

## The embodiment of cultural landscape... A tour of the no-monuments

**Concha LAPAYESE, Darío GAZAPO**

*Polytechnic University Madrid, Cultural Landscape Research Group, Madrid, SPAIN*

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### **Abstract:**

The embodiment of cultural landscape...a tour of the no-monuments is an essay made of three Conceptual Actions and an Epilogue, where we operate into a critical position in between art and architecture, describing another understanding of the (beauty of a) cultural landscape.

The Conference ECLAS`2010 let us to build a conversation framework with other international strategies about the different ways of continuing building our inner and external landscapes.

To promote a kind of (Beautyscape) Laboratory, a place to educate the aesthetic and ethic sensibility, previous to do any social act into our landcities, let say politic act, architectural act, and economic act. An alternative Space-biologic Laboratory (SBLab.)

We operate from the Cultural Landscape Research Group, at Madrid Polytechnic University, trough the studio Hybrid Actions in between Art and Architecture on the degree course and Construction of the Landscape on the postgraduate course, at the Madrid Architecture School, as encounter places, where to redraw the borderline between disciplines and the reality.

**Keywords:** *Beautyscape Laboratory, Artscape, Landcity, Smithson, Oteiza, Inner and external landscape, Space-biologic Laboratory.*

We have realized the need of a new kind of gaze on the city, in between art and architecture. The need to look for singular references, diverse values of space, a multidisciplinary closed-up to the meaning of architecture and the needs to focus in various fields, could helps us to redraw the essence of the urbanscape: inner and outer landscapes.

How shall we inhabit the urban-landscape?

The Basque artist Jorge Oteiza fabricated a specific gaze, which one we transform into city parameters, as an instrumental one, by incorporating other attitudes, in between art and architecture, oscillating between oblivion and memory:

"To different shapes of man correspond different interpretations of the landscape... There are comings and goings in the landscape; and these trips are unceasing in the formative process of a type of man, of a culture..."

Jorge Oteiza

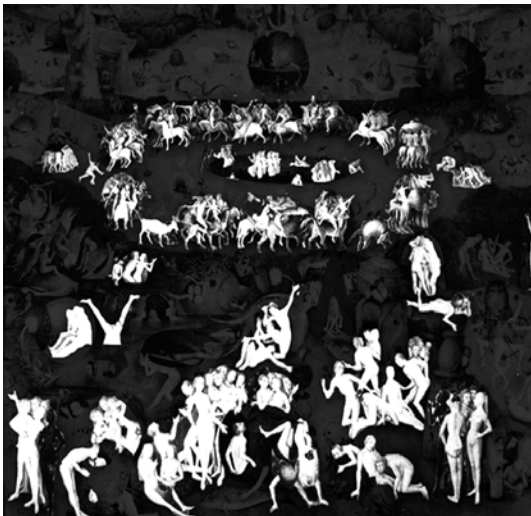
How shall we map the urban-landscape?

Departing from different assumptions, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari note, and we signal and appropriate in order to define the meaning of urban-landscape:

"...There are lines of articulation, strata, and territorialities; but there are also lines of flight, territorialisation movements...making maps, constructing maps, the map is open, it is connectable in all its dimensions, collapsible, reversible, susceptible of receiving constant modifications..."

...It can be broken, turned upside down, it can adapt to mountains of any nature, be started by an individual, a group, or any social formation. It can be drawn on a wall; it can be conceived as a work of art, constructed as political action or as meditation..."

Deleuze/Guattari



**Figure 1.** *Urbanscape after the Delight Garden: Conceptual action, the inhabitants of the Bosch's Garden.*

In order to apprehend and comprehend the different dimensions composing any piece of urban space, to decode a possible cartography, we will look at the landscape from the landscape. These pages let us to continue the dialectic procedure, in order to follow the investigation about the ways of continuing building our inner and external landscapes, of our cities, let say, of our social lives.

There will occur in a kind of triptych, of three actions, conceptual ones and an epilogue:

I. CONCEPTUAL ACTION: *Art and Architecture in between URBANSCAPE.*

II. CONCEPTUAL ACTION: *INNER AND OUTER URBANSCAPE*

III. CONCEPTUAL ACTION: *GOINGS AND BACKS TO THE LANDSCAPE*

EPILOGUE: *Madrid Cityscape: A Tour of no-monuments of contemporary city.*

### **CONCEPTUAL ACTION: *Art and Architecture in between URBANSCAPE***

We wish to discover the different dimension that these specific landscapes go through, by following a process of displaced repetitions. In each "site" we shape a sort of "landscape" of our own, around which the architectures emerge. We would like to reflect from this gaze on the landscape, from artistic, philosophical, and aesthetic stances.

