

ECLAS 2011 SHEFFIELD

ETHICS/AESTHETICS

Abstracts

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LANDSCAPE AS A FUNCTIONING ELEMENT OF UTILITARIAN STRUCTURES:

A case study of the Irish vernacular

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Abstract

This paper investigates utilitarian or "everyday" relationships to landscape evident in the interlock of land use practices, spatial strategies, and built structures in the context of rural Ireland.

Historically in Ireland, as an agrarian society, there has been a direct and very functional relationship to landscape, reflected in structures ranging from the ancient to the vernacular of previous decades. This is particularly the case with utilitarian structures, e.g. farming buildings, limekilns etc. and shows an economic and resourceful use of topography, land-form, vegetation, watercourses etc. in the creation of shelter, containment, access, agrarian function etc. In these cases landscape is a functioning element in the design, not merely a setting.

This performative approach to landscape provides an insightful counterpoint to contemporary habitation of the Irish rural landscape, which arguably approaches landscape as a picturesque commodity.

The paper presents primary research and detailed spatial documentation of a range of utilitarian landscape strategies observed during numerous field trips within rural Ireland in addition to background research and analysis. The disappearance or threat to many of these structures and landscape conditions has lent imperative to this documentation. To date interpretations of these structures and

elements has been limited to their picturesque qualities or their vernacular form. This paper explores the functioning and sophisticated interlock between built-form and landscape, and aims to provide a re-reading of vernacular structures in the Irish landscape

Keywords

Utilitarian, vernacular, rural Irish landscape

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