marin Counties, CA, 1972-1976.

Figure 4. Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison
Survival Piece #5: Portable Orchard, 1972.

As can be seen, environmental art covers a broad range of expressions. Matilsky points out that "artists often move freely from one area to another and from indoor to outdoor work."[115] It would be difficult to put labels on certain artists or the type of work they are involved in. Matilsky helps to focus our attention and clarify our interests by saying, "of the many artists who create environmental art, only those bearing a direct relationship to the evolution of ecological art will be discussed in this volume."[116] She uses environmental art as background information to show how ecological art evolved out of it. Some artists begin in one area and grow into another. Matilsky traces the beginnings of environmental art from,

> minimal and process art-that emerged during the 1960's. Both were concerned with extending traditional boundaries of form, space, and materials. Minimalist artists like Tony Smith (1912-1980) created large, geometric sculptures made from industrial materials whose overwhelming presence in the art gallery demanded more space. To artists such as Robert Morris and Robert Smithson, who both began their careers as minimalists, earthworks were a logical extension of their earlier interests. Nature provided an opportunity for them to translate primary, abstract forms on a large scale.[117]

These earthworks essentially, began the environmental art movement. [see fig. 4]

An important motivating factor for the environmental movement was the rejection by artists of the saleability of their work, says Matilsky.

> For environmental artists, nature embodied and inspired the freedom to forge new directions in art and move away from the commercial gallery system. The traditional art gallery, by exhibiting art objects and reducing them to a commodity, was perceived as limiting the artist's creative possibilities. Environmental artists joined a growing number of artists who created works that could not be purchased. This, of course, opened up the question of support and patronage. Some galleries responded favorably to the new art and exhibited indoor projects by environmental artists. University galleries and museums also provided opportunities to survey these new developments. The most important consequence of artists freeing themselves from dependency on the gallery was their beginning to work in the public domain, a fertile forum for the creation of ecological art.[118]

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[115] Matilsky, p. 37.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Matilsky, p. 38.
[118] Ibid.

Figure 5. Herbert Bayer
Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks, Kent, Washington, 1982.

This "public realm" is a realm in which landscape architects traditionally work, albeit with different constraints of budget, clients, and responding to a social responsibility for viable spaces. Artists have had the ability to explore maybe less public, less viable spaces, yet respond to environmental systems with all the options and constraints they entail. This ability has given them a good ten year jump on landscape architects. The choice of using both the new articles in landscape architecture and the new exhibit in the world of art then, should be clear. They are both at the cutting edge of the fields, one in built form, the other in words.

A specific subset of 'environmental art' is 'ecological art'. It is differentiated from environmental art by the following.

> Through ecological artworks, artists try to mitigate environmental problems often by revitalizing an ecosystem and the human interaction with nature. They attempt to transform damaged habitats or sterile urban sites into life-generating places. Many of these artists propose or create ecological art for areas where nature's balance has been breached by human interference. Expanding upon early environmental art and nature. Ecological art does not isolate and interpret aspects of nature but integrates them into a total network of relationships.[119]

Of the artists highlighted in this gathering of 1992, twelve artists are singled out as "ecological artists". These are Patricia Johanson, Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Alan Sonfist, Nancy Holt, Buster Simpson, Betty Beaumont, Heather McGill and John Roloff, Mel Chin, and Cheri Gaulke, Susan Boyle, with the Wilson High School Students. Of those twelve, eight artists and their projects are used in this paper. The decision to narrow the number of artists and projects to be used was done after the intial research was complete. It was noted that some artists covered similar enough issues that there was overlap between them. Some engaged significant issues better than others, so that those artists that did not offer any new information to the discussion were dropped.

The rest of this chapter is a review of the selected projects. The following chapter compares the written ideas of the landscape scholars with the built works of the artists.

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[119] Matilsky, p. 56.

Patricia Johanson - *"Leonhardt Lagoon"*

"Johanson was one of the first artists to think of art as a means to restore habitats, and her work is an outstanding model for maintaining biodiversity."[120] She revitalizes degraded urban sites and displays them to viewers. They tend to be wetland systems because these are the ones rapidly being lost to urban development.

Her recent work *Leonhardt Lagoon* (1981-86) [see figs. 6 and 7] is located in Dallas, Texas, and includes both a wetland restoration/creation and a sculptural element. "Although the artist has advanced degrees in art and architecture, it is the love of nature that has enabled her to intertwine aspects of both fields in such ecological artworks."[121]

With *Leonhardt Lagoon* Johanson began with a polluted body of water that desperately needed help. "The lagoon, over five city blocks long, was constructed in the 1930s as part of a flood-control project."[122] Prior to her work is was a solid mat of algae which did not allow for any other life to exist in it. The application of fertilizer on the lawn surrounding the lagoon was significantly contributing to the pollution of the waterbody. Her reaction to the site, her proposal for restoration, began with research of the area and found that it had "once [been] a thriving wetland."[123] This gave her the initiative for the restoration of the lagoon.

Johanson added "native plants, fish, and reptiles into the lagoon in order to revitalize and balance the food chain."[124] She chose emergent vegetation to clean the water while providing food and shelter to animals, and reduce wave action, which was contributing to erosion of the shoreline.

Within the restored lagoon is an abstract sculpture that dives into and out of the water. The gunite sculpture is of "two introduced plants: *Saggitaria platyphylla* (the delta duckpotato) and *Pteris multifida* (the Texas fern)."[125] It is not an exact replication of either plant, but a blending of the two. It is abstract and enlarged to a scale to make possible walkways out of the stems, steps out of the leaves, and shade and shelter for aquatic and semi-aquatic plants and animals. "One of the large leaves of *Saggitaria* [was] designed as a breakwater to control erosion of the northern bank, which was losing soil at a rate of eight

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120 Matilsky, p. 60
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
125 Matilsky, p. 61

inches a year."[126] Visitors to the site can climb over the leaves and stems that thread themselves through the water, air and land. "On sunny days, turtles perch themselves on the sculpture."[127]

The forms themselves do not change or decay as lagoon life does, but it provides access to the water, and an experience that heightens awareness of lagoon life. The visitor is walking on, or just above the surface of the water, which allows an intimate experience for viewing. The plants chosen for the sculptural piece not only help to clean a polluted site, but were chosen for their form. Their form abstracted, becomes the way for someone to move through the site.

> Johanson's work functions significantly on many levels. By reviving habitats and reintroducing native plants, and animals to a site, she demonstrates how to creatively preserve biological diversity. At the same time, the artist provides a unique educational opportunity for people to explore nature's intricate relationships and aesthetic patterns. By walking among her sculptures, the viewer experiences the fusion of art and nature and the uniqueness of habitat.[128]

Johanson's *Leonhardt Lagoon* restores a particular piece of an aquatic ecosystem, but it is not clear from the reading if this lagoon connects with local hydrologic systems. This piece has two components to it, the restoration and the sculpture. It is significant to note that the two forms can exist without each other.

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[126] Ibid.
[127] Matilsky, p. 62
[128] Matilsky, p. 65.

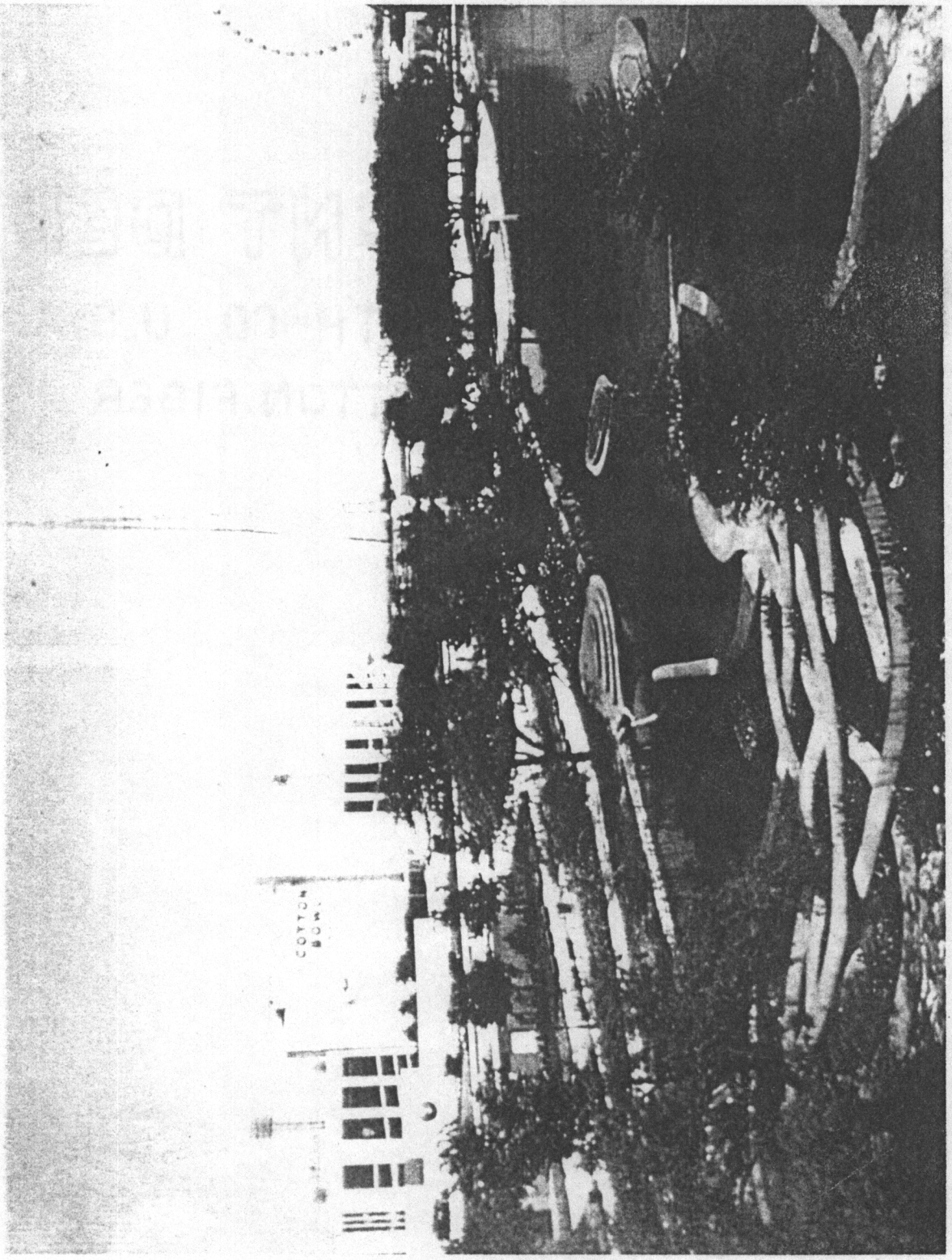

Figure 6. Patricia Johanson
Leonhardt Lagoon, Dallas, Texas, 1981-1986.

Figure 7. Patricia Johanson
Leonhardt Lagoon, planting plan, 1982.

Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison -"*The Lagoon Cycle*"

The Harrisons work has grown over to time to include larger and more complex natural systems. They began with pieces that spoke about growing food such as *The Survival Piece,* which included fruit trees in wheeled containers under artificial lights. And *The First Lagoon* which represented a way for people to raise crabs inexpensively in an artificial configuration. "The artists soon realized that ecological art must examine and respond to the totality of interrelationships that define ecosystems in order to effect environmental change."[129] The Harrisons went on to tackle entire river systems and global watersheds. They are working at a much larger scale than other artists in this group.

> Because their art involves the largest territory of any of the artists discussed in this book, it must by necessity be more conceptual. Most artists study and remediate a particular site, which is often fairly small. By contrast, the Harrisons have accepted the challenge of interpreting bodies of land and water that often cross national boundaries. As a result, their art is as distinct and complex as the ecosystems they seek to preserve.[130]

The Harrisons raise our awareness of ecologic destruction, poetically through words and pictures. They use maps, collaged photos, and poetic narration, to raise awareness. [see figs. 8 and 9] They are interested in opening lines of communication between civic groups, politicians, government and the community. "The power of their art resides as much in the artist's thoughts and impressions, as in the visual documentation of the place."[131] The importance of storytelling and communication is their art form.

> The Harrisons are also defining the future direction of ecological art by expanding the role of artists who, it is hoped, will become members of teams that implement projects relating to large ecosystems. Their work functions as a cross-disciplinary role model for many younger artists beginning to look at art from an activist point of view.[132]

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[129] Matilsky, p. 66.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Matilsky,p. 66.
[132] Matilsky, p. 72.

