EMBODIED KNOWLEDGE OF LANDSCAPE:
ACCOMMODATING ONGOING SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE
IN THE PRESENTATION OF HERITAGE LANDSCAPE

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This dissertation frames a new approach to the presentation of heritage landscape, taking into account the emergent priority of ongoing subjective experience in heritage discourse. The dissertation advocates for a shift in heritage theory and practice based on an understanding of “embodied knowledge” of landscape—meaning, recognition of individual, corporeal experience as a defining aspect of landscape.

The research question that this dissertation explores is: How can a progressive understanding of landscape, based on new thinking about embodied knowledge, contribute to the theory and practice of heritage landscape? The research question and argument are explored through close study of a specific site: Śāntiniketan, India. As India’s 2010 nomination to UNESCO’s World Heritage List, Śāntiniketan is currently under consideration for designation, and the role of subjective experience in shaping its character makes this an ideal moment to reassess the process through which it and other sites are nominated and evaluated.

The corporeal body is the locus for this study, which builds upon the prevailing phenomenological stances towards the body. Those stances critique the way Cartesian intellectualism has prioritized the mind over the body, and they reposition the body as an essential site of knowledge production. In keeping with that line of thinking, this study argues that landscape is known to exist only because of the presence and proximity of an experiencing corporeal body. Drawing upon philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s notion that the lived body is the vehicle for being-in-the-world, the research concentrates on the corporeality of the body, which is a perpetual condition of sensorial experience of the world by being in it.

The primary source of information for this dissertation is embodied knowledge, which is information gathered over time by the bodily senses immediately from the landscape. The
process of embodiment acknowledges co-existing corporeal bodies and engages them with each other and with other objects. The sensual conversation between milieu and body creates an embodied knowledge, which removes the Cartesian separation between body and mind. Through active engagement, the researcher here empathizes with the site, with people on the site, and with their perspectives. In the act of empathizing, the researcher emulates those experiences and eventually presents the site through an artistic expression.

This dissertation work is a performance of present-ing landscape. For that, a performative research methodology was developed. The intention was to develop a method that would help a researcher—in this case, myself—to gather corporeal knowledge, through corporeal or active experience, and to share, by active archiving, a heritage landscape such as Śantiniketan. The performative research method developed in this work combines practice-based research with traditional research methods such as empirical mapping, archival study, and ethnographic interviews. As part of the practice-based research method, my dissertation uses two strategies to represent and interpret embodied knowledge of landscape. The first involves *rhythmanalysis*, a method developed by sociologist Henri Lefebvre in his 2004 book, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday life*. In undertaking research, the rhythmanalyst uses his or her own bodily rhythms as a reference through which to experience and evaluate landscape as a system of rhythms. Part of my research has involved engaging dancers with the landscape of Śāntiniketan, generating non-stylized movements as they respond to available sounds, textures, wind, and humidity, which I register using a video camera. The second strategy theorizes the video camera as an independent body with embodied vision. For that work, I conducted two movement workshops at Śantiniketan with dancers from Viśva-Bharati University. A video camera followed the dancers’ movements in a semi-choreographed work, with the dancers emulating
landscape elements in stylized gestures. From the resulting footage, I created a short film to demonstrate embodied knowledge. The film captures the process of a body gaining knowledge of the landscape, by being-in-landscape, by moving through landscape, and using bodily senses. This method further acknowledges the corporeal body as a site upon which personal experience becomes deposited as embodied knowledge.

Practice-based research is an immersive and improvisational method. It makes explicit an understanding of landscape as temporal by itself being a temporal process. By not just describing but also actively creating an embodied knowledge, the dissertation redefines four aspects of heritage: archivability, authenticity, history, and insider-outsider duality—all of them newly understood as constructs of the present moment and dependent on the individual experiencing body.
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Acknowledgements

Śāntiniketan.

Narrow streets, red soils
Dripping leaves, stooping shrubs
Erratic showers, slippery slopes

I was created when
fire kissed the earth
and the earth hardened

This academic work is testimony to several associations—professional and personal—that came together at different stages of its development and in varying capacities. Each of them is significant and has contributed meaningfully to this work.

Prof. David L. Hays asked me the most intriguing questions, the meaning of which I wouldn’t understand. He would bring up the same questions persistently and tenaciously, and that would make me think—“Why this question?” One fine day, it would all start making sense and that question would assume center stage in my thinking process. I’m most grateful to him for being patient with me throughout the process of developing the dissertation work and for having nurtured my thinking process without imposing any opinions upon me. He has waited and watched, let me keep and drop methods along the research process and has always had faith in whatever I did. That has encouraged me tremendously as a researcher and also enlightened me about the ethics of being a refined scholar. His meticulous reading through my drafts has taught me more than I would ever learn from any books.

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creations. Kalā-Bhavan courtyard and canteen provided a conducive place to converse with students, teachers, and participants and to brainstorm ideas about the work—an activity called addā in Bengali. Addā is also a place, where brainstorming occurs. I spent most of my waking moments during the writing stage at Espresso Royale at the Undergraduate Library or at Caffe Paradiso, if not at the UIUC Main Library reading room.

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Glossary of Terms

Āchārya: professor
Addā: canteen
Adhyakśa: principal
Adhyāpak: teacher
Agrahayan: November-December
Alpanā: decorative drawings made on floor, using rice powder mixed with water
Āmrā: Mango
Ānandam: joy; love
Ānandbazār: happy street
Ashaṭh: June-July
Āśram: hermitage, monastery
Āśvin: September-October
Bahrūpiā: impersonator
Batsākh: April-May, also implies a month in spring season
Bandhab: friend
Bārī: house
Basant: spring season
Baul: wandering poet-musician of Bengal, searching for his maner manus (ideal being). Baul music has greatly influenced Tagore's poetry and music.
Bhadrā: August-September
Bhāshā: language
Bhavan: building
Bhitī: avenue
Bhor: dawn
Bichitra: wonderful; amazing; diverse
Bodher tapasyā: meditation
Brahmachārya: to follow/pursue virtue
Cāidukān: canteen
Caitī: a derivation of Caitya (a Buddhist shrine)
Carakh Paṭṭā: festival of Bengalis and Sāntāls during March-April. An artificial tree is created.
Chaitra: March-April
Chhātra: student
Chīnā: Chinese
Chitrabhānu: studio
Dehāli: threshold
Dināntikā: that marks the end of day
Fālgun: February-March
Gāch: tree
Ghantā: bell
Gitānjali: an offering of songs
Griha: house
Griśhama: summer season
Guhā-ghar: cave-dwelling
Halkarshan: ploughing the land
Hemanta: late autumn
Jal: water
Jātrā: traveling theater
Jyeshṭha: May-June
Kalā: art
Kālo: black
Kārtik: October- November
Karunā: compassion
Kathakali: stylized classical Indian dance-drama noted for the attractive make-up of characters, elaborate costumes, detailed gestures and well-defined body movements presented in tune with the anchor playback music and complementary percussion. It originated in Kerala. In Kathakali, the story is enacted purely by the movements of the hands (mudrās) and by facial expressions (rāsas) and bodily movements. Dancers also undergo special practice sessions to learn control of their eye movements.
Kathedgāch: Jackfruit tree
Khajurgāch: Date palm tree
Khoāi: denuded land
Konārk: with corner
Kubo: Woodpecker
Kunj: garden
Lebu: lime
Māgh: January-February, also implies a month in the winter season
Māghotsav: winter festival
Mangal: celebration
Manipuri: a classical dance form from Manipur which embodies delicate, lyrical and graceful movements. It is characterized by rounded movements, avoiding any jerks, sharp edges or straight lines.
Māstermoshāi: endearing term for teacher
Mochi: cobbler
Mohallā: neighborhoods
Mrinmoyī: made of mud
Natun-Bāri: new-house
Palli: village
Palli-samgathan: rural reconstruction
Pār: leaf
Pātha: learning
Polāśgāch: Butea monosperma
Pouś mela: winter fair
Pouś: December-January
Punāschā: postscript, addition of a new chapter or a new dimension
Rikśā-wālā: rickshaw driver
Sādhna: meditation
Sādhnā: realization
Sāl: Shorea robusta
Sangī: music
Sāntāl: a community in Bengal
Śāntinikut: where peace resides
Śara: autumn
Satyam: truth
Śephāli: Nyctonthes arbortristis
Śikśā: education
Śilpotsav: craft festival
Śimul: silk cotton tree, Bombax
Śīśir: winter season
Śonā-jhurī: Eucalyptus
Śrāvan: a month in the monsoon season
Śrāvan: July-August
Śrīniketan: where grace resides
Sur-tāl: melody-beat
Śyāmāli: dark woman
Talā: beneath
Tālādhwaj: glory of the toddy palm (Borassus flabellifer) and a flag
Tapoban: forest dwelling for meditation
Ube Chhab: evaporation of emotion
Udāyan: garden
Udichī: north
Upāsanā Ghar: prayer house
Utsav: festival
Uttarāyan: when the sun travels towards the north; summer
Vār: a heroic ode sung for warriors going to war
Varshā: rains
Vasan: spring season
Vasantotsav: festival of spring
Vibhāg: institute
Vidyā: knowledge
Vinaya: humility
Viśva-Bhāratī: World-University
Vrikshāropan: tree planting
Zamindār: feudal land owner

The proper names of people have been written without transliteration marks. For transliteration of Bengali and Sanskrit text, the ALA-LC Romanization Tables: Transliteration Schemes for Non-Roman Scripts 2012, approved by the Library of Congress, was used.
Introduction

This dissertation frames a new approach to the presentation of heritage landscape, taking into account the emergent priority of ongoing subjective experience in heritage discourse. The research advocates for a shift in heritage theory and practice based on an understanding of “embodied knowledge” of landscape—meaning, recognition of individual, corporeal experience as a defining way of knowing and engaging with landscape.

The research question of this dissertation is: How can a progressive understanding of landscape, based on new thinking about embodied knowledge, contribute to the theory and practice of heritage landscape? With that question in perspective, this dissertation rejects the focus of heritage theory and practice on preservation value based on the historical moment-of-creation, and in its place substitutes the concept of the present moment of being-in-landscape.¹ That change is particularly relevant to recent discussions about how heritage is constituted, especially as articulated in the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Ename International Charter of 2008. That document calls for revising heritage interpretation strategies to include ongoing processes of subjective experience. However, the conventional process for nominating and evaluating heritage sites insists upon objective documentation of materiality and historicity and altogether fails to take subjective interpretation into account. This dissertation addresses the conflict between recent developments and conventional methods of constituting

¹ Being-in-landscape is derived from the phenomenological being-in-the-world. This concept was developed by Martin Heidegger and later by Merleau-Ponty. Being-in-the-world (German: In-der-Welt-sein) is Heidegger's substitution for the Cartesian split of things into subject and object. Phenomenologically speaking, all consciousness is consciousness of something, that there is no consciousness without an object. Similarly, objects do not exist if there is nothing that engages with them. Hence being-in-the-world is a manner of perceiving the world where the world and the one perceiving are intertwined such that the existence of one gives relevance to the other. Merleau-Ponty furthered that idea. In his understanding, through bodily involvement in the world—being-in-the-world—the perceiver experiences an object in its environment, as well as experiences the effect that object has upon the beings around it. This perception involves becoming integrated within the environment.
heritage by proposing methods that integrate subjective experiences, and hence fulfill the need for inclusive interpretation strategies of heritage.

The research question and argument are explored through close study of a specific site: Šāntiniketan, India. Šāntiniketan is a university town set within a landscape of mangroves, laterite (i.e., clayey) soil, rice paddies, and small ravines. In 1922, the poet, musician, and painter Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), eventual laureate of the Nobel Prize in Literature (1913), established Viśva-Bhāratī University at Šāntiniketan in order to promote performing and visual arts. As a modern educator, Tagore prioritized individual experience over objective knowledge of the external world and shaped both a method of learning and a curriculum based on being-in-the-landscape. In keeping with that priority, the physical aspect of the university campus comprises informal open-air classrooms; those are mostly semicircular, paved with red gravel, and defined by low parapets. Students were also encouraged to engage with the larger landscape of Šāntiniketan in their studies and creative work. As India’s 2010 nomination to UNESCO’s World Heritage List, Šāntiniketan is currently under consideration for that international and prestigious designation. Nomination process for designation involves assembling objective data about the site. The collection of objective data necessitates maintaining a status quo for the site. This runs counter to the philosophy of the site’s founder because he envisaged the site to be shaped and reshaped through continuous subjective engagements of its users. The role of subjective experience in shaping its character makes this an ideal moment to reassess the process through which it and other sites are nominated and evaluated. Accordingly, Šāntiniketan is an ideal basis for inquiry into larger questions about subjective experience and heritage landscape.

Scholarly understandings of landscape fall generally into four categories: (1) landscape as an objective world, (2) landscape as a visual representation of culture and power, (3) landscape
as a result of social processes of production and consumption, and (4) landscape as phenomena. Landscape scholars Carl Sauer (1925) and J. B. Jackson (1984) defined landscape in terms of an objective world of physical features that can be accessed empirically, laying emphasis on historical research, reconstructing past landscapes, and tracing their evolution. In contrast, a wide range of scholars, including historian Martin Jay (1993), cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove (1998 [1984]), critic Raymond Williams (1985), and social philosopher Gillian Rose (1993), framed landscape as a system for producing and transmitting meaning through visual symbols and representations. During the 1990s, new interests in process and transformation related landscape to industrialism (including agriculture), colonialism, imperialism, and travel. My research builds on the fourth category of understanding: landscape as phenomena. Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) greatly influenced scholarship about that idea, in which landscape is defined in terms of embodied practices of being-in-the-world—meaning, in which body and landscape are understood to be entwined and emergent. Also important has been empirical work by geographer Hayden Lorimer (2003) investigating embodied acts of landscape formation, work associated with “non-representational theory” and with emerging interdisciplinary studies of body, perception, movement, and materiality.

Until very recently, heritage scholarship recognized the significance of individual sensory perception but only in a very limited way. For example, more than a century ago, art historian Alois Riegl (1903) introduced the concept of the “unintentional” monument, which functions by engaging the visitor with the “monument” in the present time. I cite Riegl as an early example of a scholarship that recognizes sensory perception is contingent and embodied. My research builds on that idea to show how bodily engagement with landscape can become a criterion of heritage landscape evaluation and designation.
Riegl’s was an early voice advocating for attention to temporality in heritage studies. His valorization of “unintentional” monuments supports the premise of this dissertation, which argues that heritage preservation practices should go beyond an assertion of permanence and historicity so as to make space for fragility and temporality. Conventional, contemporary heritage practices do not accommodate the latter. Instead, they support historicity by depending on the archivability of artifacts. In other words, they assume heritage to be object-based and therefore capable of being documented and preserved in an archive. UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee insists on documentation of heritage, limiting the definition of heritage to representational forms. This insistence on documentation and archiving of heritage has an adverse effect on heritage management practices as they lead to construction of a singular narrative about a heritage site. As a result that singular narrative becomes the basis of knowledge mediated to visitors and users. This, in turn, leads to heritage management practices choreographing the users’ experiences and controlling their associations with it. Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty has established that the most immediate relationship of human beings to space is through their bodies, since “it is by means of the body that space is perceived, lived, and produced,” then it can be argued that the corporeal body is the primary, active interface through which visitors engage with heritage sites. In this understanding, the act of representing is to be in and of the world and is practiced by the engaging body.

By placing bodily experience of landscape within the discourse of heritage preservation practice, the questions that this research explores include: (1) How does the corporeal body

know? (2) What does the presence and proximity of the corporeal body mean to landscape creation? and (3) How is this embodied knowledge shared?

**Significance of the corporeal body to the research**

The corporeal body is the locus for this study, which builds upon the prevailing phenomenological stances towards the body. Those stances critique the way Cartesian intellectualism has prioritized the mind over the body, and they reposition the body as an essential site of knowledge production. In keeping with the phenomenological line of thinking, this study argues that landscape is known to exist only because of the presence and proximity of an experiencing corporeal body. Drawing upon Merleau-Ponty’s notion that the lived body is the vehicle for being-in-the-world, the research concentrates on the corporeality of the body, which is a perpetual condition of sensorial experience of the world by being in it.

**Dissertation Approach**

The primary source of information for this dissertation is embodied knowledge, which is information gathered over time by the bodily senses immediately from the landscape. The research method emphasizes a process of embodiment that acknowledges co-existing corporeal bodies and engages them with each other and with other objects. Embodied knowledge becomes manifest in three distinct steps: empathy, embodiment, and expression. Empathy is an experience of a milieu as an extension of self-awareness. Embodiment is internalization of the sensual experience of landscape as an extension of one’s own body. Accordingly, a person sees the tangible world as a detached spectator, but he or she is also immersed in it, the body being both

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apart from and art of the very world that is being observed. The sensual conversation between milieu and body creates an embodied knowledge, which overcomes the Cartesian separation between body and mind. That embodied knowledge is communicated to others through expressions—written or visual—for example in the form of poems, paintings, sculptures, or journalistic writings. Through active engagement, the researcher here empathizes with the site, with people on the site, and with their perspectives. In the act of empathizing, the researcher emulates those experiences, and eventually presents the site through an artistic expression. This written document is a part of that expression.

**Research significance**

My research draws upon a discursive shift in the appreciation of landscape: from treating landscape as empirical, objective knowledge, gaze, or text to treating it as embodied, temporal experience. Consequently, it rejects the focus of heritage theory and practice on preservation value based on the historical moment-of-creation and, in its place, substitutes the concept of the present moment of being-in-landscape. This research is particularly timely because Śāntiniketan is currently on UNESCO’s tentative list and evaluating the nomination process now can help in expanding the definition of heritage and hence help in designating the site for values that it represents. The nomination dossier’s documentation is exhaustive in terms of material culture, historicity, and the archivability of the site. However, the critical role of corporeal engagement in inspiring Tagore’s aesthetic and educational ideals is largely overlooked.

Yet, in the last decade, heritage theory has been opening up to accommodate experiential approaches to heritage presentation, providing an opportunity for defining heritage landscape not

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as an object but as a continuously occurring performance. ICOMOS’s Ename International Charter of 2008 created new opportunities for devising interpretation strategies that include landscape in its many aspects, from pre-defined narratives to ongoing processes of subjective experience. My research is positioned in this contemporary discussion about heritage constitution. It attempts to make an unmediated presentation of heritage landscapes without reducing them to clichés of signification or fixed narratives.

Taking a stance towards concept of Heritage

In the Indian subcontinent, the concept of heritage as a preservation practice is an imported one—specifically, from Europe. Heritage interests in India gained institutional recognition with the establishment of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta in 1784. This society was established to undertake research, building on reports of Mughal rule by French travelers such as Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (traveled India between 1638 and 1643), François Bernier (traveled India between 1658 and 1669), and Jean de Thevenot (traveled India between 1666 and 1667). Subsequently, the Bengal Regulation 1810 was formulated, which brought repair work center stage to heritage preservation discourse in India. In 1861, archaeologist and engineer Alexander Cunningham began an extensive survey of architectural remains “worthy of attention.” The survey offered “an accurate description, illustrated by plans, measurements, drawings or photographs” and was accompanied by a narrative of history and associated traditions. Cunningham’s work culminated in the establishment of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in 1871, under which an exhaustive collection of detailed drawings of buildings all over India was created. In 1904, the ASI enacted the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, which provided effective preservation and authority over the monuments, particularly those under the custody of individuals or private ownership. It empowered the Director General of
ASI, who were British, to decide whether or not any article, object, or work is an antiquity for the purpose of the Act. The decision of the Director General was final. That fact also points to the connoisseurship agenda of ASI. ASI was established in the colonial period and propagated the British view of heritage preservation, which was limited to the structural stabilization of monuments.

One of the dilemmas of this dissertation has been to decide what position to assume towards heritage discourse. Should it operate within the Eurocentric heritage discourse adopted in India during the nineteenth century and which has since become the dominant ideology? Or, should it abandon that discourse in favor of the Indian perspective, where the “object of inquiry,” Šāntiniketan, exists in a different way. Šāntiniketan was conceived at the time when heritage discourse of preservation and connoisseurship had already taken root in India. In fact, as previously described, that discourse was first introduced to India in Bengal, the region in which Šāntiniketan is located. That circumstance makes it is reasonable to relate the conception of Šāntiniketan to heritage discourse of that period, even though Šāntiniketan was not conceived as a potential heritage site. At that time, heritage discourse was about taking stock of older buildings considered to have architectural merit worthy of a connoisseur’s attention. It was an elitist concern, reflecting an obsession among upper class Europeans with prized collectibles.

This is not to say that no concept of heritage existed in the Indian sub-continent prior to that introduction. Bengali translation of heritage is uttarādhikār. That term means inheritance because of birth, reversion, or patrimony. This suggests that the concept of heritage depended

5 Graves Champney Haughton, A dictionary, Bengali-Sanskrit-English: adapted for students of either language, to which is added an index, serving as a reversed dictionary (Delhi, India: Caxton Publications, 1987).
on custodianship, where ownership remained in families and was typically handed down to the heirs. It was assumed that the owner of the heritage object was only a custodian for the duration of his or her ownership and would be responsible for the upkeep and safeguarding of it until the time of transfer to the next generation. It was a concept based on lineage, not community. The concept of shared heritage having a public association was unknown. The word “tradition” also finds a central place in the context of heritage discourses. The Bengali equivalent of that term is *iti aitihyaṃ* and *pāramāṇaryā.*\(^7\) Aitihyaṃ also refers to oral tradition.\(^8\) But, oral tradition is connected to *iti-ha āsa*, which means “so it was” and refers to a tradition, legend, story or an epic poem.\(^9\) That translates to *history* as the English equivalent. This implies that the concept of heritage extended beyond objects to practices that sought continuity with “tradition.”

Although there was a clear sense of preservation already in South Asia that was based on family kinship colonial intervention introduced a European concept of preservation practices that focused on attaching values of antiquity to heritage. Whatever was old and hence unknowable was especially valuable. Heritage was thereby alienated from the domain of everyday life and popular practices and became exclusive to museums and connoisseurs. Considering that, at the time when Śāntiniketan came into being, the dominant ideology of heritage discourse in India was limited to protecting the objects of the past, this dissertation analyzes the heritage discourse from the European perspective. Additionally, the site does not exist because of its Indian identity. It exists for its own sake, and it develops because of the influences of various people who came to Śāntiniketan from all over the world, including nearby. Hence, it would be

incomplete to attribute a cultural, or even a political, value to Śāntiniketan because of its incidental geographical location. From this perspective, it seems reasonable to address the context of heritage issues as defined by the European traditions and subsequent academic criticisms thereof. Thus, in short, the heritage discourse that emerged in Europe during the late nineteenth century and that was later adapted, and evolved internationally, through heritage institutions such as UNESCO and ICOMOS forms the basis of this dissertation work.

The brief account above describing the introduction of European heritage ideology to India makes recurring use of terms such as survey, documentation, preservation, measurements, monuments, worthiness, and authority. In recent years, those terms have been rejected as insufficient by anthropologists, art historians, sociologists, and philosophers, who favor concepts such as memory, ownership and property rights, nationhood, identity politics, interpretation, and tourism. Today, intellectual debates related to heritage widely accept its significance as that which draws on the power of the past to produce the present and shape the future. Those heritage agendas are discussed in detail in Chapter 1, below, to set the context of heritage discourse for this dissertation.

**Shifting the realms of Heritage interpretation**

Because of concerns such as those described above, the focus of heritage discourse has moved from connoisseurship and collectibility among elites to the public domain. Concerns about interpretation demand that the power of determining what is valuable and thereby constitutes heritage move from experts to individuals. However, what emerges consistently is the fact that, even in that shift, heritage is always constituted through, and relies heavily on, its archivability. The archive is a collection, or a place to store a collection, of historical documents or records providing information about a place, institution, or group of people. Information in the
archives plays a large role in building knowledge about a heritage site. Knowledge created based on information from archives is objective. It is based on a viewpoint or study of a researcher from a specific frame. Also, the fact that that information is in the archive indicates that the archive authorities have approved of that information being worthy of being in the archives. Hence there is a bias for the kind information that stays in the archives. Archivability, which depends on connoisseurship and authenticity, may appear to be contradictory to the relevance of individual subjective experiences of a heritage site. However, insofar as individual bodies are understood to be sites wherein experiences are deposited, those bodies become archives. That understanding brings heritage into the “present.” Conservation, essentially an intervention in the present moment, is distinct from preservation in its ability to accommodate transformation. Thus, conservation facilitates landscape by retaining its inherent condition to keep transforming with time.

Phenomenology offers a resource for both conservation and landscape studies insofar as it emphasizes the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, and the significance of proximity in shaping landscape. Constantly changing orientations, which cause objects to become variously reachable and unreachable, lead to consciousness of experience in the present moment and, in turn, to constantly changing meanings in landscapes. Given the expansiveness of landscape, the simultaneity of multiple stories, consciousness, arrival, and choice of direction (decision making) informing intentions (future course in life), each body is relevant and has the capability of interacting with the landscape for the landscape’s own sake and for the body’s own sake.

In her work, Sara Ahmed, who studies race and culture from a phenomenological perspective, helps raise sensitivity to the fact that people visiting heritage sites bring to it their
own specificity.\textsuperscript{10} Her understanding urges for a strategy that presents site in such way that it helps visitors know the site while becoming aware of their own difference relative to the site’s conditions of existence. It necessitates a site design that allows bodies to move through space on their own terms. Doing so enables an understanding of the site in terms of how it evokes the sense of being the “other.” Phenomenology encourages appreciation of diversity of human culture. The body’s urge to locate itself in temporality and thereby its need for a point of origination to orient itself is universally true for all bodies in their experience of a space. This relation between the body, time, and space can thus determine interpretive strategies of heritage sites as well.

In the context of the observation that visitors bring their own specificity to a heritage site, a question arises: can heritage sites be presented in such a way that visitors will not perceive or idealize the ideologies already present in them? In such a scenario, the visitor would ignore what he or she is guided to perceive, instead assuming responsibility for interpreting the site in his or her own way, depending upon “what routes have been taken” and what is “familiar.” Thus, proposing multiple possibilities of heritage interpretation, especially in the context of knowing the “other” heritage in relation to one’s sense of being, can loosen up the constricting forms of contemporary heritage interpretation. This also acknowledges multiple intentionalities relative to heritage sites, which engage different constituencies, such as tourists, maintenance, historians, and local inhabitants.


**Researching as a phenomenological exploration**

In making explicit the inevitability of a body’s situated-ness in space and time, phenomenological concepts of intentionality, orientation, spatiality, and inhabitance are relevant and valuable to advances in heritage research, just as research is one way through which to perceive and build knowledge about a site.

**Intentionality**

Each body has a point of view in the world. The body is not an object in space; more than that, it haunts space in the way it moves with a will. Body movement changes the availability of objects. Thus, the body has an intention. Bodies occupy space by becoming busy “with” the objects present in that space. ¹¹ This aspect is directly applicable to interpretation of heritage sites, especially in the context of subjective experience. On a heritage site, the body is not simply present; it is present with intention. That intention depends on the role the body plays in creation of the site and, hence, the site remains in the process of being produced as long as it has the presence of a body with intention.

**Orientation—body’s situated-ness in space and time**

Orientation, or a way of knowing, is spatial as well as conscious. Orientation is spatial in the sense that it involves registering the proximity of objects and others. ¹² Those objects become available to a body because the body has taken certain routes. In that way, orientation is a consequence of consciousness, embodied in the process of decision-making pertaining to what directions to take. Intentionality, which shapes spatial orientations such as relations of proximity

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¹¹ Ibid., 20.
¹² Ibid., xiv.
and distance, is shaped by social orientations (e.g., education), which in turn affect what is available. But social orientations are themselves effects of a social position already taken. Thus, orientation and the consequences of orientation are always in flux and mutually affecting each other.

**What orientations do**

Orientations shape how we inhabit space and how we respond to shared inhabitance. Inhabitance is related to intimacy and, hence, proximity of the body with the dwelling place. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty suggests that “spatial forms or distance are not so much relations between different points in objective space as they are relations between these points and a central perspective—our body.”¹³ This means that body assumes a centrality in a space, with which it is intimate. This is specifically pertinent in defining space as something produced through the presence of the body. There can be no space without a body to produce it, and thus interpretation of a heritage site solely on the basis of its physicality offers an incomplete and arguably disengaged appreciation thereof.

**Spatiality—direction and orientation**

Space acquires “direction” through how bodies inhabit it, just as bodies acquire direction through how they inhabit space. Direction only makes sense as a relationship between body and space; thus, space, body, and direction are correlated.¹⁴ The body orientates itself by lining itself up with the direction of the space it inhabits. Orientation also enables a critique of the distinction between absolute space and relative space (i.e., location and position). The points of view closest

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to us enable us to take certain directions, and things that reside on that line of direction become available to us. Through choice of a specific line of direction, other things remain or become out of reach. Thus, excluding things is also a consequence of us having taken certain lines of direction that became available to us.

