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## POP-Up: Binding Landscape Architectural Learning and Bookmaking

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### Abstract

*This paper will present a practice of producing artists' books in the teaching of design, as a form of alternative architectural and landscape architectural representation and production. Various pedagogical results have arisen from this, including the importance of the act of making and of crafting products within design learning. The making of books allows 1:1 scaled objects to be produced so students are working at full scale rather than through an intervening medium. Yet interestingly, these books simultaneously work to scale, due to their content. The artist's book has a strong relationship with the model due to its three-dimensional qualities and the reading of the book as a form of 'folded' model is also explored. Books implicitly embrace the notion of documentation, as records of past events. This requires the students to curate, compile, edit and reformat their work; the books they made held the unfurling narrative. This then allows, and values, documentation to be admitted within the design process. This notion of documentation as interpretation acknowledges the recursive and reflective elements within the design process.*

*These ideas will be explored through a series of case studies that use artists' books in various ways to teach design, including the book as documenting site analysis, as a generator of design development, as a presentation tool, and the role of hybrid representation. This paper proposes that artists' books offer a lens through which architectural and landscape architectural representation may be examined and critiqued. Artists' books offer a complementary representation to be explored as a new means of investigating spatial interpretations and propositions in three-dimensional form.*

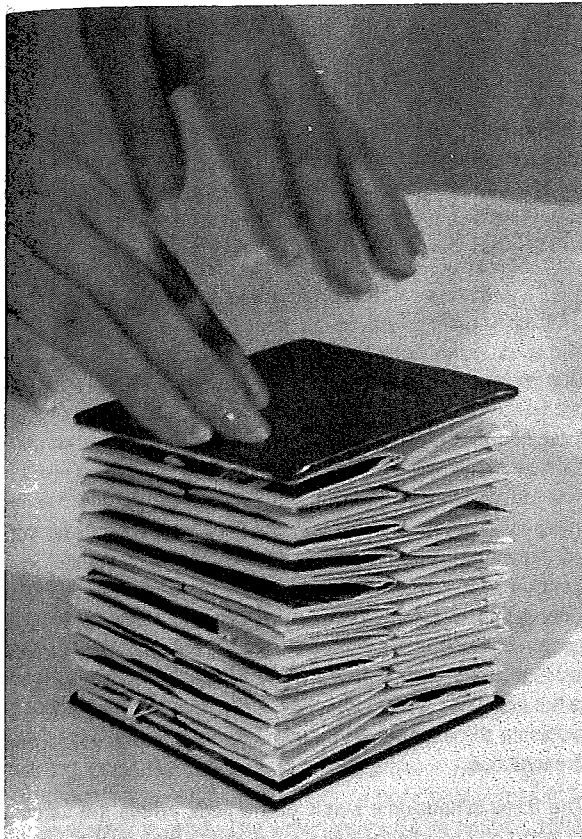
This paper presents an ongoing collaboration that arose in response to a shared frustration with certain conventions of representation within the field of landscape architecture and also a desire to reorient the space of learning within the classroom. The artist's book, as a designed object and container of ideas related to landscape architecture, is the vehicle through which these ambitions are investigated and tested. Since the late 1960s, much discussion has centred on arriving at a definition for the term 'artist's book'. This paper uses the term (from here on in often referred to simply as 'books') to define a work that integrates the formal means of its realisation and production with its thematic or aesthetic issues (Drucker 2004, 2). In other words, the book must in some way acknowledge the medium through which it is communicated. Hence, in an artist's book, 'the content is inextricably linked to its form' (Fraser 2007, 6).

This collaborative teaching practice in landscape architecture employs the concertina book format as a means through which to explore, imagine and represent the urban landscape. The authors have been jointly exploring books and landscape for the past seven years in different teaching scenarios; this paper focuses on a series of electives that are taught in collaboration in the landscape architecture program at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University (RMIT) over two years. Here both student and teacher experiences and outcomes will be reviewed in relation to the project intentions. These intentions have been organised into two main categories: exploring landscape through the book; and creating a space of explorative learning. While described as separate categories, they are of course interconnected. The paper also covers unintended discoveries and reflections arising from the teaching.

