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THEMED SECTION

Introduction: Landscape, place and identity in craft and design

Kay Lawrence, Editor

Climbed over a gate into a bare paddock for the first two drawings as this site gave the best view of the channel as it entered the lake. Sat on the side of the hill amongst the long grasses, their feathery tips brushing my legs as I perched there setting up, the sun hot on my back. Later I moved to the cliff top near the Ngarrindjeri cemetery to finish the sequence. I could hear the frogs calling from the reed beds below; a hollow, reverberant rhythm, pulsating with different beats like the canopy of reeds in the swamp rippling in the wind.

*Kay Lawrence, journal entry, 27 Sept. 2014, near Wellington, where the Murray channel enters Lake Alexandrina/Parknka/Mungkul/Kayinga*

This edition of *craft + design enquiry* called for papers that addressed how writers and practitioners in the fields of craft and design have employed the visual, material, spatial and temporal processes of their disciplines to interrogate questions of identity in relation to place and landscape. It was my long-standing interest as a craft practitioner in engaging with landscape to explore issues of personal and national identity that led to the invitation to edit this edition of the journal. So I come to this role as a maker and a writer in the field of craft practice, with a particular focus on drawing and textiles.

In everyday speech, the terms ‘place’ and ‘landscape’ have slightly different inflexions. We tend to think of a landscape, whether a representation or a physical terrain, as the topography of a piece of land seen from one spot: we *look* at a landscape. While place may refer to land that is unoccupied by people, places are generally understood to incorporate the idea of dwelling, of people living in and being connected to a particular location. Each term posits a subtly different way of relating to the environment: landscapes perceived largely through sight and thus able to be conceived as separate from and outside us; places lived in and known intimately through the senses of touch, sound, smell and vision.

The excerpt from my journal that prefaces this introduction was written during one of seven drawing trips that I made during 2014 along the Murray River in South Australia to make a series of drawings for the exhibition *Same River Twice,*
which was held concurrently at the Australian Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide and the Murray Bridge Regional Gallery from December 2014 to February 2015. The body of work I presented was titled *No words for the river* and it was painted at sites along the Murray. The works were watercolour drawings superimposed over a lexicon of phrases (in English) that I drew from the historical record that describe the river in terms of lack and deficiency. The intent of this layering was to bring into focus the tension between the expectations generated by the English linguistic concept ‘river’ and the complex and fluid entity that is the ‘River Murray’.

As I sat drawing, responding to the landscape in front of me, I was conscious of the bodily experience of being there by the river, in that place, at that time in all its sensory complexity: the light, the air, the terrain, the sounds magnified by water. In ‘Place and the problem of landscape’, philosopher Jeff Malpas points out that a landscape, whether a visual representation or a physical terrain, is necessarily perceived from a particular place and so ‘the experience of landscape seems not to be restricted to the visual alone. The experience of landscape is as much the smell and feel of a place as anything purely visual’ (2011: 10).

As noted by Malpas and confirmed by my experience, relationships to landscape are multilayered and interwoven with place. In considering the temporality of landscape, anthropologists Tim Ingold and Richard Bradley have concluded that the landscapes in which people have lived are, like places, shaped over time by human action as well as by physical forces, although these temporal processes that occur imperceptibly over millennia are almost impossible to perceive from a human standpoint:

> I argue that we should adopt ... what I call a ‘dwelling perspective’ according to which the landscape is constituted as an enduring record of—and testimony to—the lives and work of past generations who have dwelt within it and in so doing have left something of themselves. (1993: 2)

To adopt a dwelling perspective when considering landscape in Australia, for example, is to recognise the continent as a peopled place rather than ‘terra nullius’, which was the concept invoked to justify the removal of the first Australians from their land during and after the period of colonisation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. My experience walking along the Murray River looking for sites to draw made me viscerally aware of how this landscape has been shaped by thousands of years of Aboriginal inhabitation.

While apprehension of our physical environment is shaped by the senses, the meanings that we give, as individuals and communities, to landscapes and places are socially and culturally inflected, and so bound up with complex questions about human identity. If we accept that ‘identity’ is not a given, but constructed in response to an intricate array of social, cultural, economic and physical forces, then how we think of ourselves as individuals, communities and even nations will be shaped by the places and landscapes where we live, for,
as art historian W.T.J. Mitchell reminds us, ‘landscape is not an object to be seen or a text to be read but a process by which social and subjective identities are formed’ (1994: 1). Within this process, it is through our location in and attachment to places that we come to know, understand and give meaning to the world. As geographer Tim Cresswell points out, ‘When we look at the world as a world of places we see different things. We see attachments and connections between people. We see worlds of meaning and experience’ (2004: 11). The papers in this volume open up the complex meanings that we attach to landscape and place, and how they in turn shape personal, community and national identity. The writers, practitioners and scholars from across the world examine the varying cultural inflections that attach to landscapes and places and how they interconnect or differ across locations as physically and culturally diverse as Antarctica, Australia, England, Greece, Mongolia, Scotland and Slovenia.

This edition of *craft + design enquiry* begins in South Australia with a journey across time and continents to the crowded urban streets of nineteenth-century London, at that time the centre of the British Empire. As Ingold and Bradley point out, it is *where* we are positioned within a landscape that activates a point of view on our surroundings (1993: 18). It was a journey undertaken by Sue Kneebone in 2012, from her home in Adelaide to a house in London, which prompted her insight into some of the dark forces that shaped a nascent Australian identity. In her essay ‘Dark Manners’, she employs the particularities of the outwardly respectable home of surgeon and anatomist John Hunter in Leicester Square, a house that concealed a shadowy trade in human remains, to interrogate ‘dark issues of colonial settler identity’ in Australia. The essay examines the intent and material processes that shaped her exhibition of the same name, which was presented in 2013 at the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia. The exhibition alluded to the layout of Hunter’s house in a series of Gothic tableaus, where animal remains grafted on to period-style furniture, anachronistic laboratory equipment and a reliquary of camel bones created an uneasy and sinister conjunction of nature, culture and science. Kneebone’s use of bricolage as a crafting practice to bind disparate things in disturbing relationships brought into focus the oppressive and destructive relations between the colonists and Indigenous Australian people that underpinned the British colonial project and that lingers still in Australia.

It is these repressed forces which Ross Gibson asserts still haunt the Australian imagination (2002), that trouble any straightforward reading of the innocuous needlework kits that Sera Waters critically examines in her essay ‘Inside the outback: An exploration of domesticated landscapes in Semco’s Long Stitch Originals series of the 1980s’. Waters points out that these long stitch embroideries, many picked up in opportunity shops, represent landscapes unconnected to the specificity of an actual place. She argues that, instead, they offer idealised depictions of pastoral scenes that conform to well-worn tropes
from the twentieth-century Australian landscape tradition, which are presented as simple scenes to be quickly stitched in wool. In evoking nostalgia for an idealised Australia that is represented by rural landscapes set with homesteads and scattered gums, and a time when housewives had the leisure and skill to decorate their homes with needlework, Waters reveals how, in the lead up to Australia’s bicentenary in 1988, these embroideries disavow the realities of the colonial past and even the postcolonial present, to offer instead the reassurance of a unified and unproblematic Australian nationalism.

Rowan Bailey and Claire Barber in their essay ‘The sleeping-bag landscape’ present another use for needlework, in this case a way of stitching an ‘ethics of care’ into salvaged sleeping-bags for those without a place to call home in the chilly north of England. In their essay, they conceptualise the sleeping-bag as a ‘travelling concept’ that moves across landscapes to finally become a material landscape itself, full of imaginative possibilities. They position the sleeping-bag as a place holder for different kinds of identity; as it moves from its material resonance and use in landscapes as diverse as Mongolia and Antarctica, it becomes a way of crafting an identity of place for the displaced in urban Bradford. Here, in a textile-based community project at the University of Huddersfield, abandoned sleeping-bags were salvaged and laundered by makers whose textiles skills were then used to reconfigure them as private places that offer protection and even a sense of belonging to the homeless people to whom they were given. As the authors note, ‘to be homeless is to be without the certainty of belonging to a place’. Through small empathetic gestures, the sleeping-bag becomes a way of putting oneself in the place of another, as well providing another with a warm, dry place to sleep.

Like the sleeping-bag, buildings and garments are designed to enclose and protect the human body from the elements, and it is through the evocation of these functions and meanings that they give shape to human identity. Drawing on Gottfried Semper’s insights into the origins of architecture in textiles (Schafter 2003: 37), Peta Carlin extends these ideas to encompass the concept of place. In her essay ‘PLACE │ DRESSING’, Carlin conceives of place as a garment: the geographical and cultural specificity of the Outer Hebrides as expressed in the enclosing and protective weave of Harris Tweed is contrasted with the undifferentiated and reflective surfaces of the curtain walls that clothe the global city. In a scholarly and poetic discussion of the affiliations of words like ‘dressing’, which describe the process of clothing the body and building a dwelling, she reveals how the languages of cloth, architecture and body illuminate the complex relationships that shape the identity of persons and places.

In situating place as central to the experience of landscape, Malpas opens up ‘the possibility that the place at issue … is one that encompasses more than the visual alone, one that combines the spatial and the temporal and constitutes a mode of engagement with rather than merely separation from’ (2011: ix).
These physical and bodily relationships to the temporal and spatial aspects of landscape are examined by Alice Lewis in her essay 'Body scape: A wearable inquiry into body–landscape relations'. She interrogates the conception of landscape as outside the body, to propose instead that bodies, as tangible material presences in the world, exist within the landscape, which she considers as a kind of infinite space rather than bounded by geography. In the workshop and project, a Conversation of Space—which Lewis conducted for the Meeting of European Design Students at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia during 2011—she worked with a group of students to stage a series of performative interventions into the spaces of the city. Through the design and wearing of abstract garments that complicated and interrupted the way that people were able to move through the urban landscape, their bodies became complex material presences, disrupting and displacing space, picking up detritus and leaving faint traces of their passing. The performances were not designed to address these embodied relations to the streetscape in terms of identity but, rather, to draw attention to the spatial and material significance of human bodies in the urban landscape.

The inexorable accumulation of the residues and traces of human action, like those described by Lewis, make their contribution to the slow evolution of the forms of landscape for, as Ingold and Bradley have noted, 'it is in the very processes of dwelling that the landscape is constituted' (1993: 11). But, as we dwell, we also die and return to the land that sustained us. It is this aspect of the human connection to landscape that Tom Lee addresses in his essay ‘Place and identity: What can we learn from the dead?’. In considering the design of cemeteries in England and Australia, places where the dead are returned to the earth to become, as Lee says, ‘mediators between the humans we take ourselves to be and the places we are not’, he employs philosopher Michel Foucault’s concept of heterotopia to situate the cemetery as ‘other’ to what we think of as ‘normal’ places. In the essay, he proposes a number of ways that cemeteries could be redesigned to become more like the everyday places we inhabit as living beings with their multiplicity of functions and meanings. One of his suggestions is to recreate the cemetery as a ‘natural’ burial ground, more like a woodland or the bush: a habitat that is able to support human and non-human alike. Instead of grid-like expanses of lawn and headstones that reduce the complexity of human identity to numbers and information inscribed on a memorial, he suggests that cemeteries could shift from their singular mortuary purpose to include all the diversity of purposes, experiences and meanings that being a place entails. This would enhance remembrance of the dead by activating those qualities of intimacy, attachment and connection that bind human beings to place and mitigate somewhat the loss of individual human identity that occurs when we return to the earth.
If it is memory that enables us to construct those narratives that shape our individual human identity, it is through remembering that we give meaning to the landscape. For Ingold and Bradley:

the landscape tells—or rather is—a story. It enfolds the lives and time of predecessors who, over the generations, have moved around in it and played their part in its formation. To perceive the landscape is therefore to carry out an act of remembrance, and remembering is not so much a matter of calling up an internal image, stored in the mind, as of engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past. (1993: 2)

The landscape architecture projects discussed in Panita Karamanea’s essay, ‘Landscape, memory and contemporary design’, seek to reveal the story of three different landscapes in Greece, each with a different history, ecology and cultural identity, and each being rich with associations from the distant and recent past. As the projects she describes demonstrate, it is through small gestures, slight modifications to the terrain, planting schemes that encourage indigenous plants, and paths that enable a kind of physical narration of the terrain, that landscape architecture becomes the means to activate the genius loci of each place. These subtle interventions that activate the latent characteristics of each site and encourage an embodied relationship with landscape, become a way of activating acts of remembrance. It is not just the history of events associated with these particular places that this reshaping of landscape is designed to evoke, but that other kind of remembrance as described by Ingold and Bradley that emerges through our perceptual engagement with place.

Conclusion

One comes to understand a landscape through movement within it, and one comes to understand and know a landscape through the journey ‘there and back again’ that one takes from one landscape to another (Ingold and Bradley 1993: 18)

This volume began with reference to a particular place in South Australia where the Murray River flows into a great lake, known by Aboriginal people variously as Parknka, Mungkul and Kayinga. The essays take us on a journey back and forth across hemispheres to end on another island in the Mediterranean at Armeni, an ancient Minoan Necropolis in Crete. These places have played their part over centuries, even millennia, in the formation of civilisations that now reach into the twenty-first century. This movement through landscape and place reveals the complexity of meaning that our dwelling places and landscapes provoke in the human imagination. They express the diverse ways that human
environments shape how we think and feel. Editing this volume has also been a journey. My knowledge of how we understand our place in the world through landscape has been expanded by the insights provided by these essays.

While craft and design are often thought to be primarily involved in producing ‘things’, they can also be understood as processes—‘an approach, an attitude or an action … a way of doing things’, as art and design researcher Glen Adamson once said of craft (2007: 4). The contributors to this edition of craft + design enquiry think with and through the design, materials and making processes of their disciplines as well as examining craft objects and human habitats to address the entwined relationships between landscape, place and identity. It’s unsurprising that most of these essays engage with the disciplines of textiles, architecture and landscape architecture within the larger fields of craft and design. Each of these systems of knowledge engage with the materiality of the physical world to produce practices and products that are intimately connected with the experience of dwelling. The materials that create cloth, buildings and the built forms of the environment originate in the earth. Whether derived from clay, minerals or plant life, these are the materials, shaped by human ingenuity and skill, that ultimately shape our habitats, protect the body and provide the context for human life and thought. It is through dwelling that we give places and landscapes their identity as meaningful entities, as they in turn shape us.¹

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References


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This hall, in which he was now left alone, was a pet fancy of his friend the doctor's; and Utterson himself was wont to speak of it as the pleasantest room in London. But to-night there was a shudder in his blood; the face of Hyde sat heavy on his memory; he felt (what was rare with him) a nausea and distaste of life; and in the gloom of his spirits, he seemed to read a menace in the flickering of the firelight on the polished cabinets and the uneasy starting of the shadow on the roof. He was ashamed of his relief, when Poole presently returned to announce that Dr. Jekyll was gone out.

(The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Stevenson 1886: 27)

The house of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde stands as a metaphoric representation through place of the conflicted identity of its inhabitants. To the street, it is the handsome home of the upstanding Dr Jekyll, who entertains his friends in 'the pleasantest room in London'; to the rear, it is the laboratory where lurks Dr Jekyll's alter ego, the evil Mr Hyde. Robert Louis Stevenson’s classic Gothic tale The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde symbolises a duplicity in which comfort and respectability is unsettled by a dark menace and hidden crimes.

As a place where conflict of identity resides, Dr Jekyll's house opens a door to our own unsettled place in the world. Exploring notions of Australian colonial settler identity as being out of place at the far edges of empire is a recurrent theme in my work as a visual artist. This field of inquiry raises the issue of a non-Indigenous relationship to the land as being an uncanny mix of uncertainty, anxiety, arrogance and strangeness—an unsettling malaise that filters through to the present. In this essay, I consider Australia’s sense of place and identity in colonial settler society through an investigation of nineteenth-century scientific practices in Australia and Britain, as represented in the exhibition Dark Manners.
In *Dark Manners*, held at the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia (CACSA) in Adelaide in 2013, I explored the medical frontier from a time when a growing interest in the natural sciences and evolutionary theory led to a dark and complex trade between colonial Australia and the centre of empire. It delved into the murky morality of respectable men of medicine in nineteenth-century Australia and Britain, who procured and donated human and animal remains for museum collections. *Dark Manners* looked at the notion of Australia as a nebulous laboratory at the far edges of empire where gentlemen scientists were the shadowy subjects of their own curious predilection for collecting. In the exhibition, I employed material hybridity as a way to craft an uneasy tension between the unspoken interiority of polite society and the duplicity of dark deeds committed in the interests of humankind, which continue to haunt the present.

The intention behind this exhibition project was to understand and represent the ethics and belief systems in British scientific thinking at the time of Australia’s colonisation, and how those systems remain hidden in the present. One of the key areas of interest was researching the British experimental surgeon and comparative anatomist John Hunter who, as surgeon extraordinary to King George III, was a significant figure in Georgian high society. Hunter’s quest for new medical discoveries reflected scientific thinking from the age of enlightenment, an era that preceded and overlapped the British settlement of Australia in the late eighteenth century. His work, and in particular the home where he worked, are said to have inspired a vital element of Stevenson’s Gothic tale of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

**Settler society and the Australian Gothic**

In my studio research, I seek ways to recast the past in its complexity by invoking the strangeness of colonial settlers inhabiting a strange land. For my doctoral research project, ‘Naturally Disturbed’ (Kneebone 2010), I implicated my own colonial settler–farming family as I gained a deeper understanding of the impact that nineteenth-century society has on the present through the social and environmental effects of introduced land-use practices.

Investigations from a postcolonial perspective of the Gothic genre of literary fiction have helped me to encapsulate and frame my material responses to the darkness of this colonial past. Gothic fiction was popular throughout the time of British settlement in Australia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A number of theorists have explored the origins of Australian Gothic including, in the *Anthology of Colonial Australian Adventure Fiction*, Ken Gelder and Rachel Weaver, who point out that adventure stories and the colonial agenda are closely bound up with one another, although the relationship is a troubled one shadowed by darkness (2011: 1–2). Gerry Turcotte proposes that the
Gothic mode is ideal for conveying a sense of spiritual malaise that is specific to the Australian colonial experience because of its associations with fear, uncertainty, isolation and the unknown (2005). The anxieties experienced at isolated stations, being at the mercy of nature, frontier conflict and becoming lost in the bush are examples that he explores as unique to the Australian Gothic experience. Turcotte explains how the Gothic mode, as a hybrid form, works by fragmentation, borrowings and conflations. In doing so, it lends itself to surreal and uncanny fabrications where the unfamiliar is imposed on the familiar.

Research suggests that the genre of colonial adventure fiction was popular because it resonated with the colonial experience and helped to frame Australia's fledgling sense of identity (Foster et al. 2001: 99).

In her book Fantastic Metamorphosis, Other Worlds, Marina Warner postulates that the Gothic sensibility was a literary tool for 'turning on its head the governing notion of Otherness' (2002: 24). She intimates that tales of metamorphosis often occur at points of interchange or cross-cultural zones. Warner explains how such transformations allow the rules of natural order to be broken, and invite us to enter an imaginative realm where reverie may help us to think otherwise (2002: 18). This corresponds to the Australian colonial experience in which cross-cultural encounters in an unfamiliar place lend themselves to the Gothic sensibility as a popular form of expression.

Pierre Nora’s metaphorical description of revived memories existing in transient states ties in with the notion of the Gothic being materially suspended in an unresolved state, neither dead nor alive (1984, cited in Farr 2012: 61–66). This fits with Eve Sedgewick's reading of the Gothic trope of the 'live burial' as a metaphor for a 'repressed thing that threatens to return' (cited in Halberstam 1995: 72). Judith Halberstam explains how the power of Gothic as a narrative technique 'can spin the sentimental into something abhorrent, and then frames this transformation within a humanist moral fable' (1995: 73). Drawing on these analyses of the Gothic in relation to my artworks, I suggest the transformation of images and objects into materially unresolved states is a way to draw attention to the spectre of concealed histories with dark moral undertones that threaten to return and haunt us in uncanny ways.

Cultural theorist Jane Goodall notes how ideas of the colonial and postcolonial uncanny have been circulating since around the turn of the millennium, with varying lines of interpretation. She explains how, in the Australian context, responses come from a postcolonial condition as a ‘state of ambivalence and contradiction in which “a certain unboundedness” is making itself evident in the settler relationship to the land’ (2013).

The dark undercurrents and Gothic descriptions conveyed in much Australian colonial literature has helped to inform and rouse a darker side to my artwork.
Figure 1. Sue Kneebone, *For better or for worse*, 2010, archival print, 73 x 95 cm
Photo: Sue Kneebone
I used the process of photomontage, which helps to produce disparities and contradictions that interrupt continuity of experience, to invoke this Gothic sensibility in my studio practice. Different images placed together combine as a new form or concept arising from the juxtaposition. The work *For better or for worse* (2010), for example, was an outcome of this process. This transmogrified wedding portrait from the late 1890s of my great-grandparents becomes a foreboding tale of impending environmental catastrophe. Before them lies the night parrot, a vulnerable ground dweller from the Gawler Ranges, which is now believed to be extinct as a result of habitat destruction and the introduction of feral animals such as cats and foxes. Through the process of montage I have implicated my grazier ancestors in this difficult past.

![Figure 2. Sue Kneebone, *Angelfire*, 2008, bones and mixed media, approx. 200 x 200 cm Photo: Chris Boha](image)

The craft of bricolage is the structural process of bringing together disparate objects to form a work of art. Art theorist Johnathon Katz notes how the epistemological and multivalent nature of assemblage has the capacity to communicate different lines of meaning to different audiences (2008: 45). The inherent instability of bricolage, with its juxtaposition of incongruous materials, may lead to assembled forms that challenge the narratives and conventions of history. In my work, bricolage helps to establish narrative connections between memory and archival fragments of history. For example, *Angelfire* (2008) is an installation of guns crafted from animal bones found in the Gawler Ranges pastoral region of South Australia, where my great-grandparents ran a sheep
property. Guns played a dark part in frontier conflict and in opening up the landscape for pastoral use, while also erasing native ecologies. Corresponding to the Gothic trope of the 'live burial', bones have been resurfaced and transformed into metaphorical guns to invoke unsettled memories from the colonial past.

By using the transformative processes of photomontage and bricolage, the art forms that I create seek to traverse time, memory and place to convey loss, myths and silences from the disturbed and unsettled past of colonial settler society. My intention is to lead the viewer to consider the more insidious subtexts behind these images arising from the legacy of colonial incursions.

**Hunter's House and the Hunterian Museum**

John Hunter (1728–93), surgeon to George III and an esteemed man of medicine in eighteenth-century British society, ran an anatomy school at the back of his house on Leicester Square in London. The exhibition plan of *Dark Manners* was loosely informed by a sketch of the rooms in Hunter's house, which is believed to have later inspired the setting for Stevenson’s 1886 Gothic novella *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (Moore 2005: 430). The ingenious layout of Hunter's home was designed to separate the two worlds of good and evil. At the front of Hunter's house was the parlour room, where patients were received in the morning and society guests in the evening. A marble staircase led to a first-floor salon where guests ‘recited, danced and gossiped until the early hours’ (Moore 2005: 433). Meanwhile, a corridor downstairs led to the rear of the house where a four-storey structure housed the anatomy school, which included a grand reception room, lecture theatre and museum. Hidden furthest from the general household was an attic that housed Hunter's dissecting room. The back of the house opened out to a busy thoroughfare at 13 Castle Street where, at night, body-snatchers, known as ‘resurrection men’, would surreptitiously deliver corpses across a lowered drawbridge, which could be swiftly raised to prevent entry. This unique layout allowed Hunter to range freely between the cultural entertainment of Georgian society, taking place in the salon room overlooking the gardens of Leicester Square, and another world of death and dissection at the rear (Moore 2005: 432–33).

Like the house of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Hunter's house would come to 'symbolize the mutually dependent but conflicting aspects of Hunter himself, at once the esteemed society surgeon pursuing a laudable quest for medical advancement and the obsessive collector immersed in illicit activities in order to enlarge his hoard of human and animal parts at whatever cost' (Moore 2005: 432).
Hunter was well connected and his friends included the naturalist Sir Joseph Banks, who was also an adviser to George III. Banks urged the monarch’s support in the discovery of new lands including the *Endeavour*’s expedition under James Cook to find ‘The Great South Land’. On his return from this expedition in 1771, Banks gave Hunter the skull of a kangaroo—it was intended to be a complete specimen but the carcass was eaten by the ship’s crew, hungry for fresh meat (Moore 2005: 284–322). As only the skin and bone of the kangaroo remained, the first English attempt to paint one, by George Stubbs in 1772, could only be an approximate forensic interpretation. From this time on, Australia became a kind of curious ecological laboratory in the interests of colonial expansion.

Although Hunter held unorthodox views that questioned the biblical age of the earth and documented variations within species, he passed away some 70 years before Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* was published in 1859, which created a new demand in the minds of naturalists for the comparative study of animal and human specimens (Moore 2005: 495). A dark trade between the centre of empire and its colonies began in earnest.

Even long after his death, Hunter’s name was connected with the amassing of human and animal collections at the highest level of the British scientific community. The Royal College of Surgeons’ Hunterian Museum in London, named in Hunter’s honour, holds an extensive collection of anatomical specimens. It and the Anatomical Museum of Edinburgh University were among a number of nineteenth-century British anatomy collections that I visited in 2012 during a research trip to the United Kingdom. Fieldwork, which has been an integral part of my studio research, enriches the experiential side of research that is unobtainable from archival sources. The images and installations in *Dark Manners* were in part informed by visiting these institutions. Jane Goodall recalls how, in her own visits to these museums, she was ‘disconcerted by the mismatch of form and texture: the geometry of the display cases with their polished wood and glass, against the matted fur and porous bone of the objects inside’ (2013).

In the Hunterian Museum’s archive of correspondence, a table of listings that gives precedence to the name of the collector over the nature of human remains highlights the pragmatics of scientific collecting. The examples below list some of the human remains that travelled from Australia to Britain from the 1860s, in particular exchanges involving Sir William Henry Flower, conservator of the Hunterian Museum from 1862 to 1884, and then director of the Natural History Museum in London from 1884 to 1898. The correspondence shows that Flower was receiving animal and human remains from across Australia and the globe while he was in these positions.
1864, Sir William Flower, to William Lodewyk Crowther, Australian and Tasmanian animal skeletons.

1871, Morton Allport (sender), to unknown recipient, Skeletons of two Tasmanian Aboriginals.

1870, Robert Henry Armit, naval surveyor to Sir William Henry Flower, knight, zoologist—Skull and artifacts from Australia.

1898, James A. Bonnin, to unknown recipient. Skeleton of South Australian.


Adelaide collectors

In 1896, around the time of Sir William Flower’s retirement, Scottish physician, naturalist and anthropologist William Ramsay Smith arrived in Adelaide to take up a pathology position at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. Ramsay Smith simultaneously held positions as the city coroner, chairman of the Central Board of Health and the anatomy inspector, which allowed him to collect human remains by dubious means (Macdonald 2010).

Adelaide has been identified in regard to human remains as the ‘most fruitful source of material due to the anthropological interests of several leading figures within its medical school, established in 1885’ (Turnbull 2012: 12). Edward Charles Stirling (1848–1919), during his tenure as professor of physiology at the University of Adelaide from 1885 and as director of the South Australian Museum from 1884 to 1912, actively encouraged the acquisition of Aboriginal skulls and skeletons, ‘to study what he believed were evolutionarily significant features of the Aboriginal body’ (Turnbull 2012: 12). Both Stirling and Ramsay Smith were part of a systematic trade of human material with leading British anatomists, such as William Turner, who was professor of anatomy at Edinburgh University from 1863 to 1916.

Ramsay Smith was responsible for the bulk of Edinburgh University’s physical anthropology collection, which held the remains of some 500 to 600 individuals, many of which were collected surreptitiously and by dubious means from burial sites, including Ngarrindjeri burial grounds in the sand dunes of the Coorong (Scobie 2009). At the time of Ramsay Smith’s death in 1937, an astounding 182 skulls were found in his Adelaide home. Mike Pickering, Repatriation Program director at the National Museum of Australia, suggests that ‘Ramsay Smith was body shopping—collecting individuals of unusual pathologies or disease. He was trying to buy favour and kudos with his alma mater’ (Scobie, 2009).
Dark Manners—The exhibition

By drawing on the plan of Hunter's house for the exhibition layout of Dark Manners, I established a metaphor of duplicity for darker aspects of Australian colonial settler society. The exhibition venue, Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia (CACSA), is a late nineteenth-century house located in the quiet, well-heeled inner suburb of Parkside on the southern fringes of the Adelaide Parklands. Nearby, the historic Parkside asylum was an occasional source of the bodies that were procured by anatomists for museums and collectors. Thus, the locale and history of Parkside and the gallery added to the auratic feel and intention of the exhibition to invoke the past.

CACSA has three main exhibition spaces under one roof, which neatly allowed me to replicate aspects of Hunter's house layout, with the front room representing the salon or parlour room, the central room a museum or lecture room, and the back room being the space hidden away for receiving bodies and preparing dissections.

