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Viewing, weaving,

Phenomenological Spectatorship and Performing Landscape

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This thesis project examines the notion of landscape as an (art) historical, phenomenological and, as I hope to argue, performative concept. It discusses the different, often contradictory openings "landscape" holds, starting from the history of aesthetics, landscape painting and the "bourgeois-ification" (Cauquelin 2004) of the gaze. Landscape is a disciplined, framed entity suggesting a way of looking at the world through lines, cut-outs and photographic devices. On the other hand, it is a spread-out field of sensibilities and affect, used as metaphor for heterogenous yet correlational world without the usual focal point of human body or narrative.

I suggest that landscape works on aesthetic, ethical and political levels. It is concretely shaped through and by forces both within and beyond our comprehension – since industrialization, forestry, transportation, extractivism and climate change, directly resulting from the former, have left their marks on the landscape. In this work, the focus is on one specific means of transportation, the train. Also known as the first industrial object, the train has worked as a force that pierces through the landscape violently and organizes the world according to straight lines. At the same time, it has assembled our perception anew with its cinematic and panoramic treatise of nature. My converging companion in this text is the artistic part of my thesis project, *On-Time Performance*, a performance installation that unfolded during a single express train journey from Helsinki to Kuopio in September 2025.

Yet the train does not represent an absolute evil; rather it is an ambiguous means of looking, on one hand forcing the landscape into a strict frame and on the other, letting it perform through the windows and thus become and almost active agent. I approach the landscape as a performance in this specific setting from a phenomenological angle, drawing mostly from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of *chiasm*, an intertwining without complete submerging. I suggest this is what happens in allowing the passing landscape turn into a performance, and that this can lead to looking *with* and *according to*, rather than at; becoming empathetic of the landscape and our surrounding while remaining at a critical distance that allows us to interpret landscape as a performed – as in politically and socially constructed – phenomena.

KEYWORDS

landscape, phenomenology, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, industrialization, trains, panorama, framing, performance, chiasm, intertwining, landscape dramaturgy

Sisällys

1 Introduction: Transforming the Landscape

This artistic research project examines the notion of landscape as an (art) historical, phenomenological and, as I hope to argue, performative – both in its positive, neutral and potentially negative meanings – concept. It discusses the different, often contradictory openings this concept holds: starting from the history of aesthetics, landscape painting and the "bourgeois-ification" (Cauquelin 2004) of our gaze it initiated. We move on to the as a phenomeno, as something that is always an object of experience (something that happens between the one who watches and the one being watched), then to its underlying political meanings (forces that have shaped it from early industrialization to present day loggings, extractivism and urban city planning) and finally to deconstructive and/or non- or post-representational tendencies to see it as a holistic entity with its own agency and its own performative way of being and "looking at us". Through these notions the project discusses the possibilities of site-specific or site-sensitive performance especially related to the question of movement and gazing into a landscape in motion, as in my own artistic thesis project; how to relate to a space when its presence is constantly unfolding in movement from one place to another, e.g. watching it from a train window? What is the connection between the bourgeois gaze of the industrial subject, landscape and performance?

My theoretical framework and methods draw mostly from phenomenology, through which I will examine and attempt to express the experience of landscape and what, in the end, becomes essential to it. These questions lead me to wonder how performance, especially when explicitly focused on relating to and intentionally sensing the environment visually, sonically and kinetically, can alter or disrupt that experience in the direction of being more aware and critically conscious of one's own everyday landscape and the forces that have shaped it. In addition to approaching these questions from the field of (post)phenomenological aesthetics (focusing on French philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Luc Nancy), I discuss historical developments in arts and aesthetics; and to bring it all back to performance, the concept of landscape dramaturgy as an overarching present tendency to make sense of different, more-than-human and post-narrative spatialities and temporalities present in performing arts today. Ana Vujanovic has described the current notion of landscape dramaturgy: "Over recent decades dramaturgical thought [has] 'spaced out' and moved from a depth of logocentrism over inter-textual plateaus to a surface of environment" (Vujanovic 2018, 1) and become "visual and auditive stimuli spread out in

slow and long-lasting moves" (ibid. 2017, 2). To demonstrate this, I will draw examples from performance and multidisciplinary art, including but not limiting to the artistic component of my master's thesis, *On-Time Performance* (2025). I will describe the works' (assumed) goals and entry points to analyse if and in what ways these examples partake in what I call landscape-oriented performance.

1.1 Landscape from backdrops to surroundings

The notion of landscape carries many meanings and takes on various positions. Often it is associated with a reproduction, an image – a flat surface with a steady and often square framing, something that presupposes a certain distance and disengagement. Metaphorically the term is used to describe inner, cultural and historical "worlds", which is, interestingly enough, already in contrast to the idea of a landscape as a flat, two-dimensional surface of a painting. In everyday thought, landscape falls somewhere in between those two – like an image before the spectator, but with rounded-out, slightly concave edges that dissolve somewhere into the surroundings. I imagine it is, in essence, like looking through a *claude glass* that makes everything look like a hazy recollection of a childhood memory, a tool painters and tourists alike used during the era of picturesque aesthetics to capture the landscape in its "ideal" form. You become vaguely aware of your connection with the picture, but it does not quite grasp you. It stays within a safety distance.

1.2 Landscape or space? The question of chiasmatic interaction versus the image

The relationship between a place, space and landscape; the distinguishing between the three-dimensional space you immediately and inseparably interact with, and the landscape as a background that stays in the distance, captivates my thoughts in performances that have an explicit relation to the space they take place in. Where does the space of the performance begin and end, especially if it is happening outside and/or in a public place – and/or moving from one place to another?

Site-sensitive performance often focuses on immediate interaction, more-than-visual perception and working directly from and with the space, on its conditions. In many ways it is either – depending on the point of view – a predecessor or a synonym for landscape theatre, which originally evolved in context of the traditional stage, framed in a way comparable to a painting. Our interconnectedness with the world around us is emphasized

and demonstrated in different acts. Site-sensitive performances and practices often (but not always) call for equalizing view of the space, of sensing its components as parts of heterogenous spreading field of affects and compounds equally as important or un-important. They often turn down reject the presupposed distance between spectators and the performance, and emphasise interconnectedness, the space's own suggestive qualities and the importance of active participation.

Another possible interpretation emphasises that the presupposed distance is precisely what allows chiasmatic interaction, a notion developed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his late philosophy – an entanglement without complete merging, intertwining without assimilation. *Chiasm*, and the closely related *flesh* are concepts of certain obscurity, but a famous passage from Merleau-Ponty's essay helps dive into them: "It is as though our vision were formed in the heart of the visible, or as though there were between it and us an intimacy as close as between the sea and the strand. And yet it is not possible that we blend into it, nor that it passes into us, for then the 'vision' would vanish at the moment of formation, by disappearance of the seer or of the visible." (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 130-131). In a similar manner, Derrida (2006), following Levinas, talks about the genuine encounter with the "other" (in this case animal) as an allowing of a distance, a break or a disruption to exist instead of forcing an assimilation that fuses the interacting parties into one – aim that is both impossible and ethically questionable. Others have also claimed that all art presupposes a certain distinction, a distinguished existence that prevails holiness (Nancy 2005). Every image is "holy" in this sense – in the sense that it assumes a respectful if detached approximation. The ambivalence of the concept of landscape demands curiosity and leads us towards finding, somewhere in this churning, an opening towards *performance* – as something that both prevails the distinction and maintains the possibility for it, and ongoing opening-and-closing, appearing and dis-appearing.

1.3 Industrialization, transportation and the panoramic view

It is one of my starting points in this text, that the massive changes in navigating reality (our surrounding landscapes), as in transportation (mainly, the introduction of the train), and in documenting it, as in the invention of camera and later on the movie camera, essentially introduce the same concept of seeing. Simplified, it is the colonial way of control, looking through frames and straight lines – of arranging the world into graspable, handleable, all the time within-reach pieces that are at the same time two-dimensional, in a way behind a glass

or on a screen. The train window opens to a panoramic worldview of proto-cinematic spectacles.

"The railway is considered the first industrial object in history with which everyone came into contact", Anne Freytag writes. Since panoramas, it has been compared both to film (Deleuze 1986, Freytag 2003, Schivelbusch 1986, Kalanti 2003, Huhtamo 2013) and to the constant stream of images we are now fed day-to-day trough multicorporate tech companies. There is delicious parallelism in the fact that one of the first films was a picture of a train arriving to the station. Both have also been compared to invasion, piercing, penetration, forcing – and more concretely, to guns (*shooting on film* and *bullet trains*). Trains are both historically and still today, quite literally, imperial and colonial machines, and even putting that aside, new technologies and modes of perception are always shaping the environment and the world around us. Yet, train might also allow us to see the landscape as unfolding, as constantly happening, as something made and in-the-making.

1.4 Converging rail tracks

Part of this project was carried out in the form of an artistic project, inevitably leaking into this written component as well – though I aim to treat them as individual works. The artistic part of my master's thesis, called *On-Time Performance*, took place entirely on an express train from Helsinki to Kuopio in September 2025. The performance installation focused on the specific landscape(s) of the train and its journey, dealing both with the inner material landscape of the train carriage and its implementations on bodily behaviour, and the historical and phenomenological unfolding of the outer environment as seen through the windows and manipulated by different devices viewing. The presence of the performance will haunt this textual piece and spring up to the surface from time to time. The relationship between this text and the performance is like that of the train tracks: "[t]he rails converge and do not converge; they converge in order to remain equidistant farther away" (Merleau-Ponty 1993).

In addition to embodying these complexities and contradictions already introduced, the performance tried to subtly introduce alternative possibilities of viewing landscape by making the audience aware of the ambiguity of their own position and of the artificiality and fragility of the perceived landscape. I suggest that landscape framed this way becomes a performing agent or a performance.

1.5 Landscaping the spectacle /// Spectating the landscape

I am concluding my research with a phenomenologically oriented overview of the current debates on the meaning of landscape dramaturgy, its incorporation in contemporary art works both in the gallery/performance and theatre context, and how that relates to the post-industrial subjectivity whose most prominent and urgent problem is the ongoing and rapidly accelerating ecological collapse. I suggest that landscape as a dramaturgical framework and "operational notion" (Schuquel 2021) is consistent with the phenomenological approach to *things as things* (with their very own agency and aura of being) and of experience as in-between world and subject. I offer phenomenology and landscape dramaturgy as tools for empathy, both in performance as well as inevitably, in life. I suggest that both treat the intersecting with landscapes with the sort of ambivalence that is needed in order to actually encounter something that is *both* the other and inevitably part of you.

