

Hasn't It Always Been Like This?

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This thesis project traces a place-story of the Lake Union Dry Docks, a working industrial site wedged between growing residential Eastlake and the rapidly developing South Lake Union urban hub. Industrial sites are increasingly buffeted between fetish and erasure: their functions removed, their forms destroyed or repurposed to serve anew. But unlike many post-industrial sites the Dry Docks are still functioning, drawing off a nimble history of boat repair and building. The thesis design is a simple path that navigates the awkward junction of the Dry Docks, South Lake Union, and the Eastlake residential neighborhood. Walking along it reveals hidden adjacencies and obscured histories of the site, creating a space that grows in significance in the body-memory and minds of its users, engaging public connection to place.

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PREFACE

This project began as the exploration of a working industrial site as seen through overlapping lenses of architecture, landscape architecture, and social work. From the vantage point of these three fields, each concerned with life in the city, I was curious to understand how the processes of urban development affect industry when its location becomes a target for new development. The Lake Union Dry Docks—sited on the water between two growing neighborhoods, still functioning as ship building and repair facility right next door to a technology hub itself partially ensconced in now-defunct industrial building shells—presented itself as an ideal site on which to practice across disciplines. I imagined a design intervention here that would engage industry, landscape, and the Dry Docks’ adjacent neighbors. But each successive reading of the place—its program, history, and occupations—led to more questions, prompting me to ask what, if any, intervention is appropriate in this place. The site is not terribly comfortable for human scale occupation yet a design that aggressively courts neighboring Eastlake and South Lake Union could significantly disrupt daily functions at the thriving dry docks. In this place, I came to see a number of small moments that speak to the rich history and occupations of this site and Lake Union. I wondered how I could reveal those hidden moments and bring them into the consciousness of people whose paths cross the site whether in reality or in imagination.

At the end of the thesis project, I came to realize that this project was focused on the pause – the moment of reading. While a design insertion is proposed, the more critical point of this project is learning to read sites more carefully and empathetically. As a student in architecture I had been taught to read a site as the setting for a design, essentially rendering site as a relatively inert place that should be reconfigured to be good, useful, and functional. This approach privileges a tabula rasa framework, wiping out existing occupants and elements for a static vision of place that cannot possibly capture the nuance and variation that is there before design interventions reshape the site. As a student in landscape architecture the emphasis was on learning to read the site as a system, but this approach too undervalued the complexity of a site as I began to understand it. This thesis was focused on exploring the frameworks for reading a site in order to develop an approach that would merge my values and thinking with the tools and outcomes of the design process. Thus this thesis is a reflective work, developing my critical approach to design thinking in order to establish alternative ground for launching my career within the design professions.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In his book *Cities for People*, architect Jan Gehl writes that urban design happens as “life, space, buildings – in that order.”¹ Life refers to the humans, animals, plants, and other living occupants of a place. If, as Gehl proposes, designers attend first to the life of a place and only after that to the space and its physical character, the resulting change will integrate with the existing context and nurture life from within. This thesis utilizes that idea as the groundwork for a design project that engages an active industrial site in Seattle, Washington: a dry dock facility located in the center of the city.

The Lake Union Dry Docks are a working industrial facility squeezed between the old blue collar Seattle and a new technology-oriented city, between a growing residential neighborhood in Eastlake and a fast-developing urban hub in South Lake Union. The economy of Seattle is shifting from one based in manufacturing and resources to one focused on ideas and services, subsequently altering the city’s spatial needs. The apparent trend away from manufacturing industries could accelerate or we could be reaching a point of equilibrium wherein both modes of production have a place. Moreover, civic leaders and urban designers are not clear on the direction of cities in the 21st century as they face the challenges of climate change, globalization, urbanization, and worldwide poverty. These challenges may well alter the role of production as well as that of city and urban services as we understand them. Economists and urban designers are challenged to predict the future. In response to this uncertainty, this thesis proposes this moment as a time when we might consider how to better steward our industrial resources and

1 Gehl, Jan. *Cities for People*. Washington, DC: Island, 2010. 198-211.

thoughtfully consider our collective futures.

Thus, the “life, space, buildings” philosophy works as an initial roadmap for engaging with a complex set of occupants, users, and stories at a rapidly changing industrial pocket on Lake Union.² As evidenced in South Lake Union with the development of the Amazon campus, urban development adjacent to the site is progressing quickly; this invites a pause that makes it possible to consider the life and space of the site and to reveal the site’s character before the next inevitable wave of building overtakes the neighborhood. A successful design method within this context will respond to present site elements while remaining open to the possibility of their evolution. In this way, the design is an opportunity to nurture the multiple possibilities and futures of a site. An inclusive, open-ended design methodology starts with a broad reading of site that extends beyond its visible physical and political bounds to include that which is not easily seen or known. How can designers translate such a seemingly unbounded substrate into a defined site, and thereby reveal the groundwork that might lead to an imperative for design?

To answer these questions, this project frames the Lake Union Dry Docks as an active industrial landscape and, rather than accelerating

² Gehl 198.



Image 1: Cranes at the Lake Union Dry Docks, often used for lifting heavy materials utilized in ship maintenance.



Image 2: Houseboats - originally the residences of workers employed by Lake Union industries - form a small waterbound residential pocket north of the project site.

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its progress toward a post-industrial re-imagining or apparent obsolescence, applies design skills and evaluation to reveal discovered qualities and alternate futures. This in-depth investigation calls for historical, geographic, cultural, and economic readings of site. Equally important to this thesis is a sensory and experiential reading of site – how sights, touch, sounds, smells, and even tastes inform an understanding of place and make space for site layers to manifest and intersect. Engaging an alternate aesthetic, material, and temporal understanding of the Dry Docks leaves room for potential spirit of the place to emerge rather than imposing one upon it from the outside. The histories and processes of a place, its functions, and its textures are all present at a site, whether or not they are easily perceptible. Within the bounds of this project, the design that emerges from this sensory exploration is a path intended to slice through story, history, and place without disrupting the Dry Docks' inherent function, program, and character.

This project pauses at the moment before conceptual development and stays in the act of reading a place before re-imagining its future. The intent of the pause within the design process is to provoke a reciprocal pause in the final design insertion, creating opportunities for future users to participate in the reading and shaping of place. The design insertion precedes an inevitable expansion of development brought about by the influx of new soft industries and technologies in South Lake Union; it draws attention to the nature of the site by creating simple passage for users: a path traversing the adjacent neighborhoods. This pathway follows in the footsteps of architect Alexandre Chemetoff who in *Visits* describes his design for a public park by asking, "Hasn't it always been like this?"³ His question provocatively implies a

3 Chemetoff, Alexandre, and Sandrine Gill. *Visits: Town and Territory: Architecture in Dialogue*. Basel: Birkhäuser, 2009. 35.

design intervention that submits to the existing place and highlights site conditions while the intervention itself fades into a comfortable familiarity. In his work *Primacy of Site*, building and landscape architect Martin Hogue echoes Chemetoff's approach of conceding the primacy of a design to the existing complexity of a place, stating that, "The role of architecture may not be to establish permanence but rather to acknowledge a certain richness of experience on the site. To operate in this way is to accept the inevitability of change. Future events are fused with the history of the site through the imagination as a substitute for direct experience."⁴

In this thesis I am investigating as both an architect and a landscape architect. In these dual roles I am seeking to foster new and potential life for, at, and on the site by embracing the perspective of explorer and designer. In this manner I wish to reveal the inherent qualities of place and to design out of the character of the place as a means of embedding inherent complexity. The distinct approaches of learning architecture and landscape architecture are not wrong but rather are each limited – whether rooted in a specific point in time, framework, or within their respective fields. The thesis marks a culminating moment in my education; here, I seek to leverage my dual disciplinary education to address the present moment of transition where cities are moving from industrial-based economies to idea-based economies. We are in a time in which we seek to design technological systems that address the perceived deficits of our cities and places without acknowledging the possibility that what is already there may in fact be all we need at the present. We may not need new technology or new materials or new utopias. Instead, we can imagine what we have as supporting a fuller and healthier urban place.

⁴ Hogue, Martin. "The Site as Project: Lessons from Land Art and Conceptual Art." *Journal of Architectural Education* 57.3 (2004). 59.

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INTRODUCING THEMATIC SECTIONS: REVEALING A DESIGN METHODOLOGY

Engaging with the Lake Union Dry Docks as a designer led to initial questions about the origins of the place and its various functions. How did the docks come to be built in their location on the southeast end of Lake Union? What factors led to their establishment? Are they still relevant to the City of Seattle or the Pacific Northwest?

The Dry Docks were built in their present location to take advantage of water-based transportation infrastructure (locks, sheltered water, and coastal rail) and land-based materials (lumber, sawmills, and easy-grade access to early Seattle settlements). For the Dry Docks as well as for other industrial facilities on Lake Union, the city infrastructure built along geographically influenced pathways was both an instigator for development and the result of previous industrial expansion on the lake. This infrastructure also shifts as urban uses and needs change. As existing infrastructure is maintained, re-imagined, or removed to meet these shifts it simultaneously responds to the site's past evolution and informs future identities of the area. An examination of the Dry Docks' past, present and potential future using diverse methods is necessary to develop an understanding of the site's complexity and create a design out of that complexity. In this sense, the thesis does not propose a solution for the liminal industrial zone surrounding the Dry Docks nor does it present a new framework for design; rather, it explores the design process as a means of finding alternate phasing and scales of development on the site. Thus, the design is not a final product but a process of thinking about time and place. This process presumes that the present is a moment of change and as such it is a moment for reflective design – a restrained hand with an emphasis on making space that feels good to different users. What feels good to one user may not feel good to another, so the project is also about mediating an experience in

space, allowing for multiple occupations.

Each examination of the Lake Union Dry Docks reveals an increasing complexity brought about by forces beyond the bounds of the designated site. These forces exert a powerful influence on the area's morphology, its use, and its perceived characteristics; their imprint is apparent in the intricate relationship between topography and industrial performance, the sociocultural diversity, and the economic and political frameworks within which the site is continually produced. The multiplicity and unboundedness of these forces necessitates an expansion of site and of how designers define site within the context of a project. Many landscape writers and theorists challenge conventional definitions and preconceived notions of site proposing we expand beyond the concrete bounds of site to include elements not typically included in the architectural process. In Carol Burns and Andrea Kahn's edited volume *Site Matters*, landscape scholar Kristina Hill rethinks the scope of site by connecting it with ecology; urban planner Robert Beauregard traces the idea of site to place, which "...cannot be empty," and possesses a place narrative that cannot be fully erased.⁵ In her essay "Groundwork," theorist and teacher Robin Dripps writes that site can be read as a reductive, concrete, spatially finite entity while offering up an alternative term for the elements that act upon site: ground. Ground becomes a catch-all term encompassing the physical elements and processes that occur below the surface of a site, as well as the histories, traditions, cultures, ecologies, and ideas that influence a site and are altered by events that occur on a site.⁶

5 Burns, Carol, and Andrea Kahn. "Why Site Matters." *Site Matters: Design Concepts, Histories, and Strategies*. Ed. Carol Burns and Andrea Kahn. New York: Routledge, 2005. 39.

6 Dripps, Robin. "Groundwork." *Site Matters: Design Concepts, Histories, and Strategies*. Ed. Carol Burns and Andrea Kahn. New York: Routledge, 2005. 60-64.

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This investigation began with an expansive conception of site consistent with the inquiries above, defining the Lake Union Dry Docks as the sum of its history, uses, and future occupations. Further exploration of the Dry Docks suggested a shift toward the use of ground in order to differentiate between the concrete site and its less tangible histories, ecologies, and occupations. In this paper, the discussion of sites follows the trajectory of the discourse captured in Burns and Kahn's volume, beginning with expanding ideas of site and moving to the question of whether to use another term entirely as Dripps does, differentiating a concrete definition of site from a more metaphorical conception of ground.

When a site is considered to be something more than a location awaiting a project – more than a blank slate, or *tabula rasa* – we are confronted more clearly with the quality of open-endedness and incompleteness that accompanies any completed project. Digging deep into a site and questioning its inevitable future identity can open the door to more questions than we appear to resolve. The process of deep investigation establishes, creates, and nurtures a sense of humility and a need to design dynamically in a manner that actively accommodates future growth. In addition to embodying it within its design, this thesis has sought to embrace that dynamic framework within the structure of its writing; it provides an interwoven dialogue between the conditions observed on site, themes in urban industrial and post-industrial development, and a sampling of literature that speaks to these conditions. This project teases out four thematic elements of the unbounded site that encompass the complexity of designing in a post-modern city as it shifts away from its industrial foundations toward a future era that is not yet fully defined. The first theme, substrate (or defining site) provides the basis of investigation. The second theme explores the infrastructure of place – an armature that emerges from the

substrate of site. The third theme, voices, describes politics and power both within and beyond the bounds of the site, asking the question: Who decides? The fourth theme engages design and complexity, creating an overlay or intervention that reflects and responds to the first three elements as they exist on a site. These themes build upon one another and create a framework for deeper investigation within the design process.

The section on substrate begins by posing a critical question that has been explored at length by architects and landscape architects including Carol Burns, Andrea Kahn, and Anne Spirn: How do designers define site? The subsequent physical description of the Lake Union Dry Docks provides a substrate out of which to explore the less tangible elements of the project site. This investigation continues with Martin Hogue, who reimagines site as the melding of imagination, location, and time. His reframing of the elements that constitute a site facilitates a more nuanced reading of South Lake Union and the Dry Docks, leading to an unveiling of sensory impressions and points of discontinuity and opportunity.

The second thematic section concentrates on the site's armature – its history and infrastructural overlay – and how it shaped and became inextricable from the site. Through understanding the area's armature we arrive at another perspective on the nature of site wherein the term ground is a more appropriate term for the constant underpinnings of a place, both physical and metaphorical. Infrastructure itself becomes a type of ground -- a familiar interconnected web of industry and development that changes with uses and needs, forming the framework for sites and occupants. As Robin Dripps writes in "Groundwork," her essay on site and ground, "patterns of streets, alleys, and other urban pathways have a structure, hierarchy, and social coding that

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Image 3: Side stair for one of the early wooden structures at the Lake Union Dry Docks.

become a powerful stabilizing datum.”⁷ This infrastructure expresses the urban vernacular rhythms that shape the experiences of place and reveals clues to past iterations and occupations.

In explicating the voices present on the site, the third thematic section asks a critical but oft missed question: Who decides? Occupants of a site – human, constructed, and grown – are subject to the power structures of a place and some voices are heard above others. In her book *The Power of Place*, scholar Dolores Hayden writes, “The power of place – the power of ordinary urban landscapes to nurture citizens’ public memory, to encompass shared time in the form of shared territory – remains untapped for most working peoples’ neighborhoods in most American cities, and for most ethnic history and most women’s history.”⁸ Hayden points out that urban history has neglected sites of significance to Black Culture, to women, and to working-class and poor neighborhoods, as is evidenced by public monuments and preserved sites.⁹ How the voices of those occupants are heard and prioritized has significant implications for all who interact with that site, whether in body or in imagination. The urban examples explored in the previous section show that at present, the post-industrial futures of sites like the

7 Dripps 68.

8 Hayden, Dolores. “Claiming Urban Landscapes as Public History.” *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1997. 9.

