



SHADES^{of} SUBLIME

a design for landscape experiences
as an instrument in the making of meaning

Paul A. Roncken







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Thesis committee

Promotors

Prof. Dr A. van den Brink
Professor of Landscape Architecture
Wageningen University & Research

Prof. Dr E.A. de Jong
Professor of Culture, Landscape and Nature (Artis Chair)
University of Amsterdam

Co-promotor

Prof. Dr M.G.C. Schouten
Special professor, Ecology and Nature Conservation
Wageningen University & Research

Other members

Prof. Dr H.G.J. Gremmen, Wageningen University & Research
Prof. Dr M.N.C. Aarts, Radboud University Nijmegen
Prof. Dr M. Prominski, Leibniz University Hannover, Germany
Prof. D.F. Sijmons, Delft University of Technology

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SHADES OF SUBLIME

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Paul A. Roncken

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Paul A. Roncken

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Introduction



Figure 1: C.D. Friedrich, Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer, 1818, oil on canvas, 98x74cm.



What is the sublime?

In experiential terms, the idea of the sublime can be interpreted as an extreme type of aesthetics, a supernova of sensations (after: Lewis 2003). It is extreme, at both ends of the emotional spectrum – both in its uplifting and oppressive forms. In its darker forms, it may be expressed as a harsh, spartan lifestyle and a desire to ‘live deep and suck out all the marrow of life’ (Thoreau 1854). In a more light-hearted version it is an inspiring experience with an uplifting effect (Longinus 2010 (third century)). The fact that the whole of nature is bigger and more complex than any individual can imagine or fathom may induce some fear, but this can settle within moments into a sense of awe and respect (Kant 1951 (1790)). Some believe that the idea of the sublime may help human beings to regain a rightful humility regarding our treatment of nature (Brady 2013). In design-related discourses, the sublime is a specific aesthetic sensation that was debated throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as one of three cornerstones in the development of landscape design: the beautiful, the sublime and the picturesque (Wimmer 1989). Remarkably though, it is specifically the idea of the sublime that has been regaining relevance over the past twenty years (Tuan 2013; Berleant 2009; Brillenburg Wurth 2002; Ashfield and de Bolla 1996).

Sensations described as ‘sublime’ are often associated with grand and astounding natural scenery, such as dizzy heights, erupting volcanoes and complex patterns of animals, oceans, clouds and plant growth (Burke 1998 (1759)). Such phenomena were not only deemed arrestingly scenic, they also seemed to address some ancient and symbolic aspect of life before human influence (den Hartog Jager 2011). An unmitigated confrontation with such an intense reference conveyed not only beauty, but a certain amount of fear and horror as well (von der Thüsen 2008; Tuan 1979; Burke 1998 (1759)). Interestingly, images of such natural scenes often included a

special position within the landscape from which to best witness such sublime qualities. A famous example is Caspar David Friedrich's painting *Der Wanderer über den Nebelmeer* (1818). It depicts a lone man on top of a mountain overlooking a foggy valley stretching endlessly before him (Figure 1). In this artwork, 'nature' can be recognized as an obscure source of marvels and 'landscape' as the more mundane environment that offers scenic access to vantage points overlooking marvels (see also: Crandell 1993).

References to similar 'sublime' landscape experiences are as old as storytelling itself and can be traced back as far as Homer's *Odyssey*. These are accounts that contain both fictive and realistic elements, such as prominent geophysical features. There is a notion of a challenging journey through the wild and unexpected that helps to build character. The journey may be a cathartic one in which the hero must rely on his or her ability to improvise and overcome mesmerizing obstacles. Even today, when a scientific team demonstrates yet again that a journey through the wilderness without mobile phones and other electronic gadgets increases creative reasoning by a full fifty per cent (Atchley et al. 2012), it causes a media stir (e.g. 'Want to boost your brain?', independent.co.uk, retrieved 29 January 2015). Real-time experiences of the wind, the smells, the sounds, the view and the ever-changing face of nature can give way to an immersive sensation of 'being' that is apparently creative.

European ideas about mankind's relationship to nature were severely challenged by the great Lisbon earthquake and tsunami in 1755. This event shocked many people, even decades later, and showed that raw natural powers should not be underestimated (Schouten 2001: 176). Since then, even in the absence of an earthquake or tsunami, the staggering raw power of nature was sought after by expeditions into wild landscapes, such as Henry David Thoreau's exploration of a spartan way of living in *Walden* (1854: 73, 74), the solo adventures of John Muir from 1888 to 1901 and the *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau

(1783). Such examples and collections of landscape experiences aroused even the senses of those that stayed at home. They also raised interest in a ‘true’ description of natural phenomena, somewhere between the real and the imaginary, such as Goethe’s nature observations and Charles Darwin’s insights during his travels.

There are also more recent accounts of hiking through the last wildernesses in Europe, such as those by Robert Macfarlane (2012) and John Wylie (2007), filled with precise and eloquent descriptions of just those types of places that recall sensations as described in the eighteenth century. Macfarlane, for example, describes places that are sometimes pristine and unspoilt, at other times explicitly designed or the result of human intervention. Such travelogues exist even for the cultivated Dutch landscape, despite the fact that the natural landscape has everywhere been tamed and constrained (Freriks 2010; van de Klundert 2012). The same is true for so-called urban jungles (Bunschoten 2010), which can best be explored by getting lost in a more or less intoxicated state, as demonstrated by the Paris based Situationist Guy Debord (1995 (1967)). The sublime can also be found in less obvious sources, such as illustrated children’s books (Roncken and Convery 2016) that depict landscapes of imaginary worlds and the popular superhero comics that emerged in the early 1950s (e.g. Marvel Comics). In addition to such literary works, paintings and other works of art such as music, fashion, architecture and design, the experience of the sublime is now being modernized by cinematography, the internet and the gaming industry (Giblett 2008; McGonigal 2011; Lanier 2014).

Nevertheless, one may question whether sublime experiences like these have become obsolete and are merely a reminder of a Romantic era that may only be of historical interest. One glimpse at the photograph *Nickel Tailings #34* (Sudbury, Ontario 1996) by Edward Burtynsky dismisses this doubt and rejuvenates the idea of the sublime as a contemporary environmental experience (Figure 2).

The text that accompanies this image on the photographer’s website says that the startling colours may be reminiscent of lava flows caused by a natural phenomenon,



Figure 2: Edward Burtynsky, Nickel Tailings #34, 1996.

yet the oranges and reds are the product of a man-made process of separating nickel and other metals from the ore mined in Canada (edwardburtynsky.com, retrieved 29 January 2015). The dramatic consequences of such a heavily polluted vein of planet earth are rivalled by the sheer visual impact of this photogenic landscape. We can admire the photographer for finding this remarkable place and capturing it so well, and at the same time wonder how such an environmental disaster could be allowed to come about. The aesthetic effect captured in the photograph is but a by-product of an industrial intervention, which was never intended to entrance human beings into any aesthetic state. In other words this landscape is neither natural nor designed; it is an accident. Still, the scale and extremity of this and similar phenomena in contemporary environments are not incidental (Jorgensen 2014; Steiner 2014; Bélanger 2013; Berger 2007).

The ‘environment’ photographed by Burtynsky is not so much a ‘landscape’ with a certain aesthetic character; it presents an image of ‘nature’ being injured. Instead of ‘landscape’ the term ‘environment’ seems to be more appropriate. The distorted environment is in need of agency and restoration to become more natural again. Burtynsky offers a vantage point on a marvel that should not be marvelled at. It seems that an ethical judgement is involved here: a landscape that should not be. Instead of a historical sublime experience of rewarding natural marvels, the contemporary sublime involves a strong ethical contemplation of the devastating impacts humans can have on nature. This contemporary relevance of the sublime is the main reason for the recent upsurge of academic interest in the sublime (Pillow 2003; Kirwan 2005; Shaw 2006; White and Pajaczkowska 2009; Morley 2010; Costelloe 2012; Brady 2013; Vandenabeele 2015). As early as the mid-1990s the environmental philosopher Berleant stated that the subject of the sublime is still symbolic of how unprepared the general audience is to develop strategies for dealing with the inherent disorders that arise when confronted with what he referred to as ‘negative’ aesthetic engagement (1997: 78, 79). By introducing the idea of ‘negative’ aesthetic engagement Berleant challenged the dominant position of ‘positive’ aesthetic theory. He argued that aesthetics research is biased towards the preferable and pleasant aspects of experience (i.e. the beautiful or the picturesque) and that as soon as environments become unpleasant for physical or mental well-being, they tend to lose their status of being ‘aesthetic’ (i.e. sublime). Or, as formulated by Rolston Holmes III, ‘do we wish to paint nature pretty, removing the warts? Or to paint nature as it is, warthogs and all?’ (2002: 136).

Likewise, every landscape is in the first place an environment that is somehow upgraded by the connotations surrounding the phenomenon ‘nature’. For instance, since Burtynsky photographed the ravaged landscape of Sudbury, Ontario, the region ‘has undergone a furious and costly clean-up project, which has seen almost eight million trees reintroduced into the city’s landscape’ (sudburyontario.

worldweb.com, retrieved 29 January 2015). The idea of the sublime has not become obsolete, but its significance may have changed to signalling a landscape disorder or an infliction on nature. This also alters the position of landscape design. Referring to Burtynsky's signalling, art reveals the paradoxical fascination for sublime environments, whereas landscape design is called upon to convert any discomforting sublime into a 'healthy' state, both of natural systems and of human experience.



A short history of the idea of the sublime

Leaving aside for a moment the daunting implications for the contemporary relevance of the sublime and its historical framing as a Romantic sensation, how was the idea of the sublime originally conceived? The oldest source for the idea of the sublime is the ancient Greek work known as *Peri Hypsous* (Longinus). This manuscript contains a lecture about an enchanting and highly effective type of rhetorical performance of poetry or speech. It is a guidebook for training, so to speak, the reflexive capacity of performers and the speculative capacity of an audience. It was not intended for landscape experiences. Italian scholars first translated this manuscript in the sixteenth century and it was subsequently translated into other European languages such as French (Boileau Despreaux 1683) and English (Smith 1739). The original title of the book *Peri Hypsous* was changed into *On the Sublime* in more common European parlance. This translation also changed the original connotation of the book. *Peri Hypsous* refers to a complex meaning of really great literature containing 'the high seriousness which comes from absolute sincerity' (Sanders Way and Rhys Roberts 2010). The new word 'sublime', however, refers to something hidden or obscure and that is a more authentic and natural state of being. In German it is known as *das Erhabene*, which is understood as something

that can be experienced, but in fact refers to something extraordinary or impossible to conceive (Schiller 1918).

The translation into modern European languages made it possible for Edmund Burke (1759) to develop a new interpretation in which the experiential object of nature becomes a source for sublime sensations. He stated that ‘the sublime is without clearness and thus forces our reasoning to establish an artificial clearness or compensation of the lack of clearness: causing the anxiety of ‘terror’ (1759: 127). ‘Terror’, as understood by Burke, can be defined as the emotional and physical reaction driven by survival and improvisation, an ability to respond in the now. He positioned the experience of the sublime as a visceral experience that draws on deep inner feelings rather than the intellect. The intellect is not absent, but it is supplemented by more metaphorical interpretations induced, for instance, by sounds, smells, tastes and seemingly random memories, which are used to generate coherent meanings. As advocated by Burke, the greatest possible chance for a sublime sensation was in the un-designed, in the wild, pristine and therefore more ‘authentic’ parts of landscapes. Consequently, such experiences have been allocated to natural scenery where human involvement is dwarfed, and also in volcano eruptions and other natural disasters and marvels. Such features and events inspire and stupefy at the same time.

In the literary and artistic history of the Western world, the idea of the sublime has been assigned to intense and meaningful aesthetic experiences, ‘peak’ experiences and ‘flashbulb’ memories (Brown and Kulik 1977; Richardson 2010; Costelloe 2012). Related to this is Sigmund Freud’s concept of ‘sublimation’ as a subconscious release of repressed libido energy. An excess of libido energy was to be channelled into a more acceptable or culturally higher form of compensating actions and thoughts (Freud 1930). This interpretation is analogous to the chemical process in which a solid substance changes directly into vapour when heated – a process called ‘sublimation’ by alchemists in the seventeenth century. In the alchemy

tradition, a body can be made spiritual and the spiritual can then be made corporeal again, but contained by a different type of body (Barrett 1815).

The most complex philosophical interpretation of the sublime is by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (Kant 1951 (1790); Kant 2003 (1764)). While his works were written in the eighteenth century, his influence on the idea of the sublime increased during the nineteenth century and caused it to be problematized as the indicator of something that lacks empirical evidence and therefore also lacks scientific substance, despite its moral function of inducing a sense of awe and respect. There have been other contributions by equally famous philosophers, such as Hume (1739), Schiller (1801), Hegel (1807), Schopenhauer (see also: Vandenabeele 2015; Schopenhauer 1958 (1883)) and Nietzsche (see also: McMahon 2004; Nietzsche 1964 (1872)), but the main idea of the sublime has become defined by three predominant founding fathers: Longinus (*Peri Hypsous*), Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant.

In *The Sublime, A Reader in British Eighteenth-century Aesthetic Theory* (1996) Ashfield and de Bolla identified studies on the ‘experiential object’ (e.g. landscapes), on ‘the affect’ – the mental and emotional processes involved – and a third and dominant discourse which analyses the discourse on the sublime itself: ‘in many ways ... the most interesting approach but it too easily leads to the conclusion that the sublime is without substance, an immaterial object’ (ibid. 9). Within a philosophical discourse, focusing on the immaterial may be an elegant challenge, but as a concrete direction for further design and aesthetic research it is not very helpful. A focus on ‘the experiential object’ instead would provide something more concrete to discuss, namely the design of specific types of sublime landscapes.

The sublime was one of three aesthetic ideas that contributed to the theory of aesthetics during the emergence of landscape and urban design during the eighteenth century (Wimmer 1989; see also Chapter One). Ideas on the beautiful, the sublime and the picturesque were used to reflect on the design of large private properties, expanding agricultural efficiency, coarse industrialization, exponential

urban growth and the management of natural resources. The landscape philosopher Ian Thompson explains that categorizing nature experiences into the beautiful and the sublime proved insufficient for the totality of aesthetic experiences in landscapes: ‘the rutted lanes and rustic mills depicted by Meindert Hobbema (1638–1709) in Holland and the East Anglian pastorales painted by Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788) owed nothing to smoothness or serpentine curves, nor did they induce feelings of awe and trepidation. On the contrary, their subjects were mundane and the qualities they celebrated were roughness and irregularity’ (Thompson 2009: 50). It was then generally agreed that landscapes needed ‘that kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture’ (Gilpin 1802). Even Immanuel Kant categorizes the art of landscape gardening together with that of painting as ‘the beautiful arrangement of its products’ and ‘nothing else than the ornamentation of the soil ... since it also has no concept of the object and its purpose (as in architecture)’ (Kant 1790: 167). In her book *Nature Pictorialized*, landscape architect Gina Crandell even argues that, after this historical discourse in the Western world, have learned to appreciate the beauty of nature by first seeing pictures of it (1993: 4). The image of nature became, so to speak, ‘landscaped’. According to a study by environmental scientist Arjen Buijs (2009), not only the general public, but also experts now interpret the beauty in nature as a synonym for the picturesque qualities as revealed by the visual arts. To me, these historical developments reveal that in my research it is important to keep distinguishing between nature, landscape and a third, inclusive category of ‘environment’ (e.g. urban environments, virtual environments).

In the eighteenth century the ancient Greek idea on rhetoric (*Peri Hypsous*) was transformed into a nature-related sublime (Burke). In the nineteenth century, with its increasing landscape-related designs, this natural sublime became a more moderate and picturesque version of the sublime. The twentieth century saw experimentation with urban and technological artefacts and their artificial types of sublime sensations (see Chapter One; Newman 1948; Nye 1994; Meyer 1998).

In the twenty-first century ‘wrong’ environments, such as environments that have been severely ecologically degraded (Hitt 1999) and fearful social phenomena (Žižek 1999) have caused a growing interest in ‘negative’ aesthetics, presumably represented by the idea of the sublime. The idea of the sublime has become known in a variety of expressions and its idea has been used for a diversity of causes. Designerly interpretations (Cross 2007) of the sublime ought to reflect this diversity and at the same time capture its essential experiential claim.



Research aim and research questions

Since the publication of Ronald Hepburn’s essay ‘Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty’ (1966), the contemporary understanding of experiences of nature has been moving towards a more immediate and embodied type of experience instead of one through representations in the visual arts. There appears to be no specific ambition to clarify or even include the idea of the sublime within this discourse (see the absence of the sublime in Drenthen and Keulartz 2014). Moreover, the aesthetic domain as a whole is still dominated by the notion of beauty and preferred style (Moore 2010). Kirwan (2005: 157) even suggests that ‘the aesthetic remains, in all its own beauty or sublimity: unexamined.’ If landscape design is called upon to transform any ‘negative’ into a culturally higher ‘positive’, then the landscape architectural repertoire will reflect the means to achieve this transformation. Landscape designers may unwittingly be restrained from contributing to a wider diversification of the idea of the sublime simply because their focus is on beautification or by means of the picturesque. As a consequence, more incongruous or dissonant experiences are unlikely to be included in the theoretical framework for landscape aesthetics and the design repertoire.

As a landscape architect, I have experienced how reticent I am to design landscapes that create ‘negative’ aesthetic effects, such as placelessness (Eco 2004; Botton 2007; Scruton 2011) and alienation (e.g. Olwig 2005), even though such landscapes have profound effects on people. ‘Negative’ aesthetics were not explicitly addressed during my education or practice other than the urge to ‘cure’ any negative effects on landscapes by means of ‘positive’ aesthetics. Whereas eighteenth century landscapes were designed to include a vantage point overlooking a natural sublime, twenty-first century landscapes appear as upgrades of environments to repair what is considered to be a sublime devastation of nature. These notions prompted me to wonder whether landscape design would benefit from a more comprehensive framework for landscape aesthetics, including ‘negative aesthetics’, and, if so, how becoming more knowledgeable on the idea of the sublime could generate such a framework. The idea of the sublime may have gained in relevance, but should landscape designers not also explore it more systematically as a designerly concept (Cross 2007)?

A focus on the idea of the sublime will inevitably lead to a reconsideration of the bias towards predominantly ‘positive’ aspirations, both in aesthetic theory and design practice. I also believe that the influence of landscape architecture as a scientific discipline will be strengthened by explicating a designerly way of thinking about and acting on the idea of the sublime. The development of the idea of the sublime as an aesthetic category has a clear historical relationship with the development of landscape experiences and the design and management of natural resources. The sublime may yet provide the key to a more specific design repertoire on how to include ‘negative’ aesthetics in contemporary and future landscape design. This aim is expressed by the following research question:

What characterizes a future landscape architectural design that includes the idea of the sublime as part of its aesthetic repertoire?

This main research question aims to define future characteristics of the design repertoire, informed by a multidisciplinary inquiry on the idea of the sublime. Two fact-finding sub-questions help to elaborate on the multidisciplinary inquiry and a third sub-question involves the act of designing as a research method. Answering my main research question will involve a synthesis of the answers to all three sub-questions.

What is, within landscape aesthetics, the historical and contemporary understanding of the idea of the sublime?

Why are sublime experiences labelled as ‘negative aesthetics’ and by whom?

What expressions relate to the idea of the sublime in landscape and landscape design?



Research approach

Landscape architecture as a design discipline has a speculative role in imagining diverse, innovative and environmentally responsive futures (Waldheim 2006; Weller 2009). This thesis takes up the challenge of fostering the speculative position of landscape architecture by means of some form of design. If landscape architectural research includes designing in a conventional manner – analysing a site and development brief and deriving a local solution – then the speculative is present in the form of drawings, sketches and argumentation. Alternatively, my research approach encompasses literature from a wide diversity of sources: rhetoric, philosophy, psychology and art. Figure 3 presents the diversity of influences on the idea of the sublime, as embodied in these sources and discussed in this chapter,

organized according to the subject (horizontal) and the field of expertise (vertical). Drawing on these sources, my research aimed to study the idea of the sublime as part of the landscape architectural repertoire, which is illustrated in the right side arrow in Figure 3.

It should be noted that the identification of a sublime aesthetic repertoire is not – or at least not only – a matter of visual expression, but primarily a matter of design culture and habitual creative manners. Therefore, characterizing a landscape architectural design involves a ‘designerly way of knowing’ (Cross 2007) that is a ‘reflexive approach’ to explore new possibilities of understanding and new ways of knowing (Deming and Swaffield 2011: 8). Such a reflexive approach includes the effect of the personality or presence of the researcher on what is being investigated (Oxford 2011).

In this research I specifically applied this designerly way of knowing when answering the third sub-question. By exploring the concept of ‘Landscape Machines’, engaging with its core ideas and actually designing such machines together with colleagues and students, I have been able to develop the contours of a future landscape architectural repertoire. ‘Designerly’ in this sense means gathering insight and enhancing the existing body of knowledge through the act of designing, making full use of my own skills and competences as a designer. This approach can be referred to as ‘research through designing’ (Lenzholzer et al. 2013).

Whereas the third sub-question is related to the reflexive approach, the first and second sub-questions have a more fact-finding character. Answering these sub-questions involved a literature review. This review can also be called ‘designerly’ because, as a designer, I interpret literature and artistic or design sources with an explorative mind, focusing on new possibilities rather than accepting past and contemporary interpretations. Of course, apart from pure fact-finding this has a reflexive side as well. Finally, finding an answer to my main research question

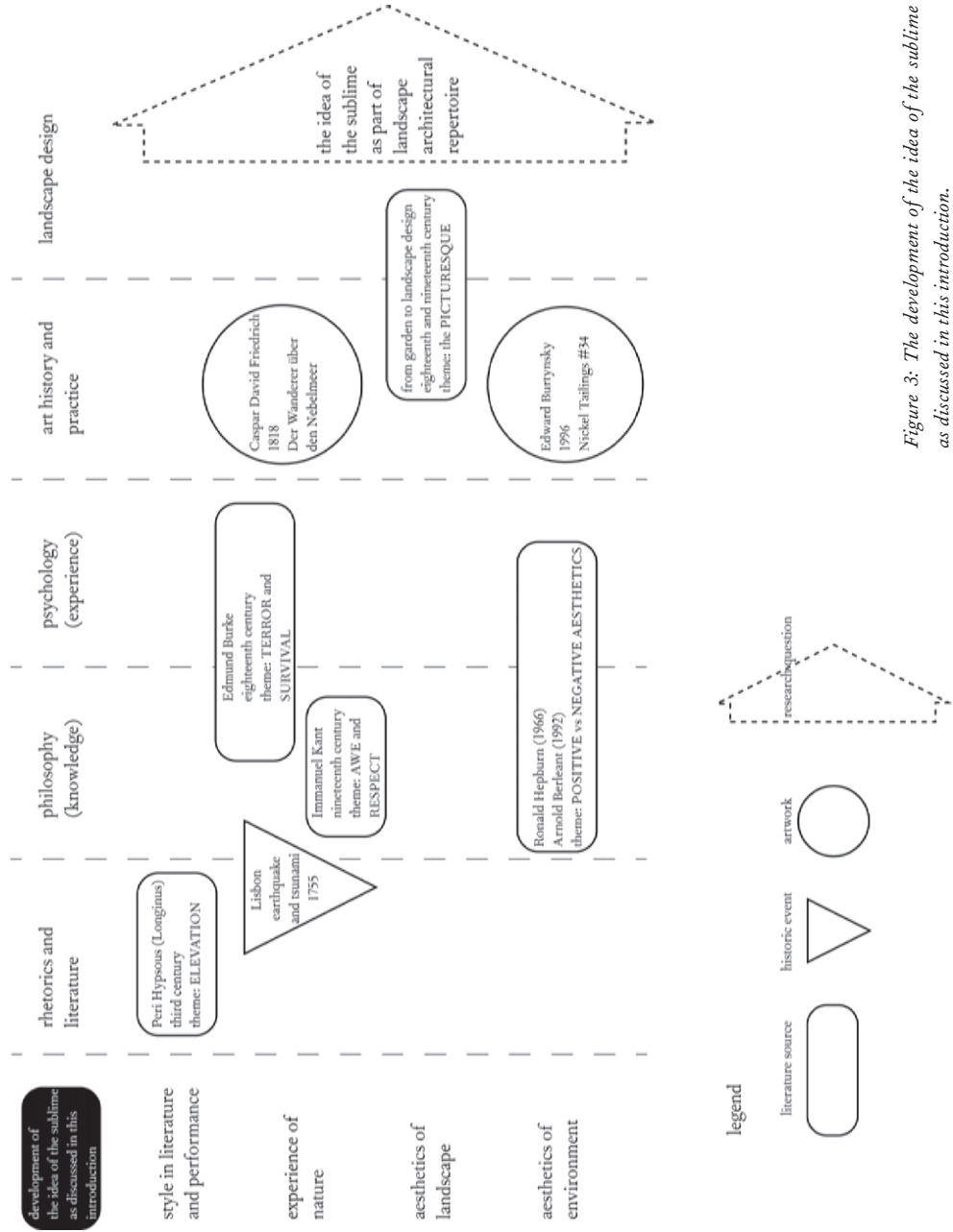


Figure 3: The development of the idea of the sublime as discussed in this introduction.

required a synthesis of the answers to the three sub-questions as well as including the act of designing (i.e. *What characterizes a landscape architectural design*).

I will now explain in more detail the sources I used in this research and the way in which I used them. To answer the first two sub-questions I made a literature selection by using the keywords ‘sublime’, ‘nature’, ‘landscape’, ‘environment’ and ‘design’. This search was performed by multiple databases as offered by Wageningen University Library and additionally by Google Scholar to include more design-related literature. By means of a ‘constant comparison’ as part of a ‘grounded theory analysis’ (Strauss and Corbin 1990), I continued doing this throughout the whole period of research for this thesis. First, using an ‘open coding’ (ibid. 61) I compared and categorized quotes and paragraphs within this growing body of literature. The idea of the sublime began to emerge both as an object (e.g. landscape) and a subject (e.g. experience). The keyword ‘sublime’ was often absent or present simply as a reference to one of the founding fathers. Then by means of an ‘axial coding’ the connections between categories were refined and developed (ibid. 96). The descriptions and connotations of a ‘sublime-like’ type of relationship between an object and subject proved to be a more valuable indicator. This refinement led to a new categorization of themes that somehow relate to necessary contexts and conditions for a ‘sublime’ relationship between various types of objects and a subject (Chapter One).

Based on this categorization, the next step was to study the primary texts by the three founding fathers. A first intensive reading of these primary texts boosted the evolution of my research. My study of *Peri Hypsous* by Longinus in particular defined the idea of the sublime by surprisingly explicit designerly aspects and the subject of creativity. The effect of the experience of the sublime, according to Longinus, is a gain of co-creativity by the whole audience, time and time again, with each performance. This notion led me to question many of the ‘sublime’ connotations from my initial literature review, such as ‘loneliness’, ‘once-in-a-

lifetime-experience’ and ‘impossible to design’. I then followed a ‘selective coding’, a ‘process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development’ (ibid. 116). I selected those quotes, definitions and paragraphs in the texts of the three founding fathers that help to define what the structure of the sublime experience is (Chapter Two).

The structure of the sublime experience contains some fragments of designerly aspects, especially regarding the creative inclusion of the audience; however, the position of the designer was not yet explicit enough. In Part Two of this thesis I have therefore included sources that highlighted a more active and involved (i.e. designerly) position. One source has been largely neglected or undervalued in recent publications: it is a controversial but unique work by Thomas Weiskel (1976). The other source is non-western (Buddhism). These sources have proven to be valuable in making explicit how one can be creatively involved in the sublime experience instead of merely being carried away by it. In *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*, Thomas Weiskel (1976) analysed the experiential structure of the sublime according to the works of Romantic landscape poets. Poets and designers share a common and specific quality when considering the experience of landscapes: they both seek to capture experiences as well as transform them into a newly designed artefact. For a poet this artefact is the poem, for a landscape designer it is a design. Weiskel explicitly includes the notions of both ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ aesthetics. His work is generally considered to be remarkable and yet also controversial, most notably because he draws heavily on psychoanalytical theories and early neurological findings. Nevertheless, later cognitive theories on Romantic texts, such as works of literature and poetry, have become a specialized branch within experiential research (i.e. Richardson 2010).

I have selected quotes and paragraphs that relate to a new theme presented by Weiskel’s work: the manipulation of a landscape experience by the poet. His

suggestion of three types of manipulations: a reader's sublime, a poet's sublime and a liminal sublime, presented a conceptual framework for a variety of sublime experiences that could potentially be influenced by a conscious intervention by the poet or, in my case, the designer. By comparing this framework to the prior 'axial coding' of themes from the much broader body of literature, I was able to synthesize a new conceptual framework (Chapter Three). This new conceptual framework includes my preliminary conclusions regarding 'negative' aesthetics, although none of the collected sources could specify how such 'negativity' could be manipulated, other than through beautification. One option, according to Weiskel, was presented by the liminal sublime, although Weiskel himself was not particularly clear about this and neither were my other sources. This particular hiatus troubled me for a long time and was only resolved after I followed a lead from environmental aesthetic philosophy to include a non-Western aesthetic viewpoint (Saito 2007). The specific non-Western source that I have included is Buddhism in general and Zen in particular. Buddhism offers a long empirical and theoretical tradition on experiences that are relevant for a 'liminal' type of sublime experience (Chapter Four).

My next and final step was to apply the insights collected at this point of my research to study how, as formulated in my main research question, landscape architecture design can be expanded by a new way of knowing the sublime. The reflexive act of designing is present on two levels within this part of the research: the design of specific landscape expressions (Chapter Five) and a reflection upon designing by including these landscape expressions (Chapter Six). These two levels are relevant because my research aim also consists of two elements: a new, design-oriented expression of the idea of the sublime and, consequently, a new way of dealing with the sublime within landscape design. To define new expressions, I worked towards a 'thick description' (Boeije 2005), a broad and detailed description of circumstances and mechanisms, to describe a specific landscape expression to match a specific type of sublime experience. The result is the conceptual design of

landscape expressions (i.e. archetypical landscapes). A thick description is relevant because the experiential connection between the object of landscape and the subject is not only related to the physical appearance of the landscape (thin) but also to a cultural, social and personal context (thick) (Chapter Five).

My design research reported in Chapter Six is closely connected to my literature research, although it developed in a distinct process of supervising and working with landscape architecture Master's thesis students at Wageningen University, collaborating with national and international peers, and academic publishing. In five published articles, I have collected and analysed exemplary design work by students working on the dynamic and changing aspects of newly productive landscapes (Roncken 2006; Roncken 2011; Roncken et al. 2011; Roncken 2013; Roncken et al. 2014). These articles provided an opportunity to explore a new kind of symbiosis between the formal aesthetics of 'landscape' and the dynamic aspects of the 'machine'. The word 'landscape' represents a controlled natural appearance, whereas the word 'machine' represents both the influence of mankind and technocracy including agriculture. In their synthesis they express the emergent and wild convulsion of landscape ecological processes in the making, in which humans are just as much part of the audience as animals and plants are. The concept of the Landscape Machine explores the specifically dissonant and unresolved state of relatively young and evolving landscapes that have productive uses for generating energy and food, cleaning soil and water and producing wilderness-like biotopes. Besides discussing the visual display in these designs, I have explored what new design habits have to be developed to be able to experiment with a dynamic repertoire for a diversity of sublime landscapes for the future. Yet there are more design applications possible. At the end of this thesis I will reflect on my research questions and discuss the academic, societal and designerly implications of my work.



Structure of this book

The book consists of four Parts. The first Part (The Structure of the Sublime) explores the past and present ideas on environmental aesthetics and the historical development of the idea of the sublime according to *Peri Hypsous* (Longinus), Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. In the second Part (Anatomy of Sublime Sensations) the experience of the sublime is dissected into several experiential categories based on the study by Thomas Weiskel on Romantic English landscape poetry. Here, the experiential structure of sublime sensations is formulated and represented by six different types of sublime experiences, including two types that relate to non-Western cultural traditions, and Buddhism in particular. In the third Part (Landscapes of the Sublime), the derived experiential categories of the sublime affect are transcribed to a landscape aesthetic typology. Furthermore, the work on designing Landscape Machines is explained, exemplified and discussed. The thesis winds up in Part Four (Challenged by Sublime Landscapes), which recapitulates and synthesizes the research results and discusses how these results could benefit the future landscape architectural repertoire and support a practical understanding of the idea of the sublime.

As an additional means to gain an experiential idea of the sublime, I have included a few texts that introduce a creative or designerly interpretation. This is motivated by the consideration that the developing idea of the sublime has been marked by specific historical episodes. According to the historian Frank Ankersmit, any historical interpretation calls for an experiential method that is in itself already a ‘sublime historical experience’ (Ankersmit 2005). In his view historical episodes must be interpreted within their specific historical and emphatic frame. This calls for an immersive engagement with the same type of doubts, hopes and developing ideas as those experienced and considered by the original historical figures. For this

purpose I have written a play in three acts and a series of four letters. Both the play and the letters aim to better understand and interpret the influences of the historical personalities that have shaped the idea of the sublime. By writing these I aimed to explore the various historical attempts to define the sublime and portray its changing and diverse character. As such, they represent different aspects of explorative human understanding of the experiential space between a *sense of self* and a *sense of place*.

Of course, the play and the letters cannot be considered as a form of academic research. But they may help readers, as they helped me, to find their way in the extensive world of the sublime, to reconstruct the development of this idea over time, and to explore its historical, contemporary and potential future design representations. In that sense, the play and letters form a kind of counterbalance to and artistic elaboration of the research presented in this thesis. Acts One and Two of the play are positioned at the end of the corresponding part of this book, while Act Three concludes the book. The letters are presented, in a noticeably different layout, as an Intermezzo between Part Two and Part Three.

Part One

The Structure of the Sublime

Chapter One

THE IDEA OF THE SUBLIME

Seven themes related to nature, landscape, the environment and art

‘... to call a landscape peaceful, smiling, majestic, gloomy, as the case may be. This total emotional reaction, commonly attributed to the landscape as a quality, we shall call landscape effect. Its clarity, its completeness, its power, will be the result and the measure of the style or character manifested in the whole landscape and in its component parts. Although landscape effect is in many cases so subtle and complicated a thing that it is impossible to determine all the causes that bring it about, it is still a great essential to be sought by the designer, for it is the whole and the only ultimate esthetic value which a landscape can possess.’

(Hubbard and Hubbard, *Introduction to the Study of Landscape Architecture*, 1917: 22)

The sublime is such a ‘massive concept’ (Brady 2013: 1) that it has been described by theorists from a range of disciplines in relation to nature, landscape, environmental phenomena and art. While it has also been related to social phenomena (Žižek 1999) and technological objects (Nye 1994), my main argument lies with the design of landscapes. As discussed in the Introduction, nature, landscape and the environment offer a wide range of thematic differences. The relationship between nature and the sublime is thematically related to Romantic experiences (Burke 1759; Weiskel 1976); the relationship between landscape and the sublime is thematically related to an aesthetic debate that includes the beautiful and the picturesque (Wimmer 1989); and the relationship between environment and the sublime is thematically related to somehow accepting ‘negative aesthetics’ (Berleant 1997). In this chapter I will analyse what themes are present within the various academic discourses that help to define the idea of the sublime. In total I have derived seven themes.

I will start by discussing environmental aesthetics, since this holds an incentive for the contemporary revival of the idea of the sublime, followed by landscape aesthetics and nature experiences, and finally additional and miscellaneous artistic sources that are related to landscape design.



Theme one: despite knowledge and imagination, a sense of ‘awe’ remains

Since the late 1960s environmental aesthetics has emerged as a specialised field of aesthetics within philosophy ‘in reaction to the growing popular and political concerns over environmental degradation and destruction’ (Drenthen and Keulartz 2014: 1). As a branch of philosophy, aesthetics is concerned primarily with the perception of nature and more recently also with modified environments (ibid. 4). Environmental aesthetics adds to this a political concern about the degradation of the quality of nature (see: Carlson 2014). For some decades, authors have been polarizing the relationship between nature and art by adhering to either science-based models (e.g. Muelder Eaton 1998; Carlson 1979) or non-science-based approaches (Berleant 1992; Hepburn 1966; Saito 1998). Allen Carlson argued for a science-based approach because the aesthetic appreciation of nature should be guided by scientific knowledge to help distinguish between real and false judgements (Carlson 1979).

For instance, the appreciation of a whale must involve viewing it correctly as a mammal (rather than as a fish). This ‘clipping of the wings of imagination’ was needed to prevent naive and sentimental imaginative responses that would impoverish appreciation (Brady 1998: 146). Particularly when experiencing nature, one needs a guide to properly understand its scientific, and therefore intrinsic, self, lest ‘seeing a mountain as an ice cream cone brings in a way of thinking about the

mountain entirely unrelated to it' (Fudge 2001). The opposing non-science-based approaches more or less accept the deviations of imagination, even if this means accepting non-existent (fantastical) or undeterminable situations (Muelder Eaton 1998; Nohl 2001). Although imagination may indicate a false judgement, in the idea of the sublime it gains an accepted functionality by means of the concept of 'awe' or 'grandeur' (Brady 2013: 2). 'We continue to seek out incredible, extraordinary places and phenomena – and for many of us, some of them are more accessible than ever before' (ibid. 2).

Drenthen and Keulartz suggest that the political agenda within environmental aesthetics could muster imagination and art 'to make our potentially catastrophic future vividly plausible, and to open up space for alternative, less "toxic" forms of living and dwelling' (2014: 8). The term 'negative' aesthetics is not accepted as a given, but is influenced by a political agenda. Yet even without having to decide whether the sublime is more related to knowledge or to imagination, it is relevant to include the theme of an opposition between them. The idea of the sublime may have value within environmental aesthetics, according to Brady, exactly because both knowledge and imagination remain absent and only a sense of 'awe' remains as a 'moral significance for contemporary times' (ibid. 8).



Theme two: from distant contemplation to embodied engagement

The isolation of aesthetic objects from the rest of life (i.e. disinterestedness) is a concern that is addressed by those in favour of ecological inclusiveness (Hitt 1999) and embodied engagement with environments (Sepänmaa 2007; Berleant 2011). A prime concern here is to 'promote vigilance regarding the ramifications of our sentient responses' (Saito 2010: 379). To be absorbed in appreciation ('aesthetic

engagement’) is a way of counteracting shallowness and disinterestedness (Berleant 1992: 87). For public audiences that seek to participate in everyday environments there are a growing number of themes linked to food, recycling, public health, urban gardening and longevity (e.g. Meyer 2008; Thompson, Aspinall and Bell 2010). This involves creating an ‘immersive’ environment that will lead to recognition, empathy, love, respect and care for the environment (Meyer 2008). Such immersion explicitly includes bodily activity and goes beyond mere scenic appreciation. Rolston (1998) explains that when one enters a forest, for instance, one does not really engage with the forest until well within it. Inside the forest, there may not even be any scenery.

Among these new types of immersion are alternative types of wilderness explorations, such as urban types (Jorgensen and Keenan 2011) and industrial types (Potteiger and Purinton 1998; Whiston Spirn 1998). Redeveloped post-industrial sites include new uses for large former machine halls and massive concrete or steel structures which may generate enthusiasm to explore new possibilities without having to start all over again (Berger and Sijmons 2010; Meyer 1998; Weilacher 2007). In an article on the ‘ecological sublime’, Christopher Hitt discusses a holistic type of responsibility for ‘our’ planet and its ecosystems (1999). It builds on the word ‘Plight’ that was introduced in the famous book *Design with Nature* by Ian McHarg (1969). Designed landscapes should ‘provoke those who experience them to become more aware of how their actions affect the environment, and to care enough to make changes The designed landscapes of the world take up a small amount of the globe’s surface. Yet they are visited and inhabited by people who have a great impact on the environment in everything they do – where they live and how they commute, what they consume, and whom they elect to public office’ (Meyer 2008: 21).

The fact that more and more people visit different environments around the globe has made sociologist John Urry wary. He introduced the concept of the ‘tourist gaze’ to indicate that tourists tend to see environments according to their

expectations and, in return, environments are – over time – physically modified to match such expectations (1992, 2012). This phenomenon explains why certain generic and fashionable features such as shopping malls have come to dominate many local subtleties. The dominance of the visual field and the influence of clichéd knowledge are characteristics that have been ascribed to these features to explain this phenomenon. In landscape architecture, the dominance of visual clichés is an issue that has been thoroughly assessed (e.g. Crandell 1993; Moore 2010; van Etteger, Thompson and Vicenzotti 2016). The tendency by these critics is – again – towards a broader inclusion of the senses. Always pushed to the edges of graphical presentation by influential design competitions (Amaroso 2012; Treib 2008), landscape architects have also tended to neglect the participating influences of audiences in the act of creating landscapes (Herrington 2009: 126–130). Alternatives are studied by offering students a more direct interaction with one-on-one landscape experiments, such as in the educational concept of ‘thrift’ (Dee 2010).

An analogy can be made with the development of the idea of the sublime, which may also have become a cultural cliché. Mass reproductions of sublime landscape paintings and photographs of sublime landscapes have left an imprint and created a phenomenon equal to the ‘tourist gaze’ (Lewis 2003; Stormer 2004). Moreover, the image of a nature-related type of sublime (e.g. the painting by Caspar David Friedrich, Figure 1) has made many people long for this type of sublime without considering any other type. As a result, everyday landscapes are hardly ever considered as places for the sublime. A movement away from the visual imprint could open up new types of sublime. Both in environmental aesthetics and in landscape architecture it is increasingly accepted that we not only ‘read’ the landscape but are also ‘involved’ in the landscape; landscape is a verb and a performance (Wylie 2007). Walking and working in the landscape using muscular power and hand–eye coordination are as much part of the aesthetic experience

as looking and daydreaming. Their combined effect is what constitutes aesthetic interactions, or what James Gibson refers to as ‘affordances’ (Gibson 1977).

Affordances are provoked by natural features, such as topography or objects, which invite humans to grasp possibilities for interaction (Heft 2005: 123). An example would be the discovery of a natural staircase formed by the roots of trees that cling to the side of the mountain. Certain types of interaction may be hampered by constraints, such as swimming through a thick layer of floating vegetation or detritus, or wading through deep snow. It is through physical interaction that one can discover the possible and impossible interactions with an environment; they arise contextually depending on imaginative ingenuity and physical agility. This second theme for the idea of the sublime aims at widening the diversity of a typology for the sublime by focusing on multisensory and embodied types of experiences, and thereby also more engaging landscapes.



Theme three: landscape design may have commodified the sublime

The discourse in environmental aesthetics is mainly concerned with the perception of nature; the discourse in landscape aesthetics also includes landscape painting and landscape design (Thompson 2009). In the eighteenth century the English social elite travelled to Italy for ‘cultural improvement’ (ibid. 49) and it was the combination of Italian landscapes, the strenuous crossing of the Alps during the Grand Tour and the vast landownership by the elite that spun the discourse on landscape aesthetics. It was not only the gentleness of the English landscape that was aestheticized, but also an Arcadian interpretation of classical literature (ibid. 50). Paintings of the seventeenth century by Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) and Claude Lorrain (1600–1682) showed how the Italian landscape could be composed to include classical

temples and weathered vegetation. Landowners fashioned their estates after these images, but without losing the charm of the English countryside. William Gilpin (1724–1804), for example, produced guidebooks to teach readers how to evaluate English landscapes as if they were paintings. He also provided guidelines for improving on nature because ‘nature unaided was able to produce textures and colours, but it rarely produced good compositions’ (Thompson 2009: 51).

The effort to achieve Italian or Arcadian compositions in the English landscape gave rise to a picturesque middle ground between the beautiful and the sublime. ‘Picturesque items are typically in the middle ground between those experienced as either sublime or beautiful, being complex and eccentric, varied and irregular, rich and forceful, and vibrant with energy’ (Carlson 2007). Landscape paintings had developed from background scenery into canvas-wide compositions that could make viewers feel as if they were present in the scenery. Some painted landscapes could conjure up a sense of beauty and Arcadia, while other examples could just as easily conjure up a sense of horror and dystopia.

The history of landscape painting has taught landscape designers in what ways the effects of the sublime and the beautiful can be unified in one composition. This can be compared to the complementarity and interconnectedness of the contrasting forces of Yin and Yang in Chinese philosophy. The picturesque is a landscape designerly solution for composing a whole experience by including parts that relate to beauty and to the sublime. The symbiotic power of the beautiful and the sublime within the category of the picturesque became the popular and habitual realm from which landscape-related aesthetics could be integrated into everyday society (Andrews 1989). Both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ aesthetics were forged together to create designs for artificial landscape gardens as well as a long-lasting series of urban parks, systems of parkways and, finally, natural landscape reserves (Olmsted 1902).

Like the increasingly popular paintings depicting a balance of beautiful material and sublime elements in the rich detail of dark-toned patina, which could be hung

in almost any room, the picturesque became the most feasible vehicle for landscape design (Wimmer 1989: 431-433). Instead of creating pure wilderness scenery, a technique was perfected to create spatial perspectives that trick one's perception of space (e.g. seemingly larger than in reality). The picturesque draws the attention to the act of viewing and the resulting contemplation, a negotiation between the interiority of private feeling and the reality of the exterior world (Richards 2001). The often manipulated and tamed expressions of nature were kept at a critical distance and for this reason the picturesque 'has been theorized as the crucial contributor to the formulation of ideas of aesthetic distance in the late eighteenth century' (ibid. 26). The picturesque could 'control' the sublime, frame it like a picture, 'commodifying' it as an object of touristic appreciation (ibid. 24). Such a commodifying effect of landscape design, through the picturesque, offers a theme that is relevant to the idea of the sublime. The image of the sublime may have been commodified by landscape design and therefore landscape design itself may itself have become entangled in maintaining a clichéd image of the sublime.

In general there are two types of aesthetic theories, namely institutional theories and audience theories (van Etteger, Thompson and Vicenzotti 2016: 86). Institutional theories emphasize the position of the artist and the acceptance by an art world; audience theories emphasize the influence of audiences. The suggestion that landscape design may have commodified the sublime is aligned with the later since it is related to commodifications in favour of audience preferences. If, however, the idea of the sublime has somehow been misunderstood due to this strong tie to the influence of audiences, then it may be reasonable to try and develop a more institutional theory of the sublime. The position of the designer and the acceptance by an academic world may, in that case, be the instigators of an alternative interpretation of the sublime. My thesis will develop along this institutional line and my research did not involve audience participation.



Theme four: a landscape sublime for a living system design

The ambitions and potentials for designed landscapes have not lessened over the centuries. In the twentieth century they have grown from gardens to regional design, the design of infrastructure, new urban planning and natural habitat restoration (McHarg 1969). Landscape design continues to mature and its relevance and historical impact are no longer disputed. If we inspect the list of topics found in contemporary books on the theory of landscape architecture, we find historical legibility, public policy, native natural planting, engineering, urban open space, information technology and designer commerce (Deming and Swaffield 2011: 25). Aesthetics is often not included because it lacks a theoretical foundation, but in fact it does not even need one, since a well-established picturesque practice has become mainstream. Landscape urbanism, a conceptual branch within landscape architecture, is less concerned with what things look like and also tends to reject aesthetics as a discipline worth considering (Thompson 2012: 12).

Instead of being considered as a fundamental aspect of human behaviour, landscape aesthetics is implicitly considered to be a visualization, representation and effect-driven asset. Although the stylistic aspects of design are indeed subject to fashion and reflect the personal hallmarks of the designer, aesthetics is rooted in more fundamental knowledge of the way humans can perceive, interpret and interact. A noticeable trend among contemporary landscape designers is their reference to the idea of the sublime. Some designers occasionally use it to indicate the unique quality of landscape design that is related to meanings such as ‘depth of feeling’ (Horn 2010), ‘a constant interchange of opposites’ (Meyer 1998), ‘much more than beauty alone’ and ‘to dramatize contrasts and experience both space and timespan’ (Strootman 2008), and ‘subtle, indirect and introvert as opposed to vulgar and fat’ (Louter interview with Geuze 2003).

According to the Dutch landscape architect Adriaan Geuze, the problem facing landscape design is how to gain sublimity (sic) within the context of mass culture, mainly because it is expected that in a few decades most of the world's population will live in cities. Geuze argues that contemporary landscape design includes both urban and rural areas and both wilderness and industrial areas, and that this calls for an open re-evaluation of personal sensations, defying a collective conditioning (see: Louter 2003). The growing interest in the sublime coincides with the maturation of the profession of landscape architecture as a domain that is willing to accept the apparent dissonances in everyday environments and in everyday audiences. An evolving practice is concerned with the metabolism of food, energy and waste being forced upon increasingly uninhabited landscapes by expanding urban populations. At the same time, a growing interest in the scientific and historical aspects of landscapes is engaging designers more closely with the functional aspects of plants, insects, other wildlife, bacteria and many more components of dynamic systems. Landscape studies are slowly but inevitably evolving from artistic concepts to living systems design.

This will inevitably have to include sensations that are related to life and death, to processes of destruction and rejuvenation, resilience and co-evolving with animal species in ways that are as comfortable or as spartan as needs be. Such sensations will continue on an everyday basis and will include tension, stress, suspense, wonder and leaving one's comfort zone. In short, landscape architecture has reached an age mature enough for a broadened and more comprehensive aesthetic idiom that includes the idea of the sublime. Now that humankind tends to imagine that it can ensure its own survival through technological means, 'the sublime is more relevant than ever before' (Hitt 1999: 618), not so much because we are entering a new age, but because we have outgrown a 300-year-old Romantic notion of an endless, boundless nature separate from humans. The design for living systems could well be an ambition that can be aligned with an improved framework for a landscape sublime.



Theme five: preferred landscapes can heal, all landscapes can mean

Attempts to explain nature experiences drawn on a variety of discourses. In 1911 W. Hellpach published his book *Geopsyché*, a term he invented in an attempt to relate the social, the cultural and the natural to explain nature experiences. In contemporary science, many of these areas have become specialized fields within separate domains of publication. Eighty years after *Geopsyché*, Steven Bourassa (1991) concluded that despite the vast amount of research that had been done, no comprehensive theory of landscape aesthetics had emerged to unify the myriad of factors involved, including biological, cultural and personal (Bourassa 1991: 53). Researchers from other fields than landscape design such as Agnes van den Berg (2017, 2014, 2011, 2006), Arjen Buijs (2009) and Maarten Jacobs (2006, 2011), but also landscape architects like Catherine Ward Thompson (e.g. Ward Thompson et al. 2016) and Anna Jorgensen (2014) are merging empirical findings with social and cultural theories.

