NARRATIVE

You stand there at night, you don't see anything. That sound comes to you and there's a beautiful story in it.

Foxhunter listening to the sound of the dogs,
New Jersey Pinelands (Hufford, 6).

We live within worlds of stories, and we use stories to shape those worlds. In history, fiction, lived experience, myth, or anecdote, stories tell of origins, explain causes, mark the boundaries of what is knowable, and explore the territories beyond. As we remember, interpret, plan and dream through stories they give form to the transience of experience.

Whether they come as the sound of dogs at night, or a human voice at the threshold of sleep, recollected from memory or read from the marks on a page, a picture, or a landscape, stories are only knowable through some form of communication. Narrative refers to both the story, what is told, and the means of telling, implying both product and process, form and formation, structure and structuration. Narrative is thus a more comprehensive and inclusive term than story. While every story is a narrative, not every narrative necessarily meets the conventional notions of a story as a well-wrought tale plotted with a sense of clear beginning, middle, and end (Prince, 91). A narrative may be as simple as a sentence, “I went down to the crossroads,” or as extensive and complex as the notion of progress. Beyond conscious awareness or inherent in daily actions, it may be as mundane, varied, scripted, or open-ended as our own lives.

Coming from the Latin gnarus and the Indo-European root gna, “to know,” narrative implies a knowledge acquired through action and the contingencies of lived experience (Turner, 163). Children develop this very human capacity for understanding narratives at an early age. They can learn complex spatial sequences that will take them from school to home if they are connected to stories (Trimble 1994, 20). We continue to negotiate our way through life with the aid of stories. According to cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner, narrative is a fundamental way of thinking that is very different from a logico-scientific way of knowing. Instead of searching for universal truth conditions, to follow a story requires paying attention to par-
Stories do more than explain, which comes from the Latin "to flatten." In his essay "The Storyteller," Walter Benjamin contrasts the power of stories with that of the explanation and information that saturate modern life: "The value of information does not survive the moment in which it was new. It lives only at that moment; it has to surrender to it completely and explain itself to it without losing any time. A story is different. It does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time." (Benjamin, 90)

ticular connections, coincidences, chance encounters. The end cannot always be predicted or deduced (Polkinghorne, 17).

Once in the purview of literature and art, the study of narrative now traverses a broad range of disciplines as part of a shift in the way the world is described in both the humanities and the sciences. Historians, who once attempted to emulate models from the physical sciences by eliminating narrative, now reaffirm its necessity to historical consciousness (Danto: "To exist historically is to perceive the events one lives through as part of a story later to be told" [p. 343]). Thomas Kuhn in The Structures of Scientific Revolutions (1960) demonstrated that what passes for progress in science has as much to do with the acceptance and succession of stories as it does with compiling objective descriptions. In addition, Lyotard (1984) argued that science is penetrated by "master narratives" of enlightenment, progress, and nationalism. In anthropology, structuralist theories, most notably those of Claude Lévi-Strauss, established a systematic approach for uncovering the unconscious content of narratives, which in turn helped establish the interdisciplinary study of narrative in the social sciences. Others have applied the insights from narrative theory in areas as diverse as medicine (Coles), policy analysis (Roe), and geography (Duncan). This current interest is not just about how to tell stories, but about understanding the importance of narrative in its archaic sense, as a fundamental means of knowing and representing the world (Mitchell, x).

Like a language, narrative is a means of communicating. The selecting and sequencing of events to construct a meaningful story can be homologous to the selecting and sequencing of words to form a meaningful sentence. Changing the order in which events are told in a story changes the meaning of the story. According to Paul Ricoeur, who produced the three-volume study Time and Narrative, it is the temporal qualities of existence that reach expression through narrative, and narrative is ultimately a language of time (Ricoeur, 166, 167). The genealogical story of one Pennsylvania German farmer in the Oley Valley illustrates this temporal structuring:

I'm the eighth generation on the place.
They came here in 1725. It was Rudolf Hoch.
He had a son Johannes.
Then there were two Abrahams, three Gideons
and then it was me.

John Hoch. Oley Valley, Pennsylvania

In just a few lines he is able to encapsulate over two hundred years of events and changes. There is no plot per se, rather, time is structured by the sequence of generations named by each son who inherited the farm. In these ways, by selecting certain events from the flow of time, linking them to make intelligible sequences, or plotting an end in relation to a beginning, narratives shape the sense of time.

In John Hoch's story the biblical references in the names as well as the absence of women's names index important aspects of the social structure of the place. Here too, meaning resides not just in what is told but in how
it is told. The apparent continuity from generation to generation belies the significant sometimes radical changes, reorganization, and modernization that occurred at each transition of ownership. Yet, his narrative style is concise, selective, and without any hint of sentiment. By contrast, an article in the “Lifestyle” section of an area newspaper recast John’s life as a nostalgic remnant, an emblem of a better, simpler life that is passing along with the family farm. These differences illustrate that it is imperative to pay attention to narratives, because they structure the meanings by which people live (Cohan and Shires, 1).

We can begin to understand narrative, then, as a vital activity coursing through oral tradition, texts, video, and other media, reflecting the diverse motives and contexts for telling stories. Old genres find new expression. Just as oral tradition became codified into epic texts, novels appear on computer screens. Roland Barthes described this multiform and fundamental nature of narrative in his “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative,” noting.

The narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances—as though any material were fit to receive man’s stories. Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances: narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting (think of Carpaccio’s Saint Ursula), stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society: it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is very often shared by men with different, even opposing,* cultural backgrounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself. (Barthes, 79)

**LANDSCAPE NARRATIVES**

Narratives are also there in landscapes. They intersect with sites, accumulate as layers of history, organize sequences, and inhere in the materials and processes of the landscape. In various ways, stories “take place.”

