DECONSTRUCTING THE HIGH LINE:
THE REPRESENTATION AND RECEPTION OF NATURE IN
POST-INDUSTRIAL URBAN PARK DESIGN

by

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Deconstructing the High Line: The Representation and Reception of Nature in Post-Industrial Urban Park Design

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to study how nature is represented and perceived through the lens of cultural values which influence the development, design and reception of public park spaces. This research uses the High Line in New York City (designed by Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro) as a case study to explore how underlying values about nature have influenced its development as an elevated rail, an abandoned infrastructure and now a celebrated model for reuse as a park. In 2009 the space was opened to the public as a re-interpreted eco-typical botanic garden portraying an idealized nature and showcasing “wild nature” as its own aesthetic. Drawing from Semiotic and Reception theory, this thesis analyzes how modes of representation have been used to construct particular meanings and ideologies about the landscape. These values are revealed through the semiotic manifestation of both material and immaterial signs which influence a visitor’s reception and experience of nature.

The development of the High Line exemplifies the polarity between the cultural ideal of the static and orderly garden and the messy processes of wild nature. This thesis argues that while the space’s history as a “wilderness” inspired its preservation, its design and development indicate a continued value for the idealized representation of nature through Picturesque representation and the selective editing of site history.

This abstract accurately represents the content of the candidate’s thesis. I recommend its publication.

Approved by

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I’d like to thank my advisor, Joern Langhorst for his enthusiasm, contributions and support of my research. I’d also like to thank Department Chair Ann Komara for her participation and assistance. I am grateful to Senior Instructor Tony Mazzeo for his continued insight from the crossroads of theory and practice and Charlie Chase for his instrumental voice from the field of landscape ecology. In addition, I’d like to thank the Brandeis Family for the Thesis Scholarship in Landscape Architecture.
The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing that stands in the way. Some see nature all ridicule and deformity... and some scarce see nature at all. But to the eyes of the man of imagination, nature is imagination itself.

— William Blake
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The integrated perspective of “nature as culture” is one that dates to the writings of Immanuel Kant and has continued as a contested subject between scholars of the natural and social sciences ever since. In contrast with Aristotle’s work which initially drove the division of nature and culture, the idea emphasizes the intricacy of connection between nature and the production of human meaning. This debate has polarized the objective and subjective understanding of nature by pitting the reality and ready apprehension of nature against the truth-value questioning of scientific knowledge. Most recently, the development of sociological theory termed “social constructivism” views human and non-human nature as “incomprehensible outside of culturally-based knowledge schemes.” Contemporary French sociologist Bruno Latour supports this synthesized approach as unambiguous proof of the complex interactions between nature and culture, contending that “objectivity and subjectivity are modern myths that support a whole host of questionable dualisms.” As a result, “nature as culture” is envisioned such that it cannot be reduced to the human perception of nature versus nature itself. With this in mind, we struggle to negotiate the objectified relationship that has been established through cultural modes of representation. This conflict is exacerbated in urban environments where the need for more “green space” holds greater aesthetic, social, health and economic value than in less densely settled areas where such space is more readily available. The urban-nature dialectic is one that has been maintained by values that have historically communicated a reverence for the orderly appearance of nature through the typologies of “park,” “garden” and “streetscape.” Such landscapes maintain the perceived separation between the human and non-human systems that interact outside of the spatial designations humans make for nature. In addition, this objectified view of nature is reinforced through the material and immaterial acts of representation which can be interpreted through a semiotic study of our landscapes.

By studying the signs and signifying practices that are laden in the development of a site, the values and authors of these texts may be extracted. For centuries, the Picturesque genre of landscape design has conveyed specific ideologies and aesthetics about the treatment of nature. For the visitor, such landscapes blur the boundaries between what is perceived to be natural and

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1 The term “nature” has many contexts and meanings. For this inquiry, when I talk about nature, I am only calling it “nature” in the singular but am acknowledging that “nature” has many natures and qualities. The nature I refer to is one that includes both human and non-human processes though the symbolic character of language leaves the term open to interpretation. This being the case, the essence of the problem is the interpretation of the word “nature” as meaning non-human biotic and abiotic systems that specifically are exclusive of human operations.
what is designed, thereby suggesting nature as the author of landscapes that are anything but natural. This constructed nature has consequences because it communicates an idealistic nature with particular qualities that are deemed ‘beautiful’ through the lens of culture though they may not in fact be ecologically healthy. In addition, the repetition of a singular landscape genre develops an expectation of a particular experience of nature, limiting the phenomenological and imaginative human experience from a landscape and the richer texts developed from its reception.

Robert Smithson observes, “The Picturesque, far from being an inner movement of the mind, is based on real land; it precedes the mind in its material external existence. A park can no longer be seen as “a thing-in-itself,” but rather a process of ongoing relationships existing in a physical region- the park becomes a “thing-for-us.” This observation supports what John Dixon Hunt has termed the “Reception of Nature.” This perspective treats landscape as a narrative from which every visitor reads a text. The text is largely shaped by cultural constructs, but it is also shaped by their own individual experiences and presuppositions of what nature is and how it performs. The narrative that is written through the practice of landscape architecture uses a combination of form, material, space and geophysical characteristics as a means of shaping the story. It exists temporally and on many scales: it has multiple histories because it includes the history of the space while concurrently including the visitor’s history, memory, values, and their current and future experiences of the site.

This thesis will analyze the High Line in New York City's Chelsea neighborhood (designed by Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro) as an urban post-industrial site that has undergone both cultural and ecological succession and is now a model for infrastructural re-use. The High Line is a mechanism for the expression of cultural values and by studying it much can be learned about the role and perception of nature in our contemporary urban landscape. The High Line as a post-industrial site is part of a larger context, the succession of obsolete sites and infrastructural networks in urban centers across the U.S. Cycles of development, use and abandonment have become recognized more clearly in the post-industrial era as large tracts of urban areas have been subject to abandonment and neglect through disuse. These patterns of neglect have revealed ecological opportunities and the availability for processes of plant succession and the messiness of nature to take hold. In urban areas where the landscape is constituted of rigid architectural forms and is planned for human density and the efficient movement of people and goods, the disorderly form of wild nature is an anomaly, juxtaposed with our own preferences for organized urban systems. While the existence of weed species in these areas have often been viewed as indicators of abandonment by humans, their proliferation is often curtailed by redevelopment within a short enough time period that opportunities

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for further successional use by species through the development of shrubs and small trees are eliminated quickly.\textsuperscript{11} The history of the High Line features this stage of transition as one that influenced a change in the human relationship with the urban wilderness, in its transformation from eyesore to icon, creating opportunities while concurrently driving efforts for demolition.

Though its implementation took 50 years to come to fruition, in 1932 the elevated railway viaduct was a symbol of modernism and technological progress, a feat of engineering that produced environmental benefits for the community. Commercial activity sustained its use for another 50 years when shifting transportation infrastructure favored the trucking industry over rail. By 1980 the structure, neglected and forgotten in a primarily industrial district, became a relic that the City chose to ignore. The derelict space developed new uses and meanings as it became a transgressive space for illicit activities and the occasional guerilla garden. Its deteriorating skeleton was viewed as an obstacle to business growth while it concurrently became a petri dish for successional processes to interact with human habitats. This hybrid landscape became a wilderness for multiple living systems.\textsuperscript{12}

Since the late 1990s, visual representation practices have had a significant role in the High Line’s development, preservation, design, maintenance, publicity, urban planning, and use. By 2005, a 20-year long battle within the neighborhood to demolish the structure resulted in its preservation, but not without the iconic representation of the space as a wilderness. From 1999-2000 art photographer Joel Sternfeld photographed it, revealing it as a melancholic and otherworldly space, “pristine and authentic.”\textsuperscript{13} This act of representing an unkempt, wild nature that took hold in the midst of Manhattan transformed cultural views of the space from neglected human domain to that of “wilderness,” inspiring its transformation.\textsuperscript{14} By iconifying it, describing it and marketing it as such, a neighborhood preservation effort started by two people became a massive economic juggernaut, backed by NYC’s fashion, design and Hollywood elite. In one swoop of powerful landscape imagery, a space with a varied past of both celebrated and sordid human activity became objectified as a romantic and imaginary realm of nature, devoid of people, transgressive and mythical.

The High Line also reveals the economic implications of park development, and the effects of neighborhood rezoning and environmental justice for communities. While the High Line cultivated a donor society of wealthy Manhattanites eager to support a high design park of private-public partnership,\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{12} Before site demolition, horticultural taxonomist Scott D. Appell of the Historical Society of New York inventoried the species on the site. There are personal accounts of how people in the neighborhood used and viewed the site. Because there was never a study completed to inventory the kinds of wildlife and insects that were found in the abandoned space, we are unable to confirm the variations in fauna and insects that have changed site over the course of its transformation. As a result, the inventoried species may be described but with the assumption that varying species of birds and insects co-habited the site in order to propagate the ecosystem that grew there.
it is questionable if the long term maintenance of such a park is feasible. At $672,000 an acre to operate annually, it is NYC’s costliest park to maintain, with the average park costing $9,555 an acre. The redevelopment of post-industrial sites into fashionable new parks also has far-reaching consequences to the diverse and low-income neighborhoods that have nurtured their community for so long. Like Central Park, the planning of parks for the initial purpose of providing urban communities with social, recreation and health benefits quickly spurred higher-income commercial and housing developments, displacing their original inhabitants. Such communities that are in the greatest need of parks are soon priced out of their own neighborhood once the parks are built.

The High Line is significant because of its role as an idealized model of infrastructural re-use and urban renewal. Cities both nationally and internationally have struggled with what to do with defunct urban infrastructural networks and too often the tendency has been to demolish and build anew. Many U.S. cities are looking to re-create the public space through similar projects in their own urban landscapes from obsolete or soon to be outdated infrastructural elements; Detroit, Atlanta and Memphis are interested in applying the model to their outmoded transportation structures. Similar projects are also being discussed for Chicago (Bloomingdale Trail), Philadelphia (Reading Viaduct), Jersey City (the Sixth Street Embankment) and St. Louis (the Iron Horse Trestle).

This thesis looks at the complexity of the reception of nature and the numerous layers of cultural information that builds a viewer’s response to landscape. The chapters of this thesis have been constructed in a similar fashion. Site History (Ch 3) and Theoretical Foundations (Ch 4) create a groundwork for the exploration of Landscape as Idea (Ch5). Chapter 5 analyzes the production of ideas regarding nature through the lens of the four natures. Chapter 6, Transformation elaborates on the building of a reception of site, emphasizing the human and non-human forces that shaped the High Line while taking note of aspects of its development that were either emphasized or dismissed in its new role as public space. Finally, Chapter 7 The Construction and Production of Nature highlights the cultural values of the Picturesque that are pervasive in the High Line and can be identified through the site by way of a semiotic analysis.

The High Line provides a valuable site for studying an urban infrastructural corridor whose meaning has been transformed by the human and non-human processes acting on a site over time. Despite the undeniable role of humans within this ecosystem, this landscape has been re-created as one that is separate from nature through modes of representation, with design playing a primary role in framing this perception. The High Line provides a unique opportunity to understand landscape architecture as an evolving practice whose tactics should be further challenged and explored as a medium for the propagation of cultural ideals.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Method

A single case study of the High Line in New York City’s Chelsea/Meatpacking District will be presented in this document. A study of this park highlights the polarities between the cultural perception of ecological “beauty” and that of ecological health and the modes of representation that promote this differential. This case study will have multiple units of analysis in order to analyze the different modes of representation which influence a visitor’s experience of a site. The complexities of historical, ecological and social factors that are present in the High Line are represented through:

1. Development of archival research
2. Development of relative theory
3. A semiotic analysis of landscape elements, park development practices and design development documents. Production of diagrams that analyze relationships.
4. Informational interviews

The collection of qualitative research followed Robert Yin’s criteria for research design quality, also summarized by L. Kidder and Judd. Research was collected and analyzed to construct and determine internal validity. Theoretical foundations for the research were established and tested to determine external validity. A case study protocol and database was created for the collection and analysis of the research in order to demonstrate the reliability and diligence of the data compilation.

I. Archival Research

Sources of Information have included: Design development drawings, public process meeting minutes, planning documents, books, photography (marketing, art-photography, informational, historical), web-based articles, YouTube videos, newspaper articles, and magazine and journal articles.

The history of the High Line is well documented regarding its development and inception. The events surrounding efforts to preserve and/or demolish the structure are even more so though conflicting information regarding public safety and health issues due to the degradation of the High Line was laundered in the mass-media. Socio-economic implications for the local community as well as local

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businesses and landowners are ever-present in the community meeting minutes and planning documents that exist. The rise of celebrity of the Friends of the High Line founders and the strategies to gain support for the park was a highly visible series of promotional events. As was the well-publicized design competition to generate ideas for the park. As noted previously, media coverage in anticipation of the park and since its opening in 2009 is endless and multifaceted, illustrating how the High Line has become its own cultural juggernaut.

II. Development of Relevant Theory

A body of theoretical literature was developed for the purposes of analyzing this research. The application of this theory provides context for understanding how the research is presented and the framing of the argument through the lens of Reception and Semiotic Theory. Landscape architecture theory provides a historical context for the values about non-human nature as it has developed in the U.S. This literature is summarized in Chapter 4.

III. Semiotic Analysis and Diagram Development

Both physical/material and non-material signs graphically, spatially and conceptually illustrate the semiotic relationships evident on the site. In addition to photographic representation collected during site visits during the past year, photographic imagery was collected from its early history as an active railroad as well as during its abandonment. The art photographer Joel Sternfeld was hired to capture the “wild” space in 2000 and his work has also been instrumental for analysis. The Friends of the High Line maintain a website that functions in a variety of ways: besides posting historical, regulatory, media-related and programmatic information about the High Line, it also provides an interactive online database for photo-imagery. Visitors to the High Line are able to upload their own photography to the site. Despite being a small representation of the number of visitors, this publicized imagery exemplifies the subject matter and types of experience that is interpreted from the site.

IV. Informational Interviews

Many of the desired interviews for this research project could not be performed because of a lack of responsiveness on the part of the interviewees or their organizations, specifically Friends of the High Line and Field Operations. At the start of the research phase, the objective had been to perform informational interviews with the stakeholders and designers of the space in order to extract the nuances of cultural values that shaped and directed the design intent during design development. Multiple attempts were made to make contact with the designers of the High Line. Requests for interviews and specific information from landscape architects from Field Operations went unanswered, as did information and interviews requested from Piet Oudolf, the planting designer. Various stakeholders including the City of New York Parks and Recreation Department, and additional staff of the Friends of the High Line were all unresponsive to requests for interviews and documentation.
The High Line’s caretaker, Friends of the High Line (FHL), is more than the custodian, fundraiser and operations entity for the park. They are also the communications coordinator for everything to do with the High Line. From programming to media coverage to design queries to visitation and public process, one individual from FHL, Kate Lindquist, fields every question. Any contractor that worked on the project has been directed to withhold information without a directive from Lindquist. FHL has provided me with a list of potential contacts; however, the organization itself was reluctant to provide me a contact due to an overwhelming number of requests. Johnny Linville, Horticulture Forman for FHL was a source of an abundant amount of information about the construction, maintenance and design of Phases 1 and 2. Through a series of interviews via phone and a site tour of the space, Linville was an instrumental source for understanding the current landscape maintenance regimes, operations protocol, gardening practices and relations with the public visitors.

Communication about the High Line has always been highly visual, from the early efforts to save the structure with the rallying efforts of neighborhood postings to the distinctive logo development which gave credence to an unfunded but highly connected community organization (the newly established FHL in 1999). This is evidenced through the use of powerful photo-imagery by Joel Sternfeld, the wide range of photography captured by visitors strolling the narrow corridors of the space and the views recorded from the roofs of adjacent buildings. Such viewpoints have provided unique perspectives of this space over time and have been significant in influencing the modes of representation of the High Line.

Methods of Chapter Analysis

Chapter 5 Landscape as Idea: The Four Natures:

Chapter 5 analyzes the production of ideas regarding nature through the lens of the four natures and the language that has been used to shape values and human responses. This chapter uses Chapter 4 Theoretical Foundations to build a foundation for understanding the cultural constructs of imagining nature.

Chapter 6 Transformation: Building a Receptive History of Site:

A true receptive history would include for the individual visitor an understanding of the site's history. Those who live in Chelsea no doubt would carry with them a much more thorough and in depth account of people’s relationship with the site over time. Archival research regarding the High Line has been exponential since the park’s development, but the two other significant periods of time that the space has evolved through has been significantly underdeveloped in cultural recordings and representation. As far as cultural representation goes, the history of the High Line began in the popular media only at the point when Joel Sternfeld produced and marketed his art photography of the space. Prior to that point, the High Line was as good as forgotten since in
many ways it had already been dismissed as a pending demolition. Because of this, there exists a need to represent this history that is so critical to understanding the palimpsest of this site. As a result, Chapter 6 employs a variety of historical accounts and interviews in an effort to recreate the processes that acted on the site over time, processes that shaped its development and the responses that people had to nature’s wild acts of defiance.

Chapter 7 Construction and Production of Nature

There are two layers of analysis that are done to extract information from the High Line’s design and development. The first layer is the semiotic analysis and the second layer is the identification and categorization of signs and signifying practices into categories of Picturesque qualities.

The diagram which analyzes the signs and signifying practices identified in the development and design of the High Line can be found as Appendix A. The table is included below and notes the table headings and information type relevant to each sign being evaluated. The third row explains the type of information, how the information is derived and lists questions that are relevant to semiotic analysis and modes of representation. As with any semiotic interpretation, signs may signify multiple concepts and can fall under multiple modes of representation (index, icon, and symbol). I also acknowledge that I am the individual who is performing this analysis and that I bring along my own set of values to the interpretation. Regardless of this, the values that I have identified are strong cultural values that underlie a human world that is American and capitalist. Because I bring this same background to the analysis, I aim to extract the values that are part of my own culture.

For this analysis, the semiotic theory of Saussure will be used, offering a dyadic sign: where the sign is composed of the signifier and the signified:

The *signifier* is the *form* which the sign takes.
The *signified* is the mental *concept* represented by the signifier.

While a broadly Saussurean framework is being applied in this analysis, Peircean distinctions will be used. I am adopting this model with the understanding that the form need not be physical; it may be material or immaterial as supported by Peirce. Peirce’s conceptual modes of “icon”, “index” and “symbol” are important means of investigation in the interpretation of the varying types of relationships that exist between the “signifier” and the “signified”. The recognition of icon, index and symbol reveal the degree to which the form identified represents the concept, and thereby how direct or arbitrary that relationship is. It is important to note that Peirce’s semiotic theory recognizes that signs can be anything (material or immaterial) “as long as it mediates between its object and an interpretant; icons, indices and symbols are classes by which signs

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relate to its object". Based on the nature of arbitrariness related to Saussure’s system of signs, those that study semiotics emphasize that the relationship between the signified and the signifier is dependent on learned social and cultural practices. As a result, the ability to interpret signs amid the conceptual modes of icon, index and symbol is reliant on the strength of the conventionality of the sign. That is, an interpreter’s ability to read the signifier from the signified is based on how well that relationship has been acquired through cultural practice. The table of contemporary Picturesque tenets which I am using to evaluate the signs that have been identified is included in Chapter 7 The Construction and Production of Nature.

Following is the Semiotic analysis table describing how the research was interpreted:

Table 2.1 Semiotic Analysis Diagram

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signifier</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Signified</th>
<th>Description of signifier</th>
<th>Modes of Relationship (Between the signifier and the signified)</th>
<th>Index (Nature of connection: causal or physical)</th>
<th>Iconic (Resembling or imitating, possessing similar qualities)</th>
<th>Symbolic (Signifier does not resemble the signified-learned relationship)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photographic representation of the sign or signifying practice is included in this cell.</td>
<td>Photograph of signifier</td>
<td>What is the concept or concepts that the signifier communicates?</td>
<td>Indexical modes exhibit direct relationships between the signifier and the signified</td>
<td>Is the signifier perceived as resembling or imitating the signified, being similar in possessing some of its qualities. Icons include all metaphor and photographic/visual representation.</td>
<td>Is this a mode in which the signifier does not resemble the signified but is arbitrary so that the relationship must be learned? (All language is symbolic).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22 Idem.
This thesis looks at the complexity of the cultural information represented in the landscape in building a viewer’s reception of nature, both prior, during and after an initial experience. The chapters of this thesis have been constructed in a similar fashion. Site History (Ch 3) and Theoretical Foundations (Ch 4) created a groundwork for the exploration of Landscape as Idea (Ch5). This Chapter analyzes the production of ideas regarding nature through the lens of the four natures and the language that has been used to shape values and human responses. Chapter 6 Transformation elaborates on the building of a reception of site, emphasizing the human and non-human forces that shaped the site while taking note of aspects of its development that were either emphasized or dismissed in its new role as public space. Finally, Chapter 7 Construction and Production of Nature highlights key cultural values that are communicated through the site by way of a semiotic analysis.
CHAPTER 3
SITE DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

LOCATION
West Side of Manhattan, Chelsea/Meatpacking Districts, New York, NY, USA

Section 1: Gansevoort Street to 20th Street (This case study is limited to Phase 1)
Section 2: 20th Street to 30th Street
Section 3: West Side Rail Yards: 30th to 34th Streets (This portion of the line was only recently secured in 2011)

SIZE

Section 1: 2.79 acres, 9 blocks, .5 mile
Section 2: 2.14 acres, 10 blocks, .5 mile
Section 3: 2.15 acres, .45 mile
Total length: 1.45 miles without Post Office spur
Total: 6.7 acres, 22 blocks, 1.45 mile

Figure 3.1 Context Map of the High Line

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Park Precedent

While the media touts the High Line as the first elevated linear park built on old railroad track, this is only true in the U.S. The idea originated in Paris in 1988 with the design of the Promenade Plantée, a 2.8-mile-long series of gardens built atop an abandoned railway viaduct in the Right Bank’s 12th Arrondissement. The design of the Promenade Plantée is formal and balanced with a linear walkway as the axis. The park is anchored on one end by the Opéra Bastille and the other is Bois de Vincennes. Like the High Line, the Promenade Plantée is also set compactly amongst the architecture of buildings.27

Economic Impacts

The High Line is managed by Friends of the High Line, a non-profit, private partner to the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. The 501(c) (3) non-profit was founded in 1999 by two neighborhood residents, Joshua David and Robert Hammond to advocate for the High Line’s preservation when the structure was under threat of demolition. It is set up in the same way as the Central Park Conservancy, as a public-private partnership. Friends of the High Line provide over 90 percent of the park’s annual operating budget, responsible for maintenance of the park, and public programming pursuant to a license agreement with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. FHL also led the design process for the High Line’s transformation to a public park, partnering with the City of New York on an international design competition that eventually selected the team of James Corner Field Operations (landscape architecture) and Diller Scofidio + Renfro (architecture).28 FHL is responsible for all staffing except for security, which is the sole staff responsibility of the City of New York Parks and Recreation Department.29

Pre-Development and Post Development Financial Assessments

Requests made to the Friends of the High Line for specific financial data related to construction and operations of the park went unanswered. In 1992, amidst the Chelsea property owners’ efforts to remove the High Line, the Surface Transportation Board had required that all funding for demolition be secured prior to the project, a cost of $100 million.32

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Table 3.1 Pre-Development Financial Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated construction costs (Sections 1 and 2)</th>
<th>Estimated revenue from tax revenue increases</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$65 million to build</td>
<td>Financial analysis indicated that the High Line could spur development and add an additional $250 million in incremental tax benefits to NYC over 20yrs.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study was completed by HRandA Advisors, John H. Alschuler (who was the current board of directors of FHL in 2009).