With its period-style furniture, the front gallery room became a sinister veneer to hide the memory of colonial settler society. Assemblages of antiquated objects with sinister ornamental details alluded to the study and transfer of natural history specimens from colonial Australia to the centre of empire. Animal bones and skulls were incorporated into furniture and light fittings to create an uncanny conjunction between nature, culture and science. Referring to poet and critic Susan Stewart's understanding of the antiquarian in her renowned book On Longing, I sought both to distance and appropriate this past to make my own colonial settler heritage something strange and other. Stewart explains that, in order to entertain an antiquarian sensibility:

>a rupture in historical consciousness must have occurred, creating a sense that one can make one's own culture other—distant and discontinuous. Time must be seen as concomitant with a loss of understanding, a loss which can be relieved through the reawakening of objects and, thereby, a reawakening of narrative. (1993: 142)

Opposite the entrance to Dark Manners was an occasional table on which sat a set of kangaroo-skull boat craft. On either side was a silhouette of Joseph Banks and King George III. This work, titled Bushcraft, set the scene for Dark Manners by presenting the backstory of Banks and Hunter and the collecting of their first kangaroo skulls in the interests of science and eventual colonial expansion.
Figure 3. Sue Kneebone, *Bushcraft*, 2013, kangaroo skulls, string and bones on occasional table, 60 x 50 x 40 cm

Photo: Michal Kluvanek

Figure 4. *Dark Manners* installation detail; left: Sue Kneebone, *Devolution*, 2013, furniture and mixed media, variable dimensions; right: Sue Kneebone, *Overtones*, 2013, tables, flywire, bones

Photo: Michal Kluvanek
In his study of the bourgeois system of objects, sociologist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard critiques the class-related phenomenon of refinement, describing, for example, the bourgeois interior as dependent on the discretion of ‘tints and nuances’ (cited in Stewart 1993: 29). Susan Stewart draws on Baudrillard’s argument that muted tones, such as mahogany, teak and tinted stains and veneers, mark ‘a moral refusal of colour in the bourgeois world’. Refinement, Stewart says, ‘has to do with not only the articulation of detail but also the articulation of difference, an articulation which has increasingly served the interests of class’ (1993: 29).

In *Dark Manners*, individual assemblages bring together a peculiar mix of polished veneers, brass and glass with animal remains such as bones, skulls, eggs, feathers and fur. In her essay on the exhibition, Jane Goodall described how the ‘fur, feather and bone are released from containment, and set in relationship to highly crafted items of mahogany and brass. The works are combinations of objects belonging to incommensurate orders of reality, marked out in visual terms as the rough and the smooth, the jagged and the straight, the frayed edge and the curvilinear outline’ (2013).

Figure 5. Sue Kneebone, *Harmful benefits*, 2013, felt, rubber, brass, bone, 80 x 30 cm   
Photo: James Field

In the work *Harmful benefits*, the felt silhouette portrait of curator and conservator Sir William Henry Flower is juxtaposed with a nonsensical apparatus assembled from rubber, bones and brass. The work’s title hints at the contradictory practices of museum curators such as Flower, who maintained a respectable standing in society on one hand while, on the other, engaging in a dark trade in human remains. Goodall notes that in taking away a sense of the familiar order comes disconcertment:
To the colonial eye, what made sense of this incongruity was a hierarchical schema that supported processes of aesthetic and cognitive evaluation. When all that sense-making apparatus is stripped away, leaving the objects no context but each other, they acquire a strange equilibrium through physical interdependencies. (2013)

The middle room of *Dark Manners* presented an anachronistic style of laboratory, where bellows, tubes and spirit bottles brought to mind a Gothic world continuing to push the boundaries between life and death. In the tableau *The nervous art of science* (2013), projections of centuries-old life masks and death masks rise cyclically above the laboratory table. The images included the demonic face mask of John Hunter, which resides in the Edinburgh Anatomy Museum.

![Image](image_url)

*Figure 6. Sue Kneebone, The nervous art of science, 2013, glass, wood, brass, video projection, bones, found objects, approx. 200 x 100 x 200 cm*  
*Photo: James Field*

In the back room, a reliquary of camel bones and prayer stools suggested the clash of ideas between science and religion that emerged from the time of enlightenment, when science experiments included attempts to measure the soul by weight in the belief that the separation of flesh and bone reflected the separation of body and spirit. Like Hunter's dissecting room, this final exhibition gallery was hidden at the rear. Its extensive and explicit assembly of skeletal remains allowed visitors to *Dark Manners* to gain a visceral sense of the duplicity of scientific collecting practices, distanced by remoteness and obscured by respectability.
Figure 7. Sue Kneebone, *Quarry of souls*, 2013, camel bones, prayer stools, rope, approx. 300 x 300 x 200 cm

Photo: James Field
Throughout Western art history, bones have symbolised death, destruction and mortality, yet they are the most enduring of corporeal remains after death and a material link to loss, absence and irredeemable change. Bones are physical reminders of what has gone before and is lost forever—they link the past with the present. In the context of museum collections since the nineteenth century, however, human remains have been separated from their humanity.

The museum experience in Victorian society distanced viewers of such specimens from the uncomfortable reality of their origins (Alberti 2011: 184). Museums privileged sight at the expense of other senses that may evoke disgust, such as smell, touch and sound—indeed, the concept of disgust played a significant role in the civilising process in Victorian society by enculturating norms of cleanliness, reserve and restraint. Once on display, bones become passive participants.

Mike Pickering points out that today’s curators are fortunate because the ‘experiential circumstances of the individuals’ lives and deaths have become “lost in time”’ (2010: 14). He raises the disturbing reality that collections of human remains often comprise individuals who were not far removed in time from the collector. Once they enter the glass vitrines of the museum, however, history protects viewers from the trauma:

The passing of time filters out the horrors, emotions, and the social impacts until ultimately we are left with the institutional and professional objectification of life and death. Everything is neat, clean, tidy, and boxed. History still works to protect us from the full trauma of events that occurred at the time of the trans-substantiation of individuals into a museum’s ‘sacred objects’. (2010: 81)

In nineteenth-century museums, human bones became passive participants in ethnographic collections, where the identity of the individual is denied through the systemic process of collecting. Human remains in museums are ethnographic souvenirs of the colonial project. Susan Stewart writes on how, as souvenirs of death, bones become potent anti-souvenirs: ‘If the function of the souvenir proper is to create a continuous and personal narrative of the past, the function of such souvenirs of death is to disrupt and disclaim that continuity’ (Stewart: 140).

Conclusion

Like the house of Dr Jekyll, _Dark Manners_ presented the uneasy duality of comfortable respectability and dark menace that united certain men of science in the British imperial metropole and the Australian colonies, such as John Hunter and William Ramsay Smith. From its parlour room frontage, through its curtained laboratory of contorted scientific experimentation to its rear
charnel house of bones ascending to heaven, the exhibition layout sought to lure visitors deeper into the Jekyll and Hyde space that venerable physician anatomists occupied in the nineteenth century. A pervasively Gothic sensibility accentuated these dark connections. Period-style furniture and domestic objects, repurposed or reassembled to incorporate bone, fur or other animal remains, strove to unsettle the appearance of domestic comfort by materialising the unfamiliar in the familiar, the concealed in the conventional, the unwelcome in what should be welcoming.

This was the *unheimlich* made manifest. In what should be a relaxing interior, settler society’s ambitions of comfort and respectability were unsettled by the surfacing of uncomfortable reminders.

Implicit in *Dark Manners* was an interrogation of issues that strain against national identity. The collection practices of anatomists contained the silent premise that the collected remains came from the ‘other’—be they the poor in early nineteenth-century Britain, the criminal, the medically unusual or Indigenous people of colonial Australia. Made remote, human remains were treated similarly to animal remains. Well into the latter part of the twentieth century, collections held by lauded individuals or state institutions embraced and reinforced white settler society’s notions of ‘ourselves’ by their objectification of what was outside ‘ourselves’. Such notions, reinforced with the imprimatur of science, were critical to the formation of the identity of the nation that white settler society became—and in many ways they remain so. It is a haunting past that lingers still.

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Inside the outback: An exploration of domesticated landscapes in Semco’s Long Stitch Originals series of the 1980s

Sera Waters

Abstract In 1983, Semco, a company with an established market for fine embroidery patterns and kits, released a new series titled ‘Long Stitch Originals’. This series differed from the company’s previous linen patterns and kits for its use of wool, the non-utilitarian and decorative role of the completed item, and the series’ depiction of Australian landscapes rather than British motifs of domesticity. This essay argues that these kits invoked strategies that were used in the early twentieth-century landscape tradition and, in doing so, engendered a domestic and visual form of nationalism that was prevalent in the lead up to Australia’s bicentenary. Though these kits are not part of institutional collections and have been largely removed from Australian homes, an examination of them uncovers a popularised visual form of settler colonialism of the 1980s. Their material and pictorial use of abstraction, idealisation and patterning will be explored as nostalgic renditions of the Australian landscape; a looking backward in the face of the realisations wrought by postcolonialism.

In September 1983, Semco Pty Ltd began its release of ‘original designs’ for a new series of needlework kits called Long Stitch Originals (‘Long stitch means a fast finish’ 1986). These kits were available in department stores and consisted of a tapestry needle, dyed Australian wool, basic instructions, and an interlock canvas printed with the black outline of an ‘Australian’ design (Figures 1 and 2). Once completed, the round scene, 29 centimetres in diameter, could be displayed in a mount and frame, which was also produced by Semco, thereby fulfilling its design as decoration for the home. While Semco was not alone in supplying imported needlecraft kits to the Australian market, they were leaders in manufacturing needlecraft supplies onshore and creating Australian designs (Dexter 1973). Throughout the 1980s, the Long Stitch Originals series expanded into a range advertised in the Age as ‘traditional Australian outback scenes’ (‘Long stitch’ 1986). Rather than ‘outback’, however, the long stitches considered in this essay (which are restricted to the series’ first issue of kits,
numbered approximately 3071 to 3104), overwhelmingly represented pastoral scenes, predominantly homesteads in idealised rural settings, with a number of exceptions such as a paddle steamer (Figure 3), Captain Cook’s relocated house, or cut flowers. As will be explored, this misuse of the Australianism ‘outback’ is typical of the generalising, idealising and propagandising that was applied to popularised versions of Australian landscapes during the twentieth century. When unpicked, this long stitch series can be read materially and pictorially as domesticated examples of the way Australian landscapes housed the nationalistic agendas that were set against the late twentieth century’s rising tide of postcolonial awareness.

Figure 1. Semco Long Stitch Originals series, ‘Cottage garden’, kit no. 3094 (front)
Photo: Sera Waters

Figure 2. Semco Long Stitch Originals series, ‘Cottage garden’, kit no. 3094 (back)
Photo: Sera Waters

1 Despite its popularity and ubiquity, I have been unable to ascertain how many long stitches were released for this series. According to Ruth Lee, whose dissertation explores Semco pattern production from 1910–60, the company kept few, if any, records of its products. She writes ‘the patterns, as far as I could ascertain, were never copyrighted … only the name was patented. [This has made dating of the patterns difficult as no accurate records appear to have been kept]’ (1993: 136). This is also true of the Long Stitch Originals series. I have found (as second-hand products) patterns ranging from 3071–3104, which indicates that there are at least 33 in this series. It is likely, however, that there were many more, given the 1979 crewel series, a precursor to the Long Stitch Originals, occupy the 1200s, and an extension of the Long Stitch Originals series, which was also released in the 1980s (but with many more historical houses, flora and fauna subjects) take up numbers spanning approximately 3300–0002 to around 3301–0012. The first issue of this series differs from the extension of the series, which incorporated embroidery threads for finer details, and which took up more flora and fauna, as well as historic houses as subject matter.

2 Kit no. 3081 is an image of Captain James Cook’s cottage: ‘the Victorian house … was built in Yorkshire in 1755 by the parents of Captain James Cook … [and] was transported to Melbourne and erected in the Fitzroy Gardens in 1934. The cottage was taken apart brick by brick and packed into cases and barrels to be shipped to Australia, along with cuttings of ivy that originally adorned the house, which were replanted when the building was erected in Melbourne’ (‘Cook’s cottage’ 2013).
In Australia, Semco’s Long Stitch Originals series arose from a century-long lineage of needlecraft production. Originally founded in 1908 as a Melbourne-based importation company, Semco Pty Ltd was transformed in 1915 to begin manufacturing ‘women’s apparel, whitework and transfer patterns’ under the new leadership and business vision of Charles Henry Mylius (Lee 1993: 135). In 1924, the growing company relocated to Black Rock, Victoria, and there produced an extended range of ‘traced art needlework, paper transfers and handicraft instruction booklets’ (Lee 1993: 135). Many of their popular sellers included domestic utilitarian linens (such as aprons and doilies) printed with ‘pretty’ and predominantly British motifs to be embroidered with a range of fine cotton stitches, including French knots, feather stitch and stem stitch. From 1915 until the 1970s, Semco was secure in its position as a successful Australian producer and distributor of fancywork supplies and kits. By 1973, they supplied and decorated Australian homes with a range of more than 600 products, including many popular linen napery ranges. Overall, there were over 10,000 Semco products available (Dexter 1973).

The developments in Semco’s handicraft and booklet production in these early years appear to have arisen from Mylius’s business foresight into an Australian market. English imported needlework articles and booklets were popular in Australia from the 1890s (Fletcher 1989: 18), and Mylius undertook research in England in the early 1920s (Lee 1993: 135), where it is likely that he observed textile technologies such as mechanised dyeing and printing processes, as well as the late Victorian development of instructional language. The addition of more detailed written and diagrammatical instructions addressed gaps in needlework patterns that, prior to this time, gave ‘no indication of the kinds of stitches, colors, or materials to use to reproduce the patterns in needle or thread’ (Daly Goggin 2002: 326). Scant instructions assumed a high level of needlework knowledge and creative authorship in customers, whereas Semco’s use of increasingly instructional communication with their consumers reflects

3 1908 is a date provided by Lee (1993: 135) who records that initially Semco was Stanley E. Mullen Company, which imported products such as sheet music, postcards and transfers. Her information is obtained from an unpublished paper written by a former Semco director, Alec Murray, in 1990. I have discovered some disparity around the date this company was founded. Nancy Dexter (1973) contradicts the founding year of 1908 and claims that it began in 1904. A Brandcorp (the name Semco Company has gone under since 2009) summary also diverges in dating the company’s foundation to 1907: ‘Samuel E. Mullins [sic] founded the Semco Company in 1907, specializing in Embroidery products … [and] was the 3rd company incorporated in Victoria’. (‘Brandcorp—Innovative world class brands’ 2009).

4 Marion Fletcher presents an alternative date of 1935 for the change of the company’s name to Semco (1998: 18). The first three letters of Semco were derived by Mylius from the name of the company’s founder S.E. Mullen (Gamble 2013).

5 Lee describes this range as: ‘small d’oyleys and tray cloths, piano runners, children’s clothes, tea towels, peg bags, table cloths, place mats, cushions, handkerchiefs and the ubiquitous calico apron’ (1993: 141).

6 On their promotional webpage, Brandcorp claim ‘… even 100 years ago the Semco brand was a leader in its market segment. Semco had uninterrupted business through two world wars and the Great Depression, providing Australia and New Zealand with beautiful Needlework, Haberdashery and Craft products. Semco still manufactures many of its needlecraft products in its facilities in Sydney’ (‘Brandcorp’ 2009). This claim has been substantiated by Lee’s dissertation, which records the popularity of Semco amongst her interviewees (1993); a survey conducted by Semco in the 1970s which found that 80 per cent of Australian women were familiar with the brand (Dexter 1973); and the ‘Semco of Black Rock’ article, which charts the Australian history of Semco history throughout the twentieth century (Gamble 2013).
an acceptance that technical needlework skills were declining in the general population, as they had been since the Industrial Revolution (Fletcher 1989: 9). With profits in mind, it was by not presupposing extensive needlecraft knowledge, coupled with technological advances in mass-producing textile kits, which enabled the distribution of Semco’s textile products to a broadening market at an affordable price. With the release of the Long Stitch Originals series 60 years later, both production techniques and instructions had advanced to accommodate a growing population of amateur consumers.

Mylius’s uptake of textile advances in Australia were focused on extending the Semco business towards manufacturing products locally. In line with the social politics of the era, however, the growing business also expanded the use of a visual language that ‘reflected and reinforced the domestic world of the Anglosaxon housewife’ (Lee 1993: 140). Texts that record individual voices from Semco are lamentably scarce, so it is significant that Lee’s study draws from unpublished papers and interviews with past employees, many of whom are now deceased. Extracts from her interviews reveal a structure within Semco that upheld an ‘ideology of domesticity’ by restricting selected motifs to those ‘without links to time or the outside world’ (1993: 140, 141). The sometimes daring vision of the six women designers who developed Semco’s patterns was regulated by an overwhelmingly male hierarchy of management and travelling salespeople who made decisions based on their perceptions and knowledge of consumer demand. Diana, a retired head designer from Semco, stated in interview with Lee:

Designers had to submit 20 or 30 or 40 designs and take them down to the big chief and the travellers and everyone had a look at them and decide which six they were going to have. They never chose the ones we liked you know … but still they were selling them I suppose and they knew … what they thought they would sell. They didn’t always know. (1993: 136)

As a result, an English Rose motif, design SM11, was repeatedly reinvented and remained in circulation for many decades (Lee 1993: 140). Some Australian flora and motifs found a place in Semco’s designs from the beginning, but mainly it was ‘pretty’ British motifs that populated designs prior to the Second World War. In summary Lee writes:

… the world depicted by the motifs of the linen embroideries of 1920–50 is domestic … timeless … usually rural and British … where houses and gardens feature. It is a static world and intensely feminine, reflecting a nostalgic view of a domestic idyll. (1993: 141)

7 Jennifer Isaacs dedicates two pages in her volume The Gentle Arts: 200 Years of Australian Women’s Domestic & Decorative Arts, to ‘Semco commemorative embroideries’, which show aprons, quilts, as well as crochet, embroidered with designs that celebrate local events such as Amy Johnson’s 1930 flight from England to Australia in a gypsy moth biplane, the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, or the cricketing milestones of Don Bradman (1987: 194–95). These embroideries, which are far less common than the British-inspired designs, have been collected by Australian institutions, such as the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney.
This British-derived ‘ideology of domesticity’ was reiterated by Semco in Australia until the 1950s and represents a culture-wide predilection that certainly was not limited to this company. Lee makes the point that Semco did not dictate trends to their buying public, theirs ‘was an essentially conservative enterprise’ responding to perceived consumer demand (1993: 135). It is necessary, however, to acknowledge that Semco’s process of purposeful selection not only had the potential to perpetuate gender divisions but effectually excluded specific demographics; for example, needleworking men and people of diverse cultural backgrounds. Just as significant, though, was an unresponsiveness towards the genuine interest of many Australian women in subjects beyond British domesticity. In 1949, Country Women’s Association of Australia (CWA) member Mrs E.A. Coghlan, reflected:

... it was a pity that Australian artists did not publish a book featuring truly Australian designs taken from Aboriginal drawings or wild flowers. Such a book would be a great assistance to country women who at present were able to copy only standard English designs in their handicraft (Eagle 2001: 8).

Despite the problematic nature of such cultural appropriation, at its core this statement reflects a yearning for subjects with a non-British–Australian inflection. This challenge was taken up by many artists and designers from the late nineteenth century onwards (Bogle 1998) but, for Semco, it was to happen in the latter half of the twentieth century.

From the 1950s, Semco conservatively expanded its repertoire to include some international motifs, commemorative motifs of important local events and, somewhat ironically, eventually Australian motifs such as the kangaroo—but this did not happen until later (Lee 1993: 141). While a smaller number of these designs were produced than the popular British-inspired designs, their production at all suggests the postwar market of the needlework hobbyist was diversifying, and this was likely enabled by the growing migrant population as well as the opening up of the world via global telecommunication systems, including television. But popularity was still somewhat fickle. In 1941, Diana designed for Semco a motif of a Mexican lady that continued to sell into the 1950s, whereas, for unknown reasons, her South Sea Islander design was unpopular (Lee 1993: 141). Another designer, Joan, stated her 1980s historic houses and tram designs ‘kind of bombed out a bit … I thought people were interested in history, but perhaps they aren’t. They want pretty-pretty things’ (Lee 1993: 141). What was thought of as ‘pretty-pretty’ moved with fashion informed by Australian and international cultural shifts; this would also eventually be the case with the increasing, then ultimately decreasing, appeal of the Australian landscapes that feature in the Long Stitch Originals series.
To keep up with changing fashions in the 1970s, Semco was an instigator of new textile technologies in Australia. In 1973, when Semco released a crewel series of Australian designs supplied with imported wool, Nancy Dexter reported that crewel and wool work used for upholstery and pictures was ‘the fastest moving form of embroidery overseas at the moment’ (1973). By 1979, Semco was under the leadership of general manager Robert McAdam (‘Tapestry wool’ 1979: 8). In response to this burgeoning market, the company worked with the Australian Wool Corporation to develop technologies that were capable of tapestry wool production in Australia. According to the Canberra Times, the result was ‘Semco Gobelin Wool, processed by Alpha Spinning Mills and produced in 250 quality
controlled shades in Semco’s new factory’ (1979: 8). Unlike the crewel kits, long stitch and other wool-supplied kits produced after 1979, including the Long Stitch Originals series, proudly bore the authoritative Australian Woolmark label. This proclaimed Semco’s use of wool that had been farmed, processed and dyed in Australia, thereby linking their product to a successful industry that had been long regarded as a national symbol.

Figure 4. Maker unknown, Semco Long Stitch Originals series, title and kit no. unknown
Photo: Sera Waters

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8 The Black Rock premises were sold in the 1970s for a housing development and Semco’s ‘new factory’ was once again in Melbourne (Lee 1993: 136).
Part of the appeal of wool, aside from its international fashion status and, onshore, its material link to ‘Australia’, is captured in the title of a short article in the Age: ‘Long stitch means a fast finish’ (1986). The use of thick strands of wool, paired with one (sometimes two) basic stitching techniques, meant the kit could be completed in ‘8–10 hours’ by individuals with near to no stitching experience (‘Long stitch’ 1986). This alone likely fuelled their popularity with the amateur market. By contrast, the prior 1973 crewel series, similarly using wool (albeit one ply), specified instructions for 20 or more stitch techniques to render a scene on a printed linen ground. Instead, the Long Stitch Originals series only required one main technique: the single long stitch, moving horizontally, vertically and sometimes diagonally in and out of a sturdy, interlock canvas ground (which was easier for amateurs to work), with an occasional French knot for floral embellishment. Working the long stitches covered extensive ground with each movement, which differed significantly to other needlecraft kits on the market that employed finer, skilled and time-consuming techniques.

The linens and finer canvases used in some kits were of a quality that could be left uncovered on completion of the project. Due to its thickness, wool requires an open weave canvas ground that needs to be entirely covered by stitches. While this requirement is not unusual for many forms of canvas work, the round design, coupled with the stiffness of the canvas and the length of the stitches, which gape when not flat, made it more difficult to repurpose the kits (as upholstery, for example). Instead the round scenes were specifically designed to fit the readily available pre-cut mount boards and frames. As well, deviations from the printed lines defining areas to be filled with the appropriate and pre-selected (and sometimes pre-sorted) wool colour, risked gaps, framing difficulties, or running out of a colour, causing the ground to be visible and or compromising the pictorial quality of the simulated landscape. Unlike Semco’s printed linen patterns of the previous era, which provided basic outlines to embroider that could be extended by ‘the clever ones [who] used to fill them in and put them in the Royal Show’ (Diana, cited in Lee 1993: 127), these simple long stitch kits supplied a market that was becoming less technically proficient, yet imitated a style that superficially attempted to effect ‘skill’ via faster and less technically proficient means.

9 The Age claimed that the popularity of the Long Stitch Originals series had spawned similar models internationally (‘Long stitch’ 1986). Perhaps this was because Semco had been taken over by Scottish Company Coats in 1983 and that they were already significant exporters to New Zealand, South Africa and the Pacific (Lee 1993: 136–40).
The series arrived in a period marked by the rise of women in the workforce (and a correlative decline in time for ‘homemaking’), the waning place of embroidery within Australian schools, emerging stylistic shifts away from aesthetics of production, and the rise in availability and affordability of mass-produced home items. This period, as surmised by Lee, marks a shift, not unnoticed by Semco, that Australian women were ‘being educated to become consumers instead of producers of household necessities during this era in capitalism’ (1993: 21). In contrast to the ‘make-do’ approach of Australian households and actively enabled by the Country Women’s Association during pre-1950s times of economic hardship and straitened resources (Eagle 2001: 8), the Semco long stitches (which were not necessities) minimised production in favour of consumption. Emphasis thus shifted with this series from applying honed skills of needlework, to recreating a needlework-effect. The use of wool, I argue, indicates a nostalgia for the diminishing practice of handicrafts within the domestic setting and, with this loss, ‘a rupture within an historical body of knowledge’ (Burn 1993: 11). Embroidery, tapestry and needlework within the home have long been signifiers of feminised acts of making home; bringing together time, pride, comfort, love and centuries of knowledge passed down through generations. Even though the Semco long stitches exploit simplicity and swift execution, in benign imitation of more labour-intensive needlework forms, they are purposefully made within and for display in the home in material homage to needlework as a fading form of homemaking.

These long stitches also imitated painting in their similarity to paint-by-numbers kits, using wool instead of paint to create the effect of rippled skies, foliage and well-kept homes on fertile land. Examination of their design reveals their development from paintings: washes of painted colour have been translated
into irregular wool shapes of shaded tones, and brush marks are inferred by the direction in which the wool is stitched (Figure 7). Like their painting equivalent, these long stitches were a kitsch and accessible pursuit ‘sold as an artistic, pleasant and productive use of leisure time’ (Knott 2013: 181).

Figure 7. Maker unknown, Semco Long Stitch Originals series, title and kit no. unknown
Photo: Sera Waters
Semco’s Long Stitch Originals series and other wool products were designed for display within the home. Following the release of the crewel series, general manager Robert McAdam noted a change in consumer desire when he proclaimed ‘the trend is to decorative rather than utilitarian embroidery’ (Dexter 1973). The long stitch kits, designed as wall hangings, operated as portals, not unlike reproduction landscape paintings; their main function was to enact looking and, while doing so, to privilege a selected and constructed view from the comfort of home. In line with their decorative and idyllic nature, art historian W.J.T. Mitchell, in response to Raymond Williams’s remark that ‘a working country is hardly ever a landscape’, suggests that ‘the invitation to look at a view is thus a suggestion to look at nothing—or more precisely, to look at looking itself—to engage in a kind of apperception of space as it unfolds itself in a particular place’ (2002: viii). As representations of ‘Australia’ to be worked, then lived with and dwelled upon, the Long Stitch Originals series exerts a ‘subtle power’ and can be seen as Semco’s 1980s version of the ‘nostalgic view of a domestic idyll’, once sought from Britain but now located in mythologised Australian landscapes.

Nostalgia, according to Svetlana Boym, is the ‘desire … to obliterate history and turn it into private or collective mythology’ (2001: xv). The most overt form of nostalgia in these long stitches is their pictorial longing for an Australian past as expressed through idealised landscapes. From the 1970s onwards, Semco began to incorporate a range of overtly mainstream Australian motifs in their wool products, beginning with the celebrated (and highly reproduced) Heidelberg paintings. The crewel precursors to the Long Stitch Originals series were described as ‘resembling a combination of [William] Dobell and [Russell] Drysdale’, particularly with the pattern titled ‘The outback pub’ (Dexter 1973). This resemblance to Australian landscape paintings was carried on with the Long Stitch Originals series and, while the ‘outback’ was expanded to include some bush and possibly outer suburban scenes (such as ‘The terrace’, kit no. 3096), they were overwhelmingly pastoral. Amongst the winding paths, native foliage and open skies, is an ongoing presence of homemaking on a simultaneously national and domestic scale. In typically rural Australian settings, human industry melds with nature in scenes that feature various types of established housing, wooden palings, towering eucalypts, cottage gardens, tracks, grazing animals and, sometimes, a man working the land (never a woman). With titles such as ‘Quiet morning’, ‘Sunny cottage’, ‘Summer solitude’, ‘Shearing time’, ‘The bullock wagon’ or ‘Afternoon reflections’, a generalised picture emerges of an Arcadian Australia that is spacious, productive, and safe.

10 In the 1980s, Semco also released Long Stitch Innovations, a series celebrating seasonal imagery; kits aimed at children, such as the Fun Stitch series (‘Long stitch’ 1986); and kits employing other needlework techniques such as cross-stitch.

11 Mitchell notes that, given the chance, he would retile his book to acknowledge that the power of landscapes ‘is a relatively weak power compared to that of armies, police forces, governments and corporation [but] exerts a subtle power over people, eliciting a broad range of emotions and meanings that may be difficult to specify’ (2002: vii).
‘Station sunset’ (kit no. 3079, Figure 8), is just one example that presents the pastoral ideal in the extreme, which fits with Jeanette Hoorn’s description of such landscapes as ‘a frictionless space devoid of labour with an abundance of nature’s gifts in a calm and leisurely setting’ (2007: 9). Its soft pastel pinks, purples and olives are similar to the tones of Tom Roberts’s painting ‘Evening, when the quiet east flushes faintly at the sun’s last look’ (1887–88), which is described as ‘capturing le moment crepusculaire, the stillness of dusk’ (Lane 2008). This long stitch presents a moment of pause, with livestock, quietly feeding before a station, come to rest with the setting sun. Implicit in Roberts’s distant view of pastoral land is that as ‘… a national picture … its subtext is the claiming and clearing of the land’ (Lane 2008). In contrast, the focus of ‘Station sunset’ falls upon the homestead, which blocks the horizon line. The viewer is positioned within fence lines that limit the view to one of domestic containment. Despite being an exterior view of a station, this image does not look out and, thus, continues to present an interior view of settled Australia.

