THIS LITTLE LAKE

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This Little Lake

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THESIS STATEMENT

While there are contemporary understandings of dynamic and relational multi-species ecologies in the field of Landscape Architecture, static methods of practicing landscape design continue. Representation of designs are separate from the physical place, focused on an ideal end point for a site. However, entangled and relational landscapes require entangled relational landscape methods.

Framed conceptually by the art theory of Relational Aesthetics, this project examines how the medium of filmmaking can assist in establishing a performative and relational landscape practice. Through filmmaking, the elements of time, emotion, memory, and storytelling become the guiding principles of the design.

In *This Little Lake*, Trout Lake in East Vancouver becomes a testing ground for how a landscape practice can move away from being observer, and towards being an active participant in the life of the place. Physical interventions emerge in the landscape by deeply noticing and working with the specific site, people and non-human actors that make up that place. By applying an aesthetics of relations to landscape design, our work as land-movers and place-makers can become collaborative, integrated into the ongoing story of the place.

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Trout Lake on January 18, 2022.

DEFINITIONS

This Little Lake argues for alternative forms of what we call **site analysis;** which is to evaluate the components that make up the "ground chosen for something and the location of a set of activities or practices" (Kahn 2). In this project, the terms **site** and **place** are used interchangeably to refer to the relational condition that emerges from ongoing exchanges between humans, non-humans, and the physical space. *Site analysis* traditionally does not refer to a comprehension of the complex relations that make up a site, and so in the context this project, **site-knowing**, or **site-understanding** refer to a deeper physical and conceptual comprehension of *site* (Kahn 1).

This project is situated in the realm of alternative landscape methods working towards deeper understanding and responsiveness to *place*. This project draws inspiration from the art theories of performative and relational aesthetics. **Performative aesthetics** is understood as the "establishment and exploration, through action, of a distributed field of reference" (Reimer 32). **Relational aesthetics** is a similar concept; it is an art theory that examines human relationships between one another and our surrounding environments as the subjects, processes, and results of making (Bourriaud 113). *Performative aesthetics* and *relational aesthetics* are seen as potential ways towards a landscape practice that better responds to relational, dynamic understandings of ecologies.

Most of the following definitions are adapted from Julie Pernini's *Relational Filmmaking Manifesto*. **Filmmaking** refers to the process of making a film or video. This term is used despite the fact that most works included in this project are digital video. This is a common practice in the film field, and it is a way to recall the histories of film's many genres (Pernini 8). **Relational filmmaking** refers to a style of *filmmaking* that uses the sociocultural world as the basis for the work, where the film is a result of a relational process. **Animation** is understood as a subcategory of *relational filmmaking*. While *animation* has a different making process compared to *filmmaking*, it can also be used to probe and develop relations between humans and non-humans. **Photography** is understood as the predecessor of *filmmaking*. The photographic medium has the unique ability to "record as well as reveal visible, or potentially visible, physical reality" (Kracauer 4) - this is continued on in **filmmaking**. Forms of *photography* such as video stills, digital images and film photography are used in this project.

CRITICAL ESSAY

SITE ANALYSIS: STATIC VS. RELATIONAL STRATEGIES

While there are contemporary understandings of dynamic and relational multi-species ecologies, common landscape design methodologies and representational forms remain static, not having changed greatly since the formation of the profession. Representation and conceptualization of the landscape go hand in hand; how a site is represented demonstrates the process and the values of the landscape project. When Andrea Kahn and Carol Burns describe how "modes of representation construe sites, and their formative role in the production of site knowledge should be revealed and expressed" (Kahn 5), they identify how representation enables as well as constrains how designers come to understand, and thus design for, a specific place. To choose a mode of representation is to choose what is most important in the landscape project, as different modes of representation emphasize different information.

An understanding of the specific site and all of its relational components is arguably the most important part of a landscape project, as the project is meant to have a physical impact on the land and all of those involved. However, many current traditional methods of analyzing and representing landscape are means of general analysis; limited in portraying dynamic, emergent processes that occur over time, and the overlapping lived experiences that are happening on the site. "In design history, the site has been denatured (engaged as a formal surface), mythologized (emptied of meaning), and colonized (subjected to the singular authority of design controls). *This history offers few images, few tools, and few models for capturing the relationship between a project and its locale"* (Kahn 10). "Locale" here might be understood as not only the land that surrounds the site, but also referring to the complex web of socio-cultural and ecological relations that the site exists within. This history of academic landscape design methodologies that do not centre the entangled, dynamic existing relationships of site requires exploration of alternative methods that do work toward this goal.

Kristina Hill identifies the importance of recentering design and planning methods around "observed flows and relationships" of a place: the idea of a "fixed" site does not allow for designs that respond to specifically what and who exist there, and changes that will occur over time (Hill 132). Designers such as Karen Lutsky, Sandra Parvu and Eunate Torres, and Lawrence and Anna Halprin work to find methods of understanding and representing change and relationships of the site. Karen Lutsky utilizes the concept of "probing" to describe a landscape process that is curiosity-driven, and a way to "see" change in landscape (Lutsky 4). Multiple forms of creative analyses and representational methods are inspired by specific sites and experiences. These are used to explore how the site and the person doing the probing interact with one another (Lutsky 6). In their *Landscoping* studios, Sandra Parvu and Eunate

Torres focus on "reclaiming landscape project as a project," understanding that the project is only one instance of the site's life. Methods such as filmmaking and performance are used to register and interact with unique components of each site (Parvu 21).

The landscape practice of Lawrence and Anna Halprin in the sixties and seventies consisted of ongoing participation and responsiveness to shifting and dynamic site ecologies. Lawrence Halprin found inspiration for his creative landscape design methods in the emergent nature of ecologies; "I view the earth and its life processes as a model for the creative process, *where not one but many forces interact with each other with results emergent, not imposed*" (Halprin 44). Participatory workshops such as *Experiments in the Environment* and the *RSVP Cycles* were processes of design meant to enable continuous interactions between designer, community, and environment (Herrington 2016). The intent of the Halprins' practice was for the built design to emerge from the existing interrelated sociocultural and ecological relationships specific to each place.

This project situates filmmaking in this realm of alternative site-knowing methodologies based in fluidity and relationships. Filmmaking is well suited for conceptualizing the landscape project as a dynamic and relational act because it has the unique capacity to capture, portray, and create moments in time, memory, stories, and emotional connection. Film theorist Siegfried Kracauer describes, "films…represent reality as it evolves in time" (41). Film can effectively reveal changes that occur, centering the shifting nature and new forms that emerge in a dynamic landscape. Film's ability to tell stories and capture memories allows for multiple perspectives and lived experiences to become an integral part of the design process; film can express the complexity of urban space (Sandercock 60). A landscape design should be directly responsive to the specific site, and those that make up the site - this requires empathy. Filmmaking can build emotional connection between the viewer and the viewed in a way that almost mimics physical reality; we subconsciously register what we see and hear in a film similarly to how we register real-life interactions (Stadler 29). By incorporating methods of filmmaking into the landscape design process, the elements of time, memory, storytelling, and emotion might become embedded; thus developing a landscape practice that is more in tune with concepts of relationality and emergent ecologies.

DYNAMIC ECOLOGIES AND RELATIONAL AESTHETICS

In 2008, Elizabeth Meyer described the paradigm shifts occurring in the ecological sciences. Turning away from the idea of stable, ideal plant and animal communities, there is now a focus on the fluidity of ecologies; how ecologies are emergent, adaptive, and self-organizing systems (Meyer 20). Since the seventies, ecologists have written of entanglements, of messiness, how ecologies are "open systems" of shifting relations (Hill 136). Yet, in the field of landscape architecture, there remains a divide between ecology and the aesthetic process of design thinking; static methods

of representation and romanticization of beauty in the landscape continue. As Anita Bakshi and Frank Gallagher describe, "while nature is dynamic, following unpredictable trajectories, American landscape designers often take static approaches focused on ideal end points" (24). This often means a design that has been represented and thus conceptualized as the ideal and final form of a place. Eva Gustavsson outlines how traditional aesthetics of landscape architecture are analytical and structuralist; they are seemingly objective methods for producing general knowledge about a fixed place (29).

These methods are not in tune with current thought in contemporary landscape architecture, where values are shifting towards change, inclusiveness, and interpretation. Gustavsson calls for a "meaning-oriented approach to aesthetics," where representation becomes a way of knowledge-making, rather than a way of describing a fixed end point of a design (30). Gustavsson sees a possibility for shifting aesthetics away from being object-focussed and towards it being understood as action (30). Similarly, Maria Hellström Reimer proposes *"a fundamental shift in landscape thinking from representation to agency"* (24)*.* **How can a landscape design practice move from static representation towards action-oriented ways of practicing design?**

Maria Hellström Reimer turns to the art theory of relational aesthetics to understand how design practice might become performative. Relational aesthetics examines human relations and our surrounding environments as the subjects and processes of art-making (Bourriard 113). In relational aesthetics, the process of making is always occurring, emerging from existing relationships and the physical conditions of a specific lived space. A shift in landscape thinking from static to performative might be enacted similarly, where the design process is understood to be in a constant state of becoming. A performative aesthetics in landscape design might understand the relationships and embodied experiences of the designer, landscape users (human and non-human), and the physical space as the subjects as well as the processes of landscape making and re-making.

