mented," which shapes what one sees and calls to mind the virtues of unifying devices. Through past experience, designers accumulate a repertoire of analogous situations. Before each new situation, one asks what others it is like and most unlike. Likeness and unlikeness are understandings that help to imagine and test possible solutions. This virtual world will almost always extend beyond the original site boundaries, since a site depends on its context. The designer is suspicious of limits and yet cannot deal with the universe. Therefore he decides: Where shall my focus be? What shall be its context? How shall they connect? This is often a larger universe than the one first given, and thus some tension arises. The design need not harmonize with its context, should that be undesirable or ephemeral, but it must take it into account.

Designers develop a preference for a particular way of structuring their process of design and hold strong attitudes about appropriate procedure. Some prefer to make decisions along the way, moving deliberately from one step to the next, while others engage in a free-flowing inquiry in which nothing is frozen until all aspects seem right. These personal styles help shield them from the anxieties of the open search. But since the design process should fit the problem as well as the designer, a personal style is also a limitation of possibilities, a latent distortion of the problem. Ideally, designers should be eclectics. Where this is not psychologically possible, they should at least be aware of other ways of doing business and have a sense of the type of problem to which their own manner of working is best fitted. All design methods are laden with values; none are objective. Each emphasizes some environmental qualities over others and favors particular ways of judging.

CREATIVE RISK TAKING (1983)

STEVEN KROG

Why are there so few manmade landscapes which persuade us to launch a purposeful excursion or cause us unexpectedly to change an itinerary? Why are there so few fascinating, new landscapes that we must see? And why do many of those which are provocative so often come from the pens of building architects—Ambasz, Rob and Leon Krier, and SITE, to mention a few? Or from the so-called Earth Artists who manipulate large-scale earth forms?

I would suggest that the prevailing lack of interest in, or commitment to, artful “works of genius” predestines many well-intended efforts at landscape design to be shallow or feckless—not worth a detour.

Why this languidness, this disinterest? First, while the thoughtful, but puzzled stare has become a ubiquitous expression on the face of architects, landscape architects remain complacent and undaunted behind a Maginot Line ideology of functional geometry generated by design process. Insecurity and its attendant winds of controversy (which blew even before Tom Wolfe) are productive, heuristic springboards. They are the source of architecture’s vitality and a guarantee of its evolution. Landscape architecture is the lesser for its “security.”

Secondly, landscape architecture is suffering an interregnum of significant consequence.
In a different context, but toward a not so different end, D. H. Lawrence wrote, "... men cannot live without masters. There is always a master. And men live in glad obedience to the master they believe in, or they live in fictional opposition to the master they wish to undermine."

Present-day landscape architects lack both.

To learn how landscape architecture is made today, one must study the machinations of its nearly deified design process. Certainly there is no denying the essentiality of methodical analysis of program, site, and their fit. After all, the landscape is a much-varied entity, difficult to understand and manipulate.

When in doubt, we stoke the fire under design process, hoping it will produce one more alternative, one more flash of insight. But while, breeder reactor-like, the design process often manufactures more information than it consumes, it has sadly never produced one gram of insight.

This is not the fault of the process. It never promised us solutions to our problems—just a means toward their logical scrutiny. In our haste, confusion, or indolence, we overlook the fact that the process collapses just when we approach the fearsome gap between the functional diagram and design development. Up to this point, the process is well illustrated. But then it provides only a blank space or a vague innuendo. Halprin acknowledges this dilemma in his RSVP Cycles, but went on to say, "Scores tell what and why, but they leave the 'how' up to the individual." So now he tells us: No Trade Secrets! Well, I suspect that none will ever be forthcoming. We admittedly are talking about the moment of artistic creation. And if John Dewey was correct in his assessment of art as a nondiscursive symbol, words must prove inadequate.

So, this prescribed retreat to process must be seen as an expedient, yet hopelessly self-deceptive strategy. We delude ourselves in believing that by energetically invoking the process, we will definitely arrive at a creative design solution. We can only dissolve this obesiance by facing the great risk—by recognizing that creation/invention is an emotion-, intuition-, intellect-, and energy-intensive task. We must learn to tolerate two experiences that the design process is explicitly intended to circumvent: substantial personal terror and uncertainty—even good designers usually do not know exactly where they are going when they are creating/inventing.

Blasphemy? Not at all. Consider the fictional attempt by would-be novelist Daniel Martin. John Fowles writes:

He suddenly saw the proposed novel as a pipe dream, one more yearning for the impossible. The terror of the task: that making of a world, alone, unguided, now mocked, like some distant mountain peak. He could never do it. Never mind that what he felt was felt by all novelists, all artists, at the beginning of a creation—that indeed not feeling the terror was the worst possible augury for the enterprise. (Author's emphasis)

I am not saying that landscape architects do not experience terror. But most of us feel frustration with the process, not fear of the task. "The process has brought me this far," we think. "Why won't it bear me across that final design chasm?"