9 Hayden 2-13.

Lake Union Dry Docks are limited to either fetishization or attempted erasure, effectively muting the functions and conditions that led to their existence. These post-industrial sites often fall prey to the forces described by Dolores Hayden in *The Power of Place*: “When the urban landscape is battered, important collective memories are obliterated.” But perhaps some remnants of that memory can be retained through the armature of industry. As Robin Dripps writes, “...the pattern of manhole, gas, and water valve covers dotting streets [that tell]... a story about what is there and what has disappeared.”¹⁰

A thorough exploration of substrate, armature, and voices ground this design project as a challenge of designing with complexity; this design overlay becomes the fourth thematic element of the project dialogue. The section reveals two alternate perceptions of design that interweave Robin Dripps’s framing of ground and site with Jan Gehl’s three points of engagement (“...life, space, buildings”). This blending of perspectives opens the door for a design methodology founded in the familiar, the rhythmic, and the emergent. This approach to space-making is akin to vernacular in its capacity to respond directly to occupants’ needs and fancies.

¹⁰ Dripps 69.

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II. DEFINING SITE: SUBSTRATE

The first question this thesis will address is the idea of site: How does one define a site, physically and conceptually?

Within architectural thought and process, the site is traditionally thought of as a physical location, a piece of ground that is bound to the earth and subject to its physical laws. Site is also commonly conceived as a location for an intervention, a neutral or unfinished “lot” to be completed by an architectural project. Site and project are often thought to be distinct, one making way for the other.¹⁰

In the introduction to their anthology *Site Matters*, editors Carol Burns and Andrea Kahn ask “What is a site?,” challenging the reader to examine pre-existing ideas of site and setting the stage for a discourse on the role of site in the design professions.¹¹ They introduce this question by articulating generally accepted ideas of site among designers: “In design discourse... site is too often taken as a straightforward entity contained by boundaries that delimit it from the surroundings. This oversimplified understanding has arguable basis, as every work of physical design focuses on spatially finite places... practice and pedagogy reinforce similar tacit understandings of site as a circumscribed physical area given *a priori*.”¹² They proceed to articulate two provocative observations: (1) “[This approach]

¹⁰ Hogue 54

¹¹ Burns and Kahn x.

¹² Burns and Kahn x.



Image 4: The shoreline presents visitors with a vast layering of textures, colors, sensations, geologic elements, and organisms.

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Image 5: Moss and other vegetation grow upon and between the floorboards of the wooden walkways near the Dry Docks.

suggests that designers have no role to play in determining sites and, conversely, that the determination of a site does not bear on matters of design consideration,” and (2) “More profoundly, it occludes the fact that a site is defined by those holding the power to do so.”³ These observations introduce a level of uncertainty into the role of designers in determining and accepting extents of site and instead point to a political determination of site, which may or may not account for geographic, social, or cultural determinations of such boundaries.

To explain their alternate notion of site, Burns and Kahn assert that the spatial bounds of site are determined by three distinct areas: the areas of control, area of influence, and the area of effect:

To be controlled or owned, the physical site needs delimitation; however to be understood in design, it must be considered extensively in reference to its setting... The concept of site, then, simultaneously refers to seemingly opposite ideas: a physically specific place and a spatially and temporally expansive surround. Incorporating three distinct geographic areas, two divergent spatial ideas, and past, present, and future timeframes, sites are complex.⁴

In defining site according to its internal and external adjacencies, Burns and Kahn expand the idea of site beyond its physical boundaries and add significant depth and breadth to the concept. The work of designer and theorist Anne Spirn also speaks to a more complex ideation of site.

13 Burns and Kahn x - xi.

14 Burns and Kahn xii.

In the *Language of Landscape*, she offers a way to conceptualize the urban site as a landscape and as part of a greater ecological system, wherein human actions are part of the nature-forces acting on (and from) the site:

I use the word landscape in its original sense in English and Nordic languages—the mutual shaping of people and place—to encompass both the population of a place and its physical features: its topography, water flow and plant life; its infrastructure of streets and sewers; its land uses, buildings and open spaces. The urban landscape is shaped by rain, plants and animals; human hands and minds. Rain falls, carving valleys and soaking soil. People mould landscape with hands, tools and machines, through law, public policy, the investing and withholding of capital, and other actions undertaken hundreds or thousands of miles away. The processes that shape landscape operate at different scales of space and time: from the local to the national, from the ephemeral to the enduring.⁵

Spirn's words speak to a complexity inherent in the urban site that is not reflected in a tabula rasa, urban-block-as-site defined primarily by its footprint, location, and proximity to amenities and places of employment.

These broadened concepts of site are slow to manifest in the design process. Burns and Kahn comment on differing conceptions of site and point to a calcifying gap between design work and theory as an

15 Spirn, Anne Whiston. *The Language of Landscape*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1998. 397.



Image 6: The detritus shed by watercraft is washed up along the shoreline; synthetic and natural materials intermingle here.

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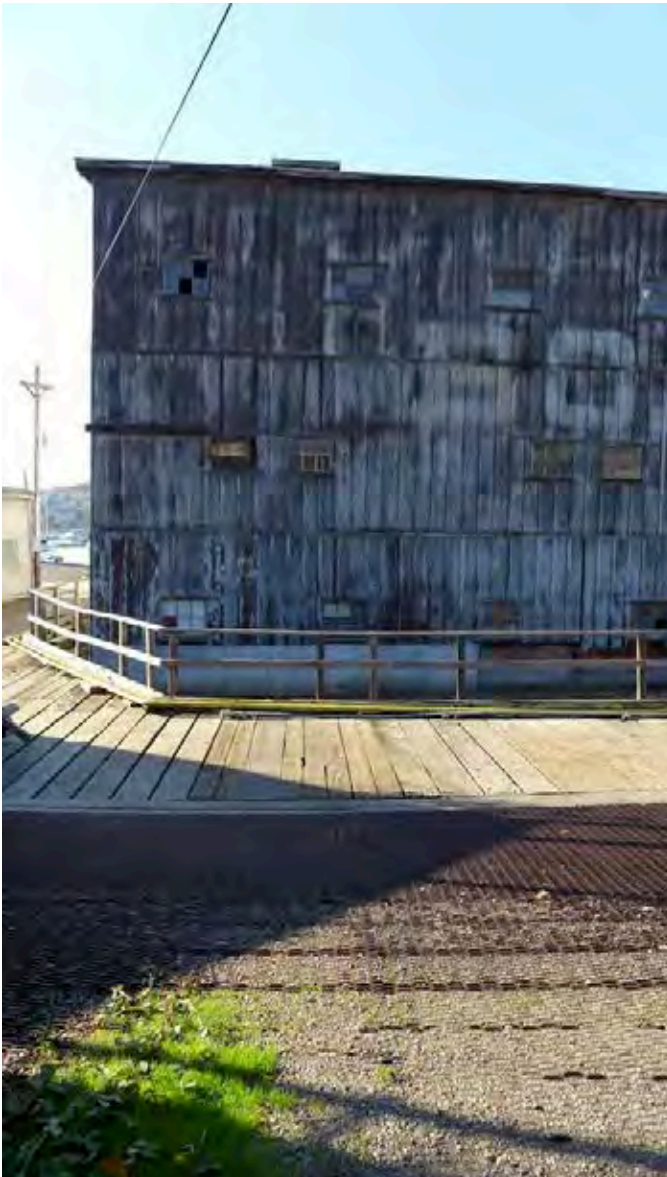


Image 7: The weathered signage on the worn wood siding of the Dry Docks evokes a different era of industry and occupation.

impetus for broadening site's definitions:

First, site knowledge, even if unspoken, exerts a powerful force in design that theoretical inquiry should acknowledge and critically assess. Second, historiography has sanctioned particular ways of engaging with site matters, and the deleterious effects of these sanctions should be recognized and countered. Third, modes of representation construe sites, and their formative role in the production of site knowledge should be revealed and expressed...we claim the site as a relational construct that acquires meaning and value through situational interaction and exchange.⁶

This leads the reader to wonder if there is room in the realm of physical design for a constructed discourse on site. As Burns and Kahn state, "...Site thinking is concretely situated, more interactive than abstract, and less concerned with the semantic content of knowledge than with a concern for relationships among knowers and known."⁷

This creates an opportunity for an on-the-ground engagement with site complexity – an opening for spatial dialogues between place, observers and occupants. Andrea Kahn further explains the need for discourse in "Defining Urban Sites," where she argues urban sites cannot be seen in isolation: "The impossibility of isolating one urban locale, operationally, from its surrounds, lends urban design its inherently public dimension... design actions in urban contexts have consequence beyond narrowly construed limits of legal metes and bounds."⁸

¹⁶ Burns and Kahn xv.

¹⁷ Burns and Kahn xv.

¹⁸ Kahn, Andrea. "Defining Urban Sites." *Site Matters: Design Concepts, Histories, and Strategies*. Ed. Carol Burns and Andrea Kahn. New York: Routledge, 2005. 292-293

In applying such thinking to the Lake Union Dry Docks site, the designer is challenged to both define the site as a place and to read the substrate for less tangible forces – identifying the concrete elements at the Dry Docks will make space for a more nuanced reading of place. The Lake Union Dry Docks awkwardly located in time and in space. They are sited in an industrial-zoned joint north of the rapidly growing South Lake Union commercial development, south of the iconic (and also growing) Eastlake houseboat and multi-family housing area, and directly west of the elevated I-5 freeway under the cliffs of North Capitol Hill. In character, the dry docks and their industrial neighbors are typical of many marine industrial projects: low-slung buildings, restricted access, and limited water views from the adjacent roadway. Fairview Avenue – the road stretching between the Dry Docks and surrounding buildings – is an underwhelming asphalt strip melting into gravel; it is heavily used by utility trucks and by vehicles being repaired at one of the small garages across from the dry dock facilities.

Although physically bounded in between with the street, the shoreline and the lake, the Dry Docks seem to recede from view, hiding their function behind a closed façade removed from the street by a row of parked cars and a twelve foot elevation drop. When even physical elements of a place are obscured in this way, how is it possible to experience the less tangible elements? This hiddenness presents an



Image 8: Fairview streetscape, as seen when facing south.



Image 9: Fairview streetscape, as seen when facing north.

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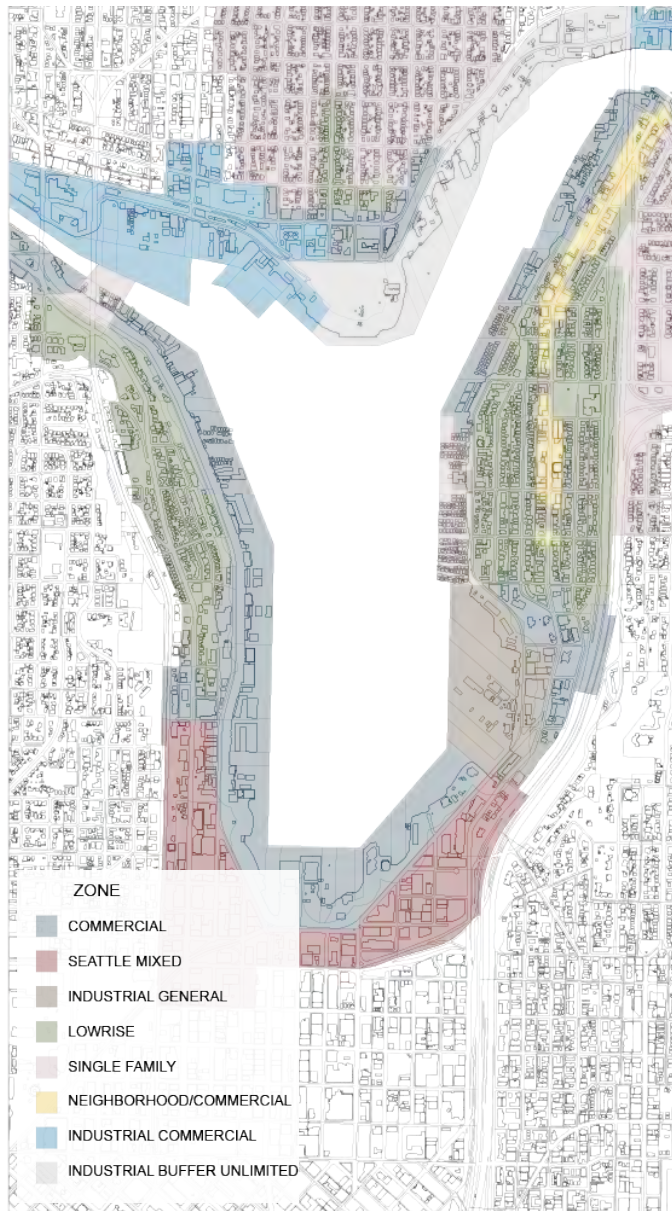


Image 10: Zoning map of the periphery of Lake Union.

opportunity to reveal the Dry Docks and its adjacencies in order to facilitate dialogue among site elements and users. To understand these less-tangible characteristics of site, it is important to start with the site as we see it now and to identify the forces that gave rise to it.

PHYSICAL SITE DESCRIPTION

To read the unbounded site – or, to evoke Robin Dripps’s term, *ground* – one needs to begin with investigating the earliest uses of the site.

The Dry Docks were built in 1919 as Seattle’s Lake Union increasingly was becoming a site of industrial production and a transportation hub.⁹ Historic maps indicate that the Dry Docks were built to the maximum length within state-designated harbor limits. Maps and photos also reveal that the original shoreline has shifted significantly inward over time (shifting shorelines map). For much of the twentieth century wooden trestles lined the shore and provided rail access to water-based industries. Over time, these trestles were filled in with earth displaced by large public projects such as the Denny Regrade (1908-11, 1929) and grading projects that made way for Interstate 5’s route

19 Raymond, Vaun S. “Lake Union Drydock.” *Lake Union Virtual Museum*. King County 4Culture, 2008. Web. Summer 2013. http://www.lakeunionhistory.org/Lake_Union_Drydock.html.