The term landscape narrative designates the interplay and mutual relationship that develops between landscape and narrative. To begin with, places configure narratives. Landscape not only locates or serves as background setting for stories, but is itself a changing, eventful figure and

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* It must be remembered that this is not the case with either poetry or the essay, both of which are dependent on the cultural level of their consumers.” (Barthes’s note)
The Hoch farm in 1882. The dark shaded roof on the left side of the house marks the "grandparents' addition." Sitting on that side of the porch, John Hoch recalled in 1982: "When I quit farming and sold Mark the place, I said, I don't want to go away. I said, I don't want to move along a highway where there is noise that you can't sit on the porch and talk. We made a deal. I moved over to this end of the house. I can stay here as long as I live. When my Pop was living yet, he died in fifty-six, I used to come over and be with him over here in the evening so he wouldn't sit alone."

The drawing was done by Ferdinand Brader, an itinerant artist from Germany who did similar ones for many of the farms in the Oley Valley. While working on this drawing he also helped with farm work and slept in the straw shed (shown here extending from the middle of the barn).

process that engenders stories. A road establishes a sequence while opening the possibilities of chance encounters. The scale of space becomes the scope of an epic or the confines of a personal drama. Traces in the landscape hold secrets and invite interpretation. Trees, rocks, ground, weather, or any elements can serve as emblems in a narrative. In this manner people map landscapes into the very texture and structure of stories.

In turn, every narrative, even the most abstract, allegorical, or personal, plays a critical role in making places. It is through narrative that we interpret the processes and events of place. We come to know a place because we know its stories. Whether it is an encounter with the edge of a forest or a drive down a suburban street, we know these places through personal experience as well as from books, television, or folklore. Barbara Johnstone writes, "The texture of a familiar neighborhood is a narrative texture, too; when a neighborhood feels like home, the houses and people one passes on its streets evoke stories" (Johnstone, 10). As these stories encode histories and memories, they imbue sites with dimensions of time and associations not readily available to the outside observer.

Besides transforming place through association, the narratives of events, or even fiction and myth, are "written into" the physical form of the
landscape, becoming concrete, tangible...real. John Hoch's narrative of
genealogy not only structures a sense of time, it is also built into the phys-
ical form of the architecture and landscapes. The typical Pennsylvania
German farmhouse has a "grandparents' addition." When one generation
retires, they move into the addition, making room for the next generation,
the next phase of an ongoing narrative. As John and other farmers look out
across this valley, each farm marks the site of a specific genealogical story.
The link between landscape and narrative goes beyond shared formal
properties of hierarchy, shape, or rhythm. It is more than an analogy such
as that made between architecture and music. While there are limits to an
analogy, there are untold possibilities when landscape and narrative are
seen as intertwined through lived experience. Anthropologist Edmund
Leach describes this relationship:

It is not just that "places" serve to remind us of the stories that are
associated with them; in certain respects, the places only
exist...because they have stories associated with them. But when
once they have acquired this story-based existence, the landscape
itself acquires the power of "telling the story." (Johnstone, 120)

CROSSING TEMPORAL/SPATIAL BOUNDARIES
There is a tendency to think of narrative primarily as a temporal art and
landscape as something visual, spatial, an unchanging background and
therefore non-narrative. However, as Ricoeur states, narratives combine
two dimensions, one a temporal sequence of events and the other a
nonchronological configuration that organizes narrative into spatial pat-
terns. Stories can plot events into lines, create hierarchies, unite begin-
nings and ends to form circles, or tie knots and design labyrinths. Likewise, through landscape the temporal dimension of narrative becomes
visible, and "space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of
time, plot and history" (Bakhtin, 84). Landscape narratives mediate this
crossing of temporal and spatial experience.

In addition to Horace's notion of ut pictura poesis or the evocation
of place in literature, there is also a great tradition of visual narratives that
solves the problem of how to represent time in spatial form. First, the sin-
gle point in time or "frozen moment" common to realism, photography,
the dramatic action of Baroque art, or even the ordinary genre scene
frames one episode while implying what went before and what will follow.
A second strategy, linear narrative, links a series of individual episodes
into linear sequences, as in the Bayeaux Tapestry or the ordinary comic
strip. A third strategy, continuous narrative, represents the passage of time
with a series of events, all of which take place within a unified context
(Andrews, 126). Medieval depictions of the garden in the Romance of the
Rose, for instance, show three different episodes occurring in the same
scene. The continuous narrative also uses spatial depth to represent tem-
poral position, with the present occupying the foreground and the past in
the distance, or the reverse.
VISUAL NARRATIVES

A Point in Time

(Private collection, courtesy Curt Marcus Gallery.)

This image invites speculation on the circumstances of what went before and what will follow this moment. A woman waits impatiently while a man (based on a self-portrait of the artist) searches for a key to unlock the gates of a garden (in this case the gates are Lorenzo Ghiberti’s *Gates of Paradise*). Beyond literal aspects of the scene, the painting suggests allegories of the garden, gender, art history, and interpretation.

Linear Narrative


This integral architectural element tells biblical stories of the Old Testament in a series of framed panels. Like the contemporary Western convention for reading cartoons, the story begins at the top left panel ("The Garden of Eden") and proceeds from left to right and from top to bottom.
Continuous Narrative


The first panel of Gates of Paradise, “The Garden of Eden,” brings together in the same image several episodes spanning a great interval of time. The story can be read from side to side and in successive layers of depth. The foreground tells the creation of Adam (left) and Eve (center) and their expulsion (right). The temptation, the immediate past and cause of the expulsion, is in the middle ground (left). The remote past and eternity recede into the background.

This panel and others on the door were completed with an understanding of linear perspective. While perspective usually represents one moment in time, here it gives a unified context to multiple events in time (Andrews, 117-18).

Continuous Narrative

Garden scene from the Roman de la Rose, Late fifteenth-century manuscript in the British Library. (Snark/Art Resource, N.Y.)

A succession of three events, the greeting at the gate, entry, and entertainment by the fountain, is shown here in one scene.
Similar strategies apply to interpreting the temporal configurations of landscapes. Singular events such as floods, urban renewal, or more quotidian happenstance leave their mark in the landscape. Ensembles formed by one building episode or any site carefully restored to a historic period of significance also tell of one moment in time. The sequence of moving through a series of settings becomes analogous to a linear narrative. In this manner the processions through landscapes recount specific tales (Sacra Monte, which tell of Christ's passion), allegories ("out of the darkness into the light"), or social narratives (routine sequence from public to private realms, or home to work). It is harder to apprehend the landscape itself as a sequence of "slow events" except when process of growth, decay, denudation, succession, gentrification, and so on appear as stages, stratigraphies, or soil horizons. Filled with multiple layers of history and simultaneous events in a common context, landscapes seem most like continuous narratives.

