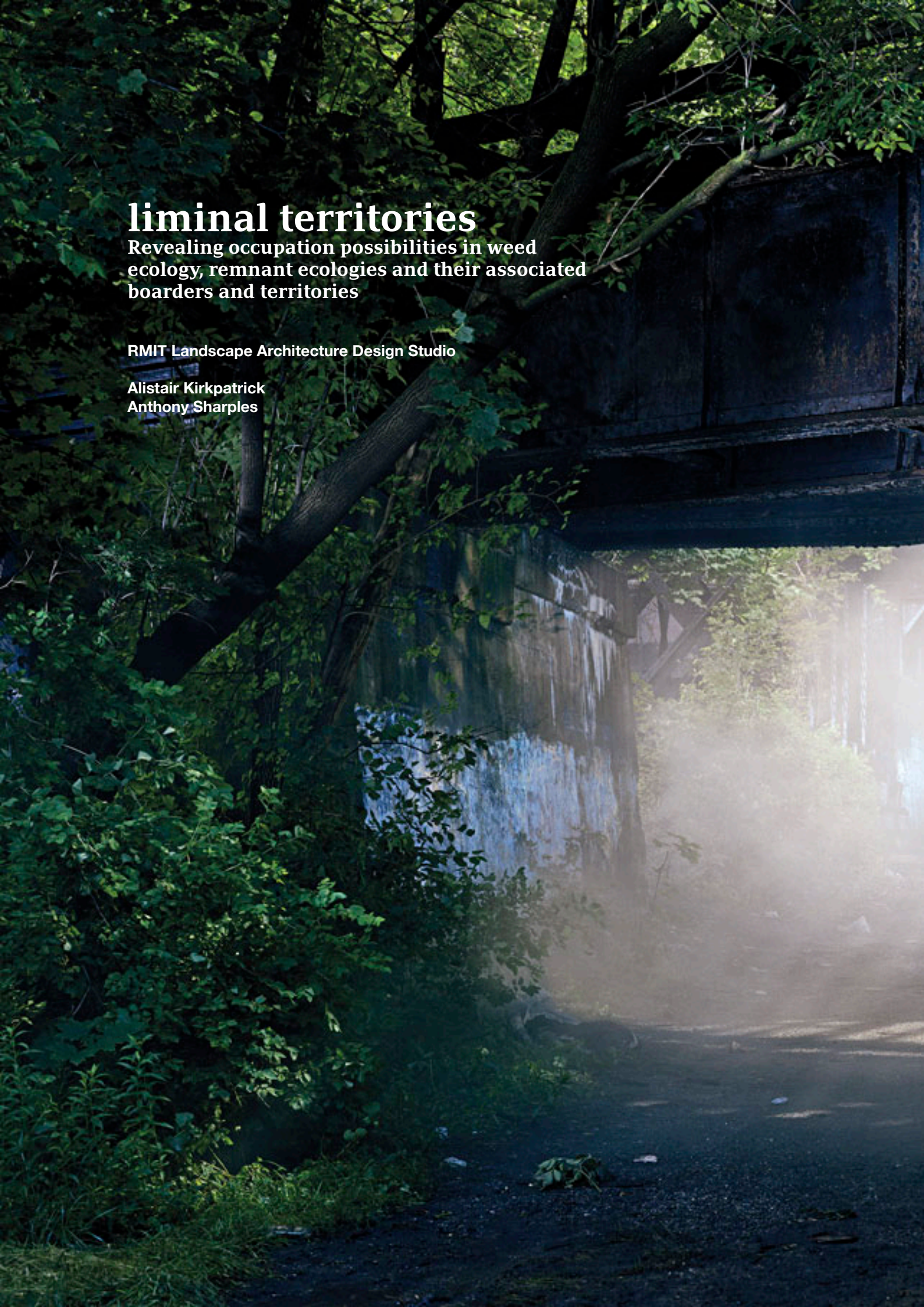


liminal territories

Revealing occupation possibilities in weed
ecology, remnant ecologies and their associated
boarders and territories

RMIT Landscape Architecture Design Studio

Alistair Kirkpatrick
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Site: Melbourne Greater Region

Method / Approach

Liminal Territories invites students to explore landscape as a fluid yet complex set of conditions and mechanisms. What are the environmental, physical, political, cultural and historical systems that influence the current or past uses of landscape/s and how does vegetation work into this framework? How do you place value judgements on one or more of these mechanisms as 'important' or 'of greater importance'?

We will explore large scale mapping techniques to investigate the complex conditions which exist within liminal territories and ask the students to define their own sites through interests / research / mapping and landscape qualities such as remnant vegetation, weed ecology, current and past use, context, hydrology, geology and 'in between spaces (terrain vague)'. There will be a strong focus on theoretical positioning and precedent.

The learning outcomes from this studio will invite new ways of seeing which could allow alternative ways of designing. The students will learn to design with rigour through thorough and accurate research.

The techniques which will engender new ways of seeing / designing are;

1. Using hand drawing techniques to undertake a rigorous analysis of the spatial and compositional qualities of remnant bush land indigenous vegetation. A comparative analysis to be done with a weed ecology using various drawing techniques.
2. Large scale context mapping (Hand drawn)- The function of these maps are to outline various landscape qualities such as remnant vegetation, weed ecology, current and past use, context, hydrology, geology and 'in between spaces (terrain vague)'. Students will use these 'maps of borders and territories' to select their sites of interest.
3. Model Making - There will be two different outputs of the model making; 1. Generative and working model (mid semester), 2. Spatial Model / Actualised Model (End of Sem) Model making will be used to show the spatial qualities of vegetation and also of the final design output on site. These models aim to use both digital technologies with hand built techniques.

