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**Reality versus surreality: At the intersection between the surreal
and the landscape**

A Dissertation
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Landscape Architecture

at
Lincoln University
by
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Abstract of a Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Landscape Architecture.

Reality Versus Surreality: At The Intersection Between The Surreal and The Landscape

by

Ruby Williams

This research delves into the crossover between the design process of landscape architecture and Surrealism. It aims to uncover how the Surrealist Philosophy may impact the way landscape architecture designs are produced, and how the resultant design is influenced through this philosophy. This is achieved through a three-part methodology: a literature review examining the roots and historical influence of Surrealism; exemplars of Surrealism's influence in landscape architecture through a case study approach; and a hypothetical design probe. The hypothetical design probe allowed for a trial of the techniques and tactics used by the surrealists, and a critical reflection of their successes and pitfalls. The findings from this research suggest that integrating surrealist philosophy into the landscape architecture design process may open up creative possibilities within design when used alongside normative techniques, enriching the process and its resultant product.

Keywords: Surrealism, Landscape Architecture, Surrealist Philosophy, Design Process, Design Beginnings.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Designs are not produced out of thin air. They arise from a series of processes that are twisted, overlapped, built and reflected upon. No one person thinks in the same manner as another, and therefore, every process becomes, in some way, unique to that person, their background, cognitive processes and environment.

With a background in fine arts, the majority of my academic career has positioned me to challenge conventions and hold myself accountable for the discomfort this created. It is within the discomfort of the unknown and the unconventional that the most interesting discoveries are often made. This is undoubtedly the case in the creative process as I have experienced it. Processes of discovery have meant that often in the work I produced, it became increasingly less about the final product and more about the experiences and processes that formed it. The interplay between thought, intuition and environment became highly informative. In this way, my paintings became physical manifestations of an evolving design process, revealing that creativity is not linear but instead layered, contradictory and often uncertain. This discovery was particularly evident when what I painted was inspired by the Surrealists and their philosophy – a philosophy that revels in the discovery and uncovering of the self, the way one thinks, and the influence environment has on this (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020).

Since shifting my studies toward landscape architecture, I have discovered a dramatic change in the creative processes I employ, as reflected in the work I have produced. Although it is to be expected, this has ignited a curiosity within me. A curiosity that revolves around the design processes of landscape architecture. Unlike painting, landscape architecture is heavily mediated by rationality, logic and technical demands. While necessary for the functioning of design, these processes may have the potential to diffuse, filter, or constrain processes of creative intuition. This tension sparked my curiosity: what would happen if Surrealist philosophy were actively applied to the design process of landscape architecture? Could its methods create designs that are more responsive to the potential undercurrents that may make up a landscape, balancing function with imagination, logic with intuition?

This dissertation explores the intersection of Surrealism and landscape architecture. While Surrealism is most commonly associated with its iconically warped and dream-like imagery, it is more than simply a style or aesthetic. The Surrealist philosophy, rooted in a deeper understanding of the mind, calls upon people to reveal the hidden worlds that lie within reality, discovering the

extraordinary that lies within the mundane (Sheringham, 2006). For landscape architecture, a field often tied to pragmatism and functionality, Surrealism may open new possibilities in the creative process.

The act of designing with this philosophy prompts us to question where the boundaries lie between art and landscape, between rational design and intuitive revelation, and between reality and 'surreality'.

This research aims to explore the potential impact of Surrealist philosophy on the design processes of landscape architecture. In doing so, it will investigate how surrealist methods might reframe the designer's relationship with site, people and land. It asks:

- What happens to the design process and to the resultant design when surrealist philosophy is applied?
- How could surrealist methods generate landscapes to better balance form and function with creativity and imagination?
- How may designing through the unconscious evoke deeper connections between people and their environments?

1.1 Methodology

To explore these questions, I follow a three-part methodology, drawing on literature, case studies and a hypothetical design probe. The hypothetical design probe will allow me to apply the findings from my research as presented in the literature review and case studies, to a conceptual, hypothetical design. In this case, I will allow the influence of the surrealist philosophy to shape, in part, the design process of my final-year Major Design (MD) project. The MD project is a year-long investigation into a site of each student's choice, in which we are tasked with conceptualising its redesign. In this manner, the hypothetical design probe, unlike much scientific, evidence-based research, places a greater emphasis on what chance discoveries I may encounter or make, and how the process behind design may release potential for new spaces of design (Gaver et al. 1999). It will test whether the Surrealist philosophy can expand the creative scope of landscape architecture, drawing inspiration and ideas directly from the influence the landscape has on the person and how this aligns with the functional demands of design. Ultimately, this research positions Surrealism not

just as an aesthetic borrowed from the past, but as a philosophy that may invigorate the way we choose to begin and enhance the design process.

Within the first part of this research, the literature review grounds and introduces the themes and foundational theories of Surrealist philosophy. Beginning research through the form of a comprehensive literature review allows for an analysis of the relevant overlap between the two subjects. This anchors the intersection between Surrealism and Landscape Architecture in what is already understood: how the two disciplines have interacted throughout time and what this relationship has produced.

The second and third sections of this research collate ideas from the literature review, refining them with case studies and further exploring them through a hypothetical design probe.

The case study approach is designed to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context (Varela et al., 2021; Yin, 2018). This is a suitable research method for validating and constructing theory, something that is particularly relevant to the scope of this research project (Varela et al., 2021). From these case studies, I will be able to explore and analyse the application of surrealist philosophy and theories of surrealism within the physical landscape, analysing the design as a product of its process (Schön, 2017).

This is of importance because it allows the theory to be constructed and dissected before it is validated; in other words, a theory or theoretical framework must emerge through the study of an empirical case or object, and from this, it becomes based on a case or object (Varela et al., 2021). Case studies in this dissertation will be selected according to their relevance to this topic as per their mention as examples in the literature studied, and through external knowledge of them as gathered through my fine arts degree. The case studies themselves may be of both conceptual and built works; for, it is important to examine these ideas as both a drawn concept and a built landscape due to the importance of drawing within the design process and the discipline of landscape architecture (Balmori, 2014).

Through this, I will gain a greater understanding of the successes and pitfalls of the interaction between surrealism and landscape architecture in real-world examples, analysing how they have responded to site, stood the test of time and encompassed techniques of surrealism.

Finally, I will personally apply methods that arise through the study of surrealist philosophy in a hypothetical design probe, using specific surrealist techniques that are deployed as methods within the design process and experimenting with aspects of this through my Major Design project. What this forms is essentially an exegesis that interprets my account and practice, thus, performing

research through creative practice supported and explained through reflective critique. As Lyle Skains (2018), Associate Professor in Literary Media, discusses in *Creative Practice as Research: Discourse on Methodology*:

We create art to connect with others, to connect with ourselves, and often just for the sake of it. We experiment with our art in order to push boundaries, to ask questions, to learn more about our art and our role within it. This is nothing new. What emerges, then, from this methodology, is the exegesis that accompanies the creative work: that knowledge that has remained implicitly within the artist, made explicit and seated within the context of the scholarly field. (Skains, 2018, p. 86)

That being said, creative practice has the ability to both enhance and serve as a form of research (Almendra & da Silva, 2025; Skains, 2018). Art has been a consistent backdrop to human history, development and understanding, through it we have questioned, probed and uncovered who we are and developed a greater understanding and connection with the world around us (Ahmed, 2023). Thus, it is through creative practice that I am proposing the final stage of my research concludes through the form of an exegesis.

Drawing on tactics and methods from my research in both the literature review and case studies, I will engage in a process of trial and error through the application of surreal tactics that arise through my research, to my design probe; interweaving the philosophy of surrealism into my landscape architecture design process. This will allow me to crystallise and prove my findings from the literature review and case studies that I undertake as a component of my research.

Doing this will involve the identification and application of surreal tactics I use within the landscape. Surreal tactics are the various tools, techniques and actions that have been used historically in works of surrealism, which tend to produce unexpected, chance outcomes that in my experience, conventional methods are less likely to achieve. These can be exemplified through rapid sketching, drawing and painting as a form of automatic drawing; a technique pioneered by figures in the surrealist movement such as Andre Breton, Max Ernst and Jean Arp, which forgoes active thought in favour of techniques that capture the spontaneous nature of the subconscious mind (Breton, 1924/1969; Percival Zur Loye, 2010).

Such techniques will be employed in an attempt to capture the landscape as it is experienced through my process of unconscious thought; essentially, the psychological experience of that place. This is a technique I have previously worked with before, documenting the essence of memories and fleeting moments through rapid, intuitive painting in the final year of my Fine Arts degree – using methods of the surrealist philosophy to capture the true nature of these moments, unhindered by

rational thought (see fig, 1). Surrealism was a movement that was founded on its philosophy, particularly its belief in a higher form of thinking beyond conscious thought, and a desire to escape the perils of reality; this had been largely pioneered by its founding figure, Andre Breton (Breton, 1924/1969).



Figure 1: Sunday, 2024. A painting produced as a part of a series in the final year of my Fine Arts degree, capturing the essence of an early Sunday morning through automatic drawing techniques. Created by the author.

However, applying these methods to the design of a landscape will likely create an interesting and vastly different result; therefore, I must not only critique the process but also acknowledge my own positionality throughout to evaluate its successes and pitfalls. Critiquing the process may be done through analysing and reflecting on how the surreal philosophy infiltrated the design process by asking myself a series of questions such as: What questions did I ask because of the use of these tactics, and did they impact the way I designed or what I designed? How are abstract ideas grounded into design? Did the use of this philosophy enhance the design or overshadow it? It is through this critique that I may draw conclusions, revealing the effectiveness of these tactics as tools, and how they may be adapted for practice.

Positionality will also play a vital role throughout this, ensuring that I, as the researcher, acknowledge my own biases, which are likely to inform the direction this research takes. Biases that I likely have are due to arise as a result of my background in fine arts and the previous experiences I have in

working with surreal-inspired techniques and tactics. With a creative background and fondness for pushing boundaries and experimentation, I am likely to favour the more creative, unconventional design process because of its familiarity to me. This may, as a result, assume a positive-leaning direction and outcome for the research and direction this dissertation undertakes. Due to the highly subjective nature of the philosophy and research undertaken, I will be using first-person language throughout this dissertation to reflect my key role within this document, as not an objective observer, but an active participant.

1.1.1 Positionality

What must occur in the context of this process is a certain positionality, where my experiences, beliefs and inherent biases are identified as things that inevitably filter into and begin to influence research findings. The process of creating is undeniably subjective; a sentiment that is further fortified by the notion of creating using the surrealist philosophy. This is a philosophy that draws from the experiences of the subconscious mind, something that is unique to each and every person (Krauss, 1981). Positionality offers a reflection on the position adopted by the researcher, encouraging them to acknowledge the subjectivity that may have prompted their research (Beigi, 2024). This is known as reflexivity, where one's position throughout their research is examined in an ongoing process (Beigi, 2024). Questioning and challenging the assumptions you may have made throughout your research process creates space for the 'construction of knowledge with greater nuance and rigor' (Beigi, 2024).

By continuously questioning and challenging your own assumptions, reflexivity allows for the construction of knowledge with greater nuance and rigor, and is critical for informing, developing and evolving positionality (Beigi, 2024). The practice of reflexivity may lead to uncertainty, but it also contributes to an overall sense of assessing the limits of our understanding; effectively, it allows one to examine the framework of thought itself (May & Perry, 2017). Essentially, this acts as a mediator. While we tend to design using a specific, often conventional method, who we are, our experiences, and our unique cognitive function inform every aspect of our practice. Conventional design methods favour objectivity, removing the personal thoughts and biases of the designer to produce something functional for their stakeholders. However, to be rational and exclusively use conventional methods of design is to shut off a valuable asset: our subjectivity. It is our subjectivity that carries valuable insights into how we perceive, experience and contemplate the world around us. Through subjective experiences, opinions and environmental factors, we are shaped not just as people, but also as designers.

1.1.2 Expectations and Assumptions

Before beginning a project, it is often natural to carry a series of premonitions on how I envision the direction the work takes and how it may and evolve as I research, experiment and delve into the process. Acknowledging these assumptions and biases at the beginning is therefore, a vital part of understanding not only my biases, but also evaluating the outcomes that will result.

Having worked with a Surrealist-inspired way of thinking in my Fine Arts Exegesis, I found myself arriving at this project with a complex mix of confidence and uncertainty. My past engagement with automatism, chance and intuitive decision-making had previously reshaped how I understood creative processes; and now, forms a bias for how I may perform this research. Through painting, I learnt how to relinquish rigid structures of control and trust the instinctive impulses that surfaced. These experiences revealed how using surrealist techniques could produce unexpected outcomes that felt more truthful to the essence of a moment. They also allowed me to understand how uncomfortable it can be to relinquish control to processes of chance, particularly when habits of precision and technical discipline feel safer. In saying this, holding myself within the discomfort, acknowledging it, and allowing it to sit is what truly allowed me to embrace, understand and embody the Surrealist Philosophy.

However, this was done in a familiar environment, within a discipline that I had grown very comfortable with over the previous years. It was easier to trust my intuition and relinquish absolute control when I had become well-versed in the nuances of my practice. In contrast to beginning a Master's of Landscape Architecture which was unfamiliar to me. It is a discipline I have thrust myself into, a fast-paced environment that I have had to learn and grow to understand over the past two years. As a result of this, the prospect of relying on processes of chance, intuition and impulse seem insurmountably more daunting; heightened by the discomfort of being in a newly unfamiliar field. Relinquishing aspects of the design process to processes of chance, an uncomfortable concept, now appears increasingly more so.

