THE ART OF PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE

by

JORDAN BATES

(Under the Direction of Douglas Pardue)

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the ways that humans perceive their urban environment, and how those perceptions inform each individual’s aesthetic judgments. The objective is to show how landscape architects can encourage and invite pedestrian experiences through the physical shaping of the city. The review of scholarly literature and case studies yields aesthetic principles that can be utilized by landscape architects that encourage participation through walking, and thereby focus interventions in the urban environment on pedestrian experience.

INDEX WORDS: Aesthetic principles, Art as Experience, Pedestrianism, Urban experience, Phenomenal art.
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JORDAN BATES
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by

Jordan Bates

Major Professor: Douglas Pardue

Committee: Judith Wasserman
Richard Seigesmund
Katrina Evans

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2011
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

THE PURPOSE: There is an integral connection between the values and needs of city inhabitants and the aesthetics and function of cities. We shape our cities, and in return our cities shape us. The objective of this research is to show how landscape architects can encourage and invite pedestrian experiences through the physical shaping of the city.

There are many ways in which we as humans experience the urban landscape. Driving through a city in a car presents one type of urban experience. Looking out of a fourteenth story window at the city below presents a different type of urban experience. Moving through a city as a pedestrian presents yet another type of urban experience and that is manifested by intrinsic human motion, to walk. Walking is inherent to the human physical form and offers a unique and integral experience of the urban environment.

THE PROBLEM: The need of pedestrians as a valuable form of urban experience has diminished in many cities. Urban designer Roger Trancik sees this problem as an issue of spatial continuity. “The pedestrian links between important destinations are often broken, and walking is frequently a disjointed, disorienting experience”. (Trancik 1986) He cites the automobile along with the street structures and parking lots required to accommodate it as a main cause of the discontinuity of urban space. (Trancik 1986) Nan Ellin writes that the automobile has “transformed city building as it altered the logic and scale of movement…privileged vehicular movement over the pedestrian experience”. (Ellin 2006)
Allan Jacobs attributes this problem partially on the expansion of streets that are made wider “to accommodate greater traffic flows” with longer armatures that would increase the speed and efficiency of the traffic. (Shane 2005) Jacobs goes on to say:

In practice this has meant that the power over street space has shifted from the people who live around a given street and the people who drive through it. (Jacobs, Macdonald, and Rofé 2002)

The focus on improving street infrastructure has encouraged the adaptation of automobiles and other motorized vehicle use in cities but has diminished the connectivity of pedestrian amenities and the pedestrian experience. (Ellin 2006)

Landscape architect Lawrence Halprin places great importance on the quality of the urban environment, and in his opinion this quality gives reason to pedestrian experience and movement.

The beautiful street is beautiful—not only because of the fixed objects which line it—but also because of the meaningful relationships it generates for the person-in-motion. His movement is the purpose for the space, and it should function to activate his kinesthetic experience in a series of interesting rhythms and variations in speed and force. The qualities of moving up and down on street ramps and steps, of passing under arches and through buildings, of narrowing and widening of spaces, of long and closed views, of stopping and starting are qualities which make a vital urban experience for the walker and his mobile point of view. (Halprin 1972)

By exploring how the artistic quality of the contemporary urban environment can encourage and motivate pedestrian movement, landscape architects can tease out strategies for explicitly constructing the aesthetic experience of the city. In Art as Experience, John Dewey explains this action as “recover[ing] the continuity of aesthetic experience with the normal processes of living”. (Dewey 1959) Dewey suggests that art is more than a painting hanging on a wall in a museum that is separated and distinct from everyday life, that “artistic and aesthetic quality is implicit in every normal experience” and that art is a unified action with everyday experience. (Dewey 1959)
The phenomenon that makes a painting art is similar to the phenomenon that makes the urban environment art; the art is found in the quality of experience that gives delight to its participants. (Leddy 2008)

The aesthetic delight found in the participatory experience of walking the city is one that transcends an objective function of the city. The aesthetic experience of walking the city expresses an imaginative quality that is “pure” in its integrity and is a unifying act. There is cohesion between the act of walking and the composition of the city. Art as pedestrian experience is the integrity, the glue in a sense, that holds together the disparate elements in the experience of the city. (Dewey 1959)

Philosopher Arnold Berleant suggests that integral to the aesthetics of environment is the full range of sensory perception including those of a psychological nature activated by the experience and unified to unfold the experience. Over time the individual’s perceptions reveal the connections and the relationships through the engagement between the physical body and place, the participant and the city. This is what Berleant terms “aesthetics of engagement”.

[Aesthetics of engagement is] the paradigm for the appreciation of both nature and art. The aesthetics of engagement advocates transcending traditional dichotomies, such as subject/object, and diminishing the distance between appreciator and appreciated, aiming at a total, multi-sensory continuity of the former with the latter, be it nature or art. Moreover, the aesthetics of engagement is not limited to nature and art, but constitutes a model for the appreciation of any environment. (Carlson and Berleant 2004)

The aesthetics of the urban environment and the quality of experience derived from it implies that we must actually move through and actively participate in the city through perception, a process. (Berleant 1992)

The active conception of environment derives...from the manner in which we are involved in spatial experience rather than from the way in which we objectify and conceptualize such experience. (Berleant 1991)

This implies that the process of walking legitimizes the experience of the body as it is part of the temporality and art of the landscape. The physical experience of walking is a
direct way that inhabitants show their appreciation and delight in the city by participating and contributing to the urban environment over time. If the urban environment is to be considered inviting for pedestrians, then it should display qualities that are empathetic to the experiential needs of the individual. Through the invitation of an experiential aesthetic of the city, the pedestrian is included as an integral part of their city.

Environment is not outside us to be experienced in consciousness or feeling, nor can it be construed as surroundings: As actors in the world, we are inseparable from it and fully implicated in its dynamic processes. (Berleant 1991)

The pedestrian is not merely an observer but is intrinsically part of the greater performance of the city.

Pedestrian movement offers purposeful participation in the aesthetics of the city. It is through this participatory and unified collaboration that the pedestrian becomes the perceiver, spectator, performer, and creator. The walker is simultaneously both artist and audience by creating their own experience as they move through and perceive their environment.

Walking is an empathetic and unifying process. (Berleant 1991) Through modes of pedestrian engagement, the walker become a part of the aesthetic process of the urban environment. Pedestrian movement establishes the body and place physically and mentally. This is how philosopher David Macauley views the act of walking the city:

In the repetitious act of turning over our legs – of falling forward, then rising and collecting ourselves into a corporeal rhythm – we are as it were like a big knitting needle stitching ourselves into the local fabric of the environs, grounding and rooting ourselves if only momentarily. (Macauley 2007)

Repetition and forward motion of the walker embed the surrounding environment within the participant making the experience meaningful.

ARGUMENT/QUESTION: The quality of the urban environment is directly related to the types of participation and quantity of participation. Cities that offer an experiential aesthetic to the pedestrian are inviting and compel the walker to take part in the experience. Directing this research is two main questions. (1) Within the profession
of landscape architecture, there is a rich body of knowledge and history of work that encourage pedestrian participation through artistic qualities. What are some examples that demonstrate these qualities? (2) How can other arts influence and reinforce the pedestrian experience in cities?