4. Rapid Drawing / Throw away drawing – A fast brain storming design technique to allow for multiple iterations in a non precious manner.

5. Interrogation of convention - What drawing techniques ie. plan, section, perspective are useful to show the design and at what scale?

Broader Issue

In current, Australian Landscape architectural practice, the way a space is deemed 'desirable' is through a heavily designed and altered landscape with a static boundary, whilst everything that sits outside that landscape is deemed, less desirable. This becomes cyclical as the 'designed' landscape falls from favour driving the need for constant renewal. A shift in the way we perceive our role as practitioners, could radically alter the way our urban landscapes are physically realised.

Theoretical Position

Exploring the notion of borders and territories in Landscape Architecture opens a multifaceted discourse. Investigation into ecological/physical/geological and biological conditions which contradict/ compliment and collide can allow a rigorous understanding of the pragmatics of vegetation behaviours. When we investigate borders and territorial aspects in the urban context, the situation becomes even more interesting and complex. Ethnobotanics as a meta-narrative weaves; perception, history, psychology and program with the biological opportunities and limitations. As beings that create hierarchy consciously / subconsciously within our perceptions of the world the role of canonising landscape and offering alternate framing devices allows Landscape architects to offer new opportunities of seeing. The ever shifting boundaries of space allow the designer to design within liminal spaces. Rich and exciting urban landscapes abound in the urban fabric that could be considered invisible, techniques of design proposed by this studio invite a revealing of these landscapes.

Dr Schoonderbeek from TU Delft University is running an architectural research program 'Borders and Territories' which explores the "unstable, complex, fragmented and non-hierarchical" qualities that relate to design research. We will be using a similar framework to apply to Landscape Architecture to understand the dualities of indigenous and weed ecology fragments in Melbourne's metropolis. We feel this studio could have the potential to collaborate with TU Delft in the future.

Key Readings

1. TU Delft - Borders and Territories Paper <http://www.tudelft-architecture.nl/chairs/architectural-composition-public-building/research/borders-territories>
2. Terrain Vague - De Sola Morales
3. Rethinking the National in national parks .Marilyn-Omerovi
4. Envisioning Landscapes, Dan Hicks.
5. A new nature, Tim Low

Tools

1. Hand Drawing merged with digital as a drawing method
2. Emphasis and interrogation of drawing convention; plan, section and perspective
4. Hand Drawing - Large scale mapping, Throw away drawing, Compositional and spatial qualities of plants
5. Model Making (Generative and Actualised)
6. Computer generated design; AutoCAD, Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign

Assignments

Assignment 1: (Task 1 + 2)

Task 1: Analysis of a remnant ecology (indigenous vegetation)

Techniques:

- + hand drawing
- + collation, and curation of research to create zine
- + photo mapping and hand drawing to create panorama's to engage with vegetation as a spatial force

Requirements:

- > 4 hand drawn panoramas (from you photo mapping panorama's) demonstrating, mass and void, repetition, light qualities and textures.
- > Series of sketches from site scanned in and manipulated digitally
- > A5 Zine, which includes your precedent research, explorations and findings and vegetation studies

Output: 2 x A1 Panel, 1 x A5 Plant Identification and Informative zine

Task 2: Analysis of a weed ecology

Techniques:

- + hand drawing
- + collation, and curation of research to create zine
- + photo mapping and hand drawing to create panorama's to engage with vegetation as a spatial force

Requirements:

- > 4 hand drawn panoramas (from you photo mapping panorama's) demonstrating, mass and void, repetition, light qualities and textures.
- > Series of sketches from site scanned in and manipulated digitally
- > A5 Zine, which includes your precedent research, explorations and findings and vegetation studies

Output: 2 x A1 Panel, 1 x A5 Plant Identification and Informative zine

Assignment 2: Border and Territory Mapping

Using similar hand drawing techniques from task 1 + 2, produce large scale mappings of the greater Melbourne region at various scales. These mappings aim to outline various landscape conditions. Think about how these forces and mechanisms boarder one another, and think about ways to define specific ' territories' based on your interests and the following:

- Hydrology, geology, current use, context, weed ecology, remnant ecology, history

These maps will help you locate the liminal territories which you will engage with for your design.

Techniques:

+ Hand Drawing

+ Mapping

Requirements:

> Multiple A0 Hand drawn plans

> Research shown through infographic

> Generative Model

> Precedent Research + Theoretical Position

Output: Multiple x A0 Drawings, 1 x A1 Research (infographics), 1 x Generative Model

Assignment 3: Canonising Space

On the sites chosen through your mapping of liminal territories use your body of knowledge and research to implement a design which critiques / uses / spatialises your studio ambition and interest. Think about the what, how and WHY. Does your design use multiple sites or only one? How will you use time to your advantage to help aid your design ambition?

a) Large scale context plan

b) plan of design/s at appropriate scale

c) site analysis (earlier assignments) ambition / interest

d) section, perspective, hand drawings at appropriate scales

e) plant identification zine

f) Actualised model at appropriate scale

Output: 3 A0 Minimum + A5 Catalogue + Actualised Model