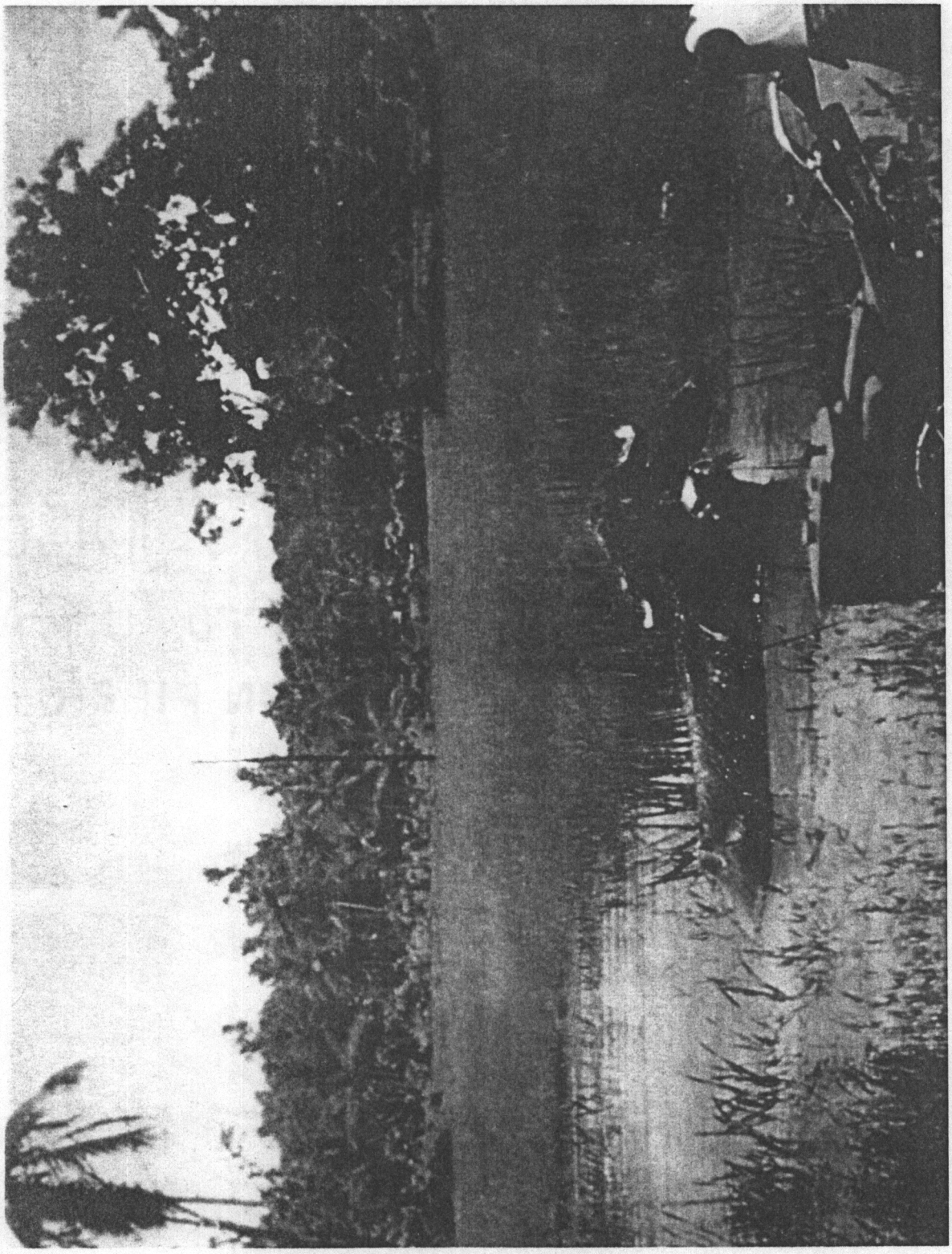

Figure 8. Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison
The Lagoon Cycle: Seventh Lagoon, 1972-82.

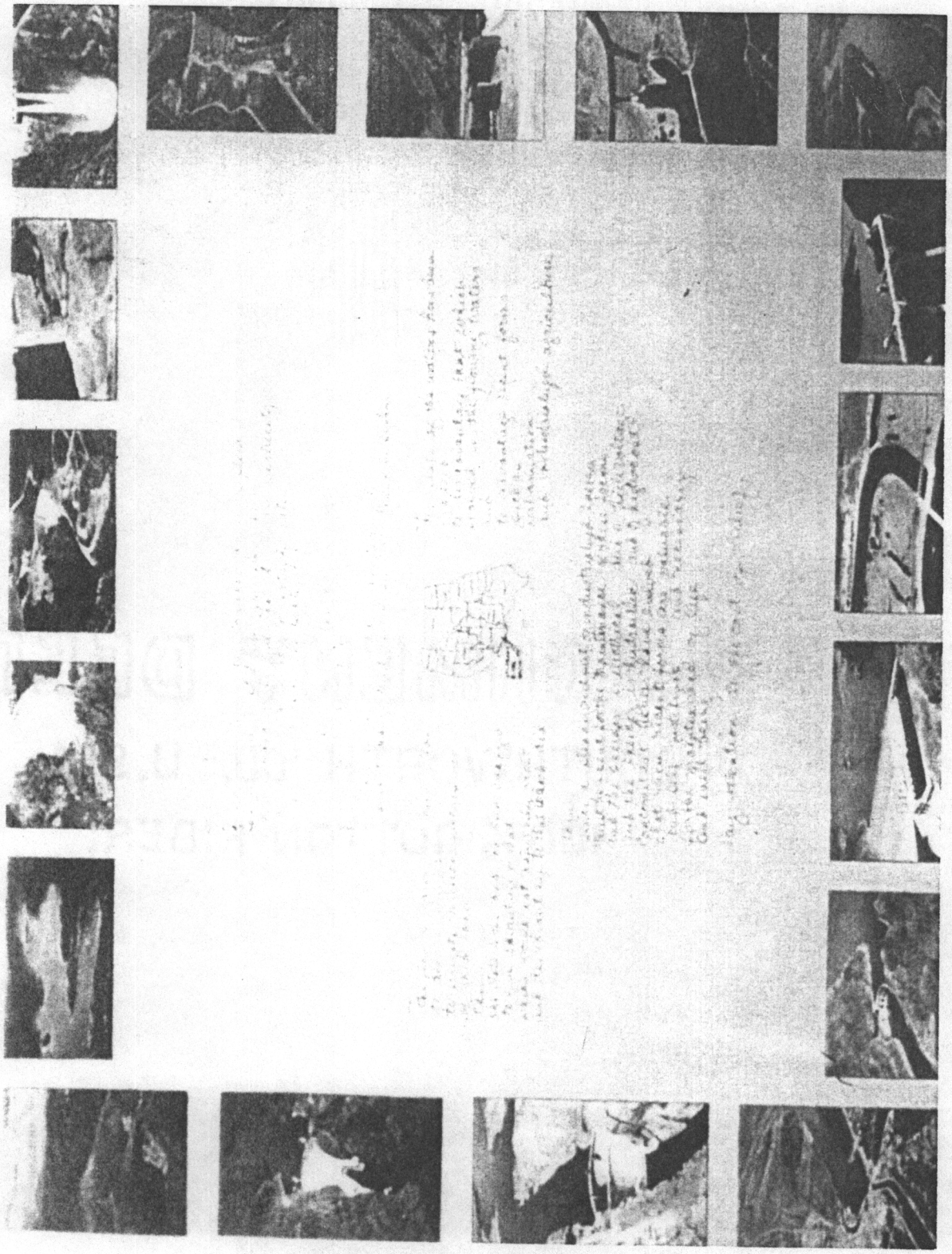

Figure 9. Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison
The Lagoon Cycle: Sixth Lagoon, 1972-82. (Colorado River Watershed)

The Harrisons are using the power of story telling to affect environmental change. In *The Lagoon Cycle* and *The Book of the Seven Lagoons*, they used 50 large format sepia prints collaged with photographs and poetry. They used the dialogue of the "witness" and the "lagoonmaker" to evoke an ecological ethos. The following is a portion of that dialogue.

> *Sometimes I dream of the water buffalo*
> *in its wallow in Sri Lanka*
> *the one that ran afoul of the gasoline engine*
> *and is being replaced by the tractor*
> *Now that tractor does not replicate itself freely*
> *nor provide milk.....nor utilize weeds as fuel*
> *nor produce fertilizer and fuel with its dung*[133]

The Harrisons do not create forms in the environment as other artists in this group do. They engage people directly through displays and performances in museums and courthouses that usually result in media coverage and controversy thus helping to spread their message. Their goal is that the people who experience their work, will in turn affect change in the environment.

[133] Matilsky, p. 70.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles - "*Flow City*"

Mierle Laderman Ukeles is the first artist to devote herself primarily to the environmental issue of urban garbage.

> By staking out this new territory, she pioneered an important issue long before it received widespread media attention. Her work demonstrates that waste management-recycling and landfill reclamation-can offer artists inspiration and an opportunity to revitalize the urban ecology.[134]

Her work has involved "some remarkable artworks and dramatic public performances that attempted to heighten public awareness of the problems associated with urban waste."[135] She acknowledges the drudgery involved in such maintenance activities as cleaning, washing, correcting, and mending; from [which] she recognized their necessity for sustaining life.

One of her most ambitious projects *Flow City* (1983-present), [see figs. 10 and 11] is located at West 59th Street and the Hudson River. Matilsky calls it a "philosophical place where mundane reality and the potential of transformation meet."[136] As the artist explains, 'it addresses who we are and where we are going.'

The piece is within the New York City Department of Sanitation Marine Transfer Station. This is where trucks deliver garbage to be transferred to barges and taken to the Fresh Kills Landfill on Staten Island. At the beginning is the 'Passage Ramp,' a 248-foot passageway made of recyclables. Glass, metal, and plastic are separated, and composed on the walls. Ukeles layers her refuse strata by material, color, and texture, and incorporates moving mechanical parts from sanitation trucks. Flasher panels are recycled from old departmental vehicles and used to light her work.

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[134] Matilsky, p. 74.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Matilsky,p. 76.

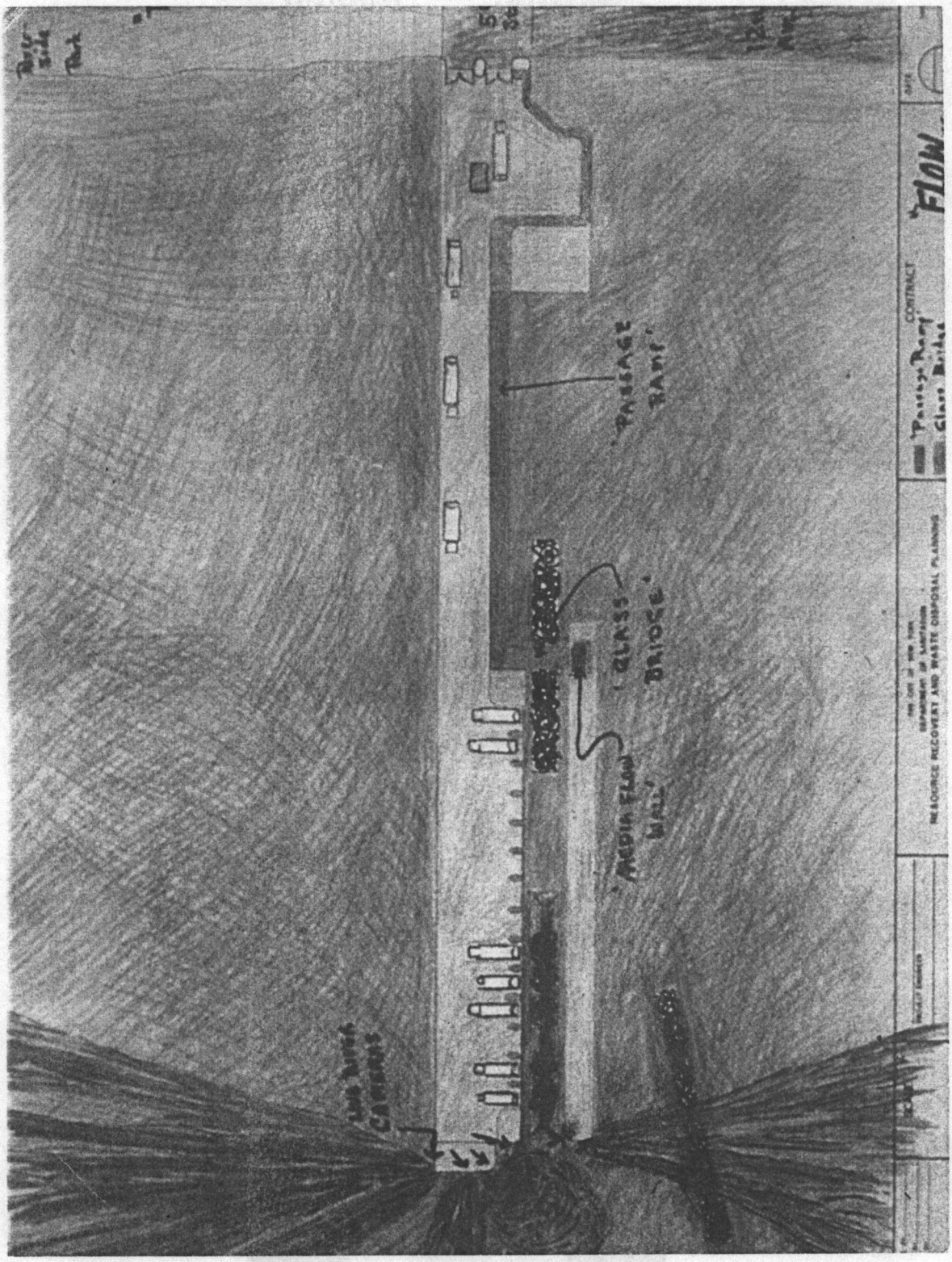

Figure 10. Mierle Laderman Ukeles
Flow City, New York City Sanitation Marine Trasfer Station, 1983-present.

