

2013

Forms, Transitions, and Design Approaches: Women as Creators of Built Landscapes

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**FORMS, TRANSITIONS, AND DESIGN APPROACHES:
WOMEN AS CREATORS OF BUILT LANDSCAPES**

A Thesis Presented

by

TAI-HSIANG CHENG

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

SEPTEMBER 2013

Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank various people for their contribution to this thesis: Committee Chair Patricia McGirr for her patient guidance and useful critique of this research work. I would also like to thank Annaliese Bischoff for her enthusiastic response in the historical review, and Peter Kumble's assistance for providing comments in the preliminary stage of the study. My grateful thanks are also extended to my friends, particularly Ryan Ball for his help in proofreading the thesis proposal. Chingwen Cheng and Jennifer Master for providing knowledge in the data analysis process, Professor Robert Ryan's guidance in the research issue class, and Professor Mark Lindhult's suggestions in mid-semester review. I would also like to extend my thanks to Jennifer Tseng Yarbrough, Alison Frazee and UMass Writing Center for their support in editing and proofreading the thesis paper.

A grateful thank you is given to Ms. Carol Johnson and other professional women who provided comments in this study; your constructive insights are integral to this study. Thank you to all.

Finally, I wish to thank my parents for their support in this long journey.

ABSTRACT

FORMS, TRANSITIONS, AND DESIGN APPROACHES:

WOMEN AS CREATORS OF BUILT LANDSCAPES

September 2013

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Gender issues in the landscape, for a long time, have belonged to the fields of social and political science, which remain relatively unfamiliar to both practitioners and students in the discipline of landscape architecture. Previous scholars have put effort into examining questions of gender, culture and landscape in order to clarify the issues that researchers may encounter in today's field of study. Among these gender classifications, questions in feminist inquiry have provided a historical setting to this study: what are the forms, transitions and design approaches that women employ as creators of the built landscapes?

Through reviewing the past literature and surveying today's practitioners, an understanding emerges of how female landscape designers think about their gender identity as a variable in the design process. In addition, several issues are further identified, including the female awareness of their gender identity in the workplace, types of female work, transitions in design approach since the 1899 American Society of Landscape Architects was founded to the present day, cultural discourse in female landscape forms, and so on.

The major goal of this study is not to build a description of history that asks how women may design differently than men, but to reexamine the idea that has made such stereotypes invalid; gender may influence design approaches but not outcome. Furthermore, this study also attempts to identify the potential gender issues in today's profession, and to provide a viewpoint to landscape designers of any gender: How does our innate gender identity potentially influence design thinking? Finally, as a designer who is drawn to the cultural dimension of landscape architecture, I hope this study will be helpful to landscape professionals in developing a more complex approach and critical eye for looking at designed landscape forms as cultural vehicles for gender construction.

Keywords: gender issues in landscape architecture, female design approaches, female landscape forms, transitions in female design approaches, female awareness, types of female work, gender discrimination.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Women have played an important role in the development of American landscape architecture. Gender issues that examine women as creators of the built landscape are also commonly discussed in our discipline. A review of past literature suggests that, the interrelation of gender and landscape architecture has ranged from old-fashioned rhetoric such as the term “Mother Earth”, to the early twentieth century, in which women are at some point considered naturally adapted to the profession¹. Today, many women are becoming leaders of various groups and organizations in American landscape architecture professions, which show a successful transition of women’s role in landscape architecture has been made with the passing of time, and moving into a new phase.

According to the latest report from the American Society of Landscape Architecture(ASLA) in celebrating Women’s Day 2013, the numbers of female members has grown from 15 in 1899 to 5,301 today². As some landscape historians may notice, there was only one female member of the total eleven founding members in 1899 when ASLA was established. The numbers of female members have been growing for more than a century according to Women in the ASLA: A Descriptive Analysis. However, the growth of female members parallels the growth of male members.³

Previous discussions of gender issues in landscape architecture have been broad: Some focused on historical narratives such as the lives of female gardeners in the early

¹(Way 2009)

² <http://dirt.asla.org/2013/03/05/asla-celebrates-national-womens-history-month/>

³ (Hennigan 1998)

twentieth century and how they influence the development of landscape gardening; others focused on cultural dimensions, such as using the rhetoric “mother earth” to link gender and landscape. Still others focused on the practice of landscape architecture; that is, women as either creators or users of the built environment. Sometimes, gender discussions in landscape architecture may lead to a binary discourse stereotype: public and private, outdoor and indoor, Mars and Venus thinking. Therefore, in her article, “The Expanded Field of Landscape Architecture,” Elizabeth Meyer reminds us we should be skeptical of gender affiliations to the landscape which are often considered as female: irregular, emotional, and even chaotic.⁴

In the early twentieth century, several renowned female pioneers in the field solidified the foundation for later development, and their professional performances in multiple scales ranged from the domestic field such as garden design and residential works to the public domain such as community development, children’s playground designs, and civic gardens. Today, women are leaders and decision makers in environmental sustainability issues which parallel transitions in project types. Despite the major roles women play as creators of built landscapes, somehow, their design approaches have not been fully discussed. Do female landscape architects have different methods of designing landscapes than their male counterparts?

When browsing landscape company websites, there is often a link titled “Design Philosophy” or “Our Approaches” on its introduction page, which expounds and propagates the company’s core values. Interestingly, many companies owned by female

⁴(Meyer 1997)

principles tend to use words such as “collaboration” in this description. Whereas companies owned by a male or a group of males, prefer to use phrases such as “integrating the environment” or “working globally” rather than “collaboration.” In landscape architecture, like most of the design business, the way to achieve a successful model is through successful collaborations. However, based on the observation above, it seems that females may emphasize collaborative processes ideas such as social networking, sharing ideas, and making connections more than their male counterparts.

As previously mentioned, topics of gender discourse are very broad, and thus, difficult to discuss without organization. Therefore, in his article “Gender, Landscape, Culture: Sorting out Some Questions” Robert Riley reminds us, it is important to classify gender issues in the landscape before we start to talk about gender in the landscape.⁵ As a student interested in the cultural aspects of landscape architecture, I also attempt to sort out some gender questions in my own way. In addition to that, the idea of “Female Landscape Forms” was mentioned in the Robert Riley’s article. Such broad, diverse meanings and discussions generate my motivation for further inquiry: Will gender alter design? Is gender difference a variable in designed forms? Will landscape forms differ due to gender-oriented design approaches? How do female practitioners see their gender role as female in the workplace? And how do they think about their design approaches as female? How women’s design approaches transitioned throughout the century since the ASLA have was founded?

⁵ (B.Riley 1994)

This study began with the question “Are there specially female methods of designing landscape?” In order to fully explore the question, we must also ask what design thinking and approaches do women employ toward landscape architecture? And most importantly, what makes gender stereotypes invalid? By reviewing past female’s approaches and surveying today’s female professionals, I attempt to explore several gender issues involving women as creators of the built landscape. In addition, I hope this study—though it may not be the most popular theme in today’s landscape profession—will be beneficial to students or researchers who are interested in the interdisciplinary exploration of landscape architecture in the future.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH THEMES

This study attempts to explore the characteristic approaches that women as creators of built landscapes employ. The themes of the study are partially derived from ideas proposed by previous scholars, as well as the researcher's interests for further inquiry into the gender issues within landscape architecture that have been discussed throughout the culture and history. Meanwhile, this study also examines the descriptions of women designers' role and transition in the design approaches in a given period of time as historical material has been provided. (Figure1)

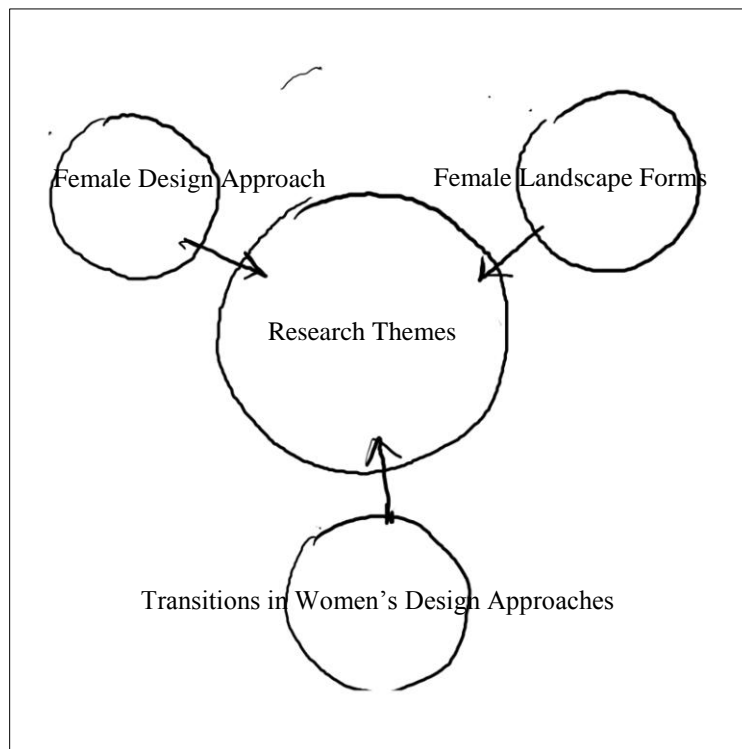


Figure1. Research Model

To be more specific, the research themes can be divided into three independent themes that are also related to each other:

Female Design Approach

Before starting to answer the following research questions related to gender issues in landscape architecture, it is important, as a researcher, to have a preliminary understanding about how female practitioners think about their gender identity.

The female design approaches in this study are described as opposite to male approaches; there may be some differences in the way women think about things. However, it is pretty general as a part of human nature. When it comes to the design, what are the differences between male and female designers?

Female Landscape Forms

The second study goal is to explore the idea of “Female Landscape Forms.” According to Robert Riley’s article “Gender, Landscape, Culture: Sorting Out Some Questions”, this concept refers to the forms that “women designers themselves, free to create, would make for themselves—forms expressing their gender experience and their biological sexuality.”⁶ However, are there “Female Landscape Forms” created by female landscape designers? In addition, this term may also need further explanation from different viewpoints. And finally, how do female practitioners think about “Female Landscape Forms,” as an artistic, social, or cultural vehicle?

⁶ (B.Riley 1994)

Transitions in Women's Design Approaches

The last study goal is to examine the transitions in female design approach that have occurred since the early twentieth century, when American Society of Landscape Architects was founded, regardless of whether or not women have different design approaches than men. How did female designers shape the American landscape in their distinctive ways?

There have been several female pioneer landscape architects in the history of United States. Their roles as female pioneers were responding to the society, where technology, knowledge and other facts were significantly different from today. Have their design approaches transitioned with the passage of time? What has changed and what remains unchanged?

The following literature review will focus on these three research themes. The purpose of the review is to provide a primary understanding of the historical descriptions of female design approach, female landscape forms, and an overview of transitions in female design approach since the early twentieth century.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to present an overview of the research themes that were noted in the historical materials. This review will provide the reading materials that need to be further examined by the following study methodology. These three research themes that belong to separate fields of study while relating to each other are as follows:

Female Design Approach

The discussion of gendered design approach may regard the female approach as an opposing concept that is minor, marginalized, or other to the male design approach, and male-dominated culture. Usually, the marginalization of female design approach is unconsciously implied. In design theories, the concept of “other” space or “Others” are mentioned in contemporary architecture theory: some space prototypes such as museums, prisons, hospitals, and unconventional places that are distinguished from everyday landscape are usually regarded as “other.”⁷

In the history of art criticism, as a feminist critic, Heath Schenker says: “feminist interventions in the history of art should aim to understand complex social, economic, and psychological situations that produce art at crucial historical moments, and should also aim to understand these same forces shape the meaning of art, the way it is received

⁷(McLeod 1996)

and interpreted by its audience.”⁸ This statement suggests that female approaches are dealing with the issues where art, audience and society intertwine.

