

FILMIC EXPLORATIONS OF FOUND LANDSCAPES

GAO, YUFAN

Boston Architectural College, yufan.gao@the-bac.edu

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how motion—both bodily and cinematic—can generate new spatial understanding and transform landscape perception. Using filmic approaches as tools of spatial inquiry, the research explores how motion and stillness reveal spatial, temporal, and ecological dimensions often overlooked in conventional design processes.

The research is grounded in a graduate course titled *The Perception of Found Landscapes: In Stillness and Motion*, where participants explored marginal and overlooked spaces through an iterative process of filming, reflecting, and curating. This process culminated in a faculty–student exhibition, which served as a methodological extension of the research.

Central to the study is the concept of Found Landscapes—marginal, interstitial, or provisional spaces. Like found objects in art, these landscapes lack conventional recognition yet hold aesthetic and experiential potential. Reinterpreted through media, these sites become spaces where motion activates spatial relationships and stillness heightens ecological awareness.

The study positions film not only as an observational and representational tool but also as a generative medium—one that resists the urge to solve the problems of a landscape and instead invites a slower, more perceptive engagement with landscape as a site of meaning and discovery. Film’s unique capacity to both consolidate fragmented spatial experience into perceptual continuity and to deconstruct apparent unity by surfacing hidden or layered relationships offers a powerful tool for designers. It captures the oscillation between coherence and rupture, allowing landscape to be understood not as a fixed condition, but as a dynamic field of temporal and spatial negotiation.

Keywords

Media-Based Research, Filmic Approaches, Motion and Stillness, Spatial Perception, Found Landscapes

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This paper builds on my ongoing research into motion, media, and landscape perception, conducted through a pedagogical-research model embedded in a graduate course titled *The Perception of Found Landscapes: In Stillness and Motion*. The study explores Found Landscapes—marginal, interstitial, or provisional spaces that challenge conventional notions of design and site. Through filmic approaches and curatorial methods, students and I engage with motion and stillness as tools for perceiving, interpreting, and reimagining landscapes beyond predetermined typologies.

The course is conceived in response to a growing urgency in landscape architecture education and practice for problem-solving-oriented design, often at the expense of slower, more deliberate forms of observation. As Patrick Keiller's *Robinson in Space* (1997) reminds us, "The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible." To truly see what is already there requires a cultivated gaze that lingers, notices, and reinterprets.

Swiss film historian Fred Truniger (2013) articulates this perceptual shift through the work of filmmaker Rüdiger Neumann, who resists learned pictorial conventions. As Neumann puts it: "Seeing, just seeing—not rendering what is thought visible, but rendering what is seen thinkable" (Truniger, 2013, p. 95). Our understanding of landscapes, as well as our visions for their future, is shaped by a lifetime of experience, aesthetic training, and cultural narratives. The course seeks to disrupt those narratives, expanding perceptual awareness through media-based research and embodied inquiry.

It culminates in a faculty–student co-curated exhibition, which creates opportunities for collective exploration. Case studies presented in findings and results are primarily my contributions to the exhibition. The exhibition functions as a methodological extension of the research where spatial experiences are curated, framed, and reimagined.

1.2 Found Landscapes

The concept of Found Landscapes in this study draws on a lineage of spatial theories that reframe how overlooked or marginal spaces are understood, experienced, and valued. Similar to found objects in art—ordinary materials gain new meanings through recontextualization—Found Landscapes gain aesthetic and conceptual significance when re-seen through movement and filmic explorations.

Lorenzo Romito's notion of "actual territories" identifies residual and interstitial spaces within the built environment—zones in flux that resist formal classification, where meaning is assembled through bodily engagement and experience rather than through fixed design interventions (Romito 1996). Edward Soja's theory of Thirdspace expands this view, offering a hybrid spatial condition that transcends the binaries of physical (Firstspace) and imagined (Secondspace) environments (Soja 1996). Found Landscapes, in this light, are not preexisting sites but emergent constructs produced through lived practice, interpretive framing, and perceptual presence.

Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopias offers a complementary lens for understanding spatial exceptionality. These are real sites within society that operate outside normative spatial structures—spaces of transition, contradiction, and symbolic layering (Foucault 1984). Marc Augé's notion of "non-places" similarly describes transient, function-driven environments often dismissed as placeless or ahistorical (Augé 1995). Yet when reframed through cinematic or curatorial practices, they can reveal latent social and experiential complexity.

Together, these perspectives form the conceptual foundation of this study. Found Landscapes challenge dominant narratives of landscape as fixed, ordered, or resolved, and instead propose a mode of engagement grounded in ambiguity, relationality, and temporal unfolding. Through motion, framing, and perceptual attunement, these spaces invite aesthetic and critical re-readings that foreground process over product and presence over form.

