

# Alan JOHNSTON

## THE NORTHERN MIRROR

It is a landscape of certain anonymity, and of ambivalence, too. For this anonymity hovers above it despite all the visible traces of its former history; man's intervention, creation and manipulation. This anonymity is part of the nature of the site: it is not entirely nature and it is not entirely man-made. Both the forces of nature and former human alterations seem to have undergone a neutralizing collaboration resulting in this anonymous, unauthored being. What can be seen in this landscape is the work of antagonistic forces: the creative, constructive and transforming forces of human industrialization and the forces of nature, which slowly claim back what was once taken from her; and in between there are traces of new human forces of a different kind, taking part in that re-gaining, re-forming process. All this has culminated in a redefined space, a public space; no longer one of work and exploitation, but of leisure and "recreation". All this is embraced; it seems, within the forces of time. This is not an urban space and the architectural form of Johnston's work is not architecture either. It makes visible that which is otherwise invisible. Its physical structure, visually perceived, works in a somewhat similar way to what Patrick Geddes called a synoptic view and its conditions: "Large views in the abstract, Aristotle knew ... depend upon large views in the concrete". The key to understanding this lies in what such a view does. It is a visual linking of what is within the visual field.

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