

The language of scripted spaces

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THE LANGUAGES OF THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY and of psychoanalysis are combined with insights on social systems from Deleuze and Guattari to re-think the dynamics of urban landscapes. The modalities of control and fantasy in scripted spaces are explored through analysis of two opposing yet related tendencies in capitalism: desire embodied as the controlling and repressive—the paranoiac tendency—and desire embodied as the deterritorialising and the nomadic—the schizophrenic tendency. Specific examples of shopping areas show how overt and/or psychic control mechanisms mutate with overt and/or psychic fantasy spaces in order to transform desire into the purchase of commodities.

READING LANDSCAPES AS A SYSTEM of interdisciplinary signs is an approach which has become increasingly popular with critics and designers. The Languages of Landscape Architecture conference,¹ for example, proposed this connection between landscape and language. As Taubeneck (1994) points out, linguistic analysis has become the privileged mode of interpretation within diverse disciplines, including philosophy, the arts, politics and architecture. This shift in method is accompanied by a theoretical move towards anti-foundationalism, in which language is viewed in terms of what Rorty (1991, p.3) describes as:

a set of tools rather than a set of representations—tools which, because of what Dewey called ‘the means-ends continuum’, change their users and the products of their use.

Language is thus defined by the uses to which it is put. As Wittgenstein (1953) said, ‘Don’t ask for the meaning, ask for the use.’

Undermining any notion of an absolute foundation, the uncertainty of language has also been recognised. Reconceptualising language as ‘a conflicted field of borrowings or quotations’ (Taubeneck 1994, p.199) is an application of the post-structuralist dictum that any text, taken as a whole, can have multiple and irreducible contradictory meanings imposed upon it. Language as an ‘all-pervasive medium’ means our approach to questions of origin, truth, and authenticity is problematic, and affects every facet of our thinking about sociocultural production.

KEY WORDS

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In this paper, the application of language to landscape is analysed more specifically by making links between landscape and particular forms of language. At one level, a link is proposed between landscape design and the language of the entertainment industry. It is a link which has already entered popular thinking and was the subject recently, for example, of an entire issue of *Metropolis*. More tentatively and abstractly, we will explore a link between landscape and the languages of paranoia and schizophrenia, as implied but not developed by Sass (1992). Supporting this view, too, is the well-known work of Deleuze and Guattari, whose *Anti-Oedipus* (1983) and *A thousand plateaus* (1987) both bear the subtitle, ‘Capitalism and schizophrenia’. Their work also provides

the impetus to consider the network of linguistic relations in which landscape design produces powerful systems of signs that structure and transform our experience of the world.

The observations made in this paper lie within the crossovers between language theories and other academic disciplines. At a general level, focusing on these crossovers can clarify how landscape operates within mass culture or, even more broadly, how landscape serves as an open-ended translation of social production itself. More specifically, we are suggesting a mode of discourse that explains how landscape and architecture work as systems of control and fantasy.

Desire, fantasy and reality

Traditionally, desire has been understood as a fantasy of something missing in the world. This, in effect, limits desire to a state of lack, a state that encourages fantasies to produce the fantasised object. To Deleuze and Guattari (1983, pp.29–30), however:

There is only desire and the social, and nothing else . . . Desire produces reality, or stated another way, desiring-production is one and the same thing as social production.

They thus transform the traditional conception into the idea of desire as process grounded in the real world. Desire becomes a 'pre-personal, pre-individual' field, a 'primary force, rather than a secondary function of preliminary needs or goals . . .' (Bogue 1989, p.89). As an affirmative free agent, desire makes connections and transformations, producing assemblages or 'desiring-machines' through which fluxes—the continual flow of social energy—pass and are transmuted in everyday life. Indeed, within this discourse, one way to view people is as 'desiring-machines'.

If desire is what produces reality, as Deleuze and Guattari claim, a further issue is raised: how is desire manifested in its two polar opposites, characterised by the paranoiac and the schizophrenic? In applying these concepts to landscape, it is necessary to explore the social mechanics that engender their coming together to produce the desire for consumer goods. This type of desire leads to the proliferation of what we call 'scripted spaces', forms of packaged entertainment such as shopping malls and theme parks and, by extension, national parks, cultural monuments like Versailles, and cultural landmarks like the Musee D'Orsay in Paris or the new J Paul Getty Museum complex in Brentwood, a suburb of Los Angeles. With the concept of scripted spaces, we emphasise the close relationship in consumer culture between landscape and entertainment, and ultimately landscape and fantasy, and underline the powerful effect that landscape architects can have upon people's fantasies and actions.

