

# A study on Grafting the Public Space View to the Concepts Interpreted in Land Art

Soojung Choi\* Jinhyung Yoo\*\*

\* *The Graduate School of Hongik University  
Seoul, Korea, gloomyoasis@hanmail.net*

\*\* *The Graduate School of Hongik University Industrial Art  
Seoul, Korea*

**Abstract:** Recently, several policies are under way in the topic of the public design and seek various directions at the same time in Korea. The city view, which is one of the objects, holds a meaning as a public property composing the city over the individual facilities and visual problems. However, the city view of today does not give any aesthetic beauty or valuable experience. The study on land art is an alternative for that. This study tries to find out three key words, time, space, and natural material in land art and seek the value and possibility for the application to the actual squares, parks, and watersides of the public space. ‘Time’ helps to form a space that faces with changes and induces communication, ‘Space’ helps to form a space that can re-discover the natural order, and ‘Natural material’ helps to form the eco-friendly space.

**Key words:** *Land Art, City View, Public Space, Time, Space, Nature.*

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background and purpose of the study

These days, the policy on the various public spaces such as public design, public art, etc. focused on the public, is the topic of conversation in Korea. Seoul city and many local municipalities are checking the existing public spaces and vividly seek new directions at the same time. The importance of these recent interests is great because lots of disharmonious spaces have been created after the law of Compulsory Building Artistic Decoration was enforced in 1995. The problem of the existing landscape is that there are many decorations, which are not located well and do not go with the surrounding environment. These problems seem to happen because the landscaping is only focused on the individual decorations that is, there is a lack of harmonious view seeking the harmony with the natural aspects of outside. Based on the realities above, the researcher is interested in Land Art to form a better public view and whether to apply the factors of place, time, and natural material analyzed by the artistic characteristics to the landscaping activity.

Andy Goldsworthy, among the land artists, does his work with the material found at the spot and sees the changing process according to the time flow, aloof. The form and space using artificial material are defined as a stagnated place, but the ones that use the natural materials become a space that reconstructs new stories endlessly due to the changes of nature according to the time flow. This study tries to find out the possibility of general and

actual applications of the factors on the nature of the place and time material revealed in the works of land artists.

## **1.2 Study method and scope**

At first, the researcher is going to explain the reason why she studied land art and observed the après-guerre process up to its advent that expands the concept of exhibition from inside to outside and freely chooses materials especially using the natural aspects actively. The researcher is going to highlight how this kind of art movement delivers the sensitivity to the public and visual viewpoints, at the same time

Among the characteristics of land art, the researcher is going to analyze three characteristics; the aspect on the space dealing with place, the process of work and aspect of time which are important, and lastly, the relation with the environment as natural materials. Then, the researcher would like to look at the concept and value of public space view that is actively processed in public enterprises becoming the topic in Korea and the direction in the future. The researcher also would like to search the values in the public space view through the studies and cases on how the characteristics and concepts analyzed above could be induced and grafted holding positive directions.

## **2. The forming background of land art**

### **2.1 The appearance of land art**

After the Second World War, the USA experienced lots of conflicts and changes both in domestic and foreign policies. The society was confused and complicated by the cold war structure between the East and West, racial conflict between the black and white, antagonism of values between old and new generations, etc. The atmospheres affected the culture and art and caused an obstruction to the self-imposed creating activity. The world of art tried to be free from the previous structure by denying its formal tenacity, commercialized galleries, or customized attitude of art galleries, and minimal art appeared as a yearning for the new aesthetic value. It means the minimizing of illusion and rejects the existing viewpoints that the impression and self-expression are the center of arts. Land artists who have the tendency of avant-garde brought the natural environment into the artistic formative space during the process of expanding the ways of expression on arts and started their works in the Mother Nature effected by suggesting the real materials in creating works. To overcome the limit of the existing expression space, they used the Mother Nature as their work space and used the materials of the nature in their works. They also made much account of action and process putting and creating the accidental effects of the natural phenomenon in their works.