THE GOAL: The intent is to suggest artistic principles to be utilized by landscape architects that encourage participation through walking and thereby focus interventions in the urban environment on pedestrian experience.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE: The research methodology is comprised of three main components. (1) This research includes the exploration of the qualitative theory of aesthetics for insight into the ways that we as humans perceive our urban environment, and how those perceptions inspire meanings and delight that explain how the aesthetic experience of the city is an art. (2) Another component of this research is the review of scholarly literature that draws from landscape architecture studies including the history of urban planning to survey the characteristics of city structure and form that invite pedestrian participation within cities. Included is the review of art history for strategies that can contribute to the delight of aesthetic experience for pedestrians. (3) Using Asheville, North Carolina, as a case study, the author makes a first person account of perceptual experiences of a pedestrian through the lens of the performer, observer, and creator.

Chapter 2 considers aesthetic philosophy for insight into the ways that humans perceive and how those perception inspire meaning and delight.

Chapter 3 reviews select artists and landscape architects to better understand the qualities that inform their artistic attitude and practice.

Chapter 4 is a personal account of two corridors in Asheville, NC, that highlight the perceptual experience of the author through the subsequent creation of site-conditioned drawings and diagrams.
CHAPTER 2
PRODUCING AN EXPERIENTIAL AESTHETIC

How can landscape architects shape the urban environment to be one that appeals to pedestrian aesthetic delight and encourages the ongoing participation of their city through walking? How can the urban landscape be considered art?

Instead of beginning by formally classifying the urban landscape as one might formally classify a painting hanging on a museum wall, this research begins with a different tact by examining the aesthetic experience of the individual for insight on how one might arrive at one’s personal, subjective judgments of delight. This is a concept supported by the expressed belief that the understanding and knowledge of the aesthetic environment is through an individual’s perception. An individual’s perception is achieved through the union of senses and action culminating in an experience.

In *Art as Experience*, John Dewey theorizes that the quality of personal experience is the root of our judgments concerning what is artistic and delightful in the urban environment. (Dewey 1959) The artistic is a quality that is implicit in every daily experience. (Dewey 1959) Herein lies purpose of art: to connect the participant in the experience of their environment and to elevate that experience, and to give delight. (Dewey 1959) The artistic quality of the urban environment elevates the everyday experience of the pedestrian and enriches and connects their relationship to the environment through a heightened experience. If our artistic delight is implicit in every experience, this poses immense possibilities for the environment that is the medium of the experience. Not only does aesthetic experience expand the possibilities for the everyday urban environment, but the aesthetic experience implies a challenge to landscape architects: make the aesthetic explicit, make the pedestrian feel something.
Throughout the twentieth century, new movements in art such as happenings, land art, kinetic sculpture, modern dance, performance art, environmental art, installation art, and landscape architecture have expanded the aesthetics of art and environments. In this expansion, there are strong implications for art as pedestrian experience. Critical to this expansion of art is the declaration for the utilization of the full range of perception of the individual which challenges a whole body participation and their own subjective judgments through observation. (Berleant 1970) These new movements imply dynamic perceptual experiences that unify the subject and the object by engaging and including the participant as a performer, not just an observer. These new movements expand the limited spatial confine of art (such as a museum) out and into everyday environments in which to be engaged, over time. (Carlson and Berleant 2004) In this case, the everyday environment means ‘where you are now’, you going to the store, you walking to a neighbors house or you…..doing whatever you do. The opportunity for artistic delight exists in every experience. The expanded experiential field of art reveals the opportunity for artistic delight by simply walking through your city.

Opposed to this unifying and inclusive nature of the aesthetics of experience is an attitude of ‘disinterestedness’ that could be considered a limiting cultural conception for the art of the urban landscape and pedestrian experience. Arnold Berleant describes disinterestedness as

an attitude denoting the perception of an object for its own sake without regard to further purposes, especially practical ones, and requiring the separation of the object from its surroundings in order that it may be contemplated freely and with no distracting considerations. (Berleant 1991)

For example, disinterestedness might exclude from the realm of the artistic an everyday experience such as walking through a city. This reflects a attitude that art must rise above utility. The attitude of disinterestedness identifies the objects of art as distinct from everyday life and separate from the everyday environment. This notion explains a ‘museum mentality’ of art that seeks to separate objects of art from daily experience.
(Berleant 1970) In this way, a disinterested or distinct object of art strives to distinguish itself through “language, symbol and symbol systems” such as the use of pedestals on which to set a sculpture. (Berleant 1991) This type of distinction signals the observer immediately its prominence and therefore its exclusivity and partial separation from the everyday experience of the city. (Carlson 2000) Similarly, Catherine Howett states that we are “culturally predetermined” to view the landscape in a symbolic and arbitrary fashion that has encouraged a subject/object separation limited mainly to the sense of sight. (Seamon 1993) Like philosopher Martin Heidegger, Howett argues for

[The] fundamental human experience of **being-in-the-world**...the necessity of an experiential aesthetic to replace the operative one derived from Cartesian subject-object dualism, distancing us physically and spiritually from the world in which we are actually immersed. (Seamon 1993)

Through walking, the multisensory experiential approach to landscape can connect the subject to their immediate landscape by expanding their awareness of place and their relationship to the natural world. (Seamon 1993) Walking could be considered an antidote to the disinterested attitude by including and unifying the participant with their city through the experiential aesthetic of the urban environment by being fully engaged through their perceptual faculties.

The experience of walking the city immerses the pedestrian and exposes the beauty found in the art of the urban environment. The aesthetic quality of the experience is an invitation for the walker to take part in a larger performance of the city, to contribute. The art of the urban environment engages the senses of the walker thereby heightening the experience.

The aesthetic experience of the urban environment can be analyzed in a manner similar to the way Mikel Dufrenne analyzes the phenomenal experience of a symphony. The example chosen for the purpose of this thesis is Beethoven’s 9th symphony. First, Beethoven envisions and writes the score which is a complex of technical and creative expertise with a final goal: delight. The next step requires the coordination of many
musicians to carry out the vision of the score with the same final goal as Beethoven although the work is not yet ‘manifest’. The symphony is manifest when it is actually performed and heard by an audience. The final goal of the symphony is to delight its participants through the perception of hearing. The art is a consequence of the subsequent perceptual experience. The original score and the individual performances are all an important and cumulative part of the aesthetic experience. As Dufrenne explains:

> Just as the score is studied with a future listening in mind, so is the plastic work recognized analyzed with reference to the aesthetic perception it is meant to invite. 5(Dufrenne 1973)

It is through this analysis that one envisions the role that all the individual aesthetic elements play leading up to the final unified experience. In this way, the urban environment is similar to the ‘manifest’ symphony. The aesthetic experience of the pedestrian within the urban environment is dependent on an underlying structure of aesthetic qualities that invite participation through physical engagement. These qualities all work together in alliance and unification of the landscape, the architecture, and the individuals who comprise the city. The goal is to inspire and delight the pedestrian.

**HOW DO WE PERCEIVE?**

Perception on the part of the individual informs their aesthetic judgments and ultimately the delight they find in their environment. In *The Sense of Beauty*, George Santayana explains human perception and distinguishes the perceptual experience as separated into three modes or levels. These modes are visualized here as layers within a cake. (Fig. 2.01)
On the bottom layer of the cake is our sensory perceptions such as haptic (touch), auditory, visual, olfactory, and gustatory. (Fig. 2.02) These represent the information we directly gather through physical faculties. The feel of the roughness of wood, the sound of wind through tall grasses, the reflection of sunlight on the surface of water, the smell of flowers and the taste of wine are all examples of information gathered directly through the senses.

