LANDSCAPE REVISITED

Ten Conjunctions of Art and Landscape

Edited by Sigrid Sandström

WRITINGS FROM THE ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS
10

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Sigrid Sandström

Introduction

SIGRID SANDSTRÖM

The symposium *Landscape Today* took place at The Academy of Art / Uniarts Helsinki in October 2021 as an introduction to a semester long lecture-based thematic theory course entitled *Rethinking Landscape*, during which the subject of landscape in art was addressed from a number of perspectives.

This publication draws its material from the symposium, taking the format of a reader providing texts that explore how both our relation to and understanding of 'landscape' have shifted over time. What are the most urgent issues that landscape confronts now, and how do these issues connect and position themselves in relation to earlier moments in art history?

Landscape has played an important role throughout the history of art, and our immediate surroundings have always engaged and inspired artists. But beyond landscape painting as a historical genre, the perspectives it embodies are today becoming of even greater concern to many contemporary artists due to a new awareness of our acute climate crisis.

Nature itself, and more specifically landscape as an artistic practice, has consistently been used as a formula or model for various ideologies during different time periods. Our understanding of landscape, and the meanings we project onto it, are in continuous flux, changing with the ideas of the moment. The 'raw material' of landscape art, the world itself (both terrestrial and atmospheric) is also in flux. How has landscape adapted beyond wonder at the 'natural

world', becoming the witness for changes brought about by human actions? In a time during which our human imprints are ever present, brutally so, exposed like open wounds, it has become necessary for many artists to reflect and bring forward their deep concerns with that which surrounds them.

Perhaps a useful analogue to many of these ideas is the shifting status of the Lascaux caves as they have been 'discovered', opened, closed, reproduced then 'reopened' in virtual forms. My first visit there was an immersive and awe-inspiring experience, although the cave I got to visit (Lascaux II) is in fact a replica, a few hundred metres away from the original cave, opened for tourists in 1983 to 'experience' the cave without actually entering it. The original Lascaux cave, which was discovered by a group of boys in 1940 and was open to tourists from 1948-1963, has been closed off to visitors due to increased carbon dioxide levels, which damage the ancient artworks. Further Lascaux cave replicas have been made for different purposes. Since 2013 Lascaux III; an immersive 3D VR exhibition, has been on a world tour showing a selection of highlights from the caves. The latest replica, Lascaux IV, which is located inside a nearby hill overlooking Montignac, opened in 2016 and integrates digital technology into the display.

The paintings on the walls of these caves are pieces of information added on top of each other throughout history, to be interpreted anew each time they are seen. As a palimpsest of stored time they share something essential with most painting, regardless of the time period it was produced, where paint is placed on top of something else, hiding or superimposing while revealing though depiction. They conceal while simultaneously calling for attention.

Here the cave itself is also the landscape in which the paintings made upon it exist – it is a container to which paint has been applied throughout time. The decision to make a replica of a permanent

rock location and to have it tour, turning the fixed location into a mobile one, painting the paintings all over again with the intention to present historical evidence, while simultaneously fast forwarding and bypassing time and place, seems symptomatic of our current society's obsession with time, but also its inability to really grasp longer time-spans, either in the past or future.

On the one hand, the instinct and drive to discover and explore the unknown is fundamental to human nature, and as children an inquisitive desire is key for learning and for understanding one's inter-connectedness to the surrounding environment. On the other hand, we have the cynical and exploitative results of this inquisitive hunger; the extractive practices that many of the essays in this reader alert us to.

It is true that while the construction of landscape is often an act of co-option, dominance and control, it can simultaneously, to some, operate as a refuge or hide-out from exactly those power structures and their market-driven agendas. To others, the landscape in which we find ourselves can appear as a trap to overcome or override, while at the same time the projection of another landscape elsewhere can be a consolation. But regardless of outlook and emotional approach, the claimed landscape is always dependent on those in power, and therefore all landscapes are vulnerable and temporary. Boundaries might be transient but while in existence solid and impenetrable. Investigating the limits of, and blurring, boundaries are concerns that many contemporary artists share in their quest for change and new insights.

The contributors to this publication approach landscape from their different areas of expertise. My aim was to offer the reader a variety of entry points for further reflection on the role landscape (historic and contemporary) might have in contemporary art. Paintings from the earliest ancient and Classical periods included

natural scenic elements, deployed contextually, but landscape as an independent genre did not emerge in Europe until the Renaissance in the 16th century. In China, however, the genre can be traced back to the 4th-century CE.

Art historian and contributor Minna Törmä describes, in her essay, 'Traveling While Lying Down: Chinese Landscape Handscrolls as Vehicles for Mind Travels', how handscrolls depicting landscape sceneries were used in the 11th century as a means to travel in the mind. The nature of the roll, scrolling from right to left to unfold new vistas while rolling up what has already been seen, is much like a movie, or perhaps more like an actual *stroll* in a landscape: an image to move in rather than a moving image. Törmä is proposing that the scrolls offered a refuge in the imaginary during turbulent times, a meditation offering relief from the political – something that may be just as valuable today.

Christopher P. Heuer reflects on the European encounter with the Arctic during the era of the Reformation (further information on Heuer's extensive research on the topic can be found in his book *Into The White – The Arctic Renaissance and The End of the Image*, Zone Books, 2019). Heuer focusses in his essay on the shock and great confusion registered by the 'first' visitors to the Arctic. The writings of these men describing their encounter with the true North and its expansive landscape speak of feelings of disorientation and discomfort, as this new landscape appeared quite uneventful, mundane and hard to measure oneself against. Visually sparse while still seemingly limitless, the view was more one of loss and absence than of discovery.

Heuer remarks that the Arctic landscape offered nothing concrete to map out or plunder, and that it became a place where the exotic was no longer synonymous with abundance, but instead sameness and absence. He further points out how recent deconstructions

have laid bare the sustained racial violence implicit in these Northern encounters with the Arctic region and the creative acts of erasure and wilful blindness – whitewashings – that shaped European understandings of *who*, in fact, 'belongs' in Northern landscapes: "We could not scarcesee one another" wrote one explorer in 1578, " . . . nor open our eyes [...]"

Susan M. Merriam's essay examines seeing (perception) over time. Taking Jacob Ruisdael's canonical and hugely influential painting *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds* from the 1670s as the starting point for her inquiry, she reflects on how historic interpretations and understandings are shaped by the socio-political events of the location depicted in the painting as it has changed over time. Merriam's text is addressing the ongoing relation between stasis and change in painting, where landscape as site and landscape as genre are examined as places that manifest both a particular moment and the passing of time. Another aspect that adds to the objecthood of painting is the ageing of materials and the resulting diminishment of its illusory aspects. Merriam proposes that the painting's dissolving surface offers an invitation to think about historical distance, and about the tidal nature and instability of landscapes, their materiality and their depictions.

Riikka Stewen discusses different approaches to Nordic landscape panting in the 19th century as part of wider projects of nation-building. Stewen describes the work of this time as sediments of landscape as well as cultural constructs, and proposes that we "look at and understand nature as a palimpsest both in the sense of physical material environment and as cultural idea". She also addresses the way landscape painting at the end of the 19th century became a place for rethinking the relationship between the human being and nature. As a response to rapid industrial development, and a form of resistance against it, there was a significant wave of

mystical art movements who believed in a fundamental connectedness between humans and nature, for whom landscape painting was a way of "re-enchanting" nature, as Stewen suggests.

Suzanne Hudson reflects in her essay 'Against Nature' on how Agnes Martin positioned herself in relation to landscape. Martin had, in the 1970s, refuted any claims that her paintings referred to nature and instead asserted her approach as classicist, giving the famous quote "Classicists are people that look out with their back to the world". Hudson sees Martin's paintings not as landscapes but as aesthetic systems. Latterly, in 1993, Martin finally affirmed that her response to nature was a response to beauty itself. Hudson concludes that Martin argued not for a literal transcription of place but a conversion of it into experience.

Hanna Johansson reflects on landscape as an ambivalent concept, landscape being not only an object for our gaze and subject for representation but also the act of physically perceiving an environment. As such, a landscape is both a perceived, encountered environment while at the same time its visual, verbal or aural interpretation. She points out that for interpretation to occur a certain distance and separation is needed. In reflecting on whether it is possible to talk about landscape in the age of the Anthropocene, she looks at Jacob von Uexküll's (1864-1944) term *Umwelts* as an intermediary reality between the objective and the subjective environment. Her essay concludes with an examination of a number of different types of landscapes within contemporary art: political landscape, technological landscape, landscapes that explore the limits of representation, landscape as habitat, and the expanding field of artificial or virtual landscapes.

Many of us have a very strong emotional or personal bond to what we define as 'nature'. Yet we are baffled by, or in denial of, the rapid changes that are happening in our immediate surroundings.

In 'Lithium Landscape: From Abstract Imaginaries to Deep Time and Multi-Scalar Topologies' Samir Bhowmik looks at the realities and ideologies shaping our contemporary landscape and reminds us that the accelerated damage to the environment occurring now has no clear visual imaginary. The amorphous ideas sometimes associated with the lithium industry, of new green technology, growth and clean energy, are largely immaterial and dimensionless, which makes the true scope, scale and cost of lithium-based energy systems abstract and impossible to fully grasp. Bhowmik asks us to expand our examination of the visual cultures of energy landscapes – as places of extraction and sites of production – and to look at lithium through the lens of deep time to develop new representational methods considering these impacts.

Nisrine Boukhari's text speaks of landscape from an experiential point of view, as a shifting site of displacement and mourning, but also describes an absolute closeness to the experience of landscape and to the different ways that landscapes are sensed and perceived as one travels from a familiar territory and language into something else. She reflects on how a landscape is perceived as an unfixed subject, in transit, travelling elsewhere. Her text evokes poetry that seeks to define this perspective as one between the sited and the imagined, a practice of wondering and wandering where the line between a landscape and its viewer becomes blurred and consolation is found in the freedom this creates.

What is landscape in the age of space travel and satellite surveillance, and how is it related to the expanding universe? Minna Långström's essay 'Images of Mars and the Landscapes that Created Them' draws from her work on the documentary film *The Other Side of Mars* (2019), asking if we can approach an alien landscape as it is or if we always see it *as* something. She addresses the importance of the place from which we look as well as the sometimes very distant

place we are looking at, and concludes that some internal knowledge of a place can never simply be transformed into 'an image'. Instead, over time, a complex and triangulated depiction is created, one that tells us as much about those working to depict it as the place itself. For Långström these thoughts resolve into a series of questions that we might bring to bear on any landscape: "the landscape in a film installation – especially one with several perspectives or video channels – often becomes a place that we can start to see as something *as such* precisely by considering multiple perspectives of it; who or what inhabits the landscape, what is its history and current use? What is the angle? Who takes the photograph? How true is it? What's missing, hidden or revealed? What is the scale? How detailed or complex is it? How was the landscape picture taken? By whom? What had to be designed, manufactured and done for the picture to exist? What culture created the (image of the) landscape? Does it aim for objectivity or emphasise a certain perspective?"

Recently, I have been thinking that our relationship and connection to our surrounding landscape is changing as rapidly as new technologies and our continuous exploitation of natural resources escalate: our understanding of where something might begin and end becomes blurred. As co-producers of this waste landscape we are now obliged to step in and engage, and thus the notion of landscape is no longer something that can be viewed from a distance.

The thought of our contemporary landscape has, for many of us, a dystopic aura that might even be alluring – in the ways that all dystopic thoughts allow us to displace our uneasy reactions to the here and now. Things do not look good. We feel shame rather than pride. The clock is ticking. We know we are responsible for our exploitations, but simply don't seem to care enough to take charge. As humans we seem utterly unable to go beyond ourselves or to think in the long term. Even just imagining life one generation ahead

of ourselves is apparently impossible for us. Meanwhile, we keep trucking. We keep using up our limited resources. We all know that things are not what they look like, they are worse. So how does, or can, painting reflect and cope with this right now? How does one subvert the act of *looking at* into an act of *engaging with*?

It seems to me that many painters have turned to using materials in a more resourceful way recently, for example making their own paint and pigments in order to become more in tune with the sources of their materials. A more radical way of looking at contemporary landscape painting might actually be to see these new approaches to the practice as a new landscape, in which the process of obtaining the material becomes part of our engagement with landscape itself. If process and material are the content carriers, and if landscape is no longer necessarily an image, we might then be able to ask ourselves what this new landscape is telling us.

Travelling While Lying Down: Chinese Landscape Handscrolls as Vehicles for Mind Travel

MINNA TÖRMÄ

The Chinese court painter Guo Xi (11th c.) argued that painters could create works which can transport viewers to wander in a landscape. For example, a scholar-official, who was bound to his desk in the office, could take out a landscape handscroll, scroll through it at his desk and return refreshed to reading and writing documents having travelled among streams and mountains, maybe stopping for a picnic at a scenic spot with his friends. All this could take place in his mind, aided by a painted image. He even maintained that painters could capture the cries of the monkeys or singing of the birds and said in *Lofty Message of Forests and Streams* (*Linquan gaozhi* 林泉高致):

"Without leaving your room you may sit to your heart's content among streams and valleys. The voices of apes and the calls of birds will fall on your ears faintly. The glow of the mountain and the colour of the waters will dazzle your eyes glitteringly. Could this fail to quicken your interest and thoroughly capture your heart."[1]

1 Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih (eds.), *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, Harvard University Press, 1985, p. 151. Guo Xi's text has been translated into Finnish; see, Minna Törmä, *Metsien ja virtojen ylevä viesti. Guo Xin (n. 1001 - n. 1090) ajatuksia maisemamaalauksesta*, Taide, 1999.

This essay will discuss various examples to show how this idea worked in practice. However, Guo Xi was not the first to emphasise this idea. In fact, the idea of travelling through a painting had already been persistent in Chinese art for centuries. The term *woyou* 臥遊 ('travelling while lying down') is encountered in a fourth-century text *Introduction to Landscape Painting* (*Hua shanshui xu* 畫山水序) by Zong Bing 宗炳 (375-433). He was getting old and moving about was not as easy as it had been, so he painted pictures of landscapes he had visited on the walls of his room. He lamented his looming old age and the loss of energy in his body, but nevertheless placed his faith in the power of imagination. The images could take him wandering again:

"If truths that were lost before the period of middle antiquity may be sought by the imagination a thousand years later, and if meaning that is subtler than the images of speech can be grasped by the mind in books and records, what then of that where the body has strolled and the eyes rested repeatedly when it is described form to form and color for color."[2]

It is fascinating to observe that the eleventh century – Guo Xi's lifetime – seems to have been the heyday of the idea of *woyou* or 'travelling while lying down'. References to it abound in images and in verbal accounts. For example, Guo Xi's contemporary Qin Guan 秦觀 (1049-1100) was not yet old but was feeling rather poorly. To cheer him up, a friend lent Qin Guan a handscroll by the Tang dynasty painter Wang Wei 王維 (701-761) which depicted Wang's large estate Wangchuan Villa (*Wangchuan tu* 輞川圖) and its landscape. The friend told Qin Guan: "Study this and it will cure your

2 Bush and Shih, *Early Chinese Texts*, p. 145.

illness."[3] We are lucky, because Qin Guan wrote down all this, telling us also how he felt about the landscape painting:

"Wild with excitement, as if I were with [Wang Wei] himself, I entered Wangchuan. We crossed Huazi Hill, passed through Meng Wall Cove, and paused to rest at Wangchuan Villa. We tied up at Grained Apricot Lodge, ascended the Clear Bamboo Range, and stood at Magnolia Enclosure and turned back at the Southern and Northern Hillocks. We boated on Lake Yi, played among Willow Waves, and rinsed in the Luan Family Shallows. We poured wine at Gold Powder Spring, passed White Rock Rapids, stopped at Bamboo Grove Lodge, turned around at Magnolia Bank, and reached Lacquer Tree Garden."[4]

All these place names in the quote were well-known sites of the estate of the poet-painter Wang Wei. And every eleventh-century scholar would have known them by heart even if they had not seen the famous painting, partly because Wang Wei had composed a sequence of poems commemorating the sites of his estate. Having enjoyed the painting, Qin Guan ended his narrative by saying: "I forgot that my body was in Runan, and in a few days my illness was cured."[5]

What emerges from these quotes is that a landscape painting could serve as a vehicle for mind travel when movement was restricted for a variety of reasons: mainly old age and illness but also being bound with duties which prevented the viewer roaming in the landscape. The horizontal handscroll was a particularly suitable format of painting in this respect. It can be several metres long,

3 Robert E. Harrist Jr, *Painting and Private Life in Eleventh-Century China*, Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 72. Today, we know Wang Wei's composition only through a rubbing of an early 17TH century engraving which was based on a painting by Guo Zhongshu 郭忠恕 (ca. 910-ca. 977). The rubbing is in the collection of Princeton University Art Museum, see https://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/41417 (accessed 3.6.2022).

4 Harrist Jr, *Painting and Private Life in Eleventh-Century China*, p. 72.

5 Ibid., p. 72

and it is not usually opened up in its entirety but viewed section by section, from right to left, closing the section already in view before unrolling another new vista.

Guo Xi further elaborated on *woyou* by distinguishing four modes of 'viewing speed' for it. Depending on the type, a landscape painting would be suitable for travelling, sightseeing, wandering or dwelling. He added that the last two were superior.[6] As we have seen in the case of Wang Wei's Wangchuan Villa, the handscroll as a format is most befitting to mind travel particularly when the painting is constructed with a sense of clarity and precise knowledge of travel methods. Even a short handscroll can take the viewer on a journey. Guo Xi's *Old Trees, Level Distance* (fig. 1a) provides an example of what would seem to be a short journey as the painting is only 104.4 cm long and could easily be viewed as a single scene.[7] Nonetheless, the way he has arranged the composition and furnished it with details leads the viewer to linger rather than simply rush through. Besides, when we begin to unroll a handscroll we may not know how long the scroll will be. When we open this scroll we encounter a level, distant view of a river landscape. Two fishermen in their boats are represented in the hazy morning, and if we gaze further along the river on the opposite bank we note two tiny figures of travellers with a donkey disappearing in the distance. I have interpreted this

6 Bush and Shih, *Early Chinese Texts*, pp. 151–152.

7 For details of this painting see https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/39668?ft=Guo+Xi&offset=0&rpp=40&pos=1 (accessed 5.6.2022). For all the scrolls discussed in this essay, I would recommend that you also explore the paintings online using the links in the footnotes. Online collections entries will allow you to zoom in closer to the details of the paintings. More examples of handscrolls can be found on the University of Chicago Center for Art of East Asia 'East Asian Scroll Paintings' website: https://scrolls.uchicago.edu (accessed 26.7.2022).

opening scene as being morning on the basis of the combination of fishermen, mist and travellers setting off on their journey.

Moving slowly onwards (fig. 1b), we see the path that the travellers have been following. It has passed a pavilion situated on a promontory, surrounded by a cluster of trees and rocks. Somebody is in the pavilion arranging seating and/or tables. In paintings, a pavilion usually acts as a marker for a scenic spot and indeed this is further confirmed as we gaze onwards to the left: a group of people are approaching the pavilion. The first part of the group consists of two servants, one carrying a long narrow parcel and the other bringing a box. The narrow parcel contains a zither (*qin* 琴) and the box perhaps provisions for a picnic. After passing these two, we meet the second part of the group on a bridge. Two elderly looking gentlemen – possibly scholar-officials – are heading to the pavilion and are accompanied by servants. Their plan seems to be to explore the beautiful scenery from the pavilion while enjoying music and refreshments. We as viewers are prompted to join the procession and spend a leisurely day in their company there.

The second example is a longer scroll called *Buddhist Temples amid Autumn Mountains* (*Qiushan xiaosi tu* 秋山蕭寺圖).[8] It is by an unknown painter and was painted sometime during the fourteenth century, either towards the end of Yuan (1279-1368) or in the early Ming (1368-1644). The subtitle of the painting relates it with the style of Yan Wengui 燕文貴 (ca. 967-1044), a somewhat earlier contemporary of Guo Xi. Yan Wengui's best known painting is the handscroll *Pavilions and Mansions by Rivers and Mountains* (*Jiangshan louguan tu* 江山樓觀圖), which is in the collection of Osaka

8 For the details of this painting, see https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/40106?ft=Yan+Wengui&offset=0&rpp=40&pos=4 (accessed 5.6.2022).

Municipal Museum of Art. This latter scroll was the focus of my book *Landscape Experience as Visual Narrative: Northern Song Dynasty Landscape Handscrolls in the Li Cheng-Yan Wengui Tradition* (2002).[9]

One of my main arguments in the book was that even if a handscroll did not seem to be based on a story or to be telling a story, when we view a handscroll a narrative begins to build up in our minds because of the nature of the viewing process. Painters had learnt to use changes in the compositional structure to manipulate the tempo of the viewing process. For example, clusters of details and action tend to slow down the viewers because they want to absorb all that is happening. This is how the painter can create the narrative rhythm, which is the basis of Guo Xi's categorisations of the speed of movement.

In this scroll, the landscape begins with a close up of a cluster of trees, old craggy pines dominating the group (fig. 2a). As we 'stand' by them, a vista over a river landscape extends towards the horizon and turning our eyes to the left we see a hillock rising. Adjusting to the imagery we notice a boat along the lower border of the image inviting us to join and thus helping us to continue the journey since no path has yet been visible for us. The boat seems to be a ferry carrying people across the river with two boatmen navigating the shallow looking stream at this point.

The boat passes the hillock and is heading towards a shore where people are waiting (fig. 2b). This group is setting off for an outing: one (a servant) is taking care of two picnic baskets attached to a pole and another is holding the long parcel which contains the lute (*qin*). A horse stands by, maybe having brought the gentleman to meet the

9 Minna Törmä, *Landscape Experience as Visual Narrative: Northern Song Dynasty Landscape Handscrolls in the Li Cheng Yan Wengui Tradition*, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2002.

ferry and continue his journey. The scene at this point provides a wealth of detail and it takes time to process it all. We have the anticipation of an outing which appears to be the main narrative here. But there are other stories as well. What about the hunched (old) man moving away from the shore with his servant? He is holding a long staff. The houses on this promontory are very modest, and the thatch on some of the roofs is in need of repair. On the opposite bank we get a glimpse of the prows of two boats and beyond, more thatched roofs. The landscape is misty and high mountains are vaguely visible in the distance.

There seems to be a pause at this point. The group going for the outing is moving towards the beginning of the scroll, but as viewers we are not yet ready to return as we have barely explored the landscape. We have become curious about the hunched old man. Where is he heading to? Following him between the houses and through the trees we arrive at a group of buildings set snugly at the foot of a mountain. These structures are well-built, with beautiful gabled roofs made of ceramic tiles. This must be a fairly prosperous temple. Steeply rising cliffs protect it from three sides. We could stay here for a while as the route onwards (to the left) seems to be blocked by the mountains rising high and stretching from the bottom of the image to beyond the top.

Eventually, we discover that there is a path between the mountains which negotiates us through to the other side (fig. 2c). That we are on the right track is confirmed by two wanderers on a bridge crossing a rivulet which is merging with the main river. From this point, if we turn our gaze upwards, we can enjoy the sight of a waterfall trickling down the mountains. We keep admiring the view as we continue behind the boulders along the shore and the path widens out when it comes into view again. We see another temple further up on the mountain slope and we could make another temple visit

if we are inclined to do so. Or we could just continue left where another bridge leads over a stream. It is these points of diverging paths where the viewer pauses to contemplate which direction to proceed along.

Choosing the latter, we have caught up with a group of travellers. The group is headed by a man riding a donkey and followed by two servants carrying lots of luggage. Are they on a leisure trip or are they travelling on business from one place to another? Amongst the things the servants are carrying we can see a parasol and something which might be a folding chair (though it is somewhat badly drawn). These details would indicate that the journey is being taken for leisure. As we open the scroll further (fig. 2d), the mountain scenery has changed to a lowland landscape. The path disappears from view for a while as our vision is blocked by a hillock. However, even when the path is not visible as a continuous line but occasionally obscured by elements of landscape, we know that it will appear again. At the other end of this, a cottage with a flag is tucked at the foot of the hillock, the flag being a sign for an inn. A group of people emerging behind a ridge are approaching it from the opposite direction, and the man leading the other two men is pointing at the inn. It is clearly time for a break.

After resting for a while, we come to the river shore, where we find a ferry boat (fig. 2e). Is it departing or has it just arrived? It is vaguely reminiscent of what we encountered earlier at the beginning of the scroll: two ferrymen (fig. 2a). If we look closer at the group on the boat we might be surprised to see that the group is similar to the one departing on an excursion in the second segment of the scroll: a man (a scholar) with two servants bringing food baskets and a lute accompanied by the donkey (fig. 2b). The ambiguity of this group – are they departing or arriving? – is intriguing. Are we to continue the journey or should we re-trace our steps back to the beginning?

In handscrolls, people coming towards the viewer (moving left to right) would often indicate that the scroll is coming to an end.

Nevertheless, curiosity prompts us to continue the journey and to cross the river. We pass buildings, only the roofs of which are visible, as the path emerges into view and then leads towards the left along the shore (fig. 2f). There we catch up with a wood gatherer with two donkeys, both laden with bundles of firewood, while the man himself is carrying his share of the load. The path itself turns inward in the picture and disappears from view. The next frame (fig. 2g) is the ending of the scroll. At the very end, his boat partly hidden by the shore, a boatman sits huddled at the prow, turned towards the beginning of the scroll.

As the third example, I have chosen a painting attributed to Qu Ding (active ca. 1023-ca. 1056) and titled *Summer Mountains* (fig. 3a and 3b).[10] It is short like Guo Xi's *Old Trees, Level Distance* (fig. 1a-b), but unlike Guo Xi's painting, *Summer Mountains* presents a grand view of mountains, and it is filled with action and detail. In this scroll we 'enter' the painting at the lower right-hand corner, where the masts of several boats are visible behind a bank. We see some figures on their decks and wonder if these rather large vessels are fishing boats or used for something else.

Our point of entry to the painting is somewhat puzzling, however, as we are not immediately offered an obvious way to continue our journey. Instead, we are confronted by an expanse of water. There is no bridge or a ferry visible to get us over to the other side. From where we stand, we see more boats with their tall masts across the water behind the banks of a village, where we also glimpse the flag

10 For the details of this painting, see https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/39915?ft=Qu+Ding&offset=0&rpp=40&pos=1 (accessed 23.7.2022).

of an inn. The village looks modest yet prosperous. Our gaze may follow a flock of birds soaring in the air, and beyond this we see layers and layers of mountains. We might even notice two tiny figures who are disappearing behind a ridge in the distance and further beyond then, a temple-roof and a pagoda.

It feels almost as if we are meant to stay where we are and just explore the landscape with our eyes from the 'outside', without becoming part of the action unfolding in it. If we let our eyes roam freely, we note the wood gatherer carrying his load on the village paths. That path follows along the shore and after disappearing for a while becomes visible on the other side of a hillock. There it continues over a bridge where one figure rides on a donkey and another walks behind it. The landscape further up is partly enshrouded in mists and therefore hiding any routes which would take us to the mountains. Nevertheless, our eyes catch a magnificent temple complex about halfway up a mountain. Along the bottom of the painting, after the bridge, the path leads past buildings which are partly hidden by the rocky shore and among trees, and which then disappears from view.

When the path appears again from behind a hillock, it leads over another bridge. Glancing upwards, a waterfall gushes down from the mountains. At the other side of the bridge there is an indication that we have arrived at a point where the path provides two options to follow. The more obvious option points towards the lower edge of the image and along it leftwards. The other option suggests a movement 'inward' into the painting. It is curious, however, that the latter disappears from sight almost immediately, though our gaze can surmise that it leads to the palatial looking building complex further up. Details are miniature-like, but nevertheless we get glimpses of figures by the windows or on the terraces. And yet, this area seems somewhat inaccessible.

In a sense, what is left for us is to follow the path along the lower part of the painting. There, on the path, we catch up with two travellers carrying their loads approaching yet another bridge. A fisherman on a boat is about to pass beneath it. Looking inward at the scenery, we see buildings supported by poles partly overhanging the water. One of them might be a restaurant, as we see figures seated by the windows. A caravan of several donkeys and figures on foot are approaching it from the left. Then our journey passes by a number of modest houses hidden under trees and the rocky shore before reaching a small, shabby looking hut. This might be a shrine. The painting is a bit worn out here, but it seems that two travellers have stopped there leaving their loads on the road and paying obeisance to whatever is inside the shrine – maybe a statue of a bodhisattva. On the final bridge we meet a man carrying loads on a pole held over his shoulders and we know it is time to turn back.

