unplanned wanderings:
and the discovery of a pier

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abstract

My question here revolves around my orientation with my own work; my own frustrations and inability to so often answer the question "can a meaningful place be designed?"

This journey examines the theory of semiotics. Through this, three strategies have been developed to explore the branches of semiotic research in Landscape Architecture.

The first strategy allows meaning to develop through time, and it is with the repeated usage of people that meaning will accrue. The second strategy shows how meaning can be determined before the design through mapping current and desired locations of meaning in space. And, the third strategy reflects on how meaning emerges from the earth when no interference from designers or users occurs.

The result of the three individual strategies is a combination of solutions, illustrating how to create places of true richness. This new space will engage visitors, pull in new visitors, and help create something memorable for those engaging in a space.

Contents

* all illustrations by author

Pre-script

Figure 1: poplar sky.

A journey

I wander

I saunter through the forest as if I own it.
I feel comfortable.
I am at home.

At some (unknown to me now) location I stop. I look up. The white, grey and black of the large poplar trees contrast beautifully with the blue sky. It is spring. In the distance I can hear my father's chainsaw cutting down trees for fire wood. I am far enough away that I know I am safe. I gather what is left over from a trail my father cut for himself. Every year he cuts a different trail, allowing the forest to regenerate itself before he tries to cut that place again. I pick up leaves of all different colors and stab them onto a stick. When I get enough it looks like a closed accordion. But this accordion is made of a stick and leaves. Most of the leaves are orangey brown. I walk far enough that I can only faintly hear the chainsaw. The ground is sloped downwards now. I can see a rusted form in the distance. I need to break branches to get through the forest. Finally when I get to the rusted metal I can see it is an old tractor. It has many bullet holes in it, but it is still a tractor; could it be something else?

I do not know why it was that I chose that day to wander, nor do I know why I chose to pick up the rust colored leaves that so closely resembled the rusted tractor. But it was something in my gut, some form of intuition that guided me to pick those leaves and observe that tractor on that day. I have since seen the tractor many times; it was shortly thereafter that my parents chose to pull it out of the forest and place it on display.

It was intuition that guided my wandering then, and in many ways it is intuitive wandering that guides what I do today.

Directional context

In Chuck Palahniuk's novel 'invisible monsters' he unfolds the story of a "fashion model who has everything: a boyfriend, a career, a loyal best friend. But when a sudden freeway 'accident' leaves her disfigured and incapable of speech, she goes from being the beautiful center of attention to being an invisible monster, so hideous that no one will acknowledge she exists. Enter Brandy Alexander, Queen Supreme, one operation away from becoming a real woman, who will teach her that reinventing yourself means erasing your past and making up something better. And that salvation hides in the last places you'll ever want to look." (Palahniuk 1999, cover jacket). I see the world in much this same way, messages unfold, meaning skips, and we interpret. And often it is only when the reader of the environment takes it upon themselves that they are able to understand, or enjoy, the places that the readers are going to become.

"Don't expect this to be the kind of story that goes: and then, and then, and then.
What happens here will have more of that fashion magazine feel, a Vogue or a Glamour magazine chaos with page numbers on every second or fifth or third page. Perfume cards falling out, and full-page naked women coming out of nowhere to sell you make-up.
Don't look for a contents page, buried magazine-style twenty pages back from the front.
Don't expect to find anything right off. There isn't a real pattern to anything either. Stories will start and then, three paragraphs later:
Jump to page whatever.
Then, jump back.
This will be ten thousand fashion separates that mix and match to create maybe five tasteful outfits. A million trendy accessories, scarves and belts, shoes and hats and gloves, and no real clothes to wear them with.
And you really, really need to get used to that feeling, here, on the freeway, at work, in your marriage. This is the world we live in. Just go with the prompts.

Jump back twenty years to the white house where I grew up with my father shooting super-8 movies of my brother and me running around the yard.

Jump to present time with my folks sitting on lawn chairs at night, and watching these same super-8 movies projected on the white side of the same white house, twenty years later. The house the same, the yard the same, the

windows projected in the movies lined up perfectly [sic] with the real windows, the movie grass aligned with the real grass, and my movie-projected brother and me being toddlers and running around wildly [sic] for the camera.

Jump to my big brother being all miserable and dead from the big plague of AIDS.
———

Jump to me being grown up and fallen in love with a police detective and moved away to become a famous supermodel.
Just remember, the same as a spectacular Vogue magazine, remember that no matter how close you follow the jumps:
No matter how careful you are, there's going to be the sense you missed something, the collapsed feeling under your skin that you didn't experience it all. There's that fallen heart feeling that you rushed right through the moments where you should've been paying attention.
Well, get used to that feeling. That's how your whole life will feel some day.
This is all practice. None of this matters. We're just warming up.
Jump to here and now, Brandy Alexander bleeding to death on the floor with me kneeling beside her, telling this story before here come the paramedics."

(Palahniuk 1999, 20)

Figure 2: Collage explorations of meaning in designed spaces.

Question

My point of reference within this work originated with my own frustrations and inability to so often answer the question "Can Meaningful Places Be Designed?"

It is a legitimate question, but no matter how often I've been asked it (in a critique session, a presentation, or during casual conversation), I never know what to say. Because if what people mean is: Can the love of a place be designed? Or can a person be taught how to enjoy space? Then the answer is no.

> "Can a (landscape) designer help make a significant place? yes
> Can a (landscape) designer design significance into the place at
> the time of its realization? No, or let's say, no longer."
>   (Treib, Marc, in Swaffield 2002, 99)

Which may be why the question, when asked, is usually done in a skeptical tone implying that, unlike learned skills like, adding, subtracting or building a bench, abstract meanings of a place cannot be universally transmitted from designer (teacher) to user (student) or can they?

I often try to imagine how a potential designed place, in which I (or anyone for that matter) create (in the comfort of the educational wall) has the ability to defend, discuss, and invent intentions at the whim of the interpreter, or at the moment of the question. How then do we communicate to potential (often imagined) users of the space (real or imaginary)? Because it seems to me that if the users of that potential space were required to read the intentions of the Designer before entering (much like is done by a instructor with their student) this imagined space, we as a profession may diminish our drive of creative movement forward because we would lack any future thinking or knowledge of what spaces could be. Individual interpretation and personal relationships with space would be removed. For all meaning would be given to us, interpretations would be left unavailable.   And in many ways, this could be what would occur if we attempt to design with strict meaning embedded into place. Or, would it create a more universal understanding between non-designers and space?

> "Is it really possible to imbue a place with meaning from the
> outset? It would seem that history tells us yes, if the users
> possess sufficient experience in common. For one, significance
> is culturally circumscribed and, ultimately, personally
> determined."
>
> (Treib, Marc, in Swaffield 2002, 97)

What confuses me is not the logical nature of the question of can we imbed meaning into a space, but the fact that it has always been asked of a student studying the design of places, for far less time than of those asking it. And further to a student who has never escaped the confines of the institutional walls. These walls create a security covering, but perhaps it is these which allow for comfort when asking and answering the question. However, what does this say to me, as a student, or my instructors, and the six years I have spent studying design if I said that any attempt to educate me in the design of meaning in places was a complete waste of time? I am unsure if this means that I have missed something, or if multiple interpretations are available for each space,

or if the question is rhetorical. It could be that rhetoric may be most simple response, I don't believe that everything can be taught, and much of what we learn we must do through experience and personal reflection of place.

Instead I try to answer this question in my mind, by recalling some of my own valuable experience, not exclusively as a student, but as a person curious about life exploring the places I move through, and have revisited throughout my life. I believe that living in a place, one learns to read and interpret, to delineate relationships through disconnection, and how to create appropriate responses to return with. Responses of disconnection creating empathy and understanding of the places we inhabit. So often though, these places only signify anything meaningful to us when we reflect, revisit, and contemplate them as something we wish to be meaningful to us.

> "Significance is there to be discovered, inherent and ascribed,
> shaped by what senses perceive, what instinct and experience
> read as significant, what minds know. Any organism with senses
> has the potential to read and understand landscape."
>
> (Spirn 1998, 18)

From this I then need to understand, what is it that causes one to want to revisit these spaces? Because if at this moment I am implying that for meaning to be imbued into a space, one needs to revisit, to contemplate, and discover; what is it then, that may cause a person to have the desire to do these things within a space? As I do not think I am the only person to have a favorite, and less favorite spaces. Some which I will go to again and others I will never visit again.
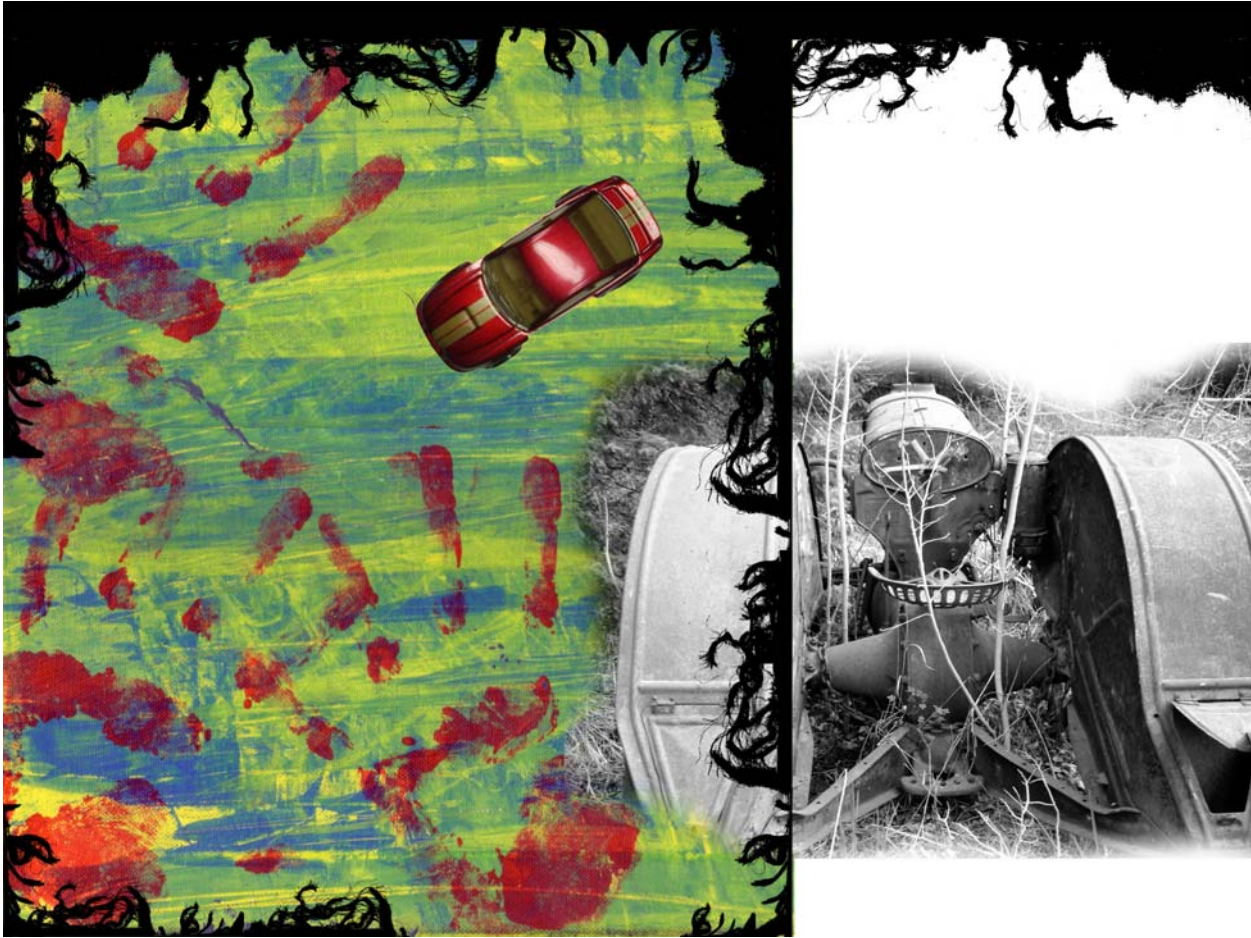
Figure 3: memory collage of where I grew up.

Introduction

The design development

This practicum is a personal process of design meaning that I never imagined would focus on design. I meant it to remain theoretical, probably more convoluted than logical, and not at all didactic. And in some way it has remained this way, and in other has become very didactic and linear.

When I began this journey I attempted to set some guidelines for myself. Initially, these guidelines were all very broad; guidelines did not make much sense to me, and did not help in directing my thinking at all. What they did do, is cause me to read, which also causes one to veer off toward strange (but wonderful and exploratory) tangents, and so my plans changed; I paused and thought. I am not sure if it was because of (what I thought at the time) kooky suggestions, or the continual rescue rope thrown after me into the abyss but I have to thank each of my professors who have instructed me over the past seven years. Each has helped me in ways in which were probably never intended, but without these (at times) random investigations I had been sent on, I would have never understood what I do. Also, I need to thank my fellow students, in particular, those who have been in design school with me for the past six years (you know who you are), none of you has allowed me to slip up, nor complete anything I had not been proud of.

What emerged from this reading and random investigations was my thinking. My thinking came out in parallel narratives, each with its own investigations, discoveries and conclusions. Each though, summarizes a thought process and has moved me through my design processes.

My hope is that when this is complete it is no longer mine; that it is something more, re-forming the development and thinking of what we call design. It is this hope that has kept me going.
Kept me from going crazy. Allowed me to keep some level of focus.
When it is complete, it is my hope that it will be something I am beyond.

> "What is most interesting about the development of the competition is precisely how factual and meaningless the sequence of decisions that led into the project was, despite the many associations that have been made between the project and certain philosophical, cultural or formal trends. In fact, we now see that meaninglessness as the order that builds multiple cultural resonances."
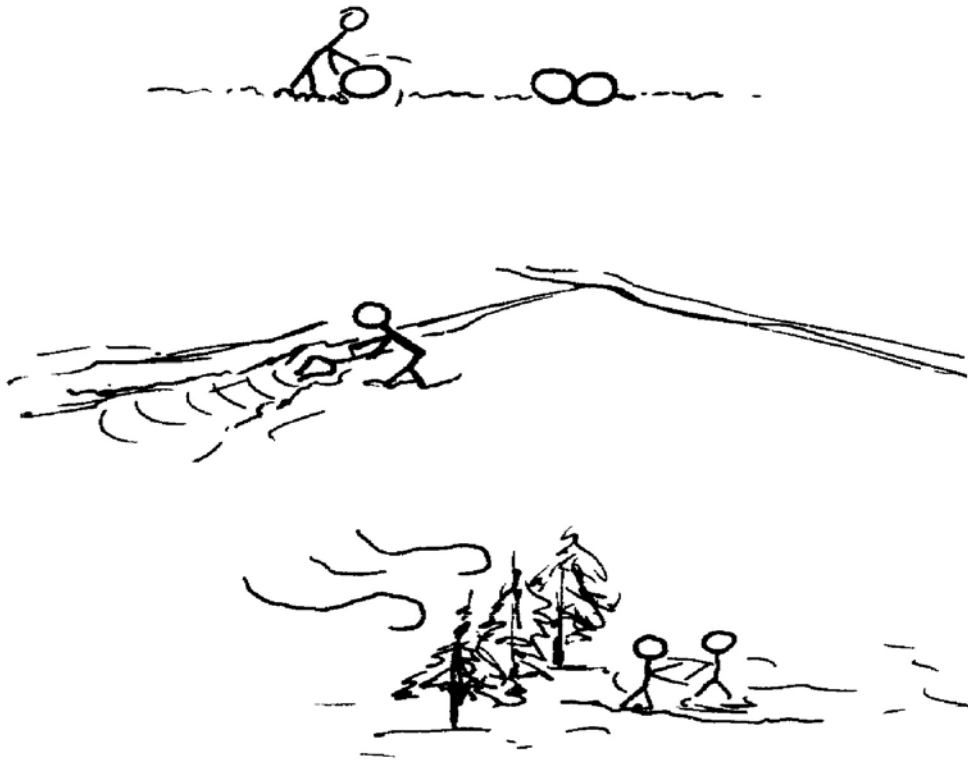>
> (Ferre, Sakamoto and Kubo 2002, 9).

Figure 4: deliberate moves to manipulate the land

Design

I feel that like many – perhaps even all – designers, I have learned to understand places through investigatory processes. And as I design I discovered that, like exploring it is done through doing, by designing.

> "Not only do we use and make objects; objects in turn have, in a sense, made us what we have become as a species. It seems evident that we have evolved ourselves in large part to interact with this artifactual world of sign-formations in other words, that human evolution is in part the product of our long interaction with systems of built forms"
>
> (Presiosi 1979, 1)

Long before any idea of what designed places could mean, deliberate moves have been made to manipulate the land. Seeing these I understand. Rocks and boulders were moved to create ceremonial spaces; trenches were dug to move water; trees and shrubs were planted to block the wind.

And who could ask for a more truthful expression of meaningful space: generous, uncritical, and blessed with wisdom and genius, as endlessly forgiving as only well used spaces could be. But these spaces were constructed with only the most primary understandings of meaning within them could be. They have nothing to do with the emotional quality, not without a primary meaning to them. How then would these spaces translate into something meaningful to the users, and subsequently readers, of those original spaces?

Though most modern designers have learned from 'masters' in a formal, methodical way-

-I too have experienced classes which felt endless, exploring work; to see how many spaces it contains, how many themes it covers, how the designer deals with progression, movement, and meaning-

-it feels although learning this way involves more of an absorption of existing ideas than one of thinking and developing one's own. It is this practicum which I take as my opportunity to develop my own ideas about design, particularly those of meaning, and how that translates into effective communication of a space. This document is a record of my thinking, unfolding and emerging from my own mind; translating from the nightmare of ideas that exist within.

In the past, after this process of learning (in traditional classes) I would have (at that time) moved forward to design my own spaces, which at times seemingly appear to have 'quoted' a design master in appearance or form, even if I had copied elements of their work, I have noticed that my own work becomes, even slightly, just a little more clear. Although I question this method that I have so often explored; how does it make sense that I am able to re-interpret what I feel a space is, and translate that into what I want a space to be? All without speaking with that designer to really know why something was the way it was. But does any of that really matter, am I trying to create spaces that can be read like a story, moving from page to page in a sequential order, or should it be that a place jumps from one element to another without those literal translations between. Do landscapes require perfect sentence structure to exist; are they like a piece of writing where rules of grammar and syntax exist? We often design in this way, trying to map out the way a person will experience the space we design; move from point A to point B seeing X on the way…but is this the most effective way for us to design. Personally, I very seldom keep to the path, follow the line of a perfect design the same way that I do with a piece of writing. So why then should we speak of a design with that same language? What is design language?

 In this ongoing process of becoming a designer, I read, I explore, I watch, I smell and I hear the spaces I love. I explore these places for pleasure, first, but also more investigative, conscious of style, of language, of how elements were formed and information is being conveyed, how the designer is structuring a story, creating movement, employing detail and dialogue. And as I design I discovered that, like exploring, it is done one element at a time, one line on the paper at a time. Everything is critical, yet, nothing is precious: changing a species, removing a building, reorienting a parking lot, and putting it all back.

> "The landscape is itself a text that is open to interpretation
> and transformation. It is also a highly situated phenomenon
> in terms of space, time, and tradition and exists as both the
> ground and geography of our heritage and change."
>   (Corner, The Hermeneutic Landscape, in Swaffield 2002, 131)

I am mostly happy when I am engaged with environments that I understand, the place and the physical character of it. Because of this, it troubles me how, as a designer, I can design understandable, clear and acceptable places; however, I feel that I have to increase the meaning of these places to be significant.

Kalin (2001), states that currently, many environments which people engage with, are losing their semantic value or identity; resulting in places that could be indefinable by society as places of chaos. I do not necessarily feel that this is true, as meaning must exist for a space to exist.

However, to help remedy this potentially fatal act of chaos in my own design work I feel that it is necessary to explore the notion of semiotics in design, and understand the meaning behind the individual movements of my hand and how these translate into something potentially significant in result. This in turn, should create something that is universally enjoyed, at least in part by all people as a space will hopefully emerge that can be enjoyed, and thus read by all.

The entrance into this journey of what meaning is dissects the two halves of what meaning is.

> "Most of us, I suspect, without giving much thought to the matter, would say that a sense of place, a sense of being at home in a town or city, grows as we become accustomed to it and learn to know it peculiarities. It is my own belief that a sense of place is something that we ourselfves create in the course of time. it is the result of habit or custom. But others disagree. They believe that a sense of place comes from our response to features which are already there – either a beautiful natural setting or well-designed architecture. They believe that a sense of place comes from being in an unusual composition of spaces and forms – natural or man-made."
>
> (Jackson 1994, 151)

Taking these cues from J.B. Jackson, where he speaks of the sense of place is what I refer to as meaning. That special feeling we all get when we enter a place and want to return again. This feeling does not necessarily directly correlate with the architectural forms, or the landscape elements, but

> "with some event, some daily or weekly or seasonal occurrence which we look forward to or remember and which we share with others, and as a result the event becomes more significant than the place itself"
>
> (Jackson 1994, 159).

The question arises for me in this journey, does meaning arise from my creation of well designed spaces or are the actions that I perform limited by external relationships between the spaces I create, and those that I cannot touch? Though semiotics seems to have an already existing etymological definition, studying the meaning(s) of places seems to be a very ambiguous topic, and those who claim specialty in the area very seldom come to any conclusive results without containing an element of ambiguity or personal relationships with the space. Even in well distributed articles, like Marc Treibs, Must Landscapes Mean (in Swaffield 2002), or Anne Whiston Spirn's book, The Language of Landscape (1998).

Each written exploration concludes in a similar way, stating that meaning today, cannot be inserted into a place that it should develop and build, evolve and change, creating meaning over time. This cultural notion of meaning being built and understood over time is similar to many of my later conclusions to the topic, but then, my question is, how designers create a place of meaning (from design day one), and then knowingly allow meaning will develop. That is, creating a place that people will want to inhabit, spend time, and help contribute to the meaning of that place. We should as designers enable ourselves to design with an idea of what feelings will be communicated by that space. After all, so many of us design this way, with our feelings, so shouldn't these feelings be translated through the design, and does this mean that we, as a discipline, require as rigid a meaning set as might oral language?

A meaningful place should ultimately be meaningful to the users (readers) of that space. Though I am unsure as to how possible this is. The designer has control over the design of the space and it is through this control that they hope a kind of meaning can be understood through the design. It is through trusting the designer that they will create a space that allows for this kind of understanding and meaning to exist. The designer is in control, so how can we ensure that they understand how to create places of meaning?

Semiotics

I think the trouble with trying to understand the meaning of places is often due to the approach taken by most when studying the place(s) meaning(s). When looking at semiotics, one begins by understanding the individual thinkers and moves forward from there, sometimes accepting what has been said, sometimes forgetting it, sometimes layering it, and sometimes going back, and starting again. This seems to be a logical starting point for the study of semiotics. This approach may only be appropriate for those studying semiotics in the purest sense. My attempt here is to understand the ground work put forth by those studying semiotics. Fundamentally, what semiotics is, not necessarily how it reflects on or with design.

semanti c adj. 1894, borrowed from French *sémantique*, from Greek *sēmantikos* significant, from *sēmaínein* to show, signify, indicate by a sign, from sêma sign (Doric *sâma*); for suffix see -IC. The word was recorded earlier in English in the adjective sense of related to signs of the weather, and now obsolete meaning. -- **semanti cs** n. 1893, borrowed from French *sémanti que*, noun use of *sémantique*, adj.; for suffix see -ICS. The study of semantics as a branch of 19th century philology was known earlier in English as *semasiology* (1847, borrowed from German *Semasiologie*, from Greek *sēmasíã* signifi cati on, meaning, from *sēmaínein* signify + German *–logie* -logy).

semioti cs n. 1880, borrowed from Greek *sēmeiõtikós* observant of signs, adjecti ve to *sēmeiõsis* indication (earlier *sēmeiõti s), from s*ēmeioŭn* to signal, from *sēmeíon* sign, from *sēma* sign: for suffi x see -ICS. A form of the word closer to Greek is found in English *semeiotics* that branch of medicine dealing with the interpretation of symptoms (1670), and is referred to even earlier in the adjective *semeiotical* (1588). In the general sense of signs or symbols and the study of their use in conveying meaning, the word is recorded as early as 1641.

(Barnhart 1988)

Initial Understanding

The most basic levels of semiotics can be applied to almost any discipline; that could be engineering (structural systems), medicine (symptoms), literature (writing), anthropology (societal relationships), or the mass media (cultural influences). And similarly those involved in the discipline also range; from linguists, philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, literary, aesthetic and media theorists, psychoanalysts and educationalists (Demytrie 2000, 17). Semiotics is a field where great confusion is sure to exist, as variation exists in exactly what semiotics involves; concerning not only that of intentional communication, but also our understanding of significance in relation to anything in the world (Demytrie 2000, 18).

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) is credited for being one of the first semiotical thinkers, whose thinking opposed that of similar linguistic thinkers of his time. Leading up to Saussure most linguistic thinking employed a chronological perspective, analyzing specific changes in specific languages. Saussures thinking is classified as more synchronic branch of linguistics, versus those of previous, being thought of as more diachronic (Cobley and Jansz 2004). The theories set out by Saussure can be applied to any language system, which is the main difference between it, and the other theories proposed by others of the time. Even though much of Saussure's thinking was applied directly to the nature of his own linguistic teachings, those comments he made to the field are integral to the understanding of sign systems (Cobley and Jansz 2004).

