

The Book as a Landscape

1. Landscapes as "texts"

There is a long tradition of regarding landscapes as texts and texts as landscapes. Characterizing visually experienced nature as a text implies stressing its meaningfulness, its character as a message or an expression. According to an old metaphor that was highly esteemed in medieval Christian culture as well as in early modern science, nature itself is a divine message addressed to mankind, analogously to the holy scriptures, revealing the will of God as the superior "author" to those who are able to decipher the signs. As a consequence of the process of secularization, art gains authority over the signs of nature, and it is the artist who creates messages by composing the elements of the visual world. The idea of interpreting texts as landscapes seems less evident at the first moment; it implies the notion of texts and landscapes as artificial products which depend on an individual human subject's intentions.

Carl Gustav Carus, one of the most important romantic theorists of landscape painting, even refers back to the medieval topos of nature as a divine message – and exhorts the landscape painters to study the language of nature.¹ In Romantic literature there are many modifications of the initial concept of landscapes and texts mutually reflecting each other. When natural landscapes are described as texts in works of literary fiction – as, for instance, in Wackenroder's *Herzensergießungen*, in Ludwig

¹ Cf. Carl Gustav Carus: Briefe über Landschaftsmalerei (1815–1835). Repr. Heidelberg 1972: "[...] es liegt ein gewisser Grad philosophischer Ausbildung darin, einzusehen, oder wenigstens zu ahnen, daß die gesammte Erscheinung der Natur die Offenbarung einer [...] den Sinnen unzugänglichen, unendlich erhabenen alleinigen Gottheit sei [...]" (p. 83) "Die Sprache der Natur soll also der Künstler reden lernen, und der Hörsaal, wo ein solcher Unterricht von ihm empfangen werden kann, ist nur die freie Natur selbst; Wald und Feld und Meer, Gebirg und Fluß und Thal, deren Formen und Farben er nun unablässig, ja lebenslänglich studieren soll [...]" (p. 157)

Tieck's *Phantasia*, in Jean Paul's novels —, the narrators express not only the idea of "reading" the natural world as if it were a meaningful book (which actually means attributing meaning to the phenomenal objects), they implicitly point at the analogy of divine creation to the creations of literary writing. In many cases, however, the idea of nature as a text is closely linked to the idea of opacity and enigmatic messages. Many romantic texts suggest that it is equally impossible to decipher nature as to decipher works of literature completely. In E. T. A. Hoffmann's works there are several episodes in which either writers copy hieroglyphic texts they do not understand properly, or in which painters depict landscapes as if they were copying an enigmatic composition of written letters.

In the course of nineteenth century and in the context of modernist reflection about landscape painting, the concept of visual realities as scriptural signs has been taken up and modified several times. The art of landscape painting can thus be conceived as a transcription process again, though under different perspectives. Peter Handke, for instance, characterizes Paul Cézanne's works as paintings that are at the same time images and scriptures.² In their quality as "letters" of a scripture, those paintings seem to consist of magic spells that conjure up the very substance of the things represented.

Modern art as well as modern literature has arranged many forms of mutual reflection between the art of writing and the art of creating landscapes. As crossover processes between literature and the visual arts are characteristic of modernity, in literature we find experiments of representing "landscapes" in a modernist sense and of using the book as a framing device for landscape constructions. Gertrude Stein develops a mode of composing texts from words and verbal sequences which at the same time evokes the idea of de-centered — "subjectless" — writing and of landscapes which are dissolved into single views and momentary pictures. In Stein's composition "Four Saints in Three Acts" landscape spreads over the pages of the book — and at the same time the impersonal narrating instance reflects on the process of creating landscape as such.³ As Christoph Parry pointed out,

² Peter Handke: *Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire*, Frankf. (Main) 1980, p. 62.

³ Cf. Eckhard Lobsien: *Landschaft in Texten: Zu Geschichte und Phänomenologie der literarischen Beschreibung*. Stuttgart 1981, p. 17–18

(w)hen looking at contemporary fiction we are likely to meet with two overlapping reactions to this change in the relationship of time and space, Fascination with the immediacy of contemporary experience coexists, often in the same text, with the conservationist effort to preserve or restore something of the experience of distance that is being displaced from living experience. [...] Nature having rapidly lost much of its mystery, poets and painters sensed a calling to reinstall something of the lost mystery in their work.⁴

2. The Book as Spatial Object

In modernity, the concepts of nature and landscape can be regarded as a challenge to visual arts as well as to literature. There is especially one concept which links modern literature and visual arts: the concept of the book as a spatial object that can be shaped as a reflection model of other and larger expanses of space. It was Lawrence Sterne who already conceived of his novel "Tristram Shandy" as of a spatial object. By different strategies, using narrative as well as by typographic devices, Sterne suggests that his novel is a three-dimensional space, in which the narrator walks along in different directions, often accompanied by his readers. Sometimes the novel's chapters appear as the rooms of a house the narrator is showing to us; sometimes there are passages that resemble landscapes. In Book VI, Chapter I, the narrator refers to the landscape surroundings through which he guides his reader: to wilderness, a valley, and a hill.⁵

