THE EVOLVING MEANING OF SITE-SPECIFICITY: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

by

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Under the Direction of Marianne Cramer

ABSTRACT

Landscape architects specialize in works that are site-specific. However, the meaning of the term *site-specific* has evolved to no longer be defined simply as the geographic boundaries of the site, but now has a broader meaning within a global context. An understanding of a site must now include an understanding of the natural systems, as well as the political, economic, and social systems at work. As the definition of a *site* expands, the inherent dichotomy between local thinking and global thinking also expands. This thesis uses Miwon Kwon's three paradigms of site-specificity as the basis for a theoretical framework, to which contemporary theories on nomadism and general systems thinking are added. The author then analyzes the paradigms through the lens of four contemporary site-specific works. Finally, the author analyzes a contemporary landscape design to illustrate the ways in which the concepts utilized in the four paradigms can benefit the practice of landscape architecture.

INDEX WORDS: Landscape architecture, land art, environmental art, general systems thinking, space, place, site, site-specificity, nomadism

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DEDICATION

To my parents, who always encouraged me to pursue my passion.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF DEFINING SITE

Landscape architects are living in an age when they are increasingly confronted with

issues of a global scale. The global economy and global environmental crisis are growing

concerns in society. As a result, American society is increasingly aware of the growing impact

that our daily decisions have on the environment in a global context. This has created a new

way of thinking about who we are as a society, where we live, and how to 'place' ourselves

within the world. As geographer Edward Soja explains,

> The spatial dimension of our lives has never been of greater practical and political
>
> relevance than it is today…we are becoming increasingly aware that we are, always
>
> have been, intrinsically spatial beings, active participants in the social construction of
>
> our embracing spatialities. Perhaps more than ever before, a strategic awareness of
>
> this collectively created spatiality and its social consequences has become a vital part
>
> of making both theoretical and practical sense of our contemporary life-worlds at all
>
> scales, from the most intimate of the most global. (Soja, 1996, p. 1)

Perhaps more than ever before, humans are aware of their impacts on a complex

world. Despite the benefits of thinking on a more global scale, there are also drawbacks.

Increasing globalization has led to a backlash against these trends which can be seen in the

work of contemporary artists and landscape architects. For example, the promotion of

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vernacular architecture (Frampton, 1983) and the recent growth of the local agriculture movement are all part of this reaction against the ills of globalization. Celebrating the importance of a site's ties to its local context and its "sense of place" is an important aspect of the work that landscape architects do today (Lippard, 1997). But is promoting the local aspects of a site the best solution?

How can landscape architects successfully balance these two conflicting views of a site? How can landscape architects balance the need to think within a more global, systems-based context, while still celebrating the local aspects of a site? Addressing these questions will provide the field of landscape architecture with the opportunity to create works that more successfully respond to the global environmental crisis in addition to creating works that can celebrate a site's local significance.

The term 'site-specific' has been used throughout the history of architecture, landscape architecture, and environmental art to describe work with meaning and understanding dependent upon the site where it is located. The manner in which this term has been used has changed throughout history as our society's understanding of the environment has changed. This thesis will analyze this changing definition by researching its history in the fields of art, architecture and landscape architecture. Further review of the current research on the meaning of *site*, and its relation to similar terms such as *place* and *space*, will be analyzed. This thesis will seek to answer the question: *How can a more robust definition of 'site-specificity' aid landscape architects in creating designs that balance both the local and global aspects of a site?*

The purpose of this thesis is to broaden the understanding of the meaning of the term *site-specificity* in what the author terms the *spatial disciplines* (art, landscape architecture, architecture, and urban planning). This broader definition will hopefully help practitioners, particularly landscape architects, to create site-specific designs that more successfully balance the realities of globalization with the importance of celebrating the local aspects of the site.

As American culture enters an age with increasingly complex environmental and societal issues, a more robust definition of 'site' will aid practitioners who work in the landscape to more critically consider the ramification of their work. In addition, a more comprehensive and contemporary definition of 'site-specific' work will translate into the creation of landscapes that are more responsive to social and environmental needs.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to expand upon the meaning of the term *site-specificity* this thesis draws primarily from precedent in the art world. Art in the environment (whether it is environmental art, earth art, public art or land art) has pushed its relationship with the site in fascinating new directions. This genre of art offers a wealth of ideas to the field of landscape architecture. As Udo Weilacher comments in his book, Between Landscape Architecture and Land Art,

> Since the decline of the influence of Modernism on style, contemporary landscape architecture has been lacking any avant-garde stimulus from which it could evolve its own expressive force…In contrast, the strongly experimental explorations of art repeatedly open up new ways of perceiving nature subjectively and experiencing

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landscape personally. Nothing would seem more natural than for landscape architecture to concern itself with an art which not only addresses itself to similar themes but also works with the same materials and in the same space (Weilacher, 1999, p. 39).

In order to analyze artists' thinking on the meaning of site-specific work, this thesis uses art and architecture theorist, Miwon Kwon's three paradigms of site-specificity from her book, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (2002). Her work is used as a theoretical framework for this thesis because her research represents some of the most recent and provocative thinking on the subject of site-specificity. In addition, her unique background in both the fields of art and architecture offer an interesting perspective which is fitting for the purposes of this thesis. However, because her research is predominantly focused on its application to the fields of art and architecture, there may be additional insight to her framework that can be added from the field of landscape architecture. For this reason, other contemporary theories that deal with site, place, and space are discussed and compared to Kwon's.

Current research on the meaning of site in both the fields of environmental art and landscape architecture show a pattern of systems-based thinking. The artwork is no longer about the object produced, but instead is a "discursive narrative" (Kwon, 2002). The artwork is more about the process of its making, the coordination with cultural institutions, and the systems within which the artwork exists. As Kwon (2000) states,

Within the limited critical discussions concerning present-day site-oriented art, one

tendency has been to valorize the nomadic condition. Referencing the writings of

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari as theoretical support, some critics have championed

the work of artists such as Andrea Fraser, Mark Dion, Renee Green, and Christian

Philipp Muller, among many others, for having abandoned the phenomenologically-

oriented mode of site-specific art (best exemplified by Richard Serra's sculptures). This

is a mode that is seen to be outdated now. Moving beyond the inherited conception

of site-specific art as a grounded, fixed (even if ephemeral), singular event, the works

of these artists are seen to advance an altogether different notion of a site as

predominantly an intertextually coordinated, multiply located, discursive field of

operation. (p. 33)

Similarly, in the field of landscape architecture, practitioners are increasingly utilizing design

schemes that are intertextually coordinated. This way of thinking about site has been further

analyzed by the growing body of study known as systems thinking.

There are some delimitations to this thesis, mainly due to the author's bias. This thesis

focuses on environmental art mainly because of the author's interest and education in

sculpture and fine arts. In addition, the case studies and other examples of works draw

primarily from western culture. This is again due to the author's exposure and education.

In addition, it is important to note that in analyzing the meanings of site, place, and space, the

scope of this thesis does not include virtual space. More research is needed to understand the

subcategory of virtual space within the broader theoretical overview provided here.

This thesis is designed to build upon Kwon's work by adding further contemporary theory on site-specificity, place and space, as well as overlay systems thinking. The thesis begins with interpretive historical research on the meaning of site-specificity, place and space. Defining the meaning of the word *site* and *site-specificity* has always been a critical component of the work of landscape architects, architects and environmental artists. Chapter Two will explore the changing definitions that the spatial disciplines have used throughout history to explain the relationship of their works to the environment. An interpretation of the historical research will create a basis for understanding the current research on the meaning of site.

Part 1 of Chapter Two interprets the history of the term 'site-specific' starting with its beginnings in the art world of the 1960s. The chapter analyzes the changing meaning of the term over the following decades as artists' works began to reflect societal changes of the time and were increasingly responsive to social, political, and environmental movements. Site-specific installations were heavily influenced by theories in the fields of architecture, city planning, and the environmental movement. This chapter also chronicles these developments and their effects on the meaning of site-specific work, and also the changing meaning of the related terms site, place, and space from the 1960s through the 2000s.

Part 2 of Chapter Two interprets the current thinking of site-specificity, as well as contemporary theories on the related terms of space and place. This section builds upon the history of the terms, and reviews current thinking on the meaning of terms through careful

analysis of prominent thinkers in the fields of art and architecture theory, as well as landscape architecture and geography.

Chapter Three then builds upon the current thinking present in Part II of Chapter Two, and sets up a theoretical framework which seeks to build upon the theoretical framework of Miwon Kwon and answer the question: *What is the new meaning of site-specificity*? This is accomplished by building a fourth paradigm of site-specificity upon her framework through a careful analysis of theory and systems thinking. The result is a framework that can be used to analyze site-specific works.

Chapter Four uses the framework established in Chapter Three to analyze four case studies. These include Andy Goldsworthy's *Wood Line* and *Spire*, Mary Miss' *FLOW: Can You See the River?*, Mark Dion's *Neukom Vivarium*, and Foreign Office Architects' *Yokohama Port Terminal*. The author then interprets the works as they relate to the four paradigms based on the artist or architects' concepts for their works and the process they undertook to realize the projects.

Chapter Five then offers a critical analysis of the case studies by reviewing the artist or architect's concept of the work against the key components established for the paradigms of site-specificity. The author analyzes how each of the works selected identifies with the four paradigms of site-specificity. Chapter Six is an analysis of a contemporary landscape design, utilizing the concepts presented in the previous chapters. Michael Van Valkenburgh and Ann Hamilton's project, Allegheny Riverfront Park, is analyzed against the four paradigms of site-specificity. The author uses this framework to present the designs strengths and areas for potential improvement in relation to "site-specificity." Finally, Chapter Seven provides a

reflection on the results of the case study analysis and offers insights for landscape architects.

Suggestions for further analysis are also reviewed.

CHAPTER 2

THE EVOLVING MEANING OF *SITE* AND *SITE-SPECIFICITY*

PART 1: THE HISTORY OF *SITE-SPECIFICITY*

Sculpture in the last 20 years is an attempt to reconstruct the notion of site from the

standpoint of having acknowledged its disappearance.

– Thierry de Duve

In order to understand the meaning of the word site, and particularly its meaning in

twenty-first century culture, it is necessary to analyze it through a transdisciplinary process, as

well as look at the evolution of the term over the last several decades. To successfully do this,

this thesis compares the theories of architects, geographers, urban and regional studies, and

city planning – the fields geographer Edward Soja refers to as the "spatial disciplines" (1996, p.

10). Jane Rendell, a prominent architecture theorist, also adds art to the list. She refers to

these collective theories on space as "critical spatial practice" (2006, p. 17). Although she also

refers to landscape design in her writings, landscape architecture as a profession is never

explicitly mentioned as part of the critical spatial practice. This is an unfortunate oversight.

This thesis borrows Soja and Rendell's terms to refer to the disciplines which theorize

spatiality, however, when using the terms "spatial disciplines" or "critical spatial practice" this

thesis expands upon their definitions to also include landscape architecture and sculpture in

both terms. By comparing the works within these rapidly evolving fields with the theories of the other spatial disciplines, we can arrive at a more complete definition of site.

Perhaps most significantly of all the spatial disciplines, landscape architecture is a field that is inherently tied to the understanding of space, place, and site. These words are used routinely to describe all aspects of the work, from initial site visits, and site analysis, to descriptions of the final work: its use of space, its creation of place, and its relative success or failure to attain site-specificity. What exactly is meant by these terms? And how have their meanings changed over time? A lot can be understood about these seemingly ambiguous terms by researching their usage within the field of landscape architecture, as well as within the other spatial disciplines. Of course, as with all words, their meaning changes over time in response to cultural changes. This chapter analyzes the meaning of 'site' and 'site-specificity' and related words, such as space and place, to establish their nuanced differences and evolution over time. Furthermore, a review of their meanings within the larger cultural context is considered.

Very few landscape architects even bother to define the word *site* today; it seems to be a given that the site is simply the physical parameters of a design project. In this context, the word is defined by property boundaries, land ownership, and the physical characteristics of the land planned for manipulation. As the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines it, a site is simply "the spatial location of an actual or planned structure" (www.merriam-webster.com). So, based on this definition, when artists or landscape architects discuss *site-specific* work, they are referring to a work or structure that gains its meaning, at least in part, from the land on which it is located. As art historian Nick Kaye defines it, site specificity is a "work of art and

the places in which its meanings are defined" (2000, p.1). However, artists, landscape

architects, and those that make up the spatial disciplines have developed much more

complex relationships with sites over the years which take into account much more than just

the physical aspects of the adjacent land. Nonetheless, it is the author's belief that without a

better understanding of the definition of site used by the other spatial practices, landscape

architecture is falling behind. Looking to the other spatial disciplines will help landscape

architects to broaden their thinking when creating site specific works.

Many space practitioners working today have expanded the definition of site to

include much more than just the physical aspects of a site. Site now can be defined by less

tangible factors, such as culture, and community. Once the meaning of a site has expanded to

encompass things like history and culture, is the word *site* still sufficient, or should it now be

called a *place*? While these terms are used somewhat interchangeably by those in the spatial

disciplines, their meanings are actually distinct and evolving. Of course, even if the actual

physical land has not changed, the way in which our culture views and defines the land

changes over time. This is to say that wrapped up within the definition of place is our own

personal view of it; part of the meaning is within our own minds. As Lucy Lippard explains,

> Inherent in the local is the concept of place – a portion of land/town/cityscape seen
>
> from the inside, the resonance of a specific location that is known and familiar. Most
>
> often place applies to our own 'local' – entwined with personal memory, known or
>
> unknown histories, marks made in the land that provoke and evoke. Place is latitudinal
>
> and longitudinal within the map of a person's life. It is about connections, what

surrounds it, what formed it, what happened there, what will happen there (Lippard, 1997, p. 7).

Space on the other hand, is a physical, even experiential component. "Space is where culture takes place, is lived. Place is the result of their union" (Lippard, 2003, p. 60). While a place is a very personal experience, according to Lippard, a site remains somewhat of a more publicly defined space, with meaning derived from more than just personal internal experience. However, the meaning of site is an ongoing debate, one that needs further analysis and discussion. As Miwon Kwon writes,

> What remains unrecognized, and thus unanalyzed, are the ways in which the very term 'site-specificity' has itself become a site of struggle, where competing positions concerning the nature of the site, as well as the 'proper' relationship of art and artists to it, are being contested. (Kwon, 2002, p. 2)

Before analyzing the new definition of site, it is critical to first look back to the historical development of the word, and of the term 'site-specific,' to understand how it has become a "site of struggle." This chapter analyzes its meaning through the spatial disciplines of art (particularly sculpture), landscape architecture, architecture, city planning and geography, and their responses to cultural changes over the last 50 years.

DEMISE OF THE INSTITUTION AND RISE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Blurring of Lines between Object and Viewer

It is not necessary to look back in time any farther than the 1960s, when the meaning of site first began its modern metamorphosis. During the 1960s in America, the modernist movement in architecture, city planning and art was reaching its decline. Often characterized as a movement that is dehumanizing, and one that attempted to isolate aesthetics from their broader social contexts, this art form could no longer survive during the 1960s. This was a time in American history when great changes were happening in society, such as the Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam War, and the Women's Liberation Movement. Modernism was failing miserably to meet the needs of the communities in which it was inflicted, as evidenced by failures in architecture and city planning at the time, most obviously in the case of Pruitt Igoe, an urban renewal project in St. Louis that was championed during its construction as a success of modernist architecture. It was designed in the modernist style during the 1950s, but by the mid-1960s, its name had become synonymous with crime and the failure of top-down institutional solutions to solve social issues. The project became such a failure that it was imploded in 1972, and had become a symbol for the failure of architecture and city planning to understand the needs of society. It has been postulated that this failure was due to the fact that the architects and planners did not embrace the importance of including the local culture as part of their definition of site.

The art world was also not immune to these societal changes of the 1960s. The prominent art movement at the time, known as minimalism, was born out of the modernist movement. It sought to capture aesthetic purity through simple geometric forms. However,

unlike the modernist movement from which it grew, minimalism began to invite the space

around the art object into the presentation itself. Just as architects and city planners were

rediscovering at the time, artists were also rediscovering the importance of the object's

context, or site.

One pivotal artwork at the time that explored the relationship between an artwork

and its surrounding site was Robert Morris's piece, *untitled (Mirrored Cubes)*, first presented in

1965 in New York. The piece was a simple geometric form, in keeping with the minimalist

tradition. However, what changed its meaning entirely was the fact that it was covered with

mirrors. As Kaye explains, "The mirrors complicated the relationship between the object and

its context, as if to dissolve the solidity of the unitary form into multiple reflections of the

gallery space" (Kaye, 2000, p. 28). And in so doing, Morris was inviting the gallery itself, as well

as the viewer, back into the artwork. The artwork's context was no longer separate from the

piece itself, but had instead become a critical part of the work.

