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To talk about landscape as mentor is to speak of nature in a particular way, within a tradition of observation that is bound to territory. Landscape is nature transformed by a quest for observing and understanding the vegetation, land forms and patterns of inhabitation we experience, and a desire to translate what we find into images that others can comprehend. It is only one of several ways that we have come to know nature, but its influence is ubiquitous.

The term landscape apparently entered our language in the seventeenth century through the Dutch word *landschap*, which refers to tracts of land and was used in connection with the depiction of cultivated fields and dikes. In English it has come to refer, understandably, to a wider realm of geography, first to rolling hills and forests, then, in America, to the wild and awesome mountains of the West. Images of landscape have become fundamental to our culture. They fill our magazines and calendars, speckle the walls of waiting rooms, banks and houses, and beckon to us from travel posters and exhibitions.

We are concerned in the following articles with the landscape's influence on a particular group of people, those who are interested in channeling and transforming the forces of the environment to make inhabited territory, to make places. What lessons have they taken from their observations of the landscape and how have those lessons conditioned their fundamental attitudes towards the forming of places?



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This discussion is more inclusive than the traditional art–historical dichotomies of manmade and naturalistic, or Classical and Romantic. We are interested in how the landscape—the natural world given shape by people through cultivation and construction or through graphic representation and verbal description—has entered into the thinking of designers. We are especially focused on designers who are concerned with fashioning the places where we live, and constructing their relation to a larger, more encompassing order—an order that is itself part of the very substance of nature and of how we think.

Multiple Conceptions

We should not assume that the landscape is singular in its conception or constructed only in one way. There are many forms of landscape and many approaches to its depiction, even within the bounds of Western culture. There is a still greater array of approaches to landscape within the traditions of those cultures that produced what Sir Bannister Fletcher used to call (astonishingly) “Non-historical Architecture.”

Take, for instance, the landscape scene to be found among the rock carved temples at Mahabalipuram, as described by Heinrich Zimmer in *Myth and Symbol in Indian Art and Civilization*:

The centralizing episode of the Ganges relief is the descent of the celestial stream. This is depicted in the central cleft of the great rock wall. From the cistern above (which we now have to imagine) water rushes down. A giant serpent king, covered by the current, is moving upward, his powerful serpent body undulating with slow movements: shielded by his halo of snake heads and hoods, he greets the water, rejoicing with rapt devotion. He is followed by a snake queen in a similar attitude of bhakti, devout rapture and pious bliss... Meanwhile from all sides flock together gods, celestial beings, demons and genie, men and animals, to observe the miracle that is to rescue life on earth... Overlooking minute traits and details, this work of art

*aims to convey the attitudes, the typical motions or postures of repose of the beings concerned. It insists on the basic kinship of all creatures... The entire universe is alive; only the degrees of life vary. Everything proceeds from the divine life-substance and energy as a temporary transmutation.*¹

This is landscape differently conceived, a landscape that encompasses many meanings and interpretations beyond those found in Western writings and art. Some of those meanings involve a sense of intertwined life forces that is closer in some ways to presently evolving views of the cosmos, views that stress its mutability, and to the transformations in the earth that are brought about by all actions.

The Scale of Consideration

What we learn from nature has partly to do with the scale at which we look. One can examine nature at various scales ranging in size from the microscopic through the garden to the mountain range, or, more recently, the globe. Or one can observe across differing units of time, from the instant, through daily, seasonal, annual, biological, ecological, geological or astronomical time. Clearly, we usually work with the daily, seasonal and annual cycles of time, maybe sometimes even with centuries, but geological and astronomical time remain metaphoric in our experience.

There is another sort of landscape that has recently come into play—the infinitely small and unfathomably large patterns of organization and growth that electronic tools have opened to view. A half-century after Gyorgy Kepes’ pathbreaking book, *The New Landscape in Science and Art*,² technological developments have outstripped even his expectations. Our civilization has learned to record and manipulate numbers and sizes that were previously beyond comprehension, and in only a few years this capacity has transformed the reach of our understanding and our ability to control phenomena that are beyond normal perception.

Yet, we must not forget the wonder of imaginative processes that could turn ink into gnarled Chinese landscapes, paint into Tuscan idylls, silver oxide into the presence of Yosemite, and stone into the Sacred Ganges. We should seek to understand and to learn from the close observation, spiritual empathy and disciplined forming that created these more approachable miracles.

The focus here is not on the landscape as an artifact but on the landscape as a guide to thinking. One of the central virtues of this formulation is that there are many ways of thinking about landscape. In their book, *The Poetics of Gardens*, William Mitchell, Charles Moore and William Turnbull created a fanciful dialogue among many—a farmer, a gardener, an ecologist, a painter, a tyrant and a connoisseur.³ To that list we obviously may add an architect, a landscape architect, a patron, a citizen and, in a class by himself, J. B. Jackson, the legendary editor of the great magazine, *Landscape*, which has influenced us all.

