

Sight, Touch and 'Being There': the construction of presence in selected colonial
landscape representations

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For the beloved

Abstract

This study places research detailing the scientific and political underpinnings of the kind of viewing employed in the British landscape painting tradition against its deployment in the British colonies of South Africa and Australia. This research was used to examine how sensing 'home' and sensing a 'different place' occur. The 'embedded' experience of a specific landscape as exemplified by the established artistic traditions of Aboriginal and San cultures is set against the practice of a distanced, externalized viewing developed in relation to optical technologies and the detached vision required of the colonial traveller.

This thesis explores three modes of relating to the landscape via representation and their construction of home. It looks in detail at British landscape representation, then at San and Aborigine representations of their experiences of the landscape. I then follow the person of Thomas Baines, an expedition artist, in order to briefly explore the confrontation of the British settler with an unfamiliar, foreign landscape in the colony.

Concomitant to this exploration is the consideration of the possible sensual biases at play in the articulation of landscape. The experience of spatiality is predominantly defined in terms of sight. Touch bears on this experience not only in its literalisation in the arts as a response to 'texture' or emotive feeling, but it has effects beyond this, or in the depth of this, specifically its involvement in constructions of 'proximity'. Being cultivated are degrees of sensitivity to what comes to happen in 'close space' – where the event occurs, one that is hoped by the settler to be reciprocal, although never fully so, to his perception at that moment.

The articulation of sensuality involved in constructing landscape representation traditions offers crucial insights into how present orientations to landscape operate.

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before any other degree or examination in any other university.

Sindra Da Corte

_____ day of _____ 20__

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Preface

This dissertation begins with an exploration of a moment in which British nationhood and identity were being actively constructed. Of interest to me was how predominant the notions of sensuality and sensibility were in these formulations, and how they were ordered to support and activate a British identity predicated on 'independent-mindedness'. This characteristically 'British' quality was itself developed in relation to emergent scientific rationality and in the context of expanding British imperial influence around the globe. This aligning of the senses to a specific identity is tracked through the formulation of the British landscape tradition, with specific attention placed on the conception of the British landscape artist.

The second chapter considers two different indigenous traditions of emplacement in areas under British colonial administration. These Aboriginal and San traditions comprise distinct artistic practices that employ sophisticated bodily and sensual involvement in realizing intimate inhabitations of bodies in land. I attempt to understand a different 'making' of the body and by extension, the kind of sensuality that activates a different inhabitation of both landscape and the body.

The focus of the dissertation then moves to an examination of the quandary the British subject faces when he tries to place himself in the colony. The desert is used as a context to explore the failure of the philosophical underpinnings of the British landscape tradition, as explored in the first chapter, to adequately represent the 'new', strange terrain of the colony. Various strategies employed in the British Imperial project that order the colonial world through a particular linking of 'here' and 'there' are investigated for their role in maintaining the sensual underpinnings of the British identity of a colonial settler.

In the last chapter, I demonstrate how my own artistic practice grapples with the notions of 'here' and 'there' in relation to images of holiday destinations. That is, I explore how the idea of separated but linked spaces is articulated, and the manner in which these specific landscapes are considered and visited. Both of these practices seem to draw from colonial formulations of 'home', 'not home' and detached looking. The holiday brochure focuses notions of 'here' and 'there' as relations of 'home' and 'away from home'. Seductive holiday images enable a superficial visual consumption of landscape – a sensual logic that I resist in my artworks. Instead, I choose a positioning of the viewer's visual sensuality that occurs through an over-determination of materials in my artworks. The viewer's gaze is guided to the materials on the surface of the artwork, instead of looking 'through' an image's surface into an illusionary rendering of a far-away terrain.

I wrote the dissertation using ‘experiential’ language – one that resists easy consumption – thereby inducing a kind of reading that embeds itself in the text. My intention was to make palpable the settler’s situation of having to exist in a strange place, absent from the constructs that formed and sustained his identity, and that furnished ways of emplacing himself in his home country. I wanted the dissertation to be read through this sensibility ‘inhabiting’ the language. It is a sensibility that undergoes fragmented living; is one of a person having to synthesise, through senses that are constantly active, two radically different places – a process that fails to cohere an integrated self, and is profoundly haunted by ‘home’.

The concept of inhabitation realises the aims of this project. Firstly, it guides most productively the analysis of the sensual underpinnings of processes of emplacement in terrains; of how these terrains register as ‘home’ and ‘foreign’; and of how places are constituted. ‘Inhabitation’ also allows for emplacement to be framed as the action of weaving an intimacy of body/bodies, senses, affect, ideas and places. A critical component of this framing is that organized sensualities are at work both in embedded cultural experiences that are ‘lived’ into the landscape as well as in the distanced British view that can only visit that same landscape. Lastly, it acknowledges the ‘subjective’ ramifications of sensuality, that of instituting and sustaining a specific kind of lived body.

Chapter One

Being there

Introduction

The construction of 'home' articulated through the British landscape painting tradition established a specific relationship to the world, which occurred in the context of the scientific developments at the time and when 'British' interests were extending beyond their own geographic borders.

SENSING IN A SCIENTIFIC SYSTEM

I would like to begin by considering the practice of scientific exploration as a way to trace the making of a scientifically sensitive body¹ where, as Mary-Louise Pratt, the linguist and comparative literature academic notes, agency is framed as objectively allocating place (Pratt 1992:24).

Linnaeus's System of Nature was a representational system in which descriptions were utilized to name, rank and classify all organisms on earth. Pratt explains that this System of Nature served as an ideational and ideological tool to relate European selves to 'non-bodies'. The 'sensing' by this European body, as initially practiced by the commercial and intellectual elites of the late eighteenth century, depends on description which places non-bodies within a lexicon or system of knowledge. Later, their 'place' as non-bodies would determine how they were to be regarded: "placing gave them their order and functional relationship to other non-bodies in the world" (Pratt 1992:24).

The process of sensing objects of study becomes 'objective' while these objects' own 'sensing' supposedly ceases when they become objectified: the scientist is to be invisible or imperceptible to the object studied. He is instead concerned with producing an order out of a 'confused mingling of beings' (Adanson in Pratt 1992: 30). The same order prevents that 'mingling' – instead, a separation of bodies occurs, borne out of a study that no longer requires a sympathetic relationship with the object of study. A separated being results from the separation of bodies when factors like influence and context are denied.

Pratt observes that during the first half of the nineteenth century the public began to inhabit this scientific body, that is, the public became 'scientific' in its engagement with the world (Pratt 1992:23). Stephen Mason, the science historian and modern chemistry researcher, further notes that agency in this context begins to take on nationalistic overtones as science is increasingly advocated as advancing the economy and culture of a region (Mason 1959:439). This kind of agency is extended within the colonial project where scientific knowledge was used in the control of peoples and constituted the difference between subject/person and object (Pratt 1992:36). The subject's perception is reduced to measurably significant terms.

What does it mean to investigate within a scientific system?

It is necessary to explore the particular articulation of the kind of sensing that develops in the context of what Constance Classen, researcher in the cultural history of the senses, calls the rise

¹ My use of the term scientifically sensitive body refers to sensibilities that have become attuned to the scientific.

of sight-based technologies (Classen in Howes 2005:80). Sight-bias, which characterizes science's investigation of Nature, is evident in the impunity with which the scientific view is privy to the object studied. The scientific imperative is regarded as 'making visual' the order thought to exist in Nature. In order to 'reveal', this bias results in a practice where it is socially permissible to break the boundaries of morals, norms and the physical integrity of the 'object' studied. As an example, the act of dissection and images of objects of study both share a need for stillness – an arrested movement or a suppression of feeling, and an exclusion from direct interaction – so that the functions of various components of the body may be understood. The body of the object of study (a subject from a different perspective) becomes entrenched – via the scientific view – in the twinning of visual appearance and function. Concomitant to this twinning is the seeming guaranteed openness of the object's body to visual and/or physical violation. The ramifications of allocating place – a practice initiated by Linnaeus' System of Nature – occur in the context of experiment: the visual becomes equated with 'evidence revealed' and made substantial with its attendant lingering entitlement to violation and violating.

How the visual functions within this context is indicated in the shift from apprehension by the senses to the senses engaged in 'reading'. Lissa Roberts, the science and technology historian, notes that the increase in the development of instruments, and its attendant move to 'objectivity', implied that the senses themselves could now metaphorically be measured (Roberts in Howes 2005:106). With the exclusion of interaction, influence and interpretation, sensuous engagement with the world shifted from apprehending to a particular kind of reading that considers the kind of information which substances hold. The senses, predominantly the visual sense, is involved in measurement - the view now measures; it treats the viewed as information. A new set of distinctions are established and coalesce at new points.

In the case of chemistry, the mode of investigating how the world is constituted moved from qualitative distinctions that only the senses could apprehend to calibrated readings of experimental apparatus which subordinated the human senses (Roberts in Howes 2005:106). Whereas the scientist's senses of taste and smell dominated qualitative chemical analysis, the advent of instruments brought about their disappearance from chemical inquiry. Sight only gains its dominance as a sense by virtue of the disappearance of these senses – it does not perform tasks fundamental to formal, quantitative chemical analysis. Rather, its role is utilitarian – reading the information measured by instruments.

Instruments opened up areas of study beyond the capacities of the human body's perception, a world different from one we perceive. It is as if at this juncture that the body loses its integrated nature and seeing moves to reading or measurement.

What of the more proximate senses of taste, smell and touch? In their being discarded, what notions of distance enter into scientific enquiry? How is the body called on to be in this new arrangement?

The status of the senses was relegated in modes of scientific enquiry that defined the world according to the instrument. Scientific investigation presupposed a standardized world of quantities, a world which is measured and manipulated in keeping with the 'objectivity' of laboratory hardware (Roberts in Howes 2005:106). In this context, the laboratory becomes the site where the 'objects' of study are made to 'speak'.

In questioning how Nature is measured, one notes that scientific validity grapples with a particular distance of knowledge or inquiry from that which is studied. Thomas Kuhn, the science philosopher, notes that commensurability between science and the world is enacted when numbers, which serve as facts, are compared to theory (Kuhn 1977:182-3). Scientific natural laws, which operate to make scientific sense of Nature, only rely to some degree on these facts.

Consequently, Nature came to represent a foundational understanding of the world, of reality scientifically re-enacted when Nature is framed as the source of measurable, quantitative regularity that would also serve as the basis for the confirmation of 'facts'(Kuhn 1977:219). In short, Nature was both the source and confirmation of facts.

It is that distance between knowledge and the object studied that serves to valorize measurement. Although the role of Nature in the comparison of facts to theory is characterized by issues of 'scatter' or 'lack of fit', measurement is able to render the degree of comparison quantifiably explicit (Kuhn 1977:194). As a result, Nature can still be framed as the ideal scientific object in yielding consistent on generalizable results without a struggle (Kuhn 1977:219).

"Reasonable agreement" and the issue of contact

"Reasonable agreement" usually refers to the correlation of measurement to theory because the route from theory or natural law to measurement is almost never travelled backwards (Kuhn 1977:197). Theory or natural law is determinative to a significant extent of the kind of measurement required – it is very difficult to extrapolate a natural law or theory from measurement alone. The implication is that there is a certain instability around the 'specific'. Most scientific laws have so few qualitative points of contact with Nature and investigation of those contact points usually demands such laborious instrumentation and approximation since Nature itself needs to be forced to yield appropriate results (Kuhn 1977:197). The particular 'here' of an area under investigation is considered to be too specific for the scientist who is concerned with identifying the logic of Nature which is larger than his human body and the

bodies of the objects he is studying. In this context where qualitative contact is diminished, how does the notion of contact shift in light of this distance between the knowledge created and the object studied?