Because I am dealing with phenomenology, landscape and performance – all which in essence seem to escape strict definitions and, in a way, to both compliment and contradict each other, I find myself almost inescapably drawn to experimenting with methods that also stretch the boundaries of clear definitions and established traditions in scientific writing. When attempting to get to the core of an embodied experience, a phenomenological inquiry usually doesn't shy away from metaphors, rhythm, repetition – poetic language, in short – to try and illustrate the unillustratable. And since this is an attempt to somehow hang on to the loose threads left hanging by the traditions, I will try to illustrate my findings and ideas in these words but also in figures, charts and diagrams; all that considers lines with varying curvature. In many ways, this project is about the different ways in which knowledge is distributed and how these ways of distribution are often presented as if neutral platforms for the "content" itself – not as something that partakes in the formation of the said knowledge. It is about looking and ways of seeing. And because we are dealing with ways of seeing and the question of images, vision, scenery and looking – the occasional presence of an image becomes unavoidable.

I am aware that the subject matter essentially branches towards the entirety of the Western art history from the industrial era onwards, and that the vastity of the subject will not allow me to cover it thoroughly – and that it would be foolish to even try. Yet, even though I will try to follow along the rail tracks to keep myself from pacing in too many

directions, an occasional sidestep and churning towards the undisciplined edges of thinking and sensing, a full world opening outside of the frame, will reveal itself necessary.

2 Landscape: a way of seeing, a means of looking

In this section, I will dive deeper into the concept of landscape and sketch an overview of its position historically and today. Landscape works on multiple levels: it can be an image, an environment or a sort of intersection between the two. It is a category (even if unreliably blurry) present in the fields of art, architecture and city planning, geography and environmental philosophy.

My approach is phenomenological, drawing specifically from French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty and his notion of chiasmatic intertwining as a way of sensing and being-in-the-world that is incorporated in the relationship between human and landscape. I also develop this thought in relation to philosophy of images in general, mainly following the footsteps of Jean-Luc Nancy, who in his later thinking (clearly drawing from phenomenology and especially Merleau-Ponty) wrote about chiasma-like interaction taking place in the seemingly passive spectating of images.

2.1 A short history

The notion of landscape as a distinct aesthetic category was born in the late 1700's, when English and German philosophers "discovered" the picturesque landscape of their pastoral countryside. Around this time the Western aesthetics in general as a science or a sub-orientation of philosophy was established, and it was mostly through two different categories related to (the admiration of) landscape: one of them the picturesque, the other sublime (Burke 1757, Kant 1790/2018). Landscape as a genre of (Western) painting had already emerged earlier, during Renaissance (Cauquelin 2004), having become especially prominent in – not surprisingly – England. It has been argued that it was not through the admiration of the natural world that the genre emerged in the West, but rather, through invention of perspectival painting (ibid., Fuchs 2002). The paintings depicting beautiful sceneries of the countryside and grandiose mountains adopted these new technical findings to create an effect of depth – perspective – and they eventually directed the aestheticians' sensibilities to see

framed landscapes everywhere they were directed, also in the natural world. The direction of influence was from art to the world rather than the usually assumed other way around.

It was again in England where the earliest industrial inventions were brought to life. In Europe, the steam machine was utilised comprehensively in the early 1700's, used first to carry coal from mining establishments to factories, and soon enough people from the same mines up in the fresh air (Schivelbusch 1986). Anne Cauquelin (2004) argues that the completion of landscape as a concept, as a *bourgeois way of seeing*, was finalized only during this early period of industrialization. The bourgeois way of seeing refers to a specific mode of sensibility that divides and conquers and looks at the world as if through neatly assembled selection of photo frames. The fascination with the notion of landscape can be seen both as a counterreaction against industrialization, stemming from romanticism and the idealization of "pure" nature outside human influence, and as a direct continuum of it. Suddenly there was a dichotomy to be realized – the new, noisy and coil-y man-made world against the "untouched" natural world. During romanticism landscape also started to work hand in hand with newly arising nationalist ideals combining with the search for essentialist purity in the form of a nation. Both in the Nordic countries, romanticist Germany and, for example, America (Fuchs 2002) landscape painting has been utilized as a tool of hegemonic propaganda of the virginal nature of "great nations". As Riikka Stewen (2023, 88–89) writes, landscape's relation to military strategies and cartography are also undeniable, as military officers were often the first to render portrayals of places undiscovered. In Finland, e.g. Akseli Gallen-Kallela and Pekka Halonen participated in this narrative building of national identity (Stewen 2023).

Whichever way we look at it, one distinction remains important; that of the human and the landscape, man being the one navigating the ever-more complex world and positing himself – because, obviously, it is a "man" we are talking about – in front of it as if looking at a painting, be it of an urban cityscape full of smoke and brawl or a virginal scenery of meadows and bird chirps. To see a perspectival painting depicting natural scenery, to be immersed by it, relays on the spectator's ability to stay still, directly in front of the canvas; not too far, not too close. It presupposes a Cartesian subject, a thinking *cogito:* "the viewpoint of a perspective painting (that is, the projective point opposite the vanishing point of the painting) was compatible with a subject considered as an immaterial, and thus non-extensive, mental substance facing a *spectacle* of material substances extended in time and space: the

thinking Ego was a perspectivalist's eye." (van de Vall 2008, 18, emphasis added.) Thus the union of landscape painting and perspective intertwines with another (supposed) correlation – that of perspective and the thinking ego, René Descartes' introduction of the mind-body dualism (in)directly responsible for the whole western paradigm of thought since, to simplify the narrative a little (van de Vall 2008, Chaudhuri & Fuchs 2002, Wylie 2006).

Yet, already at this early stage the ambivalent essence of landscape was recognized and discussed. The picturesque paradigm recognized the landscape (as a concept that, for a while at least, equalled nature) essentially as something to admire from afar, something that presupposes a distance that allows certain disinterestedness and idealization to take place. In short, it really treated landscape as an image. It is not to say that a beautiful, picturesque landscape did not evoke any emotions – on the contrary – but the emotions, or so Kant (1790/2018) and other idealist philosophers of the time argue, are not to be confused with the aesthetic appreciation of the view. For Kant, aesthetic appreciation is a process for analytic intelligence, requiring certain skills, upbringing and taste. The sublime, on the other hand, had almost the opposite effect on perception. What categorizes it is a profound, shaking effect it leaves on the spectator – "suddenness, power, obscurity, precipitousness, vastness, and difficulty" (Freytag 2003, 215) are all traits that escape the seemingly passive essence of a framed landscape.

Today, the most common connotations bordering landscape still include the landscape painting – and more generally, landscape as a picture or an image. Sometimes we are asked about the landscapes of our childhood or another significant period of our life, or a landscape that first comes to mind when we think about certain people, places, events, or even emotional states. We might get an image in our head, a composition forming that includes elements like trees or tall houses, mountains or fields of grass, a glimmering sea. They rarely include distinct figures of humans or animals, except maybe in the form of sounds like a dog barking or indirectly in cars driving past. On the other hand, we can speak of soundscapes separately, as if landscapes really do not incorporate any other senses than the visual (again contributing to the idea of landscape as merely an image). If there are humans, they often kind of blend into the scenery as well – a stock version of a mother waving on the porch or someone cycling up and down the street, becoming abstract, vague characters always on the edge of becoming. In many ways, landscape is about losing focality so often

found in the human form. And it is finally this "losing focality" that becomes essential, as we will later discover.

In the Finnish language there is the word "mielenmaisema", which directly translates to "mind landscape" or "landscape of the mind". Similarly, in German the term *Seelenlandschaft* is used to describe the vastly expanding inner worlds of subjects outside the grasp of words. These expressions lead the notion of landscape further into the direction of a heterogeneously spreading field of affects, ideas, impressions – the other end of the "landscape spectrum" mentioned in the introduction. It is something that surrounds or stems from rather than spreads before. The core ambivalence that surrounds landscape and pulls it in two very different directions seems to be that of surface and depth; is it a cropped-out picture or an ever-spreading field of multiple sensory experience?

Landscape is also talked about in urban city planning, in land use politics and architecture, as well as in everyday aesthetics which directly theorizes and aestheticizes the practical matters of, for example, city planning, transportation and infrastructures. During the past few decades, landscape has also been a focal point of interest in cultural geography, which has, perhaps surprisingly, drawn a lot from phenomenological philosophy (especially Maurice Merleau-Ponty) and interdisciplinary, "soft" sciences such as performance studies and e.g. Latour's actor-network theory (Wylie 2006) that emphasises the interconnectedness of all living and non-living beings. "Landscaping" is a verb derived from the practice of "making landscapes", but it could be argued that landscape is, essentially, always made, or always in the making – by the spectator moving about the world and always re-positioning oneself, always turning her head to another direction, creating continuous panoramas wherever she goes.

But let's focus on the still image first, even if it refuses to stay still for us.

Paul Cézanne: ***Mont Sainte-Victoire, Seen from the Bibemus Quarry*** *Mont Sainte-Victoire, Seen from the Bibemus Quarry*, oil on canvas by Paul Cézanne, 1897; in the Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Maryland, U.S. Photo: Britannica

2.2 The image, the distinct: Painting

"[T]here is no escape from [the] vulnerability of flesh. I can never rise above the world in order to look down on it with magisterial detachment from a perfectly secure viewpoint", Robert Kirkman (2007) states dramatically in his essay on the phenomenology of climate change, in which he asks what would constitute a corporeal, deep-cutting understanding of the effects of climate change – and more profoundly, of us as something that is made of the "same flesh as the earth". (*Flesh* is a notion of Merleau-Ponty, tackled together with *chiasma* in the next subchapter.)

Western art history has certainly aimed at looking down on the world "with magisterial detachment from a perfectly secure viewpoint". To look at an image is to look at something that is, by definition, a surface, something distinct from the three-dimensional affective world, something that presupposes the gaze from a specific angle. One cannot escape the metaphysical demands of the image by positing their body in a diagonal when standing in front of a painting. As already discussed above, the supposed "immersion" of a perspectival landscape painting is paradoxical, since in actuality it requires and produces quite the opposite: the "success of the illusion depend[s] on [being] firmly alienated from the landscape" (Fuchs 2002).