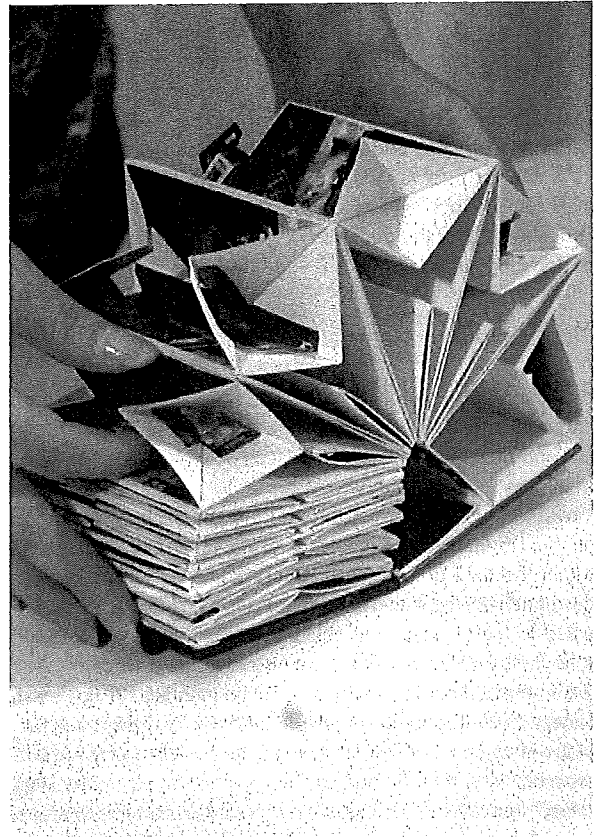
*Figure 36.1: Ting Cao. Dead/ Alive City, 2010, from 'POP-Up: Invisible Cities Melbourne' elective.*

*Figure 36.2: Ting Cao. Dead/ Alive City, 2010, from 'POP-Up: Invisible Cities Melbourne' elective.*

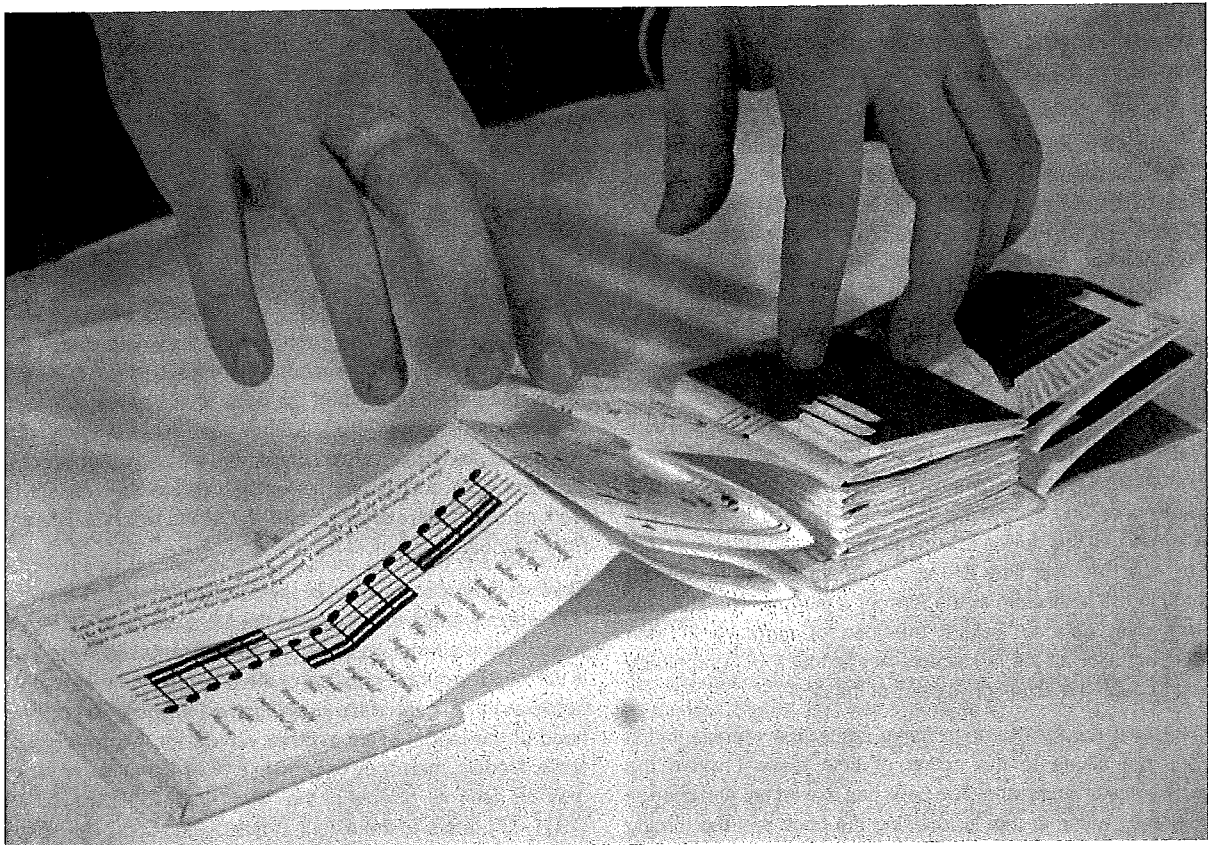
*Figure 36.3: Matthew Conte. Urban Rhythms, 2010, from 'POP-Up: Invisible Cities Melbourne' elective*