Figure 8. Maker unknown, Semco Long Stitch Originals series, ‘Station sunset’, kit no. 3079
Photo: Sera Waters
Such visions of ‘Australia’, I suggest, borrow significantly from the ideals present in landscapes of the interwar period that Ian Burn examined in his lecture ‘A landscape is not something you look at but something you look through’ (1993). Burn analysed within paintings, including Penleigh Boyd’s Morning light (1922), Hans Heysen’s White gums (1926) and Arthur Streeton’s The land of the golden fleece (1926), the creation of a ‘pastoral utopia’, enacted by the ‘artist’s ability to abstract social significance from the real’ (1993: 23). He claimed that it was ‘through those social processes of idealisation and abstraction, a powerful rhetoric, a visual rhetoric, emerged’; a rhetoric that ‘frames the landscape as a metaphor or symbol of nation’ (1993: 23). The symbols put forth by ‘pastoral utopias’, and their uptake by media during the interwar period, were vehemently upheld and protected, according to Roslynn Haynes who claims that idealised images of Australia were one means to stimulate foreign economic investment (1998: 162). As a result, views of ‘Australia’ that resembled troubling actualities and could potentially suggest financially unstable realities (such as the severe 1920 drought recorded in film, photographs and disparaging commentary) were censored in international as well as Australian media (1998: 162). While levels of censorship wax and wane according to political and social climates, it is not surprising that idealised landscapes are a powerful form of national image-making in painting, photography, journalism and, for domestic audiences, even in wool long stitches half a century later.

Idealised landscapes often develop from a sense of threat. To seek to control the ‘threats [and] … forces we feel we cannot control’ (Burn 1993: 23), we exclude them and, thus, interwar Australian landscapes were rendered as peaceful, pastoral and with ‘no sense of the single moment’:

The masculine ideals of the war were used to promote and validate a particular landscape of peace, an ideal of pastoral harmony, wealth and national potential. The new vision of the landscape found its embodiment in a ‘pure’ landscape icon, a gestalt which did not distract the eye with detail or narrative incident, in which one may encounter unnecessary references to contemporary life. Such an icon of pastoralism was offered for silent contemplation. (Burn 1993: 25)

In their quietness, this type of landscape becomes reverent, something to protect and which offers protection from outside forces. The interwar painters and, later, the long stitch designers in their quest for idyllic landscapes, adopted visual tactics such as abstraction, the creation of intimacy through a shallow pictorial space (Burn 1993: 22–23), and created the impression of timelessness through generalisation (or lack of specific details).
The passive power hiding in this visual language bears similarity to the ambiguity Homi K. Bhabha explores within discourses of nationalism (1990: 1–7). These ambiguities, as well as ambivalences, can be seen replicated in Semco’s Long Stitch Originals series where they occupy, as Hannah Arendt so aptly describes, ‘that curiously hybrid realm where private interests assume public significance’ (cited in Bhabha 1990: 2). Part of this ambiguity arises from the fact that this Semco series is not being examined here as ‘authored’ works of art, and neither were they considered this way during their development. As Lee expresses: ‘The designs seemed to be viewed by management as part of the process of production, rather than as works of art, as the designers could not put their signatures to their work’ (1993: 136). The implications of this un-authoring, a generalising or blanketing approach, not only confirms their collective

Figure 9. Maker unknown, Semco Long Stitch Originals series, ‘Morning frost’, kit no. 3080
Photo: Sera Waters
examination here as cultural and material productions, rather than as individual works of art, but speaks to the ambiguous space they occupy. Without ‘author’ or ‘authority’, these long stitches float across private and public desires to foster belonging, literally proffering nostalgic images of home, and appealing to the desire ‘to rebuild the ideal home that lies at the core of many powerful ideologies of today’ (Boym 2001: xvi).

Semco’s process of absorbing and containing the individual designers and designs into one series of consumable products, mirrors the treatment given to the picturing of ‘Australia’ as nation. The destabilisation of ‘author’—from unknown designers to eventual makers—correlates to the non-specific depiction of ‘Australia’ dispersed at a mass level; a depiction of a place with no ‘authority’, a non-specific location that lacks local histories or lived experiences. In his book *Reading the Country*, Stephen Muecke takes up a ‘theory of place’ and explains the effects of the removal of specificity:

… place introduces specificity and difference—new areas to be investigated within a larger whole. In Australia, the most commonly uttered place-names refer to large unities: ‘Australia’, ‘Melbourne’, ‘The Northern Territory’ and even ‘The Kimberleys’. These unities are so large they become abstract and general, they evoke stereotyped and familiar responses which feed off ideologies like nationalism, ‘stateism’ or the urban/rural division. The study of specific, local places puts things more on the scale of everyday living. (cited by Lucy 1986: 88)

The names given to the places represented in these long stitches, such as ‘bush’ or ‘outback’, are sites that dwell in the national cultural imagination rather than in places with specific, local and layered histories. As spatial theorist Paul Carter surmises: ‘As the colonist advances … he wipes out every sign of difference, covering up the swerve of historical experience, reducing the land to a blankness’ (cited in Rutherford and Holloway 2010: 7). This long stitch series not only takes its lead from late colonial landscape traditions and colonisation itself, but the images are materially blank; up close, the distanced woollen landscapes dissolve into fuzzy strands that carry no specificity, no stories and, not surprisingly, no acknowledgement of the spiritual connection to country of Indigenous Australians.

As well as invoking generalisations and, with them, stereotypes around nation, these long stitches also take up the landscape strategy of distance, in this case decorative distance. As W.J.T. Mitchell explains:

The landscape imperative is a kind of mandate to withdraw, to draw out by drawing back from a site. If a landscape, as we say, ‘draws us in’ with its seductive beauty, this movement is inseparable from a retreat to a broader, safer perspective, an aestheticizing distance, a kind of resistance to whatever practical or moral claim the scene might make on us. (2002: viii)
Being drawn in and back simultaneously into a ‘safe’ perspective encourages a viewer to imaginatively place themselves within these non-specific scenes. By contrast, Susan Best, in a review of the exhibition *Photography and place: Australian landscape photography 1970 until now*, highlights the shared approach of artists viewing the Australian landscape from a postcolonial perspective; ‘that none of them enable or suggest easy entry into the depicted landscape’ (2011: 34). Unlike the long stitches, whose domesticated landscapes activate a desire to become absorbed into an idealised space, their photographs do not present accommodating landscapes (Best 2011: 34).

The patterning employed in the Semco landscape designs, not unlike mapping, has overridden specific stories of Australia, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, men and women, and the historical patterns of this land, with demarcated (fenced) blocked and blank areas of wool. Considering patterning and patterns as a visual form of marking out territory, the lines of these long stitch patterns chart predetermined static scenes that inhibit the potential of finding new and nuanced, complex and relational territories like those expressed in Ross Gibson’s concept of ‘changescapes’ (2005). The patterns of these long stitches, like the patterns performed in picturing ‘nation’, are boundaries that restrict an individual experience to predetermined and generalised parameters. The extension of patterns into sociocultural territory correlates with patterns of ‘seeing’ Australia that omit complexity, diversity and specificity, in favour of an ideal. A prevalent pattern in Australian history is viewing the space of feminised domesticity as passive. When colonised landscape patterns of the outside are brought inside, opportunities to reflect individual experiences are restricted. A reading of the Semco Long Stitch Originals series that cannot be ignored is the continuation of outdated gendered roles of British exploration, colonisation and domestication; a land, mapped and tamed by men, is brought into the home to women for the final stages of taming.

Through the frame of Semco’s popular Long Stitch Originals series can be seen Australian expressions of cultural containment and denial that were also taken up by a raft of other mass-produced Australian cultural products throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In the lead up to the bicentenary celebrations of 1988, they took the form of a nostalgic and outmoded landscape language, a defence mechanism that protected the now more flimsy concepts of ‘home’ and ‘nation’. The designers appointed by Semco were simply responding to a popular demand for non-specific and non-contested views of Australian landscape, taken up so readily in this period. In retrospect, however, ‘[t]he insidious power of signifying practices, indeed, is that they carry their “determined sets of meanings” with them, regardless of a producer’s intention’ (Lucy 1986: 90). This series, like much popular culture of the time, can be read today as a visual manifestation of a refusal to acknowledge the postcolonial contestation of land ownership, which, for many artists, as Susan Best observes within 1970s photography, meant ‘a straightforward depiction of the land lost force and interest’ (2011: 34). While artists began to shift their view, looking down to acknowledge their
footsteps and their imprint on this land, the mass Australian imagination, seen here through Semco’s long stitches, continued to be drawn in by a horizontal and idealised view across a land.

In the 1980s, the stereotyped Australian pastoral landscape of bright light and gum trees captivated the mainstream in numerous forms. Television series, playing in the heart of the home (perhaps with Semco long stitches hung nearby), such as *A country practice*, *The flying doctors* and, earlier, *Skippy*, appealed with their idealised rural Australianness. More tellingly was the 1986 success of the Art Gallery of New South Wales’s *Golden summers: Heidelberg and beyond*, a blockbuster exhibition of Australian Impressionist paintings that received record attendances and travelled from Sydney to Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. According to Anne-Marie Willis, many of the visitors ‘were visiting familiar works—works known through multiple encounters with reproduction over many years’ (1993: 86). Though it is impossible to measure the effect ‘nation’ landscapes have had—a passive force that W.J.T. Mitchell describes as an ‘indeterminacy of affect’ (2002: vii)—it is apparent in this drive to visit familiar works, to invoke nostalgia, or to long stitch stereotypical scenes, that the myths of Australian landscapes endure and are kept active via reproduction. Willis argued that the exhibition, which ‘claimed “de-mythologisation” became re-mythologisation … [as] mythologies for the present are manufactured by claiming the authority of the earlier ones’ (1993: 88). This, too, can be said for the uptake of Australian mythologies in popular cultural products such as Semco’s Long Stitch Originals series and fits with Willis’s suggestion that the ‘operational strategy of national imagery is one of recycling, remanufacture and relocation’ (1993: 88).

Though I have aligned this series with an idealisation seen in interwar landscapes, I also suggest that many borrow from the nation-making paintings associated with Australian Impressionism. In the woolly strands of sky—blue, dusty or late afternoon—an idea of Australian light is expressed, influenced by the exemplary, sensitive and extensive explorations of Arthur Streeton and, later, Hans Heysen. As imitations though, these long stitches fit Tim Bonyhady’s descriptions of the raft of ‘hackneyed’ inferior versions that ‘reduc[e] … the landscape to a stereotype of bright sunshine and scattered gum trees’ (1985: 156). Bernard Smith called this a ‘national vice’ (cited in Bonyhady 1985: 156). All the same, in the 1980s, clichéd and nostalgic views of Australia were popular and prevalent.

While nostalgia, according to Svetlana Boym, is often referred to dismissively (2001: xiv), an examination of nostalgia and its mass invocation in 1980s Australia is insightful. It could be argued that the 1980s were not dissimilar to the period of and between the great wars in that a ‘threat’ to ‘home’ was perceived, this time arising from inside, rather than outside. In response to the challenges in facing our colonial history of settling, came the long stitches, amongst a sea of other cultural products, using myth and national nostalgia as a means to conjure a clichéd expression of ‘belonging’. The resulting pastoral landscapes removed
all threats and challenges, and, as such, can be read as visual recreations and assertions of a past that never happened, one that erases the complex and mourns ‘the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values’ (Boym 2001: 8). To create these scenes, distance was essential. And, just as the interwar landscapes employed the expansive perspectives of recently returned soldiers, the long stitched landscapes took an intentional outside view. As Boym explains, ‘national awareness comes from outside … it is the romantic traveler who sees from a distance the wholeness of the vanishing world’ (2001: 12). Boym describes two forms of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia ‘protects the absolute truth, while reflective nostalgia calls it into doubt’ (2001: xvii). The mass-dispersed Semco long stitches, as futile attempts to still a shifting ‘home’, fit with the restorative form of nostalgia, problematically presenting through the landscape the ‘truth’ of a ‘national memory that is based on a single plot of national identity’ (Boym 2001: xviii).

Figure 10. Sera Waters, *Paradise tampering: The house fire*, 2010, Semco Long Stitch Originals series, ‘The manor’, kit no. 3095, wool

Photo: Sera Waters
Thirty years on from their release, the framed landscapes of the Semco Long Stitch Originals series appear to occupy more second-hand and opportunity shops than homes. Their visual rhetoric is outmoded and their domestic place has been filled with new interpretations of our local and global lives. Juliette Peers notes a similar dismissal of works by the Australian Impressionists, noticing ‘the Heidelberg School no longer seems to quite matter … in the manner that it mattered throughout the 1990s and for extended periods in the mid- to late twentieth century’ (2005: 182). Like the national mythologising that is linked to the painting of the Heidelberg School, the sentimentalised landscapes of the Semco long stitches have moved away from current concerns; their particular view of long stitched ‘Australia’ having been eroded, notably by a ‘decline in the importance of agricultural industries’ (Elder 2007: 74) and changes wrought by native title legislation that continue to destabilise many national myths. Decades on, these material and cultural artefacts are no longer fashionable as decoration and have, instead, ‘become remembrances of things and times past’ (Lee 1993: 61).

It is notable today that these kits are underappreciated and, as far as my explorations discovered, are not part of institutional collections—despite the fact that earlier and finer Semco embroideries made from patterns and kits are being collected by institutions. As this essay has argued, through examining their patterns of nostalgia, decorativeness, consumption and imitation of idealised Australian landscapes, the Semco Long Stitch Originals series houses an expression, popular in the 1970s and 1980s, that disavows the realities of a colonial past. As well, when seen as products positioned in a long line of Semco manufacturing and development driven by consumer demand, these long stitches reflect, from a conservative perspective, the slow and ambiguous shift in concepts of Australian domesticity. Rather than leaving no gaps, as technically required of long stitch, by allowing gaps (and indeed acknowledging this series as filling—or rather forming—a gap in our understanding of this period) these long stitches can be repositioned as ambiguous human expressions of ‘reflective nostalgia [which] dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity’ (Boym 2001: xviii). If we continue to unpick this series, and reconsider them today, noting the specificity and exclusions they sought to contain, they compel us to find, in the words of Paul Carter, ‘… a poetics of situations, occasions or unfinished tracks rather than complete outlines’ (cited in Rutherford and Holloway 2010: 9).

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The sleeping-bag landscape
Rowan Bailey and Claire Barber

Abstract  This essay considers the 'sleeping-bag' as a travelling concept for developing new relations between the landscape and textiles. It examines the sleeping-bag within the wider historical and cultural contexts in which the material qualities of cloth are carried and transformed. By examining the appearance of the sleeping-bag in different landscapes and its own structure as a vehicle for conceptual thinking, the essay considers how certain strategies of thinking-through-making are brought to the fore in the analysis of specific examples, from an examination of the interconnectedness between materials and the landscapes from which they derive to the distancing of this relation as the sleeping-bag travels through unfamiliar terrains and climates. In turn, this cultural analysis provides the framework for The Sleeping-bag Project, which was first developed in 2010 and which uses the tools and skills of craft to reveal unacknowledged and hidden identity relations between craft-making and homelessness. It is argued that through this project an identity of place for the displaced is made possible in and through an ethics of care.

Concepts that travel

A sleeping-bag has a distinctive structure. It preserves life in extreme circumstances by capturing air through down or synthetic fibres and re-insulating the body using excess body heat. Its contemporary examples are high-tech, branded by names such as Polarguard®, PHD, ALPKIT, Rab®, Cumulus and VAUDE, although its long and muddled history belies this sophistication. As a place holder for identities past and present, the sleeping-bag becomes a container for the embodiment of these histories, including the histories of its own making. To explore the sleeping-bag as a travelling concept in different fields, it is worth mentioning the theoretical backdrop presented in the writings of Meike Bal, author of Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide (2002). This book offers a theoretical platform for thinking in, with and through the sleeping-bag, in the context of cultural analysis. What is interesting about Bal's work is the metaphorical resonance of the landscape as a terrain within the practice of text-based research. Concepts engage with and are shaped by aspects of cultural production across space and time. In the introduction, Bal provides an account of the interdependent relationship between objects and the concepts derived from them:
The *field* of cultural analysis is not delimited, because the traditional delimitations must be suspended; by selecting an object, you *question* a field. Nor are its *methods* sitting in a toolbox waiting to be applied; they, too, are part of the exploration … this is where travel becomes the unstable ground of cultural analysis. (2002: 4)

In effect, the object of analysis contributes to the formation of a conceptual framework for understanding the phenomena of cultural life, its practices, contexts, dialogical interplays with other ‘things’ and its reception within the field of discourse. In the spirit of Bal’s travel through modes of cultural analysis, and taking on board her valuable insights into their transdisciplinary potential, this essay proposes to reconfigure the existing delimitations of craft as a self-contained object. An investigation of how the sleeping-bag travels, literally and metaphorically, is a method of shedding light on the meaningful practice of craft within the social fabric of the world. The landscapes within which it appears—its material composition, the conflicts between intimacy and distance, and the associative triggers between examples—form a route map through this essay.

We propose to firstly address the ‘sleeping-bag’ as a travelling concept for forging new relations between the landscape and textiles. The sleeping-bag serves as place holder for identities past and present through its material resonance in the landscape. We will consider how the sleeping-bag appears in different historical and cultural contexts, from its early incarnation in Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Mongolia and southern Russia; its use by explorers in Antarctica; to its mass production and circulation in times of military conflict. These examples address how the design and manufacture of sleeping-bags is often dictated by the conditions and demands of specific terrains.

Secondly, by turning the positioning of the sleeping-bag on itself, what does it mean to consider this item as a landscape of and for the maker and to focus on those specific strategies of empathic and ethical thinking and making that take place through material encounters with cloth? As a case study, The Sleeping-bag Project, which was developed and based in Bradford, uses the tools and skills of craft to reveal unacknowledged and hidden materialities of exchange between the maker and homelessness. We address this project’s attempts to facilitate the empathic imagination through the act of craft-making and, in so doing, reconfigure an understanding of identity relations within the urban landscape. We argue that this creates conditions of possibility for crafting an identity of place for the displaced and thus reclaim the urban landscape, in and through an ethics of care.
Materials in and of the landscape

Early iterations of the sleeping-bag appear in the landscapes of Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Mongolia and southern Russia with the felt kepenek, a garment derived from fleece. Using heat, water and pressure to bond fibres into a solid mass, felt is moulded and shaped into body pods. Since the Middle Ages, this cocoon cloak, designed by Yörük tribespeople, has served in extreme climates as portable architecture for the body. As this style of sleeping-bag suggests, the significance of sleeping-bag formations derived from the landscape extends to the material resources required and how they are constructed.

Nomadic tribespeople of Mongolia (Mongol and Kazakh), Iran (Turkmen and Kurdish), Afghanistan (Uzbek and Tajik) and Russia (Kazakh, Turkmen and Tartar) endure extreme climates. For example, the soil type that results from dry climates cannot sustain large flocks of sheep for long, which requires the movement of flocks in search of new pastures. The felt cloak of the herdsmen is created from the fleece of the herd and is a solution to maintaining the nomadic lifestyle. In Mongolia, for instance, horses drag a wooden pole wound round with sheep’s fleece across the ground so as to create enough friction to form a firm felted material. The success of these communities is linked to the tough, warm and transportable body pods that are fashioned out of this felt. Thus, the craft of making felt is intimately linked to the maker’s livelihood and their understanding of a given climate and terrain.

Similarly, reindeer fur has also been used in the manufacture of body pods. Reindeer fur can have up to 2,000 hollow hairs per centimetre, and this volume has unique insulating properties. Prior to the arrival of Euro-Americans, the traditional Koyukon people of Alaska perfected insulated clothing and sourced the skins of animals that live in the northern landscapes of Alaska.

The resources required to create a felt cloak consist of fleece, water, person power and heat. Felt construction is dependent on the specific frictional properties of wool. Each fibre is covered by small scales, which protrude at an angle so that, when they move against one another, they become interlocked (Belgrave 2001). A mass of fibres, moving together under pressure, become tightly linked and then matted to produce felt. The type and quantity of materials used can be traced to their source. A type of felt cloak used by Turkmen requires three kilograms of fleece, which can be obtained from the fleece of approximately three sheep. The wealth of nomadic communities was traditionally determined by the size of their flock, with value systems directly linked to the material resources that are born from and sustained by the landscape (Deffontaines 1967). The type of fleece that is used for the felt comes from specific breeds, such as the Dâglak, a flat-tailed sheep that is indigenous to Iran and the Erik (a Turkmen breed) (Burkett 1971). Heat is required to produce felt and, therefore, its manufacture is closely aligned to the seasons. It is difficult to felt fibres in
the cold but, equally, the summer temperatures present problems due to the physical exertion required and the risks of dehydration. As water is a necessary resource for the felt-making process, it takes place in regions with natural sources of water.

The first sleeping-bag to be patented, in 1876, was named the Euklisia rug (British Museum and BBC 2010) and was made from woollen cloth. The materials were sourced in Wales, having been worked by men and women from rural communities (up until the nineteenth century, weaving was centred in rural communities rather than cities). The sheep would have been reared on the hillsides, and most families would have carders and a spinning wheel to transform wool into yarn for weaving. Even though diverse industries on a bigger scale were driven by a more efficient use of water power during the latter stages of the eighteenth century, which could drive machines to card and spin automatically, domestic spinning continued. The invention of the Euklisia rug was a timely entrepreneurial endeavour against the backdrop of increasing colonialism and troops in combat. The Euklisia rug, was exported across the world, with records suggesting that in 1891 the inventor, Pryce Jones, had a contract to supply the Russian army with 60,000 rugs. The rug also found its way to the Australian outback and missionary posts in the Congo (Startzman 2014). Its dispersal across the globe as a ‘sleeping-bag’ form, through travel and exportation, shows how the transposition and relocation of traditional crafts and materials created in one landscape travels to other terrains and climates.

Felt and reindeer fur continue to be a source of inspiration in contemporary sleeping-bag design. The latest 2013 Nemo Canon -40 Expedition Bag sleeping-bag mimics the design of traditional Inuit sleeping-bags, using a construction method that pre-warms air before it is inhaled (Jurries 2013). Gabi Schillig’s felt sculptures occupy the urban landscape in a series that mediates relations between public and private, but also privileges a position in the urban landscape, enabled by its contrasting material qualities of felt. This material stands out in the reinforced concrete, metal and glass of urban landscapes (see Figure 1). What differentiates the landscape of the Yörük tribesmen from the urban landscape of conceptual design is clear. Whereas Schillig’s felt structures are performance pieces, serving as exemplars of conceptual design in a busy urban city-scape, the felt kepeneks of the Yörük tribesman are living pieces, designed out of necessity and from the landscape itself, and used for shelter against environmental conditions.
Whereas in traditional nomadic cultures, materials are intimately connected to the maker’s livelihood and their understanding of the landscape for survival, the symbolic significance of these materials and processes changes as they become part of a wider commercial context. Schillig’s conceptual work exemplifies this kind of shift in thinking. The body pod is an alienated felt figuration that, while divorced from the environment, offers itself up as a protective shield against some of the harsh conditions of urbanisation. The distancing between materials and the landscape from which they are sourced brings into play a different set of complex negotiations between the user and sleeping-bag systems in the context of moving across unfamiliar terrains.

Materials distanced from the landscape

Herbert G. Ponting was appointed the official photographer of the Terra Nova Expedition to Antarctica of 1910–13, which was led by Robert Falcon Scott. Among photographs of the landscape of Antarctica, the ship Terra Nova as it negotiates its way through the ice, and the explorers, hut-bound waiting for spring, is an image of crew members repairing reindeer fur sleeping-bags
at Cape Evans in May 1911. The sleeping-bag appears intermittently in the historical re-telling of this journey and carries a narrative about the plight of the tragedy itself. Two specific examples, when juxtaposed, reveal the material structure and complexities of sleeping-bags as they travel through the Antarctic.

The first example is recorded in Apsley Cherry-Garrard’s diaries, first published in 1922 under the title *The Worst Journey in the World: Antarctica* (Cherry-Garrard 1989). Cherry-Garrard writes of his sleeping-bag’s inability to cope with the harsh conditions:

> The trouble really began in your sleeping-bag, for it was far too cold to keep a hole open through which to breathe. So all night long our breath froze into the skins, and our respiration became quicker and quicker as the air in our bags got fouler and fouler: it was never possible to make a match strike or burn inside our bags! (1989: 186)

Elsewhere he writes of getting frostbitten inside the bag and the extreme discomfort at night time when they would become ‘obstinate coffins’ (1989: 255). The second example is part of the reception of the expedition in popular culture, with Ealing Studios’ 1948 Technicolor production *Scott of the Antarctic*, featuring John Mills. In an early scene at base camp, Ponting, played by the actor Clive Morton, entertains his companions with a tongue-twisting poem he names ‘The sleeping-bag poem’. It is a performance that demonstrates the changeable qualities of reindeer fur and skin. As an object of humour and optimism, the poem presents the reindeer hide as a material beyond the explorer’s previous experience and focuses on the navigation of the sleeping-bag’s surface qualities, while accentuating, through wit and playful gesture, the encumbrance of its form. Ponting confuses his audience through his frantic and oscillating tongue-twisting commentary:

> Some likes the skin side on the inside and the fur side on the outside
> others like the skin side outside and the fur side on the inside.
> If you turn the skin side inside thinking you will side with that side, then the soft sides fur side inside which some argue is the wrong side.
> If you turn the fur side outside, as you say it grows on that side, then your outside is next to skin side which for comfort is not the right side.
> The skin side is the cold side and your outside is not your warm side and two cold sides side by side are not the right side, one side by side.
> If you decide to side with that side then turn the top side inside and the other side inside then the cold side hard side skin side will beyond all question be inside out.

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The interchangeable character of the sleeping-bag bears an ominous form as it is reshaped through Ponting’s performance. In contrast to their limp and passive shape on the knees of the Terra Nova explorers, the sleeping-bag comes alive as a twisted and complex terrain that the explorer has to negotiate. Recto and verso, the skin and fur sides become, as the story unfolds, solid structures that are, according to Cherry-Garrard, capable of asphyxiating the user.

These two examples demonstrate the peculiar distancing of the sleeping-bag’s attachment to the landscape as soon as it starts to travel beyond the limits suited to its original function. This detachment brings the landscape and the sleeping-bag into a dichotomous, rather than a complementary and mutually supportive, relation. Whereas the indigenous peoples inhabiting the arctic are connected to the land for survival and thus have developed an ecosystem to manage their environment, ‘explorers’ have sought to ‘master’ complex and hostile terrains, and with this, create a demand for new ways to cope with the challenges of self-preservation. This leads one to consider how the sleeping-bag starts to travel across the globe, often as a result of colonial and militarised pursuits for land ownership.

The military sleeping-bag, in particular, has a history where adaptation to surroundings is built into the mass manufacture and ideological war propaganda of the bags themselves. A 1916 poster reveals the multi-functional power of the ‘Save our Skin’ (SOS) sleeping-bag.

The image depicts a gloved British infantryman using a sleeping-bag to protect him as he straddles a barbed wire fence while shaping a piece of wire to form the letters ‘SOS’. The image is framed by the caption ‘How we strafe German barbed wire’:

S.O.S. SLEEPING-BAGS: In addition to being warm and waterproof, when open and thrown across enemy’s barbed wire entanglements enable the men to traverse them without receiving a scratch.
Figure 2. George Loraine Stampa, *How we strafe German barbed wire: By S.O.S. — ‘Save our Skin’ — Appliances*, 1916

Photo: Courtesy of Imperial War Museum, London
The fantasy of this image is directed to an audience unaware of the reality of frontline service during the First World War. The soldier, making trench art out of barbed wire while sitting on a well-padded and sturdy sleeping-bag, is a mythic reconstruction. Prior to the Second World War, most kitbags contained bed rolls only. One instance of a sleeping-bag structure in use during the First World War can, however, be found in the archive collection of Dr W.R. Blore, who was part of the Royal Army Medical Corps, based at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli (see Figure 3). As a medical doctor, Blore, of higher rank, and perhaps more stationary than a foot soldier of the infantry, was supplied with a kapok-filled bag. A fibre that is often used for stuffing pillows, kapok is harvested from the pods of a tree native to the tropics of West Africa, and parts of southern Mexico and the southern Amazon.

Figure 3. Dr W.R. Blore’s kapok-filled sleeping-bag, 1915–18
Photo: Courtesy The Great War Archive, University of Oxford

It was not until the Second World War that sleeping-bags became part of a much larger mass manufacture and distribution of military kit. The US military, in particular, invested heavily in research into thermal clothing and sleeping-bags. The Harvard Fatigue Laboratory, founded in 1927 by biochemists L.J. Henderson and Bruce Dill, looked at the physiological effects of heat and cold on the body, by conducting experiments to track the insulation needs of the
In 1942, Dr Harwood Belding created the Copperman, a heated manikin that was designed for the testing of thermal environments. The laboratory’s research was put to the test out in the field, in the battles of the Bulge and the Atlantic, for which soldiers were supplied with footwear and protective clothing to cope in different climates and conditions. The result of scientific research at the laboratory was the design and development of new sleeping-bag systems in the postwar period.