In the Anglo-American notion of landscape painting picked up properly during the late Renaissance period, a tradition was quickly established. The prominent custom,

whether portraying forests or the rapidly growing cities, mountains of coastal Spain or glaciers of Alaska, was to picture it as if seen "from the front" (as if there is a set viewpoint that is the front!) and from afar and slightly above, as from an "objective", almost God-like perspective. The invention of perspectival techniques allowed painters to introduce the effect of horizon, of the space of the image continuing somewhere beyond one's ability to see, as when looking at a "real" landscape – thus the supposed immersion. As Jean-Luc Nancy puts it, these paintings contain an "estranged and unsettled presence, from which all the gods have departed and the humans are always still to come" (Nancy 2005, 62). Nancy is pointing to the fact that landscape painting is predominantly a (post-)Christian tradition – along the animals, the painting also lacks the presence of pagan gods and spirits. In that sense too it is still and dead, and perhaps the objective viewpoint suggests the perceiver to be the new god. Indeed, it was the time of enlightenment, of the new "religion" of universalising humanism that bore these depictions.

Anne Cauquelin suggests that the birth of the genre of landscape painting made way for the "bourgeois-ification" of our gaze, completed in the period of industrialization. She writes that

> [T]he frame cuts and recuts; on its own it conquers the infinite of the natural world, takes away the too-full, the too-diverse. The limits that it sets out are indispensable to construction of landscape as such. Its law rules the relationship between our point of view (singular, infinitesimal) and the multiple, monstrous thing. And so not only do we interpose the frame of the viewfinder between the world and us, but we double and triple the veils, the screens. (2004, 5, translated by Käthe Rott.)

Landscape painting worked the path for the conception of landscape as a natural view – and eventually in many cases, a synonym for environment or nature. On many accounts, including the writings of the forementioned Anne Cauquelin (2004), the birth of the bourgeois subject, early industrialization of enlightenment and romanticism, and the first aesthetic studies (on landscape) are of the same origin that is directly connected to the whole western way of life. Yet, according to Cauquelin, it is not so much about the content of the landscape paintings – even if they were to also depict the new ways of distributing land, labour and products – but about the way of looking it enhanced, about the square cutting of the world into postcard sceneries. "'Landscape system' seems to serve as a barrier erected

against a lack of culture or barbarism, against unkempt and dangerous spaces. [...] It keeps out the untamed and draws a circle of good behaviour and refined manners", Cauquelin argues in a late interview (2016, 9).

Landscape was a dominating genre throughout the enlightenment, romanticism and impressionism. The latter shifted towards attempts to portray not the "objective" reality but the *experience* of landscape that is rich in variety of species, colour, shape, dimension and affect, but was no less a depiction of the bourgeois gaze (ibid., 10), a frame keeping out the untamed. However, there are also varying accounts on landscape's potential. Maurice Merleau-Ponty analyzes in many of his later texts the works of post-impressionist painter Paul Cézanne, also referred to as the "founder of modern painting" (Luoto 2013, 26). Both Cézanne's own and Merleau-Ponty's accounts already call for a different way of looking at a landscape, a painting, and at the world in general. According to Merleau-Ponty, what rises from the canvas calls for entangled, interactive approach – you never just look, you are being looked at in a process of intertwinement. Merleau-Ponty quotes Cézanne, saying "[n]ature is on the inside" (1993, 4) and continues to state that things have their "internal equivalent in me" – so why wouldn't "these correspondences in turn give rise to some tracing rendered visible again, in which the eyes of others could find an underlying motif to sustain their inspection of the world?" (ibid.) Or: seeing becomes not only a matter between a subject and a painting (or a landscape), but an intersubjective process that enables shared experiences – of, for example, art.

Since post-impressionism, the notion of landscape painting – and, accordingly, that of landscape – has indeed been completely deconstructed and reconstructed multiple times. "The entire history of painting in the modern period, with its efforts to detach itself from illusionism and acquire its own dimensions, has a metaphysical significance", Merleau-Ponty writes (1993, 13). In *Landscape Revisited: Ten Conjunctions of Art and Landscape*, a book compiled of texts originally presented at the *Landscape Today* symposium held at the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki in October 2021, Suzanne Hudson focuses her attention on the landscape paintings of Agnes Martin. Martin's landscapes are minimalistic compositions of vague colour and sharp shape, mostly different kinds of greys, blues, whites, and square formations; they are, nevertheless, named landscapes. Martin's approach was anti-real, anti-mimetic, anti-natural – but "flattened, ordered and geometrized" (2023, 120), and perhaps in this sense precisely a practice of landscape painting. According to Hudson, the disciplined

grids work as a "classical device of ideal proportions" (ibid.). She argued for landscape as an "aesthetic act", and in this sense, perhaps something working similarly to Anne Caquelin's bourgeois gaze – even if Martin's account was not normative but rather descriptive. However, it is also possible to find a phenomenological undertone in this approach to landscape; "We may be looking at the ocean when we are aware of beauty but it is not the ocean," Hudson quotes Martin (2023, 128). I interpret this as an attempt to express the vastitude and incomprehensibility of the experience of landscape; landscape's inseparability of the spectator's sense structures, of the beauty that seems to be a part of itself, but also part of the one looking; the intertwining of seeing and being looked at, touching and being touched.

But in non-Western contexts, there have always been alternative ways of portraying natural scenery, ways that argue for a different account of the landscape experience. In "Traveling While Lying Down: Chinese Landscape Handscrolls as Vehicles for Mind Travel", also part of *Landscape Revisited*, Minna Törmä writes that in Chinese tradition, landscape illustration has a far-reaching history and a particular significance. Since the 1500's, a popular form of portraying landscapes has been handscrolls, a form of paper device that is meant to be slowly rolled open from right to left, thus gradually forming a narrative and opening of a landscape. (Törmä 2023.) It is a controlled setting but contains one distinctive feature – that of the presence of the perceiver implemented into the image unfolding via the movement of the hands and the eyes. The illustration is not meant to be grasped as a whole or at one glance from a "perfectly secure viewpoint" (Kirkman 2007), but rather with a slow unfolding connection, a journey through and *according to* the landscape. However, it is important to note that the cultural bearing of these handscrolls is probably not fully accessible to me, and its applicability to this context remains uncertain.

Yet, I see this as a step towards the landscape that is a surround system, a sensory field. It can also be seen (from a Western perspective, perhaps) as a performative gesture or a performance-landscape. An ambiguity is, however, found at the heart of the landscape as a genre of visual arts.

The 21st century's post-representational and poststructuralist thinking drawing from new materialism has tended to erasing all divergence between subject (both in the sense of a

subject experiencing and a subject of an artwork) and matter. We become one flesh, not in the Merleau-Pontian sense, but rather in an even more literal meaning – we are made of the same matter as everything around us, and it is impossible to know how to categorize this churning matter, what would constitute the smallest unit of division.

Perhaps contrary to this approach, I would like to think possible naming something an image and to remark something powerful in its refusal to surrender to our experience, to our attempts of incorporation and absorption. "The distinct stands apart from a world of things considered as a world of availability", writes Nancy (2005, 2). At first this seems to invite us to draw a rather questionable conclusion: the world is not available for us, meaning we become passive and cannot fully realize our potential and impact on the world – cannot see ourselves as part of the "world's flesh". We remain separate in a sense of indifference. But Nancy insists – or so is my interpretation – that the world as distinct, as an image, becomes art precisely because it is not "available". Availability here means something "useful", something to practice the logic of capitalist consumption on. Holding a certain distance, being distant and distinguished, can also mean refusal to be reduced to something consumable, something to devour and assimilate. It can mean refusing the spectacle – and, perhaps, embracing performance.

Nancy suggests that the certain distinctiveness is what makes the image a "sacred" thing. "The sacred, for its part, signifies the separate, what is set aside, removed, cut off." (Nancy 2005, 1.) There is tension in stillness, there is endless potential in "passivity". This is, in essence, what Merleau-Ponty argues in more abstract terms. From this distinction we come to see the landscape, not only as art, but as the other – and the other as something that needs to be taken care of and attuned to. "But its 'within' is not anything other than its 'fore': its ontological content is sur-face, ex-position, ex-pression. The surface, here, is not relative to a spectator facing it: it is the site of a concentration in co-incidence." The image *is* its surface. The aspiration to immersion starts to feel almost violent.

Yet, according to Cézanne, "[t]he landscape [...] becomes human, becomes a thinking, living being within me. I become one with my picture.…We merge in an iridescent chaos." According to Britannica and Suzanne Hudson, in the apparent immobility of landscapes Cézanne seemed to recognize and sense the underlying potentiality, geological and ecological forces in movement so slow or so fast as to become incomprehensible to us.

(Huyghe ed. 2026, Hudson 2023.) Could there be a way to accept agency and interconnectedness without complete merging?

2.2.1 A field of imagination – somewhere between image, world and perceiver

In a way, landscape holds the privileged position of something that exists almost by definition somewhere between life and art. Or, as Chaudhuri and Fuchs put it, "landscape has particular value as a mediating term between space and place" (2002, 3). I argue that it is the epitome of what Merleau-Ponty calls the *chiasm*, intertwining. Chiasm, or intertwining, is a notion developed in Merleau-Ponty's later philosophy, partly as a self-reflective critique on his own earlier phenomenology of perception, sometimes blamed of merely relocating the universal subject from the realm of the Cartesian cogito to the sensing and perceiving body. In his later philosophy, the relationship between body and the world (art, landscape, the other) becomes ever forming, a constant unfolding of potentiality rather than actuality, and this forms into an ontology of seeing and precepting in general. Closely connected to chiasm is the notion of "flesh" (*la chair*), which refers to both the literal matter we share with the world but also the ongoing reciprocal process of the sensing and the sensible switching places.

But are we not talking about a landscape here – so are we not talking about a flat surface, something essentially opposite to the idea of heterogenous, multisensory field we are inseparably mixed with? Despite or rather precisely because of the perspective's illusion of depth, we are faced with something separate, something that requires us to take a position of the all-knowing subject. In Nancy's words – something distinct. Here, too, Nancy's thought can be traced back to those of Merleau-Ponty. "Depth animates the world as a landscape open to exploration and ordering; it also hides the world, guarantees its ambiguity and complexity, and ensures that it remains beyond the reach of thought – whose goal is certainty and transparency", John Wylie interprets Merleau-Ponty (2006, 527). The landscape's status as an image is one of simultaneous opening to the world and reverting back to the canvas.