1.3 Motion and Aesthetic Experience

Motion has long shaped how we perceive and ascribe meaning to landscapes. Historical aesthetic categories—the Sublime, the Beautiful, and the Picturesque—already positioned movement as central to landscape experience. Edmund Burke's Sublime evokes vastness and unpredictability, qualities

heightened through spatial disorientation and sudden perspectival shifts (Burke 1757). In contrast, the Beautiful offers a harmonious unfolding of space, often through continuous motion that produces visual balance (Burke 1757). The Picturesque, as defined by Uvedale Price, is best perceived in motion, as its effect emerges through shifting vantage points, layered compositions, and the interplay of light and shadow (Price 1810).

This temporal unfolding is further explored in C. C. L. Hirschfeld's *Theory of Garden Art*, where Linda Parshall highlights Hirschfeld's emphasis on both bodily and imaginative motion. Hirschfeld proposes that garden experiences are not confined to physical traversal but are extended through mental anticipation and reflection—anticipating later phenomenological accounts of landscape (Parshall 2002). Arnold Berleant similarly critiques the detached, picturesque gaze and advocates for a participatory aesthetic rooted in embodied experience. He distinguishes between the panoramic mode, which treats landscape as a scene to be observed, and the participatory mode, where space is navigated and co-constructed through bodily presence and sensory engagement (Berleant 1992, 1997).

1.4 Motion and Meaning

Giuliana Bruno (2007, 2008) describes motion as a force that produces meaning, arguing that both film and architecture generate spatial narratives through movement. While cinematic framing and sequencing reveal hidden spatial relationships, movement through landscape similarly unfolds layers of spatial experience that would otherwise remain unseen. In this sense, landscape is not a passive setting but an active condition, continuously shaped through bodily motion, shifting viewpoints, and changing temporalities. This perspective aligns with Francesco Careri's (2017, p. 39) conception of architecture, which distinguishes between the "space of staying"—architecture as the physical construction of space—and the "space of going"—architecture as the symbolic construction of space, defined by movement and perception.

Philosophical discourse on movement further reinforces the idea that space is continuously shaped through interaction and mobility. Gilles Deleuze (2001/1953), building upon Humean empiricism, argues that subjectivity itself is shaped by experience, habit, and repetition. Rather than existing as a predefined entity, perception is constructed dynamically through movement and relational synthesis. Just as subjectivity emerges through transitions and spatial-temporal shifts, landscapes are understood relatively through the movement of the observer, the shifting of light, and the unfolding of time. Motion shapes both subjectivity and spatial experience.

1.4.1 Motion as Resistance

The role of walking as an aesthetic action exemplifies how motion challenges spatial conventions and generates new meanings. Careri (2017, pp. 67-102) traces walking as a subversive practice—from Dadaist urban excursions and Surrealist deambulation to the Situationist *dérive*—all of which sought to destabilize conventional relationships between individuals and the built environment. Walking becomes a method of reappropriating urban space, encountering the unfamiliar, and revealing—within the familiar—the hidden social and spatial structures.

Other embodied practices such as parkour also exemplify motion as resistance, particularly within conflict zones or tightly controlled urban territories. These acts reframe infrastructures and residual spaces as arenas for autonomy, using motion to defy surveillance, authority, and prescriptive design. In this sense, motion is not simply experiential, but spatially and politically generative.

1.4.2 Gendered Spatial Experience

The relationship between motion, meaning, and landscape is also deeply intertwined with gendered spatial experience, where movement through space is not neutral but shaped by social and cultural constraints. While women are not entirely absent from landscape representations, they are seldom portrayed as active participants who define, interpret, or move through space with agency. Yet film and performance studies foreground this relationship through motion-based inquiry. Agnès Varda's *Vagabond* (1985) follows Mona, a wandering woman whose movement through rural and industrial landscapes reveals spatial hierarchies, marginalization, and gendered vulnerability. Her motion asserts autonomy while also reflecting exclusion, as she navigates transitory and socially neglected spaces. Through long takes and observational framing, Varda uses motion to construct spatial narratives, showing how found

landscapes emerge through bodily presence and absence. In *The Gleaners and I* (2000), Varda repositions walking and gleaning as acts of reclaiming overlooked environments, focusing on women and other marginalized figures who navigate agricultural and urban spaces, gathering remnants left behind by dominant systems. In these works, the moving body reclaims space, transforming sites of abandonment into spaces of presence, visibility, and meaning.

1.5 The Instrumentality of Filmic Approaches

Film, as a time-based medium, offers a powerful mode of spatial inquiry. David Ross Scheer (2014) contends that traditional representation is giving way to immersive and performative simulation. While landscape architecture has traditionally relied on static representations—plans, sections, perspectives—these tools often freeze spatial relationships into fixed views. In contrast, film captures landscape as a process and transition. It constructs spatial meaning through movement, sequencing, and duration, revealing the landscape's dynamic and multi-scalar nature (Girod and Wolf 2010; Truniger 2013).