Table 3.2 Post Development Financial Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual construction costs (Sections 1 and 2)</th>
<th>Real estate development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$153 million to build</td>
<td>$2 billion in new developments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In 5 yrs since construction started, 29 new projects created, including 2500 new residential units, 1000 hotel rooms, 500,000 sqft of office and gallery space, an estimated $900 million in new residential and commercial development.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 Funding of High Line Construction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construction Funding sources35</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of New York</td>
<td>$112.2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Government</td>
<td>$20.3 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of New York</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caledonia, developers of an adjacent luxury apartment building. Contribution was in exchange for zoning rights which enabled them to add more floor area to their building</td>
<td>$6.9 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of High Line, including other private and corporate funding sources</td>
<td>$13.2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total design and construction cost of Sections 1 and 2 (Construction took place from April 2006-June 2009)</td>
<td>$153 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Community Profile:

The following data presents a comparison of land use, demographic and economic data within Manhattan Community District 4, the district through which all but four blocks of the High Line travels. District 4 extends twice the length of the High Line and therefore may not be a measure of the High Line’s impact on changing the demographics of a neighborhood. At this time, 2010 data for the specific census tracts adjacent to the High Line does not include income and education statistics, important indicators of the trends in gentrification of a neighborhood. The statistics for Census tracts 79, 83, 89, 93, 97 and 99, the tracts immediately adjacent to the High Line, should be analyzed in the future when the information is available. The fact that this information is not yet readily available suggests that the speed of change within communities is occurring at a rate that is faster than we are willing or able to monitor and respond to.

Following is additional information that reveals current dynamics of the Chelsea neighborhood:

- Between October 2008 and June 2009, the median list price for a home in the vicinity of the High Line rose from $870,000 to $1,300,000 at the opening of the first section of the new park.\(^{36}\)
- Multiple large low-income and rent-stabilized housing projects exist in Chelsea east of 10\(^{th}\) Avenue.\(^{37}\)
- 17% of residential units in Manhattan are nuclear families while 50% of them single person occupants.\(^{38}\)

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\(^{36}\) Zillow ‘NY 10011’ in Zillow Home Prices and Home Values, http://www.zillow.com/local-info/NY-10011-home-value/r_61625/#metric=kmt%3D1&d%3D126&t=p%3D5%26rt%3D7%26r%3D-D61625%26el%3D0 (accessed June 2011).

Community Open Space Needs

Prior to the development of the High Line as a park, the west side of Manhattan had a disproportionately low acreage-per-capita of parks than the rest of Manhattan. Community Board 4 ranked fourth from the bottom of 59 community districts in terms of open space. It had less than one-fifth of an acre per thousand residents. The average city-wide access to open space is 2.5 acres per thousand residents.

Table 3.4 Land Use Comparison: 2002 and 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoning Type</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lot Area</td>
<td>Lot Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of Lots</td>
<td>Sq. Ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 Family Residential</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>172.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Family Residential</td>
<td>1,354</td>
<td>6,773.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Residential/Commercial</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>3,144.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial/Office</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>4,220.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>3,985.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation/Utility</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>10,505.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>3,539.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Space/Recreation</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>773.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Facilities</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>2,285.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Land</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>2,228.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td></td>
<td>171.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,626</td>
<td>37,799.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annual Maintenance and Operations Costs

The High Line costs $4.5 million a year to maintain. The City of New York contributes $1 million of this amount annually. FHL “provides over 70 percent of the High Line’s annual operating budget, and is responsible for maintenance of the park, pursuant to a license agreement with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Cost per acre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Line</td>
<td>$672,000 per acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(NYC’s most expensive green space per acre to operate.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryant Park</td>
<td>$479,166 per acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Park</td>
<td>$32,000 per acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average New York City park</td>
<td>$9,555 per acre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Security costs

The park has 11 park enforcement patrol officers for the 4.9 acres of Sections 1 and 2 within the trendy, designer boutique-filled Meatpacking District. The Bronx gets five enforcement officers, for all 6,970 acres of Bronx parkland. City parks patrol officers at the High Line also operate crowd control and manage numbers on the High Line, limiting access at peak periods. The City of New York is responsible for the funding and staffing of all safety and security enforcement.

Staffing

FHL staff features four people earning more than $100,000, including Hammond, who earned $280,000 last year. There are a total of 30 F/T staff, administrative and field personnel. FHL staffs 7 F/T year-round gardeners and utilizes over 200 volunteers during the spring green-up (the event when all cut-back of dead foliage takes place) and the growing season.
Programming and Visitor use

The first year Section 1 of the High line opened over two million visitors were recorded with an average of 15,000-20,000 visitors on a busy Saturday during the growing season. Visitorship consists of 50% New York City residents and 50% non-residents. Of these non-residents, 25% are international travelers, primarily from Europe and Japan. FHL started an education program in 2000 which has developed school trips, youth programs, arts programming, and cooperative programming with the Hudson Guild.

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THE HIGH LINE: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Pre-Development (1900-1930)
   - 1847: The City of New York authorizes street-level railroad tracks down Manhattan's West Side to Canal Street.1
   - 1851: So many accidents occur between freight trains and street-level traffic that 10th Avenue becomes known as Death Avenue. For safety, men on horses, called the West Side Cowboys, ride in front of trains waving red flags.5
   - 1900: About 250 meat plants and slaughterhouses thrive in the area.6

2. Active Use by the Railroad (1934-1960)
   - 1908: Congestion of transportation traffic, from rail, ship and street traffic, constrains commercial traffic with congestion in area. Over 500 people take part in protests.2
   - 1911, 1916, 1925: Multiple models for elevated multi-transport corridor are presented. Implementation is eventually delayed by World War I involvement.4
   - 1934: The High Line opens to trains. It runs from 34th Street to St. John's Park Terminal at Spring Street. Milk, meat, produce, and raw and manufactured goods come and go without causing street-level traffic.3

3. Abandonment and Opportunistic use (1960-1990)
   - 1938: Congress passes the National Trails System act allowing ‘rail banking’ for the use of non-motorized trails pedestrian/bike trails as interim use with the intent for future transportation needs.30
   - 1950s: Growth of interstate trucking leads to a drop in rail traffic, nationally and on the High Line.10
   - 1960s: The southernmost section of the High Line is demolished. Rail traffic begins to decline.6

4. 1980-1989
   - 1980: The last train runs on the High Line pulling three carloads of frozen turkeys.7
   - 1985-1989: A group of property owners lobbies for demolition of the entire structure.11

Figure 3.2 Timeline of the High Line's Development
Regeneration, Re-use and Redevelopment

1999
Friends of the High Line is founded by Chelsea residents Joshua David & Robert Hammond advocating for the High Line’s preservation & reuse as public open space. Joel Sternfield is hired to photograph the urban wilderness."14

2001 - 2002
The Design Trust for Public Space creates "Reclaiming the High Line," a planning study jointly produced with Friends of the High Line, which lays out a planning framework for the High Line’s preservation and reuse. About 36 meatpackers remain in the area.20

February 2001
Friends of the High Line is founded.20

March 2002
Friends of the High Line gains first City support—a City Council resolution advocating for the High Line’s reuse.21

1999

October 2002
A study done by Friends of the High Line finds that the High Line project is economically rational: New tax revenues created by the public space will be greater than the costs of construction.22

December 2002
The City files with the federal Surface Transportation Board for railbanking, making it City policy to preserve and reuse the High Line.23

March – September 2004
Friends of the High Line and the City of New York conduct a process to select a design team for the High Line. The selected team is James Corner Field Operations & Diller Scofidio + Renfro.24

June 2005
The Surface Transportation Board issues a Certificate of Intransit Trail Use for the High Line, authorizing the City and railroad to conclude railbanking negotiations.25

April 2005
Construction begins on Section 1 (Gansevoort Street to 20th Street).26

June 2006
Final designs are released for the High Line’s transformation to a public park.27

June 2008
Section 1 (Gansevoort Street to West 20th Street) opens to the public.28

June 2009
Section 2 (West 20th Street to West 30th Street) opens to the public.29

November 2005
The City takes ownership of the High Line from CSX, who donates the structure, a Trail Use Agreement is signed. These two actions effectively preserve the High Line south of 30th Street.30

2005

April 2005
An exhibition showcasing the preliminary design by James Corner Field Operations & Diller Scofidio + Renfro opens at the Museum of Modern Art.26

April 2006
Groundbreaking is celebrated on the High Line with the lifting of a rail track. The first phase of construction on Section 1 of the High Line

2008-2011 Open House NYC continues to lead tours of the “wild” High Line.31

June 2011
Section 2 (West 20th Street to West 30th Street) opens to the public.32

2009

June 9, 2009

Timeline footnotes

5 Idem.
8 Idem.
9 Idem.
10 Idem.
11 Idem.
12 Idem.
14 Idem.
16 Idem.
17 Idem.
20 Idem.
21 Idem.
22 Idem.
23 Idem.
24 Idem.
25 Idem.
26 Idem.
27 Idem.
28 Idem.
30 Idem.
Multiple theories and theoretical concepts are applicable to the analysis and understanding of the High Line. For this project, the most relevant landscape architectural theory that has driven the research and analysis includes:

- The historical treatment of wilderness and the human-nature dialectic that has motivated the persistence of Picturesque ideals in American landscape architecture.
- Reception theory and the idea that visitors carry both individual experiences and perceptions as well as embedded cultural values with them in the reading of a site.
- The power of landscape to communicate values regarding nature through cultural practices. This section will summarize existing theory that discusses the conflicts surrounding the human-nature dialectic. The recognition that the Picturesque aesthetic has produced cultural preferences for the idealization of nature.47

I. Landscape Architecture Theory

History and Tenets of the Picturesque Aesthetic

While the genre was conceived and debated in the 18th century by William Gilpin, Uvedale Price, Richard Payne Knight, and Edmund Burke among others, the tenets by which I am evaluating the High Line’s design and performance are those that have been examined and explored in contemporary design by William Cronon, Susan Herrington and Joan Iverson Nassauer.

In *The Trouble with Wilderness*, William Cronon, explores the historical foundations of the American perception and treatment of nature, saying, “It is not too much to say that the modern environmental movement is itself the grandchild of romanticism and post-frontier ideology, which is why it is no accident that so much environmentalist discourse takes its bearings from the wilderness these intellectual movements [of the sublime and the frontier] helped create.”48 He identifies embedded values regarding the sacred treatment of nature and how the romantic

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47 When I use the term “idealization of nature” I am referring to the preferencing of particular qualities of nature which serve to exclude humans as part of nature. These qualities are identified culturally as “good” or “beneficial” and include the visual aestheticization of nature. In effect, these strategies actively dismiss the messiness, destructiveness and adversity that occur within non-human ecological processes while depreciating humans’ similar role in shaping their environment.

Sublime became a driver for the preservation of land. This preservation effort became an escape from the industrial qualities of urbanity, developing into a "domesticated" source of class-based recreation where wilderness became a playground for people's personal fantasies. Cronon also addresses the editing of the historical narrative in order to sanitize nature by extracting human history from the landscape, citing the removal of the Native Americans as an act of purification of the Frontier myth. He notes that "idealizing a wilderness too often means not idealizing the environment in which we actually live, the landscape, for better or for worse we call home."49

In *Framed Again: The Picturesque Aesthetics of Contemporary Landscapes*, Susan Herrington discusses the "three faces of the Picturesque," analyzing the Picturesque genre of landscape design as a style, as an ideology, and as an aesthetic. She recognizes the last century’s trends in human-landscape interactions through environmental psychology which focused on human preference for conditions and behaviors. This view supports a perception of the landscape predominantly as "a source of information."50 Critical to her argument is the idea that "understanding how the aesthetic mode of the Picturesque operates expands how we perpetuate ideals and values through Picturesque techniques." According to scholars, such landscapes have conveyed an ideology that has been described as an effort to "naturalize" the power and wealth of the hegemonial sect.51 She discusses design techniques that have been used historically to mask human authorship of the landscape and discusses tenets of the Picturesque that continue to be used such as the application of landscape narrative, primacy of the spectator, and the use of artifacts "to create mental connections between sensations, ideas, and memories."52 The use of Picturesque aesthetics in contemporary landscapes has ignored the theoretical contribution of the genre, reducing its contribution to aesthetic techniques while limiting the varied experience of the landscape.

Joan Iverson Nassauer contends in *Messy Ecosystems, Orderly Frames* that the naturalness that Americans appreciate today is more closely related to an 18th century concept of the Picturesque and the beautiful than it is to the understanding of ecological function.53 Because the cultural concept of this genre of design produces a landscape that looks tended, not wild, it becomes a recognizable system of landscape conveying "symbols that work beside neatness to represent human intention."54 Nassauer posits that "landscape language that communicates human intention, particularly intention to care for the landscape" is design communication that can be used for the improvement of ecological quality. The cultural language for "cues to care" can provide a context

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for ecological function in design. She attests that despite the love humans have for the cultural concept of nature, “people do not know how to see ecological quality directly, only through our cultural lenses.” In this way, people expect to see design that communicates human intention in settled landscapes so when wild vegetation develops, people perceive these lands as being neglected. The same indigenous communities presented in gardens or preserves are understood as nature and people find this landscape aesthetically pleasing. Nassauer maintains that the “Perception of human intention may be the difference between a nature preserve and a dumping ground…the existence of design cues for intent must be present.”

II. Reception Theory

One way of exploring the experience of designed landscapes is through the adaptation of literary reception theory to the study of gardens. This thesis uses John Dixon Hunt’s theory of reception of nature to understand the High Line as a complex narrative. In this case, the garden is a text written over time and space, the visitor brings a pre-visit understanding of the space’s past as well as pre-conceived notions about nature’s operations on the site. In The Afterlife of Gardens, John Dixon Hunt writes:

“The interaction between a literary text and the reader’s processing of it takes place in certain conditions that control that interaction; these have to do with genre, tone, structure, etc., as well as the social conditions in which it is read. The same is true of a garden, except that conventions and circumstances are different, even unique to that art; it uses different materials, involves the spatial experience of perambulation and (prime among the senses) viewing, and draws on assumptions that visitors bring with them about garden art and its different ‘genres’…A garden may propose or even instruct, and its visitors dispose or construct meanings and experiences from that...for without stimuli or triggers, no response or interpretation will be forthcoming.”

Hunt argues that such an approach via the reception of gardens expands their significance and meanings. He contends that gardens are experienced often by a succession of visitors at different times and often from different cultures; differing experience, though partially determined by the design intent and its subsequent modifications, also augments the site's potentialities, and this "afterlife" of gardens comes to enhance the original moment of creation. Hunt references Wolfgang Iser and his concept of the “Implied Reader” from literary reception, a role that is purely a theoretical construct and not a specific person. He extrapolates the idea to infer that the garden then has an “Implied Visitor”

55 Ibid, 166.
58 Ibid, 14.
where the garden itself is made up “only of a series of changing viewpoints, each one restricted in itself.”59 In addition, the viewer’s knowledge of the landscape, such as the history of the site or the understanding of ecological processes, can alter their ability to enjoy the designed qualities of the site, an idea that is also aligned with Panovsky’s three levels of iconography. Detailed technical knowledge will also deter appreciation of Romantic qualities, aesthetic readings and even imagination.60

Reception theory is also addressed by Elizabeth Meyer in *Sustaining Beauty*. She talks about the Brundtland Commission’s three legs of sustainability: ecology, social equity and economy and how the ecological operates in relation to social justice and economic profit but not in terms of aesthetics. Meyer makes a case for the inclusion of “beauty” into discussions of sustainability.61 She quotes Anne Whiston Spirn who describes the performative aesthetic of ecological processes:

“This is an aesthetic that celebrates motion and change, that encompasses dynamic processes rather than static objects, and that embraces multiple, rather than static objects and that embraces multiple, rather than singular, visions... This aesthetic includes both the making of things and places and the sensing, using, and contemplating of them.”62

Meyer’s manifesto discusses design as a cultural act, “a product of culture made with the materials of nature and embedded within and inflected by a particular social formation, employing ecological principles while also enabling social routines and spatial practices.”63 She also attests to the perception of nature in urban environments: “Most constructed nature in the city needs care, cultivation, and gardening... natural-looking designed landscapes quickly become invisible landscapes and neglected landscapes.”64 Another of Meyer’s tenets speak to the performance of beauty as an event that works on our psyche and is an experience that is discovered through the sensorial experience.65 Such a reception of nature is accessed cognitively through “seeing and touching, smelling and hearing, between reason and the senses, between what is known through past experiences and what is expected in the here and now.”66 Meyer contends that the fundamental beauty of landscape resides in its ability to change over time.

The application of theory related to landscape and memory is critical to this research because of the shifting interpretations associated with the High Line as a place transformed and reinterpreted over time. These types of cognitive processes are significant in the treatment of sites that have experienced varied

62 Ibid, 100.
63 Ibid, 117.
64 Ibid, 120.
65 Ibid, 119.
66 Ibid, 123.
cultural meanings. In terms of the imposing post-industrial ruins of our urban infrastructural networks, the scraping of a skyline through the demolition of such works leaves indelible images of a past often ignored and superceded by a subsequent function and form. Multiple opinions exist on the approach towards landscape and memory with Sebastien Marot arguing that a site's role in memory should be used as a design approach. Complimentary to this, Peter Latz asserts that relationships must be made concrete and visible and that there is a cognitive re-processing of the place on behalf of the viewer; it is the viewer, not the designer who re-interprets space to create their own picture of a place. These two approaches imply differing degrees of control on the part of the designer when considering the amount of influence the designer has on the visitor's experience. Latz's perspective is more open-ended in understanding how the space will be re-interpreted over time and in turn, provides alternatives for design strategies that may be more flexible in meaning to the visitor.

Exploring landscape as an idea frames a discussion for its understanding as a medium for the communication and proliferation of cultural values. Theory supporting the exploration of cultural meaning conveyed through landscape will be expounded upon in Chapter 5 of this thesis with brief summaries of the relevant texts included here. In Recovering Landscape, James Corner addresses landscape as both idea and artifact having the capacity to critically engage the metaphysical and political programs that operate in a given society; landscape architecture is not simply a reflection of culture but more an active instrument in the shaping of modern culture. Through its design and molding it conveys historical mores while also having the power to reinforce hegemonial agendas. Also relevant to the discussion of the High Line is the concept of the three natures, a 16th century development in which the expression “third nature” was used to distinguish the human designer of landscape. The three natures will be discussed further in the subsequent chapter, Landscape as Idea.

In The Social Creation of Nature Neil Evernden discusses the conceptual domestication and systemization of nature that has occurred which frames our continued treatment of it through culture. Naming nature has created relationships and associations with those conventions, thereby shaping how we understand what those elements are. But in doing this, fundamentals of nature have become social creations, with their explanations and meanings being biased with the language of culture. According to Evernden, “The thing itself is not the thing without its meaning to culture.” Frederick Turner also explores the complexities of an unpredictable and transformative nature in The Invented Landscape. He emphasizes the need to analyze nature’s qualities through the understanding of tendencies of the human species.

72 Frederick Turner, The Invented Landscape (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 44.
Turner distinguishes that ideas of sustainability and homeostasis are unnatural goals because of nature’s agency to “change, improve, complexify, and sometimes destroy.”

Anne Whiston Spirn notes that the perception of the world as a complex network of relations has been a major contribution of ecology allowing us to see humans as one part of an interconnected system. She observes that the tendency has been to use this information to “move directly from these insights to prescription and proscription.” In this way ecology has been used as an authority with the historical use of nature as a guide for landscape design which defined an “aesthetic norm, the ecological aesthetic.”

III. Semiotic Theory: Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Peirce

The study of social and urban semiotics will be used (the study of meaning as generated by signs, symbols, and their social connotations). The dyadic model will be used in conjunction with tenets of Peirce. The two differing modes of thought regarding semiology and semiotics originate with Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), respectively.

While semiotic theory was originally developed by Ferdinand de Saussure, his concepts were largely grounded in the analysis of language as the basis of social life. For the analysis that is being performed as part of this case study, the dyadic model of Saussure will be used in conjunction with tenets of Peirce. Peircean semiotics differs from Sassurean semiotics because Peirce’s theory is normative and not descriptive like Sassure. It is also a formal and general theory of signs which means that it applies to any kind of sign and because cognitive science is formal; its signs are relative to any subject. Peirce also denies intuition, the direct relation between an object and its interpretant without the intervention of a sign. He supports that every intellectual experience is a sign-mediated acquisition of knowledge. Signs are the medium for thought—minds are sign systems and thought is sign action. Anything can be a sign as long as it mediates between its object and its concept. Icons, indices and symbols are classes by which signs relate to its object by degrees of directness or arbitrariness.

The significance of Pierce’s model to the investigation of this thesis is its relevance to Reception Theory. By assuming culture to be a system of signs, we acknowledge that the values and customs practiced and perpetuated by a group are communicated through those signs. Such signs that are communicated through the experience of a landscape or a park must be understood as received by the visitor, functioning as the “interpretant” of the signs. The significance of performing a semiotic analysis of the High Line is what it reveals about contemporary cultural values about nature and park development. Umberto Eco put forth: “Reconstruction of cultural code does not mean explanation of all

73 Ibid, 41.
76 Ibid, 92-93.
phenomena of the given culture, but it rather enables us to explain why this culture has created this phenomena.”

Semiotic codes are defined as “procedural systems of related conventions for correlating signifiers and signifieds in certain domains.” These codes provide a framework within which signs make sense: they are interpretative devices which are used by communities of people operating with the knowledge of certain value systems. They can be broadly divided into social codes, textual codes and interpretative codes. Signs have no inherent significance without “sign-users” investing them with meaning through the association with a recognized code. Pierce developed a way to analyze the directness of the relationship a signifier has with its signified (Saussurian terms) through the modes of index, icon symbol. The classification of these modes demonstrates the degree to which the sign meaning must be learned, therefore it can be inferred that the cultural meaning associations for the learning of arbitrary relationships must be pervasive.

INDEX

The Peircean classification considers index as “A mode in which the signifier is not purely arbitrary but is directly connected in some way (physically or causally) to the signified - this link can be observed or inferred (such as smoke or a clock).” Thusly, the form which is represented is directly related to the idea, either physically or causally. Signs that exhibit an indexical relationship between the form and the concept need the least amount of cultural learning associated with them.

ICON

The Peircean classification considers icon as “A mode in which the signifier is perceived as resembling or imitating the signified (recognizably looking, sounding, feeling, tasting or smelling like it) or being similar in possessing some of its qualities (a portrait, a diagram, metaphors).” All of the following common definitions of icon fit within Peirce’s mode for understanding the degree of relatedness between the signifier and the signified of a sign. Photos (all unedited images) are not only iconic, but indexical; point by point they correspond to nature at a particular point in time. Iconic signs are highly motivated because their signifiers are highly constrained by their signified. The extent to which the signified determines the signifier is high, therefore the less motivated and the more learning of a convention is required.

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80 Ibid, 244.
81 Ibid, 40.
82 Ibid, 42.
83 Ibid, 38.
every picture an icon because they have qualities that “resemble the objects they represent, exciting analogous sensations in the mind.”85 Chandler notes that pictures tend to resemble what they represent only in some respects.86

In general, icons are also used in a sense as symbols, i.e. a name, face, picture, edifice or a person readily recognized as having some renowned significance or embodying certain qualities. Such an icon is a singular image that represents something else of greater significance through literal or figurative meaning. They are most often associated with religious, cultural, political, or economic rank or position.87 Vladimir Lossky and Léonid Ouspensky observe in *The Meaning of Icons* that throughout history, a variety of religious cultures have been inspired and sustained by “concrete images”. The use and function of such images, either for teaching, inspiration, worship, adoration, or ornament and aesthetics depends upon the system of beliefs of that particular religion and at the time of practice.88

The development of icons in contemporary society reveals a set of values that portray a reverence for pop culture and cultural ideals: Hollywood figures such as Elvis, long-standing cultural places such as Rockefeller Center or resilient corporate brands such as Coca Cola have all been identified as iconic. Particular images or works by specific artists and their modes of representation are also iconic: Michaelangelo’s David, the Rosie the Riveter ad campaign, DaVinci's Mona Lisa. All of these images have become icons representative of associated or suggested meanings. The associations and meanings of icons change with the development and evolution of cultures. It is important to note the historical use of icons as images that communicate a religious significance and indicate values for reverence, otherness and sacredness. These valued objects are made separate from the human world, occupying a representational presence that can be accessed within the human world through such material images, but are in fact not of this world and hold a place of elevation that exists within the imagination, a place that resides in both faith and fantasy. Its relevance is to culture and representation, though its use is distinctive within religious doctrine to represent entities that do not have a physical or material presence.