The middle layer of the cake represents the formal qualities of objects such as geometry, unity, symmetry, regularity, proportion, and scale. (Fig. 2.03) These are qualities that are the basis of form, spatial and ordering principles. These formal qualities are often perceived through direct means such as sight and touch.
The top layer of the cake represents the *symbolic* experience that “becomes beautiful in its expressiveness” by ascribing meaning to the lower layers of perception. (Fig. 2.04) (Santayana, Holzberger, and Saatkamp 1988) It is the top layer of the cake, with all the fancy frosting, that represents how objects in the perceptual field carry meaning. Without this acquired symbolic knowledge, form is merely a shape devoid of past, future or meaning. A stone perceived only through formal qualities is merely an organic shape. It is through the layering of perceptual experience that a stone finally exists as a stone. A stone could symbolically represent sacredness, stability, immortality, permanence, or a whole myriad of contextual, personal or sociocultural meanings. (Weilacher 1996)

All of the layers work together to complete the cake. This complete cake metaphorically represents an individual’s aesthetic experience as the opportunity to find beauty and delight in the everyday experience. These modes of perception that Santayana proposes are expected and implicit ways that we as humans perceive our environment. Every environment can be analyzed in these terms, but each in relative degrees based on the subjectivity of the individual.
MOVEMENT AND PERCEPTION

Like a cinematic montage, the urban environment is story of sequential scenes that unfold, evolve, and at times abruptly change through slow, pedestrian movement. This is a phenomenon astutely presented by Gordon Cullen that he calls serial vision. (Cullen 1971) (Fig. 2.05) Like the dramatic scenarios of the story line that are revealed throughout the course of the film, so too does the story of the city present itself to the participant.

![Figure 2.05: Serial Vision. (Cullen 1971)](image)

Through movement of the individual, the scenes of the environment flow relative to the position of the pedestrian. The synthesis of motion and sensory perception enhances the participant’s spatial definition and distance. This is caused by parallax which are the oblique and vertical movements of the pedestrian that shift the angles of perspective.
PARALLAX: DEFINING SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS

VIEW A

VIEW B
Parallax is the “criss-crossing” or the layering of geometries and the unfolding of space through movement that is distinct and deeply integral in the experience of objects and architecture and their relationship to each other in space. (Holl 2000) The perceptive information arising from parallax helps define the spatial experience of the urban environment. The advancing heights of buildings, the changing perspectives of the urban environment, and the rising and falling elevation of the ground plane are all in flux relative to the moving pedestrian. Architect Steven Holl states:

The spatial definitions of the city interlock in a web of movement, parallax and light. We play in unqualified delight with our eyes open, our legs moving, our arms and torso engaged. The phenomenon of ineffable space refers to the maximum intensity and the quality of execution and proportion – an experience becomes radiant. Dimensions alone do not create this space; rather the space is a quality bound up in perception. (Holl 2000)

The sense of parallax is closely aligned with the kinaesthetic or the sense of effort required on the part of the walker to move through the city. A steep grade may require greater physical exertion by the pedestrian. However, this sense of physical exertion in combination with the flux of the changing scenes of the landscape define place and the pedestrian’s connection to it.

Figure 2.06 Parallax : Movement defines spatial relationships.
HUMAN SCALE

The measurement of the foot reveals a scale for the urban environment that describes a general comfort level - the physical threshold for the walker. Human scale is a measurement that describes a physical and symbolic relationship between the individual and their environment. Architect Walter Gropius speaks about this important measurement:

The size of the township should be limited by the pedestrian range to keep them within a human scale. Our stride determines and measures our space and time conception and pegs out our local living space. Organic planning has to reckon with the human scale, the ‘foot’ when shaping any physical structure. (Sale 1980)

Because of physical human individuality, there are no exact universal measurements for the dimensions of human scale. It is reasonable to speculate that the urban environment that is inviting and walkable must display the conditions and qualities that are sympathetic to the human scale of senses, movement, and physical endurance. This is how Architect Jan Gehl considers pedestrian scale:

About 1,640 feet is a distance most pedestrians find acceptable. This is not an absolute truth, however, because what is acceptable will always be a combination of distance and the quality of the route. If comfort is low, the walk will be short, while if the route is interesting, rich in experience and comfortable, pedestrians forget the distance and enjoy experiences as they happen. (Gehl 2010)

The physical distance that limits the threshold of pedestrian range can be offset with a positive aesthetic perception of the urban environment on the part of the walker.

In Gehl’s view the pedestrian is the gauge for the quality, characteristics, and scale of the urban environment. In Cities for People, he outlines three types of pedestrian activities that are dependent on the quality and conditions of urban form. These are what Gehl terms “necessary activity”, “social activity,” and “optional activity”. (Gehl 2010)

Necessary activities are ones that are required to carry out daily function such as going to work and grocery shopping. Social activities occur in spaces that have concentrations of people and may involve talking, watching, and generally interacting with other people.
Optional activities are carried out because they are enjoyable, stimulating, or recreational. As Gehl explains, the aesthetics of the urban environment are directly responsible for the types of activities in which pedestrians are willing to participate. (Figure 2.07) (Gehl 2010)

There are certain amenities and attributes of cities that contribute to aesthetic delight and individual comfort thereby encouraging pedestrian movement. As the quality of urban conditions improve, it is likely that pedestrians are willing to spend more time taking part in and contributing to their city. Gehl identifies attributes such as clear structure of the pedestrian system, locating the pedestrian systems to link important destinations, and lots of benches and secondary seating as qualities that are inviting to pedestrians. While these attributes are not necessarily experiential in nature, they work in tandem with the aesthetic of the total environment. When considered as essential attributes to encourage pedestrians to use city spaces, then these attributes must be an integral aspect of the aesthetic.
WALKING

Walking is a significant and meaningful way in which the individual participates, engages, and becomes part of the aesthetic process of their environment through immersion. The slow movement resulting from walking gives the participant opportunity to tune in to the natural processes that by default of which we are all part. This is revealed through the temporality and continuous change in the cycles of nature such as weather phenomena, growth, and decay. Henry David Thoreau expounded on the principle of walking, not merely as physical exercise, but to strengthen the individual’s relationship to nature and environment. Thoreau’s treatise on human movement in the essay Walking can be seen as a way to better understand our “inner voice” as our relationship to external ecologies becomes more “intertwined”. (Thoreau 2009) For Thoreau, the act of walking reveals the inside/ outside, the affirmation of individual existence in the natural world that inspires meaning though our engagement. This is what Maurice Merlot-Ponty terms the chiasma or the criss-crossing of external environment and inner voice. (Merleau-Ponty and Lefort 1968) Walking unifies these two worlds: that which can seen and experienced and the invisible.