In order to clarify the relationship between these complex issues, researchers must take different approaches to find a method. As a philosopher of deconstructionism, Jacques Derrida stated that, the hierarchy of ideological thinking can be eliminated by breaking down the link between two opposing concepts⁹, thus allowing the minor, marginalized, non-mainstream concept to emerge to the surface. This theoretical statement provides a methodology for feminist researchers: In order to see female approaches that have been ignored or excluded from the eye of a male-dominated value system, one must take a different study approach as Schenker suggests: “the most obvious way to redress the exclusion of women from history is to include them.”¹⁰

Definitions

Among all the discussions of women’s design approaches, the first inquiry that needs to be addressed is, as researchers, how do we separate female’s approaches from male approaches? Karen Madsen and John Furlong, in their article “Women, Land, Design: Considering Connections,” have mentioned that “gender issues in the landscape can be divided at least two ways: women as creators of the built environment and women as users of the built environment.” The statement provides a sketchy definition of the gender issue in landscape architecture. In addition, this article also points out that “women’s approaches could be described as “women’s way of reasoning and relating,

⁸ (Schenker 1994)

⁹ Jacques Derrida, "Interview with Julia Kristeva."

¹⁰ (Schenker 1994)

teaching and learning, designing.”¹¹ Under the definitions, this study could be defined as examining women’s way of designing as creators of the built landscape.

Policy Making Process

According to a study regarding gender influence on the policy making process, women may be more likely to see emotion as an important component for a decision-making process.¹² Emotion and subjectivity are, at some point, described as qualities of “connectedness” which may imply female. In contrast to that, reasoning and objectivity are the qualities of disconnection, or the denial of connection which may imply male.¹³ Females are accustomed to understanding things by connecting while men are accustomed to analyzing things in order to identify the difference between things. That said, “Analyzing is the activity of distinguishing between elements, it can easily lead to seeing distinctions as being divisions—to seeing elements that are different as being separate, distant, and disconnected”¹⁴

Kristine Hill is the researcher who conducted the study above. She further concludes: “male policy makers favored balancing competing rights in ethical reasoning, while women favored a strategy of response to the needs of affected parties, particularly children.”¹⁵ Besides, “Women are more likely to see emotion as an important component of an effective policy-making process, while men either did not address it or found it a negative influence.” She further quoted from Carol Gilligan’s findings stating that “...in

¹¹ (Karen Madsen 1994)

¹² (Hill 1994)

¹³ (Franck 1989)

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ (Hill 1994)

moral reasoning men use principles of fairness, whereas women emphasize inclusion and relatedness, seeking win-win solutions.”¹⁶

As a result, women designers or policy makers may pay more attention to personal experience that comes from their distinguished values of subjectivity and emotion as important personal reflections during the decision making process. The quality of connectedness, emotion, and subjectivity reflected on design practice may lead to an emphasis on making connections; Women designers tend to emphasize building a close relationship between clients, peers and users during the design process.¹⁷

Women’s Way in Designing Landscape

The gender difference may also exist in the field of landscape architecture. The garden designs in early twentieth century America were considered a profession naturally adapted to women at some point. “Flowers are like children, beautiful, irresponsible, helpless things; and we may say that the good gardener will make a good mother and the good mother—after her children are grown up—the best gardener”¹⁸

As one of the early female pioneers in landscape design, Ellen Shipman also said that “there is no profession so suited to women, so needed and so repaying in every way—nor any that at once give so much of health, wealth and happiness.”¹⁹ It implies that women may have unique talent in landscape gardening.

However, do women have different design approaches in designing landscape than men? According to historical descriptions made by Boston architect Guy Lowell in

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ (Franck 1989)

¹⁸ (Chamberlain Edith 1892)

¹⁹ Quoted in “Professional Opinions,” Lowthorpe School Catalogue(Groton, MA 1926).

early twentieth century, “A woman will fuss with a garden in a way that no man will ever have the patience to do.” He added, “If necessary, she will sit on a camp-stool and see every individual plant put into the ground. I have no hesitation in saying that where the relatively small garden is concerned, the average woman will do better than the average man.”²⁰ This comment was made a century ago: It may suggest the gender stereotype in the early twentieth century America when women just stepped into the career field. In 1902, an officer of Massachusetts Civic League, stating, “A woman has a feeling about dirt which men only pretend to have.” This statement was made to praise women’s contributions to civic improvements as well as shaping of public landscapes.²¹ In addition, Bremer Pond and Henry Atherton Frost, two of Harvard’s faculty, believe that “Women turn more naturally than men to landscape work.” This quote was also mentioned by a landscape historian in order to introduce women’s role in the development of American landscape architecture.²²

Henry Frost was the founder and director of The Cambridge School started in 1915, which was considered one of the most influential institutes in training women as design professionals. He agrees that women do better work than men in the field of residential design because they have a flair for design related to the human and pay more attention to details.²³ These historical descriptions have provided a preliminary understanding of women’s design approaches, even though they may contain social bias as we see today.

²⁰ Quoted in Mary Broson Hartt, “Women and the Art in Landscape Gardening” 1908.

²¹ (Lawson 2012)

²² (Close 1996)

²³ (Anderson 1980)

In more recent reviews, women's approaches in designing landscape were still made; Madsen in her article "Women, Land, Design: Considering Connections" asks "what might feminist landscape look like" and further quotes the comments from Deborah E. Ryan: "There is a woman's way of designing and that it is non-patriarchal, collaborative, temporarily. It is constructed of devalued or discarded materials, and it fosters connections, respects the intrinsic value of the land."²⁴

Female Principle in Architecture

The gender difference in design approach not only exists in policy making and landscape architecture but also architecture. As Margrit Kennedy suggested in 1981, there were several hypotheses based on female and male principles in architecture. The female principle is (1) More user-oriented than designer-oriented. (2) More ergonomic than large-scale, monumental. (3) More functional than formal. (4) More flexible than fixed. (5) More organically ordered than abstractly systematized. (5) More holistic than specialized (6) More complex than one-dimensional. (7) More socially oriented than profit-oriented. (8) More slowly growing than quickly constructed.²⁵

Another model for this hypothesis comes to mind was a 1938 article titled "Freedom in the garden". In this modern landscape theory, James Rose talked about how materials used in landscape architecture differ from both architecture and sculpture in several important respects: "The landscape materials, for the most part, are living and growing." He added, compared to the scale and dimension in architecture and sculpture that "usually determined once and for all by non-changing elements, the variables in

²⁴ (Karen Madsen 1994)

²⁵ (Kennedy 1981)

landscape—sky, topography, and materials—make it a subtle art.”²⁶ That said, the appearance of designed landscape would be in a relatively unstable, constantly changing state because a part of the quality of selected materials. As a result, “A sense of form is more difficult to achieve because of the looseness and instability of growing material used in garden design.”

In this context, does the female principle in architecture imply the qualities of landscape architecture that are, according to James Rose, more “living and growing”? On a construction site, the building’s unchanging permanency is often in stark contrast to the surrounding trees and plants, which are growing and changing with the changes in season. Therefore, this phenomenon reminds me again of the female role as silent and marginalized, which is similar to the way that surrounding landscapes are marginalized in a building’s construction site.

The Female Landscape Forms:

“Female landscape forms” in this study originally refers to the definition proposed by Robert Riley in his writing “Gender, Landscape, Culture: Sorting out Some Questions”: “Are there female landscape forms? I mean not forms nominated by scholars as symbol of gender or sexuality, but forms that women designers themselves, free to create, would make for themselves—forms expressing their gender experience and their biological sexuality.”²⁷

²⁶ (J. C. Rose 1938)

²⁷ (B.Riley 1994)

While landscape architecture is generally accepted as a form of art, as endorsed by Frederick Law Olmsted,²⁸ every landscape professional should understand how it differs from other art forms such as the painting, sculpture, and photography due to its functional and circulation concerns. The nature of landscape architecture is to improve people's living environment and meet their need for both functional and aesthetic concerns. In modern theories, landscapes are especially designed for people: "...Although addressed to a variety of purposes, landscape design ultimately concerns making outdoor places for human use."²⁹ In this way, unlike sculpture and other fine art, landscape architecture is not purely concerned with aesthetic.³⁰

One question that can be raised is whether, viewers are able to tell the gender connotation of artwork, through purely aesthetic or practical viewpoint? For instance, in viewing a sculpture in a gallery, we may be able to receive the gender message that creator attempts to convey based on a purely aesthetic view. However, can we tell the actual gender of the artist if, in a civic park, we see curved, wooden benches surrounded by grass hemispheres? (Figure2)

²⁸ (Howett 1992)

²⁹ (Treib 1992)

³⁰ (J. C. Rose 1992)

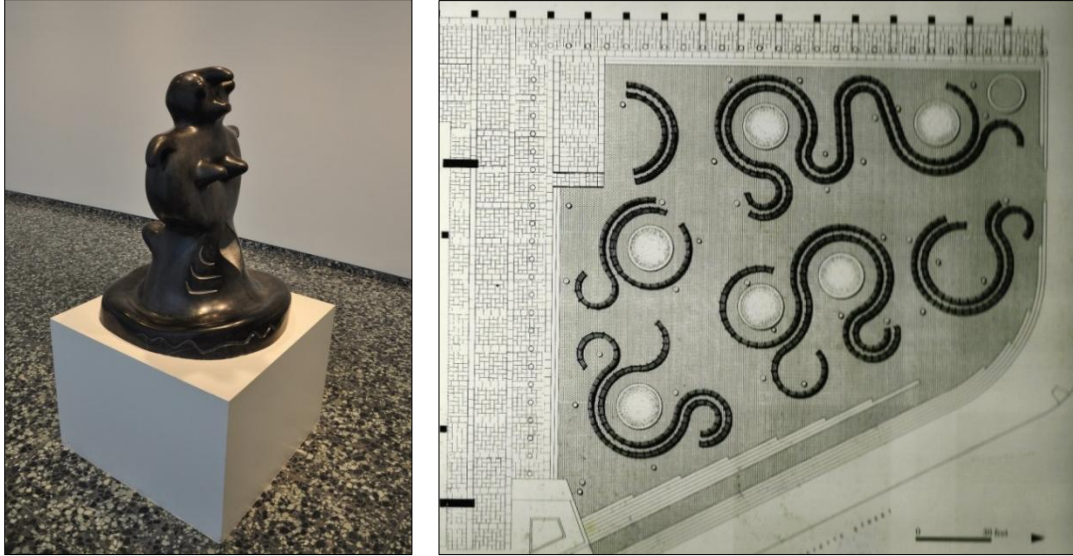


Figure 2. Female Art Works (Left: Photograph by author, Right: from the book of “Martha Schwartz: Transfiguration of the Commonplace)

Robert Riley also suggests the same piece of art can elicit different reactions from different viewers. “A sexual sculpture in a gallery is different from a grotto or a vine-covered pergola in a private garden and different indeed from a dead-end cave in an urban park after dark.” That said, as viewers, our perception will inevitably be influenced by the physical environment surrounding us.

However, the idea of female landscape forms in this study will be explored from multiple perspectives: the review should be focused not only on forms created by women artists with a female aesthetic but also created by any potential form-makers; the former can be mostly found in the field of fine art: feminist art, visual art and those that meet the original definitions proposed by Robert Riley, the latter refers to those works created by anyone.

In art history, some landscape forms were originally built to convey the message of the creator’s gender, and some were not; however, some landscapes that were not built

to convey gender meanings may be engendered unintentionally. As a historian suggested, “gender is socially but not naturally constructed.”³¹ Some landscape forms famous for their gender connotations—especially the feminine—were not actually created by women. The following literature review will focus on both issues.

Female Landscape Forms Created by Women with Female Aesthetic

The phrase “female landscape forms” literally refers to the forms created by female artists who use landscape elements as the medium with which to combine the concept of landscape forms with the feminine aesthetic.