This focus on motion is not new to landscape architecture. *The View from the Road* (Appleyard, Lynch, and Myer 1964) explored how space is perceived through movement, particularly from the perspective of the driver. Their work emphasized sequence, rhythm, and viewpoint—principles that resonate with filmic approaches.

Film theory further deepens this conversation by highlighting how motion shapes not just what we see, but how we experience space. Bruno (2002, 2008) frames motion as a form of affective engagement, while Truniger (2013) emphasizes film's ability to blur distinctions between infrastructure and environment, city and countryside. Scholars such as Asli Özgen (2022) and Thomas DeaneTucker (2020) highlight cinematic walking as a spatial and political act, foregrounding how perception in motion reveals the layered social structures embedded in place.

Despite these connections, landscape architecture has been slow to adopt film as a critical research method. When film is used, it is often to promote completed designs. This study argues that film should not be treated as a supplement to design, but as a generative tool. The Landscape Media Lab at ETH Zurich exemplifies this shift, employing cinematic techniques to study perception, ecological change, and site temporality, a trajectory this study intends to pursue.

1.6 Research Objectives

The study is grounded in a graduate course that integrates filmic methods into a pedagogical framework emphasizing observation, experimentation, and curatorial thinking. It is guided by the following objectives:

- Enhance perceptual awareness by training participants to recognize overlooked spaces and develop new aesthetic and poetic readings through alternative modes of seeing.
- Investigate film's role in landscape representation by employing seeing devices, cinematic techniques, and sequential photography.
- Examine motion as a spatially generative force by analyzing how movement—whether bodily or cinematic—constructs spatial relationships and opens new interpretive and design possibilities. While the work is centered on perception, it also lays groundwork for future spatial interventions by revealing how filmic inquiry can lead to new ways of inhabiting, sequencing, or composing space.
- Reveal the importance of embodiment in observation by exploring the subjective nature of perception and the contingent nature of motion in relation to identity, thereby underscoring the relationship between embodiment and phenomenological understanding.

2 METHODS

2.1 Contrasting Filmic Modes and Frame-by-Frame Analysis

A central component of this study involves the production and analysis of two contrasting types of video essays, exploring motion and stillness as complementary modes of landscape perception. The first type emphasizes the physicality of the gaze and the embodied experience of space, examining how walking, riding, or shifting viewpoints construct spatial dimensions inaccessible from a static perspective. The second type, informed by the formal conventions of structural film, adopts an ecological view through the still frame, extending beyond natural environments to consider the banal temporalities of everyday life—a key concern in structural filmmakers' investigations of spatial perception (Russell, 2006).

Each video undergoes an iterative process of intuitive filming followed by reflective, frame-by-frame analysis, during which keyframes are extracted to highlight specific spatial phenomena. The first type reveals hidden physical spaces constructed through movement; the second identifies ephemeral temporal spaces that emerge through prolonged stillness. Extracted imagery is then explored through reflective essays, deepening engagement with the visual material and its phenomenological implications. Observations focused on spatial thresholds, interruptions, foreground-background dynamics, and subtle environmental transitions, which often revealed relationships not visible in still images. The iterative process surfaced thematic clusters that shaped the curatorial framework for the end-of-semester exhibition.

2.2 Seeing Devices and Aesthetic Curiosity

Drawing on Deleuze's *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1986), this study considers the instrumentality of cinematic techniques in landscape perception. Rather than serving traditional narrative purposes, cameras are positioned as philosophical and aesthetic instruments that challenge and reconstruct our perception of space.

A key component of this methodological approach is the exploration of various seeing devices, each offering a distinct framework for engaging with landscape. This begins with a study of the criticality of selected techniques—how they question dominant visual conventions and shape new ways of seeing. The panoramic camera, for example, produces a democratic visual field, minimizing hierarchies between human presence, objects, and environments (Pantenburg, 2012). Algorithmic composition introduces chance and randomness, disrupting culturally learned pictorial conventions (Truniger, 2013). Other cinematic techniques also operate as constructed seeing devices: the long take cultivates temporal attention and embodied duration, allowing spatial rhythms to emerge organically; off-screen space heightens awareness of absence and peripheral conditions, inviting the viewer to imagine beyond the frame; and montage generates meaning through juxtaposition, revealing unexpected spatial relationships across time and context.

Participants are then invited to explore various experimental techniques, guided by fundamental questions: How does landscape perception shift when mediated through a camera? How do different devices evoke aesthetic curiosity and reveal hidden spatial dimensions?

2.3 Phenomenology and Embodied Landscape

This study is grounded in phenomenology, emphasizing the embodied experience of perception. Landscape is understood as a lived condition, shaped by bodily movement, sensory awareness, and memory (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Phenomenological consciousness informs the research through the interplay of movement and stillness as complementary modes of perception; the use of seeing devices to examine how framing and sequencing construct spatial meaning; and the curatorial act as a method of positioning landscape as both physical terrain and representational construct. By centering embodied perception, temporal consciousness, and media experimentation, this methodology expands the conventional boundaries of landscape research, advocating for motion-based exploration.