A good example is environmental psychologist Van den Berg's studies of experiences not only of nature, but also of 'green spaces' that may range from wildernesses (2006) to gardens, urban sites (2014) and healthcare-related environments (2017). She studied stress reduction in natural settings and found that these evoke positive affective responses that block negative thoughts (ibid. 3). She also found that natural environments help people to capture demanding mental processes more effortlessly (attention restoration, ibid. 3). She stressed that fractal patterns that can be found in natural settings, but much less in human-made structures, increase a wakefully and relaxed state but such results do not exclude similar benefits by urban environments (Joye and van den Berg 2011). Her empirical and theoretical efforts indicate that it remains to be shown that innate restorative responses relate to particular types of 'ancient' nature (ibid. 4) and her concern is that 'by embracing narrow evolutionary assumptions, the entire research

field of restoration studies might all too hastily become refuted or marginalized by critics who do not subscribe to the value of restorative interventions, and that this, in turn, will hamper the process of urban greening.’ (ibid. 7). This suggests that the picturesque tradition in landscape aesthetics may indeed have reason to falter. She also suggested including more than mere visual exposure, which has been the primary medium for nature-related experience research. Multisensory experiences, including olfactory cues, have recently come into focus (2017: 3) (see also Theme Two).

Nature experience research can be divided into two main approaches: landscape preference studies and place attachment research (Jacobs 2006: 31). Landscape preference research is related to environmental psychology with the underlying assumption that preferences for certain types of landscapes relate positively to happiness, stress reduction and physical health. There are three dominant theories that explain such preferences: the arousal theory (Berlyne 1974), the prospect-refuge theory (Appleton 1975) and the information processing theory (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989). None of these theories make an explicit reference to the idea of the sublime. Place attachment research, on the other hand, does include references to the idea of the sublime (Tuan 2013). Instead of focusing on preference, the main concept of place attachment is found by defining types and intensities of ‘meaning’ (Gifford 2014). The geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (*Landscapes of Fear* 1979) argued that even negative emotions such as fear capacitate individuals to give places significance. Early findings by Brown and Kulik indicate the existence of ‘flashbulb memories’ (Brown and Kulik 1977) – vivid memories of details and a heightened awareness related to a natural or cultural disaster, such as the 2004 tsunami, the death of Princess Diana and the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Although fearful and traumatic, these experiences create meaning. Places of remembrance often include a similar element of fear, such as former battlegrounds or places where disasters happened. In such cases, landscape design is needed to create a place for mourning and reconciliation.

In my research it is important to be informed by current developments in nature experience research, although this is not an easy task and my methods do not provide new empirical data. The idea of the sublime is in the first place a philosophical concept and has historically been provoked by artistic speculations. My intention to characterize a future landscape architectural repertoire must a priori not be limited by what can be confirmed by empirical research, but it should not be too wildly speculative either. In the division between preference studies and place attachment research there is room for debate. On the one hand, there is an intention to find evidence that certain nature experiences are related to health (e.g. stress reduction and longevity), and on the other hand, place attachment research aims to describe all kinds of consequences of experiential affects (e.g. fear and remembrance). The idea of the sublime is framed by the term ‘negative’ aesthetics as being explicitly different from preference and positive affects such as happiness and physical health. This would align the idea of the sublime with place attachment research. Nevertheless, it is my intention to question this framing and I will therefore include both preference studies and place attachment descriptions. Preferred landscapes may be able to heal, but all landscapes can mean.



Theme six: a paradox of authentic environments and artificial landscapes

The three theories that try to explain landscape preferences – the arousal theory (Berlyne 1974), the prospect–refuge theory (Appleton 1975) and the information processing theory (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989) – all seek to explain how the human experience has, during the course of evolution, gained certain innate, or biological, characteristics (Jacobs 2006: 38). A dominant explanation for preferences is provided by the biophilia hypothesis (Wilson 1984). This suggests that the African Savannah,

which contained many trees for refuge and plentiful open space for prospect, is the original template for the most highly preferred type of landscape. This ‘authentic’ landscape is supposedly still hardwired in human perception and explains survival-related preferences with a certain focus and emotional response.

The fact that environmental psychological theories are informed by a primordial and survival-related ‘authentic’ experience points to a remarkable similarity to Burke’s idea of the sublime: ‘the sublime is an idea belonging to self-preservation’ (1759: 127). However, the empirical evidence for this assumption is weak and it does not include the sociocultural aspects of human development. Jacobs (2006) recalls research that confirms that children younger than eleven prefer savannah landscapes, ‘while children above this age prefer their home environment’ (ibid. 36). One contemporary critique of this evolutionary perspective targets the assumption that a survival-related concept would induce individuals with an innate sense of love and care for other species and an acceptance of threatening environments. Joye and de Block (2011) postulate that it is more likely that humans have evolved towards ‘wiping species X out’ or to change the original environment (ibid. 206). This critique may be taken as a disqualification of any future inclusion of the sublime within preference studies, but may also widen the search for other types of sublime landscapes, including new artificial landscapes with, perhaps, equally new and artificial experiences (e.g. Joye 2007). The theme to be noticed is the paradox between authentic environments and artificial landscapes. A side effect is that any new artificial landscape will have to be examined with equally new empirical research. Until that time, speculating about relevant artificial landscapes will permit a wider designerly exploration, as is the aim in my research.



Theme seven: the sublime can remain dissonant, irresolvable and disruptive

Artists have contributed greatly to experimenting with the idea of the sublime. They have been less reluctant than philosophers and psychologists to envision a type of sublime that is not related to primordial nature, but to more man-made phenomena. This has certainly not been without its failures, as in the case of the composer Karlheinz Stockhausen, who judged the 9/11 attacks to be sublime: ‘The greatest work of art imaginable for the whole cosmos,’ he said, and after a short argumentation added, ‘By comparison, we composers are nothing’ (Castle 2011). Stockhausen dared to create an immediate relationship between a personal sensation and categories of common interest. He reasoned that if a devastating volcano was considered sublime in the eighteenth century, why not the burning towers in the twenty-first century – a thought that proved to be more taboo than Stockhausen anticipated when he made the remark to an unprepared audience at a music festival in Hamburg. His career, and even his family, suffered as a result. The reference to the sublime was clearly considered to be far too positive to be associated with such a morally despicable act.

Luckily, artists and their chroniclers are stubborn and have continued to draw on their personal experiences to challenge conditioning ideas. One example is the abstract painting *Vir Heroicus Sublimis* by Barnett Newman (Newman 1950-51), a red canvas with two vertical thin lines in contrasting colours. This large canvas – approximately four metres wide and over two metres high – presents not only a challenge to the very nature of what art is, but evokes an immersive sensation that can take the viewers out of their comfort zone and into a ‘spartan void’. According to Newman it is the act of looking itself that is fundamental to this sublime sensation, a way of looking that is so dynamic that no conclusion can be made, only a repeated looking and looking again. In the end this will result in a sense of place, an inner

voice that will tell you that you are here and not there (commented by van de Vall 1994). A similar effect is obtained by analysing the musical piece *In C* by Terry Riley (commented by Brillenburg Wurth 2002: 257; Riley 1964). Here, the conclusion is that this, and other sublime music, is related to sensations of infinity, indeterminacy and irresolvability.

The American painter Barnett Newman critiqued the absolutism of perfect creations: 'Man's natural desire in the arts to express his relation to the Absolute became identified and confused with the absolutism of perfect creations – with the fetish of quality – so that the European artist has been continually involved in the moral struggle between notions of beauty and the desire for sublimity' (Newman 1948: 51). Land artist Robert Smithson concluded that far from being an inner movement of the mind, his type of landscape aesthetics adds a material reality to the definition of aesthetics (Smithson 1979). He created some landforms using sand, mud and stone that were not figurative, but abstract, and that relate to the physical reality and dynamics of the place. He argued that the interpretation of the place should be determined not by a narrative story, but by a sensitive engagement. In this technique the use of colour, texture, light and bodily responses come together to engage the visitor with the site itself, enabling the visitor to be 'immersed' in or 'touched' by a landform and its abstract meaning to humans.

These examples define the experience of the sublime as an active process of seeking and, after enough repetition, a radical resolution of this process into a sense of place (according to Newman) or an eternal creation (according to Brillenburg). Other artists have made other hypotheses to explain the structure of the sublime experience. The landscape architect Bernard Lassus (1988) explored a 'counter-intuitive' experience that acknowledges a human need to outsmart natural environments instead of being humbled by them (Lassus 1998). The Dutch painter and poet Armando (see: Alphen 2000) finds the sublime in guilty landscapes, such as a forest where prisoners have been executed, a place with no obvious scar or sense

of remorse, except the motionless trees that still bear witness to the terrible event. Here the sublime is in the resonance of the past that determines a contemporary sense of place. Art dares to provoke the dissonant and explicitly unresolved aspect of the sublime and thereby challenges a creative or disruptive response by an audience. This theme will be the final theme to be included.



Conclusions: the challenge in the field of aesthetics

This collection of seven themes defines the idea of the sublime by referring to yet to be developed notions concerning nature, landscape, environments and art. Each of the themes presents a challenge and opportunity: to revive a sense of ‘awe’; to explore an embodied engagement; to go beyond a commodifying tendency of landscape design; to help to design living systems; to consider all types of meaning besides preference; to consider the authentic and the artificial; and to accept dissonance, the irresolvable and the disruptive. When categorizing these themes, two categories can be distinguished: themes that relate to the result of the experience of the sublime and themes that relate to the condition for the presence of such an experience (Figure 4).

Some of the most influential ideas on landscape experiences were made during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by means of the concepts of the beautiful, the sublime and the picturesque. By the mid-twentieth century, artists and philosophers had begun to reject such categorizations, which were found to lack many other sensations. Being alone in the landscape or in the immediate presence of an artwork was supposed to support a personal understanding, even if this meant experiencing confusion and ambiguity. By the end of the twentieth century the field of aesthetics had become more inclusive and it was by now conceivable that

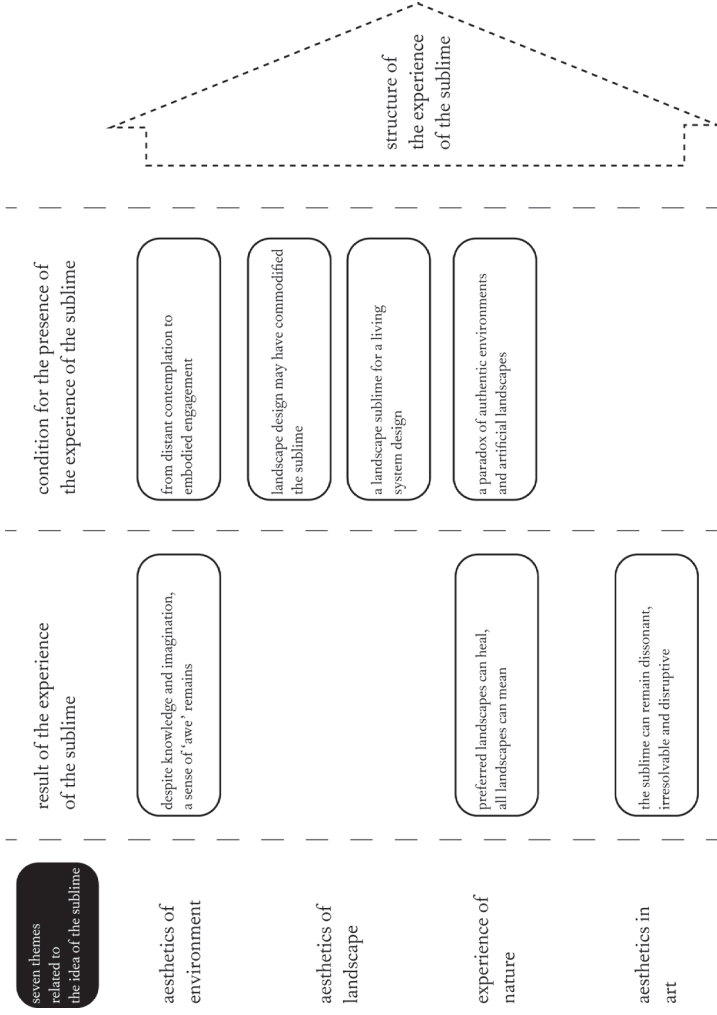


Figure 4: Overview of themes that relate to the idea of the sublime, divided into two categories: the result and the condition of the experience of the sublime. A third category still lacks clarity (the structure of the experience of the sublime) and will be the subject of Chapter Two.

sensations could both inform and deceive, and invite enriching artistic speculation on artificial experiences. The field of 'aesthetics' has thus evolved into a creative instrument for further explorations, despite the lack of empirical evidence.

While the seven themes introduced in this chapter offer relevant content to help with interpreting the idea of the sublime and to keep a record of the diversity of interpretations, they fail to develop a generalizing theory of their own. This fragmentation is also reflected by the recent anthologies on the sublime, with conclusions that vary from statements such as 'it will probably not be possible for future sublimicist theory to reach higher or deeper than the claims that raw ideas are sublime, that the whole net of culture is sublime, and that all philosophic and moral thinking is sublime' (McMahon 2004: 142) to the statement that the sublime is strikingly close to a religious experience, a thought that renders the sublime experience all the more troubling (den Hartog Jager 2011: 172). Kirk Pillow (2003) concludes that the modern separation of cognition and aesthetic experience needs rethinking due to the idea of the sublime, because it addresses unconventional forms of self-understanding and senses of reality. However, such conclusions do not yet redefine or remodel the idea of the sublime itself. The 300-year-old idea of the sublime is still showing only little wear and tear. The same old notion of the sublime experience is revived time and again in contemporary expressions, although now ranging from natural to artistic and from ecological to terrorist perspectives (Hitt 1999; Battersby 2007).

It is as if there is a taboo in the world of aesthetic research on challenging the idea that aesthetics is balanced by two counterweights: the beautiful and the sublime. As a consequence, we are constantly in pursuit of a middle way, which reduces the realm of aesthetics to little more than a problem between opposites and condemns landscape design to perform a balancing act. To me, there is one obvious conclusion before any new research challenge can be conceived: the idea of the sublime has become an increasingly exciting academic problem and obscure topic for – by now –

any medium of representation. Yet all the while the puzzling and paradoxical experiential structure of the sublime affect remains intact. Remarkably little progress has been made in defining the experiential structure of the sublime, and thus in aesthetics in general. In my view, the current renaissance of studies dealing with the sublime overlooks the fact that it would be more helpful to stop collecting ever more exotic applications that do not question the clichés of the sublime, but to examine the structure of the sublime experience itself – to dissect the ‘anatomy’ of the sublime experience, so to speak. To prepare for such an anatomy, I first consult the founding fathers of the idea of the sublime.

Chapter Two

AN EXPERIENTIAL SEQUENCE

The founding fathers on the idea of the sublime

The theory of the sublime is built on the ideas of three founding fathers, as I would call them, from different cultural backgrounds and different centuries. Of course, many more thinkers have seriously reflected on the idea of the sublime, including great names such as Hegel, Hume, Schopenhauer and de Sade (see Kirwan 2005). Nevertheless, the influence of Longinus' *Peri Hypsous*, of Burke and of Kant is deeply significant. They not only responded to their inner voices, but built their work through conscious reference to their predecessors. As such, the idea of the sublime has matured as each has made their contribution. The development of the theory of the sublime has in turn influenced the field of aesthetics. The difficult concepts introduced by the idea of the sublime have made aesthetics a less frivolous and a more serious theory for explaining experiences. In this chapter I will focus on describing the development of the idea of the sublime as defined by the founding fathers; and more specifically what characterizes the structure of the sublime experience and what style or condition must be present to induce the sublime?

The identity of the author of the Roman-era Greek work of literary criticism *Peri Hypsous* is in doubt because there is hardly any reference to this work in other rhetorical or philosophical works of that age (Sanders Way and Rhys Roberts 2010: 1–14). It is assumed that the work was written in either the first or third century AD. The name of the writer remains a mystery. The manuscript contains a note 'by Dionysius or Longinus'. Attributions have therefore been made to either the Neoplatonic philosopher Cassius Longinus or to Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Recent research, however, suggests that it concerns an otherwise unknown author who is usually referred to as Pseudo-Longinus. For the sake of clarity I will refer

to the author of the *Peri Hypsous* as Longinus according to the 2010 translation by Sanders Way and Rhys Roberts that I have used throughout my research.

The three founding fathers agree on some aspects, but differ on others. For instance, Longinus did not use the word sublime, but referred to *Peri Hypsous*. *Peri Hypsous* might be literally translated as *about (Peri) great height (Hypsous)* (Longinus: 23)¹. His treatise deals with a rhetorical theory for gaining mastery of the most compelling storytelling technique. He had observed that great poetry and speeches contain similar elements that explain their success. Not just a fleeting success, but a long-lasting influence, a form of cultural conditioning. ‘The effect of elevated language upon an audience is not persuasion but transport’ (Longinus: section I-4). An audience that is transported feels that what is said opens up their own act of creation. An elevating technique does not enforce a message, but in a miraculous way it is open to individual interpretation.

The second founding father, Edmund Burke, contrasts the word sublime with the beautiful (*A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 1759)². This opposition was absent in the *Peri Hypsous*. Burke’s eighteenth-century view is rooted in the then relatively new British tradition of aesthetic theory. On the whole, such an aesthetic theory describes how human nature and the image of nature coincide (Ashfield and de Bolla 1996). Works of art and the perception of nature are both considered to be the natural products of human experience and thus part of the same theory of aesthetics. The British sublime covers both the ‘social, ideological and finally cultural basis of the aesthetic realm’ (ibid. 4).

1 The reference to the work of Longinus will be made as (Longinus: page or section) and refers to the 2010 edition edited by Sanders Way and Rhys Roberts that also contains a 1899 Latin facsimile. Reference to the text by the editors themselves will be made as (Sanders Way & Rhys Roberts 2010: page).

2 The reference to the work of Edmund Burke will be made as (Burke 1759: page or section) and refers to the 1998 edition edited by David Womersley. Reference to the text by the editor will be made as (Womersley 1998: page).

The third founding father, Immanuel Kant (*Critique of Judgement*, Kant 1790)³ is intellectually on the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. Kant considered Burke to be ‘the most important author’ on the treatment of the sublime (Kant 1790: 118). Kant himself, being less interested in nature as a source of aesthetic experiences, elaborates the idea of the sublime by analysing how it conflicts with the human mind. His work on practical reason and judgement (Kant 1781, 1790) aims to define how we can know things by experiencing them and vice versa: can we know anything if we cannot experience it? Kant argued that the sublime is that which cannot be experienced but nevertheless strongly influences humans. This influence is not related to knowledge, but to a sense of human inadequacy. The sublime invokes a sense of humility, which in turn engenders a moral response to those phenomena that are beyond human reach. In Kant’s writings the sublime became the ‘negative presentation’ of something too complex (‘mathematical sublime’) or too pervasive (‘dynamical sublime’) to be presented by anything other than the ‘unpresentable’ event itself (after: Lyotard 1992), i.e. *das Erhabene*.

This interpretation questions whether the sublime can be caused by a source that can be experienced, let alone painted or designed. To Kant it had become clear that no object or event in the world can be indicated as ‘sublime’, because the sublime is in the ‘eye of the beholder’ (Kant 1790: 95). Kant defined a new role for the sublime: a sensational phenomenon that proves that humans are capable of overruling anything ‘unpresentable’ by their superior and imaginative minds. Nevertheless, this superiority should be safeguarded by critical reason and a moral sense. Kant argued that aesthetics and ethics cling to each other, something that was only implicitly present in the work of Longinus and Burke.

Comparing the ideas of these three founding fathers reveals the development of the idea of the sublime through the ages. To this day it remains a relevant idea

3 The reference to the work of Immanuel Kant will be made as (Kant 1790: page or section) and refers to the 1951 edition translated by J.H. Bernard and published by Hafner Press.

about the relationship between experiences, knowledge, imagination and morals, encompassing an impressive set of themes that resemble many aspects of religious practice and belief systems. The sublime became the ‘unpresentable’ aspect of Western enlightenment, which was otherwise built on critical reasoning. It was too grand and ambitious an idea to fit within the gentler theory of aesthetics, which remained concerned with beauty and good taste. Kant himself concluded that the sublime should be banned from the domain of aesthetics (Kant 1790: 104). The idea of the sublime became a victim of a much too ambitious philosophical plan and ended up being a contradictory concept. Aesthetics was subsequently downgraded into a style and beauty discourse, leaving the grand implications of experiential relationships underdeveloped.



Longinus: indicating a qualitative, vertical, change

The classical Greek text *Peri Hypsous* is written as a letter to an unknown man named Postumius Terentianus. The letter was a response to a lost treatise by a fellow Greek named Caecilius on the subject of performance. Reading between the lines, the historical context seems to be one in which culture is in crisis: ‘in the Treatise we hear the voice of a dying liberty’ (Sanders Way and Rhys Roberts 2010: 14). A literary decline is mentioned throughout the book, and even references to the ‘evil influence of riches’ (ibid. 14; Longinus: 157–58). Longinus believed that a deep-seated moral issue was at the root of this decline. The treatise was a lament for a decline of eloquence at a time when wealth and luxury were spreading.

The text disappeared for centuries. The original text may not have been meant for public use; perhaps it was intended for private or secret circulation (Sanders Way and Rhys Roberts 2010: 15). The text re-emerged only in 1554 in a version published

by Francis Robortello (Basel). Only two-thirds of the original work was recovered, which of course seriously hampered a complete interpretation (ibid. 1, 17). Editions of this fragmented version soon appeared in almost every European country. After Boileau's French translation in 1674 and William Smith's English translation in 1739, the title *Peri Hypsous* was eventually overtaken by the title *On the Sublime*. The wording of the original Greek title and of the English translation contains the first clue to the experiential structure of the sublime.

Although both 'Hypsous' and 'sublime' refer to a position, their connotations are extremely different. 'Hypsous' refers to a height, whereas *sublime* refers to something 'on' or 'underneath' (*sub*) a 'border' or 'edge' (*limen*). Hypsous indicates a vertical relationship, a difference in height between something above and below (Preminger 1974: 819), which may be interpreted as a difference in quality or a mathematical measurement between objects. 'Sub-limen' does not necessarily imply a vertical relationship, but rather a relationship between 'here', 'there' and something in between: a border. The connotation of 'sub-limen' could indicate a comparison between two dimensions or types of reality (e.g. the real and the ideal). The border that is in between the 'here' and 'there' may be situated anywhere: above, beyond, parallel and even within. The many possible connotations regarding such a position have undoubtedly influenced later contributors, raising evocative speculations.

Grammatically, the word sublime is an adjective, similar in meaning to adjectives like 'fantastic', 'overwhelming' or 'incredibly beautiful'. Hypsous is grammatically related to adverbs such as 'higher than' or 'better', indicating a relative position. Hypsous could be interpreted as a more technical term to indicate the possibility of a change in the quality of the position. However subtle, this grammatical analysis suggests a change in the experiential expectations that were associated with the term sublime, compared with the more qualitative intentions of Hypsous. The original title *Peri Hypsous* does not convey the intention of describing the theatrical or

abnormal characteristic of the object or experience itself, but rather indicates the effect of a change in personal quality of the one who experiences.



Longinus and the echo of a great soul

Longinus applauded and condemned the good and bad points of fifty Greek writers, spanning almost a thousand years. His analysis of an elevating style was not just a fashionable event, but a sincere and all-inclusive introspection into a culture that was declining and had known its greatest spokesmen (Homer, Herodotus, Plato and Demosthenes). Longinus's intention was not to simplify the effects of an elevating style to one singular passion, but to simplify the effects to a 'concourse of the passions' (Sanders Way and Rhys Roberts 2010: 27). Elevation needs more than one passion; both hot and cold, both happy and sad. He also argued that elevation needed 'flaws', the opposite of striving for perfection and uniform correctness. Elevation needed something that is waiting to be perfected by the audience (Longinus: section XXXIII). The style that enables such elevation also necessarily reflects the character of the one who performs: 'Sublimity is the echo of a great soul' (ibid. section IX). This echo, together with a trained style and skill, must find a way to include the audience in an act of creation. Longinus challenged the widespread ambition of a perfected style of art represented by an object (ibid. section XXXVI). In other words, Hypsosis is not an artistic style for creating a perfect object or poem, but rather an experiential technique to include the performer and the audience in the creation of something that exceeds both.

From this we can extract three elements necessary for an experiential sequence of the sublime:

The one that performs: a great soul

The flawed style by which the performance is shaped (causing elevation)

The response of the audience (transported by the impression that one is part of an act of creation)

To enhance the value of a flawed style, Longinus argued that familiar language and ‘homely’ expressions are sometimes much more telling than elegant diction (Longinus: section XXXI). As an example, he explains that a situation drawn from everyday life creates an atmosphere that is more convincing than a bombastic and over-rhythmical style, which would not convey emotion but only the style itself. Technically speaking, any emphasis on style conveys no meaning. Also, the pursuit of novelty, which seems to be a fashionable craze in every age, is no guarantee for elevation (Longinus: section III). Elevation will only occur if the audience participates in the act of creation. This is how the ‘flaw’ needs to be understood. Rather than indicating a fault that undermines perfection, or an obsolete piece of information that would only be a side track in the main argument, the flaw leaves space for a meaningful interpretation. The right subject and a great soul enhance the contours of a void that is then used to create a tension that almost commands consideration by the audience.

The five sources of Hypsosis defined by Longinus are therefore: (1) the power of forming great conceptions; (2) inspired passion – these two parts are mostly instinctive and for the talented; the remaining three can be taught at the academies – (3) the style of thought and expression; (4) noble diction by elaboration of language;

and (5) dignified composition (Longinus: section VII-1). The aspect of the flaw is not thoroughly explained, nor does it play a central part in the texts, but it is more implicitly discussed by means of the many examples that are included. Sadly, examples become dated. New cultures and new times demand new examples. In our times the most common principle of the flaw may be within the comprehension of the plot: there is a murder but we do not know who has committed it, there is a love that is unanswered, there is a God who does not listen, and so on, these sorts of flaws. They mainly serve to make it possible for the audience to recognize the same type of problem they might encounter in their lives and become enticed to solving what yet remains obscure.



Burke: dramatizing a nature-related sublime

In *The Sublime, A Reader in British Eighteenth-century Aesthetic Theory*, Ashfield and de Bolla (1996) explain the broad variety of British interpretations of the sublime. Burke's work stands out among interpretations that seek to develop a descriptive model that explains the 'transactions between inner mental states and the qualities of objects in the world' (Ashfield and de Bolla 1996: 14). His work led to a change in the way experiences were viewed. Burke shortly refers to Longinus when introducing his belief in the force of nature and its power to provoke ambition in human beings:

Now whatever either on good or upon bad grounds tends to raise a man in his own opinion, produces a sort of swelling and triumph that is extremely grateful to the human mind; and this swelling is never more perceived, nor operates with more force, than when without danger we are conversant with terrible objects, the mind

always claiming to itself some part of the dignity and importance of the things which it contemplates. Hence proceeds what Longinus has observed of that glorying and sense of inward greatness, that always fills the reader of such passages in poets and orators as are sublime; it is what every man must have felt in himself upon such occasions. (Burke 1759: 96)

It is remarkable how often the eighteenth-century use of the word sublime is associated with theatrical and Romantic descriptions of natural phenomena as sources of the sublime (Sanders Way and Rhys Roberts 2010: 23). Even by contemporary standards, many romantic personifications of natural phenomena still exist, such as ‘furious volcanoes’, ‘savage plains’ and ‘divine starlit nights’. Such experiential phenomena anticipate a certain emotional response to a specific natural extremity. The eighteenth-century enthusiasm for exploring such natural phenomena has created many powerful symbols or doorways to sublime dimensions that remain potent to this day (White and Pajackowska 2009). However, during the process of translation from ancient Greek to German, French and finally English the experiential expectations of objects of a once rhetorical technique have become overly dramatized. Compared with Hypsous, Burke introduced a very particular set of interpretations that reveal a few important changes to the idea of the sublime. Foremost is the fascination for nature-related phenomena as a source of the sublime, which changed the first of the three elements of the experiential sequence:

The one that performs: a great soul, changed into ‘nature’ in its most powerful and astonishing state. (Burke 1759: Part II section I)

As a consequence of this, the sublime was no longer performed by a human performer, but by natural phenomena. Humans are only present as witnesses of the performance by natural phenomena. In most cases this meant that sublime

experiences also became more private and singular. The techniques described by Longinus were necessary for a performance before an audience. In Burke's interpretation, anyone, even being alone, could access the great soul within nature and experience its powerful and astonishing meaning. The idea of the sublime was rewritten to match an individual (i.e. 'lonely') response to something that simply 'is', and certainly does not perform any deliberate acts of entertainment. This is a rather surprising turn in the interpretation of the *Peri Hypsous*. In the rhetorical theory, the performer takes a position between the audience and the subject of the performance. In nature, the individual is solely responsible for whatever experience arises due to the 'performance' of nature. The perception of the performance of nature became the 'lonely' responsibility of an individual; not being part of a greater audience, nor guided by any flawed rhetoric.

In Longinus' version, the performer requires a great soul. Instead of the mitigating presence of another great human soul, Burke introduced the notion of safeguarding the lone individual against all the dangers that an immediate experience of nature could install. The sublime quality of nature would only reveal itself by experiencing the raw expressions of nature without being in real danger. This safeguarding has become quintessential in the development of aesthetic ideas and intentions in landscape aesthetics. Designed interventions were partly needed to avoid real danger and real threatening anxieties lest they should overrule a contemplative state while enjoying the performance of nature. Apparently, not all that is nature is healthy for human beings. As of consequence, any sublime design of nature then implies remodelling nature into an experientially preferable 'landscape'.



Burke: introducing a conversant distance

With the introduction of a safeguard, Burke also marks the border between two opposite aesthetic categories: the beautiful and the sublime. The beautiful needs no safeguard and can therefore develop as an everyday type of aesthetics, while the sublime needs safeguarding and will therefore be present more incidentally. This opposition and difference in rhythmical appearance became the foundation of eighteenth-century aesthetic theory. It also marks a moral separation between aesthetic categories that are harmless and those that are potentially harmful. For Longinus, such a division was not needed.

Maybe Burke's division underlined a complicating dualism that has troubled our contemporary understanding of aesthetics ever since. Burke described both the beautiful and the sublime as essential instruments in our development to maturity, so we do not 'remain as brutes do, the same at the end of this day as they were in the beginning of the world' (Burke 1759: Part I section XVII). If a human being is able to rise above themselves, a sort of 'swelling' and triumph occurs. Never is such a swelling more apparent than 'when without danger we are conversant with terrible objects'. Conversant here probably means 'knowledgeable with' or 'familiar with', although it could also mean 'being in conversation with', hinting at a much more casual interaction. A person can rise above themselves by imitating the subject of their contemplation, and the larger the things being contemplated, the larger the triumph. Someone who experiences a conversant danger is also filled with a sense of greatness, so the reward for being exposed to danger is higher than the reward obtained from beauty. Burke favours this transformational power of the sublime because his ultimate aim for aesthetic experiences is to break the habit of being an inconsiderate brute. This requires a strong medicine.

Burke had a good reason to ignore the expert performer between the subject and the audience. He was annoyed by artists in general and poets in particular (Burke 1759: 99). He felt they had become trapped in a narrow circle and were imitating one another instead of imitating nature. That is also the reason why his aesthetic theory also serves as a theory of artistic experience: art critics were similarly trapped and were therefore not suitable as guides and judges. The 'true' standard of the arts, according to Burke, was in every man's power and not in geniuses. Burke was a man for the crowd, as Longinus was for the experts, or those with a great soul. For Longinus, a performance should assist an audience to experience what remains hidden at first glance. To Burke, the most powerful and great conception of nature is its dangerous and violent being. A personal encounter with this drama would help every person to gain an authentic opinion of man's supremacy and triumph over brutality. Experiences of nature could instil a moral sense into people. In Burke's view the elevation of humankind comes from an inbuilt sense of correction when exposed to the dangers and might of nature. Similar to the concept of the flaw by Longinus, exposure to these aspects of nature would force human beings into a state of mind that demands an original inward greatness to withstand similar outward phenomena. Longinus considered such an elevation impossible, without guidance the audience would succumb to the wealth and luxury of societal conditioning and thus deny elevation. As a consequence, the second element of the experiential sequence of the sublime was also changed:

The style by which the performance is shaped is not a human artistic style, but the style of 'nature' itself, especially the obscure, dangerous and awe-inspiring aspects. However, the experiencing individual should be safeguarded by eliminating real dangers, allowing them to be 'conversant with terrible objects'.

Burke believed in a clear division between passions that reflect either societal display (collective and represented by the beautiful) or those of self-preservation (individual and represented by the sublime) (Burke 1759: Part I section VI). Societal display is the terrain of the beautiful, with its harmless and subservient appearance, whereas passions of self-preservation are sublime. Such passions involve pain or danger and Burke considered them much stronger than pleasure. Neither the most luxuriously living persons nor the ones with the liveliest imagination, nor those with the most sound and exquisitely sensible body could surpass the force of the sublime (ibid. 86). In this conviction there is a similarity with the cultural context in Longinus's time. Both authors have a motive for promoting the sublime as a means to oppose a hedonistic culture. Both authors, although 1,800 years apart, wished to educate an audience that would otherwise become meek sheep in the hands of shallow seducers. Burke was apparently aware of an evolution towards increasing individualization, while Longinus was building towards social equity with a high general quality.

The style that Longinus preferred was casual and rooted in everyday situations (Longinus: section XXX-2). Burke, however, mainly promoted the theatrical and horrific expressions of nature. How should we understand this radical change? Do the elegant and exemplifying style of the performer and the shock treatment by exposure to nature both serve to educate the human race against too much self-indulgence? Longinus believed that an experienced performer with a great soul, eloquent diction, great timing and a little natural irregularity in the performance could provide the ingredients for an elevated style. Burke believed that nature itself was the excellent yet explicitly brutal performer that needed no adjustment, only a safe, conversant position.

The third element of the experiential sequence therefore became:

The shocked response of the audience (gain of inward greatness caused by a conversant interpretation of the dangerous and awe-inspiring aspects of nature).



Longinus' sensational drift

To better understand the radical change of concept within the sublime experience, I will revisit Longinus's rhetorical theory. His interpretation is about a specific type of storytelling (i.e. narrative). He addresses a rhetorical style, a great soul and as a result a transporting effect becomes activated. I refer to this as 'sensational drift' and use this expression to indicate a fundamental and mechanical aspect of the elevated style. 'Drift' indicates that there is a dynamic aspect that can transport a person's awareness. Burke refers to this as an 'irresistible force' (Burke 1759: 127). The drift is 'sensational' because it includes an arousal of the senses. In Longinus' text we find more clues about such a sensational drift. According to Longinus, a sensational drift is evoked by a quality of the style of the performer and a great soul; and to Burke it is evoked by the qualities of greatness in the natural features. What are the experiential characteristics of this sensational drift?

Multi-perspective repetition

To begin with, Longinus speaks of a true element during the act of elevation. He says the element of truth in an experience comes from repetition, because only repeated experience of something can reveal equal fascination every time and engrain the experience in one's memory (Longinus: section VII-3). This sounds like an obvious didactical principle, but to Longinus it is a benchmark for experiential quality. The principle of repetition makes it possible to experience several times, under various circumstances, incorporating a multitude of perspectives: a plural repetition. Moreover, the fact that all men, with different lives, ambitions, pursuits, ages and languages, can share a similar sensation associated with the same subject means that a shared experience may arise, although felt individually. The aim of true elevation is to induce a sensational drift that is repeated and slightly adjusted to resonate with

all the varieties of individual perception. A shared faith in the object of admiration may be established (ibid. section XXXIII). In contrast to Burke's individual natural sublime, which for many people is an once-in-a-lifetime experience, this true elevation contains a shared and repeatable aim. A successful use of style can cause a sensational drift that embeds a multitude of perspectives, time and again. Both the repetition and the multitude of perspectives create a situation that is very hard to escape, even if the experience itself is not a pleasant one.

One particular sentence in Longinus' work reveals many facets of the sensational drift that causes true elevation (Weiskel 1976: 10). This sentence will serve as a reference for further deduction of elements that define the sensational drift. The sentence reads:

For, as if instinctively, our soul is uplifted by true elevation; it takes a proud flight, and is filled with joy and vaunting, as though it had itself produced what it has heard.
(Longinus: section XXXIII-2).

Juxtaposed souls

The phrase 'as if instinctively, our soul is uplifted' in the first part of the sentence indicates that the technique of the drift is an instinctive ability. At some point in a performance it is possible to be uplifted, or elevated, and be reminded that a person is not only brains, bones and tissue, but alive and gifted with a soul. To have this sensation, the audience must submit to instincts that allow them to become adrift. This implies a certain distance from the content as such and a movement towards awareness of one's own soul. In other words, a movement from the present time and physical place (from here on referred to by me as the actual situation) towards an inner awareness of the self or soul (the projected situation).

If I here compare 'elevation' (Longinus) to 'the sublime' (Burke) I can reason that the sublime has a similar impact to elevation, which has a direct uplifting effect

on the soul. The word sublime refers to a crossing of something that is either a border or a threshold, a reference to something that seems to be at the border of something else. It indicates a presence of two aspects at the same time: the ‘here’ and the ‘there’. In literary terms, such a situation is referred to as a juxtaposition (Oxford 2011). A juxtaposition is a placement of two or more different items that, because of their near proximity, will be compared with each other, even if they are not intended to be compared or have nothing in common. Proximity creates an undeniable appeal for human interpretation. For example, an apple and a pair of scissors create a different juxtaposed interpretation than an apple and a pear. When the greatness of nature is juxtaposed to the soul of the one that experiences, the sublime looms, according to Burke.

Another important aspect of the phrase ‘as if instinctively, our soul is uplifted’ is the statement that this uplifting is done instinctively. The storyteller does not enforce the juxtaposition; it is instinctive – without conscious thought – revealing a reflexive capacity. This can be interpreted as a situation wherein the soul of someone in the audience is uplifted towards the position of the great soul of the performer, or that an individual becomes aware of a sense of inward greatness by being conversant with juxtaposed greatness.

Double movement

In the second part of the sentence, ‘it takes a proud flight, and is filled with joy and vaunting’ reveals yet another sensory ‘movement’ among the audience. The proud flight indicates a movement of lifting from the ground. After first an inward movement that includes one’s own soul, a proud flight is taken. It would be easier to imagine this the other way around, first taking off and then reacting to this footloose position with the sensation of ‘joy and vaunting’, but the unique aspect of this sensational elevation is to start with an inward movement and then continue outward. The result can technically be characterized as a ‘double movement’.

Longinus does not linger long on the description of this experience, he rather presupposes familiarity with this sensation (Longinus: section I–4).

The vaunting, a kind of extravagant self-praise or boasting, is essential for describing the effect of the double movement introduced at this stage. It is one's own soul that is included in this double movement. One is not only present in the actual situation, but one is simultaneously transported to a projected situation. According to Longinus, this double movement gives rise to a sense of authenticity. It is authentic because it is proven by the experience itself: elevation flashing forth at the right moment scatters everything before it like a thunderbolt, and at once displays the power of the orator in all its plenitude (Longinus: section I–4). The audience is suddenly relieved of normal physical restrictions. This induces a sense of lightness by a joy in the actual situation and a self-praise (vaunting) in the projected situation. A quick sequence of the two movements implies a speed that is very different from regular physical interactions.

Shared aesthetics

The last part of the sentence reads 'as though it had itself produced what it has heard'. The remark as though suggests something that is not real but seems real. What seems real is the audience's experience that 'it had itself produced what it has heard'. There are several implications in this expression that are easily overlooked.

The possibility of a shared experience, after the individual and instant double movement of joy and vaunting, is not neglected by Longinus. Most later interpreters, influenced by Burke, refer only to the solitary state of experiencing the sublime (see Ferguson 1992; Stormer 2004). Burke's focus on the individual hampers a process that can be shared. Burke's sublime aims to raise the necessity of individual survival against raw nature, a hint at self-preservation, whereas Longinus's elevation is a proud flight that must be joined. To Longinus, sharing an elevation is essential

for creating a sense of truth and authenticity. To Burke, the sublime is an inward greatness that can liberate an individual from a too shallow collective display.

This reveals an exciting difference between true elevation and the natural sublime. The natural sublime helps individuals regain their individuality when confronted with a powerful source, whereas true elevation helps a collective to share a proud flight by uplifting each individual soul. Seen from the perspective of elevation, aesthetics is a collective matter of sharing the sensation of creation. The perspective of the natural sublime appears more familiar to the contemporary idea of aesthetics as it is a state in which the individual gains a preferred experience despite the presence of a 'negative' (e.g. horrific) sensation. The above difference may challenge us to reconsider the contemporary interpretation of aesthetic theory.

Shared act of creativity

The second implication of the phrase 'as though it had itself produced what it has heard' can be found in the identification with the performance. The word 'produced' is noticeable in this respect. If the audience only had the sensation that it could reproduce what it had heard, this would be a didactical principle of imprint, repeating what has been told. In that case there is no need of an 'as though', because it is a fact. You either can or cannot correctly recollect what has been heard. Therefore, my interpretation is that this fragment is not related to a re-production of what is heard, but to an act of creativity, grounded in what is heard. This clarifies why Longinus is not interested in objects that produce Hypsious (e.g. an erupting volcano). Instead, he is focused on a flux of creativity by means of personalized imagination.

In Longinus' version, the members of the audience have the sensation that they themselves are creating. The performer is only a catalyst to set the audience into a sensational drift of creation. The audience participates in an act of creativity. At the same time, this impression is shared by the members of the audience, strengthening the idea that the experience is not merely a personal imagination, but

proven by collective recognition. The shared act of creation happens on the spot and there is proof of it happening all around. Being affirmed by a larger group, this overwhelming impression is not a mere individual suggestion, but becomes embedded as a new collective reality. The ultimate aim of Longinus's elevation is to allow the audience to finish the performance or take the performance beyond that of the original source. It would be logical to assume that Longinus did not write to Terentianus to instruct him how an audience can become enslaved by the content of the performer. Rather, his rhetorical technique aimed at perfecting a performance that would enable the audience to enter their own creative act with equal rigour and splendour, inspired by the great performing soul.

Summarizing, the *Peri Hypsous* contains a rhetorical technique to bring an audience into an act of creation. A comparison (juxtaposition) between the great soul of the performer and one's own soul gives rise to a sensational drift. The audience is transported to a proud and vaunting projected space where the restrictions of physicality are absent (double movement). The style of the performance is not intended to overwhelm the audience in such a way that there is nothing left to add. On the contrary, the style of the performance is in some ways flawed, indicating that there is room to perfect the subject of the performance. Because Longinus envisaged a single person performing in front of a large number of people, his technique aimed for a wide and diverse audience response through a multi-perspective repetition of the same ingredients. A repeated and successful inclusion of the audience would allow a growing sense of authenticity and proof of both the great performing soul and its subject.

I have already mentioned that the transformation of the *Peri Hypsous* to the eighteenth-century sublime introduced a fundamental change. The natural sublime was not connected to a rhetorical technique, but rather it describes responses by often lonely individuals at a 'conversant distance' to nature. As a consequence, it

must be questioned whether the audience can be equally transported and included in the creative process by the experience of nature without the help of a performer.



Burke's competitive ambition

Compared with the work of Longinus, the treatise by Burke left me with a rather unfulfilled impression. He wrote on the basis of 'the best scientific psychological theory available to him' (McMahon 2004: 11), yet he presents nothing more than a selective set of experiential examples that suited his interest. Burke's treatise is more prescriptive than argumentative. As if aware of the audaciousness of his work, he reminds his readers that they have to be forgiving if they examine it closely. Only those willing to accept it as a 'peaceful entrance to truth' will find its proper value (Burke 1759: 100). Burke was only 27 years old when he wrote it. Nowadays this type of work would easily be classified as 'esoteric science', and yet it is treated with biblical respect as a definition of the sublime. It is thought-provoking because it so deeply embraces the fact that the 'pain' and 'struggle' related to nature can become enjoyable. Another reason for Burke's success are the rich descriptions of qualities that are present in nature. There is no other work that has elaborated on these aspects in such detail.

Burke lived in a time of great political havoc and as a politician and writer he advocated traditions that were being displaced by modern advancements. He was known for his cautionary position and was proactive in criticizing – in his view – wrong politics. In his political writings he addressed the importance of reading the present and relating it to the past. He noted that there are 'very few, who are capable of comparing and digesting what passes before their eyes at different times and occasions, so as to form the whole into a distinct system' (editor Womersley in

Burke 1998: xvi), an observation that deeply resembles one of the opening remarks by Longinus: 'Judgement of style is the last and crowning fruit of long experience' (Longinus: section XXXIII).

Burke set out to argue against a growing paradigm used by political opponents, such as Hobbes, who stated that 'it was men's emotions, so easily aroused by unscrupulous preachers and embittered academics, which might distract them' (editor Womersley in Burke 1998: xxii). Instead, he increasingly felt that passions should be at the core of political virtue, a position that we also recognize in Longinus's critical view of the decline of eloquence due to increasing wealth and luxury. Burke is said to have been a theatrical man who often used techniques and metaphors from drama to alert his audience. He changed political positions a few times and defended each of them with equal rigour. This was not understood by his contemporaries. His love for rhetorical mastery may explain why he used the work of Longinus as a basis for his own epic work.

Contrary to the *Peri Hypsous*, the word soul is hardly used by Burke. Instead, he tried to ground the sublime in an almost modern explanation: 'God has planted in man a sense of ambition, and a satisfaction arising from the contemplation of his excelling his fellows in something deemed valuable amongst them' (Burke 1759: 96). The mystifying word soul is exchanged for a rather strategic and economic sense of 'competitive ambition'. This is a smart way of resolving the philosophical problems related to the idea of soul. It also provided a more practical context for discussion by the high social classes, of which Burke was obviously a member.



Burke: introducing the obscure instead of the flaw

To Burke the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime is obvious and necessary. The beautiful is to be considered small, calming and clear, while the sublime is obscure, grand and wholesomely disturbing. The notion of the sublime is needed because some ideas are essentially obscure. The sublime is not associated with human comfort and it arises from a sense of primordial self-preservation (Burke 1759: Part I section VI). Like Longinus, Burke described a flaw in the experience of the sublime as the essential tool for provoking an instinctive response by the audience. He did not call this a flaw, but referred to it as ‘the obscure’. The obscure in nature needs to be addressed more consciously precisely because it is inherently unclear. The obscure can awaken imagination that is not part of everyday appearances, or the actual situation.

As an example, Burke appraised the quality and function of an idea of ‘hell’ (Burke 1759: 106). The sublime idea of hell is present when a poetic obscurity feeds the imagined proportions. To Burke, a painting of hell that clearly depicts what it should look like is not as successful because it makes the obscure too clear; it presents the subject too concretely. The audience needs to be drawn into participating in the act of creating the idea of hell. The sublime enables an audience to think and experience for themselves instead of accepting the implicit limits suggested by others. The sublime stimulates self-awareness rather than praise for the creator of the image. Both the flaw and the obscure allow the audience to continue what the performer touches upon, opens or initiates, beyond the original source. Obscure objects and scenes invite people to explore ‘unpresentable’ ideas such as pureness, hellishness, timelessness and infinity.

The sentence:

God has planted in man a sense of ambition, and a satisfaction arising from the contemplation of his excelling his fellows in something deemed valuable amongst them (Burke 1759: 96)

contains elements equivalent to those in the sentence I analysed from Longinus's work. The 'instinctive reaction' described by Longinus has become a 'God planted sense' in Burke's version. The soul is present in the 'ambition'. The double movement is in 'a satisfaction arising from the contemplation': contemplation is the inward movement, followed by the ambition to excel as the outward projection, which includes a similar feeling of pride and inward greatness (vaunting).

As in Longinus's description, there is a limit to how far an identification with the source of the sublime is possible. Burke describes the idea of 'ambition' as part of 'excelling his fellows in something deemed valuable amongst them'. Burke is not so ambitious as to identify with nature itself or any divine status, considering it enough to compete with other people. This particular notion is very revealing. Longinus introduced the phrase 'as though it had produced' and Burke describes 'something deemed valuable amongst them'. To Burke, the experience of the sublime itself may be related to natural wilderness, but the effect is apparently meant to serve some esteemed value among human beings. This reveals a hidden anthropocentric effect of the Burkean sublime. The sublime as described by Burke aims first of all to enhance an individual ambition as part of competitiveness among human beings. However, the final result of a nature-related sublime is expressed by the creative output of the individual that competes within a group. According to Burke, experiences of nature stimulate a healthy human competitiveness that is not focused on shallow human worries and political tendencies. Humans should only compete with each other to create things that equal the idea of nature.

As a model for this competitiveness Burke introduces the psychological principle of the desire to resemble. ‘The mind of man has naturally a far greater alacrity and satisfaction in tracing resemblances than in searching for differences; because by making resemblances we produce new images; we unite, we create, we enlarge our stock; but in making distinctions we offer no food at all to the imagination.’ (Burke 1759: 69). By wanting to resemble we also produce new images, says Burke. The principle of imitation was considered an important source of creativity in Burke’s day and would be until deep into the twentieth century (see: Braembussche 2007)⁴. In this respect, Burke was ahead of his time. In Burke’s universe, as long as the sublime source is obscured, the audience can retrieve a primordial sense of competition, stimulating them to complete and participate in the act of creation. People experiencing nature are therefore not passive and imitative. Burke suggests that people should wake up from their shallow, automatic responses by experiencing raw sensations and creating something empowering for the whole of humankind.



Burke: introducing a style for the horrific

So far Burke and Longinus do not differ much in their adaptation of the sensational drift. Burke shares with Longinus a love of drama that contains (natural) flaws and obscurity. Burke implicitly widens the possibilities for a collective creative process. The sublime is a contagious sensation if experienced correctly and is thus ‘true’, as Longinus would say. Burke’s key contribution is the introduction of ‘nature without a guide’ as the source of the sublime. Longinus’s ideas are about words and possibly theatrical performance in front of a real audience, whereas Burke’s choice of sublime sources are primarily natural things, with a small exception for words – his

4 Examples of art that seek not to imitate but translate include expressionism, surrealism and abstractionism.

beloved medium as a writer and politician. To Burke, words are already combined emotional and rational constructs and are therefore very effective at communicating the obscure. Words can present ideas that ‘have never been presented to the senses of any man’ (Burke 1759: 196).