A 'scripted space' is a type of pedestrian space which replicates the complexity of urban life within highly staged 'maximum security' compounds. These spaces are refuges from the apparent messiness and dangers of urban life, providing a 'safe' environment in which to indulge in the pleasures of the marketplace. A scripted space resembles a rollercoaster ride where control is interpreted as consumer protection—with only the pretence of danger. Some spaces have more of this rollercoaster effect than others.

The language of the entertainment industry—scripts, imagescapes, special effects, fantasy, narrative, visual commodities, and performance—is written into

these spaces, becoming at times interchangeable with the language of fantasy. In turn, the language of fantasy closely resembles certain aspects of the schizophrenic experience. According to Sass (1992, p.372), recent popular culture is characterised by features that are 'more than a little reminiscent of certain schizoid and schizophrenic tendencies', including reduced affect, loss of a sense of reality or of a separate identity, and being saturated by abstract, unfounded images.²

These tendencies reflect a paradoxical relationship to modern culture:

Schizophrenics . . . exist not just as a product of but also as a reaction against the prevailing social order. Both their antinomianism [opposition to prevailing norms] and their withdrawal bear witness to an unwillingness, or incapacity, to conform to the standard expectations of modernity, and to a yearning instead for some kind of subversion or escape. (ibid)

What Sass (1992) has formulated as the schizophrenic's 'yearning . . . for some kind of subversion or escape' is interpreted by Deleuze and Guattari (1983) as a positive 'line of flight' and a model for the creative side of desiring-production. In contrast, as developed by Deleuze and Guattari, paranoia is characterised by fear of the free play of the imagination. This fear of the unknown is transformed into a desire to control, repress, systematise and centralise the power of the state or of an individual.

If *Anti-Oedipus* is remarkable for 'its history of desiring-production, . . . a social history of the interrelationship of desire and power' (Bogue 1989, p.105), it is, in part, because of Deleuze and Guattari's acute analysis of the organised power of the state. We draw on this analysis to explore the organised or disorganised power of the consumer ethic, which is made up of both producer and consumer and thrives on amusement, entertainment and fantasy.

In the entertainment industry, the production of consumer based fantasies occurs with a script from the writer or director which is enacted in a fantasy performance either on the Big Screen of movie theatres or the small screen of home VCRs. We suggest that landscape architects similarly design or produce scripted spaces. These scripts for human interaction define and tie together in an overt and readily identifiable way disparate elements of the imagescape—buildings, signage, walkways, foliage. Often these scripts produce and/or encourage in the participant predetermined or 'directed' fantasies which drive consumerism and cultural identity.

According to Biggs (1994, p.71), synergy is the 'new buzzword' representing a currently popular marketing strategy. More simply termed retail entertainment, this strategy sets 'the retail stage' with 'interactive displays, presentation areas, and multimedia entertainment . . .'. The design concept of 'sets for consumption' is exemplified in The Forum Shops, a mall in Las Vegas that Biggs describes as 'a Roman retail mecca complete with classical columns, marble fountains, talking god and goddess statues, a bacchanalian laser show, and an indoor sun that sets every half hour'. The interior designer for this space, Terry Dougall, is quoted (ibid, p. 73) as commenting:

Everything we do is theater . . . Good theater has an appeal far stronger than other types of design: it allows us to escape from our responsibilities as adults and find ourselves in a fantasy world.

Jon Jerde, one of the most successful architects of scripted spaces, including City Walk in Universal City (a suburb of Los Angeles which incorporates Universal Studios), consciously designs around the fantasies of expected users of his spaces, to create stories that people want to walk through:

I ask people living around the site to tell me what they genuinely imagine their world is, at its best. Since I know they are exaggerating, when I actually build it—their fantasy—I know they'll pay any money to show up. (cited in Klein 1993, p.277)

Shopping, as in The Forum Shops, has been converted into narratives reminiscent of ancient cities of another era, then given a suburban twist. Shoppers are drawn into malls that reproduce the confusion and turmoil of an imagined old-world city, often replicating the medieval walled towns of old Italian cities. As Klein (*ibid.*, p.278) describes it:

We live literally in an age of globalized localism, where everything seems wired into the master computer system and yet everything is also simultaneously an enclave, the last bastion against a world without borders, a fantasy narrative that is supposed to feel intimate but actually leaves no clear boundary between private and public events . . .