Despite these correlations, there are important distinctions between reading landscape narratives and narratives as spoken or written texts. Unlike verbal narratives, spatial narratives are silent but persistent. With few protocols for reading a landscape from right to left or front to back, the viewer enters at different points, is free to pause, take in the whole image, inspect its parts, or review. This changes the traditional relationship between author, text, and reader where the author exerts control over the telling. Instead, the spatial narrative is more about showing, relinquishing control to the viewer/reader who must put together sequences, fill in the gaps, and decipher the meaning (Chatman 1981, 124). And since most landscapes are shaped by environmental and cultural processes, they do not have an author or a narrator. In turn the viewer must find the stories and become the narrator.

Rather than a limitation, these conditions offer distinct opportunities for different forms of narratives such as the gathering of past and present into a synoptic view, parallel or intersecting story lines, collages that create nonlinear associations, multiple layers of stories, and narratives open to participants. In fact, the postmodern turn in literature away from 19th-century conventions of realism and notions of linear time employs many of these same strategies. Stories within stories repeatedly interrupt the narrative of Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler*. In the short story "The Garden of Forking Paths," Jorge Luis Borges creates a complex labyrinthine configuration of time and space.

**FORMS OF LANDSCAPE NARRATIVES**

To know landscape narratives involves more than what meets the eye. As protean synthesis of time and space, experience and place, the fictive and the real, they cross boundaries of expressions and representational forms. The following chart outlines this prodigious variety of landscape narratives.

**NARRATIVE ARCHITECTURE**

Narrative can provide a critical framework for an approach to architecture. However, much of the variety of narrative forms and practices noted above had largely been rejected by modernist design. Not that modernism was totally with-
### TYPES OF LANDSCAPE NARRATIVES

**Narrative Experiences**

Routines, rituals, or events that represent or follow narrative structures, e.g., festivals, processions, reenactments, pilgrimage, daily journeys, crossing the threshold.

**Examples**

Tours and rituals enact narratives, selecting and organizing the experience of place into temporal sequences. The major tourist route through Prague, from the Powder Tower, to Old Town Square, across the Charles Bridge, and up to the Castle, follows the sequence of public monuments and spaces established centuries earlier by the coronation route of the kings.

**Associations and References**

Elements in the landscape that become connected with experience, event, history, religious allegory, or other forms of narrative.

**Examples**

The longevity of trees often serves as a metaphor of the continuity of family genealogy or as a time marker that speaks of the origins of communities. A slippery elm that survived the 1995 bomb blast in Oklahoma City became a symbol and meeting place for survivors and families who protect and water it.

**Memory Landscapes**

Places that serve as the tangible locus of memory, both public and personal. This may develop through implicit association or by international acts of remembering (and forgetting); e.g., monuments, museums, preserved buildings, districts, and regions.

**Examples**

The ancient rhetorical practice of delivering long speeches was aided by the mental construction of "topoi," or places organized into spatial complexes or "memory palaces." To remember was to walk through these spaces, noting what was "in the first place," and so on. Likewise, urban design can be conceived as a rhetorical device for activating public memory.

**Narrative Setting and Topos**

A setting is the spatial and temporal circumstances of a narrative. It can recede to the background or figure prominently. A narrative topos is a highly conventionalized setting linked with particular events, which is evoked repeatedly in a culture's narratives. In Western culture epiphanies occur on mountaintops, and chance meetings take place on the road.

**Examples**

The pastoral topos is connected with narratives of retreat from the social complexities of the city and a nostalgic return to origins, childhood, and a place apart in harmony with nature. The ideal setting of this story is repeatedly conjured in suburb, park, garden, and campus with just the minimal elements of lawn and trees.

**Genres of Landscape Narratives**

Places shaped by culturally defined narrative forms or "genres," e.g., legend, epic, biography, myth.

**Examples**

The settlement of portions of the American West was motivated by legends of a "Great American Garden," a place of utopian harmony and fertility. Photographs sent back from western lands encoded this legend in terms of scale, presence of water, and productive farms (Loeffler).

**Processes**

Actions or events that are caused by some agency (wind, water, economics) and occur in succession or proceed in stages toward some end (progress; entropy). Erosion, growth, succession, restoration, demolition, and weathering are visible records of change that inscribe time into landscape form.

**Examples**

On a landfill in the Meadowlands, in New Jersey, designers initiated the process of vegetation succession and separated it into a series of clearly identifiable stages. Walking along a path structures a sequence of interrelated changes in soil fertility, microclimate, vegetation types, and habitat.

**Interpretive Landscapes**

Elements and programs that tell what happened in a place. The intent is to make existing or ongoing narratives intelligible.

**Examples**

Besides placing texts in the landscape, interpretation can be achieved through elements of design form. In the early 1800s the foot traffic of traders and pioneers going from Natchez, Mississippi, to Nashville, Tennessee, wore a deep path known as the Natchez Trace. The Natchez Trace Parkway is a modern road that parallels, crosses, and reveals the history of the Old Trace.

**Narrative as Form Generation**

Using stories as a means of giving order (selecting, sequencing, etc.) or developing images in the design process. It is not necessary that the story be explicitly legible in the final design form.

**Examples**

To redesign a housing project in France, Lucien Kroll invented what he called "a fairy tale." He imagined a crowd of pedestrians crossing through the area, demolishing and then "remolishing" the monolithic structures in the process. This story helped generate a pedestrian-scale street with more vernacular forms and an evolving program (1994, 45).

**Storytelling Landscapes**

Places designed to tell specific stories with explicit references to plot, scenes, events, character, etc. The stories may be either existing literary or cultural narratives or produced by the designer.

