



Borrowing Views *Art, Ideas, and Landscape* *in Stanley Park*

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Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between landscape painting and landscape architecture, both historic and contemporary. It examines the historic influence of European picturesque painting on the English landscape garden style, as well as Canadian Group of Seven paintings and their relation to wilderness parks, and uses these frameworks to analyze Vancouver’s Stanley Park. It examines the social and ecological problems arising from these colonial landscapes and the narratives embedded within them, and proposes turning to contemporary landscape painting as a starting point for rethinking these landscapes. Contemporary landscape artists are engaging with ideas about our relationships to the environment and to each other, and many useful parallels can be drawn between current issues in landscape art and landscape architecture. Their work can inspire diverse designs that move beyond the deep-rooted tropes of ‘wild’ and ‘pastoral.’

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Fig. 1. Charuvi X Lumberman’s Arch, digital collage, by the author

1. Statement of Thesis

“The poetic image - whether conveyed by paint or acted out in real life - may be beguiling, but this enchantment with an image cannot be detached from a disenchantment with things as they are” (313).

With this statement, the authors of *Landscape Painting Now* speak to two powerful qualities of images. They give us pleasure through looking, but they also help us think past current conditions - whether we’re looking forward or back. Images give us historical perspective, they allow us to critique the present, and they help us imagine new futures. This project explores the role painting played in shaping our landscapes, and asks what it can contribute to the generation of new ones.

Landscape painting is deeply connected to two of Canada’s predominant park styles: the English landscape garden, and the wilderness park (see, among others, Crandell and Hunt regarding English garden style, and O’Brian & White and Cole regarding wilderness). While the idealized pastoralism of the English landscape garden is modeled after European picturesque paintings, the wilderness park aspires to the ruggedness celebrated by the Group of Seven, whose paintings helped solidify Canada’s wilderness identity during the early 20th century (Dejardin). These park landscapes, which tend to be the defaults for Canadian parks, have naturalized colonial and national power and concealed complex cultural and ecological realities. While many parks still embody these traditional styles, landscape painting has moved forward. Growing numbers of contemporary artists are turning to landscape painting to make sense of our strained relationship with our environment. Their adaptation and subversion of this tradition can inform our approach to park landscapes and help us generate more diverse designs that move beyond the deep-rooted tropes of ‘wild’ and ‘pastoral.’

2. Critical Essay

Introduction

When Kate Orff proposes “un-making, undoing, subtracting, reversing, decarbonising, tearing out, ripping up, replanting, softening and connecting” (Orff 96) as responses to climate stressors, she touches on a central component of social and climate justice movements: the urge to undo in order to repair. As the removal of monuments across North America demonstrates, there are narratives embedded in our built environments that need to be recognized, rethought, and in many cases, replaced. Environmental and social crises are challenging our views of nature and culture. This new reality calls for reparative work. More broadly, it calls for reimagining our relationship with our surroundings. Timothy Morton sees the current ecological panic as an immersive experience; since our old ways of thinking created the problems we’re facing, they can no longer be trusted, and we’ve lost what we thought was our reference point

(Morton 26). In that case, *are there new vantage points to be had? How do we understand our relationship to the world around us?*

These questions are central to landscape representation. A landscape painting is not just a painting of the land, but a statement of our relationship to it. Art historian John Berger describes “unpaintable landscapes” as those that can’t be truly captured in a painting; they lack focal points or vantage points; they have their back to the viewer (Berger 121). Paintable landscapes, then, face the viewer; they make sense on a human scale. It follows that when we shape physical landscapes after this pictorial tradition, we arrange them to face the human viewing them. We see the social and ecological effects of this anthropocentric position when we examine traditional park designs.

To rethink these traditional landscapes for a contemporary context, we need to first recognize their history and cultural meaning; for this we can look to contemporary landscape painters, who are themselves repurposing a traditional genre. Art critic Barry Schwabsky sees the recent resurgence of painting as part of a backward-looking trend in contemporary art; the historical, even antiquated, medium is in tune with a widespread impulse to examine the past (Schwabsky, *Vitamin P3*). Echoing the sentiment of Kate Orff’s un-making, he identifies the underlying feeling as that “of having taken a false route into the future - of needing to retrace one’s steps and see where the untaken forks in the road might lead” (*Vitamin P3* 12-13). He writes, “better than any other media employed by today’s artists, painting lends itself to eloquent ambivalence toward its own historicity.” (*Vitamin P* 12). Painting is not only backward-looking, however: “many of the artists who are - in one very different way or another - ‘painting landscape’ today are grappling with questions about what our relationship with nature can be today, how nature and culture are intertwined, and what it means to be a thinking and perceiving subject in a world that may be indifferent to our thinking and perceiving” (Schwabsky, *Painting* 23-24).

Painting, view, and landscape

Since the first European settlers established themselves, they have modeled Canada’s landscape after the Western landscape tradition. This tradition was somewhat late blooming, reflecting European privileging of human agency over nature; cultures with less anthropocentric worldviews tend to have more robust landscape art (Schwabsky, *Painting* 14). When European landscape art did emerge, it was alongside colonial expansion, as an instrument of empire that objectified the world and presented it for consumption (Andermann, et al 11). This imagery in turn shaped the land. J.B. Jackson describes landscape’s transition from image to action: “[f]irst it meant a picture of a view, then the view itself... Finally... we undertook to make over a piece of ground so that it resembled a pastoral landscape in the shape of a garden or park” (3). Landscape architecture has, since its origins, been in conversation with landscape art.

Two of Canada’s predominant park styles are strongly tied to landscape painting. The English landscape garden, with its rolling grassy hills, naturalistic plantings, ponds, and architectural features, grew from European picturesque paintings, and primarily features in large urban parks such as New York’s Central Park, Victoria’s Beacon Hill Park and Winnipeg’s Assiniboine Park. The wilderness park style evolved with the paintings of Canada’s Group of Seven. Wilderness parks are mostly found in rural areas and are intended to preserve nature. The national parks created in both Canada and the US fall into this category.

The pastoral story: picturesque painting, romanticization, and the urban parks movement

“There is no doubt that the eighteenth-century English landscape garden has been the most influential force in the last two centuries of landscape design... this garden was itself based on pictorial conventions borrowed from naturalistic painting.” (Crandell 8)

During the seventeenth century, landscape began to transition from a mere setting for paintings of architecture and human figures into a subject in and of itself. The naturalistic and moody landscapes of painters like Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa influenced both English Romantic painting and landscape design in the following centuries (Hunt 97). Creators of picturesque gardens emulated their informal vegetation and references to classical literature in English country estates. In keeping with its roots in painting, the view of the land was primary in the picturesque garden, and took precedence over its use. The ‘natural’ appearance of English picturesque landscapes effectively naturalized the uneven distribution of land and the power of the landowners because the estates did not appear constructed, but as if they came about naturally (Harris & Ruggles 17).

The romanticization of nature in 17th to 19th century England contained a good deal of nostalgia for idealized pastoral landscapes. The population, which was becoming increasingly urbanized, viewed rural areas as healthier than their rapidly industrializing cities (Jones 45). The first urban parks, like St. James’ in London, were created to bring the healing benefits of nature to city dwellers (Jones 44-45). Amidst this ruralism, both English landscape design and urban parks developed, quickly spreading to the continent and beyond. In the mid-19th century the urban parks movement reached North America, mostly famously in Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted’s Central Park. Olmsted had travelled to Europe and was inspired by the English landscape gardens (Jones 52). The formalized natural look Olmsted and his colleagues created was what Annie Spirn refers to as “naturalistic constructivism,” or human artifice to hide human disturbance. This concealing of the designer’s hand and emulation of the pastoral contributes to the impression that these landscapes are natural and timeless, rather than the product of a specific time and culture.

Early creators of the English landscape garden borrowed form as well as theme and meaning from landscape painting (Hunt 107). Modern iterations of the picturesque seem to have little connection to the meanings intended in their predecessors, but the style has taken on its own cultural significance. In former colonies in particular, the English landscape garden represents colonial intrusion into the land. The Western “ideology of habitation, occupation, and domestication” (Morris 4) is also evident in European landscape art. Characteristics such as the illusion of depth, roads leading the viewer into the space, and depiction of human use of the land invite audiences to view it as available for use and occupation (Morris 4). Parks and gardens in many locations share the English landscape garden style; as Gina Crandell argues, “often the pictorial conventions of naturalism and the pastoral ideal have enthralled the landscape architect and overruled context” (11). The prevalence of this English countryside style in North America attests to the influence of colonizing forces on the landscape.

The wilderness story: the Group of Seven, Canadian identity, and the national parks movement

As Canada transformed from colony to independent nation, wilderness played a key role in its developing national identity. Natural resources played a large part in Canada’s economic development and the landscape that contained them is celebrated culturally (Walton 142). In fact, there may be no other country that focused on landscape as closely as Canada did in the 20th century (O’Brian 21). The paintings of the Group of Seven both responded to and promoted this national interest. The Toronto-based Group was famous for their scenes from rural and northern Canada. Painter Tom Thomson influenced their direction, but died in 1917, three years before the Group was officially formed. The Group of Seven actually comprised ten men: A.J. Casson, A.Y. Jackson, Arthur Lismer, Frank Johnston, Lawren Harris, Frederick Varley, Franklin Carmicheal, J.E.H. MacDonald, L.L. Fitzgerald, and Edwin Holgate. Emily Carr, though associated with the Group, was not a member. These artists were largely responsible for bringing modern painting to Canada; they were not revolutionaries, but rather wanted to bring Canadian art, which was half a century out-of-date, in line with the rest of the world (Dejardin 20). To the painters of the Group of Seven, our national identity “was indivisible from the nation’s northern geography and climate” (O’Brian 21) and their vision helped shape popular consciousness. They embraced the sublime power of local landscapes, which had traditionally been viewed as too raw to make fitting subjects for paintings (Dejardin 16). The group’s paintings portrayed Canada as rugged, northern, and empty, and Canadians as white, male, and homogenous; the painters tended to omit human occupation and resource extraction from their compositions (O’Brian). “Through the fiction of wilderness... ‘empty’ land was declared to be there for the taking - and then it was mythologized” (O’Brian & White 4). The continued popularity of the group’s work is evidence that the idea of wild Canada still has power.

This embrace of wild nature and its role in nation building is evident in the national parks movement, both in Canada and the United States. These parks are tasked with simultaneously preserving and allowing access to nature (Kheraj, *Inventing* 11). The nature they are ‘preserving’, despite being imagined as untouched wilderness, is often constructed or altered. Their making repeatedly involved the displacement of Indigenous people, and concealing of resource extraction or other industry (Hamilton). This parallels the glossing over of infrastructure and human occupation in paintings by the Group of Seven. In the face of the Anthropocene, the fiction of wilderness represented by these parks and paintings is becoming even harder to maintain.

The pastoral, the wilderness, and Stanley Park

We can see the effects of the wilderness and pastoral narratives play out in the 405 hectares that comprise Stanley Park, located in Vancouver’s city centre. As a large urban park that also embodies wilderness characteristics, it demonstrates both narratives at work in the same location.

The rural location of most wilderness parks notwithstanding, both the urban and national parks movements should be seen in the context of increasing urbanization. A reaction to urbanization, the antimodern movement lauded parks as respites from the city (Kheraj, *Inventing* 8). At the same time, city parks of the Victorian era, like Stanley Park, were a means of expressing civic pride (Jones 52).

Colonial landscapes, including the English landscape garden, were themselves considered civilizing forces. The construction of European-style gardens in the colonies naturalized imperial expansion (Andermann, et al 11). In Stanley Park, newcomers changed the style and species of the peninsula’s plant communities to suit their desires. The introduction of European biota into Stanley Park’s ecosystem was part of “a broad and deliberate effort to biologically transform the Northwest Coast into Western Europe” (Kheraj, *Inventing* 46).

While early public parks were ostensibly for everyone, their effects were felt unevenly. Parks advocates were often wealthy men who benefited from the increased value of real estate in cities with parks, and Stanley Park was no exception (Kheraj, *Inventing* 8, 61). It certainly did not benefit the many Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents of the Stanley Park peninsula, who were removed to make way for the park (Barman).

Stanley Park demonstrates the fictive nature of many of our wilderness areas. While often referred to as virgin forest, primeval landscape, or untouched nature, this narrative obscures the considerable effort involved in constructing Stanley Park. The Parks Board resisted not only human influence, but natural disruptions like fire and insects as well, for the sake of a static and visually pleasing forest (Kheraj, *Improving*.) Achieving Stanley Park’s iconic appearance “was an active process that demanded elaborate

human intervention” (Kheraj, *Improving* 67). Today’s park disguises evidence of a range of human activity over at least 3000 years, including shell middens, burial cairns and gravesites, farm building foundations, gun batteries, and a water main, among other artifacts (Copp).

Visual materials support this image of pleasant parkland and untouched nature to draw visitors and celebrate Stanley Park’s place in the city. Postcards from the park’s inception to the present day focus on the same tropes, chiefly coniferous forests, seascapes, and other natural scenery; ponds and manicured gardens; historic or pastoral structures such as totem poles and the lighthouse; and animal life, both native and exotic. As evidence of its “picturesque” qualities, Stanley Park is a popular subject for paintings, photography, and other visual media; it is even home to “Painter’s Circle” where local artists create and sell original drawings and paintings to park visitors. Artworks featuring the park tend to present similar subjects as do the postcards, with limited human presence and a focus on natural features. Aside from sales within the park, which take advantage of crowds of tourists, many works are reproduced and sold commercially, both as art prints and souvenirs. The uniformity of visual representations of Stanley Park attests to the strength of the park’s wilderness image in the popular imagination, and its frequent appearance in tourist materials suggests the park symbolizes Vancouver.

What is landscape painting now?

In recent decades, there has been a resurrection of painting in general, and of landscape painting in particular. It is different from the pastoral and wilderness scenes many of us might picture, as diverse artists adapt and subvert the medium. Whether in visual arts, writing, or landscape architecture, examining our landscape involves thinking about our relation to our environment and to each other. Timothy Morton sees environmental art as a way of “registering the feeling of being surrounded by others, or more abstractly, by an otherness, something that is not the self” (17). This can apply to social and ecological relations. Since the early 2000s, rather than focusing on national identities, “the discourse on landscape has splintered and representations of it have increasingly focused on environmental degradation and colonial dispossession” (O’Brian & White xv). Like landscape designers, landscape painters are grappling with how to understand our place in nature and reexamining the role of aesthetics in landscape. The authors of *Natura: Environmental Aesthetics After Landscape* posit that art will remain relevant even after what they call the “demise of the landscape form” (9). “Even as the autonomy of artwork faces the constant challenge of technology and its attendant forms of subjectivation, the indeterminacy that is particular to art nonetheless continues to hold an advantage over other forms of knowledge and experience” (14-15). Like illustrations in a storybook, images give us more immediate entry into their world than do the story’s

words. As we reconsider the narratives our landscapes represent, images can help us generate, express, and understand new ones.

To Morton, aesthetics may not be a solution to environmental problems, but they do form a basis for a critical view. He proposes studying form as a way to recognize and critique the ways we engage with the idea of nature (Morton 3). Given our tendency to regard landscape as a backdrop, overlook the cultural processes that made it, and accept the ideologies it naturalizes as inherent (Harris & Ruggles 16-17) studying the form of our public landscapes would appear to be especially important if we are to reimagine them for the 21st century.



Fig. 2. Figgis X Shakespeare Garden, digital collage, by the author

3. Approach & Programmatic Issues

As someone with a background in painting, I was intrigued by the potential of contemporary landscape painting to address the field's historic and lasting impact on landscape architecture, and on the relationship of viewer to space implied by both. What ideas about landscape are today's artists expressing, and can they be translated into landscape designs?

This thesis will investigate design approaches to Stanley Park based on contemporary landscape painting and related practices. Rather than one comprehensive design, a series of design 'vignettes' will reimagine critical areas of the park in different ways. Each design will stem from the concepts, techniques, and aesthetics of a contemporary artist. The programmatic focus of this project is processual; more traditional programmatic concerns are defined according to each intervention and will be addressed in the design portion of this report. Stanley Park serves as a testing ground for design responses that blend artistic practices with site considerations and my own agenda as a landscape designer.

By researching, analyzing, and inhabiting the practices of others, I hope to broaden my own perspective on landscape. I see this approach as a way of moving past my subjective position, enriching the concepts I'm bringing to design, and understanding how I as an individual might design for perspectives other than my own. The focus of the project is on the process of design: how we perceive, generate, represent, and translate ideas, and how we as designers can learn from other disciplines and individuals working outside of landscape architecture.

