

LANDSCAPE FORMS – FORMS OF COMMUNICATION STRUCTURED ON THE SUPPORT OF A SPACE ORGANIZATION

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Abstract

In the present paper, we start from considering that through space organization and landscaping, there is a permanent exchange of messages between the living world and the human element, between the world of landscapes and its perception by human beings. We are also interested in the elements that determine the landscape structure and how they can be highlighted from a diachronic point of view; therefore, we study the role of human beings in space organization. In the second part of this paper, we conduct a case study on Land Art, a phenomenon still little studied in our country, which represents the harmony between working techniques, natural materials in their pure state, and the landscape. Land Art works can be defined as large-scale sculptures inserted into nature. Their presence changes the reading of the landscape and shapes the place.

Key words: non-verbal communication, spatial communication, landscape design, Land Art

The approach of landscape design and of landscape in general, from the exclusive perspective of the relationship between the subject who receives, feels, and deciphers and the subject who transmits, structures and codifies, would be incomplete without the "third valence, omnipresent in the case of landscape design, namely the spatial support, the land, the place where landscapes are structured according to their own laws from an artistic, technical, scientific, or utilitarian point of view, the landscapes consciously and artistically created as basis for the quality of life of living beings, particularly human beings" (Grigorovschi, M., Grigorovschi, A. 2010) (our translation).

This space organization, according to intentions and principles of composition, is the expression of the human desire to create messages and meanings, which it communicates visually through images. The landscape thus becomes a text, a book that constructs its meaning each time it is read, encompassing both the material level that shapes reality and the spiritual, cultural, and ideatic level.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The starting point for this article is the definition and presentation of the characteristics of spatial communication as an essential component of non-verbal communication, considering that through space organization and landscape design there is a permanent exchange of messages

between the living world and the human element, between landscapes and their perception and deciphering by human beings. We are also interested in the elements that determine the landscape structure and how they can be highlighted from a diachronic point of view; therefore, we study the role of human beings in space organization and how they artificially put into practice their wishes concerning organized space.

In the second part of the article, we take a closer look at Land Art, a phenomenon that is still little studied in our country and which represents the harmony between working techniques, natural materials in their pure state and the landscape. Land Art works can be defined as large-scale sculptures inserted into nature. Their presence changes the way the landscape is perceived and shapes the space. Land Art works – sometimes of impressive dimensions – radically change the landscape or the topography. Discovering them requires the viewer to move around in space, experiencing different sensations and even emotions. The work gives meaning to the landscape, which, in turn, can be read differently. (Chipot A., 2010).

Our paper aims to contribute to the yet little-studied field of landscape structuring and landscape interpretation as a form of manifestation of the communicative relationship established between living matter and its spatial support, the territory. In our study, we consider landscape forms as communicatively significant constructions, as well as organized structures that involve processes

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of coding, reception, and interpretation on the part of human beings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In his book "Funcțiune, spațiu, arhitectură" ("Function, space, architecture") (1979), Gh. Săsarman identifies, according to the spatial approach to the natural organization of matter, two categories described as "complementary": *the function* and *the structure*, which the cited author defines in relation to the organization of natural space. Function is defined as "the totality of the forms of movement that characterize a spatial entity", and therefore operates primarily in terms of energy. Structure is defined as "the totality of the elements of a spatial entity and also the relations established between these elements as well as between the latter and the whole" while carrying substantial and also informational valences (Săsarman, 1979). The two categories are inseparable and form a unit: function represents the diachronic aspect, while structure represents the synchronic aspect of the same reality. We can cite many examples of spatial entities that illustrate the unity of function and structure: the giant spirals of galaxies, the imposing peaks of mountains, the conical tops of volcanoes, rocks shaped by wind and water, caves, sand dunes, and winding rivers.

With the emergence of living matter, a new function emerges: the *biological function* (metabolism, as the exchange of energy, substance, and information between the organism and the environment, is the general expression of the new function), supplemented by a new type of structure, the biological structure. Living matter thus contributes to an improvement in the natural organization of space. The newly organized structures meet certain requirements (individual or collective) that are extensions of the biological function and serve to make it more effective. By analogy with the function and also for a necessary delimitation, Gh. Săsarman proposes the name *functionality*, to designate all these requirements. The resulting structures are constituted as elements of the habitat; they no longer represent the natural environment, the territory occupied by a species, but the environment transformed by the instinctive and ordering action of the individuals belonging to the species. And the author quoted concludes: "It is from this action that the deliberate, conscious, and coherent organization of space by man draws its origin, its rudimentary precedent." (Săsarman, 1979) (our translation)

The fact that man has created his own mean of communication, the articulated language, has not prevented him from continuing to use non-

verbal way to a very large extent, and people also often communicate through space. The process of organizing space was gradually affirmed and generalised, in complete continuity with its natural organization. This began with the organization of natural structures (such as caves or other material shelters) and led to the creation of artificial structures designed to satisfy increasingly complex material and spiritual requirements. Such similarity offered the possibility of using the natural organization of space as a support and model for its artificial organization; the lesson of nature continued to accompany the history of man's organization of space.