**SYMBOL**

The Peircean classification considers symbol as “A mode in which the signifier does not resemble the signified but which is arbitrary or purely conventional - so that the relationship must be learnt (such as the word ‘stop’, a red traffic light, or a national flag).”89 Symbolic signs are unmotivated because the concepts they represent are not tightly associated with their form. The less motivated the sign, the more cultural learning of a convention is required.90 Its relevance is to culture and representation, though its use is distinctive within

85 Ibid, 39.
86 Ibid, 39.
88 Idem.
90 Ibid, 40.
religious doctrine to represent entities that do not have a physical or material presence.

IV. Cultural and Ecological Performances

I. Urban ecology:

Despite an abundance of research in urban ecology, the study of the interaction of cultural and ecological processes has been limited. While the planning fields are still based in a scientific approach, one that is founded in “determinism,” culturally influenced landscape ideals should be accounted for. Nina-Marie Lister posits that too much nature-modeling in urban landscapes deprives these environments of the potential amalgamation of culture and nature. Urban landscapes are heavily influenced by a multitude of factors. Varying densities of people and vegetation, topography, water sources and microclimates, architectural and infrastructural forms all interact to create a landscape layered with cultural, ecological and spatial meaning. The act of garden making is a process inherently molded by human expression and interpretation. As a result, centuries-old ideas of the sublime and the pastoral continue to be represented through the design of public urban park spaces, perpetuating cultural ideals of nature as neat and orderly.

The literature that addresses the interaction of cultural and ecological systems in the production of new environments sits at the crossroads of several disciplines, all of which utilize a distinct language in their treatment of both nature and culture. These fields include landscape architecture, urban ecology, urban planning and cultural geography. Much of the urban ecological literature integrating human and non-human systems has been produced through the collaborations of urban ecologists and urban planners with the specific purpose of slowing ecological and evolutionary change through the better understanding of shared energy systems. The social and biological sciences have largely studied human and ecological processes as separate circumstances. Literature from the field of urban ecology has generally held fast to the methodologies of the biological sciences, while emphasizing the need for improved integration of both social and ecological sciences in order to better understand complex urban systems. C.S. Holling viewed dynamic ecosystem development whereby living

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93 Ibid, 39.
98 Ibid, 9.
systems evolved unpredictably and discontinuously, with regeneration or reorganization occurring in response to disturbance events. The language of urban ecology has attempted to redefine urban environments in a way that inserts humans and their urban landscapes into ecosystems that are much larger and complex than the bounds of the city itself. Thus the use of terminology such as “human dominated ecosystems” and the “integration of human and non-human processes” becomes the human-influenced ecology of these environments. The nature of this language bridges between ecology and culture: terminology such as mosaics, patches and corridors are adaptable in describing such urban ecological fabric. While this integration and acknowledgement in the field is certainly a step in the right direction, there are complications with the use of such language. By inserting humans into terminology applied to ecological models which are systems assumed to be reproducible, predictable and pre-determined, such language implies that that the interactions of human and non-human processes result in dynamics that exhibit these same qualities. Regardless, differences in the use of language to describe integrated systems also exist within the field of urban ecology. “Urban hybrid systems”, “human and natural systems” and “human-dominated ecosystems” are among the terminology used by ecologists to describe the ecosystems of urban environments.

II. Urban planning:

Urban planning literature addresses environmental planning and the temporal adaptation of urban spaces through the lenses of land use, transportation planning and urban renewal. In terms of this research, pertinent literature focuses on the production of space, revitalization of neighborhoods, rezoning and reuse of urban landscapes. There are several classic texts that are still relevant today including Jane Jacobs’ The Death and Life of Great American Cities and Kevin Lynch’s Image of the City. Both texts are instrumental at identifying elements and qualities of cities that create vibrant urban spaces that function over the course of time and create environments that are resilient to change. More recent texts such as The American City: What Works and What Doesn’t have addressed fundamental problems with traditional planning approaches that have contributed to the decline of many American cities.

Ideas about the role of park and “green space” in urban environments are an ever-present theme in city planning. From an economic standpoint, they can shape and energize neighborhoods, driving new development and generating sales and property taxes for the city. The economic argument has often outweighed the other many benefits of park development that may be more difficult to quantify. Regardless, a paradox exists in regards to the potentials for species diversity in the city. While city conditions may suggest lower rates of vegetative diversity; large expanses of impermeable surfaces, air pollution and

intensified wind and heat may imply an environment with diminished conditions for viable habitat. But urban ecologists of the last fifteen years have come to understand the urban environment as both highly altered and ecologically diverse, exhibiting "more point to point variation across space than in naturalized settings."101 This diversity has been studied through the development of urban plant ecological research. The integration of the urban design discipline with plant ecology can provide opportunities for understanding vegetative habitat within the city while creating opportunities for design projects as ecological research.102

CHAPTER 5

LANDSCAPE AS IDEA

The Four Natures

In *Recovering Landscape* James Corner posits, “Landscape is both idea and artifact, it has the capacity to critically engage the metaphysical and political programs that operate in a given society….landscape is an ongoing project, an enterprising venture that enriches the cultural world through creative effort and imagination.” He goes on to say that there is “a belief that landscape architecture is not simply a reflection of culture but more an active instrument in the shaping of modern culture.”\(^\text{103}\) This observation speaks to the active agency of landscape, while “artifact” speaks to the incorporation of the historical context of landscape. While Corner uses the term “landscape” here, “landscape” is implying a space as an amalgamation of both nature and culture. The intention in this chapter is to explore the meanings of “nature” that have developed and informed the perception of landscape. The attitudes and movements that have fed the nature-culture dialectic will be addressed in the subsequent paragraphs. While Corner is addressing landscape in a way that proposes the use of invention to “recover” the vitality of landscape, this chapter is addressing “landscape as idea” as a means of examining the ways that the reception of nature is pre-conceived, before the experience of a site. This pre-history is built in part by the cultural practices of hegemonial sects while also unique to the visitor’s cultural heritage and familiarity with the subject matter.\(^\text{104}\)

How landscape is constructed in the minds of its audience is a matter of cultural constructs that set a stage for idea and artifact. Anne Spirn’s observations of “landscape as a reflection of culture” and “landscape as an instrument of shaping culture”\(^\text{105}\) imply an evolving conversation between historical meanings and how meanings are reinforced or challenged through the experience of contemporary landscapes. Historical ideas about nature have also been influenced by the manufacturing of language developed by groups with differing objectives. Language is an intentional device that has been used to construct nature in particular ways. The object of reference (that of “nature”) may be the same, but the fact that language is a symbolic representation of the subject makes it an object constructed by cultural relationships. According to Saussure’s original framework that considered all language as symbolic, the actual relationship between the language that pertains to the object and the object itself has a completely arbitrary relationship; the relationship between the signified (the concept of nature) and the signifier (the language used to describe it) constitutes the sign. Pierce contended that because this relationship between

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the signifier and signified has no resemblance, the relationship must be learned. The contemporary understanding of nature is complex and through the medium of language, landscape is re-presented and re-translated in a variety of ways. This chapter uses John Dixon Hunt’s framework of the three natures to demonstrate how language has played a role in the historical and cultural development of meanings regarding nature in the U.S.

Since the middle of the 16th century, nature has been symbolically separated into three realms, each inferring a different cultural treatment. The three categories vary between scales of human intervention in the physical landscape. John Dixon Hunt illuminates these three categories of landscape first defined during the Renaissance:

i. ‘First nature’ being unmediated nature and wilderness, “the natural world” of both the raw materials of human industry and the realm of the gods.

ii. ‘Second nature’ being the cultivated or cultural landscape, including agriculture, infrastructure, and urban development. These are places where humans have altered the environment for the purposes of human habitat and survival.

iii. ‘Third nature’ being the garden, a combination of nature and culture. Hunt refers to gardens as a “third nature” because of their self-conscious representation of first and second natures; they are an artful interpretation “of a specific place…for specific people.” The term is used “to distinguish the human designer of landscape” and their expression is more “sophisticated, more deliberate, and more complex in their mixture of culture and nature” than Second nature.

In the U.S. these relationships have varied greatly over the last 200 years due to the dynamic shifts in cultural movements and values and have driven a reverence for nature and wildness where it exists outside of second and third natures. Alternatively, great efforts have been made to domesticate wildness where it exists within the realms of second and third natures, which can be seen through the development of the High Line. Despite the varying degrees of human intervention that occur within the realms of first, second and third natures in the landscape, a distinct separation has been built between nature and humans through modes of representation.

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110 Ibid, 34.
I. 1st Nature: Wilderness

i. The history of wilderness in the U.S.

Contemporary ideas about wilderness vary between the mythical and imaginary and the measureable and idealistic. The prevailing cultural assumption of the last two centuries has been driven by imaginings of wilderness as an uninhabited landscape, where the nature-culture dialectic “casts any use as abuse.” The long-standing sentimentality for nature as untouched by humans has been driven by multiple cultural forces that have perpetuated dreams of remote forests and distant mountain peaks. William Cronon accounts the history of cultural thought underlying the objectification of nature through the settlement of America. He notes that “wilderness hides its unnaturalness behind a mask that is all the more beguiling because it seems so natural. As we gaze into the mirror it holds up for us, we too easily imagine that what we behold is Nature when in fact we see the reflection of our own unexamined longings and desires.” While wilderness had once been the evil that civilization needed to be protected from, by the 1862, Thoreau was likening it to the Garden of Eden.

The power of wilderness’s influence is due to its learned value to culture and the sacredness we hold for it. William Gilpin, Edmund Burke, and Emmanuel Kant wrote about experiencing the Sublime in the vast powerful landscapes where one could find God. The sublime was not a pleasurable experience, “it was a terror of being brought so close to the presence of the divine.” The emotion evoked by the sublimity of wilderness, the sacred context, “othered” it from people’s daily lives. “Wilderness became an icon during the 19th century due to the romantic sublime movement and the rise of primitivism, the belief that the cure to the ills of the civilized world was a return to simpler way of life, embodied in the American frontier.”

After the Civil war, wilderness became the playground for urban ideas of recreation, not for cultivation or permanent residence. Cronen attests, “Ever since the 19th century, celebrating wilderness has been an activity mainly for well-to-do city folks.” The projection of class-based imagination of leisure time onto the American landscape did much to shape an iconic wilderness. The Sublime became domesticated as more and more people came to sentimentalize nature and “view wilderness as a spectacle.” No longer was there a sense of terror but the imposing mountains became named with religious conventions of worship such as “Cathedral” or “Church Rock.” The settlement of the Frontier drove a

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112 Ibid.
113 Ibid, 70-71.
114 Ibid, 73.
115 Ibid, 74.
116 Ibid, 76.
117 Ibid, 78-79.
118 Ibid 79.
wilderness preservation effort which coincided with the movement to set aside national parks and wilderness.\textsuperscript{119}

Another event that fueled the idealistic view of wilderness as uninhabited was the expulsion of the Native American tribes from their territories. This act contributed to the American view of the frontier wilderness as unsettled and pristine, though it had been home to others. It was then conquered with mapmaking and land designations: once wilderness was mapped with boundaries, named and classified in governmental regulatory terms, wilderness lost its ruggedness and savageness.\textsuperscript{120} The act of measuring, quantifying and distributing wilderness into systems of regulation and protection altered the symbolic meaning of wilderness into something tamed and tended.

Cronon contends that ideas of the sublime and frontier oriented wilderness cause us to adopt too high of a standard for what counts as “natural.”\textsuperscript{121} As a result, the symbolic representation of wilderness creates further distance for people living in a rapidly-changing, technologically advanced society, idealizing an idea of a relationship with nature that is not attainable. A further complication of understanding nature lies in the learned cultural representation of language such as “nature”, “wilderness”, “wildness”, and “ecosystem.” While the definitions of “nature”, “wilderness”, and “wildness” all clearly describe conditions specifically exclusive of humans, “ecosystem” describes a complex community of organisms within which we are the top of the hierarchy. Doubtless, our supremacy in this hierarchy and ability to perceive control of our environments inhibits our ability to fully understand the complexity of the ecosystem of which we are a part.

In The Authority of Nature, Anne Whiston Spirn reflects on the ideologies that the differing roles of ecology propagate in the world: “Ecology as a science (a way of describing the world), ecology as a cause (a mandate for moral action) and ecology as an aesthetic (a norm for beauty) are often confused and conflated...The perception of the world as a complex network of relations has been a major contribution of ecology permitting us to see humans, ourselves, as but one part of that web. There has been a tendency, however, to move directly from these insights to prescription and proscription, citing ecology as an authority in much the same way that nature was employed in the past to derive laws for landscape design and to define an aesthetic norm, “the ecological aesthetic.”\textsuperscript{122} For the purposes of this chapter, “ecology as a cause” will be addressed as second nature and “ecology as an aesthetic” will be addressed as third nature.\textsuperscript{123}

\textit{ii. Ecology as a science (a way of describing the world)}\textsuperscript{124}

Through taxonomy and other methods of classification and measurement used by science, every “thing” in the world as it exists physically is named and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{119} Ibid, 75.
  \item \textsuperscript{120} William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness” in Uncommon Ground (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996), 79.
  \item \textsuperscript{121} Ibid, 87.
  \item \textsuperscript{123} Idem.
  \item \textsuperscript{124} Idem.
\end{itemize}
described. Simply through the act of objectively characterizing something, those objects are disassociated from the entity doing the classifying, eliminating the relationship that exists between them. In *The Social Creation of Nature*, Everenden quotes Maurice Merleau-Ponty who suggests that "To return to things themselves is to return to the world which precedes knowledge…and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language, as is geography in relation to the countryside in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie, or a river is. To return to things themselves is to observe them before they were 'nature,' that is, before they were captured and explained, in which transaction they ceased to be themselves and became instead functionaries in the world of social discourse. Once named and explained, they become social creations, and their primordial givenness is subordinated to their social utility."\(^{125}\)

In *The Invented Landscape*, Frederick Turner speaks of nature as the new Divine, speculating that “the environmentalist ethic has in effect replaced God with nature.”\(^{126}\) He expounds upon this ecological religion, identifying “unspoken principles” of this new creed which drive the values underlying the nature-culture separation. Two of these are:\(^{127}\)

- Homeostasis is a basic feature of nature where balance is restored after disturbance and nature has an ideal state that shouldn’t be altered.
- Humans are subordinate and separate from “transcendent nature,” where humans are evil with an unnatural presence in the world.

The language of urban ecology has attempted to redefine urban environments in a way that inserts humans and their urban landscapes into ecosystems that are much larger and complex than the bounds of the city itself. Thus the use of terms such as “urban hybrid systems,”\(^ {128}\) “human dominated ecosystems” and the “integration of human and non-human processes” becomes the manner in which a mixed urban ecology is conceptualized. While the acknowledgement of this integration may be a step in the right direction, there are complications with the use of such language. By applying the terminology of ecological modeling to humans it is inferred that such hybrid systems may be predicted, controlled and reproduced.

**II. 2nd Nature: Cultivated Landscape**

1. “Ecology as a cause,”\(^ {129}\) a mandate for moral action and the environmentalist religion

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126 Frederick Turner, *The Invented Landscape* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 38.
127 Ibid, 39.
Modes of thinking regarding ecology as a mandate for moral action can be viewed through the lens of second nature. It is through the critical discussion of our own habitats and productive landscapes that we create idealized visions of what a “healthy” ecosystem is. Today dirty rivers, polluted soils, and large ominous black and rusting steel structures stand massive and alone in the landscape. Barbed wire fence and heavily bolted locks delineate gated entrances. Once the source of employers of hopeful immigrants and new residents of rapidly growing cities, these post-industrial landscapes of vast scale have become a symbol of blight and economic disparity in their vacancy. Other infrastructural structures speak to the immense impact of moving freight and people in and out of the city each day. The development of these utilitarian and infrastructural structures of the Modernist era did not often reflect aesthetics. They are frequently situated on the banks of waterways, making them prime real estate for a subsequent type of industry, high end mixed-use and residential redevelopment. Because of this, they quickly identified and planned for redevelopment, though the scale of the development often entails a significant magnitude of time, time during which the site sits vacant, scraped or partially excavated. Our postmodern response to the abuses of the land can be understood as denial, perhaps a stage of cultural grief for the loss of a once-rich landscape. Such activity further admonishes humans for their cultivation of the land, reinforcing the need to prevent such abuses in places designated and preserved as “wild.”

Twentieth century environmentalism reinforces this: if we keep people out of wilderness, than those places will remain intact and will retain biodiversity, “leave remote ecosystems alone to flourish of their own devices.” Wilderness has also been established culturally as an ecological ideal where strategies are used to place nature in select places with the purpose of functioning in particular ways. Andrew Blum notes that “Existing ecological strategies have simply put ecology in the city rather than engaging it in larger systems and in a more holistic way.” He continues, “The landscape architecture-ecologist collaboration is complex and has complications- design aims to implement intentions and interventions while ecology is looking to measure using a theoretical framework of undisturbed nature.”

ii. “Nature as a thing-for-us.” Productive landscapes and meeting human habitat needs

The language of urban planning has addressed the role of nature in human environments and the adaptation of urban spaces over time through the lenses of land use, transportation planning and urban renewal. City planning

132 Ibid, 258.
efforts focus on the production of space, revitalization of neighborhoods, rezoning and reuse of urban landscapes. Neil Everend notes,

“A forest may be a mythical realm or a stock of unused lumber, but either way, it is able to serve a social function. It is, in that sense, never itself but always ours, our “system” of distinctions among the worldly phenomena...It is our habit, and perhaps an inevitable one, to subsequently construe nature as the source itself. Yet nature is not the well, but the bucket, and a leaky one at that.

We can certainly know the concept nature; as a container, it is ours completely. But the contents can never be known as encountered in experience if we begin with a denial of experience. Indeed, we might say that it is through the dismissal of direct “subjective” experience that we are made vulnerable to the imposition of the social abstraction called nature and the conventions it entails....But how are we to have any experience of non-objectified nature if, as social beings, we are inevitably immersed in a world of symbols and abstractions.”134

The treatment of nature as a source for health and wellness permeates our contemporary culture. There has been an increased emphasis for the development of parks on the part of municipal and federal entities with the goal of increasing people’s access to outdoor recreation. Such efforts have included the analysis of per capita access to “green space” and the development of parks for the specific use preferences of a community. In addition, the amelioration of urban climate conditions and microclimates is a significant result of the incorporation of vegetative living systems into urban landscapes.135

Ideas about the role of park and “green space” in urban environments are an underlying driver in city planning. From an economic standpoint, they can shape and energize neighborhoods, driving new development and generating sales and property taxes for the city. More often than not, the economic argument has taken a front seat to the other aspects of park development that may be more difficult to quantify. Corner addresses the economy of landscape: “At the level of consumer (public demand) and producer (regional economic development interests), landscape is increasingly sought for its unique and intrinsic characteristics- its scenery, history, and ecology. Whether as theme park, wilderness area, or scenic drive, landscape has become a huge, exotic attraction unto itself, a place of entertainment, fantasy, escape, and refuge.”136 He goes on to note that “the tendency today is to treat landscape as a giant commodity.”137

The commodification of nature that occurs as a result of park building further alters the face of a neighborhood. Human systems shape these landscapes through cultural agency while spatial meanings are produced through a set of societal values and mores. In *Recovering Landscape* Corner refers to two key observations about the perception and reception of landscape as it pertains to productive landscapes within its cultural context. As observed by Corner “As is widely prevalent in painting, film, communications media, and tourist marketing campaigns, contemporary representations of landscape typically invoke idealized images of countryside devoid of modern technology, urbanization and change.” He also quotes Raymond Williams, “A working country is hardly ever a landscape,” an assertion supported by Jean-Francois Lyotard: “To have a feeling for landscape, you have to lose your feeling of place.” This implies that “place” is a cultural construct and that one must lose the awareness of the built environment in order to sense the constructs of nature. There are broader implications to this assumption because it again asserts a passive role to nature and an active role to humanity.

III. 3rd The Garden: Nature and Imagination

i. Ecology as an aesthetic, a norm for beauty

During the 16th century, the concept of third nature arose in order to distinguish the human design of landscapes which differed from the second nature of cultivated landscapes and the first world of unmediated nature or wilderness. This third nature referred to the human construct of “the garden,” which presented a metaphorical and imaginative place for people to express and explore their ideas about nature. Throughout history, gardens have been created for the purpose of absorbing their visitors into “imaginary worlds while also grounding them physically and tangibly.” Alternatively, ecology as a concept, as a norm for beauty, and as an ideology driving a style of landscape design has only developed within the last 150 years. John Dixon Hunt affirms, “The act of garden making is a process inherently molded by human expression and interpretation.” As a result, centuries-old ideas of the sublime and the pastoral continue to be represented through the design of public park spaces, perpetuating cultural ideals of nature as neat and orderly. What is further problematic is that the ecological models that have been simulated through the

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144 Ibid, 53.
sublime and pastoral were not ecotypes at all but landscapes that had already been altered by the human hand of preceding native cultures. By looking at ecology as a model for design, landscape architects conceal the role of humans in the formation of what that landscape looks like, falsifying the qualities of the “natural.” As a result, however close the design gets to replicating nature’s ecotypical models, it is always laden with cultural values through human decision making, selective editing and the communication of aesthetic or ideological preferences. Anne Spirn contends, “Nature and natural are among the words landscape architects and ecologists use most frequently to justify their designs or to evoke a sense of goodness but they rarely examine or express precisely what the words mean to them and they are genuinely ignorant of the ideological minefields they tread.” In effect, what is occurring is a translation of selective ecological values into aesthetic values.

Joan Nassauer is critical of aestheticized ecological values in *Messy Ecosystems, Orderly Frames* when she submits, “The naturalness that Americans appreciate today is more closely related to an 18th century concept of the picturesque and the beautiful than it is to the understanding of ecological function.” The cultural concept of picturesque nature produces a landscape that looks cared for, not wild. It enters the recognizable system of landscape form with powerful symbols that work beside neatness to represent human intention. An obvious comparison to exemplify this is between the Park de Buttes-Chaumont and Central Park. Hunt notes that while a landscape such as Buttes-Chaumont builds a fantasy which is both influential and apparent, Central Park offers an illusion of wilderness that is more powerful for having less obvious production.

Hunt also speaks about the pervasive quality of landscape to reference other places, ideas and events through a site. He refers to this as re-presentation because of the repeated use of these references and notes that the understanding of these texts enhances the experience of them. Through the many readings of cultural signs and signifying practices, landscape architecture has a powerful role in asserting new meanings or perpetuating the historical discourse. But while Hunt observes that the literary text has no ability to respond to the reader’s responses, he notes that the garden changes over time, directly challenging the visitor’s pre-conceived notions of what it is, and how they experience and respond to it.

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156 Ibid, 16.
experience” of a landscaped site includes the distinction that it is separate from the “other worlds however ambiguous” and that this is done using the abstraction or modeling of natural and cultural worlds. For the High Line, this included strategies within the site design which were botanical, sculptural, aquatic and spatial.

**ii. The High Line as virtual reality: the use of myth and metaphor**

The integration of the natural and cultural worlds into the space of third nature often employs the use of other literary devices such as myth and metaphor. Hunt notes that one of landscape architectures least explored qualities is its ability to build a ‘virtual reality’ through the “combination of a felt experience of both organic and inorganic materials with a deliberate creation of fictive worlds into whose inventions, systems and mythological or metaphorical languages we allow ourselves to be drawn.”

As a virtual reality the authors of the High Line created a myth of the wild. FHL represented to the public something of a Brigadoon-type fiction. The idealized wild that only existed in their imaginations and not in urban park spaces became the alternative reality that already existed but was inaccessible. The fairy tale was further enhanced by the artistic representation, media and marketing of the site. The use of Sternfeld’s photos in 2000 aestheticized the messy ecology while the use of metaphor in describing the space built a reception pre-history in the imaginations of the future visitors. David Hammond observed, “a lot of New Yorkers dream about opening their closet and there being a secret room on the other side and their apartment just got to be twice as big….this is how I viewed the High Line…that there was this huge space that you didn’t know existed, just waiting for you to take advantage of it.”