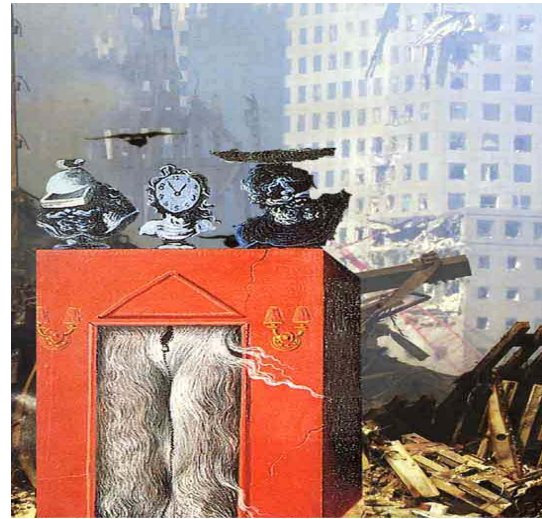
To apprehend and comprehend the different dimensions, composing any piece of multiple landscapes, in order to decode a possible cartography to

continue our route, goings and backs, we will look at the city as cultural landscape.

The landscape feeling is the main motif behind the Basque artist Jorge Oteiza study of the Megalithic American Sculpture, which he completed after his stay to South America:

“... The landscape is a multiple and sensitive body, charged with mysterious energies, wheeling fatefully over us, with the key to our destiny.”

If we understand “memory” as the function enabling us to retain past experiences, and if we understand “landscape” as a sensitive body, the “landscapes of memory” are shaped as sensory and semantic memories inhabiting the corporeity of the landscape and retaining its past experiences. In the comings and goings to the city, we start a process of reading/ writing, transcription/ translation of the urban-landscape. If the landscape is a sensitive body, it can feel outside stimuli, it feels under its skin, under the city-skin.



**Figure 2.** *Urbanscape after 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001: Seven doors to the next millennium.*

A cultural landscape deals with a specific logic, which reveals its urbanscape. The logic of the urbanscape could be written as an open formula with possible variations that remember the integrity of complex number, in between natural and imaginary:

$$(Art(scape) + Architecture(scape)) \rightleftarrows urban (scape)$$

Thus the data collection phase on the urban-territory operates between both senses. There are comings and goings to the urban territories: in the first trip, a tour – scalar, planned, topological -; in the second trip, a walk – a scalar, random– that would be our approximation from a sort of “spatial biology...” to the urban territories. In the memory is the “Tour of the Monument of Passaic”, by Robert Smithson.

### **CONCEPTUAL ACTION: INNER AND OUTER URBANSCAPE**

If we can learn to feel the “urbanscape as sensitive body...” we can understand that scope is able to feel outside stimuli, able to feel under and inner the “skin”, that we could learn from the vision of the bask artist Jorge Oteiza: he fabricated a specific gaze, which one we transform into city parameters, as an instrumental one, by incorporating other attitudes, in between art and architecture, oscillating between oblivion and memory:

“To different shapes of man correspond different interpretations of the landscape...”

Jorge Oteiza

It is a process of “displacements” in between “to think” and “to feel” the landscape. It is a work in progress, as happen in the external periphery of the new developments of our contemporary cities and inside the old part of our cities: “goings and coming backs” to the urbanscape.



**Figure 3.** *Urbanscape Another tour to the no monuments of Passaic 1967-2007: from Robert Smithson. A comparative action - W 74°06'72", N 40°52'82".*

Belonging to a specific culture, a shape of man of the XXI century, we have our own interpretation of the urbanscape, our specific voices, from the "expansive field of architecture". Paolo Mendes Da Rocha and Toyo Ito are two exponents of an understanding of our cities, who takes the "inhabitant" to the central position of the matter:

- Inner landscape: the dignity of the ways of living. The opinion of the social housing's inhabitants is considered the most valued criteria to evaluate the work achieved in our cities.

"...A home is no more than the activity that it congregates inside. A house has the size to permit a child's race.

...A child that does not exist yet, one that is on the way, and is the builder of his house...maybe the house has not built yet, ...but the children are already running through it..." (1)

Paolo Mendes Da Rocha

- Outer landscape: the creation of public space in a logical context, in which is must develop.