As an heir of Sterne, Bryan Stanley Johnson published his novel "The Unfortunates" more than 200 years later, in 1969. This novel consists of a black box which contains the single chapters of the book as mobile elements. We are supposed to read them in the order suggested by the box,

⁴ Christoph Parry: *Peter Handke's Landscapes of Discourse: An Exploration of Narrative and Cultural Space*. Riverside, CA 2004, p. 38)

⁵ "WE'LL not stop two moments, my dear Sir, — only, as we have got thro' these five volumes, (do, Sir, sit down upon a set — they are better than nothing) let us just look back upon the country we have pass'd through. — What a wilderness has it been ! and what a mercy that we have not both of us been lost, or devoured by wild beasts, in it. Did you think the world itself, Sir, had contained such a number of Jack Asses ? — How they view'd and review'd us as we passed over the rivulet at the bottom of that little valley ! — and when we climbed over that hill, and were just getting out of sight — good God ! what a braying did they all set up together !" Lawrence Sterne: *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, Book VI, Chapter I)

but we can also arrange them differently to form another sequence. The idea of “randomness” is of constitutive significance for this novel – on the structural level as well as on the level of contents. Programmatically, the black box does not contain any organized space but only fragments which can be combined in many different ways. The reader chooses his own way through the book’s virtual paper-scape, and whichever way he takes, it will be contingent.

Michel Butor organized his book entitled “Mobile” (1966) as a territory through which the reader can travel; it corresponds to the topographical structure of the USA with their different states and regions. Thus the book presents itself as spatial, and this space is mainly structured by the names of villages, towns and cities. These names occur repeatedly, as they are used in different States, and thus they provide for a web of interrelations between the different US-American territories.⁶ “Mobile” visualizes Butor’s proposal to create a new scientific discipline called “itérologie” which is supposed to analyze human movements.⁷

Book artists contribute to “iterologic” research in their own way, as the following example may show: In 1977, at the comprehensive exhibition of contemporary art “documenta 6,” the artist Milan Mölzer presented two book-objects which are obviously based on a similar idea of representing a process of traveling by the elements of a book. Mölzer’s “Reiseheft” (Travel-Notebook, 1976) consists of a school-notebook. According to the artist’s description it records a journey by train that started in Darmstadt on April, 25th at 20.06 (6 past 8 p.m.) and ended in Cologne about three and a half hours later (23.33/33 min past 11 p.m.). In his “Reisetagebuch” (travelogue, 1976), Mölzer recorded another railway trip – from Darmstadt to Düsseldorf via Mainz. The records themselves consist of horizontal lines that were continuously drawn by a pencil and by a felt-tipped pen respectively throughout the two journeys. In their arrangement, the lines resemble the lines of a musical score, but the train’s movement has shaped their form: the wavy lines express continu-

⁶ Michel Butor: *Mobile*. Étude pour une représentation des Etat-Unis. Paris 1962.

⁷ “Je propose une nouvelle science (elles poussent comme des champignons ces années-ci, on en récolte à l’ombre de toutes les sorbonnes ; quelques-unes parmi la moisson finiront bien par porter fruit), étroitement liée à la littérature, celle des déplacements humains, que je m’amuse à nommer itérologie pour qu’il y ait déplacement dans le mot même.” (Michel Butor: *Repertoire IV*. Paris 1974, p. 13)

ous motion. Therefore they also remind of medical technology and its devices to record vital processes.

As multiple and quite differently shaped pieces of art prove, experiments dealing with the book as a spatial object have stimulated new interest in the possibilities of creating and reflecting landscapes. There are numerous artists and literary authors who are interested in the material aspects of the book as well as in the artistic concept of landscape – and who thus created landscape books in various forms. These pieces of art clearly draw on more traditional forms of landscape representation and are therefore linked to the topics and themes connected with the art of landscape painting as well.

Often the artists’ reflections about landscape are interconnected with topics of ecology and environment discourses; often they provide for a critical perspective on the history of civilization as a history of fragmentation, destruction and exploitation of natural resources.

Book-object Landscapes (Examples)

Steven M. Cortright’s artist’s book entitled “The Earth” (1973) was created from an illustrated book on geology (figure 1).⁸ The artist opened the book and carved a ‘canyon’ into its paper body. Consisting of the material substance of the many pages that were cut by the artist, this canyon in its gradual structure of different layers actually resembles the real canyons represented in the pictures we see on the pages, and it seems to illustrate the definition of a canyon given in the explaining lines of the text: “A deep, steep-sided [...] river valley is called a canyon or a gorge.”

Why does anybody do something like this to books?

