

HYBRID Stripscape

“To detach the landscape from culture as an object of scientific or aesthetic contemplation to objectify it is not only to fail to recognize the constitutive power of representation in forming of reality but also to be distanced from the various reciprocities and indifference's that are structured between the land and its occupation by people.”

James Corner

Taking Measures Across the American Landscape

Through the years a majority of citizens within the United States have lost the most elementary connection known to man – that of the connection to our immediate environment (except for the superficial way that it affects our lives, i.e. weather, traffic, proximity to the nearest gas station/convenience store, etc.). Many factors have contributed, including technology, the growth of many of our urban communities, rapid transportation etc. - now a majority of our day to day experiences with the land are purely visual. Air travel and other modes of transportation have become so accessible that localities can be more closely connected to sites thousands of miles away than to their immediate surroundings.

Mankind exists within a threshold where the broad sky meets land; we commonly refer to this as the horizon. It is within this space that there is an occasional shimmer of fleeting clarity that awakens all the senses and defines the raw reality of the way things are and the realization that changes need to occur. I was raised in a relatively small farming community in the Midwest. Many conversations revolved around the land.....Is the soil ready to plant ?.....How much is that piece of land being rented for ?.....How many acres is that section of land ? The relationship between mankind and the land was that of respect for the land, a kind of stewardship; the belief that land is the provider of life/food. Today we are a society of consumers, not caring about how a product has arrived at marketplace or how much work it took to get it there, but more concerned with quantity and price. How can we exploit the opportunity to re-connect with the land/nature and in turn become stewards of the land ?

Let me begin by speaking about what exists, in way of the family farm. At any given farm you will see grain bins lined up like soldiers marching across the plains. (see image 1) There is a poetic repetition to the vernacular language of the Midwest farm. There is also a temporal beauty found in the everyday – as with corn cribs and how they transform from a solid mass when filled to a delicate translucent skeleton of the plains when empty. (see images 2 & 3)



image 1



image 2



image 3

It is also a stark reality that at the outskirts of many of our cities today there is an anomaly – that of the edge condition where farmland/vacant land adjoins suburban life. There is a lack of dialogue between the land and the suburban inhabitants. It is at this junction, this milieu where there is opportunity to create a dialogue and exploit the possibilities. It is a fact that architecture is connected to the earth both literally and figuratively and thus the surface of the earth is the canvas of the architect. It is our responsibility to strengthen our effectiveness within our most intimate environment. (see image 4)

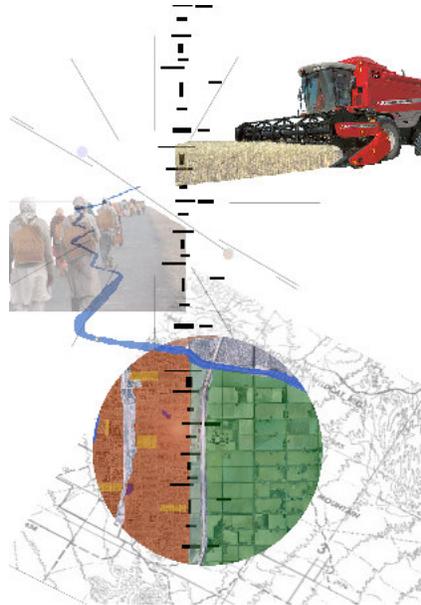


image 4 - mapping collage

The freight industry and the act of processing food both consume large amounts of energy – studies suggest agriculture and food production account for approximately sixteen percent of our total energy consumption in the United States. The possibility of architecture and landscape becoming interwoven is a strong concept that supports the richness that can be found in overlapping relationships such as suburban living and farm land. Like many other things land has become a commodity, as a result the commodification of land has led to development where the immediate site has become a by-product rather than a supporting layer. The march of urbanity is consuming precious farmland, some may view this as progress – but is it responsible progress ? (see image 6) I believe by addressing these issues in a manner that allows farmscape and cityscape to co-exist there is the opportunity to create smart progress.



image 5



image 6

This proposal seeks to conduct an intervention between the land and the urban 'fringe'. (see image 5) This 'fringe' provides the opportunity to diversify and create hybrid spaces where typical urban occupants can interact with the land by burrowing into the soil, it is with this action and the sense of touching, smelling, feeling and seeing that there begins an intimate connection and also the understanding that what we as a people choose affects us not only locally but also globally. These 'fringe' communities help to form a thickened threshold and the ability to form a first hand relationship with the adjacent farmland – residents can walk the fields and gather fresh produce for their evening meal or gather food for an impromptu farmers market. Not only does this act save on the energy consumption often necessary to get produce to market, but it also serves as an education device on what it takes (i.e. weather, water, sun, energy, work, digging, planting, sweating, eating, dreaming - connecting) to generate the food we eat. Borrowing from the simple farm vernacular, materials are used to express not only an aesthetic quality but also serve the purpose of providing comfort for the inhabitants.