The language of filmmaking embeds movement and relationality into the process of making itself; landscape architecture might look to this medium as a way towards performative aesthetics.

And so; **How can filmmaking assist in shifting landscape design practice from static representation towards action-oriented ways of practicing design?**

"If there is an aesthetics of the cinema… it can be summarized in one word: 'movement'."

- Rene Clair

DYNAMISM AND EPHEMERALITY IN FILMMAKING

This project positions filmmaking as one method of moving towards a landscape design aesthetics of agency and change that is in tune with ecological values of emergence and fluidity. Movement and change are inherently embedded into this form of representation. Film theorist Siegfried Kracauer describes the early predictions of two photographers for the medium that would become cinema. In 1860, Gaetan Cook and Henri Bonnelli announced; "We will see... landscapes, in which trees bow to the whims of the wind, the leaves ripple and glitter in the rays of the sun" (27). This ability to record and reveal physical reality and change through time are film's defining qualities. A cameraman for the Lumiere brothers described cinema as "the dynamism of life, of nature and its manifestations, of the crowd and its eddies. *All that asserts itself through movement depends on it. Its lens opens on the world"* (Kracauer 31). It is this ability to capture time and movement, and its connection to physical reality that allows film to respond to emergent and relational landscapes. Bernadette Blanchon-Caillot comments on the contemporary discourse of aesthetics in the field of landscape architecture, suggesting that "an aesthetics for today is one that is constituted through the acknowledgement of reality: the physical actuality, specificity and impermanence of every place" (5). The moving image is tied to physical reality in a way that the static image is not; it allows for change and specificity of physical experience to become the central focus of the work.

Sandra Parvu and Eunate Torres see filmmaking as a powerful method of embedding physical materiality and impermanence of place into the landscape practice. The pair ran a series of design studios that used interdisciplinary techniques to explore relations between students and site. In these studios the process itself became the design, and set in place a method for working with the existing and shifting elements of site. These studios are examples of how the moving image lends itself to capturing and portraying the physical reality and ephemerality of place, and they work to re-establish the landscape project as one part of the site's ongoing life. However, film's ties to physical reality also gives it the uniquely powerful potential to embed relationality into the design process. Through its ability to shift and overlap time, scales and stories, film can portray individual and collective lived realities.

"And I?" says the leaf which is falling. "And we?" say the orange peel, the gust of wind… film, whether intentionally or not, is their mouthpiece."

-Gilbert Cohen-Séat

MULTIPLE REALITIES IN FILMMAKING

Film is one method of entering a relational landscape practice; it can act as an amplifier of individual experience while equally portraying the experience of others (Farso 60). Not just a static image, film can shift someone into a perspective radically different from one's own. Siegfried Kracauer describes how film has a "peculiar requirement to explore all of physical existence, *human or non-human"* (Kracauer 45). Film as a landscape method can level the playing field; it can render equal the world of a leaf and the world of a human. In a review of a film exhibition centering on landscape, Erika Balsom writes, "The moving image is bound to reality, registering its traces. ... Why landscape? Because this is the only world we have, and we are not in it alone."

Film acts as an entry point into multiple realities, it can demonstrate how there is not one all-encompassing understanding of existence; rather, there are multiple realities simultaneously being lived. In a design studio ran by Mads Farso and Rikke Munck Petersen, student Ida Cecilie Lynggaard questions multiple timescales of a site through filming the movement of a snail, then immediately cutting to a zoomed-out view of cows grazing in the same place (71). The vastness of the site is highlighted in comparison to the worldview of a snail, demonstrating a coexistence of scales and lives. While this type of interconnectivity that exists on site is difficult to portray in traditional static drawing methods, film is able to capture and portray these simultaneous realities.

This ability to portray multiple scales and experiences also applies to film's capabilities of portraying the plurality of human realities. Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes how in Western academia there is a normalized understanding of history as one coherent narrative- a belief in a singular, totalizing story of the world (33). The movie *Rashomon* demonstrates how filmmaking is one way to work past this, to highlight, as Smith describes, the "diversities of truths" which make up the world. *Rashomon* tells the story of a murder from four widely varying points of view, each story contradicting the others. Director Akira Kurosawa described the film as "an exploration of multiple realities, rather than an exposition of a particular truth." Film can reveal the lived realities of different people. This can be applied to the story of a site; film is a medium made up of fragments, and so it can show how there is no singular, linear truth of a site; instead, it is made up of multiple lived stories that exist in a place.

A DYNAMIC, RELATIONAL LANDSCAPE PRACTICE: FOUR CATEGORIES

There are many ways in which the moving image is well-suited to responding to shifting, dynamic ecologies and portraying the multiple realities that exist within the site. This project focuses on four qualities that film uniquely and powerfully captures, portrays, and/or creates: time, memory, storytelling, and emotion. These qualities are integral to the development of a dynamic and relational aesthetics of landscape architecture.

Time

"To take a site seriously means to make its changes visible. This implies that a project, a landscape project in particular, is something that cannot possibly be completed. Its realization can be understood as a temporary intervention whose shape will continue to evolve in time."

- Sandra Parvu + Eunate Torres

To approach a landscape project as a temporary intervention is to understand that a landscape design is part of the shifting ecologies of the place. A landscape practice can work with and become a part of these changes, rather than attempting to control them.

It is important to understand a landscape project as a moment in time, rather than a final, rigid form of a place. The field of ecology has now come to understand sites as something similar to a sandbar; temporary expressions of shifts in larger systems (Hill 138). As Kristina Hill describes, "designers and planners should be prepared to recognize the temporary nature of spatial features and the greater permanence of the flows that create them" (Hill 138). In the face of our new and more extreme climate, there is a need for understandings of site as shifting sets of relations guided by larger systems, and occurring at multiple timescales.

Film has the capability to stretch and condense time; to make visible changes that occur in landscape that may be too big or too small for humans to notice. For example, the films of Louis Schwartzburg allow humans to see different timescales that overlap our own. His well-known documentary *Fantastic Fungi* was filmed over the course of 15 years, using time-lapse photography to capture the lives of fungi, including the formation of mycelium. Schwartzburg has also used film to capture the lives of hummingbirds and mosquitos. Fungi and plants live in a timescale much slower than a human's, while the timescales of insects and hummingbirds are much faster than our own. As Schwartzburg describes, filmmaking can act as a "time machine," enabling us to see life and processes that we could not see otherwise (Ebert 2021).

Memory

"Moving in or through a given place, the body imports its own emplaced past into its present experience. Thus our experiences of place – and its social, physical and intangible components – are inextricable from the invocation, creation and reinvestment of memories."

- Sarah Pink

Memory is central to the idea of a relational landscape practice. Our experience of place is made up of layers of simultaneous places and experiences; memories and current physical experience grow into and from one another. Sarah Pink suggests a theory of "place" as being always in process- "place" as an event or occurrence. Pink is advocating for a new method of ethnographic research, one that would enable ethnographers to occupy similar places to those whose experiences and memories they are seeking to understand (72). This relates to the field of landscape architecture; if we are to design places where people exist and interact, designers should come to understand their own entanglements with place, rather than viewing it from an outside, objective perspective. The urban landscape has been referred to as layers of memories. As Gene Stroman describes, successful films can resonate with past lived experience, allowing us to recollect memories and thus, strengthen our identities (2019). The dynamic qualities of film, and how it is composed from multiple fragments, make this medium well-suited for portraying the memories of many; this is connected to film's ability to tell stories.

Storytelling

There has been a general shift towards narrative in landscape architecture, many projects include story in different ways. However, Eva Gustavsson warns of literal storytelling in a design context: this is when a "veneer of stories" is added to the landscape through signs or other explicit references (29). Rather than being superficially added to a finished design, it is important for the pre-existing and ongoing multiple stories of a place to be a process of design, the driving factors for the physical making of a place.

Leonie Sandercock describes how "story can awaken energies and imaginations, becoming a catalyst for involving urban conversations, and for deep community dialogues" (60). Film's ability to portray a story is due to its added component of time, and its ability to portray the lived experiences of many different people. Film can be a way of providing a thick account of the social phenomena of a specific place (Sandercock 60). In the case of Leonie Sandercock and in the documentary work of Austin Allen, film's ability to tell stories is used in a way that has real effects on how we understand specific places. Through the telling of personal stories of community members, the lived experiences of different people concerning place, and how these stories relate to one another, can be seen. The work of Allen and Sandercock demonstrates how film has the ability to tell stories in a way that emotionally connects us to real people and places. Filmmaking can allow for a collaborative process of design that enables multiple perspectives to be seen and heard.

Emotional Connection

A designed landscape should be deeply aware of the specific individual and collective lived experiences of the specific place, and should be directly responsive to these existing relationships. Empathy is frequently discussed in the design field, but the work of Anna and Lawrence Halprin demonstrates a landscape practice where empathy is the subject as well as the guiding process for the work. Emotion was central to their practice; Anna Halprin describes Lawrence's designs as "creating the possibility to find and experience emotions." This method of seeing emotion as the guiding factor for the work can also be observed in filmmaking.