**Examples**

Gardens, memorials, and themed landscapes are all designed to tell specific stories.
out narrative content, since the break from the past and initiation of utopian futures were oft-repeated stories with strong moral subtexts. What modernist ideology rejected, postmodernism embraced, and narrative came to epitomize alternative critiques, intentions, and practices. Michael Graves, for example, believed that the abstraction and exclusive formalist exercises of his early work had become increasingly unintelligible to the public. He turned, instead, to a more accessible canon of Western architectural language—pediments, barrel vaults, trabeated columnar porticoes, pyramids, and other classical elements that speak of connection with history and context (at least that of 19th-century cities) rather than rupture (Abrams, 6). In similar manner other architects refer and allude to stories in regional traditions, popular icons such as highway strips (Venturi) or media culture, as in the cyberpunk references of NATO (Narrative Architecture Today), started by Nigel Coates. In their design for the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., Pei, Cobb, and Freed demonstrated how space and form can dramatize and exert control over the sequential unfolding of a story. Other designers, most notably John Hejduk and Rem Koolhaas, a former scriptwriter, experiment with writing their own fictions into the fabric of the landscape.

There are important differences about the nature of narrative architecture and its role. The literary or film devices of plotting, foreshadowing, fading, and jump cutting all have their spatial equivalents, which Bernard Tschumi uses to disrupt conventional notions of narrative closure and control of meaning. And even without reference, analogy, borrowed plots, or fiction, a building can reveal its own biography of weathering, histories of use, institutional practices, rituals, growth, adaptation, and decline (Mostafavi and Leatherbarrow, Rakatansky, Wines).

Despite such diverse directions, in all these projects narrative is a means of connecting architecture with landscape. Graves repeatedly depicts his buildings as set within the topos of an “archaic landscape” drawn from memories of afternoons in Tuscany (Abrams, 8, 9), whereas Coates finds his clues for stories in the gaps and gritty reality of marginal spaces, “near railway stations, beneath motorways or on the seventeenth floor of Trelick Tower.” And any site holds memory traces that can be extended through new building episodes (Henriquez and Henriquez). In addition to providing the ground of memory or context, landscape narratives also transgress conventional boundaries of built form. In their different ways, Bernard Tschumi and John Hejduk both follow events and characters as they merge with, move, dissolve, disperse, and deform architecture across sites. For Hejduk, characters become buildings that travel “as if” in some medieval miracle play to different cities where they interact with and are changed by these places (Vidler, 209). Aldo Rossi is also interested in event, narrative, and the idea of memory that is dispersed through the forms and institutions of the city. Instead of adding his own story, he uses the analogue of urban design as theater, a setting open to chance encounters, unfolding events, and new stories that arise from the collective experience of the city (Livesey, 115–121). Thus, we can see a range of narrative possibilities from explicit associations with stories to implicit narrative structures and an openness to ongoing social and natural processes.
Upper church nave, San Francesco, Assisi, Italy.

Replete with biblical stories, history, and moral teachings, Gothic and Renaissance cathedrals are some of the most textualized forms of architecture. The narratives continue from the exterior sculptures into the spatial metaphors of the nave, the anagogic function of light through stained glass windows, and the cycles of frescoes. Shown above is an example of the sequence of linear narratives across the interior spaces of Italian chapels and cathedrals mapped by art historian Marilyn Lavin. (From Lavin 1990)

Bernard Tschumi experiments with analogues drawn from literature and cinema. In Manhattan Transcripts he transcribes temporal sequences, events, scripts, movement, and other aspects normally removed from conventional architectural representations. The first transcript, “The Park,” follows the “archetype” of a murder across twenty-four sheets where “photographs direct the action, plans reveal the alternatively cruel and loving architectural manifestations, diagrams indicate the movements of the main protagonists” (Tschumi, 8). Cinematic framing, sequencing, disjunction, fragments of events, and superimposition were all techniques later employed in his winning entry for the Parc de la Villette competition.

Panel from Manhattan Transcripts, “The Park.”
(Courtesy Bernard Tschumi Architects)
John Hejduk plots stories instead of programs and functions. Buildings become characters in "masques," allegorical dramas enacted by masked performers popular in 16th- and 17th-century Europe. Like a theater troupe, this architecture is nomadic. "The cast presents itself to a city and its inhabitants. Some of the objects are built and remain in the city; some are built for a time, then are dismantled and disappear." (Hejduk, 15). This is not a frivolous spectacle, however. As Vidler notes, this vagabond architecture resists assimilation into the normal spaces of the city. Like a stranger, it critiques and disrupts the commonplace (Vidler, 214).

"The House of Suicide" and "Mother of Suicide," shown here, traveled with Hejduk from his Lancaster/Hanover Masque in Pennsylvania to the Latvian city of Riga along with ninety-five other buildings/stories. A built version of them remains in Prague.

Above: John Hejduk, architect, "Gymnasium Male/Female" and "House of the Suicide," Riga. (From Hejduk 1989)

Left: "House of the Suicide" and "Mother of Suicide" on the grounds of the Royal Garden, Prague, Czech Republic.

Of "House of the Suicide" John Hejduk writes:
"Made of steel panels, factory painted white enamel. There is an eye slit in one elevation, a door in the other. The roof is made of vertical volumetric triangular slivers diminishing to a tiny opening at the top. He liked to watch the points of light move along the walls and floor. The Farm Community (in agreement with the family) sealed the door by welding." (Hejduk, 86)

(Collection of the architect)

An invented archaeology and memory traces of the site's history extend from the ground plane to the roof. The landscape, with its sculpted tree stumps, recalls the original forest, while the ground plan incorporates the footprints of the 1940s mock-Tudor apartment building the tower replaces. A single pin oak in the garden on the penthouse roof matches the elevation of the former first-growth forest. (Schubert, 32)

In the work of Henriquez and Partners, "narrative is used for its power to stimulate the imagination and engage participation... The task is to create narratives that resonate with the history of a specific place—a history that includes both the built and the natural world, the real and fictional pasts, and that enables citizens to project their lives into the future" (Henriquez and Henriquez, 191). Their narratives range from site-specific histories and biblical references to the history of architecture, mythology, ecology, personal stories, and fiction.
MAKING LANDSCAPE NARRATIVES

As landscape and narrative continue to be primary areas of diverse theoretical inquiry and practice across disciplines, a number of critical questions emerge. Concerns range from the instrumental (How can designers create intelligible narratives? What traditions can be drawn upon?) to the social role of narrative (How can narratives create a shared public realm in a diverse, pluralistic contemporary culture?) and questions of design ideology (What are the potentials and limitations of the designer as author? How does the generation of stories, fictions, or plots challenge and transform notions of function, determinism, and representation?).