Artist Richard Long relies on walking as an integral part of his artistic process to express and emphasize our everyday perceptions. For Long, the art found in the experience of walking surpasses the desire for “object-making”. (Tufnell 2006) Long definitively states that the simple process of walking is considered an art by making visible real experience in time and space. Long’s works such as Two Walks and Circle in Alaska are modest representations of his art through walking. (Figs. 2.08, 2.09)
Through the everyday act of walking

[Richard] Long makes us conscious of the interpenetrating, interacting, moving world of nature, from the trees to the rivers, to the path of the wind, the different cycles of existence of living things – in short, the entire visible and invisible flux of the structure of life. (Long 1991)

Long expresses the unifying nature of art by highlighting its commonality in individual experience and by integrating everyday materials such as stones and sticks. These are materials to which anyone can relate. (Tufnell 2006)
In the words of Long:

My work has become a simple metaphor of life: A figure walking down his road, making his mark. It is an affirmation of my human scale and senses: how far I walk, what stones I pick up, my particular experiences. Nature has more effect on me than I on it. I am content with the vocabulary of universal and common means; walking, placing, stones, sticks, water, circles, lines, days, nights, roads. 31(Tufnell 2006)

Long’s manifested works mark the artistic appreciation of individual experiences through walking. Long’s works convey a strong value for his relationship to nature and pass along an invitation to participate in our everyday environment through similar, simple experiences.
VISIBLE, EXPLICIT QUALITIES ARE ENGAGING

If experiential delight is a motivating factor on the part of the pedestrian, then the perceptual qualities explained through Santayana’s modes should be explicitly presented and visible. This is analogous to what Kevin Lynch terms as *imageability* of the urban environment.

*Imageability is* that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. It is that shape, color, or arrangement which facilitates the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly useful mental images of the environment. It might also be called *legibility*, or perhaps *visibility* in a heightened sense, where objects are not only able to be seen, but are presented sharply and intensely to the senses. (Lynch 1960)

If the urban environment is “highly imageable” or visible and explicit, then it becomes an invitation for pedestrian participation. (Lynch 1960) These qualities are “apprehended over time as a pattern of high continuity” revealing the pedestrian’s connection to the urban environment. (Lynch 1960) The visible and explicitly artistic qualities of the city, qualities that clearly engage the perceptual senses of its inhabitants has the potential to inspire meaningful delight within the individual.

This chapter has explored philosophical and conceptual ideas suggesting that the aesthetic experience of the urban environment is part of the larger artistic performance of an individual’s everyday life. Useful principles have been extracted from these concepts to be utilized by landscape architects not only in the urban environment as is the focus of this thesis, but applicable to any environment. These principles have been organized into two separate but interconnected diagrams. The first diagram focuses on principles for *producing an experiential aesthetic*. The second diagram focuses on principles for *participating in an artistic experience*. (Fig. 2.10) These two diagrams are intended to be interchangeable. The principles are intended to function without a beginning or end dependant upon the context or situation they are being applied to.
PRODUCING AN EXPERIENTIAL AESTHETIC

INVITE: Invite participation through the artistic quality of the environment.

ENGAGE: Engage the individual through their perceptual faculties.

INSPIRE: Inspire meaning in the participant through engagement.

CREATE: Create your own experience.

OBSERVE: Make judgments based on your subjective observations.

PERFORM: Perform and take part in an experience motivated by your judgments.

PARTICIPATING IN AN ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE

CREATE: Create your own experience.

OBSERVE: Make judgments based on your subjective observations.

PERFORM: Perform and take part in an experience motivated by your judgments.

Figure 2.10 Producing and participating.
A key concept of experiential aesthetics is the quality of the urban environment that serves as an invitation to participate through walking. Qualities that engage through the full range of perceptual faculties on the part of the individual inspire meaning and delight. The role of the landscape architect, as the artist, is to vividly and explicitly present the quality of the urban environment for the delight of its participants. These aesthetic qualities are ones that are inclusive and seek to unify the experience of the pedestrian to the environment and ecologies with which we are intertwined.
CHAPTER 3
ENGAGING ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE

Art is a explicit quality apprehended through individual perceptual experience. When these artistic qualities are present in the urban environment, it could be seen as an invitation that encourages participation and interaction of pedestrians. There are many different qualities that are empathetic to the values and needs of humans as pedestrians. This chapter will review some artists and landscape architects who, through their works, reveal qualities that inspire delight through interaction. This chapter begins by considering some conceptual and artistic forces that have shaped contemporary notions of the urban landscape for an understanding of how their artistic practice is relevant to the artistic experience.

THE EXPERIENTIAL FIELD

An experiential aesthetic of the urban environment is one that ultimately includes and connects the pedestrian through their senses and movement as an act of creation and identity. The conceptual expansion of the arts observed in the twentieth century serves as a model for an experience-based aesthetic of the urban environment. The twentieth century was an era marked by artists and designers that were pushing traditional boundaries placed on art to explore realms outside of the museum and into the environment. They explored the aspects of an expanded art that sought to unify the perceptions of the individual with the object(s) being experienced. (Berleant 1970) The heightened, full range of senses comprised of visual, olfactory, gustatory, haptic, kinesthetic, and auditory perception was explored and actively included into the aesthetic experience of art blurring the boundaries of the artist, observer and performer. The perception of time and processes of nature became common themes of an expanded art
that moved outside the traditional boundaries of the museum or broke free of the pedestal and picture frame. The introduction of new works in the 60’s and 70’s, that are now categorized as land art, environmental art and light/space art to name a few, exemplify part of this trend.

Rosalind Krauss in her essay *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* sought to understand how these new works that were constructed in the landscape such as *Perimeters* by Mary Miss or mirrored boxes set in the landscape by Robert Morris, did not seem to fit into a traditional category of sculpture. (Krauss 2002) (Fig. 3.01)

These are examples of works that, at the time, “had entered a categorical no-man’s-land”.

[S]culpture itself had become a kind of ontological absence, the combination of exclusions, the sum of neither/nor. (Krauss 2002)

Using a method of structural linguistics, Krauss defined an expanded aesthetic field by describing ‘what sculpture is not’ through a process of disqualification. Krauss explains the process in this way:
Exploring what the works by artists such as Mary Miss or Robert Morris are not, exposes a positive complex “one that would be both landscape and architecture...two terms that had formerly been prohibited [from art]...terms that could function to define the sculptural”. (Krauss 2002) A subsequence of the expansion of aesthetics identifies sculpture not as a disinterested and “privileged” object. Instead sculpture exists on the periphery of a larger expanded field along with site construction, installation art and marked sites. (Fig 3.02)
In figure 3.02, the “pure contradiction” traditionally associated between landscape (the ground) and architecture (the figure) is united and represented as a “complex”. This refers to site-constructions such as mazes or processionalts that are created to engage and include participation. As suggested by Krauss, Berleant, Carlson, and Howett, the cultural predetermination that allows one to give in to the disinterestedness of art by separating the subject and object is merely a bump in the road. Within the expanded aesthetic field, “practice is not defined in relation to a given medium—sculpture—but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms” giving expanded freedom to landscape architects to employ any number of artistic positions to engage the participant and inspire meaning in the urban environment. (Krauss 2002)

At the heart of the expanded aesthetic field are the individuals, the participants, those who benefit from the quality of their city. The artists and landscape architects who explore perceptual phenomena in our environment bring these participants to a closer understanding of their relationship to the urban environment, nature and the space within much like Henry David Thoreau or Robert Long. They search for qualities that inspire meaning by giving prominence to individual experience. Here is a review of some of their strategies.

