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"A place for mutual reconciliation and peace?"

Bridging the north-south. Cross-cultural understanding in tourism.

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A place for mutual reconciliation and peace?

Bridging the north-south….Cross-cultural understanding in tourism.
Aalborg Botanic Garden and writer's path an experience of simultaneous visions.

ABSTRACT: How can we design urban environments rich in experience for embodied learning and play that support knowledge in the making? And how can knowing the metaphysical roots and fundament of other cultures create an environment for cross-cultural understanding?

To study the interrelations between garden, architecture, artefacts, media, discourses, embodied interaction and learning in educational environments, we as architects and urban planners must investigate and analyse the links between leisure, learning, architecture, narrative and interaction.

The first part will look into the history of the illusive, illuminated towers and gardens of "Luna city", "Tivoli" and "Disney World", a world of illusion, simulation and experience described and analysed through the two French philosophers Baudrillard and Foucault, and into the origin of the multiform garden through Borges' novel "The garden of forking paths."

The second part will look into the new laboratories of the virtual and actual worlds of architects such as Marcos Novak, Usman Haque, OMA, and Kas Oosterhuis. They create mobile, interactive, sensitive architectural objects and environments for the future, which can interact with the environment and the users. These are gardens, towers and architectural objects based on concepts, interaction and metaphors that give us a glimpse into the future.

The third part is based on a case study of the design process of "the writer's path", on the rules and design tools in new games such as "Farcry", "Crysis", and "Half Life 2". The aim of this part is also to look at a case study of how architects can use game tools in the design process and thus create a better dialogue between user and designer. Learning from a case study on history, philosophy and the discourse of urban development, this paper will suggest and discuss concrete solutions for the new Queen's Garden in the city of Aalborg.

The Queen's Garden or the Peace Park contains six conceptual parts. The concept and intention of the park is: Knowing the metaphysical roots and fundament of other cultures can create urban environments rich in experience for embodied learning and cross-cultural understanding. The park is an attempt to create a modern, contemporary and spiritual green heart for the city of Aalborg. The six conceptual parts are: 1. Square of the four religions introduced: Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and Hindu. 2. The two Islands contain parts of Greek mythology and Shinto. 3. Nordic mythology is a part of the Crystal Forest. 4. The writer's path leads from east to west, introducing past and contemporary writing & storytelling. 5. The lake and the canals are the core of the park and lead from north to south.6. The orangery and echo house introduce exotic plants and flowers.

Finally, this part will try to present methodological and analytical tools for the work, teaching and research at the architects' schools. The case will try to unfold new methodologies and future learning scenarios in order to reinvent, rethink and recreate the city of Aalborg and other cities.

The Garden of Forking Paths.

We are in the same position as the main character in the classical multiform story "The Garden of Forking Paths"[1] (1967) by Jorge Luis Borges. We are divided between an infinite range of possible choices and possibilities. Here, the main pivotal point of the story is a seemingly pointless murder. The narrator and main character is the German spy Dr. Yu Tsun, who decides to kill a man, choosing him by picking him out from the phone book.

Dr. Yu is hunted by the British agent Captain Richard Madden, and it is only a matter of hours before he catches up with Yu. The only way that he can tell the leaders in Berlin which city to bomb is by killing a man whose name is also that of the city. Because he knows that the newspapers will mention his arrest and his seemingly pointless murder of an elderly man called Albert.

But as chance has it, this Albert possesses the manuscript of "The Garden of Forking Paths", written by a distant relative of Yu, the writer Tsùi Pen. This book is a circular narrative; a book in which the first pages are identical with the last, and consequently the book is theoretically an infinite part of eternity. Yu knows that he has one hour to decide before Richard Madden arrives to stop him. Should he kill Albert or befriend him? In two minds, he sits down and speaks with Albert, who tells about "The Garden of Forking Paths".

-"In all fictional works, each time a man is confronted with several alternatives, he chooses one and eliminates the others; in fiction of Tsùi Pen, he chooses – simultaneously – all of them. He creates, in this way, diverse futures, diverse times which themselves also proliferate and fork. Here then, is the explanation of the novel's contradiction.