Jane Stadler describes what she calls film's "compassionate gaze," which can be understood as "an aesthetic mode that functions to bridge the distance between self and other, establishing a foundation for ethical understanding" (Stadler 28). Stadler uses the film *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* as an example of how film can engender empathy for someone who's lived experience might be very different to our own (Stadler 32). The film is shot from a subjective first-person perspective, where the viewer is meant to be experiencing the world in the same way the main character does. The addition of a subjective soundscape in this film also works towards establishing emotional immersiveness. When we watch a film we are no longer experiencing something in a purely visual sense, bringing the portrayed story world discernibly closer to the viewer (Stadler 39). While other modes of representation are able to create emotional connections to some extent, film's attributes of movement, sound, and realistic first-person perspective enable the viewer to connect with what or who is being portrayed in a way that registers closely to physical reality. Film's capacity for creating emotional connection can work towards inspiring an "alternative architecture of relations" (Mads Farso 64), where empathy and emotional understanding might be translated into physical design.

Centering qualities of storytelling, emotional connection, time and memory in landscape practice enables the aesthetics of the profession to move beyond static methods of site analysis and representation that result in static built form. A practice of relational landscape aesthetics might be more responsive to emergent and dynamic ecologies and sociocultural realities of the site.

The following section will describe a case study for each of the categories of time, memory, storytelling and emotional connection. These will demonstrate the shifts in practice and perception that occur when these qualities are key components in design work. Artist precedents will then be examined; the works included fall into the categories of relational aesthetics and/or video making. These will be examined as explicit examples of how aesthetics can be shifted from detached observation to agency.

LANDSCAPE PRECEDENTS

Criteria

Project utilizes an expanded set of landscape design processes
The project focuses on collaboration and interdisciplinary ways of knowing and making.

Project produces alternative outcomes
The project is imagining or creating spaces different from those created by traditional western landscape design.

Project centers embodied understanding, personal experience and emotion

TIME: *LANDSCOPING* - SANDRA PARVU + EUNATE TORRES

Eunate Torres. *EAU MORTE, film-sketch, Super 8 (6'29")*. 2003-10. *https://vimeo.com/44563947*

    Landscoping is a design studio run by Sandra Parvu and Eunate Torres between the years of 2004-2007. The purpose of the studio was to create a new set of representational and design process tools, stretching beyond the boundaries of the landscape architectural discipline and potentially questioning the idea of the discipline as such (20).The studios were framed as first attempts at uncovering specific site-interactive work processes that "recover landscape as a project, rather than as a design". The premise of the studio was based on Georges Descombes' idea that "the [landscape] project was not something to be brought to the site, but that it was already there inscribed in the territory, its forms and its history" (20). If the existing elements of a site are critical for the future project, what is the best way to capture, reveal, and represent the site and its existing elements? Can different modes of representation- particularly those inspired by filmmakers, land artists, and choreographers- radically shift how the project itself is understood? In this context, film is understood as one important medium in a set of tools created for understanding each specific site; part of a method of combining landscape architecture with other working processes (21).

This studio had a focus on how a landscape project is part of a much longer history and future of that site, and therefore the landscape project should be (re)understood as a project, rather than a final design of a place. The discussion on representation, and the importance of incorporating multiple disciplines when understanding place, is also significant to my research. Questions of the extent to which representation of site influences the actual project, and the limits of traditional landscape drawing when capturing the time are central to my graduate project. I am curious about how to better integrate relations between self and site; since film is so successful at portraying specific points of view and capturing memory, one's own experience of place could be better incorporated.

Eunate Torres and Sandra Parvu. *Gleaned Instants.* 2006.
"Landscoping" *Journal of Landscape Architecture,* 2007, *p.25.*

MEMORY: *FIELD WORK* - MARTHA SCHWARTZ

Martha Schwartz Partners, *Spoleto Festival, Charleston, SC, USA*.1997.
https://msp.world/spoleto-festival-charleston-sc-usa/#

This project was commissioned for the festival *Human/Nature: Art and Landscape in Charleston and the Low Country* in 1997. All entries were asked to examine the "fluid interactions between nature and culture in the urban and exurban landscapes of Charleston" (Beardsley 187). Located on a pre-Civil War plantation, the intention of Field Work was to draw attention to the cultural history of the landscape. The work consisted of white cotton panels hung on cables in parallel rows, meant to resemble sheets hung out to dry. The installation connects cabins where enslaved people lived to the adjacent meadow, implying a relationship between the domestic labour and field work of those who had lived in the cabins (Beardsley 190).

Field Work was a temporary intervention that altered perception and understanding of the place. The project is a uniquely dynamic memorial; the fabric panels register the empheralities of the site, such as the time of day and changing weather (Beardsley 191). To move through the space is to feel connected to those enslaved people who also once moved through the space. All landscapes are made up of layers of experiences; all people contribute to what that place is. Field Work demonstrates how a landscape intervention can draw attention to these layers, enabling people to feel emotionally connected to those who once shared the same ground. This work is a gentle and thoughtful approach to uncovering the complex (and often troubled) histories of ongoing human-nature interactions that occur in a place over time.

STORYTELLING: *CLAIMING OPEN SPACES* - AUSTIN ALLEN

Austin Allen, *Claiming Open Spaces*. 1996. *Video still.*
YouTube, uploaded by Kofi Boone, 2 Jan. 2016

This documentary was directed and produced by Austin Allen in 1996. It explores the city parks of Columbus, New Orleans, Detroit, Oakland, and Montgomery, and the Black communities who frequent these public spaces. The film documents how the surrounding communities of these city parks had been left out of the planning of these spaces at the time. Through interviews with community members, it becomes clear that these parks were important components to the Black communities surrounding them. These were gathering spaces where these communities could be themselves; as an Oakland community member describes - "it was a lifestyle, it was a whole gamut of what a young black kid really comes to know as his culture. This is where you learn how to live in your community." The community significance of these parks is in strong contrast to how civic planning went about designing these spaces. These parks were shut down and redesigned to suit city needs and generate revenue. A Columbus city planner describes this process as the "ongoing colonization of space," as the city removed this Black community from their own gathering space.

Claiming Open Spaces is a strong example of how filmmaking is a powerful storytelling tool, portraying the lived experiences of the many people who make various urban park environments. The difference between the concepts of a regional park and a community park becomes clear - the film highlights the striking contrast between realized city park projects and the surrounding Black communities who once considered these spaces as integral parts of their cultural identity.

       Claiming Open Spaces was made after the new city park designs had been built - this is in contrast to the concept of filmmaking being used as design process; part of ongoing understandings of place. This difference brings questions to mind in terms of my own research; how might filmmaking be used to identify the current communities of Trout Lake? Rather than being a documentary of the negative impacts regional park planning can have on existing surrounding communities, how might filmmaking be used as a tool to amplify and uplift current experiences; centering the community in the design process?

Centre For the Preservation of Civil Rights Sites, *Austin Allen behind the scenes.* 1997.
https://cpcrs.upenn.edu/resource/claiming-open-spaces

EMOTIONAL CONNECTION: *DANCE DECK & RSVP CYCLES-*
ANNA + LAWRENCE HALPRIN

The Dance Deck was designed by Lawrence and Anna Halprin and built between 1951 to 1954. It was constructed from local Douglas fir, and used existing trees as its main anchor points (Merriman 433). Lawrence Halprin describes the intent behind the form; "[The Deck] did not become an object in the landscape, it became part of the landscape and that is very different. The fact of its free form, which moves around responding to the trees and to the mountain view and other things, has been a premise of mine ever since" (Merriman 433). *The Dance Deck's* dynamism and responsiveness to its existing environment was designed specifically for 'movement experience', meant to enable an embodied dance practice that connected self to the natural surroundings.

The space was used to conduct the first of the Halprins' *RSVP Cycles*; a method of group design that incorporated community participation and critical feedback. *RSVP Cycles* consisted of four interchangeable stages; understanding of existing resources, ongoing participation, planning, and feedback. Scores were most significant to Lawrence; as he describes, "It is through [scores] that we can involve ourselves creatively in 'doing', from which, in fact, structure emerges - the form of anything is latent in the process… Scores are process-oriented, not thing-oriented" (Halprin 46). For Halprin, built form emerged through a process of iteration and collaboration.

The Dance Deck is directly responsive to its physical environment, designed to be a dynamic part of the place and a bridge for human participants to connect to the natural surroundings and to their own emotions. While this intention is relevant to my own research, I am more interested in how a design can be emergent, resulting from a design process that is ongoing, actively incorporating feedback from the landscape-users. This is why the Halprins' *RSVP Cycles* is more significant to my own project; this is a design process made up of ongoing feedback loops, where attentiveness to the existing environmental and social ecologies of the place are the drivers of the design.

ARTIST PRECEDENTS

The following artists are relational interventionists and filmmakers. They provide inspiration for a performative landscape practice in three related ways:

The artists engage in complicating and making known the entanglements that exist between people and environment.

The projects are examples of art-as-agency
The works demonstrate how art can move from static representation to agency; they are meant to affect their physical and sociocultural surroundings.

They are community-building artworks
The projects emerge from specific communities and have tangible and long-lasting impacts on their social environments.

FALLEN FRUIT

Fallen Fruit's mission is to radically transform how people imagine community, and to re-envision a city as a place of abundance (Burns 2021). They work towards these goals by organizing community projects such as making maps of pre-existing fruit trees in cities, planting fruit forests, planning urban fruit forages, and hosting "Public Fruit Jams"- where people bring their own fruit to make communal jams. The concept of reciprocity is embedded into these acts; by fostering and harvesting from urban fruit forests, the fruit trees, individuals, and the community all benefit from one another.

