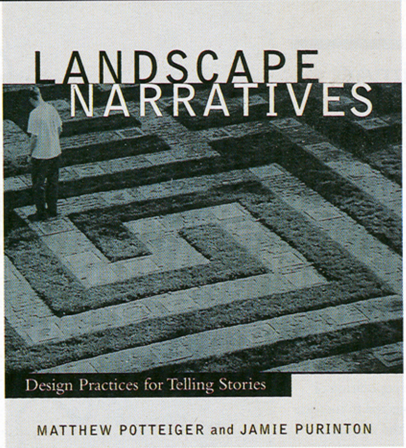
COMMUNICATIONS MERIT

Land Plots

Matthew Potteiger and Jamie Purinton

LANDSCAPE NARRATIVES: DESIGN PRACTICES FOR TELLING STORIES
John Wiley & Sons, New York, New York



The basic premise of this broadly researched and impressively cross-referenced book is that, in the authors' words, "[N]arrative is a very fundamental way people shape and make sense of experience and landscapes…," and that this is true despite the fact that narrative is "not typically acknowledged in conventional documentation, mapping, surveys, or even the formal concerns of design." *Landscape Narratives* does much to fill in this fundamental gap.

Written by Matthew Potteiger, a professor of landscape architecture at the College of Environmental Science and Forestry at the State University of New York at Syracuse, and Jamie Purinton, a design teacher and the head of her own landscape architecture firm in New York City, the book begins with a section on theory that cites examples (frequently illustrated with photographs and drawings) from the worlds of art, design, history, literature and literary theory, anthropology, and geography to establish the link between places and stories. Part two focuses on practice and identifies and illustrates such narrative techniques as naming, sequencing, revealing and concealing, and gathering. In the final section of the book narrative theory and practices are applied to tell three particular stories—the restoration of the Meadowlands in New Jersey, the development of Cazenovia, a village in central New York State, and the lure and symbolism of the open road throughout American history.

One of the many insights of *Landscape Narratives* is the authors' conclusion that while many designers, especially since the 1980s, have consciously incorporated narrative into their work, they have done so in the literal manner of storytelling. Potteiger and Purinton make a convincing case in favor of narratives that are "implicit and integral to the processes that shape landscapes in the first place" rather than as "something added to landscape."

Potteiger and Purinton make a convincing case in favor of narratives that are "implicit and integral to the processes that shape landscapes in the first place rather than as "something added to landscape."

AUTHORS: *Matthew Potteiger and Jamie Purinton.* PUBLISHER: *John Wiley & Sons (New York, New York, 1998).*

Among other projects Landscape Narratives *looks at the Story Garden in Portland, Oregon, on the book's cover,* above.