Assemblage 2 Case Study 3_ROYAL PARK_part 3

Following this file is one remaining file:

- ‘Case Study 2_Royal Park_part 4’
You are finally across the road. This is a busy area. People are always coming and going at the hospital.
You start to move away and up slightly and the path shifts at the same time. The solid trunks of the tall gums register the park ahead. The flat area that you are just leaving now has become a sort of datum. It feels like the bottom of a slope (even though it is not). A large hospital is partly datum. There might be one or more pedestrians to negotiate past there. You are starting to orient yourself up the hill; it is now easier. The low brick wall you pass on the left of the hospital grounds. The path starts to ramp up toward the trees and is noticeably deeper. These are the sorts of gums associated more with rural land and windbreaks. There is dry rather much scattered on bare ground, which is not very urban. It is much more open and there are some small shrubs on the slope to your left.

As you pass these your eyes are drawn across to the scattering of many half-grown Eucalypt (gum) trees and other species on the very even and expansive surface moving up and away from you, most of it obscured and out of view. The trees are distributed in a manner that registers the movement of the slope uphill. You might even get a glimpse of an horizon up the slope amongst the trees, a luminous horizon against the openness.

Shortcut ‘goat tracks’ just over the fence here can be seen heading more directly up the hill. You are moving in a way that is about relaxing into the walk. The small slopes, low vegetation, mulch surface and low set-back fence deter you from considering such a shortcut.
You are now moving into what feels like the flat low section in the path. Cars enter and leave as people also enter and leave. People meet and gather, talk to relatives, fix up buggies in prams, make phone calls, sit on the low wall, wait. There is usually a number of people here, coming or going or waiting. It is a very busy destination with cars parking and leaving, with people approaching from the park across the entrance way next to the cars that are entering and exiting. That is a hospital's important to this space. There is bustle and swarming and disorientation, just aiming and organizing and working out where to go, or just about to depart and re-organizing and saying goodbye, care-taking, conversations, families, bowed down, a whole variety of different cultures and mix of people, the occasional dressing gowns, flowers and babies, joy and sadness and aims, conversations and its own preoccupied significance. Entering this stretch of footpath. You need to negotiate the cars, kiosks and people to get past this spot. You would often need to pay close attention to all around you or you will bump into others or be hit by a car entering or exiting across your path.
You have now shifted up onto this 'native' and dry park level. As you move through the trees, which seem to be something of an entry to the park and also, due to the gums and mulch beneath them, a bit and the path, which because of the slope making it very visible to you, accentuates that it is now dead straight.
The mass of native plantings imposes itself upon this space. Gums and mulch push out, lean out, beyond the fence toward the road as if important, as if the park is important.

This mass of plantings sits above you on this great surface which slopes or rolls down to the road and the Victorian terrace houses, which are lower than where you are. These houses line up as though they were the edge of the city and the workaday world, and which faces out to the park and the world beyond.

Together the houses-road-city on one side and the native massive plantings on the other define the greater space here.

Within this space, above the road, is a closer and very clearly defined space, defined by the line of Elms and the native plantings which is focused on the path and grass surface between. This dark Elm trunk edge this space, whilst the canopies, especially when in full leaf, roof the space.

You are on this path and surface that very consistently moves up this long slope bounded by the two edges and canopy and then disappears. The straightness of the path is accentuated by the line of trees to the right and the wide line of gums and mulch to the left that borders the park. The Elms disconnect you and push you away from the movements on the road, the houses and workaday life. The amorphous massed native plantings distance you from what is beyond them, apart from the occasional inviting glimpse to what seems higher, lighter and more open. The relatively green and shaded nature of this space accentuates the openness and lightness of the beyond space.

You are leaving what is behind and are now oriented ahead along the path and up slope into the park. You feel as though you are leaving the workaday world yet you are still officially outside the park.

The path ahead disappears over a grassed horizon which moves up the slope through the trees. The dark vegetation which forms the background to the horizon cloaks off this long space.

This space is a gap between the workaday and the park world. Moving beyond the gums your body relaxes as it no longer has to negotiate anything. You feel the movement of the hill up and across.
A new hospital building has emerged during the duration of this study and appears over the horizon of this image—and in other images—for simplicity this study has focused on the state of the park before the building was there.

The sequence, or really the process up to this point, of leaving home, crossing the road, negotiating the hospital space and entering this park space was followed by a 70-metre straight stretch of path. In contrast to what came before it this was an entirely regular and straight path requiring virtually no negotiation and what was up ahead seemed obvious and predictable.

This predictable stretch is not very consciously experienced at all. It seems that consciousness is suddenly not required and movement is automatic. The ease and abandonment of this auto-movement starts to orient you away from everyday life. It is also something of an opening onto what is beyond the everyday and residential and of the predominant Victorian era native-planted parks of Melbourne. This auto-movement, this arrival or welcoming by what is beyond, is also the first expression of something that seems only for locals, for you.

You seem to come back to something more conscious just before this path. This overall dynamic, this shift, acts as a transition. At this point what you are heading for (the high point) seems diagonally up the long slope to the left and there is nothing obvious ahead along the somewhat relentlessly sloping path—so you have no reason not to turn just there.

This entrance seems natural to most who come to Royal Park from this direction. It is not very apparent from here that there is a quicker way to get to the middle of the park by continuing further up the path. However, it is an extra 170 metres up the path and 6 metres higher than here. So, this is the obvious entry for someone who does not know the park or for someone who does and wants to relax into the walk. Though the path slope is about the same as for the exterior path it appears easier on this entry path.

The perimeter treatment of this park seems very generous. Mulch and gums, a small fence, more grass and massed tree plantings to move through before entering what is beyond them. The seemingly randomly arranged field of trees and groupings continue without obvious end up the slope.

There is an opening in the wall of trees. Beyond this wall the most distant trees, with only sky beyond them, provide a dark background for the line of the lighter grassed horizon which drops consistently from right to left. The curving path, which lies flat on the ground surface, moves around the slope adding to the sense of the roundness of this landform. Glimpses of the horizon up the slope through the vegetation and that the path seems to move upward give this route a sense of easing up the hill.
The path flattens out slightly again. You are still within the trees but they start to open up. Your attention is focused on the emerging horizon that seems to be becoming a large opening that moves uphill from the path to the top of the hill. There is a strong feeling of looking westward and slightly skyward. There is an even stronger suggestion that the top of the hill is the obvious destination.
A little further and you are moving out of the trees and the horizon becomes clear upslope. The hospital building also appears at the bottom of the slope. There is a strong sense of a beyond over the horizon and an up and beyond up the slope.
Leaving the trees the top of the slope or hill now seems obvious, framed by vegetation on either side. The presence of 'goat tracks' that depart from the path and head almost directly uphill affirm the top of the hill is something at or near the top as something worth heading up. The top is unclear and the distance involved is unclear. You are visually orienting toward this destination yet your body wants to continue in a relaxed stride around the slope. And this feels the right way to go as the path, moving around and up, suggests it will arrive at the top, and an easy to walk on smooth and sealed path. The path disappearing into the trees ahead suggest something more exploratory about the route ahead.
Near the top of the rise on the path the top of the hill is now more to your side. The horizon now has very distant tree tops appearing on it.
You are probably not conscious of it but with each step you take at this part of the path the trees on the far horizon emerge further and further and the top of the hill now does not just seem like an open horizon. It starts to seem something of a bounded space.
At the same time as you move over the rise the tree that is relatively close to the path starts to obscure the view to the top of the hill. The mass of vegetation beyond this tree then replaces the tree in obscuring the view to the top. The walking is considerably easier here. There is a feeling of moving parallel to the hill and moving slightly downhill. The top of the hill, which now seems large and wide is obscured by dumpy or tiered vegetation. It now seems more like a meadow or a plateau than a stop.

At this point the whole walk has been uphill. The vegetation upslope and the form of the topography seems to enclose you in a large space. Your views are restricted in what feels like a depression. From this point onward the city has been left behind. Moving through a group of large shrubs accentuates this removal further as the city would not be visible even if one turned around. There is a sense that you have arrived in the park now. This arrival is felt as an orienting and openness forward.

The vegetation upslope is almost garden-like in the variety and clumping in comparison to the other plantings experienced. The wind usually disappears here. The sound of the city falls away and the wind in the tops of canopies is now more obvious. There is a feeling of openness higher up in the canopy but also an openness expected ahead. The slope falls away from the top of the hill and down to your left. There are woodland plantings upslope and down the slope to the left. It seems that the woodland plantings continue somehow beyond what you can see. You can follow the treeline (on the slope moving downhill) and disappearing beneath the canopy, suggesting a long slope downhill. These trees do not seem planted. They seem like remnants of bushland. The ground is littered and patches of bare ground suggest this also. You feel removed from the city in this quiet and sheltered bush-like depression on the side of the hill.

Vehicle sounds subtly emerge from the quietness as you move along. These now come from Flemington Road down the hill to the south-west and contribute to orienting you even more toward the top of the hill. In their own gentle way they add to the transition away from the workaday. There is an ease in moving around this hill.

As you approach the group of large trees ahead you start to orient further away from the road and the outside world. There is a renewed sense of moving uphill slightly again. These larger smooth trunked gum trees start to take over from the shrubby understory plantings and smaller and rougher trees of the space you have been within. These allow longer views between them and accentuate the shifting shape of the greater ground surface down to the left and up to the right.

You get a very strong feeling of moving slowly upward, getting closer to the level of the top of the hill. You sense that you are moving up onto a wide and sunny rise. This is a large and open flat slope surface moving upward to the top. The mass, continuity and scale of the hill surface is reintroduced in this movement from the enclosed small space to this opening out and up to the left this slope feels like it continues consistently as long way downhill to the west, presumably eventually to roads, though exactly how this occurs is obscured by the woodland plantings. The transition to this level, which feels close to the top or even part of the top, occurred faster and felt easier than the earlier view to the top suggested it would. (The path is not actually parallel and gets closer to the true path at the top as it proceeds.)

If you come here you are almost certainly feeling as though you will be soon (need to be) turning right (unless you are heading to the residential areas to the north west or one of the sporting facilities in the western corner of the park.)
As you move out of the canopy of the trees you come across a sunny intersection of paths. The path to the left crosses over a tram line not far away. It does not invite you as it moves away from the top of the hill, though more park and probably returns to roads and more built city. It seems secondary to the top of the hill. The path ahead seems to take you no closer to the top (and if you know this path, you know that it does not itself continue to the top). So, this seems like the obvious place to depart this path and head closer to the top. To get to here and to turn toward the top means you are already on an experiencing vector. This is the way to the top if you are on an experiencing vector, or a vector which experiences experiencing. The other options seem to offer less in this regard. Anyone who knows these paths knows that if you keep going straight ahead from here over what feels like a wide ridge line then you quickly start becoming conscious of traffic and traffic noise.

As you entered the park you were moving across the slope and parallel to Flemington Road. The farther you move the more you turn toward, and pretty much reach, the centre of the native island. This turning takes you further away from the built workaday world. The path to here was the only paved way to the circle from that entry location. This route provides for a relatively flat approach to the site. The angle of approach is sharper than 90 degrees. The sharpness of the turn accentuates the difference between the two stretches of path and shifts your orientation significantly. Entering the park the path direction is 56 degrees west of north. By the time the path reaches this point it is 24 degrees west of north. The sharp turn makes it 77 degrees east of north. This is a change of direction of almost 135 degrees. The gradual curve on the path changes your orientation much more than you would assume. When you set out you feel like you are heading west. Turning at this intersection and you are almost heading east.
Further ahead the line of trees becomes taller. The openness of the tree top canopies is now replaced with a much more solid wall of vegetation. At the same time trees in the middle ground start to separate from the background revealing what seems like a wide light grey planar surface between the mid-ground trees and the background trees. Your view starts to touch on this newly emerging surface. The contrast of passing a small group next to the path contrasts with the emerging distant scale and openness of this grey surface. The random scattering of trees around you gives way to an openness of space all around you. At the same time your attention is pulled more toward the view ahead, which begins to usurp the view around you.

The width and spaciousness of the wide open surface you are on makes everything on the surface stand out and in relation to everything else, and stand at a distance from you. There is a sense that it is all presented very properly and clearly - and to you. Walking becomes easier as if to welcome you. You are on this great surface that stretches far behind you and continues forward as far as the background trees. It is something of a surprise that it all seems to be presented to you so very obviously now.
Prior to this turn the top of the hill and any destination were out of view. You have, however, been anticipating something above and ahead of you. If you were not familiar with this park you would have assumed you were now in the process of arriving at whatever it was you were about to arrive at. There has been a shift fromueness and gradual removal from the outer world and mystery about what lies ahead, which opened you up to what lay ahead and to what now seemed obvious ahead.