2.4 Curation as a Method in Pedagogical Practice

This study adopts a pedagogical approach that balances theoretical inquiry with media-based research, emphasizing experiential learning through critical observation. In the course *The Perception of Found Landscapes: In Stillness and Motion*, curation served as an integral research method embedded throughout the semester. Beyond reading, screening, filming, and writing, a structured 2+2+2 format

guides students through each thematic section. For each, they collect two reference images from existing artistic, cinematic, or spatial sources; two primary research images from their own fieldwork; and two texts that expand the theoretical discourse. Through this process, image curation becomes both an investigative and sketching tool, revealing unexpected connections between seemingly disparate visual and textual materials. The juxtaposition of images—whether complementary or paradoxical—transforms intuitive spatial observations into structured aesthetic and conceptual insights.

The study also emphasizes collaborative knowledge production, with faculty and students engaging in co-curation (e.g., Figure 5). Participants actively select, arrange, and exhibit works in unexpected locations, which themselves become found landscapes. Rather than following the conventional format of design school reviews, where projects are arranged and presented student by student, the exhibition is curated around thematic sections of collective work. Individual students walk with reviewers through the space, engaging with their contributions within a broader curatorial framework. Each walk becomes a distinct narrative, shaped by movement, spatial relationships, and the unfolding dialogue between works. Reviewers' movement through the installation and spontaneous commentary often introduced alternate readings and revealed moments of resonance or disorientation that were later reflected upon by participants.

This dialogic reception loop became a secondary, unstructured layer of analysis that underscored the relational quality of spatial meaning in curatorial formats. This format also disrupted conventional review dynamics by shifting focus from formal presentation to spatial narration. In doing so, it created space for a wider range of embodied experiences, allowing for voices and subjectivities that might otherwise be marginalized in more performative, hierarchical formats.

2.5 Figures and Tables



Figure 1. Rooftop of the Charles F. Hurley Building (2022). Film stills by the author.

Film still reveals ephemeral reflections and surface decay on the rooftop of a brutalist structure. The spatial reading challenges aesthetic binaries, evoking the Sublime (monumentality), the Picturesque (texture and shadow), and the Beautiful (light and reflection).

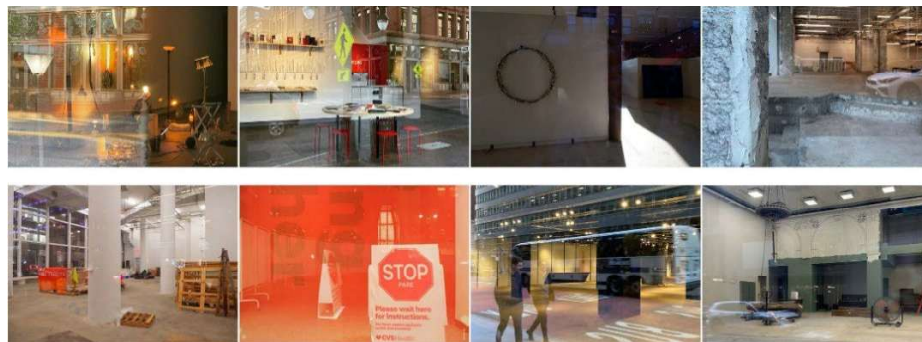


Figure 2. Windowscape Wonders (2021). Film stills by the author.

Reflections across a window surface create a layered, shifting composition. The viewer's motion generates evolving spatial narratives, redefining the boundary between real and imagined space.



Figure 3. Morphologies in Motion (2021). Film stills by the author.

Close-up filmic sequences document how elemental forces reshape sandy micro-topographies. Perceptual shifts due to body and camera movement echo larger geomorphological systems.



Figure 4. Event Tents (2019). Film stills by the author.

A still-frame study of temporary structures for the Head of the Charles Regatta. The sequence highlights cycles of assembly and disassembly, transforming utilitarian landscapes into temporal choreographies.



Figure 5. Curation as a Method in Pedagogical Practice (2024). Photo by the author.

Occupying multiple landings of an academic stairwell, the exhibition transformed a circulatory void into a reflective spatial field. Reviewers and students moved through the space non-linearly, engaging works situated within thematic and perceptual relationships. The experience redefined the final review as an act of walking, seeing, and co-narrating.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Summary of Key Findings

The following findings emerged through the production, analysis, and curation of films and still-frame experiments. These findings align with the research objectives outlined in Section 1.6:

- Motion reveals latent spatial dynamics. Movement, both bodily and cinematic, surfaced spatial conditions that static representation tends to obscure.
- Stillness heightens temporal perception. Fixed-frame observation illuminated ecological processes, material change, and micro-events within the landscape that unfolded over time.
- Seeing devices alter spatial reading. Experimental media tools—mirrors, reflections, body-mounted cameras—generated unfamiliar perspectives and challenged traditional visual hierarchies.
- Co-curation reshapes pedagogy. Through sequencing and juxtaposition, the exhibition format became an interpretive tool, revealing thematic and spatial relationships among works. Replacing critique with narrative walk-throughs, the course model emphasized collaboration and multi-authored meaning-making.