Fang, let us say, has a secret; a stranger calls at his door; Fang resolves to kill him. Naturally, there are several possible outcomes: Fang can kill the intruder, the intruder can kill Fang, they both can escape, they both can die, and so forth. In the work of Tsùi Pen, all possible outcomes occur; each one is the point of departure for other forkings. Sometimes, the paths of this labyrinth converge: for example, you arrive at this house, but in one of the possible paths you are my enemy, in another my friend. If you will resign yourself to my incurable pronunciation, we shall read a few pages."[2]

Yu Tsun is caught in a web of possibilities, the garden of the forking paths is a metaphor of time, and the story is about the uncountable possible actions in time that we are surrounded with. Yu is overwhelmed:

"Once again I felt the swarming sensation of which I have spoken. It seemed to me that the humid garden that surrounded the house was infinitely saturated with invisible persons. Those persons were Albert and I, secret, busy and multiform in other dimensions of time. I raised my eyes and the tenuous nightmare dissolved. In the yellow and black garden there was only one man; but this man was as strong as a statue… this man was approaching along the path and he was Captain Richard Madden."[3]

Yu is arrested for the murder of Albert and learns in prison that the Germans have bombed the city, indicating that they have understood the message in Berlin. He is sentenced to death by hanging and sits in jail, devastated by remorse and weary of life, and regrets his choices. Now there seems to be no multiform in other dimensions of time in which he and Albert can go through other less fatal variations of their encounter.

The garden of the forking paths is gloomy and is a very exact metaphor of the way that our lives may be in the future if we do not understand the importance of the choices that we make. We have to choose and we cannot let anyone else do it for us.

19th April 1905 Einstein's Dreams

In 1993 Alan Lightman wrote the novel "Einstein's Dreams" which consists of a range of "dreams" dreamt by Einstein when he was a young clerk. They are all concerned with the concept of time and reflect different theories of the nature of time and the ways that we live with it and experience it. In one of the dreams he describes a world in which time is three-dimensional like space.

A house is constructed in three mutually perpendicular directions, length, breadth and height. Similarly, a person may participate in three different time directions. Each decision-making point is split into three, and each is as real as the others or has equal validity.

In the dream a man is described: one November morning he is standing on a balcony in Berne thinking about visiting a woman in Fribourg: "His hands grip the metal balustrade, let go, grip again. Should he visit her? Should he visit her?"[4]

In the first world: he decides not to visit her. He forgets her, goes to work and goes out with his friends. Three years later he meets a woman in a clothes store in Neuchatel, and he moves in with her. They live quietly and peacefully and grow old together.

In the second world: he decides that he has to see her and goes to Fribourg. He only knows her fleetingly. There is something volatile about her, but he goes anyway. He leaves his job in Berne and moves in with the woman. They live a violent cat-and-dog life together but stay together in spite of everything.

In the third world: he also decides to see her again, but he thinks that there is something volatile and calculating about her. He goes to Fribourg anyway. They meet, have tea together. After an hour she says that she has to go. They say their goodbyes; he takes the train back to Berne and ends up standing on the balcony again.

How is it at all possible to live in a world that is split into three at every point of decision?
We are not always conscious of the choices that we make, but there are days upon which the range of our possibilities seem to have an almost paralysing effect on us, they all seem equally credible – but once we have chosen, we cannot change it, can we? Our lives are not a virtual game in which we can explore all the ramifications of a decision.
In the scope of time there are uncountable worlds and possibilities, but is there always one decision that is better than the others, and would you automatically choose that one?
Lightman queries it in the following manner: "Some make light of decisions, arguing that all possible decisions will occur. In such a world, how could one be responsible for his actions? Others hold that each decision must be considered and committed to, that without commitment there is chaos. Such people are content to live in contradictory worlds, so long as they know the reason for each."[5]

"Groundhog Day"(1993) is a very modern film. It reflects the complete split-up of our everyday life and our own otherwise-so-linear courses of life in which we constantly become increasingly aware of our many options.

TV channels are easily changed, the job is easily changed, the wife is easily changed and the children can be taken care of by the state, leaving one free to remarry over and over again. We live an everyday life that is increasingly characterised by a multiform way of thinking.
We are continually reminded of the parallel possibilities that we can choose.
The problem no longer consists of whether there is a choice but whether we can live with and believe in the choice that we have made, well aware that all the time parallel possibilities exist and that we are not sinking into a labyrinth in which all the options become grey and meaningless.
50 years ago there was only one choice. A life, a job and a wife. The book that you bought at the bookstore had one story told in a straight line from beginning to end.
Today, the story fragments are blowing about our ears as soon as we turn on a screen. And our children play their way through uncountable games constructed upon a multiform plotlines.

