# III. Earthworks, Golf Courses, Philosophical Models, and Poetic Metaphors: Landscape as Art Form, Sport, Deconstructivism, and Phenomenology

Industrial technology has produced the machines that can manipulate landscapes with an ease previously undreamed of; without it Earthworks, or Land art, would probably not exist. There are certain ironies, both intended and not, in the creation of these monumental and often beautiful projects. Many evoke in scale and cosmological intent the primary earthworks of prehistoric peoples, yet they are not expressions of widely shared and deeply held cosmologically oriented religious belief as were the great earthworks created at Newark, Ohio, or Cahokia, Illinois, which we examined in Chapter One. Rather they are the heroic creations of artists who, often through the agency of bulldozers and other earthmoving equipment, have accomplished with relatively small work crews and within their own lifetimes landscape transformations on a scale rivaling that of these original earthworks, the building of which employed battalions of workers over a period of many decades or even centuries. Frequently placed by choice or necessity in remote and inaccessible locations, often the deserts of the American West, modern Earthworks exist primarily for the appreciation of tourists who are willing, usually by means of a four-wheel-drive vehicle, to experience them firsthand and for other followers of contemporary art who are content to view aerial photographs of them.

Indeed, the camera is their handmaiden, for rarely if ever are these sometimes ephemeral projects undocumented. Still and moving images are as important to the artists as the Earthworks themselves, and some artists such as Andy Goldsworthy (b. 1956), whose delicate and poetic constructions are exceedingly transitory, have become photographers of professional stature in the service of their art (fig. 15.14). Aerial photography, which also allows us to comprehend better the configuration of such prehistoric earthworks as the Nazca lines in Peru (see fig. 1.35) or Serpent Mound in Ohio (see fig. 1.37), is similarly important in making many modern Earthworks legible.

The space they occupy makes a territorial claim to the sublime that substitutes for the inherent divinity that prehistoric and ancient societies ascribed to their sacred places. Unlike the acts of cosmological centering performed by these early people, however, the creators of contemporary Earthworks must locate them through a necessarily mundane process involving negotiation of property leases or the purchase of real estate. In the case of some Earthworks artists, especially Christo (b. 1935), who for this reason perhaps chooses important and conspicuous urban areas for some of his projects, the process of obtaining permits is as important as the realization of the art itself.

**15.14.** ***Red River,*** **Jemez, New Mexico, by Andy Goldsworthy. July 28, 1999**

Being explicitly identified with specific artists, contemporary Earthworks have an importance within the context of our celebrity-conscious culture more often linked to the name of the artist than to the concepts they are intended to manifest. This is

**15.15. *Spiral Jetty,* Great Salt Lake, Utah, designed by Robert Smithson. 1970**

***Below:* 15.16. *Observatory,* Oostelijk (East) Flevoland, the Netherlands, designed by Robert Morris. 1971, reconstructed 1977. Influenced by archaeology and by the phenomenology of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Morris emphasized the experiential participation of the viewer who comprehends different scales of time through walking in and around this 300-foot-diameter (91.4-meter-diameter) Earthwork of concentric mounds, embankments, and canals. These different scales of time include the actual time spent on the site, prehistoric time as symbolized by its archaeological form, and cosmological time as referenced by Morris's solar solstice sight lines.**

unfortunate because many were intended as a critique of art-world values as well as of Industrial Age environmental degradation. Although Earthworks have a materiality that transcends a strict definition of Conceptual art, the Earthworks movement is nevertheless contemporary with, and part of, the Conceptual art movement. Both Land art and Conceptual art are latter-day links in early-twentieth-century Modernism's break with tradition and expansion of the definition of what is art. Both are part of the same late 1960s gestalt of protest against the established norms for viewing and thinking about art. Both eschew style in favor of idea and form.

## Earthworks as Art Form and Landscape

Robert Smithson (1938–1973), Robert Morris (b. 1931), Charles Ross (b. 1937), Nancy Holt (b. 1938), and James Turrell (b. 1941) are nontraditional American artists whose chosen medium is the land itself—soil, rocks, water, existing geological and topographical structures—as well as light and sky (figs. 15.15–15.21). Smithson, a prolific writer and the most articulate champion of the Earthworks movement before his premature death, made it clear that his concerns were with cosmic space and time rather than with historical space and time. He aligned his own intentions with those of fellow artists of his generation who were also concerned with "inactive history" that brought "to mind the Ice Age rather than the Golden Age."[27] Further, in the late 1960s, Smithson was in the vanguard of artists who wished to abandon the notion of art as object. Their polemic was directed against the current status of art as a marketable commodity.

