

Places

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Caring About Places: Landscapes

Our surroundings nurture our imaginations. The forms they present to us, the processes they harbor, the scale and abundance of their extent, give reach to our understandings. The landscape, considered as an object of contemplation, is a splendid contrivance that has been made available to us through the cumulative efforts and passions of artists in many cultures. It is rich with suggestive possibilities because we have learned to read significance in its forms.

Landscapes, depicted, constructed, or found, embody the world we have come to know: a crisp world of measured terraces that sets the impatient hand of man against the unimaginable slowness of ecological formation; a realm of chasms, mysteries, and opening vistas that serves to evoke at once a world beyond control and the poignance of being a part of it; or a landscape of traces—tree silhouettes, whose adjustments and particularities symbolize the mutuality of genetic impulse and environmental modification; water courses that take their form from the registers of geological time yet host lives that pass nearly as quickly as the water that flowed past Heraclitus' foot; interweaving foliage that calls forth a vision of interdependence that may help to explain the promise of responsive environmental design.

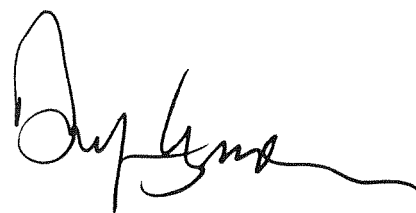
Landscapes, bounded and observed, viewed from a specific vantage

point or called to mind by words, can—when imbued with the proper imagination—typify personality or even symbolize political aspiration.

Yet the landscape works on us in subtler ways as well. It enters without artifice or intent into the lives of townspeople, who develop a socialized landscape—townscapes—that becomes a part of the fabric of understandings that makes up a community, that becomes, quite literally, commonplace. The commonplace and the radically imagined are each powerful tools for introducing mental structure into our experience; as such they are used for diverse purposes by the various components of society. Commonplace and radical are not clearly aligned with left or right, good or bad; they are, rather, characteristics of our surroundings that bring things to mind, holding steady some aspects of the world, offering hopes for change in conditions that seem oppressive, being subject, like all ideas, to manipulation as well as to criticism and refinement. The artificers of landscape have long known how to use its suggestive powers to serve their ends; citizens now are learning that they too can exercise some control on the world as it seems, that they can conserve, regain, and contrive landscapes that suit their imaginations.

But the landscape or the townscape, or any other recipient of imaginative

investment, can yield its insights only if we attend to it, only if we bring to it a wish to know, a willingness to feel, and an enthusiasm for the actual. We must care to make our surroundings well, and we must care to know them well.



Donlyn Lyndon

Errata

We regret that in Volume 2 Issue 2, two illustrations were printed upside down: Georgia O'Keeffe's "New York with Moon" (Figure 2 in "Georgia O'Keeffe's *Radiator Building: Icon of Glamorous Gotham*" by Elizabeth Duvert) and Barbara Stauffacher Solomon's wonderful color drawing, "Tree Columns for First Figure" (Figure 4 in Michael Palmer's, "Figures in Space"). We apologize especially to Georgia O'Keeffe and Barbara Stauffacher Solomon for our oversight. Their illustrations were among the chief delights of the issue.

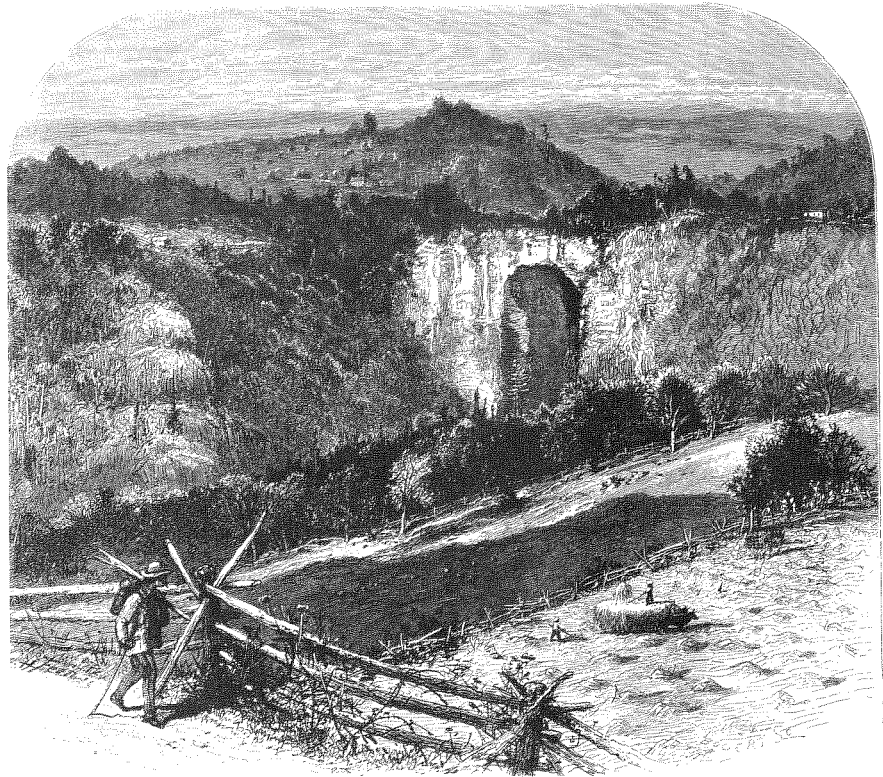
The Even More Extraordinary Jefferson

Walter Creese

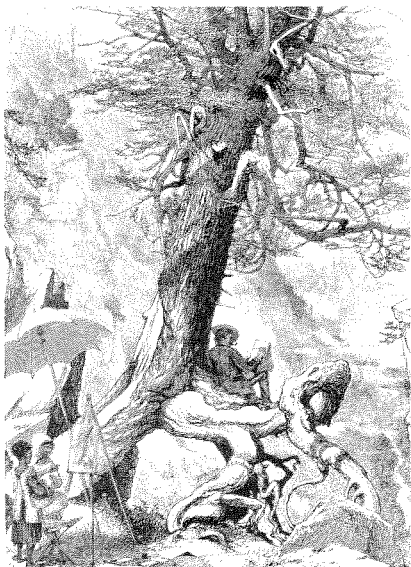
Thomas Jefferson's awareness was more scenic than that of many later architects; hence his architecture never quite crystallizes outdoors but exists in flux with its landscape surroundings. To understand the comprehensiveness of his approach, therefore, it may be more useful to glance first at his thought processes as they relate to landscape and afterward return to his architecture in situ. His presuppositions about landscape are well demonstrated in his discussion of two locations, the Natural Bridge and Harpers Ferry, both of which he described in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* of 1787. They were dear places to him because they inferred initiative and direction, landfalls toward which to steer in order to establish a national sensibility.

I

Jefferson's habitat, Charlottesville, is situated between parallel ranges of hills, varying from 500 to 1,300 feet, many of which he described in his writings as "mountains." Monticello stood out among them at 850 feet. Jefferson measured and described these "mountains" as individual entities. Earth forms had a special fascination for him because they were features to relate to, concentration points to rally around, permanent peaks to admire, in a nation that as yet displayed very few monumental buildings and nurtured still fewer longstanding traditions. At this time Americans approached natural features such as mountains more readily because there were no squares, castles, or palaces already in place. Jefferson bought the Natural Bridge and 157 surrounding



I Natural Bridge, near Lexington, Virginia. Jefferson owned the bridge from 1774 until his death in 1826. This was a "wonder of the world" for him, but it blended easily with its local surroundings. From William Cullen Bryant, *Picturesque America* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1872).



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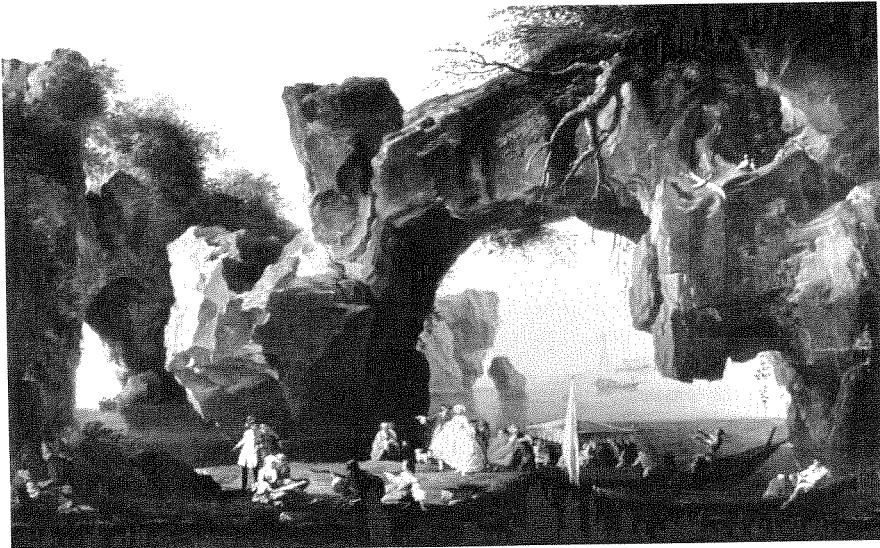
2 Cedar Creek Gorge from the Natural Bridge. Jefferson would never have tempted fate by sitting on such Baroque roots, as this later romantic artist does. From Bryant, *Picturesque America*.

acres in Rockbridge County, near Lexington, Virginia, on July 5, 1774, and kept it the rest of his life, even after his bankruptcy. He turned his private resources and initiatives toward open public benefit. Natural Bridge could almost be called the first national park, for it was kept inviolate, in its remote spot, for the novel arch it contained. Although Jefferson attempted to have the bridge recorded on canvas a number of times so that its image might be better recognized publicly, it actually was not so sensational, rising only 215 feet, with a 90-foot span, and otherwise melding into its bucolic setting. In his *Notes on Virginia*, Jefferson managed to make the site *sound* twice as exciting as it really was: "Though the sides of this bridge are provided in some parts with a parapet of fixed rocks, yet few men have resolution to walk to them and look over into the abyss. You involuntarily fall on your hands and knees and peep over it. Looking down from this height about a minute, gave me a violent head ach." His psychosomatic reaction might be thought more British than American, since the feeling of fright obviously derives from Edmund Burke's mid-eighteenth-century English Sublime conceptualization. As Walter Hipple explains in his book on *The Beautiful, The Sublime, & The Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory*, "Greatness of dimension . . . fills the mind with that 'delightful horror' which is the essential effect of sublimity." It was typical of Jefferson to want to share terror in this amicable way.

When Jefferson described the descent from the deck of the bridge to Cedar Creek below, he presented a quite different mood: "If the view from the top be painful and intolerable, that from below is delightful in an equal extreme . . . ; so beautiful an arch, so light, and springing as it were up to heaven, the rapture of the spectator is really indescribable!" Down below was the domesticated prettiness and charm that he often cultivated inside his architecture. This lower register had so much exuberance and spring that it might even be called a French aspiration, for Joseph Vernet of France painted in the middle of the eighteenth century a number of pictures, such as *The Italian Gondola*, in which a natural stone arch framed a romantic and playful scene. And Jefferson had visited the Paris Salon of 1789, which exhibited as many as twelve of Vernet's paintings. Both Jefferson and Vernet spoke in the language of reverie and good humor in the midst of apocalyptic events (a strange inconsistency to twentieth-century eyes, of course), as 1789 was the year of the French Revolution.

II

Jefferson's view of Harpers Ferry on a visit in 1783 was more expansive but bound to be more tragic and thwarted. According to him, Harpers Ferry "is worth a voyage across the Atlantic. Yet here, as in the neighbourhood of the natural bridge, are people who have passed their lives within half a dozen miles, and have never been to



3



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3 The Italian Gondola, by Joseph Vernet, 1745–1750. The French painter Vernet included shipwrecks and natural arches in his more fanciful marine landscapes. Jefferson knew his paintings. From Florence Ingersoll-Smouse, *Joseph Vernet, Peintre de Marine* (Paris: Etienne Bignou, 1926).

4 Harpers Ferry from Jefferson Rock by moonlight. Jefferson's vantage point of Jefferson Rock is at the left, with the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal seen at its tip. The view is east down the Potomac River, the Shenandoah coming in from the right. The Catholic church (1833) has a spire, and St. John's Episcopal Church (1852) behind it has a two-stage cupola. From Bryant, *Picturesque America*.

survey these monuments of a war between rivers and mountains, which must have shaken the earth itself to its center.” Why did these natives fail to take inspiration from these wonderful, indigenous scenes? It was a potential fault of a republic that citizens would live down to its liberties and privileges rather than up. He observed in *Notes on Virginia* that some of them in Virginia were unable to aspire architecturally above the level of the shack.

The “war between rivers and mountains” was a naturalistic facsimile of the American Revolution of a decade before. And thus it ought to carry a heavy impact. So he says in *Notes on Virginia*, “The passage of the Patowmac through the Blue ridge is perhaps one of the most stupendous scenes in nature. You stand on a very high point of land [Jefferson Rock, or just above it]. On your right comes up the Shenandoah, having ranged along the foot of the mountain an hundred miles to seek a vent. On your left approaches the Patowmac, in quest of a passage also. In the moment of their junction they rush together against the mountain, rend it asunder, and pass off to the sea.” The reader senses the full force in natural phenomena, translated from the political, of the American Revolution, the final breakthrough. However, after the breakthrough, a strange thing happens. Usually Jefferson kept the foreground formally composed; the distance he allowed to be more incidental and spreading. In this instance, however, the reverse relationship prevails.

In *Notes on Virginia*, he says, the “distant finishing” of the picture “is a true contrast to the fore-ground. It is as placid and delightful, as that is wild and tremendous. For the mountain being cloven asunder, she presents to your eye, through the cleft, a small catch of smooth blue horizon, at an infinite distance in the plain country, inviting you, as it were, from the riot and tumult roaring around, to pass through the breach and participate of the calm below. Here the eye ultimately composes itself.”

Three aspects of this quaint description are of interest to us here. The drama climaxes by splitting apart only one mountain, when no such single mound is dominant in the actual scene. He moves a mountain apart to create a satisfactory focal point, just as he hypothetically elevated the Natural Bridge to a dizzying height. Second, Jefferson did not include middle distances in his descriptions. The viewer was either here or there. Vertical planes had to be pried apart for more dramatic effect. He entitled those elementary zones the “Near” and the “Distant” (which he flip-flopped in the act of perception at Harpers Ferry). It wasn’t until the later visions of the Hudson River School painters that the Renaissance device of a middle distance was reinvoked in the landscape vocabulary of the nation. The third notable aspect of this description arises from the “small catch of smooth blue horizon,” lying twenty miles beyond at Frederick, Maryland, and “the fine country around that.” “That” represents “the infinite distance in

the plain country,” yet if one goes to Harpers Ferry and actually looks, this farthest view is hardly discernible. How can we explain Jefferson’s exaggeration again in this regard, particularly when “Near” and “Distant” are this time reversed? The simplest account is that after the violent breakthrough of the Revolution (that is, the powerful river through the resistant mountain), domestic peace has to lay just beyond in space as well as time. The “smooth blue horizon” was a tabula rasa of his political hopes for after the Revolution, for his vision of what the peaceful and bucolic country could become. For Jefferson, the foreground was always a leaping-off place.

The good times would never come so easily, however, and nothing shows that opposite scenario better than the intensely human, rather than natural, drama of this very spot of Harpers Ferry. All good intentions sank like a gritty residue to the bottom of its two major valleys; the Jeffersonian bubbles expired so rapidly. By 1796, only thirteen years after Jefferson’s visit, a federal armory was established there, partly because of the remoteness and security of the site. In 1840, environmental hate was first registered against Harpers Ferry by that practiced observer of the Hudson River scene, Nathan P. Willis, in his *American Scenery*. Willis resented the intrusion of industry into the previously untroubled setting: “The unpicturesque new village of the white man, his mill or his factory, does not convey to my imagination an image of happiness; and I regret the

primitive rover of the wild [the Indian], who neither blackened nature with smoke, nor violated her harmony with brick and shingle.” The benign Jeffersonian gaze was turning negative and bleak. The industrial intrusion was more resented because of the fastness of the location. Only nineteen years after Willis’s visit came the attack on the arsenal by John Brown and his eighteen followers, and the calculated disdain of Willis shrank to a cold hysteria in the chilling drizzle of October 16, 1859. No papers have indicated that Brown took notice of the esthetic potential of the unique surroundings. In environmental terms, genuine awfulness and fanaticism took over from Jefferson’s moderate sponsorship of the awesome outlook. In 1861 and 1862 the town was repeatedly attacked by Confederate soldiers with the gunmaking machines being shipped off to Richmond in 1861. Everything ended with a too immediate and pragmatic result, and Jefferson’s happy vision of the national future evaporated in the heat of regional and partisan strife.

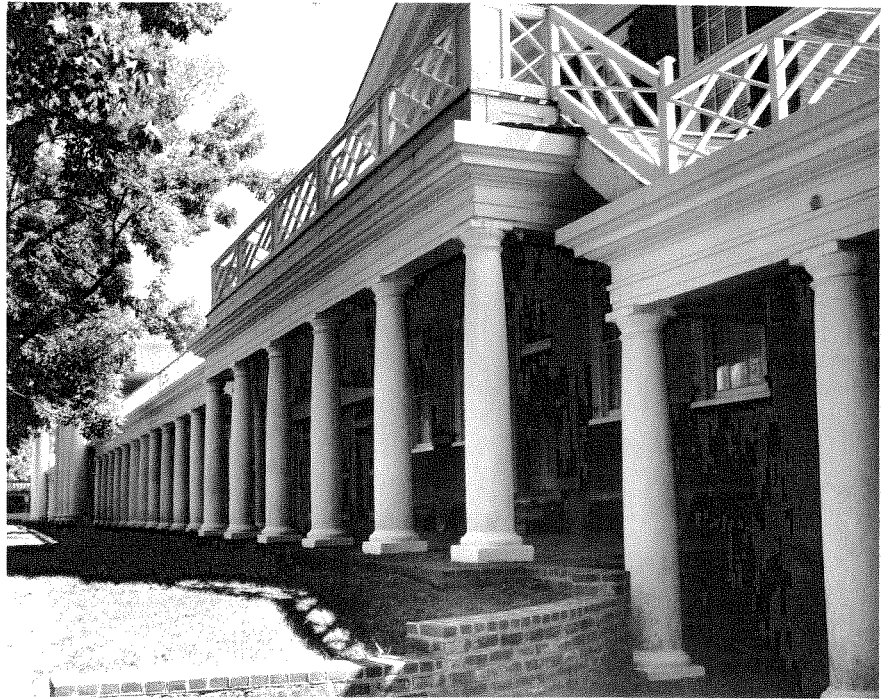
III

Did Jefferson’s panoramic way of looking at the landscape bear any relation to the manner in which he conceived his architecture? It did, because the latter was always a part of the effect of an outdoor amphitheater, a kind of “built scenery.” The two Ranges of the Lawn at the University of Virginia resemble the panoramic, parallel run of the Blue Ridge and the Southwest mountains from



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5 Harpers Ferry under Confederate occupation, May 1861. The covered bridge was burned by the Confederates in July 1861. The roofless structure to the right is the arsenal that was the target of John Brown’s raid in 1859; it was gutted by Union troops on April 16, 1861. From *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*.



6

6 Awkward Junction of Porticoes, East Range, University of Virginia. With Jefferson, one rose or fell, went forward or back, rather abruptly. Photograph by Ralph Thompson.

7 Pavilion X, East Range, University of Virginia. The students are hardly visible. Timelessness and purification were Jefferson's aims here. Photograph by Phillip Neuberg.



7

northeast to southwest as best seen from Monticello. Within the Ranges the same abrupt and awkward shift of Jefferson's attention that takes place in his landscapes can be witnessed when a portico is suddenly lifted to respond to a rising terrace. More spectacular yet is the buildup of the pavilions into distinct "mini-mountains." The rows of the Ranges frame the Lawn on each side, so that "Here the eye ultimately composes itself," as Jefferson said about the Frederick Town perspective. Pavilion X on the Lawn encapsulates the effect, if one can draw near enough to it. Pavilion X would appear even more monumental and mountainous today if the original parapets above the entablature were still in place. Jefferson commands our attention by suddenly upgrading the scale over the domestic by placing a bigger portico over two smaller ones. There is another degree of exaggeration in it, as in his descriptions of the Natural Bridge towering over the spectator, Harpers Ferry stretching away from the spectator, and the Southwest and Blue Ridge mountains from Monticello streaming by. The luminosity of the porch represents a mesmerization of the spectator by the singling out of a facade. The wooden material is structurally cumbersome but systematically very pleasing because the members are nevertheless all present and accounted for. One suddenly wants to register and reregister the white columns and entablatures as they press forward and back along the perspective of the East Range. Robert Venturi christened this

Jeffersonian effect of architectural cues as "contrasting adjacency" in his discussion of the Lawn in *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966). Jefferson sought out the right components (for him) and then froze them at the most poignant moment to obtain the highest degree of manifest Classicism, much as people iron autumnal leaves between wax paper to capture the tints. It is the same kind of freezing that takes Shaker furniture and family houses above and beyond the Federal style. The bafflement for the average spectator today comes from seeing such "conventional" elements turned into such a variety of clasped positions. One can hardly believe that Classical features were meant to be that stark or pure. That is what makes them American rather than European. The puristic luminosity registers so strongly that it even draws attention from whomever moves in the shadows below and behind the columns, white drawing forward and away from black. Jefferson's archaistic approach captures immediate attention for eternal aims. It is the American formula for "ever after." His architectural motifs, especially the porches, bays, and terraces, are, in a way, cages he is constantly springing open for the escape of the spirit. Escape or release is an American intention. To let his spiritual birds escape from amidst the artificial mountains, the Lawn was originally opened toward the southwest, to soar ninety feet above the prospect below, and two wooden terraces were provided at Monticello to allow his guests to stand tall to look over his "Sea

View" to the south and the Blue Ridge on the north. He was an amateur all right, but how few professional architects since have worked so hard at vesting their environmental experiences or succeeded in making them as vivid, so vivid that their images can hardly be shaken off even today?

Jefferson belongs among us as an American because he was so individualistic in his public appearances. And that individualism found its strongest expression at quite opposite poles. He spaced the pavilions slightly farther apart along the Ranges as they became more distant from the dominant Rotunda. This creates optical differences in the way it is viewed, from one end or the other. He remained entirely silent, in his usually candid writing, about what he had done. He "hid" the students in the shadows under the porticoes, failed to humanize them, in an antidomestic effort to achieve a mini-monumental scale. He took up an eminently rational style, the Classical, distilled and "purified" it, and yet kept it mysterious and elusive. Sociable, buoyant, and courteous as he was, Jefferson could also force the smaller dome, column, or railing, however inadvertently, to become the very apotheosis of personal loneliness when silhouetted against the distant landscape and sky. These selfcontradictory gestures make his work, as exaggerated and genius laden as it is, extraordinary and American.

Subconscious Landscapes of the Heart

Randy Hester



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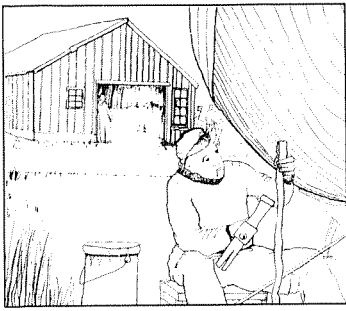
1, 2 In Manteo, North Carolina, locals find employment reconstructing ships that were once part of the town's everyday life. Here a replica of an Elizabethan ship is moored at the boat-building center. Enough tourists are attracted to revive once failing industries without sacrificing the life-style and landscape qualities local people value.

When bridge-building opened access to the North Carolina Outer Banks in the 1950s, highways built to facilitate direct travel to its beaches passed by the island town of Manteo. Within the next thirty years, Manteo plummeted from being the region's primary trade center to that of a near ghost town.

Today, as a result of extensive grass roots community development that revived its once-decayed village charm, Manteo has become the home of a reconstructed ship reminiscent of the vessel Sir Walter Raleigh's lost colonists arrived in 400 years ago and now attracts enough tourism to restore failing indigenous industries.

Manteo's recovery is a familiar story. A small dying town takes an economic U-turn by capitalizing on its smallness, intimacy, natural beauty, village character, and its rural past. Panacea for poverty! Unfortunately, for many communities, this turnaround spells the eventual demise of existing community traditions, destruction of valued places, and replacement by a phony folk culture.¹

Recognizing the pitfalls associated with inviting new development, Manteo took unusual steps to avoid both a tourist takeover and a junk culture.² As the town's community designer, I helped the residents identify and preserve their valued life-styles and landscapes in the face of change. Once identified, important social patterns and places, which came to be called the Sacred Structure by locals, inspired our plan for community



revitalization. Because the town's economic recovery was dramatic and local people were able to maintain control of the development, our plan received national notice. Much of the attention focused on the use of the "Sacred Structure" as both a means to preserve the local culture and the foundation for new development.

In the following pages, I reconstruct the process of uncovering the valued places and discuss the specific impact of the Sacred Structure on the community design plan. I also point out the difficulty of legally protecting valued life-styles and places. And finally I make some general observations about the potential use of "sacred structures" in other communities in transition.

Uncovering Valued Places

I was originally hired to redesign the village waterfront, but it took only a few days on site to realize that a waterfront park would be a cosmetic cover-up. With over twenty percent seasonal unemployment and a declining tax base, Manteo needed a new economy. On the day I discussed this with Mayor John Wilson, the hardware store closed downtown and moved to a nearby resort location. The mayor, a young architect and native, saw the town through the eyes of both professional designer and local insider. He loved the place. He wanted the town to recapture the spirit he had experienced as a child playing on busy docks.

However, not even nostalgic boyhood memories of a bustling waterfront could deny the message

of the hardware store. We agreed that day to expand our contract. I outlined a holistic community development process,³ no mere pretty park. The Town Board approved the idea. I moved my office to Manteo. We began immediately a community-wide discussion to design a strategy to overcome the problems besetting Manteo.