Space is a significant factor in Fallen Fruit projects; the projects question assumptions about the legality of urban public space and work to build entanglements between specific urban environments and the people and fruit trees that exist there.

The fruit forages and "Public Jam Sessions" are examples of environmentally and socially radical acts of care. People come to know and be involved with their neighbours in a city, and the projects foster care for collective spatial resources (public fruit). This focus on entangling people with their existing urban environments through reciprocal relationship could lend itself well to a design approach that centres care and ongoing involvement with place.
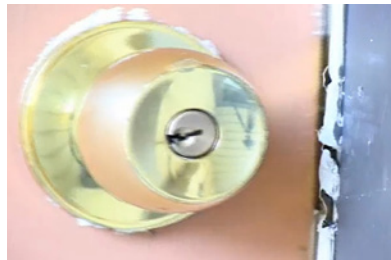
JULIE PERINI

Julie Perini is a self-described relational filmmaker; she uses the principles of relational aesthetics to guide her filmmaking process. In her document Relational Filmmaking: A Manifesto and its Explication, she articulates a set of tenets for what relational filmmaking means. Some of her tenets that are relevant to my own project include: Relational films are made with (not about) people, the final form of the film is dependent on the process of making, and "relational filmmakers believe that reality is the consequence of what we do together" (Perini 10). These three tenets may help to guide my own design process, as they pertain to the idea that a place is in a constant state of becoming, made up of layers of experiences within the environment. A performative landscape practice would also be in a constant state of becoming, shifting through the act of making and engagement with the reality of the place and people involved.

Perini uses her project *Girl Next Door* as an example of what relational filmmaking can be; this film is about Perini's neighbours. The video is a combination of interviews with real neighbours, interviews with people whose lives are similar to those she had wished to interview, and paid actors in the roles of neighbours. The subject of the film is the relationships between Perini and these people, and the final work demonstrates how the making of a documentary can be a tool for the artist to engage in community. In *Girl Next Door,* the emphasis is on the existing relationships between neighbours, rather than creation or enhancement of these relationships. This is also a project that is focussed exclusively on human-to-human relationships, rather than human-place-non-human relationships. I am interested in how design might not only focus on relationships between designer, community members, non-humans, and place, but how design might enhance and foster new connections between these groups.

URSULA BIEMANN

Ursula Biemann investigates subjects including climate change and new ecologies through video making, fieldwork, and collaborations with artists, sociologists and anthropologists. Her projects are large-scale, often taking the form of multi-layered videos that incorporate footage of vast landscapes combined with documentary footage, poetry, and academic research (Biemann 2021). In *Acoustic Ocean*, the relationship between the Atlantic Ocean and a Sami biologist-diver is explored. Bieman describes the project as a portrayal of "a science fictional quest into an amphibian life." This description demonstrates Biemann's ability to combine storytelling with documentary. Her final works are often immersive physical installations featuring multiple screens showing various film fragments and other forms of media including cartography, props and photography (Biemann 2021).

Biemann's collaborative filmmaking process is integrated into academic research, where art-making becomes an active part of ongoing investigations and new understandings of existing relationships between people and environment. This fluidity between research and practice is something I hope to incorporate into my own project. However, Biemann's practice is often the production of a final product, rather than filmmaking being used as a processual activity. I am interested in how filmmaking can be an active way of understanding place.

PAULA JARDINE

Paula Jardine is a visual and community artist based in East Vancouver. Jardine describes her art practice as "creating community events and celebrations as a way of finding my place ~ in relation to my neighbours, the seasons, the land, and the natural systems we are all part of" (Jardin 2009).

Her work *Trout Lake Restoration Project* began with a concern for the health of Trout Lake; swimming is restricted due to high levels of e coli. The project explores how restoration work can emerge from creative methods: collection of oral histories at tea parties, planning sessions with biologists, engineers and community members, and art-making resulted in a community action plan presented to the parks board.

Jardine's projects are beautiful examples of how artistic practice can be community-building. The relationship between humans and the environment is central to Jardine's art practice; much of her work explores and creates cultural forms that celebrate and connect people to the landscape we live in (Jardine 2009). Jardine's methods of relational art practice might be seen as an example of how landscape design might be integrated into existing ecologies and the social and artistic practices of Trout Lake.
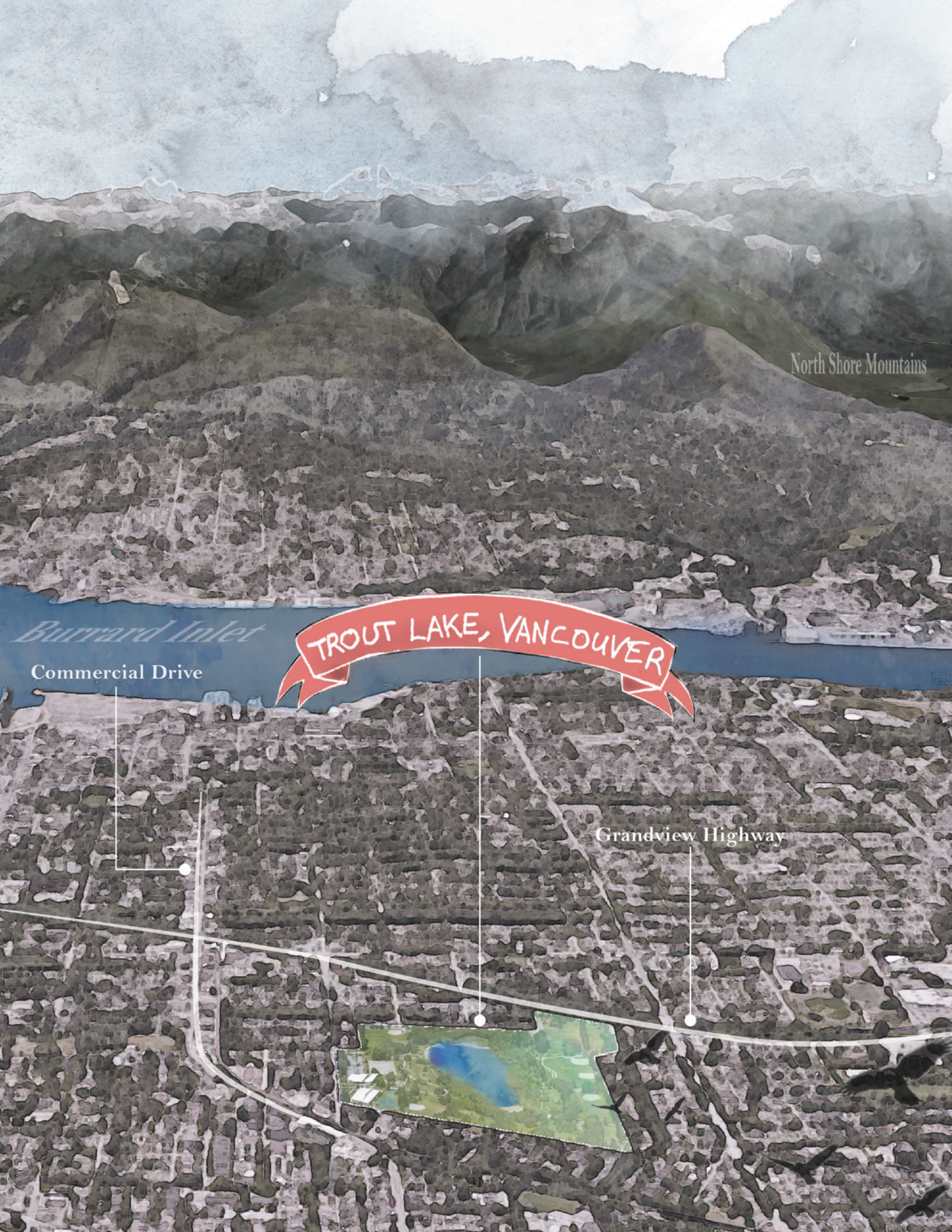
North Shore Mountains