In Merleau-Ponty's "Eye and Mind", looking at a painting becomes a situation of being looked at, as well. Being a sensing body essentially means being a sensed body, and this is precisely what chiasm or intertwining reverts to. It is constant transversing, the outside turning into inside and vice versa, reversibility of the flesh – and the "[r]eversibility refers to the fact that the body is always both subject and object" (ibid. 525). In a classic example

Merleau-Ponty talks about the specific situation of touching one's own hand with the other hand, thus making the person tangibly both the subject and the object of this constantly reversing touching-being-touched-situation so that "the 'touching subject' passes over to the rank of the touched, descends into the things, such that the touch is formed in the midst of the world and as it were in the things" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 134) – think about Agnes Martin's quote about the sea and the ontological location of its beauty. This is, however, only the most far-reaching example – the same principles apply in an intersubjective encountering of two people, two others that are both selves. Encounters, in turn, are always about potentiality, and this potentiality of subject-objecthood lies in the very essence of being, it is present in encountering animals, artworks, landscapes. Similarly touch is only the most "extreme case" – the very same potentiality lies in vision, for vision is for Merleau-Ponty touching with eyes. "As soon as I see, it is necessary that the vision (as is so well indicated by the double meaning of the word) be doubled with a complementary vision or with another vision; myself seen from without, such as another would see me." (Ibid.) What might sound like a self-evident fact incorporates new meaning when applied to the relationship between an artwork and a spectator – or nature and spectator. The reversibility of subject-objecthood comes to apply to the landscape. In a chiasmatic interaction, the landscape is a *potential* subject gazing back.

Brazilian performance scholar Maurílio Bertazzo Schuquel contends that "landscape makes one see a whole that is correlational" (Schuquel 2021, 1). This way landscape can be seen as a practice that could help gain a corporeal understanding of the rather tricky concept of chiasm. In many ways, landscape is about losing the focal point, about a whole without a center – a field of imagination (even as an image). When we add chiasm to the equation, we get a whole that is not only correlational and lacking a focal point, but that always – if not actually, potentially – includes my own sensing body. Or as Merleau-Ponty puts it; "[different organisms'] landscapes interweave, their actions and their passions fit together exactly" (Merleau-Ponty in Kirkman 2007). There is no landscape without the one looking at it – but reversibly, there is no subject looking without the landscape. This way, landscape activates and starts working as a being with potential to look, to show, to perform.

2.3 Working the earth: Land(scape) art

The 1960's gave birth to a whole new genre and generation of visual and performance artists working almost exclusively with the earth and landscape(s). The motivations were mostly

based on the rise of environmentalism and rejecting the commercialism and institutionalism of e.g. pop art of the 60's as well as the social disengagement of modernism prominent for most of the first half of the 20th century, but feminism and spiritualism were also heavily reclaimed, for example in Ana Mendieta's art – the pagan Gods whose missing Nancy noted in the early landscape paintings were crawling back from their caves.

"Land art artists compose from the environment itself, using the resources of landscape art: focalization, dispersion and, again, concentration; the work is the vision of an orderly set of categories of space and time", Anne Cauquelin writes (2007, 12) according to Schuquel (2021). This is similar to performance scholar Patrice Pavis' (2016) idea in *Routledge Dictionary for Performance and Contemporary Theatre*, as Schuquel (2021) again points out; "the study of landscape in performance differs from and extends the landscape in land art – still, obviously, stemming from the fine arts' tradition – in that it incorporates also sound and textual practices" (which land art as a predominantly visually and conceptually motivated genre rarely does). Curiously, according to these perhaps rather limited views land art would be even further away from landscape as a heterogenous yet correlational field (or as a performance, as we will later discuss) than a landscape painting. It does nevertheless – or perhaps because of this – seem to make sense to analyse land art a tiny bit more extensively in this context. As mentioned above, the motivations behind land art can be traced back to the newly arisen consciousness of ongoing ecological collapse potentially leading to an unliveable planet sooner or later. Needless to say, the ecological catastrophe is evermore present today, and as we are approaching the "sooner" rather than "later", so are the different ways of addressing climate and environment change in art, research and their combinations multiplying by occasion. The tools of today might be different, but they are in no way inseparable from the continuum of these earlier traditions.

Nancy Holt was an influential land artist working with public sculptures, installations and what can sometimes be called performance, to address the ways we look at the landscape and the world. "Holt's first sculptures evolved out of her interest in photography and the lens as a tool to alter perception", states the Holt-Smithson Foundation's homepage. This can be found both in her early 70's very first "seeing devices", as in *Window Locator* incorporating a T-shaped industrial piping system meant for looking out of her studio window to the Greenwich Street, and in later landscape-specific locators such as *Hydra's Head*, in which a number of circular pools of water resembling mirrors were laid out on a

bank of the Niagara river, forming the shape of the Hydra constellation. “Pools of water are the eyes of the earth”, Seneca wrote, and Holt was enchanted. What is made palpable in both the sentence and, accordingly, in Holt’s work, is our reciprocal relationship with the earth and the landscape; the earth looking back at us. At the same time, we can see ourselves from its “eyes”, the image of the self looking. As noted earlier, according to Merleau-Ponty, vision becomes possible only through the self taking part in the visible becoming aware of one’s own perceptibility.

Throughout the 70’s, Holt stayed consistent with the questions of viewing the landscape and altering perception. In her video experiment, *Going Around in Circles*, Holt reused the pipe *Locators*, creating a double screen, a doubled means of looking. In both Holt’s and e.g. Ana Mendieta’s works, while very different and while Holt deals more explicitly with the question of gaze and the ways of looking, it finally becomes a question of the spectatorship and the ontology of the artwork – on which level do the works operate, how are they accessible to us – to understand how exactly these works communicate with the notion of landscape. While they work with and from the land, the approach is conceptual, almost speculative. In practice, many of these kinds of earthworks are only graspable to us now due to heavy documentation – due to photography or filming. This is the case with most performance art, as well. While dealing with landscapes, they are not available to be experienced *as* landscapes. In their essence they seem to want to escape the surface of the flat image, to keep withdrawing to the ground of it. But the direction is inwards rather than outwards. Especially artists like Mendieta deal with the personal, and the practice of blending in with the landscape is in essence an intimate, dialogical process with the earth. The spectator here seems to be an outsider.

On the other hand, by becoming photographs and videos circulating the world wide web, the works that focus on exposing our ways of seeing and looking incorporate another layer of image and gaze making. Another lens, another screen is added on top. This way, the tracks have formed a loop; we make a circle and arrive back to image – this time, more specifically, photography.

Nancy Holt was married to Robert Smithson, likewise a renowned land artist, whose most widely recognized work is the *Spiral Jetty* (1970), a huge spiral made of soil and basalt rock

and shaped like a fern leaf, located in Utah's Great Salt Lake known for its distinct ecological features. But Smithson engaged in more process-driven or performative site-specific works as well; the textual piece "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey" (1967) can be seen as exploring the landscape(s) as unravelling panoramas through transportation vehicles' windows, and the existential double role of the landscape is also addressed.

> The bus passed over the first monument. I pulled the buzzer-cord and got off at the corner of Union Avenue and River Drive. The monument was a bridge over the Passaic River that connected Bergen County with Passaic County. Noon-day sunshine cinema-ized the site, turning the bridge and the river into an over-exposed picture. Photographing it with my Instamatic 400 was like *photographing a photograph*. The sun became a monstrous light-bulb [sic] that projected a detached series of "stills" through my Instamatic into my eye. When I walked on the bridge, it was as though I was walking on an enormous photograph that was made of wood and steel, and underneath the river existed as an enormous *movie film* that showed nothing but a *continuous blank*. (1967, emphasis added.)

This speaks for not only the porous borders between landscape art and land art, but for the inevitable merging of photographic devices and our ways of seeing – and how the treatment of these mechanics of seeing becomes almost inevitably a part of any artwork engaging with the question of land(scape) art.

3 The Industrial Subject and the "Spectacle"

In this section, my aim is to weave connections between the (post-)industrial era and our way of seeing – images, but also the world *as* images, which landscape in this context reduces to as well. "[T]he most grandiose result of the photographic enterprise is to give us the sense that we can hold the whole world in our heads – as an anthology of images", Susan Sontag writes in her famous essay "Plato's Cave" (1977, 1). This *dividing into* and *holding as* images follows the familiar logic of consumption and ownership.

It was not until the early industrial revolution (and the imperial era) that the landscape, and the Western people's perception of time and space, became irreversibly altered in a way that I would claim is how environment and landscape is mostly perceived to the present day. As noted above, Anne Cauquelin argues that landscape notion as we

experience it today was created during this era (2004), although the first moves towards this development were set in motion during the Renaissance. It, for the very least, brought the notion of landscape into the realm of nature from that of painting and art, and in a way *created* nature as something distinct in general. Aesthetics, too, was first concerned primarily with nature, before moving towards art during romanticism.

Cauquelin argues that this massive alteration in the way of looking at the landscape is predominantly due to changes in the relationship between land and people, although ultimately this concerns only people of specific class(es). Shifting from mostly agrarian culture, where the relationship to the land had, for many, been qualified by tactile ownership; of working with the earth and the landscape from day to day for one's actual food and living, to that of proto-industrial, outsourced labour, relocated the perspectival point. Now those who defined what constitutes a landscape were the ones seeing it from the above perspective; tourists (a brand-new invention), the bourgeois on their Sunday walks, leisurely upper-class painters looking for a spot to set up their easels and start sketching. Of course, most people still did not have this privilege.

The era of early pastoral tourism brought along with it several pocket-sized tools for viewing the landscape as an idealized image. For those who weren't blessed with a steady hand and academic painting lessons, a *claude glass* provided an exemplary tool; it is a small, dark, slightly convex mirror in the form of a pocketbook that simplifies the view by giving it a painterly, picturesque, framed quality by reducing certain colour tones. It worked as a "sort of pre-photographic lens", and one could even go as far as to identify it with Instagram or any photo editing filters. Interesting is also the kind of performative quality in viewing the scenery through a claude glass – like with any mirror, to see the image reflected in the glass in front of your face, one would have to turn their back to the actual landscape. Turning one's back works as a painfully representative metaphor, even if it is a little too obvious. It enhances the idea that dividing the world into images – landscape being the most evident category – evolved hand in hand with the industrial revolution; with alienation from the immediate environment and the soon-to-be underlying hegemony of man versus nature in the West.