The following sections illustrate a few thematic insights emerged through the 2+2+2 exercise and specific film works. Together, they reveal the diverse ways that filmic approaches operate as tools of spatial inquiry.

3.2 Landscape as a Reconciliation of Opposites

A theme that emerged during the faculty–student co-curation process was the capacity of landscapes to reconcile seemingly opposing forces—natural and artificial, growth and decay, beauty and the sublime, being and becoming. Rather than existing as binary conditions, these relationships often form a continuum, with landscape functioning as a medium of negotiation and synthesis. This spectrum was revealed not through abstract theorization, but through frame-by-frame engagement with marginal sites where environmental change, material patina, and temporal layering produced perceptual ambiguity.

Students reflected on their experiences of nature not as a stable category, but as a shifting sensibility shaped by emotion, memory, and cultural framing. These reflections echoed Raymond Williams's (2005) argument that nature is not a static or singular entity, but a socially constructed and ideologically loaded concept. Using filmic abstraction—light and shadow, ambient sound, ecological transition—students uncovered how natural processes such as sedimentation, decay, and weathering appear just as vividly in infrastructural or post-industrial spaces as in canonical “natural” environments.

To further examine this perceptual fluidity, students applied traditional aesthetic frameworks—the Sublime, the Beautiful, and the Picturesque—to both natural and non-natural environments. By bringing these sensibilities into urban, infrastructural, and liminal contexts, they questioned the romantic associations of wilderness and instead proposed a dynamic, interpretive reading of the built environment. This logic of aesthetic reclassification echoes James Benning's *California Trilogy*, which uses seriality and equal framing to suggest that spaces not traditionally considered landscapes—agricultural fields, industrial peripheries, roadside scenes—may, through duration and compositional repetition, be reinterpreted as such (Benning 2002). Likewise, students in this study discovered that sustained attention and careful framing could activate spatial and aesthetic meaning in sites typically dismissed as non-landscapes.

This aesthetic reframing is exemplified in *Roofscape of the Charles F. Hurley Building*, a filmic study of a brutalist rooftop slated for demolition (e.g., Figure 1). Through cinematic framing, weathered surfaces interact with moving clouds, angled sunlight, and reflective water. These ephemeral elements transform the concrete mass into a space of spatial and aesthetic negotiation. The building's monumentality evokes the Sublime; its textures and shadows suggest the Picturesque; and the transient interplay of light and water registers as the Beautiful. These readings were not predefined, but emerged through the act of looking slowly, framing carefully, and curating relationally.

3.3 Media as an Instrument of Perception

The physical gaze of the film, grounded in bodily engagement with space, extends beyond visual perception to encompass sensations of weight, duration, movement, and resistance (Wolf, 2010). This perspective underscores that landscape is not merely observed but actively navigated, endured, and inhabited through the sustained act of looking. The exploration of Found Landscapes in this study reveals that spatial experience can also be actively constructed through filmic experimentation and mediated perception.

In *Windowscape Wonders: An Imagined Urban Nature through Reflections*, the reflective surface of a window becomes a dynamic site where motion is both registered and enticed (e.g., Figure 2). The constant flux of interior and exterior elements across the window's surface generates a layered choreography of light, color, and form, altering the perceived landscape. These shifting reflections—dependent on the viewer's angle, proximity, and movement—redefine the boundary between real and imagined space, transforming the window into an evolving lens through which landscape is fragmented and reconstructed. Each fleeting reflection is a fragment of a larger, unexpected narrative.

A related experiment in mediated perception appears in *Broadway Junction*, where film is captured through a see-through mirror positioned at varying distances from the camera. This analog device continuously collages viewing and happening, constructing a layered narrative from infrastructural oddities and overlooked fragments. By superimposing foreground reflections onto real-world scenes, the analog collage generates uncanny overlays of infrastructure, movement, and transient human presence. This act of seeing disrupts the detached gaze traditionally associated with landscape representation. Rather than maintaining distance, the film inserts the viewer into the perceptual field, making the experience of seeing itself an active, constructed process.

The longer one looks, the more the landscape reveals itself in unexpected ways. Minimal interventions, such as adjusting the angle of view or repositioning the mirror, can profoundly shift perception, altering how space is understood and experienced. This process calls for a more nuanced, relational understanding of landscape, and a design language that responds to the delicate balance between intervention and perception. It is through these subtle recalibrations, where the act of seeing becomes an act of spatial engagement, that media reveals its capacity not only to document but to participate in the production of landscape itself.