"...The trees ceremony has become possible every spring of our lives, in every fragment of city that we will re-create..." (2)

Toyo Ito

### **CONCEPTUAL ACTION: GOINGS AND BACKS TO THE LANDSCAPE.**

How shall we inhabit the landscape?

"...There are comings and goings in the landscape; and these trips are unceasing in the formative process of a type of man, of a culture..."

Jorge Oteiza

We develop an analysis of the Urban-Landscape from "a recovered sensibility", a profound way of gazing at nature, reviewing its hidden structures and looking into meditation and contemplation for an alternative method of comprehension.

This Oteiza's biologic vision connects with Robert Smithson's entropic gaze on the territory, his going back and forth, oscillating between site and non-site:

Going to the urban landscape ----- Back to the urban landscape

Going to the urban landscape

When we enter these sites for the first time, we are shocked by their formal sharpness and definition, by the concreteness of the external landscape.

(1) Palolo Mendes Da Rocha, In conversation with C.L. y D.G. Madrid 2006. EMV. MADRID "HORIZONS" Lapayese and Gazapo curator's.

(2) Toyo Ito, in conversation. Idem (1).

It is a continuous material fragment of constructions towards which all lines of flight are aiming: unstable diagonals, territorialized lines of flight of public spaces... The gaze eventually sets on the edge of the city.

In our memory still linger the walks around Robert Smithson's spiral, the walks inside Michael Heizer's "Double Negative", the tours through the archaeological station of Mount Aguiña, the touch of the spiral jetty emerging from Salt Lake in Utah...

If landscapes mutate, they are living bodies, could be create a meditation point as the "spiral jetty" inside our urbanscape? And could be understood as a non-extraordinary stage, nevertheless as an ordinary site of our cultural urbanscape?

Back to the urban landscape

We view landscapes as multiple and sensitive bodies, charged with mysterious energies... the multiple - a property of post-modern landscape, of eventful landscape, proposed by Gilles Deleuze, Paul Virilio; the mysterious - the unknown - pushing man to action; the energies, as if arrowheads, as vectors going through a force field - Heidegger's Germanic Ort; are the Robert Smithson's entropies.

We transcend the dissections of its abstract geology; we conceptually density cuts of Gordon Matta-Clark. It is a mysterious body, something living, the action of the biologist studying life.

This strategy of urbanscape analysis as an artistic and aesthetic body is necessary in the current debate, which operates from that biology of space described by Oteiza and which opens the doors to future interpretations of other landscapes.

**EPILOGUE: Madrid Cityscape: A Tour of the No-monuments of the Contemporary City**

*How shall we map the urban-landscape?*

We are studying the forgotten urban-landscapes, as a first level, for their proximity with the action performed on the territory, landscapes of inoccupation and urban territories with a high entropic degree. There are other urban-landscapes waiting. We aim at a map that is connectable in all its dimensions, capable of being constantly modified by cadences of spaces, of places... It is understood as cultural and political actions.

A revision of the evolution in the experimental strategies is proposed in the urbanscape all along the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Surely, throughout history, Culture,



**Figure 4.** *Urbanscape Madrid 25 EMVS: CITY-MAP II. The square-map is inhabited by the citizens" W 03° 37' 06" N 40° 21' 28"*

Arts and Architecture have never been so deeply linked as throughout the previous 20th century.

Without doubt those links have gone deeper in the usual aesthetic relationship, getting involved in much broader contexts affecting all fields in nature and social coexistence. The continuous transference of expectations and the dissolution of traditionally disciplinary specific fields, it have meant a transcendental change in the way of looking, and therefore, of facing new circumstances which arise in the present and the ones which can be noticed in the near future.

It has probably been in everything related with the concept of *URBANSCAPE*, where it has been most intensively verified all these enriching interactions... Talking about it, the cultural interdisciplinary has slowly been confirmed as a needed attitude and a main strategy when analyzing and generating any socially efficient and culturally valid product. As a result, Architecture, thought an open process and sensible to society demands, has been benefited by those exchanges among the different culture fields.

From Arts fields, where all along the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a continuous reflection and a deep critique has been created, consolidating and configuring proper spaces and principles in agreement with new socio-politic needs.

The incorporation of the concept of “*exteriority*” as a needed and indispensable aim to build oneself “*identity*”, and to define architectonic contexts of exchange – a new social and aesthetic Landscape -, represents a basic starting point, from where proposing the checking of “experimental strategies” which have taken the *exterior space* as main reference of its productions.