I do not assert that there is a causal relationship between terror, doubt, and creative excellence. Rather, I do suggest that despite written programs, site analyses, elaborate design concepts, and processional massaging or incubation, most landscape architects still
do not know where their designs are headed even while using the process. And because they perceive this as an apparent obstacle, they avoid design innovation. The methodical process of deduction can satisfy site planning’s functionalist requirements. But landscape architecture is a more demanding mistress. Designers must accept personal terror as inherent to an act of discovery. This is the landscape architecture of experience, not objects.

In the epilogue to his 1961 Landscape Architecture, John Simonds briefly discussed his revelatory comprehension of the prepotence of experience over plan, or designed shapes, spaces, and forms: “The living, pulsing, vital experience, if conceived as a diagram of harmonious relationships, will develop its own expressive form.” The profession’s ready deference to a regimental design process is the result of Simonds’s and others’ uneasiness with this emancipatory discovery and the sincere yet unsuccessful effort to make that discovery serviceable.

We should not be surprised by these halting attempts; their potential consequence is far greater than the introduction of some mere style. They entail the wholesale modification of the way we think about the purpose of landscape architecture (“what” we do) and the means of accomplishing it (“how” it’s done). Succinctly, in the words of writer Donald Barthelme, “[Art] is a process of dealing with not-knowing: a forcing of what and how.”

If we abandon the design process as the fountainhead of inspiration, but keep it as an information gatherer, it can be cathartic—and frightening. The best analogy I know is that of artist Robert Irwin’s description of his experience in shutting down his studio after he decided that paintings and sculpture were a false means toward his artistic intent.

So what is a “new way” of thinking? I submit that successful landscape architectural art will involve the simple recognition, or the subtle creating and transformation, of a place’s “presence” (to use Irwin’s term); along with, or perhaps through, the minimizing (Frank Stella would claim “elimination”) of metaphor.

To begin this new approach we must divest ourselves of the notion that we engage in creating art only as rampaging self-expressionists with little or no interest in communication, or that when we practice the art of landscape architecture we are incapable of addressing functional concerns. It was with these distinctions that Norman Newton was grappling when, in response to my “Is It Art?” essay, he looked down his nose at labeling landscape architecture a fine art and wrote, “In the fine arts—as in painting or sculpture, for example—the creator of a work is engaged primarily in solving his own problems—doing what he feels he must get out of his system or explode. The landscape architect, on the other hand, is trying primarily to solve other people’s problems.” My own differentiation between site planning and landscape architecture notwithstanding, I believe Newton’s to be one of the principal misconceptions about the making of art. I believe that for most artists today the situation is almost exactly the opposite of that suggested by Newton; that making art is a quest, a looking for something that artists don’t have, can’t find, or wish existed. Says Fowles’s Daniel Martin, “You create out of what you lack, not out of what you have.”

The realization of this point is central. What is sought after by the artist cannot be an object, it must be an experience. Richard Williams got it all wrong when, in response to “Is It Art?” he wrote, “one infers that Mr. Krog associates art with beauty.” The search for “beauty” presupposes that the artist’s purpose is the production of an object which is to be consciously approached as a work of art; and that, if the object lacks “beauty” it is therefore poor art. Objects need not be beautiful to qualify as works of art. Few would defend as beautiful Edvard Munch’s painting The Shriek, but few would dismiss it as artless.
Turning aside from this diversionary question, "Is it beautiful?" we are free to accept artist James Turrell's imperative that "the media of art are perception." Small wonder that Robert Smithson, Carl Andre, Christo, Michael Heizer, Dennis Oppenheim, and other artists turned to the landscape as their forum and/or medium. The landscape teems with factors which heighten one's perceptual awareness and one's artistic experience precisely because it overflows with latent present, is subject to relatively few metaphorical associations, and is largely lacking in museum pretension.

However, because of the landscape architect's bent for practicality (i.e., the client's needs), the application of these windfall advantages presents a problem. If we agree that the subject of art is aesthetic perception itself, and if we wish to claim for landscape architecture a seat among the other fine arts, then we ultimately must confront the messy dilemma of whether the profession's works are to be a service to society or a commentary on society.

Most designers would define their professional role with one of these two terms. Most landscape architects and/or site planners could be expected to choose "service" over "commentary." The recognition of one's own orientation is crucial, since it establishes and regulates the actual physical forms and, therefore, impact of the resulting landscapes, available to the artist/designer.

Over the past two decades, many leading characters have taken note of the findings in the field of semiotics and tried to apply them to the design of buildings, so they can serve more successfully as the cultural symbols their designers claim them to be. If the public is to "read" a building as a house, school, church, or whatever, the design should include those signs the public are most likely to interpret as indicating house, school, or church.