Figure 11. Mierle Laderman Ukeles
Flow City, 1983-present, artist on the "Glass Bridge", 1992.

> Ukeles's space introduces the concept that waste is a false cultural construct; every item is inherently valuable if only our traditional thinking about garbage can be changed. In reality, there is no such thing as 'waste'. Within the natural world, everything is reused and recycled. Only human beings have neglected this fundamental principle of nature. *Flow City* heightens our consciousness about materials; and this is the first stage in efficiently reducing urban waste, one of our most critical environmental problems.[137]

From the passage ramp one enters "Glass Bridge" where you can actually view the trash being transferred from truck to barge. Ukeles calls it "the violent theater of dumping."[138] The sequence ends in the "Media Flow Wall" which contains live video images of the river, the landfill, and pre-recorded images of people recycling which attempts to show each individual as a potentially recycler and sanitation worker. Ukeles in this piece is fighting against the unwillingness of people to recognize that the people who take your waste are not the ones who make it.

Flow City is similar to *The Lagoon Cycle* for it shows us in a new way how we affect the environment. Neither project designs solutions to environmental problems, rather focus on affecting change in the minds of those who are causing the problems. Although Ukele's actual project uses recycled materials, its intent is to educate, as opposed to physically building a place to recycle. This highlights one of two different approachs used by the artists.

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[137] Matisiky, p. 76.
[138] Ibid.

Alan Sonfist - "*Time Landscape*"

Alan Sonfist's "most important contribution to ecological art is his introduction of the *Time Landscape,* [see figs. 12 and 13] a monument to nature planted with native trees and vegetation that once thrived where cities now stand."[139] (conceived mid 60's and planted in 1978) This work was one of the first in this genre when the art form was not even recognized as an area to be explored. *Time Landscape* in New York City is just one piece of numerous artworks envisioned to occur in all cities all over the earth.

The artist believes that nature deserves to be resurrected and commemorated in much the same way that heroes and saints are in human history. "Rather than taming nature, a traditional concept in landscape architecture, Sonfist creates monuments to virgin and native landscapes that presently exist as mere patches on a vast, scarred planet."[140] The site was originally a tenement building "reduced to rubble and engulfed by weeds."[141] Sonfist researched the history of the site to develop his plant palette of oak, sassafras, wild roses, red cedars, and gray birches, among others. He even replaced original elevations of pre-existing landforms, "but Sonfist does not simply attempt to create an idealized ecological model of a forest; instead, he creates a historical, living artwork, a monument to nature's cycles of growth and decay."[142] Sonfist's primary goal is education of the history of a preexisting condition.

Time Landscape has a fence around it and there are no gates for people to enter. It is meant to represent Manhattan Island prior to European settlement. We observe the work from the outside. The pathway leads around the entire project, but never in.

The project serves as landscape reminder. It shows residents and visitors to New York a glimpse of what has been lost and what could exist again. Its function as a natural system is unclear due to its small size. Connections to other such areas in the city are not evident. It acts as a singular element in an urban setting.

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[139] Matilsky, p. 80.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Matilsky,p. 82.
[142] Matilsky, p. 83

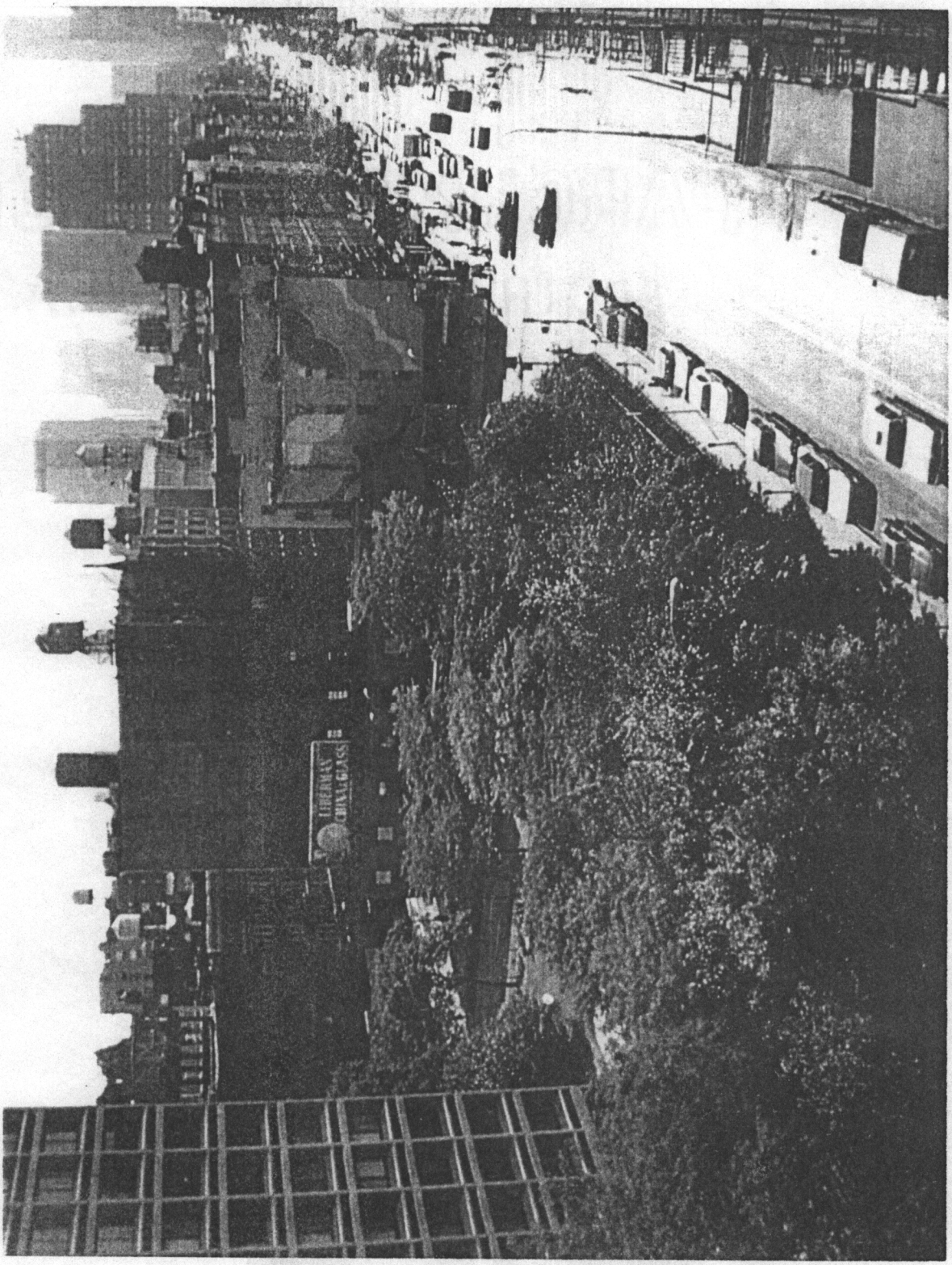

Figure 12. Alan Sonfist
Time Landscape, conceived mid-1960's, planted 1978.

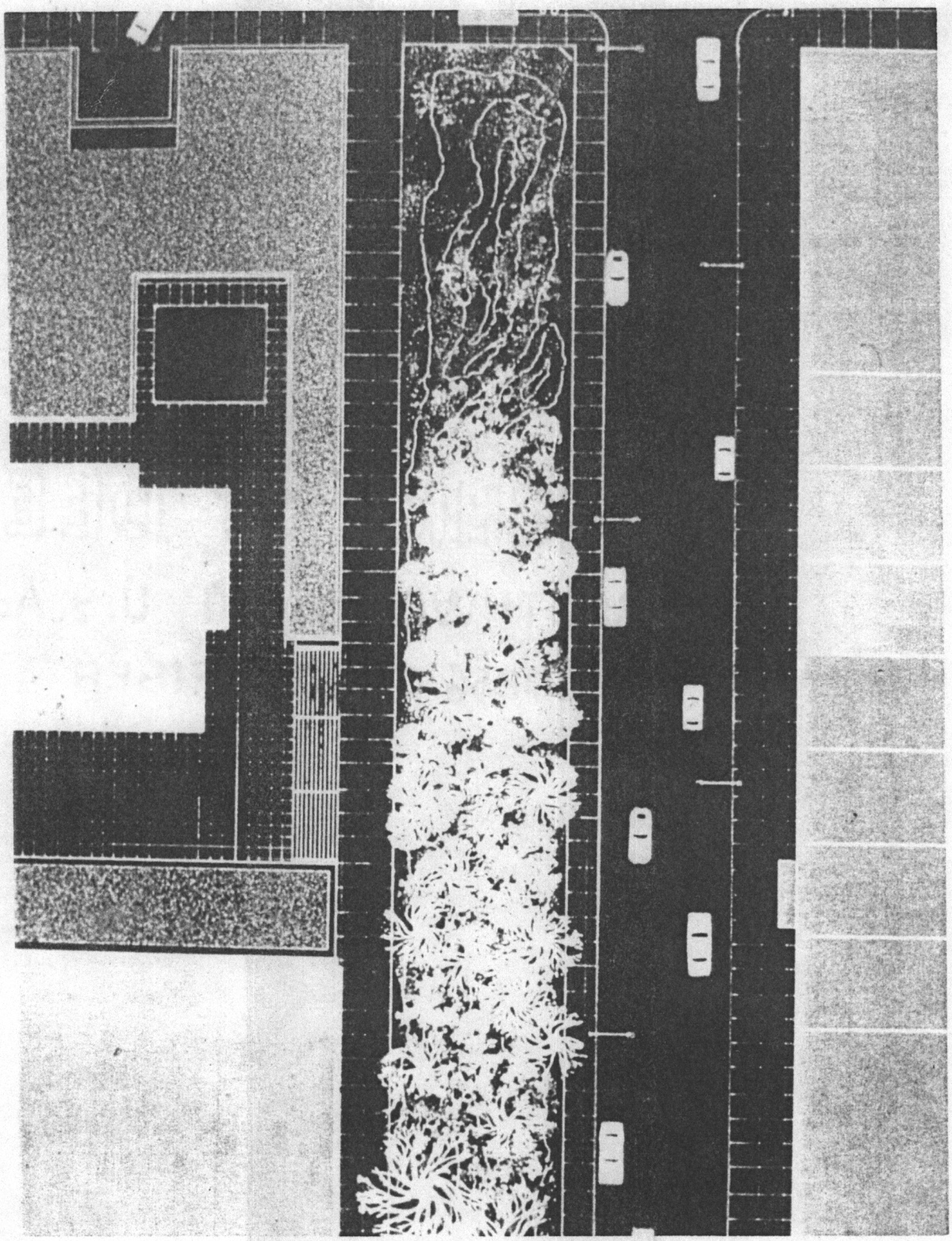

Figure 13. Alan Sonfist
Time Landscape, Greenwich Village, New York, site plan, 1978.

Buster Simpson - "*Host Analog*" and "*King Street Gardens*"

Simpson has been working in this realm of ecological art for a long period of time. His work varies from activist statements about ecological destruction, to more recently completed projects that resemble landscape architecture. Although Simpson's earliest art focused on water, recently he has become involved in establishing habitats that enhance the quality of urban life and provide spaces in which people can coexist with nature. Matilsky says "in all of the work, there is a touch of humor and individuality that contributes to the effectiveness of his art."[143]

His most recent works *Host Analog* (1991) [see fig. 14] and *King Street Gardens* (begun in 1990) [see fig. 15] involve ecology, art, and communication of important messages. *Host Analog* is located in Portland, Oregon and is a response to the intense logging of the Northwest's ancient forests. It is essentially an interpretation of the naturally occurring process of forest decay and growth. Simpson is attempting to create a forest of trees from a giant 80-foot Douglas fir nurse log. "Nurse logs are fallen trees that slowly decompose and simultaneously become a host for newly sprouted seedlings."[144] A special mist irrigation system provides the best conditions for growth, while imitating the natural conditions of the forest. The trees themselves grow very slowly and will take five hundred years to reach maturity.

