

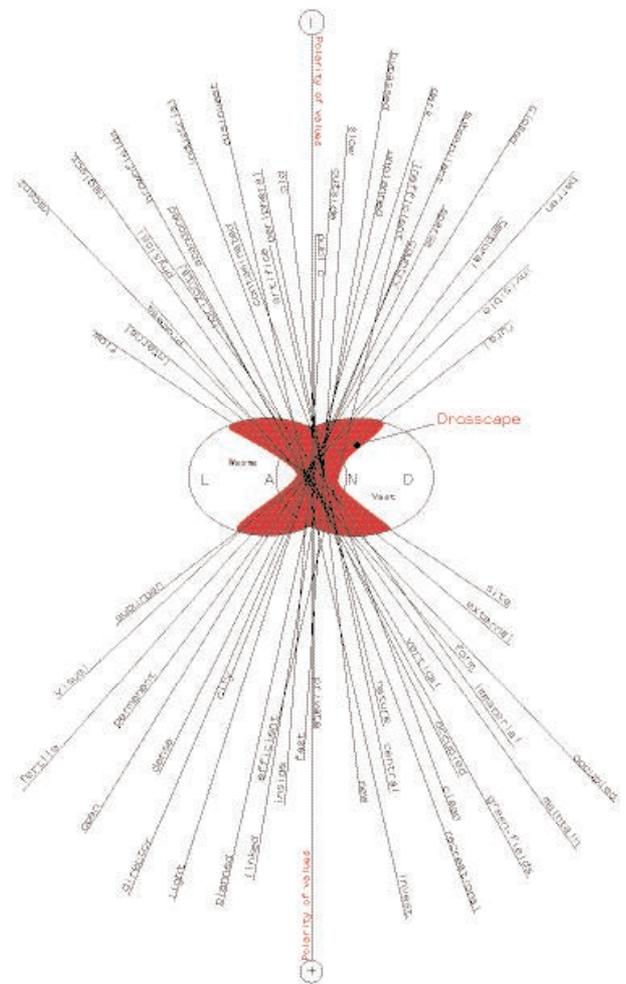
Kelly Shannon

DROSSCAPE

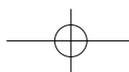
The Darkside of Man's Cultural Landscapes

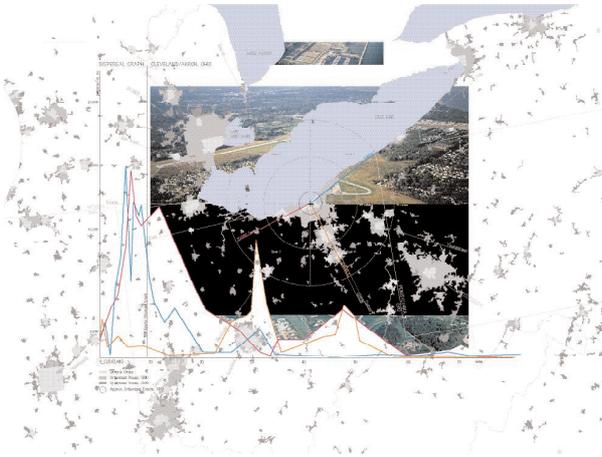
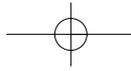
New landscapes are continuously created while others are destroyed. The cultural landscapes of the 21st century include the globe's vast post-industrial landscapes and territories simply consumed by sprawling development.

Cultural landscapes are popularly viewed as extraordinary natural or man-made landscapes that are recognized as treasures – as sites of amazing beauty – and that require stewardship for their preservation. In 1992, the UNESCO World Heritage Convention declared three categories of landscapes (the consciously designed landscape, the organically evolved landscape and the associative landscape) that represent the “combined works of nature and man.” They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal. The majority of the sites listed are those of aesthetic splendor and celebratory of the symbolic essence of man's remolding of landscapes. However, there are many other landscapes that are also part of our universal patrimony and which reveal man's disturbing relationship with land over time. The cultural landscapes of the 21st century include the globe's vast post-industrial landscapes – the numerous territories that have been raped for their natural resources, have become deadly poisonous in the process of unmitigated exploitation and require unfathomable amounts of funding for their reclamation – as well as the ever-increasing number of territories which are simply consumed by sprawling development. These altered landscapes, forever changed from their “original”



Drosscapes emerge out of an amalgamated zone of that which is considered vast, and that which is waste. Other values stretch the drosscape into an amorphous entity emerging from a wide range of societal concerns.