As I began talking to more community leaders, I realized that everyone shared the mayor's passion for the place. I was struck by the emotion with which people talked about how special Manteo was.

This was a happy coincidence for me. In my community design work I search for social nuances to inspire form.⁴ I had just finished designing a day care center in which I had used hypnosis to help the staff discover the spatial qualities they wanted in the facility.⁵ Startled that their hypnotic spatial preferences were so different from the questionnaire results, I read what I could find about spatial values and concluded that unconscious attachment to place might be a powerful factor in community planning. I felt that the concept of spatial values would be more useful to designers than our present idea of landscape aesthetics, but the words Sacred Structure had never occurred to me.

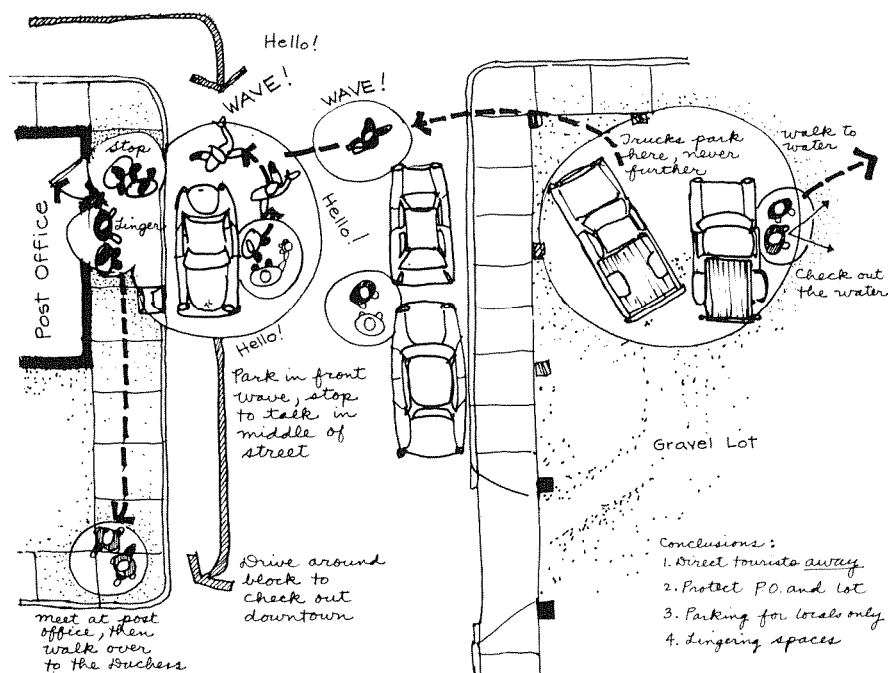
I welcomed the opportunity Manteo offered to explore these ideas, but the problems confronting Manteo seemed to require economic development, not studies of emotional attachment to place.

However, through our community goals survey, many of the same points the mayor and leaders had articulated resurfaced. Although the survey, by which citizens were randomly interviewed in their homes, focused on broad community concerns, affection for place was mentioned frequently.

When asked what they liked most about their town, residents often mentioned small town qualities such as informal friendliness (fifty-one percent of those surveyed listed this in an open-ended question, a somewhat higher response than I had gotten in other communities in North Carolina) and being able to walk almost everywhere in town (twenty-two percent, an unusually high response). Places such as the waterfront, the village, and specific shops were mentioned as being important because they represented home or provided roots.⁶

Residents were clear. They wanted new economic development, but they wanted the small town atmosphere preserved. We knew neighborhoods could be protected by zoning, facilities could be located compactly to reinforce walking, and a historic district could save venerable architecture. But that didn't satisfy us. We felt we were missing the essence of what townspeople were saying. We undertook the task of finding out precisely what life-style and landscape features were essential to the continued functioning of the town's culture.

Behavior mapping gave us another clue. For several weeks we sat in



NEWSING AT THE POST OFFICE

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3 By mapping where activities occurred in the community, we discovered daily patterns that had place specificity. This warned us that land use changes in those places might have a disruptive impact on the life of the townspeople.

4 The map of sacred places touched a subconscious nerve in the community, giving residents a collective picture of the settings vital to town life.

various locations and recorded what people did and where. The resulting maps showed us activity settings for the daily patterns of townspeople. While people had described some of these in the goals survey, most had not been mentioned. Activities like newsing (exchanging gossip) at the post office, hanging out at the docks, and checking out the water (tides, shoreline, fishing catches, weather, and gossip) recurred in the same places each day. Life-style and landscape were intertwined. Daily ritual had place specificity, and the cultural dependence on places seemed more widespread than people had reported in our interviews. This meant that changes in land or site use had the potential of significant, disruptive impact on the community.

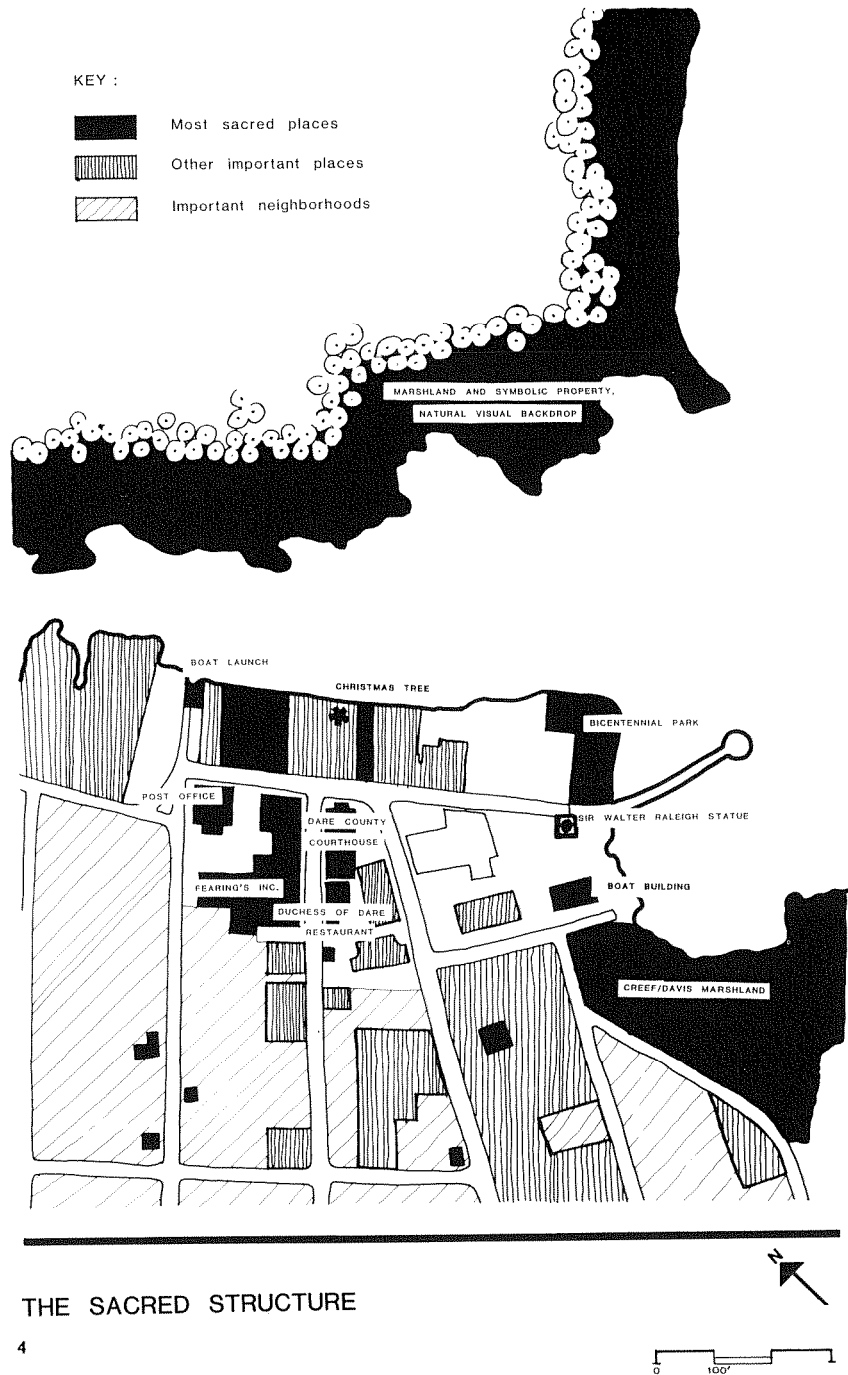
Still, we did not know which places were most essential to the life of the town. But we had hunches based on our knowledge of social patterns in other towns, the survey results, our behavior mapping, and informal discussions with town leaders. From these hunches another community designer, Billie Harper, and I made a list of the places we thought were important to the social fabric. For example, we both thought the gravel parking lot would be essential because it was the setting for checking out the water and community festivals. We guessed that Jule's Park would be inviolable because the mayor had told us that Jule Burrus had built it from ruins as a labor of love for the town. We were right about these. We also thought actor Andy Griffith's house would be important

because of the status he brought to the community. We were wrong.

We revised the list after checking it with several Town Board members. A newspaper questionnaire was developed for townspeople to rank these places in order of significance to them as individuals. We also asked residents to state which places they thought could be changed to accommodate tourism and which places they were unwilling to sacrifice in order to attract tourist dollars. We used historic tourism as a trade-off because that seemed the most viable economic development strategy that we were developing at the same time.

A series of specific trade-offs were posed, such as whether the respondent agreed that it was more important to leave the Christmas tree in the gravel parking lot downtown than to use the space for parking. The responses to these questions allowed us not only to measure the intensity of attachment to places versus the benefits of tourism but also to recheck the relative importance of places.⁷

A ranked and weighted list of significant places resulted. As I recall, one resident, upon seeing how many places ranked higher than the local churches and cemetery, dubbed the list the “sacred structures,” and thereafter the list was called the Sacred Structure of Manteo. The cemetery and the high school provided benchmarks for comparison, and we used them as cutoff points for the list of places that should not





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be negatively affected by new development. The places included the marshes surrounding the town, Jule's Park, a drug store and soda fountain, the post office, churches, the Christmas Shop, front porches, the town launch, a statue of Sir Walter Raleigh, the Duchess Restaurant, the town hall, locally made unreadable street signs, the town cemetery, the Christmas tree in the gravel parking lot, park post lamps placed there in memory of loved ones, and two historic sites.

The newspapers published the results. A map of the Sacred Structure was included with the inventory plans we prepared during the planning process for the town. The map simply showed the places colored with varying intensities based on the questionnaire results. It looked similar to other land use maps. It was immediately clear that the Sacred Structure touched a subconscious nerve in the community. The residents wanted these places protected. One newspaper editor expressed his and local concern that the identification of these places in the survey meant that the designers were considering changing the places to attract tourists. He carefully listed those

places that must not be profaned for tourists, stating that they were "perfect jewels" the way they were.⁸ His "perfect jewels" play on words referred directly to Jule's Park but also included the other most valued places. Frequently during the planning process that followed, the editor cornered me to remind me that those places were sacred and that local people were willing to sacrifice economic gain to save these places because they had a higher value than dollars.

Sacred Places

What did people mean by this Sacred Structure? The concept of sacred place making, or a community sacred structure, is easy to accept in primitive cultures. We smile knowingly at stories of tribes who proclaim their village square to be the center of the universe, who believe that passing through a doorway changes their state of mind, who designate twisted plants as magic trees or attribute doorway gardens to the spontaneous generation of the earth, and who set aside these common landscape features as hallowed.⁹ It is harder to comprehend that we, in our modern, mobile, and secular American society, hold any place

5, 6 Most of the places listed as inviolable were humble, homey, and homely. Still, they embody the life of Manteo.

7 The multi-million-dollar boardwalk, designed by the author, was built entirely by local volunteers and craftsmen. The Sacred Structure inspired the overall design plan, directing details that give the revitalized town an unpretentious atmosphere that invited public participation.



7

necessary to our daily lives as sacred.¹⁰ Yet our cultural preoccupation with placelessness and topophilia suggests that we do highly value some places.¹¹ In this context, perhaps a useful definition of sacred structure would be those places—buildings, outdoor spaces, and landscapes—that exemplify, typify, reinforce, and perhaps even extol the everyday life patterns and special rituals of community life, places that have become so essential to the lives of the residents through use or symbolism that the community collectively identifies with the places. The places become synonymous with residents' concepts and use of their town. The loss of such places would reorder or destroy something or some social process familiar to the community's collective being.¹²

Manteo's Sacred Structure, for the most part, consisted of humble places, "holes-in-the-wall," that were the settings for the community's daily routine.¹³ No mere places, they embodied the life of Manteo. While these places combined to express Manteo's uniqueness and probably structure residents' internal images of their town, not one of them was exotic.

Yet each was eloquent in its context. They were typical (and often times run down) features of what is commonly found along the Carolina coastal landscape. They were familiar, homey, and homely.

These places were almost universally unappealing to the trained professional eyes of an architect, historian, real estate developer, or upper middle-class tourist. As a result, in Manteo only two places among the Sacred Structure were protected by historic preservation legislation. Only a few were protected by zoning law. Even to locals the sacred places were outwardly taken for granted. Their value resided in the community's subconscious but loomed large in conscious minds of locals after four things happened.

First, the places were threatened. When we began talking about the changes necessary for economic recovery, town leaders, at first, and then residents became aware that their community was in transition. The dramatic scope of the proposed plans to alter the town forced people to think about the social institutions and the environments that mattered most to them.

Second, the places were legitimized. The locals were emotionally attached to many places that they knew did not match the media images of good environments.¹⁴ (Designers might simplify this as the distinction between ordinary vernacular and high-style architecture.) Since they were somewhat ashamed of these places when outsiders were around, it was important for us outside design experts to say these places were fine. Otherwise townspeople would tell us only about places that tourists would value, and we would never have been able to uncover truly important places.¹⁵

Third, a collective picture of the valued places was presented to the community. Although each person might use and/or value many of the places, he likely didn't know how much others valued the places nor did he see how the separate places created a collective framework. The list of sacred places, the map, and the simple name, "Sacred Structure," overcame this. The list and map provided the townspeople a gestalt of previously known but separated facts. It was similar to putting up a land use map; neighborhood residents who may

be intimately aware of some parts of but not the total land patterns frequently remark, "I didn't know the business district extended all that way." The map turned special places into a pattern, previously experienced but not grasped as a whole. The name, Sacred Structure of Manteo, was one resident's way of simplifying the whole. The Sacred Structure became part of the local vocabulary and was debated at the Duchess Restaurant and Betty's Country Kitchen along with such topics as job opportunities and property tax benefits of tourism. The community's unconscious concern about special places had become part of the collective and now open conscious expression.

Fourth, the places were consecrated by residents. This required setting aside the most important places from less valued ones. Townspeople did this systematically by responding to the newspaper survey and refining their list of sacred places throughout the planning process. By the time we completed the design plans, the most valued places had been designated inviolable, not to be changed in any way to accommodate new development. This, of course, required sacrifice on the part of townspeople. Economic development would suffer to the extent residents judged any given project incompatible with the Sacred Structure. Today, we estimate that preserving the Sacred Structure cost the town over half a million dollars in retail sales alone each year. This sacrifice of financial gain seemed essential in consecrating

the places. This was what the newspaper editor reconfirmed when he repeatedly said these places had a higher value than dollars. I should point out that these four steps in making conscious unconsciously valued places seem essential only in retrospect. As we went through the process, we were uncertain about what to do because there were no precedents.

How the Sacred Structure Influenced Planning and Design Decisions

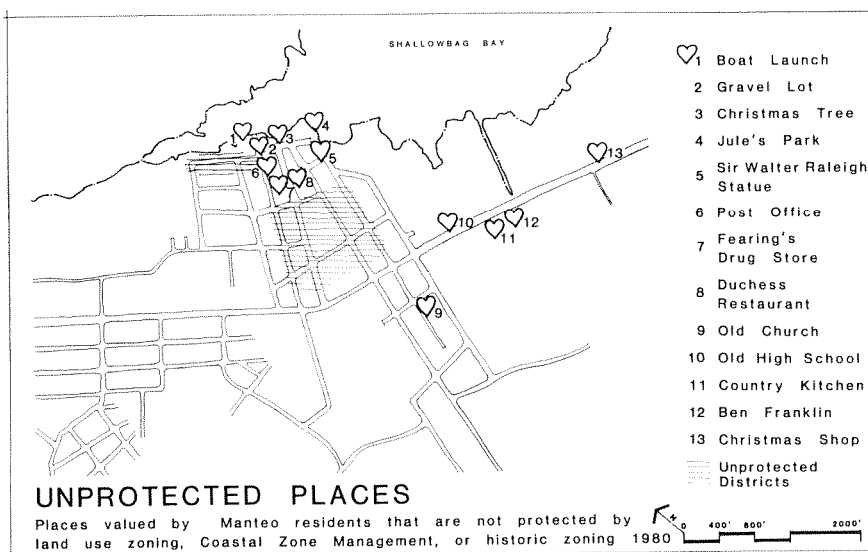
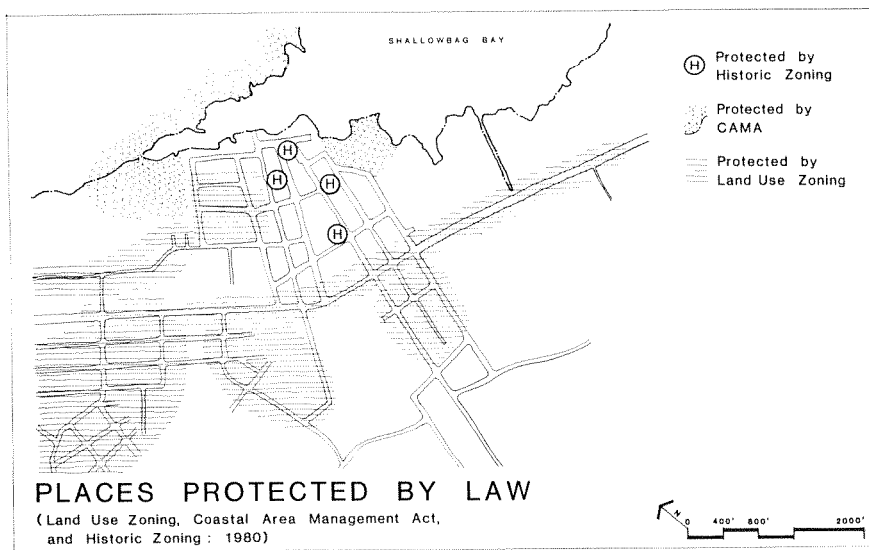
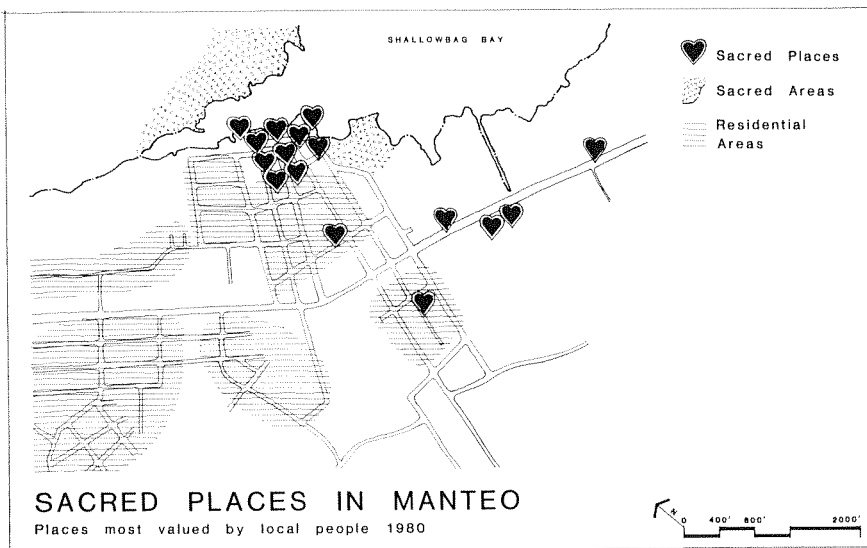
After we presented the Sacred Structure map to the Planning Board, it became part of the formal discussion, influencing planning decisions in several ways, including the following:

1. It transformed the typically vague discussion about loss of valued life-styles and landscapes into a focused and specific debate about what sites should be changed or kept to reap the benefits of tourism. The Sacred Structure map depicted important social patterns and cultural settings more effectively than any other planning document. Most places essential to the social life of Manteo were not included in other town documents, not in the zoning ordinance, not in the visual inventory, not in the list of historic sites. In fact, less than half of the Sacred Structure had been uncovered through traditional inventories such as significant historic architecture, the visual image of the town, and culturally important sites as defined in the Coastal Management guidelines. And less than a third of the sacred

places could be protected by historic, appearance, and coastal zone legislation.

2. The Sacred Structure inventory was used by residents to objectively evaluate plans in terms of impact on their lives. Townspeople could tell if a particular development violated places they had identified as sacred. For example, one plan was unacceptable because it required changing Bicentennial Park (ninety-five percent of the survey respondents had indicated that changes, even minor ones to the lamp posts in the park, were unacceptable). The Sacred Structure gave residents the rationale to support many of their gut feelings about development plans and proposals.

3. The Sacred Structure directed the final plan chosen. Of seven plans that we developed for the village center, townspeople chose one with somewhat less economic potential specifically because the plan preserved more of the Sacred Structure and interrupted fewer of the townspeople's accustomed patterns and rituals. In fact, the Sacred Structure inspired weaving the tourist and local places together with a living-learning boardwalk and designating that Bicentennial Park, the Creef-Davis boat works, the gravel parking lot, and the Christmas tree be maintained for their existing uses. Even the visual quality of the new development was inspired by the Sacred Structure, inviting personal participation and interaction; it has an unfinished appearance that makes it open to community change. Locals continue



8 The places listed by townspeople as most sacred cannot be protected by present law. Of the seventeen most valued places in Manteo, only five qualify for zoning or historic district preservation.

to add new touches. The feeling to be conveyed was that of a homey and unpretentious atmosphere that existed already in people's front porches. As a result, the development is intimate and small in scale.

4. The Sacred Structure provided the basis for negotiation with outside developers who proposed needed but inappropriately scaled projects. Because the valued places were dispersed throughout the waterfront, their preservation precluded wholesale urban redevelopment. Developers balked at this limitation at first because it required small parcel development. We had produced a *Guide for Development* for the town of Manteo that stated the town's intention to preserve the Sacred Structure. We provided performance criteria for the type of development that would be consistent with the Sacred Structure. Using the guide, the Town Board was able to emphasize to developers the importance of preserving the valued places and building within the existing community framework. For example, a large piece of the new tourist facility was located on previously unused Ice Box Island to prevent development of the marshes. In another case, developers were convinced to do infill development that enhanced the sacred places rather than to raze the buildings for larger scale commercial development.¹⁶

5. The Sacred Structure provided the basis for ongoing citizen evaluation of zoning and development proposals. In a recent

debate over the development of a new marina, residents pointed to the results of the Sacred Structure survey that showed that sixty-five percent of the townspeople preferred improved boat ramps and docks for locals to providing more docks for tourists. The private marina has been delayed.¹⁷

The Sacred Structure was a significant factor in the planning and design decisions in Manteo. It raised these valued community places to the same level as economic, technical, and political considerations. The result was a community development plan that permitted the town to benefit from tourism and at the same time protect fragile local, place-related social institutions from tourist encroachment.¹⁸

Piecemeal Legal Protection

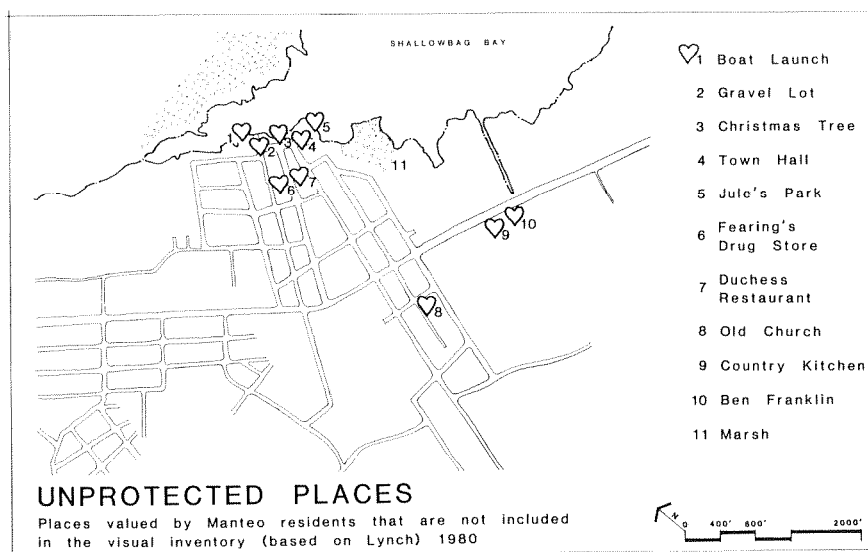
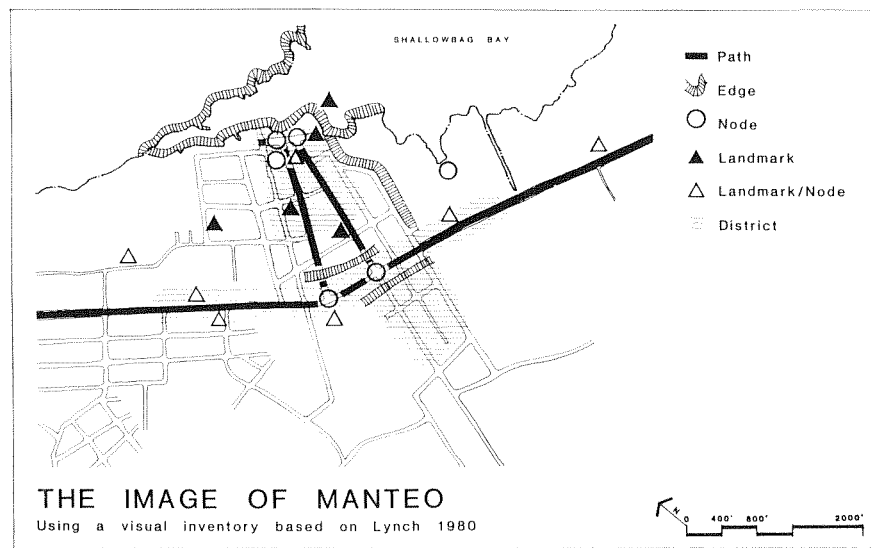
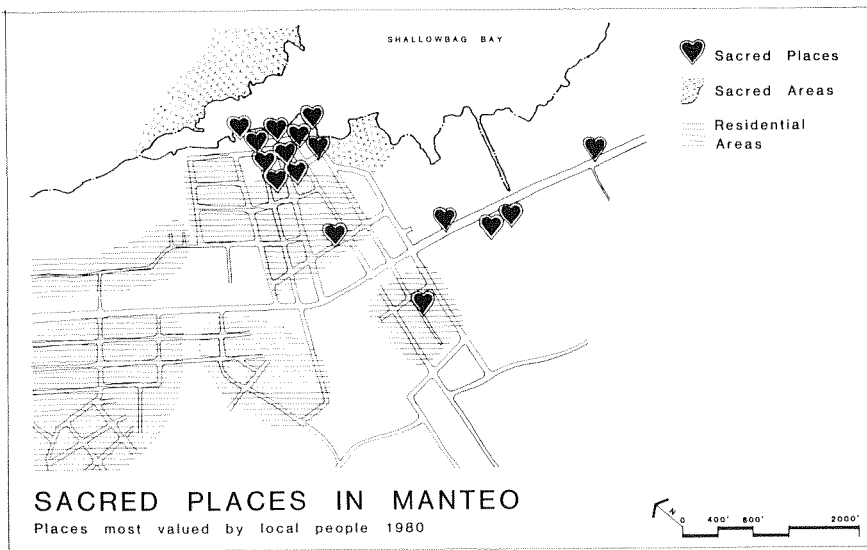
Because the Town Board and the Planning Board in Manteo supported the preservation of the Sacred Structure, they used it throughout the planning and design process. Legally, however, there are few precedents for this approach. Of the seventeen most valued places, only five could be protected by existing legal mechanisms (using historic preservation legislation, the Coastal Act, and the local zoning ordinance).