**Inhabitance—to become familiar**

Familiarity is an effect of inhabitance, shaped by actions that reach out towards objects that are already within reach. Inhabiting space involves a dynamic negotiation between what is familiar and unfamiliar, so as to create new familiarities. Familiarity enables recognition of what is given and helps the body to become oriented accordingly. However, in getting lost, the process of orientation becomes even more discernible. The condition of being lost is also a way of inhabiting space by registering unfamiliarity and subsequently making it familiar. Being lost happens by risking departure from already taken routes, changing directions without knowing where some paths may lead.15 This is a deviant form of orientation that involves directing energy to something that is less proximate. Familiarity is an effect of histories of arrival of the body—that is, arriving at points already known. By deviating, new possibilities can be arrived at, allowing new familiarities to be created. New directions are often generated by that condition of being lost. In discourses related to heritage management, one might imagine a situation in which all forms of visitor movement are choreographed beforehand, every path has a designated direction, and every destination has a pre-defined narrative. With the spatial experience predetermined, the body loses its significance in becoming familiar with the site. The site is always familiar, even before the arrival, or even before directions are taken. Thus, the value that

can be added on-site due to non-familiarity or by losing way never happens. Bodies stop making
decisions because they do not have to, and their experiences tend to become homogenized. This
becomes problematic as it leads to the homogenization of heritage sites.

**History as habitus**

Ahmed describes histories of body as the “habitus,” which integrates past experiences
through the very perceptions and actions.\(^16\) Phenomenology exposes the “sedimentation” of
history in repeated bodily actions. She says that what bodies do are effects of histories, but that
history disappears in the moment of its enactment. History is not accessible and is spectral. The
changing present continuously requires new interpretations of what has taken place, and so the
past is unstable and unrecoverable. It can only be experienced in the present. This idea inverts
the conventional forms of interpretation of heritage sites, where the focus is on remembering the
original moment of creation. As we have seen, the body acquires history through sedimentation
and not through the “originary,” so being on the site is also an act of sedimentation. This
resonates with Lowenthal who calls heritage “not erudition but catechism,” a “legacy that gains
new resonance while in our care.” Scholarship of heritage that discusses this instability is further
elaborated in Chapter 1.

**Failure—attempt towards embodied knowledge**

If the usability of an object is disturbed, then the object is seen for its own sake—
meaning, as if devoid of its histories.\(^17\) If a landscape fails to do the work for which it was
intended, it implies that the landscape may be ready for new usability that will respond to new

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 32.
\(^{17}\) Ibid., 26.
intentionalities. Because the users of the landscape change significantly over time, that failure resides in people, in their distance from history, and hence in their incapability to live the original intended action. The recognition of this failure can help in creating sympathetic strategies for heritage sites, where the intention can be to let go of the past and to enable appreciation of the present for what is at hand.

**Researcher as performer and research as a performance**

One aim of the present work is to “present” Śāntiniketan. Doing so implies an act of presenting, of making present, or of bringing things into present tense. It also implies the conventional meaning of making a thing explicit for understanding. The dissertation performs at the fringes of those heritage discourses considered mainstream or most reliable in the international arena with special reference to landscape and the specificity of Śāntiniketan. This section addresses how my presence on the site and my own intentionality there were inevitably responsible for the course and form this research took.

Trained in architecture and landscape architecture, my habitus made me begin research by collecting objective data about the site in terms of its history and through documents such as maps, illustrations, photographs, and written accounts, but eventually my presence on the site brought me in contact with the unfamiliar. The unfamiliar changed my orientation such that the unfamiliar became familiar, and that opened up new directions of exploration. The research became a constant discovery process, as the available tools kept becoming insufficient, and the next step evolved out of necessity because the previous step or a previous discovery opened up new directions.

This dissertation is located at the intersection of conflicting ideologies of heritage constitution. One conceives the site initially as a place that would nurture individual, lived, and
embodied experience to subsequently enrich the site. The other represents the site today as a place constituted of fixed meanings based on the material evidence of Tagore’s presence in a fixed past. It is crucial for this dissertation to acknowledge that Tagore envisaged his school with the fundamental belief that the individual and the surrounding world are intertwined in the first sense of heritage, that they complete each other, and that their relationship emerges through a sensorial connection. The individual is not an independently existing knower, and the world is also not an independently existing fact waiting to be known:

The earth does not merely hold his body, but it gladdens his mind; for its contact is more than physical contact, it is a living presence.18

This body-landscape reciprocity was the basis of Tagore’s approach to education, that for which he later advocated, and it informs the way that this dissertation approaches the site of Šāntiniketan. In Gitānjalī, Tagore wrote:

The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures. It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers. It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and of death, in ebb and in flow.19

My initial investigations at the site based on objective methodology led to the discovery that the site at Šāntiniketan was conceived with the idea of nurturing an appreciation for “truth” and “beauty” among students. These two concepts needed further investigation. It would have

been sufficient to assume that Tagore’s concept of the two terms was derived from *Upanishadic* texts, but archival research indicated that he wasn’t reading Indian texts exclusively; he was also well versed in, and kept abreast of, philosophy as embraced at that time in different parts of the world, especially western Europe. Accordingly, my research builds upon the significance of “truth” for Tagore in that comparative context and in relation to heritage. Because heritage finds its existential legitimacy in its “authenticity” and the ways and means of proving how “authentic” it is, the idea of truth was studied from that perspective during the research process.

Tagore rejected an adherence to authenticity and tradition, especially when that emerged from the necessity of branding something as traditional for the sake of exoticizing it. Art historian Partha Mitter underscores Tagore’s resistance to “self-conscious attempts to manufacture an authentic Indian art.”20 That was stated by Tagore quite clearly in a lecture delivered to his students at Śāntiniketan:

I strongly urge our artists vehemently to deny the obligation to produce something that can be labeled as Indian art, according to some old world mannerisms. Let them refuse to be herded into a pen like brand[ed] beasts that are treated as cattle […]21

Tagore’s philosophical perspective is part of the heritage of Śāntiniketan. But this is problematic because his own philosophy rejects the authority of the material archive as a site for representation. So how can we understand heritage at Śāntiniketan? Heritage is about material archives, which means physical evidence and human witnessing of that evidence. But, what strategies can ensure evidence and witnessing in the first person? My study of the site would be incomplete if Tagore’s ideology were not taken into consideration. Orienting towards that led to

the discovery of his idea of “universalism,” which means that each person perceives the world because of his or her own “personality.” Moreover, Tagore viewed individual perception as a universal phenomenon that transcended cultural and national barriers. While deliberating on the nature of creative self-expression, Tagore chose universal values over cultural singularity. Mitter notes that, “armed with strong individualist views, Tagore had qualms about being behind the representational world.” Because Śāntiniketan is an academic setting for nurturing and advancing artistic skills, and because Tagore’s conception of creativity transcended the realms of both narrative and imagery, it became clear to me that, for the purposes of this study, mere analysis of representations of this place would not be sufficient. Therefore, a method had to be developed in which the site would be presented (not represented) in and during the act of presenting it. Thus the research became a “performance” of “presenting” Śāntiniketan.

During a lecture to art students in which Tagore described his creative process, he mentioned that the only training he had from his early days was in rhythm in thought and sound. He “had come to know that rhythm gave reality to that which was desultory, which was insignificant in itself.” Sociologist Henri Lefebvre developed a strategy to study the world only by acknowledging the rhythms present in the world, at the same time coordinating our own bodily rhythms with those. His seminal work, Rhythmanalysis, thus became one of the key influences for this dissertation.

The act of “presenting” has been achieved via performance made manifest in multiple forms: being at the site, film making, mapping, and writing. Making the film and the maps was

23 The lecture was delivered at the Carnegie Hall in New York, on December 2, 1930.
not sufficient; the narrative that accompanies those makes us comprehend those pieces of work and in turn changes our comprehension and accessibility to them. The film and the narrative make the readers familiar with the site and hence accessible. The narrative text is valuable, but the act of writing is also valuable as it directs attention to representation as a process rather than as a product. The research process has been part visceral, part immersive, part detached, and a constant negotiation between those. The process of visiting the site numerous times, traversing the landscape of red clays, and encountering the texts and the smells of ancient paper at the archives was an immersive experience, and it initiated in me a resistance to “detach”—that is, to approach the site as if an outsider from a distanced and privileged vantage point. Hence, the project became a phenomenological exploration. Orientation with the site and what it offered, with people there, and with scholars elsewhere made me change the course of the research, orienting and aligning it in new ways. This has been a process of constant discovery.

**Dissertation Outline**

The dissertation is organized conceptually into five sections or themes, which correspond to its five chapters beyond this introduction. The first two chapters, “Heritage—how is it known” and “Landscape discourse,” map developments in heritage and landscape discourses to date. The third chapter, “Knowing landscape corporeally,” illustrates unmediated, corporeal perception—without-distance at Śāntiniketan. The fourth chapter addresses the insufficiency of current heritage practices in accommodating embodied knowledge of landscape. That is demonstrated in part by critiquing the catalog entries in the Śāntiniketan archive and discussing the influence of archive contents on constituting narratives about that place. The personal memoirs and poems of Tagore and other artists at Śāntiniketan are discussed in reference to landscape documentation in the World Heritage Nomination dossier. The final chapter, “Accommodating landscape
phenomena in heritage theory and practice,” speculates upon strategies for facilitating receptivity for unmediated, embodied engagement. It concludes with speculation about the opportunities created by, and the consequences of, shifting discourse for heritage practices.
Chapter 1: Heritage—how is it known

This chapter discusses the concept of heritage and provides a background to the development of heritage discourse from the early twentieth century to the present, with emphasis on four themes: as a response to international politics, as a response to cultural specificity and diversity, as an agenda of commodification, and as a practice of memory. This chapter discusses heritage as it has evolved and thereby sets out the context to which the dissertation responds.

What is heritage

If Peter Howard, a cultural heritage scholar, describes heritage as “everything that people want to save, from clean air to morris [sic] dancing, including material culture and nature,” archaeologist Laurajane Smith claims that “there is no such thing as Heritage” but only opinions and debates about heritage. Rodney Harrison, a heritage studies scholar, defines heritage in terms of objects and practices:

Objects of heritage are the things we pay attention to because they’re still meaningful to us, not always because they tell great stories about the past but because we use them to tell stories about ourselves. Practices of heritage are customs and habits which, although intangible, also inform who we are as groups, and help to create our shared social memory. We use objects of heritage (artefacts, buildings, sites, landscapes) and practices of heritage (languages, music, community celebrations) to shape our ideas about who we are as nations, communities, and individuals. What we define as “heritage” is constantly changing in the light of the present as we look to the past to imagine our future.

Harrison also describes heritage as the practice of various preservation methods; as a specifically defined legal entity, such as a building or site one included in the World Heritage List; and as an idea that emerges from recognition of a potential or real threat to an object.

26 Rodney Harrison, Understanding the Politics of Heritage (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press in association with the Open University, 2010), http://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/history/heritage/what-heritage
Preservation methods are dependent on choices of “what to conserve from the past: which memories to keep, and which to forget; which memorials to maintain, and which to allow to be demolished; which buildings to save, and which ones to allow to be built over.”

Constitution of heritage as an entry on the World Heritage List assumes that heritage must be appreciated, which necessitates a witnessing of that heritage in the form of tourism, which in turn necessitates a management system that supports tourism. Active conservation becomes part of the agenda and is dependent on formal documents and heritage policies. In all this, Harrison claims, “there is a dialectical relationship between the effect of listing something as heritage, and its perceived significance and importance to society.”

Heritage is also defined as “those objects, places and practices that can be formally protected using heritage laws and charters.” When defined by its vulnerability, heritage necessitates protection measures. Moreover, listing on a heritage register “assumes a potential threat at some time in the future, from which it is being protected by legislation or listing.” Because the condition of vulnerability is implied in the enacting of protective measures (whether actually needed or not), heritage is defined as weak.

**Heritage discourse over time**

**Emergence of the “Monument” that needed restoration or preservation**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, heritage protection measures were influenced by the restoration-based agendas of architectural preservation groups such as the International

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27 Ibid., 9.
28 Ibid., 11.
29 Ibid., 11.
30 Ibid., 13.
Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments. \(^3\!\!\!1\) During that period, the monument changed from untouchable relic to something of use to society. In the early part of the century, the emphasis was on restoration of the stylistic features of ruined and abandoned structures (International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments Madrid Charter 1904) in order to return them to a pristine original state. \(^3\!\!\!2\) But as buildings preserved in this way lost their utility and were expensive to maintain, the policy changed to allow occupation of buildings as a way of ensuring their longevity without compromising their “character and historical values” (International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments Athens Charter 1932). \(^3\!\!\!3\) Although, both of those charters aimed at preserving the materiality of structures, the Athens Charter can be credited with allowing the use of contemporary materials for structural stability. \(^3\!\!\!4\) The Athens Charter became an iconic moment in the history of preservation practices as it stressed the significance of the neighborhood and other surroundings of ancient monuments, of collaboration with scientists for scientific preservation, and of methodical documentation as essential to preservation method.

Concern for heritage became more pronounced after World War II (1939-1945), when representatives from the European countries realized the urgency to reconstruct historical knowledge and retrieve objects of cultural memory lost or destroyed in the war. Buildings were considered the most vulnerable objects symbolizing the rampant obliteration of cultural memory due to war. Conservation measures at that time were focused on immediate restoration of historic

\(^3\!\!\!1\) The Getty Conservation Institute, Cultural Heritage Policy Documents, https://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications_resources/research_resources/charters.html  
\(^3\!\!\!2\) http://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications_resources/research_resources/charters/charter01.html  
buildings that were affected by the war. During this period, conservationists also started considering how to protect historic buildings from destruction caused by the process of ruination. Due to these emerging agendas of heritage protection, which involved multiple countries, one of the first priorities was to create an international network of organizations. That led to the establishment of UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in London in 1945. In the 1950s and 1960s, UNESCO was instrumental in developing a framework for international collaboration in safeguarding the cultural heritage of humanity in the form of international recommendations and conventions, in order to provide a framework of reference for legislators and heritage managers.35

In the meantime, the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention (Hague Convention 1954) responded to the urgency of salvaging cultural property damaged during war.36 In articulating that objective, this convention also opened up larger debates about ownership and responsibility and offered the possibility of international responsibility in protection of cultural heritage. It was the first time that the words “property” and “heritage” were used to denote the objects worthy of protection. The word “property” triggered off debates about responsibility and ownership rights, while “heritage” came to include “movable” objects as well.

The next major development occurred with the approval of International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS Venice Charter 1964).37 This expanded the definition of historic monument from a discrete architectural work to an “urban or

36 http://www.un-documents.net/cpcpeac.htm
rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization.” This charter facilitated using the conserved “monument” for socially useful purposes, even though no new modification that would alter the visual experience of the monument was allowed. At the same time, any replacements done for structural stability had to be visually distinguishable from the original. This would ensure that the restoration activity would not falsify historic authenticity.

A major breakthrough occurred with the UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972, which merged two separate conservation movements, one focusing on cultural sites and the other on nature. The decision to build the Aswan High Dam in Egypt, which would have caused irretrievable damage to Egyptian heritage, drew international attention and instigated a need for an international protection strategy. Consequently UNESCO, with the help of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), started preparing a draft for convention on protection of cultural heritage. Around the same time, the White House Conference in Washington, D.C., called for international cooperation to protect natural heritage. Eventually, the two concerns were addressed together in the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972, and heritage came to be regarded as both cultural and natural.38 The convention defined cultural heritage as including architectural works, paintings and sculptures, archaeological works, inscriptions, groups of buildings in landscape, and sites that combined works of nature and man. Natural heritage was defined as including physical and biological formations, geological and physiographical formations constituting habitats of threatened species, and natural sites. The key

concept introduced with this convention was that of “outstanding universal value” from historical, artistic, scientific, ethnological or anthropological, and aesthetic perspectives.

The 1972 Convention was a landmark in the history of heritage conservation in several ways. Firstly, this was the first time an agreement took the form of a convention, an imposed international law having greater power of execution than the previous charters, which were merely policy decisions agreed upon by a group of professionals. Secondly, the 1972 Convention has been credited with bringing the concept of “world heritage” onto the global stage, as it equated the loss of any specific cultural or natural heritage with loss of a world heritage.\(^\text{39}\) In 1978, UNESCO announced its first World Heritage List, and twelve sites were conferred the status of World Heritage, of which eight were cultural and four were natural sites.\(^\text{40}\)

In 1976, UNESCO adopted the Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas (UNESCO Nairobi Recommendation 1976).\(^\text{41}\) This recommendation advanced the definition of heritage to include vernacular areas as well. Besides, with the introduction of the word “environment,” the recommendation sought to merge the concepts of natural and man-made setting. Although this recommendation did not have any legal binding on participating state parties, it broadened the scope of heritage inclusion to go beyond the conventional monument.

With the UNESCO Nairobi Recommendation 1976, the scope of conservation practice widened from protection or restoration to include “revitalization of historic or traditional areas and their environment.” Thus, sustainability as an outcome of preserving social fabric and

\(^{39}\) Ruggles and Silverman, “From Tangible to Intangible Heritage: An Introduction,” 5.
\(^{41}\) ICOMOS, Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas (1976), http://www.icomos.org/unesco/areas76.html
community health became inherent to conservation practice (Article 14, UNESCO Nairobi Recommendation 1976). From that emerged the need for a space to encourage dialogue and cooperation between conservation professionals and communities. Subsequently, the complex range of attitudes regarding the safeguarding of stakeholder interests began to be debated in heritage discourse (Article 35, UNESCO Nairobi Recommendation 1976).

With the Nairobi Recommendation, the environment now extended beyond the actual built monument. The ICOMOS Florence Charter declared gardens of historical and artistic importance to have the stature of a “monument,” thereby integrating gardens into heritage discourse. The Charter treated gardens essentially as architectural compositions the components of which are “living, which means they are perishable and renewable” (Article 2, ICOMOS Florence Charter 1981). This was problematic as it dissociated the garden as a formal composition from its constituent elements. Further, it privileged gardens that had been a subject of a visual representation, reinforcing the conventional visual bias of heritage appreciation (Article 8, ICOMOS Florence Charter 1981). Its elitist preference for sites of “enjoyment suited to meditation or repose” neglected other sites that might be significant due to difficult events and painful memories. The Florence Charter is also momentous in the history of conservation as it sparked off debates about “authenticity” and the recognition of layers of history that a heritage site may possess. Thus, the focus of conservation practice shifted from preserving or restoring the original moment of conception to the appreciation of renewability of site itself.

Emergence of Cultural Landscape

Responding to issues raised through the adoption of Florence Charter, the World Heritage Committee adopted guidelines in 1992 to include cultural landscapes on the World Heritage List. That expansion involved three main categories: (1) clearly defined landscape designed and created intentionally by man; (2) organically evolved landscape; and (3) associative cultural landscape. Peter Fowler, an expert advising UNESCO and ICOMOS on the subject of cultural landscapes and World Heritage, wrote an essay reviewing World Heritage Committee’s Global Strategy regarding World Heritage cultural landscapes. In that essay, he observed that the World Heritage Committee relies upon definitions of landscape given by Carl Sauer and J. B. Jackson and assumes cultural landscape to be the one which is sculpted to fulfill the intentions of a cultural agency. With UNESCO endorsing combinations of nature and human effort as cultural landscapes worthy of World Heritage status, certain convergent and divergent agendas of decision making came to the forefront. Both forms of heritage are continually renewed, yet both cannot be eternally regenerated. Hence, I insist that this limitation needs to be addressed in subsequent UNESCO documents dealing with cultural landscapes. Geographer and historian David Lowenthal explains two divergent attitudes when it comes to preservation of natural and cultural heritage, which complicates addressing cultural landscape preservation. Firstly, nature is considered past as well as present while culture is based mostly on fascination for history. Secondly, nature is essentially “other than us” while culture commands empathy. These may infiltrate attitudes that tend to dismantle a cultural landscape into having two separate components, and this issue needs to be addressed in subsequent documents on cultural landscape.

The next major development in heritage discourse was the declaration of the Nara Document on Authenticity.\textsuperscript{46} International protection demanded definitive criteria for inclusion of heritage sites on the World Heritage List, and thus issues of heritage evaluation started surfacing. Gauging “authenticity” became the most agreeable practice for World Heritage evaluation. Authenticity was based on “value,” deemed necessary to construct a reference framework for the site that would lend it its historical significance. In response to this, the Nara Document on Authenticity was conceived to ensure protection of cultural diversity and resist the Euro-centric standardization of societies and environments. The Document recognized and took into account the existence of multiple kinds of heritage that are not comparable to each other. It responded to preceding heritage documents and destabilizing their stance of defining authenticity in terms of “universal value.” The Nara Document created opportunities for evaluation criteria to look beyond the historical and to include contemporary practices, such as ritual rebuilding, as also authentic. Thus, impermanence and renewal were acknowledged as authentic. This “had an impact that far exceeded that of monument preservation because it admitted the human being as integral to the construction of meaning and the ongoing creation of material culture.”\textsuperscript{47}

In 2002, UNESCO listed various types of cultural heritage as including the following: cultural heritage sites (archaeological sites, ruins, historic buildings), historic cities (urban landscapes and their constituent parts as well as ruined cities), cultural landscapes (parks, gardens and other ‘modified’ landscapes such as pastoral lands and farms), natural sacred sites (places that people revere or hold important but that have no evidence of human modification, for example sacred mountains), underwater cultural heritage (shipwrecks), museums (cultural

\textbf{\textsuperscript{46} ICOMOS, \textit{Nara Document on Authenticity}. (Nara Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention,1994), www.international.icomos.org/charters/nara_e.htm}
\textbf{\textsuperscript{47} Ruggles and Silverman, “From Tangible to Intangible Heritage: An Introduction,” 6.}
museums, art galleries and house museums), movable cultural heritage, handicrafts, documentary and digital heritage (the archives and objects deposited in libraries, including digital archives), cinematographic heritage (movies and the ideas they convey), oral traditions (stories, histories and traditions that are not written but passed from generation to generation), languages, festive events (festivals and carnivals and the traditions they embody), rites and beliefs (rituals, traditions and religious beliefs), music and song, the performing arts (theatre, drama, dance and music), traditional medicine, literature, culinary traditions, traditional sports and games. 48

Emergence of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Recognition of Authenticity marked the shift in conservation sensibilities from material preservation to safeguarding of cultural practices as they are performed and gave way to considerations for recognition of intangible heritage as a distinct category of heritage inclusion on the World Heritage List. Subsequently in 2003, through the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), UNESCO officially recognized the significance of intangible heritage, but the definition of intangible is still in early stages of clarification. According to the Convention of 2003, intangible cultural heritage is manifested in the following domains: (1) oral traditions and expressions; (2) performing arts; (3) social practices, rituals, and festive events; (4) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and (5) traditional craftsmanship. In cultural landscape scholarship, the tangibility or the measurable qualities of a landscape are usually recognized in the form of geographical and territorial boundaries, while the intangible or the experiential value of the landscape is often relegated to an inaccessible, imaginary sphere.

48 Harrison, Understanding the Politics of Heritage, 12.
Although UNESCO appreciates the interdependence of intangible and tangible aspects of cultural landscape, it still limits the definition of intangible to representational aspects such as “practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith—that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.” Safeguarding intangible heritage calls for its “translation” from oral form into some form of materiality, such as craft production, representational art and skills, archives, inventories, museums, and audio or film records.

Scholars are already demanding this reframing of heritage with ramifications for landscape as a category. Art Historian Dell Upton suggests that landscapes have no inherent “traditional” or modern identities or meanings. They are products of multiple, only partially overlapping, realms of knowledge, practice, and significance. Conservation strategies that insist upon and limit themselves to documentation of performances and spatial measurement of sites miss their intangible elements. At the same time, focusing on intangibility as a form of performance does not capture the essential experiential quality of a landscape. “Intangible” as a category misses the embodied subjectivity discussed above. It identifies a few exceptional bodies—the body of the performer or the sushi chef—and thus converts them into objects; but it misses the utterly dispersed experience of every subjective being’s experience of being-in-landscape.

The potential of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Convention lies in its aim of garnering global support to encourage cultural practice as a human right, ensuring respect for

multiple cultures to co-exist. The Convention focuses on intangible heritage as forms of experience which are aesthetically elaborate and those which are meaningful to a community, distinguishing them from activities that are utilitarian. However, it is not without problems related to issues it is attempting to address, such as human rights, majority-minority community relations, inventory, transmission through time, cultural practice, and the concept of intangibility itself. Anthropologist Richard Kurin points out that the Convention’s demand that intangible cultural heritage exhibit mutual respect between communities can be problematic as sometimes communities define their identity on the basis of their opposition to other groups.51

There has been considerable debate among international experts over the usefulness of inventorying intangible heritage. The Convention’s requirement of inventorying brings intangible heritage into the realm of objectification and attempts a measuring of the intangible heritage, which is antithetical to the essence of the term “intangible.” Besides, documentation may play only a modest role in the preservation of heritage. Paradoxically, the making of inventories may divert energy from the task of working with specific communities on actual safeguarding activities.52

Another issue is that the Convention defines intangible heritage as that which is shared within a cultural community and is transmitted from one generation to the next, thus distinguishing its value from, and thereby excluding, that which is transmitted across cultures. In this case, concerns for community representation and responsibility become apparent. The process of transmission of musical practices across cultures and their subsequent re-formation

52 Ibid., 72.
blurs the boundaries of community-based culture. This reveals an apprehension about the relevance of defining heritage merely on the basis of cultural identity.

Several questions emerge about the validity of giving preference and assigning values to cultural practices dissonant with global morality and ethics: For example, as anthropologist Michael F. Brown has noted, “Rights to heritage may not be so important when questions are larger (like global concern for whales’ extinction versus traditional consumption of whales in Japanese cuisine).” The overarching concern voiced in his anthropological stance stresses that granting transcending legal status to culture freezes social life in time, leads to imagining stable boundaries (which do not actually exist), and gives certain social groups a “mystical otherness.” Geographer William Logan raises issues of human rights specific to the ICH Convention. His argument is that the notion of human rights “can and must be used to limit the proposed intangible list.” Kurin urges for an outlook towards heritage that can objectively discern, and subsequently reject, commodification inherent in the concept of cultural property in forums such as UNESCO.

The ICH Convention’s aim of transmitting heritage in its most authentic condition, and with all values intact, to next generation becomes complicated in the case of intangible heritage. What is authentic heritage for a community may be based in its potential to keep changing. Thus, it becomes pertinent to speculate which elements of intangible heritage merit protection and what ways can be devised to ensure transformations authentic to the practices of intangible heritage.

54 Ibid., 45.
Diversity versus Universalism

In light of the debates that surfaced due to the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, the need to address issues of human rights was felt. Through its Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), UNESCO assumed responsibility towards “human rights” and “uniqueness and plurality of the identities” by creating conditions for diverse cultures to flourish and interact in a mutually beneficial manner. Although the Convention honors the anthropological perspective of multiplicity of cultures, it remains silent on issues of intercultural relations and how universal ethics can be created in this multicultural scenario. In his critique of the 2005 document, anthropologist Thomas Eriksen claims that it is characterized by indecision regarding use of concept of culture. Firstly, there is a bias towards reading culture as “difference.” This is problematic as this establishes a “we” and an “other” which is different in the eyes of the “we,” and this establishment does not qualify as an analysis of culture. Besides, the effects of globalization and external influences on culture are also defined as culture, thereby demonstrating an inherent duality between the definition of culture as “difference” versus that as “plural.” Logan has also voiced similar concern and called it a “clash between universalism and cultural relativism.”

The recent ratification of the ICOMOS Ename International Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites (2008) has created opportunities for devising strategies of interpretation as a totality of activity, reflection, and creativity stimulated by a

cultural heritage site at both personal and collective levels and that can be carried out by anyone, whether a layperson or an expert, a local resident or a visitor. The charter highlights seven principles as essential to this wider interpretive involvement in heritage and conservation activities: (1) Promoting Access and Understanding; (2) Reliable, Broad-based Information Sources; (3) Attention to Setting and Context; (4) Preservation of Authenticity; (5) Planning for Sustainability; (6) Concern for Inclusiveness; (7) Importance of Research, Training, and Evaluation.” Historical archaeologist and historian Neil Silberman presents the Ename Charter as enabling new strategies for interpretation, from pre-defined narratives to ongoing processes of choices and intentions. This opens up new opportunities for proposing performative models of heritage interpretation that encourage subjective and multiple interpretations of heritage sites like Śantiniketan and also for passing responsibility for heritage interpretation from stewards to those interested in the experience of heritage.

Contemporary concerns related to heritage

The concept of heritage as emblematized by UNESCO and ICOMOS has recently undergone a radical change, from being a purely western European intellectual premise in the twentieth century to a democratic “world” heritage of today. Rodney Harrison and colleagues link the evolving notion of heritage to the changing relationship between people, places, and objects. This change is an outcome of things being increasingly reproducible, blurring the significance of “authenticity;” mass global travel resulting in the creation of homogenous landscapes; and migrating families resulting in multiple associations and embracing plural

identities. Today, intellectual debates related to heritage widely accept the significance of heritage as no longer about the past but that which draws on the power of the past to produce the present and shape the future.62

Memory, ownership and property rights, nationhood, identity politics, interpretation and tourism are some of the central debates occupying present day heritage forums. The following paragraphs describe the influence of commodification, memory, place and location on heritage discourse and heritage management.