Smithson was in a sense an environmentalist, a man acutely aware of the degradation of natural landscapes by twentieth-century industry. However, with the idea that even industrial wastelands have an intrinsic beauty that can be given form and expression through art, he actively sought as sites for his work abandoned quarries, strip mines, polluted lakes, and other disfigured portions of the landscape. His brand of environmentalism was devoid of sympathy for protesters who thought of industrialization as essentially evil, a catastrosphe humanity had visited upon nature. His perception of time in "Ice Age" or geologic terms gave him the ability to think within the context of





planetary, rather than human, dialectics. He brought to his art the perspective of earth science gained from frequent trips as a child to the American Museum of Natural History and on car trips with his family to the American West. From his boyhood interest in natural history and his impressions of the immensity and grandeur of Western scenery as contrasted with the densely suburbanized and heavily industrialized landscape around Passaic, New Jersey, where he grew up, Smithson extracted a worldview that considered modern Machine Age humanity as part of nature and environmental remediation through art as an interesting opportunity for artists like himself.

His explorations of desolate and deteriorating industrial landscapes resulted in an exhibition of a new kind of sculpture he called Non-Sites. His work as an artist-consultant to an architectural team competing for the contract to expand Dallas–Fort Worth Regional Airport helped him to conceptualize how he could independently make Land art on an airport scale. This led him to abandon the symbiotic relationship between artist and gallery, and in 1968, he traveled through the deserts of California, Nevada, and Utah in search of a suitable location for a large Earthwork. He was particularly attracted to the reddish-violet color of salt lakes, and in 1970, further search in the West led him and fellow artist Nancy Holt, also his wife, to a portion of the Great Salt Lake in Utah "which resembled an impassive faint violet sheet held captive in a stoney matrix, upon which the sun poured down its crushing light."[28] In Smithson's eyes, the peculiar beauty of the desolate site was augmented by the industrial wastes and abandoned machinery he found there, rusting derricks that recorded past attempts to extract oil from tar deposits. The color of the water was the result of the presence of a microorganism. According to Smithson, the site "reverberated out to the horizons only to suggest an immobile cyclone while flickering light made the entire landscape appear to quake. . . . This site was a rotary that enclosed itself in an immense roundness. From that gyrating space emerged the possibility of the Spiral Jetty."[29]

**15.17. *Star Axis,* located in the desert east of Albuquerque, New Mexico, designed by Charles Ross. Begun 1974. *Star Axis* is a monumental demonstration of the relationship of Earth's axis and Polaris, the North Star.**

***Below:* 15.18. *Roden Crater Project,* near Flagstaff, Arizona, designed by James Turrell. Begun 1970s. Turrell, who sees natural light as his primary medium, has created within the cone of an extinct volcano spaces in which to experience the ambiences created by the sun and moon at various times of day and year.**

Using heavy machinery like that which had scarred the site, Smithson deposited black basalt rocks and earth, creating a spiraling form 1,500-feet (457.2-meters) long in the purplish-pink water. Underlying

**15.19 and 15.20. Interior and exterior views of *Up and Under,* Nokia, Finland, designed by Nancy Holt, 1998. Built in an abandoned quarry, this Earthwork is composed of sand, concrete, grass, and water. © Nancy Holt/licensed by VAGA, New York, NY**

Smithson's dialectical vision of industrialist and artist engaged in exploitation and reclamation of the earth is the concept of the law of thermodynamics, modern physicists' notion of the universe as being in a state of entropy to which the artist grafted his contemporary perspective of the natural environment as being debased by human activity but capable nonetheless of poetic expressiveness.

Shortly after working with Smithson to document the creation of *Spiral Jetty,* Nancy Holt undertook to create *Sun Tunnels,* an earthwork in Lucin, Utah (1973–76). Set within a vast desert landscape, these 9-foot-diameter (2.7-meter-diameter), 18-foot-long (5.9-meter-long) industrial concrete pipes are positioned in alignment with the rising and setting of the sun at the time of the summer and winter solstices. Perforations in the pipes admit light in patterns that evoke various star constellations. More attuned to evoking ancient cosmological expressions in the landscape than modern physics, Holt's subsequent Earthworks include *30 Below* (1980) for the Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, New York; *Star Crossed* (1980) at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio; and *Dark Star Park* (1984) in Arlington, Virginia. Her most recent Earthwork, *Up and Under* (1998), located in an abandoned sand quarry in the village of Pinsiö near Nokia, Finland, consists of seven horizontal concrete tunnels, four of which are aligned on an east-west axis, while three are oriented with Polaris, the North Star (figs. 15.19, 15.20). The tunnels protrude from a 630-foot-long (192-meter-long) snakelike mound ending in a roughly circular mound that is approximately 230 feet (70 meters) in diameter and 26 feet (7.9 meters) high.