Most importantly, an analysis tool was put forward describing language with the most simple relationship; that is the signifier and the signified.

> The signifier – the form which the sign takes
> The signified – the concept it represents

This concept is simple enough to understand, and this is why (in my opinion) that prior to Saussure defining the field of semiotics, a generic blanket concept was often used to cover meaning, and these blanket concepts are defined with a rigid language (meaning) set, only applicable to a (often) single set. Today however, I would like to believe that we can create more flexible sets, capable of changing and evolving to suit the problem. Language sets are familiar to most as oral/written language. While this makes sense theoretically, to deal with meaning in this way (with regards to this place or any other) is much too

complex (as a starting point anyway). Too complex, because when we study a spoken language the framework already exists (words and meanings), and all that needs to be studied is the way in which combinations and organizations (grammar and structure) combine to formulate a solution. Saussure's definition of these sets begins with a dissection of the linguistic sign as a two-sided entity, or dyad (that is the signifier and the signified).

One side of this entity (sign) is referred to as the signifier.
The signifier is real; it is the physical component of the sign.
Inseparable, the other half of the signifier is referred to as the signified. Where the signifier was physical, the signified is imaginary, or a mental component (Chandler 2003).

For example, if we look at the word landscape, we all understand that the word is composed of the letters, l / a / n / d / s / c / a / p / e (signifier), as well, we can all understand that what is provoked for the hearer is not the 'real image' of a landscape, but a mental concept of 'landscapeness' (signified). Landscapeness could be the ground, trees, paving, decking… really, anything under the sun. Whatever the 'real' landscape being referred to as the signifier, may result in being different than what is imagined as the signified.

This being the fundamental framework of Saussure's theory of the

> "inseparability of the signified (mental concept) and the signifier (material aspect) lead(s) Saussure to offer the following diagram:
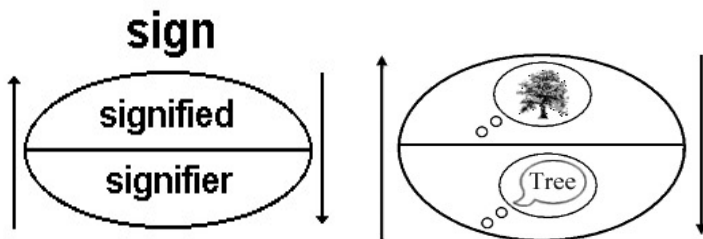
> Clearly, Saussure believes that the process of communication through language involves the transfer of the contents of minds…"
>
> (Cobley and Jansz 2004, 12)

Figure 5: diagrams adapted from (Chandler 2003)

The complexity defining semiotic nature(s) of space arises where the language of place breaks down. It becomes troublesome when we try to define a place term with a language system that does not contain the required systemic framework to sustain anything else. It is because of the random combination of signifiers and what is being signified. This means that the current form of language we use to explain an object (what it is that we are referring to) is not accurate, or specific as to properly communicate an exact mental understanding of that object (signifier). When you comment on an aspect of a design to me, I may imagine a separate dimensioning of that same concept to which you referred. This is why, when communicating design intents, it is often required to include writings, drawings, videos etc. But I feel that when describing a place, there must be a way to signify that exact feeling which we want to share with those who may have never visited that place. Or similarly, instill that same feeling in a future design that we have yet to build. But in order to design a place to feel a certain way, we must first be able to understand what it is that causes us to feel a certain way.

Because of this problem of exactness in language, designers often draw from multiple language sets (example, each of the senses) at a time to properly communicate what it is that they may be conceiving for a place (object, form etc).

It is often the hope when communicating, that my mental concepts are properly communicated to others, however, there is no natural reason why our language sets have been set up the way that they have. How can we pull these multiple language sets throughout the design process to allow for them to communicate not only in the conceptual stage, or in the final design, but throughout?

This method does work when we think of it in a theoretical framework. In the past, when a design was constructed for a wealthy landowner the concept of what that place signified was part of that class system. It was part of the way of life of that time (Treib, Marc 2002, 97). Today however, design does not always work in that same way, diversity has caused some level of confusion in the system of meaning. Whether defining pieces or wholes; within a design language, a drawn language, a written language, or an emotional language; if a culture collectively decided that something should mean something else, it would be absorbed into that language set. Saussure expressed that most signifiers do not have a genetic quality to them, and that most of them must be taught. This is explained in a two part expression, where each requires the other

to exist (Cobley and Jansz 2004). And this is true within formal language sets, but a deeper level of meaning or significance could exist within places. Anne Whiston Spirn (1998) speaks of that deeper feeling one has when in a space, and Marc Treib (2002) speaks of the pleasure in a space. We know these emotions exist, so how can the language of these emotions be mapped?
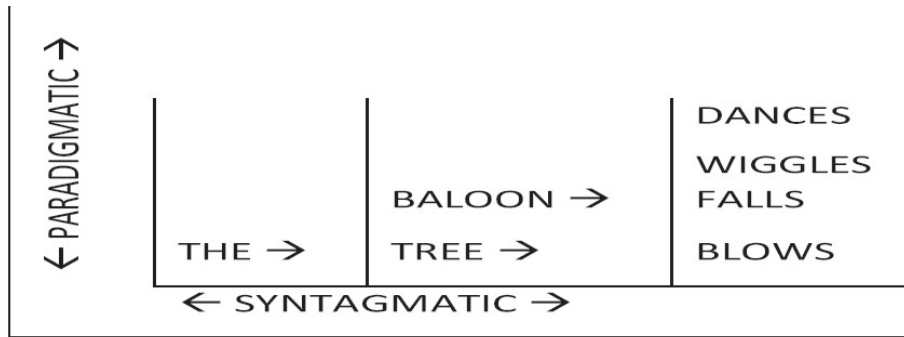
These two parts (signifier & signified), Saussure refers to as parole and langue. Parole is comprised of each of the individual components of a language (words, images, smells etc), and langue is the system that structures and determines the differences between the components of the parole. When we think of these differences we can't help but imagine the random possibilities that could potentially exist from such an open system, however, most language systems have understood rules to them, of which we rarely need to consult. If we did require regular consultation, it would be difficult to formulate any type of relationship, physical or not.

A theoretical site

Breaking it down

When using language, Saussure referred to the structure of any language in terms of combination (syntagmatic relations) and substitution (paradigmatic relations).

These two terms can be drawn in a graph (seebelow) like a sentence, can be broken down into its parts.

```
↑
PARADIGMATIC
                                          DANCES
                                          WIGGLES
                      BALOON →            FALLS
          THE →       TREE →              BLOWS
←
          ← SYNTAGMATIC →
```

Syntagmatic relations can be understood as the rules which the parole (referred to earlier) follows. A Syntagm (a group of forms, similar to syntax) cannot exist without a sequencing of parole(like a sentence), but a parole, can exist on its own. A syntagm relates to the elements which precede, succeed, or surround that particular syntagm in sequence. This element 's signification exists in a two dimensional understanding where meaning is not solely linear. The signified object could have its own paradigmatic relations where it could be substituted with something else. While these two relationships must be able to exist in the two dimensional graph they still allow for a great deal of flexibility in meaning, as long as the system is not obstructed (Cobley and Jansz 2004, Chandler 2003). Similarly, Matthew Potteiger and Jamie Purinton outline the sequencing of landscape experience in their publication Landscape Narratives (2002). In their writing of landscape realms, Potteiger and Purinton are speaking of the landscape in its syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations.

Figure 6: paradigmatic/syntagmatic graph, adapted from (Cobley and Jansz, 2004)

"Rather than a limitation, these conditions on the spatial narrative offer distinct interpretation, multiple authorship, competing discourses and change, making landscape interpretation, multiple authorship, competing discourses and change, making landscape such a vital phenomenon...First, landscape and narrative (paradigmatic)(sic) can be redescribed as cultural systems of signification, as language. Second, landscape and narrative (syntagmatic)(sic) are also linked by an expanded notion of text and the network of intertextual associations. Further, landscape narratives are not directly homologous to language, but meanings and interpretations are both enabled and constrained within social discourses."

(Potteiger and Purinton 2002, 137)

Seeing the landscape as a series of events or a progression of movements, unfolds a story to a reader in all types of language, including the designed landscape.

Breaking it down further

A short chain of signs can often be easily understood as a two dimensional linear combination. However, when we try to sign or give meaning to a place it becomes a little more complex. This is because of the problem of how signifiers (the representation) are not always read literally, and are not translated the same in all systems or languages.

One example is the cypress tree. A cypress has an expression in its phylum, Cupressus sempervirens, its connotation with bodily death, spiritual immorality, or its notion of climatic conditions of where it can grow as well as its relationship as a tree combined with the features surrounding or combined with it to create an entire design scene.

These literal (often physical) meanings are referred to as the signifiers' denotation; while the interpretive (personal and cultural meaning) of what it could be, is referred to as its connotation. The frequency of the connotation beyond what could have been an intention of the original sign creates the additional level of confusion and is where communication and language

require multiple layers to exist properly. While we can create a story, a path, a movement system for a participant to occupy, we cannot always convincingly create our desired connotation to a viewer. This could also be seen as part of the excitement of what design has to offer. Opening to interpretation, whether that be through freedom of movement or differences in an individual and their understandings of landscape features, a flexibility in understanding these shifts must be presented by the designer when creating any space.

> "Opening the discursive space of landscape narratives changes the relationship between designer, story, readers/community and landscape. Landscape narratives need not be controlled and plotted stories. Instead, designers can open the discourses constituted by narratives that inhere in very ordinary landscapes. Instead of emphasizing closure and unity, opening involves the ongoing processes of narrative production. In effect it engages the practices of how people make places and stories a constitutive part of their own experience, interpretation, and memory."
>
> (Potteiger and Purinton 2002, 143)

What I control and what I don't

Umberto Eco (1980) expresses the difference between a stimulus and sign communication. A stimulus (something you don't control) is something that is often not desired, like a reflection of the sun into one's eyes. When this happens we quickly blink, sometimes then squinting, depending on our continual movement through the space. This could also include the weather or surrounding noise. Sign communication is the aspect that we do control. However, the meaning is then only understood when one has previous experience with the sign. Only when an individual has previously experienced a sign will they be able to fully understand that sign and its appropriate response. A stimulus to the weather, such as shivering will exist when one feels a cold wind, however this can be used in a place and controlled to mean something. These types of controlled stimuli often arise from previous experience and knowledge of a possible response to the potential outcome, like moving under a heat lamp on a patio. A person's response to stimuli will insist upon a reaction; however we are not likely to learn from this experience, or not experience it again. This means that the next time I have a bright light in my eyes I will still

blink, or have a cold wind on my body I will still shiver. Sign communication, where it is separate from stimuli, may have originated from a stimuli. Communication exists from experience of stimulations, which we then recognize as signs should direct our future responses. When one moves in the exterior environment we will undoubtedly encounter various elements for the first time. An example could be a staircase. The first time we encounter the staircase we need to experience the stimulus of stubbing our toe, before we are able to understand and then communicate with the stairs to relate to the material, size or dimension of the steps. After this initial stimulus of the stair, and understanding what it is, we (the user) are then able to understand the stairs as a sign, which we are then able to access later, the next time we see stairs.

This means that the stairs can then begin to have a level of signification to them. It is unlikely that the signification of the stairs would be permanent, or true for all stairs, however certain elements of the understanding (a change in level) would from then on be universal, such as knowing that stairs help us move from point A to point B (a shifting in level). This process of stimulus, response, education, and understanding is fundamentally what an experience of place is. Which is why conclusions of design meaning existing as a 'patina' or layering probably arise;

Reflecting on this kind of 'patina' in the landscape, I feel that meaning only exists after this short chain emerges. I see this chain as:

- Stimulus – Response – Education – Understanding -

Looping Back

The landscape is what we desire to understand. The landscape forms (sign vehicles) have a capacity to communicate their meaning and function to the user (reader) of place. The object (sign vehicle) occupies the responsibility of the denotative, functionally holding meaning in the landscape. The denotative function of an object in the landscape can only exist when that object's specific function is known to the reader, or, innately intuitive to them. When one enters a space for the first time, and I will assume encounters something with which they are familiar, the denotative reference of that object is understood and that individual is able to engage with that object in a familiar way. Whereas, if in that same space that same individual was to encounter something which did not include any visual signs which were familiar, it would be rendered useless; losing

its ability for easily referenced communication and meaning. Sudden changes in denotation require a familiarity in the function of that same form. It is only through some form of communication that the denotation will be understood and then, that the message can be clearly communicated.

While elements in the landscape all (usually) have a denotative function (most often the most basic), they can all usually contain a number of connotative functions as well. A light post for example, has a basic denotative function of lighting, while it could also imply, safety, an entrance, or aesthetics; all of which are connotative functions of the light post. Often, these connotative functions of objects fall into the realm of what many would call the symbolic. Being that, many of these are implied meaning, not functional meanings (Eco 1980).

Certain thinkers (Broadbent, Eco) have commented about the primary and secondary functions in design. I however, feel that this is not as important as accepting the potential for both denotative and connotative functions to evolve and change over time. Today this is very true with the transformation of abandoned industrial spaces in our cities. When first conceived, these 'industrial' spaces were not thought of as a recreational green space; however, today many of these spaces are being transformed into active spaces, transforming both the primary (denotative) use and the secondary (connotative) meaning of the place to something else. While certain qualities of the original secondary (connotative) meanings may be more commonly translated into a new space, it would probably still retain its connotative functioning in that space, only that it now holds a historical twist on its original function. Eco (1980) expresses his feeling that 'it would be a mistake, however, to imagine that by their very nature architectural sign-vehicles would denote stable primary functions, with only the secondary functions varying in the course of history.' It is even possible that certain primary functions, could be no longer effective, thus no longer denoted, and no longer having any type of code to express. Any space has the ability through history to evolve. Thus their primary and secondary functions are able to disappear, recover, or substitute for something else.

This rapid change in historical forms (to fill, to empty, to remove meaning, to add new meaning) forces one to feel that the best solution would be to rely on one's own instincts in inhabiting space. History has shown that forms are able to instinctually adapt, change, and then be manipulated to connote as needed or desired (Eco 1980).

Along with a possible manipulation of functional form, we must recognize that

it is easy to allow relics to shrink out of proportion with their once significant meaning. This happens when a form retains its denotative function, yet loses its connotative functions, and what is left is a primary form of which no original connotations still exist. Still, when creating new spaces, we are fully aware of this loss of the sense to which a form is subjected, or its ability to acquire a new sense. And since most understand this possibility of shifting in meaning, one should potentially, design for a changing primary function and flexible secondary functions.

> "And the ludic activity of repeatedly discovering meanings for things, no longer turned to dilettantish rummaging into the past, could take the direction of inventing, not rediscovering, different codes. The jump backward is replaced by a jump forward. Abandoning oneself to the curiosities of history gives way to a kind of design of the future. The alternatives might be put thus: in 'recovering ' fragments of an existing city I might perhaps rediscover antiquated rhetorical codes and forgotten ideological backgrounds, but in the game of recovery, as we said, there will as a rule be only superficial consequences, with my basic codes and ideologies remaining generally the same. But if I had before me an urban macrostructure that would clearly accommodate any number of changes in my basic conception of the city and were prompted to invent a particular disposition of it for my future use, my activity could become anything but superficial, for I might have to restructure my basic codes, in deciding what to make of it, and even my ideological perspective, for clearly in deciding what to make of it I might be prompted to alter my behavior overall. The use of forms, or rhetoric's, that hold within them these possibilities of change in conjunction with restructuring of ideological perspectives would be something quite different from our 'philological' activity. In the latter one can enjoy (but only to a point) the rediscovery of forms of the past and the insertion of them, with semantic fission, into one's accustomed contexts, but in the former one would be dealing no longer with obsolescent forms: one would be engaged in giving new meanings to forms that are made for transformation, and that will be transformed precisely when one decides they should be and decides what directions the transformations should take. So against the background of the historical dynamics of death and rebirth of already produced forms –

sometimes traumatic and vital (humanism), sometimes tranquil
and ludic (the recent rediscovery of art nouveau) – appears
the positive possibility of an invention of rhetoric's that would
provide for different ideological perspectives, or for a continual
reworking of the signs and of the contexts in which they would
acquire meaning."

(Eco 1980, 34)

Creating meaning in design is easily possible within a moment. While change
may be ignored in other professions it is necessary for the designer to designate
no end in time by allowing for the possibility of an undulation of events in one's
work. Allowing then for change to be flexible because ultimately the who to,
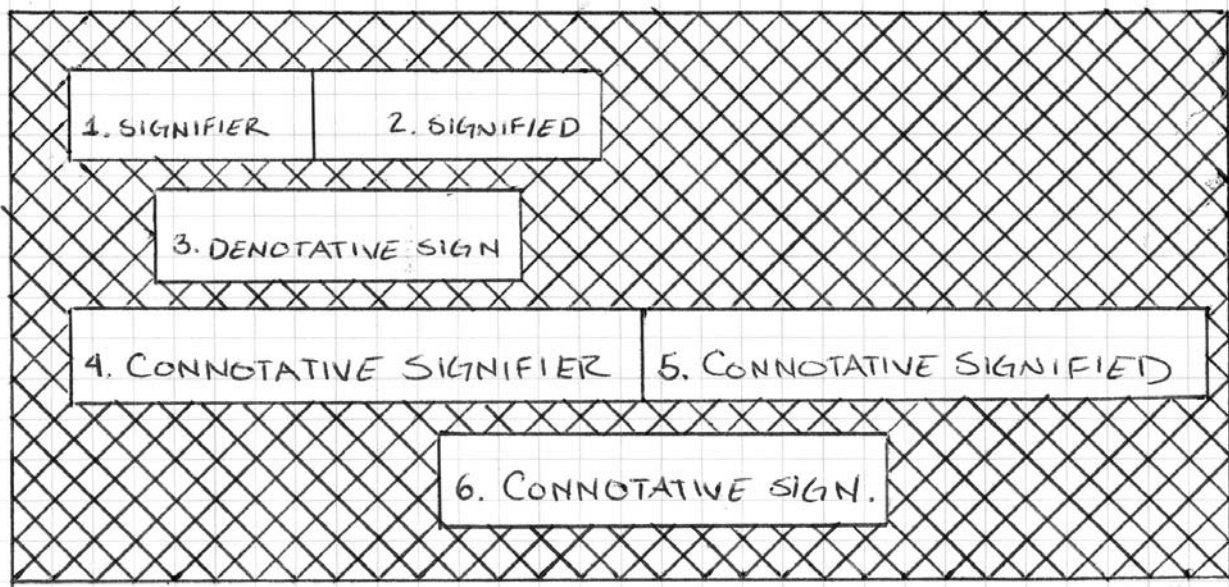the when, and the level of meaningful understanding of the design cannot be
known.

Image

Figure 7: reproduced diagram from (Cobley and Jansz 2004, 51)

In Roland Barthes (1997) articles Semiology and the Urban, and The Eiffel Tower, he speaks of the act of advertising and promotion and how these are ultimately urban signs of a place. These ideas of advertising and place are examples of the connotative and denotative images, and further how these tools of language can be used to manipulate our thinking about what a place is and how it feels. Barthes goes about this analysis of a city by dissecting the denotative-connotative relationship in a questioning fashion. He does this, for the most part, by examining the advertising language of cities, specifically Paris, through his own dissections of semiotics. He breaks up the idea of images into three components. First, he mentions the linguistic, referring to any physical words in the advertisement. This would denote the name of a product but, coupled with other layers of the text it could also connote a general concept. Second, he mentions the coded iconic message, referring to the visual images in the advertisement. And, third, he mentions the non-coded message, referring to the (usually literal) denotative images in the advertisement. It is also understood that each of these is directly related to the society or cultural language (langue) that the advertisement is being sold too (Cobley and Jansz 2004).

Importantly, Barthes moves beyond this parallel thinking and emphasizes the importance of the 'reader' in the process of the meaning's interpretation. He recognizes the importance of the reader, in that, without them the connotation of the sign cannot exist. Barthes produced the following diagram (figure 7) and description to explain what he meant:

> "The denotative sign (3) is made up of a signifier (1) and signified (2).
> But the denotative sign is also a connotative signifier (4).
> That is to say, it is a material substance: only if are in possession of the sign 'lion' is it then possible to have connotations of its pride, ferocity, courage etc.
> And a connotative signifier must engender a connotative signified (5) to produce a connotative sign (6)."
> (Cobley and Jansz 2004, 51)

Moving this thinking into the field of Landscape Architecture, the concepts are not isolated within this field. The thoughts, concepts and moves draw from and refer to other disciplines often which help frame the field itself.

Figure 8: In this advertisement, Barthe's three layers of communication exist. First with the literal message of visiting Wards Island Beach. Second, the coded message of the place being a romantic location for couples to spend time. And third, the image of the beach and water.

When we refer to the meaning of Landscape Architecture we also refer to all things which relate to those spaces, beyond the literal appearance of its physicality, including all those in connection with it in which significance and value may correspond; including their purpose(s), conception(s), idea(s) and belief(s). (Broadbent, Bunt and Llorens 1980)

Barthes (1997) includes in his thinking how a city (and presumably its individual landscapes) are a discourse. And this "discourse is truly its own language: the city speaks to its inhabitants, we speak our city, the city where we are, simply by living in it, by wandering through it, by looking at it " (Barthes, Semiology and the Urban 1997, 168). The problem that arises for Barthes, when we attempt to dissect this discourse is not having a pre-existing metaphor. With other branches of semiotics (film, plants, clothing etc.) we would normally have a form of metaphor from which to work. To deal with this problem, Barthes (1997) confined himself to three remarks, not necessarily having a direct connection to landscape semiology, but they could help direct one's thinking by helping to draw a summary sheet of current thinking, which often does not reflect the historical semiological thinking of Saussure and Peirce[1].

Barthes first remark states that symbolism is no longer relevant today as a relationship between signifiers and signifieds. Barthes felt that society has fundamentally changed in a way that causes the list of signifieds and their corresponding signifiers to be no longer relevant as they once were. Additionally, one to-one symbolism is a dead lexicon and currently discredits the word symbol, which until this time was the relation of signification dependent on the presence of the signified. This is in large part arises as a problem because of a desire to expand the current significations of the exterior; which is almost an impossible task. Placing on one side of a chart signifiers and on the other side the signifieds is silly. A two dimensional chart such as this would assume that places all function similarly as they have for centuries (and we may not know if they ever did function this way). While the basic functions may be the same, specifics will have changed. Any list made to express the functions of an outdoor space will

[1]Peirce was another theorist who, like Saussure, introduced semiological thinking to the world. His system was situated on the existence of a tripartite system, composed of a sign, an object, and an interpretant. Like Saussure his system has helped evolve the field of semiology further. (Cobley and Jansz 2004)

> "constitute only on a extremely elementary level for
> semiological analysis, a level which will probably have to be
> reviewed later: not only because of the weight and the pressure
> exercised by history but because, precisely, the signifieds are
> like mythical creatures, extremely imprecise, and at a certain
> point they always become the signifiers of something else; the
> signifieds are transient, the signifiers remain"
>
> (Barthes, Semiology and the Urban 1997, 169).

This means that anything signified in the landscape will suffer from a superficial overlay. While this may create and express a hierarchy, to determine a center it may result in only concluding that you have found an empty place, necessary for the emergence of the rest. Barthes second remark is that

> "symbolism must be defined essentially as the world of
> signifiers, of correlations, and, especially, correlations that we
> can never enclose in a full signification, in a final signification"
>
> (Barthes, Semiology and the Urban 1997, 170)

Illustrating that any current meaning applied to a form must either retain a level of flexibility in meaning or, be so literal that its meaning cannot change, removing any possibility of future evolution. To do either must be done in more detail than has been orchestrated by previous semiologists. The question arises about how to create a space that is specific but is still flexible to allow for specificity of something else in the future.

One way for this to occur requires the users of the city, to flâner (French verb for a person who strolls casually through the city) their way through life. They must imagine themselves as readers of the city, reading the city like poetry line by line and with each move is a change in line of the poem, allowing the writing to express what the spaces are. We must learn to become readers of the city for the city to mean.

The semiotic approach sees communication as a mutual negotiation of meaning rather than a linear transfer of messages from transmitter to receiver. Thinking this, then what exactly did the semiotic theorists Saussure, Peirce, and Barthes mean? What is the sign, the signifier, and the signified in the context of landscape architecture? I have started to examine the strengths and weaknesses of semiotic analysis. I hope to communicate my analysis through an overlay of landscape language. Barthes third remark is regarding how the signified is always a signifier for another signified and on and on. When we attempt to examine these we realize that each is connected to another infinite chain of metaphors whose signified is always changing meaning or evolving into a signifier. In his attempt at a semantic approach, Barthes (1997) urges us to explore the notion of the play of signs, to understand the structure of place, but knowing this, never trying to fill in the hypothetical structure with permanent meaning. Along with this, we must know that simply by inhabiting space, an implied significance has been given to the signification.

Representation

Part of the problem with any strategy for exploring form and meaning in the landscape is directly connected with representation of its relationships. Meaning ultimately comes down to communication, and this means that it must stem from language (but all language, not just spoken and written). But the question then becomes what is language? And, if it is necessary to create a new language to explore the meaning in design or, if are able to use existing language to express our feelings in a significant way.

Anne Whiston Spirn's writing in Language of Landscape (1998) claims that the 'landscape has all the features of language.' Now I am unsure if her claim is relevant, as she structures her argument around the framework of the rules of grammar and oral language.