Burke focused on a specific type of sensational drift: ‘The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror’ (Burke 1759: 101). Burke intends to join the most horrible – motion suspending – environments with the competitive desire to resemble the greatness within nature. Burke mentions in part II of his book a series of atmospheres that can be met while traversing and interacting with natural phenomena: shapes in the background and a partly fenced darkened foreground; images and expressions of power; the overlarge against the small; or the one in command over the underdog. A sense of privation and lack of basic necessities can be aroused by introducing emptiness in otherwise lively places; darkness and solitude can be conveyed by informal and overgrown pathways. Greatness, vastness and infinity can be introduced by alternating silence with overwhelming noise of water or animals (especially alarming sounds), or by optical tricks such as exaggerated perspective (height is less grand than depth) or unexpectedly scaled-up or scaled-down versions of familiar elements (dwarf-sized people, gigantic spiders). Colours should mostly be saturated and fuscous, such as black, brown and deep purple; and effects of suddenness or quick transition from light to darkness or darkness to light may conjure sublime sensations.

The horrific ‘style’ advocated by Burke is obviously very different from Longinus’s proud rhetorical sublime. Burke himself was apparently also troubled by this, because he introduced a safety rule by insisting that the observer should remain at a distance from dangerous situations. The body should not be in danger, but the mind should be able to imagine danger: the ‘conversant distance’. His

intellectual successor Immanuel Kant (publishing in 1790) agreed on this aspect: ‘the astonishment that borders upon terror ... this, in the safety in which we know ourselves to be, is not actual fear but only an attempt to feel fear by the aid of the imagination’ (ibid. 109). Kant would later articulate a sublime that is to remain conceptual, rather than a real – and physical – sensation that cannot be fled and therefore would not allow the imagination to roam freely.

Summarizing, over a period of almost 1,500 years the idea of Hypsous gained momentum to grow into the idea of the sublime. It turned into a nature-related sensation that needs no guide other than a human sense of preservation. Instead of a juxtaposition of souls, the natural sublime introduced the juxtaposition of humankind to a primordial type of nature. In Burke’s time more and more individuals no longer needed their survival instincts for actual survival, so instead this vacant human capacity was used to enter an imagined world of competitive, fresh and compelling ideas derived from experiencing the quality and the force of nature. For this conversant interaction, nature can and must be at a comfortable distance to propel humans to a reflective consciousness. What is needed, as Burke puts it, is obscurity of a primordial source, contained in the paradoxes of horrific but fascinating natural features.

Burke’s writing is passionate and in many places overly theatrical. His work should be read as an alternative to the dominant political coldness of the time. It is not so much a declaration of love as a declaration of war against shallowness. Mythology and traditions may have seemed obscure in an increasingly modernizing age, but as incentives they are essential for incorporating the original sources into all that is created anew. Maybe the chaos of politics and the obscurity of his own emotions drove him to capture something that continuously slipped through his fingers.⁵ He defended and exemplified the sublime to such a degree that he created a kind of sublime universe, that is a dark universe that apparently resonated well

5 Ultimately he was not very successful in obtaining a secure political position.

among many artists. The success of the Burkean sublime was not due solely to his own work, but also the work of many artists who drew on and depicted Burke's dramatic natural features. Burke was the master scenographer who enabled so many artists and thinkers to explore a dark and obscure sense of nature that would not remain limited to nature itself, but could easily expand to similar obscure situations, such as warfare, industrial machinery, scientific experiments, Dionysian rituals and, much later, also to a Freudian subconscious.

It might just be that Burke's interpretations are youthful and romantic, while Longinus's are more ripened and comprehensive. What Burke did not take into account is the real violent nature of human beings towards one another and their own cognitive capacities. Exploring this subject and its ethical implications was the next step in the development of the sublime.



Immanuel Kant's moral dilemma

There are two works in Kant's oeuvre that contribute to the idea of the sublime. The first is of lesser importance, because his later and more mature work defined the sublime in a totally new and different way (Crowter 1989: 8–15). This first work, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, is similar to Burke's list of sublime sensations and sources, including the simple statement that beauty is more feminine and joyous and the sublime more masculine and horrific (Kant 1764: section 1). He also states that both of these 'finer feelings' are mostly intertwined with each other, which finds a parallel to the development of the picturesque, as mentioned in Chapter One. Furthermore, Kant states that different types of people naturally appreciate or gravitate towards either beauty or the sublime (Kant 1764: section 2). For instance, a melancholic person will have a predominant sense for

the sublime. In this early work Kant speculates on a differentiation of inner states and the resulting bias towards certain experiences. Such a speculative differentiation according to types of people is not considered in his later work, but will again appear to be relevant when discussing the work of Thomas Weiskel (1976) in Part Two. For now, Kant's acclaimed major work *Critique of Judgement* (*Kritik der Urteilkraft*, 1790) is where we will look for similarities with the mechanism of the sensational drift deduced from the work of Longinus.

The analyses of the sublime in the *Critique of Judgement* is the concluding part of a trilogy that includes the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*. The main aim of this trilogy is to explore whether one can know what cannot be experienced: 'It is indispensably necessary for the human understanding to distinguish between the possibility and the actuality of things' (Kant 1790: 249). Possibilities may be something imaginable, but they are nevertheless not significant to the actuality of things. This is relevant to the idea of the sublime because both *Peri Hypsous* and the sublime have their origin in sources that are hidden and obscure – soul or nature – and therefore in need of our human contribution to make them visible or whole. It is this human capacity to contribute that produces a philosophical challenge in Kant's reasoning. If we cannot experience the sublime source directly, how can we reasonably extrapolate or imitate it? Through what type of knowledge or understanding is this possible?

Such a philosophical question is a further development of the works of Longinus and Burke, who mainly discussed how the technique of elevation can be induced and what type of sources are effective in doing so. They were 'effect seekers', whereas Kant questioned the function of the sublime in principle and mistrusted a priori the sensational drift because it makes humans uncritical and meek in the face of ideas that have no actual foundation. To Kant, a weakness for sensational effects is a characteristic of superstition and is therefore incompatible with the ultimate

capacity of mankind. Mankind should be free from any mechanical determination and instead be driven by rational principles (Crowter 1989: 17).

The chapters on the sublime are related to the question of how we should understand the principle of taste and judgement (Kant 1790: 37). Kant acknowledges that humans are dependent upon a sensational functionality for taste (e.g. whether something is sour, bitter, sweet, salty or umami), but this sensational aspect is not sufficient to understand the human mind. We need our ‘imagination’ to judge taste and this process is referred to as ‘aesthetics’ (ibid. 37). In other words, aesthetics is the process by which sensations become experiences. This translation of sensations into experiences is where the essential philosophical problem resides, because this translation is not without flaws. The necessity of imagination is already familiar to us, because we have seen in the work of Longinus and Burke that the audience participates in the creation of the sublime. What is typical about the aesthetics of the sublime is ‘the mere ability to think ... surpassing every standard of sense’ (ibid. 89). This means that the sublime may be overwhelming to the senses and may cause one to become carried away in a sensational drift – but that only describes the mechanical part. In order to become useful, the sensational drift should be judged. Only if we can use our superior mind to surpass the drift, can we benefit from it and distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad.



Kant warns against subreptions

The idea and possibility of the sublime exposes a challenging aspect in Kant’s own philosophical reasoning, and so it is therefore no surprise that it comes at the end of his trilogy on superior reasoning. In a way, the idea of the sublime is at the heart of the theory of knowledge in general, because it so fiercely challenges all that can be

rigidly reasoned. The sublime is a phenomenon related to something that cannot be comprehended immediately, neither with the mind nor with the senses. Humans will try anyway and they will fail. The ‘negative’ presence of the sublime indicates the contours of what is present and not its substance. It poses an enormous problem to Kant’s desire to let reason dominate everything else. Can humans make sense of a ‘negative’ presence? Can they gather scientific data from it? Even the size and position or contour is not experienceable; there is only an impression of absence. This – not accidentally – coincides with the aspect of horror as an ultimate form of the obscure that was discussed by Burke. As such, horror is the result of an inability to sense and comprehend through verification. In the absence of verification by experiential data or positive identification, the remaining impression of what is absent causes the mind to speculate without limit through imaginative fiction or imaginative sensibility. To Kant, such a possibility was indeed horrifying.

The alternative that Kant proposes is purely theoretical and may seem utterly impossible. He concludes that the ‘beautiful prepares us to love disinterestedly something, even nature itself; the sublime prepares us to esteem something highly even in opposition to our own (sensible) interest’ (Kant 1790: 108). The term ‘disinterestedly’ refers to a playful state, a satisfaction independent of intentional desire and even independent of truth. According to Kant, desire for knowledge should not be related to aesthetic enjoyment. If aesthetics is the translation of sensations into experiences, then humans should be able to explore and enjoy the transition fully. If, however, such aesthetic translation serves an intentional desire for knowledge or power, it could eventually overrule the practical mind (*Rheine Vernunft*) and thereby create wrongful impressions (ibid. 38; Zangwill 2010). Beauty implies a freedom of mind and imagination that does not interfere with desire. The sublime, however, implies something entirely different. Kant concludes that ‘we cannot know but only think nature as its presentation’ and this judgement awakens the feeling ‘of the minds destination’ (Kant 1790: 108, 09).

This needs some explication. The mind's destination is of the highest importance in Kant's work. The fact that we cannot sense or comprehend some phenomena because they are either too complex or too dynamic does not render us helpless. On the contrary, we possess a superior mind that can create concepts and ideas about anything, even about the ultimately complex or dynamic. In this sublime – and creative – act, we are both proud of this human faculty as well as grateful for the challenge that was provided by the source. To Kant there is an inbuilt increase in respect for the original source due to this ultimate challenge. As such, the sublime given all its unrepresentable qualities can convey an equally unrepresentable ethical quality or norm. Both morality and the sublime lack sharp contours and both harness a universal necessity for humankind (e.g. Lyotard 1994: 229). We need the sublime as a 'supersensible' judgement caused by a mere sense of the unrepresentable relationship between the universal and the subjective (Kant 1790: 107). This is also referred to as the 'subjective universal validity' (ibid. 49). The sublime enables us to be proud of ourselves and to increase our respect for external sources. In terms of the sensational drift, this conclusion by Kant implies a resistance to the drift in favour of the creation of a universal moral sense. Any other outcome of the sensation of the sublime (such as knowledge or a sense of power) is a 'subreption' (ibid. 96), meaning that an imaginative fantasy is considered as realistic as reasoned knowledge, which is a false mixing up of the real and the suggestive.

Kant's radical viewpoint – to conceptually surpass something that has the capacity to put human sensations into a drift and to transport them – is completely opposite to Longinus's concept. Kant deems it wrong and immoral to allow the drift to transport us and create wrongful and suggestive impressions with the same authentic taste as true knowledge. To Kant there is but one conclusion: the sublime does not belong to aesthetics. Only the beautiful expresses the proper, playful impression, free from the desires of the mind. The sublime should therefore be cast out of the domain of aesthetics. Instead, the sublime becomes an ethical

category because of its powerful capacity to convey a sense of awe and respect for an unrepresentable source.

One may wonder what really is the benefit of surpassing a sensation that Longinus describes as ‘vaunting’? Is not the sensational aspect of elevation useful for gaining a new sense of creativity, as was envisioned by both Longinus and Burke? To answer this question we need to elaborate on three key ideas in Kant’s reading of the sublime: the moral law; positive and negative presentation; and uncompromised imagination.

The moral law

As increasingly knowledgeable people we have become more doubtful about the sources and performers we can trust. We are not little children who open up to any good storyteller, however sensational their performance. The mechanical aspect of the sensational drift may be there and may even be effective, but most of us have learned to block out an immediate influence, including our own soul or inward greatness (e.g. Hertz 1985: 51–55). In some ways this is a pity, because Longinus and Burke expected us to produce new images. In other ways it is a relief, because there may indeed be good reasons to resist that which can sweep us away with such a powerful sensational drift. The contemporary French philosopher François Lyotard discusses exactly this aspect of Kant’s view on the sublime in *Lessons on the Analytic of the sublime* (1994). Lyotard introduced the postmodern idea that since the holocaust, all grand expectations and ideas are bankrupt (1984). Humanity simply cannot control itself and is too easily swayed when exposed to a sensational drift such as the propaganda of the third Reich. Such a despicable event addresses the moral of something that may be sublime, but should be judged as unwanted. So, we should reject people that act instinctively and enter a proud flight by wanting to resemble a Nazi during the holocaust. As a modern society we cannot permit this kind of sublime provocation. Morality is an important tool for

distinguishing between a mere sensation of the sublime and an aesthetic judgement (e.g. Crowter 1989).

Kant exposes a moral dilemma about aesthetic judgements. The objects of nature could only be judged by a sense of beauty and not by what we call sublime (Kant 1790: 120–22). Kant, and most other philosophers after him, positioned the sublime in the eye of the beholder. This beholding eye can only change according to the training it obtains (Kant 1790: 95). No object, not even nature as a whole, can be sublime, because the sublime can only properly operate on the faculty of concepts (ibid. 121). As we can only imagine the objective sublime qualities in nature by using our imagination, we should control our imagination and protect it against the morally unjust. An aesthetic judgement, such as the beautiful, is based upon a common taste, a ‘harmony of everyone’s judgement with our own’ (ibid. 104). Beauty can be shared and is clearly associated with the object. The sublime is beyond human understanding in general and therefore is above any question of taste. In other words, the sublime may technically be an aesthetic category, but as it can be wrongly perceived as providing true knowledge, Kant argues that it should not belong to any category related to the pleasurable.

As a somewhat puzzling addition, Kant introduces within the structure of the sublime an automated response of respect for the source of the sublime. To Kant it is a ‘law for us’ that our initial incapacity to comprehend the situation, will result in the feeling of respect for such a source (ibid. 96): ‘the feeling of the sublime in nature is respect for our own destination, which, by a certain subreption, we attribute to an object of nature (conversion of respect for the idea of humanity in our own subject into respect for the object).’ He then states that the sensation of the sublime is a pain arising from the desire to resemble what we imagine the sublime to be. This, in the language of the sensational drift, contains a juxtaposition between the actuality of the place and time of the event and an inner sensation of pain, and finally defiance and awe.

This treatment of the sublime may be elegant for natural features, but is problematic for human sublime sources, since we do not want to respect the horrors some of us are capable of. That is why the twentieth-century French philosopher Lyotard reinterpreted Kant's universal law as a relative and essentially individual (postmodern) law. Lyotard analyses how both the sensational drift and the aesthetic judgement are part of the sublime experience. He concludes that the 'negative presentation' of the sublime would, theoretically, best be interpreted as a sensation alone, although this proves too difficult for humans. Humans will always, as individuals, interpret a sublime source by means of an aesthetic judgement and will then fall into the trap of creating subreptions. Because of this inevitability and because of the historical evidence of the 'frailty of human nature' and its 'shortcomings' (Lyotard 1994: 112–114; 8–10), it is not respect that is the ultimate result of the sublime experience as a whole, 'it is its resistance to temptations, its triumph over them, reducing them to naught' (ibid. 238).

In the end, it is exactly the sense of the 'difference' (*le Différend*) between knowledge and experience that is the central topic of the sublime and not, as Burke and Longinus suggested, the desire to be equal or to resemble. The notion of being different is what is typical for human beings and their resistance to being equal is what drives them to be different (a circular reasoning). The sublime is the mechanical sensation that proves that being different is possible and even desirable. With this argument Lyotard reinstates an appreciation for the mechanism of the sublime that implies participation in the act of creation – or the act of resistance, in the words of Lyotard himself.

The positive and the negative

In Kant's interpretation, the beautiful relates to things that are known and are harmonious, and as a result are harmless. By comparison, the sublime involves a struggle with our senses and the concepts we are familiar with. Kant refers to

sublime experiences of phenomena that we cannot sense and cannot comprehend; we only have an impression of or comprehend something that is not the actual phenomenon. This is a 'negative presentation' (Kant 1790: 109) and is opposite to the beautiful, which refers to real objects and noticeable details, and is therefore 'positively present'. The terms 'positive' and 'negative' are used by Kant to indicate an essential difference in presence within the theory of judgement. In my view this difference is very useful for understanding how we should interpret the use of sublime imagination (e.g. Brady 1998; Fudge 2001; Costelloe 2007, 2012). When using these terms the word 'positive' does not refer to a state of pleasure, nor does 'negative' refer to a state of discomfort, although these connotations are often associated with the beautiful to indicate the pleasurable and the sublime to indicate discomfort. To avoid the bias of aesthetic preference by reference to associations that are culturally variable, a strictly technical interpretation of positive and negative is needed. We could even avoid the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime entirely if we consider both of them as stemming from the same mechanism, a mechanism that contains two technical differences, either a positive representation or a negative representation.

Positive and negative refer to a position between an object and a subject, or between the source and the responder. A positive position indicates that there is an object present that may be accompanied by a subjective response. A negative position indicates that there is no actual object present, even though there may be a subjective response. An interesting consequence of this extrapolation of Kant's view is that a positive position is not automatically related to the judgement of the beautiful, but could just as easily be judged to be ugly. The presence of a positive representation allows us to imitate the characteristics of the object that we sense. A negative position cannot be imitated because there is no example. In this case, we have to turn to our imagination to invent what is absent. Reason and senses are useless in this enterprise and yet are in continuous movement in the attempt to get

to grips with the phenomenon. Initially we are aroused by this paradoxical state (elevated situation) and at a certain moment we realize that we are still in the here and now (actual situation). At that moment, Kant believes, we experience both a pride in our own imagination and a respect for the source that is capable of enticing us so much.

This insight is powered by the strange sensation of the vacuum that contains nothing and yet creates a pressure. The vacuum itself seems to gain a mass and position within ourselves (Kant 1790: 109–110). In these text fragments Kant uses an almost spiritual language to express the effects of a negative representation. He almost sounds like a Buddhist monk describing a meditation technique rather than explaining a watertight philosophy of reason: ‘This movement may (especially in its beginnings) be compared to a vibration, i.e. a quickly alternating attraction towards and repulsion from the same object. The transcendent (towards which the imagination is impelled in its apprehension of intuition) is for the imagination like an abyss in which it fears to lose itself’ (ibid. 97). This may be Kant’s way of describing the communication with the soul that Longinus referred to.

Uncompromised imagination

Another revealing statement by Kant is that a sublime experience can only exist as a free judgement. For example:

‘if we are to call the sight of the ocean sublime, we must not think of it as we [ordinarily] do, as implying all kinds of knowledge We sometimes think of the ocean as a vast kingdom of aquatic creatures, or as the great source of those vapors that fill the air with clouds for the benefit of the land ... but these furnish merely teleological judgements. To call the ocean sublime we must regard it as poets do, merely by what strikes the eye – if it is at rest, as a clear mirror of water

only bounded by the heaven; if it is restless, as an abyss threatening to overwhelm everything.’ (Kant 1790: 110–111).

In Kant’s view only someone acting like a poet can be free from prejudices and pre-conceptualization.

Why would only a free judgement be sublime? Because, argues Kant, the sublime only exists if our imagination is not compromised by any intellect that could intermingle with real knowledge and dilute our judgement of pure reason. When one registers what is already known, or one is conditioned by ideas or preferences that falsely steer the imagination to familiarities that are deeply associative but are not proof of anything, the imagination does not capture what is beyond presentation, but what is seemingly nearby and might even appear to be objective. In such cases a subreption is created where poetic awareness should be present. The observation of a poet, as in intended by Kant, is mere awareness; poets look without prejudice and are not conditioned by knowledge or preference. To Kant, the only proper response to a negative position between object and subject is to resist any subjective interpretation and to simply be aware of the unrepresentable object. Kant, in my view, here concludes that the awareness of the sublime is possible in two complementary ways: (1) since the sublime source is without form or physical embodiment, it can only be referred to as a concept of imagination; (2) since the sublime is only a concept of imagination, any nearby physical proof is to be regarded as a poet would, by uncompromised imagination.

Summarizing, there do indeed seem to be good reasons to avoid being swept away immediately by some sensational drift. For humans it appears to be almost unavoidable to create subreptions that might even gain respect due to the ‘moral law’ deduced by Kant (1790: 96). The more one preconceives one’s environmental interactions, the less one experiences the sublime in its poetic appearance and the more it is used to categorize experiences as sources of knowledge that are false and

yet attractive because of the pressure of the vacuum that arises when confronted with a negative representation. Resisting such a process requires strenuous efforts and is somehow contrary to the general notion of aesthetics as a relaxed and casual action. Paraphrasing Brady (1998) one may conclude that Kant has clipped the wings of aesthetics. The dynamic forces of nature, such as ocean waves, fires and hurricanes, ‘raise the energies of the soul above their accustomed height and discover in us a faculty of resistance of a quite different kind, which gives us courage to measure ourselves against the apparent almightiness of nature’ (ibid. 109), and that which exceeds our mathematical comprehension, suddenly swallowed by size or complexity (ibid. 89).

The capacity of humans to interpret a sensational drift in the wrong way may indeed put at risk a clear distinction between real knowledge and imaginative possibilities. There seems to be no other option but to withstand the sublime sensation experienced by an uncompromised imagination. This is the advice we must follow to create a modern society that is not enchanted by obscure superstition. It has been argued by renowned social psychologists such as Daniel Kahneman (Nobel Prize winner and author of *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (2011)) that the less information people have – which is the case during a negative presentation – the more improbable and yet overconfident their guesses and intuition become (ibid. 201, 416). People will start to believe in miracles and are open to the most extreme suggestions or illusive proof or reasoning.

Unlike Burke and Longinus, Kant seems to have exposed a valid danger in the processing of a sensational drift, a nearly unavoidable aspect in the human interpretation of the sublime. It would take an experienced meditative master to block all the knowledge, preferences and memory to maintain the poetic state that Kant proposes. If indeed Kant seems to propose such an ascetic attention to the sublime, it is all the more obvious that the sensation of the sublime is characterized by demanding effects such as the ‘strenuous’ (despair, indignation (Kant 1790: 113)),

the ‘disposition’ (the relation to the context (ibid. 115)), ‘simplicity’ (*die Einfalt*, ibid. 116) and the ‘pluralistic’ (not self-referring, but all inclusive (ibid. 119)). Such characteristics demand uncompromised training.



Conclusions regarding the structure of the sublime experience

The findings in this chapter reveal that there are many reasons to seriously investigate a revision of sublime-related aesthetics. Figure 5 shows the fundamental ideas that have been discussed and how they relate to the four questions concerning relevance, the type of object, the result, the style and the condition for a sublime experience. The conclusions formulated in this chapter are in turn presented in relation to each author (horizontal) and to each of the four questions (vertical). From the work of Longinus I have deduced that a well-managed sensational drift will result in a creative act by the audience and that this act will complement the story delivered by the performer and match the level of intensity of the performance.

The analyses by Burke and Kant increased the creative involvement of the audience’s imagination. Burke saw this enthusiasm as equal to something grand in nature, creating new images and invoking in humans a healthy sense of competition. Kant also regarded imagination as crucial, although he ‘clipped the wings’ of aesthetics because of the possible amalgam of imagination and verifiable knowledge.

What kind of design is needed to deal with sublime aesthetics? The fact that the sensational drift can be experienced not only by a well-directed performance by a fellow person, but also by being in nature creates a big responsibility for an individual or a group of people engaged with nature. Even if nature is designed by a landscape architect, it is different from a live human performance. All that is presented and unrepresentable in a designed landscape is perceived through the cultural, biological

fundamental ideas on the sublime by the founding fathers	why is the idea of the sublime relevant?	what object relates to the idea of the sublime?	what is the result of the experience?
Longinus	<div>culture is in crisis</div> <div>too much wealth and luxury make shallow cultural products</div>	<div>the one that performs (a great soul) + a flawed style of performance + the transportation of an audience</div> <div>not sculpture but words and speeches</div>	<div>uplifting of the soul</div> <div>to be included in an act of creation (a proud flight)</div>
Burke	<div>a means against societal display (of artists and poets)</div> <div>a means to oppose an increasingly hedonistic culture</div>	<div>the irresistible force of nature including its horrific qualities</div>	<div>to awaken an inbuilt sense of correction when exposed to the might of nature</div> <div>to be inspired to create things equal to the qualities in nature</div>
Kant	<div>an experience that exposes a problem regarding the absence of empirical verification (e.g. the unrepresentable)</div> <div>allow distance from sensational drifts and gain rational principles</div>	<div>the eye of the beholder</div> <div>all things in nature but potentially also anything equally unverifiable (e.g. art, warfare and technology)</div>	<div>humans are capable of overruling any 'unrepresentable' phenomenon (i.e. conceptual superiority)</div> <div>vacuum of sensing and knowing will install a sense of respect for the original source (i.e. moral law)</div>
conclusion regarding the structure of the sublime	the idea of the sublime is a liberating means against a popular display of shallowness and/or inattentiveness	the consequences of sensations becoming experiences, juxtaposed to a great soul, force or phenomenon (e.g. knowledge, sense of awe, creativity)	the sublime causes a new creative manifestation with some profound (moral) consequences (e.g. rivalry, unbound creativity, respect)

Figure 5: Summary of the fundamental ideas on the sublime as discussed in this chapter and the conclusions regarding the structure of the sublime.

and personal aspects within each individual, as suggested by Steven Bourassa (1991) (see: Theme Five, Chapter One). Perhaps the most implicit and obvious strategy for dealing with sublime aesthetics lies in the notion that aesthetics involves both the mind and the body. The sensational drift explicitly refers to a double movement that involves the body (where the soul resides). Also, Burke's explicit reference to nature introduces a survival-related physical interaction with a natural phenomenon: sweating, crying out in fear, experiencing heightened senses, the possibility of being engulfed by water or fire, or the threat of attack by animals. Such physical responses are what is left of an otherwise 'negative presentation'. There is a continuous action and reaction between bodily and mental states.

what style will induce the sublime?	what condition is needed?	conclusion regarding the structure of the sublime
presence of a great soul	collective and guided experience	the sublime is a sensational drift inducing a double movement (inward inclusion/outward projection)
a flawed 'everyday' style to be perfected by the audience		
elevation of perception by a concourse of passions		
theatrical obscurity of 'horrific' natural manifestations	individual and physical immersion into nature (i.e. loneliness)	the sublime is being 'conversant' with 'horrific' aspects in nature awakening a creative authenticity
safeguarding against danger and real fear by a 'conversant distance'		
(too) dynamic or (too) mathematical	uncompromised imagination instead of categorized concepts	the sublime calls for alertness while preventing a subreption from happening (wrong gain of knowledge)
the sublime is an immersive experience of a great example (soul) or event (nature) demanding effort and creativity	the sublime needs alertness and openness whether by collective concentration or private necessity	

The structure of the sublime is therefore best categorized as an experiential sequence: a sensational drift aggravated by mental factors such as internal conflict or stress, or, as Longinus phrased it, 'Are you not amazed how at one instant she [Sappho] summons as though they were all alien from herself and dispersed, soul, body, ears, tongue, eyes, colour?' (Kant 1790: section X-3). The interaction between the body (object) and the mind (subject) is much more potent than is generally assumed when the word 'aesthetics' is mentioned. This potential will be elaborated in the following chapters before a design or design strategy can be formulated.

The idea of the sublime is indeed a very complex and astonishing aesthetic category. Kant thought it best not to consider it an aesthetic category at all because

of all the serious implications it bears. This may be a wise position, but perhaps naive if we take into account the susceptibility of humans to the seductive powers of the sublime, even when philosophers say they should not. The effects of the sublime reach all the way to the act of creativity itself, and for this alone are deemed valuable and worthwhile. Nevertheless, the comments by Kant should be taken into account. The proposition that aesthetics should cover the translation of sensations into experiences is in my view very helpful as a starting point for redefining a repertoire of sublime sensations. In what ways can humans process sensations into experiences by means of the sensational drift?

All three founding fathers showed themselves enthusiastic about the idea of the sublime and yet only Longinus did not consider an opposition between the beautiful and the sublime. By creating such an opposition, Burke and Kant implicitly promoted the beautiful as the easier and more comfortable version of aesthetics. Longinus's *Peri Hypsous* did not position elevation beyond human reach. On the contrary, he celebrated the human capacity to be included in what is apparently best described as a shared creative effort. Burke and his contemporaries related the sublime to nature as the pinnacle of suprahuman expression. This focus on nature made aesthetic appreciation more complicated, because it introduced a phenomenon that is beyond human representation. Longinus's 'soul' at least belonged to us, even though it remained obscure. Nature is not ours, nor is it located somewhere in the vicinity of our body – at least not the type of nature that Burke referred to.

The structure of the sublime experience can be built upon the assumption that sublime aesthetics is the translation of sensations into experiences. The further development of the anatomy of sublime sensations will consist of discussing whether or not it is possible, on the whole, to correctly process sensations. A distinction between the sublime and the beautiful will be avoided as much as possible. Sensations will be categorized as either a positive or a negative position between an object and a subject (or a source and a receiver). The inevitable influence of imagination and

its habit-breaking influence on aesthetic processing will be further investigated. The three founding fathers have helped to define the structure of the sensational drift, enabling humans to gain experiences using their creative imagination, both as an individual and as part of a greater collective (and audience).

Act One

SUMMONED

Where Burke, Kant and Longinus agree and disagree

Characters:

Edmund Burke

Immanuel Kant

Longinus as the ghost

Scenography

A desolated landscape of books piled up like rocks and buildings, stretching away endlessly on all sides. The horizon is filled with shredded paper; the sun and moon are made of newspaper collages. Dim light casts shades of purplish colours. Rumbling sounds can be heard and gusts of dust appear at intervals as piles and heaps collapse, continuously changing the topography. Two men are walking through this paper landscape. A tall and delicately handsome man with a dedicated stride is in front. He is followed by a rotund man in a suit in the English style, huffing and puffing, and muttering to the man in front.

(Edmund) Burke

It is no use to be in a hurry.

[Calling to Dr Kant and rubbing his mouth with his handkerchief.]

In this paper wilderness you will not find any convenience or comfort.

[He nearly stumbles over a particularly large pile of crumbling books.]

You have to prepare yourself! Brace yourself against the boredom that seeps through this atmosphere. It might be the end of you if you think that you are in control of these written ridicules.

(Dr) Kant

Dear Mr Burke, there is no threat in this paper landscape. All that is left of natural harm has become man-made and can easily be foreseen and controlled. This country has finally elevated itself and has abandoned cowering before some sensational God.

Burke

You speak of God! Have you not declared the end of any such Otherness.

Kant

On the contrary, I had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith.⁶ One should not try to explain Otherness, be it nature or God, in rational terms. The soul is immortal and we cannot know about immortality because we cannot experience it. Human reason is limited and it requires a discipline to keep reason within its own limits.⁷ Our Summoner has shaped this world according to such human limitations. This land is controlled and contains a clear meaning and we have to find out what meaning that is. And whether it is of value.

Burke

[In between heavy breathing because he can hardly keep up with his companion]

But indeed Mr Kant, there may be a new kind of Otherness in this unknown territory.

6 Critique of Pure Reason, 1787 second edition, Preface

7 Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Rossi Philip, 'Kant's Philosophy of Religion', 2013

We have to be awake and must not get ourselves caught by anything. The person who summoned us might be a cruel and vile person. You know what types have tried to put our good names in front of their arbitrary carriages.

[Kant turns around briefly]

Kant

Do not worry Mr Burke. We shall survive. The one who summoned us has no use for us more dead than we already are. I somehow feel that this writer has learned from our lessons and has kept what is reasonable and eliminated what is not.

[...and quickly starts to walk again.]

Burke

[Disappointed, to also having to start to walk again.]

You have never been good at anticipating a disaster, have you? Once you declare your own or someone else's mind dominant, all sensations die with this act of supremacy. You deny your fantasies that are ruled by emotions. I however, enjoy my fantasies by using my rich empathic competences. I know how to guide my fears into pleasurable entertainment. Yet you must have known fear and solitude? Why else be a rigorous philosopher and published writer? Tell me, companion, what is wrong with goose pimples, even if your mind knows better?

[Kant remains silent and starts to walk even faster.]

Alas! The sensation of cowardliness has come over you! At least some evidence of emotions. Now there, allow me to analyse the psychology behind this response. Let's see

[While walking, starts to dig in his pockets and soon recollects a little notebook from which he seemingly chooses a random page. He then starts to recite in a declamatory voice.]

‘The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror The inferior effects are admiration, reverence and respect.’⁸

Mr Kant, do you feel any admiration for this landscape?

[Still no response.]

Clearly not. Let me see, I know what state you are in. You are hurried on by an irresistible force. ‘The sublime is without clearness and thus forces our reasoning to establish an artificial clearness or compensation of the lack of clearness: causing the anxiety of “terror” ... the sublime is an idea belonging to self-preservation.’⁹

Yes! That is it. You are in a survival mode and your inert state of terror is masked by some idiot assumption that our Summoner is harmless and might even be a very decent thinker. This idea of yours is actually very *Obscure* ... an imperfect idea that affects your imagination

[Burke starts to count on his fingers, emphasizing each of the following characterizations by a raised and slightly surprised, high pitch to his voice.]

8 Edmund Burke, *On the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. David Womersley (second edition, Penguin Classics, London: Penguin Books, 1759): 101.

9 Ibid. 127.

You have this *Idea of Power* of our Summoner, he seems in some way superior to us. At the same time our host has not made a very convenient place for us to visit. All basic necessities are lacking. Instead, the familiar types of *Deprivation* are here: *Vacuity of space*, there is nothing more than paperwork here; *Darkness* surrounds us, just look at the purple shade that is cast everywhere; *Solitude* has befallen us, we seem the only living creatures here; and lastly the *Silence* that is heavy like an implosion of meaning. However, the occasional rumbling sounds in the background are quite terrifying, as are the gusts of wind caused by collapsing heaps and sky-high piles of books. There are obvious signs of *Greatness* in this place, the *Vastness* of it, the *Infinity* and *Uniformity* of it. And the *Difficulty of Understanding* the meaning of our summoning and Summoner, let alone the *Difficulty to Walk* this uneven terrain. The *Labour* it takes to make any progress here

[Kant suddenly halts and shouts at Burke.]

Kant

STOP your IDIOCY, you English toad!

Burke

[Obviously prepared for any such response.]

Ah yes, the Suddenness of events and changes. The Quick Transformations of quietness to provocation, or light to dark. Thank you Mr Kant, I had nearly forgotten that important marker of the aesthetic experience you suffer. You bear all the mentioned marks of a man that is subservient to the sublime.¹⁰

[Burke smiles and quietly walks past his infuriated companion.]

¹⁰ Ibid. 101–127.

Burke

Alas, stumble we must over all the residues of meagre thoughts that are so carelessly cast away in this landscape. Just look at all these books and words and sentences and shreds and frustrated half-breeds. This collector has even decorated the sun and moon with interpretations of our work. What have we done to this world?

Kant

[Continuing his fast pace.]

He needs us. He is in need of our clarity and originality. He does not seem competent without it. We are continuously summoned by new thinkers. That seems to be our doom. I sometimes wish that I was wrong and there was a gracious and forgiving God to spare me this afterlife responsibility. We shall have no rest as long as new intellect chooses to challenge our works.

[After climbing a solitary rise in the landscape, they stand on top of it and look ahead. Silence for some time.]

Clearly Mr Burke, you are right. We do not have to worry about new intellect. It does not come close to our clairvoyance and rigor.

Burke

We are wanderers in the mist, like that painting by Casper David Friedrich. In our age we stood on real mountain tops and looked at unspoilt white clouds. Look at these paper replicas! This future was not what I had in mind while writing for new generations. I must say, it is not as pleasing as it used to be. I rather liked the sense of wild nature and the terror inside it.

Kant

I know you do, and it is clear that you finally understand the flaw in your own work. What is the use of terror and fear if it is detached from real survival? You have said so yourself: only in the absence of real and immediate danger can horror be enjoyed to create enthusiasm. Well, enjoy this landscape of literature that holds no natural threat. Besides ... you are long since dead, this is not your world to die in.

Burke

I used different words.

Kant

And I shall not cite you, dear friend. We have been intimate for such a long time now. I have forgotten what your exact words were. Am I wrong about the intentions of what I just rephrased?

Burke

Well, yes and no. Yes, we can only enjoy terror if it is terror seen from a safe distance. Yet somehow this paper landscape is more frightening than natural scenery. It seems to breath fear in a more vicious way. It holds some mental threat that my instincts are useless against. I am afraid that I may become insane if I imagine the mental vastness of all these interpretations of our work.

Kant

That is an interesting observation.

[Burke sighs and sits down with a rash relaxation of his legs.]

Burke

Thank you Herr Doctor! You see the seriousness of our situation. Hopefully you will admit that this is not what you had expected to happen almost three hundred years after your publications, this multiplied landscape of words, interpretations upon interpretations. They hardly relate to what we intended to create, but instead seem trapped in a nightmarish palimpsest.

Kant

I do not know, yet. I have to ponder on this for a while.

Burke

Very well, you ponder and I will rest. I am sick of being summoned by some rash and bad interpretation of new intellect.

[They go about their own business for quite some time, occasionally taking up some book or paper to examine the content. The light weakens and it becomes a moonlit night.]

Burke

Let us begin again. It is the only way to get out of here. Why have we been summoned? What is the challenge?

Kant

I believe our Summoner is another one of those psychological passionates. There are many fragments with reference to Freud and Lacan.

[Suddenly shouts out.]

Ebenfalls! ... and interestingly, there are many couplets of verses, some of them quite good.

Burke

[Picking up a book and opening it.]

This type strikes me as a romantic man and very civilized. At least we should consider ourselves lucky to be surrounded by quality scrap work.

Kant

He is, however, rather mean in judging us. Here read this:

[Hands over a piece of paper.]

Burke

‘Thomas Weiskel, page 79: The Kantian therapy is a drastic one; it logically ends in mental suicide.’ Goodness me! That is indeed nasty I am sorry for you Dr Kant. More than anyone, you should abhor any reference to a therapy of any kind.

Kant

Yes ... and then again, I have grown mild over the past centuries. I can see his point.

Burke

How could you possibly agree?

Kant

My weak point has always been to understand the moral of man. I was perhaps too ignorant to presume that a good example would cause another one to follow that example. Over the course of time, art and nature have been robbed of their position as exemplary role models. The balance between the good and the bad has toppled towards the bad, or at least the realistic. Remember all the *schäbige* places we have been summoned to: worlds built on human ideas, imitating reality from the limited

perspective of such ideas. Some of these fantasies did not last long enough to be self-supporting, others were ugly and uninspiring, and most of them were without a singular original thought. It is as if humans do not dare to think for themselves any more, but instead build these defensive chains of quotes and references.

Burke

Yes, I see. I wonder how it has become commonplace to cite so many authors in one place! These new thinkers seem to have made a monetary system of thoughts and cannot accept their own currency.

Kant

Indeed. After three hundred years of observing the effects of my work, I have become wary of human reason. I am now inclined to conclude that logic only exists within the limitations set by humans themselves. Life, however, is not human, it is something entirely different.

Burke

[Looks Kant in the eyes; the two stare at each other, intensely reading what cannot be put into words.]

That is quite something, Herr Doctor. Well, at least my work was original. It contained hardly any references. Those were all my original thoughts.

Kant

Do not overestimate yourself.

Burke

I beg your pardon.

Kant

You stole a lot from Longinus, or whatever his name was. That Greek rhetorician.

Burke

[Suddenly freezes and starts to look scared.]

Please be careful when mentioning his name, or you will be the one summoning him into this place. He is such a theatrical figure and cannot stand to be refuted. I did not steal from him; his work was the knowledge of the community, written down by a messenger.

Kant

Does that matter?

Burke

Yes, it does! It is the difference between citing one particular person, or trying to capture the ghost of time.

[A classic whoooo and whaaaa sound is heard, accompanied by skittish laughing and giggling. The source of the sound is not to be seen. It appears to come close and drift off again, like a circling thunderstorm.]

Kant

[Looks anxiously around.]

Burke

[Seeking ammunition by quickly digging up books, ready to cast at some menace in the air.]

There you have it! Brace yourself clever German mind, we might enter a typical Germanic battlefield.

Ghost

AAAAAAAaaaaaaah, Mister Burke ... are you there? Hiding underneath the works of others?

[And drifting off again.]

Burke

Show yourself, you coward!

Kant

Verdammt noch mal Edmund. Behave yourself, he is only playing with you.

Burke

[Grinding his teeth.]

I hate this madman.

Kant

He owes you one.

Ghost

[Swishing by.]

What are you talking about, *Herr Doctor*?

Kant

Stop fooling around! You two must be reasonable and immediately stop this ... this subreption!

Ghost

Vitium subreptionis: this crime is winding into your soul.

[Suddenly very close by and taking the shape of a transparent person clad in late Greek style.]

He is not afraid of how I look, he is afraid of my judgement. This he cannot comprehend. His reaction is truly pathetic and I will keep hunting him for what he did to my *Peri Hypsous*!

[Laughing hysterically.]

Kant

[Tries to calm the ghost.]

I see you were summoned too

Ghost

Yes, long before you were.

Kant

Do you have a clue what the intentions of our Summoner are?

Ghost

This Summoner has the decency to remember my work and my genius.

[Citing himself.]

‘We demand that which transcends the human.’ Our Summoner is called Thomas Weiskel and he wrote immediately after quoting me: ‘Without some notion of the beyond, some credible discourse of the superhuman, the sublime founders; or it becomes a “problem”.’¹¹

[Now pointing at the still threatening pose of Mr Burke.]

And he ...

... made my beautiful *Peri Hypsous* into a foundering problem.

[Suddenly a burning sword springs from the stretched hand of the ghost and wings like those of an archangel appear from his back. The whole apparition rises slightly from the ground and a thundering voice can be heard.]

I will haunt this man until he sets right what he put wrong!

Kant

Stop the performance Longinus, or whoever you are

Ghost

Never! Never shall I stop my haunting. I already disagree with the word *sublime*. I cannot tell what the additional value is after such noble naming of *Peri Hypsous*. A better translation would be *summoning* or *great gathering*. ‘Sublime’ is a word that depresses! Sub, sub, sub ... what degenerative connotations it has; and lime ... limus ... limen ... could be something ... could be *lumen* too, meaning *light* or *opening*.

¹¹ Longinus: section 36.3 and Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976): 3.

[Dramatic again.]

Yes, THAT would acknowledge the value of my *Peri Hypsous*: to be part of the light! To become an opening yourself! To become a door that opens to another door onto another and another and so forth! Much different from Mr Burke's cheap copy.

[The ghost is about to stab with his sword and Mr Burke throws some books at the half floating figure, meanwhile cursing and shouting.]

[Suddenly, a penetrating roar shatters everything around the three figures, accompanied by gusts of wind. Shreds and particles of paper rise like a giant wave and glide towards them, darkening, enveloping and choking the landscape and its little characters. Chaos and then: silence.]

Part Two

Anatomy of Sublime Sensations

Chapter Three

THOMAS WEISKEL

An instrument in the making of meaning

*'If the night blackened with a coming storm,
Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are
The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
Or make their dim abode in distant winds.
Thence did I drink the visionary power.'*

(Wordsworth 1805, *The Prelude*: verse 310)



Introducing a broken puzzle

Weiskel was a promising young scholar and assistant professor of English at Yale University. He analysed the same three founding fathers that I have included in my research and extended the existing body of knowledge on the sublime by drawing on the theory of psychoanalysis and the works of the English Romantic poets. The result is that his work *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (1976) caused an 'upsurge in interest in the sublime ... a trend that still continues' (Kirwan 2005: 157). Weiskel's work includes both art (poetry) and science (neurosciences), making it a fine example of a study that is actually *on* the experience of the sublime, instead of *around* it (ibid. 158). Weiskel's aim was to develop a theory or model of transcendence. Drawing on his work, I have analysed a new theme presented

by Weiskel's work: the manipulation of various types of sublime landscape experiences by British Romantic landscape poets.

Weiskel stated a 'perhaps too obvious and unwieldy' observation that 'in the history of literary consciousness the sublime revives as God withdraws from an immediate participation in the experience of men' (ibid. 3). The eighteenth-century upper classes sought to re-enchant the world. The rich and educated longed, rather melancholically, for an essential or primordial proof of life, but being rich and used to comfort, they only wanted to engage with these new sublime experiences at a safe distance. Certain provocative experiences were cultivated to feed lively conversations, pseudoscience or erotic play. In some ways, these were not immediate experiences, but more conceptualized experiences of wild nature. In this disguise, they were potent to the imagination but impotent to muscular and instinctive response. Weiskel argues that by this conceptualization the idea of the sublime gains a voyeuristic character. This bothered Weiskel, who was rather more interested in realistic and strenuous experiences that create an inescapable situation: real survival instead of imagined heroism. Weiskel found convincing examples of such transcendental experiences in the poetry of William Wordsworth.

Within the work of the poet Wordsworth, there appears a crossing of the Swiss Alps at Gondo Gorge. Weiskel studied this landscape experience, which is part of a much longer poem called *The Prelude*. Wordsworth left various notes in letters and jottings about his actual experiences at Gondo Gorge. In these notes Weiskel discovered that Wordsworth was indeed terrified by the horrific experience at Gondo Gorge. He also discovered that this was a genuine and unmitigated horror, not at all at a safe distance. Wordsworth was deeply traumatized by the experience and had tried to invent a new reading of his experience through his poems. In doing so, the poet created what Kant described as a subreption. The poem became Wordsworth's instrument for testing a new interpretation of the experience and experimenting with

the strength of such an altered experience (ibid. 46). According to Kant, this new interpretation is not to be trusted as a basis for knowledge. Nevertheless, Weiskel discusses exactly this *subreptive* power of the sublime as a type of self-therapy. In Weiskel's work this specific type of therapy has a special name, the *liminal* sublime. The focus on the liminal sublime adds a fresh idea to all the known reflections on the sublime by and after the three founding fathers. It is, however, also part of an idea in the making; Weiskel himself could not finish this idea as he had wished, because he died in an accident. So this is where the puzzle remains broken and an extrapolation of Weiskel's reasoning is all the more needed.



Making of meaning

The contribution by Thomas Weiskel is not limited to the idea of the liminal only. His work on the transcendental structure of the sublime is a study to integrate the rhetorical *Hypsous* by Longinus, the natural sublime by Burke and the subreptive consequences highlighted by Kant. According to Weiskel, the idea of the sublime served as a functional vehicle for the Romantic ideas of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, epitomized by the widely familiar English nineteenth-century poets such as Blake, Collins, Byron, Coleridge, Pope, Keats and especially Wordsworth. Implicitly, Weiskel emphasizes the role of poetry rather than philosophy in making the sublime influential. The Romantic landscape poems revealed an 'excitement in the making of meaning' (ibid. 22): 'the sublime dramatized the rhythm of transcendence in its extreme and purest form, for the sublime began where the conventional systems, readings of landscape or text, broke down, and it found in that very collapse the foundation for another order of meaning'. Both the vaunting of

Longinus and the creation of new images by Burke, as well as the poetic imagination of Kant, are an inspiration to Weiskel. Combining all prior studies on the sublime makes a ‘fusing [of] the natural and rhetorical sublimes’ possible (ibid. 17).

Weiskel highlighted three important and convincing aspects of the accumulated ideas on the sublime.

The first is that it is not necessary to choose or prioritize one founding father above the other. All three have contributed, in their own way, to the idea of the sublime and together they form the pieces of a puzzle that is not finished yet. A contemporary reading of the sublime does not exclude one interpretation and favour another, it aligns the multiplicity of the sublime and sees no contradictions. In other words, the theory of the sublime presents such a considerable challenge that it has not yet been concluded.

The second addresses the difficult problem that Burke and Kant in particular introduced: the sublime is a negative presentation and therefore cannot be understood by the senses, or by logic; it needs to be imagined. A remaining problem in understanding the sublime is therefore not to expand on the style or artefacts that help to create a sublime sensation (like Longinus and Burke), but instead on how a certain culture deals with imagination.

The third aspect is, in my opinion, the most brilliant. Weiskel uses contemporary (in his time) psychological and psychoanalytical theory to understand the relationship between the making of meaning and imagination. His conclusion is quite revealing: the sublime confronts humans with an inbuilt disorder, a malfunction or flaw in their own operating system (ibid. 30). The sublime cannot be understood by successfully processing sensations; the structure of the sublime must be studied by examining the failures to process sensations. Weiskel argues that sublime experiences are unavoidably related to subreptions. As a result, the Kantian warning against the formation of a subreption is both valid and functional.

The sublime and the incomprehensibility that it represents can only be made known through subreptions, as an instrument in the making of meaning.



Experiential disorder and the disintegration of language

As a landscape poet, Wordsworth wanted to share his experiences with a large audience to find solace and comfort in his own sensations. This effect is what Longinus described as an essential ingredient of the sublime: sharing the experience in such a way that not only is the information shared, but the sensation itself is conveyed to and shared by a group of people. Rather than being about a mute landscape conversing with a speaking being (after Paz 1986: 19), aesthetics is about speaking beings considering their own responses. Burke's contribution materialized the idea of the sublime by describing sublime features in nature. These features of nature give rise to sensations that are too obscure for human minds to comprehend and interpret.

All three founding fathers acknowledged that imagination is a necessary component of the sublime experience. Weiskel analysed this imaginative component in the works of poets who sense and imagine landscapes and try to express this in their poems. These poets have shaped an important part of the meaning of landscapes by including both their internal dialogue and detailed information of the landscapes they describe. The experiential structure of the sublime is related to both, and these works of art provide good material for a functional understanding of imagination as a necessary component of the sublime.

The first thing to note is that Weiskel, in studying both the poems and the intentions of the poets, deduced a three-phase model for the experience of the sublime that explains in more detail what happens during the sensational drift, as introduced earlier:

Phase one: The mind is in a routine-like state, habitual, more or less unconscious and harmonious.

Phase two: The habitual relationship suddenly breaks down. A fragment of text seems to contain a meaning that is not reflected by our minds: ‘a natural phenomenon catches us unprepared and unable to grasp its scale’ (Weiskel 1976: 24). Mind and awareness can only turn to itself because the relationship between inner and outer is no longer evident.

Phase three the reactive phase: ‘the mind recovers the balance between inner and outer by constituting a fresh relation between itself and the object or environment’ (ibid. 24). In this third and final phase a vital creative aspect is introduced: a fresh relation, a newly created relationship.

So, habitual states are broken and repaired again, and in the third, reactive phase a fresh or creative result is produced. In these phases we can recognize Weiskel’s interpretation of the subreption as a necessary resolution to explain the unrepresentable state of the sublime. When a mind is in recovery, unable to identify what has occupied it, it is out of control. Informed by practised experiencers such as poets – as also Kant suggested – the conclusive phase of a sublime experience is more comparable to a voice in search of expression. These poets know the sublime in the failure to properly experience sensations and thus engage in a process of creativity, or imagination.