It is my assumption that working with Surrealist techniques will be challenging, but provocative, and in turn, ignite a series of creative sparks that would then fuel and direct my design process. Due to the sporadic nature of the philosophy, I find myself uncertain what the methods might produce or how they might filter through a design. What I envision is a predominantly visual practice; plans and maps with layers of trace covered in sketches and automatic writing, interpreting paintings as a way of working with my strengths but also challenging existing conventions, and above all, a constant internal reflection of self throughout.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The research I have undertaken in this literature review explores the intersection between landscape architecture and Surrealism. Initially delving into the history of surrealism, the methods, techniques, and tactics that formed the movement, the literature follows on to discuss the effect of this movement on landscape architecture, how it filtered into other design movements such as modernism and postmodernism, and the vernacular of the landscape, from which it may be read.

This serves to establish the theoretical and historical grounding for this dissertation. It traces the development of Surrealism, its methods and philosophies and the extent to which these have intersected with landscape architecture. While Surrealism is often canonically remembered as an art movement defined by dreamlike imagery and uncanny juxtapositions, its origins were deeply rooted in a greater philosophy (Fijalkowski & Richardson, 2016; Hopkins, 2004). Surrealism evolved from people's desire to escape the realities of their world, revealing the unconscious, disrupting active, rational thought, and uncovering higher realms of thinking (Hopkins, 2004). In this sense, it could be suggested that Surrealism became a mode of cognition and form of creation that resisted straight-cut linear logic. It was never just an 'aesthetic', but sought to discover revelation through processes of chance, intuition, and a practised absence of active thought, dubbed the 'irrational' (Breton, 1924/1969).

For landscape architecture, a discipline that has long been positioned between creativity and pragmatism, Surrealism offers a provocative counterpoint. On one hand, the profession demands technical accuracy, functionality and rational justification. On the other hand, it draws on the designer's fluid imagination and the poetic resonance of the landscape. This tension between logic and intuition lies at the heart of design practice, yet the literature on landscape architecture has historically overlooked Surrealism's potential to reframe it. Where the movement's aesthetic language and forms, such as biomorphic forms, surprising juxtaposition, and disorienting spaces, has occasionally filtered into landscape architectural design, as seen in Thomas Church's *Donnel Garden* (1948) or the provocative works of Martha Schwartz such as *Splice Garden* (1986) its roots in more profound philosophy have often been neglected in favour of more conventional modes of practice and reason (Church et al., 1995; Tsegaye & Shen, 2020).

Beginning with Surrealism's origins in the early twentieth century, the literature review follows on to explore the philosophy as articulated by the movement's founding figure, André Breton and supported by fellow founding figure, Louis Aragon, alongside the methods and tactics that sought to

bypass conscious control and reveal the inner workings of the subconscious mind (Fijalkowski & Richardson, 2016; Hopkins, 2004) It then considers how these methods have been adapted or misinterpreted over time and how their legacy can be read in relation to modernism, postmodernism and the vernacular of the landscape.

By drawing together art history, philosophy, landscape theory and design criticism, this review establishes the intellectual ground from which this dissertation proceeds. It seeks to show not only how Surrealism has influenced design historically but how its philosophy might be reactivated as a tool for challenging the rational constraints of landscape architecture today.

2.1 Historical Context of Surrealism

Developed in the 1920s following Dadaism, Surrealism was a movement that responded to the traumas of the First World War (Fijalkowski & Richardson, 2016; Hopkins, 2004). This was a period characterised by its tumultuous changes. Between WWI and the Russian Revolution, technological and scientific advances, people's understanding of their world drastically changed and became profoundly affected (Hopkins, 2004). As a result, Surrealism became known as one of the most lasting and progressive art movements of its time (Clancy, 1949). It advocated for anti-Eurocentric and anti-racist attitudes during the time of Germany's National Socialism (1920-1945), Spain's Franco dictatorship (1939-1975) and the Soviet Union's Stalinist rule (1924-1953) (Pfeiffer, 2020).

Amidst this historic backdrop of uncertainty and instability, Surrealism was allowed to flourish, allowing people to comprehend and describe the turbulence they were experiencing in a new and progressive way. It grew exponentially in popularity and was virtually a global phenomenon by the time of its demise in the 1940s (Hopkins, 2004).

2.1.1 Surrealism Defined

Andre Breton (1924), one of the key figures from the movement, wrote *Manifestoes of Surrealism*. This book became a principal text that surrealists would refer to, debate and adopt to form a foundational understanding of the surrealist philosophy. In this text, Breton (1969) defined surrealism in two primary forms:

SURREALISM, n. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express—verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner—the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.

ENCYCLOPEDIA. Philosophy. Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of the dream, in the disinterested play of thought. It tends to ruin once and for all other psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in solving all the principal problems of life [...]. (Breton, 1924/1969, p. 26)

Often associated with art, surrealism asked questions about how we live in this world. It quickly became likened to notions of the bizarre, otherworldly and that which has a dreamlike quality (Hopkins, 2004). In my own attempt to break down the word, 'surreal' can be understood simply in two parts, 'sur' and 'real', where 'sur' means above or over and 'real' refers to that which exists and is reality. The word itself may translate to 'above reality', or in other words, 'the dream' encapsulating the higher realm it aspired to reach (Magallanes, 2005).

2.1.2 Surrealist Philosophy

As Breton defined it, Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of a higher form of thinking, where the absence of active and deliberate thought is utilised as a tool to solve problems in an unusual and often second-nature manner (Breton, 1924/1969).

Surrealism was bound to the understanding that fundamentally, humans are irrational beings (Hopkins, 2004). As a result, surrealist artists such as Max Ernst, Salvador Dalí, Joan Miró, and André

Masson aimed to plumb the mysteries of the human mind through an often turbulent love affair with psychoanalysis (Hopkins, 2004).

Psychoanalysis is a Freudian concept which focuses on the subconscious activity in human behaviour and its manifestation through automatic processes, doing things without thinking about them (Freud, 1914/1995; Klem, 2021). Following the lead of Sigmund Freud, Breton believed that the unconscious was a source of all true knowledge, beauty and creativity (Breton, 1924/1969). This revelation led to an intimate focus on the unconscious workings of the mind throughout surrealism, exploring what happens when active thought is absent. Elements of chance and surprise, thus, became a consistent theme in the Surreal, threading their way through its primary objectives. It was theorised that exposing the inner workings of the mind would result in the sharing of powerful wisdom with society, potentially dramatically changing how it views and solves social and environmental problems (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020).

2.2 Tactics of Surrealism

The Surrealists employed a wide range of methods and tactics to produce their work. A method can be understood as a way or technique of doing something, while a tactic is the particular approach taken to carry out that method. These tactics varied between individuals, with Surrealists favouring the strategies that suited their own creative tendencies and outlook on life. Despite this variation, the shared aim of the movement remained the same: to question the world in which we inhabit.

2.2.1 Automatic Processes

To bypass rational thought and conscious control, Surrealists resorted to 'automatic processes', known as automatism (Hopkins, 2004). This was a tool that allowed the unconscious mind to express itself freely in various forms of output (Krauss, 1981). As a result of Surrealism's innate focus on uncovering the subconscious, automatism became a foundational tool used, and all other techniques were merely extensions of it (Ray, 1966).

Automatism was often achieved through the rapid creation of art, writing, or other forms, without premeditation or planning; thus, it was automatic (Opstrup, 2017). Working faster than the mind can think captures the raw, unfiltered thoughts and emotions of the creator (Breton, 1924/Freu1969; Krauss, 1981). Essentially, the primary method of this tactic is to create a moment of stillness within the mind, providing the opportunity for the unconscious to express itself (Krauss, 1981).

Extreme methods were often taken by surrealists to achieve this level of unconscious thought. At the peak of its time, some artists turned to the influence of hypnosis, drugs or the occult to transcend

into the depths of the mind (Opstrup, 2017). An example of this is Hilma af Klint, an artist who grouped up with four of her female friends, calling themselves *The Five* (Bartholomee, 2025). The Five met regularly to connect with the spiritual realm through prayer, séances, and meditation – allowing their hands to be guided during the drawing process and create automatic drawings (see fig. 2) (Bartholomee, 2025).



Figure 2. Automatic Drawing by The Five, 'Untitled', 1908 (From ArtgalleryNSW, n.d.)

2.2.2 Not Just an Aesthetic

Surrealism's popularity is demonstrated through the omnipresence of canonical iconography such as the warped imagery of Salvador Dali (see fig. 3). As discussed by Hopkins, through the heavy circulation and adaptation of its aesthetics, the 'darker', unconscious aspects of our psychic lives, which were celebrated by Dada and Surrealism alike, are now commonly thought to be positive things (Hopkins, 2004). That being, the historically dark origins of surrealism, which resulted in the creation of bizarre and new imagery, art and literature, are often forgotten. The angst, anguish, and trauma of the surrealists may be viewed superficially, confined to an 'aesthetic', as an abstract, interesting display of geometry, colour, and the otherworldly.

In saying this, it is essential to note that the time period of Surrealism has passed. Anything created beyond this, whether 50 years ago or in the current day, is *not* surrealism. It may be inspired by the movement and have strong, similar undercurrents and themes, but it cannot possibly be a true

replication of the war-responsive work attributed to the Surrealists. These creations can be 'surreal' in nature, or use tactics of the movement, but they cannot be Surrealism.

However, in volatile periods of turbulence and uncertainty, movements of abstraction have been known to flourish, as seen in the creation of Surrealism. This is largely due to the fact that abstraction-oriented art reveals a need for distancing from a world that artists regard as troubling (Cristina, 2012). Thus, it is possible and even probable that, in today's current climate, between the climate crisis, political instability, and wars such as those between Palestine and Israel, Russia and Ukraine, and the Syrian civil war, people may turn to methods of abstraction not dissimilar to those of the Surrealists in their time.

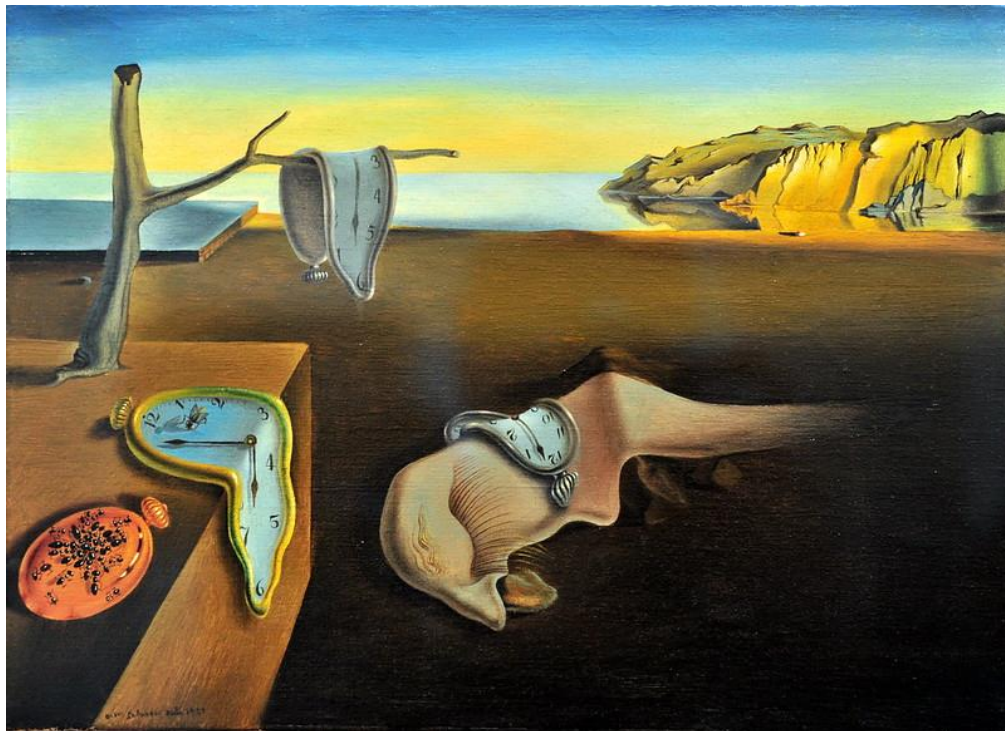


Figure 3: The Persistence of Memory, a painting by Salvador Dalí, 1931 (From McKee, 2012)

2.2.3 Tactics For Surreal Design

The following tactics have been sourced from literature due to their identification as markers and tools that are surreal in nature. What this provides me, as a result, is a framework to identify and assess the use of surrealism within my case studies and tactics to use for my own personal exploration within the hypothetical design probe. It is in my opinion that each of these tactics may be used in the design process or creation of an object or landscape to generate interesting ideas, designs, shapes or materials that challenge more conventional and normative methods. As a result of this, the table itself will be referred back to throughout the following sections of this dissertation (case studies and design probe) as a form of assessment and a guidance tool.

Table 1: Tactics For Surreal Design

<i>Double coding</i>	Refers to something that conveys two or more different meanings simultaneously (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020).
<i>Convulsive beauty</i>	Revels in the union of opposites (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020). It is the beauty found in the unexpected contradiction of things, often jarring, that produces a shock factor and emotional response.
<i>Magic-circumstantial</i>	The unexpected discovery of an object in daily life suddenly causes a revelation. Such a revelation often corresponds to hidden desires within the unconscious (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020).
<i>Surprising juxtaposition</i>	Places unrelated or contrasting elements together to create unexpected and thought-provoking combinations (Lipscomb, 1997).
<i>Automatic writing</i>	Surrealist technique where the writer allows their subconscious to guide their hand, producing text without conscious control (Opstrup, 2017).
<i>Automatic drawing</i>	Similar to automatic writing, automatic drawing is a surrealist technique in which the artists had is guided by their subconscious to produce an image without conscious control (Krauss, 1981).
<i>Random encounters</i>	Embracing chance meetings and events as meaningful often leads to unexpected and meaningful outcomes (Magallanes, 2005).

