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The asymmetry of landscape: Aesthetics, agency, and material reuse in the Reserva Ecológica de Buenos Aires

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Abstract

Situated on the edge of Buenos Aires, perched on the mudflats between downtown and the river, the Reserva Ecológica is 864 acres (350 ha) of public landscape. In the 1980s, at the end of the military dictatorship, cultural and hydrogeological forces combined to produce an excess of construction debris, dredged material, political action, and alluvium that aggregated here to form the Reserva. This piece identifies the appropriation and reuse of waste products in an estuarine megacity as the raw material for this civic landscape and argues for the importance of an aesthetics of asymmetry in the formation of democratic public life. Human and non-human actors are situated in a landscape where radically different means and forms of entanglement and novelty are the norm. In the Reserva, asymmetrical processes have resulted in an aesthetics beyond meaning, a new landscape, and new publics.

Landscape aesthetics / sediment / public space / Buenos Aires / ecological preserve

Introduction

1983. In Buenos Aires it was a year of terror and relief. Devastating flooding on the Río Paraná collided with the collapse of the military dictatorship and its processes of domestic violence¹ to reshape the muddy zone between city and river known as the *ribera*. The remaking of this space, now called the Reserva Ecológica Costanera Sur, is one of the enduring legacies of that tumultuous time. This depositional landscape composed primarily of dumped demolition debris, dredged sediment, and floodplain alluvium stands as a testament to the imperfection and dynamism of *porteño* society and the fecundity and power of the Río Paraná,² linking them together as co-workers and unequal adversaries in the making of a dynamic place. This piece is an attempt to wrestle with this reality by focusing on the agency and qualities of things through what I call landscape asymmetry. This concept draws from landscape theory and hemispheric studies, describing a space where disparate and dissimilar forces come together in the context of highly asymmetrical power relations over time, giving rise to novelty in practice and theory through aesthetics.

The Reserva is a typical contemporary landscape, in a way. It is a leftover, a residue reclaimed as a recreational area—simultaneously public, infrastructural, contested, and wildly productive. For that reason it offers some lessons that are broadly applicable, and reflects contemporary discourses around landscape infrastructure, environmental risk, the Anthropocene, and the recovery of urban waterfronts. Analyzing sediment containment facilities as a type, Sean Burkholder notes that they often are ‘politically ambiguous littoral landscapes that provide significant habitat value to their respective regions.’³ This insight offers a window into the Reserva, where political ambiguity is brought about not through an absence of politics and other forms of power, but an excess of it.



Figure 1 Río de la Plata. The view across the Río de la Plata is endless, as Uruguay is lost to the curvature of the earth. The coast is made of a geological and industrial residue of the city and river; demolished houses and eroded sediments mix together to create pockets of groin-like riffles, beach-like sandy slopes, and a red-tinted intertidal zone.

The Reserva is strange and unique with a specific kind of wildness, and to experience it is to constantly dash much of contemporary landscape theory against the rubble of the perimeter dike. The landscape beckons what Maria Hellström Reimer calls ‘a reconsideration of landscape aesthetics beyond the consoling and the beautiful, as well as a fundamental shift in landscape thinking from representation to agency’.⁴ To experience this landscape is not to discover meaning or some representative truth, but to take part in the actual working-out of partially formed or latent values, desires, and intentions alongside other things—political foes with competing visions, binocular enthusiasts and migratory warblers, cultural and hydrogeological forces. In the Reserva things give rise to novelty through their desires, capacities, and their interactions—new publics, new ideas, new practices, and new experiences (Fig. 1).