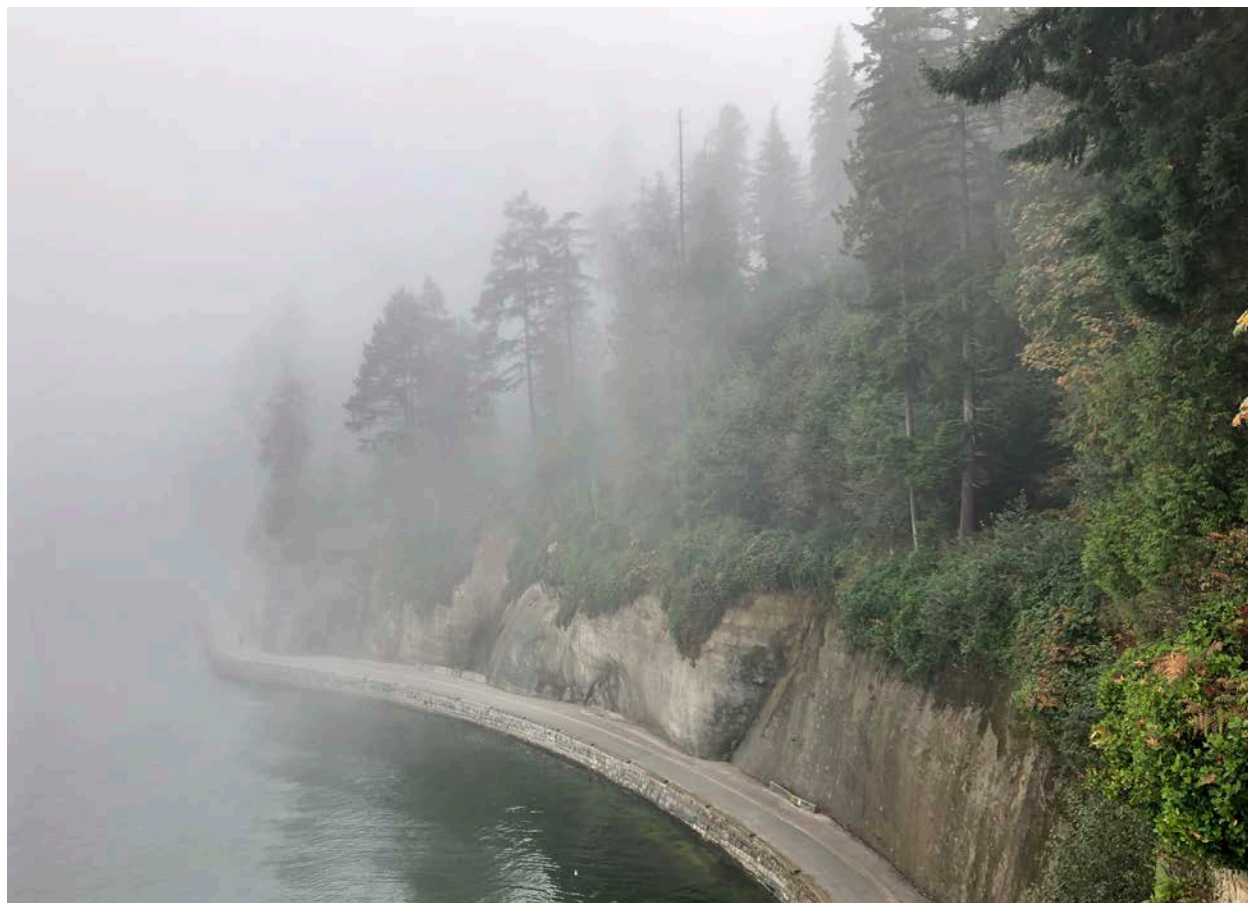


Fig. 3. From Siwash Lookout. Photo by the author

4. Site Matters

Stanley Park

The land we now know as Stanley Park is located on the unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. Its position on the end of the peninsula in Burrard Inlet is significant not just for its proximity to downtown Vancouver, but also as an important confluence in the territories of the three local First Nations (Vancouver 2).

While the seawall that encircles it is perhaps its best-known feature, it encompasses several other walking and cycling routes, two swimming beaches, sports fields, formal gardens, an aquarium, a miniature train, an outdoor theatre, a waterpark and other play areas, and extensive wooded areas.

The park was inaugurated in 1888. It was not designed by a landscape architect, but evolved over decades with input from the Vancouver Park Board. British garden designer and town planner Thomas Mawson designed Lost Lagoon, as well as the causeway that cuts the former tidal area off from the rest of Coal Harbour.

Current Concerns

In 2011 the Vancouver Park Board (VPB) and the three local Nations of Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh initiated a relationship-building process to facilitate cooperative planning and development in Stanley Park, and the VPB continues its reconciliatory work. This page summarizes a report from 2018 outlining the development of a 100-year comprehensive plan between the four groups, highlighting the most relevant concerns for this thesis.

“The Stanley Park Comprehensive Plan process will allow not only the establishment of an authentic narrative for Stanley Park but it also enables the ability to chart a new course for the enrichment and protection of the park for centuries and all generations to come” (Vancouver 3)

Related Policies

2014 Vancouver Urban Forest Strategy

- Ensure resiliency to disease and climate change
- Grow urban forest canopy
- Manage urban forest as a vital living asset

2016 Vancouver Biodiversity Strategy

- Maintain Ecological Processes (Restore habitats and species)
- Connect citizens to natural areas in the city
- Celebrate Biodiversity through Education & Stewardship

Rational for Understanding Stanley Park: Developing a Comprehensive Plan

The VPB and the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations have initiated a planning process for the development of a 100-year vision and comprehensive plan for Stanley Park. This aims to redress the lack of comprehensive planning for park design, development, and programming in the past. It intends to correct the misguided narratives that surround Stanley Park, including the view of the park as “untouched nature,” and to address the dehumanization of park residents during the first half of the park’s history. It acknowledges the area’s importance to all three local First Nations and the resilience of their presence over millennia. It is hoped a comprehensive plan will lead to better understanding and stewardship of the land and its flora and fauna in the face of climate change, sea level rise, habitat loss, water quality issues, and forest canopy and native vegetation stressors. The VPB acknowledges that many of these challenges stem from the colonial settlement of the western world, and that colonial-based issues would benefit from new perspectives.

Pastoral Stanley Park



Fig. 4. Comparison of picturesque landscape painting with Stanley Park. Paintings, top to bottom: Thomas Gainsborough, Landscape with figures on a path, c. 1747; Claude Lorrain, A River Landscape with Jacob and Laban and his Daughters, 1804; J.M.W. Turner, Norham Castle, Sunrise, 1798; all photos by the author

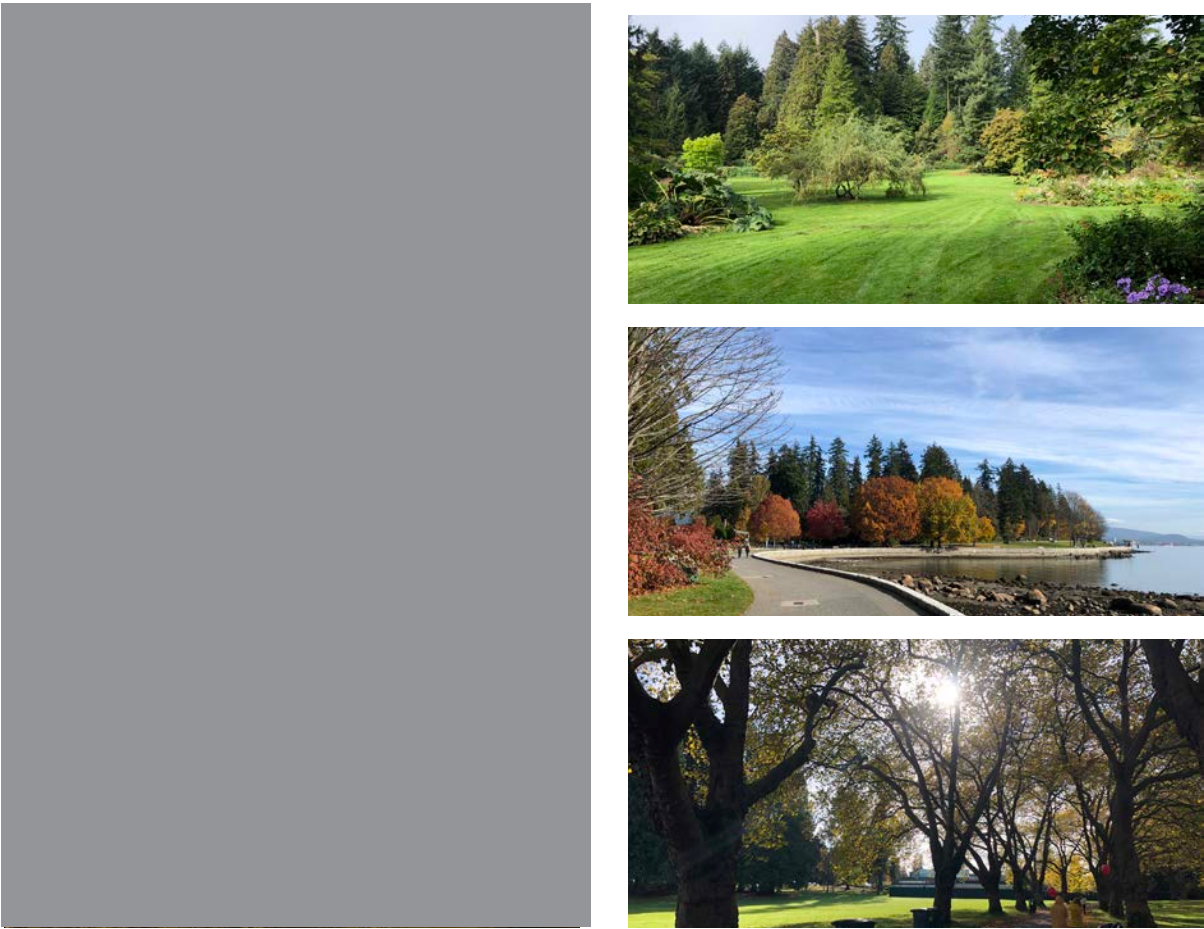


Fig. 5. Comparison of picturesque landscape painting with Stanley Park. Paintings, top to bottom: William Havell, Tintern Abbey, 1804; Jacob Van Ruisdael, Road Through Fields of Corn near the Zuider Zee, 1661; Claude Lorrain, View of la Crescenza, c. 1649; all photos by the author

Wild Stanley Park

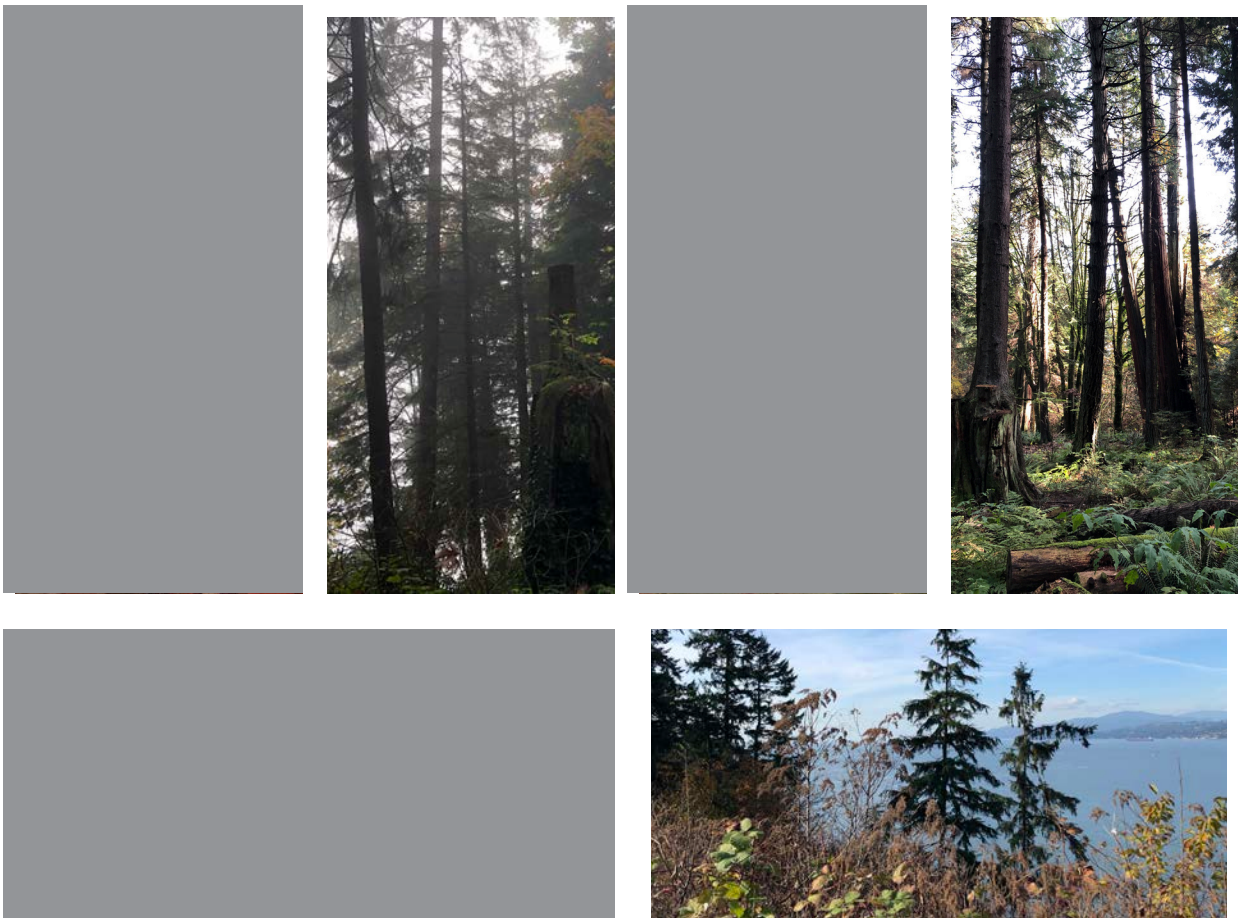


Fig. 6. Comparison of Canadian wilderness painting with Stanley Park. Paintings, clockwise from top left: Lawren Harris, Algoma Sketch XCII (Algoma Autumn), c. 1920; Emily Carr, Deep Forest, Lighted, 1935; Lawren Harris, Montreal River, c. 1920; all photos by the author



Fig. 7. Comparison of Group of Seven and related painting with Stanley Park. Paintings, top to bottom: Lawren Harris, Shimmering Water, Algonquin Lake, 1922; A.J. Casson, The White Pine, 1948; J.E.H. MacDonald, Algoma Hilltop, c. 1919; all photos by the author

Context

While Stanley Park is emblematic of Vancouver, it has commonalities with other large parks worldwide, and with landscape paintings. As evidenced by the images on the preceding pages, (**figures X and X) its form relates to both picturesque and Group of Seven paintings. It presents not only the English garden style, but qualities of a wilderness park as well. The park is evidence that two colonial narratives about nature are at play in our city - that of idealized pastoralism, and that of untamed nature. For this reason, it is an ideal site to test designs that respond to these landscapes.

The resources and wealth provided by Canada’s landscape should not be overlooked as factors in it forming the basis of our national identity (Walton 142). Wilderness parks and resource development can be viewed as two sides of the same coin. In a similar vein, agrarian style parks are a counterpart to the development of cities. Not only do they make urban life more bearable, their creation tends to increase real estate value and spur development in surrounding areas (Kheraj, *Inventing* 8).

A look at Stanley Park’s context reveals its proximity both to the dense urban core that developed beside it, and to resource extraction. Just north of the park are bulk export docks, owned by one of Canada’s largest oil and gas companies. Directly adjacent to that is Xwemelch’stn, or Capilano Indian Reserve No. Five. Historically there were familial ties between its residents and those of the village of χway̓ χwey, which was a short canoe trip away on the Stanley Park peninsula (Barman) - that is, until it was cleared to make way for the park. The site now hosts Lumberman’s Arch, a literal monument to resource extraction. Stanley Park and its landscapes are tied to aspects of the settlement of Canada that extend far beyond the park’s boundaries.