We are therefore discussing natural organization and artificial organization, both of which are similar in their object (both apply to space) and in the unity of function(nality) and structure. However, the differences between them are more significant. Particularly visible on the human level of space organization, the main difference lies in the appearance of the conscious factor, and, implicitly, of deliberation, i.e., the project. In the artificial organization of space undertaken by man, each work is preceded by a project through which the unity between function and structure is deliberately ensured and the materialization of the project is coherently pursued.

Equally important in the series of consequences of the appearance of the conscious factor in space organization is the fact that, over and above material requirements, there are also spiritual and human requirements. "The real leap from the natural organization of space to its organization by man is precisely this *new functional content*, the qualitatively greater complexity of the goal pursued, and - only secondarily - the project, which is linked to the method." (Săsarman, 1979) (our translation)

Human-mediated space organization evolves in close relation to its natural organization, forming what is known as the *human habitat*. The greater the proportion of human-mediated space organization, the greater this unity. Humans' organizing action is rooted in the laws of nature; nature provides man with the raw materials, and the organized space is ultimately returned to nature.

P.A. Michelis relates the birth of the first aesthetic impressions in human beings to the moment when nature no longer excited man's senses with the sole aim of ensuring his means of subsistence but also offered him the spectacle of harmonious lines, an enchanting spectacle, apparently without practical repercussions, the contemplation of which gave man a feeling of

serenity and grandeur that raised him above the material condition, the only one of which he had been aware until then. (Michelis, 1982) Later, man discovered the alternations of nature, which gave him a sense of rhythm and, subsequently, a feeling of harmony and balance of contrasts.

However, organized space, unlike natural space, is no longer simply an objective reality but also the constantly evolving result of conscious action, directed towards a certain goal. This purpose is represented by *functionality*, defined as "the set of requirements whose satisfaction is sought through space organization" (Săsărman, 1979). The purpose of organising space is to guarantee the survival and well-being of the human species. Through its purpose, the functionality thus acquires meaning, rising above the natural function.

The informational message implied by space organization, seen as a phenomenon of communication, presupposes the existence of a language, a repertoire of signs, which are coded elements of the configuration, expression, and composition of organized space. For the message to be transmitted and for the phenomenon of communication to take place, the sender's repertoire of signs must coincide in part with the receiver's repertoire of signs. If this is not the case, the message will be disrupted, and the respective entity in the organized space will not be recognised as such; as a general rule, repertoires do not evolve so rapidly as to completely rule out the possibility of communication. Even when codes change or new styles appear, the two nevertheless retain certain elements in common.

Land Art, also known as Earth Art, is first and foremost a sculptural movement that involves the incorporation of physical or conceptual elements of the landscape into the finished work. The most famous of these are often known for their monumental scale but also for the intrinsic qualities of the work itself. The Land Art movement began to emerge in 1960 and represents the harmony between natural materials, working techniques, and the landscape. The work created with materials characteristic of the place and integrated into the landscape acquires an aesthetic as well as an ecological aspect. Through the Land Art phenomenon, landscape professionals want to sound the alarm about the environment, global warming, and the destruction of nature. Through the creation of Land Art works, out of a passion for using materials in their pure, unprocessed state, and out of a love of nature, the representatives of this movement have designed works that have a particular effect and maximum impact, going so far as to claim to meet pure art. The visual impact of

the works is impressive, not only because of their size but also because of the harmony between the forms, materials and landscapes chosen to create them.

Land Art was born out of a desire to work the land. However, Land Art was not originally environmental art in the current sense of the term. Robert Smithson's "Asphalt Rundown" (1969) (*figure 1*), which consisted of dumping a trailer full of hydrocarbons into nature, had nothing to do with a concern for ecosystems.



Figure 1 **Asphalt Rundown**, Robert Smithson, 1969

A second generation of artists, such as Agnès Denes, Andy Goldworthy and Nils Udo, transformed Land Art into environmental art in the true sense of the word. Nils Udo's sculptures are integrated into nature and made mainly from living materials (*figure 2*).

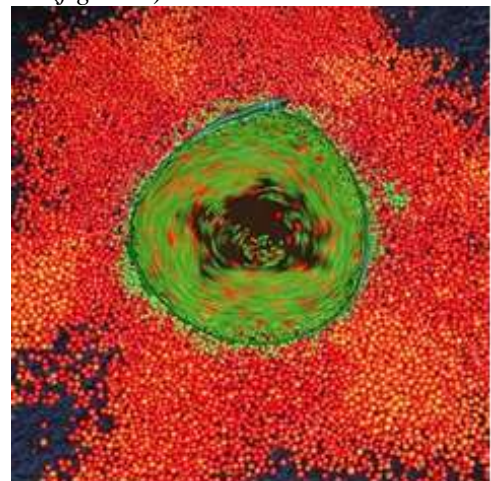


Figure 2 **Summer in the park**, Nils Udo, 1999

Similarly, the works of Agnès Denes, such as "Tree Mountain - Proposal for a forest", are highly polemical (*figure 3*). Here, Agnès Denes creates a virgin forest that forms a landscape in an

abandoned industrial zone and absorbs pollution. The project has a strong political connotation, the Finnish government having decided to finance it at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992.