It is fascinating how every time one views a landscape handscroll one discovers something new and the interpretation changes. In my previous explorations of this painting I had ignored the fact that there was no clear link in the form of a ferry from the lower righthand corner of the image across the water. Instead, I had assumed that the painter would have allowed me to imagine one in order to access a path and continue my journey.[11] In addition, the painting was created in the imperial court, and I have tended to think that the emperor used it as a vehicle for *woyou*. Viewing it the emperor would have found a prosperous and peaceful scene filled with detail showing that everything was in order in his empire. It is also short and dense which might suggest that the emperor may not have had time to linger too long when viewing a painting.

11 See for example: Törmä, *Landscape Experience as Visual Narrative*, pp. 66-68.

But what if *Summer Mountains* was not meant to function as a visual narrative in the way *Old Trees, Level Distance* (fig. 1a-b) and *Buddhist Temples amid Autumn Mountains* (fig. 2a-g) did? Since the path is mostly visible along the lower border of the painting and there are no significant diversions from it, another possibility is that the painting was originally part of a low screen. As an image, the painting forms a unified composition in the sense that it does not encourage or require sequential viewing.

It was fairly common practice to change the format of a painting in China and we know of cases where a painting which was originally a screen was turned into a handscroll.[12] Landscape imagery was often found on screens which framed a bed or a couch or on pillow screens. It was thought to have a calming effect on the mind when one rested or slept surrounded by a screen like this. No landscape screens from this period survive because screens were functional objects and therefore subject to wear and tear. We know of the existence of such screens from colophons attached to paintings, from poems, diaries and art historical texts. If a painting on the screen was deemed to be valuable, it could be remounted as a handscroll, though we do not know how completely a scroll would preserve the original screen. Parts of it may have been lost in the reformatting process.

Nevertheless, in both cases (screen and handscroll) the imagery was meant to assist the viewers in their *woyou*. Guo Xi, when discussing the essentials of landscape representation, emphasised clarity and rationality as only then would the viewer be able to follow

12 I have discussed this issue in detail in *Landscape Experience as Visual Narrative.* The analysis focuses on *Luxuriant Forests and Distant Peaks* (*Maolin yuanxiu tu* 茂林遠岫圖), which has been attributed to Li Cheng (collection of the Liaoning Provincial Museum, Shenyang). The painting is accompanied by a colophon which narrates the story of this change of format. Törmä, *Landscape Experience as Visual Narrative*, pp. 43-45 and pp. 78-80.

what the painter had created. The desire for mind travel (*woyou*) arose predominantly in old age, during illness, or for relaxation in general. Guo Xi and his contemporaries had great confidence in the power of the mind and this leads us to the Chinese concept of *li* 理.[13] The Northern Song philosopher Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107) – also Guo Xi's contemporary – had explored how *li* was linked to dreams and memory:

"What the mind 'penetrates when stimulated' is only the *li*. The events of the world as it knows them either are or are not, irrespective of past and present, before and after. For example, whatever is perceived in dreams is without form; there is only its *li*. If you say that dreams are concerned with such things as forms and voices, these are ether." He continues: "Within heaven and earth, what is simply is. For example, what a man has experienced, has seen and heard ... one day after many years he may recall it, complete in his breast. Where has this particular *tao-li* been located?"[14]

Thus, if we as viewers (and the painters too) have explored our surroundings carefully and in depth, we would understand the inner structures and principles of each object and phenomenon, including how landscape and travel through it is constructed. While this association with *li* is clearly manifest in the paintings which have been so far discussed in this essay, there are also handscrolls which convey a more complex visual narrative. A painting by Cheng Zhengkui 程正揆 (1604-1676), *Dream Journey among Rivers and Mountains* (*Jiangshan woyou tu* 江山臥遊圖; no. 150, dated 1662) displays this

13 This concept can be translated in various ways though most often it is translated as 'principle'. Törmä, *Landscape Experience as Visual Narrative*, p. 88.

14 Translated by A. C. Graham; see: A. C. Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers*, Open Court, 1992 [1957]), p. 15.

complexity and challenges the conventions which have governed the previous examples (fig. 4a-h).[15]

Opening *Dream Journey among Rivers and Mountains*, we encounter a group of buildings tucked comfortably into the landscape behind a hillock on which grow four twisted trees (fig. 4a). Beyond this scene a river landscape winds into the distance. Moving left, a bridge stretches across a river, and this signals the presence of a path. On the opposite bank we get a glimpse of more buildings though only their roofs are visible. They are protected in an enclave created by boulders and the rising mountains. If we imagine ourselves standing at that point and looking in the opposite direction we can view a waterfall cascading down a mountainside. There a path winds upwards curving to the left and disappears from view.

As we scroll more of the painting open (and start closing the beginning), we have passed the mountain range and approach a valley where we are offered several paths as options to follow (fig. 4b). One of them disappears behind a mountain and another one turns left along the mountainside. While deciding which direction to take we are also confronted by a large Taihu rock in the middle of the landscape. It is almost blocking our way forward. The rock catches our attention and we forget the paths, instead trying to make something out of this unexpected feature. It presents an anomaly to our sense of scale, and it is not the only confusing detail. Along the lower edge of the image, there are mountains with spruces growing on top of them. But the scale is all wrong and they remind us of miniature versions of great mountains. It is in fact as if we are looking at rocks planted with spruce seedlings on a tray landscape, or *Penjing*. The anomalies of scale are striking and signal to

15 For details of this painting, see https://collections.lacma.org/node/240953 (accessed 24.7.2022).

us that this painting does not follow the usual conventions of composition. However, before elaborating on what this might mean from the point of view of interpretation, we should look through the scroll in its entirety. Up to this point, we have not encountered any figures moving about the landscape. Instead, the only indication that the landscape is inhabited is the presence of the houses in the beginning.

Once we have passed the Taihu rock, we do catch up with two figures on the path: these figures seem to be scholars, wandering in a leisurely fashion and chatting with each other. Moving forward, the path descends towards a river which can be crossed by a bridge (fig. 4c). A village is visible upstream, but since no path is clearly approachable, we move on along the path in the foreground. It begins to turn upwards into the mountains and disappears. The path apparently continues behind a mountain, coming into view again on the mountain's left side. A group of buildings is wedged, as it were, between the peaks of this mountain, as if hidden from view for those within the painting. As the path reappears, the roof of a pavilion juts from a cliff top. We meet a person standing on the shore and see a fisherman aboard his boat on the river. Somehow at this point we first seem to be at a dead end as a tall peak rises in front of us.

Nevertheless, there is a path squeezing through between the tall peak and some boulders (fig. 4d). Stepping forward, we arrive on a promontory of a vast river expanse. If we imagine ourselves standing next to the old, crooked pine looking to our right, we see a building on a cliff – possibly a pavilion for viewing the scenery. The distant mountains across the water are swathed in mist and the presence of villages is indicated by rooftops. There are two scholars on our side of the riverbank. They stand there, and the one on the right is pointing upwards at five birds flying together. Could they be geese?

Walking past them, we encounter another Taihu rock. It is not quite as grand as the first one, but it occupies a conspicuous position on the riverbank. The river landscape offers no boats to make the crossing, and the mountains are only to be enjoyed from a distance. In order to move forward we have no other choice but to follow the barely visible strip of path along the lower edge of the image. As we continue this route, we meet two figures further along the shore (fig. 4e). They are engaged in a discussion, turning towards each other. The river expanse changes into a mountainous landscape as the mountain formations are moving closer to the foreground. Walking along the shore we pass behind a boulder with a crooked pine growing on top of it. Gazing inwards, a stream is trickling slowly down from the mountains, growing wider before it joins the main river. A long wooden bridge crosses the river at this point, where the current below looks strong. On the bridge, three figures are making their way across. Two of them are dressed like scholars – one holding a long staff – and the third is a carrying a long package, likely to contain a lute (fig. 4f).

Once back on the path, the mountain landscape becomes seemingly impenetrable. The mountains rise steeply at either side, and though the painter has placed a group of buildings on one of the mountain tops they will not be visible to anyone down below. The path moves close to the viewer, stretching from the bottom edge of the painting to the top of it and cutting our sense of continuity. It feels as if we have arrived at the end of this visual journey. Nevertheless, since the scroll allows us to open it further, we unroll it and see that the landscape continues. In the rest of the scroll there are no figures (fig. 4g-h). In addition, there is a reversal of scale, similar to what happened in the second section around the first Taihu rock (fig. 4b). Here, like in the second section, the landscape elements along the foreground are small, indicating that they are

further away in the distance thereby confusing our sense of space. At the very end of the scroll, however, the scaling and structuring of the landscape elements once again becomes what we would consider normal.

Cheng Zhengkui called the painting a "Dream Journey" (*woyou*). We know that he painted numerous handscrolls with the same title – hundreds in fact. The paintings were intended as gifts to his friends who were serving at the newly established Manchu court in Beijing. The inscription at the end of this painting states that it is number 150.[16] We therefore know that the painting was not meant to depict a 'real' landscape. Knowing the ideas behind the creation of this scroll, we can approach the interpretation of the changes of scale, awkward forms and a sudden appearance of gigantic Taihu rocks as features of the dream world. Furthermore, and in particular regarding scroll number 150, I would like to provide a more specific interpretation.

The painting has taken us on a journey through a landscape and in many ways functioned like the other scrolls we have explored in this essay. Nevertheless, some of the details I have singled out in the previous paragraphs engender a sense of wandering in a garden. The two Taihu rocks are the most obvious references, as these types of rocks were essential features of Chinese gardens. But the changes of scale point in that direction as well. In the previous discussion on section two I made a connection with tray landscapes, which contained miniature mountains with vegetation and water (fig. 5). In gardens the visitors are expected to interpret the changes of scale and translate them into a landscape experience. Therefore, a tray landscape should be viewed as a 'real' landscape. Another detail

16 Forty paintings from the series survive. For example, the Art Institute in Chicago has one in its collection: https://www.artic.edu/artworks/79314/dream-journey-to-rivers-and-mountains (accessed 25.7.2022).

which I found striking was that the figures in this painting seemed to be strolling in the landscape in a leisurely manner without the urgency of travelling forward. This sense of leisure also points to gardens, which were places for the enjoyment of conversation, music and landscape.

The interpretation of this particular painting by Cheng Zhengkui as an imaginary garden actually relates well to what Wai-yee Li's research in her article 'Gardens and Illusions from Late Ming to Early Qing' shows: "[t]he trend of writing about illusory gardens arguably started in the late Ming."[17] She adds that this was related with a fascination about dreams and illusions more broadly. These ideas were contemporary with Cheng Zhengkui's life. He was born in the late Ming (in 1604) and saw the collapse of the dynasty. Then he made the difficult decision to serve the new rulers and the new Qing dynasty. In this context, it is compelling to discover that a number of the gardens explored by Wai-yee Li existed only as texts. The examples she cites had, for example, such names as *Non-existent Garden* 烏有園 and *Imagined Garden* 意園.[18] Like Cheng Zhengkui's handscrolls, these descriptions created dream-like imaginary journeys through gardens and in them everything was not necessarily as in reality. It seems that the chaotic historical circumstance of the dynastic transition spanning most of the seventeenth century led scholars to cling to the imaginary/fictive rather than the real/concrete. There was a tendency to relinquish materialism and seek refuge in the imaginary.

As this essay demonstrates, handscrolls could draw either from the real or the imaginary when taking the viewer on a journey.

17 Li Wai-yee, 'Gardens and Illusions from Late Ming to Early Qing', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 72:2 (December 2012): pp. 295-336. Quote on pp. 298-299.

18 Ibid., 298-302: *Non-existent Garden* was 'created' by Liu Shilong 劉士龍 (17TH century) and *Imagined Garden* by Dai Mingshi 戴名世 (1653-1713).

Gardening could also be an act of imagination. Nevertheless, the creation of a physical garden could also take into account the principles of travelling, sightseeing, wandering or dwelling. These are the four modes of movement emphasized by Guo Xi (and discussed earlier in this essay). This brings us to the ways gardens have been categorized. Chen Congzhou (1918-2000; *On Chinese Gardens*, 2008 [1984]) has proposed that gardens should be divided into two main types: "in-position garden viewing" and "in-motion garden viewing".[19] For the first type, his main example is Wangshiyuan 网师园 in Suzhou (fig. 6a-d).[20] He further explains that his impressions are based on "lingering observation from fixed angles"; that is, "there are more visual points of interest to appreciate from fixed angles."[21] For the second one, his focus is Zhuozhengyuan 拙政园, also in Suzhou.[22] In this example, he refers to "moving observation from changing angles", meaning that this type of garden "demands a longer 'touring' vista."[23]

The two garden types proposed by Chen Congzhou will guide us in developing the analogy between a handscroll and a garden. Following Chen's two categories and modifying his expressions a bit, we could argue that landscape handscrolls, which are for travelling and sightseeing, could fall into the category of 'in-motion garden/landscape viewing." Accordingly, those for wandering and living could be about 'in-position garden/landscape viewing'? If we adapt Guo Xi's modes into gardens, it could be said that gardens

19 Chen Congzhou, *On Chinese Gardens*, Better Link Press, 2008 [1984]), p. 15.

20 The name of the garden has been translated, for example, as the 'Garden of the Master of the Fishing Nets'.

21 Chen, *On Chinese Gardens*, p. 15.

22 The name of the garden can be translated, for example, as 'Humble Administrator's Garden'.

23 Chen, *On Chinese Gardens*, p. 15.

like Wangshiyuan are suitable for wandering and living, whereas Zhuozhengyuan is more appropriate for travelling and sightseeing. The handscrolls take us on a journey in our imagination when we are stationary, while in a garden we are moving around viewing the spaces from different angles and at a varying pace. Yet, imagination has a role in gardens as well because we are expected to interpret the shifting changes of scale – tray landscapes and Taihu rocks – in relation to our landscape experiences. Contemplating a tray landscape, we should roam its paths and scale the heights of the mountains, in our imaginations.

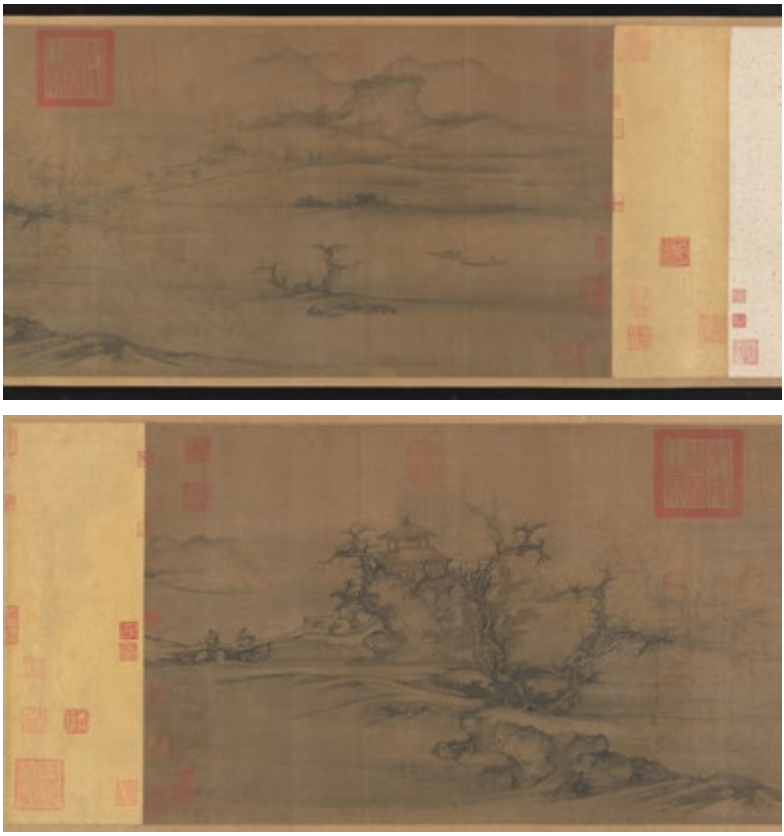

Fig. 1a. Guo Xi (11th c.), *Old Trees, Level Distance*; section one of the handscroll, ink on silk, 35.6 × 104.4 cm; Gift of John M. Crawford Jr., in honour of Douglas Dillon, 1981 (1981.276), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Fig. 1b. Guo Xi, *Old Trees, Level Distance*; section two

(Note: all images of the paintings are in the Public Domain)

Fig. 2a. Unknown painter, *Buddhist Temples amid Autumn Mountains*; section one of the handscroll, ink and colour on silk, 32.5 x 321.3 cm; Gift of the Dillon Fund, 1983 (1983.12), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Fig. 2b. Unknown painter, *Buddhist Temples amid Autumn Mountains*; section two

Fig. 2c. Unknown painter, *Buddhist Temples amid Autumn Mountains*; section three

Fig. 2d. Unknown painter, *Buddhist Temples amid Autumn Mountains*; section four

Fig. 2e. Unknown painter, *Buddhist Temples amid Autumn Mountains*; section five
Fig. 2f. Unknown painter, *Buddhist Temples amid Autumn Mountains*; section six

Fig. 2g. Unknown painter, *Buddhist Temples amid Autumn Mountains*; section seven

Fig. 3a. Attributed to Qu Ding (active ca. 1023-ca. 1056), *Summer Mountains*, ca. 1050; section one of the handscroll, ink and colour on silk, 43.5 x 115.2 cm; Ex coll. C.C. Wang Family, Gift of The Dillon Fund, 1973 (1973.120.1), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Fig. 3b. Attributed to Qu Ding, *Summer Mountains*; section two

Fig. 4a. Cheng Zhengkui (1604-1676), *Dream Journey among Rivers and Mountains* (no 150, dated 1662); section one of the handscroll, ink and colour on paper, h. 36.8; Far Eastern Art Council Fund (M.75.25), Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Fig. 4b. Cheng Zhengkui, *Dream Journey among Rivers and Mountains*; section two

Fig. 4c. Cheng Zhengkui, *Dream Journey among Rivers and Mountains*; section three

Fig. 4d. Cheng Zhengkui, *Dream Journey among Rivers and Mountains*; section four
Fig. 4e. Cheng Zhengkui, *Dream Journey among Rivers and Mountains*; section five
Fig. 4f. Cheng Zhengkui, *Dream Journey among Rivers and Mountains*; section six

Fig. 4g. Cheng Zhengkui, *Dream Journey among Rivers and Mountains*; section seven

Fig. 4h. Cheng Zhengkui, *Dream Journey among Rivers and Mountains*; section eight

Fig. 5. A tray landscape, Liuyuan, Suzhou © Minna Törmä 2009

Fig. 6a. View over the pond towards Washing Cap-Strings Pavilion, Wangshiyuan, Suzhou © Minna Törmä 2009

Fig. 6b. Opposite side of the pond, Wangshiyuan, Suzhou © Minna Törmä 2009

Fig. 6c. Arrangement of rocks, Wangshiyuan, Suzhou © Minna Törmä 2009

Fig. 6d. A Taihu rock in a pavilion, Wangshiyuan, Suzhou © Minna Törmä 2009

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Fig. 1. Haarlem Lead Seals, mid to late seventeenth century, Jamestown, Virginia, Courtesy Jamestown Rediscovery (Preservation Virginia) https://historicjamestowne.org/collections/artifacts/haarlem-seals/

Jacob Ruisdael's **View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds** and its Afterlives

SUSAN M. MERRIAM

In the first decade of the twenty-first century a team of archeologists working in the former British colony of Jamestown, Virginia, unearthed a number of lead seals in the Confederate Fort area (fig. 1). While the seals are corroded and in a somewhat fragmentary state, they feature a stamp, 'Haerlem's Goet' (or 'Goods from Haarlem'), which allowed scholars to identify their place of origin as Haarlem, The Netherlands.[1] The mysterious objects, it turns out, once functioned as markers of authenticity – they had arrived on the shores of colonial Virginia affixed to bolts of linen from Haarlem's famous bleaching fields.

The lead seals' place of origin is depicted in a series of paintings described in seventeenth-century inventories as "Haarlempjes"

1 'Haarlem Lead Seals', Historic Jamestown, accessed 28 12 2022, https://historicjamestowne.org/collections/artifacts/haarlem-seals/

Fig. 2. Jacob Ruisdael, *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds*, c. 1670-75, Mauritshuis, The Hague, https://www.mauritshuis.nl/en/our-collection/artworks/155-view-of-haarlem-with-bleaching-grounds/

or "scenes of Haarlem."[2] Jacob Ruisdael's *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds* (Mauritshuis), one of the most famous of these images, still has the potential to astonish viewers with its beauty and sense of calm (fig. 2). The painting's somewhat elevated perspective provides a sweeping view of the flat Dutch landscape under a pale blue sky dotted with clouds, while sunlight illuminates houses and trees. Shadows play across the fields. In the middle of the picture, a small group of labourers oversee white strips of linen drying in the sunlight and fresh air. The massive St. Bavo Church draws our eye to the horizon and to the town of Haarlem, the simple but striking skyline providing a rest for our gaze.

For some viewers, Ruisdael's painting is so effective at conveying a deeply satisfying, desirable image of place that for them, it might become fixed as the view of Haarlem. Perhaps the appeal of this beautiful composition explains why Ruisdael painted multiple versions, among them pictures now in Zurich, The Hague, Amsterdam, Berlin, and San Diego.[3] The painting's compelling qualities are emphasised in many texts, including the one accompanying it on the Mauritshuis website, which praises Ruisdael's achievement by

2 In a discussion of Ruisdael's many images of the area around Haarlem, Linda Stone-Ferrier notes that "The only extant document that refers to Ruisdael's views of Haarlem dates from 1669; in the inventory of an Amsterdam collection, 'Een Haerlempje van Ruysdael' is listed as worth twenty-four guilders. The reference to a 'Haarlempje' by 1669 suggests that such views were common by then, and were identified by that term." Linda Stone-Ferrier, 'Views of Haarlem: A Reconsideration of Ruisdael and Rembrandt', *The Art Bulletin* 67 (September 1985), p.18.

3 Ruisdael painted at least 15 scenes around Haarlem; for a discussion of these scenes within the context of Ruisdael's career, see Seymour Slive, *Jacob Van Ruisdael: Master of Landscape*, Yale University Press, 2005, pp. 12-15; see Slive as well for discussion of the copies, p. 144.

noting that with the scene depicted in this work Ruisdael "captured the essence of the Dutch landscape."[4]

Yet, counter to this remark accentuating the painting's eliciting of the eternal or immutable (does the Dutch landscape have 'an' essence?) the work can be understood as pointing to change and instability in multiple ways. On the most basic level, the concept of change is evoked by the composition, which represents several tensions signalling instability or movement. Firstly, the painting invites the viewer to become absorbed in detail at the same time as giving a sense of freedom and expansiveness – we might have the feeling of the landscape exceeding our gaze, extending beyond the frame. Secondly, parts of the picture are somewhat generalised, while others are quite precise. Much of the vegetation doesn't read as individualised in any way as specimens or types, for example, and yet some of the houses depicted are identifiable as belonging to specific people.[5] Thirdly, the clouds appear to show an exact moment in time, and yet, this moment is transient – the cloud formations and shadows they cast will morph by the minute, throughout the day. Like a photograph, the painting captures a fleeting moment in perpetuity.

Other interpreters have taken a different approach to the painting, noting that it represents a relationship between stasis and

4 Jacob Ruisdael, *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds*, Mauritshuis, accessed 28 12 2022, https://www.mauritshuis.nl/en/our-collection/artworks/155-view-of-haarlem-with-bleaching-grounds/

5 According to Slive, Lucas de Clercq owned the bleachery depicted in the foreground of the Mauritshuis painting. Furthermore, Slive notes, "The pitched roof and two chimneys of the house in the right middle ground of the painting belonged to the Huis Clercq en Beeck, a manor Lucas de Clercq owned with his brother-in-law Lucas van Beeck." Slive, *Jacob van Ruisdael: Master of Landscape*, p. 12.

change.[6] The specific time suggested by the indication of cloud movement, in particular, can be understood as being juxtaposed with the apparent stability of the town. In this reading, one might imagine the townscape, characterised most overtly by the monumental church, as enduring – fixed – while the ephemeral clouds represent evanescence and point towards the fixation with notions of flux prevalent at the time.[7]

In this essay I want to examine yet another approach to the idea of change in the *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds* by analysing two moments in its life – its moment of origin, and its moment now. Essentially, I'll be exploring how our historical distance from this image can illuminate the ways in which a landscape painting might enable different readings over time. First, I want to think about possible meanings the painting may have had in the era it was created. How were its form and the materials used in its construction valued or conceptualised? How did it relate to other landscape paintings, or more generally, ideas about the land? What would a seventeenth-century viewer have thought when they gazed at the Dutch fields, labourers, and Haarlem skyline? Of course, it goes without saying that this approach is full of pitfalls – it's a fallacy that one can recreate a moment in the past. We can, however, develop a plausible range of ways the image may have been understood – emotions it might have evoked, thoughts it might have animated, and associations it might have engendered. I'll then move on to consider our reception of the painting centuries later. How has the distance shaped our understanding of the image? Of its materiality, its vision, its meaning as an object? I will conclude by comparing

6 Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker, 'Jacob van Ruisdael, *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds*', in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, accessed 12 12 2022, https://smarthistory.org/ruisdael-view-of-haarlem/.

7 In this sense, the painting might be called characteristically baroque.

the two receptions, which will ultimately bring us again to the metal discs and the fields they reference.

I've chosen this approach, which will be somewhat more personal than most scholarly or academic texts, because I'm writing this from a particular place and time, which is, after all, how everyone encounters both the land and landscape painting. We are all embodied subjects with specific experiences and points of view. I'm also writing as a teacher in the third decade of the twenty-first century, a period during which assumptions about representation have been powerfully challenged. Teachers of art history now must find new ways of accounting for images and the choices they have made in teaching those images.

The **View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds** and the Landscape Tradition

Any student researching the origins of Western landscape painting quickly learns that the subject has interested artists and viewers since antiquity. After a fallow stretch during the medieval period, landscape reemerges in the fifteenth century in the margins of manuscripts and paintings as a backdrop for devotional figures. Many of these images, often created in northern Europe, represent a closely observed landscape view. By this I mean that they show plants, trees, grasses and the sky with minute detail, not in proportion with what we would actually see.

Historians recognise the sixteenth century as the period when European landscape came into its own as an independent genre. Joachim Patinir and Pieter Brueghel are two of the most important figures in this moment: Patinir's extraordinarily detailed scenes of evocative, seemingly imaginary mountain landscapes, often populated by hermit saints, and Brueghel's more naturalistic images (particularly the series of seasons, such as *Hunters in the Snow*) show a developing interest in exploring landscape as an independent

subject. While stylistically quite different, in each case the landscapes represent figures in the land, whether a holy person, such as St. Jerome, or a group of hunters walking through the woods on a winter day, with the landscape taking up a large part of the canvas or panel.

Landscape painting flourished in the seventeenth century, particularly in the Dutch Republic, where painters depicted highly naturalistic scenes of local geography. These images, often produced by artists working in Haarlem, tend to be resolutely local in focus, and while figures are represented they are shown as subsidiary to

Fig. 3. Claude Gellée (called Le Lorrain), *Pastoral Landscape*, 1638
Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, Minnesota
The John R. Van Derlip Fund, and Gift of funds from Ruth and Bruce Dayton, SIT Investment Associates, Darwin and Geri Reedy, and Alfred and Ingrid Lenz Harrison. Alamy Stock Photo.
https://collections.artsmia.org/art/5747/pastoral-landscape-claude-gellee

the land. Jan van Goyen, for instance, painted a number of dunescapes, or understated, almost sober depictions of the Dutch coast.[8] In contrast to landscape paintings from a 'bird's eye view', these might be said to be made from the point of view of someone sitting on the ground, and seem to celebrate earth, sand, and low-growing plants. An alternative tradition, popularized in Italy and France (and also practiced by some northern European artists), represents the land in idealised, sometimes heroic terms. These images, painted most famously by Claude Lorrain or Poussin, feature bucolic scenes, golden sunlight, and classical narratives or a connection to the pastoral.