It feels like you have climbed yet it feels easy getting here. Prior to entering the park views into it suggested a substantial slope inside the park. However, the path just prior to entering the park was, as it turns out, the steepest section of path. The shift into the park was very overpowering and distracted you from the effort required to move through the earlier sections of path.

You are entering the expanse of the top of the hill, which is a part of the great ridge-like movement of the hill east-west across the whole 'Native Island' which drops 23 metres across the 'Native Island' over a distance of 850 metres. There is a strong sense of the hill dropping a significant way to the west from this intersection. The distribution of trees is light enough for suggestions of very long views downslope. So, the moment of reaching the view to what seems to be the top is also the moment of having access to the whole east-west ridge movement across the whole 'Native Island'. The vastness of the whole hill, not just this top part, and the scale and openness of the top are part of this arriving.

The path sits flatly on this wide and open surface that seems to open out even more ahead. The slope feels that it has virtually disappeared and the walking seems easy ahead. You start walking and the slope increases slightly. You feel you are moving up onto a large rising surface that will become the top of the hill. After a dozen or so steps the slope flattens out again. It feels very direct and easy.

Your focus of attention is on the grassy horizon line that is backed surrounded by the line of distant trees. The top parts of large gums can be made out as the background to the horizon formed by the surface you are moving onto. The bottoms of these trees are obscured by the foreground suggesting that the grassy horizon is above, and rolls over to the level of the trees.
Your attention shifts. The surface ahead is becoming vast, deep, very wide and widening slightly yet vastly domed surface. Without realizing it you now have a higher view of this surface which allows you to be able to see over a low horizon on the near side and across to the far horizon with a different profile. Your eye starts to move across and over this surface. The wall now defines a vast space, and a surface that seems to press up into this space. You are now able to see the circle path and look directly down the path to this path if you have been here before you now feel that you are heading straight at the circle. The path seems to point toward the centre of this great space (this circle). The path seems to point to the highest point of the horizon.

The paths meet dead-end-like, at what seems to be the start of this wide open-space. The whole view forward feels distinctly symmetrical and direct. There is a symmetry in the width, height and distance ahead. The openness, clarity and symmetry sets up a sense of arrival which has monumental and expanding ease about it.
Haptic and Abstract

Your visual capabilities shift from navigation-negotiation-orientation, and with respect to the surface have shifted from being more scenic and distant to being opened up to texture and detail. Your eye skates variously across this surface alighting here and there on textural detail on the ground-plane. It combines this with movements across to the texture of the native grass field on the far side, which can now be made out. The surface and horizon become haptic.

‘Haptic’ does not just mean seeing texture, but emerges with the abstract. It seems that when conditions combine to produce a distant abstract background and that the middle ground is removed that you become more attentive to close detail and texture. This is only half of the process as the abstract background and the textured foreground components differentiate themselves as components and communicate with each other. This communication produces communication between them. Each now intensifies and expresses the other and they together, each differently, express relations beyond themselves. They have become system components and can now be considered ‘abstract’ and ‘haptic’ proper.

The production of abstract visual parts or dimensions of experience produces haptic visual dimensions. Haptic dimensions tend to be close and much more bodily related. Abstract dimensions tends to be further away and more scenographically related. This particular differentiation of components – into abstract tree wall and foreground haptic surface - is simply a more obvious example of the whole process of the differentiation and specification of the landscape: a process where the sense of a component is ‘in the end’ the functioning of the component in the system, its part in the assemblage, it apart in doing what the landscape does. The grass species growing here (lolium perenne etc?) were never a grass species but was always already appropriated as a system component, or rather that something of the grass species taken en masse (shiny, detailed flat stuff…) gets taken away by the system, just like other parts of the system. Nature uses whatever it wants in whatever way it wants to play a part in whatever.
As you approach the circle the slope of the path (from about 50m away) imperceptibly and gradually increases, and then again, imperceptibly but more steeply from about 15m away. Your viewing of the surface shifts from looking out at the surface as a whole object in the distance (and shifts even more rapidly in the last few metres) to viewing widely around and across a stretched out space. Your viewing stretches, or rather your viewing is stretched, toward distant long horizon views, toward and around the line of the path you are now entering and pull back across the grasp as you are approaching. Within 15m of the circle you pass the single tree on your left and you are now able to see past the group of trees on the left to the left-most view of the path.

Almost simultaneously you are able, for the first time, to be able to see the left-side path disappear around the circle, over a low horizon line. At about 7m the corresponding right-most view and path disappear as the shrubs to your left pull back. It is now very obviously a vast circle. A circle that is not all visible and wraps or folds back down over what seems to be the one horizon of the great space. With the completing of the circle comes the near-completion of the wall of trees, reinforcing the rounding of the path and great surface. The dramatizing of the widening and circling is dramatized further by the relatively fast increase in slope and hence bodily relation to the circle, as the full circle comes into view. At the same time as the circle path surface is produced the whole surface seems much more vast and flattens out. This arriving (a flattening, a deepening, a circling and a widening. The renewing vastness of the views is focused on the surface as a vast surface. You cannot just look at this surface as an object. It spans across almost 180 degrees of your view. Your eyes can only range across it.

As part of this abstract-haptic interplay (see previous page), your eye and turning body then tracks across the almost 180 degrees wide line of abstract trees. Your eye then pulls back to this path moving around it to form the circle. This intensification and entwining of sensory bodily processing marks with the coming into being of the perfect and infinite circularity of this path and space. This combines with the shift from here being around topped hill to this circular round plateau/surface-space which has separated itself from all that came before it and below it. The event is the event of differentiation and specification.

There is a 400m fairly consistent slope from near where you started approaching the circle to the horizon most of the way across the circle – the line that you are on is not far off the longest ridge line, the east-west ridge line, that runs through the park. You have without realizing risen 3.5 metres to the path. The horizon ahead is another 4 meters above where you stand, though from here it looks flat. The whole surface (all told greater than 12ha) you have been traversing has been rising constantly to this point, and will continue to rise, at a lesser slope. This means that you are looking up into the sky slightly.

There is strong combination of feeling a very significant shift at this circle and also a strong feeling of the continuity of the ground plain under your feet. This is a separation of the activity, and especially the activity (or a range of activities) of experiencing associated with this circle and space from that which came before. This dramatized differentiation process is simultaneously a dramatized specification process. (Refer to sheet titled: Longitudinal Section #1)
The longitudinal section follows the path of a person who walks from the hospital corner to the outside.

Significant differentiation

Temporal
(affectual areas)

Longitudinal section through walk and associated temporal and spatial differentiations

Before entering park
Moving into park
Turning and moving toward circle
On circle path

Associated spatial differentiations

Temporal differentiations

(longitudinal section)
THE CIRCLE AS A DESTINATION (or EXPERIENCING AS DESTINATION?)

‘All life involves individuating closure and this can be established in a number of ways: membrane, skin, a territory, all of which serve to bring into communication an interior and an exterior.’ Ansell-Pearson

This termination makes the great circle like ‘the’ destination – or at least ‘a’ destination already. To come this way has involved being on an experiencing vector – the circle is a destination on such a vector. A strange destination – not a point destination but a vast space and a circular path as a destination and the event of reaching this dispersed destination.

A number of factors have been involved in this differentiation. With any differentiation there is also specification. Some of this specification has been engaged with so far. In what other ways is this differentiation specified? And as differentiation cannot be separated from differentiated, what else functions in the process of differentiation and specification? This path-circle-surface draws upon and redirects wider and closer forces. Starting more widely first.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL ROADS AND PATHS (AND THE CIRCLE)

Each of the paths leading to the circle start at points on the edge of the park where local perpendicular roads come to meet the park. These paths continue the alignment of these roads into the park and then slowly shift alignment to hit the circle more or less perpendicular to it.

Therefore the whole residential catchment has the option, given some of the distances involved, of relatively quick and convenient access to this circle. This relative convenience is combined with: a visual separation from the outside of the interior openness of the ‘Circle Area’; and a further separation, within the interior, of the circle.

This combination results in a connection to an experientially separated or removed realm (or a process of removal), requiring some time, mental and bodily investment – and that such a realm is relatively convenient to the local residents. A realm that, given such investment, is readily available to you. Close and removed.
A PATH SYSTEM DESIGNED AROUND THE CIRCLE

The whole internal path system is designed in relation to the circle and to the local road system. From the outside of this site virtually all paths lead to the circle. The only path that does not eventually lead to the circle runs briefly parallel to it before stopping.

The paths and other aspects of Royal Park make little sense without the topography they are on. The circle has transformed certain geographical scale topographic tendencies in this landscape.

THE SHAPE OF THE LAND: TOPOGRAPHY

The ‘Native Island’ is a large island of land that rises from the roads at almost all entry points, eventually to the circle itself. The circle is located at the highest part of this piece of land. It is shaped so that moving uphill from any point on this piece of land, with its 3.5 kilometers of edge, leads to this circle, of 1.2 kilometers circumference. The piece of land that it is located on is shaped with the circle at a bulbous part of bulbous triangle.

(refer to sheet titled: ‘Geology map showing location of Royal Park’)

At a larger scale the greater geology is predominantly a basaltic plain that slopes gently southwards and which starts to drop away more rapidly toward the Bay at the southern end of Royal Park. The form of the plain is also produced by two streams, Moonee Ponds Creek and Merri Creek, cutting into the basaltic geology on both sides of the plain. The ‘Native Island’ is effectively a peninsula that sits out somewhat proud from a ridgeline that moves southeast out from the greater basaltic plain. An east-west ridge-line moves downhill from the highest point of the island down to Flemington Road.

This Native Island hill or ridgeline is 1100metres long and 800m wide at its widest (road to road). It rises 30m from Flemington Road to the top of the hill and 20 odd metres from the Flemington Road and Gatehouse street intersection. Macarthur and Gatehouse Streets are located on or beside what would have been creek or run-off lines. The section of Flemington Road from the hospital back to Elliot Street is located on or next to an old creekline. The hilltop drops down into these ex-creekline depressions.

It is one of the most prominently scaled land-masses in the local area. A series of high-points / hills / landmasses look over the lowland areas of the Docklands and Port Phillip Bay. The flat lowlands are the conjoined deltas of the Yarra River (mainly), the Maribyrnong River and the Moonee Ponds Creek. The Royal Park hill is one of the most prominent hills overlooking this lowland geomorphological surface – and how this affects views from

Other hills and high points within 5 kilometres of the city are built on. There is only one other hill close by (in Kew, 4.5km away) which is topped by open space. It is bushland, and not spatially open. Royal Park is a particularly rounded hilltop and sits at least 10 metres higher than all high points between it and the bay. From all parts of the Native Island there is a strong feeling of the ground rising up in the direction of the hilltop.

Most of the slopes on this hill/ridge range from 1 in 30 to 1 in 20, but often approach or exceed being 1 in 20, which, to gain some idea, is the steepest slope generally recommended for pedestrian ramps in public spaces. So, most of the uphill movement at Royal Park requires some effort. Royal Park slopes are, obviously, much longer than an access ramp. Near the top of the hill the slopes flatten out somewhat. Movement responds to these slopes.
Geologically, a great Basaltic (laval) plain drops down to Port Phillip Bay. This plain is generally slightly undulating and relatively flat. The undulating flatness of the plain is produced by the smooth liquid movement of lava moving across the landscape. It is divided into separate plains by waterways that have cut down into the resultant geologically hard plain. Royal Park is located at the southern end of one of these separated plains at the point where the whole plain starts to drop away both down into the Bay and also to the Moonee Ponds creek.

The Royal Park circle is located on its own domed promontory 40-45 metres above the Bay and 'overlooking' the Moonee Ponds creek valley, the Bay and the wide flatlands Yarra Valley area of the Docklands where the creek and other streams meet the Bay (Yarra Delta).

This Google maps view* shows the settlement pattern north of Royal Park, which is overlain on the slightly undulating basaltic plain and edged by two creeklines. The resultant highly regularized and continuous street layout and landuse is largely restricted to a very large field of similar middle suburban houses with two major and very long, straight and relatively undifferentiated main road commercial 'strips'.

