"It is a desperate moment when we discover that this empire, which had seemed to us the sum of all wonder, is an endless, formless ruin, that corruption's gangrene has spread too far to be healed by our scepter, that the triumph over enemy sovereigns has made us the heirs of their long undoing. Only in Marco Polo's account was Kublai Khan able to discern, through the walls and towers destined to crumble, the tragedy of a pattern so subtle it could escape the timetested grammar."
A design thesis submitted
to the
Graduate Faculty of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
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Master of Landscape Architecture

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defense date

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Keywords: archetype, hero, fool, tower, tarot, landscape
This work is dedicated to my parents:

Robert Louis Mowson
whose passion for knowledge made the world a magical place

Audrey Schmidt Mowson
who loved gardens and taught me that the truth of the heart can transcend the mundane

I would like to acknowledge the generosity of my committee members:

Ron Kagawa
who is a rock against which the tides may rise and fall

Susan Piedmont-Palladino
who understood my poetry and taught me to sing it

Paul Emmons
who possesses and shared with me the treasure map of the universe

Jaan Holt
who is surely the greatest penguin of all

and

My Beloved
WAAC
where all things become possible

Special thanks to my husband, John, my daughter, Sarah, and my son, Joseph, for their belief in me fuels my life
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Design in the civic realm demands opportunities to recognize commonality. Architecture, therefore, must provide a call and response between visitor and space. This intimate dialogue can only occur where landscape elements speak a universal language. Revelatory, Allegorical, Cosmological and Vernacular methods of design have traditionally been employed to communicate in the landscape. This project explores the method of Archetypal design as a means to avoid the culturally-dependent, and hence, esoteric language of design and so create an exoteric language more appropriate for civic space.
This project began with the question: By what means does a designer create an intimate experience in the public realm?

Introduction

Intimate and public may seem as ideas in opposition that cannot guide design to a single goal. Intimate is the interior, private, secret; public is the exterior, open, shared. To bring these together is to make the secret open or relate the private to the public. When considering the purpose of place in the civic realm, it seems it should provide for recognition of commonality, or a glimpse of the private in the public, and to do that requires an intimate dialogue between visitor and place. A civic park, then would be a place where listening and sharing occur. Design must speak to the individual and allow the individual to see himself reflected in place. There must be some recognizable code of meaning that passes between these two participants. This recognition is what provides intimacy. Catherine Howett wrote:

"...architecture can communicate visual and conceptual messages according to the way a vocabulary of meaningful formal signs is ordered, much as a spoken or written language makes sense to us because it follows rules of syntax and grammar in the arrangement of words whose meaning we know." (Howett 1987 p 112)"

In other words, there must be some organization of the language of landscape that communicates meaning. "Artful authors craft many-layered landscapes with multiple meanings, overlapping functions and contexts." (Spim 1998 p 77) This thesis project explores an approach to bringing meaning to the landscape, inviting interpretation so that intimate dialogue may take place.

The work of William Whyte (1980) and Clare Cooper Marcus (1998) examines the behavior of people in urban spaces and recommends guidelines for the design of functional features that seem to be present in successful architecture. Seating configuration and placement, manipulation of scale, location, amenities and security are elements that can be related to the behavioral response of visitors and a formula has begun to emerge that can be applied to create spaces that are predictably successful. Such work and thought is of tremendous value to those who design public spaces. What this correlational research (Groat and Wang 2002) fails to describe is the qualitative experience of the places examined. Determining a preference for place is quite different from characterizing the experience of place. Additionally, the experience of place appears to be culturally dependent (Tuan 1974). A
deeper understanding of the experience is necessary if landscape architects are to mediate the relationship between people and place. A look at the various strategies of mediation results in five broad categories of methodology: Revelatory; Cosmological; Allegorical; Vernacular; and Archetypal. They are the different approaches that inform this process of design.

Revelatory

As the triumphs of technology have freed men from the tyrannical side of nature, separation has grown between man and his natural world. In pre-technological societies, and in most of the world into the twentieth century, the rhythms of nature were integral to daily life (Marcus 1991). Modern technology has allowed some societies to overcome conditions of climate. Once, the vagaries of flood and drought determined the viability of whole regions. Today, people need not be constrained by such concerns. Until modern times, man depended on a thorough knowledge of weather and seasons for survival. Daily rituals were intertwined with that knowledge. While nature had the upper hand, art and the earmarks of “culture” reflected and reinforced man’s intimate relationship with the natural world. The interface between man and nature occurs in the designed landscape, and by necessity the designed landscape was a reflection of man’s respect for and recognition of the laws of nature.

As far back as there are records of civilization, one can see evidence of Man’s response to the natural conditions of his world (Jellicoe 1975). Festivals, worship practices, and temples and community gathering places all reflect an understanding of the changing seasons and conditions of the environment. John Stilgoe (1982) traces the origins of agricultural design by settlers in the New World to their roots in successful practice as delineated by the demands of climate. We continue the traditions of pre-technological times -- Christmas/solstice, baptism/flooding, Thanksgiving/harvest -- though these celebrations are now largely devoid of their original connection to nature. These rituals may serve an important function in connecting people to each other, but they only faintly reinforce our relationship with the earth.

No longer moored in the natural world, we have lost touch with the constancy that speaks across time and culture. We’ve stopped listening to the words of our world and lost a connection to a common language that brings meaning to place.

The growth of cities and their attendant sprawl has often obliterated the natural landforms, streams and habitats of regions. Fortunately, the dire consequences of such actions have been kept in the sight of many, and from the Garden City Movement (Howard 1965)
through the greenbelt designs of the 1960's (Whyte 1968), to today’s land conservation efforts, action has been taken to preserve open spaces and restore natural habitats. Urban streams which were diverted to underground culverts in the wake of development have, in many places, been brought to daylight again. Where cities once turned their backs on waterways that had been the recipients of industrial neglect and abuse, they are now developing river walks and restoring the aesthetic and natural functions of the same waterways. These efforts communicate the power that the natural world continues to exert, and designers should heed that message. Ann Spirn (1998) writes about the language of nature and the importance of remembering how to understand it. She talks of reading the landscape to bring a depth of meaning to our experience of the world: “Artful authors craft many-layered landscapes with multiple meanings, overlapping functions and contexts.” (p 77)

One way, perhaps, of conversing with the landscape is to assess the ways in which materials and form can contribute to a revelation of natural processes.

Sycamores planted to signify a stream bed, Amelanchier heralding Spring with early blooms, a bench sited to capture afternoon sun on a cold Winter day – these are messages encoded with our knowledge of the natural world.

Cosmological

There are landscapes and sites that are considered sacred. Most often these sites commemorate an experience of the divine — the location of the birth of a prophet, a place in which a vision was experienced, the grave of a martyr. Other times, a sacred site is the deliberate construction and consecration of a place meant to bring people into contact with the divine. A sacred site may also serve as a reminder of sacrifice -- a memorial to war dead or victims of tragedy. Depending on the tradition in which they arise, these places present material links between man and his god (Tuan 1977, Osmen 1990). A Mayan zig-zag created steps by which man could physically and spiritually ascend to the realm of God above the dense tree canopy. The cruciform plan found in Christian churches makes direct reference to the cross of Christ. An eternal flame suggests the transcendent power of the divine when contrasted with man’s temporal existence. Bringing man to God or God to man is an ancient practice that may seem out of place in the modern world, but churchyards, memorials, cemeteries and nature preserves are commonplace features of the contemporary landscape that serve that purpose. (Nash 1973, Olin 1988)
Into the seventeenth century, Western culture regarded art as an embodiment of the divine, that is, art did not merely represent the qualities of a higher order of being; it was itself infused with those qualities. Just as in Greek mythology, where gods and men freely interact, no distinction was made between a space dedicated to the divine and the divine itself. To order space through architecture was to repeat the act of bringing order out of chaos, just as had been done at the time of the Creation (Eliade 1957). Hence, construction of public space was the act of creation itself—and the repetition of such acts of creation was one way in which man continued to uphold the divine purpose.

