I apologise to those who hang on LR Extra's every word, (I know you're out there) for twelve months silence. No excuses, except work and sloth a universal paradox. But at least it is spring again, apple blossom has broken, and leaves are greening the trees.

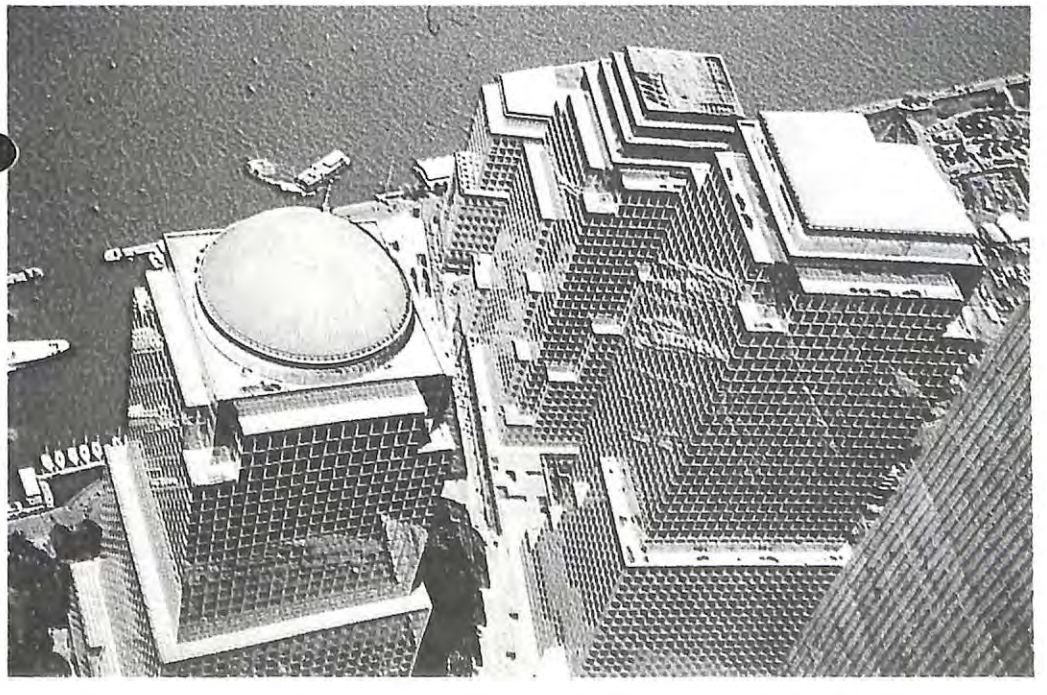
LANDSCAPE RESEARCH GROUP

LANDSCAPE RESEARCH EXTRA 28
May 2001

US Waterfronts Observed

I spent the last summer of the millennium touring a selection of Dockland and Waterfront urban regeneration schemes in the USA as part of a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Travel Fellowship. Having visited a variety of similar schemes elsewhere in Europe and the Far East, I was keen to make comparisons, both from the perspective of an A-level Geography teacher and as someone interested in the aesthetics of the built environment. I flew into New York, then completed an anti-clockwise circuit of the States, calling in at Boston, Detroit, Chicago, Seattle, LA, Washington DC, and Baltimore. Here are a few of my impressions....

On day two of the trip I encountered one of the most impressive schemes visited on the entire trip. Battery Park City is a new business and residential neighbourhood, created near the southern tip of Manhattan on landfill. *Below: Battery Park City, New York*



Unusually, and significantly, the masterplan focuses on public spaces and the development has featured strict design guidelines (eg granite curbing, stone bases to all buildings, restrictions on building heights

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The views and opinions in this publication are those of the authors and the editor individually and do not necessarily agree with those of the Group. It is prepared by Rosemary and Bud Young for the Landscape Research Group and distributed periodically to members worldwide as companion to its refereed main journal Landscape Research.

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etc). The aim has been to "create another neighbourhood in the New York vernacular". The result has been to create an area which on a superficial level resembles some of the more successful areas of London Docklands, but which on closer inspection goes much further. Offices are integrated with genuinely public areas (rather than areas which are solely rest areas for weary office workers); a wide range of shops serve local residents, workers and visitors alike (rather than being solely expensive boutiques and bars); the scheme is easily accessed by subway and train, and indeed these access points have been used as major business foci for the whole development; and much of the land has been devoted to a range of residential developments (with a large public school), in an area a few minutes walk from Wall Street, where free-market land prices could have been expected to exclude such uses.

By way of contrast, a 10 minutes walk down Wall Street, is an attempt to revive an old neighbourhood rather than to create a new one. At South Seaport, a group of historic residential and dock buildings have been restored on the eastern side of Manhattan in an attempt to trigger inward investment. A major focus has been to create a maritime museum, based in several buildings spread quite widely through the area and on boats moored on the dockside. A large quayside building has been converted into a shopping mall and food hall known as "Pier 17". Other buildings have been sympathetically converted for office use. The restored area had a folksy, open-air museum feel, but lacked the vitality of the more successful examples of this genre, at least on the damp day I visited. Pier 17 seemed like any bland shopping mall/food court anywhere in the States, and reminded me of a much brasher version of the troubled Tobacco Dock scheme in London Docklands, but with none of the historical ambience.

On to Boston, and to one of the better known schemes on my itinerary. Rowe's Wharf is a large waterfront office development regarded as a classic example of inner city regeneration. When seen together with the adjacent Quincy Market scheme (a market refurbishment very reminiscent of Covent Garden in London) and the current "Big Dig" project (a controversial scheme to replace a major, and very intrusive, inner city freeway with a road tunnel under the city), Rowe's Wharf can be seen as a major trigger in the "reawakening of the waterfront" in Boston. Until recently, virtually the whole of the historic waterfront was neglected and largely ignored by Bostonians - now there is a real "sense of place" and it is one of the main "happening" parts of the city. The coming and going of aircraft just across the water at Boston airport added an unlikely, yet strangely satisfying, sense of activity, replacing the more intense waterborne activity of the past. Across the water to the south stood the newly completed Federal Courts - a huge curved glass wall on the outside, and an appropriately hushed atmosphere within.

Thanks to the Amtrak schedule, I arrived in Cleveland at 5am, and was able to watch the Waterfront coming to life in a more vivid way than at other cities I visited...The flagship of Cleveland's waterfront regeneration is the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, located on the shores of Lake Erie, a dramatic futuristic (ie weird-looking) building by I. M. Pei (of Louvre pyramid fame). At 5am it had a distinctly surreal quality, with its apparently random angular blocks rising from a still lake surface; five hours later it was the focus of buskers, school parties and trippers galore. The area to the west, known as "the Flats" encompasses an extensive area of old warehouses and sheds, wharves and industrial



Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Cleveland

complexes dominated by an impressive array of old bridges crossing the meandering river in this area. These bridges along with other key industrial buildings are now being repaired as focal points in an area gradually being taken over by clubs and restaurants, apartments and offices. Landscaping of some areas has taken place and a new tram link has been completed linking the area to the rest of Cleveland's extensive public transport system. The whole area had a curious "in limbo" feel: the industrial structures seemed in suspended animation, while the leisure developments were deserted during the day giving the area a somewhat spooky feel. The huge towering gantry and lift bridges looming over the area made it seem like a strange sculpture park, a feeling enhanced by the new walkways and information boards for visitors.



The Flats, Cleveland

Detroit has suffered more than most American cities in the way its residents and businesses have deserted the central city for the suburbs. The acres of derelict land near the city centre reminded me of photos of British cities after the Blitz or during the era of comprehensive redevelopment of Victorian slums after the war. An early attempt to bring new life to the Downtown area was the Renaissance Centre, built for the Ford motor company in the 1970s next to the river, (and looking for all the world like a cluster of aluminium covered toilet rolls...). This created a dramatic landmark but has done little to trigger any genuine renewal in the surrounding area, partly due to its inward looking design (surrounded by a large bomb-proof bulkhead and having an entrance which is notoriously difficult to find!). The centre has recently been taken over by General Motors who are planning to open up the site and hopefully trigger a genuine "Renaissance" in the area. The bleakness of the nearby (mostly empty) business district, made this difficult to picture...