So here we finally arrive at the critical fork in the landscape architect's road—whether to try to design a cultural symbol by molding signal-laden forms and materials, and thereby provide a valuable service to society, or to mold those or other forms and materials so that they are assigned new meanings evoking rich, fundamental thoughts and images, and thereby comment constructively upon society's ideas and visions. Both are mighty endeavors, both are potentially artful, and both employ the insights of semiotics. Because it necessarily relies upon known, communicative signs, I would define designing cultural symbols as an inventive task; whereas assigning new meanings is creative.

In spite of herculean efforts by semioticians, however, architecture and the physical environment steadfastly prove not to be a language. There does not yet exist a comprehensive, recognizable system of object-meaning relationships which would allow designers merely to choose from a vocabulary of forms and be sure they are successfully communicating.

Neither do I suggest that one orientation is "better" for society. Nonetheless, it is apparent that the "creative" aim to heighten perceptual awareness often stands in opposition to the "inventive" task of designing cultural symbols by instilling metaphorical traits in a new project through the skillful use of culturally accepted meanings. That is, to design what is recognized as "a church," the designer must give it characteristics which make it appear "like" the culturally accepted equivalent of a church. The same can be said for a park, a parking lot, or a street mall. Anyone working to change the workaday environment must succeed in managing these familiar symbols. You cannot design a communicable—and therefore truly habitable—environment without this skill. And one is surely not condemned to repeat available and familiar forms. As Widdowson has observed, "The exis-
tence of a common verbal language does not stifle creative verbal expression, it guarantees an audience and enhances communicability.\textsuperscript{10}

But if Irwin is correct in his belief\textsuperscript{11} that we move through the world with a high expectation-fit ratio (that is, we block out supposedly noncritical information, or see only what we want to see or think we see), then the metaphorical characteristics of places and things will further homogenize our experiences. The more the metaphorical content is increased—the more something is made to be "like" what we expect it to be—the less likely it is that it will be truly seen or experienced. Therefore, while "inventions" are more likely to successfully communicate certain types of information, they are less likely to heighten awareness; and conversely, while what I have termed "creation" is more likely to heighten awareness, it is less likely to be easily understood.

When I insist on preeminence for "creation," I am responding to the apparent need for forums which help us explore the truth of what it means to be socially conditioned beings in a physical/nonphysical world. From Descartes to Einstein it has been established that what we think we experience is seldom the accurate representation of reality—no matter what we may believe. The artist’s purpose must not be to explore the frontier and then return to document his/her discoveries for a sedentary and complacent audience, but rather to create a laboratory for the audience to investigate the physical and psychological boundaries of its own perception. No life-changing revelation or astounding news need result—a momentary knitting of brow or widening of eyes is sufficient, provided the work of art has made some contribution to one’s perception of the world. I do not suggest this as the ultimate orientation of art or landscape architecture. Art is a product of the society which creates it and is therefore ever-subject to change. Our over-programmed society simply demands art of experience.

Can or should landscape architecture enter this arena? I believe it has no choice if it is to contribute to a better understanding of our humanness. Whether or not it is done as landscape architecture, the sculpting of exterior space is now, and will continue to be, a principal scene for this investigation.

How do we proceed? The current reliance upon a design process provides an obvious starting point. Composed of ephemeral, temporal, and spatial qualities, the landscape is difficult to describe, evaluate, or interpret. Yet landscape architecture cannot afford to overlook or neglect the very necessary, though admittedly unsettling, confrontation with these interactive, nonmappable, nonquantifiable, and difficult-to-predict components.

Along with stewardship must come respect for our interaction and participation with the land. Nowhere is there evidence to suggest that our simple, artificial constructs are sufficient for examining and, subsequently, manipulating the landscape. It is therefore unconscionable, to me, that we justify our self-indulgent preparation of two-dimensional drawings by manufacturing the myth that alluring graphic plans practically guarantee desirable landscapes. Despite lip service to the contrary, the "plan" has become the object (both noun and verb) of landscape architecture. Are we jealous of the architects' building elevations? We admonish our students and ourselves not to design solely in plan, but no effective alternate mechanism for designing is proposed.

Perhaps the Minimalists' reductivism of the 1960s provides some clues. These artists discarded complex imagery and its metaphorical content to permit access to purer emotions and experience. Landscape architecture could engender similar results. Complexity of meaning, perhaps; complexity of forms, only from the masterful.
The enhancement of presence and subduing of metaphor may not require works of genius, but Mary Gordon’s charge to writers should also ring true for landscape architects involved in the act of artistic creation:

“The important thing is that they must express reality; they must express their genius, not themselves. . . . For pitted against reality . . . the self is puny; it is of no interest.”