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through the city (1965-69).¹⁰¹¹ This resulted in increased landmass at the shoreline and a consequent increase in the number of buildable plots, which also made way for additional industrial buildings along the lake.¹²

The coastal Salish people, whose ancestors originally occupied the area, call this site *sTLup*; this roughly translates to 'deep water.' *sTLup* describes the way in which the steep slopes of Capitol Hill meet Lake Union to create a deep near-shore area.¹³ The dry dock builders were most likely attracted to the accessible depth of the shoreline that makes it an ideal place to dock and service large seafaring ships

The Dry Docks project into the water between Waterways 8 and 9. The dominant structure of the docks is an approximately 1,200 foot long pier that juts northwest into Lake Union from the lake's southeast corner. The angle at which they were built increases the length of the docks without extending them too far into the lake and it accommodates deep-water ships on the lake-ward side. With this angle, they are nearly parallel to the shoreline at the north end and are

20 Klinge, Matthew W. *Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2007.

21 Dougherty, Phil. "Interstate 5 Is Completed in Washington State on May 14, 1969." *HistoryLink.org- Online Encyclopedia of Washington State History*. N.p., 10 Apr. 2010. Web. Feb.-Mar.

22 Kroll, Baiste maps

23 Thrush, Coll-Peter. *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-over Place*. Seattle: University of Washington, 2007.



Image 11: Lake Union shoreline shifts, last one hundred years of development

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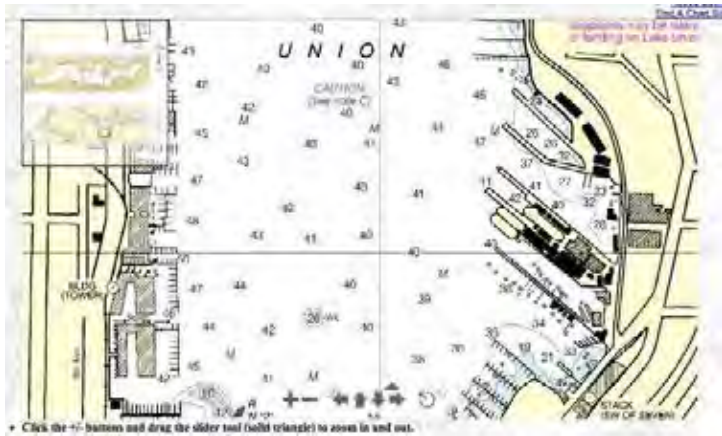


Image 12: Historic map of Lake Union with water depths; the Lake Union Dry Docks are located at waterways 8 and 9 (lower right).



Image 13: Aerial view of the Lake Union Dry Docks, present day.

perpendicular to the shoreline at Waterway 8. The pier hosts covered boathouses, wooden sheds, warehouses, and two floating dry dock structures. It is also surrounded by a boats ranging from small non-motorized recreational watercraft and yachts to large Arctic Sea fishing boats, research ships, and barges, creating great scalar variety on the water.

The Dry Docks face Fairview Avenue East on the landward side and are located in South Lake Union just north of the intersection where Fairview splits from Eastlake Avenue East; from the split, Fairview Avenue runs along the shoreline and remains parallel to Eastlake Avenue for nearly two miles until the University Bridge. The project site is aligned along Fairview Avenue E with its northern boundary at East Garfield Street and its southern edge at East Galer Street. The Dry Docks meet Fairview as a two-story, 160 foot long wood building built on wood pilings approximately ten feet from the shoreline. The building's second floor is at street level. Its lower level can be seen across a moat separating the shoreline from the pier (image drydock façade). Access to the structure is available via two second-floor bridges and from a driveway that connects Fairview Avenue to the Dry Docks' northern-most pier (plan view). Directly across from the Dry Docks along Fairview Avenue is a low wooden shed with garage doors; the 125 foot long structure houses several car repair shops and was

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Image 14: The length of the Dry Docks as seen looking south. The viewpoint is slightly off of the path along Fairview and it is the only landward location where any interior functions are visible.



Image 15: The main building facade, as seen from the slope Below Fairview Avenue East.

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Image 16: The Lake Union Dry Docks as seen from Fairview.

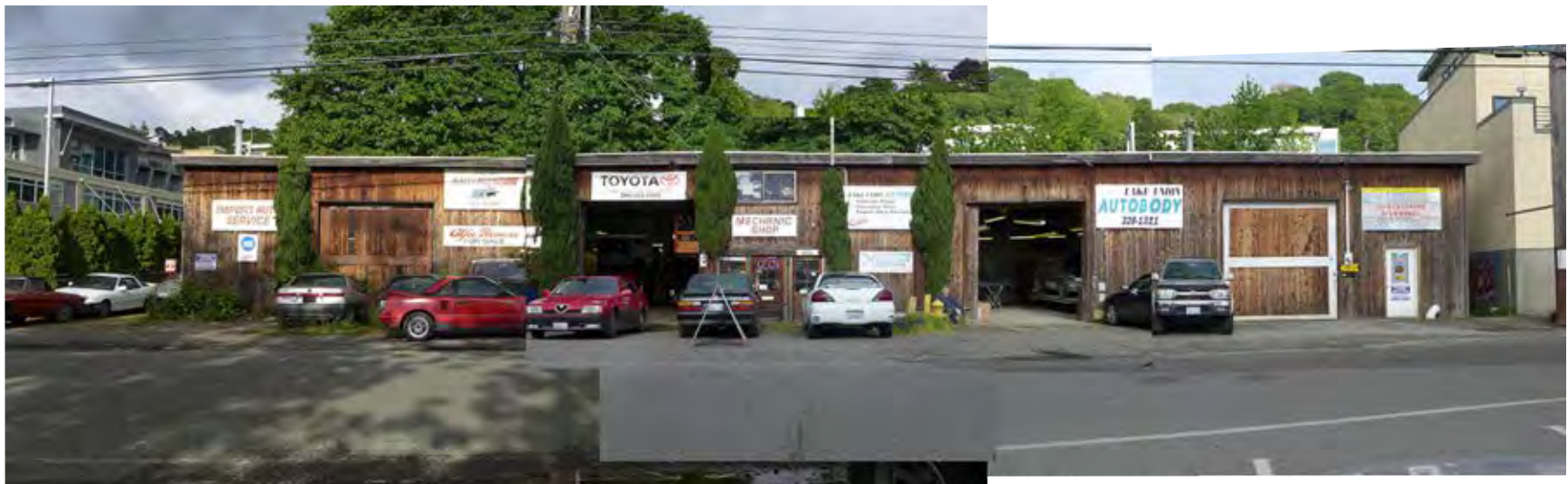


Image 17: Car repair garages across from the Dry Docks along Fairview.

originally used for coal storage for the steam plant located just south of Fairview Avenue North. The steam plant was designated as a historic landmark in 1994 and was subsequently converted to the headquarters for ZymoGenetics, a biotechnology and pharmaceutical company.¹⁴

The shoreline adjacent to the Lake Union Dry Docks building is located at the base of a steep slope ten to twenty feet below street level. The slope is primarily stabilized with fiber rolls (image fiber rolls) and vegetation (including English Ivy), with rock riprap at the steepest points. Occupants have made some effort to plant local species so the top of the slope hosts big-leaf maples, shore pines, salal, and a few ornamental shrubs. During summer months, some of these trees obscure the building's façade and views across the lake. Across the street, the garage structure hosts a series of lonely Italian cypress columns. The area behind the garage is a bit wild and unmaintained, hiding parts of an old concrete trestle within the branches of a stately maple and a very robust explosion of English Ivy.

In its entirety, the Fairview Avenue streetscape along the Dry Docks is 700 feet long and approximately 20 feet wide with gravel parking strips on both sides, creating a 74 foot wide streetscape. A pass-through parking lot – stretching east to Eastlake directly north of the garage building and aligned with the dry dock driveway – is an additional area of interest. Including this parking lot, the site can be understood as nearly 350 feet stretching from Eastlake Avenue East to the Lake Union shoreline. Thus, connections between Fairview and Eastlake exist at the northern site boundary at East Garfield Avenue, at the parking lot north of the garages, and at a drive-through passage in the WSECU building south of the garages. The south end of the site is marked by a large sail-inspired sculpture visible from Interstate 5 and Eastlake Avenue (south of

24 Becker, Paula. "Lake Union (Seattle) Cybertour." *HistoryLink.org- Online Encyclopedia of Washington State History*. N.p., 27 July 2007. Web. Feb.-Mar. 2014.

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Image 18: Existing paths along the periphery of the Dry Docks.

the Fairview intersection), and from Fairview Avenue North in South Lake Union.

The stretch of Fairview Avenue E that is adjacent to the Lake Union Dry Docks is part of the marked Chesiahud Lake Union Loop Trail (CLUL) that connects the floating walkway at Waterway 8/Submerged Parcels Park to an asphalt path. The asphalt path winds north past the former NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) piers before reaching the Eastlake houseboat docks. The CLUL paved trail gives out just north of the site, where it blends into the parking strip-lined street that services houseboat slips on the eastern shore of the lake.

Topographically, the site is located at the low point where the steep slope of Capitol Hill to the east meets the more gradual slopes of Eastlake to the north and Cascade to the south. The slopes level out at the junction of Eastlake and Fairview Avenue E, directly east of the I-5 elevated freeway (section diagrams all directions). The lake itself sits in a bowl created by the hills that form the neighborhoods surrounding the lake: Capitol Hill to the east; the University District, Wallingford and Fremont to the north; and Queen Anne to the west. Cascade/South Lake Union slopes gently up to the south-and is marked at its west edge by the original ravine that spans from Belltown to the south shore of the lake (topo map – features marked). The eastern slope from Capitol Hill plunges steeply into the lake, interrupted only by I-5, which towers

above the Eastlake neighborhood and the Lake Union Dry Docks.

REIMAGINING SITE

The sum of the concrete elements that constitute the Dry Docks imply that there is a greater complexity at hand than what is easily described above, prompting a further search for alternate readings of site. In his article *The Site as Project: Lessons from Land Art and Conceptual Art*, landscape and building architect Martin Hogue also challenges traditional architectural conceptions of site, looking to land artists like Robert Smithson and to landscape theorists in his quest to reconsider the designer’s understanding of site. Within his writing, Hogue explores elements of the driving question behind this thesis: “Hasn’t it always been like this?”¹⁵ He explains that by placing attention on the site rather than on project parameters, the designer can re-cast the site itself as a fundamental element of the design and building process where the site itself is understood as a construction teased out of a place that possesses its own up-until-now “given, immutable qualities.”¹⁶

Hogue presents a reconsidered understanding of site that is organized into three primary qualities: *imagination, location, and time*.¹⁷ In order

25 Chemetoff 35.
 26 Hogue 53-54.
 27 Hogue 54.



Image 19: Paths and modalities of travel around the project site.

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Image 20: English ivy scales the remnants of a concrete trestle that sits beside an actively used parking lot.

to elaborate on the element of *imagination*, Hogue borrows architect and author Carol Burns (*Site Matters*) and land artist Robert Smithson's interpretations of place. In "On Site: Architectural Preoccupations," the Burns article Hogue that turns to for his exploration on imagination, she "proposes the notion of the "cleared site" to describe the traditional thinking about architectural sites – that the site is no more than that which awaits architectural intervention, something empty or cleared of content either physically or intellectually."¹⁸ Hogue goes on to cite her proposal that "A more fruitful direction lies in the recognition that all sites are constructions, whether out of a set of empirical conditions, the imagination, or both. The site is never simply found, but instead always constitutes an act of making." She places the onus for creation of site on the observer, thus implicating anyone who consciously encounters the site in defining it and designing it. Robert Smithson – most widely recognized for his earthwork titled *Spiral Jetty* – adopts a similar stance with his *non-site* installations, gathering elements from a specific location and exhibiting them as isolated elements in a gallery. Hogue writes, "For Smithson, the role of the imagination is not to complete or build upon a suggestive canvas provided by the site, but rather to point out the gap that exists between the unprocessed, found reality of the land and its appropriation in ways that provide specific interpretations of the

site.”¹⁹ Moreover, “Smithson [suggests] that it may be enriching to think of a site as the structure of action that conditions our experience of any environment. With both, we are confronted with the idea that sites can exist in the mind’s eye before they are established as precise locations in the world.”²⁰ Designers creating in this moment of rapid urban building can flip that logic to imagine the layers of memory on a precisely located site before acting upon it.

Considering the physical shaping of sites leads to Hogue’s second quality of site: *location*. Hogue observes that with his earthworks, Smithson calls into question the traditional assumption that a site is a location that precedes the project. Through his constructions, he questions the idea that a site belongs only to the realm of the concrete, the known, and the quantifiable. Under this convention of identifying site the conditions of a place are presumed to be out of the architect’s control and the architect simply “receives” these conditions as opposed to curating the elements that s/he addresses within a site response. According to Hogue, the placeless-ness of Smithson’s earthworks dislodges the assumed primacy of location in determining the definition of site. Consequently, location is placed alongside site as a set of relationships between concepts in the mind.²¹ The investigation of *location* continues through James Turrell’s *Roden Crater* and his *skyspaces*; to Hogue, these works illustrate that defined sites exist as clearly delineated places independent of their physical placement in space. The *skyspaces* are created to engage the realm of the sky in a bounded way, thus defining sky as site. Hogue’s analysis on *location* also draws upon Gordon Matta-Clark’s *Fake Estates*, residual parcels of urban land purchased and surveyed by the artist. Hogue observes that “many were literally inaccessible and landlocked between

29 Hogue 54.

30 Hogue 57.

31 Hogue 57.

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Image 21: A large seafaring ship rests at the pier adjacent to the Lake Union Dry Docks.

buildings or other properties. Of these, Matta-Clark remarked, ‘That’s an interesting quality; something that can be owned but never experienced.’”²² Matta-Clark’s depiction of the ‘realness’ of inaccessible sites brings to mind an earlier idea of the “borrowed landscape” an ethos captured in the Picturesque and in historic Japanese and Chinese gardens.

Hogue’s third element of site is *time*. Adding to the idea that the site can be a project unto itself, the element of time acknowledges change, rather than the arrested state of site as tableau for architecture. Land artist Walter de Maria captures the relationship between change and time in his piece *Lightning Field*, which awaits a storm in order to be fully realized as a project. Musing upon the connection between site, time, and changes to place, Hogue makes the following observation:

For architecture, [the installation without lightning] suggests the possibility that completed projects be seen as open-ended projects that seek to work with an ever-changing set of conditions. It proposes a design approach to intervene minimally, where needed, and in reference to what is already there. It invites the designer to recognize the potential of a site and tease out its qualities without overpowering them.²³

In this way, Hogue’s three site qualities of *imagination*, *location*, and *time* necessitate a restrained approach to place grounded in integrating the real and the unreal, the physical and the conceptual, and temporal

³² Hogue 57-8.

³³ Hogue 59.

shifts; the sensory experiences of a place can inspire a deeper reading of site.