Like ancient cosmological landscapes, *Up and Under* has an "axis mundi" in the form of a large vertical tunnel placed at the crossing of four tunnels beneath the round mound. It brings a circle of sky with clouds, stars, and sometimes the moon into the perception of the viewer within the tunnel. Reinforcing the cosmological idea of centering space, Holt took samples of soil from villages all over Finland and buried this mixture beneath the vertical tunnel. In addition, she placed three circular sky-reflecting pools, which are fed by an ancient spring, in the quarry floor adjacent to the mounds, whose slopes are covered with grass. The pools, which vary in diameter from 22 feet (6.7 meters) to 30 feet (9.1 meters) to 40 feet (12.2 meters), also mirror the Earthwork. It is meant,





**15.21. Lower Portrack, Dumfriesshire, Scotland. Designed by the owners Charles Jencks and Maggie Keswick. 1990–2000. Characterized by Jencks as "a garden of cosmic speculation," it contains a terrace of polished aluminum and astroturf, which is arranged in a warped pattern suggesting the physical configuration of space caused by a "black hole" in the universe.**

as its title suggests, to be viewed from above, along a path that follows the crescent-shaped cliffs created by the operation of the former quarry, and from underneath the earth, inside the tunnels. It can also be experienced by following the path at the top of the winding mound or by moving around the forms on the quarry floor. According to Holt, "Each changing visual experience leads to a questioning of perception itself—near and far, whole and detail, reflection and reality, aerial and ground."[30]

Charles Jencks (b. 1939), with his late wife, Maggie Keswick (1941–1995), a student of the Chinese garden and *feng shui* principles of landscape design, created a garden in Dumfriesshire, Scotland (figs. 15.21–15.23). Its modeled terrain bears a superficial resemblance to archaeologically inspired Earthworks in the United States. Jencks and Keswick, however, were not interested in evoking prehistory. An architectural theorist and popularizer of Postmodernism as well as the author of *The Architecture of the Jumping Universe,* Jencks is fascinated with forms that relate to a new theory of cosmogenesis, which claims that the universe continually jumps to new levels of organization. The "garden of cosmic speculation" in Scotland seeks to represent with elegance and wit Jencks's idea that "the new sciences of complexity, of which chaos is just one of twenty, show the omnipresence of these sudden leaps at all scales."[31] Among other things, he wanted the garden to represent the structure of space-time and quantum physics as envisioned by contemporary cosmologists. Different from Ptolemaic and Cartesian space, it portrays, according to Jencks, a universe that is "curved, warped, undulating, jagged, zigzagged and sometimes beautifully crinkly."[32] For Keswick, their garden was a means to express in a twentieth-century Western context *qi,* the "breath," or inherent energy, possessed by all phenomena, an essential ingredient of Chinese painting and also sought by Chinese garden designers, as we observed in Chapter Eight.

Within a concave section of the Giant Dragon Ha Ha, lies the Symmetry Break Terrace, which is meant to represent the four basic jumps—energy, matter, life, consciousness—that have taken place since the creation of our universe. Another terrace designed as a curving recessive checkerboard of Astroturf and polished aluminum is meant to diagram the way black holes are thought to warp space-time (fig. 15.21). A Physics Garden (an intended pun upon the Physic Garden for medicinal herbs) displays gatepost finials that are metal spheres representing various models of the universe based upon the Gaia, Ptolemaic, armillary, constellational, and atomic hypotheses.[33] The climax of the garden is the 55-foot (16.8-meter) spiral mound and 400-foot (121.9-meter) double-wave Earthwork created with dredged spoil from the marsh that formerly occupied a part of the property (fig. 15.23). Here the designers' intentions were to represent in interlocking sculptural patterns of grass and water the Chinese concept of *qi* and the geomantic principles of *feng shui* together with the dynamics of complexity science and chaos theory. Thus, Jencks's spiral mound, dubbed the Snail, was created by piling the excavated material from the

**15.22.** Lower Portrack, kitchen garden with sculpture of polished aluminum representing a double-helix

**15.23.** Lower Portrack, spiral mound and double-wave Earthwork

marsh to an angle of repose just preceding that which will cause a landslide—"phase transition" as this point is called in the theory of complexity that physicists have developed to explain the creative patterning of matter that occurs on the border between chaos and order. The reversing curve implies the smooth transition observed in the manner in which unlike things are enfolded into a spatial continuum. As a result, Keswick's serpentine ponds assume the form of fractals, the endlessly recurring paisley shapes observed in nature, while also serving as metaphors for the energy-charged calm that resides in pools throughout the universe.

Like the creators of Earthworks, golf-course designers are concerned with sculpting the land, although not to express conceptual meaning but





rather for strategic purposes that are intrinsic to the game. Yet because of the sport's venerable history, its impact on land and water resources, and its importance as an expression of contemporary cultural values, their work deserves discussion here.