### **2.2 The meaning of land art**

Land artists regard the whole process more important than the completed works as a result. They also regard the discovery on the change made by the nature important because they work in the nature. Thus, they actively use time and space as their formative factors because the process of action accompanies with them and most of their works are done in the given natural space and limited time

The time, in land art, helps to reinterpret the daily experience in the environment as the artistic action. Various changes and attentions on the m revealed in the series of process while assimilating to the natural view are important characteristics in land art. The time of land art makes us notice the volatility by the time or environment changes free from the viewpoint that sees the art work as the result of simple image and let us take

the viewpoint of seeing the work through the context of environment. The effect that makes to notice on the object emphasizing the time expands the existence of that object and makes us to be aesthetic stimulus giving the chance to face other context and viewpoint.

Land art chooses natural objects as the material and use the natural change in their works through artificial transformation and natural phenomenon of them. In this aspect, they emphasize the interaction and unity between nature and human beings. They sensibly respond to the position (place) of works and put the essential point in the natural recognition in itself without transformation as much as possible. This attitude made possible to give a new artistic understanding on the natural environment and paved the way to re-discover the nature.

By inducing works into the real space, land art reduced the distance between works and people, and helped the arts to take more important role than before in public communication.

In the meantime, due to the peculiarity of exhibition places and deserted places, most land art works are introduced to people through photographs, prints, or mass media. In using mediums like these, it contains the sociality different from other types of arts and brings a shock to viewers through the breadth that the nature gives and additional eventful aspects. Land art introduced the re-interpretation on the material aspect for the aesthetic ideologies that had been constructed since Modernism. It also regarded the working process important and suggested a new art form having relations with various art tendencies at the same period.

## **2.3 Artistic characteristic of land art**

### **2.3.1 Space**

The things that land art is distinguished from the traditional paintings or sculptures are that the real place is the component of works. Even though it uses media like photos or documents as a way of working, these expressions are based on the real experience of a specific place or actual environment.

Once, Carl Andre expressed a formula that the 20<sup>th</sup> century sculpture was developing 'from form to structure' and 'from structure to space'. According to him, even the 'placing work' is a form of work and 'place is sculpture' because choosing a place produces art works. In his work that putting ordinary and regular object he uses in a certain place, the place is an element that cannot be separated from his work.

Andre's work <Equivalent 12> has a distinctive character because he chose the gallery where bricks are arranged. People regard ordinary bricks as an art work because they are joined with a place called gallery.

The actual characteristic that land art has is well shown in the concept of on-the-spot/off-the-spot too. A land art artist Robert Smithson embodied the work of off the spot in 1967. He exhibited soil or pebbles brought from the actual place, geographical map on the spot picture taken in the sky, etc. together. Contrasting to on-the-spot works, the information on the work is exhibited at the gallery space which is off the spot. Actively developing the concepts of 'on-the-spot' and 'off-the-spot' like this, he creates the concept of 'on-the-spot-limited sculpture'. He explains "in a sense, the spot is the reality that is not physically processed. We cannot realize the soil and ground when we are inside. On the other side, the off the spot is an abstract container." He emphasizes that the land art works should be designed and installed to get along with the nature there as the material of that place. His claim on the characteristic of the place is also a silent critic for not using the nature properly. Therefore, the land art work based on the most suitable character of the place offers a special and evident relation between the work and the place.

The concept of 'on the spot-limited sculpture' that emphasizes the place of works is also shown at <Emptied and filled> of Michael Heizer, too. This work was put in a hole covered with concrete after massive granite was moved from the high land of Sierra Mountains to Nevada Desert. He shows the geological process that forms a mountain as the rock is moved from its original place in backwards. This work shows the power of sending message that the change of the place can have and the effect of visual esthetic shock. Meaning attention at the work that a certain place is holding itself is related to the time that the researcher is going to explain later. The flow of time is well revealed by how the same place is getting changed. By changing the place of the granite, Heizer takes the time lapse into his work, too.



Figure.1



Figure.2



Figure.3

Carl Andre <Equivalent VIII> Heizer <Displaced-Replaced-2> Robert Smithson <nonsite>

### 2.3.2 Time

The characteristics that land art is closely related with a certain place and the possibility of capturing the time flow are connected. If there is an art work completed without any relations with a place, it could be said that it would last forever above the meaning of time. However, if it is only meaningful when it is limited to a certain place, the characteristic of that place would be changed as time goes and the work itself would be changed, too. The concept of time can be more prominent as working with materials of natural objects that can easily be changed by the time.