In *Host Analog* Simpson

> introduces nature into the city while reminding us about a unique natural legacy that has been pilfered. The centuries it will take to establish the forest contrast sharply with the minutes involved in cutting down a tree. However, the image of a decaying log supporting new life sends a hopeful message about the regeneration of nature that ultimately can come from responsible human stewardship.[145]

[143] Matilsky p. 92-93.
[144] Matilsky p. 95.
[145] Ibid.

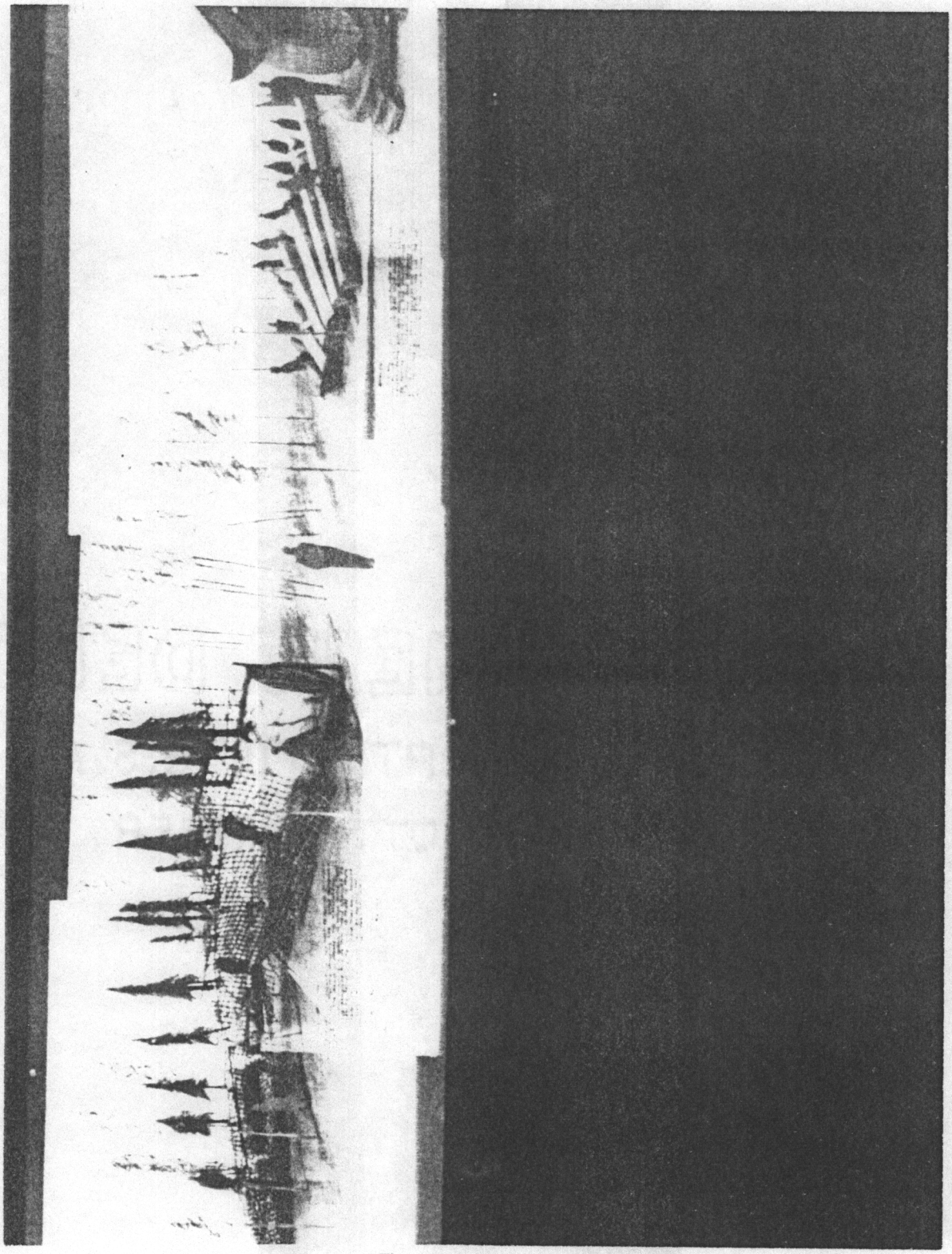

Figure 14. Buster Simpson
Host Analog, 1991.

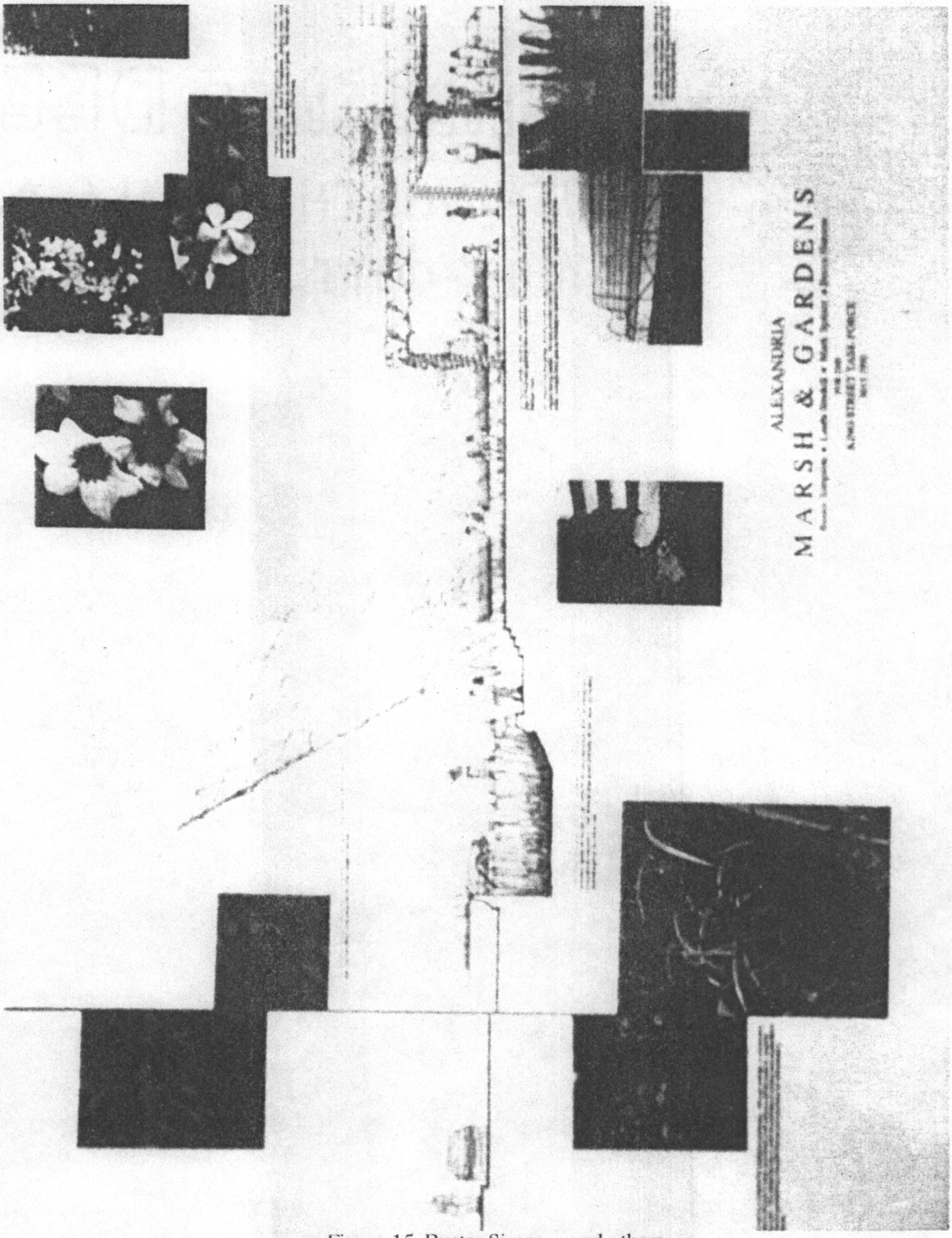

Figure 15. Buster Simpson and others.
King Street Gardens, section of sunken garden, topiary, and hanging gardens, Alexandria, Virginia, 1991.

Along with the nurse log are cut planks and a giant slice of an ancient tree on display. These contrast with the nurse log and seedlings by showing our logging activities. The combination of these two things shows how we have traditionally treated the forest and how we may treat it in the future. The cutting and the replanting is graphically hightlighted. The plight of the ancient forest has been well publicized and Simpson is picking up on the knowledge that we have and making a political statement that attempts to educate us. A message is being communicated.

Simpson collaborated for his work on King Street Gardens with Laura Sindell, a sculptor, Mark Spitzer, an architect, and Becca Hanson, a landscape architect in re-creating the native plants and wildlife in a portion of Alexandria Virginia that is now heavily developed. Matilsky says

> the design is composed of three elements: a marsh of cattails functioning as a storm-water basin and habitat for red-wing blackbirds: hanging gardens, made of trellises with climbing vines of honeysuckle, roses, wisteria, jasmine and clematis; and a topiary sculpture that abstractly recalls the shape of a colonial tricornered hat, a ship's prow, and a plow. Planted with Virginia creeper, the hat/prow/plow symbolizes man's intervention in nature and his devastating changes to the land.[146]

Plants were not only chosen for their color and fragrance, but were also chosen as food for songbirds. This is an ecological artwork that "revitalizes urban and natural life...simultaneously."[147] The space is functioning as a stormwater basin, yet it is a gathering place for people. The space has symbolic references of man's history to educate the visitor. The historical reference of man's domination over the earth is expressed as a hat/prow/plow. The reference to a ship's prow evokes the early arrivers to America, many of which came through Alexandria. The ship represents an exploration vehicle, a colonization tool, and master over the sea.

The combination of the natural functions of the site and the cultural symbols combine to suggest new relationships with our environment. The message here is that we can no longer build for human interests alone, we need to consider other life as well. "The artwork offers an experience of nature that heightens all of the senses and filters out urban pollution."[148]

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[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Matilsky, p. 96.

The significance of these projects, besides their immediate ecologic content, is the extent to which they have included human processes and symbols on an equal level as the ecologic function. They create forms that heal the environment, communicate that message, and provide for usuable space for people.

Betty Beaumont - *"Ocean Landmark Project"*

Betty Beaumont has created an entire new ecosystem on the ocean floor. No other project in this group can claim as much. Her piece *Ocean Landmark Project* (1980) [see figs. 16 and 17] is essentially a pile of bricks made from recycled materials. She researched Japanese methods of reef creation and spent much time on determining the size of the bricks to be used. Certain fish prefer certain size spaces created by the pile of bricks. The resultant sculpture vaguely resembles a mini mountain range and "recycles waste and establishes a habitat for fish."[149] She created an artwork that helps to counter the damaging effects of over fishing the oceans and dumping waste into coastal waters.

> For this piece, she fabricated 17,000 blocks from 500 tons of recycled coal ash to construct an artificial reef. Each block measures 8 x 8 x 16 inches. This stabilized fly ash is now part of a thriving 150-foot-long ecosystem colonized by vegetation.[150]

Different from other projects in this group, this piece is not meant to viewed or experienced by people.

> the sculpture...is located on the continental shelf 50 miles from New York City and 3 miles off the coast of the Fire Island National Seashore. Submerged under 70 feet of water and invisible to the public, the reef and the new life it has attracted have been recorded by the artist in underwater photography and acoustic imaging.[151]

It is "conceived to preserve marine life and not as a place for human beings, Beaumont's project is distinctfrom the work of other artists."[152] Acoustical soundings, video and photographic material were used to record the construction and ultimate success of the piece in attracting fish. The museum display is the only way we have of knowing about this work.