EXPLICIT STORYTELLING

Perhaps the most direct way to see the interplay between landscape and narrative is in places designed explicitly to tell a story. Like the Gothic cathedral, the garden is a distinct storytelling site. Here we can see the strategies for translating all the associations and structure of narrative texts into landscape texts. To begin with, a garden becomes a creation story when it attempts to retell the received narratives of a culture's origins in nature. Every garden also initiates its own creation story in the transformation and adaptation to the particulars of site, culture, labor, money, and time.

Stourhead in Wiltshire, England, is a particularly vivid narrative landscape. It derives from a specific story, Virgil's Aeneid, a version of the founding of Rome by the Trojan hero Aeneas, which is retold in the landscape with a high degree of authority and control over the means of representation. First, the temporal configuration of the plot becomes the spatial configuration of the gardens, as the story line of the hero's wanderings around the Mediterranean basin unfolds along a stroll around the lake, uniting story and topography. And while it is impossible to reproduce a narrative verbatim in landscape form, it can be effectively alluded to through names, references, associations, and symbols. Along the pathway the scenes, characters, and events of the story are conjured by inscriptions, statues, and identifiable architectural references to ancient Rome (albeit slightly scaled down), includ-

Bottom left: Claude Lorrain, Landscape with Aeneas at Delos. Oil on canvas, 1672.
(National Gallery London/ Bridgeman Art Library, London)

Bottom right: View of the Pantheon across the lake at Stourhead.
Above: Aeneas journeys into a grotto in search of secrets.

Left: Toward the end of the circuit, the visitor reaches a high point and Aeneas’s destination at the Temple of Apollo.

ing the Pantheon, the Temple of Flora, and the Temple of Apollo. This storehouse of images, and the substitution of lake for sea, create a landscape dense with associations for those already familiar with the text.

Yet, clear as this story appears, there is still more to be read. The motivation to create the garden and the selection of this particular story of a hero’s great personal loss were influenced by Henry Hoare’s own experiences of losing several family members. Virgil’s Aeneid becomes an allegory that invites the reader to make associations with other stories. In addition to the classical elements, there is a Gothic cottage set against a wooded shoreline, various medieval relics, the salvaged remnant of a Gothic cross from the town of Bristol, and a monument to King Alfred, a hero in the ninth century who played a key role in the founding of Britain (Moore, Mitchell, and Turnbull, 144). All these elements are part of a narrative of a particular British sense of place and history, overlain on the universal story of empire building of Virgil. Therefore, the landscape becomes a multilayered set of narratives.6

The desire to tell stories using similar strategies is evident in vernacular landscapes as well. The American front yard is a common narrative tableau, adapting the received traditions of the pastoral topos and its story of rural escapism and leisure to contemporary situations. The lawn and serpentine driveway recall in miniature a version of the pastoral estates of the English gentry. The yard has also shown the capacity to absorb a great mélange of other stories encoded by emblems of national myths (wagon wheels), exotic paradise (pink flamingos), local history (coal chunks displayed on the lawns of Carbon County, Pennsylvania, or bog iron edging yards in the Pinelands, of New Jersey), and ethnic origins (frequency of Blessed Virgin Mary statues marking Italian heritage in Bensonhurst, New York, or elaborate gravel patterns of the Portuguese in South San Francisco).7
THE POLITICS OF READING LANDSCAPE NARRATIVES
Telling stories in landscape raises the question “Will they get it?” Henry Hoare’s garden in the Stour Valley made sense because of shared knowledge of classical literature and national mythology. Telling this story was a constituent part of creating a shared cultural realm. Even though John Hoch’s Oley Valley was settled by Germans, French, Swiss, and English, they were all motivated by a common reading of the Bible forged by the Protestant Reformation, practiced similar farming and building techniques, and spoke the regional dialect of Pennsylvania German. Today development fragments and diffuses what the valley once gathered and stored, introducing greater differences of lifestyles and personal stories. Beyond these particular places, the universal claims of Western classics or the narratives of national identity have been challenged by differences of ethnicity, race, class, and gender. So at the same time that designers are interested in telling stories, the terms of doing so are changing. What are the prospects for landscape narratives when there is a great diversity of readers, few shared texts, and often multiple and competing stories? Because certain symbols and references are context specific, familiar only to certain groups, their use can either include or exclude people from reading the landscape.

CONTESTED MEMORIES
Many designers seem intent on reviving a 19th- and early 20th-century conception of the city as the embodiment of collective memory. But again, what constitutes the collective memory in contemporary culture? One prevalent strategy relies on site-specific references or local emblems such as Martha Schwartz’s Blue Crab earth mound for Baltimore’s inner harbor to recall the past. While these designs start to reach for meaning beyond the purely abstract visual form, they often remain at a very literal level of symbolism (Cameron, 1996). Another strategy is to create multiple and ambiguous readings that encourage different points of view rather than one correct message.

Two memorials, the Korean and Vietnam Memorials, which lie on either side of the reflecting pool of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., demonstrate distinctly different ways of constructing memory in contemporary culture. The very act of constructing these public memories was fraught with the same controversies, questions of purpose, and conflicting interpretations as the wars they commemorate. The process of making these memorials reveals the broader controversies concerning the purposes and approaches to narrative.