Today landscape designers continue to recover a territorial agenda. Theorists such as Christophe Girot have noted that this move towards large and more complex terrain is partially provoked by social and material displacements brought on by climate change and economic volatility as well as epistemic shifts driven in part by new sensing and computational technology and the widespread availability of information.⁵ Today these forces are sometimes discussed as emergent conditions indicative of a new epoch, the Anthropocene. But this is not really true. Métis anthropologist Zoe Todd points out that universalizing concepts like the Anthropocene tends to sub-



Figure 2 Sediment management infrastructure in Baltimore, Maryland. Here, machine operators at the Cox Creek Dredge Material Containment Facility are undertaking crust management through using a long-arm excavator, evapotranspiration, and hydrostatic pressure.

sume local specificities into an overarching narrative.⁶ This criticism echoes Elizabeth Meyer’s argument two decades earlier that ‘we should be suspect of generalizations that transcend the boundaries of culture and region’.⁷ Moreover, the dynamics of acceleration and violence that are supposedly indicative of the Anthropocene have been endemic to landscape throughout the Americas for over five hundred years. Here the collision of indigenous, colonial, and external interests in the context of asymmetrical power relations has given rise to new social institutions, technology, cultural norms, and spatial practices as well as loss and destruction on a massive scale.⁸ That is, the markers we think of as indicating the Anthropocene are not anything special. They are foundational to American landscape itself, and perhaps only seem special because these dynamics are now impacting the elites that typically govern cities, run companies, or write about landscapes. A careful examination of landscape asymmetry throughout the Americas offers many lessons that have been overlooked (Fig. 2).

This focus on asymmetry is likely a bit overwrought for certain landscape types that have long been of interest to landscape architecture. Places with a strong alignment between stakeholder values and end uses, or even simply a powerful, well-funded client such as the institutions that continue to patronize award-winning projects (museums, universities, corporations) may not benefit from a focus on the asymmetry of landscape. But those that are public, radically dynamic, and contestable—the extraction



Figure 3 Satellite image of the Río de la Plata estuary during a 2012 flood. The muddy Río de la Plata can be seen here in flood stage, with Buenos Aires and Argentina along the southern edge, Uruguay to the north, and the great plains of the pampas extending to the west from Buenos Aires. The darker green area extending west from the Río de la Plata estuary along the spine of the Paraná River is the delta.



Figure 4 Strand plains of the Sarandí Canal, south of the petrochemical dock. The strand plains running parallel to the shore are produced through a convective current especially strong during *sudestada* storm events. The simultaneous deposition and current reversal causes the mouth of the stream to shift to the north. The petrochemical facility is built on former mudflats and is associated with the port facility to the south of the Reserva.

site, the waterfront, the industrial leftover, the transit easement—would. In this context, my work is guided by a few simple questions: How can we value places like the Reserva on their own terms? And if we can, to what end? Why might an alternative to conventional practices be desirable?⁹ The ways landscape architects and other practitioners of the art have operated in the Reserva since 1983 offer some clues.

The asymmetry of landscape

The modern city of Buenos Aires sits near the mouth of the Paraná River on the edge of the vast pampas, the agricultural heartland of South America. The Paraná is one of the world's largest and most sediment-laden rivers, carrying some 160 million tonnes of material to the Atlantic Ocean annually.¹⁰ Near Buenos Aires the Paraná joins the Uruguay River and fans out to form the broad, shallow Río de la Plata estuary. Extended seasonal rains far inland—often driven by El Niño events—can trigger extensive flooding with a discharge of 65,000 m³ every second.¹¹ What is more, sustained winds from seasonal ocean-born storm events (called *sudestadas*) drive ocean water back up the estuary, roughly analogous to a hurricane storm surge.¹² This causes a reversal in current and shifts the estuarine turbidity maximum, producing a mixture of heavier bed-load sands and clay materials, with depositional processes concentrating on the southern, Argentine edge (Figs. 3 & 4).

Low, extended mudflats become differentiated in strands creating subtle repeating topographic ridges and valleys only a few centimetres high, running parallel to the shore near Buenos Aires. This subtly churning zone composed of gradients within gradients, so well understood and explained by fluid mechanics, is also chaotic, strewn with erratic and aberrant materials—a carcass or stone cast up by storm currents, bits of plastic and driftwood originating as trash from the communities nearby or river detritus, a surprising woody species making a go of it on a little high ground until the next flood comes along and rights wrongs. The result is a relentless horizontality that is also subtle and surprising—the estuary on one side, the plains of the pampas on the other, and these bumpy mudflats perched in between (Fig. 5).