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[149] Matilsky, p. 98
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Matilsky, p. 101

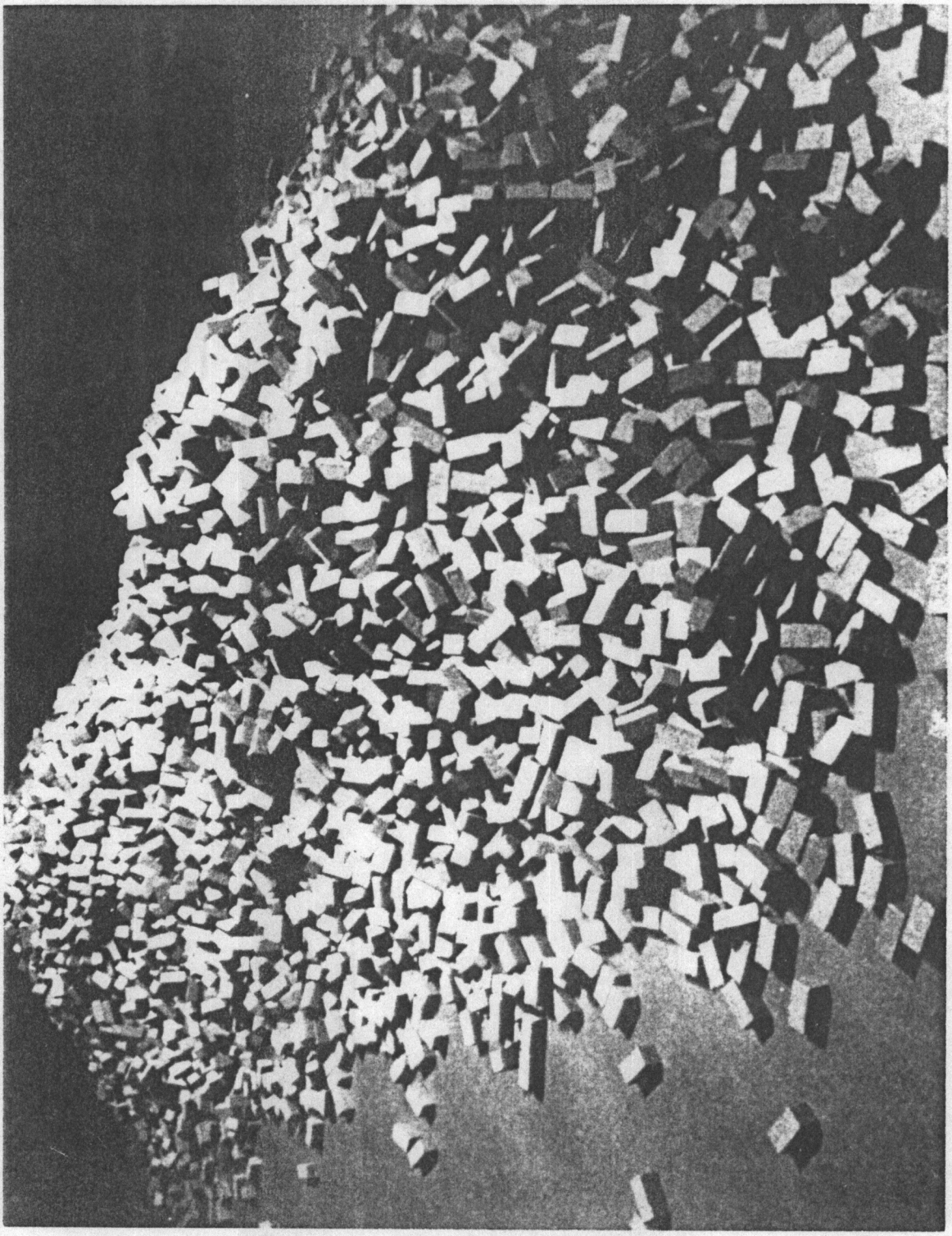

Figure 16. Betty Beaumont
Ocean Landmark Installation: The Object. (model), off shore of Fire Island, National Seashore, 1980.

Figure 17. Betty Beaumont
Ocean Landmark Project, detail showing reef and fish, 1980.

People can benefit from this work by not only the potential for more fish, but for the ecological message it sends. As other artists in this group have shown, our waste can be transformed into life creating forms. Unique to this project is the fact that Beaumont has created forms that create a foundation for an entire new ecosystem to develop upon.

Because *Ocean Landmark* is invisible to most people. It can not be directly experienced. Its importance as a work is sent to us through media and interpretation. Beaumont is more concerned with affecting environmental change.

Mel Chin - *"Revival Field"*

Mel Chin has only recently focused his attention on environmental issues. His first ecological artwork, *Revival Field* [see fig. 18], is an attempt to demonstrate a safe, natural means to clean up toxic waste from the soil of the Pig's Eye landfill in St. Paul, Minnesota. The project's success depends upon the capacity of a unique group of plants to absorb heavy metals through their vascular system. *Revival Field* will be the first test of this method, called 'green remediation,' a term used by the scientists who first began experimenting with the process."[153]

"Revival Field" consists of a 60-square-foot section of landfill contaminated by such heavy metals as cadmium that have seeped out of used batteries."[154] The 300-acre landfill has been designated a state superfund priority.

> The planting field is plotted in the shape of a circle, a geometric form traditionally perceived in both science and art as symbolic of nature's purity. Cosmologically, it corresponds to the cycle of time and refers to the four corners of the earth. Whether or not Chin consciously intended these connections, there is a purposeful serenity to the design that provokes comparison with Eastern religious art forms like the Tibetan mandela.[155]

The contaminated earth is fenced in with chain link and subdivided by intersecting paths that form an X. The project's boundaries are circumscribed by a square. Chin conceives these visual overlays as a target, a metaphorical reference to the work pin-pointed for clean-up. The divisions are also functional, they separate different varieties of plants from each other for study. In the circular field four fields are portioned off so that six types of plants, two pH and two fertilizer tests can occur in each quadrant. The land area between the square and circle function as a control plot where plants will be seeded with local grasses. The design for *Revival Field* facilitates the chemical analysis of each section, adds Matilsky.

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[153] Ibid.
[154] Matilsky, p. 109.
[155] Ibid.

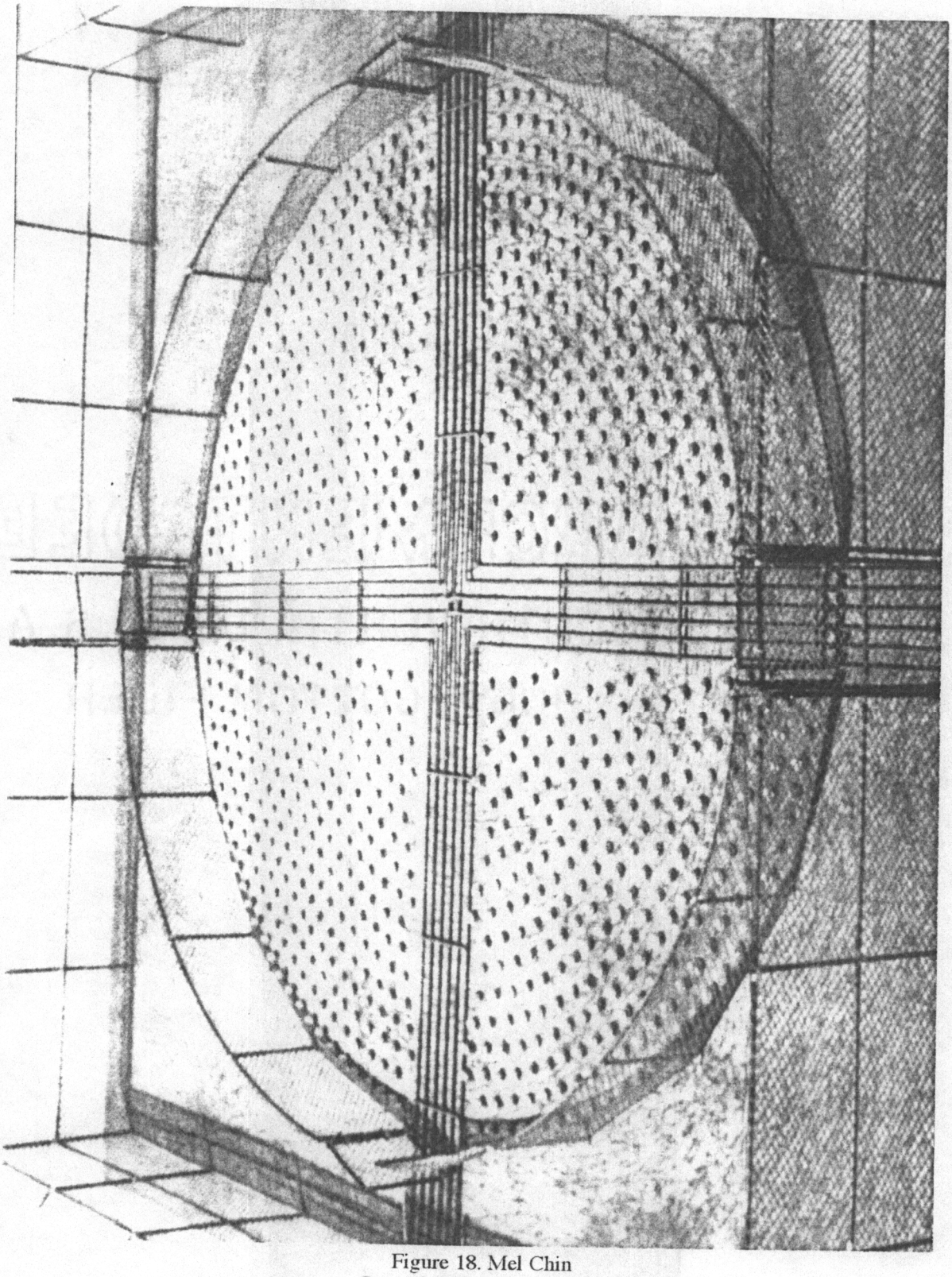

Figure 18. Mel Chin
Revival Field, model, 1990.

With the help of a Senior Research Scientist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Dr. Rufus Chaney; Chaney and Chin selected six type of plants known as

> hyperaccumulaters, that extract zinc and cadmium through their roots into their leaves and then store these elements in their biomass. Among the varieties tested are a hybrid of sweet corn (Zea mays) and bladder campion (Silene cucabis).[156]

These plants were planted by Chin and a team of five artists and volunteers [see fig. 19 and 20]. They prepared the soil wearing special suits, face masks, and gloves. Prior to the work, they were required to attend forty hours of Hazardous Materials Incident Response Training. "*Revival Field* dramatizes the variety of work unrelated to art that is necessary to implement ecological art."

Perennial and annual seeds and seedlings were imported from mine sites in Belgium and England, where they adapted over centuries to high levels of toxicity. After planting, the city trucked in water tanks to ensure sufficient nourishment through the summer months. In October 1991, Chin and his assistants harvested the plants [see fig. 21], which were cut and dried like hay, ashed under controlled conditions, and then analyzed by Dr. Chaney. Two more plantings are scheduled, but in future sites the process of planting and harvesting will continue until the soil has been detoxified, says Matilsky. "Ashing increases the concentration of the metal to the level of commercial ore. Ideally, this recycled ore could pay for the cost of the land remediation process."[157]

Chin's own description of intent in the written proposal for *Revival Field* remains the most articulate explanation of his 'art':

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[156] Matillsky.p. 110
[157] Ibid.