By contrast, while in Chicago I took the opportunity to visit Dearborn Park, a major redevelopment just south of "the Loop." Developed largely through the efforts of local people and businesses, this scheme has had a major role in drawing people back to live near the centre of the city. Attractive town houses, traditional in style and yet not artificial or overly folksy in feel, have replaced huge areas of former railway sidings. Pleasant parks, a lack of intrusive through roads (yet equally a lack of dark, dubious alleyways and corners...) create a safe, homely feel in a part of the city previously avoided by many. A range of properties (and occupants, - both ethnic and economic), a school, nearby shops and community centre, helped to create a sense of healthy city living rarely seen in a residential area so close to a city centre.

Despite its much hyped, positive "Sleepless in Seattle" image, I found Seattle a huge disappointment. The city felt like a relentless suburb, seeming to sprawl endlessly over potentially attractive hills and headlands, broken only by screaming, frantic freeways. A very intrusive elevated highway slices through the waterfront, splitting it from the shopping area and the famous market. The pedestrian has to face a steep climb down steps and under the freeway (sometimes far from salubrious) to reach the waterfront. In addition, Seattle's sizeable homeless population has also adopted the waterfront as a major area in which to pitch for the night, which inevitably has an impact on the area in the evening.

Whilst in Los Angeles I visited rather glitzy waterfront regeneration at Long Beach - terribly artificial, yet somehow appropriate for the city of Hollywood. The nearby "Fisherman's Village", at Marina Del Rey, felt like a mutated New England fishing village transported to the west coast, gutted and then filled with trinket shops of the worst kind... And yet, I've had worst ice creams...

The final scheme visited on my Fellowship was the Inner Harbour scheme at Baltimore, one of the earliest and most successful schemes in the USA. A large area of the harbour area has been transformed into a major economic and cultural focus of the city, with new shop and restaurant complexes, a large aquarium, a "hands - on " science centre, a museum of "Naive Art", a large conference centre, several hotels, and much attractive landscaping of the quayside.



Baltimore Harbour

Many of the schemes I visited followed the "Baltimore Formula" - a conference centre, an aquarium, landscaped open spaces for events, food courts, a hotel... Most had achieved quite dramatic physical transformations of previously undesirable areas, but only some had successfully engineered a positive "sense of place" which made them attractive places to *just be*. Despite all the variations, I was left

with the feeling of a definite genre of urban development having been created - one with as much distinctiveness as an area of 19th century terraced houses or a 1960s shopping centre. I was left with the bizarre thought of trying to decide which scheme I would recommend preserving in the future as a classic example of its kind, when these areas once again come up for regeneration.

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All photos by the author.

JOURNAL CONTACT DETAILS

A first list

From the Editor
We would like to know from our readers whether this presentation of titles from a limited number of journals and periodicals, continues to be of any interest in the era of websites. We are aware that we could find for you the leading websites (Landscape Design is www.landscape.co.uk) and from there you may be able to explore better what is being published. However there may be a downside for those not using the internet regularly, rather than for active researchers or enthusiastic others, who use it daily. We expect little feedback but for those with email, contact me at:
young@airphotointerpretation.com
Those without internet, on a post card please.

But to make a start:
Countryside Recreation (The Countryside Recreation Network) for which the website is www.CountrysideRecreation.org.uk

Urban Morphology research group
www.bham.ac.uk/geography/umrg/umrg.html

The Urban Parks Forum Newsletter No 7 2001
For which a telephone contact is 01235. 533. 266

The excellent Newsletter of the Aerial Archeology Research Group AARG whose website is
http://RS6000.univie.ac.at/AARG/

Landscape and Urban Planning: contents can be viewed at
www.elsevier.nl/locate/contents.co.uk

Ecos: A Review of Conservation. Now at volume 21/2 has a contents page at
www.greenchannel.com/banc/

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'CHICKEN RUN' My part in the Great Escape

In mid-1997, while painting in my studio I had a telephone call from Peter Lord, Director at Aardman Animations in Bristol who wondered if I could spare an hour to mull over some ideas with their production team on a new film.

For an hour Nick Park, Peter and their executive producer introduced me, somewhat tentatively, to the plot and current thinking behind their new film. From their rather vague descriptions I guessed it would feature lots of chickens, a POW camp, and some curious plot-lines that were then marinating in their heads.

Nick had recently seen the US piglet biopic *Babe* and was deeply dissatisfied with the topographical inaccuracies of the film. Ostensibly set in the US, but filmed in New Zealand, the farmhouse was a *smorgasbord* of vernacular scenes, a bit of a thatched roof here, some half-timbered frontage there, Cotswold dry stone walls everywhere else. Nick, a fastidious designer, had always believed in topographical verity - look closely at any of his Wallace and Gromit films and you will see how carefully he constructs brick walls, designs a terraced street, and models the features of a limestone plateau.

Over time, it emerged that the new feature film would be set in a specific part of northern England and at a particular time period - the 1950s. My task was to compile a vast collation of images of the Yorkshire Dales form that period. Once compiled, the images would form a visual scrapbook for the art director. Two months and several visits to Yorkshire and to sundry rural life museums later, the imagery was assembled. I gave the directors and producer a short lecture on British art in the 1950s to set the scene and to give some idea of the colours, textures and visual language of the period - rather dismal ochres, subdued greens and cloth cap figuration, if the truth be told. Soon after, this collation of several hundred drawings, photos, postcards, and colour slides was whisked off to a big shed on the outskirts of Bristol where, for several years, an army of animators strove to bring *Chicken Run* - the feature film into the world.

For those who have yet to see it, the film is rather dark, rather *capon noir*, leavened by some wicked one-liners from two racketeering rats; 'poultry in motion' - they observe of one pirouetting chicken. There is a four-, maybe five-second sequence as our hero,

Rocky the Rhode Island Red (played by Mel Gibson) makes his escape by tricycle in front of a backdrop of rolling dale and dry stone walls - five seconds of topographically exquisite Yorkshire landscape. Try not to miss it.

Paul Gough RWA
Credited for *Design Research*
'Chicken Run' Aardman Animations 1 Dreamworks 2000
Paul, Sorry this came out so late. I didn't miss it and your contribution was wonderful. However I usually lip read films and for this reason, missed great chunks of dialogue. Got it? Beak reading is not easy. Editor. Note to readers: PG is Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Art, Media and Design, UWE Bristol. Involved in cartoons? Good heavens man!

Below: Southern Bohemia. See end page.



FIELD OF DREAMS

Readers of this column (are there such people? and is it a column?) will know that I am intrigued by the way in which human yearning for an earthly paradise expresses itself in the creation and enjoyment of particular landscape types and landscape images, not least in 'Picturesque' landscapes which seem to have a remarkably universal appeal. The 'Picturesque' landscape can of course be traced back to paintings of Claude and Poussin, golden, luminous landscapes stretching away into the distance between clumps of trees on either side, sometimes including a river, lake, or even a view of the sea, and sometimes including also a temple, bridge, or other building - recollections of times long gone; representations of Arcady. In the 18th century, rich landowners bought paintings by Claude, Poussin, and their many imitators to bang inside their country houses, while outside, they recreated the grounds surrounding their houses to resemble those same landscapes.