In the heat of the Cold War, the sleeping-bag, as a structure, takes on new forms for different climates. America’s militarised power can be found in the types of sleeping-bag produced. Referred to as sleeping systems, they contain labels with clear instructions. The Mountain M–1949 Bag (see Figure 4) includes capitalised warning notes such as ‘AVOID sweating in bag’ and ‘Breathe through lace opening … DO NOT put face inside bag’. These instructions differ with each sleeping-bag system, ranging from the generic model, to the styles named ‘Intermediate Cold Weather (ICW)’ and ‘Sleeping Extreme Cold Weather (ECW)’. The sleeping-bag spectrum thus diversifies as the occupation of different landscapes by military presences shifts and changes over time.
The technological advances in thermal protective sleeping systems indicate a transformation in thinking about shelter in the landscape. Whereas felt and reindeer fur are materials that are symbiotically connected to the landscape, in that they originate from the very livestock that can sustain life in certain environmental conditions, and in so doing, provide shelter to others, the mass-manufactured and synthetically produced sleeping-bag of the nineteenth century reshapes the identity of the landscape. As a material resource, the sleeping-bag becomes a travelling marker distanced from the terrain it seeks to occupy. Furthermore, the sleeping-bag system, as appropriated by Western culture for the purposes of exploration, is capable of turning on the user. The Antarctic examples show how a cultural misunderstanding of traditional sleeping-bag technologies can become a destructive agent. The user is not the expert maker anymore and, as a result of conflict, such as war, the form of the sleeping-bag has changed. Technological development and the mass production of the sleeping-bag is not the result of relatively benign human activity, such as sheep herding, but an outcome of the military funding that develops scientific laboratories for material experimentation. The global army of sleeping-bags that were manufactured during the Second World War and into the Cold War is an instance of the user’s distance from another kind of production process. The body’s circulatory system, whether sweating or breathing, is a protective mechanism that the sleeping-bag can obstruct. The soldier has no choice but to passively follow its instructions for use.

The internal structure of the sleeping-bag as a landscape terrain

The two previous sections have positioned the sleeping-bag by locating material examples derived from and distanced from the landscape. The examples have brought into play a juxtaposition of moments, gathered across time and space, that act as signposts or place holders for some of the histories (factual and semi-fictional) the sleeping-bag embodies. In returning to our preliminary account of the sleeping-bag as an object of analysis and to the ways in which this shapes a conceptual identity for craft practices, it is necessary to detour into the terrain of the sleeping-bag itself, as a landscape, with a view to establishing the symbolic significance of its internal structure.

In 1970, Philip Leider, then editor of Art Forum, published a short text entitled ‘How I spent my summer vacation or, art and politics in Nevada, Berkeley, San Francisco and Utah’ (Leider 2009). The piece recalls a visit to see Michael Heizer’s Double negative, a land-art construction located in the Moapa Valley, Overton, Nevada. Completed in 1969, it is an excavated trench, measuring 457 metres long, 9 metres wide and 15 metres deep. The negative space of the work involved the displacement of over 244,000 tons of material and is a marker of a gaping hole within the landscape. Leider describes the piece as follows:
We were all expecting something strong, but none of us were quite prepared for it, as it turned out. We were all yipping and yowling as if Matisse has just called us over to look at something he was thinking of calling *Joy of Life*. The sun was down; we wound up slipping and sliding inside the piece in the dark. The piece was huge, but its scale was not. It took its place in nature in the most modest and unassuming manner, the quiet participation of a man-made shape in a particular configuration of valley, ravine, mesa and sky. (2009: 535)

Like many creative earthworks of the late 1960s and 1970s, extraction and displacement of materials sought to manifest the convergences between art and landscape. Often executed as rejections of the commercial pursuits of the American art world in the 1960s, they inhabit isolated spaces, transforming over time into new formations. Heizer’s deliberate dissection of the Nevada desert through this extraction process reveals the sedimentation of sandstone layers, exposing the landscape’s interior structure and material traces of its geological formation. The sleeping-bag, as an object of analysis, also has an internal structure that lends itself to a land-art analogy, for to consider it as if it were a landscape in its own right, enables an imaginary leap into the very space that is in and of itself. This allows the reader to travel inside the sleeping-bag to observe its material construction.

Sales material for contemporary, thermally insulated sleeping-bags is often accompanied by diagrams that show the way in which air circulates through the material to visually express the way in which heat is generated by activity inside the sleeping-bag. As dissections, these diagrams resemble Heizer’s earthworks. The analogical leap of the imagination, to firstly position oneself inside *Double negative* to observe its scale, and to secondly take this experience of size and project it into the diagrammatic space of the sleeping-bag, is part of the journey towards understanding this cocoon-like pod as a travelling concept. As Meike Bal suggests, with reference to the ‘concept’, one must attempt to give an account of its history, to reflect upon how it has been previously defined, to check its etymological roots and the theoretical contexts that may have informed its understanding by others. She writes:

> [W]hile groping to define, provisionally and partly, what a particular concept may mean, we gain insight into what it can do. It is in the grouping that the valuable work lies … The grouping is a collective endeavour. (2002: 11)

Perhaps the endeavour here, within the space of this essay, is an attempt to find out what a sleeping-bag can do, to us, when we treat it as if it were a concept, that is, an abstract idea, derived from the material of its own making and reception in different contexts. There are two basic definitions of conceptual thinking that need to be signposted before considering what the sleeping-bag can do as a travelling concept. The first concerns mental representations and
The second, abilities. These definitions are best explained with reference to the internal structure of the sleeping-bag, which is diagrammatically expressed in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Internal cross-section of a sleeping-bag demonstrating the standard type of box-wall baffle used to hold natural down or synthetic fibre insulation in position
Image: Claire Barber

On the one hand, mental constructs allow for the invisible or not-yet-seen to be imagined. Cognition requires the imagination to think beyond the limits of literal understanding. One could say that, on first glance, a diagram of a dissected sleeping-bag is just that. But a diagram is already a mental image, an abstraction or simplified representation of a more complex internal structure. The image becomes a kind of geometric visualisation of a landscape because its purpose is to encapsulate the whole in such a way that it can be computed in the mind. The leap inside the diagram as if it were a landscape, akin to Michael Heizer’s Double negative, allows for the sleeping-bag to be understood beyond the formal language of construction. Its internal structure has a circulation system, derived from body heat, and the implications of this relationship suggest that the sleeping-bag develops its own agency, produced from the landscape from which it grows; that is, our own thermal heat system. Abilities, on the other hand, are the skills we learn to enable us to carry out specific tasks. Treating concepts as abilities takes us to craft skills and the thinking capacity of the maker to perform certain activities, mindfully, and with care. Being inside the landscape of materials, where we automatically witness their complex structure and organisation, is the foundation for the specificities of experience. This gives place to the possibility of making sense of the empathic structures of making, particularly when the sleeping-bag as a concept provides an opportunity to change how one thinks through craft-making. This soft theoretical positioning has an impact when it enters into the space of craft practice. Our final example is the manifestation of an alternative narrative of understanding, derived not from where the sleeping-bag appears in space and time, but how it is serves as a place holder for the maker.
The Sleeping-bag Project

The Sleeping-bag Project involves different modes of engagement, both inside and outside of the academic institution. Its life began in 2010 in a module on an undergraduate textile craft program at the University of Huddersfield, called ‘Crafting the community’. Students practiced different community-centred approaches to volunteering by getting involved in or setting up local community projects, often working alongside economically, socially and/or culturally isolated and under-represented people. Working in collaboration with the curator and volunteer June Hill and Inn Churches Homeless Shelter manager Julie Thompson, the project involves collaborative making by salvaging discarded sleeping-bags from music festivals, laundering them, investing them with textile embellishments and then giving them to the homeless. By recharging these sleeping-bags with a new purpose, these modest material interventions are geographical displacements where aesthetic and political considerations overlap, resulting in the convergence of philosophies of practice and pedagogical ambitions. Often gradual and evolving, each volunteer’s perspective on the ethics of care was experienced through the act of crafting something for someone they were never likely to meet. These intimate and personal experiences of engagement were carried through a practice that often stood outside of the artist’s studio or classroom context. By encountering differing notions of otherness, hidden or invisible to the face of institutional life, volunteers were able to think with and through a set of themes or questions around the issue of homelessness. The sleeping-bag became an abstract object situated between the maker and an idea of homelessness. By standing in as a material landscape of imaginary possibilities, the sleeping-bag served as a place holder for meaningful activity.

Anyone who chooses to enter the space of The Sleeping-bag Project to issue a response, participates in the processes of ‘ethical engagement’. An ever-evolving play of voices situates and positions the project within a ‘politics of care’ and this is what ensures its survival. To be homeless is to be without the certainty of belonging to a place. An empathic politics of care does not claim to know this experience. It is rather like a metapractice that takes place through the act of making itself; a form of thinking through the specifics of the task at hand. Those who make a contribution know very well that they can never fully salvage or solve the problem of homelessness. But this is also its potential: ethical interventions begin their life with the very smallest of empathic gestures. The sewing of a pocket into freshly laundered sleeping-bag material, using embroidery to embellish personal messages, holding conversations with oneself or with others about what it might be like to be on the streets, or using a needle and thread to think outside the limits of one’s own environment, are gestures that explore the intertwined relationships between feeling and thinking through the landscape of craft.
This travelling concept began in a field, on which a music festival had recently taken place, in the late summer of 2010. On entering the site, volunteers were confronted by a mass of detritus. Thousands of pop up tents were caught in the breeze and intermittently floated into the air, bobbing down onto the grassland. Inside the tents were traces of human existence hurriedly abandoned: remnants of cosmetics, disposable wipes, rolled sleeping mats and bedding were strewn in an intimate snapshot of unselfconscious scruffiness. Volunteers waded through the waste, routinely unzipping tents in search of sleeping-bags that were not soiled or damaged by fire (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Salvaging discarded sleeping-bags from the aftermath of Leeds Music Festival, 2010
Photo: Claire Barber

These sleeping-bags were bundled into car boots and cascaded into people’s homes to be laundered and dried. The venture became a collective process requiring effort and commitment among other weekly washing routines. For instance, one volunteer recalls how she rushed to get sleeping-bags washed and dried amidst the pressures of Christmas and her university deadlines. She carried them by train to her family home and, as sleeping-bags were hung on radiators and draped and arranged in the family living room to dry, she recognised the strain they were causing in her busy household. Another volunteer took a garbage bag filled with sleeping-bags to be washed at her halls of residence and recoiled at the aroma they released: a fierce smoky
smell, powerfully indicative of where the sleeping-bags had been used. Another volunteer dried sleeping-bags in the shared garden of her Yorkshire terrace home. Hung in rows, creating waves of brightly coloured shapes that echo the rugged hillside backdrop, they brought about conversations with neighbours on the nature of homelessness (see Figure 7). The ongoing project spills into the local community through a social process. One volunteer declared that ‘by bringing a sleeping-bag into your home you are also bringing in the very person who will use it’.

Figure 7. Drying sleeping-bags salvaged from Leeds Music Festival, 2010
Photo: Claire Barber

Adding gestures of care to the sleeping-bag through hand-crafted textile practice, draws upon the abilities of the maker’s response. An embroiderer, for example, investigated the material of the sleeping-bag with curiosity as if it were an unexplored terrain. As her needle pierced the slippery mass-produced fabric, she became aware that her stitches would compress the synthetic filling, thereby inhibiting the sleeping-bag’s insulating properties. Various alternatives were considered to overcome this problem. It is in this process of exploration that the embroiderer is mindful of the potential end-user, while developing a more in-depth understanding of her own work.
A weaver used her knowledge of traditional craft techniques to respond to the challenge of how users can transport the unwieldy sleeping-bags, which have often lost their carry bag, when they are not being used as shelter. She developed soft handwoven straps made from weft threads recycled out of disused sleeping mats. This technique creates a soft, strong and compressible strap in bright orange, turquoise and yellow. She asked her friends to test the straps and to experience the feeling of carrying a sleeping-bag slung over their shoulders. Another volunteer considered the challenge of keeping personal belongings safe while asleep outdoors. She developed a passport-sized pocket that is neatly sewn into the inside of the sleeping-bag lining. The pocket was designed to be secured by a looped buttonhole stitch, which is a skilful and time-consuming technique. On realising that she could not finish the pockets in time for the winter shelter, other volunteers helped her out, and met in university corridors between classes to craft the pockets.

It could be seen that craft is irrelevant in the severity of the situation of homelessness. It is tempting to bypass the act of making to arrive at the problem more quickly with a charitable donation. The Sleeping-bag Project, however, implies an extended duality that presents both the functionality of a warm clean space to sleep in and the counterbalance of a craft that is a subtle manifestation of a proof of care between maker and homeless recipient. Cloth is activated by the different levels of interaction: from the transmission of the smell of laundry powder to the carefully hand-sewn buttonhole stitch that secures a pocket for a few personal possessions.
To conclude, the examples we have discussed provide a way into the social world of the sleeping-bag as a travelling concept. Contained and embedded within each example are the histories and memories of the landscapes that have passed us by and those that continue to mark their presence in contemporary culture. Arriving at a condition of empathy with The Sleeping-bag Project offers up a very different approach to craft-making. As a case study, it articulates how the sleeping-bag is a necessary segue between the maker and the user or, in the language of the process of empathic identification, between the mental and affective capacity to put oneself into the place of the other. The ethical issues associated with this kind of leap, as if one can truly incorporate the specificities of the other’s experience, should be noted. We are aware of the risk of this becoming another form of isolation at the level of a mental appropriation. When considered in the wider context of the sleeping-bag landscape, however, the reader is invited to consider the terrain, context and complexities of conditions of living, through a mode of abstraction that takes the wider landscapes of material life experience into consideration. The diagrammatic abstraction of the sleeping-bag allows us to linger in the space of homelessness rather than through the personal and private space of the displaced person. This encourages further consideration of the wider historical, political, economic and social factors that make up the condition of homelessness. This is similar to the imaginary empathic investment of the maker who, through their acts of doing, reconfigures the reception of the historical examples mentioned above. In effect, the making activity of the craftsperson brings the reader closer to what the sleeping-bag can offer as a travelling concept. Its life is activated as one develops the slow process of crafting an intimate relationship to the material qualities of cloth. Mental representations, craft abilities and abstractions derived from thinking with and through the sleeping-bag is what gives it its currency as a concept. Homelessness, the abstract concept, is thus carried by the sleeping-bag into the space of the maker and, for a moment, the complex particularities of a real-world experience linger in the mental imaginary of the needle worker.

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The sleeping-bag landscape

References


PLACE | DRESSING

Peta Carlin

Abstract  Philosopher Jeff Malpas once observed that ‘[p]art of the secret of a place lies in the other places with which it communicates’; suggesting that places are necessarily interconnected and cannot be experienced in isolation. PLACE | DRESSING explores connections between Melbourne and the Outer Hebrides, and focuses on the relationship between the handcrafted, geographically specific and culturally grounded fabric of Harris Tweed, handwoven by islanders in their homes in the Hebridean islands, and the phenomenon of the mass-mediaised surface of the curtain glass wall (Figure 1) that patterns our cities across the world. Conceiving of place as a garment, this scholarly and poetic essay discusses the traditional practices involved in the production of Harris Tweed (Figure 2), and juxtaposes this fabric with the disconnected and globalised surface of the curtain glass wall. The vestiary metaphor is extended to encompass Gottfried Semper’s concept of Bekleidung, and the concept of inhabitation is further explored. Departing from the reading of photographs juxtaposed, an image of a curtain wall façade and a swatch of Harris Tweed, this essay calls into question how we clothe the body and dress the building, in a weave that enables us to rethink the complex relationships between landscape, identity and place, and their investment in craft and design practices, with particular emphasis on textile design and architecture.

Figure 1. Peta Carlin, Cowen House from the Urban Fabric: Greige Series, 2007, photograph printed on Belgian linen, 1520 x 960 mm
Copyright: Peta Carlin

Figure 2. Harris Tweed herringbone weaves, c. 2002
Copyright: The Harris Tweed Authority
Beings surround themselves with the places where they find themselves, the way one wraps oneself up in a garment.

—Georges Poulet

Everything that ‘adorns’ man can be ordered along a scale in terms of its closeness to the physical body. The ‘closest’ adornment is typical of nature peoples: tattooing. The opposite extreme is represented by metal and stone adornments, which are entirely unindividual and can be put on everybody.

—Georg Simmel

Place as a garment

An ancient scribe tells us that the Attic chiton (χιτών) was originally designed by Aeschylus¹ as a linen or woollen costume to be worn on the stage. This swathe of cloth elegantly draped, was later to be adopted by priests and torch-bearers, finding itself as an ornament to festivities, thereafter being worn by the populace at large (Mallgrave 1996: 296). Its prefacing figure, χ (chi), is reminiscent of a rudimentary signature as well as a mark of a destination, an address inscribed on a map. Such drapery also formed the mainstay of Highland wear, the feilidh mhor or large wrap (forerunner of the kilt) was similarly arranged, hitched higher however, and belted to the body. The tweed’s malleable form shrouded the body, providing protection from the elements, and also operated as a minimal shelter, a makeshift domicile in the midst of the landscape. The big cloth, or clo mhor as Harris Tweed is known in Gaelic, and the large wrap are conceivably one and the same cloth and familiarly interchangeable.

In the waulking² song ‘This morning I have risen early’, there is a line, ‘[a]nd in my tartan plaid I fold her’ (Campbell 1969: 134–35) that speaks not only of the tender intimacies of courtship but, perhaps even more profoundly, of Harris Tweed’s authenticity and its inextricable connectedness to place. The fabric’s very situatedness is constitutive of its unique existence, and is further embodied in its rich history and its customs, which are held fast in oral form, the tradition continuing to this day and very much lived.

Fleeces continue to be sourced from the Blackface and the Cheviot sheep that wander the Hebridean islands’ machair and mountainsides and, prior to the introduction of commercial dyes, the fibres were further coloured by that land: the tweed’s variegated web infused plants indigenous to it. The mixture of specimens and mordents were closely guarded recipes that passed from one generation to the next, from mother to daughter (Thompson 1969: 31–34).

¹ Aeschylus (c. 525/524 BC – c. 456/455 BC) was an ancient Greek tragedian.
² Waulking is the fulling and finishing of the cloth, rendering it appropriate for wear. It was performed by women, 10 or so, and was accompanied by singing. The vast majority of the songs are of unknown origin and form part of a great oral tradition.
In the Hebrides, the ling heather, or fraoch, bequeathed a deep green; stone parmelia or crotal lending red; cudbear (corcar) bestowing purple; woad (glas-lus or guirmean) instilling blue; with an intense yellow received from dyer’s rocket or lus-bhuidhemor—these plants were only a handful that stained the wool, the dying undertaken in a large cast-iron vat prepared over a fire set in the open (Thompson 1969: 32–39). The different coloured wools were carded together and spun, with additional combinations in hue and tone ensured in the weaving of warp and weft. The fabric was further imbued by the scent of the weaver’s peat fire, the web itself an iridescent and shifting landscape, sensorial and concinnous, incanted over during the waulking, its surface redolent with histories and local lore.

Enfolded in the feilidh mhor, the lovers were indistinguishable from the land; camouflaged and flattened, they were at one with it as they were with each other. While visibility was manifest in the craftsmanship of the cloth, re-immersed in the land it was drawn from it became indistinguishable—unified.

In ancient Greece, the visible surface, epiphaneia, was understood as a ‘coming-to-light’, the bearer of ‘prominence and impressiveness’, qualities conferred upon it by the skilfulness of its weave, its association with conspicuousness said to be of lesser consequence (McEwen 1993: 87–88).

Kosmos and adornment

For the Greeks, kosmos, in its Homeric form, was generally understood as a ‘rhythm or an order … rediscovered with each new tracing of the figure’ (McEwen 1993: 42), as is the case with Harris Tweed, with its endless permutations of patternation and colouration. The term kosmēse, however, also signifies arranging, ordering and adorning. Manifest in the acts of building and making, the crafted surface, its very appearing, was an acknowledgement of existence. So, when a woman adorned herself, kosmēse, wrapping her skin, chrōs (skin or colour), in yet another skin, she lent body, ‘bring[ing] living surface-body so clothed to light; … mak[ing] it appear’ (McEwen 1993: 43–44). The word ‘cosmetics’ takes its leave from such enhancement and recalls Baudelaire’s advocating, ‘[m]aquillage has no need to hide itself or to shrink from being suspected; on the contrary, let it display itself, at least if it does so with frankness and honesty’ (1993 (1863): 34). As ‘a continuous coloured surface, a fabric’ (Wigley 2001: 250), adornment was not simply understood as mere appliqué, a piecemeal embellishment, but rather as an enveloping, a swathing or draping, a dressing binding, yet abounding in its entirety: the adorned memorialising adornment.

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3 Charles Baudelaire (1821–67), French poet.
For Gottfried Semper, Greek architecture was conceived as ‘the art form and decoration … profoundly and intimately bound and influenced by [the] principle of surface dressing, [so much so] that it [was] impossible to consider them separately’ (2004: 246). This understanding was to conceivably inform both architecture and vestiary arts from that time onward. Indeed, for Vitruvius, woven cloth facilitated not only the covering and protecting of the body, but also enabled adornment so that the fabric might enhance the body’s honour (McEwen 1994: 134). It ensured visibility and allowed the wearer to assume one’s place in the world. The Latin term honestas not only conferred honour, but was also a bestowal of reputation, character, respectability, virtue, integrity and dignity; esteemed Roman qualities and, hence, necessarily public (McEwen 1994: 138). For John Ruskin, adornment was conceived of as a form of ornament attendant to an existing structure, with architecture being proposed as ‘an art that “adorns the edifice raised by man for whatsoever use”’, such embellishment understood as separate and lying in contradistinction to the surface to which it was applied (Benjamin 2006: 16). Semper conceived of adornment similarly, but understood it as a cosmic imperative, experienced as ‘a manifestation of the universal world order within the phenomenal world’ (Semper 2000 (1856): 91). Premised upon his theory of formal beauty, and its principle axes of symmetry and proportionality, coupled with directionality, such embellishment was co-extensive with his concept of dressing, conceivable as an all-encompassing ensemble—a Gesamtkunstwerk: a ‘synthesis of the arts’. In adornment, as in dressing, ‘[c]entripetal and centrifugal tendencies [were understood as] fused’, individual elements orchestrated through their very participation (Simmel 1950b: 343).

**Colour and dressing**

A legacy of his long-held interest in textiles, Semper’s preoccupation with the woven cloth, it has been suggested, marks the culmination of his interests in polychromy (Mallgrave 1996: 290), ‘light and colour … treated as one … heightened by the juxtaposition of fragments of pure hues’ (van Zanten 1977: 63), recalling the Luminists’ portrayal of the landscape and their concern with atmospherics. For Semper, such chromo-luminarism conceivably registered as a vestige of the ancient technique of toreutics, the weaving together of a diversity of stuffs, manifest now as colour, ‘the subtlest and most incorporeal dressing’ (Semper 2004: 379), a symbolic, indexical homage to the crafted, iridescent surface. For Semper and Benjamin, painted and applied, colour was

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4  Gottfried Semper (1803–79), German architect and scholar.
5  Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (c. 80–70 BC — c. 15 BC), Roman architect and author.
6  John Ruskin (1819–1900), English art and social critic.
understood as ‘fluid, the medium of all changes’ (Benjamin 1996 (1914–15): 50), binding disparate elements of a building together and further to their environment and surrounds, the play of light on these surfaces epitomising divinity.

For Semper, ‘delight in colour’ ‘is fundamental to our being, residing in our instinct for play and adornment’ (Semper 1989: 14). The interplay between the liminal materiality of colour with the varying intensity of light was to find its apotheosis in his theory of dressing, or *Bekleidung* as he was to term it, a principle that enabled him to ‘posit a unitary origin for all the arts’ (Rykwert 1976: 78). Its ‘motives [while] borrowed from the realm of costume and finery’ (Mallgrave 1996: 293) were evident earlier in his conception of the architectural enclosure (Semper 1989: 24).

*Bekleidung* is derived from the German *kleiden*, and is generally understood as ‘to clothe’ or ‘to dress’, finding its origins in *kleit* or cloth, which, upon further derivation, is revealed in the mixture applied to the cloth, *klei*, a clay or loam (Spelman 1997: 48), in order that it be fulled and waulked. The preparation and finishing of the cloth undertaken between loom and body, and by extension, the workmanship enacted upon stone between quarry and wall, enabled both cloth and stone to become wearable and, hence, inhabitable.

For Semper, speech, the spoken word, further supported his concept of dressing. Words were not simply ‘linguistic symbols applied to building at a later stage but clear indications of the textile origin[s]’ of architecture. Homonymous wordplays in German, his native tongue, revealed associations; analogies that informed the symbolic and unitary origins of the formal language of the arts as a whole. Correspondences between *wand* and *gewand*, wall and garment, associations between *zaun*, a hedge or fence, and *saum*, hem or fillet, further exemplified in the double meaning of *decke* as both ceiling and cover, manifested as the ‘prehistorical conditions’ of ‘dwelling [which were to] assume monumental form’ (Semper 2004: 248).

Semper’s founding of structural–symbolic ornamental motifs on the technical arts sought to expose ‘universal principles that always retained a certain stylistic necessity’, revealed, for example, in the correspondence between the triglyphs of the Doric temple and the fringed and decorative borders of fabrics, both the result of the need to terminate and resolve edge conditions (Semper 2004: 32). In these shifts between media and modes, a transfiguration occurs, movements reverberating between body and building, between the intimate and the architectural, regardless of scale, dressing. For:

In principle what the human body is to its coverings (cloth, cosmetic paint, or jewellery), load-bearing materials are to finishing materials. The analogy rests on equivalent ‘experiences’ of sheltering, modesty and decoration. In neither case was nakedness evident, not for stone nor flesh; in both cases there was something unseen and supporting, and something visible and supported. (Leatherbarrow 1993: 202–03)
Semper’s concept of dressing draws from an understanding of the festive nature of the theatre, ‘the haze of carnival candles [being] the true atmosphere of art’, replete with its religious nuances, which were given form, not only in the ‘stone dramas by Phidias’ (Semper 2004: 439, n. 85), but also on the festival stage, its bedecking informing his conception of monumental architecture, the anchoring of ritual in place and its rendering as tangible (Hvattum 2004: 67).

The festival apparatus—the improvised scaffold with all its splendour and frills that specifically marks the occasion for celebrating, enhances, decorates, and adorns the glorification of the feast, and is hung with tapestries, dressed with festoons and garlands, and decorated with fluttering bands and trophies—is the motive for the permanent monument, which is intended to proclaim to future generations the solemn act or event celebrated. (Semper 2004: 249).

For Semper, ‘dressing and the mask [were] as old as human civilisation’ (2004: 438–39, n. 85); the ‘masking of reality’ recalling the role of the mask in ancient Greece, those worn by the gods, in particular, which served ‘to express tensions between contrary terms’ (Vernant and Frontisi-Ducroux 1990: 206), manifest in the contest between that which is supported and that which is covered, a veiling, a veritable ‘dissimulating fabric’ inextricably woven into the ‘fabrication of architecture’ (Mallgrave 1996: 300). For the structure beneath the textile surface or mask operates as nothing more than a prop. It is ‘merely a supporting player, playing the role of support, supporting precisely because it does not play’ (Wigley 2001: 12). The outer surface is necessarily performative and is rendered so only in and through its dressing, differentiating itself from its fixed and voiceless scaffold, in an interplay between concealment and revelation.

**Enclosing and enclothing**

Semper’s interest in the performing arts, however, was not limited to drama, but was also informed by dance and music; those ‘cosmic arts’ inspired by Mnemosyne and her sorory; *mimesis*, the forming of images as opposed to mere copies ‘deriv[ing] from the star-dance of the heavens’ (Gadamer 1986: 36). In ancient Greece, *choros*, earthbound, was understood not only as the dance floor or the dance place, but the very dance itself (McEwen 1993: 58). Place appeared with the dance, those sets of steps and turns figured and repeated, and dissolved when the dance was completed (McEwen, 1993: 63), place tethered in memory and lived, nonetheless.

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7 Phidias (c. 480–430 BC), Greek sculptor and superintendent of the works undertaken on the Acropolis.
The German words for wall and for garment, *wand* and *gewand* respectively, find their origins in *wenden*, ‘to turn’, as well as *winden*, ‘to wind’ or ‘to twist’ (Spelman 1997: 51), a surface enclosing, well-crafted, appearing. In the Hebrides, the cloth was waulked in a sunrise direction, turning round the table, as the cloth had previously been wound around its beam in the weaving, the cloth then tailored to encircle the body, as the walls enclosed the room in which the dressing took place. The wearer’s journeying through the city, conceivably mirrored, more or less, the ancients’ cycling movements about the *polis* and the very appearance of place (Malpas 2007: 494).

The word itself, *polis* (the ancient Greek city-state), is suggestive of a ring-wall, its Latin derivation, *urbs*, containing within it the figure of a circle, derived, as it is from the same root as *orbis*, from which we get orbit. The word ‘town’ comes to us through German and originated in the word *zaun*, a surrounding hedge or fence (Arendt 1958: 64, n. 64), which also bares comparison to *saum*, or hem (Semper 2004: 248). Semper posited ‘the surrounding wall’ (*Einfassungsmauer*) as the ‘first element of antique architecture’ as well as the ‘primordial seed’ (*Urkeim*); the wall germane to the dwelling, unfurling further to encompass both temple and city (1989: 23), drawing closer, conceivably clothing the body.

