

Notes for a lecture on

ART AND LANDSCAPE

Landscape Environment Advancement Foundation, LEAF

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Prologue

While putting together this lecture, we found that we had compiled and organized a fair amount of information. It seemed only natural to put it together so that it allowed easy reference. This monograph is not really the lecture, and at best will help communicate the broad position that the lecture takes, and will allow someone who has actually listened to the lecture, more information on the various parts in it.

As spatial designers, our engagement with the idea of art needs to be intense and evolved. If in fact it is not so, then it is likely that we will not find ways of finding answers for the many questions that we are faced with; for example, such as those of individual and community identity, the impact of divergent urbanity, environmental degradation, the problems of depleting energy sources, the ability to comment on the nature of governance in our societies, the fissures caused by segregation in society, and so on.

If this seems like a farfetched proposition, then the lecture attempts to prove the premise as rationally as is possible in 40-45 minutes.

To do this it uses the following devices:

- Page 01** The beginnings of this lecture refer to Sir JJ College of Architecture which is a venue of great historical significance and an institution that is personally valuable to me since my father began his teaching career there in 1952.
- Page 02-06** This section alludes to the many possibilities that could have formed part of the lecture, but chooses not to. This includes the work of some marvellous land artists, the festive nature of art in our public realm, or could have well tried and made some connections with the professional work undertaken by our office. All these were serious possibilities, which we chose not to pursue, but still felt that referring to them was important, since in some cases it would allow the listeners an introduction to works that they may not be familiar with, and then decide to investigate them later on their own steam.

•**Page 07-08** This refers to the inspiration for the title of the lecture **“Running away without leaving home”**, which is a powerful quote, by a dancer and choreographer Twyla Tharp. It also uses the work of a bright young artist, Vyom Mehta, whose work I reviewed for private consumption. We have used his installation “Ice” to explain the ability of art to allow many interpretations and revealing of many possibilities.

•**Page 09-10** The main body of the lecture attempts to deconstruct and explain an assumption. This is stated in the sentence **“Landscape Designers in India, should position their faith in the idea of art, understand its mechanics, and with this knowledge forge a critical path in these times of flux.”**

•**Page 11-15**
-A definition
-The sublime
and suffused
In the first part it explains the realm of a landscape architect and for that matter with some modification, any spatial designer. It also explains the manner in which we are suffused with the idea of art in India. We believe that there is a strong subliminal influence that the many forms of art exert on us, and we need to delve inside us, assimilate these many divergent threads, and find suitable expressions to the multilayered and complex times that we live in.

•**Page 16-26**
-Culture and Time
-Conceptual frameworks
-Coming of age
The next part, attempts to explain the manner in which mans relationship with nature has been continually modified, and the manner in which it finds reflection in the arts across time and place. The key here is to appreciate the value of art in its ability to allow dissection and representation of and contemplation on, our relationship with our environment. It also attempts to contextualize the wealth and depth of artistic traditions in India, and the manner in which they encompass divergent styles and concerns of perhaps a variety that would encompass many a key artistic intention found in the rest of the world. . The understanding of these many artistic pursuits could well allow us a window to learn and appreciate the abstract intentions used in the many facets of the arts. We also try and present some key attempts in India, that undertook the development of a language that is based on local and regional sensibilities and ethical systems.

•Page 27-33

- Firing synapses
- Inversion
- Leading the sciences

There is increasing evidence now to believe that our brains are hardwired to appreciate certain visual stimuli in a certain manner, and that artists through time and age have intrinsically understood this and used techniques to evoke the reactions they desired from the viewer. The science of art then is an important tool in the repertoire of a spatial designer.

The section also introduces the idea of being able to imagine space, in ways not often taught to many of us as professional designers.

There is also evidence to believe that in several cases the ideas of art have allowed progress in science, and also that the work of many artists is extremely valuable because embedded in them are ways to be able to explore frontiers of science.

•Page 34-35

- Relations and redefinitions

And finally the lecture reminds us of the many issues that confront our times, and the fact that we grapple with ways to find suitable responses, but often fail; not accepting that using art as a language has tremendous possibilities with significant implications.

•Page 37

The lecture ends with a summation that reads as under:

As spatial designers, art as a motivating force is a powerful idea. It allows spaces to be beautiful; to have soul breathing in them. It allows innumerable connections, both said and unsaid, to waft in the air, for any one to read what's being said, or to sense, grasp and write a personal narrative.

But if it did that, and just that, that would be a tragedy. Art is far more important than that.

In any age, complex and innumerable questions abound. Art allows us to inverse the questions, and also to answer them in innumerable way simultaneously.

And then, it allows us to imagine relations, meanings, truths that we did not even think existed; and more importantly abstracts and simplifies them in manners most palatable.

And finally, it becomes the language with no script, allowing the disparate to bond and resolve, and find equilibrium in what can at times be unbalanced times.

**Landscape Designers in India, should position their faith in the idea of art, understand its mechanics,
and with this knowledge forge a critical path in these times of flux.**

**Landscape architect
a definition**

The sublime and suffused

**Relations and
Redefinition**

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**Culture and Time
Conceptual frameworks
Coming of age**

**Firing Synapses
Inversion
Leading the Sciences**

The way forward ...

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INDIA