Four mechanisms were utilized to reduce the legal vulnerability of the Sacred Structure. The State of North Carolina passed a locally supported historic corridor that protected two of the valued sites along the main vehicular entrances

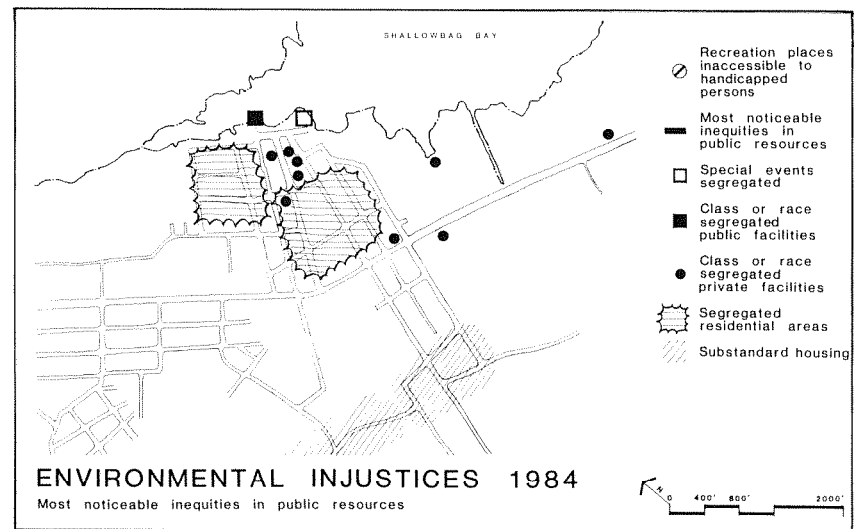
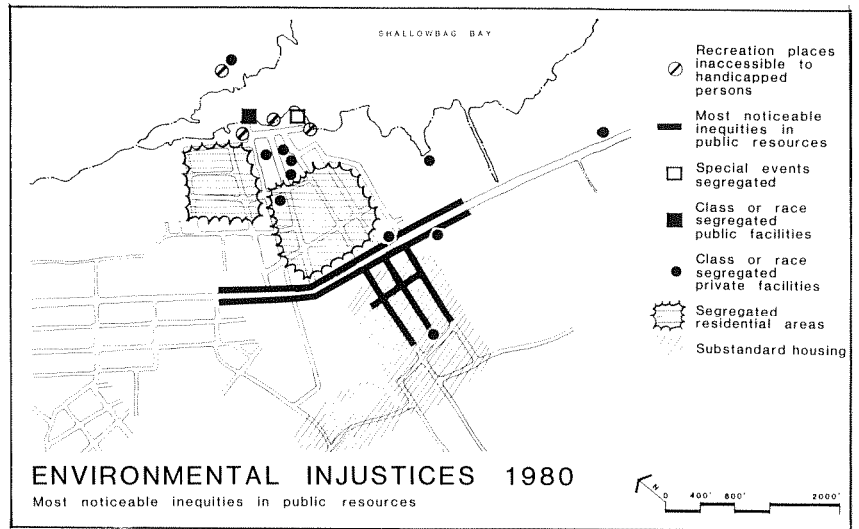
to town, the Christmas shop and a church. The corridor legislation also added protection for Fort Raleigh, a historic site, and for neighborhoods already somewhat protected by zoning.

The town formally adopted the *Guide for Development*, which spelled out the intent to preserve the Sacred Structure. The guide was then incorporated into the local Coastal Area Management Plan to strengthen the Sacred Structure's legal status, but these actions were largely symbolic because the Sacred Structure was not specified by any of the appropriate state enabling legislation.

The legal mechanism the town is relying on most is the creation of a village business district (where the new development is occurring and that includes fourteen of the sacred places). A conditional use permit is required for all new development in this district. Among other things, the petitioner for development in the village business district must demonstrate that local access to the Sacred Structure will not be negatively affected by the change before the conditional use is approved. The conditions for receiving the use permit are articulated in the *Guide for Development*. The guide mandates that any new development, rehabilitation, or change in the village must be assessed for impact on residents' use of the Sacred Structure and must protect or enhance local pedestrian access, parking availability, and local visual access.¹⁹



9 Using a typical visual inventory to identify important landmarks and nodes, designers missed more than half of the Sacred Structure. An ordinary looking place, unappealing to the trained eye, might be an essential part of the community life.



10 The preservation of sacred places may provide a polite and updated justification for racial or class segregation, although this seems not to be the case in Manteo.

Observation One: A Contribution to Social Design

What can be learned from the experiences in Manteo that would be useful elsewhere? The Sacred Structure represents a small yet valuable breakthrough in social design, particularly in reconciling tourism with existing community mores and rituals. In fact, the use of the Sacred Structure inventory could be an important mechanism for any neighborhood or city in rapid transition that wishes to maintain valued life-styles and places. The recording of such patterns underscores the fact that not just primitive tribes in exotic places have sacred landscapes essential to a community's healthy survival. The use of these subconsciously valued places to inspire large-scale community development might be an important precedent in social design.

The success, however, is subtle in Manteo. For example, at a recent tourist event that attracted nearly ten thousand visitors, local people were still able to walk to the post office, crab, and swim at the waterfront and have a leisurely breakfast at the Duchess diner in the section set aside for locals.

Observation Two: The Need for Enabling Legislation to Protect Valued Places

Clearly, new legal mechanisms are needed to help communities preserve their social structures in the face of rapid tourist development. Zoning, appearance, historic district, and Coastal Management mechanisms do not

preserve the "placial" essence of the social and cultural life of small towns. By providing land use separation, zoning protects Manteo's sacred places from the grossest incompatibilities, but little else.

Local governments desperately need state legislation that will facilitate preserving valued landscapes and life-styles that represent not just their sense of place but also significant supports for the social life in their community.

Sometimes existing mechanisms actually work against the protection of locally valued landscapes, as in Manteo, where Lynch-based, image-of-the-city mapping (frequently used as the basis of appearance legislation) identified landmarks that lacked significant meaning to locals.²⁰ Similarly, historic preservation legislation protected only ten percent of the sacred places in Manteo. And although Coastal Zone management laws in North Carolina mandate identification of sites of local cultural importance, only historic and ecologically fragile sites are offered legal protection.

The conditional use system has worked well in Manteo for nearly three years, with all new development conforming to the guidelines, but problems remain. The Planning Board has relied on a professional planner to administer the process. This is an expense unaffordable in most small towns.²¹ Furthermore, the process has yet to be tested in the courts and thereby established as an effective legal precedent. And the Sacred Structure

protects only social institutions that are place specific; it neglects many vital social traditions and ownership patterns.

Observation Three: Questions about Equity

One troublesome question arises from this type of social preservation: can the preservation of valued places reinforce undemocratic social patterns such as economic or social segregation? In some cases this is likely, in the same ways that zoning and historic preservation typically are used to exclude "undesirables" directly or psychologically. Topophilia might provide a polite and updated justification for racial segregation. Even in Manteo, the new strip development along the highway is more racially and economically integrated than in the village, where most of the Sacred Structure is located. A recent post-occupancy evaluation of town use suggests that the implementation of the plan has had a positive influence on accessibility, particularly for teenagers, blacks, and poorer citizens. However, this is likely due to other factors in addition to the Sacred Structure. We made a special effort to involve these groups in the planning process, and addressing environmental injustices was a major force of the overall community development plan.²²

In communities with widespread injustices, the preservation of sacred places would likely prolong those injustices. And in communities trying to overcome an unhealthy past, or in suburban communities

suffering from environmental anomie, identification of a Sacred Structure might be a painful and divisive effort. But for many small towns in transition, the identification and preservation of sacred places likely is a key to successful metamorphosis that builds on rather than destroys the existing sense of community.

NOTES

- 1 This scenario is discussed in detail with supporting research in James William Jordan, "The Summer People and the Natives: Some Effects of Tourism on a Vermont Vacation Village," *Annals of Tourism Research*, Volume 7, Number 1 (1980), pp. 34–55.
- 2 For a complete discussion of the community planning process employed, see Randy Hester and Marcia McNally, "Manteo, North Carolina, Avoids the Perils of Boom-or-Bust Tourism," *Small Town*, Volume 14, Number 3 (1983), pp. 4–11. See also Randy Hester, "Selling Landstyle and Lifescape for Economic Recovery," *Landscape Architecture*, Volume 75, Number 1 (1985), pp. 78–85.
- 3 See Randolph T. Hester, Jr., *Planning Neighborhood Space with People*, 2nd ed. (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1984), pp. 135–167.
- 4 See Randolph T. Hester, Jr., "Warning: Ivory Tower Designers May Be Hazardous to Your Neighborhood's Health," *Landscape Architecture* (July 1978), pp. 296–303 and Randolph T. Hester, Jr., *Neighborhood Space* (Stroudsburg, PA: Dowden, Hutchinson and Ross, 1975).
- 5 For a description of the results, see Randolph T. Hester, Jr., "A Womb With a View," *Landscape Architecture* (September 1979), pp. 475–481.
- 6 Randy Hester, *Survey of Townspeople: Public Report One* (Raleigh: North Carolina State University, 1980).
- 7 This technique was developed by Billie B. Harper under the direction of Henry Sanoff at North Carolina State University. Five percent of Manteo's residents

returned responses via mail or at a drop in town hall. The sample generally reflected the town's demographic characteristics, but a random sample would no doubt have provided more representative results.

- 8 This editorial appeared in *The Coastland Times* on March 24, 1981.
- 9 Examples of such religious associations with the ordinary landscape are described in Paul Shepard, *Man in the Landscape—A Historic View of the Aesthetics of Nature* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967).
- 10 An excellent discussion of daily landscape is contained in the articles in D. W. Meinig, editor, *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscape* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).
- 11 Two examples of the recent literature from psycho-geography are E. Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976) and Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974).
- 12 Much of my thinking about the Sacred Structure of small towns has evolved through discussions with Ed Blakely, Ted Bradshaw, and Marcia McNally. This definition is largely the work of Ed Blakely.
- 13 These types of places were first identified as critical to community well-being by Jane Jacobs in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961) and Herbert Gans in *The Urban Villagers* (New York: The Free Press, 1962).
- 14 This is further complicated by the fact that these daily-life places, being homey and homely and therefore unappealing to outsiders of high status, frequently are subconsciously highly valued yet seen as a negative reflection on the community by poor locals. This creates conflict among people inside the community who want to preserve their life patterns yet remove these places as negative status objects.
- 15 In the survey, we asked residents to list the places that most contribute to the "image" of Manteo. In most cases these places were not the same places "valued" by townspeople. It is essential for the designer to get beyond the surface image of the place. Valued places frequently are

ordinary looking, making it difficult for designers and planners to identify these places.

- 16 Randy Hester et al., *Guide for Development: Public Report Three* (Town of Manteo, North Carolina, 1981).
- 17 From a telephone conversation with Mayor John Wilson, August 1984.
- 18 The revitalization of poor communities is a delicate balance of promotion and protection. In this article the protection aspect is stressed. An equally important promotion process paralleled this work.
- 19 Marcia McNally, *Guide for Development* (University of California, Berkeley, 1983).
- 20 See Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960).
- 21 From personal conversations with residents July 15, 1984, I learned that in July 1984, the Town Board terminated the planning position in order to lower their operating budget.
- 22 Several international cases indicate that the preservation of Sacred Structure does produce more equitable communities. Specific cases may be found in Mary Alice Kellogg, "Can Native Peoples Save Their Lands?," *International Wildlife* Volume 13, Number 2 (1983), pp. 18–23; Linda K. Richter, "Political Implications of Chinese Tourism Policy," *Annals of Tourism Research*, Volume 10, Number 3 (1983), pp. 395–413; and Kevin Healy and Elayne Zorn, "Taquile's Homespun Tourism," *Natural History* (November 1983), pp. 80–89.

An earlier draft of this article appeared in the 1985 Environmental Design Research Association Proceedings.

Balzac, Proust, and Colette in the Garden: “a question of climates . . .”

Ann Leone Philbrick

To introduce these oddly assorted gardens and enter these gardens from the directions that suit me, I'll ask questions and then answer them myself. Why choose these three authors? How do their gardens grow? What is “climate”? I chose Balzac, Proust, and Colette because I love to read their books. And the three of them—Balzac long gone and therefore the passive member—form a mutual admiration society. Colette and Proust exchanged books and accolades over the years, and they both plunged joyfully and repeatedly into Balzac's *Comédie Humaine* from their childhood.¹

The answer to “How do their gardens grow?” is less flip than the question. Each garden that we enter is a mediator: between a person and nature, between inner and outer worlds, between imagination and reality, between untamed and thoroughly domesticated feelings. They are, all three, meeting grounds for paradoxes: their domesticity appears limiting but instead invites fantasy; their walls seem to bound vision but instead nurture it. Each is a place where strong things flourish: love, ambition, a cleaving to what is real *and* to what is dreamed. They are admirable places for literature to produce vision, set apart from the rest of the world, yet contiguous to it and rooted, literally, in it.

I'll quickly answer my last question, and then enter a very odd garden indeed. Climate is defined as the combination of temperature, precipitation, and winds characteristic

of a locality or region over an extended period of time. I and my three writers would agree, and this definition should acquire resonance in the course of my discussion. I propose another definition. Climate is, for today and for these gardens, the combination of sensation, movement, and communication characteristic of a locality during a privileged (that is, extraordinary and significant) moment in time. I propose that these two climates coexist with extravagant success in Balzac, Proust, and Colette's gardens.

Le Père Goriot, by Honoré de Balzac, was published in 1835. It is a novel about Paris, its lures and allure for a young man, and the man's acquaintance, often painful, with its extremes of passion, obsession, ambition, success, and failure. The young man, Eugène de Rastignac, and many of the other important characters, are lodgers at a drab boardinghouse in Paris, the Maison Vauquer. The novel opens with a description of this establishment. Balzac engineers our approach—our descent—into the novel in a dramatic, even cinematic way. In the first paragraph, he tells us that an “almost penniless girl” lives here; he then speaks in an aside to his imagined reader, a well-to-do young woman, and warns her that his “drama is neither fiction nor romance.” “All is true,” he says, and he says it in English, as if to insist on the remarkable quality of this observation. Only then, touched by this suggestion of limitless truths to explore, do we move toward the Maison Vauquer.²

We progress as a camera might, first through the *quartier* of the city, then on to the street, where we find ourselves inspecting the facade of the house. We open the gate, cross the garden, enter the house, inspect its rooms from bottom to top, from the most comfortable to the most impoverished and pathetic of the lodgers. At this point, the reader realizes that the penniless girl, so dramatically spotlighted in the opening paragraph of the novel, has taken her place among the other characters; she will concern us no further today. This novel is not about just the people and things that it seems to be precisely about; its scope is at once cosmic and microcosmic, ranging from Balzac's image of Paris as a teeming and unfathomable ocean to an obscure individual's most fleeting emotion. How does Balzac choose to have us enter this world? He brings us through the garden of Madame Vauquer's boardinghouse.³ This garden is a transitional space between the outside world of Parisian intrigue, where characters will do battle, and the Maison Vauquer, a veritable well of secrets, passions, and denouements. The garden is at once our last view of the outside world, as yet uncolored by what we will learn within, and our most complete sampling thus far of what *is* within. What do we learn as we contemplate the garden of the Vauquer house? First, what do we see? There is a sign reading “Maison Vauquer, Lodgings for Ladies, gentlemen and others”; a wicket gate through which we walk; “a green marble arch painted by local talent”; and within this

“imitation shrine” “a statue representing the God of Love,” whose “chipped scaling surface makes it look like a patient for one of the nearby hospitals, and provides an allegory for those who are fond of symbols.” There are picturesque ivy-covered walls, two paths that flank a bed of artichokes, some cone-shaped pruned fruit trees, a small clump of lime trees with a table and chairs beneath them.

What may we infer from what we see? Harry Levin has observed that in Balzac’s work, to *see* is to *know*.⁴ What we have seen holds messages for us. First, I remark on the otherness of this world. Balzac affirms that there is no separation between fiction and reality here; “All is true.” This otherness is not science fiction, either, for Balzac has assured us in his opening paragraphs that we may recognize elements of this drama in our hearts and lives. Consider the sign reading “Pension bourgeoise des deux sexes et autres.” A literal translation from French gives us “The two sexes and others.” People in this novel are so possessed and inspired by their passions, of all sorts, that at times their behavior surpasses or bypasses human qualities.

Now we look at the disintegrating statue of the god of love. All may be true, and this may be—is—the beginning of a great adventure, but in the most drear surroundings, vulgar and dilapidated, and in his musings on the statue, Balzac suggests decadence as well. The nearby hospitals of the time treated syphilis, certainly the malady of

love from which the statue suffers. So we may infer a love story—several, as it happens, corrupt as well as unhappy. Balzac has told us that all is true; I take this to mean that truth can exist in many guises. The love story suggested by the young girl (Victorine Taillefer) is only one of many, and a relatively obscure one, and the loves of this book are of many sorts indeed. All the other details, of crumbling walls, lime trees, and table, help us to be familiar with the geography of this place, its atmosphere and character. At this point, a few pages into the novel, we *think* we have some understanding of the Maison Vauquer.

All of this seems a useful introduction to the novel, warning us of strangeness, passion, and a certain squalid milieu. Is this all the garden offers? Several pages later, after we’ve toured the rooms and met the inhabitants, we emerge briefly to the garden again. For Madame Vauquer, we read, “this little garden, which silence and cold, infertility and damp, made vast and featureless as a steppe, was a smiling grove.” This is a fantastic statement. (I mean “fantastic” in the sense of grotesque, wildly fanciful, unreal). Setting aside quickly Madame Vauquer’s loving and certainly violently biased view of her property that could allow her to see her dusty clump of lime trees as a smiling grove, however could this walled-in, obscure, crowded, and dingy corner by “made vast and featureless as a steppe”? This garden is a mystery and part of the vaster mystery that comprises the novel and Paris itself for Balzac and

his characters. The truth is here, but submerged. Signs are given that seem to lead nowhere for the moment. Balzac has presented a microcosm, whole and significant in itself, in a small way. This tiny world resonates, to the reader who finishes the novel, with all the vast drama to come.

The inhabitants of the Maison Vauquer, privileged to stroll in its garden, are all transients; some are runaways, even fugitives, cut off from their origins and therefore rootless. In Proust’s garden (and we shall see, Colette’s as well), lives a woman firmly bound to its plants and soil, physically and in spirit. “Combray” is part of the first volume (called *Swann’s Way*) or Marcel Proust’s immensely long novel *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu*, *In Remembrance of Things Past*. This first volume appeared in 1913; the whole work had been published by 1927, five years after Proust’s death. Again, we are at the threshold of a gigantic enterprise, in size and in vision, when we walk into this garden. The narrator of this part of the novel is the middle-aged Marcel, who soon steps aside in his memories to allow his childhood self to observe and interpret. This child, also called Marcel, and in many ways a reflection of Marcel Proust, tells of his beloved grandmother walking in her garden in Combray. The fictional Combray is Illiers in the real world, the home of Proust’s aunt and uncle Amiot, and its garden is certainly drawn from gardens that Proust knew as a child: the Amiot’s house garden in Illiers; their far more elaborate



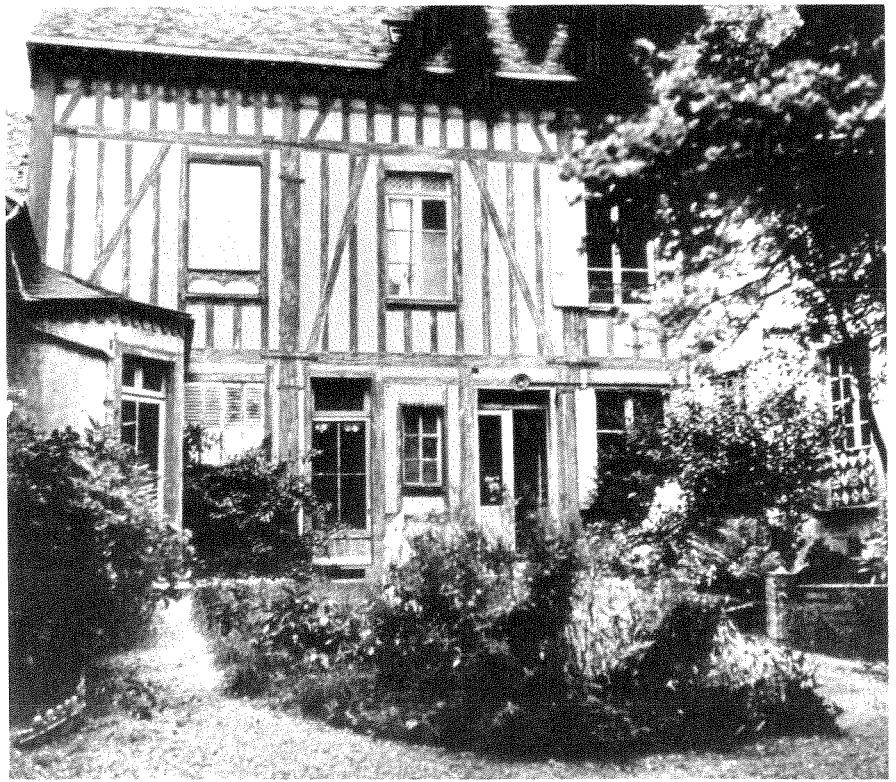
pleasure garden just outside of town; and perhaps also his uncle Louis Weil's garden in Auteuil, a suburb of Paris. It seems likely that the pleasure garden, grander in scale and design than the one in town, became mostly M. Swann's garden, where young Marcel first sees and instantly loves Swann's daughter Gilberte. I include the Amiot pleasure garden because it is a beautiful photograph and because it is perhaps easier to imagine Marcel's grandmother walking its paths than in the very restricted space seen in the photographs of the Amiot garden in Illiers.

Marcel describes here the moment of anguish in his day, after dinner, when the adults repair to the garden (or the parlor if the weather is bad) and he must part with his

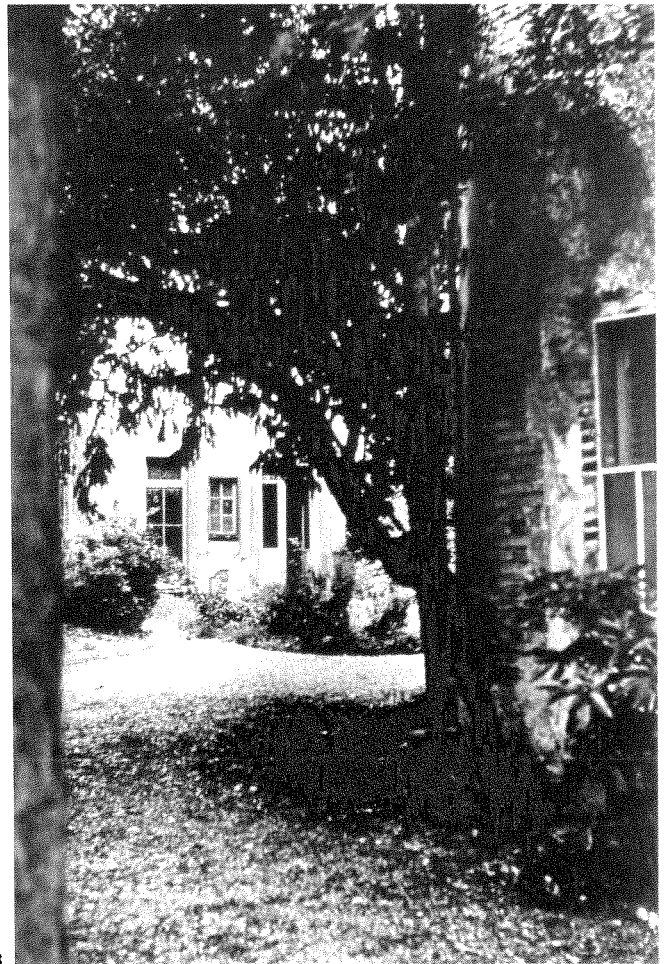
mother for the night. The passage is so woven that each observation is the thread of a separate but related experience. We, however, are concerned only with the grandmother, who clings to her garden walk even when rain keeps the other indoors:

But my grandmother, in all weathers, even when the rain was coming down in torrents and Françoise (the cook, housekeeper and ferocious protector of her family) had rushed the precious wicker armchairs indoors so that they should not get soaked, was to be seen pacing the deserted rain-lashed garden, pushing back her disordered grey locks so that her forehead might be freer to absorb the health-giving draughts of wind and rain. She would say,

I **Pleasure garden** of Proust's uncle Jules Amiot on the outskirts of Illiers. Photograph courtesy of Roger-Viollet.