In a cinematic mode, films such as "Groundhog Day" (1993) by Harold Ramis and David Lynch´s "Lost Highway"(1997) and "Inland Empire"(2006) have developed their entirely own cyclical way of describing the world; things that in one medium predict the development in a new medium in which the story has many tracks. In the book "Hamlet on the Holodeck", Janet H. Murray points out that the dramaturgy and narrative techniques of the future no longer unequivocally will rest upon linear narrative as we know it today, but rather upon "the multiform story"; that is, narratives with several access points for the user and with several more opportunities for interaction between the user and the narrative. Janet H. Murray writes about the new media:
"As these utopian and dystopian fictions remind us, we rely on works of fiction, in any medium, to help us understand the world and what it means to be human. Eventually all successful storytelling technologies become "transparent": We lose consciousness of the medium and see neither print nor film but only the power of the story itself. If digital art reaches the same level of expressiveness as these older media, we will no longer concern ourselves with how we are receiving the information. We will only think about what truth it has told us about our lives."[6]

Through creating temporary autonomous zones in Berlin's underground and abandoned building sites, Lebbeus Woods tried to set free a collective and anarchic architecture, to which no one could claim ownership. The structures could develop whenever necessary, being loosely based upon a flexible net of high-velocity optical fibre cables, and could disappear again according to the citizens' wishes.
Above Paris, Woods imagined that floating structures could develop and disappear again.
In the same city, Bernard Tschumi realised his "Parc de la Vilette" (1982) in an abandoned and desolate area, in cooperation with Derrida. Here, the park was constructed from several layers: the grid, the dots, the lines and the random topographical flat structures. The Russian Constructivists' work on archetypes and weightless spatial structures (1919-1923) and indeed the red colour of the abstract shapes show how Tschumi is deeply indebted to Malevitch, Chernikov, Rodechenko and El Lissitzky.
The fundamental principles of the deconstructionists are a new set of architectural working principles such as folding, displacement and transformation. Bernard Tschumi and Peter Eisenman started to rethink the architectural idiom in the 1980s together with Derrida.
Derrida writes that "Folies" is the right word for Bernard Tschumi's folies. In English, it means madness, mania, crazy, silly, summer pavilion and meaningless. It is the contrast between form, non-content and possibility that Tschumi is playing on. Here, the architecture does not necessarily have a meaning but a potential.

Derrida explains it as follows:

"The *folies* put into operation a general dislocation; they draw into it everything that, until *maintenant*, seems to have given architecture meaning. More precisely, everything that seems to have given architecture over to meaning. They deconstruct first of all, but not only, the semantics of architecture."[7]

The folies are the dots in a grid that they do not fill out, but in which they indicate a space, a space of potentialities, it is a confrontation with the idea that architecture must have a meaning.

There must be an interaction between form and content, this is what determines the sign's signifier. We have returned to the three-dimensional schema of the myth and of Roland Barthes: The signifier, the signified and the sign. "The folies" are simply "the sign" momentarily emptied of signifier and signified. As with "Naked Lunch", it is possible to enter the story at any point, the semantics of architecture and story have been broken down.

The open and multiform architectural work exists and is in process both in virtual and physical space.

Virtual space opens up for a new dramaturgy and an architecture based upon an architectural form dealing with transformations and metamorphoses as the fundamental principles. In Italo Calvino's book "Invisible Cities", he describes the traveller's journey between countless possible worlds and cities:

"Arriving at each new city the traveller finds again a past of his that he did not know he had: the foreignness of what you no longer are or no longer possess lies in wait for you in foreign, unpossessed places. Elsewhere is a negative mirror. The traveller recognises the little that is his, discovering the much he has not had and will never have."[8]

"Everything I saw, I saw only once – and never again". This is the melancholic conclusion made by Jens Christian Grøndahl's travelling narrator in the film "A Traveller's Tale"[9], but it is a conclusion from the linear story.

The new era's traveller in virtual space has several possibilities, he seems to be able to experience his journey over and over again and try out the multiple paths of the story until he has tried everything.

Calvino's book tells of 55 cities that Marco Polo has visited and described to the emperor Kublai Khan. Perhaps some of them are fabricated, perhaps they are cities which they fabricate together, perhaps it is Venice that Marco Polo describes. It does not matter, it is the images and the idea of the places that are important, and they can be read in random order.

Similarly the story that Borges describes in "The garden of forking paths."[10] It is a circular story with many plot lines; it is not linear but rather multiform in its narrative structure. It is a series of disconnected images and scenes that the reader himself connects.

Virtual reality is not a medium but a meta-medium that brings several media together, and it is no longer so much about creating a story as it is about designing and "building" worlds.

The stories in VR media are the stories about worlds to be explored. Just as when we travel and arrive at new and strange cities, our curiosity is a part of the story in the new world.