These acts of displacement and accumulation at a regional scale have been augmented by modern landscape practices for nearly two hundred years through reclamation, landfilling, and dredging.¹³ This history is not unique to Buenos Aires, but it is a common refrain that bears repeating. Since 1836 some 2,000 ha have been added along the coast as landfills, speculative real estate developments, parkland, and industrial facilities.¹⁴ The Reserva began to take its modern form in the late 1970s, when a new system of elevated urban highways were being cut through the city. The plans echoed an earlier proposal by Le Corbusier, Hardoy, and Kurchan¹⁵ in a heavy-handed and utilitarian manner and were based on the popular



MUSEO NACIONAL DE BELLAS ARTES, BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

Figure 5 *Vista de Buenos Aires*, Richard Adams. This reproduction of Scottish painter Richard Adams' 1832 work depicts the lively social and ecological life of the ribera of Buenos Aires. Here the city is situated to the right, high on the bluff, the estuary is to the left, and the bumpy mudflats stretch out into the distance.



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Figure 6 Shoreline of the Río de la Plata at the Reserva. The rubble, bricks, and concrete are composed of demolition materials. Welded wire mesh from the building materials can be seen near the foreground.

biological metaphor-cum-modern planning axiom of urban transport as a healthy circulatory system.¹⁶ Similar to other mid-century modern cities, the projects connected the suburbs to the downtown core at the expense of inner-city and working-class communities. As one more act of state violence being visited upon parts of the Argentinean population by the dictatorship, neighbourhoods were demolished as highways were cut through, and the demolition debris was trucked to the ribera to be dumped (Fig. 6).¹⁷

The incremental process of dike construction by dump truck was synced to the systematic destruction of neighbourhoods. Material from one day's demolition provided the stable ground on which the next day's trucks could make their way to the edge and deposit their payload. The result was a monumental landscape composed of buildings reconstituted as land in the order that they disappeared.¹⁸ The dike enclosed some 800 acres (324 ha) that was partially filled with contaminated sediments dredged from nearby navigation channels in the shallow estuary. This new terrain was intended to become the administrative headquarters for the government.¹⁹ The aesthetic and technological affinities with a work like *Spiral Jetty* are powerful, but here the material is a waste product of political violence in the service of technological progress. A few years earlier, discussing contemporary earth art, Robert Smithson noted that 'processes of heavy construction have a devastating kind of primordial grandeur . . .'²⁰ This was no hyperbole. The violence of the demolition in Buenos Aires was devastating. It was a vio-

lent spatial practice of exclusion through demolition synced with citizen surveillance and clandestine operations of kidnapping and murder by the military, taking the form of long-desired new land out in the river, a massive construction the size of Central Park.

The work was never completed. Cessation of the governmental project coincided with the collapse of the dictatorship in 1983.²¹ As construction ground to a halt, floodwaters from the Paraná arrived and the deposition of sediment and biological material produced an unintended ecological project of the highest order. Open lagoons and micro-topographic mudflats were created within the bluff-like slopes of the perimeter dikes. The emergent landscape was a collaborative mesocosm of the estuary and pampas.²²

Competing visions for the future of this landscape began to develop immediately. Ultimately the legal standing of the floodwaters, birds, and the appropriated sediment dump was cemented by courts through the arguments of new affiliations of neighbourhood groups, wildlife NGOs, and academic scientists by demonstrating the biological diversity of the landscape. In 1986, municipal ordinance number 41,247 was authorized, setting aside the reclaimed terrain as a place for the protection of wildlife and public recreation in the city.²³ The tendency to nominally convert dredged material facilities to habitat is often an outcome where planning and money are lacking on the part of the agencies and engineers creating the place, a result that squares well with the desires of well-organized



Figure 7 Plan and section composite. This aerial and section cut show the ribera and its landscapes of material reuse in relation to the bluff and historical core of Buenos Aires.