The implications for landscape architecture are many. For me, the “reality” of the landscape involves exploration of the limits of experience, of what a “place” can do to me or for me. I am interested in landscape architecture as a three-dimensional discussion of the interaction of persons and the environment but only when “news of the world” is the topic. I want landscape architects to create settings where I can discover special, unknown aspects of my own perception and understanding. This can only be accomplished through the evaluation, interpretation, and transformation of selected experience. Landscape architects’ continuing tendency toward geometric exercises in molding, compressing, and diluting familiar things to make them fit immediate projects is inadequate.

To accommodate contemporary needs, wholly new combinations or assigned meanings may be necessary. And herein lies the rub, because bestowing new meanings will startle and confuse the audience until it learns the new vocabulary. (Three-quarters of a century after its introduction, Cubism continues to perplex.) Our options are not many, though. As Barthelme explains,

“Art is not difficult because it wishes to be difficult, rather because it wishes to be art. . . . [The artist] discovers that in being simple, honest, straightforward, nothing much happens.”

An example is that of architect Peter Eisenman. While developing singular residential projects based on an interpretation of linguist Noam Chomsky’s theories of grammar and syntax, Eisenman assigned new meanings to walls, doors, windows, floors, stairs, etc. For this he endured considerable abuse. Today, even Eisenman admits to the limits of the experiment. But note, at no time were we asked to believe that he was creating a new prototype for Levittown. What is important is that we now have one interpretation of how the organization of language and of architecture might correlate. I believe we must consider this to be valuable even though it has not changed the face of architecture. How is art to progress if someone isn’t prepared to take a risk, to put a finger in the flame?

To the inevitable charge of “inaccessibility,” artist Ben Shahn responds:

“It is not the degree of communicability that constitutes the value of art to the public . . . however difficult its language, [great art] will serve ultimately to dignify that society in which it exists. By the same argument, a work that is tawdry and calculating is not made more worthy by being easily understood.”

Still, so-called esoterica is not the sole approach to artistic experience, nor are cultural symbols and perceptual awareness totally distinct events. Surely such achievements as Le Corbusier’s Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamp, Gaudi’s Güell Park, and Picasso’s Guernica, illustrate how new cultural symbols can result from forms given new meanings. This is attainable when the new meanings are required by issues dealing with elemental truths concerning existence. The works may not always be simple and clear, but they are usually filled with wonder and possibility. Without exception they are devoid of gimmicks or tricks.

Why isn’t landscape architecture nearer the artistic mainstream? One reason is that landscape architects rely too heavily upon their own built projects for most of the clues about design. We need to do more research and to engage in more experimentation. Consider those
cartoonish thumbnail drawings which serve as a testing ground for architect Michael Graves and others who do them. They permit description and dissection. They encourage evaluation and interpretation. They allow (limited) experimentation—without building. Of course they, and models also, are imperfect tools. But they may be the best architecture has.

Landscape architecture, too, needs to develop a more productive relationship with graphics and models without deluding itself about the authenticity of these representations. And landscape architecture must resurrect its interest in its own rich history, not for answers, but rather as a secure and informative benchmark.

Even our workplaces hamper us. It is hardly surprising that landscape architects' commonly chaotic or bustling offices and university design studios seldom nurture works of genius. Barragan is right when he recalls that "art is made by the alone, for the alone." Creation is an intimate act.

But despite the most perseverant efforts, there will be no life in your art if you have no experience to draw upon. To my mind, the only way to produce experience-supportive landscapes, is to have an experience-supported reservoir of understanding. I think we should visit places not just to see them and record them with our snapshots, but rather to feel them. Let the seeing be documentary, but the feeling enlightening. Our designs will be the better for it.

THE OBLIGATION OF INVENTION (1998)
BERNARD LASSUS

The dissociation that has now become widely established between landscape and concrete space hides another one, between appearance and concrete space, and that for two reasons: one relative to their respective scales, the other to the omission of the evocative power of appearance.

Now that daily life has been overwhelmed by this process of dissociation, would it not be time to try to illuminate the relationships between landscape, appearance and concrete space, for those who are interested in landscape through development?

VISUAL APPEARANCE AND TACTILE DISCOVERY
If, while walking in 1961 along the quays of the port in Stockholm, I suddenly saw before me the silhouette, which had remained until then invisible, of an imposing warship, it was undoubtedly because, in the background beyond the ship was the landscape of the port. The background had helped the thin layer of paint (akin to a paratrooper's battle dress) covering the ship to play the role of camouflage. That is, to destroy, through mimesis, the appearance of the boat and to create instead an ensemble in which the vegetable element [trees, etc.] dominated that of the port all the way to the horizon. Such a silhouette could