Making Space: Vision and Visualization in Landscape Architecture

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English

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Abstract

Despite rhetorical studies of public space, studies of its design are limited and rarely inform readings of public space. This situation is particularly unfortunate since public space design is particularly ripe for rhetorical analysis. Landscape architects draw, write, and sell landscape plans to clients and stakeholders before they become the material public realm that receives most of the attention from those concerned with spatial politics. The intent of my project is to supplement rhetorical critiques of public space by attempting to understand the exigencies that landscape architects face in winning support and approval for their designs, how they go about winning that approval by creating persuasive texts, and how that rhetorical process manifests as features of the built environment, often in surprising and unintended ways. By exclusively focusing on already-built public spaces critics miss out on a rhetorically-complex, persuasive writing project about which the field has germane expertise to offer.

By focusing on the intersection of visual rhetoric with workplace writing this study examines the rhetorical contexts in which landscape architects operate and the situated, visual practices they employ. It claims that drawing is the landscape architect’s principal mode of rhetorical invention, an argument that construes drawing as a professionally-developed viewing strategy. Observational and interview methods were employed to study the contexts in which landscape architects visualize space through a wide array of skillful, graphic techniques. Rather than understanding competent viewership as a literacy, it approaches viewing as an active, embodied techne, composed of disciplinary visualization techniques in tool-mediated situations. In the landscape architecture firm,
seeing space “skillfully” is a prerequisite for drawing space cooperatively; a professionally-shared, “skilled vision” allows members to “see together” as a community – attending to the same details, employing the same perceptual tools and concepts, and sharing an aesthetic taste – to deliberate through drawing. The rhetoric of landscape architecture is a discursive and illustrative exercise in disclosing this view for others. Landscape architects in this study employ discursive and drawing techniques, like highlighting and coding, that help impart to outsiders their expert view of phenomena by organizing it into an analytical and analogical framework.
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Chapter 1 -- Introduction

Urban, public spaces occupy a unique place in rhetorical history. Early Athenian democracies owe their existence not just to the spread of certain artistic and philosophical ideas, but to the dedicated physical places that anchored their existence. Athenian democracy revolved around the agora, an open marketplace and civic center that played host to the city-state’s most important political, commercial, athletic, religious, and philosophical events. And, from the Greek agora to the commons of medieval England to the urban parks of the Victorian era, shared, public spaces have continued to be a vital locus for democratic practice. Western cities have historically been designed around central squares, often anchored by monuments that project and enshrine civic values. Pre-20th Century denizens had little choice but to use public spaces. Most lived in small homes without yards. Lacking cars, they walked, often to town squares to shop or parks to catch a glimpse of nature. Lacking refrigeration, they had to shop almost daily. Squares, churches, and taverns collected their neighbors, friends and strangers alike. This pedestrian-citizen ecology provided a crucial venue for citizens to encounter one another. Even when these encounters aren’t verbal, but mere “people watching,” they appear to foster tolerance and a sense of solidarity among citizens (Shaftoe 13). And yet, this ecology began to deteriorate during the 20th Century as cars made streets unsuitable as the public living rooms they had become. As the automobile and mass-communication technology transformed travel and social life, the function and design of public space changed as well. Cities sprawled outward; merchants relocated into shopping malls. From Hannah Arendt to Richard Sennett to Mike Davis, urban theorists have chronicled the 20th Century decline of the public sphere. Named culprits abound: the automobile, the television, the internet, budget cuts to municipal budgets, and capitalism itself. Whatever the cause, public life has relocated from the street into the home. And, urban public space has been left populated by only those who could not afford the technologies of the new public life. No longer woven into the fabric of most peoples’ lives, public spaces went neglected.
Concerned for the infrastructure of deliberative democracy, scholars of rhetoric have taken a renewed interest in the urban, built environment. From its displays of communal values to “spatial argumentation,” these rhetorical critics engage public spaces as visual rhetoric, as a set of resources that can facilitate or frustrate civic discourse or serve as the stage for civil protest, and as a form of material epideictic. When rhetorical critics account for the visual and material rhetoric of public spaces they engage it as a text, an experience, and/or an agent in its own right. But, despite rhetorical studies of public space, studies of the design of public spaces are rare and rarely inform such readings of public space.

This situation is particularly unfortunate since public space design is particularly ripe for rhetorical analysis. In the first place, disciplines of environmental design, from architecture to landscape architecture to urban planning, are rooted in the same origins as the rhetorical arts. Vitruvius’s De Architectura, the only surviving classical Roman architectural treatise, was foundationally rhetorical, as the historian Robert Frith argues, The reliance by Vitruvius on rhetoric cannot be overstated...the way we are encouraged to judge architecture is the same mode of reasoning that oratory was to be judged by. Some of the key words in the lexicon of architecture find their way there from the teachers of rhetoric. Etymologically the word for plan or plot is shared with that of the ‘plot’ or narrative thread of a speech. The word ‘elevation’ to describe the public face of a building is borrowed from rhetoric’s demand for an ‘elevated’ mode of speaking. The way Vitruvius teaches us to design a work of architecture is similar to that for putting a speech together, through invention, arrangement, memory, delivery, and style (41).

Architecture was originally conceived of as expressive and suasory, as a kind of rhetoric. Though the two disciplines have drifted apart, especially post-Enlightenment, they are both practical, productive arts, what Aristotle called techne. Second, despite its material ends, landscape architecture, as it is practiced today, is all writing and drawing. Landscape architects draw, write, and present landscape plans to clients and stakeholders before they become the material public realm that receives most of the attention from
those concerned with spatial politics. Landscape architecture is also an exercise in persuasive salesmanship and political brinkmanship. In many ways landscape architects’ most important skill is the ability to successfully persuade those who have a literal or potential veto over their projects – clients, approval boards, members of the public – through drawing and public discourse.

Though writing scholars have studied engineers, scientists, and architects in some depth, little has been written on the design of this crucial element of public, democratic life by landscape architects. This dissertation aims to fill that gap in the scholarship. It argues that the rhetorical criticism of public space would benefit from a detailed account of how it is written and drawn into existence: with what tools and practices, to solve what exigencies, and to communicate what messages? I used observational and interview methods to investigate the design of public space by landscape architects, approaching it as a fundamentally rhetorical practice, one that mobilizes landscape architects’ graphic artistry and argumentative, political, and pedagogical prowess. To study the graphic texts they produce, I spent time observing and interviewing landscape architects in two firms, gathering several types of data. I conducted interviews with landscape architects about the design and presentation processes. I collected pictures of landscape architectural tools and work product at all stages of that process. And I shadowed both novice and experienced landscape architects over the course of a week as they went about their daily work. Both interviews and observations were audio recorded for transcription. Both graphics and transcripts were analyzed for their argumentative topoi, often-unspoken assumptions or principles that connect claims and evidence.

The intent of my project is two-fold. The first two chapters develop an alternative to the prevailing conception of rhetorical viewership as a “visual literacy,” the concept of “visual skill” developed by the anthropologist Christina Grasseni. The latter two chapters attempt to supplement rhetorical critiques of public space by developing a methodology that uses skilled vision in landscape design to understand the rhetorical dimensions of designed public spaces. By approaching public space criticism from the design perspective, rather than through experiential analysis, I believe rhetorical critics of public space can enrich their readings of public spaces. By exclusively focusing on already-built
public spaces critics miss out on a rhetorically-complex, persuasive writing project about which rhetoricians have germane expertise to offer. Specifically, rhetoricians are well-positioned to view the landscape design process as a rhetorical situation in which an exigence presents itself and may be resolved through “the introduction of discourse,” and in this case drawings, in order to influence an audience without violating the situation’s constraints (Bitzer 3). By extension into genre theory, the graphic genres of landscape architecture can be understood as typified solutions to recurrent exigencies (Artemeva & Freedman 165). In addition, rhetoricians are well-positioned to understand designed environments as rhetorical compositions, not only because they have persuasive consequences, but also because they pass through a series of traditional rhetorical situations: an iterated, collaborative writing process, inventive drawing, and public presentation. This project attempts to understand the exigencies that landscape architects face in inventing, refining, presenting, and winning support and approval for their designs and to account for that rhetorical process as it manifests as features of the built environment, often in surprising and unintended ways.

One of the most fruitful theories for understanding the situatedness of disciplinary writing has been genre theory, specifically Carolyn Miller’s 1994 account of genre as social action. Miller’s formulation is a valuable counterweight to the common view of genre as a set of textual regularities or family resemblances. As Miller explains, genres are not a frozen set of rules or forms. They are typified rhetorical reactions to recurrent rhetorical situations and are only stabilized-for-now. For Miller, genres are vital to socialization into “communities of practice,” not just as tools for accomplishing one’s ends, but an important means of learning “what ends we may have” (38). For Miller, then, genres ask us to adopt an appropriate, community-based “social motive,” one recognized and allowed for by the group and then “satisfy private intentions through rhetorical action” (36).

Miller’s view of genre as social action has been broadly accepted by writing scholars. In the introduction to Worlds Apart: Acting and Writing in Academic and Workplace Contexts, the authors reject the popular notion of teaching textual features as an avenue to disciplinary learning,
[W]e hold that the knowledge that one needs in order to write effectively in a particular work context is not simply of the textual aspect of the accepted genres, in the general form in which it can be imparted outside the specific site; one also needs knowledge of the culture and the circumstances, and one needs to understand and take on the local purposes, the social motives that prevail in that setting. Participating in a genre means not just producing text that looks like the ones that are usually produced in that milieu but having purposes…that are recognized and allowed for within that context and for which the genre has emerged (Dias et. al 22).

To appreciate the plans, schematics, and public pitches for new public space that issue from a discipline we must know what landscape architects’ goals and purposes are, what counts as a problem to be overcome and then look at what means are used to solve them. Because one of my goals in this dissertation is to give outsiders to landscape architecture (like myself) a way to comprehend, contest, and critique the schematics and plans for new public space or to call for and compose their own, I hope to give an account of these genres that goes beyond their textual regularities and get at their underlying goals and logics.

By focusing on the intersection of visual rhetoric with workplace writing this study examines the rhetorical situations in which landscape architects operate and the situated, visual practices they employ. It claims that drawing is not only the landscape architect’s principal mode of delivery, but also their primary mode of invention, an argument that construes drawing as a professionally-developed viewing strategy. Rather than understanding competent viewership as a “visual literacy,” it approaches viewing as an active, embodied techné, composed of disciplinary visualization techniques in tool-mediated situations. Landscape architects visualize space through a wide array of skillful, graphic techniques such as highlighting, coding, annotation, and superimposition. In the landscape architecture firm seeing space “skillfully” is a prerequisite for drawing space cooperatively; a professionally-shared, “skilled vision” allows members to “see together” as a community – attending to the same details, employing the same perceptual tools and concepts, and sharing an aesthetic taste – in order to deliberate through drawing. 

The
remainder of this chapter outlines the dissertation by reviewing the scholarship in visual rhetoric and in public space rhetorical criticism and then indicating where the research in this dissertation builds on, amplifies, or challenges it.

**A Metaphor for Visual Rhetoric**

Kenneth Burke was among the first to call for studies of the dynamics of human symbol use beyond the written word, “mathematics, music, sculpture, painting, dance, architectural styles” (28). An early theorist of visual rhetoric, Sonja Foss, proposed twin definitions of it: at once a perspective and a communicative artifact. In the latter definition, visual rhetoric describes any human-made artifact whose purpose is to persuade those who view it. In the former, visual rhetoric is an action, an approach to viewing images “that highlights the communicative dimensions of images or objects” (Foss 213). In particular, Foss was concerned with the evaluation and judgment of imagery and offered a rhetorical alternative to “judging imagery from an aesthetic perspective” (214). Foss goes on to describe this approach as a set of critical-analytic questions such as "What is this image doing to viewers?" "What is this image's role in the larger persuasive effect of its context?" and "What does this image persuade viewers to think/feel/identify with/do?" (Peterson 21). Foss’s account of visual rhetoric (the verb) – a critical-analytic mode of viewing images by breaking them down into their rhetorical purposes, functions, and appeals – is probably the most widely used, cited, and taught. It has also been widely critiqued for attempting to fit a square peg into a round hole.

Foss’s focus on the rhetorical function of the image has been challenged by those who fear it too easily textualizes the image, converting it immediately into a description of what the analyst sees, which is then rhetorically analyzed (see Peterson). Valerie Peterson in her 2001 article “The Rhetorical Criticism of Visual Elements: An Alternative to Foss's Schema” critiques Foss’s approach for exactly what it sets out to do: treat rhetorical function as divorced from aesthetics. Foss eschews aesthetic approaches to images as unsatisfactory for rhetorical analysis because “their aim is to identify artistic merit or aesthetic excellence; they are not concerned, as are rhetorical critics, with the influence of images on audiences and the way images are constructed to affect such influence" (214). This distinction, says Peterson “misses the overlap of the two realms
and the usefulness of the vocabularies of fine and graphic arts for the purposes of rhetorical analysis. It also misses the role beauty plays in assessments of rhetorical excellence” (22). Thus, Peterson suggests visual rhetoricians use extant terminology and theory from the graphic arts. She suggests an alternative approach to Foss’s schema, starting one’s analysis with an image’s “sensory visual stimuli” – light, line, color, perspective, shading, volume – rather than with constructed and already-interpreted images (23). When we look we construct images, says Peterson, “a complex of visual elements and relationships which are (already) "made out" to be something by the individuals who encounter them… ‘we don't just 'see' but have to learn how to see and what to see.”” (22). As a result, in taking Foss’s approach, “the process of seeing” remains unexamined and the critic begins with the already-interpreted image (22). Peterson suggests that critical interpretation ought to wait until after perception is carefully scrutinized, an approach that “helps critics avoid the trap of ideological determinism” (25).

There’s certainly something to Peterson’s alternative. And yet, I suspect her method buys in to the very modernist assumptions she critiques: the idea that the analyst could find some objective perch from which to assess an image, but that no one has yet gone far enough to ensure it. If looking is biased and colored by experience, suggests Peterson, then perhaps the rhetorical critic can do something other than look, something more sophisticated and objective. But, trying to decompose the visual image into ever more objective elements, to then be subjected to critical analysis, is to move in the wrong direction. If Peterson proposes “starting with stimuli” and examining the “process of seeing,” my project suggests just the opposite. The converse of elementalizing viewership into perceptions is to intentionally occupy the culturally, ideologically, and disciplinarily “proper” mode(s) of viewership for the image in question and in being so indoctrinated to learn something new about the way the world appears from within. By viewing images as enskilled viewers, we may come to learn as much about the rhetorical tactics of images as we could have as critically distanced analysts reducing the image into a universal language of visual elements. To put this another way, instead of trying to “look without” the visual illusions that make shapes and lines on paper cohere into wholes, as Peterson
suggests, we should seek to “look with” those patterns and illusions that only experts recognize.

One attempt to account for viewership from within the “visual culture” of those who constitute a given image’s primary audience is Cara Finnegan’s “image vernacular” concept, an interpretive framework for viewing images that relies on shared warrants in order to construct enthymemes (34). The term warrant is Stephen Toulmin’s term for an unstated major premise of enthymematic logic, an assumption or principle that authorizes or bridges data (or minor premise) to the claim (or conclusion) (Toulmin 90-3). A warrant is produced, claims Toulmin, when “[o]ur task is no longer to strengthen the ground on which our argument is constructed, but is rather to show that, taking these data as a starting point, the step to the original claim or conclusion is an appropriate and legitimate one.” Warrants are “general, hypothetical statements, which can act as bridges, and authorize [sic] the sort of step to which our particular argument commits us…Propositions of this kind I shall call warrants (W), to distinguish them from both conclusions and data” (91). In this dissertation I will use the terms warrant and topos interchangeably, even though not all Aristotelian topoi fit Toulmin’s definition of warrants as “rules, principles, inference-licences” (Toulmin 91). I do this because, for my purposes neither term quite fits the phenomenon being described. Toulmin’s term comes from a treatise on argumentation theory, but doesn’t weigh in on warrants as a perceptual phenomenon. And Finnegan’s term, while it nicely captures the way in which warranting topoi get incorporated into a mode of viewership, refers specifically to the operation of a vernacular commonplace rather than a disciplinary or professional one. In my observations, the warranting topoi of landscape architecture were composed of both verbal and visual rhetoric that reinforced one another. So, when I refer to a particular topos, such as visual order causes social order, I intend to convey its presence in both visual and verbal rhetorics.

Importantly, for Finnegan, the value-laden perceptions of members of the “visual culture” are obvious from within it and the operation of an unstated major premise is transparent to the interpreter. In Finnegan, 19th Century viewers of photographs relied on principles from physiognomy and phrenology that were popular at the time to derive
personality claims about a photograph of a young Lincoln. And the conclusions they reached in writing about Lincoln’s photograph reflect the enthymematic application of those topoi. The “obvious” way in which Finnegan’s letter writers generate claims is at least partial evidence that they “see with” image vernacular topoi such as “faces index character.” It isn’t just that these viewers have learned the terminology of phrenology and physiognomy, but that they have adopted a perceptual skill that requires them to attend closely to certain details (e.g. the eyes) and then generates evaluative claims. In Chapter 4 I’ll explore a one disciplinary topos, visual order causes social order, recoverable from the drawings and terminology of landscape architecture.

Image vernaculars are “tacit topoi of argument that viewers employ creatively in specific rhetorical situations” (34). Put differently, image vernaculars are interpretive frameworks used syllogistically by viewers in a “visual culture” to make meaning and draw conclusions from images. Viewers do this by drawing on “tacit social knowledge” about the operations of technologies of composition (e.g. photography, Photoshop) and about culturally-favored assumptions and principles, what “everybody knows” (34). This knowledge allows viewers to construct enthymemes by providing “unstated premises” that seem “at once invisible and transparent… ‘natural,’ rather than context-bound” (34). I use Finnegan’s concept to help me recover the warranting topoi used by landscape architects to make evaluative and interpretive claims about images. The image vernacular, like the warranting topoi on which it is based, seeks to disclose an often-unspoken and unquestioned logic on which an argument relies, expressing it as a principle or rule. In particular, Finnegan’s work demonstrates that close analysis of the rhetoric surrounding images can reveal pervasive ideas that are rarely expressed out loud yet govern argumentative and interpretive acts within a visual culture. Reasoning-with-images is not merely a passive reception of ideological messages, but an active, participatory process in which viewers produce novel claims by applying shared, warranting topoi.

As is often the case with the suppressed premises of enthymematic reasoning, arguers may be unaware of them and unable to explicate the logics that underwrite their own arguments. Finnegan’s letter writers show themselves to be skillful arguers,
inventing sophisticated claims. However, they do not portray themselves as doing so. Instead, as Finnegan illustrates, the letter writers perceive Lincoln’s character in his photographed face. By applying a “physiognomic image vernacular” skillful viewers know where to look for meaningful details, both simplifying and clarifying, for themselves, what Lincoln’s photograph “means.” They have acquired a visual competence, an ability to see rich detail by focusing on particular areas of significance (e.g. the eyes, the brow) in order to draw conclusions that only make sense within 19th Century, American visual culture. Because they share a set of warrants for interpreting photographs, all members of the visual culture who have internalized the unstated premise “faces index character” are liberated to engage the interpretive question of “not whether the photograph shows a relationship between character and expression, but what specifically that relationship is?” (45). This is a powerful insight in how images operate rhetorically, one that will be important to the analysis that follows. A shared understanding, whether within a visual culture or a disciplinary practice, of what certain images transparently “show” changes the way they make meaning for viewers. Without an appreciation of which elements of an image are meant to be questioned, which to be attended to and heavily discussed, and which ignored the rhetorical critic can only make the most surface of readings of an image.

**Skilled Vision**

In his book Rhetoric in the Flesh, TPC scholar T. Kenny Fountain discusses the need for research that investigates the “visual practices” of a disciplinary community, how experts in a discipline develop “socially organized ways of seeing” that allow them to read, interact with, and act upon disciplinary texts (4). Drawing on anthropologist Grasseni’s “skilled vision,” he demonstrates that learning to see disciplinarily is a vital constituent of expertise. Seeing like a disciplinary expert, a result of training and socialization into a community of practice, is both more central and prior to so-called thinking like an expert. Skilled viewers encounter a richly-textured scene, often through mediating technologies that help make salient “what matters” to the work of the discipline. Seeing is, therefore, increasingly viewed, by technical and professional communication (TPC) scholars, anthropologists, and cognitive scientists as active rather
than passive, a situated, social activity. Seeing as an expert, in particular, must be shared amongst members of a community of practice in order for deliberation and decision-making to proceed. Fountain’s study of anatomical vision in the gross anatomy laboratory, for example, explores the multimodal rhetoric of objects – anatomical models, atlases, cadavers – that help undergraduate anatomy and medical students turn what they’ve learned about the body’s anatomy into a way of seeing the body as an anatomy. The multimodal objects of the anatomy lab train vision rhetorically in combination with anatomical procedures, practices, routines, and performances such as dissection and autopsy. That is, skilled vision is a constituent of skillful performances of expertise. Disciplinary experts who work together on a sociotechnical project, such as the design of a landscape through graphic design, must agree on a set of values and priorities that allow them to reduce the wealth of information and possibilities that attend complex design problems.

In the spirit of Fountain’s call, one aim of this dissertation is to extend Grasseni and Fountain’s skilled vision approach to the study of visual expertise in graphic and design professions to landscape design. In particular, skilled vision is one way of approaching viewership that takes into account viewers’ active engagement and even interaction with and transformation of visual artifacts. Viewership in design and engineering domains is typically something other than a reception or appreciation, skilled viewers highlight, mark-up, layer drawings onto each other, and otherwise transform drawings in order to disclose an underlying reality germane to their own professional goals. While we might call this a literacy, skilled viewers often seem to be using visuals as much as looking at them, creating something new, as much as examining what’s shown.

Because conversations about visual skill seem to be missing from public space scholarship, my project will seek to fill this research gap by ethnographically observing the visualization practices of landscape design in two landscape architecture firms. Because landscape architectural texts are predominantly visual, I rely on the theoretical concept of “skilled vision,” as well as its twin concept “professional vision” developed in linguistics by Charles Goodwin, to study the unique “ways of seeing” of different
disciplines. In Skilled Visions, Christina Grasseni defines looking as:

a technique of the body (Mauss 1935); as such it is culturally and socially performed as habitus (Bourdieu 1972). Second, learning how to look at the world, how to visualize particular objects or phenomena, is a form of social apprenticeship. Learning a skilled way of looking, therefore, involves senses and emotions as the apprentice becomes proficient in carrying out a form of expertise. Third, the concepts of apprenticeship and of culturally competent ways of seeing lead the ethnographer to keep an analytical focus on different types of “schooling the eye,” or schools of seeing—for lack of a better word… “schools of gaze” (“Skilled Visons” 19).

Charles Goodwin describes professional vision as a “socially organized way of seeing and understanding events that are answerable to the distinctive interests of a particular social group” (606). Simply put, skilled/professional vision is the shared ability to recognize in accord with other members of a discipline or profession – ideologically, aesthetically, and morally – that allows one to be a practicing member. I find that skilled vision provides a compelling framework in which to consider the graphic texts of landscape architecture because the profession uses a vast array of visualization techniques and technologies to design the material world through drawing. Grasseni suggests that recognizing what matters is a skill that members of a profession gain through talk and practice. It is inextricably tied up with one’s ability to successfully participate, not just in a discourse community, but in a community of practice (Skilled Visions 53-5). Landscape architects then go on to employ discursive and drawing techniques, like highlighting and coding, that help impart to outsiders their expert view of phenomena by organizing it into an analytical and analogical framework. This ability to “share” skilled vision through talk and drawing – what Jordynn Jack calls a “pedagogy of sight” – is the rhetorical métier of landscape architects. Sharing this “way of seeing” makes collaborative design through graphic communication possible and at the same time makes technical visuals and texts difficult to penetrate. Thus, the presentation of landscape architecture should be understood as a discursive and illustrative exercise in disclosing this view for others.
Since I am interested in the designer’s perspective on public spaces, Goodwin and Grasseni’s work provides a way of accounting for the routinized and ritualized graphic design practices that landscape architects use to produce landscape plans and that constitute a landscape architectural way of, not just seeing, but conceptualizing public space. As Fountain shows, outsiders to a discipline may lack the proper visual attention and recognition skills to interpret disciplinary texts and evidence (35). As such, a “way of seeing” that is shared makes visual communication to other disciplinary members possible by relying on a skilled vision shared only by members.

The parallel between Finnegan’s “image vernaculars” and the profession/skilled vision of landscape architects should be clear. Both are interpretive frameworks that make sense of images by applying a “tacit social knowledge” acquired through experience and practice in a group (Finnegan 34). Just as landscape architects focus attention on and recognize meaningful aspects of a site, Finnegan’s letter writers analyze Lincoln’s visage by isolating his brow or eyes to make claims using the widespread social knowledge of physiognomy and phrenology as an unspoken warrant. Finnegan recovers, from the letters to McClure’s, an unspoken topos (faces and their expressions index peoples’ character) that undergirds almost every interpretive claim about Lincoln’s photograph. She argues that viewers were engaged in an enthymematic process in which they used pervasive, shared warrants to interpret the new visual “data” of young Lincoln. Similarly, landscape architects interpret visualizations according to a set of shared topoi, embedded in the visual culture of the discipline. By examining the visual artifacts that require skilled vision, observing how they get used by landscape architects, and talking with landscape architects themselves, I uncover the unspoken topoi implicit in what they emphasize, reveal, and conceal.

**The Rhetoric of Public Space**

By understanding the design and presentation of public spaces as the employment of a professionally-developed, visual skill, I hope to offer rhetorical critics of public space a method that incorporates TPC research on design (in particular environmental design disciplines) into experiential critiques of public space. Rhetorical critiques of public space are diverse and difficult to categorize. The focus of this dissertation will be
on two groups of scholars (grouped by their methodology) that I believe best represent major strands of public space criticism. The first, the rhetoric of display, includes public memory scholarship (Blair, Clark, Halloran), museum studies (MacDonald), alongside the many other scholars who all approach symbolic and material aspects of public space as epideictic reflections and expressions of “what we value.” The second, the rhetorical resources approach, asks what opportunities – for making arguments, for political expression, and for constructing a social identity – exist in the built environment and how rhetors make use of those resources. While rhetoric of display scholars primarily examine how the construction of memorials and other material symbols assert, express, and shape public values, the resources approach examines how denizens of space coopt, make use of, and make sense of the built environment for their own purposes. Each is committed to what Carole Blair calls “being there,” visiting sites themselves, not just looking a pictures, and often participating both bodily and socially in the goings on of a site.

In general, I argue that the rhetorical study of public space tends to privilege experiential interpretations of sites, textualizing them into their salient messages or evocations, in part because critics study public spaces only after they have been built and in part because of a tendency to focus on spectacular, unambiguously expressive displays designed to make statements: monuments (Blair, Marback), memorials, graveyards (Hobbs), and protests in public spaces (Deluca, Endres & Senda-Cook). For the most part, these readings of public spaces remain focused on the ostensive, symbolic elements of public spaces of significance, often art objects, and their meanings. Too little attention is paid to public space as something collaboratively composed and designed to mediate rather than communicate, the result of an extensive writing, drawing, and speaking campaign of persuasion and one designed to have suasory effects. When we view public spaces as landscape architects see them, they appear not as message-laden texts, but as mediators of behavior and attention. These effects are most obvious when landscape

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1 Throughout this dissertation I use the term denizen, rather than citizen (which implies political membership) or inhabitant (which implies residence), to refer to people who spend significant amount of their time in certain places (e.g. "denizens of the library"). The denizenship of a place should be understood as any and all users, occasional or regular: local residents, tourists, the homeless, and those who only work there.
architects present their work to lay viewers. On the one hand, presenters encourage the evaluation of the designed site as a functional diagram, the purpose of which is to mobilize and facilitate authorized behaviors and frustrate unauthorized behaviors. The diagrammed site implies that if the viewer can locate on the plan “space for” all their needs and desires, accessible and protected from external forces, then the resulting environment will function well. On the other hand, the perspective drawing in tandem with a constellation of terms for presenting the design aesthetically – focal points, scale, proportion, axis, balance, symmetry, asymmetry, order, unity, repetition, golden ratios, and massings – constructs the site as scenic or picturesque. These analogies, space as-graphic art and as-system, reveal how landscape architects hope lay viewers will look at their plans and perspectives because it is how they view spaces.

Scholars of urban communication come closest to this mediation approach. They approach public spaces as infrastructurally and environmentally relevant to the rhetoric of public space. As Dickinson and Aiello state the consensus, “[t]he bricks and mortar of cities are communicative insofar as they shape, constrain, and ultimately also mediate the everyday lives of individuals and communities” (1294). That is, we may understand public space not just as message-laden, but as a mechanism that facilitates some and discourages other behaviors, one that is relevant as the infrastructure for civic participation. Urban communications scholars tend to have a wider lens on the city than I take here, a focus that approximates the discipline of urban planning rather than landscape architecture. David Fleming’s City of Rhetoric, for example, contributes to publics theory by looking at the urban plans and design of Chicago’s Cabrini-Green redevelopment. Fleming uses concepts from the field of urban planning to (re)describe some of the central issues of publics and counterpublics in terms of the built environment. Jenny Rice’s Distant Publics takes a similarly city-wide view by examining the rhetoric of development in Austin, TX. While these scholars take the needed step of familiarizing themselves with the rhetoric and terminology of urban planners, even they tend to examine already built, planned, and designed places rather than more closely studying the professions that craft them or the rhetorical practices and processes through which they must pass.
Designed public spaces are the result of a rhetorical process that seeks to negotiate the demands and desires of clients, stakeholders, the public, and designers themselves. Writing studies of architectural design demonstrates just how important the practices, technologies, and rhetorical situations out of which these designs emerge are to understanding public spaces. Without attention to it, critics will inevitably miss the many influences on the final plan that have taken their toll along the way: the skilled selection at site visit, the graphic medium of design, the topoi of landscape design, and the town planning boards and public meeting comments.

**Workplace Writing Methodology**

Despite plenty of interest in public spaces, rhetoricians haven’t really studied landscape architecture design at all. While rhetorical studies of urban design (Fleming), architecture (Medway, Ackerman & Oates), and engineers (Winsor, Geisler) have established a framework for studying “material design” disciplines, none have looked at landscape architecture. Landscape architecture is worth studying because it has not yet been studied, but also because it is a uniquely graphic profession, one whose work begins with graphic texts (site surveys and photographs) and whose ultimate products are also graphic texts (schematics, instructions). Like many design professions, it is undergoing a shift away from hand-drawn and clay-model design and toward entirely computer simulated design that offers a unique opportunity to study this sort of writing under technological change.

TPC scholars of architecture ask how buildings get written, modeled, and drawn into existence, first on paper. The most prominent voice in this conversation, Peter Medway, emphasizes the “virtuality” of the buildings that his architects collaboratively construct. By attending to the ways in which architects talk (using the present, not conditional tense) about their buildings, Medway arrives at a fine-grained view of the semiotics of architectural design which, he claims, constructs virtual, socially-shared objects. Similarly, Ackerman and Oates examine the architectural design process as a writing process that is not exempt from cultural and social influence. As they point out, design consultations with “users” almost always begin and end with management as the representatives of building usership. This results in predictable design choices that
(literally) reify office hierarchies. Ackerman and Oates trace the design process, including the graphic techniques from bubble diagrams to checklists, that allow architects to translate client requirements into physical buildings. As they note, hierarchies are reinscribed into plans through these disciplinary genres not merely by accident (and often over the objections of architects themselves), but because the writing/design process is figured as “an acontextual technology” (114).

Situational studies of professional writing have shown writing plays a significant role in disciplines that would traditionally have been considered purely mechanical and physical (see Geisler, Winsor). Design work, while it can often be traced back to pre-typographic and even pre-literate origins, is practiced today as almost entirely via collaborative writing and drawing. Writing studies of engineering has cleared much of the ground here. For example, a large body of work on mechanical engineering demonstrates the degree to which the process of engineering design is, as Cheryl Geisler describes it, an “intensely literary” endeavor (Geisler 173). Engineers must define conditions, specify functions, generate alternative options, communicate those possibilities to others, create representations of solutions in models and sketches, deliberate with other engineers over those sketches and models, and communicate their final design to outsiders. As Peter Medway argues, the final product of an architect is technically a written document, not a structure (479). Though architects surely don’t think in these terms, they are initially evaluated, hired, and paid based on plans they create. When they wish to make changes, they make changes to those drawings and plans or have conversations that effect changes by speech act. Medway’s analysis of architectural writing views it as a wholly unique semiotic act of writing that instigates material production. In this, architects are the consummate technical writers. They write the instructions for producing buildings, public spaces, and other structures. And while their involvement in projects typically extends beyond the drawing up of plans, their expertise lies largely in their literary, graphic design, and rhetorical abilities.

I follow Stephen Witte and others (Witte, Witte and Haas, Wickman) who construe writing broadly to include the mundane acts of drawing, modeling, sketching, and other uses of nonlinguistic sign-systems. This view of writing, as more than merely
print-linguistic, has been elaborated by semioticians from Roland Barthes to Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen and extended by visual rhetoricians. Witte’s argument is that ethnographers of writing err when they focus exclusively on print language or subordinate nonlinguistic forms of meaning-making in studies of “writing.” There simply is no clear line to be drawn between “graphic writing” and linguistic writing. As Witte’s work shows, the design process often begins with meaning-making sketches, lists, notes, labels, and drawings. Finished products frequently include graphic elements that cannot be (at least not coherently) cordoned off as non-writing (see Witte 229-39). Writing, in other words, may include the use of nonlinguistic symbols for meaning-making. This use of the terms “writing” and “text” can be nonintuitive. Indeed, many of my interview subjects had some difficulty appreciating why exactly I would be interested in their sketches and schematics if, as I informed them, my interest was writing in their profession. However, when it comes to the study of the texts that circulate in a landscape architecture office, it would make little sense to try and isolate “the writing” from the drawing and even visualizing play that they use to invent.

My collection of qualitative and interpretive data includes: (1) expert interviews with practicing landscape architects; (2) direct observations of their workplace activities, deliberations, and design work; (3) photographic documentation of landscape architectural work product: drawings, sketches, models, and simulations; (4) description and photographic documentation of the display tools (e.g. tracing paper, colored pens, AutoCAD, SketchUp) that are used during the creation of landscape architectural design visualizations. My sources reflect my theoretical focus on visualization practices, which are the forte of landscape designers, as central to architectural expertise and authority.

I conducted most of my observations and interviews in two landscape architecture offices in Rochester, NY. This choice was based on personal connections that allowed for more extensive access. The first, Gordon Landscape Architecture, is one of the more prominent firms of its kind in western New York. It is a small office employing half a dozen landscape architects and offering only landscape architectural services (they have no in-house surveyors or civil engineers, for example). These services can be quite expansive, including master planning, site planning, cultural landscape research and
documentation, community design, park and recreation planning, garden design, and construction management services. Gordon LA is based in Honeoye Falls, NY, a historic village near Rochester, NY. The firm prides itself on its historically and environmentally researched projects, sometimes including business that required no design work, but instead the creation of a historical significance report for landmark status or grant applications. At Gordon, my main contact was the principal landscape architect and firm founder, Dave Gordon. Along with Dave, I interviewed and observed Ann Myers, a project manager and landscape architect and Alex Wagner, a landscape architect and the newest hire.