> "words and parts of speech-patterns of shape, structure, material, formation, and function. All landscapes are combinations of these. Like the meanings of words, the meanings of landscape elements (water, for example) are only potential until context shapes them. Rules of grammar govern and guide how landscapes are formed, some specific to places and their local dialects, others universal. Landscape is pragmatic, poetic, rhetorical, polemical. Landscape is scene of life, cultivated construction, carrier of meaning. It is language."
> (Spirn 1998, 15)

The act of writing the landscape is done through design, by taking features that exist in the world and emphasizing them, embellishing them; or taking components of a design like a shallow hill and making it steeper to create a harder climb. Though it seems that Spirn is speaking of design simply as what design is, and not how these individual components of design combine together to create anything meaningful. She speaks in a way validating all landscapes, making them all equally important and emphasizes that it is only once someone explains what they are that you feel then a referred (from the person who explained it) significance. Because of the cognitive components to landscape language, it may be necessary to ensure components on their own can be appreciated in solitude from one another.

Spirn's comparisons of landscape to poetry or other writing is very beautiful, and like a classic piece of literature, landscapes will last. Similarly, most people will not read a classic piece of literature, nor would many who come across a piece of landscape authorship be able to fully appreciate its value, its meaning, or its

consequence till it is validated, explained, and understood. So possibly it is more important, as Treib remarked, to design places of 'pleasure' before we concern ourselves with language, as definitions and meaning accrue on the landscape like a 'patina' over time.

And still, Spirn's advocacy for the profession of Landscape Architecture is very strong, and not necessarily for the communication of language and meaning to 'designed' places but to the verification and understanding of what landscape is, how it functions, and as a result its meaning.

> "Not to know, and to confuse landscape and nature, is to equate
> landscape with mountain, meadow, farm, and country road,
> but not highway or town. Yet a designed urban park is no less
> a landscape than a planted cornfield, the island of Manhattan
> no less a landscape than its Central Park...To see landscape as
> mere scenery gives precedence to appearance at the expense
> of habitability and risks trivializing landscape as decoration-
> landscaping-concealing the significance of sense other
> than sight and of parts hidden from view, the deep context
> underlying the surface. To call some landscapes natural and
> others artificial or cultural misses the truth that landscapes are
> never wholly one or the other."
>
> (Spirn 1998, 24)

While Spirn's focus is on the labeling of landscape features, and how these can be mapped out in a progression similar to traditional language structures, Corner (Representation and Landscape 2002) focuses on the origins of landscape design through the representation of place in our imaginations; our scoring, our speaking, our drawings. Which is ultimately where built landscapes originate; that is the designer's head, which is then represented on paper (usually) in a drawing. The reason for this being of concern is because the building, the experience, and the function of the landscape are ultimately practised by non-Landscape Architects, and it is these people who contribute, (often creating) to a places meaning. So it is important to consider, how then a place could potentially be communicated to these people before a design is constructed. The problem with understanding the quality of a place arises with the simplicity in which artistic media take in comparison to the 'real' landscape.

"This problem of distance and indirectness is further complicated by the apparent disparity or incongruity between drawing and landscape. While the preliminary sketch bears an obvious and similar relationship to the work of painting and sculpture, a drawing, any drawing, is radically dissimilar from the medium that constitutes the lived landscape. The disparity between the phenomenon of drawing and that of the landscape means that there is often a discrepancy between what is represented and what gets built. It is significant – but not necessarily disadvantageous – that the nature and embodied meanings of drawings and landscapes belong to different worlds, as do their modes of experience."
   (Corner, Representation and Landscape, in Swaffield 2002, 145)

Exploring the way that the landscape is represented – plan, sketch, elevation, painting etc – influences the resulted landscape that is designed. Considering the relationship between the end results of the design with the initial conception of the drawing is an interesting relationship, though I do not necessarily feel that it is a literal relationship between drawing and form and Corner (2002) does not feel this way either. This is because of the variety of drawing types employed in the development of the landscape design – conceptual, representative, construction – and how these different types of drawing are each destined for different ends. That is, a drawing is often produced in order to communicate a specific concept, or component of a design to a specific person, and that drawing does not need to actually communicate to anyone other than the person for whom that drawing was destined; while the landscape itself (the physical one) does communicate and engage with everyone (unless it is a intentionally personal private yard, but these are often designed and used by the same person and evolve over time). Then, similarly to Corner's argument, what is the relationship between, the meaning and the space.

"A more significant type of drawing in landscape architectural design might arise from a twofold use of the graphic medium: one is the speculative function, and the other is the demonstrative function. In the first, drawing is used as a vehicle of creativity, and in the second, drawing is used as a vehicle of realization. Both types of drawing work by analogy and occur alongside one another simultaneously."
   (Corner, Representation and Landscape, in Swaffield 2002, 159)

So then, it may be possible to begin the analysis of landscape meaning with the conceptual drawings, and attempt to construe or build up the meaning from those. However, even if this was completed, a problem is still present with the timing of such a process. That is, time does change a place once it is constructed, and a drawing is a never changing representation, although the connotation of a drawing may change over time. And further, a never changing image of a place that at the time of its conception was not complete. Possibly, for a drawing to be imbedded with the meaning of that place it represents, it needs to be completed during the time of construction, and never ending, till the point of that places demolition. Layer upon layer the drawing would change, building itself like a composer writes music, listening to the music as they write, hearing the notes at the same time as writing them on the paper. A final musical composition would be similar to a set of as-built drawings, which even still are only accurate within a single moment in time.

So the relationship between the paper and the space is important, though only in the communication of a single moment, to a single audience. Representation of a place should also be never complete, as the place, its ideas, its meaning, and its form is ever changing; and similarly a representative drawing of that place should also be ever changing. Any drawings which I complete here, are only complete in this moment; as my thoughts and conceptions of what a place could be in a single moment in a time and in a meaning.

Figure 9: A drawing of meaningful places to me.

Meaningful Places

My interest in the underlying meaningful (positive gut feeling)in the design of spaces must be determined equally by what it is that the landscape is saying to me as it is the landscape performing this message. It is not often that a place is able to invoke a very true feeling of something significant to me, but when it does, the message is powerful and all too true as being something that is worth studying.

Alain de Botton, in The Architecture of Happiness (2006) speaks of the possibility of starting the conversation with buildings (I would state equally with landscapes) by visiting a museum of modern art.

> "We will, of course, run a risk if we spend extended periods
> analyzing the meanings that emanate from practical objects.
> To be preoccupied with deciphering the message encoded in
> a light switch or a tap is to leave ourselves more than usually
> vulnerable to the commonsensical scorn of those who seek
> little from such fittings beyond a means of illuminating their
> bedroom or rinsing their teeth…To inoculate ourselves against
> this derision, and to gain confidence in cultivating a contrary,
> more meditative attitude towards objects, we might profitably
> pay a visit to a museum of modern art. In whitewashed galleries
> housing collections of twentieth-century abstract sculpture, we
> are offered a rare perspective on how exactly three-dimensional
> masses can assume and convey meaning –"
>
> (Botton 2006, 78)

He moves through these sculptures, examining their presence and relationships to emotions and previous memories, each we can relate to something from our lives. Although some of these observations can be literal, and seem superficial; and may then, not be as meaningful or significant as a feeling of moving through an open field or sitting in a city park. Botton expresses that if an object has a hint of a living thing we will create that connotation in our heads. It does not take a very literal relationship for these types of understandings to be created in our heads. The difference between that of a painting, a building or a landscape would not exist; that is, if the same expressive capacity was present. These emotional responses can also be removed from direct reasoning (like the previous) and honor what we would reveal as beautiful. Because the component of something that we feel is beautiful would potentially then exist in anything else we also think of as beautiful. And even though we each have our own preferences for beauty, fundamental relationships between abstract form

and literal object can be understood equally by all.

These living forms can be found in many places, our furniture, our utensils, our lawns, our etc. We define many forms and shapes with these emotional definitions. A table can have the legs of a fawn, a fork has the strength of a beetle, and a lawn can have the undulating surface so often related to the feminine form.

And these personalities are present in so many aspects of our lives. Typefaces have personalities. I have a large collection on my computer, from which I select an individual typeface to express the qualities of the document I am composing.

> "The straight back and alert upright bearing of a Helvetican 'f'
> hint at a punctual clean and optimistic protagonist, whereas his
> Poliphilus cousin, with a droopy head and soft features, strikes a
> sleepier, more sheepish and more pensive note."
>
> (Botton 2006, 86)

Botton (2006) argues that this judgment of what qualities an object potentially holds (and the apparent difference if that object is; here or there; rotated or removed, etc.) can be directed back to our relationships with people. The forms we cherish most are related to our personalities, helping express our observations and understandings of others emotions based on their facial or bodily movements. It is our examination of these innate qualities that awards us the ability to be so very aware of the environments we inhabit. And similarly, why when we design, we obsess over the most miniscule of details in the environments we create. But it is also the larger scheme, the grandiose of the landscape that is often credited for evoking these emotions. How then does this happen, for meaning could be created from the sum of its parts, but to examine these components individually could be an endless task, and still not result in a complete understanding of the whole.

It is suggested that when we dislike an environment (which could be the whole, or part), our dismay of that place arises because of the person we intuitively relate to it (Botton 2006, 88). It could then be commented to the opposite; that places we admire, or enjoy can then be associated with the people we greatly admire; presumably, friends, family and maybe celebrities. And perhaps this is why we so often allude to these places with humanistic terms; laughing hills, dancing leaves, strong stance,… My question is then, how does one create a space that can reflect the viewer's positive relationships?

Reflection

After I design, I reflect upon my own work, piece by piece, line by line, pondering each transparent decision I had made. And though it is impossible to recall every source of inspiration and instruction, I can remember the advice and spaces that seemed to me as revelations: places of beauty and experience, but also books, instructors, and students.

When I was between my second and third year of design school, my studio instructor assigned a one day project on the representation of signs we have seen in our travels throughout France and the United Kingdom over the previous few weeks. We were supposed to reflect on what we had seen, where we had gone and represent in black paint every reference to something, which was a symbol for something else, and then draw some conclusion of which could then direct our thinking about moving through space.

It all seemed so dull, so mechanical
I felt I was way beyond this kind of thinking. Without this kind of reflective, pointless exercise, I already knew that signs existed everywhere I went. After all, I was drawing the alphabet.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

Still, I liked my studio instructors, and I wanted to please them. Drawing the alphabet morphed into putting splotches of paint and globbing it on the paper; creating connections and trails between the letters , a connecting trail and story of where I had been. Even if I was the only one, at that moment, who knew what each of those marks meant, it allowed me to start looking for signs; I found them everywhere, telling me stories everywhere I went.

The crack in the wall, the bumps in the gravel road, the squeaky wheel on the bicycle…

Before this assignment, before my first international flight the sign language of this place was preparing me, consciously or unconsciously, for what I was going to experience. It asked me to consider what it was to be present or absent, aware or obtuse, to observe the signs and warnings, to accept or deny what was around me.

Roland Barthes (Barthes, The Eiffel Tower 1997) alludes to these types of observations and relationships in society in terms of advertising all of which,

can be defined by the sincerity or falseness with which signs are communicated, subtly or insistently, on the subject of place, and philosophical differences between this and that place: All of which surface in advertisements about tourism. The connotative abilities of advertisement agencies are able to create images (signs) of a place before we even visited it, which could be falsely manipulated (or not) by a signs (images, advertisements) denotative qualities.

I enjoyed this game I created of tracing the patterns of letters and making connections of place between them. It could be seen as cracking a new code, or developing a new language, that I was the sole creator, a puzzle that was emerging on my paper that I was the only one able to decipher. I felt although I was engaging with the paper, the places, with myself in some multilayered communication, of which I was the author and reader.

After this I believed that I was able to think about space's communicative abilities much more clearly. However, I was only partly correct. Because in fact, I was only relearning to experience place in a way that was once innate, but I had since forgot. In exploration we often forget

 "of the total ignorance of the newborn child and the richness of
the world that a child contacts in the first decade of experience,
and of the power of imagination in childhood, often lost to
adults."

(Hart 1979, 3)

Even before we learn of the cognoscente movements through space, the process of moving on our parents shoulders, holding a guardians hand, or running free on our own, it is an experience we form understanding with; one stride at a time, one blink at a time, in which paying attention to whatever is occurring is creating a response to ourselves, creating our only understanding of that place. One response at a time is how we understand place, which seems only fitting, because it is how the spaces we move through are designed in the first place.

The more we experience, the more frequently we can discover how different components add up into a space that has meaning. The more we experience, the more we understand, the more likely we are to discover new ways to experience. Each experience is customized to the reason why we are exploring a specific place.

When I first began exploring, the thrill of this brand new freedom was all I desired; the physical nature of the outdoors, and then creating meaningful relationships in nature. But soon after my start with exploring I began wondering what else these places I would regularly explore had the potential to be. I needed further stimulation, entertainment, inventions, even information and beauty. I examined, I dissected, I ran and stopped, and looked. Stopped altogether and daydream, start over, and rediscover. I explored many spaces as a child, and recently I find myself returning to the same places years later to see what I may have missed, or the way in which time and age has affected my understanding.

As a child I was always drawn to outdoor spaces comprised of rocks and trees; that of the Canadian Shield. I enjoyed trading the familiar world of designed schools, homes, and parks for the more subtle world of large granite outcroppings, large poplar, birch, and pine trees, moss covered bogs, and beaver ponds emerging from out of nowhere. I would have gladly spent a day in the forest, rather than spending it on a manicured lawn. I loved trees, I loved rocks, I loved moss I loved spaces where my imagination could expand towards an alternative reality. As a child I loved to imagine and pretend, and like most children I would "reveal a remarkable ability to recall in great detail the physical qualities (particularly color) of places within their everyday environment..." (Hart 1979, 333).

It is my imagination that allows me, even still, to protest against the way that we are being told what is true and what is false, what is real and what imagination is.

Perhaps my need for independent exploration has something to do with how I experience space, and ultimately imagine the possibilities for a design outcome, one element at a time: the perception of time and space, technology and possibility, and of course the imbedded messages that are always connected to these in every design. I like spaces with shifts in scale like the granite outcroppings, spaces with no permanent usage like my childhood playground, spaces whose meaning and intelligence don't automatically exclude them from the enjoyment of most people. Each step I would take in these spaces would be another imaginative experience to add to my future design database.

There are places that I have been, and revisited, in a way, to rediscover my dependable places of imagination and understanding. I explore addictively, constantly.

Once when I was traveling with co-workers to a conference I was caught staring out the car window and mumbling to myself. My boss pleaded with me to discover what I was doing, but I was too embarrassed to express that I was imagining being somewhere else and ignoring him. I experience place how I think it should be, thinking of the possibilities, the meaning of it, how I feel that place wants to be used keeping within cultural normality.

 Along with the start of my design education, came a more pressing desire for me to imagine and explore on my own. Escape from the everyday. I took more walks alone, more secret, and more personal; allowing me to imagine a change or process the day I just had in a place I could enjoy. It was always a mystery how long I could stay captivated by my mind, allowing it to play, and keep myself away from somewhere I had to be.

I wandered as much as I could. Wandering is like a bad habit, with similar elements of addiction. I consider myself lucky to have good teachers, and friends who were also wanderers. The places I would discover became further from home, more exciting, more extensive. I am vaguely aware of how the power of these places and wanderings have translated into meaning something, but only slightly, and only as much as, a particular space may allow to occur.

Strategies for design

Possibly a starting point for design would be by determining how a place reflects positive attributes that we denote in our current lives, and then slowly allowing that idea to morph into what we desire. Something as simple as a line on a piece of paper relates to emotional qualities, "a straight example will signal someone stable and dull, a wavy one will appear foppish and calm, and a jagged one angry and confused" (Botton 2006, 89). This simple exploration of lines is significant, as it is a line that we often start with when designing. Could it be so simple that the lines we design with reflect a similar emotional quality that a completed design would evoke?

It is our relationships (and understandings) of the meaning in previous spaces that helps us understand the next space that we read. After all, we are a species of memory, and we can only respond to something that we have previously been introduced to. When engaging in physical places, often it is the meaning of past memories (even slight details) that triggers our memory to a possible understanding of what that place means; reading it as something significant. Much like my memories of cutting wood are evoked by walking through an aspen forest; it does not necessarily matter where that forest is, its size, or similar details, only that it holds aspen trees, the sound of a chainsaw, or the wet smell of fresh cut wood.

> "The sameness of the American landscape overwhelms and liberates you from any sense of place. Familiarity makes you feel everywhere at home. A sense of time passing makes you gradually increase your speed."
>
> (Jackson 1994, 152)

It is the combination of multiple layers of meaning, some very minor, and some major that allows us to reflect and understand. And ultimately think of a place as beautiful. I am unsure as to what beauty means to different people, and I am unsure if this needs to be known, but what is important, is to create a place that can be related to. It is the combination of understanding and a conglomeration of multiple components, all in balance that allows us to enjoy, read, and relate to spaces.

> "To call a work of architecture or design beautiful is to recognize it as a rendition of values critical to our flourishing, a transubstantiation of our individual ideals in a material medium."
>
> (Botton 2006, 100)

It is curious to contemplate that this defense of what a space means is a relatively new venture in the field of Landscape Architecture.

> "During the 1980s, declarations of meanings began to accompany the published photos and drawings of landscape designs. At conferences, landscape architects would describe their intentions, their sources, and what the designs meant."
> (Treib, Marc in Swaffield 2002, 91)

This is interesting how it was at this time that this became the 'in' thing to do. Perhaps it was the goal of a young crowd of Landscape Architects to try to communicate something intuitive. Or maybe it was felt, at that time that a justification was in order as part of the communication of what was created: Or prior, to sell an idea to a person putting out the money to build the design. Of course it is always possible that those involved in this early movement were only trying to create changes in the everyday. And by creating a 'memory catalogue' of these pleasurable spaces, those designers were able to understand what was making those places pleasurable, able then in future years to pull from this established catalogue to imbue meaning on other spaces.

In Treib's Must Landscapes Mean (2002) he articulates five separate methods for understanding/designing with meaning; the neoarchaic, the genius of the place, the zeitgeist, the vernacular landscape, and the didactic. I am not convinced that these five classifications to landscape design need to operate, or be used separately. I think that they should each be able to operate within a single design, ensuring that each (and its connected multi-layered elements) create elements of meaning for everyone. I feel this way because much meaning that is construed on a design is not always implied in the meaning to everyone, that it can be at times negotiated, and debated in your mind to decipher your own implied meaning of the space. What is important however, is ensuring that the reader of the space has the desire to enjoy and spend time there, rather than glancing to it from afar (unless that is the purpose) or avoiding it all together.

Neoarchaic: "A sort of primitivism constituted one attempt to retrieve that which had been lost at some unspecified point along the way to modernity. Borrowing from approaches that ranged from the body works of Ana Mendieta to the stone markings of Richard Long to the theories of entropy proffered by Robert Smithson, landscape architects began to reconfigure the land in a manner we could term Neoarchaic" (Treib, Marc, in Swaffield 2002, 92)

The genius of the place: "…to consult the spirit of the place as a means of rooting landscape design in a particular locale. A garden was not a universal concept to be applied uninflected upon all sites. Instead, the garden revealed the particularities of its place as well as the profundity of the garden's idea." (Treib, Marc, in Swaffield 2002, 92)

The zeitgeist: "a belief in the Zeitgeist (that is, "the spirit of the times") as a determining force for any aspect of contemporary culture." (Treib, Marc, in Swaffield 2002, 94)

The Vernacular Landscape: "The vernacular is a rich source of materials and forms; after all, it constitutes the "real" world in which we dwell…The vernacular environment is treated by designers as a quarry for raw materials to be reconfigured and thus transfigured." (Treib, Marc, in Swaffield 2002, 95)

The Didactic: "The Didactic approach dictates that forms should tell us, in fact instruct us, about the natural workings or history of the place." (Treib, Marc, in Swaffield 2002, 95)

Even with this 'formal' structuring of five design approaches to how meaning can help inspire a design, the concept of approaching design with only a single strategy is skeptical. Each has its own issues associated with it, but that is not the problem I have, the issue that I have with this type of rigid set of definitions is regarding how the meaning behind a design (even when these methods are clearly used) will be understood. Treib (in Swaffield 2002) has this same problem with his own system. And he openly states that users of the space will only understand the relationships if they have "sufficient experience in common" (97) with the design. I would agree with this statement, but I also wonder if one or more of these approaches could be combined with those of

Alain de Botton's study of the how buildings speak (Botton 2006).
Treib speaks more of the need for the creation of the pleasurable space. And that same goal is ultimately what Botton is speaking of as well. However, Treib does not determine how this should be achieved, and Botton is somewhat vague on the issue, only implying that the possibility of relating one's personal experience with a place is where that feeling of the 'pleasurable' or 'distaste' would come from. I do not necessarily disagree with either of these theorists, I do however still have a curiosity where that 'gut feeling' of what makes a positive space comes from.

Indeed a well designed space has certain connotations to it; but does it not 'feel' that the spaces we enjoy have a greater rooting than just those of the function, the traffic flow, the facades, and the colors?
How is it that a landscape form can hold meaning that contributes to experience?

> "So in the long run it is that recurrence of certain days, certain seasons that eventually produces those spaces and structures we now think so essential. I believe we attach too much importance to art and architecture in producing an awareness of our belonging to a city or a country, when what we actually share is a sense of time. What we commemorate is its passing; and we thus establish a more universal historical bond and develop a deeper understanding of our society."
> (Jackson 1994, 162)

Balancing the separate interrelationships of what is a form, how that contributes to its meaning to result in a particular experience has been the focus of this practicum. In this next section it is my attempt to outline a range of perspectives and design strategies presented by different professionals. Upon some of my initial explorations and understandings of what the discipline is (to designers), I discovered that the purpose is to create meaningful landscapes. Meaningful in the way that the designer "orders landscape(s) in a way that expresses particular ideas or concepts that will be meaningful to those who experience it" (Swaffield 2002, 73). Traditionally this ordering would have been done through shifting the landscape plane, but even this notion has shifted through the development of minimal landscape interventions; often associated with reframing the way we view the landscape. In the debate of meaning in the landscape I have found that two branches of the discussion exist; one which questions the possibility of creating meaning and the other is about how to allow meaning to develop through use and time.

"This has been dealt with in subtly different ways. Most
fundamentally, there has been a shift over time from a
focus upon how landscape might express some aspect of a
dualistic relationship between nature and culture, toward
the conceptualization of landscape existing within a field of
relationships, involving both nature and culture, but that also
allows a wider range of possibilities."

<div align="right">(Swaffield 2002, 73)</div>

Strategy 1

Olin, Jellicoe, Fairbrother, Condon, and Walker each argue that meaning should
focus on creating something significant; evolving from an understanding of the
qualities of human experience.

Laurie Olin, in Form, Meaning, and Expression (2002) puts forward an argument
that the primary framework for meaningful experience is nature. This is argued
through the examination of historical gardens from the French and English
landscape traditions, such as Blenheim Park and Chantilly. He illustrates how
it is the 'natural' elements in these gardens that help create the experience of
the place, and the objects that are placed within are mere accents to a greater
whole. This idea contrasts that of Geoffrey and Susan Jellicoe (2002) who try
to prove the existence of that one 'thing' that alludes to landscape architecture
as the meaningful middle between us and it. They reference the shift of
time through the medieval town through to the American grid and through
to a painting. Each of these, it is claimed, contributes to the landscape as
'meaningful infrastructure.

"For the first time in history, the shape of the world that
is unfolding expresses collective materialism rather than
prescribed religion. In the advanced countries, the individual
is evolving his own personal beliefs with his own home. The
greatest threat to his existence may not be commercialism, or
war, or pollution, or noise, or consumption of capital resources,
or even the threat of extinction from without, but rather
the blindness that follows sheer lack of appreciation and the
consequent destruction of those values in history that together
are symbolic of a single great idea."

<div align="right">(Jellicoe and Jellicoe, in Swaffield 2002, 82)</div>

Similarly, Nan Fairbrother's article New Lives, New Landscapes (2002) illustrates the idea of how it is infrastructure that has influenced the 'new industrial' landscape, which seeks meaning; as it is these places that are readily becoming landscape artifacts. And artifacts are no longer useful in our current place in the world. We can relate this idea to how an ancient stone arrow head has now been replaced by carbon or aluminum arrows. In Landscape Architecture this would be similar to how the industrial components have been translated into diving and rock climbing facilities. Design elements change, evolve and become something new when someone takes the time to translate them.

> "...the days of spontaneous rightness are over here as everywhere else in our environment, and that to achieve good landscapes for our new ways of living we must deliberately design new settings to suit our new land-uses. And the past cannot help us. There are no traditions for industrial landscape, nor for mechanized farming, nor pylons in the countryside, nor urban housing in rural areas, nor mass motorized leisure, nor for any of our other new land uses."
>
> (Fairbrother, in Swaffield 2002, 83)

Patrick Condon (2002) examines the nature of space in terms of its volumetric nature; through his understanding of the places through action as the source of experience. It is his opinion that meaningful places don't arise from the placement of object and forms, but from the phenomenological approach of enclosures, which to a degree is a logical argument, as meanings can only communicate within a set boundary (a room, an enclosed landscape, our range of sight and smell...etc). But I question as to how regulating that boundary limits ones design options.