## Landscape as Sport: The Golf Course

Course architecture is such a basic element of golf that the characteristics of each course account for the degree of challenge it presents to players.[34] In a great global family tree of golf courses all the branches can be traced to Scotland where the game grew out of the landscape, the sandy, alluvial terrain called links. Natural links are found in estuarine areas where rivers deposit sediment on their way to the sea. Golf originated as a game along the estuaries of the rivers Eden, Tay, and Forth. The first golf course, St. Andrews, dating from the early fifteenth century, was in its earliest form completely natural, a treeless stretch of windswept, rolling dunes with soil pockets supporting native bent grasses and some fescue.

The original game involved batting a "featherie," a small leather-bound, feather-stuffed ball, along a route improvised from the grass-covered links, avoiding the natural hazards of the gorse-encrusted dunes and eroded sandy hollows. Tees, clearly defined fairways, and well-manicured putting greens were unknown. Players simply wandered across this hillocky, treeless landscape, aiming their shots at whatever small holes served as cups. Although a series of such holes became institutionalized through repeated play, the number of cups on different Scottish links varied.

In the mid-eighteenth century, golfers' clubs were formed to organize the play. The Society of St. Andrews Golfers instituted turf maintenance for the putting areas, or greens and, in 1764, set eighteen as the official circuit of holes that was later followed elsewhere. Golf-course architecture had its inception as the members of St. Andrews started to manipulate their natural golfing terrain by cutting double cups into enlarged greens—one for matches heading "out," the other for those heading "in," widening the grassy playing strip by substituting turf for heather, and adding artificial hazards. "Penal" design is represented by the Old Course as it originally existed, where it was necessary to clear many natural hazards; the alternative is "strategic" design, which allows the player the option of taking a slightly longer but safer route at the cost of additional strokes. From these basic principles, golf course architecture evolved.

Adopted in England and after 1779 in America, golf was played on rudimentary courses often lacking the characteristics of linkslands terrain. But the popularity of the game grew, particularly when in 1848 the low-cost, durable ball made from the natural latex of the tropical gutta-percha plant was invented. This also made possible the use of revolutionary iron-headed golf clubs. As the demand for new courses grew with the gradual spread of the game, the first course designers were Scots and then Englishmen with professional qualifications derived from greenskeeping, not landscape design. They worked almost entirely on the ground, not from drawn plans, paying attention to the practicalities of the game rather than to any picturesque qualities inherent in the landscape. They did little to alter their sites, incorporating existing turf and other features or simply modifying courses, making them safer for the growing population of golfers or extending the length of holes to take into account the longer flight of the new gutta-percha balls.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, innovations in the routing of the course introduced variability in wind direction as a challenge for players. New machinery for mowing and new means of cutting and lining holes with metal cups improved the quality of the greens. Discovery through trial and error proved that the heathlands southwest of London were ideal inland golfing country when cleared of certain vegetation.

By 1900, nearly a thousand courses had been built in the United States. With their distant views across rolling meadowlike greenswards fringed with trees, many of these golf courses offer scenery similar to that found in "Capability" Brown's Grecian Valley at Stowe or Olmsted and Vaux's Long Meadow in Prospect Park (see Chapters Seven and Nine). But this is simply coincidence, because on golf courses the designer's primary consideration is not the scenery but rather the lie—the position of the golf ball as it ceases rolling and comes to a stop. Bodies of water, however scenic, are intended as hazards for the player, not aesthetic features. Near the putting greens, fairways are punctuated with bunkers, shallow sand-filled depressions, also intended as strategically positioned hazards. To provide a final challenge as the player reaches the hole, designers have greens graded with almost imperceptibly undulating surfaces.

The 1920s was a golden era for golf course construction in the United States, with an average of six hundred constructed each year between 1923 and 1929, boosting the national total from 1,903 to 5,648. Many of these were laid out by local greenskeepers, who were often emigrants from Great Britain, and amateur golfers whose primary intent was to shape the landscape to suit the objectives of the game. Given an extraordinary site on California's Monterey Peninsula, two regional tournament champions, John Francis Neville (1895–1978) and Douglas S. Grant

(1887–1981), designed the breathtaking Pebble Beach Golf Links in 1918. Built on a high bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean, Pebble Beach does not occupy true linksland, but its sandy, hummocky, windswept terrain and magnificent views of Carmel Bay make it appear to fit its name.

Equally endowed, Cypress Point, adjacent to Pebble Beach, was laid out ten years later by Alister Mackensie (1870–1934), a British physician turned golf-course designer. Mackensie, who built courses in England, Scotland, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South America as well as the United States, is considered one of the most eminent course designers in golf history, a reputation bolstered by his publication in 1920 of *Golf Architecture,* codifying thirteen key principles guiding course layout. These included—in addition to those directed at enhancing the strategic interest of the game, the comfort and convenience of players, and the year-round playability of the course—one that advised blending the course's artificial and natural features so that the two appeared indistinguishable.