The second firm, SGE Associates, began as an engineering firm and has expanded to offer a full array of services, including landscape planning and engineering. There are three landscape architects in an office of 30, predominantly civil engineers. Much of their work involves helping real estate developers develop raw land into residential parcels. SGE specializes in this area. They can credibly claim to offer clients the ability to take a development project from start to finish because of the full complement of engineering, landscaping, and regulatory services they offer. More than at Gordon, SGE landscape architects spoke about the political, legal, and regulatory machinations that were central to their work. My main contact at SGE was Tim Moore, a landscape architect in the firm. In addition to interviewing Tim, I interviewed Greg Johnson and Harold Pell, two landscape architects, but also two of the firm’s executives. Johnson and Pell, while they still oversaw the design of projects, spent much of their time bringing in clients, selling clients, and dealing with legal and political issues, an aspect of the industry that I had not otherwise captured.

These two firms offer exemplary versions of typical landscape architects and their position in the workplace, one as a standalone firm and the other as part of a full-service team. The differences in the quality, type, and freedom of work between these two situations have been instructive for understanding the constraints on landscape architecture. The sorts of concerns I saw there drive the design of spaces in ways that I would likely not have been able to observe at larger, more prestigious firms. Landscape architects in New York, LA, or Tokyo, whose jobs can be remarkably different from
those at Gordon or SGE, confront tasks and challenges that are closer to the idealized world of landscape architecture: clients with an aesthetic vision and near-endless resources. They would not have been exemplary of the majority of landscape architects, nor would the work, as exciting and innovative as it often is, have been as typical of the sorts of projects that characterize most of public space in America. I got to examine the quotidian work of landscape architects, who are as likely to be tasked with squeezing extra lots on a developer’s parcel at the same time as they are asked to create an inviting park that people want to be in. Additionally, Gordon and SGE’s history of work in the Rochester area meant that I could visit sites at various stages of completion.

Chapter Summaries

The chapters that follow proceed according to the design process, beginning with the early stages of discovery and invention and moving on to discuss the revision of designs and their presentation to various audiences. Ultimately, these chapters show, consonant with rhetorical and sociological studies of scientists, the influence of impending rhetorical situations on the work of design itself. Chapter 2 explores drawing and genres of landscape architecture as a set of heuristic techniques for comprehending and reducing environments to manageable texts. It claims that drawing is the landscape architect’s principal mode of rhetorical action, that invention is done via graphic sketches and annotation work, and that seeing space professionally is a prerequisite for drawing space cooperatively. A shared “skilled vision” allows members to “see together” within a community and thus communicate through drawing. Acquiring it is key to the landscape architects’ socialization into the discipline and obscures outsider participation. Chapter 3 explores the rhetorical presentation of landscape architecture to lay viewers – primarily clients and public meeting attendees. Its central claim is that presenting landscape architecture to lay viewers entails the mobilization of what Jordynn Jack calls a “pedagogy of sight” for landscape architectural vision by adapting the simplified versions of the heuristic visualizations of Chapter 2 as pedagogical. Rather than allow these lay viewers to look incorrectly at visualizations, they endeavor to share their insights with lay viewers in the form of pedagogical visualizations, analogies, and terms that assist presenters in teaching proper viewership. Chapters 4 and 5 explore some of the rhetorical
implications of landscape architectural design practices. Chapter 4 shows how the values implicit in landscape architectural visualizations and designs may be explicated as warranting topoi. The chapter explores one topos that I observed in action, visual order causes social order. This “felt safety” topos was, I argue, developed to deal with public audiences recurring concerns about crime and safety and shows one way in which recurrent rhetorical situations can influence disciplinary theory and practices, often in perverse ways. Chapter 5 presents a case study in the rhetorical analysis of designed public space informed by the writing studies of landscape architects. It uses extensive visits to Rochester’s Memorial Art Gallery grounds, including a walkthrough with its principal landscape designer, to conduct rhetorical critiques of the space in line with two different approaches to public space rhetorical criticism. It aims to demonstrate how insights into landscape architectural practices, values, and rhetoric can inform such critiques. Chapter 6 will draw conclusions based on the four content chapters, suggesting new directions for rhetorical critique and possibilities for intervention into public space design.
Chapter 2 – Learning to See, Learning to Draw

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the intersection of visual rhetoric with workplace writing by examining the rhetorical contexts in which landscape architects operate and the situated, visual rhetorics they employ. It claims that drawing is the landscape architect’s principal mode of rhetorical invention, an argument that construes drawing as a heuristic for viewing. I will refer to this heuristic, following Michael Lynch and Luc Pauwels, as visualization. Visualization is a heuristic in the sense that it functions as a practical shortcut for solving problems. Michael Lynch defines visualization as “the various practices associated with making objects observable and intelligible” (27). For the scientist, visualizing measured phenomena may reveal unseen “mechanisms” that can be documented, combined, used to make predictions about nature. For the landscape architect, visualization reduces each of many dimensions of a site – its sun exposure, landform shape, or traffic – into separate and combinable drawings, reducing the interplay of these dimensions into visible lines, shapes, and colors on the page. In brief, visualization is a process that takes a complex reality and reduces it to publicly viewable drawings with which designers can think and over which they can sensibly and reliably argue.

I used observational and interview methods to study the disciplinary and non-disciplinary contexts in which landscape architects visualize space through a wide array of skillful, graphic techniques such as highlighting, coding, annotating, and superimposing. By examining visual rhetoric in this way, I approach viewing as an active, embodied, and embedded technical skill or techne, composed of disciplinary visualization techniques in tool-mediated situations. In the landscape architecture firm seeing space “skillfully” is a prerequisite for drawing space cooperatively; a professionally-shared, “skilled vision” allows members to “see together” as a community – attending to the same details, employing the same perceptual tools and concepts, and sharing an aesthetic taste – in order to deliberate through drawing. This understanding of “visual skill,” a term adopted from Christina Grasseni’s anthropology of vision, stands in contrast to the standard view in rhetorical studies of viewership as a literacy (see Skilled
Visions). At least in the context of professional visuals, however, visual rhetoric and viewership are best described using the metaphor of a learned, interactive, skillful practice not a broad-based, analytical literacy.

Borrowing heavily from Bruno Latour’s “Visualization and Cognition,” I will discuss two stages of activity that constitute visualization in landscape architecture: inscription, in which worldly phenomena are recorded as marks on paper and synoptic assembly, in which those written records are collected, compared, and combined. (see Latour’s “Visualization and Cognition”). These terms come from Bruno Latour’s sociological work on scientists, but they apply as well to engineering and design. Visualization first requires the ordering of the messiness of the world into data. In the graphic realms of landscape architecture, this data is almost always collected and rendered through drawing. When landscape architects draw they compose disciplinary visualizations – schematics, diagrams, and 3D models – of space. By inscribing a three-dimensional space as a graphic – a diagram, perspective illustration, or sketch – landscape architects reduce the variables that may influence design decisions and begin the process of pre-determining the criteria according to which clients, stakeholders, and landscape architects themselves may evaluate the design. Graphical inscription is necessarily selective, but judgments of relevance (e.g. does this count as an instance of phenomenon X?) are less proceduralized in landscape architecture than they are in the sciences. Visual judgments of relevance are more than a matter of knowing-what, a checklist of “things to look out for” such as existing structures and wind conditions (though these are certainly part of the process). Its execution lies in recognizing the relevant features and aspects of a site because they are actionable, a visual skill that the TPC scholar T. Kenny Fountain describes as “recognizing and seizing enacted affordances,” and then mapping or sketching those features graphically to construct visual artifacts that can be taken back to the office and combined with others (94). In Fountain’s study of anatomical vision in the gross anatomy lab selective dissection of cadavers is referred to as “netterizing” the body, that is, drawing and diagramming the body so that it comports with the idealized figures of Netter’s Atlas of Anatomy (114). Just as Fountain’s lab students must first make the body an actionable surgical diagram,
the landscape architect must reduce the site into an actionable form, plan drawings, for example.

Whereas inscription almost always takes place on-site, synoptic assembly, the second stage of visualization, describes work that almost always takes place off-site, in the studio (“Visualization” 11). In studio, landscape architects annotate, align, and recombine graphical renderings with each other, as well as with information rendered graphically (e.g. sun path analysis), all for the purposes of discovering, arranging, and proposing a design solution. Almost as soon as the design process begins both designer and client quickly move from looking at and talking about things and conduct their work over drawings – maps, sketches, models, etc. In describing this synoptic recombination of visual displays, Latour emphasizes its material quality, referring to it as “paper shuffling” and “the manipulation of paper, print, images, and so on” (“Visualization” 6). Landscape designers, with the assistance of graphical techniques (like bubble diagramming) and tools (like trace paper), manipulate the now-graphical landscape in ways that make apparent ideas, opportunities, conflicts, and functions, to themselves and to other designers, clients, and stakeholders. In other words, drawing is heuristic, a techne developed through practice in-studio, that helps landscape architects see the site in ways that facilitate landscape architecture both as an inventive and as a persuasive profession.

The rhetoric of landscape architecture is a discursive and illustrative exercise in disclosing this view for others, a topic I’ll explore in more detail next chapter. Landscape architects in this study employ discursive and drawing techniques, like highlighting and coding, that help impart to colleagues and clients their view of phenomena by organizing it into an analytical and analogical framework. This ability to “share” skilled vision through talk and drawing – what the linguist Charles Goodwin calls “professional vision” and the rhetorician Jordynn Jack calls a “pedagogy of sight” – is the rhetorical métier of landscape architects.

While the rhetorical study of viewership, especially of technical images and information graphics, have theorized the interpretive frameworks that viewers bring to representation (Finnegan, Northcut, Walsh) as well as the rhetorical pedagogies that inculcate those viewing frameworks (Jack, Fountain), still needed are studies that
consider technical graphics as partial views, each one a component in a synoptic system that requires numerous other graphics and a skillful viewer to make sense of them together. This mode of viewership is an active, skillful practice that requires not only the interpretation of images, but their manipulation, combination, comparison, and superimposition.

While this dissertation does not center on the training and acquisition of landscape architectural vision, new landscape architects surely develop their own professional, visual competence with practice and guidance from teachers and senior mentors. As Fountain explores in depth, disciplined performances of recognition must be trained through an apprenticeship of embodied action. Recognition in these professions means “seeing with” the values of a disciplinary community, indeed seeing beauty in well-cultivated specimens that resemble the idealized models on which one is trained, and a desire to bring the world into alignment with those exemplars. Acquiring it requires apprenticeship in and deep appreciation of the doxa (unspoken values) of the community. We’ll catch a glimpse of this apprenticeship in the review of work between a principal and a junior landscape architect, Harold and Tim, later in the chapter. For now, I wish to build on the work of Fountain, Lynch, Grasseni, and Latour by exploring visualization within a design discipline rather than a scientific one.

I’ll proceed by describing landscape design as a series of recursive stages, a rhetorical process. The first three stages – program development, site inventory and analysis, and schematic design – are described in order and examples of the inscription and synoptic assembly practices of various stages will demonstrate their rhetorical dimensions. Subsequent chapters will explore some of the aesthetic and doxastic dimensions of landscape architectural vision and address the late stages in which drawings are made presentable to lay viewers by helping them to “see as” a landscape architect. This chapter, however, makes the simple case that landscape architects deliberate through drawing, that drawing is an inventive, heuristic practice used not just to present, but to discover “solutions,” and gives definition to the two modes of drawing

2 Every landscape architect breaks down the design stages differently. This is equally true for textbooks. These stages are meant to reflect the design stages as they were described to me by those I observed.
that constitute skilled vision in landscape architecture: on-site rendering and in-studio manipulating of graphic visualizations.

**Visual Literacy and Visual Skill**

The asymmetric power inherent in “looking” has a long and fraught history in existential and postmodern thought. In Being and Nothingness, Sartre examines a phenomenon in which we experience “the look” of another person as an intrusion into our own acts of unobserved observation that causes anxiety and must be managed. We want looking to be unidirectional, but in the presence of others we feel shame for our voyeurism (Sartre § 4). Foucault takes up this theme, seeing without being seen, as the central mode of power in the modern world: panopticism. A panopticon is a prison, drawn but never built by Jeremy Bentham, in which all prisoners could be seen from a single vantage point in a tower, but could not see each other, their tower observer, or even whether anyone was in the tower at all. According to Foucault, the panopticon was the perfect metaphor for power dynamics in modern society: power lies in the capacity to see without being seen (Foucault 195-228).

Visualizations, such as maps, elevations, and photographs, compound the potency of asymmetric viewership through the development of what Bruno Latour calls “immutable mobiles” (“Visualization” 6). Immutable mobiles are texts (or inscriptions per Latour) that, because they are constructed according to specific procedures and principles (e.g. projection), can be easily assembled, compared and interpreted together in a single place. “[L]et us all go to many places on the earth,” says Latour mimicking the modernist logic “and come back with the same, but different homogenous pictures, that can be gathered, compared, superimposed and redrawn in a few places, together with the carefully labelled specimens of rocks and fossils” (“Visualization” 14). Thanks to innovations from perspective drawing to the printing press, it became possible to construct representations of reality that were both difficult to alter (immutable), transportable easily from place to place (mobile), and conceptually compatible with other immutable mobiles, “presentable, readable and combinable with one another” (6). In Latour’s account of immutable, mobile visualization, it is not merely the ability to draw a map that distinguishes the French explorer La Perouse from the Chinese and Indian
natives he encounters on his travels since “they all draw maps more or less based on the same principle of projection, first on sand, then on paper” (6). What makes the Frenchman’s maps an instrument of power is what they are subsequently used to do, how they are “brought back” and recombined with other maps in Versailles to answer questions, settle arguments, and determine ownership and trade routes (6). For Latour, this panoptic view can only be seen from the map room in Versailles, not in China or India. The same power dynamics that require the construction of immutable mobiles also demand a certain kind of reading, the trained attention and visual knowledge required to view skillfully the “cascade of inscriptions” by manipulating diagrams on paper (17).

The visual rhetoric scholars Ben and Marthalee Barton examine the representational dynamics of panoptic visualization in terms of its synoptic and analytic modes (“Modes of Power” 138-42). Visualizations are synoptic when they represent in a relatively small space and a totality of information. Barton and Barton identify the map as the paradigmatic synoptic visualization since it allows the viewer to see the entire Earth in a single look, from a single vantage point. Visualizations are analytic when they disclose an “order,” the existence of “norms” of behavior or of structure, and therefore permit the identification of outliers, social misfits or “recalcitrant individuals” (145). Importantly, each of these visualizing functions is a one-way street, enforced by protected guilds and the exclusionary, technical nature of the knowledge needed to perform and construct it.

Latour argues that the skill of projection is not enough to account for the potency of science and engineering. It lends representations “optical consistency” and therefore immutability during transportation, but not mobility. For that, a trip is required. We must invest the projection with significance, carry it back in paper form, record other places and data in conciliant metrics and according to the same drawing principles. “[W]ithout dozens of innovations in inscription, in projection, in writing, archiving and computing,” he argues “this displacement through the Pacific would be totally wasted” (6). In other words, the exacting precision of bureaucratic “centers of calculation” – where archived files, county records, and regulatory code books can be kept, consulted, and combined
with new inscriptions – is needed to work upon the site despite merely drawing on pieces of paper (29).

What ethnographers and anthropologists of these “visualization professions” are beginning to explore next is the inherently collaborative and structured practices of expert visualization. Visualization requires careful, arduous work in a structured environment and is practiced collaboratively within a community of practice (see Lave and Wenger). Visualizations, according to Luc Pauwels, produce and display “social objects” that form the currency of discussion and debate (Pauwels 12). For example, Peter Medway’s study of the social semiotics of architects traces their collaborative construction of “virtual buildings,” an architectural social object, that exists even prior to the fabrication process. The “virtual building” can be found nowhere in particular, but “emerging piecemeal and in dispersion in the heads and on the drafting tables of different individuals around the office. The developing artifact becomes known, an object of shared cognition, as it is communicated throughout the team (and beyond, to client, city authorities, etc.)” (Medway 487). In other words, visualization requires a skilled viewer who – connected to a system of mobilized data collectors and inscription devices and embedded in disciplined practices that can use collected traces to see revealed patterns – collects, renders, compares, and combines graphic displays with others. It is this subsequent, systematic, even ritualistic viewership, that deserves attention in the study of landscape architectural drawings.

Learning the panoptic viewing practices and techniques of landscape architecture is not the learning of a visual literacy, a “critical-analytic tool” for reading visual artifacts (Foss 306). If it were then we would expect critical viewers, like Latour’s explorer La Perouse, to “see more” than the natives he encounters on his journey because they have critical distance and conceptual frameworks for deconstructing visual artifacts. Instead, learning “to see” skillfully, in the sense I am using it, involves an engrossing socialization into a profession, the mastery of a set of disciplinary visualizing techniques, embodied practices that remediate recovered traces into objects of study, and the adoption of a shared moral and aesthetic taste.
This approach to viewership-as-skill is best-captured in Cristina Grasseni’s term “skilled vision,” which considers vision as “a social activity, a proactive engagement with the world, a realm of expertise that depends heavily on trained perception and on a structured environment” (Made to Be Seen 19). The characteristics of skilled vision are numerable: (1) it is pragmatic, it describes something one does with visuals, a set of routines and mediated practices aimed accomplishing a defined goal. It engenders “a social and ideological belonging” to a community of practice, "as well as of aesthetic longing” (7). In other words, the enskillment of vision reflects the (2) socialization, through apprenticed training (not classroom study), and an attendant (3) professionally-shared aesthetic sensibility (or taste) about objects within the domain of the profession. Studies of visual skill, “highlight the processes by which consensus on notions of beauty, propriety, and exactness is achieved socially” (22). For example, Grasseni describes the development in Italian farmers of what she calls “breeding aesthetics” according to which “good milking” cows are perceived as “good looking” cows (“Skilled Vision” 54-5).

Finally, this aesthetic apprenticeship almost always happens in the context of (4) a structured environment in which both material artifacts and the social environment “guide and channel it” (21). In his book Rhetoric in the Flesh, Fountain argues that the multimodal, rhetorical artifacts of the gross anatomy lab are crucial to the training of vision because they afford and constrain embodied action to facilitate recognition of the body as an anatomy (Fountain 7). The many educational aides of the gross lab are necessary to its development. Not coincidentally, Fountain recognizes many of the same facets of anatomical vision as Grasseni, an aestheticization of “good looking” dissections, a social apprenticeship into the surgical profession, and a practice-oriented, pragmatic orientation. According to this line of research, viewing is a technique developed through situated practice, reflection, and apprenticeship, that one thoroughly adopts. Such embeddedness is necessarily non-neutral, obscuring even as it discloses. “Skilled vision” is an artifact of one’s socialization into a professional community, not a critical lens that can be swapped out for the next.

However, to say that viewing is skillfully embedded in professional communities and structured practices is not to say that disciplinary visuals are so mystifying that they
can never be read by the uninitiated. Indeed, as scholars of visualization have remarked, skilled vision is distinctly “sharable” and communicable. The linguist Charles Goodwin offers an ethnographic account of the conveyance of skilled vision, or what he calls “professional vision.” To be granted expertise, professionals must be able to help others see as members of the community of practice by seeing through professionally-developed codes and schemas. In his 1994 article, “Professional Vision,” Goodwin explores the discursive and annotative techniques used by the defense lawyers and expert witnesses for five L.A. police officers to obtain a not guilty verdict during the first Rodney King trial. The videotape evidence showing the L.A. policemen beating Mr. King was, strangely, the focus of and main evidence for their defense. The defense lawyers did not present the video evidence as a “record that spoke for itself,” but instead argued that “it could be understood only by embedding the events visible on it within the worklife of a profession…that the beating constituted an example of careful police craft work, a form of professional discourse with the victim” (615-6). The defense managed to help the jury view the video both as police officers (they were provided ethnography about police practice) and through a coding scheme provided through expert witness testimony and via the annotation, framing, slowing, and coding of the video.

<table>
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<th>Sharing happens through standardization</th>
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<td>recognition → highlighting → coding → future recognition</td>
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Table 1: My visualization of Goodwin's Professional Vision

Goodwin concludes that sharing vision in this way is accomplished through a standardization process, first by literally highlighting visual elements important to the community of practice so that viewers learn to take notice of “what counts,” then eventually naming or coding those elements so that it becomes easier to see and discuss.

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3 To highlight the transparency of viewership Goodwin cites a comment given to a reporter by one of the officers on trial, Sgt. Stacey Koons, “If we had our way, we’d go down to Dodger Stadium and rip off that big-screen Mitsubishi and bring it into the courtroom and say, ‘Hey, folks, you’re in for the show if your life because when this tape gets blown up it’s awesome.”’ Far from rejecting the conclusivity of the video or seeking to minimize it, it is as apparent to Koons that the video patently exonerates him as it was to most viewers that it condemned him, so thoroughly had he adopted the skill of viewing as a police officer.
them, until finally, the skill of recognition organizes one’s perception of visuals (and the world) in accordance with the standards of a community of practice (608-15). By providing a whole new vocabulary, standardization encourages further coding of visual phenomena in those terms and subsequent talk-about “social objects” of the profession, which only reifies the veracity of coded perceptions.

Similarly, Jordynn Jack explores the rhetorical strategies that experts use to disclose to lay viewers their own way of seeing in “A Pedagogy of Sight: Microscopic Vision in Robert Hooke’s Micrographia.” Jack analyzes Robert Hooke’s Micrographia as it teaches readers of his early textbook on microscopy how to view its many engravings, “what to see and how to see it” (19). Jack examines Hooke’s use of analogies to bodies and machines, enargia (vivid description), and the topos of appearance/reality to help lay readers “see microscopic specimens as mechanical bodies, as evidence of divine creation, and as pleasant entertainment” (19). One of the key insights of Jack’s article is that the way of viewing microscopic science is not invented but imported by way of analogy. Hooke grounds the viewing of one phenomena (microscopic engravings) analogically in a more familiar viewing experience (human bodies). And Hooke’s reader is at least given the feeling or simulation of gaining the visual skill of recognition required to be a natural philosopher by perceiving bodies in microscopic images. Furthermore, Hooke’s analogies and guidance are motivated, “Hooke’s pedagogy of sight is never a matter of providing neutral instructions, simply numbering body parts and referring readers to a key or legend. Instead, his instruction also served to inculcate a program of mechanical philosophy deeply embedded in Enlightenment-era social and religious ideology” (193). Hooke’s analogies to bodies and mechanisms ground microscopic vision analogically in Christianity and Nature inviting viewers to attend to and code the engravings in Micrographia as consonant with an extant ideology.

So, to the list already provided by Grasseni of skilled vision as: (1) pragmatic, (2) socialized/apprenticed, (3) aesthetic, and (4) structured, we can also add from Goodwin and Jack that it is (5) “sharable” and (6) doxastic or value-laden. Skilled vision is conveyable to the lay viewer through analogy, annotation, and coding of visual artifacts. And doing so also (at least partially) indoctrinates viewers, because skilled vision
embodies the doxa – the unspoken, taken-for-granted values shared by a community of practice – that warrant argumentation within it.

The key difference between the concepts visual literacy and “skilled vision” is that visual literacy is critical and analytic. It attempts to “read” images by adopting a neutral, detached perspective, including a perspective on cultural and social dynamics. This chapter’s exploration of landscape architectural vision approaches it not as a literacy, not a critical-analytical tool, but a professional skill of recognition necessarily embedded within a particular social, cultural, and disciplinary context. The term recognition in both of its definitions is the appropriate one. On the one hand, the verb recognize is synonymous with words like notice, identify, and note. It means just what its Latin roots imply, “to know” (something or someone) “again” because you have seen them before. On the other hand, the word means to acknowledge or show public appreciation for, “to accept that something is true, important, or legal” (“Meaning of Recognize”). Both meanings are operative in landscape architectural vision, the skilled vision at work in the landscape design process that I turn to next.

The Landscape Design Process

The landscape design process consists broadly of three stages: program development, site inventory and analysis, schematic design. This process ends in a proposal plan, a first draft in essence, that is presented to the client(s). From there, a series of drafts are submitted and negotiated between the client and landscape architect until agreement. The final stage of the process involves the creation of construction documents that a construction company will use to estimate cost and bid on the project. In general, construction documents will include at least: a site plan, grading plan, layout plan, irrigation plan, planting plan, and detail diagrams of lighting and other new structures.

Program Development

Program development begins the process and includes all preliminary research and information gathering including any historical research about the site, the client’s
needs and budget, gathering applicable local codes and regulations\(^4\). The term program refers to a statement of the client’s needs, which is developed in conversation with the landscape architect. Depending on the project, extensive historical research may be useful or even required. In addition, most projects require extensive research and knowledge of local regulations, building codes, and available variances to identify opportunities and constraints. A firm’s approach to program development can distinguish it from others because firms tend to specialize and focus their approach to research, which subsequently defines its designs. The two firms I studied, Gordon and SGE, each specialized in distinct areas of program development. Gordon is known for its historically-grounded designs. The firm does extensive historical research on sites and often uses what it finds to inform their design. SGE maintains a reputation for code-compliant, politically-savvy, start-to-finish housing subdivision design and development. They sell prospective customers on their ability to identify, anticipate, and work-around legal and political hindrances to a project.

Program development also involves the collection of information from clients themselves. Clients determine the problems-to-be-solved by landscape design and are the ultimate audience for the design presentation, but they are also viewed by landscape architects as lacking the ability to “see in three dimensions” such that they don’t “know what they really want” (Pell and Gray). Landscape architects frequently encounter clients who “come in with images from magazines or Pinterest” and request specific features (Gage). Landscape architects press clients on these requests by asking them “What for? Why do you need that?” Some landscape architects routinize information gathering from clients into a questionnaire that lists criteria by framing it in terms of utility: needs, requirements, and budget, preempting the development of criteria that cannot be properly coded. Others conduct interviews, sometimes on site. For larger clients, the project may

\(^4\) My description of this process doesn’t begin with client acquisition, which is certainly a part of the work of a landscape architecture firm, because my time in these offices didn’t give me much access to this part of the process. Briefly, large and especially public clients, like museums and municipalities, put projects out for bids that landscape architects apply for with (often extensive) briefs/proposals. The brief lays out important information about the project as the firm understands it, what the firm provides (scope, deliverables), who will be involved (consultants), and fees. Once, the client accepts the proposal and signs a MOU (memorandum of understanding) the design process begins in earnest.
have already begun, perhaps with an architect who is designing a new building, and the landscape architect is expected to accommodate their work to the architectural design. Program development aims to identify any constraints and opportunities (cultural, natural, infrastructural, and legal) that will not be observable during a site visit, but that nevertheless might bear on design and therefore must be present to the designer (ideally graphically rendered) during studio design.

The program itself caches out as a list of quantitative (usually a list of the desired “use areas”) and qualitative (a desired aesthetic or psychological effects) needs identified during this process often ranked in terms of their priority. The task of the subsequent stages will be to translate this list into a spatialized graphic. To this end, some landscape architects include at this stage converting the program into an “adjacency diagram,” a kind of table that represents the functional areas required and the desired adjacency between any pair of those areas, as in Figure 1.

![Figure 1 Example of an Adjacency Diagram (“Interior Design Programming”).](image)

Adjacency diagrams are more common in interior design and architecture, but they are not unheard of in landscape architecture. Neither of the firms I studied used them. However, they demonstrate one way in which prioritized lists are translated into a graphic, plan-view plane. In Figure 1, for example, each column represents a client need...
or requirement and rows represent individual rooms. The chart assigns a degree of need for each column to each room and the triangular adjacency diagram takes those combinations and translates them into desired adjacencies. This method allows the designer to see at a glance which rooms will need to be central and well-connected (Staff Room), which can be flexibly located (Work Area), and which ought to be remote (Guest Apartment). We’ll examine the more common visualization practice for list-to-map translation – bubble diagramming – later in the chapter. But, we can already see one of the overriding conceptualizations of space, the site as an array of functional area, being imposed on texts meant to represent it.

**Site Inventory and Analysis**

The second information-gathering stage of landscape design is called site inventory and analysis and requires a visit to the proposed construction site\(^5\). This stage is more interesting for my purposes, since it incorporates drawing the site, specifically a plan-view sketch of the site. It requires a skilled viewer who, attuned and attentive to both the site and the remaining drawing goals and tasks of the design process – with all its limitations, preferred inputs, and representational capacities – sees and records only what is valued by that process. According to landscape architecture textbooks, inventory describes the “objective” identification of all “relevant conditions” on the site and analysis describes their evaluation and actions to be taken (Waterman 54, see also Holden and Liversedge). In the absence of an existing and accurate base map (a scaled, architectural plan, usually kept on file with a municipality, that details the presence and distances of basic structures, sidewalks, streets, trees, and utilities), a landscape architect can conduct a site inventory to draw one. Otherwise, a base map is printed out and drawn on to conduct inventory and analysis drawings.

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\(^{5}\) Site inventory and analysis represent only two kinds of inscription. Observational sketches, for example, are another, rough perspective drawings done on-site that attempt capture the feel and use of a space. Civil engineers contribute to the design of the site through on-site drawing as well.
Figure 2 Example of a Base Map (“CL Project”).

For very large projects inventory and analysis might be conducted through both site visits and aerial photography, a subject we’ll return to at the end of the section. The textbook description of inventory and analysis suggests that objective inventorying precedes analysis, but often the two go on together with landscape architects making evaluative observations while they are measuring the size and distances between existing features (see Waterman). Indeed, the product of inventory and analysis is often a single graphic, usually a rough, plan-view sketch of the site with accompanying notes (see Figure 3).
Figure 3 Example of a Site Inventory and Analysis. (Hansen & Alvarez).

Though this task is often given to more junior landscape architects, it requires skillful recognition and numerous expert judgments. The site visit is one of the first instances in which landscape architectural vision can be observed in use as the inventorist notices and then draws “what matters.” The inventory shown in Figure 3 shows the identification of conditions such as wind direction, soil erosion, high-sun and shade areas, the non-existence of fencing, views, “exposed feelings,” non-observable utilities, and gutters. Landscape architects, however, don’t speak of inventory as a particularly difficult task, but rather as dull data collection. Textbooks and practicing landscape architects describe inventory as simple and total, “an account of everything that exists on the site” (emphasis mine, Waterman 54). One University of Florida guide to site analysis advises landscape architects on a site visit to “record everything you see (and feel) at the site”
(Holden and Alvarez 1). Such advice points to the transparency of skilled vision. Landscape architects think of it as the “objective” recording of sensations, even as it requires a trained, professionally-informed selection and omission of details on-the-fly.

It is difficult to square Figure 3 with an account of inventories as objective and all-encompassing since an untrained inventorist would likely produce an inventory of the same property that would surely include both more detail and less. Knowing what to include and exclude is crucial to a successful inventory, but it is considered obvious, except to a non-expert. As an outsider observing, the first thing I looked for to understand what goes into an inventory was a checklist of “things to look out for” or “what to record on a site inventory.” Textbooks spend little to no time on the practice of inventory (unlike analysis), instead emphasizing that it requires considerable time spent on-site, but they do provide lists of conditions to take note of such as ecological conditions and built structures. Here is my attempt at a composite list of all the “things to notice” during a site visit:

Table 2 What to Notice on-site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ecological</strong></th>
<th>soil type, drainage, plants, water bodies, sun/shade patterns &amp; wind direction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geological</strong></td>
<td>Land shape, formations, water flow, rock foundation, slopes, swales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Built structures</strong></td>
<td>utilities, septic, eaves, gutters,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>People</strong></td>
<td>users, animals, visitors, current usages, desired usages, pathways, desire lines, views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feelings</strong></td>
<td>security/safety, openness/claustrrophobic,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Codes</strong></td>
<td>lot size, setbacks, zoning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td>Past uses, buried hazards,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surrounding Uses</strong></td>
<td>Adjacent properties, nearest highways, traffic, nearby nuisances, water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
<td>Property values, economic zoning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you compare this list to the site inventory in Figure 3 it should be clear that memorizing a checklist will not give you the ability to conduct a proper site inventory. For one thing, an inventory that noted every listed condition would be cluttered and illegible. For another, a checklist cannot teach you skillful discernment, “what counts” for the purposes of the landscape design. For that, a well-attuned sense of the ultimate goals, likely problems, and actionable vs. non-actionable data that attend the landscape design process is required. For example, what counts as a swale or a slope? Why are “existing trees” noted as “healthy?” What is an “exposed feeling” and why take note of it?

As we move into the next stages of the design process, schematic design, we’ll glimpse some of the graphic techniques landscape architects use to create and invent solutions for the space based on a site inventory. However, there is one other method of site inventory and analysis to examine, which does not require a site visit because the landscape architect works from aerial photography. Site visits seem to be geared mostly toward “getting a feel” for the site, noticing who or what uses it, what condition vegetation is really in, or locating the watershed, all in search of inspiration. However, the use of “vertical photographs” taken from drones, balloons or aircraft to document large sites is quite common, not as means of “feeling” the site, but of abstracting patterns from it.

Aerial photographs are usually not generated by landscape architects themselves, but by the state GIS department or by hired aerial photography companies. Watching landscape architects draw on aerial photographs provides one of the clearest demonstrations of the highlighting and coding process that typifies landscape architectural vision in action as it inscribes the photographic site as a graphic site of figures, forms, and vectors. This is because landscape architects annotate aerial photography in ways that reflect what features are valued (and therefore deserve representation) by the design process. According to Goodwin, while certain features naturally stand out in our perceptual field, we also highlight and code what we see both to communicate what we are seeing to others and to help structure our own thinking and memory (see Goodwin). Though widely-practiced, highlighting is honed within a
community of practice. Highlighting leads to naming or coding highlighted items, a process that facilitates thinking by breaking down the visual field into coded units of analysis. Eventually, the goal is to be able to do away with the phenomenon itself, what Michael Lynch refers to as the “specimen material,” and just work with texts. As Goodwin points out, highlighting takes advantage of a well-known rule of Gestalt perceptual grouping called figure-ground perception, which states that human perception groups a visual field into objects (or figures) as standing out against a field (or ground) (606). The perceptual distinction of objects from background can be facilitated through highlighting that gives salience and figuration to certain elements. At the same time, highlighting “backgrounds” other elements. For viewers and drawers alike, this strongly implies the relative importance and probative value of highlighted elements both in the context of the work activity at hand (landscape design) and also beyond it.

Harold and Greg at SGE walked me through how they conducted an “aerial photo site analysis” for a residential development project they were working on in Victor, NY. Their client (a developer) had purchased a plot of farmland they were interested in developing into a residential subdivision. The property was large enough (28 acres) that they began their “site visit” with a high-resolution, aerial photograph from the New York State GIS database. As they described their thinking Greg laid out a printout of an aerial photograph on the table and got out a highlighter:

Greg: …and then Harold kind of right here you highlight where your site is [outlines the boundaries of property]. Understanding of, you know, this is the context. Where is this site in relation to everything else around it and coming up to 30 or 40 or 50 thousand feet to get this view of okay now you said, client, you said you want this in this area [circles area in pen] and have a discussion about

6 Unremarked upon here, is the remarkable socio-technical system for collecting these high-resolution photographs, a discipline in its own right called photogrammetry. These are not any old aerial photographs, GIS images must be vertical (taken from straight overhead), must be taken with well-calibrated, large-format cameras, and then reconciled with surface points for exactness. GIS photogrammetry facilitates the work of numerous professions from archaeology to police work. Thus, the “photographic site visit” that Greg is about to walk me through has already been substantially structured, framed, and flattened in preparation for the sorts of freehand annotations that will yield accurate perceptions of relative size and distance.
does it make sense. I mean what it is that they're trying to propose versus what are the surrounding uses (Pell and Gray).

