APPLICATIONS OF PHOTOMONTAGE IN CONTEMPORARY LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

SCHUNK, LAUREN

Iowa State University Department of Landscape Architecture, laurenschunk@gmail.com

1　ABSTRACT

Landscape architects have employed montage as a representation tool since the 18th century. More recently, a specific type of montage, the photomontage, or composite drawing created by combining photographic elements with other types of representation such as pen or watercolor, have become prevalent in contemporary landscape architecture representation. Digital tools such as Photoshop have contributed to the proliferation of photomontage as a technique for describing designs. Paralleling the use of digital tools to assemble photomontages is a shift from highly abstract, conceptual photomontage compositions to more literal representations (Composite Landscapes Exhibit, 2014). Despite the departure from abstraction in contemporary photomontages, there are examples of photomontages created throughout the design process that go beyond the literal picture (Belanger and Urton, 2014). From an analysis of contemporary literature and works produced by several firms, including James Corner Field Operations, Atelier Girot, and GROSS MAX landscape architects, four categories of photomontage emerge: (1) photomontage as an exploratory sketch, (2) photomontage as a tool to communicate a conceptual idea, (3) photomontage as a tool to combine scientific data and emotional quality and lastly, (4) photomontage as a tool to literally represent a place. Using these four categories, this paper draws upon contemporary examples to analyze the compositional strategies of photomontages in each category.Findings reveal that unique compositional features characterize each category. Photomontages as sketches apply transparency, varying scales and saturation, and are highly conceptual in nature. Photomontages that communicate conceptual ideas have similarly abstract qualities, juxtapose disparate images at different scales, and abandon the traditional rectangular frame. Photomontages that combine three-dimensional modeling tools with emotional qualities include quantitative data with transparent photographic overlays and are incorporated as analytical tools in the design process. Literal representations are contained within rectangular frames, have high, consistent saturation, and show elements and figures at realistic proportions. Analyzing the various types of photomontages and their compositions shows how photomontage can expand beyond a literal representation tool that characterizes many contemporary composite renderings.

1.1　Keywords

Photomontage, Representation, Visual Communication, Contemporary Landscape Architecture