<i>Uncanny coincidences</i>	A concept in art associated with psychologist Sigmund Freud that describes a strange and anxious feeling sometimes created by familiar objects in unfamiliar contexts (Lipscomb, 1997); Tate, n.d.-b).
<i>Disorientation of the senses</i>	Creating experiences that confuse or unsettle the viewer, challenging their perception and understanding (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020).
<i>Exquisite corpse</i>	A collaborative surrealist game where participants sequentially add to a drawing or text without seeing the previous contributions, resulting in unexpected and often disjointed final compositions (Kochhar-Lindgren et al., 2009).
<i>Discover the extraordinary within the ordinary</i>	Finding remarkable and surprising elements in everyday objects and situations reveals their hidden potential (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020).
<i>Symbolism</i>	Refers to the use of icons, objects or motifs to represent deeper meanings and unconscious thoughts (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020).
<i>Irony and humour</i>	Subversion of expectations and challenges of conventional norms, often through playfulness and absurdity (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020).
<i>Frottage</i>	The technique of creating a design by rubbing (as with a pencil) over an object placed underneath the paper (Ernst, 1948).
<i>Grattage</i>	The technique of creating by scraping layers away to create an interesting and unexpected surface, pattern or texture (Ernst, 1948).

2.3 Surrealism and Landscape Architecture

Although surrealism was best known for its relationship with art, it was an interdisciplinary movement (Lipscomb, 1997). Initially a branch of the avant-garde movement, Surrealism ventured to cross cultures, contexts and media forms (Mical, 2004). While landscape historians and critics have failed to narrate in detail the significant threads of surrealist influence on landscape history, it should not be doubted that it was there (Magallanes, 2005).

Two potential avenues present themselves at the overlap between Surrealism and landscape architecture. One which actively engaged with the profession and one that skirted around the edge, rarely venturing in (Lipscomb, 1997). Landscape architecture embraced the aesthetics of Surrealism, relishing its abstractions and biomorphic forms which could often be found in modernist landscapes. Although, imitating the surreal form does not make the garden surreal (Magallanes, 2005). The less explored aspect of surrealism and one of its foundational properties was its philosophy. It can be said that aspects of the surrealist philosophy were adapted in the postmodern movement, evolving from its modernist cousin (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020).

Surrealist philosophy is likely to be overlooked in the context of landscape architecture due to the field's highly rational nature. As discussed by Associate Principal Landscape Architect at Perkins&Will, Micah Lipscomb, designs must be functional, practical, and possess a degree of technical knowledge to ensure they are effective and durable (Lipscomb, 1997). Not only this, but the landscape architect has a tendency to design to appease the general taste of the public or the budget of the patron.

Outrageously creative and unconventional ideas procured by the landscape architect are often filtered out by the process of logic and commercialism. Even when embedded in the design and design process, layers of creativity are diffused by waves of rationalisation, control and practicality (Lipscomb, 1997). However, as argued by David Pye, a Professor in furniture design at the Royal College of Art, it is folly to pretend either that design is simply a problem-solving activity or that it is merely art, for it is both (Pye, 2009).

In the case of designing for the 'essence' of the landscape, as the surreal philosophy may effectively attempt, the approach might be rejected for its lack of rigour, absence of scientific reasoning, and lack of methodology (Bowring, 2021). However, as argued by Bowring, many researchers become so fixated on methods and data that they lose sight of the very thing they want to find out about, that being, the landscape (Bowring, 2021). This may also be the case for the application of Surrealist ideology in landscape design.

An application of Surreal philosophy in the creative process for landscape architecture, alongside the discipline's inbuilt layers of logic and reason, may result in designs that challenge the general taste of

the public. However, Surrealism itself was able to innovate in design while designing within the taste of the wider community; thus, it is, in fact, very possible to achieve both a working design and an artistically creative design (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020). Perhaps those who experience the landscape designed with a surreal philosophy will be touched by the essence of the surreal – intuitively recognising what has been designed in this manner, generating a deeper connection with it. This notion reaches beyond the scope of this research project, although it proposes an interesting route for potential further study.

2.3.1 The Influence of The Environment

Although landscape was never a primary focus of Surrealist theory, it was harnessed as a metaphorical, poetic and inspirational vehicle for creative means (Magallanes, 2005). Laurie Olin (1988), landscape architect, opened up his essay *Form, Meaning and Expression in Landscape Architecture* with the following:

Historically, landscape design has derived a considerable amount of its social value and artistic strength from three aspects of the endeavour: the richness of the medium in sensual and phenomenological terms; the thematic content concerning the relationship of society and individuals to nature; and the fact that nature is the great metaphor underlying all art. (Olin, 2011, p. 19)

The profound connection between landscape design and human experience is often underscored by this underlying metaphor. The environment is viewed as a source of inspiration and revelation, a perspective that aligns with the Surrealist philosophy (Magallanes, 2005). The Surrealist movement recognised the undeniably interconnected relationship between people and their environment (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020). While people shape their environment, it is a reciprocal relationship, and in turn, the environment also plays a part in shaping people (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020).

Landscape provides humans with a basis for their identity, so it is only natural for people to be inspired and shaped by it (Magallanes, 2005). The environment's ability to influence human behaviour is something that both surrealists and landscape architects have recognised and valued (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020). For the surrealist, this was through the role of the unconscious in the creative process and how it became influenced by the mundane, ordinary or ambiguous aspects of their surrounding environment. For the landscape architect, a response to the environment may be

more methodical, demonstrated through a breakdown of the synthesis of factors that make up the landscape logically and rationally (Lipscomb, 1997).

Both the surrealist and the landscape architect searched for revelation by observing their world (Magallanes, 2005). Breton identified that landscape is a familiar fixed point from which people react, resulting in surrealists turning to the places in which they lived and mining their surroundings for images of the landscape that obsessed them (Magallanes, 2005).

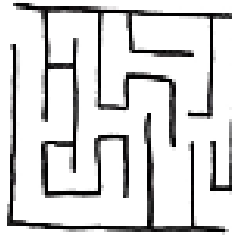
The brief pause in conscious thought made possible through art, architecture, or landscape architecture may lead to deeper insights and revelations in others (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020). This suggests that integrating surreal philosophy into the design of the environment can foster a stronger connection between people and their surroundings, as it becomes a passageway to form deeper connections.

2.3.2 Physical Manifestations of Surrealism in the Environment

While it is the biomorphic forms of nature, the unclear, blurred, compound, complex form of natural processes, that intrigue the landscape architect with their mystery, promise and raw energy, the following forms and structures depicted demonstrate aspects of the surreal that may be applied to or found within the environment in the process of design (Olin, 2011). These could be employed as tactics or further construed to pull and emphasise meaning within the landscape, further enhancing the forms and natural processes of nature that are procured in the landscape. The following figures, Figure 4 and Figure 5, provides an overview of key Surreal forms and interventions that may be used in the landscape.

Labyrinth:

Disorients and confuses; a familiar place is suddenly something to be lost within.



Grotto:

A small escape within a wider context, the nook that may be ignored or out of place.



Walled garden:

An enclosed world to escape to. Separates the reality of the exterior from the fantasy of the interior.



Temple:

Grand and intricate. Disorients through its scale and symmetry.



Figure 4: A collective figure of surreal forms found in the landscape with ideas developed by Lipscomb (1997) and diagrams created by the author.

Miniaturisation:



Gigantism:



Abrupt scale shifts:



The juxtaposition of styles and forms:

Style + FORM

Combination of incongruent materials:



Disorientation of the ground plane:



Repetition:



Substitution of the artificial for the real:

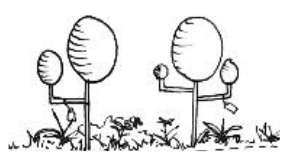


Figure 5: A collective figure of surreal structural devices found in the landscape with ideas developed by Lipscomb (1997) and diagrams created by the author.

2.4 The Case of Modernism, Postmodernism and The Surreal

Surrealism has certainly had its influence on movements within landscape architecture and architecture and can be placed in relation to the shift from Modernism to Postmodernism (Magallanes, 2005; Mical, 2004). Where modernism took inspiration from the aesthetic of surrealism, postmodernism adopted more inspiration from its philosophies (Mical, 2004). As discussed by Professor of Architectural Theory Thomas Mical, Surrealism has been the least explored of all the artistic modernisms affecting the design of buildings and cities. However, the surrealist critiques of rationalism, formalism, and ideology are questions embedded in the legacy of modern architecture (Mical, 2004).

2.4.1 Modernism

Modernism was a movement with no defined beginning or end, though it is generally placed in the period between 1915 and the 1950s. It focused on the concerns of industry and urban expansion and put a heavy emphasis on its zeitgeist and the importance of function over form (Poblotzki, 1993; Treib, 2011). The right of logic and rationalisation was given greater weight than that of imagination and creativity. Due to this, all art form and creativity was sapped from that which was created (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020). As a result, people have failed to bond with modern architecture and landscape architecture projects (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020). Drawing from the aesthetic of surrealism, it created jarring scenes and juxtaposed the landscape with the abstraction of functional, hard shapes and edges, as well as biomorphic curves and forms. What it created generally didn't relate to people or the landscape. The imposition of its highly functional aesthetic on the landscape, alongside the movement's lack of communication through design, ultimately played a part in its demise.

2.4.2 Postmodernism

The initial enthusiasm for modernism had faded by the end of the 20th century, ushering in a new phase of postmodernism. Post-modernism became a reflowering of the values of the traditional and surrealist philosophies, attempting to re-inject creativity and meaning into what it produced, unlike the modernists (see fig. 6) (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020). Postmodern architecture revived interest in meaning, symbolism and communication by re-examining historical styles and cultural references (Treib, 2011). It brought significance back into architectural theory, tying it to broader cultural and societal contexts. Drawing from this, according to Professor of Fine Arts, William Dunning, the visual theories of Surrealism were utilised by postmodern artists to reach the unconscious; therefore, developing a better connection between people and the designed environment (Dunning, 1995).

The surrealist's ability to surrender rational thinking to elements of chance became an enrichment in a world that was increasingly organised along functional and rational lines (Kienast & Vogt, 1993)

Therefore, postmodernism's intention to provide insights through design placed it in line with surrealist and traditional philosophies; injecting meaning into physical forms and providing insight for the audience (Tsegaye & Shen, 2020). Unlike modernism, both the surreal and the postmodern movements acknowledge the mutual relationship between people and the surrounding environment and the provocation that can occur because of this relationship.



Figure 6: The difference between modern (inner group) and post-modern (outer group) design intentions. Image by Tsegaye and Shen [sic] (From Tsegaye & Shen, 2020, p.79)

2.5 The Vernacular of the Landscape

Landscape is not just scenery, but a complex web of influences; cultural, historical, ecological, topographical, social and more, all intermingling to form an ever-evolving product (Smith & Straight, 2015). Every landscape has a language, a vernacular, that is specific to it. Landscape encompasses the connection between people and place, the language of landscape recovers the dynamic connection between these (Spirn, 1998). The ability to read this vernacular is the ability to innately understand the underpinnings of what makes up the landscape, in part. As discussed by landscape architect Anne Spirn, "The language of the landscape is our native language" (Spirn, 1998). Language can do what a set of neatly packaged design principles often cannot, by communicating a slew of meanings and connotations that delve beneath the surface and uncover the grit that makes up the landscape (Smith & Straight, 2015). Therefore, to understand the vernacular and be able to express it is to communicate the often overlooked, yet key components that make up part of the landscape's sense of place.

Vernacular adj.

(of language) of one's native country: not foreign origin.

(of architecture) concerned with ordinary rather than monumental buildings.

(Smith & Straight, 2015)

A vernacular landscape does not concern itself with authorship, for humans are not the sole authors of the landscape (Spirn, 1998). The designer using the vernacular is simply reframing the subtle, yet iconic emblems of the landscape. Ironically, however, many vernacular landscape objects and forms unintentionally exhibit a significant level of originality, simply by being responses from disparate individuals. Implicit in the vernacular, is the creation of non-standardised, 'native' things which are produced by the average person, rather than being designed by professionals (Memmott et al., 2023). Often, what is vernacular is the subtle, overlooked layers within the landscape. Such as the design of bike racks, manhole covers, the texture or colour of concrete, pavers or the way and materials in which fences are made. Reading the language of the landscape is a by-product of living and experiencing it, making thought tangible and imagination possible (Spirn, 1998).

Inspiration from the vernacular of the landscape has led designers such as John Brinckerhoff Jackson to produce work that has greatly influenced how landscape architects think about and represent landscapes as lived human environments (Blankenship, 2022). Jackson drew a particular attention towards the 'everyday landscape', one which has been shaped by human activity over time. Such landscapes were often not held with regard in the imaginations of designers and planners, for, they were the informal product of cultural, social and economic processes and adaptations to the natural world (Blankenship, 2022). These processes are often overlooked and ignored, however, designing for them, brings to light what is often dismissed. Like the Surrealist, the designer who creates with the vernacular in mind and the everyday landscape has a fascination with that which is deemed to be mundane and the extraordinary ability for what is ordinary to express something greater; that being, the essence of the landscape.

