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“Thickening the Light”: designing grounded experience in Christchurch’s Eastern Frame

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University by Charlotte E. A. Murphy

Lincoln University
2014
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Abstract of a thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of M.L.A.

'Thickening the Light':

designing grounded experience in Christchurch's Eastern Frame

by

Charlotte, E. A. Murphy

This thesis explores the recent movement in landscape architecture towards phenomenological design, and investigates what possibilities could be generated through a process which places primacy on embodied experience. The research project investigates both the body of phenomenological theory and the realm of landscape design. The design processes, as well as the design outcomes, were found to be integral elements of what constituted the design intervention as an continuous, modulating being. The resulting design process is performative in that the majority of work takes place on site, in direct engagement with the landscape. As part of its experiential focus, the design process places importance on what the landscape is doing materially, operationally, and temporally. In addition, in order to design landscapes that provide for more grounded experiences, techniques of strangemaking are used. In particular, cut-up methods are adopted in order to create design briefs that de-familiarise the familiar in the landscape. In doing so, habitual design conventions are disrupted. In order to maintain a focus on embodied experience, perspectival, rather than bird's-eye viewpoints, are employed in representing the design work. In this process, representation acts as a generative as well as communicative tool.

The thesis suggests that phenomenological methods offer alternatives in urban design to conventional analysis, plan-view driven approaches. It also proposes that there is potential scope for application in and examination of experience in rural settings. The research identifies particular resonance in this phenomenological approach in post-disaster settings. Finally, the research reflects on the role of the design-researcher in a phenomenologically-inflected process.

Keywords: landscape, design, phenomenology, site, representation, drawing, graphics, urban design, experience, embodiment, philosophy, Merleau-Ponty, post-disaster, memorials, design process, cut-up, immersion, New Zealand, Christchurch, Canterbury
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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Phenomenological Methodology</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1  Active Landscapes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in the World</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World-in-Formation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immersion</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immersive Design</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touched/Touching</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touch as Primary Mode of Encounter</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traces</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traces</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touched and the Touching</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Doing</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2  The Visible and the Invisible</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between us and the world</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embodied Design</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible Definition/Discussion</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flesh of the World</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invisible</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invisible and Design imaginative engagement with the world</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intertwining</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenological Reduction</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubling Back of Experience, Hyper Reflection</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenological Reduction</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Strangemaking</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Challenge of Familiarity</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ostranenie: defamiliarisation</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strangemaking Design</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception vs. Conceptualisation</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representing the Strange: defamiliarisation in Visual Art and Drawing</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process as Design</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorisation and Meaning</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Carnality of the Invisible</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing the Strange</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conclusion: Landscapes of Possibility</th>
<th>52</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applications</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban design</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural design</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-disaster</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenological Frames</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immersion</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Visible, Invisible, and the Chiasm</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strangemaking</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Research</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Practice of Design-Research</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
<th>59</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1: Observations</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2: Overlay Interventions</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3: Strangemaking Interventions</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4: Storyboard Interventions</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

Figure 1 (a) The exhaltant of the earth and (b) the inhabitant of the weather world (Ingold, 2008, 1864) 7

Figure 2 Tracks left by stock on Banks Peninsula 11

Figure 3 Tracks left by people on Banks Peninsula 12

Figure 4 Meadow intervention with rippling steel ‘path’ 13

Figure 5 Reformulation of subject: object dichotomy 14

Figure 6 Coprosma crassifolia growing in the lee of a hardwood post. Waipuna Saddle, Banks Peninsula 15

Figure 7 Desiccated Totara Stump at Waipuna Saddle, Banks Peninsula 16

Figure 8 Proposed intervention with desiccated Totara Stump at Waipuna Saddle, Banks Peninsula 16

Figure 9 Blueprint plan for Christchurch produced by CERA (2012) 21

Figure 10 Automatic drawing sketches on site in graphite: tentative, but beginning to explore space, form and mood 22

Figure 11 Sketches drawn on site: exploring space and the intervention of a path 23

Figure 12 Poplar Trees line the northern bank of the Avon River, Christchurch 24

Figure 13 Poplar trunk with buttress form 28

Figure 14 Poplar trunk with grotesque form 28

Figure 15 Proposed Poplar tree structure formed from latex mould 29

Figure 16 Example of a cut-up text based on my field notes from a trip to Waipuna Saddle, Banks Peninsula and an academic article by Ross Jenner (2011) 34

Figure 17 An array of design interventions based on strangemaking techniques 34
Figure 18 Initial sketches for design response to cut-up brief

Figure 19 Sample page of storyboard template

Figure 20 Sample page of rendered storyboard showing Artesian Baths intervention

Figure 21 Storyboard template and drawing materials while in Christchurch’s Eastern Frame, sheltering from the rain underneath a boarded up building.

Figure 22 Phased sketches, rendered in watercolour

Figure 23 Three threads of the memorial for the Canterbury earthquakes in the Eastern Frame: Closeness, Meditation, and Lightness.

Figure 24 Distributed forms across Eastern Frame as part of threads of memorial design concept for Canterbury earthquakes

Figure 25 Initial sketches responding to cut-up brief

Figure 26 Storyboard of Artesian Baths Complex

Figure 27 Plan View of storyboard threads traced through Eastern Frame

Figure 28 a) Proposed Eastern Frame immediately after construction and b) 50 years after construction

Figure 29 Artesian Baths Complex in Christchurch’s Eastern Frame

Figure 30 Artesian Baths Complex in Christchurch’s Eastern Frame

List of Tables

Table 1 Operations Table: Moorhouse Avenue, Christchurch

Table 2 Operations Table: Clarkville, North Canterbury

Table 3 Operations Table: Waipuna Saddle, Banks Peninsula
Introduction

Where are you right now?

Does that question interfere with your ability to pay attention to this text? Is your attention now vacillating between your place in the world and your concentration on this abstract discussion? Does this text suddenly appear as no more than a series of marks on a sheet of paper, more a material presence than a portal to an intangible realm of thought?

Even as I sit at this desk writing, my words shimmer between vessels of communication and sensual forms. I have often wondered about these moments when we experience the world and ourselves in it with startling clarity. For Merleau-Ponty, such moments bring the strangeness of the world to our notice; this experience of the phenomenological reduction is central to my explorations (2002, xiv).

During my undergraduate Landscape Architecture study, we were tasked with writing a manifesto of our approach to design. I produced a manifesto which imagined a design philosophy where embodied experience had primacy, and landscapes were designed for perspectival encounters between people and places, rather than as containers for content, symbols or meaning. After presenting a draft version of my manifesto in a workshop, my tutor asked, “I wonder what that would look like?” At the time, this wondering struck fear into me: I had a vision for how I would like design to perform, but I had very little idea of how to go about doing it. These thoughts did not abate over the next two years and as I was preparing my proposal for this thesis, I realised that I was in essence asking: “How do I do that?”; “What would happen if I tried that?”

As a designer considering these issues of embodied experience I wondered what the implications would be for design process: what would an experientially focussed design process look like? As Landscape Architects, what is it that we are asked to design, to alter, to address? The world itself.

Phenomenological theory concerns itself with the nature of the world’s being: both the landscape and its inhabitants (Abbott, 2011a; Bowring, 2007; Ingold, 2002; Girot, c.1999; Marot, c.1999; McCarter & Pallasmaa; Merleau-Ponty, 1968; Norberg-Schulz, 2007; Stephenson, 2007; Wylie, 2006). I am intrigued by the possibilities of adopting a phenomenological approach to design. Indeed, how could we design in an experientially-rich manner? Furthermore, what possibilities could be generated by designing in such a way? This project aims to explore a branch of this intermingling between philosophy and design. In this exploration, design is both a means of investigation and a potential outcome of the research.

In this framework, consideration of the ‘content’ of landscapes is less important than the interactions that take place, both between beings and between the world and beings. Perhaps even the possibility of ‘content’ can be considered to be implausible in this paradigm (Abbott, 2011a, 2.4). The movement in Landscape Architecture towards
an approach based on practices and affects, while offering up multiple opportunities for innovation and creativity, also presents a need to re-examine design processes and objectives. There is little work documenting the systematic application of phenomenological methodologies to design processes or the documentation of design outcomes of such processes. Indeed there is a need for the discussion about whether we can even design in a phenomenological way. How could we apply this philosophical framework to Landscape Architecture? How could phenomenology effect approaches to landscape architecture methods, sites and outcomes?

A Phenomenological Methodology

The philosophical approach underlying this research is phenomenological. In particular, this research explores the possibilities that emerge from developing a phenomenological design practice. As such, this research investigates both the practice and theory of design and the philosophy of phenomenology.

Phenomenology offers a cogent critique of our current methodologies and frameworks. It is important to explore the veracity of these critiques and to test the implications of applying phenomenological theory to design process and productions. Because of Landscape Architecture’s joint critical and creative modes, as a discipline it offers a valuable position from which to explore landscape’s phenomenological dimensions.

There are several interpretations of phenomenology as a theory and as a practice. The body of work which I have chosen to primarily use is that elucidated by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), a French philosopher who was taught by Edmund Husserl and influenced by Martin Heidegger, two of the ‘fathers’ of phenomenological theory.

Phenomenology eschews placing primacy on our knowledge of the world, and instead gives precedence to our perception of the world. As a result, in comparison to other disciplines, phenomenology,

...tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian, or the sociologist may be able to provide. (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, vii)

Phenomenology requires an ability to engage in and communicate a mindful reflection about our experience in the world.

This focus on perception leads to the placement of the body at the centre of the means by which we encounter the world. Theorist, Michel de Certeau, described the difference between an embodied perspective and a detached, birds-eye perspective on the world through his striking image of a spectator leaving the hubbub of the New York City streets and rising to the top of the World Trade Centre:

To be lifted to the summit of the World Trade Center is to be lifted out of the city’s grasp. One’s body is no longer clasped by the streets that turn and return it according to an anonymous law; nor is it possessed, whether as player or played, by the rumble of so many differences and by the nervousness of New York traffic...... His elevation transfigures
him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance. It transforms the bewitching world by which one was 'possessed' into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. The exaltation of a scopic and gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more. (c1984, 92)

The effect of this elevated, 'detached' position is to render the embodied subject blind to their own corporeal condition, and instead artificially reduce them to a 'seeing subject' who, while seeing more, apprehends it from a distorted perspective. Phenomenology advocates that we grasp the position of the thoroughly embodied subject who is ensnared in the messy goings on of the world, who apprehends it 'from the street level'.

The primacy of perception to our experience of being in the world means that perception is not a technique or a method which we can adopt, in which we can clothe our research- or design-selves. It is not an armature with which we can frame our endeavours. Perception simply is. We are always-already perceiving. Perception precedes knowledge and knowledge is never outside of perception.

Perception is not a science of the world, it is not even an act, a deliberate taking up of a position; it is the background from which all acts stand out, and is presupposed by them. (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, xi, emphasis mine)

We cannot therefore begin to perceive, however we can begin to mindfully perceive.

Because we come to the world from a position of individual embodiment, all experience and knowledge of the world is necessarily perspectival:

All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experiences of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless. (ibid, ix)

Knowledge does not hover apart from, and is not somehow unsullied by experience-in-the-world. Knowledge is borne out of embodied experience and when detached from this milieu ceases to have value. We are always-already situated in the world. The existence of the world precedes perception: the world already exists before knowledge. (ibid, ix-x)

Embedded in phenomenology is the idea that each person holds a unique, perspectival engagement with the world which necessarily forstalls a 'complete' apprehension of the world.

The world is not what I think, but what I live through. I am open to the world, I have no doubt that I am in communication with it, but I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible. 'There is a world', or rather: 'There is the world'; I can never completely account for this ever-reiterated assertion in my life. (ibid, xviii-xix)

Our understanding, knowledge and even perception of the world are always fundamentally 'incomplete'; they can never be all-encompassing. This refutes the concept of a birds-eye-view (as described by de Certeau above) that is somehow more objective or precise than an on-the-ground perspective.

By engaging in a phenomenological approach then, I carry a series of assumptions into my research design. Firstly, we are always-already perceiving, and we are always-already situated in the world. A 'complete' or 'absolute' apprehension of the world is impossible. As
a continuation of this, knowledge and experience are fundamentally perspectival and not absolute. Finally, an embodied perspective is an appropriate perspective as part of a phenomenological engagement with the world.

**Method**

This research explores the interrelationship between phenomenological philosophy and design practice. In this exploration, design is both a means of investigation and a potential outcome of the research. To undertake this research, I employ interpretive and projective design strategies (Deming & Swaffield, 2011, 51). I have chosen to engage in design interpretation strategies within my design experimentation process because I argue that they offer an effective way to approach design within the world-in-formation. Paul Carter terms such design-research, “material thinking” (Carter, 2004, 15). In this framework, I envision my role as design-researcher to be that of a postmodern investigator. I will not be able to reveal any inherent ‘truths’ about either the site, design processes or design products. However, I can offer my interpretation and critique of my own experience and processes, documented in a systematic fashion. I assume that design is rooted in experience: an individual reaction to the site, an individual position in relation to the site. My choice to adopt this immersed approach is deliberate and stands in contrast to putting myself in a vacuum removed from everyday life. Because of its emphasis on entangled experience in the world, this individual perspective can offer unique insight into everyday experience that an approach devoid of this situatedness would be less suited to explore.

**Research Design**

My aims at the beginning of the research process were to:

- Refine and develop a phenomenologically-centered design process;
- Examine and critique the design outcomes of a phenomenologically-centered design process;
- Examine and critique the phenomenologically-centered design process in relation to large-scale urban projects;
- Examine and critique the design outcomes of the phenomenologically-centered design process when applied to a large-scale urban project.

As I worked towards these aims, the research work in practice moved through the following steps:

- Examination and analysis of phenomenological design literature;
- Performative design exercises in a range of different landscapes around Canterbury, where I immersed myself in the site and engaged with my experience through sketching and writing;
- Development of design practice techniques to facilitate engagement with a phenomenological design approach;
- Development of small-scale design interventions;
- Development of a large-scale design intervention;
- Critique of the processes and outcomes.

I tested these strategies out on smaller design interventions. Through these smaller design experimentations, I refined my own design process. It was
crucial to critique these processes and to see how effective they were 'in the field'. This design research was undertaken in the context of the Landscape DesignLab within the School of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University, New Zealand. As part of participating in this design community, I frequently presented interim discussions of my work and reflected on my research in the light of others' work. The practice of actively reflecting and critiquing as a group of design researchers was influential in framing my navigation of the research and design processes. Although I ventured into the landscape largely on my own, my course of action was guided, prompted, and at times diverted by both my supervisors and my fellow students. This immersed approach within a design research environment provided ongoing feedback and guidance throughout this project.

I kept a design diary, including both sketches and written notes, to document my reflections on the design process. This document was to help me to reflect on the process at later stages of the research. I found the need to be mindful about how I documented my process visually, particularly with regards to the more ephemeral and ineffable phenomena that defied visual or auditory representation. Juhani Pallasmaa has suggested that the body, and in particular the drawing hand may be capable of directly 'thinking', articulating and designing from its position embedded within the tangible world:

...perhaps it is the hand that really imagines as it exists in the flesh of the world, the reality of space, matter and time, the very physical condition of the imagined object. (Pallasmaa,

2009, 17)

Drawing on the work of several other design-thinkers, I explored ways of incorporating hand rendering and innovative diagramming methods into my process (see Cook, 2013; Dee, 2012; Gustavsson, 2009; Halprin, 1965). As I documented my experiences and findings, and explored design ideas, I deliberately attempted to record these both conceptually through language and diagrams, as well as descriptively through poetic language and expressive drawings.