“Contact” ensures the reciprocity of Nature to the theoretical predisposition of the measurer (Kuhn 1977:201). Experiment is described similarly as a process to find more symmetry and continuity in the ongoing dialogue between theory and Nature (Kuhn 1977:201). It is significant that both occur through measurement alone. Only that of the object of study which has been successfully measured can be used in this ‘neutral’ comparison. Not surprisingly, experiment also frames an ideal model of Nature with which ‘contact’ is to be made.

Interestingly, large amounts of qualitative work were required as pre-requisite for fruitful quantification in the physical sciences. Instruments, the aim of which was to produce lasting quantification, had to be designed with initially qualitative concepts in mind because it was very difficult to find many problems in Nature that would permit the quantitative comparison of theory and observation (Kuhn 1977:192,217). Therefore, measurement assists scientists to gauge the accuracy of their theories and assess the efficacy of their chosen modes of investigation. The modifications made in theories and in investigative strategies, and the resulting measurement they produce also mark the progression of scientific work in a particular area of study. Measurement is framed as a kind of sensitivity which ignores the qualitative demands made on the scientists’ senses by the objects or phenomena they are studying. Lastly, measurement makes scientific comparison possible.

The development of sensuous technology

Knowledge and the way it changes over time gives an indication of the particular form that our sensuous engagement with the world takes.

(Roberts in Howes 2005: 109)

In consideration of Roberts’ statement above, how are we asked to sensually inhabit our bodies when scientific investigation establishes a focus on Nature that hopes for quantitative results? Reading, as I use it here, requires the subject to attune his sense of sight to observation and a different experiential body is called upon. Having the senses then called in this way, that is, being directed towards information, what is the work of the feeling body? ‘Sensing’, scientifically speaking, is described as being involved in the chaos of the world while measurement’s neutrality is heralded as a strategy for remaining unchanged by direct and intimate contact. Journalist and writer Italo Calvino offers the argument that within the practice of scientific exploration, with its emphasis on quantitative values, everyday sense experiences may be transfigured by extraordinary revelations (Calvino in Howes 2005: 248). This is what occurs in the ‘reading’: the body, with its own understanding of inhabiting, is extended through

the senses and awaits the transfiguration of its experiences - a notion of 'there' is cultivated. 'There' is something beyond the immediate perceptual and physical limits of the body that offers the promise of transformation; of escape from the usual/everyday, from the irrefutable presence of 'here'. It calls on the senses to act as proxies for the experiential body, when, for example, an encounter with the wild is brought into knowledge of scientific natural laws in order to experience 'Nature'.

'Sense evidence': from apprehension to reading

By contrast, Roberts describes how in the eighteenth century, chemistry students had to learn what sense evidence was significant and how to use their bodies to expose such evidence to critical scrutiny and analysis (Roberts in Howes 2005: 109). That reliance on sense evidence grounded the chemist in a world of complex heterogeneity, however, this methodology was not amenable to the construction of quantitative laws as individual phenomena had to be linked in a never-ending chain of sensuous comparison in which general categories and relations would slowly emerge (Roberts in Howes 2005: 112).

Sensible evidence served to guide chemists through individual aspects of their work but 'New' chemists sought determinative evidence transportable across qualitative and spatial borders alike (Roberts in Howes 2005: 108). How are these borders established? What is the relationship of the quantitative to these borders? Is the qualitative un-movable, un-communicable? Is quantification the language of sensual detachment? This fixation with borders occurs as sensuous traffic with Nature is made to retreat to the lab's privacy (Roberts in Howes 2005: 106-7).

Roberts aptly describes that within this context, the careful reflective deployment of 'sensuous technology' was used by the scientist to bridge the gap between lab production and a knowledge of Nature (Roberts in Howes 2005: 113). Roberts further intimates the kind of transfiguration the body, via the senses, is expected to undergo. The manner in which scientists investigatively deployed their senses in relation to a changing constellation of technologies they depended on and what sort of knowledge they hereby produced indicates a broader transformation in how chemists conceived of their world and their 'bodily' position within it (Roberts in Howes 2005: 106-7). This indicates an attempt to move to a full-bodied system of chemistry in which the body becomes enmeshed in an increasingly complicated web of man-made technologies as humans search to increase their productive capacities (Roberts in Howes 2005: 109). My understanding of the term sensuous technology is that it describes how scientific instruments of investigation to some extent mimic the actions of the senses but also, because of that relationship to the senses and at times because of an inclusion of some of the senses in the operation of these instruments, there is the implication of how the senses are

then to exist in relation to the outside world and to knowledge. These instruments give cognitive insight to and also limit exploratory experience by transforming it into quantifiable information – this particular development of technology predominantly occurs through and places prominence on the sense of sight.

Instruments supposedly amplify the reach of the senses but limit this experience of reaching to a closed system: a tunneling of the senses occurs – without the possibility of intrusion, that is, they are completely disconnected from what could not be accommodated into the functioning of the instrument. For example, the tube of the optical microscope concentrates vision *absolutely* onto the specimen below.

What is out of reach is brought ‘closer’ and made palpable via one sense only, usually sight: the impression is created that what occurs ‘there’ is brought ‘here’. For example, the telescope, like the microscope, extends the periphery of contact, even if that contact only occurs visually. The use of a single sense in the operation of these instruments denies the susceptibility of the body to be affected by what is brought ‘closer’. Perceptual contact occurs through a direct line and in one direction: *from* the object studied or looked at, itself reduced to phenomena and/or appearance via the singular sense *to* the mind.

Resurrecting the scientific subject’s body

In the context of experiment, with this move to a more instrument-reliant mode of scientific investigation, ‘new’ methods did not ‘extend’ fully all the senses equally (Roberts in Howes 2005: 123). In the new chemistry, taste and smell almost disappear as formal media of chemical analysis (Roberts in Howes 2005: 123). Touch and hearing are sidelined. Sight although previously less important in the context of direct visual evidence e.g. colour changes, was then intensified into a visual *reading* of results produced by lab instruments (Roberts in Howes 2005: 123, my emphasis). The visual is separated from apprehending the materiality usually inherent in direct contact with the ‘objects’ of study and through which the scientist-subject derives the sensual materiality of his own body in that moment. In this manner his sensing body becomes the viewing body. In other words, sight is not privy or present to direct contact in the experiment – it is detached from the material peculiarities of the interactions of the objects of study, the materiality of the objects themselves and the materiality of the body it itself is situated in. Yet sight, of all the senses, is dominant. This viewing that reads what is before it indicates how the self is located in the world where the relation to materiality is denied and superfluous. Scientifically accessing the world involved a remaking of the senses.

A particular form of idealisation – remaking an ‘expansive’ world

The new chemistry moved from a suspect, subjective, sensory realm to an idealised realm of objective rationality (Roberts in Howes 2005: 23). This shift in sensory usage and the emphasis

on quantitative analysis served to increase the congruency of chemistry to the theories and practices of the cognate sciences (Roberts in Howes 2005: 123).

The use of precision instruments, mathematical calculation together with the public discourse of scientific rationality both yielded and was dependent on a world of standardized, measurable quantities (Roberts in Howes 2005: 123). Sensible evidence is framed accordingly as insufficient: by relying on sensibly revealed characteristics chemists were limited to the sensible realm where, it was argued, a whole world of phenomena passed by *unnoticed* and *unmeasured* (Roberts in Howes 2005: 115, my emphasis). Instruments were to bring to human perception that which the senses could not.

Sense evidence was thus framed as being inexact, incomplete and couldn't stand for all time and space as objective, generalizable knowledge (Roberts in Howes 2005: 115). The shift of the senses from apprehension to reading is implicated in how Nature was framed from being a world, inhabited by sensibly rich and malleable substances, to a System of primary elements that combined in measurable proportions and strict categorical ways to compose the entire world (Roberts in Howes 2005: 107-8). Substances, previously 'inhabiting' a world, were then to bear out their composition – their physical, structural integrity, their 'bodies' could be disintegrated into purer elements that bore no resemblance to the 'body' they were released from. This precept that elements combine in strict categorical ways exercises a certain control over the 'body' of the substance: its more furtive qualities are excised and rendered absent in the knowing of things when elements buried in these 'bodies' are extricated. What occurs is the disintegration of what up to now has been a coherent body, a body-as-unit, as the senses knew and experienced it to be. The scientific viewer became distanced from the world and the world to him became more abstract.

Sensory investigation in the sciences becomes increasingly associated with social transgression – a particular kind of body, the inhabited body, which uses itself to investigate is then considered to be maladjusted. Using one's body or senses to investigate the world is framed in terms of the attributes of touch: specifically, the emphasis on contact and the notion of the indexical. By contact, I refer to that physical act of bodily incorporation, of physically, by its substance affecting the other. Also, I choose the term touch, that interaction of bodily surfaces to highlight the anxieties around the potential and enforced porousness of the body's borders considering the kind of required body state described in the previous paragraph. I am referring to a kind of contact that seems malevolent – one that requires an inhabitation of the body that threatens structures that order social and political being. That interaction is not only limited to the interaction of bodily surfaces. In sensory evidence, the chemist's sensibilities served as an indexical mirror of the investigative procedures they pursued and the more direct their touch with the world of their investigation became, the less inhibited they became regarding current

standards of hygiene and gentility (Roberts in Howes 2005: 113). For the body of the measurer to be influenced, that is, to be affected physically, bodily, sensually became transgressive.

The potential for diminished inhibition that resulted from using the body's senses as investigative tools had 'dangerous' implications especially when the world framed by the practice of sense evidence was one of 'malleability'. Brian Easlea, the theoretical physicist, notes that the denigration of sensory evidence also marked the emergence of a scientific world view which later dominated European thought (Easlea in Classen in Howes 2005: 77). Although the scientist and the witch worked side by side for a century or more where a new experimental philosophy and witchcraft co-existed, for the scientist to take charge of the cosmos, the witch had to be expelled because the results of experiments would be unreliable if supernatural forces, i.e. witchcraft could transgress natural laws (Easlea in Classen in Howes 2005: 77).

The evidence accompanying charges of witchcraft are usually based on an intense qualitative contact with material objects – one that is in keeping with an order other than that of the rational or scientific, which is precisely where its particular sense of perversity lies. That is, this kind of contact becomes cast as a set of actions governed by a deeply personal sensibility which brings about knowledge that cannot be corroborated by scientific means. Normative investigation requires a contact that ensures the separation of modes of investigating oneself and of investigating materials objects/ objects of study. That is, the interaction of the person with material objects should be rational, objective, scientific and generalizable. The difference between apprehending and reading, the qualitative and the quantitative was thus cast as incommensurable. To become the measurer, one had to 'read' according to a codified perception that is disembodied and therefore to the same degree distanced from his immediate physical surroundings.

CONSTRUCTING THE SUBJECT – ALLOCATING PLACE

Constructing 'Continuity'

The implications for the feeling or sensing body when a new, 'scientific' world view is being articulated needs further exploration. Nature becomes the symbolic model of this new world – its construction as a unified continuity perpetuates the idea that there is only a single, irrefutably observable reality. The interchangeable use of the terms 'unity of Nature' and 'continuity of Nature' suggests the integrity of a larger body without spatial limits and informs the belief in a single mediating substance or a single form of being divided up into hierarchical arrangement of genera and species (Foucault in Klonk 1996:6). Art historian Charlotte Klonk notes that this hierarchical and systemic arrangement informed systems demonstrating the

unity of Nature and guaranteed the place of the subject within it as possessing an increased range of knowledge as all relationships to it are guaranteed and fixed (Klonk 1996:8). Through landscape representation, that order would be enacted in the same way that a taxonomical order is inferred from the visual structure of the objects studied by the scientist (Klonk 1996:6).

The nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of distinct, separate and independent categories of the privileged human subject and the objects of study. Objects were conceived of as structures – what constituted as knowledge of objects was the knowledge of their origin, history and causality (Klonk 1996:7). In contrast, the advent of the subject in the order of discourses emerges out of the reflection and projection of man himself as the cognitive subject (Klonk 1996:7). The separation of this privileged human subject as an object of knowledge and from objects of knowledge resulted in a separation of knowledge into two different independent domains of enquiry e.g. natural history and philosophy separated into science and social science (Foucault in Klonk 1996:68). The social sciences were to reflect on the link between empirical content and the transcendental questions of knowledge (Klonk 1996:7).

The new understanding of Nature presented in landscape painting is articulated through the interaction of beings and their environment. It is an interaction that occurs along an ontological continuum where all in this represented world is ‘systematical, is combination, relation, affinity and connection’: as Robert Thornton, the botanist explains, “‘There is nothing but what is the immediate effect of something preceding it, and determines the existence of something shall follow it’” (Thornton in Kriz 1996:39). Within this study of interaction, the sensual bodies of the observed served to exemplify ‘sharedness’ (Klonk 1996:39-40). However, the separateness of beings is maintained and their influence is limited to their ‘effect’ with the use of this term. The aversion to the melding of bodily experiences that typified the time of sensual chemistry is allayed in the example of Erasmus Darwin’s observation of the shared properties of plants and humans where bodily action is classified into four classes: irritation, sensation, volition and association (Klonk 1996:39-40). Sharedness is noteworthy in this example for its casting of the body and feeling as biological, reactive and externalized performances for the subject, who at the same moment, operates without reference to his body.

I feel it necessary to draw upon two images to press out a more concrete example of the intimacies i.e. the kinds of interactions established within a scene of Nature that I am attempting to explore. John Constable’s *Salisbury Cathedral from the Bishop’s Grounds* of 1823 displays for me a striking distinct separateness of beings and objects from each other – discreet bodies keeping respectable distances is marked by the lack of intrusion of beings into each other’s domains. The view is unobstructed and open. The impression is created that all is seen: the crisp articulation of full figured human and animal bodies, the immediate recognition of that which is seen, the elements in the scene do not obscure each other nor are there confusing

mergings of line or form that would introduce doubt as to the scene's full disclosure of itself to the viewer.



Figure 1.1
John Constable, *Salisbury Cathedral from the Bishop's Grounds* 1823 (oil on canvas, 876mm x 1118mm)
London, Victoria and Albert Museum



Figure 1.2
Thomas Gainsborough, *Gainsborough's Forest* 1748 (oil on canvas, 1219mm x 1524mm) London, National Gallery

Gainsborough's Forest of 1748 seems claustrophobic in contrast in that differing incidences of seeing are strongly determined by particular locations in the scene. The details of the trees unseen by the gaze directly are reflected in the water on the right. The trees in the background seem more ghostly than distant. Some figures especially that of the animal on the left, are obscured to the extent that an awareness of the hidden is emphasized – this is reinforced by the cave-like darkness behind the already mentioned obscured animal. In the centre of the image, an animal seemingly acknowledges the gaze and presence of the viewer. The interest of the gaze is drawn into the scene by curiosity or jolted back to the viewer's presence and then induced to imagining 'what could be there' as intimated by the reflections in the water. Furthermore, the gaze is only privy to seeing that which is in contrast to its immediate surroundings.

Studying Nature

The scientific observer becomes the primary or central subject – the ‘evidence’ acquired through his contact and presence validates knowledge. Carla Mazzio, the science and medical historian elaborates that it is this subject’s experience of the object studied that makes contemporary processes and “...modes of cognition apparent” (Mazzio in Howes 2005:87). Objects of study are thus given their specific symbolic and conceptual presence which is employed in the representations of landscapes to allow the viewer to feel that a moment of deep contact with Nature has been successfully articulated. Through landscape representation’s ability to articulate and provide a ‘deep contact with Nature’, the viewer has his senses attuned to and ordered according to contemporary understandings of Nature and knowledge-making.

The implication arises that scientific study focuses on that which is already easily disposed to observation. A certain pressure exists: that knowledge be visibly evident and visually accessible. A description of the preferred method of investigation in Geology for example presents clearly the disinclination towards what is ‘unseen’. Geology is to restrict itself to mere observation rejecting any prior suppositions concerning the underlying mechanisms connecting what is observed (Klonk 1996:67). The fieldwork approach that thus develops promotes a contact with land that occurs only through this kind of visual observation in the field (Klonk 1996:68). The garden in its many forms, as a result, becomes representative of the ideal systemic-surrounding where various objects of study present the natural order as visible and thus inhabitable, that each object of study’s very being bears their ‘definitive yet interconnected place’ to the view (Klonk 1996:38).

Reading Nature in terms of Science as a public exercise

Jane Carruthers, the historian, and Marion Arnold, the art historian, describe representational practices up to and during the 1850s – a period of huge growth in Western knowledge as various disciplines of scientific research began to fit together (Carruthers and Arnold 1996:22,36). Considerable public demand for both verbal and visual information was stimulated by the Victorian pre-occupation with acquiring ‘true facts’ without subjecting them to close analysis (Carruthers and Arnold 1996:167). Quantifying and describing every detail on earth became a marker of Victorian determination and confidence (Carruthers and Arnold 1996:167). Non-fiction served as the ideal recording mode for the display of these English traits. The non-fictional emphasis on representation - functioning to deliver facts that are themselves products of acquisition and possession – actualizes the world imagined in the sciences. The consumptive qualities inherent in these practices lends a participatory invocation to English subjects – like Thomas Baines, an amateur – to make a contribution as an artist and a recorder which requires these subjects to act as proxies for their/British culture (Carruthers and Arnold 1996:22,36). Not

surprisingly, Baines maintained that realistic content was crucial – specifically, that everything that was observed should be recorded.

The artist figure within the context of the expedition

The emphasis on ‘non-fiction’ and on ‘recording’ instituted the detachment of the embedded individual as these forms of representational practices are manipulated as instruments of a particular linkage of eye and mind. The artist-subject dominates the ‘scene’ by orienting what he sees to the interests of ‘home’ – his chief consideration being how to represent that before him which counts as information. Conquest begins with this kind of observation: in building an understanding of the world which the colony cast as a Garden *has* to furnish, the information gained begins to confirm for the British public certain notions of their own nationhood.

Observation implies a scientific basis for interaction. Scientific ideas embedded in natural laws begin to inform beliefs in an immutable social order – the example given is the Linnean fascination with mapping distinct notions of order in the natural world where each living organism had a universal name and place in its strictly *hierarchical* system (Carruthers and Arnold 1996:22, my emphasis). As a result of this twinning of science and representation into a public visual practice, Nature is provided as the conspicuous ideal through which conquest is articulated. The scientific expedition expressed most succinctly the Victorian belief that British Imperial expansion was the ‘correct’ way to extend economic and social progress – a belief pursued with a determination that belied a characteristically inflexible point of view i.e. not seeing more than one side of a thing (Carruthers and Arnold 1996:35,164). That which falls under the ‘natural’ invites conquest, those in view remain fixed and are to ‘prove’ the subject’s view.

Consequently, science and civilisation were ‘congruent’: imperialistic government interests utilised science to identify areas of the globe that would form suitable colonies (Carruthers and Arnold 1996:37). The scientific expedition allowed this kind of civil progress to be constructed and performed on a worldwide scale. The Australian Expedition (1855-1857) led by the explorer Augustus Gregory which signaled the beginning of capitalism’s territorial phase in the colonies also required that Baines fulfil the role of recorder and storekeeper (Carruthers and Arnold 1996:38). This expedition aimed to gauge the mineral and pastoral wealth of Northern Australia and to consolidate British commerce in the East Indies (Carruthers and Arnold 1996:38). The Zambezi Expedition led by Dr. Livingstone which attempted to investigate the possibility of a chain of trading posts that would extend coastal trade inland saw Baines occupy the same role.

The sensing subject within this social order

The position of an onlooker has his exertion and his control over the environment viewed registered through naming, classifying and measuring: it is the empiricism of science which 'empowers' man to dominate nature with his vision and his mind (Carruthers and Arnold 1996:99). Within the expeditions mentioned above, in Australia, Baines was charged with visually interpreting all the important events of the journey so that a home audience comprising the general public, the scientific community and capitalist investors would be 'impressed' and 'excited' (Carruthers and Arnold 1996:40). In the Zambezi expedition, Baines was required to execute 'faithful' representations of the successes of the British party, the general features of the country and drawings of wild animals and birds (Carruthers and Arnold 1996:50). He was also required to delineate for the general collection useful and rare plants, fossils and reptiles as well as drawing average specimens of different 'tribes' (Carruthers and Arnold 1996:50). The focus on noting objects of acquisition and possession contributed to the experiential architecture within which Baines was compelled to visually construct what would be 'representative' of the 'colonial experience'.

CONSTRUCTING SUBJECTIVITY

The artist subject

Art historian Dian Kriz notes that it was landscape painters in nineteenth century Britain who were at the nexus of diverse systems of power which encompassed modes of patronage as well as institutions involved in the teaching and display of art, and their attempts in many ways to codify methods of viewing and representing natural landscapes (Kriz 1997:4).

The person of the landscape painter was crucial to the constitution of a communal English identity, a British indigeneity, within a liberal paradigm that depended to some degree on the prior existence of a private interiorized self (Kriz 1997:89). These two subjectivities were mutually reinforcing: English national identity was strongly bound with the ideal of individual distinction and independent-mindedness (Kriz 1997:89). The pressure on the landscape painter to be emblematic of these dispositions where integrity is immune to the influences it is open to is increasingly significant as English imperialism and imagination began to extend beyond its own national borders.

The viewing subject

The move to observation, the moment of viewing, links both viewer and artist – their agency is associated with these images whereby the making and viewing of British land occurs and the sense and memory of 'being there' is cultivated. The 'encounter' with the landscape heralds the emergence of the observing subject, who is privy to a British viewpoint which simultaneously

observes home and nature. Works by landscape artists J. M. W. Turner and John Constable are used by Kriz to detail how this sense of 'being there' is achieved.

Turner's depiction of the island of Staffa (figure 1.3) is strongly infused with his own attitude as an observing subject in that he perceives in the ongoing spectacle the quintessence of a permanently forming and developing Nature (Kriz 1997:87). This understanding of Nature as dynamic reinforces the moment of encounter between the landscape and the observer as significant (Kriz 1997:87). The 'significant moment' illustrates and entrenches the precision of the observing subject's gaze in capturing the perfect example of understanding what Nature is.



Figure 1.3
J.M.W. Turner *Staffa, Fingal's Cave* 1832 (oil on canvas, 909mm x 1214mm) New Haven, Yale Centre for British Art



Figure 1.4
John Constable *Flatford Mill* 1816 (oil on canvas, 1331mm x 1583mm) London, Tate Britain Gallery

Constable's *Flatford Mill* (figure 1.4) ideally demonstrates a heightened sense of observation - emphasis is placed on specific details throughout the picture and attention is concentrated on the peculiar situation of light in the scene (Kriz 1997:105). Significance is given to each element by its relation to something outside of itself, the observing subject, and is no longer derived from an intrinsic order within the subject matter (Kriz 1997:105). In Constable's case, the importance his homeland and its activities had for him determined the pictorial order of his work (Kriz 1997:105).