Effects of Modernity: Values in Flux—from multiculturalism to commodification

Heritage is a commodity, driven by capitalist agendas but placed in a cultural context. Social anthropologist Arjun Appadurai explores the relationship between culture and commodification from historical, ethnographical, and sociological perspectives, with special focus on modernity and globalization. His discussion of commodities illustrates that an object has a social life and that the values ascribed to it are constantly in flux.63 The values depend upon two aspects of the object. First is the “commodity phase” or the moment during which an object is operating as a commodity. Second is the “commodity candidacy” or the object’s ability to function as a commodity in order to meet the needs of buyer and seller and the cultural framework in which the exchange takes place. In the field of heritage management, the heritage resource can be equaled to the object. Thus, to determine its social life, it is pertinent to identify the values attributed to it, to identify the criteria for values attached to heritage, and finally to determine the ways in which the values affect interactions among people and between people and

heritage. This stance is supported by human geographer David Harvey. He interprets the economic, political, and cultural shifts caused by capitalism to argue that the value attributed to heritage, and hence the renewed interest in historic preservation, is a direct outcome of a capital-driven market for cultural consumption.\textsuperscript{64} He also argues that the changes in the values attached to heritage occur as a response to the transformation of capitalism itself.

Geographer Peirce Lewis problematizes attitudes of viewing history as a commodity, calling that a “security blanket” which has resulted in the failure of preservation in the United States. By failure, Lewis means the inability to read the cultural meaning of a place. He elucidates five main attitudes of American preservation practices that are problematic and hence have resulted in standardization of cultural meanings. They are cultural memory influenced by commodification of heritage, preservation of antique texture, successful proxemics, environmental diversity, and economic gain.\textsuperscript{65} He sees all of these as problematic because they have resulted in standardization of cultural meanings. For Lewis, no part of a cultural landscape is unintentional and, thus, preservation practices need to consider the reasons and processes of landscape transformations, keeping location and environmental context in mind.

Landscape architect and cultural critic Dean MacCannell articulates the commodification of heritage sites from three perspectives: as tourist destinations, as understood by tourists, and as organized by the tourism industry.\textsuperscript{66} When seen as a tourist destination, it appears as an unplanned typology of structure that provides access to modern consciousness or “world-view.” MacCannell places his argument within the modern social structure by examining institutions

that support that structure and by conducting an ethnographic study of modernity. He concludes that leisure has a sociological perspective which considers it more rewarding than merely economical. Here, MacCannell brings in the second perspective—that of the tourist. He comments on differentiation, "staged authenticity," and the different levels of reality that the tourist confronts to show how these leisure experiences define modern man and constructs his identity. MacCannell frames the traveler as someone in search of the authentic and who risks moving beyond familiar territories into cultural otherness. At the same time, he discredits the modern tourism industry, which has been appropriated by corporations, in fostering rapid and homogenized development. To combat this, MacCannell, suggests newer and more localized forms of cultural tourism.

Sociologist John Urry echoes Harvey’s and MacCannell’s arguments and theorizes heritage places in relation to rise of tourism. He defines tourism as a particular kind of consumption that has grown out of recent economic restructuring. In his later writings, Urry advocates for a focus on tourism and remembering—that is, processes of place creation—rather than heritage and memory, which are things. Urry argues that heritage and “how societies remember the past” are social phenomena that involve complex economic, cultural, and social processes. This valorizes a need to understand processes of remembering in the context of travel, tourism, and a proliferation of tourism industry.

Architectural historian Françoise Choay describes the UNESCO ideology of preservation as an institutionalized example of how westerners conceive their relationship to temporality and

have constructed their identity. She proclaims modernity to have had adverse effects in preserving the urban environment as cultural heritage. In this she builds on MacCannell who argued that tourist destinations depict a spatial typology that facilitates a “modern sociology of leisure,” that which demands much more than mere economic benefits.  

What surfaces from these arguments is the modern sensibility of the World Heritage List, through which heritage is converted into a commodity. The monuments on the World Heritage List “get instantly attached to prestige and become an object of emulation,” the economic value of which is hard to resist. Consequently, these sites become cultural products re-presented for consumption, as both dispensers of knowledge and sites of pleasure. This leads to other issues that make sites vulnerable. Firstly, a World Heritage site becomes either a “show” or a “stage for a show.” Secondly, it becomes a place rented out for utilization as advertising aids in the form of souvenir shops. Thirdly, the monument’s success lies in its deliverability and, hence, efforts are made to make it more accessible, causing detrimental effects on its immediate environment. Lastly, the sites are conditioned to suit the needs of tourists (homogenous by nature, often defined by being the most affluent), thereby homogenizing the climate to be consumed. This sometime forces local population to adapt to, and sometimes excludes them from participation in, the cultural consumption.

Parallel to, and stemming from, the discourses on commodification of heritage are discourses that present a critique of object-centric heritage scholarship. They propose, instead, re-representing culture as a process discursive stance that appreciates culture’s fluidity and

71 Ibid., 162.
plurality. Harvey’s work, presented above, has influenced this scholarship most effectively. Cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove cites Baudrillard and Harvey when asserting that cultural knowledge and power, not use value, determine the value of heritage, thus suggesting a very different way of allocating resources for conservation.72

**Place, Locality and context**

The significance of cultural heritage lies in the way it shows people something about themselves and about the world to which they belong. In this respect scholars such as cultural critic Michel de Certeau, Appadurai, Philosopher Edward Casey, and philosopher Jeff Malpas become significant in their assertion for significance of “place” not just in terms of the meanings it holds and evokes but also in the way it is a productive act restructuring the established notions of nation-state. As UNESCO gives nation-states the power to identify “world” heritage, theories that destabilize and revisit the notion of nation-state in relation to “place” become significant in heritage studies.

An important aspect of understanding “place” relative to cultural heritage is how it contains individuals and collective meanings. In this context the work of de Certeau becomes significant.73 He asserts that people continuously individualize shared meanings, transforming objects, rituals, laws, and language to make their own. His analysis of experiences of walking in the city or riding railroads relate to cultural heritage by presenting the different ways in which

place becomes an important part of individual existence. This also suggests that the creative process of constructing heritage resides in individuals as well as social bodies and institutions.

Appadurai’s work on the production of locality emerges from his writings on effects of globalization leading to cultural flows. He asserts that globalization has displaced the “place” from the local to the context of a world in which the traditional nation-state has become destabilized by processes of transnationalism.74 For him, locality is primarily a relational concept, rather than a spatial one, “a series of complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of immediacy, interactivity and contexts.” There is a two-way relationship between place and the people in which each is related to, and creates, the other.

Casey argues that place is distinct from space, because it holds tangible meanings for people.75 Casey traces the evolution of spatial conceptions through the writings of Descartes, Leibniz, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Bachelard, Heidegger, and postmodernists such as Foucault, Derrida, Tschumi, Deleuze and Guattari, and Irigaray. He shows that, historically, much of European thinking has conceived place in terms of mere location or position within a space where movements of physical bodies occur. He problematizes this concept by showing how place becomes a constructed notion which is representable on a map. Instead he presents the idea of a “sense of place” which imparts both a sense of identity to unique locales and a sense of identity and belongingness to the individuals in relation to those places. This “sense of place” has been effective in redefining modern cultural heritage as a shared heritage especially through new media, such as the movies directed by Wim Wenders.76

74 Arjun Appadurai, Modernity at Large (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 1996).
Contemporary discourses on the concept of place have been enriched by the work of Malpas, who has addressed the nature and philosophical significance of the concept of place by drawing upon phenomenological and hermeneutic resources. Malpas’s work is distinctive in its conceptual analysis of space, how it relates space to place, and its “topographical” analysis of self and identity. Malpas argues for an “externalist” conception of self and mind, according to which human lives are indissolubly linked to the places in which those lives are lived.\(^{77}\)

In his essay “The Necessity for Ruins,” J. B. Jackson argues that the physical degradation of places and things is a necessary precursor to our valuing them as heritage. He compares two different types of monuments. The first type reminds us of specific leaders or events and has a ritualistic expectation from the users, even in terms of memory. The other is the “trending” type of monument, which memorializes a vague sense of past, with unspecific dates and names. Here, instead of remembering a specific place, societies prefer to remember a notion of a “golden age” when there was an “original landscape.”\(^{78}\) Thus, place as presented by Jackson is essential to evoke memory, attempt restoration, and subsequently re-produce the cosmic scheme and “correct history.”

**Memory: nationalism, stakeholders, property**

The potential for locality to embody, symbolize, and evoke both individual and collective memory is an important aspect of the role that heritage can play in building a sense of community. In the same manner, commemoration can help communities to produce locality. Phenomenologist Edward Casey theorizes about the connection between place and memory in

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\(^{77}\) Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 18.

the sense that places facilitate the contextualization of memory. Additionally, place holds events within itself by giving memory an authentically local habitation.\textsuperscript{79}

The central dilemma that UNESCO faces is “how to enjoy the benefits of the past without being overwhelmed or corrupted by it.”\textsuperscript{80} Historian Pierre Nora differentiates between memory and history, the former being lived and the latter constructed. But history only has value because of memory. Hence, any site that becomes a venue of historical preservation can only be complete if it is associated with memory.\textsuperscript{81} It follows that memory is dependent on present time. Lowenthal, on the other hand, suggests that history is not knowable. Although awareness of past is important for our orientation in time and place, the past is not fixed. According to Lowenthal, our interpretations of the past are in constant flux, and that is also different from the past itself. The present time is in flux and, hence, the changing present continuously requires new interpretations of the past. This thought problematizes the concept of authenticity, makes decay valuable, and undermines the insistence on “temporal purity.”\textsuperscript{82}

Memory is created in the present but is associate with the malleability of the past. Past can been molded to suit a political, nationalistic, economic or identity-related agenda. When people learn about that constructed past, they nurture a new memory of it. Cultural practices, resulting from such memory, thus are invented and formally instituted to infuse desired values. This point is clearly expressed in the compilation of historical essays by Hobswam and Ranger, which explores how fragments of the past have been appropriated as “heritage” and how heritage

\textsuperscript{79} Edward S. Casey, \textit{Remembering: A Phenomenological Study}. (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 189.
has been used for various political, nationalistic, economic, and identity-constructing ends.\textsuperscript{83} Trevor-Roper’s essay is a part of the compilation and with the example of Scottish kilts deconstructs the national myth of a material culture to show how collective memory is capable of being constructed.\textsuperscript{84}

The issue of “ownership” of heritage coincides with issues of ownership at local and global levels addressing individual, community, or national interests. Here the work of professionals informed by legal, intellectual, or scientific attitudes sometimes coincides and sometimes conflicts with the agendas of local stakeholders, and this concern is finding renewed attention in heritage studies. Through the relationship between heritage and state institutions, Appadurai shows that nations can be powerful contributors to the politics of remembering.\textsuperscript{85} He also suggests that the focus of nation-states on the politics of remembering and recovering might dilute or undermine the equally important need to examine the politics of forgetting and erasure. He advocates for the significance of layered narratives sensitive to both remembering and forgetting and to local community in the context of the nation-state. Thus, multiculturalism and blurring concepts of identities and belongingness are posing major challenges to heritage practices embedded in nation-state defined, homogenous forms of heritage.

**Interpretation and presentation—an agenda of knowing heritage in the present**

Two pertinent debates have percolated through concerns for heritage, namely, (1) the role of interpretive strategies in discouraging commodification of heritage; and (2) the role of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{83} Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
\item \textsuperscript{84} Hugh Trevor-Roper, “The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, 15-42.
\item \textsuperscript{85} Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 156.
\end{itemize}
memory in decisions about preserving the past. Heritage practices seek to address these two concerns by way of interpretation and presentation. That is also being addressed by ICOMOS in its latest Ename charter concerning interpretation and presentation of heritage. Interpretation goals in this charter show sensitivity towards “social, financial, and environmental sustainability” achieved through “meaningful collaboration between heritage professionals, associated communities, and other stakeholders.”

These concerns have opened up avenues for a discourse related to personal and collective memories, especially in the wake of culture essentially being defined as “collective” by UNESCO. Emerging questions that need attention in world heritage conventions include, (1) How do individuals and collective memory find a common ground in heritage protection? and (2) What role can intangible cultural heritage play in mediating between individuals and collective memory. In light of those concerns, the emerging agendas regarding international heritage that need attention include blurring boundaries between past and present and revisiting concepts of authenticity. Those concerns also point towards a need to reimagine the practice of heritage interpretation from heritage professionals providing objective “knowledge about heritage” to a practice of ongoing subjective experiences.

Chapter 2: Landscape discourse

What birds plunge through is not the intimate space,
in which you see all forms intensified.
(Out in the Open, you would be denied
yourself, would disappear into that vastness.)
Space reaches from us and translates things:
to know the essence of a tree,
throw inner space around it, from that space
that lives in you. Surround it with restraint.
It has no limits. For the first time, shaped
in your renouncing, it becomes fully tree. —Rainer Maria Rilke.87

Rilke’s poem points out to the intimate connectedness between people and the world, a
key phenomenological tenet. One knows the world only by sharing in its limitlessness,
projecting oneself into it rather than remaining distant. From that perspective, landscape is a
phenomenon available in its fullness and complexity to firsthand, grounded contact and
engagement.

My research acknowledges the discursive understanding that landscape is a phenomenon.
This approach lays emphasis on methods to describe and present landscape rather than to
diagnose and represent it. The viewer of or visitor to a landscape, an outsider of the Cartesian
paradigm, becomes an insider in the phenomenological model. This chapter discusses key
writings that have been influential in the emergence of the phenomenological discourse of
landscape. Although that discourse assumes what appears to be a binary position with regards to
the Cartesian discourse, it integrates the Cartesian concept of vision and distance by
acknowledging embodiment and erasure of the distance for perception. Hence, it becomes
pertinent to understand the presence of phenomenology in landscape scholarship in reference to

87 Stephen Mitchell, ed. and trans., “What birds plunge into is not intimate space,” in The Selected Poetry of Rainer
other discursive positions. To address that concern, this chapter traces distinctive traditions of
landscape writing, bringing out their interrelatedness and stressing their interdisciplinary nature.

During the past century, landscape scholarship has evolved through four interrelated
discourses, namely (1) landscape as an objective world, (2) landscape as a visual representation
of culture and power, (3) landscape as a result of social processes of production and
consumption, and (4) landscape as phenomenon. This chapter begins by discussing the scholars
who have contributed to those four discourses. It then proceeds to describe the development of
phenomenology as a philosophical construct. It then discusses in detail the contemporary interest
in phenomenology among landscape scholars and landscape practitioners. Lastly, it establishes
key parameters that support an inquiry of landscape as phenomenon.

Landscape—a representation and/or phenomenon

Objective world

Cultural landscape theorists Carl Sauer and J. B. Jackson define landscape in terms of an
objective world of physical features, one that is “out there” and can be accessed empirically.
That approach lends priority to historical research, reconstructing past landscapes and tracing
their evolution.88 Within Sauer’s definition, “the physical environment retains a central
significance, as the medium with and through which human cultures act.”89 Jackson defined
landscape as a source and repository of symbolic meaning and value. In his study of everyday,
“vernacular” landscapes of post-war America, he also described landscape as a world on the

move and in the making rather than fixed or framed. In so doing, he became an early advocate of landscape understood in terms of experience, dwelling, and embodied practice—an understanding which has recently come to fore in landscape studies. Landscape scholar John Wylie traces the history of landscape discourse and argues that the tradition of defining landscape as a material world constituted a set of principles and arguments against which all subsequent generations of landscape analysis defined themselves.

Visual representation of culture and power

In the concept of the period-eye, an art historical method of analysis devised by Michael Baxandall, landscape is defined less as an external, physical object and more as a culturally specific way of seeing or representing the world. More specifically, landscape is closely identified with landscape art as a system of producing and transmitting meaning through visual symbols and representations. Martin Jay, Denis Cosgrove, Raymond Williams, and Gillian Rose were key proponents of this landscape discourse. They and other scholars sought to position and interpret landscape representations critically around three metaphors: landscape as veil, landscape as text, and landscape as gaze. Their discourse was concerned primarily with interpretation of the meaning of landscape, and landscape representations were the objects through which they made their inquiry.

90 John Brinckerhoff Jackson, Discovering the Vernacular Landscape (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984).
91 Wylie, Landscape: Key Ideas in Geography.
93 Wylie, Landscape: Key Ideas in Geography, 65.
Social process of production and consumption

In the 1990s, the definition of landscape as a visual representation of cultural meaning was critiqued and extended to address relations of power. Debates questioned the materiality of landscape and opened analysis of landscape to discourses of travel, colonialism, and imperialism. Geographer Don Mitchell advanced a materialist and Marxist vision of landscape as one grounded in the material transformation of landscape through industrial and agricultural processes. Here, landscape was about production and consumption, labor and leisure, and worked more through everyday economic and social processes than the aesthetically minded artistic and literary realms. Writings during this period also emphasized questions of representation, erasure, and appropriation.

Phenomenon: temporal embodied inhabitance

Landscape phenomenology rejected notions of landscape as an image or representation expressing cultural values and meanings, arguing that those perpetuate a series of dualities between subject and object, mind and body, and culture and nature. From a phenomenological standpoint, landscape was defined primarily in terms of embodied practices of dwelling, practices of being-in-the-world in which self and landscape are entwined and emergent. Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s writings influenced this scholarship significantly and addressed the relationship between vision and embodiment. Cultural Anthropologist Tim Ingold redefined landscape explicitly as dwelling and practice. Geographer Lorimer Hayden’s work

was an empirical study of embodied acts of landscaping, and observed links between that approach and “non-representational theory,” as well as with emerging interdisciplinary studies of body, perception, movement, and materiality.\(^{97}\) J. B. Jackson recalled Mircea Eliade’s concept of polarized sacred space when he wrote that the acts of building and dwelling constitutes landscape.\(^{98}\) The notion of landscape was thus anchored in dwelling-activities. Jackson argued that “far from being spectators of the world we are participants in it.”\(^{99}\) Jackson’s position proposes a vision of landscape as a shared, lived-in world. As Wiley notes, “that position is problematic as it tends to equate phenomenology with the description of subjective, lived experience. This is a key point because, phenomenology does not locate the self in the body and the body in the landscape, rather seeks to redefine vision in terms of embodiment.”\(^{100}\) Phenomenology does not simply add a body to the already extant landscape but rather breaks the Cartesian paradigm and rejects the subject-object divide. Merleau-Ponty used the term *intertwining* to capture the way in which self and landscape relate to each other.\(^{101}\) Landscape is thus a mode of “being,” a generative process of being-in-the-world. Cultural geographer Nigel Thrift has made a major contribution from this perspective by describing landscape as phenomenological. He proposes landscape as both the milieu and the act of inhabiting, fused together and continuously being enacted via bodily-practices.\(^{102}\)

\(^{100}\) Wylie, *Landscape: Key Ideas in Geography*, 149-150.
Landscape—a phenomenon created, then known, then created

Phenomenology—an evolving discourse

As discussed previously, phenomenology is a philosophical way of seeing the world that emphasizes lived-experience and subjectivity. Austrian philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is credited with having founded this philosophical movement. He claimed that consciousness is separate from human experience and that phenomenology is a cerebral reflection on what is available to human consciousness. His philosophical stance towards phenomenology came to be regarded as “transcendental.” His view was challenged and broadened by “existential phenomenologists” such as Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961). According to existential phenomenology, consciousness is inseparable from the world and human existence, and human experience is essential for knowing the world. Geographer Louisa Cadman provides a comprehensive time-line of the development of phenomenology as a philosophical construct and subsequent influences on landscape studies. She summarizes:

Heidegger proposes that we are always already thrown into the world and inseparable from it. Our immersive practices of being-in-the-world are disclosive and we must avoid tuning to subjective or objective reasoning to account for them. Merleau-Ponty shifts things slightly through the notion of the “lived body.” Here the disclosive nature of being-in-the-world is available only through the body and our bodily competences. It is then down to the later Wittgenstein to account for the nonsystematic (it cannot be known in advance) and performative (its rules are only given in action) play of embodied practice.103

In Heidegger’s conception, phenomenology is a method that urges a return to “things.” Thing-ness implies a corporeal presence. Interpretation here does not imply a reproduction of the elemental from an assumed cultural stance. Instead, it calls for a “way of being” and of “becoming oriented” in relation to the elemental. That conception resonates in Casey’s argument that “we are bound by body to be in place.”\textsuperscript{104} Thus, “the very physical form of the human body regularizes our world in terms of here-there, near-far, up-down, above-below, and right-left.”\textsuperscript{105}

“Intentionality,” “intuition,” “evidence,” “empathy,” and “intersubjectivity” form the main principles for a phenomenological inquiry. Intentionality is explicit when a body stretches

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Figure1.png}
\caption{Graph from Cadman, 2009}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{104} Edward S. Casey, \textit{Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World} (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 104.
out to a thing, hence, materiality. From a phenomenological stance, consciousness is always “of” [a thing], and hence, material. Intuition takes place when the object of intention is directly available to the body, hence, proximity. Evidence is the act of describing the object of intention when it is intuited. Empathy or experience of one’s body as another body allows an appreciation of the other’s subjectivity, hence, intersubjectivity. A phenomenological research materializes in three distinct methods: engaging with the elemental, radicalizing senses, and breaking free from representation-based thinking. Chapter 3 of this dissertation explains those methods further.

**Contemporary discourse on landscape and experience**

Through shifting attitudes, landscape pedagogy has been aligning itself more with phenomenological discourses. The most prominent shift in has been an outcome of dismissing the traditional practice of analyzing fixed representations and a subsequent realization that those practices promoted a disengaged approach towards landscape, one that disregarded experience as a meaningful aspect of landscape. Proponents of this critique have defined landscape as performative and impermanent. For example, Tim Ingold, Christopher Tilley, and Nigel Thrift are concerned with landscape as both the venue and the act of performance, treating the two as inseparable in the definition of landscape. While time as it is lived—that is, temporality—finds a central place in the theories asserting landscape as performative, landscape is also described as a text which can be told as a story connecting lives of people to places.¹⁰⁶ Michel Conan explores experience as an outcome of conscious movement in a given landscape, which has the power to reconstruct and impart new meanings to the landscape. This view is also shared by James

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Corner, in his design practice, and Beth Diamond, in her teaching style. Both posit landscape as an agency of cultural change. The other emerging thought is one that critiques the power of vision in analyzing landscape.

The other emerging thought is one that critiques the power of vision in analyzing landscape. Practicing designer and landscape architecture theorist Marc Treib credits vision as powerful in creation of landscape representation loaded with intended meanings, while Corner and Rachel DeLue intellectualize the distance which is essential for conscious vision to play a significant role in designing and analyzing landscape.

Tim Ingold is one of the key advocates of phenomenological approaches to landscape. Ingold introduced the concept of the “dwelling perspective,” which intends to dissolve the distinction between landscape and temporality. For Ingold, landscape is situated in human, embodied dwelling, and dwelling is entwined with temporality. He contrasted the notion of a fixed and stable history, a time that is looked at, with the notion of lived temporality performed through engaged bodily activity. Thus, landscape (the milieu and the act of dwelling) and temporality form an indissoluble phenomenological whole—the process of the becoming of the world. Ingold’s earlier work looks at time and landscape as topical contacts between archaeology and anthropology. His premise is that the concept of a temporal landscape merges the intellectual divide between archaeology and anthropology, in the sense that archaeology, when practiced, is also a form of “dwelling,” Heidegger’s concept of being present. Ingold cites

the example of map making in which a map represents the cartographers’ ability to be present simultaneously at several places and nowhere in particular. For him, landscape is not “land,” not “nature,” and not “space.” “Land is the lowest denominator of the phenomenal world, inherent in every portion of earth’s surface, yet directly visible in none.” Ingold juxtaposes the innovative concept of “taskscape,” a continuous unfolding of stories of activities, with the more widely understood notion of landscape as a series of related features. In placing the two together, he calls for a definition of landscape that does away with the dichotomy. Living allows humans to become part of landscape, and it allows landscape to become part of human existence.

Ingold’s dwelling perspective has had wide ranging implications for fields beyond landscape. For example, Nigel Thrift based his advocacy for non-representation on Ingold’s rejection of the subject-object divide. Non-representational theory was useful in shedding light on the inherent inability of art historical and literary sensibilities to situate embodied experience and practice in the realms of a cultural discourse that was saturated with already-structured social meaning.

Ingold’s work also had an impact on the definition and importance of representation in cultural discourses. The act of representing came to mean being in and of the world of embodied practice and performance, rather than taking place outside of that world, or being determinative of that world. This non-representational thinking, concerned with presentation through thought-in-action, considered representation always a part of presentation, with representation emphasizing merely a particular moment.  

The concept of temporal landscape was adopted by John Wylie and geographers John-David Dewsbury and Mitch Rose in their argument that writing about “enacting geographies” is also an enactment. They addressed enactment through three themes: opening, presenting, and witnessing. Opening is to recognize the “excess-of-world,” and that “the world does not add-up”—it is “taking place every day.” Opening acknowledges that the researcher writes and researches within the world that is taking place now. Presenting emphasizes breaking away from apprehending culture as pre-formed, resonating with Thrift’s advocacy for breaking away from representation. Witnessing is explained as “both the moment of experience and a stance thereafter towards the world that acknowledges and attends to the gap between what we have seen and are seeing, with what we have written and could write, and with what we have said and can “say”.”

This process operates in two directions that come together in being (as defined by Merleau-Ponty) and in “intelligence-as-action.” This understanding re-iterates the principle that the world comes about, that the world is primarily emergent with the performance of everyday activities that take place in it.

The writings of landscape historian and sociologist Michel Conan have had an impact on landscape history and design processes. Conan is especially committed to exploring the role of design in imparting meaning to a place. His recent work makes explicit the necessity of studying experience in landscape in order to unsettle and restructure the foundations of the picturesque aesthetic, which are strongly established in landscape scholarship.

Conan complicates the usual concept of motion, discerned as a series of several indefinitely changing positions, by explaining that the value of the landscape does not lie in the collection of those still images or in the moments of stillness. The viewed images become part of

memories only in relation with the experience of that particular moment of stillness. Those images, on return visits, may get revoked but with a completely different perception based either in memory or in relation with the experience at hand. Thus, differing experiences of motion highlight cultural differences which play a crucial part in subjective interpretation of landscapes.

Conan dismisses cognitive/behavioral research that claims to be based on experience of motion, an approach exemplified by Kevin Lynch’s work for the design of the beltway in Boston. The problem with that approach lies in the flawed assumption that a person’s “image of a city” is situated in material objects such as buildings and edges, an idea that excludes on-going experience of a place. Critiquing behavioral approaches to landscape inquiry, which rely heavily on analytical methods based in the materiality of landscape, Conan proposes phenomenological inquiry as a path to landscape literacy. Developing a phenomenological method involves conceiving experience in terms of intentionality (individual), intersubjectivity (individual in relation to culture), or cultural change (aesthetic response) that occurs due to artistic innovation. Conan proposes that sensitivity to these conceptions of experience can facilitate design contributions that enable a variety of possible experiences. Additionally, Conan seeks to place landscape experience (design reception) within the discourse of design where design is an agency for cultural change.¹¹³

Conan further credits the experience of motion in gardens as playing a significant role in participants’ personal development. In his essay that appeared as part of a compilation edited by Conan, Norris Brock Johnson uses the example of Zuisen-ji and Saiho-ji, to shows a link between experience of motion in a landscape and an individual’s quest for emotional ecstasy.

typically achieved by reaching a sacred place.\textsuperscript{114} He calls this process a landscape metaphor as it is the “landscape design that helps visitors experience a shifting of meanings attached to their personal lives.”\textsuperscript{115} Thus, experience of motion in landscape occurs when the landscape design is able to affect the imagination and concerns of its users.

Landscape architect and theorist James Corner embraces landscape urbanism in his practice, demonstrating that landscape is capable of organizing the city, enhancing the urban experience, and addressing ecological concerns. His designs for the High Line (2009) and Fresh Kills (2010) are key examples that articulate the concerns of this movement. Landscape architect Charles Waldheim coined the term “landscape urbanism” to describe emerging design practices that realize the capability of landscape as an ordering element in a contemporary urban setting.\textsuperscript{116} Landscape urbanism calls for the use of horizontal surfaces (landscape elements) as generators of “urban effects” as opposed to traditional use of architectural edges.

In his earlier works, Corner proposes a recovery of landscape in the cultural sphere (recollection) and rethinking what landscape actually is—or might become—as an idea and as an artifact (invention). In both recollection and invention, landscape is an ongoing project.\textsuperscript{117} The eidetic content of landscape—that is, the capacity of landscape to contain and express ideas and so engage the mind—necessitates considering landscape as that which shapes cultures. Corner

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnotesize{114 Zuisen-ji and Saiho-ji, are two temple garden landscapes, designed as places for training monks by a Buddhist monk, Muso-Kokushi (1275–1357). Both have a monastery and a lake at the lower level, separated by steep paths from higher levels in the mountain. The paths were designed to create a succession of different experiences: a sense of rising, and an experience of awareness of the mountain.
\end{footnotesize}
proposes three-fold recovery of landscape: retrieval of memory and cultural enrichment of place and time, social program and utility (new uses), and ecological diversification and succession.