The point of departure for this project involves the process of mapping. (see image 4) It is through this process that the issues at hand are defined not by simply tracing the existing conditions but by exaggerating the issues in order to better understand

and explore the possibilities of what might be. Often in farming you are faced with the necessity to “make do” with the tools at hand, i.e. the land and resources available. The transformative quality of “making do” is a powerful tool in the design evolution of the urban “fringe” because of its ability to identify the needs and desires that are not fulfilled by the dominant order that defines urbanity.

The Hybrid *stripscape's* ultimate purpose is not to erase or blur boundaries. Instead, it thickens them, occupying them with programs/inhabitation that allows for chance experiences with the landscape. It is transformed into a thickened threshold that is permeable, while maintaining respect for the delimiting role of the boundary. As a result these modified boundaries (areas of “strip living”) operate more as connectors than as separators, and promote the creation of urban/suburban/rural aggregates – hybrid combinations of culture, commercial, work, and leisure. These localized – hybrid environments become the building blocks for continued revaluation of this generic landscape. (see images 7,8 & 9)



image 7 - snapshot plan of the 'fringe' in the context of existing suburbs



image 8 - plan detail

The “strip living” units incorporate green living responsibly through the use of solar panels at the roof, in addition to alternating green roof areas, rainwater gathering through the roof system to be used for irrigation, natural ventilation, and a wall system that consists of bio-based spray insulation and a rainscreen system that consists of a natural wood trellis (to shade and dissipate heat) over building paper and recycled composite exterior siding. Construction materials, massing, and the skin of the “strip living” units are developed in response to the farmland vernacular and the land surrounding the building, promoting public/private overlaps between interior and exterior uses. One example of this is the spatial thickening of the boundary between the interior and exterior in the form of the framed volume. This begins a dialogue by creating a third space between outside and inside – strengthening the relationship between the two programs and promoting public/private overlaps between interior and exterior uses. Large expanses of glass as well as edited views have been incorporated for privacy and also as a reminder to the inhabitants of their surroundings. Exterior decks/walkways allow individuals to walk above the fields, but also allow participants to walk within the fields. (see image 10)

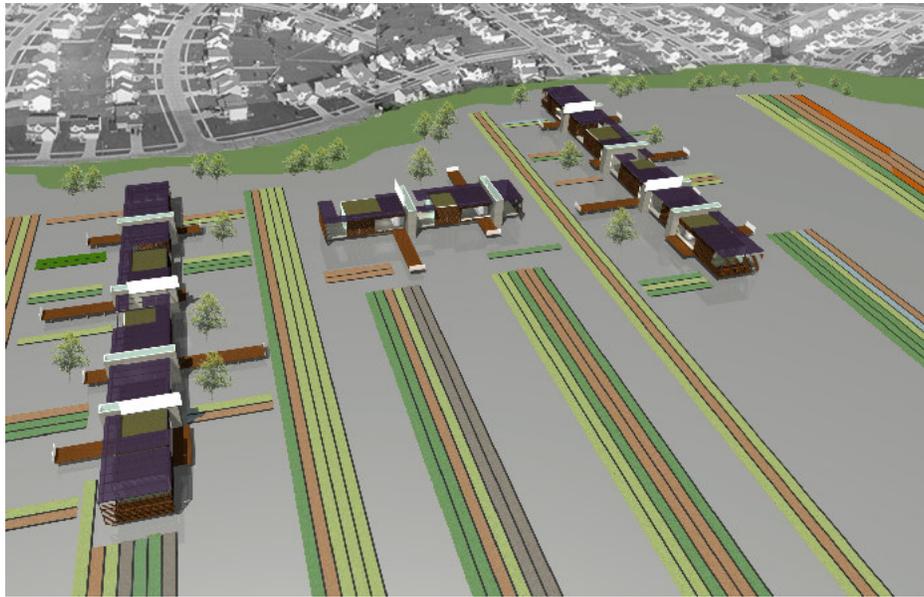


image 9 - birdseye view of a portion of stripscape



image 10 - perspective montage of stripscape inhabitants

The “strip living” is placed within the adjoining farmscape/cityscape and organized in both a perpendicular and parallel pattern. A combination of living options add to the diversity of the inhabitants. In addition a combination of diversified strip planting is incorporated to allow for a wide range of crops to choose from. This in turn will allow for chance meetings between neighbors and fortify the farmers creed of respect thy neighbor. It is also important that inhabitants have a chance to experience the full realm of the land – living upon, above and within the land. By identifying the lack of transition between suburban living and the surrounding landscape and thereby acknowledging the problem of irresponsible development, the importance of forming a connective tissue (thickened threshold) between cityscape/farmscape is evident. The following images are snapshots of the day to day, temporal qualities for people living in and around stripscape. (see images 10, 11, 12 & 13)



image 11



image 12



image 13