▲ Figure 36.1



▲ Figure 36.2 | ▼ Figure 36.3



## Exploring Landscape Through the Book

The concertina book as a representational format within landscape architectural education is conducive to a particular reading of space and of drawings. To examine the book as another three-dimensional, complementary landscape architectural representation places it within the design process. This allows for an examination of the relationship between drawings, landscape process and the book. More specifically, the book as a site for *post factum*, or after-the-fact, documentation is explored. The book is therefore seen as both a full-scale object and a vehicle for the depiction of generative and propositional design ideas at scale.

### *Time, Site and Material*

Designing in the medium of landscape involves working with particular qualities inherent to the field. These include time, site and material. Time encompasses both changes that occur within the landscape over a span of time and the sequential movement as one travels through the landscape. The notion of 'site' is inherently complex and contains infinite potential within the field of landscape architecture. While site is often designed within specific boundaries it is also inextricably connected to the physical and social systems that extend beyond a boundary. Site, therefore, may be seen as a system within the framework of landscape, since boundaries do not exist, except those through ownership. Therefore, to design one part of the landscape, or site, always implies its adjacency within a process. Site, then, is defined by a particular way of looking, rather than being delineated by set parameters. Material may be seen as both the materials of the student; that is, the representations produced that translate ideas on paper, and the materials of the land at full-scale. It is these aspects of time, site and material that conventional representation in landscape architectural practice and education often neglects (Rendell 2007, 185).

In conventional practice, landscape architectural drawings are presented as a static instant. The plan may be read as a snapshot in time, a synchronic sliver of illumination in the process and time of a landscape. The drawings are an idealised moment, omitting the representation of origin, decay or palimpsest. The consequence of a frozen, documented snapshot in time is to elevate that particular moment to represent all moments.

Alternatively, the codex-based format of the book offers the opportunity for sequence to be included within representation. Writer and academic Renée Riese Hubert (1991, 223) writes that within a book, 'a general narrative terrain is carved out where time and space are characterized and implied'. The students use this device to explore how the landscape, or one site, operates over time and space, and their own movement through the landscape in the form of a journey. The students were then able to include the idea of narrative in their representation of the landscape, not textually, but graphically and through the actual physicality of the book.

The static quality of conventional landscape representation does not allude to the notion of time present within the experience of landscape. The book has movement and change inherently within it; that is, opening the book and the turning

of pages, as a performance – 'the book is something that one participates in' (*Books as Art* 1993, viii) – places the book in time. The present tense of reading gives the book a temporal quality. The seeming double-spread stasis co-exists with a cinematic potential in the 'lively hybrid of exhibition, narrative, and object' of the book (Lippard 1985, 49–50). Hence, time is included within landscape representation.

The books made in these electives emphasise the structure of the book object as crucial to the execution of the work. Further possibilities are alluded to through various folded concertina structures where one page onto the next. Therefore the book can be read as a whole or as a series of sequences.

### *The Book as Object*

Due to issues of scale, landscape architecture students do not spend the bulk of their time working on the object of their thoughts; that is, students make scaled drawings rather than full-scale landscapes. Robin Evans (1997, 156) has written that architecture students similarly labour through some intervening medium, never with the final form of the thing that they are proposing. Within design education, the translation from proposals on paper to full-scale projects rarely occurs. Due to this, drawings, rather than being a means to an end, become an end in themselves. Sarah Treadwell (1997) writes analogously of architects that the 'site in which architects work is the drawing'. This approach typically requires the student to elucidate the intention of the work through verbal and visual presentation.