(*which does not show topographic shifts, vegetation or small building massing)
THE SHAPE OF THE LAND IS REGISTERED BY THE PLANTING

Most plantings outside of the circle are distributed in a ‘woodland’ manner. With the particular density and randomising at Royal Park the movement of the landform is registered at eye level by the visual interrelationship of tree trunks and shrubs intersecting the ground-plane.

Gum trees (like other trees) register the greater movement of the groundplain through how their trunks and shadows hit the ground en masse. Large gum trees do this under a canopy. The density-randomising is such that from within the site long views under canopies are enabled whilst restricting most views to within the large site.

Tree trunks registering the movement of the groundplain.

The combination of restrictions to viewlines by vegetation and topography means that the landform movement is registered and a greater landform configuration is implied at most places without an actual view of the whole landform. A strong movement toward the higher ground is implied from lower views into the park or lower views within the park, just as a long disappearing view of the western part from the higher areas implies great distance down to the west. And the shape of the site is implied and expressed whilst blocking out the surrounds.

Together, landform and vegetation produce the woodland and grassland surface of the whole park by drawing out, for as long as possible, the continuity and extent of this surface through topographic and vegetative separation from the nearby and busy roads. At the western end separation is a challenge where the triangular corner has an internal angle of less than 30 degrees (which does widen later). The combination of views from roads, plantings and regrading at the far western part of the ‘Native Island’ draw the grassland surface as close to that corner whilst still maintaining separation. This surface is able to move continuously down to a water body that acts as a leading edge to this great surface. This separation also enables a more acceptable traditional park space, or the image of one, to emerge near the corner. Many who come to the Royal Park dome section would not move across the tram tracks to experience the ‘Western Native area’. It is an important transition area to the dome from the west and has enough separation for it to function independently. The design has produced the largest practicable continuous and yet separated surface possible on the ‘Native Island’.
The dominant and less than dominant ridgelines are kept free or relatively free of vegetation so that the ridgeline or the horizons formed by the ridgelines are experienced moving from their lowest point to the top of the site, to the circle. Horizons and ridge-lines play a number of roles at Royal Park including registering long distance continuity. The scale, bulk, shape and movement of this land – which moves beyond these road boundaries - are carried through to the top of the hill, the circle.

TWO PARTS OF THE ISLAND: A TENDENCY TOWARD THE TOP FOR EXPERIENCERS

This hill-island is differentiated by a tramline through the middle: it divides the lower triangular and smaller western part from the higher eastern part. Being triangular and smaller here means that the busy traffic movement around the edges plays a much more dominant role in the interior of this site than within the larger part of the ‘island’ where there is a much greater area-to-edge relationship (‘Native Island’ 16.5 ha/km, ‘Western Native end’ 9 ha/km) and distances inwards from the edge are significantly and consistently greater. These distances are not just mathematically larger but of another order. The lower site has a central ridge running down toward the western corner of the island thus the relationship to the traffic is intensified as the slope leans towards the roads. This lower western part has a considerable catchment due to the amount of edge which is opposite part of the catchment but its configuration, 2 and 3 dimensionally, means that apart from immediate-local users, users will defer to the larger, rounder-squarer, more elevated and removed part of the ‘island’—with a centre that is more separable. Immediate-local uses would include such things as the isolated tennis club, which has its own relative sense of separation beside the water body, a separation with its own grand relation to the long view up the surface toward the top of the hill.

Any desires that involve significant time and movement and moving away from the workaday / built city / roads would tend to be heading toward where the circle is at the highest part of this piece of land.

Without other factors being involved humans strongly tend to walk directly up or around hills and along ridge lines. If hills are too steep for a particular desire then humans will then walk diagonally across a slope. The top of the hill creates particular directional tendencies for those on a more experiential vector. Such vectors strongly tend toward the top of the hill (or from the top to the bottom.). The hill produces asymmetries of desire, exploratory or experiential movement. Such desires are part of the hill and structure the whole local area.
THE OUTSIDE EDGES OF THE PARK SUIT CERTAIN VECTORS

(refer to sheet titled: ‘Local / neighbourhood spaces…’)

More traditional uses of parks – involving picnic seating, barbecues and toilets in this part of Royal Park are only to be found separated off from the dominant or ‘most important’ spaces of the ‘Native Island’. There is a differentiation between these convenient low parking-related spaces and those beyond. Traditional treatments can be found at the far western end and in the Native Garden. Combined with Ievers Reserve these 3 spaces conveniently provide easy access for the more expected or group park activities for most of the residential and nearby catchment. These edges and nearby parks serve the local park functions of family gathering and other types of gatherings.

The rest of the ‘native island’ tends to select out the more experiencing-type vectors as only those willing to make the investment that is part of such experiencing will tend to connect with it.

The west end of the ‘native island’ is itself only really functional for nearby locals as something of a local park. The Native Garden area of Royal Park functions effectively separately from the circle area. Whilst there might be some crossover of use between the Native Garden and the circle area the traditional sedentariness of the Native Garden and contrasting character, green grass, water, sheltered enclosendness, ornamental bridges, detailed plantings etc., make it effectively separate. Even though it is very close to the circle itself and easily accessible it would be irrelevant to most circle vectors, and vice versa.

Apart from those who treat the ‘Native Island’ as a local park those entering the ‘native island’ at the western end tend to go all of the way to the circle. A tipping point, if you like, separates out the two realms of vectors. There will always of course be eccentric, wandering and other vectors that move between what are tipping points for other vectors.

Aside from the ‘Native Garden’ there are no areas of green mown grass, barbecues, picnic settings or water bodies.

This separation tends to exclude sedentary traditional uses, which reduces what can connect to the circle. However, the circle is still convenient for a range of uses, from the more functional – pure dog, bike or foot exercise to the more experiential (which might include such exercising). The change in the mix of uses, a selection-mechanism, is an important part of an intensifying of the experiential functioning of the ‘Native Island’ and circle.
Local / neighbourhood spaces
(open spaces that are used because of their convenience & amenities)
WHAT IS NOT PROVIDED

(refer to sheet titled: ‘Facilities and dog restrictions’)

Beyond these relatively small and convenient local spaces the rest of the native island area has, in great contrast to these spaces and most other spaces in wider Melbourne especially large inner urban parks, been developed in a way that has consciously and greatly restricted the range of the sorts of park uses that are normally provided for.

For this large space there are no playgrounds or play equipment. The closest public toilets to the circle – as measured from the closest point on the circle to those toilets are: the toilets near the intersection of Flemington Road and Elliot Avenue (840m); at Ievers Reserve (640m and across a major road) and north to the cricket club (350m across the very busy Macarthur Road and hidden away). There was once a public toilet on the hill itself. This was taken away.

Other large inner city parks, and many of the smaller ones, often have more than one set of toilets conveniently distributed across them. There is no on-site parking, which is unusual for such a large native park in Melbourne. There is metered parking on the street, in Gatehouse Street, Flemington Road and The Avenue. These tend to be used for other activities, such as the Hospital and residences. It is not usually hard to find a park on one of these roads but for such a large park the way the parking is provided de-emphasises convenient car access in a manner which de-emphasises the park as a destination for drivers.

There are two sporting fields on Flemington Road and a small tennis club at the extreme western end. Their location here in conjunction with the way the paths have been laid out, the topography and tree plantings – and the convenient access to parked cars - make these fields experientially separable from the rest of the native island section of the park. There are no other sporting facilities in the native section of the park.

There is very little attention to planting display in any sense. There are two little areas of native and more detailed garden bed planting on the edge of the circle at the two most direct entries to the park and circle. These seem to have been located here to make the park, on entry, more palatable to normal park expectations. To some regular Royal Park visitors these seem somewhat out of place. The Native Garden is a strong exception but its difference makes it effectively separate from and irrelevant to the rest of the park.

The plantings of Royal Park moderate the winds and trees by their nature can provide shelter, but there is little attempt at Royal Park to provide shelter from the elements or sheltered or intimate spaces. One of the

There is no attempt to provide spaces for gathering.

All large parks of the city of Melbourne list a good paragraph of ‘features’. These are listed to provide potential visitors reasons to visit them. Royal Park also has such a paragraph but only two items relate to the native island part of the park, the Burke and Wills memorial and ‘remnant vegetation sites and replanting trials of native grasses’. It is doubtful whether anyone but history or native plant enthusiasts who would travel to Royal Park to see such things. Apart from the Burke and Wills monument, there are really no ‘features’, as things. The whole thing, the experience, is instead the focus of attention. It might be said that the non-locals who come here are experience enthusiasts.

NB this account cannot help but discuss the results of what the designers have done, but it is not meant to be a design appreciation or critique. It discusses the actions of designers only for how this aids the understanding of how Royal Park functions. It is worth saying, with a little concession to brevity, that there are other aspect of Royal Park that the designer’s changed or added that have contributed to what the park does but are not really discussed here - including traffic management and car-parking strategies, the tennis courts, relocations and demolitions.

The discussion will return now to the point where the circle is first encountered.
Facilities and dog restrictions
THE EVENT OF REACHING THE CIRCLE

There is a strong sense of having arrived. Of having it all laid out in front of you. The circle seems laid out at your feet. The strength of this feeling overwhelms any understanding of what this ‘all’ is.

The circle draws on, sets up, constructs and / or incites a certain range of vectors – those on an experiencing vector. This circle becomes the focus for this range of vectors. For such desires this part of Royal Park becomes the focus of all of the park. To enter the park was to depart from the workaday and domestic worlds. To reach here on the circle there is a double departure: a moving away from the initial departure and a moving to something beyond.

Tops of hills or high points are usually destinations of some sort. In this case the circle becomes the destination or the experiencing becomes the destination.

THE VIEW

This is an arresting view. It stops you still. While the grandeur of it as something to look at begins to slow you down as you approach it readying to stop, it is just before you stop that it is most arresting.

You are now standing on the edge of the great circle. Even for those who come here often this view stops you still. You would have to be on a very functional vector to not stop.

It is more precise to say that whole complex event experienced, an event of many entwined dimensions, is expressed here through how perplexing this arresting view is. It is all the more perplexing as the view is so open and clear as though there was nothing to hide.

As discussed earlier, there is a shift that begins with a gradually widening view of a distant horizon, and then as the circle is reached, the view pulls back so that you are on the circle and the view rapidly widens into a 180 degrees panorama of a newly unitary space.

Important to this is that the sense of the roundness and continuity of the path is strongest at this point. The path defines the area and the area is expressed through the way that the clarity or graphic obviousness of the path expresses the whole area of the grass-path-tree wall circle.

From here you can see the greatest extent of path and the greatest area of grass surface of the various locations around the path.

Not all of the path is visible from here but standing people can been seen at all points on the circle from here. From here you can see the greatest extent of people on the path from any point.

Talking to various people who’ve experienced this event they might all have different ways to think about it or discuss it but they all share the eventness of it, an eventness produced by the interaction of concrete relations. From a starting point of the event the interaction of concrete relations can produce a shared discussion of how such an event concretely functions (in a way that draws you back to the different way that the event was thought about to strengthen the understanding of the event and discover what is being shared differently.

From here you see the longest widest horizon within the circle that can be seen from the edge of the circle. At this point the horizon feels, until you look a bit harder, like the other side. The in-circle horizon is also furthest away at this point. The native grass section, which you may not know about, recedes into the background here. It becomes part of the horizon.

This is the most symmetrical point, symmetrical and flat. Combined with the ease of the slope the view presents itself as a simple and clear set of relations. You are very conscious of the texture of the surface near you.
How to use the panorama pages
(that follow this page)

How to use these pages (sets of two panoramas)

The ‘in-focus’ (non-blurry) section in these panoramas equates, in width, to the binocular part of our whole field of view. In reality we do not look at the whole binocular part of our field of view at once, all in focus, but employ ‘foveal vision’ and look at very small (2%) areas in sharp focus and then by moving the eyes back and forward across the whole binocular area (and beyond) we build up a sense that it is all in focus.

Though it is not the same we also look at photographs similarly, foveally jumping from one part to another across the whole binocular area of the image, building up an idea of the whole image as in focus.

Viewing behaviour when on the path

Viewing from the path whilst walking tends to remain focused on the view ahead, and may shift to looking more across the circle (and beyond). Viewing from the path when standing still is more open to scanning around the view (and beyond).

How these panoramas attempt to relate to this behaviour

The two panoramas on each of these left hand pages attempt to, loosely, parallel these sorts of views, the movements between them and scanning across the whole circle viewing extent.