Each name on the wall of the Vietnam Memorial evokes a memory, a story—in fact, many possible stories for all those who know the name. As those who make the pilgrimage to the site walk along the wall, they follow a topographic narrative, descending as the wall increases in height. Names accumulate until they reach the apex, where the names of the first and last Americans to die in Vietnam are brought together. The memorial draws much of its meaning from the context of other national memories, as the two ends point to the Washington and
Lincoln Memorials and recall the wars associated with the names of those Presidents. The potency of the Vietnam Memorial, however, lies in its rhetorical silence, how it evokes narratives without controlling any specific reading of them and remains ambiguous. Its minimal quality and lack of control over interpretation challenged traditional notions of monument and provoked a storm of protest. As a concession to those who wanted a more traditional (i.e., realistic) memorial, a sculpture of three soldiers posed in a moment of heightened (yet still ambiguous) attention to some invisible action was located nearby.

The winning solution for the Korean Memorial in 1989 also raised controversy, but this time by being too referential. The team of architects and landscape architects from the Pennsylvania State University intended to tell the story of the war in more figurative rather than abstract terms. A group of thirty-eight soldiers (the 38th parallel being the U.N.-designated division between North and South Korea) tells a chronology of the war, from initial surprise and setbacks to a series of victories, ending in an uncertain stalemate. This is accomplished by a sequence of different configurations, facial expressions, and gestures. A conflict developed when the sponsors of the memorial requested changes to the arrangement and expression of figures that the designers felt altered the story to show a single moment of victory. The controversies over this project and the Vietnam Memorial demonstrate that while storytelling is often thought of as a form of entertainment, when it is actualized in any given cultural context it can become a battleground of competing values (Wallace, 8). Whether through abstraction or realism, ideologies inhere in the very means by which a story is told.

THEMING

For very different purposes “themed landscapes” shape and reconstitute memory into clear, controlled narrative tableaux. Disney World’s Frontierland, Adventureland, and Main Street epitomize certain selected dramas of a popular American mythos. Beyond the entertainment realm of the theme park, the strategies of theming pervade other enclaves, including festival markets, waterfront redevelopments such as New York’s South Street Seaport and Battery Park City, historic districts, tourist areas, resorts, malls, and restaurants. According to geographer Edward Soja, all of Orange County California, where Disneyland is located, is a themed landscape (Soja, 94). In an ironic reversal, even small-town main streets, the originals that Disney simulated, are being rescripted as historic or ethnic caricatures to attract tourists. Like Stourhead, they recover lost worlds. However, as a phenomenon of the late 20th century, the themed landscape serves a more pervasive nostalgia and compensates for a sense of fragmentation and lack of security outside its bounds.

These carefully packaged tales also create a realm for consumption, where people acquire not just single items of clothing, food, or housing, but participation in whole lifestyles and landscapes. As Christine Boyer writes in an essay in Variations on a Theme Park, “This subtle form of
advertising blurs the distinction between the atmospheric stage-set and the commodities on sale, for its well-constructed historic tableau not only enhances the products on display but locks the spectator into a larger-than-life store/story” (Boyer, 200). Despite the prevalence of historical allusions of many themed landscapes, the purposes of consumption often require vague remembrance rather than particular accuracy. Boyer notes, for instance, that New York City’s South Street Seaport became commercially successful as a “historic” festival market only after the fresh fish (and their odor) were removed (Boyer, 203).

These examples highlight several critical issues for telling stories in landscape. Since there are many possible stories and versions, it is important to consider whose stories are told, and what purposes are served. In addition, what makes for an intelligible story? This requires understanding of cultural contexts, the shared conventions of reading landscapes, as opposed to relying on the approach that “it means this because I say it does.” There is also a politics of interpretation to acknowledge. How is it read? Finally, there is the issue of how much control the designer has over the telling and interpretation of a landscape narrative. What role do users/readers play in interpreting and constructing their own stories? How open is the narrative to change, reinterpretation, participation? By engaging these questions, landscape narratives can go beyond naive storytelling and become a more significant means of making places.

IMPLICIT NARRATIVES
Narrative need not be conceived as an explicit storyline grafted onto a site as if it were once a blank slate. Narratives are already implicit to landscapes, inscribed by natural processes and cultural practices (Rakatansky, 1992). However, beyond the frame of the garden or the parking lot of the theme park, they may be difficult to read if one is looking for conventional stories. Narratives can reside in very ordinary forms, routine activities, and institutional structures. Behind the uniform setbacks, heights, and materials specified in standard zoning and building codes are social narratives of progressivism and countless adjudications of what determines health, safety, and welfare. As they develop from often competing interests, these landscape narratives often lack clear individual authorship. Constantly in process of being made and unmade, they become open narratives without the closure and clear plot structure of conventional stories. Therefore, understanding narratives on this level requires more than reading a historic inventory or visual survey; it involves special attention, methods, and time to engage the storied texture of a place.

The implicit nature of narratives may be difficult to identify even in cultures which seem to have resisted the fragmentation of modernity. Anthropologist David Guss tells of his search to record the creation epic of the Kekuana in the Venezuelan rain forest. When he got there, he found “no circles of attentive youths breathing in the words of an elder as he regaled them with the deeds of their ancestors.” Instead, he gained access to the stories only when he got involved in basket making. Only after spending

Cameron Halkier, model maker; Richard Henriquez, architect; The Surveyor, Presentation Model for the Bayshore Lands Rezoning Proposal, Vancouver, 1989. (Courtesy Henriquez and Partners)

In The Practice of Everyday Life, Michel de Certeau compares the inscription of lines and boundaries in the landscape with the primary role of stories. Both are founding operations that “open a space” and provide a “legitimate theater” for practical actions (124, 125). Architect Richard Henriquez’s tripod sculptures derive from their symbolic use in early founding rituals and their instrumental role in marking out the first operations in any building project. In The Surveyor, glass sheets suspended from a surveyor’s tripod tell the history of the site’s development. “Looming heavy in the scaleless sky above the brass outline of the proposal is a sixty-story plumb bob” (Pérez-Gómez, 25).

The new blue silos in the Oley Valley stand out as emblems of either innovation or unsound business risk. As one farmer recalls: “I never will forget, a salesman for these blue silos was around in 1970 and he told me by 1976 I’m gonna be out of business if I don’t get one. Well, I thought, I’m gonna go out with something at least. They always call them the ‘blue tombstones’ because they put so many guys under.” The name indicates the conservative orientation of Oley farmers. In other places these silos are referred to as “blue angels.”