Corner’s concern is that landscape is generally assumed to be passive and the desire of the designer is either to re-create it or to preserve it. A combination of nostalgia and consumerism drives this desire while suppressing ambitions to experiment and invent—which landscape has the capability to offer. The objective of Corner’s work is thus to shift landscape from being a product of culture to being an agent producing and enriching culture. He is especially interested in the landscape as an “agency,” thinking about how landscape works and what it does.

*Landscape Theory* was one of the seminars organized in 2008 as part of the Art Seminar series, aimed at establishing new ways of thinking about landscape in art. It brought together more than fifty scholars from multiple disciplines to understand the relationship between landscape and art. The context for the seminar was the observation that there is little consensus about the relation of landscape and art even though multiple studies of landscape representation exist in different disciplines. The discussion was not aimed at a cohesive or a definitive dialogue but suggested that the various opinions offered by thinkers might collectively approximate the ever-shifting grounds of landscape scholarship and eventually break free from the traditions of studying of landscape representations in discourses of art. In her introductory essay about the necessity for such a dialogue, art historian Rachael DeLue makes explicit that landscape theory is in a perplexed state of intellectual disagreements as “landscape theory winds up, necessarily, as the theory that must account for everything.”118 In this context of “landscape” being difficult to see and to theorize DeLue proposes a multidisciplinary dialogue that de-familiarizes two

terrains: “the terrain of landscape itself and the terrain constituted by traditional methods of inquiry” specific to each discipline that engages landscape.

DeLue discusses Thoreau’s “visual failure” as an obstructed seeing, which formed the basis of early nineteenth century popular travel writing, and which influenced the perceptions of landscape users (for example, travelers). She uses this metaphor to explain why various disciplines fail to go beyond their established traditions of inquiry. She advocates for “contact,” which is a product of not seeing and a product of confronting a sought-after sight. What the current landscape theory needs is to disarm the gaze by looking back, a distance which assumes responsibility for visibility, and multiple loci of vision where subject and object positions are interchangeable.

Other key positions emerged during the seminar. Anne Spirn proposes a sense of empathy or projection of one’s own consciousness on a thing or place and a power of imagination as more important than knowledge as tool for landscape appreciation.119 Her concern is a harmonious coexistence of nature and humankind, and landscape theorists are part of that same human culture. Landscape is proposed as ideological.120 Landscape is proposed on one hand as representative of power and on the other hand as an imagined act.121 But what is sometimes explicit, though mostly understated, is recognition of the distinction of landscape from landscape representation, and that is the direction this seminar proposes to reveal.

Marc Treib explores the significance of representation in landscape practice. In, Representing Landscape Architecture, he compiled various contributions that looked at wide ranging genres of design representation in the context of their inherent challenges, complexities,

119 Spirn, “‘One with Nature’: Landscape, Language, Empathy, and Imagination,” 44.
120 Alan Wallach, “Between Subject and Object,” in Art Seminar 6: Landscape Theory, 316.
and potentials. This compilation aims to investigate the ways in which landscape architecture has been represented and can be represented in future.122

For Treib, representation is not a neutral practice, and the way imagination takes form informs the representation. He is concerned that the medium of representation chosen offers its own set of potentials and limitations which may have an effect on the resultant landscape. The contributions in the volume ask questions ranging from the intention of communication, the reception of the image, and resultant perception; to the dependency of designers on the availability of graphic media; to the relationship between representation and built form; and to the issue of time and process in representation.123 Treib problematizes static views taken in interactive media and proposes to engage time as a necessary dimension of representation. Treib’s work explores the disconnect between the photograph of a landscape and the landscape itself.124 He valorizes the significance of vision in photograph creation as opposed to the actual technique of capturing photographs. His position locates the power of representation on the body.

Corporeal body: perception without distance

Embodied landscape aesthetics invites one to experience landscape not simply by looking at it with distanced aesthetic appreciation but rather by becoming involved in a multi-sensory relationship with it. Immersing oneself in the milieu creates a narrative about the landscape.

In *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed advances phenomenological discourses by proposing that mobility in landscape is related to body as a mode of inquiry—not merely confined to physical travel but perception-in-motion. Ahmed’s thesis also reinstates David Lowenthal’s concern that “the shifting definitions of authenticity of heritage sites from substance to form to process and to images and ritual performance” disrupt the relevance of defining authenticity.125 Within the discourse of phenomenology, art historian Amanda Boetzkes follows the Earth Art movement of late 1960s to argue that “nature is not a site, but is present to human senses and appears only in its resistance to being subsumed into representation.”126 Boetzkes shows that art can play a part in critiquing the ways we frame nature by forging an aesthetic awareness of how nature exceeds its discourses and representation.127 This can be extrapolated to landscapes as sites of human intervention. More than using land as a sculpting medium, Earth Art initiated an interrogation of how the excessive presence of nature problematizes the drive to represent. Boetzkes’ work forges an aesthetic awareness that nature exceeds discourses and representations about it. Henri Lefebvre’s *Rhythmanalysis* asserts that rhythms in body are significant to understanding interrelation of space and time with everyday life.128 Rhythmanalysis strengthens the argument for phenomenological examination of landscape by superimposing the quantitative and qualitative rhythms on natural rhythms of the body.

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Body realized as landscape-domain

Phenomenological psychotherapist Van den Berg traces modern phenomenological views about the human body and outlines the key moments in philosophical discourse that addressed “subject” in reference to the body. He writes that for Descartes, subject is within the body of man, and the only psychological reality is I think. In this understanding, Van den Berg qualifies the body as a screen between subject and object, as the gateway to the "soul" and as the tool of the subject. He traces the subject further to explain:

Brentano… corrects Descartes's I think into I think of (this house). [For Husserl] it is this house itself… to which the intention is directed. [For Heidegger and Sartre], thinking of a house, I usually think of its habitableness, its intimacy. I think of this house in order to...\(^{129}\)

In that he concludes that the subject is in the body, and therefore the place of the subject is inseparably connected with the boundaries of the physical body.\(^{130}\)

For Van den Berg, body is a framing device that allows landscape to represent itself. He cites Sartre to distinguish three dimensions of the human body. The first is realized as "domain," or landscape. It defines itself through the chair on which it sits, the pavement on which it walks, and the threshold over which it stumbles. It is exclusively present. He explains it with the example of a mountaineer who, while climbing, no longer thinks of his body. Just because he forgets his body, “this body realizes itself as landscape: the measure of his stride realized by the nature of the gradient which he climbs.” Landscape defines itself through the pavement on which the body walks, or the threshold over which it stumbles. Thus, in negotiating a landscape, the individual is absorbed in its structure, thoughts completely given to it. The fatigue of her/his


\(^{130}\) Ibid., 169.
body shows itself in the first instance in the distance from or the inaccessibility of the goal, in the changed aspect of the landscape.

Even when he [falls over], his pain is projected. [It] is the property of the stones, nature of the landscape…The ability, efficiency and vulnerability of the body only becomes apparent when the body is eliminated, passed over in silence for the occupation of for the landscape.\textsuperscript{131}

The second dimension of the body exists because of a viewing by another unperceived body. Here, the body is that which appears to the other, whose movements are unaffected by the watching. The observer watches the body replying to the appeal issuing from the landscape. For Van den Berg, when a person observes the movement of another, the movements are the center from where landscape receives its meaning.

The third dimension of the body comes into being when the body becomes aware of the observer. The third body is the body that is constituted while being together with another, the body that is justified in the witnessing by the other. The movement changes because of that and correlates to the observer. In this way, the observer becomes the landscape of which the body becomes aware in order to negotiate in the first instance.

While discussing an observing body that encounters a landscape of rock art images, archaeologist Christopher Tilley argues that “the [movement] of the body is produced in and through the landscape […]. The relationship between person and place has a quality of an embodied and embedded identity, both divisible in terms of different qualities of the rock and linked together in the sequences in which they are encountered.”\textsuperscript{132} While claiming that the body both limits and constrains, while enabling us to perceive and react in specific embodied ways,

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 170.
\textsuperscript{132} Christopher Tilley, “Phenomenological Walk,” in \textit{Body and Image: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology} 2 (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2008), 256.
Tilley argues that imagery [of landscape] works first and foremost through the flesh to influence the embodied mind. In this process cognition is secondary rather than primary. Meaning is derived from and through the flesh, not as cognitive precipitate of the mind without a body, or a body without organs.133

A key position emerges from the conceptual mapping of phenomenology in the development of landscape scholarship: namely, to develop a method of landscape inquiry that involves the researcher as an insider, engaging the researcher with landscape through perception without distance. That method would use a corporeal body, which has a distinct intentionality, is oriented according to that intentionality, and becomes the site of landscape representation. The following chapter describes that method, which has been developed during the course of this dissertation work to incorporate the above concerns for a phenomenological understanding of presentation of landscape.

Chapter 3: Knowing Landscape Corporeally: Case Example of Śāntiniketan, India

Form is inseparable from movement: forms are alive in that they are never immobile. Form is, at the very instant of its birth, a phenomenon of rupture. The moment is a complex situation, in which multiple orientations and diverse polarities are placed side by side, meet and collide, and in the midst of which those ruptures occur that are called events. We thus come to the idea of multiple temporalities, of a layered temporality in which each domain, each level of historical reality advances according to its own rhythm and largely independent of the rhythm of other domains. —Henri Focillon

This chapter explains the performative research methodology that has been developed to address the body-space problems outlined in the previous chapters. The intention was to develop a methodology that could help a researcher gather corporeal knowledge, through corporeal or active experience, and to share, by active archiving, a heritage landscape such as Śāntiniketan. The performative research method combines practice-based research with traditional research methods such as empirical mapping, archival study, and ethnographic interviews. The chapter begins with a description of three distinct components of the research process. The first component concerns empirical mapping and details the kinds of maps created and how they are valuable to this research as a way of forming an effective background to the performative research strategy. The second component pertains to archival study and describes the information taken from original manuscripts and published books. The third component is formed by ethnographic interviews and enumerates the content and purpose of the questions asked, and their eventual outcome. The chapter then goes on to describe the practice-based research process, providing specific details about how it evolved, was immersive, and was improvisational at different moments. The research method makes explicit an understanding of landscape as temporal by itself being a temporal process.

**Gathering Background Information about the site**

The research work was started in summer 2010, when I made a short visit to Śāntiniketan. Thereafter, I started researching about Rabindranath Tagore’s philosophy and the historical development of Śāntiniketan. In Spring 2011, I conducted an experimental workshop at Meadowbrook Park, Illinois, in collaboration with dance students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), to understand and document the relationship of bodily rhythms with those perceptible in the surrounding landscape. The goal was not to study Meadowbrook Park per se, but to establish a method for exploring the way bodies are in landscape. The process is described in detail later in this chapter under the section titled “Rhythmanalysis.”

In summer 2011, I returned to Śāntiniketan with the sole purpose of going through the information held in the archives. The archives were temporarily re-located to the Udāyan, one of Tagore’s residences in the Uttarāyan complex, since the Rabindra-Bhavan (the library building which also houses the archives) was under renovation. At the archives, the curator told me that he has been digitizing all the manuscripts and letters of Tagore since the beginning of his employment at the archives, having completed 448 out of 800 folders. On the first day, I went through all the digitized folders one by one. I read many of Tagore’s letters just out of curiosity to know a little more about him, even though I knew that the information may not be directly useful to my research.

The Bichitra-Bhavan, or the Audio-Visual unit at the archives holds a big collection of photographs of the site, videos of seasonal festivals or dance drama directed by Tagore and also over 1600 paintings by Tagore. I went through all the historical photographs of early Śāntiniketan, looked through the videos available of Tagore’s dance dramas that were performed in open spaces, and browsed the letters that were written in English and dated between 1900 and
1930. These were correspondences between Tagore and his friends which mentioned the planning, organization or educational ideals of the school or the university, or which mentioned Tagore’s aesthetic philosophy. At the archives I found some of Tagore’s poems and some of stray thoughts scribbled on non-descript scraps, in his own hand about art, aesthetics and his idea of human union with nature. Those scribbles too were well compiled by the archive staff. I also looked into the documents which described the physical landscape of Śāntiniketan. I found Tagore’s own hand written document about his vision for Śāntiniketan and Viśva-Bhāratī. Making a list of people who were associated with the site and whose writings or art work would be helpful in shedding light upon the experiential quality of the site was easy because the archives had catalogued all the manuscripts on the basis of keywords like “art,” “Viśva-Bhāratī,” “āśram,” “ānandam,” “karunā,” “personality,” “beauty,” “truth,” etc. They were also catalogued according to dates and hence it was easy to browse through documents that were written around the time of the conception of the school and the university. There were folders arranged according to countries, cataloguing Tagore’s correspondences with people of various nationalities. There were folders arranged according to names of celebrities, cataloguing Tagore’s correspondences with important personalities such as physicist Albert Einstein, Mahatma Gandhi, author and political activist Helen Keller, and author Victoria Ocampo. The heritage cell of the archives was also located in the Udāyan. It was a beautiful room, with huge windows draped with soft flowy linen curtains on all sides and overlooking a courtyard designed along the lines of a Japanese style garden. I sat down in the archives at a low table with cushions on the floor. It felt like being transported into that time when Tagore himself would seat himself at one of those low tables and read or write in these spacious breezy rooms. The intention of visiting the heritage cell was to study the Śāntiniketan world heritage nomination dossier
commissioned by the Viśva-Bhāratī Parishad. Although I could not make any photocopy of the nomination dossier, I was permitted to make notes on paper with pen, sitting in the archive premises. It was a 500-page document and an almost exhaustive information book about the architectural features of the site. After coming back from this study, and equipped with the experience of the Meadowbrook experiment, I was able to present a study proposal for this site. I prepared a base map by stitching together 121 hi-resolution images (taken at an altitude of 50 m above the ground) from Google Earth maps. The base map covered an area comprising the campus, going all the way up to the Kopāi River on the north and Ajoī River on the south.

Information from Viśva-Bhāratī Campus Maps, Uttarāyan Maps and National Atlas and Thematic Mapping Organization (NATMO) Maps showing soil, vegetation, topography and water bodies was marked on the base maps.

After Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from UIUC, I made my third visit to Śāntiniketan in summer 2012 to conduct movement workshops in order to develop a performative research methodology for creating and sharing the embodied knowledge about the site. During this visit I also interviewed artists, students and teachers at Kalā-Bhavan and Sangīt-Bhavan at Viśva-Bhāratī. Lastly, during winter 2012-2013, I made my last visit to the site with the intention of conducting a retrospective workshop with the old and new participants. Subsequently most work was carried out at the University of Illinois, which included editing the video footage, scripting the voice over for the video, digitizing maps, and compiling the observations and analysis of all field work in a textual format.
Figure 2: Udāyan

Figure 3: Kalā-Bhavan
Apart from miscellaneous images dating back to 1901, which highlight activities on campus and registered change of the site from a desolate place to a green campus and a celebratory space for festivities the year round, the photo archive also contains photographs by Emil Otto Hoppé, a German photographer who visited Šāntiniketan in 1929 on Tagore’s invitation. Besides the photos, I was also able to find doodles of the āśram precinct by Sudhi Ranjan Das, one of Tagore’s first five students at the āśram, dating from the 1920s; paintings by Rabindranath Tagore, Benodebehari Mukherjee, and Nandanlal Bose; writings and memoirs of first teachers at the āśram such as Satish Chandra Ray, William Winstanley Pearson, Leonard Knight Elmhirst, Charles Freer Andrews, Alex Aronson, and Nandanlal Bose; and travelogues by Sir Lawrence John Lumley Dundas, 2nd Marquess of Zetland and Earl of Ronaldshay, who visited this place in 1943.

The following pieces of information from the archives has been key to the development of this project: Tagore’s textual works in his original handwriting titled “Sādhnā” (realization), “Ānandam” (love), “Satyam” (truth), “On erasures” (a style of painting developed by Tagore, that involved making doodles to obliterate previous layers of writing); Tagore’s correspondence with Albert Einstein, Helen Keller, Sarojini Naidu, Mahatma Gandhi, Scottish geographer Arthur Geddes (who was the key consultant during the initial planning of the campus), educational reformists such as Maria Montessori (Italy) and Paul Gaheeb (Germany), and many more. Those pieces of archival information revealed the significance of individual experience in the conception, development, and sustenance of the educational project manifested in the landscape
of Śāntiniketan. Hence those pieces became fundamental in defining the premise of this landscape inquiry as phenomenological and urged a distancing from the archives itself.

Empirical Mapping

As mentioned previously, the mapping process began with stitching together Google Earth images. The stitched image was then digitized using Adobe Illustrator. Major connections

Figure 4: “Baghdad May 24, 1932” by Tagore. 20 x 25 cm
Source: Śāntiniketan: Rabindra Bhavan Archives Ref. Num: f00.2275.16
such as railways lines, highways; village boundaries; campus buildings; Tagore’s residential complex; gardens and groves; landscape elements such as water bodies, forests, rivers, and canals were marked on the digitized image. The map was supplemented by information from the following sources: historical information from “Santiniketan 1927” by Arthur Geddes (1/2 inch to 1 mile);\textsuperscript{135} state level drainage, soil, vegetation and physiographic information from “NATMO West Bengal State Maps 2000” (1/2,000,000);\textsuperscript{136} district level information from maps created by L. S. S. O’Malley (1/250,000 or I inch to 4 mile) in 1919;\textsuperscript{137} and Bolpur town level information from maps created by Hashim Amir Ali (I inch to I mile) in 1960.\textsuperscript{138}

\textsuperscript{135} Arthur Geddes, \textit{Au pays de Tagore. La civilisation rurale du Bengale occidental et ses facteurs géographiques} (Paris, France: Librairie Armand Colin, 1927).
\textsuperscript{136} National Atlas and Thematic Mapping Organisation (NATMO), Government of India.
\textsuperscript{137} L.S.S. O’Malley, \textit{Birbhum, Bengal District Gazetteers} (Calcutta, India: Govt. of West Bengal, 1910).
Figure 5: Map showing Śāntiniketan and its environs. Redrawn from Google Earth image Geo Eye 2011
Figure 6: Festivals round the year.

Figure 7: Map showing the relation of Śāntiniketan with other villages which are sites of festivals and jātrās (traveling theater).
The Hashim Ali survey provided some data in tabular forms which enumerated the location and duration of fairs that are held in the vicinity of the campus. It also provided information about the location of Sāntāl villages; youth camps; and artisans such as potters, lac workers, and cobblers. The information from these tables was used to create maps showing the interconnections between the university and the local community, and the fluidity of the boundaries of the campus. These maps serve to make explicit the futility of creating rigid administrative boundaries to define heritage landscape.

**Ethnographic Interviews**

To understand the ways in which landscape occupies a distinct and prominent place in the artists’ life style and work profile at Śāntiniketan, I interviewed students and teachers from two specific departments—Kalā-Bhavan (Department of Fine Arts) and Sangīt-Bhavan (Department of Performing Arts) at Viśva-Bhāratī University. The only two criteria for inclusion of a respondent in the interviews were that they incorporate landscape in their artistic endeavors, and that they volunteer.

The interview questions were open-ended and semi-structured and the interview itself was intended to be more conversational than interrogative. For this reason, the interview was divided into three sections—the first was designed to develop a certain degree of familiarity between the participant and the investigator and generate a congenial environment for conversation, second comprised the main body of questions which addresses the participants’ sensorial engagement with the landscape and the last section was an informal exchange of opinions and closing conversation. The interview was designed around the following questions:

**Section 1:**

1. How long have you been associated with Śāntiniketan?
2. When did you first come here?

3. What prompted you to come here?

4. What role has Śāntiniketan played in your life prior to your coming here?

5. What does it mean to you to be in Śāntiniketan?

6. How does your experience of being at Śāntiniketan relate with seasons, time, people?

7. Where are the places that you usually visit located?

8. Please show the places you visit on the map.

9. Any special place you like to visit more often?

Section 2: Questions to assess the participants’ perception of landscape:

1. Please describe those places?

2. What do you do in those places?

3. How much time do you spend there?

4. Is there a relation between the time of the day or seasons and your association with those places? Do you visit those places at any particular time of the day/year. When and why?

5. In what ways do you associate yourself with those places?

6. Have the associations with those places changed over time?

7. Can you describe how?

Auditory

1. Can you describe the sounds in Śāntiniketan?

2. Do the sounds evoke any past memories?

3. What are those memories?
4. Do any sounds inspire you in any creative manner? What are those sounds and how do they inspire you?

Olfactory

1. Can you describe the smells in Śāntiniketan?
2. Do the smells evoke any past images?
3. Does the image contain places, persons or events associated with it?

Holistic experience of landscape

1. Do you experience this place as part of a memory of some other place?
2. Please describe your experience of being in this place?
3. Have you expressed the experience of being in landscape? In what way has it informed what you do? Poem, painting, dance?
4. If so, please describe the artistic creation.
5. Please describe what was your inspiration in the artistic creation from the landscape.

Section 3: Extended set of questions to seek participants’ opinions about the consequences of World Heritage status of the site:

1. Śāntiniketan is being nominated as a world heritage site, what do you foresee the potentials and constraints of this?
2. If it is a world heritage site, how is that going to affect your association with the place?
3. How do you wish to engage with a heritage site?
I took notes during each interview after acquiring respondent consent. The interview was conducted at a place on campus comfortable for the respondent. The highlights from these interviews are presented in Chapter 4 of this document.

**Performative Research**

As part of the practice-based research method, my dissertation uses two strategies to represent and interpret embodied knowledge of landscape. The first involves *rhythmanalysis*, a method developed by sociologist Henri Lefebvre. In undertaking research, the rhythmanalyst uses his or her own bodily rhythms as a reference through which to experience and evaluate landscape as a system of rhythms. Part of my research has involved engaging dancers with the landscape of Śāntiniketan, generating non-stylized movements as they respond to available sounds, textures, wind, and humidity, which I register using a digital video camera. The second strategy theorizes the video camera as an independent body with embodied vision. For that work, I conducted two movement workshops at Śantiniketan with dancers from Viśva-Bharati University. A video camera followed the dancers’ movements in a semi-choreographed work, with the dancers emulating landscape elements in stylized gestures. From the resulting footage, I created a short movie to demonstrate embodied knowledge. The movie is attached as a digital link and mentioned in Appendix A of this document.

This method further acknowledges the corporeal body as a site upon which personal experience becomes deposited as embodied knowledge. To gain access to that knowledge, the video camera is theorized as an embodied vision engaging with the experiencing bodies.

139 Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*. 
Rhythmanalysis

Lefebvre’s *Rhythmanalysis*, relies upon the fact that our bodily rhythms inhabit us and are embodied in our actions. To be a rhythmanalyst, we must not only live our bodily rhythms, but also be able to distance ourselves from them to analyze them. The rhythmanalyst superimposes, synchronizes, or interacts with the rhythms of the immediate in its present moment, all the while integrating the memories of other moments and all times. According to Lefebvre, the rhythmanalyst draws on “his breathing, the circulation of his blood, the beating of his heart and the delivery of his or her speech as landmarks, without privileging any one of these senses, raised by him in the perception of rhythms, to the detriment of any other. He thinks with his body not in the abstract, but in lived temporality.”

Prior to the two movement workshops at Śāntiniketan, I had conducted a collaborative movement workshop at Meadowbrook Park in Urbana, Illinois, with the intention of engaging with the landscape as a rhythmanalyst. My application of rhythmanalysis in that workshop involved engaging dancers with the landscape, generating non-stylized movements as they respond to available sounds, textures, wind, and humidity, which I registered using a video camera. Subsequently the video footage was edited to a sharable video of varying lengths—1 minute long, 3 minutes long, and 5 minutes long. My research treated the process of editing the video footage as a performative process that located patterns and frequency of repetition in the dancers’ movements and gestures. The editing window on the computer screen is comparable to a visual rhythm, which affected the way in which the clips were chosen or trimmed to tell a rhythmic story. The research method treated engaging with the visual patterns emerging due to

140 Ibid., 21.
the editing process on the editing software screen as an immersive strategy, which makes visible the active engagement of the researcher in the embodied-knowledge creation process.

**Present-ing Śāntiniketan**

Drawing upon the experience from the movement workshop at Meadowbrook Park and upon the archival research, I conducted a movement workshop at Śāntiniketan. The participants from the Sangīt-Bhavan study either Manipuri or Kathakali dance styles, which are narrative based. Participants from the Kalā-Bhavan include painters, sculptors, and installation artists exploring site-specificity in their works. Khoāi was selected as the site of performance based on the fact that each of the participants held some personal connections with this place. The ideal site would have been the Viśva-Bhāratī campus because that’s where that the artists spend most of their time working, designing performances or practicing. But as video photography is not allowed [even by permission] on campus, Khoāi became the second choice.

141 The Śāntiniketan landscape is characterized by red soil along the River Kopāi, which has weathered into ravines. Khoāi was formed in tracts of red earth over which the run of monsoon floodwater was so sharp that ravine-like formations got created. This gives the site an appearance of microcosms of hill ranges carved out of reddish leached, laterized and gravelly soil in which deep gullies are created by floodwater naturally draining towards the Kopāi River basin. Derived from the Sanskrit kshaya, meaning denuded lands Khoāi is considered a rare phenomenon, but contributes superlatively to the Śāntiniketan landscape. Its unique presence in the landscape reflects powerfully in cultural, artistic and literary world related to Śāntiniketan.
Figure 8: Screen shot of the video editing process
There were two reasons for selecting artists as potential participants in the workshop. Firstly, as Śāntiniketan is essentially a university town conceived by Rabindranath Tagore to bring together artists from various cultural backgrounds to form a cultural whole, the artists form an inherent component of Śāntiniketan community actively engaged in shaping the place. They come here only for education and hence belong to this place only as long as they are physically here. Besides, belonging to other places, they tend to bring their cultural specificity to the site making the site multi-layered and heterogeneous. Secondly, performing and visual artists at Viśva-Bhāratī University are trained to become aware of their body and their expertise in movement suited the requirement of the project.

The initial part of the process involved multiple conversations spanning hours—getting to know each other and the respective artistic inclinations. We conversed about the history of geological formation and subsequent transformation of the site. The participants explored the presence of material landscape elements that render this place unique in terms of its physical characteristics. The elements identified included assorted compositions of soil that varied from sticky laterite to lumpy clay to brittle sand. The next stage was to look for the paths that the past monsoon water took as it eroded the soil away giving this place a quality of being ever transient. It was summer time and monsoon had yet to come, hence the paths had dried up.

A retrospective workshop was conducted during winter 2012-2013, when there were faint traces of monsoon water which had flowed through this place just a couple of months back. In this workshop, the participants from the previous workshop were invited to view the edited footage of the previous workshop and create improvisational pieces with that viewing in mind. The video installation was done at the site of the performance itself. The original idea was to project the moving image on the Khoāi walls itself, but, due to technical difficulties,
compromise was made and everyone watched the video as a group on the computer screen itself, while a camera documented the process. In the final video, the events unfold as the audience watches the participants watch themselves engage with the site. The one who gazes is the one who is being gazed at. This is adding another layer of frame to disrupt what would be conventional insider-outsider dynamics within a museum-like setting.

Rhythmanalysis is a constant negotiation between immediacy and memory. During the second workshop—as during that at Meadowbrook Park—the participants were asked to record their memory of experience while moving and while watching the others move. To externalize their embodied experience, the participants remembered and documented the process of their corporeal engagement using drawn lines in colors of their own preference. The intensity and length of the lines indicated the intensity and duration of engagement. They were asked to remember as much as possible of the external world in terms of their awareness of the presence of dust, heat, wind, clay, sounds, smells, textures (in terms of presence or absence of voids), topography (in terms of ascent or descent), erosion, ruination, renewal. They were also asked to remember as much as possible of their personal or internal experience of the place in terms of memory, dreams, “I,” “other,” nostalgia, camera, narrative (text), structural memory (music/dance education).
Figure 9: An example of workshop response
Tracing Śāntiniketan

The video is titled “Tracings…” Tracing suggests the act of following, discovering and unfolding. This is what this video does as it follows the movements and gestures of a body emulating the ecological history of the place. The very nature of a tracing is to create another layer over what it traces. Thus the name suggests a process by which landscape also gets re-created in the very act of representing it. In “Tracings…,” the hands trace textures of a sandy formation and eyes trace the hands’ paths, feet trace undulations of a clayey ridge as they tread and the camera traces their journey. The hands trace the memories in rhythmic lines that trace the sounds playing off the camera-frame. The soil leaves traces of itself on the paper letting a part of itself to go away. The moving picture playing on the screen traces the place which contains it.

The participants were given the following choreography instructions:

Find your own personal space in the area and adapt your body to the space—choreograph movements that suggest being in and being of the place. Become aware of other bodies around you—the other participants and the camera. Choreograph movements that suggest being in and of the space, but here the space is now the one that includes the other bodies. Tell a story as a group or in pairs about this place by emulating the landscape elements.

Staging was done with the sole purpose of achieving a cinematic exaggeration of the events unfolding during the course of the workshop. This meant allowing frames to be defined by the natural topographic qualities of the site, for example the edges of ravines formed edges of the frame. The frame was either parallel to or perpendicular to the most distinct contour of the site, thus allowing the camera to orientate/align itself with the site. The camera was mostly stationary. When the camera was mobile, it was allowed to orientate/align with the movements of the other body which it was tracing. Also, to achieve a heightened cinematic experience late afternoons and early mornings were the chosen times of the shooting process.
The music heard in the final edited version of the video is not what the dancers heard during the process. This adds another layer of complexity to the process and re-iterates the active presence of the filmmaker.