These paradoxical spaces of 'globalized localism' bring out the ironically close relationships that artifice and special effects have to functionality. They blur the already ambiguous distinction between high and low culture, and emphasise the powerful effect of landscape architects upon cultural fantasies and social activity.

The schizophrenic experience, too, forces the distinction between apparently polar opposites to dissolve. Detached from a singular identity, the schizophrenic moves across identities, blurring the boundaries between what we consider to belong to either the real or the virtual, the functional or the non-functional, the internal or the external domain. In an analogous way, scripted spaces function by combining both very private forms of desire and motivation (internal fixations and ideas), and public forms of desire and overt fixations. Together, these poles of desire are enacted—and ignited—in scripted spaces, bringing about overt and rampant consumerism.

The boundaries of scripted spaces

The idea of scripted spaces begins with Robert Venturi, who in 1972 created a new paradigm with which to interpret the urban landscape. He proposed viewing the Las Vegas strip as a completely new kind of space which disregards all the rules we learned when studying the piazzas of Italy and the squares of France. Venturi argued that while classical European spaces were created by forms in space—forms of great monumental architecture meant to endure centuries—the spaces or landscape of contemporary urban regions are symbols in space. That is, spaces of cities such as Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Taipei and Hong Kong are decorated sheds with large signage, along with symbolic entrances and exits through which the artifice of the surface calls forth images of particular fantasies and symbolic spaces.

Venturi drew attention to the culture of the ephemeral image—the lighted signs, neon words, decorated drywall, walkways, foliage, water and overblown symbolic monuments (Luxor, Caesar's Palace, MGM Grand), which create what

we call imagescapes. These static or dynamic tableau-like elements operate as the gestalt or visual icons which identify a place. Collectively, these disparate elements make up vistas (assemblages) of glitter and excess. From this point of view, landscape, like painting as described by Bryson (1988, p.xxi), is 'an art of the sign, which is to say an art of discourse . . . coextensive with the flow of signs through both itself and the rest of the social formation'.

Since Venturi's groundbreaking work, a further paradigm shift has taken place. No longer a response to a dominant auto-culture, the emerging paradigm is enacted in isolated pockets of pedestrian culture through the production of scripted spaces. These highly controlled and edited fantasy compounds, supplemented by an array of 'special effects', are designed to keep pedestrians entertained and eager to 'explore' the entire enclosure.

For example, Edwin Schlossberg (cited in Biggs 1994, p.73), the designer of Sony Plaza in New York, describes his design strategy:

I decided to eliminate the proscenium and take everyone backstage to create a retail environment so people in the store and the store itself are part of the show . . . Structurally, instead of using a formal relationship with everything on the wall and the customers in front, we put it all in the middle of the store with the idea of theater happening between people.

The most popular entrance to the Louvre in Paris is via the shopping arcade under I M Pei's glass pyramid, where 'the pressure to look at works of art is almost stronger in the arcade than in the museum'. From there, one moves on to the museum itself, as described by Vienne (1994, p.77):

We proceed upstairs, attracted like moths by the exhilarating light of the Richelieu courtyards. It's like entering from backstage on a movie set. As soon as we step off the escalator, Leo and I are part of the architectural script. In this grandiose decor, we feel that we have a role to play. One can get stage fright just looking at the soaring space . . . Trying to take it all in, we suddenly realize that we are indeed on a stage. Through the large street-level bay windows, an audience of Parisians gawk.

In some cases, it is precisely through the reassemblage (restructuring) of incoherent and unrelated materials that contemporary architects compose scripted spaces. For example, Taylor (1994, p.73f) outlines how, in Costa Mesa, California, a 3700 square metre extravagance known as the Lab or 'the antimall' is made up of:

two single-story buildings with several garage-size openings that open onto a pedestrian-scale avenue . . . Designer Ron Pompei of the New York-based architecture firm Pompei AD describes the low-tech collage of exposed rebar and jackhammered concrete as a 'cross between architecture, sculpture, performance art, and site-specific installation art'.