Figure 4 Aerial image of SGE site with highlighting simulated (New York State GIS, annotated by author)

Greg begins by defining the boundaries of the property with a highlighter, then justifies the chosen framing ("coming up to 30 or 40 or 50 thousand feet") of the photograph as important for his purpose, viewing adjacent uses, and then draws a circle to define a functional area of use. Defining boundaries with highlighter is an effective way to break up a photograph that has poorly defined features. It allowed me to see in Greg’s units of analysis, here “properties” and “functional areas.” It also helps Greg “hold steady” perceptual judgments by giving them salience (the visual contrast of the bright yellow highlighter) and figuration (the property is now a geometrical shape). In doing so, Greg need not remember where the property is or, if he labels it, what it is. Greg continues,

Greg: They wanted to develop for residential. And you give them a sense of okay what do you have around it. Well, you have residential [highlights an area] you have residential [highlights an area] you have residential [highlights an area] you have golf course [gestures] (Interviewer: Golf course, right. What is this a high school or something? Harold: Finger Lakes Race Track.) And then you've got
agricultural uses that surround that area [highlights areas of farmland], but then you start to see where some of these other developments are in relationship to where this site is and then the larger picture is also taking a look at where is this in relation to arterials now here's a main arterial [highlights highway] this is Route 332 which goes all the way down to Canandaigua here's the thruway right here [highlights I-90] just to give you a [indecipherable] gives us gives them it gives everybody a sense of where is this in relationship to where we are today (Pell and Gray).

Greg’s use of terms is worth our time here. He codes the photograph into more “functional uses,” which include residential, golf course, and agricultural, and “arterials.” An arterial roadway is a “high-capacity, urban road,” the primary function of which is to “deliver traffic from collector roads to freeways or expressways and between urban centres” (“Arterial Road”). It also evokes an analogy to the anatomical term artery, a blood vessel that carries blood from the heart to the rest of the body. Indeed, a metaphor of the city-as-organism that has functional components that require the arterial circulation of resources is already emerging. The biological analogy is implicitly at work in landscape architects’ language and explicitly in many textbooks. For now, however, it is enough to note that Greg’s own description and demonstration of his initial design process includes the highlighting of the aerial photograph. Highlighting is guided by terms like arterial and use that can be used to code the photograph and constitute the landscape into figures that reveal patterns and relationships so that he (and others) can see opportunities and constraints for design. Greg’s partner, Harold, recreates just such a recognition he had while they were doing this work initially:

Harold: Yeah there's a there's another consideration too and this [outlines in green highlighter] is the Victor Central School campus. And that's a huge determining factor for residential projects (Interviewer: Yes, I'm sure it is). So, even though that particular piece of property is in the town of Farmington it's in the Victor School District and that's a very strong benefit for that project, you know if it's a project that's going to be marketed towards that market sector. Even though it doesn't show it on here this [highlights trail in green] is the Auburn former
Auburn Railroad line that's now been turned into a hike-way/bike-way. So, you
know if you have a residential community that you're proposing with a town that's
very aggressive at restoring that turning that into a wonderful amenity for people
hiking and biking having that literally adjacent to your project site becomes a real
positive element for the project design (Pell and Gray).

By highlighting school-district boundaries and trailways, Harold draws attention to
aspects of the site within a different paradigm, selling points for the developer. Harold
didn’t outline the school zone on the map during this session, but, as I later found out,
this property is right on the boundary of the school district. And Harold did indeed
overlay the district boundaries onto the aerial photograph of this site (in this case using
the visualizing software from New York State GIS) to see this with certainty.

Notably, Harold doesn’t identify the railbed/bike path as an arterial, though he
could have. He does not remark upon where it goes or continue highlighting its path to
the edge of the map as Greg had done with the two highways. Harold codes it as an
amenity (literally, a pleasantness) that might be appealing to a particular “market sector.”
Amenities and school-districts don’t fit the biological analogy that Greg was developing
earlier, perhaps because Harold’s role in the firm is different from Greg’s. Harold is a
landscape architect by training, but he is also one of the most senior partners. His official
title within the firm is Business Development Director. He spends a considerable amount
of time drumming up business, presenting to municipal and zoning boards, and pitching
to clients. SGE does most of its business with real estate developers building new
subdivisions just like this one and Harold is attuned to the impending transactional
negotiation. As a result, Harold is coding in different terms and enunciating a different
analogy. With an eye toward showing the developer how to sell this project (to buyers
and the Town of Farmington), Harold notices and highlights conditions on the site that he
thinks the town, client, and client’s customers will value. Because he’s holding a different
colored highlighter (by happenstance), his annotations are distinct from Greg’s and we
ended up with an aerial photo coded with two different analogies: the site-as-organism
and the site-as-commodity. Greg and Harold have different jobs and different goals for
the drawings that must be produced and presented in the next stage. But already they are
gathering semiotic resources for that work at this stage, noticing, highlighting, and coding
the aerial photograph in preparation for the rhetorical work it will continue to do.

**Schematic Design**

The next process stage, schematic design\(^7\), describes the creative discovery and
invention of a “design solution” that best mediates between the programmatic needs and
the site conditions. Given the constraints identified during research, inventory, and
analysis of the site and the problems identified in collaboration with the client, the
landscape architects explore what resources and opportunities are available for solving
these problems. They do this by schematizing these disparate elements into
informationally-dense drawings. Schematic drawings illustrate the look and function of
the designed space. They demonstrate the centrality of visualization as an inventive
resource for landscape architecture as landscape architects think on the page in sketches
and diagrams, and then think together through continued drawing.

The main viewing technique I observed in both offices during schematic design
was, as Greg called it, “bubble programming,” also known as functional diagramming,
the purpose of which is to visualize space diagrammatically (Pell and Gray). “Bubble
programming” describes the freehand drawing of diagrams that represent the functional
and relational needs identified in program development as graphic elements such as
circles and lines. Larger bubbles reflect larger spaces, adjacent bubbles are adjacent in
space, and longer lines refer to longer pathways. Bubble diagrams represent in a flat
plane what had until now been a list of requirements, the “program.” One kind of bubble
diagram ignores spatial constraints or conditions of the site itself, instead representing
only the idealized functional areas and the connectivity between them, as in Figure 6.

\(^7\) This stage is also sometimes called “concept design” or even enveloped into the programming stage.
On the other hand, bubble diagrams can be drawn annotatively, either directly onto or, as in Figure 7, on trace paper laid over a plan view map.

Though it likely evokes associations to computer networks or managerial hierarchies, bubble diagraming in architecture precedes other network diagrams, apparently originating the genre. Architectural bubble diagrams appeared in publication
as early as 1929, possibly inspired by the mystical diagrams of Kabbalism popular in the 1920s and 30s (Emmons 863). It was the ultra-modernist architect Le Corbusier who first advocated its practice to his students and Bauhaus designers like Walter Gropius and Louis Sullivan advocated it as well. Both promoted bubble diagramming as an organic way of designing, mimetic of the designs of Nature.

Bubble diagramming has developed into an annotative technique, reliant on trace paper and its capacity to visually superimpose multiple images. Superimposition visually conflates the spatial dimensions of maps and relational dimensions of bubble diagrams. During site inventory, landscape architects render spatial information into a plan. Bubble diagrams render relational and functional information as a visual graphic as well, a diagram. Because diagrams and maps resemble each other and despite the fact that they are organized according to different metrics (function/connection vs. spatial proximity), landscape architects use trace paper to superimpose one over the other.

For Latour, the superimposability of visual inscriptions is one of the defining features that makes immutable mobiles so potent in science and politics.

it is possible to superimpose several images of totally different origins and scales. To link geology and economics seems an impossible task, but to superimpose a geological map with the printout of the commodity market at the New York Stock Exchange, requires good documentation and takes a few inches. Most of what we call “structure”, “pattern”, “theory”, and “abstraction” are consequences of these superimpositions (20).

Latour describes how scientists build visual representations on increasingly consolidated prior visualizations in cascades, “not inscription per se, but the cascade of ever simplified inscriptions that allow harder facts to be produced at greater cost” (16). Similarly, landscape architects cascade layers of trace paper to see patterns and opportunities for design.

Superimposition is more than an abstract or figurative means of comparing one text with another, it is a material relationship, the two texts pressed right against each other in or to reveal a patterns. Depending on which maps are being superimposed designers can see how use areas and municipal codes comingle with sunlight, shadow,
built structures, heat, and wind conditions. Overlaid topographical maps and watershed visualizations show opportunities or problems for storm water drainage. What Latour says of the open holes in the Munsell chart goes as well for the translucence of the trace paper. “Without the holes, there can be no alignment, no precision, no reading,” and without translucence there can be no alignment, no synopsis, no discovery (Pandora’s Hope 60). Not only does the cheap, impermanent trace paper encourage exploratory drawing, but they are superimposable with other layers of trace, properly aligned, over the same plan.

There is no necessity, in a diagram, that well-connected nodes (or bubbles) also be proximal in space. This is clear from looking at an electrical or circulatory diagram.

![Figure 7 Diagram versus Map of Human Circulatory System (“Circulatory System”).](image)

Diagrams tend to represent network importance graphically as size. In the left-hand diagram in Figure 8 the heart is centered, oversized relative to the lungs, and positionally incorrect. In the right-hand map, the heart is easily mistaken as a minor node in the circulatory system. Conflating connectedness with proximity is a systematic bias of annotative bubble diagramming, but it is a felicitous one for landscape design. The effect is that landscape architects place well-connected nodes centrally so that they are easily accessed from all sides and place poorly-connected nodes remotely. This hub-and-spoke spatial arrangement reifies the social prescriptions of clients as a result.
We can see this visual conflation in action as soon as design begins. Greg describes the way he and Harold begin designing using the now-annotated aerial photograph.

Greg: The reality is that the first thing that Harold and I do, almost immediately, is to take an aerial photograph with some of these constraints and opportunities labeled on it and start with bubble programming (Pell and Gray).

Greg then tears off a piece of trace paper and lays it over an aerial photograph that has been “analyzed,” highlighted and coded with constraints, buildings, major trees, etc.. Everything is drawn onto the trace paper which is taped onto the aerial photograph with “drafting dots,” small, circular pieces of drafting tape used to keep the trace and base papers in alignment. He begins to talk aloud through an imaginary program,

Greg: Okay let's see here what what do we have to go in we've got wetlands here so we can't use that, but we sure as hell could use this [draws a circle over an unmarked area] and use this here [another circle] and all that backs up to this [draws arrow to street] single family [draws rectangles inside circles, labels with SF] single family [more rectangles labeled SF] might be a good use over here it's a little bit more dense over here [another rectangle] maybe we do multi-family up in this zone here [labels MF]. Does that mix, yeah that could mix with the other uses that we have around here [points to existing commercial buildings]. And from a land planning standpoint we start to carve this up in our minds, carve it up by doing,… we do roadway, there's a roadway [draws a line through the site] and we'll just sketch something on a piece of tissue paper (Pell and Gray).

As he draws Greg translates aloud areas on the site into “use areas” (e.g. wetlands, single family). By encircling them Greg unifies disparate blotches of color into coherent objects, using his highlighter to focus my perception on the task of interpreting what is inside as a whole. By naming these objects Greg further assists this interpretation and teaches me, demonstratively, how to recognize each object. As I improve at these acts of recognition and “correctly” notice wetlands in other images, I reinforce for myself Greg’s codes as valid and real. As with site analysis annotation, the diagram is heuristic; it facilitates thinking and invention by rendering information gathered in one form (the program from
the client, the inventory from the site visit) into graphic figures. Both the spatial conditions, identified in the site inventory and analysis, and the client’s functional and social requirements, identified during program development, are given figuration, represented graphically as abstract shapes and lines and laid on top of each other such that patterns and conflicts become apparent.

Superimposition allows not just the combination of visualizations of the site by adding layers of visualized information, but also simplifications of it through the removal of layers. Multi-layered visualization has been taken over by computer modeling software such as the widely-used SketchUp and the basically-universal program AutoCAD®. AutoCAD allows designers to work on any combination of different layers of a project (in plan-view) at the same time with the ability to switch on and off layers of drawing. The AutoCAD drawings at SGE included dozens of layers, some of which are drawn by civil engineers, soil scientists, and even computer-rendered visualizations of data. I watched the most junior landscape architect at SGE, Tim, while he drafted a first attempt at code-compliant property lots for the Farmington subdivision development discussed above. His principle focus during this project was to “maximize efficiency,” that is, to squeeze as many single-family plots onto the site as possible given the town codes regarding street setbacks, plot minimums, etc (Pell and Moore). AutoCAD allows designers to keep more visualizations than they would have previously. Tim worked with several layers turned off including the already-progressing civil engineering work on rainwater drainage going on in the next several cubicles. Drainage could potentially complicate the placement of Tim’s plots, but his boss was more interested, for now, in just how efficiently the properties could be drawn. Tim drew in AutoCAD with as few layers turned on as he could manage – site boundaries, existing structures, major plantings, wetlands and their setbacks – since the full display would be totally unreadable. At the same time, his drawing gave figuration to ever more lists of requirements, this time code parameters. He worked in split screen with what he hoped would be the relevant sections of the town code open in a second window, toggling back

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8 These programs are purchased as subscriptions and updated constantly with geographic data. Gordon had access to both of these programs, but SGE only used AutoCAD, a hindrance, in the view of at least one landscape architect, in their ability to do advanced landscape design work.
and forth between listed parameters in the code that would conflict with the goal of efficiency.

Figure 8 Excerpt from Farmington Town Code regarding Single-Family Housing (Town of Farmington Code).

As with the bubble programming we saw before, a list of requirements is given graphical figuration, translated from a whole host of parameters (e.g. the minimum width of lot for a single-family dwelling shall be 60 feet, and the minimum area shall be 7,200 square feet.) into a set of drawn figures – the rectangular single-family plots. The ultimate goal of this effort is to enable the designer to cease having to look at lists like the town code because it (eventually) gets rendered into code-compliant geometric figures.

In Peter Medway’s ethnographies of architectural practice, he focuses on what he calls the “virtual building,” exists as a semiotic construction that is not reducible to the many drawings on drafting tables. Instead, “[t]he developing artifact becomes generally
known, an object of shared cognition...[a]t any one time, different bits may have different degrees of legitimacy and confirmation” (Medway 487-88). Different members of architectural team make changes to the virtual building, unbeknownst to other members, but for which they must still be responsive and responsible. Medway marvels at the semiotic mix of talk and drawing used by architects to coordinate this collaborative synthesis of design work, but his studies predate the widespread use of AutoCAD. What “visualization collators,” like AutoCAD, make possible is a networked, living draft of the virtual building. It can accept and “keep” drawings and edits from multiple designers that would have previously have been kept only in the heads of individual designers. And individual landscape architects are empowered to look only at the elements of the drawing that are relevant and can ask questions of other designers by looking at drawings rather than conducting meetings. This dynamic is not necessarily different from or progress beyond the virtual building described by Medway. It is probably preferred because it facilitates business operations by requiring fewer face-to-face meetings. Most remarkably, designers are still able to collaborate and communicate merely through the entry and recombination of AutoCAD-aligned drawings.

Finally, SketchUp, a modeling software that has largely replaced clay modeling, reveals how designers even collaborate on design with networked computer algorithms that act as landscape architects. Sun-path analysis, for example, describes a kind of plugin to SketchUp that automatically renders precise information about the angle of the sun, shadow down to the meter (accounting for latitude, season, time of day, and altitude). This information, which was formerly analyzed via the rendering of “sun path studies,” is automatically generated once the site is correctly placed (latitude and longitude) and aligned (with cardinal North) within a model of the Earth’s surface. Sun path analysis plugins are designed to not just overlay on top of, but also interact with information about objects (called massings) in the model. For example, Gordon LA landscape architect Alex, rendered buildings he was working on in a “quick and dirty SketchUp model” which automatically cast accurate shadows according to sun angle and a simple dial.

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9 Sun path studies describe the construction of stereographic sun path diagrams, which visualize the arc of the sun’s path and its azimuth in the sky by representing these data as a flat arc an overlaid on top of a plan.
allows the designer to simulate season and time of day (Wagner). He was also able to
download “massing data” on major surrounding built structures to visualize the location
of shade from sources well beyond the site.

Figure 9 Sun path model in AutoCAD (“Visualizing Sun”).

All of this allows Alex to look at opportunities and constraints for design that accounts
for areas of shade and sun in the summer and winter, to know where snow will pile up,
where to place seating and plant trees and what kind. In this, SketchUp has taken over an
aspect of each of the stages we’ve discussed thus far – the site inventory and analysis of
sun light and heat conditions, its rendering graphically, and its superimposition onto other
graphic elements. The SketchUp plugin contributes real information about the site and
renders it graphically within three-dimensional drawing as an additional layer. Alex
collaborates with this entity through its “drawings,” an interactive simulation of season
and sunlight at the site.

Among visualization techniques, superimposition is perhaps the visualization
technique of the landscape architecture studio, and trace paper perhaps the quintessential
component of the landscape architect’s drafting table, because it allows landscape
architects to “draw in layers” on a plan or elevation, creating synoptic visualizations dense with information (see “Modes of Power”). Alex uses superimposition to see conflicts between plantings, users, and sunlight, Greg uses it to see conflicts between the client program and site inventoried conditions, and Tim uses it to see less than all, or rather see selectively, the drawings to-date in AutoCAD.

We might wonder, at this point, what the logical endpoint of landscape architectural vision looks like? What would be stressed in the “best” design, and what would be de-emphasized? Part of the point of taking the skilled visions approach (for me at least) is to show that viewership and the acquired visual skill that one builds over time and practice is responsive to recurrent rhetorical situations that place pressure on what qualifies as best or beautiful. Like other techne, there is no single ideal form, only nimble, proper, timely responses to local kairos. Skilled vision emerges socially (through apprenticeship, conversation, etc.) and changes as social boundaries and norms change. The “best” landscape architecture drawing in one context will be inadequate in others. So, one way of looking at this is the rhetorical way: the “best” landscape design is a text that, when entered into a rhetorical situation, effectively produces change by persuading an audience while navigating constraints. If this seems to flirt with tautology, we can, using observational and ethnographic methods, go and describe those situational dimensions to some extent, as this chapter attempts to do.

By repeatedly attending to what other stakeholders (clients, the public, other landscape architects, approval boards) care about, experienced landscape architects, like Harold or Dave, develop what Bourdieu calls “a feel for the game” of landscape architecture, an aesthetic responsive to the audiences, constraints, and exigences that they repeatedly face. For Harold and Greg, for example, “best” includes the standards of plot efficiency. To their eye a “beautiful” drawing would be optimally efficient without jeopardizing aesthetic quality, violating code restrictions, or ecological viability. It incorporates, for example, native plant species as a saleable benefit for homeowners that reduces their watering and yard maintenance. We see this a bit in Harold’s review of Tim’s work. He expresses to Tim that his drawing is illegible to him (“what is this, the setback?”), a complaint that expresses problems with Tim’s use of visual jargon, but
Harold also presses Tim to create a more “efficient” drawing (one with more housing plots), a criteria for successful drawing for this client. By enforcing his own viewing practice on it, Harold disciplines Tim’s drawing toward efficiency. If we imagine such a design drawing being entered into an international competition (assuming the existence of international competitions for subdivision developments) it would likely lose out. In panel competitions the sorts of practicalities and legal constraints that SGE deals with daily would likely not be part of the judges’ aesthetic sensibility. But Harold and Greg can see this sort of “pragmatic beauty.” They’ve developed an aesthetic sensibility that considers the many constraints that actually bear on real projects. I saw this most clearly in my interview with Harold and Greg, their enthusiasm for well-crafted subdivisions that satisfied the explicit list of program requirements, the objections they saw coming from the approval board, as well as their own internalized desire to create a balanced ecological habitat, and on and on. I also saw it in Harold’s review of Tim and by watching Tim as he did his own design work. Tim, a relative novice at SGE, worked with one computer monitor filled with pdfs of town code and the other with his nascent AutoCAD design. While Harold could glance at his work and perceive noncompliance, Tim had to painstakingly measure setback distances while toggling back and forth between the town code. Because Harold has designed his fair share of subdivisions for the Town of Farmington, he knows what they tend to look like, on paper and in person. So, he can say after a glance when something looks off (“what is the setback you have here?”), not because he’s memorized the Victor town code, but because he has internalized code compliance as part of his own sense of propriety. He has, in other words, visual skill.

**Conclusion**

Much of the scholarship on visual rhetoric is grounded in a critical, semiotic approach to viewership. The dominant metaphor for vision is viewing-is-reading (“visual literacy”), according to which, we perceive visuals as a field of signs that create arguments, emotions, and associations that are read by a viewer and ought to be read critically. Definitions of visual rhetoric reflect this, characterizing it as both analytical (breaks an image down into its component parts) and critical (questions the assumptions
and associations that an image invites and evokes). For example, Sonja Foss defines visual rhetoric as “a critical–analytical tool… that highlights the communicative dimensions of images or objects” (306). And Cara Finnegan concurs that visual rhetoric is “a critical and theoretical orientation that makes issues of visuality relevant to rhetorical theory” (Hill and Helmers 198). However, the visualizations of landscape architecture, especially those that circulate through the design process of landscape architecture firms, form one part in a system of visualization that renders everything from client needs to physical sites as comparable graphic drawings that facilitate collaborative design.

Disciplinary visuals are opaque to lay viewers not just because they require knowledge of disciplinary codes and symbols (those can be learned or provided in a legend), but because they are expert tools that require a professionally-shared and practice-oriented visual competence. Were we to pluck any one of these drawings out of this system and analyze it critically and rhetorically, we would likely be lost without an appreciation for its context. Socio-cultural applications of genre criticism have attempted to tackle this contextualization problem with some success by approaching multimodal texts as “social actions” and understanding visual and textual conventions as concretized solutions to recurrent social exigencies (see Miller, Kostelnick, Miller and Shepard, Bazerman). Yet, these scholars have consistently found genre too inflexible, language-based, and static to grapple with visual rhetoric and new media (see Kress, Miller and Shepard). The skillful approach to visual rhetoric figures these texts more like tools than depictions or statements (see Swarts) and the viewing of them as the embodied practice of an expert who “knows how” to look at and use them (e.g. by superimposing them). As we’ve seen, landscape architectural vision is a complex skill that should not be limited to on-site viewing, nor isolated to graphic design, but extends throughout professional practices from site to studio. It includes such visual competencies as the ability to recognize and draw “what matters” and to use superimposition to disclose patterns.

Visualization does not begin in the studio, but on site as inventory and analysis. The move, via visualization, from site to studio, allows landscape architects to radically revise the setting for the landscape design from the messy landscape site, municipal codebook,
and inchoate meetings with clients, where their graphic artistry has little influence, to the computer screen and angled desk where it governs.
Chapter 3 – Sharing Your Vision

Introduction

While the previous chapter explored visualization as a design heuristic, this chapter explores the rhetorical interaction between landscape architects and lay viewers and thus, visualization as a persuasive tool. It focuses on presentations of landscape architecture to lay viewers, both the public and clients. Public presentations are attempts to consult and curry favor with the community of stakeholders. They are typically open to the public, locally advertised by the municipality, and focus on the visualizations on a “presentation board.”

If presenters wish audiences to take away more than an impression of technical competence they must present accessible, usable drawings rather than construction drawings full of indecipherable symbols, encoded line-weights, and other visual jargon. And yet, learning to read a schematic is not, as many lay viewers believe, merely a matter of learning the visual jargon – the symbols, abbreviations, and conventions of landscape architectural drawing – though these do pose problems. Construction plans, and technical schematics of all kinds, are drawn for a particular use – bidding on, acquiring, and fabricating the plan – that has little to do with the use that lay viewers have for it, comprehending the look and functionality of a future space. Similarly, the graphics of public presentations are made to be used, by public meeting attendees, to evaluate the quality of the planned site and determine whether to approve or oppose it.

The architect and theorist of graphic art, Manfredo Massironi, distinguishes between graphics that “picture” or “depict” an object or scene in-context (illustrations) and those that remove objects from their context (operational graphics), often against an empty white background, in order to exhibit their structure or function (see Massironi). According to Massironi, the illustration is designed to “cause perceptions comparable to those caused by actual objects” by accounting for the optics of human vision, a kind of visual illusion that produces perceptions of depth, relative size, and positioning (Massironi 86). The purpose of the operational graphic, on the other hand, is usually to guide fabrication, disassembly, or manipulation (Massironi 91).

Though we tend to think of the illustration as universally understandable and the operational graphic as specialized, they are better distinguished according to usage. Each is drawn with what deconstructionist cartographers call an agenda, a set of assumptions about what it will be used to do and a resulting selection and omission of details that serves its communicative purpose (see Harley, Monmonnier 130-9). Minimizing distortions to the scaled lengths of edges and surfaces assists fabricators more than prospective denizens and, conversely, maximizing contextual cues serves navigation. Just as road maps are for highway navigation and therefore select certain elements for notation and others for depiction landscape graphics are drawn with distinct agendas. It is primarily our lack of experience with fabrication (as opposed to bodily navigation), and the issues that arise therein, that make operational graphics more opaque than illustrations.
The central claim of this chapter is that selling the lay viewer (whether client, community member, or politician) on one’s plan is a matter of helping them “see” through a combination of talk and graphic displays. The major obstacle to using visual displays to justify landscape architectural work is helping lay viewers to use them to understand the look and function of a space. Rather than understand the crafting and presentation of landscape architecture to the public as “visual argumentation,” designing visuals to express or support a claim or proposition, this chapter describes how visualizations are designed to change lay viewers’ perceptions, to indoctrinate them in the skillful appreciation of landscape architecture. And yet, many of citizens who show up to public meetings have often never engaged in the activity of looking at a drawing in order to evaluate a planned environment. Rather than allow these lay viewers to look incorrectly at visualizations, the landscape architects I observed mobilized a “pedagogy of sight” for landscape architectural vision by adapting the same heuristic visualizations we saw last chapter as pedagogical. If, during design, landscape architects endeavor to order and reduce the “specimen material” of the site through rendering procedures that generate legible, analytic visualizations, then they also endeavor to share their insights with lay viewers in the form of pedagogical visualizations, analogies, and terms that assist presenters in teaching proper viewership (Lynch 37).

For reasons of availability and privacy, I was unable to observe any actual client meetings either at Gordon or SGE. So, I combined interviews with my subjects and observations of their preparations for client and public presentations with video observations of landscape architecture presentations given by other firms and shared in videos online. I was able to view 24 recordings of (mostly public) presentations of landscape architecture from across the country and used these to broaden the sample of landscape presentations. These videos included larger, public space projects (e.g. developing entire parks, extensive waterfront redevelopment). Relying on presentations that have been volunteered for public exhibition might present a biased view of presentations generally. However, many of the videos I used were made available as a matter of policy by the municipality itself (e.g. Toronto Waterfront posts the entirety of all public meeting recordings).
Finally, a word about public meetings, who attends them and why they matter. Public meeting attendees have an outsized effect on landscape architects’ designs both because they are literally present and because they are demographically and culturally similar to landscape architects themselves. Landscape architects, especially those who have conducted numerous public meetings like Harold or Dave, consider themselves quite familiar with the public meeting attendee and their likely concerns, which are familiar to and resonate with the predominantly white, well-educated landscape architects. When asked about what the community wants/fears/cares about they tended to point to their interactions in public meetings.

This is unproblematic so long as public meeting attendees accurately represent their communities. However, the demographic composition of public meeting attendees tends to be much older, whiter, higher income, and more educated than the general population of the area (see Jackson and Shade). Though there is some dispute among those who study public consultation about whether the demographic non-representativeness of public meeting attendees matters in terms of “representativeness of opinion” (see e.g. Gundry and Heberlein), my interviews with landscape architects suggest that they think about public/community opinion by thinking about public meeting attendees. In the next chapter, we’ll see how, even given “representativeness of opinion,” demographic representativeness colors design. The poor, black or Hispanic teenager “concerned about crime” and the elderly, white homeowner of the same opinion present the landscape designer with rather different imperatives.

Consider, for example, Dave’s explanation that during the design of the Brickyard Trail he was aware of the owners of adjoining properties and the likely concerns they would (and many eventually did) have about the presence of a trail running through what they considered their backyards. They would be worried about drinking, vandalism, and delinquent access to their properties. Would their properties be visible from the trail? As a result, Dave sought a trail path that stayed well clear of those properties even when that made his job more difficult. They also sought to emphasize in their graphics for public presentation just how far the trail stayed from these properties, how the lines of sight would be obscured, and how difficult it would be to traverse the marsh that separated the
trail from the properties. That is, Dave anticipated the complaints and concerns of the site’s immediate neighbors and designed (and portrayed the design) of his presentation board to answer those complaints.

Presentation board visualizations, as well as the discourse and text that accompanies them, are employed to accomplish the goal of helping lay viewers glimpse the coherent perceptions of the world through expert eyes and thereby share in a worldview. This attempt to disclose for lay viewers otherwise unseen phenomena must be taught and developed in novice viewers through visualizations. Much like Robert Hooke’s labelled, microscopic engravings visualized an embodied, mechanized, Christian conceptualization of Nature by exhibiting a novel rendering of it, the annotated visualizations of landscape architecture exhibit an aesthetically-ordered and functionally-systematic environment for lay viewers. Through graphic genres such as plans and sections, presenters help their audiences see through the concepts and terminology of the discipline. The visualizations of landscape architecture also reveal an underlying orderliness to the incomprehensibility of the inhabitable environment. With graphics and the language of graphic design, landscape architectural presenters reduce the built environment to appealing “views,” visible in perspectives, and functional “systems,” visible in plans, that are only revealed through drawing.

Views and Systems: The Rhetoric and Display of Landscape Architecture

With graphics at the center of deliberations, Jack’s “pedagogy of sight” and Finnegan’s “image vernaculars” – “enthymemetic modes of reasoning employed by audiences in the context of specific practices of reading and viewing in visual cultures” – become pivotal to understanding the dynamics of public and client meetings: Jack’s because it focuses on the rhetorical training of the viewership and Finnegan’s because it focuses on the application of new skills to produce interpretations of visuals. Recall that Cara Finnegan’s term image vernacular refers to an interpretive framework for viewing images that relies on shared warrants in order to construct enthymemes (34). By encouraging their lay audiences to conceive of space as either a system of human activity or as a visual artwork, the graphic genres landscape architecture pre-determine what viewers look for and eliminate complicating aspects by excluding them from the drawing.
And the rhetoric that accompanies plans and perspectives further inculcates in lay viewers the proper criteria for evaluating them and the design. If Finnegans helps us ask: what kind of interpretive topoi are brought to bear on a graphic, Jack helps us ask: how are interpretive topoi (warrants) developed and suggested to lay viewers? With an appreciation for the kinds of interpretive logics that will be brought to bear on certain graphic genres, we can anticipate the kinds of claims that they will support. Analogies bridge the gap between the experiences, identities, and beliefs of the lay viewer with the visual appreciation of unfamiliar, disciplinary visualizations, such as micrographic engravings or diagrammed plans. Once accepted, these analogies then form the warrants for all deliberation about the site design, a framework for evaluating the exhibited imagery.

During presentation, the landscape architects I observed justified their designs according to two distinct analogies between the presented drawings and the proper conceptions of space. On the one hand, presenters encourage the evaluation of the designed site as a functional system, the purpose of which is to mobilize and facilitate human actions (at least authorized actions). Visualized through diagrams, the implied warrant for landscapes as systemic is “site plans that diagram well will function well.” In other words, if the client can locate on the plan “space for” all the needs/desires of the initial program, suitably accessible and protected from external forces, then they ought to be satisfied that the design accomplishes its program of goals.

On the other hand, these landscape architects mobilized the discourse of graphic art to encourage the evaluation of drawings as one would assess a work of graphic art, according to the geometry-inflected principles of graphic design: focal points, scale, proportion, axis, balance, symmetry, asymmetry, order, unity, repetition, golden ratios, and massings. The constellation of terms for presenting the design constructs the site as scenic or picturesque, with the implied image vernacular that “graphic beauty is equivalent to environmental beauty.” The graphic genre for visualizing this analogy, and the one referenced most often in combination with the terminology of graphic art, is the perspective drawing, which displays the site as it would appear to the eye, illustrating how a proposed design would appear from a particular angle.
These analogies, space as-graphic art and as-system, can be understood as a kind of analogical training in how to view landscape graphics. The analogies help inexperienced viewers use familiar graphics – maps and perspectives – to understand space by looking at pictures. By presenting their audience with a familiar evaluative task (judging the appeal of a painting) rather than a foreign one (using an image to project the experience of a place), examining a diagrammed system or an illustration in perspective becomes a pleasurable, even fun, task that can redirect lay viewers’ focus on mundane problems onto a more pleasurable artistic activity. What sorts of activities would you like in this space? What sort of feelings should it inspire? What message or meaning should the space invoke? These are, of course, questions about an idealized site and the ideal lives that go on within it. Graphics direct attention away from the messy world and toward the idealized visualizations and narratives of it.

During an in-person observation of Gordon’s associate landscape architect, Ann, she reviewed the design of an entryway and garden for a local animal shelter. Ann explained the design of a small area near the entry to the building both in terms of its functional and aesthetic roles. The firm, Ann explained, “wanted to keep the plantings area as large as possible so that it technically reads as one space when you look through it” (Myers). However, in the same breath she notes that “the movement in this area is pretty narrow,” a minor flaw in her view, but a flaw that must be tolerated, in this case, in order to make sure the space didn’t read as divided in two spaces (Myers). I was not, at first, sure what it means to “read as” one space and the perspective graphic is crucial to getting me to see that what she is saying is so by pointing to perspective renderings to explain it meant for a space “to read as” one space and overhead plans to show the narrow pathways. Whenever she spoke about the goals and effects of the design in the abstract she also brought out a graphic to reference. Furthermore, once we had the proper graphic to reference the terms followed suit. With a perspective she could talk about how “focal points” had been created to draw people through the space or how “when you have the same palette of plants through the whole space…they actually blend together and we're not dividing it any further… in perspective things kind of gets flattened out it's going to read to me as one space” (Myers). Ann marshals the language of graphic art to
describe physical objects – a “palette of plants” that “blend together” in perspective – in order to make sense of not just the orderliness of the design, but the fact that it has been composed to have these effects. Similarly, with a plan in front of us, a systemic discourse emerged and issues like “regular” and “easy” access arose. Concerns of mobility and use arise as well,

“You know we want to make the gathering area of course. You can't put it here, you're going to be blocking people, right? So, you're going to have to start being creative with where you're putting the benches and you can see from this [indicates an earlier plan] it is actually changed to this [indicates later plan], was actually. This is printed, let me see, If I have a better … Okay I think it's a little bit easier to see here [indicates a 3rd plan]. So these… the tables are gone they really thought it's not so much for eating it's more for chatting and sitting around” (Myers).

Charles Goodwin and Jordynn Jack, who arrive at similar conclusions about training viewers to appreciate disciplinary visualization, look in different places. Jack’s “pedagogy of sight” describes how a rhetorical framework can “instruct readers how to view images in accordance with an ideological or epistemic program” (193). Pedagogies of sight teach viewers through the use of analogical reasoning and vivid description of where, how, and what to look at in a crafted image (Jack 195). Jack’s initial study examines Hooke’s use of mechanical and bodily analogies and descriptive characterizations of engravings to constitute the “mechanical bodies” revealed by microscopes and to justify the nascent field of microscopy. In a similar vein, Charles Goodwin’s ethnographic description of the annotated visual aids crafted and mobilized by expert trial witnesses to simulate visual skill for jurors, illustrates how cultivation of and talk about visual displays work in concert to enskill viewers with the ability to see from within a professional paradigm. While Jack focuses on the analogical underpinning of texts, Goodwin focuses on the deictics of talk-in-action during conversation that experts use to constitute their objects of knowledge. Both forms of pedagogy are visible in landscape architectural presentations.