I carried out these smaller design experiments on my rural property in North Canterbury, around Waipuna Saddle on Banks Peninsula, and in around the central city of Christchurch. Chapter 1 reveals how these explorations in the region surrounding the central intervention were a critical part of the phenomenological design process. The large-scale intervention took place in the central city of Christchurch. Christchurch has undergone significant transformation after a series of earthquakes during 2010 and 2011. It is estimated that 80% of the central city buildings have been or will be demolished (North, 2012). While this process might seem unprecedented, and is indeniably devastating, on one level it is a reflection of the constant change (modulation) that the built environment (and indeed the world) always experiences. This research focussed on an area designated as the Eastern Frame in the 2012 Central City Recovery Plan (CCRP or 'Blueprint' Plan), which outlines development plans for the urban centre (Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority, 2012).
Chapter 1: Active Landscapes

Introduction

People in the World

What is this world that we are charged with designing? What is our position in it, and what is our relationship to the landscape? The world is a “zone of entanglement,” according to phenomenological anthropologist, Tim Ingold. Human subjects move, encounter and enmesh with the world and other beings within it (2008, 1807). This concept stands in contrast to a Cartesian model in which autonomous human subjects act upon the passive object of the world. Indeed, in Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s words, there is a “carnal adherence” within the world, “of the sentient to the sensed and of the sensed to the sentient” (1968, 142). Not only do we ‘come upon’ beings and elements in the world, but we interact with them in a tangible way that implies touch. Merleau-Ponty argues that it is these very interactions which are at the core of an experiential landscape:

The phenomenological world is not pure being, but the sense which is revealed where the paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people’s intersect and engage each other like gears. (2002, xxii)

The world itself is in fact constituted by these nodes of interaction. Merleau-Ponty envisions this interwoven field of intersubjectivity as “the Flesh,” and it is in the context of a corporeal landscape that,

...we continually redefine ourselves by relating to the world around us. We do so on the basis of intercorporeity - that is, our material likeness to (and thus kinship with) the world. When thinking from the body, we act with mind and body in concert from a condition of immersion. In this model, we are open circuits, completed in sensory contact with the world, and this relationship is not one we can fully control. (McCann, 2005, 10)

In our bodies of flesh, we are always-already in constant contact and feedback with the Flesh of the world. In this framework it is impossible to sit outside the world, enjoying an objective vantage point. The drive to achieve disembodied voyeur-like position of de Certeau’s figure at the top of the World Trade Centre is doomed to fail (1984, 92). It is striving for an impossibility. Within phenomenological thought we come to a knowledge of the world and of ourselves from a place of immersion within the world.

World-in-Formation

Furthermore, the position from which we encounter the world is not stable, but shifting, as we too move within the world and it moves around us. In Ingold’s words, the world can be understood as the “world-in-formation” (2008, 1802). He argues that, “Inhabitants ... make their...”

1. Merleau-Ponty’s more full description of the Flesh continues: “Between the alleged colours and visibles, we would find anew the tissue that lines them, sustains them, nourishes them, and which for its part is not a thing, but a possibility, a latency, and a flesh of things.” (1968, 132-3) A more detailed discussion of this will be in the The Visible and the Invisible chapter.
way through a world-in-formation rather than across its
preformed surface.” (Ibid) The world is not a landscape
that was completed a priori, but rather continues to be
altered and made as we move through it and interact with
it and with each other. Two key attributes of this world-in-
formation are that of flux and duration. In flux, the ‘objects’
in the world are not self-contained or in a vacuum, but are
rather in constant interaction with the other elements of
the world. As we move and shift and change from place to place
and moment to moment, so too does the world. The world-

formation modulates through time as well as space. In its
duration, the world is not ‘frozen’, it endures through time.
Furthermore, it alters as it endures. In this way, Merleau-
Ponty describes the world being as, “simultaneous and
successive” (1968, 132). Ingold goes on to describe how
the world-in-formation is comprised of the earth-in-

formation and “sky-in-formation” (2008, 1801). In this
formulation, the sky is not a vaulted plane hovering above
the self-contained sphere of the world (Figure 1a), but is
rather a modulating medium that mixes and mingles with
the modulating surface of the earth (Figure 1b 1). Not only
do we as beings interweave with the world, but the world
interweaves with itself.

Immersion

Immersive Design

How then could a designer working within a
phenomenological process approach the world? Given
our always-already enmeshed position in this world-in-
formation, it seems that it would be spurious to artificially
impose objectivity on our approach towards the world. As
the world becomes known to us, we alter the world, and
our movements are incorporated into it as we continually
build our knowledge of it. We do not, and cannot hold
an all-encompassing, detached birds-eye-view. From a
phenomenological position, as we come to know the world,
we also change it. Thus, as we undertake work to observe
on site, we are inextricably participating in the world. In a
phenomenological landscape we are inherently implicated
in the doings of the world. We cannot hold ourselves outside
or above: separate. We are inseparable from the world.

Gaston Bachelard argues that a philosophically
distanced positivist process, which seeks to discover
absolutes through objective analysis and argument, ends up

1. See also (Merleau-Ponty,
1968, 138)
placing primacy on knowledge that operates at a non-human scale:

There is no dearth of abstract, ‘world-conscious’ philosophers who discover a universe by means of the dialectical game of the I and the non-I. In fact, they know the universe before they know the house, the far horizon before the resting place; whereas the real beginnings of images, if we study them phenomenologically, will give concrete evidence of the values of inhabited space, of the non-I that protects the I. (2005, 87)

Like de Certeau, Bachelard argues for a movement away from philosophical perspectives which work from a ‘bird’s eye view’ and which seek to formulate a totalising system of knowledge from a place of distance and remoteness. These approaches attempt to come to knowledge through logical argument based on positing self and other in a relationship of binary opposition. Instead Bachelard advocates an approach that places primacy on a knowledge of the world that comes from embodied experience, in which self and other are inherently entwined. In doing so, a phenomenological approach is more capable of coming to a knowledge of the materialities and activities of the concrete world, yielding more intimate understandings of the intersubjectivity of the world-in-formation. This has implications for how we approach the processes of design.

**Touched/Touching**

**Touch as Primary Mode of Encounter**

In order to respond to this ‘zone of entanglement’ as a designer, phenomenological theory suggests that we adopt a very active, embodied approach to exploration of the landscape. According to phenomenology, our primary way of encountering the world is through embodiment. Merleau-Ponty describes encountering the world through vision as, “palpatiting it with our look” (1968, 133). This is a look which probes, even ‘adheres’ to the world into which it casts its gaze (ibid, 142). Like a hand grazing a rock leaves behind traces of itself as skin is caught by the stone, our interactions with the world are not ‘clean’ - a ‘residue’ remains one upon the other as the world and ourselves interact. In this design process I consciously tried to employ such a gaze. As will be described further, this meant looking in such a way as to be imaginatively flexible with time. It also meant employing a look that was sensitive to the haptic: to texture, to movement (see Appendix 1 for initial examples) of observational work. This vigorous look bears a strong relationship to the sense of touch itself. Juhani Pallasmaa argues that,

All the senses, including vision, can be regarded as extensions of the sense of touch - as specialisations of the skin. They define the interface between the skin and the environment - between the opaque interiority of the body and the exteriority of the world... Even the eye touches; the gaze implies an unconscious touch, bodily mimesis and identification. (1996, 42)

Not only does vision have a relationship with touch, but all senses are made possible by the surface of the skin. Merleau-Ponty even goes so far as to describe the conventional division between the senses as “crude” (1968, 133)*. All sensation of the world can be described as various ways of touching the world.

The key difference in the phenomenological approach, then, is a full engagement with the situatedness of the
designer in the world. Bernard Lassus offers a description of an immersive approach to landscape design which he employed whilst working on a competition entry for the redesign of the Parisian town, L'Isle d'Abeau:

First, in order to become immersed, over the course of long visits at varying hours of the day and in all sorts of weather, in the site and its environs, and to absorb, spongelike, everything from the ground to the sky, almost to the point of boredom, I adopted a 'floating attention.' (2002, 222)

The process that Lassus describes, allows enough time on site to experience a variation in the behaviour of phenomena over time (of the world-in-formation), and in different conditions (weather, seasons). The repeated visits provide opportunity to observe variation and iteration in the workings of a landscape. His explorations of the site are not limited to the parameters of the area of intervention itself, nor are they confined to the site as it presents itself in the contemporaneous moment. Instead he moves in, around, and through the site where he will intervene. For this reason, while my aim was to design for the central city of Christchurch, I also explored the landscapes of the wider region, including North Canterbury and Banks' Peninsula, (Waipuna Saddle), coming to understand the ways in which the areas and phenomena aligned and differentiated themselves from each other. Bachelard's examinations are not merely visual in nature, but engage in a broader sensory engagement, strongly implying touch, by, "picking out and testing the visual and tactile scales." (2002, 222-3) Indeed his zone of attention extends beyond the ground plane and outwards and upwards into the atmosphere.

This immersive approach is echoed in the work of Catherine Dee and Rivka Fine at Brightside, a disused steel production neighbourhood in Sheffield, UK. They describe how they engaged in a particularly fleshy design process on the site:

Through repeated bodily interactions we came to know the site in an intimate way, looking, touching, and changing, and looking and touching again as a means to interpret as well as to create. (2005, 81)

As with Lassus, the key aspects of the interaction are the intimacy (touching, human scale) and the iterative nature (repeated visits and exercises). They also place high value on materiality and detail on site, however ephemeral.

Experiences of the ephemeral phenomena and traces of the seasons have become dispersed across the site, gaining greater prominence and significance. Hints of former industrial use lie scattered over Brightside, disclosed when attention becomes absorbed by detail: the curled metal shavings swept to the edges of the now exposed workshop floor evoke the ghostly absence of industrial lathes. (2005, 80)

Their immersive, attentive approach drew them to subtleties in the landscape and allowed them to experience the particularity of the place.

Informed by these design-thinkers, I sought to immerse myself in sites in a way that devoted great attention to absorbing detail in the world. I predominately worked immersed in the world in which I was designing. I operated under the assumption that I was altering the world as I moved in it, just as it was altering around me. I adopted a practice where I spent repeated lengths of time on and around sites. This allowed me to absorb the intricate interactions taking place in the world over time and my changing reactions to
them. I approached each landscape as I would approach a day in the wilderness: I carried my supplies with me and approached each visit with an openness to how the landscape might act upon and around me. I moved through, within and around the sites, and engaged in sensorially rich encounters: touching, smelling, feeling, listening, focussing deeply, and allowing my mind to wander. This process of immersion thrust me into a landscape of forces. I was unable to ignore the weather, the texture of the ground, other inhabitants. They all assailed my horizons of perception as I pushed into and around the landscape, leaving traces of my own movements through it.

One part of the practice I developed was to take field notes during and after each visit. This process of writing helped me to engage with and articulate my enmeshment in the world. By the deliberate use of descriptive, poetic language, it also, alongside drawing, acted as an experiential resource into which I could later delve. On one visit to Latimer Square in Christchurch, I found my being-in-the world destabilised my design process and felt a bodily discomfort:

Wind is being a real problem. It comes straight down
Worcester Street from the East.

Keeps blowing the easel and acrylic sheet over. Acrylic sheet acts as a sail.

Have to lower the easel so that it is close to the ground....
(Noise from plastic wrap whipping in the wind on cardboard cathedral is driving me nuts). (19 February 2013)

I found that as I went out and acted in the world, I was irrefutably acted upon in return. As I tried to set up my design materials in the landscape, they were subjected to forces in the landscape. The environment around me actively and continuously affected my senses, directly intervening in my experience of designing, and thus my design process itself. My design process, physically and imaginatively, had to adapt to this environment. As a designer I was both touched and touching, and furthermore not the only agent of control in the landscape, as McCann intimated earlier.

On a different occasion, during a visit to Waipuna Saddle on Banks Peninsula, I made the following set of observations:

The mist created an eerie atmosphere. The field of experience was limited by the density of the mist. At times only ten meters in any direction. The mist did not just 'fill the air', but intermingled with the objects in the world-in-formation:
spangling plants with dew, beading spider webs with
pearlescent drops, damply coating posts with a sheen of
water, casting a muffling grey cloak across the grass. Muscled Totara, long dead, and the bark long since decayed from them,
emerged out of the vertical sheets of mist, staggered like
stage flats. But this comparison to stage flats does not describe
the soft density that the mist lent the space between things.
Furthermore, it gave edges within this space: there were
curves and leaps, hollows and branches, thickets and planes.
(30 July 2013)

During this visit, I was moving through the landscape, touching the world with my hands and palpating it with my gaze. I could observe how the world around me was marked by the infiltration of objects and elements into and around each other. More than making an inventory of the site, I was trying to describe the effect of the way the parts of the world interacted with one another. In this way, the space between objects that is often seen as empty was
was critical to further deepening my experience of that place. In this way there was an interrelationship between my experience of the landscape and the understanding I drew from this experience; the imaginative formulation that gave articulation to my knowledge; and how that articulation then reverberated through into my continued experience. This was an iterative feedback loop in which my enmeshment in the world was starkly apparent.

Traces

Merleau-Ponty argues that a “touching subject” is not separate from the world, but as a being capable of receiving touch, “...passes over to the rank of the touched, descends into the things, such that the touch is formed in the midst of the world and as it were in the things.” (1968, 134) These touches do not simply take place in the context of the world, rather they make up the fabric of the world. The actions of beings are deeply entwined with the world itself:

Through this crisscrossing within it of the touching and the tangible, its own movements incorporate themselves into the universe they interrogate, are recorded on the same map as it; the two systems are applied upon one another, as the two halves of an orange. (ibid, 133)

The movements I make are not separate from the world in which I design, but rather become enfolded into it. Thus as we are in the process of designing we are already performing design (and creating design outcomes). As I venture in the world, traces of these interactions are formed.

Figure 2 Tracks left by stock on Banks Peninsula

as important in revealing the affect of the landscape as the objects themselves. To probe this landscape and to be able to articulate what I experienced required me to move around site in a deeply thoughtful, yet physically open manner. At times I would have to spend some time waiting for the appropriate word to 'bubble up to the surface' and make itself known. Being able to articulate what I was experiencing...
in the world. Some are ephemeral and fleeting, others calcify and linger.

One of the most easily recognisable traces in our lives are paths. Like those tracks left by sheep on contoured land (see Figure 2), they reflect minute changes in the ground, the path approximating the least resistance, and frequency of use. Humans also form paths in the landscape (see Figure 3). I chose to incorporate these traces of touches into this phenomenological design process. For instance, when I came to design a number of meadows in the central city, I chose to not form paths, but to let paths be formed in response to people’s movements. In other cases, I detailed materials, such as compressed aggregate, that would ‘hold’ the shape of footfalls for a period of time, allowing the ground surface to be imprinted with traces of movement. In another instance, I included a rippling, steel ‘path’ that was unsuitable for walking upon in an efficient manner (See Figure 4). Its path-like placement, bisecting the meadow and leading the participant from outside the site onwards, both attracts people to walk near it, but repels them, disallowing them to walk on it. They may however play on it, hopping or sliding, but then they have moved away from the traditional activity of a path. The steel path entices people to walk alongside, using it as a guide, but it also begins to sporadically absent itself from them, by ‘disappearing’ underground and then underwater.