Burrard Inlet

TROUT LAKE, VANCOUVER

Commercial Drive

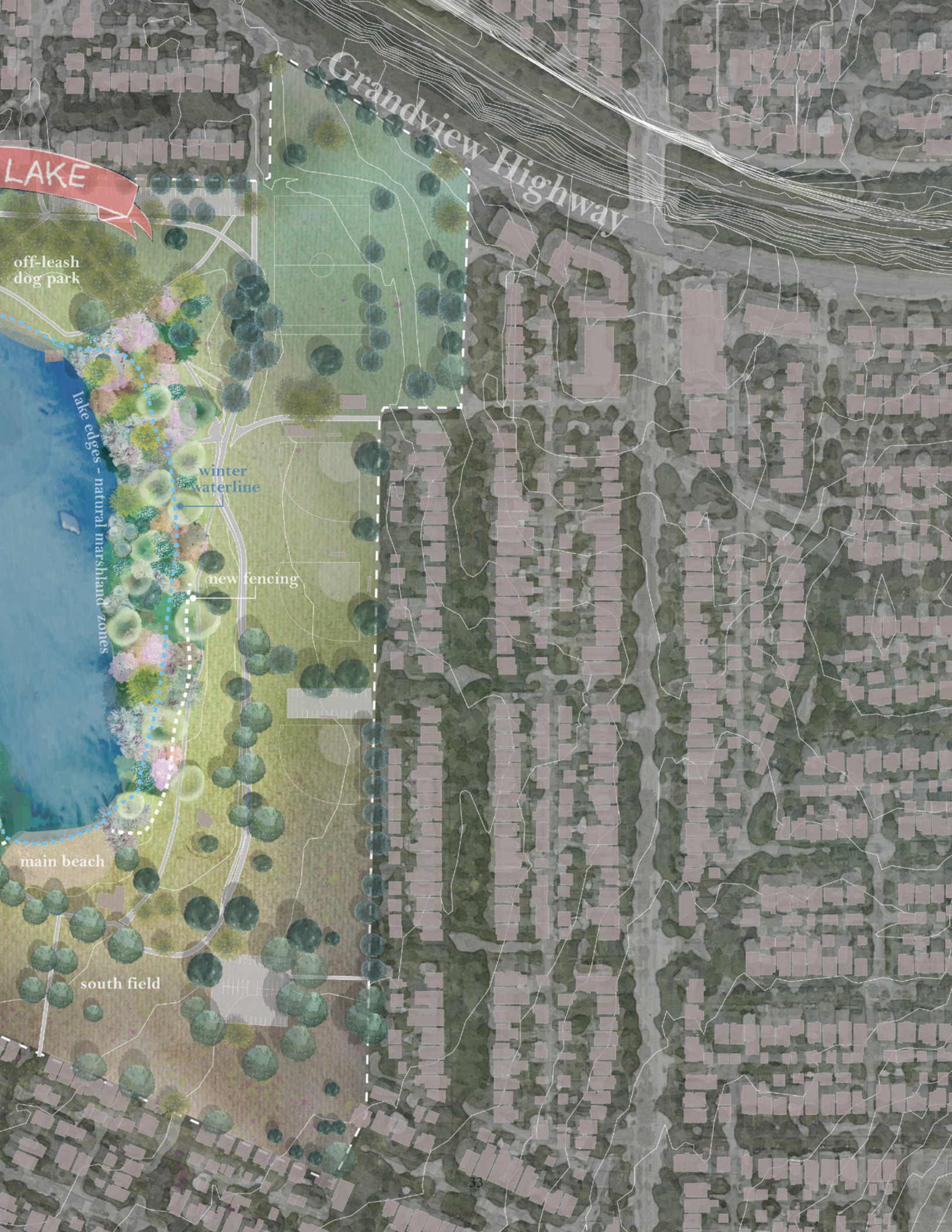**Grandview Highway**

TROUT

Commercial Drive

Trout Lake
Community
Centre

0m   50m   100m

LAKE

off-leash
dog park

lake edges - natural marshland zones

winter
waterline

new fencing

main beach

south field

Grandview Highway

TROUT LAKE

Trout Lake is a vibrant and unique place that is special to its East Vancouver community. The park includes a community centre, multiple sports fields, a beach area, an off-leash dog park, and a set of trails that circle the perimeter of the lake. The lake edges are largely marshland, with many native species returning to the area. Under the care of the Vancouver Parks Board, management of the park is disorganized; control occurs in the outer areas of the park, while the inner lake edges have been left to remain as they are. This has resulted in the production of the John Hendry Park Renewal Plan; a masterplan created by the Parks Board outlining a series of objectives for cohesive park improvement over the next 20 years (City of Vancouver 2021). However, this renewal plan does not take into account how the community interacts with the park, particularly around the edges of the lake.

HISTORIES

Like any urban environment, Trout Lake is made up of layers of histories, taking on multiple identities and physical forms over the years. Cease Wyss describes the pre-colonial history of Trout Lake; it was once a part of the stream network that ran through what is now Vancouver - these streams were integral to local ecologies and provided a wide variety of food and medicine to the Indigenous communities of the area (Wyss 13:03-13:19). Trout Lake was once a wetland surrounded by forests, full of berries and medicines such as cranberries, salmonberries, native willow, red osier, and labrador tea. Berry camps occurred here during the summer; Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations would gather here to pick berries, hunt and share food, and to celebrate earth's abundance (Wyss 13:30-14:05).

"Trout Lake was a meeting point between the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Watuth. We would have all camped out, hunting and gathering… sharing food and talking about the good things that the earth provides to us."

-Cease Wyss

Trout Lake - South End, *1904. City of Vancouver Archives* (edited).

As colonization and industrialization occurred, the stream network was gradually filled in, but the lake remained, as it had use as the water supply for the local mill, and as a source of peat (Vancouver Heritage Foundation). As one of the only places in the young city left undeveloped, the urban marsh took on a character of illicitness. East Vancouver community member Fred Rogers describes his memories of the lake during his childhood in the 1920s; "my father told me never to wander down to Trout Lake. It was a marshy wilderness then, and I remember that during the summer older boys had campfires burning at night. It was a secret place of nude swimming" (Rogers 2001). This identity as a place of wildness and covert activity remains in contemporary Trout Lake.

Trout Lake has a vibrant history as a wetlands full of food, a multicultural gathering place, and a place of hidden safety in an urban environment where people felt comfortable being themselves. Remnants of this character remain today, emerging through the physical landscape and in the social uses of places in the park that are left unmanaged by the city.

CURRENT SITE MATTERS

Contemporary Trout Lake exhibits a contrast between the true character that emerges in some places, and the management practices of Vancouver Parks Board. Some areas such as the beach and the lake are highly controlled; sand is brought in each spring, and 206,000 cubic meters of fresh water is pumped in every year in an attempt to keep the lake swimmable (City of Vancouver 2013). However, the edges of the lake are largely left alone - this is where the magic and uniqueness of Trout Lake occurs.

Heterotopias

The pockets of vegetation surrounding Trout Lake are full of liveliness. The natural wetland state of this place is free to function here, flooding in the winter and receding in the summer. Many native plants such as red osier, Douglas spirea, and salmonberry still exist here and continue to return. This is also where the community feels comfortable interacting with the land; these hidden places host all types of human intervention, as people alter this landscape for necessity and enjoyment.

A heterotopia is a Foucauldian term that refers to a real, physical place that is enacted by people who are outside of normal society in some way; the "hetero" in heterotopia refers to difference (Foucault 47). A utopia is society in its ideal form, it is a concept, and therefore fundamentally unreal. In contrast to this, heterotopias have physical presence in the world; they are mini-utopias made by and for people who do not fit into the predominant culture (Foucault 47). Trout Lake is full of these kinds of places.

People live, celebrate, and make art in these lake edge zones. This park is a place where the community feels like it is their own, altering the landscape to suit their own unique needs and ideas for how the park should be. Many willows in the edge areas of the lake are places where people take up temporary residence in the summer. These are spaces where unique uses of land happen; I've seen one willow become a library – people arranged logs as seating, and left a rotating selection of books. Many unofficial trails in the park lead to hidden clearings where groups often gather, occasionally building campfires in the summer. Forts made out of branches are regularly made, shifting their locations with the seasons, and ribbons and dried flowers are often added to these. A temporary sand labyrinth occurred on the beach in January, and each spring people add new sections to the woven willow fence in the northeast corner of the park.

Trout Lake hosts festivals such as Illuminares, the Alice in Wonderland Festival, and Vines Art Festival. These are art and music festivals that celebrate difference and imagination, encouraging people to express their uniqueness and to connect with each other and the surrounding environment.

Trout Lake is a beautiful mishmash of community design and interaction with the land. This is ongoing: over the course of this project, I have seen many of these community interventions be made, disappear, then reappear elsewhere, or something new takes its place.

Heterotopia #1: Teenage Hangout. I found this place in August; following a closed trail, it appeared as though people frequently use this clearing as a place to gather. Logs had been organized for seating, and there was a fire pit at the edge of the site.

Heterotopia #2: Tree for Singing. This is a portrayal of a willow tree where people gather during the Illuminares festival. People climb into the branches to sing, while the area below turns into the dancing stage.

Heterotopia #3: Campground. This area was peaceful - sunlight filtered through the trees, and as it was deep in the edges of the lake, there were only the sounds of birds. The area had been cleared for setting up tents; although there were none at the time, remnants of these temporary shelters remained.

There are 31 draft directions for John Hendry Park, shown and described in this concept. Many have carried through the planning process from start to finish. There are 10 new or updated directions (marked by coloured boxes) that have been updated since 2019 to reflect current Park Board strategies, observations of park use during the pandemic, and the predicted impacts of climate change. These 10 directions are presented in more detail in subsequent display panels.