3.4 Motion as a Spatial Generator

Certain landscapes only fully emerge through movement, revealing spatial relationships that remain imperceptible in stillness. In this study, motion was not used merely to document space but to construct spatial understanding over time. Frame-by-frame analysis served to reveal the latent spatial dimensions embedded within transitional sequences often overlooked in real time. Rather than resolving these into a unified reading, the process allowed spatial multiplicity to surface gradually, enabling participants to engage with landscape as a field of overlapping meanings and emerging relationships.

This became particularly clear in *Spatial Element*, a filmic study of Elsi Giauque's textile installation. As the viewer moves through the space, woven panels of varying density, color, and transparency generate an unfolding composition. Surfaces merge and separate, overlap and dissolve, creating a perceptual collage that is constructed in real time. Through film, this process was extended, offering an experience of spatial layering and revealing how movement creates new visual rhythms.

A related transformation was explored in a film of the Alexander Hamilton Bridge, where movement dramatically altered the legibility of an infrastructural landscape. From a fixed viewpoint, the bridge appears as a singular object: a steel arch spanning the Harlem River. But as the camera moves beneath and around the structure, the space unfolds as a layered system of trusses, masonry arches, and sequential frames. Frame-by-frame analysis revealed how lighting, rhythm, and bodily orientation redefined the bridge, not as a static crossing, but as a cinematic sequence of exposures, compressions, and structural inversions. In motion, the bridge was newly perceived.

A parallel insight emerged in the *Morphologies in Motion*, where micro-landscapes formed by wind, water, and sediment were filmed from multiple vantage points (e.g., Figure 3). Through walking, crouching, and shifting the camera's orientation, textures etched into sand echo larger geomorphological systems. What

appears flat from one position becomes sculptural from another; shadows articulate new voids as light moves across the surface. These perceptual discoveries were made during frame-by-frame analysis, where small, time-based changes accumulate into new spatial logics.

Across these examples, films foreground how spatial understanding is produced through movement. For landscape architects, this approach offers a powerful mode of fieldwork. Motion functions as a lens through which latent spatial dynamics—material transition, scalar ambiguity, perceptual layering—are made visible. Film enables designers to perceive and reflect upon how a site is experienced in time, and reshape how space is read, valued, and ultimately engaged.

3.5 Stillness as a Temporal Lens

While motion reveals the sequential articulation of space, the still frame offers a contrasting perspective that captures temporal and ecological transformations within the landscape. This second mode of analysis, using fixed-camera observation, makes visible subtle environmental rhythms that might otherwise go unnoticed. By removing the immediate agency of a moving observer, stillness draws attention to imperceptible motions: ephemeral wind patterns, the undulating surface of water, or the shifting interplay of light and shadow. It also reveals cyclical transformations, from the daily arc of the sun and seasonal plant cycles to the gradual weathering of materials.

Stillness is not the absence of motion; rather, it cultivates a heightened sensitivity to temporal change. One example, *The Architecture of Clouds*, explores clouds as ephemeral spatial phenomena, where the sky becomes a dynamic architectural field shaped by condensation, wind, and atmospheric shifts. The fixed frame anchors the viewer's gaze, allowing subtle variations in density, shape, and movement to accumulate over time. By challenging conventional notions of permanence and structure, the work suggests that even the most fleeting elements actively participate in shaping spatial experience. What emerges is not a static composition, but an evolving, durational field.

Landscape film serves as a witness to patterns and processes that unfold across multiple timescales. It captures not only transient movements within the environment but also directs the gaze toward spaces often dismissed as banal. Russell (2006) describes how an ecological view of landscape can be interpreted through the formal conventions of structural film, where the commonplace and the temporalities of everyday life become sites of cinematic inquiry. This approach is evident in *Event Tents*, a study documenting the cyclical construction and removal of temporary structures for the Head of the Charles Regatta (e.g., Figure 4). These interventions—modular panels, grid-like frameworks, fabric enclosures—briefly transform parking lots, pathways, and waterfront edges into stages of communal gathering before dissolving back into passive green space. The process is not merely logistical, but performative, rendering the site as a rhythmically assembled and disassembled landscape. Their arrangement recalls Carl Andre's minimalist sculptures, where meaning arises from spatial positioning, material presence, and repetition. Similarly, the tents invite a reading of landscape as a system of relational objects where ephemerality becomes both form and framework.

The still frame provides a critical gaze, replacing the rapid succession of filmic cuts with extended duration and training the eye to perceive long-form spatial rhythms. One revealing aspect of still-frame video analysis is accidental choreography—the spontaneous spatial interactions and juxtapositions that emerge within carefully framed compositions. In interstitial spaces, for instance, wind displaces debris across a vacant plaza, momentarily reorganizing its composition before dissipating. At a construction site at dusk, the first artificial illumination highlights the skeletal framework, its glow briefly aligning with the faint light of a new moon, collapsing natural and artificial temporalities. Elsewhere, a missing wall in a high-rise under renovation frames the shifting glow of sunset, casting a transient projection of light onto an unfinished interior and altering the perception of spatial depth.