Terms, analogies, and image vernaculars work in concert with drawings themselves, which are colorful, elaborated versions of the heuristic drawings used to
discover design solutions in Chapter 2. Following Jordynn Jack, I looked for analogies marshalled during public presentations and found two dominant ones, systems and graphic art. Following Goodwin, I coded video presentations for the specialized terminology used by presenters to describe visuals, noting the ways terms were used with specific kinds of graphics. Terminology participates in the analogies and argumentative logic of presentational rhetoric by extending both via terms of art. By discussing visualizations using the terminology of graphic art or systemization, presenters frame and define the discussions that may be had about the site design. These terms and analogies indicate implicit warranting topoi for viewing graphics, Finnegan’s “image vernaculars,” that help bridge the gap between the graphic and the environmental by conflating aspects of each. The remainder of the chapter will discuss each of these graphic genres, the analogies invoked to explain them, and the pedagogic strategy at work during presentations.

**Visualizing the Look: Photographs, Perspectives and Section-Elevations**

Perspectives, plans, photographs, and section-elevations are presented to an audience together on a “presentation board.” These visualizations are non-technical, lack extensive detail, and are annotated, colorful, and simple for maximum rhetorical effect. The presentation board is often the only stand-in for the design itself, to visually approximate how it will look and feel in a way that is legible to the lay viewer, and so is the only reference point during a meeting. Audience members can then use these graphics to evaluate the design, ask questions, make comments, and give their feedback to designers. While landscape architects, construction engineers, and planning commissions have a fabricating use for drawings (do these drawings describe a buildable object?), clients and community members assume that the space can be fabricated and focus on using the drawings to project denizenship (what would inhabiting this built environment be and look like?). Though the visual jargon is stripped away, the task of using drawings to evaluate a designed environment can still trip up viewers, like myself, without practice at it. The fact that an array of visualizations – perspectives, section-elevations, photographs – are presented helped me, and presumably other lay viewers, piece together a mental picture by using the different graphical views to toggle between vantage points,
guessing about how elements will look and function, and checking those guesses against the other visualizations. Perspective drawings were particularly important to this assembly process. As Kostelnick argues, perspectives are not design drawings; they are, by convention, for lay viewers, particularly important to bridging between the other, less familiar visualizations on the presentation board as well as the lay viewer’s own knowledge of the space (Kostelnick 250-2). It is typically only at the end of the design process, when most design choices have been made, that landscape architects take on the time-consuming, arduous task of drawing a detailed perspective drawing of the site to help them visualize “the look” or appearance of the site by representing it as an illustration from a particular vantage point.

Sometimes hand-drawn, but increasingly drawn using computers with rendering software such as SketchUp or Photoshop, perspectives show an artistic illustration of the site, an in-perspective view of how it will appear from eye-level or slightly above (high-angle). A perspective-view drawing is one kind of graphical projection. It projects objects on a flat surface as they would appear to the eye if viewed in three-dimensional space.

Figure 10 Drawing in perspective means tracing lines of sight where the intersect a flat plane (Nava).

Using the optics of depth perception (the eye sees dimensions along the line of sight as
shorter than dimensions across it) the illustrator foreshortens lines perpendicular to the viewer. Because the eye converts angles into distances such that objects further away appear smaller and vice versa, perspective drawings do the same, drawing distant objects as smaller. In short, perspective drawings best exhibit “views” of a space by providing the same cues used by the eye to perceive depth, size, and texture in the environment.

Like perspective drawings, photographs are exhibited show “the look” of a feature, often one that is indicated in limited detail or is not generally familiar. For example, photographs of particular structures, plants, or claddings can assist lay viewers’ visual imaginations. Photographs are also graphical projections, produced automatically by a using a lens to focus light on film or other receptive surface. Because photography functions most like the human eye, the perspective projections it produces are most realistic to viewers. Photographs are included in presentations to resolve specifics, to clarify what colors and textures will look like together. For example, lay viewers unfamiliar with a proposed wood finish or stone can be shown a photograph.

When describing perspectives, the presenters I observed spoke in terms of “visual appeal.” Well-designed spaces create “appealing” visual effects on an inhabitant. They should have “visual appeal.” Visual appeal describes designed effects on an inhabitant from the feeling of enclosure, to focal points that draw the eye, to small areas that “feel” unified and well-defined. The composition of these visual effects comes largely from the graphic arts, especially perspective painting techniques and the Gestalt principles of perception. For example, the placement of a unique tree in the center of a garden will serve as a focal point, drawing attention there first and then accentuating the view by buildings elements that emphasize on the focal point. Presenters visualize the composition of these “views” through perspective drawings, which are attempts to display realistic snapshots of the finished design from particular vantage points. Of course, a perspective rendering can only visualize the site from one vantage point at a time. So, perspectives represent the site from particularly important vantage points (e.g. the entryway from the street) to accentuate these views.

Perspectives exhibit views exceptionally well. But, painterly views do not exhaust the sorts of visual effects that landscape architects can create and display for lay viewers.
In addition to composing “views,” presenters discuss how the design “defines space” such that it is intuitively legible, an effect that can be quite obvious, if ineffable, to the inhabitant of a designed space, but is difficult to represent on the page. Defining space includes the creation of a sense of enclosure, creating transitional spaces between inside and outside areas, and providing clear boundaries to a space as well as clear avenues for movement, as in, “we used a hedge and red-brick pavers to define the waiting area.” Tim explains spatial definition as “using horizontal and vertical planes to create outdoor rooms” that inhabitants intuitively perceive. Spatial definition is more difficult to represent graphically and yet landscape architects pride themselves on their ability to design well-defined spaces. And so, they endeavor to communicate and how their design will provide “a sense of enclosure” or “an area of respite.” For example, “clustering” similar plantings together in a space inclines viewers to see that space as a single, unified area. A longstanding practice of graphic design, clustering makes use of the Gestalt principle of similarity, that “elements within an assortment of objects are perceptually grouped together if they are similar to each other” (“Gestalt”). Section-elevations as well as high-angle perspectives that depict the site from slightly higher than eye-level can accentuate this spatial definition. In Figure 2, a section-elevation is used to show how the addition of trees and an existing convex landform can create a feeling of enclosure and privacy.
Figure 11 Showing Spatial Definition with Section-Elevation (Reid)

The section (or cross-section) renders the landscape as though the top layer of earth at the site were cut vertically in half along a chosen plane, separated, and then viewed at a perpendicular angle, not in perspective. It is the counterpart to the site plan, which is a horizontal section taken at ground-level. Any elements that do not intersect the imaginary plane are not represented. Sections are used commonly in architecture to show the vertical dimension and structure of a building.
Figure 12 Section-Elevation of Coal Creek Parkway (JGM Landscape Architects).

Presentational graphics tend to combine the section with an elevation in which background elements (not contacted by the cut) are also represented. An elevation is a horizontal projection of the landscape onto a parallel vertical plane. By adding elevation-views of parts of the landscape beyond the section plane, section-elevations synopsize multiple kinds of information about the vertical landscape (terrain grade, element heights, human scale) in a single representation in order to give the “sense of space” created by a design.
Lay viewers don’t always arrive at a public meeting thinking in the correct terms. Instead, community members often bring with them idiosyncratic concerns about loitering teenagers, off-leash dog runs, and parking and voice these concerns during the question and commentary portion of the meeting. Talk of the “definition” and “legibility” of space can be, not just unfamiliar, but of secondary concern to public meeting attendees. Yet, by using the language and visualizations of landscape architecture, presenters impose their view of the space, its problems and their solutions, on the discussion as the relevant and appropriate terms for discussing design. Section-elevations, for example, are often used to address questions about the character or “feel” of the designed space. The terminology that accompanies section-elevations, like perspectives, is noticeably influenced by the rhetoric of geometry. Ann, for example, describes her use of vertical planes (e.g. hedges, fences) and horizontal planes (e.g. tree canopies, decks) to “define space” (Myers).

Because they are attempts to exhibit visual appeal, each visualization of “the look,” especially perspective renderings, are also highly-idealized illustrations that manipulate weather, season, light, people, maintenance conditions, time, and angle of
view in 11 ways that distort the reality of the design. Neighboring structures and activities can be in selected or ignored for representation. If, for example, a neighboring lot is vacant and overgrown with weeds the rendering can strategically frame-out any view of it, fading to white where the site ends. Conversely, a neighboring park, view of the water, or otherwise valued view can be included and accentuated, often in the same drawing. Perspective renderings regularly omit mundane elements that are either likely to be present or are legally required and therefore will necessarily be present on the actual site. Garbage cans, municipal signage, and homeless persons are rarely shown on graphics. These elements are omitted to increase the visual appeal and perpetuate the notion, at the heart of any design art, that the denizen’s problems, needs, or desires can be solved through the physical reorganization of the environment 12.

The idealization of perspectives also goes on along the dimension of time. Perspective renderings tend to show all of the possible uses of a space going on at the same time, resulting in an unrealistic over-population of the site. So, sports fields will be filled, paths walked-on, and benches in use. A pastiche of presents and futures are woven into a single perspective rendering: trees have typically reached full maturity (+10-20 years), yet the cars and people are contemporary, it is always Spring, always sunny, often mid to late-afternoon, and the grounds have been immaculately cared for. Similarly, photographs of example elements (e.g. “here’s what a gazebo looks like”) will be expertly-taken stock photos in high-resolution, idealized conditions and lighting, and in well-designed settings. Indeed, an entire subspecialty of professional photography, architectural photography, has developed to properly capture the professional view (as

11 Occasionally, these are formed into “principles” for explaining landscape architecture, as Rob Steiner does formally in Garden Design Magazine, by imploring amateur gardeners to obey “the law of significant enclosure,” which recommends that the vertical planes of a space be at least 1/3 the length of the horizontal plane (Steiner). His other “rules” of design have the ring of geometry as well. For example, the use of a “regulating line,” an imaginary line that governs the orientation of elements and pathways in the design or “the golden ratio” which helps viewers comprehend drawings in plan view (Steiner). While presenters don’t often invoke specific laws or principles, they do refer to obliquely to geometric rationales through the use of the language of “focal points,” “balance,” “symmetry,” and “proportion.”

12 This idealizing tendency cannot be completely reduced to the nefarious manipulations of client and public expectations. As students of cartography learn early on, maps must generalize of necessity, or build a cluttered and useless map. In order to perspicuously disclose the information relevant to the viewer’s purpose significant detail must be omitted and not always in service of misleading the viewer.
well as large scale) of beauty in architecture and landscape architecture. And, the skills and effects of this kind of photography have been pivotal in the design of photorealistic, 3D renderings. Given that perspective illustrations are idealized in this way, the hope is that lay viewers will mentally project a vision of the site that reflects a concomitantly rose-colored view of the design.

Though graphic idealization seems motivated to distort or even deceive, my interviewees didn’t see it this way. From their point of view, lay viewers require these overly simplified visualizations in order to focus on the relevant aspects and evaluate the design. Indeed, as Alex told me, much of the back and forth between Gordon and their clients has to do with what can only be described as irrelevant details being altered or removed from the rendering in an effort to return attention to what the artist considers the relevant aspects of the drawing. Take, for example, the scale figures (people) included in perspective renderings, which are an issue of particular scrutiny and variety. Alex at Gordon LA spent considerable time thinking, showing, and redrawing the human figures in his drawings. Here is how Alex described what he was working on as he added detail to a rendering of a lakefront property,

Um, again this was like the 10th iteration that we ended up landing on there was a bunch of different ones with different types of plants and even the people end up being pretty important cause to us all they are is scale figures that's all they really serve to us is understanding the size of the space but when the client looks at it that's one thing they can really understand is people so they're looking directly at that and saying “this isn't diverse enough,” “this isn't, you know, it's not the right age group.” So, getting the right people is also a challenge.

Alex’s focus on human figures illustrates just how confusing “thinking in three dimensions” can be and how open they are to influence through representational selection. Even perspectives are treated as technical drawings, drawn to show the look and scale of the visual elements. For those who have never encountered this kind of disciplinary graphic on display during a public meeting, being asked to use what is essentially a painting to evaluate the underlying design it represents, devolves into an exercise in nitpicking. In a search for familiar, informative details, many viewers lock
onto people as a telling indicator for the design. Here, Alex shows a designer’s frustration with an audience who, focused on the human figures included (from his perspective) to give a sense of scale, refuses to evaluate it on the “correct” basis. It is Alex’s job as the rendering artist to adapt the drawing to the client’s preferences and that’s what he does, but it is the presenter’s job to help lay viewers see the visualization differently, more expertly, according to criteria such as the views that the design affords or the way it organized the space into well-defined areas of use. Pedagogies of sight narrow what can be seen in part by teaching viewers what to ignore. According to the artists, the idealization of the portrayed scene is driven as much by the viewer as by the designer. The removal of distracting details is part of the process of correcting misuse of the visualization, by focusing lay viewers on “what matters,” what will be created and why, what the design is trying to accomplish. Idealization clears the way for lay viewers to attend to the “correct” details of an illustration.

Such confusion is common. In another instance, a client was bothered by the presence of an adult male figure who appeared to be alone in a park because he seemed like a threat. In another, the client was opposed to an early-stage rendering that used character-less “shadow figures” that are a common feature of architectural drawing. Here’s part of a conversation between Dave, Alex, and Sara during preparations for Sara’s presentation to a client:

Dave: Did you put Joy (client’s child) in the picture?

Alex: No

Sara: No, it.. Don’t, don't put anything that even resembles anyone because you'll get in trouble. He did have some weird looking kids in the photo-sim (Alex: Its shadow people) and some other creepy guy I saw hanging out in their patio. (Alex: I didn't know if she lived alone) She has friends visit, but she will definitely find it creepy (Smith).

The fact that the client finds the scale figures “creepy” is not surprising or confusing to any of these landscape architects. They are used to clients who take this approach to their drawings and are focused on the task of rendering the perspective in a way that assuages the client. The client evaluation of the design simply cannot proceed until these distractions are removed.
In general, scale figures are typically middle-class, slightly diverse, active, pedestrian, and young (children frolic through everywhere). The resulting image represents the site as the active, social center of a community. This is a puzzling use of time for the rendering artist if we assume that the purpose of the drawing is to evaluate the landscape design. Even if we accept that portrayals of the site on a sunny, Spring day will help it sell by covertly influencing its evaluation, it makes little sense for the lay viewer to focus on the entirely-fabricated inclusion of human figures, much less their age, attire, and even apparent class, except for the fact that their clients are determined to use those figures to evaluate the design. When experienced viewers see those figures they use them to get a sense of how big everything is by via a reference element that is always about the same size. Other than their size, the scale figure doesn’t really need detail and is often drawn as a cartoon or a faceless outline. And yet, from his comments it appears that Alex believes lay viewers look to human figures for cues to the success of the space by looking to see what kinds of people have been attracted to them. Or perhaps, more charitably, that lay viewers attend to the human figures as cues to how the landscape designers are thinking about who the space is for. Either way, considerable time is spent swapping out “irrelevant” details, sometimes derailing client meetings because they cannot get past the presence or depiction of a human figure.

As presenters endeavor to show how their designs will look upon completion, their language invites viewers to think instead about design elements and in the terminology of graphic design, in terms of focal points, massings, frames, and planes. In terms of visualizing the look of the site, viewers are presented both with a selection of “views” and with “defined spaces,” and is educated through the presentation about how those visual effects are composed through rules of thumb and concepts from graphic design. They should evaluate perspectives based on whether it creates appealing views and section-elevations based on the creation of legible “outdoor rooms.” In order to allow this interrogation distractions must be removed or altered in order to help viewers attune themselves to using illustrations, perspectives and section-elevations, as exhibitions of particular kinds of information about environmental design.

Both Jack and Goodwin emphasize that visual expertise is taught and shared with
the lay public in service of the discipline and profession, as justification for its goals and
authority and to engender appreciation for its craft and expertise. As a rhetorical strategy,
then, a pedagogy of sight is a sincere attempt to help outsiders recognize an orderly world
through an unfamiliar medium. Landscape architects can hardly help themselves from
trying to impart to clients the analytic value of graphic visualizations and an appreciation
for the beauty of the view from their drawings. They see themselves as offering lay
viewers both the tools and skills required to understand space, to “think in three
dimensions” about the design of space. This pedagogical persuasive strategy mirrors the
accounts given by Goodwin (about archaeologists and police officers) and Jack (about
microscopic scientists) and is arguably a hallmark of visual rhetoric of professionalized
experts. Their presentations are not just designed to sell, they are geared toward
educating clients in the sorts of details they should care about, details that can best be
grasped through graphic visualization\(^\text{13}\) and solved through graphic design.

Once viewers adopt the professional framework for viewing, the work of
persuading them about particular instances of expert work is practically complete, as
Goodwin’s description of police testimony in the Rodney King trial makes tragically
clear. Goodwin explains,

The central point debated within the [Rodney King] trial was what the policemen
who beat King perceived him to be doing. These perceptions were not treated as
idiosyncratic, phenomena lodged within the minds of individual policemen, but instead as
socially organized perceptual frameworks shared within the police profession” (616).
Once jurors were convinced of the existence of shared, expert “professional vision” of
police, they were authorized to use it to make novel kinds of judgments. In the context of
an authoritative expert deploying a coherent set of terms, coding schemes, and visual
aids, this perspective-taking activity can overwhelm even the commonsense of jurors

\[\text{13} \quad \text{While I argue for a pedagogical understanding of the design presentations, I don’t assert that this is all}
\quad \text{that is going on. Many clients and stakeholders surely evaluate designs based on explicit arguments, on a}
\quad \text{cost-benefit analysis, or on their identification with the presenter. Neither would I claim that the}
\quad \text{pedagogical indoctrination of viewers, even when it plays a role in persuading them, is complete or even}
\quad \text{very substantial. Clients are not often inclined, after being so-trained, to go out and become landscape}
\quad \text{architects. However, they do often arrive with some interest in design and appreciation for it and are}
\quad \text{therefore naturally curious about and receptive to the kind of expertise on display in these meetings.}\]
viewing images of assault. The key to getting lay viewers to agree to the actions and claims of an expert, is getting them to view, speak, and deliberate (even when they express disagreement) in accord with these “socially organized perceptual frameworks” (Goodwin 616). Or, as Kenny Fountain saw in his medical students, “view bodies as instantiations of anatomy,” to change they ways the conceptualized the object of knowledge (Fountain 121). From within the visual paradigm of expertise, actions that would have seemed wrong, senseless, or confusing can be reevaluated as sensible, logical, and just.

Visualizations are pivotal in this process. The goal in presenting a design is less a “built case,” as a pure visual argumentation theories might suggest, and more an attempt to prompt in viewers a kind of paradigm shift, or rather, a genuine attempt to indoctrinate the viewer by offering them a limited view of the design and limited language with which to discuss it. The landscape architectural view of space, when discussed, detailed, highlighted, annotated, and diagrammed with landscape architectural terms is designed to help others “see” and discuss it properly. And proper viewership, in landscape architecture, means graphically-mediated viewership. Visualizations are presented as useful and appropriate tools for understanding spaces via drawings. Yet, most of the landscape architects I interviewed described lay viewers as, if not visually incompetent, at least naïve and inexperienced at using graphics to visualize space. They voiced frustration at lay viewers’ tendency to resort to seemingly irrational ways of evaluating design, their fixation on non-design elements in graphics, and their penchant for agreeing to major changes with little comprehension of the implications (see e.g. Alex’s comments above). For example, clients often express a desire to change the character of the human figures in a perspective rendering (e.g. from old to young) despite their irrelevance to the design.

Ultimately, creating visually appealing graphics are key to teaching landscape vision, because they invite confusion between graphic and environmental beauty. As graphic artists themselves, landscape architects are in an advantageous position to leverage their drawing ability to create visually appealing visualizations. Presenters even seem to want to help lay viewers understand how visually appealing designs have been
made appealing, via lessons on creating views and defining space, implicitly justifying their own expertise. The unspoken warrant underlying this iterated crafting of ideal depiction of the space is that visually appealing graphics will make for appealing environments when realized as three-dimensional spaces. If clients find their visualizations unappealing as graphics they will be uncomfortable with the design, perhaps for reasons they’re not even capable of expressing. To some extent dissatisfied viewers can be reassured that “they’ll like it when they see it,” and narration and orienting descriptions during the presentation can be used to evoke non-visual aspects of the design. But, presentation drawings are presented as if they were the physical site. And, for lack of an alternative locus for discussion, their visual appeal as graphics becomes the proximate issue for evaluation. As a result, deliberations about the site design become graphicized, governed by the terms and warrants of graphic art, as well. None of this is to suggest that a graphic understanding of space wrong or necessarily problematic, just that an unspoken warrant – beautiful drawings make beautiful spaces – applies to the practice and rhetoric of landscape presentations. But, drawings don’t only visualize “visual appeal,” some are exhibitions of how the site will function and affect behavior, the other dominant analogy and the subject of the next section.

**Visualizing Functionality: Plans and Diagrams**

While private clients often prioritize the look of a design, community members and stakeholders tend to focus on questions of functionality rather than aesthetics: How can we increase park usership? How can we have safer, more inviting public areas? Will this design invite the “wrong” sort of people into our community? Presenters answer these kinds of questions by pointing to diagrammed visualizations designed to exhibit how the design will function: affect behaviors, afford movement, and organize activity in public space. Visualizing the functionality of a design, as we saw in the previous chapter, is accomplished through the drawing of plans and superimposing them with diagrams. The site plan is the epicenter of attention during presentation since it maps all the elements visualized elsewhere.
Like perspectives, maps are familiar to most people and so they are a useful graphic genre for orienting lay viewers. Few presentations fail to include at least one plan-view visualization of the site.

As we saw last chapter, site plans are also relatively easy to overlay with non-geographic information in the form of diagrams. Plans that have been functionally diagramed tend to be easier to interpret since they pertain to human movement and activity on the site, subjects that community members care about.
Site plans project the site from an overhead view, useful for showing the “footprints” of structures, pathways, streets, and plantings according to their relative proportions and distances. Plans make boundaries easy to see because they “place” only one or two objects in any location. Conversely, they are poor visualizations of tall, vertically-complex objects like buildings. For landscape architecture, however, design along the z-axis (height) tends to be relatively modest and simple. Landscape topography and trees can be flattened and symbolized in plan-view with contour lines and canopy circles.
The most relevant information, the placement and displacement of objects (plantings, pathways, etc.) along the x and y-axes, is rendered geographically and in proportion. This flattening effect serves a similar purpose it did as a design heuristic in the previous chapter; it eliminates a whole dimension of spatiality, allowing the viewer to forget the complications of height and depth so that they can focus on a diagram, a system.

One of the most famous sociologists of space, William Whyte, is known primarily for spending time on rooftops filming public spaces and the people in them: where they go, how they cluster, what they do, what they avoid, etc. Whyte made a study of how the built environment influences social behavior and he did it by adopting an overhead viewpoint. De Certeau maintains that the perspective of plans (God’s eye, panoptical, controlling) generates particular conceptions and interventions about space. For De Certeau the God’s-eye perspective that we get from the skyscraper was crucial to panoptic, social control. The plan reduces terrains into texts and produces his division between strategy and tactics (91). These are the same concerns that drive NIMBYist skepticism of building and that many community members arrive ready to voice, a desire to control their environment and the people in it. Because the site plan is at the center of discussions of landscape architecture the diagrammatic-systemic perspective becomes a primary schema for understanding the design, understanding how it will control human
activity and behavior, therefore, becomes the central issue for discussion.

The site-is-a-system analogy invokes not only the visual rendering of the site-as-diagram, but also the language of systems. Areas are identified by their functions, the goal of sustainability figures the site as an ecosystem, and terms such as connectivity, pooling, channeling, and route of flow describe the circulation of resources. This discourse most often figures the site as an organic system (an organism or ecosystem), one that circulates resources dynamically to different functional entities (e.g. organs). Architectural theory has a long history of conceiving of buildings as organism-like (see Emmons). At other times, the discourse figures the site as a machine, as when functional areas and connective paths are planned or repaired. Most often this second sense prevails. The site is a human-centric machine whose purpose is allowing inhabitants (at least considered, authorized inhabitants) to move easily and comfortably through a networked site filled with functional zones that users value. Thus, the designed site is diagrammed as a machine for facilitating the set of actions laid out in the initial program.

As with visualizing “the look” of the design, visualizing its functionality is an exercise in learning to see and think like a designer. Presenters typically begin in the same places the design process did, with environmental and landform conditions at the site in plan-view and end with perspectives that show how it might appear. Presenters show plans diagrammed to exhibit how their design will accommodate sun, wind, and other environmental conditions, how it will function differently during different seasons, how it facilitates, anticipates, and privileges certain kinds of movement (e.g. pedestrian over automotive) and activity (e.g. play fields, shaded seating areas). Yet, few meeting attendees arrive concerned about whether the site will be well-adapted to the weather and climate. Why walk the audience through the design process? Why not just show them where all the amenities are located and what they’ll look like? Presenters are once again teaching viewers to appreciate their work by visualizing for them the technical constraints and practices that have gone into the work of design. The various agendas of the site plans establish the proper criteria for looking at and evaluating the design.
While certain diagrammatic plans can be confusing to viewers who have never seen, for example, sun/shade patterns represented diagrammatically, presenters try to help by explaining the significance of color, shapes, and symbols in these simplified, analytic displays. Ultimately, these displays are meant to justify programming choices such as the placement of seating areas. For example, during a meeting soliciting public feedback for preliminary designs of Aitken Park in Toronto, Scott Torrance and Thomas Balsley present a series of visualizations of the park. Early in his presentation Torrance tells his audience that his firm “looked at the wind analysis and the sun/shade analysis of the park to get an understanding of how it will actually feel throughout the seasons” (“Aitken” 2:42-45). Meanwhile, he displays four simple plans of the site (each labeled as one of the four seasons) titled “Wind Analysis.”

Initially, these plans are diagrammed in pink (labeled “conducive to sitting activities”) and blue (labeled “conducive to standing activities). This graphic is quite clearly, to anyone familiar with the genre, a simplified version of a common visualization in wind engineering, the “pedestrian wind-comfort” analysis. A wind-comfort analysis measures wind conditions in terms of their conductivity to walking, standing, strolling,

\[ \text{Figure 17 Torrance's Wind Analysis ("Aitken Park").} \]

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14 Several examples of presentations come from the Toronto Waterfront initiative because the city has recently made an extensive effort to consult with the community on a major public space project in downtown Toronto and because they make all their public meetings publicly available as video recordings.
sitting, or uncomfortable (see Stathopoulos). The underlying concept of pedestrian wind comfort is not explicated during the presentation but taken for granted. Presenters may even consider it helpful, as opposed to displaying wind analyses in terms of quantified speed. Indeed, it is difficult to understand at a glance what exactly these plans are representing without taking their characterizations about wind and comfort at face value, especially in the 90 seconds of focus the display receives.

Calling an area “conducive to sitting” is an odd way to talk about how windy it is. What does it mean, for instance, for wind conditions to be “conducive to sitting?” Do sitters prefer light winds or a nice breeze? Do those sitter preferences change with the season? The climate? My temptation was to simply accept the characterization as a technical matter. Torrance attempts to help the viewer out, explaining that “in the spring the west side of the park will be sunny in the morning and also will be very comfortable for sitting. So, it will be a great place to locate chairs and tables” (“Aitken” 2:46-2:55). As he delivers this line, an additional annotation – two yellow-colored, rectangular areas along the west and east sides of the park – now appear over the plan labeled “Spring” as well as two sun symbol and ranges of hours (SUN: 8AM-10AM, SUN: 2PM-3PM).

These represent Torrance’s “sun pockets” that will be present in the Spring and their times, early morning and afternoon. So, now we are looking at a plan overlaid with two types of information, wind and sun, though the “wind analysis” information is
relayed in terms of sitting/standing comfort. But, Torrance adds to the confusion by presuming the analytic clarity of the wind analysis diagram and explaining the conditions predominantly in terms of “sun pockets,” as the new overlays are revealed one by one. Presented in this way, it was difficult for me to resist interpreting the blue shaded area as “shady,” rather than “windy,” especially given that low-wind areas often overlapped with sun pockets. Furthermore, as a lay viewer, I took the indication that an area was “comfortable for X” quite literally and not, as it was intended, only in its technical sense as conveying the amount of wind. Though it is meant to be clarifying, thinking of windiness in these terms, conductivity to some actions and not others, is odd and can misleadingly imply a level of scientific precision to the design that is not warranted. Torrance really is trying to “show his work” in a simple, colorful graphic that approximates the heuristic visualizations of pedestrian wind engineers. And, given enough time to re-listen to, pause, and Google terms from it, I can understand this presentation correctly. However, without these luxuries and without familiarity with this graphic genre, the display has a different sort of coherence to it.

The most important information communicated in the graphic is not the specific analysis of Aitken Park, but the clear statement of the appropriate criteria for thinking about programming the site: wind patterns, shade patterns, and their seasonal variation. We are invited to think about these conditions specifically in regard to their effect on human comfort and activity, the site as a system of human actions. Without saying so explicitly, Torrance makes clear which criteria his audience should consider relevant and any future discussion of this plan-view graphic (one of the few plans offered) will be literally colored by these criteria. Once we accept them, the landscape architect’s diagrams and drawings become an almost unavoidable medium for understanding the site. As Torrance explains, Aitken Park is sunny in certain places (alongside the buildings), at certain times of day, during certain seasons. The audience need not understand how the combinations of sun, shade, season, and wind have been considered as long as they are confident that they have been and that they are being shown a kind of proof that these patterns are matched to the design, even if we don’t quite follow along, confusing wind and shade or overgeneralizing terms of art like “comfort.”
Notice that the criteria for what can be considered and dealt with by the landscape architect is limited to that which can be displayed, preferably rendered into plan-view so it can be superimposed onto the site plan. Diagrams are visualizations of the relevant criteria and, indeed, almost the only criteria for evaluating the design’s functionality. They tell lay viewers what variables to care about and design for by depicting them as shapes or vectors. Typical categories of diagrammatic overlay include: sun path analysis, noise analysis, wind rose analysis, heat analysis; at the urban planning level this also includes circulation, kinetic, and traffic diagrams. The resulting visualizations are analytic plans that foreground “zones” of influence through the figuration of selected criteria (e.g. areas of sun exposure at particular times) and therefore justify certain design choices (e.g. move seating into areas of summer shade and winter sun at midday). The presentation of the design becomes a graphic game with its own logic and rules: desired functions should be located on the plan as figures, usable circulatory paths must be created to connect these functional areas, and environmental interferences must be either blocked or accommodated.

Perhaps this seems obvious. Of course, in the presence of diagrams and maps a speaker will be almost required to explicate only what the display reveals, in this case the highly visible pink and blue wind analysis and yellow sun pockets. My aim is not to accuse landscape architects of deceit, but to trace the emergence of a teachable, heuristic viewership, a combination of terms, analogies, and displays, that “works” for the presentation and evaluation of designs because lay viewers can be encouraged to “see” its coherence. If, in the context of a presentational site plan, the rhetoric of systems seems almost obligatory this is a happy consequence of a heuristic device that can be successfully mobilized to teach the systematic, diagrammatic vision of landscape architecture. Not only is the lay viewer encouraged to think in terms like “use areas,” “public and private zones,” and “circulation,” they are also taught to see them, to correctly identify what counts as meaningful instances of those phenomena in a site plan or aerial photograph.

Diagrammatic overlays and annotations realize the systemic terms and analogies of landscape architecture as colorful shapes and vectors. When superimposed onto the
site plan, the viewer must literally “look through” the translucent overlay that frames, highlights, and encodes it in order to analyze it. The result of learning to see space diagrammatically is a site composed of functionally-defined “areas” connected by circulatory paths and assailed by environmental vectors (wind, sun, water) that affect usage and must be either accommodated or “blocked.” When audiences comply with the criteria laid out by visualizations they do so by using to their terms and logic to ask questions, make comments, and even level criticism. Here, for example is an exasperated audience member at a Toronto Waterfront meeting who goes on at length, seemingly searching for the right way to phrase his frustrations:

So, there is that triangle at the bottom beside the Don River, I mean beside the Don Roadway, the straight-line path. That is something that I always thought could have been a traditional natural area. It is now, you have now made that part of the natural area, but at the same time the developed areas have probably increased in other places … overall there's still a lot of questions about what the development will be and whether it needs to occupy as much area as it does it's not as if we absolutely have to have development we can decide how much we need. But, I still think you need to consider that maybe the development charges need to be higher so that you can have less development rather than necessary driving this by the development that's actually there and in particular I think just to use this as an example I think what was done in the West Don Lands is an example of overdevelopment and the wrong kinds of development. I mean to put buildings up to eight stories right inside the park doesn't make sense that's where you want the two-story buildings. To have that huge new building right at the entrance to the valley at Queen Street I don't even know how that happened. I mean it's obvious like we don't want to see those kinds of things repeated in the Port Lands. So, if that just means plain less development so that they can be both greater areas of natural land and at the same time not have to have extra height then that is a solution. (“July 24—EA Meeting” 5:00-5:23)
Even though the commenter speaks almost entirely in ordinary language, his comment also struggles to mobilize the proper terminology to isolate and criticize the design. His initial references to the graphics on display refer awkwardly to triangles and lines. He divides the design into “development” and “natural areas,” divisions that are easy enough to understand, but that are at the same time clumsy attempts to use the terms of art that the presenter wields with far more sophistication. And, he has difficulty justifying his assertions that tall buildings don’t belong near the park, “it’s obvious we don’t want to see those kinds of things repeated.” Though there is a legitimate, deeply-felt public critique in these comments they come to seem completely out of place in a public deliberation that has become quite technical. On screen during these comments we can see the landscape architect disengage from listening, cleaning his glasses and waiting for them to end, and several audience members turn back to look in exasperation at the commenter. The presenter does not bother do address the comment and the moderator moves on with a reminder to keep comments focused and short.

In contrast, in a different public meeting, an audience member worries whether the design that has just been presented isn’t “your summer pool in Canada scenario where it’s it’s lovely in you know your Spring and Summer seasons but doesn’t get much use in Winter. You know one thing I dream about is maybe skating somewhere on the Don River kind of like the Rideau so I’d like to hear a little bit more about the winter programming” (“Port Lands” 1:26:07-43). This is a well-disciplined request from a member of a citizen group. He wants to “hear about the winter programming,” a correctly-used piece of jargon and a focused request for a particular amenity. Instead of insulting the expertise of designers he references a similar successful design in a rival city, appealing to both a sense of civic pride and acknowledging the value of design. A presenter responds to this request:

Yeah so that’s actually been a very important part of our discussions is thinking about the seasonality of the programming across all of the park spaces… but beyond the winter there are certainly the shoulder seasons that have to be thought about carefully and I think when we are as we move further into detail design and are looking into areas such as Promontory Park
which if we are able to use to our advantage the fact that we are creating the
promontory from all this fill and create sheltered microclimates for the
different types of programming we can extend the use of those spaces even
though they are exposed to the prevailing winds and make that more of a

Though it sounds relatively accessible, the presenter and this questioner speak to each
other in terms that are thoroughly technical. From “programming” to “fill” to “sheltered
microclimates,” a layperson is left to guess at the meanings of key nouns from context
clues. This isn’t an impossible task, the above response is certainly intelligible if
unnecessarily difficult, but it is also heard differently by different audiences, fostering a
productive kind of miscommunication.