Fig. 8. Stanley Park, Downtown Vancouver, Xwemelch’stn, and Vancouver Wharves area

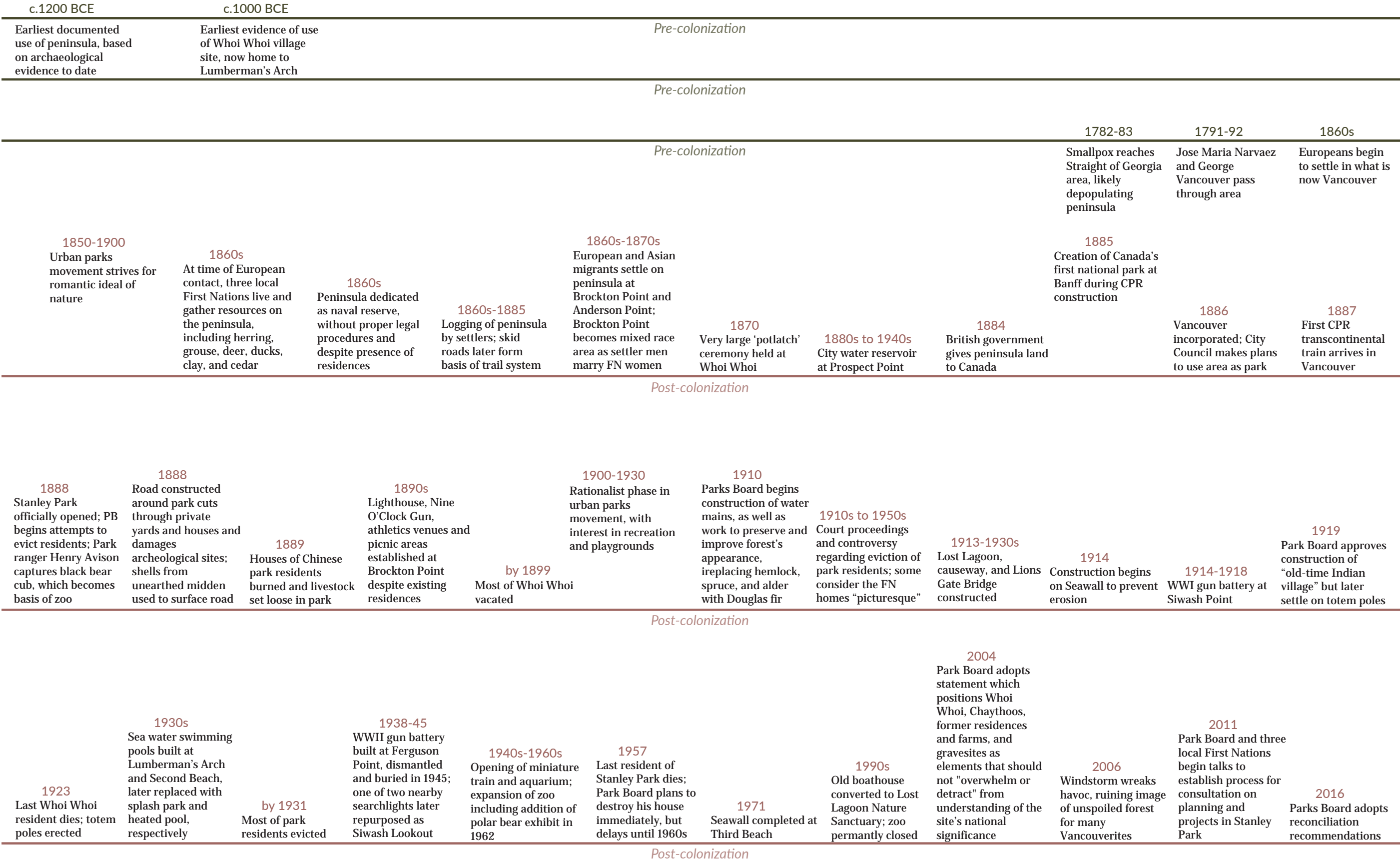


Fig. 10. Stanley Park Timeline

5. Precedent Studies

Given my interest in relating contemporary landscape painting and landscape design, my precedent analysis is organized into two categories: Contemporary Artists and Landscape Projects.

Painters were selected after a preliminary survey of contemporary practitioners and represent a small sample of the breadth of work being produced. Further research remains to be done and the brief notes are in keeping with this stage of work.

Analysis of landscape precedents is more detailed and covers representation, temporary landscape installations and permanent designs. As the aim of this thesis is to generate an abundance of designs of different types and styles, the landscape precedents are diverse.

My intent is to combine elements from these artistic and architectural practices, pulling together related narratives, concepts, and forms as the basis for new designs.

Contemporary Landscape Art: Definitions

Within the context of this thesis, I define “contemporary landscape art” by breaking the term into its three components.

“Contemporary” refers to work produced from 1990 onwards. This excludes the painting movement of the 1980s, the medium’s previous peak. It also coincides with major global shifts whose effects on the art world, and life in general, persist today, including the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 and subsequent rise of deregulated capitalism, as well as the spread of the internet, resulting in increased connectivity and globalization.

“Landscape” refers to engagement with the environment, whether it is seen as inclusive or exclusive of humans and human activity; or engagement with historical landscape art.

“Art” refers to visual art - primarily painting, but also inclusive of work that is in dialogue with landscape painting.

Contemporary Artists

Etel Adnan

Born 1925, Beirut, Lebanon. Lives and works in Paris, France.



Fig. 11. Etel Adnan, Untitled, 2014. Oil on canvas, 13 x 16.1 inches.

Adnan’s small-scale colourscapes are simple and joyful. Her clean, abstracted landscapes maintain an air of familiarity. The authors of *Landscape Painting Now* describe them as “a warm invitation to experience the universal joy of perception” (308). A lighthearted style that could work well with play landscapes and enliven areas of the park.

Noa Charuvi

Born 1979, Jerusalem, Israel. Lives and works in Brooklyn, USA

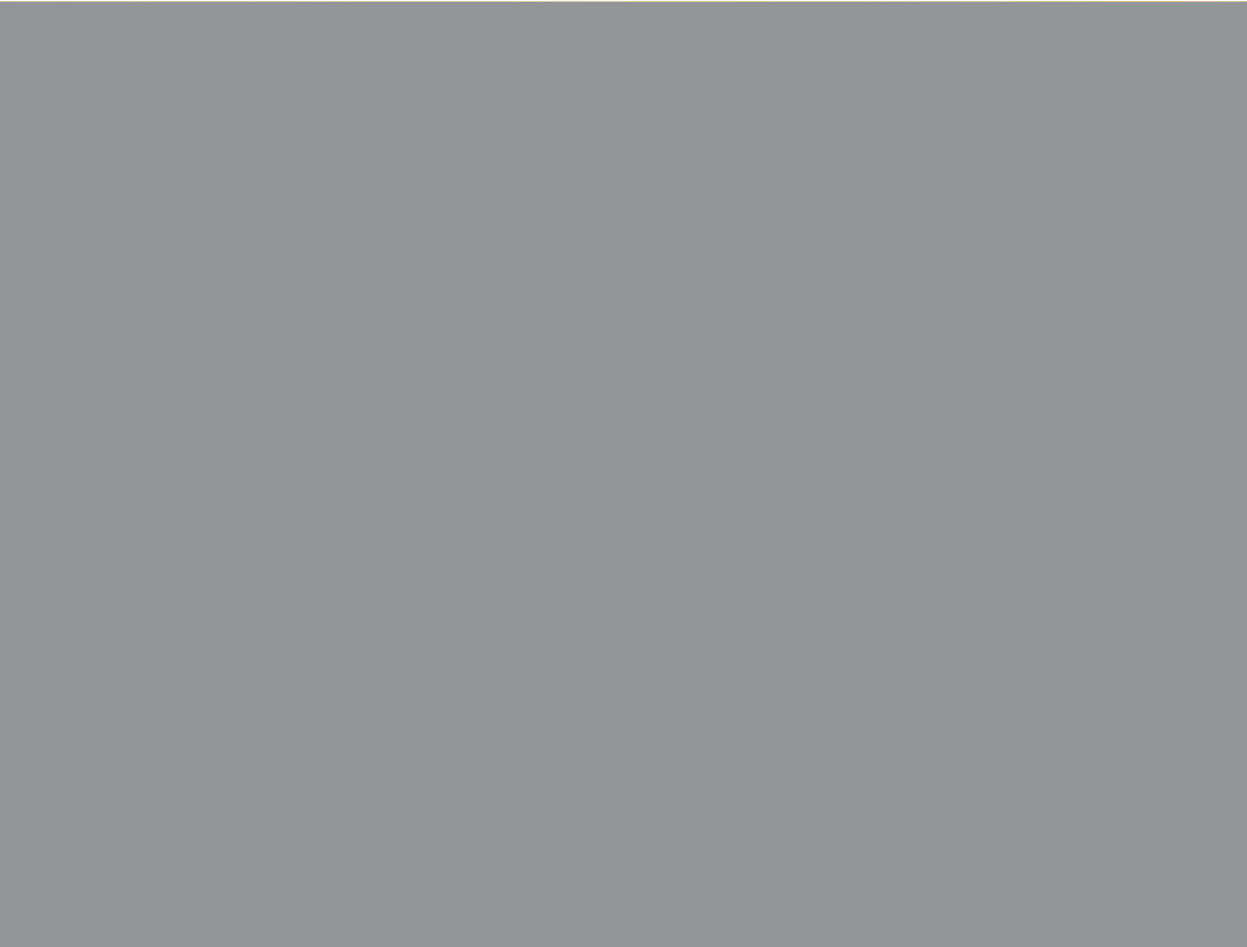


Fig. 12. Noa Charuvi, Smudge, 2010. Oil on canvas mounted on panel, 9 x 12 inches.

Charuvi paints scenes of conflict, destruction and construction. In many of her works, building materials stand in for landscape elements. Her choice of subject matter points to key elements that are missing from the version of history Stanley Park currently presents.

Genieve Figgis

Born 1972, Dublin, Ireland. Lives and works in Dublin



Fig. 13. Genieve Figgis, The Pursuit (after Fragonard), detail, 2018. Acrylic on canvas, 39.25 x 31.5 inches.

Figgis reinterprets Rococo paintings, using the materiality of the paint to distort the originals while also emphasizing their opulence. The swirling paint gives the effect of a meltdown. Her work suggests using plant materials in ways that remake traditional flower gardens.

Jordan Nassar

Born 1985, New York, USA. Lives and works in New York



Fig. 14. Jordan Nassar, My Right Eye is a Sun, 2017. Embroidery on aida canvas, 16 x 20 inches.

Nassar, who is Polish-Palestinian-American, uses embroidery patterns from Palestine and other countries, blending cultures and traditonal gender associations. This blending of cultural and natural imagery would lend itself to a more honest and reflective approach to designing in Stanley Park.

Kay WalkingStick

Born 1935, Syracuse, USA. Lives and works in Easton, USA



Fig. 15. Kay Walkingstick, Oh Canada, 2018-19. Oil on wood, 36 x 72 inches.

WalkingStick is a Cherokee artist who draws from traditional arts and crafts, inserting cultural imagery into landscapes. She uses patterns from the culture whose landscape she is painting to create a barrier between the viewer and the land, which art historian Kate Morris describes as an indigenous ‘anti-invitational’ approach to landscape (4). Like Nassar, her blend of cultual and natural imagery fits with the a more complex and truthful narrative for Stanley Park, and her use of barriers could lend itself to areas where access should be restricted.

Matthew Wong

1984-2019, Born Toronto, Canada



Fig. 16. Matthew Wong, Morning Landscape, 2017. Oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches.

Wong, who was self-taught, painted landscapes that prioritize the transmission of information over representation of a view, often resulting in a pictorial flattening. He began his paintings without a finished result in mind, letting “the image paint itself” (Bradway, et al 128). Perhaps elements of his process could be applied to landscape designs that are process-based, or collaborations between designers and other human or more-than-human beings.

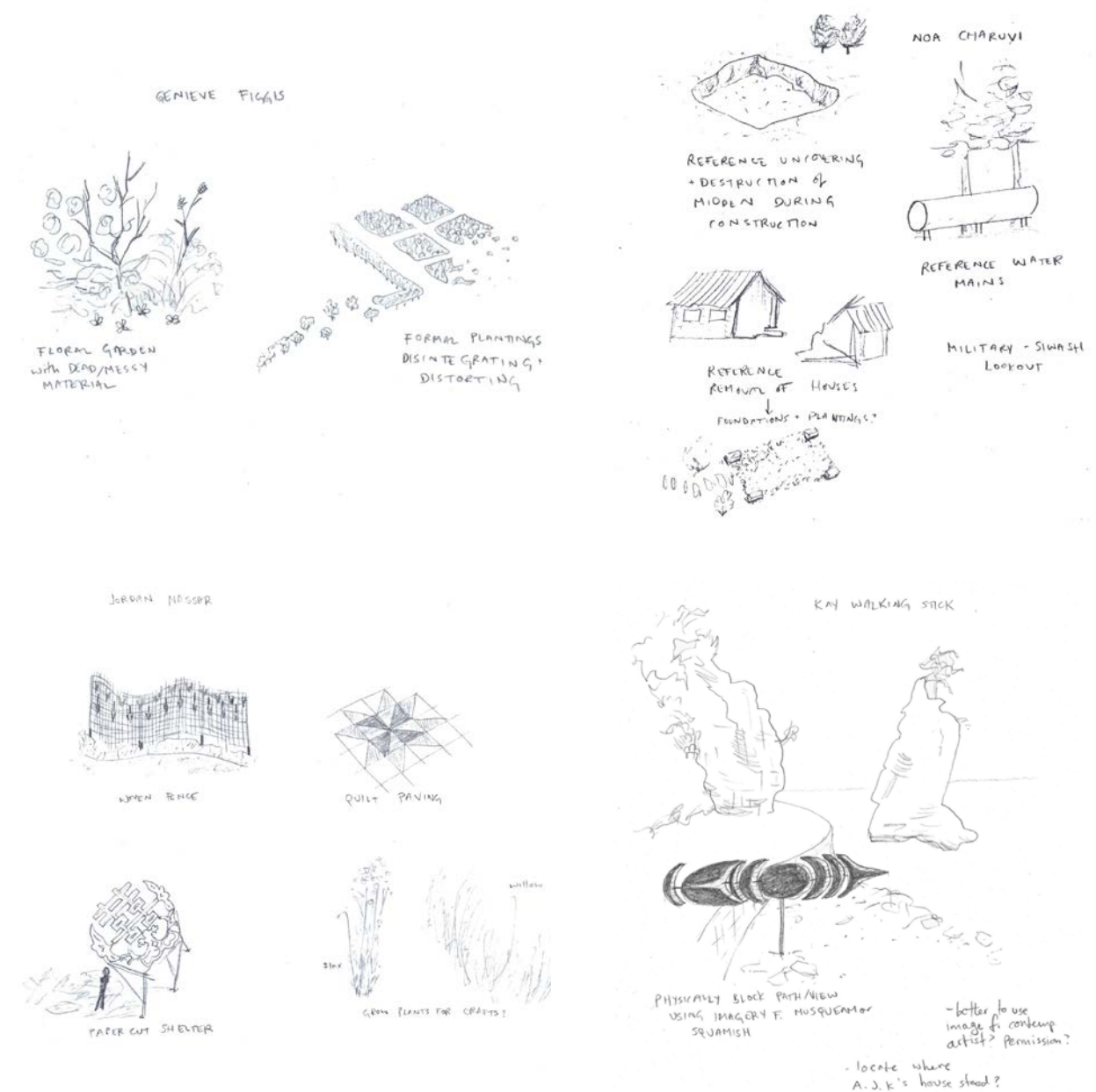


Fig. 17. Initial sketches: translation of painters' work to landscape design

Landscape Projects

Criteria

Design draws on artistic practice

The designers incorporate the concepts or formal qualities of artistic practices, either their own or others', into their landscape designs

Design engages with site history

The project considers the visible and hidden stories of the area they are designing

Design works towards an expanded range public spaces

The designers take a decolonial approach, represent non-Western traditions, or attempt to generate otherwise non-normative designs

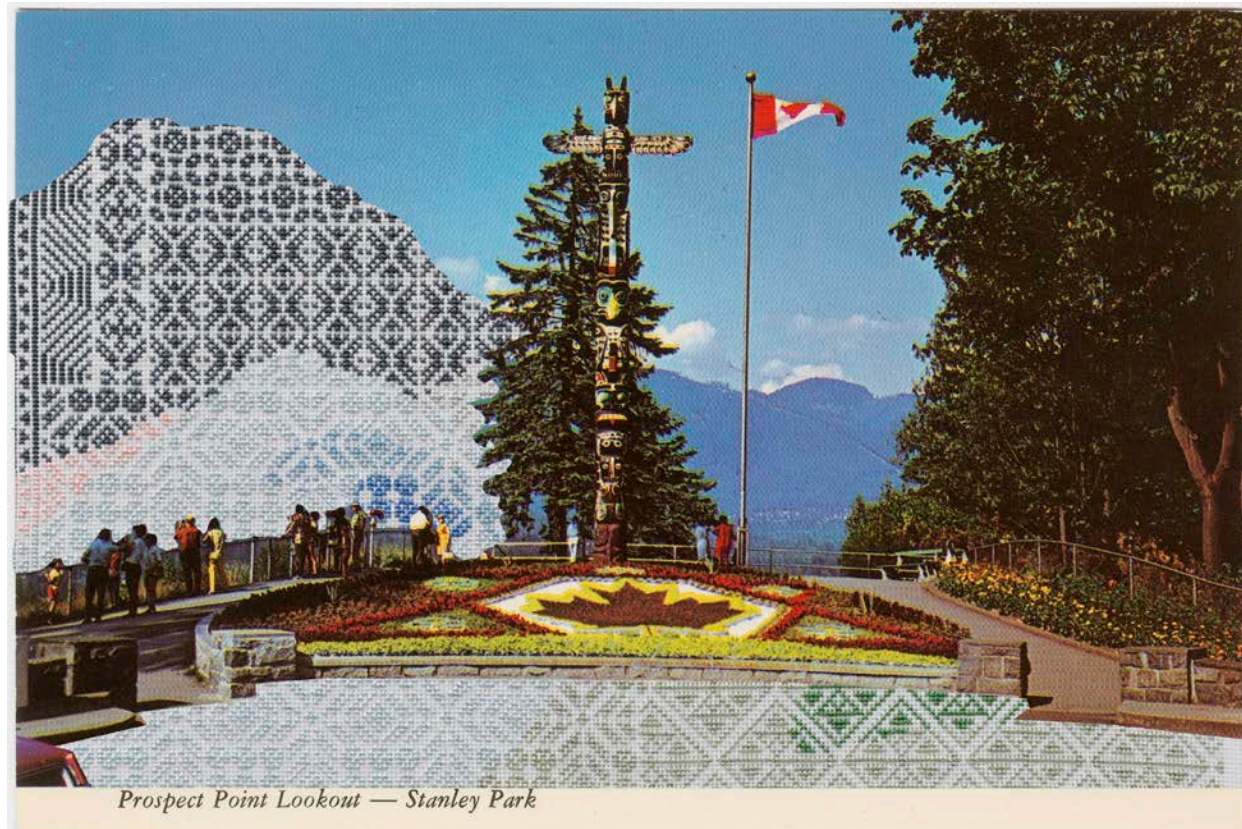


Fig. 18. Nassar X Prospect Point, digital collage, by the author

Martha Schwartz, *Bagel Garden*

Boston, USA, 1979. Temporary installation in private garden



Fig. 19. *Bagel Garden, installation*



Fig. 20. *Hannah Hoch, Cut with the Kitchen Knife through the Last Epoch of Weimar Beer-Belly Culture in Germany (detail) 1919.*

Design Summary

For Bagel Garden, Martha Schwartz created a temporary installation in her front yard using only inexpensive materials that were available in her neighbourhood: purple aquarium gravel, dried and water-proofed bagels, and flowers from a florist. Her clipped hedges and symmetrical arrangement mimic a formal French garden, but her use of vernacular, non-landscape materials subvert the tradition. The project, which is at once comical and critical, spawned intense debate after it made the front cover of Landscape Architecture Magazine.