Not only does this artist’s book reflect on the fact that “landscapes” are created by images and texts (that “landscapes” exist, because images and books exist) – it may also be regarded as a sort of paradox riddle, if we describe the canyons in the photos as the “real” canyons (as I did). To put it more precisely, the photographed canyons only represent “real” canyons, because they are just images, whereas the canyon cut into the book’s body is a reality, although it only imitates the structures presented in the photos. Therefore it becomes questionable which canyon is a first-

⁸ Katalog/Catalogue “documenta 6” (1977) (Handzeichnungen, utopisches Design und Bücher) p. 308/309: Steven M. Cortright: “The Earth”: 1973.

grade and which one is a second-grade reality – and whether there is a difference like that at all. The photographed canyon is only a two-dimensional reality although it precedes its three-dimensional counterpart chronologically. Which canyon is representing which one? Obviously, Cortright's book can as well be interpreted as a reflection about landscape concepts and as a reflection about the principles of representation. But it also points at the process of constituting landscape by the observer's sight and at the fact that landscape is a cultural construction: We can only see the canyon landscape after we opened the book; we only see it as part of a book, and what a canyon landscape is like is told to us by means of language.

The idea of forming landscapes by transforming books has stimulated many artists to create metamorphic objects. In Wolfgang Hainke's: "Long Distance Dedication" (1982/84) Europe as a whole becomes a book which invites the spectator to travel (figure 2).⁹ The object consists of a road atlas, whose maps are overprinted in different colors. One map, showing the main routes through Europe, remains clearly visible in spite of this print color manipulation. The book's pages are arranged in the form of a three-dimensional leporello, but at the same time they remind the observer of the shape of a mountain landscape. In the foreground the object resembles a card house, in the background the book's pages are arranged like a concertina. Once again, art and nature, book and landscape cannot be distinguished, and what we actually see depends on our point of view.

3. Some Literary Landscape Books

The concept of landscape as a 'book phenomenon' and of landscape and book mutually reflecting each other can be regarded as common ground for modern visual arts and modern literature.

Quite a number of modern and post-modern literary authors did not only create conventional books, but explored the material substance and the visual shape of the books by transforming them in different ways.

⁹ Katalog/Catalogue: DAS BUCH. Künstlerobjekte. Ed. Siegfried Salzmann. Bad Cannstadt 1989. Cf. p. 36, No. 21: Wolfgang Hainke: "Long Distance Dedication" 1982/84. "Europa-Straßenatlas, auf Leinen aufgezogen, im Siebdruck überdruckt, Leporello-Faltung; Buch-Deckel mit Stempel-Druck, Druckknöpfe zum Verschließen." 28 x 17 x 5 cm (im geschlossenen Zustand)."

There are interesting examples which reflect upon 'landscape' as a concept of traditional art that must be modified in order to be adapted to contemporary experience.

3. 1. Rolf Dieter Brinkmann

Rolf Dieter Brinkmann, who is often characterized as a pop poet of the 70s, created several books combining texts and images and arranging them in a way that can only be described in terms of structuring spatial objects. All of his works, including his lyrical poems, essayist texts and autobiographical notes present a decidedly subjective view of the world. And all of them mainly reflect the ugliness, triviality and corruption of contemporary environments and everyday realities. His autobiographic 'object books' report the author's everyday life in these realities by combining the form of a personal diary or a traveler's notebook with pictures from different sources: Many of them are taken with the author's camera, others are occasionally found objects such as postcards, newspaper illustrations, photos from magazines, advertising leaflets and commercial posters. Additionally to Brinkmann's own texts, which are mostly facsimile type-writer documents, there are also reprinted text-elements from other sources such as newspapers and magazines, tickets and similar printed materials to be found in everyday life.¹⁰

When Brinkmann reports his travels through this everyday reality – several times even quite literally in the form of a travel diary – he composes his books as landscapes which represent the space experienced by the traveler. Describing impressions of landscapes he simultaneously reflects the process of observation itself. In a railway compartment he reflects on the particularity of time and space.

Did you ever realize how tremendously fragmented the present is as soon as you divide one single moment into its elements and recombine them? And outside, still, that torn-up or simply neglected landscape, hardly interesting. (transl. MSE)¹¹

¹⁰ Rolf Dieter Brinkmann: Rom, Blicke (1979). Reinbek 1986.

¹¹ Rolf Dieter Brinkmann: Rom, Blicke. Reinbek 1979, p. 14. Original text: "Ist Dir schon mal aufgefallen, wie irrsinnig zerstückelt die Gegenwart ist, wenn man einen Augenblick auseinandernimmt in seine einzelnen Bestandteile und sie dann neu zusammenfügt? – [...] Und draußen weiter die zerfetzte oder einfach nur liegengelassene Landschaft, wenig interessant."