**Defining the corporeal body**

The landscape setting is a color palette, a textured deposition of multiple soils, a tracery of emerging and disappearing light, a container resonating sounds from far off and nearby. The participants alternatively immerse in and distance themselves from the landscape experience. Their bodies are deposits of a shared cultural memory—represented in their stylized gestures and the rhythms to which they move while telling a story. Sometimes, they move in a rhythm as if they are recalling a song they learnt long back. Each individual body embodies landscape differently and presents it as an individual reflection. The research participants engage through semi-choreographed emulative and interpretive movements that show their bodies’ landscape setting and the meanings it holds for them. Movements serve to express the continual process of emergence and ruination, erosions and renewals, and thus tell a story of landscape history. The camera is drawn towards the hands as they touch and traverse the rugged texture of the Khoāi.

The choice of traditional costumes serves to indicate a social and political status and also appropriateness (a structure) to the dance that otherwise becomes fluid because of the setting. The participants have been trained to perform in a theater with a pre-choreographed, strict narrative for a fixed audience. Their stylized movements are a product of their training in a specific classical dance-form, which is either Manipuri or Kathakali. The two dance forms are very distinct in their movements, but that distinction is less discernible in the footage. In this case, the performance setting is fluid, their audience is the moving camera and other participants and the narrative is being determined in the very act of its creation. Hence the only thing that
anchors them to a structure and renders them with a cultural identity, specific to Śāntiniketan, is the clothing.

**Camera: The essential corporeal body**

Closeness of camera suggests the presence of my body in reference to their body and camera replicating the movement of their body; my body empathizing with them. In order to reference spectators’ emotional participation with a film, Film theorist Adriano D’Aloia cites Albert Michotte’s definition of empathy:

> When we observe what someone else is doing and we ourselves live it in some sense, rather than just understand it at an intellectual level.  

This may present the camera as a mere extension device attached to the perceiving body. In fact, the camera is the indispensable, essential performer in this process of landscape creation. Landscape, here, is known only in its contact with the body. If camera is that body, it is indispensable for sharing the knowledge it thus embodies. Hence, it is essential to recognize the presence of camera. The camera here is not used as a recording or a documentation device. Instead, it is instrumental in establishing a constituted view point of heritage. During the course of constituting heritage it projects landscape as performative. Stressing the camera’s capability for close-ups, novelist and essayist Italo Calvino describes the camera as having its own “working method that enables it to isolate a single vastly enlarged detail […] in comparison with the rest.”

142 Adriano D’Aloia, “Edith Stein to the Movies. Empathy as Film Theory,” in *In the Very Beginning, at the Very End. Film Theories in Perspective*, eds. F. Casetti, J. Gaines, and V. C. Re (Udine, Italy: Forum, 2010), 493.

Sharing the knowledge of corporeal bodies

The video is a compilation of what the camera “sees,” “knows,” and “shares” as it follows the semi-choreographed movements of performance artists engaging in embodied exploration of the landscape of Šonā-jhurī forest at Khoāi in Śāntiniketan. The video also allows its audience to partake of the camera’s lived-experience as it unfolds the temporal landscape. The presence, immediacy, and mobility of multiple bodies articulate landscape as capable of morphing into multiple planes of engagement that exist only as long as the duration of engagement. The video presents and represents the landscape as well as representations of the landscape. It also presents the landscape in the act of representing itself. It presents the landscape to exist, for its audience, as always in the act of becoming and hence, as always performative. The bodies in the video are visible as representing landscape, and they are simultaneously visible as being a part of landscape.

The camera serves as an embodied vision. By making the presence of the camera visible, the video represents the distinction between the material landscape encountered by a distant disembodied gaze and that described through mobile engagement of the participants. The mobility of the participants articulates a constant shifting plane of engagement, which is contained by the landscape and which never exceeds it. In the final video, we see a participant tracing the texture of the soil with the intention of replicating it on his drawing book, but he soon realizes that the soil is brittle and falls on the notebook despite his efforts to contain it in his hands. Thus, we see landscape being independent of its representation, having a will of its own.

Outcomes of the performative research method

The exercise of making the video “Tracings…” addresses three issues: landscape literacy, heritage constitution, and heritage presentation. We have seen that Michel Conan proposes
phenomenological inquiry as necessary to landscape literacy and thus to facilitating design contributions. He critiques behavioral approaches of landscape inquiry, those that rely heavily on analytical methods based in the materiality of landscape, and urges development of a phenomenological methodology that involves conceiving experience in terms of intentionality (individual); intersubjectivity (individual in relation to culture); or an aesthetic response to artistic innovation. Addressing Conan’s concern, videos such as “Tracings…” are useful in exploring experience in motion as a design parameter, thus highlighting the significance of the camera as an essential tool for a phenomenological inquiry of landscape.

We have also seen that Heritage is associated with archivability and historicity. This video has the potential or rather an imminent danger of being passed off as archival material representing cultural practices in a specific landscape and hence representing heritage. In fact, the video does not claim to document a specific cultural practice and, thus, by its very existence, forges heritage. The possibility that this video can construct heritage raises questions about the validity of archival material as the sole determinant of heritage value.

To present a heritage site in a comprehensive manner to its users and visitors, heritage presentation practices call for a design sensibility that is inclusive of the users’ subjectivity and multiplicity. At the same time, landscape reshapes the world because of its eidetic content, i.e., its capacity to contain and express ideas and so engage users in a heightened experience in the present moment. Thus heritage practices that assume landscape to be passive need to go beyond their intention to either re-create or to preserve the material landscape. Drawing upon James Corner’s argument that landscape is an activity of innovative practice which engages the imaginary with the built, and that the two are relevant together, “Tracings…” presents landscape

as both venue and material for recovery in terms of both retrieval of memory and enrichment of
time and place.\textsuperscript{145} Hence, this video is meant to address a design sensibility for presentation of
heritage sites that acknowledges the multiplicity of landscape experiences and acknowledges
landscape as active.

**Body is a vehicle of landscape-creation**

Not only the film, but the body is a vehicle for landscape creation. Christopher Tilley has
recently argued that any imagery is perceived first and foremost through the flesh to influence
the embodied mind.\textsuperscript{146} The process of sensing through the fingers, ears, nose or eyes actively
constitutes the mute significance of that imagery. The emerging bodily movements and gestures
are immediate and do not require any translation in terms of either thoughts or meanings. The
meaning derived is thus visceral, working through the muscles and ligaments, through physical
actions and postures.

Ahmed argues that the body haunts and inhabits space in order to interpret it.\textsuperscript{147} The body
haunts space in the way that it moves with a will. As the body moves, the immediate objects
available to it change. Thus the body inhabits space by continuously negotiating between what is
familiar and what is unfamiliar, creating new familiarities. Although familiarity helps the body to
become oriented, it is in getting lost that the process of orientation becomes even more
discernible. Being lost is also a way of inhabiting space by registering the presence of an
unfamiliar entity and subsequently change that unfamiliarity to a familiarity.

\textsuperscript{145} Corner, “Recovering Landscape as a Critical Cultural Practice,” 15.
\textsuperscript{146} Tilley, “Body and Image: A Phenomenological Perspective,” 20.
\textsuperscript{147} Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 29.
The physical features of the space, such as air, smells, or sounds accumulate like points to create lines, or accumulate lines to create new textures on the surface of the skin. Such spaces create an impression of the unfamiliar on the body and thus reshape the body surface. Besides the physical features it could so be the social characteristics of the space, defined by other bodies already inhabiting that space. Their familiarity or unfamiliarity is also going to affect the shape our body takes. Thus, landscape and body are intertwined. Body’s presence creates landscape and landscape affects body’s orientation which in turn will again affect the landscape. This shows that removing body removes knowledge of space, thereby stripping it off its meaning.

Ahmed also describes histories of the body as a habitus, which integrates past experiences through perceptions and actions. What bodies do are effects of histories, but history disappears in the moment of its enactment. The changing present continuously requires new interpretations of what has taken place and so the past is unstable and unrecoverable. It can only be experienced in the present. The idea inverts the conventional forms of interpretation of heritage sites, where the focus is on remembering the original moment of creation. But as we have seen that the body acquires history through sedimentation and not through the “originary,” so being on the site is also an act of sedimentation.

**Empathy is a vehicle of corporeal knowledge**

Tagore’s aesthetic ideals of engaging with the world in bodily terms resonate with phenomenology which considers the world and the body as entwined and emergent. According to Tagore, to become self-aware one orientates oneself in time and space. Phenomenologists describe this process as referencing to one’s “intentionality.” One of the ways to gain access to the “other’s” individual corporeal experience is through “empathy.” Empathy refers to the experience of something from the other's viewpoint, without distinguishing the self from the
other. It is the experience “my body over there.” Husserl’s assistant, Edith Stein, proposed a phenomenology of the empathetic act. For her, the empathetic act differed in essence, genesis and structure from other acts such as judgment (which is knowledge based), outer perception (which is distance based), feeling of oneness (which is I versus other based). Stein’s position on empathy has been described as—Einfühlung, or an “individual and internal feeling of sharing otherness.” For Tagore, there is always an inherent empathy, karunā, towards the infinitude of the world which finds its expression within our finite form, the human body.

The process by which I treat the video camera as an embodied vision, allows it to exceed its role as mere recorder and to empathize with the “present” bodies in order to share their corporeal experiences with those that are not present. The choice of video camera as a tool of embodied inquiry has emerged from the cinematic discourse (especially Vivian Sobchak, and Abbas Kiarostami) that acknowledges the active role of the viewer (non-present body) who, by immersing in viewing the video as it unfolds, also participates in the lived-experience of temporality.

While describing the advantage of a motion picture over a still picture film theorist Vivian Sobchak remarks,

> If the photograph is a “hole” in temporality and announces a vacancy, then the motion picture in its motion sufficiently fills up that vacancy and inaugurates a fullness. The images of a film exist in the world as a temporal flow, within finitude and situation. [The film] does not transcend our lived-experience of temporality, but rather that it seems to partake of it, to share it [, it] exists for us as always in the act of becoming.

Furthermore, according to Sobchak, a film is both an “objective existence” for its spectators, as well has its own being. Thus,

[S]pace in the film becomes the *situation* of an existence, and objects and landscapes take on a thickness and substantiality, an always emerging meaning that is chosen in the diacritical marking of movement (whether cinematographic or editorial). The film, then, offers us the existential actualization of meaning, not just the structure and potential for its being. Its significance is constituted in its emergence and existence to a world that is encountered through an active and embodied gaze that shares the materiality of the world and inscribes temporality as the concrete spatiality of its situation. Thus, although it is a favored description, there is no such abstraction as *point of view* in the cinema; rather, there is a specific and mobile engagement of embodied and enworlded subjects/objects whose visual/visible activity prospects and articulates a *shifting field of vision* from a world that always exceeds it.\(^\text{150}\)

Sobchak too invokes empathy when she argues, “we do not experience any movie only through our eyes. We see and comprehend and feel films with our entire bodily being, informed by the full history and carnal knowledge of our acculturated [changing due to exposure to various cultures] sensorium.”\(^\text{151}\)

**Relevance of this method to heritage discourse**

In discourses related to heritage management, let’s imagine a situation in which all forms of visitor movement are choreographed before-hand, every path has a designated direction, every destination has a pre-defined narrative; in such a scenario the body loses its agency in becoming familiar with the site. The site is always already familiar, even before the arrival, or even before the directions are taken. Thus, the value which is added on the site due to non-familiarity or by losing way never happens. Bodies stop taking decisions because they don’t have to, and experiences tend to lose their difference. This gets problematic as it leads to cultural homogenization of heritage sites and the erasure of active meaning.

\(\text{150} \) Sobchack, “Intentionality, Embodiment, and Movement,” 61-62.
The target audience for “Tracings…” is the cultural heritage preservationist. Heritage management strategies that focus on mediation of heritage sites in terms of guided tours and choreographed visitor paths want to contribute to the tourists’ and visitors’ knowledge but in actuality, these strategies undermine the capability both of the corporeal body to interpret the site and of the site to hold multiple meanings. This video is a reproduction of something that has never existed, not a representation but a simulacrum, and so as material evidence it produces entirely new materials that we attach to a site and call heritage. Yet, the video is a vital way of accessing heritage as something which is experienced and known in an unmediated way because of the presence and proximity of the corporeal body. Here, the definition of heritage accommodates its fragility and temporality, highlighting that the discourse of heritage practice pushes itself to go beyond the object-based methodology that sought merely to document and preserve.

Conventional heritage practices that are embedded in object-based methodology focus on documentation and preservation. They aim to foster knowledge-building for the visitors through mediated modes such as guided tours. When the site is construed that way, it is always familiar, homogenizing individual experiences and prompting a cultural neutralization of the site itself. However, this video highlights the problems of that conventional practice by re-inforcing it. Parts of this video have the danger of being read as a documentation of a dance form practiced in a particular landscape. If it finds its way into the archive, it might pass off as material evidence of some heritage. Thus, the possibility that this video can fabricate heritage raises questions about the validity of archiving as the sole means of heritage constitution. The vitality of this work lies in its ability to deliver heritage as something which is experienced and known in an unmediated way, treating history as habitus, bringing the present and the presence center stage to
landscape inquiry. It thus attempts to address the recent priorities emerging amongst international heritage agencies such as ICOMOS and UNESCO.

I will conclude by posing a few self-reflective questions, which are relevant to this and similar researches. Firstly, there has always been an obsession for “information” and the validity of something to exist only if there is a proof in some form, i.e. someone has witnessed it and documented it to make known to others. For example, the angel in Wim Wenders’ film *Faraway, So Close!* (1993) who becomes human and feels the hunger and pain and isolation that every human being feels, yet he does not exist. Because he does not even have a name, let alone a passport. Landscape, here, is known fundamentally through its contact with the body, and the body is where the experience is deposited. Then, is this process confirming to archivability as well, which gives the subject an already assumed superior status of being the one who “looks?”

Secondly, the question remains if this process has been successful in erasing the gap between insider and outsider? Is everyone who comes in contact with the site an insider, irrespective of cultural specificity and is it in this proximity that the site acquires new meaning? To make the third point, I will cite *Shirin* (2008) by the Persian film maker Abbas Kiarostami. In his film, the audience Kiarostami’s film (us) watches only the changing facial expressions of women who are supposedly watching a movie in a theater. We hears only the soundtrack of the movie and learn the tragic story of Shirin without ever seeing her. We know Shirin’s story only in the way it is available to us through the women’s changing facial expressions, which are apparently responding to the soundtrack. Significantly, the actresses were instructed to imagine and project their own love stories onto—in other words, to empathize with—three moving dots on a vacant screen as the camera shot their expressions. The absence of the signified in Shirin’s story is crucial because it shifts from a specific to a universal significance. In the movie it is known only
through the empathy of women belonging to various nationalities. This leads us back to the question of fabrication as a form of presentation—“If fabrication is some form of truth” then how much can be fabricated to constitute and thus present heritage?
Chapter 4: Defining the embodied Śāntiniketan

Śāntiniketan

My research question and argument are explored through close study of a specific situation: Śāntiniketan, India. As India’s 2010 nomination to UNESCO’s World Heritage List, Śāntiniketan is currently under consideration for that designation, and the role of subjective experience in shaping its character makes this an ideal moment to reassess the process through which it and other sites are nominated and evaluated. Śāntiniketan is a university town set within a landscape of mangroves, laterite (i.e., clayey) soil, rice paddies, and small ravines. In 1922, the poet, musician, and painter Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), laureate of the Nobel Prize in Literature (1913), established Viśva-Bhāratī University at Śāntiniketan in order to promote performing and visual arts. As a modern educator, Tagore prioritized individual experience over objective knowledge of the external world and shaped both a method of learning and a curriculum based on being-in-the-landscape. In keeping with that priority, the physical aspect of the university campus comprises informal open-air classrooms. Students were also encouraged to engage with the larger landscape of Śāntiniketan in their studies and creative work.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first part of the chapter describes the site of Śāntiniketan as it is known through historical documents, archival collections at Rabindra-Bhavan, the local library at Śāntiniketan, and also descriptions in the World Heritage nomination dossier. This description frames an objective knowledge about the site primarily through a linearly progressive historical narrative about it. It is also useful in familiarizing the reader of this document with the site. The second part of the chapter peels away the layers of this objective presentation to reveal how a very different set of individual narratives and associations are embedded in the creation of a shared knowledge of this site. The intention of this two-part
approach to how the site is “known” is to make a case for a definition of heritage landscapes that exceeds the material archive (which, I will argue, is always insufficient) and calls for an approach that is individual, on-going, and experiential in the most basic sense.

Śāntiniketan landscape: known as…

the legacy of Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore (7 May 1861-7 August 1941) was a poet, artist, educator, philosopher and humanitarian. Even though he often introduced himself as “Āmi Kobi,” or “I’m a poet,” he contributed extensively to various genres of writing, such as novels, short stories, plays, dance-dramas and essays. He composed roughly 2,230 songs, two of which – Jana Gana Mana and Amar Šonar Bangla – later became the national anthems for India and Bangladesh respectively. His writings address both political and personal topics. He wrote in a lyrical style and thus considerably modernized Bengali literature and music, which until then were bound by rigid classical forms. Because of this modernization of style, his songs and poems were meaningful to the entire social spectrum of Bengal, from the poor boatman toiling hard, rowing people across the wide rivers to earn a living, or a wealthy landlord. Each one related to the everyday events and transitory emotions captured enticingly by Tagore in his songs. A compilation of his poems, Gitānjalī (London, UK: Macmillan, 1913), soon gained much recognition within the literary world in Europe. In 1913 he became the first non-European to receive the Nobel Prize for literature. To indulge his creative urge, he took to painting at the age of sixty. He visited more than thirty countries on five continents between 1878 and 1932, familiarizing the rest of the world with the Indian culture and soon became a much recognized voice. In 1915, he was knighted by the George V, King of the United Kingdom and Emperor of
India, but he later renounced the knighthood as a protest against the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre.152

Tagore was born in a well-known, wealthy family in Kolkata. His father, Maharishi Debendranath Tagore, was a religious reformer and scholar. The Tagores were pioneers of the Bengal Renaissance, a movement committed to blending traditional Indian culture with Western ideas. His brothers and sisters were poets, musicians, playwrights, and novelists. The family mansion at Jorahanko was a culturally and politically stimulating milieu. While growing up, Tagore was exposed to a cosmopolitan environment at home. His family members engaged in discussions about world literature as well as Bengali literature and music. “There, Goethe was read in German, De Maupassant in French, Sakuntalā in Sanskrit, Macbeth in English.”153

Tagore strongly advocated an educational and aesthetic ideal that promoted nurturing of emotion and personality as against merely acquiring knowledge. As a child, he rejected classroom schooling, preferring instead to explore the landscape. When he was twelve, his father took him to Śantiniketan.154 There, his father taught him Sanskrit and astronomy. After the lessons were over, Tagore was free to roam among the fields and forests. Later, he was sent to University College London to qualify for the Indian Civil Service, but he returned after eighteen months without completing his education. Despite his wariness about classroom education, he returned with strong convictions about the universality of human nature across the world and a realization about the futility of human divisions caused by superfluous barriers such as national

152 British troops killed 1,500 Indians, including women and children, peacefully congregating to protest against British Imperialism and also to celebrate the spring harvest festival of Baisakhi.
154 Debendranath established an Āśram, at Santiniketan, in 1863 for meditation purposes.
Figure 10: Rabindranath Tagore
Source: Bichitra Bhavan Audio Visual Archive Ref Num: F-448->10982 R
boundaries and ethnic specificities. In 1901, he established *Bolpur Brahmachārya Āśram* at Śāntiniketan, a residential school on the old pattern of Indian āśram. The idea of āśram evolved into an idea of a university and, in 1921, he established *Viśva-Bhāratī* or World University, dedicated to promoting performing and visual arts.

**an administrative and a geographic entity**

Śāntiniketan is 110 miles to the north of Kolkata, India. It falls in the Bīrbhūm district of West Bengal state. It is flanked by Prāntik town on the north and Bolpur town on the south. The larger region is defined by the Kopāi River on the north and the Ajoī River on the south. Śāntiniketan merges into vast plains of rice paddies along its edges.

![Figure 11: Kopai River](image)

The place is recognizable in its distinctive components: the āśram or residential school, *Uttarāyan* or the residential complex, and Viśva-Bhāratī. One mile west of Śāntiniketan is Surul village, where *Palli-Samgathan Vibhāg* or the Institute of Rural Reconstruction was established. It is now known as *Śrīniketan* and falls under the purview of Viśva-Bhāratī.
Figure 12: Geographical characteristics of Birbhum. Redrawn from NATMO Maps.
Figure 13: Map of Śāntiniketan. Redrawn from Google Earth image Geo Eye 2011
The Āśram

The word Śāntiniketan translates roughly from Bengali to mean “where peace resides.”

The place got that name from a small meditation house built there and named thus by Tagore’s father, Maharishi Debendranath, in 1881. Until then, it was a barren piece of land owned by Bābu Śitikānta Sinhā, the zamindār (feudal land owner) of Raipur. In 1862, the Sinhā family gifted this land to Debendranath, who was so captivated by the barrenness and peacefulness there that it became his favorite meditation spot. He found richness in its seeming emptiness and decided to establish there an āśram for small children. With this intention, he bought a vast amount of surrounding land from the zamindārs of Tāltore and Surul and created the Śāntiniketan Trust in 1863. The Deed of Trust had a provision to establish a school and develop an open space in which to hold annual fairs where the villagers from surrounding areas could sell their produce.

As a child, Tagore would often accompany his father to Śāntiniketan. Apart from the occasional brushwood, there were two chatīm (Alstonia scholaris) trees under which his father would meditate. This desolate look of the landscape setting appeared almost austere to him. The childhood visits to Śāntiniketan provided him with an unbridled opportunity to experience and communicate with the landscape setting. He recalled much later in a memoir, My Reminiscences,

155 This piece of land was known as Bhubandānga, named after Bhuban Sinhā, a member of the zamindār family. The area south of campus still retains the name.
156 The present day Purbapalli was bought from the zamindārs of Tāltore.
In the hollows of the sandy soil the rain water had ploughed deep furrows, carving out miniature mountain ranges full of red gravel and pebbles of various shapes through which ran tiny streams, revealing the geography. I was the Livingstone of this undiscovered land which looked as if seen through the wrong end of a telescope. Everything there, the dwarfed date palms, the scrubby wild plums and the stunted jambolans, was in keeping with the miniature mountain ranges, the little rivulet and the tiny fish I had discovered.\textsuperscript{157}

Figure 14: The barrenness that appealed to Tagore
Source: Bichitra Bhavan Audio Visual Archive Ref Num: F-454-11199 S

Tagore eventually realized his father’s wish by establishing the residential school, \textit{Bolpur Brahmachārya Āśram} (later called \textit{Pātha-Bhavan}, which means “center for learning”). The school started functioning formally on December 22, 1901 with only five students enrolled. Tagore nurtured there a model of education aimed at “cultivation of feeling” as opposed to education of intellect. In keeping with his education ideology, he initiated a massive effort to green the place. The top-layer of gritty dry soil was removed and filled with rich soil brought

\textsuperscript{157} Rabindranath Tagore, \textit{My Reminiscences} (New York, NY: Macmillan 1962), 82.
from outside, and trees were planted. The once barren landscape started to be transformed into a carefully distributed composition of *amloki* (Phyllanthus emblica) groves, *śephālī* (Nyctonthes arboristris) groves, *āmrā* (Mangifera indica) *kunj* (garden), *mādhobī* (Hiptage benghalensis) *kunj*, palm trees, and coconut trees. Several *sāl* (Shorea robusta) trees were planted, marking the well-known *Sālbhitī* (*Sāl Avenue*) which defined the main entrance to the campus. Classes were open-air and organized informally under shady trees within these groves and gardens. Their semicircular form was either defined specifically by low-height brick parapets or marked off casually by red-gravel paving. The alfresco quality of the classrooms allowed for an uncontained interaction between “inside” and “outside,” with each contributing a distinctive quality to the landscape.

Figure 15: Upāsanā Ghar (house for worship)
Source: Bichitra Bhavan Audio Visual Archive Ref Num: F-447B-11222 H
Figure 16: Sālbhitī
Source: Bichitra Bhavan Audio Visual Archive Ref Num: AL-22B->4953A S
Figure 17: Ghantālā
Figure 18: Open air classroom

Figure 19: Open air classroom
Other structures appeared at various periods in the evolution of Śāntiniketan. The first to be built were the Śāntiniketan Griha (Śāntiniketan house) and the Upāsanā Ghar (house for worship), the latter being a beautiful, stained glass temple where worship is non-denominational. Later, Tagore built Natun-Bāri (new house) for his family and Dehāli (threshold) where he lived for a while himself. Other structures include Dināntikā, an octagonal two-storied structure originally used as a tea-house; Tāladhwaj, a round mud hut with a thatched roof built around a tāl tree (toddy palm) with part of its trunk and its huge palm leaves stretching out over the top; Kālo Bārī (black house), a mud structure with coal tar finish and sculpture panels; Māstermoshāī studio, a single storied structure built for Nandanlal Bose, the first principal of Kalā-Bhavan; Caitī, a small structure made of mud and coal-tar, planned by Nandalal Bose and Surendranath Kar to showcase newly created works of art every few days; and Ghantātālā, a pavilion with a bronze bell hanging to regulate the classes and other events held during the day.

Figure 20: Tāladhwaj
Source: Bichitra Bhavan Audio Visual Archive
Ref Num: F-290B->2934 S

Figure 21: Chatīmtalā
Source: Bichitra Bhavan Audio Visual Archive
Ref Num: F-447B->11223 H
Figure 22: Āśram Map. Redrawn from Google Earth image Geo Eye 2011
North of the āśram area described above is Uttarāyan (summer, also means when the sun travels towards the north), the ensemble of Tagore’s houses, built at various moments over a period of two decades from 1919-1941. Most of the houses have poetic names that reflect either projects that the poet immersed in at the time of construction or his artistic temperament at that time, which led him to create that house. They are symbols of his aesthetic enrichment even as the dwelling designs and language grew humbler with time: Konārk, Mrinmoyī (made of mud), Śyāmalī (dark woman), Punāschā (postscript), Udichī (north), Udāyan (garden), Guhā-ghar (cave-dwelling). Punāschā also means addition of a new chapter or a new dimension. Punāschā and Śyāmalī also share their names with the poems created by Tagore in 1932 and 1936 respectively.

Figure 23: Konārk
Konārk was the earliest dwelling that Tagore built. Originally constructed of mud, it was later rebuilt using bricks. This was meant to provide him seclusion from social life at Śāntiniketan whenever he wanted that. The house had a pillared verandah on its east side, which was often transformed into a stage for performing plays and dance-dramas composed by Tagore. For example, *Natir Pūja*, a well-known dance-drama by Tagore (1926) was first staged here.

There were no walls in the central large room; hence the surrounding landscape would become an effective backdrop to the performances. The verandah was also used for evening poetry recitation sessions. Mrinmoyī was a square patio, well shaded by creepers and trees with semi-covered seating pavilions on its corners.

*Figure 24: Šyāmalī*
Śyāmalī was an experiment in low-cost construction, which would also serve as a model house for villagers. The house had a distinctive anthropometric scale and was built of mud using earthen water-pots arranged inside plaster-casings to form its roof and walls. The earthen pots were meant to provide insulation and thus keep the interiors cool. The facade was treated with relief work, meticulously carried out by Kalā-Bhavan students under the guidance of Nandalal Bose. The east doorway was flanked on each side by relief Sāntāl imagery created by Ramkinkar Baij. Mahatma Gandhi and his wife Kasturba stayed as guests in this house. This was Tagore’s favorite house and he chose to spend the last few years of his life there.

Figure 25: Punāscha

Punāschā was built to the east of Śyāmalī. It was there that Tagore immersed himself in his painting pursuit. Thus, the name which means postscript, seems to point towards the new artistic search that Tagore began in his later years. The last house built for Tagore was Udichī. It was a double storied structure standing on stilts. A spacious room on the second floor is
approached by an external flight of steps. The structure underwent multiple changes. Later, the first floor was used exclusively for poetry classes.

Udāyan is the most imposing house in Uttarāyan complex and was designed by Tagore’s son for his own family.¹⁵⁸ The structure was initially a modest building that evolved into an elaborate structure, almost palatial in its scale. The Guhā-ghar, also known as Chitrabhānu (studio), was built for Pratima Devi, daughter-in-law of Rabindranath Tagore. The space was later converted into a workshop space for Rathindranath.

¹⁵⁸ Rathindranath Tagore was trained in Agricultural Science at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.
Rathindranath also designed the layout of the gardens at Uttarāyan. He brought trees from various parts of the world with climatic conditions similar to those at Sāntiniketan and planted them in Uttarāyan. Among those were the African Tulip (Spathodea campanulata) from Equatorial Africa, the Sausage tree (Kigelia africana) and Rhodesian Wistaria (Balusanthus speciosus) from tropical Africa, the Baobab tree (Adansonia digitata) from Sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean Trumpet tree (Tabebuia aura) from Latin America. The Pampā Lake is an artificial lake created inside a small garden designed on Japanese landscaping principles.