Artistic Practice

Bagel Garden presents a conceptual approach to landscape design. It doesn’t refer to a specific piece of art, but instead lifts satirical, nonsensical, and anti-establishment attitudes from the Dadaist art movement. Dada evolved during WWI as a reaction against the society that created the war. While the term covers diverse artworks, many of its practitioners recombined imagery or objects from popular culture in absurd ways to comment on their world; the works tend to be anticapitalist and have an emphasis on spontaneity. Bagel Garden echoes all of these themes. Schwartz describes it as a reaction to landscape architectural culture which at that time was “corporate, white male, and homogenous” with no content or concept behind it, and no relation to art (Schwartz). Bagel Garden was created and dismantled within a few days, but thanks to LAM, it had a massive impact.

Expanded Public Space

Schwartz justified Bagel Garden by calling it “cheap” and “democratic” (Schwartz). It certainly employs inexpensive vernacular materials, but I question the term democratic: the audience is other landscape architects, not the public; Bagel Garden, like many late-20th-century art projects, is an ironic take that speaks to knowledgeable insiders. On the other hand, the project sparked a debate within landscape architecture that ultimately resulted in creative designs that pushed the boundaries of the profession and generated more diverse spaces.

Key Takeaways

- Humour: The playful attitude of this project is shared by several contemporary landscape painters, and is one of the attributes that distinguishes their work from historical landscape art
- Critical angle: Expressing a critical stance through design helps refresh outmoded traditions
- Conceptual approach: Working with the concepts behind artistic practices can result in more meaningful landscapes than those that simply emulate their form

I.M. Pei, Pei Partnership Architects, *Suzhou Museum*

Suzhou, China, 2006. Museum grounds; free access during museum hours



Fig. 21. *Suzhou Museum, aerial view, central courtyard*



Fig. 22. *Suzhou Museum, interior view, central courtyard*

Design Summary

Architect I. M. Pei designed the buildings and gardens for Suzhou Museum’s new location. They combine Pei’s modernist style with traditional Suzhou garden and architecture styles. Among Pei’s design principles were integrating the design with its environment, and creating a distinctive spatial progression. The gardens and buildings are thoughtfully integrated, with a series of exhibition spaces centred around courts and gardens. These spaces are connected by ‘cloisters,’ or corridors which offer views into the gardens as one moves between exhibition halls. The courtyard gardens follow the Suzhou scholar’s garden tradition and its embrace of landscape art. They feature traditional Chinese garden elements such as rocks, water, and plantings, which mirror the mountains, water bodies and forests depicted in Chinese landscape paintings. Pei achieves balance, an important aspect of Chinese gardens, by contrasting the angular geometry of the architecture with soft natural forms.

Artistic Practice

Like traditional scholar’s gardens, Pei’s garden directly recreates scenes from paintings. The rockery in the main courtyard is one example. A group of rocks set against the “page” of a white wall imitates the overlapping peaks seen in Chinese mountain paintings. Pei used a Song Dynasty painting to determine the placement of the rocks, which are flame-finished to give them an inky look (Huang 45). The darkest rocks are placed in the front and the lightest in the back, following the Chinese perspective technique of painting distant objects in lighter washes. This effect is heightened by the shadows they cast on the wall. The rockery presents both the flatness of a painting and the illusion of distance created therein. The architecture, which has a strong visual presence throughout the gardens, is also inspired by painting. According to Pei, its emphasis on lines, and the contrast between dark grey framing and white walls are inspired by brush strokes (Pei).

The architecture is both a backdrop for garden scenes and a place to view them from, suggesting the interrelatedness of the two elements. Windows in the cloisters serve as frames, directing visitors to desired views of the gardens. Pei writes, “[w]hile looking out these windows one should get a sense of being inside a painting” (Pei). In the scholar’s garden tradition, these scenes are meant to entice the viewer to venture out of the building into the landscape. This provides an interesting contrast to historical Western picturesque gardens, which, while also meant to be viewed from the residence, often were designed exclusively as scenery and were not expected to be used.

As one moves along the corridors, the window frames present a series of views of the scenery. This emulates the “shifting perspective” of Chinese landscape art. In this technique, multiple perspectives are shown within a single piece. This relates to the historic scroll format, wherein artworks extend along the length of the scroll and are not viewed all at once. The modulation of views between windows also emphasizes movement and progression through the spaces.



Fig. 23 Mi Fu, “Auspicious Pines in Spring Mountains,” Song Dynasty

Fig. 24. Rockery by day and by night

Site History

Pei responded to the museum’s context by using the historic local style in a modern idiom. Suzhou contains many intact historical gardens, one of which is adjacent to the museum. Pei acknowledges this tradition and context by providing an interpretation of it in Suzhou Museum. The humble scale of the architecture is similarly respectful of its historical surroundings. It employs the white and grey tones of local vernacular architecture rather than imperialist red and gold; Pei considers this an expression of the political context in which the historic Suzhou style developed (Pei).

Expanded Public Space

While Pei doesn’t directly address diversity and inclusion in discussing this project, he speaks to the importance of cultural representation in the built environment. He states that working on this project affected him profoundly by reconnecting him to his Chinese roots, which he had lost sight of living in another country. “Heritage and culture is [sic] so important and one should routinely revisit their own so as to not lose sight of them” (Pei). Pei’s reinterpretation of China’s rich landscape and art tradition demonstrates its potential to inform projects that are meaningful to audiences both in China and abroad.

Key Takeaways

- Movement of eye - movement of body: Considering the eye’s movement though painting as a guide to the visitor’s movement though a landscape design
- Multiple perspectives: Suggests a different relationship to the land than the single point perspective which is normalized in Western art and which implies a single, “right” view
- Formalist approach: A modernist take, shared by Roberto Burle Marx and Geoffrey Jellicoe, among others, wherein formal elements of a painting are recreated using landscape features. Techniques that could be borrowed from Pei include directing and framing views, creating small scenes within a large space, and using backdrops to show form
- Balancing built and natural: Integration of architectural and natural elements suggests embracing harmony, not separation, between human and non-human factors

Walter Hood, Hood Design Studio, *Shadowcatcher*

Charlottesville, USA, 2012. Landscape project on university grounds in residential area



Fig. 25. *Shadowcatcher sculpture*

Design Summary

Hood Design Studio’s Shadowcatcher project comprises a series of interventions on the University of Virginia’s south lawn, which encompasses the historic home site and cemetery of an African-American family. A free black woman named Catherine Foster lived there in the mid-19th century, and traces of her house, a stone-paved yard, and 32 graves remain. The design interventions demarcate key archaeological elements using sculpture, grading, and other tactics. A system of curving paths connects these moments but remain distinct from the main UVA circulation, both through their visual opposition to UVA’s orthogonal lines and because they don’t connect to the main system. Hood’s design sets the site up as a distinct, alternative cultural space.

Artistic Practice

Walter Hood’s practice blurs the edges between art and landscape architecture, encompassing temporary installations, gallery exhibitions, public art, large-scale landscape projects, and master planning. While Shadowcatcher utilizes several traditional landscape architectural interventions, the studio’s website groups it with their ‘art and fabrication’ work. The focal point of the project, the Shadowcatcher sculpture, draws on Hood’s background in art (he holds an MFA in studio arts and sculpture in addition to his architecture training.) This piece carries much of the symbolic content of the project. The original home’s footprint, recreated in polished metal, is raised 12 feet in the air, with its shadow projecting back onto the ground below. Thus it suggests both the earthly interment and spiritual afterlife of its former inhabitants. Hood also says the bright light it reflects in the sky alludes to the future, while the site’s archaeological remains represent the past (Kelly). As this project illustrates, Hood’s design approach embraces metaphor and symbolism, which typically characterize artistic practice.

Site History

This project engages with site history in a meaningful and respectful way. Instead of being exhumed and displayed, the artifacts remain intact and protected in the site, and landscape interventions tell the site’s story in their place. To Hood, all landscapes have a story, and landscape designers need to choose whether to “erase something or to embrace it” when approaching a site (Hood, *Interview*). He rejects the act of “placemaking” as colonialist (Hood, *Interview*). Acknowledging and engaging with site history, particularly when it involves marginalized people, is an anti-colonial statement in and of itself.

Expanded Public Space

This highlighting of African-American history is just one way Hood promotes inclusive public space in the UVA project. By foregrounding the domestic history of this public space, he creates a hybrid landscape. Throughout his practice, Hood champions hybridity as a way of getting past restrictive typologies which perpetuate colonialist landscapes (Hood, *Interview*) and work against design that truly responds to communities (Hood, *Beyond*).

Key Takeaways

- Hidden histories: This project highlights the power in looking closely and responding to what exists in the site
- Distillation: Hood’s work draws on metaphor and symbolism, key elements of artistic practice, to channel the meaning or content behind a project into discrete design moves
- Landscape as gallery: Sculpture can express a project’s intent as well as inform its design. It suggests opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and co-creation with artists

Gross. Max., Representation and Process



Fig 26. Gross. Max., *Render for Garden for a Plant Collector*, 2008



Fig. 27. Gross. Max., *Render for Templehof Airport*, 2011

Artistic Practice

Visual representation is a central component of Gross. Max.’s practice. Their website presents the studio’s projects using exclusively visual materials, excepting project titles, which speaks to the firm’s strength in and commitment to visual communication.

Eelco Hooftman, one of the firm’s principals, frequently includes paintings in his lectures. In a talk delivered at Walker Art Center, he uses landscape paintings to illustrate concepts related to his practice and relates them to the firm’s own representations (Hooftman). Gross. Max. creates images of their projects that, like many landscape paintings, present an eye-level perspective, portray atmosphere, and hint at narrative. Presenting these images, Hooftman states that for Gross.Max., “landscape is very much a visual medium” and describes how these loose perspectival views often precede plans and sections. The visual is the basis from which their projects proceed; it also leads the presentation of their proposals. Perspectival images have an immediacy that plan and section do not; any viewer, regardless of background, can quickly grasp the broad gesture of the design. As with the firm’s website, you ‘get the picture’ but not the details.

The prevalence of art and narrative in Gross. Max.’s designs puts the focus on experiential qualities such as spatial and temporal movement. It differs from modernist or picturesque applications of landscape painting in its response to place, both drawing on and adding to the narrative of the site.

Site History

Site history features in many of the firm’s projects. Some proposals respond to the context with a related narrative, as with *Garden for a Plant Collector*, which was installed outside the House for an Art Lover in 2008. The House for an Art Lover is a centre for visual arts in Glasgow. Gross. Max.’s project, based on a story about a plant collector who wants to understand colour and growth, creates an outdoor plant collection which parallels the art collection inside the building. Other projects repurpose site materials in the new designs, like *Rottenrow Gardens*, or base the design on existing structures, like *Emscher-kunst* in Berne Park. In all cases, the narrative of the project responds to the story of the site.

Key Takeaways

- Starting with the view: Gross. Max.’s process of working out a design from a view or atmosphere captured in a perspectival image seems useful for translating paintings to design
- Joining stories: Finding a narrative that complements existing site conditions, as Gross. Max. does, is my goal in drawing on contemporary artworks in my designs

6. Project Schedule

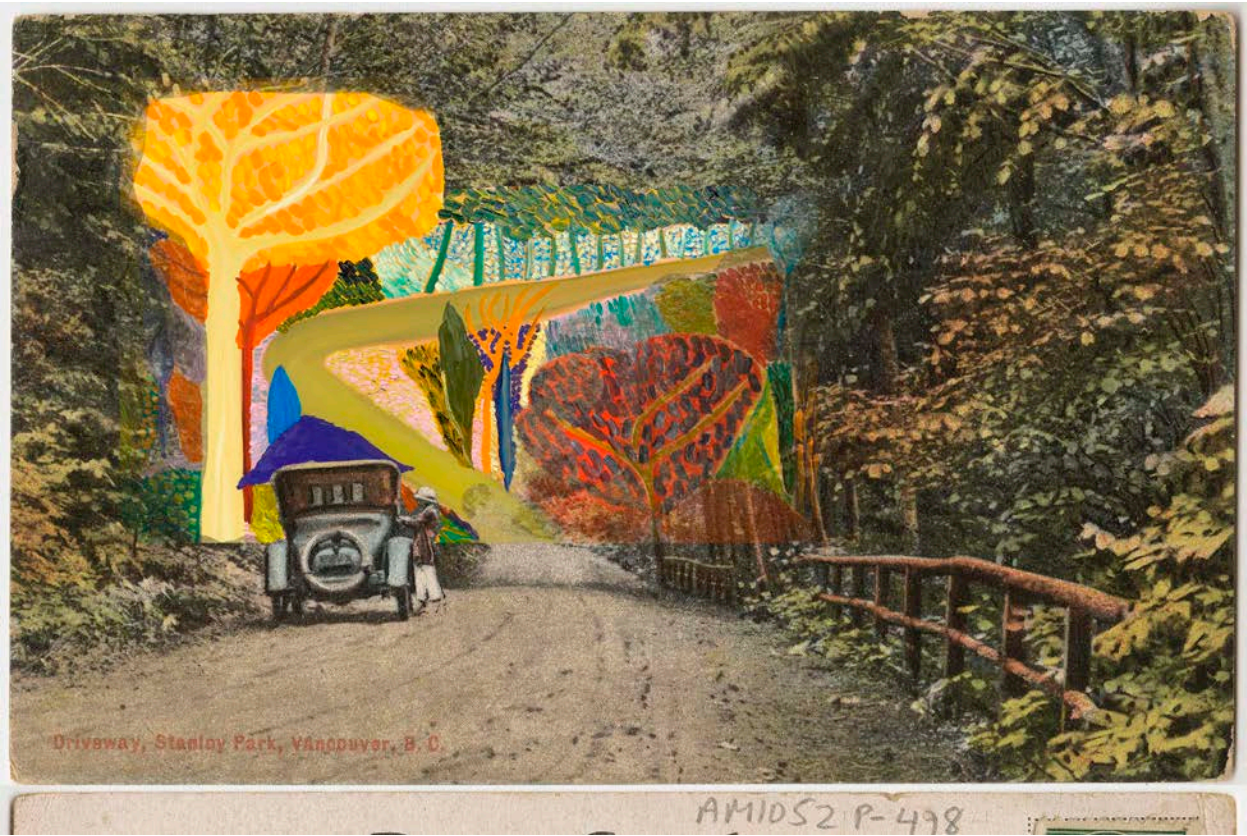
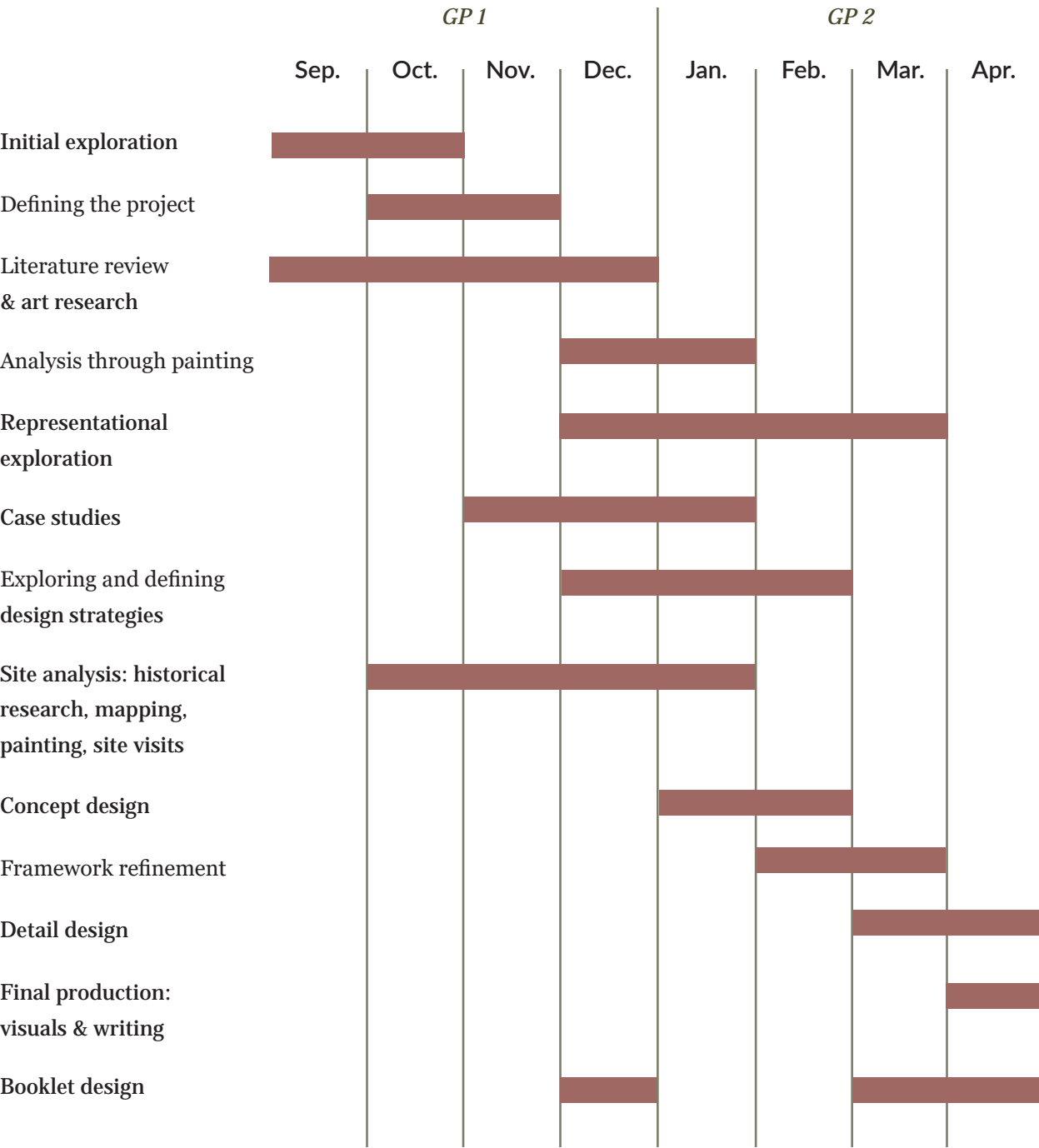