"The ultimate gate"

In the story "Through the Gates of the Silver Key" by the American writer of weird fiction and horror H. P. Lovecraft, (1890- 1937) the main character Carter reaches "The ultimate gate". It is a time portal and a multiform access point, allowing Carter to experience his life story in a simultaneous now. "Then the waves increased in strength and sought to improve his understanding, reconciling him to the multiform entity of which his present fragment was an infinitesimal part. They told him that every figure of space is but the result of the intersection by a plane of some corresponding figure of one more dimension – as a square is cut from a cube, or a circle from a sphere. The cube and sphere, of three dimensions, are thus cut from corresponding forms of four dimensions, which men know only through guesses and dreams; and these in turn are cut from forms of five dimensions, and so on up to the dizzy and reachless heights of archetypal infinity. The world of men and of the gods of men is merely an infinitesimal phase of an infinitesimal thing – the three-dimensional phase of that small wholeness reached by the first gate, where Umr at-Twail dictates dreams to the Ancient Ones. Though men hail it as reality, and band thoughts of its many-dimensioned original as unreality, it is in truth the very opposite. That which we call substance and reality is shadow and illusion, and which we call shadow and illusion is substance and reality."[11]

Carter's biggest fear is losing his identity, because when he discovers the multiple simultaneous layers in the multiform moment, his usual "I" disintegrates and becomes not one person but many persons, he is in several places at once, he is the boy in the field in Arkham and he is the grown man. He is a quasi-Carter in a space-time continuum.

But with this new consciousness, he also becomes caught inside this "Portal". After travelling in time in order to find the answer to the origin of the portal, he returns in a different physical form, namely as an alien who must disguise himself as a "human being", perhaps he is changed forever and ends up an ultimate ethereal Carter outside space and time as a phantom and even more as a cosmic intelligence and state of consciousness. To a certain degree, this is reminiscent of Job's destiny in "The Lawnmower Man"(1992), where he escapes into virtual space, only to become a bodiless intelligence in Cyberspace.

Multiform architecture and the open work

Now that we seem to be facing a radical change in our way of seeing and using architecture, it becomes important to consider and try out some of these new approaches. Luigi Prestinenza puts up a hypothesis in which he states. "If architectural forms change, our brains will be prompted to think differently, to be structured using more flexible, less oppressive forms, to explore new dimensions of thought. Culminating in an ability to overturn our destinies, seeing life not as a temporal linear sequence with beginning and an end, as suggested by the linear and homogeneous space-time of our constructed environment."[12]

He does not answer the hypothesis directly, but refers to Umberto Eco's paper on the poetics of the open work, which contains a wide range of explanatory and defining terms about the nature of the multiform and the way that we should understand it.

Eco ends with a summary of his examinations, emphasising three levels of intensity connected with the "open" work: "Thus, we have seen that:

1) the "open" works, in so far as they are in movement, are characterised by an invitation to create the work together with the artist;

2) on a broader level where the work in movement is what is special you will find works which are already physically complete, however "open" for a continuous gemmation of internal relationships, which the recipient is to discover and choose during the perception itself of the totality of stimulation;

3) any work of art, even being produced according to an explicit or implicit poetics of necessity, is basically open to a virtually endless series of possible solutions each of which gives the work new life by following a perspective, a taste and a personal execution."[13]

With these three levels of intensity, Eco pinpoints something central within most art forms and media. Tschumi's "Parc de la Vilette" contains these levels as an open architectural work. A wide range of films and novels have attempted to pin down this open work, but whereas their narrative forms are linear to a certain extent, the new DVD players have made it possible to decompose and reconstruct the different film scenes in new ways. In the more classical literary works such as Burrough's "Naked Lunch", Italo Calvino's "Invisible Cities" and Alan Lightman's "Einstein's Dreams", it is possible to enter the story at any point.
In their "A Thousand Plateaus", Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have realised an open work which can be read in the same way that we play a CD listening to some of our favourite songs: randomly and with repetitions of some of the songs because they have certain special qualities.

Actual and virtual ruins, hellscapes and dreamscapes

The acopalypse is a Sci-fi genre in its own and it is indeed mainstream and the ruins of the Underworld has a special ruin value in the last game "Crysis"(2007) from Crytek the destructive landscape created of a alien invasion on earth becomes almost "sublime" in its infinite complex and detailed horror, and the sound of the aliens in the sky creates instant chill. The landscape of hell in mainstream games, comics and films that unfolds the aesthetics of the vision of the apocalypse is constructed and created again and again and that image is a more common image, that the image of a possible heaven, heaven don't sell tickets, hell is a real "Blockbuster".
The "sublime" is a term in aesthetics whose fortunes revived under postmodernism after a century or more of neglect. It refers to the experience of pleasurable anxiety that we experience when confronting wild and threatening sights like, for example, as in "Crysis" the massive craggy erupting mountain, in a cold icy storm and black against the sky, looming terrifyingly in our vision.
The "sublime experience" as the German philosopher Schopenhauer coins it: "a pleasure from perceiving objects that threaten to hurt or destroy the observer"[14] has reappeared in our virtual world and we play the experience again and again, and in games we can die again and again and redo our mistakes until we do it right and then we win. We simulate a possible meeting with hell as Dante in "Crysis" (2007) and "Half-life2" (2004) and the landscape and architecture the "Level" is carefully designed by level and game designers but they lean heavy on their classical roots from the work of artist as Hieronymus Bosch, Piranesi, Sandro Botticelli, William Blake, and Gustave Doré. The sublime is also illustrated in Romantic painters as Caspar David Friederich from the 19th century in his work he shows how small and insignificant we are as humans against the forces of nature.