2



3

“At last one can breathe!” and would trot up and down the sodden paths—too straight and symmetrical for her liking, owing to the want of any feeling for nature in the new gardener, whom my father had been asking all morning if the weather were going to improve—her keen, jerky little step regulated by the various effects wrought upon her soul by the intoxication of the storm, the power of hygiene, the stupidity of my upbringing and the symmetry of gardens, rather than by any anxiety (for that was quite unknown to her) to save her plum-coloured skirt from the mudstains beneath which it would gradually disappear to a height that was the constant bane and despair of her maid.⁵ [pp. 11–12]

This is all. Here is no minute description and, indeed, no description of any kind of the vegetation or the character of the garden. In the Vauquer garden, we moved inward, deliberately led by the narrator, the way marked by things that had significance, often immediately.

In Proust’s garden there is only the grandmother walking on muddy paths through pouring rain. How can we interpret this scene? How can we see the garden in the most rewarding way? Physically, there isn’t much. We find ourselves studying an established relationship between a character and a garden space. What does go on between Marcel’s grandmother and her garden? How does Marcel perceive and interpret, use the scene to

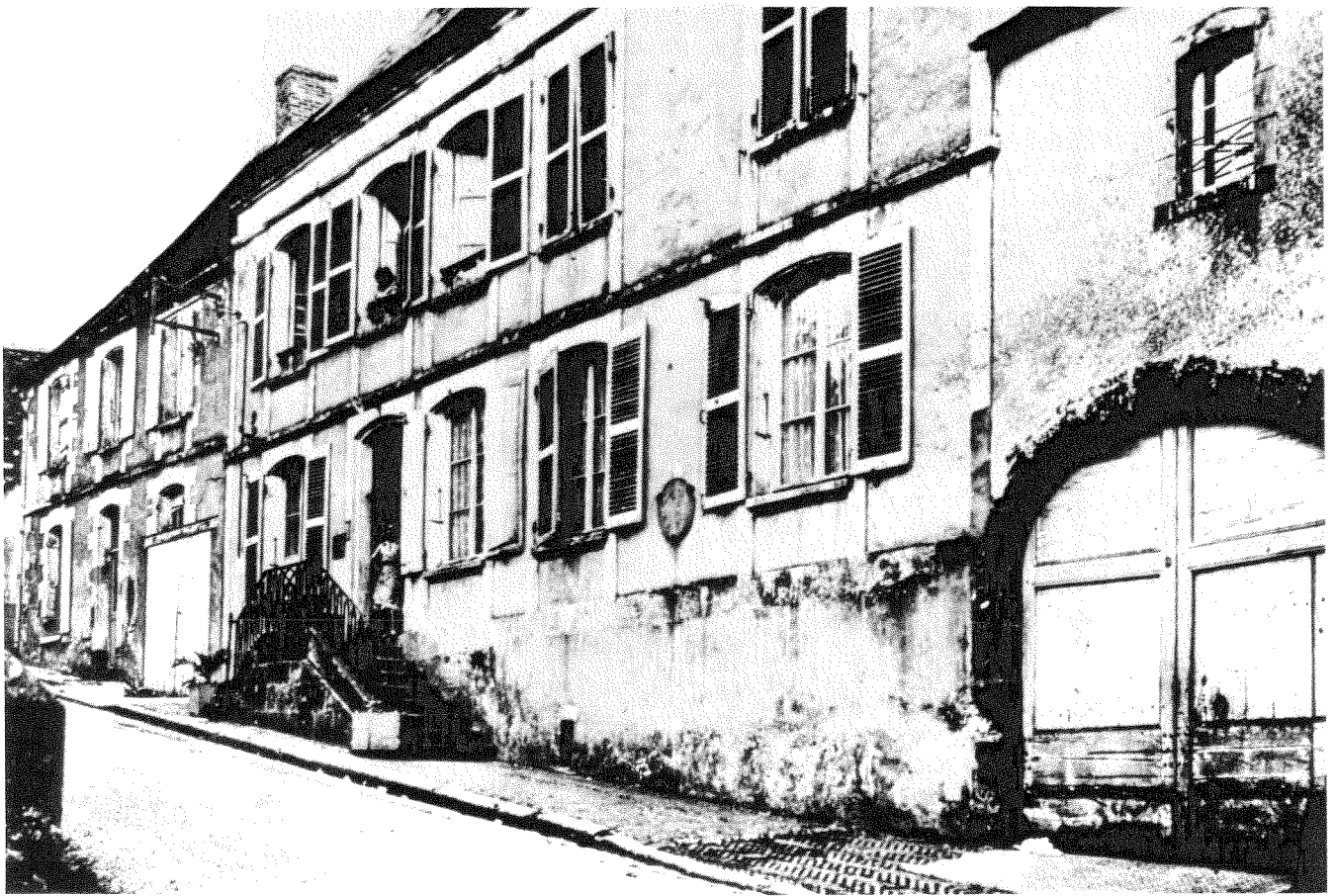
understand his grandmother? In Balzac’s novels, things that are contemplated deliver up their significance forthwith (recall the god of Love statue). Not so here. For Proust, vision is often inaccurate or incomplete; one must penetrate further into a scene he paints to finally “see” something new.

Here, the watching child—who is also the narrator—becomes a part of the scene he relates. Marcel has described the rain and his grandmother’s words, as any one of us who had happened to be there could have done; and he has gone much further, inside her head where he imagines thoughts orchestrated by both her movements and those of the storm. Clearly, so far as Marcel is concerned, any being so tuned to her surrounding world could well absorb that world’s essences by her forehead, by her face lifted to meet it.

The garden is a mediator in the grandmother’s life, a refuge from the house and very proper family; a place, albeit irritatingly symmetrical, where nature intrudes on well-regulated bourgeois life; and a meeting ground for inner and outer exertion. Its character, which seems so unwelcoming—rain, wind, mud, unromantic tidiness—answers her needs for freedom, action, reflection.

A French reader of Proust, Gérard Genette, has observed that Proust’s descriptions are not so much descriptions of the object con-

templated as they are a narrative and analysis of the perceptive activity of the person—Marcel here—who contemplates a presentation of this person’s impressions, progressive discoveries, and perspective.⁶ Most interesting for those of us who push on to read all of this book is Marcel’s participation in the scene. He is not an omniscient narrator who chooses to unfold all that he knows in order to bemuse and amaze us; he discovers as he observes and at first knows no more than he observes. Here he has come upon an insight in a remarkable way; the garden has served to frame and reflect the inner life of one of his most cherished creatures; and in the course of this discovery, he has moved into the frame, too. His grandmother’s concerns, the grave as well as the everyday ones, find their voice in the climate where she places herself. The garden and its climate transcend their natural function and importance: they have come to contain, while illuminating, Marcel’s memory of his grandmother. This is our first glimpse of his profound love for this woman; this fascination that we first find in the garden at Combray unfolds in progressively more luminous and dramatic moments throughout thousands of pages of *In Remembrance of Things Past*. If it seems that I’ve labored mightily over one small passage, I would agree; but I suggest that in this garden we have watched its creator learn that his vision of the world will unfurl and blossom if he can bring himself to wait and to reconsider what he thinks he has seen.



4

4 Facade of Colette's childhood home in Saint-Sauveur-en-Puisaye. Photograph courtesy of Roger-Viollet.

Colette wrote the novella *Sido* about her mother in 1929. Sido, Sidonie Colette, a tiny provincial woman who married twice and cleaved to her house and garden, lives everywhere in Colette's books. Sido's is the voice of maternal love, wifely love, the love of small creatures and plants, the love of looking, smelling, and touching the natural world. Colette calls to her and names her whenever she needs to evoke those loves in her work, in journals, articles, fictionalized, and unadorned autobiographical pieces. Sido is a central figure of her daughter's work, and Sido's own center is her garden, which we now enter by the street. I include this somewhat melancholy photograph of the facade of the Colette family's house in the Rue de l'Hospice in the Burgundian village of Saint-Sauveur-en-Puisaye; Colette herself called it "graceless." Keep this view in mind as you examine the extraordinary world that existed behind these walls, as Colette tells it. You see clearly that the houses run together and that the back gardens will therefore be contiguous and not large.

As in "Combray," we see here a beloved woman in her garden, observed by the child who adores her. For Proust, and for his narrator, the young Marcel, things and scenes have layers of meaning and value that may be discovered through time by the penetrating forces of memory and the senses. Colette requires less patience of us; we have but to listen and, above all, watch her mother in her garden, and we will find a new way of defining this world.

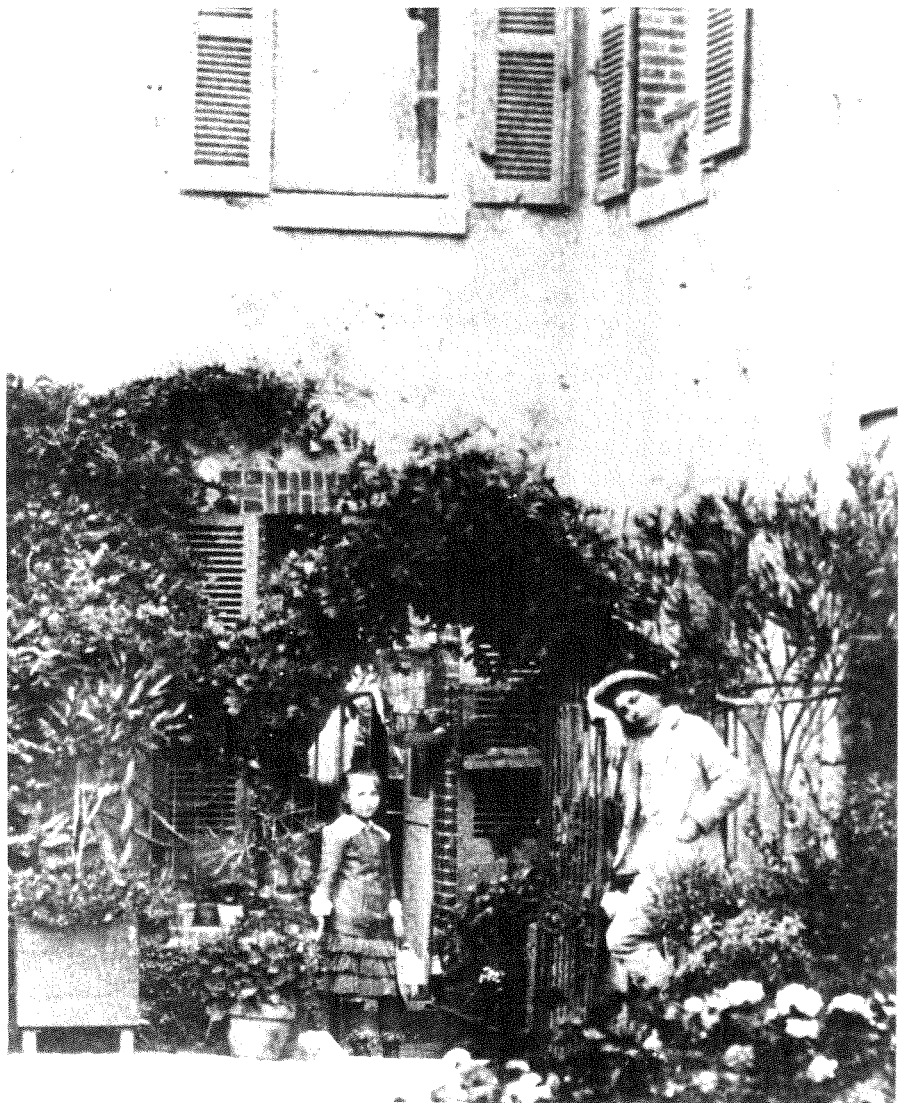
Here we find a harmony between Sido and her garden and a fantasy less dramatic than that of the vast steppes of Madame Vauquer's garden. There is an enduring magic at work here, nonetheless, and it is acknowledged not only by an imaginative child but by Sido's village neighbors, stolid country women, rooted in their daily provincial life. Colette speaks of the garden as the container of a mysterious plant life that holds and communicates her past by powerful sensual contacts: "the warm garden nourished itself in a yellow light, with trembling reds and violets, but I couldn't say if this red, this violet, came from, if they still come from, a sentimental happiness or an optical dazzle." This is an impressionistic description, the garden represented by light and color rather than very realistic details of plants and design. It is a place for dreaming and a place of dreams, and those dreamlike qualities are what have endured in its portraits that appear frequently in Colette's writing.

The garden is at once the source and continuing repository of Colette's childhood. She feels in retrospect, and perhaps sensed as a child, that her life has emanated from it and continues to bloom in her memories of it. "As a child, in my imagination and pride, I situated our house at the center of a rose of gardens, winds, sun rays, and no part of it completely escaped my mother's influence." (*Rose* in French is a flower and also a rose window, the kind we see in great cathedrals. Colette suggests here a structure both humble and

spiritually grand.) That extraordinary influence works in a reciprocal fashion, too, for Sido becomes an other-worldly creature when she moves about in her garden: "My mother regained her tranquil, her glorious garden face, much more beautiful than her worried *house* expression. In her dominion and her care, the walls grew taller, unknown lands replaced the enclosed space that I had so often and easily crossed over, jumping from wall to wall, from branch to branch."

The bond between Sido and her garden establishes a privileged world, where objects, creatures, and sensations are spellbound. Colette describes her mother standing in the garden, calling to her neighbors, unseen beyond the walls. This is no simple, neighborly exchange of garden tools and flowers but an almost godlike summoning of natural forces. A neighbor returns the picket and string that Sido has lent her to sow her seeds in straight lines: "Carried by dreams, fruit of a magical levitation, Sunday plaything, the picket, bound cone-shaped in its 10 meters of string, traveled through the air, fell down at my mother's feet . . ." The most ordinary enjoyment of colors, odors, and housewives' gossip is transformed into rites of life in Sido's garden, ringing with eerie, wailing, disembodied voices:

Other times, she sacrificed a fresh offering to her underling, invisible spirits. Faithful to the ritual, she threw back her head, as if consulting the sky: "Who wants some of my red double-



5

5 **Colette** and one of her brothers in the garden behind the house at Saint-Saveur. Photograph courtesy of Roger-Viollet.

flowered violets?” “Me, Madam Col-ê-ê-ête,” answered the unknowable voice from the East, plaintive and feminine. “Here, catch!” The small bouquet, tied together with a juicy jonquil stem, flew in the air, caught up with gratitude by the plaintive spirit of the Orient.

The neighbor on the other side of the east garden wall wails in wonder that *her* violets never smell so good as Sido’s. And the child Colette responds with an observation that I wish to have serve as a first answer to the transforming and visionary powers of Balzac’s and Proust’s gardens as well: “Naturally, I thought. And I almost added, ‘It is a question of climates’”

We have fetched up again at climate, for both meteorology and mood. Let me remind you quickly of *my* definition: the sensations, acts, and communications of a locality during a privileged moment in time. I wish now to look closely at sensations and movement in our three gardens to find how they let us accomplish the feat of *seeing* in new ways. The three authors have turned to nature to learn about or to explain the creatures who populate their fictional worlds. And yet, we are not in a renaissance of romantic literature, where an individual may find his emotions and identity reflected in nature. I will generalize about exceedingly complex and crafted, as well as crafty, pieces of writing: For Balzac, to be a realist was to be big as well as small. He may have made the Vauquer garden out of a collection of particulars,

but it is a vast, crammed, all-inclusive space, containing seeds and symbols of the three-hundred-odd pages that follow; it is more a garden of Eden—or, better still, abandoning my horticultural metaphor, an ark—than it is a backyard full of posies. The garden of the Maison Vauquer is, crudely put, a tool. Balzac feels no particular respect for this plot of ground, but consuming respect for the beginnings of adventure that it holds. Proust’s garden in the opening pages of “Combray” is not a tool but a key. His young narrator Marcel loves the garden because it has become, in his memory, a part of his cherished grandmother. Colette, simply, loves her garden, all the gardens of her life. Here is where the craftiness that I mentioned earlier comes in. Her prose is supple, appearing sometimes arch, sometimes ingenuous; it is never really the latter. She loves her garden, *and* she makes it work for her, to create a central image in her work.

With these observations in tow, I’d like to return to the notions of sensation and movement, which will resolve themselves, in the garden, into seeing and knowing.

In the Vauquer garden, we find our sense of what reality *is*, stretched, made monumental, from dusty artichoke patches to vast and frigid steppes, from the gentle aside to a lady reader to a reference to venereal disease. These wonders are meant to be *sensational*, that is, causing unnatural emotional excitement. Now we as readers are

really ready to begin to comprehend the vastness of Balzac’s enterprise.

The Combray garden *plot* is prepared for very different plantings and growth; we find real weather here, the breath and texture and substance of it. And the inner weather of Marcel’s grandmother parallels this, as she feels in turn excited by the wind and rain, and stormy at the thought of Marcel’s too sheltered life.

Sido’s garden has its own life, for its own sake, and shares it with Sido and her daughter. We feel the real, horticultural sort of garden, with sensations of shimmering heat and light, a dazzle of color, activity, and happiness.

Movement is as different in its form and function in these three spaces as is sensation. Balzac frames his garden within the street that lies outside it; he calls the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève a bronze frame, hard, metallic, lifeless. The garden is unpopulated, a set piece or tableau. It is frozen, as a steppe, and literally motionless; only the narrator’s and our eyes move through it, like movie cameras.

Proust’s garden lives beneath the lashes of rain, drafts of wind, the pacing, trotting, and gesticulating of Marcel’s grandmother. These physical movements serve as the reflectors of similar inner disturbances within the story (that is to say, in the grandmother’s mind and heart) and beyond it, in the mind of Marcel, who observes as a child, and later recounts as an adult writing the book.

Proust's motion and action is complex and complicated. What goes on in Sido's garden is simple. Her garden grows. The flowers are not props, but real and even more than real, made better than the same flowers on the other side of the garden walls. This space reverberates with movement, people, and objects; the colors themselves tremble in the light, the walls grow, fabulous lands surge forth to replace its mundane dimensions, a child leaps among its trees, and garden tools and flowers fly through its most particular air. People raise their heads to the sun to call to one another, like other, larger flowers participating in what is very close to an occult experience, to hear Colette tell it. Finally, I return to the child Colette's explanation of her mother's extravagantly blooming

garden: "it is a question of climates," "C'est une question de climats." The garden is at once the most familiar and domestic spot where people meet and incorporate the outside world in their lives. The garden may also nourish a multitude of voices and ways of seeing and knowing. The garden is a place, a space, where climate, plot, and continual cultivation all have double meanings and where all can flourish.

NOTES

- 1 All translations from Balzac are from the Penguin Classics edition of *Old Goriot*, 1951. Proust translations are from the Random House edition, 1981, translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin. The translations of Colette are my own.
- 2 Nicole Mozet has done a pithy study of the Vauquer garden that is easy to

visualize and therefore is extremely useful. See "La Description de la Maison-Vauquer," in *L'Année Balzacienne* (1972).

- 3 I have been unable to find any satisfactory illustration of this garden. I think, too, that for our purposes, an illustration is unnecessary. Unlike the gardens described by Proust and Colette, this one is entirely fictional, designed in all deliberation as a container of symbols and clues. Balzac constructs his garden with precisely the details that we need in order to decipher its code and apply its meanings and dimensions to the rest of the novel. It is itself a map, rather than the living, ambivalently fictional spaces that we find in Proust and Colette.
- 4 Harry Levin, *The Gates of Horn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).
- 5 *Remembrance of Things Past*, Volume One: *Swann's Way and Within a Budding Grove*, Marcel Proust, translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, New York: Random House, Inc., pp. 11–12.
- 6 Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1972), p. 136.

Place: Memory, Poetry, and Drawing

Laurie Olin

The accompanying drawings comprise two suites that were made within a brief period of time. Although I have drawn for most of my life and have produced stacks of sketchbooks and other drawings, I have a certain affection for these particular efforts. This is partly because of their content and tone and partly because they are mementos of particular places and time. Made during the late 1960s when the country and I were both undergoing crises and changing in ways that were unclear, they look long and hard at two very American landscapes of the West. Both sets of drawings were conceived and executed as sustained works. At the time I thought of them as related to the tradition of landscape meditation in American verse. Awkward as it often is to draw analogies between work in one medium to that of another, it was a conscious goal at the time, and it is interesting to consider from the safe distance of the present.

Drawing Suites

On the surface the two are quite different. One is of things seen driving across Texas. It has a clear beginning, middle, and end, with a sustained point of view; it relies on a series of contrasting but related—either formally or thematically—objects and scenes. An underlying malaise persists throughout. Although many of the images are of phenomena that in

and of themselves are enchantingly beautiful, others are not, often blatantly so. The mood is pensive, one of controlled fear and anger. I had driven across southern Texas in the dead of winter, writing a note to myself as a tentative title “Driving in the Southwest on U.S. 90, Texas 87, Texas 6, Texas 36, Interstate 10, Texas 71, U.S. 290, and U.S. 80.” The group was made as a book. It isn’t really a sketchbook, although it is meant to resemble one, but instead a composition, more like a scroll, a score, or a story. The drawings were meant to be seen in a particular sequence, one page at a time, thereby forcing an element of time, sequence, and reading.

The other set of drawings of Agate Point is quite different in mood, content, and method. If the “armadillo book” has a clear form and theme, analogous to a classical sonata, the Bainbridge Island drawings have the looser, rambling open form—or even formlessness—of later nineteenth-century romantic piano works, hardly a sonata at all, more like études. Here all of the drawings are of one place, turned over and over. The tide goes out, the tide comes in. Boats are built, wrecked, and rebuilt. The land slides into the sea, and the water throws things up onto the beach. The sun rises and sets. A crow flies away, croaking in the fog. These drawings are as much about burrowing into a place as

the others are about moving through and away from one.

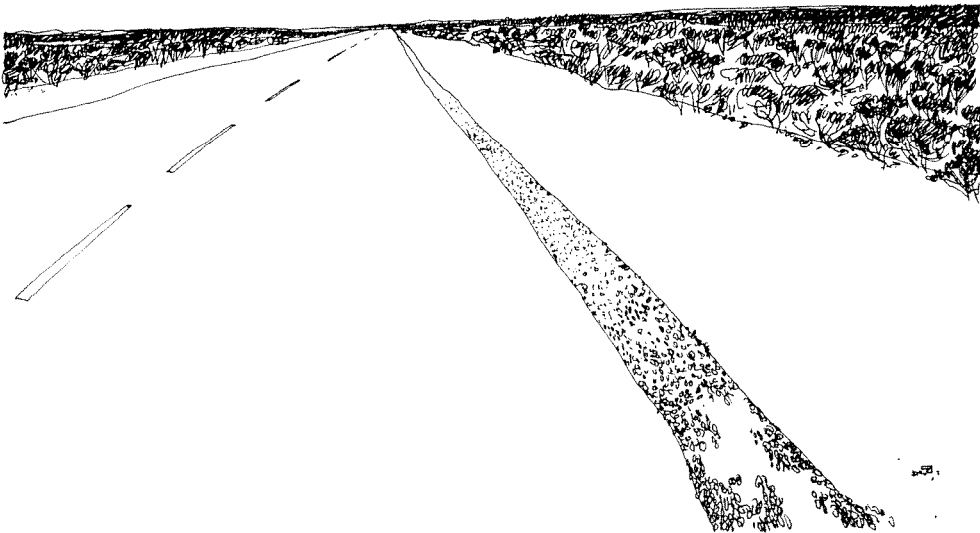
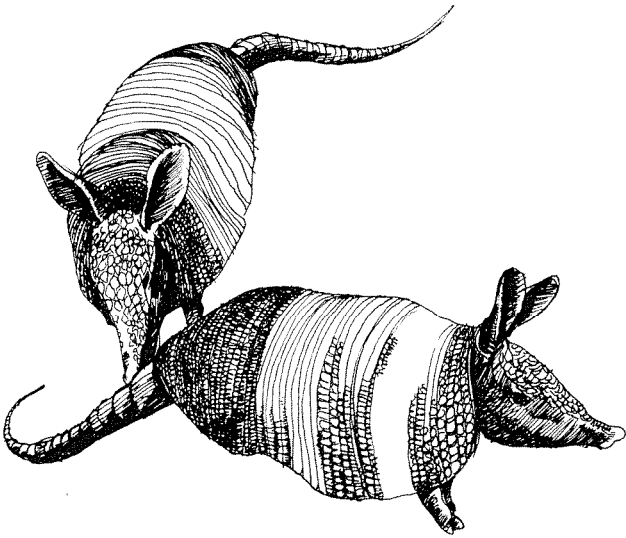
As in all compositional arts, what is left out is as important to the making and eventual success or failure of the work as what is included. Sometimes this is meant to be part of the statement or view taken in the work and can be considered content. In many cases, however, this is of interest and importance to the artist but not meant to enter into our experience of the work or its potential. In the last drawings of the beach, there is no indication or explanation of two things very much on my mind while making the drawings. One is the presence of Chief Seattle’s grave a short distance away across a thin strip of water; the other is that of a set of magnificent petroglyphs on an enormous rock facing east to Puget Sound and the sunrise. Although it is unclear to me how the drawings might or might not acknowledge these presences and their contribution to the persona of the place, at the time it seemed enough to present the back of the rock with the petroglyphs—a hulking presence—and the view that those ancient carved faces have had for centuries rather than a representation of them.