By the time Ruisdael painted the *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds* in the 1670s, he had a range of compositional types from which to choose. As noted above, already by the 1620s, Dutch artists had begun to paint relatively naturalistic scenes, often of the dunes and beaches around Haarlem. In contrast to the pastoral or ideal landscapes popular in France and Italy, these appear to be observed, in situ. Compare Ruisdael's work, for example, to a landscape by Claude Lorrain created in 1638 (fig. 3). Lorrain's picture, typical of the Italianate landscape tradition, is carefully composed – trees and a classical building frame the scene, guiding our eye through the centre of the picture. While it is possible to find this type of framing in nature, the device, which really functions theatrically like curtains in the theatre, is pictorial. Framing is a way of making landscape perspectival – of drawing the viewer into space. The trees, moreover, are generic. They are not specific to any place in Italy, but are, rather, trees that

8 For more on Van Goyen see Eric Jan Sluijter, Nicolette Sluijter-Seijffert (translator), 'Jan van Goyen: Virtuoso, Innovator, and Market Leader', *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art*, 13:2 (Summer 2021), DOI: 10.5092/jhna.13.2.4 Available at https://jhna.org/articles/van-goyen-virtuoso-innovator-market-leader/

could be used interchangeably to perform the framing function. In contrast, while Ruisdael's landscape is of course composed, it appears unframed, as if the artist just happened upon the scene. The landscape represented in the *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds* is also a more apparently naturalistic composition due to its emphasis on the flat countryside, townscape, and clouds – all identifiable as the town of Haarlem and its environs. The slightly elevated perspective intimates that the artist observed the scene from a small hill, looking towards the horizon. A drawing done by Ruisdael in the late 1660s or early 1670s supports this interpretation: created from a northwest perspective, the same as that shown in the painting, the drawing suggests that the artist has happened upon a pleasing view and documented it.[9]

Landscape and Pictorial Illusion

Much has been made of Dutch artists' ability to create illusionistic effects, even though they worked with a substantially more limited palette than modern painters.[10] Seventeenth-century Dutch artists produced their most spectacular illusions in still life painting, working up seductive textures such as the 'bloom' on a grape skin or the reflective sheen of highly polished glass and metal.[11] Landscapists, challenged with capturing a different range of materials, proved their mettle by creating a sense of atmosphere and light passing through clouds. Important aids to painters in their quest to sustain

9 For more on this drawing, see Slive, *Jacob Van Ruisdael: Master of Landscape*, p. 220.

10 See Ashok Roy (ed.), *Artist's Pigments: A Handbook of their History and Characteristics*, A National Gallery of Art Washington Publication, Oxford University Press, 1993.

11 For technical information about still life painting, see for example Arie Wallert, *Still Lifes: Techniques and Style: An Examination of Paintings from the Rijksmuseum*, W Books, 1999.

this persuasive naturalism existed in a wealth of guide or recipe books and painters' manuals.[12] Equally important would have been their training as apprentices. Master painters passed along the secrets to creating splashy visual illusions, as well as to the production and use of materials, most of which are similar to those used by modern painters: support (linen or panel), sizing, primer, and oil paints.

These visual effects play a central role in animating the apparent spontaneity of The *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds*, which appears to recall a moment of witness even though it was produced in a studio. For, despite a widespread interest in observation and description and a compatible interest in representing nature, seventeenth-century artists created drawings in plein air, and then worked up paintings indoors. This practice was common in the seventeenth century, and was pan-European. Real plein air painting didn't occur until the nineteenth century. The *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds* is thus, like much seventeenth-century painting, a kind of 'apparent realism' – a reality effect.[13]

The Social and Political Context for Understanding the View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds

What would have been the seventeenth-century social and political context for understanding the painting? How would period viewers have interpreted the work? As I mentioned at the beginning of this text, it's important to keep in mind the impossibility of reconstructing the thoughts and perceptions of earlier periods (or our

12 While primarily focused on practice in London and Antwerp, Jo Kirby, 'The Painter's Trade in the Seventeenth Century: Theory and Practice', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* Vol 20, 1999.

13 See Roland Barthes, 'The Reality Effect', originally published in 1968; reprinted in *The Rustle of Language*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1986.

own, really) in any simple way. It's only possible to imagine a set of associations or thoughts the painting might have engendered, all of which are filtered through our own distorting lens. The list of associations for Ruisdael's *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds* is long. At the top would be a sense of place (manifested or experienced in a range of ways), then an aesthetic sensibility, a religious feeling, and an awareness of the labour depicted.[14]

Depending on whether a viewer was local to Haarlem, or to the Netherlands, or to Europe more generally, one might understand the place depicted differently. Historically, Haarlem was renowned for its environs, which were often the subject of favourable reviews for their beauty and pleasing qualities. Seventeenth-century writer Frances Junius, for example, relates that the area around Haarlem has "a pleasurable situation and healthy air."[15] In an early printed book about the town Haarlem is described as "'situated in a locus amoenus...'" or "an idealized place of safety and comfort."[16] The woods around the town were frequently evoked as being especially attractive. Karel van Mander (1548-1606), the Dutch mannerist painter and theorist, noted that Haarlem had a wood like a public park.[17] He explains that south of the town lay a forest where people of all ages found relaxation in a variety of forms – walking, picnicking, and lying down.[18]

14 Instrumental in shaping my text in this section has been Huigen Leeflang's 'Dutch Landscape, The Urban View: Haarlem and its Environs in Literature and Art 15th-17th Centuries', in *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaerboek*, 1997, pp. 52-115.

15 Junius is cited in Leeflang, 'Dutch Landscape, The Urban View', p. 60.

16 Braun and Hoogenberg's *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* (1575) is cited in Leeflang, 'Dutch Landscape, The Urban View', p. 60.

17 Cited in Leeflang, 'Dutch Landscape, The Urban View', p. 66.

18 Van Mander is cited in Leeflang, 'Dutch Landscape, The Urban View', p. 66.

The extensive, almost excessive tributes to Haarlem's bucolic charms belie a darker, more violent history. In the late sixteenth century, during the Eighty Years' War, Haarlem was the target of a seven month long siege (December 11, 1572 to July 13, 1573) by Spanish forces under the leadership of Philip II. Effectively blocked from trade, food supplies dwindled and the town's citizens starved. Attacks on the city by the Spanish and their agents as well as defensive moves made by Haarlemers resulted in massive destruction to Haarlem's infrastructure and built environment. People on both sides of the conflict were executed or killed in the extended fight. By the time the siege ended in 1573, Haarlem had been devastated.

Thus, while Ruisdael created his painting about one hundred years after the siege, the landscape represents a buried history. For a Haarlem denizen, this landscape might picture at the same time a patriotic victory over the hated Spanish and a recuperation of a damaged site, a site once marked by loss, deprivation, and death. The beauty we witness could be seen as representing regeneration, but could also have been associated with evanescence – the sense that this beautiful landscape had been scarred by the whims of humans marked by politics and belief systems. In a broader sense, the defeat of the Spanish Army implicated in the peaceful scene Ruisdael depicts would have also resonated with citizens of the Dutch Republic as a marker of their nation's independence. In other words, the 'buried history' would have had both an extraordinarily layered local and national significance.

The patriotic sentiment evoked by the past alluded to in the painting may have been matched by a religious sentiment. While seventeenth-century Dutch landscape paintings frequently appear devoid of religious content to modern viewers, they can often be read as evoking the divine in a general sense, and in a more specific

way may recall organised religion.[19] In the *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds*, for example, the vast sky and spectacular lighting effects illuminate all of God's agency and creation, while the prominent placement of the monumental church on the horizon suggests that the viewer at the very least briefly contemplates the place of organised religion in the culture.

Another way the *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds* might have been interpreted by seventeenth-century viewers is as an outstanding example of art, representative of the period's artistic milieu and Haarlem's elevated position as an artistic centre over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While Haarlem's artistic scene was historically rich and varied, the town is perhaps most notable for its association with landscape painting. Van Mander went so far as to claim it as the origin of the Dutch landscape tradition in his Schilderboeck (1604), attributing Dutch interest in landscape to the fifteenth-century painter Albert Ouwater.[20] I have already mentioned Van Goyen; other important landscape painters preceding Ruisdael include Jan and Esais van de Velde, Willem Buytewech, Hercules Seghers, and Pieter Molijn. Additionally, we have seen that so-called 'Haarlempjes' were a special category of picture focused on the area around the town. While Ruisdael is perhaps the most famous of the painters who created these images, a range of views by other artists are exhibited in museums and collections throughout the world.[21] The identification of a place or locale with a specific type of image attests to the renown of these scenes of Haarlem.

19 Here I'm making an argument for a generalised evocation of a sense of the divine. For a longer discussion of the ways interpreters have approached the subject of religion in the painting, see Slive, *Jacob Van Ruisdael: Master of Landscape*, p. 14.

20 Van Mander, *Het Schilder-boeck*, (fol. 205 v)

21 Linda Stone-Ferrier, 'Views of Haarlem: A Reconsideration of Ruisdael and Rembrandt', *The Art Bulletin* 67 (Sept., 1985), pp. 417-436, 418.

Finally, it's important to consider how the labour depicted might have been interpreted by a seventeenth-century viewer. Ruisdael's relatively elevated, almost panoramic viewpoint overlooking the landscape allows him to depict Haarlem's famous bleaching fields and some of the people who worked in them. The centrality given to workers bleaching linen in the midground suggest that this form of work, like the church of Haarlem represented on the horizon, was an important feature of the area.[22] Indeed, bleaching linen was a distinguishing characteristic of the town of Haarlem, and would have been, along with beer making, one of the its prime economic drivers. Haarlem's linen bleaching industry was so renowned, in fact, that tourists were known to visit the fields to watch people at work.[23]

Linen could be expensive, a result, not surprisingly, of the labour involved in its production. The cloth may have been manufactured in Haarlem, or may have originated elsewhere in Europe and then shipped to the Dutch Republic to be whitened or bleached. This process required specific resources, most of which were available at Haarlem, and most of which reflect the specificity of place–aspects of the terrain, or what would be 'terroir' in wine- or cheese-making. Haarlem's bleaching fields produced outstanding linen in part, for instance, because the town had ready access to abundant coastal waters and sandy areas appropriate for drying large bolts of cloth.[24] Additionally, the dairies in the area around Haarlem were a fantastic source of buttermilk, used in the bleaching process because of its lactic acid content. Other necessary materials, including potash,

22 Stone-Ferrier's 'Views of Haarlem: A Reconsideration of Ruisdael and Rembrandt' also provides an excellent introduction to the bleaching industry in Haarlem.

23 For more on tourists watching linen bleaching see Slive, *Jacob Van Ruisdael: Master of Landscape*, p. 13.

24 Stone-Ferrier, 'Views of Haarlem: A Reconsideration of Ruisdael and Rembrandt', p. 423.

soap, bluing, and peat (for burning) were easily shipped to Haarlem from nearby cities or countries.[25]

The bucolic view illustrated in the painting thus represents a burgeoning industry, one reflecting the growing, proto-capitalist Dutch economy. It is also the case that the linen points to another, perhaps more important industry – global trade through the Dutch East and West India Companies. These shipping concerns also reflect an even larger European phenomenon: the growing exchange of goods, the slave trade, and colonisation and its profoundly harmful effects. Thus, while the tiny figures represented under the soft light illuminating the fields are often referred to by art historians as 'staffage' or relatively unimportant figures to the overall composition, they represent a really fundamentally important economic driver, a process of capital development and exchange, and a world view.[26]

The **View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds**, Art History, Materiality, and the Global Economy in the Present

When Ruisdael created this view of Haarlem, he was a successful painter working at the top of his field. He produced this type of work later in his career, and would have been recognised as a skilled artist, one who specialised in landscape views, many of which were associated with the town of Haarlem. During his career Ruisdael created hundreds of paintings, a testament to the vibrancy of his career, but even with this substantial output he still garnered a relatively small audience in comparison to today, when reproductive technologies make it possible to see images replicated thousands

25 Ibid.

26 Slive, *Jacob Van Ruisdael: Master of Landscape*, points out that these workers would have been unable to afford Ruisdael's paintings, given their meagre earnings, p. 14.

of times (a Google search for 'Ruisdael, View of Haarlem' in 2021 returns 78,000 entries). It is the case, however, that Ruisdael had a strong reception, first influencing painters in his own circle, and then later artists in Great Britain, France, and the United States. Eighteenth-century British artists Gainsborough and Constable, outstanding landscape painters in their own right, each copied his work, with Constable going as far to say that engaging with one of the Dutch artist's paintings "haunts my mind and clings to my heart."[27] Another British artist, Turner, also favored Ruisdael, copying his paintings as well.[28] In nineteenth-century France, the Barbizon school fell under the spell of Ruisdael's romantic realism, and the artist's sway can be felt across the Atlantic in the works of New York State's Hudson Valley painters Thomas Cole and his student Frederic Church.

Thus, when we see a Ruisdael landscape in the twenty-first century, we see a hugely influential work, one whose formal and stylistic characteristics have informed hundreds, if not thousands, of images we have already encountered (and perhaps made ourselves). In short, it's not an overstatement to say that Ruisdael fundamentally shaped our idea of what landscape can be. Simply put, the work is canonical. We cannot encounter this painting without considering the lens of Dutch, British, French and American painters who have encountered and interpreted it before us. So, our *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds* is also a view of a key moment in the history of art, in this case, the art of landscape painting.

27 Seymour Slive, *Jacob van Ruisdael: a Complete Catalogue of his Paintings, Drawings, and Etchings*, Yale University Press, New Haven, p. 695. For more on Ruisdael's reception see Slive, 'Ruisdael's Clientele, Early Collectors and Critics', in Seymour Slive, *Jacob Van Ruisdael: Master of Landscape*, pp. 17-28.

28 A.G.H. Bachrach, 'Turner, Ruisdael and the Dutch', *Turner Studies*. 1 (1981). pp. 19–30.

The *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds* is also a view of a material history, specifically the degeneration of materials due to the passage of time. In other words, when the *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds* was created in the late seventeenth-century, its material qualities, as noted above, were typical for an oil painting. But those materials, once fresh, are now many hundreds of years old. Oil paintings, no matter how apparently well preserved, are dynamic systems subject to chemical changes. The stretchers used to support the canvas, the sizing, the oil paint, all are now evidence of a process long in the past. The painting is an artefact or even a document of the materials of that era – in terms of materials, the view is never fixed.

Because we have access to a range of advanced technologies we can look closely at the way paint was applied, or at the way colours might have deteriorated over time. Any member of the public can use digital tools, even without taking advantage of the scientific equipment one might find in a conservation lab. In the Mauritshuis painting, for example, the digital enlargement available online allows us to see details in a way that would have been difficult for a seventeenth-century viewer to access. We can enlarge the city view, for instance, so that we can see how Ruisdael created the illusion of sunlit roofs by using dashes of paint to give the impression of sunlight passing through clouds.

In studying the painting up close, we can also see craquelure – the tiny hair thin cracks that result from oil paint drying out over hundreds of years. These cracks substantially alter the painting's surface appearance, and would not have been present when the painting was completed in the seventeenth century. The cracks evince the passage of time, and suggest that the painting has had its own experience as an object – it has been subjected to environmental factors such as changes in temperature and exposure to dust and light. We don't see the paint in its original, relatively pristine form.

Craquelure can be used as a kind of fingerprint – different materials yield different forms of cracking.[29] Patterns are also connected to a painting's geographic origin; the cracks found in seventeenth-century Dutch paintings, for example, are distinct from those found in Italian or even Flemish paintings from the same period. Seventeenth-century Dutch craquelure is relatively regular, comprising strong verticals, with horizontal or angled lines running between them, resulting in a networked series of rectangles and trapezoids. Craquelure, then, is a form of locator similar to landscape painting itself, the lines formed indicating place and time.

Craquelure makes the painting into more of an object and less of an illusion. Or, one might say that there is a tension between the nature of illusion, which draws our eye into an imagined depth such as in a landscape, and the nature of craquelure, which not only draws our eye to the surface, but emphasises the object and time-bound qualities of the image. Additionally, the more attentive we are to the illusion, the more likely its secrets are to be dispelled. Attentiveness to the surface thus elicits more than an admiring gaze at painting technique. The surface is, essentially, an invitation to think about historical distance, about the distance between the moment when the painting was new, in its moment of creation, and now, as reflecting its subjection to centuries of light, dust, air, and a variety of gazes.

In the early twenty-first century, it's difficult to see a view like this and not think of the violence being perpetrated elsewhere by European colonisers, including the Dutch, in the seventeenth century. Certainly, many of my students today looking at the landscape would be attentive to the labour being performed, and would wonder

29 For this, and the information following, see Spike Bucklow, 'The Classification of Craquelure', *Bulletin of the Hamilton Kerr Institute* (September 2016), accessed December 28, 2022, https://www.hki.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/projects/cracks.

about its role in the global economy. More obvious examples of paintings might be used to reflect on the legacy of European colonialism; in the Dutch Republic, perhaps the clearest example would be the series of works produced by Haarlem-trained Frans Post, who documented the landscape and people of the Dutch colony in Brazil.[30] But while Post's paintings often speak overtly (and sometimes highly optimistically) about a colonial presence, the sugar industry, and enslavement, I would argue that the subtlety of colonial relationships in Ruisdael's image make it an equally, if not more, compelling case study. The peaceful, prosperous illusion Ruisdael created is tied up in a set of relationships we recognise completely or clearly perhaps only centuries later. This is where the lead seals return – unearthed in Jamestown, one of the first places in which enslaved people were found on American soil, the nearly mute seals point to a set of colonial relationships.[31] Thus, we might observe this landscape painting not with the optimism many Dutch citizens must have felt about their relatively newfound freedom and booming economy, but with melancholy, with a sense of the difficult legacy of colonialism and its violence. We may in the end feel a sense of mourning, or perhaps even question the role images and their seductive beauty have played in constructing a view of history.

30 For more on this colonial project see Rebecca Brienen Parker, *Visions of Savage Paradise: Albert Eckhout, Court Painter in Colonial Dutch Brazil*, 1637-1644, University of Amsterdam Press, 2007. Post's paintings in the Mauritshuis collection illustrate the range of approaches to colonial Brazil taken by the artist. Accessed 28 12 2022, https://tour.mauritshuis.nl/search/en_GB/?q=frans+post.

31 While Jamestown is often cited as the beginning of slavery in America (1619), there are a number of preceding cases, including that of enslaved Africans brought to St. Augustine by the Spanish in 1565.

Landscape has always been a place to escape, to adventure, and to restore. Even in the seventeenth century, people thought of landscape images as allowing armchair travel, and in our own time we can imagine many occasions on which we have sought refuge in an image of the natural world.[32] So perhaps landscape paintings such as Ruisdael's *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds* are seductive because they appear to be a space we may mentally inhabit – the painting seems to act as an invitation, offering few barriers to our entrance. After all, the small elevated bit of earth from which Ruisdael made his drawing of the town could hold us as well. And yet, the moment we begin to enter, we see the surface, its age reminding us of the distance between our own moment and the moment the painting was created.

32 For the seventeenth century see Kristina Hartzer Nguyen, 'The Made Landscape. City and Country in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Prints', *Harvard University Art Museums Bulletin* (Autumn 1992), p. 10.

Fig. 1. Regest Vat. (Martini IV), vol. 41. Epist. 119. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome.

Out of the White

CHRISTOPHER P. HEUER

European travellers assumed the Arctic would kill them. Shipwreck in the region meant both entrapment and drift, in a manner wildly different from elsewhere; winter turned ocean into rock and spring rendered land water. Arctic terrain resisted oppositional binaries of sea and earth; like marshes and swamps, they were neither solid nor liquid. Drowning, starvation, and exposure aside, being marooned in such terrain meant that separation from towns and sun threatened death in forms little-known. And at the most fearful times of year, to perish in such terrain was not to disappear but to accrete, to be "metamorphosed into the ice of the Country, and already past both our sense and reason" as one terrified sailor wrote from Spitsbergen in 1631.

Recognisable in such accounts – male, white, often based upon ship's logs, which have their own poetics of writer and addressee – was an imagined plurality of new world types and things: arctic vs. tropic, stark absence versus teeming presence. Many English and Dutch forays to the far North took place at the time of the Reformation. Topical diversity paralleled the daunting new confessional geography reigning back in Europe. In such cases, indigenous voices were not so much silenced as erased, whitewashed, iconoclasted.

The few Western descriptions of the early modern North (published and unpublished) were quietly different from those written in balmier climes. They are austere, workmanlike, tales of strangeness, yes, but they are predominantly tales of failure and lack. Late

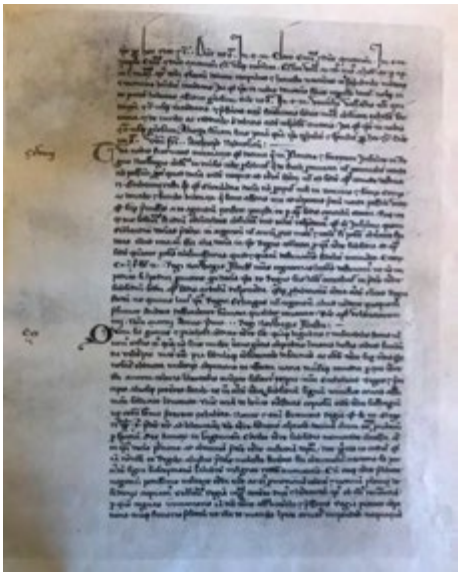


Fig. 2. *Warhafftige Contrafey Einer Wilden Frawen, Mit Irem Töchterlein, Gefunden in Der Landschafft Nova Terra Genannt, Und Gen Anttorff Bracht* (Nuremberg: Hans Glaser, 1567). British Museum, London.

medieval accounts of, say, Greenland are haunting in their details of dearth. We have a letter of 1206 in the Vatican archives (fig. 1) from Pope John XXI, writing to the Archbishop of Gardar, "at the confines of the known world" where, as the missive puts it, "money does not exist, nor is other kinds of grain produced", and then another letter from 1282 wherein, because of the "poverty of the land, and the scant means of living", inhabitants request to pay their papal tithes in whalebone, walrus skin, and seal teeth.

Extraction, then, remained the inaugural tack for Southerners encountering the arctic. It would not be long before people would be taken, too (fig. 2). From the time of Olaus Magnus onwards, it was clear to Europeans that the extreme North was anything but

empty. Fantasies of a void arctic still sustain colonising enterprises today: minerals, oil, underpaid indigenous labour. This all was very different from early Spanish and Portuguese contexts in the south, with their accounts of armadillos, obsidian, and sun-drenched civilizations to study or destroy. To many Europeans, the Far North was instead thought of as icy, unpopulated, commodity-poor; visually and temporally 'abstract'. It was a different kind of *terra incognita* for the Renaissance imagination than the sun-drenched Indies, offering no clear stuff to be seen, mapped, or plundered. It became a place where the exotic was no longer synonymous with abundance. Instead, it offered a litany of absences. Sailors of the time knew this, disappointed in their expectations of a particular *kind* of wildness and difference: "In place of odiferous and fragrant smels of sweet gums & pleasant notes of musciall birdes, which other Contreys in more temperate Zones do yield," wrote an arctic sailor in 1578, "wee tasted the most boisterous Boreal blasts mixt with snow and haile."

Before nineteenth century arctic expeditions – and their chroniclers like the French Salon painter Biard, who theatricalised the poles as sites of sublimity, pathos, and heroism – early modern descriptions bespoke precarity and duress, and often a distrust of visual experience. It is interesting here to consider how early modern exploration of the far North took place under an almost hegemonically protestant and bourgeois aegis - English, Dutch, and German explorers were the ones exploring the area, just at the moment their countries were ravaged by confessional conflict. The spiritual context for their exploration was somewhat different to their counterparts from Spain and Portugal. Such sailors (some of whom, we know, had actually taken part in iconoclasm themselves back in Europe) were often immersed in spiritual conditions in which physical vision, at the very least, was more than likely to deceive.

And the arctic supplied a perverse welcome to the idea that absence could be virtuous. Neither a continent, an ocean, nor a meteorological circumstance, the Arctic forced white explorers, writers and early artists from England, the Netherlands and Germany to grapple with a different kind of experiential encounter; one where the idea of description as a kind of accumulative endeavour of 'representation' – and stable self-other relations – was thrown into question.

The hierarchy of malleable matter and structured form is as old as Plato. Engels and Marx, writing in *The German Ideology*, mocked the idea of some immaterial spirit distinct from matter; for them, of course, the self is only a relation to its surroundings. Adriana Craicun has described an "archipelagic" mode of experience at work in 19th century arctic words and images. Before Franklin, arctic explorers of the American and Asian far North (in the sixteenth century) never assumed that they were coming to a continent. Rather, they saw and reported the arctic as a chain of islands within a sea – a place of passage, an "achipelagus", which one sixteenth century dictionary defined as "broken lands". This, as Craicun suggests, marked a departure from the mode of encounter understood as cleanly "terrestrial or continental"- with fixed self-other boundaries; I/thou, or conqueror and conquered. The geophysical situation of the unsettled arctic prompted a heterogeneity of representational form – one *mimetic* upon the broken arctic landscape itself (even today the arctic remains neither water and land, much like beaches or swamps).

What would it mean to think about early globalisation, about early modern cultural 'contact' and the environment, in terms not of 'hot' movement and difference, but of 'cold' stasis and sameness? Recent deconstructions of the 'heroic' age of arctic exploration – the 19th century – have laid bare the sustained racial violence implicit in these Northern encounters that the Renaissance invented. But also

the creative acts of erasure and wilful blindness – whitewashings – that shaped European understandings of *who*, in fact, 'belongs' in Northern landscapes: "We could not scarce see one another" wrote the explorer Best in 1578, " . . . nor open our eyes..."[1]

Today, can we represent the arctic as something other than 'other'? White European Arctic accounts speak not just of arrested passage but, in fact, interruption within the then-developing genre of the exploration travel narrative. This was a genre which often told of sun-drenched indigenes and fabulous landscapes of treasure; it famously nourished a neo-theological poetics of 'transport' to virtually displace home-bound (white) readers. Yet certain remains of arctic disaster halted the voices of the marvellous in favour of the mundane. Today the exotic, startling readers in a world of misdistributed resources, suggests landscapes not of vivacity and abundance, but of stoppage and loss.

With the warmest thanks to Sigrid Sandström and to David Price. This text discontinues content from Christopher P. Heuer, *Into the White*, Zone Books, 2021.

1 See, for example: Lisa E. Bloom, *Gender on Ice*, Minneapolis, 1993; James M. O'Toole 'Racial Identity and the Case of Captain Michael Healy, USRCS', *Prologue* 29: 3 (Fall 1997); Benjamin Morgan, 'After the Arctic Sublime', *New Literary History* 47:1 (2016), 1-26; Coppélie Cocq and Thomas A. DuBois, *Sámi Media and Indigenous Agency in the Arctic North*, Seattle, 2020; Anchorage Museum, *Black Lives in Alaska: Journey, Justice Joy*, Anchorage, 2021; Jeannette Ehlers, Jessie Kleemann and Pia Arke (eds.) *Atlantikumi*, Nuuk, 2022; and more foundationally, Matthew Henson, *A Negro Explorer At the North Pole*, New York, 1912; Tete-Michel Kpomassie, *L'Africain du Groenland*, Paris, 1977.

Maps, Places, Connections: Figures of Northern Landscape in the 19th Century

RIIKKA STEWEN

Preamble

Depictions of landscape have existed for millennia. In Egyptian art, on the walls of the tomb-chapel of Nebamun from the 14th century BC, you could have seen papyrus growing on the marshes by the river Nile, many kinds of birds and fish, and butterflies. Almost as old as the paintings commissioned by Nebamun are the reliefs of different signs and pictograms carved on rocks at important natural and geographical sites and sacred locations in Mesopotamia; these markings were connected to territorial borders of the Hittite empire in the middle of the second millennium BC.[1]

The Chinese called landscapes *Shanshui*, mountain water, and when viewing these pictures made imaginary journeys through a landscape: crossing a bridge, greeting locals, resting at an inn. These vertical or horizontal scrolls were meant to be opened as the journey advanced. The First Nations people of Australia represented

1 Ömur Harmansah, 'Event, Place, Performance: Rock Reliefs and Spring Monuments in Anatolia', *Of Rocks and Water: An Archaeology of Place*, ed. Ömür Harmansah, Oxford & Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2014.

their landscape as enfolding the imagined viewer, as holding them in their embrace, and early renaissance Italian painters portrayed their sitters against a backdrop of meadows and cityscapes as if they were emerging from them.

In each of these examples, the relationship between the experience of the landscape and its visual record is imagined differently, and perhaps the experience itself is different in each case and each culture. What is certain is that the viewer and the landscape are always codependent, creating each other; neither can exist without the other. For the phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty the seer and the seen were inextricably intertwined in the texture of the visible, as passages and notes in his late, posthumously published work *The Visible and the Invisible* suggest. This was his conception of perception *à l'état brut*, natural, or unprocessed, perception. In Western thought it is unusual to consider vision as a proximate sense but already in his earlier *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty refers to vision as that which binds together, as if touching from a distance.[2]

The distinction between the viewer and the landscape, the subject and the object, is not universal; nor is it a result of any kind of linear development or evolution; it does not exist in every culture. In fact, the French anthropologist Philippe Descola goes as far as to claim that European culture is the only culture which constructs the human being and nature as separate.[3] Within European scientific culture, feminist philosopher of science Evelyn Fox Keller has described two kinds of attitudes toward nature, two ideologies which do not imply any linear or diachronic development but are instead

2 See, for example, *Phenomenology of Perception*, transl. Colin Smith, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962, p. 119, note 2.