2.6 Summary

From this literature review, it can be established that Surrealism has had both direct and indirect impacts on design processes and thinking, yet its role in landscape architecture remains under-examined. While the aesthetic influences of Surrealism surfaced through form-making; partially informing movements such as Modernism, the deeper philosophical and methodological aspects of Surrealism have often been overlooked in landscape architecture, for favour of rational and functional approaches. This reveals an area for further investigation, looking into how Surrealist tactics may inform design processes today. To address this gap, the following case studies explore projects and practices where surrealist ideas, either explicitly or implicitly, have surfaced in relation to landscape. These examples range from visionary and unbuilt proposals to constructed works that display ephemeral interventions. Together, they form the beginnings of a diverse foundation to test how Surrealist philosophy may be translated into the language of landscape architecture and what opportunities and limitations surface when this occurs.

Chapter 3

Case Studies

To better understand the intersection between Surrealism and landscape architecture, the following series of case studies has been selected to examine aspects of the surrealist philosophy that have been embodied, directly or indirectly within them.

While literature has outlined the methods, tactics and influence of Surrealism on wider movements, the inclusion of case studies provides an opportunity to observe the manifestation of these ideas in practice. This is exemplified through built works, visions, or ephemeral interventions that reveal the Surreal as not only a theoretical construct, but as something materialised in form, space and experience (and a utilisation of the tactics referred to in Table 1).

The selected case studies reflect a diversity of scales, contexts, and intentions. Some, such as Pamela Burton and Katherine Spitz's *Hydrotopia*, exist only on paper, using symbolism and dreamlike metaphors to imagine alternative realities. Others, such as Andy Goldsworthy's *Woven Branch Circular Arch*, or Martha Schwartz's *Bagel Garden*, intervene directly in the landscape, reframing the familiar through juxtaposition, irony and temporality. Examples, such as Ferdinand Cheval's *Ideal Palace* or Rebecca Krinke's *Place to Share Beauty and Fear*, highlight how the influence of the dream state, the subconscious, and chance encounters can translate into large-scale built form.

By studying these examples side by side, patterns in how surrealist philosophy emerges in landscape architecture-related works are revealed. Not only this, but how these interventions respond to, or resist, the rational demands of design. Together, these case studies form a critical foundation for the design probe and comparative critique that follow. They demonstrate the richness and complexity of applying Surrealist thinking to the landscape, while also revealing the tensions that arise when the irrational meets the rational and when the constraints of practice confront imagination.

3.1 Pamela Burton & Katherine Spitz: Hydrotopia

Hydrotopia (1986) is an unbuilt project designed and presented by Pamela Burton and Katherine Spitz in the exhibition catalogue *Transforming the American Garden: 12 New Landscape Designs* (Magallanes, 2005; Burton & Spitz, 1986). It is a garden designed for the mountains above Malibu, used by scientists, theologians, and convicts; each stakeholder representative of aspects of the human psyche: the empirical, the spiritual, and the irrational (Burton & Spitz, 1986). Through symbolism, juxtaposition, fragmentation and the incorporation of dreamlike elements, this design project imbues aspects of the Surrealist philosophy.

Hydrotopia recounts a symbolic journey into the subconscious mind, using water as a metaphor for the 'stream of consciousness'. In this project, water was symbolic of the different realities faced: the real and surreal, pathos and ethos, rational and irrational (Burton & Spitz, 1986). Channelled and collected at various points throughout the garden, the water is both controlled by human intervention and allowed to form its own natural path autonomously. In this project, Burton and Spitz describe *Hydrotopia* as a landscape that "becomes more than a pretty garden; it functions like a language, uncovering through its discontinuities deeper meanings within the mind" (Burton & Spitz, p. 30, 1986). Allowing water to forge its own path leaves elements of the design to chance; relinquishing control to the landscape and elements that control it.

This project is designed to act as a refuge, where the synthesis of symbolic elements confronts visitors, generating a sense of discovery and the otherworldly that align with that of Surrealism. However, due to the hypothetical nature of its designs, the exhibition in which *Hydrotopia* was featured was heavily criticised by Treib (1986). The ideas existed exclusively on paper (see fig.7), thus, becoming necessarily different from those that occupy real space (Treib, 1986). Without the constraints of real space, the design existed solely in the utopia of graphics. In this manner, it did not encounter the often sporadic and unpredictable nature of the natural and built environment. As a result, it is difficult to determine how successful the design would have been if implemented in real life. Particularly, when considering a large component of the design relied on the psyche and experiences of people, the scientists, theologians, and convicts, to bring its concept to life.




Image redacted due to copyright policy.

Figure 7: Sketches of Hydrotopia. Image is of low resolution due to the scanner likely used at the time of its creation (From Burton & Spitz, 1986, p. 31)

Hydrotopia demonstrates the potential of surrealist philosophy to reimagine landscape as a symbolic and psychological space rather than solely a functional one. Through its use of metaphor, juxtaposition and chance, the project embodies Surrealism's desire to reveal insight beneath surface form, reaching subconscious thought. It relies on water as both a medium and metaphor; a component that in turn, illustrates how surrealist tactics could foreground ecological processes while simultaneously engaging with human psyche. However, due to the nature of *Hydrotopia* as unbuilt, speculative design, it lacks the constraints of real-world construction, maintenance, and user engagement to prove its functionality. This includes the effectiveness of its Surrealist-based theory, which relied on personal experience to bring it to life. Therefore, its surreal qualities remain hypothetical. While the project suggests that Surrealism may be able to invigorate design thinking by expanding the role of symbolism, chance and unconscious process, it fails to translate this imagery into lived, functional landscapes. Despite this, it is important to examine works that are conceptual as well as built; particularly due to the ability for drawn concepts to drive the direction a work may take once it is built (Balmori, 2014).

3.2 Andy Goldsworthy: Woven Branch Circular Arch

Andy Goldsworthy is a British sculptor and photographer who creates site-specific works that act as a commentary and intervention within the landscape. Highly intuitive in nature, each piece Goldsworthy produces leans on its ephemerality, reframing how the landscape in which they are produced in is viewed. His works, such as *Woven Branch Circular Arch* (see fig.8), are created on site, often relying on a camera to capture the otherwise momentary installation, which would otherwise melt, decay, or wash back into the landscape from whence they came.

The temporality within each of these pieces speak to their relationship with the landscape; random encounters that ignite a visceral response from Goldsworthy, accentuate the existing features of the landscape, rather than disrupt and corrupt its natural beauty (refer to Table 1). The works Goldsworthy produces range from intimate, small interventions, to large scale installations; both of which interact and collaborate with the natural elements of the world around them (Kosky, 2012).

Defamiliarising the landscape in this 'magic-circumstantial' manner takes a small component and reframes it in a new way, inspired by the revelation that the object brought (refer to Table 1). In the case of *Woven Branch Circular Arch*, the fallen branches of trees in Dumfriesshire were reimagined, woven to create an almost portal-like structure, that allows one to glimpse into how the every-day discards of nature may be reimagined. This is a tactic that relates back to ones used not only by Surrealists but also in theories of critical regionalism. Critical regionalism recomposes elements of the landscape that are specifically familiar to an area, indirectly derived from a place's peculiarities (Frampton, 1983). This is an underpinning strategy of the theory, mediating the impact of globalisation that creates a 'sameness' which reduces the unique and identifiable qualities of a site. The reframing of these elements reveals the nuances of the region in a new, profound light, bringing into focus what makes that area different from another.

Image redacted due to copyright policy.
Find image at:
https://goldsworthy.cc.gla.ac.uk/image/?id=ag_03744

Figure 8: Andy Goldsworthy, Woven Branch Circular Arch, Drumfrieshire, 1986. (From Goldsworthy, 1986)

The tactic of defamiliarisation encourages revelation amongst the viewers and visitors of the site (refer to Table 1). As done by Surrealists such as Méret Oppenheim, Hannah Höch and Rene Margritte, the reframing of otherwise mundane and overlooked items and aspects of the environment draws attention to them, changing the way they are perceived, something that was commonly identified in my fine arts degree. Additionally, when this is performed with an understanding of what makes up the vernacular of the landscape, greater revelations can be formed as the perception of familiar environments is reawakened.

Additionally, Goldsworthy's embrace of impermanence resonates with more contemporary concerns such as climate-responsive design. Rather than resisting change, his works foreground and celebrate processes of decay and renewal, opening a way to engage with the temporality of the landscape through his constant use of biodegradable and physically unstable materials found on-site (Kosky, 2012). The fleeting nature of these interventions highlights the fact that no design is permanent. This notion can be easily forgotten or overlooked when drastic interventions are made in the landscape. Significant, defined changes to the landscape may have the effect of being everlasting in their environment; however, everything must inevitably succumb to processes of change and processes of time.

3.3 Ferdinand Cheval: The Ideal Palace

The Palais Idéal (see fig. 9) was designed from 1879 to 1912 by a French postman named Ferdinand Cheval, often referred to as 'Postman Cheval'. With no prior convictions in design or architecture, inspiration struck Cheval in 1879 when, one day, while walking through a paddock, he came across a pumice stone so unusual-looking that it awoke something that lay deep within his psyche (Ayşe Gülçin, 2023). Inspired, he immediately began constructing the palace, gathering stones from the countryside to turn his dream into a reality (Flavell, 2021). From that point on, Cheval would refine and expand his idea for forty years, often waking from a dream to jot down what he needed to add to his design.

What thus emerged was an awe-inspiring palace, garnished with depictions of animals and creatures, grottoes, fountains, and temples (see fig.10). The Palais Ideal became an important precursor to Surrealist design. It was a site given importance to by philosophers, particularly Surrealists who sought the aspect of space that could liberate thought and emotions (Ayşe Gülçin, 2023). Engraved into the walls of the palace are the following words translated from French;

I am not a builder. All my life I have neither used a trowel nor was I a sculptor. Let alone being an architect, even a chisel was a foreign tool to me. Know that everything you have witnessed is the work of an ordinary villager who created the queen of the world inspired by his dream. (Ayşe Gülçin, 2023, p. 87)



Figure 9: The Ideal Palace, a creation built by Facteur Cheval as a result of his dreams (From Prieur, 2014)

Cheval's work occupies a liminal space between architecture, sculpture and landscape, reflecting Surrealism's fascination with environments that resist categorisation. It embodies the qualities of

obsession, chance and dream-driven creativity that defined the movement decades later, while remaining firmly rooted in the vernacular materials and context of rural France.

The Palais Idéal exemplifies how surrealist philosophy may manifest in built form to transcend conventional design practices. It illustrates the potential of applying unbounded, spontaneous and intuitive creativity to landscape and architectural environments. On one hand, it exemplifies the capacity of unconscious inspiration and form-making to generate spaces that evoke wonder, curiosity and emotional resonance. On the other hand, its idiosyncratic and highly personal nature raises questions about functionality, accessibility and the limits of translating such visionary processes into shared, practical landscapes.

For contemporary landscape architecture, *The Palais Idéal* suggests that surrealist tactics such as chance, dream, tapping into the subconscious and symbolic construction can profoundly expand the creative process. However, this should not overshadow the collective needs and pragmatic realities of designed landscapes.



Figure 10: Details of The Palais Idéal (From Debs-eye, 2008)

3.4 Martha Schwartz: The Bagel Garden

Martha Schwartz is a renowned American landscape architect who has often challenged the pragmatic conventions set out by the landscape architecture world. Schwartz's work tends to draw heavily on the traditions of site-specific and installation work, as she brings her artistry background into the world of landscape architecture (Smith, 2013). One of her first notable works, *Bagel Garden* (see fig.11), defied the discipline as it was understood and recognised, confronting the typical standards landscape architecture held itself to. *Bagel Garden* was created by Schwartz in 1979, as an impromptu project undertaken while her husband was away. Living in a terraced house in Back Bay, Boston, Schwartz decided to revive their untidy 22 square-foot garden (MSP, n.d.).

The garden lay somewhere between the threshold of pop art and a French Renaissance Garden. Like its neighbours, the garden was lined with a trimmed box hedge around its perimeter. However, unlike its neighbours, within the enclosed space of the hedge lay 96 real bagels, a mixture of salt and pumpernickel, lacquered by Schwartz and laid out in a grid pattern on a bed of purple fish gravel (Herrington, 2013). Planted within the central box hedge were a series of geraniums, in the same grid pattern as the bagels, coloured to match the gravel. The garden was everything that a garden of the time was 'not'. It took benign everyday items, such as the bagel and reframed the way not only the bagel was viewed, but also the landscape in which they had been placed, and the framework that challenged the garden's existence in the first place.

What ensued from this installation was a mixture of outrage, support and excitement. *Bagel Garden* was published on the front cover of the Landscape Architecture Magazine, receiving an immense amount of backlash (Schwartz, 1980). However, the more critics looked beyond their superficial reactions, the more it made sense; *Bagel Garden* demonstrated clear evidence that designs could contain and reveal serious assumptions about the creative process, encouraging people to learn from them (Clay, 1980). As editor of the Landscape Architecture Magazine, Grady Clay (1980) wrote in response to Schwartz's Bagel Garden in the May 1980 Landscape Architecture Magazine edition:

No profession can survive without the continuous injection of new ideas.
We need them, and we expect that LA will continue to be a testing ground
for them. If it occasionally turns into a battleground, so much the better for
us all. (Clay, 1980, p. 266)

Bagel Garden challenged the conventions of landscape architecture, leaning into its visual artifice and the revelation of the unexpected and mundane. This is something that arose from the use of bright colours, artificial materials, absurd scale and repetition that can so often be found throughout many of Schwartz's projects following the Bagel Garden (Smith, 2013). Often, many landscapes

attempt to mask the level of human intervention that has procured their creation, instead, disguising this behind a perceived level of 'naturalness'. What can be seen as a result, is often highly unnatural, maintained environments, presenting as though they have been organically formed this way. However, Schwartz's grid of bagels and vibrant purple gravel brazenly draw attention to its man-made quality and level of human intervention, revealing the level of interaction the human hand has had in the design process (Herrington, 2013).