For instance, in the late sixties, landscape artists started to build the connections between female and land by applying the concept of “Mother Earth”. Robert Smithson’s exhibition entitled “Earthworks” consisted mostly of photographs which evoked the relationship between people and land. The earthworks artists set the stage for feminist artists who expressed their creative ideas from the old-fashioned ideology where earth as the mother of all living things.³²

From the literature review, there are two commonly shared characteristics in female landscape forms: First, they are often associated with the images of female bodies. Second, female landscape forms are often created in a way that directly responds to earth, water, and other natural elements.³³

One example is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial located quietly in the corner of the National Mall, which symbolizes the central

³¹ (D.Garrard 1994)

³² (Wallis 1998)

³³ (Frueh 1994)

power of the country. The memorial's design has been recognized as a milestone of feminine landscape. On one hand, it has generated the discussions in terms of the war, power, and political structure through cultural coding.³⁴ On the other hand, as designer Maya Lin has suggested, "I think the most important aspect of the design was that I had originally designed it for a class I was taking at Yale and not for the competition. In that sense, I had designed it for me—or, more exactly, for what I believe it should be."³⁵ That said, the creation of memorial has met Robert Riley's original definition of female landscape forms: women are free to create for themselves. In addition to that, the form of Vietnam Veterans Memorial is two black stone walls sunk into the ground and meet at the center. It finally expresses an indivisibility of the form and earth. (Figure3)



Figure3. Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Photography by

³⁴ (McGirr 1994)

³⁵ (Lin 2000)

Female artists also seek to use their body images as a creative source. According to another feminist artist, “Idealizations of the female body reflect and enforce cultural desires about a woman’s beauty and sexuality, her social place and power.”³⁶ Furthermore, the woman and natural connections are also embraced by feminist artists who honor to Goddess. Goddess art –another style of feminist art—is regarded as a “luminous symbol of hope for women living through the dark night of patriarchal holocausts, genocide, and ecological disaster,”³⁷ and has become one significant method of artistic expression.

Ana Mendieta is a controversial feminist artist famous for her body earth work series. By using natural materials such as earth, leaves and twigs, she creates female outlines in the wilderness. During the creative process, she carves the female shape on tree trunks, or burns the female body shape into the earth using gunpowder in order to represent dialectics such as “female to nature as male to culture.” Her performance arts often expresses the topic of death, rape, murder, and sex of implicit violence are also bringing stronger emotional impacts to viewers.³⁸ (Figure4)

³⁶ (Frueh 1994)

³⁷ (Orenstein 1994)

³⁸ (Schor 1997)



Figure4. Ana Mendieta's Works (from "Wet: on painting, feminism, and art culture")

Female Landscape Forms Created by Anyone

As earlier mentioned, many landscapes are culturally coded as feminine whether they are naturally formed or manmade. The phenomenon that landscapes read as feminine usually comes from ideology system of a society. People who have different thoughts read landscapes in different ways, and as a result, meanings of landscape differ from time to time and changes from place to place.

Landscape is a medium.³⁹ Some features of nature such as caves, hollows, water, blossoms are coded as feminine in some culture.⁴⁰ Several objects such as "butterflies, labyrinths, grains, rivers, pottery, horns, spirals, zigzags, moons," may also imply

³⁹ (Waldheim 2006)

⁴⁰ (Shepard 1967)

feminine because some of these symbolize the fertility and productivity which is associated with the female body.⁴¹

In art history, the earliest interior architecture can be traced back to the caverns of the Paleolithic Period. A cavern's dark, damp, labyrinth embodies female interior anatomy.⁴² In addition to that, the fact that several ancient civilizations were born along the riverside—the Nile Delta for instance—symbolizes the idea of “Mother Earth” giving birth to the civilization of Ancient Egypt.

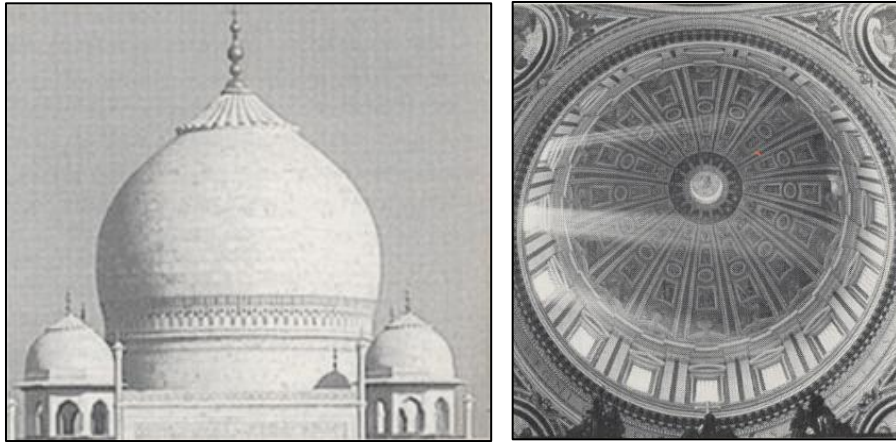


Figure5. Domes as Female Forms (From “the monumental Impulse: Architecture's Biological Roots.”)

Even the Great Pyramids on the Nile Delta site can be gendered as female. The architectural mass of the pyramids were constructed by thousands of male slaves to honor the Pharaoh, but, in the unknown depths of the pyramid, there are countless secret rooms, funeral chambers connecting narrow corridors and passageways. The whole system symbolizes the reproductive tract of the female body. As a historian suggests, “In the

⁴¹ (Orenstein 1994)

⁴² (Hersey 1999)

Pyramid, the largest volumes—the king’s and queen’s chambers—reflect the placement and scale of a vagina and a female urethra.”⁴³ From this viewpoint, the cultural construction of the Great Pyramid is both masculine and feminine in ancient Egypt.

Another built form, the dome—an architectural element commonly seen in the Roman Period—is also mentioned in the review. A dome’s round shape encloses and provides a space for people to enter, which is a metaphor for a mother with a baby in her womb. Similarly, other forms from nature such as an egg, has an outer shell and an, oval shape that promises the survival of lives within a round space filled with physical and spiritual nourishment.⁴⁴ (Figure5)

Are female architects “making rooms”? An idea-oriented, feminist perspective journal published in 1981 was titled “Making Room: Women and Architecture.” From reading the title, readers may be able to infer the ideas that making “voids,” instead of “mass” in a built form has feminine implications.

In terms of landscape, the construction of land for human dwelling may also be read as a process of constructing the feminine.⁴⁵ According to the article “Leveling the Land” by David Leatherbarrow, a leveled land not only provides a foundation for the built site but also sets up the stage for public lives. The leveled land has a dry, solid surface that is read as male, in contrast to the formless, wet subsoil that read as female. In this context, the quality of a leveled land for construction is “dry above and wet below.”

⁴³ (Hersey 1999)

⁴⁴ (Hersey 1999)

⁴⁵ (Leatherbarrow 1999)

It has again evoked the cultural discourse of two opposing force existing in one container: wet is to feminine as dry is to masculine.⁴⁶

To summarize, the female landscape form can be created by anyone. On one hand, women artists create landscapes with a female aesthetic—they use natural materials such as water and earth to dialogue with environment. They may also utilize body images as a symbol of sex in order to present female ideology as opposed to male-dominated social values. On the other hand, built landscapes that are reminiscent of reproduction or for the purpose of nurturing can be engendered as feminine. (Figure6)

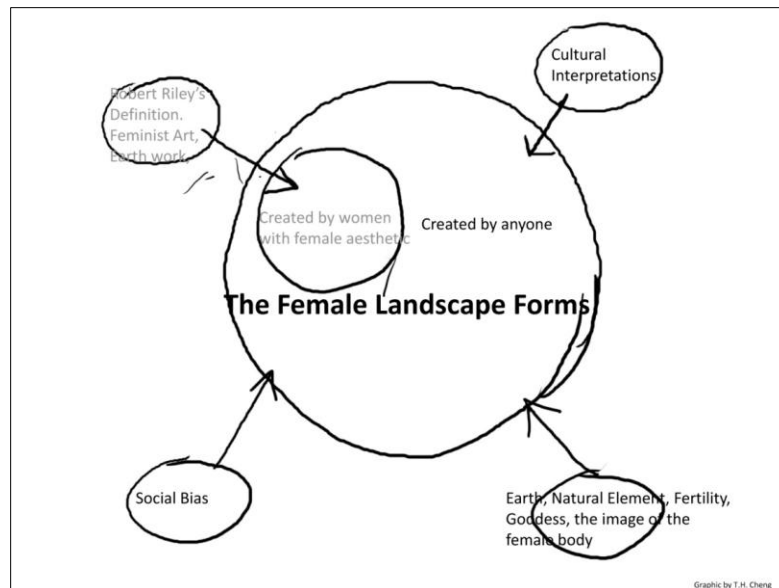


Figure6. Female Landscape Form Model

⁴⁶ Ibid.

The Transitions in Female Design Approaches

Based on the above review, landscape forms can be engendered intentionally or unintentionally by both creators and viewers. When it comes to form making in landscape architecture, women creators played key roles since the beginning of the twentieth century in the United States. How might their gender identities potentially influence the designed landscape? The review can be traced back to an important landscape prototype: gardens.

Gardens as Women's Place

The garden is among one of the most commonly discussed themes in landscape architecture. A garden also has broad definitions and a variety of meanings that come from both inner and outside factor; its physical appearance and ideology are synthesized, driven by nature and culture.⁴⁷

The meanings of gardens may refer to gender because it is read as a “mirror of society”⁴⁸ in which power and social hierarchy exist. Garden may also become a place where sexism and ideology such as “human’s power control over nature” are expressed. In an article about the power manifested in a garden, Robert Riley makes the following comment: “The process from a forest to forest glade, to meadow, to garden, to lawn is a metaphor of increasing control over, or sublimation of, the raw sexual content of nature.”⁴⁹ Riley suggests that nature is controlled to serve human needs, for both physical and visual pleasure.

⁴⁷ (Francis 1990)

⁴⁸ (Griswold 1992)

⁴⁹ (Riley 1990)

A book introducing gardening that titled “American Gardens of the nineteenth century: For comfort and affluence” was published in 1987. From the title, readers can infer that a garden in the nineteenth century is designed to please humans. In this context, a garden can be read as a “woman’s place” for two reasons: First, a garden is a place that signifies the human beings as “makers and spectators”⁵⁰ of nature as well as having power and control over nature. Second, female bodies are sometimes treated, visually or physically, as the subject of male desire. Therefore, the “nature” —perhaps one of the most ambiguous and vague words in the dictionary —contained in garden, has long been engendered as feminine.⁵¹

In the early seventeenth century, settlers’ wives in North America from England created the gardens in order to sustain their families by growing vegetables and flowers.⁵² When arriving on the coast of the New World of the Americas, they brought seeds for planting. “Field work was for the man; the door yard garden a few steps from the kitchen fireplace, the spinning wheel, and the cradle were the responsibilities for the women.”⁵³ This description provides a rural picture of men working outside while women were working within the house; it may also suggest that gardens were becoming a stage where women could show their domestic authority.⁵⁴

American gardens in the eighteenth century were mostly taken care of by women for utilitarian purposes—gardens were created for both food gathering and embellishment

⁵⁰ (Lang 2000)

⁵¹ (Lang 2000)

⁵² (Verey 1984)

⁵³ (Berrall 1966)

⁵⁴ (Streatfield 2012)

to achieve a goal of comfort and affluence. In the Victorian era, ladies would create gardens by grouping plants and flowers of similar colors and forms in each area of the garden in order to achieve the desired visual.⁵⁵ As well as serving as a social tool for wealthy estate owners to display their taste, a beautiful, well-designed garden allowed upper class women to express their design aesthetics.

Early Social Issues for Women in the Landscape Architecture

The American Society of Landscape Architecture was founded in 1899. In the opening years of the twentieth century, women were often considered landscape gardeners.⁵⁶ Leslie R. Close mentions that in the early period of American landscape architecture, the split of gender roles led to the separation of house and garden. For instance, the construction and maintenance of a house building was traditionally considered a man's job, while interior space and the landscape surrounding a house was considered a woman's. As a result, some female designers' projects in the early twentieth century were often limited to garden craft and residential, planting works. Around the same time, due to traditional stereotypes, women's careers were also limited to specific professions such as horticulture, social work and education for children,⁵⁷ which often did not require a formal education. In addition, the social mainstream viewpoint also tended to believe that women had no need for further education.⁵⁸

Without accredited programs from schools, early female pioneers were usually self-trained from different backgrounds, which brought diversities to the early

⁵⁵ (Griswold 1992)

⁵⁶ (Close 1996)

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ (Clements 2012)

development of landscape architecture.⁵⁹ Among these female pioneers, many are garden lovers. For the education system of American landscape architecture, gardening was also as its root. The earliest course founded by Michigan Agricultural College entitled “landscape gardening” rather than “landscape architecture.” On the other hand, Harvard offered the first professional degree in landscape architecture in 1900 but no women were allowed until 1942.⁶⁰

The first school established for women only was the Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture for women founded in 1901, which focused on the training of horticulture and drafting skills.⁶¹ Fifty years later the Cambridge School of Landscape Architecture was founded, and it was considered one of the most influential schools of the time.⁶²

For today’s feminist historians and theorists, the gender stereotype is read as the product of outdated thinking from the Victorian era, which limited women to a domestic role while men performed a public role. Suzanne M. Spencer-Wood talks about feminist approaches in designing American’s urban street landscape: “the boundary between domestic and public was blurred and shifted, by combining the separate spheres in a number of ways.”⁶³ In this context, today’s gender issues in landscape architecture should attempt to explore a new horizon, where the boundaries between private and public spheres are no longer clearly defined.