It would be revelatory to see how the traces left by people’s movements belie or reinforce this designerly intention once the intervention was in situ and part of the world-in-formation. By allowing an increased amount of touch in our making process we allow ourselves to gather different, richer data about the site and to respond in more subtle, precise ways. As Dee and Fine point out, this affects the type of information that we place importance on in our process:

Our focus in this paper is on revisiting embodied ways of knowing a landscape, ways of knowing that are partial,
subjective, and emotional. These values have traditionally aligned with feminine meanings and experiences and have conventionally been granted a lower status within the dualistic complexes that value mind over body, and rationality over matter. (1005, 77)

The attention to and incorporation of touching came to hold a significant place in my phenomenological design process, expressing itself both in terms of process of design and the processes of the design outcomes.

**Touched and the Touching**

These touches, visual or otherwise, flow out into the world. Not only do we touch the world in every act of sensing it, but this touch is returned, in the manner of a feedback loop. Merleau-Ponty asks,

What is this talisman of color, this singular virtue of the visible that makes it, held at the end of the gaze, nonetheless much more than a correlative of my vision, such that it imposes my vision upon me as a continuation of its own
The ‘objects’ we see in the world, are not passive, receptive objects, but in a sense they ‘look back’ at us, making our own act of looking apparent to ourselves. In this way they are active subjects acting upon us. In describing Peter Zumthor’s work on the Bruder Klaus Feld Kapelle, Ross Jenner observes that, “Matter is not an indeterminate mass or lump before the bestowal of form.” (2011, 41). When we mould materials or assign them purpose, we are not invigorating them God-like with life, as if they are an Adam-figure we have formed out of clay. The materials are already invigorated and pulsing with life. In this sense, there is never a blank slate at a site. This landscape of multiple activities breaks down any notions of a subject:object hierarchy or opposition and instead situates beings and elements in the world as simultaneously subject/objects (See Figure 5). As we touch the world, visually or otherwise, the world requites our touches.

Operations

Landscape Doing

Bachelard remembers how in his experience of walking along a path, the ground seemed to exert a counter-force against his own labours: “When I relive dynamically the road that ‘climbed’ the hill, I am quite sure that the road itself had muscles, or rather, counter-muscles.” (2005, 90) The landscape seemed to have a flesh of its own, potent and active\(^6\). Mick Abbott too expresses a desire to acknowledge

Figure 5 Reformulation of subject:object dichotomy

the feedback loop of affect between beings and the world-in-formation:

As a designer working with landscapes, increasingly I find myself less concerned with what a landscape is, and more with what that landscape does. For while much comment is made on what people do to landscapes – for instance, through infrastructure proposals, housing development or tourism ventures – little is said of the ways landscapes shape us. (2011b, 72)

Bachelard goes on to argue that our understandings of the activities of landscapes are limited by our lexicon of (linguistic) symbols, “And indeed we should find countless intermediaries between reality and symbols if

\(^{6}\) See also (Lund, 2012) and her experience of a malignant force of a wind during a walk in Reykjavik.
we gave things all the movements they suggest.” (2005, 91) Abbott and Bachelard signal an opportunity to expand this linguistic map. Through this increased attention to the work of landscapes, we can both enlarge both our ability to see the landscape, and our ability to articulate what we see.

In response to these challenges, I made it a practice to draw out descriptors of the actions of a landscape from my field notes. After Eisenman’s work on diagramming (1999), I labelled them operations. I organised my findings into a simple table that detailed elements that were on site, the materials from which they were comprised, and the operations that describe how they performed. (See Table 1: Operations Table: Moorhouse Avenue, Christchurch; Table 2: Operations Table: Clarkville, North Canterbury; Table 3: Operations Table: Waipuna Saddle, Banks Peninsula, p 18)

From these tables, I compiled a glossary of operations with a working description of how I saw each verb enacted in a landscape. This glossary was not intended to be definitive, but rather an expression of the possibilities that such a phenomenological investigation could yield. This practice required me to focus deeply, but also, in a sense, to let go of my attention: to see beyond the functional and practical characteristics of elements in a landscape, and to instead sense the expressive characteristics. It also required me to deliberately manipulate time imaginatively to ‘see’ these movements. For instance, in order to become aware of the ‘pleating’ of a desiccated Totara stump (see Table 3, p18; and Figure 7, p16), I had to reformulate the image of a quickened stump and then ‘pull back’ through time to imagine the transformation that had taken place. As well as reflecting the physiological process that had taken place as the stump aged, the ‘pleating’ also expresses the way the desiccated pleats nudge into the atmospheric and terrestrial world around them. The movement-shape impinges upon the way other elements touch the Totara: the lichen that form on the withered grain also pleat in their turn as they grip and scale the fibres of the stump. My slight intervention drew attention to these pleats by filling a portion of the lines at the top of the stump with copper (See Figure 8, p16). This draws the participant to notice the variation in the existing

7. I mean this is the Merleau-Pontian sense of active seeing: palpating.
form while subtly adding a new element of differentiation. The lines of force of the pleats have resonance beyond the originating object itself. This makes it difficult (or even pointless) to determine the edges between objects; instead a fundamentally interwoven fabric of affect becomes apparent.

While in the case of the Totara I had to rapidly accelerate through changes that took place over a long period of time, with other phenomena I had to elongate and almost hover through small moments in time. While observing Coprosma crassifolia, around the Waipuna Saddle, I could see how its actions operated at a variety of different time scales (See Figure 6). I could see that over several years, one plant had constricted its growth to the dimensions of the post by which it was growing, so that it stood solely in the lee of the post. I could also see the way the plant, in this very moment, vibrated in response to the touch of the wind’s infiltration. In its fluttering, the leaves and stems of the Coprosma affected the flow of the wind in their turn, even if at a very small scale. The experience of these field trips led me to realise the usefulness of adopting a plastic sense of time when observing phenomena in order to apprehend “all the movements that they suggest” (Bachelard, 2005, 91).

One practice that proved to be helpful in perceiving the landscape more thoroughly and intensely was hand drawing. Through its engagement with both visual and physical process, the habit of drawing enabled me to practice perceptively palpat ing the landscape. As I would try to render the characteristics of a feature, or a collection of items, I would engage with the object with my senses, almost sending out tendrils of perception, some physical,
some invisible, to ‘nudge’ the phenomena and get to know it. I would see how it responded to me and to the world around it. I would then try and capture the effect from the object through drawing. George Descombes has described how drawing holds a similar place within his design process. He says that,

> Drawing is not a tool, though pens and pencils are. My drawings don’t express, don’t communicate, what I already know (or if they do, that knowledge remains incidental to the drawing). Rather, I search in my drawings as one searches for words. (2012, 60)

Drawing in my phenomenological process cycled through series of phases: a sensorial engagement, an imaginative apprehension, and a physical rendering.

In hand drawing, the body inhabits the image as the hand and arm make the same movements to record a thing’s image as they would make to caress the surface or outline of the thing itself... Furthermore, in hand drawing the line has a certain tolerance as it is being drawn - it can wander slightly, thin or thicken, waver or straighten in response to the non-verbalised intentions of the designer. (McCann, 2005, 16-17)

The act of engaging with the perceptive process through drawing, in its turn returned a physical gesture and a visible product to the world.

**Conclusion**

The characteristics of the world-in-formation pose a challenge for building a phenomenological design process. Fluctuations, iterations, and movements typify the landscape and resist a neat and straightforward design methodology. Furthermore, the designer is caught up and implicated in these relationships. Some design-thinkers propose that we embrace the entanglement inherent in being a designer in such a world. Instead of adopting a distant and ‘objective’ approach, drawing from them, I have experimented with perspectival processes that immerse the designer in the landscape, and employ touch as primary mode of encounter. In this embodied framework, all the senses are variations on the sense of touch. The processes that emerge are immersive, iterative, languid and fleshy. These processes acknowledge and are alert to the feedback loop between sensed and sensing, and the traces left in the world from the adhesion between these parties. This phenomenological perspective grants agency to landscapes, hailing them as active and potent. This activity is reflected in my development of a series of operations that can be used to describe the vitality in the landscape.
### Table 1: Operations Table, Moorhouse Avenue, Christchurch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Operations</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roof</td>
<td>stretching, spanning, blocking, enveloping</td>
<td>concrete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puddles</td>
<td>pooling</td>
<td>water, oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curbs</td>
<td>accumulating</td>
<td>concrete, stone, weeds, debris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fences</td>
<td>catching</td>
<td>wire, steel, wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walls</td>
<td>marking, bubbling, staining</td>
<td>plaster, concrete, steel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground</td>
<td>wearing</td>
<td>asphalt, dirt, metal road, concrete, grass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cracks</td>
<td>pushing, colonizing</td>
<td>grass, weeds, debris</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: Operations Table, Clarksdale, North Canterbury

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Operations</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frost</td>
<td>icing, cracking</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground</td>
<td>rupturing, sinking, supporting, cracking</td>
<td>dirt, water, mud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheets</td>
<td>bleaching, mapping, drying</td>
<td>textiles, sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawn</td>
<td>marking, wearing, spreading</td>
<td>grass, feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dew</td>
<td>beading, clustering</td>
<td>water, grass, cobwebs, sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigation sprayers</td>
<td>dripping</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debris mounds</td>
<td>gathering, accumulating</td>
<td>debris, wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driveway</td>
<td>warming</td>
<td>sun, concrete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonfire</td>
<td>smoking, burning, mouldering</td>
<td>debris, fire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3: Operations Table, Waipuna Saddle, Banks Peninsula

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Operations</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stump</td>
<td>pleating</td>
<td>Totara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mist</td>
<td>shriveling</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plants</td>
<td>bending, curving, wearing</td>
<td>grass, Totara, Peppertree, Coprosma, Griselinia, Kowhai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wool</td>
<td>catching, stretching</td>
<td>fibre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lichen</td>
<td>gripping, clustering</td>
<td>lichen, moss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocks</td>
<td>jutting, nestling</td>
<td>volcanic rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fences</td>
<td>accumulating, growing, seeding, catching</td>
<td>wire, hardwood posts, treated radiata posts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts</td>
<td>standing, leaning, marking, nurturing</td>
<td>hardwood posts, treated radiata posts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wire</td>
<td>buried, winding, catching, circling, coiling</td>
<td>wire, barbed wire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 2: The Visible and the Invisible

Visible

Introduction

Drawing from the work by Lassus, Bachelard and Dee & Fine, it can be seen that we are inextricably caught up in this world in which we all live and perform (Bachelard, 2005; Dee and Fine, 2005; Lassus, 2002). Through Ingold’s notion of the world-in-formation, the active nature of the world is explored: how it is not a passive receptacle for our actions, but the source of actions and performances of its own (from multiple perspectives within it even) (2008). This point of view has fundamental ramifications for the way in which we approach the world as designers. Phenomenological thought suggests that we need to adopt an immersive approach to the sites in which we design, learning to observe and articulate the ways in which they are active. How then could we be in this world, as designers? How could we ‘do’ immersion? As designers, how can we actively immerse ourselves in the world?

Relationship between us and the world

In his last, incomplete work, The Visible and the Invisible, Merleau-Ponty presents these titular concepts as two aspects of the world. In a final chapter called, “The Intertwining - The Chiasm,” he begins to describe the nature of the visible:

The visible about us seems to rest in itself. It is as though our vision were formed in the heart of the visible, or as though there were between it and us an intimacy as close as between the sea and the strand. (1968, 130-1)

There is a paradoxical relationship between our flesh and the flesh of the world: it is at once distinct and thoroughly muddled. As we revolve this image of the sea and the shore in our minds we can be at one and the same time absorbed by the minute mingling of water and sand as they lap against one another through the movement of the tides, and struck by the vast scale apparent in the leagues of ocean that situate the shores. A scale both vast and intimate. Although we are always-already immersed in this world, the scale of our connection with it is elastic.

Merleau-Ponty describes the body as being comprised of two laps:

The body unites us directly with the things through its own ontogenesis, by welding to one another the two outlines of which it is made, its two laps: the sensible mass it is and the mass of the sensible wherein it is born by segregation and upon which, as seer, it remains open. It is the body and it alone, because it is a two-dimensional being, that can bring us to the things themselves, which are themselves not flat beings but beings in depth, inaccessible to a subject that would survey them from above, open to him alone that, if it be possible, would coexist with them in the same world. (ibid,
The body possesses two circuits: the flesh which constitutes the body itself, and the flesh which comes into being through differentiation within the world. The body as a being, maintains an ‘openness’ to the world. It is in this openness that the body is perpetually coming into being. This openness is integral to the development of the body over time. It in fact formulates the body as a being. The body is never ‘done’, it is never finished: its exposure to the world results in an inflection in its being, which iterates from moment to moment. Moreover, it is the flesh of the body and its critical openness that allows us to access the world as a place of multiple dimensions. Merleau-Ponty describes this as coexisting with the things in the same world. This is recalled in the ongoing temporal and material engagement in Dee and Fine’s work, which they name “dwell-design” (2005, 73). To design in the phenomenological manner suggested by Merleau-Ponty, Dee, and Fine, we must embrace a mindful encounter with the openness of the body and the world. Indeed, to fully explore the world, we have to come to it through the body.

Embodied Design

Immersion is an essential component of a phenomenological design practice. But practically and specifically, how can we come to the world through the body? This is a crucial question because, for phenomenology, embodiment is fundamental to the way in which we know the world and participate in it as designers.

I decided to explore this question further by spending time designing on a specific site: the proposed Eastern Frame in central Christchurch (see Figure 9). By experimenting with my design process I aimed to investigate how I might actively engage with the body’s openness. I chose to try engaging with the landscape primarily through my body. As already discussed, drawing became a crucial way in which to perform as a designer in the landscape. To this end I took along with me a variety of drawing materials, so that I could respond to and process my experience on site through hand rendering. I also took a smart phone so that I could photograph if absolutely necessary, however my primary recording tools were to be paper and drawing materials. I wanted to avoid the lack of mindfulness that could occur when I employ photography too freely.

The second part of my experimental approach was to encounter the city on foot: ranging over different perspectives, moving through space, sitting and standing still, withdrawing from a space and approaching it. The physical mass of my body and its iterative coming-into-being through its openness to the world would be a foundational means by which I would navigate my exploration of developing a phenomenological design process.

On the first day that I began this process I parked two blocks North of the Eastern Frame and then began to walk, until I reached the site of a demolished church which, although not within the boundaries of my ‘site’, I found I wanted to consider more closely:

At St Lukes, I began to sketch. Not to record what was there, but to process what I was seeing. To see more intently. I

1. See also: "According to Merleau-Ponty we are united with things through our body and the body emerges as a being from the texture of things by differentiation." (Vallega-Neu, 2005, 65)

2. I took an iPhone 4 on site. I primarily used the camera feature, but also used the other ‘computing’ capabilities, such as the web browser and document viewer. This enabled me to access information, such as the Blueprint plan, without carrying large amounts of paper. I could also look up historical information about sites as I needed to.
Figure 9: Blueprint plan for Christchurch produced by CERA (2012), with the Eastern Frame highlighted.
sketched with a graphite pencil and the drawings were quite messy. Hard to make sense of, but helped me to consider shapes, depth and scales [Figure 10]. I really felt like I could palpate the place with my eyes.

I spent some time walking around (often changing my perspective/position very slightly, a couple of steps, standing up, crouching down) and sketching.

Then I began to feel impulses to make certain interventions, and so I began sketching these. Initially I used the graphite pencil, but then began using charcoal to play around with shape and shade better. (20 September 2013)

A process of design did not arrive fully formed at the start of this design experiment. I felt my way through the experiment, trying to knowingly cycle through a feedback loop between myself and the landscape. The sketches I made were not tidy, nor were they particularly legible (Figure 10). But they were not primarily meant as a form of communication, but rather as a making-sense-of. As they move away from graphite pencil and into charcoal they become more expressive and fluid (Figure 11). The significance of these images is not how the drawings appeared, but rather how they formed a part of my touching the world, and in doing so they themselves entered the visible.

