

The texts are an opposing (or side-stepping) strategy to the artificial cohering of space and time you get with restoration and renovation programmes. And keep in mind that the Stourport Canal Basins is a RESTORATION programme – a reinvented environment that requires low level assumptions about continuity of a place over time.

I think what I do is advocate for discontinuity and absence in the design process (which is why I can be [perceived to be] difficult to work with!) and encourage an asymmetrical emergence of place memory. In this project this has been about reintroducing a trace of a (then) event in (now) time – John Fennyhouse Green forward projecting basins and warehouses on a stubble field. A 'then' event that disrupted the steady state landscape of the time, and began a process that we are responding to 'now'.

"... a situation may be either a state, or an event, or a process. ... states are static, i.e. continue as before unless changed, whereas events and processes are dynamic, i.e. require a continual input of energy if they are not to come to an end; events are dynamic situations viewed as a complete whole (perfectively), whereas processes are dynamic situations viewed in progress, from within (imperfectively)."

– Bernard Comrie (1976), "Aspect: An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems", Cambridge University Press, p. 13

This idea of event-ness is crucial. Because design programmes are bounded by time and budget and institutionalised ways of going on, they are usually promoted as events – and to some extent they are. Design programmes are, indeed, dynamic situations viewed as a complete whole, with start and end dates punctuated by milestones. But design (note 1) is, more importantly, a process – part of the dynamic viewing of place in progress (i.e. Great Time).

"...viewed in progress" – this is not the same as saying something has forward trajectory and/or is moving towards a future of some different kind, but more to do with (place over time) change and how this structures and is structured by (and relies on!) memory.

It is all very much bounded up with what Barnett Newman was saying about time:

"Suddenly one realizes that the sensation is not one of space or [of] an object in space. It has nothing to do with space and its manipulations. The sensation is the sensation of time – and all other multiple feelings vanish like the outside landscape."
[Barnett Newman 1949]

This is back to those notions of time and duration in painting we've discussed before.

And I've been thinking recently about the idea of 'the moon in a dewdrop' – that this is what I'm looking for, and have always been looking for. That time-based juxtaposition that is more than *nama rupa*. The problem, though, is that built environment outruns are all about *nama rupa* – how ideas become quantified named objects as the basis for cost and build certainty. And in chasing certainty, you end up with the moon and the dewdrop, but lose the moon in the dewdrop. It's a problem.

"Maybe you think things are okay and that you are doing 'all right'. But someday the monotonous and ugly spaces you live and work in will be organised as intelligently and as beautifully as the spaces have been in some paintings."
[Ad Reinhardt 28th April 1946]

It's always seemed to me that to do what Reinhardt is suggesting, you have to step outside "the comforting edges of painting" and deal with these things in the world of Reinhardt's "everything else". Which is why I don't allow my work to be separated out from the main build programme and badged as a stand-alone art commission funded through a separate arts commissioning budget. That would be just reintroducing those "comforting edges of painting" in a different guise, to somehow miss the point of what Reinhardt is proposing.

Of course, the build process frustrates good intentions, and in the end you fight every inch of the way only to fall short of what could have been. And what could have been could have been those 'archaeology of the image' (note 2) drawings (yes, they are mine and not M's) in built form – something intelligent and beautiful, something 'as painting'.

But you can't do that stuff in the land of the po-jama people, hence the need to go elsewhere, to go into exile.

Note 1

'Design' as in the French sense of 'dessin' or, better, the Turkish 'desmek' (to open up, exhume, incise, dig, dig up, dig out, dredge up, probe, root), rather than the English and Dutch notions of design as 'a planned or planning process' or 'evil scheme'.

Note 2

I think we both work with the idea of 'emergence' – like Braque, of working from the back to the front. I've always thought that painting and places are both emergent.

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