In "Crysis the level design are leans on Dantes inferno and the "Nine circels of Hell" we begin our voyage in the dark wood as Dante, and after a long and dangerous journey we are descending trough a large excavation to the bottom access of the alien mountain cave and we are climbing inside the mountain of Purgatory to the final confrontation with the alien forces (Satan) in the core of the mountain. The climbing of the alien mountain becomes a symbolic struggle and each level that you win and overcome, represent a intermediate aim on the road to purgatory. "In Half-life2" our voyage begins in the ruins of metropolis and the goal is the alien mega structure at the center of town, it is not a mountain but we must climb it to confront the alien forces of evil.

The overall structure is based on the classical Journey of the hero, Joseph Campbell has in his book "The Hero with a thousand faces" Campbell explain the overall common structure in myths and fairytales how the archetypical journey of the protagonist develops he calls it the rites of passage:" separation-initiation-return"

"A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man."[15] In the videogames we are the hero and we are taken the dangerous journey that begins in the dark woods. This is why the videogames is so fascinating we become heroes, and can experience heaven and hell without dying.

You may experience some kind of "Katharsis" on your journey trough "Crysis" but its not a "Memory theatre" as Dantes inferno that has a precise architecture so that you can remember all of the deadly sins and the punishment that goes with them and later remember the seven virtues but in Half life you meet all the collaborators with the alien forces you meet all kind of zombies as in the underworld of Hades and Dantes inferno but the main point in Crysis and Half-life2 is that you can travel forward in time to hell and back without dying you can taste the sense of immortality and that's simulation that is hard to compel with. In Disneyland you can travel backwards and experience your childhood. Playing "Crysis" is there any possible kind of reconciliation in it? Can war and conflict be reconciled trough playing videogames? Do we become numb and senseless by playing, or could we say that if we all are playing the same games we share a common human condition and fate, the obstacles and struggles are the same to all of us?

There is a potential in gaming that can be described as an possible agent of peace, you can go any where meet any one the world is open, so why don't it reflects in mainstream games?

Coney Island & Disneyland – the Perfect Simulation
In "Delirious New York", Rem Koolhas describes how in 1903 Coney Island was a true mini-Manhattan and a hysterical experimentarium where everything was done to create illusions. The starving masses came flowing out of New York in their spare time, demanding entertainment.
"At night, the radiance of millions of electric lights which glow at every point and line and curve of the great play city's outlines lights up the sky and welcomes the home- coming mariner thirty miles from the shore."[16]
One of the biggest attractions, "Luna City" was during the day a chaos of white-painted boards and construction elements, not until after dark and with the lights on did the city become "real", in the same

way that Las Vegas was and is completely dependent on watts to make the signs, the animations, and the arcade games function, just as Venturi describes it in "Learning from Las Vegas"; "If you take the sign away, there is no place, the desert town is intensified communication along the highway."[17]

Las Vegas is a city made for speed. Iconography, animation, and watts are the building blocks of the city. At night the city comes to life, the city is a neon mirage, it is an electric field. To a certain degree, the same is true for many of the big malls that are cropping up in the suburbs around our cities. If we remove the signs, there is no longer a place.

In Venturi's optics, Las Vegas has become the first prototype for a future landscape in cyberspace. These "pleasure zones" such as Disneyland, Las Vegas, Xanadu, and Alhambra influence the first attempts with 3D internet. These are places like Alphaworld and Active World. However, Luna City may have been the first electric city, but too folksy and loud to be remembered.

In Los Angeles, which has become rich on celluloid dreams, and whose main industry is the world-wide film and media machine Hollywood, lies one of these classic pleasure zones, Disneyland. The place that mediates and facilitate the dream of the eternally lost childhood, and as adults we are only able to look back at the lost enchanted world of childhood because we as adults have arrived at "reality". Baudrillard explains;

"Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is unreal"[18].

To Baudrillard, it is obvious that Disneyland is located in the most unreal, postmodern, and chaotic place. The city that is not a city, but a highway with warehouses, slum, and carparks: the film city Los Angeles. Just by strongly contrasting the surrounding city, Los Angeles confirms the idea that Disneyland is fiction, that Disneyland is a dream machine and, therefore, completely "unreal". Baudrillard views Disneyland as a deterrence machine that can sustain the idea that what is outside is the true "reality". He calls it a;

"Deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate the fiction of the real in the opposite camp."[19]

Viewed in this perspective, "The Matrix" with its dystopian vision of how simulation has taken over could hint at a possibility to escape. When considering everything, Disneyland may be more real than the matrix ruling outside.