Hunt emphasizes the role of the “liminal experience” of entering a garden and feeling that it is a special zone is demarcated by the distinct qualities of its entrance. Then the experience is sustained by the immediate understanding of the designed space, its order, its purpose. He references the existence of a theatrical metaphor which leads the visitor from one place to another, building a specific experience prescribed by the designer where the “visitor’s involvement is as an actor/spectator.” In this way, the garden literally becomes theatre, a place where people are staged through the design strategies of aesthetics. Comparisons may be made with the experience of a zoo; the removal of interactions with the subject and the framing of particular views and experiences create an atmosphere of spectatorship, one that eliminates any possibility of active participation in the space. And by creating a theatrical and virtual realm, the visitors also assume character roles other than who they are in reality.

In *The Iconography of Landscape*, Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels posit that “the palpable existence of the garden is as strong as its imaginary

154 Ibid, 45.
156 New York Voices: Joel Sternfeld http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Nzr7g8FQgk (Accessed 12.1.11)
158 Ibid, 41-42
existence.” Like the painters of the American Wilderness, the metaphorical language used about the wild High Line creates the myth of nature that holds particular idealistic characteristics. These learned qualities are a production of human thought and imagination, ideas that are developed in an alternative mode to visual representations such as photography, drawing, or painting. Because of its symbolic nature, language has the power to create unique interpretations on the part of the individual human imagination.

Through linguistic signs, the High Line reveals a contemporary reverie for nature in the city. This romanticism and longing for wildness that is repeatedly reimagined through the use of metaphors adapted from popular fairy tales and fictional narratives recently adapted into the minds of adults through Hollywood film production. Since the inception of efforts to preserve the space, the experience of the “wild” High Line has been compared to Alice in Wonderland, the Chronicles of Narnia and The Lord of the Rings tales, all suggesting alternative realities based in childhood fictions. This alternative reality has been written about in the popular media and reiterated by Joel Sternfeld and representatives of Friends of the High Line. Such metaphorical representation is aligned with John Dixon Hunt’s suggestion of the physical garden’s role as a “virtual reality.” Conversely, this virtual reality of a mythical garden was being built around a wild nature that was all but inaccessible except to those who built the myth, including Friends of the High Line, the influential supporters of the preservation effort and the media journalists who now had a romantic subject to write about subsequent to the tragedy of the 9-11 World Trade Center attack.

But it was Sternfeld who was the catalyst for transforming the corridor of messy weeds into a mythical enchanted prairie in the sky: in a YouTube interview that was released shortly before the Section 1 opening, Sternfeld described his experience coming upon the space as a wild landscape when he photographed it in 1999-2000. “The High Line is this Alice in Wonderland experience, you go through the keyhole and suddenly you are in another world that you never knew existed...”

Following are selections from a feature article for the New York Times, written by Adam Sternbergh, exemplifying the High Line’s influence to inspire journalists to conjure dreams through metaphorical poetics:

“The High Line is, according to its converts…the happily-ever-after at the end of an urban fairy tale...It’s a flying carpet, our generation’s Central Park, something akin to Alice in Wonderland ... through the keyhole and you’re in a magical place...The idea of a park on a railbed in the sky... You’re in the clouds, as it were, on the level of the Jetsons.”

He goes on to say, “I ducked through a hobbit-size door in the backside of a Tenth Avenue warehouse...then we all stooped through the door he punched in his back wall three years ago, and boom, there we

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162 See Appendix for Table of metaphorical language used to chronicle the mythical wild High Line.
were, on the High Line, a moment that felt like stepping through the back of the wardrobe, out into Narnia.”

A quote from Adam Gopnik was included in the article: “The High Line does not offer a God’s-eye view of the city, exactly, he wrote, but something rarer, the view of a lesser angel: of a Cupid in a Renaissance painting, of the putti looking down on the Nativity manger.”

In many respects, the mythical representation of the abandoned High Line built a pre-text for what the public was to anticipate from the experience and for the reception of the designed nature. Denied of the “wild” experience, the general public was limited to the illusion created by what they read and the imagery they viewed. While longing for the myth, they were provided instead with the spectacle that is the simulated wilderness of the contemporary park design. Neil Everenden talks about the implications of exerting too much control of non-human processes in our environments: “Through our conceptual domestication of nature, we extinguish wild otherness even in the imagination. As a consequence, we are effectively alone, and must build our world solely of human artifacts. The more we come to dwell in an unexplained world, a world of uniformity and regularity, a world without the possibility of miracles, the less we are able to encounter anything but ourselves…. This is why wildness is most realized in terms of mythology and fairytales… the inability to imagine it outside of culture and human artifact.”

iii. 4th Nature: Nature and cultural systems as hybrid ecologies

Some contemporary landscape theorists argue that over the course of the 20th century, another nature has developed, a ‘4th nature’ which considers a landscape of greater scale and complexity. This fourth nature encompasses the following qualities:

- These environments are “varying scales of mutating environments which fuse natural and artificial, technologic and infrastructural.”
- Such natures are “monitored and controlled, the ecologies are amplified or manufactured with the intent of augmenting performance and responsiveness, controlling the flow of resources, monitoring data or redressing environmental imbalances.”
- “The dialectic is no longer nature versus city, or natural versus artificial, but positions within a spectrum of mediation and manipulation of nature, landscape and built environment.”

Within this realm of thinking about nature and city, there has been a rise in architects, landscape architects, urban planners and ecologists looking at how existing infrastructural systems can be “catalysts for organizing and defining the constructed environment, proposing scenarios in which the boundaries of built and unbuilt, mediated and natural are growing ever more complex and ambiguous.”

Recent theory has also been developed by Bruno Latour who:

“detected two contradictory processes at work in modern societies: first, the increasing proliferation of hybrids mixing nature (the physical, “objective” world) and culture (the human, “subjective” world), and second, the recurrent tendency of purification, which attempts to reinforce the epistemological separation of nature from culture, object from subject. At the very moment in history, in other words, that the science wars seem to pit objectivity against subjectivity, the evidence of complicated intertwinings between the two realms seems unmistakable. The contention is that objectivity and subjectivity are modern myths that support a whole host of questionable dualisms, many of which refer directly to science and religion as antipodes.”

This fourth nature is readily exemplified in the ignored, abandoned spaces of our contemporary cities. Obsolete infrastructural networks and vacant post-industrial spaces of the modernist movement have become sites of opportunity for hybrid ecologies. These spaces which exist within the systematic confines of the built urban landscape quickly transform back to “wild”, reminding us of the culturally based perception of failures associated with neglect, including the propagation of “messy” native and weed species. In this sense, neglect is perceived in spaces when the orderliness of a specific human intention can not be ascertained, even though non-human processes are an integral part of ecological succession and the agency of nature to act on and remediate the site. As a result, there is frequently pressure to make use of the space through its redevelopment, largely halting any further successional processes that would progress the space into true habitat which could sustain a degree of biodiversity. The wild garden that develops in spaces that are vacant and abandoned is a far cry from the purposely constructed “natural” garden that is built within cultural contexts, but each have both a profound and conflicting influence upon the people who experience these spaces.

The objectification of nature occurs through each aspect of the concepts of the four natures: “Inasmuch as landscape objectifies the world, in the form of “scenery,” “resource,” or “ecosystem” for example- it sets up hierarchical orders among social groups and among humans and nature more generally.” Corner

notes, “One is always an “outsider,” as far as the beholding of manufactured landscape goes, for to be “inside” entails the evaporation of landscape into everyday place or milieu. It is in this deeper sense that landscape as place and milieu may provide a more substantial image than that of the distanced scenic veil, for the structures of place help a community to establish collective meaning and identity. As members of an ecosystem and residing at the top of the hierarchy, it may seem unnatural for humans to actively think about urban environments as complex systems that are simultaneously both human and non-human. But despite complex infrastructural networks, these landscapes continue to respond to numerous sets of stimuli that are both biotic and abiotic in character. While the city is a heavily proscribed environment made up of the highest densities of people, architecture and infrastructure, it remains a dynamic product of nature.

CHAPTER 6

TRANSFORMATION: BUILDING A RECEPITIVE HISTORY OF SITE

The “Nature” Of Nature in The City:
The High Line as An Expression Of Human and Non-Human
Processes Over Time

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a reception history of the High Line and to build an understanding of the site as a palimpsest. The layers of this palimpsest have been built and intertwined by processes that are not solely controlled by humans. Any site, whether it be first, second, third or fourth nature is touched by the human hand in some way, just as it is touched by non-human ecological forces. These interactions are always at play on a site and work to develop new relationships and changing qualities of landscape amongst hybrid ecosystems.

The intent here is to describe the evolution of these processes in a way that allows an understanding of how these processes responded over the course of the last century and through the lens of the High Line’s four historical phases. While this section provides a historical account of cultural movements in flux, the goal is to consider the development of the High Line as a physical element of a complex habitat whose role changes within the context of spatial contention. Throughout the research that I have conducted, there has been selective editing of the site’s history and an active dismissal of the original role of the site as active transportation system and abandoned space. If any signifying practice symbolized a true repugnance for the structure, it was the iconifying of the space through Joel Sternfeld’s photo documentation and then the subsequent scraping and removal of every biotic and abiotic process on the site. This chapter will explore the High Line and the Chelsea neighborhood as a habitat responding to environmental conditions and operating as a medium for “urban nature.” It will also explore the relationships between the establishment of non-human ecosystems in urban environments and the resulting cultural changes that occur over time. By constructing a narrative that recognizes the human and non-human processes of the site a more extensive receptive history may be illuminated, providing a richer understanding of the dynamic forces that have and continue to act on the High Line.¹⁷²

Throughout its history, the High Line has functioned as a sign, exhibiting varying degrees of relationships between what it is and its meaning. This can be attributed to the multiplicity of context that the space experienced through its cultural history. According to Semiotician Daniel Chandler, “Contexts can change the mode of classification. Signs can not be classified in terms of the three modes without reference to the purposes of their uses within particular contexts.

¹⁷² Research completed as part of the Mannahatta Project shows that the island was an extremely diverse place at the time of Henry Hudson’s arrival in 1609. The 56 catalogued ecological community types rivaled the biodiversity of Yellowstone. Despite the known ecological history of the place as one dense with trees and streams, this chapter does not aim to evaluate the development of the ecology over time, but the responses of people to conditions within their own habitat and the non-human processes that respond accordingly. See Eric W. Sanderson Sanderson, Eric. 
A sign may be treated as symbolic by one person, iconic by another and indexical by a third. Similarly, a sign can be a symbol, an icon and an index. The park map of the High Line is a good example of this: it is indexical in identifying the physical locations of elements, it is iconic in representing the directional relations and distances between landmarks, and it is symbolic because it uses symbols whose meaning must be learned. Chandler further interprets semiotic theory by noting that “Signs may also shift in mode over time.” Such transient and unique qualities of sign systems parallel tenets of Reception Theory as it pertains to interpretations of a landscape. Cultural associations like Nassauer’s “cues of care” altered the human understanding of the High Line as “cared for” over the decades.

As a result, the High Line’s identity changed, allowing for it to be perceived with differing meanings and as all three modes of index, icon and symbol in each of its historical periods. At the time of its initial construction as transportation infrastructure it was a symbol of modernism, of the ability of humans to overcome nature with technology and a symbol of urbanization. Concurrently as icon it represented the overcoming of site adversity, New Deal economics, and city building. As index the High Line exemplified shipping industry efficiency, safety for citizens and a traffic-sorting system.

After abandonment by the railroad, the High Line became contested terrain, derelict space and growing medium. As a symbol it represented the city’s devolving post-industrial status, the rise of the automobile industry, and the post-modern era. Its presence became iconic of the inefficiencies of government planning, the social fragmentation and upheaval that was occurring in the neighborhoods and playing out in through the rise of illicit sub-cultures. It was also iconic of the demise of the railroad industry. During this time, its indexical characteristics marked it as a cultural wilderness and derelict space as a drug haven. Its physical presence in the landscape made it a barrier between the community of Chelsea and the Hudson River.

The contemporary High Line as preserved and redeveloped park has made it a symbol of today’s cultural values about park-building. It is a symbol of the vested economic interests and hegemonial power of development over lower-income communities. It symbolizes the domestication of nature even through the preserving and “saving of nature” as much as it symbolizes the grassroots ingenuity of FHL and post-modern ideology. As an icon the High Line represents an aestheticized simulation of wild nature represented in a Picturesque style, representing nature as a metaphorical spectacle in this way. The park is indexical through its function as a re-use design and promenade spurring urban renewal.

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174 Ibid, 43.
175 Ibid, 43.
I. Pre-Development Conditions (1900-1930)

Shaping a Human Habitat

From the mid-19th century until the early 20th century, Manhattan was undergoing rapid urbanization and its West Side was a frenzied area of commercial and residential activity and circulation. Much of this conflict arose as a result of the 1847 City of New York’s authorization of street-level railroad tracks. Cars, pedestrians, horse-drawn carts, and freight rail lines all competed for space to move within the same travel corridors. By 1890, the shoreline had already been transformed into a linear tract of land for marine-oriented commerce through land fill deposition and pier construction. Passenger ships docked at terminals such as Chelsea Piers, creating hubs for further masses of people to gather and disseminate. With so many types of uses together in the same area, it is no wonder that use conflicts arose, to the detriment of the community. So numerous were the accidents occurring between freight trains and street-level traffic that 10th Avenue became known as “Death Avenue”. In an effort to create a safer neighborhood, men on horses, called the “West Side Cowboys,” rode in front of the trains waving red flags as a warning to people crossing the rail corridor. By the 1870s, the community had become outraged over environmental conditions caused by the at-grade railroad traffic. Smoke, fumes and soot permeated the air as the rumbling noise of the heavy steel cars mixed with a growing urban population. The use of crossing guards was instituted 24 hours a day. While these dangerous conditions persisted until after WWI, the power of the railroad only grew: In 1896 New York State extended the railroad’s franchise from 50 to 500 years. By 1900, about 250 meatpacking plants and slaughterhouses prospered in the area.

Chelsea has a long history as a diverse but cohesive community, championing for a better quality of life since the early Progressive Era. “Characteristics of progressivism included a favorable attitude toward urban-industrial society, belief in mankind's ability to improve the environment and conditions of life.” As a result, in 1908 the congestion of commercial traffic led

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to the protests of over 500 people and the formation of citizen’s advocacy
groups, including the Social Reform Club’s Committee which later became the
League to end Death Avenue.

Between 1911 and 1925, several models for an elevated multi-transport
corridor were presented though consideration of any of them was delayed until
after World War I. Between 1905 and 1940, the population of Chelsea decreased
rapidly as residential housing was replaced by business.\footnote{Donathan Salkaln,“History of Chelsea,” \textit{Chelsea Reform Democratic Club Website}, \url{http://crdcnyc.org/Websites/CCtest/Images/History/New Chelsea History_Timelime.pdf} (accessed February 10, 2012).} Finally, in 1929 after
more than 50 years of public debate about the hazard, the City and State of New
York and the New York Central Railroad agreed on the West Side Improvement
Project, which included an elevated rail line. The entire project was 13 miles long
and eliminated 105 street-level railroad crossings. It also added 32 acres to
Riverside Park. The project cost over $150 million in 1930 dollars (more than $2 billion today).\footnote{Idem.}

According to Donathan Salkaln, member of the Chelsea Reform
Democratic Club, Chelsea’s fortunes might have been different had the RMS
Titanic not sunk. Pier 60 (at 11th Ave and 19th St) was to be NY’s berth for the
Titanic, a potential catalyst for early efforts of urban renewal. Instead, Chelsea
Piers (built in 1907) and handling much of Trans-Atlantic luxury passenger lines
until 1935 became the destination for survivors via the RMS Carpathia. He likens
the neighborhood of Chelsea to the survivors of the Titanic:\footnote{Idem.}

“\ Its turbulent history of change has tested the resolve of many, as
has the force of discrimination. Industries of railroad, warehousing,
trucking, passenger shipping, manufacturing, and riots, have
stormed through its streets, leaving behind generations of those
left in the wake. The last relic of the railroad industry is now the
High Line, the docks that served luxury liners are now parks, and
the giant warehouses have been converted into art galleries,
offices, and condos. Historic Districts and strong zoning laws have
kept a good portion of our neighborhood in the sunlight, but those
laws are continually challenged, as is affordable housing, and our
way of life... The seeds of civic spirit spread by John Lovejoy Elliot
and Clement Clark Moore have grown into strong roots of passion.
Local block associations, planning boards, community groups, and
politicians have since been diligent in embracing and improving
the lives of a very diverse Chelsea Community.”

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182 Idem.
183 Idem.
II. Active Use By The Railroad (1934-1960)

High Line as Infrastructure

*Symbol:* Overcoming nature with technology, Modernist ideology, rise of urbanization

*Icon:* Overcoming site adversity, New Deal economics, citybuilding

*Index:* Emphasis on shipping industry efficiency, citizen safety, traffic-sorting system

The High Line was designed to be efficient as a system as well as sensitive to the gridded city plan. It ran through the center of blocks rather than across avenues, connecting to the warehouses and factories the freight line serviced without the negative conditions of elevated subways. In 1934, the High Line was operational, running from 34th Street to St. John’s Park Terminal, at Spring Street, transporting milk, meat, produce, and raw and manufactured goods. Once built, the High Line project was praised as "one of the greatest public improvements in the history of New York."\(^{185}\)

The structure that was fabricated as an infrastructure corridor at 29 feet above grade was supported by 475 columns with art deco steel framing, reinforced concrete decking, 3’ of gravel ballast, and metal handrails. It was designed 30’ wide in most places but is as wide as 88’ in some areas, allowing for rail tracks to travel in both directions. Its load capacity was four fully loaded freight trains.

While the High Line was being planned and built, the city landscape was changing rapidly. In 1930, plans had been submitted for Rockefeller Center, the city had started installing traffic lights, and in 1931 the Empire State building was completed. The physical nature of Modernism had taken hold and NYC was leading the way in its efforts to use technology as the tool to create an efficient and robust urban core. This movement drove a human ambition to overcome the obstacles that faced dynamically growing urban communities and in doing so, to take control of their environments. This perspective drove the engineering feat

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185 The High Line is referred to as an elevated track until the late 1980s when it becomes commonly referred to as the High Line. In an interview with Victor Hernandez (July 10, 2011), he claimed that the name originated in response to the drug activity that occurred up on the site.

that was the High Line. Today, the elevation of roads, trains and other infrastructural networks in urban environments is an expected view in the horizon. In the early 1930s an elevated freight rail line running through buildings was a testament to the city’s commitment towards technological progress and creating better living conditions for its communities.

III. Abandonment And Opportunistic Use (1960-1990)

High Line as contested terrain, derelict space and growing medium:

Symbol: Post-industrial era, rise of the automobile industry, post-modern era.

Icon: Inefficiencies of government, social fragmentation, rise of illicit subculture, demise of railroad industry

Index: Wilderness/derelict space, drug haven, barrier between the community and the Hudson River

The 1950s and 1960s saw the completion of the Interstate Highway System and the growth of the trucking industry, resulting in a drop in rail traffic, nationally and on the High Line. Despite the decrease in rail traffic, trains continued to service the area. Efforts for urban renewal and increased residential housing led to the demolition of the southernmost section. In 1962 as part of the Mitchel-Lana Housing Program, Penn South was built. The ten-building affordable housing complex had 2,820 units and was built between Eighth and Ninth Aves and 23rd and 29th Streets. It remains a diverse and affordable resource for housing in the community.

The tide of social change began to turn in the ‘60s when Greenwich Village’s Stonewall Inn was raided by police in 1969, an event which affected Chelsea’s future and its neighborhood dynamics. The resulting gay riot brought attention to the area and highlighted the powerful efforts against sexual-orientation discrimination. At the same time the cost of living in Greenwich Village had been increasing, pricing gays out of the neighborhood; socially and ethnically diverse Chelsea welcomed the gay and lesbian community. 187

While New York City was becoming progressively more metropolitan, Chelsea became a place for the fragmented populations of the city’s underbelly. Urban landscape conditions had changed adjacent to the elevated track; what had been a productive corridor of activity was now a shadowy and dangerous area. During the 70’s and 80’s, the High Line itself became a hotspot for a mixing of club-goers and meatpackers as a dance, drug and sex scene emerged. The area was rampant with illicit behavior, including drug use and transactions, first heroin, then crack. Thirty feet above the street, the space was used for deviant sexual behavior, theft, prostitution and assault. There were frequent shootings beneath it while warehouse break-ins and squatting was common. The corridor became a homeless haven. The “High Line” was never referred to as the High

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Line until the proliferation of drug activity in the space. 188 Victor Hernandez described the seedy conditions that developed adjacent to the High Line:

“Many clubs developed, mostly related to hardcore transsexual behavior; they were also drug and art havens. Artists traveled in cliques and networked through the clubs. The gang presence was evident: anti-gay biker gangs would frequent the area and were extremely violent against the gay community. Warehouses were used illegally; buildings were completely abandoned and burned, the area was extremely dark at night. Underground art production occurred in the warehouses despite the lack of functioning lighting systems. The police would not even enter the area or they would come well past the time of the criminal events. They would never go up on the High Line. The neighborhood was very well defined by sections- places where you could go and places where you couldn’t. Despite this, the community had a unified response to heavy criminal and gang activity. Neighborhoods would band together and root out those who threatened the area, whether it was gangs or individuals.” 189

But there were tame recreational uses too: couples often used the space and people would walk it in the evenings to watch the sunset and the night sky. Hernandez noted the heavy regulation of the park today and that people can no longer do many of the things that were special about going up there. The previous experience provided an opportunity for privacy, solitude, and a long walking corridor. He remarked that today’s experience of the High Line is adversely limited by its hours of operation and heavy tourist crowds, preventing some of the better experiences of the space.190

During the late 1970s, early efforts to change the face of the neighborhood began with the conversion of some of the warehouse buildings into apartments. By 1985 renowned gay club Mineshaft was shuttered while “bohemian utopia” Florent restaurant opened, welcoming its diverse clientele of artists, musicians, movie stars and neighborhood flotsam. Florent was a “lone eatery in a shadowy industrial neighborhood” nurturing “an all-night carnival atmosphere.”191 Finally, in 1980, the last train ran on the High Line, pulling three carloads of frozen turkeys. A group of property owners lobbied from 1985-1989 for the demolition of the entire structure, protesting the unsafe structural

188 Victor Hernandez, bellhop of the Hotel Chelsea and forty-year resident of the Chelsea neighborhood (born and raised locally) described his experience of the High Line over the years. He described his experience of the High Line over the period that it was a derelict space. Mr Hernandez is currently writing a book on the history and development of the Chelsea neighborhood. He claims intimate knowledge of local comings and goings, people who inhabited, visited and spent time in the Chelsea area, as well as specific illicit behavior and events that occurred in the neighborhood. Mr. Hernandez was hesitant to divulge specifics about pre-development High Line history due to a confidentiality agreement with the Hotel Chelsea Management, as well as his reluctance to divulge information that would be included in his book.


190 Idem.

conditions and its blight in the neighborhood. The Chelsea Property Owners (CPO) owned land under the High Line that was purchased at prices reflecting the High Line’s easement. They were required to prove that existing financing of $30 million to fund the demolition was secured prior to approval of its removal. Peter Obletz, a Chelsea resident, activist, and railroad enthusiast, challenged demolition efforts in court and tried to re-establish rail service on the Line. Obletz’s contestation and the lack of full financing for the demolition further delayed the structure’s demise.

Adjacent resident of the High Line, Patty Heffley described the space: she had “moved to New York in 1978 eager to photograph Manhattan’s punk scene. She chose her apartment because it was a place where she could make a lot of noise. The High Line was an agreeable presence. At first, a single locomotive rumbled by once or twice a week, but that eventually stopped. Weeds were growing. Ms. Heffley said she always wanted to plant flowers, but never found a way. “I tried filling a water balloon with seeds, but it’s farther than you think,” she said.