DISCONTINUITY AND OPPORTUNITY: INHERENT AWKWARDNESS

The Lake Union Dry Docks (LUDD) exist in a place where the urban grid shifts to run along the shoreline and Interstate 5; this shift also marks the point where Eastlake Avenue and Fairview Avenue split from one another. A simple two-way paved arterial road, Eastlake Avenue follows Lake Union's shoreline at a distance. Fairview Avenue turns from northeast to north at the water's edge as the street grid shifts. This juncture – the project site – feels physically awkward and unwelcoming to the casual observer, particularly when streets do not form the expected grid. Parked cars interrupt sidewalks and street front façades hide buildings' internal functions, adding to the area's dissonance. The site is located between a number of different zoning areas – an industrial-zoned 3-block area bounded by a more pedestrian-oriented, residential, and neighborhood-commercial Eastlake and by a growing technology center in the South Lake Union neighborhood (map – zoning & corridors). In addition, the two narrow blocks between Lake Union and I-5 create a compressed corridor for vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles. The CLUL Trail implies that pedestrian and bicycle routes separate from the busy car and transit corridor on Eastlake Avenue at the split and follow Fairview Avenue down to the shoreline; however, Fairview itself is a non-descript asphalt street with undefined gravel shoulder transitions, crowded parking, and active industrial-commercial traffic during the day; as such, it is not foot- or bike-traffic friendly. (images – streetscape). During the night, façades along the street are closed off and there is very little visual connection with the Eastlake commercial strip (images – evening). This isolation also creates undesirable conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists where their impulse is to move quickly past the area toward the livelier streets of South Lake Union or

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the finer-grained residential Eastlake neighborhood.

Therefore, the LUDD site is experienced as a series of abrupt transitions in the physical infrastructure as well as the social and metaphorical infrastructure. The layering of uses, users, histories and potential futures transcends the political bounds of the site as each function, occupant group, or history possesses its own physical edges blurred by the progression of time. The awkwardness at the Dry Docks reflects the meeting between industrial functions that are not intended as public, pedestrian-friendly spaces and intermediate urban thoroughfares. The unaccommodating way the Dry Docks orient toward the public streetscape is not unexpected given the danger inherent to heavy machinery on site. Nonetheless, the prevalence of visual barriers is worth describing as it also indicates ways in which the borders have come to define the site. While it is not uncommon for industrial facilities to mask their interior functions, in this location that masking adds to an already unwelcoming sense of impenetrability. The adjacent streetscape along Fairview Avenue has its own kind of intransigence, characterized by parked cars that obstruct bicyclists' views of oncoming traffic. A wall of ivy obscures the water's edge and camouflages the legs of buildings raised the over water, implying the existence of dry land where there is none.

Architect and writer Robin Dripps speaks to the overlap of varying elements of site that lead to a blurring of its edges in her article "Groundwork" and differentiates between the entity we call *site* and the network it rests upon, *ground*. By concretely delineating site from ground, Dripps expands on Hogue's analysis of Matta-Clark's work with inaccessible sites and offers a more precise way to separate the physical edges of site from its transitory and metaphorical elements.

In her analysis, Dripps asks the reader to consider the *ground* as a structure that provides the base for connections, for site, and for architectural intervention. She identifies *ground* as both “structure and processes of the earth, but also as metaphor, [referring to] patterns of physical, intellectual poetic structures that intersect, overlap, and weave together to become the context for human thought and action.”²⁴ Unlike Burns and Kahn and Hogue, who see *site* as part of this expansive network of processes, Dripps defines site as a certain expanse with known edges, an entity that “reduces the complexity of human and natural interactions.”²⁵

In the case of the Lake Union Dry Docks, the defined streetscape fronting simple shed structures belies an on-the-ground complexity of undetermined street edges littered with parked cars and repair garages that once housed coal for the Lake Union Steam Plant. Speaking to an intricacy of ground oft missed in simpler readings of site, Dripps draws an analogy between modern historical methodology and vernacular history: modern history emphasizes bounded events such as wars and catastrophes and records them as autonomous occurrences, while vernacular history emphasizes a “repeating pattern and process [that] requires a large enough temporal context.”²⁶ At this project site, public

34 Burns and Kahn 59.
 35 Burns and Kahn 61.
 36 Burns and Kahn 61-62.

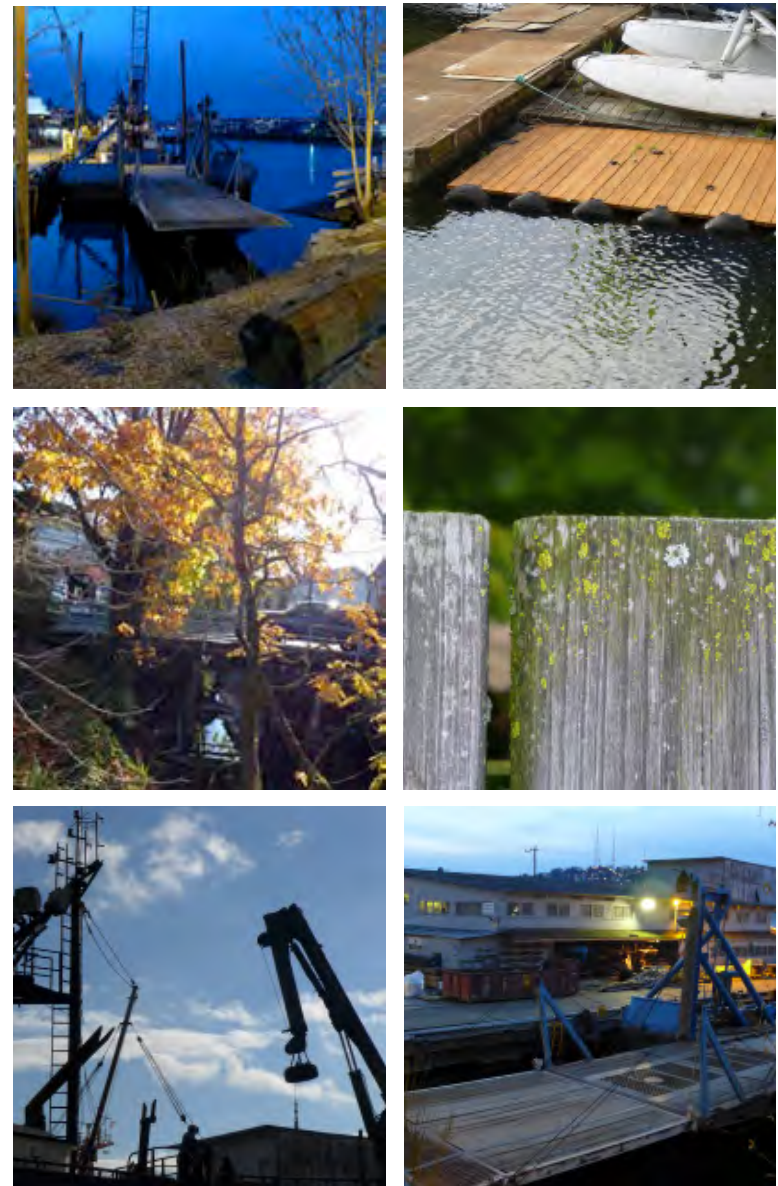


Image 22: Sensory impressions at the Lake Union Dry Docks engage the sense with sounds, smells, temperature variations, offering rich encounters with place.

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Image 23: Grid shifts and parked cars are just two of the elements creating a sense of discontinuity and awkwardness at the Dry Docks



Image 24: The Zymogenetics building (formerly Lake Union Steam Plant).

perceptions of site carry different boundaries than those of the place itself. What is seen and what is accessible to passersby is different than what is physically present. The consideration of edges blurred by smaller-scale processes over time guides an expansive definition of place; it also allows for nuanced design responses that acknowledge daily comings and goings of site users – workers on the site and joggers or bikers who regularly traverse place. By engaging these familiar patterns designers can make space for the complexity existing beyond the Dry Docks' closed façade. These patterns can be observed both within the site and outside of its apparent bounds – from the infrastructural vantage point of the freeway, weekday commuters gaze at the familiar topography of the Dry Docks, holding their massive forms in sharp contrast to the everydayness of their daily drive. In the modern city, such opportunities to observe framed views of otherwise inaccessible spaces comes through infrastructural adjacencies, where daily-use pathways provide an armature for experiencing elements of the city-site.

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III. ARMATURE: INDUSTRIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND HISTORIES

Something as basic as a railroad or streetcar system changes the quality of everyday life in the urban terrain, while marking the terrain.

Dolores Hayden, in "Working Landscapes"³⁷

In patterns of modern urban development, industrial spaces have been most often held at a remove from residential and commercial spaces. This has happened through zoning as well as through the urban planning and investment decisions. At the same time, many cities in the United States developed around the industries that were catalysts for their early expansion, such as Detroit's growth around the automobile industry or Los Angeles's unfolding around the film industry.³⁸ Industrial facilities were built in conjunction with transportation infrastructures: first along waterways, then adjacent to railroads, and more recently next to highways. As a West Coast city that emerged in the late 19th century, Seattle developed simultaneously with both coastal industries (namely fishing) and extractive forestry industries. Each of these industries required water-based transportation so their facilities were often located along the shores of waterways. As the city's industries expanded, railways were also built to facilitate the movement of goods across land.

³⁷ Hayden, *The Power of Place* 22.

³⁸ Banham, Reyner. *Los Angeles; the Architecture of Four Ecologies*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971. 1-10.

Image 25 (opposite page): The piers and underbelly of the West Seattle Bridge frame the immense industrial operations at the Ash Grove cement plant and the Duwamish Waterway

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As industrial growth accelerated, it challenged the separation of production facilities, urban infrastructure, and lived space. Residences cropped up on the many hilltop neighborhoods to meet the industrial expansion along the shorelines. City dwellers primarily brushed up against industrial areas in two ways: by looking down at them from their homes perched on hillsides above the lake, or as they passed by them moving from one neighborhood to another using transportation corridors that skirted the coast. Experiencing industry at a distance – from the safety of one's home – was a privilege reserved for the few who could afford it, while the working masses encountered industry more directly by working in it, living next to it, or moving close by it on public transport. When encountering the city along its more level topography it is easy to forget the places of industry; for modern-day urbanites living on Seattle's hilly, coastal topography, the evidence of industrial infrastructure is constant.

In "Redefining Infrastructure," Pierre Bélanger talks about the paradoxical presence of urban infrastructure: "Often found underground, or on the periphery of cities, infrastructure remains largely invisible until the precise moment at which it breaks down."³⁹ The simultaneous growth of infrastructure and industry in Seattle creates a network of forms and passageways that emerge from the underlying geography of the city. Industrial infrastructure has a ubiquity that arises from the needs of urbanization and industrialization and as such it is an armature for the stories of place to play out.⁴⁰ Similar to the way Robin Dripps explores ground and water, the forms of industry and infrastructure on Lake Union emerge as a new topography which – "much like water and earth – inform the way a city grows."⁴¹ The armature, in essence, is a man-made

39 Bélanger 332.

40 Bélanger 333.

41 Dripps 64.

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substrate; it is to substrate what site is to ground. It is the massive scale of industrial production and distribution systems in addition to the networks and patterns of a place that makes the armature of infrastructure comparable to nature and ground.

The subsequent graphic narrative illustrates the symbiotic establishment of Infrastructure and Industry on Lake Union and highlights infrastructure's role in Seattle's growth and settlement patterns, and its reliance on topography and natural resources. The Lake Union Dry Docks emerged from this network of lakeside infrastructure – adapting to historical events and forces within the armature of industrial Lake Union and its surrounds.

Lake Union is at once emblematic of and divergent from several key trends in contemporary urbanization. In ways that are resonant with experiences in countless other cities nationally and globally, the communities surrounding Lake Union have undergone decades of industrialism and a subsequent post-industrial reinvention. Specifically, Lake Union and Seattle at large matured within the same century and at the same time that other American cities were emerging as centers of industry and transportation. Like other West Coast cities, Seattle's growth has been relatively recent, and because of this Lake Union is a unique case where a very particular combination of technological enterprises – not the usual suspects in large scale urban redevelopment – have converged to channel huge amounts of capital into the first of what may well be a series of large projects in the creative destruction and renewal of a world-class urban core.

HASN'T IT ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS?