Fig. 28. Wong X Forest Road, digital collage, by the author



Fig. 29. Adnan X Rose Garden, digital collage, by the author

7. Design Proposal & Resolution



Fig. 30. Noa Charuvi at Brockton Point, digital collage by the author

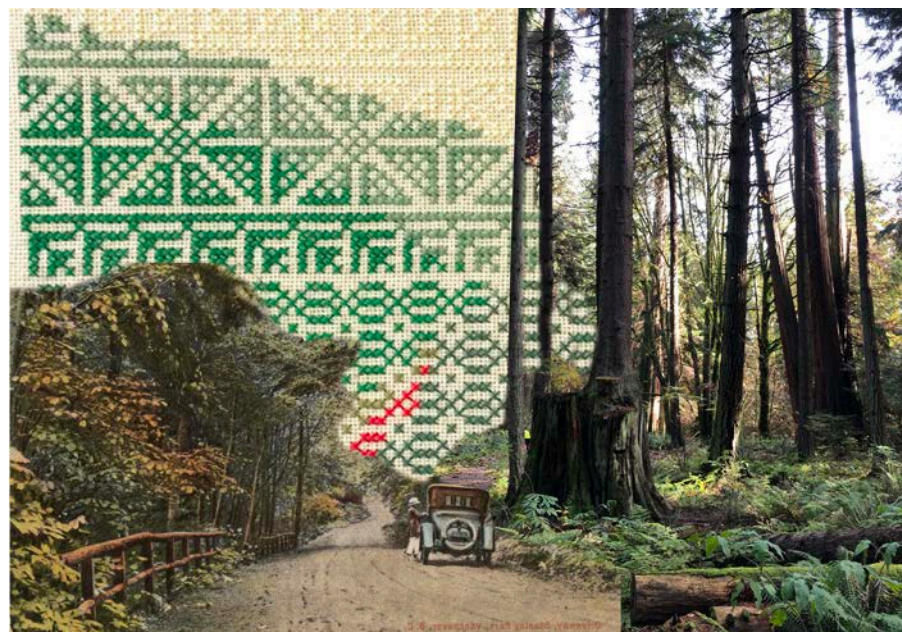


Fig. 31. Jordan Nassar on a Forest Road, digital collage by the author

Process

“What makes art different than other things? It’s the human spirit. And the human spirit is constantly changing” (Gustafson)

In the lecture quoted above, Kathryn Gustafson argues that landscape architects should look at art. She speaks to one reason we can learn from artists, which is the nimbleness of their medium comparative to landscape architecture. Demands of the art market notwithstanding, without the concerns of stakeholders to consider, artists can also afford to take more risks. By drawing on contemporary art, we can build on the work artists have done to bring their ideas into the discourse.

My approach with this project has been to look closely at the work of landscape artists, curate pairings of artists with sites in the park, and then use their concepts and processes as the logic that drives the design. This process can be seen as ‘going into character’ as each artist, based on their art, in order to consider what aspects of Stanley Park might interest them, what roles it could play, how their approach provides a counter-narrative, and what it could do for the park. Cues from each body of work, along with criticism and interviews, guided me in choosing sites for interventions.

I undertook this process with a total of nine artists. Four have been further developed into design proposals, and were selected based on relevance to the site, on their interplay as a group, and on their relation to historic landscape styles. Two are located in “wild” areas of the park and two are in landscape garden settings.

Collage has proved useful throughout this project, allowing a fusion of site with external references or allusions, and drawing the languages of art and landscape architecture together. Plan and section are used to represent design interventions in order to emphasize the transition from representation to spatial design as art is translated into landscape architecture.

I next discuss selection criteria and introduce the nine artists before presenting the four design interventions.

Artist Selection

An important factor in choosing artists was achieving variety within the group, to reflect the heterogeneity of contemporary landscape painting and help inform a multidimensional approach. Taken together, the artists represent a range of ages, nationalities, genders, styles, and methods. To best expand the field of ideas represented in the project, I sought to include artists whose background is different from each other’s and from my own. These artists are working within or in conversation with the Western landscape painting tradition, which does imply certain shared foundations, but it also makes their work especially useful for unpacking the park landscape. I chose work that reflects what I saw as important issues in the park that are currently underrepresented.

A practical consideration was the amount of information available about the artist, including critical discussion, and preferably interviews or writing by the artists themselves. This excludes artists who are very early in their career and privileges those who are recognized in the art world, but allows for a more balanced and robust interpretation of the work.

Artist selection, as well as translation of the work into design, has been a subjective and intuitive process. While this project is intended as a step towards understanding others, in many ways it is no less a product of an individual than any other graduate project. I acted both as curator, in choosing artists, and as artist, in creating the design interventions.

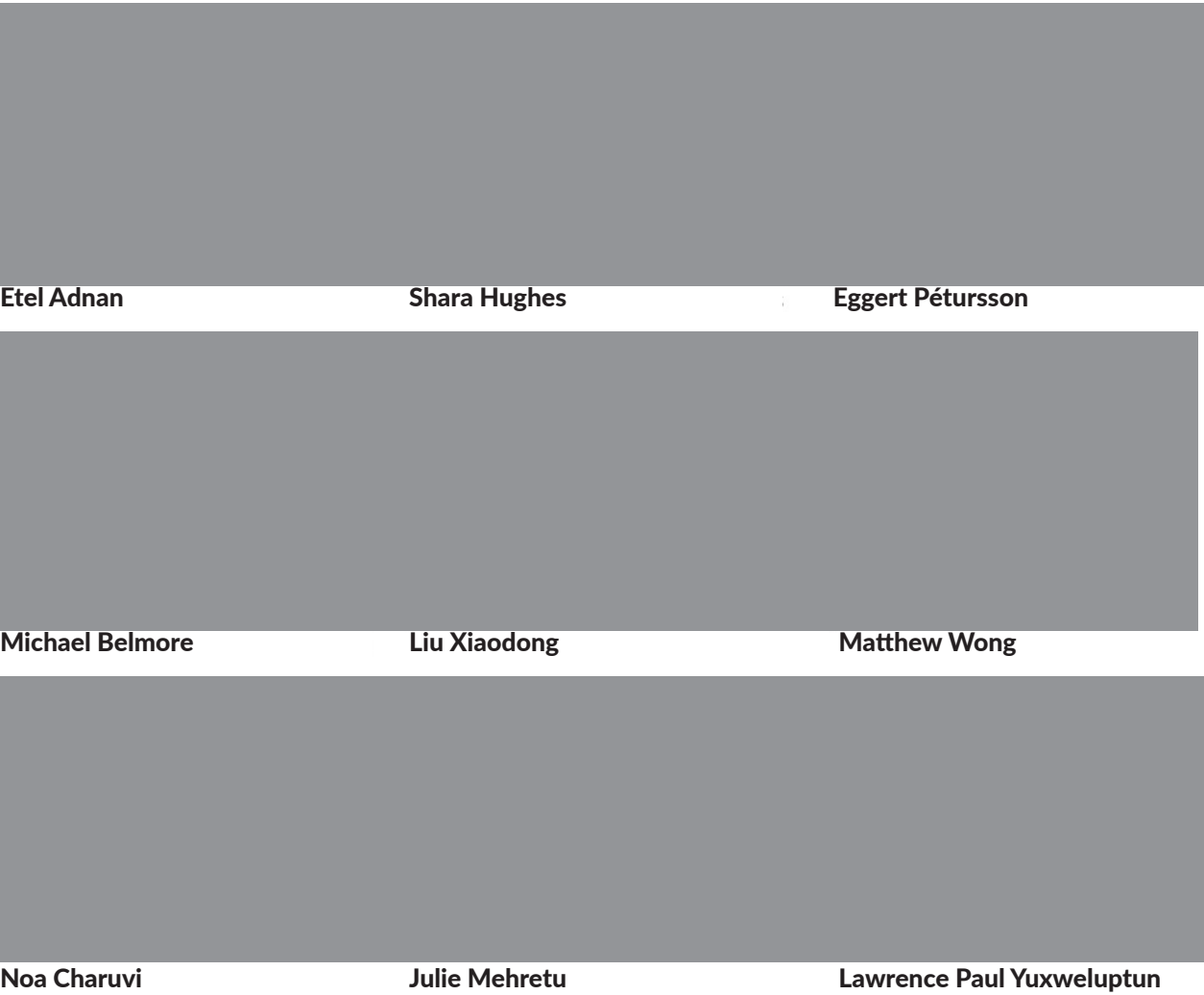


Fig. 32. Nine Artists & Their Work

Concept Analysis

Diagramming concepts and considering shared content is useful when weighing which aspects of design should be emphasized in each intervention; site, visual program, political program, and my preferences as a designer are all factors in each design. Here the artists are grouped into three broad categories.

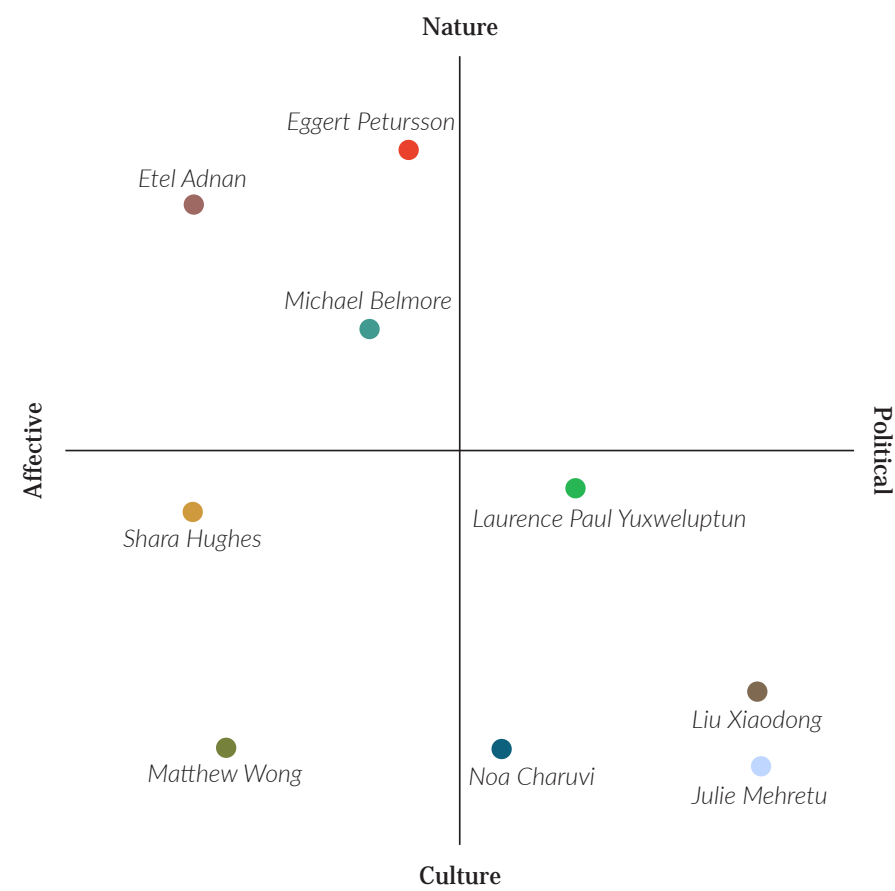


Fig. 33. Concept Graph

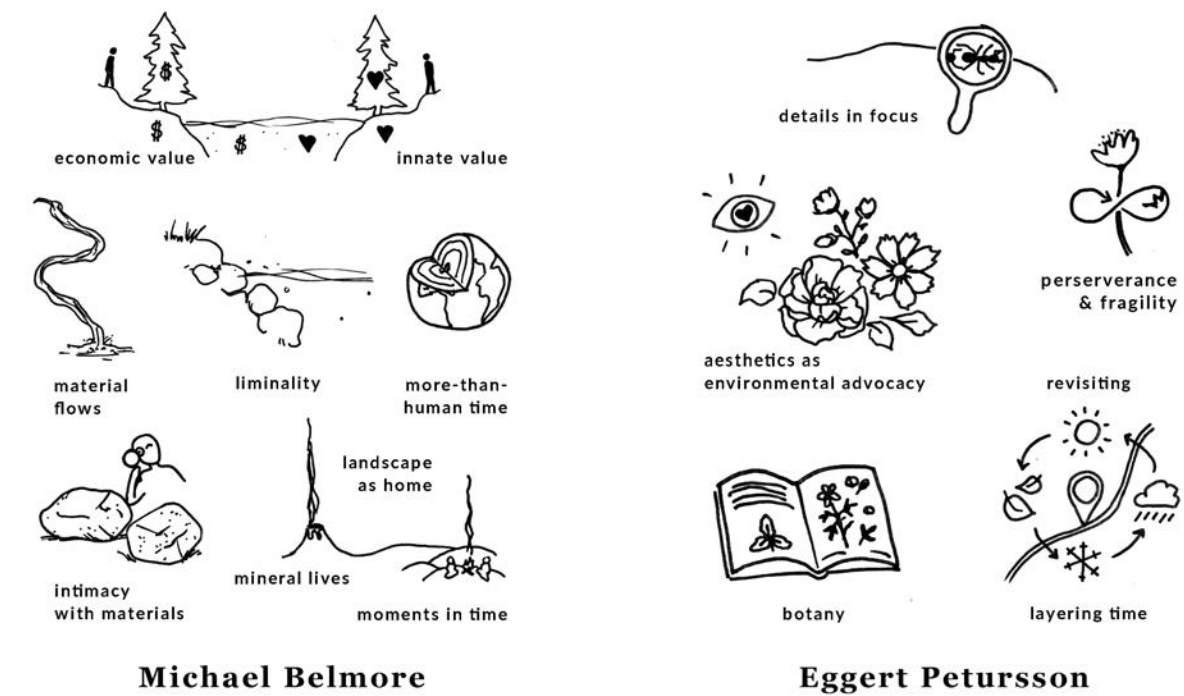


Fig. 34. Non-Human Environment

Non-Human Environment

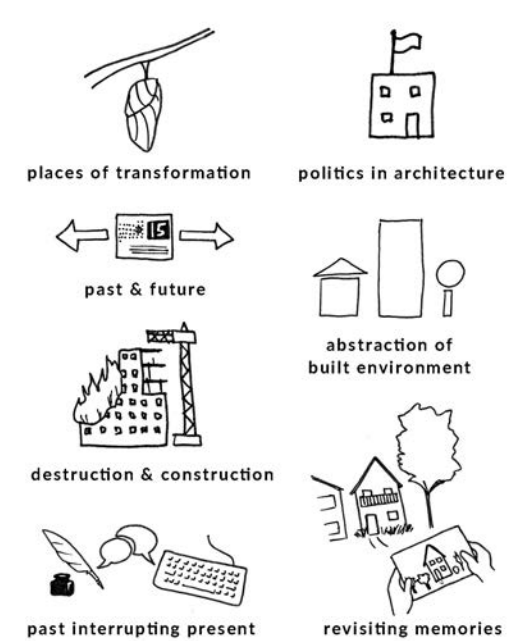
Michael Belmore and Eggert Petursson both advocate for the environment by expressing a deep understanding of its contents. Their work suggests designs that begin with material considerations.

