Edge of Emergence:
Landscape as a Journey of Memory
Jiayue Wang | MLA Landscape Architecture, RISD
Edge of Emergence:
Landscape as a Journey of Memory
This is a book for Past Memories and Emergence of a Return
Edge of Emergence: Landscape as a Journey

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Landscape Architecture Degree in the Department of Landscape Architecture of the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island.

By: Wang, Jiayue
Date:

Approved by Masters Examination Committee:

Emily Vogler, Department Head, Landscape Architecture

Leslie Lee, Primary Thesis Advisor

Theodore Hoerr, Thesis Committee
INTRODUCTION

I still remember that Friday afternoon after kindergarten let out. I was five years old that day when my grandfather taught me how to fly a kite in a tomato field. The wind blew too strong and it cracked my lips. He would put sesame oil on my lips to heal them. Now, whenever I come across a farmland, that vivid memory returns. However, the story and the land will be forever sealed in my mind. How does farmland have such power to make me recall that specific moment? What combination of sensory and visual triggers are at work here? What role do spatiality, sequence, thresholds, scale, and temporality within landscape play in this convergence of place and time, and the re-emergence of memory and the emotional associations it carries?

How to design encounters and thresholds within landscape that cause attentiveness, pause, reorientation, and trigger memory and emotion associated with other places and time?
It was dry like my lips in the autumn weather. Water already began to be absorbed into the cracks. Like the sesame seed oil filled the dry gaps in my lips. I taste this memory like a child.

In fact,
I was a child really tasting it.

The string was so tense, like the strong winds. Carved my cheek and wanted to blow everything away. It blew away the crops, dead leaves, and through the birch forest. Take away my screams and fears. It kept blowing. Trying to blow away all my memories.

I tried to seize it like I tried to hold that string. My kite is so small, yet why does it fly so far? I couldn't hear my grandpa, I was too far from him to, But I knew what he wanted me to do. I let the kite go.

When the wind stopped my kite dropped down and I ran to it. I took all the string and rolled it back up. My finger was creased from the strong pull of the kite and it would hurt to bend, But I would not let anyone know.

KITE ON THE FIELD

Personal Memory from 5 years old
Flying Kite with my grandpa
Jiayue 2018.10

It was dry like my lips in the autumn weather. Water already began to be absorbed into the cracks. Like the sesame seed oil filled the dry gaps in my lips. I taste this memory like a child.

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Collective unconscious

A more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal. I call it the personal unconscious. But this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the collective unconscious. I have chosen the term “collective” because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal, in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substance of a supra-personal nature which is present in every one of us.

Visceral

Relating to deep inward feelings rather than to the intellect. Deep feeling from human is always hard to be noticed and captured when it begins to generate in terms of a certain reaction from a “thing”. It is the sign of human deep feelings begin to be visualized and transferred from internal to external world. More importantly, visceral would become the most real and instinct evaluation about the “thing” human encountered.

Memory

1. The faculty by which the mind stores and remembers information
2. Something remembered from the past; a recollection
3. The part of a computer in which data or program instructions can be stored for retrieval.

Experience

1. Practical contact with and observation of facts or events
2. The knowledge or skill acquired by experience over a period of time, especially that gained in a particular profession by someone at work
3. An event or occurrence that leaves an impression on someone.

Communication

1. The imparting or exchanging of information or news
2. Means of sending or receiving information, such as telephone lines or computers
3. The means of traveling or of transporting goods, such as roads or railroads.

**KEY WORDS**

**Definition**

**Collective unconscious**

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**CONCEPTUAL DIAGRAM**

In my point of view, landscape is a 4D or maybe higher dimension event. It weaves people’s collective unconscious by providing them experiences and at some point triggers the visceral sensory emotions and creates or highlights their memories which develop communication between deep feelings and landscape/place. This communication happens at the moment I define as the “threshold”.

In my thesis, the collective unconscious represents the group of people that have the similar behavior or reaction from the certain stimulation or sensory experiences. Which brings the discussion about the placelspace quality or value that creates an experience that is a reflection of that unconscious.

The visceral reaction is the most real and essential reflection of a particular space. Within the design process, when a designer creates a moment that triggers “users’ visceral” reading of his/her design, it also builds a chance for users to be conscious about the space. Meanwhile, users derive this awareness from the participation with the landscape.

The experience is part of the memory being reopened from the stimulation when human put themselves into a space/place or landscape, where past experiences begin and continue to be stored as a new part of their memory.