The artist as genius

The increasing importance of British landscape representation and its broadening circulation in British society contributed to the landscape artist emerging as a specialized optical subject – his sensing body, his presence, his experience of being present is resurrected through the concepts of 'vision' and the 'visible'. The singularity of his importance implicates how power is concentrated, controlled and contained in the figure of the artistic genius. Kriz describes how his power was 'attested to' because the ideal of the 'autonomous' creative individual which he embodied was offered in the form of a model that viewers couldn't hope to emulate (Kriz 1997:2). The landscape artist was

... a producer of such potent symbolic representations of natural order in a period of social upheaval throughout Europe. Whereas the ideal history painter has been identified in academic discourse as a supra-national subject who represents universal truths through forms divested of national prejudice, the landscape artist in the 1790s and the decades thereafter is figured as a national subject, in both his public and private character.

(Kriz 1997:45)

1. The power of the artist to configure contexts of experience

The authorship of the artist's vision is thus articulated: that the effect of the artwork be visually arresting and that this effect is decidedly connected to the character of the artist and the scene, which should be prominent as 'highly distinct'. Dian Kriz offers numerous examples of how this authorship is communicated.

Genius was described as being governed by imagination to transform matter into spectacular displays of colour and light, into an object of experience (Kriz 1997:3). The successful artist's works, in keeping with English 'independent-mindedness', were those which 'held their own' in the visually competitive display spaces of private homes and public exhibition sites (Kriz 1997:39). Contributing to this end, the genius *landscape* artist used high key colour, highlighting and other visually arresting effects to represent local light, atmosphere and climatic conditions

(Kriz 1997:6). A special relation was made by commentators between pictures with these arresting effects and their creators - that certain qualities of the artist's character was seen to be embodied in and through the work produced (Kriz 1997:6).

William Hazlitt, the English writer, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, the painter, stated that imitation alone wasn't enough to imbue the artist or the native landscape that he represented with a highly distinctive character (Kriz 1997:59). The picture was not just hand labour but also contained the implicit, "translucent" presence of the painter's mind: the scene is enjoyed for the artist's skill in making the image without the overt interruption of his presence (Kriz 1997:6).

2. Aestheticizing Nature as a way to portray an ideal social reality

The power inherent in the 'translucent' presence of the artist lies in his ability to make perceptible a mind that is capable of concentrating and intensifying emotions generated by a natural scene without distorting the objects or feelings represented (Kriz 1997:87). The corollary of this would be that the British 'native genius' had to be controlled as the excesses of his creativity threatened the stability of the community which it inspired and embodied since viewers in their viewing of these landscape images were framed as British social subjects (Kriz 1997:87). These images that could promote national identification could also threaten it. Any creative innovation that did not adhere to norms which secured a particular British identity was considered dangerously disruptive.

The threat that the landscape painter, the 'national subject', holds is neatly contained with his aestheticizing of local natural scenes being framed as serving to awaken emotions that wouldn't otherwise occur in common British scenery (Kriz 1997:87). The imaginative genius of the painter is described as the source of value in such paintings because with his powers of observation, his specialised knowledge of art and his unique creativity and sensibility, specific aspects of nature are revealed (Kriz 1997:87).

Picturesque viewing and sketching involved the removal of signs of modernisation and social conflict in the domestic terrain (Kriz 1997:86). The erasure of 'confusing incidents' would, as Archibald Alison, the priest and essayist notes, permit the viewer to indulge, without interruption, in interesting trains of thought that the character of the scene was fitted to inspire (Kriz 1997:86).

The 'character of the scene' refers specifically to the ephemeral and arbitrary occurrences of selected episodes of human activity that are associated with a specific site (Kriz 1997:97). The 'emptiness' characteristic of these scenes would prompt the imaginative constitution of these episodes through the representation of transient but 'universally' significant effects of atmosphere and weather (Kriz 1997:97). That is, human activity usually associated with a

specific site is suggested in representation by atmospheric and climatic (weather) effects that read the peculiar locality of a specific site in terms of 'what is common', and is thereby reconfigured as the broader community or nationalistic terrain (Kriz 1997:97). However, in becoming sources of aesthetic pleasure, human activity signifying existing social relations and historical events are separated from moral and intellectual scrutiny (Kriz 1997:97). Instead, these relations and events are transposed onto natural scenery illustrating a harmony between social feelings and natural law, as a majority of these 'tranquil' scenes occur in rural and agricultural contexts (Kriz 1997:97).

It needs to be mentioned that against this formulation of a British creative sensibility and identity as described above, the British artist in the colony operates in a different manner. Baines serves as an explicit example of this: in the colony where British Imperial identity meets and conquers the 'New World', Baines as a creative individual is cast more as a 'recorder' than as an 'innovator' of the British landscape painting tradition. It would be intolerably disturbing if an artistic tradition which is created to sustain and exemplify Britishness undergoes such innovation at the margins of the British Empire that it is rendered unrecognizable in its power for the British public back home.

Consolidating a public

The term 'picturesque' suggests close slippages between nature and art, the real and the image. Although the natural landscape serves as its primary subject, the picturesque emerges as a category capable of representing everyday matters where social reality is seen from an idealized vantage point (Price in Klonk 1996:28).

The novelist J.M.Coetzee notes that the picturesque genre engendered a cult of contemplating the landscape, making this a widespread cultural recreation (Coetzee 1988:42). A generation learnt to view terrain as a structure of natural elements with analysable relations to one another (Coetzee 1988:42). This reading involved an awareness of which associations were natural, were acquired and which were borne by these elements (Coetzee 1988:42). Therefore picturesque landscape, through the acquired principles of composition, had the effect of reconstituting the landscape in the eye of the imagination (Coetzee 1988:42).

These associations were drawn from viewers' shared local interests and from a shared body of political, literary and historical ideas that denied conflicts and served as an induction into a consequently united community of landscape viewers (Kriz 1997:97). Furthermore, these 'shared' associations regulated through custom and history an excessive desire for political change, as was happening in France at the time, was addressed at the level of the individual as the necessity to control the creative intellect (Kriz 1997:101). This particular notion of community occurs in the context of and is critically dependent on visual representation: what

remains invisible is rendered unthinkable within the parameters of an associationist aesthetic and an empiricist science which privileges vision over the other senses in acquiring knowledge and experience (Kriz 1997:103).

British landscape representation: categorising experiences of nature

The picturesque and the experience of contact: "the encounter"

The Sublime and the Beautiful, as categories of landscape representation, both evoke eternal conditions. In these kinds of images it is the topography that visually asserts stability by being restricted to limited colours and by being independent of any characteristics that might stem from specific weather conditions or time effects or by strong compositional structures depicting exceptional events that usually inform their subject matter (Klonk 1996:28,71).

In contrast, the picturesque's preoccupation with atmosphere created a sense of a contemporaneous moment of encounter with Nature.

In nineteenth century pictorial and landscape representation the decentralisation of subject matter engendered an interest in atmosphere as the possible object of experience (Klonk 1996:87). The outdoor sketch, in order to capture real light situations, allowed for colour to be directly applied to paper making the image appear as an exceptionally fresh, spontaneous and fluid rendering of a moment despite these images being very much worked in the studio (Klonk 1996:101-2, 108).

The practice of outdoor sketching had wider ramifications:

The Varley Circle [of artists] modified the practice of sketching ...they elevated the status of the sketch done outdoors to a work in its own right which was worthy of exhibition. In so doing, they introduced a new evaluation of the diversity of natural phenomena and the ephemeral appearances of landscape which had a lasting effect on British landscape.

(Klonk 1996:101)

Attendant to these developments, the pictorial space was treated as a 'field': all areas of the picture were given prominence so that no feature becomes the compositional focus and the picture is entered in an immediate way when viewed (Klonk 1996:109, 122). Picturesque composition allows for the integration of two modes of sketching practice: that of capturing the overall impression of an area and that of the careful study of particular objects (Klonk 1996:106). The immediacy of the view helps to evoke an experience of temporarily inhabiting a space. The panorama, by emphasizing 'inclusiveness', provided the viewer with an impression

of witnessing a 'real' scene, as if this viewing was unmediated. This image of Nature and natural order therefore becomes an intense moment of vision (Kriz 1996:149-150).

Vision in the contemporary moment

The changes in the understanding of nature were also contemporaneous with the shifts in perception that created agency for the viewing subject.

To entrench the value of vision in the contemporary moment, of framing 'contact with nature' as seeing in the moment, an increased capacity of the visual was required. William Gilpin, the artist and cleric, advocated that picturesque practice reject the academic tradition of referring to nature in terms of an inherited stock of received formal ideas and instead should present nature as a source of archetypes that were to be only visually identified in the natural landscape itself (Klonk 1996:106).

Richard Payne Knight, the scholar and connoisseur, stated that in the context of painting the imitation of nature depended on artists painting what they saw and not what they knew or perceived with the aid of the other senses (Klonk 1996:53). If this consideration was complied with it alone would be sufficient to guide both the artist and the critic to the true principles of imitation (Klonk 1996:53).

Additionally, qualities associated with the sense of touch were subsumed into the domain of the visual. Touch became ghostly: Uvedale Price, the landowner and author, notes that the ideas of texture, integrity and three-dimensionality acquired by touch should be expressed in vision through the intricate play of chiaroscuro, a dominant technique in late eighteenth century picturesque depictions, to reveal these qualities. The use of chiaroscuro to communicate tactile values of texture and integrity implies that the view requires the gaze to infer a certain history of touch that invokes a memory of 'this place'. This ghostly touch imbues an image of 'this place' with a quality of palpability which summons the viewer to entertain the experience of being there in the place depicted. It is interesting that in images of British domesticity, empathy with a place occurs through this linking of touch and seeing.

The imitation of visual impressions solely informing how nature and local landscapes were to be sufficiently 'represented' necessitated the imperative of a rustic visual variety that would be characteristic of the picturesque (Klonk 1996:72). So much so that as Price indicated the roughness, variety and alternating distribution of light and shade served to 'unify' picturesque compositions (Klonk 1996:72). The landscape artist recorded the relation of different appearances to each other (Klonk 1996:99).

Knight described the picturesque as a kind of beauty that belongs exclusively to the imagination guided by vision – a vision that served to awaken emotions that would not otherwise be

'present' in common scenery (Kriz 1997:36, 87). Raw nature was to be celebrated but for vision and its associated emotions only because picturesque theory, in denying efficient causal connections between the object of sensation, sensation itself and ideas, posited this process of association as taking place in the mind alone (Klonk 1996:35).

This emphasis on a particularly phenomenalist framing of the relationship between mind and nature results in picturesque landscape painting as well as the experience of nature being opened up to its legacy: the demise of the understanding that the mediation between subject and nature occurs through a direct physical link between them (Klonk 1996:5, 152). Klonk also suggests that as a consequence of this demise, our current relationship to the natural world is marked by deep alienation (Klonk 1996:5, 152). However, this intellectual capacity to disconnect oneself from the concrete impact of life was at the time considered essential for 'good taste and good political action' (Klonk 1996:35).