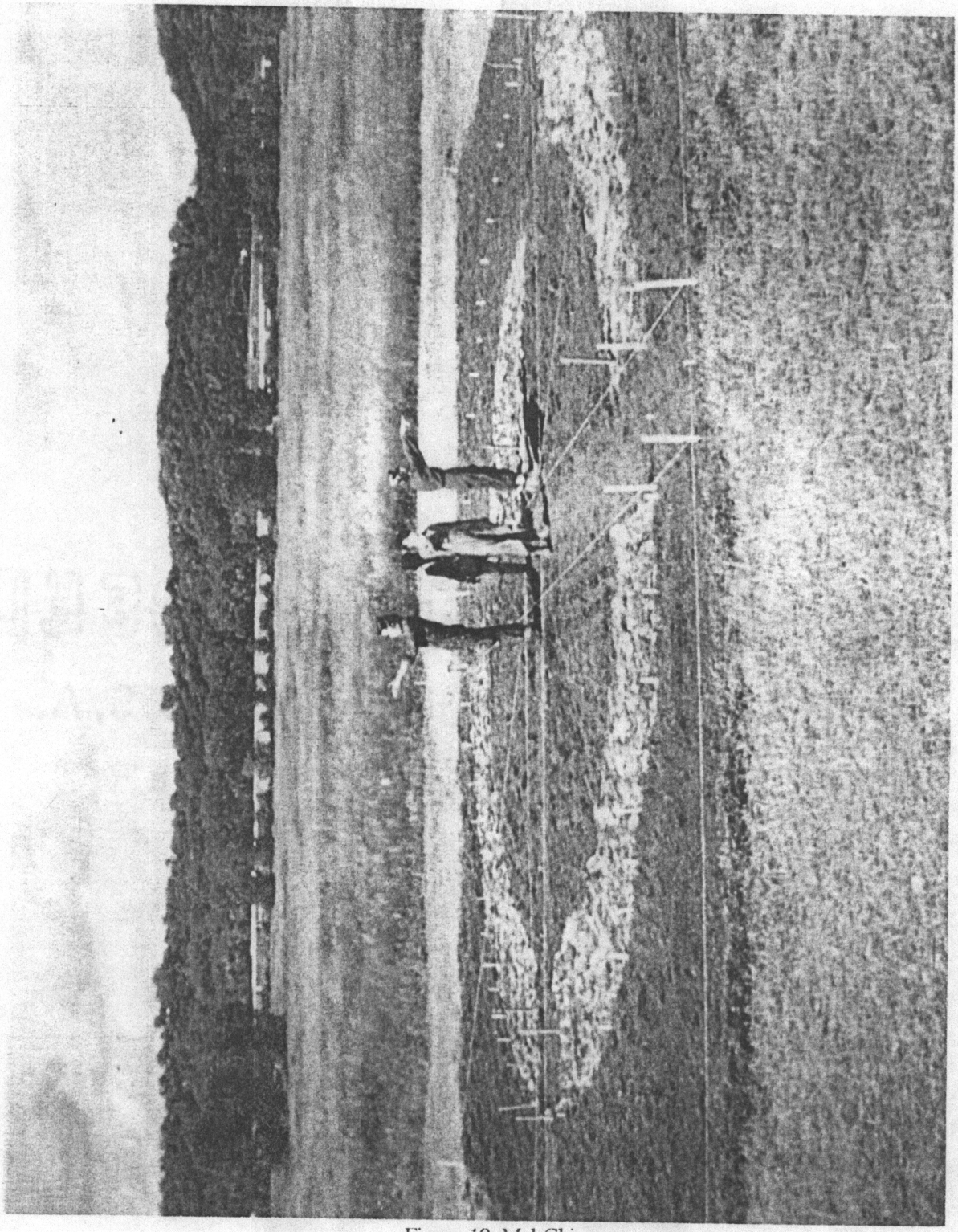

Figure 19. Mel Chin
Revival Field, Pig's Eye Landfill, St. Paul , MN (the artist's plotting the field), 1990.

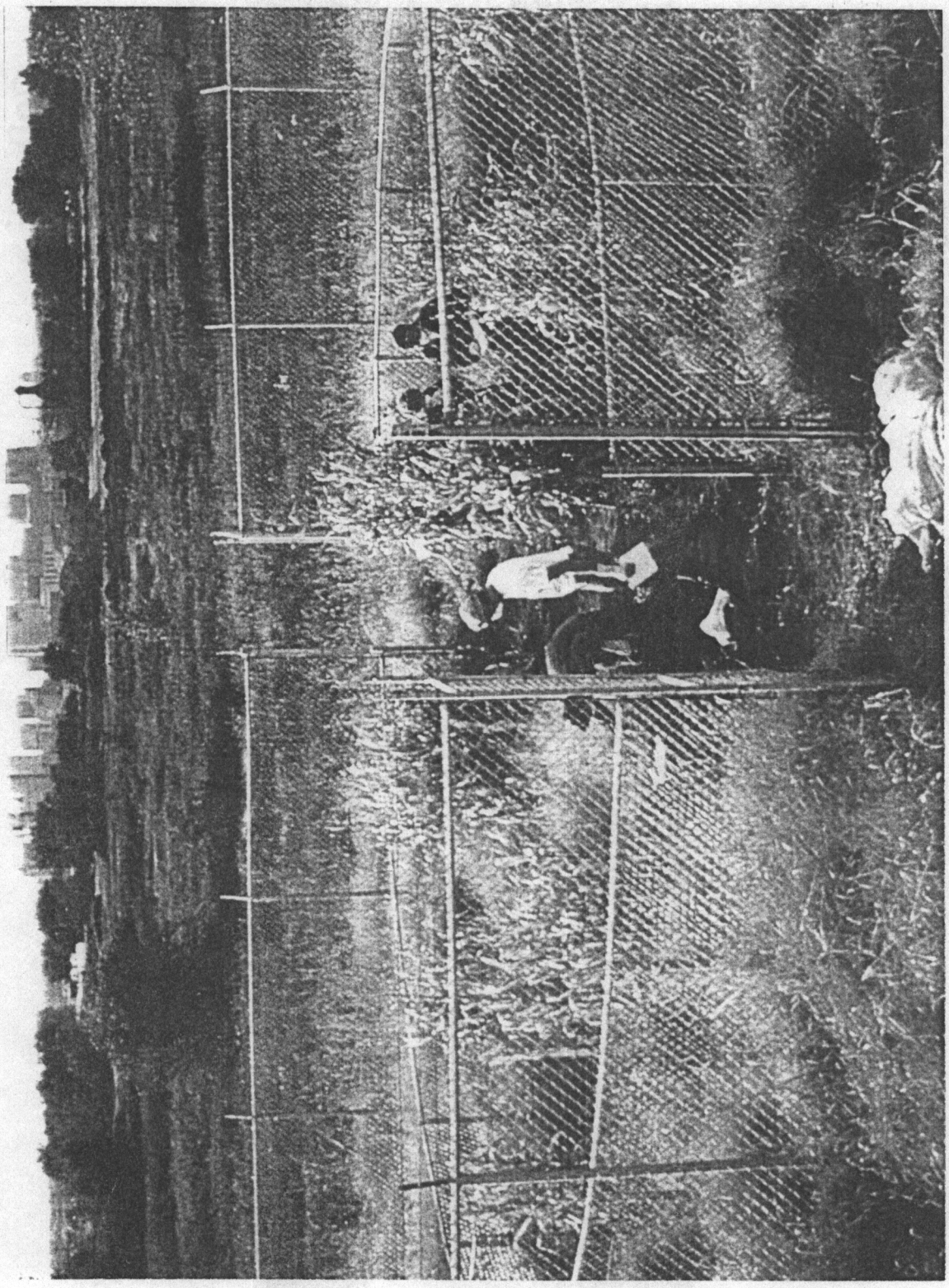

Figure 20. Mel Chin
Revival Field, harvest September 1991.

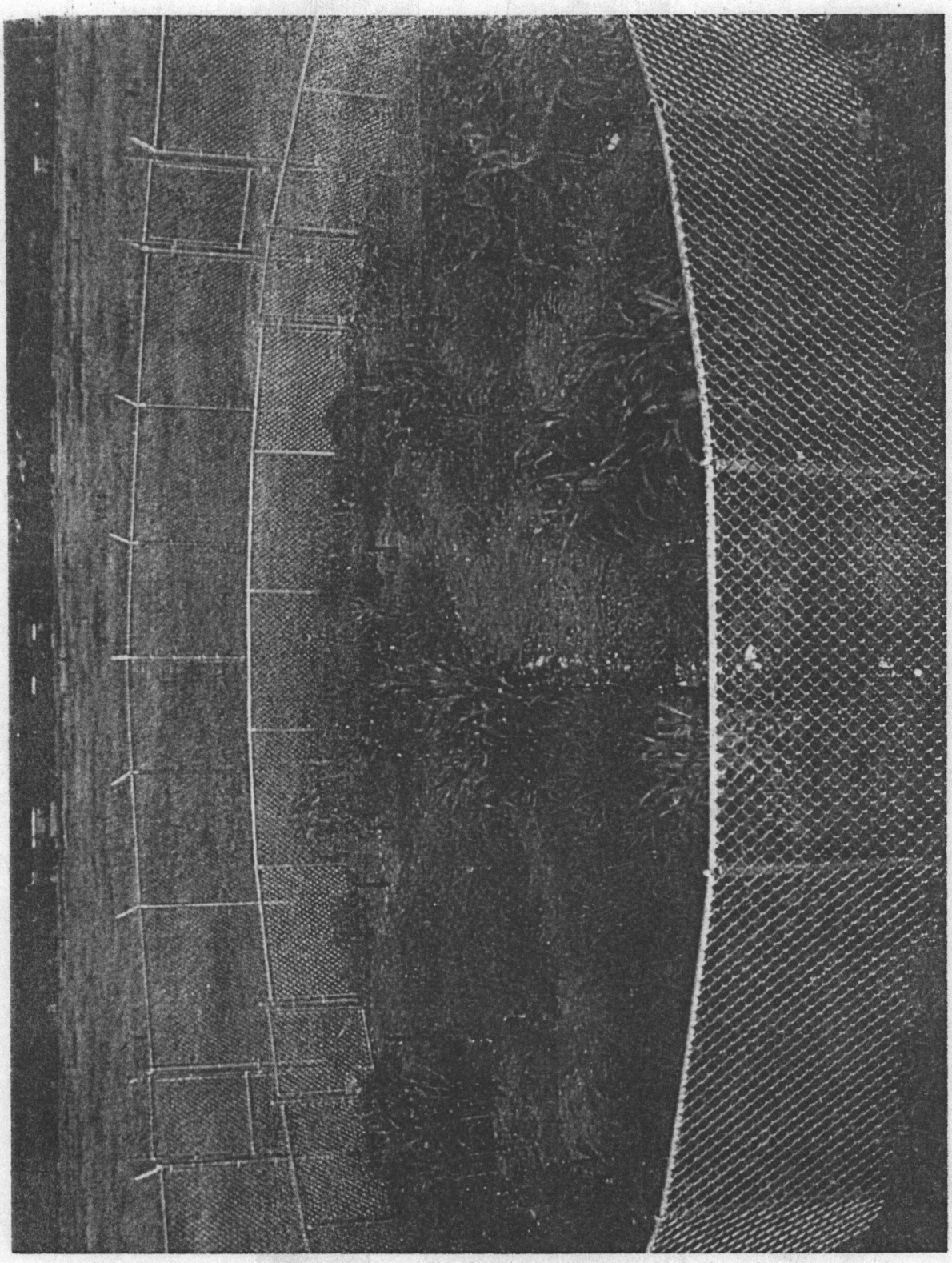

Figure 21. Mel Chin
Revival Field, early July 1991.

> Conceptually, this work is envisioned as a sculpture involving the reduction process, a traditional method when carving wood or stone. Here the material being approached is unseen and the tools will be biochemistry and agriculture. The work, in its most complete incarnation (after the fences are removed and toxic-laden weeds harvested) will offer minimal visual and formal effects. For a time, an intended invisible aesthetic will exist that can be measured scientifically by the quality of a revitalized earth. Eventually that aesthetic will be revealed in the return of growth to the soil.[158]

Matilsky says in Chin's view, Art and Nature become inseparable. She thinks this is as it should be since the processes, life forms, and physical configurations of the planet are the ultimate works of art. "Accordingly, the most valuable art will assist both nature and people to achieve once again an optimal state of balance.[159] Matilsky adds, working with toxic waste can be a daunting proposition. It involves applications for permits, delicate negotiations with public officials, and most importantly, the danger of exposure. "The fact that an artist has been able to surmount all of these obstacles opens up yet another dimension to ecological art."[160]

The physical form of this piece is at first hard to read. The outer barbed wire fencing and the inner ring of additional fencing suggest no admittance to the site. But the gates and pathways oriented to the cardinal directions, indicate entry, but only to those that are qualified.

Revival Field like *Ocean Landmark* may be invisible to many people. The visibility of the project clearly relates to issues of communication. These issues will be discussed in the chapter.

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[158] Matilsky, p. 111.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid.

Chapter 4 - Results

The authors in *Landscape Journal* provided many criteria that they feel the new aesthetic should meet and the ecological artists have provided forms that address many of those criteria. To adequately compare and contrast the ideas or criteria with the artistic expressions, a matrix was used as an organizing tool. The matrix consisted of the criteria from the authors, grouped together into three broad categories. They are process, sense of place, and symbol. These were cross referenced with the chosen artists and their work as presented in the 1992 exhibition. The following are the results of that exercise. The three categories (process, symbol, and sense of place) are presented as topics. The discussion revolves around the art projects but attempts to focus on the issues that those projects raise.

Process

Broadly defined the term "process" refers to "that which is going on." Specific to this discussion, process refers to the natural processes functioning in the landscape which sustain life. Process is defined further by the landscape architecture authors as it pertains to new landscape expressions. The authors suggest that the new aesthetic and its resultant forms should:

1. enhance the integrity of the ecosystem
2. support long-term regenerative values - including human systems
3. integrate the entire range of ecologic systems
4. respond to the cycle of death

The art projects address these criteria, but in visual ways.