Fig. 1: Robert Morris. Mirrored Cubes. 1965.
(Source: http://www.spruethmagers.com/artists/robert_morris)

Unfortunately, many artists were not happy with the 'context' that they now saw reflected in their work. Just as America was in a national discussion over the failure of institutions, such as in city planning and urban renewal, to adequately provide for society's needs, the art world was in a similar discussion regarding the ability of the established art institutions to provide art for the general public. Artists were increasingly skeptical during this time of the institutionalization and commodification of art and the inability of the institutional art world to provide art to the non-elite.

As Miwon Kwon states in her book, *One Place After Another*, "…while minimalism challenged the idealist hermeticism of the autonomous art object by deflecting its meaning

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to the space of its presentation, institutional critique further complicated this displacement

by highlighting the idealist hermeticism of the space of the presentation itself" (Kwon, 2002,

p. 13). In other words, artists who first began to challenge the autonomy of art objects, now

began to challenge the autonomy of the gallery spaces where the work was displayed. If

artwork was to gain meaning from its surroundings, the white sterile walls of the gallery

certainly did not offer much added meaning. Daniel Buren's artwork, entitled *Within and*

Beyond the Frame highlighted the artists' dissatisfaction with the gallery by literally taking the

concepts of minimalism and marching them out the institutional window, thus seeking to

"expose the cultural confinement within which artists function" (Kwon, 2002, p. 18). Site-

specificity in art thus began as a way to oppose, or disrupt the institutional space. It

"encouraged the active participation of audiences as a challenge to the static art object"

(Ehrlich, LaBelle, 2003, p. 15).
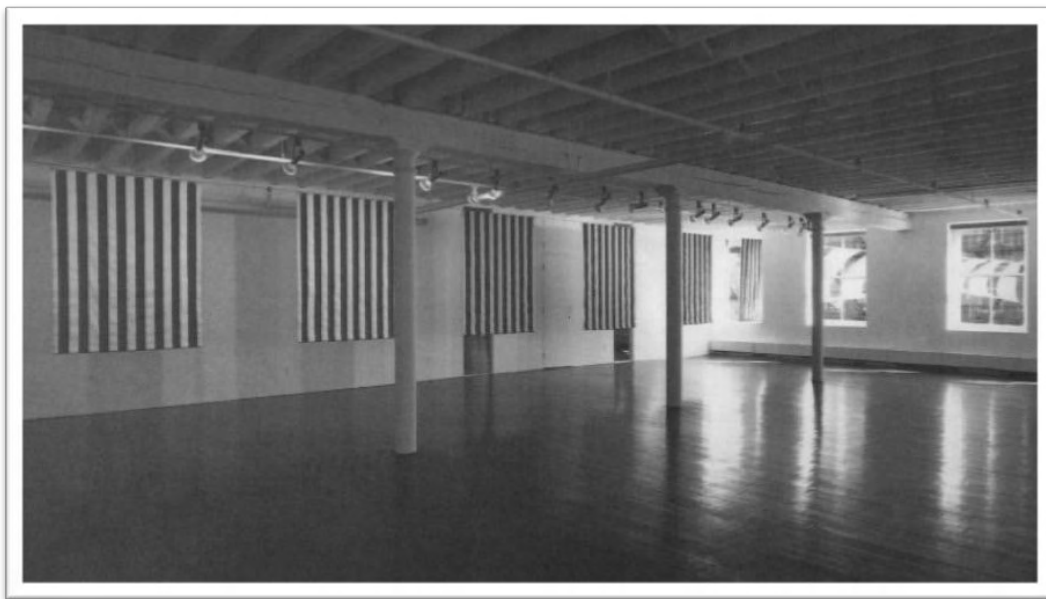
Fig. 2: Daniel Buren, Within and Beyond the Frame, travail in situ, John Weber Gallery, New York.
October 1973. Copyright Daniel Buren / ADAGP, Paris
(Source: Kwon, 2002, p. 16)

Fig. 3: Daniel Buren, Within and Beyond the Frame, travail in situ, John Weber Gallery, New York. October 1973. Copyright Daniel Buren / ADAGP, Paris
(Source: Kwon, 2002, p. 17)

<u>*Demise of Modernist Architecture and Urban Planning*</u>

Architecture was beginning to undergo a similar transition to that of art, as the failure of modern architecture and its 'pure' form was no longer connecting with the societal needs of the time. The paradigm shift from modernism to the rise of postmodernism is often said to have begun with Robert Venturi, and his now-famous quote in his writing, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*:

Architects can no longer afford to be intimidated by the puritanically moral language of orthodox Modern architecture. I like elements that are hybrid rather than "pure," compromising rather than "clean," distorted rather than "straightforward," ambiguous rather than "articulated," perverse as well as impersonal, boring as well as

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"interesting," conventional rather than "designed," accommodating rather than

excluding, redundant rather than simple, vestigial as well as innovating, inconsistent

and equivocal rather than direct and clear. I am for a messy vitality over obvious unity

(Venturi, 1966).

Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture is generally hailed as the starting point for

postmodernism in architecture, which understood the failings of modernism and called for a

return of a humanized urban vision (Finkelpearl & Acconci, 2000, p. 25).

It is interesting to note that just as Venturi was writing these words in the mid-1960s,

Jane Jacobs was essentially voicing the same concerns in terms of city planning. City and

urban planning was also undergoing a paradigm shift, changing from a highly institutional,

top down approach toward a transition to a more humanized vision of communities, a more

'messy vitality over obvious unity.' With Jane Jacobs' pivotal writing, *Death and Life of Great*

American Cities in 1961, she was able to dramatically change how city planners and city

administrators approached development. Instead of viewing the land as a tabula rasa for

sweeping modernist designs, as city planner Robert Moses had done, Jacobs championed the

need to assess the existing social aspects of a site. Due to her work, and groundbreaking work

of other planners at the time, *Advocacy Planning* was pioneered, a form of city planning that

sought to advocate for the disenfranchised sectors of the population. Similar to the artists'

rejection of the art institution, and the architects' rejection of orthodox modern architecture,

advocacy planners realized that the current institutional system responsible for city planning

had inherent inequalities that were leaving portions of society out of the planning process.

City planners, like architects and other space practitioners, were beginning to understand the need to include the surrounding communities when planning development changes on a site. The social aspects of the site were becoming part of the definition of site-specificity.

Artists were also seeking to include their communities in their art. The late 1960s also brought about a type of art that highlighted the separation between public space and the art institution, and sought to provoke a discourse about this separation. In Vito Acconci's work, *Following Piece* in 1969, he followed a different person in the street, or public space, each day until they entered a private space. He repeated this task each day for a month and then sent a record of his activities to a member of the art world, thus seeking to 'link' the separation between the institution and public. Acconci challenged traditional notions of site for art. He imagined fluid intersections with the city, creating public space for the art in a way that had tremendous influence (Finkelpearl & Acconci, 2000, p. 25).

Born out of this desire same to include more portions of the community with institutional decision-making, The National Endowment for the Arts created the Art in Public Places Program in 1967 to "give the public access to the best art of our time outside of museum walls" (Lacy, 1995, p. 22). The first commission was Alexander Calder's sculpture titled *La Grande Vitesse,* installed in Grand Rapid, Michigan in 1969.

Fig. 4: Alexander Calder, La Grande Vitesse. 1969
(Source: www.bluffton.edu/~sullivanm/michigan/grandrapids/calder/whole2.jpg)

Despite the fact that La Grande Vitesse marked an exit from the museum walls and an effort to position art in a site more accessible to the community, the piece was still highly 'modernist' in terms of its form and its association with its context, unlike the work being produced by other minimalists at the time, such as Acconci. As Kwon states:

It is important to note that Calder never saw, nor did he feel it necessary to visit, the plaza before the sculpture's installation. Like a good modernist, he operated under the assumptions of an artwork's autonomy. The site, in the case of this project, then, was conceived as a kind of abstract blankness awaiting some marker (i.e., art, sculpture) to give it what could be claimed an authentic identity, even if that identity was created through the logic of a logo. (Kwon, 1997, p. 101)

Unlike artists such as Calder who were still tied to the modernist notion of an object's

autonomy from its context, many artists were now moving towards an art that celebrated

site-specificity. Now that artists were leaving the gallery's white box, it was only obvious that

those same artists would want to create works as far outside the box as possible. In fact, the

farther away they could get from the institutional confinement of galleries and museums, and

the deeper they could entrench their world in 'natural' sites, the better. As Martha Schwartz

states,

> Art was now reinstated as a part of our environment, not an isolated event accessible
>
> only to the effete gallery world. From making discrete landscape objects to shaping
>
> the landscape as an integrated artwork and space seemed to me a completely logical
>
> sequence. The next step was to move from the pristine natural environment and apply
>
> the same ideas of interaction and intervention to the complexity of the city. (Schwartz,
>
> 1993, p. 262)

The artists had officially formed a new genre which escaped the confines of the gallery space.

They had now entered a new and untapped territory. However, this territory, the American

landscape, was already claimed by the field of landscape architecture. What were landscape

architects doing during these turbulent times, and how did the changes in architecture and

art affect their work and their interpretation of site? Unfortunately, it has been said that ideas

in architecture follow about 15 years behind those in art, while ideas in landscape

architecture follow yet another 15 years behind architecture (Treib, 1993, p. xi). While the

1960s was a time for bold new changes in art, and the beginnings of a new movement in architecture, landscape architecture was struggling to make the transition. Treib explains,

> During the 1960s the concern for form in landscape architecture suffered a major setback. In the anti-aesthetic throes of social turmoil, and the consequent rise of an ecological consciousness, interest in the shaping of landscape design was seriously undermined. The Olmsted picturesque aesthetic continued to hold sway as landscapes emulated the natural. Only recently – within the last ten years or so – have a small number of landscape architects attempted to grapple with the discipline, the art, and the profession as a vital artifact of contemporary culture. (Treib, 1993, p. x)

As Treib goes on to explain, the land artists of the 1960s were those who in some ways were able to push landscape architects back to the important notions of considering the "particularities of the site, its shape, its material, and its situation" (Treib, 1993, p. x). In other words, by following the lead of the land artists, landscape architects were then able to re-evaluate the importance of site in the creation of artistic form. Unfortunately, landscape architects were lagging far behind the land artists in this regard.

Rise of Land Art, Rise of Site-specificity

A rich, new era was beginning in the worlds of art and architecture, one that articulated its specificity to site through means quite different from minimalism. As Kwon states:

The (neo-avant-gardist) aesthetic aspiration to exceed the limitations of traditional

media, like painting and sculpture, as well as their institutional setting; the

epistemological challenge to relocate meaning from within the art object to the

contingencies of its context; the radical restructuring of the subject from an old

Cartesian model to a phenomenological one of lived bodily experience; and the self-

conscious desire to resist the forces of the capitalist market economy, which circulates

art works as transportable and exchangeable commodity goods – all these imperatives

came together in art's new attachment to the actuality of site. (Kwon, 2002, p. 12)

With this awakening to the "actuality of site" came an awakening to the realities of the

environment, and its inherent transitions over time. No longer was the idea of site-specificity

merely contained as a phenomenological approach. It now must deal with the systems at

play. As discussed earlier, these systems included the social systems inherent to a site. But just

as important, the new definition of site also had to include the ecological systems.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWAKENING

Site Expands to Ecological Systems

As artists, particularly land artists, began to dabble in the world outside of the museum

and gallery walls, it became evident that the art piece could be easily influenced by the

unpredictability of nature. The way in which the land influenced the art, as well as the way in

which the viewer interpreted the art, now became part of the piece itself. As Kwon explains,

The 'work' no longer seeks to be a noun/object but a verb/process, provoking the viewers' *critical* (not just physical) acuity regarding the ideological conditions of their viewing. In this context, the guarantee of a specific relationship between an art work and its site is not based on a physical permanence of that relationship (as demanded by Serra, for example) but rather on the recognition of its unfixed impermanence, to be experienced as an unrepeatable and fleeting situation (Kwon, 2002, p. 24)

The late 1960s and early 1970s brought about the continued rise of the land art movement and, as it is also frequently referred to, earth art. The year 1968 marked the beginning of the movement to many, with the *Earthworks* exhibition at the Dwan Gallery in New York City. For Robert Smithson's piece, "non-sites," he brought back bits of the earth from the "site" from which it was gathered, to insert in the gallery space, or "non-site".

Fig. 5: Robert Smithson. A Nonsite, Pine Barrens, New Jersey. Winter 1968.
© Estate of Robert Smithson. (Source: Graziani, 2004, p. 72)

A NONSITE (an indoor earthwork)

31 sub-divisions based on a hexagonal
"airfield" in the Woodmansie Quadrangle –
New Jersey (Topographic) map. Each sub-
division of the Nonsite contains sand
from the site shown on the map. Tours
between the Nonsite and the site are possible.
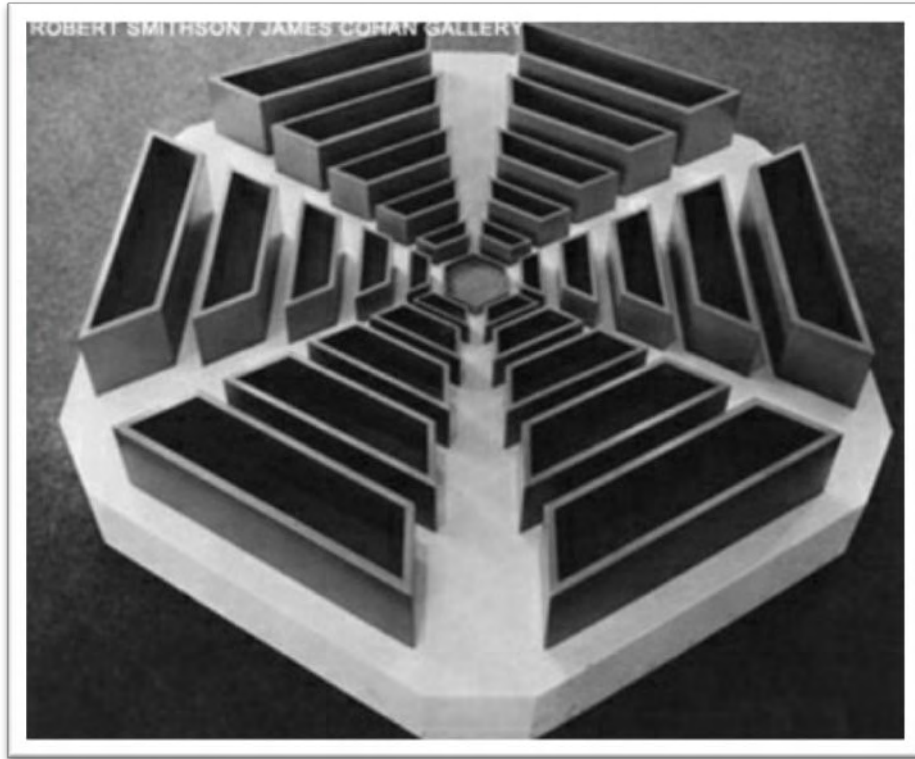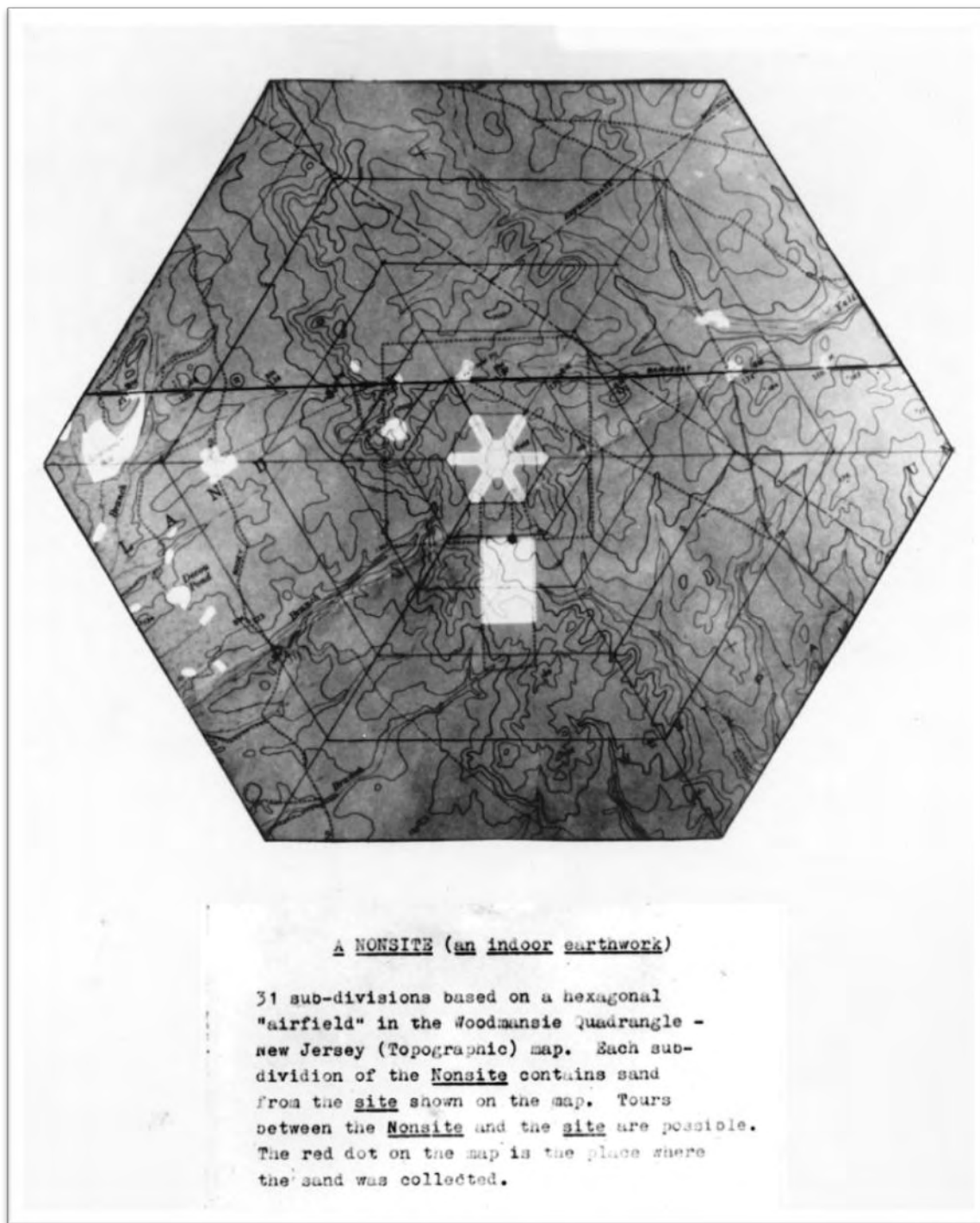The red dot on the map is the place where
the sand was collected.