This cosmological principle guided design. As thinking became more “scientific,” separation grew between man and God, the divine became more and more an imagined presence, and architecture became more and more a symbolic representation of the experience of the divine. These symbols, however, were understood and continue to have power.

“As a representational art, early landscape architecture was a device of embodied communication, creating symbolic settings wherein a culture could communilize and comprehend its history and future -- the very basis of community. A built landscape provided an embodied map, a way of knowing one’s place in the world.” (Corner 1990 p 64)

Today a community is more likely to represent a variety of cultures and a variety of cosmological constructs. Moreover, cultural interpretations of creation theories share the stage with interpretations from the world of physics or astronomy. That is not to say they have lost their power. A landscape that represented the “big bang” theory would communicate to modern man as much as a sacred pillar to a Celt. (Eliade 1957 p 34)

Allegorical

Just as early and anonymous architects would have referred to creation stories in their designs, later designers would have simply increased the repertoire of stories or myths to present. Le Notre’s garden at Versailles is filled with allegorical sculptures and forms, signifying a link between Louis XIV and Apollo and other mythical figures of glory. For the Sun King the main axis runs east to west, following the sun. Architects of the time would
have used the shared language of cultural myths to tell a story in the landscape.

"Also, there was a disposition on the part of his audience to understand and appreciate his constructions, both as sensual environs, and as emblematic representations of agrarian social views." (Olin 1988 p 156)

In today’s cultural mix, stories about Apollo may not signify power, but we easily “read” the message of the U.S. president photographed on the deck of an aircraft carrier. Planting Rosa x “Peace” in the White House garden is simply the modern equivalent of allegorical design. In these minimalist times, spouting dolphins may be an inappropriate way to signify immortality, but the infinity edge of a pool of water sends the same message, and a simple form suggesting twin towers will always speak to this generation of tragedy and loss.

Vernacular

The rigid grid imposed on the land west of the Ohio River presents a fascinating geometry to the airplane passenger. Distinct from the undulating field borders of the East, or of Europe, it is a result of the National Land Survey of 1787. It was meant as an effort to parcel unsettled land in anticipation of western expansion, but it now defines the towns and borders of the region (Stilgoe 1982). Roads and towns were laid upon this grid, and their form is a defining characteristic of the West. Likewise, the cities of the East were “designed” with grids before they had a chance to grow randomly like their European ancestors. This pattern establishes a regional distinction that signals a separation from the landscape of the Old World. The same airplane passenger knows he is over agricultural land when he can see the remarkable circles of verdant green created by pivot irrigation. Covered bridges tell a traveller he is in Vermont, white steeples indicate a church is nearby, tile roofs claim Spanish ancestry, settlements along the navigable rivers and streams of the Tidewater region are reminders of how the tobacco trade organized the region. Such is the cultural or vernacular landscape — it taps out a code that identifies the character of a region. The image of “Main Street” is so powerful that the Disney Corporation has chosen it for a theme in its fantasyland, Disney World, where visitors are greeted by the front porches, pseudo Victorian buildings and friendly shopkeepers of an imaginary small town in America.
"[A] reason for discussing the pre-industrial town was that it still repre-
sents for most Americans the most picturesque and appealing aspect
of our past. The small town of that period is familiar in our popular art
and literature and folklore: the town with its central square or market-
place, with its fairground and local academy or college, its so-called
block of offices on the main street, the First Church with its graveyard
where the first settlers are buried, and the Greek revival facades
along the tree-lined streets leading out into the country."
(Jackson 1980 p 117)

Whether or not these images are overused, they are effective because they are imbued
with meaning.

Vernacular images derive from an actual experience of place, and it is the experience that lends power to the image (Tuan 1977).

These icons become meaningless when they are too far removed from the impetus that
first gave them meaning. Naming the local parking lot, fringed with grocery store, dry
cleaner, gas station and mortgage lender office, ubiquitous to the far suburbs, “Village
Green” in no way establishes it as a center of civic life as was the common of colonial
America. However, when the meaning of that common is applied, even in an abstract
form, to a landscape design, one may see the sort of success that the Main Street project
in Charlottesville, Virginia, designed by Lawrence Halprin, has ultimately enjoyed.

The symbols of the vernacular landscape are changing by exposure. Television and the
internet are shrinking distances and compressing time. The outer suburbs of American
cities display a homogeneity not possible fifty years ago; indeed, it is often impossible to
locate oneself based on the clues of such landscapes. Just as the community changes,
so do the symbols of that landscape, and new words are added to the cultural vocabulary.
There will always be code words for celebration space and commemorative space and
community space and any other space that has embraced the activities of people
that transcends time and place.

Recognizing the symbols of the vernacular landscape and bringing them into landscape design lends meaning to designed space.
Carl Jung (1990) maintained that archetypes comprise the world of the subconscious and that these archetypes are the symbols of the processes of conscious life. Jung claimed that archetypes are the same for all people in all places for all time, and so form the collective unconscious.

Archetypes, in a sense, are a communicative mode by which complex ideas may be transmitted via the subconscious in images.

Examples of these archetypes include river, island, sky, mother, and death. Jung maintained that symbols, representing these archetypes, appear to us in dreams and that in recalling dreams we bring to the conscious level our connection to the subconscious world. We may think that the subconscious is an unknown world to us, but at the same time we accept metaphor into our lives. Anne Whiston Spirn writes in *The Language of Landscape*:

> “Landscapes are the world itself and may also be metaphors of the world. A tree can be both a tree and The Tree, a path both a path and The Path. A tree in the Garden of Eden represents the Tree of Life, the Tree of Knowledge. It becomes the archetype of tree. When a path represents the Path of Enlightenment of Buddhism or the Stations of the Cross in Christianity it is no longer a mere path but The Path.” (1998 p 20)

Design elements in the landscape can suggest archetypes and so connect the visitor with the larger collective unconscious. Jeffrey Jellicoe (1991) was intrigued by the work of Jung and was explicit about employing the symbols of the subconscious in his work:

> “Jung was only a name to me when I first realized that the subconscious could be enlisted, as in all art, to reinforce the conscious and the tangible in landscape design...Was it possible to sublimate a technically correct but otherwise insignificant design by inserting within it an invisible idea that only the subconscious could comprehend?” (1983 p 124)

Jellicoe argues that there is a distinction to be made between the intellectual exercise
of designing form and the emotional or spiritual desire for form. Design need not be an analytical response to site and program but a projection of the subconscious into the built world. In his Guelph Lectures, he said, "[T]he designed landscape has always been a projection of the human psyche into its natural environment. The creative powers of the subconscious have in the past consistently informed those of the conscious and it is towards their revival that these lectures are mainly directed." (1983 p ix) He maintains that instinct is synonymous with the subconscious and that one should rely on instinct when designing. This seems a rather vague directive, but he continues in Lecture II: "...it may be true that quite unconsciously all original designs are inspired by analogy to something known or unknown, post or pre-natal; nothing comes of nothing, and from where else can inspiration come?" (p 53) His idea was to create a subliminal landscape through design elements that contain referential power. Just as the symbols of a dream can be a path of communication between the conscious and the subconscious, the symbols of the landscape can call a response from the subconscious. In such a way can there be an intimate dialogue between visitor and space.