In his 1982 Argument and Advocacy article, “The Personal, Technical, and Public
Spheres of Argument,” Thomas Goodnight argues that “argument practices” of the
technical spheres “substitute the semblance of deliberative discourse for actual
deliberation, thereby diminishing public life” in part because “[a]s forms of decision
making proliferate, questions of public significance themselves become increasingly
difficult to recognize, much less address, because of the intricate rules, procedures, and
terminologies of the specialized forums” (Goodnight 199-206). Accordingly, Goodnight
suggests that “an appropriately designed public forum would provide a tradition of
argument such that its speakers would employ common language, values, and reasoning
so that the disagreement could be settled to the satisfaction of all concerned” (Goodnight
202). What landscape architects seem to have discovered is technical terms that maintain
the semblance of common language. Just as Goodnight warns, those who fail to correctly
employ the rhetoric of landscape architecture and urban planning in public meetings run
the risk of being ignored as unserious whereas properly-used jargon inspires thoughtful
engagement in the same idiom. It has become, in other words, incumbent upon the public
to organize not just around an issue, but to verse themselves in technical knowledge and
terminology to participate in public deliberations. Indeed, the “winter programming”
questioner is a representative of an activist group with some expertise in urban planning.
The unsuccessful questioner appears to simply be a frustrated community member who
lacks the language to express himself. Instead of the presentation making it easier for him to do so, it makes things more technical and difficult.

The system-inflected terminology of ecology, especially the term sustainability, is particularly useful for disciplining these comments into compatible language so that they can not only be reconciled, but so that their fundamental incompatibility is hidden. The language of plans and functionality often overlaps with the language of ecology, specifically in one of its commonest buzzwords, sustainability. Public meeting attendees include those who don’t care at all about (and sometimes are antagonistic to) environmental issues and those who care deeply about them. Presenters are faced with critical feedback from both sides. And because of the regimenting question-and-answer format of most public meetings, mutually incompatible dissents do not interact with each other to reach consensus. Instead, all public comments and questions are directed through the moderating responses of the presenter. Yet, the invocation of “sustainability” can warrant arguments vaguely enough to upset neither side.

As I’ve argued already, it is not ecological systems that get diagrammed on presentation boards, but the human functions of a space (e.g. recreational fields, walkways, areas of shade), a tool metaphor in which the built environment is conceived of as a machine for human mobility, recreation, and use. With talk of “sustainability,” “landscape ecology,” and “native species,” presenters vacillate (sometimes purposefully) between invoking the care for biological ecosystems and the economic and social sustainability of the design. For example, invasive species violate the principle of sustainability and so do unnatural landforms that disrupt water flow. However, the word is also used to mean “economically sustainable,” for example, what will help maintain a “sustainable tax base” (Pell and Gray). For example, during his preparations for client presentations Greg at SGE consistently touts “the long-term affordability of native grasses,” because they don’t need to be mowed as often and require minimal watering. Harold makes this pretty explicit for me when I ask about his use of the word,

I look at sustainability and I think we do as a firm as kind of that three-legged

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15 This doesn’t always work, of course, as Greg acknowledges. SGE’s clients are typically developers, not residents, of properties and so they are themselves focused on salability. Native grasses, it turns out, aren’t as broadly appealing as a traditional mown lawn of turfgrass and so developers are hesitant to use it.
stool it's not only that environmental sensitivity to design but it's also the social aspects of
you know the quality of life kinds of things within communities and within a setting. You
know, does a park function because of the way it's designed does it function successfully
and third is economics and without any one of those three things you know my view of
sustainability is questioned. We often say that when we hear when we go into a public
meeting and people complain about how intense development might be you know we
have a mindset that you know that the developer, our client the owner, has to be able to
make a profit on that otherwise, you know, it doesn't work. So, those are those are three
important things at least in my definition of sustainability (Pell and Gray).

Harold and Greg are using the term sustainable both correctly and misleadingly. Harold’s
comments mirror pretty much exactly the EPA definition of sustainability, the
goal of which is to “create and maintain conditions, under which humans and nature can
exist in productive harmony, that permit fulfilling the social, economic, and other
requirements of present and future generations” (“Learn About Sustainability”). This
broader meaning of the word is actually quite common in the corporate world; there’s
even a Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) that tracks companies according to their
economic, social, and environmental sustainability. But, the technical definition of
sustainability matters less than how typical community members use and understand it.
Harold goes on to complain that most people (including those he works with) don’t think
about sustainability like he does, as having economic and social dimensions. And yet,
both Harold and Greg pepper their talk with the word liberally.

Sustainability functions, especially in the context of a public forum, as an
ideograph or virtue word. According to Michael Calvin McGee, an ideograph is “a high
order abstraction representing commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined
normative goal” (15). Widely used ideographs of western political discourse such as
<equality>, <liberty>, and <freedom of speech>16 are also examples of Westen and
Hart’s “virtue words,” words that are both less than fully specified and are thus open to
various, different interpretations and that “convey normative judgments without being
defined as expressing normative judgments,” in this case positive normative judgments

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16 Ideographs are marked with angle brackets by rhetorical critics to indicate their status as ideographs.
(Westen & Hart 543-4). For the uninitiated audience member, sustainability is synonymous with environmentally-friendly because it is generally used in contexts that imply such a meaning. It would be odd to hear someone say, as Harold’s definition suggests, that a plan is not sustainable because it does not create enough jobs. But this is, indeed, part of the technical meaning of the word and how presenters like Harold apparently mean it. The ideographic use of <sustainability> helps facilitate cooperation through misunderstanding between presenters and members of the public who need not reach true consensus or compromise because they hold different definitions and conceptions of terms crucial to a project’s justification. Harold implies, with the persistent use of <sustainable>, that even self-interested choices are also environmentally-friendly ones. By conflating ecological and economic sustainabilities, presenters invite lay audiences to confuse the functioning of one kind of system with all kinds, all while maintaining a kind of plausible deniability because of the breadth technical definition of the term.

Virtue words, like sustainability, also work in combination with the simplified, didactic visualizations on presentation boards. As we’ve seen, presentational functional diagrams exclusively visualize the paths and activities of humans, not the ecosystems or habitats of nonhumans. Yet, plantings and grasses are typically the only colored items, given various appealing shades green, while streets and buildings are typically left translucent. This gives most drawings the effect of looking like an especially green place, even if they’re small urban parks surrounded by concrete and asphalt. If <sustainability> is a virtue word, green appears as a “virtue color,” implying something vaguely and normatively positive. While my interview subjects seemed to genuinely care about ecological sustainability, plants’ and animals’ uses for the site are not displayed. As with the native grasses, environmentally-sustainable design is something clients like to feel they are doing without making sacrifices on the program, cost, or visual quality. To the

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17 To speculate slightly, Harold strikes me as slightly uncomfortable with the lay meaning of sustainable as equivalent to environmentally-friendly. And yet, it is a near-ubiquitous commonplace in the profession. A broad definition of sustainable, “part of a three-legged stool” including economic and socially sustainable, allows him to use the word without having to personally adopt an environmentalist political outlook (Pell and Gray).
extent plants or animals appear on the drawing at all, they are displayed as decorative, visual elements, again for human ends. The presence of green color and the sustainability warrant stand in as tokens of environmentally responsible design despite its absence from the logic of either the plan or the rhetoric of its presentation. “Sustainability” is an ideograph and an argumentative warrant that complements plans and diagrams to encourage viewers to feel good about choices that are justified by it.

Presenters of landscape architecture mobilize a pedagogy of sight to win jobs by bringing their clients into an arcane-seeming, often-confusing world of visualizations – diagrams, plans, elevations, and sections – and training them to look with the concepts, schemas, analogies, and terminologies that make them cohere. They use perspective drawings to show “the look” of a design, highlighting its visual appeal through composed “views” and “defining space” in section-elevations and high-angle perspectives. They use diagrammed plans to teach lay viewers to see space as a system of human functions. In many ways the graphics of landscape architecture directly reflect the concepts and terminology of the profession. Indeed, the presentation board visualizations are simplified versions of the very heuristic drawings landscape architects use to invent and discover their ideas.

Conclusion

This chapter began by describing the role of presentation graphics as something more than a “visual argument,” a display of evidence meant to be used to build a logical case for a proposition. Instead, the visualizations of presentations, from perspectives to diagrammed plans to section-elevations, are aides for educating recognition, helping lay viewers see and conceptualize the site like a landscape architect. The lay viewer is shown where to look (colorfully highlighted areas), how to think about areas of emphasis (through terms and analogies), and even what to ignore (through omission) through the depiction of the site. They are meant to persuade the audience not just as exhibitions of evidence or proof, but as perceptual paradigms. Comparable to Robert Hooke’s micrographic engravings or the annotated frames presented by police experts during the Rodney King trial, they are offered as revelatory, insights into a hidden reality available only to those who look, talk, and think in an appropriate, expert way. Like a microscopic
engraving, lay viewers may initially find the visualizations incomprehensible, but learn (with help) that they carry useful information in them. An orderliness becomes apparent only by looking at space through drawings. Unlike the natural orderliness of microscopy, however, that orderliness is revealed as the careful composition of designers. That is, spaces must be made orderly, systemic, and aesthetically pleasing through the practice of landscape architecture.

Constructed to sell lay viewers on the design by showing them how it will appear to the eye and how it will facilitate the actions of human beings, these presentational graphics must answer different questions and serve the distinct uses of clients and the public\(^\text{18}\). The viewing audience at a public meeting asks questions that predominantly reflect an interest in how the project will intersect with (disrupt) their lives: how it will affect their property values, how long construction will go on, or what kinds of people it will invite into their community. That is, they have particular uses for public spaces in their community that they are invested in and to an extent consider “theirs.” If the answers to these questions are not made available in visualizations of the space, viewers will ask them explicitly. However, few of us have any experience using visualizations to choose between proposed designs, nor do they consider a drawing as a significant intermediary that might distort their perceptions and evaluations of designs. They have limited language or criteria for evaluating and critiquing drawings. And yet, with a little orientation, based on unfamiliar drawings, most of us can and will form opinions based on drawings and inflected with expert terms and concepts.

In creating rhetorical visuals that exhibit information selectively, omit details routinely, and simplify and reduce three-dimensional spaces for the average viewer, landscape architects find themselves with significant representational latitude, a powerful position from which they can distort, omit, and emphasize visual elements represent the function, look, and effects of the design. For example, perspective drawings regularly

\(^{18}\) Interestingly, public meeting discussions are increasingly recognized by developmental scholars as having their own rhetoric, a set of warrants and arguments that has been termed NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard; See Borell & Westermark). NIMBY objections center around a particular set of complaints about proposed construction: crime, outsiders, property values, and aesthetics, of concern to denizens. The presentations of landscape architects anticipate these complaints and discipline the deliberations by teaching expert terms and criteria through their visualizations.
omitting mundane elements like garbage cans, fire hydrants, and street signs and carefully
crafting the human scale figures. If visualizations are to be informative rather than cluttered
and confusing some elements will need to be represented, some emphasized, and others
obscured or omitted. Despite this representational latitude, landscape architects don’t just
project an image of their design that is totally unrealistic (though they take their liberties,
especially when representing non-design elements such as weather and people). After all,
they will ultimately be held accountable for the quality of the built site, not just nicely
drawn promises. Landscape architects seem to prefer their clients to appreciate what
they’ve done for them for the right reasons and they endeavor to teach them to appreciate
landscape architecture through drawings that clarify “what matters” by highlighting and
representing it.

As a result, drawing, as the primary means of invention and presentation, tends to
imbue designed spaces themselves with the orderliness and legibility of graphic design,
as the geometry and artistry of graphics is ultimately carried over into the built
environment itself. The end-result of landscape design is a site that “reads,” as landscape
architects say, easily and intuitively. Focal points attract the eye and guide the movement
through the space. Clustered plantings give the impression of unity and size. Sites
become more visually interesting (having incorporated the best graphic design principles
such as contrast, color coordination, and geometric balance), more legible and traversable
(becoming more map-like, it becomes clearer how to navigate it and what we are
supposed to do in it). Space is “defined” into “outdoor rooms” through the use of sharp-
edged, geometric planes. The built environment becomes, as a result of passing through
this crucible of drawing, more graphic. If, in the future, landscape design and
presentation is done through three-dimensional models rather than drawing plans and
perspectives, as some predict, we may find city planners hiring computer modeling
experts and video gaming developers to build hyperreal virtual spaces that the public and
public officials can visit virtually. Perhaps public meetings will center on these virtual
visualizations in the hope that lay viewers will be able to immediately and intuitively
evaluate designs without needing to learn how to look at a site plan, which might alter not
just the presentation of public space, but its design.
Today’s graphics of landscape presentations encourage us to act, not as passive recipients of a visual argument whose premises we already understand, but as confused newcomers to a technical domain who are being asked to make important questions on the basis of graphics. These viewers are invited to abandon their common sense (e.g. looking to human figures to evaluate scenic qualities), to learn and apply new criteria. Goodwin’s study of the King trial is a case study in just how perversely this can go, as jurors are encouraged to abandon their common sense and view a brutal police assault as a kind of dialogue controlled entirely by the victim. Presenters, through their heuristic talk and displays, invite the public into an expert world in which certain elements deserve attention, others to be ignored, and the very conceptualization of space is analogized in new ways, to functional systems and geometrically-proper graphic art. None of this is common sense, the presenters of landscape architecture seek to develop in lay viewers the same heuristic, graphically-mediated way of viewing space, landscape architectural vision, that they themselves use. This visual skill is mediated by drawings, specifically drawing in the heuristic genres of landscape architecture. It is a skill that viewers are meant to internalize and carry with them, including both looking at graphics such as plans and elevations and mentally projecting an image in one’s head as well as looking at the physical environment as an illustrator and seeing the possibility for reducing the world into graphics.
Chapter 4 – Defensible Space

Introduction

The last two chapters show how visualization operates as both a design heuristic and a pedagogical tool for sharing tacit knowledge toward persuasive ends. I have argued that many of the biases of public space design arise from visualization practices that recognize and represent sites through the medium of drawing. I have also argued that the presentation of landscape architecture is an exercise in “teaching” lay viewers to adopt their “professional worldview” by recognizing the same exigencies that landscape architects do. There are more exigencies for landscape architecture than it will be possible for me to explore in one chapter. This chapter is a rhetorical analysis of one such exigence – public space is dangerous – that confronts landscape architects. Graphic genres are powerfully shaped by public meeting attendees’ fear of public spaces, resulting in a style of public space design that Nan Ellin calls, “the architecture of fear” (see Ellin).

The graphic genres of landscape architecture give salience to some exigencies to the exclusion of others by making them visible. The rhetorical cultivation and identification of exigences as exigent, primarily through heuristic drawing, is an important dimension of genres of technical communication. However, it isn’t the case that landscape architects simply invent each problem they then solve. While many exigences are visually and terminologically constructed for audiences, landscape architects are also confronted with the problems of the community, such as the cost, safety, and character of public space. And, though the target audience for this visual rhetoric are those privileged community members who experience urban fear of crime not as a concrete problem of their lifeworld, but as an abstract societal concern, fear of crime is foremost among them.

Understanding how genres are adapted to the problems they respond to is the purview of rhetorical genres studies, which conceives of socially recognized problems as “exigencies” (Bitzer) and the appropriate responses as “social actions” (Miller). Most genre theorists reject Bitzer’s initial formulation of rhetorical exigence as an objective state of affairs and instead follow Carolyn Miller’s characterization of it as a “social
motive,” a “mutual construing of objects, events, interests, and purposes that not only links them but also makes them what they are: an objectified social need” (30). Thus, exigencies represent not just any private problem, but those socially-approved problems and motives that may form the basis for rhetorical action. The transition from personal to disciplinarily and genre-bound exigencies is a learning and acculturation process. As Miller argues, we “learn to adopt social motives as ways of satisfying private intentions” (38). Rhetorical genre theorists have further characterized exigences as “perceived homologies in circumstances,” “similar appearing problems,” “a standard perception,” “an objectified social need,” and as “patterns of similarity.” The typified, rhetorical responses that develop in response to these collectively-recognized “samenesses” are what they call genres. Genres, then, emerge out of and are bound up in the social dynamics of a situated group. They tend to harden and reify through repeated responses to the group’s exigencies, defined by their shared perceptions of lack or need. Thus, by studying exigencies and the genre forms that address them we can better comprehend how problems appear to distinct communities and what sorts of rhetoric count as solutions.

To demonstrate the way genres of landscape architecture are adapted to the social motives of public audiences, this chapter focuses on the common idea that public space is dangerous shared by many public meeting attendees (and to a lesser extent by municipal officials such as town boards). There is no more common complaint raised during public consultations than the problem of crime and anxiety about the design inviting its rise. The public’s concern about crime and their concomitant fear of entering and investing in the public realm emerges over and over again in ethnographies of (see Merry, Low), polling on (see Davis, “Safety”), and empirical studies of urban life (see Russo, Vieno, & Rocca). The landscape architects I interviewed confirmed that they can almost always count on the issue being raised in public meetings. Yougov polling shows that Americans

19 In landscape architecture, for example, a powerful “sustainability warrant” is regularly used to justify design choices via the topos designed spaces ought to be sustainable over time. This topos is reinforced both in the rhetoric and visualizations of the landscape architecture. Further, many of my subjects’ implied that pedestrians take priority over cars and their drawings encode those presumptions into graphics with depictions that omit cars, include pedestrians, and designs that foster walking.
have become increasingly afraid of crime in the US, especially in large cities, and that half of Americans believe that crime has increased over the past 20 years, during which period it has not only decreased, it has plummeted (see “Safety”). Though what it is mean by crime varies tremendously, the responsive visual rhetoric of landscape presentations is telling. As we’ll see, crime in public space generally refers to incidents of burglary, theft, and assault by concealed assailants. Regardless of the actual crime rate or their own likelihood of victimization, a large proportion of Americans are afraid to enter urban, public spaces (see Russo et. al). Several sociologists have proposed that this paradoxical rise in fear despite falling crime is related to the breakdown in what Eric Klinenberg calls “social infrastructure,” the material and institutional places – libraries, parks, bars, coffee shops – that provide context and opportunity for social life in a community (Klinenberg, see also Putnam). In sum, the idea that public space is dangerous is widely perceived, especially focused on large cities, out of step with actual crime statistics, and potentially related to the post 1960s breakdown in civic engagement and public life.

While other topoi of landscape architecture – sustainability and pedestrianism – are fairly recent fads in landscape architecture, one responsive to the environmental movement and the other a response to the modernist movement, fear of the city and its masses is as old as modern cities themselves. Bound up with class and out-group anxieties, historians have traced the expression of urban fear to the French Revolution (see Ellin, Rabinow) and ethnographers have tied it to racial anxieties and an attendant “loss of placeness” that follows urbanization (see Altman and Low). As Miller’s theory of genre predicts, though community members may harbor other “private intentions,” such as racial anxiety or childhood nostalgia, the appropriate “social motive” for expressing those anxieties is the more technocratic concern about crime (Miller 156-160): “Is this gonna bring strangers into the neighborhood?...I don’t want a bunch of drugs going on in my backyard [Dave voicing public meeting attendees]” (Gordon “Interview”). As we’ll see later, municipal officials (e.g. town boards, city engineers) avoid even these versions of the problem, fully converting citizens’ “safety concerns” into environmental or budgetary problems. Regardless, one of the principle reasons that the public seeks guidance from experts in the design of public space is a belief that
landscape architects can help them exert social control, especially over strangers, in order to “feel safe” in public. This fear is manifest in the design of public space itself because landscape architects, sometimes unconsciously, sometimes quite purposefully, and other times by legal requirement, respond to these anxieties through their drawings.

Felt safety begins with design for the middle-class – from middle-class scale figures to middle-class targeted amenities – to imply a sort of “if you build it they will come” logic that is never explicitly stated, yet seems adapted to assuage the anxieties of a public meeting audience. “If we draw and design orderly spaces,” they imply, “the correct members of the community will show up and occupy them.” The converse implication is just as important: through the absenting of certain people (e.g. the poor, the homeless, and minority communities) from perspective drawings these groups will no longer be present in public spaces. Once a viewer accepts that design through drawing can solve social ills like crime, landscape drawings can be read as sensible, even quasi-scientific remedies to the social problems that go on (or fail to go on) in those spaces. By simply not reminding audiences of their existence and not accommodating their needs in the design drawing the poor are “crowded out” of the picture of the community.

However, felt safety goes beyond graphic representation. As we’ve seen, the two dominant metaphors of landscape drawing and rhetoric are space as system and space as appealing view. Both can be mobilized to compose spaces (and drawings of spaces) that feel safe and assure community members that redesigned public spaces will solve problems like crime. Perspectives exhibit a “naturally surveillable” space: clear lines of sight free from hiding places and visible to neighbors (see Jeffrey). Meanwhile, plans partition space into proprietary zones designed for socially approved activities and about which denizens feel “territorial” (Newman).

I’ll argue that the rhetorical topos visual order causes social order reconciles these two views of space into a coherent logic that suggests design solutions to the safety-from-crime concerns that members of the public bring to meetings. This topos is then applied to landscape graphics as an image vernacular. That is, visually ordered environments – well-defined spaces and paths, well-maintained grounds, transparent views, etc.– are presented as remedies to social disorder, from vagrancy and vandalism to petty theft and
Let’s look at an example. Figure 1 shows an example of what crime preventative design looks like. Why does the “after” image from Figure 1 above look safer (meaning something like, “it seems less likely you’d be accosted walking along”) than the “before” image? One explanation, call it the implied guardianship thesis, suggests that signs of care operate as an index for the presence of a carer or guardian. Perhaps the definition of a bounded walkway does additional palliative work, metaphorically implying a domain of protection from all sorts of encroachment, not just vegetative. The second path seems to authorize its own use; its parallel, bounded edges and reflective post were obviously installed. The other shows signs that it has been made through usage, a well-trod cut-through, a path where people weren’t meant to go and where one might encounter others who are places they’re not supposed to be. Having been accosted on the “after” path, one can imagine pointing to the path itself as a kind of promise of protection from those who

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20 To be fair there is some photographic sleight of hand at work here, the “before” picture was taken in winter and the other during a season when the grass is greener. Though, ironically, warm weather and criminal activity travel together (see Schinasi and Hamra, Horrocks and Menclova), the “after” image does look more inviting.
put it there, maybe even suing.

Alongside the implied guardianship thesis, a few other explanations of visual order causes social order have been elaborated by theorists: (1) the architectural definition of public from semi-public from private territories encourage denizens to take responsibility for areas of ownership, to watch those areas, notice intruders, and to protect them, known in architectural theory as “defensible space;” (2) landscape design that provides for clear “views” provide the panoptic situation, epitomized in Jane Jacobs’s “eyes on the street.” Because people feel they are being watched and that potential assailants can be seen approaching, they feel a kind of safety in numbers.

And yet, visual order causes social order was not stated explicitly by any of the landscape architects I interviewed or observed. It is implicit in the entire project of public space design, from design to presentation, that redrawing public space can address the exigency of crime. In general, this means seeing social problems as remediable through visual design and seeing drawing as medium for environmental design. We’ve seen that landscape architects use diagrams to visualize functional systems and that use perspectives to see visually-appealing views. To further understand this quasi-science of behavioral landscape design, the theory(s) that underwrite felt safety design and rhetoric, we should first understand some of the historical context for the idea that the physical environment can be shaped to encourage a safe and crime-free public realm.

**The Landscape Architecture of Fear**

Urban and architectural theorists have remarked extensively on the appearance and expression of fear of urban, public space. Prototypical examples of the architecture of fear include fortress-like home design, single-use zoning, mandatory set-backs, defensive park design and furniture, and the rise of home security systems and gated communities. The criticism that the contemporary landscape reflects a public paranoia has been connected in particular to neoliberal capitalism’s privatizing tendencies (see also Flusty, Davis). Per Ellin, the architecture of fear describes “the ways in which the contemporary landscape is shaped by a preoccupation with fear” and the argument that it “exacerbate[s] rather than eradicates[s] the sources of fear and insecurity” (back cover). The historian of architecture, Joy Knoblauch, however traces a more contemporary trajectory for the fear
of public space back to the nostalgia for traditional neighborhood design that originated with Jane Jacobs and her “eyes on the street” theory.

In The Death and Life of American Cities, Jacobs celebrates the sidewalk as a critical device for generating order and a shared sense of safety. The central problem of urban space, that so many strangers are concentrated together and expected to trust each other, can be solved in part, says Jacobs, by “[t]he ballet of the good city sidewalk” (50). Through the communal watchfulness of those very strangers, an “intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves, and enforced by the people themselves” city sidewalks secured themselves (32). At its core, Jacobs’s idea was that traditional street design – dense occupancy, mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods – had already solved the urban fear problem by placing anonymous strangers as close together as possible and giving them clear sightlines to public space. Only empty, unwatched streets and sidewalks require policing and invite criminality. Therefore, thought Jacobs, sidewalks should be designed such that they are kept in fairly continuous use and invite the watchful eyes of those she called the “natural proprietors of the street” through the orientation of windows toward the street (35). These two goals reinforced each other because “[n]obody enjoys sitting on a stoop or looking out a window at an empty street…Large numbers of people entertain themselves, off and on, by watching street activity (35). She critiqued the modernists of the mid-century for their abandonment of traditional, close-set, walkable street designs in favor of what she saw as self-aggrandizing, alienating architecture that failed to respect this “intricate sidewalk ballet” (51).

Rhetorical scholars have expanded on the implications of architectures of fear for public rhetoric and deliberative democracy. In particular, City of Rhetoric, David Fleming’s rhetorical study of the array of urban design theories and visions for the city, which argues that community conflict, not feeling or empathy, is necessary for a healthy public sphere. Fleming subscribes to Jacobsian advocacy for public spaces that “generate contact,” though “neither the intimate contact of the home nor the formal contact of the assembly or courtroom. It is the casual contact of strangers and acquaintances” (“Housing Rhetoric”). Fleming’s focus on contexts that fail to foster dispassionate-yet-invested
argumentation is reflected in Jenny Rice’s call for less feeling and more non-judgmental, rhetorical inquiry in Distant Publics. Rice critiques what she sees as a problematic “public subjectivity grounded in one’s own feelings” as the primary failure of public development discourse because it “serves to distance publics from each other” (back cover). The issue for rhetorical scholars, according to Rice and Fleming, is not citizens’ argumentation skills -- each points to a surfeit of valid, well-reasoned public arguments -- but a lack of fellow feeling with other members of one’s community. This close-but-not-too-close relationship recognizes others as valid participants in a shared world, yet allows for their differences. And yet, the only public spaces that appear equipped to “generate contact” are the homogenous, quasi-private spaces of suburbia, which isolate denizens from potential conflict, exposing them only to potential interlocutors who share their values, identities, and ethnicities. For Fleming, these represent the fallen state of urban environments, “a place that [is] sparsely populated, homogeneous in citizenry or function, and predominantly devoted to private pursuits” (162). And he presses us to wonder whether, “good argument require[s] contexts in which arguers are daily confronted with other arguers holding different views but united by common problems?” (152). If so, then the privatization of public spaces and an urban infrastructure that stymies rather than generates contact removes the conditions that have traditionally grounded deliberative democracy.
Crime-preventative design, while not the only factor, has played a major role in dismantling the deliberative invitations of urban, public space. Jacobs’s “eyes on the street” framing of the dilemma has taken hold in America, less an explicit theory and more as an aesthetic sensibility shared by designers and the middle-class audiences they design for. Not only should designing surveillable public spaces make denizens feel safer, they were thought to encourage investment into the community, a sense of responsibility, and investment in self-governance through self-policing. From the designer’s perspective, the “natural proprietor” subjectivity that Jacobs refers to can and should be fostered through proper street design. And yet, prompting proprietary behavior soon developed into a more explicitly behaviorist theory of criminology as Jacobs’s ideas collided with a crime wave during the 1960s and 70s.

On its own, “eyes on the street” tells designers how to make crime more observable, but not how to encourage strangers to defend one another. Psychological research in the late-60s suggested they might not. The 1964 high-profile murder of Kitty Genovese “in the safety of her Queens neighborhood, allegedly watched and
uninterrupted by 38 of her neighbors” was a turning point, not just for public perceptions of urban crime, but for the role of environmental design in defending against it (“Do You Feel”). The Genovese murder led John M. Darley and Bibb Latane to propose the “bystander effect” in 1968, an enduring finding in social psychology that claims onlookers are less likely to assist victims in the presence of other onlookers than they are when alone (see Darley & Latane). The bystander effect seemed to demonstrate the insufficiency of “eyes on the street” since onlookers in crowds were protected by their anonymity which created a “diffusion of responsibility,” discouraging any one person from helping when no one else was (Darley and Latane 155-60).

Oscar Newman’s 1972 popular book, Defensible Space: Crime Prevention Through Urban Design, advanced things by adding “territoriality” to Jacobsian surveillability, the idea that public spaces could be designed to foster a natural sense of ownership of common spaces. Newman was influenced by the contemporary writings of Robert Ardrey and Konrad Lorenz who argued that human behavior is driven by inherited instincts toward aggression, hierarchy, and territoriality (“The Economy” 341). Ardrey’s territoriality comports with behaviorist notions of humans as animals, dominated by reactivity and instinct. It is no coincidence that such a design theory was developed and deployed primarily in urban, public housing developments or that public officials took them up enthusiastically (“Do You Feel”). Newman’s idea was that designers could foster a protective territoriality through the design of the urban environment by “creat[ing] clearly defined zones of territorial control and influence... primarily through the use of physical and symbolic barriers intended to be easily perceived by local inhabitants and outsiders” (Newman 272).
Figure 21 Example of CPTED-driven design of a streetscape (“Building Resiliency”).

By using barriers, even symbolic ones such as low picket fences or hedge, to distinguish public for semipublic from private space, Newman offered designers a semiotics through which they could design to mitigate crime. Items such as swings, flowers, picnic tables, and lawn furniture could be used to convey that an area is being actively managed or guarded. However, Newman made little attempt to separate correlation from causation. Newman’s own published research has been critiqued as unscientific (see Kaplan, Mawby), including critical appraisals by Erving Goffman as well as Newman’s collaborator George Rand who departed an early attempt to study the design of the Pruitt-Igoe grounds (“The Economy” 348-50).

Taken together, natural surveillability and territoriality displace a different logic for safety design, the logic of “fortressing,” or in police jargon “target hardening.” Fortressing describes the building up of physical impediments to criminal action, from walls and fences to deadbolt locks and bollards (short, dense posts used to divert cars). The logic of fortressing for safety is that visibly strong defenses will delay, and thus deter, attacks. Mike Davis’s “Fortress L.A.” is the most comprehensive account of fortressing urban public spaces. In it he details the numerous defensive architectures from bum-proof benches to caged trash bins that frustrate non-automotive movement through Los Angeles. Davis calls one regional library branch with it “fifteen-foot security walls,
anti-graffiti barricades…, sunken entrance protected by ten-foot steel stacks, and its stylized sentry boxes perched precariously on each side,” “undoubtedly the most menacing library ever built,” (239). Fortressing design does its job too well. Rather than signaling to all denizens (with or without criminal intentions) that an area is safe, it signals that it is unsafe, apprehensive of attack, fearful. People tend to avoid public spaces that exhibit their own armor because it implies an impending attack and makes denizens feel like criminals. As Davis points out, architectures of fear “relentlessly interpellate a demonic Other (arsonist, graffitist, invader) whom it reflects back on surrounding streets and street people” (240). However, the design program laid out by Jacobs and Newman, premised on the notion that transparency and public/private definition promote safety, works not to make these spaces less coercive, but to make that coercion less observable. In doing so they bring to “fortressed” public spaces the same solution Jeremy Bentham applied to the prison.

C. Ray Jeffrey’s term CPTED (crime prevention through environmental design), based on his 1971 book Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design is the term used today by scholars in criminology and urban design for this entire array of designing to prevent crime, from target hardening to “eyes on the street.” Jeffrey’s book attends not just to architecture, but also to maintenance of public space – timely removal of graffiti, repairing broken lightbulbs and windows – as an important component of crime prevention. Jeffrey’s book was the seed for “broken windows theory,” the criminological theory that observable, indexical signs of crime and social disorder further encourage crime and social disorder in a vicious cycle. Proposed by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling in their 1982 Atlantic article “Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety,” broken windows theory suggests that denizens look to indexical cues in the built environment to determine the appropriate social norms and degree of monitoring. Thus, timely maintenance, especially the removal of “indicators of social disorder,” of public spaces becomes a key aspect of crime prevention. Broken windows theory was put into wide practice in the early 90s, most famously by Bill Bratton in New

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21 According to Charles Peirce, an indexical sign is one that has a natural, direct, or necessary relationship with the object it refers to. For example, a footprint is an index of an animal, smoke indexes fire, etc. Wilson and Kelling key in not on symbolic signification, but on indexical signs of this sort.
York City, and was credited for the reduction in crime during the 1990s (see Corman & Mocan, Kelling and Sousa), though those claims have been challenged (see Harcourt and Ludwig, Sternbe... CPTED strategies remain a component of “best practices” in landscape architecture. A section on “Security Design” is written into federal building code by the General Services Administration (GSA), specifying that “site planning, perimeter definition, sight lines, lighting, etc.,” should be considered to “prevent and mitigate crime” (“8 – Security Design”). Some municipal legislators have even passed ordinances to enact CPTED design principles in public projects (Atlas 877).

And yet, it would appear that crime isn’t all that amenable to behavioral modification by environmental design. At least based on empirical studies of the matter, sites designed according to CPTED principles don’t mitigate (much less prevent) crime when implemented (see “Do You Feel,” Corman and Mocan). One might object, even given that such designs don’t lower crime, that they at least give citizens as sense of agency and make them feel safer about being in public space, perhaps leading to a virtuous cycle of citizen involvement and investment. Yet, here too felt safety design (and maintenance) doesn’t even appear to mitigate the kind of feelings of unsafety that one might hope it would. Psychologists distinguish between two kinds of fear of crime, a concrete fear of crime (FC) and a more abstract “concern about crime as a social problem” (CC) (Amerio and Roccato 18–19). Researchers describe FC as a “a feeling of dread or anxiety about personal safety or about personal possessions’ preservation” (Russo et. al 4). Someone who is afraid of being personally victimized in public has a concrete fear of crime (FC). This concrete fear of crime is often based on a personal history of victimization or familiarity with others who have been. Certain social groups are prone to have higher FC: young and old people, women, low-SES groups, poor people, and the poorly-educated (Russo et al 4). An abstract fear of crime (CC), on the other hand, is a more general anxiety about crime in society, a sense that “crime is getting worse” in one’s country or city, but not correlated with personal exposure to crime. Instead, CC is associated with exposure to mass media (see Heath and Petraitis) and “distrust of others, ethnic prejudice, and political disempowerment” (Amerio & Roccato). Meanwhile, CC is “weakly or even not linked to people’s everyday experience” (Russo et al 8).
When CPTED strategies are enacted the empirical evidence suggests that they address CC rather than FC. As Russo, Vieno and Rocca find, in their empirical study, removing “signs of social disorder” (aka “physical incivilities”) does little to address actual crime or its concrete, psychological effects on community members likely to be victimized (women, the young, elderly, and poorly educated). The composition of “safe feeling” spaces, assuages citizens’ concerns about crime in their society, while leaving both actual, local crime rates and concrete fear for personal safety unaffected (Russo, Vieno, & Rocca 4). Furthermore, concern about crime is, itself, often a stand-in for other personal anxieties about race and cultural change that are not recognized as proper “social motives.”

Felt safety is, in a sense, a creation and for the rhetorical situations of client and public presentations. Contra landscape architects’ own sense of it, I believe that felt safety is most important during the verbal/visual presentation than it is to the environmental psychology of denizens, as CPTED theories assert. If we understand Newman, Jacobs, Jefferies, etc. as innovators in the presentation of landscape design, expanding what it promises and connecting those promises to social policies that municipal leaders care about, then CPTED looks much different. Such a view also makes sense of its practitioners’ reticence to empirically test their theories or respond to critiques of its validity. Perhaps local politicians are satisfied to be seen trying to address issues of public safety so long as people like Newman and Jefferies are able to provide “good enough” rationales for CPTED design. And besides, no one else is offering the same deal: a solution to public safety problems via a one-time, building project.