We can count Andy Goldsworthy as the artist who uses the concept of time. He is interested in the change revealed through various point of time and the time lapse involved rather than the result or condition of a regular point of time. The creation and decay, motion and change, etc. are the phenomena that show the progress of time and try to emboss the time through careful observation. For him, expressing the time is closely related with a place. He thinks that the shape of two different points of time separated far away only shows the difference instead of any flow or change. Thus, he tries to hold the change by recording and observing the time flow at one place for a long time. He, however, denies expressing this kind of change directly. He regards that the intention on the work is revealed enough only with the observation and record on the process and interestingly sees the result made from the three combinations place, time, and natural material.

The works of Andy Goldsworthy that implicate the time are shown in various forms. Among them, the rain shadow work starts lying on a road on a day when the rain is expected by a weather report. When the rain is enough to make the ground wet, he gets up and takes pictures the place where he was. The shadow shown here is the expression of not-wet condition due to his existence.

In these kinds of work, he notices the change by the time made through the interaction between human beings and the nature. The existence of a human being itself gives a change to the image of nature and it tells us that change consumes time and progressing always. The difference between wet and not-wet grounds suggests that the time has passed and make us think about the time concept itself such as change, motion, etc. On the other hand, he expresses that a human being is also a component in the nature. A human being takes a position in a space time of nature and shows that he or she is a being that should endlessly exchange influence with the surrounding environment. In this aspect, he suggests that the work of art should be relied on the conditions that the form or interpretation can be different.

The snow work is depicting a series of changes like a drawing while the snow is melting according to the time flow. When the snow on a piece of paper is melting, the soil or small particle in the snow flows like drawing a picture and shows its trace. He calls this phenomenon 'Earth Drawing'. He uses the change as the time flows while understanding the characteristics of natural materials in maximum.



Figure.4

Figure.5

Figure.6

Andy Goldsworthy <Rain Shadow> , <Clay wall> , < Snowball in Summer>

### 2.2.3 Nature

Land art uses the nature as the direct work material. Thus, there are some differences from the works of artificial materials, emotionally and ostensibly. Also, as we can find out at the characteristic of the nature symbolized in curves, the works using the nature are not artificial and gives us comfortable feeling. The difference between the inanimate and animate depends on how much it is mobile and communicable in the aspect of reciprocal action with the outside environment. In case of using the nature as material, the nature can be easily changed by the environmental influence. As there is a difference between the straight lines drawn by hand and ruler, nothing is the same and the work using the nature basically gets away from the uniformity and includes various changes and the interpretation could be vary. The use of nature does not stop at the artistic form or versatile colors, but affects the feeling of human beings who see it. As we can guess that the words 'natural' and comfortable' are used in the same context, the psychological effect through the use of natural material is great.

On the other hand, using the nature as material is good to create accidental effects. The nature makes the order and keeps it by itself. The complex order of the foundation of the natural phenomenon is kaleidoscopic and hard to predict, so we can see some accidental and unexpected images or results. The view work of Goldsworthy mentioned at the previous time part lets the nature draw by itself and it is a characteristic of land art that uses the accidental effect. Also, his clayly work uses the characteristic of clay that cracks as it is dried and uses them as his work. He shows the image like a drawing while delaying the cracks in some parts putting wet woods underneath. A little bit of artificial change on the material lets the nature draw by itself.

### **3. Public space view**

#### **3.1 The concept of city view**

“View” means the perception of a certain local environmental characteristic consisted with the nature, artificial factors, and lives of residents. In a narrow meaning, the city view is defined as the physical facility and visual aspect of the space like building, street, park, etc. but in a wide meaning, it includes the natural factors composing the background of the city and furthermore, it includes the shape of human livings that live, experience, and exchange. In the end, the city view can be seen as a mixed phenomenon combining objective and physical environment as a reality and human experience as a subject and it is a concept that includes the non-visual area like various city activities and historic-cultural meanings of the place.

#### **3.2 The character and direction of the city view**

In city design, the view approach gets away from the ways of existing buildings or individual decorations and holds the view of overall plan. This approach can suggest a solution for the symptom that the individual buildings or building design does not produce any beautiful street or living environment, as a whole, and it is connected to the characteristic of land art that emphasizes the related place in a larger aspect.