Weiskel found an explanation for such a seeking voice in the essay by Roman Jakobson, ‘Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances’ (1956). Roman Jakobson was a Russian linguist (1896–1982) and he is one of the founders of modern linguistic science (e.g. Kraus 2014, reprint Jakobson 2014). Jakobson’s interest in language extends from semiotics (Jakobson 1965) to phonology (Jakobson and Mepham 1978) and the phenomenon of inner language and language disorders (Jakobson 1956). Jakobson’s analyses of the language disorder aphasia caught Weiskel’s attention when he was trying to explain the specific relationship between imagination and the experience of the sublime. An aphasia is a severe neurological disorder that limits the mutual calibration between articulation through language and processing by the senses. A person can lose the ability of expression through language as a result of brain damage. Weiskel’s idea is not to claim that a sublime experience is equal to an aphasia, but he saw remarkable similarities between the types of imaginative manipulations and the two types of aphasic disorders analysed by Jakobson. Through the work of Jakobson, Weiskel was able to rehabilitate some of the rhetorical origins of the idea of the sublime (i.e. Hypsous).

In Weiskel’s three-phase model the breakdown of habitual relationships can be understood as the activation of an experiential disorder. In the third phase, the reactive phase, there is a recovery. In that final and vitally creative third phase lies the specific quality of the experience of the sublime that was highlighted by Longinus, dramatized by Burke and perhaps feared by Kant (i.e. subreption). In Weiskel’s model the two language disorders, as discussed by Jakobson, are used to explicate the existence of two versions of disintegration in phase two. In phase three these provide the incentive for two types of creative recovery. I will first recall what Weiskel’s ideas were and then introduce my own interpretation. I have reason to expand on Weiskel’s attempt to describe the work of Romantic landscape poets because my work describes the work of landscape designers.



Two disorders and two types of recovery

The two types of language disorders that were analysed by Jakobson result from either a ‘selection deficiency’ (Jakobson 1956: 121) or a ‘contexture-deficiency’ (ibid. 126). A ‘selection deficiency’ is a defect in the capacity of naming. For correct linguistic use of names, there needs to be an embedding in a meaningful context: ‘The sentence “it rains” cannot be produced unless the utterer sees that it is actually raining’ (sic; ibid. 121). But if one is overwhelmed by, say, being near an erupting volcano or a terrorist attack, this embedding may become temporarily lost. A habitual pattern of naming is broken. The isolated word of ‘volcano’ or ‘attack’ then means nothing but ‘blab’ (sic; ibid. 122). In order to be able to properly name something, Jakobson refers to a ‘metalanguage’ (ibid. 123) – a form of comprehension that enables someone to switch between different types of language. In terms of the sublime, Weiskel here hints at a broken relationship between linguistic language and the multisensory language of nature, landscape, environment or art (i.e. similarity disorder, Jakobson 1956: 125). Weiskel then introduces another term for this type of disorder, because Jakobson did not specifically discuss the idea of the sublime. Weiskel’s term is the ‘reader’s sublime’ (1976: 30). A reader’s sublime indicates a second phase in the model of the sublime in which one loses the capacity to interpret, through language, what the environmental context signals.

The second language disorder, a ‘contexture-deficiency’, affects the combination of ‘simpler linguistic entities into more complex units’ (Jakobson 1956: 126). Instead of wordlessness there is a compulsory need to compose our own sentences and utterances by drawing from, cutting across and encompassing different forms of experiential expressions. Sounds and smells may intermingle with words, as if they bear the same type of meaning. In more severe and regressive forms of this disorder, affected people are able to utter just a single word that carries all meaning in one

condensed form or are afflicted by a ‘total loss of the power to use or apprehend speech’ (ibid. 128). Jakobson positions this language phenomenon in line with Romanticism, whereas the first type of disorder may have ‘equally intimate ties of Realism’ (ibid. 132). Weiskel also acknowledges the tie with Romanticism and landscape poetry as he names this ‘the poet’s sublime’ (1976: 30). It is important to note that Jakobson mentioned that ‘the varieties of aphasia are numerous and diverse, but all of them lie between the two polar types just described’ (1956: 129). This should be borne in mind when discussing the idea of the sublime. I will now further analyse Weiskel’s interpretation of the two ‘polar’ types when habitual aesthetic relationships break down.

The reader’s sublime

This indicates a breakdown of experiential habitual patterns when someone loses the capacity to create associations (Weiskel 1976: 30). They lose the capacity to relate meaning to language and cannot interpret (*read*) what is happening. They can see the signs, but cannot translate them into associations or metaphors that help to understand the sensation and give it meaning. For instance, a person may see a landscape feature, sense it and estimate its size, but be unable to recall its name or what it is related to. The person is unable to relate to the phenomenon and is unable to contextualize it. To Weiskel, this is only a temporary lack of ability. It may however cause great anxiety and inflict a mental and/or physical pressure, like the ‘vacuum’ that Kant recalled (Kant 1790: 109–110). It is a pressing emptiness or ‘otherness’ that cannot be expressed, an ‘alienation’ from one’s own capacity to read (Weiskel 1976: 36). Jakobson recalls: ‘patients of this type grasped the words in their literal meaning but could not be brought to understand the metaphorical character of the same words’ (Jakobson 1956: 69). The term *reader* is therefore introduced by Weiskel to indicate what the essential problem is: lack of a proper reading. Or, put in

Weiskel's terms, 'what happens to you standing at the edge of the infinite spaces can be made, theoretically, to "mean" just about anything' (Weiskel 1976: 28).

The poet's sublime

This indicates a psychological state of 'bordering': a kaleidoscopic mix of stimuli and responses that are intermingled. In this state a person mixes up an uncontrollable flow of associations and loses any sense of structure. In this poet's sublime one may be able to verbalize, feel and associate freely, but is not able to create structure by using the ordinary rules of grammar and syntax. This lack of structure and abundance of associations distorts all causal coherence. Time and space become fluid perceptions, things from the past may come to life, and what is miles away can seem nearby. All made plausible by a stream of sensations that are unified by paradoxical connections. The ultimate form of this disorder is repetitive and circular. Objects become 'dwellings, locations, things to be inhabited or rolled through, set in motion or brought to life', containing a 'presence' (Weiskel: 140): 'it cannot be grasped in the present because its medium is duration' (ibid. 154). Weiskel's use of the word 'poet' is a direct reference to the English poets he studied, who could creatively benefit from this type of disorder.



The awful power of imagination

The third phase in Weiskel's model deals with the recovery from a temporary experiential disorder. In most cases this process of recovery is a subconscious process, but it may also become a conscious process, as Weiskel observed in Wordsworth's memoirs. Wordsworth had struggled with the 'alienating' effects of the sublime on human awareness. This alienation is similar to what Freud had

described as *sublimation* (ibid. 100). Without deliberating too much on the work of Freud, it is possible to understand what is meant here. Freud used the word 'sublimation' to describe a subconscious response by people when aroused by the energy of libido. Instead of an actual sexual response, a useful or acceptable social response or work of art is produced (Volney 1992; Freud 1949). Freud's interpretation indicates a movement from an inner centre (libido production) to an outer centre (production or creation), a movement I posited earlier as the double movement: a movement inward followed by a responsive outward projection. This *double movement* is made when phase one is followed by phase two, or: a inner habitual breakdown is recovered by an outward vital creative phase.

An example of such a sublimation was discovered by Weiskel in the notes left by Wordsworth. The poet had struggled with the 'alienating' effect of the Gondo Gorge experience. He wrote that he had experienced this 'awful power' which he called 'Imagination' (Weiskel 1976: 202), an awful awareness that one is dependent upon imagination to live through a sublime sensation. In the meantime one loses the 'chance of a deeper grasp of the sublime moment when we merely translate its terms or imagery into another set of terms' (ibid. 34). Imagination is needed, despite the fact that it is imagination that distorts. Imagination is here described almost as a part of an immune system that helps one to recover from a sensational drift. Wordsworth experimented in his poetry with alternatives that would not distort the events at Gondo Gorge. It is in this effort that Weiskel identifies a new experiential meaning of the sublime. Somehow Wordsworth was able to 'marry sublimity and self-consciousness' (ibid. 156), a possibility Weiskel named the 'liminal sublime'.

The liminal sublime is either a self-induced therapy or an offensive posture against the 'awful power of imagination'. It is an effort to take 'incomprehensibility itself as a principle of judgment' (ibid. 35). The conclusion by Weiskel seems to be that in his poetry Wordsworth sought to dissolve imagination completely. In this ambition one can sense the suggestion by Immanuel Kant of experiencing as

poets do, using their uncompromised imagination. The liminal appears to be an acceptance or a total defiance of a human inadequacy in experiencing without imagination. Weiskel suggests that Wordsworth achieved this by completely abandoning or resisting imagination. One may not be able to avoid entering a habit-breaking situation (phase two), but one may still consciously avoid recovering from it by means of a creative response (phase three).

The word 'liminal' refers directly to the word sublime itself, derived from the Latin 'limen' [threshold] or 'limus' [oblique]. It underlines the ultimate position of the sublime: directly on the threshold or edge of being an experiencing entity. Weiskel speculates on the desire by Wordsworth to get rid of the awful distorting power of imagination and perceive the threshold or bordering position itself. Unfortunately, Weiskel's early death prevented him from pursuing the remarkable implications of the liminal in depth. Before improving an understanding of the liminal, I will first discuss the two subsequent types of recovery from either a reader's and poet's sublime.



The sensational drift revisited

Weiskel's categories of a reader's sublime and poet's sublime also describe what type of imagination is used to recover from a sensational drift. Weiskel again refers to the work of Sigmund Freud, this time to Freud's concept of the *ego* (Freud 1949: section XIX-34; Weiskel 1976: 100). Relating the idea of the sublime to the ego marks a significant contribution to the theory of the sublime. Whether the sublime experience can be related to a soul (Longinus) or to a sense of competition (Burke), there is obviously an aspect involved that provokes a 'sense of self' (my wording) as underlined by environmental philosopher Emily Brady, who speaks about 'The

admiration we feel in the sublime, as well as a perspectival shift of self, can feed into new forms of self-knowledge' (2013). It was mainly the work of Freud (and Carl Jung) that established a definition of 'self' in terms of ego in the Western world. The term 'self' or 'sense of self' is also used in Eastern philosophy and might therefore help in making cross-cultural comparisons – as will be the topic for the following chapter.

Considering the presence of a habitual breakdown, it appears obvious that what makes the experience of the sublime problematic is not the external object or phenomenon as such, but its relationship with the self. People who experience the sublime are caught in a sequence of sensations that alienate them from their capacity to sense. The 'awful' type of imagination that is needed to recover from this is, in Freudian terms: sublimation. 'Psychologically, the structure suggests a compensation principle in which a presumed identification saves the empirical mind from defeatism' (Weiskel 1976: 44). The imagination serves as an instrument to compensate for a lacking capacity to sense and make sense. There is so much at stake in this short and essentially horrific moment of incapacity, that the incomprehensible source of the sublime will be interpreted by that what (hopefully) remains stable: one's ego or sense of self. By recovering from such an inner habitual breakdown, the creative recovery is not just a convenient catch, but rather a symbol that enables a renewed personal identification. The result is to Weiskel what Freud refers to as a 'symbol of identification'. This causes the typical paradoxical experience of the sublime, being both frightening and exalting at the same time. The frightening part of the sublime experience is caused by the habitual breakdown or incapacity (vacuum) and the exalting part is created by the instinctive response to create a new symbol of identification. To conclude, as Kant already suggested, the sublime is a sensation becoming an experience; and we can now add: through a creative act that involves 'a sense of self'.

Reader's sense of self

A reader's sublime is related to a symbol that compensates for the lack of meaningful context needed to grasp what is sensed. What awaits expression is an awareness of a greater power that lacks a 'metalanguage', but at the same time bears a great empowerment. A reader's recovery is to accept that the sublime source cannot be comprehended but must be compensated by an equally meaningful symbol; including the perceived vacuum as part of the experience. The symbol that is thus created may serve a double purpose. It serves as a signifier of the importance of the source (respect, sense of moral supremacy) and it may become a cultural token to express the vacuum embedding this source (a sign of authenticity). The symbol that is created after a reader's sublime gains a new meaning by the memory of the original event, even though it is not a perfect representation of the original. It therefore reflects some qualities and 'flavour' of the sublime source. It is a symbolic representation grounded in an ego-attempt to contextualize the source. This typical human interpretation allows the creation of new and profoundly original images, tokens and concepts that differ from the original source, yet remain intimate to a renewed sense of self.

The effect of this type of symbol may be long lasting, maintained by an enthusiasm for or fear of worshipping it. However, it may lose its symbolic empowerment if it cannot be read anymore because the experiencer does not remember what the vacuum was indicating. The reader's sublime matches Burke's and Kant's concepts of the sublime as awe and respect for the (natural) source while remaining at a humble distance (Weiskel 1976: 28). The reader's symbol can also be shared with others because the sublime sensation is solidified (and downscaled) to a token. When explaining about the significance of this token, one's personal sensations can be included to better communicate about the circumstances that have caused this type of sublime. A personal reader's symbol can thereby become a shared symbol, even if others have not had the same experience. This reader's sense

of self may therefore become a powerful cultural tool for the making of meaning by creating new images that are intimately (because personally) related to the original source. The symbol hides the essential inability to relate to the original source, but hides it by including a sense of self that feels infallible or authentic. This knowledge, even subconsciously, is humbling and could create an even greater moral appeal for remembrance. Still, at the heart of every reader's symbol, there is an incapacity to contextualize, articulate or vocalize, i.e. there remains a void. Even though a reader's symbol may be powerful and precious, it is essentially flawed and problematic and thereby feeding into a consciousness of a possibly less flawed type of a sense of self. This partly explains Weiskel's fascination for a liminal type of sublime.

Poet's sense of self

A poet's sublime involves a flow of associations in an experience that far exceeds the capacity of the body within its natural limits of time and space. It is a liberation of all rules of language and by a kaleidoscopic mix of stimuli and responses, time and place and even one's own memories become intermingled. There may be the impression of an age-old wisdom, even an 'Ur-like' appearance, as is often recalled in poetry (Weiskel 1976: 140–152). This may manifest itself as a 'regressive journey to origins' and the continuous progress of life (ibid. 146). 'There is simultaneously a wish to be inundated or engulfed by pleasurable stimuli and a fear of being incorporated, overwhelmed and annihilated' (ibid. 104). In psychotherapy this is explained, by Freud, as an expression of the 'id', a component of personality that is present from birth where contrary impulses may exist side by side (Freud 1949). The 'id' precedes the ego and is undifferentiated. A poet's sense of self can become an experience of a universal truth or a primordial state and thereby overwhelm the 'poet'. Even if the flow of imaginations is not accurate, the sense of the mere density of meaning can become evidential, enlarging a sense of 'deep'

understanding. All the sensations that are consumed challenge existing cause and effect relationships (causality).

The poet's symbol that is created is not so much a means to compensate for a vacuum, but rather a capturing of this sensational discovery. The presence of otherwise hidden beings may suddenly become realistic. Meaningful contact with animals, the deceased or 'mother nature' may suddenly be possible. It can therefore not as easily be downscaled to an object or sign, as in the reader's sublime. Any symbolic representation aims at preserving an inclusive identification (e.g. super-ego). Weiskel states that it remains, nevertheless, but an echo that 'is doomed never to coincide with its original' (ibid. 164); 'it cannot be grasped in the present because its medium is duration, and the attempt so to grasp it directly ... revives the vacancy as a sense of loss' (ibid. 154). Weiskel here quotes Burke: 'Melancholy, dejection, despair, and often self-murder, is the consequence of the gloomy view we take of things ...' (ibid. 96). Besides this sense of loss, it is the body that also objects to the desired qualities of this poet's sublime. The physical boundaries of the body do not allow to travel through time and space and memory. And yet, it is also the body that can provide a remedy to the impossible poet's symbol: labour, 'which requires the contraction of muscles' (ibid. 96). Physical labour solidifies the problematic structure of the poet's sublime into an equalling of it by means of pain and endurance – a relevant landscape-related remedy that I will bear in mind until the third part of my research. And so, also at the heart of every poet's symbol Weiskel recalls an inbuilt flaw, an inability to relate a far more creative causality or logic than can be made possible in an embodied reality, i.e. there remains a creative excess.

Psychologically speaking, both types of recovery, however instinctive, are problematic. The reader's sublime is difficult to maintain because these symbols are only meagre representations of the original source. The poet's position becomes problematic because there is no embodied possibility to actually participate in the flow of 'otherness' (ibid. 140). How long can one claim to be synchronous with that

which is larger than we are? There is an inherent type of disillusionment in both types of recovery and yet, both types of recovery create new meaning. Moreover: a type of meaning that is uniquely related to a sense of self. By following Weiskel's reasoning, the sublime is an experiential instrument in the making of meaning (ibid. 22). Whatever the outcome is, it remains a human product and thereby essentially flawed. The sublime is an experiential instrument that is extremely helpful in the creative act and is probably unique to human beings.

Throughout its Western history the idea of the sublime has been projected on aspects of life that symbolize a density of meaning. Longinus did so because he opposed the 'evil influence of riches' (Longinus: 14), which lead to literary decline and a shallowing of expression. He believed and promoted an elevating technique that he thought was present in all the major literary works and enabled a group of people to be transported into a state of pride and authenticity. Burke embraced the sublime because he was annoyed by critics and artists in general, and poets in particular (Burke 1759: 99). He opposed this societal display by addressing an individual sense of primordial self-preservation. People had to be allowed to judge for themselves instead of being slaves to societal display.

Kant opposed a human future grounded in mythology and other premodern make-believe. He perfected the theory of the sublime into an educational principle for creating concepts in the mind that make us both superior to and humble towards boundless sources (Kant 1790: 82, 83). Kant's ideal sublime experience was an uncompromised imagination, as found in the work of poets. However, Weiskel's further analyses of the works of landscape poets reveals that imagination will always be compromised, exactly because it involves a sense of self. This is not a negative functionality that needs to be avoided; on the contrary, it is the main functional attribute of the sublime as an instrument in the making of meaning. There is however, another way to deal with the second phase in the experiential structure of the sublime: an attempt to eliminate imagination altogether and neglect every type of recovery: the liminal.



About the liminal sublime

What clues for this ‘liminal’ does Weiskel provide besides resisting every possible imaginative symbol? In the last chapter of his book he exposes some of the main characteristics of the liminal sublime by analysing how Wordsworth created his poems, mainly his long poem *The Prelude*. There are in total four characteristics that I have found that throw some light on the structure of the liminal.

A mode of conversation

According to Weiskel, Wordsworth ‘virtually destroyed the-poem-which-is-about-something by taking the subject out of poetry’ and discovering ‘a mode of conversation’ (Weiskel 1976: 169). This conversation is not a communication: ‘Its aim is not the transmission of knowledge or a message’ but to free what is hindering ‘the passages of self-knowledge, however shallow or deep’ (ibid. 169). What Weiskel points at is Wordsworth’s ambition not to describe an object or sensation in great detail, but to use poetry to be conversant with those components that block self-knowledge. This potentially allows the poet to become aware of the symbols that he is creating himself. The conversation is not, as Burke suggested ‘being conversant with nature’, but rather being conversant with one’s own perception through the medium of nature.

Double consciousness

‘Often do I seem/Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself/And of some other Being’ (*The Prelude* II 31–33). The ‘other Being’ is part of a remembered state of mind, a previous consciousness or previous ego. Whereas the self is an ‘inferred protagonist of visible scenes of whom he is now conscious for the first time’ (Weiskel

1976: 170). It appears that Wordsworth is more interested in the fact that a double consciousness is possible than in solving any possible conflict between the two.

The sound of consciousness

Weiskel quotes what is according to him one of Wordsworth's first attempts to formulate the sensation of the liminal:

*... for I would walk alone,
Under the quiet stars, and at that time
Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
To breathe an elevated mood, by form
Or image unprofaned; and I would stand,
If the night blackened with a coming storm,
Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are
The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
Or make their dim abode in distant winds.
Thence did I drink the visionary power;
And deem not profitless those fleeting moods
Or shadowy exultation: not for this,
That they are kindred to our purer mind
And intellectual life; but that the soul,
Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
Remembering not, retains an obscure sense
Of possible sublimity, whereto
With growing faculties she doth aspire,
With faculties still growing, feeling still
That whatsoever point they gain, they yet
Have something to pursue.*

Wordsworth, The Prelude: 302–322

In this exert of the poem, the how of the sensation is described, how the faculties grow and still grow, instead of the what these faculties could indicate or pursue. The fact that faculties are there is fact and sensation enough. By a strong and enduring focus on the faculties Wordsworth tries to find comfort in the bare consciousness of the supersensible. Wordsworth ‘knows how he wants to sound but [knows] not quite what he has to say’ (ibid. 174). He is more interested in the sound of consciousness than in the human imagination that is possible due to it.

Saving resistance

Lastly, what can be achieved by these preceding three techniques is a ‘visionary power’ (ibid. 173), a power that does not seek to gain by affecting others, but a power to resist the conscious creation of symbols. This resistant power can overcome the desire to downgrade the sublime source to a human equivalent so as to understand (ibid. 175). Instead of using imagination as a saving notion, a saving resistance is forged (ibid. 185). The liminal sublime is a ‘moment not before but after the threshold has been re-crossed in retreat’, a ‘visionary seeing whose very intensity’ is as ‘redundant energy’ (ibid. 185). Weiskel concludes that it is not imagination that is to be resisted, but the terrified ego (ibid. 201).



Sensations becoming – how many – experiences?

This daring analysis by Weiskel introduces a different framework for understanding sublime aesthetics: the phenomenon of the sublime is rooted in a breakdown of an experiential habit that addresses not only an external feature or phenomenon, but also, and more importantly, a sense of self. Meanwhile, the century’s-old project to define the sublime experience has not lessened in ambition or complexity. There is

rather a need to accumulate all the preceding voices into a contemporary attempt to define the idea of the sublime. Weiskel's contribution explicitly refers to many of the ideas that have been included in the *Peri Hypsous* (Longinus). This is understandable, as Weiskel is neither a philosopher nor a nature researcher; he is a scholar of English literature and as such inclined to rhetoric, as was Longinus. For me, as a landscape designer, the rhetorical view reinstated by Weiskel offers a much more mouldable framework for exploring a much wider set of meanings made possible by the structure of the sublime. The sublime appears not as that ultimate and most authentic phenomenon that is beyond human reach. It may even be nothing more than a habit-breaking affect that awakens the creative capacity of an audience or individual. The perspective of a reader's and a poet's sense of self allows us to break down this creative response and analyse how diverse it can be (with the promise of another liminal type yet to be included). Landscape design may follow, like the design of poetry, a style or technique for breaking an experiential habit. Only after that does it allow an audience or individual to explore, consciously or not, a specific type of creativity to again mend one's sense of self. The diversity of landscape meanings that are made possible by this sequence must be further studied and mapped in more detail (see: Chapter Five).

The type of meaning that a landscape designer can fabricate is not only about increasing meaning. Landscapes, and perhaps more explicitly 'environments', also lose meaning, despite the best intentions of the designer, as exemplified by Burtynsky's photograph (Figure 2, p.12). Both gain and loss of meaning are significant. For instance, the type of meaning made by a Romantic landscape poet may be very different to the type of meaning introduced by a landscape designer. A poem is often created by only one poet, whereas a landscape is created by many agents, including a team of designers, a multitude of clients and stakeholders and citizens, a team of builders and, after completion, also all the animals, plants and ecological processes in that landscape. A landscape meaning will reflect this multiplicity when

it has been shaped by such a co-creating process. Moreover, in contrast to poetry, through embodied engagement a landscape design can immediately provide access to a ‘metalanguage’, a multitude of sensory languages consisting of sounds, visuals, smells and muscular effort, and even written language (inscriptions).

At this point, I will revisit the seven themes that I presented in Chapter One to identify if, and in what way, these themes contain aspects that begin to clarify the making of meaning by landscape design.

Theme one

Despite knowledge and imagination, a sense of ‘awe’ remains. In a landscape design the aim can be to make accessible vantage points to observe natural marvels (see Introduction). A poem is both the work of art and the medium at the same time. The awe that may be felt through a poem includes the creator of the poem. In landscape design, any awe for nature, is more likely not to be directly related to the designer (who only facilitated a medium to access this natural marvel). Weiskel’s suggestion of a reader’s sublime includes the creation of a cultural token as a signifier of the importance of the original source. The creation of specific landscape tokens may elicit a type of awe for the design (and designer) of this token, apart from the awe for the original source. The warning by Weiskel, that in the end both the reader’s and the poet’s symbols are flawed and thereby problematic, raises the question of how the liminal can contribute to landscape design. This will be studied in Chapter Four.

Theme two

From distant contemplation to embodied engagement. This theme may be more related to a poet’s sublime and the prominent presence of the human body as a limiting factor compared to a flow of imagination. The suggestion in recent literature

that physical labour or other types of embodied engagement, will be revisited in Part Three of my research.

Theme three

Landscape design may have commodified the sublime. This theme is related to the suggestion made by Weiskel that both a reader's and poet's sublime are problematic, indicating that they are in the end downgrading the sublime affect. As an alternative, the liminal sublime addresses a type of sublime free from such problems, by resisting imagination. What if resisting imagination also includes resisting design? Design can very well help to express a reader's sublime by creating cultural landscape tokens. Design could also help a poet's sublime by expanding the use of the human body and improve the explorative and immersive means while discovering new types of landscape experiences. Are all of these design interventions necessarily commodifying the sublime as suggested by this theme? Cannot landscape design also intensify expressions without commodifying them? In other words, as formulated by theme seven: can landscape design remain dissonant, irresolvable and disruptive? In terms of meaning, they can (e.g. landscape of fear, Tuan 1979); in terms of preference these would fail to gain the hearts of audiences. Also, if the liminal type of sublime offers any resolve, it will be interesting to consider a liminal type of design. For this, the idea of the liminal first needs some more elaboration as will be presented in the following chapter (on Buddhism).

Theme four

A landscape sublime for a living system design. The ambition to design living systems as one of the contemporary aims in landscape architecture encourages a reconsideration of the type of meaning that landscape design can help to express. Living systems include urban systems and everyday environments beyond mere artistic considerations because they are related to 'serious' efforts aimed at feeding,

cleaning and housing a growing world population while addressing ecological resilience, among other challenges. A landscape sublime may partly include Romantic considerations, but will have to face challenging, dissonant and disruptive realities. I believe that the framework provided by Weiskel, aimed at understanding landscape poetry, still lacks more dissonant types of meaning that are valid within living system design (e.g. ‘negative’ aesthetics).

There is obviously a remarkable gap between dissonance and a rewarding experience. Weiskel only recalls the type of desire that marks a poet: ‘Romantic desire, as everyone knows, can never be fulfilled... So long as it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous, and tranquil, and self-possessed’ (ibid. 144). In living system design it is more plausible that new symbols must be fulfilling because they relate to a material world – that is not necessarily joyous and tranquil. I call upon a need to include a ‘reality check’ regarding aesthetic sensations, which is including explicitly dissonant types of experiences due to inevitable dissonant realities of a wide variety of landscapes (natural, artificial and accidental). I will elaborate on this point while discussing the next theme.

Theme five

Preferred landscapes can heal, all landscapes can mean. It is clear that Weiskel’s work offers great opportunity to expand on subject of meaning, more so than preference. As discussed in this chapter, the first movement within a sublime experience is the sudden breakdown of the habitual relationship between meaning and what is sensed: in the beginning there is no meaning. The final movement is the fresh creation of meaning by including one’s sense of self. This process is a genuinely felt, compelling and deeply impressive experience that may not be pleasing, nor even be healthy if prolonged for too long. Weiskel seeks to explain this urgency as the pressing need to respond after an experiential breakdown of habit. In Weiskel’s

analysis he only addresses those representations that are positively related to a sense of self, although both positive and negative recoveries are theoretically possible, as long as these can be resolved to 'meanings'. It would serve landscape aesthetics more if we categorize both positive and negative types of meaning, offering a larger variety of sublime experiences than defined by Weiskel. Whether these negative but meaningful landscapes are also healthy and preferable will be part of the discussion in the final part of my book.

A first issue that now arises is to question whether every intervention by the imagination will lead to a new symbol or identity that will be accepted in a sense of self. It seems likely that a strong ego influence (in Weiskel's terminology) will help to align imagination to a preferred type of resolve. It may even be the case that the aesthetic experience may not even be marked by a breaking of a habitual pattern and may barely be noticed. Even if a sensational drift is at the root of it, a discrete joyous sensation may dominate, subconsciously celebrating that one's existing sense of self has dominated another minor experiential dysfunction. Could this small but joyous sublime resolution, be called 'sublime' at all? Or is this the type of sensation that is historically referred to as 'the beautiful'? Is the beautiful a disguised sublime experience that is ego-consistent?

Weiskel hints at such a psychological implication in his proposition that 'the sublime and the beautiful differ not in ontological presupposition, but in the attitude towards dualism implicit in each' (Weiskel 1976: 45). The sublime may thereby be the indicator of an exceptional influence on the sense of self and the beautiful may be the indicator of the influence by the sense of self itself, resulting in a less noticeable but nevertheless vaunting experience. The sublime may be an indicator of a more enduring and severe juxtaposition of imagination and the sense of self, whereas the beautiful marks a light and unnoticeable one. Either way, the overall definition of aesthetics is severely challenged by this plausible interpretation. Instead of being ruled by preference and a sense of beauty, aesthetics would then be

a process best described as an urgent and personal instrument in both the breaking and making of meaning.

A second issue arises from the possibility that a new sense of self and its related symbols are not limited to those modifications that are preferable to the ego. Also included should be those modifications that might be rejected by a dominant ego (i.e. negative aesthetics). There can be either a rejecting or accepting relationship between a resolution and the ego. Within the cognitive sciences the rejection of such a relationship is referred to as ‘cognitive dissonance’. A ‘cognitive consonance’ is the opposite, in which newly introduced thoughts, beliefs and attitudes are consistent with the ones that were already present. The Oxford Dictionary online states that cognitive dissonance is ‘the state of having inconsistent thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes’ (2011). As a conclusion I will therefore add two variations to Weiskel’s threefold categories:

reader’s consonance: a symbol or token that recalls a consistent relationship with one’s sense of self

reader’s dissonance: a symbol or token that recalls an inconsistent relationship with one’s sense of self

poet’s consonance: a kaleidoscopic flow that is consistent with one’s sense of self

poet’s dissonance: a kaleidoscopic flow that is inconsistent with one’s sense of self

the liminal: resisting the terrible power of imagination upon the terrified ego

Theme six

A paradox of authentic environments and artificial landscapes. The fact that the sublime is defined as a creative process allows the subject of artificiality to become more relevant. The subject of authenticity may be more applicable to the liminal sublime, as I will explore in the next chapter. The paradox between the authentic and the artificial may be present when the idea of the sublime is only related to one type of sublime, as presented by the eighteenth century debate. Due to a larger variety of sublime experiences, the paradox may partly vanish or be incorporated in the various types. I will revisit these themes in Part Three, when discussing a diversity of landscape expressions.

Theme seven

The sublime can remain dissonant, irresolvable and disruptive. This theme is now firmly integrated in the improved framework for five categories of sublime experiences.



Finding help in Buddhism

According to Weiskel the sublime is an instrument in the ‘making of meaning’ and I find this a most eloquent expression. The sublime is indeed ‘a massive concept’ (Brady 2013: 1), not only to philosophers and aestheticians, but mainly in everyday life. Weiskel’s contribution has helped to make the sublime a more accessible and less weighty phenomenon by suggesting that it may be present whenever aesthetic engagement breaks a habitual pattern. His explanation that sensations are processed into meaning through a sense of self offers a welcome alternative approach to the sublime. Instead of studying the sublime by means of its artistic representations, it

can now be studied in relation to the various states of an evolving sense of self. This is, however, not the only manifestation of the sublime. Weiskel also includes a liminal state in which any relationship with a sense of self and all the imaginative projections surrounding it are resisted.

There are various sources that better articulate the transcendental experience of the liminal than Weiskel's, including some Eastern philosophies and practices. Of these, I have selected Buddhism as one of the most widely studied by Western scholars (Suzuki 1925; Conze 1951, 1959; Suzuki et al. 1960; Nārada 1980; Watts 1985 (reprint of 1957); Sangharakshita 1987; Varela et al. 1993). Buddhism provides not only theories but also practices for dealing with the 'ego' when sensations become experiences. The literature on Buddhism that I have studied contains no references to the word 'sublime', but the analysis of the experiential structure of the sublime has uncovered certain themes that occupy Buddhism. Weiskel observed that it is not a coincidence that the sublime entered the scholastic arena at the same time that philosophers started to doubt the relevance of a godhead (Weiskel 1976: 3). The eighteenth-century sublime was an antidote against a pressing boredom and celebrated the Uncommon and a desire to join with the Great (ibid. 11–18). To Longinus, *Peri Hypsous* was an instrument to combat shallowness, as was Burke's *Sublime*. Both entailed a desire to change oneself drastically by self-motivation in the wake of a ripened soul. The idea behind the sublime was to reinstall an imperative to think and sense for oneself through the liberating act of experience. A very similar intention is present in Buddhism, which includes much more stringent definitions and methods for such experiences. Buddhism is a largely non-theistic, practical psycho-philosophical approach to personal emancipation (Conze 1951, 1959). It addresses the experience of 'self' in a way that is of interest to this analysis of the sublime.

Before the twentieth century, the study of Buddhist sources was restricted to a handful of scholars who were fortunate enough to be able to access scriptures

in translated languages. Among them was Arthur Schopenhauer, who was – perhaps not surprisingly – also deeply interested in the idea of the sublime (*The World as Will and Representation*, 1883). Buddhism has been actively studied and incorporated into Western conceptions of experience only since about the beginning of the 1960s (e.g. Suzuki 1925; Watts 1957), and it is only very recently that studies have been done that compare Western and non-Western philosophical conceptions (Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1993; Libbrecht 1995). Some influential twentieth-century Western artists (e.g. Marcel Duchamp's sculptures, Allen Ginsberg's poems and John Cage's music) were deeply influenced by Buddhism, particularly by Zen Buddhism. Zen Buddhism also has a very distinctive view of nature and landscape, captured in poetry (*haiku*), painting and garden design. In the next chapter I will discuss the general principles of Buddhism to further clarify the definition of the liminal sublime.

Chapter Four

SIX SHADES OF SUBLIME

Including Buddhism and the absence of imagination



Short answers

Buddhism studies what it seeks to get rid of, namely the sense of self. It involves not only study, but active practice of what happens in the absence of a conception of a 'self'. In this sense, Buddhism is interested in the structure of a sense-of-self-experience. In the work of Longinus the idea of the soul was a necessary condition. Burke replaced the soul with a sense of rivalry among equals. In Weiskel's analyses the self, or ego, is quintessential in describing a variety of sublime experiences, including the liminal. How does Buddhism interpret the idea of a soul or self?

A short answer is provided by D.T. Suzuki (1960), who states that it is impossible to study the 'self' by anything external to it. The self can only know itself (ibid. 37) and no objectifying method can be used to understand it. A more intimate method is needed, such as meditation. There are various meditative techniques (e.g. *Vipassanā*¹²) which allow sensations to arise without appropriating or identifying with them. The aim is to gain a personal intimacy with the continuous process of sensations becoming experiences. A characteristic of the Buddhist understanding of self is the continuous change of its appearance (Suzuki 1960). Moreover, the Buddhist viewpoint is that certain emotions, particularly greed and aversion, are continuously interfering with our perception of self: 'We are subsequently reborn in a situation of need and dissatisfaction ... so long as we are under the influence of these emotions,

12 All Buddhist terms are written in Pali language and translated according to Narāda. NĀRADA 1980. *The Buddha and his teachings*, Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation.

we are not in control of ourselves’ (Dalai Lama and Vreeland 2013: 22, 23). The definition of the ‘self’ is thus problematized in Buddhism. This is in part also what Weiskel analysed. He stated that both the reader’s and the poet’s sublime are problematic because they install either a symbol or a flow of identity that will help to build a sense of self, albeit rooted in imagination and creativity. This experience provides such a powerful imprint of a new or renewed type of meaning that the experience itself may serve as its own undeniable proof. Buddhism intends to lay bare the most intimate and even minute experiential consequences of constructing a sense of self (and the making of meaning).

The poet Wordsworth was regarded by Weiskel as an *experiential* expert who developed a perception that he referred to as the liminal. Buddhism describes a similar state of mind as an equanimity to whatever creative resolution is revealed (*Upekkhā*) (e.g. Conze 1951, 1959; Sangharakshita 1987). Buddhism is interested in the phenomenon of proclaiming symbols and assuming identities; as these are the source of friction and unhappiness. Buddhist teaching argues that any appropriation of a sense of self is a cause of disappointment, insecurity and fear, and also boastfulness, vaunting and pride (Dalai Lama and Vreeland 2013: 37). Here the terms ‘vaunting and pride’ are used to indicate a negative psychological state, as opposed to the work of Longinus, who implied that the aim of *Peri Hypsous* was a positive vaunting and pride. What Longinus and Burke believed was the experiential aim of the sublime is to Buddhism precisely what needs to be avoided.



Sublime experiences in Buddhist terms

The idea that experiences themselves cause experiential problems is, according to Buddhism, related to the short time span of all mental and physical phenomena (Dalai

Lama and Vreeland 2013, 33). Conceptualizations, emotions and desires are human products and as such are valuable to human beings, but they are only temporarily meaningful. If humans prolong essentially short-term responses to sensations, they immediately desynchronize from reality, which keeps moving onward. Reality is not fixed in time and space, it is transitory (*Anicca*) and any attachment to physical or mental phenomena will cause a rasping (*Kilesa*) against such transitoriness, causing anxiety (*Dukkha*) (e.g. Conze 1951 1959; Sangharakshita 1987). The Buddhist method is to (1) become aware of this disturbing influence and (2) practise resisting the urge to appropriate or identify with any sensations, experiences or concepts. The result is (3) that, without clinging, there is no substance for a sense of self to arise, no ego will be built and there will be no appropriation to suggest any ownership (*Anatta*). The meditative practices enable one to sense without appropriation nor affirmation of a sense of self.

The terms I deduced from Weiskel's phrasing of the liminal correspond to this method. The Buddhist awareness of influences disturbing one's own perception is comparable to a 'mode of conversation' and a 'double consciousness'. These subsequently relate to a conversant state with one's own perceptive capacities and the awareness of one's struggling mind in a recovering state. 'The sound of consciousness' equals the Buddhist attempt to practise not clinging to physical and mental phenomena, merely to listen to their 'sounds'. This was described by Wordsworth as an attempt to understand the workings of a supersensible consciousness without clinging to any particular imaginative exploration. As a result, both Wordsworth's method and the Buddhist method achieve a state that can be described as a 'saving resistance' against imagination – or, as Weiskel concludes, against 'a terrified ego' (Weiskel 1976: 201).

In the historical development of the idea of the sublime, a first hint of a possible false sense of reality was articulated by Kant as a subreption. To Kant, this was a reason to dismiss the sublime as an aesthetic category and direct it to the field of

ethics. Humans may be able to conceive objects and phenomena that are essentially unrepresentable to them, but this capacity is nevertheless problematic. In Buddhism we can recognize a Kantian warning against the delusional influences of subreptions. But whereas Kant worried about the influences on scientific reasoning, Buddhism is worried about the disturbing influences of a sense of self. A sense of self will express itself through three forms of *Kilesa*: the desire for agreeable physical and mental phenomena, the aversion against disagreeable physical and mental phenomena, and, ultimately, the delusion of an ego as a transfixed form of reference (e.g. Conze 1951, 1959; Sangharakshita 1987). For Kant, the experience of the sublime posed a threat to a collective aim of defining universal knowledge; in Buddhism the state of equanimity (*Upekkhā*) is practised to maintain an open universality. Buddhism not only offers a theoretical complementarity to the idea of the sublime, but also a supplementary practice, to which methodological improvements have been made over successive centuries. However pleasurable and sustainable the reader's and poet's sublime may appear to us, they will always be overruled by the transient nature of reality. Buddhism is therefore not intent, as Longinus and Burke were, to enhance the influence and creative potential of experiences. Its focus is on the liminal perspective and not the imaginative creations by a reader's and poet's sublime.



Practising equanimity

To what extent should we acknowledge the power of our creative instincts? Suzuki explains that imagination is so vastly creative that it will not be repressed, it will convey itself one way or another (Suzuki et al. 1960: 44). The equanimous attitude towards the continuously adaptive presence of creativity is what Buddhists refer to as *Upekkhā*, a state of inner calm. The main aim of meditative techniques is to establish

an inner calm that allows sensations to become experiences without appropriating them or identifying with them (Dalai Lama and Vreeland 2013: 47). Wordsworth identified a similar state, although his explicit method was not meditation, but writing poems about natural features and his mental associations. He used poetry as a method of questioning his own identity in relation to physical objects and well-known concepts.

In Buddhist terms, the ‘saving resistance’ within Weiskel’s analysis is the effort to not appropriate or identify with any sensation or experience in the process of sensations becoming experiences. If an equanimity regarding this process can be attained, then a vivid awareness of the transitoriness of sensations (*Anicca*) is possible. In a state of conscious awareness (*Sāti*) one can be in this world while constantly probing one’s responses without judging them. Equanimity is the opposite of a mind that is in a constant rush to make sense of things and of the continuous calibration of an ego that is either in need of affirmation or new definition. An important aspect of Buddhist meditative training is *Sāti* (conscious awareness), an attitude in which all the sensations that compete to become the defining impression are accepted as temporary truths that can dissolve again. In practising *Sāti* one ‘first begins to see in a precise fashion what the mind is doing, its restless, perpetual grasping, moment to moment’ (Varela et al. 1993: 247). This enables the practitioner ‘to cut some of the automaticity of his habitual patterns, which leads to further mindfulness, and begins to realize that there is no self in any of his actual experience’ (ibid.).



The definition of the liminal

The above discussion drawing on Buddhism enables us to define the liminal state in terms of theory, method and practice. Buddhism does not seek to resist imagination,

as Wordsworth tried to do, but rather studies and articulates the effects of sensational processes. It involves methods for developing a capacity to observe a stream of imagination without identifying with it, however dissonant or harmonic it may be. All such interpretations are allowed, but are not appropriated. I interpret this as a flexible awareness of a continuous exchange of perspectives: a reader's consonant followed by a poet's consonant followed by a poet's dissonance, etc. One moment one can experience as a reader, sensing similarities; the next moment one can be a poet, sensing dissonance. No single perspective is singled out, because only the multitude of perspectives can reveal the transient nature of reality. A prolonged exercise in perceiving the continuous development of sensations into experiences can eventually lead to a state of mind in which the sensing no longer leads to interpretation and conceptualization (Nārada 1980). And this is reminiscent of what I previously called 'the sound of consciousness' in the work of Wordsworth.

From this I conclude that the liminal can be defined as an equanimity towards a continuous exchange of all the first four types of sublime experience. The dynamic movement is an interweaving of all the possible outcomes when sensations become experiences, and a deep awareness of the conditioning effect these have on a sense of self¹³. The liminal state builds towards a varying perspective that does not halt or appropriate any single perspective. A methodological aid in the development of a state of equanimity may be to include all possible dissonant and harmonic angles to allow opposites to diminish each other and reduce any urgent sense of meaning.

13 The Buddhist training aims at deconstruction of the concept of the ego. This includes not only a development of insight into the working of the mind (as described above), but also the cultivation of compassion (*Karunā*), loving kindness (*Mettā*) and sympathetic joy (*Muditā*) towards all sentient beings: 'unconditional, fearless, ruthless, spontaneous compassion' (Varela, Thompson et al. 1993: 248).



Beyond the liminal

There is another, more resolute Buddhist perspective. This perspective offers something additional to all existing ideas on the sublime. During Buddhist meditation it is possible to experience a prolonged liminal state, which can give a more profound effect of equanimity. The liminal state is therefore a gateway and not a final goal. The prolonging of the liminal state is a precondition for the deepest possible sublime effect: that of the truly unrepresentable, or *Nibbāna* (literally: to be extinguished). This very specific experiential category is possible after dedicated training in meditation. However, the state of being *extinguished* cannot be consciously sensed, it can only be experienced in retrospect after the momentary disappearance of all sensing or ‘the snapping of the ego boundary’ (Suzuki 1925). Once experienced, it permanently changes one’s view of the ‘self’ (Conze 1951; Sangharakshita 1987). I have found no similar descriptions of this type of state in the works of the founding fathers of the sublime. I think it should be included and named in any complete anatomy of aesthetic sensations. I call it the ‘unrepresentable’ since this still contains a reference to the idea of the sublime.



Six shades of sublime

A well-accepted experiential aim of the landscape architect is to help create meaning by interventions and design. According to Buddhism, all of these efforts, with the exception of the liminal (*equanimity*) and the unrepresentable (*Nibbāna*), will cause experiential problems. Creating meaning is a different matter to Buddhists than to Weiskel. It can be argued that the work of Weiskel on Wordsworth proves that

you do not have to be a Buddhist to strive for a Buddhist-like aesthetic experience. Neither is there just one type of sublime experience. My conclusion is that sublime experiences both exist as a variety of creative solutions, and as equanimous experiences with or without Buddhist reasoning. If one focuses heavily on the ever-changing process of sensations becoming experiences, then the Buddhist practice may prove more valuable than design. If one focuses on the value of experiences as instruments in the making of meaning then design seems a relevant field to express and preserve all kinds of symbolic tokens or super-ego identifications. Both perspectives include a fundamental awareness of human aesthetic capacities.

To reflect all aesthetic perspectives I propose to use the word ‘shade’. The phrase ‘shade of sublime’ then indicates the inherent juxtaposition between imagination and meaning within the idea of the sublime. A shade only exists by comparison with other lighter or darker, cooler or warmer situations. The nomenclature for a comprehensive anatomy of sublime sensations can therefore best be described as various shades of sublime existing relative to each other.

In total, I conclude that there are six shades of sublime to express the idea of the sublime. These shades that can be grouped into two categories, the first four shades are ‘saving meanings’ that help to overcome what Weiskel called the experiential disorder of the sublime (the temporary aphasia). The last two shades are ‘uncompromised savings’ that prevent imagination, conceptualization, appropriation and identification. The Buddhist perspective has proven to be informative about the liminal type of sublime, as introduced by Weiskel and implicitly described by Kant (unconditioned imagination). Besides the liminal, there is another type of sublime that was not indicated by any of the founding fathers of the sublime: the unrepresentable.

The first four shades: ‘saving meanings’

- › *reader’s consonance*: a new or forecasted symbol that recalls a consistent relationship with one’s sense of self
- › *reader’s dissonance*: a new or forecasted symbol that recalls an inconsistent relationship with one’s sense of self
- › *poet’s consonance*: a kaleidoscopic flow that is consistent with one’s sense of self
- › *poet’s dissonance*: a kaleidoscopic flow that is inconsistent with one’s sense of self

The last two shades: ‘uncompromised savings’

- › the *liminal (equanimity)*: resisting appropriation and identification
- › the *unpresentable (extinguished state)*



Reflection

Aesthetics should not simply be an academic exercise for reflecting upon the intentions of artists and designers. As discussed in Chapter One, the orthodox view of aesthetics regards ‘taste’ and ‘preference’ as its prime value. Almost all dictionaries define aesthetics as did the English philosopher Roger Scruton (2011) for the *Encyclopedia Britannica*: ‘Whatever the ultimate value of aesthetic experience, we pursue it in the first instance for enjoyment’s sake. Aesthetic experience includes, as its central instance, a certain kind of pleasure.’

The singular notion of pleasure and the absence of any disorder, let alone any dissonant experience, is philosophically known as the apolaustic bias within aesthetics (Chignell and Costelloe 2011). My analysis of the structure of the sublime

experience indicates that aesthetics can be described in a more diverse way and that the diversity of the aesthetic experience can shed light on the paradoxical outcomes of aesthetic engagement: at one time harmonious and perhaps mere moments later dissonant as well. Like the original Greek term for sensory perception (*aisthêsis*), the aesthetic realm ought to include all that is experiential, and the total variety of experience that humans are capable of also includes unwanted and undesirable outcomes. Introducing the six shades to the existing spectrum of landscape aesthetics (now: the beautiful, the sublime and their composite: the picturesque) challenges us to rethink the aim of landscape design. If landscapes should offer such a diversity of aesthetic sensations, this presents landscape design with new challenges.

There is now a wide diversity of designed landscapes, natural landscapes and even accidental environments (see Introduction) to be re-evaluated in the light of these expressions of the idea of the sublime. In the third and final part of my research I will translate the six shades of sublime into six corresponding types of landscapes. These six landscapes will, for the time being, be archetypal for the experiential shades of sublime. It must be emphasized that these are landscape experiences and not landscapes with formal and objective characteristics. Even when discussing landscape archetypes, these are part of a chain of biological, cultural and personal factors (Bourassa 1991). The sensational drift that guides an immersion into one type of sublime experience may occur and fade, leaving a memory of a specific shade of sublime. Landscape architecture has to deal with the experience of such ‘oceanic places’ (Freud 1930) where conceptions, emotions and desires are born, discarded, resisted or extinguished by a probing human mind, identity and body.

Act Two

SECOND THOUGHTS

The sublime as a serious fantasy

Characters:

Thomas Weiskel – as himself

His family

Scenography

A new environment slowly emerges from the collapsing paper landscape in the previous act: a study with a desk in front of a nicely decorated window overlooking a winter landscape with snow-dusted trees. Slight rises in the ground make a good playground for some children on a sledge. A lone person is ice skating on a frozen lake. A man in the study roughly closes a book and shouts in frustration, hurls his pen into the room and nervously strokes his hair. He has fairly long and dark hair, which he wears in an almost medieval style, a moustache and large whiskers. He is surrounded by manuscripts and some faint music can be heard. It is 1 December 1974.

Weiskel

[To himself.]

My characters are slipping away! I get carried away! Why can't I find peace between the horrific sublime and Longinus?

[He picks up a small book by the English Romantic poet Wordsworth and studies the couplets and all the scribbled notes in the margins.]

[A voice from outside is barely audible. Body language can be seen through the windows.]

Voice

[Distant.]

Thomas! Thomas, are you coming! It is so beautiful outside! Look at the clear blue sky!

[A child's voice.]

Look at me smoking daddy!

[Puffs a steam of hot air.]

Not for real

[Laughing.]

Weiskel

[Laughs in return and waves and shouts with exaggerated pronunciation.]

Enjoy yourselves, I will be there in a while.

[To himself.]

I have already sent my manuscript to the publisher, but I need to reconsider parts of the conclusion. Wordsworth is my example of extraordinary seeing, but I do not seem to see what he sees. I must try harder to think like him.