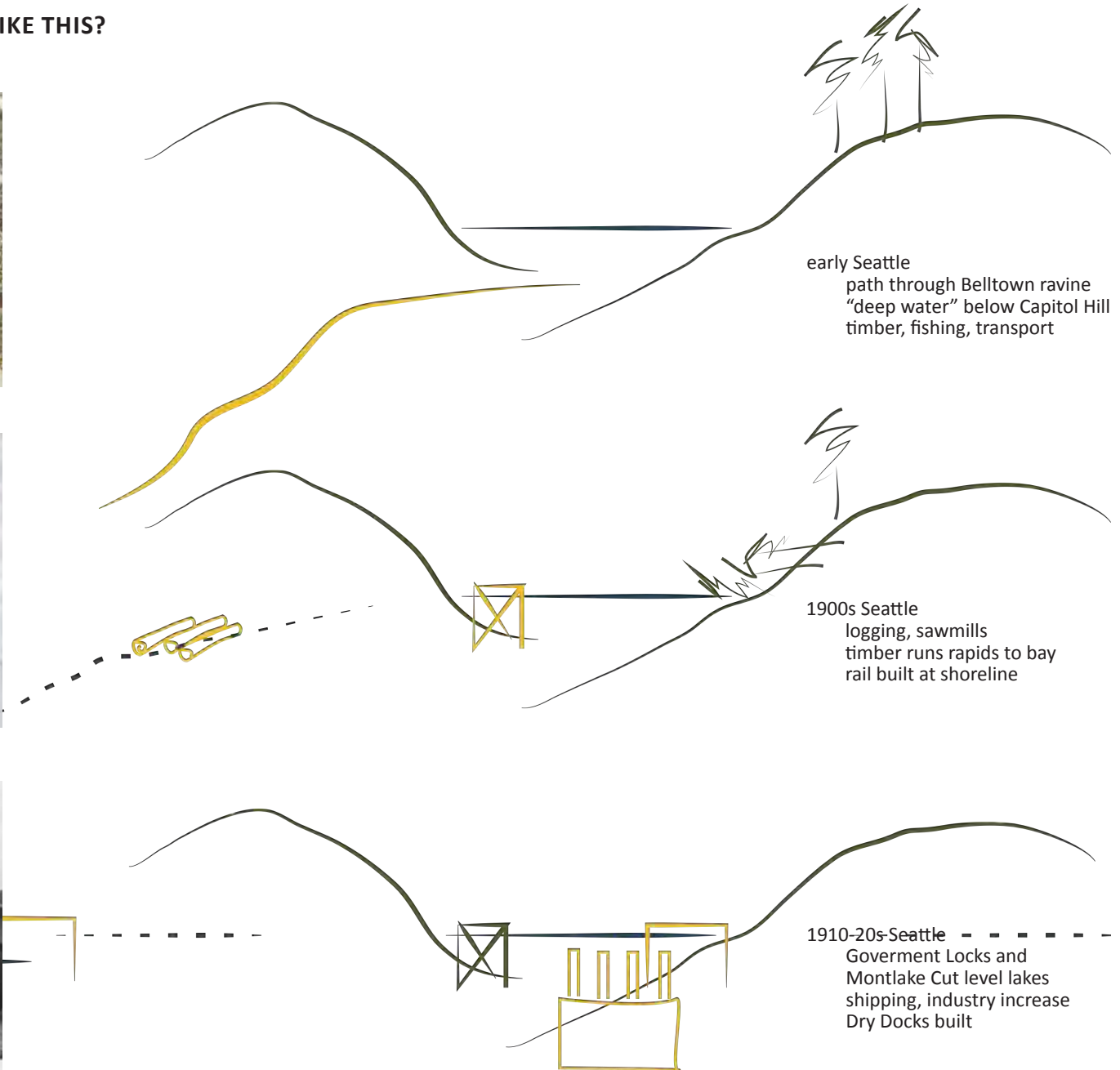
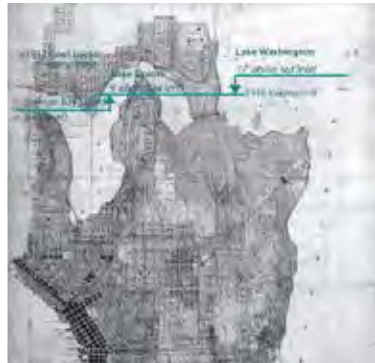
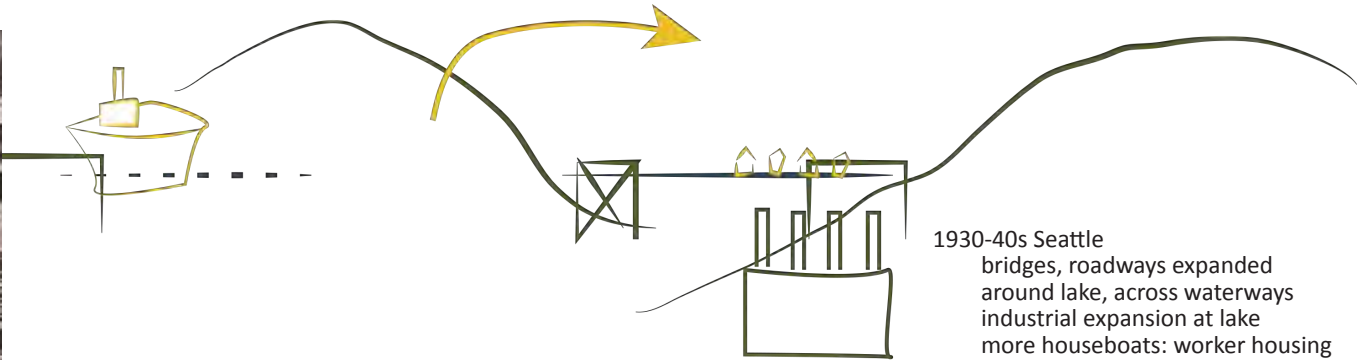
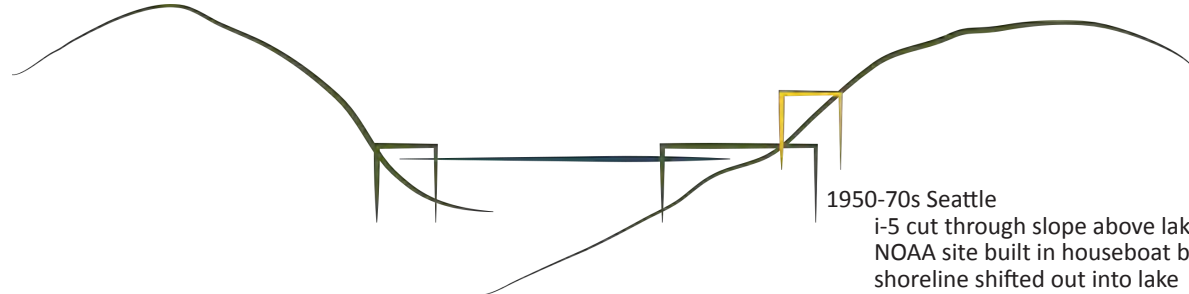


Image 26: Site topography and the evolution of industrial infrastructure over time.

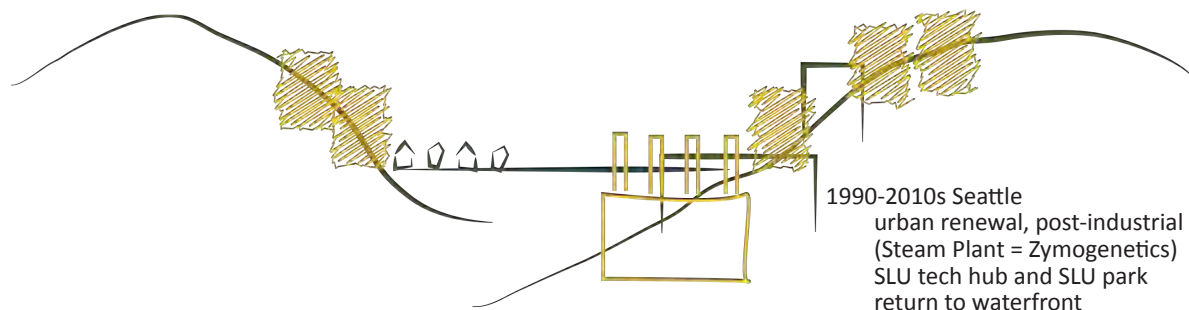
ARMATURE: INDUSTRIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND HISTORIES



1930-40s Seattle
bridges, roadways expanded around lake, across waterways
industrial expansion at lake
more houseboats: worker housing



1950-70s Seattle
i-5 cut through slope above lake
NOAA site built in houseboat bay, shoreline shifted out into lake
gasworks decommissioned, Gasworks Park created



1990-2010s Seattle
urban renewal, post-industrial rehab (Steam Plant = Zymogenetics)
SLU tech hub and SLU park return to waterfront
houseboats more desirable
increased housing Eastlake

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Lake Union has long functioned as Seattle's resource-rich backyard. Before western expansion, the lake – named 'small water' by the Coast Salish people – received clear water from the Cascade Mountains through Lake Washington ('large water') via the now extinct Black River. It hosted migratory salmon as well as numerous other fish, fowl and mammals (including mountain lions) before tumbling down into the salty waters of Puget Sound at Shilshole Bay. Early inhabitants lived on the lakeshore, using it for travel, hunting and gathering land-based and sea-based resources.⁴² The lake was also reached via footpath through a natural ravine to the area of Elliott Bay now known as Belltown.

Lake Union hosted numerous resources for early Euro-American settlers, including sheltered fresh water for human consumption, well-timbered hillsides above easily-accessed water systems providing transportation across the region, plant and animal populations, and land-based pathways linked to Elliott Bay settlements. These conditions set the stage for broader development along the lake; expansion began with sawmills and boat builders and led to the radical engineering projects that seamlessly linked waterways, such as the Montlake Cut connecting Lake Union to Lake Washington. The Montlake Cut lowered the level of the larger Lake Washington to meet that of Lake Union, drying up the Black River. Over nine feet of land became exposed from the lowered water levels in Lake Washington while along Lake Union, the shoreline was less altered and also became more fluid. To the northwest of the city center, the cut also altered the Government Locks that carried large vessels up and down the approximately twenty foot vertical change between Shilshole Bay and Puget Sound. Additional alterations

⁴² Thrush, Coll-Peter. *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-over Place*. Seattle: University of Washington, 2007.201.

occurred on the land south of Lake Union with the Denny Regrade, which created passable slopes for future rail lines.

As is the case in many cities worldwide and in particular those on the west, much of the waterfront surrounding Lake Union was initially developed and urbanized according to the logic of industry. It was the place where the many of earliest industries sprang up, and changes to those industries have also been visible, with a greater need for warehouses to store goods trucked in from far away and with the closing of laundry facilities, stables, and steam power plants. The shoreline shifted in response to these changes – first as trestles built for rail servicing barges and waterfront industries, then as fill for more building along a changing shore, and finally as the grading of land to make way for roadways through the expanding city. While sawmills and extractive industries thrived during the 19th century, the early 20th century marked the dominance of Ford and Boeing – paragons of industrial urbanism in Seattle and abroad who operated locally at manufacturing sites adjacent to Lake Union. Ship fabrication and other heavy industries soon followed. These economic activities were generally organized on a regional model where Seattle served as the Pacific Northwest hub for manufacturing and distribution.⁴³

As more people settled in the city, the wealthy built homes up on the hills above the lake in the neighborhood now known as Capitol Hill. New industries continued to sprout along the lakeshore to support the growing region. Workers employed by the Lake Union waterfront industries built their homes on the water, creating a low-cost houseboat settlement between the sawmills, brickworks, boat builders, steam plant, and laundry facilities.

⁴³ Link, Karin. "2003 Cascade Historic Survey: Buildings, Objects & Artifacts." *Seattle Department of Neighborhoods*(2004):2004. Web. Summer 2013.

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Image 27: Varied dry docks mechanisms in action on Lake Union

Lake Union Dry Dock Company was established as a repair yard in 1919 and continues in that role today. It has also built quite a number of boats along the way. During WWII, it built yard minesweepers under the name Associated Shipbuilders, a joint venture with Puget Sound Bridge & Dredging Co. and which built larger minesweepers in PSB&D's yard on Harbor Island.⁴⁴

A dry dock is a narrow basin or vessel that can be flooded to allow a load to be floated in; it is then drained to allow that load to come to rest on a dry platform. 'Dry dock' can also refer to a facility, or pier, that performs ship repairs and building and it may have capacity to pull multiple vessels out of the water. Dry docks can use any one of a number of mechanisms to lift ships out of the water including rolling them up a slope onto block, using a system of winches and forklifts (as is typical in dry-storage facilities for personal pleasure craft), or using hydraulic or pneumatic mechanisms that submerge so ships can enter, then raising the mechanisms and the craft above the waterline. In performing these functions, the Lake Union Dry Docks is a self-contained industry that houses two dry-docking mechanisms that have a 1,200 ton and a 6,000 ton capacity, multiple cranes, a machine shop,

44 Colton, Tim. "Lake Union Dry Dock." *Lake Union Dry Dock*. Shipbuilding History, n.d. Web. Sept. 2013.

a paint booth, welding and other related amenities.⁴⁵

Dry docks were initially used in the Greco-Roman and early Chinese cultures. The first early modern European (and oldest surviving) dry dock is still in use and was commissioned by Henry VII of England at HMNB Portsmouth in 1495. This dry dock currently holds the world's oldest commissioned warship, HMS Victory.⁴⁶ There have been a series of inventions and new approaches to the function of the dry dock and yet the essential form and performance of the dry dock have not changed. Thus, Seattle's dry dock serves not only as an industrial facility but as a piece of industrial history, a part of cultural history rarely recognized or acknowledged in our shared cultural landscapes.

Initially, the Lake Union Dry Docks was a place to service and build wooden boats, including overwintering fishing boats brining salt cod in from the Bering Strait. LUDD simultaneously built custom yachts and ultimately worked to standardize the building of pleasure boats, offering the "Lake Union Dreamboat" for \$5000 in the 1920s. Prohibition expanded their trade into rum runners and fast boats for the US Coast Guard – the Dry Docks company was effectively playing both sides of the conflict for economic gain. During WWII LUDD avoided the financial failure experienced by many other wooden boat makers by negotiating military contracts for Minesweepers and submarine detectors. They continue to remain solvent through their military contracts and their ability to service a wide range of boats. In the Pacific Northwest and Seattle, ships that need to access to the Dry Docks must navigate the Hiram Chittenden Locks (800 feet by 80 feet), but once inside they benefit from zero tide fluctuation, freshwater, and easy access to numerous materials and supplies.⁴⁷

45 "Facilities & Equipment." *Lake Union Dry Dock Company*. N.p., n.d. Web. Sept. 2013.

46 "Drydock." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 06 June 2014. Web. Spring 2014.

47 Raymond, Vaun S. "Lake Union Drydock." *Lake Union Virtual Museum*. King County 4Culture, 2008. Web. Summer 2013.

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Due to the functional, structural, and topographical considerations of a dry dock, the inner workings of the LUDD are largely invisible to the public. The need for deep water sends the docks far out away from the shore, a built-up street front on the near shore pier frontage obscures most sightlines, and minimal elevation gain near the street side of the docks prevents near views from above. A few spots near the public roadway offer partial views past the built facade, but they are largely planted and somewhat inaccessible. The water-facing side offers revealing views, but those are only available to boaters.

In the section below, each of the scalar experiences described are connected to views beyond the realm of passage. The industrial is linked inextricably to views of Elliot Bay, Mount Rainier, and Lake Union where over time both pleasure and production gained a foothold. As humans we hold multiple concepts of ourselves within the world: person to person, self as part of a larger community, self within the magnificence of nature. We seek out interactions that are comprehensible – wherein we have control over our surroundings, and also those that show us how small we are – in the presence of the majestic and the powerful. The subsequent connections between large-scale context and the human scale are not precedent studies so much as they are a collection of framed moments that emerge on the paths and roadways people use to move around cities. In each case, the location, trajectory, and speed of travel offers a particular vantage on points of interest – industrial or sublime.

INDUSTRIAL SITES IN THE URBAN CONTEXT: INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE HUMAN-SCALE

This thesis proposes alternate readings of site by using travel as a mode of exploration. Each throughway offers a vastly different scale of interaction with the industries it skirts. Freeways and

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arterials offer fast flyovers from within motorized vehicles; local streets carry bicyclists and slow-moving cars at a medium speed and facilitate a closer, more intricate view; walking paths and sidewalks present opportunities to absorb sights slowly and in even more detail. Even with these variations in speed and in scale, each modality allows travelers to view industrial places in the context of the city and creates a narrative of interconnection as one passes through. The following image story demonstrates vantages provided by urban pathways, primarily in Seattle.

Children who travel in ferries, along the viaduct, or over the West Seattle Bridge begin to recognize the giraffe-like forms of shipping cranes on Harbor Island from a young age. The water-bound vantage point and moderately fast speed of travel offers an overview of shoreline industries, highlighting their basic form and allowing the vast complex of cranes, ships and containers to resemble building blocks and toy boats. The adjacency of transit corridors to the large industrial facilities facilitates this near-but-far view of an area that is necessarily walled off from non-workers.

At a much smaller, slower scale, the bike paths and local arterials in our city also bring commuters and recreationists into close proximity with the cogs and wheels of our urban machine. The Burke-Gilman Trail, built atop the old BNSF rail lines (originally the Seattle Lake Shore and Eastern Railway lines), traces the level ground along the waterways that informed



Image 28: The Viaduct and I-5 offer large and fast overviews Seattle sublime -- industrial and nature-made (Joshua Trujillo / seattlepi.com Feb. 16, 2011)

HASN'T IT ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS?