Fig. 6: Robert Smithson. A Nonsite, Pine Barrens, New Jersey. Winter 1968.
© Estate of Robert Smithson. (Source: Graziani, 2004, p. 73)

The work highlighted the change in the meaning of the earth once it was removed from its context and placed within an institutional setting. As the name of the piece suggests, it gains its relationship to site from a place other than the gallery in which it sits. In this way, the artwork, known as the 'non-site' pointed to the site, or landscape, as a way of exposing the limits and the operations of the gallery system (Kaye, 2000, p. 93).

Robert Smithson, who identified himself as a minimalist artist in his early career, also rejected the constraints of the art institution, and took his work to remote outdoor locations as a means to escape these artistic constraints. The gallery became the location to display the *documentation* of the artworks, but no longer the location for the artwork itself. The artwork was now intrinsically tied to the "site."

In Smithson's writings, he called attention to the notion that the designer's task is expanding to transform those environmentally devastated sites that have been blighted and forgotten. Curator of the Department of Architecture and Design at the Museum of Modern Art, Peter Reed, writes: "Smithson's work was prophetic and influenced the way some designers, Peter Latz and George Hargreaves among them, look at the relationship between the industrial landscape and nature, between the ugly and beautiful" (Reed, 2005, p. 25). Hargreaves' work at Byxbee Park, sited on a capped landfill, is a prime example of the influence that Smithson's writings and other artists had on the field of landscape architecture.

Another important distinction between this new art form known as "land art" and its predecessor, minimalism, was that land art began to discuss the notion of time as it relates to site. While minimalism's engagement was with "the present tense of space," (Kaye, 2000, p. 91) land art was bringing the past and the future into the discussion. Once the pieces were

outside of the sterile gallery space and in the dynamic environment, artists were confronted

with the inevitable changes that the piece would undergo in the elements. These changes

that nature inflicted on the piece became part of the work itself. While exposing the

ephemeral habits of nature made for innovative art, artists were realizing that their

understanding of the environment and its systems was often lacking.

On describing his design process for Byxbee Park in Palo Alto, California, Landscape

Architect, George Hargreaves explained, "I'm setting up a framework on the land. Then

vegetation, people, and water wash over it. This is completely different from what I was

brought up to do. It's a cousin of [Richard Serra's] lead pours: you set up the process, but you

don't control the end product" (Beardsley, 1998).

In the late 1980s, Hargreaves Associates worked with two environmental artists,

Michael Oppenheimer and Peter Richards, to design a park for the landfill with unique

sculptural amenities. The goal of the design was to repurpose a 30-acre portion of the park

from landfill to passive recreation space. The designers also aimed to respond to the natural

and cultural history surrounding the site through the use of abstracted sculptural forms and

plant materials. The park opened in 1991 and received multiple awards for its thought-

provoking and innovative use of a unique site.

The artists and landscape architect sought to express the notion of change over time

through the sculpture, *Pole Forest*. A field of telephone poles is meant to recall the area's

earlier commercial life (Hazelrigg, 2006), but perhaps more importantly, the poles were

anticipated to track change over time. The poles were initially installed on the landfills clay

cap at a perfectly vertical position. However, due to the inevitable shift of the clay cap as the

garbage underneath decomposes, the poles record change over time as they lean over with the shifting surface (Hazelrigg, 2006).

The design also used artwork to tie the site with surrounding sites. For example, the designers connected with the neighboring airport by creating a row of chevrons made of concrete highway barriers which aligned with the flight path of approaching aircraft.

Fig. 7: Pole Forest, Byxbee Park. Palo Alto, California. (Source: www.cityofpaloalto.org)

Fig. 8: Chevrons, Byxbee Park. Palo Alto, California. (Source: www.cityofpaloalto.org)

The mid 1960s to early 1970s were a time when concern for environmental protection

was growing amid the American population. Landscape architects, in turn, were more

concerned than before about ecological processes and the protection of the natural

environment (Treib, 1993, p. 267). With this focus on purely ecological aspects of a site,

landscape architects began to place less value on the importance of designing form and

space. Instead, the ecological principles at play were used to generate the form, separate

from the influence of the designer. In Ian McHarg's pivotal 1969 book, *Design with Nature*, he

promotes a method of interpreting and defining site through the layering of ecological

systems present. As Robert Morris explains in the 1966 article *Notes of Sculpture Part 2*,

> Some of the new work has expanded the terms of sculpture by a more emphatic
>
> focusing on the very conditions under which certain kinds of objects are seen. The
>
> object itself is carefully placed in these new conditions to be but one of the terms. The
>
> sensuous object, resplendent with compressed internal relations, has had to be
>
> rejected. That many considerations must be taken into account in order that the work
>
> keeps its place as a term in the expanded situation hardly indicates a lack of interest in
>
> the object itself. But the concerns now are for more control of and/or cooperation of
>
> the entire situation. Control is necessary if the variables of object, light, space and
>
> body are to function. The object itself has not become less important. It has merely
>
> become less *self*-important. (Morris, 1966, p. 20)

SOPHISTICATION OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

Social Context Becomes Entrenched in Definition of Site

Landscape architect, Gary Smith comments that in the 1980s that "while we landscape architects could see that McHarg's "layer cake" method created places that were ecologically sound, often the general public didn't seem to be particularly moved by them. Meanwhile, artists were finding ways of using the landscape to inspire profound cultural dialog" (Smith, 2011).

Towards the latter half of the 1970s, geographers became increasingly interested in refocusing on geography through a humanistic lens; this required a focus on the notion of place, as evidenced in the work of Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph. In Tuan's view, place is entrenched in the notion of locality, of home. Place is "an organized world of meaning. It is essentially a static concept. If we see the world as process, constantly changing, we would not be able to develop any sense of place" (Tuan, 1977, p. 179). It is precisely this notion of place that is no longer realistic in today's decentralized and nomadic world. He continues – "Modern man might be so mobile that he can never establish roots and his experience of place may be all too superficial" (Tuan, 1977, p. 183). As Cresswell points out, this reading of 'modern man' is steeped with moral implications. Mobility and movement undermine attachment and commitment (Cresswell, 2002, p. 13). There is an implied polarity to this notion, as if increased mobility directly correlates with the decline of place.

Another prominent proponent of the idea of *local* during the 1970s was Christian Norberg-Schulz, whose 1976 book, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, is

still widely referred to today by the spatial disciplines, particularly architects and landscape architects. When defining the meaning of the word place, Norberg-Schulz states,

> …obviously we mean something more than abstract location. We mean a totality made up of concrete things having material substance, shape, texture and colour. Together these things determine an 'environmental character', which is the essence of place. In general a place is given as such a character or 'atmosphere'. A place is therefore a qualitative, 'total' phenomenon, which we cannot reduce to any of its properties, such as spatial relationships, without losing its concrete nature out of sight. (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, p.7)

Norberg-Schulz was one of the first to bring the theories of phenomenology to the built environment, and in so doing, began a new way of thinking about the definition of place. Landscape architects first began to explore these new ways of thinking about place as well. Williams Square, designed by SWA is located in Irving, Texas, is a prime example of a new interpretation of the meaning of 'place.' The design was completed by landscape architects James Reeves and Daniel Mock of SWA in 1984. It was an award winning design, that aimed to provide a grand new open space for the community of Irving, and a landmark for the City. The landscape architects partnered with sculptor, Robert Glen, to create a unique setting for his realist work, *The Mustangs of Las Colinas*. The sculpture commemorates the wild mustangs that were native to the Texas landscape.

A 1985 article on the project in Landscape Architecture Magazine stated that "The plaza is a powerful union of realism and abstraction." In order to achieve the realism of the

design, the artist carefully studied and measured horse cadavers to create his realistic

sculptures. Although designed larger than life-size, the bronze horses are intricately detailed

to convey a lifelike quality. The realism of the sculpture juxtaposes the water feature, which

takes on an abstracted representation of a stream course. However, the way in which the

horses interact with the water is strikingly lifelike. The appearance of the splash of the horse

hooves into the stream was created by meticulous planning. The project designer and

architect achieved the exact effect of hooves striking water by studying movies and making

still photographs of horses moving through water (Landscape Architecture, 1985). They then

created copper piping with thin slits through which high pressure water jutted, creating the

splash effect.

The plaza is enclosed on three sides by buildings. A fourth building was planned to

complete the plaza's enclosure, but was never built. The plaza setting deliberately omits other

site features, such as benches and trees so that the scale and the magnitude of the horses in

not interrupted (Landscape Architecture, 1985). The absence of other features in the ground

plane allows the viewer to imagine the space as a large, open native grassland prairie through

which the horses are galloping. A mixture of "Bright Blaze" granite and "Texas Pink" granite

are used to create the allusion of geological layering and different terrain. In addition, a

variety of granite finishes offer subtle texture.

The design was highly praised upon its completion. A jury member reviewing the work

commented: "Like the great fountains in Europe, Williams Square combines water and

sculpture in a way you very seldom see in this country. It's a fantastic example of not knowing

where the sculpture stops his work or the landscape architect stops his…" (Landscape

Architecture, 1985).

Fig. 9: Mustangs of Las Colinas in Williams Square. City of Irving Texas.
(Source: www.irvingtexas.com)

Fig. 10: Mustangs of Las Colinas in Williams Square. City of Irving Texas.
(Source: www.irvingtexas.com)

One criticism of Williams Square is that the site fails to connect with its surrounding context. As one critic commented, "After you've apprehended the place (which takes about 15 seconds) and taken the obligatory photograph, there's not much left to keep you there – either in the plaza, or, as far as I could tell, in Las Colinas itself" (Hohmann, 2002). Hoffmann, concludes, "This is a "simple reflection of the design of its city and other well-intentioned planned urban communities of the 1980s: It's visually compelling (at least initially) and functional, but it doesn't have much soul" (Hohmann, 2002).

Artists and landscape architects were beginning to discover that to be successful, their work needed to consider the role that society, or the viewer, plays in the definition of place. As artists also discovered, land art that purely focused on its environmental context could still fail to be site-specific if it failed to address the social meaning of the site.

In his art piece infamously linked to the failure of art to address the role of the community, Richard Serra found himself at the center of the controversial removal of Tilted Arc. The artwork, which was commissioned for a federal office building in Lower Manhattan, quickly became famous for the controversy it ignited. The public's distaste for the piece due to its apparent disregard for the social functions of the space which it severed, led to its removal from the plaza in 1989, only eight years after its installation. Although the work and its controversies have been written about quite exhaustively, it is important to mention here because the removal of Richard Serra's piece marked a critical turning point in the definition of site-specificity.

Serra strongly believed that his piece was unquestionably tied to the site, and felt that "to move the work is to destroy the work" (Serra, 1994). However, opponents saw the work as a dislocation of the public plaza, an obtrusion that set the importance of high design and esoteric artistic endeavors above the needs of the workers who traversed the plaza every day.

Kwon states that Serra's assertions of his work's dependence on the site for its full meaning is used as an "indignant defense" and signals a "crisis point for site specificity – at least the version that would prioritize the *physical* inseparability between a work and its site of installation" (Kwon, 2002, p. 13).

While Serra was praised in the art world for his raw exposure of process in his sculptures, his process of making the work was limited to his own *personal* process. "While Serra had been a process artist, the process never included a two-way public dialogue" (Wines, 1987, p. 87). It was becoming evident to artists that not only were the

phenomenological aspects of the site important to consider, but also the social systems at play. As James Wines postulates,

> The court documents may, in fact, stand as a quintessential work of conceptual art, displacing the physical presence of the sculpture with the far more intriguing discourse it inspired. Had an artist of Duchamp's wit and perception been the creator of Tilted Arc, he would have seized on the potency of this irony by declaring the court proceedings the art, and the clippings the exhibition catalogue. But Richard Serra is not an artist given to spontaneous reversals or trenchant humor" (Wines, 1987, p. 87).

As a result, Serra's failure to include the public as part of his definition of "site" is what led to the downfall of Tilted Arc. This controversy became a turning point for public art, and for artists who worked in the realm of site-specificity. The piece's inability to connect with the public systems at play in the plaza led to new thinking on how the public was a part of the meaning of site-specific work. As a result, in the 1980's there was a growing move among artists and public art programs to avoid the mistakes of Serra's elitist take on public art, and instead make public art useful. Artists created utilitarian objects, such as benches, sidewalks, and plazas that were hard for some to identify as art. "This functional art came to dominate public art in the 1980s, becoming somewhat formulaic" (Finkelpearl, 2001, p. 32). This notion of useful art was in direct contradiction to Serra's theory on public art. He stated, "I am interested in sculpture that is non-utilitarian, non-functional…any use is a misuse" (Serra, 1980, p. 128). What was once considered a radical notion – including the public in the design

process, was now thought of by many artists as merely a step in the "bureaucracy of collaboration by 1990" (Finkelpearl, 2001, p. 35).

As Serra once distilled the nature of artistic activities down to their elemental actions (to drop, to split, to roll, to fold, to cut, etc.) (Serra, 1994, p. 3). "the situation now demands a different set of verbs: to negotiate, to coordinate, to compromise, to research, to promote, to organize, to interview….The salient point here is how quickly this aesthetics of administration, developed in the 1960s and 1970s, has converted to the administration of aesthetics in the 1980s and 1990s" (Kwon, 2002, p. 51).

THE RISE OF GLOBALIZATION AND NOSTALGIA FOR THE LOCAL

Local versus Global

The 1990s and 2000s marked a fascinating time in history, when globalization became understood as an unavoidable reality of modern life. As a result, the rise of globalization led to a fear of the loss of local distinctions, and a return by many to the importance of 'genius loci.' Lucy Lippard's 1997 book, *Lure of the Local*, was a call back to the importance of the local aspects of site under the eminent threat of the decentralization of modern society. Lippard believes that "inherent in the local is the concept of place – a portion of town/land/cityscape seen from the inside, the resonance of a specific location that is known and familiar" (Lippard, 1997, p. 7). Her idea of place as inherently local devalues the idea of systems, or connections of places and people to each other. This is an understandable argument, given the threats that decentralization and transient populations at the turn of the twenty-first century. However, Lippard's dichotomy between local and global reads as a nostalgic cry to return to

the local, when this is no longer a possibility in modern times. As Kevin Hetherington states in his essay, *Presence, Absence and the Globe*, "globalization suggests that the national and the regional as a source of orientation are no longer sufficient to our understanding of local circumstances let alone international ones" (Hetherington, 2002, p. 177). Globalization, as it relates to ease of global transportation, migration, and rapid global sharing of information, has created a world where the local aspects of a site, such as vernacular culture, can no longer exist without influences from cultures around the world. It is necessary to find a new way of looking at site-specificity that honors the local, as Lippard advocates, without ignoring the important influences of our global reality.