Madison Backus lives in Brooklyn, New York, but he paints scenes remembered from growing up in North Carolina. Houses are depicted as he remembers seeing them from the road. The road itself is a timeline as it changes from a dirt road in the lower left to a paved surface as you travel toward the upper right.

Below: “Les illetes” found throughout the region of Vercheres serve as a locus of memory. “From the month of March to Easter, it was sugar maple time. Generally, my grandfather spent all of March in the sugar shack in the Vercheres forest. He had to tap about 3,000 maples, collect the sap and boil it, and then conserve it as maple syrup and maple sugar. The sugar festivals took place around Easter. It was an opportunity for family gatherings, to help with the work and to socialize.” (Julie Dansereau in discussion with her father, who has always lived in the village)

weeks and months making excursions to gather cane, cutting, peeling, plaiting, learning the motifs of design and usage, and working within the circle of elders at the center of the roundhouse (itself a cosmographic diagram) did he finally learn the complex narrative and its reproduction in experience and objects of the place. He concluded that “to tell a story therefore was to weave a basket, just as it was to make a canoe, to prepare barbasco [a variety of vines used to stun fish by depriving the water of oxygen], to build a house, to clear a garden, to give birth, to die” (Guss, 1–4).

**MEMORY LANDSCAPES**

As a locus for individual and collective experience, the landscape becomes a vast mnemonic device. Almost any element in the landscape—woodlots, street corners, old trolley tracks, thresholds, or even tools used to shape the landscape—provide access to this memory landscape. Placenames, for instance, become abbreviated histories recording sites of events and activities (Freeport Landing); they mark former landscape features (Wall Street), subjective experience (Desolation Point), encounters with the uniqueness of place (Dancing Rabbit Creek), and specific lives (Washington). While such elements may appear inconsequential on a map, to change or erase them would threaten the structure of shared experience and belief. In a review of community oral histories, Linda Shopes, a historian at the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, discovered how memory is repeatedly anchored to place. She concluded that “no other topic or way of structuring talk about the past dominates the interviews as extensively, deeply, or consistently as this sense of place” (Shopes, 6).

A recent project for the community of Vercheres, Quebec, by Peter Jacobs and Philippe Poullaucc-Gonidec attempts to reinscribe memory as means of creating a coherent landscape and provide a guide for future growth. Vercheres is one of the six original settlements in Quebec. There are still lines and hedgerows that trace the French Seignieries, long narrow strips
of land, approximately three by thirty arpents, that stretch from the shore across the fertile flood plain to the forest beyond (Jacobs). However, enormous growth in human settlements and in industrial and manufacturing activity over the past twenty-five years has spawned a network of rail, road, and utility corridors that have severed the traditional linkage of river and woods across the agricultural plain.

Their design strategy reestablished the structure of the landscape derived from the biophysical and cultural memory of the region. The connection with the forest is made by “les ilettes” that are found throughout the region, usually associated with changes in topography and soil moisture on an otherwise flat agricultural plain. These clusters of woods serve as visual signals of the once forested plain and will reinforce the memory and presence of what remains of the larger forest of Vercheres farther away. The “ilettes” connect the community to the forest, which is the locus of recreation, the provision of wood, the manufacture of maple syrup in the spring, and romantic encounters in the summer. In addition, the metapattern of linear hedgerows reinscribed across the village through subdivisions will connect the village to the agricultural plain to which it has always belonged. As Peter Jacobs concludes, “By emphasizing the landscape imagery of the region, by tying the village to this imagery, and by projecting it back onto the landscape context of which it is a part, the strata and diversity of the history of the village is encouraged to re-emerge.”
Implicit Narratives of Conventional Practice

Not only is the narrative production of places difficult to apprehend but it is often edited out of and not admitted in conventional representations of landscapes. A map that totalizes the representation of space effectively erases the narrative actions, the journeys of discovery, acts of naming, and daily routines that produced the spatial patterns in the first place. Only the cartouches of certain old maps that depict explorers’ ships, travelers, or surveyors hint at this experiential dimension (De Certeau, 121). The challenge is to find new modes of representing and reinscribing narrative into drawings, maps, charts, and other conventional forms.

Yet, as designers shape landscapes they inevitably engage narratives, often without explicit intent. Any clearing of a site is also an erasure of any number of stories, while excavation can unearth and reveal histories. Common practice also employs settings, emblems, and devices so familiar that their narrative associations have been forgotten. The repeated use of pastoral landscapes, for instance, is full of such “dead metaphors.” Certain forms of practice, however, are more clearly narrative in their purposes. The interpretation of sites is a common narrative objective of the National Park Service, historic sites and nature centers. In preservation practice alone there are salvage narratives, restorations of one moment in time, or adaptive reuse, which brings the past and the present together into a continuous narrative. There are also narratives of ecology, which employ metaphors to communicate the intricacies of ecological process and extend its principles into the sphere of social action. Restoration ecology constructs narratives of returning to origins, makes propitiation for past environmental mistakes, and perpetuates processes into the future.

Engaging Process

Landscape narratives need not be limited to telling what has already happened. They can be an implicit part of daily actions, exchanges, interpretations, and other ongoing processes. For artist Richard Long, walking opens up a geography of stories evoked by placenames, marked by temporary interventions along the way, or plotted on maps and in texts. Narrative is a
process continuously moving between a series of interrelated actions. Likewise, narratives emerge from the interplay of natural process and cultural processes. On a tall blank wall of the chapel in the Brion Cemetery, Carlo Scarpa created a gap in the parapet that allowed water to seep through and stain it. This initiated a process of weathering, inscribing time into the life of the building (Mostafavi and Leatherbarrow, 98, 103).