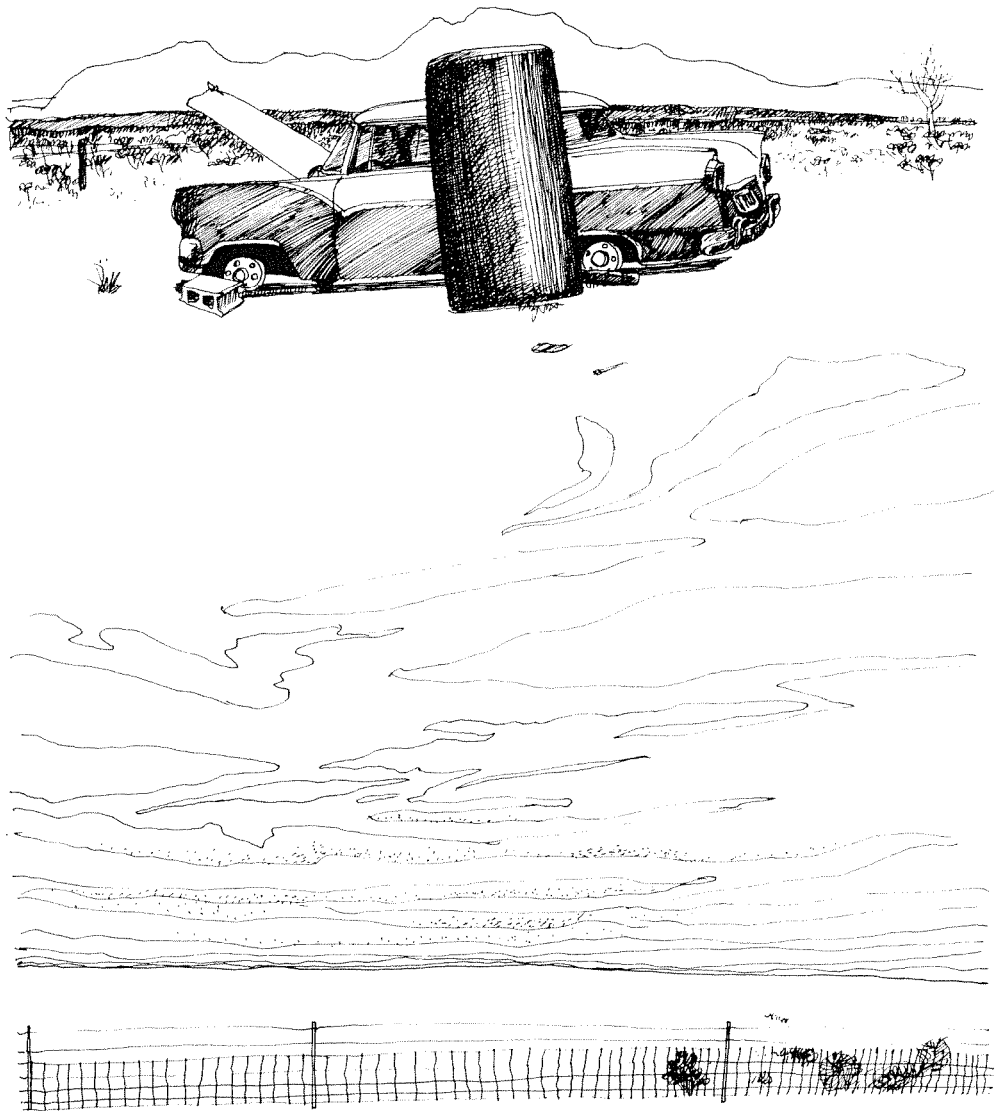
The activity that occurs in any place can vary from the tumultuous and crowded to the calm and solitary, but our perception and understanding of places will always be a personal and individual act. In the process

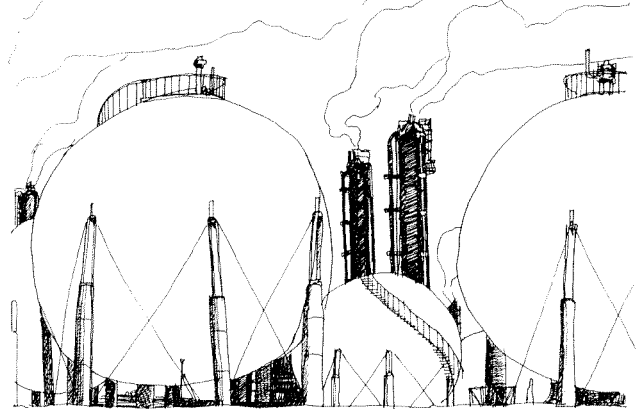
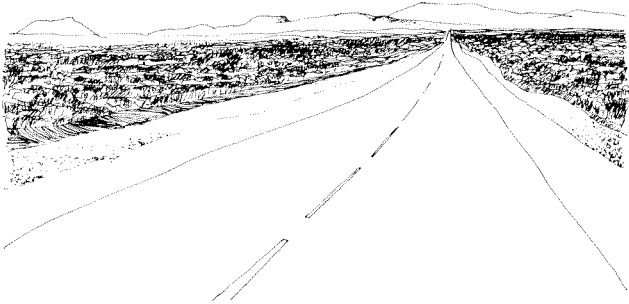
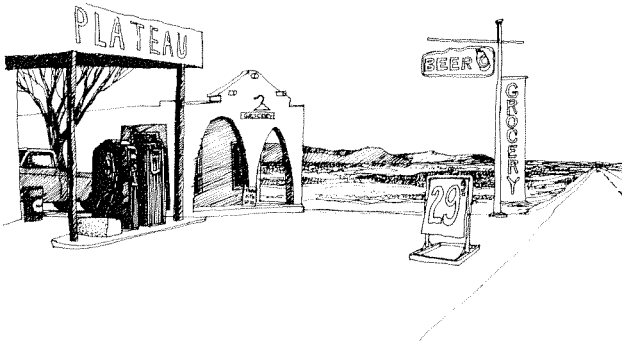
of learning about the world, we examine the elements with which it is made, weighing their relationships, and committing an enormous amount to memory. Long before any of us become designers, artists, landscape architects, or planners who record and make places for others to consider and use, we develop a truly remarkable ability to memorize the myriad

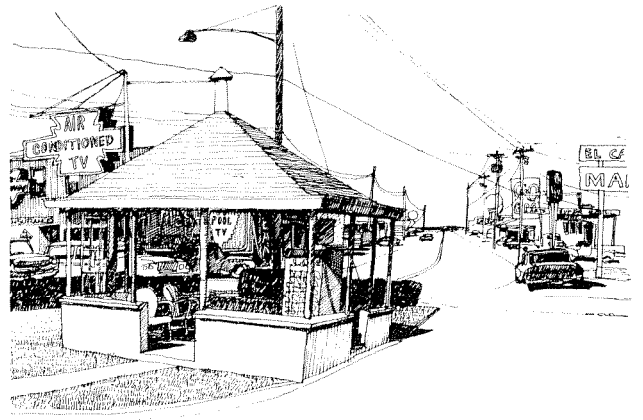
places of the world about us. These drawings to a certain extent are the exercises of a nascent landscape architect becoming conscious of the process that for most people is done without self-awareness or critical thought. It is in the making of worlds that we learn to reinvent the world and in the creation of new places, both good and bad, that we consciously and

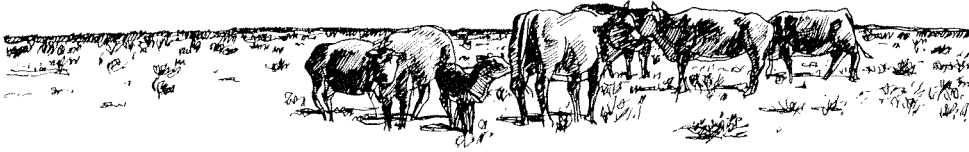
unconsciously draw upon our experience and knowledge of the places that already exist. In making places, as in all of art and culture, we make plans for the future, for what is not yet in existence, and always with only knowledge of the past and what is. In truth, all that we can know is memory. The rest is imagination.

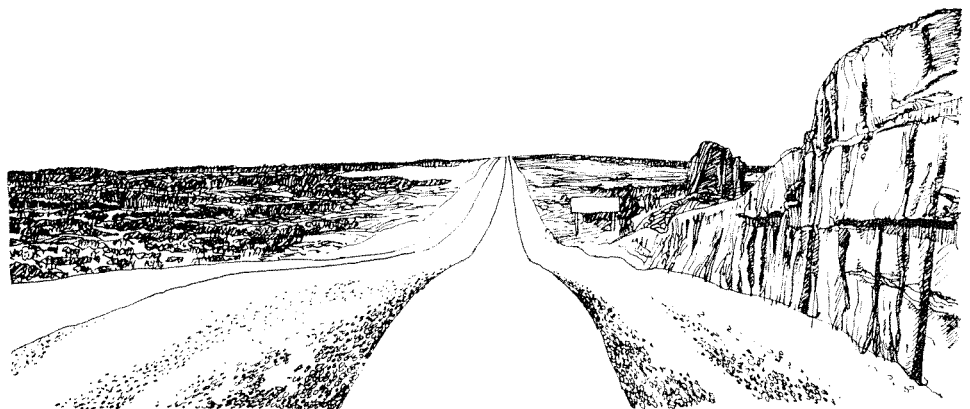
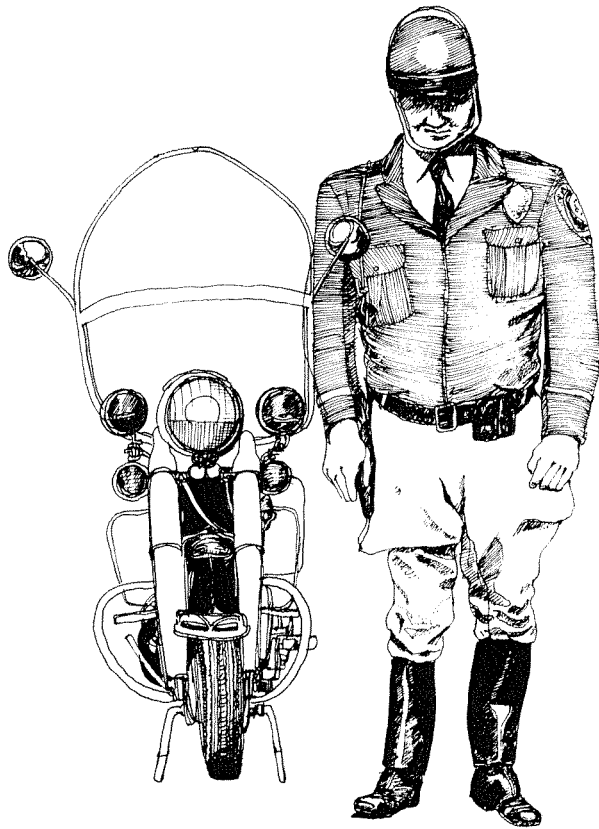


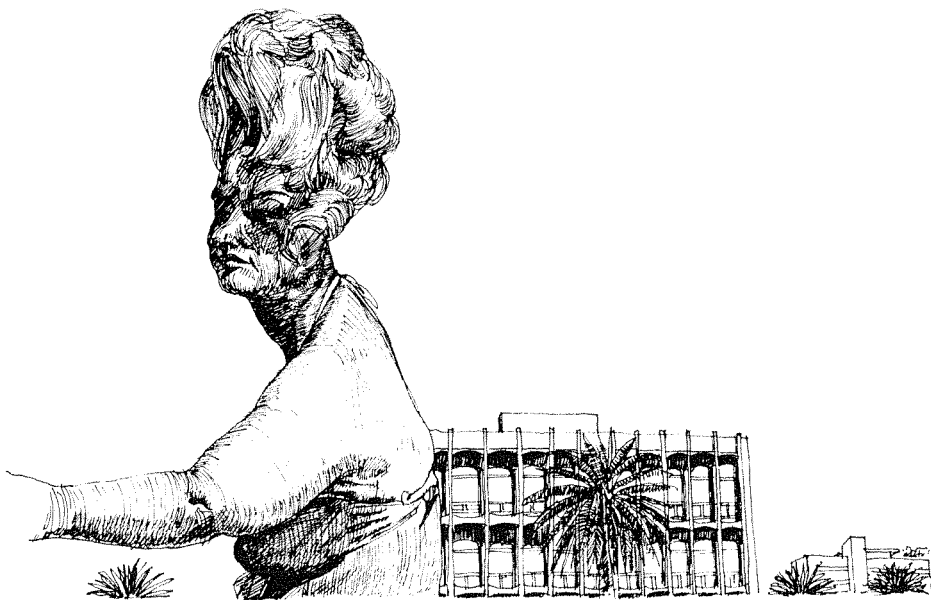
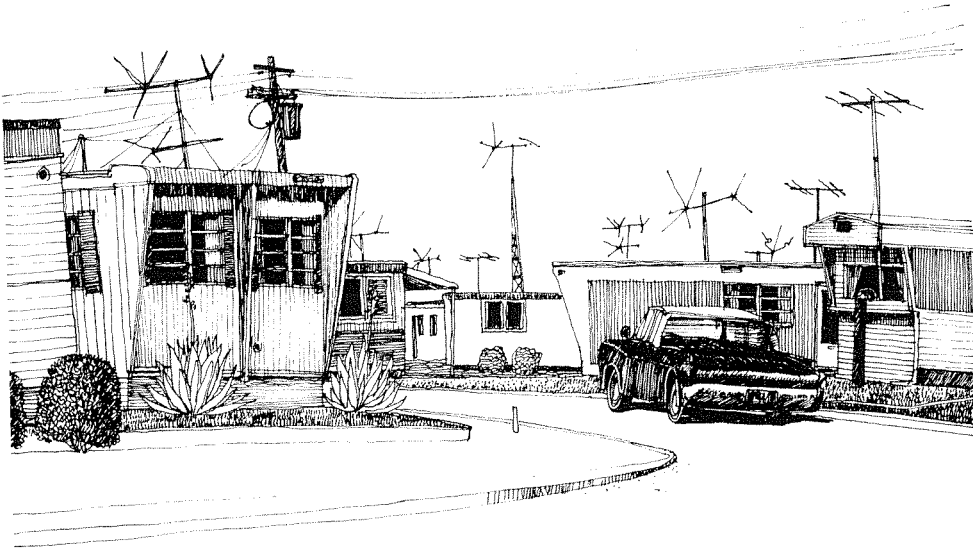


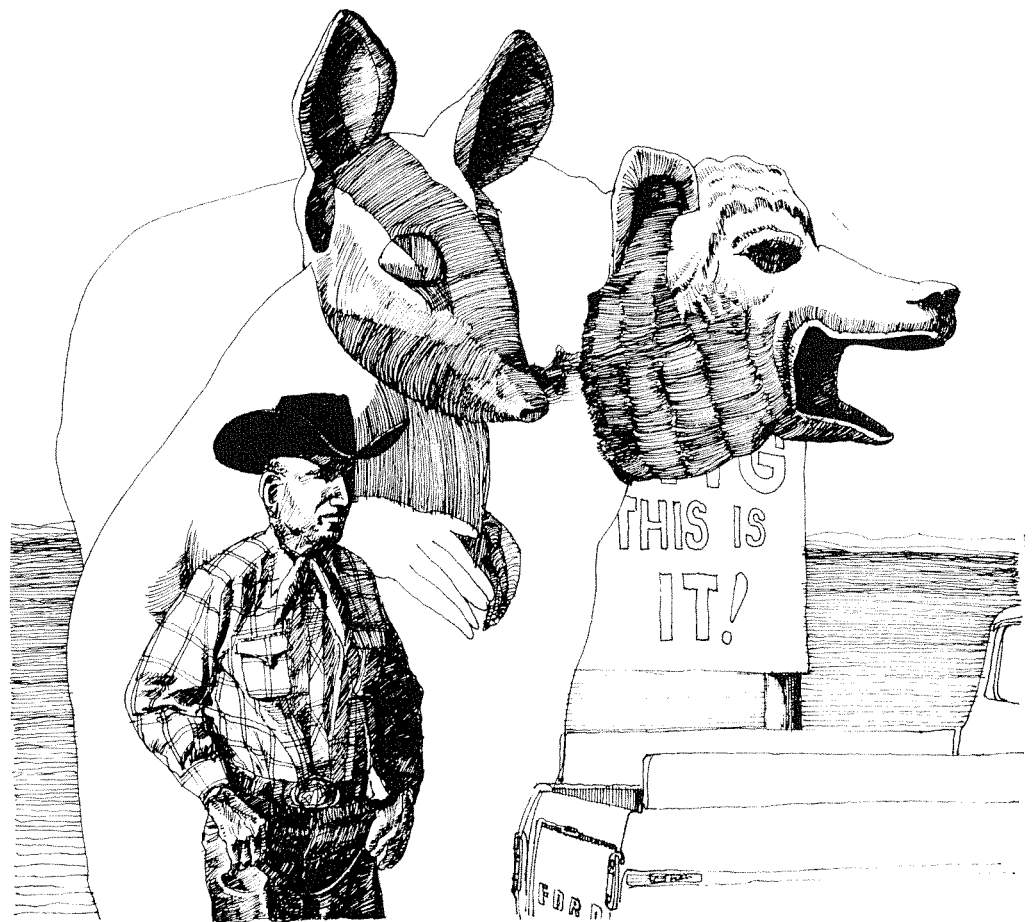
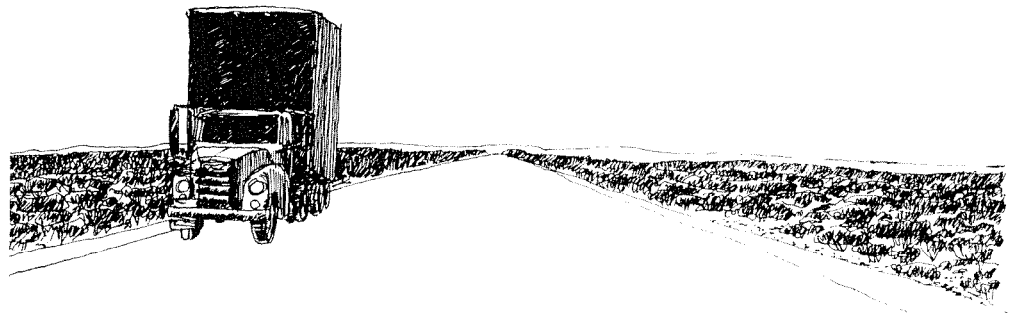


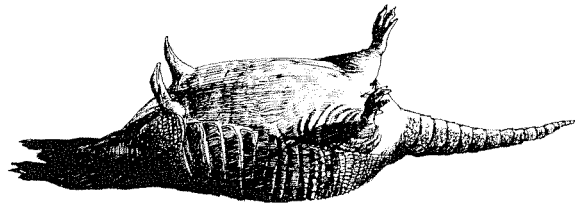
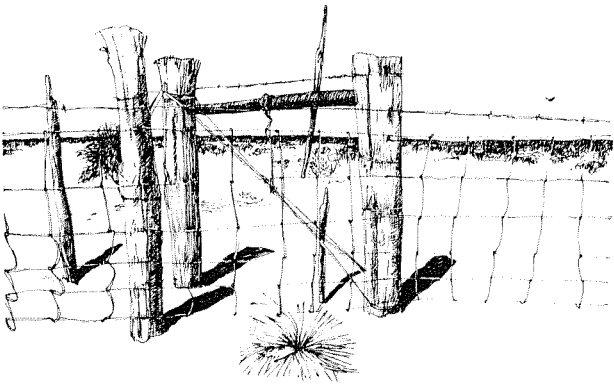
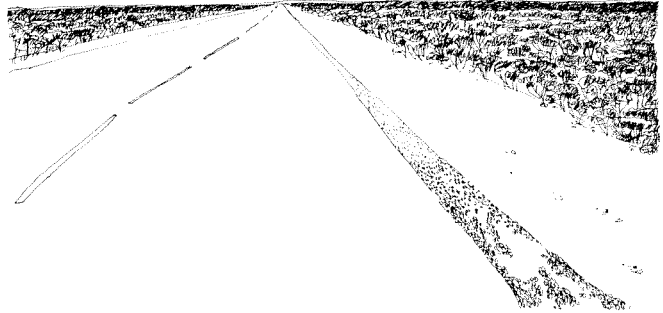
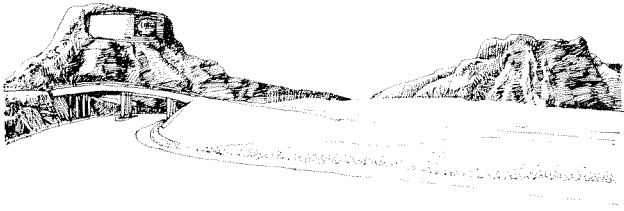












Landscape Meditation in American Verse

The notion of a sense of place is bound to our memories of the world and to self-understanding. Places as such are composed of many elements that are highly variable and infinitely different. Yet all have in common the general truth that they are settings for our lives and self-awareness. Familiar places become memory theaters of the past and present. Unfamiliar places are stimulating or unsettling to the degree that we need to pay attention to them, both to find our way about them and to contrast them with our expectations, experience, and knowledge of the world. It is this link to memory, to conscious and unconscious thoughts, that gives places and our understanding of them importance and meaning, both individually and collectively. Particular places possess emotional and ideological associations—historic, patriotic, religious, familial, personal—for us all. These places can evoke childhood, with all of its pleasures and uncertainties; adolescence, with its self-awareness and sexual anxiety of particularly trying events and optimism; or our later adult years of work and accomplishments. Sometimes it takes only a few constituent elements of a place to evoke a flood of images and memories. Proust's *Madeline* may be the best example of a world

conjured up from an everyday object, but our literature abounds with characters and actions tied to particular scenes and the creation of worlds from fragments and glances.

In cultures where people don't move about as readily as in America today, landscapes become places of continual and perpetual memory—at times as overwhelming and smothering as they are supportive and nurturing. The restless movement and lemminglike surges of contemporary Americans from city to city and region to region has both destructive and constructive aspects. We are not commonly thought of as a very contemplative, introspective, or self-critical society. Instead, Americans are often characterized as being eternally optimistic, somewhat naïve, and undereducated about the ways of the rest of the world and the past. Such stereotypes need to be tempered by alternative views that hold up certain parts of New England and the deep South as hopelessly reflective and trapped in the past. The brittle Puritan Yankee landscape and bucolic pastoralism of Bucks County, the somnambulant towns and shimmering drowse of tidewater and bayou estates that come to mind, however, suggest that these clichés are based on a certain amount of truth. Beginning in these very

landscapes—quintessentially American—there has been since early in the nineteenth century a deep concern with the perception of a *sense of place* in American art, especially in painting and literature. The expression and search for things lost or discovered permeates our literature as it does our self-awareness. This interest has often taken the form of an exploration, a journey, a search. What is it that was lost? What were we looking for? What is found? Easy to ask, harder to answer.

There seem to be several lines of inquiry contained within the tradition of landscape or place literature. As in all of art, the first question is who or what am I, and how do I relate to others and my surroundings? The second is what is the nature and meaning of my setting? One of the best places to begin is in nineteenth-century painting, where one finds studies of the landscape of man and the landscape of nature. Homer, Innes, and Eakins show us the inhabited world, the artifacts, the light, and people moving about at work and play: fishermen, farmers, mill workers, particular people inhabiting an American world of a particular season and locale, going about their ordinary or extraordinary lives: men mending nets on the banks of the Delaware River, a boy driving cows back to the farm in the early evening meadows of Montclair, New

Jersey, a young woman carrying a lunch pail across a plank bridge to a mill in Maine at midday. At the same time, other painters, such as Moran and Bierstadt, gave us a world not made and barely comprehensible by mortals. The great plains and Rocky Mountains, the Grand Canyon and Yosemite, buffalo herds, vast horizons, forest fires, and countless animals of all sorts and sizes were presented as a vision of nature and the American West, as a cornucopia of unique and memorable places to stagger the imagination. One can go on, from place to place and period to period. The list is extensive: Bingham's trapper and Indian companion drifting between the islands of the Mississippi river in the limpid light of a summer afternoon, precursors of Huck Finn and Jim; the fractured light John Marin witnessed sparkling from the rocks, waves, trees, and clouds of the islands and headlands of Maine; Georgia O'Keeffe's blood-red hills of Abiqui; the empty Brooklyn streets of Hopper; the low sharp light of winter in Manhattan as reflected in the chrome and glass of shop windows and buses by Estes. American artists have seen their world clearly and well and have rendered its variety of places immortal. This is as true for the ordinary as for the grand.

So, too, in American verse. As in Europe and Asia earlier, there have been two

traditions. One is a tradition that examines the human condition on a bare stage and is concerned with passion and feelings without regard to specificity of locale or time. In our era this is the poetry of much of the modern movement, as exemplified by Beckett and those who attempt to strip us to our motives and emotion, hoping to comment on what is constant and common in the human condition without reference to external settings. It is an art of powerful abnegation, difficult to make, often disturbing to experience, and finally bleak and wanting in its vision and possibilities.