Landscape architects, through an understanding of the symbols of our culture, have the opportunity to present landscapes of meaning that encourage connection. This implication invites a design strategy that employs a built environment as a metaphoric manifestation of archetypes that speak through the subconscious. By looking to the cultural traditions of the world and the iconography of those traditions, we can construct environments that transcend the everyday and create channels of meaning that can speak to modern man.

Five methodologies have herein been described. One may think of them as "layers of meaning" in the landscape or, perhaps, more appropriately, since no hierarchy is implied, a scale of methodological approaches along which a designer may move. There is certainly no one way to design, and any architect may find that either a combination of ideas or one specific approach is best lent to any given project. It is, however, in the final, Archetypal, method that this designer has chosen to work. Revelatory, Allegorical, Cosmological and Vernacular methods are exclusive approaches to design. To read these landscapes requires a set knowledge that make them culturally dependent and therefore esoteric. The power of universal archetypes lies in their ability to speak to all; when designing in the civic realm, an exoteric approach is the most likely to express commonality. And so, in a quest for design principles that would create intimate dialogue between visitor and place I journeyed to the terra incognita of the subconscious where, ultimately, self-discovery drove this project. Jung and Jellicoe called like a siren from the sea, and it is, in fact, a siren’s call that begins this project...
The Site

For this project, to test the thesis, it was important to select a site that was as rich with landscape elements as possible within the immediate region. Since the purpose was to explore possible archetypes, a site with a variety of features was required. In a Spring studio, a student mentioned a waterfront site that had a tunnel which prompted a survey of the site.

Windmill Hill Park is a 3.4 acre site located on the Potomac River in the south-east corner of the city of Alexandria, Virginia. Bordered on the north by Wilkes Street, on the West by Lee Street, and the South by Gibbon Street, it’s current land area was 2/3 the current amount until the 1930’s. When the port of Alexandria was dredged at that time, fill was added to the park, creating its present landmass. In 1949, an “amphitheater” was carved out of the land, and the park hosted the 200th anniversary of the founding of Alexandria when the park was named “Centennial Park.”

A visitor to the site is confronted with a complexity of disjointed features. There are: a children’s playground; a volleyball court; a soggy dog park; a basketball court; some scattered picnic tables; the heaving concrete remains of a marina quay; a stormwater outlet stream; an old railway tunnel. No paths, save a sidewalk that runs downhill alongside the playground, invite entry or passage. Yet the waterfront aspect and hill suggest a natural “Captain’s walk” from which one can both imagine the
call of the sea voyage and the anticipated return of the voyager. This aspect of the park was the most compelling -- it is impossible to stand on the high ground of the park, looking to the water, and not dream of journey. Reverie here compresses time so that one imagines explorers and merchants through history navigating the Potomac and perhaps anchoring at this site. Visions of families reuniting and the vigil of those who wait for the hero's return filled the place, and the draft of that dream began the desire for a design that would bring form to the experience.

The tunnel on the northwest corner of the site was constructed in the 1850's to serve the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. A line ran from the Potomac River at this site to Gordonsville, Virginia. Denied access to the Long Bridge which crossed the Potomac, freight from the north arrived via freight car ferry from Maryland and was loaded onto trains at this site until 1909. The tracks were removed from the tunnel in the 1930's. This unexpected relic seemed like a magical invitation to the site, and I walked it many times wondering how it's form and function would contribute to the unity of the park design.

To the southeast, across the water, the construction of the new Woodrow Wilson bridge is a backdrop for the vehicular traffic of the old bridge. The bridges present another river, this one of commuters, and the flow of movement over the river, which has a directional flow of its own, emphasizes the commerce that surrounds the park, and brings the calm of the park into sharp relief.
From an elevation of 36 feet at the western edge of the site, the terrain slopes down to the river edge. The elevation at Union Street is 10 feet, putting all that is east within the 100 year flood plain.

To the north, west and south, the site is bordered by single family homes. Automobile traffic moves through the site along Union, Lee and Gibbon Streets. Bicycle traffic enters the site from the north along Union Street and from the south where a designated bike trail continues. Bicyclists often enter and exit the site through the east-west tunnel. Street parking is used by those who arrive at the park by car. A children’s playground which is heavily used sprawls along the north side of the park. To the south is a basketball court.

For many years a private marina operated at this location, but in 2004 the wooden docks and pilings were removed. There remains a derelict concrete quay. In winter there is a view to the river and the opposite shore of Maryland from the western side of the site. For the rest of the year, the views are compromised by the trees of the site.

For the most part, native volunteer trees comprise the vegetation of the site. Platanus, Robinia, Rhus, Prunus and Salix are the prevailing species. They grow along the stormwater outlet and the abandoned quay and down by the river edge. Their size is an indication of the years that have passed since commerce or cultivation was practiced here.
An outlet brings stormwater to the site on the east side of Union Street. A channel has been cut to the river, and along this stream trees have volunteered. Debris washes into this channel, and generally the water’s edge is littered with logs and river flotsam that wash up from the Potomac.

The Potomac is tidal at this point, and the daily tidal change is about eighteen inches. Annually, the mean low tide and mean high tide range varies by almost four feet. The highest water levels occur in Spring when upstream runoff is greatest, and the lowest water levels occur in late summer when drought is common in the watershed.

There is a designated dog park on the south east corner of the site. Throughout the year and at all times of day, owners bring their dogs to exercise here.

In addition to the casual strollers, dog owners, parents with children, bicyclists and basketball players, there is often found a fisherman or two fishing off the edge of the remaining quay.

The site called to me as a slumbering poem that could wake to inspire oneric reverie.
The Journey

It is easy to look back on the process of developing this thesis project and see it as a resolute march toward an inevitable conclusion. However, only the clarity of hindsight provides that perspective, for the immediate experience of this exploration was one of confusion and questioning. At the outset, I thought I was on an outward quest for answers that I would find in the ideas and writings of others. I thought that I could find a formal language for those ideas and that a design would take shape that expressed consideration of views of expressing meaning in the landscape. Instead, I found myself in the labyrinth of my own heart and learned that only when the path turns inward can one discover what it means to design.

In the beginning, however, I was intent on extracting meaning from the place where land and water meet, and to that end, I searched the language of metaphor and images to find the cultural stories that told of the meaning of that place.
My first thought was that this place is where a voyage begins. The shore is a place of embarkation and brings to mind the odyssey of Ulysses, the voyage of Sinbad, the discoveries of Christopher Columbus, Viking raids, Captain Cook in the Pacific and Captain Hook in Neverland. The sea voyage represents man meeting the challenge of nature at its most ferocious, and the stories of this meeting are stories of exploration that goes beyond the physical realm of the sea and into the character of the voyager.