Watching golf on television, as I sometimes do, it has often struck me that certain golf courses are a sequence of picturesque landscapes. Each fairway leads from the foreground into a distant prospect, framed by trees; often the view is enhanced by a stream or lake, the prettiness of which of course conceals grave danger to the players. The stream may be crossed by a bridge; the final prospect is likely to culminate in a view of the clubhouse, a visual equivalent of a country house (which it perhaps formerly was). The golfers may be experiencing the extreme anxieties of competition, but to the dispassionate observer they appear as pastoral figures wandering leisurely through Elysian fields. As a non-player I can only speculate here, but I imagine that most golfers, most of the time, are in fact enjoying themselves, and not least because of the sylvan landscape they inhabit.

Some years ago I read a piece by George Monbiot in *The Guardian* which deplored the creation of golf courses. It seems that golf courses are swallowing up the Earth as quickly, or nearly so, as concrete and tarmac. In arid regions, precious resources are expended on the constant watering of greens and fairways to maintain a lush, green landscape for the benefit of a wealthy minority. Now, I am an admirer of George Monbiot, and by and large I suspect that his judgement was as astute on this occasion as it usually is. And yet I do feel that there is something to be said for golf courses, and indeed for other landscapes designed for sport of one kind or another.

Just as some spectator sports achieved mass popularity because they offered a sharp contrast to, and a momentary relief from, the drudgeries of working life, so the environments in which those sports were played were, and sometimes still are, strikingly unlike their drab surroundings. As a boy I trudged through the dreariest imaginable urban and industrial wasteland - after a trolley-bus ride - to watch Huddersfield Town play football. Like a golf course in a desert, but not restrictively, a sports ground set in an urban environment can offer a brief means of regaining Paradise. To urban eyes, cricket on the village green blends seamlessly with the rural scene, but agricultural labourers doubtless drew a distinction between the fields in which they laboured and the kinder turf on or beside which they took their recreation.

Specifically, a surface on which sport is played is likely to provide an exceptionally intense experience of greenness: vibrant, lush, luminous green; a sward

as smooth as baize. Spectators attending a sports event in a large stadium - which they may have approached through urban streets - are accustomed to climbing up inside the building, and then suddenly finding themselves looking down on an area of green possibly bathed in sunshine or illuminated by floodlights. A while ago I had a similar experience in Edinburgh; although landscape erupts in the most marvellous and dramatic way in the very centre of this marvellous city, yet the city retains an austere and, in some lights, sombre urban aspect. On this particular day we climbed several dingy staircases to reach an empty flat, then found ourselves looking down on a sunlit bowling green, surrounded on all four sides by high, grey buildings, with a bowling match in progress.

Thoughts such as these having been in and out of my mind for many years, I recently experienced a 'shock of recognition' when I came upon the following passage in a novel about a table-tennis player. (Illuminated table-tennis and snooker tables are sports fields in miniature, horizontal abstract images reducing landscape to its simplest essence, a field of green).

'..... People who love the spectacle of football speak of that heart-stopping moment when you come up out of the stands and suddenly find yourself looking down upon the luminous verdure of the turf. Cricket, baseball, rugby, bowls - the same. In the end it's the arena we come for, the landscape. And the landscape of sport is always green. Always and forever green. The colour of the Elysian fields. Our only glimpse of Paradise'. [Howard Jacobson. *The Might Waltzer*. Jonathan Cape, 1999].

Philip Pacey
University of Central Lancashire

SHOULD YOU READ?

I have decided to leave this assortment unsorted. Think of it not as an efficient research tool but as a bookshop in which you may perchance find something you find interesting. Widen your horizons. Note also that these are principally my gleanings from Exeter University Library's current accessions; they reflect my interests and their accession list. If you can send me other papers for inclusion that would make the listing very worthwhile. Thank you those who have sent me papers.

Northern Ireland: Landscape Character Assessment 113pp with approx A3 map of landscape character areas described in 15 pages. Produced by the Environmental Resources Management. Environment and Heritage Service with the Planning Service 35 Castle Street Belfast.

David Pinder **Old Paris is no more: Geographies of spectacle and anti spectacle** Antipode 32/4 pp 357 to 386

Diane Reay and Helen Lucey *I didn't really like it here but I don't want to be anywhere else: children and inner city council estates.* ***Antipode 32/4 pp 410 to 428***

Morgan M Robinson **No Net Loss: Wetland restoration and the incomplete capitalisation of nature.** Antipode 32/4 pp 463-493

Thomas D Feldman and Andrew EG Jonas. **Sage scrub revolution? Property rights political fragmentation and conservation planning in southern California under the federal endangered species act.** Annals of the Association of American Geographers 90/2 pp 256 -292

Lewis Holloway **Hell on earth and paradise all at the same time: the production of smallholding space in the British countryside.** Area 2000 32/3 pp307-315

Nick Gallent, Joe Howe and Philip Bell **New uses for England's old airfields**. Area 2000 32/4 pp 383-394

Ian B Thompson **Sustainable rural development in the context of a high mountain national park: The Parc Nationale de la Vanoise** Scottish Geographical Journal 115/4 pp 297—318

John Sheail **The countryside (Scotland) Act of 1967 revisited** Scottish Geographical Journal 116/1 pp 25-40

Michael E Meadows **The role of Quaternary environmental change in the evolution of landscapes: case studies from southern Africa.** Catena 42 2001 pp 39-57

Valerie Preston and Lucia Lo **'Asian theme malls' in suburban Toronto: Land use conflict in Richmond Hill** Canadian Landscape examples-21 The Canadian Geographer 44/2 2000 pp 182-190

R Chambers **Fifty years of National Parks and aggregates extraction** Mineral Planning 81 Dec 1999 pp 4-6.

T Worthington **Another look at the Bush Farm restoration experiment** Mineral Planning 81 Dec 1999 pp 17-18

P Oliver **Regionally important geological and geomorphological sites (RIGS)** Mineral Planning 81 Dec 1999 pp 31-33

J Box and A Hill **Mineral extraction and heathland restoration** Mineral Planning 80 Sept 1999 pp 5-8

C Stapleton **Restoration to forestry in England** Mineral Planning 80 Sept 1999 pp 9-11

J Box **Habitat translocation** Mineral Planning 79 June 1999 pp 11-13. And see also: In reply from S Fordham et al and Rejoinder in Mineral Planning 80 Sept 1999 p28.

Special Issue various authors **Twenty years of mineral planning** Mineral Planning 80 (supplement) September 1999 12 pages.

F Kennedy and A Moffat **Tree species selection for restored landfills.** Waste Planning 33 (Dec 1999) pp 7-8

Gareth E John **Cultural Nationalism , westward expansion and the production of imperial landscape: George Catlin's native American West.** Ecumene 8/2 2001 pp175-203

David Pinder **Ghostly footsteps: voices memories and walks in the city.** Ecumene 8/1 2001 pp 1-19

Paul Anderson talks with Dyvia Tolia-Kelly and Melanie Carvalho . **Cultural Geographies in practice. Intimate distance: islands and English Lakes.** Ecumene 8/1 2001 pp112-119

Hugh Clout. **Place annihilation and urban reconstruction: the experience of four towns in Brittany, 1940-1960.** Geografiska annaler vol 82B /3 2000

Mei Chengrui and Harold Dregne. **Review Article: Silt and the future development of China's Yellow River** The Geographical Journal 167/1 2001
Pp 7-22

Mark Lee **Coastal defence and the Habitats Directive: predictions of habitat change in England and Wales** The Geographical Journal 167/1 2001
pp 39-56

Arturo Garcia **Romero Evolution of disturbed oak woodland: the case of Mexico City's western forest reserve.** The Geographical Journal 167/1 2001
pp72-82

Greg O' Hare **Urban renaissance: New horizons for Rio's favelas.** Geography 86/1 2001 pp 61-74

Editor Robert D Lewis Special issue on the **Industrial suburbanisation of Canadian and American Cities** Journal of Historical Geography 27/1 2001. Also contains a 5 page obituary of MRG Conzen 1907- 2000
* See also Conzen obituary in Trans Inst Brit Geogrs 25/4 by Jay Appleton

Charles W J Withers **Authorising landscape: 'authority', naming and the Ordnance Survey's mapping of the Scottish Highlands in the nineteenth century.** Journal of Historical Geography 26/4 pp532-554

Mark Tilzey **Natural Areas, the whole countryside approach and sustainable agriculture** Land Use Policy 17/4 2000 pp279-294

Derek H Alderman **New Memorial Landscapes in the American South: An Introduction** Professional Geographer 52/4 2000 pp658-660

David P Tickner, Penelope G Angold, Angela Gurnell and J Owen Mountford. **Riparian plant invasions: hydromorpological control and ecological impacts.** Progress in physical geography 25/1 2001 pp22-52

Joseph L Scarpaci **Reshaping Habana Vieja (old Havana) : Revitalisation, Historic preservation and restructuring in the socialist city.** Urban Geography 2000 21/8 pp 724-744.