Figure 11: Bagel Garden by Martha Schwartz (From Schwartz, 1980, p. 43)

Bagel Garden demonstrates a form of garden conceptualism. Garden conceptualism is designed around an idea, often inspired by the place's history, intended use or ecology, rather than the influence of plants or the architectural use of hard materials (Richardson, 2009). These spaces tend to be underpinned by a visual concept that informs every aspect of the design, blurring the boundary between art and landscape (Richardson, 2009).

In art, conceptualism aims to challenge the idea of art, whilst surrealism aims to challenge perceptions of reality through art. This can also be applied to landscape design, in which conceptualism challenges the idea of what the landscape is and surrealism changes the perception of what the landscape is. *Bagel Garden* effectively achieves both in this manner.

Schwartz challenges the perception of the landscape by reimagining what the garden would look like in an unsuspecting and disorienting way. One does not expect to see pumpnickel bagels preserved and uniformly laid out in an enclosed garden, on a bed of unnaturally purple gravel; it is as though a dream has been captured within its enclosed walls and hedges; it is hypnotic and dream-like in quality. Schwartz discovers the extraordinary within the ordinary, reframing the baked goods not just as a food commodity, but a token of Boston and an integral component of the design. Not only this, but symmetry and repetition create a dizzying effect, creating a continuous loop; the same grid pattern repeated in the geranium planting scheme at the centre of the garden provides continuity and reiterates the human touch that has had a part in its design, for no plant organically grows in a uniformly spaced grid pattern.

3.5 Josie Martin: The Giant's House

Josie Martin is a New Zealand artist and horticulturist, with training in landscape architecture, whose most celebrated work is *The Giant's House* in Akaroa (Blijlevens, 2012). Built around a historic Victorian villa from the 1800s, the hillside garden that she revived has become both a visitor destination and a bed and breakfast (Blijlevens, 2012). The site is characterised by large-scale, brightly coloured mosaic sculptures and garden scenes that erupt throughout the space, collapsing the threshold between fine art and landscape in a playful, eccentric and surreal manner.

The origin of Martin's mosaic practice was founded in the discovery of buried pieces of china while digging in the initially overgrown garden; this discovery may be described as 'magic circumstantial' in Surreal terms. Rather than discard them, Martin was inspired to re-purpose the shards into sculptural mosaic works, drawing attention to the overlooked and the everyday and preserving the historic discovery and the lost stories that accompany it. In this way, her practice not only honoured the site's layered heritage but also transformed otherwise mundane fragments into a surreal synthesis of object, memory and environment. By transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary, Martin created a landscape that is at once nostalgic, transformative and otherworldly in appearance (Reid & Martin, 2025).

Martin herself describes her practice as though she is painting with mosaics and plants (Reid & Martin, 2025). Her approach is intuitive and responsive, rather than strictly planned. It is only in retrospect that she sees the interrelation between all of the designs in the garden; when she is creating them, she acts on intuition, inspired by the eccentric and organic forms of a plant or how the light falls on specific areas and abstracts them (Reid & Martin, 2025). This method resonates strongly with Surrealist strategies of automatic creation and responsiveness to the unconscious, where chance encounters and perceptual shifts drive the artistic outcome. It provides a valuable insight into

how landscape architects may draw inspiration from the intricacies of the environment, and blow them up into a much larger proportion.

Colour is another central aspect to Martin's design philosophy. She asserts that colours act on the soul, with a strong ability to both evoke emotions and affect the mood (Reid & Martin, 2025). In the Giant's House, colour saturates not only the mosaics but also the planting design, establishing a dynamic dialogue between living vegetation and constructed forms. The result is an environment in which every element, including sculpture, planting, pathway and terrace, contributes to a completely immersive experience. Her garden becomes a world in itself, drowning in colour, painting the emotions of visitors to her space and ensuring an other-worldly experience (see fig. 12).



Figure 12: The Giant's House by Josie Martin (From Wall, 2025)

Martin carries a strong sense that there is no separation between the everyday things a person does and their identity; a lively person will produce art and a garden in reflection of that (Reid & Martin, 2025). This conviction underscores the personal and autobiographical nature of *The Giant's House*. The garden functions not only as an artistic revelation and experiment, conjoining Martin's backgrounds and interests, but also acts as an embodied reflection of the maker's personality, revealing the Surrealist principle that art and life are inseparable, something she shows through the landscape.

The Giant's House demonstrates how Surrealist principles, particularly defamiliarisation, random encounters, the magic-circumstantial moment, and immersion, can be realised within the landscape (refer to Table 1). Martin's use of the original pieces of buried china to incorporate within and

influence the garden as it is today echoes Surrealism's fascination with the readymade and with uncovering hidden meanings in discarded materials. Her reliance on intuition and responsive creativity parallels Surrealist automatism, in which design emerges from subconscious impulses, rather than prescriptive plans.

The result of this is a landscape that destabilises conventional distinctions between art and garden, function and ornament and the extraordinary within the ordinary. Visitors are enveloped in a dreamlike and otherworldly environment, fenced from the reality. It is a space that invites playful interaction while also engaging a curiosity for the landscape it sits within. This is a project that demonstrates how Surrealist tactics can generate new ways of perceiving the everyday and expand the disciplinary imagination of landscape architecture. In the context of New Zealand, *The Giant's House* highlights how playful eccentricity and intuitive making can offer a playful, local model for embedding the surreal in landscape design.

3.6 Rebecca Krinke: The Place to Share Beauty and Fear

Rebecca Krinke is an artist and Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Minneapolis. Her practice focuses on the design of contemplative spaces, where she has found a balance between her artistry and landscape architecture background (Krinke, 2005). She has described these aspects of her life as they seem to run parallel tracks, on the verge of intersecting deeply (Estlund & Krinke, 2020).

Krinke has developed conceptual projects that explore the subconscious, memory, and dreamscapes, using these to uncover the relationship between emotions and place. She acknowledges the potential of the subconscious through her use and manipulation of dreams as a tool to spark new ideas and bring the wonderings of her mind to life. Krinke views dreams as 'beautiful, mysterious gifts' that arise, bringing aspects of truth with them (Estlund & Krinke, 2020). Krinke often asks her dreams for advice on the placement of objects, waking to write down what comes to her and working with these influences; often, these may not necessarily become a literal translation, but as a source of inspiration (Estlund & Krinke, 2020).




Image redacted due to copyright policy.

Figure 13: Plan view image of A Place To Share Beauty and Fear by Rebecca Krinke (From Krinke, 2005, p. 43)

The Place to Share Beauty and Fear was a project undertaken by Krinke which explores environments of both trauma and transformation. Located in a forest of white pine trees, one may find two outdoor 'rooms' connected by one central, narrow corridor. These 'rooms' are defined by their tall hemlock hedges, shaped to form a tall, thick barrier that delineates the enclosed space from the rest of the expansive forest, creating a walled garden within the expanse of the forest. The floor of these enclosures is entirely made up of pine needles, and within each of these spaces are sculptural objects created from primarily pine needles, that emulate both beauty and fear, effectively, a form of the surreal tactic convulsive beauty (refer to Table 1) (see fig. 14). They adorn the pine trees, the stately giants of the forested landscape, bleed from branches, or make their home on the forest floor (Krinke, 1991). The unexpected presence of the sculptures is otherworldly, giving the sense that visitors have just walked into a dream contained within the confines of the hemlock hedge. As discussed by Krinke, each of these sculptural figures may serve as manifestations of unseen forces in the forest, becoming wild and laden with fear, yet made by human hands (Krinke, 1991). The figures form a trail through the corridor from one room to the other to create a journey that people walk through, for, 'a setting of incredible beauty may be the best place to think about fear.' (Krinke, 1991). Although there is a challenge that lies in sharing one's fear, doing so is healing; beauty may help one share fear and fear may help one realise beauty, a paradox of life Krinke embraces in this project (Krinke, 1991). This effectively reveals the strength of convulsive beauty within the landscape, where something sits between both the grotesque and the beautiful.

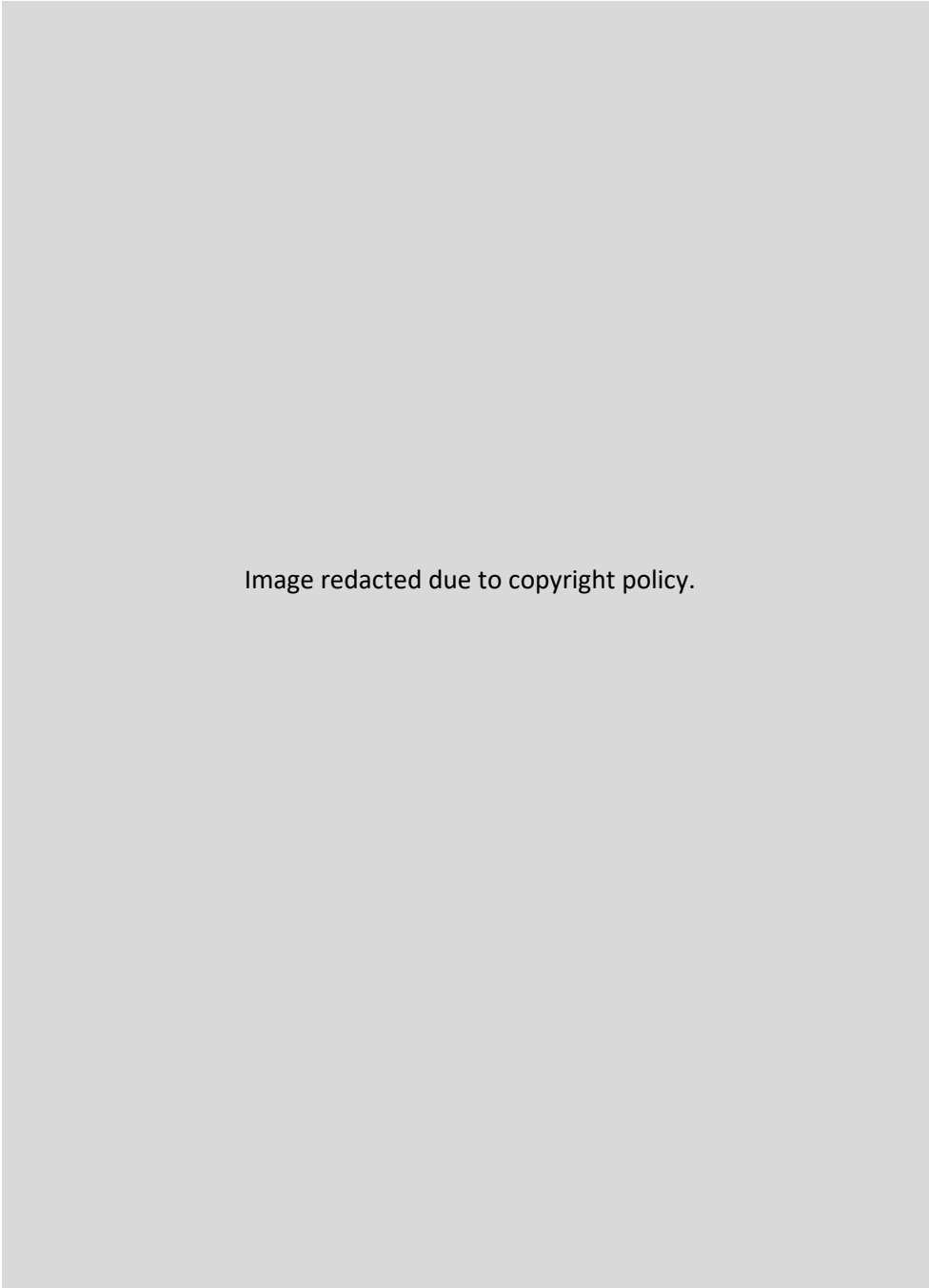


Image redacted due to copyright policy.

Figure 14: Close up of the sculptural embellishments in *The Place To Share Beauty and Fear* (Adapted from Krinke, 2005, p.42)

The Place to Share Beauty and Fear demonstrates the ability for the darkest dwellings of the subconscious mind to become intertwined with the landscape. The fear within the human psyche becomes intertwined with the beauty of the landscape and environment, and for a moment, they are one and the same. Both beautiful and grotesque in nature, they retain aspects of convulsive beauty, as the familiar repetition of the forest trees is suddenly interrupted, creating a twisted world within itself. It is an escape into a transformative space, where trauma manifests into the landscape, becoming an evocative place of memory and mindfulness.

