



DRAWING OF GIORGIO DE CHIRICO'S
"MELANCHOLY AND MYSTERY OF A STREET"
1914 OIL ON CANVAS



Mystery, legibility, complexity and coherence

Through their environmental behaviour research, Rachel and Stephen Kaplan (1989) developed four complementary qualities that influence people's experience of and preference for landscapes. Legibility refers to how easily an environment can be 'read' or 'made sense of' to enable people to predict in landscapes. Mystery describes the quality of an environment that encourages us to discover more about a place; to 'engage with it'. Coherence refers to the order of a place; how well it 'fits

together'. Complexity refers to the diversity and richness of elements within a place. The work of the Kaplans suggests that all of these qualities are simultaneously required in order for people to enjoy and respond fully to places. Landscape architecture should aim to achieve these qualities in designed places as a dominance or exclusion of one or more can lead to places that are disliked and unused by people.