Cultural Focus Area – Indigenous Reconciliation

1 CULTURAL FOCUS AREA *(new)*
- dedicate an area to support the Park Board's Reconciliation Mission, Vision, and Values
- co-create and design the area with local First Nations and Urban Indigenous residents to reflect Indigenous Peoples' interests and forge positive relationships that offer benefit to all residents

2 INDIGENOUS CELEBRATION FACILITY
- consider a covered event structure through the Cultural Focus Area design process

Water – Blue Layer

3 ADAPTIVE TROUT LAKE WATER QUALITY TREATMENT & MONITORING *(updated)*
- conduct ongoing water monitoring to track water quality improvements
- trial water quality enhancements including aeration, seasonal partitioning of the swimming area to focus water treatments (e.g. water curtain or barrier), and filtration alternatives
- work towards a goal of eliminating the addition of drinking water into the lake while maintaining a swimmable area

4 RAINWATER CHANNEL FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD RUNOFF
- construct and naturalize a water channel for treating neighbourhood rainwater runoff in the park
- restore the flow of rain water to Trout Lake to help improve water quality and restore lake ecosystems

5 CAPTURE AND TREAT PARK RUNOFF
- direct rainwater runoff within the park towards Trout Lake for natural infiltration, rather than to City storm sewers
- add rain gardens and pervious paving at parking and fields to clean and infiltrate rainwater in a more ecological way

Natural Spaces – Green Layer

6 NORTHEAST WOODLAND
- naturalize a woodland area to add biodiversity and a sound and visual buffer to South Grandview

7 NATURAL LAKE EDGES
- protect the east and west shorelines of Trout Lake as natural areas for wildlife and limit public access to these areas
- restore vegetation including removal of invasive species and ongoing maintenance

8 TREE INVENTORY AND RENEWAL *(throughout park - specific locations not shown on map)*
- assess the condition of all existing trees
- add new trees to maintain a mix of open and treed areas, to frame views, and to increase biodiversity

9 POLLINATOR PLANTING *(throughout park - specific locations not shown on map)*
- integrate plants that attract butterflies, insects, and birds throughout the park
- add educational information
- collaborate on stewardship of these areas

Open Spaces – Relax Layer

10 DEDICATED FLEXIBLE OPEN SPACES *(new)*
- maintain spaces for informal play and relaxation
- improve drainage and quality of grass
- maintain the northwest and northeast fields as unfenced to encourage informal use when not booked

11 PICNIC SHELTERS
- add picnic shelters near the south beach area (both bookable and informal)

12 LAKE LOOKOUTS
- upgrade the existing northwest pier
- remove the older northeast pier
- add two new piers on the east and west shorelines for low impact lake views
- integrate seating and low level lighting

13 SEATING, DRINKING WATER, AMENITIES *(throughout park - specific locations not shown on map)*
- add seating and drinking water throughout the park
- increase options for seating in sun and shade, lounging areas, and "playful" seating

Activity Spaces – Play Layer

14 DOG OFF-LEASH AREA *(updated)*
- keep size similar to existing (2.8 ha)
- improve signage and amenities
- mark boundaries by secure fencing per the *People, Parks & Dogs Strategy*
- maintain un-gated access points in areas with lower potential for conflict
- add gated access points in the areas closest to adjacent field spaces

15 SOFTBALL FIELDS *(updated)*
- Northwest Field: re-orient and enlarge to Softball Canada (SC) standards and maintain areas used for mini-soccer
- Southwest Field: remove due to poor drainage and tree impacts required to expand to SC sizing; future planning for this area as part of the Cultural Focus Area

16 ALL-WEATHER FIELD
- maintain with updates to surfacing (gravel, turf, or artificial turf) considered through the City-wide *Sport Field Strategy* (currently underway)

17 LITTLE LEAGUE FIELDS
- shift the northern and middle ballfields west (approximately 10 m) to support relocation of the BC Parkway Trail (see #26)
- at the same time, complete upgrades including improved drainage, backstops, spectator seating, and perimeter fencing

18 NORTHEAST PLAYING FIELD
- maintain with upgrades including drainage improvements and leveling (based on an assessment of subsurface conditions)
- add spectator seating

19 SOUTH BEACH ACTIVITY AREA
- update the beach building, including:
  - improved washrooms / changerooms
  - removal of the concession
  - a new multi-purpose activity space
  - a plaza space for mobile vending
  - a new seating deck with tables and chairs overlooking the beach
- enhance the beach area with additional sand, shade trees, and consideration for beach volleyball (space permitting)
- add an accessible beach and lake access
- create a new adventure playground for all ages with potential interactive water play
- integrate vegetation and seating throughout the area

20 SOUTH BEACH EVENT AREA *(updated)*
- add a flexible plaza space to the west of the south parking lot
- upgrade the south parking lot with permeable paving that could support use of this space during larger events
- design the area to host a wide range of activities including community celebrations (e.g. National Indigenous Peoples Day, Vines Art Festival), Trout Lake Farmers Market (see #21), fitness activities, performances, and more
- add power and lighting for events
- integrate existing trees into the design

21 FARMERS MARKET RELOCATION *(updated)*
- plan to relocate the market to the South Beach Event Area (see #20) to:
  - increase connectivity to amenities like washrooms, playground, and picnic areas
  - support water and power access
- consider access, parking, and mitigation of neighbourhood impacts in the design
- retain the north parking lot as a back-up location should the process reveal an issue to relocation that cannot be overcome

22 COURTS ACTIVITY CENTRE *(updated)*
- reconfigure and update the courts area to include consideration for:
  - 3 full tennis courts
  - 2 basketball courts
  - 2 multi-sport courts
  - addition of ping-pong
  - integrated seating with wi-fi and power

23 VICTORIA DRIVE COMMUNITY PLAZA *(new)*
- update this less used area to include amenities such as:
  - covered spaces for TLCC programming and informal use
  - an art showcase space
  - games and lounge areas, wi-fi, and power
  - integrated urban skate elements
  - a potential tetherball area

24 COMMUNITY CENTRE PLAYGROUND
- maintain the existing playground with addition of seating and bicycle parking

25 NORTH PUBLIC WASHROOM BUILDING
- renovate the existing facility in partnership with user groups to include public washrooms / changerooms
- add outdoor patio seating / picnic tables

Circulation – Move Layer

26 BICYCLE CIRCULATION *(updated)*
- 26A: relocate the BC Parkway Trail to the east park edge to improve separation from recreational trails and connect to bike routes on E 13th Ave and E 19th Ave
- 26B: upgrade a multi-use trail through the park to connect from the BC Parkway to key destinations and the E 14th Ave bike route
- add bike parking / repair at key locations

27 PRIMARY PARK TRAILS
- improve surfacing and drainage for accessibility throughout the year
- upgrade a lake loop with options to go through or around the dog off-leash area
- add connections to key park destinations

28 SECONDARY PARK TRAILS *(throughout park - specific locations not shown on map)*
- update the network to key destinations
- improve drainage and add boardwalks in seasonally wet areas

29 PARKING
- retain the four existing parking lots
- make minor adjustments at the community centre lot to improve pedestrian circulation
- adapt the south lot for flexible event use (see #20)

30 WAYFINDING
- add circulation nodes with seating, signage, and art at key points in the network
- use clear, attractive, and consistent route and regulation signs throughout

31 PARK LIGHTING *(throughout park - specific locations not shown on map)*
- consider adding lighting to key routes that may be used in the evening (e.g. BC Parkway, lake loop) and destinations like part of the off-leash area and the courts area
- limit lighting in other areas to protect dark skies, especially around Trout Lake
- adapt existing field lighting to support dark sky objectives

City of Vancouver, Board of Parks and Recreation, *John Hendry Park Renewal Plan.* 2021.

John Hendry Park Renewal Plan

The Parks Board began to acquire the land surrounding Trout Lake in 1920. The area was officially renamed John Hendry Park in 1926 following a land donation from the daughter of John Hendry, an industrialist and mill owner (Vancouver Heritage Foundation). While this title is used in official Parks Board material, the name never caught on with the surrounding community - the park continues to be publicly referred to as Trout Lake. This difference in naming symbolizes an ongoing contrast between city management and community desires.

The Vancouver Parks Board is currently developing the *John Hendry Park Renewal Plan*. Previously referred to as the *John Hendry Park Masterplan*, the Parks Board acknowledged the colonial implications of the term "masterplan", changing the name of the project in 2021 (shapeyourcity.ca). While this is a positive development, the process remains the similar: objectives will guide development over the next 20 years, following a preestablished cohesive design for the park (pictured above).

The general concept of a masterplan is not in tune with the character of Trout Lake; as a static method of designing, a masterplan strategy seeks cohesion, where a single vision for a place is implemented. A masterplan is conceptualized as the ultimate design – once established, there is no room for the ongoing shifts in the park's environment and the community uses of the space.

The *John Hendry Park Renewal Plan* includes design objectives that will intentionally cut access off to the edges of the lake. There are directions for limiting public access from the east and west shoreline of the lake in order to restore vegetation and build up the wetland wildlife. A rainwater channel in the south east corner is to be constructed, and two new elevated "lake lookouts" will be added to these areas. These are well-intentioned goals, but they designate specific areas where humans go, and where the rest of nature belongs. If this design is established, the lake-edge zones will feel more controlled; people will not feel comfortable interacting with the land in the way they do currently.

These are the areas where many instances of community design at Trout Lake occur. School groups are often seen in these places, playing in the willows and wood forts, interacting and learning about the plants that grow here. The renewal plan will inhibit many of these interactions, and a generic wetland design will begin to take its place.

Rather than inhibiting the flows and relations of this unique heterotopian environment, I began to look for ways in which designers could interact with this space that would enable how the community already designs and interacts with the land at Trout Lake.

E 13TH AVE
SEMLIN DR
LAKEWOOD DR
TEMPLETON DR
SOUTH GRANDVIEW HWY
E 15TH AVE
GARDEN DR
E 17TH AVE
E 18TH AVE
CULTURAL FOCUS AREA
TROUT LAKE COMMUNITY CENTRE
ARENA
HULL ST
E 19TH AVE
CULTURAL FOCUS AREA
MARSHALL ST

"Limit Public Access"
Community Design Locations

0   50   100

UNDERSTANDING SITE THROUGH FILMMAKING

      The problem of the masterplan arises when the designer is not connected to the ongoing shifts and flows of a site. In the case of the *John Hendry Park Renewal Plan*, decisions were made that restrict how the park functions within the surrounding community. By probing the site through filmmaking, my intention was to learn about the physical realities of Trout Lake. Filmmaking enabled me to deeply notice what occurs at Trout Lake, and to gain knowledge of the lived experiences of others in the park.

