



Boundaries

By Maya Lin



Boundaries By Maya Lin

Renowned artist and architect Maya Lin's visual and verbal sketchbook—a unique view into her artwork and philosophy.

Walking through this parklike area, the memorial appears as a rift in the earth -- a long, polished black stone wall, emerging from and receding into the earth. Approaching the memorial, the ground slopes gently downward, and the low walls emerging on either side, growing out of the earth, extend and converge at a point below and ahead. Walking into the grassy site contained by the walls of this memorial, we can barely make out the carved names upon the memorial's walls. These names, seemingly infinite in number, convey the sense of overwhelming numbers, while unifying these individuals into a whole....

So begins the competition entry submitted in 1981 by a Yale undergraduate for the design of the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* in Washington, D.C. -- subsequently called "as moving and awesome and popular a piece of memorial architecture as exists anywhere in the world." Its creator, Maya Lin, has been nothing less than world famous ever since. From the explicitly political to the unashamedly literary to the completely abstract, her simple and powerful sculpture -- the Rockefeller Foundation sculpture, the Southern Poverty Law Center *Civil Rights Memorial*, the Yale *Women's Table*, *Wave Field* -- her architecture, including The Museum for African Art and the Norton residence, and her protean design talents have defined her as one of the most gifted creative geniuses of the age.

Boundaries is her first book: an eloquent visual/verbal sketchbook produced with the same inspiration and attention to detail as any of her other artworks. Like her environmental sculptures, it is a site, but one which exists at a remove so that it may comment on the personal and artistic elements that make up those works. In it, sketches, photographs, workbook entries, and original designs are held together by a deeply personal text. *Boundaries* is a powerful literary and visual statement by "a leading public artist" (Holland Carter). It is itself a unique work of art.

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Boundaries By Maya Lin Bibliography

- Rank: #650362 in eBooks
- Published on: 2016-04-26
- Released on: 2016-04-26
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

After designing the starkly symbolic Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., when she was still an undergraduate, Maya Lin might have been doomed to spend the rest of her architecture career vainly trying to top herself. But 18 years later, her concerns clearly have nothing to do with self-aggrandizement. In *Boundaries*, Lin's lucid, soft-spoken collection of writings, she discusses how her work evolves, after a lengthy gestation, as a way of heightening viewers' awareness of a specific environment and perception of the passage of time. This temporal aspect can be a sequence of historical events (as in the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama) or a purely aesthetic quality, like the shifting play of light over a grassy field of sculpted earth (Wave Field at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor). "I like to think of my work as creating a private conversation with each person," Lin writes, "no matter how public each work is and no matter how many people are present."

Understandably, Lin writes in greatest detail about the Vietnam memorial, a high-profile commission fraught with controversy because of its unusual form as well as the age, gender, and ethnicity of its American-born architect. But this engrossing, amply illustrated book also details the thinking and experimentation behind myriad other projects, including elemental sculptures, interiors, and furniture designed with an unusual degree of consideration for the user's needs. Influenced by her ceramist father, Lin always gravitated toward working directly with malleable materials--an experience that complements the rational precision of plans and blueprints (the Vietnam memorial first took shape as a mound of mashed potatoes). *Boundaries* reflects the same blend of close analysis, intuition, and quiet humility that marks Lin's public projects. --*Cathy Curtis*

Review

"Some people perceive the world visually, like architects and sculptors. And others see the world through the prism of language, like writers. Maya Lin can do both. . . . A writer both concise and graceful on such abstract topics as art, vision, and design, Lin offers unique insights into how artists create." -- *USA Today*

"Like everything connected with Lin, *Boundaries* is beautifully designed and beautifully written." -- *The Boston Globe*

"This lovely book succeeds in two worlds: Lin wants you to read it and yet see it as an art book. . . . Every page in her book is serene, thought-provoking, striking." -- *The Arizona Republic*

"Her first book, *Boundaries*, unfolds as an intimate pictorial memoir of Lin's journey in realizing her primary passion: 'sculpting the earth.'" -- *Harper's Bazaar*

"Is Lin an artist or an architect? Given her ability to maintain her aesthetic integrity in a string of projects that have won over both critics and the public, magician is more like it." -- *Newsweek*

About the Author

Maya Lin has worked on art and architectural projects throughout the United States. Setting up her studio in 1987, Lin has created both public and private artworks, including the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (1982) in Washington, D.C.; the *Civil Rights Memorial* (1989) in Montgomery, Alabama; and the Langston Hughes Library (1999) in Clinton, Tennessee, among others. Her work has been highly acclaimed; a documentary about her work, *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*, won an Academy Award for Best Documentary in 1995.

Born in Athens, Ohio, and educated at Yale University, she lives with her family in New York City.

Users Review

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Beth Stewart:

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