What is only circumstantially referred to in the criteria are the human processes, or the cultural processes. These cultural processes are differentiated from natural processes only for the purposes of this discussion. As will be shown later, what was formerly thought of as two halves of the term process are actually integrated and come together. How we respond to the environment as a culture is becoming more important as we learn more about ecology and ecologic systems. As Ann Rosenberg pointed out, this is due to our changing paradigm.

All of the projects address process in some way, either natural process, cultural process or both. The previously mentioned criteria are aimed generally at natural process, and the art exhibit entitled "*Fragile Ecologies*" focuses on environmental issues. Some of the artists focus on recycling, others on creating habitat for non-human life. These two examples both deal with the environment but from different perspectives, hence the division (cultural and natural) into two areas of "process".

Enhancing Ecologic Integrity

Five projects of the eight show a range of ecological process involvement and some show a range of enhancing ecologic integrity. The other projects focus on cultural processes. *Leonhardt Lagoon* enhances ecologic integrity the least and *Ocean Landmark* the most. In between fall *Host Analog, King Street Gardens,* and *Revival Field* in increasing amounts of enhancing ecologic integrity. The range of process utilization in these works raises some important questions. What does it mean to enhance the ecologic integrity of a place? Not all the projects respond to the entire range of systems, and not all provide for long-term regenerative capabilities. How much, how many, and to which natural processes are we to respond to? They all do something ecologically, but some more than others. The question of ecologic function, and enhancement of ecologic integrity places the projects across a spectrum. In this discussion to ehance ecologic integrity means to restore or create an ecologic system that improves the ecologic health of a place. The following projects do this in varying degrees.

Leonhardt Lagoon by Patricia Johansonwas restored prior to or simultaneously to the creation of the gunite sculpture. The sculpture itself enhances the integrity of the environment only minimally. It is more akin to the land art of the 60's and 70's. But the lagoon is as much an expression as the sculpture and it enhances the health of the ecosystem. To what degree is not known. From the literature it is not clear if this lagoon connects with the local hydrology or other natural systems, or if it is simply sugggests renewed ecologic health. Other projects are more clear in this regard.

Integrate the Entire Range of Ecologic Systems

Ocean Landmark by Betty Beaumont is at the opposite end of the spectrum and does just that. The simple expression of a pile of bricks on the ocean floor provides the framework for an entire reef ecosystem to evolve upon. It responds to the entire range of an aquatic ecosystem in that it creates a new system, and responds to long-term regenerative capabilities by providing a permanent solution. The projects in the middle of the spectrum such as *Revival Field*, enhance the integrity of the environment as well, just in smaller amounts, piece by piece. The permanent result of a clean, non-toxic soil is similar to the permanence of the reef. *Host Analog* and *King Street Gardens* utilize one or two particular systems, as

the process of forest growth in *Host Analog* and the process of stormwater cleansing and habitat creation in *King Street Gardens*.

What distinguishes some of these projects from one another, and missing in the landscape scholar's criteria is the scale or amount of connectivity with other systems. *King Street Gardens* cleanses stormwater from the surrounding urban area. But in such a small amount that it is a symbolic cleansing. In *Host Analog* the artist is not intending to create an entire new forest but to symbolize that process in the city, as an educational expression. The range of scales asks which are appropriate and which are not. *The Seven Lagoons* is almost global in its scope, and conversely *Time Landscape* does not seem concerned with anything outside of the bounds of its fence. Which systems are we to respond too? How many? and at what scale? Some of the authors suggest we respond to all. Does this make expressions that do not do so less valid? Certainly these are first attempts in an emerging area. and later works will have to address these questions.

Long-term Regenerative Values

"Long-term regenerative values" are best expressed in *Ocean Landmark* for it provides a permanent habitat for aquatic species where one did not exist. And *Revival Field* which allows for the return of native plant material that formerly was not able to grow in the previously polluted soil. This too is a permanent solution that supports long-term regenerative values. A difference is noted though due to the fact that *Revival Field* exists on landfill, and its permanence is perhaps less than *Ocean Landmark* for its potential to be redeveloped at some point in time. The same argument can be applied to *Leonhardt Lagoon* if the lagoon proper is left alone. However, its function as a system is not clear from the readings, and it may only function on a symbolic level. This will be covered in the following discussion.

"Long-term regenerative values" in a cultural realm can be seen in works like *The Seven Lagoons, Time Landscape* and *Flow City* though with different foci. *The Seven Lagoons* project displays environmental degradation at a scale that is difficult to grasp without Harrison's involvement. It is shown to raise awareness of the processes of human life that damage the environment. This in turn is meant to incite action to change. *Time Landscape* also involves the process of awareness raising by acting as a landscape reminder. In an intense urban city like New York, connections with the natural processes of life can be hard to make. *Time Landscape* serves to educate people to the condition of the landscape prior to development so that they might gain some knowledge of their past destruction of the landscape. This will cause them to be more aware of their actions. *Flow City* is similar in that vein, though it focuses on the direct process of recycling and the potential to reduce our consumption and waste and therefore deposit less trash into the earth's systems.

Respond to the Cycle of Death

Alan Sonfist's *Time Landscape* is one project that addresses death directly. His piece, surrounded by fencing, is not meant to be maintained. In winter it hibernates along with the rest of the natural vegetation of that climate zone. Other New York vegetation used in landscape settings is planted to look nice year round. Sonfist's piece attempts to show us the natural process of death and rebirth.

This acceptance of a "less than perfect" landscape quality counters the current goal in landscape design. Some of us are taught to design for "year round color". We also plant other plants to "hide" plants in decline in a garden setting. Catherine Howett pointed out that this corresponds to a deeply engrained cultural denial of death. In ecologic systems, death and life are not at opposite extremes as seen from a cultural perspective, but are entwined and dependent upon one another.

Summary

It would seem important when using and interpreting natural processes in this type of work that part of the processes or awareness of the processes is communicated to the viewers. The scale chosen obviously depends on the project but at some level should be grasped by individuals. These forms of landscape expression are still evolving. Each serves to add to the growing vocabulary of the new aesthetic, and will be addressed in the following chapter.

Another important component to the discussion of process is the element of time. It takes time for natural processes to function. How is this to be communicated to a visitor who is only there for a short period of time? *Host Analog* would take 500 years for the trees to reach maturity. And *Time Landscape* is intended to grow into a primeval forest condition. But as stated earlier the actual success or fact that these places may never reach a climax condition is not the point. It is the visualization of the process of time and ecologic systems that needs to be communicated to educate the public, so that we may make choices now which will affect later times.

Symbol

A symbol is broadly defined as "something which refers to something else." Again the landscape scholars further define it with regard to new landscape expressions. According to them new landscape forms should:

1. not imitate nature, but abstract it, in varying levels.
2. serve as "icons of the natural world" and cultural world, and
3. utilize an appropriate "landscape vocabulary" so that these forms are readable.

Also important to discuss is the content of what is being symbolized, and the audience to whom it is aimed.

Just as the discussion of process has natural and cultural components to it, so does the discussion of symbol. In the art projects there are natural symbols and cultural symbols, and sometimes a blending of the two. Also there is a range of abstraction in the symbols. Some like *Leonhardt Lagoon* are simpler and are immediately readable, and others like *Revival Field* and Ocean *Landmark* are more abstract. There seems to be a correlation between those projects that utilize more ecologic process in their work and those that have a higher level of symbol abstraction. It would seem in order to symbolize invisible processes, more abstract symbols are necessary.

Level of Abstraction

The *Leonhardt Lagoon* sculpture of the plant is abstracted by enlargement, change of color, etc. but is still readable as plant form. Its placement in the lagoon tells us it is an aquatic species. These symbols are easily readable, although without knowledge of the lagoons previous condition the message of ecologic cleansing may not be communicated. Conversely, *Host Analog's* symbols are more abstract and the message of ecologic process is more successfully communicated. The combination of natural forms such as the nurse log and its saplings intertwined with the gridlike mesh of the mist system suggest their interdependence upon one another. The lagoon and sculpture could exist apart, whereas the saplings would not be able to grow without the mist system. This symbolizes man's support of a natural process. With the added symbol of the cut log and the saw blade another message is communicated - that we caused the death of the trees and are now attempting to allow for their regrowth. *Revival Field's* symbol is meant to

be a target or bull's eye, to draw our attention to what is going on. The ecologic message is not immediately readable by this alone, but relies on more symbols. The barbed-wire fence, the locks on the gates, and the piece's placement all communicate that danger exists within the area.

Icons of the Natural World

As "icons of the natural world" *Ocean Landmark* is most abstract. It is a symbol of reef formation, but is not trying to replicate the reef exactly. It is providing a framework for a new reef community to develop upon. The nurse log in *Host Analog* also acts as an icon of the natural world though it is not as abstracted and is closer to its original form, although not its form's natural context. The added grid mist system acts as a man-made symbol of the natural rain and humidity that would exist in the forest if the log was in its natural habitat. This is good example of where the natural and cultural symbols begin to merge.

Similarly in *Time Landscape* the symbol of a forest is perhaps closest to its original source, but its context and surrounding fence differentiate it from the city and display it as a natural symbol of a forest. Therefore is clearly a man-made symbol and something to be viewed. It is not to be experienced as it does not provide access to the piece. Rather it is an artifact symbolizing the past.

The cultural icons in *King Street Gardens* merge well with the natural icons. The trellis not only serves to illustrate our cultural history, but it serves the natural world as well by providing food for song birds, which in turn provides pleasure for humans. This combination of the two raises interesting questions about our potential relationship with the environment and how we may construct projects in the future.

Host Analog's placement in front of the convention center allows for a national audience. The symbols and the message being communicated speak about Oregon's past and future. The audience for *Leonhardt Lagoon* is semi-public due to the entrance fee required to get into the fairgrounds. In order to truly serve as an educational tool for the public these projects need to be accessible to everyone. *Time Landscape* serves the truly public nature of a symbol, but again is meant to be viewed, not experienced. The experiential qualities will be addressed in following discussion.

The question of audience is critical to *Ocean Landmark;* for it has none. We know of its existence through media chosen by the artist, not through direct experience. How important is this fact in communicating a message? Since all of these projects were presented in an exhibit, then later known through the book from that exhibit and now known here through the writing of this paper. The answer

would seem to be not very important. The audience in this case is the interested and somewhat educated. When the actual projects out in public might have a different affect. The symbols used must be readable, say the authors, but they do not say to which audience. Implied is the charge that they must be readable to the uneducated average viewer. The simplicity of the lagoon in Dallas does this, but how much power does it have to affect change in public attitudes toward ecologic attitudes. Conversely *Ocean Landmark* may be extremely successful to the gallery-going public. But what about the rest of us? If given information about the piece, the general public might come to know it and benefit from it. The problem is that it is too far removed from most people's world. One can just stumble upon *Leonhardt Lagoon*, and one can be confronted with *Host Analog*, but not with *Ocean Landmark*. This is not to say it is any less valid, just less attainable.

Appropriate Landscape Vocabulary

The issue of an "appropriate landscape vocabulary" suggests that these symbols need to be readable in order to have an affect. Again it is not clear in the readings to whom they must be readable, but it is assumed to be the average public viewer. The symbols need to attainable, and communicate a message. Those projects which utilize enough abstraction, but not too much are more successful at communicating the appropriate message. *Leonhardt Lagoon* may be not abstract enough and conversely *Revival Field* may be too abstract.

The problem, as Robert Thayer pointed out, is the fact that we are trying to visualize things that can not be seen. Landscape vocabulary relies on shared meaning amoung the viewers. We the viewers cannot see the plants absorbing the toxins in *Revival Field*. We rely on new, more abstract symbology to hint at what is going on.

Summary

Over time we may develop certain symbols to represent certain processes which previously had no relationship to one another. The problem that this research has pointed out is that we are just beginning to find, create, use the appropriate symbols. The more abstact the symbol is, the more potential it has to create new meanings. This may be due at first to a lack of experience (- lack of cognitive recognition?) with the symbol. But also the fact that new ideas require new symbols.

Sense of Place

The sense of place discussion, unlike the first two, does not have natural or cultural components to it. By its very nature, a sense of place is how humans feel in a particular location. The landscape scholars define it as:

1. expressing a oneness with nature
2. being a part of the environmental continuum
3. imparting a sense of community
4. responding to all our physical senses not just visual, this includes our senses of smell, hearing, touch, and taste

All of these things combine to create a "sense of place", so that a break down into subheadings for this section is not appropriate. They all relate and interelate to one another.

It was noted in the first two discussions that the projects that are most involved with ecologic process and most abstract in their symbology are also the least visible, least visited of the projects. These factors may limit their "sense of place" compared to those projects which strive for the middle of the previous categories. Those projects that combine readable symbols at an appropriate level of abstraction and communicate an ecologic message, evoke the strongest sense of place. This suggests that indeed this is still an evolving form of landscape expression and that the form vocabulary necessary to express such things is not fully developed.