Innovations in transportation have created a society in which it is increasingly commonplace for people to travel around the world, and thus further blur the boundaries between local and global influences. However, due to the unsustainability of the fossil fuel-based transportation systems, as well as economic volatility, the ease at which many in society can be global travelers may not last much longer. Robert Thayer postulates in his essay, *The World Shrinks, the World Expands: Informative energy and Relocalization* that the post-oil-peak reality of travel will lead to the entire landscape of tourism to be transformed, and this inevitability will have an enormous impact on the landscape (Thayer, 2008, pg. 14). However, while our ability to physically travel to a foreign landscape may diminish, we may still retain our ability to visit new spaces through virtual means. It is predicted that the scarcity of fossil fuels will have only a negligible effect on the "virtual" environment (Thayer, 2008, p. 14). Of course, the very wealthy will most likely continue to have the luxury of mobility. They will remain nomadic, while the vast majority of the population will be able to travel to new

sites only if provided virtual means. How will this affect Lippard's interpretation of place, if virtual travel becomes ever more present and accessible? In order to deal with this approaching reality, it is necessary to create a more contemporary view of 'place' that balances the historic and phenomenological aspects of 'place' with the inevitable realities of the information age.

PART 2: CURRENT THINKING ON SITE-SPECIFICITY

"To privilege the site as the context is to repress the other possible contexts, is to

become fixated on the presences of 'the site' is to believe that 'the site' exists as a

permanent knowable whole. Such a belief is untenable today."

– Peter Eisenman

Building upon the historical evolution of the definitions of site, place, and space

outlined in the previous section expands the meanings through an overview of contemporary

theories on the meanings of these words. This chapter reviews the most prominent

contemporary spatial theories proposed by architects, geographers and art theorists in order

to better understand the direction of future site-specific work.

TOWARDS A CONTEMPORARY DEFINITION OF PLACE, SPACE, AND SITE

Today's theorists in the spatial disciplines have a unique dilemma. How can work be

site specific, when we are living in such a decentralized world? Inevitably, any attempt to

create a local 'sense of place' will be influenced by the global economy, technology, and the

ease of migration. Attempts to block out global influences often are not successful, and are

not appropriate for the reality of the modern way of life. In fact, overzealous attempts to

promote a local sense of place may have negative consequences. As Cresswell comments,

"While the geographical engagement with phenomenological enquiry rescued the notion of

place from oblivion it simultaneously constructed a notion of place which is essentialist and exclusionary, based on notions of rooted authenticity" (Cresswell, 2002, p. 15). This notion that the prioritization of the local can lead to exclusion and even nationalism has led other geographers to search for new concepts of place, such as David Harvey who argues that the significance of place has actually increased in postmodernity, under what he refers to as the "time-space compression" (Harvey, 1989). Hetherington explains the meaning of Harvey's time-space compression as such:

> Social relations, accelerated, we are led to believe, at certain crisis periods in the economic cycle, have brought about change in the balance between relations of time and space: notably in terms of how transport and electronic communications technology lead to time overcoming space in terms of an erosion of the so called friction of distance. It also recognizes that this is heterogeneous in its effects upon social relations – the world is not subject to an even time-space compression. The resulting spatial configuration is a crumpled one – with time folding space in an uneven way and with a consequent uneven distribution of power and capital. (Hetherington, 2002, p. 175)

Harvey's idea of time-space compression is evident in the way in which the ease of disseminating information has led to a homogenous built landscape. Due to the ease of modern communication and the reach of the internet, streetscapes in America have been replicated all over the globe. The global economy has put the fixed notion of place in threat of extinction. Cities, as a result, have hired practitioners of the spatial disciplines, such as

artists and architects, to essentially create place, or reaffirm the local significance of a place. Is this really the appropriate solution? Or does this simply exacerbate the dichotomy between local and global thinking? There must be a way to find a middle ground between the two extremes of local and global thinking. To solve this dilemma, theorists have begun to consider new ways of thinking about place and site-specificity.

HENRI LEVEBVRE: THIRDSPACE

It is impossible to undergo a contemporary analysis of the meaning of 'site' without contemplating the meaning of the word 'space' and how it is used in the discourse of the spatial disciplines. Henri Lefebvre is often heralded as one of the most prominent contemporary spatial theorist, whose work has influenced many geographers, architects and even art theorists. Edward Soja, himself a prominent geographer and spatial theorist, refers to Henri Lefebvre's 1991 book, *The Production of Space* as "arguably the most important book ever written about the social and historical significance of human spatiality and the particular powers of the spatial imagination" (Soja, 1996, p. 8). In his seminal work, Henri Lefebvre describes three different kinds of social spaces. The first, he calls the "perceived space" or spatial practice. This is defined as producing a spatiality that "embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation" (Soja, 1996, p. 66). As Soja explains, this space is both behavior and experience, and is the traditional focus of attention in all the spatial disciplines. It is the space that is fixed mainly on the "concrete materiality of spatial forms, on things that can be empirically mapped" (Soja, 1996, p. 10).

The second type of social space is termed the "conceived space." This is a "conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers, as of a certain type of artists with a scientific bent – all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived." Lefebvre believes that this is the dominant space in any society, or as Soja puts it, "a storehouse of epistemological power" (Soja, 1996, p. 67). This is the type of space used by the spatial disciplines when envisioning how space could be, such as when representing utopias or creative imaginations of how space could be.

The third type of space, according to Lefebvre, is the "lived spaces of representations" (also called representational space). It is both distinct from the other two spaces, but also is a combination of the other two. Following Lefebvre's distrust of binary logic, the 'thirdspace' (as Soja renames it) is Lefebvre's effort to expand the thinking on space past the previously reductive binary model. These spaces include "complex symbolisms" and are linked to art "which Lefebvre described as a coding not of space more generally but specifically of the spaces of representation" (Soja, 1996, p. 67). This is a space for those who seek to describe, rather than transform space. It is "ideas about space, in thoughtful re-presentations of human spatiality in mental or cognitive forms" (Soja, 1996, p. 10). This is a space that is lived, and also one that is inhabited by artists, writers and philosophers; it is a space that is experienced but also holds meaning through representations.

Before Lefebvre, spatial theorists predominantly thought of space in binary terms. Lefebvre spoke of the limitations of a binary model, which often led to polarized views on theories, leaving no room for expansion of ideas. Kwon and Rendell's works were obviously influenced by his trialectic framework, as they also both set up a theoretical framework

organized around three components dealing with critical spatial practice. However, it is important to note that Lefebvre's use of a trialectic model is not meant to be interpreted as yet another limitation, but instead meant to be expanded upon. Lefebvre's addition of a third type of space is not meant to be complete, but instead to demonstrate ways in which critical spatial practice can continue to expand in meaning. "The critique is not meant to stop at three, to construct a holy trinity, but to build further, to move on, to continuously expand the production of knowledge beyond what is presently known" (Soja, 1996, p. 61). Taking this call for expansion of the critical spatial practice as the challenge, this thesis builds upon the trialectic frameworks employed by critical spatial theorist as a means to expand the field, making it even more relevant to our contemporary world view. Following is an explanation of the frameworks used and their relevance to the question at hand.

What is so fascinating about Lefebvre's writing on spatiality, and what makes it so poignant to the contemporary issues faced by the spatial disciplines is his emphasis on the importance of understanding both representational space and imagined spaces as equal components in our understanding of space. As another prominent geographer, David Harvey writes: "The strength of Lefebvre's arguments on social spaces lies in the refusal to separate materiality, representation and imagination or to privilege one over another" (Harvey, 1989). The theory that representational space or imagined space has just as much of a prominent role in spatial discourse as material space is echoed in the work of other spatial practitioners. As outlined in Part I, spatial practitioners such as artists (particularly sculptors) and architects have increasingly created works that explore imagined and representational spaces, coinciding with the development in spatial theory.

MASSEY: PLACE AS INTERSECTION OF FLOWS

Another prominent spatial theorist, Doreen Massey, has also "encouraged us to think of place in a way that combines bodies, objects and flows in new ways" (Cresswell, 2002, p. 25). In this way, place becomes an event, an intersection of flows at a particular time, in a particular configuration. Massey comments that Harvey's theory of a "time-space compression" jumps to huge conclusions about the universality of the theory. As Cresswell explains, Massey believes that this theory misses the fact that the phenomenon of global mobility is socially differentiated (Cresswell, 2002, p. 25). "Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway-differentiated mobility: some are more in charge of it that others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it" (Massey, 2005, p. 61). A place, in other words, is an intersection of flows and movement, to which not all are equal participants. It therefore becomes the duty of the space practitioner to create places that seek to engage the most participants within the flow of movement.

As Cresswell states, "to think of place as an intersection – a particular configuration of happenings – is to think of place in a constant sense of becoming through practice and practical knowledge. Place is both the context for practice – we act according to more or less stable schemes of perception – and a product of practice – something that only makes sense as it is lived" (Cresswell, 2002, p. 26). He continues –

This conception of practiced place revises the older ideas of place as the center of authentic existence with its own neatly circumscribed culture and identity. As an anti-

essentialist notion it does not allow for an easy correlation of place and culture.

Simultaneously this open conception of place provides an antidote to the celebration

of nomadic hybridity in which place all but disappears. Place as practice and practice

as place always relies on the symbiosis of locatedness and motion rather than the

valorization of one or the other. (Cresswell, 2002, p. 26)

Finding a way to symbiotically express the nomadic nature of modern life with the

celebration of what makes a place uniquely local is therefore the challenge placed on today's

space practitioners. While Cresswell's proposal sounds interesting in theory, how does this

transform to practice? Another prominent spatial theorist, Miwon Kwon, offers further insight

into this dilemma.

MIWON KWON: BELONGING IN TRANSIENCE

Miwon Kwon's research explores the fascinating developments in spatial theory,

particularly within the realm of Lefebvre's 'thirdspace' of representational and imagined

spaces. Kwon's background in both art and architecture, as well as her transdisciplinary

approach to 'spatial problematics' make her work relevant to all spatial disciplines,

particularly the field of landscape architecture. Her work builds its framework upon art and

architectural history, as well as the work of prominent spatial theorists, such as Lefebvre. Her

book, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, looks at the work of

contemporary artists who deal with the concept of space, and tracks the changes to the

concept of space and the changing meaning of the term 'site-specificity' over time: "Informed

by critical urban theory, postmodernist criticism in art and architecture, and debates concerning identity politics and the public sphere, the book seeks to reframe site specificity as the cultural mediation of broader social, economic, and political processes that organize urban life and urban space" (Kwon, 2002, p. 3). Through her analysis of the evolving meaning of site-specific work, she has developed three paradigms of site-specificity. While these paradigms are somewhat chronological, they are not meant to be considered as discretely separate or without some overlap in past and current site-oriented art (Kwon, 2002, p. 4).

The first of Kwon's paradigms is called "phenomenological" and is defined as "an agglomeration of the actual physical attributes of a particular location (the size, scale, texture, and dimension of walls, ceilings, rooms; existing light conditions, topographical features, traffic patterns, seasonal characteristics or climate, etc.) with architecture serving as a foil for the art work in many instances" (Kwon, 2002, p. 3). Site-specific art that identifies with the site purely from a phenomenological standpoint does not seek to take into considerations the systems at play, but merely the physical aspects of the site. The relation of the work to these physical elements is what gives the work its meaning. This paradigm gained prominence in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as previously outlined in Part I. Despite this, there are still many artists, architects and landscape architects who create works that fall within this genre. Richard Serra's Tilted Arc falls within this paradigm, as he created the work by focusing on the physical aspects of the plaza – the surrounding buildings, and the negative space of the plaza itself. The piece gained its meaning through this conversation between place and object. As he famously explained, to move his piece from the place in which it was installed would

destroy it. This is because according to Serra, its meaning was inherently tied to its location

(Finkelpearl, 2000, p. 61).

Kwon's second paradigm of site-specificity is "social/institutional" which she defines:

"through the materialist investigations of institutional critique, the site was reconfigured as a

relay or network of interrelated spaces and economies (studio, gallery, museum, art market,

art criticism), which together frame and sustain art's ideological system" (Kwon, 2002, p. 3).

Artists complicated "the site of art as not only a physical arena but one constituted through

social, economic, and political processes" (Kwon, 2002, p. 3). Mierle Laderman Ukeles was one

of the first to gain recognition for this new type of site-specific artwork with her 1973 series

entitled *Maintenance Art*. The artwork was a performance piece in which she washed the entry

plaza of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum in Hartford, Connecticut for four hours. "In so

doing, she forced the menial domestic tasks usually associated with women – cleaning,

washing, dusting, and tidying – to the level of aesthetic contemplation, and revealed the

extent to which the museum's pristine self-presentation, its perfectly immaculate white

spaces as emblematic of its 'neutrality' is structurally dependent on the hidden and devalued

labor of daily maintenance and upkeep" (Kwon, 2002, p. 19). This artwork transformed the

'site' of the artwork from the literal physical location of the piece to the social and institutional

framework of the space, and the artist's relationship to this space.

Fig. 11: Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Hartford Wash: Washing Tracks, Maintenance Outside Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford. 1973. Source: (Kwon, 2002, p. 20)

Kwon refers to her third paradigm of site-specificity as "discursive." Within this

paradigm, she explains:

> The site of art is again redefined, often extending beyond familiar art context to more
>
> 'public' realms. Dispersed across much broader cultural, social, and discursive fields,
>
> and organized intertextually through the nomadic movement of the artists –
>
> operating more like an itinerary than a map – the site can now be as various as a
>
> billboard, an artistic genre, a disenfranchised community, an institutional framework, a

magazine page, a social cause, or a political debate. It can be literal, like a street corner,

or virtual, like a theoretical concept. (Kwon, 2002, p. 3)

Perhaps building upon Lefebvre's warning to not let a trialectic framework prevent further

exploration, Kwon ends her book with a call for the considerations of a new paradigm in site-

specificity. She calls this her "speculative and heuristic concept for imagining a new model,"

which she names "belonging-in-transience" (Kwon, 2002, p. 8). This is her idea of a new way of

thinking about site, one that encapsulates the ideas of 'place' with the contemporary realities

of our transient culture. This thesis seeks to pick up where Kwon leaves off, by proposing ways

in which this new paradigm of 'belonging-in-transience' can be realized.

 In addition to Lefebvre, Soja, Massey and Kwon, there are others within the spatial

disciplines who are increasingly discussing the ways in which current global realities are

leading to new theories in critical spatial discourse, and thus affecting the contemporary

meaning of site-specificity. As Kwon further explains, "the definition of site-specificity is being

reconfigured to imply not the permanence and immobility of a work but its impermanence

and transience." The artist is now a "cultural-artistic service provider rather than a producer of

aesthetic objects" (Kwon, 2002, p. 3). This observation applies not only to artists, but also to

the other spatial disciplines, particularly landscape architecture. This leads to the question of

how, exactly, space practitioners can create designs that surpass Kwon's three paradigms, and

lead to a "belonging-in-transience?" What theories have been developed since Kwon's work

that speak to this, and what can they contribute to the profession of landscape architecture?

The next chapter will provide a theoretical framework for how to approach site-specific

installations that can work towards the concept of overlaying local and global thinking to

create a fourth paradigm of site-specificity.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: BELONGING IN TRANSIENCE

Cultural theory, to take the age we live in seriously (be it late, super, hyper or postmodern) has to grapple with the issue of mobility. It simply doesn't make sense to think of culture as mappable in a straightforward static way. People are no longer simply from 'here' or from 'there'.

- Tim Cresswell

In order to get away from thinking of site as merely a duality between local and global influences, it is necessary to expand upon this binary model. What happens when the local and the global meet? By taking the paradigms set up by Kwon and placing them upon a continuum, as shown in Figure 12 below, we can begin to consider how this continuum can be expanded. In order for local and global to meet, it is necessary for the two ends of the continuum to overlap. By theoretically bringing these two concepts together, we can effectively create a new way of thinking about site-specificity, one which combines local and the global thinking. How can space practitioners envision a site that can seamlessly overlay these two seemingly contradictory viewpoints? By taking the framework developed by Kwon and folding the ends back upon themselves a new way of thinking about local and global paradigms can emerge (Figure 13).