Landscape Lessons

The fundamental premise is that we can and do learn from the landscapes we experience. We can be tutored by consideration of places that are dominantly formed by, or evidently conditioned and changed by, the forces of nature—by sun, wind, rain and the cycles of weather, by the vegetation that roots in the soil and seeks to reach its own place in the sun, by the shape of the land and the flow of water across it, and by the shapes that result from the colossal geological forces of uplift, compression and erosion over unthinkably long periods of time. We need to learn from the landscape its lessons of interconnectedness, growth, decay and steady, subtle endurance. We seek to learn from, not just admire, places that have been reshaped by agriculture, transformed through understanding into large and small gardens that nurture the vegetation within them or bring alien seed to prosper under dedicated stewardship.

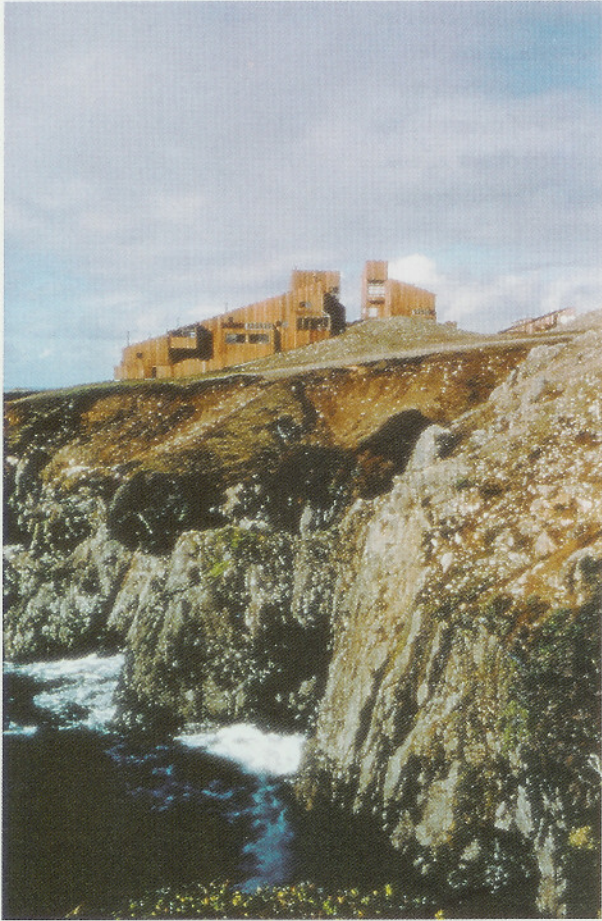
There are lessons to learn about the places we make, about the buildings we make to inhabit them, about the cities and regions to which we add our works, about the register of nature in our midst, about what can be expected of our minds. The processes and geometries of the landscape should inhabit our imaginations.

Landscape Memory

How we consider the landscape also has to do with deeply implanted memories of the places in which we grew up. Remembering the early work of Moore, Lyndon, Turnbull, Whitaker (MLTW), I recognize that each of us had a different take on the landscape.

William Turnbull grew up on a splendid farm in New Jersey and he retained all his life the values that he learned there. Charles Moore grew up in Battle Creek, Mich., a town with street trees, lawns and cultivated gardens that were like refined extensions of the surrounding wooded farmland; this was supplemented by frequent family auto trips to Florida, California and many points in between. I grew up in flat Detroit with family extensions to a farm town and a northern Michigan lake-side lodge that had timbered wilderness to wander through; those experiences were supplemented also by summer trips to the coast of golden California, with its grassy hills and rock-enfolding surf. Richard Whitaker grew up in a California farming town where streets and gardens provided respite from the vast, sun-baked, and big-farmed landscape around it; he spent his summers on his uncle's ranch near a small town in the Sierra. He, too, spent some childhood years in Los Angeles.

These backgrounds merged, at the Sea Ranch, our most noted early work, into an approach that honored the nature of the site, respected and worked with the wind, sun and topography yet struck, nonetheless, a vigorous claim on the land. By surrounding two courts and establishing a



Sea Ranch condominium
 Photo: Donlyn Lyndon

The conference "Landscape as Mentor," held by the Charles W. Moore Center for the Study of Place in Austin, was dedicated to the late William Turnbull, Jr., to honor the integrity of thought and purpose that he brought to his thinking about buildings and their relation to the landscape.