Peter Walker (2002)explores the notion of overcomplicated, cluttered spaces with solutions of minimalist environments, where the individual components and forms of each space can be appreciated and as a result become memorable. This memory then is what creates the space as meaningful. Walker structures his arguments with places of historical importance, which have stood the span of time, which have imbued meaning to them in the form, meaning, and experience. Primarily, he feels it is the importance of ensuring that places are available for 'human congregation' and 'gathering.' But this should not overpower the need for "discovery, repose and privacy in our increasingly bewildering, spiritually impoverished, overstuffed, and undermaintained garden Earth" (Walker, in Swaffield 2002, 88).

Mentioned earlier was Marc Treib's article Must Landscapes Mean? which I feel is a very fresh perspective on how we design place. While he never defines the term of Meaning in his writing, he does this deliberately, as he doesn't think it is necessary. As he comments how it is not necessary for a meaningful experience to arise from the designer's concept, or desired meaning of that place. He also questions whether a set meaning of a particular place can be designed into a place, or whether that designing meaning should even be a desirable action. He does fully admit that in the past (he refers to history because we begin learning by studying historic places), gardens were designed for specific meaning and purpose; though these places were designed by, and for, people of similar social class and understandings. It is Treib's argument that places which exist in contemporary society are not imbued with meaning from their creation, our culture is far too complex, and hold a disarray of understandings from far too many people. But he does claim that meaning builds upon a place like a 'patina,' growing over time. And because of this, it is his claim that we should concentrate our efforts on creating places of pleasure, not those of meaning. It seems that Treib has developed his thinking from theorists of our time like J.B. Jackson. Another could be Edward Relph and his article Place Reclamation (in Swaffield 2002) where he discussed the situation of what place is, and what is a place without meaning. In this essay he discusses the act of an 'environment machine' where places can be created from related factors like economics and usage. Though, even with this type of machine he discusses, he concludes, similarly to Treib, that meaning in these places will emerge over time; adding to it, that it must arise from those people who live and work in them.

> "Genius loci (italics in original text) cannot be designed to order.
> It has to evolve, to be allowed to happen, to grow and change
> from the direct efforts of those who live and work in places
> and care about them. Here, the technical methods employed
> in corporatization and the electronic media are of no value…
> Nevertheless there is an important role for architects, landscape
> architects, planners, and social scientist to play in reclaiming
> and making places. Their task is, first, to develop a sensitivity to
> the attributes of places and then to find ways of initiating and
> directing locally committed developments."
>
> (Relph, in Swaffield 2002, 104)

Meaning in this first strategy evolves through time, situating itself in a design. While a design will have an initial meaningful concept when built, the designer must be aware that meaning will accrue over time, adding new messages, and sometimes taking those created by the designer away. Layered meaning is the result, combining these layers together to allow for a richer, more significant meaning in the design layers.

Strategy 2

Still, some believe that meaning does not accrue over time through the functional relationships of nature and culture, but a more complex relationship of layered meaning. Each of the layers could be examined as a field individually, or together, as writers like Robert Thayer, Catherine Howett, and Peter Jacobs imply. They feel that meaning in the landscape can be understood, and elaborated on.

Robert Thayer in Three Dimensions of Meaning (in Swaffield 2002) puts forward two frameworks for studying meaning in the landscape. The first attempts to show how technology acquires meaning through its existence, but is understood through visual stimulus (usually in contrast with its environment), regardless of knowing its functional needs. However, once function is understood symbolic connections can begin.

> "...each dimension contributes, both individually and perhaps synergistically, to a participant's affective response (italics in original text) to a particular utilitarian or technological landscape, and that by examining each dimension separately and more closely, we can learn much about how we react to the technologically influenced landscapes that form the context of our daily (North) American existence."
>
> (Thayer, in Swaffield 2002, 105)

Thayer's second framework argues that contemporary landscapes enable an inner discomfort of emotions in a tripartite relationship. Between topophilia (love of place), technophilia (love of technology), and technophobia (fear of technology). It is between these three values that people place their value, and relationships to the land; equating layers of that place's meaning.

> "Characterizing the proportional mixture of these three
> attitudes or forces for any landscape can be facilitated by the
> use of a triangle, with topophilia at the top, technophilia at the
> lower left corner, and technophobia at the lower right corner.
> Any landscape in question can be 'located' on a triangle based
> upon the proportion of each of the three generalized attitudes
> embodied in the landscape."
>
> (Thayer, in Swaffield 2002, 106)

By using this tripartite relationship of meaning, Thayer allows meaning to be individual to each person. It is dependent on one's interpretation and beliefs of these three dimensions that allows for the creation of individual meaning for each place by each person. If mapping meaning must be done it makes sense to allow it to be individual to the reader of that space, because as explored earlier, culture, knowledge, age, etc, all equate to different understandings, and thus meanings to different people.   This type of mapping is only valuable, however, to an already existing environment, as it does not help in the creation of new spaces.

 Catherine Howett (in Swaffield 2002)in her broad overview claims that landscape design involves three types of thinking; ecology, semiotics, and environmental psychology. She follows through with this by exploring how it is through the combination of understanding these three individually that we are then able to create meaningful spaces. She begins her discussion by examining the role of ecology in design and how it is the characteristic of a challenging aesthetic that is the positive act of understanding ecology. One's awareness of desiccation, death and decay are all part of the natural cycle of life.

> "...advocates of this new direction defend it by invoking values
> borrowed from more orthodox stylistic traditions, and become
> preoccupied with management devices meant to overcome...but
> when such natural plantings periodically-perhaps seasonally-
> take on an appearance that challenges conventional notions of
> the beautiful or scenic, this transformation ought not to be seen
> as a disadvantage for which their picturesque beauty at other
> phases of growth offers compensation."
>
> (Howett, in Swaffield 2002, 110)

She insists that it is our connection to the earth and personal trap of the picturesque that is holding us back from expanding our understanding of this potentially very meaningful aesthetic. This hold is related to our preconceptions of what the landscape should be. It is only when we disregard our preconceptions of what the environment should be that we can truly engage with the ecology of the place and appreciate what it has to offer.

Though, a cognitive element could enrich the understanding of such a place, and this would be "deepened by increased knowledge of ecological processes" (Howett, in Swaffield 2002, 112) where a new aesthetic could be fostered by an understanding of potential signs and symbols; the realm of semiotics. Howett provides a convincing argument of the benefit of understanding the role of semiotics in design, and she cites others who verify what she claims. However, she doesn't actually provide much insight on how this can be done, or any advice for understanding those signs we observe in the landscape.

> "The truth that we sense in this work is not factual, not quantifiable, not translatable into language, least of all the triumphalist slogans to which a nation's experience of war is often reduced."
>
> (Howett, in Swaffield 2002, 113)

Even here, where she is speaking of the Vietnam Memorial, she alludes to a meaning being present, but never clearly states how that meaning arises. Howett feels that it is the power of an elegant, simple project that has to do with complexity in a message. To do this she Quotes Amos Rapoport and Robert Kantor to defend the ideal that meaning has to do with the complexity of the message, the ambiguity of its form and virtues in the designed environment.

> "The problem with much contemporary architecture and urban design is that it has been simplified and cleaned up to such an extent that all it has to say is revealed at a glance. A range of meanings and possibilities has been eliminated. The loss leads to a loss of interest – there is nothing to divert or to hold one as a result of lowered rates of perceptual inputs. We may visualize a range of perceptual input from sensory deprivation (monotony) to sensory saturation (chaos). In the case of the former, there is not enough to observe, to select, to organize; there is an excess of order. In the latter there is too much to observe, there is no relation between the elements, so that one

is overwhelmed by multiplicity.

> In between, there is an optimal perceptual rate (an 'ideal')
> which enables one to explore, to unfold gradually, to see, to
> give meaning to the environment. One needs to roam back and
> forth – either physically or with one's eye and mind – not taking
> it all in at a glance. If there is no ambiguity, the eye is attracted
> only once and interest is lost. If all is designed and settled there
> is no opportunity to bring one's own values to the forms…"
>   (Rappoport & Kantor, in Howett, in Swaffield 2002, 113)[2]

Howett explores few examples, mainly Maya Lin's design for the Vietnam
Memorial and Richard Haag's Gas Works Park as key examples of designs that
outline what Rapoport and Kantor concluded in their 1967 paper. She admits
fully however, that for landscapes to communicate clearly, the values of a design
must be shared by the culture. Illustrating that discovery and meaning can be
a very clear aesthetic response to the places we inhabit, or presumably design
for. This cultural motif to semiotics enters into the realm of environmental
psychology. Admittedly this third component that Howett discusses is
probably more directive of my study of space. As it is focused on the kinds of
relationships humans can have with environments we create, how we form
them; both the artificial and natural. The work of Yi-Fu Tuan

> "explored the compelling evidence for the essential role
> that culture plays in determining how we read and respond
> to environment; distinct cultures provide, as we know, the
> conceptual structures that imbue environments with meanings
> and values particular to a given group. He described as well a
> class of responses that all human beings seem to share by their
> very nature, such as our tendency to organize phenomena in
> binary pairs or to invent rational justifications for non rational
> drives and aspirations; these physical and psychological
> characteristics of the human community also determined the
> character of the environments we favor."
>   (Howett, in Swaffield 2002, 114-115)

[2]Original quote from – Amos Rapoport and Robert E. Kantor, "Complexity and Ambiguity in
Environmental Design," Journal of the American Institute of Planners 33, no.4 (July 1967): 210

From this, Howett concludes commenting on the work of Lawrence Halprin who she feels embodied her three components for design. It is Halprin's approach of choreographing space, and leaving results open-ended rather than setting goals for him or the design that lead to Howett's conclusion. Howett feels that it is the three contemporary sciences (ecology, semiotics, and environmental psychology) that create a triad able to map out and diagram a new 'cosmology' or approach to design (Howett, in Swaffield 2002).

Peter Jacobs in De/Re/In[form]ing Landscape (in Swaffield 2002) responds similarly to Howett and Thayer by attempting to divide the field of landscape into smaller components, delineating these components into a diagram. His first goal is to reconsider the situation of landscape as it currently sits, nature, culture and technology. Though he feels that sustainability should be the ultimate goal for the profession, as without such a goal, the field will collapse. Jacobs proposes an 'expanded field' for landscape architecture, outlining how it should include knowledge of society, environment and artifact. In particular, he emphasizes the understanding of the landscape as the artifact, not only components of it. Using this as his groundwork, he then outlines his proposal of a new approach for design; requiring it to include social equity, ecological integrity, and a sense of belonging. While he outlines a method for how to utilize this type of thinking, he does comment that it is not useful to locate past work within the field, but to look forward to new work, and its potential for how it can influence change.

> "The search for landscape form imbued with a sense of equity, of integrity, and of belonging; the strategies that we evolve to manage such landscapes; and the knowledge base necessary to inform our judgments and value systems constitute the challenge we face in shaping the landscapes of the expanded field bounded by our artifacts, our society, and the environment."
>
> (Jacobs, in Swaffield 2002, 121)

Meaning in the second strategy arises from the mapping and structuring of the messages of a place. Mapping can be done prior to a design to inspire a response, or after a completed design to analyze its relevance.

Strategy 3

This last component is somewhat of a synthesis of the previous two. Discovering that it is a

> "belief that humans have become alienated by modern technology and culture, and that the fundamental role of landscape architecture is to distill what it is to be human and to seek a greater sense of belonging in the world."
>
> (Swaffield 2002, 75)

To remedy this, a solution needs to put forward that redeems what we are combined with what the landscape is. Through understanding place, it is recognized that the land should have a purpose, and be validated as something significant. Where the land should be the primary concern, not what we place on it, but the land and what it is. It is possible to allow meaning to arise from nothing at all.

Design

In the creation of a design, in part or whole, I must again emphasize that what I have done here is in no way the final solution to any one or all of the problems I have out lined in previous ramblings. It is rather, a design result for me and should be viewed exclusively as my thoughts and ideas about my journey, my wandering, my analysis, and my review of selected semiotic thinking. While this study is largely meant for me, it is also put forward to foster a dialogue between those who are familiar with the subject of semiotics, as well those interested in landscape architecture. It is a starting point, a beginning, an entrance point for a discussion and inquiry to begin. It is most importantly a pathway into thinking for me, the writer, and this path is directive in a way of thinking for me about what a space is, but similarly could be used as an entry point for other places. The groundwork is done, but the thinking and understanding will be different for all.

While I have attempted to remain focused in my writing I have often felt myself passing aimlessly from one subject to another. This is my tool for thought, it works, it generates movement, and somehow I move forward from it. With this type of thinking however, I must emphasize that these thoughts are entirely my own, and nothing I have stated is a solution to any problem; only one of many infinite numbers of solutions to a single problem. I feel that moving from one subject to another (all the while trying to keep it framed in a structured semiotical framework) could be a potential method for designers and thinkers in the future. It works; it connects one with the place.   Although the methods used to explore semiotics have been personal, any reader who desires knowledge of a place should connect with it. Relax, think, and read. The answers will begin to grow.

My solution to this place moves forward in a logical progression, yet it is full of my biases and wants and needs for a semiotic structuring and a search for meaning. The solutions may be broad, yet specific; and in terms of a theoretical approach, very rich (at this moment), and lacking (tomorrow). A traditional practicum would hold a single discursive argument and form an intervention that through its own qualities, are finalized, and appropriate to various degrees. Generally this would be because of the idea of how a design proposal should demonstrate concrete results for a space. This type of resolution results in a solution that is either accepted or rejected. My understanding and approach of a place directs away from this and highlights multiple starting points and various understandings of a single problem. The hope of the results is both positive and negative feedback, creating a discussion of design and opening the possibilities of what could be. The feedback received from the proposal, whether negative or positive will only move the thoughts forward, and allow for a more resolved design to present itself with every revision. That is, if meaningful wanderings continue throughout the process.

Approaching Design

From these three strategies it is my goal to begin to design a space. I will be designing for a space through each of these three theoretical strategies that I have outlined;

Strategy 1 -design accrues meaning through the repeated usage of the people,

Strategy 2 - design meaning should be determined before the design,

strategy 3 - design has very little to do with meaning because it should arise from the site itself with no interference from designers or users of the space.

The designs that arise in the three strategies are personal and much like any design have not come from nothing. They are phenomenological, they are about memory, about trying to deliberately make something that is beautiful (to me and hopefully others as well). And behind this are the methods – highly personal perhaps but reflective and searching for meaning in a place that had previously been put aside by me in my past. Now, 'with new eyes' and a 'deliberate desire' to change something, 'meanings' are encouraged to emerge.

These three strategies are going to emerge in separate designs, each with their own conclusions, resulting in separate meanings and resolutions for a single space.

This all begins with my journey through the site. A place which I would now love to share with anyone who desires to know of the richness of the place I love again. While a personal journey is the tool for how these strategies are emerging, and bringing forward what meaning is for each solution, I would encourage the same approach for any space; it works (and while any strategy will not be appropriate for everyone, those with similar design intentions and approaches to myself will appreciate this one), and allows one to feel closer to the spaces they design.

Figure 10: The selected site for my explorations into meaning in design.

A site

I HEAR THE SOUND OF WATER DROPLETS ECHOING THROUGH MY CAR. I AM
SITTING IN A SELDOM USED GRAVEL PARKING LOT, LOOKING ACROSS THE
STILL WATER TOWARD THE ABANDONED PIER. IT LOOKS SO STRANGE WHEN
BLURRED THROUGH THE FOGGING OF MY WINDOW. I RUB MY SLEEVE OVER
THE GLASS TO SLIGHTLY CLEAR MY VIEW. I SEE THE DEAD GRASS, THE LEAFLESS
TREES, AND THE PILES OF STONE. FROM AFAR IT APPEARS AS THOUGH IT IS A
PLACE NO ONE WOULD EVER MISS IF IT WERE MYSTERIOUSLY PICKED UP AND
DROPPED SOMEWHERE ELSE.

Area

The grounding and contemplation of this project began in the place where I grew up; the city of Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. It all started around the possibility of generating multi-layered organizations and patterns of what the places I have often experienced mean; to me, to others, and how then these feelings stay with me.

My re-interest in the spaces of Thunder Bay started on a visit back to see my family in the summer of 2007. On this visit, I had an interest in visiting many of the natural phenomena which exist in the area surrounding Thunder Bay.
I took this journey in an attempt to move forward from what I felt as the depressing nature of this place. This re-introduction to the area allowed me to realize how to see the beauty in something that I have for too long taken for granted. While I may have been introducing this type of experience into my everyday experience already, I still did not know what I meant by what I was doing, or where these tendencies came from.

I moved slowly on this journey, I walked, I filmed, I listened, I smelled. It was wonderful how it brought me back to the place that I had always known. There was something intriguing about being in a familiar place that at the same time seemed so foreign to me. This was what I decided needed to be known by me, what needed to be experienced and explored. Usually, a person who wants to experience the true nature of a place goes to that place. But for years I had been doing this with my mind, not my body and senses. After a great deal of discussion with my friends, family, and advisors, I settled on a site to expose this philosophical thinking centered on meaning.

Understanding the superficial components of Thunder Bay, I selected a location on the Thunder Bay Waterfront to focus my experiments. It was difficult to settle on this location, as some of the other locations which I would regularly wander through allowed for more immediate ease and comfort, while the waterfront location is one of leftover, of unused, and of remnants. The site is an abandoned industrial pier, which was originally the site for a grain terminal. These mammoth structures stood tall on the water (each silo was 18m x 6m and on a 6x5 grid), communicating the industrial backbone of the water's edge. When the pier was used as a working grain terminal it did not allow for pedestrian access to the location. As a result, integration and experience of that place still does not exist. However, what does exist is remnants of a once industrial place; what once was imbedded into the place. It is these messages that could direct the function of what the place is today. This place has been understood through my own personal experiences of it. They are therefore personal and could be interpreted differently by others. This is part of learned differences in culture, and individual relationship with the land.

Figure 11: A location map of Thunder Bay in CAnada, The location of the pier along the Thunder Bay waterfront and a 360 view of the pier.

Figure 12: Top left - concrete rubble on the site.
Top right - The existing train trestle.
Bottom left - Concrete pier artifacts.
Bottom right - Wooden pier artifacts.

I HAVE A FEAR OF STAYING IN THE SAME PLACE FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE. I DO NOT UNDERSTAND IT, NOR DO I KNOW WHERE IT COMES FROM.
EVEN RECENTLY, STAYING IN WINNIPEG FOR THE PAST SIX YEARS,
I AM GOING CRAZY.

THE FEELING OF HAVING TO GO IS THE SINGLE STRONGEST MOTIVATION TO CAUSE ME TO WANT TO COMPLETE MY PRACTICUM AND GO SOMEWHERE ELSE. I DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHY MY PAST FRIENDS, OR FAMILY MEMBERS ARE FULLY CONTENT IN REMAINING IN THE SAME PLACE FOREVER. FOR THE MOST PART THEY ARE REMAINING IN THUNDER BAY. THE PLACE THAT I LEFT SIX YEARS AGO.

I WAS GOING CRAZY THERE TOO.

LIKE THE WATER, I TOO NEED TO CONSTANTLY MOVE; WHEN I REMAIN STILL I BECOME STAGNANT AND BEGIN TO STINK, GROW BACTERIA, AND WOULD NEED TO BE STERILIZED BEFORE I COULD BECOME USEFUL AGAIN. THIS IS PROBABLY WHY I ALWAYS FEEL A NEED TO BE CLOSE TO THE WATER, NOT THAT I CONSTANTLY WANT TO BE IN THE WATER, JUST TO BE NEAR IT; TO UNDERSTAND ITS MOVEMENT, TO HAVE A FEELING OF POTENTIAL ESCAPE AND THE HOPE TO CAPTURE A MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE.

WHILE CLOSE TO THE WATER, I RECALL MEMORIES OF FISHING, CASTING MY LINE INTO THE WATER AND SENDING IT AS FAR AS IT COULD GO. I REMEMBER ALWAYS BEING TOLD WITH EVERY CAST TO WATCH WHERE MY HOOK IS GOING. APPARENTLY I WOULD ALWAYS COME CLOSE TO CATCHING SOMEONE WITH IT. THE LINE WOULD HIT THE WATER WITH THAT FULLY AWARE 'PLOP' AND THE COMPLETE RELEASE IN TENSION ON THE LINE. WHEN REELING I COULD ALWAYS SENSE THAT SLIGHT RESISTANCE PUT ON THE LINE FROM THE WATER. EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, IF YOU WERE NOT CAREFUL, THE LINE WOULD BECOME CAUGHT IN THE PLANTS GROWING ON THE BOTTOM OF THE LAKE. AS BAD AS THIS WAS, IT WAS ALSO THE MOST LIKELY PLACE TO CATCH THE FISH. A CONUNDRUM I WAS NEVER ABLE TO NEGOTIATE WELL. UNDERSTANDING WHERE THEY LIVE, IMITATING THEIR FOOD, THIS IS HOW ONE CATCHES FISH. CREATING SOMETHING IN WHICH THEY WANT TO CHASE AND CATCH AND EAT. IT IS ARTIFICIAL, BUT IT IS ALL TOO REAL AT THE SAME TIME.

Should I be thinking of my design in this same artificial, yet real, manner?
Catching humans and making them play.

Figure 12: the view of Lake Superior from the Thunder Bay Waterfront. The terrain seen in the image is the break wall.

Location

Growing up in Thunder Bay, in many ways, was like growing up on the ocean. Lake Superior is an endless view of fresh water. It is the largest fresh water lake in the world, and as such, experiences many similar conditions to an ocean. Weather patterns are more extreme, waves are large enough to surf on, and waterfront industry is prominent.

The lake exists largely as a result of the last ice age. As the glaciers receded during the last melt, it left behind a special place. The region is comprised of many lakes of varying sizes, large granite outcroppings, mineral deposits, and flourishing forests (Burwasser 1977, Pye 1969, Tanton 1931). Understanding the place, along with why people inhabited it is all part of its semiotic meaning.

"MY DEAREST MOTHER

…We had rather foggy, dull weather on our way up to Lake Superior and after passing Thunder Cape (which is over twelve hundred feet high), and getting into Thunder Bay, we had a thunder storm which for grandeur I never expect to see surpassed, - the vivid flashes of lightning lighting up the mountains on each side of us and showing the black waves with their white caps around us on every side; then from all sides of us ribbons of fire ran up the sky in all shapes, more like rockets and fireworks, whilst the thunder leaped from the mountain to mountain in a continued roar, like nothing I ever heard before, and followed by a low growl. The lightning I suppose is attracted by the mineral deposits all around Thunder Bay.

Certainly the whole locality is well named. If I were an artist, I would choose Thunder Bay in a storm as the grandest representation of the end of the world. I could not help fancying when I looked over the side of the vessel that I would see old Charon launch his boat from the foot of Thunder Cape.

Thunder Bay would be a magnificent Styx. How I wished that you could have seen that storm. The Captain who went with me to the extreme bow of the vessel, fearing I think that I would tumble over in my anxiety to see all the storm, said that so many people were afraid of thunder and lightning that he thought that he was the only person that admired lightning, but he had seldom seen it so fine as that night and was so glad to see someone else who liked to watch a storm.

The morning was soft and misty when the little tug came to take us up the river to the Fort and everything was so calm and lovely that it seemed impossible that such a storm had raged the night before…"

<div align="right">(Vickers 2007, 3)</div>

I EXIT MY CAR. AS I APPROACH THE SITE I KNOW THIS PLACE, AND ITS INDUSTRIAL PAST, HOWEVER, THIS WOULD NOT BE EVIDENT TO AN OUTSIDER. I KNOW THIS BECAUSE I HAVE SEEN IT BEFORE IT WAS REMOVED[3]. STILL, I CANNOT HELP BUT OBSERVE IT WAS ONCE PART OF THE INDUSTRIAL BACKBONE OF THE CITY. IT IS A POSSIBILITY THAT SOON THE MEMORY OF WHAT THIS PLACE WAS TO THE CITY, TO THE REGION, AND TO LAKE WILL BE LOST.

[3] The elevator was blown up and any salvageable materials removed in the year 2000.

"How does one describe this magnificent body of water, so excellent as to have no equal, so perilous as to offer no refuge, so serene as to deny all risk, so awesome that it compels on to stand and stare at its wondrous [sic] beauty? This beautiful Inland Sea!

Lake Superior is the largest of the world's fresh water lakes. It is wholly enclosed by land, a vast inland lake of fresh water in the wilderness of Canada's Canadian Shield.

It is so massive, so imposing and so renowned, this inland sea! Lake Superior covers an area of 31,500 square miles (81,585 square kilometers). It is 350 miles (563 kilometers) long, 160 miles (258 kilometers) wide and has a volume of 2,860 cubic miles (7,407 square kilometers) of water, 10 percent of the world's fresh water. Its elevation is 602 feet (184 meters) above sea level and its greatest depth is 1,333 feet (406 meters) at its lowest sounding.

The average temperature is 8 Celsius (43 degrees F). Its north shore is over 900 miles (1448 kilometers) long with a total shoreline of 1,500 miles (2414 kilometers). To travel by canoe, as in early days, from east to west was a 1,000 mile (1609 kilometer) journey.

The coastline of this unrivaled lake in many places is sheer cliffs of solid rock that drop 800 feet (244 meters) into the frigid water, yet at the base of many of the shores there runs a thin ribbon of white sand."

(Dean 1992, 1)

The magic of the water is the original reasoning for habitation in Thunder Bay. It is the transitional shipping point between the two halves of the country. Although I believe it is the magic of this place which is the primary reason why people have stayed. Today the waterfront can be characterized by its monolithic concrete structures, rail yards, pulp trucks, stockpiled trees, and shipping boats. It is a place of industry, a place that is uncomfortable to access by pedestrians. The relationship between the water and the city is hidden among these industrial backbones. I am either in the city, or on the water's edge, surrounded by that same industry.

