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Postmodernism and Landscape Architecture

G. Lister
A DEFENCE OF RYME

Nor must we think, viewing the superficial figure of a region on a Mappe that we know smatr the fashion and place as it is. Or reading an Historie of which is but a Mappe of men, and dooth no otherwise acquaint us with the true Substance of Circumstances, than a superficial Card dooth the Seaman with a Coast never seen, which always presumes other to the eye than the imagination forecast it that presently wee know all the world, and can distinctly judge of times, men and manners, just as they were.

Samuel Daniel

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**Fig. 1.**

Map to Postmodernism.

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**Postmodernism**

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**Sheet G1**

**2nd edition 1987**

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I have bought maps & books. From Daniel's Scheme I try to page some sense of geography.

1. FO F1 G1: the direction itself as a map.
2. The blank squares are sea. The sections of the map are joined on 2 lines. I'm beginning to get the idea.
3. The tramping guide is adequate only. I have the names of tracks, a key to symbols as to where things are.
4. That bird in flight is a waterfall that little has a beacon.

---

All the yellow is NO ENTRY and at this point I am 225 metres above sea level. I know we are at Lat 35°55’ South Long 174°28’ East which means nothing to me who knows little about maps not having learned. Coastlines I can tramp. Directions draw, being there.

I know where west is because the sun's going down.

---

*From 'Topographies'* by Riemke Ensing.
Modernism  | Postmodernism
---|---
**UNDERLYING STRUCTURE**

- Quest for absolutes - reality
- Quest for absolutes - essence

- Bound with its culture
  - Progress toward rational, technological, scientific utopia
- Bound with its culture
  - Culture of uncertainty
  - Multinational information-based economy
  - Mass culture and cult of the individual

**GENERAL EXPRESSIONS**

- Meaning is referential - to search for contexts
- Intersubjective structures of knowledge
  - Science as one of our cultural myths
  - Interpretation of objective and subjective
  - The world as a construct of understanding
- Perceptual generators
- Diversity of histories, heritages, and their cultures
- Shortening focus away from goals
  - The process itself becomes the goal
- Integration, contingencies

**PARTICULAR INTERPRETATIONS**

**MUSIC**
- New forms of internal ordering
  - J.S. Bach - "Goldentone"
  - Leona Anderson - "Prairie" music

**VISUAL ARTS**
- Search for abstract expressionism
- Abstraction
- New art of space, time, and light
- New art of space, time, and light
- New art of space, time, and light
- Idea of the "right" response to an art work

**LITERATURE**
- Writer as neutral, manipulative describer of life
- "I" as the response to reality, e.g., "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings"
- Ideal of the perfect work - writing for the "purely aesthetic"
- Understanding the meaning of a work
- Understanding the formal message

**ARCHITECTURE**
- Form follows function
- Less is more
- Grid-based with foot
- "Newly"

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE**
- Form follows function
  - Function follows form of landscape
  - Aesthetic style - "aesthetically, geometrically"..."functionally, ornamentally"
  - "Design on terms" of natural process, scientific paradigm
  - Adoption of minimal values: Modernism
- Design follows function
  - "Less is more" - "Design for use"
  - "Calculated" minimalism
  - "Self-aware, conscious, right"

**ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN**
- Participatory design - "aesthetic design"
- "Environment" design
- "Focus on place"
- "Design for environmental health is a cultural faith"
- "Reforming, given world - "ensemble" design
- Surrounding implicit theories, interests, values, perspectives, norms, cultures
ABSTRACT

Postmodernism is a broad based phenomena, which at once is a group of attitudes and theories, is to do with the condition of living in the contemporary world, and includes a concomitant range of styles and expressions in different fields of activity.

In Landscape Architecture Postmodernism has been particularly associated with Participatory Design, Ecological Design, and Experimental or Contextual Design. However, reference to the more rigorous theory would encourage caution in simply attaching the label of Postmodernism to any or all of these.

No explicit use has apparently been made of Postmodernism in New Zealand Landscape Architecture and there are few examples of Postmodern trends in either theory or practice.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish particularly to thank Margaret Davies for her support and encouragement during the two years of this course.

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INTRODUCTION

Postmodernism is an area of activity throughout the fine, liberal and applied arts. It has been widely expressed in both theory and practice. There are, for example, bodies of work in design, architecture, literature and painting carried out in the name of Postmodernism, and many articles, journals and books on the subject. In recent years the word has entered the popular vocabulary. So Postmodernism is a term with a lot of energy invested in it. It is also a term of much confusion.

Because Postmodernism is the focus of such widespread energy, it would seem worthy of investigation by Landscape Architecture. Benefits of such an exploration might be:

- a new critical perspective.
- a new source of ideas, and methods.
- a revealing of opportunities.
- a new language with which to communicate with other related fields.
- a clarification, if not a resolution, of the confusion.

This dissertation sets out to introduce Postmodernism in three parts. The first attempts to define and describe Postmodernism. The second reviews writings specifically on Postmodernism in Landscape Architecture, and the third part surveys Landscape Architecture in New Zealand to see if Postmodern trends can be seen here in either theory or practice.
What IS Postmodernism?

We're getting right into Postmodernism...

As soon as we find out what it means!

WHAT IS POSTMODERNISM?

Postmodernism is a problematic term. It has been applied to just about everything from a new paradigm of Western thought,\(^1\) to a range of pastel colours.\(^2\) There is no single accepted definition, and a lot of confusion.

"What IS Postmodernism? An incipient cultural crisis, a new era in western history, a cluster of intuitions about historical change, or a fashion merely ...?" \(^3\)

Hassan has listed ten aspects to the project of defining Postmodernism:\(^4\)

1. Its name "contains its enemy within". Its definition is not internal but related to Modernism.
2. It has "semantic instability", its meaning being fluid.
3. It also has temporal instability. "Postmodernism, and Modernism even more, are beginning to slip and slide in time, threatening to make any diacritical distinction between them desperate."
4. The boundaries between Modernism and Postmodernism are indistinct.
5. There are elements of both discontinuity and continuity between the two.
6. Postmodernism requires both historical and theoretical definition.

7. "Defining traits are dialectical and also plural."

8. There is a problem linking contradictory and disparate tendencies in different fields.

9. There is the problem of prior conceptualising of a period.

10. Is Postmodernism a descriptive or evaluative or a normative category?

I have attempted to address all of these issues with the following approach, consisting of both commentary and diagrammatic map. (Fig. 1. Map of Postmodernism.) The commentary focuses on a number of themes, and the map links them together. The two are intended to be complementary. The map's main features are:

A. Locating Postmodernism by reference to Modernism.

B. Relating diverse expressions of Postmodernism to underlying theories and structures (e.g. as geomorphic features to geological structure).

C. Associating Postmodernism and Modernism with their respective cultural processes.

D. Sketching in a sample of features of both Postmodernism and Modernism to help define them by field description.
POSTMODERNISMS RELATIONSHIP WITH MODERNISM

Postmodernism in its name defines itself in relation to Modernism. Modernism itself is a contentious term with a wide range of meanings and scope. Kolakowski, for example, has suggested that it can be traced back beyond Descartes to the eleventh century, while Virginia Woolf claimed that it began "in or about December 1910".

A common use of Modernism is to refer to the period since about the turn of the century. In this context it refers to a wave of optimism in rational control of the world, including the coupling of technology and science, reformed movements in the arts, and extension of rational control over human spheres of economics, social welfare and politics.

A longer view extends Modernism back 200 years to the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, an earlier wave of enthusiasm for the notions that knowledge and happiness could be achieved through rational methods. History was seen at this time as a progressive development toward these ends. Understanding of the world was separated into distinct fields, and each was explored according to its own internal logic. So the Enlightenment contained both rational materialism and radical empiricism.

5. Ibid. p.x.
These two aspects (rational materialism and empiricism) came together in positivism which has been an important component of Modern thought.

A still longer view extends Modernism back to the flourishing of humanism in the C16th and C17th. This definition links Modernism with the separation of secular and religious spheres, the reinforcement of mind-nature dualism (subject-object differentiation), and the instrumental successes of modern experimental science.

One source of confusion with Modernism is that its definition varies between different disciplines. Modern architecture is commonly regarded as beginning with the Bauhaus school in Germany during the 1920s and 1930s and such people as Mies Van der Rohe and Le Corbusier. However, some of the premises on which it was developed, such as honesty to use of materials, relating form to the function of the building, and the use of industrial techniques, can be seen in C19th building, such as in factories and warehouses and in the Crystal Palace. In the social sciences Modernization refers to the historical process by which people's lives are increasingly organised around abstract rational structures and values, along with internalisation of external constraints, and is associated with urbanisation and industrialisation.

1. See for example: Koh.

Relph, E 'Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography.' 1981.

2. See for example: Encyclopaedia Britannica - "Modernisation"

Modern Philosophy is regarded as beginning with Descartes and Bacon. Modern Art is regarded as developing during the first decades of the twentieth century with the succession of different movements (e.g. Cubism, Expressionism, Futurism) and the establishment of the avant-garde. Yet the development of Landscape painting during the sixteenth century can also be seen as evidence of Modernism in that it expresses the dualism of mind-world, subject-object, i.e. the idea of landscape as a detached scene.

A picture that emerges is of successive waves of Modernism with a variety of different expressions. Edward Bellamy and William Morris, for example, both wrote utopian novels during the 1890s, expressing contrasting Modernist visions. The idea of utopia itself is a Modern one, representing that idea of humans gaining happiness through rational control of their own affairs. Bellamy's vision is one of achieving this through directing technology, science, and industry to human ends. Morris on the other hand, would apply rationalism to social relationships and rejects science and technology for a return to an art and craft and rural lifestyle.

Also, there have been a number of dissenting voices during the Modern period - such as Rousseau, Nietzsche, the C19th Romantics, Dada and Surrealism - and these are sometimes regarded as precedents of Postmodernism.

1. Encyclopaedia Britannica - "Modern Philosophy"
2. Relph, E.
3. Bellamy, E. 'Looking Backwards, 2010'
4. Morris, W. 'News From Nowhere'
So from this range and confusion of Modernism, the following are a list of characteristics that stand out:

1. The idea of absolutes.

2. The emergence of 'scientific Philosophy'.
   by this I refer to - reductionism
   - mechanistic views
   - deductive logic.
   - positivism

3. The reinforcement of dualism
   of mind-nature
   of subject-object.

4. The compartmentalism of life and knowledge.
   separation of science - humanities
   separation of religious - secular spheres.