Decidedly contrasting with the traditional view of landscape as a holistic entity, Brinkmann's landscapes appear to be composed of fragmented materials which are not supposed to form any 'complete' picture, even though they are enclosed between the covers of a book. At the same time, his books present only moments of punctual observation; the images as well as the written texts are 'snapshots' taken from a momentary and contingent point of view. As they radically deconstruct the preconditions of traditional landscape experience, there are many ironical quotations of the concepts related to former ideas about landscape. For instance, the picture postcards in the notebook represent the anachronistic central perspective; in Brinkmann's collages, however, they just appear as obsolete and deceiving forms of representation, if not even as recycled trash. In his travel notes, the author comments ironically, sometimes sardonically on those regions that are famous for their so-called 'beautiful landscapes'. To Brinkmann's eyes, Swiss and Italian landscapes are places like any other – maybe even worse because of their obtrusiveness.

In his traveler's diary, entitled "Rom, Blicke", Brinkmann gives a very subjective portrait of the contemporary reality of Rome and its surrounding area where he spends some months from October 1972 to January 1973 (figure 3). Indirectly he also quotes the Roman diaries of former travelers – and their ideas of Rome as the eternal city, the center of the world, the capital of classical art. The report starts with notes about the journey from Germany to Rome. Here Brinkmann already comments on landscape impressions, stressing the fragmentary character of the present world that seems to consist of loosely connected elements (p. 14).

Brinkmann's own photographic snapshots always focus on ordinary and everyday persons, events and prospects. By visual and textual means the so-called eternal city and its surroundings are portrayed in a radically disillusionary way: as space where human life is shaped by capitalism, stupidity and egoism. Brinkmann's critical review not only of real landscapes, but of aesthetic landscape concepts that have traditionally influenced the way landscapes have been looked at, chooses as its starting point the park of Villa Massimo. What he observes and reports is not the enchanted atmosphere of a place full of collective cultural memories, far away from the everyday course of time and exceptional as a refuge for privileged people, but a kind of garbage dump that exemplarily represents the garbage dump of world history.

The narrator sees himself as a part of that fragmented world of scrap and waste, and he conceives of his book in such a way that it can be regarded as a model of everyday experienced realities. Thus, the reader is also drawn into a fragmented landscape filled up with scattered things, things that are torn to pieces, – into a decadent scenery on which time and the obstructiveness of so-called progress left their mark.

Brinkmann is certainly influenced by the discourses about environment and environmental damages that achieved a pre-eminent importance in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Eventually, there is an utopian trait in his ideas about a world that is not damaged by civilization and industry (cf. p. 26). But he obviously does not believe in the existence of places of refuge like that. The leading concept of "Rom, Blicke" is the idea of disillusion, and the book's concrete form and materiality support this project, as they underline the notions of disconnectedness, fragmentation, and contingency (cf. p. 34). In order to give exact evidence of the state of the contemporary world and to describe meticulously what he has experienced, Brinkmann even inserts postcards, documentary photographs, maps of territories and segments of city maps into his book. And he adds to them notes on his own observations, generally focusing states of wretchedness and desolation. Thus, the book is literally "tracing" the thoroughly sobering experiences connected with contemporary landscapes (cf. p. 393, 433, 445).

3.2 Jürgen Becker: Landscapes, margins, surroundings

The German writer Jürgen Becker devoted several of his books to a critical review of traditional landscape concepts. Each of these works should actually not be characterized by the term "text", but as a "book", because the arrangement of the books is in itself of constitutive significance. Becker creates even more than a "paratextual" arrangement, for it appears at least doubtful whether there is a hierarchy between the "main" text and its "framework." The writer produces unconventional books in several respects: In "Eine Zeit ohne Wörter" ("A time without words"), published in 1971, Becker combines textual elements with photographs in a way that corresponds to the book's title: There are only very few and very short textual elements in the book, which is structured into 38 chapters, but without pagination. The textual part of the book consists of single lines that obviously serve as chapter titles, whereas the chapters themselves are only composed of photos and photo sequences. Usually

the text – always placed on a separate page – serves as a kind of device or guideline for an interpretation of the photos. Although the verbal passages in the book appear to be minimal in terms of quantity, they play the leading role, as they attribute meaning to the images and suggest how to understand them. Sometimes these lines of text suggest that they are part of stories which are not told; sometimes they just mention a certain time or a certain place; sometimes they seem to preserve memories. The pictures are actually supposed to be ‘read’ as if they were texts. Becker can be regarded as a writer, even if he uses photos instead of words to express his ideas, because the issue of ‘absent’ words points at a specific way of using language and working with it. It is a decidedly subjective point of view that we take in looking at the landscape which is depicted or rather created by the book. Becker’s photographs never suggest the existence of an original and uncultivated ‘nature’, instead, they show places shaped by human culture and civilization, either natural environments with the traces and scars of human labor in them, or ‘cityscapes’ which in their desolation seem to represent a world becoming empty and meaningless again. Instead of depicting nature, these images represent processes of transgression: from nature to culture and back again.