The powerful image of Ulysses resisting the song of the Sirens speaks to the determination demanded of those who will triumph in their quest. The meeting of land and sea is a physical realm and a mythical realm, and I wondered how to dramatize the call of the sea and the heroism of voyage in built form at the river’s edge. At the same time I was aware that the lure of the sea is responded to by the streams and rivers that rush to meet it. The on-site stream created by the stormwater outlet is a channel in which the tidal flow of the Potomac mixes with the rain water of the city. I considered ways in which the meeting of waters could inform design, and I thought about the many ideas that water in its different forms can represent.
The Periodic Table of Water -- water has many forms and many colors that shade one's emotional experience.
Early sections of the site at the water’s edge reveal the shallow interference of the water with the land. A sketch shows the beginning of the idea of weaving the land and water together. If the water is the masculine, Odyssean experience of journey, then perhaps the counterpart in land is the feminine, Penelopean experience of home or harbor. The expression of the feminine through weaving was something I hoped to express.
I began to think of abstracting the site to a simple experience of water and land, and experimented with the desire to weave together water and land.
If I thought of the site as a pure form that could be sculpted, could I carve the water into the land or bring the land into the water in a meaningful way?
In his book *Landscape and Memory* (1996), Simon Schama describes libation tablets. These carved stone tablets were used by Egyptian priests in the first through third centuries in rituals that acknowledged the connection of the Egyptians with the cycles of the Nile River. Wine was poured into the tablet where it coursed through channels carved into the stone. I could imagine the beauty of such a ritual and the comfort that one might feel in such an affirmation of the relationship between my God, my life, and my river. To carve such tablets must also have been an exquisite pleasure as one considered the symbols that would best represent that sacred connection and then put chisel to stone to bring through one's hands a physical prayer of supplication and celebration. I thought of my site as such a tablet: it could be carved to invite the Potomac River, through its tides, onto the land as a ritual offering. The experience would be both revelatory, through its explication of the tidal process, and allegorical, as it told the story of the importance of the river to the establishment of a port city. I created a wax model of the site, carving a channel to accept the offering of the river.

The process of carving the model reminded me of afternoons at the shore with my children. They would spend whole days creating channels and forts in the sand, and watch as the incoming tide reshaped their creations. The experiments would begin with the idea of creating castles that would withstand the onslaught of the tide, but gradually their designs would reflect an understanding of the inexorable power of water, and they’d begin to work with that force to great satisfaction.

I wondered if my design could harness not only the power of the river, but the power of the childish imagination that makes sand castles so compelling.
The allegorical path I had been following in pursuit of design resolution was taking me away from the idea that the landscape could speak to people of all cultures. As rich as the myths I had been drawing on were, translating them into built form would ultimately require visitors to interpret them. The stories I knew were from my culture, and I was determined that my design would have universal appeal rather than be culturally dependent. Just as one finds truth at the heart of a fairy story, I hoped to find a truth that could be read by all visitors. Perhaps I wanted to create a dream that was fresh and familiar at the same time.

Returning to my thoughts about the work of Carl Jung and his concept of universal archetypes, I was trying to understand what an archetype might look like. I couldn’t actually create a dream, but as I thought of the suggestive power of built form, I needed to consider just what it was that I wanted to suggest. If an archetype is a basic, irreducible element, what experience was I trying to evoke through design? The answer seemed to be in children’s play; remembering the discoveries made in sand-castle building, I hoped for an experience that was as simple and meaningful as those of childhood. I reflected on the childhood experiences that might inform my work. What universal experiences could I translate from childhood? In The Interpretation of Fairy Tales, Marie-Louise von Franz wrote, “Fairy tales are the purest and simplest expression of collective unconscious psychic processes...They represent the archetypes in the simplest, barest, and most concise form.” (Franz 1996 pg 1) I remembered my childhood love of the collected fairy stories of the Brothers Grimm, and the rich experience that sharing those stories with my children had been. As a child, I enjoyed visits to a now-gone amusement park in Woodbridge, Virginia, Storybook Land. On a wooded site, follies that depicted such stories as Goldilocks and the Three Bears, The Billy Goats Gruff and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves had been built. Child-scale, these structures invited me to become a part of the stories I knew. Though it was fun to see rendered in painted plaster and concrete scenes from familiar stories, I most loved those structures from which the protagonist figure was missing, and so I could be Goldilocks in my imagination, or fearfully tread the bridge under which the trolls lived. Recalling that pleasure, I wanted to create a design that allowed visitors to imaginatively engage with with their surroundings. I knew that, unlike Disneyworld and its packaged fantasies, I had to avoid a design so literal that it precluded individual imagination. Also, it was not my intent to return visitors to their remembrance of children’s stories, but to engage them with the truths of their present.

Thinking about the wonder and discovery that children bring to their experience with water helped me return to the question of intimacy in the landscape.

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Returning to my thoughts about the work of Carl Jung and his concept of universal archetypes, I was trying to understand what an archetype might look like. I couldn’t actually create a dream, but as I thought of the suggestive power of built form, I needed to consider just what it was that I wanted to suggest. If an archetype is a basic, irreducible element, what experience was I trying to evoke through design? The answer seemed to be in children’s play; remembering the discoveries made in sand-castle building, I hoped for an experience that was as simple and meaningful as those of childhood. I reflected on the childhood experiences that might inform my work. What universal experiences could I translate from childhood? In The Interpretation of Fairy Tales, Marie-Louise von Franz wrote, “Fairy tales are the purest and simplest expression of collective unconscious psychic processes...They represent the archetypes in the simplest, barest, and most concise form.” (Franz 1996 pg 1) I remembered my childhood love of the collected fairy stories of the Brothers Grimm, and the rich experience that sharing those stories with my children had been. As a child, I enjoyed visits to a now-gone amusement park in Woodbridge, Virginia, Storybook Land. On a wooded site, follies that depicted such stories as Goldilocks and the Three Bears, The Billy Goats Gruff and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves had been built. Child-scale, these structures invited me to become a part of the stories I knew. Though it was fun to see rendered in painted plaster and concrete scenes from familiar stories, I most loved those structures from which the protagonist figure was missing, and so I could be Goldilocks in my imagination, or fearfully tread the bridge under which the trolls lived. Recalling that pleasure, I wanted to create a design that allowed visitors to imaginatively engage with with their surroundings. I knew that, unlike Disneyworld and its packaged fantasies, I had to avoid a design so literal that it precluded individual imagination. Also, it was not my intent to return visitors to their remembrance of children’s stories, but to engage them with the truths of their present.

“Play is looking for the intersection between dreaming and reality.” - Jaan Holt, 2004
There is a children’s playground on the site and I thought a good starting place would be its redesign. The playground is in poor repair, and located along a hillside so that parents struggle uphill with strollers. I thought I could relocate the playground to make it more readily accessible, and dedicate more space to it. Climbing structures and a swingset comprise the existing play equipment. Though children visit the climbing structures briefly, the chief activity I have observed is digging in the dirt. This is completely consistent with the many studies that show children would rather explore materials and invent their own play, than respond to the prescribed behavior demanded by manufactured play equipment. (Dighe 1993) Children at play interact so physically with their environment: they dig and touch; they climb over and crawl under; they run, walk, roll, skip. Their play is an exploration of the qualities of their environment, and they freely manipulate those qualities to create personal connection to space. I wanted to consider the characteristics of a play space that would invite interactive play, for I thought of the playground as a microcosm of the larger recreational space; a core from which I could expand the notion of play to include adults and encourage spatial interaction that would be meaningful to all visitors.