As rail traffic decreased and finally ended, so did maintenance of the rail right-of-way. Routine track repair and ballast reinforcement sustained a safe rail line during its active period, facilitating drainage of water, keeping the tracks securely supported and preventing vegetative growth. Once the corridor was neglected, conditions developed that encouraged successional growth of plant life: the ballast material began to break down, expedited by the extreme microclimates relative to its location. Rail traffic had brought sediment material into the site prior to abandonment and the industrial nature of the district contributed additional sediment particles to the environment. In addition, the site experienced exposure to high winds and precipitation off of the Hudson River, southwest exposure for sunlight, and sporadic warehouse buildings providing protection for the establishment of tree species. The winds and birds deposited

Figure 6.3 High Line guerilla gardening
Credit: New York Architecture.

seeds in the ballast which had become a growing medium for a variety of 161 native and non-native species. Under these conditions, the space quickly transformed (back) to “wild,” reminiscent of the failures associated with neglect, including the propagation of “messy” native and weed species, which are an integral part of ecological processes of succession.

Shortly before the High Line Section 1 opening, a YouTube interview with Joel Sternfeld was released. Playing up the iconic wilderness fantasy, Sternfeld said “the High Line is a true ruin; it was “untouched for twenty-plus years. It is pristine, though it doesn’t fit the public’s notion of pristine, which is nature untraveled. But in some ways, the High Line is more pristine than Yellowstone or Yosemite because every inch of it is authentic. Sternfeld is comparing himself to William Henry Jackson, who captured Yellowstone with photography and presented the images to Congress, leading to the preservation of the land as a National Park. He goes on to say that his photographs allow people to see the High Line… “to see this secret landscape.”

The High Line wilderness grew over a time when Chelsea was also in a “culturally wild” state, telling a story of the relic as a place that people inscribed meaning to. Its wild neglect and avoidance by the hegemonial guard signified the space symbolically as a site where the known social conflicts could play themselves out. But remembering a story about the human wild is not the kind of history that a neighborhood undergoing gentrification behind the theatrics of new park development wants to tell. While much of what has been written and talked about regarding the High Line as a redeveloped park has indicated a nostalgia for this secret wilderness, much of the nearly 30 years of neglect has been ignored as part of its history and redevelopment.

IV. Documenting And Simulating Wild Neglect (1990-Present)

High Line as Preserved and Redeveloped Park

Symbol: Development over community, domesticated nature, grassroots ingenuity, post-modernism

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As the Giuliani administration was nearing its end, the community was divided over the preservation or demolition of the High Line, with the majority of the landowners adjacent to the structure in support of its demolition. By the mid-1990s the face of the neighborhood was already changing: with the commercialization of SoHo, art galleries began to take residence in Chelsea, quickly becoming the center of the New York art world. Today more than 350 art galleries exist in Chelsea and are home to modern art from both established and upcoming artists. In the late ‘90s Jeffrey New York established themselves in Chelsea, leading the way for the arrival of high-end clothing boutiques while a former Oreo cookie factory was renovated to become Chelsea Market. With the arrival of the galleries and boutiques, the High Line began to develop new meaning. Adjacent landowners saw the structure as a detriment to their ability to maximize the value of their real estate. The rusting sooty structure and wild nature that was evident from street level indicated a lack of care or intention for the relic. As a result, the pressure to make use of the space through its redevelopment could be established as “productive” and “useful” for the community. Such actions in any wild environment quickly halt any further successional processes that would eventually progress the space into true habitat.

William Cronon notes that there is a fundamental problem with thinking that makes human civilization "malign" and nature “benign” This is a mode of thinking that can be seen in the High Line’s development. By viewing the High Line as a place that developed as a wilderness because of neglect and the absence of humans, nature is inferred a passive and benevolent role. Alternatively, the role of humans is viewed as the destroyer, controller and the exploiter. The recognition of the power and resilience of such an ecosystem is greatly underestimated. The relationship that the people of this neighborhood had with this site as a wilderness is also denied. In interviews, Robert Hammond repeatedly uses as a tag line “You could only keep that original landscape if no one went up there.” Similarly, in an interview with New York Magazine, Joel Sternfeld spoke about the mournful passing of what was his own private park for the year that he documented it: “Yes, no question about it. I feel really sad. It was beautiful. It was perfect. I wish everyone could have the experience that I had. But you can’t have 14 million people on a ruin.”

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In an effort to advocate for the High Line’s preservation and reuse as a park, FHL was founded in 1999 by two Chelsea residents, Joshua David and Robert Hammond. The two had met at a Community Board meeting where the demolition of the structure was being discussed. Since then, they have built a citywide constituency of High Line supporters, including more than 3,300 members and a full-time staff of 30. Joshua David had lived in Chelsea since 1986, was a member of the Advisory Council of Transportation Alternatives and was a member of Manhattan Community Board No. 4 from 2000 to 2006. Robert Hammond has lived in the West Village since 1994. He had worked as a consultant for a variety of entrepreneurial endeavors and non-profits, including the Times Square Alliance and Alliance for the Arts. From 2002 to 2005 he served as an Ex-Officio Trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Both men had evident knowledge of how to fundraise, garner political support and drive a media juggernaut. Some of their early efforts to drive the preservation effort included two key representational practices. One of these was to hire Paula Scher of Pentagram Design to create a logo for the High Line. The other was to ask Joel Sternfeld to photograph the space and its “wild aesthetic.” Though Sternfeld encouraged maintaining the High Line in its 2000-2001 state, he also offered his photographs of the structure to be sold at an art auction to benefit FHL’s campaign for transforming the viaduct into a park. Since then, his photographs have routinely galvanized FHL’s fundraising campaigns and media exposure.

In 2001, Adam Gopnik wrote about the High Line in the New Yorker. The article featured Joel Sternfeld’s photography and brought the project national exposure:

“The most peaceful high place in New York right now is a stretch of viaduct called the High Line…[It] combines the appeal of those fantasies in which New York has returned to the wild with an almost Zen quality of measured, peaceful distance.”

That same year, the Design Trust for Public Space and FHL funded research for “Reclaiming the High Line,” a planning study which created a planning framework for the High Line’s preservation and reuse. By 2002, only about 36 of the over 250 original meatpackers remained in the area. City support was soon garnered through the passing of a City Council resolution advocating

for the High Line’s reuse in March 2002. By October, a study done by Friends of the High Line found that the High Line project was economically feasible: new tax revenues created by the public space would be greater than the costs of construction. The City then filed with the federal Surface Transportation Board for railbanking, making it City policy to preserve and reuse the High Line. It was during this time that a part of the Chelsea neighborhood was landmarked through the designation of the Chelsea Historic District.

The following July, FHL conducted an open ideas competition, “Designing the High Line,” soliciting proposals for the High Line’s reuse. Over 700 entries were submitted from the international design community; hundreds of them were displayed at Grand Central Terminal, an iconic representation of how the original model for the elevated railway track was presented in 1916.

From March to September 2004, FHL and the City of New York conducted a process to select a design team for the High Line; that team was James Corner Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro, with additional experts in horticulture, engineering, security, maintenance, public art, and other disciplines. The State of New York, CSX Transportation, Inc. and the City of New York then jointly filed with the Surface Transportation Board to railbank the High Line.

For a year between 1999 and 2000, Sternfeld photographed the corridor, creating a collection of imagery that would drive newspaper articles, gallery exhibits and a fundraising campaign under the campaign of “Save the High Line.” Later, Adam Sterbergh of the New York Times wrote:

“The last irony is that the rest of the High Line, the one that Sternfeld photographed, the one that sparks that reliable hallelujah moment in the hearts of one goggle-eyed visitor after another isn’t being saved at all. In fact, it was doomed from the start. Hammond and David knew that, in order to rally initial support, they had to convince people that the High Line was worth preserving in the first place, and they did so with Sternfeld’s bucolic images of an untouched pasture in the sky.”

The Illusive “Secret Garden”

The wild nature that develops in spaces that are vacant and abandoned is a far cry from the purposely constructed “natural” garden that is built within the “orderly frames” of cultural contexts but each have both a profound and conflicting influence upon the people who experience them. Those who

experienced the wild High Line described it as an alternative reality. In 2002, Philip Connors described in a poetic article for the Wall Street Journal his experience exploring the off-limits High Line:

"The High Line is a treasure now mostly because it's the structure that time forgot. It beckoned because it was... green. From 23rd Street and 10th Avenue, I looked up and saw a strip of meadow in the sky. I had to get there...

This required climbing a fence, heaping old automobile tires into a pile, scaling the pile and heaving myself onto a factory rooftop, then shimmying up steel support beams onto the tracks. Behold! The city opened like a flower, the towers of Midtown cupping the Empire State Building like petals around a gleaming silver stamen... A swath of Manhattan had gone to seed, reverting to a kind of native prairie: knee-high grasses, white and yellow wildflowers, a miracle born of neglect.

At 30th Street, a corrugated tin barricade blocks the way, but someone has torn a gash in it just big enough to allow a man to slip through. Recently, an artist painted a mural on the back side. In the sky are the words "save the tracks," as if written by an airplane skywriter. On the right-hand side of the curve, going south, a sculpture collection sits on a rooftop: funky-looking abstractions fashioned of multicolored hoops and painted wire mesh, like the offspring of a Slinky and a tennis racket...When you emerge on the other side, you see something sublime: a small garden with a tiny maple tree, a miniature pine and a patch of daisies and sunflowers. The gardener tends this lovely plot by stepping from a third-floor apartment window on a plank laid across to the tracks. For a few seasons, the little pine was wreathed by a string of Christmas lights.

In a shady spot where the tracks are bracketed by two old warehouse buildings, a miniature

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forest has risen; yet just beyond it the tracks are littered with rusty buckets, old spray-paint cans (graffiti detritus) and a lonesome-looking pair of turquoise underpants. In this way the tracks are like the streets below -- elegant here, grubby there -- On the High Line nature has restored order to a chaotic sliver of Manhattan's West Side, and the only evidence of chaos appears in the flotsam left behind by humans....

William Cronon notes a manner of thinking that makes human civilization malign and nature benign. This is a mode of thinking that can be seen in the High Line's development. By viewing the High Line as a place that developed as a wilderness because of neglect and the absence of humans, nature is inferred a passive role. The recognition of the power and resilience of such an ecosystem is greatly underestimated. The relationship that the people of this neighborhood had with this site as a wilderness is also denied. In interviews, Robert Hammond repeatedly uses as a tag line “You could only keep that original landscape if no one went up there.”

210 He continues, “As they dug you realized how fragile the plant life was...it astounded me that such a lush landscape could survive in only inches of soil. For a while it was just a torn-up mess of mud and gravel and then they got it down to the bare concrete. It became a blank slate which felt liberating because it freed you from thinking of the HL as something to be preserved and allowed you to focus on what you could create there.”

211 As theorized by Corner, the High Line quickly became a landscape valued for its “unique and intrinsic characteristics,” its geography, its scenery, its elevated nature and its ability to carry on the wilderness myth. Corner remarks, “Whether as theme park, wilderness area, or scenic drive, landscape has become a huge, exotic attraction unto itself, a place of entertainment, fantasy, escape, and refuge.” 212 By April 2005 landscape architecture and its vision for nature on the High Line had become high art with the exhibition opening of the preliminary design by James Corner Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro at the Museum of Modern Art. Meanwhile, New York magazine had declared Chelsea the city’s “most fashionable neighborhood.” In June 2005 the Surface Transportation Board issued a Certificate of Interim Trail Use for the High Line, authorizing the City and railroad to conclude railbanking negotiations. Five months later the City took ownership of the High Line from CSX Transportation, Inc., (which donated the structure), and the City and CSX signed a Trail Use Agreement. These two actions solidified the preservation of the High Line south of 30th Street.

In April 2006, the first phase of construction on Section 1 of the High Line began (Gansevoort Street to 20th Street) and groundbreaking was celebrated as a single rail track was lifted. Tracks, ballast, and debris are removed, and the tracks were mapped, tagged, and stored with the intent that some would be reinstalled in the design. Steel is then sandblasted and repairs made to concrete and drainage systems, and installation of pigeon deterrents underneath the Line. The scraping of all abiotic and biotic processes on the site had begun.

211 Ibid, 96.
In 2008 landscape construction began on Section 1, with construction and installation of pathways, access points, seating, lighting, and planting. The Whitney Museum announced plans for a MePa annex while local institution Florent closed. In June 2008 final designs were released for the High Line's transformation to a public park. On June 9, 2009 Section 1 opened to the public. By this time only about eight meatpackers remained in the neighborhood. Section 2 (West 20th Street to West 30th Street) opened to the public on June 8, 2011.

In *Reclaiming the High Line*, Elizabeth Barlow Rogers speaks of the City as a palimpsest. She notes the development of settlement in areas as responsive to geophysical conditions that existed in the area, then the development of urban form as the next layer—transportation—being important to the exchange of goods and services. She states that time is the element by which some things are dynamic and others static. In this way, new relationships are continually being formed and transformed as these static and dynamic forces evolve. The High Line is an optimal example of this.

As exhibited in this specific site history, human and non-human processes interacted and responded at multiple scales and in numerous contexts. What is clear is that while humans may respond to phenomenological information about their environments, correcting for pollution, microclimate affects, aesthetics and other sensorial information, the physical presence of

![Figure 6.9 Wild Relics](Credit: New York Architecture. June 2003.)
nature in urban landscapes remains a product of cultural movements and the methods and manners of representation supported by those cultural forces. The High Line as an artifact of the modernist era, as a medium for illicit and expressionist behavior, as a garden and as a tourist attraction are all pieces of a larger receptive history of hybridized ecologies.
“I’ve wanted to copy nature, but I haven’t managed to…Nevertheless I was pleased with myself for discovering that the sun, for example, cannot be reproduced, but has to be represented by some other means.”

- Paul Cézanne

Culture is the production of all of the interpretations regarding the nature of the world common to a social group, where value and meaning are semiotically represented for the benefit of the individual or group members. By looking at the character of semiotic relationships that can be found within the High Line and its transformation from an abandoned wild space to a public park a deeper understanding of how we represent, portray, interpret and valuate nature may be formed. Such awareness can aid an appreciation of the ways that meaning is constructed; meaning is not “transmitted,” it is a complex product of interactions between “codes and conventions,” where there is a necessity for relationships to be learned. It is important to strip down the complexity of signs in order to determine their true nature: this enables us to evaluate the multiple concepts embedded in them, recognize the cultural values they communicate and identify their authors and their authors’ motivations. Daniel Chandler, visual semiotician at Aberystwyth University notes that “deconstructing and contesting the realities of signs can reveal whose realities are privileged and whose are suppressed.”

This chapter evaluates and expounds upon the research that has been developed through the Semiotic Analysis Diagram of the High Line (Appendix A). This inventory was developed from the identification of signs and signifying practices that exist both materially and immaterially through the development and design of the High Line. The investigation is inclusive of design elements and principles, but also of representational operations and tactics. In this way, both signs and signifying practices can be analyzed by characterizing the relationship

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between each signifier and the concept that is represented. These individual signs in the landscape convey ideas that collectively form a text for understanding the human relationship with nature. This deconstruction has identified a design narrative with pervasive representation of Picturesque ideals. In addition to the physical signs in the designed landscape, selected contexts can be recognized including the design translation from Joel Sternfeld’s photographic representation as well as the edited narrative of human history that occurred through the park’s development.

Tenets of 18th century Picturesque landscape design indicated an interpretive reading of the landscape, much like painting or literature of the same era. But the aesthetic mode of the genre implies an emotional response, an emphasis on the relational interpretations over the literal meanings. These interpretations were drawn from the viewer’s full reception of nature with the understanding that the landscape’s interpretation was made richer by the education of its viewer; the translation of literary works was relayed through design and such visitors could understand that what they were seeing was a staged experience. Likewise, ideas about the wild nature that existed on the High Line have been largely generated by Joel Sternfeld’s photographs as well as by articles that have been written and distributed in the media. FHL founders Joshua David and Robert Hammond concede the power of visual representation in driving support for the park, observing that this project ‘has always been driven by images.’ In terms of semiotics, the image representation of the site is then understood to be only a likeness, an icon, of what the place actually is because of the tactics and techniques of representation that occur in order to reproduce it. The reception of the High Line is also understood differently by people depending upon their individual knowledge of the neighborhood and site history as well as their personal experience of wilderness. But while the early Picturesque assumed a knowledgeable viewer who was able to experience the reception of landscape from both an intellectual and phenomenological perspective, the High Line exemplifies an alternative approach. The design actually assumes a visitor who has little knowledge of the site history beyond the existence of the corridor as a rail line and abandoned wilderness. Such editing of a site’s narrative is inhibitive of the same informed reading and alters (and in fact limits) the reception of nature that is acquired.

Without understanding the full narrative of the High Line, the viewer understands less about the human intent of the design and the complexity of interpretation between the text and what is viewed. For the wilderness neophyte, the High Line is an ecological stage of Picturesque-inspired smoke and mirrors, further clouding an urban dweller’s reception of wild nature.

The table below identifies tenets of the Picturesque that have been communicated through signs identified in the High Line landscape.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.1 Tenets of the Picturesque</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. Literal “Picturesque” representation.</strong></td>
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</table>
| **II. Values for care and control** | • Representation of nature as fragile. Evocation of sentimentality for the “lost wilderness.”  
• Nature can’t survive without the aid of humans  
• Human authorship is purposely masked; nature’s processes are controlled by humans.  
• Preferential treatment of constructed ecosystem: Ecotype model preference and species selection.  
• Need to show care, nurturing for nature.  
• Orderliness and signs of care for nature by humans is necessary, even high levels of care, including high design” indicates an “evolution of habitat”=trendiness, desirability of neighborhood. |
| **III. Evokes a sense of the sublime.** | Representations cultivate a sensibility of awe towards the landscape, romanticized and idealized nature. |
| **IV. Representation of the pastoral.** | The working landscape has to be aestheticized. An idealized vision of country life and the working landscape. The architectural landscape as pastoral. |
| **VI. Use of metaphor and literary conventions, follies and relics.** | The use of artifacts that would be deemed unsightly without aesthetics. The use of narratives and myth to drive design. |

I. Reproducing “The Picture”

Joel Sternfeld’s photographic imagery taken between 1999 and 2000 set a stage for the reception of nature but also for the expectations of viewing the landscape with Picturesque conventions. Michael Cataldi et al. in *Residues of a*
Dream World observes of Sternfeld’s images, “His choice of camera and language play up the visual conventions of their subjects, and the use of a larger format for the High Line quotes conventions of modern landscape photography. These conventions are themselves dependent on the picturesque genre of painting.”

The continued use of Sternfeld’s photographs in representing the space contributes to the cultural learning of how the aesthetics of urban wild landscapes should be viewed. In this way, the working landscape must be aestheticized through design and care. Art historian T. J. Clark analyzed such a transformation in post-1860s Paris as railways became an “ideal subject” as landscape relics, bridging a cultural divide of ideals between the industrial manufacturing industry and the pastoral rural experience. According to Clark, the figureless railway was easily represented in association with the aesthetics of the countryside and disassociated from its role in trade and transport. This idea has a similar translation to Rails-to-Trails projects such as the High Line where the aestheticization of the labored landscape diminishes its former role in industry. These conventions affirm the use of railway artifacts and industry relics as ornament in Sternfeld’s photographs, as well as “their subsequent reference as floating signifiers and design elements, divorced from the material conditions of maintenance labor, public and industrial transportation.”

Views along the High Line exhibit qualities of the pastoral abundantly more than the sublime. Historian David Marshall described the picturesque aesthetic as exhibiting “a kind of rough beauty: fallen ruins, wilderness, forgotten and unknown territories…depending on a certain elegance and canny detail, particularly in the treatment of ruined and crumbled remains of antiquity, where detailed foregrounds gradually give way to horizon lines merging land and sky in the background.” In contrast, techniques of the sublime where the viewer is immersed in the foreground experience and the background objects were

221 Ibid, 368.
purposely hidden to some degree.224 Along the High Line the emphasis is on the creation of more expansive landscape experiences, favoring more pastoral design production. Certainly there are brief corridors of dense plantings in the Gansevoort Woodland when the viewer is immersed in the landscape, but these events are short-lived.

For the contemporary park visitor, the photograph performs the role that the 18th century painting played. Photographic representation of the urban pastoral landscape becomes the source for the production of iconic relationships. As a result, the use of orchestrated and regulated views within the design force perspectives that formulate the composition of pictures, providing foreground (ex. the plantings), mid-ground (ex. the High Line structure and railings) and background (ex. the new high design architectural landscape). But the urge to represent and iconify the High Line is not solely the impetus of the visitor. High Line staff are present in the space encouraging visitors to post their images to the High Line Flickr pool on the FHL website.

II. Values for Care and Control

The High Line is a highly maintained and regulated park where values for landscape care and the tending to nature are evident. Its translation from the “wild aesthetic” of the abandoned space has left few parallels because of the control and nurturing exemplified in this idealized version of nature. The design principle that addressed the intended treatment of nature spoke of “preserving the wild opportunistic landscape by enhancing existing plant species.” As a result, the analogous qualities that can be found in the translation amount to the intermingling of species without any formal delineation of plant type. The landscape was “enhanced” with an additional 50 species from the 161 species found in the “wild” landscape (which included invasive species) to the 210 species of native and non-native species. About 50% of these plants are native, though the categorizing of native by FHL is “native to North America;” 30% of these species are native to the Northeast, which includes ornamental cultivars bred for enhanced aesthetic qualities such as plant size, flower color, temporal bloom length and foliage enhancements.225

The removal of all of the ballast material (a.k.a. the planting medium for the wild landscape) is also indicative of the value for care, but also of the desire to create an idealized nature through human control. The site was completely scraped and sanitized of all biotic and abiotic processes, stripped to its skeleton prior to reconstruction as a green roof and design implementation.226 While human safety was the stated reason for much of it (lead paint and the pollutants deposited by the rail), this action inhibited any further re-emergence of the messy, unplanned species that existed on the site in order to allow for the design of “desired emergence.”

Another indicator of the value for the nurturing of nature is the ever-present maintenance, park enforcement staff and the seven full time gardeners,

224 Idem.
all indicative of a high level of care, support and protection for the park. During the growing season, over 200 volunteers contribute their time to care for the park. Despite the “naturalized” landscape design, the sense for orderliness and care of the space is needed for nature appreciation and acceptance. According to Susan Herrington, “signs of care by humans are necessary, even high levels of care, including high design” which indicates an “evolution of habitat,” and a sign of desirability and trendiness in a neighborhood. NYC also provides eleven “parks enforcement patrol” officers for 2.8 acres. In contrast, the Bronx gets five officers to patrol all 6,970 acres of Bronx parkland.

Field Operations developed “Agri-tecture” as a metaphorical design concept for the High Line that implied a cultivated and delineated wilderness. This concept incorporated the use of a special concrete planking system that intended to create the impression of emergent conditions through its staggered engagement with the planting beds. According to the design proposal, this system could accommodate a variety of human and non-human ecological conditions, various human programmatic activities as well as a range of habitats. People are the active participant in this concept though the “range of habitats” does not allow for such emergent conditions given each ecotype’s seclusion (both physically and through maintenance practice) preventing their interaction. This implied a “tended wilderness” and a careful orchestration of conditions. The concrete and grass interface was a hard versus soft representation of human versus delicate wild nature. As a result, the idea of the intermingling of these habitats is a provocative one and may have been the intent of the concept, but in the end the high cost of building and maintaining the park has placed a greater value on preventing any potential damage incurred to the landscape and the plant life.

There also exists a need to manipulate and “enhance” nature through the active wildlife species control occurring on the site through the use of rat boxes and pigeon proofing of the structure. But it’s not just the control of pesky NYC wildlife that is at work here. Prominent signs litter the landscape, instructing people on how to use the park: “Protect the plants, stay on the path.” In addition, roped barriers were added shortly after the Section 1 opening, separating people and their paths from the planting beds and reinforcing a physical separation between people and non-human nature; “We don’t want people to damage the plants,” affirmed FHL founder Robert Hammond and Lisa Switkin, lead designer from Field Operations. Such actions perpetuate ideals representing nature as fragile and in need of human care for survival, but also the commodification of nature because of the large price tag attached to the building and maintaining of the park.

“Wild” nature on the High Line had such a dire need for human intervention that the FHL founders received the Rockefeller Foundation Jane Jacobs Medal as well as the New York Post Liberty Medal for their heroic efforts to save the structure. Other efforts also signified the need to savor and record this “lost wilderness”; the original plants and seeds were catalogued and seed banked in the Staten Island “Greenbelt” field collection project, to be used for seed revegetation projects in NY.