Scottish Geographical Journal 116/3 **2000 Special issue on Loch Lomond**

Landscapes is a new journal (Volume 1/1 April 2000) Edited by Richard Muir and published by Windgather Press Richard@windgather.co.uk. It claims to be aimed particularly at the field worker and to be at once accessible and scholarly. Its contributors and Editorial board are from Landscape history and archaeology and many are familiar from 'quality TV landscape programmes' about landscape. They also include Marion Shoard and Jay Appleton both past 'chairmen' of the LRG.

FUTURES FOR EUROPEAN CITIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The Urban Design Group Conference 2000 held at the Architectural Association, London, 10-11 November 2000.The aim of this conference, organised by the Urban Design Group in collaboration with the Urban Design Alliance, was to facilitate a forum for the design and management

of our towns and cities. Out of this very ambitious agenda four different objectives were identified and constituted four different sessions. The first one described theories and policies including the latest urban strategies for London. The second session illustrated this with case studies of urban regeneration projects in the capital. The third session on the second day presented examples of policies and implementation of planning design from abroad. The conference ended with the third 'Urban Design Alliance Future Cities Think Tank'. The programme reflected the complexity of urban design and its multidisciplinary character. This was reinforced by the great diversity of speakers backgrounds but also by the audience, which consisted of designers, acadernics, politicians and members of the community.

The first session started with a political statement by **Nicky Gavron**, the Deputy Mayor of London, on the spatial strategy for the capital. As expected it contained all the buzzwords such as sustainability, community, transport, biodiversity, etc. On one hand it was reassuring to know that the Government of London was trying to produce a coherent and integrated picture of London's future development, but it is difficult to imagine that all these good ideas will be delivered by 2010 as planned, knowing that the Greater London Authority (GLA) has a limited power and no funding.

The two following speakers dealt with general issues. Chris Hamnett concentrated on economic and social changes and **Herbert Girardet** looked at the ecological aspects. Hamnett's thorough presentation ended with a possible scenario for urban futures and with a trend towards a greater inequality between the 'wealthy 'haves' and the 'have-nots', which might end, in the worst case, in a gradual social breakdown. Girardet set himself the impossible task of dealing with 'ecological design imperatives for urban development' in a presentation of only 20 minutes. The talk therefore remained very superficial, touching on well-known issues such as recycling, energy consumption, etc, but was unable to address any of this in further depth.

Later sessions concentrated on urban regeneration projects in London, illustrating public/private and community partnership. Unexpectedly it was full of contrasts and presented two very different pictures of urban regeneration. The Elephant & Castle Project presented by no less than six different design teams, represents grand, ambitious, profit making development led by private investments. It is therefore not surprising that all subsequent questions were answered by the Almighty Powerful Private Developer. However the glamour of this polished presentation was slightly tainted by a member of the Elephant & Castle Community Group, who spoke up and stated that he had not heard anything about the realisation of the people's expectations and stated that the community did not approve of the developer's vision. It was therefore refreshing to listen to **the Reverend Andrew Mawson,** chairman of Bromley-by-Bow centre, who presented a real community project. He did not talk about visions, but about people, the aim of the project not being to change the character of the place but to build upon the existing strength of the area.

John Worthington started the second day of the conference with a comparison between the continental Napoleonic planning system and the discretionary Anglo-Saxon one. This was illustrated by numerous European examples based on projects he has been working on with DEGW. The efficiency and pro-active continental system proved equally successful in the Austrian examples presented by **Professor Klotz.** His talk depicted a successful and well-orchestrated public consultation system, which had enabled the realisation of very ambitious projects in Vienna. For example the Donau-insel initially conceived as a flood protection project has become a very successful leisure park.

This was contrasted with a rather confused and chaotic account of an over ambitious and frightening project in Rome, which set out to radically transform the presently successful station area by removing the rail traffic and building hotels and shopping malls. This was followed by a description of the changes in Lisbon, Portugal, following the 1998 Expo, which has become a large, out of town, shopping area with a negative impact on the life in the city centre. Thus the conference was a graphic illustration of the great diversity of the urban design approaches and the differences in European cultures. **Natasha Milanovic-Pichieas** presentation of the present situation in Ljubliana, Slovenia, further stressed this point. As a geographer and economist she concentrated on the radical socioeconomic and political changes in this Eastern European country but also touched upon the pressure for new development in the new capital, which is subject to rapid growth. The last session was intended as a brain storming exercise but became a summary of some of the issues raised by the speakers. The futures for twenty-first century European cities are too complex a topic to be dealt with in one conference and will require many more. However some interesting ideas emerged from the contrasting presentations. Firstly, design and physical solutions may not be the answer and it may be more useful to look at processes. There is a clear lack of understanding about the necessity to achieve a more sustainable environment, hence professionals will have to concentrate on finding ways to change

people's perception and increase the awareness of the problems and their possible solutions, (as already applied in other European countries). Finally, cities are about people and all the participants of the urban scene ought to collaborate and exchange ideas in order to use resources efficiently and improve the living environment. In this light John Worthington's definition of design seems particularly applicable in an urban context: 'design is an elegant allocation of resources'.

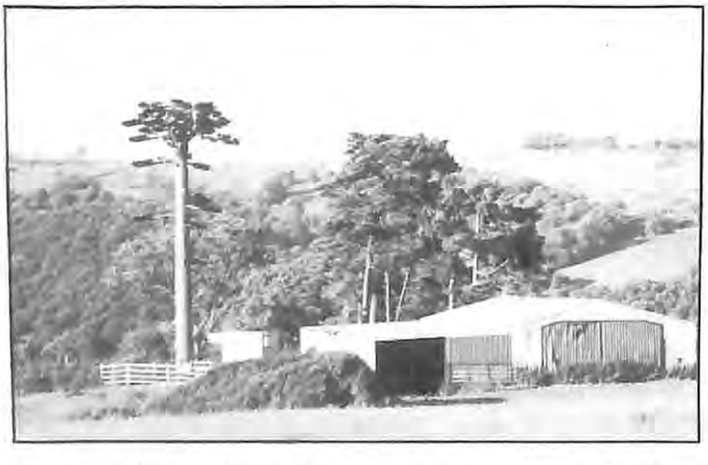
Laurence Patachini. Cheltenham and Gloucester College Email care of j.woudstra@sheffield.ac.uk

MOBILE-PHONE MASTS

Readers may have spotted something similar to the mast pictured here. If you are thinking of setting up a mast in a National Park (this is near Moretonhampstead, Dartmoor NP), you are allowed to conceal it as a Sots Pine. I am amazed at the ingenuity and how well it fits in. The Caledonian Forest is getting a bit thin??