Devoting only 60% of the available space to retail, the Lab deliberately, if not quite convincingly, blurs the distinction between what is for sale and what is not, what is old and what is new. Rusted metal, unfinished concrete and bohemian cafe decor produce the raw effect of inner city, industrial dereliction—an 'instant freeze-dried version of street life' (ibid, p.73). The antimall points to the ultimate irony: here is a type of scripted space that

calculates into its design the confusion and dysfunction associated with decaying urban industrialisation, a design that consciously attempts to construct a code for the uncodeable. Could we then describe this as a scripted deterritorialisation? What shifts does this scripting produce in its attempt to commodify disparity and dysfunction?

Paranoia and schizophrenia, as the two fundamental poles of desire, and the oscillation between them have their parallels in capitalism which Deleuze and Guattari identify (cited in Bogue 1989, p.103):

The intensified despotism of capitalism represents the paranoiac fascisizing tendency of desire to assemble entities in molar aggregates and to impose on them a centralized, unified organization whereas capitalism's accelerated deterritorialization of flows represents the schizophrenic, revolutionary tendency of desire to form molecular, nonsystematic associations of heterogeneous elements.

Without attempting a scholarly exegesis, we see this passage as recognising two opposing yet related tendencies in capitalism, two different sides of desire, the impetus behind all psychic machines. On the one hand, there is desire embodied as the controlling, the centralised, the unified, and the repressive (ie the paranoiac); and on the other hand there is desire embodied as the decontrolling, the nonsystematic, the deterritorialising, the nomadic, and the transformative (ie the schizophrenic). The latter tendency we associate with fantasy, the power of the mind to envisage alternatives—to break through the rigidity of bureaucratic, social and political repression. Yet, like desire, fantasy serves a double function.

Deleuze and Guattari (1983, p.30) distinguish two different ways to consider group fantasies: 'from the point of view of the great gregarious masses that they form, or . . . from the point of view of the elementary forces of desire that serve as a basis for them'. In short, it can be argued that the oscillation between these two poles of desire—the forces of desire that produce the fantasies of the gregarious masses and the individual forces that serve as the basis for group fantasies—blurs the boundary between external control and interior fantasy, and, conversely, between interior control (our desire for our own repression) and external fantasy.

As described above, Deleuze and Guattari (1983) equate desiring-production with social production, using schizophrenia as the model. Analogously, art, like schizophrenia, often creates group fantasies in which desiring-production is used to short-circuit social production by introducing an element of dysfunction. But the kind of group fantasies projected by the scripted spaces which have become so familiar worldwide does not have the same function of creating dysfunction in the capitalist machine. On the contrary, the function of these fantasies is to increase its efficiency.

Thus we translate Deleuze and Guattari's two poles of desire—characterised as paranoia and schizophrenia—into two reverberating poles of fantasy: first, the controlling overcoded fantasy of the scripted mall and, second, the schizophrenic's nomadic 'flight of fantasy' in which multiplicity and connections proliferate. Scripted spaces simulate the multiplicity inherent in the schizophrenic personality, suggesting the production of desire is open ended.

However, it is a simulation, designed for the consumption of fixed identities and objects; it is a design strategy and, in effect, a control mechanism.

Control and fantasy in three scripted spaces

In this section, three scripted spaces are interpreted and compared: the City Walk in California, a shopping arcade in China, and a mercado (market) in rural Mexico. We take as a given that the language of entertainment is applicable to the first two. However, in a more fundamental sense, the languages of paranoia and schizophrenia, translated as the languages of control and fantasy, may be equally useful for understanding these spaces, as they demonstrate, for example, the linking processes of coding, decoding and overcoding; territorialising, deterritorialising and reterritorialising. There is a non dualistic interplay in these and other urban landscapes between two forms of abstract machines (impersonal social or economic mechanisms). On the one hand, the abstract machines of overcoding build rigid, segmented, geometric, totalitarian structures. On the other hand, the abstract machines of mutation operate by decoding and deterritorialising, and by promoting quantum flows of emotion and creativity (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) in which we are engulfed, that is we surrender to our fantasies.