The three-dimensional status of the book invites the student to make and handle their final work, rather than submit scaled images of it. Working with books in landscape architectural education offers an opportunity to alter conventional presentation techniques and modes of representation. Although made up of discrete pages, the book needs to be thought of as a whole, as an entity itself.

Within artists' books, each page makes a contribution to the framework of structure. The relationships within the book do not exist in stasis but within an object that moves in response to a reader's touch (Bright 2005, 11). Hence, the page is not seen as a flat plane upon which an image is printed, but rather as a three-dimensional dual surface.

Although the book is a volume in space, within the book there is both the represented space – the book also allows for references to scale – and the literal space of the openings of the book (Drucker 2004, 283). Hence, books both refer to something else through their content and speak for themselves: they are both subject and object. Therefore the student is working with both referent and the 1:1 scale, which is different from their usual graphical testing.

This twinning of scale – that is, the combination of that which is represented within the book and the full-scale book as object – results in a strong presence of the representation itself. This is achieved through the format of the book and the relationship between the page and the drawings and images. The objecthood of the model offers another vehicle for this twinning of scale. Models, merely by existing in a three-dimensional state, may be seen as objects in their own right. Christian Hubert (1981, 17) refers to the extent of this objecthood: 'The space

of the model lies on the border between representation and actually... neither pure representation nor transcendent object. It claims a certain autonomous objecthood, yet this condition is always incomplete. The model is always a model of.' According to Hubert (1981, 17), although the model achieves some objecthood, its desire is to act as simulacrum, and therefore, the model as representation, is always present. Alternatively, Johanna Drucker (2004, 360) writes in her comprehensive commentary of artists' books:

We enter the space of the book in the openings which position us in relation to a double spread of pages. Here the manipulated scale of page elements becomes spatialized: we are in a physical relation to the book. The scale of the opening stretches to embrace us, sometimes expanding beyond the comfortable parameters of our field of vision, or at the other extreme narrows our focus to a minute point of intimate inquiry.

This suggests that the presence of the book exists more strongly as an object we engage with, rather than as a referent.

The codex format of the book creates containment and exposure: the book is a volume in the space (Lyons 1987, 36). The book may also operate as a 'folded model', where its spatial quality is quite different from that of the contained object of the model. This movement from two-dimensionality to three offers the potential for volume to be included within the book. It does not offer a single image, or aim for a comprehensible view, but rather a codex-based sequential, episodic narrative. The objecthood of the book enables a physical handling, and, as Yusuke Minami (2010, 6) writes, 'a book only comes in to being when it is read'. The writer Henry Sayre (Hubert 1991, 305) describes the book as performance; in this way, the book 'spaces time and temporalizes space' (Cadava 1997, 61). The structure of the book provides the potential for the students to address new materials within their study: a conceptual exploration of ideas and material has a 1:1 outcome.

### Documentation

The word 'document' refers to a record or evidence of events. It implies a chronological sequence; the document comes after the event; that is, it is *post factum*. However, within landscape architecture, the use of the word 'documentation' predominantly refers to working drawings that are made to 'get to' a design, these being the most commonly used form of representation. These drawings are a tangible representation of a proposal that, as yet, has no tangible existence, and so possess an interstitial quality, as premonitions of form yet to come (Benyamin 2007, 90).

A consequence of attributing the name documentation to drawings of the as yet non-existent confuses the definition, which is conventionally understood as a record of what has been. Therefore, to refer to construction drawings as 'documentation' lessens attention on *post factum*, or after-the-event, documentation. Drawings that interpret the 'existing', that is, whose subject matter precedes the drawing, are less dominant within design teaching.

The book inherently has within it the notion of the archive. In producing these books, the students are documenting events

and places. The students use documentation to record the development of ideas, interpret, curate, compile and edit their work. The book, therefore, suggests an alternative format for the expression of these ideas. At the end of each semester at RMIT, the students all produce a portfolio of their design work. Alternatively, the books produced within these electives also embraced the notion of documentation at the beginning of the semester. Hence, these books highlight the propositional possibilities of *post factum* documentation.

Rather than saying *what will be* or *what has been*, the book instead says this is the most *present version* of it. The 'present tense' of the archive relates to the act of interpretation through re-examination. This highlights the importance of documentation as being available for interpretation, as this acknowledges the recursive and reflective nature of the design process.

The book's *post factum* documentation pulls representation out from the shadow of the materialising scheme. Hence, representation as process is brought to the foreground and, therefore, means that representation takes precedence over realised landscape (Allen 2009, 24). The lineage of representation, rather than the landscape proposal as being an endpoint, is then made explicit.