The French critic and architect Paul Virilio, one of the worlds most visionary and well-formulated in the discussion of the new parallel world, how it is going to look like and what we are to do with it says: "A single door for entering and exiting will no longer suffice. Riemannian space…amorphous collection of pieces that are juxtaposed but not attached to each other. Pure patchwork with an infinite porosity of structure, like a sponge, "A single door for entering and exiting will no longer suffice. Riemannian space…amorphous collection of pieces that are juxtaposed but not attached to each other. Pure patchwork with an infinite porosity of structure, like a sponge. Bed becomes chair becomes table

becomes wall becomes room becomes building becomes infrastructure. Continuous like film, an architecture based on duration and flow, from the actual to the virtual, and from the virtual to the actual[20] Luigi Prestinenza asks if it is possible to work on this "other level" as an architect: "Can we work on an architecture which is not only metaphorical, but also a "creator of metaphors," which leaves its own decodification open, free, structured/non-structered and suggests and offers to the user the possibility of constructing "his own story?"[21]

The park as a spiritual garden and a learning environment

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?
"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the cat.
"I don't much care where…" said Alice
"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the cat
"…so long as I get somewhere," Alice added as an explanation.
"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the cat, "if you only walk long enough."[22]

Looking trough the keyhole into the Deans Garden of the Christ Church College in Oxford Lewis Carroll was already lost in a web of possible beginnings and endings and lost in a enchanted world of strangers, strange behaviour and constantly surreal shifts in time, place, substance and scale. But the heroin in Carroll's tale Alice was curious, and to understand and grasp the strange and alien you need to be fearless and curios. Wonderland is a "garden of forking paths" or a park with surprising shift of place and content through a interactive architecture and environment, The park is a place for redemption and pleasure, the perfect place for bringing the known and the unknown together.
We have many words for this enclosure, this special place closed of from the outside world: garden, yard, garten, jardin, gardino, hortus, paradise, paradise, park, parc, parquet, and court.

All cultures has a special attachment and name to the garden and the park, in the Bible its called the Garden of Eden or paradise. The Greek heaven is the Garden of the Hesperides. In Islam it goes by the name of Jannah. In Buddhism it is Nirvana, and the Apostle Paul speaks of the Celestial garden. In our everyday lives the garden is a small symbolic representation of paradise and the park becomes our peaceful place out of time, men have trough history often sought to create gardens that survive them and gave them a part of immortality.
But is it possible to bring fragments that represent these many different concepts of the eternal garden together, and can the similarities and differences become implicit embedded into the visual experience of the garden without losing the individual significance of each belief?

The British garden architect Tom Turner explains how the garden has developed into three classes of primary gardens: "For the body, for activity for the spirit". In the Koran Allah "Seated himself upon his

throne, and imposed laws on the sun and moon"[23]. In the Bible the creation of the garden happen when God breathing life into dust.

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.
And the Lord planted a garden eastward in Eden: and there he put the man whom he had formed.
And out of the ground made the lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.
And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four headwaters."[24] The river in Eden was parted into the four rivers: Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, Euphrates.

For all those who do good deeds there is an afterlife in Eden, in the Koran heaven itself is commonly described in verse 35 of Surah Al-Ra'd it says: "The parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised! Beneath it flow rivers. Perpetual is the fruits thereof and the shade therein. Such is the End of the Righteous; and the end of the unbelievers is the Fire." In the Koran Sura 55 (verse 46 - 62) mentioned two sets of two gardens, that sounds as a garden dived into four. A famous feature of many Islamic gardens, though not all of them, is a lay-out called 'Chahar Bagh'[25] an ideal Chahar Bagh[26] with four channels of water flowing out from a fountain in the centre to channels round edge of garden. The garden is divided into four parts, linked by bridges over the water channels. The Chahar Bagh can be created in many variations and the four water channels are often associated with the four rivers of Paradise, described in the Koran, as in the Bible which flow to the four quarters of Heaven or from them towards the centre, the garden becomes a symbolic representation of paradise on earth. Some famous examples of the 'Chahar Bagh' lay-out are the Court of the Lions in the Alhambra, Granada, Spain, the Garden of Fin, Kashan, Iran and the Taj Mahal garden in Agra, India.