It has been suggested that the camera is one of the things that turned painters away from the dominating genre of landscape painting at the turn of the 19th and 20th century (alongside a formalistic shift of paradigm in aesthetics that favoured the materiality and

surface of the painting itself instead of the world it was representing). After claude glasses, panoramas and magic lantern shows, photography, the means of capturing the world in still frames, continued the hand-in-hand evolution with industrialization. In addition to the perhaps obvious symbolic parallels of owning the world as "an anthology of images" (Sontag 1979), there are seemingly unrelated material parallels, as widely examined by Nicole Shukin (2009) – the first films being made of animal gelatin, to name the perhaps most tangible example.

These means of looking have been contested and experimented with, for example, by the already mentioned Nancy Holt, whose *Locators* were also incorporating industrial materials (piping), creating a direct connection between industrialization and our restricted, framed viewpoints. Merleau-Ponty also commented on the photograph in his lengthy essay "Eye and Mind": "The photograph keeps open the instants which the onrush of time closes up forthwith; it destroys the overtaking, the overlapping, the 'metamorphosis' [...] of time." Later on, the movie camera allowed the experience of motion while sitting still – and certain transportation vehicles, train often considered "the first industrial object in history with which everyone came into contact" (Freytag), worked in shockingly similar ways.

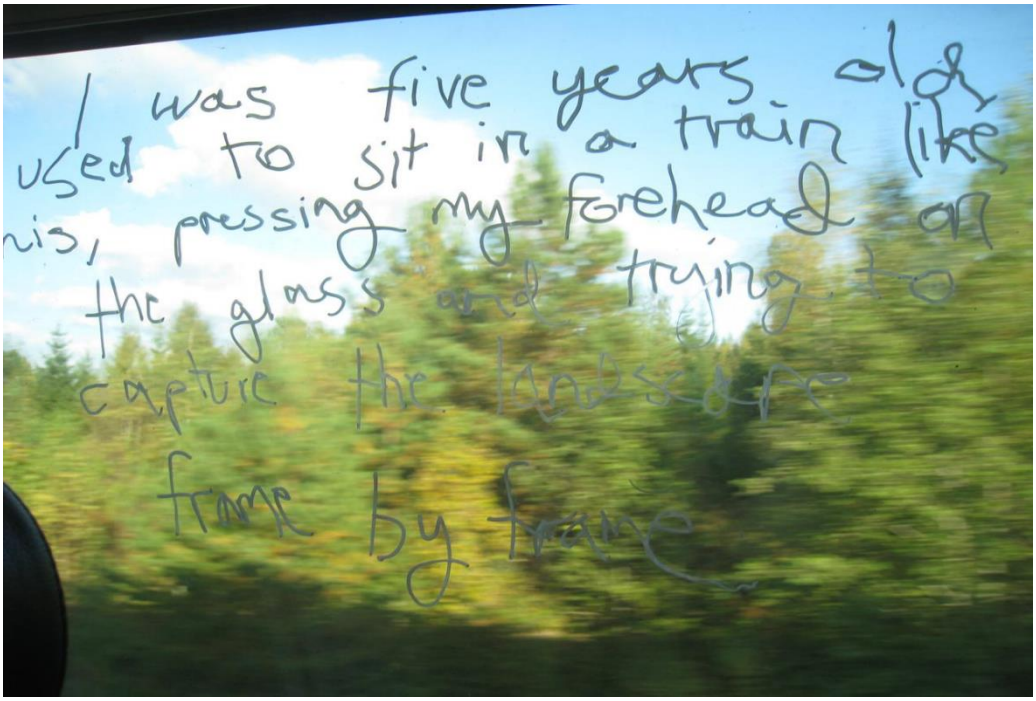


Photo: Anna Halvorsen

3.1 The train and the moving image

One of the main characters of the industrial period, both its symbolical herald and quite the concrete activator, was the train – or more generally the steam machine which, however, soon enough equalled the takeover of the iron horse (Schuquel 1986, Freytag 2003). Train was the starting point of transportation as an industry, travelling and eventually tourism as a way of life for first the upper and then, eventually, middle classes. It shrunk the world significantly. Suddenly, reaching central European cities from London was a matter of days, not weeks or months. Distance and duration were introduced anew. Around the same time as train started carrying goods around the world, which, according to Marx, is what evidently turned them into products in the first place (Schivelbusch 1986, 40), new technologies for viewing the world and, thus, the landscape, were introduced.

Cinematography, as well as photography, has often been compared to appropriation, of annihilating the person, object or scene one is shooting. In this sense, too, it is also compatible with the train, which has through its relatively short history functioned as an operational notion of piercing, cutting violently and imperially through the world with its straight, relentless lines. But they also share parallels in shaping the ways we see. Timo Kalanti writes (2006, 40):

Koska teknologiat tyypillisesti sammuttavat ruumiin motorisen aktiivisuuden mutta intensivoivat ulkoisen ympäristön visuaalista liikettä, kuljetetun liikkumattomuuden elokuvallinen kokemus on tullut modernin kokemuksen metaforaksi.	Since technologies typically turn off the motoric activity of the body and instead intensify the visual movement of the outside environment, the cinematic effect of transporting motionlessness has become the metaphor for the modern experience.

Train and cinema are both examples of a technology paving the way for a new way of seeing – and not only that, but as Kalanti argues, they were paving the way for each other. Train brought along with it a very specific way of gazing at the world – and extensively, a new way of relating to it in general, of sensing and perceiving. The landscape unfolds in a significantly different manner when sitting in a train than in any other way of going about the world; from sitting still to walking and even other means of modern transportation. Already the velocity of the advancement obviously affects the number of things the traveller can grasp with his eyes – not to mention the literal detachment from the stretches and curves of the world, caused by sitting in a coarse machine behind a double glass, sliding on iron rails that presume

the violent evening out of the ground. The horizon stretches somewhere far and seems to move at a slower pace, while things closer turn into a blurry slideshow impossible to focus your eyes on.

The view from the train window is a panorama, an early experiment in what later turned into cinema. To emphasize even more the interconnectedness of the mediums, it seems only suitable to mention the curiosity that one of the earliest motion pictures made was of a train arriving to a station (apparently, though, it is only an urban legend that people really would have been that soaked into the illusion as to actually get up in panic and try to escape the train supposedly storming through the canvas and hitting the audience). Similarly to the train, the moving image also possessed qualities that assembled the delicate relations between seeing and moving all anew. Magic lantern and panorama shows had already since the 1500's epitomised this partly, but as Timo Kalanti writes in his article "*Maailma ruumiissa – katse, inkorporaatio ja liikkeen tuntu*" ("The world in the body – gaze, incorporation and the sensation of movement"), cinema allowed the rapid eye movements of a person otherwise sitting completely still to transport them to other places, other times; to otherworldly sensations. Starting already in the early Hollywood cinema, the illusory aspirations became primary – the effect of witnessing a whole world unfold before one's eyes and forgetting about the outlines of the disciplined square frame. "Huolimatta tilallisen liikkeen simuloinnin teknisistä rajoituksista visuaalisen ympäristön liike on valkokangasprojektionakin tehokas katsojan liiketilan määrittäjä. Elokuvat saavat katsojat reagoimaan ikään kuin he todella olisivat liikkeessä." /// "Despite the difficulties in simulating spatial movement, even as a projection on the screen the motion of the visual environment is a powerful determinator of the spectator's motion-space. Cinema makes the spectator react as if they were really moving." (Kalanti 2003, 57.)

The advancement of the train is straight, disciplined and steady, allowing the voracious capturing of the panoramic view despite close-by object appearing blurry. "[T]he straight, flat line is the hallmark of industrial movement" (Freytag 2003, 229), and this was noted at the very beginning of the history of trains, as it was primarily compared to the then-most-common form of long-distance travelling, riding (inside) horse carriages. Wolfgang Schivelbusch quotes contemporary writings declaring the alienation enhanced in traveling by train, the peculiar absence of feeling the surface of the earth down to your bones (as is the case with the horse carriage) and instead flying through "space and time" as though inside a

bullet or a rocket. A few decades later, “movement and the experience of motion had disengaged from the moving body. Through the mediation of movement and its representation and, later, simulation techniques, movement detached from the motoric activity of the body and relocated outside of the observer, turning into *changes in the perceptual field*”, Kalanti (2006, 36, translation and emphasis added) continues. Essential here is the intertwined relationship between movement and perception – and how transportation vehicles such as the train created, and still create, very specific conditions for seeing by attuning the body to a very specific way of moving in time. In his article, Kalanti is mostly talking about cars as direct continuums of the moving body, indeed perfectors of the development that allowed movement to be detached from the body moving “on its own”. But decades before train had already established a brand-new relationship between body, landscape and looking.

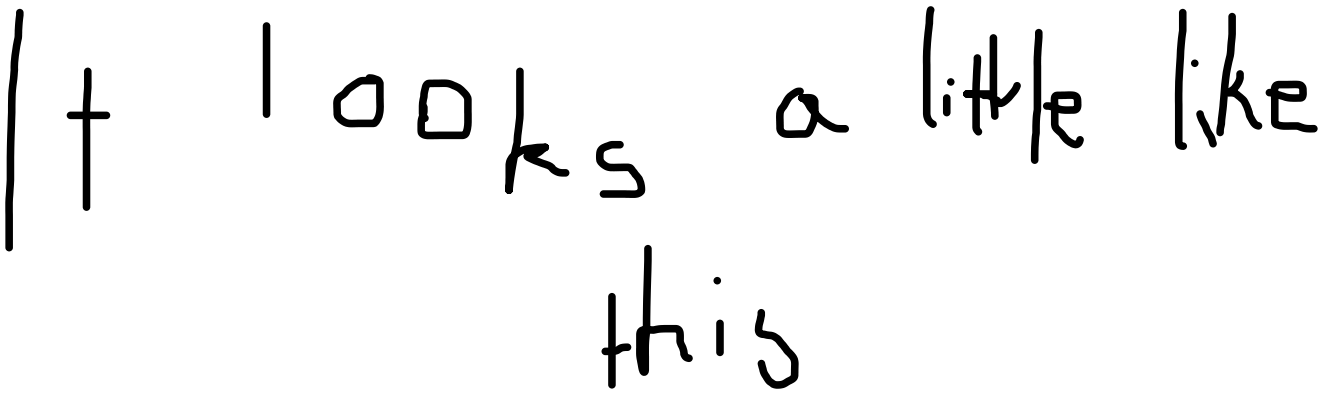
3.1.1 Performance in motion – a sidestep

In my artistic thesis project *On-Time Performance*, connected to this written component inevitably yet loosely, I was working with trains as a specific means of perceiving and moving about the world. The performance-installation was held as a one-time occasion on an express train from Helsinki to Kuopio, as part of ANTI contemporary art festival in September 2025. I worked closely with three people, and the emphasis was on a long-term processual enfolding with all of us carrying our own histories with trains and landscapes into the picture frame. My own starting point, however, was precisely the train’s curiously unique position both in industrial revolution, in landscape/image-making, and as the connector of these two.