For this reason, I have tried to maintain a distinction between felt safety and CPTED. The first I define as a verbal/visual strategy for presenting and discussing landscape graphics such that spectators/audiences feel they will foster safety. Felt safety, is something we feel as audience/spectators to landscape graphics, when they are combined with the explanations and terminological framings of a presenter. The second is a theory of environmental psychology that promises to foster feelings of safety (and ownership, protectiveness, etc.) in denizens who encounter the site. Felt safety is a response to the particular community that shows up to public meetings and consultations
with “the public,” a complex, visual and material rhetorical construction tailored to address this abstract fear of crime, commonly raised in public meetings by its educated, news-savvy attendees, the same demographic that experiences fear of crime as an abstraction. Demographically, these groups are more politically active, more educated, and older than the community at-large. And despite their safety concerns, they are among the least likely to become victims of crime (Russo et al 4). Their willingness to show up and express these fears earns them spaces that are visually ordered and defined into “defensible,” surveillable panopticons. Meanwhile, politically disempowered groups, such as the homeless, have been not so much ignored as sacrificed to the realization of this felt safety precisely because their presence makes others feel unsafe.

This lineage of urban design theories permeates landscape architects’ thinking about designing safe places even though they rarely express these theories aloud or use them to justify design choices. The shared core of this cluster of theories is this: a well-designed public space can deter crime, or at least generate a “sense of safety,” by encouraging denizens of the space to visually survey, feel territorial of, and feel watched in the space. They don’t just take Bentham’s panopticon seriously as a rational, enlightened, civilizing way to design for a better society, they celebrate Foucauldian panopticism as a way of making public city life possible.

**Panoptic Perspectives & Territorial Plans: Displaying Surveillable, “Defensible” Public Spaces**

Last chapter we saw how perspective renderings can depict a place filled with the “right kind” of human figures and omit elements that imply lack of safety. But, the logic of these depictions goes deeper. Perspective renderings exhibit the surveillability of the site, both the ability of the perspective’s subject to survey others and denizens’ own visibility to potential witnesses. An open layout design removes tall obstructions, blind
alleys, and other hiding places for attackers and makes all areas easily observable from several other vantage points. Perspectives are ideally suited to exhibit these clear sightlines as well as the denizen’s own visibility to other potential witnesses. Perspectives reveal “views,” often at eye-level, from chosen, significant positions on the site. And in the service of felt safety, they display a site that is well-lit, easily escaped, and has nothing to hide. While views can show off the “visual appeal” of the space and the artistry of the design, they can also show off its felt safety by displaying this openness and visibility. The implied topos of presentation perspectives is observable places are safe from crime.

Figure 22 Annotated CPTED designed streetscape (Nesbitt).

Meanwhile, diagrammed site plans partition the site into territories protected by community surveillance. The zones and functional areas of diagrammed plans delineate the site into implied property boundaries, inviting viewers to see those spaces as possessed and defended. In these graphics there is no common space, only bordered properties, implicitly surveilled and protected by an owner.
Environments designed and displayed via a semiotics of territories, what Newman calls “zones of defense,” supposedly make locals feel possessive and protective of “their” spaces. This could simply mean adding borders to certain areas, visually associating them with buildings, allowing them to be decorated, or defining them with vertical elements (e.g. fences, low walls and hedges). Vertical elements define public from semi-public from private space, supplying the symbolic and material indicators of enclosure without impeding the site’s surveillability. The site projects its territoriality through its clear boundaries, orderliness, and cleanliness, all of which are exhibited in the drawings of landscape architects. However, many of these boundaries and indexes of guardianship, which supposedly help foster felt safety, are only visible on the drawing (e.g. the encircled “Open space” or the tree canopies in Figure 4). The diagrammed plan functions to both foster the sense that every square foot of the site has a purpose and in combination with populated perspectives implies that the site will be active and populated, a prophylactic against crime.

Newman’s gift was his ability to take behavioral and social theories popular at the
time and give them visual and ultimately material form. His bubble diagram of the tree-like relationship between public, semi-public, and private space realizes the panoptic city as epitome of democracy.

Figure 24 Diagram of territory (Newman 9).

As Knoblauch argues, Newman’s diagrams appealed to both to a middle-class who needed to be reassured and provided an escape from an increasingly dangerous-seeming public realm and designers who saw in such abstractions “social science [distilled] into a form that they could clothe with materials and dimensions of their choosing, while maintaining the psychological mechanism of territoriality” (344). By representing democracy as an architectural relationship between contiguous, physical realms, Newman placed the architect, rather than the police officer or lawmaker, at the locus of “produce[ing] peaceful, productive behaviour, avoiding the costs, abuses, and rebellions that come with overt policing” (Knoblauch 345). Newman’s sketches helped transition environmental design away from the out-of-fashion logic of fortressing toward the cheaper, more humane, and aesthetically vogue\textsuperscript{23} panopticons in which the onus of

\textsuperscript{23} In the mid-1970s architecture was just emerging from (and responding to) Brutalism. The landscape architectural movement of Newman’s day was Environmental Restoration, which privileged open spaces and the incorporation of native greenery over concrete plazas. Thus, stylistically, the situation was ripe for
social order was placed on denizens.

The panoptic, public spaces constructed from this paradigm are a corollary to the panopticon prison, a more humane, “soft power” solution compared to “fortressing” design solutions like fences and walls. Panopticism is further appealing within capitalism because it promises to provide safety on the cheap by reducing the need for police patrols (see Ellin). CPTED promises cheap crime reduction through citizen-driven watchfulness, incentivizing through design a kind of community-spiritedness that performs police functions without the need of police patrols, the same architecture Foucault was critiquing at almost the same moment (Discipline and Punishment was published in 1975) in prisons, schools, and hospitals. Landscape architects have internalized the panoptic logic such that they design according to them and justify their designs by relying on their basic logic even though, when asked, they are unfamiliar with the concepts (e.g. CPTED, “eyes on the street,” defensible space) or their authors (e.g. Jacobs, Newman, Wilson, Jeffrey).

When I ask Tim whether safety concerns come up during design or presentation, his answer is unequivocal “it's just like almost a given there's going to be someone in the neighborhood who's just going to have, who's just scared and the whole change of just bringing more people in… the one thing they just like go to is… like, ‘Oh there's going to be crime rates going to go up.’ I mean it just it's almost inevitable” (Moore). When I ask him about them, Tim says he’s never heard of CPTED, Oscar Newman, defensible space, “eyes on the street,” or any of the theoretical work that undergirds his design logic. So, what does Tim do to assuage those anxieties?

I mean well there's a couple design elements that you can kind of get into its like I mean if it's a park I mean open layout so like your field of view is good [indicates perspective drawing]. And then lighting [indicates] has a lot to do with it. I mean cuz everyone knows night time is when a lot of crime happens in a concentrated area of people so lighting is a huge factor. And, I mean a lot of towns have certain criteria on the lighting I mean you'll have

an argument that open spaces rather than walls and bollards were conducive to safe environments to win converts. It is possible to view Newman’s “defensible space” as a rationalization of this new aesthetic.
to have like an average coverage of a foot candle across like a parking area or like a trail system or something like that. (Interviewer: You said open layout. What does that mean?) Well you can like you won't want to have like hedges and like screens where people have the potential to hide behind. And walkways so you can see ahead quite a bit [indicates walkways] so you can see what's coming at you like not so many bends like where people can hide around the corner (Moore).

Here, Tim near-perfectly espouses the design strategy for natural surveillability. Lighting parks and parking lots at night is (literally) a textbook example of a design that CPTED recommends for making sites naturally surveillable (see e.g. Jeffrey, Atlas). By open layout, Tim means a design that is see-through, with low features that allow the denizen to see far in all directions and that offer few concealment opportunities to potential assailants. All of this is emphasized in a perspective rendering that displays the scene as clear and unimpeded. So, I cannot conclude that landscape architects consult crime-prevention design theories like CPTED or “defensible space theory” to help them make decisions or to justify themselves to others. Environmental design theory was never top of mind; client and public desires and constraints were. Instead, the landscape architects I observed practice CPTED because they have internalized the various logics of crime-prevention design (natural surveillability, territoriality, “broken windows,” etc.) and apply it as a kind of prudence.

Prudence, derived from the Latin prudentia (meaning foresight, sagacity) and traditionally translated from the Greek phronesis or “practical wisdom,” is a classical virtue, the wisdom to rationally examine a situation and know what ought to be done (Hughes). In modern usage prudence has come to be associated with cautiousness and timidity, but in classical rhetoric from Plato to Cicero it played a central role as the practical wisdom to correctly read a given situation and to appropriately apply principles to situations. In Aristotle’s account prudence (phronesis) is a kind of master virtue, one that determines which of the other virtues (e.g. compassion, honesty) ought to prevail is situations that put them in conflict (e.g. when to tell a “white lie”). As Robert Hariman has argued, prudence is more than merely a calculative concept. It is a rhetorical
performance, which means it harbors both an embodied and aesthetic dimension, “the art of making the right gesture in a public space with whatever are the available means for political action” (28). In constructing felt safety, the prudent landscape architect, both as artist and presenter, chooses when to emphasize the natural surveillability of a site, when its territorial boundaries, and when its fortress-like barriers. When a client or meeting attendee wonders aloud whether a space will be safe they might have a variety of concerns in mind. Are they worried about whether their kids can play there at night? Or, perhaps, that it might attract troublesome kids at night? A “target hardened” playground – one surrounded by fencing that is locked nightly and cannot be as easily damaged or mistreated – responds to one kind of “safety concern,” while an open-plan design or “defensible space” design answers another. The prudent landscape architect must read between the lines and present a design that responds to an unarticulated, often unarticulatable fear.

What I saw as rhetorical prudence – an ability to tailor how they represented the design to spectators with different fears – my interviewees saw as prudent landscape design. As far as he is concerned, Tim works on “making the space safer,” not on matching the design of spaces to the anxieties of those he presents to. Tim doesn’t, for example, break down design-for-safety into a set of representational tactics (e.g. soften lighting, emphasize sightlines, place figures only in well-lit areas). Rather, he says he “tries to design safer spaces,” not that he tries to portray safer spaces. Though Tim understood safety design as solving environmental problems, I see them as solutions to the recurring rhetorical situations that landscape architects encounter in presenting their work. For Tim, the drawing is a communicative instrument for displaying the underlying design, making the effects of the spatial design more or less apparent. Remember that landscape architects don’t consider lay audiences to be savvy viewers and so they can readily justify such exaggerations in the depiction of the design. And so, he is justified in whatever tweaks he needs to make to clarify things for lay viewers. Indeed, Tim corrects me as I slip into presuming that he and Harold might include anything in the design only to satisfy the less reasonable demands of community members, saying “I mean, we’re not going to design anything that’s unsafe” (Moore). Instead, Tim seems to insist that
landscape architects first design the site and then later figure out how to exhibit it. Tim doesn’t really acknowledge the extent to which the influence ever runs in the other direction, with lay viewers who “want to see” that a design will feel safe causing designers to change the ways they design safety into the site.

We can see the conversion of fortressed public spaces into panoptic ones at Gordon LA as well. When I walked the grounds of the Rochester Memorial Art Gallery (MAG) with Dave, its designer, he described the removal of wrought iron gating that used to surround the museum grounds as a mechanism for improving safety on the grounds, “we wanted to make this a meeting place for the community” (Gordon “Field”).

This is how Gordon LA describes the project on its website,

The historic 14-acre campus was largely perceived as uninviting by the community and was bounded on all sides by an historic but wholly unsympathetic wrought iron fence. This fence was a physical and psychological barrier to the MAG’s grounds and the institution’s principal mission: Connecting People with Art. The MAG wanted to take advantage of an opportunity to serve as a “creative commons” and a community meeting ground – thus the concept of establishing a Sculpture Park was envisioned for the gallery’s Centennial in 2013. The park would remove barriers to the street, open itself to the neighborhood, and literally bring the art gallery outdoors to the community… Previously the campus was only briefly visited by those attending events or visiting the gallery. Today, neighbors stroll the grounds and bring their children to play in the plazas, interact with the sculptures, or use it as a meeting grounds (“Memorial Art”).

The fencing created a secluded, untrafficked, unwatched space that violated the principle of natural surveillability. With the removal of the fence, visibility was improved both from the building and from the road. Denizens became public, observable, and therefore safe from crime. Gordon’s perspective renderings show the views through the grounds clearly.
Figure 25 Gordon LA Perspective Visualization of proposed MAG Sculpture Park (Courtesy of Gordon LA).

Low ground plants and a limited number of large trees are shown trimmed to set a 10-foot canopy that creates clear lines of sight into the grounds, making inhabitants observable from the street and surrounding buildings. Parking lot lighting was added to increase the visibility of denizens at night. Gordon LA’s project description explains the logic of surveillability in plain English, “a physical and psychological barrier to the MAG’s grounds and the institution’s principal mission.” The fencing is described as “unsympathetic.” To some extent Dave’s alterations simply comport with a modern aesthetic sensibility, also evident in residential and office architecture, that prefers the wall-less, see-through designs known as “open concept.” But, as Grasseni argues, an aesthetic sensibility coheres the moral, pragmatic, and value concerns that skilled viewers come to find beautiful, proper, and exact (22). Defensible space neatly synthesizes an aesthetic in-vogue with middle-class tastes with the promise of a virtuous-yet-frugal solution to urban crime, a combination that appeals to the public, politicians, and designers alike. So, it becomes difficult to separate open concept as a purely aesthetic preference from a preference for panoptic governance through design.

Reflecting the language on the website, Dave explains that the open grounds were
meant to “bring the community in…especially families” (Gordon “Field”). This, too, is part of the indexical semiotics of designing for safety: use people to attract more people. And families, women, and children attract everyone because they index safety. The group most affected by fear of public space is women (especially when researchers don’t control for fear of sexual assault), who, are most attentive to indicators of the safety of public space (see Ferraro). Consequently, there is no better indicator that an area is safe to be in than the presence of women and children: if they feel safe, then everyone will be. Landscape architects, of course, know this and sprinkle women with children liberally throughout perspective drawings. Figure 7 above appears to only show families wandering the grounds.

Figure 26 Otterness’s Welcome Plaza (Greenwood).

The addition of a sculpture garden is a further attempt to craft the image of the space as kid-friendly. Otterness’s sculpture garden is both a focal point and an entryway drawing visitors onto the grounds and into the museum. The sculpture itself is full of cartoonish figures that invite climbing and interaction, clearly communicating that the space is for children. Focal points are used to create social spaces; they are, according to one textbook, “sociopetal,” drawing attention and social interaction to them (Naghiloo
and Falahat). They draw the eye and provide an easily observable meeting point because they are easily seen. Both their visibility and the fact that they tend to be occupied by others will make them feel safe.

Another of Dave’s projects, the Brickyard Trail, relies on plan-view visualization to navigate safety concerns in a relatively affluent suburban enclave, the town of Brighton. The town wanted to connect two open spaces in the city, city hall and a local park, and had acquired an 84-acre parcel of land that would allow them to do so. However, the site abuts numerous residential properties whose residents expressed concerns about the nuisance of having a trail running through what they considered their backyards. Wouldn’t teenagers hang out there at night? Wouldn’t drug users use it? What about trash and vandalism?

Dave: they didn't want riff raff kind of moving through their backyards and having access to their backyards. Visually, in reality it doesn't feel anything like that. Its you know very removed. And that was one of our arguments for the central path is that it didn't really get close to anybody um and it was the old rail corridor so there was a lot of reasons we wanted to put it there. Um, so a lot of push back and concern about neighbors feeling like it was going to bring in outsiders and could create vandalism and safety issues (Gordon “Interview”).

Dave needed to show residents that their homes would not be visible from the trail, that people wouldn’t wander onto their properties, and that the trail wouldn’t foster the kind of behaviors that, while not actually illegal, represented social disorder. This required a trailway path that stayed well clear of properties, dividing the tract almost exactly down the middle.
Figure 27 Gordon LA’s Plan-view Presentation Board showing proposed Brickyard Trail
path (Gordon LA).
this was the sort of line we were presenting to the public. Um, there was other alignments before this. And the GPS mapping didn't look anything like this. Um and so we were. Essentially, they're seeing a refined version of our early ideas at this point. And then um where we felt pretty confident that this was a good solution. So, um we had other scenarios that we showed them. Because there was a lot of controversy um and there was. We showed other alignments. We showed an alignment up here [indicates] and there was reasons why we didn't like that because we got into more wetland buffer and closer to neighbors um and that's why we...kind of led them down the process? Led them through the process? And um then showed em how we got there (Gordon “Interview”).
Dave explains that the presentation leads them “through the process,” that they get to see “how we got there.” They had seriously considered creating a trail spur that they considered an amenity to the neighborhood it connected to,

We ended up taking a trail spur off that was on our plan that um you know. I forgot exactly where the little stub street was it was right here [indicates area parallel to “C” in Figure X above]. There was a little stub of a street that never was built to go in here. And we actually had a trail spur that kinda meandered over into this neighborhood so people we thought it would be great because this whole neighborhood could feed in that way. (Uh huh) Well, there was enough pushback from worried neighbors that town just pulled it off the table. (Interviewer: Were you negotiating with the council...or?) Um we had the town engineer and the town supervisor were pretty active throughout the process and um there was you enough [indecipherable] raised that for that reason and for budget reasons we pulled that trail spur out. Um, you know there was concerns about the creek crossing and um preservation of some large willow that were in that vicinity that we um definitely tried to and did hang on to. Um you know concerns up here [pointing to area again] from these folks that um they didn't want to...you know we had had conversations about you know connections there and so on and they didn't really want, at that time, want anything. Now many
of there, this [points to “The Landing at Brighton” on Fig. X] is senior housing, many of their residents use the trail everyday. Um, so um those sorts of things are pretty common with public projects you always have voices. And not in my backyard kind of thing (Gordon “Interview”).

Notice that Dave transforms the neighbors’ “worries” into a set of budget and ecological concerns, even though it is fairly clear from the transcript that it was neighbors’ concerns and complaints that motivated the removal of the trail spur. Though I didn’t clarify this at the time, my own sense of what Dave is saying here is that the Town Engineer, and Town Supervisor framed the trail spur as a budget concern and a potential problem for the ecology on behalf of neighbors who were made anxious by it. Dave clearly sees the trail as a success that everyone is happy with now and implies that those who opposed this trail spur might not have as much of a problem with it today. In this way, plan-view drawings actually work against landscape architects since they so clearly locate new elements, and necessarily display their proximity near existing properties and amenities. Locals often see a conflict – an avenue for outsiders into their community, say – where designers intend to depict an amenity – an avenue into the park.

To be clear, my claim is that felt safety is one rhetorical effect of these drawings, not the only one. The quiet influence of other kinds of rhetorical exigencies from cost to environmental impact also shows up in design drawings and ultimately built spaces. It is not my claim that plans and perspectives are only for portraying a safe-feeling site, since these graphic genres also clearly help depict other important aspects and effects (aesthetic, environmental, etc.). One additional example stands out in particular. The maze-like, curvilinear layouts of suburban subdivisions, drawn with regularity at BME by Tim, are not a purely aesthetic choice, some preference for winding roads and swooping lines, but derive in large part from developers’ cost consciousness. As we saw in Chapter 2 and I heard and saw constantly at BME, developers press designers for the most “efficient” neighborhood designs, those that maximize saleable property lots and minimize streets that cost the developer sewage, paving, and streetlights that must be provided, but cannot be sold. The most efficient organizations of subdivisions, heavily feature cul-de-sacs and poorly connected streets, which, as it happens, destroy pedestrian
usage, easy navigation, and any sense of place and community. One of Harold’s most common pieces of design advice to Tim, during one review of his work, was that he make the layout more efficient,

Harold: Just keep in mind too Tim, this the right of way [the street] does take up a fair amount of space so if you, if it was an advantage to to do on a cul-de-sac[draws to show] I dunno like maybe there's a cul-de-sac I don't know it it allows you to do some thing squirrely like that and then maybe this ends up

Tim: yeah I tried to have maybe one over here, but it just wasn't working out I was losing plots in the long run, but I'll try that a couple other places...

Harold: keep in mind this doesn't have to be this doesn't have to look good (uh hm). So, we'll actually ren render this different shades of brown and then move this crest in (sure). Um and then here its kinda the same deal I might have a tendency [draws to show] to just do something like that. Maybe this ends up being a (together: cul-de-sac). I mean I don't know if that’s gonna pickup lots or... (Pell and Moore).

What Harold and Tim describe is the design of the layout (streetscape and plots) for a new subdivision they are designing on what is currently a piece of farmland. When they speak of “losing plots” they mean that the design ends with fewer single-family residential plots, which have a code-required size and shape. Harold suggests more cul-de-sacs and draws “squirrely” paths to try and squeeze more plots onto the site.

Curvilinear subdivision design can be fairly described as a design aesthetic, but it is one infused with the pragmatic concerns of developers who seek to minimize pavement costs and landscape architects who either fail to notice the problematic effects on community and walkability or lack the authority to object. Either way, understanding the curvilinear subdivision as a purely stylistic affair fails to fully appreciate it. It both responds to the pragmatism of capitalist developers, who have the ultimate say in most matters, and thereafter comes to express it.

**Conclusion**

It would be irresponsible to discuss the designs and displays of felt safety without
recognizing the extent to which they are almost always attempts to deal with denizens’ racial discomfort without ever mentioning race. Newman’s theories were developed for and principally applied to housing projects. According to Newman’s theory the problems of mostly-black housing projects were not those of poverty, policing, or culture, but due to poor environmental design. Wilson and Kelling sold a similar coded discourse to police forces, to address policing dilemmas in mostly-black neighborhoods. The solution, in both cases, as well as Jeffrey’s CPTED, has been to point out, from the privileged perspective of a white, non-resident, the indexes of fear that cause white outsiders to interpret places like housing projects as unsafe: broken windows, graffiti, obscured views, poor lighting, and then propose that by changing these cues neighbors and strangers can be induced to treat the space as though it were safe and perform the watchfulness required to keep them that way. In other words, the problem of urban crime is a communication problem, between the built environment and its denizens. Such a response should not be totally surprising given the nature of landscape architecture and the skills of landscape architects. Neither crime prevention nor behavior modification constitute traditional goals of landscape architecture, a discipline that begins with garden design and is devoted to aesthetics. Yet, when public meeting attendees confront them with this set of complaints, “what’s going to happen to the neighborhood?” “we don’t want people walking through our backyards,” they occupy a social motive and point at an exigence that requires designers to respond, which they do in the only way they can, via the design drawing. The graphic genres of landscape architecture help a group of professionals principally concerned with making pleasurable, beautiful, and functional outdoor spaces address an audience that reliably raises racially-coded anxieties about crime. The drawing solution for an abstract fear of crime, a fear plausibly related to news exposure and the perception of dangerous others infiltrating one’s community, is to design a felt safety into public spaces. The most important moment for CPTED design is not, as the behaviorist accounts of Newman and Jeffrey suggest, when it gets instantiated as a material object, but rather when it is still a drawing.

This anxiety alters the aesthetics and symbolics of public space design itself. In particular, New Urbanism (aka neo-traditionalism), a traditionalist backlash to modernist
design aesthetics that advocates a return to traditional urban design, has become the most pervasive and ideological philosophy of urban design today. Sometimes referred to as traditional neighborhood design (TND), New Urbanism is expressly a return to the pedestrian-centric street organization that many associate with a more ethnically homogenous America. In the New Urbanism the design of panoptic-territorial public spaces is explicitly wedded to a nostalgic longing for traditional city design. A powerful and pervasive narrative still circulates in the lore of public policy and design: walkable, dense, mixed-use communities that center on public spaces – porches, central squares, stoops – were erased by the modernists and by the infrastructural perturbations of the automobile. They can be revived by returning to traditional methods of design and by valuing the community and the pedestrian rather than efficient street traffic engineering. New Urbanist design isn’t just infrastructurally traditional, it is typically accompanied by traditional architectural styles that articulate with the principles of CPTED.
Figure 28 Example of New Urbanism (“Orchard Gardens).

This architectural and landscape architectural style effectively ties nostalgia for traditional pedestrian neighborhoods that were civically rich and free of crime to the CPTED infrastructural designs that supposedly mitigate crime. Traditional architecture, with its front porches and shortened setbacks from the street, imply the presence of a close-knit community who might make use of them.

Felt safety is a conception of an urban environment in which denizens (both criminal opportunists and potential protectors) “read” the built environment for indexical signs of the amount of social control exerted therein (graffiti, broken windows), for the territorial ownership over various areas (defined boundaries, personalization), and for its natural surveillability (low hedges, clear sightlines). According to its logic, if landscape...
architects design spaces that denizens “read as” safe, then they will behave as though those spaces deserve protection (by watching over, caring for, and protecting them) and thereby make them safer. New Urbanism dissolves this set of tactics into a nostalgic aesthetic of rowhouses, front porches, and town squares that belies an ulterior purpose: assuaging the abstract fear of crime held by members of the public. Jacobs’s initial idea has been expanded into a rhetorical paradigm that places fear of crime at the center of public space design, one exercised as a matter of prudence and wrapped in a nostalgic aesthetic. Newman’s contribution was to take Jacobs’s surveillability idea and marry it to theories of environmental psychology popular at the time (prospect-refuge psychology, the bystander effect, territoriality), inventing a semiotics for design that conveniently dovetailed with a shift in architectural and landscape architectural style. While these ways of designing urban spaces had to be made explicit by theorists and intentionally incorporated into parks and public housing projects, they had, according to New Urbanist lore, been invisibly practiced in traditional landscape architecture for centuries. In other words, they had long been part of the wisdom of practice in the design of public spaces. They were the common sense forgotten about after the invention of the automobile. Or, as New Urbanist firebrand James Kunstler makes the point, “a body of knowledge, method, skill and principle that we threw in the garbage after World War II” (Kunstler). This narrative – that a kind of traditional “common sense” is being recovered in New urban design – reinforces the idea that good design requires the prudent exercise of time-worn forms and practices.

Ultimately, landscape architects weren’t confronted with a design problem (how can we design safer public spaces?). They were confronted with a rhetorical problem (how can we gain the assent of a fearful public?). What they developed was a rhetorical solution, felt safety, by using the visualization tools and genres at their disposal. And, although the practicing landscape architects I observed were rarely familiar with terms like CPTED or defensible space, they nevertheless used them to design. Jacobs, Newman, Jeffrey, and Wilson & Kelling laid the theoretical groundwork and provided the explanatory psychological mechanism for what has effectively become a practicable semiotics for the design of public space, one that I saw reflected in the practices and
concepts of working landscape architects.

Felt safety quietly influences the design of public spaces in harmony with an aesthetic sensibility that designers come to adopt, find beautiful, and execute over and over. Though what I ultimately offer in this chapter is a critique of the way landscape architects solve this exigency, there is plenty to be said for public safety as a valid concern about public space. The design of safe public space is important for the creation of open, inclusive public spaces that the most criminally victimized groups in a community (the elderly, minorities, women), are safe to enter safely. This is a noble goal and one held up often by landscape architects as validation of these practices, but it is not the one their designs address or solve. And yet, by understanding felt safety as a rhetorical topos, the flexibly and prudently applied logic of safe-feeling drawings, rather than as a behaviorist, psychological theory of environmental design, its purpose becomes clearer. Public space design-for-safety, though justified by theorists from Jacobs to Wilson as a behaviorist, psychological instrument of human movement, safety, and accessibility, might best be understood as an expression of fear of crime intermingled and aestheticized with a sense of nostalgia for traditional ways of living.
Chapter 5 – In the Field: Critiquing Public Space from Site and Studio

Introduction

From participatory studies of social activism in public space to new materialists who de-center the human and trace rhetorical networks, rhetorical critics of public space are hard at work developing methods for capturing how the field of rhetoric ought to engage with the public spaces. This chapter focuses on the field-based, rhetorical study of public space via two methodologically-organized groups of scholars and attempts to demonstrate precisely what a design perspective can offer each. It makes the case for cross-pollination between the TPC study of landscape architecture and rhetorical criticism of place/space, by adopting some of the concepts, terms, and perspectives of designers. The first group, the rhetoric of display, includes public memory scholarship (Blair, Clark, Halloran), museum studies (MacDonald), alongside the many other scholars who all approach symbolic and material aspects of public space as epideictic reflections and expressions of “what we value.” The second, the rhetorical resources approach, asks what opportunities – for making arguments, for political expression, for constructing a social identity – exist in the built environment and how rhetors make use of those resources. Characterized by its participatory and embodied methods, this approach looks for the actionable rhetorical potential of a site. I include in this category, scholars who, like Kevin Deluca, examine the use of public space to voice political messages (see also Middleton, Endres, and Senda-Cook). I also include scholars who, like Gregory Dickinson, trace how denizens construct a sense of self and of place out of the public spaces they inhabit. Where the rhetoric of display primarily examines “top down” assertions of a “we” through the shaping of public space by authorities, what de Certeau calls “strategy,” the resources approach examines what de Certeau calls “tactics,” the situated, in-the-wild cooptation of the built environment.

The chapter argues that the rhetorical study of public space misses something by treating public space primarily by visiting it. Because field-based critics study public spaces only after they have been built the site itself appears more like a finished text than a composition, the final iteration of a series of designs. This tendency is compounded by theories of material rhetoric that emphasize its consequentiality, its tendency to become
persuasive in unforeseen ways, and deemphasize it designed effects. I’ll suggest that when attention is paid to public space as landscape architects see it – as a tool and a mediator of action and attention – novel effects become apparent that field-based scholars either disregard or treat as inadvertent. As prior chapters have argued, landscape architects focus on views and functions. Public space is designed to foster recognition of (appearance) and opportunities to enact (usage) the socially-approved functions of public space that designers and developers have imagined for them. And this approach to design constitutes the rhetoric of public space from the perspective of its designers. While intended rhetorical effect should not be the only focus of rhetorical criticism of public spaces, these particular intentional effects are rarely addressed by rhetorical critique. Without attention to the intended, embodied effects of landscape design, rhetorical critics will miss nearly all the action and effort that goes into designing the built environment.

Furthermore, many rhetorical situations have taken their toll on the final product along the way: the skilled selection at site visit, the graphic medium of design, the topoi of landscape design, and the town planning boards and public meeting attendees. Designed public spaces are the result of a rhetorical process that seeks to negotiate the demands and desires of clients, stakeholders, the public, and designers themselves. Writing studies of architectural design demonstrates just how important the practices, composing technologies, and rhetorical situations out of which these designs emerge are to understanding public spaces. For example, John Ackerman and Scott Oates show that, while architectural design is in principle a neutral practice, one that simply transposes and translates desires and preferences into architecturally-sound organizations of space, clients often reject design solutions that violate social hierarchies (108). Ackerman and Oates relate their architects’ frustrated efforts to design buildings that democratize access to windows and natural light, which are deemed “too luxurious” by the executives. There is nothing in principle or cost standing between “luxurious” offices for all the office staff except its managers’ concern that the building ought to reflect the company’s own hierarchy and provide environmental rewards for climbing that hierarchy.

The designer’s perspective doesn’t always demonstrate authorial sovereignty, however. Often enough it reveals that design elements that appear to be chosen and
motivated by ideology, aesthetics, or persuasion were not. The curvilinear, maze-like appearance of suburban subdivisions, for example, is so unique and (especially from the air as seen in Figure 1) striking that it is difficult not to interpret them as an aesthetic manifestation of something.

![Figure 29 Example of suburban, cul-de-sac design (Badger).](image)

However, watching landscape architects work allowed me to see street design elements such as cul-de-sacs, disconnected street grids, and winding roads help designers “improve efficiency.” That is, by designing subdivisions that have fewer streets and more (code-compliant) single-family plots developers save money on the provision of public services (pavement, sewers, streetlights) and make more of their property private and saleable rather than public. The result, as almost every observer of suburban spaces notices, are neighborhoods that lack a sense of community and discourage all non-driving modes of transit. In both cases infrastructural design has social effects. Ackerman and Oates’ architects come up with a cost-effective way to “democratize light” in an office building, which their clients reject in favor of an architecture that reflects corporate hierarchy. Tim and Harold at SGE, on the other hand, work on solutions that improve the efficiency of plots with cul-de-sacs and curved streets, the deleterious community effects of which are simply accepted by developers. What a design perspective helps us see in each case are
the mechanisms through which Capital reshapes the built environment, but not always via
the same mechanism. Sometimes the ideological commitments of clients take certain
design solutions off the table; sometimes the seemingly banal cost-cutting of developers
leads to an unintended aesthetic. These changes are best studied by interrogating design
disciplines from within and turning toward rather than away from the intentions of
landscape design. Whether we uncover landscape architects squeezing ever more code-
complaint, single-family plots onto a parcel or making sure managers’ offices express
and reinscribe the company hierarchy through amenities and space, an appreciation of
these dynamics should inform field-based critiques of buildings, monuments, and public
parks.

First, however, we require an account of how field work works, how the rhetoric of
display and rhetorical resources critiques are performed: what methods its practitioners
suggest for drawing out the rhetorical aspects of public spaces, where these fieldworkers
go, what tools they bring with them, what do they do in the space, and what questions
they attempt to answer. I’ll then read a particular public space – the grounds of
Rochester’s Memorial Art Gallery (MAG) – using each methodology. I have
purposefully chosen a site of analysis for which I had access to the landscape architects
who designed it. My final visit to the MAG grounds I took with Dave Gordon, the
principal landscape architect for Gordon LA and lead landscape architect on the MAG
grounds redesign. But, I made sure to visit the site, take notes and pictures, and try these
critical, field-based analyses before meeting landscape architects. By taking several
passes over the MAG grounds, including a with its lead landscape architect, I discovered
I could notice more and add to my initial analyses by using the language and concepts of
landscape architecture. I noticed different elements, described the same elements in
different terms, and understood the site according to different goals. By first doing field-
based analyses of the sort Carole Blair or Gregory Dickinson would advise and only then
talking with designers, I sought to describe the same site in each of three distinct idioms
(two rhetorical and one landscape architectural).

Naturally, the boundaries between the rhetoric of display and rhetorical resources
approaches can be fuzzy. Scholars borrow methods from each other and some take more
than one approach at a time. Neither are these categories (broad as they are) intended to be exhaustive of all the different ways in which public space can or ought to be studied. Many others might have been included. The subfield of “urban communication” (see Gumpert & Drucker, Tarantino & Tosoni) uses a variety of methods – documentary, geographical, “public life” observational analysis – to interrogate public spaces for the “ways in which people in cities connect (or do not connect) with others and with their urban environment” (Aiello and Tosoni 1254). Another notable exclusion is the ecological/network approach to place, theorized by Jenny Edbauer’s reconceptualization of the rhetorical situation as a “rhetorical ecology.” The ecological approach would explore public space not as a set of physical elements but as a network of associations or an enacted ecology-like system that conducts rhetoric through it. Ecological theorists recommend participatory and ethnographic methodologies that sometimes radically embed the researcher in the material and symbolic network. As Candace Rai and Caroline Gottschalk Druschke argue in the introduction to a new collection on rhetorical fieldwork, “immersing oneself in the dynamic, living, breathing ecologies that give rise to rhetoric and its work enhances the capacity to understand and observe rhetoric as a three-dimensional, situated force” (1). These perspectives on public space are not entirely excluded. Many of the methodological aspirations of rhetorical ecologists and urban communication scholars – a call for more in situ study of rhetoric in public space and an interest in the vernacular rhetoric that goes on in urban settings – are echoed by what I’m calling rhetorical resources scholars. Dickinson and Aiello, for example, borrow theory from rhetorical ecology and address urban communication scholars. Middleton, Endres and Senda-Cook apply what they call a “hermeneutics of experience,” a nod to the phenomenological concerns of many rhetorical ecologists.