In Playground Design Aase Eriksen (1985) identifies four realms of stimulation that are necessary if a playground is to facilitate child development. The physical realm provides textural experiences and space for motor activity. The perceptual realm encourages recognition of patterns and ordering of stimuli. The emotional realm allows for opportunities to overcome fear and develop confidence as well as encouraging social inter-
...Landscape, an elusive word but a tangible phenomenon, can evoke memory, mystery, sacredness, pride, power, delight, belonging, coolness, warmth, exhilaration, relaxation, contemplation...However, these psychological, physical, and philosophical complexities are rarely found in the landscape of play.” (Herrington 1997)

My goal was to create a playground in which a child could be alone and completely absorbed in an activity that called upon his own imaginative powers, but also allowed activities that required the negotiation of sharing that is so challenging to young children. I saw the playground as a series of islands of activity connected by group play, where an individual child could command his own kingdom but desire to travel to other kingdoms. Perhaps each island would draw on distinct competencies and be linked by movement as children experienced greater independence and enlarged their play space to include others. The islands would also provide retreat from group play.

The entire space needed to be secure and allow adult supervision from sufficient distance to encourage independent activity. Fencing and seating would be necessary to accommodate these goals. Shade relief in the summer months, and sun for the winter months were also necessary.
The dome appealed to me as a form that was suggestive without being insistent. It has an inside/outside quality that seems to lend itself to interpretation. I saw the dome as a structure that allows itself to be both hill and cave, and a form that can be expressed in a variety of materials.

I included domes as climbing structures, both in the form of open frameworks for older children, and as solid, shallow, textured "hills" for toddlers. These domes would become the topography of the playground. They would hide and reveal the experiences of the site for children. In their "cave" form, they would provide shelter and privacy. Inverted, they would hold water or sand. I began to think of their layout and ways to integrate their isolated forms with a pattern of movement.
At an exhibit of Turkish art, I encountered the motif of a tiger stripe on a child’s garment. The intention of dressing a child in this symbol was to confer the courage and strength of the tiger on the child. A motif of circles represented leopard spots with the same intention. The sinuosity of the tiger stripes suggested landforms to me and there was great appeal in bringing the symbol of the tiger and leopard to a children’s playground, for children are so often helpless and desire power.

As they mastered the ground of the play area, I could imagine children mastering the tiger and taking the power of the tiger into their play.
At this time, I visited the Yerba Buena playground in San Francisco, and for the first time saw a playground that responded to the interests of children. Adjacent to a children's museum and across the street from the MOMA, the playground occupies a prominent block. The space is large, and there is a resilient ground covering that absorbs the falls inevitable in children's play. There is an intriguing climbing/slide structure that was in heavy use at the time of my visit, and an irresistible sand/water area. The entrance to the playground is announced by a water runnel, and a terrace and bridging allows one to view the entire play area from above.

In the sand/water area, children may open spigots for water, and I watched children experiment with building dams of sand as they worked to control the flow of water. Adults may sit on low seating walls alongside small children in the sand, or retreat to seating further away. Though large, the outer perimeter of the playground is fenced, so that even the most independent adventurer is safely contained. During my visit, an attendant arrived and began to produce water toys and balls for children. Designed by Paul Friedberg who first successfully integrated playgrounds with public housing projects in New York City, the park gives children's play a place of prominence in a sophisticated urban landscape. There is lawn and benches and a miniature maze that provide verdant relief to
the hardscape of the site. A sundial allows children to place themselves as gnomes. There is little shade, which may not be as crucial for temperature control in the climate of northern California as it is in Northern Virginia, but the park would be greatly enhanced by shade trees or structures in the large, open play space. Carefully maintained, the park sends a clear message that the interests of children are important to the city of San Francisco.

The spiral of the sundial and the sinuous water runnels combined with my thoughts of tiger stripes and brought to mind the work of C. Th. Sorensen. A Danish Garden Architect (for Landscape Architecture was not recognized when he began his career), he was a modernist whose work is known for its social consciousness. (Andersson and Hoyer 2001) His work, though imposingly geometrical, seems to lift out of the land as though it is an expression of what the land wishes to become. In the 1930’s he devised the skrammellegeplatser (junk playgrounds) that were to inspire the later “adventure playgrounds.” He often designed playgrounds adjacent to public housing projects in Denmark, and wrote:

“...children's playgrounds are the most important form of public plantation.”
The playground plan incorporated thoughts about children’s desires for play and the forms and motifs that could satisfy those desires.
The exploration of the playground design had helped bring into focus ideas that I wanted to present on the entire site. Thinking about play and the important memories we all carry out of the playgrounds of our childhood was the inspiration for the remaining design work.

Just as a playground must address different competencies through a variety of experiences, I knew that the design for a civic space would have to be rich in its offerings to allow for meaningful play.

These offerings, however, would have to carry with them the significance that play holds for children. It seemed insufficient to create experiences that were harvested from the palette of public amenities, but carried with them no meaning. I wasn’t looking for experiences of memory, however, but of pre-memory, which returned me to thoughts about the collective unconscious.

Once, again, the question was how to represent universal archetypes in built form. In Jungian psychology, active imagination is the process by which one uses the conscious mind to interact with the subconscious mind through the symbols of dreams. If the symbols of dreams are an effort on the part of the unconscious to bring to the attention
of the conscious mind ideas of importance, active engagement with those symbols is necessary to make use of them. While dreams and their meaning are unique to an individual, common motifs occur in dreams, which is not surprising since many concerns and experiences are common to all. I wanted my landscape to present common motifs in the hope that the physical reality and experience of images in built form would allow for something similar to active imagination on the part of visitors. The problem then was how to create the symbols of dreams in the physical world.

In reading Jung, I had become aware of his interest in alchemy, and his conviction that the alchemical writings were metaphorical descriptions of the psychological processes he studied. (Jung, 1995) There was appeal to me in the idea that the physical experiments with changing materials in alchemy should stand for the psychological changes one might hope to experience in oneself. Design seems to straddle those two worlds, for, in design, we mix ideas and materials in the hope of achieving transmutation -- clay and water become a soaring arch of brick. Ideas and materials are mixed and heated in the retort of a designer’s combined imagination and skill to produce architecture. The ideas that an architect brings to the mix are the forms that he hopes to articulate and so communicate a specific experience of place.

In my role as alchemist, then, I was searching for a process by which I could transmute the materials and forms of my site to express a new idea. However, it wasn’t that this new, unknown idea was the goal of the project, but expressing the process of transmutation was. In alchemy, there is the prima materia, the prime material. It is identified with different materials, most often the water of the sea. In Jungian psychology, this prima materia is the threshold between the unconscious and the conscious. (Von Franz, 1979) Conunctio, in alchemy is the ultimate action of marriage between this prime material with its opposite; in Jungian terms, this marriage is bringing the symbols of the unconscious into the conscious realm through reflection. I tried to think of my site in the context of bringing together opposites, and the river and the land seemed to be fairly obvious opposites. Their marriage would result in the experience of the site.

If I had found my prima materia, then what was the retort in which marriage could take place? I needed forms in which materials could combine, and the active imagination of visitors to be the process that would produce transmutation. In my consideration of opposites and their marriage, the union of male and female aspects was in my thoughts. I had long held that design has a sexual nature, particularly in garden design where one is always conscious of the need to combine male and female plants, and where pollination is necessary for successful plant life. The concept of garden is also heavily imbued with sexual overtones since in our culture garden
implies Eden where sexual knowledge began. From the beginning of this project, the river, or water had represented the masculine force, and the land or earth had represented the feminine force. I could only shape the water by shaping the land, and I turned my attention to the feminine land as the opportunity to create form. If I personified the land as a woman (and I did think of matter=matter), then I wanted the land to be embracing. Thoughts now turned to the movement of embrace, and the seat of embrace, as with all movement, is the sacrum.

With a model of the site I began to play with the idea of shaping a feminine embrace.