> “When I was five years old, I used to sit in a train like this, with my parents, sipping on a juice box. We were going to meet my dad’s relatives who live in this small city that peaked together with the Finnish industry and has not recovered since the Nokia factory shut down. My grandparents lived there. They were both slowly but surely losing all their memories. They faded into grey holding tight to their small town that never recovered from the recession.
>
> The train was moving forward at a pace that felt unbearable to me. It was a stream of images, that at the same time formed a constant – formed the journey – while still remaining separate pictures somehow, like snapshots in a timelapse, unreal and two-

> dimensional, in a way. I wanted to stop the train, to grasp one 0,000001 second frame at a time. I wanted to press my palms around the window frames and squeeze the landscape, until it would become a narrow string flapping in the wind. I pressed my forehead on the glass and tried to hold my eyes as still as possible, but they kept moving. I tried to focus. But whenever I could adjust my eyes and keep them at one point, I realized I was not looking outside anymore – I was looking at my own reflection, my nose leaving grease stains on the glass, my breath forming little clouds on top of the clouds outside. Grey fading to another grey."

For me, the train performs the landscape, and landscape looks inside from the train windows in sharp, accusatory glances. In the performance we focused first on the train's own ecosystem both in relation to the outside world flashing by the windows and the suggestive surfaces and materials carried by the carriage – and tried to transcribe both into our moving bodies by attuning to every micro-jolt of the moving machinery. The affects also translated to text on the windows; the text's appearing on the glass unavoidably altered by every jolt and lurch of the train. My glass marker was leaning heavily towards the stained window, early September sun drawing on the glass from the other side. At times I tried to follow the line of the horizon, the landscape forming a millisecond frame by frame.



Kalanti writes: "Tunnemme maailman, koska maailma tuntuu ruumiissamme. Eikä ole muuta tapaa tuntea maailma." /// "We know [another possible translation is 'sense'] the world, because we feel it in our body. And there is no other way to know (sense) the world." What in everyday thinking might feel like self-evidence can be used in the context of art to demonstrate our inevitable interconnectedness with the world and with the landscape. Yet at the same time, this very landscape, this very world, will always remain behind a stained

plexiglass, refusing to succumb to my needs. We must recognize it as a separation to know, to sense, that it is looking back at us. “This extraordinary overlapping, which we never give enough thought to, forbids us to conceive of vision as an operation of thought that would set up before the mind a picture or a representation of the world, a world of immanence and of ideality. Immersed in the visible by his body, itself visible, the see-er does not appropriate what he sees; he merely approaches it by looking, he opens onto the world.” (Merleau-Ponty 1993, 3.) As I open my gaze to the world seen through a window and let it wonder through and according to the accelerating panorama, so the world opens itself to me by refusing to stay still for me, by refusing to remain an image. We start the negotiations.

3.2 The performative image; the phenomenological image

In the previous sidestep of a sub-chapter, I try to demonstrate the effects of working directly from and with the medium/platform, with the preconditions of certain space – be it physical or virtual – with its stillness or movement, according to its smooth or crackling surfaces. Here it happens to be the inflexible text editing program of Microsoft Word that allows me to use my finger to drag the sturdy laptop mouse across the screen, to create wobbly, pixelated lines that shape into letters, that turn into words, that turn into sentences. Here, the relationship with my seeing eye, with the surface of the laptop mouse and my sticky finger incorporates a specific meaning into the words. Similarly, the hard surface of the train aisle table pressing against my knees, my elbow in a 90-degree angle, supporting my hand with a white marker in it, the marker leaving runny notes on the window, allows for different meanings and affects to arise. They participate in the performance that creates the image, just as turning one’s back to the landscape to capture it in the claude glass is a phenomenal performative act of image creation.

I suggest, then, that the view from the train window is perhaps a mere painting, a panorama, or perhaps a film – but it is an image that nevertheless starts performing. Here, the questions set forward by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Luc Nancy start to arise from the ground of the image again. “I would be hard pressed to say where the painting is I am looking at. For I do not look at it as one looks at a thing, fixing it in its place. My gaze wanders within it as in the halos of Being. Rather than seeing it, I see according to, or with it”, Merleau-Ponty writes (1993, 4).

Seeing “with” or seeing “according to” the image becomes intelligible and tangible in the context of the train-window-image. This compares to the already mentioned correspondence with the moving image. “Seeing with” feels intuitively correct, since seeing from a moving train requires constant, active participation – if by nothing else, at least by rapid eye movements tracing the appearing and disappearing lines of the landscape. In many ways, phenomenology and art are both about deconstructing our senses or returning to their founding principles. In the context of the train and the moving landscape a question of whether perception can be reduced back to an almost child-like wonder arises. In many ways the experience is often worded in a phenomenologically oriented way, through an explication of the entanglement of the spectator and the spectated. Children use phrases like “landscape is moving” when looking out of a car or a train window, and can spend hours marvelling at the fact that objects passing us by from a closer distance seem to move much faster than the electric poles and mountains in the “background”.

In returning to this mode of perception, we can see a performance unfolding. We notice “the notion of performativity as ‘going further’, that is, in containing the possibility of the unexpected, the different, the risky” (Crouch 2003, 1946).

4 Landscape as a Practice / Landscape as Dramaturgy

In this second to final section, I will have slowly arrived at the intersection of performance and visual arts, and from here on now I will continue towards both *performative* and *performance*, at times bordering theatre but stubbornly striving away from it. Yet the ambivalence of said or any borders (both between strictly visual arts and performance, and between performance and theater) – indeed making them intersections – carries throughout and is essentially what, for me, defines landscape.

Scene, scenery, occasion, view, spectacle, landscape, appearance, facade, front. As we have come to notice, the notion of landscape in performing arts is in many ways the opposite of the idea of landscape as this flat, two-dimensional, framed entity in visual arts – the thing that constitutes of and as a surface only. Could there be something that brings these two seemingly opposite notions together? I claim that performance art is, at least potentially,

based on the idea of a landscape, since it oscillates somewhere between fine art and performing arts – and thus works as a binding bridge.

In Finland, for example Tuija Kokkonen and Annette Arlander are pioneering artists working with the landscape in the field of performance art. Arlander's years-long practice of "Performing Landscape" tackles with simplistic landscape-oriented and more-than-human performance, mostly using video and audio recordings to give final form and access to these works. In many of her performances, Arlander is either verbally interacting with a landscape or its specific non-human actors like trees, as in her on-going series *Talking to Trees* (2022–) that is published in a podcast format, or blending her own body in the scenery's ebbs and flow with careful movement/stillness oscillation, as in the series *Performing with Plants* (2017–2019). Perhaps her most interesting work for me in this context is the three-part experiment *Swinging together* that took place in three different art events in Helsinki during the years 2014 and 2015, also tackled in her article "Performing Landscape – Swinging Together or Playing with Projections." Particularly curious for my own research here is the combination of repetitive movement together with a projected image of a landscape, working as an artificial layer on top of the actual landscape the footage was filmed in. It seems to incorporate the playful dialogue between "organic" and "artificial" and invite the spectator to ponder on the ways these dichotomies are made up and upheld. In her article, Arlander treats the work through the notion of "haptic visuality", originally developed in the context of diasporic cinema by Laura U. Marks (2000). While the theoretical approach is different (and in Marks' case connected to a distinct framework of diasporic studies), especially since Arlander further connects it with Karen Barad's new materialistic "intra-action" and other posthumanist notions, the idea of image's haptic qualitied emphasised on non-conventional screen materials and experimental picture framings speaks to the question of viewing and even to Merleau-Pontian "touching with eyes".

Landscape can be seen as performing or performative. The performing landscape has already entered the discussion, but the "performative" emphasises landscape's constructive character, it being based on social, historical and political developments. Landscape can also be a practice. The notion of landscape dramaturgy is a counter paradigm developed in the context of theater, a traditionally human-centered and narratively focused artform – but could it be reclaimed and taken further in other contexts? In this section, I will deal more thoroughly with the different notions of landscape in performing arts, and through

development of already introduced phenomenological notion of reciprocity in existence, come up with an outline of landscape in specifically performance art and performance studies, which I feel are still lacking one. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of intertwining, or *chiasm*, can help us give shape to these ideas.

4.1 Performing the Self

"The figure gazing forth is no longer an a priori self projecting a structure of meaning upon the landscape; indeed, it is a self assembled and *performed* via the 'anonymous' practice of landscape", Merleau-Ponty writes (Wylie 2006, 527, emphasis added). In addition to the landscape becoming performed (or performing), it is also the self, the I, the onlooker that realizes its "being performed" (ibid.). This is the effect of a double-sided existence always in reversal. I take part in the visible, I take part in the world's flesh, and so the world takes part and happens in me, according to me. I perform the landscape as much as it performs me, by annotating meaning upon it, by shining on it the light of my history, and, inevitably, that of my community through my eyes. Through my eyes, it unfolds in weaving patterns.

In "Eye and Mind", Merleau-Ponty already elaborates on this reciprocity between art and its maker: "Inevitably the roles between the painter and the visible switch. That is why so many painters have said that things look at them." (Merleau-Ponty 1993, 6.) He continues to quote Andre Marchand who has stated, apparently after Paul Klee: "In a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me, were speaking to me… I was there, listening… I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it… I expect to be inwardly submerged, buried." (Ibid.)