Becker’s books “Ränder” (“margins” or “peripheries”) and “Umgebungen” (“surroundings”), published in 1968 and 1970, consist of texts only, but they also evoke the idea of landscapes: of fragmented territories, consisting of elements that are only linked by the books. In the first five chapters of “Ränder”, the text gradually disappears, until in chapter six there are no words at all; this central part of the book simply consists of blank pages. In the following chapters, language reappears, and the texts gradually gain complexity again. The verbal parts of the book contain fragments of experiences and memories; they resemble tentative records – subjective impressions reported from a changing and contingent point of view. In the blank spaces between the textual components, the idea of silence is visualized by the white paper.

3.3 Several Artists’ Books

Analogously to these literary experiments with books’ materiality and form, several contemporary artists created book objects which reflect upon the deformation of the environment, the destructive forces of civilization and cultural developments as fragmenting processes – and which at the same time ironically comment on traditional landscape concepts.

Taking an atlas of Europe as his basic material, Will Frenken created a strange book-landscape by covering the maps with black print color: The territories are transformed and made invisible by the same substance which is normally used for printing books.¹² After adding the print color to the atlas, the single pages were covered with cloth and pressed together. Thus, the book’s binding is dissolved, but the cloth provides for a new cohesion of the pages, and the book is transformed from its original shape into a leporello. Instead of reading the book, we can touch it, fold and unfold it – and meditate upon the invisible landscapes of Europe.¹³

An ironical and at the same time nostalgic attitude toward the traditional book culture is characteristic of Hubertus Gojowczyk’s book objects. When Gojowczyk creates landscape books, this nostalgic irony is extended to the topic of landscape. His object called “Waldstück” (“forest piece”) can be regarded as an ironical idyll, composed of natural elements. Actually, this object is not simply a representation of a place in the forest, but can itself be regarded as a piece of a forest – as a strange but somehow idyllic place. The title “Waldstück” refers to the object’s ambiguity, as it signifies at the same time a piece of art (“Stück”) representing a forest scenery – and a concrete piece of forest. Another piece of book-art is entitled “The resounding (roaring) forest” (“Der dröhnende Wald”); spider webs and fragments of dead insects were glued to that book in a way that creates an impression of mystery, of a place covered with dust. In this respect the slightly frightening object is reminiscent of gothic set-

¹² Katalog/Catalogue: “buchobjekte.” Exposition: Universitätsbibliothek 13.6.-10.7. 1980. Freiburg/Breisgau, p. 47 sq. Ed. by Jürg Meyer zur Capellen u.a. – No. 22, p. 48. – Will Frenken: “Diercke Weltatlas, dreieundsechzigste Auflage, ausgeführt in der kartographischen Anstalt von Georg Westermann in Braunschweig, Georg Westermann Verlag, Braunschweig, Berlin, Hamburg, Kiel, zugelassen zum Gebrauch an Schulen durch Control Commission (B.E.) intr. 63009/18/ed/tb/z vom 18.5. 1948 Office of Military Government for Germany (US) Educations Branch vom 30.9. 1948, Neu gedruckt und zerrissen am 9.10.1978.” Objekt: Atlas, Leinen, Druckfarbe. 50 x 31 x 6 cm, entfaltet ca. 30 000 cm. 1978.

¹³ “Dieses Objekt gehört zu den ‘zerdruckten Büchern’. Jedes Blatt des Atlas ist auf einer Seite mit Druckfarbe eingeschwärzt, dann mit Leinen bedeckt und abgedruckt worden. Die Seiten bleiben am Leinen haften und werden aus der Bindung gelöst. Das Leinen schafft einen neuen Zusammenhang(,) auf dem alle Seiten, wie bei einem Leporello, nebeneinander zur Anschauung gebracht werden können und so eine neue Art des Betrachtens und der Handhabung ermöglicht. An die Stelle des Blätterns tritt die Tätigkeit des Entfaltens und Aufeinanderlegens, wobei das weiche Material taktile Eindrücke vermittelt.” (Katalog/Catalogue: “buchobjekte,” p. 47f.)

tings in gothic novels; it stimulates surrealistic imagination (figure 4).¹⁴ An object similar to this one is Gojowczyks "Buch mit rechteckiger Öffnung" ("book with rectangular opening," figure 5).¹⁵ It is arranged from a book, a spider's web, insects, and lead. The book was hollowed out and filled with lead; a rectangular hole was cut into the book-cover, and the spider's web and the insects were glued into the object. With this composition the artist obviously quotes and at the same time presents a parody of Albrecht Dürer's "Rasenstück."

The process of de-composing landscapes and of subverting traditional landscape concepts can be regarded as one of the central modernist issues linking literature and the visual arts. In aesthetic projects of intentional de-structuring, the traditional form of 'landscape' as a holistic creation is subjected to criticism in the same way as the idea of the "book" as a coherent and holistic vessel of 'messages' is questioned. In many examples, visual and literary means are combined to present an artificially distorted image of the world, of landscape and of the 'book' as the most important medium of education, information and communication since the time of Gutenberg.