Image 29: ferry travel provides an intimate water encounter



Image 30: The pedestrian trades in vast industrial vistas for a fine-grained experience of industrial infrastructure.

our city's development: Salmon Bay, Lake Union, Mountlake, and Lake Washington.⁴⁸ The trail perches above the shore at just the right elevation for pedestrians and bikers to peer down into small boatyards and across Lake Union to the downtown Seattle skyline. Numerous drawbridges take us over waterways; when they open for boat traffic, drivers and bikers are forced to pause and take in the spectacle of gears and cogs and passing barges.

The smallest industrial adjacencies are those built for the solo foot traveler. In Seattle, hill-climb stairways, overpasses, and parks built over highways and waterways provide intimate encounters with infrastructural systems. Pedestrians can look over the Interstate 5 from Freeway Park and watch ships and smaller pleasure craft negotiate the drop from Salmon Bay to Shilshole along the Ballard Locks pathway.⁴⁹

INDUSTRIAL REMAKES: FETISHIZATION AND ERASURE OF INDUSTRIAL SITES IN SEATTLE

During the modernist era, the forms of American industry and infrastructure as architects regarded them took on a mythic identity – a grandeur expressed in the sheer size, incomprehensibility, and

⁴⁸ "Burke-Gilman History." *Seattle Department of Transportation: Bike Program*. Seattle.gov, Web. Feb.-Mar. 2014.

⁴⁹ "Freeway Park." *The Cultural Landscape Foundation*. The Cultural Landscape Foundation, 2001-2014. Web. Spring 2014.

power of industrial expansion. Reyner Banham wrote about this phenomenon in *A Concrete Atlantis: U.S. Industrial Building and European Modern Architecture*; the heroic forms of industrial structures are seen as shapes on the horizon, ever present but always at a distance.⁵⁰ In their continuity these industrial forms become elements of everyday life that are visible but necessarily inaccessible because of their scale, the topographic barriers to reaching them, or the danger inherent to their fundamental functions. Observed across the expanse of a city or its periphery, they resemble the mountains in a Chinese painting – layered within and resting upon the negative space of implied clouds. In their elusiveness, the forms of industrial infrastructure present a moment of prospect, inviting viewers to gaze at them and to reach outside of themselves as they ponder the relative smallness of their being. These moments often happen in the course of an everyday activity – the commute – creating a stark contrast between the mundane and the sublime.

The images and views provided by infrastructural adjacencies speak to this sense of awe in the presence of grandeur. There is much evidence for the pull of the sublime throughout history. In the Nordic experience of nature – as seen in Edvard Munch's *Children in the Forest (barn I skogen)* – the menacing forms of evergreens tower above and yet they also exert a strange pull upon the soul. The continual draw to observe and preserve these moments is present across time and culture: in the borrowed landscapes of a Japanese garden; in Heidegger's forbidding trees beyond the clearing; in the Picturesque as a response to industrialization; and in the preservation of the sublime through the National Parks Service, to name a few instances.⁵¹

50 Banham, Reyner. *A Concrete Atlantis: U.S. Industrial Building and European Modern Architecture, 1900-1925*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1989.

51 Heidegger, Martin. "The Origin of the Work of Art." *Poetry, Language, Thought*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971. 35.

HASN'T IT ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS?

Modern architecture's admiration for the grandeur of industrial forms removed from their functions has since manifested in the nostalgic preservation of defunct industrial facilities and in the repurposing of industrial and infrastructural forms, as seen in such contemporary projects as the High Line and Duisberg Nord. Regardless of the impulses to fetishize or erase the functional essence of industry, each of these examples mark a moment of observing something beyond the human scale while also evoking a memory of an older, more expansive time. This suggests a timeless valuation of that view or moment and also leads to the question of how designers can harness that energy and grandeur as they create the new forms that alter the quality of places we find along existing paths, roadways, railroads, and bridges – industrial landscapes inaccessible except for the infrastructural adjacencies that touch upon them. Moreover, is it possible to preserve the memory of sites transitioning out of their industrial uses without neutering the essential character of a place?

At present, there are many possibilities for harnessing the impulses toward observation and prospect – for shifting the cultural focus from the preserved view to a more dynamic representation of the city and its industries, as seen through multiple layers of evocative scenery. Driving south on the Viaduct in Seattle, layers of stadiums, shipping cranes, and a Ferris wheel stand in stark relief against the majestic backdrop of Mount Rainier. On South Lake Union, high tech towers with green climate systems sit next to historic laundry buildings while the rusting hulls of old fishing boats rub elbows with shiny fiberglass and steel yachts. The pull of the view has not changed – the view itself has grown more complex.

In a recent Op-Ed for the *New York Times* titled “View, Interrupted: The Spoiling of Manhattan’s Skyline,” David Carr writes a eulogy for the view of Manhattan he sees from his daily Lincoln Tunnel commute. As new high-rise apartments are built, the formerly democratic view that was visible from an infrastructural perch becomes one for the privileged few:

...Something glorious, a view held in common by thousands of people who come to New York for the same reasons people always have, will now belong to a precious few. It’s not only a perfect metaphor for our times, but a cold fact that I stare at every day. I often mutter oaths...at the people who decided that a view that is the visual equivalent of Wagnerian opera was something to be auctioned off.⁵²

Carr’s meditation on the loss of the skyline connects with the heart of a conflict between democratic attentions to place and the more limited (and limiting) condition of private development. In conveying his loss, Carr also touches on a theme that is central to Dripps’ “Groundwork”: Vernacular history tells stories of everyday life to “record typical events and recurring themes whose smooth running is noticed only when disrupted.”⁵³ While Carr is upset about the loss of a spectacular view, his grief is further elevated by the loss of a familiar comfort – the vast view that places his commute within a greater context. The view becomes a comfort in its familiarity, despite its embodiment of elements beyond one’s control.

52 Carr, David. “View, Interrupted: The Spoiling of Manhattan’s Skyline.” *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 31 May 2014. Web. Spring 2014.

53 Dripps 61.

HASN'T IT ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS?

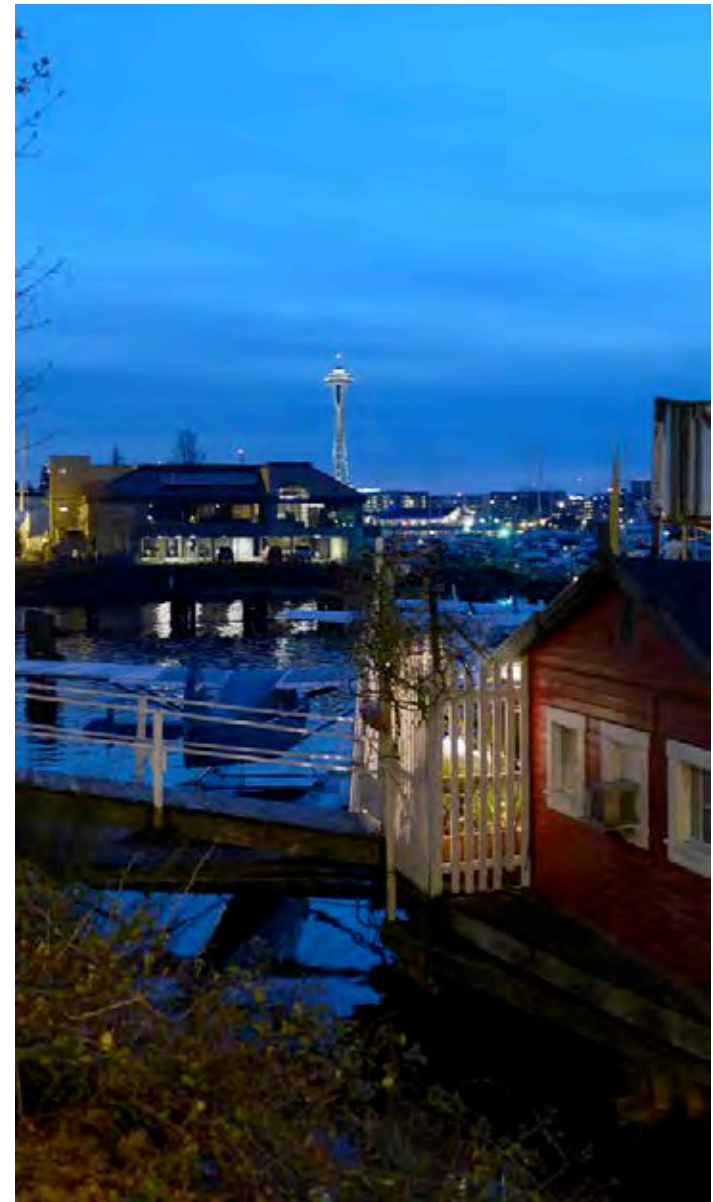


Image 32: Occupation of the project site varies greatly across time

IV. VOICES ON THE GROUND: POLITICS, POWER, AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Designers working on a site necessarily respond to the person, company, or condition making the request for design, but the person with power to engage a designer may not have the most stake in the site. With that in mind, how does design identify voices on the ground, and how does it orient to the power and politics that prioritize the presence of these voices? The Lake Union Dry Docks inhabit a complex *ground* of potentially divergent interests and users. Is it possible to maintain unencumbered industrial function while encouraging democratic use of space in an increasingly privatized neighborhood? An expansion of users in this place could serve to raise awareness of site. The people who traverse it daily will begin to know this place, bringing it into the realm of the familiar.

SITES AS PLACES OF POLITICS AND POWER

The work of Dolores Hayden supports a shifted understanding of site. In her perspective, the city becomes the parchment on which urban history is written; urban policy and development can highlight or mask that history, either minimizing or reinforcing existing inequalities in the process. In *The Power of Place*, Hayden writes, “identity is intimately tied to memory...urban landscapes are storehouses for...social memories, because natural features such as hills or harbors, as well as streets, buildings, and patterns of settlement, frame the lives of many people and often outlast many lifetimes.”⁵⁴ Engaging a measured response to site and project may allow space for those voices of place – whether loud or soft, strong or weak – to percolate up and be heard on all their complexity. A designer who acts as a facilitator of site makes space for voices rather than seeking their submission.

54 Hayden 9.

HASN'T IT ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS?

In the introduction to *The Power of Place*, Hayden proposes, “a socially inclusive urban landscape history can become the basis for new approaches to public history and urban preservation.”⁵⁵ She comes to this conclusion after recounting a 1975 argument in the *New York Times* between architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable and urban sociologist Herbert J. Gans. Hayden sums their debate up as a disagreement between Huxtable’s support for the aesthetic preservation of buildings and monuments and Gans’ emphasis on preserving social history – a position anchored in concern for democratic representation of social classes although both were concerned with the preservation of memories. Hayden suggests an approach that links physical and social issues, saying, “...it is the volatile combination of social issues with spatial design, intertwined in... controversies, that makes them so critical to the future of American cities.”⁵⁶ Hayden’s insights are at the root of cultural landscapes – places where the human connection to the land defines its essential character.

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

One way to address the rich history of the Lake Union Dry Docks is through an official designation of the site as a cultural landscape. This might be done officially through the National Park Service or more generically through a labeling of the site in this project. It is most easily defined under a UNESCO sub-designation, a “...continuing landscape is one which retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life, and in which the evolutionary process is still in progress. At the same time it exhibits significant material evidence of its evolution over time”⁵⁷ Nevertheless the term or category of cultural

⁵⁵ Hayden 12.

⁵⁶ Hayden 2-13, 8.

⁵⁷ “Cultural Landscape.” *UNESCO World Heritage Centre - Cultural Landscape*. United Nations, 1992-2014. Web. Summer 2013.

landscape also raises challenges to the reading in a manner that is grounded in both the history of the term and in its current use by historic preservation designations.

Some of the earliest contemporary writings about recognizing the human imprint on the land at a particular time in history come from geographer Carl Sauer, whose writings incorporated the human connection to land, or "...the essential character of a place."⁵⁸ Sauer's work in 1925 spurred the development of a framework for *cultural landscapes*,⁵⁹ a term used domestically by the National Parks Service (NPS) and internationally by UNESCO (World Heritage Sites) to define sites of significance.^{60, 61} This designation, coupled with the subsequent protections and publicity for sites of significance, enabled the preservation of places that might otherwise be destroyed and allowed the general public to experience history in context. Specific cultures have been preserving sites of significance for centuries but codifying this designation made possible the preservation of sites that may not be deemed important by the current landowner or of sites that exist in contested territories.

Dolores Hayden points out in *The Politics of Place* ("Claiming Urban Landscapes as Public History") that despite the apparent benefit of the cultural landscape designation, the decision of which site is significant, whose resources are used to maintain it, and how occupants are compensated for restricted development on such sites creates new questions.⁶² These new constraints alter the balance of power and sometimes the shift is toward a more egalitarian

58 Sauer, C. O. 1925. "The Morphology of Landscape". *University of California Publications in Geography* 2 (2):19-53.

59 Sauer, C. O.

60 United States. National Park Service. "NPS Park Cultural Landscapes." *National Parks Service - Preservation*. U.S. Department of the Interior, 03 July 2012. Web. Summer 2013.

61 "Cultural Landscape." *UNESCO*

62 Hayden 2-80

HASN'T IT ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS?

condition but other times it further reinforces existing power structures. An additional complication is that in many cases cultural landscapes preserve sites that are either within a time of historic significance or are performing a specific function, or both. Identifying and preserving a finite time or function necessarily restricts expressions of earlier histories and occupations, and limits the potential for evolving occupations.

As the population of the world increases and political boundaries shift and as marginalized peoples initially gain a political voice, the original designations of some cultural sites are called into question. This occurred with Devil's Tower National Monument in Wyoming, a longtime climbing mecca now closed to climbers to honor its earlier identity as sacred site for Black Hills Lakota and a number of other Western tribes.⁶³ Here in the US, the issue of government funding for NPS sites is forcing a re-examination of the way we define and preserve cultural landscapes when maintenance budgets are minimal or non-existent. Revisiting the concept of cultural landscapes presents the possibility of an approach that can be tested on sites that do not have official designations but instead have a complex history (such as the Lake Union Dry Docks). There are a number of potential conflicts inherent in obtaining a government sanctioned cultural landscape designation on this site. The delineation of a time of significance, or significant function could introduce prohibitive limits to nimble evolution and culturally responsive alterations, effectively stopping growth and leading to the ultimate irrelevance of the place. The Dry Docks have continued to thrive precisely because they are nimble and responsive, switching from fishing boats to warships, from wood to steel, and even fiberglass construction. Their continued relevance might depend on the preservation of that flexibility as demand shifts

⁶³ San Miguel, George L. "How Is Devils Tower a Sacred Site to American Indians." *National Parks Service*. U.S. Department of the Interior, Aug. 1994. Web. 10 June 2014.

to reflect new technologies.