How to use these panoramas?

If we would be walking in a counter-clockwise direction around the circle, the view looking ahead along the path is directly related to section #1 (as per the sheet on the opposite page as well). Section #3 draws a relation to the view across the circle from the path. Section #2 draws a relation to what you would see if you looked backwards when walking. When you are walking you tend to look ahead but you also scan across the circle, so to draw a relationship to this shift, with these panoramas, move your eyes back and forward between sections 1 and 2 (i.e. Look at one then the other etc.). To draw a relationship to the scanning across the whole in-circle field of view that occurs when you are standing still on the path, move your eyes between 1 and 3 and 2 …and / or …2 and 3 and 1 etc.
THE VIEW TO THE CITY

The view to the city from the circle is unique in terms of ground-based views in Melbourne. The view from or next to the circle is one of the few significant views of the city as a whole. Across the greater Melbourne memorable views tend to be from a small number of raised areas. These tend to be small specific points. Royal Park is a large viewing area.

There are a number of notable places where strong partial views of the city skyline are available from roads, often roads that are approaching the city. A couple of the views are from roads on hills and are from vehicles and fleeting. There are strong very close views such as Southbank, where the city is seen as a vast entity to the north. The view from Royal Park is on foot.

There are specific moments along walking tracks, raised areas of parks and other places. No other generous views feel so close to the city.

From here the city is presented as a large object where you feel that you see the object nature of the city, and the scale of this object. The scale of this city-object, partly due to the how close Royal Park is to the city, is less obvious from other places.

It is also very characteristic that in the Royal Park view of the city the middle ground of the view is removed from the view by vegetation. So that there is a strong relationship between this large on-foot viewing space and the city, and what is between is removed. The view to the city is from an elevated position, where the city-object seems elevated and distinctly experienced as being ‘across’ from Royal Park. Both the park and the city feel raised. This produces a sort of equality or counter-posing of two elevated things. Landscape-nature-grassy-dome-and-city or you-in-or-on-this-domed-landscape and the city-object. There is something very intimate or intimately constructive about this relationship. You, in your awayness or beyondness, in this landscape set in relation to this city-object.

There is something like a kind of objectivity to the view of this city-object. Closer up the city obscures itself. From here, the overall hugeness is obvious and presented in a poised and not looming manner. The city-object is presented in this non-workaday and quiet place as an object only, cut-off from the workaday activities of the city. This enigmatic object is across from you and not looming over you or obscure in the distance. All of the separate objects of the city skyline are presented in a manner where you get a strong sense of their individual forms, scale and (from one view) their relation to each other and yet the drama of the whole entity and its parts is not lost. It feels that all that is extraneous is removed and that you are presented with the city, and also with your separated relationship with it, and something of your own relationship to things beyond yourself.

There are 12-15 hectares of area where you can choose or find yourself viewing the city from. There is no ‘lookout’, no identified highpoint and, on the ground it is a little hard to determine where one might be. This makes the view, or the viewing or process of viewing, part of an experience rather than the reason why you came here. The view over the 12 hectares of the circle shifts significantly and after de-emphasising the powerful yet relatively one-dimensional view-as-reason-to-come-here this opens up a whole field of subtle and not so subtle differences of relation to the city, to be discovered across this wide circular area.

As mentioned, the view also uniquely presents the city-object as itself raised on a hill or rise or higher land relative to what surrounds it. From here the city is far enough away that it is not looking over you or obscuring itself from you. Yet it is wide enough as an object and close enough so that the scale of the city takes up a good proportion of your in-focus attention zone.

It is also a very distinct view in the way that there are four distinct elements to the view. Each are in abundance, each moves across the width of the view, and each accentuates the others: the brightness or the white-cloudy or blue-clear sky (or even grey sky); the background-blush-metallic-glass-rectilinear objects of the city buildings as a collective; the mid-ground-dark green mass of tree-vegetation-wall and the soft-flat texture of the foreground grasses. There is not only objectivity but rigour in the view.
The ‘composition’ of the view is not of ‘a view’, but a process of viewing. The sky plays an important role in this process. Despite being ever-present, skies are something we seldom look at. Consciousness of different aspects of a sky tends to be limited to certain things, even if they can be wonderous (i.e. changing colours). We tend to treat them as more or less a constant with what is not-sky, the terrestrial, being treated as the active player in the functioning or composition of life ‘on the ground’ (or of the assemblages of life on the ground). We are less aware of the changing relations that we have (or that life has) to the sky or to the changing role the sky has in our terrestrial assemblages.

In this case the city-object is heightened by the encompassing background vault or expanse of the sky. Not only is the city-object featured in this great overarching space but the all-encompassing sky is reflected by and reflected in the vast dome of the grass-surface-object. The ‘scale’ or expanse of the sky above and around you ‘frames’ or highlights the city-object which sits between the vegetative horizon and the large sky.

The overwhelming brightness of daytime skies push you away from close or roaming examination of the daytime sky but the presence of this sky-dome is no less powerful. You might feel elevated on this site and ‘closer’ to the sky, whilst the dome and the surface draw themselves together somehow. The view across to the city is connected to the sense that you are above things, above the workaday world between the park and the city and closer to sky, to the heavens.

The view manages to pack in extreme amounts or types of perceptual-input: a vaster sky than normal; the massive scale of the city-object-hill; the continuous ring of path on the ground; the infinite ring of trees which requires a process of viewing to be able to be able to ‘see it all’ at one time and the vast ‘rounded’ or domed grass surface-object, which like the trees escapes simple objectification, but differently. It is as if the ‘scale’ of each of these extreme quantities does not compromise but accentuates the others. This is still talking as if such a landscape / landscape in general is viewed from one place, as little more than something viewed. This envelopment is a dynamic process. To even see the view requires scanning back and forward over it. On top of this is the bodily relation to the view over time. You never just look at a view. The process of viewing unfolds with a changing bodily relation to the landscape, as part of the greater process that is landscape.

One of the few specific activities that is a stated ‘feature’ of this grassy dome is star-gazing at night. The raisedness and size of Royal Park, with the dark tree barrier, distances the park from nearby lights. The vastness of the heavens - being many point locations in a dark sky – are counterposed to the distant lit-up city-object.
THE CIRCLE IS SITED VERY PARTICULARLY

The circle is located or sited so that vast planar surface at the top of the hill is included within the circle. This allows the circle edge to be located so that the topography starts to drop away more rapidly on the south-eastern and south-western sides, which are where four of the six entries (those at locations 18, 20, 22 and 30) are located. Three of these seem to be the most commonly entered entries. Thus entry to the circle for most who come here involves a significant shift in slope, as the circle is arrived at. The relative flatness of this great surface ends at the circle’s edge. The entries at location #30 and #18 are located at the start of this great surface. The slope difference is greatest at location #18, which is where we are and where the more experientially oriented vectors would likely arrive at the circle from the Parkville side.

In terms of viewing, there is now as mentioned already, at location #18, a vast surface in front of you. The largest non-planar surface on the top of the hill is in the circle and it can virtually all be seen from here. Also, more of the inner part of the circle’s area can be seen from this point than from anywhere around the edge of the circle. 50% of the circle’s surface or 6ha are visible from here. From other parts of the circle the amount of surface visible varies between 15 and 50%.

The surface is principally engaged with through its vast flatness and by the very long horizon line that separates the ground from the background of trees. From this location can be viewed the greatest length of horizon of any point around the circle. From path to path the horizon is approximately 500 metres long. The horizon is also at the greatest distance from the path than at any other location around the path. It is approximately 260-280 metres from you. At this point the horizon feels, until you look a bit harder, like the other side. Though the native part of the circle takes up greater than 40% of the circle — about 4.5ha - it recedes into the background here. For some, the idea of the native grass is an important, or maybe even the, reason to come to Royal Park. From this entry it becomes simply part of the horizon.

The circle is close to being the largest possible experientially separable shaped space that could be fitted on the ‘Native Island’. Experientially separable in the sense that the woodland plantings can be openly woodlandish and yet together function to effectively separate off the experience of the interior from the outside whilst views into the park’s interior open spaces from outside are restricted to quick glimpses on foot or car from a limited number of places. It is no wonder there is often surprise at the scale, openness and flatness of this space in the inner city. This surprise touches upon the personal and cultural expectations of park users whose experience of park spatial arrangements would tend to be of parks composed to provide a range of ideas and scales of spatial experience, in a way commonly considered ‘picturesque’.

The surprise is probably heightened in that the ‘palette’ used are the most common elements in open space across Melbourne: roughly mown grass, simple paths, and native trees and shrubs.

This circle accentuates the scale of the whole hill and connects the vastness of itself to the scale of the hill so that the vastness and openness of the circle is an expression of the scale and form of the ‘Native Island’.

That the circle straddles both the high point of the Native Island and the large plateau-tending flat area, means that the flat area is somewhat separated from the busy Macarthur Road by the low north-west to south-east ‘ridge’-line at the top of the hill as well as maximising the ability of the ridge line to reduce views and sounds of the road across the circle as a whole. It is also sited far enough away from Gatehouse Street and the Avenue for the relatively narrow areas of planting to be distributed in a random woodland-ish way and yet still obscure views in and out. The combination of minimal planting and the relationship between passing pedestrians and automobile views is such that only glimpses of the circle area can be made.

The circle is the focus of activity in the ‘Native Area’, as touched on in the discussion about paths and local roads, is sited close enough to Parkville to feel distinctly part of the life of the many Parkvillians yet be largely visually separated from them. Their own separated world.
Their own shared separated world. The separation pulls it away from the domestic and the residential whilst making it part of local life. Whilst producing the strong and distinctive separation or differentiation which it does the way the circle is sited also accentuates the continuity of the form of the hill.

The circular path is located high enough up the hill for most parts of the path, and certainly much of the area within the path, to offer long distance views out to the wider urban world. Before reaching the path such views have been much more restricted.

The circle is large enough to both be able to wander around in and for significant and for noticeable elevation of the ground surface to start to appear within the circle – together providing something of significance within the centre - contributing to some sort of incentive to move into the circle. The significance of the interior of the circle partly comes from not being able to see all of it. There remains a degrees of mystery to the view. If you could see the other side you would probably be tempted to cut across.

The flatness of the circle is striking. Possibly nothing registers flatness more than a geometric figure on the ground. A large circle registers and produces flatness. This circle has a great deal to do with making the relatively flat area seem even flatter. From all point around the circle the amount of path you can see from where you are ranges between 20-40% of the whole path. No other shape on the ground if obscured would imply itself so insistently than a circle.

The great ‘flat’ surface is not only relatively separated from the busy-ness of the road it also leans or orients towards the city as one great seemingly even surface, which orients experience toward the city, with the sun behind you and on the city.

Being a circle it has the advantage of being symmetrical (an infinite) from whichever way or point it is approached.

**AN ENTITY**

In framing this area of land the circle draws attention to itself and to what is inside the circle, and sets up a relationship of these to what is beyond the circle. In doing so it transforms the expression of the existing form of the land.

This circle creates an entity. This entity, which is experienced on foot, is produced by the path-as-an-implied-circle that disappears over the horizon to the left and the right. It is no less the central circular surface inside the path, the larger space within the wall of trees and the relations between all of these and beyond. These involve the sun or sky-lit bright reflectiveness of the path in the foreground, the absorbing dark wall of trees in the background and the (generally) sunlit grassland grass tops or grassy surface.

As has been suggested already, this entity cannot be separated from the totally encompassing surrounding sky ‘figured’ by the tree-silhouette-outline. The sky, amongst everything else, expresses itself through this entity.

Such expression is inseparable from what the circle does, which is produced in spacetime, intensively, and can be seen in terms of movement.

The tree wall plays a particular role in this entity. Most of the trees in the view, especially those in the front and centre of the view, have their trunks obscured by the horizon. Virtually all of the trees in the view are Eucalypts (Gums) with the occasional Casuarina (Sheoaks). These species, apart from older Eucalypts, have canopies that hide their trunks. This produces an amorphous, dark and solid background. The tops of the Eucalypts start to open up with their characteristic open umbrella sub-canopies. This creates a lighter, variable, less sharp and patchy outline with the sky. This has the effect of making the line between the ground-grass surface and trees more solid, somewhat as if the sky meets the grass.
MOVEMENT AND THE EVENT OF GETTING TO THIS CIRCLE

The event of reaching the circle, or the expectation of it, transforms all that is outside it. This area is ‘now’ the outside-the-circle area. It becomes an approach zone. It becomes a movement itself. It is about getting to the circle-top. A getting to the top movement, but not just pragmatically, mostly experientially. Easy and open. People do not tend to sit down outside the circle (as far as we’ve experienced). This movement might be slow or fast, though it tends to be slow. Two thirds of the ‘Circle Area’, the part outside the circle itself, involves this movement. The production of this movement zone is simultaneous with the production of a circle movement, the movement around the circle. The outside-the-circle-movement sets you up, or more precisely sets up the movement-on-the-circle.