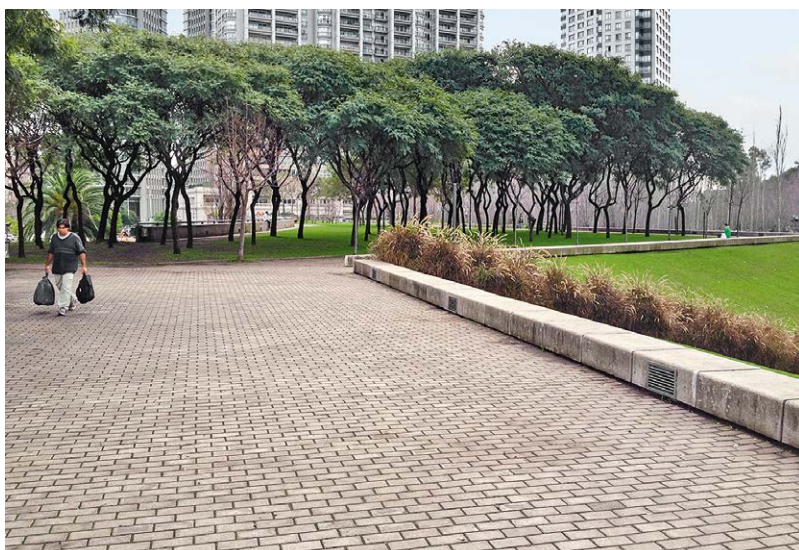


Figure 8 Parque Micaela Bastidas, Puerto Madero, Buenos Aires. A good example of successful contemporary urban landscape design, this type of parkland that was realized in the adjacent Puerto Madero quarter gives an idea of some of the competing visions for what the Reserva might have been. It is defined by clean formal moves, axes, abrupt elevation changes, and specimen planting.



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Figure 9 Mirador. One of the overlooks of the Reserva, adjacent to the path and taking pedestrians out into the vegetation springing from the flats below.

groups demanding birding locations.²⁴ Implicit in that framing is the idea that the production of landscape is primarily a human undertaking, with intent being limited to humans and any other effects being incidental. But really it is a coproduction, a fact made obvious at the Reserva. While fish, dump trucks, hyacinths, and floodwaters may not have intent in the same way that military dictatorships or engineers do, here they very clearly possess agency that is different in kind but not in force.

Despite the new law, throughout the late 1980s the Mayor of Buenos Aires, Carlos Grosso, advocated for including the Reserva as part of the commercial redevelopment of an adjacent post-industrial port. This vision was backed by developers and national and international architectural associations and articulated through an international design competition.²⁵ While ostensibly about landscape and urbanism, it was based on developer-driven models and conventional design strategies and aesthetic tropes that relied on axes, defined parklands, and curvy lines representing nature. Countering the horizontality and discounting the subtlety and fecundity of the *ribera* in favour of commerce through architectural exuberance had been a dream since the Corbusian vision of 1938. However, Argentine society had shifted since the post-war period, and environmental concerns had a new constituency. And the Reserva was a landscape with a new public (Figs. 7 & 8).

More than meaning

In 1992 this new public worked with the Argentinean-English landscape design team of Nilda Cosco and Robin Moore to conceive a new landscape project as part of the Reserva. One enduring strategy that was born out of this effort were a set of incisions—small moves such as railings, nodes, and paths along the pre-existing dikes that would ameliorate the effects of a quarter-million visitors per year on the unique and evolving ecosystems.²⁶ These incisions included a system of nineteen *miradores* (lookouts), each of which used the existing dikes as an armature for circulation. They were finished with simple materials like wood chips and decking, and emphasized orientation and rich sectional relationships to experientially repurpose topographic conditions in the Reserva (Fig. 9).