3 Philippe Descola, *Par-delà nature et culture*, Paris: Gallimard, 2015.

like opposite poles emphasising either connectedness or separation.[4] For Descola, the concept of separate 'nature' simply does not make sense in any other culture than the European/Western. And, even in Europe, this distinction did not appear before the 17th century. What Descola therefore calls for is an anthropology of nature – studying the different ways cultures have felt connected to it.

According to Descola the turning point in Europe was the 17th century, and, in his early work *The Order of Things*, the philosopher-historian Michel Foucault also identified a change of what he then called *episteme* in the 17th century. Others have called this discontinuity the Cartesian turn, emphasising the significance of the French philosopher Descartes. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that in France the landscape genre rose to prominence, and that the science of mapping and cartography advanced, during the 17th century. For philosopher Martin Heidegger the mindset which sees nature as distinct from the human subject is specifically related to the development of the early modern European worldview and its foundational technicity.[5] The technical attitude is based on methods of calculation; it sees nature as a resource to be exploited and values only what can be measured and mathematised.

But it is tempting to think with Merleau-Ponty that there is an anthropological constant, that in vision there subsists a layer or sediment of *l'état brut*, a sense of connectedness. In the 19th century, which is the subject of my text, this connectedness was felt and thematised in many different ways; in Friedrich Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* at the beginning of the century, in Ernst Haeckel's idea of ontogeny as following phylogeny in the 1890s, and in the

4 See her *Reflections on Gender and Science*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1985, p. 44; p. 125; p. 167.

5 Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, New York: Harper & Row, 1966.

revival of various mystical traditions, especially at the end of the century, in the aesthetics of Symbolist artists, to whom I return at the end of this text. Today, we witness something like a revival of the sense of fundamental connectedness in discussions of the anthropocene in the arts, in animal studies, in feminist posthumanisms, and postphenomenological new materialisms. If we abandon the modern teleological view of historical change, it emerges that in many ways the current moment is fascinated by the same kind of themes that early German Romanticist philosophers and artists in the 19th century studied. They had just been forgotten in the intervening years of high modernist aesthetics.

In the following pages, I focus on landscape in the Nordic countries. I discuss three different kinds of landscape painting in 19th century Nordic art: the cartographic-scientific-technical, the Romanticist-Monist-Naturwahrheit, and a third one which I call 'Alexandrian revivalist', but which is more often called neoromanticist or Symbolist. All of these conceptions of landscape have been connected with the idea of nation building and national sentiment in the 19th century, but I propose that they can also be understood genealogically, as discursive formations and as sedimentations of significance which continue into the present. They are heuristic constructs, useful in making the many different contexts visible, but I see them also as sediments of landscape as a cultural construct. In what follows, I propose to look at and understand nature as a palimpsest, both in the sense of physical-material environment and as cultural idea. In other words, I suggest that in all the diverse attitudes toward nature, even within European/Western cultures, there are different kinds of layers and sediments, and that there is fundamental anachronicity in cultural thought and sentiment. I do not look at 'development' but rather at a process of sedimentation, a constant overwriting where anterior forms and figures

persist and may become visible, depending on how light falls on the visible surface.[6]

Measuring the Shape of the Earth, 'Cartographing' Nordic Countries

In early modern history, at the same time as the shift in episteme, in the wake of the scientific revolution, the earth began to be measured and depicted in the light of new mathematical knowledge. The shape of the earth became a point of interest with the rise of modern cartography and methods of triangulation. Scientists hoped to find answers to the question of the shape of the earth; was the earth perfectly spherical, elongated, or slightly flattened and curved at the poles? Scientific excursions to the polar circle were organised to find out the answer by measuring the curvature of the earth at the northernmost latitudes.

Visual representations of Scandinavia and the Nordic countries began to accumulate during the 18th century as a result of these scientific excursions; the Nordic countries owe their early existence as imagery to the modern episteme. The Gulf of Bothnia, Northern Sweden and Finland, and the Sami land, were shown in the illustrations of Réginald Outhier, a scientist and priest who accompanied Pierre Maupertuis in 1736 on the journey to the polar circle to measure the shape of the earth using triangulation.

Apart from reports on scientific excursions there were travelogues, and the *voyage pittoresque* became a popular book genre authored by travellers braving the northern climate. The Italian writer Giuseppe Acerbi crossed the Gulf of Bothnia in 1798 in the

6 I'm thinking of the metaphor of the Wunderblock Sigmund Freud referred to in his 'A Note Upon the "Mystic Writing-Pad"', *Standard Edition*, Vol XIX, London: The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1961, pp. 227-232.

'Crossing the Gulf of Bothnia', from Joseph (Giuseppe) Acerbi, *Travels through Sweden, Finland, and Lapland, to the North Cape in the years 1798 and 1799,* Vol I, p. 182, London: printed for Joseph Mawman, 1802.

company of a meteorologist, an entomologist and a botanist. His book, with illustrations by the Swedish colonel Anders Skjöldebrand, came out in English in 1798-1799 and was soon read in literary and scientific salons everywhere in Europe.

Landscape painting in the Nordic countries could be seen as following and accompanying these scientific illustrations and cartographic excursions, which sought to gain a complete picture of the earth.[7]

7 Up until the first images taken from Apollo 8 in 1968, this image had to be composed from many partial descriptions.

Landscape and its relation to military strategy and cartography techniques is also evident in the fact that it was often military officers who rendered the first portrayals of places. In Norway, Johannes Flintoe, the Danish artist influenced by Romanticist ideals and fascinated by Norwegian scenery, was accompanied on his journeys of 'discovery' of the Norwegian mountains by Wilhelm Maximilian Carpelan, a Finnish-Swedish officer who had followed the new governor Johan August Sandels to Norway.[8] They made their first journey in 1819, and the work was published in the early 1820s. Flintoe also exhibited his paintings showing the sublime majesty of the fjells as cosmoramas in Christiania (now Oslo).

Both Finland and Norway shared a similar historical fate in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars; from having been the easternmost province of Sweden, Finland now became the western part of Russia as an autonomous duchy in 1809. Norway was separated from Denmark and a union between Sweden and Norway was formed in 1814. Nature and landscape became extremely important for the creation of a shared sense of national unity, of belonging to a single nation in both countries.

In the creation of national imagery, and national cartographic mapping, words and images were juxtaposed – places were also described in narratives, which incorporated many elements from earlier times.

In Denmark, the first picturesque description of the country and Danishness, *Den Danske Atlas*, had already been published in

8 See Nils Messel, *Oppdagelsen af fjellet/Discovery of the Mountains*, Oslo: Nasjonalmuseet for kunst, arkitektur og design, 2008.

1763-1781.[9] Besides maps, it contained illustrations of different localities and laid the foundation for the imagery of Denmark as a unified whole. In the case of Sweden, *Suecia antiqua et hodierna* had served the purpose of cataloguing important sites and illustrating Sweden at the time when it was a great political power in Europe at the end the 17th century.[10]

In Finland, the responsibility for this kind of narrative description – in fact, the invention of Finnishness – fell to Zacharias Topelius in the 1840s. Topelius played many roles: he was the secretary of the Art Society, journalist, professor of history, and an author of stories and children's books. If it were necessary to attribute the creation of Finnishness to a single personality, it would have to be Topelius.

Fictions of Finnishness: Finland Framställdt I Teckningar

In *Finland framställdt i teckningar*, Topelius was given the task of writing the texts in which different places, natural sights, villages, historical castles, provinces, lakes and throughways were described in literary portraits and provided with a narrative identity. In his foreword, he apologised in advance to his readers for the many gaps he suspected would be inevitable in a work of such an ambitious scale. He speculated on the kind of interest his readers would have in the work and what they would expect to find in the text, enumerating themes such as folk customs, folk tales, folk memories, natural sights – *naturmärkvärdigheter*, historical details, descriptions of different localities. In the first sentences he described the geological

9 Gry Hedin, 'Anthropocene Beginnings: Entanglements of Art and Science in Danish Art and Archaeology 1780-1840', *Artistic Visions of the Anthropocene North: Climate Change and Nature in Art*, Gry Hedin & Ann-Sofie Nielsen Gremaud (eds.), New York: Routledge, Tayloer & Francis, 2018.

10 Kungliga Biblioteket has published *Suecia antiqua et hodierna* online: https://suecia.kb.se/

and political situation of Finland. This work paralleled the political creation of Finland; it could be said to constitute another layer of 'Finland' in collectively created visual and literary images, superimposed on topographical, physical reality. A place is never a pre-existing fact or reality but a collective, social, achievement.[11]

The process of creating visual and narrative topoi involved the work of many artists and draftsmen, both military cartographers, scientific illustrators, and painters. Apart from collecting earlier material and adding new narrative layers and representations to collective memory, this work, with its more than 100 images, also served the purpose of charting the potential for commercial and industrial development.

But places that the artists visited were sometimes already engraved in local memory. As Topelius said in his preface, it was important to gather folk tales and memories, to lay the foundations for further accumulation of memories and stories, in order to create Finland and Finnishness as a collectively shared social reality. Society locates itself in collective representations, and undefined space becomes transformed into places only through a continuous process of collective imaginative work, with the accumulation of narratives and memories, as Maurice Halbwachs emphasised.[12]

11 According to Yi Fu-Tuan, only space that has been made meaningful through the accretion of sentiment becomes a place. See *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1977, p. 33. Folklorist Ray Cashman describes place-making as a strategy of constructing emplaced historical narratives, landscape then becoming a vast mnemonic device. See his 'Folklore, Politics, and Place-making in Northern Ireland', in *Routledge Handbook of Memory and Place*, ed. Sarah De Nardi & alia, 2020, pp. 291-292.

12 Each society has its own dynamics of memory, based on its collective representation of its milieu. See Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1997 (1950).

Kalevala as a Place

In Finland, one of the most important collective layers of imagination in relation to the country was the Kalevala. *Kalevala* was the title given by Elias Lönnrot to his collection of folk tales and folk poems, which he had begun to gather while still a student at the University of Helsinki. The idea of collecting a 'national epic' was strongly inspired and influenced by both Homeric epic poetry and James MacPherson's *Songs of Ossian* (1760-1765), which was then thought to have an actual historical basis.

Lönnrot published the first version of Kalevala, so called Ur-Kalevala, in 1835 and the second more voluminous one in 1849. In his travels, he walked great distances and became familiar with local people in small villages who would tell him stories and also recite poetry by singing; it is said that he carried a flute with him and that music made the local people trust him and open up to him. Lönnrot travelled in the northern and eastern parts of Finland, visiting villages in regions where there were often no roads and travel usually took place on foot or by waterways. One of the villages in Eastern Karelia where he collected stories was Paanajärvi, by the lake of the same name. Artists would visit this lake in the 1890s and paintings they were inspired to paint there were published and discussed in newspapers and journals, as well as shown in the annual art exhibitions; they became mnemonic devices, imprinted on the public's memory as images symbolising Finnishness. The continuous process of creating nationally significant places involved both writers and artists over many decades in the 19th century, and there existed a mythological Finland in the narrative dimension of Kalevala before *Finland framställdt i teckningar* was even a plan.

Romanticist Encounters: Truths of Nature

In the illustrations of *Finland framstäldt i teckningar* one can see charming narrative details, human beings going about their daily tasks, collecting hay, fishing with large seine-haul nets – one can also see domesticated animals going about their business. And very often the images show how travel takes place: there are carriages drawn by horses, boats coming to the shore, farmers entering the market town with their cows, and young boys opening gates for travellers. There are very few places depicted without the presence of people. In the Pyynikinharju image, for example, the picturesque scenery is admired by a group of tourists standing on top of the rock with their walking sticks and parasols. But one can also see that the artists often resorted to a kind of visual sign language, like the military

Pyynikki Rocks near Tammerfors, lithography from a drawing by Adolf Lindeström, 'III Satakunda', *Finland framställdt i teckningar*, 1845-1852

cartographers, in describing topographical formations, rocks and mountains, and waterways.

This would soon change, however, or in fact had already changed when *Finland framställdt i teckningar* was published. Instead of schematically rendering the natural environment, without really looking, artists would now carefully observe nature, trees, rocks and forest interiors. The most important European art schools had inherited a completely new attitude from early German Romanticism. Nature was now regarded as creative, as constantly in change, and it was also felt that the human subject and nature were deeply and intimately connected. Friedrich Schelling and his Naturphilosophie was an important influence but so were the writings of the naturalist Alexander von Humboldt that changed the ways of thinking about nature. Humboldt had started to write and illustrate, with the help of other naturalists and artists, his great work *Cosmos*, the first two volumes of which came out in 1845-1847, and the additional three in 1850-1858. For Humboldt, the act of looking was centrally important as it was an act of admiration in front of the wonders of nature.

Scandinavian and Nordic artists studied in Dresden and Düsseldorf, where landscape had become the most significant genre. Danish and Norwegian painters, especially, achieved fame and admitted students to study in their ateliers; J. C. Dahl and Hans Gude were revered masters. Artists from Finland were relative latecomers, with Werner Holmberg arriving in Düsseldorf in the mid-century to study with Hans Gude and Fanny Churberg a bit later – the idea that the artist is also a wanderer in nature is seen in her self-portrait drawing from the year 1870 when she arrived in Düsseldorf, depicting herself in carelessly worn skirts and a generally dishevelled look, leaning on what looks like a walking stick.

Following the philosophy of German Romanticism, Schelling and Alexander von Humboldt, the tradition held *Naturwahrheit* – the

truth of nature – as a moral and ethical guideline. As the art historian Anne-Maria Pennonen explains, in practice this meant that the artist should study nature carefully, sketching *in* nature and observing the environment in its most minute details. The goals of both science and art were similar for these artists: to closely observe nature and to depict it as faithfully as possible. A renowned teacher at the Düsseldorf academy, Johann Wilhelm Schirmer, taught his students to observe all natural phenomena, even the most changeable ones, such as cloud formations. In studying clouds, the artists could consult one of the first meteorological studies, Luke Howard's book on the classification of cloud formations from 1803. When taking up a new position in Karlsruhe, Schirmer even had a special room built for the observation of the sky.[13]

If painting is always performative in some sense, in the Düsseldorf school of the 19th century it became particularly so. Artists working with nature were not only seeking to represent a scenery but to engage in dialogue with their subject. Seeing nature as it is, finding its truth, required spending time in nature in order to get to know the particular place, tree, or rock. The contemporary performance artist Annette Arlander has taken this as her artistic practice; she has spent days and weeks with individual trees in different parts of the world, engaging in conversations with them. Her practice can be seen as an analysis of the art of landscape painting and the implicit performativity at its core.[14]

13 Anne-Maria Pennonen, *In Search of Scientific and Artistic Landscape: Düsseldorf Landscape Painting and Reflections of Natural Sciences as Seen in the Artwork of Finnish, Norwegian and German Artists*, Helsinki: Finnish National Gallery Publications, 2020, p. 3.

14 Annette Arlander, *Performing Landscape* https://annettearlander.com/

Sentient Nature: Forest, Rock, Water

In the Düsseldorf school of painting there was a special sub-genre, the interior of the forest, or *sous-bois*, and in sketches, sometimes in watercolour, sometimes in oil, you can see how artists studied individual trees, how carefully they observed the changes in the colour of the trunk, the moss growing on the trunk, the smaller plants growing on the ground around the tree.

For Fanny Churberg, forest interiors were an important subject; what is particularly noticeable in these paintings is how she depicts the trees as sentient, as experiencing the effects of changing weather and the passing of time; the bark on the trunks shows both vulnerability and durability. In these paintings the artist was engaged in an intimate encounter with the trees, completely immersed in the forest interior.

Fanny Churberg, *Forest Interior Study*, oil on canvas, 1872, Ateneum Art Museum

Fanny Churberg, *Rapakivi Rocks*, oil on canvas, 1871, Ateneum Art Museum

Churberg also chose as her subjects ancient rocks in Central Finland, in an area that is now the Repovesi natural park, and which is not an easy destination to reach even today. Rock formations were the object of contemporary scientific interest since Charles Lyell had published *Principles of Geology* in the 1830s, and for Alexander von Humboldt they were also an important feature of the physiognomy of a locality.

In this painting, Churberg thematises natural processes as different temporalities; the rocks are primeval, their time is that of deep time, time before human subjects and before the appearance of photosynthesis and vegetation. But the granite of the rock is of a particular kind which erodes with time – it was formed in an unknown

distant past, but the time that passes shows on its surface as marks of wear. Trees are now growing precariously in the fissures and crevices, and on top of the rock; their botanical time has a different temporality, their life and death is of shorter duration, almost ephemeral compared to the rock to which they cling. Distant prehistoric time had become a question following Lyell, and the deep history of the earth had just begun to be imagined – before it had been thought that the history of the earth was allegorically described in the biblical chronology and that it was relatively short, the days of divine creation could stand for centuries or millennia, but now the temporal horizon of the earth's beginning had become so distant that it was almost unimaginable.[15]

At the opposite end of the spectrum of natural temporalities, the constantly changing element of water became a favourite theme of Nordic artists in the 1880s. In Romanticist poetry, reflections on the surface of water often stood for the poet's *état d'âme*, the desire for love and the transience of relationships in real life. In posthumanist feminist thought, Astrida Neimanis states unambiguously "we are all bodies of water", similar to other species and plants. Water both separates and connects, it is distant and near, outside and inside at the same time, or, as Neimanis says, it makes "deictics fail". Ernst Josephson's *Näcken* (Göteborg, 1880s) is completely overtaken by water and by the illusoriness and otherworldliness of water; their identity has dissolved and they have become, returned to, water. For Näcken, deictics fail as spectacularly as for Narcissus who was metamorphosed into a flower in the classical story of Ovid.

15 See for example June Goodfield & Steven Toulmin, *The Discovery of Time*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982 (1965).

Kitty Kielland, *Summer Night*, 1886, oil on canvas, Nasjonalmuseet, Oslo

The surface of a lake reflecting transparent summer night skies fascinated artists such as Kitty Kielland (*Summer Night*, 1886) and Eilif Peterssen (*Summer Night*, 1886). They were both part of the artists' colony in Fleskum near Christiania/Oslo in the summer of 1886. Their style is often described as neoromanticist, and it became identified as specifically Norwegian. In Elin Danielson's *Summer Night*, painted at another Nordic artists' colony in Önningeby in the Åland Islands, the wheat field at night is almost as luminous and reflective as the surface of the lake in Kielland's and Peterssen's works – the atmospheric effect dissolving into the luminous element of the nightless summer night was felt to be quintessentially Nordic. In Ellen Thesleff's *Spring Night* (1894) the opalescent luminosity suffuses the air and makes it visible in itself, as it becomes a diaphanous connecting medium.

Eilif Peterssen, *Summer Night*, oil on canvas, 1886, Nasjonalmuseet, Oslo

Ellen Thesleff, *Spring Night*, oil on canvas, 1894, Ateneum Art Museum

Eero Järnefelt, 'Raatajat rahanalaiset'/Burn-beating in Savolax, oil on canvas, 1893, Ateneum Art Museum

The continuity between the human condition and the landscape was understood in many different ways, from *Stimmungslandschaft* and the ephemeral poetics of translucent summer nights, and water as the element of imagination and becoming, to the harsh realities of the slash and burn agriculture depicted in some of the imagery. In his painting *Burning Brushwood* the Tolstoyan Eero Järnefelt showed both the human beings and the landscape as equally vulnerable, their destinies intertwined due to summer frosts which had caused loss of harvests and famine in the early 1890s.

Eero Järnefelt, *Lake Pielisjärvi in Autumn*, oil on canvas, 1899, Ateneum Art Museum

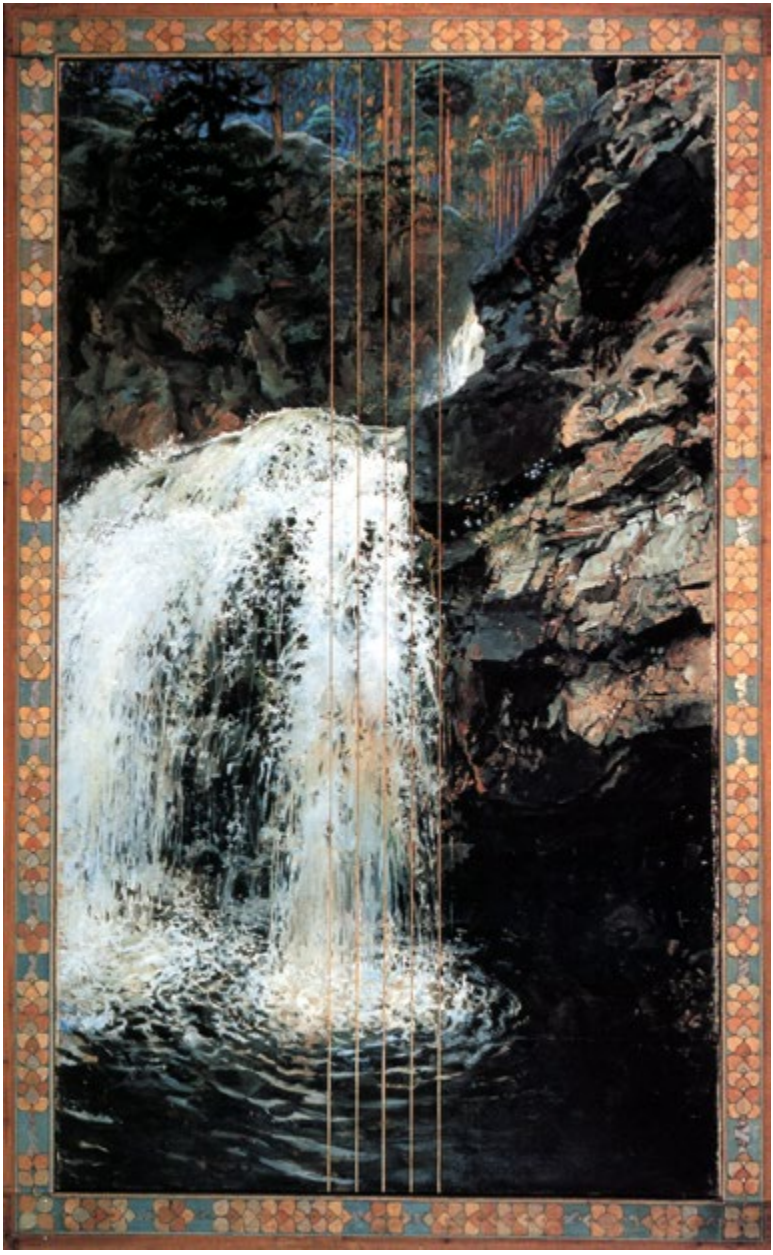
Wilderness

As artists made journeys to Karelia in the 1890s they looked at the landscape through the lens of Lönnrot's Kalevala; they travelled to the same locations where Lönnrot had played his flute and listened to folk poems. They felt that Karelia was a region untouched by modernity, similar to Brittany in France. In Paris, where artists from the Nordic countries had been studying since the 1880s, the Nordic countries were considered as being far away from the centres of modern development.

Karelian journeys gave rise to a special genre, a lake scene viewed from high above. The genre continued into the 20th century in the many paintings portraying the view from Koli mountain in northeastern Finland, and it is still recognised as quintessentially 'Finnish'.

When Axel Gallén painted lake Paanajärvi, he chose as high a vantage point as possible, overlooking the lake. In order to emphasise the wildness of the place, he portrayed a solitary woodpecker looking for insects on the trunk of a dry pine tree, and placed a fallen tree in the foreground, as if blocking entry. In another painting

Axel Gallen-Kallela, *Great Black Woodpecker*, gouache, 1893, Ateneum Art Museum



showing Mäntykoski waterfall, he carefully framed the view so as not to show the wooden buildings next to the waterfall – it all seemed absolutely natural and primeval.[16]

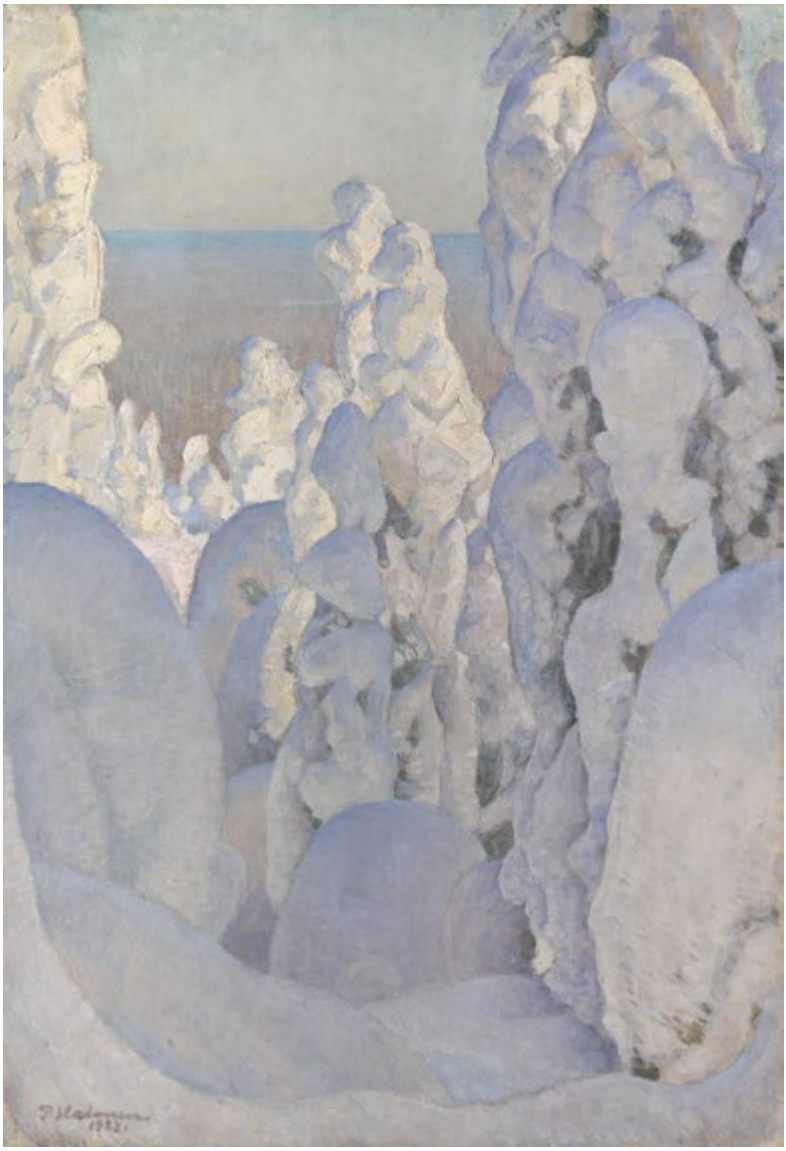
For another painter, Pekka Halonen, the act of painting a landscape was a religious one, a deeply significant ritual; it meant encountering nature, merging with a specific locality and place. Sometimes, it was not even necessary to paint. He describes climbing to the top of a hill in deep snow and arriving there too exhausted to start painting – the act of climbing was the work of art, it meant finding a union with nature. For him, there was not necessarily any difference between art and religion, but he understood religion to mean a deep connection with nature.

At the end of the 19th century, landscape painting became a place for rethinking the relationship between the human being and nature. Many European artists were extremely critical of the industrial capitalist society of their time, with its neglect for all but utilitarian values and its preoccupation with calculating profit.

Instead of seeing nature as a resource to be exploited these artists understood nature and human beings as inextricably entwined. Cézanne was one of the European artists who articulated this relationship as mutual belongingness – he did not use words such as intra-action or interlinking, but he believed that there was a fundamental connectedness, a layer of being where his Mont Saint Victoire and he were inextricable. The act of painting meant finding this state of fusion with the mountain. In his conversations with

16 I K Inha's photograph from the same year shows several wooden cottages, 1892, Finnish Heritage Agency HK19580401:670.

Axel Gallen-Kallela, *Mäntykoski Rapids*, 1892-94, private collection, photo Wikimedia Commons



Pekka Halonen, *Winter in Kinahmi*, oil on canvas, 1923, Ateneum Art Museum

Joachim Gasquet, he recounted how when looking at the mountain in order to start painting he lost the ability to see, how everything became an iridescent chaos, and how only gradually could he begin to see again and to discern the shape of the mountain. In Cézanne's thinking many cultural traditions came together, among them a revival of ancient atomism in the writings of Lucretius.

If this sounds similar to Merleau-Ponty and his idea of perception *à l'état brut*, it is not a coincidence, for there is a direct link; Merleau-Ponty's questioning of perception was largely inspired by Cézanne's thought.

Imagination

Another form of artistic revolt against utilitarianism and spiritless naturalism in the arts was the defence of imagination by Oscar Wilde in his dialogue 'The Decay of Lying – An Observation'.[17] For Wilde, the faculty of imagination was omnipotent, there was no limit to what it could accomplish. It could make the almond tree bloom in the snow in the middle of winter.