5. The notion of using human reason and control to achieve happiness and knowledge; and

6. The idea of historical progress toward these goals.
Modernism has been involved in both the landscape and in the practice of Landscape Architecture. For instance, the meaning of the word 'landscape' as a detached scene from a fixed point, can be regarded as Modern (dualism). This meaning is then particularly expressed in the picturesque styles of Landscape Architecture.

Olmstead was Modernistic in that he was not only concerned with natural physical processes and picturesque aesthetics, but particularly in using these to improve the wellbeing of urban people. Similarly the design of several of the planned settlements in New Zealand (Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington for example) with their green belts and large plots represent this goal of improving human wellbeing through rational control. The geometric layout of the street plans also express the Cartesian view of land as abstract spatial extension.

The period beginning with the first Labour Government represented another wave of enthusiasm for these Modern principles. Human wellbeing was sought through rational economic control, rational social welfare systems, technological and rational control of the landscape with such things as the hydroelectric projects and land use planning, and through large scale housing developments. It's interesting to compare street plans of this period with those of the early settlements. Post War street plans are the result of the application of rational methods to human behaviour. So streets are curved to create a more human scale, 'better' aesthetics, and a closer sense of community.

Fig. 2.
Rakaia and Twizel: Nineteenth and Twentieth century expressions of a Modern approach to town planning.
The zoning system introduced with land use planning, also expresses Modernist characteristics of separating human life into different spheres.

Although Modernism has been involved in the landscape throughout the Modern era however it is defined, Modern Landscape Architecture is generally regarded as beginning in the post WWII years with people such as Christopher Tunnard and Thomas Church, and is seen as a break with the Mannerist Beaux Arts tradition. The emphasis (following Modern Architecture to a degree) was on functionalism, a new aesthetic to those of the past, and on use of space as an abstract three dimensional material. Thomas Church designed gardens to suit the functions of contemporary lifestyles and leisure activities. He introduced outdoor lighting, for example, because much contemporary leisure time was after work at night time.
Fig. 3.
Example of a Modern style of domestic garden design.
A later phase articulated by McHarg, based design on natural processes as understood through the natural sciences, on a rational design methodology, using a model of landscape as spatially abstract, and composed of a layering of natural and cultural processes.

To understand Postmodernisms relationship to Modernism, it is also necessary to place it in the present historical context. This is a period of major dissatisfactions with various forms of Modernism. As mentioned there have been earlier dissenting voices and periods, or waves, when the momentum of Modernism slowed. Since the 1960s there has been a general reaction against Modernism, symbolised by a number of events. Jane Jacobs 'Life and Death of Great American Cities' symbolised the failure of Modern urban planning. Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring' galvanised reaction against environmental degradation seen as a result of economic and technological land use imperatives. Tom Wolfe's 'Bauhaus to Our House' tapped a popular reaction against Modern Architecture. In art there was a crisis of the avant garde. Modernism was initially a revolutionary and fringe project. It had become 'dominant but dead'. As Robert Hughes said "all the isms were wasms". And in the production of theory, a group of French writers in particular (including Foucault, Derrida, Barthes) raised serious questions about ontological and epistemological premises of Modernism.

7. Foster, p.x.
So Modernism has been variously defined, and is seen at present to be problematic. Postmodernism then, stands in relation to both these diverse definitions, and the diverse range of problems.

"There will be as many different forms of Postmodernism as there were high modernisms in place, since the former are at least initially specific and local reactions against those models. That obviously does not make the job of describing Postmodernism as a coherent thing any easier, since the unity of this new impulse - if it has one - is given not in itself, but in the very modernism it seeks to displace." 1

The significance of these reactions has also been variously interpreted.

Some commentators see Postmodernism as simply a reaction against the excesses of the post WWII years. 2 On the other hand Jusuk Koh has suggested Postmodernism is the revolutionary emergence of a new paradigm "far more significant than the evolutionary changes in design philosophy from Renaissance to Baroque to Modern". 3 Still others have suggested that Postmodernism is Modernisms 'ideal category'. 4 That is, it is the state reached at the extent of any period of modernity, when the avant garde can go no further and instead return to the recent past with "irony, selfconsciousness, and not with innocence". 5 In other words it represents a critically self-aware Modernism.

5. Ibid. p.369.
As well as the historical dimension, a characteristic of Postmodernism has been the proliferation of theory. This has been very diverse, but a group of French theorists – including Foucault, Barthes, and Derrida, are often seen as seminal. Despite the diversity of theory, a common thread seems to be the notion of contingency, in comparison to the notion of absolutes which seems central to Modernism.

Modernism tends to emphasise, for example, the absolute autonomy of subject and object, of individual and/or society, of people and of environment, of different spheres of human life and understanding, such as morality, aesthetics, economics, science and arts. Postmodern theory on the other hand stresses their contingent inter-relations.

During the preparation of this dissertation I initially used 'relativism' instead of 'contingency'. The former now seems too passive and neutral.

'Contingency' better includes meanings of activeness, purposefulness, and of uncertainty. For example, contingency can include the idea of being prepared to react to an uncertain event, and that the reaction might be based on purpose or values. It is not simply neutral and mechanical as, for example, a systems theory or cybernetic model might be.
"Postmodernisation is not ... the quixotic notion that all positions in culture and politics are now open and equal. This apocalyptic belief that anything goes, that the "end of ideology" is here is simply the inverse of the fatalistic belief that nothing works, that we live under a total system without hope of redress." 2

At base such theory is epistemological - that is it is concerned with how we have understanding of our world - but because its presumption is that understanding is contingent on the relations between individual and society, individual and environment, and society and environment, these relations themselves form central concerns of an interdisciplinary Postmodern theory.

Modernism emphasises the absolute autonomy of subject and object: There is an objective reality 'out there' that is open to understanding by us as independent subjects. It is open for us to abstract knowledge from. This is commonsense and the commonsense view of natural science.

Postmodern theory, on the other hand, maintains that we cannot approach the world free from prior assumptions and inbuilt mental structures of meaning and value. It claims that it is the notion of an absolute reality that is in fact abstract.

1. Foster, p.xi.
At the level of the individual this relativism has been accepted within Modernism since the writings of Kant. Postmodernism is not interested in this question of individual relativism as such, but is interested in inter-subjective understanding.

Postmodernist relativism is "second order". By that I mean it questions not individual assertions for their lack of evidence, but the implied and embedded standards, criteria, norms, and principles that make judgements possible and give them privileged status."

Postmodern perception theory is interactional. People are seen not as passive receptors of information about 'reality', or even as receptors of information which is then interpreted and given meaning. Rather, people are seen as projecting their perceptual structures onto the world and having partial and pre-organised information bounced back.

Individuals have unique frames of perception developed through unique patterns of past experiences and so on:

"We are all artists and landscape architects creating order and organising space, time and causality in accordance with our apperceptions and predelections."  

- but these are seen as fitting within broader social and cultural structures. It is these social structures - such as common sense, that Postmodern theory focuses on. Commonsense to us seems natural - as representing reality in a true sense - but it is an artificial construction that changes over time and between cultures.  

1. D'Amigo, R. 'Going Relativist', Telos, No. 67, Spring 1986, p139.


'House and Garden: A Discourse of Landscape in New Zealand', ANTIC Two, March 1987, pp.68-83.
For example our commonsense view of our mountainous National Parks is that they are absolutely natural, and have certain natural intrinsic values such as beauty, and spiritual presence. Yet prior to the late seventeenth century Europeans regarded mountainous areas as intrinsically ugly and evil places. They were seen as evidence of The Fall of humans and nature. In New Zealand our intersubjective understanding of these mountains has been influenced, amongst other things, by nationalism - mountains as a source of prowess and identity; by a belief in their moral building effects, coupled with 'Man Alone' ideals of independent individuals; by them as symbols of a purified social order - a 'New Jerusalem'; by secularisation of New Zealand society and the trend to attribute religious essence to Nature, and because mountains were not commercially valuable and so fitted into the commerce-religion separation.

An important Postmodern perspective on how intersubjective meaning is structured is that proposed by Jacques Derrida. Derrida describes Western thought as a duality of Presence and Representation. Presence is what seems real, such as ones consciousness, the present time, the present place, and the presence of an object to its subject. Modernism 'privileges' or values presence over representation which

4. Smart and Lauder, p.82.
5. See Craig, A. 'The Landscape of Visitors Centres' Unpublished dissertation, forthcoming, for an interpretation of religious dimensions of National Parks; Visitors Centres as Churches or Shrines; Parks Staff as secular Clerics.
is always seen as derived and partial. This can be seen as a desire for an ultimate fixed point, underived from anything else. So Modernist critiques have been concerned with determining the degree to which representation accurately approaches presence. Postmodern critiques, on the other hand, focus on representation itself as the only reality we experience. If reality is a negotiated thing, then more might be learnt from studying the negotiations than the imagined essence of the thing. This approach is termed Deconstruction. It aims to understand the interests, influences and forces working within representation.

"The newer forms of criticism focus on the specific ways in which a text (a painting, poem, or film [or landscape] say) is shaped so as to organise readings. Not only the 'text' but the 'writer' and the 'reader' are assumed to be programmed (or 'coded up') - their negotiations ... take place within an established set of cultural codes and social relationships. Since there are important questions to be raised about this setup, we can hardly trust those confident artists and critics with intuitive 'good taste' who stroll off to another open-minded encounter with pure reality ..." ¹

An example of this approach or perspective is Francis Pounds study of nineteenth century New Zealand Landscape painting. The Modernist critique of New Zealand painting worked from the premise that there was an absolutely real New Zealand (a presence) to which some painters (representers) responded more truly than others. Pound maintains however, that the so called 'truer' painters in the topographic or 'naturalistic' styles, were just as much influenced by painterly conventions and implicit theories, by a Western mode of regarding the Landscape, and were part of material interests involved in colonising a new land, both in the mind and literally. ²

This is not to say that Postmodernism is subjectivism (or Idealism) - that it claims that reality exists solely and independently in the mind or that an object's purely subjective meaning defines its reality.