Book art, as it emerges in the 1960s and 70s, has many faces. At any rate, it is closely linked to painting and sculpture on the one hand and to literature on the other hand. There are borderline phenomena which combine strategies of representation of the visual arts and literary writing. Some of them quote the concept of 'landscape' ironically.

The aesthetic project of reflecting about the preconditions of earlier landscape representations which have become anachronistic and can therefore only be quoted ironically and 'in parenthesis' is often combined with critical views on the visually experienced world that has been fragmented, corrupted and destroyed by civilization, industrial development and pollution.

¹⁴ "Dies Objekt besteht aus einem etwa in der Mitte aufgeschlagenen Buch mit dem Titel: 'Der dröhnende Wald', über das schwarze Spinnwebschleier mit Flügeln und andere Insektenreste gezogen und verklebt sind. Der altertümlich-'verstaubte' Charakter des Buches, der sich in vergilbten Seiten, antiquierter Schrift und schwülstiger Naturschilderung äußert, wird vom Künstler parodiert. Das 'versponnene' Objekt wird zum Sinnbild des surreal-schaurig anmutenden Bildtitels." (Katalog/Catalogue: "buchobjekte," p. 54)

¹⁵ In: Gojowczyk, Exposition, Kunsthalle zu Kiel. Catalogue, No. 86, 1975.

Therefore, there are several perspectives we can take in regarding book-landscapes: These are, on the one hand critical reflections about the present environmental damages and modern living conditions, they stimulate reflections about the de-centering of human vision in modernity as an indication of the dissolution of the human "subject" – and they point at the materiality and contingency of any piece of art.

At any rate those book objects and literary object books can be regarded as pieces of art that continue traditional landscape representation which – according to Norbert Schneider – has always been 'sentimental' in the sense Friedrich Schiller attributed to that word. Representing landscape has always meant reflecting on history: on the history of the earth which can be detected in nature – and upon human history that is mainly a process of forming, transforming and deforming nature.

By combining concepts of landscape with the form of the book, two questions are linked; the question as to what future has in store for nature, parts of which our culture has interpreted as landscapes – and the question about the future of the book and about the cultures of the book.

The arrangement of books as three-dimensional objects is a field, in which literature and the visual arts meet – especially in the second half of the twentieth century. In a certain sense, those books which by their form suggest the idea of mobility, translocation and transformation might even be regarded as not only three-dimensional but four-dimensional objects – quoting an idea expressed by Marcel Proust in his "Recherche": Here the narrator conceives of the medieval church of Combray as a four-dimensional object, the fourth dimension being time itself, because the church has accumulated the memories of all the centuries it has seen passing by.

This concept of space containing time as its fourth dimension is closely linked to the book in its double quality of spatial object and representation of time, and in Proust's novel, the old church clearly serves as an auto-reflexive metaphor of the narrator's own project of accumulating and arranging memories and shaping them into a book.

As we have seen, modern representatives of book art combine elements of the book and notions of landscape in order to create metamorphic objects that are both texts and space. The creation of book-landscapes can be regarded as the visualization of two discourses which have been overlapping at least since the early 1970s – the ecological discourse about distorted landscapes, and the mediological discourse about the end of the Gutenberg Galaxy, which was inspired by media theorists

such as Marshall McLuhan and by critics of mass media and illiteracy. Viewed from the perspective of their decline, – a decline which appears as a consequence of the historical changing processes linked with technological development and with a civilization that is mainly shaped by consumerism and egoism –, the book and the landscape once more appear to be closely related. Those metamorphic objects that are at the same time a book and a landscape are also like quotations which remind the observer of the romantic concept of readable landscapes – landscapes that contain complex and sometimes enigmatic messages. And they emphasize the increasing loss of readability connected with the fragmentation and destruction of landscape.

Norbert Schneider, the historicist of landscape painting, argues that artistic creations of landscape have always been a 'sentimental' enterprise: Painting landscapes has from the very beginning expressed the awareness of temporality and historicity, the idea of historical decline and distortion, the vision of a paradise lost. If we follow Schneider's argument, the book landscapes created by modern artists under the influence of ecologic discourse can be regarded as the continuation of traditional landscape painting with new although analogous means. Presenting fragile, distorted, spoiled and fragmented landscapes and giving them the shape of a fragmented and distorted or otherwise unreadable book means contributing to cultural criticism by artistic devices in a way that was initially explored by the early masters of landscape painting.

THE FIA

CANYONS. A deep, steep-sided... called a canyon or a gorge. Two... erally necessary for the extensive de... high elevation, which gives high gr... power to the streams; steep, arid...



weathering to produce... with such slowness that vertical... highly inclined rock... can stand for a long time. These... conditions are met almost perfectly in the western part of the United States. Here are vast systems of canyons of such grandeur and beauty that no description can hope to do them justice.

THE... RUNNING WATER

One of the largest... the age-long grinding... the mountains of W... where the snowfall... It flows across an...