The curtain wall takes its name from the area between the bastions, its stretch enclosing and fortifying ancient citadels. Office towers, now thus attired form a sentinel and silent chorus, lining the streets, the city operating as a backdrop. Through the dilation of the camera’s lens, a landscape is further revealed, at another focus, it discloses a room, stopping down again, architecture’s textile foundations are brought to light.
Habit and inhabitation

The city’s architecture can be ‘appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception—or rather, by touch and sight’ (Benjamin 1969 (1936): 240), though the other senses cannot be excluded and necessarily come into play. Engagement with built form cannot simply be grasped in its entirety through studied contemplation alone. Habitual use, too, informs our understanding of it and, to a large extent, even how we view it, its familiarity rendering it both preponderant and peripheral, its features registering only intermittently, in a distracted, non-concerted manner. For:

Lasting impressions, impressions which differ only slightly from one another, impressions which take a regular and habitual course and show regular and habitual contrasts all these use up, so to speak, less consciousness than does the rapid crowding of changing images, the sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance. (Simmel 1950b: 410)

The mind, it has been suggested, is composed of two layers (Freud 2006 (1925): 22)—like the double-face of a wall, or a costume well-lined—with an inner receptive surface, and an outer protective shield. The concept of habit can be likewise conceived as a surface, separating the inner life from that which lies beyond. Habit springs from the Latin habitus, a noun conveying activity, which is derived from habere, to have or to hold, and is understood as the possession of interior qualities, a mode of being, and the cultivation of mental and moral traits, which result in a constitution that confers a ‘power of use and enjoyment’ (Bruno 2002: 322). But habit, similarly derived, also extends to exterior features and outward appearance; to modes of apparel, to fashion and dressing, but also through in-habitation to the place of abode, an ad-dress. For ‘to dwell’ is:

a transitive verb—as in the notion of ‘indwelt space’: herewith an indication of the frenetic topicality concealed in habitual behaviour. It has to do with fashioning a shell for ourselves. (Benjamin 2004: [I4, 5])

Habit, too, takes on a performative role, through use and usage, customarily repeated, to the point where such action is performed unconsciously, eliciting a ‘mechanical’ reaction, an automatic response, the result of repetition. In our coursing through the city, on our daily journeys, liminal layers are acquired through our re-experiencing of the streets and the architecture that defines them. Threads are slowly woven through quotidian re-enactment, until a garment is gradually borne, lined with memories of other places, impressed upon us by the flurry of images, unconsciously clothing our existence. Inhabiting the city, we become increasingly attired in place, already enclothed ourselves. For:

[w]hen the scope of surface tactilism is extended, clothes, architecture, interior design, cosmetics, and the moving image appear as conterminous spaces of inhabitation. As the mutable skin of a social body, they are all part of a shared interactive experience. In defining our way of living space,
they tailor our own contours. They shape our passage as moving surfaces in space and mark the traces we make along the way, for ‘to live is to leave traces’. (Bruno 2002: 322)

‘Erase the traces!’ however, was an insistent refrain that echoed throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, a period heady with modernist zeal, which sought to dissociate itself from precedence, to disencumber itself of the weight of history (Benjamin 1999 (1933): 734). Progress was to seemingly take one form in the office building, which emerged as a new type, a ‘house of work, of organisation, of clarity, of economy’, a reductive construction unadorned and ossified, largely colourless and indifferent, ‘by nature, skeletal’ (Mies van der Rohe 1971: 74). New materials—concrete, iron and glass—were lauded: ‘Scheerbart with his glass and the Bauhaus with its steel … opened up the way: … creat[ing] spaces in which it [was] difficult to leave traces’ (Benjamin 1999 (1933): 734). Resistance was thus internalised, with concessions made by the plush nap of upholstery and its textiles (Benjamin 2004: [I3,1], [I5,2]). A furtive and fugitive existence was proposed, life, its vitality diminished and depreciated, devoid of existential vestiges. Uncovered and exposed, ‘[r]educed to skin and bones’, the office building was inexorably rendered as ‘a jejune thing’ divested and revealed as inconspicuous, lacklustre, another one among the many (Rykwert 1996: 382). Categorised according to its surface condition, while the comportment of the curtain wall was acknowledged, the metaphoric potential of the weave was ignored, and if it was read at all, was understood as ‘speculative cubage wrapped in exterior wallpaper’ (Martin 2001: 67–68). The grid in its repetition, repeated \textit{ad infinitum}, resulting in a self-reflexive \textit{mise en abyme}, a ‘naked and determined materialism’ (Krauss 1979: 52). The curtain wall’s formalist drive in eschewing its textile origins, thus revealed a mass-reproduced surface, ‘detache[d] from the domain of tradition’ (Benjamin 1999 (1936): 221).

\textbf{Place and colour}

It is said that ‘[i]f the place enriches the being who is found there, the being confers on the place where it is found something of its own individuality’ (Poulet 1977: 28). Or, perhaps to put it another way, we are coloured by place—dyed in the wool, so to speak—but so too do we cast upon it our own hues and enliven it, as we (the very threads of our being) interweave between here and there enclosed in place, moving in between, and in certain lights, igniting. For colour that imbues the woven cloth, like place, is by nature reflexive, ‘encompass[ing] that on which it reflects—… but never fully illuminat[ing] that which it encompasses’ (Malpas 2008: 10). Place and colour are both inextricably linked and revealed in the shifting, animate and dynamic nature of the surface,

\footnote{Paul Scheerbart (1863–1915), German author, closely associated with German expressionist architecture, and in particular, with the work of the architect Bruno Taut (1880–1938).}
whether woven, painted, knitted or built. Chiasmatic in their tidal unfurlings and enfoldings, from the intimate to the architectural, place and cloth dress, binding the body to its environment, to the landscapes and its surrounds, to the city and the buildings which compose it. Contexts immediately apparent are thus established, and span across divides, with latent memories concealed within the folds and revealed and complemented in their afterimages.

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References


Body scape: A wearable inquiry into body–landscape relations

Alice Lewis

Abstract This essay arose from my current doctoral research investigating the relative position of the human body and its garment cladding within the urban landscape as a generator of place, space and spatial change. I critique the view that our bodies are separate from the landscape, building on the phenomenological foundations of Martin Heidegger and Otto Bollnow, among others. Through this lens, we are able to understand the reliance of the human body upon the earth’s surface for existence, though there is a marked division between the ‘body’ and the ‘landscape’ inherent in phenomenological theory that places us as separate from the space. Employing a combination of theoretical and project-based discussion, I attempt to reveal the inexistence of this separation and, as such, to understand the body as a dynamic material substance of the world. If we consider this in light of the rapidly increasing global urban population then this ‘body material’ becomes one of abundance and significant spatial phenomenon.

This position is articulated through a wearable project that I conducted for the 2011 Meeting of European Design Students at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. The project, titled ‘A Conversation of Space’, investigated and provoked the dialogue of space occurring between our bodies and the surrounding landscape. Through the considered design and construction of abstract garments that distorted and disrupted the occupation and the perceived identity of particular spaces, the project attempted, through public ‘performances’, to reveal and understand the material ramification of our body presence in the world. The purpose of the inquiry was not to create a new reality or identity within the landscape but, rather, to draw attention to the significance of our bodies in creating the spaces that we know to exist.

This inquiry arose out of a desire to explore and understand the material implications of our physical bodies within the contemporary urban landscape. So often when employing the term ‘landscape’, we position ourselves as separate from the subject, as onlookers or passive viewers of a place. But, is it the case that we are, in some way, apart from the spaces that we inhabit? The Conversation of Space project, on which this essay focuses, argues that we are not ‘a-part-from’ the landscape but, rather, ‘a-part-of’ it. This argument is largely derived from the idea that the landscape is, in fact, infinite. As such, our physical bodies are inescapably positioned within this infinite landscape, meaning that our bodies must hold some material presence in the world and, hence, are a constituent component of that landscape. Our physical form places us as generators of both space and spatial change. This position was investigated at a workshop that I conducted for the Meeting of European Design Students...
Students at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, in the summer of 2011. I called the workshop ‘A Conversation of Space’ as its purpose was to investigate and provoke the dialogue that occurs between our bodies and the surrounding landscape in order to understand the material ramification of our body presence in the world. Over a two-week period, the participating students and I developed a series of garments as our research tools. The garments were designed to exaggerate particular material properties of the human body within the urban landscape. When the students wore the garments, the garments distorted and disrupted the occupation and perceived identity of a particular space. We were, in effect, researching the implications of the body through the material of the body itself. The purpose of the inquiry was not to create a new reality or identity within the landscape but, rather, to draw attention to the significance of our bodies in creating those spaces that we know to exist.

The inquiry into body–landscape relations that underpins this project arose some years ago during my postgraduate study in landscape architecture at RMIT University in Melbourne. It was, for a large part, born out of a fascination with the sheer mass of bodies that negotiate the streets of the city. As I watched the choreographed movements of those urban traversers, advancing across streets at the signal of their traffic light conductor, weaving with accuracy, sidestepping and changing speeds to make way for each other, it was overwhelmingly obvious to me that all these people, these daily dancers of the city streets, were significantly, yet somewhat unconsciously, altering the space for the people around them. While this observation may not have been as revolutionary as I thought it at the time, it went on to become a recurring theme in my teaching and doctorate in the same field. As a landscape architect, I am familiar with the design and allocation of space ‘for’ people but, in the city street, I was fascinated by how the people ‘made’ the space around them. I observed a spatial potency in the human form and bodily motion that was missing from the current discourse in landscape architecture. Each body resonated with the bodies nearby, causing a collective negotiation of the landscape, an ongoing dialogue of body–landscape relations. Does this not, then, place the body as a material component of the landscape itself? And, better still, could we employ that body material to create particular spatial scenarios?

Language and landscape

I have speculated on numerous occasions throughout my research that the absence of the human body from the material inventory of the landscape architecture discipline was due, in part at least, to the linguistic use of the term ‘landscape’. When referring to places and landscapes of all typologies there is an overriding tendency towards an objective vocabulary (Appleton 1996) that positions us outside of that of which we speak. In verbally placing ourselves as solely the viewer of these spaces, we accept and endorse our separation from
both the description and the space. We are positioning ourselves as ‘a-part-from’ the landscape rather than ‘a-part-of’ it, making the material categorisation of ourselves as being ‘of’ the landscape problematic. After all, how can we be a material component of something we are not part of? The issue with this objective use of the term is that ‘landscape’, as it exists in reality, is boundless and infinite. Contemporary landscape architect James Corner illustrates this beautifully, stating that:

 unlike paintings or novels, there is little opportunity to wander or turn away from the experience of landscape. Spatially, it is all-enveloping and surrounds us, flooded with light and atmosphere. Irreducible, the landscape controls our existence extensively; it permeates our memories and consciousness, and enframes our daily lives.

 Not only does landscape surround us, but it does so in a limitless way. (1992: 146)

 Corner’s all-enveloping scenario suggests that, while we may have the ability to see the landscape objectively, we are always and inevitably immersed in it. The Conversation of Space project adopts Corner’s position as a foundation on which to understand our embodied existence in space. It follows that, if the ground on which we stand is part of the infinite landscape, then our bodies must be inescapably positioned within it.

![Figure 1. Elastic Space performance—in progress, 2011, calico, webbing, string, thread](Photo: Alice Lewis)

**Body, ground, materiality**

There is an unquestionable truth that, as humans, we rely on the earth’s surface for our existence; our relationship with the ground is what allows us to move, as we do, through space. Immersion of the human form in the world, on its surface and experiencing space with the body is a dominant aspect of phenomenological theory (Norberg-Schultz 1976). The inevitable circumstance
of ‘being’ and existing in the world and on its surface has been developed and discussed at length by Martin Heidegger (1971), perhaps the most prominent figure in phenomenological theory to date. In his ‘fourfold’ division of the world (earth and sky, man and divinity), Heidegger speaks extensively on the position of ‘man’ dwelling in the world, between the earth and the sky. This space between the earth and sky is what we might call the ‘landscape’ and, hence, we can position our bodies as receptive beings on and in the landscape surface on which we dwell. Another phenomenologist, Otto Bollnow, revisited this idea some years later, stating that it is this surface between the earth and the sky that provides the foundation on which we must carry out our existence—we are unable to rise above it for any length of time, nor (while still living) to integrate ourselves into its soils. It is to the border between the two spaces of sky and ground that ‘man [sic] is bound with his life’ (1963: 47). What is apparent in the phenomenological positioning of the body in the world and on its surface is the ever-present distinction between the ‘body’ and those more commonly accepted landscape spaces of ground and sky. There persists, however, a reality that we must physically occupy the earth’s surface. That we are positioned on, if not in, this infinite landscape surface.

The material distinction between ‘body’ and ‘landscape’ has been a recurring encounter throughout my research to date. To begin, while phenomenology entails a return to things, or an understanding of those objects that also occupy the earth’s surface through an embodied encounter, the point is made clear that ‘man [sic] is not a thing’ (Heidegger 1971: 21). That we can experience with our bodies those things that make up the landscape does not give us licence to be included in the landscape. There is a rift in phenomenological theory that divides the body from those things it experiences on the earth’s surface. Recently, the anthropologist Tim Ingold devoted a chapter of his book Being Alive (2011) to the difficulties of categorising the material components of the world, inclusive of human bodies. Ingold lists scores of approaches to the matter of classification that have been proposed by theorists from an array of disciplines though, throughout the chapter, there emerges an undeniable tendency to position the human body (our own as well as others) as distinctly separate from the landscape. We are positioned, once again, between the solid and gaseous substances of Heidegger’s ‘earth’ and ‘sky’. Take, for example, the system laid down by psychologist James J. Gibson that includes the three categories of medium (air), substance (ground) and surface (the convergence point of air and ground) (1979). This system of categorisation explains the distinction between earth and sky, but where do the materials of plants and animals fit? Surely they are part of the material world? In response, Ingold raises the question that ‘[i]f, moreover [plants and animals] are part of the material world, then the same must be true of my own body. So where does this fit in? If I and my body are one and the same, and if my body indeed partakes in the material world, then how can the body-that-I-am engage with that world?’ (2011: 22). That we exist within the landscape is a more manageable concept than that we could, in fact,
be part of the landscape and hence part of its material existence. But, we do exist within the landscape and, therefore, must hold some material and spatial presence. We must, in some way, encounter ‘bodies’ as we encounter ‘things’ in the phenomenological sense.

So, regardless of our categorisation system, there is an emerging logic that our material presence in the landscape must be both a generator of space and spatial change insofar as our bodies alter the operation and perception of the landscape in which they exist. Consider this scenario: if we encounter someone (another body) sharing the same direct line of movement as ourselves, yet advancing directly towards us, we may find the need to manoeuvre ourselves around the physical form of the other body in order to continue on our journey. The same would be true of the other party. In the event of neither party altering their line of traversal, we would soon be in an awkward situation; standing still, chest to chest, nose to nose, the physical form of our body preventing the forward advance of either party. Interestingly enough, this is a scenario that rarely happens (Whyte 1988). Instead, we select paths of least resistance, as I observed while walking, fascinated, through crowded urban streets—sidestepping and changing speed to decrease the probability of ending up in that potentially awkward spatial engagement. Otto Bollnow offers an explanation of this situation, saying ‘that [the body] is spatial does not therefore mean that the human being occupies a certain space with his body … It means that the human being is always and necessarily conditioned in his life by his behaviour in relation to a surrounding space’ (1963: 23). If this position is considered in relation to the traversal of an urban street, then our position within the landscape is determined in equal parts by the built configuration of the space that we are in as well as those other material bodies that simultaneously traverse the landscape. So, the body that we encounter, and either stand against or alter our path to avoid, is, to the extent that it is a tangible material form, as much a-part-of the landscape as Gibson’s ‘substances’ and which have similar effect on our movement. Regardless of our classification, we cannot deny that our material presence in the landscape is one of spatial significance.

**A Conversation of Space**

The Conversation of Space project was developed to explore the spatial significance of our human bodies in the urban landscape. The workshop was based on the idea that, if we have a physical form, then we must also hold material properties that create new spatial conditions in the part of the landscape that our bodies inhabit. The project uses a combination of specifically designed garments and wearers to directly investigate those perceived ‘material’ implications of having a body in the landscape. The garments, conceptualised and made over the two-week duration of the workshop, were worn in public ‘performances’ in order to test their implications in a practical sense. The performances were
unconventional and constituted a publicly observed wearing of the garments by the participating students in the urban landscape. Those other bodies that occupied the public spaces through which the ‘performer’ passed were the ‘audience’, reacting to the spectacle of exaggerated garments and wearing bodies. The garment and the wearing bodies were employed, through the very subject itself, to directly research the material implications of the body. The purpose was not to create a new reality in the landscape but, rather, to draw attention to the material significance of our body in creating the spaces that we encounter in the everyday.

The inquiry of the Conversation of Space project is executed predominantly through the making and ‘performing’ of garments that exist as research tools. These garments became tangible, responsive tools examining spatial encounters on a human scale. This was similar to Heidegger’s original position of the body encountering ‘things’ in the world, though the project included bodies among the material ‘things’. The garments take on strange and abstracted forms, which were designed to react and mediate between the spatiality of the human body and the place in which it exists at the time. Conceptual artist and architect Gabi Schilig refers to this method of inquiry in her work as being ‘intrinsically motivated by the space of the human body … instrumentalizing textile materiality within open spatial systems’ (2009: 5). The Conversation of Space project employs a similar principle regarding the body as the primary point of departure for all investigations. The garments were tools to exaggerate perceived spatial and material properties of the body, making tangible those intangible characteristics, challenging the possible boundaries of our form. Realised at a body-scale, they are temporal in their ability to be shifted, carried through space and time, corroborated in part by the body and in part by the wider landscape. These abstract, wearable forms exist as repercussive extensions of the self—worn on our bodies and responding to our movements in an exaggerated and distorted fashion, and provoking a similar reaction from the urban landscape, which is inclusive of other bodies. Similar to underlining a word within a paragraph of text, these garments were seen as machines to highlight particular modalities of one material body in a landscape that consists of many.
A note on garments

The method of employing garments as research tools, while appropriate in the context, raises the issue that adding a garment to the body will no doubt change the presented material of that body as well as the spatial scenario that occurs as a result of its presence. Returning to those choreographed bodies of the city street, however, as they move to the instructions of their traffic light conductor, the most common feature among them, aside from their bodies, was that their bodies were dressed in garments. It cannot be denied that ‘human bodies are dressed bodies. The social world is a world of dressed bodies’
The inevitability of garments has become such that, in the spaces addressed by the Conversation of Space project (namely the public landscape of the city street), garments can be considered as equally present in the landscape as our bodies. There has indeed been a longstanding correlation between fashion and architecture, their shared motive for existence being the necessity for protection from the external world. Fashion theorist Bradley Quinn states that ‘irrespective of their modern permutations and respective roles of micro and macro structures, both disciplines remain rooted in the basic task of enclosing space around the human form’ (2003: 2). In a way, both forms can be seen as mediums to escape from the infiniteness of the landscape. But, it is the spaces between the architecture that interest us here. This inquiry considers garments as existing parallel to the body—parallel in that their physical form constitutes a spatial volume capable of provoking spatial change. As such, the Conversation of Space project has used garments as that aspect of the body that can be changed, enhanced and manipulated without lasting effect to the wearing body. This malleable component of the publicly visible body is the tool by which the material implications of our bodies in space is challenged.

There were three garments made for the Conversation of Space project, each one exploring a particular perceived material implication of having a body in the urban landscape. During the first few days of the workshop, I sat with the participating students on the banks of the River Ljubljanica, which weaves through central Ljubljana, Slovenia’s capital city. We sat and watched the astonishingly repetitious behaviour of the mass of tourists that occupied the picturesque town that summer. We watched their habitual negotiation and unconscious engagement in the choreographed dance of the urban streetscape. Out of this mass of moving, dancing bodies we selected three separate ‘material’ properties of interest. What follows here is a detailed account of each investigation focusing on the garment and the performance, visualising and provoking the push and pull of the body and the landscape in which it exists, highlighting the position of the body in the urban realm and, as such, in the infinite landscape.

The residual space

As we sat and watched the people weaving through the city, we noticed a process of exchange. Footprints were left, leaves shifted by passing feet, dust was borne away on the sole of a sneaker. Perhaps even memories were distributed between bodies, left behind or taken, momentarily or forever altering the perception of the particular place for another being in the infinite landscape. And, so, the focus of this first investigation was the residual spaces that are left behind once our physical body has moved on. The idea was further developed by applying Locard’s exchange principle, which is used in forensic science and which declares that the perpetrator of a crime will inevitably bring something
to the crime scene and will leave with something from it (Horswell 2004). While this principle was originally developed to investigate crimes, the theory can also be applied to the everyday. The constant mobility of the body in the world means that this exchange of material is a ceaseless process in the landscape, a change that is primarily driven by interaction. The project deemed this to be an unchanging implication of having a body in the landscape and, as such, it is a significant material property of the body. The traces we leave become a record of where we have been and what we have done—an imprint that changes the identity of the landscape to (potential) lasting effect. Creating new places and new identities as a result of our past presence.

The garment and performance took this notion of exchange and exaggerated the process within the urban setting. The performance attempted to enhance the process from the body as well as the reciprocating landscape, bringing to the fore the dialogue between body and space. To achieve this desired reaction, a dress-like garment was made based on an accelerated process of abrasion. Unbleached ivory calico fabric and a long train that was made to drag upon the ground eerily resembled, unintentionally, a Western wedding dress, which contrasted beautifully with the gritty surfaces of the city. The train was constructed of a network of sealed calico parcels containing water-based pigment in primary colours (blue, red and yellow) with weights of various scales. As the body and
the garment moved between the earth and sky, venturing across the public domain the weights pressed the fabric to the surface of footpath, road, bridge and so on, forcing an interaction between the textiles and the hard material of the city streets. As the body and garment traversed the surface of the world, the garment began to corrode and break away, leaving behind a wash of colour and rubble of various kinds that fell from the garment itself. The alternating colours mixed as they made contact with the ground, leaving an inventory of the wearer’s journey through the space. But, as the garment dropped away, it simultaneously collected within its folds twigs, leaves, soil and other urban forage, sweeping the ground on which it lay down its colourful lines. People stopped and watched as the body and garment passed by. Some followed, others looked and continued onwards. Some even pocketed the now colourful weights. Days later, I passed the location of the performance—the absence of summer rain had left the pigment vibrant—and noticed people following the snaking line of colour. The garment had produced, in a manner of speaking, a residual path system that remained long after the garment and body had passed on.

The elastic space

This performance made physical the temporal spatial boundary occupied by our body and created by our mobile limbs. While we sat, observed and thought of how our bodies exist in the physical form, it became apparent that, while we are each a singular being, we are constructed largely of limbs hinged somewhere near the centre that are able to swing out from that central point. This structure is a necessary aspect of our being as it is what allows us to move and hence to travel through space; our legs carry us forward in a series of controlled falls, our arms balancing and protecting us, affording us the ability to grasp objects and create gestures. This customary, continual and often unconscious movement (Manning 2009) causes the boundaries of the space we occupy with our bodies to continually stretch and contract. Becoming elongated across the horizontal axis relative to our speed of travel, this boundary is temporary and ever shifting—the swinging and swaying of our physical form changes the shape and size of the spaces in-between. These spaces have a malleable, elastic quality that cannot be seen except through the borders demarcated by our limbs.
Figure 4. Elastic Space performance—Stage 1 (confines), 2011, calico, webbing, string, thread
Photo: Alice Lewis
Figure 5. Elastic Space performance—Stage 2 (release), 2011, calico, webbing, string, thread

Photo: Alice Lewis
The garment created to make visible these elastic spaces operates in a progressive fashion, first removing the elasticity of our movement and then exaggerating it through textiles; the juxtaposition of each phase causing a resounding affect on the body. In order to conduct this performance the body was first strapped into the garment, a similar process to being buckled into a straitjacket, then stitched in at the arms, which thereby inhibited all upper body movement. The legs, left free, were able to carry the wearing body through space, though the inability to engage the upper limbs in spatial interaction was an oddity. Rather than standing dormant, this process provoked the body to twist and sway. As the movement of the upper body increased, the garment responded by breaking the stitching around the arms. The inevitable movement slowly unravelled the garment itself. As the wearer became more mobile, a loosely woven fabric that was concealed in the folds of the jacket fell from the space between the arms and the side of the wearer’s body. This fabric made physical those elastic in-between spaces, filling the area with wing-like sheets. While the fabric itself was not elastic in property, the loose, light structure got caught up in the air movement around the physical form, elongating their movements and making visible the invisible space. As air moved the fabric, the force that was needed to pull our arms through the space increased, each movement creating a different pull and causing the wearer to feel the space they occupied with their mobile body.

The social space

Returning again to our place on the riverbank and observing the people out on that summer day, we began to pay collective attention to the way that people were negotiating space in relation to other bodies. It occurred to me that this observation had been made previously by urbanist William H. Whyte in his *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (1988), in which he reveals that we (as humans) have a natural tendency to manoeuvre ourselves around the physical forms of other beings in order to successfully and succinctly carry out our traversal process. This was the very phenomenon that we were observing in Ljubljana, and it was the same thing I had observed at the traffic lights in Melbourne. People were weaving between each other, barely centimetres apart, yet it seemed they were hardly registering the other bodies, their sidesteps and speed changes almost unconscious. It was decided that the third and final garment of the Conversation of Space project would investigate this aspect of spatial occupation by creating a work that interrupted this seamless negotiation of space by inviting bodies to halt their traversal process and to physically engage with the garment and, as such, the performance.

As the garment for this final work was intended to ‘invite’, it was necessary that it could include a number of people within it, though multiple bodies were not necessary for the garment to move through space and hence maintain
the temporality inherent to garments. It needed to expand and contract, cater for social inclusion but never force it. To achieve this, we developed a rigid concertina-like structure using calico, stiff card and string that could extend to meters in length but also pack down into a neat stack of tessellated triangles. The main difficulty occurred in the ‘wearing’ of this rigid structure on the body. After numerous failed attempts to attach the heavy object onto something wearable, the structure was transformed into an accessory and a backpack was fashioned to house it. A student wore the backpack, loaded with the garment, into the busy, bustling city square. The wearer was slowly joined by peers, each removing a little more of the elongated garment from its packed confines and encircling themselves in it. People, beginning to take notice of this expanding body-form that increasingly blocked the way, were invited to join in and to physically immerse themselves within the boundary of another social body. As people became involved, the garment stretched itself around them, creating a mass of physical material. The garment, supported by fluctuating masses of bodies produced an impermeable presence in the urban landscape. The greater the number of bodies supporting the garment, the greater their presence in the place became, exaggerating the physical space of our singular bodies, as well as the process required to manoeuvre a body around it.

Figure 6. Social Space performance, 2011, calico, card, string, thread
Photo: Alice Lewis
Findings: The implications of having a body

There was nothing profoundly ‘new’ revealed through the Conversation of Space project, no ‘hurrah!’ moment or grand gesture though, in truth, that was not the intention. Rather the process of making and performative testing solidified that which was already speculated to be true: that our bodies (and the garments in which they are clad) are a material component of the landscape. Material insofar as we have a physical form constructed of tangible stuff that has a lasting and potentially significant effect on the immediate landscape and identity associated with that space. Take, as an example, the Social Space investigation in which the presence of the body and the garment provoked a sense of inquiry in other bodies operating in the same landscape space and caused people to stop, to engage in conversation and, to varying degrees, to actively participate in the performance itself. When this human reaction is considered in relation to the position of Otto Bollnow (1963) in which the spatiality of human life is inherently governed by those material forms that create the surrounding space then, surely, the presence of a body and garment that triggers such a spatial reaction among those similar forms is a significant material component of the space itself.

A secondary recurring observation of the Conversation of Space project was the overriding tendency to make clear the distinction between the ‘I’ and the ‘landscape’. While the project was originally founded on the idea that our bodies are a significant part of the material landscape and, as such, its perceived identity, it appears that the separation of the body from the spaces is an unshakeable human characteristic. This, to some extent, explains the absence of the human body in Tim Ingold’s earlier discussion regarding the categorisation of materials and the problematic of being a body that is both a part of the material world and is also able to engage with the material world. The conversation that was provoked throughout the performance of the Conversation of Space project brought to the forefront this keystone position of our individual existences. The centrality of our bodies to our perception is not a new phenomenon. Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty asserted that ‘visible and mobile, my body is a thing among things … it is caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing. But, because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself’ (1964: 161). So, while we must indeed be a-part-of the landscape in a material sense, the tendency to view the space around us objectively is a seemingly inescapable position. That our particular bodies are the tool through which we live and experience space, however, does not remove us from the material position as generators of both space and spatial change.

By way of conclusion, it could be said that the common linguistic use of the word ‘landscape’ still applies to our employment of the term today as there persists an inherent objectivity in regard to our interpretation of what the landscape ‘is’. It seems, however, that this objectivity stems predominantly from our position as the central perceivers of the space around us. How, if we are engaged in
the sensory perception of a particular place, can we be included as a part-of it at the same moment? While the Conversations of Space project did not fully resolve this question, it was clear that the constituent part-of the landscape that our bodies are categorised as is a tactile material one. Our physical presence in space will inherently change the operation of that space. Whether it is a trace of something minute left behind as we move on, or something more present—as in our bodies causing an altered spatial scenario—our embodied existence in the world has a significant and lasting impact on the landscape that we occupy. In having a body we are always and ever materially present within the infinite landscape and, as such, are continually altering the identification that other centralised bodies may have with that particular place.

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References


Place and identity: What can we learn from the dead?

Tom Lee

Abstract In his book Last Landscapes (2003), Ken Warpole notes that, for a number of reasons, cemetery architecture is the most conservative aspect of the institutions and practices surrounding death and memorialisation in the West. This is starting to change, with designers and architects responding to the groundswell of sentiment demanding that we moderns modernise our ceremonies and associated institutions. In the following essay, I look at the different demands and opportunities in urban and rural cemetery design, and focus on the multifunctional roles that cemeteries have played in the past and might yet play again.

This essay is the meeting place of previous work on paddock architecture in the Australian landscape and a recent project looking at death and the landscape. I am interested in the ways that design might respond to the nexus identified by the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk as ‘reactionary religion and progressive technological medicine’ (2013: 421), which can bar the possibility of a dignified death and a dignifying place for the dead among the living. This doesn’t mean a return to the ostentation of Victorian mourning rituals or adopting the ‘death as party’ practices of Ghana or Mexico—which isn’t to say we can’t learn anything from these. Instead, the task seems to be finding a way to give meaning to the values of specific lives and the contexts in which they are embedded, and to provide better support structures (both material, atmospheric and symbolic) for those who gather around the absence created by the departed.