Activating strategies compared among art and architecture... is the last action, an interaction. Insisting on the “*hybrid*” character of the evaluated contexts, a series of figured dialogs, between architects and artists are, in different moments, proposed, that aim to serve as “*activation and contrasting mechanisms*” from where to establish broader discussions, in which much more figures and significant positions will be involved in each moment, corporeity of cultural landscape.

### ***EM PLACEMENTS Faces / DIS PLACEMENTS Masks***

*MADRID HORIZONS: city/housing*

The need to look for singular references, diverse values of space, a multidisciplinary closed-up to the meaning of architecture and the needs to focus in various fields, could helps us to redraw the essence of the urbanscape....the development agency EMVS has made a fundamental contribution to endowing social housing with a new and commanding role, and with shifting the topic of public housing back to the centre of current architectural debates.

### ***CITY HORIZON***

“We live inside horizons, sometimes known and identifiable and other times, un-defined and vague but mental. And in this super-position of horizons and outlines, we find the specific piece of work living in a

walled house in the distance and which call us for inspection. This intertwining is the piece of work, the piece of city.”(3)

Juan Navarro Baldeweg

To repeat with little variations: we can learn to feel the “cityscape as sensitive body...” we can understand that scope is able to feel outside stimuli, able to feel under and inner the “skin”. It is a process of displacements in between “to think” and “to feel” the landscape, inner city land. It is a work in progress, as happen in the periphery of the new developments of Madrid.

### *HOUSING HORIZON*

We have, above all, been led by an interest in the possibility of establishing links among “architectural conversations”, that could helps us to redefine the faces and masks of this next landscape: MADRID PAUS...new development of the metropolitan area, growing in the north, east and southeast, where the EMVS has bought strategic soil, to build new housing complex.

Mental Conversation: “Faces and mask of the urban landscape: a new Madrid in between Mayne / Cook / De la Rocha/Ito, or FOA/MVRDV / Legorreta / Chipperfield, or memories”. There are two main frames works in between: a comparative urban-landscape strategy and a comparative architects-scope strategy, which were revisited in the Expo of Shanghais 2010 “Better City. Better Life”.

### ***A NON-SITE: A Tour of the no-monuments of MADRID, made by the citizens IN BETWEEN CITY HORIZONS AND HOUSING HORIZONS***

We could describe briefly EMVS, form the “City Horizon to the Housing Horizon”, in goings and comings backs to the urbanscape, capturing the tour which we have designed, as curators of it, in order to explain in different ambiances and contexts the work made by the EMVS.

*CITY-MAP. The square-map is inhabited by the citizens as a critic action.*

We build a first meeting point of discussion, in national terms, at Madrid Plaza de Colon, in November 2006. It was a big event, and was the first time, in which it could be analyzed the part of Madrid that was built by the agency. We create a map, on one of the main squares, and the action of the EMVS can appear inside of this map that could be inhabited by the citizens. Also, it was build two prototypes of unit housing, in natural scale, in order to test the unit houses by the visitors. The exhibition was, on that line, a reconstruction of the two horizons: city and housing. Inhabiting the city-map: Vallecas, Carabanchel, Centro... where the built projects, have started the drawing of a new city map, an urban housing constructions that are already part of our city.

*TABLE-MAP. The table-map is played by the visitors as a negotiation action.*

And in order to show the EMVS trajectory into the international panorama actual, we thought in three strategic cities which their special places: London at the Royal British Architect RIBA, Berlin at the AEDDES Gallery and the UIA Torino 2008, trying to resume the EMVS tactics: to allow to create a specific cityscape, where the debate is around the new architectural icons and a human architecture. As a brief resume of this experimental tour, we could

(3) Juan Navarro,  
in conversation.  
Idem (1).





**Figure 5.** *First Trip: Urbanscape Madrid 2008: the next Madrid.* W 03° 37' 06", N 40° 21' 28".



**Figure 6.** *Second Trip: "Urbanscape Madrid 2010: the next Madrid".* W 03° 37' 06", N 40° 21' 28".

(4) Jorge Oteiza,  
in conversation.  
Idem (1).

conclude with the importance to give identity to the new spaces. To create identity is an action that it is welcoming by the citizens of every part of the city.

**IN BETWEEN HORIZONS: INNER AND OUTER URBANSCAPE**

Operate in between inner landscape and outer landscape. Inner landscape: the dignity of the ways of living. The opinion of the social housing's inhabitants is considered the most valued criteria to evaluate the work achieved in Madrid.