On the contrary, Postmodernism argues against the separation of subjective and objective modes of being and of understanding, and for at least a 'partial interpenetration of subject and object'.¹ For although Modernism, and especially natural science, tended to emphasise objectivity, within its framework there were also methods aimed at applying objective methods to subjective experience, and also aimed at an understanding of absolute subjectivism. The former method can be seen in the behavioural sciences, where people, including their opinions, are regarded as objects,

"the positivist practice of doing opinion surveys in order to produce what purport to be brute data on the subject is misconceived. Such data cannot tell us why people have these opinions. They have to be interpreted and this can only be done by establishing relationships between opinions, intersubjective meanings, material interests and practices." ²

A modernist method aimed at absolute subjectivism was the form of phenomenology developed by Husserl. The intention of this was to 'bracket out' all prior conceptions of the world - such as scientific knowledge and the particular conditions of existence - so as to uncover an uncontaminated understanding of experience; - a direct and absolute response: "to the things themselves".³ Husserl hoped that this intrinsic response would provide a true raw data for scientific method.⁴

2. Ibid, p.25.
4. Ibid. p.621.
A Postmodern response might be 'to the other things'. Existentialists adopted the phenomenological concept of the 'lifeworld' - the real and 'taken for granted' lived world of people's experience - but they rejected the belief that it had an essence - that it could exist independently of the particulars of people's lives which are structured by contingent involvement in the physical and social world. For this reason some writers have been critical of what they term 'naive phenomenologists' such as Tuan, who they say ignore the wider and deeper relationships of existence in focusing on subjective meanings of the environment. They see Tuan as a reaction against the dominant emphasis on objectivity in Human-Environment relationships, but as being equally narrow at the opposite end of the scale.

Existential Phenomenologists, such as Merleau Ponty, work from this perspective, which might be termed Postmodern. They explore the diverse and real ways that people experience the world, including 'physical presence, feelings, emotions', but reject the notion of absolute and independent essential experience. Instead they look for intersubjective structures of such experience.

Other writers have more specifically attempted to link phenomenology with structural and material aspects of life, and to investigate the various forms and mediums of intersubjective understanding.

1. Entriken, p.621-622.
4. See for example Eyles, J. 2 'Senses of Place' 1985.

Cf. p.26, of this dissertation.
The concept of intersubjective and contingent understanding raises a number of issues, such as how such understanding is constituted, what forms it takes, and how it operates.

**INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY**

One dimension of this is the relation between individual and society. Modernism tended to adopt absolute models of this relation. On the one hand was the model of absolute voluntarism - such as the romantic idea of the artist - in which individuals exercise independent perception and will. On the other hand were the models of absolute structuralism as developed in Marxist theory. Marxist structuralism saw such things as values, consciousness and politics as part of a superstructure that was determined at its base by economic structure. So an individual's consciousness was determined by his/her economic role.¹

Postmodern theories, however, adopt contingent models of the individual-society relationship. An important such model is that of structuration.² According to this individuals inherit and reproduce social structures, which in turn act back on individuals, but the reproduction is never exact, and individuals can also act consciously to alter structures. These structuration processes include a vast and complex web of external and internalised systems, from

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¹ Eyles, p.1373.
institutions such as work, language, the NZILA, norms of behaviour, ways of interpreting the world, landscape tastes, and more obvious formal political structures.

"People do not create society for it always pre-exists them and is a necessary condition for their activity. Rather, society must be regarded as an ensemble of structures, practices and conventions which individuals reproduce or transform, but which would not exist unless they did so. Society does not exist independently of human activity. But it is not the product of it either."

Fig. 4.
A model of the intersubjective and contingent constitution of the landscape as a three way dialectic between:

A. Individual who are produced by their physical and social environments, but who are also purposeful and discretionary.

B. Society which is reproduced by and altered by individuals.

C. Physical Environment which is defined and shaped by people, and in turn develops and reinforces the nature and identity of people.

1. Bhasker, quoted in Eyles, p.4.
Similar patterns can be seen in models of relations between people and environment. Modernist ideas tended toward those of an absolute duality, between people on the one hand and an objective and neutral environment on the other.

An extreme example of this is regarding land as geometric spatial extension. Van Thunen and Marx for example, both regarded spatial patterns of human land use as determined primarily by abstract economic processes. The 'quantitative revolution' in geography during the 1960s and 1970s was similarly concerned with study of the environment as a spatial science. The definition of Landscape by the NZILA places Landscape as the product of a number of processes, i.e. as an object.

More recently, however, writers have shifted back to regard environment as a contingent phenomena, being not a neutral record of processes, interests, and ideas, nor simply a stage, but being intimately involved.

"Place is a negotiated reality, a social construction by a purposeful set of actors. But the relationship is mutual, for places in turn develop and reinforce the identity of the social group that claims them." 

1. Eyles, p.1377.
2. Ibid. p.1372.
According to such a contingent model, landscape is not so much a cause, or a product, as a medium of living. This encompasses living in its fullest sense, including such things as material needs, aesthetics, consciousness, values, political power and so on.

Interesting work has been done recently to conceptually link different aspects of this contingent model and to devise methodologies to explore them. Eyles, for example, has carried out case studies to try and tie together phenomenological, structural and material aspects of sense of place. Pred and Thrift have devised models of place incorporating several contingent processes. They combined time-geography – itself a contingent model – with certain structuration processes between individual and society such as 'structure of feeling'. 'Sense of Place' is seen as a structure of meaning involving both structuration processes and specific time-geography processes.  

1. Eyles.  
5. For an example of an attempt to apply these theories to practice see Alington, C. and G. Lister, 'Senses of Place: An Assessment of Inner City Christchurch', Unpublished Paper, Lincoln College Landscape Architecture Section, 1987.
LANGUAGE

Language is a key concept and concern of Postmodernists because it is seen at once as a medium in which intersubjective understanding is constituted, which can be studied to identify the forms it takes and how it operates, and which provides a medium to critically deal with such understanding.

Modernists tended toward a model of language that regarded it as a neutral medium of communication and as a neutral labelling of our understanding of the world. The aim of many modern writers, especially in New Zealand Modernism, was to use language as a 'clear window' onto reality - i.e. to be neutral recorders or mirrors of reality.

Postmodernists, on the other hand, see language as pre-organising our understanding and communications. The window not only has a frame, but its glass is dimpled. Language is seen as a value and meaning laden medium that precedes us. We are born into language and reproduce it by learning and working with it. 'We are what we speak.'

Lowenthal has listed a range of examples to demonstrate the contingent relationships between environment and language. On the one hand we see things in terms of our language's subject-object dualism:

2. Lowenthal, p.255.
3. Ibid. p.252.
"To say 'the wind blows' perpetrates the triple absurdity of suggesting that the wind can be independent of the action of blowing, that there can be a wind that does not blow, and that the wind exists apart from its outward manifestations."  

On the other hand our language reflects contingencies of environment.

"Tikopians, never far from the ocean, and unable to conceive of a large land mass, use 'inward' and 'seaward' to help locate anything. 'There is a spot of mud on your seaward cheek'."  

Also, like other structural relationships described in this dissertation, language is not fixed or one way. Our spoken language changes over time (as recorded for example in the Oxford English Dictionary). The meanings and uses of the word Landscape, for example, have changed over time and differ between cultures. Although we inherit language, we can act to alter it and try and 'cheat it'. (Barthes uses this idea of 'cheating language and cheating with language' as a definition of literature. We might usefully apply this perspective to the use of language and mediums of landscape architecture.)

Within master languages there are sub-languages or speech communities. As New Zealanders we form a distinct speech community within English language. As Landscape Architects we are part of another distinct speech community again. Each of these gives us a different set of presumptions, prejudices, and intersubjective meanings to those outside the group.

1. Piaget, quoted in Lowenthal, p. 255.
2. Ibid. p. 252.
A vitally important part of the Postmodern concept of language is that it is not restricted to spoken/written mediums. A vast array of cultural phenomena can be seen in terms of language.

"The production and reproduction of material life is necessarily a collective art, mediated in consciousness and sustained through codes of communication ... Such codes include not only language in its formal sense, but also gesture, dress, personal and social conduct, music, painting, dance, ritual, ceremony and building. Even this list does not begin to exhaust the range of symbolic production through which we sustain our lived world, because all human activity is at once both material and symbolic, production and communication. The symbolic appropriation of the world produces distinctive lifestyles (genres de vie) and distinctive landscapes which are historically and geographically specific."¹

Norberg Schulz, for example, discusses the language of architecture and divides this into topological, morphological and typological components.² He claims that a reason Modern architecture appears so faceless is that it consciously reacted against the typological (or figurative) component of this language.

This language can be applied to outdoor space. Christchurch's Cathedral Square for example has a spatial morphology - a space of proportions that allows certain functions to occur and in which people feel comfortable or otherwise; it has topological meaning as a central node, and so relates to the grammar of urban form, allowing

² Norberg-Schultz, C.² 'The Demand For A Contemporary Language of Architecture', Art and Design.
orientation. It is also a type. It is not just any old space and co-ordinate, it is a 'square'. This is illustrated by the fact that in geometric terms it is in fact not square. This type has specific meanings in the Western language of urban form. The square does not just allow gathering of people in functional terms, it means a place of gathering, of being seen and seeing others, of ritualising ones identity with a place.

Similarly an oak tree has general meanings because of its shape, texture, deciduousness, etc, and because it is a tree and represents nature, life, and so on. But it also has typological meanings. Oaks in our culture are associated with qualities such as steadfastness, and in the Christchurch context they carry additional meaning because they contribute to Christchurch's identity as 'the most English city outside England'. A cabbage tree has different typological meanings because it is distinctively New Zealand.

This is not to say that meanings belong to the things themselves. As with spoken/written language, meanings are attributed and maintained by people and these can change over time. The gothic architecture of Christchurch might have had strong spiritual meanings for the Canterbury Association founders. Nowadays its meanings are more likely to be those of secular romanticism, and those of a distinguishing identity from Auckland and Wellington.
MYTH

An important approach in the study of the forms of intersubjective meanings - associated with the concept of language - is that of semiology (or semiotics).

"Semiotics occurs whenever we stand back from our ways of understanding and communicating, and ask how these ways of understanding and communicating arise, what form they take, and why. Semiotics is above all an intellectual curiosity about the ways we represent our world to ourselves and each other."¹

Roland Barthes is a seminal semiologist. Particularly important is his concept of Myth.² He sees culture as a collection of myths which structure our understanding of the world. Myth is not seen in this use as a pejorative term - i.e. an untruth - because it rejects the notion of an absolute truth against which to measure it. So a Myth is not necessarily good or bad.

A Myth used frequently in Landscape Architecture is a Myth of the Rural as represented by this illustration of a suburban street by Robert Venturi (Fig. 2) and this logo from a margarine container (Fig. 3).

² Barthes, pp. 93-149.
Fig. 4. Aspak's use of a Myth of Rural

Fig. 5. Suburban semiotics. Venturi and Brown. From Bruegan, 1982, p. 36.
According to Barthes approach, there are two semiological systems at work. The first is a simple language system made up of three components: the signifier, which is the shape of the hills, house, rising sun; the signified, which is the abstract concept of rurality (i.e. out of town), and the sign which is the result of these two components working together and which is the level we are normally conscious of.