By the mid-1930s, following the worst years of the Great Depression, course construction began to accelerate in the United States with the creation of the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) to provide work for the unemployed. Municipal golf courses began to appear in cities across the country. The WPA crews moved earth and sculpted terrain using wheelbarrows and hand tools rather than heavy machinery, but after World War II when private golf course construction again boomed and massive unemployment was no longer a problem, modern earthmoving equipment was used. This greatly abbreviated the time it took to build a golf course. In addition, with petroleum no longer scarce, fuel for mowing machinery became readily available, which also stimulated course construction.

During this period Robert Trent Jones (b. 1906) rose to preeminence as America's foremost golf-course architect, and by 1990 his firm's portfolio contained 450 courses in forty-two states. Trent blended the "penal" and "strategic" types of design with the creation of a style he called "heroic." His "heroic" courses eschewed the elaborate bunkering of penal-type design, substituting a single, formidable, diagonally placed hazard such as a pond that the golfer had to clear with a long drive of more than 500 feet (152.4 meters). At the same time, the golfer was allowed to choose an alternative, less risky route to the green. Trent's particular gift as a designer lay in employing penal, strategic, and heroic design techniques according to the nature of play a course was expected to receive, taking into account whether it was municipal operation for the general public, a resort for paying guests, a country club for members, a private layout for an owner and friends, or a tournament venue for professional golfers.

In the 1960s, professional golfers were becoming celebrities, thanks especially to televised sports matches. The popularity of golf, particularly among the growing number of active retired people, was responsible for a new land-planning phenomenon: the residential community built around a golf course. However, by the mid-1970s, the escalating cost of course construction, the energy crisis, tight money, new environmental regulations in the United States, and land-use restrictions in Japan curtailed the rate of golf-course building. Then, during the prosperous 1980s, the pace of course construction revived. George Fazio (1912–1986), working with his nephews, Thomas Joseph Fazio (b. 1945) and Vincent James Fazio (b. 1942) built and revised courses, including several for clubs hosting major tournaments. The view from Hole 18, known as Super Dune, on the Emerald Dunes Golf Course in West Palm Beach, Florida, shows how, in 1990, Tom Fazio sculpted artificial water bodies, sweeping fairways, and contoured greens to create a scenic panorama out of former scrub land covered with palmetto thickets (fig. 15.24).

**15.24. Emerald Dunes Golf Course, West Palm Beach, Florida, designed by Thomas Fazio. 1990**

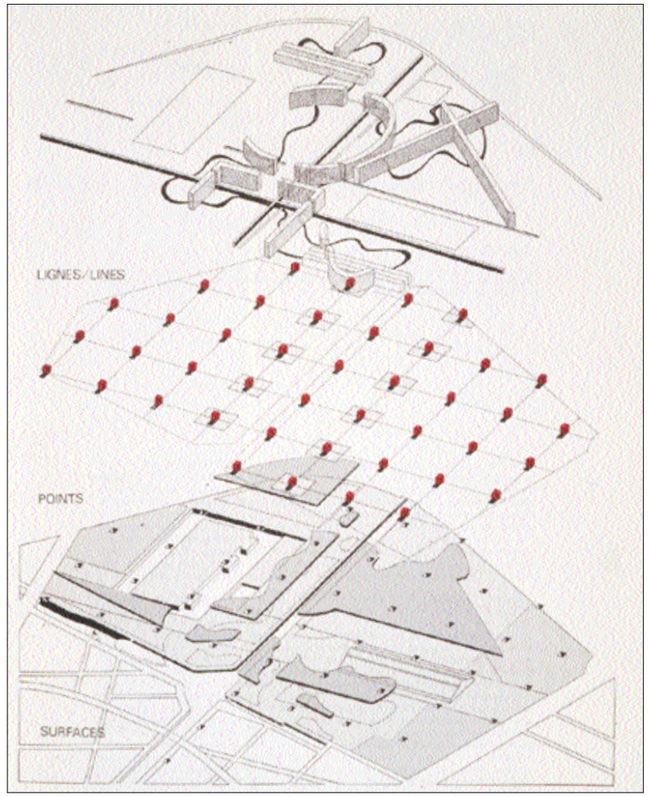




In 1974, eminent professional golfer Jack Nicklaus (b. 1940) organized his own firm. In Scottsdale, Arizona, his Desert Highlands Golf Club (1984) demonstrated how a grass-demanding sport could be successfully integrated into a naturally arid landscape. Restricted in the amount of irrigation he could use, Nicklaus created wide swaths of playable sand between fairly narrow turfy fairways and the pebbles and coarse rock of the surrounding desert. Nevertheless, Nicklaus, who seeks a deluxe finish to his courses, insists upon velvety bent grass for all his greens no matter the climate. In addition, he typically builds cascades for his water hazards, installs elaborate irrigation systems, and specifies the use of state-of-the-art mowing equipment.