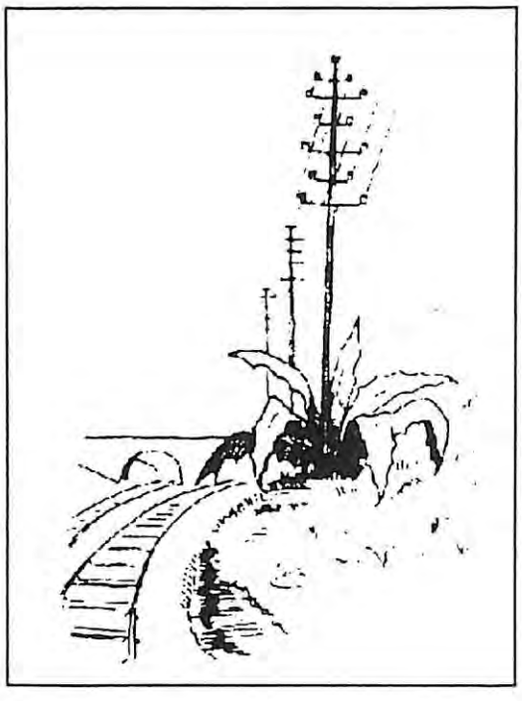
And as I am reading this to my co editor, she refers me to the following:

"...the clergyman had expressed anxiety about a proposal to raise a line of telegraph poles along the



road in front of his house, and Herbert [Jekyll] – brother of Gertrude, then busy erecting poles in West Africa, had commiserated engagingly: 'Knowing you to be pre-eminent as a horticulturalist, I beg to bring to your notice a magnificent species of the Aloe tribe (Agave telegraphica). This highly ornamental plant flourishes best by the side of roads and on railway embankments, and I can strongly recommend it to your notice, feeling it would be seen to great advantage from your drawing room windows".

And here it is, from William Robinson's 1870's periodical *The Garden*. This story is recounted in Sally Festing's well reviewed biography of Gertrude Jekyll. Penguin 1993



PERMEABLE TOWNSCAPE

Finding shortcuts is one of the delights of coming to know a city. Monolithic blocks are broken dow you subvert the traffic flows. The classical sweep ot London's Regent's Street becomes human as you find a little street cutting through it.

Networks of city streets with their magical, mathematical logic that you can only perceive when studying the A-Z streetplan , are interrupted by the *grand projet*. Regent's Street brings the exciting disorder of Soho to an abrupt halt with its bombastic monumentality. Just to the north, the genteel pace of Bloomsbury's Georgian squares is confounded by the huge 11.3 acre block of the 19th century British Museum.

Or it used to be. The recent restoration of the Museum's Great Court has opened it up to the city. The storage stacks that used to surround the British Library's reading room have been cleared away and

the 'old courtyard' has been roofed with glass. It now serves as a north-south route through the Museum and through the city. The same tactic has been used at Somerset House on the Strand: the old government offices have been turned into a link between Covent Garden and the River Thames. In Sheffield, the new Millennium Galleries are intended to be a new route, not just a destination.

These buildings have been described as 'permeable'. 'Permeability' has become a buzzword among big-project architects. Part of its popularity comes from the demands of the National Lottery, a major funder of such projects, on accessibility. For architects permeability is attractive because it suggests they are offering a contextual solution; architects can place their buildings firmly into the city, yet still provide a spectacle.

But public buildings should be rethought like this. Arcades and shopping centres have long used routes, combined with commercial distractions, as a way of looking people. The act of walking marks territory, and the knowledge of a place gives a sense of ownership. Making buildings part of the urban fabric can be a way to actively engage people, allowing them to use a space without making any demands on them. It can make public buildings truly public.

Eleanor Young
Architectural Journalist
ee_young@hotmail.com

Something about this article sets me thinking that the idea of permeability has much wider application in the rural and wilderness landscapes. Shall I make this my research investigation or will you? I cordially invite someone to write on the subject and submit it. Editor

ANTHOLOGY

This selection is one of 'landscapes in small compass'; forget panoramas, think texture.

A Sand County Almanac. Author Aldo Leopold. Publisher Oxford University Press 1949 from paper back edition 1968 pp 126.
The top of the mountain was a great meadow, half a day's ride across, but do not picture it as a single amphitheater of grass, hedged in by a wall of pines. The edges of that meadow were scrolled, curled, and crenulated with an infinity of bays and coves, points and stringers, peninsulars and parks, each of which differed from all the rest. No man knew them all, and every day's ride offered a gambler's chance of finding a new one. I say 'new' because one often had the feeling, riding into some flower spangled cove, that if anyone had been here before, he must have sung or written a poem.

Leopold's book is a classic of American holistic ecology, a natural philosophy. It is often referred to and so I thought I'd better read it. It again is about detail and a personal relationship with a piece of land he buys (in Wisconsin), and its wildlife. Human, interesting, detailed landscapes, observational science with early murmurings of landscape ecology. The piece quoted is a classic description of forest edge, and has something too for human interactions with it.

The Peregrine. Author J.A. Baker Publisher Penguin Books 1967 pp1
East of my home, the long ridge lies across the skyline like the low hull of a submarine. Above it, the eastern light is bright with reflections of distant water, and there is a feel of sails beyond the land. Hill trees mass together in a dark-spired forest, but when I move toward them they slowly fan apart, the sky descends between them, and they are solitary oaks and elms, each with its own wide territory of winter shadow. The calmness, the solitude of the horizons lures me towards them, through them, and on to others. They layer the memory like strata. From the town,...the plain is like an estuary of land, scattered with island farms. The river flows slowly, meanders..... and
.....Detailed descriptions of landscape are tedious. *(inserted after his attempt to do a geographical setting for his book).* One part of England is superficially so much like another. The differences are subtle, coloured by love. The soil here is clay: boulder clay to the north of the river, London clay to the south. There is gravel on the river terraces and the higher ground of the ridge.

This book won a prize for natural history writing. The subject matter is the Peregrine, and it's a book I put down after ten pages as not very human almost mysogenistic, too obsessed by birds. However birds are intimately interwoven with habitat and there are small field descriptions on dozens of pages. The 'field' is the author's landscape. At that scale of experience (I almost wrote 'view'), he does not find landscape tedious, and it is the close detail of plough furrows, scrub, bracken and long grass that the peregrine patrols. Baker is obsessed with his

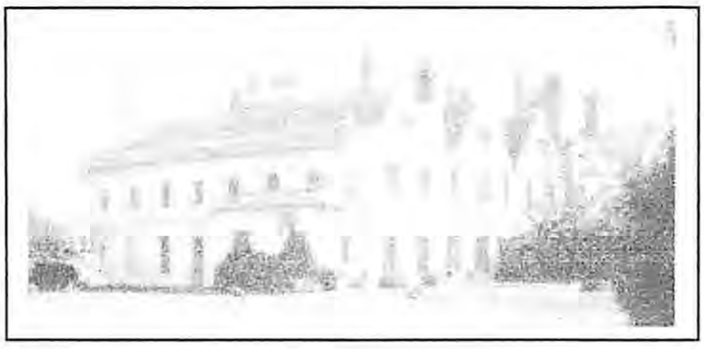
relationship with the bird, is it one individual only? I think it is. Must I read on?

Brensham Village. Author John Moore Publisher Penguin Books 1952 pp 55 (first published 1946)
I used to think that the cricket-field at Brensham, on a blue afternoon in May, must surely be one of the pleasantest places in the world, and certainly when I travelled about the world I found few places pleasanter. About the time of the first match, the apple blossom came out, and the willows put on their young green. The first cuckoo arrived and started calling from the small adjacent meadow which was appropriately named Cuckoo Pen. There were cuckoo-flowers in this meadow too, a silver lilac carpet of them, so that we did not know whether it was called after the bird or the flower. Lapwings had their nests there, and sometimes we found the mottled eggs when we were looking for a ball which had been skied, Brensham fashion, right over the tops of the willow trees.