The land form of my site was the sacrum, which would be my retort.
The hill on the west side of the site offered not only sufficient elevation change from the river edge to provide vistas, but its potential landscape held promise for manipulation. I saw the sacrum of the site located here. This would be the pivot point that would anchor the design. Just as in dance, or Tai chi, the strength and balance for gestures would generate here. In expressing this idea, I wanted a vertical axis to connect the sky with the underworld. Water could provide a reflective surface to bring the sky onto the ground plane, and the source of the water would be the river. What I began to search for was the form and structure that would carry this thought. I was still wondering what archetypes I wanted to express.

It was suggested to me that I look to the Tarot cards to find an organizing principle for examining archetypes.
There is no certainty as to the origins of the Tarot cards. The mystery of their inception lends them power, for without historical record to guide their study, they are open to interpretation. Rich in graphic symbols, they inspire multiple translations. Many writers believe that the Tarot cards come from ancient Egypt, but the earliest historical record of the cards is from the late fourteenth century when they appear in Italy. (Graves 1973, Douglas 1972, Sharman-Burke 1985) Just as alchemy was a pre-scientific attempt to understand the nature of matter, Tarot cards appear to be an attempt to describe man’s psychology and the challenges on the path to becoming a mature individual. “In some ways Tarot imagery resembles that of alchemy, which, as C.G. Jung has shown, was for its more perceptive devotees a system of Hermetic training leading to spiritual enlightenment... the alchemical treatises and the Tarot cards are both examples of the secret language of symbolism which initiates of all ages have devised to instruct heir disciples and confound the profane.” (Douglas 1972 p 34) Two distinct sets form a deck of Tarot cards: the fifty-six cards of the Minor Arcana are most like our modern playing cards, with four suits; the twenty-two cards of the Major Arcana, depict personalities and symbols of adventure. These twenty-two cards of the Major Arcana are those that were explored for this project, for there is general agreement that this set is representative of archetypes. “The separate cards and corresponding subjects of the Tarot are not merely chance depictions owing to the whim of the artist. They are carefully selected categories which, taken as a whole, form a unified knowledge of the experiences which a traveller may expect to encounter during his brief exposure to the gentle winds and stormy seas of life.” (Graves 1973 p 7) These cards present a sequence that tells of the journey through life toward enlightenment. Each card is a careful illustration loaded with symbols that represent the challenges of a particular stage or challenge in life. “The cards are vehicles for the power of life, the archetypal contents of the unconscious.” (Douglas 1972 p39)

*The tarot images act like mirrors, reflecting things that the unconscious mind already knows, and feeding this information through to the conscious mind.*

(Sharman-Burke 1985 p 17)

Bringing the archetypes of the unconscious into a conscious experience was just what I was hoping to achieve in my site design, and so I began to look at the Tarot cards in the hope of recognizing experiences sufficiently universal to empower civic space. The “spread” of a Tarot card reading is the journey of the hero or fool, and I thought of my site as an opportunity to present this journey.

“The journey of the hero is the oldest story in the world. As the basic structure, it is woven into myths, fairy tales, and legends that tell us how a person sets out to accomplish the great work. It is the story behind all these stories, which to this very day are always told in the same way under countless names in all languages and cultures over and over again. No one has ever devised, invented, or thought up this story. Instead, a direct knowledge of the soul is expressed in this story; one could say a knowledge that we have “brought along” with us. As the oldest story in the world, it is also an exemplary story, a parable for the human being’s path in life. This is what makes it so interesting, and this is why it must be told time and again so that we never forget why we are on the Earth and what we have to do here.” (Banzhaf 2000 p17)
I first looked at The Star. This card, with its inclusion of water seemed directly related to my site. A woman kneels at the water’s edge, and in the traditional Tarot cards, she holds a vessel from which she is pouring water. The water symbolizes both a life-giving force and the source of knowledge. An overhead constellation suggests destiny and in alchemy, the star is the symbol of the imagination. I chose to see the woman as Demeter, waiting for the return of Persephone from the underworld, for life-giving water spoke to me of the life-cycle and the changing of the seasons. I gave this card a mood of grief and drew a landscape of mourning that I thought would be a counterpoint to the life-force of water. I could see in my site an experience of reflection at the water’s edge where the falling leaves of Autumn would contrast with the river.

Next, I considered The Moon because this card too shows water. A figure on a bridge stands between death and life, consciousness and unconsciousness, night and day. A dog, who is the Hero’s travelling companion stands on one side of the bridge, and a wolf, which represents madness and the underworld stands on the other. A drowning figure calls from the water, and Sirens entreat the Hero. A boat and the moon mirror each other’s shape, reminding us that this is a journey on two levels. The Moon card serves to caution the Hero of the danger of getting lost in the dark side of the imagination. Just as Ulysses desired to hear the song of the Sirens, but directed that he be lashed to the mast of his ship, lest he join the Sirens forever, the Hero must journey to the underworld but remember the return passage. In landscape terms, I wanted to express this card through a recognition of the water that flows past and into the site from the river, and also the water that joins the river from the land through the underground system of stormwater sewers. Both parts of the water’s journey are important.
The next card I studied was The Hanged Man. It is a compelling card as it shows the Hero hung upside down from a tree. Coins fall from his pockets. It represents reversal of fortune in the sense that one has lost one’s bearings. It reminds one of the confusion that is inevitable in life and the danger of getting “caught up” in that confusion. Dante describes this as he begins his Divine Comedy: “Midway in our life journey, I went astray from the straight road and woke to find myself alone in a dark wood.” (Dante 2003) I set the Hero at the water’s edge where contemplation reveals his dilemma. He is caught in a tree whose leaves fall like coins at his feet. Neither the land or the water orient him, for he must find his path within his own heart. It is a moment on the journey when the Hero is alone and depends upon his own strength of character to resume his course. I tried to depict this isolation where the only source of reference is one’s own reflection.

The Hermit card attracted me because of the tunnel on the site, which seemed to me to be a hermit’s cave. The Hermit represents the wise man who imparts knowledge to the Hero as he begins his journey. It is the Hermit who reveals the Hero’s true nature and reinforces the call to the journey. This card is the moment of initiation for the Hero/Fool. The Hermit holds a lantern which illuminates the way. We are familiar with the Hermit from most fairy tales; he is Yoda instructing Luke Skywalker in the Star Wars story; he is Merlin in the Arthurian legends; he is Rumpelstiltskin. The Hero finds the Hermit’s retreat, and I wanted to emphasize this retreat, or cave. I thought of Socrates writing of Plato’s cave, and the power of experiencing the illusion of shadow forms in contrast to the world revealed in sunlight. I tried to draw this moment of dancing shadows which holds more allure than the quiet Hermit with his lantern. The tunnel seemed to be the place of initiation, where the Hero would journey underground and into illusion to discover himself.

The final card that I examined was The Tower. It was appealing for many reasons: it had architecture; it had flames; it had a falling Hero; it had destruction! This card shows a tower which, having been struck by lightning, is in flames and crumbling. The Hero is falling to his death. This card symbolizes the destruction of illusion and the fate of one who has pinned his hopes on such illusions. It is the moment when the Hero realizes that he has worshiped false gods and built his faith on common lies. At this moment he must choose to seek truth. For my drawing, I formed a tower from the red clay of the site, and brought the river to its base to reflect the unconscious reality of the end of illusion. The sun is setting in the west, and in a moment everything will be dark.
I found studying the Tarot cards to be a powerful experience, and I was surprised by the intensity of emotion evoked by the images. I was unable to stand apart from the ideas they represented, and from this point forward, the process of design was both an external exploration of form and an internal testing of the validity of those forms. I would show the journey of the Fool, but I knew also that I was the Fool.