[He picks up an open book and reads out loud.]

A tranquillizing spirit presses now

On my corporeal frame, so wide appears

The vacancy between me and those days

Which yet have such self-presence in my mind,
That, musing on them, often do I seem
Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
And of some other Being.

(Wordsworth, *The Prelude* 2.27–33)

[Again to himself.]

Burke and Kant introduced the negative sublime. They hardly differ from each other and both believe that it is even necessary for the sublime experience to distinguish between an object and a subject, a dualism, hence negative. They both refer to natural sources of the sublime just as easily as to conversations, words and artworks. There is nothing wrong with that. They just focus too much on the impossibility of a subject comprehending something. They see this as the opposite of something beautiful, that which can be comprehended and enjoyed, and that does not threaten our sense of reality.

They seem to have missed the opportunity to read Wordsworth How I wish they had known the works of Wordsworth. They would have to start all over.

[Writes down.]

– Kant: Germany, 1724–1804

– Burke: Ireland 1729–1797

– Wordsworth: Cockermouth Cumberland, 7 April 1770 – Ambleside, 23 April 1850

[And adds.]

Wordsworth *Prelude* completed in 1805 and published only in 1850

[To himself.]

Neither Burke nor Kant could have read Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, although Wordsworth could have read the works of these men. But he would not have been able to swallow it. Badly written and much too far-fetched for his taste. Probably.

Longinus, however, would have liked Wordsworth!

Maybe Longinus and Wordsworth both promoted a positive sublime, a singularity in experience

Nay! Wordsworth does something more. He somehow turns the horrible in nature into a positive inspiration for himself. This is not what Longinus would promote. Longinus was for choosing the subject very carefully, to contain enough noble ideas to dwell upon.

Longinus was much stricter in choosing his subject. Wordsworth seems to be able to handle almost anything. He would have been able to write about our current finite society and retrieve something mesmerizing from it.

Longinus believed that a poem is a man-made construction, a carrier of elevation, but in itself not the source of elevation. The source is the raw idea of some strong intellect or ripened person.

[He struggles to find a text amidst the piles of paper, which takes a while.]

Here, I have it. Longinus section X part 3: 'the effect desired is that not *one* passion *only* should be seen in her, but a *concourse* of the passions'.

'Her?' What does he refer to as 'her'?

[He turns one page back.]

Sappho ... he is referring to Sappho, the first woman whose work survives from the Antique Greeks.

[He turns again to the initial page.]

‘Uniting contradictions, she is at one and the same time, hot and cold, in her senses and out of her mind, for she is either terrified or at the point of death.’

A concourse of passions ... uniting contradictions ... maybe Longinus, like Wordsworth, did try to capture both the positive and the negative, simultaneously ... towards the liminal?

[Pause.]

AAAAaaaargh, the liminal, the arcana in my work

[He turns around frustrated and observes his family enjoying themselves outside.]

[To himself again.]

Another question then: could there be a Romantic sublime without the work of art that conveys it?

Of course. The sublime is a sensation and only needs an individual experience as proof of its existence. A singular being experiencing the sublime in a tree full of snow could have a sublime sensation – only he would not know what to call this experience if he had no frame of reference.

Could there be a wrong type of sublime, as Kant seems to suggest? If there is no previous experience that can be recalled, there is no telling whether a sublime sensation is true or false.

The sublime can therefore only be judged through a shared frame of reference created by the dominant culture you are part of. Without it, it is just another sensation.

Not true. Why not?

[He takes his time to gather his thoughts to reply to his own challenge.]

If a person has a sublime sensation, the question is what he does as a conclusion to this sensation. Both the sublime and the beautiful are sensations that can be interpreted and expressed by humans. That is what they have in common. They exist because we present them to ourselves – perhaps only by a shiver that nobody else notices, but the shiver is there. Sometimes only by a happy feeling

The point is, I seek to understand the obsession that is so present in the Romantic works of art, an obsession I miss among my contemporaries, who only seem to strive for material perfection or shallow beliefs that are not grounded in eternity.

I know more about the autobiographical poem [*The Prelude*] than Wordsworth himself reveals in his text. I know that he suffered real fear in his crossing of the Alps and that he did not dare to go back to some of the locations thirty years later. I cannot but conclude that he was disappointed with himself. This was a reason for him to reframe his memory of what really happened. He is much more matter-of-

fact in his poems than in what I can retrieve from letters he wrote describing the same event.

His poems helped him to recover and see differently. He could even imagine himself experiencing the same event, with different sensations. In the end he is no longer sure of the authenticity of either. He acted like Sappho in the passage by Longinus: ‘Uniting contradictions, she is at one and the same time, hot and cold, in her senses and out of her mind.’

Perhaps the greatest threat to Wordsworth is that the experience of crossing the Alps at Gondo Gorge denied him the possibility of self-consciousness. His soul seemed turned completely towards the original Maker and the terrible majesty of his signifying creation.

This is what happens if you experience the sublime without the safe distance Burke and Kant suggested – a first-hand experience with an unsure ending, the sublime as a sensation that cannot be fled and thus always points at a source outside and independent of oneself. The negative.

The sublime, however, does exist in real threatening anxiety, both physical and psychological. The loss of self-consciousness may seem to be an anxiety that is counter-sublime in Longinus’ terms, because the important movement in the sublime is towards the self, towards the soul. Wordsworth, however, proves that the sublime also exists in real danger. In a situation of real danger Wordsworth needed a compensation. He found it in the Romantic drive to produce something equally sublime yet romanticized, that can be shared with other human beings, to share the burden. He actively redesigned his experience, as poets do.

[He sighs.]

This is exactly what Kant suggested. The sublime product at many times leads to a subreption. If the work of art is able to mix up the real sublime source with imaginative interpretations, and there is no telling what is authentic any more, then a new sublime is made.

[A momentary pause.]

[He looks for his cigarettes but does not see them.]

[He sits down and writes in his notebook.]

The sublime does not necessarily exist through a collective frame of reference only. It can be an individual attempt to recover from a momentary loss of self. However, while mixing up the original source and your own imaginative projection, the presence of an audience that serves to prove this construction is most profitable. Even if no one in the collective can understand the deep anxiety of the poet, the mere presence of an audience is essential for the ritual. Only the presence of the reader allows the poet to prolong his attempts. Without the reader there is no witness and no possible hope.

[He speaks out loud again.]

That is the Romantic motivation to produce works of art! After the sensation of that which transcends us, we have to become human again. The imagination is a power of resistance and in this sense it coincides exactly with the psychological necessity of originality. The imagination is a saving consciousness and the so-called ‘elevation’

is not towards a higher otherness, but to an inward recovery. The Romantic notion is that we let ourselves be momentarily totally absorbed by that which transcends us, only to allow imagination to have a great influence on us.

Maybe Kant constructed the sublime as a premodern type of therapy. I must admit that I see that I am only perfecting his line of thought. Burke only introduced the terrible as a possible source of the sublime, but Kant introduced the warning on how to deal with it.

And this is also what I did.

[He grows more determined.]

I bet that people who read my manuscript will find many flaws in it and consider it of lesser importance than Kant's work, mainly because it does not present a different view on the sublime. It only logically describes all the variations possible. Maybe I should have followed my instinct and delved more deeply into the third type of sublime beside the positive and the negative: the liminal. The good, the bad and ... the ugly.

The liminal is massively ugly indeed. I did not put enough effort into portraying the liminal as a powerful solution to contemporary sublime sensations. We are not Romantic anymore; we have become Pragmatic. My next book will be about that.

[And with this happy foresight he reaches for his coat in an agile manner and slips through the door and then another door and another one, entering a different domestic realm. Through the final door that separates him from his family outside, he calls for his daughter Heidi and spurs her to climb on the sledge and join him on the frozen lake

*in the park nearby. Soon after, he pulls her while riding his ice-skates. As they speed up their laughter swells. Together they proudly career the magnificent winter landscape across the ice, and hear it cracking.]*¹⁴

14 In remembrance of Thomas Weiskel and his daughter Heidi, who both died tragically on 1 December 1974. Thomas left behind his nearly finished manuscript of *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*.

Intermezzo

Four Letters

Development of landscape-related sublime sensations

The following collection of fictive letters represents a discourse over a long period of time. The letters express how the experience of nature and of designed landscapes including cities; has changed over time.

In the first letter, nature and landscape are generally viewed from a distance. Surrounded by mountainous landscapes and the night, the writer projected an imagined landscape onto a real landscape, one composed of large natural elements containing a divine secret. The writer's imagination was an interpretation of a grand view and so concerned the awareness of reality. It is a view Burke would have liked.

In the second letter, landscape is a man-made concept that reflects what mankind is capable of. The author is concerned about human nature because of its potential brutality and destructiveness, whereas natural scenery appears to be harmonious and sustaining. He argues that designed nature or protected nature can be used as a cure for unbalanced human behaviour.

This antidote is denied in the third letter. References to grand old nature is described as male-oriented. The sublime should not be situated in nature any more. The very notion of the sublime is tarnished and explicitly human. The fictive author, Nana, argues that should a sublime exist, it would be as a psychological and social construct in the human realm, preferably in an urban context. Humans themselves are sublime and artworks are their nature.

The fourth author introduces a Japanese perspective that regards the idea of the sublime as typically Western. Here, the sublime is interpreted as a design tool for human imagination. It is not an absolute sensation of something that appears to be a truth. At the same time it is an imaginative experience that is full of both 'densities of meaning' and a 'shallowness of meaning'. According to Wakahisa Japanese culture has turned the 'shallowness of meaning' into an art form to reinterpret a sense of loneliness. In Japanese Zen Buddhism, the ideas of imagination and truth are equally false

Part Three

Landscapes of the Sublime

Chapter Five

SERIOUS LANDSCAPING

Six archetypical landscapes

‘For those few like me who live without knowing how to have life, what’s left but renunciation as our way and contemplation as our destiny? Not knowing nor able to know what religious life is, since faith isn’t acquired through reason, and unable to have faith in or even react to the abstract notion of man, we’re left with the aesthetic contemplation of life as our reason for having a soul.’

(Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, translated by Richard Zenith, 2001: 11)

The idea of the sublime has accumulated over a period of nearly 2,000 years. An eighteenth-century Romantic depiction of the sublime does not hold the only key to understanding its contemporary significance, nor does that serve the evident maturation of the expertise of landscape architecture. As discussed in Chapter One, landscape aesthetics is not about the scenic alone (i.e. the picturesque), it is much more seriously involved in healing, narrating and programming a more integrative human involvement with a much larger diversity of environments than only parks, plazas and public spaces. This ‘seriousness’ is reflected in the description of six shades of sublime that relate to different types of a ‘sense of self’. In this chapter I discuss how a ‘sense of self’ as diverse as six shades of sublime can be related to a ‘sense of place’ through the medium of landscape experiences.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the central idea of the sublime has been the experience of something that is too grand or too complex to comprehend. In classical Greek and Roman times, this grandness and complexity was reflected in poetry, philosophy and performances. The key to Hypsous (the sublime according to

Longinus) can be described as inducing a sensational drift that allowed an audience to partake in a creative act of the same quality as the 'great' soul that is performing. In the eighteenth century this 'great' soul was found in the grandness and complexity of nature. Natural environments were discovered as an antidote to an increasingly urbanized and self-centred society. The key to this type of sublime was to engage with the raw characteristics of nature from the lonely and fragile position of an individual. According to Burke, this 'therapy in the wild' would induce a creative rivalry with other human beings to attain a natural quality found only in nature itself. Later, Immanuel Kant provided a more fundamental questioning of this Romantic idea. According to Kant, the sensational drift should only be witnessed in a state of 'uncompromised imagination', as poets do, and not by assuming that any true knowledge could be gained from it. An uncompromised imagination would allow humans to gain a humbleness that reflects an awe and respect for the 'unpresentable' sublime source without imprinting any false empirical proof about reality onto it (i.e. subreption). The idea of the sublime was to Kant (and to most scholars afterwards) not so much an aesthetic achievement, but a moral imprint. This also gave birth to the idea that a sublime source cannot be designed, since the design of the 'unpresentable' is obviously impossible.

The source media for inducing a sensational drift have expanded beyond poetry, performances, natural phenomena and wildernesses (Chapter One). As formulated by my research questions, my search for a contemporary sublime lies not in merely expanding into new realms of sources (e.g. technological, ecological and social). Instead, as I concluded in Chapter Four, it lies in the diversification of a sense of self as a creative response to what is best regarded as an experiential disorder. In total I have derived six shades of sublime that each relate to different types of ego symbols or specific absence of any symbolic representation. The term 'negative' aesthetics is not just about those awkward situations that cause anxiety, as described by Arnold Berleant (see: Introduction), although the idea of the sublime does necessarily

include an anxious flinch. Depending on the ego identity of the person experiencing it, there are six possible outcomes that can all be marked as ‘instruments in the making of meaning’. ‘Negative’ aesthetics is a much more versatile tool since it is related to the creation and questioning of personal meaning (i.e. sense of self).

One of the conclusions from the analysis of the work of the three founding fathers in Chapter Two was that sublime aesthetics calls attention to the fact that sensations are processed by human aesthetic engagement in experiences. The work of Thomas Weiskel, discussed in In Chapter Three, helped to develop the idea of ‘sensations becoming experiences’ by including specific creative capacities, as found in the works of Romantic landscape poets. Weiskel aimed to realign the rhetorical sublime (Hypsous) to the natural sublime. The process of sublime sensations becoming human experiences is more dependent upon the structure of creativity and imagination than on the object or medium of whatever ‘unpresentable’ source. To me, this has proven to be an essential claim: it opens the possibility of being interested or absorbed in dissonant sensations (i.e. ‘negative’), because even while being dissonant, our human capacity for creativity allows us to ‘design’ our experiences to align with a certain sense of self. This ‘design’ may not be entirely conscious; on the contrary, in my findings the only explicit conscious involvement is by wilfully resisting the act of imagination (e.g. Buddhism and the liminal perspective). The practice of Buddhism also opens the possibility of an even more extreme type of sublime aesthetics, where a sense of self is absent in the whole. Only in this case does the term ‘unpresentable’ seems applicable, because it is only by somehow extinguishing the typical human capacity for creativity and imagination that we can reveal a domain that is truly ‘unpresentable’.



The making and breaking of meaning

The significance of the idea of the sublime has not lessened over the centuries, but has rather been gaining momentum. Within the orthodox view of the sublime there is no grey area and no possible gradation of its absolute character, as exemplified by Kant's dynamic and mathematical sublime and by many other more fashionable terms such as ecological, industrial and mock sublime (see McMahon 2004). A consequence of this perspective is that when someone claims to have had a sublime experience, his or her judgement cannot be questioned. A judgement on having or not having had a sublime experience reflects a most sincere and authentic given. Such a given may suit the harrowing character of the sublime, but it is not helpful for understanding the experiential structure involved. Adhering rigidly to this view will condemn the sublime to being a historical reminder of a once Romantic era. A contemporary understanding of the sublime, by defining six shades, provides an opportunity to be involved in designing experiences and participate in the making (and breaking) of meaning.

The play in three parts and the fictive letters in this book explore the various historical attempts to define the sublime and portray its changing and diverse character. I composed these to show that the various ideas about the sublime do not contradict each other, but represent different aspects of explorative human understanding of the experiential space between a sense of self and a sense of place. This means, for example, that even without the cultural conditions of the eighteenth century, the experience of the sublime is still possible. Newly designed places, both by human ingenuity or stupidity, induce an incentive for equally new types of a sense of self. Pulling these historical examples together creates a 'map' of diverse aesthetic categories. This diversity cannot merely be ascribed to an endless accumulation of ideas on the sublime, snowballing into increasingly diverse and fluctuating

articulations. There is a set of principle outcomes possible when sensations become experiences, when a sense of place and a sense of self intermingle to construct the very notion of a 'landscape'.

In my work so far, the six shades have been strongly defined, in terms of Bourassa (1991), by biological aspects and not so much by the cultural and personal aspects of landscape aesthetics. Biologically, the six shades relate to a neurolinguistic perspective on 'metalanguage' (Jakobson 1957: 123) within a three-phase model for the experience of the sublime. Most notable about this model is the second phase, when a habitual experiential relationship breaks down and affects a sense of self in need of a recovery. The 'sublime' instrument for recovering a sense of self is, within landscape architecture, a specific sense of place. The interaction of both senses endow places with additional meaning, but can also diminish meaning if a dissonant sense of self is involved (i.e. *the making and breaking of meaning*). Meaning is gained, maintained or lost with every sublime aesthetic engagement. Each landscape aesthetic engagement by an individual relates to a sense of self and is a sincere attempt to create some kind of meaning. Even a landscape that is perceived as meaningless will relate to a certain sense of self. A remaining research question is 'What landscape expressions relate to the idea of the sublime?' In other words, how can we describe the different landscape expressions that arise according to either one of the six shades of sublime? This is the question that will be addressed in this chapter.



Unsettling landscapes

A trend that began in the early twenty-first century points to an explorative notion of landscapes in which immediate, embodied and frequently dissonant experiences

are welcomed (see Chapter One, Theme Two and Theme Four). This notion has gained popularity among contemporary critics who attribute the dissonant or unsettling characteristics of landscapes to their changeable and diverse nature (Clemmensen 2014; Hellström Reimer 2010; Jorgensen and Keenan 2011). They include design critics who reject the visual dominance in landscape design and seek to reinstate multisensory experiences (Dee 2010; Meyer 2008; Moore 2010), new nature explorers who seek the unnerving aspects of death, loneliness and related anxieties (see: Macfarlane 2007; Freriks 2010; van de Klundert 2012), and landscape designers who want to work with unpredictable ecological processes and a continuous change of form, size and meaning (Corner 2005; Berger and Sijmons 2010; Roncken, Stremke et al. 2011; Bélanger 2013; Lokman 2017). Some believe that thrill-seeking individuals will want to experience dangerous recreational landscapes, either on their holidays or in virtual worlds on the internet (White and Pajczkowska 2009; Lewis 2003; McGonigal 2011). There is already enough momentum for a type of landscape architecture that favours the inclusion of 'negative' aesthetics in designed landscapes.

The use of the term 'designed' in this context needs further clarification. The critics mentioned above highlight certain landscape interventions that are at least partly, or perhaps even totally, uncontrolled. A landscape, be it natural, urban or an artistic representation, may still bear no meaning or bear a lesser meaning to individuals than intended. A designed landscape may mean nothing to certain people under certain circumstances. Conversely, a non-designed landscape can mean much to certain people under certain circumstances. Sublime aesthetics, as redefined by me, is an instrument to categorize even the biggest discrepancies between meaning and design. This widens the variety of landscapes to consider when researching and designing an aesthetic impact.

A warning is needed, too. Nature experiences may not only 'be benign but also frightening' (de Pater 2015: 169). It may not even be advisable to try and dwell in

the transcending experience of nature, as one can be touched so deeply (i.e. peak experience) that it could cause a trauma (van den Berg and ter Heijne 2004; Terhaar 2009). De Pater (2015) speaks of a spiritual journey in which landscape experience can become part of a process of self-transcendence. In such an ‘inspirational learning cycle’ both negative and positive aspects are ‘part and parcel of the spiritual process’ (ibid. 173). De Pater also addresses the risks of frightful encounters as pitfalls on the spiritual journey into nature. Wilson (2011) discusses the capacity of a mysterious ‘otherness’ that may surprise, but as long as the encounter is participatory there may be a ‘transformative’ aspect in even the most frightening encounters. Wilson refers to a ‘liminal space’ where both conscious and unconscious meet in an awareness that may exceed the boundary of the body.

Such warnings are valid and in this thesis I have touched upon this theme several times. Burke advised explicitly on the imagination and the aspect of horror. He concluded that a safe distance would be needed to attain a ‘conversant mode’. Also, Kant warned against a subreption (an experienced induced sense of truth) and advised eliminating the sublime from aesthetics. The idea of the sublime is not without real danger and the above-mentioned empirical findings show that redefining of a sense of self through a spiritual journey contains certain risks. Nevertheless, I feel inclined to promote the idea that aesthetics is indeed not limited to those experiences that are preferable and thereby related to health. In terms of ‘meaning’, landscape aesthetic repertoire offers a ‘multi-dimensional, non-dual ontology that allows room for experiencing the transcendental and subjective domains that have for so long been neglected’ (de Pater 2015: 175 citing Zimmerman 2000: 191). And indeed some of these perceived meanings may not be healthy.



From a cure to a creative journey

Aesthetics has, certainly in relation to design, become a cure for dissonant reality (see Chapter One, Theme Five). In other words, referring to ‘aesthetics’ is an implicit act of cultural censorship, a qualitative and ‘positive’ selection of behaviour and experiment. Consequently, aesthetics has become synonymous with an unspecified sense of quality in which style improvements are the instruments used to upgrade the lives of people. Landscape experiences can easily be attuned to intimate personal modifications, for example by listening to music (through earphones) while hiking or cycling or driving a car, eating specific food while spending time in a park, conversing about certain topics with someone while enjoying a view, not being able to smell due to a cold while strolling at a market, or driving a wheelchair through gravel or sand while others are walking barefoot. Individuals can customize the personal (e.g. phenomenological) influences of a landscape to a great extent.

As Weiskel remarked, it is not a coincidence that the sublime entered the scholastic arena at the same time that philosophers started to doubt the relevance of a godhead (Weiskel 1976: 3). The eighteenth-century sublime was an antidote to a pressing boredom and celebrated the Uncommon and a desire to join with the Great (ibid. 11–18). Much earlier, to Longinus the *Peri Hypsous* was an instrument for combating cultural shallowness. This entailed a co-creative sensational drift and a desire to change oneself drastically, with a ripened soul as a role model. The most fundamental change in the development of the idea of the sublime has been Burke’s suggestion to regard ‘nature’ as the performing artist instead of the ripened soul of the spokesman. Placing the sole responsibility of a place-experience at the control of the individual indeed brings potential risks. The natural sublime involves an imperative to think and sense for oneself and become liberated by the act of creativity in the making of meaning. However, the implications of a nature-

related sensation instead of the guiding performance and voice of a performer are considerable. Without an intermediating performer, there is no great soul to guide the audience on a sensational drift. It is also possible that the audience, walking the landscape, may be blissfully unaware of any performance by the landscapes they are crossing.

How will the audience know and receive a landscape (natural or designed) that is performing? Will this always be by a sense of awe and respect (see Chapter One, Theme One)? This question is essential to understanding whether the sublime is an exclusive or an everyday functionality within landscape aesthetics. In the twenty-first century this question can also be recognized in the works of contemporary philosophers. One example is the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, who analysed opportunities for changing one's life in his book *You Must Change Your Life* (2011). He seeks to redefine the type of authority or 'vertical tension' that humans have historically adhered to with the aim of obtaining an image of one's bettered self. According to Sloterdijk, the environment, for humans as for every organism, determines the possibilities for transcendence. The more abstract and unknown the danger in an environment (i.e. habit breaking), the more transcendent it appears. The means he describes involve embodied experiences, endurance and creativity, and ascetic practices. Aesthetics may from time to time be a means for reaching collective agreement and an example of good taste, but as a continuous everyday presence it serves a necessary purpose of supporting individual creativity when making sense of disorderly senses. In this context creativity is not the same as artistic freedom. It is an essential instrument in the making of meaning that serves the purpose of continuously aligning a sense of place to a sense of self (and vice versa) – a form of creative emancipation.

The functionality of the sublime was once analysed by Neil Hertz (1985), who discussed the psychoanalytical state of the sublime. To him it was obvious that the current predominant global culture provides so many references to an implied sense

of awe that individuals are denied the ability to be creative by making meaning themselves. According to Hertz, books, movies, science, fashion and social behaviour are 'blocking agents' that prevent any self-induced sublimation and restrict the act of thinking to a strict 'reading' of the situation. This 'reading' is part of a cycle that starts with remembering, then citing and lastly writing, so that others can again relate to this by reading (Hertz 1985: 55). The desire to live with the continuous support of a design, such as architecture, easily leads to a selective blindness to aspects that do not fit into that style of design. This can be seen, for example, in the commercial food marketing practice of rejecting misshapen vegetables because they do not convey the generally accepted healthy image. This indicates that although global culture appears to be dominated by individual action, there is hardly any individual who can think unconditionally; instead, people relate to what others have expressed and created. Such 'voluntary prisons', as Rem Koolhaas referred to them within the architectural discourse (Koolhaas and Mau 1995: 4–21), offer a serious challenge to both the audience and the designers who want to include aesthetics in their work.

Unlike so many animals, humans do not rely on a strictly repetitive preference for a certain type of flower, colour or fragrance. Humans interact with their environment in rather ambiguous and creative ways and rely more on their logical ingenuity. They are, according to Kant, in need of a systematic categorization to avoid dangers like dying from eating the wrong fruits and plants. I believe that the consequences of this inbuilt flaw are what Immanuel Kant intended to describe and educate. His insight is that humans need to deal with the paradox of having a physical existence that by nature has its limitations and a flexible mind that can move freely through space and time. Yet in doing so he discredited the function of embodied creativity as a way of sensing as no person has sensed before and thinking what no thinker has thought before. His effective insight is purist, but may be a second best option for dealing with the unruly reality of having a body; the paradox itself cannot

be dispelled. Burke offered the suggestion that physical labour is an essential means to overcome the melancholy that can pervade the sensation of the sublime.



The pursuit of landscape architecture

A relation to embodied experiences is essential when considering landscape design, yet this is not the same as describing the physical properties of landscapes. A myriad of factors should be included, namely biological, cultural and personal factors (Bourassa 1991). At the same time, ‘only by the virtue of leaving traces in our brain’ (Jacobs 2006: 5) do we produce experiences. So what is the value of describing certain types of places that relate to certain types of meaning? Within the scope of my thesis it has been my intention to consider a future landscape architectural repertoire. A sub-question is: To what extent can the idea of the sublime be expressed by means of specific landscape experiences? A conclusive answer to this questions points to two types of influences: both a sense of self (the six shades of sublime) and a sense of place (the yet to be described types of places). The challenge in describing a more specific type of sublime experience lies in aligning two types of sensing, that is, two types of ‘feeling that something is the case’ (Oxford 2011).

There are two major trends in the discourse on landscape experience that describe that ‘something is the case’. Both trends influence the way in which the landscape architectural repertoire is positioned in practice as well as in education and research. The first trend is the promotion of findings that prove that natural environments are healthy for both mind and body (see: Chapter One, Theme Five); the second is influencing an audience to support and adopt more sustainable and nature-inclusive types of agriculture, urbanization and infrastructure (see: Chapter One, Theme One and Four). The idea of the sublime is sometimes explicitly mentioned as a potential

instrument (see Chapter One, Theme Six). Discussions in both trends include all types of places (i.e. nature, landscapes and environments). Under both trends the aesthetic creativity of the landscape architect is confined to either an explicit health-related goal or an ethical pursuit to influence an audience to adopt better behaviour. In other words, the current trends point to aligning an improved sense of self (more healthy or more sustainable) through the design of an improved sense of place. The 'feeling that something is the case' would gain meaning through landscape design into 'sensing that places are more healthy and/or sustainable'.

In my research, this confinement is too limited, because I intend to describe places that both make and break meaning. As discussed, these may be neither healthy nor sustainable. However, it is also very hard to escape these trends and all the lauded examples they engender. The process of breaking away from these major trends has been the work I have undertaken with my MSc students and international colleagues. In Chapter Six (Landscape Machines) I describe this process and discuss the results obtained so far. Gobster et al. (2007) discussed in 'The shared landscape: What does aesthetics have to do with ecology' that there may be landscapes that are ecologically sound, but fail in terms of scenic order or smell or safety. My proposition for the idea of the sublime addresses this mismatch, because even incomprehensible or dispreferred landscapes mean something. And besides, these landscapes mean something not only to people as an audience, but also to a broader non-human audience.

Given the diversity of shades that I have derived in this thesis, the framework for a new landscape architectural repertoire reaches beyond aspirations for a more nature-inclusive and healthy type of landscape design. There are perhaps far more landscapes in the world that are neither preferred nor ecologically sound and would therefore not be considered as part of landscape aesthetics. The alternative framework for a landscape sublime that I describe includes all types of meaning, both dissonant and consonant, as well as negations of meaning (i.e. the liminal and

the unrepresentable). The general ‘feeling that something is the case’ is probably the best description of the millennia old essence of the idea of the sublime. Something that breaks away from experiential habits and opens up the possibility of new and fresh relationships between a sense of self and a sense of place. As discussed above, this sense of place is to be described as a creative journey that weaves together positive and negative sensations as well as incentives for performances (e.g. working, walking, playing, praying, etc.). I will coin an alternative motto for this creative journey: ‘Serious Landscaping’. I use the word ‘serious’ to indicate a need that requires a deep reflection of landscape aesthetics as an instrument in the making of meaning.

To seriously engage with the complexity of making, breaking and denying a variety of meanings, and to accept that experiences are fluid and continuously explorative, creative, paradoxical and possibly dissonant, is not only more realistic and in line with the interests within the growing field of environmental studies, but is also more fundamentally related to the effects of sensations becoming experiences. Since landscape aesthetics is influenced by both a sense of place and a sense of self, a performing landscape can be sensed not only within the physical domain, but also through exploration of the self. This coincides with ‘a fundamental shift in landscape thinking from representation to agency’ (Hellström Reimer 2010). The result is a researchable field of realistic, diverse responses to landscapes. The six shades of sublime contain variables that describe this diversity.

The word ‘landscaping’ is a verb that covers a range of activities, including planting trees and mowing the lawn. This is an action-oriented view of design that seeks to explore all there is to landscapes. However, besides physical interactions, the verb landscaping may also indicate the capacity of individuals for exploration, personal creativity, dealing with designed conditioning and all the paradoxes of having a body and an incredibly flexible mind. Action and interaction are needed

to engage with landscapes, whether it is walking, pruning or even devastating a landscape as an undesirable by-product of activities like industrial mining or warfare.

A commitment to Serious Landscaping is a commitment to fully understanding why and how humans interact with landscapes and not to judge or otherwise disregard certain phenomena. Serious Landscaping is dedicated to understanding and mapping sensations and experiences as comfortable or spartan as they may be. It stands for a more comprehensive aesthetic idiom that reflects the accumulated ideas on the idea of the sublime. Since humankind tends to imagine that it can ensure its own survival through technological means, 'the sublime is more relevant than ever before' (Hitt 1999: 618). Even when a disorder is at the heart of an experience, this awakens the typical human asset of being creatively and meaningfully involved – sometimes even a collectively induced type of creativity, as Longinus envisioned.

Serious Landscaping requires a broadening of design repertoire beyond that used in current landscape architecture. Translating the six shades of sublime into six archetypal landscapes that embody specific challenges and fascinations can do this. They are archetypal because they refer to a mental image that may be nested in a collective subconscious (Jung 1959) and described by the collection of already familiar types of places. Archetypal landscapes indicate that the six types of landscapes are larger than life, in the same way that the archetype of 'the mother' is an indication of characteristics and connotations of a larger-than-life 'mother'. Just as not all women that are mothers will automatically be equal to this archetypal 'mother', not all landscapes that contain certain sublime elements will automatically be the archetype of 'the sublime'. The following descriptions are a starting point for discussing what actual design repertoire will cause such archetypes to exist in specific situations, cultures or groups of people, with reference to their individual mental and physical characteristics. I use a 'thick description' (see methods in the Introduction) to define the archetypes by making references to natural, artificial and accidental landscapes.



Six archetypical landscapes

As a reminder of some of the essential philosophical arguments within the discourse of the sublime, I will refer to the first four shades as meaningful landscapes and to the last two shades as uncompromised landscapes. These terms stem from the work of Weiskel and Kant. Weiskel convincingly allocated the role of the sublime within aesthetics to that of an instrument in the making of meaning. The first four shades reveal four essentially different types of meaning. The last two shades are what Kant indicated as the result of an uncompromised imagination. I have, however, dropped the term ‘imagination’ because it is not only imagination that is uncompromised. Buddhism has informed me that emotions, desires, conceptions and habits are also part of what will have to be resisted within a liminal perspective.

The first four archetypical landscapes: MEANINGFUL LANDSCAPES

- › legible landscapes (reader’s consonance)
- › neglected landscapes (reader’s dissonance)
- › portal landscapes (poet’s consonance)
- › horrific landscapes (poet’s dissonance)

The last two archetypical landscapes: UNCOMPROMISED LANDSCAPES

- › liminal landscapes (state of *equanimity*)
- › unpresentable landscapes (*extinguished* state)

Legible landscapes (reader's consonance)

According to Simon Schama, author of the famous book *Landscape and Memory*, 'Even the landscapes that we suppose to be most free of our culture may turn out, on closer inspection, to be its product' (1996: 9). To Schama this is not a cause for guilt or sorrow, but celebration. The recognition of the cultural influences in landscapes is a way to 'read' landscapes. Rather like strolling through a museum, one can stroll through a landscape and interpret its signs and meanings. The interpretation of these signs could become a rather personalized landscape narrative (e.g. Whiston Spirn 1998; Wylie 2005). It could also be part of a historical reading to determine what remnants are evidence of the former use of places (Potteiger and Purinton 1998). Either way, the recognition of an outward signifier that fits a perceived meaning will enable sensations to become legible experiences. Or, in the words of the 1990 winner of the Nobel Prize in literature: essentially mute landscapes may gain in meaning for a speaking being (Paz 1986: 19).

The experience of a legible landscape is the result of an underlying sensational disorder that hinders the capacity for reading (similarity disorder). At first glance this may appear to be a counter-intuitive resolution. However, at the root of every sublime landscape experience is a disorder, a disfunctionality that must somehow be resolved. During a 'similarity disorder' someone loses the capacity to create associations within a continuous chain of sensations (Weiskel 1976: 30). In this state, one cannot rely on associations, only on immediate references. For this reason, legible landscapes relate to remembered facts or patterns instead of a stream of associations. The experience that cultural signs can be recognized in the abstract complexity of landscapes offers a pleasing and satisfactory solution to an essentially problematic sensational disorder.

If, for instance, one is well prepared before entering a historic site, the facts and structures that have been remembered will be compared to what is perceived on the site itself. A similar fact-driven 'science-based approach' is dominant in

environmental philosophy. Carlson, one of the most influential figures in this discourse, argues that aesthetic appreciation of nature should also be guided by scientific knowledge (Carlson 2010). Prior knowledge supposedly helps to distinguish between real and false judgements. For instance, the appreciation of a whale ‘must involve viewing it in the correct category of a mammal (rather than as a fish)’ (Carlson, explained by Brady 1998). This ‘clipping of the wings of imagination’ is needed to prevent naive and sentimental imaginative responses that will impoverish appreciation (Brady 1998: 146). When experiencing natural landscapes in particular, a guide to properly understand its scientific and thereby intrinsic self is needed, lest ‘seeing a mountain as an ice cream cone brings in a way of thinking about the mountain entirely unrelated to it’ (Fudge 2001: 281, 282).

The recognition of the correct category can be found in a wide diversity of signifiers or ‘tokens’. For instance, a specific tree could be interpreted as a Wodan’s Oak, referring to the mythological reading by use of such a symbol. Another example may be specific for the Netherlands, where landscape types are commonly categorized, i.e. read, by a relationship between geographic features and soil types (Hendriks and Stobbelaar 2003; Van Toorn 1998; Drenthen 2011). Another way to increase the legibility of landscapes is to aim for an educative explanation of the functionality of a (designed) landscape, for example when contaminated soil and water are being treated by a design intervention (e.g. Corner 2005), or when a historical event is rendered perceivable by means of design (e.g. narrative design: Potteiger and Purinton 1998; Whiston Spirn 1998). More everyday examples are traffic signs, street names and road numbers. A legible landscape is perhaps the most familiar type of all archetypical landscapes to be designed. One can play with the incapacity to read and then reveal a meaningful reading at a certain vantage point, for example by creating a tension between hiding and revealing views of the wider landscape, landmarks and river curves, or including a multisensory orchestration of sounds, smells, the sensation of moisture and views of water. If sound and vision

are not consistent, the number of possible associations may be drastically reduced, thus enforcing a similarity disorder, but from a different viewpoint the viewer may experience a harmonious coming together of sensations and impressions.

If one is able to experience a legible landscape, this means that there is initially something one cannot grasp, but one can learn to interpret by exploring different viewpoints on the site or preparatory documents in advance of a site visit. In terms of the value of meaning as the alternative measurement for landscape aesthetics, I therefore classify the resolution of a similarity disorder into a legible landscape as a considerable gain in meaning. The result is an increase in experiential satisfaction because the developed sense of place is harmonically related to a sense of self. In other words, there is an increase in legible meaning: that which is found to clarify the place also clarifies the self, or the perceived identity of the place is conceived through an equally perceived identity of the self.

Neglected landscapes (reader's dissonance)

When the above-mentioned situation is not resolved in harmony with a sense of self, then a different type of landscape is construed. The same underlying similarity disorder turns into a dissonant experience. The result is not an increase in meaning but the opposite, an absence of meaning to the point of an experiential disgust or neglect. Initially, such landscapes are avoided, perhaps abandoned and left derelict – much like wildernesses. Such landscapes are referred to in the literature as ‘drosscape’ (Berger 2007) or ‘non-lieux’ (Augé 1995). It is precisely because of their decrease in meaning that, after a while, new meanings may be projected upon these neglected landscapes. The sensation of the sublime is here perceived in the Freudian sense of sublimation: an unconscious effort to release a repressed amount of libido energy by means of compensating actions and thoughts (Freud 1930). Neglected landscapes may attract, so to speak, equally neglected aspects of

the self (or cultural groups). In discussing this I refer not to Freud, but to the more contemporary work of the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk.

In his book *You Must Change Your Life* (2011), Sloterdijk analysed the history of personalized exercises, or aesthetic asceticism. Asceticism was also a key element in the thinking of the rather pessimistic philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, who defined the relationship between asceticism and aesthetics as a ‘suffering personally felt, not the suffering merely known’ (1883: par. 68). Asceticism is considered to be about self-discipline, something you have to do and practise when all cultural legibility is perceived to be meaningless. This is not a popular idea because most people would rather avoid the ‘deserts’ that ‘test’ them. In a landscape that offers little or nothing in the way of indicators to read as culture or interpret as affordances, one must face any evolving similarity disorder on one’s own, and the dissonant experience of lacking similarity with any cultural or natural association can be alienating or frightening. However, neglected landscapes can also become accepted as ‘training grounds’ (Sloterdijk 2011). Burke also defined ascetic aspects in natural landscapes in his list of Privations: Vacuity of space, Darkness, Solitude and Silence (1759: 113–127). In the history of civilization such ‘training grounds’ – *asketeria* or *hesychasteria*, places of silent exercise – were situated at a distance from civilization (Sloterdijk 2011: 425). The Indian word *ashram* is a ‘place for effort’ and *sannyasin* means ‘he who has forsaken everything, including all profane places’ (ibid.). In the twentieth century some French artists rediscovered an urban type of neglected landscape by explicitly getting lost (*derivé*) in neighbourhoods that were unfamiliar to them, and, to help induce a state of similarity disorder, to be drunk at the same time (Debord 1995; Sadler 1998). Franz Kafka wrote about an equally contemporary state: the fearful state of not being understood by government officials and no longer understanding a common language (*The Metamorphosis* (1912), *The Trial* (1925)).

The potential benefits of neglected landscapes that clearly create dissonant experiences tend to be brushed aside by the urge to heal or repair them. Neglected landscapes, as depicted in the pictures of manufactured landscapes by Edward Burtynsky, are a waste product of industrial productivity. Landscape architecture could very easily be employed to help to get rid of such landscapes, which are poisonous to flora, fauna and damage abiotic metabolism (e.g. water, soil and air quality), but in Sloterdijk's interpretation, the possibility of a 'training ground' can also be a reason to nurture and accept a certain area of neglected landscapes. He identified five subjects for exercises to help explore the experiential lessons of immersive neglected landscapes (Sloterdijk 2011: 419–440): (1) material and food scarcity, (2) physical endurance, (3) sexual drive, (4) alienation and (5) culturally embedded death.

Material and food scarcity is a voluntary condition, for example during a hiking tour or camping in the landscape. During holidays and retreats many people will often seek out remote or at least unfamiliar places to test their survival skills. The design of such interactions has been part of landscape architecture since the development of National Parks and nature reserves. A continuous performance is needed to explore the landscape for affordances related to shelter, food and safety (Atchley et al. 2012) as means for a 'global fitness' (Sloterdijk 2011: 348).

Focusing on *physical endurance* means exceeding one's current muscle power, coordination and stamina. For example, a company retreat weekend in the Belgian Ardennes challenges participants to overcome the difficulties presented by the rough terrain, and undertaking a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella tests one's stamina and endurance. In urban environments skaters and free-runners find training grounds by turning to walls, alleys, stairways and dry swimming pools as obstacle courses. Because of their permanent state of neglect, former industrial areas are sometimes squatted by artists looking for challenging environments that demand novel perceptions and innovative skills.

Sexual drive may be related to wildernesses as well as Arcadian landscapes as these are historically regarded as natural places for open celebration of sexual arousal and courtship. The primordial is perhaps best situated in neglected places that are still untouched and bear an authentic and pure natural quintessence. Nevertheless the abandoned character of neglected landscapes may also give rise to repressed sexual interactions. The taboo surrounding sex is a powerful way of creating a dissonant experience in public environments. At the same time, there are many places where a certain relaxation of sexual morals is implicitly tolerated, such as in a relative secluded place in an urban park, on a beach or in a shopping mall. Especially during festivals, many parks, squares and boulevards become crowded and more intimate spaces that include a diversity of smaller neglected places. In that way, public space can even become a voyeuristic arena for the observation of people's behaviour.

A prolonged stay in natural landscapes can attune a person to *alienation* from humanity and an increase in 'becoming animal' (Abram 2012). Urban environments contain a variety of situations and neighbourhoods that are alienated from each other, such as the homeless versus the rich and prostitution versus shopping streets. According to Sloterdijk, the experience of alienation is principally related to a sense of hostility: one will instinctively avoid being caught or beaten by an enemy. To mark one's territory is to mark where friends can be found and enemies will be alienated. In some cases, even a violent weather change can create a temporary neglected landscape.

Finally, every being faces inevitable *death*. Cemeteries and commemorative places are designed to give death a dignified environment. In the natural world there are fabled places where whales and elephants go when they feel they will die soon. On the other hand, the presence of scattered dead animals in accessible nature reserves is the subject of heated public debate in the media (e.g. Nooren and Schouten 2013). The presence of crime scenes, warfare and the potential threat of

suicide bombers can mark an environment as a landscape to avoid and neglect. In computer games, though, such landscapes are increasingly popular.

Portal landscapes (poet's consonance)

A *portal landscape* is the effect of a *bordering* sensation in which time and space become fluent attributes. In a portal landscape a multitude of lateral associations across time and space will extend the sense of place enormously and the sense of self will expand beyond the limits of the body. In terms of the economy of meaning, this may be the largest gain in meaning possible within all four meaningful landscapes. Among psychologists it has become apparent that the less information people have – which is the case during a bordering sensation because of the disorder that prevents any informational structure and order – the more improbable and yet overconfident their guesses and intuition become (overconfidence and heuristics, see Kahneman 2011: 201, 416). When caught in a flow of associations and metaphors, miraculous interactions and appearances become plausible. Portal landscapes exist, for example, when mythological and fantastical characters and situations appear to be real or imminent in landscapes that resemble the mythological environment, when Mother Nature is experientially perceivable, when holes in the ground seem to connect to different realities and when volcanoes, thunderstorms and tsunamis seemingly rage against the arrogance of humanity (Dannenberg 2007; MacDonald et al. 1989). Landscapes can suddenly appear to be part of exotic landscapes far away, long ago or purely imaginary. By being in harmony with this bordering state, landscapes will appear to be portals, allowing memories and supernatural phenomena to become as vivid as the awareness of the actual moment.

In Shamanism, such portal landscapes are invoked by rituals that may include dance and hallucinatory plants or fungi (Hume 2007). The bordering state is an 'ineffable experience' that 'is often expressed poetically or in metaphors, and has to rely on the inadequate use of words to convey their true impact' (ibid. 39). A very

similar set of rituals is made contemporary and popular at outdoor musical festivals. A famous example of an age-old portal landscape can be found in the song lines that Aborigines use to navigate between a dreamworld and the physical appearance of the Australian landscape (Chatwin 1987). If taken seriously, portal landscapes are what Immanuel Kant feared most as he named the mechanism of a 'subreption'. There is no reason to claim that such bordering sensations are purely fictive and hold no element of truth; they may be truthful and essential vehicles for humanity to gain an experiential relationship with elements that are otherwise hidden. The landscape of the afterlife, experienced by some during near death sensations, is an example of such a debated subreptive and portal landscape (ibid. 41–42).

The number of everyday portal landscapes is increasing. Research indicates that the general public interprets 'aesthetics' as something that resembles Arcadian landscapes (Buijs 2009). People almost expect landscapes to have a portal quality to transport them back to vivid memories or take them on fantastical journeys that remind them of childhood naivety. The recreational aspects of landscapes have obviously increased and offer a transformative motive of their own (see: Brinkhuijsen 2008). Sociologist John Urry coined the term 'tourist gaze' to refer to the process of environmental transformations in response to tourists' expectations (Urry and Larsen 2012). As tourism has become more popular and increasingly commodified, the landscapes of destinations have developed into desirable places that appeal to a specific type of tourist. The gaze of tourists thus indirectly affects the landscapes they travel to. This indicates that it is not only designers that have gained more control over landscape experiences, but the public and commercial agents as well.

It is feasible that the pervasive acceptance of tourism, and also the immersive qualities of cinematography and gaming, will help to stimulate a preference for landscapes containing a portal meaning. Research has revealed that an individual's capacity to respond in harmony with their own bordering sensation requires an

instinct acquired at a very early age (Jonsson Abercrombie 1969: 66). A child may, according to current multimedia standards, learn to develop a sense of self that is strongly related to an imaginative sense of place (e.g. McMahan 2003; McGonigal 2011; Dasberg 1981). In such a personal environment one can be inventor and investigator of ‘the secret of the dawn of our day, of our not yet externalized self’ (Langeveld 1963: 21). Technology has evolved to include a child’s intuitive navigation and explore the audio-visual realms of ever more immersive portal landscapes. One could even claim that this aesthetic effect has become so dominant that it has become difficult to escape addiction to easily accessible portal landscapes. The bordering effects of landscapes entice not only designers, but also the general public, habituated as they have become to special effects created by atmospheric lightning, soundscapes, smart furniture and synthetic fragrances, as well as many now normalized but still illusive landscape rituals such as driving fast on a highway, smartphones checking biometric functions of your body, and having almost every type of food within one’s grasp, turning almost every experience into a portal to a more desirable, personal atmosphere.

Horrific landscapes (poet’s dissonance)

When bordering sensations remain dissonant from a sense of self, the sense of a place immediately grows into the experience of horror, creating existential fears, doubts and anger. A common designer’s (and philosopher’s) solution is to buffer genuine horrific landscapes by creating a safe distance. Aesthetic sensations can then be distant, harmless, controlled and even aimed at a mild horror that does not cause any immediate alarm. Such precautions cannot prevent certain (everyday) situations from conjuring up unavoidable ‘bordering dissociations’, for instance when an emotional shock occurs as a result of a natural or cultural disaster. Research indicates that people’s memories of and receptiveness to experiences are more accurate and detailed and induce a sudden ‘flashbulb’ use of memory (Brown and Kulik 1977;

Er 2003). These effects result in sensations being firmly imprinted in memory. The inescapable character of a horrific landscape creates a heightened awareness and can leave a permanent experiential scar, like Wordsworth's 'Gondo Gorge' experience, analysed by Weiskel. According to Wordsworth there is a terrible imagination at work that cannot be denied.

It is feasible that horrific landscapes are the eighteenth-century epiphany of what was then regarded as truly 'sublime', such as being near an erupting volcano and the horrific monster's mouth in the gardens of Bomarzo, and today perhaps the footage of warfare on the evening news (Battersby 2007). When landscape sensations become bordering instead of merely lacking similarity, they directly influence personal confidence and stability (see: Tuan 2013). So, what meaning is there to horrific landscapes? For one thing, there is a large market for 'dark tourism', or visiting the remnants of a dissonant heritage (Robb 2009). Landscapes that display relics and scars of the First and Second World Wars are not only popular for their commemorative function, but also serve a more general purpose of exploring potential human tragedy (Hartmann 2002). Some people also visit former battlefields for their immersive, horrific character. Major role-playing events are held to re-enact dissonant events of warfare and deprivation.

Such immersive events border on play, often provoked by a subculture that also produces books, movies and outfits (e.g. Magistrale 1988). In fact, horror has become a well-accepted genre that far exceeds stories about witches and werewolves on vast misty heaths. More genuine horrific landscapes can be found in urban environments in which one can become lost or trapped and which contain concealed hiding places (Nasar and Jones 1997). In some urban areas fear of crime at night is a major urban stress indicator. Fear of wild animals, in urban areas as well as in natural landscapes, is also related to genuine horrific landscapes (Manning et al. 2009). If real fear is present and the experiencer is not affected by a bordering sensation but a similarity disorder, the same environment could be experienced as a

neglected landscape. In the development of the aesthetic capacity in children there may still be a period when imagined (or even real) horrific landscapes are terrifying yet explorable: into the endless woods in fairy tales, into the darkness underneath the bed, into outer space or deep down in the oceans.



Uncompromised landscapes

In all four types of meaningful landscapes, sensations are coloured by an additional perception. They are not just left as sensations, but are interpreted into experiences of various kinds. This is an important characteristic that is absent in the final two archetypal landscapes. In these landscapes there may be a sense of place, but any attempt to align it to a corresponding sense of self is avoided.

Liminal landscapes (state of equanimity)

As one matures and gains many and diverse experiences, one can obtain a relative notion of experiences. Instead of becoming trapped within the experience of only one type of landscape, one can gain insight into the pattern of sensations becoming experiences. The liminal awareness of sensations becoming experiences by means of creative responses can be celebrated as an extraordinary gift. It is the awareness of the creative capacity itself, without wanting to own it or identify with the results. This celebration of creativity equals the celebration of relativity.

A core aspect of Buddhist training is to engage a sense of place with an inner quietude: calmly being in the 'here and now', in a state of equanimity in which awareness of the smallest and most insignificant is equal to that of the seemingly important and popular. Landscapes can be the instrument for the development of this awareness. These are landscapes that express (1) the continuous changing

nature of all phenomena, i.e. the ephemeral, or (2) an intricate interconnectedness of life processes. Examples of (1) may be tidal landscapes that change with every new tidal cycle, affecting plant growth and animal behaviour, or landscapes experienced during certain hazy, drizzly or foggy weather conditions. The term used in the fourth letter (see: Intermezzo), *sharawadgi*, is also helpful here, because it refers to a buzz of experience without any recognizable order of composition. Cities and industrial landscapes can be just as ephemeral as natural landscapes, as for instance in the movie trilogy *Koyaanisqatsi*, *Powaqqatsi* and *Naqoyqatsi* (Godfrey Reggio 1982, 1988, 2002), which depict human, natural and technological relationships.