Institutions and the development of landscape painting

Swiss artist and curator Bernard Luthi states that art serves a representative function in our society in the sense that power structures and relations are made apparent through the process of managing 'representivity' (Luthi 1993:15). This management includes the proliferation of that which makes visible and what is made visible (Luthi 1993:15).

In the nineteenth century, when landscape painting was emerging as an independent category of painting, British art institutions like the Royal Academy and the British Institution framed qualities emblematic of the ideal viewing subject. These qualities were articulated primarily through the distinctions made between 'sensibility' and the 'sensual'.

The Royal Academy favoured painting as 'highly intellectual and moral' (Kriz 1997:53). This is evident in its devaluing and regulation of colour intensity, of dramatic light and dark contrasts and of 'painterly effects', all of which were described as appealing to the senses, considered dangerously or excessively emotional and subjective (Kriz 1997:53). Reynolds and Edward Dayes, the English watercolour painter, stated that it was the 'excessive manner' of the above elements that registered visual evidence of the artist selfishly displaying himself and of the viewer relishing in sensuous display rather than exercising social sensibility and intellect (Kriz 1997:49).

'Excessive' sensuality which registers and emphasizes the materiality of the manner of the artist, the represented scene and the viewer competes with 'vision' in its capacity to determine the context for the experience of the artwork/picture. Their conflicting ideas describe the contestation around the kind of visual perception that will determine the context in which the experience of the artwork is understood. A visual perception registering as sensual and registering the sensual is then framed as being too distracted by the particular and address the

sensual and physical body as untethered to controls imposed through prevailing rational and moral dispositions.

The denigration of the bodied experience and the specific focus on the material rendition of a scene implicit in the viewing of artworks is made apparent by public exhibitions. Public exhibition strategies mark the anxieties regarding the material rendition of a landscape scene in an image and the kinds of viewing implicated in that rendition. The aversion towards a sensually bodied experience of the artwork is made apparent in the point that Kriz makes about the scale of landscape images. They were smaller in scale than history paintings and so allowed for the total picture to be seen in one field of vision so that the effect of the painting *on the mind* is complete, that is, fully communicated (Kriz 1997:55).



Figure 1.5

Thomas Gainsborough, *Wooded Landscape with a Seated Figure* 1747 (oil on canvas, 625 x 781mm)
London, Tate Gallery

Thomas Gainsborough's *Wooded Landscape with a Seated Figure* of 1747 in figure 1.5 above offers an opportunity to discuss the implication of a body's presence through the view. The artist's 'body' implied by the point of view within the picture and imaginatively inhabited by the viewer when the painting is seen indicates that this identification of the viewer with the landscape is solely dependent on the artist's 'vision'. The artist's vision becomes the symbol of the ideal viewing English subject and a marker of the new 'body' – existent in and through vision only, the merging of subjectivity and national identity. The kind of sensibility to be performed in public is subject to such scrutiny.

After the French Revolution, there arose a need to develop a distinct, British, native school of painting that would embody the specific ideal of 'English character' as a way to bind the body politic (Kriz 1997:9, 11). Excessive sensuality was associated with revolutionary sentiment described as particularly French in character. Against these concerns, it is interesting to note how the circulation of British landscape images was framed. With the aid of the British Institution, landscape painting developed in the context of a market desire for depictions of familiar places and events (Kriz 1997:11). Fusing narrative with the depiction of local landscapes ensured that these images possessed significant exchange value as being 'British'. The genre of landscape painting aligned artists and viewers within a nationalistic trajectory where viewing nature slips into a public and proprietary viewing of land.

The 'love of travel' with which associations of freedom, thinking and curiosity about the past were made was thought important for the development of a bold and independent disposition (Kriz 1997:35-6). As noted before, landscape and its representation becomes the designated context for the display and performance of the English ideal of independent-mindedness, that being the freedom of the individual from authoritarian control (Kriz 1997:35-6). Private funding of the arts or free market competition allowed the English people themselves to create what they required thereby allegedly supporting the independence of landscape artists while exercising and displaying their individual sense of 'taste' (Kriz 1997:35-6).

British artists were compelled to embrace the British aesthetic otherwise they would alienate themselves from their public by abandoning their own social and national identity (Kriz 1997:46). This abandonment would be evident in the embrace of the artificial and the gaudy in art, specifically the brilliant effects of spangle, catching light and tinsel characteristically part of the unnatural, dangerously feminized pre-Revolutionary French taste (Kriz 1997:6). A showy style was said to appeal to those who were not in the habit of thinking when they were seeing (John Taylor in Kriz 1997:50). Although nature was to please the eye, it was sentiment that would gratify the mind (Kriz 1997:51). 'Excessive' attention to seeing as appealing to the body's senses was implied as limiting the potential for an intense experience of the landscape, especially since it was identified with an excitability that would threaten a national British

identity premised on 'restraint'. The reactive body has to be averted – one in which sensual seduction and excitability is linked to dubious and dangerous action and a betrayal of self and nation. Adopting a different sensuality meant adopting a different polity.

Jurgen Habermas, the sociologist and philosopher, stated that "subjectivity, as the innermost core of the private, was always already oriented to an audience...", the power and danger of this is its ambiguous relationship to the public (Kriz 1997:136). Therefore the British civic humanist construction of the subject is that of a citizen who suppresses his sensuous needs and desires, his body, and it is this form of liberal disinterest that informs *independent-mindedness* making for a disposition of detachment (Kriz 1997:46).

The instability that arises in searching for an image of home in a foreign space

Within the Victorian rhetoric of discovery, it is the aesthetic pleasure of sight that single-handedly constituted the value and significance of the journey (Pratt 1992:204).

Utilising Mikel Dufrenne's description of adventure, I hope to extrapolate how adventure, particularly its narrative form, is deployed to re-cast the visual evidence of the colony delivered by a British colonial view as a kind of pleasure or enjoyment. The moment of arrival in the colony holds the resolution of the imperial journey in suspense. As Mikel Dufrenne, the philosopher and aesthete explains, the adventure provides an event or object of experience for the cultural world. The goal of exploration or the recompense to the hero's adventure remains hidden as the unexpected occurrence he and his audience expect. As a result, adventure registers as an inexplicable desire for the potential discovery of an absent object – what serves as a challenging provocation in the story becomes a source of uneasiness in the colony (Dufrenne 1973:398-9). This anxiety belies the pressure to perform a kind of discovery for 'home' that will *not* materialize as a failed expedition in the colonial project. The event or place of arrival, where the absent goal or object will be realised, has the considerable power of arousing feelings that are related to a new side of the world being shown eventually giving rise to a new aspect of self (Dufrenne 1973:403). The images that British colonial landscape representations present of the colony to a British public materialize Imperial conquest into actuality – especially since significant colonial representation in general is treated as bearing a distinct quality of 'reportage'. Charles Harrison, the art historian, states that the landscape painting genre provides precedents for a continued engagement, in the context of the visible, with that which is contingently excluded from the possibility of being seen and represented (Harrison in Mitchell 1994:234). Of particular interest to this assertion is the differentiation Harrison makes between the effects associated with landscape, some of which grapple with ideas of integration and dislocation, and the effect of painting which is derived from some

coincidence between thought and making that is a relaxation of both the protocols of viewing and of the supposed significance of latent content (Harrison in Mitchell 1994:231-2; 234).²

PERSPECTIVE

The problem of accurately representing space which is not corporeal in that it is neither object nor body

The articulation of space is dependent on the relationship of pictured space to pictured objects and the relationship of these to the art object itself. The position of the viewer's sensing body in relation to the articulation of space in a picture seems to be centred on how the materiality of space, object or body, and art object are conceived and differentiated. The art historian Erwin Panofsky noted that in Greco-Roman art, space was conceived of as the empty remainder of the paint surface and as inconsequential on the integrity of the object represented (Panofsky 1991:109). This emptiness is framed as either the symbol of ideal space or as the surface of the material picture support (Panofsky 1991:109). Space is thus described as the reading of depth intervals between the vertical staggering of visual elements as either infinity or as zero (Panofsky 1991:109).

When the material picture support is later replaced with the concept of an 'immaterial' picture plane, the world of things is introduced and confronts the spectator as something objective, transforming itself as it were into a 'prospect' (Panofsky 1991:110). The world of the pictured object suggests space as something to be seen - objects within this context 'witness' space for the viewer by their own peculiar displacement of space. Represented space is thereby imbued with roughly 'measurable' qualities of directionality, depth and distance. The spatial system of

² His assertions form part of a larger enquiry which he proposes of the power of landscape painting and with which this dissertation bears some affinity:

If there is a form of power specific to landscape painting, its measure will surely not be taken by a survey of what it is that landscape paintings show, however well explained that showing may be. To enquire adequately into the power of landscape painting, we will need to explore and to reexamine critically the kinds of metaphors for which the genre has historically furnished occasions and to which it has given rise – among them metaphors of integration and dislocation, of presence and absence. That is, we will need to take special account both of the forms of self-consciousness with which the concepts of nature and of vision have inescapably been invested and of the ways in which that self-consciousness has itself been topicalized. And then we will need to connect these to such particular forms of the dialectic between illusionistic depth and factitious surface as the genre of landscape has had distinctively to offer. And finally we will need to face the full implication of the register of effects with which landscape has been associated in the modern period, some of which are forms of practical derogation of clichés of integration and dislocation.

(Harrison in Mitchell 1994:231-2)

interior spaces, conceived of as hollow bodies or as that which 'contains' objects and bodies, was also used in the depiction of landscape spaces: three-dimensional relationships and spatial qualities were articulated through the contact of figures or objects with the 'floor' or ground (Panofsky 1991:55). Perspective expressed both bodies and the intervals between them because the ground functions as an index of spatial values: the sizes and the distances of individual bodies by their being arrayed on the ground plan are made readable (Panofsky 1991:57, 58). Consequently, the body and the object become the production of space and are immediately subject to the determinants of that space; they become symptomatic markers that inhabit the world-space of the picture (Panofsky 1991:57).

The unity of picture plane, depicted objects or bodies and depicted space is dependent on their being oriented through a homogenous, unambiguous and unlimited spatial extension to the vanishing point on the horizon (Panofsky 1991:122). Regulated distance ensures the cohesion of homogenous space, its visual integrity as pictured space. Perspective permits the correct topographical arrangement of individual objects or bodies, specifically "...how far two things ought to stand from one another..." and "...how closely they ought to cohere..." (Panofsky 1991:63, 65). This is so that the "...intelligibility of the subject matter is neither confused nor impaired by sparseness..." which would intolerably stretch the capacity for relation and comparison to occur within the confines of the gaze (Panofsky 1991:63, 65). Space is 'read' by the eyes: a meaningful and ideal proximity established within the represented scene allows for degrees of intimacy to be expressed through distance, 'closeness', seclusion, isolation, resemblance and difference.

Presence

Description is said to become increasingly intelligible when emphasis is placed on hyper-realistic sharpness and clarity: landscape paintings gain a visionary quality, thereby being endowed with meaning beyond the actuality of the landscape's appearance. This suggests a shift in landscape representation from depicting a moment of encounter to evoking the presence of personal vision. The imperative of clarity is associated with the artist having a clear conception of his subject otherwise, as the English landscape painter David Cox states, the creative intellect "will wander wildly" (Cox 1922:13-14).