Perhaps the best word to describe the *miradores* system is *deft*. They are not necessarily light in their touch, being composed of thick wood members and requiring regrading while attaching to the massive dikes made from demolition debris. But neither are they exuberant or dominant, meant to symbolically exude narratives of cultural healing, restoration, or some kind of optimism. For a moment they seem to open up this otherwise implacable landscape that exists at radically large and small scales defined by the hydrogeology of one of the world's great rivers and the industrial and political processes of a megacity. The wood decking that takes your feet just out over or down to the mud, the railing that you lean on with your forearm, these things appear intermittently as spots that offer distant views of the skyline or across a lagoon, or encourage close inspec-



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Figure 10 Dike path. The elevated, compacted path along the top of the exterior and interior dikes. In some areas these are now more or less lined with locust trees, appearing for the moment to offer an expected, domesticated, park-like landscape. But even here the steep slopes of the dike down to the perimeter lagoon and the irrepressible vegetation pushing up it belie the fact that this place is a different animal.



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Figure 11 A mirador immediately adjacent to the dike path at the Reserva. The infrastructural ground of the dike collides with the vegetation growing in the alluvium that capped the contaminated dredged material where a small space is carved for humans to stop and chat or admire some of the vegetation.

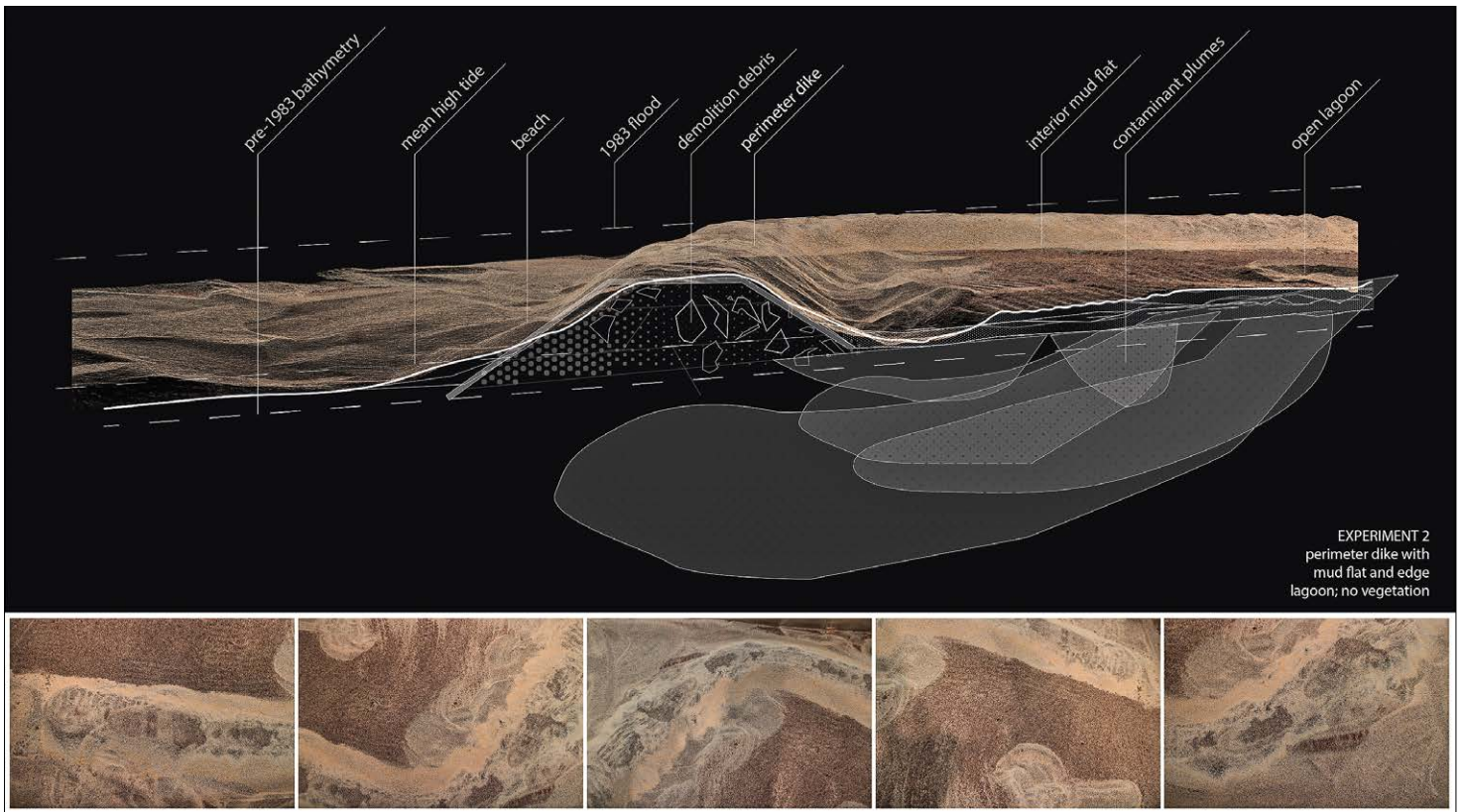


Figure 12 This is an image of an experimental study to recreate and capture the landform and microtopography of the Reserva. The work recreates surfaces and subsurface conditions to speculate on the effects of floods and groundwater on the likely contaminant plumes in the original dredged material of the Reserva. The method combines

colour-coded media that is shaped using tools, digitally captured using photogrammetry, and subjected to analysis and speculation using conventional drawing tools including 3D modelling software and Adobe Illustrator.