Examples of (2) may include travelling for a considerable time through environments that can be navigated only by adaptation to circumstances. Besides travelling, perhaps a mere glimpse of a migrating flock of birds may also attune a person to the cycle of the seasons. The experience of this type of liminal may be more related to a dynamic interaction with a flow of events and transformations instead of to a certain type of landscape. It is about the experience of what in Buddhism has been called ‘interbeing’, as Thich Nath Hanh explained: by carefully observing a sheet of paper one becomes aware of the tree that was the source of this paper, the sunshine that made the tree grow, the lumberjack who felled the tree, the lumberjack’s parents and ultimately also of oneself, holding and contemplating the paper (after: Thich Nath Hanh, in Schouten 2012). Such a sense of intricate interconnectedness evokes a consideration for even the tiniest of creatures and ‘dead’ materials (e.g. a broadening of the concept of audience). Also here, the interconnectedness is not limited to natural landscapes, but is present in urban landscapes in the form of metabolic flows (e.g. Nijhuis and Jauslin 2015).

However, mere fascination for the ephemeral or interconnectedness is not enough to really experience the liminal. The liminal state is a state of equanimity and not identification or appropriation. It is therefore not as simple as perhaps suggested above by describing liminal landscapes. These landscapes do not contain

the liminal, they are instrumental to gain a liminal awareness. This may be best discussed if we regard the tradition in the East, where the design of specific types of liminal gardens is much older. The Zen gardens, that relate to liminal landscapes, are rather small and paradoxically, consist of immobile stones rather than dynamic water, plants and animals (e.g. Ryoan-ji 1486, Kyoto). These rock gardens reflect a solidness that helps one to become aware of the restless continuation of sensations becoming experiences. The garden is a training ground to stop this restless process. The main design intervention is the selection of natural rocks that contain a shape of irregular, asymmetrical and thus living contours (*Bonseki*). The Zen gardener does not impose his own intention upon the natural forms. Everything should look as if it had always been in the same position. It is within the contrast of a restless self (in some of the gardens represented by raked waves in gravel) and the solidity of the garden (rocks) that an inner quietude may arise. Through a continuously endured sensation of this contrast a sense of place will become exchangeable with a sense of self, the two not only becoming aligned in terms of harmony or dissonance, but also overlapping to join in an energetic sensation of equanimity. No object, not even a rock garden, not even the larger landscape that it may represent, can escape the eternal change of everything. No subject, not even the most creative person, can continue to be creative for eternity. The very concept of meaning as a currency for measuring experiences becomes meaningless. Both objects and subjects fail to be important and eternal; they only exist in their temporary expressions, or as C.S. Lewis (1987: 223) claimed: 'If you take nature as a teacher she will teach you exactly the lessons you had already decided to learn'.

Unpresentable landscapes (extinguished state)

A final aesthetic challenge is to conceptualize the most absolute of all landscapes. Whereas a liminal landscape is still concerned with a stream of images and sensations that may come and pass, an unpresentable landscape is the metaphorical

place beyond the development of the sublime paradox. In this ‘place’, the process of sensations becoming experiences is absent because any incentive for mental or physical sensations is extinguished. This extinguished state makes the very concept of landscape trivial and yet, as a concept and reference, an unpresentable landscape may be a necessary definition. In Buddhism the word *Nibbāna* is for those that have not experienced it an evocative place of speculation. According to Buddhist teaching, this state (*Nibbāna*) arises when there is no more attachment to anything known and experiential. A main characteristic of this state, is that it can only be understood in retrospect. The realization of the extinguished state will change one’s sense of perception permanently, afterwards (Nārada 1980). The challenge for designing is really pressed to its most ultimate form. Still, there are examples of efforts to represent the unpresentable, especially in poetry (e.g. *haiku*): ‘It is in the “aha” moment of grasping the poem where the reader participates with the poet in experiencing the original moment of awareness – and it is this very process that makes haiku rewarding.’ (Welch 1995). For instance the famous haiku by Bashō of a frog leaping into a pond:

Furuikeya
kawazu tobikomu
mizu no oto
(Bashō 1686)

The old pond;
A frog jumps in –
The sound of the water.
Translation by R.H. Blyth

The original moment of insight may be similar to the moment in which the frog jumps into an old (i.e. habitual) pond. An instance later, one is refreshed and the sound of water is proof that the jump has actually occurred. It is in an instance that insight or enlightenment is realized, that the unrepresentable is presented, as by a bolt of lightning (Suzuki 1960: 53). The poem serves as a metaphor, a conception of the unrepresentable. The unrepresentable itself is in the experience.

I believe that unrepresentable landscapes therefore need to be designed equally conceptually. It does not matter what they are in a physical form, they serve to indicate what is beyond the void (reader) and the excess (poet) and the state of equanimity (liminal). The example of the frog haiku shows a design with only a few elements: a natural landscape (with all its excess of sense arousing atmospheres) containing a small animal (deeply insignificant in many ways) and the awareness of a jump and an instance later, a splashing sound (a double movement). The fact that a haiku is a very short poem helps, I believe, in the evocation of a mere instance that was as sudden and powerful as a bolt of lightning. The unrepresentable can be represented by such an instance. The opportunity for such instances occur when a habitual state of the mind is broken and any symbolic recovery remains absent.

The question is, where can habitual states of mind be broken and, as after a bolt of lightning, remain broken and empty? I believe that this can potentially happen anywhere, in any landscape. Yet one needs to be prepared and competent to be able to abandon all sense of place and all sense of self and encounter ‘emptiness’ (Suzuki 1960). This cannot be done by trying to find the unrepresentable. As Suzuki explained: ‘the harder you try to approach, the further away it will travel; only if you do not pursue, you will notice it right before you’ (ibid: 54). From this I conclude that the preparation itself, including all the failures, is the purpose of *unrepresentable landscapes*. Only after good preparation might one suddenly realize that the unrepresentable has presented itself. I further believe that the physical labour

that Burke advocated as a means to repress melancholy and such, is part of a good preparation.

Labour related to interactions with landscapes (e.g. walking, pruning, observing, harvesting, swimming, etc.) is a relevant means for preparation; also the reading of poetry, as examples of other people's experiences. In this context it is interesting to note that in Zen-monasteries gardening is one of the activities performed by monks.



Consequences for the landscape architectural repertoire

The descriptions of the six archetypical landscapes each offer challenging prospects for designers. One major challenge will be to include the dissonant experiential categories in their design repertoire, since they expand the ambition of landscape aesthetics from designing for preferences to somehow acknowledging the human condition in all its facets: this is what I call Serious Landscaping. For instance, neglected landscapes, as described above, accommodate an otherwise equally neglected human condition, such as the deprived human condition within refugee camps in war-torn areas. Instead of using design simply as a means to upgrade a neglected landscape – perhaps to a legible landscape – the set of experiential archetypes offers a means to describe the effects of being exposed to such undesirable but inevitable places. To intentionally design a horrific landscape that induces a dissonant bordering state of anxiety is not an obvious ambition to have. Nevertheless, whether desirable or not, all six types of landscapes are part of the phenomenal reality in which humans develop meaning or break away from certain meanings.

All my research sub-questions have now been addressed. Only my main question remains: What characterizes a future landscape architectural design that includes

the idea of the sublime as part of its aesthetic repertoire? As mentioned before, the descriptions of the six archetypal landscapes are full of references to known places, types of nature and environments (accidental or planned). They are not yet future-oriented. And even in the many years of work with MSc students in their final phase of study (see Chapter Six), it has proven to be very difficult to break away from dominant images and trends in design and the motivation to design in the first place. Designing according to the motto of Serious Landscaping will provide therapeutic and inspirational environments to retreat to from busy urban life. Urban regions are growing in size and number and pollution, while global warming and resource depletion are threatening the conditions for life. Landscape management is increasingly difficult as longer periods of drought, devastating rainfall and lack of nutrients lead to migration, poverty and warfare (Ferwerda 2015). Designers and policymakers have sought to boost the sense of place to create a desirable, collective sense of self, for instance by refurbishing commercial centres or allowing megamalls to be situated at urban fringes. And yet, perhaps to their own surprise, they have failed to ‘reach the hearts and minds of the people’ because of ‘the sheer complexity of the org-ware trying to mimic the complexity of society’ (Sijmons 2012: 281–290).

Over the past few years, during my research and development of the ideas for this thesis on sublime aesthetics, I studied a landscape design concept that reflects on these aspects. Within the current field of landscape architecture I observe a shift from urban design to concepts that relate to the rural backdrop (Roncken 2006, 2011, 2013, 2014). Together with co-authors and MSc students I investigated the specific performing capacity of rural landscapes as part of varied and dynamic ecosystem processes (Roncken et al. 2011, 2014; Kasper et al. 2015). Our aim was to develop a design concept that makes it feasible to dynamically or rhythmically change the diversity of landscape performances without controlling such a performance in detail. We reasoned that the aesthetic performance of Serious Landscaping should not be as intentional as in garden or park design. Our prime concern was to start

a new type of ‘green revolution’ analogous to the successful post-war Green Revolution (Borlaug 1970).

While designing, we developed this concept under the paradoxical name of ‘Landscape Machines’. The two contrasting terms ‘landscape’ and ‘machine’ suggest a certain dissonance and will hopefully inspire designers to break away from designerly habits. Our strategy was to explore productive landscapes that are similar in terms of their functionality and performance to agricultural landscapes, but related to a new urban and technological metabolism (garbage, polluted soils, expanding harbours and coastal protection). We did not intend to make nice landscapes. We were seeking to solve difficult problems relating to polluted soil and water or the major impacts of large-scale technological advances. To solve these problems we examined all possible angles to include ecological processes to clean soil, water and re-use technological garbage. The aim was to create functional landscapes with heightened and rhythmical ecological processes that would be inhabited by new audiences: animals, plants and humans. The projects proved to be successful as they have regularly won or been nominated for design prizes. But we have also met with criticism while presenting our work at international conferences. Some images of landscape design proved to be too horrific or unsettling. To us, this only proved that we were on the right path, although still looking to find better directions. Perhaps the best lesson we have learned is to design with a broader audience in mind and not simply to satisfy people’s preferences. Our designs include dynamic animal, plant and biotope interactions and remain dynamic for a long time. Such landscapes would induce a general and overall shift of a sense of place to allow the discovery of an equally shifting sense of self as part of an integral, living system.

At times, the design work was ahead of theoretical insights, but at the time of writing the final version of my thesis, theory was again ahead of design. Quoting Burke: ‘if an inquiry thus carefully conducted should fail at last of discovering the truth, it may answer an end perhaps as useful, in discovering to us the weakness of

our own understanding. If it does not make us knowing, it may make us modest. If it does not preserve us from error, it may at least from the spirit of error; and may make us cautious of pronouncing with positiveness or with haste, when so much labor may end in so much uncertainty' (1759: 54). To provide a clear focus and prepare the way for the next chapter, which contains a wide range of design examples made by the Landscape Machine team, I will highlight two aspects that indicate the relationship between Landscape Machines and Serious Landscaping. While Serious Landscaping requires a broadening of the design repertoire and the introduction of all six archetypical landscapes, the concept of the Landscape Machines has helped (1) to cultivate interest in and find a reason for including a wide diversity of landscape meanings, and (2) to explore and expand landscape designerly habits in the making of meaning for a broader audience (including non-human aspects of life). These two aspects will be revisited in the discussion in the next chapter to articulate in what way the 'research through designing' part of my thesis has provided answers to the question of characterizing a future design repertoire by including the idea of the sublime.

Chapter Six

LANDSCAPE MACHINES

An exploration of the repertoire and design of performing landscapes

Partly based on ‘Rural Landscape Anatomy’ (Roncken 2006); ‘Landscape Machines, productive nature and the future sublime’ (Roncken et al. 2011); ‘Agrarian Rituals and the Future Sublime’ (Roncken 2011); ‘Klimaatbuffers vragen om adaptieve esthetiek’ (Roncken 2013) and for the most part on ‘Landscape Machines: Designerly Concept and Framework for an Evolving Discourse on Living System Design’ (Roncken et al. 2014).

‘... the “environmental problem” is not a problem of man’s relation to his natural surroundings, but first and foremost a problem of man’s relation to himself. It is not enough, then, to talk about – and work on – environmentally clean technologies, or to further enhance our environmental education efforts, or even to better understand the dynamics of natural processes from a complexity perspective. Fine efforts as they are, they will fall short if at the same time we do not place before us as the central problem the cultural limits of that predator man provoking the environmental damages.’

(Juarrero, Sotolongo, Uden and Capra, *Reframing Complexity*, 2007: ix)

The aim of this chapter is to explore how future landscape architecture, as an evolving discipline, can deal with the idea of the sublime. As mentioned earlier, the design concept of Landscape Machines has evolved in parallel with the writing of this thesis. Discussing the lessons learned from this design process will reveal that design is not a direct outcome of literature research. It involves a renewed research interest and a multitude of trial and error processes to find a fit between general knowledge, proven technologies and a local situation. The type of design that is

explored by the concept of Landscape Machines is concerned with the dynamics of self-organizing systems and thus moves away from more orthodox object-related design research. Working according to the sublime is not merely a case of applying the stylistic elements described in the landscape archetypes that I have derived through literature research. It is, in fact, re-learning to design according to a radical opening of new types of landscape meaning and to gain awareness of all the design habits that are still accommodating a style-based aesthetic focus. Research by designing is also reflexive (see Introduction) as it is dependent upon the visualization capacities and creative personalities of individuals and individuals working as part of a team. The research into such opportunities is a work in progress and the results obtained so far will be discussed. The remaining challenges will be formulated in the concluding part of this chapter as well as in the final chapter of this book.



A performing sublime

Over the past ten to twenty years, terms such as ecosystem services, climate-proof design, landscape urbanism and green infrastructure have marked a paradigm shift from *beautification and preservation* to landscape-related *performance* as part of a more general movement towards sustainable development. Among the practical implications of sustainability for landscape architecture are the integration and development of clean technologies and the reliance on natural processes (e.g. Bélanger 2013; Berger and Sijmons 2010; Thompson 2012; Waldheim 2006). A feature of these developments is that they are interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary and thereby question the unique qualities of landscape architecture as a specialized field. As quoted above, the central problem according to Juarrero et al. (2007) is to address ‘the cultural limits of that predator man provoking the environmental

damages'. It is on the subject of these cultural limits that the field of landscape architecture can make a distinctive contribution by means of an explicit aesthetic framework and expertise.

Throughout the history of landscape architecture the exploration of cultural limits has been an implicit expertise in theoretical and experimental work. Landscape architects and designers have long been altering riverbeds and the growing conditions for plants, and have made the most remote and unexpected environments accessible. In general, the designerly purpose has been to provoke a sense of beauty and enthusiasm for the wonders of nature or to celebrate advances in engineering. A sense of beauty is certainly not excluded from the six archetypal landscapes. For one thing, legible landscapes can provide an understanding of the complex system that is needed to manage different water regimes. A relatively new challenge, though, is developing a type of landscape architecture that is open to more dissonant types of landscapes.

The paradox created by directly relating the word 'landscape' to 'machine' is provocative. The word 'landscape' can be conceived as representing the pastoral and the relatively natural, whereas 'machine' represents the influence of mankind and the technocratic, and also the darker, more despicable and harmful influences of mankind. As such, the framing of the term 'Landscape Machine' involves the age-old discourse on the dichotomy between the beautiful and the sublime. Its combined meaning could then relate to the, also age-old, designerly answer to this discourse through the much more practical idea of the picturesque (see Chapter One). However, the Landscape Machine concept, as a provocation, aims to avoid falling into the designerly habit of more or less harmonic picturesque effects, but instead seeks to explore specifically dissonant and bordering sensations, both physically and mentally.

The integration of knowledge of ecological systems into landscape design is not a new subject (Hough 1995; McHarg 1969). It is, in fact, one of the key components

of the ‘jump over the garden fence’. This development in landscape architecture is of course not entirely logical or rational. On the contrary, the development of landscape design has been strongly related to pragmatic, entrepreneurial and political conditions rather than to fundamental scientific ambitions (Sijmons 2012: 285–287). Professional skills are then called upon when the conditions have been created for the construction phase. Landscape design has become a rather practical specialism, despite the fierce theoretical discourses in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A principle lesson of recent history is that landscape architects still take too romantic a view of natural processes and many landscape architects would rather satisfy their anonymous broad audiences with accessible clichés of matured landscapes. This may be a pitfall for any profound collaboration between frontline science and practised design (Moore 2010; Waldheim 2006).

The general idea of the Landscape Machine is to develop a new kind of semi-wilderness. This semi-wilderness is the product of not only a well-placed set of ecological and technological interventions (i.e. the machinic, see also *Terra Fluxus* by Corner, 2006) but also the result of allowing new habitats to arise (i.e. the landscape). A Landscape Machine serves both the natural development of ecosystems and habitats and the harvestable resources of enhanced natural environments. The area must therefore be made suitable to accommodate both agricultural yields and ecosystem restoration. The design challenge is to marry agricultural innovation and habitat development to create a performing landscape. The physical performance is expressed in crops and animal populations and in resilient systems to cope with a new climate regime; the most resilient systems can even act as cleansing facilities for polluted soil, water and air. The aesthetic performance is expressed in the physical interaction and a continuous shifting sense of place and sense of self. Recreational opportunities will not be designed explicitly; they will arise from a more agricultural type of interaction with the developing landscape. The semi-wilderness will be

a dynamic place, as it will slowly be colonized in response to a series of shifting landscape performances.

The different context of the word ‘machine’ is intentionally confusing. The type of ‘machine’ intended here is not the Victorian type of machine with cranks and bolts. It does not belch smoke and produce unwanted by-products, nor does it appear as a clunky steel anomaly. A Landscape Machine is an organic hybrid, mechanized by natural processes such as evaporation, tidal fluctuation and groundwater seepage. It may be conceived of as a futuristic machine that is both natural and man-made. Such a Landscape Machine includes a specific distinction between ‘scripted design interventions’ and ‘non-scripted responses and interferences’. Within this ideology, the Landscape Machine does not merely adhere to the current or past landscape system, but grows and ripens as a landscape system. Every Landscape Machine is a ‘young landscape’ passing quickly into juvenile phases. Any later intervention in the growing conditions for the machinic landscape will result in a gradual landscape adaptation offering equally gradual changes in aesthetic engagement.

The definition of a Landscape Machine thus consists of the following four main requirements (see Figure 6):

(1) The continuous paradox that is offered through the design of Landscape Machines is that nothing resembles clock-like machinery; it will all just appear ‘naturally’. This paradox will be influential on both the development of the craftsmanship of the designers and the bewilderment of the audience. An interactive relationship with something as fragmented, fluid and diverse as a landscape system can be composed (e.g. conceived as eco-mechanical) if we distinguish scripted design interventions from unscripted system responses. What the designer introduces is part of the scripted intention; the way the landscape system responds is the unscripted interference, thereby affecting the original script. The development over time of scripted interventions and unscripted interferences is what constitutes the whole of the Landscape Machine. The ambiguity and uncertainty within the

experience of the audience of what is to be conceived as scripted and what not is part of the bewilderment (and may be expected to induce the sensational drift of the sublime). The audience is not strictly confined to human presence. Birds, fish, insects, flowers, trees, plant communities and the like are just as much part of the audience as humans are. The responses of plants and animals are part of the total set of audience interferences as they interact with the newly offered landscape system. Humans, plants and animals alike are subjected to interactions as a result of a scripted landscape intervention, as well as the social interactions between these diverse audiences. As such, within the concept of the Landscape Machine all aesthetics is to be interpreted as social aesthetics by a comprehensive inclusion of complete audiences.

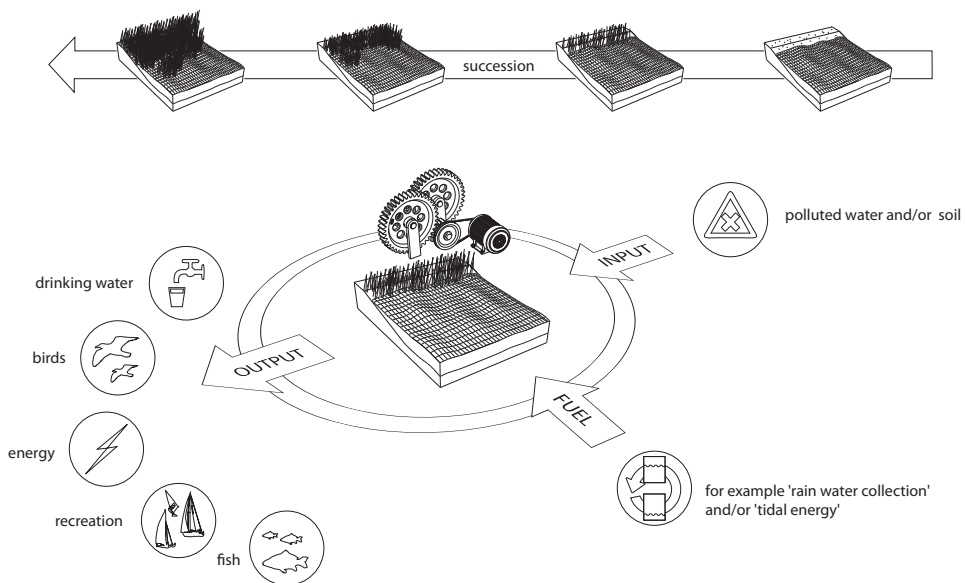


Figure 6: Schematic display of the process-related organization within a Landscape Machine: *Fremdkörper* input – initiation of the machine – natural fuel – landscape motoric parts – succession – diverse outputs. Image by A. Herrebout 2011.

(2) A Landscape Machine is a performing landscape in which a design intervention causes it to respond to novel physical conditions. The emphasis on non-endemic resources is a designerly principle to provoke a new system response. This non-endemic feature is best described by the word *Fremdkörper*. *Fremdkörper* are either technological or resource-related elements within the landscape that are non-endemic and thereby stimulate systemic responses. The word *Fremdkörper* is also a reference to the central idea of the sublime as a means to rediscover your own body and identity ‘as though it had itself produced what it has heard’ (Longinus: section XXXIII-2). The artificially introduced *Fremdkörper* are designed to cause a critical level of system stress. The main design effort lies in the determination of these critical levels related to newly introduced components and resources defined by scale, position, timespan and set of audience interactions through which a landscape will start to adapt. The performance over time of this aroused landscape, including the adaptations and responses by a diversity of audiences, is what constitutes the mechanical part of the Landscape Machine. It is in the literal sense a machine because this aroused landscape delivers a controlled amount of food, resources, energy and decontamination services.

(3) The machine will for the most part develop according to unscripted system responses. The responses will initially gain in complexity as they continuously interact with each other, affecting the shape, scale and position of components and audience responses within the landscape. There is an additional disturbance of the system by scripted harvesting of crops, fresh water, cleaned soil or animal stock. The introduced conditions need to be quantified in order to describe the material interactions (i.e. metabolism) and qualified in order to be able to monitor the type of aesthetic interactions that facilitate new routines of audience involvement. A book-keeping model is needed to account for all the inputs and outputs through the system. The functionality of the design is thereby expressed in the form of input/output ratios for both the quantitative aspects (metabolism) and qualitative aspects

(aesthetics) of the system, providing a means for evaluating performance. The quantitative aspects include amounts of water retention and waste decomposition. The qualitative aspects include human, animal and plant responses, physical well-being and sense of place and sense of self.

(4) The overall development process can be simplified by breaking it down into four stages: an *initial stage*, a *growth stage*, a *yield stage* and a *steady state stage*. During the *initial stage* an intervention is made in the landscape and the related societal/biotic/abiotic types of engagement. The *growth stage* is transitional under the influence of various interacting parallel successions. During the *yield stage* the Landscape Machine regulates itself entirely, is powered by renewable resources and will provide a maximum amount of ecosystem services and goods. The *steady state stage* is the ideal state of the Landscape Machine because the continuous harvesting of products coincides with continuous shifts within the landscape, while maintaining an abundance of biodiversity (see 2). Dynamic steady state systems are, for instance, mangrove forests, wetland systems and highland peatlands. Landscape Machines may also evolve into a steady state that is no longer harvestable. This would mean failure in terms of productivity, but success with respect to a certain state of complexity and its corresponding diversity of aesthetic meanings.



Serendipity

These four rather simple rules permit the development of a wide variety of Landscape Machines. A fundamental and paradoxical aspect needs to be discussed here. What is very striking in the stated rules for development is the inclusion of a possible alternative end state of the intended design. The first three stages gradually work towards a more or less anticipated outcome. It takes time to change large areas

of land through the rhythmic variation of occurring events such as erosion and the natural dispersion of plants and animals. Such gradual development processes can be calculated and predicted by diverse system models, for example using the Panarchy model by Gunderson (2001). Should occurrences not match the intended results it may be possible to alter the system by taking landscape management measures. However, such interventions may not suffice to change the course of events, in which case ‘a vital serendipitous relationship between formal design and chance’ (Sijmons 2012: 298) might be the only option left, an effect that can be categorized as an unscripted and opportunistic involvement in landscape development.

What about the specific human experience within the broad definition of audiences? Human experience and judgements change as environments change, i.e. aesthetics engagement is adaptive (see: Roncken 2013). Suppose a hole suddenly appears in the ground. Some people will ignore it and avoid it, some will decide to fill it in, some will reflect on its meaning and yet others will complain about it to the owners. Living systems are changed not only as a result of physical processes, but also by the experiential involvement of people, by their diverse responses and incentives to explore new possibilities. The definition of a living system includes the aesthetics of the making of meaning. Living systems are affected if people change their perception of meaning and thereby adapt their responses and interactions related to specific types of meaning. If, for example, neglected landscapes arise in people’s perception, these may lead to managerial neglect and yet they may also cause humans to interact through an enlarged focus on material and food scarcity, sexual drive, e.g. (see Chapter Five). Or, if systems do not develop as planned, as forecasted by the models, the accumulated changes in a sense of place and sense of self may turn initially undervalued results into unexpected desirable products. Serendipity will play a role as Landscape Machines transform. For example, non-scripted exotic planting may at first be considered a nuisance and an obstacle to the

development of native populations, but later the same exotic plants may be found to have highly valuable properties for the treatment of cancer.

Serendipity can be regarded as a system characteristic of Landscape Machines, resulting from the ambiguity between scripted design interventions and unscripted responses and interferences. As such, serendipity is also part of the aesthetic idiom of designing and modelling living systems. Landscape philosopher Ian Thompson points out a similar nuance in the discourse on landscape urbanism, which he compares with Daoist philosophy (Thompson 2012: 14). Daoism is not against action, but only seeks ‘to act when the time is ripe and the occasion demands it’. A relevant research question would be how to include the idea of serendipity as a functional part of system modelling. Landscape Machines can be regarded as environments in which all audiences, including humans, are deliberately estranged and teased into new performances. Introducing unfamiliar, performance-related landscape conditions allows audiences to experience new levels of intervention and gradually evolve and change their habitual aptitudes and interpretations (see Selman 2008). The experience and judgement of a broadly defined audience changes as environments change. All types of audiences are distinctly adaptive owing to their serendipitous interests and enthusiasm for exploring new possibilities that arise.



Metabolism of Landscape Machines

The metabolism of Landscape Machines encompasses more than physical interactions (matter). Cultural meanings, incentives for affordances and social processes should also somehow be incorporated. So far this is purely theoretical, as Landscape Machines are academic constructs and purely speculative; they are paper realities only. The visualization of experiential scenarios is thus an important means

to simulate any aesthetic (affordance-related) responses by human interaction. These visualizations, preferably multisensory and cinematographic, have to conjure up a high degree of empathy. Besides this, the design follows a procedure that is only partly dependent upon local circumstances and, roughly speaking, proceeds as follows:

Examine (4 points)

- › examine the confinement of the Landscape Machine
- › examine potential ecosystem services
- › examine the systemic history of the site and past/present audience engagement
- › examine external and internal metabolic relationships and note how they can be measured

Define (4 points)

- › define desirable nutrient cycles and feedback systems (recycling)
- › define nutrient cycles geographically and describe what has to be connected/isolated
- › define desirable human, animal and plant life involvement (affordances and landscape ecology)
- › define what type of yield is possible over what timespan

A rather pragmatic part of the procedure is to draw up an input/output scheme of the metabolic and aesthetic interactions. This scheme, together with accompanying cross-sections showing the dimensions in the landscape, indicates what types of relationships may develop. Such schemes may serve as the neutral ground for both

the designer and the specialists involved to foster the research and design process. One of the possible schematic representations can be found in thermodynamics, especially the evolutionary thermodynamics contained in the dissipative model by Enzo Tiezzi (et al. 2011).

Evolutionary thermodynamics is a branch of science that seeks to explain, in general terms, the processes that regulate the functions of living systems. Ilya Prigogine, a Nobel Prize winner in 1977, formulated the concept of *dissipative structures* to define systems characterized by their ability to organize themselves into coherent forms or structures and maintain them over time (i.e. steady state). Dissipative structures are thermodynamic systems, open to energy and matter, that self-organize towards higher degrees of complexity and organization (Prigogine and Stengers 1984). Living systems, such as cells, plants, animals and human beings, as well as ecosystems, cities, landscapes and the planet all belong to this category. In a wider sense, social, cultural and economic systems also involve the emergence of ordered structures and in that sense resemble thermodynamic systems (see Capra 1996; Barnett 2013). More recently, Enzo Tiezzi (et al. 2011) proposed a further development of this concept that he synthetically expressed with the acronym COOS¹⁵, which stands for Confined Ontic Open System. According to Tiezzi, all living organisms, whether simple or complex, share similar thermodynamic properties: ‘they are open systems with their own evolutionary autonomy...they are confined inside a bounded space in which they develop their processes, they are ontic, maintaining their internal evolutionary memory which cannot be deleted because it obeys the arrow of the time’ (Tiezzi et al. 2011: 2901).

It is specifically the concept of ‘onticness’ that allows the inclusion of emerging judgements and appreciation for the functionality of the Landscape Machine. The onticness of a system results from a co-evolutionary process in which systems develop through a succession of ‘choices’ and chances. The state of a system at a

¹⁵ Referring to the Latin name of the Greek island that was the home of Hippocrates.

given time and its future development follow a pathway that depends on events and thus takes memory of history as embedded information. Systems will not evolve backwards, they will always respond progressively according to the complex whole of new circumstances.

The concept of ‘openness’ refers to the exchanges between the living system and its external environment, as expected in dissipative systems. Because living systems are open, they are exposed to perturbations induced by external changes. The presence of a border, far from determining a condition of isolation, allows the system to be consistent and recognized as a singular identity. This ‘confinement’ works as a permeable membrane, an interface that allows modulation of the relations and exchanges between the living system and the external environment and thus conditions its evolution. Finally, within the whole, these concepts operate ‘systemically’, indicating a dissipative, living system. As a framework to collect the sublimely large set of mathematical data and dynamical exchanges, the simplicity of COOS is instructive.

The table on the next page (Table 1) lists all the specifications under the acronym COOS. It also contains specifications for development towards the ‘steady state phase’, which may turn out to be different from expected, even consciously altered, as a result of new insights and/or changed aesthetic engagement (through affordances). The aesthetic engagement is discussed in both the ontic and the systemic aspects of the future landscape.

Table 1: overview of the four key concepts of COOS and specified in more detail how these apply, in general terms, for a Landscape Machine

Key concept	Specification
Confined	<p><i>Boundaries:</i> permeable–non-permeable ‘barriers’ perform functions of control, linkage and communication, such as those performed by membranes, filters and interfaces, in order to regulate/constrain/monitor relations and exchanges with other systems and the external environment, for example to ensure consistency/perception of in/out limits and to specific filter and control processes/functions (e.g. noise, in/out flowing water, wind, movement of animals and people, connections to the local/global market). The boundary also indicates the boundary of a sense of place, i.e. the delineation within the landscape that relates to identifiable features within the landscape.</p>
Open	<p><i>Connectivity:</i> in/out flows allow the system to grow and develop, fed by energy, materials, water and other resources (also people as workers, recreational visitors and trespassers, imported goods, information), and discharge waste, emissions and water outflows (also export food, symbols that represent a sense of place or sense of self, materials and goods to the market). This implies the system behaves like a node (and plays a role) in a wider, even global network of processes with a proper physical consistency and space-time rhythms.</p>
Ontic	<p><i>Historical dimension:</i> combination of choice and chance, (eco)systems, co-evolution and emergence of novelties. Events that occurred in the past may be indicators of the present state of the system and present sense of place and sense of self. Elements are developed in accordance with the availability of local resources as well as the aesthetic/historical/climate/cultural/social/economic context.</p> <p><i>Steady state future:</i> new dynamic equilibrium will influence the settlement of plants, animals and human involvement, indicated by monitoring of developing capacities for affordances.</p>
Systemic	<p><i>Self-consistency:</i> the system has a coherent configuration and recognizable functions/services. A cohesive system of actors/elements derives not only from an identifiable physical structure (within given boundaries) but also from the whole organization, which implies the sharing of intentions, aims and future perspectives and the emergence of a unique identity.</p> <p><i>Multifunctionality:</i> the system is made of interacting elements/processes that perform different functions/services (with different space-time rhythms and different aims and users), but cooperate and co-evolve in an integrated whole. The organization/configuration mirrors this biocultural diversity and heterogeneity – instead of monofunctional homogeneity – as a combination of structures/functions in the same place, resulting in an enhanced land-use intensity and augmented chance for combinations, self-organization and emergence of novelties.</p> <p><i>Continuity:</i> interactions between elements in a network of processes in which, for example, outputs from one side become inputs to another (e.g. energy/matter exchanges, health-related phenomena, sense of place/self) enhance the diversity and specialization of elements and their cohesion/unity/continuity in space and time. Examples are production chains, networks of resources (e.g. energy, water, community services), means of communication (e.g. wired and wireless), discharged energy/matter collection and treatment (e.g. grey water, waste, heat), people and goods transportation.</p>



Three examples

I will discuss three examples each elaborating on a different aspect – and not in chronological order of origin, yet in an order to explain the main discoveries made during this research through designing. For a more extensive overview see: www.landscapemachines.com and also the Appendix in this book, containing all the MSc thesis projects involved in the development of the concept of the Landscape Machine. The first example, Saline Landscapes¹⁶, reveals the design strategy of upscaling an ecological innovation to the scale of a regional landscape intervention. This validates not the experiential characteristics but the productive aspects of semi-wildernesses – as has been the first paradox to explore. The second example, Dredge Landscape Park¹⁷, reveals the design strategy of a stimulated landscape performance and its enhanced functionality to clean polluted resources. As a result, the new performance of this landscape will stimulate the growth of a number of landscape archetypes as a by-product of an improved landscape performance. The third and last example, Ems Full Hybrid¹⁸, reveals the design strategy of introducing a ‘Fremdkörper’ on the scale of a regional landscape. This example validates the need for sublime landscapes as a means to not only create smarter landscape systems for ecological purposes, but also to increase the economic viability and broad audience involvement in the act of landscaping. After discussing these three examples, I reflect on still unanswered research questions and future directions in the development of Landscape Machines as a concept for the design of sublime landscapes.

16 This project was discussed in local media and contributed to a successful national grant application by the local landscape authorities to develop a test location for such a semi-wilderness. For more information see: <http://www.kustlaboratorium.nl>.

17 This project was awarded with the first price in the International Architecture Competition, Archiprix International 2007 in Shanghai, China.

18 This project was awarded with the first price in the National Architecture Competition, Archiprix 2014 in the Netherlands.

Saline Landscapes

This project evolved from a classic design assignment on introducing a new technological object into the landscape while not disrupting the experience of the existing landscape (Molpheta and van Wonderen 2009). In this case the object was a newly developed fish-farming pond in which fish are bred in a closed cycle of food, nutrients and by-products. The rather small industrial scale and the fact that it only consisted of one test farm presented a challenge to the designers. What would happen to the landscape if this farming innovation would become a success and would spread across the fields? An industrial-like repetition of the same type of pond would not fit the agricultural landscape of this region. The location for the project is the Dutch island of Noord-Beveland in the province of Zeeland, which is well-known for its agricultural land use and its dynamic relationship to the sea.

The local economy in the province is based in part on arable farming that depends on fresh water and on coastal tourism. In response to the increasing intrusion of salt water into the groundwater, one development scenario that was considered by the designers is to adapt to the increasing salinity. If the landscape system were redesigned to cope with increased salinity, would this farming innovation help to envision such a transformation? The brief that the designers set for themselves was to maintain and even increase productivity and profitability under new saline conditions, while simultaneously expanding the recreational benefits and protective coastal defence measures. A distinctive design strategy within the Landscape Machine concept was explored here: to upscale a relatively small eco-technological innovation to a regional landscape intervention (see Figure 7). Two possible types of upscaling by regional landscape development would fit the current local conditions. Both of them reveal that an innovative type of cooperation is needed between farmers, nature conservation lobbyists and coastal protection facilitators. The first type is more familiar because it involves an intricate inclusion of geographical and historical landscape features to create

a rich contrasting landscape with clear divisions between farming innovation and landscape conservation. The second type does not resemble a farming landscape at all but appears to be one fluent and dynamic estuary landscape, even though it includes the same combination of fish production, coastal protection and nature restoration.

The first expansion of the original design assignment consisted of a collective of aquaculture farmers as part of a bigger system of material and nutrient cycles related to the nearby sea and the freshwater retention areas (see Figure 8 and 9). A positive aspect of this enlargement to landscape features is the possibility of introducing a triple dike system containing two rows of *inlagen* (low-lying areas for buffering salt water intrusion) that protect the land from the sea and provide an essential component within the new production system. This complex dike system also creates the necessary compartments of the new fish breeding facility. When designed carefully, these landscape elements can reinstate historical lines and points of interest that were lost during the latest agricultural land readjustment.

This type of new agrarian landscape can thus have six alternative functions:

- › producing food with a minimum of input
- › reducing and possibly even eliminating waste production
- › producing various types of agrarian products: fish, algae, cockles, ragworms, mussels, etc.
- › protecting the land against flooding
- › appealing to a broad audience and adapting to historical features in the landscape
- › facilitating new types of ecosystems and enriching local biodiversity

The second expansion of the original design assignment further enhances the concept of the Landscape Machine with sublime intentions (see Figure 10). This

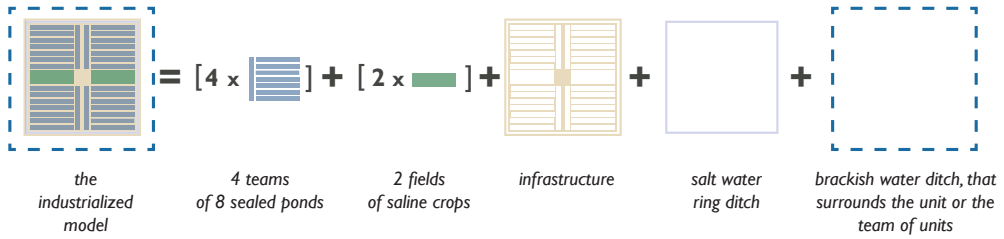


Figure 7: The designers here deconstruct the components of the new fish breeding technique to investigate expansion of the industrial-scale elements. They examined this technical repertoire to match with large-scale landscape elements and thereby used the natural processes and their relationship with the historical geography and recreational potentials of Zeeland.

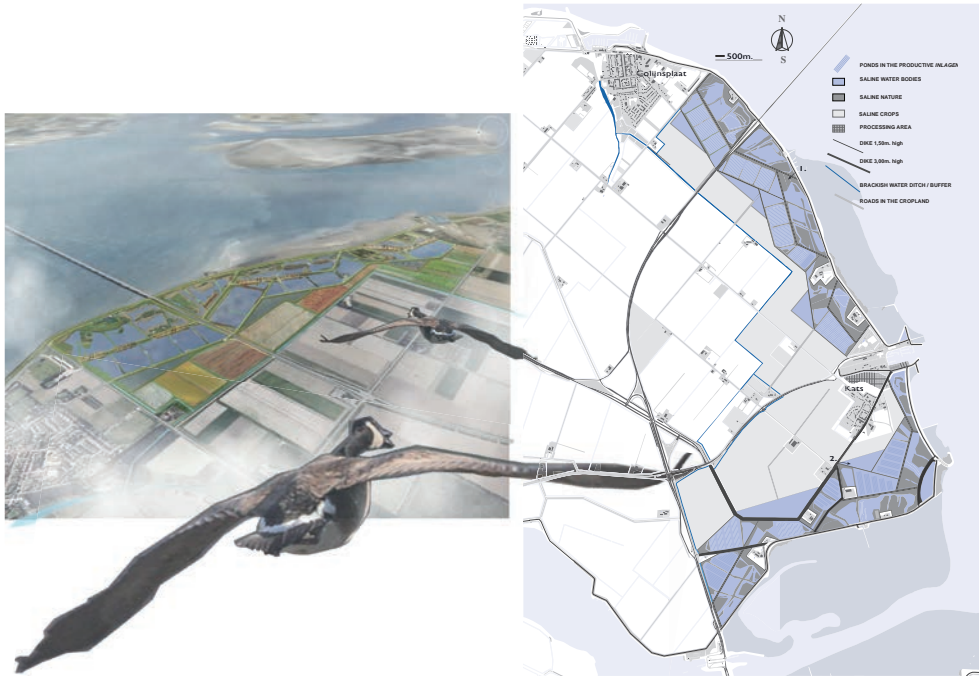


Figure 8 and 9: A new large-scale saline water system is introduced in which salt water pumped from the sea flushes through the saline productive lakes where the aquaculture ponds are situated (inner set of inlagen) and then passes partly to the saline crop areas and partly to the saline natural habitat (outer set of inlagen). Overall, the seawater is filtered within a large system covering the whole landscape and then, cleaned, returns to the sea or is recycled into the pond system. The resulting landscape contains a multitude of potentials and provides new authentic sensations – including the endangering sensation of the nearby sea – and introduces alternative economic opportunities.

Landscape Machine is even more responsive to a dynamic and open system than the regulated agricultural systems in the first enlargement (Figures 11 and 12). The location is in the area affected by a governmental plan for nature development, compensating for loss of natural values by deepening the shipping routes to Antwerp in between Belgium and the Netherlands (Treaty Vlaanderen and Nederland 2005). An area of 600 hectares has to be allocated for nature compensation, which has led to much political debate and social unrest. This Landscape Machine can deliver both the nature conservation targets and the agricultural demands by the owners,



Figure 10: The aim of the design research is to enlarge the double dike system to include fish beds between the mainland and an open tidal area connected to the sea. Different types of floating fishponds can also be placed here to benefit from the tidal influences.

creating a landscape that will be accessible to visitors wanting to experience new authentic delta landscapes.

The design of these two types of saline landscapes helped to explore two feasible types of productive semi-wilderness. We learned from this project that we can upscale relatively small-scale eco-technological inventions to better match a more integrative landscape scale. And we learned that the overall appearance of Landscape Machines can be influenced by either a more agricultural-like or a more wilderness-like landscape. In the next example I will discuss another design attempt that focuses on a large-scale cleansing functionality of a large quantity of polluted dredge. This Dredge Landscape Park illustrates a responsive landscape that offers yet another type of semi-wilderness.

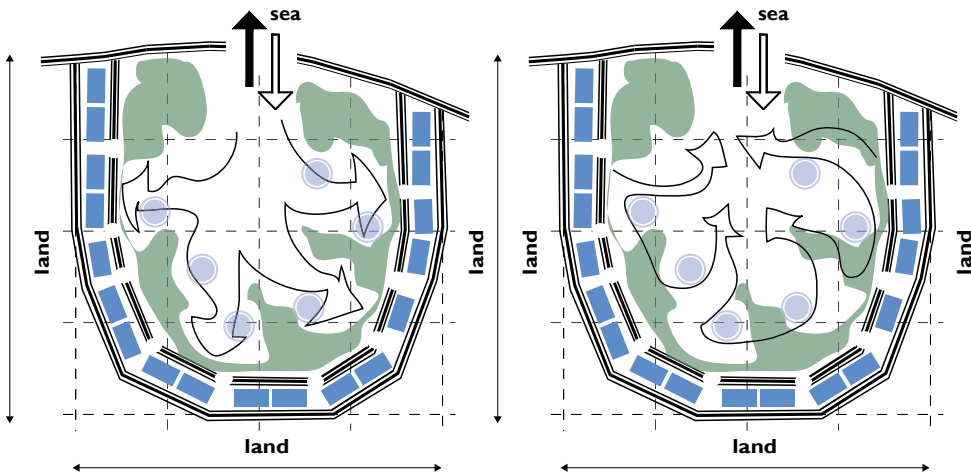


Figure 11 and 12: The salt marsh and abundant vegetation in this dynamic area contribute to the absorption of nutrients from the fish ponds. The system is almost as efficient as the initial industrial-scale model, but with closed material and nutrient cycles and open to the surrounding environment.

Dredge Landscape Park

This second example will reveal how a new performing landscape can produce a type of semi-wilderness that includes distinctive new types of landscapes (de Vries and Herrebout 2007). The incentive to change this landscape is partly influenced by a design competition for the development of a 21st century park in the project area. This design contest focused on the creation of a new type of landscape park, but the funds required to create such a large park to compensate for the growing urban demands in the region are not available. In a time of financial cutbacks the landscape architecture profession seemed to have come to a dead end regarding parks on this scale and the contesting design firms struggled with the assignment. In contrast, the proposed Landscape Machine is not just about creating a park that is costly in management and dependent upon an audience that will pay entrée fees. The challenge set here is to concentrate on designing a performing landscape that serves the resolution to a growing urban influence on the regional landscape metabolism. The idea is that a performing landscape will be fun to watch and explore while it moans and groans to process an accelerated metabolism.

Polluted silt and sludge has been accumulating in the Rhine/Meuse delta since the 1970s and causes drainage and environmental problems in the water system. This material will have to be removed more frequently and in greater quantities due to the effects of climate change and growing urbanization. The current solution is to store the polluted material in earthworks and other deposits where it is not cleaned, but at best concealed. There are three main types of dredge pollution: heavy metals, organic pollution and a mixture of both (Figure 13). Heavy metals are the most difficult to treat as they cannot be dissolved and are persistent. The remediation process consists of separating and storing the metals, partly by phytoremediation (extraction by plants). If metals are bound to peat or clay particles, additional salt water and oxygen can be used for the separation process. In this design proposal most of the polluted material will be gathered first and then separated and cleaned

by organic processes (Figure 14). Within 20 years this dredge-cleaning landscape will evolve into a ‘dredge landscape park’: a metal garden, a dune landscape as a mosaic of new explorable environments.

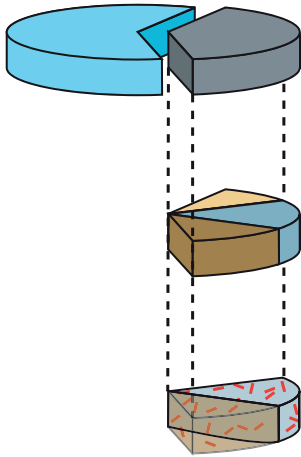


Figure 13: The idea for creating this machine was to separate the dredged material by soil type and thus by type of pollution. Specific processes are available to clean every type of soil; each process needs different circumstances and timescales to work effectively. The differences in scale and time span correspond with landscape types that will develop and can be made accessible.

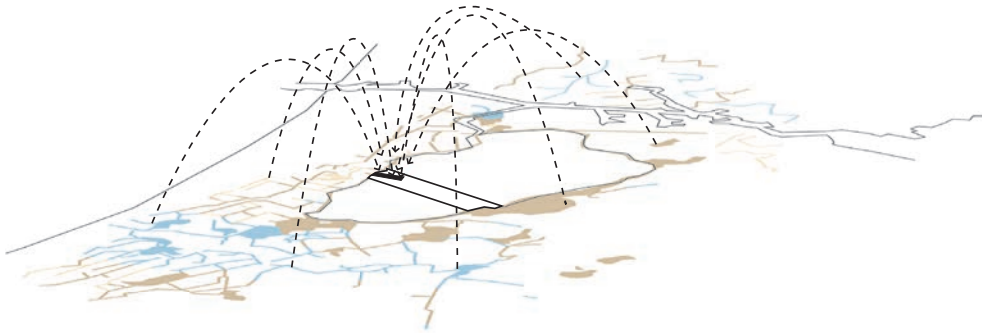
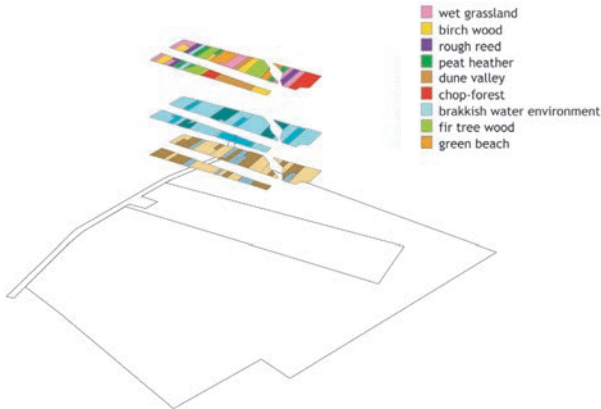


Figure 14: Dredged material from the northern Randstad – the most urbanized region in the Netherlands – is estimated to amount to 12 million cubic metres in total. This amount will gradually be transported by boat to an area that will become a Dredge Landscape Park.

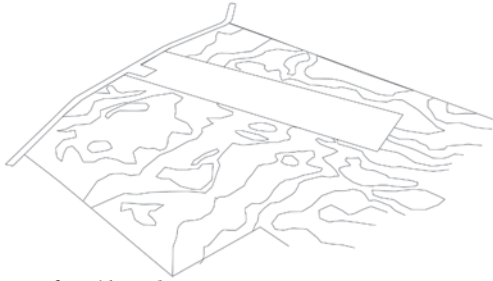
Organic pollution is relatively easy to clean by spreading the dredged material thinly over a large area of land. Oxygen and bacteria, supplied by vegetation well rooted in the material, break down the organic material within about seven years. Dredged material contaminated with a mix of pollutants presents a challenge. If enough oxygen is added to decompose the organic matter, the heavy metals may be accidentally flushed out with the residue water. To avoid this, salt water can be used although using a large amount of salt water can seriously hamper the growth of the vegetation. This type of pollution needs to be treated in sequential steps using a diversified system with different types of water: salt, brackish and fresh. This diversification expresses the complexity of the Landscape Machine and the natural systems needed to provide cleaning process (Figure 15a to d).