Another example of the regulated interaction of people with nature was the allotment of turf space in Section 2 at Community Board 4’s request. This was done so that “there was a place where people can interact with green space. People do want to get into the planting beds, but they strictly self police each other.” The role of habitat art in the park has a similar role with the perceived need for people to create habitat for birds and to control non-human nature. Through the construction of “artistic” structures visitors’ needs for aesthetics supersede the functional construction of the birds’ handiwork. FHL has also indicated that they “are keeping invasive plants off the High Line. As an organization, it goes against our principle of helping to restore the native ecology of the area.” Through this practice FHL is applying selective species control while also denying the role of weeds in an ecosystem. As stated by Nassauer, the presence of weeds also culturally indicates the neglect of a landscape.

Anne Spirn speaks of the politics of “naturalistic” design. While the early twentieth century saw the naturalistic garden design as an expression of regionalism in American art, literature and politics, late twentieth century environmentalism placed value on plants, animals and ecosystems based on their value to humans and to each other. This “naturalizing power” is a foundation for the neoliberal commodification of nature that is exemplified through the development of the High Line as a park.

Likewise, while visitors to the High Line are admiring the naturalistic planting design, gardeners behind the scenes are consulting and monitoring every bed precisely. The gardeners meet every morning before work and discuss the maintenance work that will be executed that day. Each gardener works in their own planting zone; gardeners are responsible for their zone only and do not overlap. As a result, the meetings are a way for all of the gardeners to coordinate the treatment of the beds so that one bed is not maintained more rigorously than another. The garden beds are also being heavily recorded and documented from year to year. Best Management Practices are being developed but it is still too early to have something concrete because there have only been three seasons of data and extreme climate conditions have prevented reliable baselining of conditions. Patterns of maintenance needs and success are being studied in order to ensure planting beds that won’t exhibit distress, large numbers of plant failures and which maintain a “healthy” looking nature.

High Line horticultural foreman Johnny Linville described their relatively unconventional maintenance practices: gardeners do not prune plants to perform in specific ways. This includes refraining from deadheading or pruning for aesthetics or increased blooming. Plants are allowed to self-seed and migrate by rhizomes and runners, though this is selectively controlled and Piet Oudolf’s planting design is consulted for reference in order to maintain the proportions appropriated in the design concept. Selective control of aggressive species is done during the growing season. Tree branch pruning is done for health; for example, broken or crossed branches and broken leaders are addressed. Warm season and cool season grasses are cut back at respectively appropriate times and herbaceous material is pruned out at mid-spring. In *Planting Design: Gardens in Time and Space* Oudolf and co-author Noel Kingsbury define a series of principles for their approach to naturalistic, ecological plant design: 1) use of plants with wild character 2) nature-inspired planting patterns 3) pragmatic synthesis of native and non-native plants 4) biodiversity 5) ecological fit to the site and 6) the use of dynamic, perennial plantings. Along the High Line such qualities are expressed through the representation of simulated ecotones based on designer-selected aesthetics; the ecotone as it exists in nature does not meet the aesthetic standards of cultural expectations in an urban setting. Its simulation is a representation of ecological principles that are guided by idealized qualities.

The Bloom Chart for the selected plant palette is included in Appendix C and illustrates the design accentuation of plant beds with year-round seasonal interest. Even more striking is the emphasis on the development of a planting palette which offers the experience of a blooming landscape from January until December. In creating such a garden is to represent a landscape that demonstrates the human ideal for the aesthetic qualities of flowering and fruiting plants. These qualities visually indicate productivity, growth, and the production of new life while also exhibiting sensorial information which provides a pleasurable reaction for humans.

![Figure 7.4 Piet Oudolf's planting design drawing for the High Line](image)

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While the planting beds have been loosely construed from ecological models for naturalistic plant systems, the actual production of them is a construct of human hands and imagination. Layers of creative human thought, from Oudolf to Field Operations to the FHL gardeners to the public’s reception and experience shapes the understanding of the simulated wilderness. Oudolf designed the planting plan for the High Line as proportional blobs of massed plantings.\textsuperscript{238} These drawings were then given to Field Operations where landscape architects and designers determined plant numbers based on the size of the blobs and the average plant diameter for each species. This information was given to the gardeners and landscape construction professionals who built the design. As the horticultural information was analyzed and evaluated by the gardeners who were installing the plants, some alterations were made to the numbers of plants based on their knowledge of how aggressive the species were.\textsuperscript{239} The gardeners referenced and continue to reference Oudolf’s original concept in maintaining the design intent and proportions of the plants. However, each bed is maintained separately by a different gardener and despite daily meetings as a staff with the FHL horticultural foreman in order to maintain consistency of treatment,\textsuperscript{240} it is important to recognize that such a maintenance strategy produces unique treatments of beds based on the individual emotions and thought by each gardener. The result is a design that has been digested and re-translated several times before its reception as nature by the visitor.

III. Evoking a Sense of the Sublime

Representations of the sublime are meant to cultivate a sensibility of awe towards the landscape, producing a romanticized and idealized nature. The High Line offers such experiences and conditions in its small intensely planted landscape. Oudolf’s planting design philosophy, associated with the European New Wave movement, emphasizes ornamental change over time. James Corner noted in a 2008 New York Times article that one reason he asked Oudolf to do the project’s planting design was because of the way Oudolf selected and composed plants: “his design is thought through not only in terms of summer, but also in terms of winter — all twelve months are interesting.”\textsuperscript{241} The experience of the High Line’s planting beds highlights the interest of the plantings across the seasons: the growth and bloom of spring, the height of the growing season in summer, the changing colors of foliage in fall and the winter sculptural qualities of dormant foliage left until spring green-up.\textsuperscript{242} Oudolf also looks for plants that have “elegance in their decay.”\textsuperscript{243} Frail plant choices juxtaposed with railway materials emphasize the contrasts in early spring between a metaphorical “frail nature” and the visually dominant artifacts of the human species; humanity contrasted with

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{238} Piet Oudolf, Noël Kingsbury, \textit{Landscapes in Landscapes} (New York : Monacelli Press, 2010), 25.
\bibitem{239} Johnny Linville, Telephone Interview with Patsy McEntee-Shaffer. Boulder, CO, October 22, 2011.
\bibitem{240} Idem.
\end{thebibliography}
non-human nature presents a romantic, delicate aesthetic with the rugged, heavy steel constructs of humans.

The sublime is further engaged through Oudolf’s year-round blooming landscape and the cultural perspective that “wild nature” needs to be enhanced to be appreciated. “The scene changes almost weekly as plants bud, bloom and seed on different schedules.”\textsuperscript{244} It is the constant display of phenomenological experience that produces the sense of awe. There is no lull of visual aesthetics in the nature that is being presented here. The sublime is derived from the immediate sensory data that is constantly displayed before the visitor, despite the fact that the visitor is not immersed in the experience of it but separated by the zones by which they are allowed to engage.

IV. Representation of the Pastoral

In the 18\textsuperscript{th} century the Picturesque genre of landscape was composed of soft rolling terrain, with views framed by clusters of trees with an occasional folly sparking the memory of past and often mythical places. These landscapes were the estates of the wealthy and many were made public to the lower classes under the guise of providing a civic duty to those not born privileged to experience nature in such a way. Susan Herrington speaks of the Picturesque as an ideology which “attempts to ‘naturalize’ the power and wealth of their owners.”\textsuperscript{245} This was done through “the masking of human authorship through the use of formal conventions.”\textsuperscript{246} The naturalizing of the landscape implied two things: one, that power was actually being obscured by the appearance of neglect and two, that the association with a naturalistic landscape inferred that wealth was part of the natural order.\textsuperscript{247} Today the landscape of the High Line exemplifies many of the same qualities: The soft rolling terrain has been replaced with orchestrated “naturalistic” plantings of grasses, perennials and small shrubby trees. The meandering paths and densely planted perimeters which guided the curious visitor through the variations of landscape has been replaced with indirect walkways constructed of concrete paving system which evokes an artificial integration between the human and non-human worlds. The clusters of trees which periodically framed views and aestheticized the working landscape and vision of country life in the historic Picturesque landscapes have now become the new architectural language that has developed around the garden.

The urban architectural landscape is now the urban pastoral. While I have described the transformation of the rural pastoral of the Picturesque into the urban pastoral, a similar transformation has occurred within the urban realm. The urban landscape has been a landscape of primarily rigid geometric forms, undulating along the organization of a street system and varying in scale, texture, color, weight and form. Because the spectator is often viewing from street level, the view of the architecture as landscape tends to be limited by what can be

\textsuperscript{246} Ibid, 28.
\textsuperscript{247} Ibid, 24.
experienced at human scale; the density of structures prohibits a grander view than what can be seen from looking directly up. It is only when the spectator is viewing from a level above the street grade that a greater expanse of space may be afforded and the architectural landscape can be received. But what is being viewed in the foreground, midground and background remains as buildings and infrastructure and the perspective of their relationships with other elements is determined by the numerous locations from where they are viewed.

Figure 7.5 The Urban Pastoral Landscape
P. McEntee

At the High Line, it is the specific views of the landscape from 30 feet above grade and from a very limited perspective within the 30ft corridor that has dictated a style of the urban pastoral. In its neocapitalist ability to shape redevelopment adjacent to the space, the High Line as a park became operational in framing views of the latest feats of architectural design such as the Standard Hotel, the High Line Building and the IAC Building. A landscape of glass and steel has become the contemporary horizon beckoning instead of the rolling hills and clusters of tree canopies. Architecture became the reveal with the viewer as the subject, except that the path and views existed before the urban pastoral landscape. In effect, the landscape was built around the garden path. It is no wonder then that the views of the space as well as the plants have become a manipulated and iconic photographic subject for visitors.

V. Manipulation of Spectator Views

The landscape of the High Line is a careful arrangement of space for the manipulation of visitor viewsheds, enabling the treatment of nature as a spectacle, the designation of space for specific social productions, and the aforementioned urban pastoral. In terms of entertainment value, nature at the High Line is a scene for the social intentions of the site and as a source of ornamental backdrop or accessory to the scene. Movement, views and interactions are strictly dictated by the circulation paths within the primarily 30'-0" width of the structure and by the configuration of the planting beds that typically line much of the perimeter of the corridor, maintaining insular pedestrian
pathways. The visitor’s experience is then isolated and disengaged from the street activity with views to those within the corridor and what is immediately on the horizon or far in the distance. The infrequent access points from street level reinforce this separation and promote the “floating park in the sky” metaphor. The space functions as promenade, not focused on an active engagement with the landscape; it promotes slower movement and the passive viewing of people interacting, perspectives, architecture, plants. The experience emphasizes the opportunity of “being seen” and being out in society; the historic function of a promenade. The High Line also affords privileged views of NYC through the visual construction of the urban pastoral.

In the Society of the Spectacle, Guy Debord analyzes contemporary consumer culture and commodity fetishism by looking at the manner in which social relationships become expressed in terms of producers and consumers. He contends that “All that was once directly lived has become mere representation,” referring to the central importance of the image in contemporary society to construct a desired reality in favor of a lived reality. “Images”, Debord says, “have supplanted genuine human interaction.” The evolution of social life can then be understood as "the decline of being into having, and having into merely appearing." The spectacle uses the image to convey what people need and must have. Consequently, social life is further reduced to a state of "appearing", through the production of the image. The “spectacle” refers to the system that is a combination of capitalism, the mass media, and the hegemonial sects who favor such results.

The High Line’s role in supporting this theory is evident in several ways. The idea of nature as theatre and the demise of being into having are reinforced by the things that have been produced as items that continue the experience of the park into daily life. This commodification objectifies nature further by making it a driver for economic benefits, but also as a source for the social experience. The High Line gift shop provides for its visitors an assortment of commemorative memorabilia that proves you were there. Naming conventions of local buildings use “the High Line” in order to geographically associate it with the park. The new High Line perfume, Bond No.9, pledged the park’s botanical diversity in each bottle (though its scent was reported to be questionable). Each of these examples substantiates the High Line’s ability to “sell” nature and replace the experienced qualities of the garden with things that represent them. Other methods of commodification included the sponsorship of designed spaces where signs are exhibited at the Chelsea Grasslands announcing “sponsored by Tiffany and Co.” Donated money to fund the park benefits the donor with public acknowledgement and praise. In each of these examples there is a method of association that translates Debord’s supposition with the primary motivation being the idea of the mythical wilderness. The idea of the former High Line as an experience of wild nature was sold through the imagery of Joel Sternfeld, initially

249 Idem.
250 Idem.
251 Idem.
creating the desire for an experience unattainable through the park but a source of emotion that could be replaced instead by the image. The High Line’s current state as a place to see people and be seen is emphasized by design elements such as the 10th Ave. Square where visitors have views aligned with 10th Ave in an amphitheater-style setting while being viewed by people from the street in return. The Standard Hotel also provides opportunities for 2-way voyeuristic activities between those walking the High Line and those looking to flaunt their sexual behavior behind the floor to ceiling windows rooms. But beyond the expectations of experience produced by images that have replaced the experience itself, it is the numerous staged pastoral views that limit the visitor from developing their own thoughts and interactions within the space.

The High Line-influenced rezoning of the Community 4 District of Chelsea also altered the kinds of new architecture and development projects that could be developed adjacent to the space. Controls were put into place to allow for sunlight, air movement and views to be encouraged along the park and prohibited the development of architecture over the High Line. Such projects further dictated the production of the landscape flanking the park with particular views of high design architectural works. Investors saw the park development as an opportunity for real estate speculation and a vantage point for viewing such architectural feats, further commodifying the idea of nature and using it as spectacle. In the same vein, the Economic and Fiscal Impact Analysis completed by John H. Alschuler and HR&A Advisors was necessary in order to justify the park development. The reinforcement of such ideals which make nature a source of wealth, a source of leisure, a source of theatre and as Smithson referred, “a thing for us,” externalizes it further by repurposing it outside of the human role in nature; in this way, cultural values limit nature’s role to the function of meeting specific social needs of humans and nothing more.

VI. Use of Metaphor and Literary Conventions

The use of metaphor, follies and relics is pervasive in the High Line’s redesign. This is done through the “Agri-tecture” design concept and the simulated wilderness of the planting design (both discussed earlier), the restoration of the industrial structure including the rails, and efforts to reinforce the experience of being in a mythical “park in the sky.” The High Line’s design principles were also heavily focused on “retaining the character of the structure” of the elevated rail. This goal is somewhat ambiguous because restoring the physical structure itself does not necessarily retain the structure’s character. This goal strove to preserve and remember the space in its role as a railway and part of the Art-deco architectural history. It also sought “to preserve and reveal the structure providing opportunities to inhabit and appreciate

253 Community Board 2, which includes the stretch of the High Line south of 14th Street, voted against the rezoning. As a result, the Standard Hotel was allowed to be built over the park, creating some of the worst microclimates and rain sheeting in the park.
255 Patrick Hazari, Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Designing the High Line: Gansevoort Street to 30th Street, Friends of the High Line, (USA: Finlay Printing, LLC. 2008).
Another aspect was to “preserve the industrial presence of the High Line at the street level, including the maintenance of business type consistency and the preservation of its "gritty urban character.”

The High Line’s park design relied on both the re-use of the corridor and the infrastructural framework of the elevated rail. Both the re-use of the rails and of the steel structure supports the Picturesque tenet of using artifacts that would be deemed unsightly without aesthetics. In the case of the structure, the entire viaduct of rusting steel and degraded concrete was stripped of its “unsafe” lead paint, resealed and painted. Restoration of the historic Art Deco steel railings was completed at every street crossing. Stripping, painting and restoration work was the costliest piece of the entire park construction project. During site demolition, all of the rails were mapped and catalogued for placement back into the design. But their presence in the design takes the role of folly, “a theatrical device in landscape used to evoke past cultures.” The rails appear and disappear into the planting beds while submerged into the concrete walking planks in other areas. During the growing season, they are easily hidden by the density of plantings, a fact that both FHL founder Robert Hammond and Johnny Linville state disappointment with. While it is a temporal reveal, the staff of seven full time FHL gardeners consults with each other through the growing season on strategies to develop a consistent approach to revealing the tracks while maintaining the beds. In addition, the fact that the structure itself was only restored in places where it was most visible, at the street crossings, also implies an emphasis on the visual qualities of its existence and its ability to mark the landscape with its aesthetic presence. In this way, both the tracks and viaduct function as an ornamental side note to the High Line park, supporting tenets of the Picturesque.

VII. Editing the Narrative from Derelict to Picturesque Public Space: Historical Signifying Practices

The following images, found on the FHL website under “Public Programs” illustrate the evolution of attitudes about nature surrounding the space as depicted through signifying practices over time. The first two images are of Open House New York (OHNY) 2004, which continued to access views of the High Line for the years 2005-2007 and began in 2002. OHNY (which is a program that takes place in other cities around the world) provides a weekend of access to architectural sites that are otherwise off-limits to the general public. Such an event encourages the idea for people to engage with transgressive space, to materialize the myth, that which is off-limits and exists primarily in the imagination until it is realized in space and experience. The years of 2004 and

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2005 were years that CTX still held ownership, inhibiting people from actually being on the High Line. Despite this, people waited for hours and lined up around the block just to get a viewing of this hidden wilderness from an adjacent warehouse. But the fascination to experience nature as a transgressive space has continued every year since, despite the opening of the first section of park. The images are peculiar: people looking over the edge of a rail at the High Line, looking to realize imaginings about a space that may have had little meaning to them at one point when it existed as a human network, human domain. By eliminating people and representing it in a mythical and fragile state, existing in the same harsh environment as these viewers, the authors of this text drive this reaction. In essence, the images are reminiscent of the zoo animal looking out at the wild or looking in at itself. The next event is scheduled for October 2012, an indication that the park itself does not replicate the fantasy of wilderness that has been represented by Sternfeld’s original images or that which has been symbolized through the language of those who speak and write about it.

The continued attraction of the OHNY event is an interesting one in the context of what can be discerned from the historical images. The next four images are of actions taken during the process of prepping the High Line for redevelopment. But here lies the true narrative: once the space is owned by the City of New York, actions are taken to rewrite the text and maintain the myth. This is done firstly by the 2005 clean-up. All traces of the people that inhabited the site are removed, food wrappers and toys, garden pots and furniture, beer cans, needles and paraphernalia. The next OHNY that actually allows the general public on the High Line doesn’t occur until 2006, well after the clean-up. In fall of 2006 seed from native plants are collected from the corridor by botanists from the Department of Parks’ Greenbelt Natural Plant Center where they were stored for revegetation projects (none were re-used in the plantings for the park). In 2007 as the space undergoes early stages of demolition, the tracks are marked and catalogued for re-installation. Much of the remaining steel debris is disposed of except for the rail spikes, which are collected. Then, a year before the High Line section 1 opens as a park, sketching classes are held in the still wild section 2 area of the corridor, providing opportunities for artists to represent the space with their own lens, without impressions of any human existence within the space.

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In looking at this progression of photographs, sub-narratives can be extracted. Those who benefitted from keeping the High Line an “unpolluted” wild nature is one source of authorship of the space. Acts were made to remove the tainted signs of humans from the fictional narrative of the High Line wilderness. This occurs in multiple ways including the removal of physical signs of their existence, the active forgetting of the types of behaviors that occurred there and by
speaking of it as a place as “pristine,” and “untouched.” Also, in the Friends of the High Line website image gallery there is not a single image of the “wild” High Line with obvious signs of human behavior; images that show graffiti downplay it’s prominence in the space. The only image that makes human activity a subject is Joel Sternfeld’s image of a tiny Christmas tree with lights, an act of then local resident Ken Robson. Robert Hammond described the space as being “covered with graffiti” and Adam Gopnik in “Walking the High Line” characterizes the creative network of cables and a television dish that had been established in one area. But the erasure of the presence of humans during the High Line’s period of abandonment is also the erasure of a history of social upheaval in lower Manhattan. It is also the editing out of humans in order to idealize a “wild” aesthetic that exists regardless of the presence of people. Much like the Native Americans being edited out of the Frontier narrative, the deliberate editing of the High Line’s human past is one more strategy that maintains the Picturesque ideal of nature as separate from the human realm.

The development, design and maintenance of the High Line exemplifies the polarity between the cultural ideal of the static and orderly “garden” and the messy and wild processes of both human and non-human nature. Key highlights of the High Line’s development expose cultural tendencies towards values and ideals about nature. Such elements feed a reception of nature that propagates and reinforces such ideals through the reinforcement of the hegemonial guard; for all of the momentum that around the preservation of public space for social and community good, park development is driven by those who can gain financially, those with the money, political power and affiliations with those who have both.

264 Joel Sternfeld, Walking the High Line (Steidl: Gottingen, 2001), 48.
CHAPTER 8
DECONSTRUCTION (CONCLUSION)

“Nature is a mirror of and for culture. Ideas of nature reveal as much or more about human society as they do about non-human processes and features.”

-Anne Whiston Spirn, from The Authority of Nature

Since the inception of garden history we have studied the dynamic relationship between humans and nature, its agency and representation. From the expansive and threatening wilderness beyond the protective walls of the medieval castle to expressions of the sublime and pastoral in the picturesque landscapes of England and France, the garden has been at the center of the cultural exploration of our changing relationship with “wild nature”. Such landscapes have been carefully manipulated to negotiate a particular human reception of nature, the former to alleviate fear, the latter to propagate ideas of the supernatural and mythical. Likewise, the High Line is an example of how cultural ideals of nature are constructed through acts of representation. The High Line is “the taming of the urban wild,” a wild unkempt nature beautified and memorialized through Joel Sternfeld’s imagery, then set in scene as both a spectacle of aesthetics, a nature on steroids, and as ornament to the fantastical architectural landscape that has resulted from the High Line’s development.

The High Line alters the city park paradigm by engaging the visitor in a densely urban experience of an elevated post-industrial re-use space while utilizing a naturalistic planting aesthetic. By attempting to replicate a “wild” nature, it alters the idea of nature that visitors have in their own imaginations. Such an attempt to simulate wilderness feeds a new virtual reality of the garden; it fuels the mind to both remember past and anticipate future imaginings and challenge the present understandings and expectations of nature. Because it is not true wildness, but a maintained and idealized one, it bounds and limits the alternatives and expressions of both human and non-human nature itself.

The High Line tells us much about the continued prominence of Picturesque conventions in the contemporary reception and production of nature. As both a collective and individualized reading, this reception is a blend of historical and ecological texts, signified cultural values, and the visitor’s unique experience and responses to phenomenological stimuli. The High Line can be received as a palimpsest: its post-industrial past, its development as a wilderness of both human and non-human processes, its current design and experience as presented through signification and representation. While the processes of non-human nature took hold once the rail traffic and associated maintenance regimes subsided, the events that occurred over time to influence the High Line’s

preservation were in fact re-translated in a way to substantiate particular cultural values. Through this study we can recognize that there exist multiple texts and subtexts and that the use of the Picturesque is a strategy of authorship. Its application in aestheticizing the “wild” is also a means of conducting exclusionary practices within the space. The visitor is reduced to a rigid and predominantly visual experience of specific views where they are not only a passive spectator of the landscape but a subject on display, unable to engage with the plant life around them. Without understanding the full narrative of the High Line with its explicit and implicit components, the viewer understands less about the human intent and the complexity of interpretation between the text and what is viewed.

We can receive the High Line in the way that it is being presented to us, as a romantic wilderness re-translated for the benefit of design and economy. But we can also be receptive to the text that has been deliberately hidden from the new narrative, the text of a space that underwent social upheaval. In order to recreate the High Line in its current aesthetic, it was necessary for those who desired a new park to remove the people and unsettling social aspects from the landscape’s history in order to perpetuate the continued myth of wilderness. This myth is one that is ingrained in the cultural imagination, the one where we are alone in the wild. By scraping, rebuilding and recreating it as a park, the site’s narrative was erased and re-written in the process, allowing for the Friends of the High Line to swoop in and “save nature.”