The location for this investigation is amongst this industrial shore. The site location is south of the current public marina, on a vacant pier, where once a grain terminal (Saskatchewan Wheat Pool 6) sat.

Figure 13: Top left - an iron bollard used for tying shipping boats to the pier.
Top right - a view towards the train trestle, showing how high above the ground it rests.
Bottom left - The shoreline around the pier.
Bottom right - The base of the concrete pier artifacts.

Walk Through

AS I WALK SOUTH TOWARDS THE OLD PIER I CAN HEAR THE WHEELS OF THE TRAIN CARS SQUEAKING. FURTHER, BUT STILL FAMILIAR IS THE SOUND OF THE FOUR LANE CORRIDOR RUNNING ADJACENT TO THE RAIL LINES. TRYING TO BUFFER THE NOISE BETWEEN MYSELF AND THESE SOUNDS IS A SMALL WOODLOT. IT IS NOT LARGE ENOUGH, BUT I SUPPOSE AESTHETICALLY IT DRAWS MY EYES AWAY FROM THE ROAD AND TOWARD THE LAKE, AS A RESULT I ALMOST FORGET ABOUT THE NOISE. IT IS WINDY, BUT THE WIND IS WARM. THE WIND IS BLOWING FROM THE SOUTH TODAY, BUT IT COULD JUST AS EASILY BE COLD FROM THE NORTH. IT IS ALWAYS WINDY ON THE WATER'S EDGE.

I AM STANDING ON THE OLD PIER NOW. I PROBABLY HAVE THE BEST VIEW OF THE ENTIRE WATERFRONT FROM THIS LAND. I AM ON A HILL. AS I LOOK BACK TO THE CITY I AM REMINDED OF VIEWS OF THE WATERFRONT FROM DIFFERENT VANTAGE POINTS IN THE CITY. MOST PROMINENT IS HILLCREST PARK, A SMALL PARK WHICH FUNCTIONS AS A LOOKOUT POINT OVER THE CITY.

MOVING TOWARD THE LAKE I AM ATTRACTED BY THE MOVEMENT OF THE WATER, ALTHOUGH THE WAVES SEEM SMALL TODAY. THINKING TO MYSELF I CONTEMPLATE IF I HAVE EVER SEEN THE WAVES ANY LARGER. I SUPPOSE THAT I PROBABLY HAVE NOT AS THE WATER IS CONTROLLED BY THE LARGE BREAK WALL. ANY WAVES CREATED BY TIDAL MOTION OR WINDS FROM THE EAST ARE STOPPED ON THE WALL AND DO NOT BUILD UP ENOUGH MOMENTUM TO CAUSE CONCERN.

I'M SITTING NOW.
THE GROUND IS PRIMARILY INFILL; FINE GRADE GRAVEL. AND KNOWING THAT THIS ARTIFICIAL LAND SITS ON HUNDREDS OF WOODEN PILES I WANT TO DIG. BUT I DO NOT.

INSTEAD I ABSORB SOME HEAT FROM THE SUN. NOTHING IS AROUND TO BLOCK THE SUN. IT IS AS IF I AM IN THE MIDDLE OF A PRAIRIE FIELD; THAT IS HOW OPEN IT IS TO THE SUN. BUT I AM NOT IN THE PRAIRIE; I AM ON THE EDGE OF LAKE SUPERIOR. THE SUN IS NICE; IT WARMS MY BODY EVEN THOUGH THE WIND IS CRISP. THE BALANCE BETWEEN THE TWO IS PEACEFUL...I RELAX.

THIS IS MY FIRST WALK AROUND THE PIER IN MANY YEARS. IT FEELS ALTHOUGH I SHOULD NOT BE ON IT. LOOKING BACK TOWARD MY CAR I REALIZE THAT I

PARKED ADJACENT THE ONCE TUG BOAT PIER. IT IS ALL BUT EMPTY NOW, LIKE A
TEE-OFF AT A GOLF COURSE. AND SIMILAR TO A TEE-OFF, A SINGLE HYDRO POLE
SITS AT THE END OF THE TUG BOAT PIER AS IF THE BALL HAS ALREADY BEEN HIT.

EVERYTHING IS VACANT.

I MOVE ALONG THE NORTH SHORE OF THE PIER NOW. IT IS RUGGED AND
DIFFICULT TO MOVE. THE LONG GRASS COMBINED WITH THE LOOSE GRAVEL
CAUSE SOME DIFFICULTY IN MOVEMENT.

I SLIP...BUT I ONLY SLIDE A LITTLE.
I HEAR SOME PEBBLES HIT THE WATER, AND THEN SOME SOIL SLIDE AFTER IT.
MOVING AROUND THIS LOOSE GRAVEL HILL I COME ACROSS A HORIZONTAL
GROUNDING.

A MESSAGE OF WHAT WAS: SOME OLD CONCRETE PIERS LEFT BEHIND AFTER
THE EXPLOSION. I STAND AFAR AT FIRST, AS IF I AM STARING AT A CEMETERY.
THE CONCRETE GIVES OFF AN EERIE FEELING OF DEATH, AND SOLITUDE. THE
GRIDDED CONCRETE PIERS MOVE IN A LINEAR FASHION FROM THE WATER'S
EDGE INTO THE SITE, GRADUALLY GETTING TALLER.

I CLIMB ONTO ONE OF THE PIERS. IT IS COLD TO SIT ON. A NUMBER OF BIRCH
TREES ARE GROWING BETWEEN THE CONCRETE TOMBS. IT CREATES THIS
GRID OF CONCRETE, TREE, CONCRETE, TREE...IT SOMEHOW MAKES IT MORE
INVITING. AS IF KNOWING THAT SOMETHING LIVES HERE MEANS IT IS OK TO
MOVE CLOSER. I MOVE OUT

TOWARD THE WATER. I TRY TO BALANCE ON THE OLD RAIL LINES STILL LEFT ON
SITE. IT IS DIFFICULT THOUGH, AS TIME AND ABUSE HAVE CAUSED SOME OF THE
TRACKS TO TWIST AND TURN. AT THE END OF THE LINE THE TRACKS STICK OUT
FURTHER THAN THE LAND. I STAND. AT THE END OF THE PIER I SEE REMNANTS
OF OLD WOODEN DOCK PILINGS. EACH POKES ITS HEAD OUT OF THE WATER, AS
IF IT NEEDS A BREATH OF AIR, THOUGH THIS BREATH IS CAUSING THEM TO ROT.
IT IS FUNNY HOW IT WANTS TO BREATH, SIMILAR TO SMOKERS WHO KNOW
THEY ARE SLOWLY KILLING THEIR LUNGS. THE SAME IS TRUE FOR THE POSTS.
THE WATER MOVES IN AND OUT...IT TOUCHES THE TIPS OF MY SHOES, BUT I DO
NOT GET WET.

I AM SHOCKED AT HOW THE SITE OPENS UP ONTO THE WATER...IT JUST DROPS OFF, AND THERE IT IS. MOVING ACROSS THIS SIDE OF THE SITE IS INSPIRING. THE VIEW OUT TO THE WATER IS ENDLESS...BEYOND THE BREAK WALL THAT IS. BUT STILL, IMPRESSIVE. BEHIND ME LIES THE RUBBLE LEFT BEHIND FROM THE MONOLITHIC GRAIN TERMINALS THAT ONCE FILLED THE SITE. THESE ENORMOUS BLOCKS OF CONCRETE WERE LEFT AT CONSTRUED ANGLES, AND ARE NOW USED AS THREE DIMENSIONAL CANVASES FOR STREET ARTISTS.

THE MOST STRIKING FEATURE ALONG THIS SIDE OF THE SITE IS THE ORIGINAL TRAIN TRESTLE. I WANT TO CLIMB IT, BUT I CANNOT. IT IS TOO LARGE AND COVERED IN CREOSOTE. IT EXTENDS INTO THE WATER, AND WOULD PROVIDE ME, WHAT I IMAGINE, COULD BE A WONDERFUL VIEW, BUT PERHAPS IT WOULD SHOW NOTHING MORE THAN WHAT I CAN CURRENTLY SEE AS I AM ALREADY ABOVE ANYTHING I WOULD WANT TO VIEW. I NOTICE HOW THE DOCK'S REFLECTION IS CAST ONTO THE WATER. THE CONSTANT WAVES WILL NOT LET IT STAND STILL. I THINK THE PIER WANTS SOMEONE TO DANCE ON IT. AFTER ALL IT IS DANCING ITSELF. BUT MAYBE IT IS A SOLE PERFORMER, AND DOESN'T WANT INTERFERENCE.

TO THE SOUTH OF THE DOCK IS THE CONCRETE PIER THAT ONCE PROVIDED ACCESS TO THE LARGE BOATS COLLECTING GRAIN FROM THE TERMINAL. STUDDED ALONG THE PIER ARE THE LARGE IRON BOLLARDS FOR THE BOATS TO TIE THEIR ROPES. STILL INTACT, THEY RUN THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF THE SOUTHERN EDGE.

FROM THE CONDITION OF THE PIER CURRENTLY (ALMOST LIKE A BLANK SLATE), IT APPEARS THAT A NEW IDEOLOGY (LANGUAGE) HAS BEEN THRUST UPON IT, AND WHILE ELEMENTS STILL EXIST, THEIR PLACEMENT AND USAGE HAS BEEN ALTERED TO A POINT WHERE THEY ARE HARDLY RECOGNIZABLE.   AND IN A SENSE, THIS NEW LANGUAGE HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THAT PLACE.

As a place that has been left unattended for some time, it has developed (adapted) new uses; however the place as a whole gives a feeling of autonomy, a vastness, a blank stare from the land to the viewer. In terms of meaning and language a blank place questions whether or not it is necessary for material or culture, or anything for that matter to be present to allow for a meaning to be inlayed onto it. What comes first, the meaning or the function?
The existing use of this place is a shipping pier. The act of shipping is a use, but also a function, an event, and a program. These were the pier's past functions (primary and secondary exist within these). The pier is the artifact, it has relics within it and they exist now without any specific use (function, event or program) assigned to them. In the past, this pier was categorized, understood, and referenced (mentally) from a list of functional elements understood by the reader. Key to existence is change, and adapting to change is required for evolution to occur. But part of change is a reallocation of language terms. Meaning that, once this place was a shipping pier, and now it _____. Whatever this new blank is, allows the space to change, and it is only after a reallocation of terms that a place can be understood in its new function. Language is only so diverse, and it takes time for jumps in meaning to exist. Usually places are constructed in a specific way for a specific function, change reallocates these functions, and these functions then become engrained in an understanding of the place. These past messages can be retained or lost, dependent on the cultural language, understanding, and sophistication of the reader.

Even when an individual reader of space does not understand the meaning a space holds, that does not conclude that particular place does not have meaning. A place without meaning would be a place without function, and a place without function cannot exist. Simply the act of existing encompasses function, and function has meaning.   A place may not be needed, but it cannot be meaningless. It cannot lack language, or a method to speak, to display, to expose itself in poetic resilience.

Jaques Derrida's concept of deconstruction challenges the concepts of set meanings in the environment. He feels that the signifier, and the signified are not always closely linked. He communicates that it is a flexible relationship where signifiers become signifieds and then other signifiers, and then possibly back. Resulting in a message that is never final, messages transition from one another, creating a never ending chain. This chain is how we live, adapting to changes in the everyday. Without this chain the everyday would exist like

reading the same book over and over, knowing what is on the next page before you turn it. Derrida comments on the relationship of the postmodern era in regards to this never ending chain. He compares the idea to a collage, and how the collage requires audience participation to evolve its meaning, this then results in the reduction of ownership by the author (Ellen 1996). Marc Treib (in Swaffield 2002) comes to a similar conclusion in his article Must Landscapes Mean where he feels the most important component is for a place to be pleasurable. Similarly to Treib, Anne Whiston Spirn in her book The Language of Landscape (1998) feels that it is a reader's time spent with a landscape that makes it meaningful to that reader, who can then communicate that meaning to another. It is possible then, for meaning to not be the most important component of a design (not past or current meaning) but for a place to encompass enough desirable elements of flow and comfort for it to be utilized, and then a combination of meaning, from selected past elements, current uses and future possibilities of the space will grow. But when entering into a design for such a place, where does one begin?

The abandoned pier is located to the south of Thunder Bay's existing Waterfront Park, it comprises an area of 22 hectares (54 acres). The pier is of typical construction for most turn of the century pier design. The construction itself exhibits a number of interesting components.

Construction of the pier began in 1903 (McKee 1999).   It demonstrates traditional building techniques, as well as modifications made by changes in shipping technology and site usage. The analysis of this artifact can therefore be broken up into two portions, the first as the initial artifact –that which can be qualified as traditional to the usage, and secondly, the modifications or transitions that have occurred. The result is a hybrid of industrial/shipping and social/cultural values demonstrated in the built environment.

Primary Function

The abandoned pier currently demonstrates few components of its initial artifact (primary function) that were used in the design of this space. That is, the function of housing a grain terminal. It does currently demonstrate however, the initial primary function that was used in the design of the space as a pier.
I am viewing this place as a pier, not as a grain terminal.

The occupants (street artists, walkers, etc), who inhabit the pier do not use it for

the same purposes as it was initially designed. That is, to transfer goods from rail to boat for shipping purposes. What does occur though, is the transfer of information, from messenger to receiver (literally scrawled on the monolithic rubble walls, but not necessarily). These modifications of the space are in a way, reciprocating; the current occupants of the space have adapted a traditional shipping pier formation of land and transference potential from the shipping of merchandise (information).

The current occupants of the pier use the piles of rubble for art installations, the land for walking, the concrete piers for sitting, and the surrounding land for wetland reclamation. It appears that the physical element required for providing a location for waterfront transfers is still present, and used on a regular basis. The initial construction of the pier was directed by private business, who wanted to operate private shipping ventures, this pier, was not designed for public use (McKee, 1999).

The adjacent rail lines still operate for shipping. The movement of passengers and goods over great distances is required. This transportation link was the primary function for the rail lines when they were originally conceived. Today, the rail lines function in much the same way; even though variation in shipping materials has developed over the past hundred years.

The multitude of tracks which exists in this location serve two purposes, depending on what track a train would be on, either, movement north or south, or resting and storage for a train with a later departure date.

The trees inhabiting the space north of the site are indicative of an Aspen forest. I do not believe that this land has been deliberately planted, as from the growth pattern (large to small) it appears that it has just been left abandoned long enough for aspen forest to begin its spread. Directly on the site, a small collection of trees does also exist surrounding the existing piers. These have begun to takeover within the industrial cemetery. The wooded takeover is building itself (growing) within artifact(s), that is, the time taken to allow the growth of the trees within the pier has been long enough to cause an appreciation for that time, and a lack of human intervention has caused this to happen.

The primary function of the forest is as a home for trees (a place for them to grow), possibly habitat, and a producer of oxygen and ground stabilization.

Trees (forests) are primarily viewed in practical terms by most. The trees can be felt at the human scale, they are about shelter from the wind and sun, about changing the drifting of the snow, about the water table. Possibly, though this feeling is less here in the woodlot because the trees have not been deliberately planted, they are young and the spaces surrounding or within the lot are not being used by humans, currently it is an animal habitat. While each of these is important, further meaning is intuitive and cultural. While in the woodland few connections are tied to the land, a different feeling arises from those trees that have inhabited the land between the concrete relics. I feel that these trees are more important, probably because the concrete remnants between them are retained along with the trees themselves. They exist within the open spaces of land, creating a grid, like they are planted; they (in part) are communicating what the pier is without any needed help a place leftover and abandoned.

The main area of the pier is currently collections of rubble and large piles of gravel infill. This main space does not function as anything. It is confused. It doesn't say anything. Any messages are lost to most visitors.

The dock, on the south end of the pier, is currently left preserved. Although like most of the site it does not currently function in its original primary function. It is currently sitting, as a large docking facility empty, waiting for boats. Standing on the long concrete dock you can almost hear it beg for something to be docked on it. It needs something. It wants it. It was a dock and still is.
So then the question about what a primary function is, arises from who writes (designs/changes) the landscape – and equally who reads and experiences that landscape that defines the primary (and secondary) functions?

Secondary function

The original shipping pier was restricted to public access, and equally restricted views into the space. As a result, little understanding of what occurs on this pier exists, and visitors are not typically present. On this pier however, anyone is now (kind of…) welcome. This is because of the changes that were felt necessary to allow for future development, and preferences given by the city and its advisors. While the foundational artifact (the pier) is an industrial signifier, the users and (as a result) the changes within the space have been altered to connote destruction, and a desire to remove the past.

In all semiotic models people perceive objects with a second level (sometimes more) of meaning. This is also true with trees. Most plants have historical signification levels given to them. In open spaces a tree like a cedar signified durability; willow signifies love, happiness or loveliness (Özbilen and Kalin 2001).

These feelings however are not always universally transferred from one person to another or from one cultural image to another. For myself, Aspen symbolizes a youthfulness and a progression.

I view the existing pier supports as having a multitude of meanings. The arrangement of the posts (as a grid) connotes a message of regularity, preciseness and mechanized technology. The materiality (concrete) connotes strength, the industrial, and timelessness. The size; barbarity, significance and structure. Earlier I referred to this space as a cemetery. This connotation is related to the empty nature of the space, also the regularity, and the awkward silence existing when present.

The organization of the tracks is modified. That is, the number, direction, and specific locations. The tracks themselves though, follow the same organization as they did originally; the width of the tracks, the distance between ties and the gravel footing keeping the tracks from moving apart. Train tracks here are generally the same as anywhere else. The trains themselves have changed over time, technology has evolved, as well as the requirements for train type and style. When first built, passenger trains were quite common, while now, no such trains exist in the area, further emphasizing the industrial nature, and the removal of human interaction and knowledge of the site.

The tracks themselves communicate similar signifiers as would train tracks anywhere else. This message is amplified currently by the addition of large chain link fences in the 'accessible' spaces adjacent to the tracks. Further, the large number of tracks signifies the existence of danger, industry, and possibly a less desirable neighborhood. These answers are also negotiable on the type and size of train that would move over the tracks. A passenger train for example, would connote an area of population, family and a more desirable access point. While the freight trains, which connote the industrial messages, are often an element that would be desired in the background of our lives. Knowing they exist is often enough, seeing and hearing them might be too much.   Understanding the senses through Eco would indicate relationship between the symptom and the sign (Eco 1980).

The train retains some of its traditional casual, polite, and rustic notions to it. Even these tracks are bounded on one side by a busy street, and buffering between the site and themselves is a woodlot and wetland.

Messages exist within components of the site, however it is difficult resolving what messages link these individual components. I feel that this is because of the in-between state of the site currently.

The site as a whole sends a message of the unknown, or hiatus. It is confusing, and unclear as to what is going to happen, or should happen in this place. It is not about understanding what the site wants to be, like the genius loci, it is about understanding the past, feeling it, and then allowing that to weave itself into the future, or not. It is about being conscious of the design and materials of the future. The choices we make, and the influence these decisions have on the future use of our spaces.
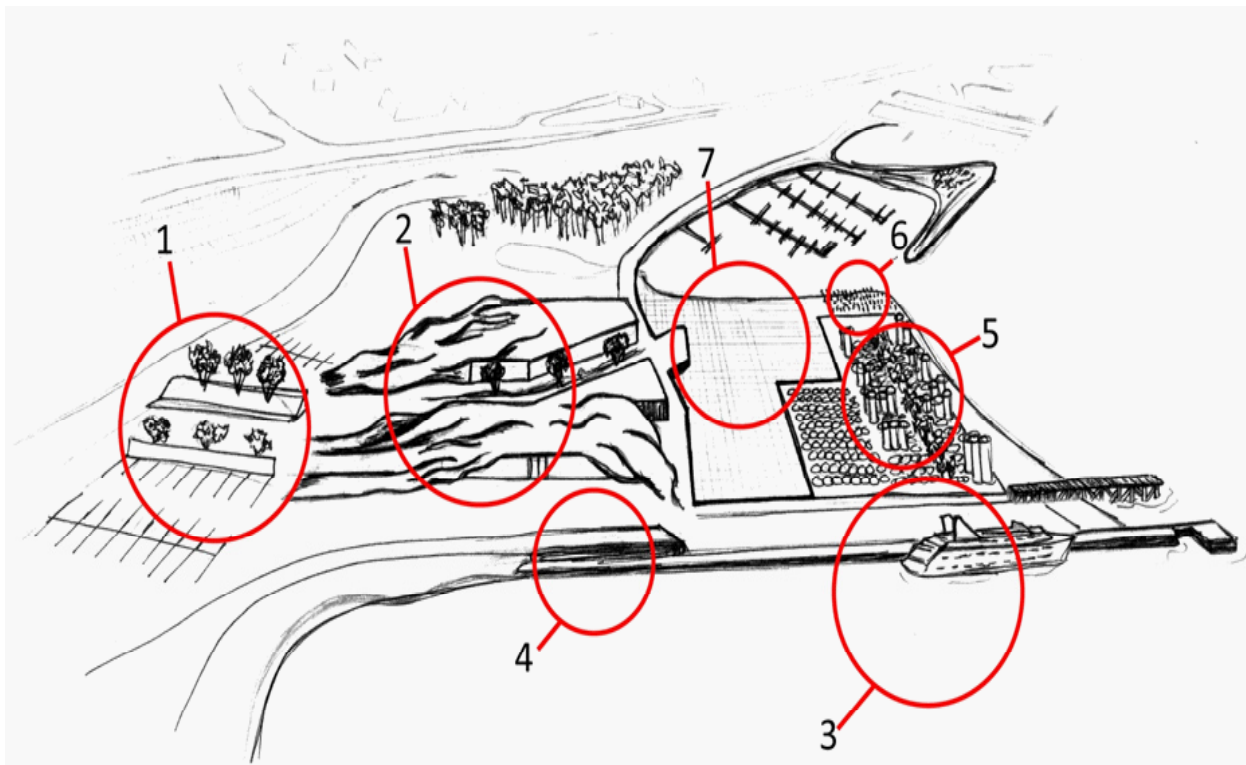
Figure 14: a perspective view of the site. Numbers relate to locations of individual site designs

Design 1: meaning through repeated usage by people

The design solution 1 follows a didactic approach to design, where I have developed a design proposal for the space, working between levels of scale; creating a final resolved solution for the space.

The Thunder Bay Waterfront shifts between its industrial man-made edges and the natural shoreline. This combination of features results in a majority of the shore being understood through its industrial activity and working waterfront functions. These functions can be strongly associated with an image of the grain elevator; the large Lakers (ocean freighters) parked beside each and the multitude of rail cars leading from the land to each. This image of industrial success is now missing on the abandoned pier, but the message of success is still an important one for this place.

The ideas behind this design came from my feelings and responses to the place, and what can make this place pleasurable to occupy. Resulting in a place that will occupy not only meaning in the present, but additional meanings imbued over time by those who will potentially use the new pier. The design for the space is functional and enjoyable by not only those who work and live in Thunder Bay, but it will be a destination for visitors to the city as well.

Form

The process of developing a formal layout for this place arose from an initial dissection and understanding of the past history of the site. This didactic progression led me to an understanding of the past built elements, their functions, and locations of each piece. While these past ideologies were not all necessarily important, nor final in any way, they did operate as a starting device as to where to begin the design from.

The form that was created allowed me to dissect the place into four functional spaces; a parking area, a central alley, a garden, and the functioning pier. Each of these spaces is comprised of individual spaces within them, and detailed components within those subsidiary spaces.

These elements take inspiration from the immediate presence of what existed in the location prior, as well as the ideas and inspirations of the region. Informing visitors to the site of what they have a chance to experience, and re-informing those from the region of why they love the area so much.

The built forms on the site take their guidance from the ships that inhabit the shores of the lake. Interior spaces will complement the exterior spaces by using light filled rooms that feel connected, bringing the indoor to the outdoor spaces. And the forms themselves have taken inspiration from the bountiful industrial relics that have existed along the shore.

Rhythm

Being next to the water there is a sense of rhythm that exists from the movement of water. The water is continually shifting between summer waves to winter freeze; allowing for patterned ripples in the summer, and snow covered ice in the winter, split by pathways made for the ships. This relationship is what connects the built forms to the natural forms to the spaces we inhabit. The existing forms on the site each have a rhythm to them; the train trestle dances on the water, the concrete pier remnants stand strong in a rhythmic pattern, the wooden dock posts emerge from the water, and south of the site the industrial forms ripple their way back and forth.

Color

Currently many of the industrial forms on the waterfront retain a bland appearance. Only emanating color through the grey and black of concrete and creosote. Here color exists in small packages, but holds brilliant significance and it is these samples that are the inspiration of each of the patches.

Taking cue from small patches the forms that exist on the site will take note, allowing colors to emanate, and reflect this observed quality. These new forms will create a communication between the old and the new; helping extend the language of the place.

Material

The message of a material choice always speaks of what a place is. Whether that be local, foreign, durable, or new. Its texture, size, shape, and origin all communicate what that material is. Here, I have chosen materials that communicate the relationships, presence and quality of this place. Not all of the materials have an origin here, but many have passed through, and more frequently exist naturally in the area.

Light

Light is used to inform, to communicate, and to enhance the design. it allows us to understand the transition and changing nature of the spaces throughout the day, month, season and year.

Artifacts

The entire Thunder Bay shoreline has the potential to be a naturally existing artifact, if not today then tomorrow. It continually shifts, changes, evolves and grows. With this larger artifact, the individual stories come to life, giving us messages and telling us stories of how humans have shifted the form of the landscape.