In this book, communication refers to the dialogue between people and landscape. As a result, communication could be interpreted as a next step after we defined the “threshold”.

I use my personal memory as an example to set up a frame to interpret the influence of memory and how these memories will function in another way. We can understand “memory” here as a story in one’s mind waiting to be found out in a representative way.

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EXPERIMENTATION

As this triggering process is related to people’s emotional change, in order to understand how to bring back people’s past memories, it is helpful to understand how to trigger people’s emotions in landscape. I designed an experiment to visualize how our emotions changed while our memories are brought back unconsciously. As a result, this experiment of our “mind journey” can be used as a guide for a real “journey” in landscape. I prepared more than twenty watercolor painted papers, put them all on the table and let people choose one. The colors were mixed naturally in the painting process and created unique textures. Then, I let people write down the answers regarding my questions in order.

From the beginning to the end, people’s emotions changed during the whole “mind journey”. This short “mind journey” of bringing back past memories developed a basic logic and observational evidence in the “physical journey” in landscape. Through this process, people’s visceral emotion and past memory (mostly from their past experiences) are recalled unconsciously.
Time creates landscape in a meaningful way as well as takes away. Within the faster land iteration and post-industrial damage of the environment, we might lose the value of the land. Meanwhile, we lose our memories of precious moments tied to that land and could never be recreated. Landscape provides us a space to grow and create, to memorize and glow.

For greater purpose, people will have a better sense of the changes that have happened to the land by memorizing and engaging, being more aware of the consequences we human beings have had done to the land. Through this process, not only will we enhance communication with the land but also learn from it.
CASE STUDY

Similarity:
All these paintings, sculptures, architecture or landscape works have one thing in common: they strike up sharply on one’s mind, thought, and memory once people encounter them. They all bring up a moment that may trigger everyone’s emotions and make people have reflection when seeing them.

STUDY MODELS

These series study models are made in an abstract way to represent my understanding of memories intertemporally.
Moments in memory
Moments within time and space

Dynamic variety
The variation of the existing space projected on the same surface will cause various effects.
STUDY DRAWINGS

These series study drawings illustrate the way how we perceive and interpret a landscape.

Perception—Moments strike us
How we perceive landscape and how we have a reflection on that?

Under fluid surface
What is under an Emergence?
Spacial Depth
The more we add, maybe the more we will get in depth.

Overlap
A particular time that has unique quality by overlapping layers into one moment.

Moment
Light creates another LAYER of moment on the drawing.
In addition, there are always gaps among all the feelings, and memories vary from individuals, which leaves a space for more exploration and also provides a chance to “breathe.”

Pattern & Trace

The precious moment in our memory is being brought out unconsciously from the experiment.

This memory is the most visceral experience in one's life. After this “memory journey,” one’s emotion or feeling changes. Some minutely, some drastically. But they all contribute to the “collective unconscious.”

MIND JOURNEY EXPERIMENTATION

“How are you feeling now?”

“Use dash line to mark out all the boundaries between colors you can see even the most subtle change.”

“What will you think of from this feeling?”

“What activity can you think of with this person?”

“When and where did that happen?”

“How are you feeling now after you rebuild this memory?”

“Connect all the answers you have written.”
Joyful
I sit by the sea in Rhode Island coastal area with an old and a new friend. It was cloudy.

Happy
I have to study in Bloom on Tuesday. I think of myself, it is sunny again!

Sad
My ex-boyfriend was always hungry! We were in Shenzhen at New Year’s day for a concert, he secretly kissed me.

Warm & Sweet
I was playing with my cat at home last Sunday. Winter though very warm inside.

Nostalgic
It reminds me of two years ago, I was hiking with my boy- friend in Greece. It was cloudy. I really miss that time.

Funny
I was late for class with Jay and Leo. Suzanne warned us, that was a funny autumn sunny day.

Relaxed
Jayue was wearing an apron and cooking fish for me that cold Friday in her house, she looked nervous and curious. So cute.

Mad/Pity/Angry
I told someone Kangui, a TV show lasting ten years will be closed very soon in Taiwan.

Fullfilled
I feel so fulfilled when I think of sitting on the beach with some artist friends one cloudy Saturday.
ENTRANCE

This phase provides a site for the combination of embedded memories, and exploration of design principles and strategies.