3.7 Summary of Case Studies

These case studies reveal how the Surrealist philosophy manifests in landscape practice through a mixture of tactics as outlined in Table 1, some highly generative and others less transferable to the constraints of contemporary design practice. What emerged most strongly across these examples was the power of process, whether dream-driven, intuitive, symbolic or magic-circumstantial, to reframe that which is ordinary, and often overlooked, and provoke new understandings of place. Each designer engaged aspects of Surrealist thinking differently: through symbolism and metaphor, through random encounters and the magic-circumstantial moment, or through immersion in the psyche and dream state. Collectively, these projects illustrate that Surrealist strategies tend to create moments or objects that heighten and capture attention. As a result, these tend toward making ‘things’ in the landscape that challenge the perception of the space they are in, rather than an entirely designed landscape itself. The only project in which this is not necessarily the case is *Hydrotopia*, in which the space was intended hypothetically to evoke matters of the subconscious. *Hydrotopia’s* reliance on archetypes and personas to function is a driving factor that limits its success, as in reality, people often blur the lines between stereotypes or refuse to conform to them.

This observation is essential because it clarifies both the potential and the limitations of Surrealist methods when considered as tools for landscape architecture. They excel at generating conceptual beginnings, emotional resonance and defamiliarising how we read a site, yet often resist translation into conventional design frameworks. Drawing from these precedents, the most useful tactics for my hypothetical design probe are those that stimulate intuitive beginnings, such as automatic processes, chance operations and defamiliarisation of the mundane and overlooked, while approaches that rely on long-term processes or archetypal users offer less direct alignment with the aims and constraints of the Major Design project. These insights allow me to shape the direction of the probe to follow, identifying which Surrealist techniques may realistically inform the earliest stages of design thinking in landscape architecture. The following table summarises my findings from these case studies.

Table 2: Summary of Case Studies

<i>Case Study</i>	<i>Form of Surrealism, Based The Findings of Table 1</i>	<i>Application</i>	<i>Insights</i>	<i>Tool</i>
<p><i>Hydrotopia</i> <i>Pamela Burton & Katherine Spitz 1986</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Symbolism - Juxtaposition - Explores the subconscious through metaphor. 	<p>Water became metaphoric for the ‘stream of consciousness’. Combined rational control (channelled water) with autonomy (natural flow). Juxtaposition through the empirical, spiritual, and irrational users; to reach a ‘higher level’ of thinking.</p>	<p>Demonstrates Surrealism as a symbolic process that can therefore guide landscape form and meaning. Relies not only on the elements of the landscape, but the experiences of its users to enhance this. Reveals limits of hypothetical design as it is divorced from real-world interaction, reducing the concept to graphics on paper.</p>	<p>Looking at this project, the foundational tool that may be pulled from it was the use of symbolism and metaphor; particularly through a space designed for certain archetypes of people. However, in reality, people are far more diverse than an archetype, and a landscape should not rely on them to ‘work’ per se.</p>
<p><i>Woven Branch Circular Arch</i> <i>Andy Goldsworthy 1986</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Random Encounters - Impermanence - Defamiliarisation - Magic Circumstantial - Discovery of the Extraordinary within the Ordinary 	<p>Using materials directly from the surrounding landscape in an unconventional and unprompted and often spontaneous manner; reframing them in a new light. Materials, decay, and temporality become part of the artwork.</p>	<p>Reveals Surrealism through process-based application; wandering through the environment can trigger inspiration. Highlights the landscape’s agency, and the ability to reframe and distort natural landscapes with impermanent installations.</p>	<p>Using the materials of the landscape to reframe how they and the landscape may be viewed. These interventions do not need to be hard or permanent; they can be as small or large as called for by the material.</p>

<p>Palais Idéal</p> <p><i>Ferdinand Cheval 1879–1912</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dream-driven creation - Subconscious obsession - Reframing of the vernacular. - Temple - Magic-Circumstantial 	<p>Constructed an entire palace from collected stones guided by dreams and intuition. Architecture, sculpture, and landscape merge.</p>	<p>Exemplifies intuitive, irrational design and the power of the dream in the design process. Reveals the power of the magic-circumstantial moment; how inspiration may strike at any moment, procured by the smallest items.</p>	<p>Working with a dream and the continuation of this influence over a long period of time; Whilst I do not have 40 years to complete this project, time is an interesting factor to consider in its implementation.</p>
<p>Bagel Garden</p> <p><i>Martha Schwartz 1979</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Irony - Surprising Juxtaposition - Discovery of the extraordinary within the ordinary. - Magic-Circumstantial - Substitution of the real for the artificial. - Walled Garden 	<p>The everyday object of the bagel, an object that is iconic of the area is reframed as formal landscape element. Artificial colour and materials subvert traditional garden aesthetics, within the conventional, repetition and grid of the formal garden.</p>	<p>Humour and absurdity reveal a surreal undertone that critiques conventional design. Encourages reflection on human intervention in landscapes and confronts what we know about the landscape/how we apply typically conventional ideas.</p>	<p>Substitution of the artificial for the real. Do not be afraid to use materials and items in an unconventional manner; these provoke thought and create juxtaposition through concepts, material and form.</p>

<p><i>The Giant's House</i> <i>Josie Martin</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Random Encounters - Transformation of the ordinary into the extraordinary - Automatic/intuitive creation. - Magic-Circumstantial - Walled Garden 	<p>Found china shards repurposed into mosaic sculptured that shape a dreamlike garden. Colour and form, derived from plants in the garden, evoke emotion and memory.</p>	<p>Shows Surrealist philosophy through intuitive, colourful and absurd interventions. The Giant's House merges fine art and landscape architecture, discovering the extraordinary in the ordinary-creating a world where people can escape.</p>	<p>Inspiration comes in many forms, using small and mundane objects as materials to create a sense of the otherworldly transforms something that would otherwise be overlooked, into something that celebrates the smallest components of a place in a big way.</p>
<p><i>The Place to Share Beauty and Fear</i> <i>Rebecca Krinke 1991</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Convulsive beauty - Dream-driven creation - Emotional immersion. - Uncanny coincidences. - Walled Garden - Disorientation of the Senses. 	<p>Sculptural 'rooms' are created in the forest, defined by neatly cut box hedges, creating intimacy in the otherwise expansive area. Within these, rooms, sculptures emerge from the trees, exploring both fear and beauty, they are simultaneously grotesque and intricate.</p>	<p>Illustrates a psychological aspect to the application of surrealism in the landscape; the deep effect that convulsive beauty may have. The landscapes becomes a space of transformation; one is 'within' the walls of the space, yet still exposed within the forest. Demonstrates integration of emotion and subconscious in design, and how the landscape influences this.</p>	<p>Drawing inspiration from dreams is a practiced skill, which Krinke has been doing for some time. It is within our dreams that our subconscious reigns supreme; and often, our emotions and psyche present themselves in different ways that can manifest into designed forms; such as those which have a compulsive beauty about them.</p>

Chapter 4

Hypothetical Design Probe

In the final phase of my research, a hypothetical design probe allows me to test how the Surrealist Philosophy can actively influence the landscape design process. Using the insights that I have gathered and revealed throughout the literature review and case studies, the intention behind this step in my methodology was to see how the theoretical ideas translated into practice, using the creative process as a form of research, to essentially perform an exegesis of design work through adaptation of tactics, design implementation and then review. In this manner, it became a method to examine what occurs when methods of chance, automatism and intuition are actively experimented with and examined in the creative process; particularly, using these as a seedling to inform the beginning stages of design processes, which continue to develop and grow throughout.

During our final year in the master's programme as Landscape Architecture Students, we are tasked with completing our Major Design (MD) project in which each student designs a site of their choosing, at multiple scales throughout the year to produce one final body of work. In this nature, my design probe became grounded in my MD project, undertaken in Sumner Village, a place I hold close to my heart after growing up there as a child. My project became centred around my design vision that 'Sumner will adapt to the inevitability of climate change whilst maintaining and enhancing its vibrant community. It will become a connected and sociable village that is responsive to its landscape and sense of place.' Underpinning my vision were three core goals, as formulated after comprehensive research of the site: Resilience, Connection and Sense of Place. The latter of these three, Sense of Place, sought to ensure that the village reflects and responds to the land, embracing principles of Kaitiakitanga through design decisions guided by the landscape's essence and needs. Within this goal, I set myself an objective that required the application of Surrealist philosophy throughout the design process. It asked that I design intuitively and responsively under the influence of Sumner's landscape, atmosphere and memories, providing me with the opportunity to complete this hypothetical design probe.

In practice, this objective was explored primarily through automatic drawing, revising my processes, and the exploration of automatic writing (refer to Table 1). While my MD project ultimately evolved within the expectations of a rational and conventional design framework, these techniques revealed the generative potential of an intuitive, Surrealist-inspired way of working within the context of landscape architecture. The probe aims to test how the design process shifted when guided by the philosophy.

The following sections introduce the site and outline how Surrealist methods such as automatic drawing, automatic writing and the dream state are interacted with and used to re-engage, reinterpret and reimagine the design process that initially shaped the MD project.

4.1 Where Does the Design Process Begin?

Design process is a topic that often inspires discussions and research surrounding *how* to design, the steps one may take to achieve their design, or alternative tactics and ways of thinking to achieve the final designed product. Research concerning the seedlings that sprout and form the beginnings of these designs has more often than not, been neglected and skimmed over, as discussed by Julia Werner (Werner, 2019). This oversight may be attributed to the concept's inherent incomprehensibility. The 'beginning' or 'start' of designs tends to be somewhat self-explanatory; often, it is assumed that one has general experience in starting something, and therefore, this may presume to be the explicit reason that there is a lack of references to beginning processes in design literature (Werner, 2019).

Despite this, the beginning of the design process is one of the most crucial steps. For, without beginning, there will be no end, and nothing will have been designed. The potential of the beginning is what makes design possible and allows for the process that produces it. It is the foundational concepts that act as the design seedling to, in turn, determine the course of design; regardless of how vague the idea may be (Werner, 2019). Irrespective of how these foundational ideas may be melded, altered and redefined throughout the process of design, these are crucial to informing how the final product may appear, feel and be experienced.

So what is a design beginning? According to Werner, the first stage of the consciously designed landscape project equips the act of design from the outset; therefore, the processes of understanding and idea-finding are mutually dependent, together forming design ideas that initiate the process of design (Werner, 2019). Influencing the design beginning with the Surrealist Philosophy may allow for a project with foundational concepts that pride themselves in creativity and artistic endeavour. Place, memory, and meaning are a trifecta of components that, in part, make up the landscape and all influence the subconscious. Associate Professor, Pauline Hurley-Kurtz, suggests that an exploration of the environment as it is encountered through the mind's eye, through these components, may examine how landscape memory can influence one's values and preferences as a designer (Hurley-Kurtz, 2001). Thus, from these seeds of influence, the basis of design may be formed.

However, transformative thinking and novel ideas cannot be produced in a vacuum; they must be lured out in the right environment (Werner, 2019). It is in this manner that the philosophy of surrealism may offer a way to effectively lure and translate the experience of the landscape as it is viewed through the mind's eye, to generate an environment that fosters creative thinking and novel ideas, serving as the foundational first step of the design process.

4.2 Context of The Probe

Sumner is a small seaside village, nestled in the undulating slopes of the Port Hills. It has a small but vibrant community; a place where children roam the streets, seagulls serenade beachgoers, and crashing waves bribe dogs, surfers and swimmers into their salty embrace. Growing up in Sumner meant climbing the neighbour's fence to play with their kids. It was barbeques on the lawn, fish and chips on the beach and making several attempts at learning how to surf. Only 13 kilometres from the city centre, this is a village that became an integral part of Christchurch's wider community in some of the earliest years of its formation, in the mid-1800s (Menzies & McAllister, 2000).

My MD project framed Sumner as a landscape that continues to flourish, despite the shadow of crisis overcast by the threat of climate change. For the design probe, the focus is on how the site is perceived and understood at the beginning of design, through both the Surrealist and normative lenses.

4.3 The Probe

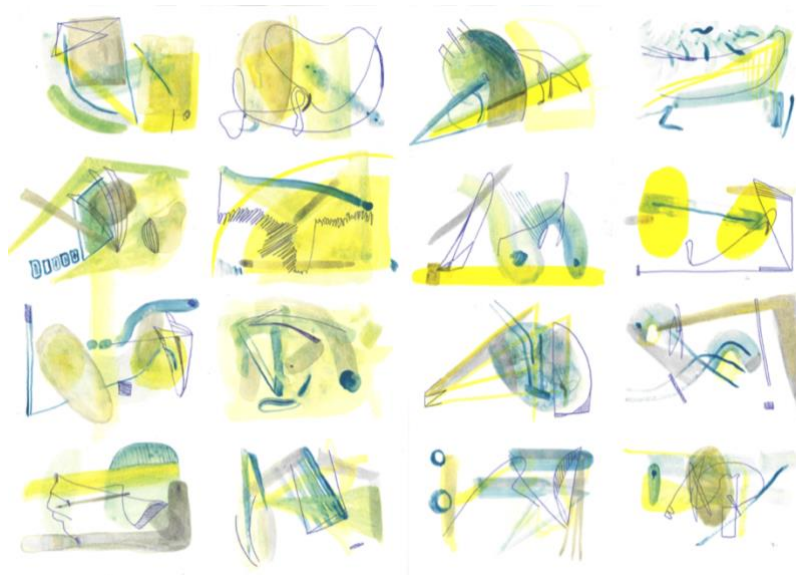
The following section outlines what occurred during the hypothetical design probe with the applied use of Surrealist-inspired tactics. The hypothetical design probe is an exercise that provides an opportunity for me to apply the findings from my research, as presented throughout my literature review and case studies, to a conceptual, hypothetical design. In turn, an application of the tactics I have unearthed (refer to table 1), and a greater understanding of the Surrealist Philosophy will shape the design process of my final-year MD project. As a result of this, the design probe essentially places its value on the discoveries that arise through the design process, and how this provides greater insights and opportunities for future designs (Gaver et al., 1999). Through a design probe such as this, the creative artefacts produced are considered the embodiment of the research, with an emphasis placed on creative exploration (Skains, 2018). Additionally, reflection of the successes and pitfalls of this creative exploration forms an exegesis component of this probe (Skains, 2018).