Phenomenological   Social/Institutional   Discursive

Local
Genius Loci

Regional
Bioregional
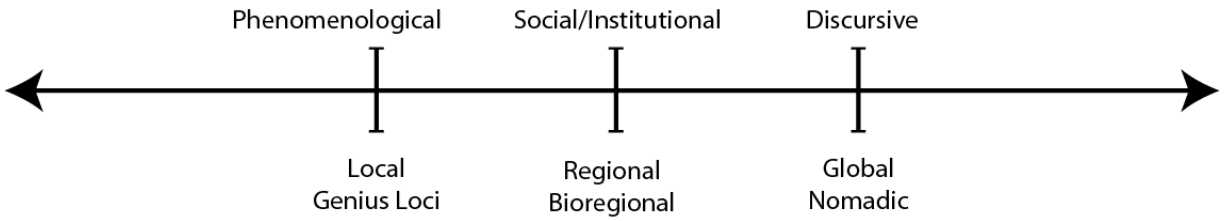
Global
Nomadic

Figure 12: Miwon Kwon's Paradigms on a scale gradient

Social/Institutional

Regional
Bioregional

Phenomenological

Local
Genius Loci

Global
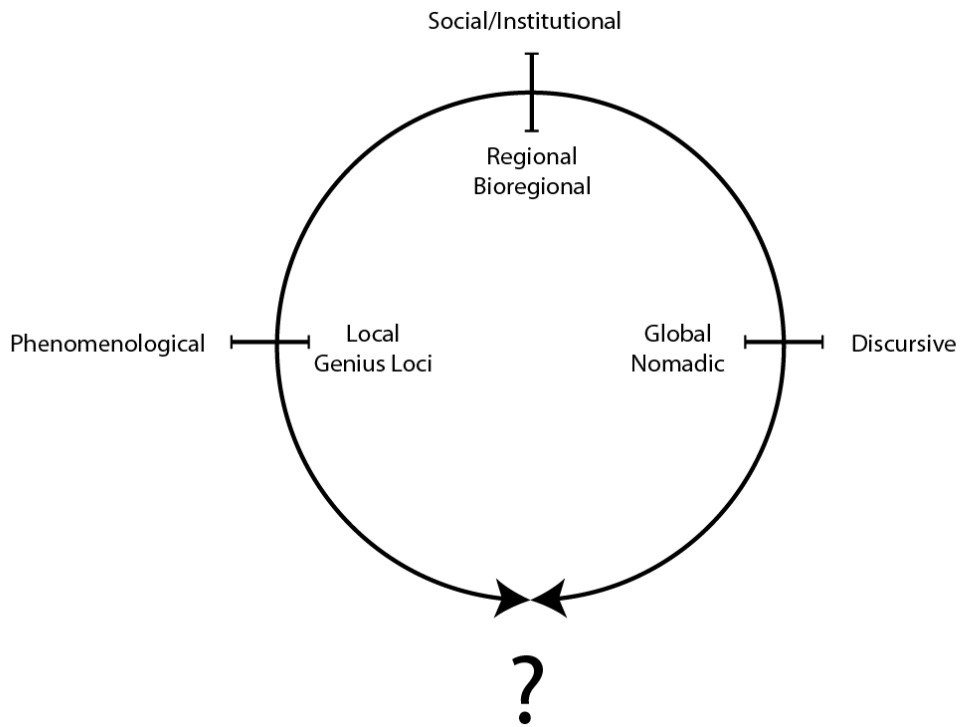Nomadic

Discursive

?

*Figure 13: The author's interpretation of Miwon Kwon's Paradigms when the two ends of
the gradient meet, thus merging local and global thinking.*

The next logical question, then, is how does one define this fourth paradigm of site-specificity? How can the local and the global be effectively merged? To answer this question, this thesis overlays the theories on global and local thinking from the various spatial disciplines. These theories are then compared to contemporary theories in nomadism and systems thinking. The result is a robust theoretical framework that can be used to analyze site-specific work.

LOCAL VS. GLOBAL: END OF THE BINARY MODEL

As Kwon states, "While the accelerated speed, access, and exchange of information, images, commodities, and even bodies is being celebrated in one circle, the concomitant breakdown of traditional temporal-spatial experiences and the accompanying homogenization of places and erasure of cultural differences is being decried in another" (Kwon, 2002, p. 8). It is this dichotomy that is becoming increasingly problematic and in need of a solution. While Lucy Lippard, among others, argues for the superiority of the local interpretation of site, there are just as many other spatial theorists arguing for the superiority of the global, decentralized model. Marc Augé, for example, argues that place has been traditionally thought of as a fantasy of a "society anchored since time immemorial in the permanence of an intact soil. He argues that these types of places are receding in importance and are being replaced by spaces that are "fleeting, temporary, and ephemeral" (Augé, 1995, p. 44) Augé coined the term *non-places* to describe places of transience that do not hold enough significance to be considered a *place*.

Interpreting site specificity cannot be done effectively with these dueling interpretations. 'Belonging' conjures up thoughts of rootedness, home, and sense of place. It is the essence of our search for the 'local'. Transience, on the other hand, means rootlessness, mobility, and nomadic. It is the essence of the modern global situation. To develop a landscape that can belong in transience, as Kwon suggests, spatial practitioners must find a way to merge the previous binary model of local and global to create a 'thirdspace' which is both a combination of the two, and yet also unique from the other two. Just as Lefebvre saw the need to expand the binary model to reach a new understanding of spatiality, this thesis seeks to re-conceptualize the binary concept of local and global to define a more contemporary model that effectively combines the two.

As geographer Tim Cresswell discusses in his essay, *Theorizing Place*, there are two different ways of thinking about place. There is the *sedentarist metaphysics* (Malkki, 1992) and then there is what he calls the *nomadic metaphysics*, a critique of the notion of place that is increasingly discussed by twenty-first century theorists. It is, as he says, the difference in valuing the place versus valuing the journey: *roots* or *routes* (Cresswell, 2002, p. 11). Cresswell believes that place-based identity may have gone too far. He points to more recent theories which are viewing place more as a "radically open and permeable" (Cresswell, 2002, p. 12). As landscape architect Robert Thayer also points out, the dualistic thinking about local versus global is no longer relevant. Increasingly we are confronted to live both simultaneously, or "living locally in a global world" (Thayer, 2008, pg. 20).

In addition to overlaying the concepts of local with the concepts of global, it is also necessary to analyze a new body of work emerging on the duality of local and global concepts of space. This is a collection of writings by space practitioners exploring the effects of nomadism on art theory and the understanding of place and space. As Meyer explains in the essay, *Nomads: Figures of Travel in Contemporary Art*:

> Unprecedented mobility and migration, the expansion of multinational companies and entertainment oligarchies, the spread of communication technologies and digital networks, the formation of the European Commonwealth and International Monetary Fund – all these developments have propelled a globalisation of culture while provoking nativist fears and fundamentalist returns, and a grass roots movement critical of open markets and unchecked 'free' trade…It is hardly surprising that the culture of itinerancy has influenced the terms of [artistic] production itself. (Meyer, 2000, p. 11)

Art theorist James Meyer argues in his essay that two different types of nomadism have developed in the art world. Nomadism has become a particular mode of artistic expression, where the artist responds to the nomadic nature of the present world condition through their artwork. The first of his two categories of nomadic art he calls "lyrical," which he describes as a "mobility thematised as a random and poetic interaction with the objects and spaces of everyday life" (Meyer, 2000, p. 11). This description is reminiscent of Vito Acconci's work, *Following Piece*, described in Chapter Two, where random phenomenon affected the outcome of the work as he wandered down a city street. While this conception of nomadism

reflects the transient nature of modern artists, it is essentially phenomenological in its

interpretation of site.

Meyer calls the second type of artistic nomadism "critical," and describes that "it does

not enact or record an action or movement for the spectator's delectation, so much as locate

travel itself within historical and institutional frameworks" (Meyer, 2000, p. 11). While the

lyrical nomadism is based more on phenomenological experience, the critical nomadism is

more of a discursive process. This type of work is illustrated in Mark Dion's art, which is further

explained in the next chapter. While Meyer's explanation of these two types of nomadic

works is helpful in understanding this new genre of art, it does not suffice to answer the

question of how to 'belong in transience.' Meyer's interpretation of nomadic art is analyzed

solely from the viewpoint of the artist as nomad. However, how does the artist or space

practitioner take into consideration the nomadic condition of the audience? The same forces

that have caused the artist to become nomadic have also caused the audience to become

nomadic. However, there is certainly more than one type of nomad. There are the fortunate

intellectual nomads, or privileged nomads (Pels 1999), such as artists who are able to traverse

the globe in the pursuit of knowledge, aided by the ease of the information age and global

transportation. As opposed to the traditional definition of a nomad, whose mobility is

dictated by economic hardship or political oppression, the intellectual nomad becomes

mobile in search of ideas (Pels, 1999, p. 65).

Separate from this category of nomads is another type of nomad, those who are

nomadic due to unfortunate situations of forced displacement. As Edward Said comments,

For surely it is one of the unhappiest characteristics of the age to have produced more refugees, migrants, displaced persons, and exiles than ever before in history….As the struggle for independence produced new states and new boundaries, it also produced homeless wanderers, nomads, vagrants, unassimilated to the emerging structures of institutional power, rejected by the established order for their intransigence and obdurate rebelliousness. (Said, 1984, p. 402)

In order to effectively create place, a space practitioner must take the different types of nomadic situations into consideration. According to Frank Go and Paul van Fenema, space organization and management theorists,

When projecting communities on a continuum, we can distinguish two polar extremes: 'prisoners of the past', that is, those whose inclusion pattern is structured, are 'immersed' and incapable of moving beyond their home culture, and the 'Global Nomads', who seem to exude no attachment to the concept of 'place' whatsoever. (Go, p. 64)

This idea is congruous with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's idea of 'nomadic thinking' postulated in their influential work, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia.*

…nomads have no points, paths, or land, even though they do by all appearances. If the nomad can be called the Deterritorialized par excellence, it is precisely because there is no reterritorialization afterward as with the migrant, or upon something else as with the sedentary…. With the nomad, on the contrary, it is deterritorialization that

constitutes the relation to the earth, to such a degree that the nomad reterritorializes

on territorialization itself" (Deleuze, Guattari, 1887, p. 421).

The valorization of the idea of the nomad, and an effort to understand their relationship with

'place' is what makes Deleuze and Guattari's notions so unique. It is obviously in contradiction

to Lippard's views, which show an obvious distain for the nomadic. According to Lippard,

"Few of us in contemporary North American society know our place." Very few people can

name the place where they feel they 'belong'. "And even if we can locate ourselves, we

haven't necessarily examined our place in, or our actual relationship to, that place" (Lippard,

1997, p. 9).

Kwon, among others, believes that it is false to promote a sense of duality between the

local sense of place and nomadic existence. She states,

It is not a matter of choosing sides – between models of nomadism and sedentariness,

between space and place, between digital interfaces and the handshake. Rather, we

need to be able to think of the range of the seeming contradictions and our

contradictory desires for them together; to understand, in other words, seeming

oppositions as sustaining relations" (Kwon, 2002, p. 166).

However, Kwon does not explicitly answer *how* a space practitioner can effectively link the

local aspects of a site with the present nomadic situation. To answer this question, this thesis

looks to systems thinking.

SYSTEMS THINKING

The fourth paradigm of site-specificity is no longer about the fixed phenomenological

aspects of place, but about the networks of flows, and the intersection of the nomadic and

the sedentary. We are entering an age of greater understanding of systems. Increasingly,

people are aware of their place within multiple systems, all working simultaneously:

economic systems, environmental systems, social systems, biological systems, political

systems. Cities are now understood as not so much a collection of skyscrapers, pavement,

people, and other 'things' but instead are understood as a collection of systems – financial,

governmental, infrastructural, transportation, social. Similarly, natural areas are not just

viewed as a collection of objects – trees, animals, bugs – but instead are now understood as

complex environmental and biological systems at work. It seems inevitable that as our culture

becomes more in-tune to these systems at work, the discourse within the art world would

reflect this. In fact, this is exactly what has happened. Art work today is less about the objects,

and more about the system at play.

Known as the founder of systems thinking, Ludvig von Bertalanffy published his text

entitled *General Systems Theory* in 1968. In the mid-twentieth century, scientists began to

realize that despite approaching problems from the perspective of different disciplines, often

their conclusions were the same. Bertalanffy points to a letter by economist K. Boulding to

illustrate this situation:

I seem to have come to much the same conclusion as you have reached, though

approaching it from the direction of economics and the social sciences rather than

from biology – that there is a body of what I have been calling 'general empirical

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theory,' or 'general system theory' in your excellent terminology, which is of wide applicability in many different disciplines" (Bertalanffy, 1969, p. 14).

Since its conception, the principles of general systems theory have been extended to realms past just biological systems. Systems *thinking* is now used as a basis for understanding a broad range of systems, including social, economic and political systems. As such, it offers the perfect extension necessary to Kwon's theoretical framework in order to better understand the implications of nomadism. In T. Downing Bowler's text, *General Systems Thinking* (1981, p. 32), he offers a checklist of the characteristics to be considered in the description of systems:

Description of a Specific System

(key words have been highlighted)

1. A description of the external **relations** of the system and the variations of these relations.

2. A description of the internal relations of the system and the subsystems for which these relations are external relations.

3. A description of the relations among the subsystems.

4. A description of the energies within the systems and the **processes** by which the system acquires, distributes, stores, uses, and transmits them.

5. A description of the polar tensions among some of these energies which constitute the system and subsystems.

6. A description of the stresses to which the system is subject and its equilibration process.

7. A description of the balance of subsystem **autonomy** and system dominance for the subsystems and for the system relative to the environment.

8. A description of **boundaries**, transmissions, inputs, and outputs for the system and subsystems.

9. A description of the states of the system and the **transformation** processes between the states.

10. A description of the exclusiveness, selectivity, and discrimination of the system relative to the constrained variety created by the system's pattern of relatedness.

11. A description of the system levels within the system and the relative novelty that results from the construction of subsystems and the system.

12. A description of the **hierarchies** that constitute the system.

13. A description of the system's resistance to **change** in terms of its patterns of relations, relative autonomy, and equilibration process.

14. A description of the system's level of **differentiation** and uniqueness relative to its class of systems.

This list, which is derived from the general characteristics of systems, can be used to think through the specific characteristics of a particular system. When applied to a site-specific work, this checklist can aid the space practitioner in forming a better understanding of the linkages that the site has to surrounding systems. For example, it is interesting to note that the first three items of the checklist deal with the relationship of the system to other systems

that either are nested within the system or encompass the system. The idea that systems of different sizes are all interwoven into a particular system is important to acknowledge when analyzing a site. As evidenced in ecology, micro-habitats are nested within larger habitats, which then, in turn, lay within larger ecosystems. The same can be said for social and economic systems.

Items four through six from Bowler's list deal with the processes of the system. It is important to understand the processes that are at play on a particular site, as these processes are intertwined with the various layering of systems. These processes may be environmental, such as the water cycle or plant and animal population cycles, or they may be economic processes, such as the commercial viability of a site over time.

Items seven and eight deal with the boundaries of the system, and the system's relative autonomy from other systems. When analyzing the systems present on a site, it is important to note that boundaries to these systems are present; however, their level of permeability must be considered. For example, are there boundaries such as roads or vegetation that hinder social systems, such as the walkability between neighborhoods? How can the space practitioner minimize these boundaries between systems?

The last six items on the list deal with either the level of differentiation between systems or the ability of the system to change over time. Both aspects are important in the understanding of a site. Space practitioners must understand not only how their site fits within the larger framework of environmental, social, and economic systems, but also must understand what differentiates their particular site from the others. This is the key to understanding the difference between 'local' and 'global.' Expressing connections to larger

systems honors the global aspects of the site; acknowledging the differences between these

larger systems as they relate to the specific characteristics of the site expresses the local

aspects of the site. Finally, honoring the system's need to change over time and fostering a

site that allows for change over time is important for system health, whether this be

environmental change, economic, or social change.

These key themes that can be drawn out of the Bowler's *system characteristics* can be

added to the theoretical framework. In this way, a layer of systems thinking is inserted as an

extension of Kwon's paradigms.

Table 1: Themes for Analyzing Systems

Themes for Analyzing Systems
Relationship to other systems
Processes of the system
Boundaries of the system
Differentiation between systems
Ability of system to change over time

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to better understand the variety of thinking on place and site-specificity, all of

Kwon's three paradigms are organized by their key components. A fourth paradigm is also

added to the list by the author, and is identified as *Nomadic Intersections*. This phrase

represents a combination of the theories on nomadism as well as systems thinking, both of

which represent new thinking on the meaning of site-specificity. The following chapters build upon these key components of the paradigms by analyzing case studies through this framework.