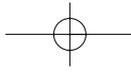
Unlike many other urbanized areas adjacent to water, the Cleveland region exhibits linear growth (rather than concentric) away from its center.

condition by human agency, lie witness to man's "progress." If landscapes are, as in Denis Cosgrove's words, "within a progressive debate about society and culture", then the good, the bad and the ugly of man's interventions in nature need be appraised as cultural landscapes.

Cultural landscapes cannot not be equated with scenic landscapes and the intellectual credibility of the World Heritage List remains questionable if a comprehensive range of landscapes are not included. As Carl Sauer, American geographer wrote in 1925: "The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural are the medium, the cultural landscape is the result. Under the influence of a given culture, itself changing through time, the landscape undergoes development, passing through phases and probably reaching ultimately the end of its cycle of development. With the introduction of a different, alien culture, a rejuvenation of the cultural landscape sets in, or a new landscape is superimposed on remnants of the old one". Alan Berger's diagram-based and photographic essay stemming from his 10-year long research into the world of altered and reclaimed landscapes exemplifies the fact that new landscapes are continuously created while others are destroyed. These contemporary landscapes portray a fluid process of landscape production and set off a chain of events perpetually fuelled by cultural needs. Reclaimed landscapes are the by-products of these processes. They are the leftover from all of society's demands, industrial schemas, political agendas, and consumptive lifestyles. Paradoxically, as revealed in the uncanny photographs, many of these newly created and toxic landscapes are the source of significant fascination, new ecologies and aesthetic pleasure. At the same time, the horizontal city and the in-between, the sprawling tangles of infrastructure and rampant peripheral and suburban development are horrendous eye sores.

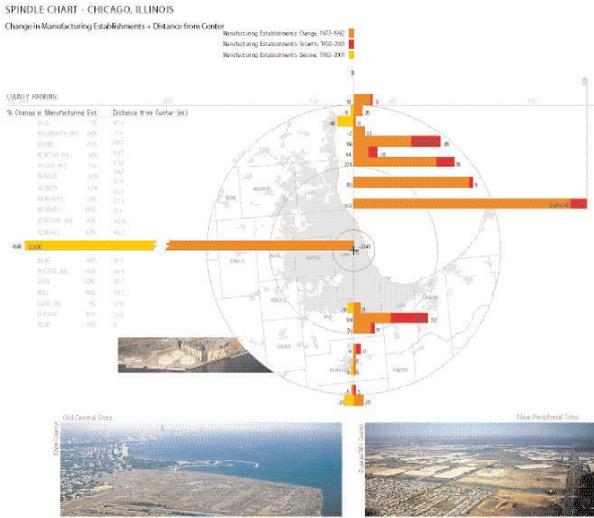
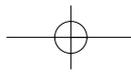
Landscape architect and Harvard-based academic Berger has been obsessed with the vast scarred, ugly, abandoned and industrially-polluted territories of America and has produced two books published by Princeton Architecture Press. *Recovering the American West* (2002) – focusing primarily on mining waste – and *Drosscape: Wasting Land in Urban America* (2006), for which he has extended his research to other "drosscapes" of late capitalism. The books contain a prolific array of illustrations. His speculative techniques of mapping are operative in the sense that they reformulate the reading of the exist territories and set the stage for the inauguration of new worlds on complex post-industrialized sites. The combination of multiple views and scales by innovative representational techniques results in new associations between disparate facts of urbanization over time. In turn, the photographs legitimize the abstract and sometimes art-quality collages/diagrams. The photographs are much





Copper Mine Pit and Wasterock Area. 2001.
Casa Grande, Arizona (reclaimed).

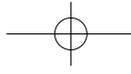


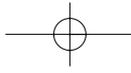


Since 1977, Cook County, Chicago's central county, has lost over 4,000 manufacturing establishments (a decline of 35 percent). The largest sustained manufacturing gains are located thirty to fifty miles outside the city center.