"All things are numbers"

Since the majority of the Islamic countries are located in the hot dry regions with an oasis culture one of the major problem has been the precious water, the Islamic paradise Janna[27] is a garden with shady trees and with many springs and rivers that flow with water, milk, honey and wine (that does not intoxicate) the springs are also spiced with camphor and ginger. Paradise appears to be a garden landscape enclosed by walls. Marianne Barrucand professor in Islamic art and archeology explains that: "The Koran gives no precise guidelines for the creation of a garden. All that can be inferred from the sacred text is the importance of shady trees, flowing water, a protective outer wall. The scattered, richly decorated that adorn the landscape, and the absence of flowers, grottos, and ponds..However, it would be wrong to consider the very real Islam art of the garden exclusively- as often happens- in a religious an literary context. Between heaven and earth there is a multitude of diverse and beautiful gardens"[28]. The Lions court in Alhambra is a precise axial symmetrical court, and in so much Islamic art the abstract and geometrical patterns as in the arabesque tiles seems to be a fundamental rule and a principle based on the abstraction of motifs originating in nature, the model and ideal is the true art in the nature.

Eight' is also the number associated with Paradise in Islam, in the Jahan Nama Garden from the 13th century CE in the city of Shiraz in Iran, there is an eight-sided pavilion at the centre. There are eight cypresses on each side of the paths leading to it. There is a long water channel which is divided into eight sections, each containing eight fountains. All in all there is 64 fountains which stretches nearly to the garden wall. There are large areas of colorful planting in geometric flower beds yellow and purple pansies, red, purple and white stock.

Geometry was also essential for the Greek, the Pythagorean school originated the belief that "all things are number" Greek architecture was based on mathematical proportions, the relationship between the width and the height of a column, the width and the height of the temple front was based on harmonic proportions. According to Tom Turner it is: "Neoplatonic ideas lie behind the Islamic and Christian square design of the Middle Ages and the mathematically calculated "Cartesian" gardens of the Renaissance. Descartes did not write either on aesthetic or gardening but his use of the geometrical method (i.e. deduction) in reasoning led philosophers and artists to seek self-evident axioms on which to base design. The axiom that art should imitate nature fitted perfectly with a Cartesian approach. Nature was understood, once again, as the essential and universal forms which shape the visual world"[29]. Characteristic for the early Christian, Islamic, and Buddhist, gardens was the cross form, the symmetric centered axis, with four equal arms, one for each corner of the world the simplest possible symbol, one horizontal and one vertical line, bringing order into a chaotic world.

In ancient Egypt the temple compound with a sacred lake and a sacred grove were planned in relation to the path of the sun, the flow of the Nile and the planets and stars positions. That explains the human relation to cosmos, the social order of the society and the nature of the world. Tom Turner explained the beginning of art: "Art developed as means of explaining truth to non –literal peoples. When art separated from religion, it retained the role of helping people comprehend the nature of the external world and of the internal world trough which it is perceived"[30]. The idea of the garden as a eternal place of perfection is found in Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Shinto. The spiritual dimension becomes a important aspect of certain gardens, in the "Dry gardens" of Zen Buddhism the cloister compound garden becomes a pure symbolic and spiritual garden. Later in the Romantic English Garden it becomes idealized landscape that symbolized the harmonious calm between mankind, nature and the gods.

The origin of the serpentine and the curved line

In Homer´s Odyssey Book XVII Odyssey describes a sacred grove: "When they had got over the rough steep ground and were nearing the city, they reached the fountain from which the citizens drew their water. This had been made by Ithacus, Meritus, and Polyctor. There was a grove of water loving poplars planted in a circle all round it, and the clear cold water came down to it from a rock high up, while above the fountain there was an altar to the nymphs, at which all wayfarers used to sacrifice." In Greek there was a special link between place an spirituality, first of all the nature and the landscape was sacred, the place itself is holy, and it embodied a deity as a part of the natural forces. And the

buildings was placed there to praise that god, demigod or group of gods. The Nymphs lives in caves, and Naiads lived by the fountains was demigods half human so they where mortal.

The return of the Greek and Roman landscape started in England with The Moor Park in Surrey owned by Sir William Temple in 1680 when he incorporated a serpentine line in his park, it was a countermove against the axial symmetrical and geometrical gardens from the Rennaisance and Barok period Tempel`s inspiration came the other side of the world, he stated: " What I have said of the best forms of gardens, it meant only of such as are in some sort regular; for there may be other forms wholly irregular, that may, for ought I know, have more beauty than any of the others….something of this I have seen in places, but heard more of it from others, who have lived much among the Chinese; a people, whose way of thinking seems to lie as wide of ours in Europe, as their country does."[31]