Essentially, the probe is employed to experiment, through creative acts, and answer my research questions, which other methods may not successfully answer (Skains, 2018).

The following section outlines my experiments with surrealist tactics (see table 1), including automatic drawing, automatic writing and a discussion of the dreamstate. Due to the limitations of this study, a selection of tactics were chosen for implementation based on their applicability to the landscape architectural design process, my previous experience with similar techniques in my fine arts degree, which provided a greater foundational understanding of how to engage in this manner of thinking and the feasibility of using these tactics within the timeframe I was provided.

4.3.1 Automatic Drawing

The hypothetical design probe effectively began during the inventory and analysis stage of my MD project, when I intuitively sketched my response to various areas of Sumner. These sketches were performed without premeditation of what they may look like upon completion, and effectively captured the 'essence' of each area they were experienced (see fig. 15 and Fig. 16). Effectively, they were a tool that created a visualisation of what it felt like to be in each of these areas, a form of automatic drawing that in a sense captured something neither words nor photographs are able to.



**Figure 15: Example of automatic drawings that were completed along Esplanade Road, Sumner.
Created by the author.**

Walking through the familiar sights and scenery of the village, I found that my intuitive mark-making shifted according to where I was and the relationship that I had with each particular area. The

surrounding atmosphere, call of memories that have since passed and my own emotional responses radically shifted each automatic drawing as I made my way around the village, stationing myself on grass patches and park benches. Some sketches were soft and open, more fluid or gestural, while others grew dense or erratic as I became increasingly overwhelmed by thick waves of nostalgia, brought by the landscape. This process revealed how deeply place and memory influenced the earliest moments of design thinking, often before conscious decisions had been made.

As I approached the street and area of Sumner where I grew up, these responses intensified. The familiarity of the streets and the pressing of childhood memory created a feeling that was both grounding and unsettling. A reminder of the deep effect and connection that we may have with a landscape, and that a landscape can have on us. My automatic drawings in this area became more agitated and energetic. The lines pushed and pulled to demonstrate a sense of restlessness; a felt energy through my connection with the place. It was in these areas, more so, that I truly felt and channelled the effect of the subconscious mind. In a sense, these revealed how the subconscious can surface through mark-making without deliberate intention, influenced by the environment that I found myself within. Rather than representing the landscape in a literal sense, these sketches represented the emotional qualities of being in that place.



Figure 16: Automatic Drawing atop Cave Rock, Sumner. Created by the author.

4.3.2 A Busy Mind

Maintaining a meditative state of subconscious thinking was difficult; the interruption of active thoughts often intruded on the experience; it was easy to be interrupted by the persistent nagging of a busy mind. This, however, became a reflective part of the process, noting down what it was that interrupted the thought. Initially, I had queried whether the moments where intuition was interrupted might be significant; however, they were typically not. Often, these were small, mundane things, like the sound of a bus stopping, or a seagull deciding to make its presence known.

During the moments where I began to think about what it was that I was sketching and producing, I would stop, switching colour or drawing utensil to denote the different layers of automatic drawing (see fig. 17). Though with greater practice, it became easier to quieten the mind and tune into a more meditative state. Entering this flow state was something that took time to reach, sitting, observing the senses around me and how the body tuned into the landscape became an important gateway into the meditative state.

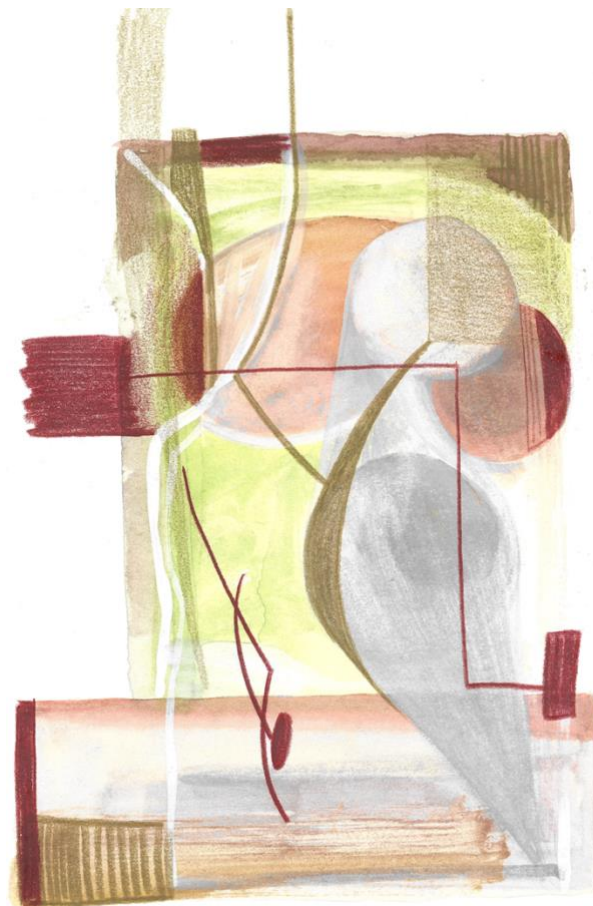


Figure 17: Automatic Drawing from Mariner Street, Sumner. Created by the author.

4.3.3 Rapid Sketching

In an effort to reduce the interruptions of the mind, one strategy became interrupting myself before conscious thought had the chance. This came in the form of rapid sketches in quick-fire succession, timed at five seconds, ten seconds and fifteen seconds. Folding up a large piece of paper, I would sit on site and set a timer for the allocated time frame and intuitively draw. Every time the alarm went off the pen had to be lifted from the page and placed down again in a new square, forcing an abrupt break in the drawing. This became a highly effective way to quiet the persistent chatter of active thought. With a short time limit, the mind is under enough pressure that it cannot fully comprehend what it is producing, shifting the focus from depiction to sensation. What emerged were drawings that were more instinctual. They captured flashes of atmosphere and movement rather than recognisable forms, tuning into the sense of being in a place in such a way that neither words nor photos can capture (see fig. 18).

As a result, the rapid automatic sketches have the potential to become a powerful source of ideas or even used to loosen creativity when it has been pulled tight. Particularly when the constraints of conventional design thinking and methods draw on either side of creative freedom, this quick exercise proved successful in releasing the tension it creates. The rapid nature of the activity forced action and ideas before hesitation and 'rational' thinking had the chance to creep in. While the resultant drawings were chaotic and abstract, they sowed the seeds of ideas for potential design moves.

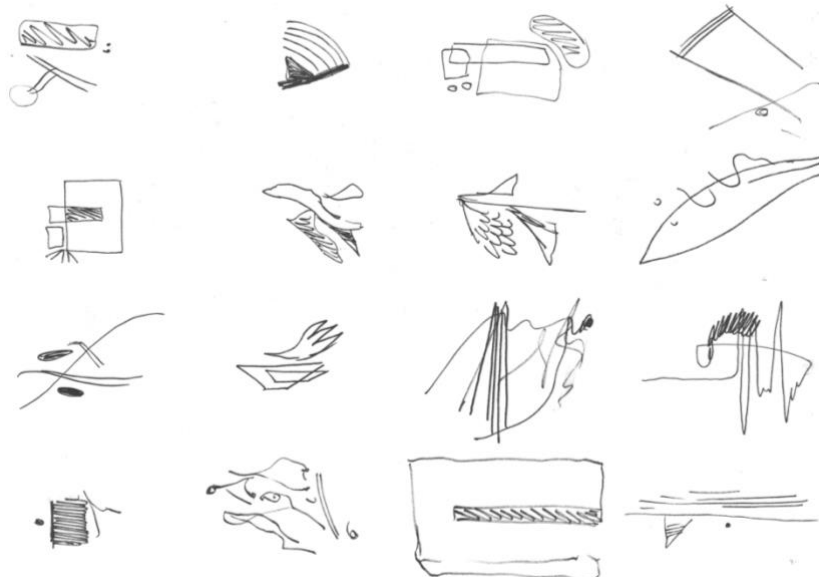


Figure 18: Example of Rapid Automatic Sketches timed at 15 seconds each. These were completed along Sumner's promenade. Created by the author.

This method, however, was not without its limits. The alarm quickly grew jarring. With frustration, each timed state felt as though it grew shorter and would occasionally pull me from the state of intuition I was aiming to maintain through the itching thought of wondering when exactly the ringer would sound. Despite this, with a muted alarm set, the repetition of the activity became almost mechanical, and it was easier to slip into a rhythm, and resultant flow state. Despite minor frustrations caused by the interruption of the alarms, the quick-fire sketches still managed to highlight the potential in the earliest seconds of creative response. Within them there was a freedom of form, shape and movement that is not often present in designs that are overcomplicated or overthought. This acts as a testament to the power of simplicity and how intuition can operate before the conscious mind asserts control.

4.3.4 The Clash of the Conventional

Entering the designed stages of my MD triggered the process of considering how these abstract, intuitive responses could translate into spatial expression. The sketches themselves were not spatial designs but instead carried a tone of movement and atmosphere that could guide and act as a starting point for design thinking.

How could these intuitive drawings influence form, movement and spatial design? Their abstract and loose manner meant that this was not necessarily an obvious next step. As a result, the strength that lay in their fluidity became vulnerable and was easily overpowered by the pressure of conventional methods and design. Overlaying the sketches directly on a plan or map may have sounded effective, in theory, but in reality, it did not translate well. This is likely because the sketches are *not* spatial; although they offer unique and interesting forms, lines and gestures, they are effectively the 'essence' of a place visualised.

4.3.5 Automatic Writing

It was at this stage that automatic writing became a valuable counterpart to my automatic sketches. Writing freely and rapidly without actively thinking about what it was that I was verbalising allowed me to uncover more specifically what the sketches had been responding to. The process deconstructed both the sketches and the landscape and seemingly insignificant details that shaped each drawing became visible. The patched cracks in the road, the gritty texture of concrete, rickety paint-chipped fences, memories of playing in patches of dune grass, and the constant murmur of the ocean were all revealed. Automatic writing allowed a greater understanding of what it was that I had

produced, but also how the environment filtered into this: uncovering the ability for intuition to respond to the quiet, overlooked conditions of the everyday.

Automatic writing became a tool for moving through conceptual blocks. When a design problem felt immovable, writing allowed me to approach it from a different angle. Ideas that had stagnated were often loosened once they were verbalised in this manner; creative block could be addressed head-on. Surrealist exercises like this aided me in progressing with aspects of my MD project that would have otherwise remained dormant. Rather than producing polished writing, the expression of half-thoughts, fleeting associations and subconscious connections became more valuable. These fragments sometimes revealed solutions to my moments of uncertainty that conventional design methods failed to achieve.

4.3.6 The Dreamstate

While one cannot predict when inspiration may strike, automatic writing allowed me to work through ideas, concepts and sticking points; revealing a potential answer or solution that I may not have otherwise discovered. In a similar manner, dreams and the dream state had been equipped by surrealists as an additional tactic to reveal answers or insights that the waking mind could not arrive at. While dreams are not reliable, they have been utilised within the landscape before as noted in the case studies of Cheval and Krinke.

The concept seemed absurd in practice, for often dreams are forgotten upon the waking moment; however, with practice and noting things down, it becomes easier to recall the bizarre and otherworldly experiences that may hold profound meaning or influence. In my experience, working on a project such as my MD day in and day out, and the accompanying stress that overshadowed it, meant it was inevitable that these experiences would filter into my dreams. While I cannot report any groundbreaking discoveries, visions of Sumner exclusively growing Poplar trees and of concrete beaches did make a brief appearance. These 'suggestions' from my subconscious did not make it into the final design, but they did propose an interesting insight into how we process information through the subconscious, confirming how it may be influenced by external factors.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Outcome

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the potential impact of Surrealist philosophy on the design processes of landscape architecture. The pinnacle of this research was the design probe, which examined how Surrealist methods might influence the earliest moments of the design process and tested what happens when intuition, memory, subconscious responses, and chance are given space to shape the beginning of design. It allowed for an understanding of how the subconscious may shape the perception of a site before rational structures take hold, and to evaluate what these methods reveal that the conventional MD framework does not. Through this, the probe aimed to clarify the creative value in the very early stages of design and to consider how Surrealist thinking might enrich these often unassuming and forgotten moments.

5.1 Addressing The Research Questions

Reflecting upon the research that has been completed, I now address the initial questions that this dissertation asked, which are further extrapolated throughout the following sections of the discussion:

5.1.1 What happens to the design process and to the resultant design when surrealist philosophy is applied?

Through my research, I discovered how the design process may become influenced or shaped by its beginnings. Often overlooked, I actively considered how this was initiated and how the influence of the surreal could shape it. Effectively, the usually conventional methods became disrupted, and thus, prompted a different perspective on what it was that I was producing and how I could produce it. However, as the MD project ensued, conventional frameworks choked much of the fluidity within these ideas.