Human Landscapes

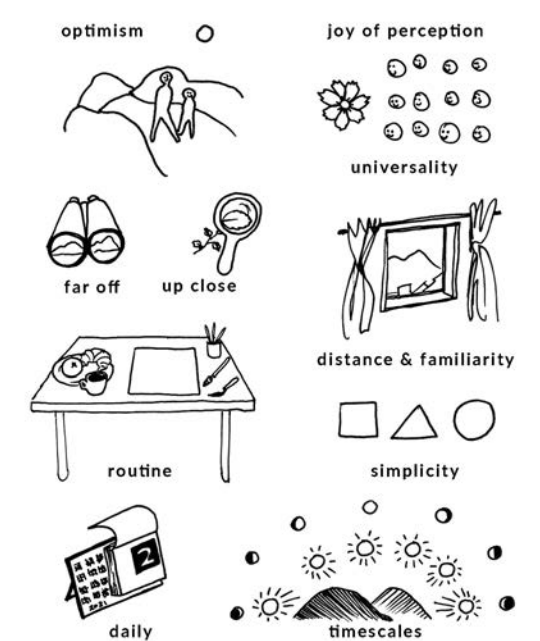
Noa Charuvi, Liu Xiaodong, and Julie Mehretu work with the built environment, political realities, and the ways humans affect and are affected by our surroundings. Their work is useful for considering the social aspects and human use of the park.

Perception & Expression

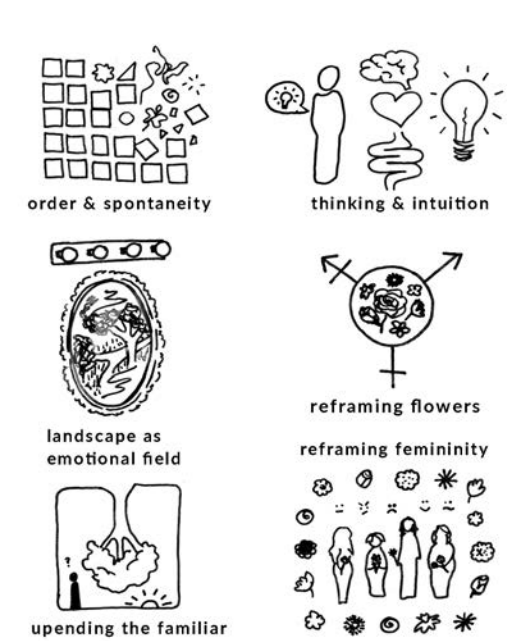
Etel Adnan, Shara Hughes, Matthew Wong, and Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun are concerned with how we understand the landscape; with its symbolic meaning and its representation. These artists help illuminate perception and cultural value of landscapes.



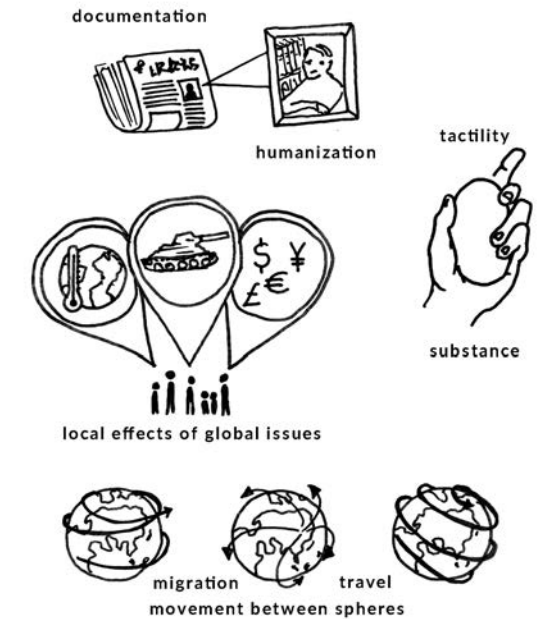
Noa Charuvi



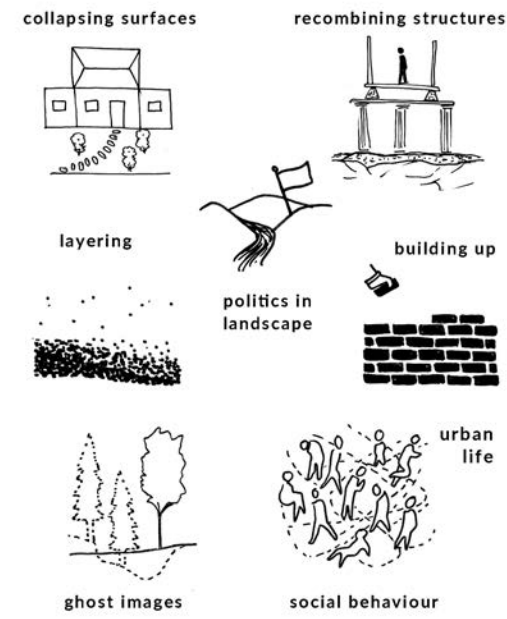
Etel Adnan



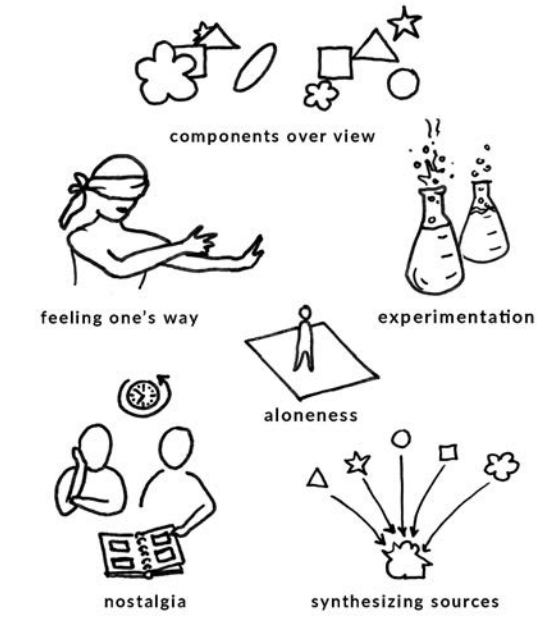
Shara Hughes



Liu Xiaodong



Julie Mehretu



Matthew Wong



Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun

Fig. 35. Human Landscapes

Fig. 36. Perception & Expression

Etel Adnan	Shara Hughes	Eggert Petursson
Seen from a distance	Floral plantings	Ecologically sensitive area
Seen every day	Orderly structure	Seen up close
		Vertical element
Michael Belmore	Liu Xiaodong	Matthew Wong
Marking a route	Public or community focus	Collective memories
Borders or liminal sites	Immigration or displacement	Deserted or unused
Geology or material flows	Relation to global events	
Noa Charuvi	Julie Mehretu	Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun
Structures, past or present	Showing palimpsest	Economic element
Transformations	Busy sites, past or present	Indigenous-settler relations
Political element	Political element	Political element

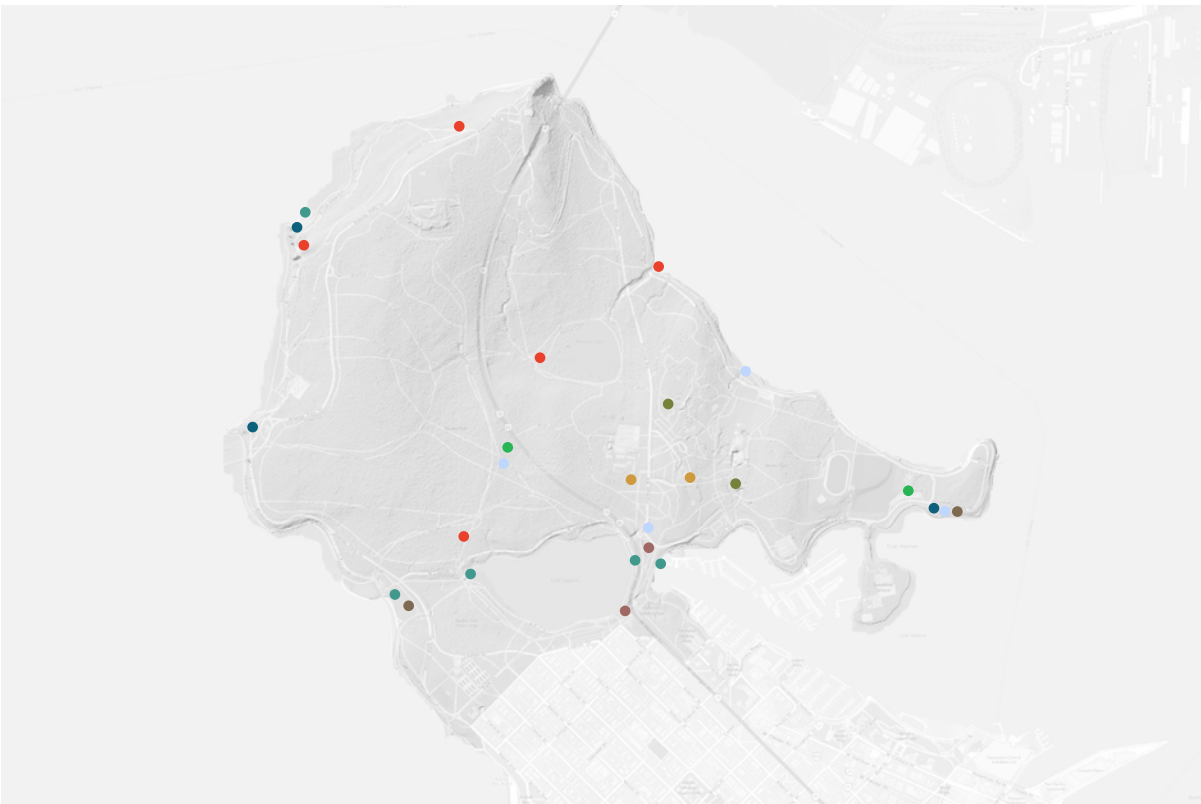


Fig. 37. Preliminary Site Selection

Design Interventions

The sites are presented in the order visitors would encounter them as they enter the park along Stanley Park Drive. "Hedgerow Maze" and "Tracing Over, Building Up" are located in landscape garden settings, and "Flower Show" and "Rock Pools" are in wilderness settings.



Fig. 38. Final Site Selection

Hedgerow Maze

Political Program

Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun





Fig. 39. Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, *Installation view of Killer Whale Has A Vision And Comes To Talk To Me About Proximological Encroachments Of Civilizations In The Oceans, 2010, at Unceded Territories, Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver*. "Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun: Unceded Territories" by keepit-surreal is licensed with CC BY-SA 2.0. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>

"I'm interested in things that are 'the Indian problem,' and Canada is the Indian problem. We have to get along at some point, so how do you deal with post-residential school, colonization, and stress-disorder syndrome? [...] How do you rectify these things? It's not easy. I've been watching our plight in this country, and what I want to do is talk to the world. That's why I paint. It's important to capture the moment of now."

—Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, *Unceded Territories Artist Statement*

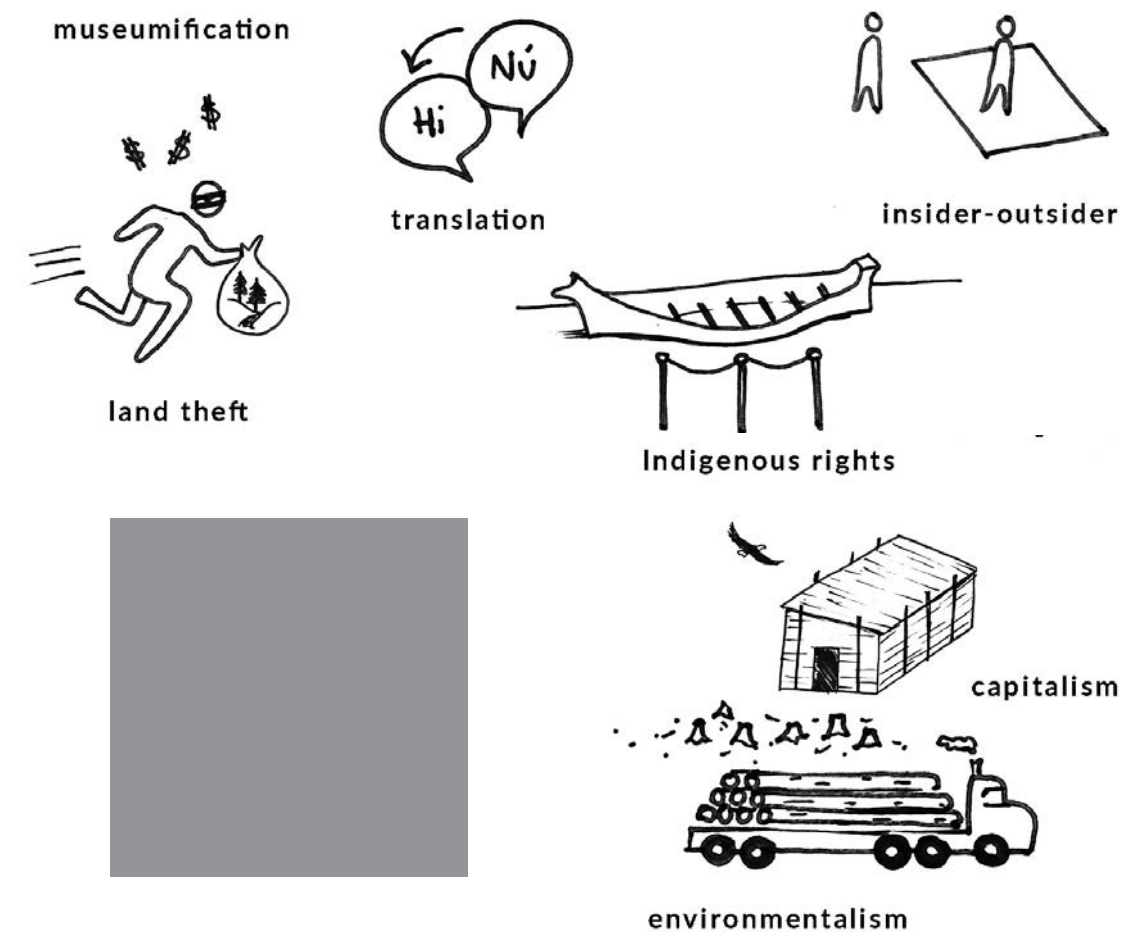


Fig. 40. *Portrait of Yuxweluptun, with diagrams depicting content of his work, by the author*

Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun

B. 1957, Kamloops BC. Lives and works in Vancouver BC.

Among the selected artists, Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun challenges received ideas of Canadian landscape most directly. He is of Okanagan and Coast Salish descent, and his work uses Western painting and Northwest Coast ovoid forms to make emphatic statements for Indigenous rights and environmental protection, and against corporate greed and colonial violence. His "reciprocal appropriation" of artistic genres is both an act of artistic and political freedom, and a way to communicate the realities of contemporary Indigenous life to Western audiences (Townsend-Gault 9). Because his work addresses the settler privileging of Northwest Coast art over local Salish works, I selected a site which exemplifies this issue: the totem poles on Stanley Park's Brockton Peninsula.



Fig. 41. Thomas Gainsborough, Landscape with figures on a path, 1746.



Fig. 42. Entrance to totem display. Photo by the author.

Site: Brockton Peninsula Totem Poles



Fig. 43. Hedgerow Maze location map

The totem poles were imported from northern communities and installed in the park shortly after the First Nations that lived on the peninsula were removed (Barman 172-173, 207). By displaying these poles outside of their political and geographical contexts, Stanley Park is acting as a museum, where fragments of Indigenous cultures are shared for the enjoyment of outsiders. In a museum, visitors can circulate freely to view the displays, without questioning if or how they should approach them. The same is true for the totems' pastoral surroundings, with their soft landforms and curving footpaths. Like a picturesque painting, the landscape draws you in. Taking a curatorial approach, I chose to intervene in the area leading to the totems rather than in their immediate surroundings.



Fig. 44, above: Yuxweluptun, Inherent Rights, Vision Rights, Image from VR, 1992

Fig. 45, opposite: Hedgerow Maze Site Plan



Design Resolution: Hedgerow Maze

One of Yuxweluptun's pieces in particular informed the design. His 1992 virtual reality installation, *Inherent Rights Vision Rights*, transports users to the land outside a longhouse. They can navigate around and into the building, where ovoid figures are performing a ceremony. Sarah King describes her hesitation as a non-Salish person moving through this world without understanding the etiquette. Unlike the free movement offered by Western landscapes, in this world there are consequences - if you get too close to one of the figures, it might fly right through you (King). In this piece, the viewer is forced to question their position and status within an unfamiliar world.

