



## surrealist garden: line site

With the choice of the walkway beneath street level as the raw site for the 'Surrealist Garden Project', initial documentation and site modeling opens the way for basic questions as well as micro-detail considerations. The former look at how the walkway can serve as the basis for a garden experience, how it relates (or resists relation) to adjacent spaces, how the architecture and landscape might be altered to create effects across an extended range. Each garden is a relation of near to far, and the 'uncanny' calls on us to collapse the Cartesian distinctions that make them opposites. The zenith of the sky is 'localized' by each shadow, just as gravity 'localizes' the center of the earth at the point where balance accommodates verticality on a horizontal support. Technology allows us to make a web of relationships connecting this site with others, so that we might think of this as an element that operates far beyond its literal boundaries, intersecting not only other open spaces but architecture as well.



The site, adjacent to art school buildings, contains numerous refuse clusters that create 'Stalker'-style (cf. Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, 1932-1986) tableaux suggesting ruins of previous site occupants.

### 1 / Roussel's procédé

Roussel's method, the *procédé*, involved one of three kinds of transformation. In the type known through the collection entitled *La Vue*, a small opening or image becomes the gateway for a series or gallery of images that the viewer may inspect in incredible detail. This method is related to the ancient custom of the 'descent into Hades' (Greek, *katabasis*). Here there is a specific theme of the journey, a journey into 'liminal' (marginal) space, and the experience of an initiation. Typically, the *katabasis* was used in ceremonies to initiate youth into full membership into adult society by revealing 'secrets' of religion, cosmology, magic, and medicine. In modern versions, the effect of isolation and sense deprivation can, on its own, induce a state of wonder where the participant regards whatever happens as uncanny and revelational.

The second main group of Rousselian methods was the *procédé* of the 'minimal difference' between a sentence or phrase where a few letters or words have been altered, or when one word becomes a pun with another meaning. The two meanings generated by the one expression are then placed at opposite points of a narrative to generate a story. The method of minimal difference can be used by creating, architecturally, two nearly identical spaces placed at strategic points on a pathway so that one is perceived as the 'completion' of the other. Thus, a line can become a circle by means of 'twins' placed at either end. The trick of the minimal difference is the idea of the double, a part of one of the themes of the uncanny cited by Freud in his classic essay (optics and identity).

The minimal difference can also be introduced through the technique of 'anamorphosis', where an incongruous image is inserted into a 'normal' view. Typically, the anamorphic image disadvantages the general viewing points and privileges a single viewpoint that must be discovered. (This can also be used with sound, where the dislocation or concealment of a source of sound is called 'acousmetric'.)

Roussel's garden, *Locus Solus*, the work of a fictional scientist Martial Canterel, used a hyperoxygenated form of water called 'resurrectine' to revive dead historical figures (or their body parts). The landscape architect Gabriel Guévrékian attempted to capture some of the effects of *Locus Solus* in his project for the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, Paris, 1925. Guévrékian, however, did not incorporate any of Roussel's *procédé* methodology. Returning to the theme of the Surrealist garden requires us to correct this oversight.

### 2 / effects made into causes

The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan describes the master signifier as a construct made by subjects themselves, a basis for authenticity and a means for organizing experience. The political function of the master signifier is well known: it is the enhancement of existing popular figures through popular culture embellishments, the promotion or scorn of various social groups, the creation of hypothetical scenarios for the future. For art, however, the important thing to know is that the master signifier has a 'rhetorical' structure. It is a means of converting effects into causes. As with the Stephen Spielberg film, *Jaws*, the shark, a well-known dangerous fish who, not surprisingly, shows up at a New England beach one summer, is converted from an effect of various conditions (hot weather, changing currents, provocation by swimmers, etc.) into the cause of a terrifying situation that can be resolved only by killing the shark. The shark is magnified into a monster of cosmic proportions, and those who battle him are, correspondingly, mythically proportioned warriors. In art, the material condition of the work of art creates conditions encountered by the public. These conditions acquire the status of a 'master signifier' once their status as effects is converted to a function of cause. The English critic John Ruskin cited the 'pathetic fallacy' of seeing nature as having intentions, emotions, and thoughts, but we as artists seek



Giambattista Piranesi constructed a fantasy through the 'archaeological insertion' of a hypothetical Campo Marzo (Martian Fields) within the known design of ancient Rome. Although there was a complex of structures to serve military and religious uses, Piranesi went beyond the existing evidence to speculate on an 'anti-city' existing across the Tiber from the actual Rome.

ways to activate this fallacy — to place MIND inside the MATTER of landscapes, objects, and buildings.