Rather than imposing narrative or order, stillness functions as an observational instrument, capturing the self-organizing behaviors of space and materiality within transitional landscapes. It slows perception and opens the landscape to forms of durational engagement that are often eclipsed by the speed and purposefulness of conventional design processes. Stillness extends the methodological range of landscape architecture beyond the visual toward the temporal and phenomenological.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 The Interplay between Motion and Stillness

The interrelationship between motion and stillness forms a central conceptual thread in the results and underpins the spatial readings across case studies. Motion and stillness are not oppositional but interdependent. Seemingly static landscapes, such as the cloud formations in *The Architecture of Clouds* (3.5), reveal continuous transformation when observed over time, showing that stillness can be a lens through which motion is perceived. Conversely, motion is often embedded within stillness, as seen in *Morphologies in Motion* (3.4), where sand formations archive environmental shifts—preserving traces of movement within material surfaces. Stillness can also represent motion, as in *Broadway Junction* (3.3), where mirror reflections overlay stationary infrastructure with the suggestion of urban flux. Finally, motion can be constructed from layered stillness, as seen in *Windowscape Wonders* (3.3), where reflected fragments reconfigure with each shift in light and gaze, generating a perceptual collage that builds through continuous visual recalibration. Together, motion and stillness offer complementary lenses for perceiving spatial, temporal, and ecological dynamics.

4.2 Filmic Approaches from Fieldwork to Design

Building on Christophe Girot's (1999) *Four Trace Concepts*—landing, grounding, finding, and founding—this study approaches motion as an active means of engaging with sites rather than a passive act of observation. Similarly, Oles and Horrigan (2025) argue that fieldwork in landscape architecture extends beyond data collection, functioning as a mode of seeing and interpreting space. While fieldwork in landscape and urban research has traditionally relied on static mapping and detached observation, this study contributes to rethinking fieldwork methodologies by integrating the moving body and the moving image as active tools for capturing spatial dynamics, embodiment, and lived experience. Motion—whether slow and immersive or rapid and cinematic—reveals spatial characteristics that conventional methods often overlook. Unlike traditional approaches that stabilize and categorize landscapes, motion foregrounds ephemerality, layering, and transition, emphasizing landscape as an evolving field of interactions.

Kinetic perception plays a fundamental role in shaping spatial awareness. Beyond their observational and analytical role in fieldwork, what is the generative and projective potential of filmic approaches in the design process? What kind of design language must emerge to respond to the hidden potential unveiled by motion?

Inspired by cinematic principles—framing, pacing, and transition—the filmic approach encourages a relational and interpretive reading of space, where sequences of unfolding views construct meaning dynamically (Bruno, 2008). These techniques are equally relevant in the physical realm. Rather than imposing form, such a language prioritizes attentiveness, recognizing that what becomes visible is shaped by how we choose to look, frame, or dwell. By emphasizing subtle observational shifts over overt transformation, the filmic approach reframes the role of the designer from author to facilitator who tunes spatial experience rather than dictates it.

Ultimately, it is the duality of film—resonating with landscape's ability to reconcile opposing forces—that opens the possibility for a paradigm shift in design. Film can consolidate fragmented spatial experiences into cohesive narratives, connecting disparate locations, perspectives, and timescales. Conversely, it can also deconstruct apparent unity, revealing layered and overlapping spatial fragments. As a medium, film uniquely captures the oscillation between immersion and fragmentation, continuity and rupture—a capacity mirrored in landscape architecture through editing-as-design. Filmic approaches in design embrace landscape's negotiation between coherence and multiplicity, between recognizable form and temporal flux. It offers a framework through which space is continuously reinterpreted and reassembled.

4.3 Designing the “Space of Going”

Francesco Careri (2017) differentiates between two conceptions of architecture: the space of staying and the space of going. Yet these are not opposites; they are relational conditions, continually reshaped by perception and context. The relationship between staying and going parallels, and deepens, the paper's central exploration of motion and stillness. Both pairs resist binary thinking and instead function as relational modes of perception. Staying is not the absence of motion; it invites a different kind of attunement—longer engagement, deeper observation, and accumulation. Likewise, going is not pure movement; it generates new perspectives, sequences, and thresholds. By pairing motion with stillness,

and staying with going, the study reframes landscape not as a fixed entity but as a field of perceptual potentials activated through bodily presence and spatial curiosity.

This relationship was enacted in the course's final review, held in the stairwell of our academic building. Whereas design school reviews typically anchor viewers in place—students presenting beside fixed pin-ups, reviewers seated in a front row—this format transformed the review into a space of going. Faculty and students curated their work along the vertical circulation path, inviting viewers to walk, pause, and converse while ascending or descending. The stairwell, ordinarily a space of passage, became a place of lingering and reflection—both a space of staying, through moments of contemplation and curation, and a space of going, shaped by movement and shifting perspective. In this way, the review itself translated theoretical concepts into lived spatial experience.