Despite this, the surreal tactics became foundational to the start of the design process, and a pivotal tool to prompt creative solutions throughout the project. The tactics of the surrealist philosophy will inevitably have shaped the direction this project took, despite the overshadowing of normative behaviours. This was also particularly notable in moments where design slowed, where an idea kept sticking. It was during these moments that applying the surrealist philosophy offered solutions, as tools such as automatic writing provided unexpected solutions to what I had unknowingly become

stuck on, without actively designing a component of my MD project. This revealed how notions of the surrealist philosophy didn't only offer design concepts and intuitive insights but also actively aided in the thinking that occurred throughout the MD process.

5.1.2 How could surrealist methods generate landscapes to better balance form and function with creativity and imagination?

The balance between form and function and how this balance is achieved was a central concern of this research. Through this dissertation, it became clear that the Surrealist methods cannot and do not offer to replace the logic and pragmatic requirements of the discipline; while landscapes may be fluid, they also effectively need to be engineered to ensure they remain functional.

What these tools offered was a rich and expansive starting point for design, through revealing the designer's intuitive reactions and early impulses, influenced by the experience of the landscape. These impulses shaped forms that carried the essence of what it meant to be in the landscape, which in turn influenced later decisions about movement and spatial structure. However, their influence was often dampened and twisted by the constraints of pragmatism. Thus, these methods alone do not guarantee functional resolution. They encourage a way of seeing and thinking that expands the creative potential of design, and allows the designer to listen to their subconscious knowledge.

In this sense, Surrealist methods do not balance form and function on their own. Rather, they enrich the conceptual stage so that the resulting design may be grounded in creativity as well as purpose. Ideas from this philosophy can survive the conventional design process, but only at the cost of compromise. Effectively, it is up to the judgment of the designer to ensure this balance is maintained. The 'irrational' and the 'rational' can coexist, but the survival of creativity requires deliberate and persistent attention, as revealed in my design probe exploration.

5.1.3 How may designing through the unconscious evoke deeper connections between people and their environments?

Indeed, my research has concluded that, yes, a deeper connection between people and their environment can be fostered through this philosophy, specifically, between the designer and their environment. Through the hypothetical design probe, it became clear that intuitive responses often emerged through the experience of place. These had been shaped by a multitude of factors, such as memory, emotion, and atmosphere, as was particularly evident to me within my study of Sumner through the Surreal lens. Each of these early impressions demonstrated how profoundly the environment influences our perception and how quickly the mind builds subconscious associations from this.

Through the tactics of this philosophy, I was able to reveal these influences and through operations of chance and intuition, reveal the undercurrent of the subconscious experience. This was a process that made my personal connections with the site evident and, in doing so, highlighted how designers carry their own understandings, premonitions and expectations into the landscapes they shape. This effectively mirrors my findings from the case studies and literature, where memory and emotional responses were notable drivers of design. While Surreal design methods cannot fully replace the conventions of normative design, they may deepen the relationship between the designer and their environment by uncovering the experience and essence of landscape that conventional methods cannot.

5.2 Key Themes

This hypothetical design probe revealed how even the earliest stages of design were shaped by my memory, experiences and emotional response to Sumner, all formed as a result of my personal relationship with the village. This connection proved to shape the majority of my experiences whilst working through the methodology. Each intuitive sketch was not a detached observation but a response that had formed through a bank of years of familiarity, embedded memories and experiences. My inventory of the village through intuitive mark-making and notation shifted due to a multitude of factors: the sensory experiences, my bodily responses and the associated memories I had with each area. I found that the closer I drew to my childhood home, the more engaged with my intuition I was and the more frantic my inventory became. These moments highlighted how emotional charge has the ability to shape the first movements of design before conscious decisions necessarily have the chance to intervene.

This closely aligns with the previously mentioned discussion by Hurley-Kurtz, which touched on how, if we explore the environment through the mind's eye, we may realise that the memories the landscape retains bear an influence on one's values and preferences as a designer (Hurley-Kurtz, 2001). This notion resonates with my experiences of automatic drawing and intuitive methods, which became the manifestation of the mind's eye. Sensory and emotionally charged memories infiltrated my mark-making, whether I was aware of it or not; the smell of the ocean, call of the seagulls and echo of childhood memories. This became an inventory of the emotional and experiential atmosphere of the place, rather than its social, physical or geomorphological aspects. They became evidence of the bias that existed in this form of research, and how design beginnings may emerge from lived experience that cannot be separated from the body or memory that inhabits the site. In short, intuitive beginnings, or instinctual decisions are not neutral, our positionality shapes them.

The theme of memory was notable across case studies and my own practice, further reinforcing its importance in both the landscape and in surrealist-based design. As Werner discusses, a landscape is a subconscious combination of multifaceted elements that make up an area; these are both naturally occurring and procured through human nature (Werner, 2019). This reinforced the idea that the subconscious is never empty. Instead, it retains an accumulation of fragments that reappear when intuitive processes are activated. Through the probe, this became visible in the way my own memories and emotional histories surfaced through spontaneous marks and shaped the earliest ideas. The findings show that beginnings are never neutral and that positionality is not an influence that can be removed. It sits as an active component that shapes the trajectory of design right from its conception.

5.3 Limitations

In completing the hypothetical design probe, I generated interesting and valuable insights into how the surrealist philosophy and its methods could influence the beginning of design and the design process. What this probe did encounter, however, were several limitations that, in part, defined the scope of the findings. Most significantly, was the inherently subjective nature of the work. Because the probe was carried out on a site that holds profound personal meaning for me, the responses were influenced by years of familiarity, memory and lived experience that are not shared by everyone. While this positionality enriched the findings, it also makes them difficult to replicate. Another designer working on the same site would not produce the same marks, words or associations, which may affect the generalisability of the outcomes.

However, it can be assumed that each individual would produce a different set of outcomes under this philosophy, regardless of the designer's personal experiences with a site. This is perhaps a strength of the philosophy, in which it extracts a unique response to site and therefore, original and creative starting points for design that press against the sameness that often comes through in conventional frameworks.

In terms of conventional frameworks, the scope of the probe was also restricted by time, having only a year for the completion of the dissertation. Surrealist techniques such as dream practice or long-term subconscious incubation require sustained engagement and practice, which was not always possible within the academic year. Perhaps, over an extended period of study, this study could yield further insights into how the subconscious mind reflects on and interprets the landscape and environment.

As the study of this philosophy ran alongside and within the normative framework of the MD projects, the tensions between the two became apparent: conventional methods demanded a strict set of answers, while the surrealist philosophy produced a more fluid, open-ended result. Using the philosophy as a starting point for the design process means that it inevitably filters through, even after reconfiguration and layers of 'rational' design step in. Often, the surreal methodology produced 'things' within the landscape, rather than a dramatic shift of the landscape itself, as was also often the case in case studies.

5.4 Implications between the Conventional and the Unconventional

There is no doubt that a strain lies between creativity and practicality, the unconventional and the conventional, the 'irrational' and the rational. The use of these surrealist techniques proved to create an evocative starting point for design, and encouraged a greater connection with the landscape to be forged. However, when faced with the normative framework of the Major Design projects, there was a distinct and unavoidable clash among ideas, frameworks, and methodologies.

It became a challenging task; on the one hand, the abstractions and concepts that emerged through the application of the surrealist philosophy created an interesting dialogue between people and place, offering to bridge the gap between the two and revealing the effect one has on the other. On the other hand, the MD project's formal framework and process created a structure that clashed with the fluidity of the creative method. Using the surrealist philosophy proved most effective as a starting point for design, to initiate the process, where its tactics and strategies were the strongest. From here, they became useful again during moments of strain in the normative processes, where I could fall back on their methods of chance and intuition to invigorate my process and release myself from any rut I may have found myself in.

This clash is not inherently bad; instead, it reveals the possibilities of both the normative and the surreal approaches to design. The surrealist methods are not able to carry a project such as MD on their own, yet they directed how the early stages of design unfolded and how problems were later approached. These methods offered a way to disrupt habit, consider alternative ways of thinking, and direct our attention towards the environment and landscape in a new way. The normative method provided a necessary structure to complete the MD project, despite constraining and washing out some of the creative freedom that the surrealist tools relied on. Finding myself in the threshold between these two positions revealed how creativity and rationality are not opposing forces, but shifting gears in the same tool-box. When utilised intentionally, the two can support each other.

5.5 Possible Tools

My findings from the literature review, case studies and the hypothetical design probe revealed that Surrealist philosophy is shaped by a constellation of tactics that may initiate design in different ways. Each case study demonstrated that the product of Surrealist techniques results in a space where the mundane, materials, memory and chance become active collaborators. Yet, it also became clear that not all tactics translate smoothly into landscape architecture. Some revealed valuable ways of reading and responding to a site and solving issues, while others proved to be constrained by limiting time factors. What emerged from this is a set of possible tools that support the earliest stages of design by encouraging curiosity and responsiveness. These tools do not provide a fixed process but instead offer prompts that engage intuitive thinking, the subconscious and creative experimentation, allowing the designer to move beyond a restrictive framework of thinking. The following table creates an outline of the tools that hold the strongest potential for the design process in landscape architecture, their potential use and the kinds of insights they may generate. Categories in this table have been defined to provide a clear insight into the tool, based from tactics inspired by the Surrealist philosophy, what that tool involves, when it may be of use, and how it may influence or impact the design process.

Table 3: Possible Surrealist Tools For Landscape Architecture

<i>Tool</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Potential Use</i>	<i>Contribution to the Design Process</i>
<i>Automatic Drawing</i>	Captures emotional and impulsive responses at the beginning of design.	When first encountering the site or beginning conceptual work.	Reveals the felt essence of place and draws subconscious responses to the surface before analytical thinking steps in.
<i>Timed Rapid Sketches</i>	Fast drawings completed within 5, 10 or 15 seconds to reduce unplanned interruptions and overthinking.	When idea generation has stalled or when intuitive responses need to be unlocked.	Allows immediate impressions to emerge and builds a fast catalogue of early ideas.

<i>Deconstruction of the Vernacular</i>	Pulls apart familiar local elements to reveal their underlying forms and embedded meanings.	When exploring how local character can be reinterpreted rather than copied.	Creates openings for contextual yet imaginative interventions that draw from the identity of place, particularly that which is often overlooked and mundane.
<i>Defamiliarisation Exercises</i>	Rotates, layers or distorts familiar site elements to reframe how they are perceived, including exquisite corpse variations.	When familiar landscapes feel too known or predictable.	Exposes overlooked qualities and encourages designers to see the site with fresh eyes.
<i>Chance-based Collage Methods</i>	Uses chance combinations of maps, images or materials to spark unexpected directions.	When linear thinking dominates or when searching for bold conceptual starting points.	Generates surprising juxtapositions that suggest new forms, textures or atmospheres.
<i>Automatic Writing</i>	Records immediate thoughts or impressions and captures subconscious associations.	Useful in early site visits or during reflective moments in the design process.	Often helps to solve problems by revealing unexpected solutions.
<i>Reflexive Journaling</i>	Notes emotional responses, subconscious reactions and positional insights.	Throughout site visits and ongoing design development.	Strengthens awareness of positionality and tracks subtle shifts in perception and bias.
<i>Iterative Reinterpretation</i>	Revisits and reworks early intuitive sketches or writings later in the process.	When rational thinking begins to dominate or when conceptual clarity is needed.	Keeps the process fluid and honours the value of early intuitive impulses, avoiding fixed conclusions too soon.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Now drawing to the end of my Master's degree, I reflect on the vastness of possibilities there are for creative practice, design and my own approach to thinking. Through this research, it has become abundantly clear how profound and layered the design process can be. We as designers may often find ourselves sitting in the comfort of what we know and understand, lounging within the confines of normative and conventional design frameworks. However, it is when we embrace the discomfort that accompanies the realm of the unknown, that we can push the boundaries of what it means to design and how we create.

Indeed, designs are not produced out of thin air. Not only do they arise from a series of processes that become twisted, overlapped, built and reflected upon, but also from our experiences, environments and outlook on the world as designers. No designer is the same; we are all formed as people individually, and therefore, every decision we make does in fact become unique to that person, their background, cognitive processes and stage of life.

I have found myself in a curious position, studying the intersection between surrealism and landscape architecture. This is effectively the junction between two stages of my life, a bridge between my Fine Arts background and newfound knowledge and understanding of the landscape. What has emerged from this research is an understanding that the Surrealist philosophy does not belong exclusively to the walls of galleries or written on the pages of art history. Instead, it offers a rich set of principles that can reawaken the earliest moments of design. It encourages designers to tap into their instinctual responses to the landscape, to listen closely to the trapped memories of place, atmosphere and intuition, and to acknowledge the subtle influence of the subconscious that often lies dormant or silenced beneath pragmatic design processes. The landscape affects us as much as we shape it.

For landscape architecture, a discipline often governed by pragmatism and functionality, this research offers an opening. It provides a way to expand the scope of what design may consider, and how we begin to design. At the same time, this research reaffirmed the challenges of working within a discipline grounded in practicality and convention, under the pressure of functionality and commercial pressures. Surrealist tactics flourished most vividly at the beginning of the design process, before the regimented structure of the Major Design project asserted itself. The clash between intuition and convention revealed how, with practice, unconventional modes of thinking may coexist with technical demand, how spontaneity can find its place beside rational planning and

how creativity may be renewed in moments when it feels most constrained. This research does not suggest that conventional design frameworks should be abandoned. Instead, it indicates how they can be enriched. Although these frameworks may cloud the influence of the unconventional in the final product, it cannot be denied that they are there.

When these forces meet, designers can tap into the full experience of their subjective knowledge and understanding of the world. They become the mediators between creativity and functionality, balancing the needs of the discipline with the impulse of the curious mind.

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