By holding a claude glass in my hand and turning my back to the forest, I am practicing and enunciating this reflexivity, my own externality and being-in-the world. But essentially, the same thing happens with every and any device (and any and every device, indeed, through this becomes a "technique of the body") of looking – like a train window. Through the disciplined framing, through the sticky double glass, I become aware of my own position in this intertwining event of perception, of its restrictions and expansions. "Every technique is a 'technique of the body,' illustrating and amplifying the metaphysical structure of our flesh. The mirror emerges because I am a visible see-er, because there is a reflexivity of the sensible; the mirror translates and reproduces that reflexivity. In it, my externality

becomes complete", Merleau-Ponty writes (1993, 6). Painting, too, is always in a sense performative – it was for Cézanne, it was for Pekka Halonen, who sometimes climbed on top of a high point only to find himself too exhausted to paint – but it was okay, since the act of climbing was the work of art (Stewen 202, 105). Stewen points out that reflected upon this continuum, Annette Arlander's "practice can be seen as an analysis of the art of landscape painting and the implicit performativity at its core" (2023, 95).

It starts to get darker. I discern a vague reflection of myself, of my distorted, dim features on the window. "In the theatre of the mind, the subject sees the landscape while at the same time seeing herself seeing the landscape" (Kalanti 2003, 81).

4.2 Performing hegemony

Landscape is performed and performative in the sense that it is literally constructed, too. Landscapes are curated by forestry policies, city planning officials and other political forces, all the while being made to seem like a natural unfolding of some universal narrative of progress. The romantic period's naively idealistic yearning for an untouched landscape, nature outside human influence does not exist – and never did. Most of all modern landscape has been, and is, a performance initiated by nationalist movements.

The Finnish landscape was predominantly a movement and a paradigm that started, as many of them do, as an attempt to disengage from and create a separate, distinct identity outside of the reigning nations' influence, in Finland historically from both Sweden and Russia. During *fin de siècle* arts were harnessed for building-of-a-nation purposes all around the Western world (Fuchs 2002, Stewen 2023). The national landscape became a homogenising project, where an all-exhaustive view was hunted down with cats and dogs, or sometimes constructed off of separate views. In Finland, the Finnish artists' "Karelian journeys gave rise to a special genre, a lake scene viewed from high above", and this characteristic is "still recognised as quintessentially 'Finnish'" (Stewen 2023, 102).

As many of these attempts do, these depictions of landscape and nation have later been harnessed as a tool for nationalistic hegemony, and it has made way for the propagandist appropriation of ideas and conceptions people relate to forest, landscape and nature – and "Finnishness". It is a widely known fact that Finland, *the* "forest state", has efficiently cut down almost all its old natural state forests, and that those that remain consist mostly of fragments too small and too distributed to form wholes big enough to, for example,

offer liveable environments for certain near-extinct species (e.g. Kotiaho et al. 2021, YLE 4.6.2024). The hegemony of forestry industry has even been successful in convincing a notable number of people to find the clean-cut economic forest as the beautiful, "real" forest, while natural state environments full of decayed wood, a rich variety of fungal species and inaccessible "ryteikkö" (thicket) are thought to be messy or forbidding. It doesn't feel exaggerated to suggest that the image of the economic forest, with pine trees in neat rows, August sunlight straining through them, is the equivalent of a "landscape" in the bourgeois sense; of the "circle of good behaviour and refined manners" (Cauquelin 2016, 10). Meanwhile the thicket of natural forests represents the "unkempt and dangerous spaces" (ibid.).

Accordingly, in the second part of *On-Time Performance*, we focused more on the history of the specific railway we were travelling on, Savo railway (Savon rata) of Eastern Finland – and the history of (Finnish) railways in general. The railway starts from Kouvola, where the tracks turn to follow a dreamy scenery of glimmering blue (on a sunny day, which we luckily had!) lakes and majestic walls of thick green spruces. The tracks are almost literally bordering the water at times. A postcard-like picturesque quality follows throughout the remainder of the journey to Kuopio. When turning to Savon rata the direction also changes, so for the rest of the journey the train travels "backwards" compared to the direction from Helsinki to Kouvola, which in the beginning creates an earie and uncanny feeling.

As mentioned, the Savo railway is surrounded by stock images of Finnish "pure" nature. Consequently, it has been an area of thriving industry, mostly for forestry and logging – Finland's first and foremost exportation practice, which the railway was also originally founded for when Saimaa waterways no longer sufficed. We embodied the importance of the logging and paper industry for the specific railway in a performative sequence, where two of the performers were very slowly rolling out white papers on the carriage floors that were sized exactly according to the length and width of the train carriage's two sides. It was both about blurring the borders of the outside and the inside, bringing the outside in as a material and demonstrating the material bending, adjusting and complying to the order of the train (as the landscape has); and about the discipline of the train (carriage) extending from the inside space to the hyperobject that is the whole railway infrastructure – slicing and organizing the world into lines and sequences (as the carriage floors did to the paper). Hyperobject is a notion developed by Timothy Morton (2013);

essentially it refers to “objects” that are of such vastity, either of physical or metaphysical (oftentimes both), that their existence exceeds the boundaries of human comprehension. A hyper object is impossible to grasp in its entirety, but its presence reaches all corners of everyday life and is impossible to escape. Oil, climate change or the internet would be obvious examples – and railway industry can well be seen as one.

On both papers there was a fragmentary and experimental text containing elements of affectual reactions but also some historical facts about the railway. While rolling the paper out, we were slowly spelling some of the words in the text out loud, starting from vague sounds and eventually forming full sentences.

Someone was thinking about these lines for a long time, sketching them on top of maps… or something.

Hands shaking and fingers grasping for answers, for things conquerable, then stroke by stroke becoming more firm, more steady, more sure of themselves…

Drawing a line there…. then there

then one there

According to Merleau-Ponty, “[a line] is a certain disequilibrium contrived within the indifference of the white paper; it is a certain hollow opened up within the in-itself, a certain constitutive emptiness.” The lines of the white paper and the firm iron lines of the railway constitute a system of “indifference” and supposed neutrality that we were trying to disrupt.

The white ink was only barely visible in the flickering sunlight and hazy halogenic lamps of the VR (Valtion Rautatiet, Finnish State Railways) carriages. The second half of the sequence consisted of us shining an UV light on the papers with the carriage lights turned off so the words became more visible, while dramatic music was playing. We were

leaning towards a spectacle – the aim was to critique the pompous nationalistic aura surrounding the concept of "Finnish landscape" that is almost shoved to passengers' faces during this section of the journey, but in hindsight I would like to think that we were perhaps also questioning the "panorama show" of the train windows as a spectacle by mimicking it, by becoming a spectacle ourselves. For that is how the landscape opens to the view.

Although the attention of the audience (and for that matter, the performers) was momentarily turned towards the inside (non-)space of the train carriage divided in two sections (one longer with three big and one small window on every side, the other a little smaller with only three big windows), what we were working with aside of the idea of an almost parodic spectacle of the nationalistic landscape, was a framework of landscape dramaturgy. That is the focus of the sub-chapter.

4.3 Common ground

When it comes to performance, landscape has been a relatively marginal focus until relatively recently. In theatre and performing arts like dance and circus, landscape has been present as a narrative tool; as a setting for the plot to take place in, a scenery or a background, essentially a perspectival painting – only with live human being doing actions in front of it – or as a poetic metaphor on a textual level.

Both theatre and performance art have, by definition, been revolving around the human and/or the narrative or textual body (in theater) of work – even if they have been approaching them from quite different places and theatre has found the focus on the body properly only *through* and after performance art. But since the emergence of *landscape dramaturgy*, the notion of landscape in performing arts in general has gathered more and more interest, research papers and extensive artistic/scientific studies around it.

"In landscape, which has to do with a whole, with an absence of centre, with an horizon, there is no hierarchy, there is no beginning, middle and end, there is no linear time of past, present and future, because times mix in a game of continuities, juxtapositions, repetitions and displacements" writes Maurílio Bertazzo Schuquel (2021, 7). Again, there is something definitive that makes the notion of landscape stand apart from the landscape in visual arts, as commonly understood – in fact, that makes it a concept of almost opposite paradigms and desires. What used to refer to the two-dimensional backdrop of a beautiful English garden or a seascape, maybe enhanced with some clouds slowly rolled down from a

ceiling or a moon in a tin can, evolved during the 20th century into a comprehensive aesthetic (and political!) framework.

Landscape in theatre (research) became a topic of discussion and a growing distinguished notion sometime during the 80's or 90's, but as Ana Vujanovic notes, landscape dramaturgy (which is, after all, the most self-sufficient occurrence of the concept in performing arts), the way it is present in the contemporary (European) theatre scene(s), "entirely belongs to our present-day social and cultural context" (2017, 1). She goes on to list some earlier manifestations of landscape being present in the thinking circling theatre and performance, highlighting Gertrude Stein's "landscape play" as the very first one. Here, landscape – in Stein's thinking (although ultimately still text-based) as well as in the context of contemporary landscape dramaturgy – incorporates the idea of synchronically spreading time and space, of moving past narrative and meaning. Whereas dramaturgy is still often associated with the construction and arranging of events or text in a performance or play, landscape here implicates a heterogeneous field of forces – text, light, sound, bodies – that are of equal value and that are all treated as matter and material for performative composition. Vujanovic writes, "I am under the impression that Stein didn't approach the theater and drama as a time-based art, an art that unfolds in time, and by the landscape principle she made the time stand almost still and spread synchronically over the textual space." (Vujanovic 2017, 2.)

There is something remarkable in that quote, whether it is true of Gertrude Stein's plays or not. It seems obvious that the term originally reserved for theatre and playwriting has had its function in closing the gap between theatre and performance or other performing arts during the late 20th century. It seems as if landscape in visual arts, like painting and drawing, is building a bridge towards performativity (if you think about the Chinese handscrolls, or Martin's compositions, or Holt's "viewing devices") and landscape in performing arts is actively leaning towards visual arts in "making the time stand still"; creating spread, most of all visually stimulating collages. Landscape is the *common ground* – as it is in the "real" world, quite literally, that which spreads over and gathers under its wings the seemingly separate elements of a certain scenery while simultaneously setting a frame around them.

In *On-Time Performance*, we tried to incorporate the practice of landscape dramaturgy in all the parts, and not only through looking out of the windows and relating to

the passing of the "actual" landscape (although, in hindsight, I would have liked to work more with the snapshots, frames and sceneries that the train makes of the outside world). Through the blending of "past, present and future", by "an absence of center" and in mixing of "continuities, juxtapositions, repetitions and displacements" (Schuquel 2021, 7), the whole train as an inside space of certain materials, dimensions and possibilities; as an object moving through the world; as part of and the enabler of the landscape it passes through; as part of an industrial infrastructure; and as an infrastructural hyper object itself, became a landscape performed and performing.