The second-order semiological system is the mythical one. This begins with — and relies for its effectiveness on — the seemingly innocent completed sign of the simple language system. However, this sign then refers to a mythical concept of Ruralness which includes a range of values, such as wholesomeness, naturalness and so on. The signification is the completion of this mythical system. So what seems an innocent diagram actually carries a range of seductive meanings, which of course is why the advertiser has chosen it, rather than simply saying "this margarine is wholesome and natural".

An important myth of the Modern era, and of Modern Landscape Architecture, has been that of Science. At a simple language system level of meaning, science refers to certain methods and ways of understanding the world, but at a mythical level Science carries values of truth, impartiality, correctness and efficaciousness, which is why Science too is used often by advertisers.
POSTMODERN CULTURE

Postmodernism has a specific historical and cultural dimension as well. Postmodern theory, and the reaction against Modernism, is bound with this historical cultural context. It is part of the prevailing moods, feelings, aspirations, political economies and technologies.

Electronic communications technology is a crucial part of, for example:

(i) creating both world-wide dissemination of a wide diversity of ideas and world-wide financial control.
(ii) creating both mass media/mass culture and allowing the cohering of previously dispersed cultural minorities and sub-cultures.

Postmodern culture has a different space-economy. It is Postindustrial. Services eclipse manufacturing. Rather than being a tool to produce commodities, information itself becomes the main commodity. National borders and national political-economys lose their integrity, as multinational corporations become increasingly important political and economic units.

A Postmodern culture is both a mass culture and a culture of individualism - of self fulfillment. In the last fifteen years for example, Auckland has gained both the mass culture of McDonalds and a range of speciality restaurants from Austrian to Vietnamese.

Postmodern culture is one of consumerism and commodification - not only of goods, but increasingly of information, experiences, lifestyles. A 'National Park Experience' could be seen as a form of consumerism for example.
Postmodern culture is paradoxically both more international in character, and contains more diversity within a place.

A Postmodern culture is one of pastiche, irony, kitsch.

Postmodern culture has been described as pessimistic: feelings of powerlessness, pointlessness, failure of earlier Modern schemes. The Jewish holocaust behind, the nuclear holocaust ahead.

Postmodern culture has also been seen optimistically, as a break from the failures of Modernism, from the hegemony of orthodoxys and master narratives, as a break from boredom.

Within New Zealand events such as growing awareness of environmental degradation, our involvement in the Vietnam War, the emergence of chronic unemployment, and growing awareness of the marginalised position of Maori and Women, were all contributors to an awareness of Modernism as "dominant but dead".

Aspects of international culture imported into New Zealand are usually acclimatised and adapted to local conditions. Francis Pound (mentioned above) described how nineteenth century picturesque modes of landscape painting were adapted to the purpose (among others) of colonising a new land in the mind. Similarly aspects of Modern painting were adapted to a style of New Zealand landscape painting that can be seen as a conscious project to create a New Zealand national identity. The same adoption of Postmodern culture can be expected. Wilcox, in fact, has discussed the importation and modification of aspects of Postmodernism for similar purposes of creating national identity.2

1. Pound, and Pound.

LOCATING POSTMODERNISM BY FIELD

A final method of defining Postmodernism is to describe it by field.

This is done on the 'Map of Postmodernism' by listing a range of examples from different disciplines, and trying to compare them to Modernist examples. This illustrates the range of different forms that have been regarded as Postmodernism, and therefore problems for definitions based on forms alone. Disparate forms may often express a similar impulse. For example a common theme of Landscape Architecture Postmodernism is contextualism. By definition this is going to lead to a variety of forms. But on top of this, contextualism has been variously interpreted as vernacular context, social context, historical context, biological process context, and so on. More fully developed forms of Postmodernism might be expected to relate to a more total context.

Conversely, similar forms might express different motivations. Is an ecological park for example, responding to its natural context, or to an abstract and absolutist model.
A common phrase used when talking about Postmodernism is 'complexity and contradiction' — coming originally from Robert Venturi's book of that name, in which he claimed that these were the qualities of appealing architecture. This phrase is a useful description of many Postmodern works, and also of the field of Postmodernism as a whole.

Another distinction that has been made between Modern and Postmodern forms that might usefully be applied to Landscape design is that between 'closed texts' and 'open texts'. In the former "all the elements of the work are directed toward a single reading of the work. Each element confirms that one reading .... In the open text all the elements of the work are maximally excited ....".

Jellicoe's work, for example, might be seen as Postmodern to the degree it tries to multiply the number of readings one can take from it. Similarly with the work of Pamela Burton, George Hargreaves, and Richard Haag.

Another characteristic of Postmodern work is wider range of tone. Modern work tended to be serious and earnest. Postmodern work often uses other tones, especially humour such as irony and wryness.

Finally, Hassan has proposed a sophisticated description of the characteristics of Postmodernism based on two categories of 'Indeterminacy' and 'Immanence'.

'Indeterminacy' includes the tendencies of "openness, heterodoxy, pluralism, electicism, randomness, revolt, deformation" - "the many asserting their primacy over the one". ¹ 'Immanences' on the other hand, is defined as "the capacity of mind to generalise itself in the world, to act upon both self and world, and so become more and more immediately, its own environment". This includes such tendencies as "Dissemination, integration, ecumenism, communication, interplay, interdependence, interpenetration".² Hassen claims that these two categories are not complete opposites, but operate in the manner of what he terms an 'ambilectic'. They can be negating contradictions, dialectical contradictions, and ambiguous, paradoxical contradictions.

2. Ibid. p.126.
IMPLICATIONS

It has seemed that the attempt to provide a comprehensive definition and description of Postmodernism for this dissertation has introduced more complexity and uncertainty than there appeared to begin with. However, the negative consequences of the confusion and vagueness associated with the term, have been outweighed by the energy of thinking that Postmodernism introduces and the implications of this for our work.

"It is not so interesting to look for an authoritative definition of Postmodernism as to consider the implications of the very complex intellectual brawl we are witnessing - and joining - right now."  

A central implication is that critical perspectives are changed. Existing positions are questioned.

"As the current 'bad boys' of the academy, Postmodernists have unified the right and left on who they both love to hate."  

This doesn't mean that it denies existing or any positions. Postmodernism is not nihilism. But because Postmodern theory claims a contingent world, it denies absolute or autonomous foundations for existing positions. A Postmodern perspective is curious about the contexts of positions, the presumptions behind them, and the interests involved.

3. Ibid. p.145.
So in this sense Modernism and Postmodernism are different in nature. Modernism proposed absolute and autonomous goals.

"We (modern architects) were thoroughly of the opinion that if you had good architecture the lives of people would be improved; that architecture would improve people, and people improve architecture, until perfectibility would descend on us like the Holy Ghost, and we would be happy for ever after." ¹

A Postmodern critical position, however, might ask you to check the foundations.

"(Postmodern) theory is less a keystone or a capstone, than a keystone kop who slyly subverts." ²

As such then, Postmodernism in itself is neither good nor bad and it is important to keep aware of this. It is contingent on the response that is made.

One response is a reactionary stance that appeals either to existing practice or to traditional fundamental bases. This is partly evident in academic circles as a resurgence of fundamentalism in both conservative and radical traditions. D'Amigo has examined criticisms from both these perspectives, and maintains however that their arguments cannot sidestep the basic claims of Postmodern criticism, which has raised serious questions. Appeals to traditional practice and foundations are appeals to concealed theory, presumptions and interests.³

¹ Phillip Johnson quoted in Hughes, p.165.
³ D'Amigo, p.135ff.
"There is much moral finger wagging - Postmodernism is decadent, self indulgent, irresponsible, a subterfuge of late capitalism imperialism - which dismisses any genuine theoretical debate." ¹

Another response might be one of pointlessness when existing foundations and goals begin to seem less solid.

However, the contingent emphasis of Postmodern theory claims that people are unavoidably implicated in their society and environment. People are not independent and autonomous, but/and also their actions do have effects that are not pre-determined. Postmodernism is against the absolute positions of both voluntarism and structuralism, of both inevitable Progress and hopeless futility. So people have no justification from Postmodern theory to either resign themselves to systems or to withdraw from them into a hermetic position. In this sense it is a human approach.

Foster has distinguished between a 'Postmodernism of reaction' and a 'Postmodernism of resistance'.² Reaction reinforces existing interests and existing structures of meaning. Resistance would persistently try to out manouevre these. Hughes, for example, sees Postmodern Architecture as reactionary:

"The trouble is that 'Post-Modern architecture' is just the same old international styles, curtain-wall shaft with a funny hat on top, and maybe a bit of marble in the foyer." ³

2. Foster, p.xii.
Critical Regionalism, however, could be seen as an Architecture of resistance.

"A critical mediation of the forms of modern civilisation and of local culture, a mutual deconstruction of universal techniques, and regional vernaculars." 1

Another implication of Postmodernism, is that the unsettling of dominant ways of seeing allows alternative ways of seeing more acceptance. Dominant ways of seeing have been termed 'Master narratives', 'epistomes', and regarded as operating in a hegemonic fashion, using all sorts of tricks to keep alternatives out, or to subsume them. Under a master narrative that regards science as truth and the European world view as the right one, Maori world views, for example, are marginalised. They are regarded as myths in a pejorative sense, at best as embellishments to the true picture. However, a deconstruction of science, as Foucault attempted, 2 that shows it as 'narrow rather than wrong', allows these Maori world views greater power. This is important to Landscape, and the process can be seen beginning to occur. A similar process is taking place with feminism. Much feminist criticism is concerned with deconstructing male orientated ways of seeing the world that are often so embedded in our culture that they seem to be 'natural'. They are common-sense. Feminist criticism has emerged in Architecture, but has yet to appear in Landscape Architecture.

1. K. Frampton, quoted in Foster, p.xiii.
2. Referred to in D'Amigo, p.141ff.
Following from deconstructive implications of Postmodernism, are new opportunities of reconstruction. Landscape Architecture has sought to be holistic. In the past, however, there have been conceptual and methodological problems in joining various disparate components together - objective and subjective aspects of the landscape for instance.

Postmodernism provides a theoretical impulse to provide a contingent holistic system. For instance, the objective and subjective aspects are seen as interpenetrating and contingent, as are individual-society and people-environment and methods for exploring these relations as such have been attempted as mentioned earlier.

Finally, a further implication of Postmodernism, if seen as an 'ideal category' to Modernism, is that of carrying on what Hassan terms the 'cognitive imperative': the process by which people have not only learnt about their world, but learnt to learn, by repeatedly undermining any equilibrium, or any closed system. He quotes Derrida:

"Though requires both the principle of reason and what is beyond reason, the arkhe and an-archy. Between the two, the difference of a breath or an accent, a blink or a wink."