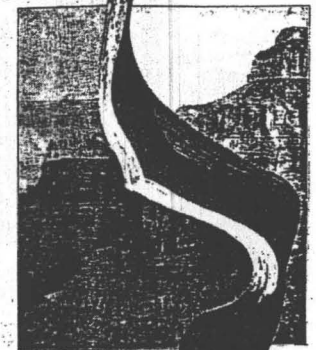


Figure 41. South end of the Grand Canyon... it stands 5000... throughout many thousands of ye... to 8000 feet above the sea. Here... and bright-colored, nearly horizont... canyons beyond comparison. Every... is a canyon: every crack and gully i... sometimes. This region is appropriat... "Canyon-Land."... About 280 miles of the Colorado's... bordered on the... south by the Comanche Plateau, 5000-7000... above sea level, and on the north by the Kaibab Plateau which attains a maximum elevation of 9000 feet, is known as the "Grand Canyon."

Fig. 1: Steven M. Cortright: "The Earth" (1973)

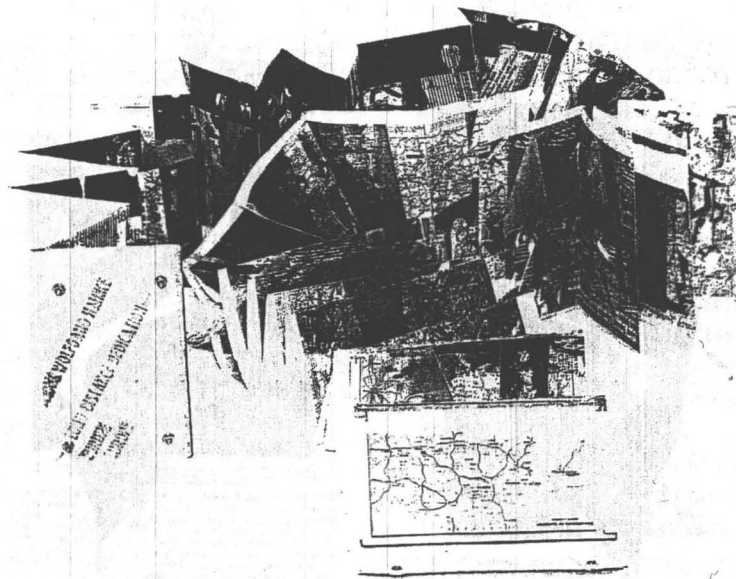


Fig. 2: Wolfgang Hainke: "Long Distance Dedication" (1982/84)

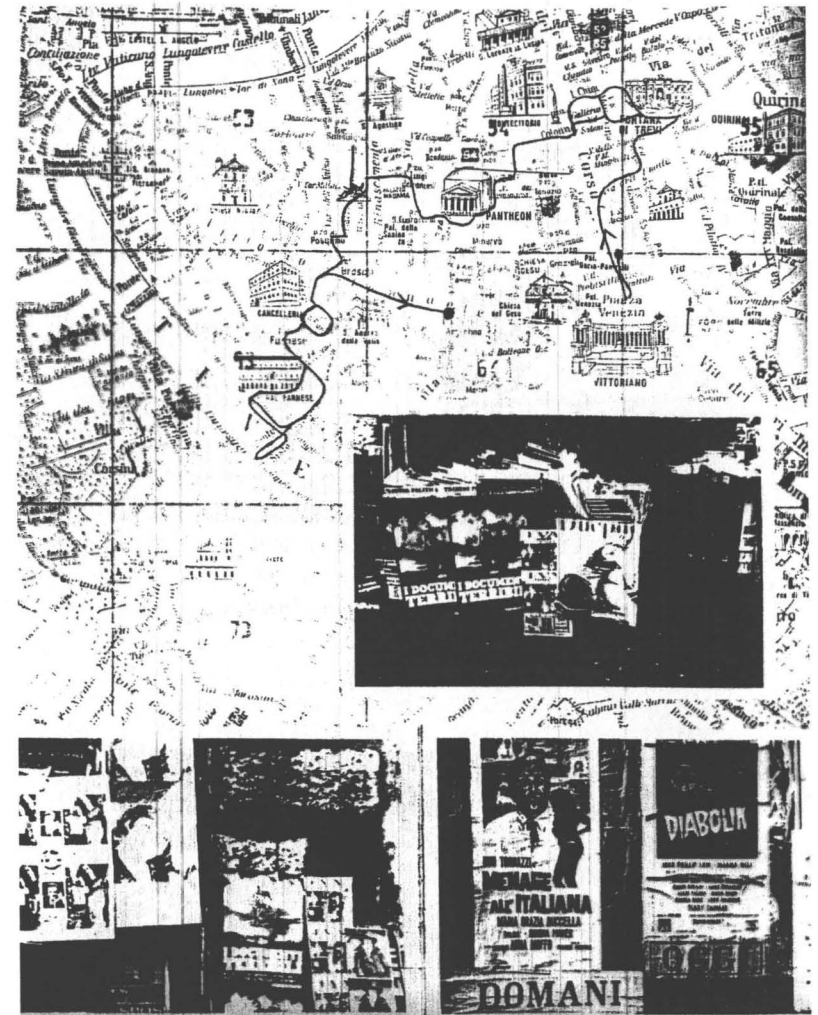


Fig. 3: Rolf Dieter Brinkmann: "Rom, Blicke." (1973)