The Finnish art historian Salme Sarajas-Korte has suggested that reading Wilde's dialogue, which was translated into Swedish in 1893, converted many Nordic artists and made them question naturalist aesthetics and its view of the world as being thoroughly disenchanted. The contemporary French philosopher Frédéric Paulhan interpreted the rise of 'the new mysticism' as an after-image of the oppressive predominance of calculating rationalism and positivism in science.[18]

Following Wilde, artists could now be seen *re*-enchanting the environment in their works, showing nature as a living and creative

17 Oscar Wilde, *Intentions*, London: Osgood, McIlvaine & Company, 1891, pp. 1-58.
18 Frédéric Paulhan, *Le nouveau mysticisme*, Paris: Félix Alcan, 1891.

Axel Gallen-Kallela, *Sibelius as the Composer of A Fairy Tale*, gouache, watercolour, Ainola Home Museum of Aino and Jean Sibelius

force. This new kind of thinking, emphasising both the power of human imagination and the creative potentiality in nature, is visible the small landscape Axel Gallén painted to accompany the portrait of his friend Jean Sibelius, the composer, as a young man. In its tripartite structure the painting suggests it has been inspired by early renaissance altar pieces, reformatting and reshuffling their structure of embedded narratives. Sibelius is portrayed in profile on the right, his face turned toward the landscape on the left while his gaze seems distant. The viewer is invited to think that on the left they see what Sibelius is contemplating in his imagination – the subject of his new musical composition, *A Fairy Tale*. The small landscape could almost be a direct illustration of Wilde's description of the power of imagination; there are snowflakes forming a screen through which the landscape with its fantastical colours and magnificent orange

fruit can be seen – all is meant to convey the imaginary landscape in Sibelius' mind when he is working on the composition. Landscape here becomes re-enchanted, it corresponds to the human imagination and its limitlessness but nature is not really observed any more; the conversation is internal to the human subject.

The landscape portrait of Sibelius became significant for Hugo Simberg, who spent most of the year 1894-95 studying with Gallén in Ruovesi. His small watercolour *Autumn II* is an homage to Gallén's work. Simberg takes the snowflakes and incorporates them in his picture but he also enlarges them and makes their function as a screen more pronounced. The viewer is now invited to experience the actual space from which they view the painting as the microscopic space; this reversal of perspective shifts the place of the human being to the same level as non-human species and other forms of biological life, including the microscopic.

Hugo Simberg, *Autumn II*, gouache, watercolour, 1895, Ateneum Art Museum

Besides the Wildean defence of imagination and contemporary ideas regarding life that is only visible through the microscope, Simberg's work points to an earlier form of spirituality or religiosity, portraying nature as animated and living.

Alexandrian Connection

In Ruovesi, both Gallén and Simberg had been reading *Taarnet*, the Danish art journal edited by Johannes Jorgensen between 1893 and 1895. *Taarnet* explored Symbolism in many forms; there were translations of poetry, short stories, pieces of art criticism and philosophical texts. What is interesting is that the editors often brought in material that discussed the relationship between art, philosophy, and religion. The question of what would replace religion as a cohesive social bond was actually a very topical one at the time; many artists thought that art could become what religion had been even if almost as many came to the opposite conclusion and converted to Catholicism or Islam, like the Swedish painter Ivan Aguéli. In the mid-1890s questions of art encompassed philosophy, politics and the emerging discipline of sociology. The Swedish art historian Torsten Gunnarsson finds it astonishing that for a few years in the mid-1890s practically all the Nordic artists were Symbolists. Symbolism here connotes a form of resistance to academicism, naturalism and impressionism as styles. For those artists Symbolism was an umbrella term for many different forms of resistance, including the social and political; many among them felt an affinity with anarchist politics, especially in the early 1890s.

However, at the very core of Symbolist aesthetics there could be detected a shared belief in the importance of art and an ethics that values difference while postulating the ultimate interconnectedness of everything living. The French critic Albert Aurier had revived the Plotinian notion – which he called Alexandrian – that everything in

Axel Gallen-Kallela, *Cosmos*, mixed media on canvas, 1902, Sigrid Juselius Foundation

nature, everything in the world, emanates from the One, *to hen*. In *Taarnet*, Johannes Jorgensen explained this Alexandrian philosophy by comparing it to the effect of light when it is reflected from different surfaces and appears to have different colours for different viewers.[19]

The Alexandrian idea of fundamental connectedness became very important for Symbolist artists. In ancient Alexandria and its Platonist schools of philosophy it was thought that everything is held together by the power of symbols. The Greek word *symballein*, at the root of the concept of 'symbol', means to hold together, to throw together. This thought had persisted in different mystical traditions, based in part on Neoplatonist thought; Romanticist philosophy and symbolist aesthetics had only to find it again.

The mystical tradition revived at the end of the 19th century also contends that the microcosmos and macrocosmos correspond to each other, as above so below. When, in the early 1900s, Gallén was commissioned to decorate the Juselius chapel in Pori, he chose the correspondence between the macroscopic views of nascent galaxies and the microcosmic inner life of plants as its theme. The art historian Nina Kokkinen also proposes that the spatial arrangement of the frescoes suggests a cycle of cosmic destruction and renewal as well as illustrating the idea of metempsychosis.[20] In the cosmic panorama of the chapel human beings become part of the universal order on an equal basis with the smallest of plants and the most distant galaxies. A few years later Gallén's disciple Simberg, who was commissioned to paint the entire fresco decoration at Saint John's

19 Johannes Jorgensen, 'Symbolisme', *Taarnet – Illustreret maanedsskrift for kunst og litteratur*, Kobenhavn, December 1893, p. 55.

20 Nina Kokkinen, *Totuudenetsijät: Vuosisadanvaihteen okkulttuuri ja moderni henkisyys Akseli Gallen-Kallelan, Pekka Halosen ja Hugo Simbergin taiteessa*, PhD Thesis, Turku, University of Turku, 2019, pp. 300-305.

Church in Tampere, painted the image of the pattern on a spider's back in one of the central vaults but monumentally enlarged, suggesting a reversal of perspectives between the macrocosmic and the microcosmic worlds, similar to his method in the small watercolour portraying the personification of autumn but now on a completely different scale.

These two fresco series are magnificent expositions of a credo, the belief in an enchanted world where the microcosmic corresponds to the macrocosmic and everything is entangled with everything else. Sometimes, however, the sense of connectedness could be expressed differently, on a much smaller scale, as when Ellen Thesleff wrote in her diary that she wanted to press her head against the ground in order to feel the earth's heart beating.[21]

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At the beginning of the 19th century, the German artist Philipp Otto Runge had predicted that the new century would be that of the landscape, because religions no longer had a hold on the human imagination in Europe. Perhaps he was right; it seems at least that landscape painting served many different purposes for Nordic artists and their audiences during the 19th century. On the one hand landscape became the site where Nordic national sentiment and identities were constructed, and on the other, landscape became a kind of mnemonic device, where past events and histories could be reconfigured, contemporary ones commented upon, and different futures imagined. Perhaps even more importantly, landscape became a place, almost a sanctuary, where one could resist the expansive influence

21 She wrote about the experience to her sister Thyra from Forte dei Marmi in the summer of 1909, SLSA (Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland) Archive 958.

of an industrial capitalism only aware of that which can be exploited for profit, and still sense a connectedness with a world filled with innumerable wonders and sentient beings to encounter.

Agnes Martin, *The Tree*, oil and pencil on canvas, 182.8 × 182.8cm
Museum of Modern Art, New York
Image courtesy MoMA © 2016 Scala / Art Resource, New York

Agnes Martin, Against Landscape

SUZANNE HUDSON

In 1974 Agnes Martin resumed painting after an interruption of nearly seven years. She turned away from the grids with which she had come to critical prominence in the 1960s and instead began to fashion large-scale square compositions with stripes running the length of the support. In retrospect, viewed within the context of a career that stretched over nine decades, Martin's hiatus appears relatively trivial. And yet, at the time of Martin's departure from New York City in 1967 – her refusal of art-making coincident with her decampment – her abandonment of life and work was the source of much concern. Its causality remained the subject of ongoing and unresolved speculation. A couple of years on, critic Barbara Rose remained confounded: "Not even her closest friends are sure why she made the decision."[1] Martin's time, as it were, off the grid, roaming Canada and the American West before settling on a remote New Mexican mesa, paradoxically secured her place at the centre of the world that she left, and which she would later rejoin from a geographical remove.

Martin's pause afforded the opportunity for reflection on what she already had accomplished, and also how such work would subsequently be framed. This was especially true in the context of her

1 Barbara Rose, 'Pioneer Spirit', *Vogue*, June 1973, p. 114.

first retrospective presentation, curated by Suzanne Delehanty for the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania in 1973. Her hard-won solitude in the desert became the stuff of myth, as the trans-cultural mysticism evident in her lectures and writings – first published in 1973, in the catalogue attending her ICA show – contributed to accounts that downplayed her own efforts at self-fashioning. Most emphatically, Martin took this opportunity to redraft a critical connection to landscape, a persistent reference since the 1950s.

Writing of Martin's mirrored, Rothko-like compositions in 1958, Dore Ashton avowed: "Sometimes there is slight stroking in the rectangle, like a window, and this suggests – as the artist intended it – the flow of rain. The warm glow and the carefully controlled optical illusions in these delicate paintings seem to be the observed and deeply felt benign essences of the mesa country, so long Miss Martin's home."[2] The following year, Ashton granted primacy to Martin's Canadian birth – "the great prairies have lodged in her imagination ever since" – supposing her upbringing to be key to her recent paintings. Despite their creation in Manhattan, they show that "Miss Martin's deepest feelings are related to nature – the vast, maddening infinitude to which she is drawn."[3] Likewise, she held that Martin's attempts at painting the Taos mountains, so nature as a specific landscape, precipitated her move to abstraction: "in her effort to express their almost unimaginable power, she discovered the need for symbolic – or abstract – means."[4]

2 Dore Ashton, 'Premiere Exhibition for Agnes Martin', *The New York Times*, 6 December 1958.

3 D. Ashton, 'Art: Drawn From Nature – Agnes Martin's Painting at Section 11 Gallery Reflect Love of Prairies', *The New York Times*, 29 December 1959.

4 Ibid.

By the 1970s, Martin actively refuted claims that her paintings referred to nature. She alerted Delehanty that Ashton's piece about the genesis of her work in the places of her early experiences was "completely inaccurate in every detail and in point of view please don't quote anything from it[.] Environment and biography have nothing to do with inspired work. AM."[5] And already by 1977 – hence, within a couple of years since Martin's time away – Ashton could begin an essay with the following sentences, which delineate this altered self-presentation (even as they perpetuate Ashton's by then long-held belief in what the paintings mean): "Years ago when her paintings were close to their sources and her thinking about them less arcane, Agnes Martin often recalled the place of her birth, Saskatchewan, and her childhood in Vancouver. Her father's wheat farm and the sea-like vastness of wheat fields were not forgotten. The great prairies had endowed her with an undying hunger for spaces. With time, Martin's relationship to nature, once so direct, has become oblique and the metaphors have changed, but the sites in her imagination are ineffable."[6]

Lawrence Alloway nevertheless drew a distinction. Instead of a direct correlation, he found a "persistently evocative" if not "openly descriptive" relationship to the natural world in Martin's images and titles alike. Where the former model "amplitude and infinite spaces" in their all-over compositions and liberal grids, the latter – including *Night Sea*, *Earth* (1959), *White Flower* (1960), *Milk River* (1963), *Starlight* (1963), *The Beach* (1964), *The Garden* (1964), *The Desert* (1965), *The Field* (1965), *Orange Grove* (1965) and *Happy Valley* (1967) – relate picture and abstract occurrence. Here is Alloway:

5 Rare Books and Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Ms 777, Folder 828.

6 Dore Ashton, 'Agnes Martin and...', in *Agnes Martin: Paintings and Drawings, 1957–1975*, London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1977, p. 7.

"One of her paintings is called *Falling Blue* but it is not necessary to assume the words describe this painting or, conversely, that the painting illustrates these words. However, the experience Martin refers to includes factors of repetition and continuity ... and of motion contracted into timelessness."[7] For Alloway then, the point was ultimately not an invocation of landscape but a registration of Heraclitian flux that serves as its hallmark.

For her part, Martin asserted her classicism, with the goal of representing the immutability underlying transient phenomena: "the perfection underlying life."[8] In her words: "Classicists are people that look out with their back to the world."[9] Thus her paintings are not landscapes at all but rather aesthetic systems. In Rosalind Krauss's ur-formulation of modernist grids, they are "flattened, geometricized, ordered ... anti-natural, anti-mimetic, [and] anti-real."[10] They thereby communicate instances of perfection that are in fact impossible in nature. Martin's use of the square support as opposed to the rectangular was significant, signifying not the horizontal plateau of the land (or the murals that supply a sort of etymology for the Abstract Expressionist picture) but a classical device of ideal proportions. In the words of Lucy Lippard, who was observing

7 Lawrence Alloway, 'Agnes Martin', in *Agnes Martin*, p. 10.

8 Agnes Martin, 'Reflections', *Artforum*, vol. 11, no. 8, April 1973, p. 38.

9 Agnes Martin, 'Untroubled Mind', in Barbara Haskell (ed.), *Agnes Martin, Agnes Martin*, New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1992, p. 15. Martin would later title a suite of six panels *With My Back to the World* (1997).

10 Rosalind Krauss, 'Grids', *October*, vol. 9, Summer 1979, p. 50. Reprinted in Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-garde and Other Modernist Myths* (1985), Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997, p. 9. For discussion of the prevalence of the grid in artistic practice during the 1960s, see Lucy Lippard, 'Top to bottom, left to right', in *Grids grids grids grids grids grids grids grids* (exhibition catalogue), Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1972, pp. 5–14; and John Elderfield, 'Grids', *Artforum*, vol. 10, no. 9, May 1972, pp. 52–59.

squares as employed by contemporary painters such as Jo Baer and Robert Ryman, it endowed "a structure with permanence and stability, making it a constant factor in a transient and corruptible world. .... The square or the cube still offers the perfect vehicle by which to impose order on chaos, the ideal form to express both multiplicity and unity."[11]

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That these changes of presentation happened after Martin left New York, and as it were, returned to 'nature', bears further comment. In 1946, Martin matriculated at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, where she took art classes and made naturalistic portraits and landscapes. Her first exhibition was mounted that year at the Harwood Museum in Taos. She returned to New York in 1951, enrolling in the Master of Arts program at Teachers College. After finishing, she again left the city for points West, travelling in New Mexico and briefly living in Oregon to teach art; she settled back in Taos in 1954. It is there, in 1956, that the art dealer Betty Parsons first encountered Martin's work, at that time a kind of biomorphic abstraction heavily indebted to cubist and surrealist idioms as well as to abstractionists Arshile Gorky and William Baziotes, but also in conversation with artists local to the area, including Emma Lou Davis, Beatrice Mandleman, and Louis Ribak. Parsons offered Martin representation should she come to New York. In 1957, Martin did just that.

She stayed with Parsons before taking residence at a sailmaker's loft in Coenties Slip, an enclave in Lower Manhattan where

11 Lucy Lippard, 'Homage to the Square', *Art in America*, vol. 55, no. 4, July–August 1967, p. 50.

her neighbours included Jasper Johns and Lenore Tawney as well as Robert Indiana, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, Ann Wilson, and Jack Youngerman. This was the community in which her art moved to a more resolute geometry, predicated upon squares, triangles, and circles. She also scavenged considerably more obdurate stuff from the surrounding work yards and interiors of old buildings, creating three-dimensional assemblages into the early 1960s; these found-object pieces coexisted alongside her first grid paintings for a few years. 1964 saw the collapse of painting and drawing, colour and line, into a single gesture. It also saw the creation of the painting she herself declared as her first grid, *The Tree*, 1964, thereby relegating the previous grids to the status of mere forerunners, approximations of the true grid to come.[12]

Martin's first show at the Nicholas Wilder Gallery in Los Angeles opened on 4 December 1965, introducing her work to a West Coast audience. Even within the parameters of a flourishing career, Martin experienced a banner season in 1966, when she was included in both *Systemic Painting*, curated by Lawrence Alloway for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, and *10*, the defining exhibition of Minimalist art organised by dealer Virginia Dwan. Following Seitz's reading of Martin's work as part of a turn to perception and the fundaments of illusion in *The Responsive Eye*, Alloway's *Systemic Painting* placed Martin within a section of monochrome paintings, and more broadly construed her as a painter involved with pattern and the organisation of repeating units within a coherent, non-hierarchical system wherein the ideational preceded the manual. The latter notion also underpinned the multimedia exploration of reductive form in Dwan's show. There, sculpture was privileged above painting, as it was in so many of the exhibitions around the so-called

12 Oral history interview with Martin, op. cit., p. 11.

"primary structures." Martin also won a grant from the National Council on the Arts, which meant that she received a modest financial windfall.[13]

This flurry of activity makes Martin's withdrawal from New York and from art-making the following year all the more meaningful. Various reasons have been cited for her leaving the city in September 1967, including existential pressures internal to her practice, the passing in August of Reinhardt, her close friend, and the impending demolition of her studio at 28 South Street. But the motivations behind Martin's departure remain a matter of speculation, replete with discrepancies: the timing relative to Reinhardt's death may well have been a coincidence since she must have been preparing to leave – purchasing and readying her camper and car, destroying by bonfire some works and storing others, etc. – well before his heart attack. Her choice to settle in New Mexico returned her to the place where she had spent more time than anywhere else. In the words of Christina Bryan Rosenberger, who importantly emphasises the centrality of New Mexico to post-War American modernism and to Martin's version of it in particular, it was "a return to familiar territory."[14] Penning a note from the Grand Canyon in November 1967, Martin framed the matter to friend Lenore Tawney as having to do with asserting "independence."[15]

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13 Nan Robertson, 'Arts Council Focuses on Filmmakers', *The New York Times*, 20 December 1966.

14 Christina Bryan Rosenberger, *Drawing the Line: The Early Works of Agnes Martin*, Oakland: University of California Press, 2016, p. 5.

15 The letter reads: "Dear Lenore / I must give independence a trial. I will have to have more time. I am thinking about you too with love / Agnes." Agnes Martin to Lenore Tawney, undated letter postmarked 17 November 1967, Lenore G. Tawney Foundation archive.

Asked in 1989 by the interviewer recording her life story for the Archives of American Art about her detachment from her existence in New York and the mind-clearing and work that it ultimately abetted, Martin replied: "A lot of people withdraw from society, as an experiment. So I thought I would withdraw and see how enlightening it would be. But I found out that what you're supposed to do is stay in the midst of life."[16] So fully had she absented herself from the art-world from 1967 to 1973 that, on the occasion of her 1973 retrospective at the ICA, Hilton Kramer could still claim in *The New York Times* that she lacked "personal mythology or media celebrity."[17] For those looking though, it was not difficult to find evidence that contradicted Martin's cool equanimity and seemingly monkish remove from worldly concerns. She reappeared for talks, produced copious writing, and redrew the bounds of permissible interpretation of her art.

With Color Field lumbering into a future in which it was perceived as mere décor – all alluvial paint flow, squeamish colour, and ostensibly empty style – and Minimalist sculpture on the ascent alongside snappy, vulgar Pop art, and shortly, an expanded field of site-specific and ephemeral process-oriented practices, what was a painter to do? And a painter once associated with landscapes, at that, now living in one of the most spectacular of natural environments? To the point of this essay, this last seems to have chafed even before the 1970s, especially as her move to New York in 1957 corresponded with the promotion of so-called Second Generation Abstract Expressionism. To Helen Frankenthaler's evocations of landscape in abstract configurations of thinned colour – lauded by Morris Louis as "the bridge between [Jackson] Pollock and what

16 Oral history interview with Martin, p. 18.

17 Hilton Kramer, 'An Intimist of the Grid', *The New York Times*, 18 March 1973.

was possible"[18] – critics were quick to see in the appeal to nature as essentialising femininity, some so gruesome as to compare her stain painting to menstrual blood.[19] (Critic Harold Rosenberg, for one, characterised her work as akin to the "customary procedure in watercolour," and also to "Georgia O'Keefe [*sic*] painting with absorbent cotton."[20])

When she joined the Betty Parsons Gallery in 1958, Martin was forty-six. Unaware of her prior exhibition history in New Mexico – which Parsons did not readily disclose so as to better introduce Martin as "fresh talent"[21] – people assumed her youth at the time of her New York debut. As late as 1966, Max Kozloff regarded her work as a "mid-point. . . between the sensibility of the early fifties, with its loosely structured and empathetic recall of the outer world, and the 'computerized' pictorial systems of today. It is a condition perhaps emphasised by the fact that the artist herself is of the middle generation."[22] In truth, Martin was only two months younger than Pollock and a year older than Reinhardt. Martin did not abide by Abstract Expressionist notions of revelation of hyperbolic persona or triumphantly individuated selfhood, exemplified, say, by Pollock's

18 Morris Louis, quoted in James M. Truitt, 'Art-Arid D.C. Harbors Touted "New" Painters', *Washington Post*, December 21, 1961, A20; and later in Gerald Nordland, *The Washington Color Painters*, Washington, DC: Washington Gallery of Modern Art, 1965, p. 12.

19 See Suzanne Hudson, 'A Comma in the Place Where a Period Might Have Gone', *'The heroine Paint': After Frankenthaler*, ed. Katy Siegel, New York: Gagosian Gallery/Rizzoli, 2015.

20 Harold Rosenberg, 'Art and Words' (1969), in *The De-Definition of Art*, New York: Horizon Press, 1972, p. 64.

21 Betty Parsons, 'Section Eleven to Open', Section Eleven Exhibitions, 1958–1961: Various Exhibitions, 1958–1961, Box 19, Folder 47, Betty Parsons Gallery Records and Personal Papers, c.1920–1991, bulk 1946–1983, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC.

22 Max Kozloff, 'Art', *The Nation*, 14 November 1966, p. 525.

autographic drip, or the writings of Rosenberg. Instead she claimed to eschew ego; for her, expression was universal and intangible if profoundly felt, emotions of gladness, contentment, or joy. These emotions were to be instantiated and communicated by means of subtle use of colour, the visibility – expressivity – of her touch within a regulated and classicising order, and the variability of surface it begot.

It has become a commonplace in the Martin literature to name *Tundra*, 1967, as the last painting that she finished in New York. It may or may not be so, but it was certainly among them. Conceivably intended to echo a 1950 Barnett Newman painting of the same title, *Tundra* is a refined composition comprising six rectangles made from a single horizontal and two vertical lines. In 1973, Martin's *Tundra* was hailed by John Serber as "the best white painting I have ever seen": 'The viscous canvas is an ode to toothpaste, meringue, aspirin tablets, skim milk, bathroom porcelain, clouds and human semen."[23] For that reviewer it was a climax. For others it remained a sign of bleak foreclosure that anticipated Martin's time in the proverbial wilderness, which was rather more accurately a period of journeying through landscapes, some of which were already known, before her return to New Mexico (where, not coincidentally, the painting has returned, as a gift to the Harwood Museum in 2017). For Newman, his own *Tundra* was keyed to notions of sublimity, effecting the powerful terror and aesthetic magnitude of being overpowered by the phenomena of the natural world. As Richard Shiff writes: "From the limitless four horizons of the tundra, Newman imagined the no-horizon of whiteout ... utterly disorienting visual blankness, no relations, no external indicators of direction."[24]

23 John Serber, 'Agnes Martin: The Painter as a Woman', *The Drummer*, 27 February 1973.

24 Richard Shiff, 'Whiteout: The Not-Influence Newman Effect', *Barnett Newman*, ed. Ann Temkin, Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2002, p. 104.

For Martin, expression was universal and abstract, which is to say that she sought experiences – and the conveyance of them in picture and word – that were not hers alone. After 1973, Martin worked anew, exploring different formats and even media, or adjusting to the rapidity with which acrylic dried in the unforgivingly desiccated heat. In 1976, Martin, fully ensconced in a life that she had remade, turned to film-making with *Gabriel*, a one-off 79-minute-long 16mm picture of a boy hiking. She described it as being about happiness consequent of an adventure in gorgeous terrain. Here is a quote worth citing at some length:

> I'll be making a movie. Of course, I'll never consider my movie-making on the level with painting. But I'm making it in order to reach a large audience. The movie will be called "Gabriel." It's about happiness – exact thing [sic] with my paintings. It's about happiness and innocence. I've never seen a movie or read a story that was absolutely free of any misery. And so, I thought I would make one. The whole thing is about a little boy who has a day of freedom . . . in which he feels free. It will all be taken out-of-doors. I feel that photography has been neglected in motion pictures. People may think that's exaggerated, but, really, I think that photography is a very sensitive medium, and I'm depending on it absolutely to indicate this boy's adventure.[25]

In 1989, she looked back on the aforementioned first grid, *The Tree*, and said this of its origin story: "Well, when I first made a grid I happened to be thinking of the innocence of trees [*laughs*] and then this grid came into my mind and I thought it represented

25 John Gruen, 'Agnes Martin', p. 94.

innocence, and I still do, and so I painted it and then I was satisfied."[26] And in 1993, Martin finally affirmed: "My response to nature is really a response to beauty."[27] For the two decades leading up to this concession, she had consolidated this line of thought, and on more than one occasion she cited the ocean: "We may be looking at the ocean when we are aware of beauty but it is not the ocean."[28] Again, Martin argued not for a literal transcription of place but a conversion of it into an experience. She showed nature to be representation from the first, landscape to be framed within and by the aesthetic act: a harbinger for and confirmation of the limits of her painting, and the literal ground for imagining the terms in which perfection might exist.

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26 Oral history interview with A. Martin, 15 May 1989, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, p. 11.

27 Agnes Martin interviewed by Irving Sandler, *Art Monthly*, no. 169, September 1993, p. 4.

28 Agnes Martin, 'The Current of the River of Life Moves Us', in *Writings / Schriften*, pp. 135–36.

Pekka Nevalainen, *Photograph*, 1976, 30.5 × 45 cm. Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Petri Virtanen.

Transformations of Landscape in the Visual Arts

HANNA JOHANSSON

Prologue

A figure is running in snow holding red, blue and yellow cloths in his hand. These cloths in primary colours stream behind the running figure. Our visible world is made up of these same primary colours, and so is, of course, the winter landscape that we see in the picture; white snow, the deciduous forest in the background and the wide-open sky above...

Pekka Nevalainen's (1951-) *Photograph* from 1976 is a landscape picture whose composition closely follows the ideals of 18th century landscape painting: a wide open foreground, some woods in the distance, a human figure in the middle. Yet the work also gives a twist to the Western tradition of landscape art because the figure in the image is the artist himself and the photograph is a record of the event. The primary coloured cloths also link the work to the tradition of painting.

Nevalainen has said about the work: "I pass through a snowy landscape, leaving a trail of primary colours behind me. The world is reconstructed in pure colours when it passes through an artist's mind. I was interested in painting but used another medium, performance, to express my ideas about painting."

Nevalainen's 'photograph' refers to a specific event in a landscape, but it is also a staged visual performance. By underlining the

manner of representation (recorded performance) and the technology and the medium (the photograph containing a painting), Nevalainen succeeds in pointing to a central paradigm that has governed landscapes and landscape art; namely that a landscape is not only an object for our gaze and a representation, but also a directly perceived physical environment.

Actually, landscape seems a fundamentally ambivalent concept. A landscape is not only a perceived, encountered and lived physical environment, but also its visual, verbal or aural interpretation. These two spaces are always overlaid.

Recent theory on landscape has pointed out exactly this; that landscape does not refer solely to the visual apprehension of the physical land, but also to a particular *mode* of apprehension. In our Western tradition of landscape painting, this mode of perception has been governed by the concept of the picturesque. That is, it reminded viewers of a painting they had seen, and therefore it became a 'motif'.

While landscape paintings – representations of landscapes – have been used to construct culture, the relationship between landscape and its representation is itself a construct.

A famous argument by art historian W.J.T. Mitchell has it that landscape painting must be understood "as a representation of something that is already a representation in its own right."[1] He argues that landscape is a cultural convention, a way of seeing, articulating and evaluating both ourselves and our community.

That is why the act of seeing and representing a landscape also constructs political meaning. Even something as traditional as 17th century Dutch painting has been seen as having not only modified

1 W.J.T. Mitchell, 'Imperial Landscape', W.J.T. Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and Power*, London and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994.

and strengthened the identity of the state, but also naturalised dramatic changes in the political, social, and economic landscape.

Bearing this in mind, I ask if it is possible to talk about landscape art in the age of the anthropocene and if so, then how landscape as a concept has transformed – and how it should be redefined.

I. History

In the history of Western art, landscape has been called 'a child of history' since it emerged as an independent motif at a relatively late date, as late as the 17th century. Earlier landscape works either serve as a stage to frame the real topic (most often human interaction) or as a symbol presented as a decorative detail.