Creating a large park is mostly a problem of finding a balance between investment and revenue, which tends to lead to an undesirably large amount of urban development within the park structure ('red pays for green'). The revenue obtained from cleaning up polluted dredged material from the waterways of a great many municipalities could pay for investing in a remediation method that is at the same time a public park. Another source of revenue is the sale of clean sand as foundation and fill material for urban and industrial development in the Dutch delta region. However, the resulting landscapes are not necessarily attractive in the classical sense of a park, stereotypically with trees, meadows and pathways. Instead, the biological, geological and ecological functions that normally dictate Dutch landscape design are subordinate to the cleaning process, which creates new types of habitat and ecological relationships, and as yet unknown series of sensations (see Figure 16a to c).

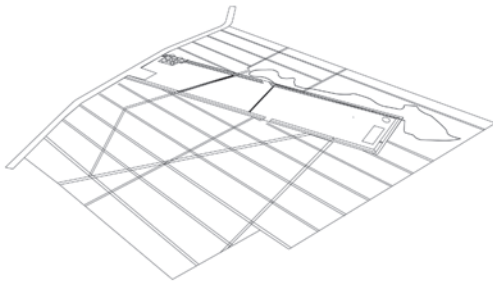
The visualizations reveal a design that shows clear lines within a larger area with strange new wilderness-like features (Figure 17). Within the clear lines the dominant agrarian pattern of this Dutch polder resonates, although at an angle to the existing urban and agricultural context. As a paper project only, such a distinctive



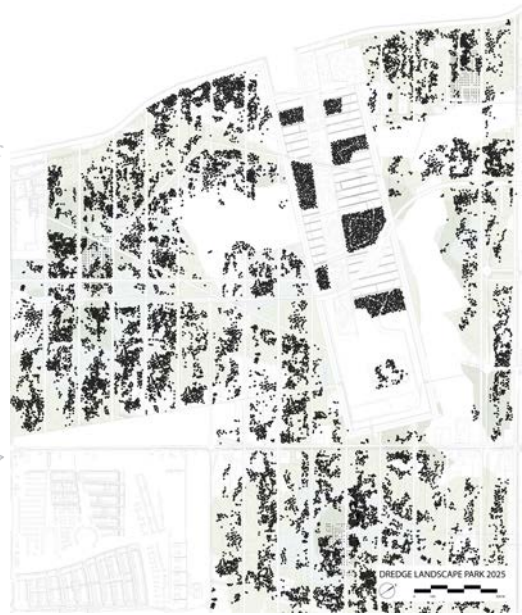
15a: different environments/habitats



15b: polderpark



15c: water filter system



15d: final stage in 20 years

Figure 15a to d: All the necessary components for the cleaning process can be found in the features of this landscape. In this case the increasingly saline groundwater is not a problem, but a convenient ingredient of this Landscape Machine.

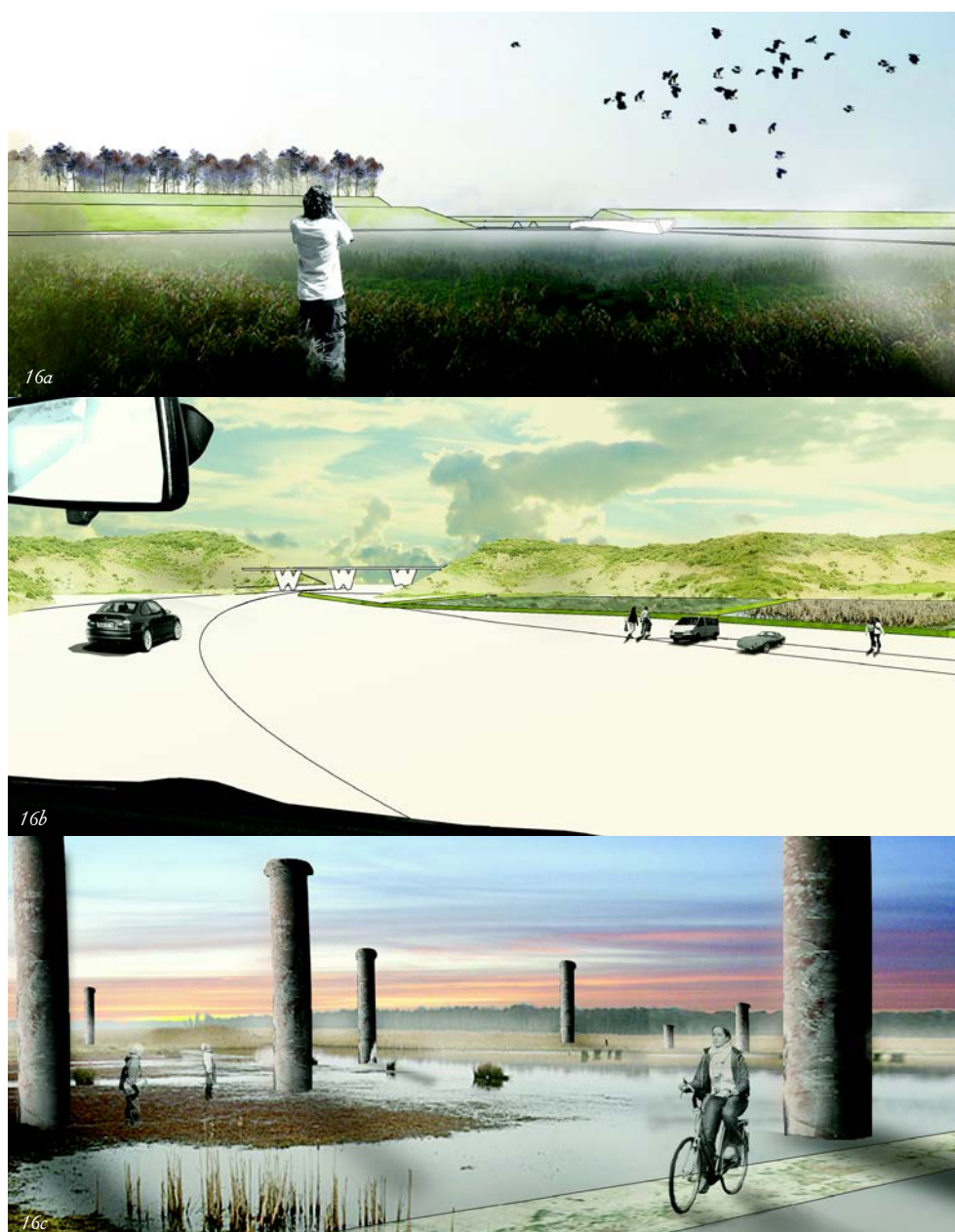


Figure 16a to c: The intended timespan and gradual development will call for a whole range of new types of activities to maintain the landscape processes – new rituals that may be able to create a new cultural impact.

visual marker serves to promote a habit-breaking pattern within the tradition of landscape compositions as well as legitimizing the size and conditions specific to the aims of the project. The visual appeal of the aerial perspective is provided by the contrast between a clearly scripted area within the rectangular collection of varied landscape types and a seemingly random pattern of overlapping lines, curved edges and clumps of trees. This clearly represents the idea of the Landscape Machine as a dualistic concept.

The images that reveal the embodied variety of landscape experiences show a similar contrast between a limited number of sharply defined technical elements and an abundance of natural habitats. The most unlikely landscape is depicted in Figure 16c, which shows a cyclist passing a series of vertical outlets in a wetland area and a few hikers in the wetland itself. These vertical outlets are dramatized elements as well as functional. They are man-made geysers that regularly spew out a spray of muddy water. A whole lot of these vertical elements create associations of

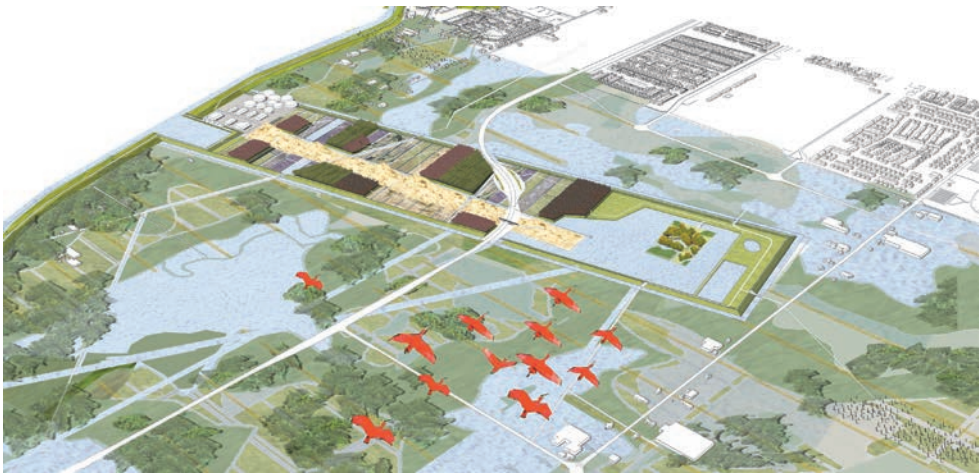


Figure 17: A birds-eye view of the landscape intervention as a whole. The rectangular shaped polder is the most scripted and ‘mechanical’ part of the soil-cleaning landscape. The surrounding landscape contains mostly unscripted elements guided by slow developments over time. Here, flamingos can find food and nesting grounds that are not available in the current habitat.

machine-like regularity and performance, which are very different from the wetland environment. In terms of the archetypical landscapes, this could potentially offer a portal landscape experience, transporting the experiencer to a deliberately alienating environment, giving rise to new types of causality between the creation of landscape and the influence of humans. They could also cause a horrific landscape experience if the bordering sensations are dissonant to the experiencer's sense of self. The designers have clearly set out to legitimize a large variety of landscape experiences through the required functionality of the facilities for cleaning the dredged material.

This design exercise provided the insight that rigorously new performances can create new types of landscapes. Within the design team it was debated whether this project would be best served by creating more legible landscape features that relate to the narrative of the cleansing process, or that the semi-wilderness should be more present. My own conclusion was that this project served to explore a daring and at the same time feasible technological aim for a landscape. But it did not yet provide enough variety of archetypical landscape experiences, nor opportunities for unforeseen habitats for animals and plants. The next project will reveal a similar daring technological intervention as an incentive to develop large-scale landscapes. This time we intended to intertwine ecology, economy and aesthetics even more by introducing a bold new element into the landscape system, i.e. the Fremdkörper.

Ems Full Hybrid

In this third and last example, the introduction of Fremdkörper will be discussed to enable the growth of new habitats that improve the dynamics of a dysfunctional landscape system (van der Togt and Papenborg 2012). The project area is the Ems estuary in the northern delta region of the Netherlands. The main challenge in this project is to revitalize the estuary system, because it has been immobilized into a non-dynamic system that needs continuous dredging to maintain just one shipping lane. A similar situation can be found in many deltas around the globe.

Deep sea harbours and other engineering interventions in dynamic natural systems such as rivers and estuaries usually require costly maintenance measures. Imbalanced input/output ratios are maintained by relentless human intervention, which continuously affects the potentially beneficial emergence of a natural balance. The design task is to rejuvenate the foundations for local and sustainable socio-economic prospects by reinstating a dynamic estuary system. The preparatory research revealed that a delta can be restored to a natural balance between width, depth and shape. A different type of intervention is needed for the upper and lower parts of the delta. The most costly intervention is needed for the lower delta (sea side): the construction of extensive rig structures to create a more varied tidal bed. However, the costs can be reduced by obtaining the rigs as a recycled by-product of the dismantling of decommissioned North Sea oil platforms. In a win-win situation, the now declining port facilities will obtain income for dismantling and adapting the rigs to create effective breeding grounds for mussels and other shellfish (Figure 18). The oil rigs can be shipped to the Ems delta as non-endemic elements (*Fremdkörper*) and become part of a new landscape system. Besides providing a new recycling industry for the region, groynes can be assembled from oil rig jackets to gradually reshape the estuary into a new dissipative system.¹⁹

The hundreds of decommissioned North Sea oil rigs present a growing problem (Figure 19). But this waste product (the redundant parts not processed elsewhere) can also be re-used as a resource to feed into both human processes (e.g. mechanical waste treatment) and natural processes (e.g. new affordances for plants and animals and human tourism). The oil rigs can be shipped to the Ems delta as non-endemic elements (*Fremdkörper*) and become part of a new landscape system. Besides

¹⁹ Based on data from 'rigs to reefs' projects in the United States, the placement of 'oil rig groynes' will cost \$15,000 per metre, while conventional dams will cost almost €200,000 per metre. This means a cost reduction of about 90%, taking into consideration the shorter length required when using conventional dams.

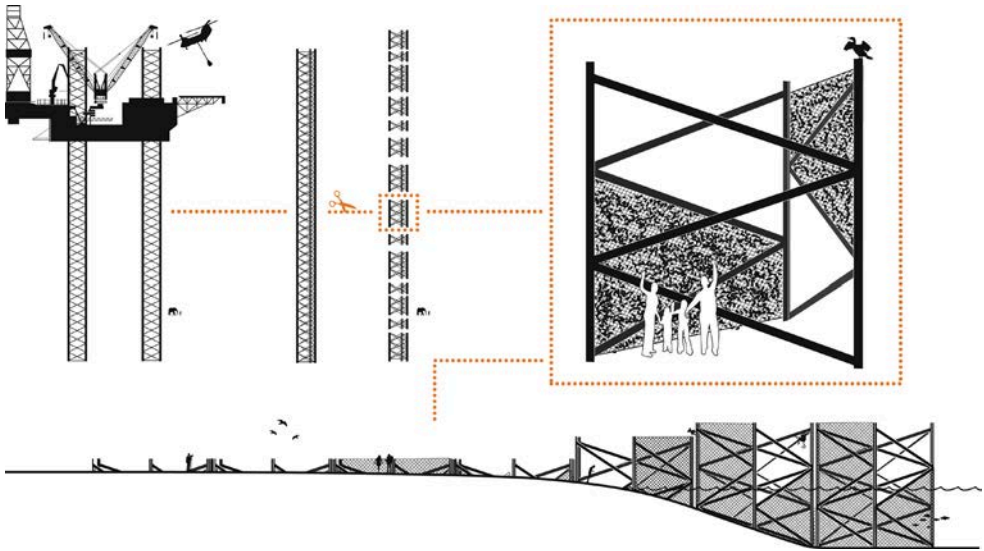


Figure 18: Disassembled oil rigs create new habitats. The introduction of Fremdkörper rig jacket structures into the dynamic estuarine system results in an intriguing 'hybrid' landscape in which nature is productive and industry produces nature.

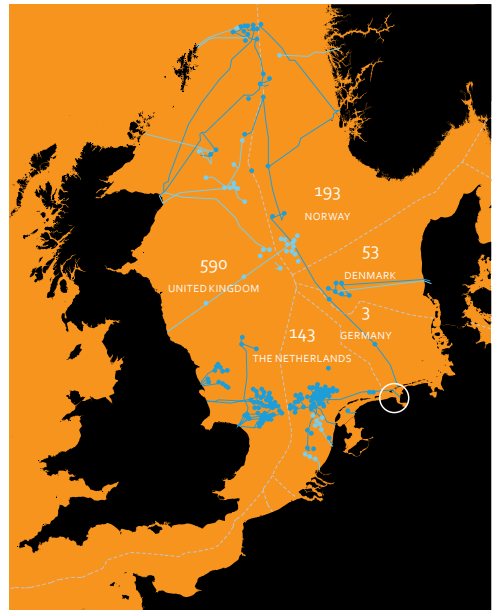


Figure 19: Project area encircled. Position and ownership of all the gas and oil rigs in the North Sea.

supplying a new recycling industry for the region, groynes made from the oil rig jackets can be used to gradually reshape the estuary into a new dissipative system.

Among the set of possible products and services, creative engagement and welfare can feed into internal flows or be exportable products (e.g. tourism). This type of systemic interaction is visualized using empathic images and experiential scenarios (Figures 20 to 22).

An important part of the design research was dedicated to understanding how the estuary system works as a series of upper, middle and lower parts. A complicating factor in this and other delta re-designs is that these sections operate as different Landscape Machines, containing different specifications according to the COOS acronym. The upper part, in the estuary mouth, is characterized by a different set of confinement, openness, onticness and systemic characteristic than the middle and



Figure 20: Decommissioned oil rigs as building blocks to steer the system back to a balanced state while maintaining a navigable channel. Decommissioned oil rigs are towed to the estuary, where the topsides are recycled and the jackets are disassembled and placed on shallow sandbanks to steer sedimentation.



Figure 21: Disassembled oil rigs create new industries. The oil rigs are deployed to heal the estuary, restore lost habitats and reconnect former fishing villages to the Ems. At the same time, they introduce an entirely new habitat where mussels and shellfish thrive, in turn attracting other wildlife and creating a new industry for the reconnected villages.



Figure 22: The Ems estuary becomes a growing landscape. With the jackets placed, sediment flows are altered and the courses of gullies are diverted. Freshly placed jackets may provide a dissonant experience that can be explored by people and animals. Older jackets will be overgrown by sea plants and mussels (not in this Figure).

lower parts. The proposed dynamic landscape is not only dynamic due to the tidal influences, but also due to changing growing conditions for plants and opportunities for animal settlement. The aspect of physical labour is explicitly present in the form of new economic interactions, such as new industries, various new agricultural opportunities and explorative tours to be made by tourists.

Even the highly controversial presence of a shipyard upriver specialized in extremely large cruise ships is catered for. The upper part of the estuary will be compromised every time a new large cruise ship is ready for delivery (Figure 23). The water level will then be artificially raised by two metres or more to allow the passage of these ships and afterwards the water is used to flush the tidal polders. This interference in the natural regime is used as an advantage to prevent the tidal polders filling up with sediment and losing biodiversity.

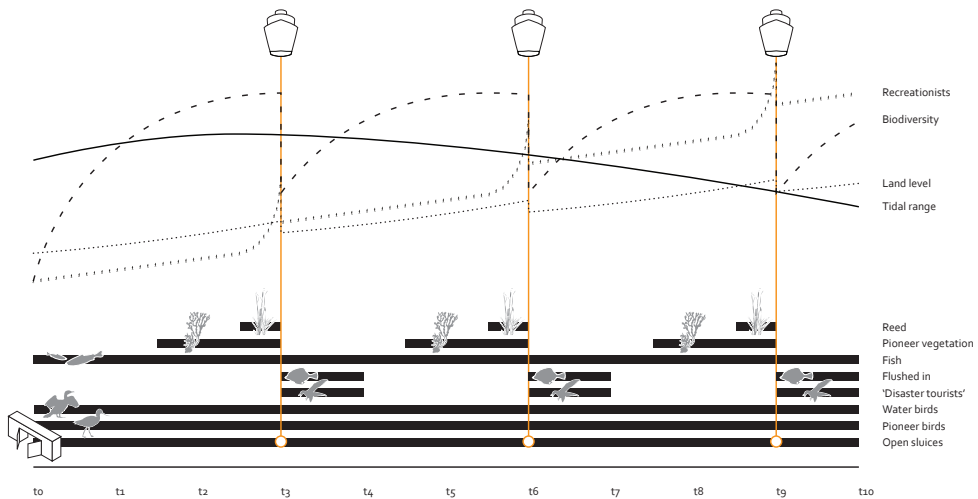


Figure 23: Dynamic development of a 'resetting' polder every time a ship passes (average once every three years). When a polder is reset, it is returned to the pioneer stage to ensure constant change and high biodiversity.

There is a strange paradox present throughout this project and its visualizations. There is at once a hugely technocratic set of solutions and an impression of a ‘used future’ in which nature is adapting to and incorporating the existing and newly introduced *Fremdkörper*. Even the flushing of the tidal polders is presented as a reason for local celebration; a regular ritual that will, again, introduce the sensation of being part of a breathing and connected whole, shared with other members of the audience: the animals and the plants (Figure 24). The flushed tidal polders may look muddy and horrible for many years; they may be neglected for some years and then reoccupied again. It is within this cycle of changing landscapes on a vast scale that the project is represented. This changing variety and almost dispassionate concern for intermediate states of neglected or horrific landscapes might even evoke certain equanimity – in other words a liminal landscape.

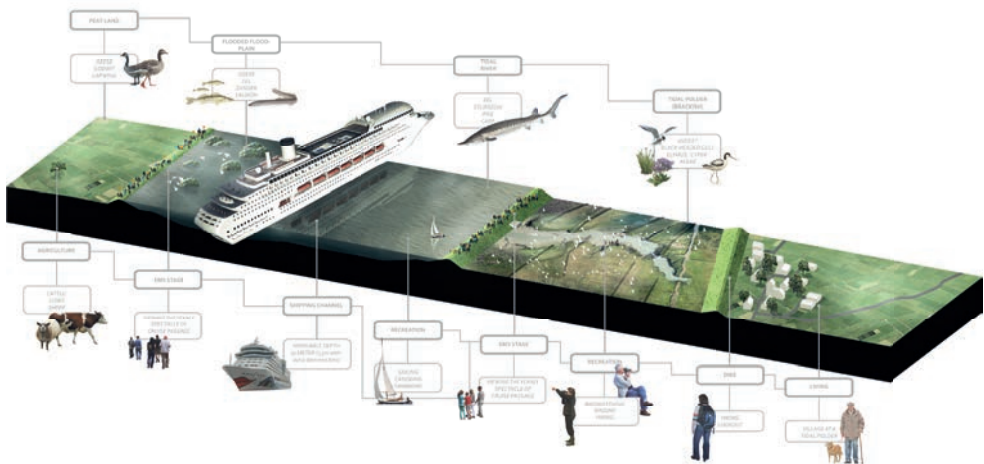


Figure 24: The dynamics of a tidal polder and its influence on a broad audience including animals and plants. See text in the figure.



Discussion

The examples of research through designing discussed above show that a new type of semi-wilderness may indeed include agricultural production resources for a growing population as well as a means to grow new habitats containing resilient natural systems. They also reveal that such intentions are not restricted to humans as audiences, but also include animals and plants, and even the substances of water and soil. Furthermore, the experience of the sublime through the development of the landscape is not only aesthetically but also socially and economically embedded. The idea of developing new semi-wildernesses is not only relevant to contemporary physical challenges in the natural world, but is also a contemporary means to explore a new economic future and type of well-being. Two aspects were introduced at the end of previous chapter to discuss the contribution to Serious Landscaping by means of the concept of Landscape Machines: (1) to cultivate interest in and find a reason for including a wide diversity of landscape meanings, and (2) to explore and expand landscape designerly habits in the making of meaning for a broader audience (including non-human aspects of life).

Concerning the first aspect, the designers involved in the reviewed projects have all put aside part of their architectural object manipulation to make way for self-organizing processes. They intended to initiate processes by understanding mechanisms to conceive a new rural landscape not as an object, but as a subjective presentation of human adaptation and interconnectedness with nature to create a living landscape. Simply recovering historical patterns or past systemic relationships within these environments is not enough. A new balance will have to be initiated between new rural engagement and new pragmatic aesthetics that may be conceived as sublime. It is in this combination of almost inconceivable complexity and ‘simple’ initiating mechanisms that the sublime becomes articulated and becomes part of a

new repertoire. Immanuel Kant characterized the sensation of the sublime by the German word *Einfalt* (*Simplicity*, Kant 1790: 116). ‘Simplicity’ evokes what is not complex, but also what is not subtle: candour, and perhaps even foolish. The French philosopher Lyotard believed this character to be crucial in understanding the idea of the sublime: ‘Simplicity is the style adopted by nature in the sublime, as nature without art. This brusque observation echoes the dispute that swept intellectual Europe and occupied it at the time, whether the sublime style is the “grand style” in the sense of ancient rhetoric or, on the contrary, the absence of all style’ (Lyotard 1994: 156).

The cultivation of a wide diversity of landscape meanings was a secondary aim while designing Landscape Machines. The primary design strategy was to avoid designing with a specific style in mind and to find more ‘serious’ reasons to include the idea of the sublime as a means to provoke a shared act of creativity by all members of the broad audience (animals, plants, humans, etc.). This perhaps resembles Weiskel’s account of the poet Wordsworth, who tried to resist the ‘awful power of imagination’. As a result, Wordsworth circled around a liminal type of sublime poetry. Have the designers of Landscape Machines perhaps intentionally been circling around the creation of specific archetypes of landscapes? My supervision of these projects was guided by curiosity. Would legible, neglected, portal or horrific landscape meanings surface simply because they appeared applicable to the aim of establishing a living system design? And in more than one situation they did surface, as illustrated by the visualizations. In those cases, the archetypes helped the designers to accept the necessary but perhaps unconventional and dispreferred types of landscapes.

Concerning the second aspect, the exploration of designerly habits was explicitly addressed within the Landscape Machine design team. We explored an abundance of technical, chemical and ecological knowledge perspectives without any clue how to apply these in new designs. This ‘delay’ before designing broke with many

designerly habits. All projects were delayed by a full year because of this. It was not until a complete narrative of all the fragments of technological, chemical and ecological understanding fitted into the historical landscape that there was any sign of a beginning of a comprehensive design. Although ‘fitting’ is not the right word. None of the Landscape Machines presented here readily fit into the landscape. They fit as far as they create, according to their new and far more demanding performance, an alternative reality. In this creative act, which is explicitly collaborative due to the many experts and changing teams, we can recognize Hypsous and the flawed style that Longinus introduced. There is Hypsous because of the effort to create a more ripened soul (of the landscape and its audiences) and there is a flawed style because of the need for the existing conditions to respond to the newly induced performance (co-creation).

Landscape architects perform landscape architecture, and yet in certain instances landscape experiences may be better served by other aesthetic disciplines. The serendipitous interrelationships that are intended within the idea of the Landscape Machine may not all be addressable by conventional landscape architectural methods. In almost all projects (see Appendix) the designers longed for a more intense collaboration with, for instance, game developers, filmmakers and writers and other artists. A striking example is the public success of the framing of the Oostvaardersplassen nature reserve as the Dutch equivalent of wilderness (Verkerk and Smit 2013). The famous historical examples of the creation of Arcadia are also a source for multidisciplinary collaborations (e.g. de Jong 2000). Modern technologies for embedding experiences in multimedia and offering them to both children and adults are all around us on a daily basis. The exploration of some type of rhythmic variation in the offering of a diversity of landscape experiences and meanings may also be better served by such collaboration.

Part Four

Challenged by Sublime Landscapes

Chapter Seven

A FUTURE REPERTOIRE BY HABIT-BREAKING DESIGN

‘The unconscious sends all sorts of vapors, odd beings, terrors, and deluding images up into the mind – whether in dream, broad daylight, or insanity; for the human kingdom, beneath the floor of the comparatively neat little dwelling that we call our consciousness, goes down into unsuspected Aladdin caves. There not only jewels but also dangerous jinn abide: the inconvenient or resisted psychological powers that we have not thought or dared to integrate into our lives. And they may remain unsuspected, or, on the other hand, some chance word, the smell of a landscape, the taste of a cup of tea, or the glance of an eye may touch a magic spring, and then dangerous messengers begin to appear in the brain. These are dangerous because they threaten the fabric of the security into which we have built ourselves and our family. But they are fiendishly fascinating too, for they carry keys that open the whole realm of the desired and feared adventure of the discovery of the self. Destruction of the world that we have built and in which we live, and of ourselves within it; but then a wonderful reconstruction, of the bolder, cleaner, more spacious, and fully human life – that is the lure, the promise and terror, of these disturbing night visitations from the mythological realm that we carry within.’

(J. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 2008 (1968): 5)

In this thesis I set out to improve the general characterization of the idea of the sublime and to formulate a designerly way of dealing with the sublime in contemporary landscapes. In the Introduction I argued that there is good reason to study ‘negative’ aesthetics as this serves to include fascinating but undesirable landscape phenomena, such as the effects of environmental threats. My research method was to focus on the experiential structure of the sublime experience and

to derive specific landscape expressions to better understand ‘negative’ aesthetics as part of landscape aesthetics. In doing so, I also set out to widen the landscape architectural repertoire to more accurately reflect such specific experiences. The main research question was:

What characterizes a future landscape architectural design that includes the idea of the sublime as part of its aesthetic repertoire?

The sub-questions were:

What is, within landscape aesthetics, the historical and contemporary understanding of the idea of the sublime?

Why are sublime experiences labelled as ‘negative aesthetics’ and by whom?

What expressions relate to the idea of the sublime in landscape and landscape design?

In this chapter I summarize the main findings of my thesis by answering these sub-questions and then pull these together in a synthesis to answer my main research question.



What is, within landscape aesthetics, the historical and contemporary understanding of the idea of the sublime?

From the literature study in Part One I deduced that the experiential structure of the sublime is complex and at present not clearly defined. The idea of the sublime is

discussed by a wide variety of disciplines in relation to literature and performance art, nature experience, landscape aesthetics and environmental aesthetics (see Figure 3). In Chapter One I described seven more or less consistent themes that either highlight a specific result of the experience of the sublime or mention a condition (e.g. distant contemplation) that has to be met first (see Figure 4, Chapter One). My conclusion was that these themes do not offer any coherent structure to understand the sublime experience. They are pieces of a puzzle that remain broken and which serve to perpetuate the romantic and mystifying idea of the sublime.

In Chapter Two, I analysed the works of three authors who can be referred to as the founding fathers of the idea of the sublime (Longinus, Burke and Kant). I deduced that the experience of the sublime consists of an experiential sequence and involves a creative act of imagination and identification. The most structural component lies in the ‘sensational drift’, a phase in which sensations are processed but are not yet resolved. To be able to understand this process, a distinction has to be made between sensations and experiences. The ‘sensation’ is that phase of the aesthetics of the sublime in which sensing is subconsciously present and comprehension is absent. The ‘experience’ is the resolution of this situation by including imagination and identification or by resisting the influence of imagination and identification.

Within the sensational drift, a set of characteristics can be discerned that influence the development of the drift. Complementary to the rather strict experiential procedure as described by Kant, the work of Thomas Weiskel (Chapter Three) provides a more liberal experiential structure. This helped me to make a further distinction into three types of internal sensations that address a soul or ‘sense of self’. Weiskel analysed the sublime sensations by comparing the works of Romantic European landscape poets and semantic theory (e.g. metalanguage). Poets are able to self-induce a sublime state and create a form of art to guide others through similar sublime states. Imagination is a necessary part of this process.

Three types of sublime can be discerned: the poet's sublime, the reader's sublime and the liminal sublime.

Weiskel described the reader's sublime as a breakdown of habitual aesthetic engagement that affects the capacity to recognize the meaning of what is sensed. For instance, a tree may be seen, smelled and touched, but remain unrelated to the word 'tree' or any alternative metaphorical meaning. The sensing of the tree is part of a disintegration of metalanguage. The tree itself becomes a symbol for the underlying incapacity to comprehend the situation. In terms of sensations, those sensations related to the tree will appear to be more meaningful because of the heightening of the sensing capacity coupled with the absence of comprehension. This incapacity to articulate meaning is experienced as the presence of a void or pressure.

The poet's sublime is another type of habitual breakdown that affects the capacity to discriminate between various types of meaning. Past experiences and memories of different places and situations may surface as equally meaningful to one's present state. This overcapacity to attach meaning to situations can be described as a flow of sensations and associations, causing a kaleidoscopic sense of unity. Both these types of sensational drift result in an increase in perceived meaning and even serve as an instrument, as Weiskel recalls, in the making the meaning.

The sensational drift develops along this sequence of stages:

The sensation is caused by a reflex and not enforced by intent. The sensation happens to a person. It is an inborn capacity of muscular and neurological coordination that heightens a sensing capacity, without the ability to comprehend or recognize the sensation. The sublime sensation causes a drift that temporarily overrules habitual patterns of sensing – the sensational drift.

The sensation is characterized by a double movement. The movement is from an actual situation to an intimate inner sensation (a sense of self) and projected

outward as an enhanced creative awareness of engagement. The sublime sensation develops into a creative opportunity involving two potentially habit-breaking senses: a sense of self in relation to a sense of place.

The experiencer involuntarily participates in an act of creativity which is guided either by a human performance or by nature/the landscape, which serves as a performer.

The experiencer may either feel activated to complete and continue the performance beyond what is offered or feel humbled and in awe of the impressions received and remain passive.

A repetition of similar sublime sensations may cause a further intensified experience. Similar sensations experienced under different circumstances can become embedded within an individual's memory, and possibly a collective memory, and gain in complexity and multiplicity.

Historically, there is an important shift to be noticed from a classic rhetorical context of the sublime (Longinus: *Peri Hypsous*) to the modern context of natural environments as places for performances (Edmund Burke and later). This shift is indicated by the presence or absence of a human performer to guide the development of sensations becoming experiences. The early modern, eighteenth-century idea of the sublime is defined without a human performer. This was thought possible because the appearance of nature was considered to have a habit-breaking effect on routine-like states of experiences. After an experiential habit is broken, a need to regain control would arise. Kant assumed that such a regaining of control would prove the dominant position of the human mind (by an imaginative concept) and leave a humbling trace (i.e. awe) of an existential challenge in a natural context.

My extension to Weiskel's work is to include explicitly consonant and explicitly dissonant versions of the reader's and poet's sublime. With reference to the cognitive sciences, I indicate these categories in terms of cognitive dissonance and cognitive consonance. A poet's consonant indicates a flow of associations that are harmonic to one's sense of self, while a poet's dissonance indicates a flow of associations that are dissonant to one's sense of self. Following this line of thought, a total of four types (i.e. shades) of sublime experiences can be discerned ('saving meanings'):

reader's consonance: a symbol or token that recalls a consistent relationship with one's sense of self

reader's dissonance: a symbol or token that recalls an inconsistent relationship with one's sense of self

poet's consonance: a kaleidoscopic flow that is consistent with one's sense of self

poet's dissonance: a kaleidoscopic flow that is inconsistent with one's sense of self

A consequence of my extension to the work of Weiskel is that the interrelationship with an existing sense of self becomes one of the descriptors by which the sensation of the sublime evolves into a sublime experience. This interrelationship was studied in more detail as it is the crucial factor in determining what categories of sublime experiences may arise. In Weiskel's work the so-called liminal sublime was intended to describe a specific type of sublime experience as present in the work of the poet Wordsworth. It is described as a resistance to the influence of a sense of self.

The sensational drift that introduces the sublime affect may be consciously influenced by an increased awareness of a sense of self. A heightened sense of self can become a tool for steering the experience towards either a harmonic or a

dissonant resolution. A deliberate denial of a sense of self, as practised in Buddhism, for example, can bypass both resolutions, making them meaningless. A further study of the experiential structure when denying a sense of self reveals that Buddhism distinguishes two such experiential states. A first and more accessible state is made possible when sensing is present, but not enhanced to serve identification or appropriation with either the poet's or reader's sublime. A second and more strenuous state is made possible when sensing is absent, thus removing any incentive for either a sense of self or a sense of place. I have categorized these additional experiential states as:

The last two shades: 'uncompromised savings'

the *liminal* (*equanimity*): resisting appropriation and identification

the *unpresentable* (*extinguished state*)

The resulting six types of sublime experiences, called 'shades of sublime', offer a plausible explanation of the experiential structure of the sublime. They each relate to a different type of meaning, and so the idea of the sublime acts as an instrument in the making of meaning.



Why are sublime experiences labelled as 'negative aesthetics' and by whom?

The answer to this question can be found by taking a historical perspective to reveal how the idea of the sublime has evolved. The first part of the answer lies in the peculiar combination of the optimistic and 'proud' sensation described in the Peri Hypsous and Burke's dark and even horrific fascination for natural obscurity. A 'negative' sensational drift has become a familiar and even popularized paradox in

which one senses obscurity or potential threats at a comfortable and out-of-harm distance. By introducing a safe and comfortable distance, any potential threat and danger can be reflected upon and thereby, ultimately, enjoyed. Through this distancing (which can be designed), fear and threat can become enjoyable and ‘negative’ aesthetics can be enjoyed.

Kant provides a second part of the answer as he defines the sublime as a negative presentation, lacking the physical aspects of an empirical object (a positive presentation). The term negative is not related to negative emotions, but to the negative presence of presentations. This negative presentation can be classified and become meaningful only by means of an uncompromised imagination, idea or concept. If one is not aware of such negative presentations and regards them as positive presentations, the result may be a subreption: a wrongful impression of a phenomenon based on imagination instead of empirical proof. This interpretation of the term ‘negative’ is used when explaining the experiential structure of the sublime. The sublime, as Kant argues, exists by virtue of a typical human intervention in a lacking, i.e. negative, empirical presence.

A third part of the answer lies in a periodically surfacing cultural debate on what is to be named ‘authentic’ and who may decide so. Even though the experiential object of the sublime has changed its medium of representation throughout the centuries, the motive for discussing the idea of the sublime was reinvigorated by a critique of cultural influencers such as art critics, the rich, politicians and ‘shallow’ public performances (see Chapter Two). The sublime as an idea surfaced as a response to a lack of meaning in cultural expression. The dualistic position of the sublime versus the beautiful can also be explained by this motive. Beauty is interpreted as the more social experience because it does not involve criticism of cultural meaning, but celebrates cultural expressions (see Chapter Five). In the contemporary discourse on environmental aesthetics, the sublime is framed as that type of sensation that invests humans with a moral duty to interact with

environments in a more ecological and sustainable way. The term ‘negative’ here refers to a qualitative judgement that expresses the idea of the sublime as the way to transcend a degenerative cultural situation.

A fourth answer is exemplified by the Buddhist practice of not appropriating or identifying with any form of meaning that can be derived as a result of the sensational drift. This denial, or resistance to the making of meaning, can be interpreted as a ‘negative’ response to the potential increase of meaning which may be caused by the sublime experience. Buddhism, as a specific non-Western cultural tradition, treats any identification with and appropriation by a sense of self as a negative influence on life processes, causing suffering and unnecessary anxiety.

In all the above answers, the term negative appears to be a fitting description of what the idea of the sublime entails. The historical development of these interpretations and my categorization into six shades of sublime can improve our understanding of the term ‘negative’ in this context. My conclusion is that both ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ aesthetic aspects, as well as the two uncompromised categories, are all part of the idea of the sublime. The first four shades of sublime arise from the dualism between a fresh sensation and an existing sense of self. The last two shades of sublime, informed by Weiskel and further explored in Buddhism, are a conscious resistance to identification and aim for a type of meaning that is equanimous or extinguished. The experiential quality of these two last shades is explicitly neutral because it consciously denies any distinction between negative and positive interpretations.

If the idea of the sublime is expressed by all six shades of sublime, the overall term ‘negative aesthetics’ is far too exclusive and therefore inappropriate. The experiential structure of the sublime that I have assembled makes it possible to identify and describe a varied and essentially diverse spectrum of experiences. This conclusion challenges the orthodox distinction between negative and positive aesthetics and thereby also challenges the validity of an explicit duality between the ‘sublime’ and the ‘beautiful’.



What landscape expressions relate to the idea of the sublime?

In Part Three the six shades of sublime are mirrored in six experiential landscapes. These landscapes are defined as archetypical landscapes to emphasize the fact that they do not describe objective characteristics, but subjective experiential states. Referring to Jungian psychology, these may be related to primitive and collectively unconscious images of landscapes. I have included a description of each landscape type and possible real world examples of such environments. I coined the term ‘Serious Landscaping’ to indicate that all types of landscapes, whether desirable or not, are part of the phenomenal reality in which humans develop a sense of meaning or train themselves to sense without any form of meaning. Even the dissonant types of landscapes (sense of place), can offer meaningful opportunities for experiences that extend or challenge a sense of self. Serious Landscaping is a design-research enterprise that sets out to study all landscape aesthetic effects that contribute to a making of meaning (see Chapter Five).

The first four archetypical landscapes: MEANINGFUL LANDSCAPES

Legible landscapes (reader’s consonance). These are landscape experiences that relate to remembered (historical) facts or patterns in the landscape (e.g. ecological). Any initial and temporary lack of comprehension, due to the underlying similarity disorder, is harmoniously aligned with a sense of self and knowledge about a place. Cultural or natural signs will, through repeated experiences, become meaningful symbols of the abstract complexity that landscapes offer. In most cases this offers a pleasing and satisfactory means to experientially interpret landscapes.

Neglected landscapes (reader’s dissonance). These landscape experiences cause a person to initially disqualify the qualities of a landscape because they are not in tune with a socially acceptable sense of place. However, through this very disqualification

these neglected or forgotten landscapes may be eliciting equally neglected aspects of social or personal life, such as poverty, physical endurance, libido, social alienation and rituals related to death.

Portal landscapes (poet's consonance). In a portal landscape people experience a multitude of kaleidoscopic associations across time and space, which can expand a sense of self beyond the limits of the body and laws of nature. The number of everyday portal landscapes is increasing because people generally expect landscapes to have a portal quality to transport them to vivid memories or take them on fantastical journeys that remind them of childhood sensing.

Horrific landscapes (poet's dissonance). These landscape experiences offer similar kaleidoscopic effects to portal landscapes, but resulting in a 'bad trip'. Some of the typical eighteenth- and nineteenth-century landscape depictions in books and paintings are horrific. Such depictions were instrumental in making these landscapes exiting and meaningful. Today's horrific landscapes can be found in dark tourism and territories caught up in war or environmental disasters, but also in theme parks and immersive digital games.

The last two archetypical landscapes: UNCOMPROMISED LANDSCAPES

Liminal landscapes (state of equanimity). Even though these landscape experiences can, by definition, not be identified or appropriated, one can engage in a sense of place with an attention to (1) the ephemeral and changing qualities within landscapes, or (2) the interconnectedness between parts, even the smallest and most insignificant details. A sense of place without a sense of self allows one to experience an equanimous stream of consciousness without any form of human meaning.

Unpresentable landscapes (extinguished state). This is a non-existent type of landscape, a metaphorical place that is beyond the capacity for sensing and interpretation. In this 'place', the process of sensations becoming experiences is absent because any incentive for mental or physical sensations is extinguished. The

sensation of an absence of both a sense of place and a sense of self can only exist in retrospect and can only be known through experience. The ‘place’ is more a ‘state of mind’ and needs preparation by continuous meditative techniques. These meditations may be accompanied by designed elements, although these elements only serve as a means, not as representations.



Answer to the main research question

Bearing in mind the discussion and the answers to the sub-conclusions, I can now answer the main research question:

What characterizes a future landscape architectural design that includes the idea of the sublime as part of its aesthetic repertoire?

The sublime can be defined as a sensational drift that includes a heightening of the senses and a breaking of habitual patterns of interpretation. The main result of this sensational drift is that it acts as an instrument in the making of meaning, something that can also be referred to as a creative involvement. From this, it follows that landscapes, as incentives for sensational drifts, also serve the making of meaning and can therefore be regarded as instruments in the making of meaning. Besides landscapes, nature and environments are also considered ‘places’ within the repertoire of landscape architecture. The aesthetics of these places are influenced not only by their physical appearance, but also by biological, cultural and personal aspects (after: Bourassa 1991). The influence of design is therefore part of a myriad of influencing factors. The total of six possible sublime experiences – the shades of sublime – can all be related to landscape expressions. These expressions are referred

to as archetypal landscapes – places that refer to a mental image that may be nested in a collective subconscious (and thereby include biological and cultural aspects) (see: Figure 25).

If all six types of archetypal places are equally relevant, then the aim for landscape architecture is to include them within the repertoire of landscape architectural research and design. The future consequences of including all six archetypal places are encapsulated in the concept of Serious Landscaping, which has the ambition to study and experiment with all types of meaning made possible, even the dissonant ones. All six types of archetypal places can be part of a future aesthetic repertoire. Figure 25 shows an elaboration of the dotted arrow in Figure 3 (Introduction), revealing how the main question of my research has been answered. In this figure the work of Thomas Weiskel and the discussion of a Buddhist approach are added to the literature research. With these additional sources, the conclusion of the literature research is formulated as the six shades of sublime and the six archetypal landscapes. The research through designing offers conclusions to the design of Landscape Machines as a first attempt to develop a future landscape architecture repertoire that includes the idea of the sublime.

The potential variety of landscape design concepts and future applications is much wider than the research through designing included in this thesis (Landscape Machines). In Chapter Five I concluded that the inclusion of all six archetypal places is best served by a continuous shifting of a sense of place to allow for a related shifting of a sense of self. I anticipate that the periodicity of this shifting is an important factor to consider. The concept of the Landscape Machine includes this periodicity in the notion that natural successions in landscapes evolve at such a rate that people are able to adapt their habitual patterns and evolve in response (see the ‘Serendipity’ section in Chapter Six). The concept of the Landscape Machine therefore includes a design strategy for exploring a functional and scripted

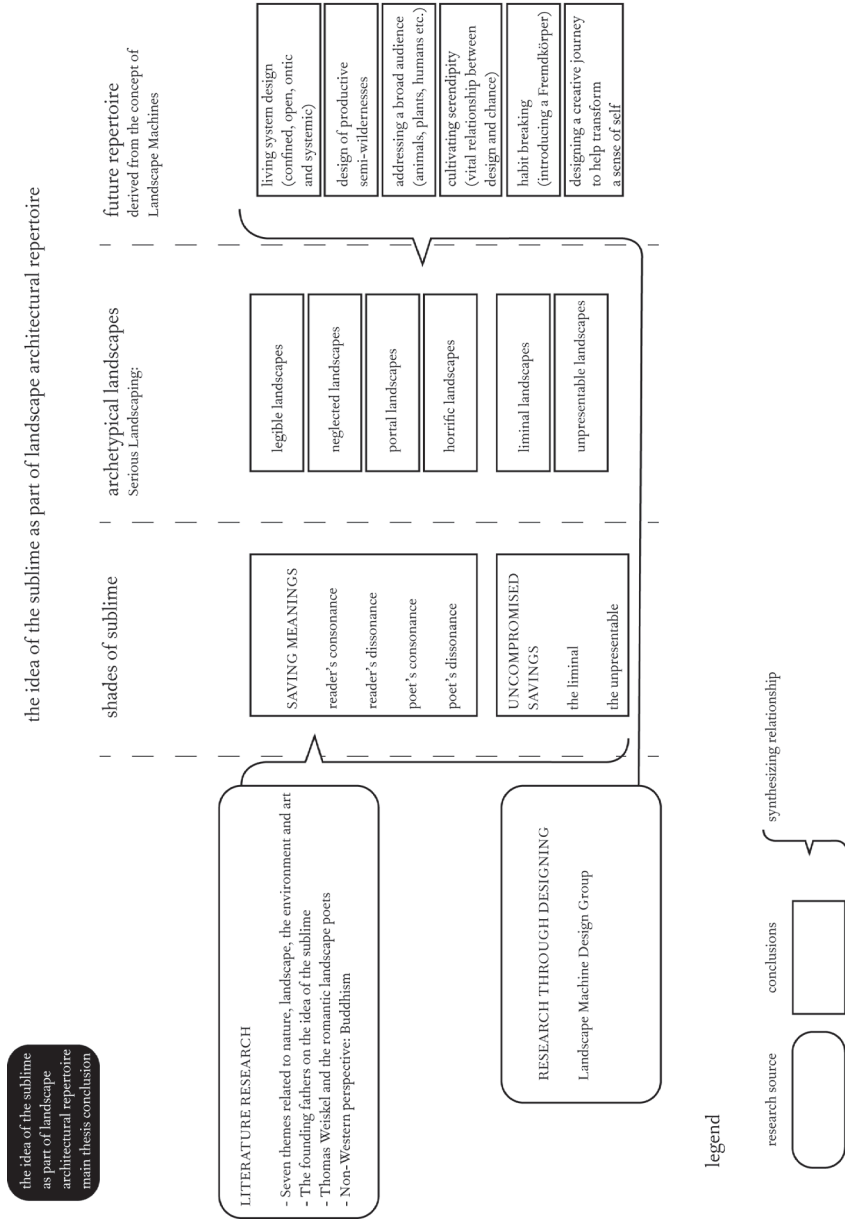


Figure 25: development of the idea of the sublime as discussed in this thesis.

performance of landscapes (reader's perspective) and a kaleidoscopic flow of non-scripted performances (poet's perspective).

The first design challenge for Landscape Machines is to focus on the physical performance of landscapes (e.g. COOS, see Chapter Six). The concept of Landscape Machines offers an integrative design-research methodology (experiences, ecology and technology) and is aimed at the mid-term (10–20 year) performance of landscapes. Within this landscape performance, eco-technological development enables embodied necessities such as food, safety and energy as well as human meaning: a sense of place enabling a sense of self. The aim is not merely to design for a limited set of intents, such as ecological restoration and recreation, but for an abundance of effects and by-products to allow unforeseen developments that challenge habitual patterns.

An abundance of landscape processes and archetypes is initiated to perform within a wide range of physical effects, such as cleaning up polluted water, soil or air and restoring dysfunctional metabolisms within a landscape system. A characteristic design strategy to stimulate such a continuous development is the introduction of a Fremdkörper that will help to accelerate a set of transitions. Such a Fremdkörper can be as simple as an embankment to hold water or as complex as the recycling of oil rigs into large-scale river groynes to gradually reshape an estuary (see Ems Full Hybrid in Chapter Six).

The deployment of Fremdkörper ('alien elements') is not restricted to the long-standing landscape architectural tradition of designing engineering facilities that improve the performance of landscapes. Within the context of the sublime their purpose is also to break habitual patterns in order to instigate fresh relationships and new forms of imagination. A natural system may be regarded as operating according to 'habits' and certain disorientations will initiate a process of adaptation and creative engagement for the making of new meaning. Fremdkörper act as disruptive factors to break existing patterns of ecological development and provoke

a chain of events, and thereby stimulate the growth of new biotopes. This is not done for aesthetic purposes alone, but is meant to enable a surplus of performance to either cleanse or recuperate natural resources and landscape systems (including social and economic benefits). The ‘alien elements’ thereby teases new adaptive behaviour and responses by a broad audience of this type of landscape design: animals, plants and humans as well as the substances of water, soil and atmosphere. This whole ‘audience’ performance stretches the discussion on landscape aesthetics beyond the purely human.

The idea of the sublime has always positioned human presence among a much larger scale or realm of natural phenomena. The process of making meaning by human–environmental interactions involves just such a larger ‘audience’. In future, other design concepts and other repertoires than revealed by the concept of Landscape Machines may be conceived. The application of all six archetypal places may also profit from including cross-disciplinary collaboration with the general public, game developers, movie makers, robot makers, poets, musicians and others. Such collaborations, both in practice as well as in education, will provide ample opportunities to develop new types of meaning to explore a diversity of sensational drifts that will allow human beings to share their landscapes with a larger ‘audience’.