The term *Nomadic Intersections* is meant to signify the site as not merely a collection of physical characteristics, but as a node of systems intersections. In this context, place is defined as the location where multiple systems are nested together. The job of the space practitioner is therefore to understand these interwoven systems and foster their connections to each other. The word *nomadic* is used to describe this new paradigm to bring attention to not only the nomadic nature of modern-day space practitioners, as evidenced by Kwon and others, but also to bring attention to the nomadic nature of today's audience. Figure 14 below completes the question posed in Figure 13.
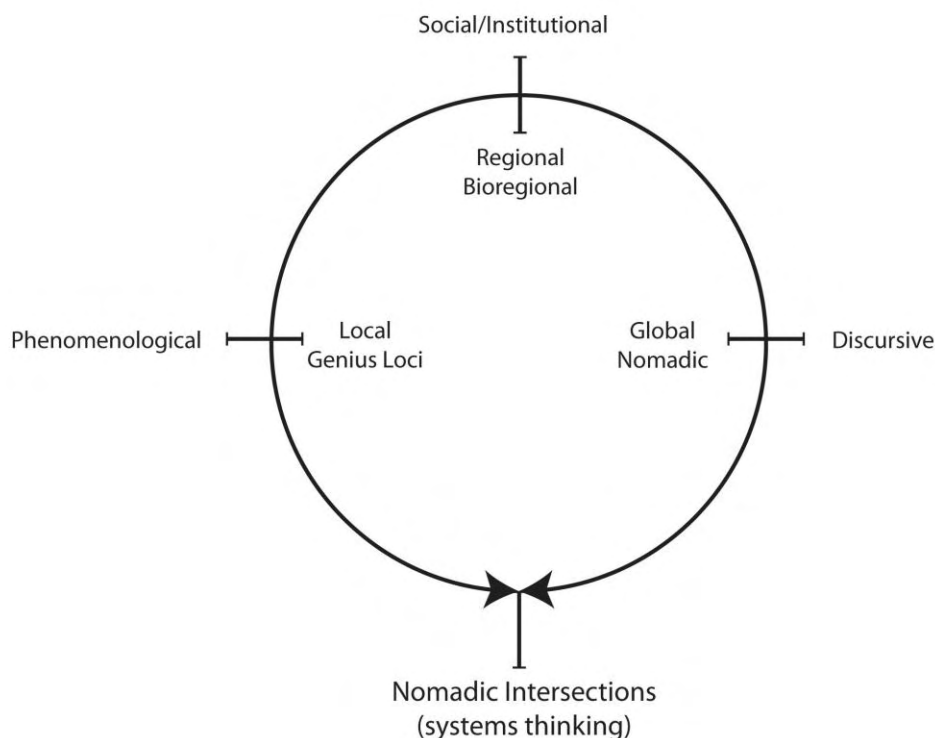

Figure 14: Author's Interpretation of Paradigms Completed

Because systems thinking offers a way to integrate both the larger global systems with the smaller local systems, in this way, site design can essentially 'belong in transience' by better represent the global and the local simultaneously. Recognition of the nomadic nature of modern space practitioners as well as the nomadic nature of those that inhabit the spaces is also a key component in the new paradigm of *Nomadic Intersections*. Table 2 below lists the key components of each of Kwon's three paradigms of site specificity, as well as the key components of a fourth paradigm, added by the author.

Table 2: Paradigms of Site-Specificity

Paradigm of site-specificity	Key Components
Phenomenological	Natural is distinct from man-made
	Work makes ties to local identity
	Work places importance on physical attributes of location
	The work's conversation with the environment is more important to its meaning than the object itself
Social/Institutional	Work highlights site as a network of interrelated spaces, economies or institutions
	Work highlights processes over physicality of site
	Social connections are key component
	Work makes commentary on role of institutions
Discursive	Work interprets site within a context of larger public realms
	Work disperses site across broad cultural, social, and discursive fields
	The space practitioner organizes the work through their planned nomadic movements
	Perceptions of viewer act as part of site
Nomadic Intersections	Work interprets site as the intersection of flows
	Work incorporates systems thinking
	Works honors nomadic nature of viewers
	Work combines local and global

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDIES ANALYSIS

This chapter seeks to build upon the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Three

by analyzing case studies which exemplify the previously stated paradigms of site-specificity.

Specifically, this chapter will look at how the case studies can help inform the meanings of

site, and how the case studies deal with the issue of local versus global thinking.

This chapter reviews four contemporary projects. The makers of these works are all

known for their innovations within the field of art and architecture, and have all grappled

with the issues of place and the meaning of site-specificity in the concept of their work. The

conceptual underpinnings of the projects are reviewed in order to understand how the works

exemplify the particular paradigms of site-specificity. Each project is then analyzed against

the components of the paradigms of site-specificity outlined in Chapter Three. Andy

Goldsworthy, Mary Miss, Mark Dion and Foreign Office Architects were selected for the

analysis because all deal with the concepts of place and site-specificity in their work. In

addition, the projects selected exemplify aspects of the various paradigms established in the

theoretical framework. Comparing and contrasting these projects and the conceptual

thinking behind the works will illustrate the complete spectrum of site-specificity. In addition,

due to the innovative concepts of these artists and architects, a review of these projects will

offer insight into the new direction of site-specific work. Projects were chosen from outside of

the field of landscape architecture so that the most innovative thinking outside of the field

may help to inform a new direction for landscape architecture. New thinking from outside the

field will help to invigorate landscape architecture theory by adding to its base of knowledge.

While each of the four case studies demonstrates particular concepts which the author

has used to align the work with a particular paradigm, it is important to realize that, like all art,

each of the case studies holds multiple layers of meanings. The categorization of the works

into particular paradigms is not meant to be exclusive, but instead is meant to help illustrate

the concepts discussed for the various paradigms. It is the intent of the author to use the case

studies to illustrate different ways of thinking about site-specificity, not to suggest that each

case study has only one interpretation. By analyzing these artworks through the concepts

detailed in this thesis, space practitioners are challenged to expand their thinking on the

meaning of site-specificity.

ANDY GOLDSWORTHY: SPIRE AND WOOD LINE

Andy Goldsworthy is a well-known artist who creates striking ephemeral pieces in

nature. The pieces themselves are made entirely of objects which he finds on site. In this way,

his work represents a close physical tie to the place in which it was created. Similar to the

model developed by land artists of the 1970's Goldsworthy's work is created in remote

locations, rarely seen by the public. The works represent an intimate interaction between the

artist and the place, and are only viewed by the public through documentation of the work.

This intimate relationship that he forms with the site is the basis of his work.

Goldsworthy mentions the word 'place' several times in his description of his philosophy, noting, "I cannot explain the importance to me of being part of the place, its season and changes" (www.ucblueash.edu/artcomm). When explaining the effect of place on his work, Goldsworthy states: "For me looking, touching, material, place and form are all inseparable from the resulting work. It is difficult to say where one stops and another begins. Place is found by walking, direction determined by weather and season" ((www.ucblueash.edu/artcomm). Like Meyer's example of lyrical nomadism, Goldsworthy experiences a place primarily through a phenomenological approach. He lets the physical aspects of the site dictate his interaction with it. For Goldsworthy, the idea of the local aspects of place is critical to his philosophy.

Goldsworthy was affiliated with an organization in the United Kingdom known as *Common Ground*. The group was established in 1983 with the aim of promoting "local distinctiveness" (Mabey, 1983, ix) a phrase they coined to promote the local aspects of Britain's culture. The organization explains the meaning of the term by stating:

> Local implies neighbourhood or parish. Distinctiveness is about particularity, it is rehearsed in the buildings and land shapes, the brooks and birds, trees and cheeses, places of worship and pieces of literature. It is about continuing history and nature jostling with each other, layers and fragments – old and new.
> (www.commonground.org.uk)

The two main objectives of Common Ground are to promote the importance of local distinctiveness and to "explore the emotional value these things have for us by forging

practical and philosophical links between the arts and the conservation of nature and landscapes" (Mabey, 1983, vii). One of the projects that Common Ground completed in an effort to foster local distinctiveness was the West Sussex Parish Maps. The initiative was aimed at promoting the local aspects of the parishes. Each map is designed by the local inhabitants of the parish, and details the local customs, dialects, plants, animals, and other natural elements which make a parish unique; "the parish map makes a stand for the idea of 'homeland' in its most local sense" (Leslie, 2006, xi). The celebration of the local aspects of a site is a philosophy that Goldsworthy has identified with closely in his past work.

Goldsworthy, although certainly tied to these notions of hyper-local in the 1980s and 90s, has increasingly become more of a nomadic artist. Within the last decade he has created works all across England and the United States. This has caused his relationship to the site to inevitably evolve as he has had to find new ways to understand a place's local distinctiveness.

Goldsworthy created two sculptures in the Presidio in San Francisco, California. The pieces, entitled *Spire* and *Wood Line* are inspired by the park's historic forest (www.presidio.gov). The pieces were commissioned specifically for the park in 2006. Wood Line is composed of zig-zagging logs that run through an open path through the historic forest. The piece adds contrast to the stands of trees, and invites the viewer to "see the trees with fresh eyes" (www.presidio.gov).

Figure 15: Andy Goldsworthy, Wood Line. Presidio Park, San Francisco, California. 2008

Source: www.presidio.gov

Spire, the second of Goldsworthy's works at the Presidio Park, highlights the lifecycle of the historic forest. Goldsworthy created this work using aging Cypress trees that needed to be taken down from the forest canopy. The Spire is composed of 35 large cypress trunks and reaches a height of 90 feet.

Figure 16: Andy Goldsworthy, Spire. Presidio Park, San Francisco, California. 2008

Source: www.presidio.gov

The Spire is similar to an artwork Goldsworthy completed in 1984 in Cumbria, England, titled *Seven Spires.* These spires were constructed similarly to the Spire in Presidio Park, however, they were tucked deep into dense woods, so that they blended in with the trees around them. The spires reference the upward and rapid growth of the pines, while also alluding to cathedral spires, which lead the eye upward (Grant & Harris, 1991, p. 62). While the Spire in Presidio Park has been tailored to its specific environment by using local materials, it clearly references Goldsworthy's previous piece, which was tied to the forests of England. In this way, Goldsworthy both acknowledges what is inherently local to the California site by using materials from on-site, but also references his roots back in England.

While both of his projects in Presidio Park clearly demonstrate ties to their

environmental setting, they also clearly reference Goldsworthy's body of work in England

through their use of similar forms and aesthetics. Goldsworthy's more recent site-specific

works outside of his British roots has made him more of a nomadic artists.

Phenomenological Concepts in Goldsworthy's Artworks

The theoretical framework identifies four key components critical for inclusion in a

phenomenological site-specific work. First, in those works most closely linked to the

phenomenological paradigm, the piece is distinguished from the natural setting of the site. Its

relationship to the site becomes the most important aspect of understanding its meaning.

Second, because the site is interpreted most strongly as the physical phenomena, it is

inherently tied to what is local. Aspects of the site that are out of reach of the viewer are often

not included. As a result, the work places a high importance on the physical attributes of the

location. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the work establishes a conversation with the

environment, which is more important to the meaning of the work than the object itself.

These components of site-specific work clearly describe the work of Andy Goldsworthy. His

emphasis on the local aspects of a site, and the physicality of the land on which he works

plays a critical role in his art. Furthermore, the relationship he establishes with the site is

critical in the realization of the concepts behind his work.

MARY MISS: FLOW

FLOW: Can You See the River? by artist Mary Miss is a city-wide public art project that reveals how ordinary activities are connected to the history, ecology, origin and potential of the White River water system in Indianapolis, Indiana. The project, installed in 2011, was commissioned by the Indianapolis Museum of Art, and partnered with over 20 local, regional, and national arts, science, environment, and municipal organizations.

Mary Miss is an established artist who is known for crossing the boundaries between art and landscape architecture and pushing the boundaries of the meaning of site-specific work. Her recent body of work, part of her series: City as Living Laboratory, has expanded the notion of site-specificity to include institutional frameworks. In Flow: Can you see the River?, the word flow is meant to draw attention to the flow of water through the city, often overlooked and neglected, as well as the flow of the community and institutions that make up the network of organizations that support the river system. Her work is part art, part city planning, and part public service announcement, in its attempt to bring awareness to the neglected riverfront, and engage the community with the waterway. While the physical site of the project is within the 100 Acre Park at the Indianapolis Museum of Art, the actual site encompasses a much larger system of the riverway, and its flow in and out of the site. In addition, the site is composed of the larger institutional, social, and political organizations that are a part of the project.

The artwork is made up of several physical components. Bright red spheres are dotted throughout the 100 Acres at the Indianapolis Museum of Art. The spheres mark otherwise

unnoticed aspects of the water system and invite viewers to see these aspects in a new way. Through the use of mirrors, the viewers are able to see themselves within the system, and thus symbolically become a part of the system.

Figure 17: Mary Miss. Flow: Can you See the River? Indianapolis Museum of Art,
Indianapolis, Indiana. 2011
Source: http://www.imamuseum.org

A second major component of the work provides a technology-driven view of the water system. A web-based application allows citizens of Indianapolis to pinpoint their location through the use of a global positioning system, and instantly see how a drop of water that falls at their location would conceivably work its way to the river. As a result, Miss

comments that "everyone has waterfront property" (www.cityaslivinglab.org). The tool

provides an interactive way for the community to understand the water system as it

specifically relates to them in their particular situation. In this way, the site of the artwork is

extended to the location of every individual that participates at any given location

throughout the city.

Figure 18: Mary Miss. Flow: Can you See the River? Indianapolis Museum of Art,
Indianapolis, Indiana. 2011
Source: http://www.imamuseum.org

There are also components to Mary Miss' project, *Flow*: *Can You See the River?,* which can be

identified as phenomenological. Most notably, her piece, like Goldsworthy's, draws its

meaning from the conversation that the objects have with the site. The red balls alone would

have no significant meaning; however, within the context of the river system, the concept

behind the work is realized. In addition, Miss' work celebrates the physical aspects of the site,

such as the river, the floodplain, and the infrastructure of the water system.

Social/Institutional Concepts in Miss' Work

While Miss' work holds aspects of phenomenological work, it clearly rests closer to the

paradigm of Social/Institutional. Although the actual sculptural elements form a relationship

with the physical site, these are certainly not the most successful aspect of the project. It is

almost as though the red balls and red fabric wrapped around the trees were an afterthought

to what composes the real project – a social campaign to bring awareness to the river system.

Miss' extensive collaborations with various local, regional, and national organizations clearly

were the emphasis of the project. As a result, the project clearly highlights the network of

interrelated institutions and community groups that activate the riverway as a site. The

emphasis of these networks is the first of the four key components of this paradigm. Second,

as also demonstrated in Miss' work, the piece must highlight the process over the physicality

of the site. Her emphasis on the processes inherent in the natural system as well as in the

institutional and political systems forms the basis of her work.

The final components of works that fall within this paradigm are that the work must

emphasize the social connections as well as the role of the institutions. Miss' work clearly

emphasizes these aspects through the artwork's involvement of institutions, as well as her

innovative attempts to bring social media into the artwork.

MARK DION: NEUKUM VIVARIUM

     Mark Dion is a highly accomplished American artist. His work has been exhibited

internationally, including at the acclaimed Tate Gallery and the Museum of Modern Art. He is

best known for creating art works that deal with the cultural representation of nature (Dion,

Graziose, Kwon & Bryson, 1997). His 2006 artwork, Neukom Vivarium, is a hybrid work of

sculpture, architecture, environmental education and horticulture that connects art and

science. Sited within the Olympic Sculpture Park in Seattle, Washington, it features a sixty-

foot-long "nurse log" in an eighty-foot-long custom-designed greenhouse. The log was

removed from its original 'site' in the rainforest, and carefully moved, along with all

accompanying organisms, to its new location in the greenhouse. The ongoing decay of the

log and renewal represent nature as a complex system of cycles and processes. Perhaps even

more importantly than the systems themselves, the viewer is confronted with the way in

which these systems were severed from their larger context of the forest. The viewers are

asked to observe the organisms alive on the log, and study the relationships held in this

severed biological system. In this way, Dion's piece discusses the relationship of the artwork

to other systems, and the boundaries of these systems.

     Dion's work provides a good illustration of the discursive paradigm due to his ability to

allow several different definitions of site to operate concurrently. The site from which the tree

was take is an important link, as it offers the viewers a visual juxtaposition to its current

location (just as Smithson's site and non-site presented this contrast). The second site of the

sculpture park signifies the piece as part of a larger art context. Third, the enclosure placed

around the tree speaks of the institutional site that has been constructed to separate the tree

from its surroundings. A self-sustaining ecosystem has been constructed, which provides the

tree and its host species with a man-made climate controlled environment. The tree has thus

visually been separated from its natural system and placed into a system with constructed

boundaries.