This is similar to Foucault's exhortion to 'constantly rehearse a break with history'. So for Hassan, progress ironically depends now on Postmodernisms ability to subvert the dominant history (or Myth) of Progress.

CONCLUSION

This description of Postmodernism is a personal composition, put together from a range of writing in several disciplines of the liberal and applied arts. It must be reiterated that Postmodernism is not a consistently defined phenomena, and that there are numerous definitions of it.

Some definitions deal with Postmodernism in a specific discipline, such as Frampton's 'Postmodern Architecture' or Hester's 'Process Can be Style', although it is a characteristic of Postmodernism, because of its contingent bias, to blur interdisciplinary boundaries. So, for example, there are journals of interdisciplinary Postmodernism.¹

Some critics have proposed broadranging descriptions, such as that by Hassan mentioned above. Other works, such as Foster's 'Anti-Aesthetic' describe Postmodernism through a collection of essays by different critics in overlapping fields. This gives a feel for the range, complexity, contradictions, and uncertainty of the phenomena.

Also within disciplines, several different strands can be defined as Postmodern. Charles Jenks identified six strands of Postmodern Architecture: Historicism, Revivalism, Neo Vernacular, Design as Metaphor, Participatory Design, Democratic Design.² Yet to other architects it seems that

¹ For example; 'Boundary 2. A Journal of Postmodern Culture'.
Postmodernism consists merely of the use of ornament, characteristic motifs, and a wider use of fashionable colour. In fashion and popular decorating magazines, Postmodernism has been referred to even more narrowly as a range of fashionable colours, and in Garden Design the term has been associated with a group of dramatic tropical plants.

This description of Postmodernism then is a personal attempt at an impossible definition, but at least it might indicate the range of the debate. This has two useful effects: First, it might save us from throwing the baby out with the bathwater. The Postmodern debate is uneven, but it is a heavily invested term. Second, it introduces perspectives that I think will be useful for understanding and practice within Landscape Architecture.
Explicit Postmodernism in Landscape Architecture

HEY! IT'S A LETTER FROM STEVEN KROG!!

REALITY

THAT'S POST MODERNISM, YOU POSER

...ARTS STUDENTS...THINK THEY KNOW IT ALL!

There is only a small body of writing explicitly on Postmodernism in landscape architecture, and this exists within the generally weak framework of critical writing or theory within the discipline. One result is that the discussion can be somewhat confusing. Attention has largely focused on three styles or methods of designing: the Ecological Approach, Participatory Approach, and what might loosely be termed experimental landscape art or contextual design.

The lack of a critical and theoretical framework in Landscape Architecture is well recognised.\(^1\) Two disturbing effects of this in relation to the Postmodern discussion is; First, the difficulty in translating and using theoretical discussion from other disciplines; and Second, the difficulty of sustaining a coherent discussion on such theory within Landscape Architecture itself.

These points are illustrated by the discussion in a series of five articles on Postmodernism published in 'Landscape Architecture' magazine between 1982 - 85, with an accompanying number of letters. As far as I know, this is the only active discussion on the subject in landscape architecture, although there are a few other isolated articles in other journals.

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1. See for example; Krog, 1985, p56.
Eastman, 1982, p55.
Radmall, P. 'Landscape By Default'
pp 17-19.
The articles are characterised by narrowly and poorly defined descriptions of Postmodernism. It seems clear that each writer has a different implicit definition. Responding articles also often pick one aspect of an earlier article as the basis for reply, so that the different writers often seem to be talking at cross purposes. This impression of confusion and lack of communication is reinforced by the letters written in reply. ¹

² Hester doesn't define what he means by Postmodern landscape architecture, but identifies the term with experimental landscape art, such as Martha Schwartz's Bagel Garden and Neeco/Tyre Garden, and with the view put forward by Steven Krog in his article "Is it Art". Hester regards this, what he calls, "contrived Postmodernism" as "frivolous" and "elitist aesthetic jokes", its only value being an expression of frustration with Modernist practice, which he sees as no longer appropriate in a time of ecological and civil rights crises. Such 'Postmodernism', however, he sees as a misguided reaction. Instead he appeals to what he maintains is Landscape Architecture's roots in both stewardship and 'adapting land for human use rather than for aesthetic purposes', to provide a more appropriate foundation for a new landscape architecture. He proposes a twin approach based on 'conservation design' and 'participatory design' responding to the ecological and civil rights crises respectively. Concomitant with this would be the need to develop a new aesthetic to accommodate these new styles.

Hester's description and classification of Modern and Post Modern styles of design in Landscape Arch.
Susan Eastman¹ and Steven Krog ² on the other hand, both welcome the new 'creative and artistic' work, seeing this as breaking away from the mould of rational and scientific methodology in which landscape architecture had become stuck - from the "unspoken implication ... that a correct solution lies hidden in the haystack of analyses, programs, and functional diagrams". ³

"Landscape architecture seems to have sold its artistic heritage for thirty pieces of McHargian method, circulation diagrams, and computer analysis." ⁴

However, both see the translation of Postmodernist thinking from other disciplines as unsuitable and misleading. They claim that many of the concerns of Postmodern architecture, for example, were already the concerns of early Modernist landscape architects such as Christopher Tunnard and Thomas Church.

Eastman: "Many of the movements design ideas - complexity, ambiguity, and historical allusion - have already been explored in modern gardens." ⁵

Krog: "Inclusivity, and contextual/historical references have always been important in varying degrees. Therefore, much of landscape architectures modern work must be identified as Postmodern." ⁶

4. Eastman, p 55.
5. Ibid. p 57.
Instead they both look to a homegrown development of theory. This development should re-examine the ideas of the early Modernists. Krog's sees the recent experimental work such as the Bagel Garden as exciting, but going through the necessary program of Modernism that other disciplines have gone through in earlier decades involving such things as abstract and reductive exploration of materials, of the essence of what Landscape Architecture can be, and of 'examining and expanding the vocabulary of the landscape'.

Eastman regards some of the landscape work being done by architects in the name of Postmodernism as exciting, and filling a vacuum of outdoor creativity, but thinks Landscape Architecture should not transplant architectural theories, but needs to develop its own; particularly Landscape Architecture needs to re-examine the aims of the early Modernist Landscape Architects, such as Thomas Church and Christopher Tunnard.
Norman Johnson, however, maintains that landscape architecture is already Postmodern and that other disciplines are just catching up. He takes as the basis of his argument, discussion in other disciplines (notably architecture) that focuses on the context of environment and history.

"Suddenly the world is speaking landscapese."
"We've known about it all along: now's the time to say so."  

This is, of course, a narrow interpretation of Postmodernism, and even of contextualism, and also doesn't critically examine landscape architectures claimed track record of "addressing the whole environment".

There are some poignant and more serious points in his article though. He recognises the likelihood of competition, blurring of boundaries, and the possibility of increased involvement, with other disciplines: - "a family reunion". He also asks "will landscape architects use (Postmodernisms) popularity?". "If landscape architects accept Postmodernism - if we play the game - then we're ahead."  

1. Johnson, N.K. 'Postmodernism - Questions Not to Ask'

2. Ibid, p53.

3. Ibid. p53.
So Hester thinks the new 'Postmodernism' is bad and we should look to conservation and participatory design. Eastman and Krog think this 'Postmodernism' is good, but is really landscape architecture going through a Modernist phase, and Johnson thinks its good, but that landscape architecture has always been Postmodern. The confusing elements seem to be those of; (i) defining Postmodernism, (ii) translating theoretical work from other disciplines into landscape architecture, and (iii) locating Postmodern theory within existing landscape architectural theory.

Neither Hester nor Johnson, for example, attempt any description of what Postmodernism is; both refer to it indirectly, although Hester describes characteristics of modernism, conservation and participatory design (see above). Eastman and Krog define Postmodernism by describing impressions of Postmodern work in other disciplines.

"If Postmodernism could be summed up in three words they would be ambiguous, askew, strange." ¹

Both Eastman and Krog refer to it as a 'movement' with a specific 'ideology'. Krog then goes on to state that in fact "we can appreciate these so called Postmodern landscapes specifically because they do not conform to any doctrine", they generate "new options", and promote freedom by "reckless disregard for the 'proper' use of standard materials". This work is useful "not because it offers a 'new truth', but because it is an opportunity to look with fresh eyes upon landscape architectural relationship with its past and future". ²

1. Eastman, p55.
2. Krog, p59.
From the perspective of Postmodernism presented in this paper, this seems a case of arguing at cross purposes.

To illustrate that Postmodern concerns are the same as Modernist ones, Krog compares Kim Levin's "(Postmodernism) is style free and free style" with Christopher Tunnard's 1942 "New modern landscape architecture is not offered to the public as a style so much as a method. The right style for the twentieth century is no style at all." However, a closer reading of these two statements and interpretation of them in this theoretical context shows vital differences. Tunnard was writing in the context of the Beaux Arts tradition. By 'no style' he meant rejection of these codified styles. He (erroneously) believed designers could be free of all and any style.

Levin, on the other hand, is writing from a historical perspective that saw how the Modern method became a style in itself, and also from the Postmodern theoretical perspective that maintains there is no style-less way of designing. By "free style and style free" he is claiming a rejection of a single imposed style, such as Modernism, and free eclectic use of all existing and new styles. So, for example, in the same passage by Levin, Postmodernism is said "to quote, scavenge, ransack, recycle the past" to be "eccentrically inclusive".

The most useful and accessible article on Postmodernism of this group in Landscape Architecture Magazine, in my view, is George Hargreaves: "Postmodernism Looks Beyond Itself".


The theoretical base of Hargreaves' view is not clearly developed, and his central tenet of Postmodernism being about 'orientating to the external world rather than internal space' may seem to be insufficient in itself. However, the article builds up a pastiche of Postmodernism ranging across architecture, landscape architecture, and sculpture, recognising diverse trends in each field, quoting the attitudes of a range of commentators, and including a wide range of examples. Postmodernism is seen as a cultural attitude, from which a diversity of styles is developing. For instance, within landscape architecture he includes examples of Ecological design, participatory design, experimental gardens, and other contextual or symbolic works such as Gas Plant Park. By recognising the looseness of the phenomena, Hargreaves avoids the trap of contradictory trends and details. His introductory description (by way of definition) of Postmodernism is taken from art critic Kevin Levin.