Cemeteries offer a unique opportunity to think about the relationship between humans and places because, in a sense, they are the place where humans become indistinguishable from places, slowly dissipating into the ‘quasi-eternity’ (Foucault 1967: 20) of ruins, remains, organic matter and dust. If cemeteries are where humans become most place-like, they are also, in an inverse but complementary sense, the most human of places, animated by reminders of life-defining mortality. The dead in this sense are mediators between the humans we take ourselves to be and the places we are not.

Cemeteries thus represent a zone where the tension between matter and information is particularly explicit. This is partially due to the fact that, when we die, we become indistinguishable from matter—worm food, as the expression goes. There is also the sense in which humans become information when they die, entering the realm of numbers, dates and names, of seriality and document. The decision then becomes: what kind of information do we want to transmit about friends, relatives or ourselves when we pass into the ‘quasi-eternal’
condition of nothingness? And how do we wish to transmit this information? What atmospheric conditions ought to mediate the encounter between the living, who go to visit, and the silent dead who continue to speak across time?

I begin my investigation with an introduction and brief discussion of French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault’s concept ‘heterotopia’, which, as Foucault suggests, is particularly applicable to the case of the cemetery. This discussion acts as a kind of frontispiece for the more specific considerations of place that follow. Then I compare and contrast a number of different models for cemeteries, using both phenomenological and historical data to account for the distinctiveness and complexity of these places. Firstly, I consider a number of different examples of urban cemeteries, with specific attention to their atmospheric quality and the role that design does or doesn’t play in the evocation of atmosphere. I then look at the growing interest in natural burial and the potential shift that the natural burial movement might provoke in the roles played by cemeteries.

Natural burial can be broadly defined as burial practices that pay heed to conservation imperatives, including the use of biodegradable materials, bush regeneration and the maintenance of biodiversity. Such practices are often antipathetic to anthropocentric monumentalism. In this article I’m concerned with how the imperatives of natural burial might entail different ways of perceiving and conceptualising the human and non-human, and how this impacts on the kinds of communicative agency we afford places. For example, how does the atmosphere of a place stand in symbolically for the deceased when there is not an explicit, legible human monument? What might a place tell us about people who are able to choose to be buried there?

To conclude, I reflect in a more speculative fashion on what’s possible with regard to the function of a cemetery. I suggest that there is much scope for living spaces to be designed in ways that account for the inevitability of our obligations to the dead, and argue that the physical and virtual spaces in which the dead are kept near have a culture-forming function that can be overlooked and left un-nourished in modern secular societies. Cemeteries have a long history of multifunctionality, as evidenced by the Victorian tradition of cemeteries functioning as gardens and leisure spaces (Martin 2004) and the ambitions of nineteenth-century cemetery reformers such as John Claudius Loudon (Johnson 2008). With a nod to this tradition, I discuss whether it is desirable or viable for the culture-forming role of cemeteries, mourning and remembrance to incorporate and be incorporated within other modern institutions, such as restaurants, farms, museums and, in particular, places that are deemed to offer the kinds of amenity we associate with the natural environment—recognising all the complications that the word ‘natural’ might involve.
Unsettled forms and heterotopias

In *Last Landscapes: Architecture of the Cemetery in the West* (2003), Ken Worpole notes that, for a number of reasons, cemetery architecture is the most conservative aspect of the institutions and practices surrounding death and memorialisation in the West. Worpole notes that, while the ceremonies surrounding death, such as funeral services, have begun to meet the changing, secular needs of the bereaved, cemetery architecture and design remains, by and large, comparatively stagnant.

One only has to compare the frequency in which images of cemeteries appear as key settings in films and television dramas, compared with the infrequency in which they appear in landscape or architectural magazines, to know that those ultimately responsible for cemetery design are out of touch with public concerns and interests. (Worpole 2003: 8)

Since the publication of Worpole’s book, signs have begun to emerge that this is changing, with designers and architects responding to the groundswell of sentiment demanding that we modernise our ceremonies. For example, the influential online architecture and design magazine *designboom* ran a competition in 2013, Design for Death Architecture, which featured a host of strikingly innovative designs submitted by prominent design and architectural firms.

This renewed interest suggests that the form of the cemetery is, at least in some fields, no longer settled and no longer inevitable. Indeed, as Worpole’s exemplary study repeatedly shows, this formal amorphousness, coupled with a perhaps paradoxical singularity of purpose (for a cemetery is always, among other things, a place to dispose of and remember the dead), is a characteristic of the longer history of the cemetery. One need only point to the change from the churchyard cemetery—where the cemetery along with the church is, in a sense, the focal point of the community—to the suburban cemetery—where the dead are ferried out to the suburbs to live in their own satellite city—to begin to understand the kinds of changes amid stability that define the history of the cemetery.

It is this seeming paradox, among a number of others that Michel Foucault picks out as defining heterotopic space. In his lecture ‘Of other spaces’, Foucault proposes this concept in order to assist in the rethinking of taken-for-granted oppositions regarding space: oppositions between the public and private space, family and social space, leisure and work space, cultural and useful space (1967: 16). Foucault introduces his analysis of ‘outer space’ alongside the phenomenological interventions into inner space that have been made by thinkers like Gaston Bachelard, making the comparable claim that, like inner space, outer space is never neutral:
We do not live in a kind of void, inside which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be coloured with diverse shades of light; we live inside a set of relations that delineate emplacements that cannot be equated or in any way superimposed. (1967; cited in Dehaene and De Cauter, 2008: 16)

In other words, experience is the experience of some place or other. It is never emptiness filled, never neutral or pure. The sets of relations that compose a specific place are not outside the human percipient. Rather, the human is an example of one among many things that is composed of the relations between things in a specific context, while never exactly being reducible to them.

Some places in particular seem set aside from what one might advisedly call ‘normal goings on’, and these are the places that Foucault attempts to make sense of with his analysis of heterotopias. Heterotopias are exemplary in their distinctive and paradoxical otherness from the places and relations with which they are nonetheless connected. Foucault describes a heterotopia as ‘a sort of effectively realized utopia’; a no place that, nonetheless, is (1967: 17).

The first example that Foucault cites to give colour to this notion is the mirror, perhaps not something that immediately comes to mind when one thinks of a place. The provocativeness of this example is an indication of the eccentricity and openness required to accompany Foucault in his analysis:

The mirror functions as a heterotopia in the respect that it renders this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the looking glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since, in order to be perceived, it has to pass through this virtual point, which is over there. (1967: 17)

The level of unreality preserved in the mirror example is, according to Foucault, a characteristic of other spaces that might seem less explicitly virtual. Foucault’s list includes boarding schools, cemeteries, monasteries, libraries, high-class brothels, cinemas, colonies and ships (1967: 18–22).

Thinking through the examples and the criteria Foucault offers, it is tempting to conclude that heterotopic space is less an essential feature of particular places, and more helpful as a tool to think about the complexity of different places in general. Indeed, the versatility of the concept is evident when looking at the way it has been employed by other thinkers. For example, the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk offers the following candidates as heterotopias: sports venues, holiday islands, places of pilgrimage, slums, car parks, different kinds of no-go areas and space stations (2013: 222). Foucault seems right in his specification that ‘heterotopology’, as he calls it, is not a science, but a systematic description of some other kind (1967: 17). There is no singular or settled list of heterotopias. What does and doesn’t qualify is always up for grabs.
Foucault lists six guiding criteria that assist in the systematic, though not scientific, identification and description of heterotopias (1967: 17). One: all cultures have heterotopias, though there is no universal heterotopia. Two: the same heterotopia may function differently at different times in the history of a culture. Three: heterotopias hold together several otherwise contrasting or even incompatible functions or performative spaces. Four: heterotopias function according to their capacity to operate outside time, in other words, they are necessarily anachronistic. Five: heterotopias feature distinctive conditions of entry, whereby entrants must adopt certain ritualised attitudes or behaviour. Six: heterotopias pose either an illusory or compensatory function whereby the illusory nature of real space is exposed, or reflected in a more perfect form (1967: 18–22).

Foucault twice uses the cemetery as an example to illustrate what these criteria mean more specifically. In one instance, he calls on the cemetery to make sense of the idea that heterotopias express an anachronistic temporality. Cemeteries are time dense places amid sets of other places where time seems too speedily effervescent to provoke pause. When one enters a cemetery, one cannot help but feel as though one has entered a different time, or a place that bears a different relation to time. This feature of cemetery space is worth noting for the sections that follow. Foucault also uses the cemetery as an example to give descriptive detail to the second criteria listed above, in the sense that it is a place that has always been with human civilisations—‘has not ceased to exist’ (1967: 18)—but which has functioned in different ways over time. In other words, the cemetery as heterotopia has both a precise and a mutable function, both stable and changeful. This aspect of the cemetery is also relevant to underline for the analysis that follows.

Examples of cemeteries

Like all heterotopias, cemeteries have distinctive atmospheres. This, however, doesn’t mean that the atmosphere will be thoughtfully designed. In this section, I look at different examples of urban cemeteries and offer some suggestions as to what is possible in urban cemetery design. I set up a suggestive rather than systematic contrast between what does and doesn’t seem to work with a focus on Abney Park and Tower Hamlets in London, two mid-nineteenth-century cemeteries that are now no longer managed as cemeteries but fulfil other public functions. Emphasis on the United Kingdom affords a tracing out of historical and cultural convergences and divergences with Australia. While the channels of influence between UK and Australian examples are more dynamic and divergent than is often supposed (Martin 2004), one can readily read the inheritance of UK cultural conventions in Australian cemetery design and management. For example, in the Australian context we see iterations of the Victorian garden cemetery and a similar shift in values towards cemetery
spaces that have been increasingly designed for ease of management, hygiene, equality, uniformity and order. More recently, too, natural burial, which is more established in the United Kingdom, is being recognised in Australia. While the uptake is slow, legislative change, community groups and proprietors are making natural burial a viable and desirable option (Brice 2013).

Both Abney Park and Tower Hamlets function as urban woodlands and, in this sense, fulfil a multifunctional role comparable to the churchyard cemetery, which, in addition to being a place for the dead to rest, was also a meeting point for the community, and the Victorian garden cemetery, which was a place for leisure as well as mourning (Martin 2004). The role played by Abney Park and Tower Hamlets as urban woodlands can be read as an evolution of the garden cemetery ideal that informed their initial planting in the mid-nineteenth century. They are explicitly recognised as sanctuaries for wildlife as well as human remains. This observation points to the following section where I discuss natural burial grounds, which also commonly function as woodlands or parks as well as cemeteries.

One of the striking things about Abney Park and Tower Hamlets is that they are almost overrun by understory vegetation. This includes many plants that are cropped or regarded as weeds in an Australian context, such as lucerne, nettle, bulbs of all kinds, daisies, canola and wild roses. This vegetation, along with the well-established evergreen trees, creates a kaleidoscopic atmosphere in continually shifting gradients of green. Scattered among the growth are titled stones, greening with moss and lichen. There is seemingly no way to distinguish the plan of the graves from the plan of the forest, with bush and grave springing alike from the soil.

Abney Park and Tower Hamlets both point to a long history of cemeteries incorporating design aspects that are proper to other genres of place. Tower Hamlets is described by the Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park as ‘the most urban woodland in London’ (2014), and Abney Park was initially designed as a garden and arboretum as well as a cemetery. While previously they might have been places to go to remember deceased family and friends, they now draw together a variety of different publics and fulfil a range of functions: workspaces for recreational and amateur gardeners and stone-carving collectives, educational facilities for woodland conservationists, and venues for holiday clubs that allow kids to make cubbies and build rope swings among the headstones. Tower Hamlets supports a network of over 3,000 volunteers and is used by over 8,500 local school children as an outdoor classroom (Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park 2014).

In contrast with the distinctive atmosphere of Abney Park and Tower Hamlets, the cemeteries in or on the fringes of Australia’s urban centres—and in the majority of lawn cemeteries—are notable for the absence of a sense that one
has entered an interior, a sheltered space that is living and breathing as much as
dead. This contrast is apparent in cemeteries like Rookwood and Macquarie Park
Cemetery in Sydney, which favour short lawns and sparse, orderly plantings.

Rookwood is the largest cemetery in the southern hemisphere and the largest
greenspace in Sydney. Built on land acquired by the government in 1862,
it houses a variety of plant and animal life and is known for its arrangement
of burial plots for various religious denominations in a suburb-like format.
Despite this non-human and human diversity, the cemetery suffers from the
same atmospheric deficiencies as many cemeteries that have been designed
according to strict, rectilinear geometry and what might be deemed an excessive
prioritisation of hygiene (Johnson 2008). As Julie Rugg points out in her article
‘Lawn cemeteries: The emergence of a new landscape of death’, post-Victorian
cemetery design and management ‘embraced clean lines, eschewed clutter and
saw virtue in uniformity’ (2006: 219). These are values that no doubt make sense
when viewed as a reaction to the ostentation and uneven expression of status
in Victorian cemeteries and mourning conventions. Similarly, one can see the
argument for cemeteries designed to accommodate lawn-mowing technologies
and other maintenance requirements in the absence of cheap or willing labour.
The often-needless hostility shown to disorder and mess can result, however,
in sterile, exposed landscapes that are uninviting to humans and animals.

Based on the abundance of closely shorn turf in the built environment, one might
be forgiven for thinking that hostility to long grass is a defining feature of the
Australian attitude to both public and private space. Some promising counter
examples can be found in recent urban architectural initiatives, such as Neeson
Murcutt Architects’ award-winning designs for Prince Alfred Park in Sydney,
which features a meadow of native grasses. A well-kept lawn, however, arguably
remains a sign of civic virtue, of cared for and well-managed space. This is
regrettable in light of the role that established grasses can play in the evocation
of a space that has been set aside, as they do at Tower Hamlets, Abney Park
and some of the natural burial grounds discussed in the next section. Grass
with height and density contributes significantly to the spatial diversity and
distinctiveness of the landscape. It creates a sense of ‘in-ness’ that is different
to the ‘in-ness’ created by the tree canopy and certainly to the typically smooth,
level surfaces common to urban places. Thick grass is troublesome. It supports
the creepy crawlies that exist in an antagonistic relationship with the clean,
safe, manageable spaces to which certain iterations of modern architecture
and design aspire. Messy grass signifies neglect. Something significant goes
missing, however, when the band between waist and foot is reduced to a
condition in which flatness and exposure is its ideal.
In *Last Landscapes*, Worpole offers a similar critique of a certain kind of popular twentieth-century cemetery:

> [T]his great, dry grass desert with uniform rows of standardized graves seemed like a grim card-game of Patience left incomplete. There is no shelter from the sun, no trees lean over the graves to shade them, no slopes in the landscape to lift one’s eyes to the sky, or deflect from the endless monotony of what is less a place of consolation and more like a killing field, or a sports field hastily dug up for mass burials after some terrible atrocity. (2003: 56)

The specific cemetery in this case is in Kent, England, and Worpole passed it on route to Derek Jarman’s idyllic memorial garden, Prospect Cottage. Worpole’s comment that flat, lawned spaces do little to ‘lift one’s eyes’ or to break up the monotony of a homogenous spatial field is revealing with regard to an argument that one might make in favour of long grasses in cemeteries. Whereas flat lawns aspire to a singular spatial dimension, tall grasses enfold multiple, woven pleats. In addition to offering a variety of shelters for insects, reptiles and birds, this spatial multi-dimensionality allows the eye to follow textured, visual paths inward to rest on rudimentary interiors: the partially opaque microworlds of other beings, living and non-living.

### Natural burial grounds

In contrast to the prototypical, well-maintained, twentieth-century cemetery in the West, natural burial grounds often support flourishing grasslands. In part this is due to the different set of priorities that define natural burial grounds. Key among these is the shift in emphasis from exclusively human monumentalism to democratic ambitions whereby design and architecture supplement and support non-human dwelling spaces and their occupants. In the words of Robert Larkins, natural burials are ‘natural monuments’ (2007: 105)—a phrase that might ideally lead to the rethinking of views about the relationship between humans and nature and the obligations of the former to the latter.

Indeed, it seems a mistake to associate places like natural burial grounds, which involve an emphasis on conservation measures, with ‘the natural’ as opposed to ‘the human’. Clearly such landscapes are included within human-spheres and designed in this sense: they are made to house the human body as it moves across the threshold from the living to the dead, from the cultural to the natural. But in part even this framing (cultural/natural) is merely rhetorical, for the human body is always natural and cultural at the same time and this doesn’t change whether it is dead or alive. What’s more, it is a misapprehension of anthropocentrism to regard any project that doesn’t telegraph its humanness as having ambitions to return to nature. To call a landscape a ‘natural burial ground’ is a shade oxymoronic in this sense.
Colney Woodland Burial Park, near Norwich, England, is both cemetery and woodland, both woodland and park. The distinctive feature of this natural burial ground, when compared with the cemeteries mentioned above, is the absence of headstones in favour of carved wooden memorials, and a radial rather than linear arrangement of graves. Local woodworkers are usually employed to make personalised monuments for each grave that conform to limitations in size but not in form. Birds and other animals are among the more popular monuments, with others ranging from books to soccer balls. The graves are arranged in rough, concentric rings encircling specially chosen trees. The effect is a greater sense of harmony between the monuments and other aspects of the landscape. The place is free from the often imposing monumentalism that characterises cemeteries dominated by large stone tombs and gravestones, and which lack the sense of enveloping tranquillity created by the forest and its undergrowth. The twin objectives of supporting a native woodland and offering a resting place for the dead successfully creates an atmosphere that, while less explicitly human in a sense, is nonetheless thoughtfully designed in terms of its appeal to human emotions. As Worpole notes of Colney, ‘Although the mature woodland seems completely “natural”, it has been the subject of judicious landscape planning’ (2003: 193). It is a kind of planning that is less to do with human permanence than with the creation and maintenance of a kind of place that, to some degree, makes the persistence of humans more likely, in other words, a ‘natural monument’.

In his discussion of Colney, and natural burial grounds more generally, Worpole makes a further point that is pertinent to broader questions to do with landscape and meaning from which the present analysis emerges. Quoting from Kenneth Frampton’s work on critical regionalism, he suggests that many newer cemeteries are not designed with the distinctive topographical features of the landscape in mind and that, in order to ensure places retain an identity rather than drifting into the realm of placelessness, design should put greater emphasis on topography (2003: 194). While the landscape at Colney could be read as ‘anti-architectural’, to use Worpole’s term (2003: 194), it is in fact carefully designed and, even if its notional ambitions are to return both bodies and the woodland to nature, this is a nature that has depended on human intervention in order persist—and humans, in turn, might one day come to depend upon it, or places like it.

Similar uncertainties surround questions to do with natural burial grounds and design in the chapter, ‘From cabbages to cadavers: Natural burial down on the farm’ (Clayden et al. 2010: 119–38), which forms part of an extended study on spaces for the dead and dying (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010). The authors focus on a particular kind of natural burial ground that involves the conversion of previously farmed land, on private property, into a public gravesite. This case study is particularly relevant to the Australian situation in light of Robert Larkins’ advice in *Funeral Rights*, namely that, ‘Natural burial grounds appear to be the best option for countries like Australia, which have plenty of land that could
do with some loving care’ (2007: 109). Clayden et al. use qualitative research methods, such as interviews with landholders, to discuss the varied motivations and considerations for setting up a natural burial ground.

Converting a piece of land from a farmed paddock into a burial ground involves significant changes, both in terms of the way the land looks and the way it is regarded by owners. The farming families interviewed by Clayden et al. reveal a variety of different design considerations (even though they didn’t think of themselves as designers): how the burial ground will be marked out from the rest of the property, the visual appeal of the site and the views it offers onto the surrounding countryside, what kind of entrance and signage it will have, the general layout of different amenities (car parks, for example) and the long-term plans for the land (i.e. whether it will remain woodland or return to grazing and cultivation) (2010: 127–29). Different landholders adopt different practices, but each involves a vision that is bound up with an awareness of the topographical distinctiveness of the land and past farming practices, such as the spreading of fertilisers, that have sometimes imperceptibly and sometimes dramatically altered the environment. This makes the farmer as designer fulfil a different role to that of a professional landscape design team, whose perceptual history is less dependent on the landscape undergoing alterations—for better or worse. In the examples the authors include, there is an expressed desire on the part of the farmers ‘to work with the existing landscape fabric and to integrate the burial ground with the farm’ (2010: 130). The dual considerations of making the burial ground distinctive, while integrating it with the rest of the property, is reminiscent of the tensions that Michel Foucault names as defining heterotopic spaces.

Farmers, like gardeners, designers and architects, though perhaps less explicitly so, are always to some extent the creators of habitats. Traditionally, this habitat creation has largely been in the service of yields, whether in the form of plants or animal products. The case of these farmers represents an interesting shift in priorities for habitat creation, not only in the sense that they are less focused on yields but also in the shift from creating places for animal and plants that humans influence indirectly from a distance through consumption, to the creation of places that are used by humans for the dual purpose of burying the dead and creating an environment for animals and plants. If, as the architect Adolf Loos suggests, architecture begins with the places humans create for their dead to rest (1910, cited in Worpole 2003: 6), one can read this shift in farming practices as the explication of latent architectural and design considerations. Importantly, farmers in these instances still work the land through from a ‘dwelling’ perspective, with a unique knowledge of the ‘taskscape’ that defines a given place—to adopt two of anthropologist Tim Ingold’s terms (cited in Clayden et al. 2010: 120–21). These aptitudes are employed in the service of concerns that are more properly those of architecture and design rather than those of intensive
agriculture, which is to say, concerns that include the what and how a place speaks to other humans, as well as accommodating the non-humans that share sovereignty of the land.

A final point worth considering in relation to the ‘From cabbages to cadavers’ study is the connectedness of the burial ground and the rest of the farm and subsequent flow-on effects regarding the way the rest of the farm operates. In one example, a farm operator discusses installing wind turbines on the farm due to a vague but growing commitment to environmental concerns and, importantly in this context, as a way of advertising the burial ground in a manner that is consistent with its conservation imperatives (Clayden et al. 2010: 135). This seems a modest example highlighting the dynamism that exists between the kinds of places humans create and identity. One does not simply undergo a change of vocation and then effect a change on the place one inhabits. Rather, identity is at each stage in some sense composed of the place it wrestles to change, and there is feedback between the two. In other words, the relationship between place and identity is not a zero sum game where inputs and output are equivalent or where the conditions of actors (human and non-human) are stable. The creation of a new place or a new relationship to place is the creation of a new identity, which is formed out of the place it has helped change.

**Conclusion: Potentials for multifunctionality**

Based on a very long anthropological history, it is probable that humans will always create places and things to remember their dead. Based on the same history, and with an eye to Michel Foucault’s remarks on the shift from the churchyard to the suburban cemetery, those places will also continue to change in both subtle and dramatic ways. Though talk of God’s death may be premature, the protracted waning of theistic world views, and with religion offering an increasingly less compelling reservoir for personal and group identification, it seems right that publics have access to new services that are modelled on concerns proper to the contemporary and the future. In this final section, I briefly speculate as to what some of those changes might be. My speculations are informed by the assumption that the only viable, future-directed, purpose-sparking, group-binding concerns will involve the maintenance of places that offer something aesthetically rewarding and productive of resilient ecosystems.

As ‘From cabbages to cadavers’ points out, natural burial grounds suggest a diversity of experiences and purposes—particularly when compared to the probable form of a twentieth-century cemetery in the West: ‘a natural burial ground is unlike a cemetery with its singular mortuary purpose, separated off from both everyday life and other life course transitions. Instead, like the churchyard, it has connections with a broader range of belief systems and experiences’ (Clayden et al. 2010: 135). So, already in these new burial grounds, one witnesses
the addition of new functions, the formation of new publics. The associations of burial and the protection and support of threatened ecologies (Barrett and Barrett 2001), as well as a general connectedness to place, might in the future become more explicit. It is also conceivable that such burial grounds might offer an educative function in the same sense that churches once did and in the way that museums and galleries currently do. Indeed, the recent efforts by museums in the United Kingdom, Australia and America, in particular, to respond to dissatisfaction with existing school systems through the creation of innovative educational programs, seems to offer more than a subtle hint at the potential roles a burial ground might play. This is particularly the case if one believes in the value of children having a robust understanding of death—any conception of life without such an understanding is clearly significantly lacking. One can readily imagine a natural burial ground or series of natural burial grounds that teach ecological and death awareness alongside more traditional functions.

In Australia, institutions like Landcare have historically played a role in making environmentally concerned publics explicit and bringing together people who identify as conservationists. It seems feasible that a natural burial ground might take on this role in the absence of state funding for conservation groups, with funds raised from the purchase of grave plots being put into the establishment and maintenance of educational programs and events. Robert Larkins notes as much when he suggests that natural burial grounds might offer Landcare and Landcare-like organisations ‘a continuing revenue base for their conservation work’ (2007: 108). Like museums, which are already well resourced to offer educational services due to their abundant material curiosities, natural burial grounds could make use of existing conservation programs, landscape designs, and memorial designs to give students an example-rich, atmosphere-specific education. Such programs might teach from a range of different examples that express the intimacy of human feeling, thinking, memory and place. These examples might be sourced from disciplines including design, poetry, literature, art, indigenous history, anthropology, philosophy and science. Woodworkers, employed to make memorials, might offer workshops alongside farmers telling stories about their land and scientists with a good knowledge of the species diversity in the area. Burial grounds like Colney already hold well-attended functions on mother’s and father’s days and at Christmas and Easter. These measures aim to create a sense of community on those days that are most difficult for those who have lost loved ones. Here the burial ground is playing an explicitly therapeutic role in a manner that has historically been associated with the church. As the success of Landcare in Australia shows, from a secular perspective, there seem few issues as urgent or as likely to garner community attention as the necessity of ecological awareness in the face of an ecological crisis. In this sense, mourning and remembrance might be conducted as part of a constructive, future-directed effort to create atmospherically distinctive, ecologically diverse and sustainable places for the dead to be kept at a near distance.
Tom Lee is a writer, researcher and teacher who works largely at the University of Technology Sydney. He has a PhD in comparative literature and two years’ teaching experience in design. He has published academic articles, poetry, essays and short fiction on a variety of topics, including the effect of naughtiness, feelings of the feet and the lists of W.G. Sebald. He is a 2014 recipient of the Marten Bequest Travelling Scholarship for the category of prose.

References


Abstract

Simon Schama in *Landscape and Memory* says, ‘Before it can ever be a repose for the senses, landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from the strata of memory as from layers of rock’ (1995: 6–7).

Landscape and memory are concepts that are strongly interwoven in the identity of a place and its inhabitants. For the teaching and practice of landscape architecture, ‘landscape identity’ is regarded as an important issue of special conceptual value.

This essay explores the way that landscape, identity of a place and memory interact through design and design’s visual form. It is divided into two parts. The first explains conceptual approaches to landscape as a palimpsest of actions on territory, as a dynamic ‘archive’, and as a tangible link between what we are and what we have become. The second part is focused on a review of three examples of design from professional and educational case studies. The rationale for presenting the particular projects is that each one explores the relationship between identity, memory and landscape design to address three questions: How can we activate latent characteristics of a landscape that are connected and refer to past times? How can contemporary landscape design rethink the past and reveal the subtle traces left at an historical or archaeological place? How does memory, as a mind process, inflect our perception of landscape and influence our interventions and thoughts about it?

In order to conceive integrated proposals that are not imposed on or do not alter the site radically, all three projects try to activate the inherent qualities of each place. They propose spaces that host a resilient coexistence of architectural and natural elements using subtle gestures and ecology as the main design tools. They are landscape projects that try to awaken, to reveal, to underline by subtraction the strongest elements that form the identity of a place and to achieve these aims within a biological framework.

Introduction

*Paysage est ou le ciel et la terre se touchent*

—Michel Corajoud

Landscape architecture can be considered as a lens for understanding a site and enriching spatial creations. It is a broad field that refers to the parameters, tensions and dynamics that create space in an ever-changing system.
of relationships. This essay explores the way that landscape as a subject of research, the identity of a place and memory interact through design and its visual and material form.

Divided into two parts, the first explains conceptual approaches to landscape as linked to place, identity and memory, and examines concepts of *genius loci* and collective memory. If we consider designs as hypotheses made about sites, can collective memory and *genius loci* form an opportunity for intervening? The second part of the essay is focused on a review of three design examples from professional and educational case studies. The rationale for presenting these projects is that each one of them responds to the above question of how to interrelate identity and memory with landscape design.

The first example, located in the historical centre of the city of Thessaloniki, refers to the redesign of an urban square that witnessed dramatic events during the Second World War. The second example has to do with the redesign of the surroundings of a protected monument in the same city. The third example presents a diploma student project that focused on enhancing through design the archaeological site of a sacred necropolis in Crete.

An urban landscape in the centre of an historical city, a landscape surrounding a monument in the suburbs, an archaeological landscape in the countryside of an island—three completely different landscapes that provoke the same questions: How can we activate latent characteristics of a landscape that are connected and refer to past times? How can contemporary landscape design rethink the past and reveal the subtle traces left at an historical or archaeological place? How does memory, as a mind process, inflect our perception of landscape and influence our interventions and thoughts about it?

Each project engages with the relationship of landscape design to memory using an array of different design tools.