Perhaps Thorstein Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption, or nonproductive leisure as a means of displaying wealth, discussed in Chapter Twelve, is nowhere more manifest than in the game of golf, especially if this assessment takes into account the difficult issue of water rights in dry climates. In spite of conservationists' protests, the popularity of the game is such that it is politically difficult to stem the tide of course construction, even in arid communities where water reservoirs run dangerously low and capacity cannot be expanded. The fact that golfing has become almost an obligatory ritual among corporate businesspeople who routinely meet clients on the links exacerbates this difficult and continuing ecological and societal problem.

Although contemporary enthusiasm for golf may be capricious, the story we have briefly traced of its evolution from the seaside links of Scotland to the inland desert around Scottsdale, from a sport whose objectives and rules were shaped by landscape to one that employs a high degree of artifice and mechanization in manipulating the landscape to create new challenges for players, is an entirely pragmatic one. At the opposite end of the spectrum is the landscape that is highly theoretical in its design intent, one that takes shape not from the land or the requirements of sport or other user demands. Such a landscape is Parc de la Villette in Paris.




**15.25. Plan of Parc de la Villette, designed by Bernard Tschumi. 1984–89**

## Landscape as Deconstructivist Theory: Parc de la Villette

Architect Bernard Tschumi (b. 1944) designed Parc de la Villette on the eastern rim of Paris as a deconstructivist exercise informed by the concepts of dissociation developed by philosopher Jacques Derrida (b. 1930) (figs. 15.25, 15.26). Whereas Earthworks artists such as Smithson sought metaphysical representation in their work, the deconstructivist Tschumi believes as did Derrida that "in architecture we find something that contradicts the metaphysics of representation and thus everything linked to representation."[35] Like Smithson, Tschumi starts from the same Postmodern position that chaos rules, but instead of creating as did Smithson an art that represents entropy, he subscribes to Derrida's concept of architecture in which "the strongest reference [is] to absence."[36]

Tschumi was one of 471 entrants in the design competition for the new 175-acre park that was to rise between 1984 and 1989 on the site of the old Parisian cattle market and slaughterhouses. The competition guidelines called for an innovative park that would be superior to the nineteenth-century Picturesque parks designed by Alphand (see Chapter Ten). A prolific the-

**15.26. Sunday in the Parc de la Villette. The recreational experiences enjoyed by visitors within Tschumi's essay in park architecture as deconstructivist philosophy are more diverse and active than the ones Sunday parkgoers have in nineteenth-century Parisian parks.**

***Below right:*** **15.27. Parc André Citröen, designed by two teams of competition entrants: Alain Provost, Jean-Paul Viguier, and Jean-François Jodry and Patrick Berger and Gilles Clément. 1985–92**

***Below:*** **15.28. Parc André Citröen**

orist who practices architecture from a highly intellectual perspective, Tschumi saw Parc de la Villette's design as an opportunity to manifest textual deconstructivism in terms of landscape. After his design was selected by a twenty-one-person jury chaired by Roberto Burle Marx, Tschumi invited architect Peter Eisenman and Derrida to participate with him by developing a small area within the park. To the commission of designing a space within Parc de la Villette Derrida brought his interest in Plato's *Timaeus* and its definition of space as *chora,* the virgin receptacle of place, or the spacing that is the condition for everything to take place, the necessary means of providing a web for places.

Tschumi's self-imposed challenge was to give spatial expression to a philosophical idea that rejects unitary meaning in favor of spontaneous multiple occurrences, or "event-texts" in the language of deconstructivism. His method was to create a fluid, nonspecific, uncentered, unconfined space — a theoretically boundaryless receptacle devoid of any representational associations, a blank textbook in which anyone can inscribe whatever meaning they choose.

Although in Tschumi's theoretical view it has no boundaries, Parc de la Villette is anchored by a science museum on its southwest end and by a music conservatory and performance hall on its northeast perimeter. These large cultural institutions, also the result of design competitions, were built at approximately the same time as the park. In addition, the industrial structures that once served as slaughterhouses have been reused as event centers. The park in between and surrounding these buildings is an open grassy plain designed as an imaginary grid punctuated by *folies,* a series of bright red, cubelike buildings, which appear as large abstract geometric sculptures set at regular intervals upon the greensward. Tschumi intended his green platform with red *folies* placed at grid intersections as "a surface of multireferential anchoring points for things or people which leads to a partial coherence."[37] Though without specified uses at the time of construction, these now function like structures in conventional parks; some are snack bars, one is a children's play structure, another a first-aid station, and so forth. A curvilinear, below-grade Bamboo Garden designed by Alexandre Chemetoff (b. 1950) provides a counterpoint to the strict geometry of Tschumi's theoretically endless spatial grid. At grade, a similarly serpentine path also plays against the regularity of the overall plan.