tion of aroids or sedges growing near the water's edge. The human body is accommodated, but the space is not about the human body. The *miradores* system augments the character of a place that is fundamentally ecological, political, and infrastructural, enabling habitation without domesticating the landscape (Fig. 10).

The *miradores* system gave shape to the desires of the emerging public, neighbourhood groups and scientists but also birds, plants, and amphibians. This vision for landscape could never compete in terms of economic value with the real estate ventures articulated as contemporary urban design that were simultaneously considered. However, it succeeded in offering a convincing alternative, effectively resisting the efforts of the Mayor, developers, and designers to develop the terrain in conventional ways.²⁷ Here the things that were valued and defended rely on the mudflats and lagoons. They are subtle, small things noticed in a quotidian manner through shifts in perspective—juxtapositions of demolition debris and flotsam and pulpy riparian vegetation, encounters between amphibians, minerals, broken concrete and brick, plants, and humans, moments of erosion and deposition (Figs. 11 & 12).

When wrestling with a place such as the Reserva it is tempting for critics and design theorists to rely on indexing, theory, mapping, and other representational approaches and to prioritize meaning in the face of this alluring incoherence. But this is wrong, or at least incomplete, in land-

scapes defined by competing values and asymmetrical forces, as Marc Treib began to articulate twenty-five years ago.²⁸ It is not that there is no meaning, or multiple meanings—there clearly are. The place has significance, carrying in its soils the violence and growth, aggregation and consolidation, the striving and dying of the river city. At first glance this emphasis on meaning seems appropriate and a knowledgeable guide can do as Anne Whiston Spirn teaches and read these things as symbols of larger narratives.²⁹ But meanings are a kind of outcome of cultural and hydrogeological accumulation,³⁰ just one outcome among many. When meaning does arise, it is *sedimented*, to use James Corner's evocative phrase, and just as it arises it can erode. It distils over time through encounters, derivative of experience—not design intent (Fig. 13).