John Moore also wrote the novel **The Waters under the Earth** publisher Collins 1965. It is picture of a fading small English estate and an ancient oak assailed by changing attitudes, the Korean War (now fifty year ago) and modernities such as a new by pass. It is wonderfully English in landscape, nature and persons. He also wrote Portrait of Elmbury which one recognises as Tewksbury (Gloucesterhire, Vale of Severn, UK). It is perhaps that these parts of the England are familiar, or that I was a boy in 1946 and felt the same feelings, saw the same lapwings (plovers) and their mottled eggs, that I am so delighted with his view of places (= landscape in small compass = nature at close to = ecstatic May mornings when the world was young and so was I).

NATURE AND I ARE TWO *Woody Allen*

Clive Adams writes on the proposal to establish a Centre at Poltimore House, Devon which will explore the changing relationship between nature and contemporary society through the arts. The project was initiated by him and his wife Jill and they have recently managed a development study which has informed capital applications to the National Lottery through the Arts Council of England, Heritage Lottery Fund and other bodies. Clive is a Fellow of the University of Plymouth - which has recently helped fund a series of related symposia - and he has been involved as a curator since the Seventies with artists who work with nature.



The American literary scholar Robert Torrance has observed that when civilizations begin to undergo breakdown or turbulent change - as in Hellenistic Greece, medieval Japan and Europe at the time of industrial and political revolution - there is an urgent need for new forms of expression to evolve in order to make some sense of the changing relationship between nature and society. The start of a new Millennium, marked by a convergence of concern over new genetic technologies, various epidemics, global warming, over-population, an increasing disparity between rich and poor, might not be such a bad time to set up a Centre to look anew at the relationship.

All of nature talks to me, if I could just figure out what it was trying to tell me. Laurie Anderson

Since the Sixties, artists and designers, writers, composers, film makers, choreographers and performers have become increasingly engaged in a critical reassessment of the relationship between society and nature, and been influenced by other cultures, religions, philosophical concepts and the scientific and technological revolution. Increasingly, they have come to analyse deficits of our own nature as well as of the one surrounding us, and of our perception of it.

'Nature' is a difficult word either to use or to avoid, its *logos* is of flux itself, and it is used to denote a far wider reference that the terms 'landscape' or 'environment'. Many past projects and investigations have fought shy of such a vast and complex subject. Virtually all commentators either in books or exhibitions have, until very recently, narrowed their analysis ~ of artists working in relation to the natural world ~ within a construct that they usually refer to as 'Environmental' or 'Land Art' ~ with some projects more narrowly defined to simply mean 'art made of and *in* nature'.

The important symposium 'The Future of Nature' at the Tate in 1994 opened out the discussion and its subsequent book addressed the issue of what cultural forms might be produced when new knowledges challenge and undermine traditional ways of conceiving the 'natural'. A recent exhibition 'Natural Reality' (1999) in Aachen attempted an analysis of artistic positions and identified the central problem in contemporary culture as being a consequence of denaturation - a rupture between



body and mind, nature and culture. It argued that as nature is the origin, condition and result of human existence, society and culture are a part of nature, and that the environmental crisis is therefore only a part of our deeper social, cultural and intellectual malaise.

I am nature ...I work from inside out, like nature.
Jackson Pollock.

In the autumn of 1995, encouraged by opportunities then offered by the National Lottery, a search began for a location for the project in Devon. The challenge was to find one that best fitted the concept, had good accessibility and the greatest potential of being viable. Devon was chosen because, in balancing the needs of agriculture, tourism, housing and industry, it faces challenges that both town and country typically face in their relationships with the natural world. It had also, in recent years, attracted a significant number of artists working in relation to nature in new ways.

Poltimore House, some 5 miles north-cast of Exeter, was finally chosen in 1998 - a house from the time of both the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment that had lost its way in the closing decades of the 20th century. The Treaty of Exeter, marking the end of the Civil War in the Southwest, was signed there in 1646, the house remained in Lord Poltimore's ownership until 1942 and it has been used by schools and as a hospital.

As part of the current study, a team of architects, artists and consultants have been commissioned to draw up plans for the house and grounds. The historic parts of the house will be restored to provide galleries, a study centre with lecture/live event and education rooms, library, archive and bookshop. An entirely new wing designed by Richard Murphy will be added to give 2 larger galleries, a cafe, lifts and services. Murphy is probably best known for his work on the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh and more recently, for a building for Dundee Contemporary Arts. Outbuildings within the gardens will be used for studios and accommodation.

The artist Garry Fabian Miller was enabled by a RSA Art for Architecture Award to work in close collaboration with the architect. His own contribution to the project will be works for the house and garden which focus on the beauty of grasses and on their significance to human life. Commissions by six other artists, chosen by open submission, will form part of the capital application. Over the past year, artists from many countries including Austria, Israel, Netherlands, Japan, USA, Belgium, Germany, Rumania and New Zealand have visited Poltimore. In a 'Year of the Artist' project organised by Spacex Gallery, the Austrian artist Lois Weinberger has made interventions around Exeter using plants and seeds from the gardens.

Music, as I conceive it, is ecological ....it IS ecology.
John Cage

Within a framework of exhibitions, events and educational activities, the Centre will examine some of the most important issues concerning society's relationship to nature, for example: how our ideas of nature are culturally constructed and our experience of nature is mediated through history and culture; how the physical demands that our way of life puts upon the natural world might be reconciled with the sentiments and values for nature which our culture has generated; how society draws behavioural analogies from the natural world to inform its own operation; how personal ties, perceptions and experiences of the natural world can become enhanced or eclipsed by new technologies.

The project intends to make a significant contribution, on levels that range from the local to the global, towards reaching new understandings of our relationship with the natural world and in ways that embrace diversity, practice inclusivity, and promote interdisciplinary dialogue. Its uniqueness lies in this unifying concept, rather than on any model of existing gallery, arts complex or sculpture park. It will provide a major opportunity for people of different ages, backgrounds and cultures to come together in a genuine spirit of creative enquiry and to share an involvement in art, design and new media, poetry, music and dance, talks, courses, workshops and residences. Both house and gardens will be accessible to all disabled people. It is intended that the Centre should involve at least 100,000 participants a year.

The study stages of the project have been supported by the National Lottery through the Arts Council of England, English Heritage, East Devon District Council, Devon County Council, South West Arts, University of Plymouth, RSA Art for Architecture Award Scheme, Devon Wildlife Trust, ENTRUST, PROSPER and South West of England Regional Development Agency. The Centre is not likely to open before 2004 and the house and gardens are not now open to the public. If anyone wants to comment or be informed of future developments, please write to Clive and Jill Adams 2 Swains Court, Fore Street, Topsham, Exeter EX3 OHH. Tel/fax 01 392 877979
email ccanw@btinternet.com

AMERICAN NATIONAL PARKS
An Innocent Abroad

In two weeks from August to mid-September 1999, prompted by generous Indiana in-laws, we did, their country in true American style, or rather its national parks: five days in Yellowstone (enough), two in Grand Teton (not enough), three in Sequoia-King's Canyon (OK, just) ~ with the odd day in Indianapolis, San Francisco, or simply moving on.

Impressions of vastness remain in the mind, and of being ferried over gulfs of near-emptiness to oases of intense, dramatic, often sensational character chosen for our special delectation. Travel broadens the mind, but also confuses it when expectations as naive as mine meet the reality, as these notes will show.

An Atlantic crossing is no cause for most passengers even to glance towards the window, yet vastness begins here. One is accustomed to the ease of flying over sizeable chunks of our planet, yet for once the appalling immensity of the Atlantic strikes home. A minutely-wrinkled surface appears below, studded with blobs of fluff ~ but it is *six Miles* below, the wrinkles are huge Atlantic swells, that fluff is cumulus clouds at least a mile above them, we are miles higher still, and this vast expanse moves unchangingly below as our airplane moves infinitesimally over it for hour after hour, and you think: "Yes, that is what an ocean is: something it takes six hours to pass over even at six hundred miles an hour .....