There is some precedent for a more flexible idea of the human-occupied landscape. In “Restoring Mill Creek: Landscape Literacy, Environmental Justice, Planning and design” landscape architect and theorist Anne Spirn connects human occupation to landscape, linking ‘nature’ ecology and human ecology:

I use the word landscape in its original sense in English and Nordic languages—the mutual shaping of people and place—to encompass both the population of a place and its physical features: its topography, water flow and plant life; its infrastructure of streets and sewers; its land uses, buildings and open spaces. The urban landscape is shaped by rain, plants and animals; human hands and minds. Rain falls, carving valleys and soaking soil. People mould landscape with hands, tools and machines, through law, public policy, the investing and withholding of capital, and other actions undertaken hundreds or thousands of miles away. The processes that shape landscape operate at different scales of space and time: from the local to the national, from the ephemeral to the enduring.⁶⁴

Perhaps the Nordic perception of landscape makes space for a less-structured approach that can still accommodate the nuances of place. The three levels of engagement prescribed by Jan Gehl offers a middle path: “Life, space, buildings -- in that order.”⁶⁵ This approach, which demands attention to the life of a place, then its spatial elements,

64 Spirn 397 .

65 Gehl 195-212.

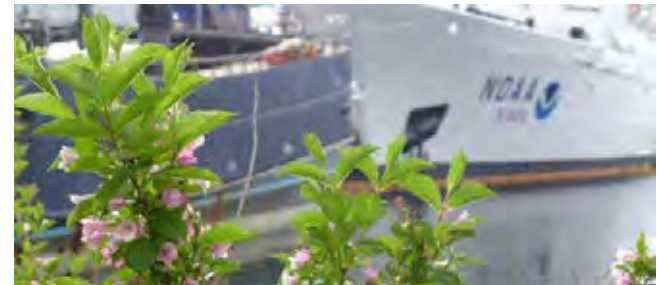


Image 33: LUDD hosts ships from faraway times and places

HASN'T IT ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS?



Image 34: Queen Anne across Lake Union as seen from the south edge of the site

effectively holds the space, with its inherent qualities, and considers the powers that operate within. Future development that truly examines the complexity of a site, its *ground*, and its life may happen slowly, but ideally this development will reflect complexity of place. In the case of the Lake Union Dry Docks, future development could go a number of ways: continued functioning as a dry dock, repurposing into a related industry, or complete removal in favor of a more site-relevant program. But the process of coming to a conclusive approach will necessarily take time -- and should incorporate voices beyond those of the tech developers already clamoring for ownership of this piece of ground on the southeast edge of Lake Union

HASN'T IT ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS?

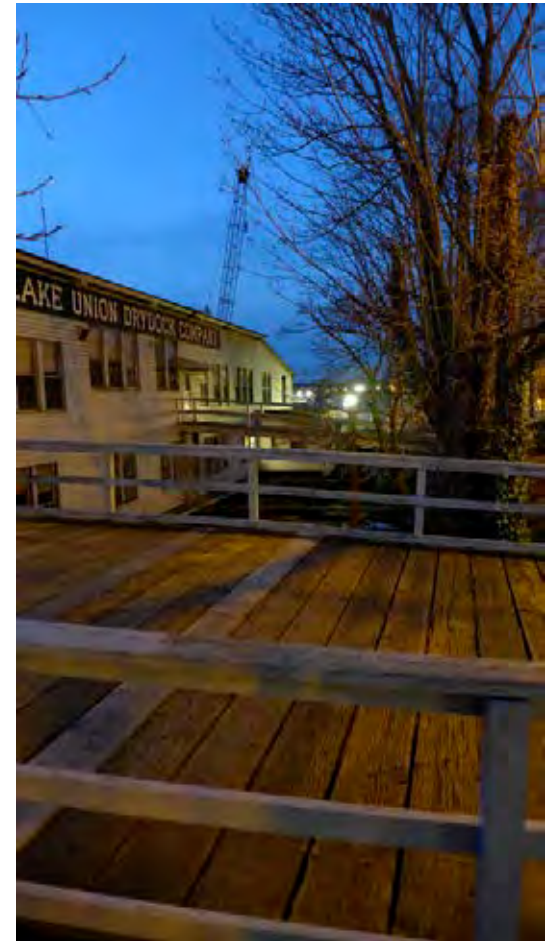
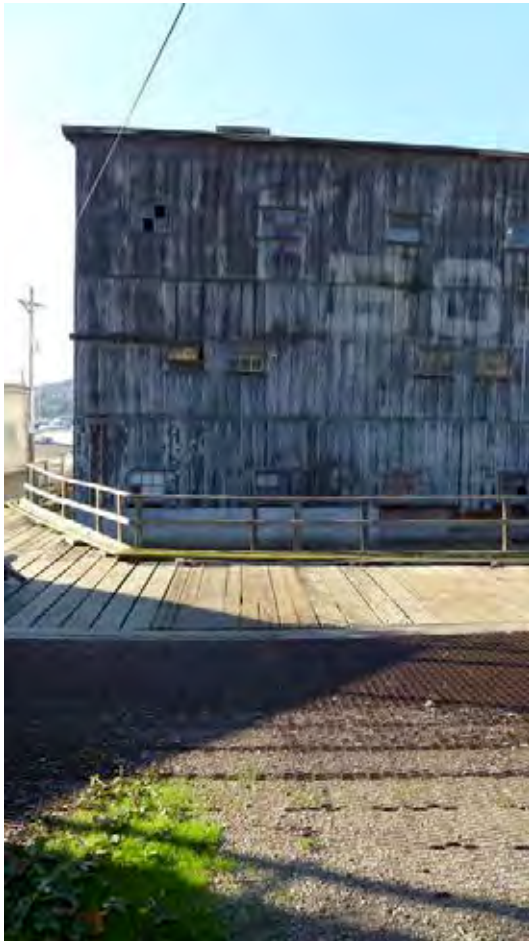


Image 35: The implied paths surround the Dry docks have an inherent complexity, in part due to an ambivalence regarding visibility and accessibility.

V. OVERLAY: DESIGNING WITH COMPLEXITY

The challenge with the design process is that it is often product-oriented, sometimes concerned more with making a statement with authority and finality. But at moments of change, certainty and finality may be premature, so it is important to ask questions, especially when the answers to those questions are not readily apparent or easily resolved. Asking questions may reveal new information, thereby expanding the scope of the project – adding complexity rather than creating a simple statement. In the case of this project, the thesis opened more questions than it resolved, and the engagement with questions of site and design for diverse voices took precedence over a physical design strategy.

An active industrial site such as the Lake Union Dry Docks could be approached in a number of ways:

The developer may attempt to buy the property, rezone for commercial or even residential, and create a structure that maximizes revenues through sleek design, high occupancy, and water views. A number of developers have approached the LUDD, but the family – with a long history there – refuses to sell.

The urban planner may be more interested in the street character – transparent storefronts, bicycle and walking paths, effective development plans that open up new possibilities for linkage between residential and commercial areas.

HASN'T IT ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS?

The historian or preservationist may be interested in retaining the story and character of the old dry docks: ageing wooden piers, dry dock mechanisms run by century-old Ford auto engines, ramshackle waterfront buildings – all telling a story of Seattle's fishing, boatbuilding, trade, smuggling, and military histories. Some may also wish to insert new uses into the spaces, while retaining the shell of the buildings – as seen in the Zymogenetics building directly south of the site. Or perhaps it could become an analog to Gasworks Park – holding its form and its contaminants while creating new opportunities for recreation and views.

But what if the multidisciplinary designer were to pull back and to consider issues that may not be addressed in other potential futures of the place? Human access for all (democratic space) is getting lost in South Lake Union with its privately owned parks under the purview of high-tech industries. In the age of the Occupy Movement protests in Zucotti Park and across the nation, do we want to accept private control of our city spaces?⁶⁸ In addition, the South Lake Union development represents a global urban reality: the final years of a decades-long shift from industrial city to tech city. Seattle is unique in that it has maintained a small, thriving, maker-based industrial economy long after the Rust Belt went bankrupt, but the city's industries are moving south and away from Lake Union as the area gentrifies.

Instead of taking a passive role in urban development, designers provide opportunities for industrial continuity within a designed cityscape. This continuity can be facilitated by the simultaneous use of transportation infrastructures in their typical functions and as democratic spaces within the public realm. Is there a way to engage with alternate possibilities for place, and can we find a way to peel back the layers of development to reveal the value of spaces that

⁶⁸ Privately held park space is not democratic space, as evidenced at Westlake Center and in SLU private development projects

V. OVERLAY: DESIGNING WITH COMPLEXITY

speak to diverse populations?

In his book *Truth and Method*, Hans Georg Gadamer examines perceptions of truth and reality in connection with individual perspective. He posits that each person necessarily views any complex situation from her or his own perspective and that none of us are afforded an objective view.⁶⁹ Much as mountaineers approach a single summit from different directions, people observe the same object or situation from their individual vantages. For each of us this creates an individual horizon which acts as datum for our observations.

The learning moments occur when two individuals compare their horizons and by virtue of being exposed and receptive to another perspective gain a third shared horizon. This third horizon is informed by greater depth of information and therefore it allows a more nuanced understanding of the object or situation in question. Successive sharing of horizons may lead to more holistic understanding of places and entities. In this way, it makes space for multiple voices in contexts where true understanding is valued.

Informed by the aim of leaving room for the existing multiplicity of

⁶⁹ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Language as a Horizon of Hermeneutic Ontology." *Truth and Method*. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. London: Continuum Publishing Group, 1989. 455-506.



Image 36: Different life and textures found on the site

HASN'T IT ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS?

place, architect Alexandre Chemetoff's monograph of work and his narrative of projects promote a subtle approach to design in public spaces. In his work *Visits* he includes a short project description titled "Hardly anything changes everything," he details a rehabilitation of Bras Vert, an existing park space along a canal, where his addition to the design was minimal and only served to improve passage through a pre-existing design. He ends the project description with a provocative question: "Hasn't it always been like this?"⁷⁰ Throughout the book, Chemetoff speaks directly to a design approach rooted in connections, echoing Andrea Kahn's elucidation of the interconnectedness of urban sites referenced earlier in this paper under the section "Defining Urban Sites:"

The space between things: Working on public space, or more precisely on the space between things and people, allows differences to be expressed without provoking a crisis among groups and communities. This is the purpose architecture and a reasoned town and country planning should serve. I think paying attention to existing places is a form of politeness and respect.⁷¹

Connections and movement thus become a point of access to the physical site and a vehicle for designing through *ground*.

70 Chemetoff 35.

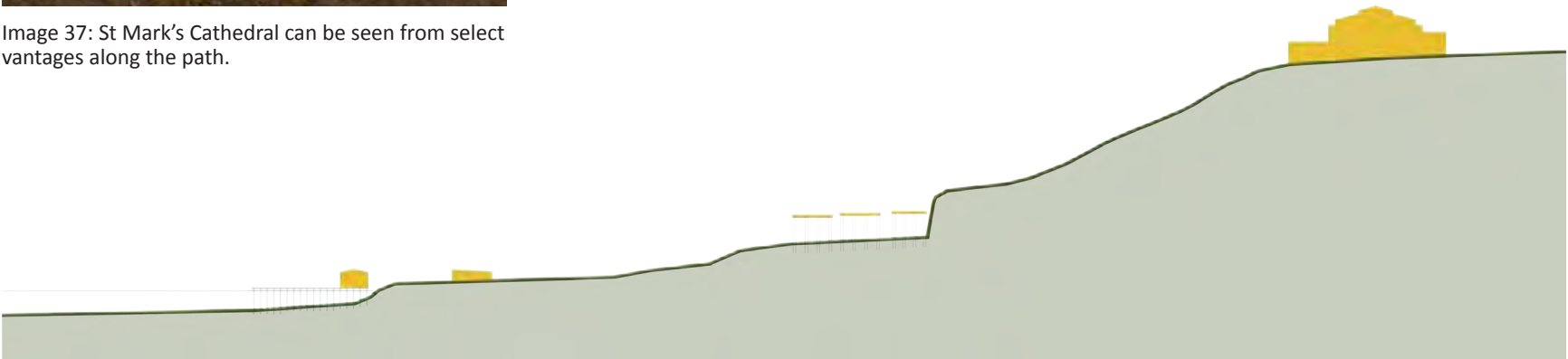
71 Chemetoff 11.

V. OVERLAY: DESIGNING WITH COMPLEXITY

HASN'T IT ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS?



Image 37: St Mark's Cathedral can be seen from select vantages along the path.



VI. DESIGN RESPONSE

Drawing on the various readings of this site -- from those casting the Dry Docks as a place of industrial ruin to the ones depicting the pleasure along the lake's shoreline -- I propose a designed throughway that offers opportunities for passers-by to see otherwise hidden adjacencies, to experience elements of the site that reference other times in history, and to provide a nuanced view of this place at this present time. This path offers a model for engaging complex environments without disrupting their function. In its simplicity and restraint, it presents a quiet way to increase community awareness and to create a space that grows in significance in the body memory and minds of its users, guiding future development by engaging public connection to place.

The path follows an indirect route through this place. It edges up against an ageing wood structure, plunges down a slope to the water's edge hiding below, and winds under the walkways bridging between Dry Docks and streetscape. It is primarily gravel, gently crunching underfoot when walked upon. Simple railroad ties traverse the steeper slopes, holding earth in place while providing a seat for the wanderer. This is a simple path, meant for the solitary traveler who longs to touch and smell the water and to be out of earshot of the city's sounds for a brief respite. Yet the pathway also offers small thrills such as the one experienced at the glimpse of a cathedral high above or the transgression into new territory when stepping off solid ground onto floating piers that trace the shore in the shadow of the Dry Dock façade. Momentary adjacencies offer a foothold into a deeper story: Decaying siding, waterlogged pilings, a window into a small office.



Image 38: The path winds down to the water, parallel to the public right-of-way.

HASN'T IT ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS?