The representation of nature as an image, one that is idealized, replicated, iconified and symbolized also has implications. To represent and conceptualize nature in a way that its agency can never be realized and to extract people from its history is to further distance humans from ecological processes of which they are a part. The complexity of cultural values that are laden on a site such as the High Line muddies the waters of distinguishing such processes at work. While the High Line’s design has accentuated particular horticultural qualities such as plant blooming, subtleties of foliage color and plant form, as well as the simulation of ecotones, these qualities have been represented in a way that reduces processes to a set of visually aesthetic qualities without revealing their agency.266 By accentuating the performance of aesthetics as an ideal over the aesthetics of performance, the gritty beauty of the High Line’s unmaintained and understated wilderness lost representation to the glitz and glamour of a tourist-oriented economy.

Despite its heavy orchestration, the High Line provides an incremental step in communicating and highlighting nature’s phenomena. It showcases a nature that is aesthetically reactive to seasons, light, microclimates and other non-human forces. This is unique to heavily urban areas where all of nature is controlled by the human hand. High Line horticulturalist Johnny Linville posits that city dwellers perceive that plants don’t operate independently of people and that people don’t think that things happen to plants, but that we do things to plants: “This is the time of year we plant tulips, now is the time we fertilize, and now is when we clean up leaves.” He observes that it has been people’s experience of more rural and expansive landscapes outside the city where the

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subtleties of wildness have been appreciated but that the High Line reveals the hues and textures of native plantings that have not been previously observed. He also noted that while the High Line has a wide range of color variation within the shade of brown, he perceives color monotony within pastoral landscapes because of the lack of such variance. But while Linville views the aesthetics of the High Line as a vehicle for the proliferation of more native plant use in garden design, the ecological benefits of using such plants remain a side note. The performance of such species choices and benefits of enabling successional processes are less apparent to those without the technical knowledge. Nassauer posits, "Ecological function must be actively represented for human experience if humans are to maintain ecological quality." Instead, while the gardeners actively negotiate the care of planting beds with migrating species, they are continuing to orchestrate a designed ecotype conceived of by the human mind and not by non-human processes. The High Line disguises the Picturesque with the smoke and mirrors of a "naturalized landscape," making it more difficult for people to understand what ecological quality looks like.

There are other consequences related to the development of the High Line as a stylish and highly touristed new park in terms of community development and environmental justice. As noted by Witold Rybczynski, there are implications with using the High Line as a typology for urban renewal and the ability of public-private partnerships to fund new parks:

="Advocates would like to see the High Line model take off nationwide in the same way Central Park was copied in the 19th century. The use of landscapes to influence urban development dates back 150 years, to when Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux laid out Central Park. While the High Line’s success may seem to be an instance of “build it and they will come,” in New York, as in Paris, “they” are already there...In no other American city do residents rely so much on communal green space...there are very few cities, particularly in the current economic climate that could match such fund-raising abilities."

Given the dynamics of the High Line’s history, its agency as a park landscape and the shaping of the surrounding neighborhoods in response to it, it is important to reflect on who is benefitting from the development of such a space. While the initial drivers for park development were twofold; the need for more green space in that area of Manhattan and the financial feasibility of the project in stimulating additional projects which would generate tax revenue, the latter appears to be the one that has gained the most attention and certainly drove the greatest momentum for the preservation effort.

According to Cassi Feldman, writer for the civic issues magazine *City Limits*, in urban renewal projects intentional links must be made to communities

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in order to prevent projects from excluding communities entirely.\footnote{Cassi Feldman, “Friends In High Places: In The Shadow Of The High Line, Other Open-Space Efforts Wither.” \textit{City Limits}, 29, no. 1: 8-9, 2004, http://search.proquest.com/docview/55332137?accountid=14506 (accessed February 10, 2012).} She notes that when the creation of parks equal development dollars, access to nature becomes a gentrifying element. She refers to private-public partnerships as situations where there often arises a “pay to play” situation for park services; low-income neighborhoods recognize that by advocating for green space for themselves they begin to price themselves out of their own neighborhoods.\footnote{Ibid, 8.} Another concern is the ability of the Friends of the High Line to maintain a donor base large enough to sustain the $642,000/acre annual operating costs. At $9,555/acre, the annual maintenance costs of the average NYC park calls attention to concerns about the geographic equity of neighborhood-based park projects as well as the long-term sustainability of financing such an expensive and cost-intensive design.\footnote{Rich Calder, “Sky High Costs” \textit{New York Post}, 10 August 2009, http://www.nypost.com/p/news/regional/sky_high_costs_jWqyN68fwWj3YVGVNOhL (accessed October 12, 2011).}

Anne Whiston Spirn writes in \textit{The Authority of Nature}, “Language has consequences. It structures how one thinks and what kinds of things one is able to express.”\footnote{Spirn, Anne Whiston. 1991. “The Authority of Nature: Conflict, Confusion, and Renewal in Design, Planning and Ecology.” In: Ecology and Design: Frameworks for Learning. Island Press, Washington, D.C. 42.} The language and representation surrounding the High Line has severe consequences. As a product of cultural influences, the language of this landscape puts forth ideas and values that are sustained and reinforced by the social collective. How and where contemporary public parks are sited rests largely on the anticipated economic gain combined with the feasibility of their development. Brownfield and post-industrial sites have become places of opportunity for new parks. If the modern environmental movement has perpetuated a romanticized wilderness as Eden\footnote{Cronon, William, ed. 1996. \textit{The Trouble with Wilderness} from Uncommon Ground. W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 83.},\footnote{Susan Herrington, “Framed Again: The Picturesque Aesthetics of Contemporary Landscapes,” \textit{Landscape Journal} 25 (March 2006): 26.} as William Cronon asserts, then the idea of transforming an obsolete, polluted and largely abused landscape into a symbolic Paradise has a psychological cost. Such representation ignores the agency of landscape to act within its own means to build, repair, heal and express. It assumes the role of humans as the more constructive actors on the transformation of a site. The irony of this assumption being that the photographic imagery produced to market the High Line’s preservation captured the agency of the landscape and its emergent qualities. Actions to develop it into the ecotypical (botanic) garden that it is today have created a product that has replaced the melancholy intimacy and immersion of the sublime abandoned wilderness with the urban pastoral. The transformed nature that the redesigned High Line represents is a manipulation of the visitor spoken of by Susan Herrington. The reconstruction of a wild nature and in fact the entire urban pastoral landscape is a testament to the “naturalization of power relationships,”\footnote{Cronon, William, ed. 1996. \textit{The Trouble with Wilderness} from Uncommon Ground. W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 83.} because it constructs the visitor into a particular relationship with a “fake nature,” and with the physical representation in the landscape of those powerful enough to author it. As a result, there becomes a general association and acceptance of new park-building
paired with the re-facing of underserved neighborhoods and highly designed affluent redevelopment projects.

As Garrett Eckbo advised in *Landscape for Living*, “It is the role of landscape design to bridge between the man-made and natural worlds as a response to the built environment which currently fragments the integration of these worlds.”

While adaptive re-use design speaks much of the same language as “green building”, “sustainable design” and “resource efficiency”, current strategies to simply retrofit obsolete spaces into parks and use them as vehicles for urban renewal may not actually fit the human habitat needs for relationships with nature. Peter Gisolfi speculates on the trend to fit “park into space, rather than planning space to park”. He asks the question, “Are the spaces that create the best environments for both people and habitats…are they really 30ft above street level?”

Andrew Blum also discusses the importance of using the tools and knowledge of ecology, advocating for park building approaches that foster connections and understandings of broader ecological processes, as well as the development of strategies that benefit those processes. Like Nassauer, he is also making a case for utilizing a semiotic system that communicates the values for healthy ecological processes that has yet to be incorporated into contemporary culture. Bridging between the sign systems of culture and the language of wild landscapes is the present-day challenge of landscape architecture. Nassauer suggests an approach for how to communicate values for healthy ecosystems within cultural constructs:

> “Cues to human care, expressions of neatness and tended nature, are inclusive symbols by which ecologically rich landscapes can be presented and be entered into vernacular culture. Working from culture is necessary to infiltrating acts of landscape change at small scales and creating innovation in landscape intervention.”

Such a strategy for synthesizing cultural values regarding “parks” with recognition and values for healthy ecosystems is an opportunity for the development of new signs and an alternative reception of nature. As Blum observes, the promotion of deeper understandings of broader ecological systems can reduce the environmental impact of cities and their inhabitants, create more pleasant places to live, and promote parks that create more suitable habitat for humans.
Another implication of perpetuating Picturesque ideals is that objectifying nature alters the human approach to environmental challenges. William Cronon warns,

“We seem unlikely to make much progress in solving these problems if we hold up to ourselves as the mirror of nature a wilderness we ourselves cannot inhabit.... Idealizing a wilderness too often means not idealizing the environment in which we actually live, the landscape, for better or for worse we call home. We need an environmental ethic that will tell us as much about using nature as much as about not using it.”

This ethic can not be developed without cultural signs and practices that change the conversation we have with our landscapes; the objectification of nature through representation has prevented the building of meaningful and engaging relationships with hybrid habitats. The power of design to enable subjective experience in the formation of evolutionary relationships with nature remains unrealized in post-industrial urban settings.

Wildness has emergent potentials in every landscape-- in wilderness, cultivated ground, garden and hybridized landscape. It exists, a powerful force, latent and with the greatest potentials amid the constructs of our rigidly organized urban habits. Its influence to drive ruin and regeneration varies between the sacred and the profane. The manner and degree to which nature is “allowed” to express itself creatively, particularly in an urban setting, will determine the reception of new interpretations. This ability to connect or alienate people from nature lies with the power of design and the ideological representation of landscape itself. Despite a century and a half of Picturesque representations of nature in America, the urbane is not yet divorced from the Picturesque garden; it continues alive and well in the twenty-first century park through the High Line. It is necessary to recognize this and to develop a new language of landscape for hybrid ecologies. The successional post-industrial landscape has become a stage for the next phase of understanding wilderness. With spatial changes and disuse in urban settings becoming a reveal for ecological processes, the evolution of the garden is before us: the wild carving itself out of the urban. While cultural perceptions of its unkempt qualities may harbor disgust, Elizabeth Meyer notes that “we can infer that new forms of beauty will be discovered as new techniques and approaches for reclaiming, remaking, and reforming a site’s natural processes are invented.” In this way, design has the power to negotiate the cultural values that have been instilled and reinforced for so long and to create new imaginings of our relationship with nature.

# APPENDIX A

## Table A.1.1 Semiotic Analysis

### Picturesque Values about Nature Represented in the Development & Design of the High Line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contemporary Tenets of the Picturesque</th>
<th>Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Literal “picturesque” representation.</td>
<td>The photograph is now the painting: Photographic representation of nature is the source of production for iconic relationships. Regulated/orchestrated views.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Values for care and control</td>
<td>• Representation of nature as fragile. Evocation of sentimentality for the &quot;lost wilderness.&quot; • Nature can’t survive without the aid of humans • Human authorship is purposely masked; nature's processes are controlled by humans. Preferential treatment of constructed ecosystem: Ecotype model preference &amp; species selection. • Need to show care, nurturing for nature. • Orderliness of nature needed for nature appreciation/acceptance. Signs of care by humans is necessary, even high levels of care, including high design&quot; indicates an &quot;evolution of habitat&quot;=trendiness, desirability of neighborhood.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Evoke a sense of the sublime.</td>
<td>Representations cultivate a sensibility of awe towards the landscape, romanticized &amp; idealized nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Representation of the pastoral</td>
<td>The working landscape has to be aestheticized, an idealized vision of country life and the working landscape. The urban architectural landscape is now the urban pastoral.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Use of metaphor and literary conventions, follies and relics.</td>
<td>The use of artifacts that would be deemed unsightly without aesthetics.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Semiotic Definitions</th>
<th>(SIGN = Signifier + Signified)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signified</td>
<td>The concept the form represents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signifier</td>
<td>Material or immaterial representation or signifying practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>Nature of connection: causal or physical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iconic</td>
<td>Resembling or imitating, possessing similar qualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>Signifier does not resemble the signified-learned relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signifier</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Principle:</td>
<td>Keep it simple; keep it wild; keep it quiet; keep it slow.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design Principle:</td>
<td>Preserve typical railings and upgrade to full code and ensure safety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Principle:</td>
<td>Preserve north-south right lines and linear consistency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Principle:</td>
<td>Preserve and reveal the structure providing opportunities to inhabit and appreciate details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Principle:</td>
<td>Preserve wild opportunistic landscape by enhancing existing plant species.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Principle:</td>
<td>Preserve industrial presence of the High Line at the street level. Effort to maintain consistency of business types and to preserve “gritty urban character.”</td>
</tr>
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| Signifier                        | Description                                                                 | Signified                                                                 | Index | Iconic | Symbolic | "Picturesque" Representation | Values for BLM | Spectator Value | Value | EF Ideas in the Landscape | pastoral qualities | UTILITY | CULTURAL \& \ ENVIRON | URBAN | USE | \_
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design Principle: Preserve unusual &amp; found conditions</td>
<td>Presence the variability, details and intricacy of the wild landscape.</td>
<td>Physical connection Enhanced simulation Symbolic of Picturesque ideals</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design Principle: Preservation of meandering &amp; varied experience</td>
<td>Preserve the variability and ability to wander through the landscape.</td>
<td>Physical connection Enhanced simulation Symbolic of Picturesque ideals</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year-Round Blooming Landscape</td>
<td>Wild nature needs to be enhanced to be appreciated.</td>
<td>Causal connection Enhanced simulation Symbolic of Picturesque ideals</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Representation of simulated ecotones based on selective aesthetics</td>
<td>The ecotones as it exists in nature does not meet the aesthetic standards of cultural expectations.</td>
<td>Physical connection Enhanced simulation Symbolic of Picturesque ideals</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Posted signs instructing people on how to use the park: &quot;Protect the plants, stay on the path&quot;</td>
<td>Control of the habitat produced by the urban garden</td>
<td>Physical connection Signs &amp; language are symbolic</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open House NYC popularity</td>
<td>Transgressive quality of wilderness, desire to view the fantasy that was created in the press.</td>
<td>Causal connection Symbolic of Picturesque ideals</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signifier</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Signified</td>
<td>Index</td>
<td>Iconic</td>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Suggest new landscape representation</td>
<td>Values for use</td>
<td>Spectator viewpoints</td>
<td>Immersion</td>
<td>Sensation</td>
<td>Pastoral qualities</td>
<td>Literary conventions used</td>
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<tr>
<td>removal of ballast material/medium-complete site reconstruction prior to design implementation</td>
<td>Human control of nature: Desire to recreate an idealized nature that functions without the abiotic, biotic processes that had existed on the site. An idealized re-designed nature: Projects/Re-graded sites must be scraped/sanitized/rebuilt to guarantee health &amp; safety. Prevent certain kinds of “emergence”.</td>
<td>✓ Physical &amp; causal.</td>
<td>✓ Physical</td>
<td>✓ Any visual representation or metaphorical reference is iconic.</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of imagery/photography to promote/remember/record sign/sign development</td>
<td>Visual communication of values, represented/images of idealized qualities of nature produced by human orchestration.</td>
<td>✓ Physical</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rat boxes</td>
<td>Disseminate human control of nature: Selective species control</td>
<td>✓ Physical</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roped barriers are added, separating people and their paths from the beds</td>
<td>People will damage the plantings, need to separate people and nature</td>
<td>✓ Physical</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frail plant choices juxtaposed with heavy steel-preserved rail line, emphasized contrast in early spring</td>
<td>Humanity contrasted with Non-human nature: romantic, aesthetic qualities of nature with the rugged, heavy steel constructs of humans.</td>
<td>✓ Physical</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simulated xeriscapes of woodland, grassland, wetlands</td>
<td>Communicating specific ecotypes found in nature that are related to ecotypes that were found in the wild space.</td>
<td>✓ Physical</td>
<td>✓ ✓ Simulated, re-presented nature</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
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<th>Signifier</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<th>Index</th>
<th>Iconic</th>
<th>Symbolic</th>
<th>&quot;Archetypal&quot; representation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edged plant beds fade into the human paths of the concrete planks</td>
<td>Mixed habitats/materals interfacing</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Symbolic mixing of habitats to replace our inability to accept their existence</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turf space allotted at Community 4's request</td>
<td>&quot;The place where people can interact with green space.&quot;</td>
<td>✓ Physical</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Turf areas are for people's learned behavior</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restoration of historic Art Deco steel railings at every street crossing</td>
<td>Aesthetic treatment to represent High Line's care for the structure from street level.</td>
<td>✓ Physical</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Historic preservation represents history</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training of trees for success</td>
<td>Desire to see plants healthy and with preferred growing habit.</td>
<td>✓ Physical</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inability to let nature self-select</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two kids were picked out of the crowd to be the &quot;co-milliionth&quot; visitors. Parks brass celebrated the two kids and their family like heroes. Officials gave the children &amp; their mom a plaque and a starring role in a tree-planting ceremony, to commemorate the attendance milestone.</td>
<td>The more people, the more popular and fashionable it is to experience and be seen there.</td>
<td>✓ Casual</td>
<td>✓ Movie &amp; music culture: numbers equal success</td>
<td>Hollywood celebrity culture</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas where tracks are completely hidden by vegetation within the design.</td>
<td>Emphasis in design was on making the beds look dense with plantings, preferred over accommodating the artifact.</td>
<td>✓ Physical</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Diminished attention on human uses</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phenomenological/ornamental questions to stimuli; Questions are usually based on plants; specific questions frequently about a blooming plant or one that smells a certain way.</td>
<td>Aesthetics-based design promotes interest in phenomenological experience of site in an obvious and apparent way.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density of plantings prohibits entry</td>
<td>Inability to inhabit the landscape.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔ │ Wild landscapes are dense and overgrown and impenetrable by humans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghosting in of tracks into the pathways are suggestive of foliage.</td>
<td>Romantic nature of relics of the past. (Assumes a known narrative that may not be shared by all viewers.)</td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design partially hiding views into the distance, leading the eye through the landscape.</td>
<td>Production of a varied experience, inspiring curiosity by hiding part of the view.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagonal patterning of concrete planks system.</td>
<td>Conveys a feeling of expanse, bordered with perimeter plantings.</td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardeners use Oudolf’s planting design to guide proportions of species in planting beds.</td>
<td>Selective control of more aggressive species in planting beds.</td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
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<td>Framing of views. Architecture in the new horizon becoming instead of rolling hills and clusters of tree canopies. The Picturesque High Line reveals the &quot;Urban Pastoral.&quot;</td>
<td>Architecture as the reveal, viewer as the subject</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency and sheer number of people photographing the space, not just their friends/families in the space, but the plants and the views.</td>
<td>Authority/primacy given to the spectator</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Deliberate editing of the human part of the landscape's past (much like the Native Americans being edited out of the Frontier narrative)—as a viewer understands less about the human intent and the complexity of interpretation between the text and what is viewed.</td>
<td>The romantic quality of nature is preserved as &quot;pure&quot; without people.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Agri-tecture&quot; Design concept implies a cultivated &amp; delineated wilderness, utilizing the concrete planks to create emergent conditions which could accommodate a variety of human &amp; non-human ecological conditions, various human programmatic activities as well as a range of habitats.</td>
<td>People are the active participant in this concept as the &quot;range of habitats&quot; does not allow for emergent conditions given the ecotype's exclusion (both physically and through maintenance practices) preventing their interaction.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speculative graph of increase of human diversity of spatial use over time.</td>
<td>People are the active participant in shaping this space and contributing to its diversity of uses and programming over time, but activities are specific to social demographic.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Habitat art in the park</td>
<td>The need for people to create habitat for birds and need to control of non-human nature.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Progression of varied planting spaces</td>
<td>Preference in variation of detail and experience, a tenet of the Picturesque.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Renderings imagined the space as a quiet and reflective place.</td>
<td>Nature equals solitude, serenity.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The scene changes almost weekly as plants bud, bloom and seed on different schedules”</td>
<td>Constant display of aesthetic and phenomenological experience.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>People are encouraged to post their images of the High Line to the High Line's website.</td>
<td>Promotion of social practice of sharing images of “beauty” or “being at the High Line”</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>“The creation of a whole new infrastructure was needed”, including structural, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems to support the new landscape.</td>
<td>Designed as a green roof</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BMPs and garden monitoring: Gardens are being heavily recorded and documented from year to year. BMPs are being developed but it is still too early to have something very concrete because they have only had 3 seasons of data and extreme conditions from year to year.</td>
<td>Study the patterns of maintenance needs and success in order to ensure healthy planting beds that won't show distress or large plant failures... maintain a &quot;healthy&quot; looking nature.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>Becks are situated to create barriers between paths and rails. Limited views to street below promote feeling of “floating.”</td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Park in the sky, painting the metaphor</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Function as Promenade, not focused on promoting active exercise, it promotes slower movement, viewing people &amp; interactions, perspectives, architecture, plants. Experience emphasizes the opportunity of “being seen” and being out in society.</td>
<td>Causal</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Iconic of the Victorian-era historical reference to a promenade. Socially learned behavior.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 “parks enforcement patrol” officers for 2.9 acres. The Bronx gets the such officers – to cover all 6,970 acres of Bronx Parkland. Park protection, rule enforcement</td>
<td>Causal</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Camara, staffs, security, social pressure to act “appropriately” when being watched</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hi, goods– umbrellas, books with a lot of imagery, gardening t-shirts, etc...</td>
<td>Causal</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stormfield’s photos (generated support and fundraising)</td>
<td>Causal</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selective control of aggressive species is done during the growing season. Tree branch pruning is done for health, for example, broken or crossed branches and broken leaders are addressed. Worm &amp; cool season grasses are not back at respectively appropriate times and herbaceous materials is pruned out mid-spring.</td>
<td>Causal</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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</table>
| Signifier | Description | Signified | Index | Iconic | Symbolic | "Picturesque" 
Values of care | Spectator 
Manipulation | Evokes the 
Symbolic | Personal 
Qualities | Symbolic of our 
Relationship with nature |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ever-present maintenance staff, 61 staff, over 30-57/7, 7 1/2 gardeners, 200+ volunteers.</td>
<td>High level of care, support and protection for the park</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of species—originally 167, including invasive. Largest plant families represented were Asteraceae, Rosaceae, Rosaceae. New design has 250 species. Invasive replaced with non-invasive &quot;appropriate&quot; relative. Increased number of species used in the design.</td>
<td>Need for enhancement of species representation and diversity.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>We are keeping invasive plants off the High Line. As an organization, it goes against our principle of helping to restore the native ecology of the area.</td>
<td>Selective species control. Weeds are not a part of native ecology.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Original plants and seeds were cataloged and seed banked in a Staten Island. “Greenerbelt” field collection project. They are being used for seed resegregation projects in NY.</td>
<td>Taxonomy and study separate humans from nature.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joel Sternfeld’s imagery captured an &quot;otherworldly&quot; experience of nature in the city that captivated the public and drove the effort to preserve the space as a public park.</td>
<td>The Picturesque: the painting is now the photograph, that which inspires and draws emotion for an aesthetic for design to mimic. Photographic representation of nature produces iconic relationships between what the subject is and how it is perceived as a landscape.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design utilized the concrete planks to create the perception of emergent conditions which could accommodate a variety of human and non-human ecological conditions.</td>
<td>Implies a &quot;tended wilderness&quot; and a careful orchestration of conditions. Concrete/grass interface is a hard vs. soft representation of human vs. delicate wild.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open House NYC 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 propagates the idea of engaging transgressive space.</td>
<td>Continued fascination to experience nature as a transgressive space, the park looking out at, the wild or looking in at itself...</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs of more than 1,000 High Line supporters, in front of a High Line backdrop by Joel Sternfeld. The portraits were collaged into a public mural on construction fencing in the High Line neighborhood.</td>
<td>&quot;The act of being a supporter&quot; and part of a social contingent who &quot;saved&quot; nature. Convey the ability of the park to cultivate a donor society</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social soup experiment...programs focus on bringing large groups of people together with the &quot;meet your neighbors&quot; and &quot;cooking in adventure&quot; tagline. Tickets are purchased online, which assumes access to the internet.</td>
<td>Fostering of creative class events.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much of the public programming focuses on art and food. See Jennifer Foster's article, re: creative class activities.</td>
<td>Fostering of creative class events.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulations of uses are lengthy and hours of access are limited.</td>
<td>Limits to the kinds of experiences a visitor can have in the space.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumbling off of areas of people disturbance in bed rather than adaptation to people curiosity</td>
<td>Movement, views and interaction with non-human habitats are restricted and dictated.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chelsea Grasslands &quot;sponsored by Tiffany and Co.&quot;</td>
<td>Money to fund the park benefits donor with public acknowledgement &amp; praise.</td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Wealthy donors influence the design of public spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;High Line Park is now a perfume — also designed to lift the senses above the city’s grit and grime.&quot; Bond No. 9 — which will recall at $149 for a 50ml bottle a &quot;Eighty percent of the notes come from plants and flowers that grow on the High Line.&quot;</td>
<td>Anything derived from a flower gardens will smell good enough to be a perfume.</td>
<td>Causal</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Small associations are learned.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Economic and Fiscal Impact Analysis completed by HR&amp;A Advisors, John R. Alaherster to justify park development. Many awards received as a result, including the William Whyte Award and other coveted APA honors.</td>
<td>Importance of showing long-term profitability for the hegemonic set in order to pursue park development.</td>
<td>Causal</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Symbolizes the commodification of parts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPA Plan, Design Trust for Public Spaces- does not talk about the community or the neighborhood dynamics in planning for the High Line</td>
<td>The desire to redevelop the neighborhood by reprogramming the High Line.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Symbolizes the hegemonic intent to gentrify the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelsea rezoning: Development of new architecture and development projects adjacent to the space</td>
<td>The ability of new parks to stimulate architectural and economic growth.</td>
<td>Causal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Symbolizes how parks change the face of a neighbor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founders receive Rockefeller Foundation Jane Jacobs Medal; New York Post Liberty Medal.</td>
<td>Founders as &quot;heroes of the High Line,&quot; &quot;saving&quot; nature</td>
<td>Causal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The association with the reward is learned.</td>
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<td>&quot;Picturisque&quot; Representation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH LINE</strong></td>
<td>Fill-blank marketing campaign, began with a logo.</td>
<td>Elevated rails</td>
<td>✓ Qualities ✓ Language &amp; symbol</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plants are not pruned to perform in specific ways—no deadheading or pruning for aesthetics or increased blooming. Plants are allowed to self-seed and migrate by rhizomes &amp; runners, though this is selectively controlled. Oudolf's planting design is consulted for reference in order to maintain the proportions appropriated in the concept.</td>
<td>Desire to simulate wildness, even while under human control.</td>
<td>✓ Casual ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Circulation is severely limited by the width of the structure and by the configuration of the planting beds that typically line much of the perimeter of the corridor, maintaining insular pedestrian pathways.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Physical ✓ Floating ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

Table B.1 High Line Park Map and Regulations

**HIGH LINE MAP/INFO**
The High Line is located on Manhattan’s West Side. It runs from Gansevoort Street in the Meatpacking District to 34th Street, between 10th and 11th Avenues. Section I of the High Line, which opened to the public on June 9, 2009, runs from Gansevoort Street to 20th Street.