Figure 19: Mark Dion, transport of felled tree for Neukom Vivarium, Olympic Sculpture Park,

Seattle, Washington, 2006. (Source: www.seattleartmuseum.org)

Figure 20: Mark Dion, Neukom Vivarium, Olympic Sculpture Park, Seattle, Washington, 2006

(Source: www.seattleartmuseum.org)

Dion's piece gains its strength not through its illustration of biological systems, but through its questioning of the severability of these systems, and the way in which the artist organizes the site-specificity of their work through a series of nomadic movements. As Dion states, "My job as an artist isn't to satisfy the public. That's not what I do. I don't necessarily make people happy. I think the job of an artist is to go against the grain of dominant culture, to challenge perception, prejudice, and convention" (Dion, Graziose, Kwon & Bryson, 1997). Kwon recognizes Dion as one of the leading artists challenging the definition of site-specific work. She comments that what distinguishes today's site oriented art,

including Dion's work is "the way in which the art work's relationship to the actuality of a location (as site) and the social conditions of the institutional frame (as site) are both subordinate to a discursively determined site that is delineated as a field of knowledge, intellectual exchange, or cultural debate" (Kwon, 2002, p. 26). In this way, the site most prominent 'site' of Dion's work is not the rainforest, nor the greenhouse, but instead is the discourse itself that he seeks to create concerning the cultural representation of nature and the global environmental crisis (Kwon, 2002, p. 28).

Discursive Concepts in Dion's Artwork

Dion's Neukom Vivarium is a great illustration of the concepts presented in the discursive paradigm. Dion dramatically expands the notion of 'site-specificity' with this project by valorizing his nomadic nature as an artist, and weaving multiple sites together in the concept of his piece. Dion orchestrated the project in a series of events, each with a separate physical site (the forest, the museum, the park, the greenhouse), all adding layers to the meaning of the work. As a result, the work disperses site across a broad cultural, social, and discursive fields. However, perhaps most importantly to the meaning of the piece is Dion's attempt to position the site within a field of *discourse* regarding the cultural representation of nature. The importance of the physical site of the artworks locations becomes less significant than the field of discourse that the piece creates.

As James Meyer explains in his 2000 essay, *The Functional Site, or, The Transformation of Site Specificity*,

> The functional site may or may not incorporate a physical place. It certainly does not privilege this place. Instead, it is a process, an operation occurring between sites, a mapping of institutional and textual filiations and the bodies that move between them (the artist's above all). It is an informational site, a palimpsest of text, photographs and video recordings, physical places, and things... (Meyer, 2000, p. 25).

In this manner, Dion's work expands the notion of site past its physical boundaries and seeks to reframe the site as a discourse between the concepts of the environment, and the institutions that inform our society's understanding of the environment. By making his artwork less about the actual physical site, and more about the field of discourse he creates around the site, Dion's work most closely aligns with the discursive meaning of site-specificity.

FOREIGN OFFICE ARCHITECTS, YOKOHAMA INTERNATIONAL PORT TERMINAL

Foreign Office Architects (FOA) was a London-based firm established in 1993. The firm's partners, Farshid Moussavi and Alejandro Zaera-Polo, quickly gained international prominence when their 1995 competition submission was selected as the winning design out of 660 entries for the Yokohama Port Terminal Design. The concept of the design, consistent with the guiding concept of the firm, was to establish a design that seeks to find a balance between local and global (Foreign Office Architects, 1997). The firm believed that in today's

global marketplace and information age, the traditional model of building an architecture

firm's reputation on its stylistic consistency was outmoded. In describing their work, FOA

states in *Architectural Design* that "Today, occupying a spatial position might be as important

as adopting a political position was for the Modernist avant-garde" (Foreign Office Architects,

1995, p. xix). FOA's name instantly defines the firm as 'outsiders', stating their location in

space as not local, but foreign. However, the firm's concept, or "spatial position" is to utilize

the heightened availability of information in the global economy as a way to merge the local

and global. FOA states:

> The problem is to discover how the spatial coherence which characterises globalised
>
> late-capitalist regimes can inform local differences, to approach the production of
>
> space as the articulation of global processes with local specificities, where global does
>
> not mean empty and local does not mean disconnected. As an architectural statement
>
> *after* Post-Modernism, *after* critical regionalism, *after* Deconstructivism, our strategy is
>
> to articulate the production of space which is coherently differentiated. (Foreign Office
>
> Architects, 1995, p. xix)

FOA sought to accomplish this by recognizing that the Modernist techniques that led to

homogenization are no longer appropriate to achieve integration. Additionally, the

identification of historical or regional figures is of no use because of their dependence on

systems of representation. Instead, FOA attempted to develop design that could "exploit the

potential of a foreign operativity, to operate by migration, displacement, estrangement, not

by seeking out origins or essences, developing genealogies, defining boundaries, assigning

capacities or inventing languages" (Foreign Office Architects, 1995, p. xix). They describe this way of thinking as a "nomadic operative," which they state does not imply a lack of control, but instead is the development of a specific mode of determination. Their work seeks to find a balance between similarity and difference.

While FOA certainly has developed an innovative theoretical concept for their work, exactly how they infused this nomadic concept into their designs needs further analysis. The Yokohama Port Terminal project, completed in 2002, is an interesting case study on the firm's concepts. The design was for a cruise passenger terminal and public spaces on the Osanbashi pier in Yokohama, Japan.

It was designed from the starting point of ni-wa-minato, meaning a meditation between garden and harbor, between the local city of Yokohama and the global Pacific cruise-liner network. The client suggested the use of this term to describe their overarching goal of merging the two large "social machines" that would make up the new system that the design must support. These social systems were the systems of public spaces of Yokohama and the systems of cruise passenger flow. The proposed structure was intended to blur the borders between local citizen and foreign visitor, between local and global. The design was envisioned as an extension of the Yokohama Park, resulting in the first extension of public space into the Yokohama Bay. This created a space where local could penetrate into what was formerly the global domain of the ship harbor. The highly differentiated structure of the space allowed for the broadest variety of social scenarios, "allowing the terminal to be occupied by locals or invaded by foreigners" (Foreign Office Architects, 1997, p. 76). When commenting on landscapes of mobility such as the port terminal, Cresswell states,

To a geographer influenced by phenomenology such as Edward Relph these sites

[referring to landscapes of mobility such as bus stations or airports] would have been

condemned as 'placeless' – lacking in roots and authenticity – completely 'other-

directed' places full of people from elsewhere, going elsewhere. There are no

'existential insiders' in such places. To a postmodern theorist such as Ian Chambers

however a place such as the airport lounge becomes a contemporary symbol of flow,

dynamism and mobility (Cresswell, 2002, p. 16).

In this way, systems are not just overlapping but are actually intersecting and thus create an

interwoven framework. FOA realizes this aspect and seeks to create a site that interweaves

the local with the global populations.
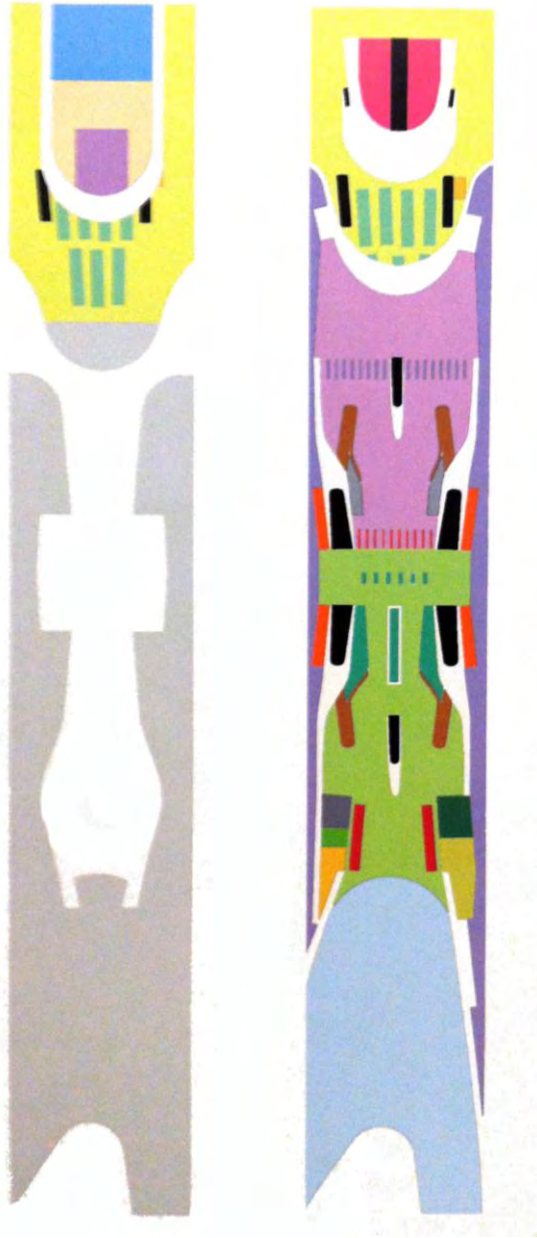
Figure 21: Yokohama International Port Terminal Site Plan, Foreign Office Architects.
Yokohama, Japan. Source: Foreign Office Architects: Yokohama International Port Terminal.
(1997). *Architectural Design*, 67(9/10), 68-73.

Figure 22: Yokohama International Port Terminal, Foreign Office Architects. Yokohama, Japan.

Figure 23: Yokohama International Port Terminal, Foreign Office Architects. Yokohama, Japan.

The final paradigm of site-specificity is one which is able to incorporate the nomadic nature of not only the space practitioner (as the previous examples do) but also must consider the nomadic nature of the audience. FOA's port terminal seeks to do just this, by celebrating the nomadic nature of the port terminal while still seeking to extend its use to the local inhabitants of Yokohama. This is accomplished by thinking of the project not through phenomenological terms, but through systems. The design was developed to operate as a mediating devise between the social system of the cruise passenger flows that enter and circulate throughout the port, and the local system of the Yokohama City community waterfront. The plan calls for a system of circulation that is organized in a series of loops to remove borders between the social systems. As a result, there is a multiplicity of paths to get from one point to another. In this manner, the flow of citizens and passengers has increased opportunities for overlap and also allows flexibility during fluctuations in pedestrian traffic. In addition, the physical design of the terminal was developed using computer software that allowed for a variety of surface folds and visual variation. This is designed to support continuous variation of inhabitants, "from local citizen to the foreign visitor, from *flaneur* to business traveler, from voyeur to exhibitionist, from performer to spectator" (FOA, 1995, xix). Only time will tell whether this initial concept by FOA will be successful in the realized design. However, FOA's attempts to use principals of systems thinking to 'nest' multiple systems together at such a large scale offers interesting insight for space practitioners.

All four case studies offer unique interpretations of site-specificity. By analyzing the case studies to illustrate the different approaches to thinking about the concept of "site-

specificity," it is the author's intent to demonstrate how space practitioners that there is no

one single way to think about the meaning of 'site.' Obviously, there is no one correct way to

interpret the meaning of the designs as well, and often, a design or artwork has multiple

interpretations occurring at once. When creating an artwork or landscape design, it is

advisable to think through *all* of the four paradigms, and analyze how they can add meaning

to a work. Now that contemporary art and architecture works have been considered, the

following chapter seeks to analyze a contemporary landscape design against all four of the

paradigms. Through this analysis, this thesis seeks to illustrate how meaning has been

instilled into the work, as well as to point out ways in which the design could be improved to

better communicate the new meaning of site-specificity.

Table 3: Paradigms of Site-Specificity Matrix

Paradigm of site-specificity	Key Components	Andy Goldsworthy: Spire & Wood Line	Mary Miss: Flow: Can you See the River?	Mark Dion: Nuekom Vivarium	FOA: Yokohama Port Terminal
Phenomenological	Natural is distinct from man-made	X	X		X
	Work makes ties to local identity	X			
	Work places importance on physical attributes of location	X	X		X
	The work's conversation with the environment is more important to its meaning than the object itself	X	X		
Social/Institutional	Work highlights site as a network of interrelated spaces, economies or institutions		X		X
	Work highlights processes over physicality of site		X		
	Social connections are key component		X		
	Work makes commentary on role of institutions		X	X	
Discursive	Work interprets site within a context of larger public realms		X	X	X
	Work disperses site across broad cultural, social, and discursive fields			X	
	The space practitioner organizes the work through their planned nomadic movements			X	
	Perceptions of viewer act as part of site		X	X	
Nomadic Intersections	Work interprets site as the intersection of flows				X
	Work incorporates systems thinking		X		X
	Works honors nomadic nature of viewers				X
	Work combines local and global				X

CHAPTER 5

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

This chapter seeks to build from the understanding of the four paradigms presented in the previous chapters through an analysis of a landscape design completed by a landscape architect and artist. First, the case study is presented, then carefully analyzed through each of the four paradigms in order to gain a deeper understanding of how the paradigms can be used to not only contemplate the effectiveness of a landscape to connect with the site, but also can aid a landscape architect to more successfully create site-specific works. The Allegheny Riverfront Park project was chosen for analysis because it is a contemporary design done by a landscape architect and artist team (landscape architect, Michael Van Valkenburgh, and artist, Ann Hamilton). In addition, the design is fitting for this thesis because of the cross-disciplinary approach to the design, as well as the designers' desire to bring new ideas about connectivity into the design process.

ALLEGHENY RIVERFRONT PARK

Pittsburgh is a unique city in that it is defined by three rivers: the Allegheny, the Monongahela, and the Ohio. While the rivers certainly offer a distinctive character to the City, the community's accessibility to the rivers has not always been ideal. The concept for the Allegheny Riverfront park design was to reconnect the City's cultural district with the riverfront, a connection that was long ago severed by a major highway. In the early 1990s, the

Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's plan for the Cultural District called for the creation of a riverfront park to border the northern boundary of the Cultural District.

The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust commissioned landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh and artist Ann Hamilton to create the park design. The site consisted of two strips of land along the river front, each approximately 4000 feet long. One is a narrow path along the Allegheny River's edge. The other is 25 feet above the river, and edges along the adjacent boulevard. The lower section was constructed first, in order to convert a former parking lot into a 30 foot wide pedestrian walkway. This area was "deliberately wild in its native plantings," designed to quickly regenerate themselves after floods or ice flows (www.mvvainc.com). The lower tier opened in 1998, providing the community with access to the neglected riverfront. The walkway fronting the river was actually designed below flood level for pedestrians to be closer to the waterfront. In order to do this, the walkway projected over the water's edge, and was carefully engineered to be able to withstand seasonal flooding and ice.