The separation of before-the-circle and on-the-circle produces a separation between down and up. Or down and up are involved in the separation of outside-circle and on-circle. Down connects to outside and up to circle. It is down-outside and up-circle. There is a differentiation of down-outside-movement from up-on-the-circle-movement, where each produces the other.

SELF-REFERENTIALITY

There is something like a self-referentiality about this circle. The infinity of the circle draws attention to itself at the same time as this transforms the relation to all else: very much touching on the Deleuzian sense of a territorial ‘membrane’, more intensely than with other differentiations at Royal Park. The circle gets you to move around it visually and mentally as well as bodily.
HOW VISION FUNCTIONS AT ROYAL PARK: THE PRODUCTION OF ‘ABSTRACT’ AND ‘HAPTIC’ COMPONENTS IN THE UNFOLDING PROCESS OF ROYAL PARK

To account for how the experience of, especially, the circle area at Royal Park it helps to understand the particular form of visual abstraction which functions very intensely at Royal Park. This visual abstraction process plays an important role in the overall affectual functioning of Royal Park.

To do this I have found that it helps to know something about how vision functions, biophysically, and then how this functioning relates to the overall functioning of Royal Park. This abstraction involves a relationship between abstraction and what we are terming the ‘haptic’ – which I have already touched on – where both are parts of the same system and are involved in the production of each other and the affectuality and expression of Royal Park.

To account for the particular form of abstraction that is certainly not restricted to Royal Park but functions intensely and uniquely there required spending some time on site and speaking with a number of people about how the landscape functioned visually. On top of this I found that discussions about types of vision from the optical sciences7 provided valuable insight on some of what was happening and aided the creation of forms of representation somewhat adequate to connecting with it.

Refer to diagrams on the following page summarising the production of ‘haptic’ and ‘abstract’ components of vision, and how they function on the ‘native island’.

Diagrams

This is a challenging thing to communicate as all of this functions involuntarily, preconsciously, simultaneously and heterogeneously. It functions simultaneously with the functioning of the other bodily senses, especially the proprioceptive (bodily) sense, as part of the unfolding assemblage at Royal Park. To put this into a narrative severely risks tasking away the intensive interactive aspect of how it occurs and the resultant forcefulness and significance.

Cone of vision

Visual abilities vary across the field of view. An important part of human vision for this project is what is referred to, in studies of vision, as the ‘cone of vision’. What this means is that a still human figure has a zone of binocular vision produced by the overlapping of the images of the two eyes. If you look ahead and take turns closing each eye you will notice that the area that overlaps is about 90 degrees of visual field across. The nose and rims of the human eye sockets physically restrict vision so that the overlapping area is a fair bit less than the total width, which is greater than 180 degrees. It is restricted vertically as well by the cheeks and brows. The resultant area of binocular vision is a flattened oval, wider than high. Outside the binocular vision area is a uni-ocular visual area.

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7 This account of vision comes from more traditional scientific fields. Deleuze sees vision from a different perspective, as my section titled: ‘Significance In Space: Sensations As Signs Of Intensity’ draws out. I find that scientific account productively works with Deleuze’s account of depth perception, intensity, significance and difference.
Diagrams summarising the production of 'haptic' and 'abstract' components of vision, and how they function on the 'native island'.

**THE PRODUCTION OF 'ABSTRACT' AND 'HAPTIC' COMPONENTS OF VISION IN THE 'NATIVE CIRCLE'**

* The human 'cone of vision' is a binocular in focus high attention zone which is approximately 90° wide. Anything outside of this cone appears more distorted and not in focus. This less clear zone extends almost 180°.

** Within the 'cone of vision' at a central distance from a standing person ground surfaces shift from being haptic to abstract surfaces. For roughly mown grass this occurs at approximately 100m.

**DISTANCES FROM THE HUMAN BODY WHERE SHIFTS IN VISION FROM 'HAPTIC' TO 'ABSTRACT' OCCUR**

40m 100m 120m

Rough mown grass is viewed haptically up to approximately 40m from sitting body (beyond that the grass becomes 'abstract')

Rough mown grass is viewed haptically up to approximately 100m for a standing body (beyond that the grass becomes 'abstract')

Eucalyptus trees are viewed haptically up to approximately 120m for a standing body (beyond that the trees become 'abstract').
When walking, and without serious events, the binocular overlap area, due to head and body movement has a tendency to move +/-15-20 degrees from directly forward. So that with walking it expands to 120 degrees or more, with a particular emphasis, on the central 90 degree area which requires much less investment. Binocular vision is, as is well known, important for depth perception.

**Fovial and peripheral vision**

Meshing with binocularity are the workings of *fovial* and *peripheral* vision. Each of these performs different functions in vision. To simplify, the retina is the light sensitive tissue on the inner surface of the eye and near the centre of the retina is the fovea. The rest of the retinal surface is concerned with peripheral vision.

**Fovial vision** The fovea is responsible for *sharp central vision*, which is necessary in humans for reading, watching television or movies, driving, close environmental navigation and any activity where the ability to discern *fine detail* is important. The fovea is largely responsible for *color vision* in humans. Combined with binocularity and movement the fovea allows us to discern *spatial definition*.

The fovea coverage takes up only the central two degrees of the visual field, which is roughly equivalent to twice the width of your thumbnail at arm’s length. When we want to inspect fine details we move our eyes, heads and bodies until the image of interest falls onto the fovea. We tend to *fixate* with foveal vision, even if momentarily, as in reading. If an object is large and thus covering a large angle, the eyes must constantly shift their gaze to subsequently bring different portions of the image into the fovea. This requires a great deal of investment. Large objects that require the turning of the head accentuate this further as humans are less likely to fixate on objects if it requires a turn of the head.

**Peripheral vision** is a part of vision that occurs outside the very center of gaze and takes up the vast bulk of the field of view. It is not, as suggested by the name, the vision which is on the edge of the visual field. Peripheral vision is not very good with detail but is good at *detecting motion*. It is good for a *general holistic impression of the situation*. Two of the main functions of peripheral vision are said to be the ‘recognition of well-known structures and forms with no need to focus by the foveal line of sight’, and the ‘delivery of sensations that form the background of detailed visual perception’. As you move close to the edge of the visual field it does also become more distorted and unclear.

Although foveal vision only occupies about 1% of the visual field it engages about 50% of visual cortex of the brain. As might be expected, the foveal receptors require more conscious control for accuracy, they are thus costly in terms of attention.

**How they work together**

Fovial and peripheral vision work together. The rapid skating back and forward of foveal vision across the visual field is enough to make it seem that the whole field is effectively equally in focus at all times. One tends to dominate over the other at any particular moment. It is easy to feel the shift between them in the landscape. Foveal vision is used to scan for detail. Peripheral vision allows faster control over the process of walking. The up and down movements of walking adds much complex noise into the system. The ‘smooth pursuit movements’ of predators (ie. big cats) allows them to keep the object of interest in the fovea. Stopping also increases foveal powers and precision. The particular interest you bring to an environment opens up an attentiveness to certain things. Your peripheral vision aids in locating possible objects of interest and your foveal vision focuses in on them.
Abstraction – grass-surface and tree-wall

Two important types of abstraction at Royal Park are tree-wall abstraction and grass-surface abstraction. There are two situations where these are particularly important: from on the circle itself and within the circle. The explanation here is relevant to both of these conditions.

At Royal Park this visual abstraction process seems particularly important for ground surfaces and massings of vegetation and is most strongly experienced on the edge of and inside the circle.

On site (and elsewhere) it was noticed that there seemed to be distance thresholds where beyond a certain distance particular surface and vegetation massings, suddenly lost their detail and texture and became more amorphous and, I considered, ‘abstract’. How this abstract condition comes about, the nature of it, and how it functions in becoming abstract are still to be discussed.

The process of abstraction is a forceful action and directs how Royal Park functions. To do this probably requires analytically teasing apart what is involved and then drawing it back together, in the case study itself, to show the affectuality and significance or function of it.

At Royal Park this is first experienced, if brought to consciousness, as an event, ‘something happens here’, and that whatever it is is, for designers I have spoken to, important at Royal Park. It would be easy to stop with identifying that this happened as enough. However fascinating this shift is in itself, the significance of this shift only starts to be tapped when we start to understand how this shift functions in the greater functioning of Royal Park. This shift is part of an affectual dynamism.

Something of this bio-physics, and something like this abstraction was tested out with faces in the street. Walking along a footpath a colleague and I noted (discreetly) to each other when an oncoming face shifted from just being a face to where you felt you could recognize a facial expression. This tended to be very similar for both of us and after a few times, give or take light direction and brightness, the distance was pretty constant and also happened fairly suddenly (“here”), like a tipping point.

Important at Royal Park were abstraction thresholds on grass surfaces and background trees / vegetation. For trees, mass or surface took over from depth and detail. For ground surfaces colour and surface took over from texture and detail. For a standing figure rough mown grass starts to be viewed abstractly at distances greater than approximately 100 metres. For a sitting figure this drops to 40 metres or so. Closer than these distances the grass surface appeared much more textured or haptic.

Tree Wall abstraction at Royal Park

For the Eucalyptus trees at Royal Park this abstraction started to occur strongly beyond 120 metres. One implication of this is that as the Royal Park circle is 390 metres across then there is a significant area, 150 metres across itself, in the middle of the circle where, if you are viewing trees outside the circle then they are viewed abstractly. If you are inside this area the whole outside appears abstract. Such abstraction would therefore seem to only occur in circles greater than 240 metres across. No sports fields are that large. This is very important at Royal Park.

As mentioned, distance is important. Central to Royal Park is the randomised woodland arrangement of, largely, Eucalypt species surrounding the circle. If, for instance, you were standing in the middle of the circle the many trees outside of the circle are located at a range of distances from 190 metres to beyond 400 metres. At Royal Park such differences effectively disappear and all trees appear as one circular mass or wall at the edge of the circle. They have shifted to become one abstract background or wall. Individual Eucalyptus
trees more normally shift to becoming a mass of trees between 150 and 200 metres from a standing figure.

The physical-visual characteristics of the tree species are important. The foliage of Eucalypts are relatively fine textured and leaves do not all face similar ways. The Allocasuarinas (Sheoaks) at Royal Park are much finer than the Eucalypts and become abstract much closer than the Eucalypts.

Young Eucalypts become abstract closer than older ones due to the foliage mass dominating visually over trunks and branches relative to older trees. Most of the plantings around the circle are relatively young. Older trees still become abstract.

The relation to the other dominant elements at Royal Park is key to abstraction. Abstraction is a relative phenomenon: relative to the brightness of the sky behind them the Eucalypts become a dark mass. The relative lightness of the grasses, especially the tops of the grasses – especially the native grasses - abstracts, and pushes the wall of trees back and darkens it.

Other important factors include: evenness of how the trees are distributed, the degree of evenness of the heights of the trees from where you are standing; how complete the circle is; and how wide the view of the trees is. Long walls of trees quickly abstract. The geometry is very influential. A square would have leading edges that you might fixate on. That it is a circle has the affect of being an infinite widening. The evenness of how the trees are distributed in the circle is important, as is the completeness of the circle. Evenness in height of trees is important. Younger eucalypt trees become abstract quicker. Older trees start to open up and display their trunks.

Where you are facing relative to where the sun is whilst you are in the circle is important. If you are facing north the side of the trees you are facing are usually in shadow. Conversely if you are facing south they are usually in the sun or compared to the northern trees much lighter. If you face north the wall strongly tends to be abstractly darkened even if you are relatively close to it at any time of the day. Facing south detail on the trees is much more easily made out. There is a very noticeable shift in how the wall appears as you visually scan around it from the middle. Just this shift itself has the effect of orienting you toward the lighter areas. The city is to the much lighter, north facing, south and doubles the pull toward the south. You don’t tend to look north. Casuarinas and low trees and shrubs dominate the view to the northern part of the circle and there is nothing like the city behind them. From within the circle you would almost always find yourself looking more southward than northward and not only because the city is there.