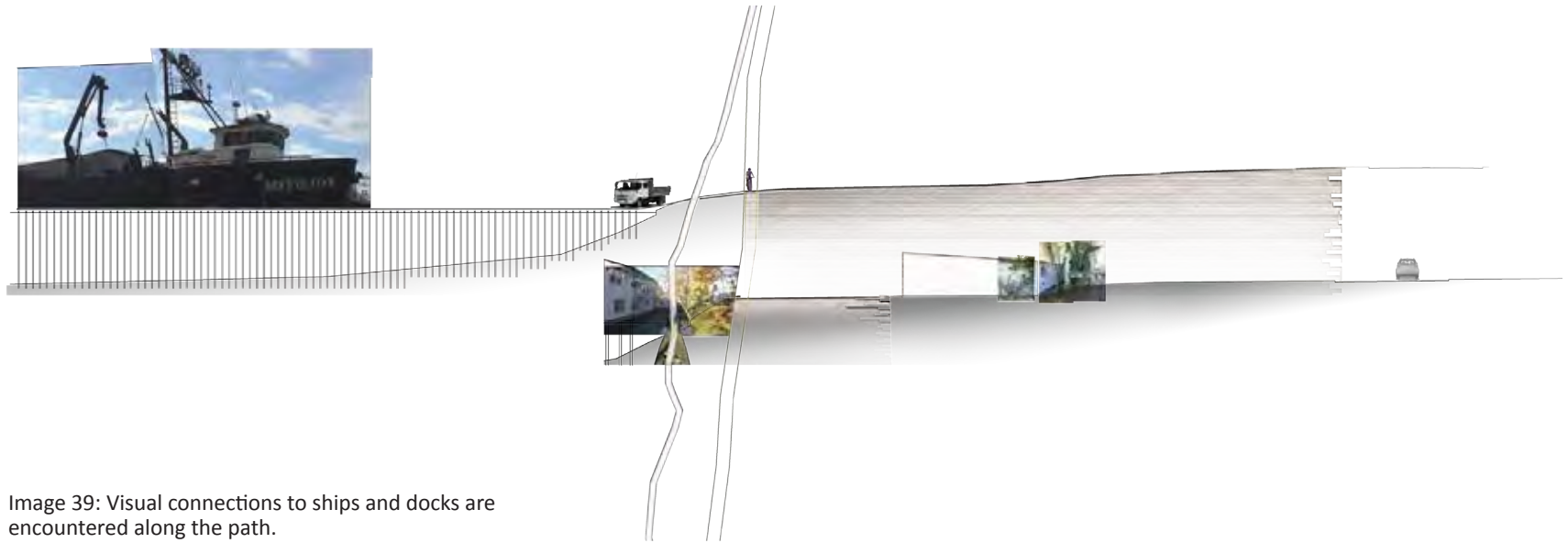
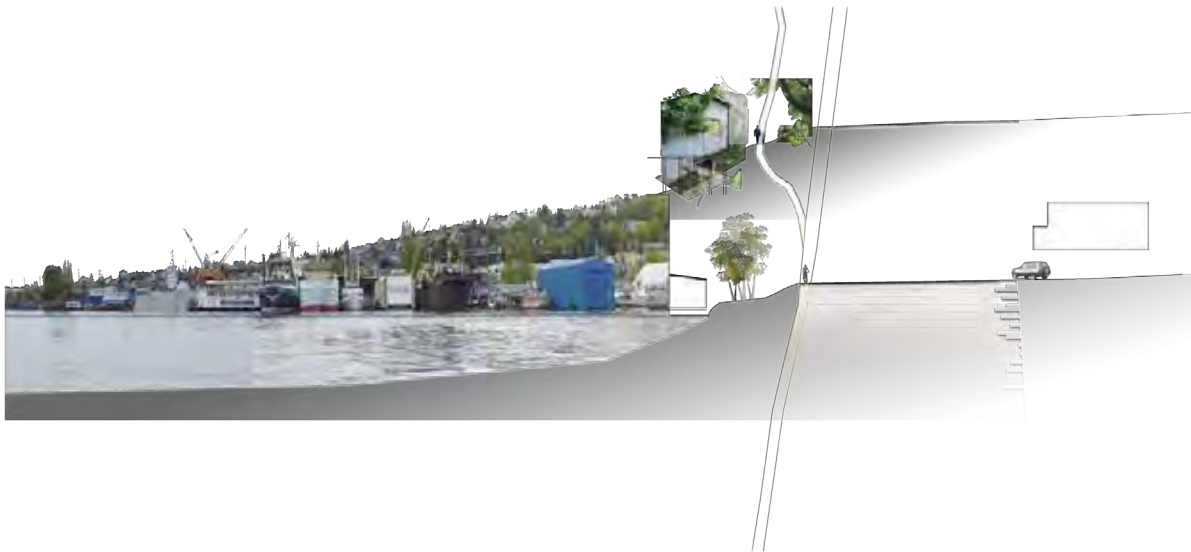


Image 39: Visual connections to ships and docks are encountered along the path.



VI. DESIGN RESPONSE

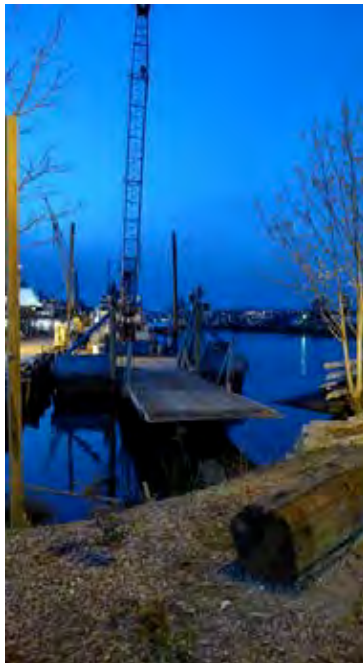


Image 40: Graphically the footpath is articulated through its adjacencies. The path itself recedes, as if it has always been here.

HASN'T IT ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS?



Image 41: An overgrown hillside creates a quiet passage down below street level, adjacent to run-down pier buildings and lapping water.

Past the Dry Docks the path rises up into the sunshine, turning briefly where the Aurora Bridge soars in the distance above the research vessels moored beyond the Docks.

Multiple access points to the path makes space for a new experience of the everyday traverse – the familiar – and opens the space to other possibilities. Discoveries of small places on the site and the addition of a place for through-travelling at a slower pace will enable elements of adjacent areas to bleed through -- making space for potential multiplicity of use in the future.

As people continue to traverse Fairview past the Drydocks, the footpath will become worn and the public right-of-way will become integrated with the Chesiahud Lake Union Loop in more than just name or designation on a map. As people gain awareness of this place and its connection to their workplaces, homes, and surrounding neighborhood, it will begin to integrate more fully with the loop that circumnavigates Lake Union.

The exploration undertaken in this thesis project revealed the Lake Union Dry Docks in its complex history and its potential for new development. Encountering the site in this way, it is upon us to consider how design can illuminate the stories of the site without clinging to one moment in time. How do we reveal without obliterating what still exists? Can a design act in such a way that it eases the transition from one iteration to the next? Cities change at different paces: sometimes slow and incremental, other times with radical

wide-sweeping renewals. In much the same way, the natural world shifts with the seasons and tides, inching slowly toward a new identity and other times bursting forth in a sweep of mud and lava, rendering place unrecognizable. Here, in this place, a bursting forth approach seems unnecessarily destructive – and short-sighted. An erasure of the existing functions and forms of the working industrial waterfront cuts short future responses to a rich history and presumes a future irrelevance of such sites. The richness in this place has potential, and could be woven into the changing fabric of the lake neighborhoods.

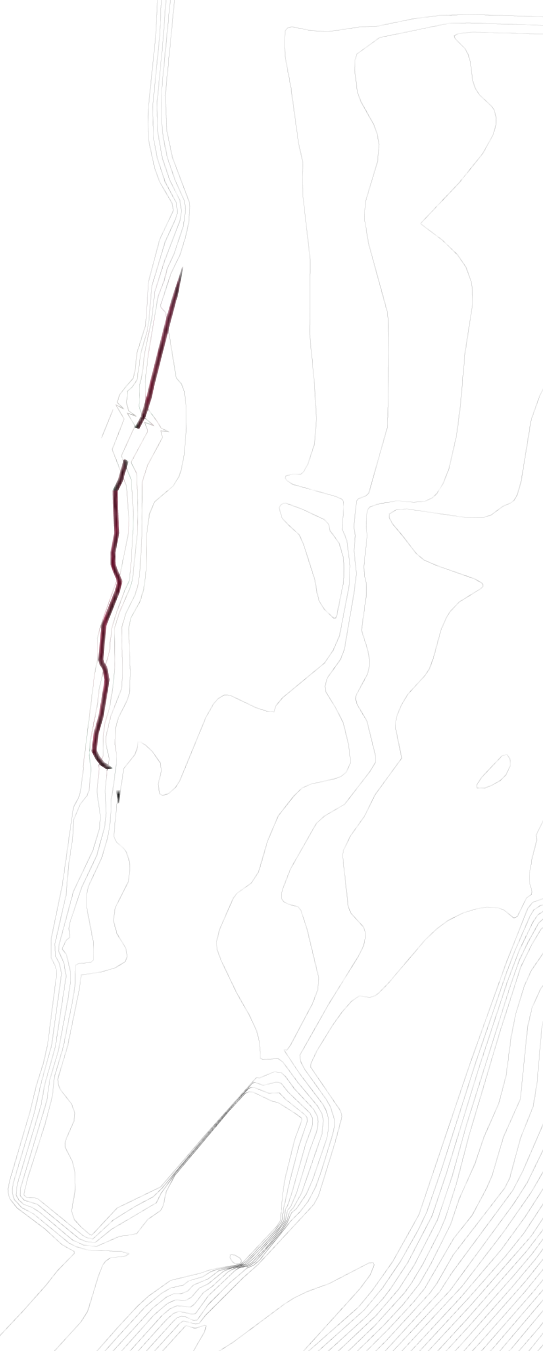
Historic preservation activities often restore a site to a specific period of significance, wiping clean some evidence of history. Cultural landscapes choose a moment in time and freeze it in perpetuity: museums of place. Mod-rehabs tend to preserve the appearance of place, but give it new life – as seen in the old steam plant (Zymogenetics) and in the many laundry, factory, and warehouse facilities in SLU, where the existing historic shells hold new occupations within. It is not clear that any of these options are right for the project site. The Lake Union Dry Docks are functioning so they shouldn't be frozen, gutted, or master-planned out of existence, but the shifts around them may indeed lead to one of those options to an intervention in the future.

I propose another path: wait and listen for voices to emerge, and ease spatial awkwardness in the meantime. Establish the initial design armature in order to provide an opportunity for a shift in how existing users interact with site and offer new opportunities that don't yet significantly alter the place. Then engage time in determining



Image 42: Floating walkways allow for a continuous pathway on steep slopes -- and connect the occupant more closely to sensations of water.

HASN'T IT ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS?



a potential large scale intervention if it seems appropriate. The benefit of working with sites that are not yet under development is that their futures are still open, so this is a designed opportunity for public engagement through actions and responses that play out on the *ground* of this site. These interactions set the stage for new conceptions of place as determined by usage and public perceptions of this place within the greater neighborhood and city; it is a way for people to “[pay] attention to [the] existing place.”⁷³ Moreover, it is a temporal, phased intervention; this leaves room for conceptions and innovations that have yet to emerge in the design professions. A light touch in *the space between things* also engages design to connect the dry dock site with its rapidly changing neighbors – this reinforces place connections between users and infrastructural landscapes in and sets the groundwork for a new, not yet conceived future. In this way we allow the site to remain and function in its current state without disrupting the Dry Docks’ inherent being-ness.

David Carr’s final sentiment in his *New York Times* Op-Ed, “View, Interrupted: The Spoiling of Manhattan’s Skyline” speaks to a broader condition present in the rapid-growth post-industrial city, and his final admonishment directs us to practice restraint: “When I look toward the city, I don’t see the glorious handiwork of human hands — I see what happens when those hands don’t know when to quit.”⁷⁴

73 Chemetoff 11.

74 Carr, David.

HASN'T IT ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS?



Image 20: At dusk the Drydock facades reveal their hollow interiors

VII. APPEARING THROUGH THE CRACKS: CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS ON PROCESS

The process of discovering an appropriate and resonant design methodology that would frame a response engendered a significant ambivalence in my thinking both about design and about the professional practice of design. I began this project interested in reading a site, not as a tabula rasa but as a place layered with narratives, meaning, memories, and futures. My design training suggested a rather proscribed set of beautification and amenities – easing user conflicts, clarifying pathways, adding comfort. But this did not address what I felt was a small, yet strong voice of the site itself. This place tells a continuous story that revealed itself as inextricably intertwined with a fundamentally Seattle (and American urbanization) story. In addition, the adjacent backdrop of shiny new tech development casts a dominant shadow on this elderly, ramshackle relic of an earlier age. As one who grew up urban in the thick of 1980s suburban expansion, I feel a visceral connection to the little moments of caring: flower pots by the doorway, freshly scrubbed siding, or newly planted perennials amidst neglect and decay. I also connect with industrial and blue-collar industries as critical to an economically healthy city – as it offers financial opportunity to and for workers outside of white-collar professions. In a Seattle marked by rising costs of living that render it progressively less accessible to working class families, the existence of functioning industries in an otherwise re-imagined tech mecca is a bright spot whose continued relevance gives me hope.

HASN'T IT ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS?

In this framework, the process of site discovery suggested a deeper engagement with site as it raised questions about what would happen next, how to respond appropriately, and how to connect my discoveries with more people in the city (without acting in a way that seemed premature/presumptuous in this place). Explorations that began with the currently accepted approaches to site analysis with similar conditions (historic structures, industrial forms, waterfront, etc.) did not reflect my ideas of what might be both possible and responsible as a designer. I intended to address a cultural landscape of industry and a public waterfront. Contemporary approaches to cultural landscape place site in a time of historical significance that effectively freezes a dynamic place and adds unnecessary complications to its maintenance. Post-industrial re-makes are consistent with other developments nearby, but are inappropriate for a functioning industry. Finally, urban park beautification projects could potentially disrupt industrial traffic to the area. Thus none of these broad approaches seemed appropriate for the site I was working with nor did they reflect the purpose of my thesis. The Dry Docks are necessarily inaccessible as a heavy industry so interventions are not appropriate within their work zone.

I think this last condition directly speaks to what makes industrial sites compelling for many of us: they hold within them powerful forms and processes whose results are physically tangible (in this case, ships and boats), but most of us never actually enter that realm. In addition, the scale of the work produced is many times larger than most of our vehicles, homes and offices – so our human sense of awe is engaged when we come into close contact with the ships slipping out of

VII. APPEARING THROUGH THE CRACKS: CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS ON PROCESS

moorage. I think this connection with the sublime and picturesque speaks to a spiritual place in many of us: the divine replaced by the power of human industry. Tangible examples of this power are becoming less legible as we warehouse, digitize, outsource, and boutique physical production. Speaking to a visceral and emotional connection to place is complicated, as design execution requires such practical considerations as a singular time and place for intervention. Engaging across time, ideas and stories is difficult, and generates the question: how will this intervention change what is here? Will this intervention hasten the demise of this place or create unforeseen obstacles?

Each intervention I considered gave me pause until I cast the walking path as the primary intervention: minimal disruption with maximal exposure for passers-by to the particulars of this place; other interventions would hew to the lessons learned through passage on the path. My design thus worked with the idea of minimal disruption and small interventions, with the goal of maximum invitation to the public. I chose to design intuitively, relying on a sensory experience of the site not confined or informed strictly by abstractions about industry, post-industrial growth, and programmatic categories. Intuitive design responses to the experiential inherently resist the large-scale interventions that are possible when site elements are generalized. Because the initial reading of site is sensory, the site is not relegated to a particular moment in time; encounters with different places on the site frame experiences across the history of Seattle. In retrospect, it seems design interventions can be differentiated in much the same way as Robin Dripps differentiates between site and ground. Much of what we learn in school has to do with the finite, acute intervention, created at a single moment in response to the information available at a single moment in time. In this project I was reaching toward a way to design incrementally, in step with the rhythms of this piece of ground.

HASN'T IT ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS?

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