Artifacts exist and should continue to exist, because it is these pieces that are responsible for the stories and messages that move between generations. Here, they exist as archeological remnants that are preserved, maintained and used. They not only help tell the story of where a place has been, but of where it can go in the future.

50MM NUTS PLACED ON 500MM GRID

1000MM BOTTOM REVEAL PROVIDES APPEARANCE OF
FLOATING

5MM THICK COLD PRESS SHEET METAL, CONNECTED WITH CONCRETE
ANCHOR BOLT TO 100MM THICK CONCRETE PLANTING BED.

50MM NUT ON EITHER SIDE OF SHEET METAL.
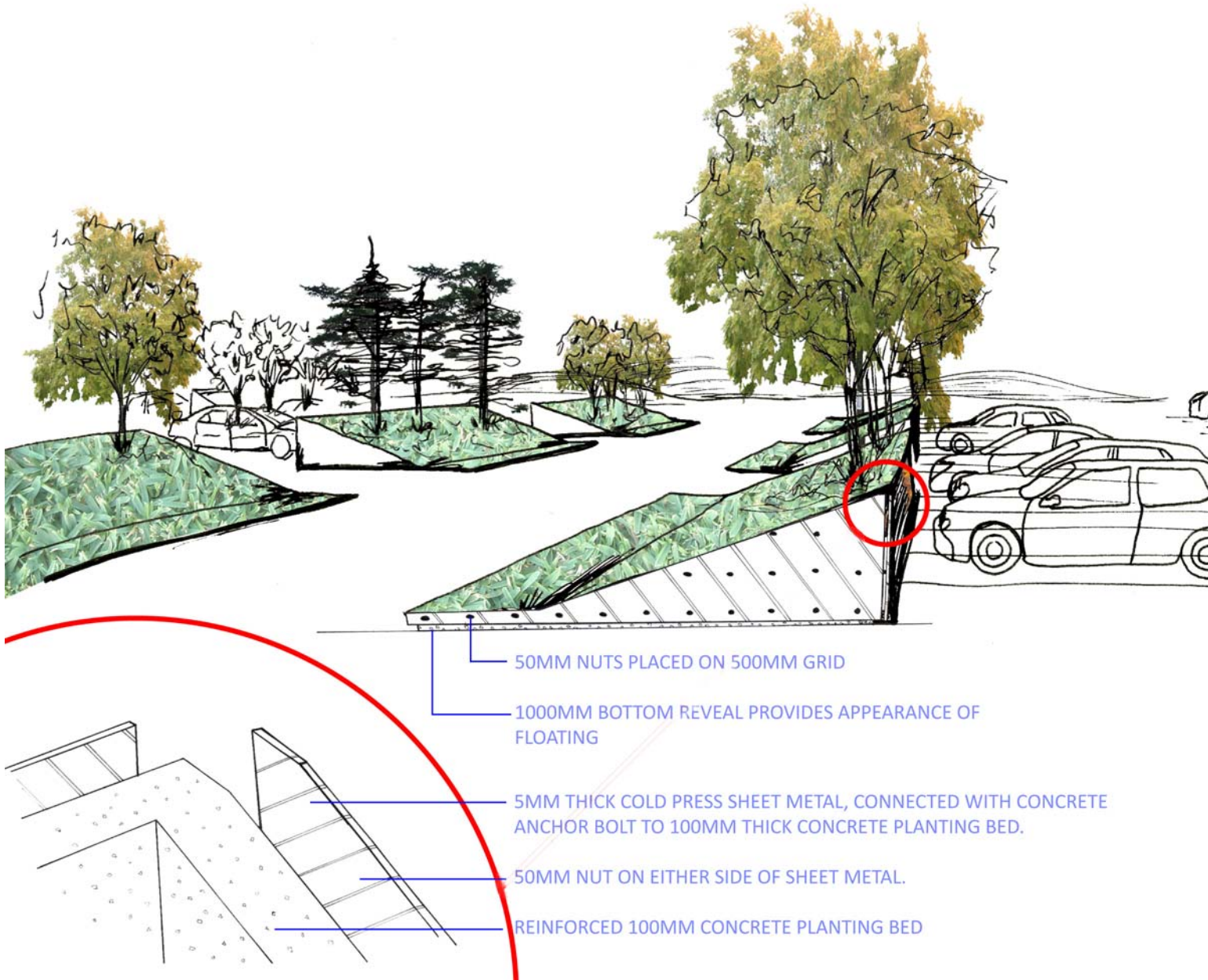
REINFORCED 100MM CONCRETE PLANTING BED

Figure 15: The entrance (1) is structured by floating parking stops, that direct traffic and provide planting beds
for trees. This is the location where the visitor to the site leaves the confines of the automobile and begins a
physical relationship with this place.

Site Design

Most people will access the site from the North. From this direction the site will connect with the existing road, as well as the current trail system from the waterfront.

A new roadway is proposed to run along the western edge of the side, providing views to both the rail lines, and over the waterfront terminal and entertainment district. From here access is provided to the parking, pick up and drop off areas of the pier. Alternatively, access is provided through the promenade along the water's edge.

If arriving by car, the passengers will be greeted by angled lawns, which appear to be 'floating' above the ground. These angled lawns double as parking stops, alerting the drivers as to where to stop and go. Studded on the tops of these angled lawns of Wooly Thyme (*Thymus pseudolanuginosus*) are groupings of Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*) and Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*).

DECKING (WHITE CEDAR, 25MM THICK, WIDTH VARIES)

JOISTS (WHITE CEDAR, 100MM WIDE, HEIGHT VARIES, 500MM O.C. SPACING)

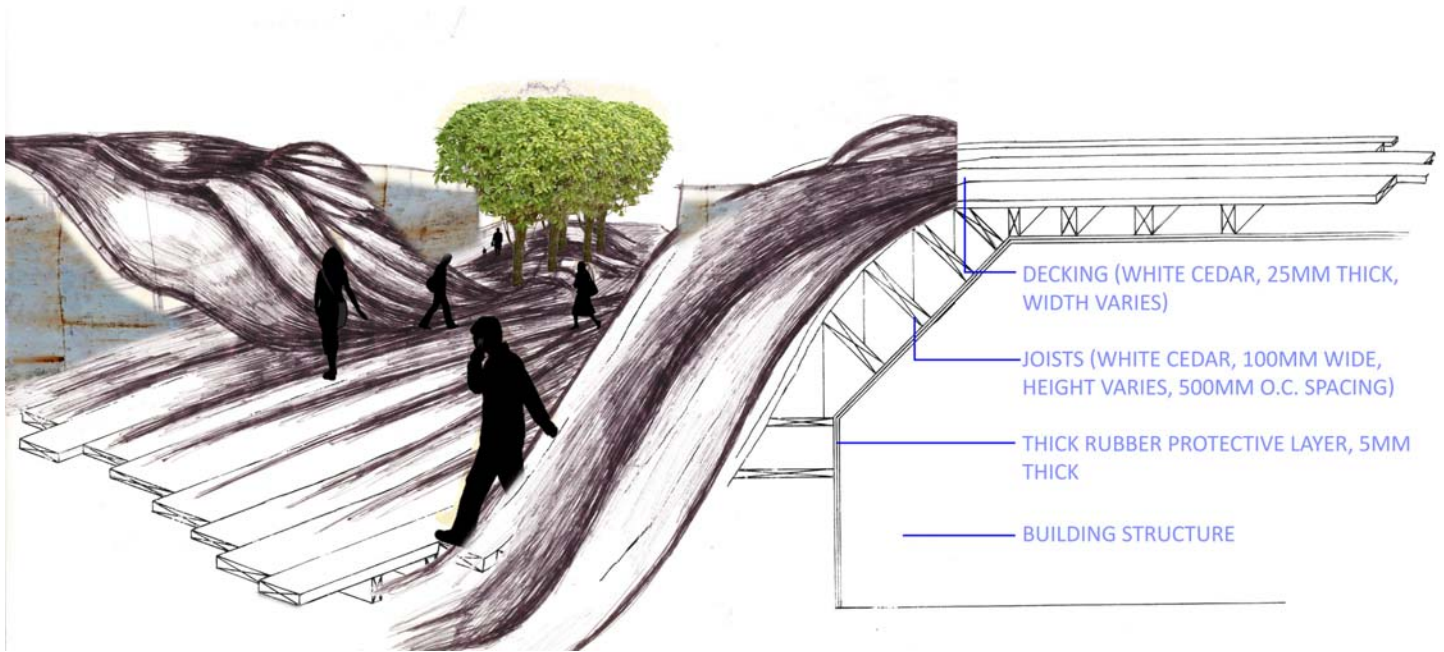THICK RUBBER PROTECTIVE LAYER, 5MM THICK

BUILDING STRUCTURE

Figure 16: view down the central alley (2). The curved decking and bermed planting surfaces can be seen. The construction method for the curved decking is in most locations similar to wooden ship building. This method was also used for the construction of the Yokohama Ferry Terminal.

Beyond the parking and drop off/pick up area, one would move through the central alley; the core of the waterfront terminal and entertainment district. The pedestrian is greeted with three alternatives in which to move through the site. The center of the opening moves through the center of the commercial core, while the two outside options move over the buildings in an undulating combination of decking and planting areas. This shifting plane that moves over the buildings speaks of the ship building industry, the ships themselves and the movement of the water.

The tops of these two buildings may be used by the restaurant owners as rooftop terraces, as well as viewing locations for visitors of the waterfront.

If moving through the center, the decking on the surface remains flat, although emerging from it in a sequence along the corridor are bermed planting beds, which meet up with the ground to form multileveled seating. These berms, like the parking stops, have a combination of Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*) and Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) planted on them, while the ground cover is Wooly Thyme (*Thymus pseudolanuginosus*).

At the end of this corridor the decking continues past the built structure, providing a view to the north, creating a mental relationship between the movement of the walkway they just experienced and that of the existing waterfront.

MAINTENANCE ACCESS

2X 5MM RUBBER FABRIC

1MM POLY ETHYLENE BEADS

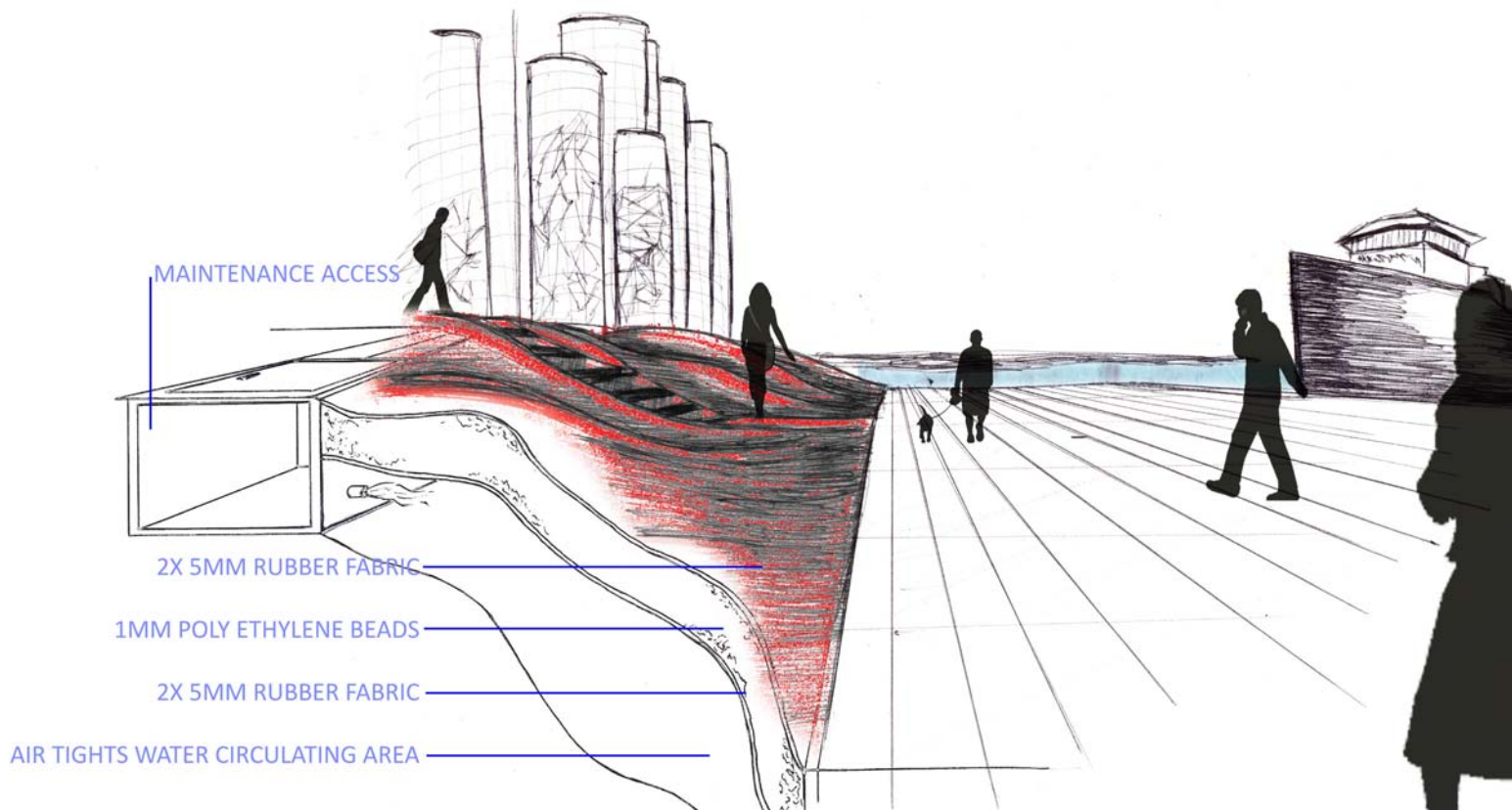2X 5MM RUBBER FABRIC

AIR TIGHTS WATER CIRCULATING AREA

Figure 17: view of the docking area (3) with the bean bag seating and cloister garden to the left and docking area on the right. Some of the bean bag seating is fixed and cooled by the lake water, while others are moveable similar to Culture Park Westergasfabriek.

Curving around these structures is the pier; the docking area for cruise ships. This pier is surfaced with a layered slate paving stone, that allows those walking on it to feel the change in the surfacing, and fully understand the difference between this space, and that of the more commercialized core they were just engulfed in. A large part of this area is left open, available for the organization of large groups getting on or off the cruise ships. Further away from the pier is the waiting area, which is composed of bean bag seating and aluminum umbrellas.

There is two types of bean bag seating; one that is liquid cooled from the lake making for a perfect area to lounge on while waiting and the others are moveable anywhere on the pier. Most of the bags are left low to the ground, much like a beach surface, and the flexibility of them would be perfect for laying and tanning; bringing the feeling of laying on the open lake to the pier.

Directly west of the open area of the docking area is the 'grain moraine' which runs the southern length of the pier, where once the train tracks existed. This trail of grain moves out of the site, as if this trail of grain has been planted by the trains that once traveled the site; leaving a linear field of grain from the pier to Saskatchewan.

30MM X 30MM WELDED WIRE MESH WITH 3MM WIRE.

CONCRETE RUBBLE, TO BE SELECTED AND ASSEMBLED ON SITE

GRAVEL BASE

ROUGH GRANITE PAVING

IRON BAND INSERTED INTO GROUND SURFACE

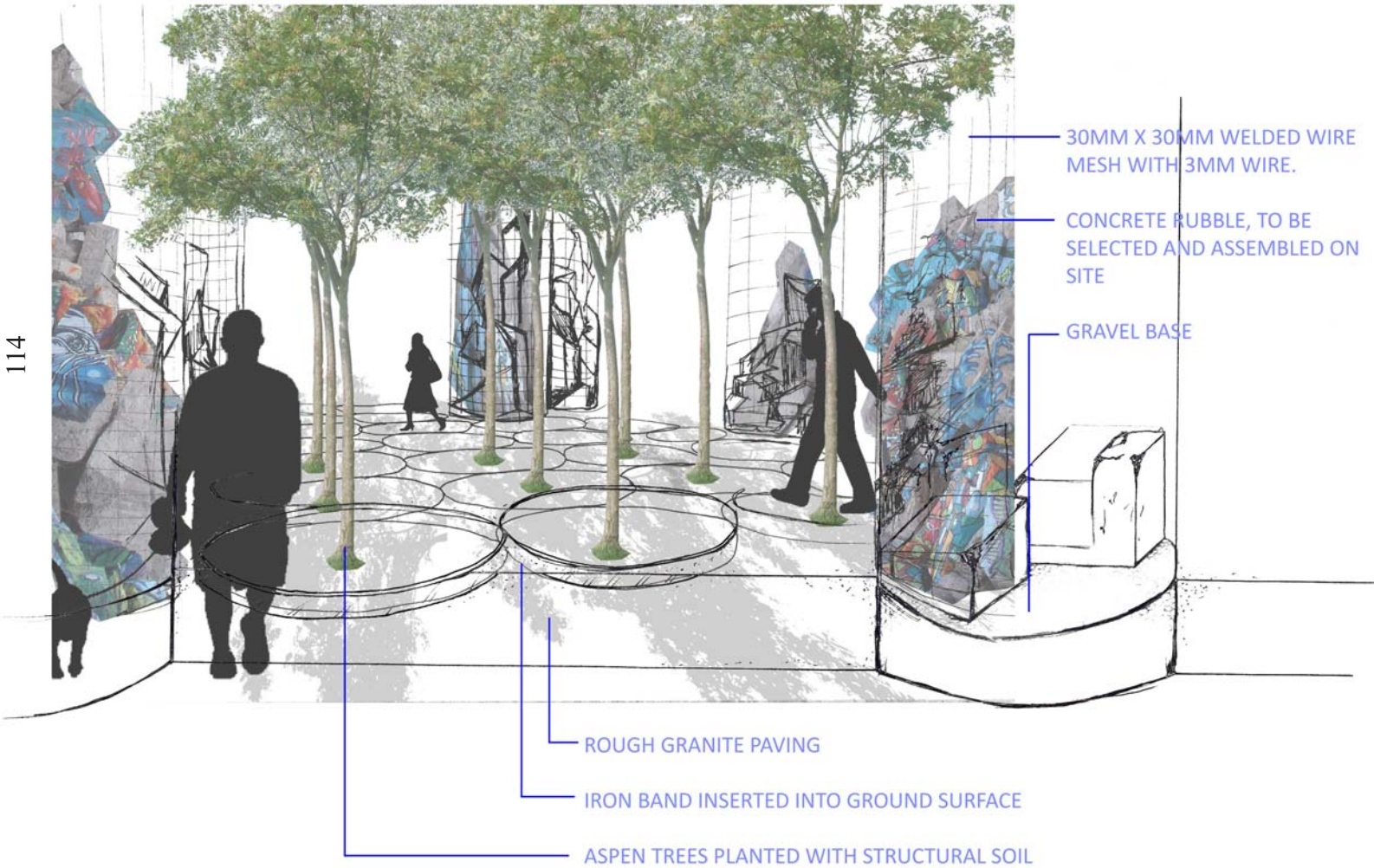ASPEN TREES PLANTED WITH STRUCTURAL SOIL

Figure 18: The cloister garden (5) is perfect for that private moment or quiet contemplation. The rubble filled gabions are used as display cases for street artists.

North of the waiting area are the 'cloister gardens; spaces of industrial worship and preservation. The cloister walls are composed of cylindrical gabions, which are filled with rubble currently on the site. The gabions are organized so as to not impede views beyond them from other locations on the pier; while keeping areas for private solitude available. In the center of these cloisters are planted a grid of trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), which allow everyone to not only feel the wind from the water but to hear it on the trembling leaves as well. On the ground, granite forms the majority of the surface; embedded in this granite are iron bands outlining where once stood the large grain elevators.
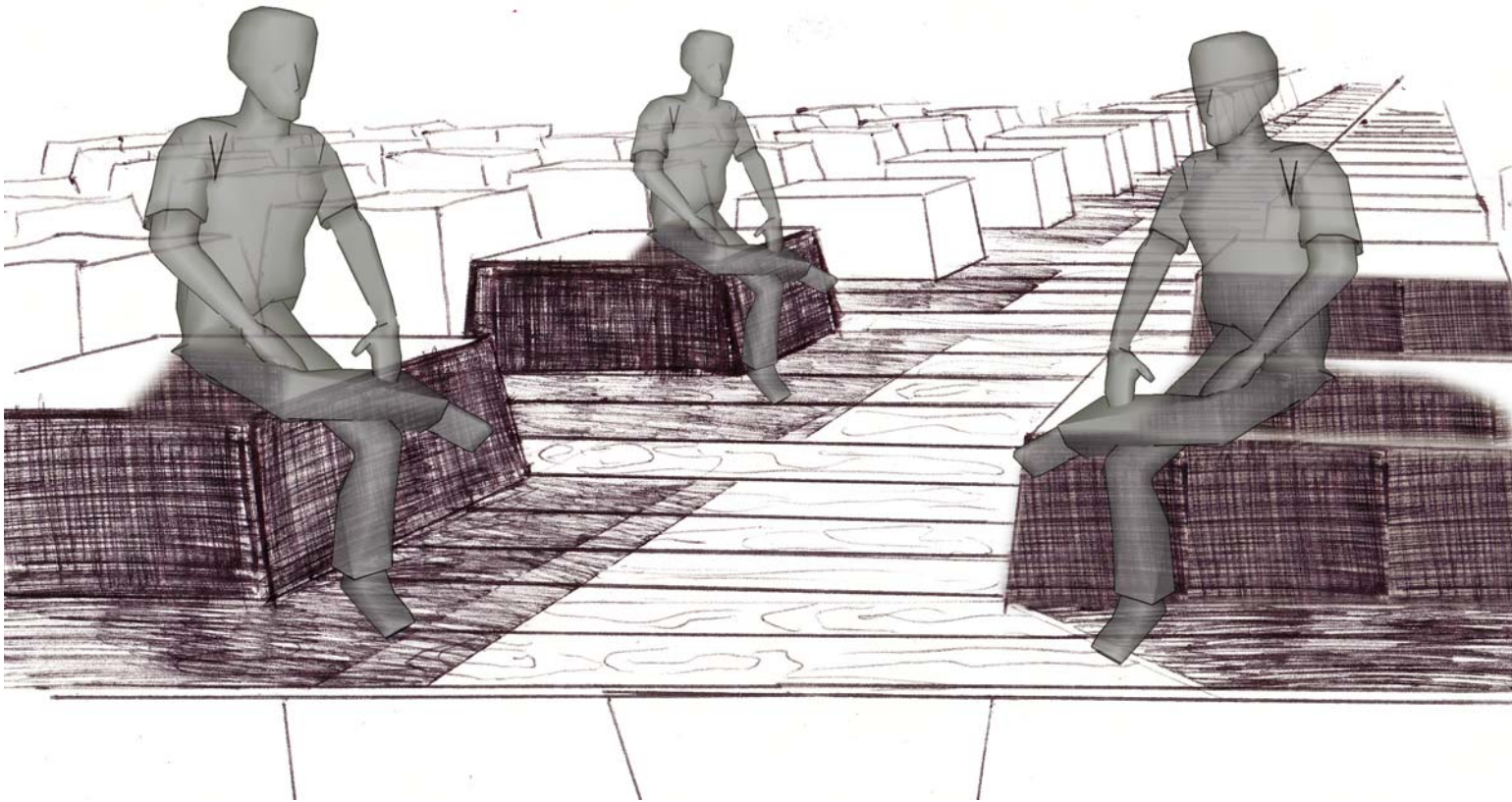
Figure 19: view of the seating and decking on the existing concrete pier (6). The regularity of the space is striking, evoking similar emotions to those felt in Eisenman's Berlin Holocaust Memorial. The difference though, is that this memorial is for abandoned industrial spaces and the artifacts can be interacted with physically or mentally.

North of these cloisters is where the concrete cemetery is laid. Though now, it is space for boat watching and temporary docking for small non-motorized boats. Between the concrete remnants is decking, which also extends into the water. Seating is now available on the tops of the concrete, as well as from deck chairs, creating a cozy space for quiet contemplation. The existing trees are still present.

FINISHED CONCRETE POST, 50MM DIA. (DAY ONE)

AGED CONCRETE POST, IRON INTERIOR EXPOSED

INTERIOR IRON POST, 10MM DIA. (YEAR 50)

Figure 20: the post garden (7) looking north towards the existing marina

On the western side of both the concrete cemetery and cloisters is the pier garden. A massive garden planted on a grid, it is composed of concrete posts on a five meter grid, as well as a lawn of Wooley Thyme (Thymus psuedolanuginosus) between posts.   The posts are built of rough concrete that will erode away, slowly exposing its inside, a solid iron bollard (the concrete will be mixed with a high water to cement ratio, allowing for a weaker dry concrete). Both the concrete and bollards are spaced for group or solitary seating. As well, they would provide a wonderful escape from one of the clubs in the commercial district after hours. Additionally, children would love playing between and on the posts, and the lawn of thyme provides a wonderful aroma while moving over.

While many of the elements and the design of the site communicate messages of the past, it does not do this in a way that is limiting for the future. The spaces still stand on their own, strong, functional, and beautiful; providing spaces for pleasure, and opportunities for additional patinas of meaning. It is a pier that works, speaks, and listens to those who pass over it, allowing for individual reflections and interpretations of what it was, is, and will be.

All of the separate design elements described over the past few pages started from the goal of creating a design in which I felt would be a pleasurable space. It should be a pier with enough variety of experience and inherent understanding that it would be desirable to visit. At the same time I felt that I did not want to create a place that would be over-structured with a language that would have no flexibility in response from the reader.