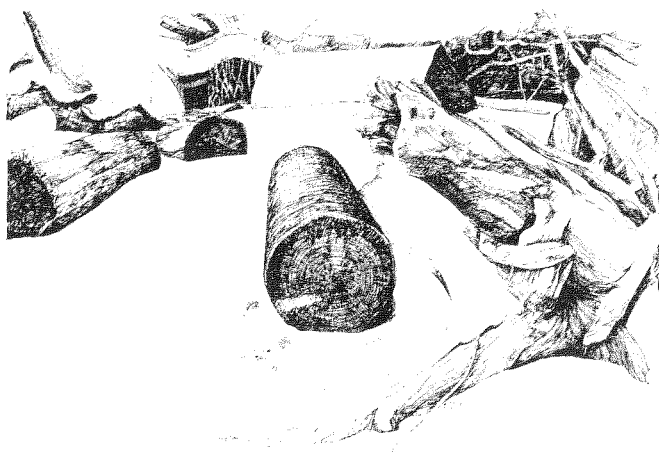
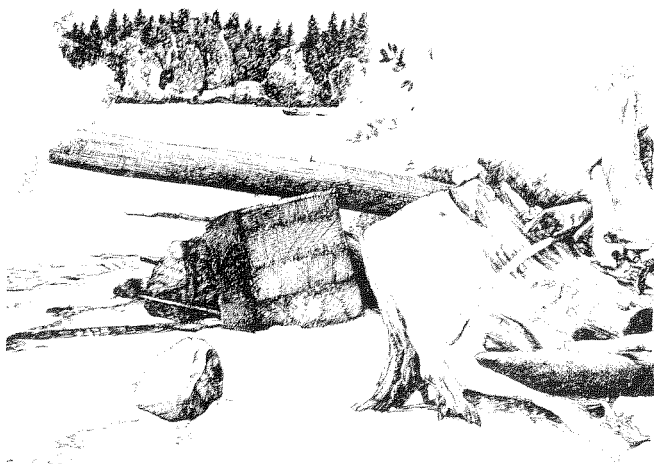
The other tradition, which has its roots in the classical periods of both Asia and Europe, examines the human condition with reference to shared or private experience, making use of the setting as a locus for action and understanding. Sometimes this surrounding world is barely noted or acknowledged, as in the poems of love, misery, loneliness, and joy of Catullus, Horace, or Li Po. Sometimes the setting becomes a major participant, contributing not only to the mood but also contributing time, action, or meaning, especially as a metaphor for the human situation, as in the *Four Quartets* of Eliot or the towns and places of William Carlos Williams, most noticeably Paterson, New Jersey. Earlier, of course, Marvel immortalized

Appleton House in his “green” poems about life, love, and social duty written after the English civil war of the seventeenth century, and Wordsworth transmuted the philosophy of Shaftesbury into the walks and meditations among his beloved lakes and peaks of *The Prelude*. Yeats with the *Wild Swans at Coole* and Keats sitting in a small churchyard at Lechlade down in the Berkshire countryside have established that landscape meditation is still one of the forms that lyric poetry can take, though the echoes go all the way back to Ovid and Vergil, to the *Bucolics*, *Eclogues*, and the *Georgics*.

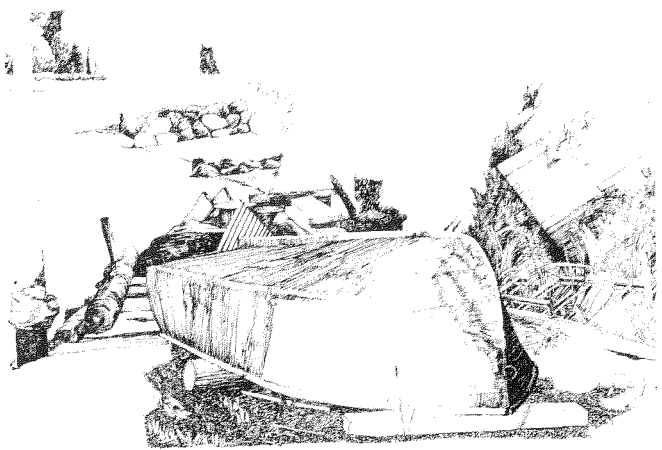
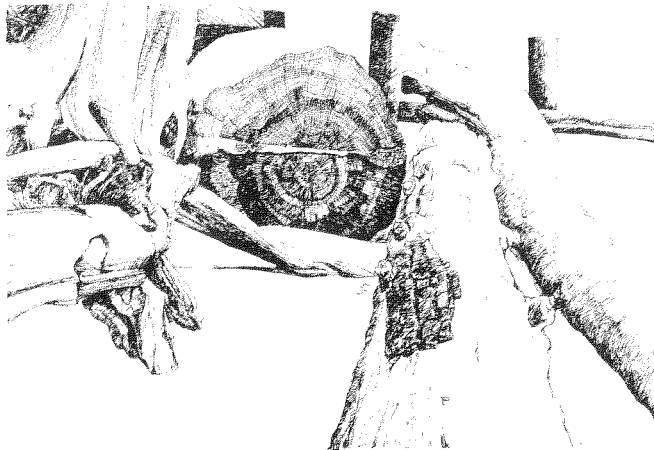
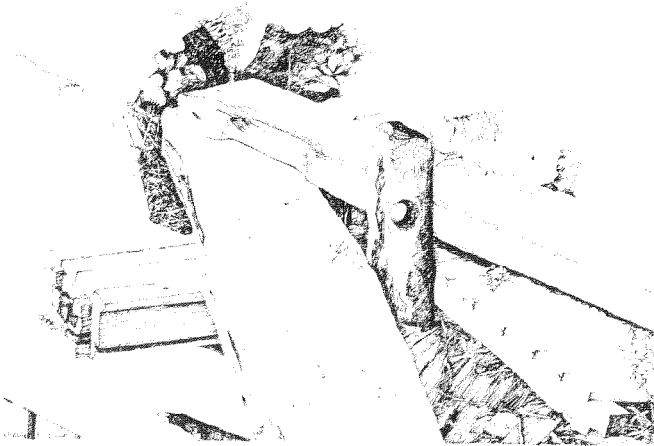
More American, however, is the loose-limbed, long-lined rambling listmaking, name-rolling poetry that derives from Whitman. Steeped in the diction of the King James Bible and fed with the oratory of nineteenth-century protestant pulpit, Whitman’s pullulating catalogues of movement and places, people and names, strings of objects capture a particular quality of the American landscape and our experience. From Manhattan’s shore, from Montauk, and Camden, he set American verse on a course of its own that was to produce poets as different as Williams, Crane, Lindsay, and Roethke. Even Pound at his most European in the *Pisan Cantos* is enthralled with the America of Columbus, Lewis and Clark, Abe Lincoln, and Sacco and

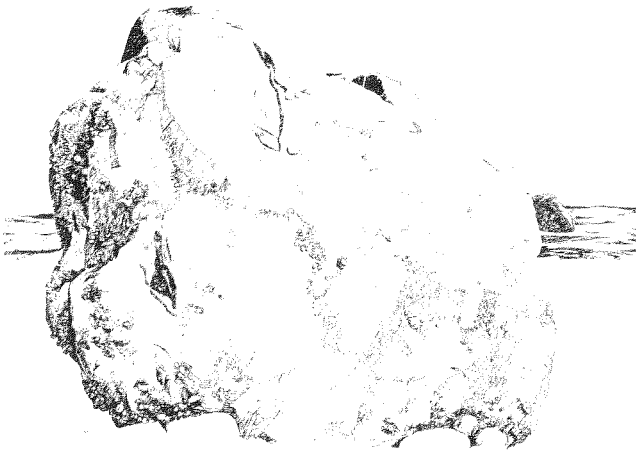
Vanzetti. Williams’s *Desert Music*, Crane’s great leap from his beloved Brooklyn Bridge to the Golden Gate, Lindsay’s Congo and Johnny Appleseed, Theodore Roethke’s poems, conveying in loving detail and wonder the pleasures of bees in the basswoods of the midwest and the receding waves of a barnacled beach on the Washington coast, all of these and more come from out of the mockingbird’s throat that started at Paumontauk. Even influences that would seem totally disparate enter into this torrent of American poetry. Modern philosophy and cubist painting in the hands of Wallace Stevens produce a welter of American landscapes, images, and places. One region after another is conjured up in our memories: the bantam roosters in the pines of Appalachia, cemeteries, animals, and heat; the Caribbean of *Sea Surface Full of Clouds* and *Ideas of Order at Key West*; or New England, especially the Connecticut of snow, of winter, of the trees and crows silhouetted against the failing day, and human emotion in the details of place; and finally his snapshots and snippets of Americans on the go, tourists in other places, other cultures, wandering through literature and language as a landscape, a *Postcard From the Volcano*. One could go on and on. American verse is rich in the specificity of places real and

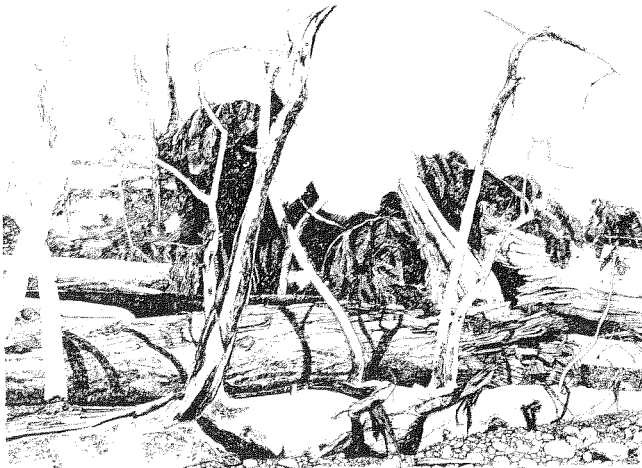
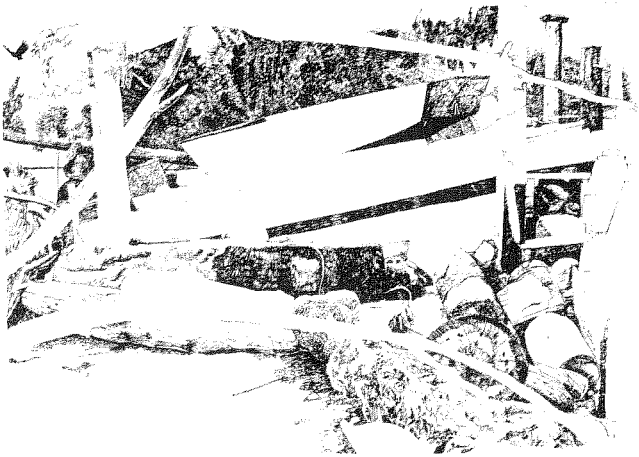
remembered. Robert Lowell’s oeuvre is as much about his mental landscape as people and their desires, frailties, and insights. The landscapes of New England and South America, of Europe and the West; our literature brings us a wealth of news about the habits and meanings of the notion sense of place.



Agate Point, Bainbridge Island, WA
 Drawings by the author.

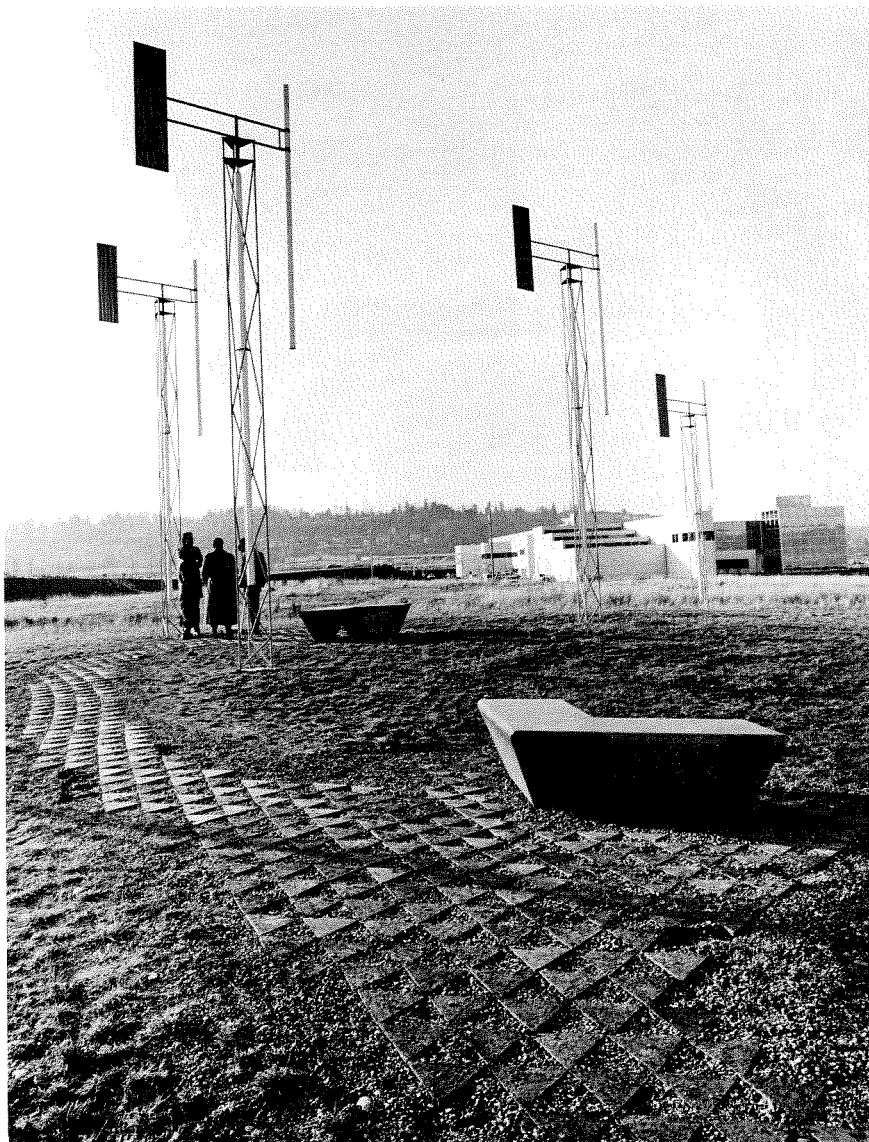






Conversation with Douglas Hollis

Jeff Kelley



A Sound Garden, one of five orchestrated environmental works along the 2,000-foot Lake Washington shoreline, is composed of a grove of twelve steel-truss towers that support twenty-four aluminum wind-organ pipes mounted on vanes that reorient the pipes as the wind changes direction. They are located atop a gentle rise of land and are

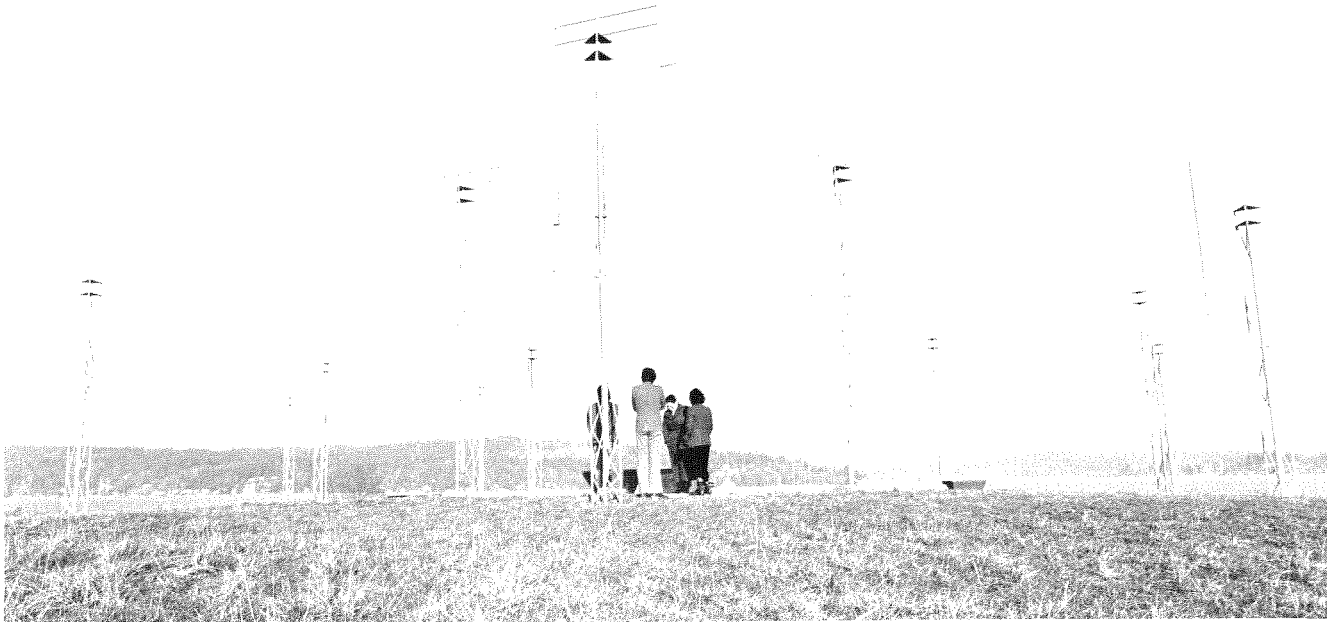
approached via a 600-foot meandering path of triangular brick pavers. Three perforated steel "tetrabanches" are located around the garden center. (The other four works are by Siah Armajani, George Trakas, Scott Burton, and Martin Puyear.) Photographs by Doug Hollis except as noted.

Doug Hollis is an artist who works with sound. His works usually consist of wind harps and wind organs installed at various outdoor locations. But the sounds they create, which range from the celestial pitch of the harps to the oboelike moan of the organs, represent just one of the wave phenomena that are drawn into the perceptual net of Hollis's concerns. His quasi-architectural structures (he prefers "structures" to "sculptures," even though it is from the recent tradition of site-sculpture that his works emerge) also activate wind waves, water waves, sight waves, and even the wavelike contours of the landscape. In effect, Hollis's site-instruments catalyze and extend human perception in terms of the inherent properties of a place; they manifest the indiscernible, celebrate what is already present, witness but do not judge. One thinks of the parable about the tree falling in the forest; Doug Hollis's pieces wait for that moment. They are listening.

The following text is excerpted from interviews conducted in August and November 1984, at, respectively, the Sun Valley Center for the Arts and Humanities and at Hollis's San Francisco home. Of course, the interviews became a conversation.

JK: You've spoken of your work as an architecture of sound. Can you describe the components of that architecture?

DH: I work with natural phenomena. I use acoustic sound



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as opposed to electronic sound. There's a strong distinction in my mind about that; acoustic sound has more architectural or ambient quality than electronically generated sound. It's not judgmental to say that; it's just that electronic sound seems to have a different spatial quality—one that does not evoke the kind of place or enclosure made up of itself that acoustic sound does. The sound that is produced, as well as the thing that produces the sound, which in my work has tended to be the wind, provides a volumetric and temporal aspect to my pieces. The sound then gives a sense of enclosure without there physically being an enclosed space; it's an implied volume.

JK: Is it an implied volume, or is it in fact a *sensed* volume?

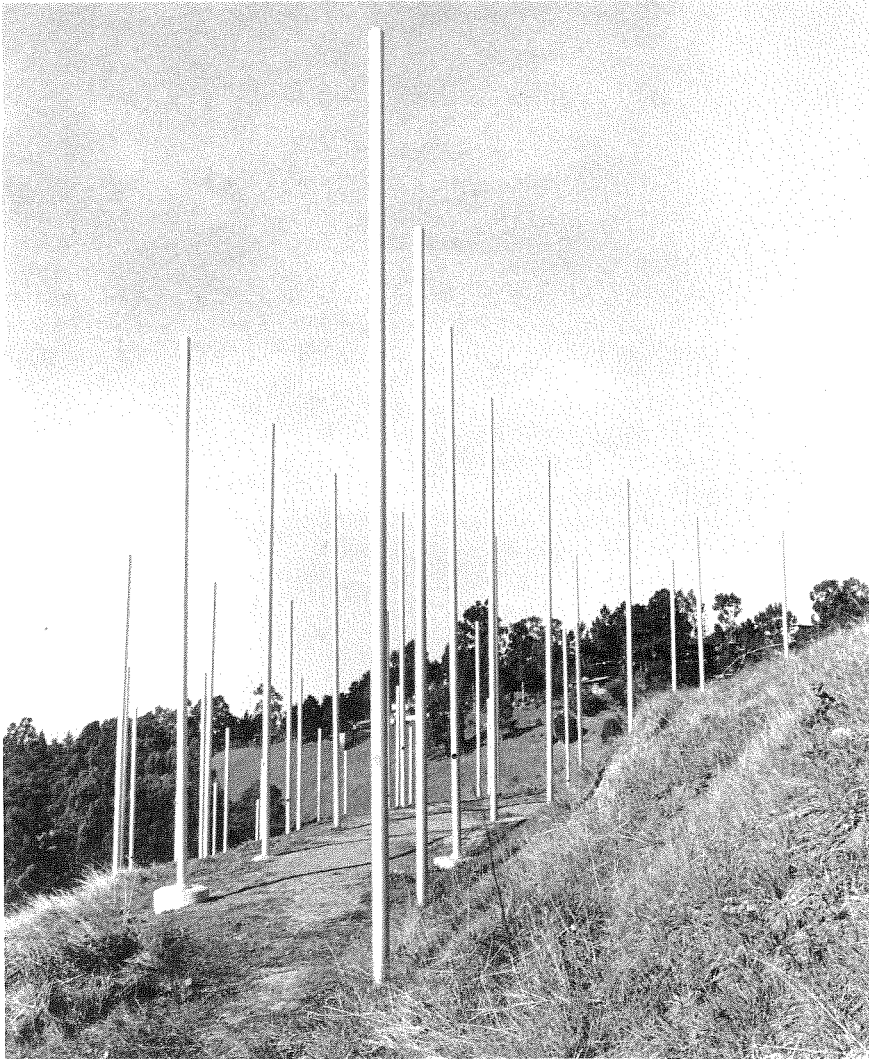
DH: It's not implied, you're right. I mean it's there, but it's ethereal in the sense that it doesn't have four walls and a ceiling, so it isn't an acoustical space, like an abbey or a cathedral, or a kind of architecture devoted to what sound sounds like *in* it. What I've been trying to do is use sound to define experiential space within a broader environ-

mental context in a way that amplifies perception. Sound has a terrific influence on our perception, but we aren't necessarily conscious of its effects upon us. It actually physically vibrates upon your body. I find that I'm extremely aware of my sonic environment, and that I navigate in space accordingly. I tend to stay away from high-density sound. It's not merely an avoidance behavior but a functioning navigational device.

JK: What do your sculptures look like?

DH: Well, I don't refer to them as sculptures but as sound structures. I've always tried to imply a sense of music in them, to make them function as visual supports for the kind of sound that they produce. The wind organs are made from various kinds of pipe, quite often aluminum pipe in diameters of about three inches. They're tuned in specific ways. I also work with various kinds of stringing material, including monofilament, racquet line, and cable, designed to function as aeolian instruments. Aeolian instruments have to do with resonance phenomena or the ways

2 A Sound Garden, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration N.W. Regional Center at Sand Point, Seattle, Washington, 1983.



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things vibrate when driven by a particular vehicle.

JK: And that vehicle is mostly the wind?

DH: Yes. And the various materials become the component parts with which I structure a piece; I think of them as a vocabulary. I've always tried to distill those components down to the simplest forms possible so that they're not objectified in and of themselves but work as mediators, or as instruments. They tend to take on a configuration that suggests, or echoes in some way, the place that they are. In my Lawrence Hall piece, for example, there's a topographic array of thirty-six pipes that's organized on a kind of warped grid that seems to echo the contour of the site. The way the hillside rolls is then amplified by the fact that the pipes at the top of the hill are taller than the ones at the bottom. You get a secondary contour.

JK: So the network of pipes is one kind of physical structure, and the sound it creates is another kind of physical structure?

DH: There are two kinds of structures: there's the passive structure of the physical, the so-called . . . I never know how to make a differentiation between the object, the aluminum pipe, and . . .

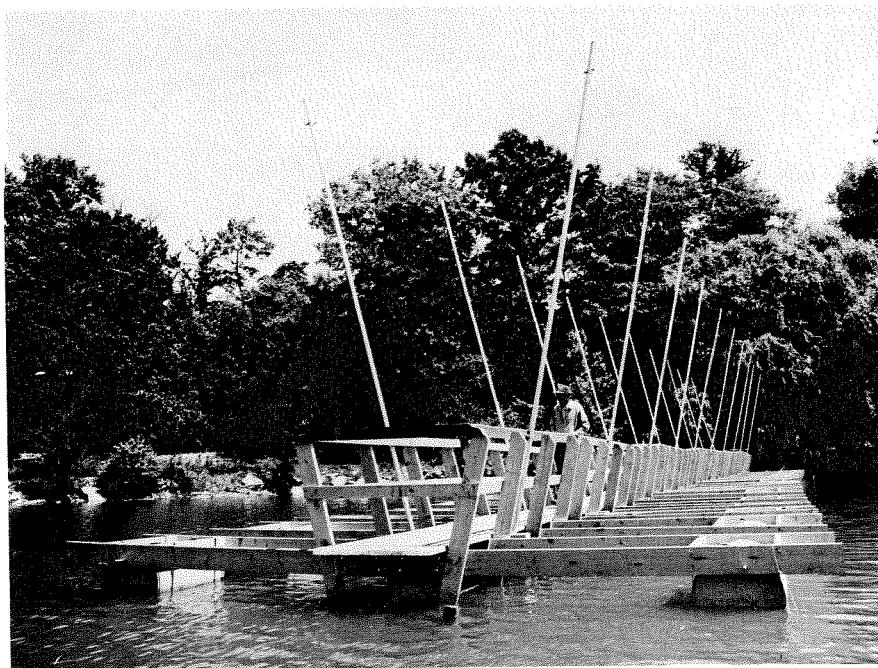
JK: Call it a pipe. My point was that they're both physical structures.

DH: I think of the pipes as fairly passive components. The sound

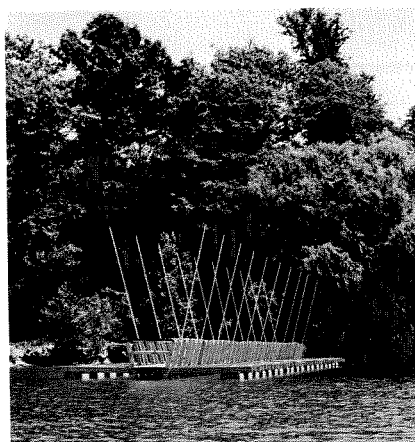
that's produced, the recognition of atmospheric motion, is a much more dynamic physical structure. I try to make the visual structures harmonious in some way; I like the idea of them looking musical—not looking like musical instruments but having an inherent visual harmony that speaks to the idea of architecture. The Greeks referred to architecture as “frozen music,” and I often refer to my work as “thought architecture.” But it's hard to talk about what these things look like. I could say, well, the wind organs look like a field with pipes sticking up from it, which is true, but it really has much more to do with what it feels like when you're within that field. So what the elements do is describe a field. They're less like the space of a cathedral and more like the order in a grove of trees. Whereas a windy hillside is an undifferentiated situation, the presence of these sound-producing instruments creates a specific sense of volume, a kind of domelike sonic ceiling, so that you feel like you're within the sound.