The upper tier, completed in 2001, was formerly a four-lane highway with 50 foot wide concrete medians. It was made pedestrian friendly with a refined bluestone walkway, planted with London Plane trees. The upper tier offers views to the river below. The two levels are connected by two ramps, which traverse a 25-foot grade change. Steel frames with chain link are covered with vines along the roadside to create a screen from the sight and sound of adjacent traffic.
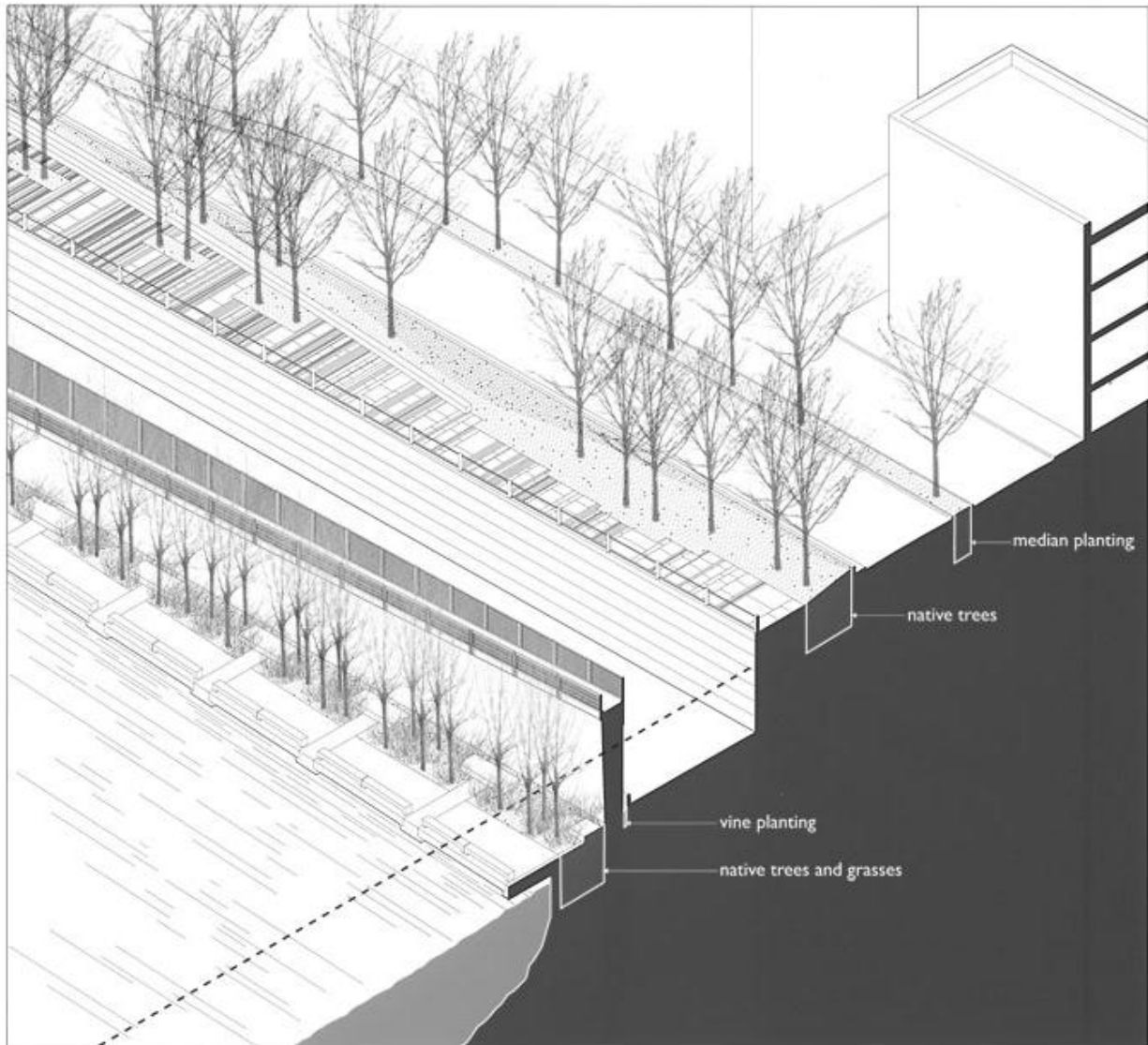
Fig. 24: Allegheny Riverfront Park. Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates Inc.

(Source: www.mvvainc.com)

The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, who commissioned the work, requested that the landscape architect work with an artist to achieve the design. This idea was unique in that the artist was not asked to simply create an object to site at the park, but to be an active participant in the design work. Ann Hamilton was brought onto the design team and created two interesting additions to the design. First she imprinted the sidewalks with indigenous bullrushes, adding eloquent texture. She also created a sinuous railing on the ramp leading to the lower tier. In reflecting on the design, Hamilton explained, "In space and through time, art and park reinforce one another as a singular system of natural/cultural encounters. The nature of the working process makes it difficult to point anywhere in particular and claim, 'Here is the landscape and there is the art' " (http://www.annhamiltonstudio.com).

Fig. 25: Allegheny Riverfront Trail. Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates Inc.

(Source: www.mvvainc.com)

PHENOMENOLOGICAL

Allegheny Riverfront Park is perhaps most easily related to the concepts presented in the phenomenological paradigm. On his conceptualization of his work, Van Valkenburgh explains, "I'm interested in folding seasons and phenomenology into my work. I focus on celebrating the material properties of landscape rather than suppressing them" (Amidon, 2005, p. 17).

Van Valkenburgh's plant selections demonstrate his interest in phenomenology. He chose trees (red maple, silver maple, native sycamore, river birch, red bud and poplar) that are known to thrive along the local rivers. He chose to plant them thickly, nearly 500 trees in total spaced only five to fifteen feet apart. They were planted directly into the riverbank in new soil designed to promote drainage and discourage erosion. The variety of trees were planted close together, a technique Van Valkenburgh calls "hypernature." (Lowry, 1998).

In explaining the concept of hypernature, Valkenburgh states, "We prefer thick plantings that can be thinned over time as nature does—it's an approach that should not be confused with just being natural but is something excited, electrified, kinetic. It is the exaggerated presence of nature—*hypernature*—that makes me think of music and painting informed by borrowing and reassembling of material essences" (Amidon, 2005).

In addition to the use of plant species to connect to the natural elements of the site, the design also sought to use design elements to connect to the riparian aspects of the site. Valkenburgh explains, "We were wanting to make a connection to the larger regional context of flood-plain tree species overhanging the edge of the river." Scale was another factor. "There's the enormous verticality of the architecture of the Downtown and the enormity of the 10th Street Bypass. We felt trees would be an important part of establishing a human scale" (Lowry, 1998).

Artist Anne Hamilton also incorporated the native plants into her design. She used native plants to imprint the cement with a unique texture (see Fig. 24). She commented that the imprints were made from plants that are known to grow in wetlands along the Allegheny

(Freeman, 2003, p. 86). The plants were specially grown for the project, then shipped to Pittsburgh to make the imprints. In addition, Hamilton uses the movement of the river to inspire her sinuous handrail design (Lowry, 1998).

The design is highly successful on many levels when analyzed against the concepts of phenomenological site-specificity. The manner in which the artist and landscape architect were able to pull in the local aspects of the river and the native vegetation, and their changes over time was not only well conceptualized, but wonderfully executed.

SOCIAL/INSTITUTIONAL

The Social/Institutional approach to conceptualizing site-specificity is defined through a network of interrelated economies which together sustain the ideological system, such as in Mary Miss' Flow: *Can You See the River?*. One way in which this project was successful in its creation of networks was through the careful orchestration of relationships between the various stakeholders involved in the project. One way to create a design that surpasses the phenomenological aspects of a site, and becomes vested in the community, is through the interaction with the local institutions. Because this design began as a request for submissions from a prominent institution invested in the welfare of the community, the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, it naturally contained an element of social/institutional site-specificity from its inception. Furthermore, a complex web of ownership of the site forced the designers to interact with multiple levels of institutions: "Creating place out of no place also involved a complex engagement at a number of other levels. For example,…while the city owned the roadways and the park, the county owned the bridges, the state owned the highway, and the

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Army Corps had veto power in issues of river navigation and flooding" (Moffat, 2002). While it certainly was not the choice of the designers to have such complex oversight, it did create an interesting dynamic for the site and a challenge for the designers. Engaging all of these various stakeholders certainly added a level of vested interest in the project in the community, and as a result, most likely made the project stronger in the end. However, the level to which other community groups, besides those that represented property owners, were involved is not clear. Further engagement of community organizations could have added another level of social connections to the site.

DISCURSIVE

The discursive paradigm of site-specificity is defined as a site that extends beyond familiar contexts to more 'public' realms. In other words, the site is dispersed across much broader cultural, social, and discursive fields, and organized intertextually through the nomadic movement of the artist or designer. The design certainly does illustrate some elements of discursive thinking in that it does connect physically and symbolically to Pittsburgh's iconic "Three Sisters" bridges; however, it is uncertain without further research to what level the designers planned for this symbolic connection. Nevertheless, the design does form an important link between symbolic representations of nature (through the river and hypernature) and symbolic representations of the City (visually and physically connecting the site to the iconic bridges and downtown) which acts to elevate the project to discursive realms. Further analysis of the users of the riverfront is necessary to better understand the sites visual and symbolic connections to its larger context along the river and within the community.

One way in which the design could be expanded upon in the future, and offer an additional overlay of discursive site-specificity, is through providing stronger connections to other city parks. This could be accomplished through city-wide events, such as an arts walk, where artists display temporary works along riverfront parks. In this manner, the park would become connected to others through a discursive event.

NOMADIC INTERSECTIONS

As explained in the previous chapters, the paradigm of site-specificity named nomadic intersections is a combination of concepts on systems thinking and theories on nomadism. Allegheny Riverfront Park does incorporate some aspects to the design that align with the concepts of this paradigm. However, there are ways in which the design could be strengthened to better demonstrate systems thinking.

One successful way in which the park illustrates a nomadic intersection is through its understanding of circulation on and around the site. The park designers saw the park as a key intersection between downtown pedestrian systems and potential riverfront pedestrian systems. By envisioning this, the designers were able to successfully connect the site to adjacent areas that were previously inaccessible. In addition, the site now provides an even larger symbolic connection: linking the city to the river, or in other words, the "urban to the natural" (Baird, 2003).

The design not only offers people a way to come to the site, but also a way to move through the site. "The upper level, or cultural landscape, of city streets, sidewalks, and architecture – a gathering place for arts and cultural events – is literally and figuratively connected to the lower level, or natural landscape, by the 350-foot-long ramps" (Baird, 2003). As Van Valkenburgh explains, "In a landscape often you don't know where the boundaries or the edges are...and not knowing that is part of what you take advantage of if you are a good landscape architect." (Amidon, 2005, p. 15). The site has essential become a place of intersection in a much larger site envisioned by the designer. This site spans between city and river, between urban and natural.

In addition to the designers' successful understanding of the site's intersections of flows, the site also incorporates systems thinking. As discussed in the previous chapter, the success of a design to incorporate systems thinking can be better understood by reviewing the "Themes for Analyzing Systems" (see Table 1). As outlined above, this project is successful in forming relationships to other systems, such as through relating to the surrounding pedestrian systems. In addition, the design honors the process of the systems, particularly the seasonal process of the water system. The designers were well aware of the river's ability to flood the banks, and damage the shore during ice floes. Honoring these natural processes by selecting plantings that could quickly recover after flood events was an important way to acknowledge the underlying systems on the site and their ability to change over time.

Further analysis of the users of the park would help to determine the park's relative success in attracting a wide range of visitors. It would be useful to better understand where

the visitors to the park are originating. For example, do most live in nearby neighborhoods or are they tourists? In addition, it would be interesting to further analyze the users of the space to determine how they use the site. Through research of the site, it is evident that the designers honored the nomadic nature of the viewers. Those that visit the site are considered lyrical nomads, as Meyer would call them, referring to a "mobility thematised as a random and poetic interaction with the objects and spaces of everyday life" (Meyer, 2000, p. 11). Users of the space are anticipated to move through it, experiencing the natural and artistic elements along their journey to other parts of the waterfront or city pedestrian network.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The previous chapter analyzed a specific work by a landscape architect and artist to better understand the ways in which theories on site-specificity can be expressed in the built environment. This chapter further develops the lessons learned from theory on site-specificity and how they can be applied to the practice of landscape architecture. The author has developed five concepts on site-specificity for landscape architects to consider when thinking through a site design project. These ideas will help to develop a design that is more firmly connected to the site through using a multiplicity of theories.

Site-Specificity can be interpreted in a Variety of Ways

A major theme that has developed through this thesis is that there is no one single way to define site-specificity. As outlined in previous chapters, the meaning has changed over time, and continues to evolve today as we enter a more globalized way of thinking. It is in a landscape architect's best interest to understand the history of the meaning of site, and how it evolved to its present day multiplicity of meanings. Through a better understanding of the various meanings of site and site-specific work, the landscape architect is then equipped with a more robust understanding of how a particular design solution can be more effectively joined with the land, the environmental systems, or the community.

<u>The Community is Part of the Definition of Site-Specificity</u>

As illustrated in the artworks by Ukeles, Acconci, Dion, Miss, and others, site-specific works can no longer merely be about the physical aspects of a site. They are intrinsically tied to the social systems at work on the land. It is important for the landscape architect to think past the purely physical aspects of the design, and look for ways that the design can become a part of the community. Creating a design that extends past the physical parameters of the site, and creates a larger discursive field will result in more successfully grounding the design within the larger community.

<u>Sites should be analyzed for Intersections of Flows</u>

Often when beginning a new project, a landscape architect's first step is to define the boundaries of a site in order to understand the scope of the project. However, this is a self-limiting exercise. Before restrictions are placed on the meaning of site, the designer should first consider the systems and flows that make up the site. They may extend far beyond the physical boundaries of the project. An understanding of the property's location within the bigger systems will help to re-envision the site within its broader regional context. For example, an exercise to determine the extent of the watershed, economic systems, social systems, wildlife corridors, and any other apparent systems should be shown as overlays in order to discover the property's location within the system's flows. The landscape architect must ask: Are there intersections of systems that happen on the property? These intersections then become the focal points for design intervention.

In addition, by using the concepts developed for sites as Nomadic Intersections, landscape architects will be better suited to deal with the inevitable transience that is inherent to modern-day society. As Weilacher states,

It seems remarkable that the potential contained in transience, the vital process of metamorphosis, has received very little attention despite its fundamental, even creative significance in landscape design. …a more open approach to transience and the traces it leaves would, in the right place, not only help to heighten perception, but also often create new space for the spontaneous, the unexpected, the experimental (Weilacher, 1999, p. 40).

Artists are at the forefront of conceptualizing the effects that this transience has had on society. If landscape architects are to create site-specific works that are not only conceptually innovative but also *functional* in a rapidly globalizing world, they must acknowledge the nomadic nature of the users of the space, as well as their own nomadic tendencies.

Sites should be analyzed for Nested Systems

As Julia Czerniak explains,

"Design strategies for a building lot, one scale of site, expand enormously when conceptualized in relations to other, nested scales of reference, like the neighborhood, city , and region of which the site is a part. Conceiving of site in this way suggests that

landscape design projects can not only draw from and expanded field of information, they can impact areas larger than their own physical extent..." (Czerniak, 2006, p. 107).

While landscape architects often have experience working with systems, often what is needed is more analysis of the relationship *among* systems. By thinking of systems as nested within each other, all with permeable boundaries, the landscape architect is better able to find ways to link the disparate aspects of a site. Furthermore, by using the themes developed for systems thinking, the landscape architect is better able to avoid the trap of thinking of the 'local' and 'global' aspects of the site as an unavoidable dichotomy. Instead, systems thinking helps the landscape architect to find ways to link to the local roots of a site while also extending networks to the global systems that interact with the site.

Collaboration with Other Space Practitioners Can Expand a Design's Site-Specificity

Finally, a more successful understanding of the meaning of a site is best achieved through design collaboration. Because of the nature of the work, resting somewhere between art and science, landscape architects are ideal candidates for fostering more collaborative approaches to thinking about site-specific design work. Within this thesis are many examples of projects that have been deemed successful at least partly due to the unique collaborations between artists and landscape architects, such as Allegheny Riverfront Park, Byxbee Park, and Williams Square. By bringing together disciplines that have traditionally thought of site-specific work in different ways, the collaborative effort can expand the design to hold multiple meanings.

FURTHER RESEARCH

In order to build upon this research and create additional insight for the field of landscape architecture, more in depth research needs to be done. Additional analysis of the case studies, including on-site analysis, is necessary. By visiting the sites and studying the visitors to the sites, valuable information could be gained on the types of visitors using the space. Assessing if the visitors to the sites live nearby, or are visiting from far away could offer further insight into the effectiveness of the design to attract both nomadic visitors as well as local populations. In addition, an understanding of how visitors use the sites would provide interesting insight into the effectiveness of the design as an intersection or node among other sites.

In addition to further analysis of the sites, interviews with the designers and artists of the site is necessary to provide further important insight into the designs. The designers and artists included for review in this thesis were chosen primarily because they all work conceptually, to a certain extent, and nearly all have published articles, books or interviews, where they discuss the concepts behind their design work or art installations. Interviews with the artists or landscape architects would be necessary to more fully understand how these space practitioners physically manifest their concepts on site-specificity.

Finally, as this thesis aims to illustrate, landscape architecture theory could greatly benefit from further research on site-specificity. Future work could be guided by using the five concepts outlined in this chapter. Each offers potential for landscape architects to redefine the way in which they look at a site, as well as the way in which they collaborate with

other space practitioners. These are all critical concepts which can help to guide the success of not only landscape architects, but also the profession as a whole.

One could devote a lifetime to understanding the body of theory on the concepts of space, place, and site. While these concepts are something that nearly everyone considers, those that call themselves space practitioners are even more intimately concerned with understanding their meaning. The field of landscape architecture can greatly benefit from a multidisciplinary approach to design which utilizes a broader understanding of the term site-specificity. As outlined in this thesis, the fields of art, architecture, and geography have developed interesting concepts on the meanings of space, place, and site, which can help to inform the work of landscape architects.

By thinking through the various paradigms of site-specificity, it is the author's intent to challenge the landscape architect's thinking of site, and expand this definition so that landscape architects are better equipped to design for the challenges of global thinking. If landscape architects are to more successfully bridge the gap between local and global thinking, it is necessary to continue to pursue a deeper understanding of how landscape designs can connect with the local aspects of the site, as well as with the systems inherent within the larger global context.

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