Turnbull's attention to the landscape had to do, in part, with his upbringing on a well-stewarded farm in New Jersey. In addition to his full practice in architecture, he also grew grapes, made wine and owned a gorgeous vineyard in Northern California. His professional life, rich and varied as it was, could be considered as an extended meditation on the proper use of the land.

complex of spaces and forms that both follow the slope and adjust to changing outlook and exposure, the building forms gather in the most fundamental qualities of the surrounding landscape and fuse them with memories of other places, and ambitions for a community of interest.

For Moore, the generic image of urbanism, of being together, was to be found in Ortega Y Gasset's discussion of the courtyard or square in a Spanish town, which Moore quoted in his landmark essay from the 1960s, "You Have to Pay for the Public Life." Ortega Y Gasset wrote:

The urbs or polis starts by being an empty space. The forum, the agora, and all the rest is just a means of fixing the empty space—of limiting its outline. The square, thanks to the walls which enclose it, is a portion of the countryside which turns it back on the rest, eliminates the rest, and sets itself up in opposition to it.³

Despite the importance Moore attached to the center, he was never inclined to set his images in opposition to the rest. On the contrary, he was inclined to invest the formalized center with intimations of the larger natural order.

Much of this stemmed from, or was at least evident in, his dissertation at Princeton, *Water and Architecture*. The design portion of his work included the layout of a travel route through Bryce Canyon, where the drive would be cadenced with water sequences timed as in a ballet. Another part included a reconsideration of the plaza at Lever House, which was then (in 1957) a fresh emblem of where the new world was going and the epitome of what Modernism could bring to the city. Charles thought the new world needed to have a little bit of the landscape embedded in its presence, even in the city, so he designed wonderful little suggestive pools for the plaza. The shapes of these were mentored by the Trevi Fountain in Rome, where the stone is carved to appear to be natural and the shapes induce every conceivable kind of water splash. That great fountain calls up both the natural

world of the water cycle and the mythology associated with it.

Subsequently Moore and Turnbull were hired, still early in their careers, by Lawrence Halprin to help him develop Lovejoy Fountain, the first of the glorious fountains that were built in Portland and copied around the world. The natural forms of Halprin's beloved Sierra informed the way in which this concrete plaza was made, the steps bending in plan to recall the descending contours of a cascade. Simple concrete forms and water evoke a sense of distant Yosemite, and in the process of their shifting, splashing descent create both real engagement between people and water and an overlay of remembered landscapes.

When Gerald Allen, Charles and I were writing *The Place of Houses*⁵, we suggested that there were four basic types of reciprocity between building form and land. These were merging, (becoming part of a landscape feature), claiming (the first act of architecture—to stake a claim in the land), enfronting (quintessentially the false-front western town) and surrounding (using a building to make a world of its own). Turnbull prepared diagrams for the book which explored the various configurations in which buildings and land form could be conjoined to honor and care for, to love a particular place.

Turnbull's skill in thinking about building as embracing larger spaces is clear in his Foothill Housing project at the University of California at Berkeley. Turnbull worked the project along the contours of the hills rising behind the university and the Greek Theater, with a cluster of buildings that create a great embrace. The project serves as a background to the landscape that flows gently through it, making marvelous places to discover. The site as a whole provides a myriad of experiences and kinds of movement, differing qualities of light, differing places to be within and around the building. The project speaks to us with the complexity of the landscape.



Foothill Housing, University of California, Berkeley
Photo: Timothy Hursley

In trying to articulate how we together thought about form, I wrote, in *Chambers for a Memory Palace*, that the bay window looking into the cove from Moore's unit in Sea Ranch Condominium One provided a strong motivating image:

It seems a suitable reason to return once again to the image (maybe dream is the better word) of creating places that have the qualities of that surf-filled cove... . Deep History, exhilarating presence, fundamental lawfulness, cyclical change, sparkling light, and infinitely surprising detail...images we have admired in Chinese landscape paintings and on the beach, in the forest, in vernacular cities, and in the finest monuments of the Baroque.⁶

We noted, further, that this is a dream worth pursuing with like-minded folk. In the articles that follow, several colleagues describe work of this sort, along the lines of presentations made at a working conference, "Landscape as Mentor," organized in 1998 by the Charles W. Moore Foundation in Austin.

Notes

1. Heinrich Zimmer, *Myth and Symbol in Indian Art and Civilization* (New York: Pantheon, 1946), 117-119
2. Gyorgy Kepes, *The New Landscape in Art and Science* (Chicago: P. Theobald, 1956)
3. William Mitchell, Charles Moore and William Turnbull, *The Poetics of Gardens* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1988), 218-240
4. Charles W. Moore, "You Have to Pay for the Public Life," *Perspecta* 9-10 (1965), 57-106
5. Gerald Allen, Donlyn Lyndon and Charles W. Moore, *The Place of Houses* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974)
6. Donlyn Lyndon and Charles W. Moore, *Chambers for a Memory Palace* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), 295