As I continued to draw, I was able to experience doubly: what was in front of me in the landscape, and what I had introduced into the landscape in the form of my drawing: I was able to experience the visible residue left by my previous experiences. On my next session in the city, I reflected further on the process in which I was engaging:

As I would consider an idea I would try and let it rest in front of me once I had sketched it out. I tried to consider what
Figure 11: Sketches drawn on site, exploring space and the intervention of a path.
were the characteristics of the concept and why I had felt this would be experientially significant. A form of critique or close reading, I would then take those key characteristics and consider how they would interact with areas around the current zone. How might they reinforce or contrast with each other? Did I want to move into a juxtapositional space, or a variation on the current space or intensify the first experience? For instance the meadow that I envisaged for the corner site I realised was responding to the vast height of the Poplars on the River bank [Figure 12]. To appreciate the scale of the Poplars, I felt you needed space to open up away from them. The small meadow then evolved into a larger unfolding of a grass land along the adjacent parcels of land, mutating through variations in colour through time and space. (23 September 2013)

Having initially employed sketching as a means to make sense of the world around me, it soon also became a way in which to explore my imagined interventions. The physical work of drawing, giving form to these design ideas, entered into my experiential world and then into the visible, where it was ready to be experienced once more³.

Visible Definition/Discussion

A contemplation of this experimental process led me to consider what constitutes a visible. Merleau-Ponty offers this elucidation:

What we call a visible is ... a quality pregnant with a texture, the surface of a depth, a cross section upon a massive being, a grain or corpuscle borne by a wave of Being. Since the total visible is always behind, or after, or between the aspects we see of it, there is access to it only through an experience which, like it, is wholly outside of itself. (1968, 136)

A visible, then, bears part of itself upon our vision, our openness to the world, but does not ever reveal itself in totality. This is partly because it is always coming into being, but also because we can never leave our body in order to experience, and thus we are inherently limited in the aspects of the other that we can encounter.

As I am experiencing the landscape, I am never able to ‘fully’ or ‘absolutely’ grasp it with my comprehension, but rather I experience an aspect, or a phase of it. As I too come into being through my experience of the world, this
mutability enters design work. A month into my design process in the Eastern Frame, I noted this shifting in my work:

As I have been drawing I have been noticing how my style changes from day to day and frame to frame. I have considered whether I should be concerned about this lack of consistency, but as I was drawing today I decided that I think it is ok. While in some ways it exposes my lack of technical ability in drawing, I also think that it reveals the changes to the steadiness of my mind in the face of varying weather conditions, altering levels of confidence in rendering and design, and the speed at which I am designing.

I also noticed that as I design an element or group of elements over a few frames, I come to know their shape, texture and placement differently. As I repeatedly draw them, I alter the gestures with which I render the lines, often becoming more decisive as I come to know the thing I am exploring. It is not just the shape that alters, but the quality of the element itself. As I begin to know it, it comes into being. There is an interrelationship between myself, the landscape in which I am in, and the imagined landscape. The drawing constitutes the threads that tie these things together, weaving a particular design into being. (15 October 2013)

The inconsistencies in my drawings were not a symptom of a weakness in my ability to see or to communicate visually. Or rather, yes, they were a weakness, but a weakness inherent in every experience. But by grasping hold of this fallibility I was able to let go of an expectation of a full or objective knowledge of the world, and instead embrace the difference which is present in each touch we cast into the world, and present also in the returned touch of the world.

Merleau-Ponty describes this iterative differentiation which articulates, as being a “difference without contradiction” (1968, 135). This conceptualisation moves away from a formulation of the world as a series of binaries, or even a series of categories, and instead envisions it as a network of nodes. The inconsistency in my drawings did not reflect a hierarchy of images that were more or less ‘true’ to an ‘original’ source. Instead, they exist in the world with equal veracity, distinct from one another, without negating one another. A further example of this differentiation in the visual realm is the way in which light enters into a room. While reading Ulysses, by James Joyce, a description of shafts of light captured something I had previously only dimly observed:

Two shafts of soft daylight fell across the flagged floor from the high barbicans: and at the meeting of their rays a cloud of coalsmoke and fumes of fried grease floated, turning. (1934, 13)

As it enters, the quality and texture of the air inside affect the appearance of the light. Dust motes float in varying densities. Not only are the shafts of light entering the dark space apparent in and of themselves because of the contrast with the darkness of a room, but also because of the changing, swirling, mutable nature of the air the light encounters. The shafts of light illuminate the intermingling of heat sources and scents. Although you cannot perceptively touch this intermingling with your hands, you can visually palpate it, and you can inhale the texture of the dust and the scent of smoke and cooking fumes. As the particles rotate in the air, and pass through different densities of light, new sets of alliances and connections are made between them, forming patterns in colour, solidity, movement and texture. For Merleau-Ponty, this interrelating is central to the way
in which visibles operate. For instance, in relation to colour
he says:

The colour is yet a variant in another dimension of variation,
that of its relations with the surroundings: this red is what it is
only by connecting up from its place with other reds about it,
with which it forms a constellation, or with other colours it
donimates or that dominate it, that it attracts or that attract
it, that it repels or that repel it. In short, it is a certain node in
the web of the simultaneous and the successive. It is a concrete
of visibility, it is not an atom. (1968, 132, emphasis mine)

What we experience as a characteristic of the visible,
such as colour, is formed in relation to the network of
the world in which the visible sits. In this way, the
characteristics of the visible are active: they do, rather than
exist as an absolute.

Flesh of the World

Far from being a vacuum, the space between things is
precisely where the interrelationship between visibles
takes place. In relation to Rick Joy’s work in the Arizona
Desert, Steven Holl noticed the way in which design can
make manifest this rich space between the visibles:

In the rammed-earth walls I felt a concentration of materials
- what I have often thought of as a hyphenated material-
spirit or spirit-material. It is as if these two realms are
pressed together into one, thickening the light. Surrounding
spaces take on a particular density with textures animated
in sunlight. The overall phenomenon, which is a result of
material, detail, space, texture, light and sound, allows
architectural form to be almost negligible. (2002, viii)

The hybrid, liminal space that Holl describes, suggests
an additional location for phenomenal forces to reside.

According to Merleau-Ponty, the spaces between things in
the world become crucial to affecting our experience. It is in
this seemingly empty space where we find the Flesh of the
world:

Between the alleged colours and visibles, we would find

anew the tissue that lines them, sustains them, nourishes
them, and which for its part is not a thing, but a possibility, a
latency, and a flesh of things. (1968, 132–3)

This realm of possibility is also called the Invisible.

Invisible

Idea

Far from being an antithesis of the visible, the invisible
is an inextricable part of the visible: “[i]nvisible, the
idea, is not the contrary of the visible, it is the invisible of the
visible”. (Flynn, 2011) Merleau-Ponty refers to examples
of the invisible as: the idea, emotion or vitality in music or
literature; or the varied manifestations of light, sound and
touch. (1968, 149) An expression of the invisible at work
can also be found in Holl’s description, above, of a, “material-
spirit or spirit-material” formed through the relationship of
carefully designed elements in the landscape. Joy’s attention
to the phenomena of the place and the materiality of the
design results in a built form which articulates the invisible.

The fact that Joy was able to express the invisible
through built form in the sensible world is not contradictory.
For in truth, the invisible is not neatly divisible from the
sensible world:
It is therefore not a de facto invisible, like an object hidden behind another, and not an absolute invisible, which would have nothing to do with the visible. Rather it is the invisible of this world, that which inhabits this world, sustains it, and renders it visible, its own and interior possibility, the Being of this being. (Ibid. 151)

The invisible does not consist of a series of ideal platonic concepts, from which things in the material world are merely poor facsimiles. More than simply co-habiting with the visible, the invisible is crucial to the expressive Being of sensibles in the world. The invisible is as key to the expression of the world as the material components. The invisible is still connected to the carnality of the material world, in fact it too possesses carnality:

For these truths are not only hidden like a physical reality which we have not been able to discover, invisible in fact but which we will one day be able to see facing us, which others, better situated, could already see; provided that the screen that masks it is lifted. Here, on the contrary, there is no vision without the screen: the ideas we are speaking of would not be better known to us if we had no body and no sensibility; it is then that they would be inaccessible to us. The ‘little phrase’, the notion of the light, are not exhausted by their manifestations, any more than is an ‘idea of the intelligence’, they could not be given to us as ideas except in a carnal experience. It is not only that we would find in that carnal experience the occasion to think them; it is that they owe their authority, their fascinating, indestructible power, precisely to the fact that they are in the transparency behind the sensible, or in its heart. (Ibid. 149-50, emphasis mine)

Because of its carnal nature, the only way we can encounter the invisible is through our own carnality. The only way we can come to the invisible is through our bodies, through an embodied encounter with the world-information.

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\textit{Invisible and Design: imaginative engagement with the world}

As a designer, I sought to explore both the visible and invisible qualities of the Eastern Frame, in which I was working. The Avon River intersects the proposed Eastern Frame at its northern edge. The aesthetic along the riverbank throughout the central city was one of the picturesque. There were sloped riverbanks, carpeted with clipped grass and lined with mature Poplar trees (See Figure 12). There was a well-formed gravel path and altogether a sense of intentional design and ‘completion’. This stood in contrast to many of the other spaces that I was faced with designing, which were largely lots either containing derelict buildings or covered in a surface of demolition rubble. As a designer coming to the riverbank, I initially found it difficult to find purchase in this carefully maintained space. In this ‘smooth’ landscape, I was drawn to irregular, (organic) elements to which I felt my look had particular adherence. During a number of lengthy periods on site, I came to spend some time meditating upon the forms of the Poplar trees (See Figure 13; Figure 14), which repeatedly drew me with their dramatic height and elaborate surfaces.

There were multiple strands to this meditation. I palpated the trees with my look ‘externally’: I moved in and around the trunks, walking up and down the line, and around individual trees. I touched them, and I sketched what I experienced, probing the nature of that experience. Partnered with this ‘external’ looking, was a palpation with an ‘internal’ look: in my imagination. In this interior process, I became aware of the plasticity of my conceptualisation of
the ‘objects’. As I continued to come to know the visibles in front of me, I also began to explore possibilities other than what was in front of me. What would happen if I wrapped copper around the trunk? If I created fences in and around the trees? If I created paths to the trees? These ideas were not inherent in the poplar trees, but rather latent, and completely shot through with the perspectival specificity of my experience during my particular time on site. The invisible is at the core of our imaginative engagement with the world:

We do not see, do not hear the ideas, and not even with the mind’s eye or with the third ear: and yet they are there, behind the sounds or between them, behind the lights or between them, recognisable through their always special, always unique manner of entrenching themselves behind them, ‘perfectly distinct from one another, unequal among themselves in value and in significance’. (ibid, 151)

These possibilities thus emerged from the space of ‘openness’ between myself and the world: the adherence of myself as designer and the world in which I was working. This close encounter with the poplars led to me engaging with the invisible of the poplars: the ideas, the gestures, the moods, which inhabited them.5

Daydreaming

One way to describe the process which I developed to engage with the invisible could be described as ‘daydreaming’. Bachelard actively uses this term. He argues that, “[t]he values that belong to daydreaming mark humanity in its depths.” (2005, 88) Lassus describes a similar kind of perceptual engagement as “floating attention”, as discussed

5 This also leads into a potentially fruitful discussion of the concept of affordances. While these affordances, can be physical, they are also inherently imaginative, as they often require a leap or impulse of thought or movement to ‘take hold’ of the affordances.
in Chapter 1. (2002, 223) Pallasmaa also stresses the importance of ‘imagination’ to experience. He states that the world (or in this metonymic example, a house). “...furnishes us with dispersed images and a body of images at the same time. In both cases, I shall prove that imagination augments the values of reality.” (1996, 86) All three writers identify the ineluctable and beneficial existence of an unseen, imaginative realm in our experience, Lassus and Pallasmaa further extending the applicability to design.

My looking and palpating with hand, eye, and pencil, very quickly became intertwined with imagined interventions in the spaces in which I was working and experiencing. I saw the variation in the forms of the trunks of the Poplars: as a collection of similar things, their differences became crucial in my coming to understand them. In trying to articulate the shape of their differences I moved beyond the form as it presented itself to me and imaginatively refashioned it. By adding, subtracting, or altering the form, I was working with the latent possibilities held in the invisible. The concept I settled on was to create inverted skins of the trunks. After making a latex mould around the bottom 1-1.5m of each tree, I would then turn the latex inside out (so that the buttresses and gnarled surfaces were facing inwards) and cast a new shape (See Figure 15). These new forms would then be able to be experienced as a new
object, with connections in the visible and the invisible to the original trunk. Over time, both the moulded structure and the tree would accumulate further differences, as the tree grew, the structure weathered, and they both aged. In this design exercise, I engaged with the invisible in order to more fully understand the phenomena I was working with. Furthermore, I actively incorporated the realm of the invisible, through imaginative work, into my design process. This produced a work of design that in itself aims to invoke an engagement with the invisible for participants.

Intertwining

Having apprehended the way in which the visible and the invisible wove into each other, both in the world and in my design process, I needed to further understand the nature of the relationship between the sensible (the visible) and the idea (the invisible). Merleau-Ponty describes the bond between them as being an ‘armature’, and names it the Chiasm, the intertwining:

We touch here the most difficult point, that is, the bond between the flesh and the idea, between the visible and the interior armature which it manifests and which it conceals. No one has gone further than Proust in fixing the relations between the visible and the invisible, in describing an idea that is not the contrary of the sensible, that is its lining and its depth. (1968, 149)

Meaning, language, ideas and the invisible, are not other than the sensible, the flesh and the visible. These realms are joined by an armature, a framework within the visible which, in giving form for the flesh, at once reveals its own presence and form, and yet veils itself.

Language

As I write this, in a sense I withdraw from the (head) space or ‘feeling’ of designing in the Eastern Frame, and certainly from the corporeal experience of being in the same place as the Poplar trees along the river bank. But in another sense I am still imaginatively experiencing the place and the process. This is able to happen through poetic engagement with the materials that remain from that process. An important part of my imaginative engagement with the visible and the invisible in my process was to take notes. I would take brief notes, sometimes just jotting down the odd word, while I was on site and then make more detailed reflections at the end of the day. Alongside drawing, language became an important way to articulate the invisible in my experience and design practice. McCann posits that, “language is irrevocably present in the act of design.” (2005, 15) She argues that this is because:

Language does not exist apart from the world, but derives from the world. It can never displace the things it purports to represent, but it too is a carnal echo that relates the body and the larger world. (ibid, 15)

For phenomenologists, such as McCann, language is not an additional system that correlates to the ‘real’ world, yet somehow avoids being sullied by the flesh of the world. Instead, language possesses its own sort of ‘flesh’: “Language is a more diaphanous body, but body nonetheless, which is capable of sedimentation, of forming a world which, in Hannah Arendt’s phrase, houses the speaker.” (Flynn, 2011 emphasis mine) As part of the invisible, language too possesses fleshy qualities and is not cleanly divisible from the sensible realm.
Just as the material world frames our experience, so too does the more amorphous world of language. By extension, as designers, language is both an influential factor which affects embodied experience in the landscape, as well as a crucial tool in a phenomenological design process.