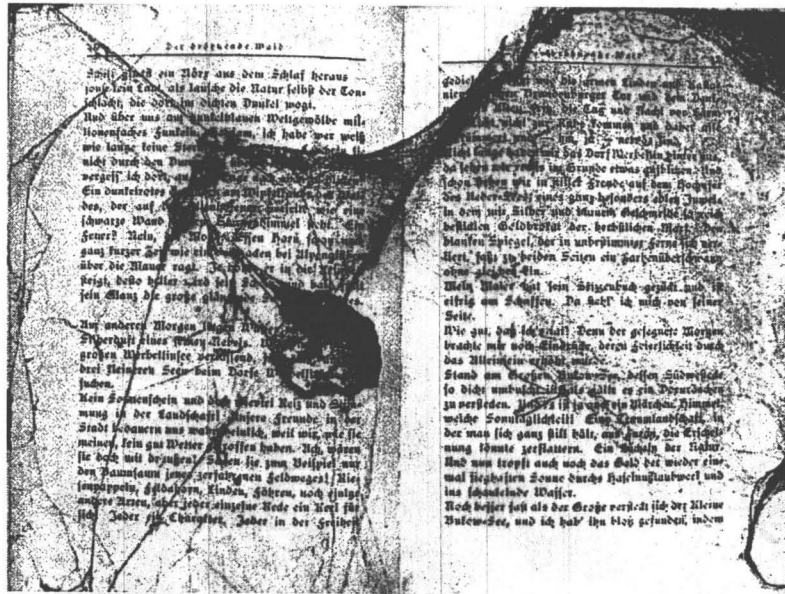


Fig. 4: Hubertus Gojowczyk: "Der dröhnende Wald"



Fig. 5: Hubertus Gojowczyk: "Buch mit rechteckiger Öffnung."

„Utopisch aufgeschlagene Landschaft.“

Romantische Weltbuchtropik, Ernst Blochs Chiffrenkonzept und Carlfriedrich Claus' graphische Denklandschaften

1. Landschaft als Text: Zu einem Kernkonzept romantischer Ästhetik

In *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahren* führt Goethe seinen Protagonisten Wilhelm in eine Landschaft mit markanten geologischen Formationen; gemeinsam mit dem Freund Jarno betrachtet er „Felsen und Zacken,“ und Jarno charakterisiert die Natur als Schrift. Skeptisch erwägt Wilhelm die Frage nach der Lesbarkeit der natürlichen Texte, die ihm aus einem allzu reichhaltigen Zeichenrepertoire zusammengesetzt erscheinen. Jarno glaubt zuversichtlich, die Botschaften der als prinzipiell mitteilbar gedachten Natur durch deren geduldiges Studium lesen lernen zu können. Sei die Schrift der Natur doch stets dieselbe, während Uneindeutigkeiten und Verwirrungen die Welt der menschlichen Texte und Leser beherrschten. Hier gäbe es viele einander widersprechender Schriften statt einer einzigen, und erst sobald die Natur in menschliche Zeichensprachen übersetzt werde, werde auch sie durch solche Zersplitterung des Sinns in Lesarten kontaminiert.¹ Wenn hier die Landschaft als homogener Text

¹ „Wenn ich nun aber, versetzte jener [Jarno], eben diese Spalten und Risse als Buchstaben behandelte, sie zu entziffern suchte, sie zu Worten bildete und sie fertig zu lesen lernte, hättest du etwas dagegen?“ – „Nein, aber es scheint mir ein weitläufiges Alphabet.“ – „Enger als du denkst; man muß es nur kennen lernen wie ein anderes auch. Die Natur hat nur eine Schrift, und ich brauche mich nicht mit so vielen Kritzeleien herumzuschleppen. Hier darf ich nicht fürchten, wie wohl geschieht, wenn ich mich lange und liebevoll mit einem Pergament abgegeben habe, daß ein scharfer Kritiker kommt und mir versichert, das alles sei nur untergeschoben.“ – Lächelnd versetzte der Freund: „Und doch wird man auch hier deine Lesarten streitig machen.“ – „Eben deswegen“, sagte jener, „red ich mit niemanden darüber und mag auch mit dir, eben weil ich dich liebe, das schlechte Zeug von öden Worten nicht weiter wechseln und betrieglich austauschen.““ (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*. In: *Werke*. Hamburger Ausgabe. München 1981. Bd. 8. S. 34)