"(Postmodernism) knows about shortages, it knows about inflation and devaluation. It is aware of the increased costs of objects. And so it quotes, scavenges, ransacks, recycles the past. Its method is synthesis rather than analysis. It is style free and free style. Playful and full of doubt, it denies nothing, tolerant of ambiguity, contradiction, complexity, incoherence, it is eccentrically inclusive. It mimics life, accepts awkwardness and crudity, takes an amateur stance structured by time rather than form, concerned with context instead of style, it uses memory, research, confession, fiction - with irony, whimsy and disbelief." ¹

¹ Levin, quoted in Hargreaves¹, p.60.
The Postmodern examples of 'earth art' or 'site art' that Hargreaves touches on, are those that gain their meaning from their surroundings, and which in turn provide a re-examination of their surroundings. This is in contrast to works whose meaning is regarded as 'intrinsic'.

Such site works may respond to natural processes, such as the canal and weir system at Lakewood Hills which makes a feature of fluctuations in runoff;¹ or to formal elements, such as Smithson’s 'Asphalt Rundown' where asphalt was run down a fresh scarp; or to more abstract elements such as Heizer's 'City Complex 1' which interacts with large scale notions of time in the Nevada Desert. Often such works use contrast with surroundings to create meaning in a dialectical fashion. E.g. a horizontal element that emphasises natural contours, or the organic shape of Smithsons man-made 'Spiral Jetty' in the dead Salt Lake. All these involve an intense re-exploration of the given world.

Similarly with the experimental gardens such as the Neeco/Tyre Garden² and the Bagel Garden.³ These set out conciously to address Postmodern concerns of context, process, foregrounding and re-examination of materials and subversion of accepted attitudes and languages.

Gas Plant Park in Seattle seems to have become the best known or most referred to example of Postmodern landscape architecture. The park is the recreational redevelopment of a polluted industrial site on a Seattle waterfront. Richard Haag was employed as landscape architect with a brief to organise removal of the industrial relics, rehabilitation of the site, and design of an urban park with lawns and trees.

Haag set up his office and studio on the site amongst the abandoned gas plant, watched how people were already using the site, and developed an alternative plan for the park that was more responsive to the complex and rich context already existins: i.e. the history of the site, the way people behaved there already, the 'working' character of the lake, its sharp weather contrasts and dramatic reflection of lights and skyline, the sculptural qualities of the industrial relics, and so on.

Haag mounted a tenacious year long campaign during 1971 to have his plan accepted.

A culture preconditioned to experience beauty only in the familiar trees, grass, water, mountains, etc. reacted with scorn and anger to the suggestion of hidden beauty in the rusted industrial forms already categorised and stored away in their subconscious as 'ugly'.

Eventually he managed to have his plan accepted on a 'trial' basis. Since implementation Gas Plant Park has found widespread support from both users and critics. In 1982 it was awarded the highest 'Presidents' Award from the A.S.L.A.


2. Ibid. p342.
If Hargreaves presents a feel for Postmodernism with his wide ranging pastiche, Jusuck Koh presents the most comprehensive and coherent theoretical work on Postmodernism in landscape architecture that I am aware of: "Ecological Design: A postmodern design paradigm of holistic philosophy and evolutionary ethic". (Koh is an architect and landscape architect, and he writes within the (inter) discipline of 'Environmental Design'.)

Koh regards both Modernism and Post-modernism as paradigms; by paradigm he means a deep seated and ubiquitous way of regarding the world. Modernism he defines as the paradigm of the 500 years since the renaissance, characterised by positivism, dualism, determinism and reductionism. Postmodernism he regards as an emerging paradigm and characterises it according to 'ecological' principles. By ecological he doesn't mean simply ecological determinism as associated with McHarg, or exclusively concerned with scientific ecology. It is a more sophisticated concept that recognises:

(A) Humans as part of the ecosystem - as part of nature.

(B) The interactional nature of human-environment relations.

(C) And therefore:

(i) the indivisibility of such things as thought and feeling, mind and matter,

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humans and environment, culture and nature.

(ii) A focus on the relationships making up these pairs. (It is in the process of people finding identity and meaning in their environment, for example, that Koh sees the desire for and value of historic preservation, symbolic allusion, and regionalism.)

(iii) The evolving nature of these relationships. i.e. No ideal state exists now or in the future. Perception and relationships change with time.

(iv) The unavoidable implication of people in their environment, coupled with the impossibility of an objective stance, leading to the need for inter-subjective ethical choices.

In his comparison of Modernism and Postmodernism, Koh makes clear that such a polarisation is to a degree artificial, and that important material, social and intellectual advances were gained within the Modern paradigm. But he also makes clear Modernisms failings and limitations. He specifically compares the polarised positions of both paradigms in design practice and design education.
Modern design practice is seen as concerned with rational solution of narrowly defined problems; elitist and heroic on part of designers with concomitant 'education' of public taste and perception; concerned with the design object rather than the design process; based on universal and utopian standards rather than context; concerned with presentation and the reality of graphics rather than implementation. Postmodern design practice on the other hand includes: participation of community in fullest sense; addressing human problems rather than 'environmental' problems; accepting importance of other disciplines in human-environment relations and swapping knowledge with them; valuing creation of processes and information as well as objects; being specialists in problem types; integrating humanism and naturalism, classicism and romanticism; judging work by fitness to broadly defined context, and by "degree to which (it) enhances the complexity, richness and identity" of the environment.

Similarly the Modern paradigm is seen expressed in design education as "a one way training and teaching process, design as practice or exercise rather than as experiment; design a problem solving process in which the solution is guaranteed to exist and problems are defined by instructor in advance. Designing begins typically with a 'space program' and 'circulation diagram', looking rarely into psychological, cultural, and ecological variables that would offset the nature of the problem itself. In other words, design is more solution seeking than problem seeking.

1. Koh, pp76-77
2. Ibid, pp81-82.
Consequently, the variations of design solutions are more in aesthetic aspects than in originality of problem conception or innovative approaches toward the design process."¹

Postmodern design education on the other hand would, he maintains, be characterised by: a synthesis of theory with other disciplines and an integration of theory and history with design studios; emphasis on the evolving relationship between people and environment, the why of history, and significance of historical relationships in contemporary context; including vernacular as well as polite design; involving the instructor as co-worker, design as experiment rather than exercise, and evolution as part of the creative process and involving a wider range of perception and cognition such as those of users.²

This article, in my view, is the most rigorously developed, coherent and broadbased article on Postmodernism in landscape architecture. However, although it was published in 1982, there has been no response to it, that I know of, in any other article.

¹ Koh, p78.
² Ibid, pp82-83.
A similarly rigorous and comprehensive article of relevance to Landscape Architecture, is M.J. Dear's 'Postmodernism and Planning'.

Dear looks at Postmodernism from several different angles: in different disciplines, as style, as epoch, as method, and as the concept of an ideal category.

He identifies Postmodern style as architectural Postmodernism, which he dismisses as reactionary. That is, it deconstructs the language of architectural form, and reconstructs it to reinforce the status quo.

He identifies the Postmodern epoch as a time-space political economy of social dislocation in which "social space, political space, economic space and physical space" are increasingly out of fit. It is a state of 'penetration' by capital and state, and of increasing commodification of all aspects of life.

The Postmodern method he identifies as deconstruction, and the central feature of the article is that he uses this method to 'deconstruct' the history and theory of planning to determine if there is a Postmodern planning emerging. His history of planning sees it developing from technocratic physical landuse planning in the post WWII years.

Diagram of Dear's model of a history of post-war planning.

(Dear, p. 372)
In the 1960s he saw it adopting the 'new scientism' that was developing in the social sciences. By this he means a positivistic, quantitative, technical and so called 'politically neutral' approach, based on systems theory and which split into 'substantive' and 'procedural' strands. The substantive strand is based on environmental systems models. The procedural strand emphasised a rational (or rationally bounded) design method (e.g. survey, analysis, synthesis).

From the 1960s a parallel stream developed around public participation in planning. This also split into a radical, or 'critical left' which developed an increasingly abstract social theory of planning, and a "transactive, creative" approach which tried to develop 'mutual learning' between planners and public to "invent an urban future".

The 1980s conservative reaction caused a re-trenchment in planning. The loss of a liberal environment and the problem of linking theory to practice led to the demise of participatory and critical strands. Mainstream planning became increasingly conservative and narrower in its aims. Dear says planning in the Postmodern epoch appears as a 'pastiche of practices' with a theory "isolated as a babel of languages". Its roles are to 'legitimise the actions of state and of capital'. "It is a planning of filigree, of decoration".

1. Dear, p380.
There are several similarities to landscape architecture in this history. The mainstream strands of 'substantive' and 'procedural' approaches could be seen in McHarg's club-sandwich model of landscape and in Design Methods respectively. The 'ecological approach', seen by many writers as Postmodern, in some of its forms fits in the positivistic substantive approach. Aspects of the participatory strand have also been seen in Landscape Architecture.

Dear proposes a 'metalanguage' based on the paired categories of: Functional/contextual, commodified/non commodified, penetration/participation. The purpose of this is to provide a new critical perspective, a language to enable comparisons and communication between the different 'insulated' forms of planning, and a language to link planning theory and practice with social processes. He hopes that such a 'metalanguage' might be the "starting point of a Postmodern reconstruction of planning".

However, Dear finally rejects the possibility of a Postmodern planning. "(The metalanguage) has admirably served its purpose as a personal hermeneutic device". His view is that Postmodernism remains constantly relevant as a stance, 'an ideal category'. He says it is also a useful term to talk about planning of a Postmodern epoch. But he claims, there is no object or coherent phenomena that can be called Postmodern planning.

1. Dear, p.383.
2. Ibid. p.383.
Postmodernism has been used in various other meanings in landscape architecture articles. J.H.A. Meeus and M.J. Vroom examined designed landscapes in the Dutch Polders. They classified these as Traditional, Modern, and Postmodern. In this case Postmodern means participatory design methods or designs allowing later freer interpretation by users.

David Ley identifies an urban renewal project in Vancouver with the following "Postmodern" themes; human scale and proportions; pedestrian and bicycle traffic; diversity of colour, materials and design, both to "foster pluralism (and) also to personalise the built form, to support ... the vast mosaic of subcultures"; historical, regional and vernacular allusions. In other words, humanistic design.

M. Gilmer uses 'Postmodern planting schemes' to refer to a planting style to suit a specific style of Postmodern architecture (neo-art deco). This planting style is made up of dramatic, mainly tropical, plants.