Where the horizon cuts out the view of the trunk of the tree it becomes abstract closer to you. One of the most powerful factors that contributes to this abstraction is where, from within the circle, an horizon comes between you and the ground surface outside of the circle. This not only removes the ground plane beyond the horizon but tends to remove the tree trunks of surrounding trees.

If other bodies come into the field of vision they will tend to draw your attention thus accentuating abstraction.

**Grass-surface abstraction**

In terms of grass-surface abstraction, we determined that when a view across roughly mown grass becomes larger than about 100m then the grass surface would tend to become abstract. If it was unmown native grass then 60-80 metres would be enough.

**What does this abstraction process do?**

This process of abstraction, of trees or grass, further away produces a parallel production of haptic qualities closer up (and vice versa). So, when a mass of trees becomes abstract in the
background grass in the foreground becomes haptic. It seems that an abstract distant view is required for a haptic foreground view. Removing any middle ground between them accentuates this production. The bio-physical bodily processes of viewing which are a connection between world and the limitations and capabilities our bodies produces this difference between the quickly abstracted distant views moving away from you and the close at hand details and texture close up. This difference is felt, and more important than this is that such a process sets up these two components to be specified by what else they are set in relation to. This is particularly important at Royal Park as the tree-wall abstraction and grass-surface abstraction are dominant components of the experience.

Before exploring how this functioned specifically we will need to examine what I am calling, and have already alluded to, as the process of abstraction-differentiation-specification-functioning or maybe it is better to consider the process of how a part of a landscape assemblage comes to be a part of the landscape assemblage and come to function in the way that it does. This process involves abstraction, differentiation, specification and functioning.

_Clarification: the sense of abstraction in the previous section i.e. tree-wall abstraction, grass-surface abstraction seems important for certain landscapes. It is a relatively specific. This should not be confused with the use of the term abstraction employed in the section that follows. The following discussion discusses abstraction as a more universal process that is part of all landscape assemblages (all organism-involved assemblages?). These two senses of abstraction are related. The first sense is one version of the more universal sense of abstraction._

This example will attempt, as part of the whole example, to draw out how these components are specified and then how they function in, and play a role in, the functioning of the relevant Royal Park assemblage. This process took considerable time to come to understand.
an affirmative open systems conception of how to design landscape

Peter Connolly

ABSTRACTION-DIFFERENTIATION-SPECIFICATION-FUNCTIONING

When Deleuze famously says ‘Difference is not diversity. Diversity is given, but difference is that by which the given is given, that by which the given is given as diverse’ he is presenting a conception of reality involving the interaction of the virtual and the actual. In other places he talks about the production of extensity by intensity. This is very often in the discourse of landscape urbanism mistakenly restricted to the physical production of the extensity (as physical form), an idea that Manuel Delanda has promoted, and seldom (ever?) is understood in terms of the production and workings of reality in terms of the continual interplay between the virtual and the actual. Deleuze does discuss how forms come about due to the processes of intensity such as in his discussion of embryogenesis. His main preoccupation, and where all of his work is pointed is on the production of reality by assemblages involving organisms: the interaction of the virtual and the actual as the production and working of assemblages.

A landscape assemblage like all assemblages involves what I term ‘dimensions’ (and which Deleuze refers to as ‘series’. These are interrelations between relations. Variations which get their variation by being connected to the other variations, so that the variation of one variation varies another etc. ‘Reciprocal determination’ is Deleuze’s term for this. The variation of tree wall behaviour varies with the variation of grass surface behaviour etc. This happens through the joining of organisms and the world, organisms and the landscape. Dimensions come into being through the mutual coming into being of other dimensions.

The full process implies the system already and can be characterized. From the ‘chaos’ of the world (not nothing or lacking order, already directional according to Deleuze) an assemblage on a certain vector abstracts relevant aspects of chaos, this abstraction process is produced in relation to the abstraction of other abstraction processes. (NB: the term ‘abstraction’ introduced here refers to a greater process of selection from chaos by assemblages. This should not be mistaken for the much more specific sense of ‘abstract’ in my text above, which is a making-abstract (in contrast to a making-haptic) – and which happens to be part of the greater process of abstraction being discussed here. The making-abstract is part of the abstraction of a differentiation from chaos.)

Such abstractions simultaneously produce intensive differentiations in time and space. These differentiations interrelate or communicate with each other. They bring each other into being. Some of these differentiations are integrations of differentiations together. Just as Deleuze says that in cinema a shot involves differentiation and specification, so in a landscape assemblage there is differentiation and the specification of each differentiation. The system produces the components of the system and produces the specification of the components as it produces itself. Specification is the process of sense-production (Difference and Repetition, Logic of Sense) or expression (Thousand Plateaus): the process of the production of the significance of each dimension in the assemblage. The process of sense-production or expression is central to assemblages and central to the affectual production of assemblages.

What Deleuze and Guattari term ‘the refrain’ is the communication between emergent dimensions of an assemblage as part of the affectual production of assemblages. Assemblages are distributed agencies, distributed in time and space. An assemblage is an ecology of specified differentiations. An ecology of spacetime components that together co-determine each other and the overall affectuality of the ecology. Such an affectuality is, being across spacetime, a dynamism in spacetime. Such a dynamism involves movement. An affectual dynamism is made singular through the singular production, interrelation and specification of differentiations: an affectual dynamism that inseparably involves sense or expression. Affect is an action of the world and is never separate from a significance of that

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8 This combination of terms resulted from attention to case studies. It was also influenced by Deleuze’s discussion of the process of differentiation and specification in a film shot in Cinema 1 and 2. This is the process of how components in a shot emerge and how this emergence is accompanied by them being specified (they ‘start’ to function in the film). Deleuze, Gilles, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, trans. Tomlinson, Hugh and Galeta, Roberta (London: Athlone, 1983 (original French edition 1985)).

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affect. This affect is an empowerment or power produced by the assemblage and it gets its significance, involuntarily, from the relation of all past and anticipated affects of the assemblage through what Nietzsche terms the ‘eternal return’ of difference (according to Deleuze). Force on force as Deleuze says. A significant action of the world. Maybe it is best then not think of affect, maybe it is better to think of affect-with-sense. Or affect with significance. Sense here is not sense as in the sensible, reasonable, fitting-into-common sense idea of sense etc (that the word sense unfortunately suggests). Sense, for Deleuze, comes before it has been transformed into ‘good’ and ‘common sense’. It is affect-with-significance, a-power-with-its-significance for a particular assemblage (which will be or have or involve a particular orientation/motivation/problem). Affect-sense-problem. Each affect comes with a significance for a particular orientation or motivation of a particular assemblage.

Differentiation-specification-functioning. The ecology produces the parts of the ecology as the parts produce the ecology. The functioning of the parts of the ecology are produced by and they together produce the functioning of the other parts of the ecology. An assemblage is produced by the interaction of heterogeneous connections just as the assemblage brings into being the heterogeneous dimensions. The term heterogeneous is central (for Deleuze and for assemblages). ‘What we term machinic is precisely the synthesis of heterogeneities as such...Quiet heterogeneous.’ 10 Each section of this case study has attempted to give expression to a certain dimension of the (emerging) assemblage in question: be it the network of roads of the whole of the state and the greater Melbourne that converge in a way that produces a transition zone around Royal Park or the relations between high points due to geological-geomorphological history or the peculiar mode of social interaction on the circle path or the way the sky and the ground-tree-circle transform each other or the specifics of local inner urban vectors. Such heterogeneity, very obviously if one scans back or forward over this case study, cannot be presumed and must be discovered or ‘followed’ as Deleuze and Guattari says, in the production of an adequate material, as central to experimentation. This following is a representational following as much as an aesthetic following. How to produce representations that allow access to the interaction of relations involved in a particular dimension? In this sense the construction of adequate representation is an aesthetic task.

Differentiation occurs to each of our senses (entwined with the other senses). There are intensive tipping points, differentiations, which emerge in the system and differentiate what has emerged from the interrelation of other emergents in spacetime. Aurally there is a common shift between when your attention moves from the sound of the crunching of your feet on gravelly or coarse path and when it opens up to distant sounds (and closes down the crunching). Or your vision, attentiveness and aural sensibility moves from when you are crouching down looking at the ground detail to standing up and looking around and then walking and navigating. You can easily notice such shifting when you look for it. Such shifts tend to come with spatial and temporal shifts and with shifts in the other senses and attentiveness. The production of an abstract wall of vegetation produces and is produced by the production of the haptic qualities of a close grass surface: but this only through the relation of these two components to all other components. However, this is not interminable as in the way Foucault characterized medieval resemblance, it is all in the service of affect. As such it becomes practical.

Differentiations can be extensive and/or intensive. They often coincide but not always. Very often a graphic extensive differentiation is a minor intensive differentiation. Very often a major intensive differentiation is only weakly extensive. Differentiations can be in space, time, ‘on the ground’, in the view, in a movement, in attentiveness’, in efforts and investments, in the relation between the involuntary/preconscious and the conscious, in spaces, in volumes, between human bodies, between bodies and things, across slopes, etc. Anything can emerge and function in the system. The system in a sense is everything, but a precise everything.

Again. Differentiation involves abstraction. A commonly observed abstraction in a view is foreground, middle ground and back ground. Here bio-physical shifts in perception capabilities are latched onto intensively to simplify what we are seeing – to aid our ability to process the world. To simplify the world to be able to act more effectively. This latching onto is also a specification. Specification is inseparable from abstraction. Simultaneously, as a block of spacetime is differentiated from other blocks of spacetime (the ecological relationships between spacetimes and all spacetimes is emergent at the same time) that block ‘receives’ a significance or a specification through its relationship to the other parts of the ecology. This significance is an expression of a relation to all of the other spacetimes. It is only through such ecological specification that affect emerges. It is only through this process that the affectivity, and the indeterminacy this affectivity, of each block of spacetime emerges. Each block of spacetime is not homogenous ‘across’ itself. Such blocks or differentiations are continuously variable. As you move across one it shifts until a differentiation shifts the shifting. Until the shift is singular. All of this is involuntary and preconscious, asubjective, presupjective. Consciousness feeds off it and feed back into it.

So abstraction reduces through the production of differentiations that breaks down the wild profusion and chaos of things into interacting chunks. It is wildly enrichening in that the significance, power and indeterminacy of each chunk pours into through its ‘newly’ formed ecological relationship to the rest of the ecology, to the other chunks (and gradients, divisions etc.).

**POTENTIAL IS PRODUCED BY THE COMMUNICATION OF HETEROGENEOUS DISPARATES AND ELEMENTS OF DISSYMETRY**

As mentioned, Deleuze’s ideas about individuation owe a great deal to Gilbert Simondon: ‘who has shown …that individuation presupposes … the existence of a ‘disparateness’ such as at least two orders of magnitude or two scales of heterogeneous reality between which potentials are distributed. Such a pre-individual state nevertheless does not lack singularities: the distinctive or singular points are defined by the existence and distribution of potentials. An ‘objective’ problematic field thus appears, determined by the distance between two heterogeneous orders. Individuation emerges like the act of solving such a problem, or - what amounts to the same thing – like the actualisation of a potential and the establishing of communication between disparates. The act of individuation consists …(of)… integrating the elements of the disparate into a state of coupling which ensures its internal resonance. The individual thus finds itself attached to a pre-individual half which is not the impersonal within it so much as the reservoir of its singularities… In all these respects, we believe that individuation is essentially intensive, and that the pre-individual field is a virtual-ideal field, made up of differential relations':

Deleuze stresses the disparate nature of the dimensions of disparity, the heterogeneously disparate nature of disparity, and that there are ‘elements of dissymmetry’ – high/low, front/back, up/down etc. This hill potentialises the summit. The city and the suburbs potentialise each other. Where you’ve come from potentialises where you are going. A before potentialises an after, which potentialises another after. This space potentialises that one and together that other one and the movement between them all. It could be said that the circle potentialises the movement to the circle that potentialises the circle. But of course it is not cause and effect, but a system of co-causation.

The ‘solving’ of the problem is the movement of the world produced by this assemblage, produced by the process that sets up potentials or unfolds potential in spacetime. This is a movement where the significance of this movement is in terms of the potentials and problem being solved. Affect-sense-problem.

Though there are many differentiations the circle sets up a great differentiation in the park for the particular range of vectors (and probably all human-related vectors). This differentiation draws upon, draws together and redirects a range of potentialising gradients and tendencies.