Imbued within the designs are messages, which are all meaningful and important to me but not necessarily to others, but they helped move me forward towards a final design. The parking stops arise from the wheel holds that exist on train tracks. On the site they stop the cars, which are now the primary means of transport to the site, where once it was the train. Trees have an aesthetic quality to them, shading the parking lot and reproduce an image of trees growing on shallow slopes throughout the Canadian Shield.

The undulated ramping surfaces of the central alley are reminiscent of the boats that frequent the water. The wood evokes these images both in terms of the constructed material of layered wood, and the undulating surface reflecting the image of waves in the water. Speckled over this wooded surface are the islands (where the plantings occur) which also encourage readers to understand the Canadian Shield through multiple lakes and small islands. The pier, while largely functional, retains the original railway trestle, which rises three metres above the pier. This helps create a historic understanding about the shift in scale between the industrial past and the present. The bean bag lounging surfaces remind us of a beach and because we are along the water's edge, provide a very literal relationship of this feeling.

The cloister uses the left over concrete remains and gravel infill leftover from the explosion and elevator removal in 2000. Through utilizing these remains the message of what they were is reconstructed in the form of cylindrical gabions. The diameter and height of these newly-formed gabions is the same as the original elevator, and while enough rubble to fill the entire gabion may not be available, a partial fullness helps communicate the destruction and what used to be present.

Within these cloisters are the small private reflection areas, creating a feeling similar to the isolation one feels when alone in the woods, or even present on an industrial pier. Allowing the rubble within the gabions to take the role of graffiti surfaces puts a new communicative layer on them, releasing not only the messages of the past structure, but future concepts of what is on the minds of young artists.

Next comes the archeological remnant garden, where the old concrete pier supports exist. These structures remain, keeping their current historical messages and strengthening the relationships between the concrete and the trees. The boardwalks lined between the supports are about providing access for engagement with the structures and interpreting the space on ones individual terms.

 The post garden will speak to some of the structural messages of what is beneath the soil, others the crumbling aspect is like old industry, but beneath is the treasure, allowing those who get close enough to understand the crumbling outside and the refined inside.

This site has combined the old with the new, becoming something never seen. It is layering potential pleasurable space that creates the current condition of the intervention. The cultural site and physical presence is a mix, a combination of layers emerging at different volumes (understandings) as you move through it. Remixing is an approach that DJ 's often use at clubs or raves to enhance the dancing experience through creating new unheard music tracks. In this sense the site design for this place is similar. Elements of the previous place emerge at different points, evolving and divulging it differently as you move throughout.

Remixing this place happens on many levels. Differences between the remix space and natural cultural values are outlined. Remix operates as the overlay, the combination of function of one piece over another. Consequently this remix space could be confused with the industrial landscape, but it is not the same. Industrial space has a number of layered components involved within it; but these are what distinguish this place as a separate entity, and one of its own philosophical boundaries.

The problem with labeling this place as anything is that it immediately creates a bias of what the place is, or was, or will be. My opinion of it being a pleasurable place is from my own analysis, and study of the place as something. My opinion of the place as pleasurable is categorizing it as something, solely without opening it up to other options. I have evaluated the space through my semiotic understanding of what it is, and as such, it makes sense that somehow, this place fits into my analysis and understanding of what that is. If I am, then calling this place something then why is it that way? As has been alluded to earlier in the document, the abandoned pier has gone through a number of changes to its physical form, function and potential; from natural shoreline, to industrial port, to abandoned rubble, to … Each of these stages in the site understanding has created another layer, another piece of this place's understanding of what it is . Consequently, each of the separate uses, ideas, or abandonments has left changes in this place and everything has begun to meld together to create what exist s today. Today, what is left is almost entirely referred to as foreign. The site has no true self. Yet, this place does exist, yesterday and today, and with each movement or change that occurs; its identity is altered, but created at the same time. These changes comprise the boxes encasing the concepts, and these need to be opened to understand the inside. The current position of the abandoned pier is unusual. It reflects the experience of nothingness, yet this is very significant in terms of the place's history and possibilities of experience available as the site (translating what it is to the users of the place). Although I feel because of the distinct separation of primary functions, and the deliberate destruction of these the place has already started the potential for what the site could be. It is still able to speak for itself, but through a compacted and partially missing history. The history told by this place is inherently post-industrial, not yet reclaimed, and it is questionable whether anything can be done to this place, without changing its current story. Part of this understanding also includes an acceptance of something new being spread over the site, possibly removing what is left of the industrial language.

The abandoned pier exists, to a certain degree, because of the increase in foreign development. These foreign enterprises allow for products (even domestic) to be grown, manufactured, or developed through external places, and this is becoming evident in abandoned spaces, which once housed industrial monoliths which spoke of the current industry, like here on the abandoned pier. Stating this requires one to accept that over time, one ideology has been exchanged for another. This spreads from Derrida's thinking of deconstruction and the flow of meaning in the environment; the signifier and signified, while closely linked, translate back and forth and into other signifiers (Ellen 1996, 11). This brings back to the space and how the movement and translation of the space through an economic evolution of the times bring the space through different meanings (primary and secondary) and communicates them to the reader (user) of the space. It is also important to note how the reader of the space often changes with these changes in the environment. Or in the least the position of the reader changes in relation to the meaning. Along with the changes in flow of meaning, the changes in flow of the reader changes too.
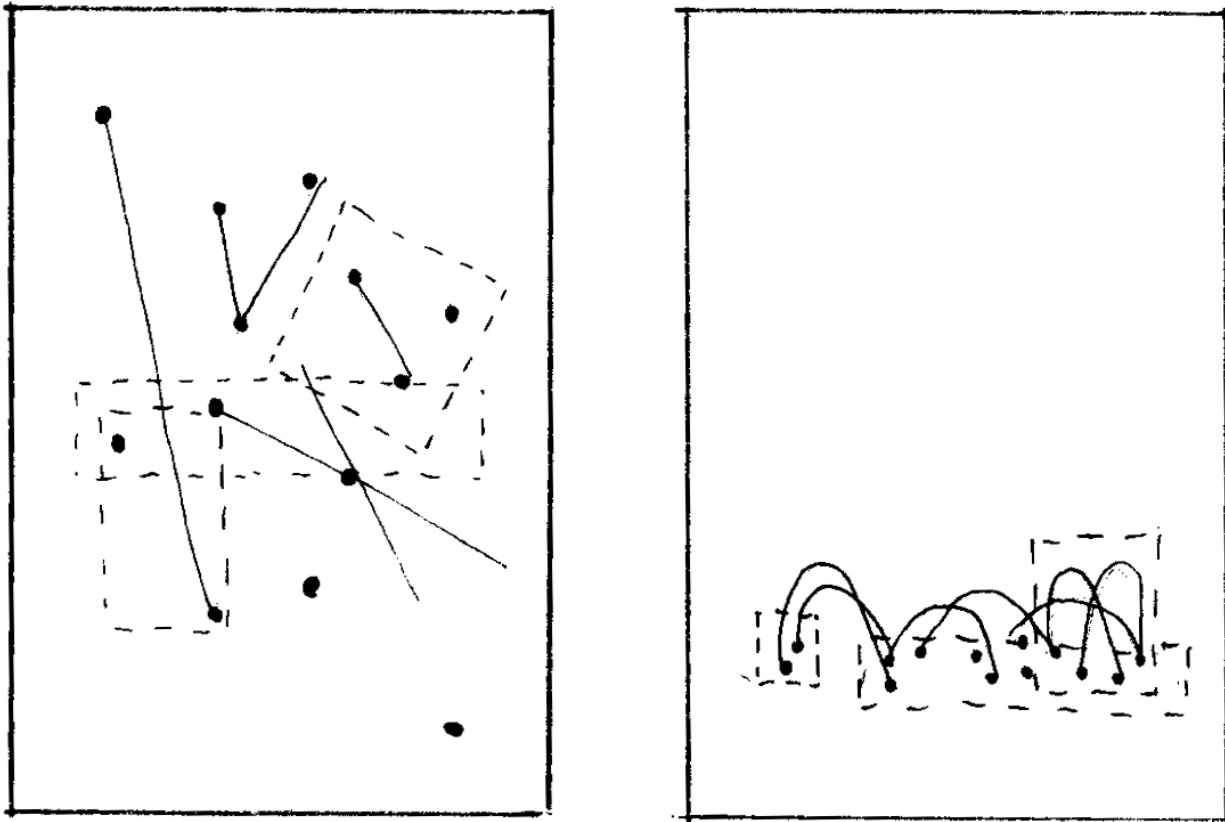
Figure 21: on the left an example of mapping the site in plan. The right is an example of mapping the site in elevation.

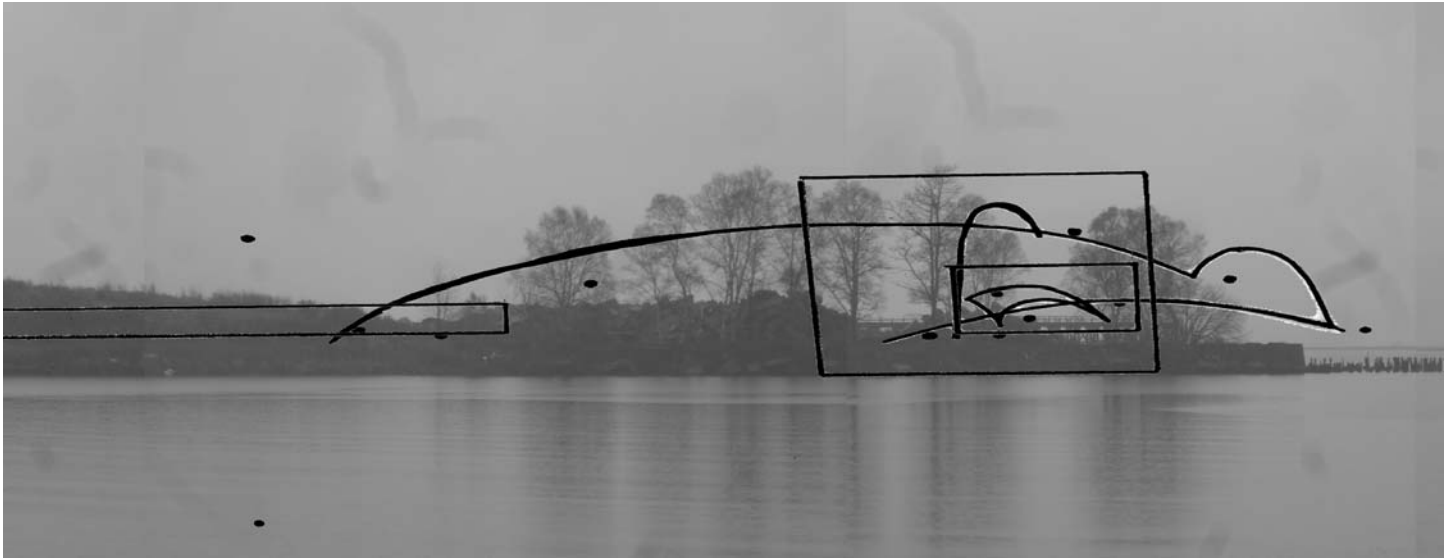Design 2: design meaning determined before the design

Figure 22:mapping of meaning on the existing site. Elevation (top) and the three drawigns below
depict both the elevation (top) and plan (bottom).

Mapping thoughts on semiotics and the act of designing

There seems to be universal understanding of some elements of any given site which extend from the expansion of cultural understanding, usually composed of individual beliefs. Everything that exists in a place could potentially hold a personal meaning to someone. These elements of meaning exist within objects and hold the potential to be important to an individual who understands them. But not all meaning is or could be understood by everyone.

These layered meanings often exist in the places we inhabit. Objects affected change in a gradual progress of signified understanding. Meaning, that something that is understood by everyone, can be classified as a universal signifier. While the most striking signified features of the landscape would exist in this boundary, it is the smallest in terms of numbers. Following the universal are cultural signifiers, where a grouping of people (usually defined by a title) understands the signified component of the object. Cultural signifiers bound the universal, as all of the universal signifiers would be classified as cultural signifiers as well. And most personal level of signifier is the 'personal signifier'. The signified concept of this does not necessarily need to be understood well enough to be classified by a grouping large enough for a title.

While meaning to one person would be enough to be classified as a personal signifier, I feel that it should enclose enough meaning to be understood, if defined to an outsider; thus having a sense of logic to it.

The theorists Bernard Tschumi and Kevin Lynch have each used mapping in their analysis and development of landscapes. Two of the most notable projects exploring mapping in design being the Parc de la Villette in Paris by Bernard Tschumi and The Image of the City (1960) by Kevin Lynch.
Tschumi's design for the Parc de la Villette is "based on the (extensively documented) structure of three superimposed systems." (Tate 2001, 62)
The three superimposed systems are known as points (which accommodate programmatic conditions on the site), lines (which serve as the pedestrian movement and canals), and surfaces (flat, open areas of separate functions) (Tate 2001). This system of points, lines and surfaces help create a dynamic park, though one of strict controversy. Many still consider the park controversial because the design is composed of a very structural, linear, and strict system. I

feel that pre-mapping a place with meaning and structure like this is a beneficial concept, though in reality, it may be more beneficial for a master plan for a park like this to only use a mapping system as a guide or locating device for where and how to place components of the design. My approach for mapping is different, in that I feel a mapping system should only advice and direct design, not physically overlay that map on a site. I feel that a person should not necessarily be able to understand the map when in a pre-mapped place, but recognize that a map was used in the creation of that place, resulting in a pleasurable place.

Kevin Lynch used cognitive mapping to account for existing elements in the landscape. He studied how users of the city perceive and organize spatial information; using this information to mentally map their way through the city. The created 'mental maps' were composed of five elements; paths (streets, sidewalks, trails, and other channels in which people travel), edges (perceived boundaries such as walls, buildings, and shorelines), districts (relatively large sections of the city distinguished by some identity or character), nodes (focal points, intersections or loci), and landmarks (readily identifiable objects which serve as reference points). These mental maps, created from the five mapping systems are the component that Lynch feels are necessary to guide a user though a city. And while Lynch does recognize the usability of this system, it is created to help improve and understand the cities that we live in. Lynch feels that if a city has these five systems in balance with one another, we would be able to improve our experience with that city, able to improve our 'wayfinding' through the place (Lynch 1960). I find this type of mapping system more useful than that of Tschumi, because Lynch does not use his descriptions as physical objects within the landscape. Though, it is still questionable as to what degree an object needs to exist to create meaning at all?

Additionally is the work of Raoul Bunschoten and CHORA (1998) displays mapping techniques which could be interpreted as being very relevant to understanding time and space. In these maps, the relationship of an object's location is considered in the map, and the objects themselves are removed from the maps in the final composition. These abstract relationships between map and form are still informative, all while learning many of the interpretations up to the reader of the maps.

Creating a mapping system for designating (equally comprehending and recording) meaning in the landscape is possible. And I feel that creating a

mapping system for understanding these meanings can help in both the design of a place, and the understanding of where that place will hold meaning in the future.

The creation of meaningful maps begins with the contents of three types of signifiers. These can be located and studied in a design through three devices: a point, a line and a plane. While running a risk of oversimplification, these elements exist as follows:

> Points: points are single locations, the locations of integral elements on a landscape of which the reader may come in contact with. The scale of the points is varying and depends on how the reader examines something; the point may be a connection, a material, or shape. If observing a site design, it may be a chair, a remnant form, or a building. If examining on a regional scale, it may be a forest, a highway, or a country. The point exists on all of these scales, but like a drawing, the scale is important to delineate the detail of the study.

> Lines: lines are the relationships that exist between points. The lines however, are not usually physical in appearance. They connect meaning and understanding between separate points. The signified line brings pieces of meaning together, helping tell the story of the place. Like the points, the lines connect. They too operate on different scales. A line may, however, connote meaning between a finite detail and a larger form, creating relationships spanning scale. As well, a line does not need to exist as a straight element. It may arc (possibly zigzag or meander) from one point to another. The degree of this arcing is used to explore the degree of understanding of the connection. The arcing should be observed much like a space-time diagram.

> Plane: planes are the boundaries which exist around the points, lines or both. These boundaries operate similar to districts on a city scale, but a plane separates the meaning, enclosing areas emphasizing their importance. Where a plane exist s it requires an understanding of why this 'district ' needs to be isolated, and not that 'district.' Like points and lines, planes do exist in all scales, but the individual plane does not shift itself from one scale to another.
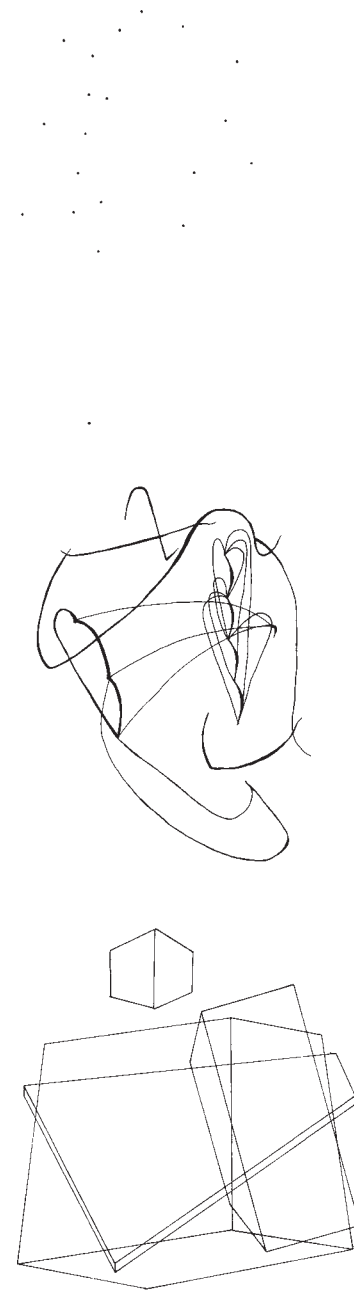
Figure 23: a detail map of one of the concrete posts in perspective. It is important to notice how
the post has many levels of meaning and relationships on all sides of the form.

The images created from the mapping of meanings potentially display areas of high meaning, low meaning, strong relationships, and weak relationships. So, even in an area where a plane exists, it could still operate with a strong line emerging from it. If a boundary exists around a grouping of points for example, and a line doesn't exist connecting it with the outside, it is then up to the designer to determine if a connection is required, or if such isolation of meaning is desired. It is also important for these illustrations of point, line and plane to be done in conjunction with the site, but be read in isolation from it. Doing so will more easily convey the possible goals of the designer about how the space/object should read. It is also of significance to understand that the creation and understanding of these drawings is directly related to the user and reader's knowledge of what they are drawing. The drawing does not determine what the specific meaning is, just where it is, what connects it, and through this help direct the design focus of the project.

The three components of these meaning maps are composed of individual components which help formulate my mental image of the signifying relationships of the site. They must be organized and layered together to create a satisfying whole. Individually the elements house their own properties and are capable of being structured in their physical form (past, present, future). But interesting results emerge when the drawings are then layered, combined, or shifted in scale. It is being precise and aware of one's desires which allows for these 'new' drawings to be beneficial in understanding the semiotic site. Combining maps of different scales or of different investigations may lead to a discovery exposing a potential location or connection of meaningful components not before known, resulting in a stronger argument for the retention of an artifact or exposing a potential location of how the movement of a signifier communicates with the reader.

The balance within a space rests in its semiotic understanding, and when this understanding is compromised, the space may feel unbalanced, uncomfortable, or awkward. Being specific with a point, line and place investigation and layering these elements wisely will allow for spaces to feel more significant and be scaled appropriately for the reader and its signifiers.

Planes in particular allow for an understanding of the appropriateness of signifiers standing in a location. The plane surrounding the isolated sign may showcase that it is too isolated, and too small, such as a connection detail, or too large, such as a statue. The understanding of the flow of a signifier's power is important, as it is the ability of the sign to intensify the identity of the whole by enriching and deepening its character. The old concrete pier remnants are an example of this. The structures themselves hold their own identities as they grow from the earth, and the reader maneuvers throughout them, contemplating the concrete's existence. The identity of one of these concrete supports is structured into the pattern of the remnant pier.   The components are interrelated, through lines, forming spaces of understanding, and so on.

The three components of point, line, and plane direct meaning together in the framework. I am unsure as to the effects of this type of investigation when elements change within the model. If, for example, I removed one of the concrete piers from the abandoned pier, how would this change the model? What seems to be working more effectively to enhance my understanding of the place is to eliminate the desire for one single image of the place. I gained a much clearer understanding of the places meaning by creating sets of images, each of which could overlap and combine their edges to share content and relationships. These drawings range in scale, combining and showcasing areas of more signifiers as areas of more detail (but not necessarily). The detail could shift and move to work with the reader, in a manner similar to how the reader moves through the space.

The balance within a space rests in its semiotic understanding, and when this understanding is compromised, the space may feel unbalanced, uncomfortable, or awkward. Being specific with a point, line and place investigation and layering these elements wisely will allow for spaces to feel more significant and be scaled appropriately for the reader and its signifiers.

Planes in particular allow for an understanding of the appropriateness of signifiers standing in a location. The plane surrounding the isolated sign may showcase that it is too isolated, and too small, such as a connection detail, or too large, such as a statue. The understanding of the flow of a signifier's power is important, as it is the ability of the sign to intensify the identity of the whole by enriching and deepening its character. The old concrete pier remnants are an example of this. The structures themselves hold their own identities as they grow from the earth, and the reader maneuvers throughout them, contemplating the concrete's existence. The identity of one of these concrete supports is structured into the pattern of the remnant pier.   The components are interrelated, through lines, forming spaces of understanding, and so on.

The three components of point, line, and plane direct meaning together in the framework. I am unsure as to the effects of this type of investigation when elements change within the model. If, for example, I removed one of the concrete piers from the abandoned pier, how would this change the model? What seems to be working more effectively to enhance my understanding of the place is to eliminate the desire for one single image of the place. I gained a much clearer understanding of the places meaning by creating sets of images, each of which could overlap and combine their edges to share content and relationships. These drawings range in scale, combining and showcasing areas of more signifiers as areas of more detail (but not necessarily). The detail could shift and move to work with the reader, in a manner similar to how the reader moves through the space.
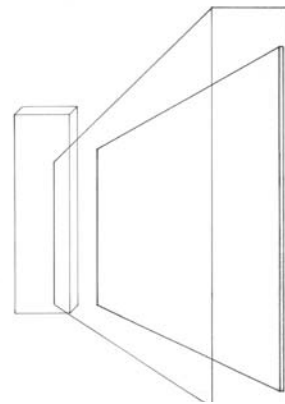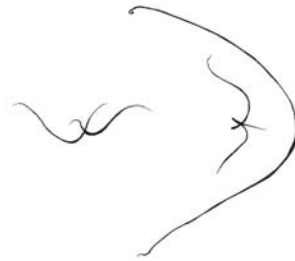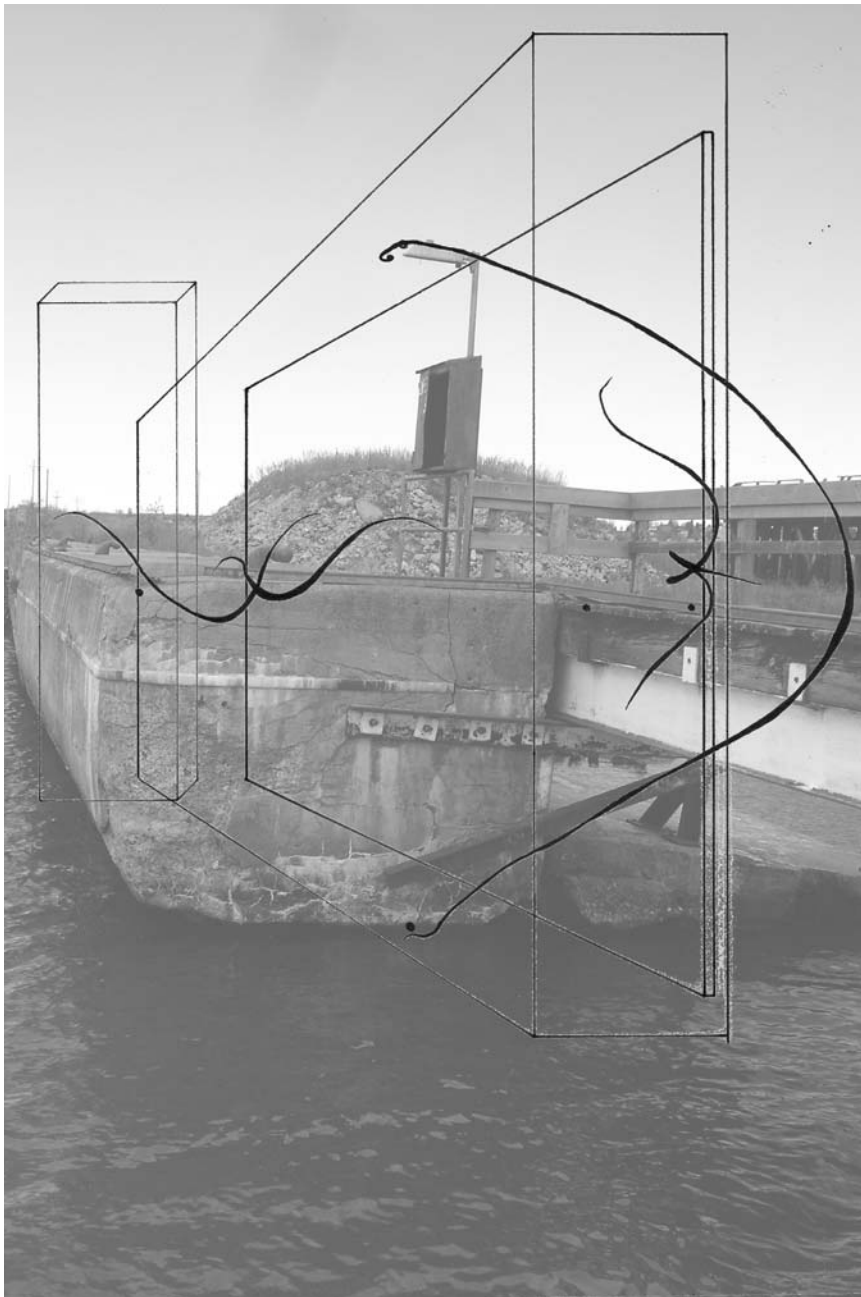
Figure 24: a detail map of one edge of the docking pier in perspective. It is important to notice how the pier has many levels of meaning and relationships on all sides of the form.

