

PREFACE

The present two-part volume 'Place and Location. Studies in Environmental Aesthetics and Semiotics' focuses on the changing relations between the environment and human experience and activities, the transformation of places and the practices of their signification over time, and the analysis of changing processes in the environment.

Environmental aesthetics has mainly treated the environment with respect to its spatial, synchronous aspect, regardless of time. The categories of landscape, milieu, view and panorama, as well as place and space have, therefore, been observed only as fixed conditions. One of the aims of this volume is to challenge such points of view and to examine places in terms of the changing elements of the dynamic environment, as narrative nodes. Such forms of representation as literature and film can offer productive parallels here.

Spaces in transition provide grounds for complex semiotic processes. Signs of place and signs at a place cause us to critically review the relationships between meaning and the sign vehicle, the ways in which different interpretation practices and locations interconnect, and the relationships between signs and context. Set in a temporal context, this approach facilitates the study of the accumulation or gradual erosion of meanings in a particular place, as well as the recognition of signs in the environment during different times.

The majority of the articles in this collection are based on the presentations given at the international conference 'CULTURE, NATURE, SEMIOTICS: LOCATIONS IV' in Tallinn and Tartu on September 23–26, 2004.

The articles in 'Place and Location' volume V part 1 have been grouped into four sections. The general structural backbone of the volume is the movement from general to particular – from abstract conceptualization, the basic properties and perceptions of space as such, to the analysis of particular landscapes, city-scapes, places and texts as 'inhabited spaces'.

The first section, 'Making Space', focuses on the basic parameters of the notion of space – on the general ways of experiencing and interpreting space, on the opposition between continuous and fragmentary ways of perceiving space, on the structure of space from the perspective of the history of art and on the way places are represented in dreamscapes.

The articles of the second section, 'Perceiving Landscapes' provide an insight into landscape as a space resulting from human intervention in nature. It includes a semiotic approach to the meaning of nature and the transformation of this meaning with the passing of time, as well as an account of personal experiences of spatio-temporal mysteries surrounding Saami Reindeer nomadism.

The third section, 'Perceiving Cityscapes', analyses the structural patterns and the use and restructuring of urban space. It takes a thorough theoretical look at places between places, as well as a street-level look at unconventional possibilities of city-touring and a cultural account of urban space as a simulacrum in a globalized context.

The fourth section, 'Perceiving places in texts', surveys the representation of places in literary texts. The significant amount of literary analysis in this volume seems to hint at the possibility of considering literary text itself as a plausible space to be occupied – for example, numerous analogies between the structures of the city and the text spring to mind.