**Landscape, place and identity—The *genius loci***

_landscape is a repository of memory both individual and collective … [and] is a site of and for identity_  
—W.J.T. Mitchell

Landscape architecture, when understood as a means to culturally define place, is a vast interdisciplinary field that addresses the relationship between the built and natural environment. As a common ground between urbanism, architecture and ecology, landscape architecture tries to respond to current issues of sustainability and environmental decline, but is equally concerned with questions concerning culture, identity and aesthetics.
The crucial difference between landscape architecture and scientific fields that investigate aspects of landscape is that the former focuses on the processes of space formation in relationship to scale, time and topos. It is concerned with the cultural and spatial organisation of place as a dynamic continuum that, according to functional programs and natural ecosystems, is constantly changing. Landscape architecture is the intermediate layer of transformation between nature and culture. When we look at a landscape, we are looking at something that is forever changing both physically and visually. The interaction between human action and the natural characteristics of a site create landscape, which is understood in this context as the cultural expression of a civilisation.

Theorist Christian Norberg-Shulz, when discussing the concept of *genius loci*, speaks of architecture as making concrete the nature of a place. He says that human-made places relate to nature in three evolutionary ways: first, human beings visualise an understanding of nature; second, humankind symbolises this understanding; and, finally, humankind uses this understanding to create a micro-cosmos. In *Elements of Visual design in the Landscape*, landscape architect Simon Bell writes:

*Genius loci*, or the spirit of the place, is that quality or characteristic which makes one location or landscape different from any other, and that is unique and individual to it. The concept is somewhat abstract and intangible and tends to be more commonly understood on an emotional and subconscious level. It is, however, a most important attribute in a place and may be fragile and vulnerable when changes occur in or around the particular location. (1993: 119)

In ‘Being and time’, philosopher Martin Heidegger discusses the concept of *dasein*, which he describes as *being in space*. The world is experienced through our bodies; the physical world is an integral part of our existence and the basis of our perceptions. He adds that humankind is part of a fourfold continuum of earth, sky, mortals and divinities. In his essay ‘Building dwelling thinking’, he argues that, through dwelling, human beings place themselves in this fourfold continuum. He refers to the Greek word *techne*, which means to make something appear. For example, ancient Greek open-air amphitheatres are places where human creation and site form one landscaped whole through *techne*, one cultural entity below sky.

Simon Bell also says that place is important to us and our lives because our sense of identity may be bound up with a particular place and we may refer to ourselves by reference to particular places. Place itself consists of the totality of the natural and constructed elements, assembled in a unique manner that includes the history and associations attached to the place by the people who relate to it.
For landscape architecture, education and practice, attention to ‘landscape identity’ is seen as part of a professional ethos; it has a special value. Landscape identity has two aspects: one has to do with the physical features of a site that give it a special spatial character and the other refers to the relationship of human beings to a specific landscape and what it means to them. Derk Stobbelaar and Bas Pedroli define landscape identity as ‘the unique psychosociological perception of a place defined in spatial-cultural space’ (2011). They explain that ‘social-cultural meanings that are linked with places, features or events in the landscape, play a role in the collective living world and confirm the “we-feeling” of a group’. Landscape identity is a key issue for them and they add that the ‘characteristic features of a landscape, rooted in time, visible and recognisable, distinguish the landscape from other landscapes and play a role in the collective living environment’. Without people connected to them, landscapes are no longer living places.

A landscape may be a physical space for living, but it is also a place with social meaning. ‘Place’, anthropologist Marc Augé asserts, ‘can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity’. Accordingly, the specificity of a place makes it a reference point and source of identification for citizens. Augé’s concept of place is clearly charged with emotion and memory. Opposed to a place is the concept of a non-place. This is described by Augé, as a ‘space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity’ and is consequently devoid of emotion and memory. In it, social interactions and emotional attachment fail and give way to individualism. An example is a supermarket, which is devoid of local identity and might be constructed in any place of the world. As he notes, the ‘space of non-place creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude’.

At the 2010 Conference of the International Federation of Landscape Architects in Santiago, Chile, it was claimed that ‘landscape architecture is a discipline cherishing and protecting the geographical identity of a place’ (Howard, Thompson and Waterton 2013: 274). Furthermore, the European Landscape Convention states that landscape ‘contributes to the formation of local cultures and … is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and consolidation of the European identity’. It is not only that landscape represents cultural identity, but that it also serves as an identity builder.

The need for research into the places where individuals might interact and create a common feeling of belonging is more crucial than ever. In Sentimental Topography, the visionary Greek landscape architect Dimitris Pikionis explains:

We rejoice in the progress of our body across the uneven surface of the earth. And our spirit is gladdened by the endless interplay of the three dimensions that we encounter in every step … You compose the diagrams of this landscape. You are the landscape. You are the Temple that is to
crown the precipitous rocks of your own Acropolis. For what else does the Temple do but enact the same twofold law which you serve? ... Is it not because of this concordance, because the same laws are at work in both nature and art, that we are able to see forms of life, forms of nature transformed before our very eyes into forms of art and vice versa? (1989: 68)

Pikionis eloquently describes the close sensorial relationship between human beings and the landscape that is walked and experienced: topos and person becoming one entity.

Memory and its relationship to topos

The American Nobel prize-winning neuropsychiatrist Eric Kandel has claimed that knowledge and memory are the centres of gravity of our personal identity, they make us what we are:

In a larger sense, memory provides our lives with continuity. It gives us a coherent picture of the past that puts current experience in perspective. We are who we are because of what we learn and what we remember ... Memory is essential not only for the continuity of individual identity, but also for the transmission of culture and for the evolution and continuity of societies over centuries ... loss of memory destroys our sense of self. It severs the connection with the past and with other people. (2006: 10)

In Europe, the concept of memory is always located in an historical context and is strongly linked to a sense of place. Landscape architect Christophe Girot says that the landscape precedes the landscape architect, yet architecture can never precede the architect. As landscapes contain the palimpsest of human actions over time, they are also carriers of the past. Finding a way of keeping a memory ‘alive’ is an act of resistance to losing our identity. The same stands for landscapes of memory. Landscape design in this sense should be the stabiliser of meaning, an intermediary keeping memory in a continuous recall. A well-preserved or designed landscape provides a psychological anchor between us and the world. Without this connection with the landscape, the individual can feel rootless. Landscape can provide a tangible link between what we are and what we have become.

Landscape and memory are concepts that are strongly interwoven with the identity of a place and its inhabitants. Local myths, associations, habits and rituals, shared fears, collective memory and common feelings are all intangible elements of a place that give it a certain allure and atmosphere, its sense of place, its genus loci. It is not only how a place is but also how it makes us feel, how we live and perform in it.
In *On Collective Memory*, the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs suggests that a social group's identity is constructed out of narratives and traditions that are created to give its members a sense of continuity, a sense of belonging. The term collective memory includes the myths, traditions and beliefs that tie people together. Individual memory refers to personal events, while collective memory contains events that were transmitted to the individual by other members of the society, it is a mutual memory that concerns us all, which is why it is so important. Halbwachs also says that individual memory is personal, while collective memory is a framework on which we can relate and contextualise our memories. He suggests that our memories gain significance only in relation to collective memory; that is, a kind of memory living beyond the individual. He adds, however, ‘While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember’ (1992: 48).

French historian Pierre Nora says:

> We speak so much of memory because so little is left … Our interest in *lieux de mémoire*, where memory crystallises and secretes itself, has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn—but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory. (1989)

Nora observes that there has been a shift from ‘a natural, collective memory’—*milieux de mémoire*—to a more ‘conscious way of maintaining memory’ that has to do with intervention on specific sites—*lieux de mémoire*. The fact that in *lieux de mémoire* memory serves as a spectacle for the modern city could lead to a kind of contemporary loss of memory. This observation on the one hand emphasises the importance of designing memory spaces but, on the other hand, implies that the role of natural memory could be unintentionally minimised.

The lack of a dynamic active memory creates our interest in sites where memory recurs, places that give us a sense of continuity. Memorial sites are needed because of the lack of a spontaneous automatic and genuine memory. Places that are designed as memory archives, as memory landscapes, have to exist in order to be the spatial testimonies of our lost collective memory.

English writer Margaret Drabble declared, ‘This is one of the reasons why we feel such a profound and apparently disproportionate anguish when a loved landscape is altered out of recognition; we lose not only a place, but ourselves, the continuity between the shifting phases of our life’. Landscapes of memory are not functional places but places that express ideals that carry meanings. The tangible and intangible aspects of collective memory can subconsciously inflect the landscape design process. As historian Simon Schama writes in
Landscape and Memory, ‘Before it can ever be the repose for the senses, landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from the strata of memory as from layers of rock’.

Landscape design as a lens for reinterpreting the past—On designing landscapes

How can we activate latent characteristics of a landscape that are connected and refer to past times? How may memory, as a mind process, inflect our perception of landscape and influence our interventions on it? The interesting issue is not only to respond to the question of what landscape is as a concept, but also to explore how to design landscapes and invent ways of revitalising and transforming them through reference to the past.

‘Landscape’ is not merely a philosophical term or a spectacular view of nature, it can also be a design product, an intervention on a large scale, or a project with biological infrastructure. It seems that landscape design is a cultural act of incorporation and compositional weaving together of all the parameters that characterise a site: morphology, hydrology, ecology, scale, vulnerabilities and latent dynamics, as well as local myths, beliefs and atmospheres—in totality, the genius loci. The landscape designer usually works with these aspects of a place in order to reinterpret it. Simon Bell explains:

... genius loci is an elusive quality which tends to be easier to conserve than to create. It is certainly vulnerable to damage or destruction if not recognized or valued and treated with sufficient sensitivity. People tend to be more attached to a landscape with a strong sense of place and so are more likely to be sensitive to and wary of landscape change. An essential part of the analysis of any landscape should be to try to identify the genius loci. (1993: 122)

If we assume that landscape design can translate these complexities and different layers of meaning, then we could claim that in order for a project to belong to an historical place it must respect and reinterpret the history and past memories recorded there. Monuments and an historical built environment help people to remember, or not to forget. Preservation of place ensures that it is possible to associate it with past events and to maintain historical continuity across time.

The next section explores the way in which landscape, identity of a place and memory interact through design and design’s visual and material form, using examples from professional and educational projects.
The projects selected vary in scale, context, situation and historicity, but share concern for the issue of how contemporary landscape design can rethink the past and reveal the subtle traces of the past that remain at an historical or archaeological site.

Example A: Redesigning Eleftherias Square, Thessaloniki—‘The time tissue’

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<tr>
<td>Design Team:</td>
<td>Katerina Andritsou, architect/landscape architect; Panita Karamanea, architect/landscape architect; Athanasios Polizoidis, architect/landscape architect</td>
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<td>Collaborators:</td>
<td>Errikos David, lighting expert; Elias Kaboukos, installations expert</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students:</td>
<td>Xenia Papatriantafillou, Marintina Kardarakou</td>
</tr>
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<td>April 2013</td>
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Time is rather a boundless landscape and what moves is the observer’s eye.
—Thornton Wilder

Eleftherias (freedom) Square is a unique place of collective memory for the city of Thessaloniki. Urbanity, history and memory are strongly attached to this place, giving it deep symbolic meaning. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the square was an urban space of leisure. It was burnt in the great fire of 1917 (which destroyed much of the city) and was witness to many historical events that occurred between the two world wars. One of the darkest historical events took place during the Second World War when German soldiers forced local people into the square before transporting them to concentration camps. This dramatic event stigmatised the square and, eventually, collective memory came to regard it as a ‘cursed place’. The cruel historical events became a burden for the site, which ended up a leftover space, a *terrain vague* that functioned as open-air parking. The square, however, situated as it is in the centre of the historical old city and in front of the waterfront, is extremely beautiful.

In the spring of 2013, the municipality of the city announced an architectural competition to redesign the square in order to reclaim this ambiguous terrain as an active urban space.

This is an example of when a place, although it possesses a strong collective memory, has lost its physical form as well as its capacity to engage people in thinking about its past functions and associations. It seems that it requires the
activation of the qualities that are inherent in the site in order to unlock the latent *genius loci*. How can landscape design reinvent a particular place within a city; how can a place of the past come alive for the present and the future?

The sense of loss forms an opportunity for urban revival and spatial cohesion; this ambiguous and awkward terrain needs to be rethought with consideration for the relationship between this landscape and memory. The intervention sought to create a contemporary European urban space that revealed the *genius loci*. The particular memories associated with the site and its temporal relationships gave birth to the main idea.

Time was the starting point: time as an ephemeral instant, as a continuing sequence of metropolitan events, as an historical moment. Temporality, fluidity, intertemporal facts. Time here is understood according to three modalities: as history and its relation to collective memory; as ecology, including the cyclical time of nature and the four seasons; and as urbanity, the ephemeral leisure time of the contemporary metropolitan inhabitant. Time was acted on as a unifying tissue, a time tissue.

Figure 1. Masterplan
Source: Panita Karamanea
The main spatial tool of the design proposal was the surface of the square and its sections; horizontal planes constructed from different local stones in longitudinal layers that weave from side to side, giving a sense of fluidity to the site through flowing lines that stretch and divide the square into three functional zones while, at the same time, creating a unified space.

Figure 2. Diagrams and sections
Source: Panita Karamanea

The dominant compositional element was the void left in the centre of the square, symbolising loss. On the edges of the square, tall existing trees form an urban forest in the middle of which is a clearing. It is an open space from which the sea, the horizon and the surrounding built landscape of the old city are visible: a free and open space in which to just be. The surface of the square runs up against a sculptural memorial wall, an anti-monument, that seems to draw the ground into it.

The intervention has a strong Mediterranean aspect. Proposed plantings are local species that demand little irrigation, thereby helping to rejuvenate the existing ecology. The existing trees, which are the main focus of the square, are maintained, while secondary trees are proposed to emphasise the project’s spatial structure. Vegetal borders form mild filters for the surroundings, and a series of small-scale Mediterranean garden habitats complement the project.
Example B: Eptapirgion area, Thessaloniki—‘Ecological histories’

<table>
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</tr>
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In wilderness is the preservation of the world.
—Henri David Thoreau, 1862

Eptapirgion is a medieval castle acropolis on the north-east border of Thessaloniki. It is situated on a small hill, surrounded by parts of the medieval wall that once protected the city. In the medieval era, the castle defended the city but, in recent times, it functioned as a political prison. Collective memory has categorised it as a frightening and wild site, a place of imprisonment for the condemned that is beyond the scope of normal life and joy. The site of Eptapirgion, however, has a special identity and atmosphere, abundant natural beauty and astonishing views. Today, the site is wild, a protected cultural
landscape where history meets the contemporary urban profile; it is a place that holds the city’s heritage, waiting to be revealed. The castle stands at the top of a hill amidst patches of vegetation and meandering paths.

In November 2012, the municipality announced an architectural competition for the rehabilitation of the site. The project presented below won 4th prize.

Eptapirgion is an example of a site where the *genius loci* is very strong. The potent presence of the monument as well as the natural beauty of the terrain demands minimum interference. Any intervention should be discrete but legible. If this territory, which is so full of symbolism, is our *materia prima*, how can we maintain the sense of place and, at the same time, bring out the latent meanings of the site and create a contemporary urban space? The main inspirational concept was to maintain the site’s *genius loci* as well as the existing vegetal wilderness.

The goal was to create a mild green cosmos, a buffer zone between the city and the monument. The concept was derived from the defensive character of the existing walls and proposes a soft, planted mantle of protection and emergence; a filter between the city and an enclosed landscape. The intervention has a strong ecological–bioclimatic aspect and uses few elements to organise the place. The design concept is based on using natural processes, designing with nature and restoring wilderness. The design process focused upon:

1. Harnessing movements, flows and pauses in relation to the topography. The main compositional gesture is a network of dirt paths that enable an experiential narration of the landscape and the monument. The paths follow...
the topography and are connected with rest areas at key viewpoints near
the walls, revealing the urban fabric, the mountain and the sea.

2. Creating a smooth vegetated mantle–filter that reveals and will gradually
protect the monument and its surroundings. Local Mediterranean dry-
climate species are used as they demand little irrigation and emphasise the
site’s austerity and symbolism. The design highlights the existing meadows,
which are considered as free fields for natural regeneration. On the site’s
boundaries a filter of low evergreen trees is created for sound insulation and
wind protection.
3. The distinct spatial identities within the site are identified and emphasised: the meadow, the zigzag path, the viewpoints, the enclosed gardens, the linear park, the hidden amphitheatres, the path by the walls.

Example C: Landscape design as an educational process—On teaching landscape

Landscape design as a methodological tool in education is more and more useful for architectural studies. Landscape architecture as an interdisciplinary subject of research is particularly important for understanding the construction of culture and place, identities and space, environmental issues and habitats. Landscape architecture offers a holistic perspective on integrating environment with culture.

In his essay ‘Nine rules for students of landscape architecture’, French landscaper and educator Michel Corajoud advises that it is very important when visiting a site to sharpen personal observation. He insists that all information and answers are there, \textit{a priori}. The only task for the landscaper is to pose the right question. A landscape project should try to awaken, to reveal and to underline by subtraction the strongest elements that form the identity of a place and to achieve these aims within a biological framework. Landscape architect Christophe Girot explains that the four steps necessary when approaching a site are: i) landing; ii) grounding; iii) finding; and iv) founding.

In recent years, landscape architecture has come to be of central importance for archaeologists in the European context. Archaeology, after all, is basically about three elements: material evidence, sites, and what can be understood from them. Landscape archaeology is the study of a terrain through the material remains of the past. The next example is about a sacred landscape in the countryside of Crete and the effort to decode the site through a diploma project.

Diploma project: The case of the Minoan Necropolis in Armeni, Crete—‘Time shortcuts’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School of Architecture, Technical University of Crete, Chania</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Students: Hrisa Panagiotopoulou, Hristianna Fotou</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervisors: Panita Karamanea, architect/landscape architect, lecturer in architectural and landscape design; Fani Tuffano-Mallouhou, archaeologist, associate professor of restoration</td>
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The quality of an artist depends upon the quantity of past he bears within him.

—Jean Gris

The project is an intervention in the late Minoan necropolis in Armeni–Rethymno, a protected archaeological site that is situated in a protected natural landscape in the countryside of Crete.

The extremely beautiful and vulnerable site is an ancient cemetery interwoven within a virgin landscape of oaks. The place is far from human settlement and the highway and it seems to have been forgotten among the quiet surroundings. The cemetery extends along a smooth slope where the ancient graves are present as holes in the ground; they are a series of perpendicular gaps in the landscape, burial cuts that have marked the site indelibly for centuries. In combination with the dense shadows from the old oaks, the place emits a sense of uncanny. It is a landscape intact since antiquity and collective memory regards it as an unusual site in the midst of the Cretan countryside, far from civilisation. The components of the site are minimal, potted with holes in the earth and planted with oaks, the question to be answered is how to intervene without damaging the atmosphere, in such a way as to be almost invisible. Using the language of landscape architecture, this diploma project researched how the spirit and identity of this site, where time seems to stand still, could be heightened while enabling it to remain relatively untouched. This is an example where the genius loci is symbolic and spiritual and the natural landscape exceptional and rare. It is a cultural landscape that requires small gestures: here, less physical alteration will achieve greater results.

The intent of the project was to heighten the qualities of the landscape by way of a subtle and reversible intervention, thus allowing visitors to understand and enjoy the special atmosphere of the place through the emergence of the natural landscape.

Each cultural landscape is a dynamic system, where space and time constitute an integral whole. The gradual decay of monuments over time leads us to consider time as linear rather than cyclic, while time in nature is experienced through the temporal cycles of the four seasons. This dual aspect of time and how it can be experienced through human movement became the basic tool underpinning the design intervention.
The basic structural element is a new path that introduces the visitor to the archaeological landscape by using the natural surroundings as elements of the project. The most humble elements of the landscape—twigs, clay, tree trunks, fallen leaves and rocks—are used with the same simplicity that prehistoric humans built their dwellings. Starting with the materials found at the site, delicate and reversible interventions are proposed that will disintegrate over time. The entrance to the archaeological site, formed by a cut into the ground, is a reminder of access to the graves, the old war pit (a hole in the ground used for defence) is converted into an amphitheatre that is sheltered by a wooden structure made from the existing trees, ancient deposition pits become spiral open-air museums for objects found at the site, light cloth double shell canopies that support climbing plants are proposed for the two largest tombs, and new viewing and sitting areas are designed to facilitate contemplation of the landscape. Simple archetypal forms from an ancient landscape, fragments of a whole, create a contemporary path that passes through the elements that evoke the history of the site, creating a contemporary landscape narration.
“Through the agency of this particular hour the mystery of time becomes one with the mystery of space. What irreconcilable elements have merged together here? Wherever one turns, one may see the double-headed herm of antithesis. Faced with a mystery of this magnitude, the soul no longer needs an explanation, for in the deepening of nature’s mystery, the soul undergoes a process, an experience, a ‘passion’ in the depths of which lies understanding.” — D. Pikionis, *A Sentimental Topography*, 1995

**Figure 8. Diagrams and photomontages**

Source: Panita Karamanea

Anthropologist Tim Ingold, in his essay ‘The temporality of landscape’, says:

For both archaeologist and the native dweller, the landscape tells—or rather is—a story. It enfolds the lives and times of predecessors who, over the generations have moved around in it and played their part in its formation. To perceive the landscape is therefore to carry out an act of
remembrance and remembering that is not so much a matter of calling up an internal image, stored in the mind, as of engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past. (2000: 189)

In having to deal with an archaeological landscape—an archaeo-scape—this project based its design process on walking and the natural potentialities of the site. Walking as a commemorative practice is used in order to awaken the relationship between visitor and place. Movement as a device for understanding landscape offers a varying conception of place, one which is continually shifting. A temporal landscape is being created, one that is best understood not from one point of view but when in motion. It is a spatial system to be experienced and revealed dynamically.

Conclusions—Epilogue

Landscape is the result of tension and equilibrium, it is dynamism, capable of transmitting emotion that goes beyond the visual.

—Manuel de Solà-Morales

Landscape design tries to balance dynamics in a constantly changing system where the sum of the parts is more important than the parts on their own. As a spatial syntax tool, it creates synergies and diagonal relationships between concept, context and ecology. But most of all, it is an open process of design related to time. Landscapes are always changing; they are in a constant state of becoming. Interventions in landscapes concern not only the creation of forms but organising the processes that give birth to them.

The examples presented in this essay show how topos, collective memory and genius loci influence projects in a creative way. Landscape design as a structural system organises, articulates, reveals, explains, reinterprets, protects and underlines the qualities of a site. A series of intangible concepts, such as collective memory and genius loci, as well as a series of tangible characteristics like topography, movement and plantation were addressed to varying degrees in each example.

In order to pay homage to collective memory and create an emotional landscape for Thessaloniki, the first example used a cut section to create a void within urban density. While the surrounding urban network is continuous, leaving an open space allows the project to evolve. Because of the scale of the site it is possible to maintain the existing void as a clearing in the city fabric. In the meantime, the design of the square’s surface gives a new layer of meaning. By shaping the terrain and creating sections at different levels, the space, although empty, becomes sculptural. The eyes are directed downwards, paying homage to an allegoric immersion in the earth and the past: a section in space,
a metaphorical section in time, a ‘chrono-spatial fissure’. The project design proposes an architectural hardscaped version of landscape design in a central urban environment, using minimal symbolic elements.

The potential of ecology to act as a catalyst to rejuvenate a site on the city’s edge is the design tool used in the second example. The existing wilderness means that the site has a compelling existing identity. The project in this instance was designed to modulate the unique qualities of the site in order to reveal and enhance it. Thus, landscape interventions function as a kind of ‘acupuncture’ that activates the \textit{a priori} features, which means that a softer vegetated scheme is sufficient intervention. Ecological design and a network of paths is the missing agent that enables the existing poetic wilderness of this landscape to emerge. This is a softscaped approach that, by reactivating natural conditions, proposes the restoration of the site.

In the last example, walking as a narrative practice is the sensorial device that enables a visitor to experience a sensitive cultural landscape in the countryside. The ancient necropolis of Armeni is a vulnerable site; the past is still present here as the site has remained intact since antiquity. In this case, subtle and sensitive gestures are appropriate. The project allows for the dissolution of material forms while introducing subtle elements that are in tune with the natural environment and made from humble local materials.

All three projects use the surface of the earth as a basic tool: a solid ground that is gradually submerged, a vegetated soft ground that invites contemplation, an earthy excavated ground to be traversed. ‘Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust’ says the Christian burial service, reminding us of the close bond that we have with the earth. It may be this strong subconscious relationship to the earth that leads us to sculpt the ground in a poetic way in projects having to do with the past. These projects also emphasise vegetation as a structural three-dimensional element. Plants, trees and soil are all parts of a narrative that creates spatial variety. Linear plantings or massed vegetation create spatial filters, visual borders and places to sit. Using perennial and deciduous species, a poetic effect is achieved as space dramatically changes with the seasons. Vegetation serves as a soft system for organising space, a living eco-material that varies through time. A third element in common is the use of movement in space: the act of walking. Walking becomes a narrative device that illuminates the site and its intrinsic qualities in a new way. The itinerary acts as an initiation to space, provokes emotions, presents different perspectives and views and leads the visitor through various spatial qualities. In this way, by engaging with the site through the sensory abilities of the human body, the interaction between the visitor and the landscape becomes a somatic experience.
In *The Eyes of the Skin*, architect Juhani Pallasmaa says:

Sensory experiences become integrated through the body, or rather, in the very constitution of the body and the human mode of being. Psychoanalytic theory has introduced the notion of body image or body schema as the centre of integration …

The body is not a mere physical entity; it is enriched by both memory and dream, past and future. Edward S Casey even argues that our capacity of memory would be impossible without a body memory … We remember through our bodies as much as through our nervous system and brain. (2005: 40, 45)

Through walking and exploring, the human body gives life to a place, making it no longer a mute territory frozen in time but an animated landscape. Tim Ingold refers to bodily memory as an aspect of human memory that can evoke another kind of remembrance. He proposes the adoption of ‘a dwelling perspective when thinking about landscape, according to which the landscape is constituted as an enduring record of—and testimony to—the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it and in so doing have left there something of themselves’ (2000: 189). The past reaches into the present through bodily memory and human experience: looking, walking, listening, touching and smelling activate these memorial spaces and bring them to life again. Space and movement function as a catalyst.

Landscape architect Ian Mac Harg says that natural phenomena manifest dynamically and depend upon physical laws and processes, we have to learn how all these phenomena function before deciding to intervene in a site. The interesting issue for a landscape architect is to find ways to incorporate into the design process the dynamic conditions of temporality and biological materiality that are found in it.

In order to reveal the *genius loci*, each project used a process of subtraction to reveal the strongest elements that formed the identity of each place. These integrated proposals are not imposed on or do not radically alter each site, they try to activate inherent qualities of each place but within a biological framework. In order to activate latent characteristics that are connected and refer to past times, all three projects try to create spaces that host a resilient coexistence of architectural and natural elements. Depending on the context and the necessities of each of these public spaces, the relation of hardscape to softscape varies. From city to countryside, the physical interventions required to bring out the hidden meanings of the site become less and less: an urban vegetated piazza in Thessaloniki, a monument’s meadow in Eptapirgion, a natural architecture in Crete. Minimal elements, subtle sensitive gestures, the use of ecology as a mild living mantle, the ground as a relief of physical materiality, movement as a device of interaction with the site, are all landscape tools that try not to impose on these existing memory-scapes.
By maintaining a landscape as untouched as possible, we leave room for individual and collective memory. The landscape designer rethinks the past and reveals the subtle traces left in an historical or archaeological place in order to enable the visitor to access the past through these traces. Landscape architecture, by using discrete design and ecology as a construction technique, is able to leave a soft footprint at a site and can organise space without burdening it by establishing designs that do not impose prevailing forms and propose without aggression. The integrated result can help us understand and perceive a vulnerable and precious landscape and be more likely to associate it with its past.

Landscape is equally a construction of the mind, a cultural archive, and an ecological warehouse. By linking landscape design research with practice and education, this essay has presented a range of design tools and results that activate the inherent qualities of each site.

Perhaps in the current era of environmental and economic crisis, hybrid landscape design practices that pay attention to intangible qualities like genius loci and memory are the only possible recourse to create culturally and ecologically sustainable environments.

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The meaning of ‘Made in Italy’ in fashion

Simona Segre Reinach

Abstract. In this paper I set out to account for the transformations and specific features of Italian fashion within a broader scenario created by the globalisation of industry, markets and consumption.

While a retrospective gaze may lead us to interpret Italian fashion as a phenomenon that has simply evolved in time, a closer examination reveals a development made up of continuity, but also of discontinuities. Continuity may be perceived in the production of quality fabrics and artisan competences scattered throughout Italy. The discontinuities highlight different fashion cultures, production and consumption marking the phases of its development.