My Own Experience Of Site

"..it is in allowing ourselves to be drawn by our loves, our intensive and extensive curiosities, attentive to what and whom we are driven to explore, and examining the complex web of relations that we inherit thereby, that we might inhabit research questions ethically."

<div align="right">-Natalie Loveless</div>

      I started learning about Trout Lake by uncovering relations between myself and the site; to see what emerges through embodied experience of the place. Filmmaking "presents a way of thinking beyond the objectivity/subjectivity divide, recognizing that the researcher becomes part of the phenomenon being studied" (Sandercock 61).

      I recorded what drew my attention; the seasonal changes, how people have independently modified the landscape, the interactions between people, other species, and the place. In Donna Haraway's concept of "becoming with," we are always ongoingly a part of intra and interactions with the creatures around us (Haraway 4). To be drawn by curiosity is to pay attention to the ways I am participating in these affective relationships; how place and self are imprinted on one another. By probing the site through film, my physical-emotional experience of Trout Lake is captured and portrayed. The elements of the site I was drawn to are overlayed with my own thoughts and memories.

Trout Lake (2021) and Ohio (1994). Trout Lake footage is merged with a photograph of a similar place from my childhood. Present experience of place and memories are entangled; they build off one another.

August and October (2021). Summer and fall footage of the same path are overlayed, drawing attention to the seasonality of this area. This is an unofficial but heavily used path in the summer, inaccessible in the fall.

Moments, *video stills.*

Moments is a video that explores the hidden heterotopian pockets often found under the weeping willows. The video focuses on mushrooms growing, pools of water forming, and an unofficial path that leads to somewhere unknown. The accessibility and character of Trout Lake changes dramatically throughout the year, particularly in the areas not currently being managed by the Vancouver Parks Board. By examining the site through video-making, these seasonal and people-made changes, and my own movement through the space can be seen.

Through the making of this film, site-questions emerged;

How can these ephemeral or community-intervention moments be encouraged or extended?

Can video/art intervention open possibility and encourage further engagement within the place?

Interview, *video stills.*

Others' Experience Of Site

Interview is a collage of collected videos made by other people. It is a series of imagined conversations in which I ask the question, "What does Trout Lake mean to you?" In contrast to the previous personal explorations of Trout Lake, this story is told entirely through the lens of others who are connected to the park in some way. It is inspired by Austin Allen's *Claiming Open Spaces*, where the identity of an urban place might be seen through the layering of many community members' perspectives.

New understandings of place emerged by making this film. Cease Wyss sees Trout Lake as a place of hope, where part of the urban landscape is returning to where it might have been headed in a pre-colonial era (Wyss 14:45-15:32). Different community restoration projects have occurred, indicating ecological interest in the park. Trout Lake is the setting for many community art and cultural festivals and gatherings, both official and unofficial. Many people have independently altered the space, integrating installations such as an intricate willow-wattle fence and a temporary tree fort.

Trout Lake has a strong sense of place that has emerged through unique and dynamic interactions occurring over time between the community, different modes of cultural expression, artmaking, and the land. Remnants of the site's past can be seen in the landscape as well as in the social uses of the place. Many of the native plants still exist here or have been replanted, and Trout Lake continues to be a multicultural gathering space.

How can a landscape project be a part of this ecological and sociocultural identity, and work to further it?

THIS LITTLE LAKE

"We are all bound by a covenant of reciprocity: plant breath for animal breath, winter and summer, night and day, living and dying. Water knows this, clouds know this. Soil and rocks know they are dancing in a continuous giveaway of making, unmaking, and making again the earth."
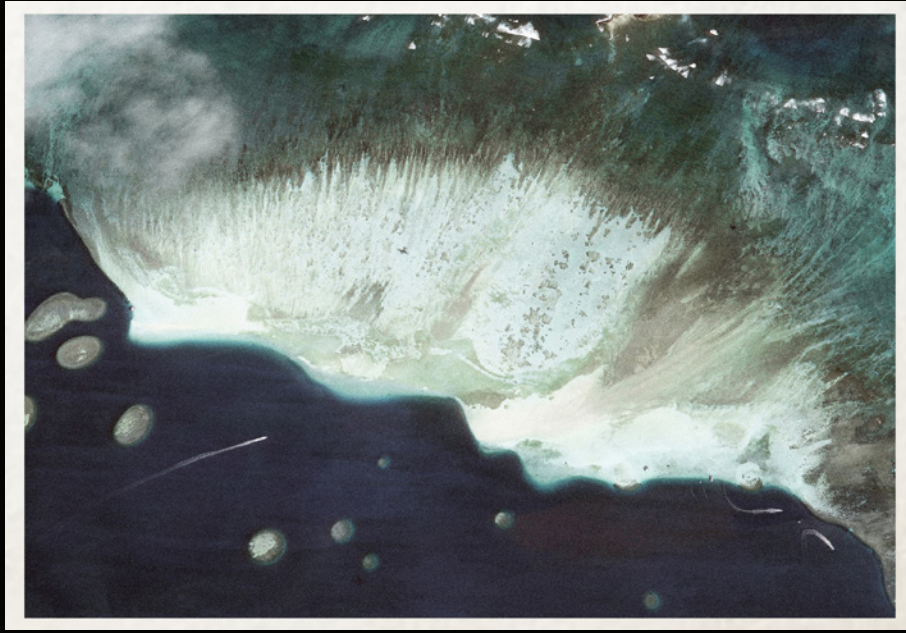
-Robin Kimmerer

    This Little Lake explores an alternative design process; how a landscape practice can move away from being observer, and towards being an active participant of the life of the place. As Robin Kimmerer describes, the world is made up of all kinds of complex relations bound in continuous cycles of making, unmaking, and making again (Kimmerer 383). This project examines how we might design in a way that is aware of these cycles, and the role we play within them.

    Traditional methods of practicing landscape design stem from a top down approach focussed on an ideal end point for a site. We design a site from a perspective that is separate from place, and as if our design is going to be the final stage for that place. This does not align with this idea of the world being alive, made up of infinite, shifting relations. *This Little Lake* forgoes a static masterplan in exchange for a shifting and relational design strategy.
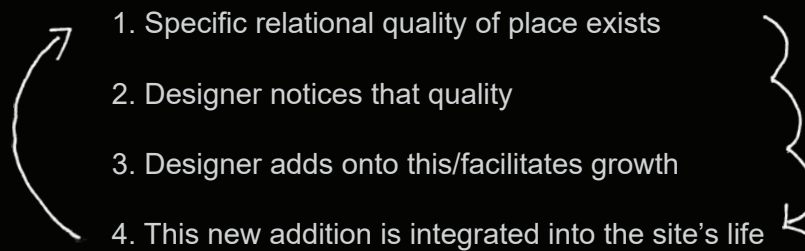
    Physical interventions emerge in the landscape by deeply noticing and working with the specific site, people and non-human actors that make up that place. The heterotopian character of Trout Lake is celebrated and encouraged as added design work is incorporated into the life of the site. There is no fixed endpoint- the interventions are meant to shift as people interact with their environment, using existing and introduced elements to suit their needs.

Kaneohe Sandbar, Hawaii. *Google Satellite Imagery* (edited).

sandbar sites

1. Specific relational quality of place exists

2. Designer notices that quality

3. Designer adds onto this/facilitates growth

4. This new addition is integrated into the site's life

This project follows a strategy called *Sandbar Sites*, a cyclical design methodology inspired by Kristina Hill's description of how the field of ecology now understands site; they are seen as "something more like sandbars, expressions of flows at larger scales" (Hill 138). *Sandbar Sites* is a landscape design method that centers these observed flows and relationships. This strategy is imagined as having four steps; the first two steps focus on understanding specifically who and what exist in a site, and the relations between these. The third and fourth steps imagine how a designer might enter these relations, becoming integrated into the ebb and flow of a place. The physical features of a place are understood as temporary spatial forms created by the relations of a site; these forms will shift and change over time.

design goals

Story of Place: Create interventions that grow from what already exists; use how community members have altered the landscape as direct indications for what will come next

Stewardship: Enhance existing human-land connections that occur here; foster new connections and potential for land stewardship

Community: Designer works as an integrated part of the site's community; interventions should strengthen existing human and nonhuman communities/ecologies

Time: There is no static end point. Designs will change incrementally over time, responsive to shifts in how the place is used

materials

The first step of the project was to identify which materials people used when creating their own designs in the park. Willow, wood, stone, and planting were selected for my own intervention process, and I added a fifth: filmmaking. These materials were selected for their potential to engage curiosity and encourage others to continue spatially designing.

MUD

Many muddy areas occur in spring due to the wetlands nature of the park. Children play in different mud pools around the lake edges

WOOD

Structures and forts are regularly built, shifting locations and forms throughout the seasons
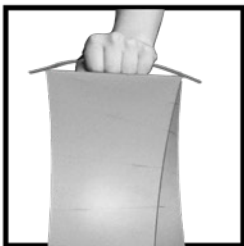

WILLOW

Willow trees are trimmed by the Parks Board each year, and branches are left in piles until the spring. People use this material to add onto the willow fence and to make forts.