This highly intellectualized approach to landscape creation is the province of design competitions and the product of an avant-garde cultural establishment. The French have historically been especially hospitable to innovation and cerebral forms of artistic expression. However, other new Parisian essays in landscape creation, notably the new parks of Bercy and André Citroën, do not pursue the deconstructivist course charted at Parc de la Villette. These other new parks project the kind of meaning and symbolic structure of older gardens where representation—the *re-presentation* of ideas, as opposed to the presentation of an implicitly endless grid as an intentionally *meaning*-less space in which visitors find whatever "event-text" or momentary significance they may wish—aims to create poetical *place,* not merely value-neutral *space* (figs. 15.27, 15.28).

## Landscape as Concrete and Metaphysical Poetry

Poet and visual artist Ian Hamilton Finlay (b. 1925) established his reputation in the 1960s as a pioneer of concrete poetry, the arrangement of individual words on a page, often accompanied by pictorial images, in ways that gives them psychological resonance and heightened meaning. His garden near Lanark, Scotland, which he calls Little Sparta, with its textual elements—graphically beautiful incised stones and wood—explores the gap between language and sign, indulging a subtle interplay of word and form, within the context of landscape (figs. 15.29, 15.30). As a garden of association, Little Sparta is reminiscent of such eighteenth-century creations as William Shenstone's Leasowes or Henry Hoare's Stourhead, which also abound in evocations of antiquity.[38] As we saw in Chapter Seven, the Leasowes was a *ferme ornée,* and Stourhead, with its themes from the *Aeneid,* is a highly poetic landscape manifesting Virgil's epic narration of the founding of Rome. Like these eighteenth-century predecessors, Little Sparta consciously recalls the Arcadian paintings of the seventeenth-century artist Claude Lorrain and the nostalgic echoes of a Golden Age found in Virgil's *Eclogues,* the series of pastoral poems composed by the Latin poet between 42 and 37 C.E. Situated in the rolling Pentland Hills of southern Scotland where sheep graze, the garden effectively implies these earlier depictions of a bucolic landscape studded with a few antique ruins. In such Claudian or Virgilian scenes human action occurs within the rhythms of a timeless agrarian round as shepherds and flocks move in sunlit meadows and rest beside shady groves and softly gliding streams. At Little Sparta, the themes of water and land, waves and hills, boats and huts predominate, although the garden also contains references to the French Revolution and warfare, especially World War II, and symbolically hints at the shadow of destructive nuclear power under which we live today. With such memorials to our losses of innocence as the fallen "Arcadia" column

**15.29. Prostrate column with the inscription "Arcadia, a Place in Sparta's Neighborhood," Little Sparta**

***Below:*** **15.30. Little Sparta, Stonypath, Dunsyre, near Lanark, Scotland, garden designed by Ian Hamilton Finlay. Begun 1966. Inscription on rough-hewn stones: "The Present Order is the Disorder of the Future — Saint Just."**

**15.31. Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Constitution Gardens, Washington, D.C., designed by Maya Lin. 1982**

and "Nuclear Sail," a smoothly rounded, silkily finished, matte gray "gravestone," Little Sparta's improbable and ironic dialogue with the tranquil Scottish borderland may perhaps be best characterized as an elegant and elegiac meditation on postindustrial as well as postpastoral civilization.

Maya Ying Lin (b. 1959) is an artist who works in the conceptual zone between landscape design and sculpture, and, like Finlay, she understands the combined power of words and visual imagery. Often classified with Earthworks artists, she is less concerned with creating large-scale works of cosmological reference in remote locations than with imaging a metaphysical poetry in environments that are readily accessible and where her art gains significance from the opportunities presented by the site. For these reasons, Lin's work is not abstractly philosophical. Instead, it is informed by psychology and phenomenology. Unlike the awesome and somewhat intimidating works of some artists, Lin's con- structions are intimate and inviting, while serving an essentially poetic purpose. Water and stone and images of time and movement are important elements in her art, and she employs these in sensory as well as symbolical ways. Psychology is evident in her use of other forms of sensory stimulation besides the visual: her work is tactile and aural, encouraging one to touch, be still, and listen. She is more concerned with investing places with universal human significance than with creating spaces like Parc de la Villette that are intended to serve as abstract architectural demonstrations of philosophical theory.

Lin sprang to prominence in 1981 as a Yale undergraduate when she won the design competition for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (fig. 15.31). A requirement of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, sponsors of the competition, was that the memorial contain the names of the more than 57,000 servicemen who died or are missing in action in that tragic conflict. Conceived as two retaining walls of black polished granite holding a grassy bank at an angle of 132 degrees, this sober, tactile, meditation upon death and war leads the visitor along an inclined path past the inscribed necrology that begins and ends at the apex of the triangular incision in the earth.