Outer landscape: the creation of public space in a logical context, in which is must develop, the inner public space, as a missing fold.

**A Tour of Madrid: GOINGS AND BACKS TO THE NEXT URBANSCAPE**

First: In a first approach one can discern a vast and totally modified territory in which these are superimposed and coexisting holes open to the sky, constructions, subterranean perforations, buildings, structures, pools, woods, animals and the most diverse installations that take in the most restless inhabitants: ending up by configuring a fundamentally heterogeneous and absurd profile. A landscape before will emerge the next "Delight Garden".

"...Art does not transform anything, it does not change the world, it does not change reality. What really transforms the artist, whilst advancing, transforming and completing his modes of expression, is himself. And it is this man, transformed by art, who can attempt to transform reality through life..." (4)

Jorge Oteiza

Second: In a second approach, we discern a frenetic activity, an unfettered interaction and combination of actions. Its

contemplation is not solely limited to this halted or crystallized profile but inevitably suggests the conscience over the intense dynamics of the temporal process it has generated. Examining ourselves on the agent and motive for such an outcome implies the need to interpret the actions for emptying the territory, the displacement of matter, the modification of the landscape that has generated among many other physical effects, the "disappearance of memory", the Other "Early Delight Garden".



"That zero panorama seemed to contain ruins in reverse, that is all the new construction that would eventually be built. This is the opposite of the 'romantic ruin' because the buildings don't fall into ruin after they are built but rather rise into ruin before they are built... ...I am convinced that the future is lost somewhere in the dumps of the non-historical past; it is in yesterday's newspapers, in the false mirror of our rejected dreams. Time turns metaphors into things, and stacks them up in cold rooms, or places them in the celestial playgrounds of the suburbs."

Robert Smithson

A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey, 1967

### **EM PLACEMENTS. Faces**

It is necessary to generate a heterotypical movement of thought, establishing "dialectical connections...", actions capable of suggesting different forms of inhabiting, of feeling and identifying with this intervened territory. We are surely capable of imagining infinite possibilities of inhabiting, of re-colonizing these, pursuing an unconventional action, a "different action", encountering in the natural entropy of nature the necessary code to interpret it.

...*Jorge Oteiza, Robert Smithson, Marcel Duchamp*...they are different forms, different "others", they are "becoming" that inhabit the "other" urbanscape, understood as the next "Garden of Early Delights". In any case they are intense, content, exquisite appearances that in keeping with the fantasies hidden and guarded by the "Other Garden of Delights". And there is no doubt that if we analyze the desires and sins housed by the figures of the "others", we can discern other riches never imagined or supposed. We see these possible itineraries to start with:

The action could have a certain correspondence with the cleaning strategy used by Oteiza. A relationship that would imply a deeper reflection on the possible interventions in this new landscape: intervening, restoring, clearing and emptying.

Looking into each city-corner, mobile and immobile objects are identified, immobile faces of the urbanscape. But with a second look, in a successive displacement, we perceive the impossibility of such immobility, faced with the constant tendency of nature to transform itself, to vary its limits, its edge and its definition. The transferred, modified material is not consolidated. On the contrary, it is permanent decanting, it slowly overlays, stratifies, its conditions of form are altered. It is not possible to measure or make reference to any fixed point because these do not exist. This latent imprecision and uncertainty accents even more the difficulty of knowing and identifying the place.

### **DIS PLACEMENTS. Masks**

The "*experience of the next*" appears to be derived from having to inhabit the precariousness, to go on to inhabit other sequences of spaces, trying to draw up the map with looks, other ways of inhabiting pre-existing landscapes. The conversation has continued, the "*comings and goings to the urbanscape*" are incessant.

All of above is intuition, actions, the next forms of inhabiting, the next maps... they are faces and masks...personages of a unique conversation.

All of these have defied their strategies, positive forms of approaching the territory that have tried to configure an "inner landscape".

Like Marcel Duchamp, some end up almost always by expelling us, throwing us from its own intimacy. Jorge Oteiza supplies a last sign, perhaps a possible solution for this confrontation, one is transformed and converted into a biologist, into a scientist capable of getting into the secret of generation space and life. It is a man who plays with life and death, which creates life and transforms death: the "biologist of the space".

We could transform our look of architect into a look of biologic of space, so we will be able to understand the "inner urbanscape", at the beginning of XXI century and expectant to a next *European Space for higher Education*, where hopping be regular this hybrid encounter in between art and architecture, as strategy of reading and acting into the urbanscape.

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