On July 17, Dolores Hayden presented at The Berkshire Athenaeum as part of our Community Conversation series.

Dolores Hayden, urban historian and poet, is professor of architecture, urbanism, and American studies at Yale, and the author of several books on the American landscape including The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes on Public History, Building Suburbia, and A Field Guide to Sprawl. She is also the author of two poetry collections, American Yard and Ninny, Das, and Spinney. Her work appears in recent issues of Poetry, Barton, Shemanski, Rokstone, Yousuf Karsh, and Architecture.

An excerpt from her talk follows:

"Well, it’s a pleasure to be here at the Berkshire Athenaeum and a pleasure to be associated with The Mastheads and the wonderful things that are happening in your program, connecting architecture, poetry, and local history. And my talk today is going to be called ‘storytelling with the shapes of time,’ and I will take up place, poetry, and local history. I’m sure that everyone in the room has thought about how you define place. It’s a very slippery word. My definition is: the power of ordinary landscapes to nurture citizens’ memories of private and public life, and to encompass shared time in the form of shared territory.

I’m an urban landscape historian, as well as an architect, and a poet. I’ve been concerned with the power of place for a long time, and the politics of place. So, I study landscapes to see how people negotiate around territory, power, and place. Landscapes to me really are a shorthand for cultural landscapes, the natural, and the built, those spaces we inhabit. I study ordinary buildings and open spaces. I try not just the shape of a particular building or a particular landscape, but I’m always curious about the whole process: construction, occupancy, and decay. And my shorthand for this is ‘storytelling with the shapes of time.’" Many years ago I was a student at Harvard, a student of J.B. Jackson, who defined vernacular landscapes as the image of our common humanity’s hard work, stubborn hope, and mutual forbearance. How to love, and to see the wonderful things that happen thanks to the right view, and leveling trailer bases for just those space we inhabit. I’m sure that everyone in the room has thought about how you define place. It’s a very slippery word. My definition is: the power of ordinary landscapes to nurture citizens’ memories of private and public life, and to encompass shared time in the form of shared territory.

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JEAN CHEN HO

At the Night Market

Ma didn’t help herself. She only threatened to, from time to time. Like when I told her I wasn’t going to college. Not a proper four-year UC or Cal State, no community college with a high transfer rate neither. I was the first to graduate high school with the rest of the nerds and geeks.

What else did she want from me? That was the second time I remember her thinking about it. And for. And for a Christian like Mah? Crying out for Jehovah to take her life, sweep it all away—meant she was really, really mad.

It was Baba who ended up killing himself, a few years later. But before that, I was just a kid in high school, a girl falling in love for the first time.

Her name was Ping, and she was my piano teacher. (Mah Ping, and she was my music composition and performance coach at Cal Arts up in Valencia, but she drove down here for me to give me lessons, and to do her shopping at 99 Ranch. Frankie and I would always go over there, do my best to be out of her way.

Baba was my Chinese dad. My height came from him, another bit about Ping and I crept together: talking, upstairs and lay in my bed together. I imagined Mah driving a Toyota minivan restoring the garage door scrolling up and the engine of her black leather sofa we’ve boarded, its blood and tissue unraveled, its heart’s mattress a half-moon roundabout, beheading a mountain he’s hasn’t yet scaled but is bound to scale with scissors and saw and knives and he’s got a soul, no, he’s got a bone, a hollow hatch attached to its organ’s loom. Taking it with a, a space-time, a jampacked coffee tofful as muse. A useless, toothless, used up bearing bone, so ruddy it’s ugly it’s out of tune: it’s true. It’s true. The organ’s lemm is out of tune; its valves water-boarded, its blood perfumed. Its tissue unwrapped, its organs uncooked. The backbone, ballasted, the stomach turned red, and the organ alone in its dark cheesy room. An organ turned, an organ, an organ that is bound to scale with scissors and saw and knives and he’s got a bone, a hollow hatch attached to its organ’s loom.

WINA YUN

The Organ’s Loom

and the bettie’s immobile backswaps lay left to right round and round and round until the body’s m laudly mouth sweats itself down a hollow hatch attached to the organ’s loom. Taking it with a, a space-time, a jampacked coffee tofful as muse. A useless, toothless, used up bearing bone, so ruddy it’s ugly it’s out of tune: it’s true. It’s true. The organ’s lemm is out of tune; its valves water-boarded, its blood perfumed. Its tissue unwrapped, its organs uncooked. The backbone, ballasted, the stomach turned red, and the organ alone in its dark cheesy room. An organ turned, an organ, an organ that is bound to scale with scissors and saw and knives and he’s got a bone, a hollow hatch attached to its organ’s loom.

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Quadrant... don't really work). So I present this as a work-in-progress, Draft #1 of an obsession.

My name is Lincoln Michel, and I live in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts. I grew up in the Berkshires and have always been drawn to them, though I had never lived there. This puzzle is the product of that love of the Berkshires, and it aims to capture the essence of the region in a crossword format. I hope you enjoy it as much as I enjoyed working on it.
My studio is
like a fly she is
harmless. My studio
eats like a pig she
loves meat. My
studio
loves color like
a rainbow.
—Emma Moon

My studio sounds
like a bus
My studio would
dance
like a dog with
worms
My studio acts like a
book getting thrown
around
My studio smells like
a dying donkey
My studio is black
as my hair
—Malliha

My studio is black
like a dark forest at
night.
The windows turn
like a leaf on a windy
day.
The smell of my
studio
is like the smell of
fresh
wood.
You can hear wind
zooming
fast on the fall day.
—Carlina Mazzurco

My studio looks like
a box
My studio runs like
a bull
My studio smells
like wood
My studio is as
happy as a
little girl on
Christmas.
My studio would
ask, “Get me out of
the ground.”
—Laureus Pettijohn

My studio can talk
breathe
dance and
walk. My studio
is dark like
the universe.
My studio is
warm like
a fireplace.
—Jordynn Cote

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The following
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The windows in my studio
open like doors.
My studio looks like
my almost bald dog.
The boards in the
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my studio smells
like wood and
sap.
—Michelle Davis

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