CONCLUSION

So discussion of Postmodernism in landscape architecture is diffuse and confusing. Several themes recur - namely participatory design, ecological design and experimental landscape art or contextual design. However, reference to the more rigorous and comprehensive articles would encourage caution in simply attaching the label of Postmodernism to any or all of these. First, because in many cases these approaches are clearly Modernist in the assumptions behind them. This is especially the case with some ecological design. Second, because the possibilities and perspectives of Postmodernism are lost if the impulses behind it are shifted into a description of a style or type of approach. This is clearly the case with the last mentioned article in this section. In itself, the article is interesting and useful. But the danger with associating Postmodernism with such an aesthetic of tropical plants is that it sells us short. It blinds us to the value of much more consequential theory and work that is taking place.
Postmodernism and Landscape Architecture in New Zealand
POSTMODERNISM IN NEW ZEALAND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

The third part of this dissertation sets out to assess the influence of Postmodernism on Landscape Architecture in New Zealand. To do this I surveyed the articles in 'The Landscape' magazine.¹

The first finding is that there is no explicit mention of either Postmodernism or Modernism.

However, all articles were categorised as Postmodern or Modern according to my personal assessment based on:
- the subject content.
- the way the subject was explained or described.
- methodologies used.
- general tone.

- and in line with the descriptions of Modernism and Postmodernism in Part 1 of this dissertation.

The result of this assessment is summarised in Table 1. As well as 'Modern' and 'Postmodern' I found it useful to distinguish an 'Inbetween' category, and a category for articles that were indeterminate or for which Modern-Postmodern seemed inappropriate. Articles were also categorised according to their primary subject, Table 2.

¹. The Landscape. Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects Inc. Wellington.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modern</th>
<th>1976-79</th>
<th>1980-83</th>
<th>1984-87</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transitional</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmodern</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Appropriate</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Categorisation of articles in 'The Landscape' based on the concepts of Modernism and Postmodernism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>1976-79</th>
<th>1980-83</th>
<th>1984-87</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspect of landscape</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme of L. Arch. practice</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Categorisation of articles in 'The Landscape' according to their principle subject.
The value of these tables by themselves is limited. As stated earlier, Postmodernism has limited value as a descriptive or categorising label and could be misleading if simply adopted as such. Also, because none of the discussion in 'the Landscape' has taken place in explicit terms of Modernism or Postmodernism, identification of characteristics is less obvious. Finally, because little of the discussion has taken place in explicit philosophical or theoretical terms of any kind, most of such philosophy is implicit, making assessment more problematic.

These qualifications aside, what Table 1 shows is that, in my view, in line with the discussion in the first part of this dissertation, and from the evidence contained in 'The Landscape' magazine, New Zealand landscape architecture has been mainly Modernist in character. The following are some of my impressions of these articles, from a Postmodern perspective.
LACK OF EXPLICIT PHILOSOPHY AND THEORY

There is a shortage of explicit Philosophy and Theory. Neil Aitken in an editorial acknowledged this:

"For too long Landscape Architects have been immersed in the hows, whens, and wheres of Landscape without being concerned with the whys." 1

Even the number of articles classified as Philosophical in Table 2 may over-represent the situation. Of 17, 5 were contributed by writers outside the profession, 5 were contributed by Dr A. Jackman, and the rest were not comprehensive articles but limited to a specific aspect of landscape architecture such as Planting Philosophy.

Dr Jackman is the only contributor to present a comprehensive philosophy and theory for landscape architecture.2 Response to these articles in the magazine is virtually non-existent.

Jackman's articles have evolved toward an increasingly complex and holistic theory of Landscape. In some aspects they have tended toward Postmodern perspectives. Recent articles recognise a central role for the human mind in the landscape, and the mind as a central landscape resource, rather than focussing on 'resources' and 'values' as components residing solely in the external landscape.

   Also: Jackman, T. 'Our National Landscapes' DSIR, 1986.
"The 'total landscape' philosophy ... recognises that the landscape about us not only represents the sum of the physical and cultural processes which operate in it, but any landscape also reflects how we have assembled the balances and trade-offs between values which we as individuals and we as society have placed on the use of land." ¹

One reason Jackman gives for developing a complex theory is to move beyond the tendency of landscape architects to act on either simplistic, insufficient rational models that focus solely on the objective physical environment on the one hand,² or on what he refers to as "the poetic purity of very personal subjectivisms"³ on the other.

However, in other aspects Jackman's articles tend more toward a Modernist stance. The model of the environment in the mind is based on a subject-object dichotomy in which reality is perceived by the subject and evaluated, rather than a more contingent and inter-actional process. This model sees landscape as a result of human values, etc. (i.e. as an object) rather than being involved in them as a medium.

The environment is evaluated according to a reductionist model of values, i.e., Ecological, Economic, Ethical. The methodological response to this has been to attempt to separate values into discrete, standardised and quantifiable units, largely so that they can be processed by computer.

¹. The Landscape. 22. 1984.
². The Landscape. 9. 1980.
The lack of explicit philosophy or theory does not however, mean that New Zealand Landscape Architecture is theory free or lacks philosophy. On the contrary, the articles in 'The Landscape' contain a number of implicit ideas and values, often hidden behind such words as 'appropriate'. It is a tenet of Postmodern theory that 'every fact is a theory', and one of the purposes of criticism is to try and bring such implicit theories and philosophies into the open.

In his editorial to 'The Landscape' in 1982, when the editorial committee changed, Neil Aitken set out this task of criticism as one of the magazine's aims:

> While I cannot guarantee that 'The Landscape' will be unbiased or unemotional, I believe that it will be thought provoking and will seek to challenge preconceived and accepted ideas and norms...”

Unfortunately this aim has not been realised. The following therefore, are what seem to me to be "preconceived and accepted ideas and norms" in articles in 'The Landscape' magazine. It should be made clear that I am not necessarily disagreeing in substance with the articles quoted, and that this selection is biased in being part of this particular project - to assess New Zealand landscape architecture in terms of Modernism and Postmodernism.
1. A common implicit Philosophy is a dislike of Philosophy or Theory.\(^1\) This is indicated by the very few articles devoted to such issues and the lack of response to those that are. Also, general articles describing a specific project or an aspect of landscape architecture, tend to dwell on the 'hows' and not on the 'whys'. This is the case even with innovative work, such as Matawai Park.\(^2\)

The dislike of theory is hinted at in the texts.

"delegates were given several opportunities to look at Hong Kong, rather than listen to papers on theories." \(^3\)

"... there are those that seem to regard the whole business as the mechanistic machinations of academic whiz kids ... that will surely bring about the death of individual judgement and that most personal of all approaches, the 'gut feeling'." \(^4\)

"indeed the (landscape) painters interpretation should be attended to primarily because he responds directly to the landscape. No verbalisations, no ideas, no pet theories." \(^5\)

As indicated by the last quote, the avoidance of theory is tied in with the belief that ones ideas and responses are 'natural'. The reasons for the described approaches to a project are assumed to be self-evident.

\(^1\) For a general discussion on this theme in N.Z. life see: Horrocks, R. "No Theory Permitted on These Premises' ANZ II, 1984. pp.119-137.


\(^3\) The Landscape, 21. 1984. p.22

\(^4\) The Landscape, 9. 1980. p.17

2. The implicit model of environmental perception seems to be that of one-way empiricism.

"Imagine our consciousness as a screen on which all perceptions fall." 1

Writers philosophical biases are usually not acknowledged and in many landscape assessments the aim is to act as neutral recorders of reality. Jennifer Roys article summarising her dissertation on 'Environmental Perception', 2 introduces a two-way or interactional perception theory, but stops with an 'ecological' model. That is, one in which evolutionary development has built into our perceptions a bias to see the landscape in terms of certain affordances, such as shelter, food, etc. Ray Appleton's Prospect-Refuge theory is a similar evolutionary or 'ecological' model. The next step, to regard our perceptions as being culturally and socially developed is not taken. There are very few articles that deal at all with this rich area of people-environment relations. One article that does deal with how our perceptions are culturally and historically contingent is Jane Clendons 'Sketchbooks and Axes'. 3 However, this is an isolated example. On a few occasions culturally developed perceptions are acknowledged, but are seen to be aberrations to a normal or real view of reality. e.g. The tussock grasslands are in fact not native and therefore not natural, therefore our perceptions of them as natural New Zealand landscapes are wrong and so there is no reason we shouldn't plant trees on them. 4

2. The Landscape. 15. 1982. p8-
3. A central implicit theory seems to be that of a nature-human dichotomy, with the often implicit philosophy that natural things are inherently good and human things are inherently bad - at least to the extent that they don't fit in with nature.

Articles in 'The Landscape' are overwhelmingly concerned with rural and wilderness landscapes, and in particular they are concerned with minimising the effect of change by people, blending cultural artifacts into the landscape. Naturalistic design styles are preferred, and colour is used mainly to blend human made structures into the colours of the landscape.

"this is one of our basic principles, designing to fit with natural law, taking advantage of natural site features" ¹

"to blend them into the surrounding natural landform" ²

"it is confidently predicted that the final result will have a 'natural' appearance and will provide a pleasant motoring experience" ³

"our objectives were easily agreed - the buildings should blend into the landscape" ⁴

Native plants are often preferred. Being here before humans they are therefore seen as more 'natural'. And being natural they therefore express the 'essential' character of the landscape, and provide it with identity. By implication our 'cultural' or modified landscapes are un-natural (with the bad connotations that word carries) and lack a real New Zealand identity.

4. There is a scientific bias implicit in many articles in 'The Landscape'. This is tied in with the empiricism and human-nature dichotomy mentioned above. An example is the tendency to think of the landscape as a system, as in systems theory.

"Only when we understand how any system (whether biological, social, mechanical) works, can we proceed to make planning changes or predict their outcome."

1. The Landscape. 30. 1986. p.10

("All environmental factors should be assessed using a common procedure.")


("The concept ... deals directly with the 'nuts and bolts' of the environment as a working system."


("It is important to understand the interrelatedness and wholeness of things in a comprehensive and systematic manner. This is done with the aid of a methodology ... which prescribes a certain way of doing things."


Landscape systems are usually approached as a layering of landscape components, such as Geology, Climate, Surface Hydrology, Groundwater Hydrology, Soils, Vegetation and Wildlife. The final components, as a veneer, are cultural artifacts (often meaning such things as historic buildings) and aesthetic factors. Even aesthetic factors are often measured in a scientific approach, focusing on measurable
physical elements such as form, line, colour, texture, scale and space.

"We tried to reduce the description to its most fundamental form by using its components."

An article on colour in the landscape dealt with colour in mainly physical terms - hue, greyness, weight - and largely ignored cultural associations. (A contrasting red woolshed and a white fence in front of the farm house might 'fit' into the landscape better than green or brown ones for example.)

A reason for a scientific philosophy is the implicit belief that it is more value free and neutral.

"any recommendations should relate to the basic philosophy of 'conservation and wise management' and otherwise be as 'value free' as possible."

