

# Editors' Introduction

## WHAT WE SEE

Design professors frequently advise their students to learn how to see, linking to this charge such phrases as “bring the right lens to the problem,” “apply vision to the creative process,” and “learn to discern the eye of the beholder.” First-year landscape architecture students are often asked to read Donald Meinig’s “The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene” (1979) in which he discusses the differing lenses people bring to landscape interpretation, urges caution about personal biases, and suggests that a better understanding of those lenses presents opportunities for enhanced communication. More advanced students sometimes read about Ralph Waldo Emerson’s concept of the transparent eyeball as a means of creatively engaging nature, supposedly free of cultural and social constraints (Emerson 1836). As students learn sketching, they are taught that drawing and seeing are inextricably connected. In assessing the era of postmodern deconstruction, graduate students occasionally read N. Katherine Hayles, “Searching for Common Ground” (1995) in which she explains the notions of interactivity and positionality for the purpose of better seeing the vantages of others, including other species. Then, of course, students also learn design thinking, which is a method of envisioning some future reality through a process of empathy, iteration, modeling, and testing.

From these and other experiences, landscape architecture students quickly become aware of the multiple definitions and metaphorical uses of the word *see*. It variously means to perceive with one’s eyes; to understand; to visualize; to empathize with another’s perspective; and to imagine (create a mental image of) a future reality. Over the years, articles in *Landscape Journal* have reflected all of these definitions of seeing. In this introduction we express our belief that seeing as a way of deeply understanding differing points of view and seeing as a means of envisioning the future

are deeply important for the evolution of research in landscape architecture.

## Seeing Differing Points of View

It is because of this belief in empathetic seeing that, in our introduction to 33:1, we suggested a number of important social and environmental issues worthy of exploration in *Landscape Journal*. While those topics were not intended to be comprehensive, we did hope for renewed interest in the pressing issues and debates of the age.

Since that introduction, issues of race have come to the forefront of national consciousness once again. On the evening of June 17, 2015, 21-year-old Dylann Roof entered Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina and, after listening to an in-progress bible study, opened fire, killing nine black parishioners, including Senior Pastor and State Senator Clementa C. Pinkney (Eversley 2015). National outrage gave new immediacy to numerous concerns already articulated by African-American leaders. Of direct concern are the real and perceived extant symbols of oppression dating from the anti-Civil Rights era back to the Civil War. Because of that raised consciousness, the Confederate battle flag, which flew for years in front of the South Carolina State Capitol, was permanently lowered on July 10, 2015. Days after the flag lowering in South Carolina, the Georgia Chapter of the NAACP called for the removal of the massive Stone Mountain, Georgia bas-relief of Confederate heroes carved onto a granite mountainside. Since then others have questioned the many roads, buildings, and institutions named for heroes of the Confederacy and the Jim Crow South, as well as the existence of memorials, monuments, sculptures, and markers dedicated to the “lost cause of the Confederacy” or which were constructed during the period of “massive resistance” to

integration in the years following *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, 1954.

Because landscape architectural practitioners, students, and academics design and study memorials and because of the importance of this topic to the future of the nation, we encourage well-researched manuscripts on the subject. In this issue, for example, the typical approach to memorialization is questioned as it relates to racial injustice during World War II. In succeeding issues other authors will explore the sources of many of the memorials under scrutiny today. It is our hope that research on this topic will help us to better see the world as others do.

### Seeing Future Research Possibilities

In our introduction to 34:1, we suggest design research as an important future direction for *Landscape Journal*. Another important research possibility includes the great wealth of multipurpose data continuously collected digitally and made available to the world, much of it freely given to users through apps and social media. Corporations and advertisers are already turning raw data into knowledge aimed at individual purchasing habits. Because so much open access data is available, researchers across disciplines are considering how a similar conversion of data into knowledge might shed light on their research topics. Social media mining is one rapidly emerging approach used by researchers to gather pertinent information (Zafarani 2014). Because so much of those data contain useful information about landscape interactions and interventions, researchers in landscape architecture should consider how best to access and interpret this abundance of information. Here again we encourage manuscripts that explore data mining, social media mining, spatial informatics, and other useful approaches to Big Data. Video analyses can be particularly useful to landscape-based studies because, while often not the intended focus of filming, landscapes are regularly captured in millions of amateur productions. Of course, with more than a billion YouTube videos from which to choose, selecting a viable/feasible/practical analysis method is essential. This issue features one approach to analyzing YouTube videos in landscape architectural research.

### ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Karl Linn's "Neighborhood Commons" concept found expression in declining areas of several U.S. cities

in the 1960s and 1970s. It involved a participatory process in which potential users became intimately involved in the design and construction of the commons. In her article, "Urban Barnraising: Collective Rituals to Promote *Communitas*," Alison Hirsch, Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Southern California, examines this process as a collective ritual and likens it to that used in the barn raisings of 18th and 19th century rural America. Hirsch argues that Linn's focus on process-generated form meaningfully immersed participants in the creation of an urban *communitas* through collective action.

Encouraging the use of abductive reasoning processes, Associate Professor Allen Shearer at the University of Texas-Austin offers a pedagogic framework in his article titled "Abduction to Argument: A Framework of Design Thinking," one for teaching design thinking that focuses on how designers respond to five types of "What if . . . ?" questions. Shearer argues that the framework helps students declare assumptions explicitly, become more mindful about how initial propositions frame subsequent thought, and how examining interdependencies among contrasting positions can provide a basis to test ideas within a design project.

Rob Kuper, an Associate Professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture at Temple University, presents "Examining the Visual Effects of Plant Foliation and Vegetative Winter Dormancy on Preference and Mystery," a follow-up to an article he published in *Landscape Journal* in 2013 (32: 65–78). The current contribution examines whether plant foliage and vegetative winter dormancy affect landscape preference ratings, estimations of mystery, and objective measures of attributes related to mystery. Kuper reports direct correlations between perceptions of preference and mystery estimates, especially in scenes containing dormant vegetation. He concludes with an exploration of preference ratings and the effects of vegetative change and dormancy on objectively measured landscape parameters of mystery.

Recently (*Landscape Journal* 33:2 and in this issue), the editors argued for the discipline developing innovative stewardship practices for the gathering of digital data for use in the design, planning, and management of landscape. Ben Shirtcliff, Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture at Iowa State University, picks up the gauntlet in his article titled

“Big Data in the Big Easy: How Social Networks can Improve the Place for Young People in Cities.” He argues that the use of big data (or the aggregation and analysis of “data trails left from our digital footprints (Chandler 2015, 837)”) provides two critical benefits for landscape architecture research and practice: 1) it opens a window into previously inaccessible human experience of designed environments, introducing new metrics for evidence-based design and ways of improving design literacy; and (2) the design, planning, and management of the land, especially in cities, can benefit from scraping big data to support urban ecological design. Using big data “scraped” from YouTube videos in New Orleans, Shirtcliff demonstrates that big data can advance landscape research to support positive, interdependent relationships between people and built environments.

Javier Arbona is a Chancellor’s Postdoctoral Fellow in the American Studies Department at the University of California, Davis. His article titled “Anti-memorials and World War II Heritage in the San Francisco Bay Area: Spaces of the 1942 Black Sailors’ Uprising” examines a 1942 uprising in Vallejo, California among African-American Navy personnel against racism and segregation at the Navy’s Mare Island depot. Focusing on a site whereupon unarmed black sailors were shot by white marines, the author presents the idea of “anti-memorial” as a design concept raising questions of unresolved justice associated with the shootings.

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