### Creating a Space for Explorative Learning

The 'POP-up' elective was taught twice, in alternate years. The course structure, ambitions and outcomes were consistent in the two courses. Each course began with a text, an instruction and an implied site or journey. In the first class, to bring an element of play and ritual to the process, the students were offered the choice of a blank envelope, which held a different exert from the same book. This offered a particular instruction to direct their individual journey. The student then undertook the journey and documented it in the book format. Each journey had to be replicable, so that the reader could undertake the same journey having read the book.

This format was similar in both electives, but the source text differed. The text for the first elective was drawn from *The Lonely Planet Guide to Experimental Travel* (Antony and Henry 2005), a playful compendium of alternative ways to explore the ordinary in cities, as a critique of the conventional Lonely Planet guidebooks. Readers were invited to take different city journeys, where the methodology may be clear but destination is unknown.

The second elective drew on *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino (1979). In this book, Marco Polo is invited by Kublai Khan to describe the cities he has visited, although it is to Venice that Calvino refers each time. Each student had a description of one of these cities as their generative text. In one text, the city is described as being occupied by the dead as strongly as by the living, and in another, the city is made up of two complementary half cities – the temporary and the permanent – although it is the buildings made of stone and marble which are moved each year. The students were asked to make a collage of the story. They were then asked to select a route in the city centre and recreate Melbourne through the lens of their given text (Figure 36.1 and Figure 36.2).

The final submission for both electives required two identical copies of pop-up concertina books – one copy for the students and one as archive – of particular size and containing a max-

imum of one plan. The students also organised an exhibition of their work within the faculty, and the work was videoed as further documentation.

Design learning through studio teaching is half of the student load in landscape architectural education at RMIT. Design teachers endeavour to create an open space for learning and discovery, in which the lecturer frames the project through a site or method of investigation. The student explores these ideas largely outside the class, and returns for feedback sessions. The main way of providing feedback to the student is through interim and final presentations, during which the student presents their work to a panel of practitioners and teachers with a follow-up discussion. The intention for these sessions is in the manner of an open conversation about the work; that is, a vehicle for reflective practice (Schön 1987). This experience, however, seems to fall short of the initial aspiration. For the student it is a highly stressful situation where they seem to feel judged and sometimes not even heard. For teachers participating on the panel, the sessions tend to become ones of instruction, where the student awaits their assessment and directions.

In comparison, the format of the elective subjects at RMIT allocate fewer credit points, more diverse content and less time – three hours per week as opposed to design's six – and, hence, the stakes seem lower. This allows for an exploration of alternative teaching models, which focus strongly on learning through practical experience and delivering feedback differently.

### *Learning through Practice*

These electives had a clear set of aims and tasks which were governed by the aim 'learning through doing': the semester's framework emphasised a practical approach. This was achieved by working within a set time constraint with intensively taught classes, and developing tools for bookbinding and making in class. The limited bookbinding techniques that these books employed were taught as a core part of the course. Predominantly class time was a practical experience: the students were involved in making, rather than talking about it once the work was completed.

This gave the students new tools and skills, but also offered the opportunity for the work to be made, and then remade. The potential problem of associated preciousness of the made object was avoided and also lowered the possibility of student procrastination. The students worked independently in a workshop type situation, looking at and discussing each other's act of making. The classes developed their own momentum as each book was refined, and the students developed a rapport with their fellow classmates.

### *Feedback*

Due to the book's objecthood and its presence at a 1:1 scale, the work was not critiqued as design studio work is usually, that is, in pin-up sessions or in final presentation. Feedback occurred in a different, more informal way as work was left on desks to be reviewed by peers. In these discussions, students explained how they read each other's work. This method may prioritise the reader and their interpretations, separate from the

maker's intention. The interim review was done on an individual basis, rather than as a group and the book was submitted for assessment at the end of the course. In this way, an environment of open discussion was created.

From the teachers' perspective, the format enabled a more constructive and enjoyable relationship with the students, as our role was one of facilitation rather than enforcing production. The students each took ownership of their projects and sought input from each of us. The written student feedback, completed at the end of the courses, reinforced a reciprocal experience, as stated by one student: 'Feedback felt more like support and guidance than critique. This supported the idea that nothing is "wrong" in creative process but needs to be understood and built upon' (survey 2010). Another student wrote: 'It wasn't so much about steering us in a particular direction, but more like supervising, checking in from time to time. The groundwork was laid and it was up to us' (2010). As teachers, we had aspired to this in our teaching but rarely achieved it successfully.