⁵⁹ (T. Way 2009)

⁶⁰ (Clements 2012)

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² (Close 1996)

⁶³ (Spencer-Wood 1994)

Women Professionals in Early Twentieth Century

During the turn of the twentieth century, several renowned female landscape architects contributed to the field of landscape architecture, and were role models for the next generation. Two female pioneer landscape designers are selected for review.

The first is Ellen McGowan Biddle Shipman (1869-1950), who was famous for her design approaches using plant materials as a medium in garden designs. She combined both horticultural approaches and fine arts to shape private gardens. In her year spent in Cornish Colony, a small village of artists in New Hampshire, she began engaging in the design and art-related fields as well as public community affairs. There she met Charles Platt, an architect renowned for his Italian garden design style, and they began a long-term collaboration.⁶⁴

Under the guidance of Charles Platt, Shipman's garden plan seemed to present a strong expression responding to Italian architectural style—geometric, symmetric plans with an extended central axis. Gradually, she developed a distinctive style of her own based on her unique observation of the garden and house as a single unit. In some cases, her design plan seemed to keep the skeleton as simple as possible, while giving the most flexibility and diversity to the plant material. The landscape elements in her garden designs include a central fountain, flower beds, boxwood as edges, vine-covered walls, and herringbone-patterned brick paths, and made the garden design style her own.⁶⁵

Unlike her architect partner who tended to re-grade the site with a whole new plant design layout, Shipman did not make too much change from the existing site. Like

⁶⁴ (Tankard 1996)

⁶⁵ (Tankard 1996)

other landscape planting professions, she chose to avoid outlandish plants, but was not averse to using a plant she did not personally appreciate.⁶⁶

To start a project, Shipman habitually looked first at the existing landform and plants of the site. She did not design any site she had not personally visited, as she didn't believe a good design could be accomplished solely by designers.⁶⁷ She also believe that a designer should be able to respond to a client's desire; this idea also helped to shape her collaborative design approaches.

The second is Beatrix Jones Farrand (1872-1959). As the only female founding member of the American Society of Landscape Architects, her contributions to landscape architecture have ranged from private to botanical garden design to campus planning and public garden design on multiple scales.

As a well-educated young lady from an upper class family who was enthusiastic in music and arts, when Farrand turned 21, she met Mr. Charles Sprague Sargent, the first director of the Arnold Arboretum in Boston, and began to learn landscape gardening under his suggestion. Due to her background in art during her early years, Farrand treated landscape design as an expression of art.

Her design works ranged from small-scale garden design to campus planning. In these projects, one of her most important design philosophies was that building and garden should be seen as a whole instead of as two separate bodies. Plants are the key element in garden design and play an integral role. In her designed forms, Farrand expressed her style as a mix between Italian formalism and naturalism. The former was a

⁶⁶ (Way 2009)

⁶⁷ (Way 2009)

design style that was brought back to the United States by architect Charles Adam Platt after a trip visiting Italian gardens. Farrand was also inspired by her aunt, Edith Wharton, a famous gardener and writer, who believed there should be an integral relationship between house and garden in Italian style gardens in order to present the formal design qualities of proportion, harmony, and simplicity. The work of architecture and garden should be coordinated from the beginning, as the two are seen as a whole.⁶⁸ (Figure7)



Figure7. Edith Wharton's Gardens in winter. (Photograph by author)



Figure8. Gardens of Dumbarton Oaks. (Photograph by author)

⁶⁸ Beatrix Jones, "the Garden in Relation to the House," *Garden and Forest*, April 7, 1897, 132-133.

Farrand's sensitivity to art as relating to landscape architecture was most admirable in her performance in planting design. Every single piece of flowers and grass she used to integrate the house and garden looked like a part of the whole environment—naturally and, comfortably fitting into the whole picture. (Figure8)

Farrand made the most use of her planting design ideas especially in the campus planning. Her main concern for plant selection was for survival and function, and she selected mostly local plants for her planting list. In addition, she also focused on seasonal use in order to make the designed campus ground more efficient. Finally, she created an integrated simple planting list based on her idea that the buildings and gardens should be considered as whole.⁶⁹

Based on the review of these two female pioneers, Shipman and Farrand seem to have many things in common: they were both born to a relatively wealthy, upper class family that shared a love for garden designs, and they were both trained in art and familiar with horticulture. In addition, both Shipman and Farrand excelled; at using the plants as a major design element, and were mentored by influential male peers. However, Shipman maintained a relatively close relationship with her clients in a more aggressive way, Farrand, considered self-promoting as a means of building social connections “undignified and unprofessional.”⁷⁰ Thus, Shipman never joined ASLA, while Farrand was one of the founding members, which shows that, they had distinctive way of building their social networks; Farrand tended to deal with clients within her own social class, and

⁶⁹ (Lyon 1982)

⁷⁰ (T. Way 2009)

thus, mostly deal with traditional East coast professionals. Shipman, on the other hand, obtained project sources by contacting wider strata of society.⁷¹

Daniel Krall, in his article “Were They Feminist?” discusses men who mentored early female landscape architects. Most women who chose to pursue landscape architecture as careers in early twentieth century America, had to confront the many obstacles that still exist in a male-dominated society. Therefore, many women chose to collaborate with influential male practitioners as the starting point of their practice⁷². Furthermore, male leaders existed who were willing to support female partners engaged in landscape architecture with their stronger design skills and broader social networks. For example, Ellen Shipman learned from Charles Platt. Beatrix Jones Farrand’s design approaches were deeply influenced by Charles Sargent. Peter Walker and Martha Schwartz represent a more recent example of male-female collaboration exists in today’s society. Female design approaches may be deeply influenced by their male peers throughout time.

The Women Professionals of New Generation

Two professionals were selected in order to review female design approaches: the first is Martha Schwartz, an artist renowned for her innovative skills, bold color style, and strong graphic-oriented designs which combined the field of both fine art and landscape architecture. The Bagel Garden—probably her most famous work—is still an important case study that exists in textbooks. This work illustrates that how artistic approaches, feminist thinking, and unusual materials could be integrated in the art of landscape.

⁷¹ (T. Way 2009)

⁷² (Krall 2012)

This small-scale project was completed in 1979, and looked more like a modern artistic representation in garden design than an actual garden design. Located in the Back Bay, a high-end residential neighborhood in the city of Boston, its distinctive character is mentioned in Kevin Lynch's book "the Image of the City"⁷³. In this project, Schwartz played with an eclectic selection of material— weather proof bagels and purple gravel—in a flat, 22 square feet front yard with an existing boxwood as a hedge. The design created an intimate- scale garden with the formal arrangement of unusual materials, and a strong visual effect. It has also provided an unconventional landscape in the daily domestic lives of residents. Most importantly, Schwartz interpreted the issue of domestic vs. public from a new perspective, and challenged the boundaries of landscape architecture and fine art, Although the garden finally disappeared with the decomposition of the bagels, it still presented a landscape with something humorous and non-routine in the common landscape of daily lives.⁷⁴ (Figure9)

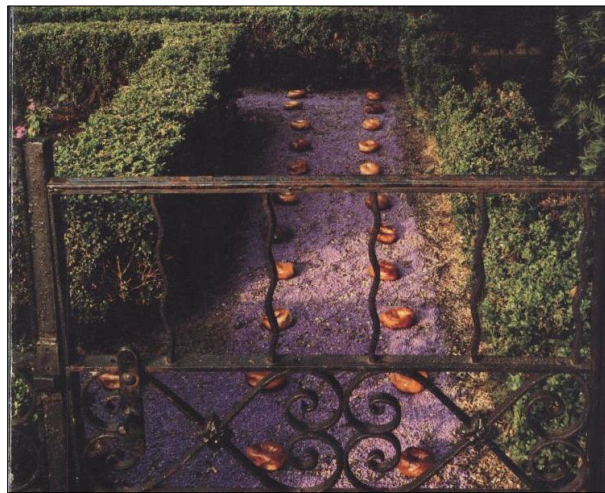


Figure9. Bagel Garden in Back Bay, Boston. (from "Martha Schwartz: Transfiguration of the Commonplace)

⁷³ (Lynch 1960)

⁷⁴ (Landecker 1997)

Another female professional from the Boston area renowned for her comprehensive style of modernism is Carol R. Johnson. Although she was trained at Harvard Graduate School of Design in 1950, where she first encountered modernism in architecture, her approaches however have differed from the international style which believed that one technical solution can be applied in all site to be design. Under the guidance of modern architect Serge Chermayeff, one of Johnson's approaches centers around the idea that designed landscape should be respond to public, environmental awareness, and a particular place should influence design. In a recent speech: "Women and Modernism in Landscape Architecture" presented at Harvard GSD, she stated that, "although the projects keep constantly changing since I started her own firm in 1959, the design approaches always reflected what I had been trained based on the same principle at Harvard in the 1950s: preservation, environment, and community: to protect the natural environment, give identity to a place and provide for the community."⁷⁵ The idiom of this statement is generally closer to the solutions in today's landscape practice that we see.

In other words, compared to Martha Schwartz's strong personal graphic style and artistic expression, Carol Johnson tends to work in a more comprehensive way, by combining the field of art and science, to create a place for people to live, work, and play.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Quoted from Carol R Johnson's speech manuscript.

⁷⁶ Quoted from Carol R Johnson Associate's website.

Conclusion of Women's Role in the History of American Landscape Architecture

The early development of American landscape architecture is partly, but deeply rooted in the soil of horticulture. For example, one of the earlier developed urban areas, Boston, consisted of many gardens created by the Society of Promoting Horticulture in 1792, much earlier than the milestone of Boston Landscapes: Emerald Necklace, which planned by Olmsted in the 1860's.⁷⁷

During the period of the City Beautiful movement in the late 1890s, a group of women working on different scales made the civil landscape better and more enjoyable. Their effort included street improvement, civil gardens, and playgrounds. This movement is generally considered a grass-root, invisible campaign that focused on smaller projects, completed by women. This is in direct contrast to the "classically-inspired, grand scale such as the white marble constructed, straight boulevards, and monumental architectures" that were planned by their male counterparts in a male-dominated political structures in that historical context.⁷⁸

About the same time, children's playgrounds had become another type of work with which women frequently got involved. Suzanne M. Spencer-Wood, in her article "Turn of the Century Women's Organizations, Urban Design, and the Origin of the American Playground Movement" states that, women have deeply contributed to children's playground design as social reformers because women have an innately superior ability in educating their children to become moral citizens. Furthermore, they care about how their kids build interpersonal relationships with others in childhood.

⁷⁷ (Cuthberton 1998)

⁷⁸ (Szczygiel 2012)

Therefore, a playground as a social place for both children and their parents become significant for mothers who are taking their first steps from the domestic domain to public domain. On the other hand, the playground as a public space in a community may also makes women aware of their roles of housewives, who have a responsibility to keep the space clean as a part of the whole community.

During the 1930s and 1940s, America entered another historical phase. Work opportunities for women in the landscape architecture business were dramatically reduced due to the impact of the Great Depression. However, in the 1940s house shortage, some females became competitive to male practitioners in work involving residential yard, garden and planting design due to their well-trained design skills background as well as their horticultural knowledge.⁷⁹ In the years between 1933 and 1936, historically entitled the New Deal era, several laws and regulations issued by New Deal agencies had brought out several public construction projects such as the establishment of the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Blue Ridge Parkway and other recreation development. Besides, the reallocation of land resources as a direct result of economic revitalization made people re-evaluate the importance of many professions, including landscape architecture. The status of a landscape architect, in response, was more and more important with the changing of American society.