Introduction

While a retrospective gaze may lead us to interpret Italian fashion as a phenomenon that has simply evolved over time, a closer examination reveals development that is made up of continuity, but also of discontinuities. Continuity is evident in the production of quality fabrics and artisan competencies scattered throughout Italy. The discontinuities are highlighted by varied fashion cultures, production and consumption marking the phases of its development. Present-day Italian fashion lacks the precise profile that it had in the past decades, but ‘Italian style’ is still recognisable. What exactly Italian style is, however, is not easy to grasp. In this essay, I suggest that understanding the concept of ‘Made in Italy’ in relation to Italian style requires research into the cultural history of Italian fashion and design, its ambiguities and historical evolution. This essay aims to account for the transformations and specific features of Italian fashion within the broader scenario created by the globalisation of industry, markets and consumption. The basic ingredients of Italian fashion were defined in 1981 in a special issue of Domus, the celebrated journal of architecture and design, which was devoted to fashion. The Milanese architect and director of Domus,

1 Specific anthropological fieldwork to analyse the structure of the fashion industry, and not only its image, makes a valuable contribution to such research.
Alessandro Mendini, was ahead of his time in recognising the relevance of fashion in postwar Italian culture and history. In that issue of Domus, Italian style was defined as being characterised by:

- crystal clear shapes, sharp cuts, precious fabrics, refined finishings showing a bond between craftsmanship and industry, a good balance of realism and imagination. (*Domus Moda* 1981)

This is a good, although florid, definition to start with. But, a theory of Italian fashion is still to be properly arrived at, as the cultural history of Italian fashion has only recently begun to be researched (Colaiacomo 2006; Fortunati and Danese 2005; Lupano and Vaccari 2010; Frisa 2011; Muzzarelli, Frisa and Tonchi 2014). In this essay, I argue that there are two main reasons for this lack of research. The first is the difficulty that Italian scholars have in historicising Italian fashion, so to speak, as if fashion was a ‘natural’ outcome of the development of the country in which the Renaissance had its origins. This is what I have called elsewhere the naturalisation of taste (Segre Reinach 2010), a sort of essentialism by which the outcome of a precise history of an industry is reduced to a theory of innate talent for fashion, an ethnocentric version of what the sociologist Joanne Entwistle has called tacit aesthetic knowledge (2009). The second one is a ‘fixation’ on the period of the maximum splendour of Italian fashion, the prêt-à-porter of Milanese design in the late 1970s and 1980s.

**‘Emancipation from Paris’: Fashion and national identity**

It is well known that in the mid-twentieth century in Europe, the United States and also in other non-Western countries with strong colonial links to the West, local industries arose in an attempt to liberate fashion from the cultural dominance of Paris. The production and cultural system of Parisian haute couture and its celebrated couturiers, led to its establishment as a benchmark for any other emergent fashion: for example, fashion designer Claire McCardell thus became the ‘American answer’ to Dior’s New Look, while Shanghai in the 1930s was the ‘Paris of the East’. Until the 1950s, many nations or cities alternated between imitation of Parisian models, and the inevitable adaptation of the same to local tastes and culture, along with the occasional aim of becoming independent from Paris. We must, however, stress that it was not a question of a single process of ‘freeing themselves’ from Paris or, rather, initially stepping up to equality with French fashion. Instead, specific fashions took shape in time. Under the label of ‘national fashion’, various anthropologies of production and consumption

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2 Although *Domus* was not the first journal to understand the relevance of Italian fashion, it was certainly the first one to focus on the link between fashion design, modernity and industry in Italian prêt-à-porter.

3 As Italian prêt-à-porter of the 1980s (for both for men and women) was the main output of the Italian fashion industry, other sectors, such as ‘fast fashion’ and ‘private label’ ready to wear, have been given limited consideration here.
have developed, relating to the individual histories that each nation, city or town has interwoven with the production of apparel, with the textile industry and the competencies of its craftspeople.

In the 1950s, Italy began to assert its identity in the field of fashion. The process was completed between the 1970s and the 1980s, with the invention of the prêt-à-porter of Italian fashion designers—the so-called stilisti (Steele 2003). Italian fashion is, therefore, one of the first sartorial industries, along with Japanese radical fashion (Kawamura 2004) to ‘emancipate from Paris’ and transform itself from a simple clothing-textile industry to a cultural industry that is evolving from the secondary sector to the tertiary one. While France maintains its dominance of high fashion and luxury, Italy has made a name for wearable elegance and industrial capacity, England is the symbol of both tradition and innovation4 (Breward 2004), Japan expresses ‘deconstruction’, minimalism and a certain brand of street culture, and the United States has ‘invented’ casual and sportswear. The process of establishing independence from Paris continues and the contemporary scenario is marked by a multiplicity of fashion cities and nations (Skov 2011), as is shown by the increasingly numerous ‘fashion weeks’ that take place in the farthest flung ‘fashion capitals’ including Shanghai, Bombay, Berlin, São Paulo, Jakarta, Sydney, Tel Aviv and Istanbul (Segre Reinach 2011).

The sartorial histories of the countries that have found themselves on the stage of stylistic desirability, once the process of multiplication of the centres has been set off, are particular and idiosyncratic. The ‘new players’ seek to blend local specialisations and capacities with globalised aesthetics that, not infrequently, clash with stereotyped, conventional ideas. Brazil, for example, seeks to set itself free from the beachwear stereotype, while India tries to shed its image as a source of ‘Oriental’ products and handwork such as beading. The intensification of outsourcing, moreover, has changed not only the geography of fashion, but also the relationship between ‘made in’ and national creativity. In some cases, sartorial identities have become more fragile while, in others, such identities have been strengthened, making a greater freedom of expression possible. For countries with a mainly productive tradition, such as Ireland, the loss of the manufacturing aspect has left the country, so to speak, a ‘fashion orphan’ (Skov 2011). For others, on the contrary, it has been possible to relaunch a postmodern, immaterial identity without having to compensate for a local manufacturing tradition that was never very significant, as in Iceland. Thus, the race towards achieving a recognised and recognisable fashion is also run by countries that, so far, have not known how or been able to express a significant sartorial positioning. Investment made by the Chinese Government to develop the idea of a creative and not only productive China is a case in point in that it has set out to enhance its historical artisan skills throughout the subcontinent by supporting the careers of its young designers (Keane 2013).

4 As in London’s diverse traditions of Saville Row tailoring and the swinging 1960s of Carnaby St.
For the well-known anthropologist and philosopher René Girard (1979), mimetic desire is a sort of universal engine that may be synthesised in this simple, adamantine statement: ‘I desire what the other desires’. The triangulation of desire\(^5\) makes objects a means to draw closer to another person whose charm we feel, not merely the fulfilment of a desire for possession. In this light, the production of a fashion is a complex cultural fact and not only an aspect of the economy of a country. This leads us directly to the fundamental meaning that dress has, in a relational sense, to the dynamics of taste and its manifestations between people and between nations. The capacity to produce fashion—that is, a desirable, commercially successful aesthetic—is linked to a set of conditions that is connected to national cultural identity. Having creative authority means that others wish to wear what a country/culture produces, which poses the question of the dynamics of sartorial style undergoing continuous change. The affirmation of a place and of a culture that may boast a situation of prestige in the arena of global fashion depends on the interlinked ideas, prejudices or reputations that others may form—which is based on many factors, not only on the ability to produce something of aesthetic importance. While the producers of apparel, the commercial firms and companies, are increasingly diversified and transnational, the relation between fashion and national identity is strengthened instead of dispersed.\(^6\) The outcome is a sort of aesthetic nationalism that has nothing to do with nineteenth-century romantic nationalism, but is more like a sort of potlach; that is, a complex exchange system in which the objects circulating are garments, designers, images and brands that are aimed at strengthening competence and prestige.

Producing, communicating and presenting a ‘recognised’ fashion thus goes far beyond the original meaning of more or less specialised textile and clothing production. The requisites of a fashion project today include material and commercial aspects and communicational and immaterial ones. Fashion as a tool for communication is also used by governments to promote tourism, to establish international relations, to compete and exchange ideas and projects, as well as a sought-after quality demanded by people to feel desirable and in step with the times. Being able to express and communicate a successful aesthetics beyond the indigenous community is now an important corollary that indirectly signals cultural and economic strength. As the sociologist Diane Crane (2000) explains, this is because, unlike other production and commercial activities, fashion expresses an elaborate culture that is composed of symbols, ideologies and lifestyles on which to draw and favour consensus and exchange. Much more than in the past, fashion has the task to reflect and represent not only social or individual needs, but also diversified possibilities to construct ex novo areas in which the imaginary is creatively set free. Up until the 1980s, fashion

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\(^5\) That is, according to Girard, an always yielding to what appeals to others.

\(^6\) Paradoxically, in our globalised culture, the concept of the fashion nation with its glamourised brands becomes more relevant.
was not considered as an academic topic or a cultural industry, but simply part of the manufacturing or textile sector—and very often it is only a by-product. As historian Regina Lee Blaszczyk maintains:

> In recent decades, fashion history has blossomed into a thriving field, attracting scholars from anthropology, sociology, history, home economics, cultural studies, and fashion design. Building on insights from earlier studies by curators and connoisseurs of dress and costume, a new generation of scholars has situated fashion within broader historical and cultural frameworks. (2008: 8–9)

Identity in fashion has, therefore, become a major issue—not just as an industry, but as a passport for modernity. As French sociologist Frederic Godart (2012) maintains, fashion has become an indispensable reference for all forms of culture and other creative industries. The broadening significance of dress has transformed fashion into a brilliant synthetic indicator that is able to express the importance and symbolic capital of a country.

It is not easy, however, for a country to make its name on the globalised fashion circuit. As artist Adam Geczy puts it:

> Fashion and dress are the very best loci by which to understand the various spaces by which the signs of nation, identity and novelty have become transacted, adapted and owned. (2013: 4)

This is a new concept that is applicable to those nations, such as Turkey, Brazil and China, that seek to use fashion to express themselves as relevant contributors to modern cultural industries, or to nations like Japan and its radical fashion of the 1980s, whose fashion has been the subject of theorising since the beginning.

Italy, however, is different, as the next section illustrates. It became a fashion nation well before it became a nation. The long process started in the Renaissance and continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including during the autocratic utopia of Benito Mussolini, beginning in 1936 (see Paulicelli 2004; Lupano and Vaccari 2010) up to the rise of the Milanese fashion designers in the late 1970s.

**Italian fashion in the making: The rise of prêt-à-porter**

For historical and anthropological reasons, Italian fashion has often been marked by strong regional and local connotations that are expressed not only in diversified producers—such as Como silks, wools from Biella, Prato carded wool, embroidery from Assisi, Brenta shoes—but also in the competition between cities, such as Turin, Florence, Rome and Milan, for fashion dominance. It is a system that is shaped by ‘embedded flexible networks’ (Godart 2012: 134).
In the 1930s, during Fascism—when a true Italian fashion did not yet exist and the tailoring and dressmaking ateliers looked to Paris for women's fashion, London for men's fashion, and the textile industry was still in its cradle—the fascist regime nominated Turin as the capital of design and aimed to invent and impose the fashion of Turin on Italy and abroad as a fashion of purely Italian inspiration and production.

Despite the efforts of the regime, the success of the campaign was modest. With the exception of Ferragamo and Gucci in accessories, recognition of Italian fashion as a competitor to Paris was achieved only after the Second World War, in Florence in 1951 (Caratozzolo 2006). The characteristics with which Italian fashion made its name, compared with French fashion, were the wearability of its garments, quality of fabrics and of details in general, and an overall allure that was more modern and casual and better suited to the times. The styles were also more easily reproducible for sale in American department stores. Florentine fashion was thus highly successful, thanks to the favour granted it by the United States. From the beginning, however, parochialism inhibited the fashion industry from developing and organising as a united sector. Positioning shifted between Florence, Rome—the home of many high fashion tailoring and dressmaking establishments—Naples and Milan, both of which also pursued the status of first in Italian fashion. Ultimately, Rome became the home of high fashion and Florence of ready-to-wear. At this point, Florence should have developed a closer relationship with the textile industry to facilitate greater expansion in the 1960s, however, while it appeared modern in the 1950s with the designs of Emilio Pucci and Roberto Capucci and the novelty of the fashion boutique, after almost 20 years Florence was unable to meet the public’s changed expectations, the region’s capacity and the very needs of the fashion designers themselves. Florence did not have the necessary infrastructure to support the early experiments in fashion design and production on an industrial scale. It was not sufficiently connected with the textile industry or the service sector, including press, photography, PR agencies, and these elements were a crucial factor for the transformation of fashion from a product for the wealthy, which it still was, into a mass language, as it was getting ready to become. The fashion designers complained that Florentine organisations, too antiquated in formula, did not enable them to fully display their skills. Another place had to be found (Mulassano 1979). It was at that point that a series of factors brought Milan to attention of the nascent system of Italian fashion. Although until then it had not played a recognised role in fashion (in 1906 it hosted the first exhibition to develop Italian fashion and, in 1948, the Centro italiano della moda was opened by Filippo Marinotti, the director of the synthetic textile company Snia Viscosa), it was for many reasons the ‘natural’ place in which to develop the idea of prêt-à-porter, which was then emerging, as well as being the driving engine of the first economic boom in Italy (Foot 2001; Segre Reinach 2006; Volonté 2012).
When in 1972—20 years after the historic first fashion show in Florence organised by Giovanbattista Giorgini in 1951—some fashion designers—including Walter Albini, who is to be considered one of the precursors of the stilista figure—decided to leave the Florentine catwalks to show in Milan, the Lombard capital was already the home to trade derived from the fashion sector. Milanovendemoda, the collective of agents and commercial representatives in the clothing industry had been active since 1969, with the aim of enhancing relationships with the many buyers who were already present in Milan. The city was also sensitive to the youthful anti-fashion revolutions that were occurring across Europe and the United States, in particular what was happening in London and San Francisco. Inspired by the Biba store in London, Elio Fiorucci’s store was a meeting point for young people wishing to distance themselves from middle-class, conservative apparel, recognising the growing importance of the communicative aspect of fashion.

The move from Florence to Milan as a ready-to-wear centre documents a change in perspective of Italian fashion, from a product of art and culture, as American observers had interpreted and promoted it, to a practice of modernity. At the international level, the rise of Milan was the start of the transformation of fashion as the expression of class and good taste to a popular language. Geographically also, Milan was ideal as a fashion centre, situated as it is at the centre of the industrial districts that made an integrated design, production and distribution system possible. The textile, clothing and leatherwear sectors have developed harmoniously in Italy, despite their diversity, unlike in other countries where the development of one sector has not necessarily corresponded to the presence or growth of another. The city also acted as a district of post-production and communication activities. The presence and concentration of commercial television companies, fashion magazines, advertising and PR agencies marked Milan as a Lombard district of media production. The city, therefore, became the meeting point between industry and the service-producing sector.
The fashion industry in Milan grew rapidly between 1970 and 1978 and was widely acknowledged nationally for its prestige. Despite the troubled years of political terrorism (1969–81) and the oil and industrial crisis in the early 1970s, Milanese fashion gave new strength to the Italian economy. After being the centre of the
The meaning of ‘Made in Italy’ in fashion

economic boom of the 1960s, Lombardy also found in Milanese fashion a means to overcome the crisis in heavy industry, with a swift reconversion (Foot 2001). In the years between 1974 and 1978, Milan and its industry were protagonists in establishing the basis for the next decade’s economic boom in Italy. In this period, leading textile associations were formed and strengthened, including IdeaComo, the union of silk textiles (1974), and Federtessile, which grouped together 10 textile associations (1975). Designers such as Armani, Versace, Coveri and Krizia started to converge on Milan. The Italian stilisti were, and still are, predominantly business people in their own right or in partnership with an entrepreneurial figure who assists in handling complex international markets. Franco Mattioli and Gianfranco Ferré, Sergio Galeotti and Giorgi Armani, Aldo Pinto and Krizia, Rosita and Ottavio Missoni, Massimo and Alberta Ferretti, Tiziano Giusti and Franco Moschino, Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana are a few examples. The investment of the Industriali dell’Abbigiamento e della Maglieria associations in Modit, the entity that oversees Italian catwalk shows, clearly established industry as having a role in the prêt-à-porter project. In the mid-1980s a new generation of designers emerged, including Dolce & Gabbana, Romeo Gigli and Miuccia Prada.

The 1990s saw the opening of Carla Sozzani’s concept store, 10 corso Como. Avant-garde in its choice of location near Milan’s Garibaldi Station, which was still a working class area, and distant from the downtown Quadrilatero fashion area, this store marked the beginning of fashion’s spread into peripheral districts in the city, such as Porta Genova, the Bovisa and Porta Vittoria. Following this, the fashion designers redeveloped the vacant, former industrial areas outside the city centre.

In the 1990s, however, prêt-à-porter underwent a crisis. There were various causes. The dominance of branding and the rise of luxury conglomerates damaged the ‘democratic’ origins that characterised the model and had been one of the reasons for its success. The formation of large luxury groups that were designed to compete in an internationalised market modified the manufacturing model of Italian fashion. Relocation and the rise of new competitors, above all in China, created difficulties for small companies that were unable to represent difference or which did not have a product with high added value. The weakness in the marketing strategies of the small firms, the lack of state support and the emergence and strengthening of the luxury multinationals made the Milan-based fashion system vulnerable to increasingly strong competition. Also, from the design point of view, consumer tastes began to change. Italian style par excellence—that of a relaxed, accessible elegance—came to be out of sync with the growing appreciation of independent creativity that marked English or Belgian production and was less and less the hallmark of Italian design.
The production and cultural model of Milanese prêt-à-porter is no longer the dominant system in fashion in Italy and elsewhere. New production and consumption models modified the shape of the Italian and world fashion industry.

**Beyond the stilisti: A new fashionscape**

The figure of the fashion designer has changed. The new generation of designers come from a different background and fashion creativity has become very much a matter of global exchange, as is its production, which is typical of the structure of most industry nowadays. This is a historical evolution of what Godart calls ‘the principle of personalisation’ (2012: 144) by which the mythology of the designer as isolated creative genius is fostered. It is, however, difficult for emerging designers to establish themselves in the new context, which is in some ways blocked by the presence of the old guard. As sociologist Giampaolo Proni states, the ‘Made in Italy’ campaign had three main features:

> The designer, who combines the roles of creator and manager in one person; the production system mostly allocated in industrial districts, with an upstream and downstream production chain; ready to wear as the production protocol. (2011: 64)

Proni is describing the 1980s model of prêt-à-porter, which had been replaced by low-cost fashion products that are issued continuously as ‘fast fashion’ and by artisan-produced, postmodern and technically sophisticated luxury. Fast fashion has modified the traditional seasonal divisions of fashion with the presentation of novelties. Its strong point is speed, attention to new consumers and prices that are matched to the latest trends. In the model of the multinationals Zara and H&M, but in a sui generis variation, a significant part of new Italian fashion is made up by producers of ready-to-wear fashion brands, such as Patrizia Pepe, Pinko, Celyn B, Liu-Jo, Carpisa and Fracomina. This phenomenon has a cultural and economic impact in that it represents an evolution of the Milan-based model to one emanating from the ready-to-wear fashion centres of Bologna and Naples. A new ‘atlas of Italian fashion’ is taking shape, in both geographic and cultural terms, which is more composite than the one that existed in the 1980s (Frisa 2011). Large multinational or Italian-owned manufacturers of luxury goods, such as Zegna, Loro Piana and Prada, are now operating alongside fast fashion brands; demi-couture brands such as Albino and Sara Lanzi, which are characterised by experimentation, artisan workmanship and technology; and sportswear and casual brands with Anglicised names (Sweet Years, A-Style, Guru). In the complex new Italian fashionscape, it is clear that brands of all kinds are more relevant than fashion designers themselves.
Fashion is still an important industry for Italy and its economic contribution to employment is rightly acknowledged. The economic aspect of fashion, however, is only a part of the phenomenon. At the crossroad between art, commerce and industry, modern fashion is also and above all a cultural phenomenon with historical and anthropological components that merit analysis. Entrepreneurs are driving the development of a new model that has the potential to maintain the international precedence of Italian fashion and luxury, and thus competing with the French multinationals. A 2012 alliance between Zegna, Loro Piana and Marzotto is an example of the new trend for disparate companies to become joint shareholders in companies from associated industries (in this case, Pettinatura di Verrone, a company that finishes wool and cashmere), thus inaugurating a partnership between large companies in the sector with the aim of keeping alive the service activities of transformation, which is one of the strong points of Italian fashion. The market is changing and this makes it possible to knock down the historic barriers preventing Italian entrepreneurs from joining forces and increasing market share. On the other hand, the sale of Italian brands to foreign groups is also occurring. Loro Piana, for example, was acquired by LVMH (Moet Hennesy Louis Vuitton) in July 2013, and there has been much commentary on the fact that luxury brands are losing their Italian roots. There are two opposite interpretations of this process. For some analysts this is seen as the Italian fashion industry’s loss of influence. For others, however, this process reinforces Italian identity by injecting financial capital into the domestic industry to allow it to operate on a global scale.

Towards an anthropology of Italian fashion

The history of Italian fashion is exemplary in the industry’s ability to enhance its special features and its constant adaptation to sociocultural humus. If, once the current global recession is over (which data suggests might happen soon (Bottoni 2013)), ‘Made in Italy’, in its various meanings, succeeds in overcoming the challenge of internationalisation and globalisation of the markets, it is no less important to pinpoint its identity, features and the new forms of production and consumption that surround it. In other words, to prepare for the future of Italian fashion, it is necessary to understand why Milan took its place alongside Paris as a fashion capital.

Today, Italian fashion—which in many cases wishes to be distinguished from a ‘Made in Italy’ with which it no longer completely identifies—signifies a capacity for experimentation and increasingly transnational creativity. The Italian fashion of today, therefore, is reinventing itself again. It is not yet clear the direction in which it is heading and there remain many questions to be answered including, for example, how producers can fuse the commercial need for mass production with the demand for quality. Equally, how can they produce aesthetically interesting productions at moderate prices so as to successfully challenge the
dominance of international fast fashion? How can production on an industrial scale be sustained and how will commercial growth via investment impact on family-managed firms? It is the market that will determine the answers to these questions.

Figure 2. The Ferragamo party at Shanghai Moma
Photo: Simona Segre Reinach 2008

While Italian fashion is currently fragmented, there are individual projects that indicate unity (Frisa 2011). From a marketing point of view, the strength of Italian fashion lies in its capacity for constant change (Segre Reinach 2013), while maintaining a clear identity. As Chiara Colombi states:

The old claim—Think global, act local—is replaced then by—Think regional, Act local, Forget global—for which the Italian products, in order to move away from stereotypical interpretations, and to be understood in its value-laden complexity, must be supported by contextualising policies and strategies in the target markets in order to show respect for, and convey, one’s identity of meanings and values. (2011: 58)

There are interesting examples of new brands that position themselves between artisan, craft and global trends. Their ‘Italianness’ is to be found more in the creative process than in the stereotypes of Italian glamour. From a theoretical point of view, however, the future scholars of Italian fashion, similarly with those actively involved in the sector, would profit from an approach that is both comparative and processual, questioning the ways in which Italian fashion differs from other fashion systems, if this is the case, and thus providing a cultural history of ‘Made in Italy’. Italian ‘good taste’, which took shape in the years
following 1950, was not the taste of an elite, as was the case for the French fashion which provided the taste of the urban bourgeoisie there (Bourdieu and Delsaut 1975). On the contrary, Italian fashion arose following a distancing of itself from the ritual of Parisian haute couture and, later, adopting aspects of a new popular culture that emerged after the decline of egalitarian ideologies of the 1970s; it is ‘post-bourgeois’ fashion.

Conclusions

A full examination of the sociological and anthropological issues concerning Italian fashion still needs to be completed. A museum of Italian fashion that presents a coherent narrative of the development of the style and industry should be established. It is not a coincidence that, despite the relevance of Italian fashion and the Italian fashion industry, its fashion schools are not recognised internationally. As Godart writes: ‘with the notable exception of Italy—the best schools are located in a very limited number of countries, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Belgium and Japan’ (2012: 108–09). I am not in the position to judge whether Italian fashion schools are good enough or underestimated (and we should take also into account that books on Italian fashion written in Italian by Italian scholars are rarely translated into English) and, in the present globalised economy of the fashion industry, it could mean the same thing.

Italian fashion has been marked by a continuous transformation (Merlo 2003). I propose that the term metamorphosis usefully characterises the process of change that has been the hallmark of Italian fashion from the early 1950s, from the first catwalk shows in Florence, up to the present day in the globalised era. It is important to consider ‘Made in Italy’—Italian fashion—as an open system, a structure that is sensitive to change and which responds to events with great vitality. It is not a closed formula that is aesthetically repeatable and encapsulated in a ‘label of origin’, as some consider, believing that by so doing they will enhance it, and instead impoverishing its more authentic value (Segre Reinach 2013). Its strength lies in its ability to evolve in time, to change while still remaining recognisable. Flexibility, considered a feature of Italian companies is also flexibility in knowing how to develop a concept and a positioning. If Italian fashion’s ability to adapt to present-day conditions while preserving clear identity, that of Italian style, is to be taken as a possible heuristic device, most of the fashion theorists, and I include myself among them, Italian and non-Italian, shouldn’t be afraid to face the reality of a system much celebrated but never really considered beyond its commercial success. To research Italian fashion implies unpacking the meaning of ‘Made in Italy’, in relation to Italian style and analysing the relationships between its cultural, economic and historical roots.
Simona Segre Reinach is a cultural anthropologist and professor of fashion studies at Bologna University. She has written on fashion from a global perspective in Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion (2010), The Fashion History Reader (2010), and published articles in Fashion Theory, Fashion Practice, Business and Economic History, and Critical Studies in Fashion and Beauty. She is author of four books in Italian: Mode in Italy (1999), La moda. Un’introduzione (2005, 2010), Orientalismi (2006), and Un mondo di mode (2011). She has done field work in China (2001–08) and contributed to a collaborative study on Sino–Italian joint ventures in the field of textile and fashion. She is also involved in Fashion Curation Studies and she curated the exhibition 80s–90s Facing Beauties. Italian Fashion and Japanese Fashion at a Glance (Museo della città di Rimini, 11 October – 8 December 2013). She sits on the editorial board of Fashion Theory, Dress Cultures Series by Tauris and The International Journal of Fashion Studies.

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The meaning of ‘Made in Italy’ in fashion


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Current calls for papers and announcements

*craft + design enquiry*: Change of status

Due to non-receipt of funding from the Australia Council for the Arts in 2015, the *craft + design enquiry* Editorial Board is seeking more stable support for the ongoing operations of the journal. These investigations will mean a hiatus in *craft + design enquiry*’s publishing schedule.

The call for papers for Issue 8 (2016–17) is on hold until further notice. Future announcements about calls for papers will be published on the *craft + design enquiry* blog (link below).

**The *craft + design enquiry* blog site**

Readers and contributors are advised that further information about *craft + design enquiry* is available on the *craft + design enquiry* blog at craftdesignenquiry.blogspot.com.au.
About *craft + design enquiry*

**Focus and scope**

*craft + design enquiry* is an open access, peer-reviewed, online journal promoting and disseminating the research excellence generated by and about the craft and design sector. *c+de* investigates the contribution that contemporary craft and design makes to society, establishing a dialogue between craft and design practice and cultural, social and environmental concerns. It interrogates and expands the international recognition of Australian craft and design.

*c+de* welcomes submissions from across the field of craft and design, including artists and practitioners, curators, historians, art and cultural theorists, educationalists, museum professionals, philosophers, scientists and any others with a stake in the future developments of craft and design. Issues of *c+de* are published annually.

*c+de* is published by ANU Press. Specialist guest editor/s are appointed to each issue. Calls for papers are announced annually. Each issue of the journal will contain both a Themed section and an Open section (for papers on any aspect of craft and design research). Submitted papers are peer-reviewed and selected papers are published in the journal.

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*c+de* is a peer-reviewed journal. The *c+de* Editorial Advisory Panel, composed of internationally recognised experts and academics, provides reviews in the fields of their expertise. Each paper is reviewed by at least two peers. The double-blind review process preserves the anonymity of contributors and peer-reviewers. Reviewers may request changes to papers.

Contributors are asked to ensure that their identities are not revealed within their paper and that the paper is not submitted to other publications during the review process with *c+de*. If favourably reviewed, and at the discretion of the *c+de* Editorial Board, the paper will be published in the journal.

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This journal provides immediate online, open access to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge.
Publishing house

c+de is published by ANU Press, which produces fully peer-reviewed research publications and is recognised by DIISRTE as a commercial publisher, enabling ANU Press authors to gain full recognition under the Higher Education Research Data Collection scheme.

The primary focus of ANU Press is the electronic production of scholarly works. All works are also available for purchase through a Print-on-Demand (PoD) service.

History

Established as an initiative of the Craft Australia Research Centre, c+de was developed in 2008 by Craft Australia and The Australian National University personnel and first published by Craft Australia in 2009. In 2012, c+de relocated to The Australian National University, where it is hosted by the ANU School of Art and published by ANU Press.

craft + design enquiry personnel

Editorial Board

The members of the c+de Editorial Board are currently drawn from The Australian National University, other tertiary institutions, and the network organisations of the Australian Craft and Design Centres (ACDC). This membership covers a broad range of expertise in training and professional practice in craft and design.

The Editorial Board is responsible for defining the policy and objectives of c+de, for determining themes, appointing guest editors and overseeing the management of the journal. The current membership of the Editorial Board is:

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- Patsy Hely, School of Art, The Australian National University
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- Jesse Adams Stein, University of Technology Sydney
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Each issue of c+de features a Themed section that is overseen by a specialist guest editor appointed by the Editorial Board. Guest Editors to date:

- Louise Hamby, Editor, *Cross Cultural Exchanges in Craft and Design*, issue 2, 2010
- Anne Brennan, Co-editor, *Craft • Material • Memory*, issue 6, 2014
- Patsy Hely, Co-editor, *Craft • Material • Memory*, issue 6, 2014
- Kay Lawrence, Editor, *Landscape, Place and Identity in Craft and Design*, issue 7, 2015

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c+de works with the member organisations of the Australian Craft and Design Centres (ACDC) network, a group of peak organisations from all states and territories in Australia representing the professional craft and design sector, and with NAVA (the National Association for the Visual Arts), a peak body for the visual arts, in communicating with the professional craft and design sector across Australia. The ACDC network organisations and NAVA engage with the sector at a local, national and international level offering services and programs supporting sustainable practice. They are:

• Artisan (Brisbane, Qld) www.artisan.org.au
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