Though I had enjoyed, and learned from, the experience of recreating these Tarot cards, I was disappointed in them. They seemed rather literal, and I felt I was back to an allegorical approach to design. Given the power I had felt through contemplating the Tarot cards, I wondered if I could further distill my response to these archetypes, and graphically represent that distillation. I was also intrigued with the idea of resolving the opposites of masculine and feminine. I decided to look again at the Tarot cards, to pair opposites, and represent them more abstractly.
I was surprised to find such strong forms in my drawings, since I had deliberately tried to avoid “drawing objects.” I felt this Tarot card set could be a starting point for expressing these archetypes in built form.
The stone and brick vault of the existing tunnel are so beautiful that I wanted to preserve them. Drainage in the tunnel is inadequate, so I thought of creating a raised perforated floor under which stormwater could travel. The stains on the brick are like shadows of history, and I decided to light the tunnel from beneath the floor to add to the walls shadows of people moving through the tunnel. I decided that a blue light would announce the tunnel entrance from outside. Light tubes would bring daylight in from above and blue light from below at night.
Tunnel entrance from the West
I began to express the forms I had found in the Tarot cards in the site design. I was looking for a balance between the land and the water and a pattern of movement that would relate the site to the larger landscape.
If the tunnel was the initiatory experience of the site, I thought it should also present a call to the journey. I wanted to take advantage of the vista across the water and preserve a viewshed from the tunnel to the rising sun and moon.
Just as I wanted to bring the water onto the land, it was important to bring the land into the water. An island would be the omphalus of the site. I thought of this as a place apart that would emphasize the relationship of land to water. It would be a destination that would enhance the sense of journey.
Toward the south across the water and omphalos.

East-West section across the omphalos.
The Fool is called to the power of his unconscious desires at the water's edge.
The journey of the Fool must present a path of moral choice if it is to be an intentional journey.
“Water has the virtue of unselfish willingness to sacrifice its present form for the shape of its next container, doing this continually and insistently, as if this act of humility were its lifelong task and highest purpose — as if its charge were to fill every space it enters the way sound does a room, pressing everything other than itself out of its new container.” (Leatherbarrow 2004 p 173)
Paths through marsh grasses would be like snakes in the grass -- the journey demands choices.
Stone had asserted itself as a material of choice for the site. While I was trying to create fluidity in the relationship between land and water, stone presented an immutable strength and history that I thought would give power to the forms on the site.
I was fairly satisfied with the design of moments on the site, but the tower design continued to elude me. I thought of it as a feminine element; an earthy enclosure. At this time I read Corbusier’s “Poem of the Right Angle,” (2003) and had the opportunity to consider again the masculine and the feminine in form. In this poem, he uses the metaphor of water to speak of the horizontal line and its necessary relationship to the vertical. The horizontal is watery and feminine:

The level is fixed where the waters stop flowing to the sea the sea daughter of droplets and mother of vapors. And the horizontal regulates the capacity of liquid.

The vertical is masculine and terrestrial:

But I am standing straight! since you are erect you are also fit for action. Erect on the terrestrial plain of things knowable to you sign a pact of solidarity with nature: this is the right angle Vertical facing the sea there you are on your feet.

Supine water is the dream that built form realizes. The feminine, that is water and earth, is the horizontal meander that is a base for the masculine, vertical form. In the midst of thinking about this, I had a dream in which I was presenting my project for review. I carefully explained to my committee that the tunnel on my site represented the horizontal, feminine, and the tower represented the vertical, masculine. I awoke, amused that it should take a dream for me to see the obvious. I had been trying to make the Tower a feminine force when it so clearly meant to be masculine! I mention this, because I don’t believe I have ever resolved a design issue through a dream, and this experience reinforced for me the principles I was considering in my thesis -- that the archetypes exist in our unconscious mind and can be communicated through dreams to the conscious mind.
Finally understanding that the tower could be free of its earthen embrace allowed me to think of it as a soaring, vertical element. I had been concerned about preventing the walls of the stone tower from obscuring views of the river for those houses on the western edge of the site, but now I could keep the stone walls low and create another structure within them that could be transparent enough to preserve views. I struggled, however, with the form of the tower, because if I were to remain true to the archetype of the Tower, I needed to communicate illusion. Just as the Tower of Babel falls to man’s hubris, the Fool must encounter a tower that crumbles beneath his feet. I couldn’t think how to build something that doesn’t exist.

I considered mist and mirrors as a way of suggesting a tower that was purely illusion, but these seemed like tricks that would be highly dependent on technical conditions. I was looking for a genuine experience that I felt would be defeated by the employ of gimmicks. I returned to thoughts about the meaning of the tower archetype, and realized that the only authentic experience would require an internal rather than external journey. The point of the Tower card was that the Hero discovers the illusion of the world and the reality of the heart. So the journey up the tower would have to be a journey into the soul. Every outward step would have to carry the Fool in an inward direction.
A double helix structure would allow me to spiral stairs up to a point above the stone walls. I considered creating a platform at the top of the stairs, but to carry out my intention, the top step would have to be the first of the descending stair. I thought that making the tower of stainless steel and encasing the stairs with mesh would result in a fairly transparent structure, and departing from the stone used in all other forms would further emphasize the distinct experience I wanted the tower to be. I then needed to work out the geometry of the helix and determine the support required.
Departing the familiar form and material of the site was intended to remind the visitor that the tower is an illusion.
The tower drawings were made in CAD, and this process was as radical a departure from the making of drawings, as the tower was from the other experiences of the site.
Thus far I had concentrated on experiences on the site that would express the archetypes of the Tarot cards and had made few incursions beyond their adjacencies. I had accepted the physical boundaries of the site, leaving buildings and streets intact. I had reshaped the river edge and changed the landform of the hill. What I had not addressed was movement through the site. I wanted to avoid an amusement park approach in which one moves from attraction to attraction. This project was meant to create a journey, and I gave much thought to the journey that would take place on the site. I needed to map that journey, but I didn’t have a guide. In his essay “Leveling the Land,” David Leatherbarrow (2004) tells of the story of Zeus weaving a wedding veil for his marriage to Chthonia. In the veil he wove a map of the earth. “It was not really a cover-up, but a filigree framework that disclosed an inhabitable landscape, one that had been there but was unknown, meaning that the act of veiling resulted in an unveiling.” (p 118-119) In the same way, it was my intention that the weaving together of the water and the land would create a veil that would reveal the meaning of the landscape.
I had made some decisions about movement, but I was struggling to communicate a cohesive journey and I was being urged to tell the story. I had made a strong connection between the tunnel and the river, and I had moved the tower to be in a direct east-west line with the island, but I couldn’t relate the tower to the tunnel, and most of the site remained undefined.
Union Street continued to bisect and so dominate the site. I was dissatisfied with the entrance to the tunnel, and there remained an awkward coming-together of paths at an unlikely place.
I was encouraged to think of movement through the site as a reading of the Tarot cards, and I returned to the cards to find a story-path. There are many “spreads” one may use in reading the Tarot cards, but the only one that uses all cards of the major arcana is the one shown above. Here, the cards of the Rider-Waite Tarot (1971) are laid sequentially in a pattern that tells the story of the Journey of the Fool. He is found in the first position, beginning his outward journey. Circling around, he comes to the middle card, the Wheel of Fortune, where the inward leg of his journey begins. His journey ends, again at the center of the spread at the World card. Since my interest, and my story was the Journey of the Fool, I decided to superimpose this spread on my site, and let the cards determine the paths and movement through the site.
With the cards in place on the site, I could see where the paths lay. I was also rather surprised to find such a strong match between the layout of the cards and the earlier decisions I had made about the inward and outward experiences of my design.
I decided to remove Union Street, and create a cul de sac at the north end of the site. I was pleased with the resultant unity it gave the site. The playground had to then be relocated and I was happy to have created an open space right at the center of the site for it. In the Tarot spread, this spot is where the Wheel of Fortune and World cards fall. Putting a space for children there seemed like the strongest response to the hopefulness intended by those cards. At this spot where so many paths on the site converge, I resolved their meeting with a semi-circle that contains a tree. It’s the Bodhi tree, the Tree of Life, and of all the design that went into the park, I suspect this tree would become the most enjoyed. I lined all but the bike path with trees to further mark those paths, but mostly to add texture to the experience of walking along the paths. The material of the paths is crushed stone. The paths are deep in section, and will serve to filter stormwater on the site. Marsh grasses along the river edge also filter stormwater before it reaches the river. I extended the retaining wall at the tunnel face all the way to the tower, thinking that this would more strongly communicate the separation of the site from the city and also link the tunnel to the tower. I regraded the hill in front of the tower, and created a series of gardens by which one would move up the hill to the tower. Where the quay arches around the circular bay, I bermed the land to create a sense of enclosure for those walking out to the path to the island. One can enter the base of the tower from the south, and look down into it from the west. From the east, one must walk up the hill and then descend stairs in the wall of the tower. Overall, I think there is a welcome variety of experiences on the site and a clarity that is balanced by moments of intrigue.
Conclusion