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11 Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, 246.
Heterogeneity is not just about relations relating but about potentials potentialising. Or relations being potentialised.

THE ASYMMETRY OF HUMAN DESIRE CONNECTS TO THE ASYMMETRY OF THE LANDSCAPE

It might be said – if we choose to see this from a certain useful angle (only one of many angles) that the asymmetry of involuntary human desires meets the asymmetry (itself an interaction of asymmetries) of the landscape to produce tendencies, propensities, movements. Up slope to the circle meets or more precisely produces desires for moving away from the everyday, for instance. Open systems work this way. These movements involve moving bodies but it is the movement itself that is produced when the way a landscape is structured suits the way a human is oriented – then you get real structure. In the Federation Square example (and here) I called such orientations ‘vectors’. A landscape can be seen, for investigative purposes, as the connection of a vector and that which makes it a vector. A human-landscape machine with two (thought) sides. You are always ‘on’ a vector: a tourist vector, a shopping vector, a going down to the corner shop vector, a cross the road vector, walking home after work vector, going to a kite festival vector etc. Landscape vectors come to life when connected or connecting to relevant landscapes or the idea of them. Such connecting incites them as much as it transforms them. Vector is a thinking device to get us to start to connect to what a landscapes does, what affects it produces or is involved in. Without such a device there is a very strong tendency to forget the human connection of the landscape machine and focus ‘just’ on the landscape, therefore treating it as something that is separate from the human. Something for humans to move around in, look at… Which is the cause of most of the perplexities of thinking about landscape. Once a vector starts to connect it is affect. It never was a vector really. The separation of vector and landscape being only abstract notions. For thought only as Deleuze might say. But introducing it can start to connect us to affect. Affect being the connection or the production. The asymmetry of human desires and the asymmetry of the landscape (world) are asymmetrical due to the connection. Affect makes them asymmetrical, makes them function for affect. Affect draws them together, integrates them as affect. Affect selects what it wants from the world, various dimension related to what we tend to understand as things, and connects them together as affect. This is always a singular affair.

THE CIRCLE DIFFERENTIATION

The circle is an important differentiation and differentiator in the system, connecting to pre-existing differentiations, tapping into pre-existing tendencies, gradients, orientations, distances, transforming existing differentiations and producing new ones. In doing so the assemblage ‘starts’ to specify these differentiations. This analysis will here continue to examine this specification, which is inseparable to the differentiation. It is a necessary abstraction to see them as separate, and to see them as separate from the overall functioning of the assemblage.

The Native island vegetation

Open spaces are part of an ecology or economy of open spaces and part of a wider economy of diversion and activity. The potential of any is related to its relation to all other potentials.

Large native parklands so close to the central city are the exception. The only other close example is based around a river. Virtually all significant tracts of native parkland / bush are located and focused around river lands, mainly river flats. As has been discussed, Royal Park is not associated with rivers, streams or water bodies. It is focused on a high-point / hill and very dry. It also seems to be the only sizeable parkland not devoted to ‘active’ recreation that is a dry native park. This gives it a very different feel and functioning than a low-wet related native landscape. The native vegetation and reduced watering and mowing regime of Royal Park really emphasize how dry and unprecious it is. As far as I am aware the exotic grasslands outside the circle (on the native island) have minimal watering and mowing.
Overall, the native island looks quiet different from other native parks, which tend to have watered exotic grass. The Native Island can certainly be green – yet duller than the exotic grassed parks - but in dryer months especially, in comparison, it looks dry and brown or golden, and it is without the focus of lowland waterbodies. Large, open, raised and dry. Hotter (in summer), windier... and also close to the city. Unprecious and open to the elements. Again this contributes to deferring your attention from things and features to movements.

(refer to sheet titled: ‘Park types by vegetation’)

Typical large native waterways parks focus on: a revegetatively supporting ecology, picturesque variety of plantings and spaces and ‘passive’ recreation (i.e. not ‘active recreation’ or sport). As they tend to be on rivers they tend to be ‘out of the way’. They can be, if proximity allows, centres of life for the relevant local populations. Non-locals often visit such places by car and activities tend to be focused around picnic-recreation areas associated with car-parks. Linear trails that move along rivers also pass through them. Royal Park is not setup for the drive-to no-local visitors. Drive-to visitors, as mentioned tend to be experience or grasslands enthusiasts.

CIRCLES IN THE LANDSCAPE

(refer to set of diagrams titled: ‘Comparing the area and circumference (and other dimensions) of the ‘Grass circle’ with common sports fields’)
(refer to plan titled ‘Relative sizes of ‘Grass circle’ and nearby sports fields’)

In terms of specification, what is it to come across this large circle here in Melbourne? Pure geometric shapes are often used in landscape-urban designs but large circles are not commonly employed. Small circles can be found in contained circulation and display situations in more precious public gardens. Circles have been used, mostly historical, in urban arrangements.

LARGE CIRCLES IN MELBOURNE

An open space circle this large is unique in Melbourne. Scanning across greater Melbourne via Google Earth reveals that there are no obvious large circular surface forms or enclosed circular spaces (or even other non-rectangular geometric surface forms this large) across the whole 2500 km² of built-up greater metropolitan area. There are large grass areas in greater Melbourne but they are not so obviously geometrically contained as this circle.

GEOMETRIC SHAPES

Geometric shapes are used for their formal compositional characteristics but also because of the particular functional nature or efficiency of the particular pure geometries. Sports fields are no doubt the most common examples of large unitary geometrical shapes being used in the landscape. In Australia, cricket pitches, which are common, can approach being round, but tend to be oval shaped. Even if they approached being round they are much smaller than the Royal Park circle. Circles are used for some more obscure sports (I.e. Goalultimate Frisbee, Skeet shooting). Royal Park is, however, not a sports field and it is much larger than a sports field.

The Royal Park circle has been produced in a very restrained manner: a restraint more akin to pure sporting functionality than a focus on composition. To call it a circle, is to notice what is most obvious, and that is the circular path. The visual obviousness of the circular path obscures that the path is inseparable from: the circular area within the path; the circular and dark wall of trees outside the path which connects a space to this surface; the sky above which makes the top of the trees a relatively rigorous line; and the flatness of the ground plane across the whole surface-space. Together these function, with everything else that these connect to, such as the relation to the hill, the city etc., as a circular ensemble—a circular ensemble that, in the particular assemblage, expresses its relation to everything else.
Park types by vegetation

- Native parklands
- Predominantly exotic parks/reserves

Landsat image highlighting green spaces in Melbourne
Comparing the area and circumference (and other dimensions) of the ‘Grass circle’ with common sports fields

ROYAL PARK
‘Grass circle’
area = 12ha
circumference = 1225m

AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL
OVAL / CRICKET PITCH
area = 1.75ha
circumference = 474m
(6.9 ovals / ‘gras circle’ area)

SOCCER FIELD
area = 0.75ha
(16 fields / ‘grass circle’ area)

AMERICAN RULES
FOOTBALL FIELD
area = 0.54ha
(22 fields / ‘grass circle’ area)

HOCKEY FIELD
area = 0.5ha
(24 fields / ‘grass circle’ area)

Relative sizes of ‘Grass circle’ and nearby sports fields
MONUMENTAL SPACE

This circle is somewhat monumental. It seems a little known fact that Henry Lefebvre discussed monumental space in terms of affect.

‘Monumental space offered each member of a society an image of that membership, an image of his or her social visage. It thus constituted a collective mirror more faithful than any personal one. Such a ‘recognition effect’ has far greater import than the ‘mirror effect’ of the psychoanalysts.’

‘The affective level — which is to say, the level of the body, bound to symmetries and rhythms — is transformed into a ‘property’ of monumental space, into symbols which are generally intrinsic parts of a politico religious whole, into co-ordinated symbols. The component elements of such wholes are disposed according to a strict order for the purposes of the use of space: some at a first level, the level of affective, bodily, lived experience, the level of the spoken word; some at a second level, that of the perceived, of socio-political signification; and some at a third level, the level of the conceived, where the dissemination of the written word and of knowledge welds the members of society into a ‘consensus’, and in doing so confers upon them the status of ‘subjects.’

At first glance the great scale, clarity and order of this circular-surface-path-space-on-the-hill ensemble seems to monumentalize some sort of functionality. The particular functionality might not be readily or initially apparent. It might be through use itself that what is being monumentalized is made more clear. In terms of ‘components’ it is only the most common and cheapest open space landscape elements that are used: grass, trees and path. More importantly, the way these are provided is extremely restrained, as has been commented on by local designers. The restraint itself implies a functionality.

For Lefebvre, objectness is not a criterion for monumental space. Whilst it might present itself as an object of sorts the circle (ensemble) might be something like a monumental space or monumental experience? For Lefebvre, monumental space “opens a way from everyday concerns to collective joy” According to the architect Aldo Rossi’s own criteria for monuments, discussed in relation to Rome, “we might easily mean a street, a zone, even a country” (though this was mentioned reluctantly). Yet, and this is where Deleuze differs from Lefebvre, it can hardly be considered symbolic in any semiological sense. It can hardly be considered part of a ‘co-ordinated’ symbol in the state sense or ‘according to a strict order for the purposes of the use of space’. So there seems to be something of a monumental provision, implying some sort of functionality, but not of a ‘strict order’ or for the state or higher power. It might be said that we could understand the phrase ‘according to a strict order for the purposes of the use of space’ to mean ‘in relation to its part in an assemblage’.

MOVEMENT AND DIFFERENTIATION

The first time you come here you move to the top. You are moved to the top. It is movement to the top. Assuming you had enough time on entry, not getting to the top, only going part of the way, is not really an option. After being here once, if you considered it, all of the landscape that preceded the circle was about moving to the circle (apart from short-cuts which often use the circle also). This then sets up what the next type of movement might be. I have never noticed anyone (no doubt they do) sit down outside of the circle (in the entire

13 Lefebvre, Production of Space, 224.
14 Lefebvre, Production of Space, 222.
37ha), apart from in the Native Garden, which is effectively a separate entity. Whether it be via paths or goat tracks the area outside the circle is for moving to the circle.

STRANGE FUNCTIONALITY OF THE CIRCLE: MADE FOR MOVING

This large circle has a strange functionality. It has the hallmarks of modern functionality. It seems made for moving. It is not how picturesque movement commonly seems to be conceived, as a moving shifting visual-sensual-spatial compression and contraction relationship variously moving around a shifting spatial and visual experience, oriented around an individualised seeing moving body and a landscape that it is moving through.

What type of movement is involved here? There has been much written about the way that automobile-freeways were exemplary in introducing a laminar type of movement to the modern world (or that freeways exemplified what was tending to be modern). Facilitating, as much as possible, via many means, continual smooth movement without obstruction or hindrance. If walking or running can be laminar this circle promotes something like a laminar pedestrian movement. Possibly more than other examples (and other forms) this circle is made for laminar or uninterrupted movement.

This movement might be somewhat laminar but it is not a fast movement generally. The movement from this entry to the circle tends not to be fast. In terms of the circle, there are no corners or anything to slow or restrict such movement. There is nothing about the path itself that distracts or hinders your movement. It has no variation in radius as an oval would. Running or even walking around an athletics track requires a more rigorous steering at the ends due to the much smaller radii and narrow lanes involved and the shift from straight to radial. At Royal Park there is only one radii and it is a relatively mindless radii being as slow and as large as it is, and it is very small and narrow for serious runners. Not mindless for serious runners. Mindless for slowish walkers.

In terms of walking it is very easy in terms of negotiating others you encounter. It is wide enough for two pedestrians (walking or running) to pass each other (or two bike riders or one bike rider and one pedestrian). You can pass others in either direction without serious diversion or slowing. However, most runners and cyclists would tend to be frustrated with this circle.

In comparison, at the Princes Park running track there is little negotiation. The width and the amount of time you need to adjust where you are across the path makes it easy and mindless for running. The only person you will likely see at Princes Park more than once, and probably only if you are a runner, is another runner. You are under no obligation to acknowledge them or to consider acknowledging them. It is very likely that runners here may have driven here or come from some distance as it is a premier running track.
Also, the size and shape of Princes Park makes each end of the long rectangular shape of the track important moments in the circumnavigation of the park. Princes Park is made for a more extended type of moving. Princes Park is set up for many runners simultaneously. It has a 3-4 metre wide track and very long straight (up to 1.2km) or near straight sections. Runners are more common than walkers and exercise-running the dominant style of running. It allows runners to abandon themselves to running at whatever degree of seriousness suits them. It allows runners to get ‘into the zone’ of running. In contrast, Royal Park is a 2.4 metre wide and continuously circular track, requiring more attention being paid to others on the path.
Each interaction is at least mildly eventful. Princes Park is a largely shaded track. Royal Park is not shaded at all.