Also housed inside Uttarāyan is the Rabindra-Bhavan, which was established in 1942 as a library and archival collection specifically to maintain Tagore’s personal collection of books. The library has over 40,000 books, which include different editions of the poet’s writings,
translations in various languages, a rare pamphlet collection, journals in which the writings by Tagore first appeared, and newspaper clippings about Tagore some dating back to 1905.¹⁵⁹

![Udichī](image)

Figure 28: Udichī

Uttarāyan is now a museum complex, with a ticketed entry. All but one of the houses have been converted into museums showcasing Tagore’s lifestyle and history of the place. The only exception is Guhā-ghar, which houses the administrative office of Viśva-Bhāratī. The Rabindra-Bhavan, is now a reference library for scholars working on the life and works of Tagore.

¹⁵⁹ The library details are taken from the information provided on the official web page of Viśva-Bhāratī at http://www.visva-bharati.ac.in/Library/Contents/LibraryContents.htm?f=../Contents/RabindraBhavana.htm
Figure 29: Map of Uttarāyan complex. Redrawn from Google Earth image Geo Eye 2011
Viśva-Bhāratī

Śāntiniketan was continuously developed from 1901 to 1921. From 1913 onward, Tagore’s travels abroad brought him in contact with prominent philosophers and educators from various countries. His interactions with them convinced him that there was an urgent need for an educational model that discarded artificial boundaries such as nationhood and embraced universal human values. Thus, he soon began to enlarge the scope of Śāntiniketan from primary education only to include university level education aimed at building friendship among all nations. He founded the Viśva-Bhāratī in 1921; translated literally the name means “World University.” Tagore’s concept for Viśva-Bhāratī is expressed in its motto: Yatra Viśvam Bhavatyekanidam (“where the whole world can find a nest.”) Tagore conceived the university as becoming a center for culture exploring arts, language, humanities, and music from all over the world. The aim was “to realize in a common fellowship of study the meeting of the East and the West, and thus ultimately to strengthen the fundamental conditions of world peace through the establishment of free communication of ideas between the two hemispheres.”

160 As stated on the Viśva-Bharati official website: http://www.visva-bharati.ac.in/Heritage/Contents/HeritageContents.htm?f=.j/Contents/SantiniketanAims.htm
The university campus today comprises nearly 3000 hectares (nearly 7500 acres), bounded on the north by the Kopāi River, on the west by Ballavpur and Benuriā villages, on the south by Bāndhgorā village, and on the east by the Eastern Railway line. The campus houses institutes of Fine Arts, Kalā-Bhavan; Music, Sangīt-Bhavan; Hindi studies, Hindī-Bhavan; Sino Asian studies, Chīnā-Bhavan and the Center for Humanities, Vidyā-Bhavan. Besides the hostels and administrative buildings, canteens (addā) form an indispensable part of the landscape, marking the places where students gather for informal conversations over tea and snacks.

Tagore vehemently opposed the idea of examination in education. Because of that, his education model was not synchronous with the education system prevalent otherwise in India. Consequently, students from Śāntiniketan were finding it hard to be admitted to other institutions for further education. Following student demand in 1926, the school became affiliated with Calcutta University, and students could take the matriculation examination. In May 1951, Viśva-Bhāratī was declared a Central University under the University Grants Commission and “An
Institution of National Importance” by an Act of Parliament. It was granted the status of a unitary teaching and residential university. With that development, Viśva-Bhāratī started conferring degrees to its students.

Figure 31: Kālo-Barī

Figure 32: Māstermoshāi studio, redone in 2012
Figure 33: Addā
Palli-Samgathan Vibhāg

Tagore believed that an educational institution has a binding social responsibility and that the university must assume an active social role, so as to impact the lives of the people around it and not remain an isolated campus of cocooned intellectuals.

In every nation, education is intimately associated with the life of the people. For us, modern education [...] has not reached the farmer, the oil grinder, nor the potter. If ever a truly Indian university is established it must from the very beginning implement knowledge of economics, agriculture, health, medicine and of all other everyday science from the surrounding villages. Then alone can the school or university become the center of the country’s way of living. This school must practice agriculture, dairying and weaving using the best modern methods.161

In 1922, he set up the Palli-Samgathan Vibhāg (Institute of Rural Reconstruction) at Surul, one mile west of Śantiniketan, with Leonard Knight Elmhirst as its first Director and Rathindranath Tagore, (Rabindranath Tagore’s son. He was trained in Agricultural Science at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign) as Elmhirst’s associate.162 The objective was to facilitate and empower villages in becoming economically self-sustained communities. Emphasis was laid on integrating scientific developments with the traditional knowledge systems of each community. The institute was later renamed as Śrīniketan, which means “where grace resides.” Tagore’s belief that an institution holds a larger responsibility, that of inclusive development of the people it serves, is described best in his own words:

It must cultivate land, breed cattle, feed itself and its students; it must produce all necessaries, devising the best means and using the best materials, calling science to its aid. Such an institution must group round it all the neighboring villages, and vitally unite them with itself in all its economic endeavors.163

162 http://www.visva-bharati.ac.in/InstitutionsCentresSchools/Contents/InstitutionContents.htm?f=../Contents/PalliSamgathana.htm
a physical manifestation of the educational ideal of Tagore

The two campuses at Śāntiniketan and Śrīniketan can be viewed as spaces of resistance, both to normative education and to events that had affected Tagore’s own life. In his profoundly humanist worldview, Tagore was reacting to memories of trauma he had experienced in multiple forms throughout his life. His first reaction was against the colonial education model prevalent in India when he was growing up. It aimed at producing clerks to equip government offices and British businesses in India, for which reason, the Indian bourgeoisie, in its pursuit of prosperity, endorsed this education system. But the system was deeply flawed. It ignored basic objectives of education, such as nurturing creativity, freedom, and joy. It failed to develop inquisitive attitudes necessary for science and discouraged objective thinking among students. Students were kept unaware of their own country’s cultural heritage – as good colonial subjects – while at the same time their education was also unrelated to any developments outside India. Further, it divided the Indians into two classes: those who received this education and those who did not. The Śāntiniketan model rejected this Imperialist education system, which focused on education for livelihood. Instead, it aimed at personal fulfillment and self-improvement as a bigger goal.

Tagore’s second reaction was the result of coming into direct contact with the people of the villages for the first time. When Tagore was sent to take charge of the family estate on Śeliadāh in 1890, he listened to their songs, watched their dramas and participated in their festivals. But, despite his empathy, the power relations remained in place, so that the villagers came to him as they would come to a zamindār “like beggars, unable, seemingly to stand on their own feet as free and independent individuals.”164 This left a strong impression on his mind that,

in turn, proved instrumental in shaping his early ideas about education. He became committed to the idea that all individuals have the right to self-respect despite their social or economic status. Tagore realized that the villages were still practicing redundant cultivation methods, were being cheated by money lenders and were not able to sell their produce independently. For Tagore, the solution to transforming rural life lay in introducing education and co-operation. He wished not only “to rescue children from the frustrations he had suffered as a boy in the name of education; to cultivate and develop the arts of life—poetry, song, drama, movement in dance and design [but also] discover whether or not the Bengal villager could learn to stand upright upon his own sturdy feet and begin to solve at least some of his many problems for himself.”

His education ideal was to nurture a fully integrated, unified personality, and the curriculum at Śāntiniketan was therefore modeled on principles of sustainability and unconstrained exchange of human values and cultures. Tagore revived the ancient Indian model of tapoban, the forest dwelling of ancient India, interpreting it though an educational model aimed at “cultivation of feeling” (bodher tapasyā / sādhnā) as opposed to education of the senses and intellect. This was a residential model that focused on cultivating creative and critical faculties by knowing oneself in relation to the world. For Tagore the traditional tapoban model was “an inspiration for life, light and freedom.” He re-interpreted it to suit the present social context and developed a model that encouraged scientific inquiry, appreciated the interdependence of all existences, had active contact with the material world and because of that necessarily denied renunciation, self-mortification, and celibacy.

Being-in-landscape was a necessary aspect of this education model where equal emphasis was laid on mind’s enquiry and on learning through sensory encounter with landscape. This was achieved by creating an atmosphere to facilitate a “union of man and nature, not only through love but through active communication.” Classes were held in the open, a metaphor of freedom from the confines of spatial or ideological boundaries. Children sat on hand-woven mats beneath the trees, they were free to climb or run around those trees between classes. Nature walks and excursions were a part of the curriculum, and students learnt about natural phenomena, such as the life cycles of insects, birds, and plants, through active observation. Tagore designed, for the children, festivals especially based on seasonal variations. He made class schedules flexible to allow for changes in the weather. Every child was trained to develop

167 Tagore, “A Poet’s School,” 57.
his individual creativity and articulate his inner being through “lines and colors, sounds and movements.”

**Curriculum**

Tagore developed his curriculum by closely observing children’s movements. He was convinced that the function of the body was not merely to carry out vital actions, but also to express:

Poupee\(^{169}\) tries to speak to me with the whole of her body. Meeting me on the boat, she expressed her delight in the form of a dance of her own design. As she danced, her speech was through her whole body. Life is sweet, she wanted to say, the world is beautiful, but having as yet no language of words, her small mind, stirred to its depths, broke out into a complex movement of dance. Her whole body moved as if to music.\(^{170}\)

Tagore’s education ideal encouraged children to fearlessly express their sentiments through perfect and graceful movements of the body. Consequently, performance arts formed the core content of the curriculum.

Body is one with the mind. My only wish as a poet is to be free to walk in the open air and to use a pen while the body is responding to the mind, in rhythm. According to such a rhythm I would punctuate. Suddenly, I should be moving slowly, andante, then allegro, and the time would change with the changes of expression. While composing my poem the body would be helping me with its own movements. So with children in school. Let them recite while out walking, let them do their thinking aloud.\(^ {171}\)

Tagore believed that a place is also a collection of multiple common-place occurrences. He therefore assigned many exercises to his students that would make them more perceptive about and value these everyday events and develop a personal relationship with the place. One

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169 Petname of Rabindranath’s adopted granddaughter, aged 2.5 years.
171 Ibid., 108-109. In 1924, Elmhirst, an English agricultural scientist who became Rabindranath's friend and who took responsibility for the operation of Tagore's school, accompanied Tagore on a lecture tour to South America. There, Rabindranath talked to him about the importance of expressing thought and feelings in physical movement and the above notes are excerpts from those conversations.
such exercise was to walk alongside the Sāntāl women as they traveled from village to village to sell their clay vessels, which they would gracefully balance on their heads. He urged his students to listen to the singing of the cart-men or to become aware of the sights and sounds on the roadside. To walk along the road on a market day, when loaded bullock carts or women were streaming by, was a movement exercise for body and mind. It involved active coordination between the eyes and the ears while walking, similar to movement in writing or sketching.

Figure 36: Doodles by Sudhiranjan Das, one of the first five students of Tagore in 1901. Pearson's class.
Figure 37: Doodles by Sudhiranjan Das, one of the first five students of Tagore in 1901. Tagore with his students.
Bengali, the mother tongue was the medium of instruction, and the curriculum was devised so as to make assimilation of knowledge natural and easy. The idea behind this was to ensure active communication between the educated and the uneducated and thus ensure communication throughout the country, which was otherwise disintegrating in the distance created between the English speaking and the non-English speaking groups.

Examinations were deemed an unnecessary distraction, and more stress was laid upon individual initiative to express through creative literary work such as story-telling, play-writing, and composition of poetry. Aptitude for music, theatrical art, and painting was nurtured systematically. Tagore also involved students in his own writing or music composing activities. On some special literary evenings, students had access to the room where he would read aloud his new writings to his critics or to his friends, and the students were also encouraged to read aloud their writings.

Tagore was essentially a poet, and therefore, to him, nurturing young minds was like poetry. He visualized an ideal teacher as a potential poet, if not an actual one. A person who was engaged with his surroundings, who was like a child himself, forever exploring and taking nothing for granted was an ideal teacher. An ability to communicate human experience in expressions as well as in “being” establishes a lasting relationship between a teacher and a student. Such a relationship will cause “a joy [to be] born.”

172 Tagore himself taught at the school. In the evenings, he related stories from Indian history to the children. He wrote verses and plays for the students to perform, and enabled a powerful student-teacher association.

Tagore rejected nationalism and religion as narrowing concepts. Šāntiniketan offered a secular milieu where students, instead of observing religious festivals, celebrate nature and seasons like Māghotsav (winter), Vasantotsav (spring), and Varshā Mangal (monsoon). The academic year began with Vrikshāropan (tree planting ceremony) and Halkarshan (ploughing the land festival), whereas the New Year was celebrated on the first day of the month of Baiśākh (Spring). Fairs such as Ānandbazār (happy street), Šilpotsav (craft festival), and Pouś mela (winter fair) helped the students and village community in reaching out to a larger audience coming from Kolkata and beyond. During these fairs, the students and local artisans displayed and sold their crafts. Apart from adding joy to dreary village life, some of these festivals brought students and villagers together for work. All these activities are still part of mainstream curriculum at Viśva-Bhāratī and at Pātha-Bhavan.

Šāntiniketan Funding

In keeping with the school’s ideals, students were not charged any tuition fees for the first few years of operation. For a long time, the funding of the school was entirely borne by Tagore. This was possible because teachers’ salaries were very low. The only regular financial support available to the school was the annual maintenance grant of Rupees 1800 ($3,600 at the time) from the Šāntiniketan Trust established by his father.\(^\text{173}\) Besides that, Tagore financed the school through his personal income from his estates, the sale of his seaside house at Puri, Nobel Prize money, and royalties from his books.\(^\text{174}\) He also borrowed money from lawyer and philanthropist


Sir Taraknath Palit. Palit had willed all his property to the University of Calcutta, and hence when Palit died, Tagore owed money to the University.

Only after Tagore received the Nobel Prize in 1913, and was knighted by the British in 1915, did the Indian nobility, who had ample financial resources, begin to take interest in his education model. Tagore also began to be invited to deliver lectures world-wide. He gave all the money he generated from the lectures towards the functioning of Viśva-Bhāratī. On his lecture trip to the USA in 1916-1917, he was scheduled to deliver talks in as many as twenty-five cities, many of them at university campuses. His talks were organized by a professional lecture agency associated with his publisher (Macmillan), and each lecture received approximately $700-$1000. With that money, Tagore repaid the debt he owed to the University of Calcutta. On his next trip to the USA in 1920-1921, he stayed primarily in New York, trying to raise money from wealthy
American industrialists. This trip was not able to generate enough funds because most businessmen he met were dependent on the British for their business. Tagore was anti-British in his ideology, and that was not helpful in raising money. His third lecture trip to the US in 1930 was more successful than the previous two.

In his quest for financial support, Tagore tapped his businessman friends as well as ruling class families of the rich princely estates, such as the Gaekwāds of Baroda. But, the money did not come through most of the time because the potential donors were not convinced of the validity of the teaching methods at Śāntiniketan. Later, he found a different fund-raising strategy. He started touring the country, holding performances of his dance-dramas with his Śāntiniketan students. From 1930 onwards, his tours generated a regular income of around Rupees 30,000 ($60,000), a resource listed as “Proceeds of Performances” in the Viśva-Bhāratī account books.\(^{175}\)

**Śāntiniketan Administration**

There were four kinds of scholars associated with Viśva-Bhāratī.\(^{176}\) First, there was the āchārya (professor) or an individual of scholarly learning who was given an opportunity to pursue independent research at Viśva-Bhāratī. French Indologist Sylvain Levi came as the first professor to Viśva-Bhāratī in November 1921 and stayed till August 1922. Second, there was the chātra (student) or an individual who had already attained proficiency in a particular field but came to Viśva-Bhāratī for advanced studies. During the initial years of the establishment of the Viśva-Bhāratī, the teachers had the opportunity to become students of these visiting scholars and to enrich their experiences. Third, there was the adhyāpak (teacher) recruited by Viśva-Bhāratī.

\(^{175}\) Ibid., 28.
\(^{176}\) Gupta, “Visva-Bharati, a World University,” 68.
Fourth, there were “friends of Viśva-Bhāratī” or bandhab, who would occasionally be invited to Viśva-Bhāratī as scholars-in-residence, writers or artists. The “friends” were sometimes entrusted with raising funds for Viśva-Bhāratī in India and abroad. British sociologist and philosopher Patrick Geddes came as a “friend” to Śāntiniketan.

Tagore revived the āśram concept of learning as an administrative concept, where the students leave their home and stay with the teacher’s family. He therefore insisted that the teachers also live on campus. On his visit to Śāntiniketan in 1915, Mahatma Gandhi encouraged the students to do their own work, e.g., cooking, washing, cleaning, grocery shopping, themselves, and not to depend on hired help for that. This ideal of self-sufficiency and classlessness was incorporated as an intrinsic element in the functioning of the school. The students were encouraged to participate in the running of the institution. They were tasked with keeping the campus clean, planning gardens, and attending to various errands related to the administration of residential hostels. This would not only provide an outlet to their surplus energy, but also mold their personality:

In their effort to build a healthy and beautiful atmosphere in the campus, they feel the joy of participation in creative efforts as also develop an aesthetic sense. Duties of running the hostel make them feel and develop a sense of belonging; not just a sense of responsibility, but a liking for co-operative efforts to serve the institution.177

**a historical narrative of social renaissance**

*Kalā-Bhavan at Viśva-Bhāratī*

Kalā-Bhavan at Viśva-Bhāratī was founded in 1921 and was originally the Institute of Fine Arts and Music. In 1934, it branched off into two independent institutes—Kalā-Bhavan and Sangīt-Bhavan concentrating on Fine Arts and Music respectively. Tagore requested modernist

painter Nandanlal Bose to take charge as the first *adhyakśa* (principal) of Kalā-Bhavan. Nandanlal, affectionately called *māstermoshāi* (teacher) by his students, guided Kalā-Bhavan from 1922-1951, after which he became Adhyakśa Emeritus. In Nandanlal, Tagore found the ideal teacher, who felt deep rapport with nature, was the embodiment of “intelligence, sympathy, skill, experience and insight,” and had the capacity to inspire others through his own production of original art.\(^{178}\) Besides teaching art, Nandanlal helped design the layout of the āśram and illustrated university publications. He also designed costumes and stage settings for Rabindranath’s plays and involved himself in various activities related to the seasonal festivities organized on campus. Nandanlal wanted to train the artists in a new way:

he wanted to initiate them into the traditional arts of India […] but he did not want the institution to become a traditional atelier and regurgitate old forms; he wanted his students to react deeply, personally, to the natural environment around them side by side with the art environment of museums and collections; he wanted them to see how the visual terminology of an art tradition and the visual facts of nature correspond and enrich each other.\(^{179}\)

Students were trained in painting, sculpture, graphic art (print making), textile design, ceramic design, and history of art. Nandanlal and his artist students also collaborated with Elmhirst and his group to bring traditional craftsmen and their products to mainstream economy. *Mochis* (cobblers), lac workers, weavers, and carpenters would come to Śriniketan to either train or to work. Workshops for training in new techniques and production were set up. The collaboration also helped craftsmen in marketing their creations.

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A second institute, “Institute of Rural Reconstruction,” was founded in 1921. Early that year, Tagore was in New York on one of his lecturing and fund-raising trips, when his friends Sam Higginbottom and W. V. Moody told him of Leonard Knight Elmhirst, a British history graduate who had visited India between 1915 and 1918 as a missionary. Elmhirst was then studying Agriculture at Cornell University and was extremely interested in returning to rural India in order to study its problems firsthand. Tagore immediately wrote to Elmhirst asking him to visit him in New York. Elmhirst had read about Śāntiniketan and Tagore and had previously hoped to meet him and visit the school. So when he received the note, he excitedly “made a hurried journey to New York, and never [forgot] the friendly welcome [he] received.” During the meeting, Tagore invited him to lead his experimental project of rural development at a farm at Surul, one mile west of Śāntiniketan. He explained to Elmhirst,

The villages around my school at Śāntiniketan in West Bengal seem to me to be dying. The villagers too seem quite unable to help themselves. Come to India and live on this farm. Try to find out what is happening, and what the cause of the trouble is, what can be done to help the villagers […] stand on their own feet. Train up some of my staff and students if you can. Will you come? Then why not sail with me tomorrow.\footnote{180}

After completing his education at Cornell, Elmhirst joined Tagore at Śāntiniketan in November 1921. Soon after his arrival, Elmhirst initiated the project. He familiarized himself with the local language, gathered individuals who were inclined towards rural development, and started acquiring equipment and other machinery. After some months, this informal group was officially named the “Institute of Rural Reconstruction,” and it was later re-named Śrīniketan by Tagore.

Śrīniketan is an example not only of rural self-help but also of a conscious attempt to erase caste boundaries that permeated Indian society at that time. All students at Śrīniketan were treated similarly regardless of caste, a practice unheard of until then. Tagore had realized that, for a revolutionary change to occur in terms of village upliftment, the villagers “must throw off their belief in fate and realize the importance of depending upon their own efforts.”¹⁸² The school could set an example that rejects, by ignoring, the outdated caste system. An anecdote recorded in Elmhirst’s memoirs summarizes how such caste boundaries were disregarded by the teachers, who were looked upon by the students more as role-models than as mere lecturers:

On 5th February 1922, with a small staff and some ten-college students, all of whom said they wanted to be farmers, we loaded our Ford lorry with cooking pots and set off for Surul. [We camped at an old] engineer's house - myself on the roof, staff on the ground floor, students one door up. We dug trenches, fixed up our latrines, started gardens, houses and workshops, defeated the marauding monkeys, and settled in.

‘But where,’ said the boys, ‘is the sweeper who will empty the latrine buckets?’ Three of them were Brahmins. ‘Don't worry, there’ll be a sweeper in the morning,’ I said. The following morning, while they were taking their baths they caught sight of me emptying the buckets. Three boys and Álu Roy, our celebrated lorry driver, immediately ran to assist. ‘If this is to be part of the training,’ they said, ‘can we not do it for ourselves from now on?’ It was three months before the resistance of the last Brahmin boy broke down. From then on there were few jobs of the meanest or toughest kind that these boys would not tackle readily.

For a time I saw little of Tagore. One […] of the staff […] told me […] that they had found him digging a trench in his garden and emptying his own bucket of waste matter into it. Turning over his letters, I find in one of them, dated 31st March 1922, the following:

“Every day I am getting more and more envious of your Swaraj at Surul […] I wish I were […] able to join you and perform the meanest work that can be done […] thus getting rid of that filmy web of respectability that shuts me off from intimate touch with Mother Dust. It is something unclean like prudery itself to have to ask a sweeper to serve that deity who is in charge of the primal cradle of life.”

As many as 200 cooperative societies for agricultural credit, irrigation and granaries were introduced. Experiments were made on new crops and on new varieties of existing crops that would be suitable to local conditions. A dairy farm provided practical demonstrations of

scientific animal husbandry. The village welfare department initiated public works (repairing and excavating reservoirs), looked after village schools, maintained a mobile library for villages, organized social and cultural activities, and ran the scout movement to mobilize the children in assuming social responsibility. There was a health section with a central dispensary, and a maternity and child-welfare section was added in 1940.¹⁸³ In the beginning, the institution faced stiff resistance from the villagers who were accustomed to dealing with local landlords for financial help rather than an institution. Unsurprisingly, it was medicinal help that slowly inculcated affection and confidence amongst the villagers. The Šrīniketan model for rural development was later adopted by independent India through its “Five-year Development Plans” for the benefit of the nationwide rural community.¹⁸⁴

Tagore insisted that there was a need for collaboration between foreigners and locals despite the language barrier. On being asked by Elmhirst for some time to visit agricultural training centers in India to gather equipment and to learn Bengali, Tagore said:

Visits you must make, equipment you must get but why learn Bengali? Our students all know English, so do the staff. Once you have learned Bengali, you will make the same mistake that so many missionaries have made. You will go out and visit villages alone. I hope you […] never visit a village alone, or ask questions of villagers without using a member of your staff or one of your students as an interpreter. The task of getting to know and to understand the village and its people must be carried out by Indians, but from you and other visitors they should learn what kind of questions to ask and how to ask them.¹⁸⁵

Šāntiniketan: landscape described in the World Heritage nomination dossier

In 2009, the Viśva-Bhāratī Parishad (Board of trustees) became interested in getting the site inscribed in UNESCO’s World Heritage List, so it appointed an expert committee to identify

¹⁸³ Ibid., 613-614.
¹⁸⁴ Banerjee, “Experiment in Education,” 149.
the heritage zones. It was also interested in acquiring Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) protection for all the structures in the Uttarāyan complex and a few structures in the Áśram complex and the Kalā-Bhavan complex. However, ASI protection means that the structures cannot undergo even minor changes that might be needed for functional purposes. Hence, the Parishad commissioned ASI solely for the structural conservation of twenty-seven structures including two man-made lakes. The restoration work began in 2007. The Union Secretary of Culture, Government of India granted approximately Rs. 50,000,000 ($120,000) for the restoration project in commemoration of Tagore’s 150th birth anniversary. The restoration work comprised mural restoration, structural and horticultural conservation of Śāntiniketan Griha, Upāsanā Ghar, Tāladhwaj, Pampa Lake, Lily pool, Guhā-ghar, Chitrabhānu, Udichī, Dināntikā, Pātha-Bhavan, Dehāli, Māstermoshaṇī studio, Śyāmalī, and other structures.¹⁸⁶

In 2010, the ASI and the Viśva-Bhāratī Parishad, as state representatives of India to UNESCO, nominated Śāntiniketan as India’s representation to UNESCO’s World Heritage List. Since then, it has remained on UNESCO’s tentative list which means that the site is under consideration for designation. The nomination dossier presents Śāntiniketan as fulfilling the criteria of Humanism and Cultural Interchange (ii), as a living example of the Tapoban and Gurukul tradition of education (iii), and promoting ideas of outstanding universal value (vi). The last criteria is fulfilled by promoting the site as having been developed on the principles of “Internationalism,” “Influence on the Modern Indian Nation—Inclusiveness & Non Alignment,” “Environmentalism,” “Women's Emancipation,” “Associated Personalities,” and “Association with Rabindranath Tagore's work and ideas.” The document is exhaustive in terms of the

material culture of the site, including the landmark buildings, vegetation and visual art-work spread throughout the campus of Viśva-Bhāratī.

The site description in the nomination dossier resembles that provided in the previous sections of this document. The nomination dossier narrative exemplifies the discourse that assumes landscape to be predominantly material culture, which can be surveyed objectively from a distanced vantage position of inquiry. The nomination dossier text describes the historical development of the site from a barren land to a meditation retreat, university, and residential area. Names and dates of structures built at the “Ashrama Complex,” “Uttarayana Complex,” “Institutes of Visva Bharati,” and “Sriniketan” along with a brief note on “The Santiniketan Aesthetic” constitute the section titled “Site Description.” This section references solely the architectural merit of the site. “The Santiniketan Aesthetic” discusses Tagore’s concept of beauty, which was “connected with truth and goodness.” Nevertheless, this also spirals down to proving the presence of a certain aesthetic simply in terms of material evidence such as “alpona [drawings made on floor], batik [a cloth dying technique], leather-craft, picture making, cleanliness and order into the campus, elegance […] in its building and interiors, a distinctive graphic image to its publications, […] frescoes, murals in Hindi Bhavana and the Kala-Bhavana campus,” and sculptures by Ramkinkar Baij.

The next section of the nomination dossier titled “Justification of Outstanding Universal Value,” claims that the site represents the “distillation of Rabindranath Tagore's life, philosophy and greatest works […] and the continuing legacy of his unique model of education and internationalism through a living institution and architectural ensemble.” It further says,

Human history needs to be continuously reminded of the existence of institutions such as these which continue to live in practice and form. For this, along with many other reasons, Santiniketan needs to be preserved as a World Heritage Site.
Thus, this section necessitates the construction of a Tagore-hood for the preservation of this site and also for its promotion as a World Heritage.

The next section, titled “Statements of Authenticity and/or Integrity,” emphasizes the unchanged nature of the physical condition of the site:

location of the facility remains unchanged even today incorporating the aspects of authenticity that is tangibly associated with spirit and feeling.” It goes on to contend that to understand its authenticity “one has to first recognize the various layers of history for Santiniketan's establishment and growth which form the periods of significance.

Thus authenticity is explained through three “Periods of Significance or Historical Layers”—namely, Maharishi Period (land purchased and ashram built by Maharishi Debendranath Tagore), 1895 onwards; Gurudev Period (development carried out by Rabindranath Tagore), 1901-1941; and Rathindranath Period (development carried out by Rabindranath's son), 1941-1952. Emphasis is laid on the fact that this area is:

nearly all intact and forms the core of the Santiniketan precinct. The structures are intact and retain their integrity and authenticity. They have been recently restored by Archaeological Survey of India.