'There' is symbolic of a detached or distant space that holds the experiential promises the viewer desires. Although the qualities of homogeneity and boundlessness that perspective institutes are foreign to the actual, direct experience of space, they instead offer an experience of a space that either evaporates true being into the mere manifestation of seen things or as anchoring the free and spiritual idea of form to a manifestation of mere seen things (Panofsky 1991:30-1). That is, the experience of implicated presence is dependent on a universe framed as a continuous quantity, existing before all bodies and indifferently receiving everything

(Panofsky 1991:66). In its totality as an image the represented landscape is different from the viewer's actual experience of space. However, the image also objectifies the subjective, as I understand, it also allows the viewer to confront his desire in relation to represented and actual land and in service of that to negate temporarily the intolerable differences of appearances and empty spaces which he sees before him (Panofsky 1991:66).

Thomas Baines' painting below, *Durban from Mr. Currie's Residence, Berea 1873*, offers an intriguing example of conveying distance. The increased attention to distance necessitated the use of optical instruments like the telescope to make visible what is beyond human visual capacity. Attendant to this use is the condition of detachment: the location that the eye sees and that attention is given to, is visually separated from the inhabited space that the viewer's body occupies. This splits the connection between 'here' and 'there' into two separate images and experiences. A crucial component of the colony being structured spatially and metaphorically as a Garden of the Imperial Home country is that of the visual articulation of distance and directionality to which are attached the narrative of these separated spaces, for example, that of Mr. Currie's garden and the ships in the distance. This sense of narrative makes immersion, even imagined ones, possible: distance provides the articulation of the relational concepts of 'here' of the colony and 'there' of the Imperial home country. Being there



Figure 1.6
Thomas Baines *Durban from Mr. Currie's Residence, Berea 1873* 1873 (oil, 455mm x 600mm) Durban, Collection of Durban Local History Museum

involves a certain proximity of these separated spaces - held in relation to one another, it is their differences that intimate distance: from the garden to the harbor, from the garden to the landscape of Durban and from the garden to the ships in the bay which are reminders of home.

A strategy aiding the viewer's body in dealing with a space that is infinitely larger than itself is to rationalize the subjective visual impression of space to such an extent that this very impression becomes the foundation for an 'infinite', experiential world (Panofsky 1991:66). This is where the 'real' is distanced and objectified and the image is considered a representative dissection of space. The landscape image consequently symbolizes the triumph of the distance-denying human struggle for control epitomized in the consolidation and systematization of the external world as an extension of the domain of the self as a nationalized, English subject (Panofsky 1991:67-8). The power of landscape images to be representative in their articulations of space rests in the objectification of 'personal' experiences of the landscape.³

In a sense the viewer occupies the same position from which the image was 'mythically' constructed and in the moment of viewing his gaze is united with what Norman Bryson, the art historian, calls the "...founding perception in a moment of perfect recreation" (Bryson in Marx 2008:86). John Berger, the art critic, adds that the viewer's eye is framed as the centre of the world: the world is arranged to be seen and converges on the eye as it converges onto the vanishing point of infinity (Berger in Marx 2008:86). The 'vanishing point' and its effect of convergence require no ambiguities in spatial relationships in the image and in the spatial extension from the foreground to this point. Convergence occurs also as a result of all objects depicted in the image 'falling into place' i.e. they are aligned to the same spatial order operating in the image. The imperative on the objects in this world of being seen is demonstrated in how their being communicatively displayed operates in relation to the view, in that these visualize a supposed willing and communicative complicity of the object with that world view which ultimately contributes to an eternal moment of discreet, disclosed presence (Panofsky 1991:68) (Bryson in Marx 2008:86). The detachment of the viewer, engendered by a gap between the seer and the seen, provides a condition where the viewer denies his own

³ British national identity is articulated through certain dispositions that the ideal citizen should possess – a primary feature of which being 'independent-mindedness'. The British citizen is figured as a predominantly cognitive subject: sensibility and sentiment are strongly favoured over sensuality and sentimentality. In this way, British indigeneity is distinguished by its distinct separateness from pre-Revolutionary French forms of identity. Dispositions deemed 'sensuous', as the French were characterized, were vilified for their capacity for 'sharedness'. Detachment, framed as 'liberal disinterest', was to allow the British citizen 'freedom from authoritarian control' – he is asked to *suppress* his sensuous needs and desires, of the experience of his body as sensuous. The sensuous threatened notions of sovereignty which became especially overdetermined as British power was extended beyond its borders.

carnality, even to the extent that it becomes an object itself. Thus the 'viewer-traveller' is framed as a solely seeing body restoring itself to a world in which it is topologically working itself into (Marx 2008:81). However, this 'immersion' into the depicted landscape is aimed at the consolidation of a 'national self'. Regarding landscape representation in the colony, the settler subsumes himself to a viewpoint in which landscape, bodies, interactions, relations and proximity are re-aligned to a pre-determined perception that is culturally imprinted from the centre of this colonial view.

Chapter Two

'Being here'

Introduction

This chapter considers how the landscape is dealt with by two different painting traditions located in two distant parts of the world that were colonized under British Imperialism. Whereas these traditions remain rooted to their geographic locations, the British artistic tradition experienced displacement as exemplified by Baines' travel in these areas. Briefly, in this context the dislocated artistic tradition that Baines employs is enabled by and makes conspicuous the portability of its images.⁴ This dislocation is augmented by an orientation to the land that is informed by the logic of the grid which grasps at land without necessarily experiencing it.

A consideration of a different mode of relating to the landscape is required when regarding the San and Aborigine painting traditions – a mode that situates itself in the sympathetic relationships between beings and land. A notion of 'home' is articulated through the sharedness of bodies and their influences on each other directly or via the landscape. Touch offers the conceptual grounding for exploring the conditions of tangibility which ultimately determines how a people situate themselves amongst others, spatially in the landscape and in the world of the image.

⁴ Baines acquired his artistic training in King's Lynn, Norfolk, England and travelled to South Africa and Australia as an explorer and artist.

TOUCH

Touch offers a particular kind of immediacy - where one is so close to the subject that essentially the possibility of vision is excluded (Bloch in Marx 2008:100). This 'extreme' closeness to the tangible/palpable registers proximity as crossing the object-subject divide, and as Mazzio notes, the history of touch is also a history of resisting objectification (Mazzio in Howes 2005:86). Touch, being immediate, has no spatial or 'third material' medium between the body and the touchable world: instead a closeness that takes the form of objects, bodies, textures, temperatures occurs as a result of this direct contact with objects (Mazzio in Howes 2005:91).

Tactility and touch, when physical direct contact is emphasised, begin to share common affinities. Tactility, described as an interplay among the senses, and touch, both become in their operations the very antithesis of specificity and categorical distinction. The difficulty of locating the origin of touch serves as an example. It occurs along the surface of the body, all over the body and inside the body – in its action of touching, this sense is momentarily without origin, making its own symbolism in that moment impossible. In contrast, the eyes, ears, nose and tongue symbolise the sensory perceptions they enable – hence the implication of a seeming affinity between sensing and its location, a rootedness.

As Mazzio articulates succinctly, touch without symbolism is difficult to represent, localise and demonstrate as a facet of bodily, cognitive and physiological experience. The difficulty that touch delivers is that it resists the operations of representation so integral to early modern somatic symbolism. This kind of somatic symbolism depends on synecdoche and metonymy upon which analogies of macrocosm and microcosm depend (Mazzio in Howes 2005:88-9). The kind of resistance touch offers to this specific construction of somatic symbolism, also renders touch absent in processes that enmesh the body into meaning. Instead it's been suggested that maybe the very failure of synecdoche is the only way that the polymorphous diversity of touch can be signified as without metonymy, the psyche battles to precisely locate and measure it (Mazzio in Howes 2005:91). My understanding is that the failure of linking parts of the body or a sensation to its equivalent whole; and operating without ideas closely associating touch to what is imagined to be intimate to it; allows touch to open up physiological experiences that are free of locating and measuring sensation on the physical body. That is, a different kind of body becomes conspicuous only to those involved in touch-based contact.

The elusive and representational dispersion that characterizes touch allows a certain connection of touch with the body to be considered. The body isn't all 'nose' but in many ways it is all 'touch' (Mazzio in Howes 2005:89). It is unproductive to represent this connection through the supposedly representational constructs of organs, media and objects. Touch, in this

context, becomes emblematic of anxieties around proximity considering the potential for the whole body to be implicated through touch.

Touch in its deep links to the body, becomes acutely sensitive to being affected and could inform how 'here' and 'there' in terms of touch, are articulated. By simile, touch can be relocated from the physically proximate to the relatively distant space of the environment, becoming close to a sixth sense: that being the inexplicable receptivity to seemingly undetectable environmental stimuli (Mazzio in Howes 2005:97). Touch seems the most suitable sense for the body to register an environment. San and Aborigine articulations of bodies are represented as being capable to some extent of assimilability and this bears significant ramifications for the kind of presence landscape is ascribed within representations depicting this form of touch-based contact.

San rock art images make apparent a subtle universe believed to exist in the physical environment the San lived in. Conceptual connections between elements in these images emphasise and depict their spiritual relationships. Prof. David Lewis-Williams, a cognitive archaeologist, and David Pearce, an anthropologist, both engaged in the study of shamanistic San rock art images, noted that artefacts, like a bag or arrow, are not often distinguished by the San from their raw materials (Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004:22). In rock art images, however, artefacts and raw materials like animal skin revert to their living sources in spiritual form – a revivification of natural material occurs in the spiritual realm evoked by these images.

Depicted figures are engaged in “action-based relationships” (Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004:177). The intensity of these interactions between figures is dependent on their proximity to each other which affords and is accompanied by transformations. Juxtapositioning indicated an interaction on a conceptual level while superimposition, reserved for the most potent supernatural being, the eland, is frequently painted over anthropomorphic figures as figure 2.1 and figure 2.2 below indicate (Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004:178)



Figure 2.1
Dying eland partially painted over a small figure



Figure 2.2

Eland in white painted over figure in red

These images become the site where potency is activated, much like the trance it depicts. The rock face described by Lewis-Williams and Pearce as a “veil” suspended between cosmological realms” (Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004: 97) was where shamans after their trance would recreate their visions amongst earlier existing images. The rock face bears the accumulation of hallucinatory experiences that, in having the same site of articulation, come to exist together regardless of their having been executed at different times by different shamans.

The intrinsic potency of the image prevents its deliberate erasure or defacement as it contributes to the trance experience:

...the people of old danced in the rock shelter, and raising their arms, turned to the images when they wanted more power...These images, especially those made with eland blood, were reservoirs of potency.

(Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004:105)

The use of eland blood in ochre pigment, becoming *qhang qhang* (Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004:101-2) indicates how potency in the image, i.e. its evocation of an overpowering quality that has the capacity to effect one physically, transforms into power, that being the ability to affect social and environmental conditions, specifically healing and the control of rain, in the everyday reality of the San.

Lewis-Williams and Pearce note that the touching of these images could trigger or contribute to the visionary insights of other shamans – “the sharing of visions is important because it multiplies *power*” (Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004:181, my emphasis).

Considering the earlier notion of the rock face as a veil bordering everyday reality and the spiritual realm, I would like to explore the implications of the images of eland that have been made with *qhang qhang*. Eland blood in being part of the substance used to make the image of the eland’s spiritual identity on the rock surface, the ‘veil’ that divides material reality and the spiritual world presents an ideal site for linking the material and the spiritual.

The potency inherent in the material i.e. the eland blood, is unleashed by its contact with and subsequent transformations within the spiritual realm indicated and held by the potent image. This image heralds a spiritual world and is heavily dependent on its contact of the material, through literal touch and the metaphors of touch, to realize potency into power.