With the advent of the second half of twentieth century, there came other opportunities for landscape architects to promote their status as social agents. After World War II, America experienced a suburban expansion due to the housing needs of

⁷⁹ (Clements 2012)

veterans and their families, as well as the population growth and urban sprawl due to the highway and interstate expansion. Such social background provided more opportunities for women professionals engaged in public affairs.

As housing needs grew with suburban expansion, the role of the home garden became more important. A front yard is seen as a distinctive place that reflected Americans' taste; unlike an asphalt concrete paved driveway, a beautiful front yard can visually upgrade the landscapes for whole neighborhoods. Therefore, it naturally became another space that female organizations, garden clubs, and social reformers focused on.⁸⁰

Landscape historian Thaisa Way, in her book: "Unbounded Practice: Women and Landscape Architecture in the Twentieth Century" suggests that typically women treat the home garden different than men; other than place for family entertainment and visual comfort, the home garden was an integral part of their own residence, and the whole community landscape. In contrast, men tend to treat the garden as a place for appearance and maintenance, and pay more attention to the construction details of the house for functional concern. In other words, compared to male utilitarian thought, females have relatively more sensitive and holistic thought of the residential landscape.⁸¹

David Streatfield has reminded us that World War II is a significant watershed for women's role in the development of American landscape architecture. Before the war, most of the women professionals—well educated, from high society— chose to work for high society. Their projects mostly focused on residential, lavish estate designs as the setting for artistic expression. This phenomenon was reflected especially in the garden

⁸⁰ (Lewis 1992)

⁸¹ (T. Way 2009)

designs of 1890-1930 historically titled the Country Place Era. During the war period, women from the all parts of society began to play important roles in the workforce, and as a result, the door for female landscape architects was opening.

In addition, modernism had redefined the central idea of landscape architecture as the reasonable, functional use of plant materials as the design element, and integration of house and gardens. Most importantly, landscapes are designed for people. “Garden design is therefore the matter of selecting forms, colors and contour applicable to the site.”⁸² At the same time, the role of private gardens was also converted to the special zone of entertainment, sports, children’s play, service and other functional space; this change in the framework of post-war gardens from private to public is one of the most crucial reasons that women designers’ roles are gradually became more accepted in post-war society.⁸³

After the 1960s, even though women were still not fully accepted in the workplace of landscape architecture,⁸⁴ American society had experienced dramatic social and economic changes. Lots of middle class women began to work in all kinds of professions, and female landscape architects were gradually getting involved in the public affairs as well. They aggressively strived for female workers’ welfare in the workplace. Such changes also challenged the roles of traditional women in American society.

After the 1970s, rising environmental awareness, ecological issues, and feminism reinforced one another to contribute to the transitions of women in landscape architecture.

⁸² (Treib 1992)

⁸³ (Streatfield 2012)

⁸⁴ Quoted from Carol Johnson’s speech manuscript

Two great females at this point: Jane Jacobs and Rachael Carson have put their effort in reimagining the future of city lives.

Briefly, transitions in women's design approaches are the products of social changes. Like other historical processes, the changes were not made in a given period of time: it is a slow process. The historical spectrum shows that earlier twentieth century women professionals were often working for high society. During the City Beautiful Movement women worked as a group in the role of social reformers to improve civic landscapes including children's playground design, civic gardens, and street landscapes. Their approaches were sometime in stark contrast to those of their male counterparts who design and plan huge, monumental scale projects.

Drastic social changes were made after the World War II. Women from all parts of society began to work within all parts of society, and their innate superiority combined with solid design skills made many landscapes comfort and enjoyable. In addition to that, due to the reconstruction of meaning in private gardens, as well as the reframing of the domestic vs. public value system, female practitioners were able to work however they chose. Their design approaches were employed depending on the uniqueness of each project. Even though women currently in landscape design may still experience inevitable bias to some extent; their unbounded practice has given the new blood to the growth of landscape architecture as a fully developed profession today.

CHAPTER 4

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The purpose of selecting a study methodology is to examine the ideas obtained from the literature review. To better inform the study, the survey as a research tool was proposed in order to gain first-hand data that may directly respond to research themes.

The purpose of the survey is to provide qualitative data for the following analysis, which will be helpful to build a comprehensive discussion that relates to three research themes: female design approaches, female landscape forms, and the transition in their design approaches. The exploratory nature of this study will not lead to a firm conclusion, but will provide a hypothetical statement that is helpful to identify the findings of the study.

Selecting Participants

The first step of the survey process is to select the potential participants; the researcher had to look into a range of people who met the defined set of criteria. In order to ensure the reliability of the survey results, the participants should be able to knowledgeable enough to be able to understand the question as well as give an appropriate answer. With this in mind, the survey includes female landscape designers who currently hold a managerial position in a landscape architecture consulting service: they may include principles, project managers, licensed landscape architects, landscape contractors and so on.

This is a nationwide survey that focused on female landscape designers who practice in the United States.

Survey Process

To start with, potential subjects that met the defined criteria were selected from the survey pool after reviewing their background resume. Their contact information was obtained from American Society of Landscape Architects' website. Secondly, each of the potential subjects was sent an invitation requesting their participation in the survey process. Those who agreed to participate were later emailed the questionnaire that contained four written questions that directly related to the research themes. Personal information (i.e., names, emails, job titles, etc) of all participants will not be revealed in this research paper in order to protect participant's privacy.

After the written survey was return by the participants, I reviewed their responses for further data analysis. Based on the "Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques," the selective coding technique was employed in this research in order to better inform the study.

Survey Questions

To provide a basic structure for the survey process, the written question was emailed to the participants after acquiring their agreement. The written survey contained four questions were as follows:

1. Would you consider yourself a "**female**" landscape architect/designer? If so, what makes you aware of this point of view?
2. Would you think there are "**female landscape forms**" created by female landscape architect/designer?

3. What are your opinions of the hypothesis “**women’s design approaches are different than men’s**”?

4. Do you think there has been a “**transition**” in women’s design approaches since the early 20th century when ASLA was founded to the present day?

The word phrase highlighted in bold refers to the research themes contained in the question. The written response to each question was collected for further data analysis.

Analyzing Process

The “Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques” has provided a basic theoretical framework for data analysis: it includes readings and coding processes of the qualitative data from the written response. The purpose of the study is not to develop a theory but instead to add the hypothetical statements gained from the survey to the research issue: female design approaches, female landscape forms, and transitions in female design approaches.

Selective Coding is defined as “The process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to the other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development.”⁸⁵ The major goal in analysis process is to make categories which are referred to as the “themes.”

The following is an example of how the survey responses were analyzed and collected in one category:

⁸⁵ (Anselm Strauss 1990)

Participant A: **“I think we are more thoughtful about design. Men usually approach a problem with an engineering eye, while my female friends approach a problem with an artful eye, then make the engineering work for it. That leaves us with more beautiful projects.”**

Participant B: **“Women in general work better with groups of people to build consensus and welcome collaboration with other disciplines in the design process. They may be better listeners and more interested in addressing the needs of the user groups by encouraging their involvement, discussion, and input.”**

Both participants offer their viewpoints that women’s way of designing may be different than men’s in some ways and such comments will be categorized in the same topic.

All the written responses will be put together in order to form the “story” which is defined as “the descriptive narrative about the central phenomenon of the study.”⁸⁶ One of the most crucial steps in the data analysis process is to move from description to conceptualization.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER 5
SURVEY RESULT

A total of 83 survey questionnaires were sent out, and 21 were returned. The response rate is about 25%. All survey respondents are currently holding a principle position in a registered company nationwide. In terms of the regional locations of the survey respondents, about half (9 participants) are from the California; one-third (7 participants) are from Massachusetts, and the rest are from New York, Connecticut, Tennessee and Texas. (Table1.)

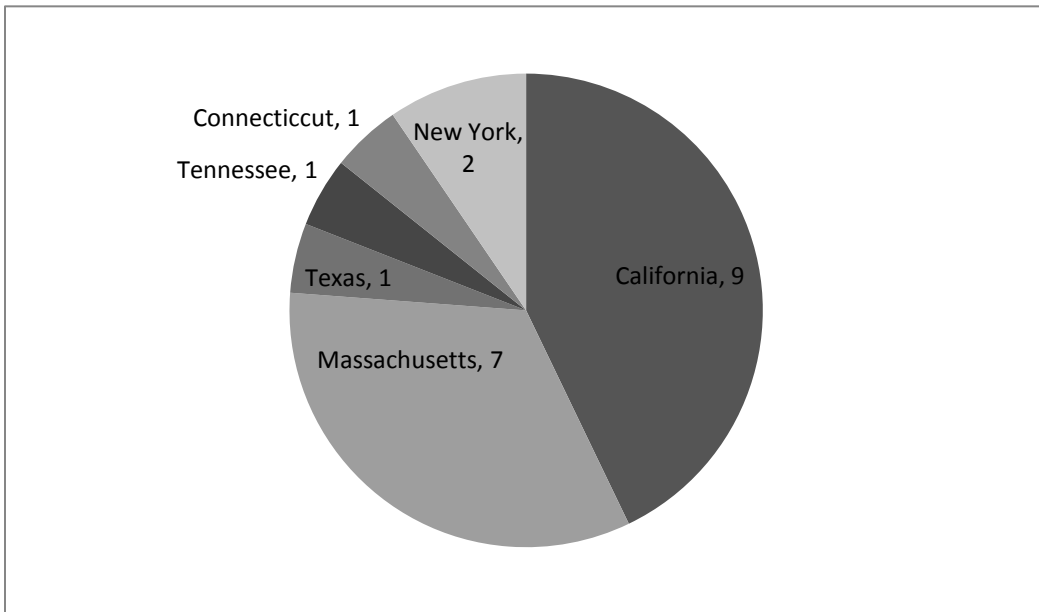


Table1. The Region of Survey Respondents based on the State.

The following result will be built on the 21 survey responses analyzed. As earlier mentioned, the goal of this study is to examine the three themes: female design approaches, female landscape forms, and transitions in design approaches.

However, since many new issues were identified from the survey responses, there was a fundamental shift in the research themes. On one hand, the emerging issues offered the different viewpoints to the study. On the other hand, the emerging issues set up potential paradigms for future study in gender issues of landscape architecture. In this context, this study may be considered a pilot project regarding the gender issues within landscape practice which may be expanded on in the future. (Figure10)

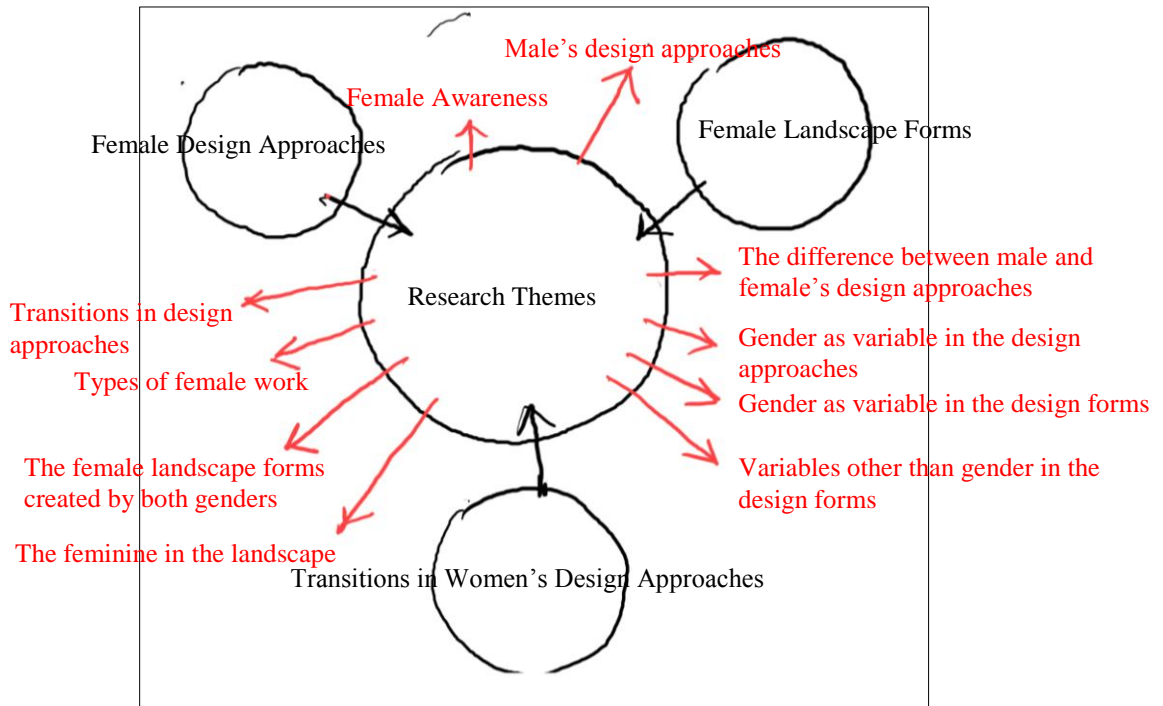


Figure10. New Issues Identified

Female Awareness

The issue of female awareness is addressed in first question: “Would you consider yourself a “**female**” landscape architect/designer? If so, what makes you aware of this point of view?” As respondents put it, the factors that make them aware of being a “female” in professional practice come from outside: the place they choose to work and the professional groups and social organizations that they belong to. For instance, one

respondent stated that being a new mother made her very aware being a female landscape designer:

- **We are still often the only women in a construction site.**
- **We are registered as a woman own business and other certified women's professional groups in the country.**
- **I am certifies as a WBE/DBE firm**
- **I am a female landscape architect because I gave birth to a son and had to pump breast milk in a conference room. That definitely made me aware that I was female.**

From another viewpoint, three respondents stated that they are aware of being a “female” because there is no doubt that they are female from a biological point of view: In this context, the survey question may have caused confusion for one of the participants.