POINTS AS CRUCIAL MEANING

Points are any location of a signifier of which the observer can read, which is based on the reader's knowledge, or desire of emphasis. While on the images the points are thought of as single points, the physical size of the signifier can be large. Though, this is where scale becomes important. An entire site, or city can hold significance, and equally the minute details; like the stamens of a flower or the screw heads on decking. Points exist within other points, in a continually more detailed model. Points exist within points, each capable of their own individual significations, as well as, referring to a message true to all points.

Similar to Lynch's 'nodes' "places where decisions must be made at junctions, people heighten their attention at such places and perceive nearby elements with more than normal clarity " (Lynch, 1960). And it is at these places, where I naturally perceive areas of more functionally evident signifiers. I do have difficulty however, confirming exactly what the meaning may be for each point I signify.

Traditionally, the industrial zones of Thunder Bay were created around the functionality of the industry. Locations each held their own signification in terms of what they were along the coast. These locations were often signified by access and safety by both those on the land and equally by those on the water. The abandoned pier was once a place for the exchange of goods, but now exchanges only cultural information.

The future of the place could though, exchange something again.
The harbor's reference point in relation to a global point is important, in that it is the furthest point west in Canada where a shipping boat can access today, without traveling over land or to the western coast.

The identity of this place in reference to a global point is directly related to its significance as a global resource. The point determines where a place is, not its size, or necessarily its significance, but the fact that it is a point requires it to be signified.
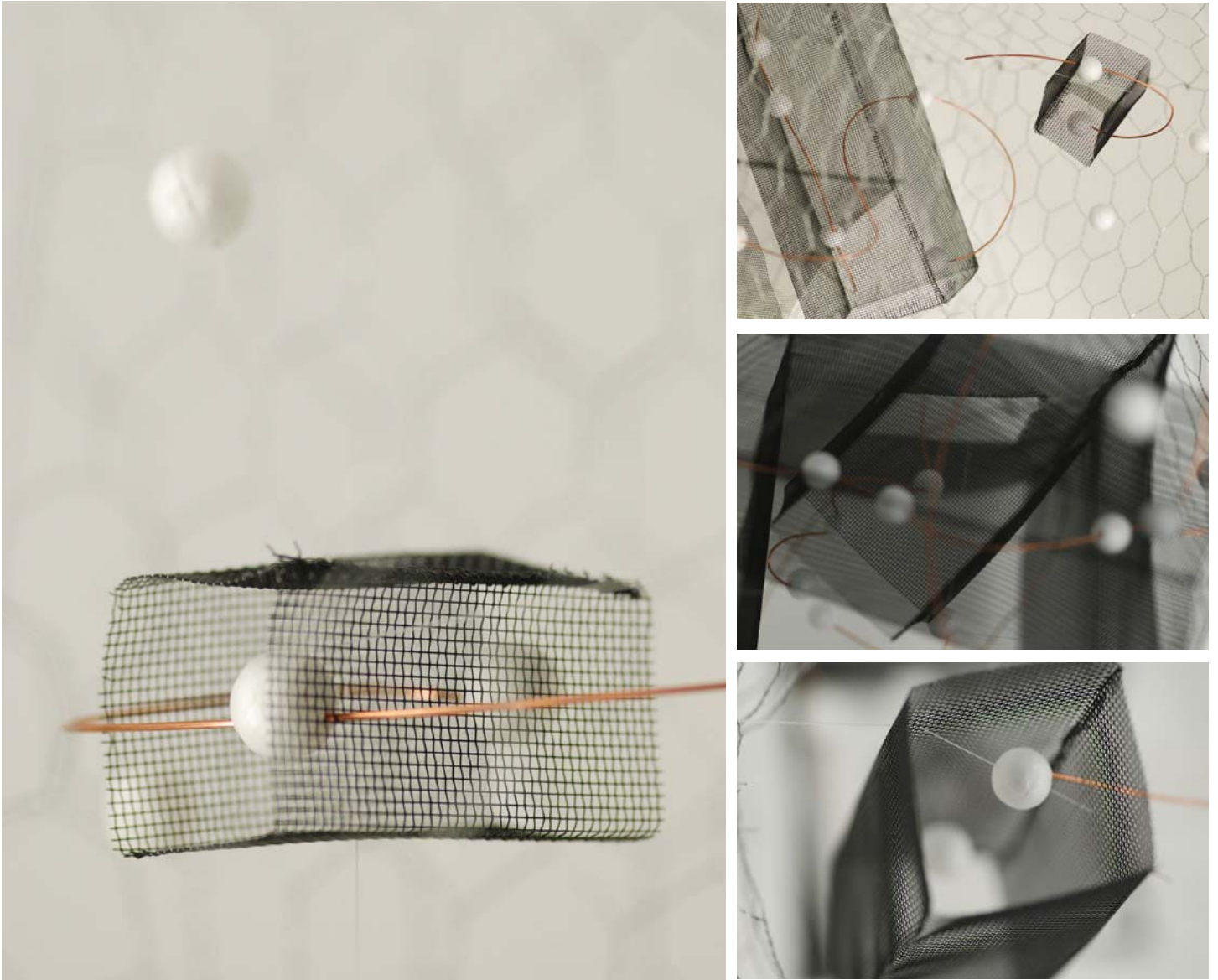
Figure 25: These images are of physical models built of the mapping systems. Seeing the Points, LInes and Planes in three-dimensions helps communicate the flow and relationships between the points of meaning.

Lines as mental movement

Line: borders exist as boundaries; real, imaginary, physical or arbitrary, they all exist. Lines exist around points and encompass them, signifying their size, importance and strength within the structure. Not all lines are closed forms however. They can indicate boundaries, but do not close points off from one another. The significance of a line is determined by its weight. On some occasions lines can act as bridges, emphasizing the relationship between points and thus creating a signified relationship between the two of them. These linkages appear often in my drawing as mental relationships indicating an imagined connection between the two points (or planes). I feel that these mental lines are important to take note of in the drawings because areas of isolation, those with no connection from a line, indicate areas that may indicate little understanding of the other, without accessing it. And why would one access the other point if no kind of connection brings its presence forward?

Currently the abandoned pier has lines of movement, but my drawings show how these lines of movement are isolated, and bounded within themselves. The occurrence of the lines to escape the areas of relics or artifacts is seldom. And less, I found, is a line of connection to outside the site.
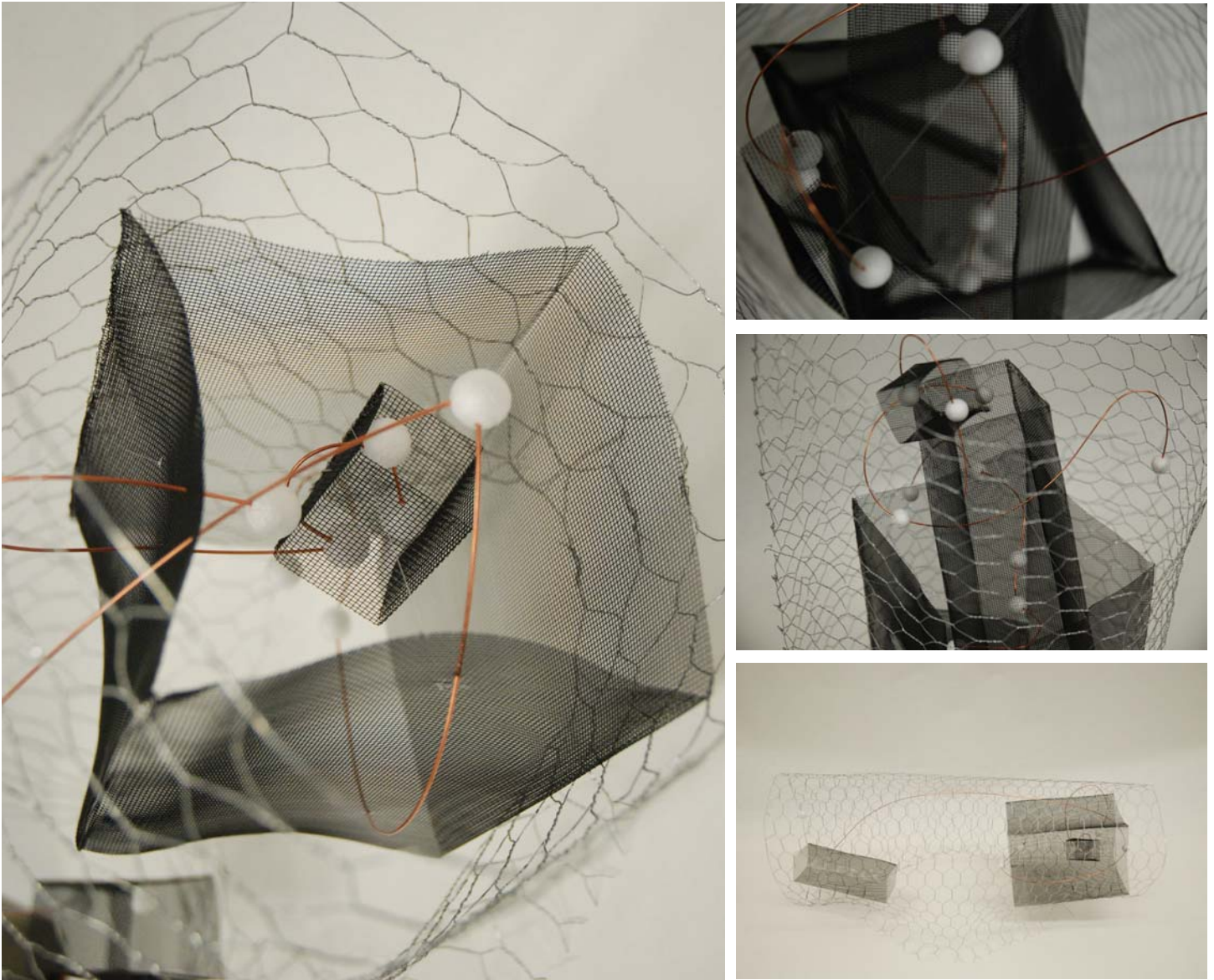
Figure 26: These images are of physical models built of the mapping systems. These images illustrate the layers of meaning, and how points exist within multiple boundaries.

PLANES AS BOUNDARY

Planes create a cognoscente mass around related points and lines, delineating importance to the signifier. Planes can create closed boundaries, isolating meaning, or demonstrate definite edges of where sign communication may stop or start. The mass of the plane does not necessarily determine the strength of the sign, as it is more determined by the curvature of the lines.

The planes can be thought of (dependent on scale) as districts and boundaries combined together. The primary purpose of the plane is to structure the extent to which a signifier can be read. I identify with these boundaries as the extents to which I feel what it is that I get from a signifier. While I have often drawn these planes as rectilinear forms, I suppose that they could as easily be other shapes. Seldom did I include a solitary sight line as an understanding or relationship worthy of being encased by the plane because seldom did I feel that a single attribute of a signifier, such as sight allowed for one to fully read it. This, like point and plane needed to be considered on multiple scales. Meaning that planes exist within other planes, and movement and shifting of meanings alters the form of the planes.

QUALITY OF THE PIECES

These images of point, line and plane that I have created expose the signified quality of the spaces they are drawn from. However, within these drawings I can easily identify and begin a personal discussion between the maps. Meaning, that when I observe my drawings I am able to interpolate what the intensity may be, based on the quantity of points, positioning of lines, and size of planes used. One could say that the density or the extent to which the points are packed together may indicate an area rich in signifiers, and offer more interest for the reader. My drawings have typically been drawn at an object scale, determined by the size of the site, displaying what could be deemed a perspective view of what the reader may be observing when moving through the abandoned pier.

But the method could as easily be used in the whole site scale, drawn in a plan, section or elevation of the space one is trying to dissect. As part of this diagramming it is important to recognize that the nature of the communication contains no physical location, no natural features, no layout...no geography. It is the reader of these signifiers being mapped that create the point, line and plane themselves; their meaning and the placements. The meaning within these places can be found anywhere, although by viewing these meaning within these places I inhabit a void, a place with no meaning. While signifiers exist everywhere, and the signified can be anything, yet it cannot exist without a reader, although the readers themselves interpret the place themselves; it is a mutual relationship involving a void and a reader. The reader examines the void and the void exposes itself to the reader. I am forced to contemplate however, how it is that the reader changes and evolves each time they inhabit the place (in this case the abandoned pier) and the place does not? Should not the place change equally? If a site does not change within its entirety, it should in the slightest change in part to increase its meaning. The signifiers potential for interpretation, or the manner in which it signifies itself changes, allowing for a place to be ever evolving, ever changing, ever interesting.

I see these maps as a starting point for design, they allow for us to understand where and how something can be improved. It is through the discipline of the author, the designer of these places that allows a final map to be created that can be clearly articulated into a designed form.

Design 3: no interference from designers or users

DESIGNING A NON SIGNIFYING OBJECT?

I do not think it is possible to design forms, places, objects without a meaning attached to them. While it may be possible to design without applying a reverse camouflage or a cheeky artificial façade, it is not possible to design with no level of meaning at all; as meaning evolves over time. I think it is possible for an object to be designed without any intentional meaning applied to it, and it may remain 'signifying-less' until someone applies a newer meaning to it. Remixing and layering, and allowing places to evolve will create interesting places. Knowing that, when a design begins, it will not end in that intentioned way; for design is not static. Artifacts evolve, change and build upon themselves to be something new, something better, something more interesting. The landscape can shift, and move and respond to its users. The elements respond equally to its readers, making a more comfortable space, a more settled space. Yet, with this permanence, function may change, objects are removed, others are added, and a more positive space arrives out of these changes. I see the current artifacts remaining on site. Having additions and functions added to them; and some remain as they are today.

Deterioration is the change, creating those layers of meaning through changes in time. These forms are left to allow for deterioration to occur as growth communicating new meaning and to some level a retained meaning. It is impossible to move back to a time where the original intention(s) or meaning(s) existed on the abandoned pier. We must move forward. Design is ever evolving, as is this process.
As I move forward and learn, and understand, and develop; the site does the same, but only in correlation to my understanding of it. And through that meaning of place, it is only where I spend the time to contemplate, and understand that will open itself to me.

Creating a place of ever-evolving and responsive features controlled by the users of the space may not be fully possible, as that space would ultimately be controlled by a rigid set of possible outcomes, not indicative of the actual goal of a new, evolving space that is continuous. Although, it is possible, to create a place that does respond and evolve within its own meanings, and solutions within the minds of the readers. That place will be changing and creating something new. In this thinking the design of the place must include the acceptance of future change, growth and evolution for the abandoned pier. This growth and potential change for the place will allow for a limitless boundary of potential solutions for the place. It can be anything. Its only requirement is the mind of the viewer.

This is a program. It is a direction for how to imagine. How to discover. Possibly how to design.

> "Designers are storytellers. Design is a way of imagining and telling new stories and reviving old ones, a process of spinning out visions of landscapes that pose alternatives from which to choose, describing the shape of a possible future. The products of design – gardens, homes, road and water systems, neighborhoods, and cities – are settings for living that convey meaning, express a society's values.
> We extend these meanings further through processes of construction and cultivation, use and neglect, as we dwell in what began as dreams."
>
> (Spirn 1998, 267)

To discover I dream.
To design i tell.

Dream One.

The rain has finished now. That wet smell emanates from the earth, telling the story of a thousand drops falling on it. The ground is alive. The puddles drain from high to low creating streams as they flow down towards the lake. Every once in a while the water stops. It cannot go any more; it is at a low point. The water stays till it is absorbed; getting stinky and birthing mosquitoes. The artifacts of the past breathe heavily as if they want to speak but cannot get enough air in their lungs to produce words.

I am surrounded by piles of rubble, soil and concrete. It is as if a child was told to clean their room, but forgot half way through.

Everything is organized by material; clothes in one pile, toy cars in another, and plastic food in another.

Placement is intentional, but random.

The trees are tired. They seem hardly able to produce a bud. Around the base of the trees are grasses. Depressed grasses, unable to stand. They slouch, sloth-like and blow in the wind. The grasses are yellow and brown, but could as easily be shades of grey. Lifeless and ignorant as if they are the children who have forgotten to clean their room.

Equally lifeless and grey are the concrete pier supports separating the trees and grasses. Conveying death in their ominous cemetery-like stance, they stand strong. After the rain, the cracks on the concrete bleed, releasing the limestone in white stains; when freeze/thaw occurs pieces chip off, drop, roll towards the grass at the base of the trees. I sit there now, listening to the calming effect of the waves washing over the crumbled shore.

Concrete rubble meanders over the old pier. The massive pieces are crawling over the soil trying to get somewhere, but there is nowhere to go. Some of the pieces have given up on the journey across the abandoned pier. They have settled and become imbedded in the earth. That same earth that is saturated in rainwater also holds the concrete. The concrete stands strong, proudly showing off the artwork displayed on its walls. The bright colors contrast with those of everything else and are obviously foreign to this place. This place is abandoned, and rarely used; waiting and begging to be useful. Its industrial nature begs for a purpose but it is currently on vacation.

Dream Two.

Jump backward just a few days to the abandoned pier. The pier is busy, lined with the harsh grey concrete of the curved grain elevators with trains moving in and out of the track shed and boats docked along the pier and a cloud of grain dust floating through the air. On industrial ports where grain is shipped, everything is just what you'd think.

The silos hold strong weighing down the pier, not elevating it. The dust in the air smells foul, not a rotting foul, but a stagnant noise-clogging foul. Workers are not standing around to look like they are working. They are working. No pretend trains posing as real trains.

The boats are not plastic.

All around us are these industrial – twentieth century train – silo – train – boat.

It is working. It is loud. Then I wake up.

Dream Three.

Jump to five years from now, walking the pier, just you and me visiting this place walking along a beaten gravel path of a few larger stones and patches of lifeless grass. Some half construction zone with a chain link fence around it, the sequential patter of children running where the land has been leveled from years of trucks spinning their tires. The tracks are still there.

We go towards the large opening. This is next to the old train trestle, and you tell how you know someone who used to work on a train. You say how they used to travel across the country and they must have seen many rickety structures like this one. It looks like it may collapse, but it will not.

Sunlight comes down on us through the clean air. Squirrels and urban forest are within walking distance. You look towards the crumbling concrete and wonder how long it will take before it falls into the water. It makes you wonder how much today really matters, you wonder about the future.

Does it matter if the trees are large, if the concrete is cracking, or what else this place is? When people are happy, even amongst this rubble, they're happy.

We parked at the closest parking lot we could find today, no newer closer lots, nothing except an overgrown road.

Jump to the two of us on old concrete pier supports on that same pier, but on the other side, side by side, just like an archeological dig.

We are sheltered from the sun, speckled with its warmth. The canopy of the trees hangs above us; around the base of the trees are blue flowers. They blow back and forth, mimicking the movement of the water all around us.

Incredibly relaxing you tell me, the flowers, the concrete we are sitting on, the water, the posts, the trees, and these moments never last this long. We doze off in a calming lull of a nap.

Dream Four.

Jump way into the future to when you and I have children with us on this pier, layered with its years of use. Concrete monoliths are still piles of rubble, but appear green and lush with cedar trees growing over them, the roots looking as if they are climbing over the piles. The children climb around on this concrete and wood. Pathways lead around the piles; it reminds you of an English cloister garden. The pathway leads to other paths, which leads to a garden of flowers (flowers that most people pull out of their gardens), daisy's, lupins and wild roses. The fences are gone, the dangerous rubble is secured by the trees.

We chase the children around the pier on the undulating surfaces stopping when we are tired or hot.

The leftover concrete and metal provide a surprising cooling effect.

Tourist boats drive by the pier. They toot their horn and wave. The harbor seems less busy now.
Jump to the night. You and I are on the pier again. In the distance we can hear music from waterfront clubs, and the sky it lit up in wonderful colors from teens lighting fireworks.

This activity makes us both feel comfortable with the blackness all around us.
Jump to dancing.

We dance under the flickering sky. Now it is blue, now red, and orange.

It is magical in the darkness. The moon reflects from the water to us. We know another couple is somewhere, we can hear them. We don't mind.

Lying on the gravel we appreciate the seclusion, the dryness, the existence of a place like this.

Dream Five.

Jump further. We are old. Visiting the pier again. We chose not to bring our flying scooters to help with the walk today. We ache. Though our pain drifts away as we observe the care taken with the pier. Large trees now dwarf the sun baked ground, greyed by the years of traffic and weathering. The trees are so large that it is difficult to see the sun through them, but I know it is there. The cool shade feels comfortable on our aged bodies. We continue to the end of the pier and view out to the water. We can still see toward the other piers on the waterfront even though these piers are nothing like they were. Looping around to the end of the pier we feel the cool breeze come in off the water, it easily blows through our cotton clothes, creating that perfect balance between the sun, wind and body.

The individual components of the site have begun to change, but still hold that same feeling that they once did. That of the peaceful reluctance of and need of the industrial structure.

It has once again started a new transformation into something else.

The abandoned pier, now inhabited has turned in on itself. It is washing, cleansing and refreshing itself in its regular cyclic cycle. It needs to do this to engage those reading the spaces and allow them the opportunity to author its response.

Concluding thoughts

Here, I have explored three separate semiotic strategies for three separate design possibilities. Each design solution is supported by a strong theoretical backing and would be possible to detail for a final, buildable design.

In my first strategy and design my focus was on creating a well designed space, following primarily a didactic path, holding to (what I feel) a common design thread. Each component within this design has a purpose, and much like my usual design progressions, it studied the space before the design, determining what I felt it should have been, and then completed a resolved design solution from what was intuitively felt and researched of the site. In terms of semantic reasoning of this design process, much of what has been imbedded into the design relies on the ability of the reader (participant) of the design to have a certain level of knowledge about what some of the meanings could be describing. While certain emotional feelings and responses will arise from different users of the space it is difficult to know exactly what every individual is going to know, feel, or understand about this place. For this reason I have accepted in this design solution that the possibility of something not being meaningful or significant to an individual is possible, and other meanings, uses, and desires may arise and become part of what this place has to offer. Instead of concerning myself with this, I accept that designs will change, but only when the places do not serve their functional purposes, and require that someone changes them. And it is this reason that I have resolved to create a place that is functional, but enjoyable by those who will become participants of the place.

In the second strategy and design my focus was on creating a system of mapping to occur before the design to direct my thinking about the current and potential levels of meaning and significance. This was done though a series of relationships between three components, points (the meanings), lines (the pathway of understanding these meanings) and planes (the boundary to which a meaning is constrained). This form of mapping in no way pre-determines what the place is going to be, or what the potential of this place should be. It only determines spaces that enclose significance and determines where, if possible, connections and possibilities for future meaning could arise. This mapping device is most realistic to be used in the initial states of site design/understanding. This process could also be used after a design is complete to evaluate its reality of being a well designed or poorly designed place.

Co-ordination of a whole design, or individual components within a mapping description like this one I have proposed allows for a greater guarantee that the place will have connectivity, and an overall aesthetic understanding of place. It will bring to surface issues of components which do not communicate, or those which stand alone. Each map forcing the designer to decide if that solution is necessary, or even if it should be structured and organized the way it has been. These maps may only be functional to those people who create them (and in a single moment), but that is partly the point, as the design process is for the designer, not those using the spaces. To map a method of design is only necessary to understand the advancement of that design, to be read by the designer not the users of the space.

In the final strategy and design, the goal was to leave the site to naturally evolve. To allow it to move through a process of entropy to become what it wants to become. The purpose of this was to allow the place to regenerate, to disassemble any recognizable design or intentional movements, because it is not necessarily how the place looks today as it is about how it functions tomorrow. And it is arguable that a place knows what it needs to do to function the way that it wants. In the dream world that I described the site became inhabited by numerous species of plants and animals, as well as retaining open multi-purpose areas. These 'usable' spaces were retained because of their ability to adapt to a functional requirement of the site. So if a place can become what it needs to be on its own, why then do we need to confuse the overall quality of the space?

Overall, I reflect on these three strategies and designs and feel that together they are stronger than they would be on their own. It is possible that the combination of all three strategies would create a greater whole. Ensuring then that a future design is composed of meaningful elements that are pleasurable to engage with, connect with other features of the site, and still retain that site quality of being able to adapt, change and evolve to become something new. Creating places of true richness requires engaging visitors, pulling in new visitors, and creating something memorable. Is that not what all spaces should aspire to be; spaces of regular human engagement? And sometimes, is this not best achieved through exploring a new approach or allowing ourselves to view the world differently, stopping, breathing, and appreciating what a place is today.

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Thank you for reading this.