The site known as Snake Den State Park, was built in 1969, it is a farmland and woodland combination and comprises 744 acres, located along Route 6 in Johnston, Rhode Island. The reason to choose this site also involves a personal memory from fall, 2018. The undeveloped property has self-guided walking trails, beautiful trees, flowers, plants and working farmland. This suddenly drove me back to the afternoon when I was five years old with my grandpa when he taught me how to fly a kite. Such a strong feeling of collecting these precious moments 22 years later made me see it, feel it, smell it and bathe in it, in another time on the other side of the earth. I saw everything overlapping with my memory spatially and intertemporally.
SITE ANALYSIS

While I walked through the site, there were several turning points I identified as "threshold." These turning points are where the environmental features begin to change. For instance: farmland/water, farmland/forest, open/enclosed, dry land/wetland, and topography variation. During the whole journey, we can see different views, hear changes from the urban environment to the natural environment, and smell distinctive scents while we move forward. These experiences all contribute to my emotional change and recollection of memories.
SITE ANALYSIS
SITE ANALYSIS
STUDY MODELS

These study models address the exploration of:

- How to trigger human emotions?
- How to bring back memories?
- How to provide experiential change?
- How to design this “journey”?

Memory and emotion change along the “journey” on the site.
Use reflective materials to reveal things that are hidden or forgotten.

Reflective material will visualize the hidden environment.
Enlarge the phenomenon

Regrading the existing topography to connect waters on the site as a guide to visitors during the journey.
Spatial quality change will reform our sense of the scale in a certain place and may lead to the previous memory.

Take advantage of the existing topography.

Stage one  
Return

Stage two  
Rebuild

Stage three  
Release
This drawing is a vision for the design proposal. It shows different stages of the journey using a collaboration of reality and fantasy. The ground means time and space and the triangular shaped structure absorbs both sides into one, forming a bridge. It carries past and present into the future, with memories restructured along the journey, reflecting the awareness of the absence.

Silver Point Pen drawing  2019.3
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EMERGENCE

Some scientific research and books provide strong support of how to understand our emotions. By summarizing those philosophies into five principles and strategies for my design, this helped me to build up related themes that can trigger emotional response. These principles and strategies illustrate what motivates, and how to motivate our emotions. Based on my previous experiment’s results, I could motivate people’s emotions in certain areas of the site to trigger people’s past memories.
DESIGN PRINCIPLES

What motivates an emotion?

1. Cause Attentiveness
We all have personal goals of pursuing something, the bigger our goal is, the stronger our emotion will be.

2. Self Identification
How we understand ourselves in relation to place and scale.

3. Enhance Personal Meaning
How we understand ourselves within the world, as part of an interconnected whole, as part of place, and how this deepens emotional associations.

4. Provide Positivity
We all tend to seek for healthy well being. To quote Shakespeare in Hamlet: “For there is nothing either good or bad/but thinking makes it so.” And we are often told, with good reasons, that beauty (or ugliness) is in the eye of the beholder.

5. Positioning for Re-engagement
We consistently interpret what happens in our lives and when conditions align, replay the same emotional plots over and over as memory emerges.
DESIGN STRATEGIES
How to motivate an emotion?

1. Disruption (change routine) and exaggerate phenomena
   To gain attentiveness for people who encounter the landscape, change their route on the path, enhance the phenomenon on their way or exaggerate the elements on that landscape can make disruptive effect from people’s expectation. Thus, cause people’s attentiveness and bring up their emotion change.

2. Reflection
   Creating space that has reflective qualities (such as water’s surface) that people can situate themselves within, thereby triggering emotions.

3. Centralization:
   Situate people within spaces with different scales so as to form their understanding of their personal relationship to place, among the interaction with others. In this way, triggering emotion, meaning and associated memories.

4. Projection
   Within the overall sequence of experiences, design moments of awe and beauty so as to create a framework of positivity and hope.

5. Programming
   Set up experiences and events that become a part of new memories and at the same time can trigger people’s past memories.
Emergence along the Journey
PERSPECTIVES

Meditation Grove
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Stone Walk

Reflection Walk
THE END OR THE BEGINNING?

These principles formulate the strategies and finally create the six themes in the design. The whole journey in landscape is a linear system, but the stimulation in each theme is a networked system. During the whole journey, people’s emotions will be triggered when they encounter a new theme. Between each theme, they have space and time to process their emotions and adjust their experiential state. In the end, when people finish the whole journey, they will not only have their past memories brought back but also will have built new memories for future events. In this way the past, present, and future potential memories overlap spatially and intertemporally.
Interestingly, one day during this thesis time, my grandfather called me and complained about the construction work near his house. He said: “I can’t fly a kite anymore!”

Every story will finally become a memory. I wish those precious memories can always stay with me, even in a different space and time.
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