The explanations for this lateness are based mostly on the history of representation and human beings' self-understanding as well as on the history of the relations between humans and their environment.

According to art historian Ernst Gombrich, in *The Renaissance Theory of Art and the Rise of Landscape* (1980), in sixteenth-century landscape paintings we are not seeing views but largely accumulations of individual features.

Ed Casey has, in turn, suggested that the late emergence of landscape art was due to the history of perception and representation.[2] Casey's point isn't to argue that landscapes would not have been perceived or appreciated before the seventeenth century, but that the suitable means for representing landscape were as yet lacking. There was always something in the environment that prevented the landscape itself becoming the primary object for representation.

2 Edward Casey, *Representing the Place: Landscape Painting and Maps*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2002.

Casey as well as many others have noted that the development of landscape painting as a distinct genre was indeed a result of the seventeenth-century scientific revolution, and a new worldview, coupled with a mechanistic view of nature.

This was also a moment when the modern self-reflective subject was born, along with the "age of the world picture" (*Die Zeit des Weltbildes*) as defined by Martin Heidegger.

When the world was understood as a picture, which a man can observe from the outside, distanced observation of it was also suddenly possible.

This change in relationship between man and his surroundings, along with theological, political, economic and moral concerns, is interrogated in the short essay 'Uncanny landscape' by Jean-Luc Nancy.[3]

According to Nancy, landscape is opposed to country (*pays*). The countryman, or peasant, is someone whose occupation is the country. He occupies it and is occupied with it.

If we listen to the word 'peasant' carefully, it tells us that it also means a pagan. Both the worlds 'peasant' and 'pagan' derive from the latin word 'paganum'. Here Nancy's ideas of contradiction between country and landscape become clear. As pagan, the peasant worships but also 'occupies' the gods of the country, as well as the land itself. There is a presence that acts at every level in the life of the peasant as pagan. This presence is nothing but earth itself.

The crucial moment of change happens when the country is transformed by industrialisation and urbanisation. And another regime opens that entails estrangement and it is at that moment that the question of landscape occurs. Landscape is born. According

3 Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Uncanny Landscape', *The Ground of the Image*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005.

to Nancy; "landscape is the land of those who have no land, who are uncanny and estranged."

This idea of landscape in Nancy is reminiscent of Casey's argument that landscape is possible only where a certain conceptual distance between man and the world occurs.

In the footsteps of aesthetic theory, landscape painting evolved in the 18th century into an ideal subject matter for art, and in the 19th century it became the dominant genre when urban artists went on painting excursions to nearby areas of natural beauty and to rural areas, until its loss of prominence in the early 20th century.

II. Abstraction and landscape

In the beginning of the 20th century the position of landscape painting came under threat not only from photography, but also from the new functions of painting, especially the growing interest in abstract art. The aim of high modernism was to divest painting of any reference to 'reality', nature, or any external motifs and instead to focus attention on the painting itself, and its surface.

Abstract painting made you as a viewer aware of a reality that cannot be seen or depicted, yet one that the picture nevertheless refers to. The reality of abstract art in this sense is negative. It is unknown, invisible and unlimited.

The abstraction of landscape art splits in two directions. On the one hand, there is non-figurative art, relating to landscape as proximate, tangible matter and a bodily place. On the other, abstraction is directed towards purified optics and the minimisation of illusory effects.

Jukka Mäkelä's *Corner* (Nurkka, 1979), or *Basto io* (1970) position themselves on the boundary of optical illusion. In *Basto io* the grey overall tonality is regularly interspersed with lighter circular areas superimposed by smaller ball-like shapes that cover the surface. The

composition resolves in front of our eyes into a snowing landscape, but the same composition is a reminiscent of the painter's traditional optical aid, the grid. There are frame-like white wedges around the edges of the optical, 'snowing' landscape, whose function is to make the viewer aware of the illusionary aspect of the work.

It can also be argued that the characteristic features of late-nineteenth-century painting led to one potential end of landscape art. These characteristics were, for example, the increasing focus on materiality in painting as well as new types of technological apparatus like the camera and microscope, and studies of microscopic materiality in nature.

Danish scholar Klaus P. Mortensen's discussion of late 19th century and early twentieth century landscape paintings makes the following summary:

"In the works of these painters, characterised by their interest in the materiality of their subject matter and the painting itself, the genre seems to be on its way to rejoining the nature that landscape painting originally separated itself out from."[4]

One example and description of this mixing of the subject and material of the painting is made by Robert Rosenblum in his renowned essay 'The Abstract Sublime', where he compares *Gordale Scar* (1812-14) by British artist James Ward to Clyfford Still's painting *1957-D, No 1.* (1957), which was made almost 150 years later. Rosenblum writes: "In Still, Ward's limestone cliffs have been translated into an abstract geology, but the effects are substantially the

4 Klaus P. Mortensen, 'Maamies ja maisema', Torsten Gunnarsson & Leena Ahtola-Moorhouse (eds.), *Luonnon lumo. Pohjoismainen maisemamaalaus 1840–1910*, Ateneumin taidemuseo et al., 2006.

same. We move physically across such a picture like a visitor touring the Grand Canyon or journeying to the center of the earth."[5]

The same can be said about the Finnish artist Marika Mäkelä's paintings from the early 1980s. In an earlier article on these abstract landscape paintings, I wrote: "Even though Mäkelä's paintings essentially avoid all clear references to the objective reality outside themselves to me they represent a new kind of writing about landscape... I suggest that in her art Mäkelä depicts the experience of landscape or environment, and rather than being remote or controlling, her depiction addresses closeness and subversion of differences, making the experience multisensual and tangible in a way that is possible only in paintings. The landscape, then, cannot be thought of as a representation, a likeness of scenery unfolding before our eyes, but as an overwhelming sensation of the environment and the abundant offerings of the nature."[6]

The interesting aspect is that when modernism began to be criticised, around the middle of the 20th century and even more so in the sixties, 'reality', i.e. life as well as vegetation, became the focus of artists through conceptual as well as time-based, body, and environmental art. It has been more common to speak about environmental art (etc) than 'landscape' art per se.

However, funnily enough it was the materiality of the landscape that the artists were working with, and often in the form of abstraction (in land and environmental art especially). These works were dominated by indexicality, and they remind me of what Michael

5 Robert Rosenblum, 'The Abstract Sublime' (1961), *The Abstraction of Landscape: From Northern Romanticism to Abstract Expressionism*, Madric Fundación Juan March: Editorial de Arte y Ciencia', 2007.

6 'The struggle between light and gravity: Reflecting nature in Marika Mäkelä's paintings from the early 1980s.' In *Marika Mäkelä*, Tampere: Sara Hildén Art Museum, 2015.

Marika Mäkelä: *Seudun äänet* / *Sounds of the Region*, 1983, 230 × 200 × 3 cm, acrylic on canvas. Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Petri Virtanen

Newman calls "indexical abstractions" since they were mere traces of the landscape and the artists' movement in landscape. But the word 'landscape' was not commonly used in these works even though the 'matter' of land art, body art, and performance art was, essentially, landscape. The concept of landscape was considered old-fashioned.

The aversion to 'landscape' as a term seems to be connected to it denoting a conspicuous and ideal view, detached from the unbroken continuum of the environment.

However, we can argue that there has been 'the revival of landscape art' since the beginning of the 21st century.

III. contemporary art and landscape

If I can generalise, I would firstly say that it was photography that prompted the vanishing of landscape painting at the turn of the 19th and 20th century onwards. But at the same time, I am fascinated by the idea that it was technical media, mostly photography and video, and technical reproduction, that made possible – in fact, almost obliged – the return of landscape art.

Secondly, if landscape disappeared into the materiality of painting and of nature itself at the turn of the 20th century, it seems to be from the same materiality of the media as well as the landscape itself that it reoccurs as a genre.

(One can observe that landscapes have changed over the centuries along with the development of visual means and devices used to represent landscape. Various optical instruments, Claude glass, and other reflecting surfaces, camera obscura etc. were early aids for the contemplation and presentation of landscape.)

The way in which contemporary landscape artists operate with these devices binds them to the history of the genre. By moving between different forms of observation and technical devices these works of art place themselves within the history of landscape art.

Alma Heikkilä, *soil - minerals mixing with the living*, 2019, 265 × 240 cm, acrylic on canvas, plaster. Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Petri Virtanen

But by doing so, they also challenge the history of observing landscape and the position of both the artist and the viewer.

On a general level one can notice at least four (or even five) different ways in which landscape appears in today's art.

1. The first is what I would call 'political landscape art', that deals with (for example) gender, race, ethnicity but also issues like land-use, water-use and forest-use, extraction...
2. Secondly, 'medium or technological landscape' that uses new or old technological tools to show or reveal something new in or of landscape (for example Santeri Tuori).
3. Thirdly, 'landscape of closeness' and landscape that challenges the limit of representations (for example Olafur Eliasson).
4. Fourthly, works that actively try to expand our human understanding of landscape as our habitat (for example Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Alma Heikkilä).
5. Fifthly, artificial or virtual reality landscapes that use 3D glasses to view landscape (for example *IC-98's House of Kronos* VR version or the work of Jakob Kudsk Steensen).

Today landscapes are based on elements like fire and water as in many works by Bill Viola, or Olafur Eliasson who has brought natural elements like rain, rainbows, currents, ice, snow, or different kinds of weather phenomena from the background to the forefront of the work. 'Landscape' can also mean details that have previously been little-noticed, like rain, sun, wind, or clean air.

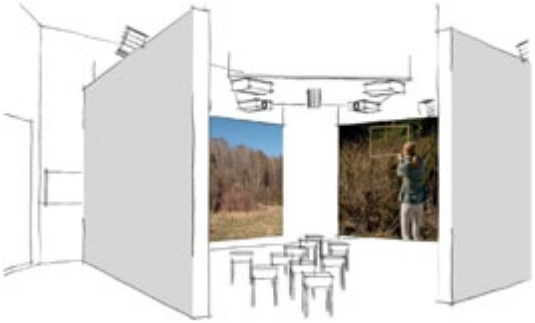
Landscape can be representations and processes of life of the vegetal kind; the actions of micro-organisms or plants like in Alma Heikkilä's paintings. These canvases can also be called *Umwelts*, living places for the micro-organisms. *Umwelt* was a term coined by biologist Jacob von Uexküll (1864-1944) in the early 20th century.

The concept describes the in-between world that exist between the world itself and the world as it is experienced by living beings, an intermediary reality between the objective and subjective environment. According to this interpretation Heikkilä's canvases are living places for the small creatures that inhabit these canvases.

Von Uexküll argues in his book *A Foray Into the Worlds of Animals and Humans* that animal species co-exist in parallel spatio-temporal worlds of which humans can have no experiential first-hand knowledge. At its epistemological core lies the concept of *Umwelt*, which develops through action and behaviour, and that is why is has no immediate correspondence with the geographical environment. The environment of the *Umwelt* is constituted already in the pre-conscious state, when the organism begins to react to stimulation. As different animal species have different qualities, their *Umwelts*, too, are different. The most primitive animals do not react to their environment in any way, which makes their *Umwelt* a totally closed one, whereas the *Umwelt* of the most developed animals is fundamentally open to the environment, which means in turn that they actively shape their environment.

In addition to Alma Heikkilä's paintings the idea of *Umwelt* also seems significant to other works that I see embodying the fourth type of contemporary landscape noted above. These are works that actively try to expand our human understanding of landscape as our habitat by involving other species' understandings of landscape into our perception. These I would call 'landscape in the era of the Anthropocene' or 'posthuman landscapes', depending on what we emphasise and how we define the Anthropocene and posthumanism.

I will close with one example of posthuman landscape work by Eija-Liisa Ahtila. In many of her recent works like *Horizontal* (2011), *The Annunciation* (2010), and *Studies on the Ecology of Drama I* (2014)



Eija-Liisa Ahtila:

Above: *Studies on the Ecology of Drama* I, 2014, installation sketch. Photo: Crystal Eye, all rights reserved

Below: *Horizon*, 2011, installation view. Photo: Adrian Villalobos, Crystal Eye, all rights reserved

she has put into question the human-centred worldview. In *Studies on the Ecology of Drama I* she even expands, quite convincingly, the understanding of landscape representation towards the more-than-human world.

The work already states the central question in its title: what might an ecology of drama be, and how it can be actualised? If drama is to be ecological it should address the interrelations between creatures and their habitats in a way that does not place humans in a hierarchically superior position. How is this possible?

Ahtila's film is a contemplation on the limited ways in which we perceive the diversity of the world, environment, or landscape if you like, and on the ways in which the legacy of the moving image can change this situation. A three-channel video installation uses footage from everyday environments in Finland; at the edge of the forest, in the air, at a stable, in a yard, inside of a house. The entire piece is constructed as a series of performative lectures given by a human actor, who is accompanied by a cast that includes human acrobats, a horse, a dog, birds, trees and shrubs. At the beginning of the film the actor states that the core idea of film as a medium is its anthropocentricity, the human-centred perspective of film. The time and the space of the film as well as the composition and framing of the shots are all constructed from a human perspective, the very concept that is being deconstructed in the film. The methods of showing and seeing in all dramas are based on a human model of reality. In *Studies of the Ecology of Drama I* the lecturer, played by the actor Kati Outinen, wants to create a serious thought experiment, about whether it might be possible to see in other ways and to shift our attention to other living beings. As she describes her intentions, she draws the viewer's attention to various aspects of the environment using methods based on composition and drama.

Right from the start, Outinen succeeds in turning the viewer's attention away from the human figure and towards events occurring in the environment. As the film proceeds, the viewers are given more insights into the environment, or the *Umwelt*, of other species.

While Ahtila thematically moves towards an investigation of nature and the world of non-human beings, her works have increasingly begun to comment on the methods by which landscapes are constructed. Whereas in many of her earlier works the 'landscape' was the habitat of humans and animals or the setting of the action, *Studies on the Ecology of Drama I* employs a more landscape-like idiom.[7]

The Finnish professor of environmental policy Yrjö Haila defines the landscape in an interesting way: The landscape is that part of the surrounding world that we feel we are so dependent upon that we attach meanings to it. That landscape is the milieu of life: a precondition of life produced by the activity of living." According to Haila landscape is a sphere of life predicated by action, not a view ruled over by the gaze. Haila underlines that understanding landscape as the sphere of life does not in any way imply its "naturalization". Moreover, the elements of landscape have symbolic meanings, which is a material necessity for we are a symbolic species, as Haila also remarks.[8]

Haila's idea of landscape comes close to the branch of biology called biosemiotics, coined by von Uexküll, who realised that animals, too, use symbolic expressions.

Studies on the Ecology of Drama is founded on the notion that the human experience of the world is not the only possible way to

7 Martin Lefebvre, 'Between setting and landscape in the cinema', *Landscape and Film*, ed. Martin Lefebvre, Routledge, 2007, p.22.

8 Yrjö Haila, 'Maiseman todellistumisesta', *Maisema Kiasman kokoelmissa*, eds. Eija Aarnio & Marja Sakari, Helsinki: Nykytaiteen museo Kiasma, 2006, p. 29.

perceive and experience reality, and it tries to shift the viewers' attention to other ways of experiencing the world. The film borrows the expressive devices of nature documentaries or educational films, yet it changes their content profoundly. Unlike nature documentaries, which typically anthropomorphise animals, it turns the tables and zoomorphises human perception. It thereby succeeds in teaching us new things not only about cinema but also about the limits of perception as determined by our senses. And by doing so, the film also transforms the perceptional and representational grounds of the notion of landscape.

The fifth category of landscape listed above is something that I haven't yet reflected on enough.

However, there seems to be a connection between Ahtila's way of using fiction in her drama. This becomes evident in a scene where Kati Outinen launches into an account of the common swift, which becomes the key element that transforms the perspective of her performance and that of the entire work. Outinen guides the viewer to the life of the bird. The pictures in the film show what it feels like to live in the air like a swift.

Perhaps my reflection on landscape in contemporary art will continue in the world of 3-D images that leads the viewer into another kind of fictional world.

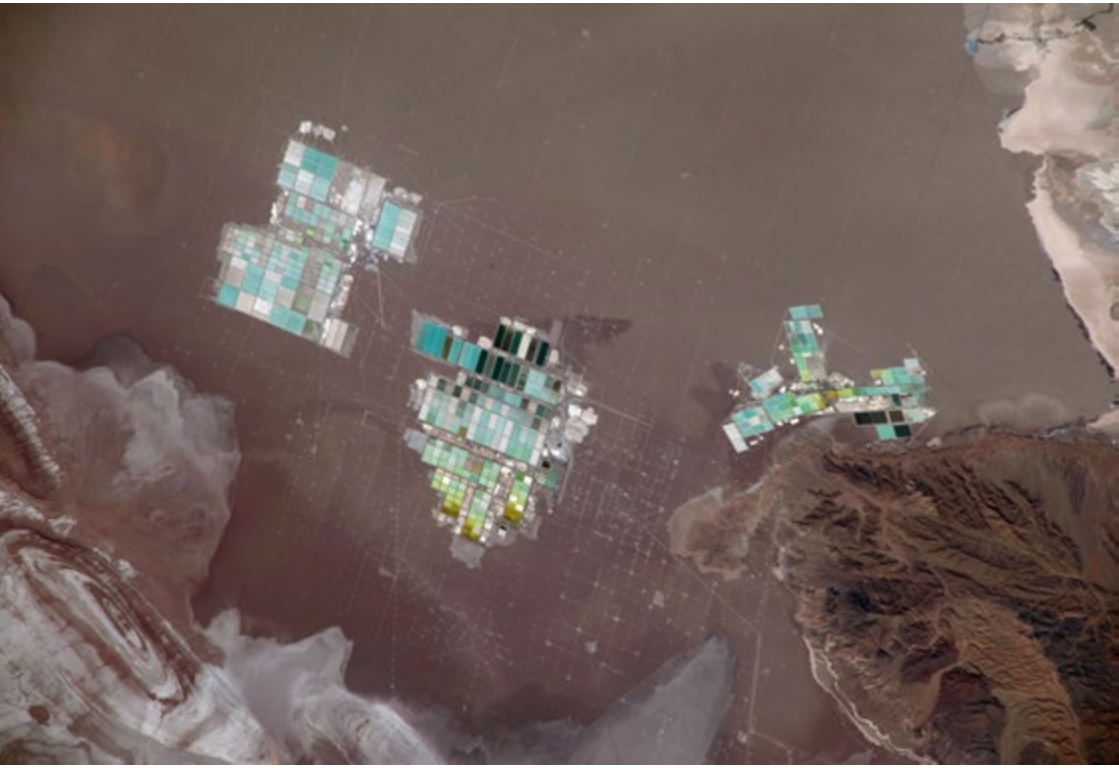


Figure 1. Image taken by the International Space Station of the Lithium fields in the Salar de Atacama. (Source and copyright: NASA, Public Domain)

Lithium Landscapes: From Abstract Imaginaries to Deep Time and Multi-Scalar Topologies

SAMIR BHOWMIK

I. Lithium Imaginaries

From space, the lithium fields of the Salar de Atacama in Chile appear like a multi-coloured mosaic or plots of agricultural land arranged in grids.[1] To some, they might even appear as ancient hieroglyphs or giant technological objects like touchscreens and iPads. On the ground, the landscapes of lithium appear as rows upon rows of conical white hills, fantastical arrays of vibrant fields set against the backdrop of an endless horizon. It looks like an arctic landscape, filled with snow, depicting a purity, making the fields seemingly at one with nature. Here, the future stretches out into infinity.

Zoom out from Salar into the Nevada desert and you might spot Tesla's Gigafactory, designed to resemble the batteries manufactured there. The size of several football fields, the facility is large

1 USGS, 'Earthshots: Satellite Images of Environmental Change', earthshots.usgs.gov/earthshots/node/107-ad-image-0-0 (accessed 5 4 2021).

Figure 2. Gigafactory, Nevada. (Source & copyrights: Planet Labs, CC-BY-SA-4.0)

enough to accommodate a complete Boeing Factory.[2] In the harsh desert landscape it looks strangely out of place, like an unwieldy and ugly spaceship that has crash-landed, having run through its fuel supplies.

This whimsical image of a battery megastructure also appears in Northern Finland. The promotional campaign of a failed bid for a Gigafactory shows the stylised rendering of a 18650 Lithium-ion cell carpeted with solar panels, with windmills in the surrounding

2 Jon Jivan, 'Tesla Gigafactory', *Electrek*, 18 August 2015, https://electrek.co/2015/08/18/gigafactory-shown-progressing-but-still-a-fraction-of-its-final-size-in-recent-satellite-photo/ (accessed 5 4 2021). ; See also: https://www.tesla.com/gigafactory (accessed 5 4 2021).

landscape.[3] The image hypothesises an age of energy sufficiency. The battery-like form of the Gigafactory promises the existence and continuation of verdant landscapes. Yet, the megastructure has no relation to the landscape in which it is set, and which it will eventually exploit. The positive-negative terminals and the cylindrical body of the lithium-ion battery have no functional correspondence with the factory's architecture. In other words, its form factor has nothing to do with the building, nor its utopian context.[4] It is nothing but a technical diagram superimposed on the landscape. This immediately recalls the image of the Salar de Atacama with its endless orthogonal grid of lithium fields, where the landscape is subjected to the technical processes of extraction.

These two scenes of the field and factory are examples of the sort of imaginaries this essay briefly explores in order to better understand the visual cultures and environmental costs of lithium-based energy systems. The imaginaries and other visualisations that I analyse here challenge us to re-examine the relationship between representation and the actual extent of lithium extraction, manufacturing and waste. I argue that to understand the environmental implications of lithium we also need to examine its representations, which allow us deeper insights into its topologies, its deep time, and its multi-scalar aspects.

3 'Ministry: Vaasa competing for Tesla Gigafactory in Finland', *YLE Uutiset*, 25 January 2017, https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/ministry_vaasa_competing_for_tesla_gigafactory_in_finland/9423510 (accessed 5 4 2021).

4 The 18650 is a standardised cylindrical cell form, measuring eighteen by sixty-five millimetres. Developed in the mid-1990s, it is commonly used in portable electronic devices like laptops, and electric vehicles like e-bikes and Tesla automobiles.

Figure 3. Lithium Mine at Bolivia's Uyuni Salt Flat (Image Source and copyrights: Oton Barros (DSR/OBT/INPE), Coordenação-Geral de Observação da Terra/INPE; CC-BY-SA-2.0)

II. Lithium Dreams and Hieroglyphs

The visual imagery of lithium can be gathered from a plethora of short documentaries, movies, and online news clips. Years ago, the *Lithium Dreams* project, led by Kate Davies and Liam Young of the Unknown Fields Division, turned a mundane field study trip into an exciting new media adventure that "explor[ed] the infrastructure behind the scenes of our electric future."[5] This is a perfect example of what media theorist Shannon Mattern describes as "extreme field work."[6] The project examined lithium extraction zones in Bolivia and the Salar de Atacama, resulting in drone imagery, an artwork of a battery "fashioned from glass, graphite, aluminum, nickel and lithium brine collected from the Salar De Uyuni in Bolivia", a trailer for a Japanese racing car, and a short film about a daily commute

5 Unknown Fields Division, Summer 2015 Lithium Dreams, http://www.unknownfieldsdivision.com/summer2015bolivia+atacama-lithiumdreams.html (accessed 5 4 2021).

6 Shannon Mattern, 'Cloud and Field', *Places Journal* (August 2016): https://doi.org/10.22269/160802 (accessed 5 4 2021).

consumed with the digital. These projects present a rich and varied view of lithium mining. They suggest an approach that blends visual artistry with hands-on field study.

Although *Lithium Dreams* employs diverse forms and genres of mediation from sculpture to drone and film, it does not quite visualise the multi-scalarity and extended temporalities of lithium energy production and consumption. Documentaries such as *Lithium Revolution* (dir. Andreas Pichler and Julio Weiss, 2012) or *The Dark Side of Green Energy* (dir. Jean-Louis Pérez and Guillaume Pitron, 2020) also decline to present a comprehensive cycle of the lithium battery production, focusing solely on the extraction zone. No doubt, the visual imagery of the lithium fields is striking, but the neglect of other aspects such as manufacturing, shipping, and e-waste is noticeable. Lithium mines are certainly worth examining. But merely surveying extraction sites while ignoring the other processes by which lithium is made available for smartphones or Electric Motor Vehicles (EMVs) makes any fieldwork or film of an extraction zone incomplete.

For decades the battery has been a symbol of cheap and portable energy, as visualised in the endless drumming of the Duracell and the Energizer Bunnies. Introduced to TV audiences in 1973 and 1989 respectively, both expound the energy of their consumer products. The bunnies continue to promote lithium-ion batteries even today. Other television commercials and print advertisements depict the battery as renewable, harmless, and recyclable. Citing Marx, Sean Cubitt asserts that the lithium-ion battery is a social hieroglyphic, "an ostensibly innocent artifact in which is disguised a world of complex networks which, however, present themselves to humans in 'the form of a movement made by things, and these things, far from being under their control, in fact control them.'"[7]

7 Sean Cubitt, *Finite Media: Environmental Implications of Digital Technology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), p. 73.

Figure 4. The Licancabur volcano in the background of the Salar de Atacama. (Source: Diego Delso CC BY-SA)

While mainstream imagery of lithium batteries has usually obfuscated the global networks of energy products, the artistic depiction of the extraction zone takes us to back to a fictional scenario. Portuguese artist Mafalda Paiva's painting *Lithium Fields*, which depicts the Atacama Desert reminds us of what could have been a paradise instead of an extractive landscape.[8] In the artist's vision, "the salt flats hum with a preternatural vibrancy, an effect produced by the exaggerated density of species and radically foreshortened topography."[9] In what could be the Garden of Eden, the landscape looks verdant and untouched. It teems with flamingos, ducks, llamas, and other animals, which gather around the water bodies at the base

8 Mafalda Paiva, 'Habitats', www.mafaldapaiva.com/habitats.html (accessed 8 June 2020).

9 Thea Riofrancos, 'What Green Costs', *Logic* 9, 7 December 2019, https://logicmag.io/nature/what-green-costs/ (accessed 5 4 2021).

of the foothills. It is a scene radically opposed to the vast extraction zone of the lithium fields, as depicted in the satellite images of the USGS, which reduce the landscape to an abstraction on a planetary scale. The painting is more immediate and intimate, reminding us of the region's environment and biodiversity.

Finally, consider the artist renderings of the various Tesla Gigafactories that have been promoted as enticing images of energy sufficiency, green power, and a fossil-fuel-free future. The factories stand in glorious isolation, in the middle of nowhere, just like remote data centres. This remoteness, shared between the Gigafactory and the lithium field, is reminiscent as well of those electrical power generation and supply models built on centralisation and the geographical separation of energy sources and energy users. As Cubitt notes, this is similar to "fossil-fuel extraction, [in that] refining and use in generation typically occurs away from population centers, despite the waste of energy inevitable in its transmission."[10]

The heroic and decontextualised depiction of the Gigafactory also serves to obscure important questions about scale and the relationship between energy production and regional context. Energy generation is intrinsically tied to the land, and thus dependent on particular material and cultural contexts. Gigafactory renderings, however, do not generally allow us to perceive what is around, above, and beyond the factories themselves. A scale-comparison image shows the Gigafactory to be about as large as ten football fields or more than fifty United States Capitol Buildings.[11] Thus, a considerable portion of the landscape is encircled within their location. Devoid of any such points of comparison, these renderings leave the viewer unable to fathom the scales of the interventions the structures would make.

10 Cubitt, *Finite Media*, p. 41.

11 Jivan, 'Tesla Gigafactory'.

III. Deep Time & Multi-scalar Topologies

The image of a volcano rarely comes to mind when thinking about lithium batteries. And yet the salt flats of Bolivia and neighbouring Chile, which supply fully forty percent of the world's lithium, were formed through the action of volcanoes. 25 million years ago, magma from the mantle of the earth fell on the surface of these flats, depositing lithium as it did so. In Salar de Uyuni, "some 24 million years later, as it started to rain, a mega-lake known as Tauca formed, stretching the full length of Bolivia from north to south. Altitude and a dry climate combined to slowly evaporate its waters, leaving layers of mud and concentrated lithium brine leached from the volcanic rocks below."[12]

The world's most significant lithium district – the Salar de Atacama, on the Altiplano of Chile – is still surrounded by active volcanoes and cut by active faults. This volcanic imagery consisting of eruptions, lava flows, and depositions takes us back to a deep time. It provides a glimpse of how the energy of our electronic devices ultimately originates in geophysical time.[13] For example, Aymaran legends talk about the formation of the lake that created the Salar de Uyuni, the largest salt flat in the world, as well as a key lithium extraction site, attributing its formation "to the heartbroken tears mixed with breastmilk of Tunupa, the personification of a dormant

12 Hal Hudson, 'Lithium Dreams: The Surreal Landscapes Where Batteries Are Born', *New Scientist* 3043, 14 October 2015, www.newscientist.com/article/mg22830430-300-Lithium-dreams-the-surreal-landscapes-where-batteries-are-born/#ixzz6MuL2xuz8 (accessed 5 4 2021).