The strong association of blood with corporeality in these images leads me to discuss the role of the anthropomorphic body in communicating the supernatural experience of the trance which the shaman and the represented figures share somatically.

The body, in experiential contexts, is an instrument of presence. The viewer's identification with the world of the image depends on philosopher Michel Serres' evanescent body – one that is not physically present but that "builds itself anew through its senses" (Connor 2005:318). The senses allow the body to 'exceed itself' thereby organizing itself into the world of the image by transforming its sensitiveness into sense (awareness/meaning) and sensibility (feeling) (Connor 2005:331). It aims to gauge and make visible the internal sense of the world it finds itself in – in the case of San art, realizing spiritual identity and relationships.

San rock art indicates, via the proximity of figures to each other, the sympathetic nature of these relationships. The figures' bodies in figure 2.3 below embody the senses reaching for contact: bodily reactions make palpable the power of the spiritual realm for the viewer and the sensing/feeling of the figures become chameleon-like, enacting the somatic experiences of the eland in the image.

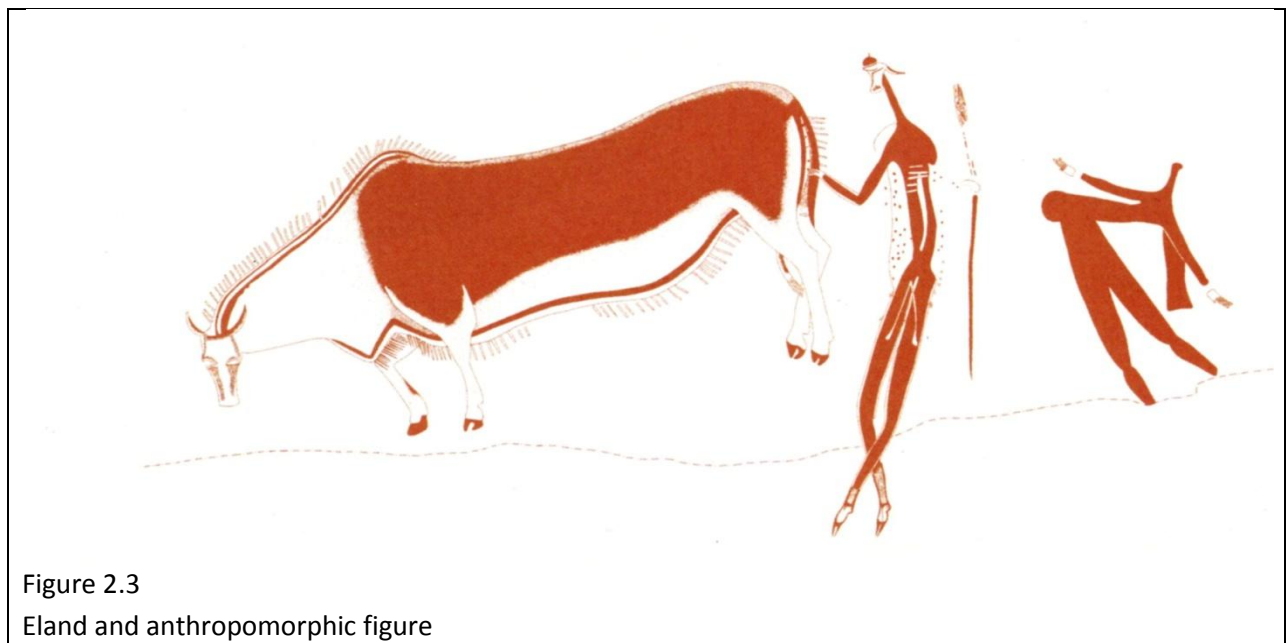


Figure 2.3
Eland and anthropomorphic figure

For this to occur, the body capable of transformation is one of a 'blankness' which is outlined by Serres as a readiness to be absorbed in thought or experience (Connor 2005:321). The figures' bodies disappear into contact with the eland and become the experience –it's where the trance occurs, through which potency becomes power and in the image it heralds the spiritual realm. Being amidst this supernatural world is evoked by what Serres notes is an efflorescence, an exploration of veils, a threading of tissues (Connor 2005:322-3).

Hence the feeling body of the figures in the image gives presence to what can't be seen in the image: its sensing collapses into feeling making tangible what is thought to occur in the trance – the conflation of realms bridges the effects of the trance on the shaman's body to what occurred during his transcological travels. In figure 2.3, physical human bodily responses are shown through the depiction of sweat, hairs standing on end and precarious balance, even though the figures are simultaneously transformed by the zoomorphic characteristics of animal-like head and hooves.

The emphasis on physical bodily reaction as realizing the implications of direct contact - whether of the shaman with the spiritual realm or by touching the image – a common border between these realms is defined and transcended allowing potency unleashed in the image to be effected in the everyday life of the San.

PLACE, LAND AND ABORIGINAL POSSESSION

Possession of land in indigenous discourse, by emphasizing social kinship as being dependent on a specific attachment to land, enables social networks to be established in an environment where the dispersal of people over vast areas is the norm.

The identity of an Aborigine individual embodies in part that of the *tjukurpa* beings - ancestors whose actions during the time of the law fundamentally determined the landscape of the Western Desert. The term *walytja* referring to both people and places articulates this cross-identification between land and the people who 'hold' it (Layton 1995: 224). Robert Layton, an anthropologist whose concerns range across indigenous arts and rights, and social change, notes that when individuals and communities "...participate in performances of culture, language is being used to do practical things" (Layton 1995: 215-6). Language, amongst other things, enables the spiritual and everyday to meet. Land in particular is described in terms of resources – in its everyday aspect, it becomes the object of subsistence activities and these sites, at times, converge with the most important places where *tjukurpa* beings went into the ground consequently making these areas rich in fecundity. Those who 'hold' the land determine access to its resources by bringing the visitor into contact with this land's sacred objects, the trespassing on which is met with punishment.

'Holding an estate' in indigenous discourse is not amenable to the enclosure or demarcation of land through which Western settlement is articulated as it is determined by kinship through ancestral embodiment. The area of the estate is dependent on a flexibility of links between people and land: rights to land overlap as descent groups that are recruited by multiple means are recognized, with the result being that the edges of these zones of land are often indeterminate (Layton 1995:211-2).

Place, particularly its fecundity, is a result of the merging of land, the ancestral and the human. This is brought about by the conflation of identities, achieved through kinship and embodiment, and of present and past times, which occurs through the meeting of realms where the everyday and the spiritual, subsistence and mythological activities are absorbed into each other, and the Dreamtime⁵.

⁵ Peter Sutton's comprehensive description of the Dreaming requires mentioning:

Dreamings are Ancestral Beings. In that sense, they both come before, and continue to inhere in, the living generations. Their spirits are passed on to their descendants. Shark Dreaming, or Honey Ant, Yam, Cough, and the hundreds of other Dreamings known across Australia are part of the spiritual identities of those Aborigines who claim them as their Ancestral Beings or totems. Groups of people who share the same Dreamings may constitute totemic corporations, sets of people bonded by a common link to the spiritual. Particular Dreamings that function in this way as signs of groups, emblems of local and corporate identity, provide much of the spiritual underpinning of traditional communal title to land. To falsely claim the Dreaming of another group is a serious infringement of Aboriginal law.

In the myths, Dreamings are born, live, and sometimes die, but they are also eternally present. The spiritual dimension or domain in which they have their existence is the Dreaming, also sometimes referred to as the Dreamtime. Because it is foundational, the Dreaming is sometimes described as the beginning of the world. This was the period when the Ancestral Beings moved about, forming the landscape and creating the plants, animals, and peoples of the known world. They also founded the religious ceremonies, marriage rules, food taboos, and other laws of human society.

In that sense, the Dreaming is the Law. But in the Dreaming, Ancestral Beings frequently broke the Law, just as people do today. The Dreaming is thus the generative principle of the present, the logically prior dimension of the now, while also being a period in which the plants and animals were still women, men, and children, before their transformation into their present forms took place.

The concept of the Dreaming, the organizing logic of so much of the symbolism of Aboriginal art, is not easily explained partly because it is unlike the foundational concepts of most other religious systems. The Dreaming is not an idealized past. The Dreaming, and Dreaming Beings, are not the products of human dreams. In most Aboriginal languages the concept referred to in English as the Dreaming is not referred to by words for dreams or the act of dreaming, even though it may be through dreams that one sometimes gets in touch with the Dreaming. The use of the English word *Dreaming* is more a matter of analogy than of translation.

ABORIGINAL REPRESENTATION OF LAND

The Dreamtime is a mythological account of how the actions of various ancestors throughout their journeys across the terrain resulted in the topographical features of the Australian landscape. However, these places were made and new origins were created through the non-intentional impacts of ancestral activity on the land. Howard Morphy, the Australian ethnographer, relays how Narritjin Maymuru (a Yolngu, an Aboriginal person from north-east Arnhem Land), pictured in figure 2.4 below in a valley in the Snowy Mountains, identifies this area with the ancestral woman Ganydjajala, the creator of stone spearheads.

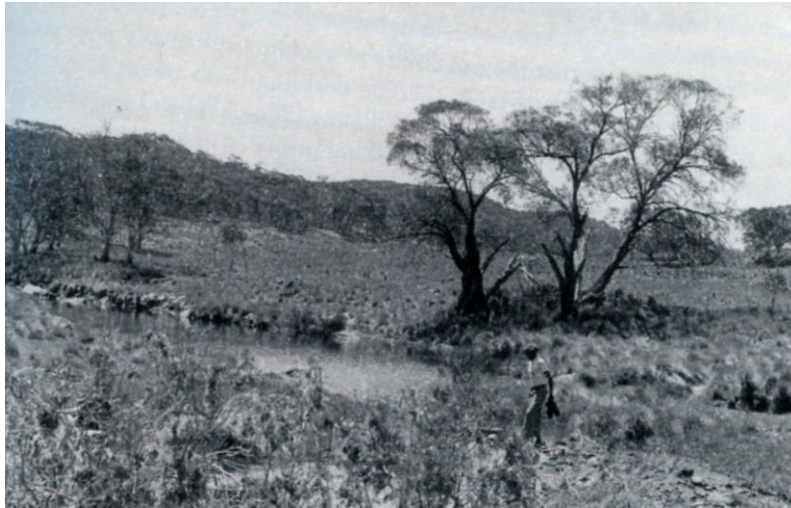


Figure 2.4
Narritjin Maymuru in a valley near the Snowy Mountains

The animate beings of the Dreaming are not night visions, nor are they idealized persons. They are Ancestral Beings. They exhibit all the faces of human virtue, vice, pleasure, and suffering. Images of these beings, their places of travel and habitation and their experiences, make up the greatest single source of imagery in Aboriginal art. While most are characterized as the animals and plants of Australia (Kangaroo Dreaming, Cheeky Yam Dreaming, for example) or as heroic individuals (the Two Young Women, the Apalach Men), some are less readily grasped as totemic beings by outsiders (Cough Dreaming, for example, or Dead Body, Itchiness, and Diarrhea).

(Sutton 1988:15-16)

The ancestral women cut down trees in the inland forests as they looked for honey. In different places, where the trees fell, they created water courses and lakes, or ceremonial grounds, or stone-spear quarries.