Begun as a studio project in an architecture class, Lin's competition entry drew inspiration indirectly from a memorial that was formally quite different: Sir Edwin Lutyens's monument to the missing soldiers of the World War I Battle of the Somme in Thiepval, France, an immense archway upon which 100,000 names are inscribed. "To walk past those names and realize those lost lives—the effect of that is the strength of the design," Lin has written. Her approach was similarly "apolitical, harmonious with the site, and conciliatory." Lin wished to produce a monument that was lacking in histrionic content but capable of serving as a necessary cathartic vehicle for mourning the tragedy of the war, a means for veterans and other visitors to come to terms with the soldiers' deaths. About the design, she says, "I imagined taking a knife and cutting into the earth, opening it up, an initial violence and pain that in time would heal. The grass would grow back, but the initial cut would remain a pure flat surface in the earth with a polished, mirrored surface, much like the surface on a geode when you cut it and polish the edge. The need for the names to be on the memorial would become the memorial; there was no need to embellish the design further. The people and their names would allow everyone to respond and remember. . . . I always wanted the names to be chronological, to make it so that those who served and returned from the war could find their place in the memorial."[39]

One side of the Vietnam Memorial's wide sunken V points to the Washington Monument, which is reflected in the somber granite's mirror finish; the other is directed toward the Lincoln Memorial. The openness, darkness, and below-grade horizontality of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial subtly oppose the self-containment, whiteness, and verticality of those structures. "By linking these two strong symbols for the country, I wanted to create a unity between the nation's past and present," says Lin. The mirror finish also reflects the visitors' images and the surrounding park, "creating two worlds, one we are a part of and one we cannot enter."[40] The stillness and emotion are palpable as visitors descend to experience the wide V's sober embrace, some of their fingers tracing over the letters of the names. Few overtly heroic monuments command this degree of respectful attention. Fresh flowers, recently written notes, and other newly deposited tokens of respect and love bespeak the continuing bond between the living and the dead.

In enjoining artists "to portray a more interesting, beautiful, dynamic, and tragic universe,"[41] Charles Jencks is thinking of the deeper cosmological consciousness produced by twentieth-century science. Along with Jencks, Lin is interested in giving landscape expression to the new concepts of the universe that are emerging through advanced science and technology. By coincidence, she was born and grew up in Athens, Ohio, near the Hopewell Mounds, and while these ancient relics probably hold the same fascination for her as for archaeologists and other cosmologically oriented artists of Earthworks, her primary objective is to discern and express what we are here suggesting as "fourth nature," a state that integrates the three preexisting categories of nature—wilderness, cultivated land, and the garden—with science and technology. This dimension of her work

**15.32.** ***The Wave Field,*** **François-Xavier Bagnoud Aerospace Engineering Building, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, designed by Maya Lin. 1995**

derives inspiration from the optical and photographic instruments—microscopes, telescopes, and satellite cameras—that make us perceive the world and universe in new ways.

To create *The Wave Field* (1995), a 100-foot-square (30.5-meter-square) earth and grass memorial commissioned for the François-Xavier Bagnoud Aerospace Engineering Building at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Lin studied the fluid dynamics associated with the physics of flight (fig.15.32). The image that gave substance to the fluidity, indeterminacy, and unending repetitiousness of the movement of air currents essential to flight was for her a photograph of ocean waves in a turbulent sea. Here she evokes both her notion of the indeterminate character of the endless advancing and receding ocean and the oceanic appearance of the waving prairie that was once the American Midwest. Each of the earthen waves, which vary slightly in breadth and height, is a cozy shell in which students come to sit and read. As Michael Brenson explains:

> In *The Wave Field,* indeterminacy becomes place. Lin grounds it, makes it available to actual people. She also gives it a moral purpose, even an urgency, that would be inconceivable in many hymns to indeterminacy. *The Wave Field* makes a case for art's ability to encourage people to gather in an environment where they will be comfortable with one another and able to trust what they have not yet recognized and what they cannot measure or control; an environment in which children feel safe and inspired by the pleasure that can come from experiencing the world in terms of discovery, play, interconnectedness, and flow.[42]

Place as indeterminacy and experience as discovery, play, interconnectedness, and flow are concepts of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Earthworks and other forms of Conceptual art bear witness to the entropic character of contemporary civilization, engage our imaginations in new cosmological perspectives on the meaning of time and space, and provide metaphorical expression for our otherwise inexpressible sorrows or joys. At the same time, our everyday lives proceed in diurnal time and real space. Our understanding of contemporary place must therefore accommodate the accelerated change, motion, and communication that characterizes the new Postindustrial Age. We must seek to comprehend a geography that is both temporal and spatial, one of flows, instantaneousness, and virtuality. Place is, in the last analysis, experiential, as much a state of mind as an earthly reality. It is, according to contemporary thought, grounded within us, within our physical bodies as well as within our psyches. This is true whether we are stationary—*in place*—or traveling. It is important to understand that movement itself is part of the experience of place and that we are all in a sense weavers of landscape. It is with this notion of place-making as weaving and the reading of the world as a loom of landscape, a cultural geography, that we will conclude.