13 Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, 'On the Multiple Frontiers of Extraction: Excavating Contemporary Capitalism', *Cultural Studies* 31, no. 2–3 (2017), pp. 185–204, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2017.1303425.

volcano known as a holy mountain to the Aymara people."[14] Thus, there is a scrambling of time at stake in mineral extraction, a mixing of the mythical past and the technoscientific present. "Sedimented in the deep time of geological processes, extracted minerals are thrust into industrial applications and have become essential elements in the devices and infrastructures that enable even the most recent developments in new media."[15] As Liam Young and Kate Davies observe, "Your smartphone runs on the tears and breast milk of a volcano. This landscape is connected to everywhere on the planet via the phones in our pockets; linked to each of us by invisible threads of commerce, science, politics and power."[16]

It would therefore appear that "landscapes are energy, and energetic transactions, as are media – as are infrastructures, bundling all three as an entangled entity." And "even before these images, the landscape is already always inscribed in multiple materials and communication enabling technologies."[17] Media history converges with geological history; diverse metals and chemicals are dislodged from their geological strata such that they may be incorporated into machines that define our technical media culture. Hence, media theorist Jussi Parikka argues for a more literal understanding of the

14 Nicola Clark and Simon Wallis, 'Flamingos, Salt Lakes and Volcanoes: Hunting for Evidence of Past Climate Change on the High Altiplano of Bolivia', *Geology Today* 33, no. 3 (25 May 2017), p. 104.

15 Mezzadra and Neilson, 'Multiple Frontiers', pp. 188-189; See also Jussi Parikka, *A Geology of Media*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

16 Kate Davies and Liam Young, *Tales from the Dark Side of the City: The Breastmilk of the Volcano Bolivia and the Atacama Desert Expedition*, London: AA Publications, 2016.

17 Samir Bhowmik and Jussi Parikka, 'Infrascapes for Media Archaeographers', in *Archaeographies: Aspects of Radical Media Archaeology*, eds. Moritz Hiller and Stefan Höltgen, Schwabe Verlag, Berlin, 2019, p. 183.

notion of deep time media-technological discourse, as referring to both temporal duration and geological depth.[18]

From the core of the earth to the volcano, from salt flats to mobile phones and EMVs, lithium spans multiple temporalities even as it is potentialised as electrical energy. In a sense, the energy of extraction landscapes, whether organised around coal or lithium, are also transformed from one form to another, from mines and fields to power plants and electrical grids, and from fuel cells to media devices and EMVs. In this process, electricity produced is also stepped down from high voltages to low, from electrics to electronics.

Thus, the range of scales within which energy moves become evident, from mythologies, deep time geologies to the inner circuits of digital devices and further. Similarly, lithium batteries inside a mobile device have gone through several processes and scales of extraction, refinement, and manufacture.[19] Shipping and logistics accompany every transfer in scale. And, every scale is also associated with a specific set of geologies, landscapes, infrastructures, and temporalities. It is global and distributed. No doubt, when one considers lithium as part of an energy infrastructure, one is confronted with the topology of an infrastructure extended across multiple scales of spatial distribution and various states of invisibility and visibility. Perhaps this is what makes it hard to visualise. What we are left with are the popular imaginaries of multi-coloured fields, Gigafactories, endless batteries, and EMV commercials. The rest of it remains invisible.

18 Parikka, *A Geology of Media*.

19 Samir Bhowmik, 'The Battery is the Message: Media Archaeology as an Energy Art Practice', *Communication +1* 7, no. 2, 2019, pp. 1–27, https://doi.org/10.7275/jxt9-pc04.

IV. The Lithium Gaze

Were it not for their environmental implications, one could perhaps dismiss lithium imaginaries, or even marvel at their ingenuity. However, concealed behind these are global networks of mining, refining, fabrication, and shipping. Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler even situate lithium within the wider network of factors that enable Artificial Intelligence. In the Amazon AI assistant and others, irreplaceable lithium batteries power intelligent interactions. As a result, with every such interaction, "a vast matrix of capacities is invoked: interlaced chains of resource extraction, human labor and algorithmic processing across networks of mining, logistics, distribution, processing, prediction, and optimization."[20] Crawford and Joler argue the scale of this system is almost beyond human imagining.

The amount of energy and waste remains central to the analysis of lithium imaginaries. "Science for Environment Policy", a study by the European Union, suggests that lithium-ion batteries are the most fossil-fuel-intensive technologies in wide use today, consuming 1.6 kilograms of oil for each kilogram of batteries produced.[21] They also rank poorly in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, with up to 12.5 kilograms of carbon dioxide emitted per kilogram of batteries. What's more, after a thousand cycles, lithium batteries end up in the recycling station, awaiting either an expensive extraction process

20 Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler, 'Anatomy of an AI System: The Amazon Echo as an Anatomical Map of Human Labor, Data, and Planetary Resources', 2018, www.anatomyof.ai (accessed 5 4 2021).

21 European Union, 'Environmental Impacts of Batteries for Low Carbon Technologies Compared', *Science for Environment Policy* 303, 25 October 2012, https://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/research/newsalert/pdf/303na1_en.pdf (accessed 5 4 2021).

or a lifetime in a landfill.[22] Electric vehicles such as the Tesla Model 3 are supposed to last eight years or one hundred thousand miles, but eventually discard or recycle fifteen pounds of lithium.[23] On the other end of the lithium life cycle, recycling technologies remain generally underdeveloped. As such, re-extracting the prized mineral remains a vexing problem with no easy solution. As a result, most lithium batteries end up as e-waste in landfills or undergo hazardous informal recycling in the Global South.

From the satellite images of the USGS alone, one is unable to fathom the rapid environmental change of the Salar de Atacama. For this, we have to depend on field research and investigative reporting. These studies highlight the acute environmental and health hazards that attend lithium extraction. The lithium extraction zone in Chile has caused damage to water resources, farming, and local biodiversity. According to Thea Riofrancos, Indigenous communities like the Tocanao are already feeling the effects of extraction in their everyday lives.[24] These changes also threaten habitats for wild vegetation and animals. Biologists, for instance, have recorded a clear decline in the Andean flamingo population. Cubitt also discusses the extraction of lithium and its environmental consequences.[25] As he notes, not only is extraction energy-intensive, lithium refinement also consumes billions of gallons of freshwater, impacting the viability of local economies. Lithium extraction involves pumping brine at

22 A 100% discharge comprises a single cycle for a lithium battery. For many, a day of normal smartphone use equals one cycle. All lithium batteries have a finite number of cycles, usually one thousand, or roughly 2.5 years. After this point, the battery generally has to be replaced.

23 Jessica Shankleman, Tom Biesheuvel, Joe Ryan, and Dave Merrill, 'We're Going to Need More Lithium', *Bloomberg*, 7 September 2017, https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2017-lithium-battery-future/ (accessed 5 4 2021).

24 Riofrancos, 'What Green Costs'.

25 Cubitt, *Finite Media*, pp. 73–84.

the rate of seventeen hundred litres per second, ninety-five percent of which is then evaporated, thus radically lowering the water table, threatening drinking and irrigation supplies.[26]

This accelerated damage to the environment has no clear visual imaginary. In other words, the emerging landscapes of extraction and environmental damage are hard to comprehend, given that the visual culture of lithium is clouded in utopian dreams and abstractions of energy sufficiency. So, one fails to understand how such landscapes are being devastated. Cubitt notes how "in the first instance, the melancholy gaze on a polluted landscape mourns its failure to master it. In a second moment, however, the work of mourning collapses as the onlooker confronts the landscape as victim of that failure."[27] As we have seen, the imaginaries engendered by the lithium industry are presented as synonymous with growth, clean energy, and a movement away from reliance on fossil fuels. But on further analysis, these representations are largely immaterial and dimensionless, making the true scope and scale of lithium-based energy systems impossible to grasp.

To truly understand these messy realities, we have to go beyond abstract and whimsical depictions of lithium fields and Gigafactories. These imaginaries are not enough by themselves to perceive and even understand the political economy of lithium. We must examine the topology of energy generation and distribution, since it is "necessary to identify the ways in which the notion of extraction [as well as manufacturing, logistics and waste] provide[s] a means to map and join struggles that unfold in seemingly distant and unrelated landscapes."[28] Undoubtedly, we must also expand our examination

26 Riofrancos, 'What Green Costs'.

27 Cubitt, *Finite Media*, pp. 73–84.

28 Mezzadra and Neilson, 'Multiple Frontiers'.

of the visual cultures of energy and energy landscapes to discuss the full extent of lithium extraction, manufacturing, and waste. At the same time, we should gaze at lithium through the lens of deep time and develop representational methods adequate to its multi-scalar aspects. Those of us who live elsewhere must remember that we too are connected to the Salar de Atacama, to the volcanoes and the mythologies, through our pervasive digital culture.

Oneself is so difficult to see. ‘Mindscape’, 2022, is one of the psyche drawing projects. Graphite on paper 21x29 cm. © Nisrine Boukhari

Hidden Lands: The Mindscape as a Landscape

NISRINE BOUKHARI

"Behold me! I have neither city nor house nor possessions nor servants: the ground is my couch; I have no wife, no children, no shelter – nothing but earth and sky and one poor cloak. And what lack I yet? Am I not untouched by sorrow, by fear? Am I not free?"
Epictetus (Discourses 3.9.15)

Imperfection

The sky is perfectly blue, and the sun blurs the line of the horizon to let the blue immerse itself without a boundary between the sky and the sea, their hues blending in unity where they meet; it is almost as if there is no breeze to gently move the waves on the water's surface, deep and infinite. All was clear and beautiful as she had never seen it before and could never see it again, because it was a dream.

She has had eye floaters since she was a child; those stray cells inside the eyeball prevented her from seeing the perfect blue of the sky or staring for long at any clear surface or scenery. As a child, she thought that some strange creatures in her eyes had invaded her brain and allowed themselves to interfere with her sight, stopping her seeing things in front of her; she was even speaking to them in case

they were aliens that no one else had noticed, but they didn't answer and kept floating like clouds hiding the sky, they were invisible to all but her. She struggled to explain what she sees or understand why she sees it. She became obsessed with reclaiming her vision and looking at the landscape in front of her until she became aware that the eye floaters would not limit her experience of seeing the world but became a unique lens through which she viewed and appreciated the landscape differently. She learned to embrace her flawed vision, trying to find beauty in imperfections, creating a deeper and more meaningful connection with the world around her.

As clear as the landscape looks, as scary as it becomes with the straying cells wandering in her eyes between her vision and the scenery, there was something always in-between that won't let those naked eyes touch the horizon.

The older she gets, the more her eyes get invaded by thicker floaters that start to be a bit smoky, and the advice is always "don't look at a clean surface or the clear sky as you might get dizzy or stressed instead of getting relaxed".

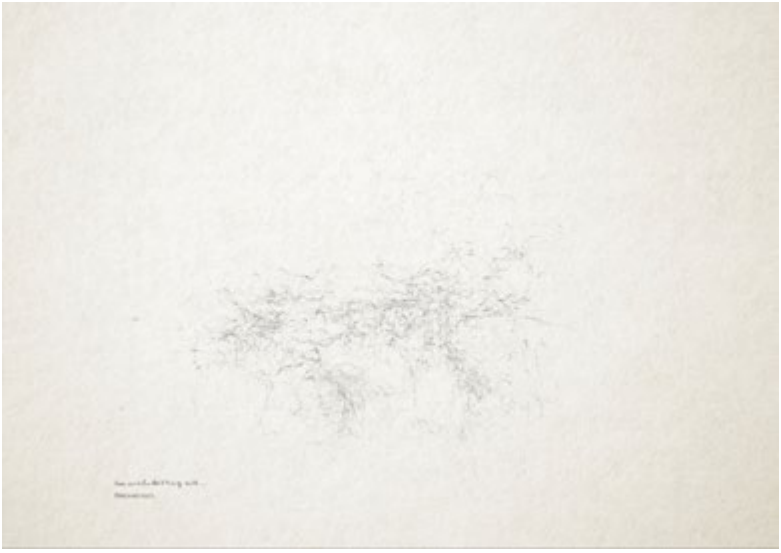
Walking like Nietzsche

Walking allows her to enjoy the landscape instead of sitting and staring at it, as putting one foot in front of the other and progressing towards the horizon lets her enjoy the scenery without concentrating on its lucidity. Something smoothly touches her heart instead of her eyes in the act of walking – which positively impacts one's physical and mental health and functions as an instrument for self-reflection and introspection. Walking for long hours let her leave everything behind, forgetting who she was, emancipating her. Identity is no longer significant when one becomes a pilgrim; a stranger to the land, the same land she can't see as clearly as others, with a landscape that changes after a few hours of walking.

Some people live with eye floaters all their life and aren't bothered by it so much, the brain gets used to this flaw and starts to ignore it because humans are good at adapting to any situation that might disable them; this is the art of survival and the love of life. Adaption, however, does not eliminate suffering, as in the case of a phantom limb that is still felt by an amputee. Her brain doesn't surrender easily to this, as she needs those eyes for her delicate artwork, which requires her to double the energy to get things done properly, especially while drawing.

Linguascape*

She was mesmerised by poems that brought nature into words, describing a poetic landscape that would let her imagine something



I am mind-drifting with...'Mindscape', 2022, is one of the psyche drawing projects. Graphite on paper 21x29 cm. © Nisrine Boukhari

different from what she saw through the combination of simple language and complex ideas that help to create a sense of ambiguity and paradox – the landscape she wanted to think about and dream of rather than look at. Words and texts created another world for her, instead of the landscape being a missed future she cannot see or instil herself into.

From William Wordsworth and the idea of the sublime, which refers to the awe-inspiring power and majesty of nature, to Wallace Stevens's rich and imaginative metaphors in his Kantian concept of how the mind creates its interpretation of reality, she saw the image of an inspirational landscape crafted in words.

An old man sits
In the shadow of a pine tree
In China.
He sees larkspur,
Blue and white,
At the edge of the shadow,
Move in the wind.
His beard moves in the wind.
The pine tree moves in the wind.
Thus water flows
Over weeds.
(Wallace Stevens, *Six Significant Landscapes*, I, line 1-11, 1916)

Her way of seeing allowed her to embed extreme clarity and ambiguity, simple words with complex connotations, and the minimalist monochromatic style with poetic and philosophical layers in the artwork, trying to discover a world that is happening already, with something wrong in it, against her will. She cannot fix it or flee, it is a state she has to accept and live with. What emerges is

a landscape somewhere between the real and the imaginary; she starts to question the authenticity of her vision, of what she sees, of the landscape in front of her and what it signifies regarding the relationship between the natural world and the imagination. It is as if there are two people in one, just as, in quoting Wallace Stevens, she is talking about the poetry and herself at the same time. The subjective doubling at work here also points towards the alienation that can be experienced alone, oneself, the way one's earlier selves can come to seem like states from which one has been exiled.

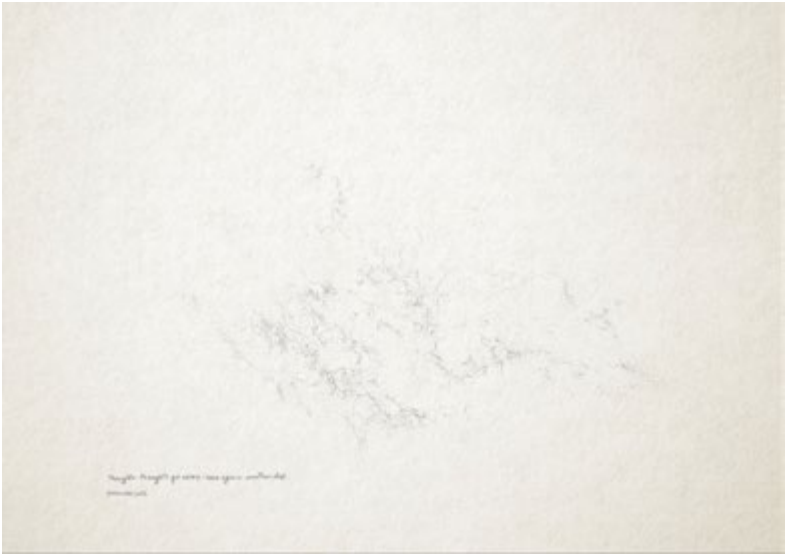
Mindscape**

The concept of landscape is more than just a representation of nature. We hear the word 'landscape' today in many fields, the political landscape, the social landscape, the psychological, the historical, and the scientific landscape.

We are keen on making a history of the landscape; as with anything else, people tend to discover who was the first to invent something. However, the landscape was not created by us; instead, it was the birth of the human gaze into it that revealed its/our secrets – the evolution of human consciousness to see new things or give meaning to something that already exists. Thus, the landscape was born by eyes and mind – the *Mind* is where she can gain a deeper understanding of the world around her and its generated images.

Nature can evoke a range of emotions, from feelings of peace and tranquillity to anxiety and stress; hence, the landscape profoundly impacts human psychology.

The landscape can affect our psychology through biophilia, the innate human attraction to nature. A beautiful landscape can induce feelings of wonder and admiration, which can have a soothing effect in helping to reduce stress and anxiety. Nature gives a sense of connection to something larger than oneself, which can help to promote



Thoughts, thoughts go away, come again another day. 'Mindscape', 2022, is one of the psyche drawing projects. Graphite on paper 21x29 cm.

a sense of meaning and purpose. On the other hand, a wrecked landscape can evoke feelings of sadness and dread, which can have a stressful effect that adds to a depressive and melancholic view of life and the future; like the experience of people traumatised by a destructive war in their countries, or by natural disasters.

Monologue

Breathing heavily! You must remember how to relax because it seems like a long road to arrive at another place, which is not your destination, don't fight change or resist it; go with the flow the same way the landscape is moving smoothly while looking from

the window of the car that is driving from 33.5138° N, 36.2765° E to 33.8938° N, 35.5018° E.

Make sounds come to your ears and become aware of them without naming or identifying them, and extend the landscape by the soundscape that follows. The others' conversation is still intelligible at 33.5138° N, 36.2765° E. A few hours later, words became like noise at 41.0082° N, 28.9784° E.

When looking from the window of a moving car, things are wiggling, and the landscape becomes blurry as if you can see time accelerating, nature becoming something else when moving from one land to another. Crossing borders, drawing the landscape in words, in reference to the memory of that person who was moving from one place to another, multiple times happening at once: the time outside the moving car, the time witnessed from the window, the present moment of the person, and the time she was fleeing.

Borders are human-made; lines that divide one person from another based on temporary necessities or pretexts that harm the harmonious being of nature, causing division and hindering any sense of unity and togetherness.

The scattered clouds, the different heights of mountains, and the colourful flowers – we don't know where they came from, but we enjoy and cherish their beauty and short lives, dissipating our grief. The nuances of green and brown from one place to another let you understand the changes and richness of nature. Everything is great the way it is; it doesn't need intervention to change the way it is, to organise the stars in the sky or to grow trees the same size and let the peaks of the mountains be the same heights. The human brain tends to understand patterns and saves energy instead of looking outside the organised pattern it gets used to; thus, humans want to apply the same limiting principle to nature, to make it linear, the same way we look at the urban landscape and we see ourselves living inside its boxes.

Nature teaches us tolerance, acceptance and understanding of its anarchy through the art of leaving it alone as the ultimate act of respect for its freedom to exist, and to stand as a mirror of human nature that is not left alone.

Nature is not sinful, but humans are, and we cannot apply all our values and behaviours to nature. We might eliminate the dangerous things that harm us and our very existence. However, we should not let our trauma make us paranoid and commit evil acts towards nature under the pretext of self-defence.

Spring comes without us ordering it or organising it. Man today thinks of fighting death or becoming immortal in the materialistic sense of the word. However, he cannot change the four seasons of the years or their succession, but man can superficially manipulate things for a while. Not forever. Spring comes each year of its own accord; no one is forcing it, and the heart beats by itself; we cannot stop it or order it to start again, but we can harm it spiritually and materially – here comes the idea of how to understand and take care of nature.

Along the way

It is 48.2082° N, 16.3738° E. “I am visiting” is what she tells anyone who asks her what she is doing here and if she intends to stay. “Well, I don’t,” she says, an incomplete answer. “I don’t stay, or I don’t want to stay, or I don’t know if I stay, or I don’t mind if I stay or not, or I don’t have the choice to stay or not to stay, or I don’t know where to go, or I don’t know how I ended up here; it is just ‘I don’t’ that carries them all”.

A dialogue between trees and migrating birds takes place temporarily before their next journey. The tree’s logic does not go with the bird’s logic, as they stay in one place all their lives, where they are rooted, unlike the birds. It makes no difference when everybody

sees you as one tree among thousands in the forest. While you're trying to look at the whole landscape, understand the community of the trees in this forest and let your mind take flight.

She is walking again and walking differently this time. The landscape has changed. The soundscape has changed – something she doesn't understand. Something is new to her. Her vision is getting more and more blurry. She cannot write long sentences like she could before; she needs to be brief and agile. "I am not escaping."

The luxury of writing long sentences and long texts is over now. Time is not on our side to expansively explain our actions and how we feel. The art of short sentences is sometimes condemned as a rhetorical way of speaking. On the contrary, she sees it as a more poetic parataxis to resist the tyranny of time, the language, the system, the state and herself.

In short sentences you are always on time and always ready. In short sentences you can leave at any moment without looking behind and leaving a mess in the text. Any part of the text is as valid as any other part. Wherever you start would mark a new beginning for a new life. Fragments are ruling the energy of the text and making sense of it, however you change their order. She needs to change her language landscape to express herself without fear. Therefore, she is drawing the linguascape of an exiled mind. The short sentences were a need, not a fantasy. They embody the energy the wandering mind has to reveal itself while connecting different threads. Writing fragments like these, for over a decade now, isn't just a way of understanding how ideas are generated in the mind through multiple, non-linear associations. It is also a way of leaving an escape route, a quick way out. If someone's life is in danger they can leave at any time without a sense of unfinishedness. The reading they make will always be valid, even if it will be difficult to interpret. Wherever you start reading will be your beginning, the text is both 'text' and

'life', both should be allowed to continue, to come and go, even when fragmented.

Mind-Wandering

The landscape picture has three parts; the foreground is the past, the middle ground is the present, and the background is the future on the horizon. Her landscapes come without foreground or background, without past or future, without identity – they float weightlessly in time and space that does not exist, a space as cytoplasm where the organelles are protected from damage and appear in the picture; another way to live and see the world in microscopic vision that comes from inside the brain and translates itself onto paper. This is the mindscape that happens through her mind-wandering state. The eye floaters are not affecting her anymore because she sees things from within, not dependent on her sight. She uses memories of fading images in her brain to remember and reconstruct the lost landscape, scratching the surface to engrave her dreams of an imaginary landscape.

It is 59.3293° N, 18.0686° E. It is cold here. She finds a dead pigeon in the lake that flows out into the sea during her daily walk. She takes a picture to commemorate the brave attempt to fly from one place to another for a warmth that was never found.

Without land, she walks along the river. On most days, the winds bring a waft from somewhere, urging her to continue walking, bathing her in light and covering her with clouds. She has no picture, and she is in no one's picture. She has no name and cannot call anyone by their name or remember the names of the places she has been to – a sudden amnesia that is happening repeatedly. Time is always in the present; there is no place to save memories; her landscape changes daily. The paradox of exile; does she exist at all or has she been rendered invisible, or both?

Home is a foreign land. 'Mindscape', 2022, is one of the psyche drawing projects. Graphite on paper 21x29 cm. © Nisrine Boukhari

She prefers seeing and drawing the landscape without a little man conquering it, as happened when the landscape was used politically to reflect power and shape public opinion, like in the legacy of colonial landscapes. Instead, she is cheering the pure beauty of the landscape free from humans and their tragedies – a place of dreams and yearning – as a last attempt to save it from being destroyed.

It is 33.5138° N, 36.2765° E. The landscape sits in decay; the tops of the trees loom from afar amidst the ruins. She didn't find a space to go to; all was gone. Her mind struggles to compensate for the missing picture with the images of fading memories. She cannot recall the images from the past and cannot imagine a future with an abundant landscape – a glitch in her vision. She runs to her desk to

draw what was there or what she saw, but her emotions prevent her from getting a clear picture that she wants to transfer; no colours, no apparent features, a landscape of disappearance and loss becoming a *psychological landscape* like a neural transfer of the breathing lines of thoughts inclined to connect deeply so as to reflect the emotional state at the time of the drawing. The landscape is a metaphoric picture of the mirage on the horizon in her mind.

*A linguistic landscape reflects the languages and varieties of language used in a particular place and the social and power relationships between different languages and language communities. But I coined the term *Linguascape* to use in reference to the idea of the mindscape in the context of mind-wandering, where it dwells as part of the conscious activities of the brain that generate a scenery through language/s in the intellectual geography of the mind and its social structure of a place. In other words, *Linguascape* is the language-based scenery that emerges from the mind's activities, and that is shaped by emotional, social and cultural factors.

** *Mindscape* refers to an individual's inner or mental landscape, including their thoughts, emotions, memories, and experiences. A concept is used as a new kind of landscape, representing the inner world of an individual to explore the imagination's realm and creating works that challenge our perceptions of reality.

Photons of Mars, a three channel film installation by Minna Långström (2019). Photo courtesy of the artist.

California Institute of Technology. Film still from *The Other Side of Mars* (2019) by Minna Långström, photography by Päivi Kettunen. Photo courtesy of napafilms Ltd.

Images of Mars and the Landscapes that Created Them

MINNA LÅNGSTRÖM

Minuscule grains of sand fill the air, colouring the peak of Mount Sharp in the distance in a dusty hue of orange. We're slowly moving forward on flat red rock formed from ancient lake-bed mud deposits. On each side of us, creating dark irregular profiles against the apricot sky, are steep mounds, eroded remnants of sandstone deposited by wind and migrating dunes. Smooth heaps of dust partly cover the ground beneath the rugged aluminium wheels. We stop to slowly let our focused gaze climb up the ridge with finely layered rocks just beside us.

Projecting Mars

Wide angle landscape views and 360 degree panoramas of Mars in ever larger resolution might create an illusion of having seen the planet with our own eyes, which we of course haven't, even from orbit, as planetary geologist Cynthia Phillips put it when I interviewed her for the documentary film *The Other Side of Mars* (2019).[1] All we have visually perceived of the surface comes from cameras attached to satellites, and robots photographing its terrain. However, it is not the remoteness itself that makes Mars an especially

1 *The Other Side of Mars* interview material, dir. Minna Långström, prod. Liisa Karpo, napafilms ltd, 2019.

appropriate subject of study in terms of our relationship to photography. There are plenty of places on Earth only accessible via cameras or other equipment, worlds yet unknown to us in the deep ocean trenches and within volcanoes, or on a microscopic level within living organisms. Our historical fascination with Mars, the most Earth-like planet in our solar system, can certainly compete with that of the Moon and with the centuries long colonialist thirst for new territories to explore and to exploit. Nevertheless, once most corners of the Earth were mapped out, during the first half of the previous century there was perhaps no other place to which as much hope and desire was being attached as Mars. The interest in life in the universe is a fundamentally human quality, and the idea that we might not be alone in the cosmos has created astonishing cultural, scientific and engineering feats. This enchantment, reflected in literature and art as well as in science, means that Mars is not a neutral, detached place of investigation. Instead we have always wanted something from it, and this yearning to find anything that could give us more knowledge about ourselves and the origin of life is still driving our interest in Mars. This desire has made us see things we have wanted to see in early photographs of the planet, and it still guides our orientation towards it. The fact that we project so much on to the planet makes us look at it in a certain way, and this in turn makes our relationship to 'Martian photography' differ from other subjects, since it reveals especially well how human bias influences observation.

Concepts often originate in landscapes and local places where ideas meet, even after the invention of the Internet. For another interview conducted as part of the film's background research I met with the French-American author and historian of science and economy Manu Saadia who has written about science fiction culture and its influence on technology and innovation. We met in the beautiful Gates and Crellin Chemistry Library at the California Institute of

Technology (Caltech) and discussed how culture and ideology influences scientific goals.[2] Saadia reflected on how early conceptions for a modern American Mars program were discussed at Los Alamos in the mountains of New Mexico in the post WW2 era by some of the same scientists who had worked on the Manhattan project there. Discussing the Fermi paradox, i.e. the likelihood of extraterrestrial life versus the lack of encounter, originating in a 1950 casual lunch conversation at the Los Alamos campus, Saadia noted that if we could prove that even unicellular life rose out of Mars (or perhaps more likely Jupiter's moon Europa) at some point, then, mathematically we would have to assume that life is everywhere in the universe. Discovering whether this is the case, as Saadia suggested, is the fundamental motivation behind many endeavours in planetary science. In the 1940s the atom bomb put humans in a new position of being capable of destruction on a planetary scale, while not much later we realised our lifestyle in itself constitutes a global environmental hazard. Becoming collectively aware of this over the past few decades might have helped reinforce our scientific as well as artistic interest in Mars, after it having been somewhat on hold for decades. The question of whether life on Earth is unique becomes more relevant in times of global crisis, and the Martian landscape especially, so seemingly Earth-like, pushes our imagination and thirst for new worlds and second chances.