Designing the space of going, then, is not only about enabling movement but about cultivating awareness of how movement reveals space. If space can be made through motion—and for motion—then designing the space of going may shift from composing forms as endpoints to creating spatial interlocutors—conditions of varying permanence and scale, ranging from objects to fields to inhabitable spaces, or at times, through intentional non-intervention. It is about creating situations through architectural insertions, spatial prompts, or minimal interventions that heighten perceptual engagement and emphasize the role of motion in spatial understanding.

It is worth remembering that the space of going is not only a perceptual condition but also a spatial construct shaped by power, access, and exclusion. Lauren Elkin's *Flâneuse* (2017) underscores how gendered and cultural norms have historically constrained who can move freely through urban and landscape spaces. While the male flâneur has long wandered as an invisible observer, the female flâneuse has often been scrutinized, contained, or erased. Walking, whether as a perceptual tool, a cinematic act, or a design intervention, has never been neutral. While this study does not explicitly track gendered movement, it aligns with and could benefit from further examination through feminist spatial methodologies, which foreground mobility, constraint, and alternative spatial narratives. To design the space of going is to create not only perceptual openness but also structural access—making spaces that mediate agency, identity, and the right to move.

4.4 Affectivity and the Perception of Ecological Time

James Corner (1992) describes landscapes as the result of cultural interpretation and the accumulation of representational sediments over time, distinguishing them from wilderness by their constructed and layered nature. This view positions landscape as a condition continuously reinterpreted through social, historical, and material processes. The moving image aligns with this conception of landscape representation, participating in the ongoing layering that shapes and reshapes perception over time.

J. B. Jackson (1984) writes, "A landscape is a space deliberately created to speed up or slow down the process of nature. It represents man taking upon himself the role of time." Motion-based analysis reveals subtle ecological processes, drawing attention to the durational qualities of landscape and allowing ecological rhythms to inform spatial perception and design response.

Corner (2014) identifies spatiality, temporality, and materiality as three core aspects of landscape representation—each fundamentally transformed when engaged through film. This study proposes a fourth aspect: affectivity. Affectivity captures the wonder and curiosity evoked by filmic approaches to landscape, while also attending to moments of discomfort. It encompasses not only what delights but also what unsettles—what troubles perception, interrupts certainty, or provokes new forms of awareness. This capacity to both evoke and disturb becomes a pathway toward critical reckoning.

An attunement to ecological time and representational sedimentation is inherently affective, forging deeper connections between people and landscape. Motion-based inquiries, by revealing how landscapes shift, persist, and transform, open access to this affective dimension. Returning to the quote that opens this paper—"The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible"—the most elusive truth may reside not in what is concealed, but in what is habitually seen yet insufficiently perceived. What demands attention is often in plain sight, filtered through the perceptual habits that shape seeing, experiencing, and remembering. Affectivity, then, is not simply an emotional or aesthetic response but a mode of knowing—a relational, embodied engagement with landscape's ongoing transformation, and thus, a way of being.

5 CONCLUSION

This research expands the methodological terrain of landscape architecture by positioning filmic exploration not only as a mode of representation but as a spatial and perceptual practice. From fieldwork to video essays, and from still-frame analysis to curatorial installation, time-based media offer new lenses through which to engage landscape's dynamic material, temporal, and affective dimensions. Motion and stillness emerge as complementary perceptual modes, each cultivating distinct sensitivities that challenge the static habits of conventional design thinking. Editing, sequencing, and framing become tools not just for visual composition but for spatial inquiry.

The study attends to Found Landscapes—those marginal, interstitial, or provisional spaces—and challenges conventional notions of site and authorship. It calls for a shift away from problem-solving and form-making as endpoints, toward the creation of spatial interlocutors: conditions that invite engagement, prompt movement, and allow meaning to surface. This approach centers the interpretive act: perceiving what already exists, reconfiguring what is overlooked, and revealing significance within the ordinary and ephemeral.

Importantly, these investigations were situated within a structured yet open-ended pedagogical framework that treats teaching as a mode of research. Through iterative cycles of filming, reflecting, writing, and curating, participants generated insights that were at once site-specific and conceptually transferable. The 2+2+2 assignment model provided a scaffold for connecting primary research with theoretical inquiry, allowing media practice to become a form of critical observation. Rather than separating creative production from reflective learning, this approach embraces the classroom as a testing ground for embodied, media-rich forms of landscape engagement. It demonstrates how spatial understanding can be co-produced through shared processes of exploration.

To perceive landscape otherwise is to imagine its future otherwise—not as a fixed resolution, but as an ongoing process of co-authorship. The imperative to cultivate the capacity to recognize latent spatial potential and to develop a language of perception as dynamic and evolving as the landscapes we seek to understand.

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