**Public Memory/Display Scholarship**

Scholars who read public, material rhetoric as epideictic display typically address sites of commemoration or memorialization, what Gregory Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian Ott call “memory places,” sites of heightened significance “more associated with public memory than others, for example, museums, preservations sites, battlefields, memorials, and so forth” (24). In the introduction to their foundational collection, Places
of Public Memory, they argue that memory places are rhetorical because they are “meaningful, legible, partisan, and consequential” (2). Lawrence Prelli’s edited collection, Rhetorics of Display, extends their approach by explicitly tying public, material rhetoric to epideixis, the oratorical genre of display and recognition via praise and blame. So oriented, the places that scholars of display see as ripe for rhetorical analysis are those designed expressly to carry meaning, primarily via visual symbols that provide citizens with a shared civic identity and narrate a noble history of the community. For the most part, contributors to these collections remain focused on the symbol-driven, meaning-making project of places of public significance. Whether they invoke the canon of memory and the role of memorials to public commemoration (Dickinson, Blair, and Ott; Gallagher and LaWare; Blair), the importance of audience and context to visual interpretation (Zagacki, LaWare, and Gallagher), or the centrality of displays and the need to reconceive of epideixis in civic life (Prelli, Clark, Halloran), these scholars focus on the ostensive elements of public space, often art objects. A display approach to the rhetoric of material, public displays focuses on examining the implicit meanings – logics, arguments, constitutive values, and myths – imbedded in the display especially of expressive objects – monuments, memorials, protests, statues, museums – in public space. Display scholars apply classical rhetorical terms and concepts to designed displays to understand the rhetorical dimensions and functions of those objects.

The rhetorical advantage of commemoration through physical edifices erected in public space is, according to this approach, twofold. First, memorials and monuments are used by those in power to “select from history those events, individuals, places, and ideas that will be sacralized by a culture” (Blair and Michel 377). As Jonathan Balzotti and Benjamin Crosby argue “each one of these places represents what some invested and empowered group deemed essential to a shared public identity that serves to fulfill and sustain some rhetorical vision of the past, present, and future” (329). Fundamentally, these memory places were always meant for display, their expressive or aesthetic purpose motivates their construction and their reception. Thus, rhetoricians treat, and can argue that citizens look at, these ostensive objects differently than they do at everyday objects. They are text-like, readable, and require examination and reflection. Like other visual
texts, material displays offer the viewer a subjectivity to inhabit. As with epideictic generally, public memorials can be used by the leaders and authorities of community to embed preferred narratives of history into everyday life, sacralizing certain values and omitting others. By building into the visual landscape symbols that reinforce these narratives and values in places of communal significance and centrality, their sacralization is perpetually reinforced, “erasing and replacing memories and implicitly calling for assent on a particular, active, publicly shared identity that spans time” (Balzotti and Crosby 329).

This points to the second rhetorical advantage of memory places, that members of the community interact with these symbol-rich memory places not as partisan assertions, but as relatively innocuous elements of their community. As persistent elements of public space, memorials and monuments forward themselves as shared, innocuous, and uncontroversial even as they attempt to shape the community’s values and public memories. Display scholars fret that material rhetoric is commonly miscategorized as argument-like. On the contrary, display as a rhetorical genre does its rhetorical work covertly and subtly, insinuating a perspective or ideology into everyday life, not with premises that lead to conclusions, but with small tweaks and emphases, terministic screens and “selections and deflections” (Prelli 3). In oratory, epideictic rhetoric takes advantage of evocative description (ekphrasis), narrative, and transportation of the audience (fantasia) to accomplish world-making. Celeste Condit calls this epideictic mode of rhetoric “shaping and sharing,” the subtle shaping of perceptions through ideological portrayal, narration, and praise (Condit 290). Epideixis, or rhetorical display, does more than commemorate, it educates, demonstrates, and guides witnesses in appropriate (and inappropriate) behavior, playing a crucial role in community formation, maintenance, and politics. Similarly, designed displays involve the construction of a world in which the audience is invited to dwell, a value-laden world that presents itself as a revelation of truth, at the same time reifying preferred values, concealing and deemphasizing others, and privileging a particular perspective on the world.

The Memorial Art Gallery
Along with the nearby, arts-focused high school, School of the Arts, the Memorial Art Gallery (MAG) anchors Rochester’s “Neighborhood of the Arts,” (NOTA) a municipally-recognized, 15-block arts district in southeast Rochester, NY. Founded as part of the University of Rochester in 1913, the MAG is the civic art museum for the city of Rochester. The MAG sits three buildings, a parking lot, sprawling greens, and red-brick paths on a 14-acre campus that occupies a large city block along Rochester’s ART Walk. ART Walk, itself, is a “permanent urban art trail, connecting the arts centers and public spaces” between the MAG and the George Eastman House, an urban renewal project that created the core of NOTA (“ARTWalk Rochester”). Head Northwest across Prince St. South along University Ave. to reach School of the Arts, housed in a 1920s dormitory for the Eastman School of Music. Head Southeast along University Ave., across Goodman St., to reach the dense core of a pedestrianized, commercial district of coffeeshops, cafes, yoga studios, shops, and galleries (see Figure 2). The George Eastman House, a museum of photography and the former home of the Eastman-Kodak founder, marks the southeastern conclusion of the ART Walk and of the Neighborhood of the Arts.
Figure 30 Aerial Google Earth Image of the MAG grounds (Maitland).

Figure 31 Neighborhood of the Arts Walking Guide for the ART Walk (“Home”).
As its name suggests, the MAG itself is a memorial, established in honor of the architect son of Emily Sibley Watson, James George Averell, who died of typhoid at 26. Though it was gifted as a civic institution “to the people of Rochester,” the museum itself is privately controlled by the University of Rochester and run by a board of directors (Timeline). Figure 3 shows an aerial view of the redesigned grounds. The circular brick-paved area at the corner holds the bulk of Tom Otterness’s “Creation Myth” sculptures. “Creation Myth” is the focal point of the grounds, both visually and functionally, as all paths lead to it.

![Figure 32 Main entry to MAG sculpture garden (Lewis).](image)

During the re-design the city sidewalks were removed, replaced with winding, red-brick paths, several new sculptures were added, and much of the wrought-iron fencing that encircled the grounds was taken down.

**Rhetoric of Display at the Memorial Art Gallery**

To read the public space of the MAG grounds using the display approach one begins with its most legibly symbolic objects, the public art sculptures that dot the landscape, and interpret them to recover the ideas, concepts, values, and assertions that
they exhibit. One of the most obvious visual elements of the MAG itself is a gothic-style tower rising from the Cutler Union, built in 1930 as a student union for the Prince St. campus, but often mistaken for a gothic church (as I did). Standing at around 100 feet, the Cutler Union’s bell tower can be seen from some distance. Because of Cutler’s gothic style, the MAG grounds can have the religious feel of a former church grounds. On approaching the MAG grounds, either by car or on foot, the eye is next drawn down from the tower to the gateway sculpture, “Creation Myth.” The piece itself sprawls across Gordon’s large, circular “gateway” area at the corner of Prince and University to form a welcoming plaza that invites the community onto the grounds of the museum. “Creation Myth” is constituted by the whimsical, roly-poly, cartoon figures that are Otterness’s trademark. When I first visited the MAG grounds I read Otterness’s “Creation Myth” as an artistic counterpoint to the architectural statement being made by the museum buildings, interacting with this dominating visual element, the Cutler Union bell tower, and specifically crafting a counternarrative to the biblical story of Adam and Eve.

“Creation Myth” also invokes the idea of artistry itself (this is an art museum after all) with a depiction of a sculptor’s workshop in media res. We see a series of female “sculptors” (identifiable by their triangular hats & bodies) engaged in a trial-and-error construction (and apparent eventual mass-production) of their male counterparts (square hats & bodies). Most interpreters of “Creation Myth,” perhaps prompted by Otterness’s own public remarks on the piece, have read it as a reversal of the Pygmalion myth from Ovid’s Metamorphosis. While some sculptures are in the process of being hewn from raw blocks of limestone, other figures emerge from molds, suggesting a mass production project in the works. The sculptors chisel and prod at male figures. The many female sculptors can be found hammering, lifting, inspecting, or kissing them. More pointedly, the piece contains explicit references Rochester icon Susan B. Anthony and the women’s suffrage movement that originated in western New York. Its figures can be found writing out one of Anthony’s more famous quotes and the motto of The Revolution, the newspaper she and Elizabeth Cady Stanton founded together, “Men, their rights, and nothing more; women, their rights, and nothing less.”
Figure 33 Part of "Creation Myth" looking North-west toward the Cutler Union (Rafferty and Deturck).
So, “Creation Myth” can be easily read as using a familiar “creation myth” to exhibit the feminist values that distinguish Rochester’s history and assert the artistic values of the neighborhood. When read in this way, the piece playfully invites the viewer to reverse ancient myths of human creation that place men prior to and creative of women and women as objects (specifically Ovid’s Pygmalion, but also Adam and Eve) and to do so in the spirit of Rochester, as a citizen of a place that values women and their rights. The Rochesterian is reminded that they are part of a proud, civic tradition and the visitor that they are in a place with a particular history and identity.

As I’d learn later, from Dave Gordon, the MAG grounds’ landscape architect and my guide on my final visit the MAG, the Cutler Union was never a church. And yet, the interpretation was both productive – it made sense to read a sculptural piece that pretty clearly alludes to the biblical story of Adam and Eve, including one figure who appears to look up at the tower – and probably pretty common (isn’t most gothic, towered architecture going to be an old church?). In the Genesis narrative Eve is made from Adam’s rib as a companion. Otterness’s piece seemed to make “Eve” prior to “Adam,” and she the creative force, rather than God. Most distractingly for me, one of Otterness’s
brass figures (a male) can be found on the edge of the area conspicuously and wistfully looking up directly at the bell tower (see Figure 7). According to Dave, however, I was preoccupied with a coincidence. The male figure was just staring off into the distance. And, the Cutler Union was built as a student union. It was never a church.

As Dickinson, Blair, and Ott say in Places of Public Memory, sites of public memory are not just places; they are destinations. Because they are non-transportable and because their mere existence causes people to travel to experience them, the memory place “necessitates a particular set of performances on the part of people who would seek to be its audience…they typically require people to travel to them” (26). I spell out this insufficiently-informed reading of “Creation Myth” because it illustrates the kind of uninformed, amateur, guess-work interpretation that sites and public artwork receive from those who don’t make pilgrimages to see them, who take them in as they pass them by or use them as a place to read a book or take a walk. This presumed touristic disposition has been a significant influence on public memory scholarship, specifically,
an expectation that the appropriate audience to consider is one that not only means to be there, but has likely done the planning, done their reading, spent money, and made the trip. Given that the audience to memory places are tourists, critics should consider all the desire, escape, and departure from the ordinary that that entails, “a set of expectations that one will encounter rare or unique relics, learn about highly significant events or people, and/or be moved in particular ways by the experience of the place” (26). No doubt such a description applies to the sorts of destination sites that these scholars typically study, famous war memorials and monuments to founding fathers. And yet, while visitors come to the MAG from across the region, the occupants of the MAG grounds (not to mention its promotional materials), suggest that it is less a destination for touristic viewership and more a neighborhood, public space. People pass through the MAG grounds, eat lunch there, meet friends, take walks, and play with their kids there. Like such visitors, I had not done my homework before I visited the MAG grounds, which led me to guess at its message and presume artistic coherence in the landscape as a whole. So, part of my argument for taking a less “readerly” approach to public space critique is based on the quotidian nature of most public spaces. Most public spaces are like the MAG grounds rather than a World War II memorial. And that entails an approach to them as denizens rather than readers or interpreters.

Much changes when we assume that those who encounter a place, its memorials and art, do so as everyday residents rather than as tourists. Public art that provides a center and gathering point for a relatively small geographic area, a neighborhood or district, plays a different role than public art that occupies hallowed grounds or stands for the veterans of war. For this reason, it might make sense to distinguish user-denizens from spectator-tourists as distinct modes of embodied encounter with public space, its art and design. Display scholars have primarily focused on a variety of embodied visitation, tourism, which relies on attentive spectatorship, in which the viewer explores, examines, reflects, and does their research. In other words, they treat memorials and monuments as texts to be read and read on-site and in the original. However, in my observations of Gordon LA and SGE, I found landscape architects to be more attuned to usership than to
readership. They designed with local residents in mind who can be distracted and are not less informed than tourists, but differently informed.

Walking the MAG Grounds with Dave

As Dave and I walked the grounds, his comments helped me see his landscape architectural goals for the site and the ways he was trying to accomplish them. NOTA residents might encounter the site hundreds of times, from multiple directions, using it in a variety of ways. Getting them to do so, making the MAG grounds a “locus of activity and social life for the neighborhood,” was Dave’s primary goal (Gordon “Field”). The artistic themes of gender equality and universal suffrage were there “to remind Rochester” of its history, a goal that resonates with rhetoric of display criticism (Gordon “Field”). But, though Dave worked closely with the sculptors, they were entirely chosen by the MAG executive board. The point of the landscape architecture was to attract, engage, and return bodies to the site on a regular basis. It is only once the site has been made useful and the community been engaged by it that messages may be delivered.

Dave’s comments made clear that local residents, not potential tourists were the focus of the design. Unlike tourists, community members live with their public spaces every day, which might mean a different relationship to its art. I could have, and to be fair to the rhetoric of display approach certainly should have, learned the history of the Cutler Union by doing my research beforehand. And yet, were I a neighborhood resident, I doubt if I would have ever bothered. I am woefully uninformed about many places I’ve lived before. Out of curiosity, I asked several Rochesterians, including some who had lived nearby, about the MAG’s tall gothic building. Most were like me, didn’t know what it was, and guessed it was a church. Dave, of course, knew the Cutler Union’s history, but in the end its meaning wasn’t vital to what he saw himself doing.

At times it seemed that whether I understood what the Cutler Union was, a church or student union, didn’t really matter as much as its revelation for visual impact. But, this would overstate the matter. Gordon LA, and Dave in particular, are invested in visibly drawing out the history of a place through its design. Their Brickyard Trailway in Victor, for example, explicitly highlights the site’s past as a brick mine and infuses that history into the design aesthetic. It may simply be that Dave presumes that others know what he
knows. The general point here is that there is more to landscape design than communicating messages. So what if I mistook the Cutler Union for a church? Landscapes aren’t just texts; they are usable. They have an architecture, structure, and visual quality all of which create behavioral effects that landscape architects are after, “we [Gordon & the MAG] wanted people on the grounds, especially families because lots of people attract other people” (Gordon “Field”). Ideally, such attractive and engaging design gives denizens the experience of discovery and exploration, it delivers surprises that drive continued curiosity, continued exploration, and more surprises. It requires thinking about the contingencies presented by mobile viewers in a changing context, sometimes in groups or in crowds, sometimes in Spring or at night or in snow.

A site that does not, by its reputation, draw an interested, quasi-informed spectatorship, a National Mall memorial for example, must create spectators out of otherwise occupied denizens. Otterness’s sculptural pieces are great at drawing attention and interaction, especially from kids. “Creation Myth” scatters its smaller bronze statues throughout the MAG grounds in a kind of breadcrumb trail leading up to the museum entrance. Museum visitors can follow this trail of smaller, bronzes hidden throughout the grounds farther onto the grounds and toward the museum itself. This trick of engaging denizens, at first via an interactive amusement (e.g. playground, meeting place), so that an idea or concept can be explored and discovered is most explicitly practiced in museum design. Drawing in children and families was, according to Dave, a major focus for the MAG in redesigning the grounds. They wanted to “open up” the museum to the public while avoiding inviting vagrancy that might turn off their membership (Gordon “Field”). “One way you do that is by getting local families to use the grounds. You offer them what they want: nice views, play structures, interactive and educational features like the Storywalk” (Gordon “Field”). Otterness was chosen specifically because of a history of creating kid-friendly, interactive art. A few of his prior, public sculptures are actual playground slides. “Aloot [of the sculptures] were made to climb on and sit on and that’s part of what we wanted, for people to feel like they could stay on the grounds and to explore the museum. They [the MAG] see it as a way of giving back to the community” (Gordon). Nearby, the sculpture “Unicorn Family” also doubles as seating space, inviting
visitors to enter the grounds and encouraging them to stay by offering them both an activity to do on the grounds (sitting) and a familiar schema for understanding what sort of place it is. “Unicorn Family,” in particular, mimics a living room with two chairs, a table, and a working reading lamp.

![Unicorn Family](image)

Figure 36 "Unicorn Family" (Castle).

Of course, taking down fencing and inviting in the community creates the possibility that the site might be used by vagrants, which the museum hoped to discourage. One way of doing this is through the design of outdoor furniture, an aspect of public space design that, it should be pointed out, gets decided late in the process, often after construction has begun. Though “detail designs” are included in final plans for everything from streetlights to benches, these are frequently altered as construction issues inevitably arise. As Dave and I made our way to the first sculpture, Albert Paley’s “Soliloquy,” a circular plaza opened up to our right, surrounded by a concrete ledge. Its central sculpture is ringed by a low, semi-circular concrete ledge that quite obviously offers itself up as a bench. A closer look at the ledge’s design reveals a series of raised and lowered sections about the width of two seated persons that clearly read as seats. It would be very difficult to recognize that the purpose of this design is anything other than aesthetic, after all the entire grounds are replete with aesthetic objects.
But, as Dave noted, the ledge was designed to keep skateboarders from damaging the bench by using it as a grinding rail. This is what’s known in outdoor furniture design as an anti-skateboarding ledge.

The landscape design of the MAG grounds captures visual attention with many of the same graphic design tactics discussed in Chapter 1 – focal points that draw the eye and contrastive colors (red brick against green grass). Now, however, everything is in motion – the viewer, the site, other people, and vehicles. One of the first things I asked
Dave as we started out from the parking lot on the walking path along Prince Street was why the pathways they used to replace the typically-straight sidewalks snaked back and forth rather than taking the shortest route he talked about using them to create reveals, “That’s pretty typical. It helps us hide what’s coming next so you don’t get everything at once. Interviewer: Why does that matter? Well, you don’t want to be able to see everything at once. That can ruin the effect we’re trying to create. You’re not focusing on what’s in front of you, the Paley [sculpture] or whatever else” (Gordon “Field”). Here we see how the perspective viewpoint becomes important as knowing what a pedestrian can see from a particular point helps with the placement of screens or attention-grabbing elements, such as tall grasses that move in the wind. So, pathways are curved and visual obstructions, like the raised berm that runs along the Prince Street walkway, are placed so that the many elements of the space are not revealed all at once, potentially from unflattering vantage points. Curved pathways, raised berms, and “screening foliage” keep mobile spectators from seeing too much, too soon, keep them “in suspense” (Gordon “Field”). If you’ve ever driven to one of those (often-gated) homes set hundreds of yards from the street, you will likely have experienced such a reveal while taking the long, winding driveway to get to the house, one that only exposes the house as you immediately approach, so that the entire building is revealed, trees clearing, all at once and at a close enough distance that the visual impact is maximized. Had you approached along a straight, unobscured path your experience would have been of a house, small in the distance, gradually coming into better and better view.

The point of such design is to control the experience of the site, ideally in ways that the visitor doesn’t notice. A considerable amount of what Dave seemed to be doing was to exclude certain views of the site from pedestrians. Some unappealing views, of the highway, say, are screened with trees or walls. Other appealing views – the entire Cutler Union, the entryway to the MAG – are also screened, held in reserve until the visitor is in position for the reveal. Dave took me to particular spots on the grounds so we could “get the full effect” (Gordon “Field”). In the studio, plantings are often spoken of for their
suitability as screens (e.g. their height, width, leaf density\textsuperscript{24}). Once again, a close attention to perspectival “views” available on the site generate design elements.

Landscape architecture isn’t primarily aimed at augmenting the meaning of public art (though certainly they do that). If anything, Dave appears to see it the other way around: landscape architecture coordinates, mediates, and makes sense of the various artworks since they (as independently conceived pieces) fail to relate to one another. They are environments rather than texts. Bright red brick pathways replace the sidewalks for several blocks along University and Prince, literally forcing passersby onto the MAG grounds, lest they walk in the street. Not only do the red bricks draw the eye as they contrast loudly with the green lawns, they offer vectors down University Ave. that are more visually interesting than walking along the street (though that’s still an option).

Much of this was invisible to me on my initial visit, which is exactly the point. The site had ushered me, my pedestrian body and its attention, from focal point to focal point, sculpture to sculpture, plaques appearing at just the right moment to provide title and artist name. Such is the work of a well-designed landscape, which unlike the public sculptures receives no title or authorship on a neat placard.

Ultimately, the “reading” approach presumes attention, never grappling with the problem of visual attention as it must be attracted and kept. By attention, I don’t mean the readerly attention, captured in the advice to “capture the reader’s attention,” which really means to begin with interesting material that inspires continued engagement. With a written text we typically presume this already-significant commitment of attention in a reader because readers are at minimum engaged in the attentive act of reading – they follow a sequence of text with their eyes on the page and turn pages when required. Instead, visual attention refers to noticing the existence of a text in the first place.

Attention-getting design mobilizes color, motion, shape, and size in order to attract visual attention. Dave pointed to clusters of plantings that he felt made the area feel organized

\textsuperscript{24} I confess to finding discussions of trees and plants difficult to follow since I don’t know much about tree types, the names for them, or the qualities that different types have. The distinctions landscape architects make can be quite fine. Some trees, it became clear, are best for creating a “ceiling” over walking paths because their leaves are big enough to provide shade, but they also filter sunlight down in appealing ways. Some are best for blocking wind, some mute ambient noise, some are quite opaque, and so on.
and under control and to tall wheat grasses that draw the eye with movement. In the text analogy, it might include the color, size, and font of a book’s cover that catches a browser’s visual attention causing them to pick it up. Landscape architects cannot afford to take attention for granted as an author might. Their designs must be self-advertising, must capture visual attention and keep it, promising more just around each corner. On the MAG grounds much of this work is done by the sculptures themselves (some of which are kinetic sculptures).

As text-based critics we get ourselves into trouble, however, if we presume the same attentiveness in a spectator, auditor, or user that they may safely presume in a reader. The touristic perspectives taken up by critics such as Carole Blair and Phaedra Pezzullo, whose book Toxic Tourism specifically takes seriously the touring of sites of toxic sites as an “‘emergent’ practice… of public discourse,” epitomize this tendency (18). By adopting a touristic ethnographic approach and thereby assuming a tourist audience, these critics pre-invest their observations with well-informed and intense interest. Landscape architects are more likely than rhetoricians to assume that the audience for a designed object will make use of it, as a denizen does, rather than read it, as a tourist does.

In addition to attracting attention, Dave made references to the way the landscape felt. For example, it “protected” visitors from the street with berms, fencing, low plants, and canopy trees. As discussed in Chapter 4, the grounds are meant to “feel open” because it is see-through. At one point, Dave expressed some disappointment with how low the tree limbs had gotten, “those [trees] ought to be limbed up closer to 12 feet,” a comment on low-hanging limbs as obstructions of views through the grounds. While much of the grounds is “open,” there are also enclosed nooks and alcoves, mostly against the museum itself, which feel “secluded” from the rest of the grounds. These are made to feel like “outdoor rooms” within the interior of the MAG grounds, “a good place to read or talk quietly” (Gordon “Field”). Further onto the grounds, we walked along a walkway that leads to the museum’s original building beneath a tree canopy formed by parallel rows of well-pruned trees, hung with string lights. The visual effect is similar to the vaulted ceiling of church aisle, drawing the eye up and dispersing sunlight down from
above. Indeed, Dave’s daughter was married on the redesigned MAG grounds and used this aisle of trees for a processional. This isn’t to say that the MAG grounds is “designed as” an outdoor church, but that its areas are designed to read as and function as outdoor rooms, easily, intuitively, and comfortably comprehended by users.

The concept of feeling or “sense of place” is a prime focus of landscape design, one that doesn’t necessarily attempt to inform or declare. Dave’s task is to design a site that is appealing and comfortable enough to feel special to its users in the community. Geographers, anthropologists, and urban theorists differ on whether Dave’s task is truly achievable via design because of disagreements about how a place acquires and maintains its sense of place, whether “sense of place” is entirely a product of social investments and historically acquired meaning or if its arrangement and architecture also play a role (see Agnew). Most seem to at least agree that it is possible to destroy a “sense of place”
through design, to design “placelessness” into a site (think, for example, of airports, strip malls, gas stations). In all the ways discussed in this section – attractive, moving plantings, spectacular, climbable sculptures, but also defensive furniture, screened external views and open internal views, discoverable, secluded alcoves and other “outdoor rooms” – Gordon LA’s design of the MAG grounds is meant to elicit feelings, a combination of attractive, comfortable, open, discoverable, and yet flexible enough to accommodate the multiple uses (and misuses) that make it socially meaningful to its denizens. Visitors are not meant to notice most of these devices or their effects even as they are influenced by them.

The rhetoric of display approach is not unmindful of the issues of attention and bodily movement. Carole Blair explicitly seeks a materialist language suited to describing ways material rhetoric controls each. Blair’s distinction between rhetorical effects and rhetorical consequences is the most commonly cited enunciation of the philosophical commitment. In her book chapter, “Contemporary U.S. Memorial Sites as Exemplars of Rhetoric’s Materiality” Blair lays out a case for a more materialist, less humanistic approach to rhetoric. Part of this case is a call for less critical attention on rhetorical effects (what are the rhetor’s goals? What is the text “designed” to do? What motivated it?) and more attention to rhetorical consequences (how is the text taken up? What consequences does it have beyond those of its author?). Blair argues that this distinction maps onto another one: a symbolic approach to rhetoric vs. a materialist approach to rhetoric. Indeed, what unifies methods of studying place/space rhetorically is an approach to reading and analyzing the material rhetoric of public spaces only after they have been designed, debated, and physically constituted. There is plenty to be said for this wait-and-see tendency. Most significantly, public spaces become meaningful and significant to a community through use by denizens that activates them with meaning. But, one consistent theme of field-based approaches has been a methodological and theoretical commitment to the materiality of rhetoric and its unforeseeable consequences on audiences. For Blair, rhetorical critics are preoccupied by the symbolic, only ever thinking about rhetoric as intentional, goal-directed symbol-use (“Contemporary” 18-20). Because rhetoric is only ever discussed in this way, its critics have become too focused
on the non-material dimensions of it and deal with it primarily as “ephemera” (“Contemporary” 18). Instead, says Blair, materialist critics ought to recognize that rhetoric must be materially realized in the world, even if just by moving air with vocal chords. The primary obstacle to critiquing rhetoric as material is that we lack an idiom for doing so; we “lack a materialist language about discourse” (17).

A pair of historical problems in the field have combined to create this lack. The first Blair calls “the residue of liberal humanism,” that many define rhetoric as goal-oriented, “used to accomplish particular ends” (21). The second is the privileged position of symbolism in rhetoric, as evidence, that most contemporary theorists define rhetoric as symbolic. The first critique corresponds to what the literary “new critics” Wimsatt and Beardsley called “the intentional fallacy,” that “the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work” (468). Similarly, Blair asks “what about the things that happen as a result of texts that lie outside the goal orientation,” asks Blair, “or even the perceptual field, of a rhetor?” (22). The New Critics wanted to focus literary criticism on the text and solely on the text. Blair doesn’t ask for the same purity, but encourages rhetorical critics, in the name of developing a “materialist rhetoric,” to attend to the unintended effects (or “consequences”) of material rhetoric. In particular, critics should recognize how texts impact not minds, but bodies and their senses (“Contemporary” 46-8). Why should rhetorical critics pay attention only to the mental effects of rhetoric and not the bodily ones? Both problems lead Blair to distinguish between rhetorical effects (intended and symbolic) and rhetorical consequences (unforeseen and embodied), a distinction that numerous scholars of place/space have taken up in their own field research (see e.g. Gallagher and LaWare, Zagacki and Gallagher, Endres and Senda-Cook, Dickinson, Propen, Hess, Bergman). Taken together, the critiques of goal-orientation and symbolism prevent rhetorical criticism from taking the “materialist turn.”

Methodologically, these scholars promote research practices that go beyond reading or looking at images of sites and encourage more intimacy with the materiality of the text. Though secondary and remediated representations of a place certainly matter, “being there matters” more (Blair 274-6). Blair chooses memorial stonework to emphasize the
materiality of not just monuments, but of any rhetoric, and advocates a combination of both physical visitation and extensive contextualizing research of sites. Blair’s chapter looks at five different US memorial sites: the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the AIDS Memorial Quilt, the Montgomery Civil Rights Memorial, Kent State's May 4th Memorial, and the Salem Witch Trials Memorial. Material sites, according to Blair, invite a set of five questions: (1) What is the significance of the text's material existence? (2) What are the apparatuses and degrees of durability displayed? (3) What are the text's modes or possibilities of reproduction or preservation? (4) What does the text do to other texts? (5) How does the text act on people? A materialist language might, Blair concludes, enable rhetoricians to talk about the material element of texts – their present-ness, their copyability, their durability – that escape liberal humanist analysis.

Of Blair’s 5 heuristic questions, it is her fifth – how does the text act on people? – that offers insight into the persuasive effects of good landscape design. Blair cites the interrogation of this question as particularly problematic for the symbolic approach to rhetoric, “understanding rhetoric as appealing rather exclusively to the mind of a reader” (45). And insists that rhetoric “acts on the whole person—body as well as mind…There are particular physical actions the text demands of us: ways it inserts itself into our attention, and ways of encouraging or discouraging us to act or move, as well as think, in particular directions” (46). Rhetoric always places physical and psychological demands on an audience member, whether those are the demands of attention or simply the physical proximity to materializations of rhetoric (e.g. speakers or texts) required to have an experience of them. Memorials make these embodied effects obvious, they “direct the vision to particular features, and they direct—sometimes even control—the vector, speed, or possibilities of physical movement” (46). Memorials are destinations; they cause people to take trips to visit them. This means they are collection points, communal spaces for members of an otherwise spread-out nation or state. Though memorials’ materiality exhibits the materiality of rhetoric generally, their materiality also distinguishes them from typographic texts. Memorials can be interacted with, climbed upon, and damaged. They physically interrupt daily life, the fastest route home, say. “These sites also
suggest—sometimes prescribe—pathways for a visitor to traverse,” says Blair (47), a persuasive effect she does not name, but that landscape architects think about regularly.

Because the rhetoric of display approach draws the critic toward the site’s artistic, ostensive, and expressive elements, the artistic message remains the focus. Bodily and unconscious effects of landscape design often go unacknowledged. In taking the display approach, I found myself focused on the sculptural artworks on the MAG grounds, wondering what sorts of regional narratives and themes artists are tapping into and how different pieces interact with each other. I could ignore the landscape precisely because it invisibly facilitates my viewing of the sculptures and presents me with a readable object. The display approach has me always engaged with a hermeneutic project, a reading, that mist ultimately produce an interpretation. Yet, one of the primary purposes of landscape design is facilitating easy, intuitive, safe navigation through the site.

By its very nature denizens are not meant to notice well-designed landscapes, they’re supposed to be comfortable in them. This invisibility has perpetually frustrated landscape architects, since it makes appreciation of landscape architecture as art more difficult. Throughout his career Frederick Law Olmstead, the American icon of park design and designer of New York’s Central Park and Boston’s Emerald Necklace, fought the impression that landscape architecture was merely expert, large-scale gardening. Olmstead wanted landscape architecture to be considered “a distinct branch of the fine arts, full sister to painting, sculpture, and brick-and-mortar architecture” (Larson 50). Somewhat ironically, Olmstead innovated the very qualities of “unconscious effect” that made the practice of landscape architecture appear artless. As the landscape historian Charles Beveridge describes Olmstead’s approach,

scenery, he decided, worked by an unconscious process to produce relaxing and ‘unbending’ of faculties made tense by the strain of noise and artificial surroundings of urban life. The necessary condition for such an experience was the absence of distractions and demands on the conscious mind. The effect came not as a result of examination, analysis or comparison, nor of appreciation of particular parts of the scene; rather, it
came in such a way that the viewer was unaware of its workings” (Yanni 9).

Here, then, workplace-writing approaches can provide value by offering a deeper appreciation of the ways in which spectatorship may be facilitated, frustrated, or directed by landscape design in ways that are then hidden from perception. From the composing perspective it becomes obvious that most of the persuasive work of landscape design is aimed not at the sorts of artistic statements of “Creation Myth,” but rather at the movement of bodies – through the design of affordances – and the creation of feelings – relaxation, discovery, belonging, conviviality, or safety – through the design.

**Rhetorical Resources Scholarship**

Perhaps, then, public spaces are not best thought of as in need of reading, but, as Nedra Reynolds suggests in Geographies of Writing, as requiring inhabiting or dwelling (163-66). According to this second approach to public space, a designed place is akin to a set for a play, arranged, adorned, and equipped for the performance of certain roles, but not determinative of them. Just as you wouldn’t be able to look at a set and say for certain what performance would occur therein, urban designers can only invite and suggest characters into public space. Extensive visual interrogation of the set is insufficient but dwelling within it or enunciating or performing it (alongside other inhabitants) in a kind of improvisational theater can, according to this approach, provide insight.

One proposed methodological alternative to textual hermeneutics is what Middleton, Senda-Cook, and Endres call a “hermeneutics of experience” (Middleton et al 395). They argue that the embodied, experiential language, borrowed from the disciplines of performance studies and ethnography, offers rhetoric a method for understanding the ritual-like aspects of protests or for attending to self-displays like clothing and tattooing.

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25 The geographer Doreen Massey’s definition of place, adopted by numerous rhetorical scholars from Jenny Rice to Gregory Dickinson, explicates this enlivened conception of space, “Instead of space being this flat surface it’s like a pincushion of a million stories: if you stop at any point in that walk there will be a house with a story. Raymond Williams spoke about looking out of a train window and there was this woman clearing the grate, and he speeds on and forever in his mind she’s stuck in that moment. But actually, of course, that woman is in the middle of doing something, it’s a story. Maybe she’s going away tomorrow to see her sister, but really before she goes she really must clean that grate out because she’s been meaning to do it for ages. So, I want to see space as a cut through the myriad stories in which we are all living at any one moment.” (“Doreen Massey”).
as rhetorical performances. The “in situ, rhetorical field methodology” they call for pairing ethnography and performance studies with the project of critical rhetoric to develop field-based methods that draw out the vernacular, real (because they are derived from interviews with and observations of on-site participants), “live” (comprised of performances and interpretations that would not otherwise be captured as “texts”), embodied, mundane, aesthetic performances, an attempt to capture rhetoric as the enacted social practice that it is (see Middleton et al). If we think of the display scholars as taking a text-focused approach to the site, then it is helpful to think of this group of scholars as receiver-focused. In particular, they suggest a focus on the ways in which an embodied person in a place experiences, performs, adopts, and coopts it. Middleton et al justify in situ, participatory methods with a logic similar to the reader-response school of literary criticism; it “offers opportunities to gather insights on how rhetoric is experienced by rhetors, audiences, and critics” (390). A friendly corrective to the fixation on the material “texts” on the site, in situ scholars concern themselves with the individuals who enact and experience rhetoric as a social practice, “not constituted simply by texts or textual fragments, but through a combination of material contexts, social relationships, identities, consciousnesses, and (interrelated) rhetorical acts that produce meanings and that are co-constructed between rhetor, audience, and particular contexts” (391).