The postmodern approach emphasizing meaning through hermeneutics, narrative, and indexing developed by Meyer, Corner, Spirn, and others remains a powerful approach in certain landscape types, where values are clear, and asymmetries negligible. But this shift towards meaning confounds in a place like the Reserva. Here the landscape is about experience itself, and these experiences are not the result of the cognitive processes alone. Moving from one *mirador* to the next, visitors experience vastness, both industrial and geological, but also the subtle variations of mud, sedges, and song birds, of woody vegetation giving it a try in a wetter spot, rarely if ever pausing to consider the meaning of things.



Figure 13 Earthworks on the brownfield. These time-lapse studies show the transformation of the Covimet factory brownfield site using 350,000 m³ of excavated material. The slow forestation of the site can be seen from left (2004), to centre (2007), to right (2018). These processes of aggregation at industrial and ecological scales are characteristic of those that hatched the Reserva.

José Ortega y Gasset writes that ‘a narrative makes everything a ghost of itself, placing it at a distance, pushing it beyond the horizon of the here and now’.³¹ At the Reserva things are not represented but present. Narratives are not the root cause of the wide variety of things that *come and are* in the landscape—for the chemicals and the bricks and the school kids and the tourists and the migratory birds. It is something more fundamental that attracts or repels. While the experience of the Reserva is multiform and variable, at the *miradores* you see close up—really notice—power and violence and growth *made vulnerable*, if only for a moment. The landscape may remain inscrutable, but you can feel it. This is the importance of asymmetry in landscape. Not that it creates a dynamic situation or novelty in a general way, for many factors can cause change, but that it creates novelty by making powerful forces vulnerable (Fig. 14).

The Reserva embodies the urban history of Buenos Aires through pure, uncut experience. This is its magic. It is the type of place that Maria Hellström Reimer would say ‘concerns the senses and is played out on a shared and material level’.³² As one moves around the pathways or walks down to the water, they are confronted with chunks of concrete, reinforcing bar still embedded. Or with bricks still mortared together pushing up through the dusty walking paths, corners rounded from the pulverizing action of waves and footsteps. In the Reserva there is no effort to extract meaning, no attempt to discover or interpret the past, but also no amnesia. Here, things and their qualities are present in situations of attraction and repulsion and curiosity, of hunting and locating, of making and conversing, or reflecting. The experience is a kind of history-without-narrative, a refusal to forget without resorting to interpretation. And this seems particularly appropriate in an intensely political, geological place made through the collision and separation of many different value systems, power dynamics, injustices, dreams, and productive processes.

Aesthetics of asymmetry

A focus on experience itself offers a means to grapple with the ambiguities, violence, structure, form, and dynamism born from the churning, colliding, and erosion of asymmetrical things. But how, exactly? If we can accept for a moment the possibility put forth by Hellström Reimer that ‘aesthetics involves the creative and negotiable allocation of matter and sensations, identities and meanings in space...’,³³ the question follows—just what type of aesthetics is needed? Beauty, what Arnold Berleant calls ‘a non-mediated model of mutuality and support’, and other persistent forms of nineteenth-century aesthetic theory just will not do in these muddy, contested places.³⁴ And as Spirn notes, they ‘cannot be normative for contemporary design’.³⁵ Frederick Law Olmsted recognized this in his vision for Chicago’s South Park, eschewing the picturesque for a horizontality defined by ‘long, shallow depressions’ and ‘slight changes of surface’.³⁶ The Reserva embodies the patient shaping of erosive or consolidating forces, but also the anomalies, aberrations, the striations, and breakages that are indicative of asymmetry.

To return to my first question: How do we take a place like the Reserva on its own terms? The conclusions of both Meyer and Spirn (and many, many others subsequently, so much so that it borders on consensus) have pointed towards a landscape aesthetic based on processes—cultural, ecological, systems-based.³⁷ Over the last twenty years it has become clear that a danger to this approach is that the agency of things themselves—humans, plants, rocks—is diminished, smoothed out into a predictable, mediated flow, sublimated into superstructures. Core postmodern concepts such as hybridity do this, reducing actions and histories that are often violent to a biological process metaphor. And while this schematic is powerful, it misses key ingredients of public space: conflict and vulnerability brought about by the asymmetrical agency of things.