The appearance of control and fantasy may be considered first in Jon Jerde's City Walk. Taking fantasy to its limits, the design plays with scale—if Disneyland is three-quarter scale, here it is one-and-a-half; it reduces the width of the street and displays monumental signage and special effects, such as a replica of King Kong and enlarged jelly beans. One main entrance, one exit, is imposed, like the entrance to a theme park. The space is heavily controlled physically and mentally through production of directed fantasies, as invited overtly and by the scale of this very popular space.

By comparison, the International Trade Center in Guangzhou, China is a shopping arcade which makes its systems of control more evident, with seemingly far less emphasis upon fantasy. Yet we may be misreading some essential cues by not considering how this space might be understood by Chinese pedestrians. While it appears to be simply a place to shop, the space also displays many mirrors and a video bank prominently. The area is relatively spacious, especially by Chinese standards. Moreover, while the presence of guards is very noticeable, even sentry-like, it is linked with the best known stores—western stores selling expensive consumer merchandise. The intrusion of desire into the panopticon utterly changes the dynamic, as if one world were dissolving while another were emerging. Or is that our western reading? The darkened, dreamy entrance beckons to a womb-like refuge from the chaos of street life in Guangzhou. In fact this shopping area is owned by Hong Kong concerns who wanted to make it as 'western looking' as possible, so that it has what one Chinese observer calls 'a deliberately exaggerated look'.

The market in Zihuatanejo, Mexico has many entrances, many people, no advertising, few signs, and a lot of activity, all compressed into a relatively small space. In contrast to the outside surroundings, which are dispersed over vast areas of rural farmland and open coastline, usually exposed to a strong sun, the marketplace is a condensed area of human activity. It is relatively dark and requires close human contact.

Next to a stall selling medicinal herbs and barks one finds a stall full of rope, tortilla makers, grass mats, bolts and scissors, and across the way is a stall which sells severed chickens. Next to that is a stall at which one can buy devotional articles—prayers in plastic bags and replicas of saints. There is little emphasis on consumer comfort or on drawing people into the shops and stalls. The activity is often frenetic: here the necessities of daily life are attended to, with very few frills. The production of fantasy is clearly present because, unlike the outside world, the mercado shows a world of plenty in which everything can be bought and in which all of the senses are inundated at once by strong smells, textures, odours, sounds and colours. The close physical contact and high noise level control the economic exchange and social interaction, and there is always the unspoken desire for more goods at a lower price.

The scripted space is a strange update of the social contract: the pedestrian plays with freedom because to be lovingly unfree (watched over, fretted over) is a fundamental right of all consumers. It is safe sex as safe desiring. Show me risk, but never put me in risk. Show me childhood in all its perversities, but remind me that I can only pay for it if I am an adult. This form of control is desire held in charming suspension, like a rollercoaster ride: the pretence of danger and the willing suspension of disbelief. As Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe (1995, p.260) points out, capitalism is, after all, in the business of deferring desire: 'If desire is the supplement which lies at the center of capitalism, capitalism's pathos is that it can contain it but not—unlike the old religions—control it.' Fantasy, desire and control are at the heart of the commercial exchanges in our scripted spaces.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have described urban landscapes by introducing multiple languages—the language of the entertainment industry combined with the language of psychoanalysis and the language of philosophical critique employed by Deleuze and Guattari in their analysis of social systems. The complex dynamic of scripted spaces—a term with both a narrower and an extended use—has been characterised as the interplay of overt and/or psychic control mechanisms (stage sets combined with the subjective dynamics of repression or guilt) with the overt and/or psychic dimensions of playing out fantasy and dreams. There are many more nuances to be examined, many more ways in which to apply these discourses to urban landscapes, of which only a sample have been considered here. We encourage others to follow Wittgenstein's dictum, 'Don't ask for the meaning, ask for the use', and from this beginning to look anew at our globalised consumer marketplaces.

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NOTES

¹ The Languages of Landscape Architecture conference was held at Lincoln University, Canterbury, New Zealand in March 1995. Originally a LOLA paper, this article summarises a larger research project in progress.

² The definition of schizophrenia underlying discussion in this paper derives from the clinical understanding of the disorder, as opposed to the common misconception that schizophrenia means having a split personality.

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