Places are performed; their shape and arrangement should, therefore, be understood as rhetorical resources. The in situ approach typically draws on an event in which the site is mobilized for social action, for example its use as a site of protest, as in Endres and Senda-Cook’s “place in protest” or Kevin Deluca’s “image event.” Its principle mode of investigation is participation with as well as observation and interview of the denizens of sites, whether they’re protesters or tourists. Other scholars interrogate this performance without ethnographic methods, relying on “methods of embodied movement” via their own movement, touch, and repeated visits to a space/place. For example, Kenneth Zagacki and Victoria Gallagher, exploring the Museum Park on the grounds of the North Carolina Museum of Art, call these performances “rhetorical enactments” (171). Dickinson and Aiello’s work on the rhetoric of Starbucks attends to its textured walls and the strategic control of coffee smells. For these scholars the way to
understand how material sites offer up rhetorical resources is to experience these sites by “enunciating” or “enacting” them oneself.

The method I used is influenced by Gregory Dickinson and Giorgia Aiello’s “Being Through There Matters.” Similar approaches are widely practiced and also influence my reading, including Zagacki and Gallagher’s “Rhetoric and Materiality in the Museum Park at the North Carolina Museum of Art,” Carole Blair’s “Reproducing Civil Rights Tactics: The Rhetorical Performances of the Civil Rights Memorial,” and Stewart and Dickinson’s “Enunciating Locality in the Postmodern Suburb: FlatIron Crossing and the Colorado Lifestyle.” Dickinson and Aiello’s methodology for studying place, which they dub “being through there matters,” a play on Carole Blair’s “being there matters,” emphasizes the movement of the embodied critic through the site. The addition of the word “through” is meant to emphasize the way in which the urban environment is “a key form of mediation, in particular by focusing less on ‘issues of symbolism’ while attending more to ‘the performative dimension of the site’” (Dickinson and Aiello 1295). The critic cannot spot meaningful enactments of place just by being there; they must go the further step of “[w]alking and wandering, strolling and sitting, dallying and driving—all of these and an infinity of others are the procedures by which the city and the body weave together” (1298). In Suburban Dreams Gregory Dickinson conducts an extensive, field-based study of suburbia that epitomizes this approach. Dickinson reads the material resources of suburbia as rhetorical topoi, structuring devices that also create the opportunity for rhetorical agency,

Thinking suburban landscapes topically also provides a complex way of thinking the relationship between structure and agency. Topoi, thought of as already available categories and lines of rhetorical action, indicate that the possibilities of rhetoric are delimited and bounded. Thought of as rhetorical resources, topoi urge consideration of the wide variety of materials out of which landscapes and lives are created. Even as these rhetorical resources organize very specific actions, they do so without determining them, since individuals enunciate these resources in
unexpected ways and often combine rhetorical resources into unusual forms as they make and perform their lives (Dickinson 2).

Like traditional rhetorical topoi, the material resources of the suburban landscape offer delimited ways of making sense of one’s life, self, and place that nevertheless get “enunciated” into surprising and creative meanings. Suburban Dreams explores the suburban vision of “the good life” realized through the social infrastructure of megachurches, malls, and neighborhoods of American suburbia, one that emphasizes ease of living, pastoral refuge from the urban, and small-town life. Dickinson’s rhetorical reading of suburbia is rather sympathetic to the suburbanites who achieve “the good life” through such resources, garnering a sense of place and meaning via the malls, life centers, and quasi-public parks of the suburbs. The “being through there” approach is rooted in Michel de Certeau’s theory of performative production and consumption in everyday life, in particular a distinction between the “tactics” of consumers, which he compared to the work of bricolage, and “strategies,” which he associated with institutions and producers and compared to the skyscraper view of the grid city. By visiting and moving through these spaces as well as watching suburbanites move through them, Dickinson develops an interpretation, not of the suburban “good life” as a directive from on high, but as a social identity enacted by denizens who inhabit a network of places that offer the material and topical resources for achieving it.

The MAG as Rhetorical Resources

The tricky part of this kind of analysis, according to its practitioners, is avoiding attributing a totalizing agency to designers of sites (and their clients) and forgetting the significant role that denizens play in “enunciating places” (Stewart and Dickinson 286). The MAG grounds offers symbolic and performative resources for denizens, but its occupants might use those resources to express themselves in unintended and unexpected ways.
Many of the MAG sculptures invoke the themes of Rochester’s anti-racist and feminist mythos. The majority of its sculpture garden is work by local artists, encouraging denizens to view the city as an important part of the MAG and the MAG as a place of significance in the city. The way the sculpture garden spills the contents (art) of the museum out onto its grounds performs the publicness of the museum, a material enactment of its founding mission, “art belongs to the entire community.” This “spilling out” continues, via the ART Walk, beyond the grounds to the rebranded “neighborhood of the arts” itself. The ART Walk was a 1999 community-led, urban planning project in which a series of sculptures, artist-designed benches and bus stops, painted electrical boxes were added throughout the neighborhood. The project has been credited with revitalizing the neighborhood. By connecting both symbolically, through the shared visual language of playful sculptures, and infrastructurally in the red-brick sidewalks of the MAG grounds that lead visitors off the grounds toward the rest of the ART Walk, the MAG grounds offers NOTA denizens an artistic identity, which they can then enunciate
by looking at and appreciating the art, supporting the museum and local artists, and by supporting the commercial district. Of course, denizens can reject such an identity, but from walking the sidewalk to waiting for the bus to going out to eat they constantly encounter both symbols of its artistic ethos and opportunities to behave as art lovers and artists in their daily lives. The rhetoric of display approach would clearly identify these sculptures as epideictic display and praise for a set of artistic values and ideals that have been materially exhibited in public. The rhetorical resources approach wonders whether and how these values are used by community members to construct an identity coherent with their environment.

Dickinson and Aiello ask the rhetorical critic to consider what sense of self and place denizens are enacting through the observable behaviors on the site. The most common activities I observed on the MAG grounds include: climbing on sculptures and ledges, walking into the art museum, admiring the outdoor art, meeting others, reading plaques and interactive paths, walking through, and eating lunch. Each is afforded by the MAG grounds, both through functional design and in its advertising and promotional material. For example, “Creation Myth” and “Unicorn Family” are designed to perform as seating and as a play structure. On the MAG website, the Centennial Sculpture Park is promoted as “a new kind of ‘town square’” (“Centennial”). Perhaps the denizens of Neighborhood of the Arts are, by bodily participating in this enunciation of a “town square,” enthusiastically occupying the social identity it offers. Or, perhaps the fact that a sculpture garden exists on the grounds provides visitors an opportunity to engage in the act of appreciating art, a demonstration to themselves and others that they are appreciators of art.

The MAG grounds privilege the pedestrian. Most of the space in front of the museum is covered in walking paths. The paths that have replaced sidewalks almost compel the pedestrian to walk past the sculptures, inviting them farther onto the grounds with optional paths that route to more sculptures and ever closer to the museum itself. Conversely, the driver experiences a scenic view not unlike driving past a small park, with clear sightlines into the grounds, well-tended trees and grasses that attract attention, but no obvious opportunity to drive in or park. Unlike, say, a shopping plaza, the MAG
does not create opportunities to be a driver on the grounds. Parking is available, of course, but it is hidden behind the museum. The pedestrian path preference in toward the museum also encourages walking out toward to commercial center of the ART Walk, which the Centennial Sculpture Plaza is oriented to face. Walking itself, as a mode of transit, wasn’t always a signal of one’s political commitments, but increasingly walking entails an ideology. It is a publicly visible performance of an urban identity and commitment to environmentalism. Increasingly, living in a city entails liberal politics. Exaggerating one’s urbanity (so to speak) by engaging in activities that are the hallmark of urban life can reinforce, for oneself and for others, those commitments. Conversely, exaggerated driving (a quintessential rural behavior) performs the opposite political commitment, the most well-known example of which is “rolling coal.”26 By privileging pedestrian movement the MAG grounds offers local community members the opportunity to be pedestrians, to walk their neighborhood rather than drive it, an opportunity many seemed to be zealously taking up. The ART Walk website calls the ART Walk, which includes the MAG grounds, “an outdoor museum” (“ARTWalk Rochester”). This implies the sorts of behaviors of close and purposeful attending to and walking through, but I didn’t observe all that much of what I’d call museum behavior on the MAG grounds. Instead, children used the grass, trees, and sculptures to play on, adults used it to walk through or rest. The MAG grounds isn’t exactly used as a “town square” either. It doesn’t contain any commercial or civic buildings on it, nor the amount of foot traffic that would allow denizens to “run into one another,” as a town square traditionally does. Instead, it has effectively become an urban park, a place of refuge in nature and art mostly enjoyed as a respite by schoolchildren and office workers and used by local residents for taking walks.

Dickinson and Aiello press us to go beyond visible activities and to move through the space ourselves. I walked through the park on four distinct visits, on different days and in different kinds of weather asking myself what sorts of actions seemed possible, invited, reasonable, or precluded to me there? How could the MAG grounds be

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26 Rolling coal involves the retrofitting of diesel engines to “increase the amount of fuel entering the engine in order to emit large amounts of black or grey sooty exhaust fumes into the air” (“Rolling Coal”). It is a form of conspicuous pollution for the purpose of protest.
enunciated? The easiest actions were to walk the paths and allow them to lead me either into the museum or down the ART Walk, which I did. I could also walk out on the grass and sit without any issue, climb on sculptures with NO CLIMBING signs, walk around behind the buildings, and generally ignore the prescribed pathways. No objections ensued. I considered the possible resources of a protest available on the site. Indeed, there has been controversy over the selection of Otterness as the artist for the main sculpture at the gateway. Early in his career, Otterness produced a piece of “artwork” in which he filmed himself shooting and killing a dog he acquired from a local animal shelter. Despite his apologies, the controversy led to objections and a small protest at the corner of University and Prince long before the sculpture began construction. Outrage at the controversy has caused Otterness to lose other major commissions. In one act of protest, guerrilla artists added two bronze statues to Otterness’s New York subway sculpture, one of a dog and another of a cameraman. Something similar could happen in Rochester and raise awareness about Otterness’s controversial past. I could imagine the defacement of Otterness’s piece in a way that might remind or introduce onlookers to the artist’s controversy, perhaps with images or statues of the executed dog.

It is worth acknowledging that Middleton et. al insistence on ethnography and participatory methods seem justified and worthwhile and my inability to fully try them out, regrettable. As Middleton, Senda-Cook, and Endres predict, I found it difficult to say as much about how the MAG grounds are used by denizens to construct a complex sense of place or identity in unexpected ways without interacting with those denizens. As a result, I can really only speak to the ways in which I experienced and performed the site, which might be quite different as an outsider to the community and the region. This is not a situation in which my outsider status counts as a benefit by lending me an impartiality or objectivity, since the question for the rhetorical resources approach is how the available symbolic-material landscape gets performed and enunciated as a social identity, a place identity, a coarticulation between the two, and an attachment to both. As I found out by talking to a former School of the Arts student, it was difficult for me to accurately imagine exactly the sorts of mischief or cooptations of the site that actually occur. Because I did not go to the high school I never recognized the MAG grounds as an ideal
place to ditch school or smoke a cigarette although these are indeed opportunities that the site offers that I only know from talking to a former student. Recognizing how nearby places articulate with each other functionally would likely reveal more fascinating insights into the feelings about and attachments to a place than scrutiny of its design, but a long-term social and cultural embeddedness is required to recognize these articulations (see Rice Digital Detroit). It is almost impossible without taking advantage of ethnographic methods. In the case of the MAG grounds, the proximity of a high school creates a “sense of place” amongst a group of users that is tied to the kinds of uses high school students make of unattended open spaces.27

While I may be committing the fallacy of attributing to design a cleverness that is unearned, one clever aspect of the MAG grounds design is its built-in opportunities to engage in “deviancy.” That kids and teenagers are permitted to climb on many of the sculptures has the potential to serve as an outlet for otherwise destructive tendencies. At this point a bit of design theory can help attune critical attention to “misuse” and the signs that designers use to see patterns of usage. During site inventories landscape architects look for what are called “desire lines,” areas that have been trodden down to reveal a path

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27 One potential resource for studying unauthorized uses and therefore unobservable, but meaningful “enunciations” of place are maintenance and facilities workers who are on the grounds every day cleaning up after and try to keep out interlopers. No group will be more familiar with the ways a site is used and misused, when, and potentially even for what reasons.
of dirt in the grass (see Figure 9). Desire lines in public spaces reveal unpaved places where denizens walk. For designers, desire lines reflect a design failure, a failure to anticipate usage preferences. This is not necessarily warranted, however. Some amount of deviation from prescribed routes may be unavoidable because they are simply an expression of independence, a bodily rejection of the prevailing institution or perceived prescription on offer. Some mountain bikers, for example, will deviate from the prescribed paths of a bike trail, in part, to perform their own competence as skillful mountain bikers. In doing so, they begin the process of cutting new trails that will be observable and authorize their own use to subsequent riders. A growing number of “trampling studies” conducted by urban ecologists have begun to empirically define how much traffic leads to noticeable effects. Desire paths can be created by relatively little foot traffic, as few as 15 passes can create a visible trail (see Hampton et al). Knowing to look for desire lines didn’t reveal any existing examples on the MAG grounds, but it did help attune to indexes of human use on the surfaces of public space. Like desire lines, the brass statues of various sculptures keep an indexical shine of interaction with oily human skin. Amongst Otterness’s many small brass figures you can see which draw the most attention from hands and where (the heads!). Furthermore, the absence of desire lines suggests that the denizens of the grounds stick predominantly to the paved paths.

On the other hand, some deviant behaviors, such as skateboarding and sleeping rough, don’t leave an observable trace because they are preempted. These behaviors may be frustrated through the difficult to recognize design of the affordances of objects on site, especially its benches. As the Marxist geographer Mike Davis details in “Fortress LA,” the bum-proof bench affords sitting-on without affording sleeping-on. Subtly shaped yet intentionally designed, they persuade inconspicuously, not through their salience, but because they are sewn so neatly into the fabric of everyday life. As the bum-proof bench and designs like it have become increasingly common they’ve received their own moniker, “defensive architecture” (also called unpleasant design, hostile architecture, or exclusionary design (see “Hostile Architecture”)). As we’ve seen, the MAG features not a bum-proof, but skate-proof bench, though certainly I might have missed other defensive architectures precisely because I’m not part of a targeted usership.
In general, deviant usage and its prevention through affordance design on the MAG grounds were much easier to recognize with concepts such as affordance and desire path than with heuristics like “How does the text act on people?,” even though they’re both trying to get at the same phenomenon. Some features, like the anti-skateboarding bench and desire lines, are merely difficult to notice. Others in the defensive architecture arsenal, like the randomized sprinkler schedules that make sleeping on the MAG grounds impossible, can be downright impossible to observe unless sought out. In part this is because anti-skateboarding designs discriminate not on the basis of shared physiology, but specifically on the basis of a form of mobility: skateboarding. It simply would not have occurred to me to try skateboarding on the site. Even if I had, I lack the bodily actions to even consider the “grind-ability” of various surface, nor the practice to be able to recognize what surfaces afford grinding. A skateboarder likely would have. A similar issue plagues design for the disabled: it is very difficult to recognize what will inhibit use without extensive trial-and-error study in collaboration with persons with various disabilities.

In the case of defensive architecture, however, this balancing act between making something attractive without making its defensive mechanism too noticeable is yet another area in which pragmatic concerns are folded into aesthetics. The MAG grounds are a compromise between the desire to offer the public a beautiful space filled with art and the need to keep that space clean, clear of homeless denizens, and prevent damage to the art and grounds. The idealized visitor to the grounds, whether art appreciator or “new town square” member, ought to be kept blissfully unaware of the extent to which the place is a fortress of constraints on unauthorized usages.

**Conclusion**

Though I am urging rhetorical critics of public space not to abandon rhetoric’s traditional focus on production, composition, and design, I am not at odds with the call to attend to the consequentiality of material rhetoric. I don’t claim that all embodied effects are designed. Neither does my desire to attend to the composition of public space constitute a call to return to privileging authorial intent, only considering it. Rhetorical critics who approach rhetorical artifacts as agents in their own right, have rightly drawn
attention to the ways that texts are not at the beck and call of their authors, that texts and images aren’t just authored and distributed, but circulate, interact, and transform (see Edbauer, Gries). Field-based scholars examine this rhetorical afterlife through a variety of phenomenological, new materialist, and experiential methods and theories too numerous do justice to (for a review see Rai and Druschke).

Yet, writing studies work on architectural design (e.g. Ackerman & Oates, Medway) demonstrates the value of studying the practices, technologies, and rhetorical situations out of which these spaces emerge. So, it shouldn’t be surprising that the scholarship that has best explored these novel issues of functionality and usage as rhetorical comes in the context of virtual environments. As technical and professional communication increasingly intersects with interactive, virtual, and web interfaces (not just traditional documents), design concepts such as usability, affordance, user-experience, human-computer interface, choice architectures, and dark patterns have made their way into the field (see Miller-Cochran and Rodrigo). In their collection of essays on usability, Rhetorically Rethinking Usability, Susan Miller-Cochran and Rochelle L. Rodrigo define usability as being “concerned with anticipating users’ needs and expectations, as well as designing texts, documents, systems, platforms, spaces, software—and many other things—with a purpose in mind that is appropriate to and tailored for that audience of users” (1). Though the concept of usability can be found as far back as the 1970s in the fields of technical communication and computers and writing, the pioneering work of Patricia Sullivan, Bill Hart-Davidson, Cynthia and Richard Selfe, and Clay Spinuzzi, has exposed usability studies to the broader field of rhetoric and composition. For example, Ian Bogost explores what he calls “procedural rhetoric… the practice of authoring arguments through processes… made not through the construction of words or images, but through the authorship of rules of behavior, the construction of dynamic models” (125). Like a virtual environment, the built environment is an interactive medium that constrains its users’ behavior and consequences, though with less God-like precision than video games do. Bogost specifically limits his claims to argumentation, the ways in which procedural rules programmed into interactive media make strong (though not explicit) claims about the
world and its rules. And so, his procedural rhetoric concept makes an excellent starting point for a rhetorical theory of environmental design, but remains narrowly focused on how environments change users’ minds. However, the differences between the architecture of games and other interactive media and environmental architecture are instructive. Because they cannot define the set of uses one can make of objects, nor define those actions’ consequences, landscape designers aren’t in the business of designing built environments to make claims about the world through procedurality. Instead, they primarily focus on encouraging and discouraging immediate actions in public space, rather than the making of enduring, ideological claims about reality.

Though Bogost rejects the application of the word rhetoric\textsuperscript{28} to the kinds of designerly suasion of bodies and attention on which this dissertation has focused, considering it a form of coercion instead of persuasion (Bogost 60-62), other rhetorical scholars have questioned such a distinction. In a recent enculturation essay, for example, Steve Holmes explores what he calls “Foggian rhetoric,” after Stanford psychologist B.J. Fogg’s “persuasive technologies.” Per Fogg, the influential behavior psychologist and founder of the Stanford Behavior Design Lab, a persuasive technology is any device designed to change attitudes or behaviors through persuasion or social influence (Fogg 1). Kin to dark patterns and choice architecture tactics (e.g. pop-up suggestions, strategic default settings, attention-getting notifications, and difficult-to-find cancellation buttons), many Foggian tactics are by now famous as components of engagement-engineered websites and apps such as Facebook and Twitter. As Holmes summarizes the dismissal of Foggian tactics as non-rhetoric, “persuasive technologies can only be manipulative or coercive and nonrhetorical because they work on the body (i.e., form habits) and not the rational mind.” Tracing an interest in persuasive technology through the concepts of bodily hexis and habits, Holmes questions the Cartesian mind-body distinction inherent in this dismissal and insists that persuasive technologies are well within the purview of rhetorical study. The results of the Stanford Behavior Design Lab, evident in Silicon

\textsuperscript{28} “Perhaps” says Bogost of Fogg’s persuasive technologies “they offer valid ways of using technology to alter behavior. But not one of them deploys rhetoric. Instead, all of Fogg’s techniques use technology to alter actions or beliefs without engaging users in a discourse about the behavior itself or the logics that would recommend such actions or beliefs” (60-1).
Valley’s most profitable and addictive creations from Facebook to YouTube, highlight the potency of design to intentionally influence the behavior of its users and therefore the necessity of attending to those rhetorical tactics as they spread from virtual to built environments (Holmes).

If we return to Blair’s distinction between effects and consequences, her critique formalizes into a similar set of twin analogies:

symbolism : intended effects
materiality : unintended consequences

The essence of her critique is that rhetorical critics pay too much attention to a rhetor’s intended effects and that they do so by focusing almost entirely on rhetors’ use of symbols, ignoring the materiality of rhetoric. Kenneth Zagacki and Victoria Gallagher, echoing Blair’s call, put the methodological tradeoff plainly, “The move from symbolicity to materiality involves a shift from examining representations (what does a text mean/what are the persuader’s goals) to examining enactments (what does a text or artifact do/what are the consequences beyond that of the persuader’s goals)” (172). That is, the call for more focus on rhetoric’s unintended consequences is a result of increased attention on rhetoric’s materiality. Many scholars of the material rhetoric of public space follow Blair in focusing on this unpredictability and insisting that its study be done in the field in order to discover some of the ways in which these artifacts “become rhetorical” in ways never intended by their designers.

While certainly the meaning of sites can be unpredictable, there is, I believe, much to be learned, specifically about embodied rhetorical effects, from the designers of public spaces because of their perennial focus on public spaces not as carrier of symbolic meaning, but as tools and as mediators of attention. The caveat I hope to carve out in this conversation is just this: that we have, in fact, not yet paid enough attention to the motives, processes, concepts, or collaborative practices that go into the composition of built environments, such that a move beyond issues of public space design is now warranted. This is especially true as rhetoric is increasingly interested in embodiment. Public spaces are rhetorical actors significantly distinct from the typical objects of study in rhetoric. As this dissertation has tried to show, the suasory effects of material, public
space are not merely accidental “consequences,” but rather “effects,” the product of intentional design. From the evocation of “felt safety” to manipulations of human affordances and their recognition by denizens, to the creation of a “sense of place,” when it comes to the practice of landscape architecture, most of the designed rhetoric of landscape architecture aims to create sensory and bodily effects.

This call to attend to design applies even if we think designers really aren’t all that good at accomplishing their goals, as might be the case with felt safety. It remains important to recognize what designers of public space are “up to,” the persuasive goals of public spaces and the graphics and language in which those goals get enunciated by its designers. Who do these experts tailor their designs to? What exigences do they recognize? What terms they are thinking in? And, what practices and tools mediate design for them?
Chapter 6 – Conclusion

Jurgen Habermas endowed the concept of the public sphere (Öffentlichkeit) with a structure, one that could and would be disrupted and transformed by the 20th Century. One part of the story he told pointed to technological disruptions of that structure in the form of changes to its communicative media. The idealized public sphere, once mediated by coffee houses, taverns, and newspapers, was “structurally transformed” when public deliberations moved onto mass communication technologies such as radio and television. Urban theorists have extended his critique by specifying its spatial dimensions and transformations. They tell a story of the structural transformations of human mobility, especially by the automobile. As society transitioned, rather rapidly during the Industrial Revolution, from a pedestrian existence to speedier modes of travel (e.g. train, and automobile), a key structural element of democratic life, the shared common spaces in which citizens naturally and as a matter of course met and came to know each other, was made obsolete.

In an influential essay reflecting on placelessness in modern societies, Mahyar Arefi dubs this diagnosis the “narrative of loss,” a recurring theme of urban theory that had been firmly established by the end of the 20th century (see Arefi). The “narrative of loss” goes like this: public spaces, no longer at the confluence of daily life, the pragmatics of which have moved online, onto highways, and into shopping malls, now no longer plays the vital role of generating contact amongst citizens. The irresistible pull of the automobile caused suburban sprawl which caused what the anthropologist Marc Augé calls “non-places” (e.g. shopping malls, parking lots, highways). Communities that once coalesced into polities on the basis of little more than a shared “rootedness” in a place, were now alienated from their neighbors, spatially and as a result relationally (Arefi 6). At best, public space has become an optional amenity, found mostly in wealthy suburbs and enclaves and often deliberately insulated from outsiders by design. To be clear, the “contact” generated by these lost places is not the first-name-basis relations of the small town, but mere contact, exposure to one’s fellow citizens such that they view one another as fellow community members. The “narrative of loss” is often told as the inevitable consequence of new communicative and transportation technologies (the automobile,
radio, telephone, refrigerator, television, computer, and the internet), all of which seem to have had the same privatizing effect of reorienting entertainment, social, and public life from the street into the home.

But, alongside the rise of consumer technologies, the 20th century witnesses the rise of the city planner, civil engineer, and the landscape architect. And their responses to innovation are just as important to telling the story. These newly empowered design professions re-drew public space during the 20th Century. Henry Ford never built a single highway or widened a boulevard. According to many urban critics, they overreacted. This was not an inevitability, but a choice. The design professions did not have to convert so much of the urban environment from pedestrian-friendly plazas and sidewalks to streets and highways. In the US, they were occasionally prevented from doing so by activists like Jane Jacobs, who thwarted Robert Moses’s plans to build the Lower Manhattan Expressway through Greenwich Village. In Europe, ancient cities were often already so dense and built up that redesign for the automobile was implausible. The urban environments that eschewed such redesigns for one reason or another (Manhattan, central Paris and Vancouver) are today reaping the rewards of a flourishing and vibrant public life. But, most did not eschew it and virtually all cities built after the automobile are paragons of placelessness.

My question in this dissertation has been why? Especially when cities are designed and don’t grow up piecemeal over time, why do they exhibit this tendency toward placelessness? My approach has been to examine one of these professions, landscape architecture, to get a sense of whether the process of design contributes to the “narrative of loss.” I think it does. I think it does so specifically because landscape architecture is both rhetorical practice, engaged in persuading audiences with images, and the fabricative one, engaged in making places that work for users. Most obviously, presentations are rhetorical when they justify changes to the built environment through the exhibition of drawings to lay audiences. But, the claim that landscape design is rhetorical also includes the thoroughly graphical nature of landscape design, which is conducted from start to finish via drawings and in terms adapted to talk about drawings. What influence has this visual rhetorical crucible had on the shape of public space?
The graphic genres of landscape architecture are just as important as heuristics for invention and discovery as they are assembly instructions or persuasive displays for others. Thus, landscape design drawing is rhetorical not only in its presentation to others, but as a collaborative tool. As heuristics, visualizations provide landscape architects a common object, an already simplified and interpreted graphic of the site itself, over which they can talk, debate, and make decisions in a shared language.

Chapters 2 and 3 explored drawing both in-studio among landscape architects and in presentations to clients and the public. Together, they argue for a heuristic account of expert viewership called skilled vision, developed in anthropology by Christina Grasseni, which she defines as “a social activity, a proactive engagement with the world, a realm of expertise that depends heavily on trained perception and on a structured environment” (Made to Be Seen 19). One of the clearest examples of visual skill as heuristic is the practice of superimposing graphics. Landscape architects use trace paper to draft ideas on plans and perspectives and they use AutoCAD to draw in dozens of layers that can be toggled on and off in order to see patterns. The practice of bubble diagramming involves using trace paper to conflate functional diagrams of the client program (a list of needs rendered as adjacent circles) with a plan of the site. Superimposition is more than mere comparison of one text with another, its heuristic potency lies in the physical qualities of trace paper itself (its translucence), which allows landscape architects to create a material relationship between pieces of paper that generates new ideas by creating synoptic visualizations dense with information.

I distinguish skilled vision from the more common metaphor of viewership competence in rhetorical studies, “visual literacy.” Visual literacy, as it is defined by visual rhetoricians, describes the critical-analytical skill of breaking down images into their component symbols (and sometimes those symbols’ component parts) and tracing the references back to shared, culturally-dependent meanings to which they refer. Images, according to visual literacy, evoke and invoke shared meanings in a culture, often but not always by design. A critical viewer will analyze an image for its motivated deployment of these symbolic resources, its visual rhetoric. The skilled viewer, on the other hand is not critical, does not rhetorically analyze images to unmask their motives, and yet is able
to see more than the analyst because of the knowledge and expertise she brings to the act of viewing. By working procedurally with images in the structured environment of the studio, she reveals an underlying reality, whether unseen patterns, opportunities for intervention, or future conflicts. In this sense the skilled viewer looks, in Richard Lanham’s parlance, THROUGH and not AT the visualization to see “the site” in a new way. Often this kind of viewership involves the manipulation, comparison, or combination of multiple visual texts, marking, coding, highlighting, and superimposing them with one another. While we might be tempted to define such manipulation as an artistic act of composition, not viewing, it is best understood as both. Approaching technical graphics, especially working visualizations meant for combination and comparison, in isolation and only via the concept of visual literacy is akin to looking at a drawing on an overhead transparency (see Figure 1) in the absence of the technology for projecting it, or the other pieces of film that it was meant to overlay.

While any image can be rhetorically analyzed from a critical distance, at times distance can blind critics to what is obvious to insiders. Critical distance works best to uncover the intentional deceptions of an image’s design, if say it is meant to misrepresent
statistics or conflate ideas. And yet, to the extent that experts mislead their viewers, they are also often misleading themselves because of the heuristic nature of skilled vision, used ingenuously by a community of practice to disclose and discover, by blocking out what conflicts with the view from the discipline. Skilled vision is best understood as a set of blinders that allows critics to narrow their focus on particular details rather than a removed perch for seeing context. This is not to say that the moment for critique and rhetorical analysis should never come – this dissertation ultimately uses rhetorical concepts to critique landscape architecture from outside the discipline – only that it ought to be delayed until it is clear what is going on. Skilled vision can help us see the world as it appears from within the discipline, what that perspective allows disciplinary experts to accomplish, and to hear the stories they tell themselves that comprise a worldview.

When rhetoricians critique language, whether typographic texts or speech, we use the terms and tools of composition, many of which were developed in ancient Greece as tools for the practice of oratory. With an appreciation of the tools of rhetorical production critics can efficiently group and dissect a text into the rhetorical tactics that constitute it. Similarly, landscape architects operate within a language that recognizes the materials they work with and effects they seek, effects and materials that are alien enough to rhetoric that attempts to use only the tools of rhetoric will be insufficient. Landscape architects and their critics compose, think, and talk in a shared language of views, focal points, pathways, and plantings. Rhetorical critics ought to be familiar with these tools of landscape composition if they wish to critique it. While we are familiar with the process and practice of writing a text or planning and practicing a speech, rhetoricians really are on the outside looking in when it comes to the collaborative composition of public spaces. Blair recognizes this lack, “we lack an idiom for referencing talk, writing, or even inscribed stone as material” but dismisses the possibility that design disciplines can help, and thus turns her attention away from the composition of public space and to the objects themselves. At minimum, the language in which landscape architects plan, design, and talk ought to be components of rhetorical criticism of public space.

In accounting for the visual rhetoric of TPC visualizations, especially those that are used as tools of invention by members of a community of practice and later adapted
to public presentation, competent viewership is best described using the metaphor of a learned, interactive, skillful practice not a broad-based, analytical literacy. And while the rhetorical potency of technical visualizations has more than one dimension (e.g. a demonstration of unattainable technical expertise that lay viewers ought to trust implicitly), what landscape architects appear to be striving for is the education of their audience, through a “pedagogy of sight,” so that lay viewers can genuinely appreciate the landscape design. Thus, the graphical heuristics used by landscape architects to discover design solutions are simplified and adapted by presenters to teach lay viewers to appreciate the design.

Field Work

Public space is most often studied on foot, by ambling around (often successful) public parks and squares. Some exclusively read the site itself, others embed themselves in a community of users, activists, or community members. Its design, especially the daily creation of mundane public spaces such as sidewalks and streets and semi-public spaces such as front yards and building plazas, is too often ignored. Often enough, these important elements of civic infrastructure are an afterthought, designed by firms like SGE focused on efficiently building rows of single-family homes. Yet, when they are designed with care and attention to social outcomes, as with The MAG grounds in Rochester or The Brickyard Trail in Victor, they reveal something even more interesting than neglect, an explicit effort to design environments that subtly influence denizens, not by persuading them with messages, but by attracting attention, providing affordances for desired behaviors, inhibiting unacceptable behaviors, and making misbehavior more visible.

In Chapter 4, I traced landscape architects’ attempts to design crime out of public spaces, a perennial topic of discussion during consultations with the public, back to its roots in theories about human-environment psychology. I made the case that landscape architects “design out crime” primarily in response to these concerned citizens who reliably raise the concern that changes to their area will bring in outsiders who will bring crime. I argued that landscape architects’ design drawings should be understood as a fundamentally rhetorical endeavor, the graphical and rhetorical construction of what I
called felt safety. From the landscape architect’s perspective, crime truly can be mitigated through CPTED design strategies (e.g. “eyes on the street” buildings, naturally surveillable design, defensible spaces, etc.). And yet, landscape architects haven’t traditionally claimed this sort of influence, focusing more on aesthetics. Furthermore, empirical evidence from sociologists and psychologists has raised doubts about the effectiveness of CPTED. Despite the counter-evidence landscape architects continue to design according to CPTED. Given this ambivalence, I argue that the crucial moment for CPTED theory and design is the visual presentation to client or public, rather than its implementation as a built environment. Its main purpose is to assuage concerns about the effect of the project on local crime rates, yet it presents itself as a theory of human-environment psychology.

From the audience member’s perspective, the basic logic and promise at work in these drawings is this: from orderly drawings come orderly spaces and from them a well-ordered society, otherwise stated as visual order causes social order. Whether or not landscape architects mean to promise such a relationship between drawing, site, and society, I think their graphics imply as much to lay viewers. In addition, their viewers find themselves in a difficult position to evaluate the validity of their claims. Will a surveillable design make the new park safer? Will shorter setbacks provide “eyes on the street” and discourage crime that way? Will defensible spaces truly cause neighbors to act as guardians of their common areas? Lay viewers have only design drawings, in combination with explanations from presenters themselves, with which to determine whether the promises and effects of a graphic will be realized in the finished product. This is why felt safety design is so rhetorically potent for landscape architects. It works, whether or not it really works.

In light of all this, I argue, in Chapter 5, for continuing to attend to the issues of composition, including the motives, intents, process, terms, and tools of design, as rhetoricians turn our attentions to the built environment. Not only are designed spaces the product of human design, they are the product of collaboration among many people. They are not the text-like objects of study to which rhetorical analysis is accustomed and
attuned and so better familiarity with designers ought to improve rhetorical analysis of them.

Scholars who do field work insist on the value of “being there,” the value of an embodied experience of a place, the value of observation, and of ethnographic engagement with others on-site. Neither images nor memories of places suffice. Often, however, this emphasis on “being there” means “going there,” as the rhetorical critic takes a research trip to experience a commemorative site. This is obviously necessary if situational study is to be done, but it means that scholars approach the site as tourists rather than as locals. Indeed, even when the researcher is a local they are confined by that perspective also. Perhaps ironically, the design perspective provides a better angle on the variety of embodied uses of public space because designing requires the accommodation of a variety of users, with different intentions, while in situ field-based methods reflect only the narrow experience of the researcher, often that of an able-bodied, interested tourist. Designers have their hands full with more than just out of town visitors. They must worry about vandals and vagrants, children and animals, the weather conditions, seasons, lighting, maintenance, and on and on. I was especially struck by the degree to which designers presumed disinterest rather than interest and assumed the need to coax attention and behavior out of passers-by. Field-based scholars are interested in the phenomenology of the site; designers are too. Yet, in the design they are required to strike a bargain between many kinds of visitors in different conditions and build a site that can accommodate all of it. The contingencies they confront raise interesting issues about how we experience the built environment: how misuse changes the shape of public space, how to attract attention, and how to afford and constrain bodies. They achieve persuasive effects through the structural transformation of public space.
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