### **Outcomes**

The outcomes of the course included high levels of student ambition of their work, realised through the opportunity to discover crafting through making. The book provided a framework through which the existing landscape could be seen, rather than proposing changes to the landscape itself. The students gained new skills of making, which were shared as they worked within the same room. By remaking their work from mock-up prototypes to final books, the students learnt from each stage they produced.

In creating a space for explorative learning, the student's relationship with the teachers shifted. By remaking the work, the students came to their own assessment and instead of waiting for direction, they engaged in a discussion about their work and the projects of the class. In exhibiting the books the students were able to watch others reading, handling and interacting with their work. This year the student work was exhibited in display cabinets in the RMIT University Library. The video archive offers a new medium and space in which it can be exhibited and archived online.

Each of the books proposed a different way to document and, hence, see the city as each student selected their own site or journey. One architecture student documented the journey within the Nicholas Building, built in the 1920s. This book unfolded vertically with interior photographs and cut-outs referring to the window fenestration. Another student documented fast and slow journeys through the city, travelling by tram and foot. One side of the concertina pages showed the fast journey, with fragmented and sometimes blurred views from a tram, and the other side showed the clear and distinct views from walking. Another student journeyed through the city and composed a soundscape that was generated by the occurrence and rhythm of certain urban design elements (Figure 36.3). This book was composed of two, inter-folding lengths, so the process of reading revealed shifting spreads of pages, similar to conducting the book while listening to the sound.

In these electives, the students did not propose a landscape design intervention on a site, as they would in a conventional design studio course. However, they did design a way of

seeing which necessarily informs thinking about, and thus designing within, landscape. One student said: 'It's opened my eyes to new methods of representation and particularly design development... landscape architecture doesn't end with plans and renders' (survey 2010). The students' appreciation of the lineage of representation, rather than the landscape proposal as an endpoint in the design process, is important. The students saw the validity of a different outcome from an investigation of landscape architectural space. The books that they produced were propositional in their reading of space, as are plans, sections and elevations of a proposed design.

The students gained skills in manipulating different formats for communication in areas that had neglected elements of landscape architecture. They addressed the notions of narrative and sequence, through movement and time, while predominantly working through a medium at full-scale.

### Unintended Discoveries and Reflections

Although no students from the first elective undertook the second, having the books from the earlier course as class reference allowed the second group of students to progress further. Their work extended the ambitions of the first set of books produced. Also the role of each teacher changed; during the course of the teaching, there had been a transference of knowledge and technical skills.

Since the book format is unfamiliar for many students, they learnt the need to rethink the original set-up of their work. Wall-mounted A1 or A0 presentation boards are an ingrained format for landscape architecture students. Instead, the three-dimensional book holds two-dimensional photographs, images, montages and plans quite differently. The book is held in the hands, closely and intimately, while the pages are turned. This changed format insists that students reinvestigate the relationship of image and text.

The course structure and its product – books – enable a way of thinking and making landscape that is worthy of further development. Having run the course twice with excellent outcomes in terms of the quality of the books made and student feedback, it would be interesting to further explore the potential for books within design studio teaching. Possibly it is the structure and framework of the elective course that frees students from the stress and mindset of the design studio, but equally there may be qualities of the teaching model that helps. The authors are pursuing an investigation into translating representation into landscape design.

### Conclusion

Within landscape architecture, documentation as a record is not the dominant practice. Instead, representation that is a visualisation of the non-existent dominates. Books, with *post factum* landscape architecture as their content, are not proposing a future landscape. Instead, they investigate the components of time, process, material and the notion of the archive, in their making. The propositional and generative nature of this representational format brings interpretation and reflection to the act of documentation.

Books are referential but are simultaneously an actual. The students' work is able to be handled and read by a wide audience and exists at full-scale while including elements of scale; that is, the students are working with a full-scale medium while simultaneously referencing the landscape. Rather than the book operating as a means of dissemination of images, the books from these electives rely on the form of the book for their execution. The page then is a bound or sequential component that is crucial. The codex aspect forms the conceptual underpinnings of the work (Drucker 2004, 126).

Landscape architecture requires a range of representational methods, as much thinking occurs in the mutable zone that occurs when shifting between representations. Artists' books have a place as a complementary three-dimensional representation, with an important role within landscape architecture.

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