Projects like *King Street Gardens* combine cultural and natural symbols at various levels of abstraction and involve many of our physical senses to evoke a strong sense of place. The ecologic message is intertwined with our own cultural heritage. The symbolic stormwater cleansing, habitat creation, and civic function of this piece provide the visitor with a sense of community that goes beyond people and modern day and goes back to our historical roots.

The evoked sense of place is due to symbols and their functions. The wetland cleanses some water but is more symbolic of cleansing waste that we create. At the same time the art piece provides habitat for blackbirds so that we may appreciate their song. This may be rare in urban settings. The cultural symbol of the hat/plow/prow not only provides food for the birds, but as the wetland does, symbolizes the potential

for a new human/nature relationship. The sense of community expands to include the environment and our history.

Host Analog also has a strong sense of place. The combination of readable and abstract symbols, and their ecologic function/representation in the piece work together to communicate a message. The log is a simple expression, but combine it with the saw blade, saplings and hi-tech mist system and you begin to get a different message than seperately.

Other projects may focus on parts and pieces of the landsdcape scholars' "definition" of sense of place. For instance, *Ocean Landmark* certainly meets the first three criteria. What is so important that the landscape expressions be visited? Can we gain knowledge second and third hand? Or do we need direct experience? Certainly the strongest effect would be first hand. But with the direction of the artist/landscape architect, a sense of place can be evoked remotely. The Harrison's projects, *Flow City*, and *Revival Field* evoke a sense of place that most of us will never visit. The questions that these projects are raising will be addressed in the following chapter.

Conclusion

In writing this chapter it was exceedingly difficult to maintain clear distinctions between each of the three catgories. They were never meant to be broken apart as such. They work together as the last section attempted to show. The old way of thinking about the world wants to break things apart and analyze the pieces. The new way tries to look at the whole and gain new insight that coordinates with ecologic systems.

Chapter 5 - Conclusions

This paper has been a search for a new aesthetic. Its focus is on furthering the process of that search. The conclusions are grouped together by subtitles because different lessons can be learned from different projects, and different issues. They begin with those conclusions that are more closely aligned with the material covered in this paper, and expand to include implications for the future.

Layers of Meaning

From the exercise of viewing the art exhibit as presented in *Fragile Ecologies,* through the lens of the articles it is apparent that *Host Analog* and *King Street Gardens* are most significant as potential examples of new landscape forms. As shown in the previous chapter, neither of these two projects are extreme in their use of symbol or process, but strive towards the mid-range of those criteria. Yet they evoke a strong sense of place, communicate certain messages well, and thus serve as excellent examples of the strive towards a new landscape aesthetic.

The reasoning for this is that they utilize multiple layers of meaning and have multiple functions. For example*King Street Gardens* with its trellis not only serves as a cultural icon of the history of Alexandria, but also serves as a food source for birds. The trellis communicates a message of mankind co-existing with nature. Also the fact that the trellis serves as an historical icon of our past negative environmental relationship with the earth. It attempts to heal those past wounds by developing a new relationship with the earth. The blackbird's habitat also doubles as a stormwater detention basin. It symbolizes the cleansing of waste in a way that creates life for other species. The multiplicity of function and symbol begins to tell of a new aesthetic that is calling for a new relationship with the environment.

The juxtaposition of blackbird habitat in *King Street Gardens* to a public urban plaza peaks our curiosity and interest about the place so that we may begin to hear the message being communicated. If these elements were placed differently or shaped in other ways, our curiosity may not be engaged and we may miss the message. If for instance the detention basin was near the edge of the plaza and surrounded by lawn, shrubs etc. we may read that as just a detention basin. But here in the central space surrounded by concrete, parking, and sculpture, the importance of the water is made clear. This is similar to what *Leonhardt Lagoon* was attempting by its location in the center of a fairground.

Similarly in *Host Analog* the placement of an ancient tree cut from the rainforest of Oregon and placed in front of a convention center is also communicating certain messages through multiplicity of

function and form. The piece functions not only to grow trees, but it does it in a way that talks about exploitation of the forest and Oregon's reliance on and growth from that destruction. It is telling people about these facts when they come to Portland for a convention. Its about confessing our wrongs and perhaps apologizing through communicating a message that with mankind's help, things can change. This is the function and symbol of the mist system. The system is made by us, but replicates the rainforest's humid climate so that the trees can survive. We have gained much by the cutting of the forests, this piece is about giving something back.

Clashing of forms

This brings up an important issue of comfort level and clashing of forms in the plaza. Traditionally landscape forms are created to be "pleasant" or non-controversial. If this is the case, those forms can easily be glazed over with a quick glimpse and deemed "landscaping" and nothing more. The messages can be missed. This new aesthetic is just developing. The "clashing" of forms may just be a transitional experiment. The juxtaposition of different forms in strange locations is using our existing vocabulary and attempting to make new words. Visually "wetland" speaks different things than "abstract sculpture". The fact that the two are in an urban plaza and relate to one another through ecologic function and cultural symbology sends vastly different messages than either one does alone.

Picturesque Aesthetic?

Ocean Landmark is an important project that questions the boundaries of "landscape" and "aesthetics" because it is not to be directly viewed. We seem to be concerned as landscape architects with only those things which can be seen. Catherine Howett wants us to expand our designs to include all of our senses. What about none of our senses? (except possibly cognizance?) This project is not directly made for people, but it is about people. It uses human waste as a product and includes us in the system. Even though the final product is not experiential. But it is vitally important to the aquatic ecosystem within which it exsits. How do projects like this fit in to a "landscape aesthetic"?

No Plant Material

Projects such as *Ocean Landmark* and *Flow City* raise the question of palette. Landscape design is not just about the use of plant material. Though traditionally this has been one of our foci. Laurie Olin seems to think that Martha Schwartz's work has opened up a wider palette, but doesn't really know what to do with it yet. Maybe Beamont's work helps us to make the choice more significant. Bricks made of recycled coal ash are dumped in the ocean, is this "landscaping"? No. But in searching for a new appropriate landscape aesthetic (...one that functions ecologically, symbolizes that fact, etc.) this project is important. It broadens our palette to include material that formerly was never used. With the added message of reusing and recycling materials, the rejection of plant material becomes an ecologic and social statement.

Action

Work like Mierle Ukeles and the Harrisons is engaged with action and performance. This again is not "landscaping" but actions can communicate meaning and messages about the landscape, about ecologic systems. Actions can be visual things that are more easily aligned with "an aesthetic". Or they can be very personal, unseen actions that one does to affect change for the better.

No Site-No Construction

The Harrisons work is not about creating forms as much as it is about engaging our minds. How does something that has no site, no form, fit into a landscape aesthetic? We affect the environment, the landscape. If we do so with a different perspective, that will be evident in the landscape. The Harrisons are focusing on the root of environmental problems...the human brain. Our actions on a total landscape level with a specific site or a specific construction will become apparent over time.

Old Aesthetic/New Aesthetic

The difference between the old aesthetic and the new begins to become apparent from the research in this paper. The old aesthetic was/is based primarily on the "view" or scene as paramount. The new aesthetic has multiple goals...ecologic, visual, and communicative. It is not hierarchical or pyramidal, but lateral. They exist side by side in similar levels of importance. The increasing awareness and study of ecology has given us this new perspective. The multiple goals of the new aesthetic include not only visual aspects, but functional ecologic aspects and the communication of certain messages. They are equal in importance. Whereas the old may have considered these other aspects, there were always interpreted through the primary goal of the visual.

The fact that *King Street Gardens* functions on these multiple layers and achieves these new goals is different enough for us to see it as not just design or landscape forms, but something more. It also allows for people to engage the project at whatever level of knowledge they are currently at, and allows for discovery and growth of knowledge, thus adding to their education. If someone reads "wetland" as they know wetland to be, and sees the blackbirds feeding on the abstract sculpture, they will start to question their relationship. They may not know the ecologic importance of what is going on, but the potential exists for it to be learned.

Messages in Aesthetics

The idea that an aesthetic sends a message is not a new one. The old aesthetic contained messages as well. One of those was concerned with evoking a pastoral retreat response from its viewers. But perhaps as the landscape architecture scholars have suggested, those messages have become so overused that we do not realize that a message is being incorporated into the work. And possibly the messages from the old aesthetic are no longer valid or perceived as being important to today's designers. What value is there in sending the message of pastoral "Eden" in a time when parts of the earth have been ecologically destroyed? The crisis of today's environmental degradation is motivating many to react. Promoting a utopian vision of landscaping is wrong. The new aesthetic is attempting to address the fact that we do not live in a perfect world, but at least we can try to do something about it. This is one of the messages being communicated in the new aesthetic that was not included in the old.

Artists and Landscape Architects Issues - personal drive

The motivation of people to react to environmental problems has provided us with examples from the art world. But why not from landscape architecture as well? The scholars in our profession have stated that artists have "a jump" on us, in fact that they have had more time to confront some of these issues. Art

tends to drive culture. This new breed of ecological artists are pushing the boundaries of their work. They have traditionally been able to do this due to their training, whereas landscape architects have been bound by client wishes and have been geared to solve societal problems. It is up to each of us as landscape architects to push the boundaries as well, to practice at the level of good art. We can not simply wait for culture to catch up, we need to educate. We can not wait around for someone to say "it's OK to design with these ideas in mind." We have a responsibility that supersedes our client's wishes. It is up to us to find the balance.

Cultural/Natural

The fact that cultural and natural needs are becoming more closely aligned with each other has been discussed by our scholars before. Although how it is happening is not a neat blending as we might wish it to occur. The art projects we have seen, especially *Host Analog* and *King Street Gardens* challenge our current notions of landscape design. They bring together cultural and natural elements in new uncomfortable ways.

Culture and nature in western culture have been separated for a long time. What does it mean to say the two are coming together? As the two projects mentioned previously have shown that what is good for people and what is good for the earth are no longer mutually exclusive goals in design, they become one and the same.

Future Designs in Landscape Architecture

From this research it is apparent that we as landscape architects cannot continue to practice as we traditionally have. New more pressing concerns are causing a shift in how we do business. To ignore them exacerbates the division between culture and nature and denies us a richer experience with the landscape. These art projects are first attempts at a new relationship with the earth. How will they influence future designs in our profession?

Future designs will need to consider all life that is being affected by and designed for. It is almost impossible for human beings to have a completely benign affect on the environment. Yes, we can design with minimal impacts, but actually improving the site ecologically, and demonstrating that through our work is of greater importance. This is radically different from our work today, and necessarily the forms will be different in the future. They will incorporate a new landscape vocabulary. As mentioned previously they will most likely combine existing forms to make new "words". Design will not be like designing an "outdoor room" as it is taught to us in early design classes. But will more likely strive to create a place

that harmonizes all things present. Again, the completeness of that attempt is not likely, but awareness of that fact and attempting to do the best we can will lead us in new directions.

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The University of Oregon,.....(fall and winter quarters) 1992

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Work Experience (responsibilities included)

COMMUNITY DESIGN ASSISTANCE CENTER, Blacksburg, VA (fall '94 and spring'95).....**Intern**
Redeveloped twenty year old landscape master plan for state mental and drug abuse hospital; and shade perennial border design.

VIRGINIA TECH, Blacksburg, VA (spring '94).....**Graduate Teaching Assistant**
Assisted in grading and critiquing students in their construction documents class.

MERRIFIELD NURSERY, Merrifield, VA (summers '92-'94).....**Plant sales**
Gained knowledge of perennials and enhanced knowledge of trees and shrubs, as well as managing the perennial section in absence of supervisor.

YORK COUNTY PLANNING OFFICE, Yorktown, VA (summer '91).....**Volunteer**
Assisted on streetscape revival project for publicly owned lands in coordination with the Yorktown Master Plan.

ARLINGTON COUNTY PARKS and RECREATION DEPARTMENT, Arlington, VA (summer '90).....**Intern**
Worked on playground restoration and design, self-regulated most of time.

NATURAL LAWNS INC., Falls Church, VA (summer '89).....**Lawn Spray Applicator**
Gained knowledge of lawn diseases, insect damage, and fertilization rates of lawns, self- managed or working with co-worker.

NATIONAL GALLERY of ART, Washington, D.C. (fall '87 Matisse exhibit).....**Audio Tour Assistance**
Greeted visitors and outfitted them with audiocassette tours.

Professional Activities and Awards

AMERICAN SOCIETY of LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, 1994
CREATIVE DESIGN AWARD recipient, Department of Landscape Architecture at Penn State, 1992
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ALPHA RHO CHI (A.P.X.) Professional Architecture Fraternity, Penn State, 1988, Vice President, 1989
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Professional Conferences

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