Śāntiniketan: a heritage anomaly

Limitations of the world heritage nomination process that constrains Landscape

The intention of the nomination dossier is clearly to promote the site as a destination celebrating various creative moments of Tagore’s life, especially through architectural evidence. But this biographical emphasis misses the profound significance of the site because it is fundamentally a landscape conceived for learning. It is a landscape where students and teachers are the primary explorers and creators of landscape and where individual subjective experiences and expressions are encouraged as a way of nurturing and sharing an embodied knowledge of landscape.
The World Heritage nomination dossier requires documentation that adequately presents the “authenticity” of the nominated site. For UNESCO, authenticity is based on “value,” deemed necessary to construct a reference framework for the site that would make evident its historical significance. Thus, conservation practices focus on constructing a value through which to highlight a temporal linearity of a history. UNESCO’s charters and ICOMOS’s documents suggest that gauging “authenticity” became the most agreeable practice for World Heritage evaluation. The Nara Document on authenticity was conceived to ensure protection of cultural diversity and to resist standardization of societies and environments, thereby suggesting a multiplicity of specific cases which at some level are not comparable to each other. World Heritage status, mostly targeting tourists, expects the site to be educative and interactive with participatory modes of tourism. The expectation is to mediate the site to visitors via special effects and audio-visual commentaries, including re-enactment of imaginary historical or mythical scenes that will package and thus mediate the experience. This results in institutionalized objectification of the site. At the same time, choreographing the site leads to visitors’ loss of freedom of interpretation and experience and ignores the fact that meaning occurs in the dialogue between the body and the milieu.

However, Herb Stovel, ICOMOS World Heritage Adviser, wrote an appendix for the Nara Document in which he exposed the limitations of outlining a definitive authenticity. By destabilizing the very concept of “universal values,” which seek to define authenticity, his writing compelled the heritage experts to reconsider the necessity of “universal values.” Preparing nomination dossiers is instrumental to construct a memory of the site for its evaluators.

and eventually for its visitors. However, dossiers are designed in such a way that they unintentionally limit the definition of heritage landscapes to explicitly material settings, whether as historic sites or as representations. Thus, the definition leads to construction of a memory which is based entirely on the material aspects of the site, framing them as temporally fixed. In this way, heritage stewardship facilitates two deeply flawed stances towards the heritage landscapes: the instrumental view, which seeks to measure the material landscape and to commodify it through an exclusively empirical knowledge; and the romantic view, derived from nostalgia, which assumes that there is a need to return the material landscape to an original state. Further, the nomination procedure compels the world heritage status seekers to compartmentalize their site, or components of it, into either one of the following: tangible heritage, intangible heritage, and cultural landscapes. This is not a suitable way of framing landscape because landscape is holistic in the way it brings together all of the dimensions of heritage. That understanding opens up an avenue for discussion about how changes in the nomination procedure might revisit landscape definitions and recognize subjective and unmediated engagement of a person with landscape as a valid definition of heritage.

The embodied landscape aesthetic invites one to experience landscape not simply by looking at it with distanced aesthetic appreciation, but rather by becoming involved in a multi-sensory relationship with it. Immersing oneself in the milieu creates a narrative about the landscape, and narratives have authors and readers. But it is useful to consider the stance of semiotician Roland Barthes who, in his essay, “The Death of the Author” (1977), denies the existence of the author and instead envisions a “scriptor,” who is born with the text which is constantly being written. Barthes transfers the control of meaning and coherence of a work to the “active reader.” The reader is an active agent constructing the meaning and hence the text, in that
sense, is written by the reader.\(^\text{188}\) Tagore advocated a similar collapse of modern authorship in his claim that beauty is being created by itself in the awakening of aesthetic consciousness of the people experiencing landscape, music, art, or literature. He appreciates the “reader who underlines passages he finds interesting in a book. Through that marking out, the reader has a proprietary right to those words in his realization of their meaning.”\(^\text{189}\) Without meaning to advocate any specific form of spirituality, Tagore necessitated self-awareness by immersing oneself in a particular sensation of beauty. Here, “immersing oneself” might be considered equivalent to “reading” and “sensation of beauty” might be considered equivalent to “text.” Additionally, we might extrapolate Barthes’ idea of text to heritage landscape of Śāntiniketan and his idea of author to Tagore, who initiated the school of aesthetic learning at Śāntiniketan. Tagore’s significance as an author recedes from the moment when the landscape begins to be experienced by individuals who thereby recreate or rewrite it. This viewpoint makes plain that, for conservation of Śāntiniketan landscape as heritage, an agenda for de-historicizing Tagore and diffusing the significance of falsely created tokens of Tagore-hood is necessary.

**Revisiting Heritage Constitution**

The following section presents the two debates that are central to heritage constitution in the context of landscape—namely, heritage archivability which is a result of an assumed subject-object divide between who archives and what gets archived. It then presents the site of inquiry, Śāntiniketan, as a series of misrepresentations caused by the World Heritage nomination process, which requires that the site be measured and represented. It deliberates upon the insider-outsider

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debate and illustrates the constantly changing status of an individual from being an insider to an outsider and vice-versa. Through this process, the section explains that, to establish a site as heritage, there is an already established pre-requisite for an outsider (a detached observer) and an insider. This is accomplished by narrating anecdotes that illustrate the ways in which the site confirms to the outsider way of looking at it by the World Heritage nomination process, all the while equally resisting its own representation. Some of the anecdotes reveal how someone who would conventionally be an insider to the site instead assumes an outsider status and consequently subverts the very system that constitutes heritage, thus alienating the idea of heritage even more. The section also relates interviews with residents of and visitors to Šāntiniketa and passages from the memoirs of Rabindranath Tagore and others to illustrate the disparity between the heritage representation and the essence of the site.

**Recent developments in Heritage discourse: ratification of the Ename Charter**

Until very recently, heritage scholarship recognized the significance of individual sensory perception but only in a very limited way, for appreciation, and even though other models had begun to be described. For example, more than a century ago, art historian Alois Riegl introduced the concept of the “unintentional” monument, which functions by engaging the visitor with the “monument” in the present time.190 The unintentional monument rejects the “deliberate” monument which is an outcome of intellectual reflection and which requires documentation and restoration to sustain itself.

Problematizing the archival approach:

Reigl’s definition questions the validity of archives in the constitution of heritage. According to him, unintentional monuments, which are much more numerous than deliberate ones, survive much longer because they exist in the moment of engagement and in their immediacy with contemporary visitors. They are not determined by their makers.

Archivability requires representation. Art historian Henri Focillon and philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy are among the many scholars who have problematized representation. Focillon’s most influential work, The Life of Forms in Art, advances the argument that analysis of art is irreducible to external political, social, or economic determinants. For him, art is form which has a life independent of human subjectivity and recognizing that is essential to the analysis of art. Such a form of analysis is valuable because it is adaptable, complex and modifiable on contact with the object of analysis. Focillon insists upon a break-away from abstractions, diagrams, generic models that can be applied to specific cases as a historiographical method.¹⁹¹ That break-away is valuable because it allows for flexibility and valorizes the object of analysis as having its own will. It works on the central principle that form is alive. This resonates with Nancy’s argument, in The Creation of the World or Globalization, that representation “reduces and neutralizes the world. The world emerges only when it is free of its representation. The world which is without a theological subject is a subject of its own representation and thus fabricates and sustains itself.”¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Focillon, The Life of Forms in Art.
Problematicizing the information approach:

Recent anthropological discourses have also problematized the conventional information driven and management based agendas of heritage stewards. Michael Brown attributes the urgency of heritage agencies to document heritage to the rise of the information society. He contends that there is a global anxiety regarding the exchange of information among different cultures and that this anxiety needs to be diffused. He reviews the policy initiatives for Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), illustrating that the information society models are in reality detrimental to ICH because they insist on inventoring heritage. The inventory damages heritage by removing it from the public domain and returning it to the exclusive control of its creators which is the information society itself. Brown further critiques the ICH convention as having a legalistic vision which cannot achieve its aim of protecting heritage unless heritage is thoroughly documented. Hence the ICH convention portrays intangible heritage as an “objectified resource amenable to modern management techniques.” This is inherently ironic to the very nature of intangibility.

Problematicizing the cultural approach:

In his critique of the concept of culture as presented in UNESCO’s report Our Creative Diversity (1996), anthropologist Thomas Eriksen argues that cultural rights should be seen more as individual rights because the issues that deal with acceptance of, and respect for, all cultures cannot be solved in a political arena without resorting to compromise, Eriksen finds in the

194 Brown terms this phenomenon as “cultural appropriation” and defines it as the ability to remove images, sounds, and practices from original setting and relocate them elsewhere. Information societies re-locate and re-present the performative content of culture as things for consumption (information societies having the interest of seeking profit out of it).
document an “unsettling bias” towards reading culture as “difference,” in the eyes of a “we” which he asserts is not enough qualification for analysis of culture. This resonates with the sentiment of exclusion as elucidated by Brown when he refers to “mystical otherness.”

Adding to that critique is the observation that the main problem lies in a self-proclaimed, almost theological role to “protect heritage,” from which stem both the problem of recognition of what can be protected (hence, inventory) and the creation of the “exotic.” This observation problematizes the insider-outsider bipolar duality caused by the management-based approach of most heritage agencies.

These critiques (and many more) were instrumental in the formation of the International Council on Monuments and Sites ICOMOS Ename Charter (2008).

**Heritage constitution: beyond archiving**

The archive is not the best way to preserve heritage. What is needed is for heritage constitution is a methodology that has the potential to shift the locus and power of interpretation from heritage stewards to individual bodies. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty suggests that spatial forms or distance are not so much relations between different points in objective space as they are relations between these points and a central perspective—our body. This means that body assumes a centrality in a space, with which it is intimate. This is specifically pertinent in defining space as being produced by the presence of the body. There can

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197 Brown states that the heritage policy makers are far behind the intellectual discourses on heritage. According to him, the discipline of early anthropology has already concluded the inability of documentation practices to protect cultures as living, dynamic systems. Anthropological studies have already established that granting transcending legal status to culture freezes social life in time; imagining stable boundaries (which do not actually exist) giving certain social groups a mystical otherness. He argues that the policy makers used these problematic issues to make policies just when anthropologists were already preparing to drop them.
be no space without a body to produce it, and thus interpretation of a heritage site purely on the basis of its physicality can at best offer an incomplete and disengaged appreciation.

Embodied engagement disregards both the body-mind duality, which prioritizes the mind, and the subject-object divide. It depends on immediate experience but does not necessarily rely on the uniqueness of experience. Embodied engagement recognizes that our being-in-the-world is conditioned by the existence of others. However, it disregards the concept of culture that assumes distinct individuals building relationships and sharing meaning separate and distinct from the self.¹⁹⁹ It exposes these notions and constructs of culture as elements of human consciousness.

Given Tagore’s principles of active learning, Šātiniketan makes for an ideal case for heritage constitution going beyond mere archivability. Tagore’s aesthetic ideals of engaging with the world in bodily terms resonate with phenomenology, which considers the world and the body as entwined and emergent. According to Tagore, to become self-aware, one orients oneself in time and space. Phenomenologists describe this process as referencing one’s “intentionality.”

How does the body experience and how is the experience available for analysis?

One of the ways to gain access to the “other’s” individual corporeal experience is through “empathy.” Empathy does not necessitate documentation but is a lived experience. Both the aesthetic philosophy of Tagore and phenomenological inquiry emerging from cinematic discourse (especially that of Vivian Sobchak, Abbas Kiarostami, and Jennifer M. Barker) have experimented with empathy as a way of knowing the world. Such a stance necessitates active

engagement of the viewer. For Tagore, there was always an inherent empathy towards the infinitude of the world, which finds its expression within our finite form (body). He sang,

Within limits you remain limitless, and that is why your expression within me is so melodious. O’ formless, your form emerges within me in shades, in smells, in songs, in rhythms, and that is why your beauty within me is so melodious… (translated from Bangla)

An incident from Tagore’s childhood when he was learning to read reveals his early experience of empathy. He came across a rhyming phrase, “Jal parey / pāt narey” (the water falls / the leaf trembles), in his book. Suddenly, words that always seemed like disconnected fragments started appearing to him as rhythmic sounds. In his words,

at once I came into a world wherein I recovered my full meaning. The rhythmic picture of the tremulous leaves beaten by the rain opened […] the world which […] merely […] information, but [is in] harmony with my being.

For Tagore, natural phenomena prompt a fulfillment of personality. Personality, as explained by Tagore, is a self-conscious mode-of-being that comprehends the world as essentially individual knowledge and personal experience. It is limited to the individual, but it extends beyond the individual through exchange of knowledge, love, and mutual dependence:

It seems to me that I gazed at you from the beginning of my existence that I have kept you in my arms for countless ages, yet it has not been enough for me.

Feel this world as a living flute might feel the breath of music passing through it. Feel the meeting of creative joy in the depth of consciousness. Meet this morning light in the majesty of your existence, where it is one with you.

201 The song Shimar Majhe is taken from Gitānjali, written in 1910 at Janipur, Gorai. The song is written in Bangla and is set to Ektāl and Chayanaut Rāga (Shīmār mājhē aushīm tumī bājāo āpone shur / Āmār modhyē tomār prokāsh tāyi ēto modhur / Kauto bornē kauto gaundē kauto gānē kauto chaundē / Aurup tomār rupēr līlāyē jāgē hridoypur / Āmār modhyē tomār shobhā ēmon shumodhur).
203 Ibid., 48-49.
204 Rabindra Bhavan Archives: Files->MSF_Eng->38->32.
While explaining personality, Tagore referred to spontaneous expressions of an artist as expressions of his personality. In other words, expressions of art do not correspond to the world of facts. Personality surpasses facts, and its abundance is what creates expression. The material world acquires a particular shape and movement by an individual’s unique relationship with it. The world belongs to him as it unfolds itself to him in a specific form and no longer remains an external, abstract, metaphysical entity. By exploring the world, an artist is also constantly exploring and redefining his individuality: “The world, while I am perceiving it, is being incessantly created for myself in time and space.”

In a song Tagore exclaims:

The sky is filled with the sun and the stars,
The world is filled with life.  
Amongst all this I find my place.
Through eternal time, that oscillates
The world ebbs and flow,
Resonating with the blood
Flowing through my veins.
Out of this wonder, my song is born. (translated from Bangla)

In this song, the music is somber and, beginning from the lowest octaves, it builds up through a crescendo with an explosion of musical expression, when Tagore rejoices in the realization that he is one with the world.

Kiarostami explores empathy as a means to subvert the insider-outsider duality. In the film *Ten* (2001), Kiarostami realizes a representation of empathy, a distant yet participating presence of the spectator. In one shot, the character’s words are heard coming from off-screen. The character is both *in* and *out*, at once *here* and *there*, which is the essence of empathy. In a

205 Tagore, “What is Art,” 63-64.
conversation with Jean-Luc Nancy, Kiarostami emphasized his preference for the role of the spectator in the creation of a work and hence in work being alive in the spectator’s subjectivity: “The gaze is important, not the subject matter” and “what’s on the screen is already dead—the spectator’s gaze breathes life into it.”207 As film critic Hajnal Kiraly points out, Kiarostami’s characters are not “outsiders,” not only because they are not alienated from the society in which they are functioning, but also because the “insiders” are not represented thoroughly enough.

To empathize, our body provides an active interface to indulge with the object of inquiry, in this case—heritage landscape. This approach distorts the insider-outsider duality to make the individuals watching the movie or experiencing the heritage landscape more active as they project their own subjectivity onto what they engage with, in order to make sense of what is present to them.

My work refers to the above-mentioned critiques to argue that bodily engagement with landscape can be engaged as a criterion of heritage landscape evaluation and designation. Those critiques and approaches set the tone for this chapter, which addresses the insufficiency of current heritage practices in accommodating individual (corporeal) knowledge of landscape. This is done by critiquing the catalog entries in the Śāntiniketan archive, discussing the contents of the archive and its consequent influence on constituting narratives about a place. The personal memoirs and poems of Tagore and other artists at Śāntiniketan are discussed in reference to landscape documentation in the World Heritage Nomination dossier.

Śāntiniketan: resists and exceeds its historical representation

The following section will briefly discuss how a conventional historical and material representation of Śāntiniketan, such as that presented in the World Heritage Nomination dossier, fails to address key features of the site. Rather, it tends to create conditions making the site resist its own representation. Consequently, the resultant protection measures end up being threat to what they set out to protect and thus become their own contradiction.

Excluding the un-built

The Śāntiniketan landscape is characterized by red soil along the River Kopāi which has weathered into ravines. Red soil is mentioned in the dossier as a backdrop, but it is an essential condition which inspired Tagore and many other artists in their creations. Interviews with some students at Kalā-Bhavan reveal that they like to visit places such as the Khoāi and Kopāi to get recharged or just to spend time by themselves.208 Khoāi is formed by tracts of red earth over

Figure 39: Khoāi

208 Derived from the Sanskrit kshaya, meaning denuded lands, Khoai is a naturally occurring micro-feature occurring in the region known as rath, the eastern extent of the Chhota Nagpur Plateau in India.
which the run of monsoon floodwater is so sharp that ravine-like formations are formed. This gives such places an appearance of microcosms of hill ranges carved out of reddish, leached, laterized and gravelly soil in which deep gullies are created by flood water naturally draining towards the Kopāi River basin. Khoāi is considered a rare phenomenon, but it contributes significantly to the Śāntiniketan landscape. Its unique presence in the landscape reflects powerfully in cultural, artistic, and literary productions related to Śāntiniketan.

Tagore sings about Kopāi as if it were a girl with whom he could converse; thus, it was conceived by him not as a place but as a companion who charged him with an artistic inspiration:

I have for my neighbor the tiny river Kopai
She lacks the distinction of ancient lineage.
The primitive name of hers is mixed up with the loud
Laughing prattle of the Santal women of countless ages.209

However, as neither the Khoāi nor the Kopāi were created physically through Tagore’s agency, they have been excluded from the World Heritage Nomination dossier, which aims to present the site as a legacy of Tagore’s artistic achievements. This exclusion based on identifying and privileging the work of the “original” author has had other effects as well.

**Keeping out the “outsiders”**

Recently, the Viśva-Bhāratī Parishad decided to preserve the campus by “walling and fencing.” In April 2011, a 21 kilometer long boundary wall began to be constructed around the campus, of which seventy percent is complete. The fluidity of boundaries between the campus and the outside was formerly a symbol of free learning and active engagement with everyday life at Śāntiniketan. This concept seems to have lost its significance in the current heritage

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management model. The meaning of boundary not only denotes an administrative area but also implies a physical exclusion of the outside the perimeter.

As has already been described in the previous sections, the University was envisioned to flourish through its active contact with the local community of Sāntāls and with students learning from engaging with nature. Indeed, this was understood to be something that Śāntiniketan would
need. But the erection of the wall discourages active participation of villagers and mutual exchange between villagers and students, thus collapsing the very foundation of the learning process there. Nobel Laureate, alumnus, and longtime resident of Śāntiniketan Amartya Sen recently criticized Viśva-Bharati Parishad’s decision to erect the boundary wall around the campus. He compared it to a presidency jail (Indian Express, 2011) and called it detrimental to the vibrant life of the campus.

The outsider is the insider

An average day for visitors in Śāntiniketan begins at the railway station. The rickshaw drivers wait there for visitors to hop off the train and to whom they offer a ride or a larger, guided tour of the site. They introduce Śāntiniketan as a World Heritage site, as a legacy of Tagore, and as a destination at which to buy local handicrafts and photograph “artists at work.” The latter—potential objects of gaze for the visitors’ camera—are fine art students of Viśva-Bhāratī. This is an example of reversal of the insider-outsider status. Denis Cosgrove’s definition in reference to landscape art, which has dominated the discourse of landscape representation, gives the outsider a privileged status of the one who is able to have an objective view of landscape because he/she is separated from the landscape. In contrast, the insider is not separate from the landscape and is available to the outsider’s view. Rickshaw drivers (outsiders) bring the visitors to watch the students engage in artistic activities (insiders), but the students also come from outside. Another issue that this situation highlights is the designation status of the site. The actual World Heritage status of the site is “tentative,” which means that the site is still awaiting a decision from UNESCO about the status conferred. The visitors to this site who are guided by the rickshaw drivers leave with the belief that the site is a recognized World
Heritage site. Significantly, the actual status becomes irrelevant because of the myth that is slowly getting percolated.

In the two anecdotes set out above, it is obvious that the students and teachers at Kalā-Bhavan, as well as the Sāntāls are—or were—also recognizes as insiders. However, although the Sāntāls were very much part of the education process at Śāntiniketan, they are now being marginalized by both fencing and the process of exoticization. An effort to go visit the villages to “see” how they live is an act of distancing “this” from “that” and pointing out the “other.”

**Commodification and polarization of individual interests**

One of the respondents to my survey became nostalgic about the times when music bonded individuals from various walks of life. He remembered that in the 1990s, when he was a student at the Kalā-Bhavan, a Baul singer would visit Kalā-Bhavan every Wednesday and prompt a spontaneous jam session in the courtyard, in which whoever happened to be there at that time would participate. As the respondent recalled, “we had a heart to heart relation with the singers. We loved to sing and play with them.” This suggests that there was never an “us” versus “them” but the individuals would interdepend and mutually participate—for example, in the creation of music. The site encouraged multiplicities of engagement without prioritizing one over the other. The respondent further explains that it is no longer that way: “Now he [the Baul singer] performs under a tree and expects payment. He displays his CD in the hāt [informal market].”

210 Respondent number 17, Prof. Sutono Chatterjee (Sculpture).
This response can have multiple interpretations. It suggests nostalgia about a lost world of freedom of spirit, but also illustrates the expanding distance between the agendas of individuals. The Baul singer now conforms to the outsider agenda which exoticizes him as a commodity and as a cultural element in the landscape setting. The respondent sees, with disapproval, that the Baul singer has become the outsider, working in collaboration with the tourists to fulfill their expectations. This distances him further. From the perspective of the Baul singer, who now sits near Ghantātālā—a place that is most frequented by the tourists in Šāntiniketan—he agrees to his exoticization and subverts the process to gain attention, popularity, and money. The respondent is concerned that:

the tourists have been coming here for the past fifteen years. *Khoāi* is being destroyed by picnickers, trashed with plastic all over. Earlier they would come and peek through the windows [of Kalā-Bhavan] and go. But now the *rikśā-wālās* (rickshaw drivers) bring them here to look at the activities of the campus, it has become a nuisance. Moreover,
people from Śāntiniketan consider themselves superior to people from Bolpur, referring to their own selves as Śāntiniketanī [belonging to Śāntiniketan]. This is hurtful.\textsuperscript{211}

The respondent is himself from Śāntiniketan, yet he sees how social inequality is slowly infiltrating the site. He considers these social problems, resulting from commodification of site, to have been created by outsider intervention.

\textbf{Misplaced Authenticity}

Rabindra Sangīt—that is, the body of songs and other music composed by Tagore—became the copyright property of Viśva-Bhāratī in 1941, after Tagore’s death. Viśva-Bhāratī instituted a music board, which assumed responsibility for ensuring that the “authenticity” of Tagore’s work is retained in all subsequent Rabindra Sangīt renditions. All artists recording Tagore’s works had to submit their musical creations to the Viśva-Bhāratī music board for approval. If the board members felt that an artist's rendition of a song adhered to Tagore's notations (contained in volumes called \textit{Swarabitān}), the album could be released. Tagore’s music was no longer something to be interpreted but merely something to be repeated. This system satisfied Viśva-Bhāratī’s efforts to deify and fossilize Tagore:

\begin{quote}
All their publications of Tagore's work — and only they had the rights to publish till 2001 — had yellow covers; cover art was considered an excess; just as any interpretation of a song that deviated from the music board's idea of the "authentic" was considered offensive and struck down.\textsuperscript{212}
\end{quote}

The copyright ownership expired in 2001 and, with that, “Viśva-Bhāratī lost its grip on Tagore’s music and it was liberated forever.”\textsuperscript{213} When the copyright was lifted, there was a possibility for musicians to explore and experiment with Rabindra Sangīt, which was until then

\begin{flushright}
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as if frozen in time and appropriated by the institution. This instance exemplifies that the search for a single, stable “authenticity” of an object ignores the intrinsic quality of the object to continually revive itself. Viśva-Bhāratī music board’s stress upon upholding Tagore’s version is an anomaly in two ways. Firstly, it dismissed Tagore’s rejection of any rigidity of form, especially in artistic creations:

The singer has everything within him. The notes come out from his very life. They are not materials gathered from outside.214

Secondly, it obstructed the sharing and dispersion of the music for a large amount of time. It was only after the expiration of the copyright lease; Tagore’s music became available freely as a basis for further music expressions. In that sense, the authentic value lies in the ability of the heritage to make a connection with individuals in such a way that they are able to actively engage with it.

**Ignoring the necessity to create**

One of the respondents was concerned about the site decaying because of the protection status. The attempt to preserve it prevented the opportunity to refresh and renew:

As a student I could dig this place and make a performance piece here. But now if I have to dig it I have to take permission of the Vice Chancellor of the university. Potential heritage status is making the site management stiff. And, ironically, history is not being preserved. For example, the ceiling murals by Benodebehari Mukherjee may vanish.215

**Ignoring the necessity for natural decay**

The site and its management, let alone the tourist influx, are in an ongoing, metaphorical tug-of-war, each one validating its presence and obscuring that of the other. Both management

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215 Respondent number 6, Prof. Sanchayan Ghosh (Painting).
and tourists conspire to stabilize authenticity in a way that runs counter to Tagore’s original intentions. Ironically, Tagore’s poem “Śyāmali,” which he dedicated to his favorite residence of the same name, celebrates temporality against the idea of preservation. Tagore spent the last few years of his life in that house, which was also a symbol of Spartan living:

These days we have whispered to each other
Today you whisper to me
“No more, break now your home”
I laid no solid foundation”.
I built my home of loose earth.
The moving earth that comes floating down the river.
The earth that will melt in the showers of Śrāvan.216

Tellingly, the Archaeological Survey of India, which is in charge of the preservation of buildings in Śāntiniketan, has covered the structure with tarpaulin to protect it against the rains. This exemplifies an important, unanswered heritage question: “How much to preserve?” The

![Figure 42: Śyāmali under protection](image.png)

216 Rabindra Bhavan Archives: RBVB_015->CF_Eng->129 (iii)-> 223.
other question that remains unanswered is: “How to preserve in a way that does not insist on artificial permanence?”

Śāntiniketan: a heritage landscape that necessitates active archiving

Descriptions provided in the previous sections explain how documentation and representation of the site is fixed and is leading to permanently archiving the site as it was “originally,” thus alienating it from its very conception. Heritage management practices strongly favor mediation of sites for information dissemination and the cultural education of visitors. That becomes problematic as it vests the power of interpretation in heritage stewards, denigrating alternative interpretations (through visitors’ own efforts) while reorganizing the site itself. As heritage presentation practices are intrinsically dependent on archiving and information management, it would be an abortive proposal to disregard all forms of archiving practices. Instead a practice of acknowledging individual interpretations that take place in the present moment can be proliferated by means of active archiving. The site here would then be also known in the way individuals dwell in the place, because their bodies are deposits of their individual experiences—habitus. The site is thereby archived actively in the present moment.

The following paragraphs narrate examples, excerpted from interviews, of how individuals have made themselves receptive of the elemental. Boetzkes describes three ways in which receptivity is practiced, “radicalization of senses” being one of them. Radicalization of senses means developing a “lived relationship with the elemental leading to a fading of sensibility.” In this approach, interpretation implies not reproducing the elemental from an assumed cultural stance but, instead, necessarily addressing the “way of being” and of

217 Boetzkes, Ethics of Earth Art.
“becoming oriented” in relation to the elemental. The following paragraphs it becomes evident that Śāntiniketan is also explicit in the way that individuals have taken such a receptive stance (active archiving) towards the site and developed a lived relationship with the site (elemental) with manifestations in their creative sensitivities.

**Story of a “confinment” artist—beyond confines in and of Śāntiniketan**

One of my interviewees is an artist who belongs to a small village on the banks of Gangā River. “The vast space [at Bhātpārā]—made me feel like a tiny rain drop. I loved that.” That is the reason, why the vast open paddy fields at Śāntiniketan appealed to him. “I work on confinement. Here I don’t feel confined. I like vastness. So my work is changing. Earlier I worked with marble. Now I’m working with metal, bronze, brass, mixed media, along with silicone gel, acrylic sheets, newspapers. Depravity and poverty in Śāntiniketan has struck me. People are not poor intellectually but economically they are.” The artist works on symbolizing these socio-cultural contradictions. One of his pieces that showcased such a contradiction was conceptualized to show *Ube Chab* (a Bengali expression that means evaporation of emotion) but was titled called “untitled.” Evaporation was represented in bronze. The artist was concerned that, due to economic pressures, people resist showing their emotions, and relationships are becoming materialistic:

Parents’ expectation with their children sometimes hampers the child’s development—a common urban Indian phenomenon. If you pass through the lower middle-class mohallās [neighborhoods], you can hear music emanating from at least six houses. There are art schools in those neighborhoods. The aspiration to learn is there but parents are scared if the child would take on “art” as a profession. All these recurring contradictions of society are part of my work.218

218 Respondent number 13, Prof. Sumitabha Pal (Sculpture).
Śāntiniketan is the quintessential Bahrūpiā

In Indian theater, Bahrūpiā is an impersonator who also a metaphor for multi-facetedness. He usually employs guile to become someone that he is not. One of the respondents, who is a sculptor and painter, believes that landscape is the quintessential Bahrūpiā. This means that landscape is not just a physical entity, but also has a personality that is capable of taking on several personas. Thus he feels that, at Śāntiniketan,

there is crisis in living here. The survival. The making. The journey.” Landscape allows the individuals to do all of those but also restricts them because it keeps changing its personality. “Landscape is also sound. There is a rhythm that comes into my work because of sound—low pitch/high pitch. I do murals here. I have two murals on campus and some in the villages. I also work with the tribals when they make alpanās during festivals. Their work is part of landscape. It is not something detached from the place. My work is also about decoration—like that of tribals. The sur-tāl [melody-beat] in any musical composition is landscape. With seasons, it seems the music of landscape is changing. Campus is heterogeneous. Villages are raw rhythm playing asrāj [a tune named by Sikh Guru Nanak Saheb after King Asrāj; this tune was used to sing vār, a heroic ode sung for warriors going to war]. All of this is joined together. There is going to be disruption if you isolate the villages from the campus.219

Elsewhere in the interview, the same respondent remarked, “We make landscape a memory. Carakh Paṭṭā is a festival of Bengalis and Sāntāls. They make an artificial tree. During March-April, the first fruit is worshipped. This is at special places and thus it is a memory.”