- **Being a female is a part of my identities.**
- **I am aware that I am female; it is all that I know myself to be, so it is hard to separate that which I am with my profession. I see myself an individual more than specifically as female.**
- **I do not have a daily awareness of gender in my profession. I consider myself a ‘female landscape architect’ in that I am, in fact, female, and I am a landscape architect, but not that I am much different from a male landscape architect.**
- **I'm not sure what exactly the question is asking other than I am a female landscape architect because I am a female.**

- **I think it would be fallacious for any female not to consider herself a “female” landscape architect. It suggests that being “female” is lesser and to be denied. Rather, I am proud to be a feminist and a Landscape Architect, and that I am impacting the realm of environmental design. I am also a licensed Architect, and that is a profession with even fewer women than Landscape Architecture, and I am proud of that as well.**

Five participants pointing out that they are proud of their role as female landscape architects: they consider themselves good landscape architects rather than female landscape architects; again, such statements suggest that in today’s workplace, there is no need to deliberately mention the gender identity.

- **I think inclusively, so I tend to think of myself as a landscape architect first, part of a lineage of professionals and not as a 'female' landscape architect.**
- **While I am a woman, I have been a lifelong feminist, and therefore have worked mightily to avoid “female” cultural indoctrination. In addition, I personally have a large number of psychological traits normally thought to be properly assigned to men.**
- **I am a landscape architect who happens to be female.**
- **I consider myself a GOOD LA: Sensitive to client needs, creative, knowledgeable, and a problem solver.**
- **I would consider myself a landscape architect just like every other landscape architect. When I was making art and identified myself as a sculptor, it really annoyed me if any one said “sculptress.” To my ears “sculptress was exceedingly old-fashioned, synonymous with being a dilettante, and not a**

serious artist. These were my prejudices having been born near the middle of the 20th century. Fortunately I don't think anyone uses that term any more. Can you imagine "landscape architectress"?

Gender as Variable in the Design Approaches

The findings of survey participants' female awareness in the workplace has reminded another question that previously asked: Does gender make their design approaches different? As a result, six participants refuted the assumption clearly: neither gender designs differently, and women do not have different approaches than men toward design. The comments include:

- **I would not consider myself a female designer and I would not distinguish between genders in a design oriented world.**
- **I think the design process is non-gender specific. We all bring our personal sensibilities to our work, female or male. But they are more about personal aesthetic, background, education, travel...**
- **Landscape architecture is comprised in equal part the designer's vision and the demands of the program and site. Designers rely on many influences as they develop their oeuvre – their personal history, and their education, among other things- which have tremendous influence on them. I do not believe gender would be primary.**
- **In my experience, I haven't seen a difference between the approach of man and woman toward design. Most of my design mentors are male and I believed my design approaches are similar to theirs.**

- **I think that is not true. I don't think there is a difference and there should not be a difference.**
- **I don't think you can say that women design differently from men. At least I haven't noticed that.**

Some participants provided different points of view to this assumption. On one hand, their attitudes are more ambivalent toward this issue: for instance, two participants agree with the hypothesis that female design may be differently from male design. On the other hand, one participant pointed out this assumption is too simple and wrong and that there are gender stereotypes implied in the question itself. According to another participant, gender, as well as the nationality and race, is a part of one's identity, and these do not influence design approaches:

- **I believe it (there are differences), but think it may be very subtle for the majority of people, it is a spectrum.**
- **I think woman's design approaches can be (but are not necessarily) different from men's. I am curious to hear what you come up with about this.**
- **I don't know about any typical design approaches. Again, this seems too simplistic. Would you hypothesize that all Asian people have the same design approach or preference? All Hispanics? All men?**
- **I think that, insofar as people are acculturated to think of women and men as different in their thinking and psychology, there may be different design approaches assigned to women and men. But I also think that your inquiry only holds true for those few women who are either designing individually,**

or are the unquestioned lead designer on a project. In our current professional world, most landscape architects work as teams, and their gender is more likely to affect their power position in the company and on their teams than their design approach.

- **That hypothesis is overly simplistic and wrong. Women in this field may experience gender-related biases and stereotyping, but those are the result of the kind of sexist thinking contained in this hypothesis. Many male designers love whimsical forms, highly floriferous designs and organic, flowy landscapes, all things typically associated with women’s “style.” And many women are uninterested in those qualities.**
- **(This hypothesis was) Too broad and vague, although there might be some truth depending on what you mean, specifically. It might have more to do with the Mars and Venus thinking, and the collaborative vs. hierarchical comfort levels.**
- **Everybody has a unique approach and while there may be some similarities between genders there are always outliers that make such stereotypes invalid.**

The Difference between Male and Female’s Design

Approaches

From the above comments, some respondents suggested that gender does not have an impact on make design. However, I believe there are still differences between males and females in designing landscape. According to survey participants, female designers

may be better at communication and more thoughtful than men in the policy-making process, which can lead to better collaboration and networking in the field of practice. In addition to that, women may be more complicated and emotional in thinking about design than men. Basically, the survey result in this area supports the literature review. However, as one participant suggests, these qualities are pretty natural to women, and may not only apply to fields of landscape architecture but also other professions.

Among the following ten responses regarding the difference between male and female design, five responses say that females may be more collaborative than males; there are two responses that say females may be more sensitive or thoughtful to the design:

- **I do think that women tend to consider more the emotional experiences of their clients, but perhaps not in all cases. I know many male landscape architects that are very much ‘in tune’ with their clients emotional experiences of landscape. However, I think this comes quite naturally to women.**
- **Men are more linear in the thoughts process while women are more geometric. Men tend to follow a list regardless of priority, women synthesize and translate easier.**
- **I think women tend to formulate more networking groups and collaborative efforts with other women designers, as opposed to men, presently.**
- **Women in general work better with groups of people to build consensus and welcome collaboration with other disciplines in the design process. They may**

be better listeners and more interested in addressing the needs of the user groups by encouraging their involvement, discussion, and input.

- **Yes, we as female designers bring a different way of listening, working with people and mentoring than men.**
- **I think we are more thoughtful about design. Men usually approach a problem with an engineering eye, while my female friends approach a problem with an artful eye, then make the engineering work for it. That leaves us with more beautiful projects.**
- **I do believe women bring a more collaborative spirit to the design process and are more comfortable with mutability as projects progress.**
- **I feel that differences still exist in the accomplishment of design work; that is, with the attitudes of some architects, clients, municipal employees, etc. toward women as professionals and with the respect for designers who are women.**
- **I would say that a woman's sensibility can be very different from a man's, but is not necessarily so. How does this manifest in a design? Maybe it is an integration of multiple forms, perspectives or intentions, rather than the entire design tending towards one unifying and dominant structure or form.**
- **I think it's accurate to say men and women have a different approach in the way or process in which they think about things, including design. Women seem to make things more complicated and men keep things fairly simple. Each can be an advantage or disadvantage depending on the design and challenge at hand.**

Gender as Variable in the Designed Forms

When it comes to issues of form-making in landscape architecture: does gender makes designed forms different? A few participants did not agree with this assumption, just as they did not believe gender influence design approaches. According to such comments, they think landscape forms are not gender specific:

- **No, I do not think that male or female landscape architects produce different forms because of their gender.**
- **The form itself is not gender specific.**
- **I am not convinced that landscape architects employ these forms as a consequence of their own maleness or femaleness.**
- **I do think that female designers do often come up designs that are distinctly different from those that men create. But I don't think anyone has a monopoly on particular forms.**

Variables other than Gender in the Design Forms

As one participant pointed out, the designed forms in landscape architecture are products of multiple perspectives that includes both outside and inside factors. Outside factors includes such things as client's needs, site limits, while inside factors are designer's personal experience, personal history, taste, and education. The participants stated that as a result, a designer's gender does not play the primary role in determining how final forms will look. Such comments are helpful to illustrate the factors that influence designed forms other than the designer's gender:

- **Each designer brings a unique vision to a project, and over time, each develops a formal vocabulary which they use to articulate their work. In some cases, and for some designers, that formal language is more intimate, smaller scaled, and planterly. In some cases it is bold and large and tough. I do not believe it is related to gender.**
- **I think the forms and styles used in one designs are more a reflections of designers' personality rather than gender. The style used also has a lot to do with what the client wants. A great landscape architect can design to a client's taste, but also put their own personal touch into the design that can be recognized by others.**
- **Good landscape design without specific forms comes from both male and female designers. As a good designer you look for the poetry of the landscape expression. I would not distinguish between genders in order to achieve one or the other.**
- **In our site designs we incorporate bold, romantic sweeping landforms and well as angular and more architectural forms. It is more site and client driven than who we are as designers or gender based. I think our practice is unique in that way. Each project has it's own spirit and sense of place**

The Feminine in the Landscape Forms

However, four participants provide different viewpoints to this issue: how do we define "femininity" in landscape forms? Based on the literature review, landscape forms are culturally interpreted as female, and they can be created by anyone of either gender.

The following comments show that how participants address this issue from different perspectives:

- **It depends upon how you're using the term female. As an archetype/symbol, as biology, as social-cultural reality? Perhaps we are all influenced by everyone else; that is, men designers are influenced by women and vice versa (and by hermaphrodites, and by transgender people, and so forth). All these are currents of influence that could all be analyzed separately as female.**
- **I am aware of a social bias that considers some forms to be male and some to be female.**
- **I think if we're talking about gender issues in form making, we lose sight of the other gender identities and the forms that come from different perspectives or gender identities. It's bigger than male/female. It is male/female/straight/gay/transgender and everything in between. I don't think you can look at a landscape form and have any idea who created it.**

On the other hand, one participant shows an uncertain attitude toward this issue, and is open to the idea that there may be difference between design works created by males vs. those created by females. This provides another potential gender issue for future study:

- **Perhaps there is/has been a different agenda for male vs. female design. I would really need to study this subject in order to give a better answer.**

The Female Landscape Forms Created by Both Genders

In regards to “female landscape forms”, which is one of the most important themes in this study, five participants agreed with the assumption that “female landscape forms.” However, none were convinced that female landscape forms can only be created through by a female designer.

Furthermore, participants agreed that so-called female landscape forms can be created by male/female/gay/lesbian/transgender designers.