ROBERT IRWIN

The practice of artist Robert Irwin explores phenomena and process, or that which is “knowable” in human experience. Irwin’s artistic principles stem from the idea that “the object serves as a passive platform” and is “merely matter”, but more importantly it “transforms” and “triggers a phenomenal” perceptual experience. (Irwin et al. 2008) In Irwin’s book Being and Circumstance, he directly states two principles of non-objective art that are imperative to aesthetic experience.
[1] Creative human action is dependent on the individual participating in the environment and intention, of his or her meaning.
[2] The determination of value lies directly in the deliberations of the experiencing individual. Only subsequently does that individual enter into the collective bargaining that makes up those more general social agreements we call cultural values. (Irwin et al. 1985)

Irwin is following in the conceptual footsteps of Dewey by placing considerable focus on the individual to first participate in their own experience in their own way and then to finally settle on their own judgments. This exemplifies the creation of an experience and its consequential meaning on the part of the individual.

Irwin’s practice of non-objective art seeks to engage the individual through the perceptual stimuli found in light, color, and spatial manipulation. *Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue?* is an example that reveals these phenomenal elements very clearly. (Fig 3.03) The reflective surface of the panels effectively makes visible the transformation of the architecture and light of the space.

Figure 3.03 Robert Irwin *Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue?*, 2006-07. (Irwin et al. 2008)
An important component of many of Irwin’s works is that they are *site conditioned/ site determined*. A site conditioned “sculptural response draws all of its cues (reasons for being) from its surroundings”. (Irwin et al. 1985) For Irwin this means intense observation and interaction with the site and immediate areas including the paths of primary movement and any existing phenomena. (Irwin et al. 1985) Listed are some of his considerations for a sculptural response:

- The site’s relation to applied and implied schemes of organization and systems of order, architecture, uses, distances, sense of scale.
- Natural cycles and events, snow, wind, sun angles, sunrise, hydrology.
- Density of the physical environment in relationship to the density of people.
- Density of sound and visual phenomena.
- The qualities of surface, sound, detail, levels of finish; and craft.
- The histories of prior and current uses. (Irwin et al. 1985)

A simple but beautiful response to phenomena and site can be found in the work Irwin installed for the 1976 Venice Biennale. By utilizing string as a device for showing intention, *String Drawing – Filtered Light* highlights the interplay of sunlight and vegetation and the subsequent patterns of shadow and the falling of leaves. (Fig 3.04) The framing of this natural phenomenon is a device that creates awareness and is a simple reminder of the delight found in the patterns and cycles in nature and the everyday world.
String Drawing is highly reductive in that there are no elements included that cannot be justified and known through the perception of phenomena, what Irwin describes as the “zero point”. (J Paul Getty 2008) This is a process created by going back to the beginning and questioning all assumptions, beliefs, knowledge and understanding to arrive at the zero point which is how we as human beings perceive the world. (J Paul Getty 2008)

Irwin’s complex site-specific work for the central garden at the Getty Museum is one that Irwin defines as “a sculpture in the form of a garden aspiring to be art”. (Fig 3.05) The Getty Garden started from the same simple reductive process as String Drawing – Filtered Light. In the words of Irwin,

the reduction was essentially a break from the past. Essentially it was taking all that content — all that idea of meaning, that whole quantitative process — down to a kind of point zero and starting over again to ask the question: “OK, how could it be otherwise?” (Irwin et al. 2008)
What can be observed in the Getty Garden is not a return to the picturesque logic of landscape. This is a complex of both landscape and architecture, a site-construction that explores themes touched on by other artists such as Alice Aycock, Robert Morris and Irwin’s own earlier work. (Fig. 3.06, 3.07) It is an inviting maze-like complex evocative of a processional that is engaging because of its full range of perceptual qualities.
The Getty Garden explores qualities that work towards a “pure inquiry” of perceptual experience such as the temporal processes of nature, vegetative cycles evidenced through color, the movement of participants, the nuances of “tuning” the sound of moving water, and the anticipation of future growth. (Irwin et al. 2008) The qualities Irwin sought to make explicit in The Getty Garden are qualities that capture his main principle of art: the “pure potential for humans to see, perceive, know, and understand the world”. (Irwin et al. 2008) With this principle in mind, the environments offered by Irwin, Aycock and Morris are presented with a similar explicit attention that might be traditionally given to a painting hanging in a gallery. These immersive environments invite engagement through walking and perception with an aim to delight the participant.

OLAFUR ELIASSON

Many of the works of artist Olafur Eliasson revolve around the human relationship to their immediate environment. His goal is to dissolve the dichotomy between the elements of nature and the elements of culture by “encourag[ing] a live experience” through the synthesis of opposing elements. (Brown 1999) Through this synthesis “these elements provoke an intense awareness of the viewer’s environs”. (Brown 1999)

Eliasson explores the question of our relationship to nature through the phenomena of light, air, water and atmosphere. Eliasson uses these elements to illustrate how space is shaped in our perceptual faculties, how that space derives from nature, and how the subsequent experience is fundamental to the subjective meaning. (Eliasson et al. 2005) This synthesis is evidenced in installations such as Notion Motion that is centered around the reflection of an object falling into water. (Fig 3.08) Through a simple act, Notion Motion reveals complex ideas concerning phenomena and perception. The visual, auditory, and temporal information created by Notion Motion visually displays the energy and motion generated by sound and spatial displacement.
Figure 3.08 Olafur Eliasson *Notion Motion*, 2005. (http://www.olafureliasson.net/works/notion_motion.html)
Eliasson’s use of light and shadow highlight the time-based processes of movement and orientation. Through the participation of the individual, Eliasson’s environments strive to invoke a purposeful awareness of our perception, the immediate environment, and the individual’s place in it. This is what Robert Irwin calls “perceiving yourself perceiving” which is a unifying, self-reflective, and meaningful act. (Eliasson and Irwin 2007) (Fig 3.09)

*Multiple Shadow House* is a vivid example of the creation of an experience on the part of the participant, a performance. This creative phenomena is also made explicit in the series *1 2 3 4°* by Robert Irwin. (Fig 3.10)
These experiential phenomena seen in works such as *Multiple Shadow House* and *1 2 3 4°* are a direct correlation to John Dewey’s account of having an experience. Dewey states:

For to perceive, a beholder must create their own experience. And their creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent. (Dewey 1959)

Works such as *Multiple Shadow House* and *1 2 3 4°* exemplify a cyclical experience of art on the part of the participant as conveyed by Dewey. In this process the participant becomes the creator of the art by performing and finally observing thereby completing the cycle.

*Scent Tunnel* by Eliasson is a site-construction representing the complex of both landscape and architecture, nature and machine. (Fig 3.11) The movement of the tunnel as it rotates challenges the movement of the individual’s spatial orientation as it envelops the pathway leading throughout. The participant is presented with the overwhelming scent of the flowers as well as a kaleidoscope of light and shadow making it an inviting and explicitly artistic experience of movement and senses. The invisible and fleeting scent of the flowers can only be experienced in close proximity thereby inviting the participant to commit to the experience. These works give power to the individual to create their own reality. This is how Eliasson’s works facilitate the ensuing experience.