The past, present and future were blended by incorporating the history of the railway and combining it with the ever-forming present of the landscape stitching itself up outside the windows and its inevitable advancement towards a foreseen future of the end of the journey.

The whole performance was scattered; across time, across the tube-like carriage that refuses a center. The carriage was not a cut off or isolated, but the outside was pouring in continuously – both from the window, through the almost-sheer worn out net curtains that sometimes didn't stay down, and from other carriages. People stomping through the car, leaving grey marks on the white paper with their shoes, sometimes laughing, oftentimes confused, other times frustrated.

There were elements working on different time levels and durational outlets – things that started early on to the journey, and never quite finished – or slowly faded away, like the layer of artificial train sound added on top of the "organic" soundscape, moments that were just tiny glimmers in the net being weaved, sequences that started and ended with clear accents. There was a lot of repetition; of words, of sounds, of gestures; and of the familiar outlines and surfaces of fields, economic forests and spots of water in the landscape.

4.4 On-Time Performance – Performing time

In total, *On-Time Performance* was a four-hour durational peace that spread around the carriage – and the whole train – and was carried out throughout the entirety of the journey.

"'On-Time Performance' refers to trains' or other transportation vehicles' ability to keep up with their initiated timetables", Wikipedia states. In addition to the ways of seeing landscape, historically the train has also introduced new guidelines for living time. A

standard time, according to Greenwich Time, was initiated because of the need for reliable and consistent timetables when railroad companies started to cooperate in the 1800's. The building of international railroad network eventually led to dividing the world into time zones in an international conference on time standards, held in Washington DC in 1894 (Schivelbusch 1986, 44) – another example of the railway industry making a map of neat lines, sections and frames out of the world.

Time was also one of the carrying themes of our performance and the process behind it – from the very beginning it seemed obvious that time is one of the elements that make up the particularity of the train-landscape. Time is part of the understanding of any space, as spaces and landscapes are experienced only in relation to (a certain) time; they unfold in every turn of the head and every footstep. But on a train, time is present in a different way than in, for example, walking (the perhaps more common and seemingly more active way of being in movement while participating in a performance).

If in a landscape-performance "time stands almost still", as Gertrude Stein would put it, in a train time behaves in an even more ambiguous way. Train is a reality cut out of reality, and a certain liminality characterises the experience. The body is seated, almost still, except for the subtle, constant tremble caused by the train jittering on the tracks. Yet the body is constantly moving forward inside this bullet-like machinery detached from the world. The tension of waiting in movement is present all the time. The duration is divided into sections not according to clock-time, perhaps, but according to train-time, which is at least as, if not even more, strict. The journey's rhythm consists of the predetermined order of the stops and stations, of the time that spreads between them in a manner that seems random. There is a tacit agreement on when is the right time to get up and start gathering your belongings to exit at the next station, an upright performative sequence, part of any and every train journey.

4.5 Back to the landscape

In the final part of On-Time Performance, the attention of the spectators was directed towards the windows and the outside world once again. But the status of the outside world was ambiguous, and the borders of the outside and the inside became increasingly blurry. In a way, the ending concluded with what the rest of the performance was trying to mutter but did not quite find the words or gestures to.

Through working with the framing and re-positioning of the audience's gaze, the train windows became not only a frame for a still painting or a panoramic spectacle, but also a screen – a cinema, or of a phone constantly feeding us visual content to engage with.

Photo: Akseli Muraja / ANTI Festival 2025

The landscape was duplicated over and over, it was cut into pieces, retracted from the windows and thrown onto the other surfaces of the dim carriage. The artificial landscape, interrupted by other suggestive, moving images, was reflected on the walls, floors, and window curtains of the carriage; it became our window to the world.

At the very end, the curtains were opened and the video projection stopped completely. All that was left was the landscape, the outside, in glimmering gold sunset – and the text fragments on the windows, changing colour according to the sun, disappearing and appearing according to the curves and textures of the landscape. We sat in silence and looked outside. I tried to breathe. I was looking *according to* and *with* the landscape.

It starts to get darker. I discern a vague reflection of myself, of my distorted, flickering features on the window. Earlier I rested my forehead on the glass – or was it several years ago? There is a grease stain the size of my head. Through this bodily excretion, the landscape becomes more blurry, more unstable. I become unstable, unsure. I become part.

5 Conclusions

In this section, I will conclude how viewing environment, art and landscape – the third as a sort of intersection of the previous two – in a phenomenological framework offers an alternative way of relating and situating oneself in the world, and how viewing performance as a landscape can help in the former. Phenomenology here refers mostly to a specific way of seeing, constructing and thinking about the world as something that is constantly unfolding; happening to us and with us, somewhere in between the body and the world, as illustrated in the earlier chapters. Often it is emphasized that phenomenology in general is mostly seen as a way to itemize the world rather than a coherent or monolithic philosophical orientation. It stems from the alliance of the "content" and the "medium", of the "surface" and "depth", and accordingly the ways and medias in which it is worked through become an integral part of the philosophy. This is what I tried to incorporate both in the artistic work of *On-Time Performance*, as well as in this written component of my thesis.

For these reasons (among others) phenomenology is often seen as a compatible tool for analysing art. Elinor Fuchs and Una Chaudhuri write that landscape in performing arts is first and foremost "a perspective and a method" (2002), and thus, I would argue, holds a similar position to art as phenomenology does in relation to philosophical aesthetics.

5.1 Why landscape?

"After all, the world is around me, not in front of me." (M.-P. 1993)

Since the 1980's, when landscape dramaturgy was first introduced, knowledge has spread widely and rapidly about the one pressing issue that considers us all. The increasingly worsening climate emergency drives all disciplines among science and arts to look for alternative ways to perceive and interpret the world. There is distinct potential in art and in aesthetics to direct our senses, to offer meaning and suggest new ways of seeing.

"Landscape is a perceived field, in which several scenic elements are agencied and placed in relation, in an equivalent way" (Schuquel 2021, 7). The equivalence and egality-equity form the center of this approach. The goal is to see oneself as part of the "world's flesh" – irretrievably entangled with it, but still as a separate being, someone who sees and is seen, someone with a capability to empathy and action that first requires distinction.

In a sense, this phenomenological spectatorship seems to resemble Elinor Fuchs' description of what landscape theatre does to a spectator: "We experience distance, but without alienation, and on the other hand involvement, without identification" (1996: 106). Fuchs explains this kind of spectatorship by invoking the landscape metaphor: "we [as an audience, MvD] are interested 6 in the entire field, the whole terrain, the total environment of the performance" (1996, 106).

5.2 The Spectacle

In Chinese, "landscape" and "spectacle" are referred to with almost the same word. There are similar connections between associated words in other languages too. The English "scene" refers both to an act played out in theatre or in a movie and to a landscape painting depicting a beautiful countryside "scene". Jean-Luc Nancy writes that in French, "there would [...] be the case of location (pays), the case of occupation (paysan), and the case of representation (paysage) [*paysage* = landscape]".

We have talked in length about the distinction of flat surface of an image versus a heterogenous surrounding field we are incorporated in. This dialectic is present in the semiotic or linguistic approach as well. Image is assigned the role of the bad guy: it is a spectacle, a mere surface. Landscape dramaturgy, on the other hand, becomes the tool of emancipation. I have unrestrainedly participated in maintaining this dichotomy, and before taking a step towards smudging these borders as well, I will continue to do so for another while.

Even if "landscape dramaturgy" is a field mostly concerned with theatre – a practice with a distinct tradition compared to both performance art specifically and performing arts in general – I find it applicable to "performance" (in both and all senses) as well. One could ask, as I did earlier; is performance not essentially opposed to theatre in its mode of presentation that defies representation in favour of *methexis* (as opposed to mimesis)

and immediate bodily presence? The junction and therefore the argument for me lies in the centeredness of human *body* – even if through different modes, through different kinds of presentations and aims for presence, the body has been and is central to both theatre, performance, and all performing arts to an extent, even if on a different epistemological level. The turn towards landscape has also been called "the spatial turn", and that applies to performance art as well. In recent years, we have seen an exceeding number of performances focusing on more-than-human existence (and performing), the spreading and evening out of sensuous stimuli, the extending of the performance's spatial limits or questioning their existence all together, usage of different senses besides sight and sound, only to name a few – all of which aim at de-centering the human form. Not to rid of it completely, but to question the currently still predominant modes of perception that contribute to hegemonies of dividing, consumption and annihilation.

5.3 The Performance

Landscape dramaturgy might be a tool originating in the world of theater, but recently it has been increasingly implemented in other fields of art and artistic research as well. For example, Vincent Roumagnac has in his doctoral thesis (2020) explored the concept of "scene" and the environment during the era of ecological catastrophe(s) and climate change. Curating, in turn, is a practice that has a lot in common with dramaturgy (Thitz 2021), or accordingly, dramaturgy can be a methodological approach to curating.

Earlier I posed the question of whether performance could essentially be orienting towards landscape. Although it has historically centered around the human form, the central aspects of lacking a coherent center – or a beginning, middle and end; focus on the action or the presence instead of narrative unfolding; the establishment of and in the space seem to favour this interpretation. The performance, or the performative, works on different levels: while it can mean pretense of neutrality or naturality, I would like to interpret landscape as a performance through the already mentioned notion of "going further", of "containing the possibility of the unexpected, the different, the risky" (Crouch 2003). In essence: something performing can mean this something presenting itself as anew; a familiar action or a view contextualised or set forward in a way that exposes its peculiarity, artificiality, beauty or horridness. Landscape as a performance exposes its secrets and exists on this plane of becoming and potentials. Performativity as becoming shares the characteristic of landscape as *dwelling* (Ingold 2020). Landscape as performance rejects

“space as prefigured and determined” and gives rise to “the motor of dwelling [...] from which contemplation and new possibilities of reconfiguring the world, in flow, can occur” (Ingold according to Crouch 2003).

In this process, I have developed a notion of landscape as a performance, rather than an image or a spectacle – and this notion of performance working as, if not an intersection or intertwining, perhaps as an opening independent of but born out of these different historical meanings landscape has carried. These meanings are getting heavy, and need to be reassembled, composed differently, perhaps just scattered around. This has been only one curious excursion in doing so.

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