The participants used terms such as “curvy, organic, flowing” to describe feminine landscape. In contrast, they referred masculine landscape as “dark, bold, and angular.” But again, those characteristics can be used by both gender in a site:

- **There could be (the female landscape form) but I have not done an analysis. Landscape in itself is both male and female - Ying/yang sort of thing which if done correctly contains elements both masculine and feminine. That is nature. One could analyze certain styles of architecture and design to be very masculine = dark bold colors, angular large forms, modern Bauhaus type buildings, etc and a cooler palette, softer lines, art nouveau era to be feminine.**
- **Tho I think of curvier, flowing forms as feminine (created by anyone) and angular forms as masculine (created by anyone). I think we all have varying doses of male and female energy.**

- **I prefer curvilinear forms and shapes, which might be considered feminine - but I do not see this preference as gender based within the field of LA. I think that "female landscape forms" are used by both genders.**
- **Yes, I see female forms-forms that are organic, curvilinear, of the earth, by both female landscape architects and male landscape architects. I also see strong, rectilinear forms designed by both sexes as well.**
- **I wonder if I am already looking for examples of women's work, and have noticed that their work is often more like the kind I like. Or, if they really do stray farther from normative practices. It seems they might. For example, the work of Marsha McNally, who works with the public, and Topher Delaney, who works closely with her clients, and does humorous work, and colorful, arty, fun design. But you could argue that there may be as many men who do so as well.**

Types of Female Work:

Another issue identified from the survey result was the types of work that female designers are often drawn to. As the literature review suggests, female practitioners tend to be drawn toward several project types as: children's playgrounds, school and community designs, home garden, smaller-scaled residential design works and so on. The survey results supported this viewpoint. Among all the types of works that women designers are especially adapted to, children's playground design is the most frequently mentioned. In addition, works such as edible landscape and healing gardens were also

mentioned, as well as works involving issues of public participation, social justice, and community planning with the development of environmental awareness.

There are two main reasons for this phenomenon: first, today's society has provided more and more opportunities for women in contrast to the early twentieth century where those in landscape practices were very limited. Second, women may specialize in several project types due to their roles as mothers, which has remained unchanged despite the transition in landscape practice:

- **Women may choose different areas of landscape architecture because they are women. For example, my choice to specialize in designing play environments for children is definitely a result of being a woman and being a mother and having a concern for children that is probably very maternal.**
- **Many influential woman landscape architects were leaders in designing natural habitats in their work near urban areas in the 1970's using native plant materials in wilder less manicured ways which countered the architectural hardscape dominated work of the time. Playground design and edible gardens may have evolved differently because women played a role in encouraging these areas of landscape architecture to develop.**
- **All women's design approaches are not the same. Perhaps more female landscape architects design children's playgrounds with an interest in children and opportunities for learning.**
- **I should add we are in high-end custom residential design. This may not be the case in commercial work.**

- **Based on some women’s tendency toward nurturing relationships and cooperation, but that’s pretty stereotypical and I don’t really buy it. Maybe ego gets in more with male dominated approaches to design and construction and the female approach is encountered more in the community building aspects of design.**
- **My current practice is focused on computer 3D modeling, AutoCAD support services for other landscape architects, some public work of large parking lot repaving projects, and marketing my own patented invention in at the juncture of soil science and landscape architecture. Do those things sound “female” to you? Or “masculine”? I simply do not accept those terms as useful filters in understanding what people do.**

Transitions in Design Approaches:

The research theme of transitions in female design approaches was one of the most significant findings of this survey. According to the survey response, female landscape designers might have been be tagged as “gardener” or “horticulturist” in the early period because of the stereotype that women should be good at domestic works such as gardening. That said, even today’s general public might misunderstand what landscape architects do other than planting and decorating the garden of a house or building.

However, participants agree that roles have changed: women are no longer considered merely as gardeners in today’s landscape practice, and have more freedom in today’s landscape practice than they did in the past. They have more freedom to work in

various areas, and are able to communicate to clients in a more direct manner. As a result, the gender issues women encounter in today's workplace may be more challenging than before.

- **Early on we were merely 'gardeners' while today we are problem solvers.**
- **I do think we have more freedom to openly be ourselves, and more opportunity in the workplace.**
- **If you're talking about just the United States. From what I remember, women who got into landscape architecture professionally got into it later than men; and it is still a male-dominated profession.**
- **Yes. I think gender issues for women in any profession were much more challenging in the early 20th century but as a woman practicing today, I feel equal and capable and think men probably feel the same. Women are leading the design teams just as much as men in the larger offices.**
- **My guess is we are less driven to be like men and more free to practice as we see fit. We do not have to play by the rules of the past. On our projects we are recognized as equal members on design teams.**
- **To communicate more effectively, yes you have to speak to others in language/process that they understand. So yes, women have to be able to discuss the process in a more linear fashion.**
- **I think first of how so many designers of the early 20th century were cast as "horticulturists" because they were women. I think it must have been very hard for them to break out of the stereotype that women were good at**

flowers and plants and men were to be relied on for bigger, bolder changes on the landscape, such as landscape architects do today. Certainly if they wanted to be l.a.'s, women had to forgo having relationships and families, unless they were wealthy. But slowly, thanks to a number of pioneering female landscape architects, women have become more accepted in the field.

- **Yes, now we are free to work however we choose, thank goodness! However, the guiding lights of Gertrude Jekyll, Florence Yoch, and Beatrix Farrand, among others, are not to be forgotten!**

Three participants provided their different viewpoint to this issue: there could be a visible transition in the way that women design landscape; however, the nature of landscape architecture is not, and will not change as a design profession. From this viewpoint, the way male and female designers approach their works will be keeping pace with times, development of knowledge, technology, land use and other changes in the society.

- **I think there have been strong women landscape designers from the beginning of the profession through the present. I think the way designers approach their work has transitioned because of changes in knowledge, technology, land use and other changes that have affected the entire profession. I believe there are proportionally more women landscape architects than there were at the founding of the ASLA, but I think their design approach has evolved parallel to that of their male counterparts.**
- **I am unaware of this “transition.” When I look back at early days of American landscape architecture, I see work that result from strong**

professional training and education for male and female designers (though, of course, there were many fewer female designers then). I see that good contemporary designs have similar roots.

- **Early 20th Century women landscape architects worked for high society. Today's women landscape architects work for all society. The approaches can be somewhat different depending on the different needs of people, but, in general, fulfilling the need of poor people and of rich people both require an understanding of those needs, an understanding of the site to be designed, the budget, and the maintenance support which will be available now and later.**

About one-third of the participants found it hard to answer this question. For instance, one participant suggests that the question itself is too broad and is difficult to answer without giving a specific condition. Five participants stated that they could not answer this question due to lack of historical insight.

With this in mind, a future study may consider narrowing the research question to a specific time and space. As one participant commented, the transition in landscape design has been made by both genders without a clearly defined boundary; in other words, it is a broad issue that needs to be examined through the lens of contemporary landscape practice as a global network:

- **This is difficult to answer because it is hard to separate whether it is just a different time or a gender issue. Maybe women have added breadth to the application of landscape architecture.**
- **I would go further with that question on a global level and not just look at the USA. I think more women took the opportunity to study design and**

became professionals and there are many reasons for that....so not the approach changed but the number of women influencing the design in general changed. Landscape as a whole went through a huge transition and both genders contributed to it.

- **I cant really answer this one as again, I would need to do some more research regarding design approach/ methodology.**
- **I am confused by the question, and also feel that I don't know enough history.**
- **No idea what you are talking about here, don't know the term in this context.**
- **I don't know my history enough to answer this question. I would say however that design approach has changed since the early 20th century.**
- **I do not feel qualified to answer this question as I know very little about the history of the profession.**

Gender Discrimination in the Workplace

The discussion in terms of transition in female design approaches has generated issues of gender discrimination in landscape practice. According to survey responses, five participants stated that they have experienced issues of inequity.

Those participants also mentioned the locations such as New York City and western Massachusetts where the gender discrimination had occurred. Does this phenomenon suggest that attitudes toward gender issues differ in different regions of the country? One thing is for sure, those participants who had experienced gender inequity agree that gender discrimination in today's landscape practice has greatly improved.

- **I am aware of being a female landscape architect because I spent about 12 years working in the public sector. There were many rules being applied in the work force during the 1980's and '90's in order to correct long-standing practices of discrimination and harassment based on gender differences.**
- **There were many projects where I know I was hired because the clients were more comfortable with women, and there were many projects where I did not get hired because the clients thought a male might be more knowledgeable.**
- **I have my own prejudiced perspective on this because I was very happy at an all girl's high school and then went to an all male Ivy League college where they were just beginning to admit women. In the architecture department there I always felt like an outsider (professors would address the class with "Now, men..."). Women were not so welcome. But that was 30 years ago and I think it is much much better now.**
- **34 years ago when I got my MLA and started working at a large 400 person architecture/engineering/landscape architecture firm in New York City there was sex discrimination. The women in this firm were not able to advance in the hierarchy or get equal treatment. As a result of this I started my own firm. At that time there were areas of practice not easily open to women such as the corporate headquarter site design projects. I don't think that you will find this discrimination today and I am very happy about the progress that has been made towards equality.**

- **I still perceive some prejudice in this part of the country. For example, when I tell people in western Mass. where I live that I am studying landscape architecture, they remember only that I design gardens, although that may be just a lack of ignorance about what landscape architects do. In fact the profession may still be suffering from the mistaken notion that landscape work is just gardening work—like what women do!**

Male's Design Approaches

The last issue identified during the survey is the male design approaches in landscape practice. One participant suggested that males who choose to work in the field of landscape architecture may have more inner female personality. Does any former study give evidence to this viewpoint? Has there been any research done about the male inquiry in landscape? In this context, we can start to think about potential gender issues in landscape architecture that focus on male designers as research subjects for future study: what are male designers' approaches in landscape architecture based on the following hypothesis?

- **My hypothesis is that the men who are attracted to LA are more in touch with their anima (Karl Jung) than most American males. Conversely, I do wonder if a number of women who are drawn to this field might be desiring to express control and masculinity through a profession that is relatively accessible to them. So I actually believe that LA is a profession with an unusually level playing field.**

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSIONS

The analysis has led to the discovery of containing potential gender issues: gender discriminations, types of female work, gender as variable in design approaches and so on. The issues identified have provided a more diverse and complex viewpoints to the research questions.

However, there will be a fundamental shift in research themes when transitioning from the survey findings to the discussion. As the researcher, I will attempt to answer the original research questions of the study during the discussion. Therefore, the discussions will return to the three research themes proposed earlier: female design approaches, female landscape forms, and the transitions in female design approaches.

Female Design Approaches

According to the survey results, male and female design approaches can be different in some specific ways. First, during the design process, when compared to the hierarchical, vertical ways of thinking assigned to male designers,⁸⁷ female designers may take more collaborative and horizontal approaches toward design. The way women communicate may cause them to build their social networks differently than males. According to survey results, women may be better communicators in design and they may also take their clients' emotional experience into consideration more often than

⁸⁷ Quoted from survey response.

men.⁸⁸ At this point, the “Seven hypotheses on female and male principles in architecture” proposed by Margrit Kennedy may support the survey result: “Female designer are more user-oriented than designer-oriented” perhaps due to of their careful listening and emotional experience with their clients. “Female designers are more flexible than fixed” perhaps due to the fact that they are more comfortable with mutability as a design process. “Female designers are more complex than one-dimensional” perhaps due to the fact that their nature is to make things more complicated while men keep things fairly simple. “Female designers are more holistic than specialized” perhaps because women work more easily with other groups during the design and decision making processes.⁸⁹

Secondly, in the types of projects, though not all female design approaches are the same, it is generally accepted that women design more schools and playgrounds, nurseries and healing gardens as a result of their superiority in cultivating as well as their motherly nature in educating and nurturing. These types of work will still serve as popular stages for women professionals now and later.

Gender may not necessarily influence design; women and men may have different approaches in the way they think about things. However, designers’ approaches are influenced by other factors as they develop their works; their personal experiences such as education, aesthetic preference, travel and so on. Those factors may play more

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ (Kennedy 1981)

important roles in helping designers to build their distinctive approaches: their gender may not be the only, or the primary one in the creative process.⁹⁰

Therefore, women's design approaches can be different but not necessarily. Inclusively, their approaches can still be the same as men's: the survey result has suggested what makes gender stereotype invalid in many cases. Most importantly, the discussion of difference between male and female design approaches must be carefully examined for future study.

In conclusion, the female design approaches—as the survey results suggest—basically correspond to the literature review. In general, females might be more sensitive, emotional, and thoughtful. They pay more attention to issues regarding fairness justice, and equity; they also emphasize taking care of the needs of disadvantaged groups such as children, and seeking for the connectedness among different things. Such qualities have often led to collaborative approaches in design, taking clients' emotions more into consideration, and specializing in community, school and playground designs. However, most female practitioners agree that this phenomenon is quite natural to women.

