

Editorial: A Cornercopia

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JAMES CORNER is chair of the Landscape Architecture Department in the Graduate School of Fine Arts, University of Pennsylvania. His influence on the discipline of landscape architecture over the last decade has been considerable. Corner's theoretical corpus is represented by a number of substantial articles and two books: *Taking Measures Across the American Landscape* (1996), and the edited book *Recovering Landscape: Essays in Contemporary Landscape Architecture* (1999). Corner's writings are sometimes complex, but at other times can be contradictory, and have provoked the landscape architecture discipline in range of ways. Significantly, Corner's oeuvre is not limited to writing (as is typically the case for many theoreticians) and, with architect Stan Allen, he runs the practice Field Operations. He has won numerous awards for his design works, including honourable mention in the Governor's Island competition and most recently first place in Fresh Kills, both in New York. However, while the projects remain on paper, the final phase of theory to practice remains conjectural. As Richard Weller notes in this issue, "Corner's project of developing contemporary landscape architectural theory will cancel itself out if it cannot find grounding within the design process".

Corner, therefore, is one of the key figures in contemporary landscape architecture. This issue of *Landscape Review* focuses on Corner's theories, with papers ranging from an extensive critical appraisal of his writings through to attempts to apply his theories, in order to, in his terms, "occasion future landscapes". This collection of articles manifests the fascination and frustration that characterise an engagement with Corner's work. The first article is by Richard Weller, a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts at the University of Western Australia, and confronts Corner's theoretical corpus front on. Divided into two parts, Weller's essay *Between Hermeneutics and Datascaes* is a comprehensive critique and contextualisation of Corner's work within the larger sphere of landscape architectural philosophy and practice. The first essay focuses specifically on Corner's advocacy of hermeneutic practice and relates this to the tangled webs of theory in which it is situated. The trajectory from theory into practice is traced in the second essay, as Weller relates Corner's discourse to the evolution of new design methods and expressions throughout the last decade, ultimately arriving at an optimistic perspective on the future of landscape architecture.

Gini Lee and Jillian Walliss explore the ways in which Corner's perspective on reading and representing the landscape might provide a means of moving beyond touristic interpretations of place. Lee and Walliss developed a studio project at the University of Adelaide, Australia, that introduced students to Corner's approach, together with a range of complementary theoretical perspectives. Critical

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perspectives on mapping, text and notions of measure were drawn into a method for approaching a remote site in South Australia's Flinders Ranges. Lee and Walliss found that the students' readings of the landscape were graphically more seductive and evocative as a result of the process of theoretical immersion followed by engagement with the site.

Corner's concentration on instruments of measure and mapping is investigated by Ian Weir, a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts at the University of Western Australia. Weir's work-in-progress sees Corner's theories coming to ground in another remote Australian site, a Biosphere Reserve into which a Cartographer's House is to be inserted. Responding to Corner's envisioning of more imaginative practices of measure and geometry, Weir presents visual and analytical perspectives that challenge conventional site analysis and attempt to subvert the kind of outcomes this approach traditionally leads to.

For Chris Yandle, a fourth year student in the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture programme at Lincoln University, Corner's intention to "provoke new and alternative ways of seeing" became the motivation for an experimental studio. In an urban park and a small rural community Yandle wrestled with circumventing the primacy of the scenic and the visual in the imagining of new landscapes.

The four papers in this issue of *Landscape Review* provide a perspective on both the breadth and depth of Corner's influence on the discipline of landscape architecture. While there is a sense of frustration in some of the attempts to engage with Corner's work, the challenge remains to extend the theories into the creation of realisable landscapes. As Corner's writings become further disseminated and crystallise into imagined and actual landscapes the requirements for theory expressed by Baudrillard would become resoundingly satisfied:

It is not enough for theory to describe and analyse, it must itself be an event in the universe it describes. 'Why Theory?' in *The Ecstasy of Communication* (1987)