And yet gain, the artist says,

now I have become so one with the landscape here that paintings are now more abstract. Each tree, whether it is Ośatvagāch, Akangāch, Simul, Aśokgāch, Kathalgāch, Sonā-jhurīgāch—each has a specific character. The unique character of trees is evident in my painting. I see how Polāśgāch is growing or how khajurgāch is growing. A tree flows in a forest.

The respondent goes on to give descriptions of ponds and how the various layers of life in ponds have inspired him in his process of creation. He concludes his interview with a telling

219 Respondent number 16, Partha Ranjan Saha (Independent Artist).
statement, “Binā chuye jān kaise sakte hain,” which translates roughly to mean, “How can you know without touching/feeling.”

Śāntiniketan is that which acquires form

To another respondent, a sculptor who works with bronze and terracotta and finds it difficult to “translate landscape and nature into sculpture clay,” Śāntiniketan has “plasticity.” He refers to it as a kind of clay, “bright red, when you fire it. I like the feeling of molding clay in my hands. The kind of clay in Śāntiniketan is very good. You don’t get this anywhere else. It has a lot of plasticity. You can bend it easily and do whatever you like.”

Śāntiniketan is a profound presence

According to one respondent his experience of being in Śāntiniketan relates with the way its presence constantly influences him. For him, it is significant because the place was created as an institution which had a residential component to it. Hence seasons, time and people become significant in terms of exploring education. “It’s me and environment—there is nothing in between. It is lifestyle that you are put into. There are cāidukāns or canteens which form the hub for meeting, and then there is the huge vast landscape. When you don’t want to meet people, hide somewhere.”

The same respondent sometimes articulates words without forming sentences, and those make evident how places, events, and experience are intertwined and emergent in his thinking. Whether it is “Khoāi—summer—silence—absence of trees—barren landscape” or “passage behind Nātya-Ghar—rain,” the place emerges in its various forms and experiences. It is where “it

220 Respondent number 8, Prof. Rishi Barua (Sculpture).
221 Respondent number 6, Prof. Sanchayan Ghosh (Painting).
rains after it stops raining. Because of so many trees, water collected on leaves keeps pouring long after it has stopped raining.” It is where “you apprehend the storm is coming. You get up and go and then bike through the storm.”

[It is where the] smell of the wet soil after the first rains is very powerful. The smell of the flowers and trees. During rains you feel nature is closer to you—it is green. Sometimes people want to cut off trees because they can’t see the sky. Summer is grey and dusty but you hear the birds during summer—all morning and evening. *Kubo* [bird] makes the sound kub kub kub—sound of emptiness. You can’t see the bird but its sound generates silence [of summer]. The tree in *Kalā-Bhavan* sheds its leaves in one week and becomes green in one week in winter. One day, it would be loaded with leaves and suddenly the next day you realize it’s bare. All the dry leaves on ground even though the entire tree is green. So every day is a changing day.222

**Śāntiniketan is a profound bodily experience**

Many people have written about the profound bodily experiences they have had when visiting Śāntiniketan. Heat and dust are occasionally mentioned often in these narratives—both are examples of a physical discomfort similar to labor pains that are an essential pre-condition to “create” art. Whether a sense of freedom to “create” is fostered by the barrenness of this place, which signifies “creation” by accumulation, or by vastness stretching to the horizon, the memoirs represent the place as an extension of their authors’ own sensorial experience of the place. These examples also suggest why Śāntiniketan is unique and what is in this place that the school could not have been anywhere else.

Such experiences create personal relationships with landscape that have found expression in various forms such as poetry and painting, or simply a philosophy of daily life. Here, I note the memoirs of a few persons who came to Śāntiniketan to teach; the passages chosen suggest that a distinct awareness of landscape shaped their teaching methodology. William Winstanley

222 Chinese bonsai, now a big tree. It is called *Chīnāgāch* or the tree from China. The place is also called *Chhā-tāl* or below the shady tree. That is why all the teachers still meet there for conversations. Even department meetings are held there.
Pearson first came to Śāntiniketan to teach at the Āśram in 1912. He described a storm but then also a stillness, which is so “intense that it seems as if time has held its breath in the expectation of the daily wonder of the sunrise.” He recalled his initial impressions of the place as follows:

Overhead is the intense burning sun. But a strong wind has sprung up and is raising a white dust in the eyes of the sun. [...] in the distance [...] all the leaves and branches of the forest are dancing like mad elephants striking their trunks against each other’s bodies, [...] a hissing panting sound can be heard. Along the fields storms of dust, like hordes of white frenzied ghosts, are tearing along, sometimes turning round and round and sometimes rising high in gigantic forms.

In the late 1930s, Alex Aronson, a student of English literature at Cambridge University, arrived at Śāntiniketan to be a teacher. For him,

Śāntiniketan was filled with unseen presences. Poets and painters, religious reformers and thinkers, long dead; music masters of old. [...] Thus I found myself translated from student to explorer of the meaning of an as yet alien country, somewhat at a loss in a truly tropical silence; where you could hear things grow around you from out of what appeared to be a distinctly inhospitable earth and where, for the time being, I was left very much to myself.

Satischandra Roy was a young poet who joined Tagore when the school was started and died after one year of service. He wrote in his journal,

These broad open spaces round Bolpur help one to understand the burning fierceness of the sun, and reveal in the storms the power of the wind. [...] When I go out into the fierce heat, I feel [...] as if in a less intense light I could not have seen the images of the sky, bright and burning like molten gold, or of the lonely plain, with its distant red road gleaming acres its widespread fields. Grey, like the bed of a dried-up river, the slightest unevenness can be seen distinctly—so far away, and yet every smallest inequality standing upright as though to compel attention and as if saying, “Today you must see me.”

224 Ibid., 114.
225 Aronson, “Tagore’s Educational Ideals,” 84.
Lawrence Dundas, 2nd Marquess of Zetland, Earl of Ronaldshay Zetland, visited Śāntiniketan in 1943. He said of the place,

The cultivation of man’s instinctive sense of beauty, […] of the harmony pervading all creation, appeared to me to run like a thread through the whole scheme of studies.227

Śāntiniketan landscape had a profound impact on Tagore’s aesthetic ideology of nurturing a personality. He wrote,

I withdrew my heart from my own schemes and calculations, from my daily struggles, and held it up in silence before the peace and presence that permeated the sky; and gradually my heart was filled. I began to see the world around me through the eyes of my soul. The trees seemed to me like silent hymns rising from the mute heart of the earth […] I found my message in the sunlight that touched my inner mind and felt a fullness in the sky that spoke to me […].”228

Paintings by artists such as Nandanlal Bose and Benodebehari Mukherjee and sculptures by Ramkinkar Baij also demonstrate the intimate relationship these artists had with Śāntiniketan.

One of the respondents said that “coming to Śāntiniketan was like being re-born.” He belongs to a remote village, and “mud houses, terracotta utensils, cultivating tools, kudāl [spade], cows, [and] plough” were intrinsic parts of his upbringing. Only when he came to Śāntiniketan, did he realize “those things would take any form in my art. Cultivating tools, paddy-rice, cleaning utensils [such as the rice-washing tray]—they have become part of my artwork now. I weave all such practices in my art work.” Here again is an example of the contradictions that pervade experiences of this landscape:

You can hear silence. Birds. Ghunghroo pehen ke koi chal rahā hai—aisā lagtā hai [someone is walking wearing anklets—that’s how you feel]. Koel bird—we call it paglā kokil [mad bird]. This bird is ever present—at all times—not just Basant but Bhor [early morning]—it screams [chillāti hai]. It calls out on the full moon—around 1-2 am. I hear birds all night long from 9pm to 1am. Because that is when I work.”229

227 Rabindra Bhavan Archives: RBVB_16->CF_ENG->446.
228 Rabindra Bhavan Archives: Files->MSF_Eng->29->27.
229 Respondent number 19, Prof. Amiya Nimaidhara (Technical Staff).
Resistance among professors and students towards heritage designation

Four powerful arguments stand out against heritage designation of Śāntiniketan: (1) heritage status tends to freeze that which was conceptualized to evolve and decay; (2) it tends to exclude from the institution individual and non-institutional entities (such as villages) that have helped make it; (3) it glorifies the institution as elitist, thus weakening the sense of belonging that individuals involved with it would otherwise have; and hence, (4) it signifies an opposite stance relative to the original conception values. The following paragraphs are excerpts from the interviews conducted with teachers and students at Kalā-Bhavan exemplifying their opposition to heritage status.

Tagore never wanted to make a museum. This is an important aspect that has to be remembered. This is a transforming space and it has to be allowed to change. Pātha-Bhavan failed in four to five years of its conception, Tagore realized it and improvised his education model learning from his mistakes. But now it is becoming frozen. Institutional framework and cultural framework are two different things. How can they co-exist—this question has to be addressed. Kalā-Bhavan is on the border of being both institutional and cultural. Need is to balance the two. Now it is more about funding and UGC policies, hence things are the way they are.230

If the status helps to maintain the campus, then it is fine but if it intrudes in artistic activity it is not fine. The place should be maintained like an institution and not a museum. It has become a pilgrimage which is a problem. It is disturbing to have tourists move about on campus. This is about practice and not the monument. It is an institution first and that is fundamental.231

Fencing, walling is immaterial and inconsequential. It may isolate the campus from surroundings. It may become Viśva-Bhāratī versus students. We already feel separated from them because of barricading etc. maybe we will feel we lost everything if it becomes “heritage.” The priorities are misplaced—focus on the improving education standards instead. They also protected the Nobel prize but it got stolen. First there is a need for inner protection—only after that outer [superficial forms of protection] can be taken care of.232

230 Respondent number 6, Prof. Sanchayan Ghosh (Painting).
231 Respondent number 15, Prof. Pankaj Panwar (Sculpture).
232 Respondent number 7, Mahmud Husain Laskar (Painting).
It [a discussion of heritage] is not our domain; it does not depend on our wish. It depends upon higher officials. Our thoughts don’t matter. But we think—okay restore Rabindranāth Tagore. But let Sāntāls change if they are changing [this is a reference to exotification practices that force Sāntāls to follow their old life style]. Rabindranāth is for everyone—not a property of one society. Rabindranāth thought and wished that a shepherd would sing his songs. That is how Rabindranāth thought and his songs transcended all layers of the society. So it is not elitist. Let feelings flow and then protection is secondary.233

233 Respondent number 19, Prof. Amiya Nimaidhara.
Chapter 5: Accommodating Landscape Phenomena in Heritage Discourse

This chapter first recapitulates the key concerns that have been explored in this dissertation. It then summarizes the dissertation’s responses to those concerns. Lastly, it reiterates the contribution of this work to the advancement of heritage discourse by opening it up to individual subjective experience and the temporality of landscape, which comes about because of remaining in the present by being-in-landscape. This dissertation work is a performance of present-ing landscape. Performance here is understood as an improvisational piece, a spontaneous mode of creation that takes place without any aid of a manuscript or score, and that which takes place in the present moment. Improvisation, according to dancer and performance studies scholar Danielle Goldman, demands

an ongoing interaction with shifting tight places [referred to as constraints], whether created by power relations, social norms, aesthetic traditions, or physical technique. Improvised dance literally involves giving shape to oneself and deciding how to move in relation to an unsteady landscape. To go about this endeavor with a sense of confidence and possibility is a powerful way to inhabit one’s body and interact with the world. This is what gives the practice its vitality.234

Present-ing landscape is not detached from being in the landscape. Thus, at no moment does this dissertation claim to represent a total picture of landscape. Landscape is evident in the way it is gradually revealed in the moment of its exposure, and thus it is present-ed while being performed. Proximity allows one to experience only part of a picture, rather than to see a whole one. In his book The Sex Appeal of the Inorganic, philosopher Mario Perniola shows that experiencing part by part because of proximity is valuable for landscape. He describes landscape as that “which asserts itself as the true protagonist of spatial experience,” because it assumes that the feeling body is part of the landscape and thus the body no longer belongs only to the

individual but also to the place where it moves. Perniola argues that improvisational performance not only is essential for present-ing, but also necessitates and hence becomes its own archive.

Performance aims to be a unique event, irretrievable, irrevocable, unrepeatable and, precisely for these reasons, it requires its own recording, photographic reproduction, filming or video shooting, in short, its own transformation into images, documents, materials, objects to be achieved and preserved. Under this aspect the shift […] from a conception of scene as actualizing, implementation and presentification, to an idea of theatrical activity as restoration, recovering past behaviour, manipulation and transmission of a legacy, is significant. In short, it would seem that the more one emphasizes the instantaneity, immediacy and facticity of performance, the more one is driven to a conservative, regulative and witnessing attitude. But witnessing what? If the boundary between scenic action and everydayness are not clearly traced […] the performative attitude goes beyond any extreme and permeates the entire existence not only of the professional actor but of any agent in whatever contest. However, if we are all performers, more or less able and capable, the exigency to provide a unique, singular, incomparable performance becomes even more incumbent and pressing upon us.

Some of the key questions that this dissertation explores are encapsulated in the following paragraphs.

What is the corporeal body?

The corporeal body is the container of the experiencing subject and a site that registers histories of experiences. It is proximate to landscape and experiences landscape in its materiality. Materiality (as a condition), unlike material fragments (as objects) does not have an autonomous organic entity. When the body haunts landscape, which means it moves with a will, the immediate aspect of landscape available to it changes. Thus, the body continuously negotiates its

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237 Perniola, “Hegel and the Thing as ‘also’,” in The Sex Appeal of the Inorganic, 73.
knowledge about the materiality of landscape, in the moment of its proximity with landscape.

With that knowledge, the corporeal body is also continuously taking shape.

**How does the corporeal body know? What do the presence and proximity of the corporeal body mean to landscape creation?**

The corporeal body gains access to the “other’s” individual corporeal experience through empathy. Empathy does not necessitate documentation but is a lived experience. Phenomenology suggests that “spaces are not exterior to bodies; instead, spaces are like a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body.” The presence and proximity of the corporeal body in/with landscape establishes a continuity that it makes possible for landscape and body to be always in a state of reciprocal engagement. Like landscape, the corporeal body also acquires a thing-ness. It becomes a fragment of the material landscape and is not differentiated from other fragments thereof.

**How is this embodied knowledge shared?**

In this dissertation, landscape is offered through a camera. My corporeal body becomes distanced from me and becomes part of the landscape—acquiring thingness—when it is perceived through the camera. The camera explores the presence or absence of voids, the ascent or descent in topography, evidence of erosion, ruination, and renewal in and of landscape and attempts to constitute a representation of its entirety.

**What is the embodied knowledge of landscape?**

Embodied knowledge is perception without distance. Embodied landscape aesthetics invites one to experience landscape not simply by looking at it with distanced appreciation but rather by becoming involved in a multi-sensory relationship with it. Immersing oneself in the milieu creates a narrative about the landscape. This dissertation acknowledges the corporeal body as a site upon which personal experience becomes deposited as embodied knowledge.

The following paragraphs reiterate the ways in which a progressive understanding of landscape, based on new thinking about embodied knowledge, can contribute to the theory and practice of heritage landscape.

**How is heritage constituted because of the embodied knowledge of landscape?**

Embodied knowledge redefines four aspects of heritage: archivability, authenticity, history, and insider-outsider duality. Heritage is conventionally understood as a function of archivability. Archivability fulfills the necessity for evidence, and witnessing of that evidence to substantiate the existence of a materiality. Embodied knowledge also acknowledges the witnessing of the material landscape but in the moment of its witnessing. The witnessing is by the corporeal body and is dependent on the orientation, location and distance of the body with respect to the material landscape. Orientation is tactile and involves more than one skin surface. This reiterates the mutuality of the body and landscape in witnessing each other’s existence.

The act of witnessing is temporal and is dependent on proximity. Thus, history as an archive of past occurrences becomes redundant due to its inaccessibility. The past, which is prior to the encounter with *thisness*, is unknowable. Others may have encountered the thisness previously, and that can be referenced by an encounter with thisness, which always occurs in the present. Thus, knowing history becomes an enactment in the present. This stance is a rejection
not of history per se but of history as an artefact that can be preserved. It is an acknowledgement of history that can only be lived. As Ahmed underscores, “To re-encounter objects […] is hence not to lose sight of their history but to refuse to make them history by losing sight.”\(^{239}\)

Authenticity, according to UNESCO’s charters and ICOMOS’s documents, is based on its historical significance and is dependent on its point of origination. Phenomenologically, history is defined as an enactment of encounter with depositions of past layers. For the purpose of encounter, the body orients itself with what is near to it. In the act of orienting itself, the body assumes a centrality. That centrality becomes the point of origin of the encounter. The encounter is dependent on the individual’s habitus. Thus, authenticity is a consequence of what the body encounters and how it is oriented towards it. This stance acknowledges the capacity of landscape to hold multiple experiencing bodies, and each encounter is authentic. For example, the section on Śāntiniketan highlights that there are multiple intentionalities in Śāntiniketan. Be it a student, teacher, visitor, rickshaw driver, tea-stall owner, researcher, historian, or local resident, each is a unique presence in the landscape setting. Each has a unique, authentic encounter, and hence each is capable of defining the heritage value of that landscape. To assign heritage expertise otherwise is to allow heritage management to be an elitist, classist, exclusionary operation.

Heritage studies have assumed a binary divide between the insider and the outsider. The outsider is the one who is separated from the landscape. The distance allows the outsider to see and quantify what needs to be assessed for heritage worthiness. In contrast, the insider is not separate from the landscape and is available to the outsider’s view, thus becoming a commodity in quantification by the outsider. The binary structured by those understandings of insider and outsider assumes an absolute positionality of and relativity between the insider and the outsider

\(^{239}\) Ibid., 140.
in space. From phenomenological perspective, the insider and the outsider are constantly positioning themselves based on what is proximate to them. Thus, their positioning, as well as their relative location to each other, is also always in flux. The duality of the insider-outsider is dissolved and the distance between them is erased. The insider is one who is most proximate to that which he/she is interpreting or experiencing. In that sense, each individual is an insider. With the examples of students, rickshaw drivers, and a Baul singer, chapter 4 demonstrates the erosion of those assumed binaries of the insider and the outsider. When they assume an insider-ship, outsiders empathize with the insiders. By experiencing something unfamiliar, the outsiders become familiar in a new way. At the same time, individuals project their own familiarity on to the site, thereby changing it.

*What design sensibilities get necessitated because of that constitution?*

Acknowledging landscape as phenomenon which can be experienced through an embodied engagement demands a presentation strategy that accommodates ongoing subjective experiences. Studying the multiple ways in which heritage sites accommodate the specificity of several people coming to them is one of the first steps in that direction. Having established that, the next step would be to speculate whether one can design a heavily mediated site where body can experience site. Specifically, could one develop a presentation strategy that shapes participation for embodied engagement with landscape? The other question that arises from that speculation is, “Is it possible to design a space that holds all those intentionalities?”

It is not enough to critique heritage nomination processes and subsequent management strategies. We have seen that modifying the ways in which heritage is defined during its nomination process can have powerful impacts in the ways heritage is experienced. We have also established that heritage discourse has large scope for landscape design to fulfill the agenda of
subjectively experiencing a heritage site. Landscape design can play a significant role to accommodate a phenomenological method of accessing heritage. In conclusion, this dissertation calls for design stances towards heritage landscapes that treat landscape as an agency to engage users in a firsthand experience of the site. In that engagement the designers become part of the performative landscape. Such a design process treats landscape inseparably as both the venue and the act of performance.

The dissertation calls for performative modes of landscape inquiry that are able to establish a performative method for inquiry, and design of heritage sites. The following is an imagined landscape design exercise, the final outcome of which is a series of trails and lingering spots on the heritage sites. The trails and lingering spots are not so much generated by the designers as they are triggered by the presence of the user who wishes to take that trail or wishes to linger at his or her chosen spot. In this manner the design process assumes a receptive stance and acknowledged the magnitude of lived-landscape.

- Create a drawing representing spatial and archival information about the site.
- On the drawing locate your seven personal landmarks.
- On the drawing locate historical landmarks.
- Create a walking trail that connects all personal landmarks with at least three historical landmarks.
- Describe the experience of walking that trail in phenomenological terms such as: walk through, walk towards, walk away from, walk besides, pause at, pause near, pause in.
  Demarcate emerging liminal in-between spaces.
- Design encounters along that trail: people, textures, colors, sounds.
- Repeat 2, 3, 4 and 5 [assume yourself to become another perceiving body].
• Redesign encounters along that trail: people, textures, colors, sounds, another perceiving body.

• Locate instances on that trail where you encounter another perceiving body. At that location, design a landscape installation that helps the visitor perceive the site at his or her discretion.

This exercise, which involves both spatial design and movement design, attempts to makes heritage presentation contingent upon corporeal experiences. Here the visitor does not necessarily perceive any ideologies present in the site and plants his/her own there by engaging with it. By being inside it, the designer designs a space that provokes an experiencing body to become aware of its point of origination. The space allows the visitors to become aware of where they are from by highlighting the difference. Move through that space on your terms. Move through that space in a way that makes you feel that you are the “other. The design is predicated on the main argument of this dissertation: that landscape is a presence, the representation of which is the story of its survival or decay, a story largely present in its own materiality [evidence], which the witnessing body experiences.
Appendix A: Movie “Tracings…”

The movie “Tracings…” used to gather embodied knowledge and demonstrate performative process of collecting data presented in this dissertation may be found in a supplemental file named Modi_Sonal Mithal.mov.
Appendix B: Other Interview highlights

One of the respondents described himself as a rock musician playing a village guy, who makes caricatures and posts on the canteen wall. This statement is illustrative of how the global and local concepts still come together in the landscape of Śāntiniketan.

Minds are sophisticated here but lifestyle is simple.

Kopāi River is a lonely place. When I want to be alone I go there. It’s a personal space for me. During summer it gets dry, so I feel it relates to me and my activity at Kalā-Bhavan—joyful. Here no one disturbs others. No one interferes. So I feel free. Kālo Bārī—it is an archive of world mythology. It is a living museum. It is part of our lives. Relationship between Kalā-Bhavan and Sangīt-Bhavan has changed over time because of boundaries. It is more distanced now. I’m feeling just too bad about WH nominations. Make boundaries with trees if you want. A wall has been put between Sāntāl village and urban areas and also between Sāntāl village and campus. We used to go to the village and sketch, stop over at a tea-stall with whose owner we had developed a relation. Viśva-Bhāratī has bulldozed that tea-stall.

240 Respondent number 5, Syed Zoheb Hussain (Master’s student, Printmaking).
241 Respondent number 9, Siddesh Chari (Master’s student, Sculpture).
242 Respondent number 2, Milton Bhattacharya (Master’s student, Painting).
Appendix C: Influences on Tagore the educator

Tagore’s educational ideas have often been compared to those of other education reformers, such as his predecessors Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Friedrich Fröbel and his contemporaries John Dewey and Maria Montessori, who advocated for learning by doing, meaning through active engagement with the material world. Rousseau considered nature as the prime teacher, but, unlike him, Tagore retained a significant role for the teacher. Fröbel and Tagore both advocated harmony with all existences and favored play, domestic, and community activities as part of education. Both appreciated a need to experience joy and festivities and were sensitively aware of the child’s dignity as part of the educational environment.
Appendix D: Influence of Tagore on other institutions

Elmhirst left Šriniketan in 1925 to initiate Dartington Hall, in Devon, England, the main objective of which was to reduce the ill effects of the industrial revolution on rural communities in Europe. His own experiences at Šriniketan and Rabindranāth’s education ideals of self-sufficiency were extremely influential on Elmhirst while he was setting up Dartington Hall.
Appendix E: Teachers at Śāntiniketan

Individuals who taught at Śāntiniketan include Charles F. Andrews, priest of the Church of England, missionary, and educator; Gopala Reddy, cinematographer and producer; Nandalal Bose, modernist painter and first principal at Kalā-Bhavan; Leonard Elmhirst, philanthropist and agricultural economist; Arthur Geddes, geographer and musician; Jogen Chaudhuri, painter; William Winstanley Pearson, botanist; Santidev Ghosh, author, singer, actor, dancer and maestro of Rabindra Sangīt.
Appendix F: Visitors at Śāntiniketan

Visitors to Śāntiniketan have included Mahatma Gandhi, who called Śāntiniketan his second home; Sylvain Levi, Indologist who wrote *Le Théâtre Indien* [The Indian Theater] (1890), a standard treatise on the subject; Moritz Winternitz (1863-1937), a professor of Indian philology and ethnology at the German University, Prague; Sten Konow, Indologist; Fernand Benoit, archaeologist, historian, and curator of the Borély Museum in Marseille; Stella Kramisch (1896-1993), art historian who studied under Joseph Strzygowski at the University of Vienna and laid the foundations for the systematic study of Indian art; James Cousins, Irish writer, playwright, actor, critic, editor, teacher and poet; T’an Yun-Shan (1898-1983), founder-director of Chīnā-Bhavan at the Viśva-Bhāratī University, and promoter of Sino-Indian cultural cooperation; Yonejiro Noguchi, Japanese poet, novelist, and critic; Guiseppe Tucci, Italian scholar of oriental cultures, specializing in Tibet, the history of Buddhism, and Sanskrit; Carlo Formichi, scholar of religion; Arnold Bake, Dutch ethnomusicologist who spent several years in the 1920s and 30s recording and filming music and dance from the classical and non-classical traditions in India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, also transcribing several of Tagore’s songs; Mark Collins, Irish linguist specializing in Munda and Dravidian languages; Shlomit Flaum, Israeli educator; and Vincenc Lesny, Czech Indologist and Sanskritist who taught at the Univerzita Karlova v Praze and came to Viśva-Bhāratī University in 1923 to teach German.
Appendix G: Students at Śāntiniketan

Notable students at Śāntiniketan include Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India; Satyajit Ray, Oscar Award winning director; Amartya Sen, economist, Nobel Laureate; Ramkinker Baij, sculptor and painter, one of the first Indian artists to understand the language of modern Western art and to use it in his sculptures; Mrinalini Sarabhai, celebrated Indian classical dancer and choreographer; Kanika Bandhopadhyay, singer; Udai Sankar, dancer and choreographer, known for adapting Western theatrical techniques to traditional Indian classical dance, thus laying the roots of modern Indian dance imbued with elements of Indian classical, folk, and tribal dance; Mahasveta Devi, writer and human rights activist; Benodebehari Mukherjee, painter, joined Viśva-Bhāratī as one of the first batch of students and continued painting even after he lost his eyesight.
Appendix H: Programs offered at Viśva-Bhāratī

- Bhāshā-Bhavan (Institute of Languages, Literature, and Culture)—Undergraduate and graduate programs in Sanskrit, Bengali, English, Hindi, Oriya, Indo-Tibetan Studies, Chinese, Persian, and Japanese.

- Vidyā-Bhavan (Institute of Humanities & Social Sciences)—Undergraduate and graduate programs in philosophy; comparative religion; economics; history; ancient Indian history, culture and archaeology; geography; mathematics; and journalism and mass communication.

- Śikṣā-Bhavan (Institute of Science)—Undergraduate and graduate programs in physics, chemistry, mathematics, zoology, botany, statistics, environmental science, and computer science.

- Sangīt-Bhavan (Institute of Music, Dance, & Drama)—Undergraduate and graduate programs in Rabindra Sangīt; Hindustani classical music (vocal); Hindustani classical music (instrumental: Sitār/Esrāj/Tablā/Pakhāwaj); and Kathakali and Manipuri Dance.

- Kalā-Bhavan (Institute of Fine Arts)—Undergraduate, graduate, and casual programs in painting, murals, sculpture, graphic art (print making), textile design, ceramics, and history of art.

- Palli-Samgathan Vibhāg (Institute of Rural Reconstruction)—Graduate programs in anthropology and rural development; certificate programs in hand-made paper making, artistic leather craft, batik work, handloom weaving, pottery, and woodworking.

- Palli Śikṣā-Bhavan (Institute of Agriculture)—Undergraduate and graduate programs in agronomy, plant protection, agricultural extension, soil science and agricultural chemistry, and horticulture.
Vinaya-Bhavan (Institute of Education)—Undergraduate and graduate programs in education and physical education.
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**Santiniketan and Rabindranath Tagore’s Vision**