JK: Describe your first artwork.

DH: The first seminal piece was called “Sky Soundings.” It had to do with kite experiments and culminated in a series of night events, or celebrations. The work utilized eight large box kites with light sources attached to them, so that they created custom constellations. At a certain point, I realized that the kite strings were creating an audible frequency and that by altering the character of these lines I could produce different sounds.



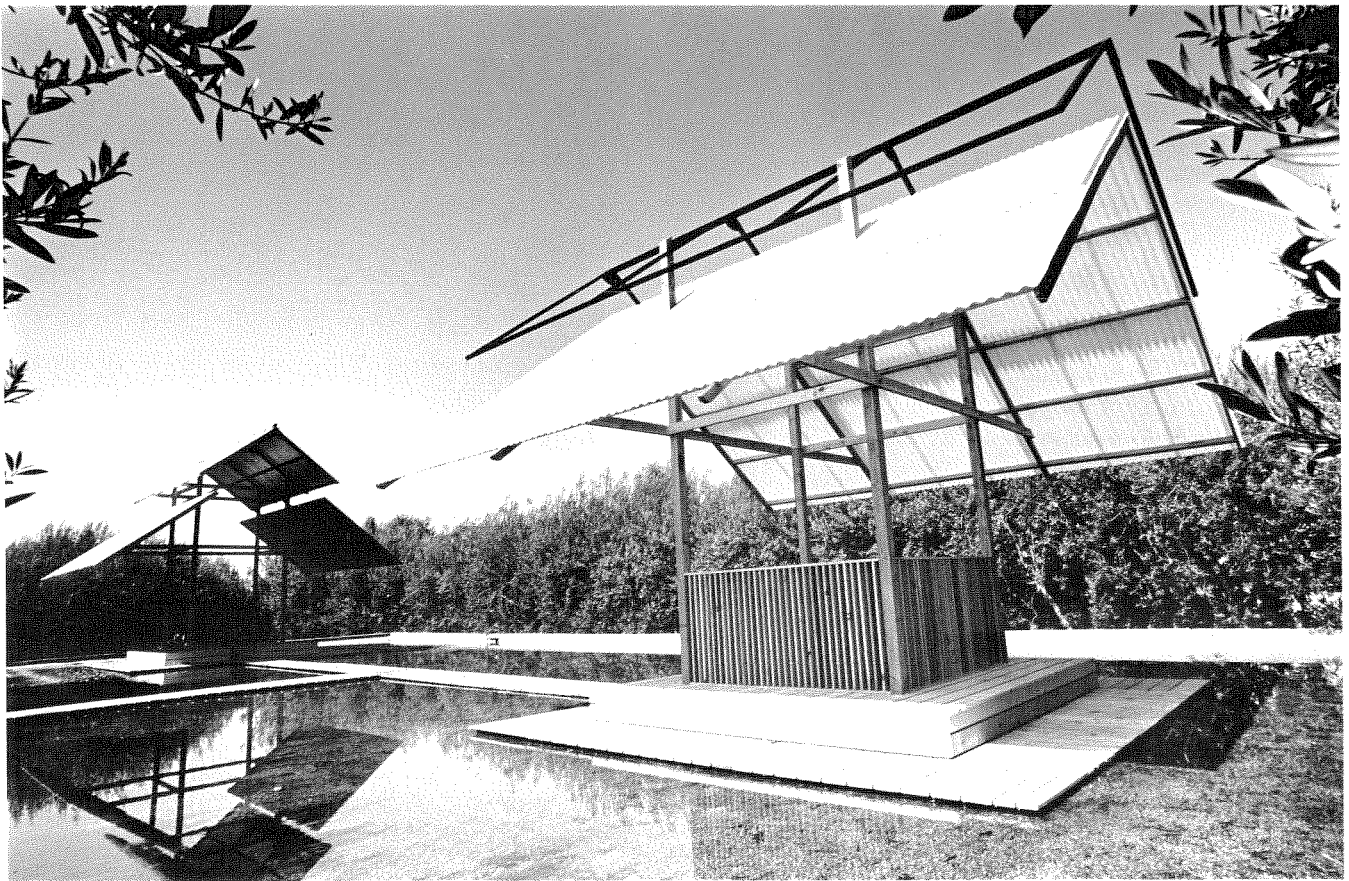
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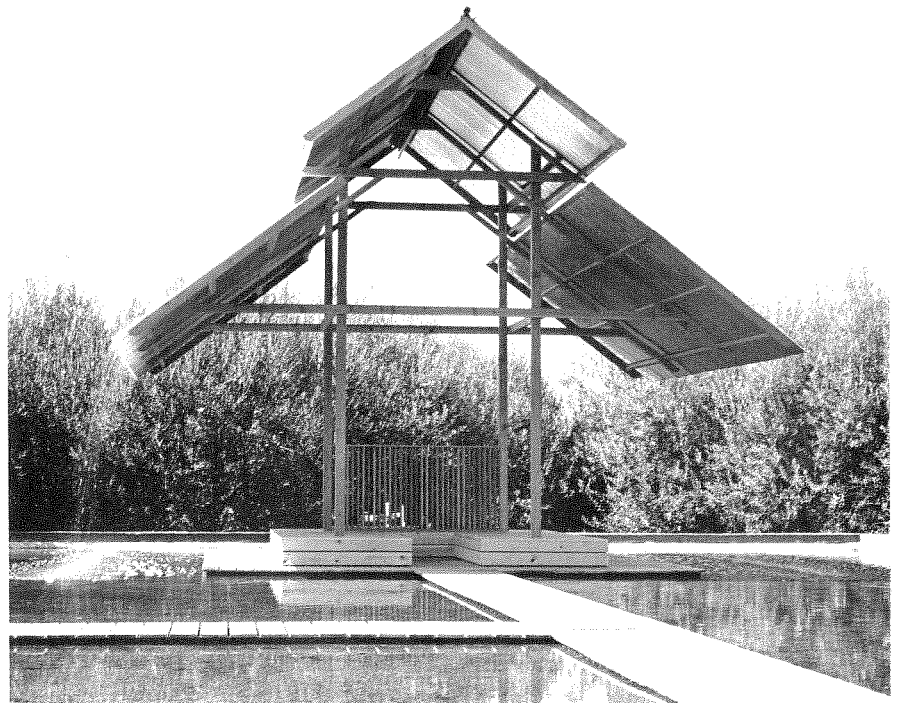
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4 A Venue was a wind-activated, walker-responsive, floating sound structure that extended 120 feet from the shore of Delaware Park Lake. It was designed to retune its sounds as the walker moved along it, making it undulate on the water.

5 A Venue, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, 1980.



6



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6 **A Talking Garden** was built in collaboration with artist Richard Turner for the Oakland Museum, Oakland, California. The flooded roof was occupied by a "Rain Pavilion" and a "Wind Pavilion," which carried on a sonic as well as formal dialogue, creating a contemplative oasis.

7 **"Rain Pavilion"** from *A Talking Garden* (in collaboration with Richard Turner), Oakland Museum, Oakland, California, 1982. Photograph by Lee Fathersee.



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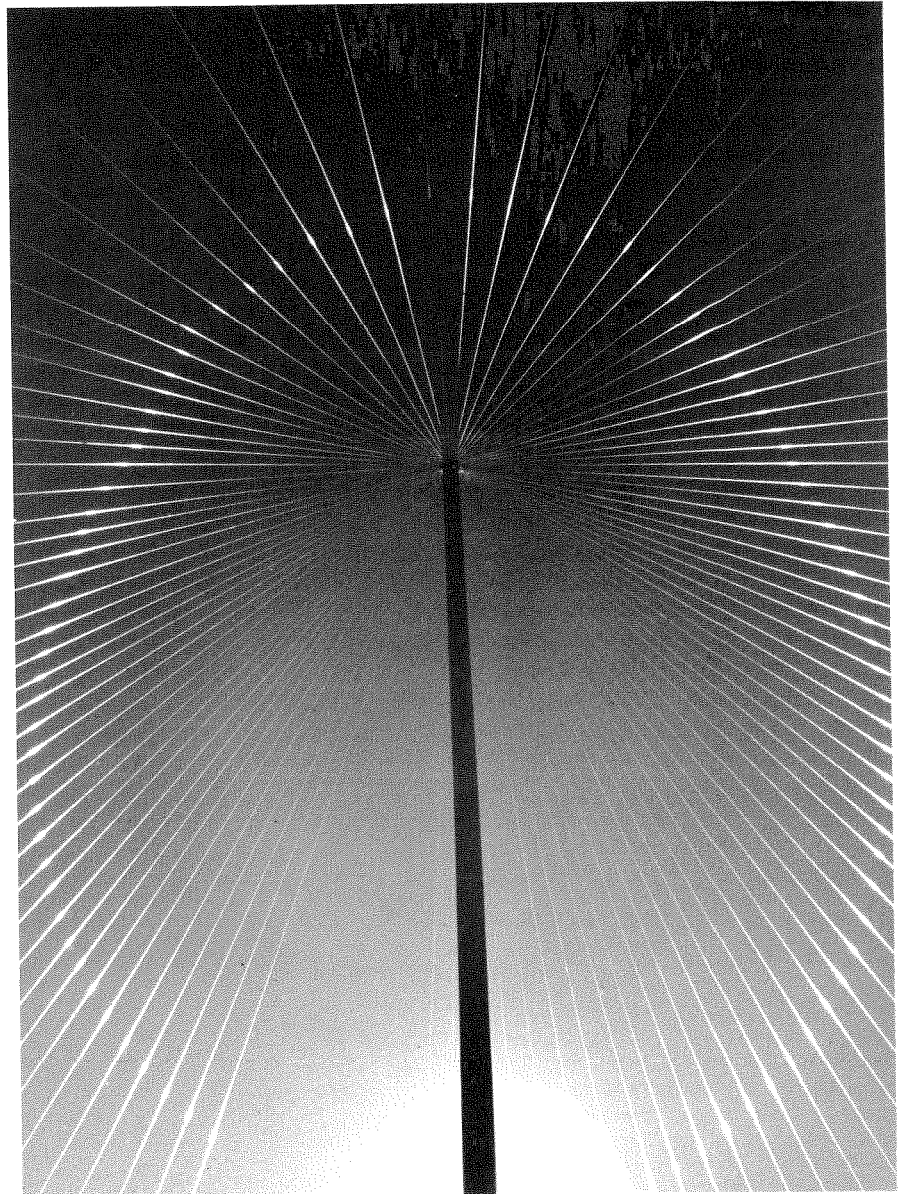
This was really the first time I realized that sound had an architectural quality, that it was possible to create theatres of sound with extremely minimal means. The other important aspect of this piece was its inherent element of celebration, the way in which people were drawn together. With the first performance I attempted, about 120 people met on a rather dark night at the edge of San Francisco Bay, and there was *no* wind; ergo the kites did not fly. And yet people had a terrific sense of reverence for the occasion, and they settled into little two- and three-person conversations in the dark. It was really the quality of those conversations that first suggested to me the notion of sound architecture. When the kites finally did fly, an even larger sense of sonic architecture suggested itself.

JK: Do you think your works occupy public spaces, or do they define private spaces that are accessible to the public?

DH: “Private” is a funny word. I prefer the word “personal” because I think that my pieces are not public in the sense of spectacle, but they become oases in a certain sense, stopping places. Whether those are private places, I’m not quite sure.

JK: What kinds of places attract you?

DH: A lot of the earlier works, up until a couple of years ago, were temporary. They were constructed in relatively short periods of time: two or three weeks for the whole



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8 OMI was a conical wind harp 23 feet high and 32 feet in diameter and composed of 100 nylon strings. The structure’s sound emanated from the center mast, which drew people into the interior of the work.

9 OMI, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, 1978.



10

10, 11 Field of Vision (120 feet x 100 feet x 8 feet 6 inches high), National Fine Arts Committee for the 1980 Winter Olympic Games, Lake Placid, New York.

12 Model for Tide Park (in collaboration with artist Charles Fahlen), Port Townsend, Washington, 1984 (in progress). This project will redefine an existing downtown (fig. 13) waterfront site recently retired from service as a ferry terminal. The main elements are a spiral "Tide Clock," which measures tide depth and creates tide pools, and a copper-roofed "Wave Gazing Gallery and Wind Harp Pavilion," connected by a series of curved terraces composed of basalt rock, beach grasses, and trees. Photograph by Peter Lester.

13 Port Townsend, Washington. Existing site for *Tide Park* by Doug Hollis and Charles Fahlen.

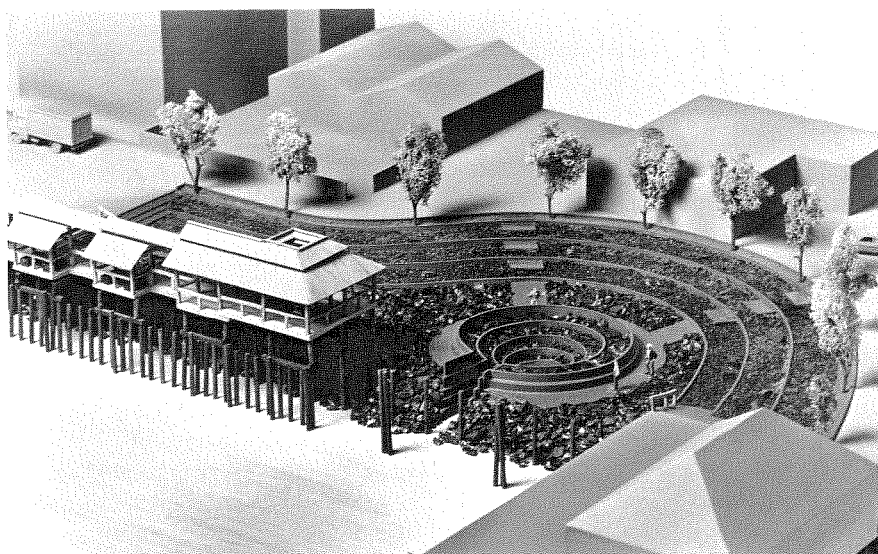


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process. So I developed a way of approaching a new environment. I walked in as a kind of blank slate and waited for something to write on me. Because I was working with wind, I looked for locations that tended not to be real sheltered, not deep in the woods. I sought out phenomenologically active places and then constructed pieces that celebrated what was already happening. So it was a kind of tuning process—or an “attuning” process. It’s almost like thinking of myself as a dowsing wand. It’s hard to intellectualize about why you like a place. Some places just feel good.

JK: You’ve talked about integrating, and then about disintegrating, the viewer-listener into your pieces. What do you mean?

DH: The idea of the viewer, or listener, is an objectification that I’ve been trying to work against for a long time. I refer to people that come to one of my works as participants. I try to dissolve the boundaries of “me over here” and “it over there” by making people a functional part of what is happening. My ten-day Omaha project, for example, was a conically shaped 100-string wind harp with a pole in the center, like a tepee. People would walk into it, center themselves, and almost always reach out their hand and touch the pole; it was like they were shaking hands with it. And they became sonic components within the piece because when they touched it, they would hear the structure’s vibrations in their bones.



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JK: Your pieces deal with space, but it seems to me that they extract sound from space in order to create a sense of place.

DH: Someone asked me once if my pieces existed when the wind wasn't blowing because when the wind isn't blowing, there is no sound. And I said yes because there's a kind of anticipation built into the structures. I feel my work is as much about suggesting that people listen as it is about making sound. So if they're about sound, they're also about silence.

JK: Describe "Field of Vision."

DH: "Field of Vision" was done in Lake Placid in 1981 as part of the Winter Olympics. It was actually not a sound work. I was interested in trying to amplify a dialogue between the windscape and the landscape, to amplify the dance these two entities do with each other the way a formation of land influences the windflow over it, creating vortexes and areas of calm. It's a kind of visualization of the atmosphere. Of course, the land itself is also formed by the wind; it isn't just a fixed entity. Maybe I should describe the actual piece: it was a square matrix of wind vanes about 120 feet on the side. I put an upright, 8½-foot length of half-inch conduit every four feet. There were about 750 of them. The wind vanes were made from aluminum tubing painted day-glow orange. I was interested in how the snow level would mediate between the windscape and landscape, so that when it was snowed in, the vanes would not be equidistant from the ground

at all points. The piece's size was necessary in order to describe the changing patterns of the waves. The field didn't turn as if one; you could see the wind moving through it like it was a field of wheat. It seemed to deal with different kinds of time.

JK: And so, with your work, we have a kind of object that isn't an art object in a traditional sense; that is, it isn't an object that refers to itself or through itself to something else, or that surrounds itself, in the case of sculptural objects, with a kind of metaphorical space. Rather, we have an object that is more along the lines of an instrument which measures some phenomena that wouldn't otherwise be perceived as such.

DH: What I do is represent things; I think of myself as more a representational artist than an abstractionist.

JK: But don't you isolate and abstract certain latent phenomena in a given site vis-à-vis your instruments?

DH: I think of that more as activating potential phenomena, of creating potential for the phenomena to manifest itself. Is that saying the same thing?

JK: I wonder if it isn't. Perhaps representation and abstraction are versions of each other.

DH: My notion of abstraction is to take "out of."

JK: Which is, in a sense, what you do. Your pieces take out of a

homogenous environment certain features by representing them, by catalyzing them.

DH: Well, what I feel I do is create structures that use a particular sensory level to make people more aware of the homogeneity of a place. In some ways, I think of my pieces as excuses for conversations on the site about the site. They're not preoccupied with themselves but act as sensory extensions that make the ongoing phenomena more perceptible. They're real analogues, not metaphors. They do what they are talking about. Does that make any sense?

JK: They are what they do?

DH: They are what they do.

JK: So what makes your work art?

DH: That depends on what you think art is. It's always a hard question, and I'm not sure I care whether my work is called art or music or science. But I do know it's an investigation of my perceptions, and maybe that's a pretty good definition of art.

ARTSTREET: Taking Place and Making News

Dean W. O'Brien

Most of the central business district in Green Bay, Wisconsin, was torn down during the 1970s and replaced by a generic shopping mall with acres of parking adjacent.

The last to go was Kaap's, a well-worn, slightly eccentric restaurant, where special moments in personal lives had been celebrated in a semipublic setting for at least four generations. It didn't go without a fight—under the banner “Support Your Local Kaap's.” But by 1980 a department store corporation in Ohio had won a demolition agreement without any exceptions, not even for Kaap's.

The common ground of the community seemed well on the way to becoming another instance of placelessness, as described by Relph, Smith, and others.¹

With the conversion of outside space to parking lot, the outdoors became a largely eventless no-where to hurry through, diminishing what might be called the now-here sense of place,² as expressed by Pascal: “I . . . wonder to see myself here rather than there; for there is no reason why I should be here rather than there, now rather than then.”³

With the completion of the enclosed mall, the inside-outside world of store-to-store shopping was all inside, with little of the exhilaration that comes from crossing boundaries. The world

outside was emptied, leaving mainly weather without human witness.

With the remote control of the urban environment by several corporations whose headquarters were well beyond the view of local citizens, the sense of local participation in the community was damaged. This situation found visual expression in site-indifferent architecture⁴ as well as the conventionally coordinated colors and other shallowly graphic consistencies imposed on the previously more site-specific and pluralistic cityscape.

By reducing the interruptions of the past, the weather, door opening and coat zipping, idiosyncracies, and visual surprises, planners no doubt speeded up the processing of people through the environment as well as the processing of environmental images through people's minds,⁵ turning the downtown into a kind of machine for selling. Instead of managing the local exceptions to the generic idea of marketplace by capitalizing on them and celebrating them as events, the new design managed them by trying to exclude them, by framing them out of the picture. Sense of place was excluded by the very same means.

The Proposition

If the “essence of place lies . . . in the experience of an ‘inside’ that is distinct from an ‘outside,’” as

Relph asserts,⁶ then being simultaneously aware of both inside and outside should make the distinction visible and create or at least heighten the sense of place.

The situation appeared to call for a frame that would separate inside from outside but not so “successfully” or single-purposefully that it would make the outside (other environments and purposes) unavailable to the senses of insiders—or, for that matter, the inside inaccessible to outsiders. So framing may create place if the framing “leaks.”

Primarily to heighten sense of place by experimenting with this concept of leaky framing, and to promote the arts in the region along with a new image of Green Bay, a pointedly nongeneric arts festival was devised.⁷

I proposed the idea in the early spring of 1980, planning began a year later, and the first festival was presented on the last weekend of August 1982. It has become an annual event, drawing crowds of more than 30,000 each of the first three years, against the standing assumption that the market for fine arts in this already small football town is microscopic.

The News Frame

The arts had been framed out of the public mainstream in Green Bay. Newspaper coverage, when it existed at all, presented the arts as superfluous, often with implied apologies to readers

that the paper was giving space to such a snooty subject.

This notion of the absence of public interest drove many artistically inclined people into “the closet,” into claustrophobic enclaves that understandably tended at once to reject outsiders and keep artists from going public. Under these circumstances, the audience for the arts in Green Bay was as limited as the environment for artistic creation. The condition is typically made visible in newspapers by departmentalizing or “ghettoizing” coverage under a standing head such as “Art Notes” and is analogously signified “on the ground” by keeping concerts, plays, and exhibits tucked away in avoidable galleries and auditoriums.

The news frame, which tended to exclude all but easily processed events, was parallel in some respects to framing in the other communally shared environment, the physical downtown. By following the proposed place-making principles, we designed the festival to assure leakage between the two frames, to see to it that there was interplay between publication in conventional media and “going public” in the streets. For example, intruding on downtown normalcy, mural painters became newsworthy to the point where talking to reporters and posing for photographers were



I The place-making Kaap's restaurant eventually rose from the rubble to become the third building from the left in 1983 ARTSTREET graphics, which otherwise depicted eight "living" structures and two generics. This composite image of the festival site appeared on posters, postcards, buttons, tee shirts, and tote bags in an effort to enhance the site's significance by reduplication. Detail from poster by Evelyn Teikari.

perceived as parts of the act of painting.

To break into the symbolic world of the day's news, an event must emanate qualities that fit into the broader journalistic frame, which excludes most of reality in order to let a manageable few features into the arena of public attention. Some of these qualities are acknowledged by journalists.⁸ Others have been detected by scholars.⁹

In consciously constructing the festival to penetrate the news frame, we incorporated most of the requisite news qualities.¹⁰ We thereby often came across a central conflict in the nature of news and possibly in the nature of place: the tension between novelty and familiarity, or what I've called authority.¹¹

Generic Lapse

As Milton Glazer put it in speaking of magazine covers, "The image must be familiar enough to be understandable and unusual enough to provoke interest."¹² In our experience the familiarity side of the equation seemed to have more weight.

It began with naming the event. Like the festival itself, the name would have to place the event in a familiar category and at the same time set it apart from other members of the category so that it wouldn't lapse into an already known generic

festival or an oh-one-of-those events.¹³ We considered Gala Nor'easter (for northeastern Wisconsin), Ring Around the Bay Festival, Slow Brown Fox Festival of the Arts (to call attention to the Fox River site), Out-of-the-Closet Arts Festival, Algae Bloom Arts Festival, and at least 200 other possibilities before hitting on ARTSTREET,¹⁴ which caught the importance of the site and the idea that the arts can be a "treet" instead of the stuffy in-group obsession that so many potential audiences imagine and avoid.

As soon as we made it public, the name started to revert to the familiar, generic "Artfair" or "Artfest." People who seized on the generic thought they knew what to do about ARTSTREET because they had already dealt with the widespread arts and crafts fairs; that is, they gained authority by classifying the event as generic: "Well, when you've got an artfair, what you do is, you put it in the mall" or in a park, some thought. In the same vein, the initial festival proposal was misperceived for several months as an ethnic food fair to raise money for the arts council. But the name ARTSTREET prevailed, as did the novelty.

One of our more important "novelties," or distinguishing strategies, was to distribute emphasis quite evenly across the arts, to express their variety and abundance, from classical and folk music to

dance, one-act plays, original poetry, storytelling, cinematic special effects, and the visual arts, from demonstrations of making studio glass in an alley to a walking tour of church architecture downtown.

The emphasis on *all* the arts was newsworthy in the sense that it made ARTSTREET unique among festivals in the state. The almost unmanageable scale of ARTSTREET was newsworthy: 63 performances on three street stages and a half-dozen auxiliary performing areas.

What the television stations and newspapers depicted mainly were the balloons, belly dancers, and clowns, which conveyed neither the particular, nongeneric qualities we had synthesized to create a fresh image of Green Bay nor the enthusiastic new public embrace of the fine arts here. Again, the authority and ease of the generic almost got the best of it.

By the same token, one of ARTSTREET's more uncommon features was a Speaker's Corner, where people were invited to speak out on anything connected with the arts, on the model of the one in Hyde Park, London. Surprisingly, a number of speakers took to the soapbox and stirred a crowd with their feelings about the arts and the aesthetic environment of the city. Although one reporter

listened throughout, Speaker's Corner was the only major feature of ARTSTREET entirely omitted in his story. It didn't fit the news template.

On the whole, however, and with the help of reporters, ARTSTREET was successful in penetrating the news frame to leave an opening for yet more arts coverage in the future. In turn, this incorporation into the symbolic frame of news validated the festival's place-making change in the framing of downtown "on the ground."

Festival Frame

The arts had been framed away into concert and recital halls, galleries, museums, and educational institutions, where environment and audience are rather controlled, especially in the "serious" performing arts, for which the audience is usually expected to sit down and stay put.