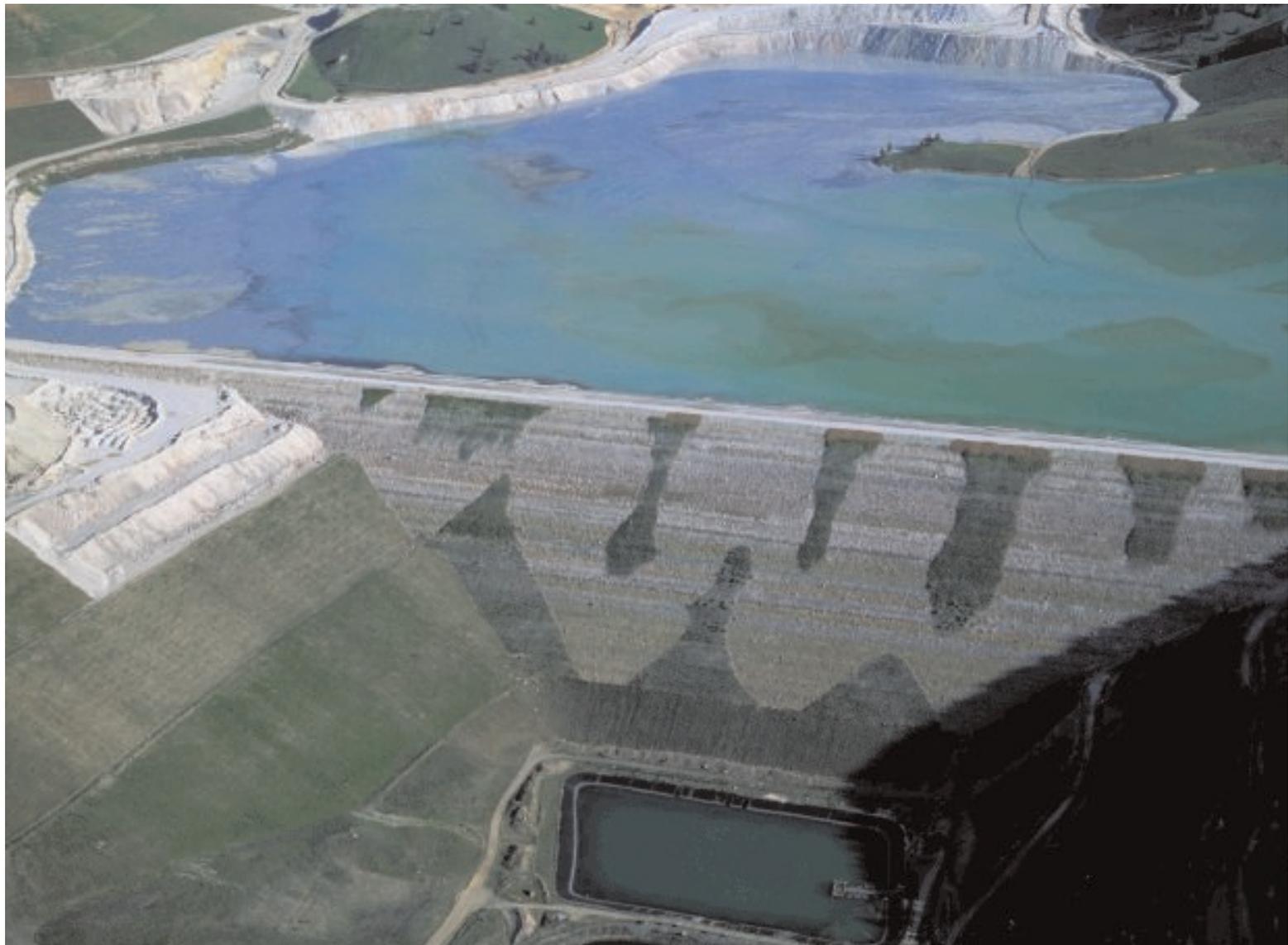
more than a collection of powerful images; they create a storyline that generates both meanings, and more importantly, questions. The careful selection of sites works with the inherent power in immediacy of images and the photographs become an emblemization and essentialization of Berger's drosscapes. Through creating links between urbanization, deindustrialization and the production of vast, horizontal waste landscapes in American cities, he has defined three types of waste landscapes: "actual waste" (such as solid waste and sewage), "wasted places" (such as abandoned or contaminated sites) or "wasteful places" (such as vast parking lots and malls). According to Berger, both "dross" – technically defined as the scum formed on the surface of molten metal and reinterpreted by Lars Lerup as the leftover of creative destruction, the ignored, undervalued, unfortunate economic residues of the metropolitan machine – and "scape" are created and destroyed by processes and values derived from, or because of cultural tastes and actions. "Drosscape" is the creation of a new condition in which vast, wasted, or wasteful land surfaces are modeled in accordance with new programs or new sets of values that remove or replace real or perceived wasteful aspects of geographical space. Drosscapes are neither intrinsically bad nor good but a natural result of consumption activities, industrial and economic growth. Indeed, waste landscape is an indicator of healthy urban growth at least from the corporate perspective – where the lure of liability reductions and tax incentives is significantly compounded by inadequate public awareness – which has stimulated the rapid development of land for short-term gains and occupancy.