Filming locations; the Jet Propulsion Laboratory

Rather than mainly fostering or critiquing this escapist desire for a new place, the documentary *The Other Side of Mars*, as well as the video installation version *Photons of Mars*, places our relationship to the photographs of Martian landscapes in the foreground. In both

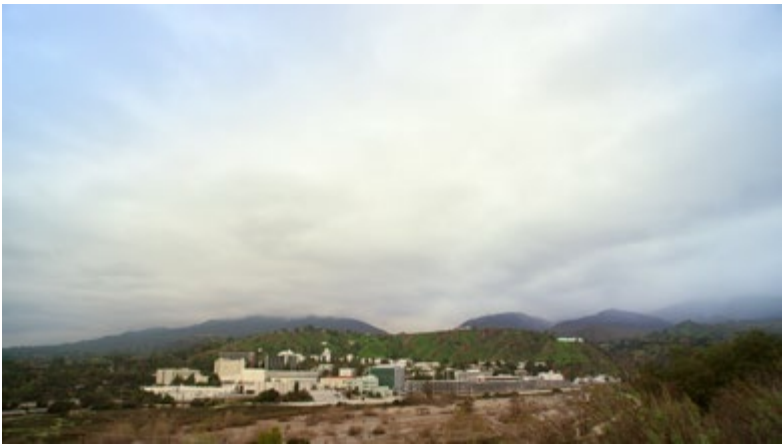
2 *The Other Side of Mars* interview material, napafilms ltd, 2019.

works the viewer is surrounded by the Martian landscapes, alternating with landscapes and facilities on earth where these photographs were produced.

The documentary was shot by cinematographer Päivi Kettunen at the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), the Mount Wilson and Stony Ridge Observatories in the San Gabriel Mountains, as well as in the river valley adjacent to JPL, at the Caltech Campus, and at the Carnegie Observatory's library in Pasadena. Aside from Pasadena we also filmed at the Malin Space Science Center in San Diego where some of the cameras used on several of NASA's spacecraft are designed and manufactured. Filming outside during the month of March granted us the green lushness of the Southern Californian spring when even drought-ridden forests recently affected by wildfires started to sprout new ground vegetation.

The Jet Propulsion Laboratory is located in Pasadena in the North West of Los Angeles, on the edge of the Mojave desert. From the first photograph of the Martian surface taken from space slowly being printed out at JPL, based on the code sent down from the Mariner 4 orbiter in 1965, to the most recent pictures received from the satellites and rovers on Mars via the international satellite system Deep Space Network, JPL has been at the epicentre of interplanetary photography. It is here that various spacecraft, including those of the Mars programmes, are being put together and with them the corresponding camera systems. From here the rovers on Mars are being navigated and manoeuvred, and commands are sent to the numerous cameras and other instruments operating on the planet.

As author, curator and artist Ewen Chardronnet has thoroughly investigated in his book *Mojave Epiphane*, the prodigious, experimental and unconventional early history of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory is one of the results of the melting pot culture that distinguished Los Angeles, as well as San Francisco, in the 40s, 50s and



NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena. Film still from *The Other Side of Mars* (2019) by Minna Långström, photography by Päivi Kettunen. Photo courtesy of napafilms Ltd

The Mars Yard at JPL. Film still from *The Other Side of Mars* (2019) by Minna Långström, photography by Päivi Kettunen. Photo courtesy of napafilms Ltd

60s.[3] After World War II some of the most extraordinary minds in engineering, science and avant-garde art had relocated here from all around the world and contributed to the merging of ideas.

When location scouting for the film I looked for some examples of places close to the Jet Propulsion laboratory where work and meetings took place, shaping and informing our interest in and endeavours on Mars. Not surprisingly, for the aforementioned reasons, possible themes and relevant filming locations for the documentary presented themselves in abundance. Paradoxically, another question was whether we could afford the expensive filming permissions around the film city. At the Ramo Auditorium, just around the corner from the library where the conversation with Saadia took place, a public discussion titled 'Mars and the Mind of Man' was held in 1971 between planetary scientist Carl Sagan, planetary scientist and the future director of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory Bruce Murray as well as science fiction writers Arthur C. Clarke and Ray Bradbury. The symposium was held in the aftermath of the first disappointing photographs of Mars by the Mariner spacecrafts in terms of exposing a planet not as conducive to life as imagined. The panellists considered our motivations for further studying Mars after this visual piece of evidence of a dead planet, at least dead as far as most of us were concerned. This was at the height of the Cold War and some of the most engaging parts of the conversation revolved around international peaceful scientific collaboration and the non-utilitarian practice of science for science's sake.

The emphasis in the *Photons of Mars* installation is on simply being present in the chosen filmed locations, reflecting on the work taking place there. In addition to visiting observatories and other

3 Ewen Chardronnet, *Mojave Epiphanie, Une Histoire Secrète du Programme Spatial Américain*, dernière marge, 2016.

environments of historical significance to Mars research, we witness some of the current work behind the images of Mars that JPL produces, while lingering in the same environment with NASA roboticists and rover drivers as well as personnel at Malin Space Science Systems. Both the film and the installation aim to express visually what sociologist of science Janet Vertesi verbalises in the film:

"*Seeing takes work. Seeing requires context, and seeing requires interpretation. There's no such thing as just seeing.*"[4]

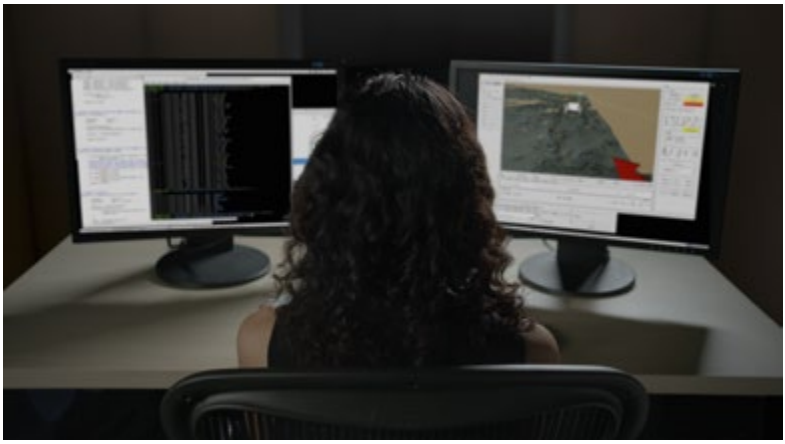
The observatories of the San Gabriel Mountains

Just next to JPL the San Gabriel Mountain chain starts, where the two observatories seen in the film are located. Juxtaposing the forest-clad landscapes of these mountains with the barren Martian vistas, the film aims to enhance the experience of our own planetary existence.

During the 1800s, aside from the occasional explorer, the San Gabriel mountain range above Pasadena attracted little attention. John Muir, famous for his role in establishing nature reserves in the US, climbing to a point near the current location of the Mount Wilson Observatory, described the mountains as "more rigidly inaccessible than any other I ever attempted to penetrate."[5] The conditions there were, however, favourable for astronomical observation and the observatory founded there in 1904 by George Hellery Hale soon became the centre of the western astronomical world. The Carnegie steel constructions constituting the observatories themselves have borne witness to important scientific work by astronomers such as Edward Hubble, who remained on staff there until his

4 *The Other Side of Mars* interview material, napafilms ltd, 2019 / Janet Vertesi, *Seeing Like a Rover*, The University of Chicago Press, 2015.

5 Mike Simmons, 'Bringing Astronomy to an Isolated Mountaintop', Mount Wilson Observatory Website



Film still from *The Other Side of Mars* (2019) by Minna Långström, photography by Päivi Kettunen. Photo courtesy of napafilms Ltd

Mount Wilson Observatory. Film still from *The Other Side of Mars* (2019) by Minna Långström, photography by Päivi Kettunen. Photo courtesy of napafilms Ltd

death in 1953. The list of prominent astronomers at Mt Wilson is long, however until the very last decades of the 20th century mostly consisted of white male astronomers. When observatories slowly started opening up for the rest of humanity, because of changes in the law, it didn't immediately happen on an equal basis. Women were initially given living quarters without basic facilities and were not allowed into all spaces, such as the canteen or social area where staff would gather and exchange ideas and experiences. As astronomer and astrophysicist Vera Rubin notes in her 1981 letter to astronomer Margaret Burbage, not until 1979 was a woman named a Mount Wilson Carnegie Fellow, and up until 1970 there were no National Science Foundation grants at all given to women to work at these telescopes.[6]

It was the research on historical Mars-related telescopic and spectroscopic observation that took our filming team to the Mt Wilson observatory during a foggy early spring day with snow still on the ground. Here, in 1964, the most detailed spectrographic plate of Mars produced up to that point was made, proving for the first time that the Martian atmosphere could not possibly maintain life on its surface. Zooming in on the equipment with which the plate was produced, the film compares this exhaustive spectroscopic study with the first photographs sent back from the Mariner 4 Spacecraft to the Jet Propulsion Laboratory only one year later in 1965. It considers how the photographs were perceived by the public as the definite confirmation of a dead planet despite the much more substantial and reliable – however not very visual – evidence of the spectroscopic study. As media theorist Grant Wythoff puts it in the film, "there's something about the graphical representation of data that is not anywhere near as immersive as a particular narrative or

6 Vera C. Rubin, 27 Feb. 1981, *Science*, Vol. 211, pp. 915-6.

a particular photographic image."[7] Fictional depictions of Mars further add to our collective imaginary perception of the planet just as 50s pulp fiction covers, as well as more recent vistas from the Wadi Rum desert in Jordan, where some cinematic depictions of Mars were shot, still contribute to our collective perception of the planet.

Seeing the landscape for what it is

From being a global picture in the first coin-sized blurry photographs taken through a telescope in the early days of photography, the image of Mars in our minds' eyes has evolved into a panoramic landscape taken by a vehicle on the Martian ground. The shift from a global image of Mars to the situated view of the terrain taken from the ground took place in July 1976 when the Viking 1 lander sent back the first picture of a red rocky desert. Making a film about photographs of Mars today necessarily entails the notion of panoramic landscape, whereas the first image that perhaps once came to mind was the global image of Mars, as seen in the drawings of early observers. As Wythoff remarks, it is interesting to investigate how astronomers at the time approached the transition from astronomical drawing to photography. Photographs taken by E.E. Barnard and others at the Mount Wilson observatory in 1909 were used by popular astronomers such as Percival Lowell to support theories of Martian canals built by a civilization.[8] When lecturing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Lowell displayed photographs with their corresponding drawings, explaining how to interpret the photographs to

7 Grant Wythoff, *The Other Side of Mars* interview material, napafilms ltd, 2019.

8 SAO/NASA Astrophysics Data System (ADS), Mars, Photographs of, Drawings from Prof. Barnard's photographs, Antoniadi, E. M., *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*, Vol. 71, p. 714.

support his telescopic observations. The same images were, however, used by other astronomers to prove opposite views.[9]

When considering the search for life in the universe, with the help of extraterrestrial landscape photographs, we concurrently encounter the question whether we as humans are capable of stepping outside ourselves and imagining realities other than those we have encountered on Earth. Can we approach an alien landscape as it is, or do we always, as Wittgenstein puts it, see it *as* something?[10] As the uninhabited place we're colonising? As the new world to be explored? As a scientific problem to be solved? As an escape to a Utopian new place where we can start again? As a resource to be extracted and exploited? As a banal demonstration of muscle? Or as something in itself to be approached with sensitivity and a scientist's open mind?

Artist and author Timo Menke, in the Swedish photography magazine *Verk*'s January 2023 issue with the theme of 'Now-Eternity', writes: "According to the perplexing paradox of quantum physics, even the universe's most elementary particles as well as their position, direction or speed cannot be definitively established. The observer's attention affects the outcome in each measurement".[11] Karen Barad has described this as an understanding of the world and man as something in the making, something fundamentally performative. Perhaps we can discern 'eternity' as something we are involved in as a process, just like other matter and energy – as something that we do and become, together with the universe?"

9 William Sheehan, *Planets and Perception*, The University of Arizona Press, 1988, pp. 233-234.

10 Janet Vertesi, film interview, *The Other Side of Mars*, napafilms ltd, 2019; Janet Vertesi, Seeing Like a Rover, Chicago University Press, 2015, pp. 78-79.

11 Timo Menke, Verk (my own translation from the Swedish), January 2023 https://www.verktidskrift.se/

In his anthology *Landscapes and Film*, cinema scholar Martin Lefebvre writes that 'landscape' is a relatively new word in the English lexicon, appearing only during the 17th century.[12] He refers to philosopher of art and author Anne Cauquelin, who in her essay 'The Invention of Landscape' differentiates between landscape and setting, the former involving a real perception of the landscape as such, and the latter using the environment solely as a backdrop for the characters and events in the foreground. When landscape is used merely as a setting the content gives meaning to the place, which in itself is secondary and one-dimensional, only serving the story. In classical time, as Cauquelin argues, the notion of landscape (as opposed to setting) was not present in art and drama. The places where stories unfolded were only present if they explained or furthered narrative events and only relatively recently have landscapes been approached autonomously in art. However, most commercial films that more or less follow a three-act dramatic structure approach the landscape as a setting, frequently introducing the location where events will take place during the introductory sequence, after which the camera lingers no longer on a location than needed for the viewer's thoughts to be guided in the right direction.

In contrast to this, the structure of art-house and art film is generally more open and suggestively relies on the viewer's reflective gaze to investigate the milieus in the film, and thus elements of the landscape itself may appear in relief. While still a setting for the perspective of whoever looks at it, the landscape in a film installation – especially one with several perspectives or video channels – often becomes a place that we can start to see as something as such *precisely by* considering multiple perspectives of it; who or what

12 Martin Lefebvre, 'Between setting and landscape in the cinema', in *Landscape and Film*, Taylor & Francis, 2006.

inhabits the landscape, what is its history and current use? What is the angle? Who takes the photograph? How true is it? What's missing, hidden or revealed? What is the scale? How detailed or complex is it? How was the landscape picture taken? What had to be designed, manufactured and done for the picture to exist? What culture created the (image of the) landscape? Does it aim for objectivity or emphasise a certain perspective?

The place from which we look

The interviews presented in the film *The Other Side of Mars* provide multiple and profoundly diverse approaches to the very same landscape photographs of Mars. Each viewpoint could have been a film in itself and many perspectives were excluded – or merely visually alluded to – due to the obvious limitations of a one hour film. The spectral, multi-angle structure was nevertheless the best device this particular documentary had in its aim to investigate the epistemology of Mars imagery and through it our relationship to photography in general.

In her essay 'Orientations Matter' Sara Ahmed discusses the notion of our perspective or orientation towards the world critiquing the phenomenological work of Edmund Husserl.[13] In her text she recreates Husserl's writing desk and through a particularly visual thought experiment shows how our familiarity with a context makes us assume things about it we in fact can't see because of our position or orientation towards it. If we are stationed at a writing desk for example, how much do we assume and how much do we actually see of the desk, what is its shape, what does it block from our view?

13 Sara Ahmed, 'Orientations Matter', *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (eds.), Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 234-357.

Dr. Vandana Verma. Film still from *The Other Side of Mars* (2019) by Minna Långström, photography by Päivi Kettunen. Photo courtesy of napafilms Ltd

Film still from *The Other Side of Mars* (2019) by Minna Långström. Image courtesy of napafilms Ltd

If we were to erase all our memories of this metaphorical table (as well as all other tables) and its surroundings, only having the present to refer to, from only this one angle, seated in front of this one table, how would we describe what we see?

Ahmed writes:

Each new impression is connected with what has gone before, in the very form of an active re-collection. Significantly, the object becomes an object of perception only given this work of recollection, such that the "new" exists in relation to what is already gathered by consciousness: each impression is linked to the other, so that the object becomes more than the profile that is available in any moment. Given this, the sameness of the object involves the spectre of absence and nonpresence. I do not see it as itself. I cannot view the table from all points of view at once.

The orientation towards something implies the position from which something is being viewed. At the end of the film its main protagonist Dr. Vandana Verma, who as a NASA Mars rover driver looks at close-up images of the Martian terrain on a daily basis, drives up the San Gabriel mountains to observe Mars through a telescope at the small Stony Ridge observatory used by astronomers and space enthusiasts alike.[14] On the way, while driving the four wheel driven vehicle borrowed for the occasion on increasingly impossible steep mountain paths, she tells us how after a longer rover driving shift, moving around in nature on earth feels utterly effortless:

"It's true that when you work on Mars, you're limited to this point of view you have, you cannot just turn your head around and fill in that

14 Film interview with Dr. Vandana Verma, Chief Engineer for Robotic Operations for the Mars 2020 Perseverance rover, and the Assistant Section Manager for Mobility and Robotics Systems at NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory. *The Other Side of Mars*, napafilms ltd, 2019.

missing gap. If it's not there it's data that's missing. So when you do move around in your daily life you become more aware of the visual freedom we have, the perspective we can get so easily."

While in reality we constantly assume things about the world we inhabit, we often have the opportunity to view things from several positions. On Mars, looking at a landscape – or even objects in it – from every angle, would be a lengthy task for the rover drivers. When Verma sits at her desk at JPL navigating a rover via the visual tools on her computer, she looks at the terrain from the point of view of the rover. Similarly as she uses a 3D virtual environment based on photographs the rover took, the landscape only looks complete when standing at the exact location from which the photographs were taken. If moving only slightly to the side, the 3D map starts revealing significant holes in its texture map. Although we have thousands of panoramic photographs of Mars by now, they are still two dimensional images that only partially cover the terrain. When used as a photogrammetric map for navigation, their shortcomings – what they leave out become apparent.

Ahmed's text matters to the film not only as part of the background research, as it is included in the film itself so as to underline that even when we look at Mars through technology we are looking at it from our own position, and in order to achieve a more complete picture we need multiple perspectives. As if through a Holodeck-simulation, the film re-enacts Husserl's desk, and lets the viewer rotate slowly around it. Later we rotate around Verma's desk as she looks at the Martian landscape in the role of a rover driver. This idea of understanding a landscape from one's physical and metaphorical orientation is further echoed in several parts of Verma's interview as she reflects over her decades-long remote experience of the Martian terrain. Despite its many angles, without Verma's perspective, this

film would not have been made. It matters that it is *her* looking at the landscape of Mars. Without knowing the history of astronomy, space and Mars exploration we cannot know why that matters.

Perhaps there are no other people in the world – at this moment in time – with such complete and vast knowledge of the landscape of Mars than those whose work it is to navigate the rovers on the planet. Theirs is an understanding of the location as a continuous expanse, formed from the combined sense of time and space spent on Mars via robotic camera-eyes and other extended senses. This perception of the Martian landscape remains to some extent the internal, non-transferable knowledge of those few people navigating these vehicles. While we might be able to photograph thousands of galaxies in the same photograph, this internal understanding of the Martian landscape is something we will never be able to turn into an image.[15]

15 Marc Kaufman, 'Astrobiology at NASA', *Life in the Universe* (blog), August 2018 https://astrobiology.nasa.gov/news/15000-galaxies-in-one-image/

A PLACE DISAPPEARING

In the summer of 2018 we are standing together, cooling ourselves in the lake that forms a borderland between the mine area and the village. We stand there in the water with our feet on the old lake bed. Amidst the faint smell of forest fires, the next day's excursion is planned. It will be to the forest where we are to document paths and test drilling holes. We realise that we have to set off early, because this summer the sunlight is so unfathomably strong and when the sun is at its highest around midday it will be too hot. We stand there in the lake with the large mine in clear view, smelling smoke in the parched landscape, on the edge of something huge and frightening, but we turn our gaze away and decide to stay exactly where we are. We will take as our starting point this specific mine and the surrounding landscape. This will be our projection area.
We are outside Aitik, Sweden's biggest open-pit copper mine. Since 2016 we have been meeting every summer in Katarina and Lars Åke's little cottage above Lake Sakajärvi and the village road. From here we follow the expansion of the mine and the dismantling of the surrounding villages.

Over the generations, people tending pastures and land have slowly created paths and memories here, together with the old forests standing for æons of nature's own time. Here we also have the mine, whose own metabolism means constantly ongoing growth, continuous expansion at a rate that leaves no time for reflection. That which was once seen as eternal is quickly becoming a scarred memory. Soon, these forests and paths will no longer be here and we wonder where memory can take root when all fixed points are gone.

Anja Örn, Fanny Carinasdotter and Tomas Örn (Norrakollektivet)

Biographies

Samir Bhowmik is a Helsinki-based multi-disciplinary artist, architect, and scholar. He is an Academy of Finland Research Fellow at the University of the Arts Helsinki, where he teaches and explores extractivism and ecology through film, installation, and performance. His current research project *Terra-Performing* (2022–27) examines extractivism and environmental change through intelligent performance research. Bhowmik received a Doctor of Arts (2016) from Aalto University, Finland, and a Master of Architecture (2003) from the University of Maryland, United States. His collaborative artistic works and writings have appeared in *Leonardo* (MIT Press), Helsinki Biennial 2021, and the Venice Architecture Biennale 2021.

Nisrine Boukhari is an artist-theorist living between Vienna and Stockholm. She employs language to invoke a distinctive mind's energy, exploring new territories of imagination and engaging the body and mind in immersive poetic experiences. Her approach involves conceptual writing, fragmentation, and deconstructed narratives. Boukhari's artistic journey extends beyond conventional language usage, delving into traumatised memory and the instantaneity of self-generated thoughts. Since 2012 she has focused on State of Mind-Wandering, investigating trauma's impact on the psyche and utilising artistic practice in a therapeutic trajectory. She coined Wanderism as a State of Mind that aims to destigmatise mental health issues and draw inspiration from philosophy of mind. With a Sculpture degree from Damascus University and an M.A. in Social Design from Angewandte Kunst Wien, Boukhari is currently a Ph.D candidate in the Artistic Research Ph.D department at the

University of Applied Arts Vienna. Her research is complemented by artist/research residencies at Iaspis in Sweden, Serlachius Museum in Finland, Trapholt Museum in Denmark, MAWA art residency in Winnipeg, Canada, NKDALE art centre in Norway, and Art Omi in NYC and many others. Her work has been exhibited globally. In 2019, she was named 'Artist of the Year' by the Swedish Art Association for her project *Landscapes of Uncertain Times*. In 2005 Boukhari co-founded AllArtNow, an independent contemporary art organisation in Damascus.

Christopher P. Heuer is a historian of early modern art. His teaching and research engage the theories, ecologies, materialisms, and politics of cultural experience from AD 1400 to the present. His most recent book, *Into the White* (Zone/Princeton UP, 2019) was named one of the 'Top 5 Books' written on Northern Renaissance Art. In 2022 Heuer was a Scandinavian-American Fellow at Gothenburg University, and before that (2019), Harvard University's Bernard Berenson Fellow at I Tatti in Florence. A Fulbright scholar, Heuer trained at Berkeley, Leiden, Columbia, and Princeton. His writing has appeared in *Art History*, *October*, *Grey Room*, *Lapham's Quarterly*, *Kunstschrift, Artforum*, *The Burlington Magazine*, *Oxford Art Journal*, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Word & Image*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, and – for some reason – *The Wall Street Journal*. Heuer has received awards from CASVA, the Kress, the Getty, the DAAD, the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung, and others. Thanks to dear comrades, he remains a founding member of the international collective *Our Literal Speed*. Heuer's newest book is about early modern underworlds.

Suzanne Hudson is Professor of Art History and Fine Arts at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, where she was

recently a Faculty Fellow in the Society of Fellows. An art historian and critic, she writes with special emphasis on the history, theory, and conventions of painting and process. She is also a regular contributor to *Artforum* and has written numerous essays for international exhibition catalogues and artist monographs. Recent books include *Agnes Martin: Night Sea* (Afterall/MIT, 2017) and *Contemporary Painting* (Thames & Hudson, 2021).

Hanna Johansson is an art historian and adjunct professor at the University of Helsinki, where she is the dean of the Academy of Fine Arts. She is also a professor of contemporary art research at the Academy of Fine Arts, and was previously a Praxis professor as well as an Academy of Finland postdoctoral researcher. Johansson has also worked as a researcher at the University of Helsinki and at the Finnish National Gallery. Contemporary art and its ecological dimensions as well as theoretical conceptualisation are her core area of expertise. Recently she has written mostly on the representation of climate and air as well as about the representation of weather in the history of art. She has published widely on contemporary art and artists in Finland and beyond.

Minna Långström is a film director and media artist from Helsinki. In her films and moving image installations she focuses on social aspects of visual technology, cinematically mediated narratives and representation in art and science. Working with documentary as well as fiction and experimental formats, her films have been screened at festivals such as Jihlava IDFF, PariScience and Helsinki International Film festival. She has exhibited at Frankfurter Kunstverein, Kiasma and Charlottenborg's spring exhibition, among others.

Susan M. Merriam is Associate Professor of Art History and Visual Cultural and Co-director of the Center for Experimental Humanities at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson New York. Her research areas include early modern representations of the natural world, historic preservation, and experimental pedagogy.

Anja Örn, Fanny Carinasdotter and Tomas Örn have been collaborating since 2016 under the name **Norrakollektivet** (The Northern Collective). So far, they have concentrated their joint work on projects dealing with the Aitik mine outside Gällivare. The mine and its surrounding landscape have become a projection surface for them to investigate, understand and shed light on mineral extraction and its consequences for man and nature. Norrakollektivet has exhibited nationally and internationally, including at Havremagasinet in Boden, Konstmuseet i Norr, Kiruna; ArkDes, Stockholm; Sune Jonsson's Center for Documentary Photography, Umeå; Moderna museet, Stockholm; Art Gallery Trondheim; The Public Art Agency Sweden's exhibition *Extracts from a Future History*, Luleå. The group is represented in the collections of Moderna museet, The Public Art Agency Sweden, Region Västerbotten and Umeå Municipality.

Sigrid Sandström is an artist and Professor of Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts/University of the Arts Helsinki. Sandström is the recipient of numerous awards including the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, a Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant, and an Artadia Award. Her work has been exhibited extensively at art institutions nationally and internationally. She is the editor of *Material Matters: Painting and Its Materialities* (Art & Theory Publishing & Royal Institute of Art, 2020), and the co-editor of *Ignorance – Between Knowing and Not Knowing* (Axl Books, 2015); *Studio Talks:*

Thinking Through Painting (Arvinius + Orfeus Publishing, 2014) *Grey Hope: the persistence of melancholy* (Atopia Projects, 2006).

Riikka Stewen is an art historian, writer and occasional critic living in Helsinki. In her research she is fascinated by histoire à longue durée, and by the power of stories and images to persist through time. Her most recent work focusses on aesthetics as a materialist-spiritualist practice, based on the idea of universal creaturely solidarity. She teaches art history and theory at the Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Helsinki.

Minna Törmä is Senior Lecturer in History of Art at the University of Glasgow and Adjunct Professor of Art History at the University of Helsinki. She has published widely on landscape studies and the history of collecting, including *Landscape Experience as Visual Narrative: Northern Song Dynasty Landscape Handscrolls in the Li Cheng – Yan Wengui Tradition* (2002), *Enchanted by Lohans: Osvald Sirén's Journey into Chinese Art* (2013) and *Nordic Private Collections of Chinese Objects* (2020). Her current research focuses on East Asian elements in the gardens of the National Trust for Scotland.

Landscape Revisited
Ten Conjunctions of Art and Landscape
Writings from the Academy of Fine Arts (10)

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Landscape Revisited draws its material from the *Landscape Today* symposium, which took place in October 2021 at The Academy of Art / Uniarts Helsinki. The book takes the format of a reader, providing material that explores how our relation to and understanding of 'landscape' have shifted over time. What are the most urgent issues that landscape confronts now, and how do these issues connect and position themselves in relation to earlier moments in art history? Landscape as an artistic practice has consistently been used as a formula or model for various ideologies. Our understanding of landscape, and the meanings we project onto it, are in continuous flux, changing with the ideas of the moment. The 'raw material' of landscape art, the world itself (both terrestrial and atmospheric) is also in flux. How has landscape adapted beyond wonder at the 'natural world', becoming the witness for changes brought about by human actions? *Landscape Revisited* presents ten 'conjunctions of art and landscape' that approach these questions from across the spectrum of contemporary criticism and practice.

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