For Merleau-Ponty, symbolic meaning in language is not able to be untangled or articulated as a separate entity from the act of communication:

The meaning is not on the phrase like the butter on the bread, like a second layer of ‘psychic reality’ spread over the sound: it is the totality of what is said, the integral of all the differentiations of the verbal chain; it is given with the words for those who have ears to hear. (1968, 155)

Language does not bestow absolute meaning upon the world. Rather it, “conveys significations in tufts, thickets of proper meanings and figurative meanings...” (ibid, 130) Words are, “the repeated index, the insistent reminder of a mystery as familiar as it is unexplained, of a light which, illuminating the rest, remains at its source in obscurity.” (ibid) Language, like the visible world, operates as a network of nodes, containing connections, divergences, and patterns. It is this very ‘openness’ in the meaning of language that allows it to be poetic, to engage with the invisible of the world6.

Phenomenological Reduction

Doubling Back of Experience: Hyper Reflection

The movement that we make when we experience traces its way through sensation, thought, language, and meaning in a flexible, reversible manner. The mindful manner of doing this which I adopted as a designer, can be described as hyper-reflection: a, “reflection which must always be mindful of its own situated character” (Flynn, 2011, unpaginated). This hyper-reflection, through its ability to thoroughly interrogate the nature of experience, can result in a phenomenological reduction.

Phenomenological Reduction

For some phenomenologists (Husserl, for instance), the phenomenological reduction is a moment where we are able to step back and encounter the world stripped bare of our usual practices and knowledges (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, xiv-xv). This, however, implies that it is possible to withdraw from the world completely and yet still encounter it. Merleau-Ponty contends that such a position is impossible:

The most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction... If we were absolute mind, the reduction would present no problem. But since, on the contrary, we are in the world, since indeed our reflections are carried out in the temporal flux on which we are trying to seize... there is no thought which embraces all our thought. (ibid, xv)

In Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological framework, we cannot separate thought from experience, nor mind from body. We cannot experience the world outside of our embodied state. Therefore a state where we can apprehend the world as an entity removed from ourselves is unattainable. Instead, Merleau-Ponty articulates a phenomenological reduction, that,

... steps back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like

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6. On the subject of meaning and metaphor, see also (Colfax, 1998, 25-26)
sparks from a fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world, and thus brings them to our notice. It, alone, is consciousness of the world, because it reveals the world as strange and paradoxical. (ibid, xv)

This reduction is a moment when our usual frameworks for understanding the world are not utterly removed, but loosen their effect on our experience of the world. As this happens, the world appears unfamiliar and bereft of order or motive. We then find ourselves possessed with “‘wonder’ in the face of the world.” (Fink, 1933, 331 and ff; Merleau-Ponty, 2002, xv) As touched on in the Introduction, the reduction for Merleau-Ponty, “disrupts our absorption in the world, thereby destroying its ‘ordinary character.’” (Flynn, 2011, unpaginated) This phenomenological reduction is a powerful moment, both in design process and in the experience of design. As we will now see, poetic language can be used to effect this experience of the phenomenological reduction.  

Conclusion

Immersion in the landscape is not just a placement of the body in a space, but rather a mindful embodied entwinement with place. An understanding of the concepts of the Visible, the Invisible and the Chiasm provide a locus around which to build a phenomenological design process that works to perform this mindful engagement. The body’s openness to the world, results in a feedback loop in which both the body and the world continually come into being. Just as I was effecting tangible and imagined change on the landscape, so to was I being altered through these encounters.  

The design process I developed employs an interweaving of both material and immaterial percepts and design work. Drawing became a key way in which to articulate my experience (both tangible and intangible). At the same time the drawing products became a part of the visible world and were experienced in concert with the landscape. This movement through the tangible and imaginative realms was a critical cycle within my design process.

The use of drawing also made apparent the inherently embodied nature of engagement with the invisible. All articulations of this intangible realm were expressed through carnal means: drawing, language, gestures. This process became particularly apparent when interacting with the Poplar trees. I palpated the trees physically, sensorially, and imaginatively. Their array of characteristics also illustrated the network of differentiation and connection in which visibles are situated.

Engagement with this imaginative realm often took place in a manner similar to daydreaming. This process allowed my imagination to traverse the tangible and intangible realms, floating in a liminal space between: that rich territory which Merleau-Ponty names the Chiasm. At its most dramatic, such immersion and engagement with the visible and the invisible results in the phenomenological reduction. This reduction frequently emerges when we encounter the world in strange and disorienting ways.

7. The Russian formalists claimed that the function of poetic language is to “defamiliarise” language (Flynn, 2011)
Chapter 3: Strangemaking

The Challenge of Familiarity

The intense awareness of being-in-the-world that is experienced in the phenomenological reduction is, by its very nature, not our usual mode of experience. I became aware that in my design process I was limited by the way in which I chose to develop interventions in the landscape. I was limited by my own design ideas and habits. I wanted to interrupt the cycle of what was beginning to feel like ‘automatic’ design. I wanted to be faced with a design situation that felt strange and unfamiliar, to heighten my experiential engagement: both physical and imaginative; visible and invisible.

One challenge in creating experientially-rich design is that we, as designer-participants, become familiar with things. We become accustomed to everyday experience and our apprehension of being-in-the-world fades into the background of our perception. Russian critic, Viktor Shklovsky noted this pattern in his 1917 work, “Art as Technique”:

... as perception becomes habitual, it becomes automatic.
... If one remembers the sensations of holding a pen or of speaking in a foreign language for the first time and compares that with his feeling at performing the action for the ten thousandth time, he will agree with us. (1966, 778)

As an experience is repeated it develops an aura of familiarity. We do not have to fully experience the thing, because our previous experience tells us that we already know what that experience will entail. We come to expect that there is nothing new to apprehend.

Ostranenie: defamiliarisation

One way to counteract this oblivion, is to de-familiarise what we are experiencing: to make it strange. Shklovsky argues that art counters the dulling of perception through this ostranenie: defamiliarisation or strangemaking (Crawford, 1984, 210). Ostranenie aims to present objects, narratives, or places in ways that defy straightforward and quick understanding.

One form of defamiliarisation can be found in collage as first practiced by the Cubist artists, such as Pablo Picasso and Jean Metzinger, at the beginning of the twentieth century. This technique of cutting up images and rearranging them, was later adopted by William Burroughs, in both his writing and visual art from the early-1960’s onwards. In this method, the text is chopped up into pieces and then stitched back together in an arbitrary fashion, rich with unusual convergences. Burroughs argues that the resulting new text,

...introduces a new dimension into writing enabling the
writer to turn images in cineramic variation. Images shift
sense under the scissors smell images to sound, sight to sound,
sound to kinaesthetic. (1963, unpaginated)

The new texts and images (static or moving) that
result from these rearrangements are characterised by
juxtapositions and unfamiliar compositions, which tend to
unsettle the audience. Because these collages are arbitrarily
arranged, rather than intentionally, the process circumvents
any risk of ‘automatic’ design through ‘automatic’ perception
and instead tend to create perceptual experiences which
incite the ‘sparks’ of the phenomenological reduction.

I decided to test out using the ‘cut-up’ method in studio
to create design briefs for myself, to see what possibilities
emerged from a design process which injected the arbitrary
into the intentional. I cut-up field notes and academic
articles and then rearranged them in indiscriminate ways
(see Figure 16). From this I drew out strange briefs and
responded to them through design (see Figure 17).²

Strangemaking Design

On this imaginative venture, I encountered an internal
immensity: endless possible landscapes emerged. One
spliced brief that emanated from these cut-up exercises read:

Remnant for Concrete
excess River and Totara concrete in to
wind-proof Forest

One of the landscape designs that I developed to
answer this poetic juxtaposition was a forest made up of
both live trees and cast concrete forms of Totara, petrified

Figure 16 Example of a cut-up text based on my field notes from a trip
to Walpuna Saddle, Banks Peninsula and an academic article by Ross
Jenner (2011).

Figure 17 An array of design interventions based on strangemaking
techniques

² See Appendix 1 for further examples of this work.
in time and space, inhabiting both the land and the River (see Figure 18). This unsettling intermingling of static and live tree forms blurs the boundary between land and water and creates a strange phenomenon: a wind-proof forest. Walking along the bank of the River, you can see from a distance that your path will be interrupted by something. Are they people? Statues? And what colour are they? In the early morning light, everything appears slightly grey, but ahead some things seem more still than others. As you draw nearer, you see that the assembly of beings spills out into the river, like an army frozen in the midst of fording. Some of the forms remain obstinately transfixed, but others emit the unmistakable quiver that constitutes life, vibrating like a hum just at the edge of hearing. You are close now. Ah! There are trees. They are all trees. But some are made of wood and leaf and others from concrete. They intermingle, hampering any attempt to neatly divide them into quick and dead. Over time, there is change in the concrete. It ages, accumulating lichen and moss, becoming stained with water marks. At first the forms largely remain the same, but as they grow older they begin to disintegrate, losing the sharpness of their youth, becoming more vague. The live Totara change more dramatically while they are young, before settling into a less shifting maturity. But at last they also begin to crumble or fall, marking time with their passing.

Perception vs. Conceptualisation

Shklovsky argues that one of the ways in which habitualisation operates is through metonymy: we speed up the process of apprehension by letting a part of a whole stand for the thing itself.
Such habituation explains the principles by which, in ordinary speech, we leave phrases unfinished and words half expressed. In this process, ideally realised in algebra, things are replaced by symbols. Complete words are not expressed in rapid speech: their initial sounds are barely perceived. (2006, 778)

One example of this is ‘lace’ standing in for the concept of ‘femininity’. In this way, we tend to react to the world according to our knowledge of things, rather than our perception of things. Senses become dulled and perception becomes almost automatic. We begin to leap to how we think or conceive of something and miss how we are experiencing it:

        And so life is reckoned as nothing. Habitualisation devours works, clothes, furniture, one’s wife, and the fear of war. ‘If the whole complex lives of many people go on unconsciously, then such lives are as if they had never been.’ (Ibid)

One result of this habitualised perception is that we can move through much of life ‘unconscious’ to the experiences that our movement through the world affords us: to the detriment of experiencing pleasure, joy, apprehension, or other immoderate emotions and sensations. When perception becomes automatic, the full spectrum of human experience becomes dampened.

The imagined encounter with the Totara described above is marked by unfamiliarity. The unexpectedness of the interruptions to the pathway and the slight but profound differentiation between the live and fabricated forms creates an unease; a slightly off-note that defies easy conceptualisation of the scene. The surprise of the placement of the trees in relation to the path and the uncanny, liminal tension created by the mixed forms engages our perception, drawing out the experience to create a more intense embodied encounter. We are unable to rely on metonymic techniques to quickly define and systematise the landscape we are approaching. Its origins in a strange brief have infiltrated the design outcome, creating a landscape that resists algebrisation. The design deliberately operates along the axes of time, as well as space, resulting in a landscape which continues to shift and alter, providing varied inflections of itself to participants. This continual reformulation propagates the unfamiliar and the strange, creating a landscape that continues to invoke perceptual engagement.

Representing the Strange: defamiliarisation in Visual Art and Drawing

        My research process had moved from my initial immersive engagements with a number of landscapes, to my attempts to disquiet and agitate my design reflexes through strangemaking in studio. To return full circle, I completed the design work on site, in Christchurch’s Eastern Frame. Taking the work from these strange cut-up briefs, I moved through The Frame, working in perspective, placing and arranging the designs through a series of storyboards. I made the storyboards from photographs taken at eye level walking along a series of trajectories into, through, and out of the Eastern Frame. I edited the images so that they were monochrome and had a looser, less photorealistic quality (see Figure 19). In one way this process detached the images slightly from the place in which they were taken; in another sense, the pared back images seemed to capture the forms, light and shadow of each place more closely than the original photographs. I found that this defamiliarisation and
simplification provided me with a canvas that was both open to the work of design and yet retained a purchase upon the landscape to which I could respond. I took each ‘film strip’ into The Frame and began to design directly into the images. In this way, I was synthesising both defamiliarising and immersive strategies to actively address both the material and imaginative realms of design, and therefore experience. Over time, I whittled down my drawing materials to chalk pastels, charcoal, coloured pencils and a few black pens (see Figure 21). I mostly worked in a gestural manner, using my fingers to smudge and move the pigment around, building up definition within the frame over time, and from frame to frame as the interventions gained solidity in my imagination (see Figure 20 and Appendix 4).

This process of engaging with hand drawing, became a critical part of my practice. Shklovsky discussed defamiliarisation largely in relation to literature, particularly that of Tolstoy, however he saw it as a common thread running through multiple expressions of art, especially those in visual art:

I personally feel that defamiliarisation is found almost everywhere form is found... An image is not a permanent referent for those mutable complexities of life which are revealed through it; its purpose is not to make us perceive meaning, but to create a special perception of the object - it creates a 'vision' of the object instead of serving as a means for knowing it. (ibid, 781)

For Shklovsky, the ‘work’ of defamiliarisation is to avoid the algebraic communication of meaning through symbols, and instead facilitate a more grounded perceptual experience. Within my design methodology, drawings acted as imaginative landscapes into which I could become
immersed, operating in a kind of hybrid world which sat in a liminal territory between the intensity of my immediate material environment and the plasticity of the immaterial imaginative world in my interior: the bonding of the Visible and the Invisible in the Chiasm. The paper, the drawings, the drawing materials, and my body functioned as the conduits between the two realms, they were the physical enactors of the Chiasm.

The nature of the drawings was significant also. Both in my process images and my final conceptual images, I employed hand rendering and an expressive gestural style to imbue the images with atmosphere, rather than ‘realism’. I used watercolours for their ability to create amorphous stains of tone and colour which suggest qualities of space, rather than prescribe. By presenting sketches which showed phased snapshots of the interventions over time (see Figure 22), I also transferred the sense of continual change and movement already suggested by the storyboard images, thus laying out a series of potential design outcomes with which participants could imaginatively engage. This use of images to foment the perceptual relationship between landscape and participants, acknowledges the embodied, situated nature of all experience. Instead of relegating the visual communication of design ideas to the role of a mediated substitution, this mindful approach treats it as a critical experience in and of itself.

Process as Design

This movement between intense, immersive encounters with the site, disorienting imaginative design exercises, and then to a synthetic interweaving back in the landscape, meant that I could never perceptively withdraw from the landscape nor become comfortable at any time in the process. I was always implicated in the design process as the landscape and I acted upon each other. Each step of the process slightly dislocated the knowledge or understanding I thought I had built up. This phenomenological design process was constantly inflected with defamiliarisation. Shklovsky identifies defamiliarisation as a defining characteristic of art:

And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. (ibid., 778)

Defamiliarisation works to encourage our experience to linger in the act of perception, rather than conceptualisation.
According to Shklovsky, defamiliarisation primarily works by augmenting the difficulty and length of perception.

The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important. (ibid)

More important than the object or outcome of an art practice, is the act of perception which accompanies each work of art.

One of the key elements that enables intense perceptual experience to happen is through the modulation of time. McCann echoes this when she describes an,

...infinitesimal lag between our experience of a thing and our conceptualisation of it. Intersubjective experience thrives within this interval, which designers can draw out by avoiding easy intellectual consumption of their designs through vision or language. (2005, 13)

It is exactly this infinitesimal lag which defamiliarisation works to elongate. When things are made strange, the moment in which we perceive is lengthened and we experience our environment in a newly intense way. Our automatic perception is interrupted. Both the cut-up briefs and the images on the storyboards functioned to create and perpetuate (‘hold open’) this lag in perception. The foreign, unsystemised syntax of the briefs continued to defy my ability to conceptualise them. The gestural, expressive qualities of the drawings avoided algebraic metonymy or direct symbolism, instead appealing to the senses and invoking a perceptual response. Automatic perception was hindered, providing the space for the experience of the phenomenological reduction.
The significance of the presence of the strange in a phenomenological design context, is that, due to the immanency of defamiliarisation to both the production and experience of the design, both the design process and the design outcome operate as works of art. Indeed the very nature of phenomenological design means that the line between process and outcome is thoroughly indistinct. As we have seen, from the earliest points of the design process, design is experienced. The design’s receptivity and responsiveness to being experienced overlap with its expressiveness which derives from its own active nature. These two impulses, openness and expressiveness, intermingle with those same impulses of the designer and participants, resulting in a feedback loop that brings both design/landscape and designers/participants into being.