According to Tom turner the design of the park at Castel Howard was the beginning of the romantic English garden in Europe, it was designed between 1699 and 1712 by Christopher Hussy "Henderskelf Lane" the serpentine path along the serpentine formed lake that links Castel Howard to the temple of four winds in Yorkshire it was a neoclassical landscape that lead to a temple, a mausoleum, statuary, an obelisk, a Roman bridge, a pyramid and a road with triumphal arches.
One of the things that characterized the romantic English garden and park was that the a garden axis becomes independent of the house axis and irregular groves and the curved line or the serpentine line, As with Charles Bridgemans`s design for joining up a series of small ponds in Hyde Park, London to form a large park now known as "The serpentine" created in 1730.
There was a fashion for Chinoiserie in English garden design it was the influence of Chinese art based on superficial western concepts of things Chinese in the 17th and 18th centuries, and at the royal botanic garden in London a Pagoda was completed in 1762. The ten-storey octagonal structure is nearly 50 m high and was, at that time, the tallest reconstruction of a Chinese building in Europe. This Chinoiserie also marks a shift from the idea that the garden and the park was a earthly representation of the garden of Eden to a more fashion like fascination of the exotic and decorative, the garden lost its direct metaphysical link. From this point the garden design becomes more decorative and eclectic (that means mixed style) and finally purely abstract under the functionalistic movement.

But the biggest and most fundamental shift with the Romantic gardens came when the French philosopher Jack Derrida worked together with the architect Bernard Tschumi on the Parc de la Villet (1892) here Derrida encouraged Tschumi to fix form before function as a anti modernist manifest. Tschumi based his design on three geometries: of points, lines and curves. The points becomes the folies or red steel pavilions, the lines where the French avenues and the curve was the cinematic promenade, it was a combination of inspiration from the Russian constructivists and the first landscape design based on deconstructionist philosophy. The place was open for any alternative reading and use, the red folies was for everyone and for no one, a park for the people with no hierarchy just a multiplicity of possibilities, like the internet a world of many centers a polycentric landscape.

The concept of Blixen´s garden

Blixen´s Garden or the Peace Park contains of six conceptual parts. The concept and intention of the park is that knowing the metaphysical roots and fundament of other cultures can create an urban environment rich in experience for embodied learning and mutual understanding.
The park is an attempt to create a modern, contemporary, green heart for the city of Aalborg.
Blixen`s garden is a place for reflection, tranquillity but also unpredictable interruptions and new interactive experiences the garden has several layers, the actual physical, the virtual, the symbolic and metaphorical layers and they are interwoven as a web.

1. Four square of the four monothestic religions introduced: Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and Hindu.
2. The two Islands contain parts of Greek mythology and Shinto.
3. Nordic mythology is a part of the Crystal Forest.
4. "The writer's path" leads from east to west, introducing past and contemporary writing & storytelling trough a online interactive multi medial platform, you can walk the book or poem of the day or writher of the week the park becomes a book.
5. The lake and the canals are the core of the park and lead from east to west and further south.
6. The orangery and echo house, introducing exotic plants and flowers.
It is all about creating a representation of heaven on earth but heaven has a counterpart and it has to be represented as well, but in a learning context that offers place for reflection, hell is also a part of our cultural background and has many similarities as well as heaven has I the different religions and myths.

Ole Pihl

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[1] Jorge Luis Borges: "The Garden of Forking Paths". 1941.p.26 and p.28.
[2] p.26.
[3] p.28.
[4] Alan Lightman: "Einstein's Dreams". Forlaget Samleren.1993.p.19
[5] p.23.
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[7] Jaques Derrida:"Point de folie – Maintenant l'architecture".Red. Neil Leach Rethinking architecture. Rutledge. 1997 p.326.
[8] Italo Calvino:"Invisible Cities". Tiderne Skifter.p. 28
[9] The sentence "All that I saw, I saw only once – and never again" is from the film "A Traveller's Tale". Script: Jens Christian Grøndahl. Director: Lars Johansson.
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[13] Umberto Eco: "The Poetics of the Open Work".p.120

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[18] Baudrillard: "America", translated by Chris Turner. 1988. Verso (London and New York) p.12.

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[22] Lewis Carroll: "Alice in Wonderland". Gyldendal. (1866) 1997.p.101-102

[23] The Koran: Surah XIII, 2.

[24] Book of Genesis Ch. 2, v. 7 – 10 .

[25] Chahar Bagh This means 'Four Gardens' in Farsi, the main language in Iran, which is the source of many garden ideas. (In Urdu, 'Char Bagh' means the same thing.)

[26] http://www.reep.org/resources/islamic-gardens/design-chaharbagh.php

[27] In the Koran Janna is the most common word for paradise. Eden is called "and" either and or "janna adn", and the garden of delight "jannat naim". Marianne Barrucand in "The garden as a reflection of paradise".

[28] Marianne Barrucand in "The garden as a reflection of paradise".in "Islam art and architecture". Edited by Markus Hattstein and Peter Delius. Koenann. 2000. p. 490.

[29] Tom Turner: p.17

[30] Tom Turner: Garden history philosophy and design 2000 BC-2000 AD". Spoon Press .2005. p.13.

[31] William Temple: op.cit., Volm.III from Nikolaus Pevsner: "Studies in Art, Architecture and Design. London: Thames and Hudson 1969 Vol. 1 p.82.