The dark crescents of New England's coastline appear quite suddenly, reduced almost to map-scale at the height we are holding, then America commences its own slow crawl below us like another ocean. As big as the Atlantic in fact, this country is so huge you begin to understand its history better: why, for instance, it took so long for European settlers to penetrate beyond the Appalachian mountains.

They run below us now, not just one but successive parallel ridges stretching hundreds of miles to north and south: uninhabited and solidly wooded once more ~ only second-growth to be sure, but having once been lost for a whole day in such country in Vermont (utterly lost, with hardly an idea any more which way was out) ~ I can see why early settlers east of the Appalachians would have stayed put. As for what lies west of them, we fly on over a nameless land of endlessly repeated identically wooded hillocks for another hundred miles or more: could anyone lacking the firmest resolve, the most urgent

need for pastures new, find their way through that? Great country for nature but hardly for humans, and it is startling to see how much still exists here.

On it goes, the vast slow change of one condition to another below our still miles-high aircraft: wooded hummocks giving way at last to the wide open Indiana plains where Jefferson's mile-square grid, after a struggle to assert itself through the trees now reigns supreme for a thousand miles, challenged only by defiantly wriggling watercourses. Even so, after the amazing Mississipi has floated past in next day's early dawn, this naive human geometry will eventually falter once more, the squares drawn by fields and fence-lines and narrow dirt roads fading not into trees now but arid eroding hills, only briefly interrupted by valley lands where the grid emerges triumphantly again.

It has not all been like that. Hungry for the complex patterns of a successfully settled land, productive yet harmonious, I have seen plenty so far. A surprising (given urban pressures) and intricate balance of farmland and woodland still remaining east of the Appalachians and there are even hedged fields: I never heard of *hedges* in the States. Then the strikingly striped Pennsylvanian landscape of spaced out farms, woodland belts and contoured fields: Amish country.

Most unexpected have been the richly sculptured uplands dimly seen next dawn east (or was it west?) of the Mississipi, each with its farmstead nestled on a plateau of fields bounded by a marvellously convoluted valley, mandelbrottish ("dendritic" one should say, of course); such valleys filled with dense dark woodland not once but again and again, the space of entire English counties occupied by this single yet satisfying pattern. I longed to see it from the ground, to know how it worked, whether it truly had the stability, the balance of human and natural, of European landscapes so surprisingly echoed here on the American continent.

Vastness can be exhilarating once grasped, and offers sensations of transcendental kind I shall come to. Yet in America, its negative side has also been very apparent in those aerial views, for the latitude offered to enormously wasteful landuses, or the cult of pioneering isolationism which allows individuals (individual but numerous) to occupy wide tracts of empty land identified as theirs only by lonely tracks and lonelier buildings. Buildings with no visible means of livelihood, or (crucially) none connected with the land itself and no use made of that land: therefore no imaginable reason for occupancy other than the wish to be somewhere as far as possible from anyone else.

In Massachusetts years before I had been naively disillusioned by another expression of that wish, in those lovely liberating rolling woods which on closer contact turned out to be all private property, the leafy canopy hiding an astonishing number of houses with only the new driveways, the "Keep off" notices on trees and the ravening of guard dogs to warn that all was not what it seemed.

That was in cosy New England. Only the most neurotic side of this desire can explain the extraordinary sight, in the Mid-West, of solitary houses spaced widely apart on narrow dead-end roads across semidesert, unmarked by anything to tie them to that one point in the desolation: no trees, no cultivation, no visible resource of *anything* except empty space, as seen from the air; or later, seen from the road, the similar scatter of single hutlike dwellings over miles of sagebrush plains: buildings dwarfed to insignificance by the vastness around them. Who lives in them? What do they think about? What lurks behind the windows, daring the stranger to venture near? Now one recognises the source of certain images in classic American cinema (and literature, eg Stephen Ring's *Gunslinger*): the solitary unexplained building, doors creaking in a dusty wind, and something waiting to happen .... They do exist.

This curiously alarming kind of territoriality – alarming because so sterile yet threatening at the same time – seems an especially mad version of the 'open yard' spatial pattern familiar from American suburbs, where no fences divide the empty lawns around or between the separate dwellings, and few *gardens* as in the rich habitable European sense, exist to connect the dwelling with its site. Open yards might suggest cosy togetherness, a friendly sharing of space, but experiences in New England (and Greenbie's great book *Spaces*) point to the reverse, while our hosts in Indianapolis spoke of having no relations with, or even knowledge of, the occupants of a house just across the empty ground separating them. Does such ground symbolise at best mere ownership, or at worst a gulf between people with no wish to communicate, which in open countryside is reinforced by actual distance? How paradoxical also that in this country of individual freedoms (as my colleague Nigel Dunnet has observed) individual expression is conspicuously lacking, as though its inhabitants had no idea what to do with all this land they own.

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JOHN HARPER'S 'STRAND' EXHIBITION, HULL

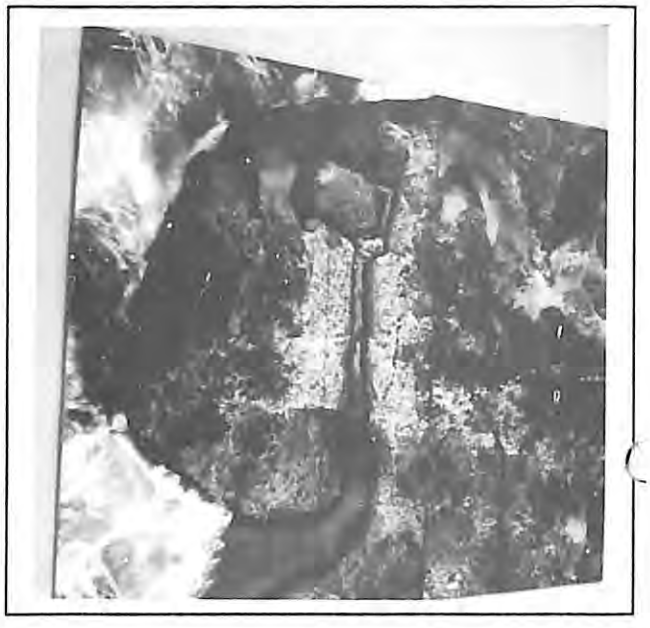
John Harper's most recent exhibition "Strand" comprised 6 large (some 2 x 3m.) black and white photographs, hung in the central octagonal room at the Ferens Art Gallery in Hull. They formed the third of a series of works exploring the perception and experience of landscapes.

These latest works explored the strand, that constantly changing and restless interface between sea and land. At first sight, the images appeared organised and controlled, based upon conventional notions of composition, of balance between black and white forms. These were reassuring images; although large, and thus physically confronting the viewer, they appeared to resonate with a familiar, accessible, relationship with the land and the elements. They presented us with views of rock and seaweed and surging seawater, such as we have all experienced when standing on a rocky shore, looking down at our feet, mesmerised by the incessant motion of the sea, fascinated by the complexity of tones and textures of rocks, seaweeds, barnacles, churning sea, detritus ....

But close up, it became clear that these were not simply enlarged single point views, but were compilations. Parts of the images were formed from a mosaic of multitudes of small and large pieces of photograph, overlapping, abutting, jostling together. Tracery of white lines on dark background forms, of dark lines on light areas, made it obvious that what appeared to be solid rock, or seaweed, or sea, was in fact a compilation of tones and textures from many previous glimpses of the endlessly changing shore line.

"Strand" formed the third of a series of major works by John Harper, who describes his practice as "an exchange between light, form and visual perception". The first series, "River", used thousands of patches of black and white photograph as paint strokes, building up an overwhelming image of the route of a river. These long images (totalling some 100m.) required the viewer to participate in, even re-create, the experience of the changing nature of the river, by walking their entire length.