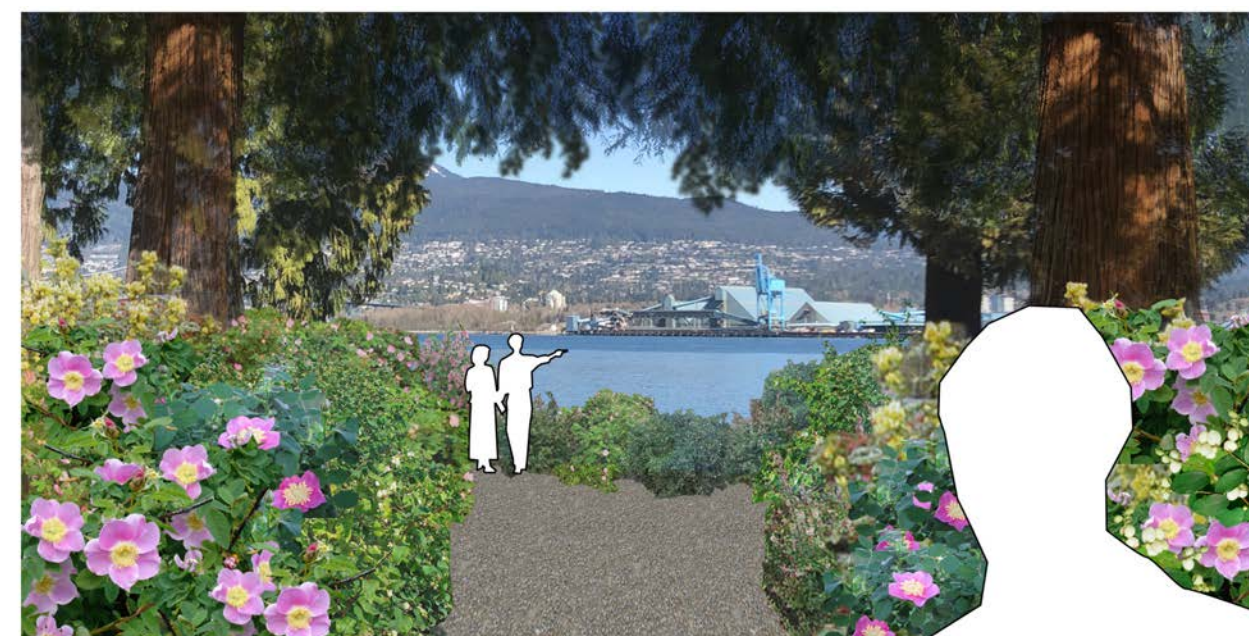
I wanted to create this effect in the landscape, both to push back against the entitlement we as park visitors feel to access the land, and to try and rectify the museumification of the totems by drawing attention to their contemporary context.



*Fig. 46, left: Entrance to maze
Fig. 47, below: View from maze,
looking north*

This hedge maze, like Yuxweluptun's work, borrows and alters a Western form. Hedgerows of native plants offer better wildlife value and lower maintenance requirements than a sheared hedge, but still serve to direct the movement and vision of those within. The maze creates an anti-invitational, non-passive landscape. Along the way, the hedge opens to point your view to important sites - the location of the demolished village, the reservation across the way whose land is contaminated by industry, and beside it, the continuing industrial activity at the Vancouver Wharves. Visitors can't reach the totems without engaging with this landscape. The hedge can also be protective, blocking some areas off entirely. Stanley Park contains numerous unrecorded middens and culturally modified trees which are susceptible to damage, including a midden behind the gift shop at the totem poles (Copp 65). The maze renders it inaccessible without drawing attention to its concealment.

Attempting to resist access to the land was a challenging tactic as a landscape designer, considering the usual aim is to facilitate movement and make wayfinding as clear as possible. It's unlikely I would have used this strategy without the influence of Yuxweluptun's work.



Tracing Over, Building Up

Process

Julie Mehretu





Fig. 48. Julie Mehretu, *Detail of Mogamma (A Painting in Four Parts): Part 2, 2012, Ink and acrylic on canvas*. "Julie Mehretu" by Marc Wathieu is licensed with CC BY-NC-ND 2.0. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/>

"...with my work, it's the architecture and the space and the built environment that become a kind of palimpsest, another type of atmosphere. The buildings are so layered; the information can be so layered and disintegrated that it becomes a dust-like atmosphere."

—Julie Mehretu, Interview with Susan Sollins

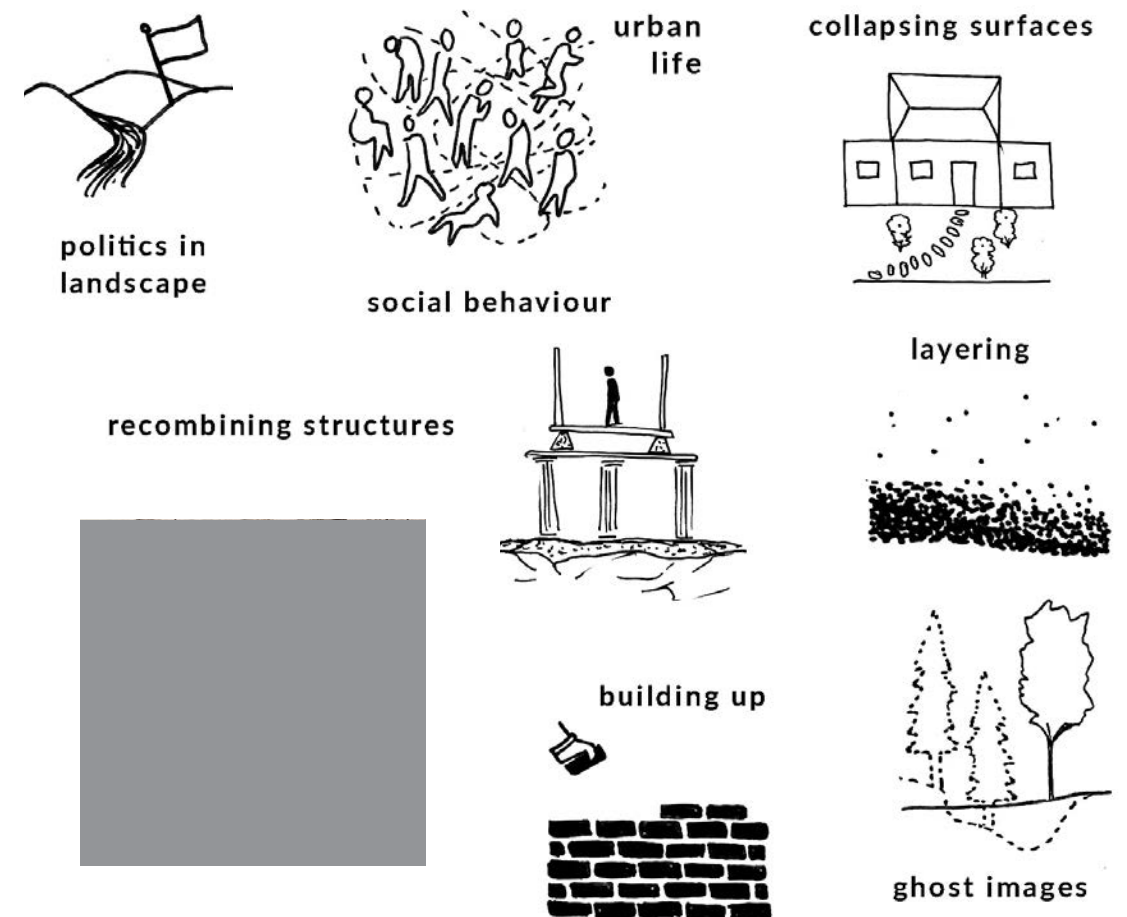


Fig. 49. Portrait of Mehretu, with diagrams depicting content of her work, by the author

Julie Mehretu

B. 1970, Addis Ababa. Lives and works in New York.

Julie Mehretu's work explores the chaos and complication of urban landscapes, and the palimpsest that is created by layers of destruction and rebuilding. In her paintings, time and space, fragments of architecture, photos of current events, and gestural marks are collapsed into an atmosphere. Her process of layering, erasing, and reinstating elements of the underpainting produces a complicated surface that she says should be felt as much as read (Mehretu).



Fig. 50. Paul Sandby, Hackwood Park, Hampshire, 1764



Fig. 51. South shore of Brockton Point. Photo by the author.

Site: South Shore, Brockton Point



Fig. 52. Tracing Over, Building Up location map

Given Mehretu's interest in the built environment, palimpsest and erasure, and politically charged sites, for this intervention I chose the south shore of Brockton Point, the location of a mixed Indigenous and settler community which was established in the mid-19th century. We know from oral records and maps (see Fig. 54) that these were long-term residences, with multiple generations using the houses and gardens.

After the park's creation, the city recast the residents as squatters whose "shacks" spoiled the view of the water, and eventually succeeded in evicting them. Their houses were burned to the ground and replaced with a sloping lawn. The city destroyed this community not just physically, but also by changing their story.



Fig. 55, above: Traces of the past at Brockton Point. Photos by the author.

Fig. 53, opposite, above: Past views of the Brockton community

Fig. 54, opposite, below: Map of the community in 1923. Adapted from Plan showing lands occupied in Stanley Park near Brockton Point. City of Vancouver B.C. City of Vancouver Archives AM1594-: MAP 6



One takeaway from this design is the role vegetation can play both in concealing and revealing site. While the pastoral landscape does hide its history, some of the planting actually preserves traces of it. These lilac bushes pictured above were planted by one of the residents in her yard in the 1890s, and at the base of the nearby stumps, pieces of brick can be seen in the grass.

For this intervention, I drew on Mehretu's process, which is strongly tied to concept in her work. Through collages I layered past and current forms, adding, subtracting, and combining until they began to move from legible to more atmospheric. I wanted the intervention to present an appropriately complex narrative that attests not just to the presence of the community, but to its destruction and to activities that have occurred in the site since.



Process Work

Fig. 57, above: Process collages, plan view

Fig. 56, opposite page: Process collages, view from west

Design Resolution: Tracing Over, Building Up

The area is divided into domestic-scale garden fences following the lines of the community's fences. These subdivisions evoke a sense of home and provide areas for privacy, small group activities, and community gatherings. Architectural fragments serve as park furniture and provide structures through which the gardens can grow, allowing the design to continue the process of growth and erasure into the future. Elements from current forms, like the seawall, are retained; hybridizing past and present allows new uses to take shape. In addition to telling Brockton Point's story, returning a sense of domesticity to the peninsula acknowledges the urban park as an integrated part of the city.

Landscape architecture's tendency to cover over the past is something many designers are addressing. As Walter Hood says, every landscape has a story, and we have to choose whether to erase it or embrace it (Hood, Interview). Julie Mehretu's strategies of hybridizing and layering were useful tools that kept the nods to the past from being too literal and helped generate a new form instead of recreating an old one.



Fig. 59, above: Tracing Over, Building Up Site Plan

Fig. 58, below: View from west



Flower Show

Appearance

Eggert Pétursson

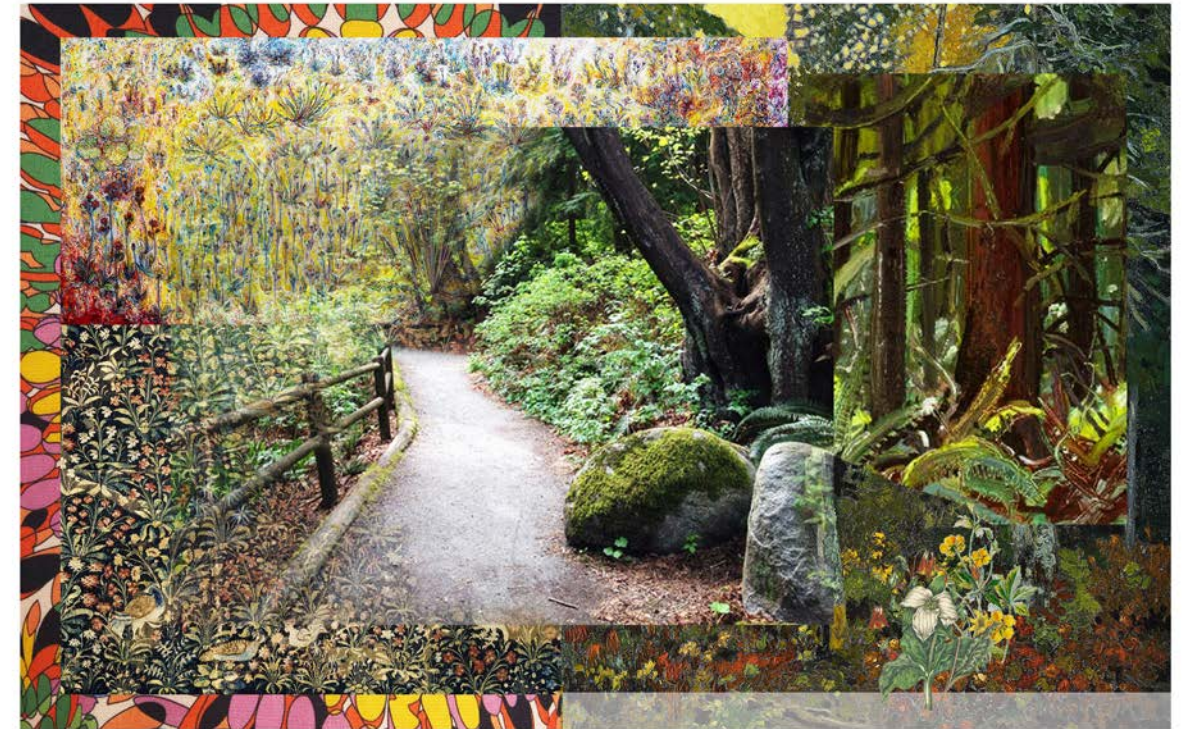




Fig. 60. Eggert Pétursson, *Detail of Untitled (Nordurland Tröllaskagi)*, 2011, Oil on canvas. "Eggert Pétursson: *Untitled (Nordurland Tröllaskagi) 2011*" by Vesa Linja-aho is licensed with CC BY 2.0. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>

"Out in nature I have seen all the most vivid and the most exciting colours that are found in my work. If people do not believe me, then I encourage them to go see for themselves. We have now, for almost two centuries, learned to enjoy nature through photography. I present my work and invite people to consider nature in another way."

—Eggert Pétursson, *Fragments of a Conversation with Eggert Pétursson*

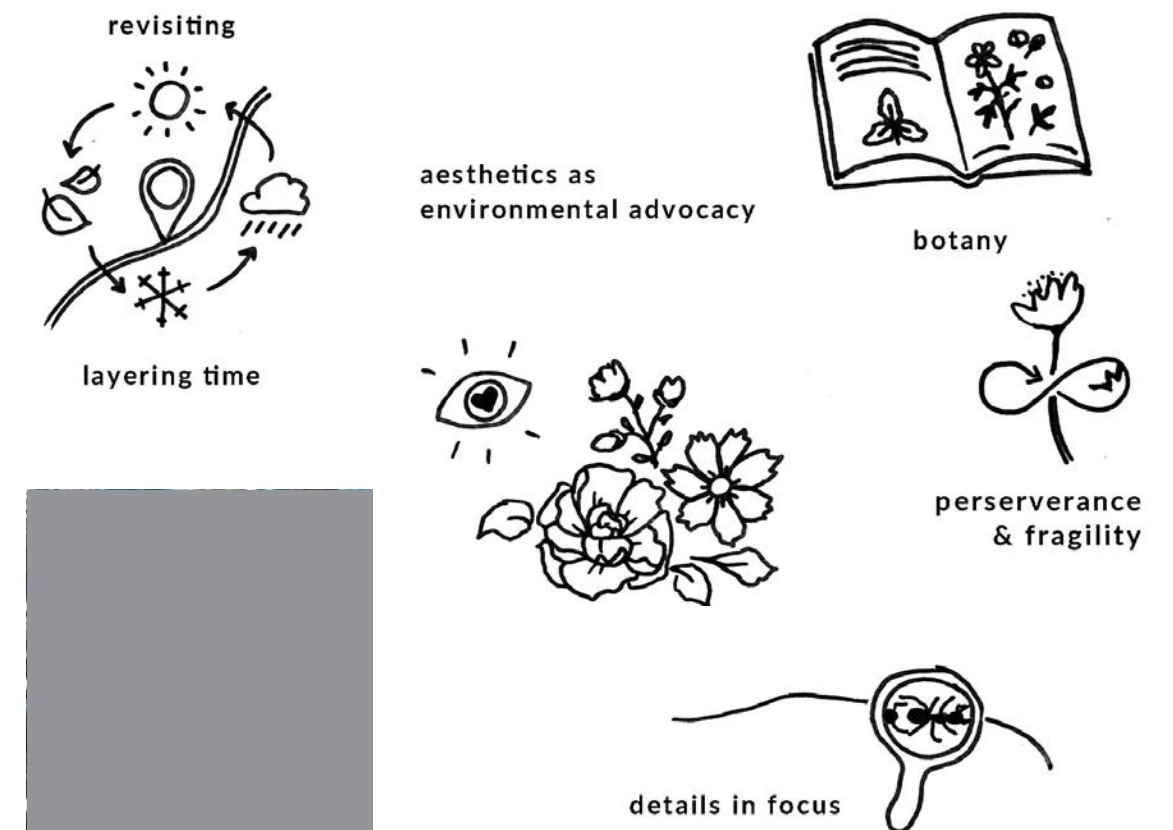


Fig. 61. *Portrait of Pétursson*, with diagrams depicting content of his work, by the author

Eggert Pétursson

B. 1956, Reykjavik. Lives and works in Reykjavik.

Unlike paintings of vast wilderness, Eggert Pétursson's landscapes depict small flora of Iceland, where he lives. He presents these low-growing plants at eye-level and at 1:1 scale - but the paintings are more than botanical illustrations, and they're not exactly pretty. Images of the same plants viewed at different times are massed onto giant canvases, surrounded by vividly coloured brush marks that can tip the work into garishness. A similar principle to that of the hypernature landscapes of Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (Meyer 17) is at work here: Pétursson amplifies the plants to call attention to them. His work advocates for the environment by inviting people to consider nature in another way. He sees no conflict between faithful recordings of the plants and the expressionistic brushwork surrounding them, because as he says, "Everything we see and sense in nature spurs a process that mostly takes place in one's head" (Pétursson).