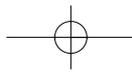
At the same time, however, in the developed world, the process of deindustrialization is in full swing as activity moves to more affordable locations. In its wake there is a proliferation of polluted and toxic lands, wasteful places and the degradation of natural systems. Deteriorating inner-city landscapes and infrastructure are transitional places awaiting reclamation, reprogramming and reuse. These sites (railyards, harbors, landfills, factories, industrial-manufacturing sites) are no longer dismissed as permanently destroyed and beyond recovery and re-inhabitation but, conversely are in various stages of reclamation for new uses and revenue generation, including housing, retail and office developments. The work to be done is plentiful, however, as Berger warns, in the 21st century, the professions of the built environment no longer have the luxury of patronage. Instead, the designer – architect, landscape architect or urbanist – must work within professional and geographical margins, create his own commissions and attract clients. The designer must engage in extensive fieldwork, site identification, and create innovative strategies to reintegrate them into larger territorial systems. Strategically phased implementation is imperative. He strongly emphasizes the notion of designers' advocacy and





Montana Tunnels Mine (zinc). 2001. Near Jefferson City, Montana. It is reclaimed incrementally as the dam is raised.

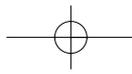




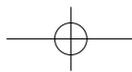
Landfill in Buford Georgia (below). Municipal solid waste landfills are mostly operated by private companies that accommodate all of the (non-toxic) refuse.

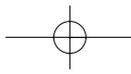
Electrical transmission line right-of-way running through Addicks Reservoir, Houston, Texas (right).





“To accept the ambiguity and severally layered meanings of landscape does not excuse us from careful examination of them and their origins. Rather, it obliges us to pay rather greater attention to them than we have in the past, for it is in the origins of landscape as a way of seeing the world that we discover its links to broader historical structures and processes and are able to locate landscape study within a progressive debate about society and culture.” (Denis Cosgrove 1984)





Landscape Contamination in the U.S.

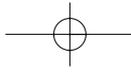
In the past 20 years there has been a paradigm shift over metropolitan and regional planning agencies, who now consider sites containing environmental health risks as priority for redevelopment (rather than a liability).

Images courtesy of Alan Berger and Princeton Architectural Press, publishers of "Reclaiming the American West" (2002) and "Drosscape: Wasting Land in Urban America" (2006).

the negotiating power of design: "... the designer is the consummate spokesperson for the productive integration of waste landscape in the urban world ... The adaptability and occupation of drosscapes depend upon qualities associated with decontamination, health, safety, and reprogramming. The designer must act, at times, as the conductor and at time the agent of these effects in order to slow down or speed them up."

Drosscape is the inevitable darkside of man's cultural landscapes. Post-mining sites appear as eerily beautiful environments yet many are highly toxic and beyond recovery in the traditional sense; they foster mutant ecologies. The wastelands of peripheral urbanization, the strong geometries inscribed in territories by the ever-increasing processes of speculative suburbanization, have become an everyday morphology and, although universally regarded as unnecessarily consumptive and ugly, continue to mushroom across the globe. Although Berger's work is focused on America, it is directly relevant for a broader audience. The United States (and exceptionally in places such as Germany and Israel) remains the leader when it comes to dealing with the cleanup its post-industrial dinosaurs. In much of the world, environmental controls are in their infancy and policies for (re)development are just beginning to be written. The drosscapes of yesterday have the potential to be new [cultural] landscapes for tomorrow. And Berger himself stresses that "the challenge for designers is not to achieve drossless urbanization, but to integrate inevitable dross into more flexible aesthetic and design strategies."





Car salvage and junkyard near Ayer, Massachusetts.
In 2003, over 12 million automobiles were scrapped or
junked in the U.S.