The second series, "From light",* was of spaces and places along rivers in the Yorkshire Dales. Here large but irregularly shaped images drew the viewer physically into a relationship, engaging with the viewer's peripheral vision, and creating an almost vertiginous sense of space. These images very successfully addressed the notion of the all encompassing sensory realisation of a landscape, the way in which we feel and sense and are aware of the spaces, the wind, the dampness, the textures, the light and the dark, the forms around us - the haptic response to the landscape that Peter Lanyon



so successfully managed to convey in his paintings.

With "Strand", the initial sense of certainty, solidity, of understanding what was presented to us was confounded, partly by the technique used. These images had been re-constructed, through fragments, glimpses, memories of a multitude of previous views, and thus brought attention to the process of perception, of viewing and re-creating the view of the landscape.

But in comparison with "From light', "Strand" seemed less energetic and dynamic; the images were contained by their rectangular outline, and less demanding of the viewer in a physical sense - and thus it seemed to me less engaging. John told me that with these works, he was aiming at initially reassuring the viewer with the convention of a rectangular frame. Thus viewers would see what they expected, both in terms of the norm of depicting landscape, and the norm of a photographic image, but then would need to question the conventional framing, and thus the process of perception.

He was exploring what he sees as our "earth based aesthetic", instilled in to our psyche through a long history of British Neo-Romantic artists, from Victor Pasmore and Henry Moore to Patrick Heron. He was deliberately drawing our attention to a way of

looking that neither artist nor viewer can escape, which arises from our cultural conditioning, and our familiarity with such conventions in the depiction of the landscape. And yet our sensory appreciation of the landscape, when within it, does not fit in to the contrived device of a frame ....

So on several levels our response to these images is confounded - the forms by their construction, the images by the title, the subject matter by the rectangular framing. Above all, in this series, there is a tension between the "normality" of the images, their stability and containment, and the dynamic of the constantly shifting, endlessly moving, infinitely stretching, strand line ....

"Strand" was exhibited at the Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, during March and April 2000

"From light" was reviewed in LRE 25, Late summer 1998, pp. 1-2 .

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URBAN RENAISSANCE URBAN SPRAWL

I married a tall blonde Essex girl (co producer of LRE) in the ancient church of St Mary, Bocking, back in 1969. On the decease of her father I played a part in securing planning consent for 17 houses on his declining nursery site and over New Year 2001, I went back to visit. The houses, next to the River Blackwater, are tightly packed into two closes and have a "somewhat towny feel", as houses can do that lack large gardens and front almost directly onto the street. Despite this they are still surburban infill. We recognised some of the trees from pre-development times, trees my wife had picked fruit from or played in as a child. Much of the ancient Bocking High Street that I knew, remains.

Braintree is Bocking's bigger coarser sister settlement up the road and lost much of its early charm to the industrialisation of the 19th and first half of the 20th century. It has dull Victorian terraced houses, other plain but no doubt safe and snug little council house homes from the thirties. It has the expected radial road spread of middle class inter-war semi detached, and a large council estate. This dates from the early 1950's it is spaciously laid out and includes a large sloping grassy space which may have been planned as a latter day village green, nostalgia for a rural past. My wife attended the primary school there in 1954, the year it was opened. It remains unchanged. Built into the estate is a comprehensive school.

In 1859 Lewis's Topographical Directory lists Braintree as having 3670 inhabitants. "A town pleasantly situated on an eminence, consisting of several streets irregularly formed and inconveniently narrow." At that date it was already a centre for the making of textiles, and Courtaulds employed 1400 people there, and in Bocking which adjoins it, and at Halstead a few miles away. Mr Courtauld invented viscose rayon, from this grew rich.

The new bypass around Braintree, its islands and sub-islands like draughts close spaced on a board, succeed in losing me completely. I am disoriented by the changes. I never knew it well and now see parts of the town that were previously not on view. The central area, once light industry, is being cleared and redeveloped for good or bad. It is quite clear that Braintree has mushroomed on its south and east sides. It has also erupted like fungal fruiting bodies under, out and beyond its ring road. Great Notley, Black Notley and other old hamlet names are now housing areas, but of these more later. In the east there is the irritatingly named Braintree Designer Village, which boasts its own station and is heralded on the bypass edge by its own signage, by a MacDonalds and a large petrol station.

My interest in all this is more than purely personal for I have spent the last year mapping the land use and character of urban areas. This work offers insights that would help many politicians and media presenters: clarifications of reality. In my mind all the time has been the idea of urban renaissance (an approach to!!); the official report by the Rogers Committee; the notion of inner city and the history of urban growth. My *experience of mapping 150 square kilometers in exceptional detail tells me the following: that urban areas and 'town' let alone 'city' have nothing in common except in selected and very narrow nuclei; that the notion of suburb is too easily imaged as 'leafy though dull middle class 1930s Surrey' when in reality its has half a hundred different faces, many of them very ugly and very deprived, homogeneous and facility poor, without being inner city, and many, these days, very recent.*

I come back then to the urban expansion (the built up accretions) around Braintree and Great Notley. First I can say that the general impression of the housing is more favourable than say Reading, Aldershot or the Surrey Blackwater Valley, (other areas which I have mapped). If these are tightly packed residential boxes then they have an Essex stamp to them, steeper roofs, and this may be the



Eden Project: photography in the tropical dome by Marie Randall April 30th2001
latter day outworkings of the Essex Design Guide; (one of my relatives bought into an earlier estate in Black Notley and much of it was very handsome suburb in the Essex DG style).

Imagine then you are lost leaving island Number 2 off an unnumbered exit of the Braintree bypass and you wrongly, and by chance (one option in seven based on exit roads) take the road to Panners Hamlet. Oh wondrous name, along with 'Grange', 'Court' and 'Designer Village'. But the surprise is to arrive into what appears to be a pastiche of Hampstead and other London styles, Dutch gables, long 'Elisabethan priory' stone mullioned casements, three storey Belgravia houses with every refined embellishment and even a tall hipped house like a Vermont Barn. Confused? Tricked? Is this what we should like? Is it OK to like it, for I find that I do. And why I do is because it feels thoroughly towny. It is outlandishly mixed in style, it has height, it reduces back gardens to sitting space and says 'no' to gardens at the front. It has urban density, urban height and urban styles. It displays wealth. It has a tree planted urban square. It looks like it will settle down, and of course it will be there for another 200 years, give or take disaster. Historians may talk of it as the great breakout in suburban building. Most important is that it breaks with every tradition of suburban building that I have ever seen, except perhaps in a sort of theme park town street in the French idiom at Freeport, Grand Bahama. Funny coincidence that freeport word. Go on be brave! buy into Hampstead-by-Great Notley which is now on offer at Essex prices. So cheap! Live close to the City. Well kind of! **Bud Young**

September Seminar South Bohemia

LRG will explore the possibility of supporting the development of a Centre for European Landscape Studies. The Centre in a 'castle' at Nove Hrady in southern Bohemia is being promoted by the Institute of Landscape Ecology and sponsored by the Czech Academy of Sciences. The proposed aim is to develop a centre of excellence in the study and promotion of good practice in the sustainable management of landscapes in Europe. A seminar to explore the idea will be held in Nove Hrady between the 6th and 10th September this year. We are looking for up to 30 people to attend this event which will be sponsored by LRG. The programme includes study visits to the Sumava Mountains National Park and discussions with members of the Czech Academy of Sciences and academics, landscape planners and managers from elsewhere in Europe with a particular interest in helping to establish this Centre. It will also be great fun. Those with an interest in attending the seminar should contact Gareth Roberts for further details. Email Gareth at <dolwen@supanet.com> or write to him at Dolwen, Trawsfynydd, Gwynedd LL41 4SP.

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