Fig. 62. Group of Seven and Ravine Trail Comparison. Clockwise from top left: Arthur Lismer, BC Forest, 1955; Ravine Trail; Frank Johnston, Sunset in the Bush, 1918; Ravine Trail; photos of trail by the author.

Site: Ravine Trail



Fig. 63. Flower Show location map

Because Pétursson paints native plants as a way to promote environmentalism, this design is placed where it can help bring attention to the ecology of Stanley Park. Its location on Ravine trail, which leads along Beaver Creek to Beaver Lake, is at the entrance to one of the park's most ecologically sensitive areas. It is at a threshold where visitors move from the outer seawall to the interior forest.

On this trail, individual plants recede into a green tangle of vegetation. The area might appear nearly untouched, but it is currently undergoing rehabilitation to correct damage done by invasive plants and park infrastructure, and it depends on municipal water to maintain the lake and creek (*State* 78).



Design Resolution: Flower Show

Pétursson's work showcases the colour, texture, and differential life he finds in Iceland's flora. I wanted to bring this focus on detail to the intervention. Stanley Park is botanically diverse and is home to several red-listed species (*State* 59) but because it is visually dominated by ferns and salal, this is easy to miss.

I borrowed Pétursson's tactic of concentrating plants in a colourful ground and positioning them vertically, both to call the viewer's attention to the environment, and to add some colour to our idea of "green" nature. Where Pétursson's work deals with an internal, imaginative augmentation of nature, the intervention plays on the physical augmentation of the park's ecosystems. Dyed erosion netting creates a tapestry-like display of native plants on a bank beside the path, and references the rehabilitation work happening upstream. The bright colour draws attention both to the plants and to the human element of

the design. Nature in this display is both tiny and enveloping, involved with and separate from people, green and multicoloured, and delicate and strong; it is contradictory, not the pure and monolithic wilderness of the Group of Seven.

Pétursson's strategy of amplifying what he sees in nature and placing it where others can see it is a promising tool for engaging people with the landscape. His work creates a whole out of individual plants, moving them from from background into focus; it suggests planting design that accounts for both the near and the far view.

Fig. 64, left: Section looking southwest

Fig. 65, right: Flower Show, detail

Rock Pools

Material Palette

Michael Belmore





Fig. 66. Michael Belmore, *Detail of Smoulder*, 2010, stone and copper

"The point is that these materials come from a certain place and they have a certain language, and a certain, in a sense, way of breathing. And the way they breathe is the way that people read them. And so I'm trying to bring together certain materials so that they are able to speak to the viewer in a very calm and subtle way... in a sense I'm an environmentalist, but I'm not a person that will hit you over the head. It's easier to get people to talk if they don't realize they're talking about something. It's an easier way to create a dialogue - through beauty."

—Michael Belmore, *Changing Hands*, Art Without Reservation 3

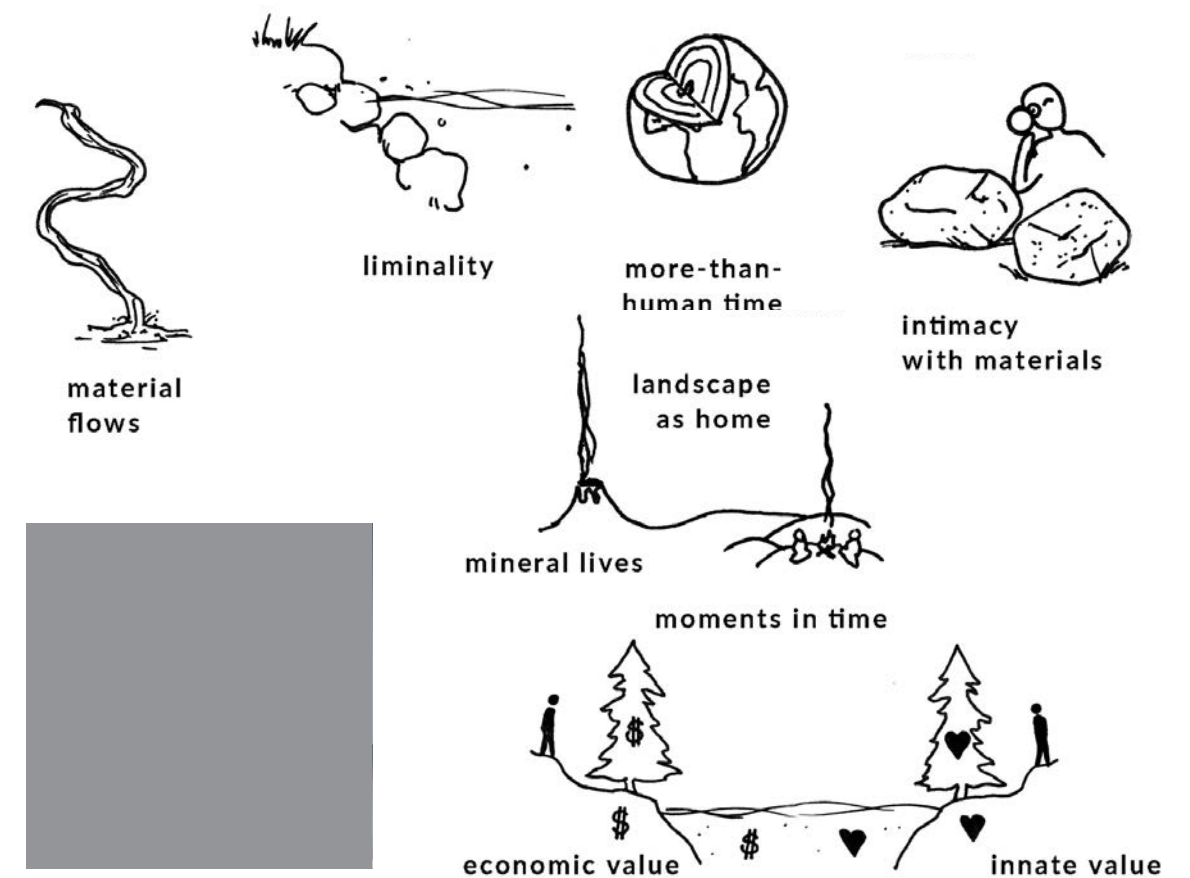


Fig. 67. Portrait of Belmore, with diagrams depicting content of his work, by the author

Michael Belmore

B. 1971, Upsala, ON. Lives and works in Haliburton Highlands, ON.

Michael Belmore is an Ojibwe sculptor from near Thunder Bay, ON. He works very closely with materials, particularly stone and metal. His respectful engagement with materials is a way to develop empathy for nature. It can be seen as an antidote to the “othering” of nature in the works of the Group of Seven, who portrayed it as monumental and inhuman. By contrast, Belmore’s work projects a comfortable and intimate feeling; pieces with copper inlaid into cut stones are meant to evoke the solace, contemplation, and connectedness that might be felt sitting by a campfire (Belmore “Land” 26). His attempt at understanding a mineral is at once a way to grasp our place in nature, and to see that it’s beyond our comprehension (Belmore “Materials”). He is particularly drawn to sites where two elements meet, and to transformations that occur there on a geological timescale (Belmore “Materials”). He uses beauty to engage people with the environment in a subtle way.



Fig. 68. Lawren Harris, North shore Lake Superior, 1926



Northwest Seawall. Photo by the author.

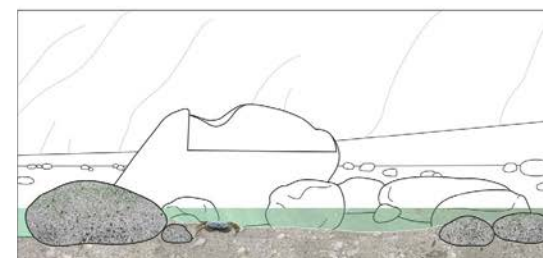
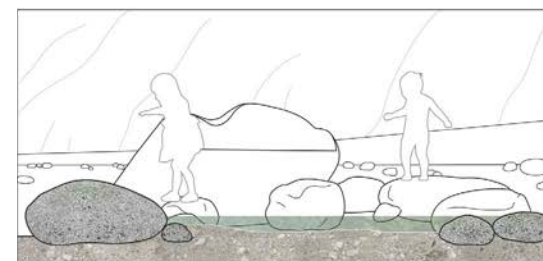
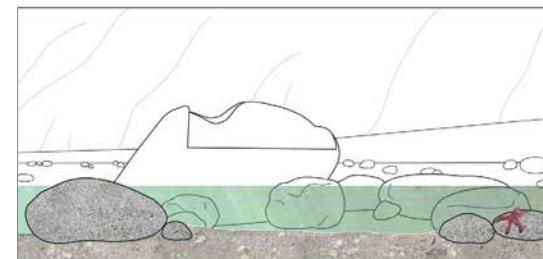
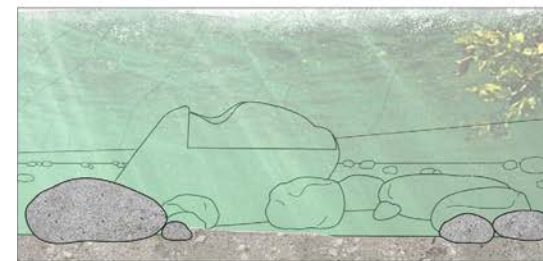
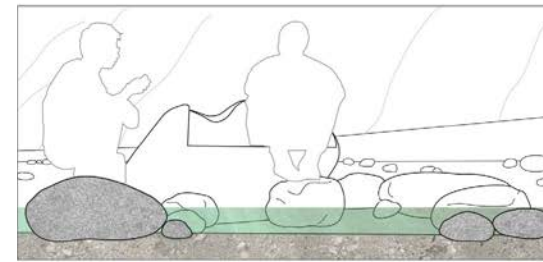
Site: Northwest Seawall



Fig. 70. Rock Pools location map

Belmore's interest in geology points to the northwest portion of the seawall, and his interest in the liminal to the intertidal zone there. This stretch of the seawall runs past undulating sandstone cliffs, but faces out to the ocean; it is narrow and does not offer many places to stop and view the cliffs, or to sit and rest.

This site has a rich variety of stone formations, created through natural and human processes. It is in view of Siwash Rock, or *Slhxí7lsh*, the basalt stack that features in images of Stanley Park's rugged coastline. It formed as softer sedimentary rock of the surrounding cliffs eroded away, creating the neighbouring beaches. Nearby in the intertidal zone, local First Nations arranged boulders in semi-circles to create tidal fish traps, and more recently the seawall, made of stone itself, was built to stop erosion of the



Design Resolution: Rock Pools

park.

In keeping with Belmore's work, the aim of this design is to use subtle and respectful treatment of materials to inspire engagement with them, and create a restful, inward-facing space where visitors can observe their surroundings. To foreground non-human rhythms, stone benches are set into arrangements of beach rocks that, like the nearby fish traps, catch water and sediment at high tide; while at low tide, the intervention is available to visitors.

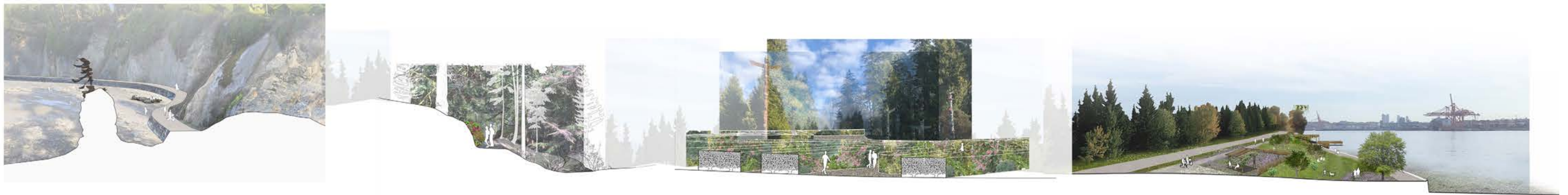
In this design humans are neither prioritized or excluded, but share use of the space. The benches are in a circular arrangement to create a restful space where park-goers can look inward to the impressive cliff faces, or across to Siwash Rock, to enjoy a moment of stillness and connection to the landscape.

With growing concerns over climate, the reach of the human impact on the environment and our dependence on its health - in short, our interconnectedness with the non-human world - is becoming widely recognized. The work Belmore has done to make sense of our place in our environment can provide insights for landscape architects, as we try to navigate the interface between humans and nature and the shifting boundaries of those categories.

Fig. 71, opposite, top: Rock Pools site plan

Fig. 72, opposite, bottom: View from Siwash Rock

Fig. 73, left: Change over time in the design



*Fig. 74, above: Combined sections, proposal
Fig. 75, below: Existing Park Section, Wild and
Pastoral Paintings*

Conclusions

Looking at landscape art, and painting in particular, through this project was useful for making a comparison between what was, what isn't, and what could be. Contemporary painting is often backward-looking, referencing the genre's past, and this quality makes it especially useful for challenging our received notions of what a park is. It helps break down existing landscapes and recognize in what ways they are and are not serving us. However, ideally this project is part of a transition - the first step in a process that would be enriched by drawing on other source materials. Referencing, for example, non-visual or non-academic creative output through landscape design would push the discipline further towards diverse, inclusive, and challenging work.

One of the unexpected gifts of studying landscape architecture has been how the knowledge I've gained has enriched my everyday experience of landscape. A simple walk outside after studying plants is a much different and more interesting experience than before; drawing more ideas in helps us see things we wouldn't otherwise see. Not only does this contribute to our personal experiences, it makes us better and more sensitive designers. Finding ways to change the lens we're looking through is especially important in this age of questioning dominant cultural narratives, as landscape designers approach dismantling damaging historic notions in our discipline.

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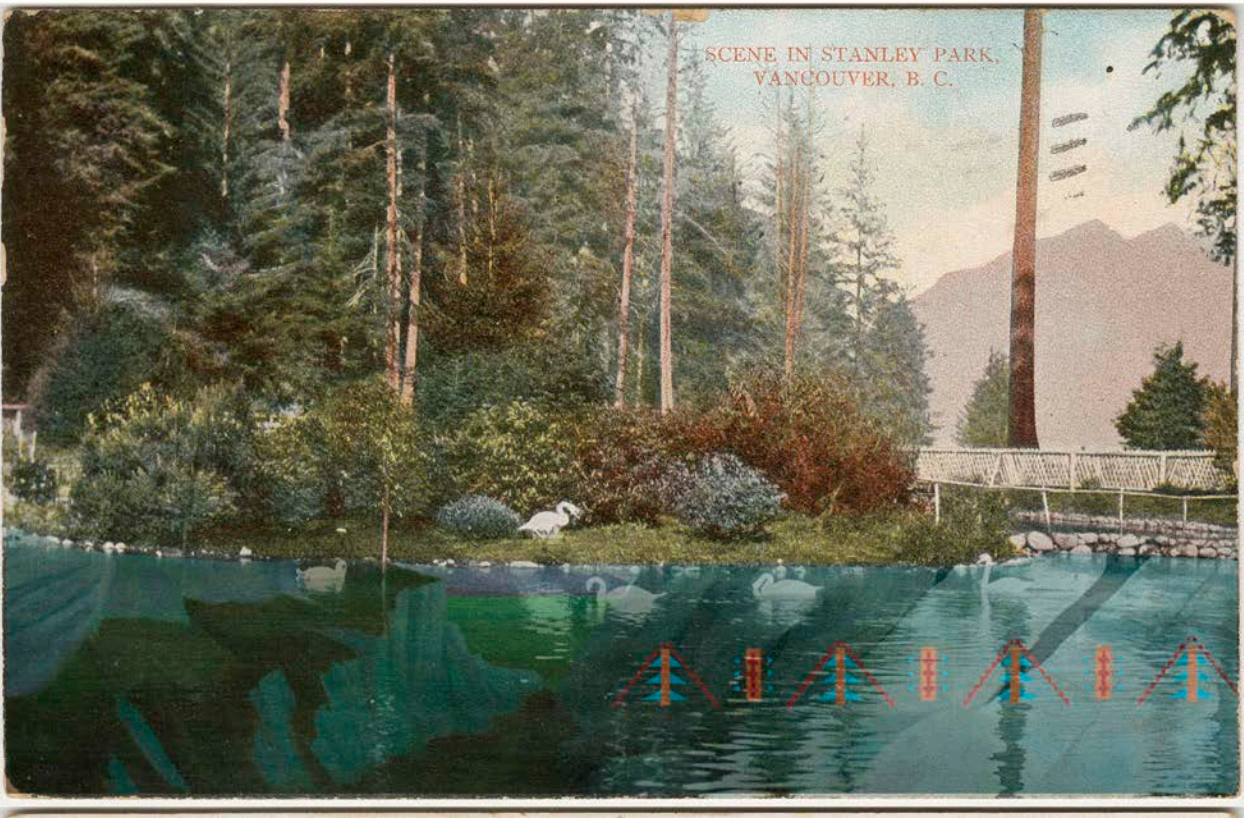


Fig. 76, Walkingstick X Pond, digital collage, by the author