Memorialisation and Meaning

A tension between knowledge and perception became manifest in my creation of a design for a memorial for the Canterbury earthquakes, centered around the Canterbury Television (CTV) Building site within the Eastern Frame. Based on my experience of moving throughout the landscape, I developed a scheme of several intertwining

Figure 23 Three threads of the memorial for the Canterbury earthquakes in the Eastern Frame: Closeness, Meditation, and Lightness.
‘paths’ that wove through, into, and out of the Frame (see Figure 24). These paths would be marked not by surface on the ground plane, but rather populated and marked by different elements. Three strands of memorialising actions would move outward from the CTV site (see Figure 23): Closeness, Meditation, and Lightness. Closeness is a planting of local canopy species, designed to create a sense of dense air and enclosure. Meditation would be enacted by the unfurling of an open-ended process of relocation. Stones and the growing material that clings to them from Banks Peninsula would be placed in groups around the Eastern Frame and left to grow. Lightness would be formed through open swathes of grass-like acrylic rods. Strips of LED lights will be placed at base of the stakes and will flicker and ripple with different coloured greens. The light sequence will be created by rasterizing an abstract watercolour painting of a field and cycling through it.

This series of interventions would resist translation into symbolic meaning. As Bowring has noted meaning-laden, metonymic memorials can disrupt the experiential connection a participant has with the landscape, “The striving for an easy understanding quickly falls away to banality, and a cleavag from their potential place in the world.” (Bowring, 2005, 183) However, the openness of such memorial could render it unrecognizable as a memorial to participants. There is a risk of it ceasing to function as an aide to commemoration. A counter-point to this risk, however, is that the unfinished nature of the memorial, both formally and experientially, could ensure that the ‘work’ of memorialisation is not stifled. In another memorial context, that of the Holocaust, James Young posits that,

...the surest engagement with Holocaust memory in Germany may actually lie in its perpetual irresolution, that only an unfinished memorial process can guarantee the life of memory. For it may be the finished monument that completes memory itself, puts a cap on memory work, and draws a bottom line underneath an era that must always haunt Germany. (Young, 1999, 5)

This embodied approach to framing memory experiences in the Eastern Frame has the potential to be open to a variety of experiences, and many possibilities of participation. The ability of a phenomenological design process to avoid prescriptive design outcomes that direct users into particular interpretations of the site, could be crucial when creating memorial spaces that act as places for remembrance, rather than as monuments, or symbols.

The Carnality of the Invisible

As I moved through the phases of this phenomenological design process, the nature of the interaction between the imaginative and the material, and the landscape and myself became apparent. Another cut-up brief which was posed, read:

Which into baths meandering either in the in internal ensures a mountain Budapest space or a sense building Istanbul

Responding to this in studio, I took the coastline of the city of Istanbul and mingled it with a historic map of the meanders of the Avon River, creating an open air artesian-
baths complex, in which people could move through a familiar part of the landscape (the Avon River) at an unfamiliar scale and in an overtly orchestrated setting (see Figure 25). As I came to place the interventions derived from cut-ups, the design once again became altered through the metonymic shift from the page into the landscape (see Figure 26). The Artesian Baths above grew up in front of my eyes as I imagined the curve of its walls shifting and settling on the land. Walls hugged trees to the interior of the complex or expelled them to the outside.

The resulting intervention moves and flows around the existing trees (see Figure 30). The middle section of the block has been the site of Centennial Pool since 1950. A 300mm well sits on the site, drilled at the time of construction to a depth of 47.6m. The well draws up flowing artesian water from the Bromley Formation. In this new conception of the bathing area, the water will spill and flow in shallow, open channels across the wedge shaped block. The water will rise up, spilling down walls and trickling through stands of trees. During the day the slender mesh copper walls will glint, reflecting changes in light and their own modulating contours. As darkness descends lights set in the ground within the double skin of the walls will emanate a glow, casting a fabric of gridded shadows. As the intervention takes form, the unusual origins of the design begin to fade and give way to a new, unique form and programme (see Figure 29).

The storyboard developed and recorded the movements of the design development, imbuing the images with a sense of action, both on the part of the participant-designer and the landscape. The storyboard format inherently always suggests an ‘and then...’ with each discrete image. There is a sense of there being ‘more than’ the individual frame, both in terms of time and space. This means that the images resist any essentialisation, acting instead as markers in a swirling zone of potentiality. As a designer, the inability to create a single image that acted as an end point was also discomforting. This shifting representation created a sense of uneasiness, a lack of rest that continually unsettled and resisted the
Figure 26 Storyboard of Artesian Baths Complex
familiar, the known: the emphasis was on perception, not knowledge.

**Experiencing the Strange**

At this point the discussion of my research has departed from the clear presentation of some kind of method and entered a less easily delineated territory, which is my experience of designing. My lived experience is not necessarily exactly repeatable (although the methodology is), but functions as a massive reporting back from an exploration. The approach could be implemented from different perspectives, and could elucidating different lived design processes. In this phenomenological context, the process as an ongoing whole could be more significant than any immediate design outcomes.

I began this thesis by presenting this as a phenomenological methodology with a structure. There were certain principles that seemed to underpin my approach and provide a framework for ‘doing phenomenology’. But, while we can discuss and describe the characteristics of phenomenology and phenomenological design approaches, being phenomenological is at its heart a strange experience. At the heart of the Chiasm is where we find, through an intense encounter, that the world is “strange and paradoxical” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, xv). Strangemaking was not confined to just a technique, but became the defining characteristic of my experience of designing. This strangeness necessarily characterises and indeed becomes the driving logic in a phenomenological design approach.

This discomfort wrought by my process was coupled with the discomfort of being in a landscape which was continuously and significantly altering around me, each set of changes throwing up unusual convergences and uncanny tableaux. Jacky Bowring describes the state of the landscape in Christchurch after the major earthquakes as being,

> ...shot through with surrealism. Accidental encounters between unlikely elements have become the stuff of everyday life. Surprising old signs painted on the side of walls suddenly revealed by demolition create unexpected juxtapositions with the contemporary city. In a damaged and windowless shop front several naked mannequins, suspended from the ceiling, pirouette gently in the breeze. Down one of the lanes tables are still set for lunch. (2013, 22–23)

In this context of the absurd, the rhythm of my unusual design practice felt apt, if uneasy. Strangemaking and acknowledging the centrality of the body to experience became useful tools in making sense of, and moving within an altered landscape. My process fully acknowledged and expected that the landscape would be continually changing at various scales and speeds. My phenomenological process was fully geared to respond to changing, uncertain landscape environments. A phenomenological process which embraces the strange and accepts it as its own form of logic is a powerful tool when designing landscapes affected by disasters. Instead of trying to impose a structure of normalcy on a post-disaster environment, the strange is more adaptive and generous towards the unusual and unexpected. The concept of the strange acknowledges that there is no single logic, but many logics. In a time of sudden landscape change, this acceptance of the unfamiliar or strange in a design process and outcomes is particularly apt.
This process of designing always felt slightly disjointed from the 'normal', the everyday. I was at one and the same time immersed in and syncopated from the flow around me, still operating within the rhythm of the city, but situated on the off-beat. Each imaginative thread shot towards a potential future and wove into my immediate experience of being in the landscape. I would slip into a strange world of imaginings, traversing between the Visible and the Invisible. In this Chiasm, a meadow would seed and expand around me. Buildings grew up and collapsed. Piles of bricks transmorphed into forms familiar and unfamiliar. Pathways and connections unfurled, withdrew and connected. I was perpetually poised on the edge of possibility. There was no 'right' way to go, but only gestures to explore. Some petered out. Some endured and forged a network of pathways and nodes through the site. The lines of my walking process and imagined eventually created a proposed urban space that was a tangled zone of affect, privileging process and embodied movement through space and time (See Figure 27, Figure 28).

Conclusion

The nature of this particular design experience resonates with Deleuze and Guattari’s injunction to immerse yourself in and play with the world as an active landscape of possibility:

This is how it should be done: lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialisation, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times. (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004; in Weller, 2005, frontispiece)

The iterative making and re-making of the world described here recalls Tim Ingold’s concept of the world-in-formation that I explored in Chapter 1 (2008). My experience of designing within a process which responds to this potentiality of place suggests a vast scope of possibilities that could emerge from such a design process. More significantly, it suggests that from an engagement with phenomenology, a vast scope of possibility for the practice of design itself could emerge.
Figure 27 Plan View of storyboard threads traced through Eastern Frame
Figure 28 a) Proposed Eastern Frame immediately after construction and b) 50 years after construction
Figure 30: Artesian Baths Complex in Christchurch’s Eastern Frame
Conclusion: Landscapes of Possibility

This thesis seeks to explore ways phenomenological theory can be fashioned into useful tools for design in landscape architecture. The research has succeeded in taking several core concepts (such as immersion, active landscapes, the Visible and the Invisible, the phenomenological reduction, and strangemaking) and formed practical expressions of these within an applied landscape design process. As well as exploring the application of theory to design, the research process has acted reflexively on the body of theory and offers new insight into the workings and nuances of phenomenological philosophy itself.

The possibilities that emerge for an embodied landscape architecture have their root in the phenomenological reduction and its ability to disrupt our everyday experience, thrusting us into intense encounters with the world. Both as designers of and participants in landscapes we engage with both the material (Visible) and intangible (Invisible) realms. The overlapped circuitry of these two forces finds expression in the intertwining of the Chiasm. This offers a powerful description of the complex nature of embodied experience. This thesis describes a process which grapples with engaging with these phenomenological concepts, and in turn offers a glimpse at the landscapes such processes might produce. The immersed nature of the design process means that ‘design’ as a concept is located as much in the process as in the productions. Utilising the phenomenological reduction and its revelation of the strange nature of the world could generate a new array of landscapes which are driven by experience, rather than content or meaning.

Applications

Urban design

The application of this phenomenological process has largely focused on the design of a large scale urban park. As such, the process and the design outcome have potential implications for the practice of urban landscape design. This process demonstrates the possibility of allowing a phenomenological focus to direct the site programme, the aesthetic, form, and even potentially the implementation. This suggests further potential for a phenomenological process to act as an alternative to plan-view, analysis driven urban design. Again, the process leans towards producing experience-based landscapes, rather than those inflected with symbolism or meaning, or based solely on formalism. The more expressive and gestural representational practices employed as part of the process also suggest an alternative to the photo-‘realistic’ images that are routinely employed. The images act as a way to engage with the affect of the site, rather than presenting an almost quantitative, ‘un-lived-in’ vision.
of the site. Instead, the more phenomenologically driven images provide space for engagement on an individually perspectival basis: they favour heterogeneity of experience, rather than a homogenous projection of the visual aspects of the site.

Rural design

As well as exploring urban applications, the research considered the possibilities that emerged when employed at a small-scale in a rural context. There were experiential differences in the contexts in which I worked during this project: the Waipuna Saddle area of Banks Peninsula and the disrupted urban environment in the central city of Christchurch. At Waipuna Saddle, the hillsides were largely cleared from forestation and the elements that were present were exposed to clear, strong sunlight, harsh winds, and hard frosts. The rise of the earth upwards holds the landscape aloft towards the dome of a vast sky. In contrast, within the flat plains of the city, normally the participants are hidden from the surrounding landscape by the rise of several stories of buildings. Each view out to the wider region or to the sky was framed by the forest of the built environment. After the removal of much of this built form, because of the Canterbury earthquakes, the landscape shifted to being one of openness and variation at a micro scale on the ground plane.

These differences are potentially related to Norberg-Schulz’s typologies for comparing the relationship between earth and sky in landscapes. The openness of the Waipuna Saddle environment can be related to his ‘romantic’ landscape, similar to its expression in a Danish context (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 42). Although the ground is set under a large vaulted sky, the landscape contains significant variation and development tends to be nestled near sheltering elements. In contrast, the plains where the city is set, while previously more densely populated by vertical elements, were, at the time of designing, thinned out to a desert-like scene. This ground plane however had much rich variation and was beginning to rise up and grow into a new kind of forestation, both built and vegetative. Although initially this context felt rather like Norberg-Schulz’s ‘cosmic’ landscape type, similar to a desert exposed to an “embracing sky,” I came to experience it closer to the ‘complex’ landscape type as I spent time there (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 42, 47-8). Both of these landscapes situated my body differently and thus affected the process of design. Perhaps the contrast in these formulations of the landscape could affect the application of phenomenological frameworks in terms of both design process and outcomes. Following this, there is an opportunity for further research regarding specific characteristics of landscapes and their relationships to phenomenological design processes.

In addition, it could be beneficial to explore the implications of scale in a rural setting. There is potentially a scale threshold at which point phenomenologically inflected methodologies cease to be able to be employed or be successful. Hence rural context and scale are possible drivers that could affect the application of these methodologies.
Post-disaster

The ability of a phenomenological approach to encompass diverse experiences developed particular resonance as I was designing in the midst of a changing, uncertain landscape environment. The dislocations and juxtapositions that characterise the strange could make a valuable framework from which to navigate a post-disaster territory. The cut-ups in the landscape that tend to be created by disasters could be taken hold of and deployed as part of a phenomenologically inflected design, which draws attention to the operations and characteristics of the landscape. While such disaster events are potentially traumatizing, perhaps there could be a way to navigate this new visible and invisible terrain by more closely understanding and experiencing the landscape, rather than simply trying to refute or deny it, to force the landscape to ‘behave’ in more expected ways.

There remains a question about whether a strangemaking approach becomes imposing and whether we could become alienated as a result. I would argue that in the Merleau-Pontian construction of the phenomenological reduction, which is invoked by the strange, the participant is never removed or detached from their environment. In fact, they become more firmly connected to that environment as the constructs of the familiar and everyday practices loosen their grasp on their experience. In this way there is a movement through the dislocation of the strange, to the phenomenological reduction, and then to a renewed groundedness. The core of groundedness is found in an intense awareness of embodiment, rather than in the familiarity of knowledge of the world. In being destabilised from knowledge, we do not lose ourselves but could become more thoroughly present ‘in’ ourselves and the landscape. This possibility of grounding participants more fully in their environment, suggests the potential for application in other post-disaster contexts. The concept of strangemaking in particular may prove useful in further understanding the experiential role of the body in making sense of an altered and continually changing landscape.

Phenomenological Frames

Immersion

The exploration of immersion as a key component of approaching landscape became, in this research, a fundamental part of the design process. As a methodology, immersion allowed me to come to know and perceive landscapes in more detail, in particular the ways in which they were active, even when this activity was expressed at a non-immediate-human time scale. It became apparent that the act of immersing myself functioned as a feedback loop with the landscape, and that the processes of site-experience and design-experience fed into each other reflexively.

Immersion emerged as a ‘portal’ through which to ‘kickstart’ a phenomenological engagement with landscape and design process. Spending generous amounts of time in and around the site allowed more nuanced perceptions of the actions of the site to be developed. These activities were termed operations. Naming and defining these percepts invited further engagement with the precise and distinct nature of
various process in the landscape. This new understanding of
the particularity and expressiveness of landscapes, coupled
with multiple sessions on site, enabled me to experience the
site as it modulated in both dramatic and subtle ways.