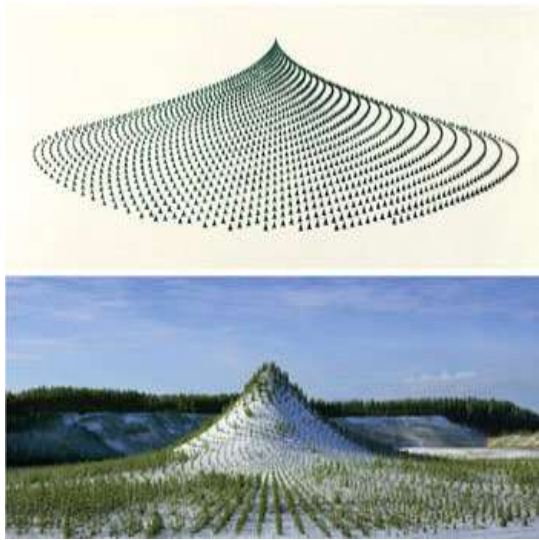


Figure 3 **Tree Mountain – Proposal for a forest, Agnes Denes, 1992**

LandArt is one of the most interesting artistic experiments in landscape art, nature, and architecture. Through their work, artists have sought to raise public awareness of man's destruction of nature and its global effects. Robert Smithson, one of the leading exponents of Land Art today, transformed a space where industrial waste was collected in order to protect nature. The emblematic “Spiral Jetty” (1970) fascinates by its paradoxical nature. The work was born of Robert Smithson's encounter with a building site. The Spiral Jetty was built on the Great Salt Lake in Utah. It was not a chance encounter. Robert Smithson was fascinated by the concept of entropy. Roden Point, an industrial site destroyed by human activity, next to a salt crystal lake, is an ideal place to put his artistic theories into practice. What's more, the waters here are red, introducing a chromatic character. The spiral is 450 meters long and consists of a four-meter-wide band of black basalt rocks, mud, and salt crystals placed in the lake. It should also be noted that the Spiral Jetty was submerged several times after its construction due to a surge of water unforeseen by the artist, and then the waters receded and the spiral reappeared, new and transformed, reddened and covered in salt crystals, having absorbed the surrounding nature and transformed itself into a natural element (figure 4, a and b).



Figure 4 (a and b) **Spiral Jetty underwater; Spiral Jetty emerged from the water (aerial view)**

If we analyse the manifestations of Land Art in gardens, we also notice that the earth is the main element in the creation of works in a natural environment, which remain faithful to the concept that materials should be used in their pure state to achieve their significant potential. The great artist Andy Goldsworthy used leaves of different colours and sizes to create the work illustrated in figure 5, following a geometric and symmetrical organization.



Figure 5 **Work by Andy Goldsworthy**

The same artist arranged yellow natural flowers in a circular shape in a field dominated by violet, emphasizing their aesthetic role, as can be seen in figure 6.



Figure 6 Work by Andy Goldsworthy

Michael McGillis uses paint to redefine the landscape through colour. For example, he painted 95 tree stumps with violet paint, wanting to integrate colour as an element in the natural landscape (figure 7).



Figure 7 A Walkway of Severed Purple Logs by Michael McGillis

The same Michael McGillis used orange paint to create a circle of stems in the Auvergne mountains in France (figure 8). Through this work, the artist is attempting to communicate the idea that the relationship between man and the environment is influenced by the way in which human beings perceive their place in the hierarchy of the natural order.



Figure 8 Work by Michael McGillis

Richard Shilling, another important artist of temporary art in the natural environment, used leaves of different colours, cutting them up to integrate them into geometric shapes created with sticks and small branches, as shown in figure 9.



Figure 9 Work by Richard Shilling

Richard Shilling recreates the seasons using natural materials, such as different-coloured leaves for autumn and different-coloured flowers for spring, to create different shapes and natural structures (figure 10).



Figure 10 Work by Richard Shilling

CONCLUSIONS

Using theoretical principles and practical examples, our article analysed the meanings conveyed by the various forms of landscaping. Spatial communication plays a very important role, because the relationship between human beings and the environment must be very close if we are to speak of normal functionality, free from negative effects for either of the participants in the exchange of messages that we call communication.

So we looked at human needs for organized space, how they can be met and, above all, why it is important to use natural materials wisely as a resource so as not to have a destructive effect on the environment. With this in mind, we have analysed Land Art, a trend that emerged in the 1960s, when the most important people involved in

its development wanted to sound the alarm to protect the natural environment.

The examples of works chosen from one of the most interesting artistic experiments, the phenomenon of Land Art, have enabled us to show that all spatial communication responds to principles of composition and has the role of creating messages and meanings at the visual, auditory, and tactile levels, both for the individual and for society as a whole.

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