The good view stimulates human beings' emotion and creativity and, makes our spirit rich but the unstable view makes it dry. It holds a meaning as a composing factor or public property that composes the whole city over a simple individual and private facilities or visual problem of their forms and design.

Then, where the valuable city view should direct to? Generally, the direction of the city view mentioned in Korea, means beauty, pleasure, and identity. The beauty means the visual superiority and harmony, pleasure means overall quality improvement of environment based on the physical functions, and identity means the unique environmental characteristic of the local area that includes the culture and history. In other words, beauty, pleasure, and identity are the quality of the city environment in the visual, physical, and socio-cultural aspect,

#### **3.3 The present status of the view activity**

An article of a professional magazine treating the tendency and task of the landscaping style in a special edition suggests the problem on the view activity as below. It commonly points out valueless works, the uniformity due to a side effect of the scientific thinking, lacks of objective values or evident direction setting on Korean property, the problem of applying looks without verifying foreign style's individualism and specialty, and lack of quality check and direction due to a rapid growth, and worries about these kinds of situation. The recent disputes on the view activity stress the problem of landscaping style, artistic aspect, the role of landscaping design, etc.

As a solution for these problems, the concept of land art above can be used. The researcher is going to look at the general possibility of application on the view activity through the actual case studies below.

### **4 The use of concept**

#### **4.1 Focused on space**

##### **-Rediscovery of the natural order**

In land art, art is defined in the context of considering that the surrounding environment as the place where the work is placed becomes the composition factor. This place dependency can be interpreted as a context dependency. The change of existing familiar order can give a uniqueness and newness, and if this change is made



successfully, it can induce the artistic stimulation along with its uniqueness. In case of the landscapers, they usually grasp the uniqueness and characteristics that the existing nature holds, changes some of them, and suggests them in the new context. When the visual system that is familiar with the nature is taken to pieces by the artificial change of the nature, people rediscover the beauty in the nature. When planning a work of accompanying a little change for the view of people, who understand the special things that the place only has and are familiar with them, a successful view activity is possible without any active installation of the special object.

In case of usual landscaping activity, on the other hand, it tends to focus on the individual characteristic and gets behind visually in the aspect of overall view. The emphasis on the place in land art helps to seek the view activity at the landscaping level. As Andre made ordinary bricks as an artwork placing them in the gallery, the emphasis on place can introduce the view activity considering the surrounding environment and cultural meanings. Using the particularity of the designated place, it can find a harmony in it including surrounding buildings, special structures of the roads or the amount of sun.

These factors look to be easily applicable at a park space of the public space. The park space of a city is the space that contributes to the improvement of resting and emotional life of people and pleasant natural environment is under planning.

Placing unexpected formative factor at a park space, which is a daily rest area, people can get visual and spiritual stimulations, and it becomes the place where the rediscovery of the natural order is made.

Table 1.

	<p>In the work of Jonna Pohjalainen, people experience the visual and intellectual joy while being stimulated on the recognition of the existing size of colored pencils and their usual usage.</p>		<p>Like 'leaves with a hall' of Goldsworthy, if a formative factor can be intentionally applied to a park space considering their colors and forms, people can form new and rich stories, enjoy intellectual joy and rest at the changeable park space.</p>
<p>&lt;Color Pencils&gt; Jonna Pohjalainen</p>		<p>&lt;Leaves with a hall&gt; Andy Goldsworthy</p>	

## 4.2 Focused on time

### -The space that can experience a change and introduce communication

As an artistic meaning that time can hold, we can say the effect of attention. Time makes us focus on the 'change or process' and gives us an opportunity to see the object in various angles. The recognition on the process or flow of time has an effect to get the 'attention' of the existence of an object and makes people feel their existence better. It could be a chance of awakening out of the ordinary point of view. When we treat the image of fragment object that easily passes away different from the existing recognition, we can give more special meanings. As Oldreath who is one of the aesthetic attitude theorists claims that the artistic experience is possible through 'various aspect recognitions', the 'attention' due to time awakes the expansion of recognition on the complex aspects of a being and induces artistic experience. Furthermore, when we focus on the time flow of the observer and own changes as well as the recognition of time of the object, it can bring a stimulating effect of



‘communication’. It is because the recognition on the change can have an effect of waking communication. Assuming that we can communicate with the animate that exchange the feedback well rather than the inanimate, time has a possibility of stimulating the communication because it can experience its own change while observing the change of the object.