The Visible, Invisible, and the Chiasm

The mindful contemplation undertaken during my times
in the landscapes revealed both the intricate nature of the
visible and tangible realms, and of the intangible elements
of my experience. This included imaginative processes
and perception of insubstantial affect in the landscape. The
inextricable connections between these two realms are
explicated by Merleau-Ponty’s concepts of the Visible and
the Invisible, and the Chiasm, the process which describes
their interrelationship. This interweaving between the
imaginative and the material became critical in recognizing
the processes that formed my engagement with the world
as a designer. As a designer both immersed in the landscape
and casting projections of potential future interventions, the
materiality of the immediate, and the effect of the realm of
the potentiality were the basis for the phenomenological
design process that was developed. The activity of drawing
was crucial for navigating this movement between the
Visible and the Invisible.

The Visible and the Invisible’s interrelationship also
has especial relevance in the presence of a landscape which
incorporates memory and loss. A deeper understanding of
the play between these two circuits of experience provides
the basis for a richer understanding of the experience of
moving through a memory laden landscape and helps to
inform how opposite design responses within sensitive sites
might be formulated. The process highlighted the potential
of deploying phenomenological design when constructing
memorials in a post-disaster context. In particular,
memorials that are based around experience and perception,
rather than symbolism and meaning. As an extension of the
applicability of phenomenology to a post-disaster context,
the relevance of experience-based design to memorial
design also became apparent.

Strangemaking

This development of a phenomenologically focused
design process drew the focus of the design outcomes away
from more symbolic, meaning-laden design responses, and
instead placed primacy on creating or supporting landscapes
which provide intensely grounded experiences. To this end,
I worked to find a way to move away from briefs which
immediately reflected the design intent with meaning,
assumed knowledge and framed the possibility of design as
a cognitive process. By putting aside conventional briefs and
instead employing arbitrarily arranged poetic language in
the form of cut-up briefs, the design process, even in studio
away from the site, became a zone of intense imagination
and therefore immaterial experience. In turn these briefs
produced design outcomes that would seem to invoke
intense experiences. Their strange and unexpected forms and
programmes interrupted the expected everyday experience.
These strange briefs were made possible by employing a
slight dislocation from the familiar. The strangemaking
approach negated any injunction for participants to come
to ‘understand’ the intention or the meaning of the design: in these cases, there is neither knowledge nor a symbolic system to assist with apprehension. Instead the focus is on the perceptive experience of landscape, whatever that may entail. In this way, the strangemaking approach functioned both as a generative strategy that could help to successfully bypass the conventions of landscape architecture briefs and provided a new set of coordinates by which participants can locate their encounters with the landscape: a plane of experience, rather than teleologically seeking an apprehension of knowledge.

Future Research

This research explored the possibilities of engaging in a phenomenological design process. There is much scope for further research to expand on and test out the application of the research outlined here. It would firstly be useful to explore the application of the methodology in other settings: for instance, further rural environments in New Zealand, or urban and rural settings outside New Zealand. In addition, it could be revealing to explore alternative ways of applying phenomenological theory and principles, other than those which were developed here. It could also be beneficial to explore use of the current methodology in a group setting, to investigate how this might affect engagement with a phenomenological process.

In terms of design outcomes, it could be valuable to take a phenomenologically designed intervention through to the build phase. At this point, conventional approaches might suggest that a post-occupancy analysis could be useful. However, given the phenomenological principles underpinning the design approach, could it even be possible to appraise if a design was successful in a context where experiences are inherently diverse and even contradictory? Post-occupancy analysis evaluates the success of a design process based on the design outcome. It does not critique the design process itself, largely I suspect because it tends to offer little, if any, insight into designers’ methodologies. While post-occupancy analysis is routinely used as a default assessment tool, this research indicates scope to engage with a range of other design assessment lenses, particularly the broad range offered by the practice of design critique.

Perhaps a particularly relevant way to interrogate the possibilities that emerge from phenomenological design processes might be to build small-scale interventions (either physically at the site-scale or as digital experiences that augment experience on site) and to also engage with participants in research about their experience of the space. This could also suggest the need for further investigation into the nature of the experience of sites: either ‘on’ site directly, or through representational mediums. There is a wide scope for further research into how participants experience design in general.

The Practice of Design-Research

An important area for further investigation that this research indicates is the role of the phenomenologically-inflected design-researcher. At the end of this thesis, as I
reflect on this work of design-research, I have prepared it in a form that it can be digested and redeployed by others. As part of this process of communication, I have smoothed out the edges of the experience of design-research, unified the voices from which the work took place, and crafted a narrative that presents itself sequentially and towards this conclusion. However, this suggests a level of predetermination that was not evident in the process of researching. When I embarked on this project, the means by which I navigated and negotiated the phenomenological dimensions I encountered was one of immersion. As discussed, part of this context was the landscape around me. A further, critical, part of this context was that the work took place in a shared environment of design-research: the Landscape Designlab, based at Lincoln University. As such, this research was not conducted in isolation, but rather in a situation of interconnected design and research endeavours. As I would venture into the various explorations in the unknown field that I was attempting to map, my path was affected and influenced by the other students and by my supervisors. I would report back and present progress in an iterative fashion. At times this would provide clarification, at others initial befuddlement as something continued to elude me, or challenge them. I had no idea at the start of my research process that I would utilise William Burroughs' cut-up technique. As I negotiated the desire to disrupt my entrenched design behaviours, I sought out Burroughs as a potential guide. The design work that evolved from employing his cut-up technique led me to an experience of intense awareness of being-in-the-world. This in turn led me to try and understand this experience through phenomenological theory, and to explore the notion of the phenomenological reduction. In this way my progress ricocheted as I nudged into other influences, ideas, and phenomena. Furthermore, the exploration of both design, theory, and research were intimately interwoven, often making any distinction between them negligible.

The 'I' and 'me' that I have adopted in documenting this research are neither static nor singular, but rather modulating and distributed. Just as the landscape affected change upon me, so too did the process of design research. What then does it mean to be a phenomenological design researcher? One characteristic is that the design-researcher, or -practitioner changes and moves throughout the process. In a reformulation of de Certeau's negotiation of everyday life, Daniel Coffeen says, "...not only does my culture assimilate me but I assimilate it: I turn it, I shape it, use it, behave with and in it." (1998, 30) The 'I' of the designer is affected by the research and in return, affects the research, and the world. I have offered here a consideration of my experiences undertaking one project. There is further potential to explore the nature of the design-researcher in a phenomenological context and in doing so create a richer fabric of differentiated experiences: both from 'myself' and 'others'.

This research presents cogent arguments that there is both a need to and an ability to design from an embodied perspective. Furthermore, there is a low threshold of investment for designers to engage with phenomenological process, as it requires no specialist physical material. The central resources that are required are access to the site,
basic drawing materials, and generous spaces of time. The method does demand an ability to engage in an immersive, reflective experience in the landscape. Such a process produced an unusual and intriguing urban space that functioned at both large, medium, and small scales. The interventions that emerged are designed in order to change over time. Finally, this research stands as a potent example of the ability for design to act as a tool to explore philosophical and theoretical ideas. Design research both gives expression to such ideas and critiques them, furthering both theoretical and practical bodies of knowledge.
References


Coffeen, D. J. (1998). Read This Text. (Doctor of Philosophy in Rhetoric), University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA, USA.


McCartner, R., & Pallasmáa, J. Understanding architecture: a primer on architecture as experience.


Sheet Experiment

Sheets of fabric could be hung from a horizontal wire (5). It would be interesting to watch the texture and color of the fabric become affected by constant exposure to sunlight, wind and rain (and other forces). I would expect the fabric to become faded rather quickly (within a week or two).

I would also be interested to watch the fabric move in different wind conditions. I also imagine that the fabric would move differently when at different levels of saturation. The weight of the fabric and its different movements might also produce different sounds. For instance, heavy, damp washing can often produce a cracking sound in a sharp, forceful wind.

This idea resonates with the Spoleto Festival Art Installation, by Martha Schwartz at Charleston, SC USA (6).
Washing on the Line

The morning sun from the East used to shine through the washing in my backyard (1, 2, 3, 4). The kitchen window overlooked this and often like looking at the patterns that the wind and the light made on the sheets and clothes. As the washing moved it would also become ruffled or stretched in different places, as the weight of the material changed. This interruption of the light on its path from the sun to me, made me more aware when the light did reach me.

Date: 13 September 2009
Location: Heywards Road Home
Wainui Falls Flooding

At the end of 2011, Golden Bay experienced heavy flooding. On the walk from the carpark to the head of the trail at Wainui Falls, there was startling evidence of the huge amount of debris that was deposited during the flooding. The sand now covers three-quarters of the height of the fence and gate.

The fence also caught branches, leaves, twigs and other larger material, acting as a kind of sieve.

Date: 04 February 2012
Location: Wainui Falls, Golden Bay
Yosemite in Winter

Ice had formed on the sides of Bridal Veil Falls (1). The water still fell down the middle. The ice and water created different thicknesses of light: from the opaque, stillness of the blue-white ice, to the pizzicato sparkling of the water spray.

Sheets of ice had also formed on the river below the falls, while the water still ran beneath. Debris was trapped in the ice along the sides of the river.

Horses & Frost

Early one Winter morning, I went out to feed the horses and beads of ice had formed on the whiskers of one horse. I think they formed there because of the moisture in his breath.

The other horse had been lying down and had kept the frost from forming underneath him. When he got up, left behind a silhouette on the ground.
Muddy Gateway (5, 6, 7)

This is another area that was altered because of the heavy rain and the movement of humans and animals. The ground became pugged up and the hoofprints of goat kids, adult goats and cattle can be seen. The odd dog print is there too. There are also tyre prints from the Toyota Hilux and the tractor.

Oak leaves from the Upright Oak (which sheds its leaves very late), and pine needles have gathered in the hollows or stuck to the surface of the mud.

Date: 09 October 2012
Location: Island Road Home
Pigs' Pen (1, 2, 3, 4)

This rectangle of land (10 x 8m) was a pen for three pigs over the Winter. During the Winter we had an unusual amount of rain and ground across the farm became waterlogged. Because of the pigs feet and snouts, the ground in this pen turned to mire. It was so deep and thick that I would sink down to my calf in places. (We had to move the pigs in the end).

The ground took a long time to dry out. As it did, small cracks began to appear, but the ground became firmer. Now, 3-4 months later, the ground is completely solid, but scarred by deep cracks. Now that it is the middle of Spring, seedlings can be seen sprouting up in these spaces.

In these photos, the ground has just been lightly ploughed for the first time. Some of the larger segments of dried mud have remained intact.

Date: 09 October 2012
Location: Island Road Home

Mud Experiment

I could simulate and document the different phases of drying that the ground goes through (8). I could inundate and agitate a patch of ground until it was a thick quagmire. I could describe and document it's ability to hold my weight. These steps could be repeated as the soil became more dry and firmer.

Path Experiment

Taking a cue from Richard Long and his work, A Line Made by Walking, I could walk a relatively consistent route across a patch of ground and see if and in what way a path became evident from this process.

Weeds (1, 2)

Weeds continue to sprout up in the cracks between pavers, despite me wrenching or boiling them out each season. I think that the dirt and leaves that gather in the cracks form a growing medium that harbours seeds and small pieces of roots I did not extract completely.

Date: 09 October 2012
Location: Island Road Home

Lichens

The glasshouse (3, 4) at my home is covered in forest of different lichens. They are generally the flat, circular, fractal-like types. From inside the glass house you can see their ‘root’ systems more clearly. From outside, the colours are more striking: pale green, forest green and acid orange. More foliar-like lichens have taken up residence on the synthetic cloth on the shade house (5, 6). They way they extend their fingers outward makes me want to pluck them off, or brush my hand against them.

Both types (flat and foliar) have formed on the apple tree nearby (7).
Growing Mosses, Molds & Lichens

Surfaces could be plastered with mediums that encourage the growth of mosses, molds and lichens (8). I think a mixture of PVA glue and horse manure might be able to be used. There could be a number of timelines over which to carry out this work. It might be the work of a decade or it could happen over a few weeks. The different maturation periods of the organisms could reflect the passing of time. The very different textures of the organisms could provide a variety of tactile sensations: the coarse and spiky flat lichens, the soft and fluffy bearded lichens, plush, spongy mosses, fragile, damp molds.
Spider Web Thread (2, 3, 4)

Dew drops collected on a long single strand of spider web, running from a power line to the vegetation at ground level. It was difficult to photograph because it was moving in the slight breeze. It seemed to quiver in the air. When you looked closely each bead of dew was clearly articulated. It was a warm Spring morning.

Spider Webs on Drain Pipe (1)

A conglomerate of spider webs in the lee of a drainpipe. They have caught debris and look like they have thickened over time. The thin threads compartmentalise the space into pockets of air.
Cobwebs

The ability of cobwebs to give articulation to the atmosphere around them interests me. They gather moisture in the air and become beaded with dewdrops. They act like filters, trapping sediment floating in the air. They are also designed and built by an inhabitant of the earth (spiders) and facilitate their way of going through and with the landscape.

Loom

Could I take the metaphor of loom and incorporate it into the landscape somehow? My initial idea was to set up a conventional rigid heddle loom and have the process of weaving be carried out by passers-by. Objects could be added to the fabric as it was created. Perhaps there could be a pool of objects nearby, or perhaps it could be interesting to see if people could find their own objects to add. Would people know how to use the loom? Would I need to leave instructions? Or is the technology so self-evident that they could ‘discover’ how to use it?

My next iteration of the idea was that I could set the loom so that the warp ran vertically. This way objects could be blown into the fabric by the wind during its creation. It might be necessary to add a sticky substance to the thread, such as PVA glue. In this way, the warp and weft of the construction could act as a cobweb.
Date: 10 October 2012  
Location: Island Road Home

**Kowhai Petals**

Debris along driveway with recently-fallen Kowhai leaves. Petals and stamens have fallen apart from each other.

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**Kowhai Assembly**

I wanted to see what I could make with the kowhai petals. I fitted pairs of petals together which created a cigar-like enclosure. I gathered six of these and faced them inward. I laid the stamens across the center in a wave-like form to 'tie' them together.

I had made the assembly a few inches from the debris, on the asphalt driveway. After I made it, I tried to move the petals as a group back to the debris, intact. The pairs of petals stayed together, but the cigars fell on top of each other. The assembly created a focus of yellow in amongst the spattering of yellow petals.

Jacky’s comment - a collection of more than two of one thing is something to take note of.
Date: 09 October 2012
Location: Island Road Home

Peeling Paint (1)

The puckering, peeling and protuberance of paint from the surface contrasts with the smaller imperfections on the rest of the surface of the paint. The accumulation of imperfections mark the passing of time. There is the potential to intervene and peel the paint off further.

Cracked Paint (2)

The crackling of the surface is formed into almost linear patterns. Through weathering, a rust colour has accumulated in the cracks of the paint.

Mud on Canvas Experiment

I could paint a sheet of material with mud made of certain locations. I could simply experiment with the variety of colours and textures that the mud forms by painting a single form multiple times (3).

Alternatively, I could paint sheets in a solid layer of thick mud and see how the new muddied fabric behaved over time (4). Would the drying process form cracks? Would the wind cause the fabric to move and alter the shape of the fabric? Would the colours change over time? Would rain turn the dried material to mud again?
Willow

I was interested in the idea of making a structure out of a growing material, such as Willow (1). I have seen images of ‘Willow Pavilions’ that change form and texture through the seasons as they come into leaf and then become bare again.