5. Also, scientific analysis of physical factors can be linked into a scientific deterministic planning or rigid design methodology.

"The consequent recommendations should follow quite clearly from the information available."

"Designing to fit with natural law."

"We can aim to reduce uncertainty." ¹

"To a large extent, the standard even gradient of the bank and the linearity of the site, determined the final design layout." ²

The design methodology is itself an important implicit philosophy. This is highlighted by some articles where a paragraph headed 'philosophy' in fact lists the design considerations. These commonly fall into three sub-headings.

- Ecological, Environmental concerns.
- Functional
- Aesthetic. ³

This reduction of the human-environment relationship to these components, and treatment of them in a methodical way, is clearly Modernist. In a telling line from one article it is claimed that:

"designing for the dead is a more complex task than designing for the living". ⁴

1. The Landscape, 30, 1986, p. 12
2. The Landscape, 23, 1984, p. 10
3. For example, The Landscape, 10, 1980, p. 3-4
4. The Landscape, 4, 1977, p. 3
ECOLOGICAL DESIGN, PARTICIPATORY DESIGN, SPECIFIC DESIGNS

Overseas writers have identified Ecological Design, Participatory Design, and some specific experimental or contextual design projects, as indicative of Postmodern landscape architecture. While caution has already been urged in simply labelling such approaches as Postmodern, it may be useful to consider these approaches in New Zealand from a Postmodern perspective.

Ecological Design. Ecology is a recurring theme in New Zealand Landscape Architecture. Much work is carried out with an explicit or an implicit ecological philosophy. However this philosophy has several varieties. One variety involves recreating and maintaining pre-human ecosystems or plant communities. This includes maintaining local genetic purity, and representative remnants of pre-human ecosystems throughout the country. Another interpretation of applied ecology, is that of increasing the depth of ecological processes and energy flows. This approach may include exotic species where they perform these functions. Yet another version of ecology is taking care of environmental problems, such as soil erosion.

Ecology can also be interpreted as one of landscape architectures central Myths. The Myth of Ecology includes other non-scientific meanings and values, such as naturalness and wholesomeness, biological nationalism and the romance of wilderness. Ecology should also be seen in terms of other implicit philosophies and theories mentioned above, such as the nature/culture and environment/people dichotomies, and the scientific bias in landscape architecture.
Ecological design is regarded as a Postmodern theme because it is responsive to the context of individual, particular sites - both spatially and temporally. In most New Zealand applications this contextualism has meant the context of natural processes, and the context of local identity. Most of the articles classified in the 'Inbetween' category in Table 1 belong to this approach.

However sites have more meanings, or richer contexts than these aspects, and a Postmodern Ecological approach would look more critically at the inter-actional environment-people relationships. The 'Creative Forestry' guidelines recognise this interactional involvement.

"We influence the way (forests) are (retained), created, changed, removed, and renewed. We live with them and off them and everyone needs them in some way. They are an essential part of our landscape. We see them and we feel the warmth of the wood burning in the grate. We can share their life in our aloneness and their death in the newspaper; in the spaces between the words." 1

and

"Ecological values are exclusive to nature and social values exclusive to society. Landscape values must be inclusive of both." 2

2. The Landscape. 13. 1982. p.6
This second quote expresses the Culture-Nature dichotomy, and a purely scientific definition of ecology. 'Landscape' is seen as bringing culture and ecology together. In the articles by P. Simpson, however, (the most clearly Postmodern contributor on the Ecological theme) Ecology is seen as a point involving nature and culture, and both scientific and non-scientific perspectives and values.

"The environment is no longer out there in nature but includes the human realm, ... and even the inner environment of our belief systems and values." 1

"I take the view that if humans evolved on earth then we are natural. If various plants and animals have been brought together during the course of human migration, then together they contribute to an ecological system." 2

"The non-material needs of people, such as the need to perceive beauty, are just as important, ecologically, as material needs." 3

"I find images like starlings on flax flowers, blackbirds eating nikau fruits, and tui drinking eucalypt nectar, ecologically very exciting. They demonstrate creative adaptability ..." 4

1. The Landscape. 13, 1982, p 11
2. The Landscape. 22, 1984, p 17
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
So a Postmodern approach to Ecological Design would attempt to be aware of all aspects and meanings of the site and environment–people relationship. A re-vegetated native plant community may be responding to natural processes of a site, including change over time, and may contribute a botanical identity to an area. It may also be another manifestation of the human desire for abstract order and certainty, of political nationalism, or of a post-colonial culture legitimising its existence. The protection of wilderness areas might be seen in a similar way. So every landscape is seen as a cultural landscape.
Participatory Planning - Design.

The idea of participation in either planning or design is only mentioned in a few articles in 'The Landscape'. There is one article devoted to participatory planning, but no examples of participatory design (i.e., where users are directly involved).

Similarly there is little evidence of listening to users in a more indirect way, such as with post-occupancy studies, taking note of vernacular design, or listening to the general impressions and aspirations people have toward their landscapes. Vernacular design is generally regarded as bad taste. There seems to be a reluctance for landscape architecture to come to terms with a suburban and car-based culture, and from the articles in 'The Landscape' there seems little concern with cultural values other than Pakeha New Zealand.

"Surrounded by visually dominant planting ... pockets of bedding plants would be less upsetting than if the horror were fully exposed." 2

"Suburbs depress landscape architects more than they depress the people who live in them." 3

"Slavish dominance of the car." 4

"Putting the car in its place." 5

2. The Landscape. 8. 1979. p.4
3. The Landscape. 8. " p.6
4. The Landscape. 8. " p.12
"Beautiful New Zealand scheme has led to Landscape Architects closer liaison with many small communities, local bodies, etc. Hopefully this has given them a greater understanding of Landscape Architecture." ¹

However, there are a few examples of more direct responsiveness to non-experts. An A.R.A. project team carried out an extensive public survey of regional landscape types.² The Waipa County Handbook project also took a more open approach, recognising the knowledge and sensitivity of local landowners and local specialists in different aspects of the Waikato landscape, as well as recognising the importance of ordinary landscapes.³ Di Lucas maintains that coming from a similar background to her clients, and therefore being more empathetic, is important.

"Farming people ... understand the land concerned." ⁴

1. The Landscape. 21. 1984. p.21
SPECIFIC DESIGNS

Of the design projects published in 'The Landscape', there are two that address Postmodern perspectives to a significant extent. These are the plan for St Marys Cathedral Park, and the Waitaki Dam Visitors Centre. Both these designs respond to the contexts of their sites in a more individual and more rounded way to that seen in other design projects.

The Plan for St Marys Cathedral Park, Parnell, in my view, uses Postmodern perspectives in two main ways. First it uses materials as language, using the meanings attached to them rather than simply being limited to 'inherent' or physical qualities such as texture or abstract space.

Spaces are shown in this plan to have meanings associated with them because of their religious context and because of their relationship with each other. These are reinforced by meanings attached to other materials as part of a broad western cultural language, such as the deep significance of water. Other meanings are more particularly local. The diamond shaped lattice pattern is an identifying feature of Auckland's Selwyn Church architecture, of which Parnell is one of the centres.

Fig. 6.
Plan for St Mary's Cathedral Park, Parnell, Auckland. David Brady.
The second aspect that is Postmodern in nature is the plan's site specificity. It directly commemorates the church that was previously on that site and which has now been relocated across the road. It reproduces the church's outline and internal spaces, and uses commemorative features such as cypress trees which represent the gothic windows and a pergola that represents the ghost of a triforium.

The different characters or atmospheres of the church's internal spaces are also reproduced, primarily by different treatments of water. The hard materials used also relate to the church as it now stands across the road.

So the meaning of this plan is bound with this particular site. Had it been implemented it would have enhanced the experience of both this site and that of the Cathedral complex opposite, establishing a dialogue between them. Conversely, if this were to be built on some other site, a great part of its meaning and power would be lost, and it would seem to be mere abstract formalism.

This is not to say that the experience of visiting this park would consist of decoding explicit meanings from each element. Rather the different components and their relationships together would allow multi-layered impressions that might be open-ended. On subsequent visits one might add different layers of meaning.
The Waitaki Dam Visitors Centre

The St Marys Cathedral Park design used meanings of a language of forms to create a history of a place. The Waitaki Dam Visitors Centre, on the other hand, transforms an existing language of landscape forms to create a new myth.

This is best illustrated by comparing it with existing hydro dam visitors centres, such as the one further up the Waitaki Valley at Benmore, and traditional landscape treatment in general adjacent to power stations. The traditional focus is on facts, technology, and military-like order. Especially prominent are 'gee-wizz facts' such as the mega watts produced and the millions of cubic metres of concrete used. The myth or story, is that of "The Harnessing of Nature" or the "Achievement Attained Through Mans Technology".
We are being blinded by Science however.

The Waitaki Visitors Centre, on the other hand, focuses on the sculptural addition of the dam in the landscape; the formal effect each has on the other.

The sculptural form of the visitors centre itself, and symbolic references, help draw attention to these qualities in the dam. The roof of the shelter, for example, suggests water flowing over the dam's lip. The sinuous curve of the wall echoes that of the dam, and the drop in the wall elevation suggests the dramatic drop in planes from one side of the dam to the other.

The experiential sequence reinforces this. One passes through a door in the wall and has attention guided by the roof, first at the dam, and then at the dramatic hills opposite. 'Facts' are confined to three insignificant panels on the outside face of the wall.
Fig. 9. Waitaki Dam Visitors Centre.

photos taken by Mike Jones
In some senses the visitors centre is superfluous. The view of the dam already existed at this place beside the road, but in another sense it is a new view. A new myth of hydro dams, that of sculptural significance in the landscape, is being created. The wall in effect blocks off the old view, and allows us through a door to a new view. The visitors centre is a shrine to that view and thereby reverentialises it.

So the forms and symbols of the visitors centre are not simply referring to counterparts in the dam as a simple language. Rather the visitors centre, together with the dam, refer to a concept in helping to create a new landscape myth. For this reason the Waitaki Dam Visitors Centre may be the first constructed and constructive example of Postmodern landscape design in New Zealand.
POSTSCRIPT

This project developed out of frustration with what seemed to be the moribund state of landscape architecture. It did not seem to be going anywhere, and contained many unquestioned assumptions. At the same time the energy of the Postmodern debate in other fields was having little impact in landscape architecture.

Postmodernism, I thought, might offer a new programme in the same way that Modernism once did. This no longer seems the case to me. By its nature Postmodernism eshews any single, or group, of programmes. And as a descriptive label the word maybe carries too many confusing meanings. However, Postmodernism does offer new critical perspectives, and this has opened the way for both new theory and new approaches to practice.
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