STONE

A sand labyrinth made in January indicates the community feels comfortable moving land here. There is currently no stone at the park; it would likely be a welcome addition

LANTERNS / LIGHT

Many festivals related to light and lanterns occur at Trout Lake; the Illuminares Festival is the most well-known.
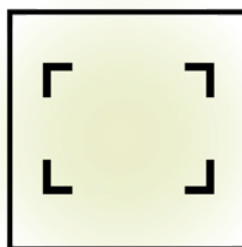

TARP / CANVAS

Makeshift shelters occur during the summer, particularly under willow trees

PLANTING

People tend to guerilla-planted bulbs such as daffodils and hyacinth, as well as the native wood anemone and salmonberry plants located east of the dog park

FILM

Filmmaking is a medium that draws people in, creating an experience that is close to reality. It has potential to inspire and instigate further interaction with the park.

- selected material

WILLOW

The project began by noticing how people interacted with the willow trees that had been cut down. Circles woven out of this willow were strewn around the park, as if they were offerings to the trees, or to the place in general. I began to weave my own willow circles, and as I did this, someone came up to join me. She told me how she often gathers willow from Trout Lake each spring to use at home, and had noticed others leaving the circles here. We both left our willow circles on branches of trees in the park. This encounter sparked the beginning of this intervention process: I realized that I could contribute to the design of the park by simply joining in.

A high visibility vest became a part of this process - ironically this rendered me invisible; I was seemingly an official parks worker going about my maintenance duties.

There is a large community-made willow fence in the northeast corner, and so I learned how to weave willow fences. The new fence follows an official trail leading deeper into the edges of the lake.

Dogs frequently run down the unofficial trail where the new willow fence was built, so an archway for dogs emerged. Dog visitors began using this archway right away - one ran through as I was finishing the top.

WOOD

There is lots of wood at Trout Lake. Old trees and branches are left where they land, and people use it for making forts, fires, and many other things. I used this material to make a large circular arch, learning how to weave wood. Unlike willow, these branches were not flexible; but this allowed them to carry each others' weight, holding onto one another to create a fairly stable archway. The arch can be seen from the main pathway, but only if someone is really looking. As one young visitor described, it is a "portal", meant to act as a potential entrance to the lake edge areas of the park.

Time Overlay. A child's interaction with the circle arch in April overlaps with my own interaction with the arch in February. The use of film enabled a focus on transformations over time throughout this project.

February

March

~ew gross, ew gross~

April

The archway has remained intact over the seasons. I had built it in February, and it quickly became inaccessible for humans as the wetland waters started to flood the area; ducks frequently swam through.

In April the water receded, and reeds began to spring up around it. People now had access to the arch, and children were especially curious about what is was. An artist and a group of kids approached the archway when I was there one day, excited to see the arch and the area beyond it. As the children played, the artist described the value she found at Trout Lake - it was a place where kids were able to connect to land, learning about the plants and animals that lived here through play and interaction. I imagine this arch as a part of these lessons, encouraging people to interact with this area.

STONE

Stone was an element that was added to Trout Lake. This intervention was inspired by sand sculptures that had been made at the beach that winter; a labyrinth, a bird bath, and different types of dams had been dug in the sand. This was seen as an indication that the community was comfortable altering land here. Half a tonne of river rock was ordered to the park in February. This process was driven by curiosity - what would happen with this new material? Would it be permitted to remain on site, and would the stones be incorporated into the community design of the space?

When the stones arrived, I began to make rock piles on the beach. This gained lots of attention from the park-goers; people asked me what I was doing, if I knew about other art projects in the park, and many people discussed their own art or nature-based practice. A kid began to make his own rock piles.

When I returned to the park next, the stones had been moved to a new location. It appeared that park workers knew the stones didn't belong, but were not sure how to deal with them. I found the stones, and built a new form; a stone circle that would perhaps not attract as much attention. People continued to ask questions, and a few participated in making their own stone artworks.

Stone Locations

The stones were relocated once again by park workers; this time conveniently to the place where I was planning to host a community planting event. I formed the stones into an outline for the garden bed.

The current iterations of these stones are in the work of community members; they have been incorporated into decorations, and some have been made into a stepping stone trail leading into the water at the main beach.

The stone circle has also been left to remain, becoming more integrated into place as the seasons change.

Location 1

Location 2

Location 2; February

Location 3; February

Location 4; March

Location 2; April

Stone Circle - February to April

PLANTING

Trout Lake's marshland identity remains in the area; many indigenous plants such as salmonberry, osoberry, Douglas spirea, red osier, and other species live at the park. There are ongoing efforts to restore the ecologically sensitive areas surrounding the lake, such as the Trout Lake restoration project completed in 2019 by the group Echo Ecological (echoecological.com). There are also areas where people have guerilla-planted their own bulbs; clumps of daffodils and wild hyacinth bloom each spring.

A Planting Day was held on March 26; this community event was meant to enable the marsh-state of Trout Lake to continue, and to create community connection and responsibility for the plants. Native edible and medicinal plants such as salmonberry, nootka rose, goji berry, osoberry, strawberries, bleeding heart, violet, and yarrow were provided by Lori Snyder, a local teacher and herbalist. Together we gathered these plants from her garden, and she taught me how to care for each plant she gave. A new garden was established on the northeast end of the park, merging with the surrounding marsh.

Hello everybody welcome to Planting Day woo0

and... yeah just getting it going quite a bit

becoming a part of that process

Bleeding heart - March to April

Planting Day was advertised across various platforms; I had hung posters in the park and in other locations in East Vancouver, and people had found out on Instagram and on a tree planter's online forum. Due to this varied advertising, people from a diverse range of ages and backgrounds participated in the event and expressed interest in continuing looking after the new garden. As the event came to a close, a kid excitedly showed his father where strawberries had been planted, explaining they could come back and pick strawberries the following year. As of May, the garden continues to flourish, and the bleeding hearts and salmonberry have blossomed.

FILM

The fifth intervention for Trout Lake was a movie night. A film screening was installed at the dog park at the north end of the site, and *This Little Lake* was shown to the community it is about. As Leonie Sandercock describes, film is a medium that acts as a catalyst for creating rich community dialogues (Sandercock 60). The screening inspired many vibrant conversations between community members; questions arose about what the new fencing in the park signified, and how this would change the dynamic of the park. An urban planner who attended this event discussed how her own field is working to include community members in the planning process. One viewer was deeply concentrated through the viewing, and discussed his concerns with human interaction with nature at Trout Lake, considering whether or not there were positive ways to interact with the environment, and how that could be accomplished. The screening event sparked imagination, perhaps inspiring further community participation in the park's landscape.

SIGNAGE

The final intervention was to add signs to the park, suggesting different types of engagement with materials and spaces. They initially appear as official signage, playfully subverting management of the park.

A community member had mentioned that the Parks Board sends their piles of trimmed willow branches to be chipped each year, rather than working with local artists and gardeners to use the branches in other ways. The willow sign was therefore the first to be made, meant to encourage creative use of the branches. The sign for stones had the same intention, signifying many possibilities for this added material.
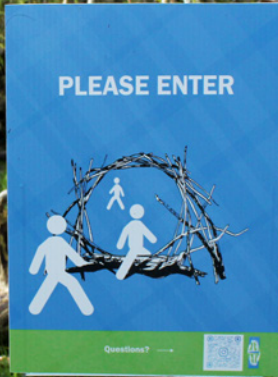
The wording on each sign was intentionally chosen to suggest interaction, rather than being instructions for specific use. Signs were placed beside two interventions made during the course of this project, encouraging people to go down the unofficial willow fence path, and to explore the area around the wood circle.

ESTABLISHING

The design goals of this project were intended to be materially achieved; there are many ways in which the project has a physical life that will continue on. As of May 2022, the signs remain. Willow circles continue to be woven, and people now regularly go down the path that was lined with the new willow fence. Lori Snyder has more plants to be added to the park, and a kid's camp at the Trout Lake Community Centre plan to take on stewardship of the garden this summer. Over the course of this project I became more connected to the park's community, meeting local artists and community members. These interventions created small changes to the fabric of Trout Lake, slightly altering how people interact with the space. It is my hope that this will continue on, that people will pick up this dance from wherever others have left off.

This Little Lake is one instance of how the practice of landscape architecture can become embedded in the place. This film shifted as it was made, taking cues from how people interacted with the interventions. This process of making required being on-site, responding to how people interacted with the new additions to the landscape. The project focused on deeply understanding a place and implementing design strategies that directly emerged from the specific community of Trout Lake, meant to change over time. *This Little Lake* serves as one example for how landscape design methods can move away from conceptualizing static end states, and towards shifting, relational, ongoing design practices that center curiosity, joy, and community.

THIS LITTLE LAKE

Intervention Locations

- 🟣 Willow
- 🟠 Wood
- 🔴 Stone
- 🟢 Garden
- 🟢 Film

0m 50m 100m

Grandview Highway

Victoria Drive

E. 19th Avenue

Dog Park

Main Beach

*"Knowing that you love the earth changes you,
activates you to defend and protect and celebrate.
But when you feel that the earth loves you in return,
that feeling transforms the relationship from a one-way
street into a sacred bond."*

-Robin Kimmerer

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