For park information, please call the High Line Information Line: (212) 505-6035

**HOURS**
The High Line is open from 7:00 AM to 10:00 PM daily.

**ACCESS**
Access to the High Line is possible via any of the following access points:
- Gansevoort Street
- 14th Street (Elevator access late summer 2009)
- 16th Street (Elevator access)
- 18th Street
- 20th Street

The High Line is fully wheelchair accessible. Elevators are located at 14th Street and 16th Street.

In the event the High Line reaches capacity, you may be asked to enter via the Gansevoort Street stairs (or 16th Street elevator if you need elevator service) only, to ensure public safety and the safety of the park itself.

**GETTING TO THE HIGH LINE**
The High Line can be reached via the following methods of public transportation:

**SUBWAY**
L to 8th Avenue;
A/C/E to 14th Street; C/E to 23rd Street;
1/2/3 to 14th Street; 1 to 18th Street or 23rd Street

**BUS**
M11 to Washington Street or 9th Avenue;
M9 to 9th Avenue; M23 to 10th Avenue;
M34 to 10th Avenue

**PARK RULES PROHIBIT**
- Walking on rail tracks, gravel, or plants
- Picking flowers or plants
- Throwing objects
- Sitting on railings or climbing on any part of the High Line
- Bicycles, skateboarding, skating, and recreational scooters (wheelchairs, mobility scooters, and strollers are permitted).
- Performances or amplified sound, except by permit
- Solicitation
- Commercial activity, except by permit
- Littering
- Obstructing entrances or paths
- Drinking alcohol
- Feeding birds or squirrels

**DOGS NOT PERMITTED**
Dogs are currently not allowed on the High Line due to the limited area of the pathways and the fragility of the new plantings.
APPENDIX C

Design Documents

DESIGN TEAM 2004-2009

*James Corner Field Operations* (Design Lead / Landscape Architecture/Urban Design)
- James Corner, Lisa Switkin, Nahyun Hwang, Sierra Bainbridge, Tom Jost, Danilo Martic, Tatiana von Preussen, Maura Rockcastle, Tom Ryan, Lara Shihab-Eldin, Heeyeun Yoon, Hong Zhou

*Diller Scofidio + Renfro* (Architecture)
- Elizabeth Diller, Ricardo Scofidio, Charles Renfro, Matthew Johnson, Tobias Hegemann, Gaspar Libedinsky, Jeremy Linzee, Miles Nelligan, Dan Sakai

*Buro Happold* (Structural / MEP Engineering)
- Craig Schwitter, Herbert Browne, Dennis Burton, Andrew Coats, Anthony Curiale, Mark Dawson, Beth Macri, Sean O’Neill, Stan Wojnowski, Zac Braun, David Bentley, Elizabeth Devendorf, Alan Jackson, Christian Forero, Joseph Vassilatos

*Piet Oudolf* (Planting Design)

*Robert Silman Associates* (Structural Engineering/ Historic Preservation)
- Joseph Tortorella, Andre Georges

*L’Observatoire International* (Lighting)
- Hervé Descottes, Annette Goderbauer, Jeff Beck

*Pentagram Design, Inc* (Signage)
- Paula Scher, Drew Freeman, Rion Byrd, Jennifer Rittner

*Northern Designs* (Irrigation)
- Michael Astram

*GRB Services, Inc.* (Environmental Engineering/Site Remediation)
- Richard Barbour, Steven Panter, Rose Russo

*Philip Habib and Associates* (Civil and Traffic Engineering)
- Philip Habib, Sandy Pae, Colleen Sheridan

*Pine and Swallow Associates, Inc.* (Soil Science)
- John Swallow, Robert Pine, Mike Agonis
Table C.1.1 Flora Species Found on the High Line (2002)\textsuperscript{283}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lichens</th>
<th>Apiaceae</th>
<th>Apocynaceae</th>
<th>Araliaceae</th>
<th>Asclepiadaceae</th>
<th>Asteraceae</th>
<th>Crassulaceae</th>
<th>Euphorbiaceae</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cladoniaceae</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cladonia mateocyatha</td>
<td>*Daucus carota L.;</td>
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<td>Robbins. Sterile</td>
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<td>(W. Buck, pers. comm.)</td>
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<td>Physciaceae</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecanora sp. Phaeophycis insignis (Mereschk.)</td>
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<td>Moberg.; rare (Brodo 2001).</td>
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<td>Rinodina glauca Ropin.</td>
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<td>Teloschistaceae</td>
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<td>Xanthoria parietina (L.)</td>
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<td>Bryophytes</td>
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<td>Brachytheciaceae</td>
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<td>Brachythecium campestre (C.M.)</td>
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<td>Bryaceae</td>
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<td>Bryum pseudotriquetrum (Hedw.)</td>
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<td>Brid.</td>
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<td>Ditrichaceae</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ceratodon purpureus (Hedw.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brid. Atrichum angustatum.</td>
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<td>Tortella humilis (Hedw.)</td>
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<td>Jenn. Weissia controversa Hedw.</td>
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<td>Aceraceae</td>
<td>*Acer platanoides L.</td>
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<tr>
<td>L. rare.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amaranthaceae</td>
<td>Amaranthus albus L.;</td>
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<tr>
<td>L.; rare. infrequent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Amaranthus hybridus L.;</td>
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<td>*Amaranthus viridis L.;</td>
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<td>rare.</td>
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<td>Anacardiaceae</td>
<td>Rhus copallinum L.;</td>
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<td>infrequent.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rhus typhina L.; infrequent. 
Toxicodendron radicans (L.) Kuntze [Rhus radicans L.]; rare. Lamiaceae
*Vicia sativa L.; infrequent. 

Fagaceae
Quercus palustris Muenchh one individual found in the Ailanthus Grove.; rare. Lamiaceae
*Lamium amplexicaule L.; rare. 
Mentha arvensis L.; rare. 
Trichostema dichotomum L.; rare. 

Molluginaceae
*Mollugo verticillata L.; infrequent. 
Moraceae *Morus alba L.; infrequent. 

Oleaceae
Fraxinus americana L. One tree near 30th St.; rare. *Ligustrum vulgare L.; infrequent. 

Onagraceae
Epilobium coloratum Biehler; rare. Oenothera biennis L.; frequent. 

Oxalidaceae
Oxalis stricta L.; frequent. 

Phytolaccaceae
Phytolacca americana L.; frequent. 

Plantaginaceae
*Plantago lanceolata L.; frequent. 
Plantago rugelii Decne.; rare. 

Polygonaceae
Polygonum aviculare L.; rare. 
*Polygonum persicaria L. X lapathifolium; rare. 
*Rumex acetosella L.; frequent. 
*Rumex crispus L.; infrequent. 

Portulacaceae
*Portulaca oleracea L.; infrequent. 

Rosaceae
Crataegus uniflora Muenchh.; rare. 
*Potentilla argentea L.; infrequent. 

Fabaceae
Lespedeza capitata Michx.; rare. 
*Medicago lupulina L.; frequent. 
*Melilotus alba Medik.; rare. 
Planchon.; frequent. 
Vitis aestivalis Michx.; infrequent. 

Liliopsida
Cyperaceae
Cyperus strigosus L.; rare. 

Iridaceae
Sisyrinchium angustifolium Miller; rare. 

Juncaceae
Juncus tenuis Willd.; frequent. 

Liliaceae
*Allium vineale L.; frequent. 
*Hemerocallis fulva (L.) L.; infrequent. 

Poaceae
*Anthoxanthum odoratum L.; infrequent. 
Aristida dichotoma Michx.; rare. 
*Bromus racemosus L.; frequent. 
*Bromus tectorum L.; infrequent. 
Calamagrostis cinnooides (Muhl.) Barton; rare. 
*Robinia pseudoacacia L.; infrequent. 

*Rumex flagellaris Willd.; rare. 
*Sorbus americana (Michx.) Ell.; infrequent. 

Rubiaceae
Galium aparine L.; infrequent. 
*Galium mollugo L.; rare.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Species</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potentilla</strong></td>
<td>L.; frequent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Potentilla</em>*</td>
<td>norvegica L.; frequent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Potentilla</em>*</td>
<td>recta L.; infrequent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Prunus avium</em>*</td>
<td>L.; rare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parthenocissus</td>
<td>quinquefolia (L.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Verbascum</em>*</td>
<td>thapsus L.; frequent.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Veronica</em>*</td>
<td>arvensis L.; frequent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Veronica</em>*</td>
<td>persica Poir.; frequent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Simaroubaceae**

* Ailanthus altissima (Miller) Swingle; infrequent.

**Solanaceae**

* Solanum dulcamara L.; infrequent.
  * Solanum nigrum L. var. virginicum L. [S. americanum Miller.]; rare.
  * Ulmaceae Celtis occidentalis L.; rare.
    * Ulmus pumila L.; rare.

**Verbenaceae**

Verbena bracteata Lagasca & Rodriguez; rare.
Verbena urchifolia L.; rare.

**Violaceae**

Viola sororia Willd.; rare.

**Vitaceae**

* Ampelopsis brevipedunculata (Maxim.) Trautv.; in-frequent.
  * Chloris petraea Swartz.

  [*Eustachys petraea (Sw.) Desv.]; infrequent.
  * Cynodon dactylon (L.) Pers.; frequent.
  * Dactylis glomerata L.; infrequent.

**Salicaceae**

Populus deltoides Marshall; rare.
Populus tremuloides Michx.; rare.
Salix discolor Muhl.; rare.

**Scrophulariaceae**

Linaria canadensis (L.) Dum-Cours.; frequent.
* Linaria vulgaris Mill.; infrequent.
* Digitaria sanguinalis (L.) Scop.; frequent.
* Eleusine indica (L.) Gaertn.; infrequent.
* Echinochloa crusgalli (L.) Beauv.; rare.
Eragrostis capillaris (L.) Nees.; frequent.
Eragrostis spectabilis (Pursh.) Steud.; infrequent.

Festuca ovina L.; infrequent.
* Lolium perenne L.; infrequent.
Panicum dichotomiflorum Michx.; rare.
Phleum pratense L.; rare.
Phragmites australis (Cay.) Trin. [Phragmites com-munis Trin.]; infrequent.
* Poa annua L.; frequent.
Schizachyrium scoparium (Michx.) Nash [Andropogon scoparius Michx.]; rare.

* Setaria glauca (L.) P. Beauv.; frequent.
  Sporobolus clandestinus (Biehler Hitchc.); frequent.
  Tridens flavus (L.) A. Hitchc.
  [Triodia flava (L.) Smyth]; frequent.
Figure C.1.1 Planting Design and Landscape Zones

PLANTING DESIGN
The High Line’s planting design is inspired by the self-seeded landscape that took root on the elevated railroad tracks after the trains stopped running. The High Line includes more than 200 species of perennials, grasses, shrubs, and trees – chosen for their hardiness, adaptability, diversity, and seasonal variation in color and texture. Some of the species that originally grew on the High Line’s rail bed are reseeded in the park landscape today. The High Line design team was a collaboration between landscape architecture and urban design firm James Corner Field Operations (the project lead), design firm Diller Scofidio + Renfro, and planting designer Piet Oudolf.

1. **GANSEVOORT WOODLAND**
   At the top of the Gansevoort Stair lies the Gansevoort Woodland – a thicket predominantly comprised of birch and serviceberry trees. A series of raised steel planters provides adequate planting depth to accommodate the trees’ root systems. Vines cascade over the High Line railing, forming a lush, green balcony visible to passers-by on the street below.

   Thanks to Doral Pitts and Wendy Keys

2. **WASHINGTON GRASSLANDS**
   The Washington Grasslands, where wild grasses sway in the breeze, stretch from Little West 12th Street to West 13th Street. Just to the south of the 14th Street Passage, a mix of grasses and shade-tolerant perennials grow in a quiet, protected area among chokeberry, sassafras, and witch hazel.

3. **DILLER – VON FURSTENBERG Sundeck**
   The Diller – von Furstenberg Sundeck, between 14th and 15th Streets, is one of the High Line’s most popular gathering spots. Large-scale outdoor furniture is aligned along a gentle curve of historic rail track and surrounded by grasses, perennials, and shrubs. Alongside the water feature, a series of raised steel planters contain a mix of wetland species. On the lower level, the Sundeck Preserve consists of willows, grasses, and sedge trees that create a striking silhouette against the skyline of the Hudson River and New Jersey.

   Thanks to The Diller – von Furstenberg Family Foundation

4. **10TH AVENUE SQUARE**
   Just beyond the Chelsea Market Passage, visitors arrive at the 10th Avenue Square. Here, a grove of three-flower maple trees frames a spectacular view of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. A wood amphitheater cuts into the existing structure, providing visitors with a unique view of Tenth Avenue.

   Thanks to Henrie and David Hellman
   Thanks to Michael and Suky Noyes

5. **NORTHERN SPUR PRESERVE**
   Evolving the wild landscape that grew on the High Line before it was a park, the Northern Spur Preserve features an impressionistic landscape of trees, shrubs, perennials, and grasses. It is best observed from the intimate observation deck, where views of this robust planting bed are set against the city streets below.

   Thanks to Christy and John MacKen Foundation

6. **CHELSEA GRASSLANDS**
   Just beyond the 10th Avenue Square are the meandering pathways of the Chelsea Grasslands, where a mix of meadow grasses and perennials surprise visitors with dramatic variety in color and texture throughout the year. Here, sweeps of brightflowers and green grasses in summer evolve into an animated tapestry of bright golds, deep reds, and rich browns in fall. This space reflects Piet Oudolf’s appreciation for the aesthetic characteristics of each plant as they change throughout the season.

   Thanks to The Tiffany & Co. Foundation
Planting

Plant communities build on existing species and conditions to produce a primarily wild, native, resilient, and low-maintenance landscape with great diversity, seasonal change, and height and color variation. Grassland mix establishment a new datum line one to three feet above the surface, reinforcing the unusual, intimate character of the High Line. Wetland and dry woodland species vary the spatial and horticultural mix.

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Figure C.1.3 Plant Design Bloom Chart

Proposed Monthly Bloom Chart

The actual plantings implemented in the design made use of species that bloom every month of the year.


Figure C.1.4 New Architectural Projects along the High Line

Arbitrariness: Saussure emphasized that the relationship between the linguistic signifier and signified is arbitrary: the link between them is not necessary, intrinsic or 'natural'. Philosophically, it makes no difference what labels we attach to things, but of course signs are not socially or historically arbitrary (after a sign has come into historical existence we cannot arbitrarily change signifiers). Saussure focused on linguistic signs, whilst Peirce dealt more explicitly with signs in any medium, and noted that the relationship between signifiers and their signifieds varies in arbitrariness - from the radical arbitrariness of symbolic signs, via the perceived similarity of signifier to signified in iconic signs, to the minimal arbitrariness of indexical signs. Many semioticians argue that all signs are to some extent arbitrary and conventional (and thus subject to ideological manipulation).

Code: Semiotic codes are procedural systems of related conventions for correlating signifiers & signifieds in certain domains. Codes provide a framework within which signs make sense: they are interpretative devices which are used by interpretative communities. They can be broadly divided into social codes, textual codes & interpretative codes.

Conventionality: A term often used in conjunction with the term arbitrary to refer to the relationship between the signifier and the signified. In the case of a symbolic system such as verbal language this relationship is purely conventional - dependent on social and cultural conventions (rather than in any sense 'natural'). The conventional nature of codes means that they have to be learned (not necessarily formally).

Iconic: A mode of relationship in which the signifier is perceived as resembling or imitating the signified (recognizably looking, sounding, feeling, tasting or smelling like it) - being similar in possessing some of its qualities (e.g. a portrait, a diagram, a scale-model, onomatopoeia, metaphors, 'realistic' sounds in music, sound effects in radio drama, a dubbed film soundtrack, imitative gestures) (Peirce).

Ideological codes: One of the types of interpretative codes, notably, the 'isms', such as: individualism, capitalism, liberalism, conservatism, feminism, materialism, consumerism and populism. Also includes codes of textual production and interpretation (dominant, negotiated and oppositional). Note, however, that all codes can be seen as ideological.

All terms in this glossary can be referenced to: Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: the Basics* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 238-247.
Ideology: There are no ideologically 'neutral' sign systems: signs function to persuade as well as to refer. Modern semiotic theory is often allied with a Marxist approach which stresses the role of ideology. Ideology constructs people as subjects through the operation of codes. According to the theory of textual positioning, understanding the meaning of a text involves taking on an appropriate ideological identity. For Althusser, ideology was a system of representation involving 'transparent myths' which functioned to induce in the subject an 'imaginary' relation to the 'real' conditions of existence. For those inclined towards realism ideology involves a 'distortion' of an 'objective' 'reality'. Barthes argues that the orders of signification called denotation and connotation combine to produce ideological myths. Ideological forces seek to naturalize codes - to make dominant cultural and historical values, attitudes and beliefs seem 'natural', 'self-evident' and 'common-sense', although the operation of ideology in signifying practices is typically made to appear transparent. Barthes saw myth as serving the ideological interests of the bourgeoisie. Semiotic analysis involves ideological analysis and seeks to denaturalize codes.

Indexical: A mode of relationship in which the signifier is not purely arbitrary but is directly connected in some way (physically or causally) to the signified - this link can be observed or inferred (e.g. smoke, weathercock, thermometer, clock, spirit-level, footprint, fingerprint, knock on door, pulse rate, rashes, pain) (Peirce).

Modes of relationship: This is Terence Hawkes's term to refer to Peirce's classification of signs in terms of the degree of arbitrariness in the relation of signifier to signified (to use Saussurean rather than Peircian terminology). These are (in order of decreasing arbitrariness) the symbolic, iconic and indexical modes. It is easy to slip into referring to Peirce's three forms as 'types of signs', but they are not necessarily mutually exclusive: a sign can be an icon, a symbol and an index, or any combination. Whether a sign is symbolic, iconic or indexical depends primarily on the way in which the sign is used, so the 'typical' examples which are often chosen to illustrate the various modes can be misleading. The same signifier may be used iconically in one context and symbolically in another. Signs cannot be classified in terms of the three modes without reference to the purposes of their users within particular contexts.

Semiosis: This term was used by Peirce to refer to the process of 'meaning-making'.

Semiotics: Loosely defined as 'the study of signs' or 'the theory of signs', what Saussure called 'semiology' was: 'a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life'. Saussure's use of the term sémiologie dates from 1894 and Peirce's first use of the term semiotic was in 1897. Semiotics has not become widely institutionalized as a formal academic discipline and it is not really a science. It is not purely a method of textual analysis, but involves both the theory
and analysis of signs and signifying practices. Beyond the most basic definition, there is considerable variation amongst leading semioticians as to what semiotics involves, although a distinctive concern is with how things signify, and with representational practices and systems (in the form of codes).

**Sign**: A sign is a meaningful unit which is interpreted as 'standing for' something other than itself. Signs are found in the physical form of words, images, sounds, acts or objects (this physical form is sometimes known as the sign vehicle). Signs have no intrinsic meaning and become signs only when sign-users invest them with meaning with reference to a recognized code.

**Signification**: In Saussurean semiotics, the term signification refers to the relationship between the signifier and the signified. It is also variously used to refer to:

- the defining function of signs (i.e. that they signify, or 'stand for' something other than themselves);
- the process of signifying (semiosis);
- signs as part of an overall semiotic system;
- what is signified (meaning);
- the reference of language to reality;
- a representation.

**Signified**: For Saussure, the signified was one of the two parts of the sign (which was indivisible except for analytical purposes). Saussure's signified is the mental concept represented by the signifier (and is not a material thing). This does not exclude the reference of signs to physical objects in the world as well as to abstract concepts and fictional entities, but the signified is not itself a referent in the world (in contrast to Peirce's object). It is common for subsequent interpreters to equate the signified with 'content' (matching the form of the signifier in the familiar dualism of 'form and content').

**Signifier**: For Saussure, this was one of the two parts of the sign (which was indivisible except for analytical purposes). In the Saussurean tradition, the signifier is the form which a sign takes. For Saussure himself, in relation to linguistic signs, this meant a non-material form of the spoken word - 'a sound-image' ('the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression it makes on our senses'). Subsequent semioticians have treated it as the material (or physical) form of the sign - something which can be seen, heard, felt, smelt or tasted (also called the sign vehicle).

**Signifying practices**: These are the meaning-making behaviours in which people engage (including the production and reading of texts) following particular conventions or rules of construction and interpretation.
**Social codes**: Whilst all semiotic codes are in a sense social codes, social codes can also be seen as forming a major sub-group of codes, alongside textual codes and interpretative codes. Social codes in this narrower sense concern our tacit knowledge of the social world and include unwritten codes such as bodily codes, commodity codes and behavioral codes.

**Social semiotics**: Whilst some semioticians have retained a structuralist concern with formal systems (mainly focusing on detailed studies of narrative, film and television editing and so on), many have become more concerned with social semiotics. A key concern of social semioticians is with 'signifying practices' in specific socio-cultural contexts. Social semioticians acknowledge that not all realities are equal, and are interested in 'sites of struggle' in which realities are contested.

**Symbolic**: A mode of relationship in which the signifier does not resemble the signified but which is arbitrary or purely conventional - so that the relationship must be learned (e.g. the word 'stop', a national flag, a number) (Peirce).
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