So often the inscription of stories into the landscape ignores the narratives of the medium itself. For instance, Stone Mountain, near Atlanta, Georgia, is the largest exposed granite monolith in the world. Yet, carved into its face is a memorial to Confederate generals (Emanuel Martin, 24). In contrast, the work of an increasing number of landscape architects seeks to reveal the effects of wind, water, and other processes, while also setting up conditions for continuous change and evolution. These actions, interventions, and evocations demonstrate that landscape narratives need not be set pieces requiring prior knowledge and controlled readings for their success. Rather, landscapes offer the unique potential to engage narrative as an integral part of ongoing cultural and natural processes.

**SUMMARY**

To conceive of landscape narratives means linking what is often treated as a material or visual scene with the less tangible, but no less real, network of narratives. As well as we might already know the various properties of geology, soil, or the social behavior in places, we might also know them within the texture, structure, and processes of narratives. Working within this narrative realm provides access to experience, knowledge, the contingencies of time and other aspects of landscapes not available through other means. In turn, working with landscapes offers the potential for unique narrative forms: spatial stories, continuous narratives, or the anchoring of memories and history to sites. Landscape joins with a very human capacity and penchant for telling stories.

This does not come, however, without challenges as to what constitutes the relationship between reality and fiction, truth and deception. For
instance, when John Hejduk prefaces *Vladivostok* with the title “As a Matter of Fact,” it seems ironic in relation to his proposals later in the book for fictional inventions: “As it was necessary for the highly rational-pragmatic city of 15th century Venice to create masques, masks, masses for its time in order to function; it would appear that we must create masques (programs) for our times” (Hejduk, 100). But if anything characterizes the postmodern landscape, it is this very proliferation of masks, of staged events, simulations, scripted places, invented histories, and escapes to other realities. While there is often deliberate intent to pass off the faux for some notion of the authentic, stories and fiction should not be equated with deception any more or less than photographs or maps are. As representations, they all necessarily mediate reality. Binaries of fact versus fiction, or the visual versus the intangible, have been scrutinized as cultural constructs that serve to privilege the scientific over other forms of knowing (Meyer). The intent here is not to propose narrative as a replacement of or a supplement to rational or scientific modes but as something that crosses, overlaps, and is inevitably inscribed within various discourses.

The real world and a storied world are not mutually exclusive; they intertwine and are constitutive of each other (Jane M. Jacobs, 15). It is important, however, to attend to how this synthesis takes place. While the “Imagineers” of Disney create beguiling fantasies, even histories, these are still framed as simulations. However, in the ordinary landscape there is no frame. The necessary fictions, histories, and myths that people create and use to make sense of their lives become real and “natural” when encoded into landscape. For the designer, then, it is a matter of not only learning how to tell stories in landscapes but developing a critical awareness of the processes and implications of narrative; whose story is told and what values and beliefs inhere in the telling?

Mark Tansey, *Untitled*. (Collection of the artist; courtesy Curt Marcus Gallery)

Mark Tansey frames his work with questions: “What shapes does narrative take? What is the spatial-temporal shape of event? Do objects narrate? What world is this? . . .”
NOTES

1. In narratology, story is usually defined as the content plane of narrative "what" is told as opposed to "how" it is told. Fabula is another term often used for story. Narrative is the expressive plane or "how" a story is told. Discourse is another term substituted for narrative. However, others (Cohen and Shires) argue that this distinction between story and telling assumes that there is a fixed chronology of events that is independent and knowable apart from how they are told. There is no story without its telling. The binary distinctions between story/narrative, content/expression, objective facts/representation, form/process, and system (langue)/usage (parole) become difficult to maintain. The act of telling mediates and constructs the story. Our use of narrative and story derives from this recognition of their reciprocity.

2. This and subsequent quotes are from interviews with a series of farmers conducted in the Oley Valley in 1982, 1992, and 1996 by Matthew Potteiger. Portions of these interviews, "Landscape Narratives, The Oley Valley," were presented at the Conference of Educators in Landscape Architecture, Blacksburg, Virginia, 1982. The author is a descendent of one of the French Huguenot families that settled in what was considered part of the valley in the 1720s.

3. According to Cicero, "Persons desiring to train this faculty (of memory) must select places and form mental images of the things they wish to remember and store those images in the places, so that the order of the places will preserve the order of the things, and the images of the things will denote the things themselves" (Cicero, De Oratore, 2.86.351–4. quoted in Andrews, 28).

4. The rejection of narrative was not universal in modernism. Louis Kahn, for instance, sought archetypal stories of origins for institutions of the street, school, or library. His organization of the Exeter Library with the books in the core and the seats and carrels arrayed along the windows sets up the narrative action of "bringing the book to the light." See Alexandra Tyng, Beginnings: Louis I. Kahn’s Philosophy of Architecture (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1984), pp. 121–125. (Interview, Christopher Grey, chair, Architecture Department, Syracuse University, April 1997.)

5. The work of Nigel Coates, along with that of Rem Koolhaas, Jean Nouvel, Carel Weeber, and Zaha Hadid, has been described as a genre of "dirty realism." See Liane Lefaivre, "Dirty Realism in European Architecture Today: Making the Stone Stony," Design Book Review 17 (winter 1989):17–20.

6. The correlation between Virgil's text and the sequence of movement through the garden is clearly demonstrated by Moore, Mitchell, and Turnbull, 136–144.

7. For a fuller treatment of the yard and its narratives, see Girling and Helphand, Yard, Street, Park (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1994).
8. Frankenmuth, Michigan, for instance, has been thoroughly “Bavarianized,” while the gas stations and storefronts of Berne, Indiana, bear Swiss chalet motifs. Mira Engler has studied this phenomenon of theming small towns throughout Iowa.


10. In Delirious New York Rem Koolhaas uses the interpretive power of myth to understand the material conditions of congestion of New York between 1890 and 1940. He ends the book, however, with a “fictional conclusion,” a series of architectural narratives.

11. Artists, writers, and designers may not be lying when they provoke uncertain memories, excavate mythic structures, or explore the fictions that constitute our lives. Vicki Goldberg draws this conclusion in her review of photographers such as Jeff Wall who deliberately stage scenes as if they were real events. (“Photos That Lie—and Tell the Truth,” New York Times, March 16, 1997.)

REFERENCES