For today's female practitioners, some factors make them aware of being “female” in the workplace. For example, they may be the only woman on a construction site, or they may be hired exclusively to lead certain project types because their clients think women may be more capable of designing children's playgrounds. Furthermore, they might experience some social rules that have been applied in order to correct gender

⁹⁰ Quoted from survey response.

discriminations⁹¹. That being said, most female designers from the survey do not think they design differently than men, or that their gender makes their design approaches different. Women designers have unconsciously accepted their gender identities as female, and their goal is to become a good landscape designer in professional practice.

The Female Landscape Forms

Female landscape forms, as its original definition proposed by Robert Riley, refers to landscape works that are created by women artists with female aesthetic. However, from survey result, it is obvious that most participants read it as landscape works created by female landscape designers.⁹² In this case, female landscape forms may be conflated with all types of projects as long as they are built by women. Thus, further, the term will necessarily generate some controversy and require a clear definition.

When considering the potential relationship between a designed forms and the gender of its creator, one survey participant suggests: “I don’t think you can look at a landscape form and have any idea who created it.”⁹³ This comment relates to another original question in the study: why might a designed landscape form not be able to convey the messages of its creator’s gender? A possible explanation is that most survey participants were selected from the pool of landscape practice where the forms are mostly designed to meet the users’ needs— the designed form is the product of multiple solutions where function and aesthetic may be equally important. As a result, the

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

creator's personal aesthetic, including gender, may not be a primary factor during the creation process.

As earlier mentioned, a bench in an urban park may be interpreted in a different way than a sculpture in a gallery, despite both having been created by women designers. The female aesthetic contained in a creator's design thinking shouldn't play the primary in making forms different in landscape practice. That being said, most female practitioners from the survey agreed that "Female Landscape Forms" are actually products of social bias which can be created by anyone.

Landscape form itself is a cultural entity shaped by human hands. Factors from both outside—budgets, site limits, clients' taste, and users' needs— and inside— designer's personality, aesthetic, and experience—support each other and contribute to the final form of a landscape work. The goal of today's landscape architects is to provide better places for people to live, work, and play, and the forms are designed to meet these needs based on principles above. In this situation, the designer's gender does not play the key role in the physical forms designed.

The other issue comes to mind is, how many survey participants were really answering the question proposed by Robert Riley: "Are there female landscape forms?" According to the original definition, female landscape forms refer to the forms that 'women designers themselves, free to create, would make for themselves—forms expressing their gender experience and their biological sexuality.'⁹⁴ However, none of

⁹⁴ (B.Riley 1994)

answers from survey participants is relevant to the original definition. The idea of “Female Landscape Forms” may still remain one of the trickiest terms in our discipline in this context.

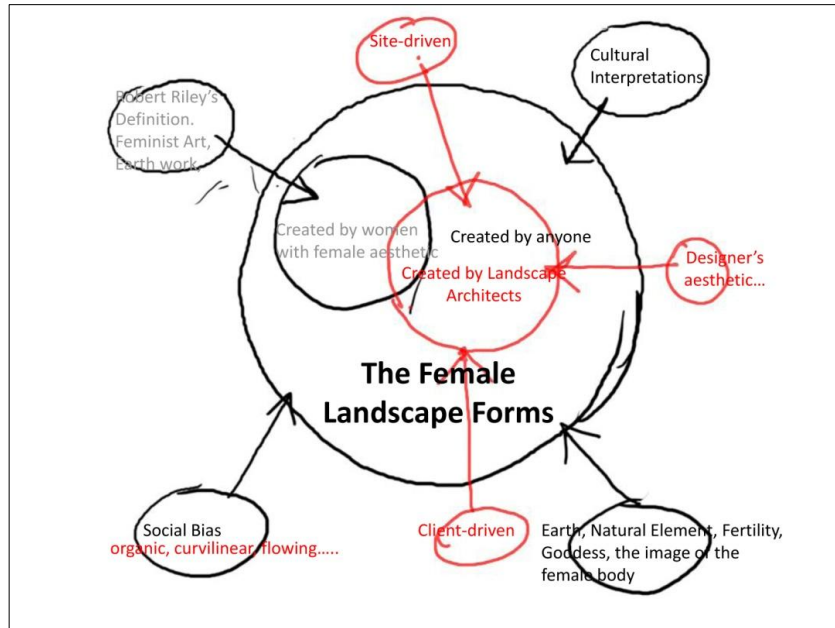


Figure11. Where is Female Landscape Forms Created by Landscape Architects?

Transitions in Female Design Approaches

Not surprisingly, transitions in female design approaches parallel transitions in the entire design profession, which are due to changes in knowledge, technology, land use and other factors within society. However, among those transitions, there are several points worth mentioning: first, today’s women have much more choice in regards to the types of works they choose to design, and they are free to work in whatever landscape practice they choose. Secondly, today’s women are leading design teams in professional

roles, and communicate in a more effective and linear way. Their contributions to American landscape architecture add depth and breadth to the profession.⁹⁵

In the early twentieth century, projects for women were often limited to private residences and garden designs. There may be two main reasons for this phenomenon: first, women were traditionally held domestic roles in the early twentieth century, and garden works usually required the workers to have artistic sensitivity, as well as the innate superiority in growing plants and flowers women should have. Landscape gardening, as the root of landscape architecture was therefore becoming a profession naturally adapted to women. Second, female professionals who were hired to work for high society usually come from high society as well; they are well educated, and thus proficient in the art, as well as horticulture, design skills, and so on. As private gardens in the beginning of the twentieth century in the United States were considered to directly reflect the owners' taste, the qualities needed to design these private gardens were naturally also elevated to high social standing.

Some early female professionals might also have benefitted from strong male mentors, who taught them design skills and provided them with opportunities available in the workplace. Male mentors may have been helpful to women who were attempting to build their own careers through social networking in such a male dominated profession.

In today's workplace, some women professionals are renowned for their approaches and leadership among their peers; the reasons they became famous were not only because they were female, but also because they were already meeting the

⁹⁵ Quoted from survey response.

requirements that made them a good landscape architects, in addition achieving professional success. In general, women generally had weaker standing than men especially during the beginning of the twentieth century, where gender discrimination against women was more pervasive and occurred much more frequently than today. As a result, few early women professionals who achieved professional success would have had stronger advocates in issues of gender and practice against their male counterparts than today. Beatrix Jones and Ellen Shipmen, for instance, are considered pioneers who elicit attention from today's people due to their gender roles.

From the survey results, the transition in women's design approaches may come from internal factors; their personal aesthetic, experience, and education cause approaches to differ from person to person. However, designers from the same generation may have similar thought processes that make their design approaches comparable to the approaches of other generations. Therefore, other than gender, there may exist a potential issue of whether identifying different design approaches is valid through the lens of designers of different generations. In this context, transitions in design approaches as the product of changes in society not only limited to female but also male professionals in landscape design.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Why Women in Landscape Architecture?

The American Society of Landscape Architecture website is one of the largest online systems for landscape people in the world, and thus, most likely provides the most information about landscape architecture in one place. Among all the information, there are several groups under Professional Practice Network link. One link, entitled “Women in Landscape Architecture” offers a platform for sharing knowledge to female and male members online. As the introduction says, the goal of this group is “creating a space to talk about experiences and challenges in the profession,” as well as “providing informal mentorship opportunities,” “promoting work/life balance in landscape architecture,” and so on.⁹⁶ The existence of this group again reflects the importance of women who engage and contribute to the field of landscape architecture.

However, this phenomenon is not unique to landscape practice. The American Institute of Architects also has an online community titled “Women in Architecture and Design,” and the American Planning Association also has a division titled “Planning and Women.” The purpose of these online resources is also to provide a platform for sharing information, and a supporting network for women professionals.⁹⁷

Every discipline has its own historical root to which both men and women have contributed. On the ground of American landscape architecture, women may spray the seed earlier than in most of the other design professions in United States. Today, the

⁹⁶ From the website of American Society of Landscape Architecture

⁹⁷ From the website of American Planning Association

growing trees have provided a shade of broader diversity to landscape people of the present and next generations.

A 2011 documentary “Women in the Dirt” by Carolann Stoney, tells the story of seven award-winning female landscape architects that are shaping the landscape in the California area. This film introduces the creative works of seven groundbreaking women in order to describe the contribution that female landscape architects have made in making California a better place to live. As the movie suggests, the landscape architecture professions is “often seen as an industry of men.”⁹⁸ However, throughout the movie, none of the difference that may exist between male and female landscape designers –whether in designed forms or approaches – mentioned.

What Makes Gender Stereotype Invalid?

This study may provide a good opportunity for researchers and students in our discipline to challenge the original question asked: “Do women design differently than men in landscape architecture?” This seemingly simple question, however, has taken considerable numbers of page to be introduced, reviewed and examined, as one of the research issues in this study.

As one participant suggests, “...**women in this field may experience gender-related biases and stereotyping, but those are the result of the kind of sexist thinking contained in this hypothesis.**”⁹⁹ Does this statement imply that the gender issues in today’s landscape architecture should explore a new horizon of landscape works that

⁹⁸ <http://womeninthedirt.com/>

⁹⁹ Quoted from survey response.

view women as creators, instead of the gender roles assigned through the eyes of traditional male chauvinism?

The nature of forms in landscape architecture, like many other arts, is both aesthetic and functional oriented, and female landscape forms created by landscape architects can take both factors into consideration. Issues about the boundary between functional and aesthetic concern in an art work should be also carefully reviewed in order to avoid the old-fashioned aesthetic debate.

The exploratory nature of this study may not lead to a firm conclusion. Most results and findings have indicated that, as Elisabeth Meyer proposes, the gender affiliation in the built landscape should be carefully reviewed, especially when it comes to cultural discourse that may lead to a “solid line that divides concepts in binary opposite,”¹⁰⁰ which should be avoided. With this in mind, this study has attentively examined the topics of forms, transitions and design approaches of women as creators of the built landscape. Furthermore, this study also attempts to find answers to questions such as how gender stereotypes may no longer be applied and what makes it invalid in today’s professional practice of landscape architecture.

What Will be Next Gender Issues?

Do women’s design approaches differ according to the region? From the survey results, half of the respondents are from the California area, which also indicates that female landscape architects on the west coast may be more willing to participate in a survey of gender-related issues. On the other hand, a nationwide survey shows that 15

¹⁰⁰ (Meyer 1997)

percent of all licensed practitioners hold a California license, which has the highest representative than any other state, and 30 percent of these practitioners are women. The survey also suggests that the percentage of women having licensed practices in California is relatively higher than any other state in the country.¹⁰¹

From this viewpoint, the geographic distribution of women in landscape practice can raise the question of how regional differences may influence participants' attitudes toward gender issues in landscape architecture. For instance, women professionals from west coast may have different insights than those who practice in New England, which has unique differences in climate, natural landscape, and cultural diversity based on geographic characteristics.

According to a survey participant in this study, "...gender is more likely to affect their power position in the company and on their teams than their design approach."¹⁰² Another issue identified in this context is how designers' gender influence the roles of designers in the power structure of landscape practice. In response to that, another participant comments, "...**I do wonder if a number of women who are drawn to this field might be desiring to express control and masculinity through a profession that is relatively accessible to them.**" It also implies that designer's gender may influence the personal promotion in a landscape architect's office, but what difference it makes relative to other design professions is unknown.

¹⁰¹ (Clements 2012)

¹⁰² Quoted from survey response.

As the well-known landscape architect Peter Walker pointed out in a recent interview: “Most landscape architects are not the top of the power structure.”¹⁰³ Again, does this statement imply that landscape architects are standing on a marginalized position in the social hierarchy? From the other viewpoint, as another survey participant suggests, the men “who are attracted to landscape architecture are more in touch with their anima than most American males.”¹⁰⁴ Does this statement generate further questions of the “female quality” which may be contained in the innate personalities of male landscape designers? Will there be another survey conducted in which male landscape designers are the research subjects in future studies of gender issues in landscape architecture? One thing is certain: time is changing, space is changing, technology and people’s thinking are changing, but human nature remains the same. Gender issues in landscape architecture as a culture vehicle—its forms, transitions and design approaches—deserve more in-depth explorations from future researchers.

¹⁰³ Bloomberg businessweek-design-2013

¹⁰⁴ Quoted from survey response.

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