### 3 / developing through drawing: thinking without thinking

Drawing the site includes all of those graphic and modeling actions you take to measure, analyze, speculate about, and predict the results of some action on the site. If you don't 'draw' in this sense, you can't think. The drawing (or model, or maquette, or whatever) you make must be open-ended enough to allow you to think of something you hadn't thought of, as if the representation was a presentation, with no 're-' to it. Freehand drawing is the best means of meditating about the site through manipulations of (1) points of view, (2) horizons, (3) vanishing points, and (4) frames. As you have ALREADY DISCOVERED, all of these can involve technological ways of combining the mental and physical states, actions, and responses of the visitors with conditions of the site itself. It's not necessary to require some heavy electronics-packed helmets or wires encumbering people, you can speculate about floors and walls that are sensitive to touch and shadows, thermally activated elements, and acoustic feedback devices. You might get people to use things like iPods to enhance interactivity that's voluntary. You might create elements that are constructed over, in, or beneath the site that do a variety of things with sound, water-sprays, images, light-levels, or air.

Speculative technology is great. You only have to think it up, you don't have to demonstrate that it would actually work. At this point in history, almost anything that can be thought up can be done, but you have to make it sound 'economically' feasible.

Given the ability to do many things technologically, the question is: why do you want to do anything at all? The idea of the garden comes from deep within our past. The Persian word for paradise and garden are the same. Eden, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, was a place of subtle topology, where evil and divinity shared the same space. The modern 'secular' garden has suffered from analogies to flower beds and city parks. Landscape Architects have more to offer than a pretty place to sit and read a newspaper, so THINK BIG and consider how the main garden, the 'spine' defined by the walkway beneath the art school buildings, ... [more on this later]

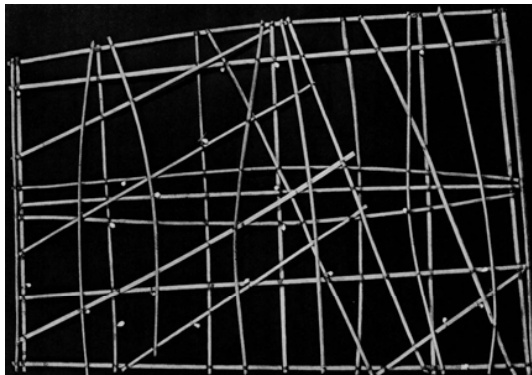
### 4 / the tell-tale detail

Every project has details, but there is always the question of how the detail stands in relationship to the whole project, and what that 'whole project' actually is — is it a functional device, a cultural place, a spiritual precinct, an idea that exists only in the imagination? The detail 'tells the tale' because it is the point where the scale of the project is 'broken' through the fantastic procedure of making the smallest element equal to the largest.

How does one detail 'poetically'? The key is to be aware of the features, qualities, and origins of the materials, shapes, and identities of the details and their relationships to each other. Not ALL of these will be relevant, but unless you have a list, you cannot make a good choice. What is a detail? It can be a component part, an element, a section, a structural connection, or a function. A bad artist/architect is one who thinks that there is a line between what people see and know about and what they can't see; what's hidden behind walls, panels, or ground levels. The good artist/architect makes the invisible active within the visible. He/she works on even the things that will never be noticed 'in the public view' as if they were critical artistic elements that will be discovered at some later point. The British architect of the Bank of England, John Soane, had his bank design drawn as a ruin, so that the 'reality' of the building could be discovered in the same way that we see the 'essence' of ancient structures when they are ruins. The detail speaks of your thoughtfulness, your awareness of levels of reality, and your ability to plan for an uncertain future.

Some projects are made to be complete at a single point in time and to last as long as they are materially useful and structurally sound. Other projects are designed to be constructed in stages, to have a youth, maturity, old age, and death. Some projects use the day, week, or annual cycle; others use weather events, such as rain or fog (or varying light and heat conditions) to bring out various aspects. Floods, frost, snow, wind, and other elements can be critical in bringing out aspects of a work. These, too, should be a part of your thinking about detailing.

Detail drawings often follow stereotypes of 'shop drawings', with orthographic projections, standard scales, etc. But, think of the construction process as going beyond the manufacture/building of the project and consider how certain aspects of a project are not fully constructed until they are used or perceived. These, too, require 'construction' documents where details show how the project works as an idea and cultural artifact. Your project can be a part of a mystery story, a scavenger hunt, or a long-range political-social evolution. Think of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial, one of the most famous works of landscape architecture. The detailing there incorporates our notions about ghosts, memory, and the futility of war. In that case, the detailing HAD to get these 'theological-mythical' details correct in their translation to the material reality of surfaces, stone panels, and joints. Angles and declination had to be precise, but the 'argument' supporting the correct detail was, in every case, a combination of the needs of the imaginary 'event' where visitors encountered memories and images of dead relatives and friends and the requirements of materials in the conditions of climate and weather, security, and public use. Nothing is ever 'simple'.



Marshall Islanders long employed 'stick charts' to show currents, winds, island locations, magnetic directions, and navigational star locations. These maps had to be learned, but once mastered, they could be used at night by touch and were resistant to moisture!