Joseph Campbell wrote: “It would not be too much to say that myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation.” (Campbell 1973 p 3) Campbell’s myths were the written and oral stories of all cultures. Architecture for me is the graphic and built form of those same myths. Just as the brothers Grimm collected the fairy tales of Europe and codified their elements (von Franz 1996) through their interpretive translation, architects momentarily codify cultural elements in built form. One might read the Grimm version of Sleeping Beauty and contrast it with the Disney version. There are similar elements in both -- that is one can certainly recognize that this is the same story -- but each is subject to an interpretive overlay that distorts each version from the other. One hopes that the power of the story is not lost in various translations. In designing a landscape, each designer translates the elements of culture into a unique version of the story. If the power of the story is not lost, familiar motifs are recognized, though the details of the space may vary tremendously. All of this is to say that I don’t believe there is a single solution to any design problem or that a resultant design is any more correct than any other. In design we often behave as if there is a formula that we can apply to our work to make it “right.” Such thinking eliminates the possibilities that creative problem solving can bring to our world. Only when we look at design as a process of exploration can we hope to discover the power at the heart of the stories we tell.

This project was never about determining an absolute design that would resolve the elements of a site. It was about exploring a process of design that could lead to various interpretations or translations of ideas.

At the beginning and for quite a while I fretted about the difficulty of demonstrating my thesis that archetypes could be represented in built form and recognized as such. Knowing that this project would never be realized in built form, and in the absence of post-occupancy studies, how would I know if I had succeeded? And what would a post-occupancy survey ask anyway? “When you climbed the tower on the site, did you experience transformation of any kind?” I knew that it was absurd to expect that visitors to my project would even recognize the underlying theme of the Tarot cards or find expression of archetypes. How, then would I measure success in this project? The answer came slowly to me as the project became more personal and internal. I wasn’t designing a civic space so much as
I was discovering a design pathway for myself. I was encouraged by the response of others to my drawings, for invariably a drawing would cause others to tell a story or share a memory related to the image. I saw that, even on paper, in simple representation, these archetypal images held power. More importantly, however, I was feeling a power in drawing that I had never experienced before. Even when I struggled to find a form for an idea, the drawings kept coming and as I shaped them, they shaped my thoughts. Representation was no longer a descriptive device but the incantation of desire.

One day, a student stopped by my desk. I was working on the abstract set of Tarot cards that were drawn in pastel, and he observed, “You are so comfortable working with imprecise materials!” I had to laugh to see my work through his eyes, because the experience for me of making those drawings was one of intense precision as I expressed something that was in my heart. On another occasion, in conversation with an architect, he said, “We are magicians. We make something out of nothing and our drawings are our magic.” And that was just the truth I had discovered: Architecture is alchemy; we transform and are transformed by our work, and our drawings are spells that we cast so that the power of our ideas, or the ideas that we borrow from the unconscious can be realized.
Finale

A final task remained, and that was to create a set of Tarot cards that captured the experience my thesis journey had been. I suppose one could pursue a thesis project in isolation, and perhaps there is considerable satisfaction in the solitary journey, but I came to see this process as a component in a larger mechanism of the academic community that surrounded me. I was inspired and humbled by the strivings of my fellow students, and greatly nourished by the generous offerings of faculty. I came to see us all on a journey of discovery of the self and our capacity to contribute to the dialogue of thought about Architecture.

The Washington Alexandria Architecture Center and its component individuals were my port and refuge as I navigated the deep ocean of design integrity. The WAAC Tarot depicts the character of the community that nurtured this thesis project.
The Fool -
childish naivete
genuineness

The Magician-
master
creator
Alchemist

The High Priestess-
Heavenly Mother
feeling and sensing
source of inspiration
trusting one's inner voice

The High Priest-
Holy teacher
Saint
the search for meaning
The Empress - Earthly Mother
creativity

The Emperor - Earthly Father
structure
clarity

The Lovers - determination
resolution
free will

The Chariot - master of contradiction
risking something new
departure
Strength - harmony
balance of masculine and feminine

The Hermit - magical tools
reveals one’s true nature

Wheel of Fortune - consciousness
seeing oneself in relation to the whole

Justice - rational
responsible intelligence
The Hanged Man - confronting choices
determination to grow
sacrifice

Death - overcoming the ego
transformation

Temperance - soul guide
measuring the quality of life
finding the right mixture

The Devil - dark depths
adversary of our shadow self
The Tower - liberation
shattering illusion

The Star - living in the present
recognizing timelessness

The Moon - overcoming the threshold
of fear
unconscious depths

The Sun - wise insight
light at the end of the tunnel
Judgement -
healing
fulfillment of Hero's task

The World -
wholeness
Bibliography


Vita

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EDUCATION/ TRAINING: MLA, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2005
Certificate in Landscape Design, George Washington University, 2003
Class A Contractors License, Commonwealth of Virginia, 1998
Certificate in Woody Plants, George Washington University, 1990
BS, Early Childhood Education, Virginia Commonwealth University, 1977

EXPERIENCE: Adjunct Faculty, Fall 2005
Washington Alexandria Architecture Center
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Intern, EDAW, Inc. 2005
Owner, Dooryards Garden Design 1991-2002
Owned and managed a successful company specializing in residential garden design and insta-
tlation with a reputation for outstanding and cost-
effective design solutions.

Partner, EuroConcepts Inc. 1999-2001
Shared in the responsibility of design development and construction of residential remodeling projects.

Project Supervisor, DBK Contractors 1999
Provided field support and client contact for an independent remodeling contractor.

Classroom Teacher, Fairfax County Public Schools 1977-1981
Employed as a Title I Language Arts Resource Teacher for primary grades, and as a first-grade classroom teacher in an early model for alternative structuring for concentrated non-English speaking school populations.

COMPETITIONS/ AWARDS:
First Place, FEMA Security with Civility Competition, Winter 2004
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