![Figure 3.11 Olafur Eliasson Scent Tunnel, 2005. (Eliasson et al. 2005)](image-url)
PATRICIA JOHANSON

The artist Patricia Johanson first approached interventions in landscape by transferance of strategies gathered from visual arts. Johanson first started looking at how the landscape could be a problem of pure form, color, and texture. This was a shift from the pictorial logic of the garden. For Johanson, the goal of this art is to expose the phenomena of the natural world and to create a dialogue between the participant and nature. (Wu and Dumbarton Oaks. 2007) This is seen in her 1968 exploration of the 1600’ site construction Stephen Long. (Fig 3.12)

The three primary color stripes on the top of the construction were used as a catalyst to interact with the naturally occurring atmospheric light. Johanson describes the effect of the construction:

At times the entire spectrum was visible due to optical mixing along the borders, and the painted colors were constantly in flux due to changes in the color of natural light. At sunset, for example, when red light was falling on the sculpture the blue stripe turned to violet, the yellow stripe to orange. (Johanson 1973)

The length of the work required the participant to walk one third of a mile for the complete experience. Through the experience of the walk, they are constantly referencing their movement in relation to the construction and surrounding natural elements.
This installation is a precursor to her later works that explored ecological phenomena for parks and public spaces. For Johanson, the intervention by the artist reveals “complex landscapes that have a life of their own” even apart from the elements directly manipulated by the artist. (Conan and Dumbarton Oaks. 2003) In the words of Johanson,

[i]heir designed structures are meant to lure visitors, frame the flow of nature, and bring them into contact with the profuse phenomena of the natural world. 75(Conan and Dumbarton Oaks. 2003)

Johanson considers the movement of participants within the landscape as a type of choreography on seen or unseen “paths that establish a pattern of movement through space”. (Conan and Dumbarton Oaks. 2003) In the case of Johanson’s works, the movements of participants are choreographed through her drawings in that these drawings should be viewed as part of the process of the final work, not as the product. (Wu and Dumbarton Oaks. 2007) The line work created through her drawings becomes part of the movement and the vehicle for perceptual experience. (Fig.3.13) The line literally is transformed in the landscape as the path of individual engagement.

Figure 3.13 Patricia Johanson Line Garden: Walking Fern, 1969. (Wu and Dumbarton Oaks. 2007)
This transformation can be seen in her minimal interventions such as *Cyrus Field* or in more elaborate interventions such as *Fair Park Lagoon* where paths of movement are physically drawn into the landscape. (Fig. 3.14) Johanson uses her source drawings as the ‘event’ that choreographs movement. The landscape becomes the medium which transforms the source drawing to create meaningful experiences through engagement. (Wu and Dumbarton Oaks. 2007)

![Figure 3.14 Patricia Johanson *Cyrus Field*, 1970 and *Fair Park Lagoon*, 1981-86. (Conan and Dumbarton Oaks. 2003)](image)

The intervention at *Cyrus Field* is one that could be typified as bringing people into nature. *Cyrus Field* was intentionally created to heighten perception through disorientation caused by the participant’s random movements. Johanson speculates that these “moments of heightened awareness demand a physical response” to either “flee or investigate”. (Conan and Dumbarton Oaks. 2003)

The site construction of *Fair Park Lagoon* is one that could be typified as bringing nature to people as it is an ecological construction in the urban context. The tangled line work of pathways echoes the emergent vegetation, and at the same time acts as moderator. The scale, changing rhythm, and shifting elevations of the ‘line work’ heightens the perceptual response of participants as it invokes close observation that is required to successfully navigate and engage the site-construction. (Wu and Dumbarton Oaks. 2007)
MICHAEL VAN VALKENBURGH ASSOCIATES

The landscape architecture practice of Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (MVVA) approaches their interventions in the landscape in much the same way as Irwin, Eliasson, or Johanson. They recognize the lack of opportunity in the urban environment to experience the “material, phenomenological seasons of the landscape”. (Berrizbeitia and Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates. 2009) MVVA often approaches ecological phenomena as the starting point for their interventions.

The reception of aesthetic experience, as wonder, is hinged on the notion that individuals develop through a wide range of practices, an empathy, or affinity, with nature. 189(Berrizbeitia and Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates. 2009)

By revealing the individual’s relationship to the cycles of the natural world through engagement, MVVA inspires meaning through their works.

Teardrop Park, particularly the bluestone/ice wall, is an ideal example of their work that strives to connect the participant with the urban environment through a relationship with natural process. (Fig 3.15)

Figure 3.15 MVVA bluestone/ice wall, 2004. (Berrizbeitia and Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates. 2009)

The materiality of the stone exposes both geological and cyclical processes of seasons. The form of construction and the tactile quality of the stones are revealing on their surface stories of great upheaval, violence, or slow change, and infusing the park with a drama that contains a hint of sublime danger and power. 182(Berrizbeitia and Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates. 2009)

Water is infused into the wall so that it is pushed through the cracks and joints at chosen points which adds an element that explicitly manifests the phenomena of the
seasons, freeze and thaw, juxtaposed with the timeless quality of stone. Much like the string in String Drawing by Robert Irwin, the surface of the wall frames the freeze and thaw process of the water. (Fig 3.16)

Figure 3.16 MVVA: Revealing cyclical processes of nature. (Berrizbeitia and Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates. 2009)

The wall elevates and heightens the relationship of this seasonal cycle that is present in everyday life and seeks to connect the participant through this engagement. A similar use of phenomena can be seen in the earlier Ice Wall Series by Michael Van Valkenburgh and Olafur Eliasson’s The Glacierhouse Effect Versus the Greenhouse Effect. (Fig. 3.17)

Figure 3.17 MVVA Ice Wall Series, 1988-90, Olafur Eliasson The Glacierhouse Effect Versus the Greenhouse Effect, 2005. (Berrizbeitia and Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates. 2009; http://www.olafureliasson.net/works/the_glacierhouse_effect.html)
The opening in the stone wall at Teardrop Park is an inviting element. It includes the participant into the environment through its scale which is a quality that is physically and symbolically sensed. The gesture prompts an internal dialogue, one that is self-reflective by saying ‘I am there’.

This chapter has considered the relevance of the urban environment in the field of artistic experience. This chapter considered the concept of the expanded field of art that includes the complex of landscape and architecture as an environment which requires physical engagement of the individual much like the procession of the acropolis: it is not a sculpture sitting on a pedestal to only observe. The reviewed artists and landscape architects employ strategies in their works that are evocative of an aesthetic that challenges the perceptual engagement of the individual. Engaging the perceptual faculties of the individual exposes their relationship to their environment and inspires self-awareness and meaning. These strategies are important in producing an experiential aesthetic that values the individual for their subjective creation of meaning and experience.
CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY: PARTICIPATING IN AN AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

The survey presented here is a first person account of the details concerning the experience perceived by the author using the principles participating in an artistic experience established in chapter 2 as a lens.

PERFORM : Perform and take part in an experience.

OBSERVE : Make judgments based on your subjective observations.

CREATE : Create your own experience.