This concept of time can be connected to the view activity in the dynamic aspect and be acted as a positive factor in space forming seeking the revitalization of lots of public communication. Contrary to the existing landscaping works that are already made fixed ones without any relations with the time flow, the work using time can be changed to the one that includes a series of process exchanging effects each other. Through this, the public field of communication becomes active and can be a help to make the ‘square’ as a public space that can feel the wave of endless change.

A square is the place, which allows the active communication and becomes a suitable place for the communicative space between human beings and the nature as well as a resting space. Like this, the square that has the dynamic and static factors can be the public space, which is easy to graft the change of space according to the time flow.

The changes of light and shadow according to the day and night or installation of a work using the changes of natural factors according to the seasons can form various shapes by time and change of the people at parks or squares. As the parks of spring and summer, daytime and dawn form different smell, light, and air, installing the work of contrasting aspects to feel these changes can be a way of various feelings through time.

Table 2.

	<p>A square where the active come-and-go is happening is a suitable place to express the time flow and induces communications. Like the work &lt;The Gates&gt; of Christo and Jeanne-Claude we can feel the time of nature while watching the orange-colored cloth is flying. The time factor accompanying change is more active and gives dynamic feelings at the space, which is the resting place of people.</p>		<p>The snow chair and table of Hongtao Zhou disappears as time goes. People can actively experience time at the public space through the visual changes and feel the communicativeness through the attention on the object.</p>
<p>&lt;The Gates&gt; Christo and Jeanne-Claude</p>	<p>&lt;Cold House Ice Furniture&gt; Hongtao Zhou</p>		

### 4.3 Focused on material

#### -Producing the eco-friendly view and seeking the accidental effects



Today, the concept of ‘eco-friendly’ is treated heavily in landscaping activities. The landscaping activity using the nature can be changed into the eco-friendly image that follows the ecology of nature away from artificial and stiff image with their soft image and natural changes according to the time flow. Also, using the nature as the material of landscaping can change the space of keeping the natural order and valuing their harmony and balance



away from biased traditional development. If the viewpoint of stimulating artistic sense can be entrenched through the use of natural material, it may extend the communication between people and nature, and increase eco-friendly space that can feel the nature closely. Especially, a waterside space is a place treating water in harmony with the space, so it is a suitable place to produce the eco-friendly view using the natural material.

And, the use of natural material is good to induce the accidental effects. As its character, the natural material goes with the changes of natural environment and these changes have the accidental effects. As the concept 'earth drawing' of Goldsworthy's work shows, the nature leaves continuous changes by its own order. The application of these accidental and kaleidoscopic effects through the natural material can avoid the stiffness and surfeit in the view activity. The use of this artistic effect of nature's own is also possible not only with mineral and plants but also with animals. The group dance of geese in a certain time has the formative beauty. Like this, the possibility of using the order made by the animate can contribute to the expansion of view activity.

Table3.

	<p>The work of Edina Tokodi creates another natural space, to which artificiality is added using natural materials while putting moss on the wall. This kind of natural space makes eco-friendly and soft images penetrating into the city life of human beings.</p>		<p>Using the material of model forest that reminds people of the sea like the whale's back, a unique space and a foreign natural space can be created.</p>
<p>&lt;Green Graffiti &gt; Edina Tokodi</p>		<p>&lt;Chiswick Park&gt; England</p>	

## 5. Conclusion

This study researched the concepts of land art to improve the art works of existing landscaping activity and the view of the public space. The researcher has induced three characteristics like space, time, and natural material from the concept of land art. This study looked at their artistic effects and they can be summarized as below. Using space, we can find the formative order in the nature under the special condition of the designated area and the space can be used effectively. As we focus on time, we can recognize the change and produce the space of communication. The use of natural material is helpful for producing the eco-friendly space and overcome the stiffness of the view activity through the accidental effects. The work of the public landscape through the application of the concepts, place, time, and material can be continued in the nature and expect to help to form the view as the space, which can be newly reproduced and interpreted rather than as a stopped space, in the future.

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