There is also the possibility of designing and building the structure as it grows: making design decisions over a long period of time, in response to the changes in the landscape and the building material.

Willow Stakes

I watched Andy Goldsworthy work with bracken in his documentary Rivers and Tides. The stems of the bracken that were under the soil had become blackened, while the upper parts had remained a lighter brown. I think it might be possible to use willow stakes in a similar manner. The stakes could be placed in the ground at different levels to alter the section that was altered by contact with the ground (2).

The pliable nature of the willow stakes would also lend themselves to making manifest the movement of the wind. If they were placed in a line or some other configuration across the path of a wind tunnel in the landscape, they may bend and shift in the path of the wind.
Rupture

In this idea I was interested in making a seemingly violent intervention in the landscape and then seeing how the landscape itself ameliorated the affects of the intervention (1). I also wondered how beings in the world might further alter the intervention.

In these drawings I imagine that the harshness of the rupture will be gradually softened and change into a shallow depression: from a V to a U to a ~
Sand and Rain

I felt that watching droplets of water fall on a sand surface would make the effect of rain hitting a particulate surface more apparent, largely because of the coarse nature of sand.

I wondered if the droplets would leave an impression in the sand, in the shape of a crater or a depression.

Water Droplets

The overhead irrigation sprayers in my glasshouse were faulty and continued to drip after they were turned off. This lead to a pool of water forming under the wooden bench (4). Droplets would form on the underside of the bench and then drop into the pool below. The droplets created a range of sounds with different pitches and timbre. These sounds and forms can be observed in the two videos above (2, 3).

Could I construct a feature that allowed water to do what it wanted to do within a set of spatial constraints? Or perhaps there is room to play with these constraints. One thing that is arresting about the situation in the glasshouse is that it is not behaving according to my expectations.
**Dew Drops**

The dew drops in the morning, before the sun reaches them, create a grey sheen across the lawn of paddock grass (1, 2, 4). Whenever you walk over the grass, your footprints shake away the dull veil of moisture and reveal an impossibly green sheaf of stalks underneath. I tried to photograph these footprints, but they seemed to defy me trying to capture them. The heavy dew also leaves a heavy damp layer of moisture on the front of my boots (3).

I tried to capture the progress of me walking repeatedly across the dewy lawn, using time-lapse photography (5). Unfortunately, the angle of the camera was too high, so that, although you can see me moving intermittently, you cannot see the effect of my progress across the ground. Instead what is most striking about the sequence is the movement of the sheet of cloud moving across the sky, broken into pieces like broderie anglaise.
Shafts of Light

While reading Ulysses, this description of shafts of light captured something I had previously more dimly observed. Not only are the shafts of light entering a dark space apparent in and of themselves because of the contrast with the darkness of a room, but also because of the changing, swirling, mutable nature of the air the light encounters. The shafts of light illuminate the intermingling of heat sources and scents.

There is perhaps room to experiment with the qualities of smoke in particular. Different materials can produce quite different scents. In turn, these scents can evoke quite different memories. For instance, the smell of coal smoke to me is homespun and comforting and takes me back to my childhood on the West Coast of the South Island. When tending bonfires outside, I have come away with the smell of smoke clinging to my clothes, skin and hair. The continuation of these scents on my body means that the experience continues on for a short while alongside my subsequent experiences, until eventually the smell is erased.
"As long as a Bush is undisturbed by civilization, it appears to be impervious to wind or weather; but as soon as it is opened and cleared a little, it begins to diminish rapidly. There are traces all over the hills of vast forests having once existed; chiefly of totara, a sort of red pine, and those about us are scattered with huge logs of this valuable wood, all bearing traces of the action of fire; but shepherds, and explorers on expeditions, looking for country, have gradually consumed them for fuel, till not many pieces remain except on the highest and most inaccessible ranges."


Fire

The role of fire in the Canterbury landscape has radically altered the vegetation in the region. As well as providing essential warmth to enable human survival in the landscape, it has also been the cause of destruction, both in the service of humans in clearing vegetation, and I imagine in causing fatal fires. The pathos and regret around the role of fire and clearing in the landscape is conveyed in Christoper Perkins’ Frozen Flames (1931) (i).

Smoke Experiments

How could I use smoke in the landscape? Currently we commonly encounter smoke through barbeques, burn-offs, bush baths, fireworks (gunpowder), and chimney smoke. Barbeques are usually either gas lit or fuelled by charcoal. On the West Coast we used to make a temporary fire pit on the beach using stones, using driftwood and charcoal to light a fire and then laying a metal grill over top to hold the food. Sometimes corrugated iron would be placed over the coals and mussels that were gathered on the same beach would be cooked.

It seems to me that there is a powerful phenomenological/experiential opportunity around gathering and cooking food in the landscape. These acts incorporate multiple senses as well as necessitating an engagement with the character and forces of the landscape. Which way is the wind blowing? Is this surface fireproof? Can I eat this? When is the tide coming in again?

In an ideological sense, the act of gathering and eating food in the same place provides a direct causative link between human actions and the effect on the environment. Would you gather shellfish from an area where you dump waste?
Honeysuckle

There is a path that I walk several times a day at home. Often I am in quite a hurry and distracted, even jogging past. Whenever I do though at a certain point I am engulfed by the sweet scent of the honeysuckle flowers, and the apple blossom next to it. The scent immediately transports me to a different state of mind. I pass through this and as the scent recedes I too move on psychologically, but not simply back to where I was before I encountered the perfume. While I am surrounded by scent it is almost intoxicating - the very weight of my body in the air feels different, as if the air has become thicker. This whole process makes be dramatically aware of taking air into my body and expelling it.
Intermingling

I came across this passage while reading, *On the Road*. The narrator, Sal Paradiso, describes driving through Mexico with two friends until they have to stop to sleep by the side of the road. The road lies in the middle of a swamp and the air is unconscionably hot, humid and heavy. One of the friends lies on the side of the road itself, while Sal lies with his back on the steel bonnet of the car, turning his face to the heavens. Spread-eagled and exposed he finds himself opened up to atmosphere. More than this, he becomes part of the atmosphere, “...for the first time in my life, the weather was not something that touched me, but became me.” He even does not mind that the bugs, with which the air is thick, are entering his mouth and are layered over his skin. The quality of the atmosphere and his attitude towards it lead to this unique intermingling of flesh and air. Or perhaps this intermingling is always happening, but here there was a receptiveness to the awareness of the sensations.
Appendix 2: Overlay Interventions
Golden elements together. What do you need for a shelter?

- wood
- walls
- floor
6. To allow dirt to accumulate on the plaster (to stop cleaning it).

2. To observe what greatness there.

3. To see what colours in these accumulations.

4. To watch how this community acts.
   How trees; how much dirt there.
   How plants the wind leaves, how the open doors of how plants become, how they reproduce.

5. To make the passing of these elements through it.
1. To place a set of stone indications up a slope next to a path, leading to a tree with a remarkable form.

2. To offer participants a detour from the experienced offered via the linear path to provide a form of visual which could be accumulated.

3. To guide participants towards engaging with the landscape beyond the path, to create a rhythm for dynamic movement through the landscape to unfold.

4. To explore interaction between elements within the landscape, between people and the landscape.

5. To consider the ways in which landscapes alter over time.
1. To introduce steal steps to the ground plane of the early lot.

2. To draw people through the site to be able to interact with the hall.

3. To make physically rich spaces more accessible to people and to observe the traces of their experiences in the tracks of their movement on the ground surface.

4. To consider the way products experience become embedded in the landscape, leaving traces of many degrees of specificity.

5. To observe the continual nature and remembrance of the social formation.
1. To place steel steps in two groups, to suggest a direction in which to walk.
2. To expand on the shapes suggested by the stock-balls.
3. To observe the patterns made by participants walking in response to the suggested forms.
4. To explore the interaction between designed forms and collaborative forms.
5. To consider the process of making the landscape between designed, participatory, and landscape as part of the world-in-formation.
1. To construct a series of foues (new & past)

2. To act as elements on which debris (leaves, seeds,汇报) can accumulate & to observe &

3. To allow the growth of elements & to interact in the system to influence & produce new elements.

4. To explore the active nature of the landscape & everything in it: things adding upon each other

5. To develop the active non-human aspects of the landscape
1. To build a series of fences.

2. To note the changes in vegetation in the field + to provide a network for spontaneous regeneration.

3. To explore the interactions between elements, being processes in this particular landscape.

4. To become aware of the "essence" of this landscape.

5. To see ourselves as participants in a mediating world-in-motion.
1. To create a series of sequential, linear focal points along the ridgeline of the Park, utilizing Shingle Style at a particular point at Latimer Square.

2. To draw attention to the focal points as they occur along the axis, thereby changing our perception of the visual experience on our position.

3. To explore the breadth of our experienced field in the city as a function of our bodily position alterations.

4. To delineate how our perceptual experience is.

5. To embrace the endless difference in experience.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hollow</th>
<th>Texture</th>
<th>Shelter</th>
<th>Markers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Crater Rim</em></td>
<td><em>City</em></td>
<td><em>Crater Rim</em></td>
<td><em>City</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To make an indentation in the hillside</strong></td>
<td><strong>To create a hollow in the riverbank.</strong></td>
<td><strong>To make apparent the crevices and hollows in the Totara stump.</strong></td>
<td><strong>To reveal the texture of the wall.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To expose the root of the neighbouring rocks and see how people use it.</strong></td>
<td><strong>To provide an opportunity to inhabit the hollow.</strong></td>
<td><strong>To introduce a new sensory element (metal) into the landscape context. The metal would feel colder than the wood.</strong></td>
<td><strong>To explore the material and process of making.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To provide a new perspective of the layers of the hills and to provide a new vantage point from which to experience the hillside.</strong></td>
<td><strong>To encounter the landscape from a particular position.</strong></td>
<td><strong>This would make apparent the particular weathering effect between this Totara stump and the weather world.</strong></td>
<td><strong>To concentrate attention on the phenomenologically rich experiences embodied in the wall.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To explain the notion that 'to perceive something is to perceive from somewhere.'</strong></td>
<td><strong>To perceive outwards from this particular vantage point and to engage with this place of perception.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Because this is the context within which we live and this intervention would intensify our experience of the world.</strong></td>
<td><strong>To draw participants into a more intense experience of the present (the now).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To explore and intensify the experience of everyday life (the rich banality).</strong></td>
<td><strong>To explore the relationship between the place of perception and field that is perceived.</strong></td>
<td><strong>By providing a contrasting sensory experience and highlighting the particularity of the weathering of this particular tree: heterogeneity.</strong></td>
<td><strong>To mudge towards an awareness of the richness and iterative nature of everyday experience through time.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>Crater Rim</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Crater Rim</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>To introduce steel strips to the ground plane of this empty lot.</td>
<td>To allow dirt to accumulate on the plinth (to stop cleaning it).</td>
<td>To place a set of stone indentations up a slope next to a path, leading to a tree with a remarkable form.</td>
<td>To construct a series of fences (wire &amp; post).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To draw people through the site to be able to interact with the wall.</td>
<td>To observe what gathers there.</td>
<td>To offer participants a detour from the experience offered them by the linear path and to provide a form around which debris can accumulate.</td>
<td>To act as elements on which debris (waste, seeds, droppings) can draw to and accumulate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make phenomenologically rich spaces more accessible to participants and to observe the traces of their experiences in the traces of their movement in the gravel surface.</td>
<td>To see what colonises in this accumulation.</td>
<td>To nudge participants towards engaging with the landscape beyond the path and to provide a catalyst for the collision of elements and beings in the landscape.</td>
<td>To allow the beings, elements and forces in the world-in-formation to interact and produce new elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To consider the way in which experiences become embodied in the landscape, leaving traces of varying degrees of ephemerality.</td>
<td>To watch how this community alters over time: how much dirt there is, what patterns the wind blows it into, how the sun dries it, how large the plants become, how they reproduce.</td>
<td>To explore interaction between elements in the landscape and between people and the landscape.</td>
<td>To explore the active nature of the landscape and everything in it: things acting upon each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To observe the continual making and re-making of the world-in-formation.</td>
<td>To mark the passing of time and how everything iterates through it.</td>
<td>To observe the ways in which landscapes morph over time.</td>
<td>To de-objectify/recognize as active non-human aspects of the landscape.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Strangemaking Interventions

1. WEARING TREATED RADIATA POSTS / MIST

Markers in the Mist?

Form mist as they dry in sun after a frost

Painted neon?
Section of asphalt "road" lifted vertically & allowed to crack. Left uncleamed so it can be colonised.

Asphalt pushed in against fences, trying to colonise & create distorted shapes.

Fences colonised by a section of asphalt. Junctions act as further points of colonisation by creating gaps & cracks.
Nurturing / Moss / Roof

Roof that nurtures through moss

Space formed by vertical stems + leaves that roof. Filaments create seats + human-scale surfaces

Moss that nurtures through roof

Scale changes what this is:
Bench seat 0.5m
Shelter 2 m
Building 5 m
4) **Blocking / Fibre / Ground**

- **To block:**
  - Water
  - Debris
  - Fibre
  - Grill

- **Plan:**
  - Woven fibre blocking off ground.

- **Ground:**
  - Fibre
  - Water

- **Woven fibre fence inserted into ground.**
Pour concrete over craters + lumps in landscape.

Allow to pool, remove + displace on site to form walls.

Allow dirt to accumulate; provide native grass seed bombs for people to distribute around the site.

Impression from woven form + layers of concrete.

Concrete poured into wall - forms woven from Karatu grass.

Pool of concrete grass.

Concrete pool of grass.
6. **Light Forms Names Presence**

- Light on stone reveals the face of the stone throughout the day.
- Light wraiths in mist.
- Downward light on stone face reveals particularity of its presence.
- Shadows of buildings that are gone, Heidegger jugs, buildings, hold a void.
- Scale and context.
- Timed shadow 12.51?
"The feeling of mountain but theoretical of working rock lets object being with."

Feeling of Mountain

Theoretical working rock

Lcts object being with
“Which into baths meandering either is the in internal ensures a mountain Budapest space or a sense building Istvank Oil."
Lichen Shawl in perforated steel/copper wire: pouring down clock tower/along slope of bank, stream with rocks, bendy + puckery around + over them. At times, pressy down into the ground to allow paths to be forged.

Glass baffles that are not to be cleaned, left to gather grime + grow lichens. Facing East, to provide a shelter from the E. wind.
Plants to create "container" to allow water to accumulate. To form happy in wet soil?

Work with existing landforms + create new ones to provide spaces for water to accumulate. These water spaces will in turn provide habitat for plants to accumulate.
- Seed bombs
- Level places for bodies to deposit seed
- Actively plant pioneer species

Bowls (boulders) set into spaces afforded by trees. The excess flows down trunk. The "drainage" stays + evaporates or provides micro-habitat for micro-organisms. And therefore birds etc.
Totara word inwardness little water - stumps

Field of chamber

Roofing chamber

Coprosera + volcanic rock

Coprosera + steel

Surrounding

Totara water

box

Submerged pools of water
Sunken paths lined with totara retaining walls

Chamfer with field of early grass
Nevertheless a Port leaps mud-like as van Levy hollows
The emblem of saddle and origins of people

Bridal Path
Lyelton → Heaphy Track

Emblem: pictorial field
↓ raised ornaments
embossed design
↓ to inset patin
↓ to throw
"The throw of saddle"

Concrete Cairn + Concrete Totara Forest

Concrete Riffle + Totara Forest: growing + static trees.
Appendix 4: Storyboard Interventions