First, as PERFORMER, the author participated by walking two established paths in Asheville, NC, over many separate visits, at different times of the day, and in many different weather conditions. Next, the author OBSERVED the urban environment along the path and specifically sought out perceptual phenomena. The observations covered in the case study give primacy to the individual’s conscious experience as a starting point for understanding the perceptual information that is presented to the walker. Finally, the author CREATED drawings and diagrams as a method to visually reveal judgments concerning the experience and to inform future participation.
1. Car and pedestrian:
Access to the site from this direction requires a strong visual invitation in order to draw in the pedestrian. Despite the pedestrian crosswalk, the street at this crossing point is extremely busy with ‘stop and go’ automobile traffic. Under different circumstances and in another context or location, this could serve as a liability by acting as a barrier to easy access. As it stands in this context, a large symbolic and historic monument which holds the center of the visual focus convinces the pedestrian to make the crossing. The Vance monument, a 75 foot tall granite obelisk that was erected at the turn of the 20th century, acts as a visual center point and anchor.
2. The Island:

Even though this location is on an island that is surrounded by moving cars, there is a sense of security that is created by low granite seat walls and strategically placed bollards and light poles. Here at the top of the island, the monument dominates. From this point of view, the participant is in a position of intense focus in full view of the ‘stop and go’ traffic. The monument, at this point in its history, is surrounded by a wrought iron fence making it a strictly visual but highly symbolic monument – more architecture than landscape. It is an object to be viewed but interacted with on a limited basis. This position acts as a vista which allows several long views of the immediate environment. The surrounding architecture is a mix of eras and styles which adds to the context of historical layering.
3. The Reflecting fountain:

After moving around and past the iconic monument surrounded by a swamp of symbolic information at the top of the island, the pedestrian is immediately drawn in by this shallow, dark bronze fountain. This is direct contrast to the monument since the fountain is not physically separated from participation. In fact, it invites engagement. The bowl is at standing height and begs to be touched and to get your fingers wet. There is no attempt to contain the falling water with a catch basin or other device. Instead the paving treatment is continuous and flush surrounding the fountain and across the island. This treatment allows the water to drop and splash uninhibitedly. There are plenty of benches from which to observe and listen to the water as well as the many people that interact with the fountain by splashing, or attempting a risky bypass of the falling water to crouch under the bowl.
falling water

reflective surface

benches

flush paving to fountain

chaotic splash pattern
4. Reflected horizon:
Up close the fountain reveals its reflective properties. The shallow, darkly colored bowl perfectly mirrors the surrounding environment. The immediate buildings and the sky are intensely visible in its surface. The surface of the water exposes the wind direction through the splash pattern, spray, and surface ripples. The space around the fountain begins to feel more enclosed as the participant feels the presence of the surrounding buildings.
trees and perennials
framed view
falling water, TOUCH ME
5. The Plaza Vista:

At this point, the space opens up. The walker is given some long views of the environment as well of the sense of elevation. There is a mix of a long view of the ridge line, a middle ground view of the plaza, as well as an immediate presence of mature trees and considerable flower cover. Anticipation and expectation begin to build. Here, considerable local foot traffic is mixed with tourist activity. There is a strong blend of necessary activity mixed with optional activity. This position also reveals the steady flow of cars that move through this area. Tiers of steps that are meant for sitting along with several benches encourage pedestrians to hang out, relax, and take in the surroundings. The sound of water from the reflecting fountain is still present here. The courthouse and the city hall sit prominently between the deep view and the middle ground. Just in front of these two buildings is a highly reflective and undulating object.
urban trail sculpture

perrenials

lots of seat walls

reflective metal

long unbroken view

view to spot #14
6. Pools and motion:
A range of long, middle views are available here, but there is a strong sense of downward movement into a bowl-like enclosure. This feeling is assisted by the movement of the water that pools and snakes through the center of this tier. The top pool is recharged through the release of bubbling water which offers a comfortable audible tone. The surface bubbles move toward a grated runnel just under the surface of the bluestone enclave and then into a larger pool. On the edge of this pool is a sculptural bench to rest and contemplate. This pool releases into another runnel. This time it is exposed and curved. The bottom of the runnel is slightly ridged which causes visible ripples in the water. The effect of this is strong motion urging the pedestrian onward which is also reinforced by a still louder and yet unseen sound of water from somewhere beyond.
sculptural bench, see position #14

water flow

reflected motion

water bubbler

ridged bottom

walkway

activity, people playing frisbee

anticipation, visual hints of the plaza

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7. & 8. Release:
The end of the runnel can be clearly seen from this side. The runnel is ended with six incremental steps that cause the water to visibly splash and make considerable sound as it falls and comes near the end of its journey. The s-curved and stepped runnel makes a final release with a one foot drop into a series of two pools. The upper pool is shallow with an open side that allows the water to casually fall. The lower pool holds the water to an approximate ten inch level. Standing at the lower end of these pools an amphitheatre-like effect is achieved by the considerable amounts of steps and seat walls that encourage sitting or lying out. At every level there is the presence of plants, trees, and flowers. Looking back at the direction of previous travel reveals the elegant arrangement of buildings and monument softened by mature trees and the layered feel of elevation rise.
perrenials, trees

tiered seating

EDGE
LIGHT

PERFORM

MOVEMENT

SOUND

ELEVATION

splash

water basin
lots of steps, possible barrier

amphitheatre effect
9. Plaza approach:
The gently curved approach to the plaza echoes the curves of the previous runnel. The walker, at this point, is strongly directed onto a central walkway by means of walls, the visual queues of the walkway, and surrounding trees. It is at this point in the walk that the undulating and reflective element becomes visible. It is a web of stainless steel tubing that is supported in the air by columns. The wave of tubing is evocative of the surrounding ridgeline of the mountains. The appearance of a formal plaza that is scaled for large public assemblies is evident. In the middle, one can just begin to get the sense of another water feature.
visual and noise barrier created by trees
reflective scultural installation
echoes runnel curve
strong pedestrian channeling
continuous flush paving
10. The Plaza:
From the commanding position on the plaza stage under the stainless steel installation, the first feature that is apparent is the jets of water that are pushed vertically into the air. The surrounding surface is a play on geometry: a square pattern inset within a larger circular platform. There are no barriers here that would discourage any interaction with the water. Minimal attempts have been made to control the splash pattern of the water. The result is inviting and engaging. Here, there is opportunity to interact with the water, move through it, bathe in it, or witness phenomena created by sunlight. The spray often causes prismatic effects of light. Despite the strong auditory volume of the water, the ambient sound of the surrounding environment is somewhat muted. This may be the result of the wall of trees that line the busiest street, the expanse of turf and the bowl-like effect of the plaza.
framed monument

long view, view of the whole plaza

tiers, layers, steps

armed forces memorial

lots of seating
11. The Climb:
The elevation change by traveling this route is both challenging and defining. The grade here is somewhat steep but offers oblique views of previously experienced spaces. This approach also offers oblique and exaggerated perspective views of buildings, however now the viewpoint is almost from underneath the buildings looking up. The filigree work of this wrought hand railing plays against the sky. The railing also becomes the framework for casting animated shadows as the sun sets.
VERTICAL PUSH

oblique angles

steep grade

wrought iron railing
12. The Target:

Now at the summit of the hill, the walker is presented with a new invitation which is a circular paving pattern and granite monoliths. The choice here is to either break the rule and cross diagonally or inconveniently make the right-angle trek and use the cross walks.
13. Bullseye:

The participant is rewarded with roughly hewn granite monoliths that can be touched, moved around, and if desired there is a bench on which to sit and contemplate the significance of the composition and concentric circular pattern.
14. The sitting garden:

This symmetrical garden is set just off to the side of a large sidewalk. The eight sculptural benches that are used here are the same as the one that is used next to the upper pool. The benches are roughly hewn from granite with a cast bronze top. The design of these benches is somewhat unconventional and do not immediately evoke a bench recognition. This design of the bench evokes questioning from the participant in a positive fashion. What is this thing all about? They are very tactile in quality and, though they have no back, are very comfortable for extended seating. There is a somewhat formal quality to the geometry of the garden but the use of compacted screenings and the informal treatment of the planting beds help to loosen up the geometry. The traditional bronze sculpture which is the center piece of the garden acts as the signage for the art museum.
compacted screenings

sculptural benches, granite, cast bronze

monument

garden

fountain

TACTILE

traditional sculpture
Downtown Asheville: Urban Context

SITE B

Wall Street
1. Wall Street Entrance:
There is much about this little side street that is immediately inviting to the passerby. The first thing that is striking is the scale of the architecture. The central structure is the landmark Flatiron building with its accompanying oversized sculpture. The buildings that line the street opposite of the Flatiron are mostly one or two story structures adding to the intimate appearance. The treatment of the paved surface is quite varied alternating between granite block, brick borders, square patterned poured concrete, and exposed aggregate finished concrete. The use of bollards, trees, and light poles act as physical barriers that delineate the car from the pedestrian; there is no curbing used here. These treatments, along with the visual cues of the paving direct and calm the cars that use the street. This gives more freedom to the pedestrian to cross the street at will. The iconic ‘Public Service’ building at the end of this sequence on Wall Street serves as an important focal reference. It can be seen from this position as it peeks out from behind the Flatiron building.
2. The Long View:
The frequent use of light poles gives a comfortable visual rhythm to the street that unifies its appearance. The heights of the light poles are also kept at a level that is consistent with the heights of the buildings that they front. The use of trees on the street helps ground the façade of the Flatiron since the structure is approximately nine stories tall and would otherwise feel rather looming. The articulation and detailing of the buildings are in keeping with a human scale. This plays off of its relationship to the materials used for paving.
3. & 4. Obliqueness and Mystery:

The obtuse-angled turns add mystery to the street. This element coupled with the Public Service building give an air of anticipation for what might be around the corner.
5. **Looking back:**

A view back down the street reveals one of Asheville’s tallest central buildings and a small glimpse of the distant skyline. It is a reminder of the changing elevation of the city as well as a legible reference point.

The sequence of Wall Street exemplifies the flux and shifting scenes that are continuous as the participant moves forward. This is a perceptive sense that affirms spatial relationships and one that inspires meaning of immediate place.
CHAPTER 5
IMPLICATIONS, FUTURE PATHS AND CONCLUSION

The goal from the beginning of this research was to produce artistic principles that encourage walking in cities. The inquiry into aesthetic philosophy gives the premise of this thesis a position, a foot-hold onto the slippery slope of interpreting art and delight. The philosophical position explored avoids pure fancy by looking towards a simple explanation, that artistic experience originates from the perceptual point of view of the individual and is gathered in a similar fashion through the senses. One does not need to be told that they are in the presence of art. Any meaning or delight inspired from the aesthetic experience is the responsibility of the individual who is best suited to make those judgments. If there is some sort of magic that exists to manifest the artistic, then it exists within each individual through their appreciation and active participation in their everyday environment.

If we assume that humans are more or less similar in the ways they experience, then this gives landscape architects a familiar starting point in understanding experiential qualities that inspire. This is an understanding that casts the landscape architect in a position of empathy. Through this empathetic point of view, there is a juxtaposition that takes place. This is qualified by a shift in the landscape architect’s perspective from the creator to the participant: a designer’s social parallax, so to speak. This is a shift between one who is expected to produce the vision for the aesthetic of the urban environment and one who takes part in the experience. It is in this juxtaposition that exposes the continuity between the two positions. In truth, these two positions are both acts of creation and acts of participation.
As shown in chapter 2, the analysis of human aesthetic experience reveals a cycle that features principles for how one participates in an artistic experience. The process of participation in the artistry of the everyday urban environment is a creative act. In the artistic experience, the objects in the environment are no longer the focus. Instead the focus is the activity of the individual and their interaction with their immediate environment. This exemplifies the importance that the individual’s perception plays the creation of an experience. It is a unifying act between the subject and the object, the creator and perceiver. It is revealing of the relationship between the processes of nature and the processes of man. The individual’s observations fuel judgments of delight and meaning which, in turn, encourage the individual’s performance and activity.

The process of participating in the artistic experience is interrelated to producing an experiential aesthetic. First, the landscape architect invites participation through the artistic qualities of the urban environment. The individual becomes engaged through their perceptual faculties. Through perceptual engagement there is the possibility to inspire delight and meaning in the individual. To suggest there is an artistic formula that can materialize meaning is illusory and is not the intent of this thesis. Specifically listing artistic characteristics is purely speculative. How much is too much? How much is not enough? How visible is visible? The values are always relative to the context. To quantify art is
universally impossible. The principles for producing an experiential aesthetic are intended to guide the sensibilities of the landscape architect and to suggest possibilities to expand on the ordinary and the disinterested.

Chapter 3 reviewed artists and landscape architects to get an impression of their artistic practice, their artistic sensibilities, and to identify their strategies which engage the individual. The artists selected to be reviewed reinforce the philosophical position taken in this thesis by placing importance on the experience of individual perception. None of the works reviewed from these artists have been experienced first hand by the author. To get a ‘true’ sense of the works they should be experienced in person, in situ. Instead, research presented has relied on photographic documentation of the works, opinions of others, and the point of view of the artists themselves.

To place the responsibility of artistic experience in the hands of the individual’s subjective point of view is empowering. It dissolves any outside constraints that may be placed on the art of the urban environment that can limit the qualities that contribute to artistic experience. Anything is possible. However, at the same time, this implies great restriction on the possibility of any artistic action being acceptable outside of the individual. One possible implication is that the experience is only right for that individual or one person’s point of view. While the individual is king for the duration of this thesis, the underlying belief of the author is that there are more similarities in human behavior than there are differences. There is a commonality in experience that is expressed through the use of our cities.

Without the possibility to engage in meaningful experiences in the urban environment, cities are a vacuum of life better suited to vast expanses of asphalt and windowless buildings. Ultimately it is through the invitation of aesthetic qualities that the pedestrian will find delight in their city. With this in mind, chapter 4 examined a specific environment created to target pedestrian use. The author first looked for immediate invitations that prompt action from the pedestrian. Observing this environment
and consciously judging it through the lens of a participant’s direct and full sensory engagement was truly illuminating. The juxtaposition that exists between the role of the participant and creator becomes apparent when engaging the environment in this manner. This change in perspective reveals the shortcomings of experiential qualities and perhaps ways to improve upon them.

Cities are created for people, and human powered motion epitomizes the human form and scale. The act of walking exemplifies the most basic and simple means of human movement. As the present concerns increase regarding the state of the natural environment, peak oil, and the dependence on foreign energy sources, the simple act of walking and human powered alternatives become a more attractive method to move through our cities; future paths of this research keep this notion in mind.

Conceptualizing new ways to strengthen pedestrian systems in cities presents opportunity to advocate for their importance. Future research could explore hybridized forms that break from traditional urban typologies exemplified by sidewalks that conform to block systems. There is great possibility in exploring under-utilized or inefficient ‘lost space’ and existing infrastructure as an expanded experiential field for pedestrian movement. These hybridized forms of pedestrian systems have the possibility to become a more interwoven and integral part of the urban environment than their traditional counterparts.

The artistic principles revealed through this research highlight the importance of recognizing the individual as the reason in the art of the urban environment. Whether the individual’s role is that of the creator, performer or observer, we all perceive our environment in common ways. These principles remind landscape architects that the building blocks of our cities are people. In return, the quality of our cities shape us.
REFERENCES


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