The work of theorists and writers such as Sarah Cowles and Jane Hutton offers ways to reinterpret postmodern insights that do not quite hold in these contemporary landscapes. Julian Raxworthy’s critique of what he calls the process discourse shows that representational practices diminish or ‘overlook an immediately latent quality of landscape—change itself’.³⁸

Figure 14 Lagoon. A view across one of the interior lagoons from a *mirador*. Woody vegetation can be seen encroaching, somewhat unsuccessfully, on the lagoon during the recent spell of drier years in the Reserva. An irrigation project is currently underway to allow the city to begin actively managing water levels in the lagoons to keep open water.



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Figure 15 View looking south. The edge of the Reserva is armoured by the old demolition material. The concrete resists the wave action more effectively than the terracotta brick, which is decomposing more rapidly and changing the colour and chemical composition of the soil. The trees of the drier dike areas can be seen just upland, with an eroded bluff to the right.

Like Hellström Reimer he calls for decentring representational practices and working directly with the landscape itself by recovering gardening practices as a means to engage real novelty in the landscape.³⁹ And he is right. But we must go one step further, because here much of the change is not only by vegetative growth but by conflict and cooperation between equal and unlike things. Eric Avila's study of the effects of freeways being cut through the Latino neighbourhoods of 1960s Los Angeles offers insight.⁴⁰ He noted that the roads were both cause and effect of the ongoing marginalization

of communities and landscapes. For Avila these acts and objects of freeway building created discontinuities that were damaging to the society, and they gave rise to artistic production and new types of appropriation. Landscapes like the Reserva demand a landscape aesthetics that values these irruptions and discontinuities alongside or even above Enlightenment ideals of beauty, continuity, composition, and tradition. Not as a means to valorize conflict and loss, but to focus on these conflicts as complex, imperfect public actions instead of simply problems to be solved.

A key characteristic of an asymmetrical landscape aesthetic is that it makes that which is massive and subtle vulnerable. The complex convection currents of the Río Paraná are experienced as a small bedform creating a rich benthic habitat for a day, or a week. Government plans to redevelop a large tract get subverted by just the right combination of environmental policy-makers and neighbourhood activists. There is no amnesia but also no interpretation, and meaning is deemphasized. Facts and values are immanent, present without being resolved into a coherent narrative. The landscape is not symbolic, or a language, or at least not primarily so. The multiform and variable meanings are temporary and derivative of experience. Finally, this aesthetic decentres the middle scale, that which relates most directly to the human body. While we may still be accommodated, as in the case of the *miradores*, the landscape is not domesticated, reformatted to our body and vision. The result is not quite alienation, but amongst-ness, wildness. An asymmetrical landscape is not a garden, but a world (Fig. 15).

The Reserva today is like a lot of modern landscapes—its artificial nature and contradictions are genuine. Rather than a work that reflects the values and ideals of a society, the landscape is more a muddy totality where sedges, old bricks, heavy metals, newts, strands of silty loam, prized avian species, high tides, and demolished housing each contend with one another. Mary Louise Pratt, in her seminal essay ‘Arts of the Contact Zone’, captures the idea well—it is a space where things ‘make demands beyond representation and basic rights granted from above’.⁴¹ This is where values, goals, prejudices, and shortcomings are debated and played out in real time. The experience of this landscape is succinctly stated by Hellström Reimer, who argues that ‘life does not unfold as a value above or beyond, but as a conditioning within; an [aesthetic] principle concerning no less than the whole, the raw and unintended micro-physicality of human-nonhuman interaction’.⁴² Here the landscape is massive, its history devastating, its publics multiplying and dying off, its fecundity unparalleled. The Reserva is always eroding the convenient division between aesthetics and ethics, and it points to a method of landscape making that is more participatory and daring.

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