Discussion of the research approach

What are the limitations of this research? My conclusions are made from the perspective of a singular researcher and are yet to be presented to a broader scientific community, because this thesis is presented in the form of a monograph. Only the design concept of the Landscape Machine has been developed and shared with a larger community. Part of my thesis can be classified as a type of qualitative

research (reflexive approach and grounded theory). As a result there may be an untraceable influence of a bias for those aspects within a text and for a selection of sources that favour a conclusion that satisfies an initial idea. In future research, test panels or related forms of empirical research can be used to refine, underline or develop my conclusions. Besides the literature research, the most striking aspect of the research has been the inclusion of research through designing.

The selection of sources

During the period of my research (2010–2017) there was a remarkable stream of new publications and exhibitions on the contemporary value of the sublime in art, environmental issues and philosophy (see Chapter One). Without exception, the authors discussed a broader selection of theoretical and artistic sources than the limited selection I included in my research. I have introduced and explained why my method would especially benefit from a focus on the three founding fathers and the work of Thomas Weiskel (see: Introduction). The argument that I have developed will now need to be analysed and debated using a more comprehensive selection of sources. I consider this as an option for future research. As a consequence, I cannot claim that my current conclusion is a comprehensive theory that encompasses the complete discourse on the sublime. It can best be regarded as a design proposal, informed by research, that has a conceptual value as well as a practical value as it introduces a novel set of archetypes that may in future influence repertoire development.

Research through designing

My research question pointed to an application in the landscape architectural design repertoire. However, in Chapter One (see: Theme Five) it was indicated that outward appearances of landscapes alone cannot guarantee aesthetic outcomes. The third Theme in the same chapter also pointed out that landscape design may

have commodified the sublime. Although design is often regarded as a creative means to solve problems and to venture into unknown territory, it is also bound to implicit rules and traditions. The concept of the Landscape Machine is an experiment to find reason and value for dissonant types of places. It explores a type of landscape architecture that permits the coexistence of natural, artificial (by means of Fremdkörper) and accidental landscape elements. The raw and oppositional character of Landscape Machines invites exploration of those types of landscapes that relate to a yet unknown sense of place and to challenge and include human interaction beyond people's comfort zones. Even though many landscape designs will not be constructed as real physical landscapes, they empower a designerly research within landscape architecture.

As such, the concept of the Landscape Machine helps to exemplify a specific type of commitment: to appreciate those places that have yet to be explored for their hidden types of meaning and to find reason for another type of landscape transformation than the more familiar parks, plazas and public spaces. It is, however, not a proof for the application of six archetypical landscapes. This misfit troubled me for a long time, until I realized that this concept does an excellent job of revealing an appropriate type of design that challenges picturesque techniques. A design for the type of sublime that I have described is an arousal of human creativity while engaging with places. This cannot be enforced by mere representations; it can only be cultivated and grown.



Academic contribution and societal relevance

What is the new insight provided by my thesis? My conclusions provide good reasons for experimenting with habit-breaking types of landscape interactions

(including nature and planned or accidental environments). Such experiments can shed light on (a) how landscape features help to bring about a sensational drift; (b) the variation of experiential responses to such a drift; and (c) the periodicity and diversity of such experiences and their influences on various states of well-being through the making of meaning.

As a landscape designer I can only relate to the sublime if I can somehow grasp it more concretely. For many generations of designers the list provided by Burke served nicely (e.g. the idea of power, privation, darkness, solitude, etc. (ibid. 101–127), but this has become an outdated list that reflects a bygone era. What my thesis can provide designers is a more structural understanding of the sublime, if not an anatomic description. Why are some sensations sublime and others not, and what happens to us when we experience such sensations? I have tried to answer these questions in this thesis and, in doing so, I have provided a new framework for understanding aesthetics. How designers will want to work with this framework will depend on contextual circumstances.

In my case, I have worked on a type of landscape sublime in a life-science university environment and a Dutch context. The Landscape Machines that we, as a changing team, have been designing respond to such contextual circumstances. There may be other design products that relate to the same six types of archetypical places for the sublime (Chapter Five). There may also be design products without reference to place at all. The six shades of sublime (Chapter Four) are related to a sense of self and not necessarily to places. So other designers, who do not work with place making, may proceed from this description of six shades of sublime and define their own six archetypical types of design.

The relationship between sublime experiences and well-being in particular would serve landscape architecture as a discipline in defining and experimenting within an aesthetic discourse. For example, the reason for including landscape design in the search for new healthcare therapies could strengthen a common knowledge base

about differentiated and embodied experiences. If sublime experiences were to be included alongside preferred experiences as a means for creative involvement, new types of benefits could be found that relate to 'meaning'. Landscape design would gain additional purpose by addressing the relationship between the sense of self and the sense of place as instruments in the making of meaning. My conclusions therefore provide a stronger theoretical basis for further investigation of these aspects of aesthetics with an important partner such as healthcare.

According to Saito, Berleant and Carlson (2014) there is also a need for more 'social aesthetics' and non-Western aesthetic interpretations. The inclusion of non-Western approaches, such as Buddhist ideas, may help to create a differentiated theory of environmental aesthetics. The call for more social aesthetics is a response to a perceived focus within the current discourse on individual experiences at the expense of the influence of groups or family values. In my research I have found that Longinus also intended the *Peri Hypsous* to address a collective of people at the same time and in interaction. These insights invite future and global partnership in design and research.

There is a strong historical argument that Longinus intended the sensation of *Hypsous* to be caused by a human performer. This rhetorical origin of the idea of the sublime has for many centuries conveyed underdeveloped insights into the structure of transcendental sensations. My work realigned the potentials of rhetoric (*Hypsous*) to the design of places to further explore the role of a human performer while inducing a sensational drift. Partners to help expand my findings into a more challenging variety of landscape sensations may be found among game developers, movie makers, musicians and writers, and in future possibly also robot developers and data analysts (if data will grow into a 'landscape' of information). Such co-creations could take the form of activities and festivals (i.e. programming) accompanying an architectural intervention in landscapes, and accidental environments as well as more traditional parks, squares and nature reserves.

My development of the idea of the sublime also has broadened the concept of the landscape ‘audience’ beyond humans. It is due to the idea of the sublime that humans directly participate in all types of places that include animal life, plant life and even the substances of water, soil and atmosphere. The advantage of introducing a sense of place and a sense of self as indicators of aesthetic engagement may therefore also extend to the development of applications for experiential training, education and landscape therapy. Such applications could help to broaden the scope of landscape architecture beyond the design of new landscapes to include the experiential opportunities of existing landscapes. My conclusions, I argue, have given the idea of the sublime greater experiential clarity, thereby making it a more feasible aesthetic aspect – even an essential aspect, because it facilitates the making of meaning and the development of a sense of self.

Act Three

DEVELOPING INTIMACY

A discourse on the flaw and the design of the sublime

New Characters:

Summoner

A twenty-first century landscape researcher who intends to find out how the idea of the sublime has developed through the ages.

Frederick Law Olmsted

A nineteenth-century idealist and productive landscape architect who set an example on how to create green spaces as integral parts of the expanding metropolitan areas in the world, and how to protect the original sources of wilderness by establishing landscape reserves.

John Muir

A nineteenth-century adventurer and botanist who explored the remaining wildernesses in the USA and dramatized his experiences in short, personal stories.

Also: one servant and two dogs

Based on the following literature: Longinus, third century; Burke 1759; Kant 1790; Olmsted 1865 1902; Watts 1957 (the tea ceremony); Suzuki, Fromm et al. 1960; Muir 1994; Martin 2011, specific references are mentioned in the text.

Scenography

A shore, a distant breeze of the wind and some slow rustling of leaves that create a gentle atmosphere. There is a man, a Summoner. He carries a manuscript underneath his armpit, held together by a steel ring. Also: a small table with its four legs directly in the sand of the beach. On the table a pile of books and prints. An occasional yell of a seagull can be heard. The man lays down the manuscript and then moves away from the table. Deliberately sweeping with his bare feet in the sand, as if contemplating something. The light of the sun changes as the clouds move. The Summoner is here to summon Longinus and ask him to join a little procession of representatives of the idea of the sublime. To find Longinus proofs to be very difficult. The Summoner has tried before, without success. Every time he had to return to the shore with the table, empty-handed. Longinus is so long gone, he has become a ghostlike figure.

Summoner

Longinus hides where hardly anyone will bother to look. He does not hide in objects, nor in illusions. He hides right here under my nose, in the instant that the idea becomes language and thereby leaves a void that cannot be expressed.

[Stops as if caught by something.]

Maybe I should just give up and try the other characters I wish to visit.

[The Summoner turns to walk away and immediately the whole scene pivots and the landscape scenery seems to invert and fall flat, like a knocked down canvas. The Summoner now stands on a painting of the same landscape he was part of only moments before. A tearing noise as the canvas underneath his feet starts to slice. A hand appears

through the canvas that grasps the Summoner and pulls him through to the dark void underneath./

[All is dark except for a tiny figure falling. Endlessly.]

Longinus *[a voice, not yet to be seen.]*

Please continue, you are nearly there.

...

Are you still falling?

Summoner *[Shouting to overcome the turbulence that distorts his body and facial features while falling fast.]*

Yes, yes!

Longinus

There is no abyss, young man,
it is just your imagination.

[For a short while the falling continues, then suddenly stops. In an instant all is imploding and quietude is present. A heat hits the Summoner and hinders his respiration. He calms himself by careful breathing and cautiously observing what type of place has materialized around him. It is a study with one wall missing to reveal a courtyard and what looks like a patio of what must be a big house. Various new smells and distant, unfamiliar sounds.]

Longinus

You are welcome in my resting place.

Have some fruit and beverage, it may help you to calm down.

Summoner *[recuperating.]*

Highly esteemed Longinus, I am honoured and pleased that we may meet *[and bows]*.

I see a Greek sun and some marble dust, olives and wine?

Was this the place you lived in when you were still alive?

Longinus

That is an odd question. No, I don't think so. I cannot remember where I used to live. I do remember the sensation of losing one life and gaining another. My old life was very short, compared to this one.

[They speak for a while and Longinus shows the Summoner around. In a vegetable garden they start to become more serious in their topic of conversation.]

Summoner

I am interested in your practical lessons on *Peri Hypsous* especially on what you called the flaw. What exactly is a flaw? Is it the same as a mistake?

Longinus

Ah yes, what exactly is the flaw? Persian tapestries contain a deliberate mistake, one thread deliberately wrong, because Muslims believe only God is perfect. But that is not what I mean by a flaw. My sense of flaw cannot exist without a desire to gain perfection. Yet it is not any godhead that grants perfection. There is only one instrument that could determine and create perfection and that is you.

[Longinus abruptly points at the Summoner's chest.]

Without your sense of perfection nothing can become perfect, not even what other people call perfect – especially not official critics or religious charlatans! One ought to strive for a type of perfection that has yet to be perfected! It is as simple as that.

[The conversation ceases for a moment.]

Of the five sources of *Hypsous*, I first named the power of forming great conceptions. Mind you, conceptions only matter to humans, so they don't matter to your subject of landscapes. Second in line is inspired passion. This is not restricted to an animal or physical type of passion, but one that will open up our imagination to go beyond anything offered to us. These two sources of *Hypsous* are mostly instinctive and present in all people. The three remaining sources can be improved at the academies: the style of thought and expression, noble diction by elaboration of language, and dignified composition. These last three are all related to style. The idea of the flaw is not prominent in these definitions as I had great difficulty writing about it.

Summoner

I can imagine that mastering a style is somehow destructive to the idea of the flaw?

Longinus

Exactly. The impression that you can perfect your performance in a style all too easily leads you to believe that perfection is equally understood and appreciated by the audience. This, however, is exactly opposite to the idea of the flaw.

Summoner

[With a wry smile.]

I was always taught that great works of art can be recognized because nothing can be added or removed from them without harming their effect. I even teach my students

to continue to perfect their designs until they have the impression that nothing can be changed without losing the radiating powers that seem to fit.

Longinus

[Laughs as well, only more darkly.]

Radiating powers? My dear boy, you mistake the image of the moon for the moon itself. I know all too well how artists gain an intimate relationship with their creations. It is exactly this intimate relationship that I am interested in. Perhaps *Hypsous* is in some ways synonymous with intimacy. The audience has to gain the same level of intimacy by participating in the act of creation. The work of art is only a means to be able to conjure the intimate act of creation. The object itself has no powers unless you put them there.

Summoner

Yes, but do I not put them there if my style is near perfect?

Longinus

That is a fact that worried me as well! I blamed the critics for it. Critics are creatures with no style of their own and therefore parasitic on others. Style then becomes a currency for trade instead of an instrument for feeding the soul. How fundamental is style? Or is it merely a temporary vehicle needed to address something much more important: the greatness of the idea and the strength of the passion.

Summoner

So you intend to include the audience in an act of creation and let them explore their own strength of passion?

Longinus

[Nods and grunts in confirmation.]

Summoner

So although the performance is the same, it will be interpreted differently by every single human being?

Longinus

Yes, the performance only collects what is typically human. By the singular act of performance there is a collective transportation towards singularity.

[He triumphantly stretches his arms sideways while a gleam appears in his eyes.]

Summoner

I see and I admire that. It also makes my profession appear bleak.

Longinus

What do you mean?

Summoner

Well, landscapes cannot be adapted to their audiences as fast as a performer of speeches can. In fact, they don't perform at all in such a way, they simply await admiration or scrutiny.

Longinus

But landscapes can easily be visited by many at a time, even at many moments during day and night! You could perform endlessly! Still, you would need a performer or poet to guide the visitors. For instance, if I imagine the landscape of the battlefield of the Spartans against the Athenians as a design of human misery and hopes, I can

relate to that, but only as a rhetorical composition, not as a composition of rocks and earth and tracks in the sand – not unless you demand that every person becomes the poet to interpret these signs.

Summoner

I see, and that is what you mean by the greatness of an idea – there must be a narrative content before there can be *Hypsous*? Some of my colleagues share this notion, especially those who are convinced that humans can learn to repeat how signs should be interpreted through historical references or cultural clichés or scientific codes.²⁰ Others, including myself, see evidence that experiencing greatness is an instinctive and biological capacity, a remnant of us as animals interpreting our environment.²¹ Either way, the designer must deliver what is within the capacity of human interpretation.

Longinus

Boy, I would need a strong drink before I could appreciate your type of landscape.

Summoner

Could it be that there is perhaps too much *Hypsous* instead of too little? I mean, have we not mastered so many diverse types of narratives because there are so many books and types of performances and interactive knowledge sources and stimuli? Might it not be that in my age we are continuously under such spells without a clue to what we would do without them? What would for example be the internet without *Hypsous*?

...

I mean, the question would then be how we could escape *Hypsous*, not how we could enter it.

20 Appleton 1975, Bourassa 1991, Kaplan and Kaplan 1989

21 Fogassi and Ferrari 2007

Longinus

[Takes his time.]

You are not referring to *Hypsous* then, but to something else. *Hypsous* is still the right aim, but what you are referring to is this damned idea of the sublime. The idea of the sublime has only enlarged the dominance of style because it is essentially about the perfection of the horrors within nature that cannot be altered by human beings. In that sense it is true that there is too much of this sublime-thing in the works of humans. The sublime has imprinted whole generations with the illusion that there is an otherness, a difference that is essentially not human. Ha! What a terrible idea. *Hypsous* is not about otherness, it is about your own soul.

[He looks intensely into the Summoner's eyes.]

[Longinus walks briskly to an adjacent room and shouts from there.]

I hope you do not expect me to confront sorrowful Mr Burke.

[Longinus soon returns with two glasses of wine and offers one to the Summoner.]

Summoner

Actually, yes. I am convinced that you have more in common than you wish to believe. And I would like you to meet Frederick Law Olmsted and John Muir

Longinus

Who are they?

Summoner

You might call them inventors of landscapes.

Longinus

[He pauses, takes a gulp of wine and pulls at his beard.]

If you promise to keep it short at Burke's. I tend to lose my temper with him around.

Summoner

You will not be disappointed.

Longinus

Go along then. I will follow.

[The Summoner celebrates within. He starts to concentrate and imagine the place to go next. There is an aerial view of the coast of Ireland and the Irish sea. The geographical features that define the natural setting of Dublin are in sight, the Wicklow Mountains to the left and south and the welcoming arms of Dublin Bay in front. All seems styled by natural perfection.]

[Both the Summoner and Longinus appear at the far end of a large clearing within a forest and have a view of a noble and elegant house, fit for the public appearance of a member of parliament.]

Burke

[From afar, gesturing to the visitors to come closer and himself striding eagerly towards them, already opening the conversation. His voice becomes louder as they approach and nearly bump into this more than enthusiastic man.]

... Dear sirs, oh you have no idea how glad I am that you have arrived. I hoped you would arrive well and alive, for a storm forecast came to my attention just an hour ago as I was informed of your journey to my house. For the sake of precaution, I

asked for hot drinks to be prepared and blankets brought to the fireplace. So there you are

[They all look at each other in slight bewilderment, a tense moment between rivals, who need to be polite and deny the other any reason to start an argument.]

You appear to be in excellent health, much better than I feared for the last half hour. Now then, please follow me. As I said, I have prepared a room for our conversation.

[Drowning out the murmured thanks by the two guests, the new host continues his monologue while walking briskly towards the large house, a monologue he has clearly prepared and longs to share.]

It is such a shame that the Irish have such a small place in the history of aesthetics, and especially the sublime. There have been so many brilliant thinkers, like John Dennis, Adam Smith and of course David Hume. The Irish are cast aside as a mere rehearsal before the Germans and Viennese came in. I for one fully agree with the notion that the idea of aesthetics is indeed only shallowly represented by the beautiful. Aesthetics is about highlighting human experience. What better light than a sublime challenge, or *Hypsous*, or the obscure, the elevated, the mystical, or whatever fashionable terms you'd like to utter.

When North America became independent, we were not sure whether politics or economics or aesthetics would serve as the *primus inter pares* in creating the new world order. Europe was anxious, as you can imagine. A growing culture has to include the lessons from the past and let mysteries become myths that serve to instruct us. Would you not agree with me, Mr Longinus? The fact that a mystery cannot be fully understood provides the flaws you so favour. Flaws fuel mysteries and we need those in order to become enthusiastic about things that we do not fully

comprehend. There has to be a mountain beyond the mountain you just climbed. Is that not the case you wanted to make? Anyway, I am so glad you came to ask for my advice. Ask me anything

[They have arrived in a nicely decorated room. The bright evening sun shines through the opened windows, which afford a view of the forest stretching away endlessly like a rolling sea of foliage.]

Burke

Tea?

[Burke pours tea into some porcelain cups.]

[An awkward silence hangs heavily in the room. Longinus ignores the tea and stares intently at the forest from the balcony.]

Longinus

You surprise me, Mr Burke. You are less ignorant and more precise than I had envisioned you. You seem to care for experiences in general, more than advocating the horrors within nature. Yet you still consider nature and its overwhelming characteristics superior to rhetoric. Why not simply accept the fact that sensations are the substance of experiences and let the objects of nature just help to conjure them up.

Burke

Well said. You are an incomparable master of rhetoric. I admit that I advocated being amidst nature and not looking at a painting of a landscape. Mankind has always underrated its imaginative capacities. You know, I try to follow what is happening

in the current age and it appears that a field named neurology now tells us that the sensation of fear we experience while reading or hearing about a frightening situation is no different from the fear we experience in the actual situation.²²

Longinus

In other words, what humans imagine when they fantasize about fear can be equal to actual fear. That is a frightening capacity in the absence of clear guidance.

Burke

I seek guidance in the most physical presence of nature because it still recalls the limits of the body. Modern commodities tend to eliminate fear, and we all like that, yet as a biological species we need fear and other survival instincts to deal with primordial sorts of experiences. Without such essentials we become something other than human. We might become synthetic, for all I know.

Summoner

Both of you are intent on reconnecting to some primordial sense, either via the soul or a sense of survival. What would you say would be needed to revive those in an instant?

Longinus

That is indeed a delicate matter. It demands a perfectly contextualized style, rhythm and a performer with a deep and practised soul. I do not believe that Mr Burke's primordial journeys into the wild can deliver those. They seem to be rather spartan and therefore raw and ineffective.

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Burke

Now that is a very odd statement to hear from you. You seem to deny what you find most attractive. For instance, your own writing celebrated the work of Homer, who wrote about spartan landscape experiences involving the Cyclops and the six-headed sea monster Scylla!

[The two men look at each other with a mixture of emotions and try to relieve the tension by wandering towards different positions in the room. The rattle of a teacup being lifted and returned to its saucer can occasionally be heard.]

Burke

[After staring for some time through the window.]

The very point of my efforts to describe features in nature is to re-embody human beings, to nail them down to dust and ashes and gravity. Without these, they would indeed be lost, like balloons filled with imagination floating off in the direction of the best storyteller.

[Silence.]

Longinus

I share that concern and this young Summoner appears to worry about an oversupply of such imaginative balloons.

Burke

In my view people are a threat to themselves. What I intended to introduce was an impartial judge in the form of a common fear and admiration for nature, although I must admit that it was Adam Smith who coined the term 'impartial judge'. Anyhow, the idea of the sublime has helped people to comprehend their futile bigotry towards

each other, and this would be served by experiencing the impartial judgement of nature. Deeply humbling. You must understand that in my time the planet was full of adventure. I wanted to instil people with enthusiasm to explore the age-old structures and connections that tie us to the larger patterns of life. In the age of the Summoner this insight has become more blurred because mankind has grown rather fond of its own designs. Still, my suggestion of regarding nature as an embodied type of reflection remains sound.

[The bell rings and a servant enters.]

Longinus

And saved by the bell we are!

Servant

There is another gentlemen to see you, sir. Shall I let him in? He says his name is Immanuel Kant.

Burke

My dear, commotion attracts new commotions. Yes, yes, do let him in. He is an honoured guest no matter what time of the day.

[The three men await in anticipation and try to prepare to meet this fabled man. After a little while the door opens again and in comes Immanuel Kant, lean, self-assured and not as stern as some might expect, but appearing rather tranquil and gentle.]

Kant

Well now, gentleman, I am so sorry to interrupt your meeting. I could not help noticing the invitation by Mr Summoner on matters that occupy me greatly. So I

figured that the sooner we met, the sooner we could all enjoy a splendid evening picnic outside. The predicted storm has found a new direction to turn to.

Burke

Ah, wonderful! Not at all a problem, my dear friend. Have some tea and join our conversation. We were just discussing the differences in the work by Mr Longinus and myself, and the capacity for natural landscapes to invoke the sublime.

Kant

[Sips his tea and seems to smell the atmosphere.]

I honestly do not know if I would have considered this Hypsous theory seriously in my former life. I generally disliked the Greek way of putting things. One thinker responds and scrutinizes the other by poetic arguments and status. Mere rhetoric, if you pardon my accusation. I was trained as a natural scientist and not as a scholarly philosopher. I liked hard evidence. In my view, nature could not be designed and landscapes gained in effect when they resembled paintings.

[All are silent for while, anticipating what Kant is about to announce.]

I see a trend in the current world order. There are more individuals breaking the spell of other people's imaginations than ever. Religions are disputed, politicians no longer work for the public cause, but for themselves, science is seen as a social construct, and economies have discarded meaning and lasting value. The number of individuals following their personal convictions is already greater than the total number of people in our times, so that must count for something.

You see, like you I have been too involved in defining a logical set of rules to guide individuals into becoming part of a certain collective mind and practice. I regarded

the individual as a single cell, ready to be perfected by reasoning or awe-inspiring nature. I craved for balanced individuals, who were rare in my time. All were flocking together behind fictions that appeared to be right. I myself created the fiction of pure reason. But now that individuality has almost been normalized, I see that I underestimated the powerful motivation that drives individuality. Individuals do not seek perfection; they find flaws, within themselves, within others, within systems and logic. And all the individuals together form a cumulative place where all the disproportionalities of all the flaws will be gathered. In the contemporary world there is now an immense collection and transparency of flaws that far overrules any sense of perfection. One flaw might stir an individual to get involved and start revealing another flaw that only he or she sees. The world is becoming less coherent and at the same time more universal in its method of unveiling flaws. We must, again, build from scratch a guiding analysis within this storm of unveiling. I do believe that the sublime is now a more important key than it was to my past project, but I am not sure that either narratives or embodied experiences will suffice to steer this potential riot. Both the Godhead and Nature may have become ineffective for such masses of diverse individuals who adhere to nothing other than their own souls.

[All digest what Kant has just said. Longinus looks rather surprised and not unhappy, the Summoner looks at the landscape through the window, Kant tips his chin, Burke puts down his cup of tea firmly on the table and claps his hands.]

Burke

Well now! Since we are still men with a faculty for perfection, I suggest we get some fresh air and take a walk in the woods. I am sure that will prove to be soothing to our intellectual worries!

[Everyone snaps to their senses and starts moving around, preparing for departure.]

Summoner

May I suggest inviting Mr Olmsted and Mr Muir to join us in the forest? I told them to wait for the right moment, and now seems to be the perfect time.

[Burke fetches his two dogs, which jump up to him enthusiastically. All walk down the stairs at the back of the house. The dogs run ahead to the first line of trees as if to warn the forest about a human intrusion. The woods make a magnificent impression: the height of the trees, the abundant animal life, the sunlight that occasionally casts its long prismatic rays, the sounds that provide a rich sense of detail and distance, the diverse and partly overgrown forest floor, the rocks that form little hills and the sweet and bitter aromas, thick with moisture or peppery due to the lack of it. They all enjoy the activity of hiking, experiencing the natural environment and talking about their impressions. Soon they make acquaintance with the two new guests: a sturdy lumberjack type of man (John Muir) and a gentleman with a natural authority (Frederick Law Olmsted).]

Burke

... and so here we are, amidst a woodland with a complexity that cannot be matched by any human design, aye?

Muir

This place reminds me of the old Indian territory in Yosemite Valley. Nature may be wild, but if you are familiar with it, you start to notice its moods. Nothing exists here without the awareness of the other.

Olmsted

I agree! It is almost like music, listen to those birds and the distant rush of water! Note how sounds are amplified and bounce off rocks and water surfaces. Once

I asked an orchestra to play at all the different positions along the grand lake in Central Park to discover that one and only elusively sweet sonic spot.²³ Such natural scenery has beneficial effects upon the human mind and body. There is an intimate relation between the mind and the nervous system and the whole physical economy. There is an action and reaction that constantly occurs between bodily and mental conditions.

Muir

Oh, and I also see that it is so much more than appreciation of harmony! There is a continuous adjustment, a continuous interference and reason for new discoveries.

Longinus

You sound as wise and strategic as Apollo, who immediately understood the mind of his opponents. Still, I have trouble reading this place in the same fashion that Mr Olmsted and Mr Muir can. They seem to read this forest like a poem. To me, this is a very nice environment, but it does not have the same effect. I need the words that describe what Mr Olmsted sees. I need a guide such as Mr Olmsted to explain how to extend my experience.

Burke

Some people are natural poets. They immediately play with what is suggested. A suggestion is to them enough to poetically explore what might be true.

Olmsted

Oh yes! I think we should prepare our children for such a capacity to explore. In my recommendations on management guidelines for Yosemite Valley, I mentioned that no photograph, series of photographs or painting ever prepares a visitor for the

23 Olmsted 1995 (1865)

surprise of an actual visit to Yosemite.²⁴ The scenes may be faithfully represented, but the visitor to the Valley is affected not only by that upon which the eye is fixed, but by all that surrounds him on every side. Immersion cannot be imagined, but can only be experienced. I repeat, landscapes move us in a manner more analogous to music than anything else. Nevertheless, the photographs and paintings of Yosemite were very effective in attracting people to the experiences that Yosemite had to offer.

Longinus

So Mr Olmsted and Mr Muir may be as unfamiliar with this place as I am and are making things up as they go along. They do not have more knowledge about this place, but they feel more confident than me in interpreting what surrounds them. They know their souls better than I do.

Muir

Aye, that may be true. I may want to collect knowledge about this place, but most times I would rather be without. I want to experience every situation like it was the first time. I like to be refreshed like a child.

Olmsted

Yes, an openness to the future! I remember a disagreement I had with the board of Central Park. I strongly objected to rich and ornamental flower beds along the pathways, for they would only distract the public. As a boy I read the book *Solitude* by the Swiss physician Johann Georg Zimmermann, in which he discusses the powerful ability of scenery to ease a person's melancholy.²⁵ Visitors to Central Park would fix their attention on that kitsch display and not let their minds wander across the sight lines and changing scenery while strolling along. Loosen up! Fancy

²⁴ Olmsted 1995 (1865)

²⁵ Martin 2011

objects distract people from looking ahead and gaining confidence about what lies before them.

Summoner

Now that is advice on the design of landscapes that answers one of our earlier questions. To what extent should style dominate the ultimate goal of greatness and passion? More generally, your recommendations indicate that too many fancy objects prevent looking ahead because they are stylistically too narrowly defined to allow alternative readings. Am I right, Mr Olmsted?

Olmsted

Indeed, the less a landscape looks designed, the better it serves its purpose. My parks contain very simple ingredients: meadows and lanes for clarity, a wilderness that is immersive, and the rural, which allows a more pragmatic and productive view of the use of nature. They are like a trinity to balance the fundamental appearances of landscapes.

Summoner

Might it be that your 'style' is rather a striving for a harmonious balance of a diversity of landscapes? Do you avoid stylistic dissonance, like musical dissonance?

Olmsted

The term dissonance is somewhat strange to me. Of course I strive for balance and harmony, but you are right that I am not a fully cheerful man myself. The relationship between the mind and the body is not perfect all the time; it needs a place and a while to become balanced. My parks help in these processes – not only for humans, but also for the health of the trees and the purity of water and air. Parks help to purify the metabolism of a cramped city life in general. Perhaps I learned this

from my personal wanderings across America and Europe. The travels themselves were pleasant and the places I visited welcoming, and yet my worries were largely about a dissonant absence of nature in urban developments. Is this what you mean to say?

Summoner

Indeed, the inclusion of an immersive wilderness in Central Park proves that you are aware of dissonance and seek to harmonize it through your designs. Yet you also seek extremity in the type of nature that you offer. Even within the park there is still a dissonance between rolling meadows and a ravine with wild nature.

Muir

May I inform you about the dissonance of wild landscapes? It seems that you have rather stylish ideas about dissonance. I have willingly experienced earthquakes and storms and extremely cold weather. These conditions are far from harmonious, they are truly disruptive. My desire is that cities evolve to become wild landscapes It is not a choice to allow dissonance as a part of everyday life, it is a necessity because we cannot hide behind our mother's skirts all the time. In our times Mother Earth was bouncing us on her knee to amuse us, but in your age the human race has sickened her like a spoiled adolescent. I think that the sublime should not be a symbol, but a continuous howl that strikes at our sense of responsibility!

Burke

Do you seriously doubt that nature will survive? Do you think she will become crippled?

[Burke, after having been silent for a while, suddenly laughs erratically, calls his dogs and sets off from the group. The whole party watches Burke walking brusquely away. A

sense of lost communication engulfs the other men. The idea that Burke, their host, is suddenly withdrawing from the conversation is a realization that is both saddening and distancing. The group starts to follow him, silently.]

Burke

I will show you something...talking of landscape experiences ... Mother Earth dying? ... dissonance, ha! ... city dwellers

[His occasional remarks become mumbles and after a while he becomes silent.]

[Hacking their way through overgrown valleys and balancing on steep and narrow stone pathways, they climb to a considerable height. Through the canopy they can see the last rays of the sun casting bundles of warm light on Burke's manor in the distance. The landscape and the mindful journey through it seems to resemble the inner sensations of the men. Their physical effort and the implicit and unfamiliar objective prevent them from becoming trapped in their state of shock.]

[Then suddenly they smell burnt embers and pleasant flower fragrances. They come across a careful human interaction with the woods, a welcoming but simple hut made out of sticks and leaves. Behind the hut the rock face stretches up towards the mountain top. A human figure is sitting on a meticulously cleared bamboo floor inside the hut, inviting them to sit in a semicircle around him. The five men and two dogs instinctively take their places and are seated.]

Hermit Weiskel

I see that the ox has departed from your souls. You can rest for a while in my hut. If you care, I will serve you tea in the Japanese custom. A *cha-no-yu* ceremony,²⁶

26 As described by Watts 1985 (reprint of 1957)

fashioned to fit my own competences. I have just recently discovered this Eastern practice.

[One side of the hut contains an alcove. In it are two drawings, one with clear strokes of calligraphy and the other a roughly painted mountain ridge with some birds flying over it. The hermit is taking his time to prepare the charcoal fire and use the bamboo dippers to pour water into a kettle of soft brown iron. Other utensils are carefully arranged. A plate with cakes is offered and the men consciously take one and pass the plate. The sweetness of the cakes awakens their sense of taste. Tea leaves are gently cut to form a powdered green heap. As soon as the water in the kettle begins to stir and steam, but not yet boil, Weiskel casually begins a conversation without directly addressing anybody in particular.]

Are you all seeking to understand the essence of aesthetics and the making of meaning?

Olmsted

[Whispers to his neighbour.]

Who is this man, Mr Burke?

Burke

He is a source of marvellous accidents. I do not know what he is talking about, yet his presence has a very serene effect on me. It is healthy to be here, even if my mind cannot understand.

[The hermit now mindfully pours some tea into a bowl that appears to be roughly made. It has been broken and mended many times and contains many other irregularities in the clay. The hermit carefully turns the bowl so that a particular side faces towards one

of his guests, repeating this performance one by one. The bitter taste of the tea mingles with the passing sweet taste of the cake. Even the dogs seem to breathe more deeply.]

Hermit Weiskel

[While serving.]

Could you accept that the purpose of life is to live without a sense of self?

The bowl I gave you was empty. It was used by the person before you. I fill it again and you empty it. What we pass on to each other is like filling and emptying. Some empty a lot so others will need to fill it for them. Others empty only a little and barely need anyone to refill it.

For a long time I tried to define something I called the liminal. Yet by naming it, it gained a disproportionate value. So a fundamental question to me became: can you sense without imagination? Can you sense directly? In concrete terms this means sensing that is undivided by categories and abstractions and without forming symbols, only the passing by of sensations wanting to become experiences.

Kant

How can you maintain such a faint relationship with reality?

Hermit Weiskel

How? You seem to be doing just fine at this moment. That is how. I helped you to achieve this, but you are the one performing. And there is no pride or vaunting needed, there is a mere quietude. No flaws, no duality, no superiority. The question 'how' is not important. A better question would be: 'when'? When can we sense without appropriating.

Longinus

Appropriating? What do you mean?

Hermit Weiskel

Do you own this moment and this landscape? This tea? Do you own yourself?

Muir

There is nothing to own, that is exactly the point.

Olmsted

In a city, all is to own. That is why we need something to experience otherwise. The performance of a ritual ... that is a nice way to explain landscape design.

[Animal sounds can be heard in the distance. The dogs begin to bark alarmingly. They stir the men gathered in the hut, making them aware of their environment. The ceremony continues without further conversation, so as not to disturb the intensity of their reflective mode.]

[After a long time they depart and shake hands. Their minds have been emptied and filled, like the teacups. They are more aware of all the sounds and smells, all the movements and aromas and small visual details.]

Hermit Weiskel

[Addressing the Summoner.]

Here, take a look at this little weed in between these cracks of the mountain. Even without knowing or uttering its name, I am aware of it. Maybe you can be aware of what you seek without naming it as well?

[The Summoner looks at the hermit in silence, with a growing smile and hint of melancholy. He bows and returns to his own realm. He is pleased with the events that have occurred and the generous help that was offered. Longinus taught him that Hypsous is more about intimacy than style. Style may have become so dominant in current landscape design that it may deny such intimacy, preventing audiences from joining in the act of creation and making them reliant on a narrative guide to become intimate. Burke, however, argued that nature needs no narrative to be an impartial, embodied judge. It only needs an occasional moment of astonishment to raise enthusiasm; an embodied rooting in primordial structures that may not be understood, but can nevertheless be felt. Burke could not accept the observation that this impartial judge might be dying, or at least becoming crippled, as was suggested by Muir and Olmsted. Kant introduced a radically different project for any judgemental guidance. The idea of a nature-related sublime coincided with the passing away of religious practices, but if nature experiences and practices are also passing away, what then will represent the sublime? Kant showed how remarkable it is that masses of individuals are driven by unveiling seemingly perfected styles. A shared act of creation to find and define human flaws is already replacing the authoritative position of godheads and nature experiences. The sublime might then be the experiential tool for detecting and making transparent all types of human-related flaws. This type of sublime is then neither personified by a godhead, nor objectified by nature, but diversified within our own human soul. Weiskel, who apparently had become a hermit performing Eastern inspired rituals, made it clear that the human sense of self is deeply problematic. One could do without a sense of self, like emptying a cup of tea. However, if tea is passed on to another, the cup must be filled again. This ritual can be performed without appropriating the tea for oneself. Tea is available in abundance. What is not in abundance, is the performance of the ritual. For that, one needs a designed landscape.]

End of the play

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this thesis has changed me in many positive ways. Foremost among these is my relationship to ambiguity. Ambiguity was to me, as an eager designer, a means to sense opportunities where others would only sense trouble. As a scientist, such ambiguity is a nuisance, and perhaps even a sign of bad research. In science one can only manage to confront one, if any, still frame of a possible future, because the validity of new futures must be connected to all the dots and networks that already exist and are considered to be true – at least in theory. I therefore had to develop new competences to appreciate and use a critical level of exactness and clarity in my writing, thinking and design methods.

I have come to realize that my work relies greatly on cooperation with equally focused supervisors, colleagues and students. Any amount of excellence in my work is not my sole doing. I have relied on other people to complete my individual comprehension.

I thank my promotor Adri van den Brink. His methodological exactness has not only helped me to develop as a scholar, but has also helped to advance landscape architectural research in general. His sometimes pragmatic and at other times principled views have helped to give roots to my research and make progress at times when the going got tough. I especially credit him for his defence of the more artistic parts of my research.

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a broader audience (including non-human perspectives) to be included in landscape aesthetics.

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I am impressed by and grateful for the editing of this book by Derek Middleton; the dedication by Monique Jansen during lay-out; Hilde Tobi for her support on the structure of this interdisciplinary research and the use of the artwork by Erik Odijk on the cover.

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A special thanks also to the co-authors of the published articles: Sven Stremke, Maurice Paulissen, Riccardo Pulselli, Harro Maat, Lian Kasper, Flore Bijker and Ian Convery.

Besides many positive changes, on many occasions I felt that I was losing a naivety and buoyancy that had characterized me before and had been an essential part of my family relations and friendships. It was as if my native mind was meticulously being replaced by a mind made out of scientific conventions in a dreamless world. Many relatives and friends mirrored these unfolding changes

and they too have been wary about the wholesomeness of this endeavour. Still, my relatives and friends have remained by my side.

My dear mum (Els) and dad (Wim) who have always been examples of devotion and sincerity and have raised me with an innate stubbornness and activism to do what can be done if the cause appeared to be right, even if this meant that other people would think you are mad. My second mum and dad have been my elder sister (Marly) and brother (Theo), who have been examples of becoming an individual with his own likings and peculiarities as well as being a scientist, or at least exemplary in pursuing the kind of good cause that our parents made us look for. My own family, who have never stopped giving comfort on a daily basis: my sublime consort in life and wife, Suzanne and our three curious and unique children, Onne, Teun and Josephine. All their loving kindness and flattery have provided the necessary relativity to what seemed to be important.

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Karen de Groot, Harma Horlings, Paul de Kort, Frits van Loon, Eric Luiten, Ruud van Paridon, Eric-Jan Pleijster, Berno Strootman, Cees van der Veeke, Peter Veenstra and others that here remain unnamed.

ABSTRACT

A design for landscape experiences as an instrument in the making of meaning

This thesis offers a theoretical and practical study of the idea of the sublime and formulates a designerly way of dealing with the sublime in nature, landscapes and planned and accidental environments, and more specifically by means of landscape architecture. Historically, the idea of the sublime is often associated with to grand and astounding natural scenery, such as erupting volcanoes and complex patterns of large flocks of birds. The experience of such phenomena is sometimes described as a feeling for some ancient, symbolic or authentic aspect of life. The sublime appears as a way to experience the 'unpresentable'. Many artists and designers have tried to capture this in their work and philosophers have contemplated the implications of the 'negative' presence of the sublime. The contemporary notion of the sublime has been underlined by an upsurge of academic interest since the mid-1990s, most notably within the field of environmental aesthetics.

The subject of the sublime is still considered symbolic of how unprepared the general audience is for dealing with the inherent disorders that arise when confronted with 'negative' aesthetic engagement. The contemporary notion of the sublime can be explained as a critique of the current paucity of imagination on how to perceive environmental issues, the development of cities and the management of natural resources. From this I deduce that the subject of sublime experiences is relevant and potentially informative in critical notions concerning the experience and design of a variety of landscapes. My research aim was therefore to characterize the idea of the sublime as an aesthetic category that may become more relevant in a future landscape architectural repertoire. The consequences for landscape architecture are explored by means of articulating sublime landscape expressions

and landscape design, as well as by discussing an implicit designerly habit when considering landscape aesthetics.

My conclusion is that the experiential structure of the sublime can be broken down and described more accurately. I have deduced, from the literature research and the interpretative analysis, that it consists of a sequence of sensations becoming experiences. This process involves a creative act of imagination and identification. I have deduced six types of sublime experiences, which are categorized into six archetypical landscapes. The main explanation for this diversity of experiences follows the explanation that every sublime experience is a temporary experiential breakdown of habitual aesthetic engagement. The experiential structure of the sublime can be described as a breakdown and a recovery, involving two instinctive types of sensing – reader and poet – and two distinctive types of recovery – dissonant and consonant. Two additional categories can also be distinguished as a result of a conscious awareness or absence of recovery: the liminal and the unrepresentable, both of which are further refined with reference to Buddhism. The six archetypical landscapes that I have derived serve as instruments in the making of meaning and are related to the six shades of sublime experiences. To improve the opportunities for creating such landscape meanings I explored the concept of Landscape Machines.

Besides this rather specific design experimentation (research through designing), a more general motto is introduced: Serious Landscaping. This motto indicates that all types of landscapes, whether desirable or not, are part of the phenomenal reality in which humans develop meaning or train themselves to sense a continuous flux of changing meaning (i.e. the liminal). The idea of the sublime is hereby embedded in a more general cultural project to develop a human perception of phenomena that are beyond human proportion. Through landscape design, such proportions are not only related to a large scale or to wildernesses, but also, and perhaps mainly, to the conscious inclusion of a larger audience: animals, plants and even the substances of soil, water and atmosphere. A future repertoire of landscape architectural design

according the idea of the sublime will challenge the centuries old designerly habit of accommodating human preferences as well as the mainly visual characterization of aesthetic engagement.

APPENDIX

Overview of all related MSc thesis work by master students during the development of this thesis.

Thesis title	student(s)	supervisor(s)	Year	Month	Location	competitions	part of publication
Zandloper. Ontwerp voor groeve Bondewijn.	Mark van Beest	Marieke Timmermans Paul Roncken	2003	December	Ossendrecht, NL	winner National Archiprix 2004	
Articulatie in het landschap. Onderzoek naar de mogelijkheden en toepasbaarheid van verhalen binnen de landschapsarchitectuur.	Bart vd Westen Peter Westerink	Berno Stootman Jaap Roncken Jaap Lengkeek	2006	July	Romeinse Lijn, IJssellinie, NL		
Dredge Landscape Park, the story is in the soil.	Alexander Herrebout Gerwin de Vries	Paul Roncken Robbert de Koning	2006	September	Haarlemmermeer polder, NL	winner International Archiprix 2007 and entry National Archiprix 2007	part of publication
Dynamic Water Urbanism. Research to the interdependency of water quality, water quantity and shoreline design in urban contexts.	Femke Haccou	Paul Roncken Vincent Kuypers (Alterra)	2007	June	Haarlemmermeerpolder, NL		
Designing Saline Landscapes for the future, in Zeeland	Sophia Molpheta Karim van Wonderen	Paul Roncken	2009	May	Zeeland, NL		part of publication
Brown coal mining and rehabilitation: a landscape chronicle. Designing the rehabilitation of brown coal mines in Lusatia by integrating landscape narration with a landscape based approach to rehabilitation.	Rianne Knoot Renee de Waal	Paul Roncken Brigitte Scholz (Bauausstellung Furst-Puckler-Land)	2009	June	Lusatia, Germany		
An Agropark as landscape machine. In search for symbiosis.	Ellen Zwartkruis	Paul Roncken Madeleine van Mansfeld (Alterra) Ingrid Duchhart	2012	September	Aguascalientes, Mexico		
Community supported landscape regeneration.	Flore Bijker Lian Kasper	Paul Roncken Harro Maat (ass.prof. Knowledge, Technology and Innovation WUR)	2013	September	Vechtplassen, NL		part of publication
Doorstep landscape. Towards an inclusion of the space-pump in the design of a metropolitan food cluster in Venray.	Renze van Och	Paul Roncken P.J.A.M. Smeets (Alterra)	2013	June	Venray, NL		
Dynamic landscape sensations. Exploring a design method for interactive landscape experiences and one prototype design for island 'Tiengemeten'.	Roel Theunissen	Paul Roncken Adriaan Geuze Rudi van Erreger	2013	October	Tiengemeten, NL	entry National Archiprix 2015	
The Ens full hybrid. A landscape design for a troubled estuary.	Jonas Papenborg Remco van der Togt	Paul Roncken Harro de Jong (buroharro)	2013	July	Ems, NL	winner National Archiprix 2014 and Land en Water scriptie prijsvraag 2013 and entry International Archiprix	part of publication
Bridging Utrecht. Infrastructure as strategy.	Marie Baartmans Marijn P. Struik	Paul Roncken Maries Brinkhuijsen	2014	May	Utrecht, NL		

Thesis title	student(s)	supervisor(s)	Year	Month	Location	competitions	part of publication
Oil sands. A landscape based design approach towards a more sustainable landscape system.	Anne Nijland Floortje Goossens	Ingrid Duchhart Paul Roncken Kristoff van Assche Chris Geerling	2014	Oktober	Alberta, Canada	entry National Archiprix 2016	
On designing experienceable stories. In the Unknown Landscapes of the First World War.	Jaap Dirk Tump	Paul Roncken Rudi van Ereger	2014	September	France, Belgium, Switzerland		
Sublime Flooding of the Maniny Brownfield. Awaking a sublime sensation by sustainable brownfield re-development.	Zuzana Jancovicova	Paul Roncken	2014	December	Prague, Czech Republic	entry International Archiprix 2017	
Works of the sublime. Sublime design of the everyday work landscape in the Hamerstraatgebied.	Abel Coenen Sascha Geneste	Paul Roncken	2014	December	Amsterdam, NL		
The minefield of a dissonant site. Exploring design strategies in the context of dissonant heritage.	Sanne van der Mijl	Paul Roncken Joks Janssen	2015	April	Ijmuiden, NL		
Double Dutch. An exploration of the 'Dutch Approach' in Rebuild by Design.	Floor van Gils	Paul Roncken	2015	September	Red Hook, Brooklyn, New York, USA		
Naturally more Malmberget.	Gilles van der Heijden Jules Neefjes	Paul Roncken	2015	September	Malmberget, Sweden		
Refugee meets local. Enhancing a sense of belonging in public space by ubicomp techniques.	Xiaoya Ye	Paul Roncken	2016	September	Arnhem, NL		
Physical modelling in Landscape Architecture. Exploring a design tool for the explorative phases in dynamic landscape design.	Jolanda de Jong	Paul Roncken Rudi van Ereger	2016	December	(research on modeling)		
Experiencing the post-mining wonder. Reclaiming a new purpose for post-mining landscapes in the Quadrilátero Ferrífero (MG), Brazil.	Carlo Leonardi	Paul Roncken Jose Eustaquio Machado de Paiva (Federal University of Minas Gerais)	2017	February	Brazil	entry National Archiprix 2018	
Water Machine Networking. Designing a future-proof water network for integral urban development in Sint-Oedenrode.	Xiao Chen	Paul Roncken Anne van Kuijk (province Noord Brabant)	2017	May	St. Oedenrode, NL		
Bingham Canyon National Park. Reclaiming the Bingham Canyon Mine by transforming it into a new generation of National Park.	Frederik Gotemans	Paul Roncken Adriaan Geuze	2017	August	Salt Lake City, Utah, USA		
Design with Fire. On the role of landscape architecture in the transition to living with fire.	Laszlo van der Wal	Paul Roncken & dr. Cathelijne Stoof	2018	January	Seia & Mafra, Portugal		
Guiding tourism in a new hydropower landscape	Sander Smits.	Paul Roncken Jorrit Noordhuizen (NOHNIK)	2018	March	Skáftartunga, Iceland		

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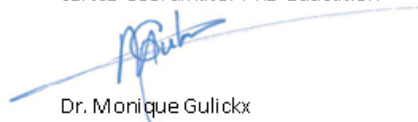
Management and Didactic Skills Training

- o Coordinating the BSc courses 'Studio Basic Design' and 'Studio Site Design' (2002-2014)
- o Supervising of MSc students (2002-2014)
- o Member of the Program Committee for Planning and Landscape Architecture (2007-2009)
- o BSc thesis coordination for the Landscape Architecture Chair Group (2007-2011)
- o Board member of Archiprix International (2007-2014)
- o Design member 'Road of the future' Oss/Noord-Brabant (2009-2013)
- o Board member of the Working Community of Landscape Ecology Research (WLO) (2009-2014)

Oral Presentations

- o *The Wageningen School and the counterintuitive sublime*, CELA conference, 25-29 June 2004, Canterbury, New Zealand
- o *New academic trends in Landscape Architecture*, ECLAS Alnarp, 11-14 September 2008, Alnarp, Sweden
- o *Landscape Machines and the future sublime*, CELA conference, 12-14 May 2010, Maastricht, The Netherlands
- o *A Designerly way of understanding landscape machines*, Designing Nature as Infrastructure Symposium, 29-30 November 2012, München, Germany

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Dr. Monique Gulickx

Colophon

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paul.roncken@wur.nl

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Historically, the idea of the sublime is often associated with grand and astounding natural scenery. This thesis investigates a twenty-first century idea of the sublime that includes dissonant phenomena such as ecosystem disruption and climate change. The subject of the sublime is symbolic of how unprepared the general audience is for dealing with the inherent disorders that arise when confronted with 'negative' aesthetic engagement. Landscape design, however, can mediate this experience to facilitate a creative act of imagination and identification with contemporary sublime phenomena. This in turn provides an opportunity to speculate on a future landscape architectural repertoire.