Princes Park is much more part of the everyday lives of commuters, residents etc. Royal Park is both more away from things yet more interactive with those who are there.

WALKING

For walkers, the circle at Royal Park is made for mindless walking in that little attention needs to be paid to the path or navigating, except when others are encountered. This difference between the mindlessness of the path and the event of meeting others is greater than for most paths. There is something about encountering others on this circuit that is particularly self-conscious. Most encounters involve, during the encounter, negotiating with yourself about if you will acknowledge who you encounter, especially given the greater likelihood of knowing people at Royal Park. For most who come to Royal Park there is some chance or a greater chance you might be acquainted with those you encounter at Royal Park or have seen them here, or acknowledged them here, before. And there is a high chance you'll pass them more than once, given the circle is relatively small. Do you acknowledge them the next time, or even the first time, knowing there will likely be a second time (or more) a little later.

The path takes you here and sets you up to some degree for such interactions. The path might remove negotiating the path but it emphasizes negotiating with others. Runners at Princes Park might acknowledge each other, though they tend to all run in the same direction, probably to minimize negotiation.

STRANGE FUNCTIONALITY #2

Your synthesis of disparate elements will be all the stronger if you proceed with a sober gesture, an act of consistency, capture, or extraction that works in a material that is not meager but prodigiously simplified, creatively limited, selected. For there is no imagination outside of technique. 16

Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus

That circles are not common however highlights that there is something not so functional about large circles in the landscape. By this sense of ‘functional’ is also meant the degree to which it seamlessly fits into the wider economics, functions and expectations of the world. The functionality of this large circle is a strange functionality. It is not normal to have such a large circle. Functionality tends to come in fairly set packages (an athletics running track) or has a flexibility that is able to shift around whatever constraints come along (jogging tracks like Princes Park or ‘open spaces’. This large circle has the rigour of a set package yet there is no obvious well-trodden use, functional constraint or convention for the scale of the circle. The ‘uselessness’ of this circle equals the conviction, if you like, of this uselessness. It is a serious uselessness. Uselessness taken seriously. It is something different or more than the well-trodden functional. Or possibly some new function or functioning?

As mentioned, the extreme restraint is commented on by designers. Restrained and rigorous. Yet, it is a wildly generous path and path-space-ensemble. It is restrained and generous. To a generous degree rigorously useless. A shared championing or monumentalising of what might be beyond the well-trodden/functional? Experience anonymously and collectively taken seriously?

What do restraint and rigour mean? Relatedly, they seems to mean, in terms of vision, which is also part of the experience of Royal Park, that it takes away all that you ‘look at’ and replaces this with a continual visual dynamism between a restricted range of continuously varying parts, which potentialise and are expressed within the movement. Relatedly,

16 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 345-346.
functional spaces, especially recreational spaces, tend to be focused on what they do and not what you are looking at.

So, Royal Park seems both strangely functional and strangely not functional. Seriously and collectively exploring what is beyond the expected. It has a strange functionality and this, maybe, becomes its functionality. It is especially generous given that it is out of the way and relatively few go here. Due to how limited this public is and how few people there tend to be here, there is then an intimacy to this generously provided space as well. Generously for you and a few others. Something outside of what is normally expected taken seriously and provided for the public.

WHAT SORT OF RUNNING MOVEMENT IS INVOLVED HERE?

Though the focus here is on certain walkers, how runners use Royal Park might be useful in understanding how walkers use it. The path at Royal Park is sometimes used by runners. How can we get a fix on the way that runners use Royal Park? Being so close (300 metres including two major roads) to the popular Princes Park running track suggests that the relatively few who choose to run here may not approach running or exercise the same way as at Princes Park, and probably in a less than common way.

For a start, Royal Park would not be considered a serious running track in that it has a harder surface than serious runners prefer. The track at Princes Park is soft gravel. The Royal Park circle is very small for a running track. There are the collective wisdoms, influenced by research findings, that are well-known to runners, regarding the health and training benefits of running (as I understand them). Such wisdom often recommends at least 20-30 minutes of running minimum per time for exercise purposes. The American College of Sports Medicine says aerobic exercise should last for 20-60 minutes, with 20 minutes being how long is required for aerobic benefits to be produced and 45 minutes as something that serious joggers should aim for. Popular running tracks in Australia (or at least Sydney and Melbourne) tend to be between 4 and 7 kms long. At 8km per hour, which some runners say is a comfortable running speed 4 and 7 kms take 30 and 53 minutes, respectively. The preference for this range of lengths might be due to the sense of achievement, in relation to perceived fitness and conditioning thresholds, from running one of the laps. To begin with, if you set out you have effectively obliged yourself or set yourself up to get around at least once, and to do so will get you over the minimum fitness threshold. The intensivity of this should be obvious. A pony on a pony ride tends to slowly (and begrudgingly) head-off and then speedily return. Extensively, for the pony, the two parts of the ride are the same. Intensively they are very different. The first lap is different from the next. (You can’t notate such differences yet they are real.) Your investment will be structured around the 30+ minute combinations available. You feel this when you are deciding on whether to run another lap. In contrast, a lap of the circle at Royal Park at 8k/hour takes 9 minutes. Every 9 minutes the choice to stop or continue returns.

Many of the really popular tracks are considered beautiful (Centennial Park) or have spectacular settings (along the cliffs in Sydney). Reviews of running tracks often include comments like ‘lots of other runners’ as a positive. This is partly for security but, like ‘scenery’ it is valued as it keeps “the mind active’. To do a half hour run at Royal Park means repeating the same route 4+ times for each lap completed at Princes Park. Repetition reduces the ‘array of scenes’ that more popular tracks boast. In Australia, many of the favourite running tracks are shaded as well. Royal Park has no shade on the path.

Popular running tracks have a certain machinic functioning where the conditions are set up for running and the presence of enough other runners running keeps you moving. This is even more extreme and often commented on in ‘fun runs’ where you feel part of a movement of people more than an individual runner. It is not uncommon at Princes Park to feel that you are moving around with a loose group of people or as a loose yet consistent flow that moves you along. At Princes Park you can, due to the long straight sections of path, often see a number of runners ahead of you for hundreds of metres just by looking ahead. This with the length of each lap makes being in a loose movement of runners more important than each lap.
All of the above interacts to differentiate and then provide specification to the differentiations. Or produce intensive shifts that have are given some sort of heterogeneous significance. Such specification seems particularly focused on the circle and the differentiation it produces.
VISUAL CONNECTION BACK TO THE CITY

At this point the connection back to the city has been remade. The walking has separated you from the city, workaday and the domestic and here you have a reconnection, which overlooks the domestic, to the city. The middle ground between this great space and the city is removed connecting the city to this space. There are few significant views of the city in Melbourne. The raised rectilinear, geometric, blue, metallic and masonry object of the city and city buildings registers through contrast the form-shape and texture-materiality of the surface of the circle-space-top of the hill. It expresses the relation of this space and your body in relation to the city-object-horizon. The city, this object of the work-a-day is in the grass surface just as the grass-surface is in the city-view.

You shift from the processing of the viewing of the space-circle, this stretching of your sensing to connect this to the stretching of the viewing of the city. The initial movement between the outer edges and the circle seems to shift to being a movement between the city and the texture of the surface. The abstraction of all that is between the city-object and your location connects to, or specifies, the haptic. The raised object city and the raised texture connect. The city is felt in the texture.
As you walk what appeared to be the grassland mound, the horizon, is getting closer. This is a very even rise. The extent of what you can see starts to shift rapidly forward and outward the further you move uphill. There are now no undulations to your right further accentuating the continuity of slope from top to bottom. You are also being more conscious of the road that is less than 100m away.
STARTING TO MOVE AROUND THE PATH

The re-established relation to the city sets up the movement around the circle. Most would turn here. East-west path cutters might go straight through. Some on a less functional route go from here to the middle of the circle to look at the sky / city and possibly wander around. Such a view can be functionalised as well. ‘Yes, it is a great view. What’s next?’

Once you’ve processed the view you will tend to turn and start to move to the right as the city orients you that way as an implication of the view to the city, there is relatively little to see the other way. The circle of trees obscures the suburbs to the west and north. There is a sensation of moving downhill slightly, for the first time since you started walking. There is almost immediately an intimate space (the only one in the ‘circle area’) with low native vegetation right next to the path and a seat with some detailed native plantings on the ground, which shifts your attention away from a view-from-an-open-location-to-the-far-horizon to what is just around you. Sheltered from the wind and afternoon sun.
The path flattens out. You are starting to slightly pull away from what seems to be the dominant plateau surface of the grassed circle. Walking is easier. There is even the sense of walking uphill slightly. This feels like a low point as the path appears to rise slightly ahead and move over a rise which is an horizon, beyond which it disappears back down again.

The city disappears behind the shrubs beside you. You start to move up hill again and there is a sensation of rolling up onto the rise. The shrubs that are close to you on the right contain your view. The view into the circle has contracted significantly.

The path seems to turn quicker on the top of the rise. As you pass over the ‘top’ of this rise you also pass the last of the shrubs, and this allow you a view down the long and open slope which you initially viewed up just after you entered the park. At this point, because you are now able to simultaneously see the grassed circle and down this slope, there is a very strong sense of the largeness and roundness of the hill. As you can now see, only from here, that the slope continues from down near the hospital, where you started, up to here and then continues past you to the top of the hill, becoming flatter from the point where you are. (The whole cross-section of the slope from the corner to the top of the hill is approximately 600m). You sense that the rise is more like a ridge, or the edge of a ridge that rolls back down to the hospital area. It is as if the removal of the trees from the view allowed you to see and feel the shape of the land, as one large domed and continuous surface, which slopes fairly constantly upwards and slowly rolls over near where you are and increasingly reduces slope gradient until it reached the centre of the grassed circle. This viewing also registers how far you have come as a sort of completion of the initial entry-sense of something above you.

This horizon allows you to view the city and the city hum is now apparent. The wind often increases dramatically as you move out of the shelter of the vegetation and effectively onto the eastern side of the top of this rise – now experienced as a ridge. There is a glimpse of the Docklands and the hospital is dominant beyond the park.

You start to move back downhill to what feels like the lowest point in the circle. A little further and the city view is obscured by close and medium distance vegetation.
At this point the path feels flat. The small-scaled planted garden beds inside the circle, combined with the single gum tree and park bench to your left and relatively restricted views to your right orient your attention and focus it forward and close to where you are. The park items and the relative shelteredness makes this feel more like a traditional ‘park’ than where you have just been.

This is the location of what feels like it could be the main entrance to the circle. It is at the end of a local street and almost the closest point from Grattan Street to the circle. You have shifted from a 600m long view and above it all to being conscious of being very close to the road. Topographically, it is a turning point in the Grattan Street path slope, and the slope of the inward path is as flat as at any point along the Grattan Street side. The circle and horizon of the grass are obvious from the street here. This makes for a very easy and direct entrance. The ‘park’ additions and this easiness seem designed to make what might otherwise be a foreign place for many park users more normal. The view into the circle, where the grass domes up toward the sky, makes for dramatic entrance from this way into the park.

From here houses outside the park are close and visible and there is often someone here sitting on the seat or flying a kite. Cars can be seen moving past. This part functions a little like an urban park for the residential population. The experience of entry means that the grass and tree horizons frame this park-like entry into a striking yet relatively contained image. This part of the circle, from the last horizon to the next ahead is very much more enclosed and the horizon much closer than where we entered the circle. The slope toward the center feels like a slope. You’ve already made the re-connection to the city and back to where you started. This feels like a degree zero part of the walk and all begins again from here.

After moving past the tree your attention starts to move forward and to your left, up and out. The slope starts to rise again. Moving past the ‘garden bed’ corresponds to a location on the circle path where the slope outside the path and inside are the same and there is a strong sense of continuity of slope from beyond the circle - down to your right through fairly open tree cover to the edge of the park – and conversely, moving into the circle and uphill, which further orients your view uphill toward the centre.
Panorama from location no. 20

looking across

looking back

looking forward
Panorama from location no. 21
looking across
looking forward
looking back
End of part 3