ARTSTREET lured the arts from these confines and put them out in the sunlight. There were exceptions, though. Symphony violinists said their instruments could not bear the weather, a pianist said she could not compete with traffic sounds, a visual artist said he wouldn't be able to take the ridicule he expected from an unscreened public audience, an actor said the wind would blow his voice away. These few who found competition with the background



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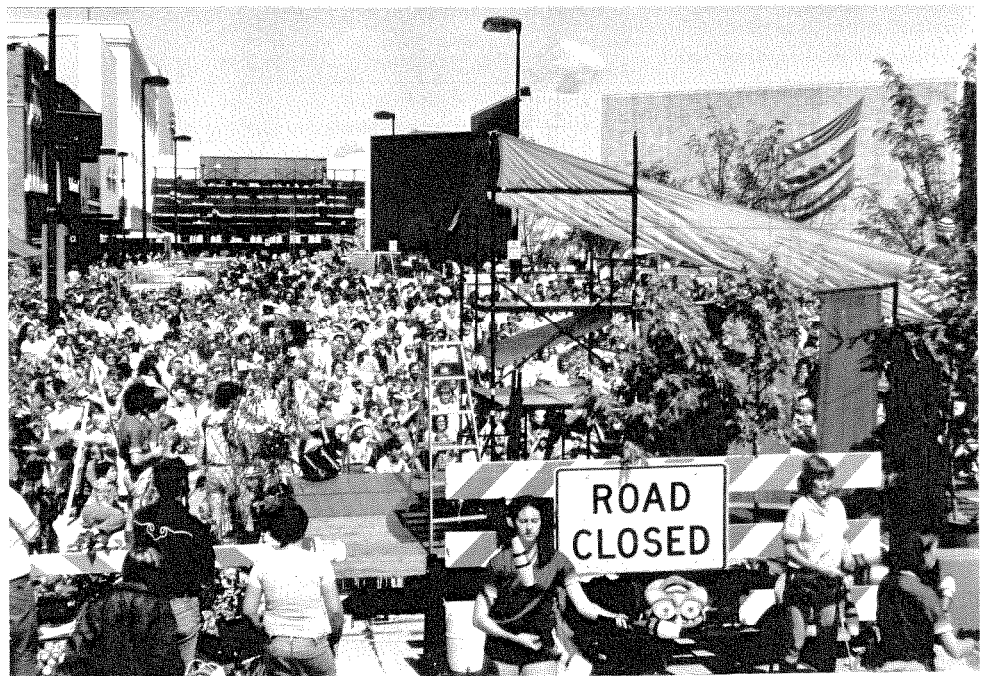
2 A cardboard ART STREET sign, duct-taped to the light pole, disrupts the municipal order, helping to create a public event and, at the same time, making the location meaningful. Such discontinuities are perceptual events in themselves. Photographs by Dean O'Brien.



3

3 The more intrusive, equipment-centered media add to a sense of eventfulness at the scene. When the scene is outside, away from the customary sanctums of art, some purity is lost, but publics are expanded and publicity is gained. Again, reduplication authenticates the experience of place. Here television covers a prefestival recital, designed to call attention to the festival and to the courthouse square, a small, overlooked patch of charm near the downtown.

4 Street barricades framed a new context that mediated between artists and audiences, creating common ground, recapturing Green Bay's downtown from generic forces, at least temporarily, and bestowing some sense of place. Kaap's restaurant was on a site at the right-hand side of this scene.



4

environment too daunting were accommodated in a room where they could essentially fill the frame, as they always had before ARTSTREET.

But many moved outside. Throngs showed up, and the downtown was physically framed with street barricades to include artists with crowds. That is, a subframe was set up to mediate between previously inaccessible performance areas and audiences, just as a good news story gives access to information framed away from public view or intelligibility.¹⁵

Festival Subframes

Within the broader frame of the entire festival were smaller subframes that recapitulated and thereby celebrated the general leakiness of the festival frame. ARTSTREET generally allowed for public participation in the arts scene, a kind of interaction across the border, or what Appleton calls "penetrability of margins."¹⁶ It allowed access to the "back regions," where tourists and others expect to find "authenticity" behind the slick facades and stagey fronts, according to MacCannell and Goffman.¹⁷ We took that notion quite literally (that is, physically) and provided an accessible back stage. Audiences could wander behind the scenes to see the backs of painted stage flats as well as actors preparing to go on stage or coming off stage in a flush.

Oddly, very few festival goers set foot backstage to see the story behind the story.

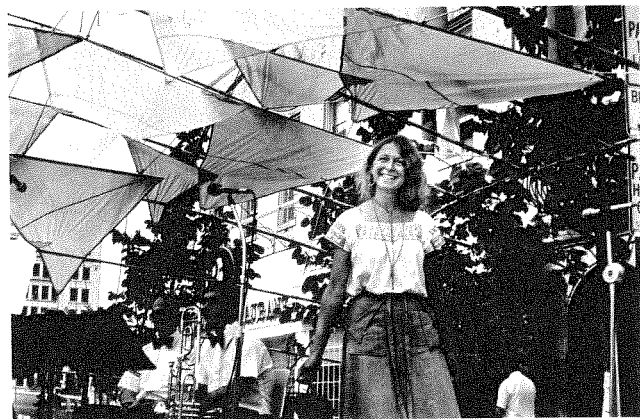
Other leaky frames worked better. In Speaker's Corner and a mime workshop, people got *on* stage, *into* the subframe. Similarly, participation was made possible at a booth where a person could glaze his or her own pot and have it raku-fired. The finale of the second year's festival was a pickup chorus of festival goers who were signed up on the spot and sang with the symphony orchestra after an open rehearsal that the crowds could also listen to.

The rehearsal is an example of another form of participation that makes a time and place meaningful, a form described by McLuhan as "cool," wherein an audience participates vicariously in anything incomplete, feeling compelled to complete it themselves.¹⁸ It is another kind of leaky frame, in that the surfaces of a ready-made world are penetrated to get at the processes behind the product.

These framing strategies were to let people in on the arts scene and give them a new personal connection with the downtown. A reciprocal strategy, also devised to encourage sense of place, let the downtown into the perception of festival goers. It was to make the festival as site-specific as possible by creating festival features and



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5 Behind the frame, in theoretically more authentic "back regions," singers of the Milwaukee Skylight Comic Opera wait to go on again. They are alone. Contrary to expectations, most festival goers preferred the "staged reality" and actually went out of their way to avoid this accessible behind-the-scenes view.

6 Bits of building and municipal signage spill onto the stage, where sculptor Kirsten McClintock is introduced as creator of the canopy above her. The canopy was designed as an expression of ARTSTREET's "leaky frame" principle.



7 The "town crier" often failed to gain attention, probably because he was not framed and his intentions were not clear or familiar enough for festival goers to manage. It was easier to exclude him from their perception altogether.

often insisting on works of art that referred beyond themselves to the particular places where they occurred. For example, a choreographer designed a dance that incorporated a fire escape, trash cans, and window bars in an alley. A mural depicted real trees recently planted near the wall. Poster artists, who consistently chose generic imagery in early renderings, were coached into an enthusiasm for the particulars of the site. Souvenir brooches were made from molds of decorative features on downtown buildings, such as an art deco doorplate and a Victorian handle. The popular walking tours called explicit attention to architecture in or near the downtown. Native American artists were situated in the exact location of a forgotten 1746 Sauk village. A sculptor designed a stage canopy to let in glimpses of the surroundings through its numerous gaps, inviting reference to visible realities beyond the stage.

An interpenetration was achieved between the outside and inside of the frames that set the festival apart from life in general but not entirely apart. The interpenetration was meant as a kind of gluing, tacking an event to a location, making sites more humanly significant, less generic, or interchangeable in the memory.

To permit participation and site-specificity, a frame

probably has to leak, but it should not disappear. In the second year, ARTSTREET had a “town crier” in top hat and tails to make loud public announcements at several spots about what was going on elsewhere at the festival. An accompanying photograph shows that his unframed presence was either ignored or regarded with suspicion as an intrusion on normalcy. A solution still under consideration is to have him carry a simple frame of three boards to put around him wherever he stops, as a kind of portable proscenium. Things in a frame get attention. Even ordinary clothes, as Ann Hollander has noted, “automatically become extraordinary on the stage or screen. The frame around the events invites intensified attention to what is being worn [because] we know it is there intentionally.”¹⁹

View-Finder Framing

Another framing variant was the view-finder of the camera. Most ARTSTREET photographers followed the conventions of newspaper cropping, which “saves space” by filling the frame with a single-purpose figure, crowding out all ground and hence environmental specificity that may compete with the figure. This “tight framing” speeds up the processing of the image in the mind by simplifying it, but it also destroys sense of place.

Most ARTSTREET photographs were disappointing close-ups of a cute child, a tuba, a glass pot, all of which were unmistakable in their circumscribed meaning and could have been taken anywhere at any time. They were generic. They eliminated the interaction between figure and ground that would have created a more experiential meaning, much as the contrast between *in* and *out* seems to create the experience of place.

By separating a particular moment from the general flux, photography frames time as well as space and so has the capacity to declare *event* as well as *place* if it conveys the contrast between the *now* captured within the frame and the *then* still at large. The contrast is made visible when the photograph refers beyond itself to past or future, calling attention to its edges, its artifice, indirectly authenticating the realities still at large beyond the edge.

ARTSTREET flaunted its edges, its limitations, its pretenses. We liked the way the “Osco Drugs” sign mingled obstreperously with the music of Offenbach and the calls from a motorcycle policeman’s radio barged into a conversation between Adam and Eve in a staged Eden.

Contrary to the belief that long-time habitation is the only effective way to realize

sense of place, the evidence of ARTSTREET is that limited-term occupation, an eventful *taking place*, has real place-making clout.

Fabricating Reality

When other times and places are allowed to crash into a framed present, an event has happened, a kind of news. There has been an “occurrence,” a “running against” the imagined constants of the scene. It may be that *event* and *place* create one another; they certainly validate one another.

With ARTSTREET, we broke into a cityscape of generic constants to make things interesting, much as a linebacker might break through the offensive line to interrupt the perfect play and make a game of it. The seal-tight framing of the downtown was penetrated by artists, art, and audiences drawn from separately framed venues.

In turn, the homemade eventfulness repossessed the downtown for the community. Direct and vicarious participation by rank-and-file citizens offset simple, generic definitions of the city by absentees at distant desks. For a time the place was cluttered with the exhilarating jostle of complex human purposes and meanings. Green Bay got a kernel image around which it can cultivate a fuller, more evocative idea of itself and

the human possibilities in its urban setting.

Ultimately, then, ARTSTREET was an experiment in the social construction of reality. As such, it succeeded in disrupting a serious case of “reification,” that condition in which people see the world as inexorable and victimizing, “forgetting [their] own authorship of the human world” and losing sight of “the dialectic” between producer and product.²⁰

We can continue to yield the initiative to advertisers and remote professionals who unilaterally assert the kernel images, or common body of allusion, around which we construct the social reality that permits us to be intelligible, visible, to one another, however imprecisely and briefly. Or we can accept our freedom, give it a mature embrace, and collaborate openly, self-consciously, and audaciously in constructing social reality—rank-and-file citizens joining with journalists, public artists, publicists, politicians, and environmental designers.

ARTSTREET indicates that public place-making might be the best arena for it. And a promising “technique” would be framing, with appropriate leaks to create a humane convergence of intention and attention.

NOTES

- 1 Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion Limited, 1976); and Peter F. Smith, *The Syntax of Cities* (London: Hutchison & Company, 1977).
- 2 Dean O'Brien, "Hitting the Nail on the Thumb," *Wisconsin Improvement Program Reporter* (School of Education, University of Wisconsin), (November 1964), p. 6.
- 3 *Pensees of Pascal* (New York: Peter Pauper Press, 1946), p. 36.
- 4 According to a source in the city planning office, the construction of at least one new anchor store followed, without significant variation, the blueprints drawn for a branch built in a suburban shopping center.
- 5 Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 25; Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (New York: Morrow Quill, 1978), pp. 328–331; and O'Brien, "Framing the Pseudoenvironment," *Landscape*, Volume 26: Number 1 (1982), pp. 26–32.
- 6 Relph, *op. cit.*, p. 49. A prior point, that "the distinctive quality of any man-made place is *enclosure*," is made by Christian Norberg-Schulz in his *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1980), p. 58.
- 7 The festival is sponsored by the Northeastern Wisconsin Arts Council, Inc. It was brought into the world by the labor of the Planning Committee's eight members, including the author and his wife, Polly O'Brien, who was appointed festival director in December 1981.
- 8 A typical explication can be found in Curtis D. MacDougall, *Interpretative Reporting* (New York: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 114–120.
- 9 Edward Jay Epstein, *News from Nowhere: Television and the News* (New York: Random House, 1973); Herbert Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time* (New York: Pantheon, 1979); Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1978); and Max Ways, "What's Wrong with News? It Isn't New Enough," *Fortune* (October 1969), pp. 110–113, 155–161.
- 10 We created what Daniel Boorstin called a pseudo-event in his *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1964), pp. 7–44. As a maximum mix of media, though, the pseudo-event can also be seen as the art form of our time. Twentieth-century masters of the form are familiar enough: Gandhi, Christo, Martin Luther King, Jr., Jerry Rubin.
- 11 O'Brien, "The News as Environment," *Journalism Monograph No. 85* (Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications) (September 1983).
- 12 Interview with the magazine designer on "The Importance of Being Rockwell," *Columbia Journalism Review* (December 1979), p. 40.
- 13 John Fowles identified the same phenomenon in botanical studies, according to his article "Seeing Nature Whole," *Harper's* (November 1979), p. 61.
- 14 The name was contrived by Colin D. O'Brien.
- 15 O'Brien, "Toward a Context Theory of Journalism," *Journalism Quarterly*, Volume 44 (Autumn 1967), pp. 491–496.
- 16 Jay Appleton, *The Experience of Landscape* (London: John Wiley & Sons, 1975), pp. 102, 105, 165, 200–202, 208, 215, 224, 270.
- 17 Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), pp. 91–107; and Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday/Anchor, 1959), pp. 144–145.
- 18 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), pp. 22–32.
- 19 Ann Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (New York: Viking, 1978), p. 239.
- 20 Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Penguin, 1979), p. 106.

The “Boutique-ing” of Joe’s Alligator Farm: Addison Mizner and the Origins of Palm Beach Style

Susan Southworth

In the early decades of the twentieth century a boom in Florida tourism followed the automobile down dusty roads. Local entrepreneurs soon found that the exotic native animals could be sold to the swarms of passing tourists as pets or entertainment, so alligator farms and parrot jungles became a primary roadside business in many parts of the state. Not only did the customers prowl about the edges of fenced-in ditches, gawking at alligators slithering over each other in muddy water, but they could take home living souvenirs, the tiny baby alligators sold in small jars or cups of water. Joe’s Alligator Farm was virtually the only entertainment for cold northerners staying in several large but unprepossessing hotels thrown up in the center of the barren island newly named Palm Beach. In the space of a few brief years the alligator farm was transformed into the epitome of haute resort life by a charming adventurer who gave the name Palm Beach an elite cachet it has retained to this day.

The middle-aged unemployed Addison Mizner viewed this new resort island with distaste but accepted the invitation to spend January there with his friend Paris Singer at the end of World War I. After a decade of effort, his hopes of becoming the fashionable architect of New York and Newport society had foundered, but not before he had created mongrel “Mediterranean” style villas, witty Chinese teahouses, and an “Alaskan mining camp” for an Adirondack retreat of baronial scale for millionaires charmed by the tales

of his adventurous life. During his brief New York career, a Mizner house was as likely to owe its aesthetic parentage to Siam as Byzantine Venice. By the Christmas holidays in 1917, the insolvent bon vivant was ready to go anywhere to escape his forlorn existence on wintry Long Island but found the sparsely inhabited Palm Beach devoid of social and aesthetic attractions. To relieve his boredom while enjoying the balmy climate, Mizner undertook his first commission on the island that would soon be dominated by his architecture, a whimsical conversion of his host’s mundane bungalow into a Chinese villa.

When the Chinese villa drew attention from Joe’s Alligator Farm, Mizner became intrigued by the notion of creating the image of an entire settlement. He temporarily dropped much of his globe-trotting architectural cornucopia and settled into a “Spanish” vocabulary of tiled roofs, stucco walls, paneled ceilings, and tiled floors and courtyards, evoking his memories of Antigua, Guatemala, as much as Salamanca, Spain. He designed dozens of houses that set the “Spanish” revival style in the early years of this fashionable resort. Yet his new stylistic self-discipline did not prevent him from straying into decidedly Venetian variations of his standard tile roof and stucco theme. Casa de Leoni, the Leonard Thomas house, was set with Lake Worth lapping at the balustrade. Its St. Mark’s lion in an ogee arched doorway and trefoil windows with cast “stone” projecting balconies were overshadowed by Mizner’s

final touch, the gondola slip at the base of the house. He was casual about mixing Spanish doorways, Venetian balconies, and gondola slips with Byzantine or Norman stair towers and Pompeian murals.

It was precisely this theatrical, one could say, irreverent, quality that fired the imaginations of his clients. The unfettered exuberance of his architectural fantasies gave full expression to their wish to express newly acquired wealth in a tangible manner. The style he introduced in Palm Beach was a drastic change from the meager bungalows and barnlike hotels lightly sprinkled on the island when he arrived. Nor did his exuberant stucco and tile haciendas bear any resemblance to the architecture of other important resorts of Mizner’s era.

Shingle style architecture dominated the major Atlantic coastal resorts, such as Bar Harbor, Maine, and Newport, Rhode Island, during the flush of enthusiastic resort development beginning in the 1850s. The brilliant, iconoclastic Boston architect, William Ralph Emerson (1833–1917) filled Bar Harbor with his witty interpretations of the shingle style vocabulary. (His virtuoso visual plays on architectural theory make the twentieth-century puns of Post-Modernists almost flat-footed by comparison.) Richard Morris Hunt (1827–1895) held sway in Newport with considerably less wit and soon abandoned the shingle style for vast ponderous piles of high Gothic or heavy Italiannate embellished stone to provide the dignity his Newport clients craved.



I Everglades Club, with the Via Parigi and Via Mizner in the background, c. 1940. Photograph reprinted from Donald Curl's *Mizner's Florida: American Resort Architecture*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press with the Architectural History Foundation, 1984. Courtesy of the Historical Society of Palm Beach County.

A new reigning architect, the dashing Stanford White (1853–1906), contributed to the shingle style, but by the time Mizner became a regular guest in Newport, White was designing summer palaces in stone with as much French enthusiasm as possible.

Yet Emerson, Hunt, and White all limited themselves to designing individual buildings, not streets and whole districts as Mizner did in Palm Beach or the whole city he had hoped to build in Boca Raton. Even his houses were usually designed as groups of small structures surrounding lanes and spaces reminiscent of Spanish villages or perhaps an opera set for *Carmen*. El Mirasol, Casa Bendita, and Playa Riente were all complex and extensive village concepts containing up to seventy rooms each for the tycoons who commissioned them. Perhaps because he had no formal architectural training, Mizner seemed oblivious to the intellectual currents of city planning and architecture preceding him. The City Beautiful and Garden City movements replaced European traditions of urban concentration and complexity with vast low-density developments in which land uses were intentionally segregated. Mizner gave no indication he knew of such theories.

While his predecessors and contemporaries achieved imposing hauteur through imitation of the chateaux and palaces of European aristocracy, Mizner mimicked the charming little servants' quarters, the simple farmhouses, and the old

winding streets of Spanish towns where small shopkeepers spilled their merchandise into the street. Mizner's clients were just as wealthy as those of Hunt and White, but he put his millionaires in the midst of village street life, and they loved it.

Beginning with the Everglades Club, Mizner designed a complex but playfully unintimidating village focused on Worth Avenue in the center of Palm Beach with both his offices and his home located in the midst of the new boutiques. His seemingly haphazard groupings of courtyards, archways, balconies, stairways, tile roofscapes, plazas, and gardens formed continuously picturesque vistas as well orchestrated as any Baroque sequence.

The first little lane, Via Mizner, was so successful that the next year he built another pedestrian street of artfully simple little buildings and named it Via Parigi for his friend and investor Paris Singer. Throughout the district Mizner mixed land uses with abandon, including residential apartments or small houses above or next to shops, offices, and cafes. With the addition of Phipps Plaza and Patio Marguery, an entire district had been created that quickly became known throughout the Western world as a charming resort.

These years in Palm Beach were Mizner's balmiest, but his ambition to make more than a comfortable income led him into a huge development scheme for Boca Raton, the grandest gesture of his career. Unfortunately, all he was

able to complete was the gesture. He managed to have himself appointed city planner by the city officials of a struggling agricultural community twenty-five miles south of Palm Beach. Through his Mizner Development Company, he simultaneously bought up two-thirds of the land area of the town, a flagrant conflict of interest. He laid out an enormous east-west boulevard, Camino Real, with plazas and commercial frontage. Meanwhile the scandals of unscrupulous developers in a number of other Florida communities were widely publicized and frightened away potential buyers, ending the Florida land boom as dramatically as it had started.

The Mizner Development Company had built the public infrastructure and major landmarks before offering anything for sale, and the first Boca Raton houses and lots went on the market at the worst possible time. The company went bankrupt and Mizner lost all he had invested, having built only a fraction of his new city. He returned to architectural commissions, designing houses in Miami, Bryn Mawr, the California coast, and the Cloisters resort on Georgia's Sea Island. Still oriented to creating integrated compositions of structures and spaces rather than individual buildings, he turned every architectural job into an urban design opportunity. For a large house in Pebble Beach, overlooking the Carmel Bay, he spilled a dozen informally connected Spanish structures along the top of a hill, incorporating courtyards, terraced gardens, and

even a village well. Further down the coast in Montecito, a grander composition of little buildings formed a 20,000-square-foot house. With his health failing and enthusiasm for Florida development further dampened by the crash of the stock market, Mizner devoted himself to writing his fascinating memoirs. He died in Palm Beach in 1933, once more insolvent and heavily in debt.

While people in many cities complain about the “boutique-ing” of their neighborhoods that deprives them of practical necessities, Palm Beach regulars are addicted to their daily fix at Gucci’s or Cartier’s and wouldn’t want a hardware store instead. (Across the bridge on the mainland, West Palm Beach was built to accommodate the mundane necessities of life.) For Addison Mizner, a pioneer of this trend, life without wealthy friends, elegant shops, and exclusive parties was not worth contemplating. He created the shops and townscape for his own ideal social life and spent his remaining years in the midst of his design. He even buried his long-time companion and pet, the monkey Johnny Brown, on Via Mizner, where the tombstone can still be seen among the carefully coiffured shoppers.

One can readily criticize Mizner’s architectural work as contrived, overly charming and picturesque. It has an undeniably phony aspect, and certainly the notion of cute little tile and stucco Spanish neighborhoods all over the country is distasteful. Yet defiantly ugly new developments in depressing waste-

lands of Florida, perversely attaching Palm Beach to their names, have sometimes achieved momentary financial success for their developers merely by evoking the potent image Mizner created for the once barren island. Contemporary “upscale” developments and boutique malls so earnestly replicated in cities and suburbs across the country suffer from the lack of social and economic diversity that has always been the weakness of Palm Beach. Nevertheless, they might seem less deadly with some of the imaginative design of spaces, sequences, and scale that were the most admirable feature of Mizner’s invented villages.

Mizner’s memoirs are out of print, but two recent books document his architecture and life: William Olendorf and Robert Tolf’s *Addison Mizner: Architect to the Affluent* (Fort Lauderdale, Florida: Gale Graphics, 1983, 181 pages) and Donald Curl’s *Mizner’s Florida: American Resort Architecture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press with the Architectural History Foundation, 1984, 256 pages).

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To Rally Discussion

I read Ann Leone Philbrick's article ["Balzac, Proust, and Colette in the Garden: 'a question of climates,'" *Places* 2:3] with both pleasure and the odd dissatisfaction that prompts ordering one's own thoughts. I wondered why, having proposed her definition of "climate," combining "place" and "occasion" and drawing on sensation, she has paid no attention to the sound characteristics of the Balzac and Proust gardens.

Balzac does give us a long travelling shot down the Rue Neuve-Ste-Geneviève, but though "even the sound of wheels is unusual," it is a sound movie: we are led to imagine an echoey acoustic like that of the catacombs; we pass through "a wicket gate with a shrill bell attached to it" to enter the garden and the Maison Vauquer. The harsh sound echoing in an inhospitable quiet serves to emphasize that quiet in our imagination, to suggest perhaps a contrast with the bustle of more comfortable quarters, to put the reader on edge, as perhaps are the marginal dwellers in the Maison Vauquer, whose bored, microscopic examinations of the garden, offering no purchase on any desired reality, reveal it as "featureless as a steppe."

Balzac's sounds are as carefully sensational as his visual descriptions, with which they are integral in achieving their effect.

I would rather discuss the house garden at Combray than evidences of its origins in the Illiers house garden, the Pré Catalan, or Auteuil,

however pleasurable these may be. I experienced a slight shock on seeing the photos of the Illiers house garden: the view was towards the house, whereas all the descriptions of the Combray garden are outward looking, either from the little parlour or from under the chestnut tree where one's attention is attracted to the end of the garden by the bell signalling a visit from Swann. We are told the distance from the gate is such that Swann's approaching voice can be discerned before his features. So sound helps delimit this garden-stage for the revelation of grandmother and family and particularly marks the appearance of Swann. The garden is an extension of the house, the "dark path" in the "illuminated panel" into which the mature narrator assembles his childhood memories, and the bell, its sounding as Swann left signalling the moment for the narrator's childhood transgression, becomes for him "a point from which [he] might start to make measurements."

Both these evocations of place strongly suggest a significant part played by sound-perceptions in the formation of the full place-impression, and Proust accords one particular sound a major role in the narrator's inner life. Other readings in fiction suggest that sound perception and moments of crisis may often coexist in memory (for example, episodes in St. Exupéry's *Southern Mail* and Svevo's *As a Man Grows Older*), which leads me to suspect that if place- and occasion-perception are indivisibly fused, then an understanding of the

action and substance of memory are further necessities for an approach to place.

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