(Morphy 1995:184)

The recognition of features and places depended on a specific configuration of the qualities of the topographical features to be found there. In a manner distinctly different from Western modes of navigation, these elements' qualities are used to locate place and are recreated in ceremonies. Ganydjatala is also associated with one of Arnhem Land's foremost ceremonies: the Djungguwan. Morphy notes,

Narritjin pointed to the sharp pebbles that lay beside the stream that were Ganydjatala's stone spears, and he pointed out the trees that were similar to those in the forests through which Ganydjatala hunted, and finally he reminded me of how the lake she created was represented in paintings on ... posts made for the Djungguwan ceremony by his brother Bokarra, and how its shape resembled the shape of the lake by which we were sitting

(Morphy 1995:184)

Narritjin was able to identify the ancestral origin of this particular place through recognition of the resemblances echoed between myth, ceremony and the valley's topographical features. Recognition was not strictly visually mimetic but rather occurred from memory as is evident in the comparison of the two quotations and the photograph labelled figure 2.4 above. It is myth and history that combine to reinforce a Yolngu image of place (Morphy 1995:196).

Morphy further points out that in Yolngu language, spatialization is primary as myths subordinate the sequence of ancestral events to the spatial circumstances of the terrain they occur in (Morphy 1995:188, 193). As a result, the experience of myth, especially in its telling, is simultaneously an experience of the places they describe. The experience of the land associated with Ganydjatala is a consequence of a familiar spatial arrangement of topographical elements constructed in myth, inducing a sense of having already been there.

The paintings of ancestral places, like *Jardiwarnpa Jukurrpa ('Dreaming') – Fire Jukurrpa ('Dreaming')* in figure 2.5, evoke ceremonial grounds in that they re-create far-off landscapes – traditionally, natural materials occurring in the vicinity of these grounds are transformed into the mythological features of these distant places. *Jardiwarnpa Jukurrpa ('Dreaming') – Fire Jukurrpa ('Dreaming')* details the travels through Warlpiri country of four ancestors to and from two fire ceremonies that they danced together at: Yarripiri, the blind snake ancestor who had with him boomerangs; Wurrulju, a spectacled hare wallaby who had music sticks;

Kunyarrpungu, dog; and later at the second ceremony, Yankirri, emu. (Ross in Luthi 1993:280-283). The process of this painting's production involved objects, referred to in myths as ancestral possessions and depicted in the painting, specifically boomerangs and music sticks, being brought to the painting's edge and several painters re-enact the emu myth on the surface of the painting.



Figure 2.5
Michael Nelson Tjakamarra (Assisted by Marjorie Napaljarri),
Five Tjukurrpas ('Dreamings'), 1984

Indeed paintings such as *Jardiwarnpa Jukurrpa ('Dreaming') – Fire Jukurrpa ('Dreaming')* are mythological maps of the landscape as features lying beneath the land and sea surfaces are represented as embodied ancestral forces. These features are markers of ancestral presence. Ancestral journeys, like the emu, dog, wallaby and snake in *Jardiwarnpa Jukurrpa ('Dreaming') – Fire Jukurrpa ('Dreaming')*, have different trajectories through the same landscape – both 'map' and landscape are sites of convergence of various ancestral presences and actions allowing for a multiplicity of meanings to exist in relation to particular areas of land.

The qualities of the places created in this myth are not depicted in the painting but are evoked through reference to narratives of the ancestral journeys in this area. There is no visual correlation between the topographical features of Mission Creek/ Wilypiri Soakage and its rendition in the painting *Jardiwarnpa Jukurrpa ('Dreaming') – Fire Jukurrpa ('Dreaming')*.

Furthermore, the scale relationships between various elements in this painting are inverted: an ancestral emu footprint for example is larger than the features indicated and the snake is in effect many kilometres long. The ancestral footprints depicted, being emblematic of transformative contact with the land, are more differentiated from each other than the places are. Places are abstracted to such an extent, even becoming nameless, that they become rhythmical points along a surface.

These paintings are heavily indexical in that they trace the origins of ancestral contact and consequently also of places and the communities attached to them. Yolngu paintings of areas in Arnhem Land indicate places or features through clan designs which visually become the surface of these paintings. In Yolngu metaphysics, design ('miny'tji') signifies the ancestral identity of an object, person or area of land and also intensifies the value of these forms within the painting or ceremony (Morphy 2007:17). These designs evoke the relationships between people, place and the sacred ensuring that the everyday is connected to the ancestral context.

The object, being or area of land marked by design in terms of ancestral identity is also associated with the power of these ancestral beings – these entities are treated as such in ceremonial contexts which re-enact transformative contact with areas of land in ancestral times.

The changed land and images that represent it consequently hold the power of the ancestors who created it into place (Morphy 1995: 201). Successful paintings, although being primarily replications of designs executed from memory, were judged so by their capacity to convey and give insight to this transformative power (Morphy 2007:115, 153). The reproduction of ancestral forms allows the Yolngu to move into closer proximity with the ancestral dimension (Morphy 2007:153).

Usually pivotal ancestral beings are depicted in acts of transformation – their own forms change as well as the manner in which these forms are rendered along a range spanning from, and in combinations of, the figurative to the geometric. These shifts in embodiment consequently enables these beings to be understood as abstractions that are only partially manifest in any one representation – much like how land is apprehended as a conglomeration of a variety of ancestral beings' journeys and actions (Morphy 2007: 137).

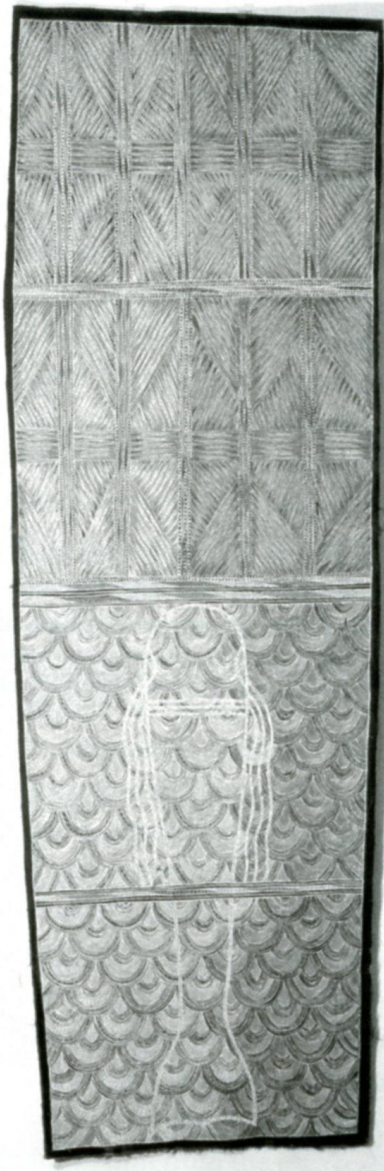


Figure 2.6

Daymirri 2002 Artist- Wanyubi Marika, Sydney, The Annandale Galleries

The conflation and associations of ancestral identities with particular features of land occurs through the interaction between the appearance of the picture surface and the underlying ancestral reality it aims to convey. Morphy points out that this articulates the belief that the surface form of things are derived from underlying structures and relationships which are templates of the ancestral past (Morphy 2007:109). Cross-hatching and emergent iconicity is identified by Morphy as creating a shimmering brilliance, at work in *Daymirri* (figure 2.6), that evokes or adds ancestral power (Morphy 2007:91).

This painting provides a striking example of the conceptual and visual effect of *buwuyak* – the property of faintness and transparency (Morphy 2007:204). The figure of the whale visually exists as an outline on a background of clan designs of the Rirratjingu clan country representing the sea surrounding Bremmer Island/ Dhambaliya. Conceptually, this being dissolves into the geometric rendition of the rock with which it is associated and subsequently becomes, as inferred by the touch of these two manifestations in the image. Typical to these representations, the surface moves, becomes unstable as the eye is prevented from settling on any segment of the image by the interference of other segments sharing the same design (Morphy 2007:92). What is depicted is transformation on the move indicating a state of immersion of communal and ancestral identity in the land. Morphy notes that the image depicts the whale

as it appears from the depths off the island. Rarely seen, it is manifest in the form of a sacred rock, exposed at low tide, that glistens white in the sun. Both the whale and the rock literally appear and disappear beneath the surface of the water.

(Morphy 2007:106)

The landscape is saturated with communal memory in that it represents a particular “structure” of how land, people and ancestors are bound to each other (Layton 1995:212). Interaction with the landscape is part of a larger process where the Dreaming is reproduced (Morphy 1995:187). The ancestral events, in being repeated over time, are made subject to this existing structure of relationships: new connotations that were gained through this repetition allow the Dreaming to accommodate itself to the ‘exigencies of historical events’ (Morphy 1995:187).

Place or feature, being the ancestor’s presence fixed in the land, marks and is the experience of timelessness within the present. The qualities of the present are thereby made apparent and its depth is gauged in relation to the ancestral past. Land is one of many sites where, because of this structure of cross-identification, the human and ancestral worlds are able to meet thus maintaining that both landscape and human identity have the “same origin: the ancestral past” (Morphy 1995:189, 205).

In both traditions studied in this chapter, touch is associated with transformation – where something of one being is subsumed into another being or into the landscape. This contact is productive in relation to power and meaning. Bodies are implicated in the landscape in a variety of ways and the sense of origins – that of a mutual connection to the landscape – is strengthened.

Generally, the bodies depicted in these two traditions are distinctive for their being both assimilable and attuned to the assimilable – that is, to what is considered to be able to be absorbed and incorporated into bodily tissues. The images that operate with this kind of understanding of the body are better situated as what Peter Sutton, anthropologist and linguist, notes as more “manifestation than mere representation” – that is, they are continuations of a specific coactive concurrence of the natural and the supernatural believed to be already existing (Sutton 1989: 48-49). Within this frame of reference, the non-objectification/non-externalisation of land recurs.

Aborigine paintings of the type shown in this chapter offer a form of connection to land, plants, insects, animals, people, ancestors and powerful beings and so the depiction that is utilized in these paintings can be described as one where space and human/animal/ancestral presence collapse into a topological map.⁶ These images which contain land-centric myths as their

⁶ “In traditional Aboriginal thought, there is no central dichotomy of the spiritual and material, the sacred and secular, or the natural and supernatural. While each of the Dreaming Beings and their physical counterparts and manifestations (as animals, plants, water holes, rock formations, or people) are distinguishable, Dreamings and their visible transformations are also, at a certain level, one. The centrality of place - particular lands and sites of significance – in this imagery enables even religious sculptures to be regarded as “landscapes”. For the tradition-minded, the art works themselves may belong on a continuum of manifestations of the Dreaming, together with

subject matter are deployed as 'surfaces' since optical distance is eradicated by the absence of both perspective and the horizon line. The connecting of past and present and the suggested simultaneity of here and there occurs – as examples, the snake ancestor in fig. 2.5 whose body straddles many places at the same time and the whale in fig 2.6 which is creature, ancestral being and rock. The 'landscape' of these images is a field of potentiality where the dissolving or collapsing of space, forms and bodies happens. However, this is also a field of simultaneous contact which is visually effected by a patterning that is both on the surface but lets the surface through to the eye. And with this shimmer of protruding and receding attention from the eye there is also movement or 'energy' over this patterned surface.

San rock art images do not have 'borders' in the sense that a frame acts as a border for a painting and in that figures are painted directly onto the rock face, a surface of the landscape. As a result, one becomes aware of their existing in the landscape. These images, painted on the rocks, become site-specific in that they are rooted to a location and the landscape comes to be embodied in a different way as the surface of the painting. The landscape exists within the world of the image as implied context or space but also as its real form: the rock surface remains as it is – it enables these images their physical permanency. The materials making up the rock art images are sourced from the landscape itself and/or from revered animals. These materials are rearranged according to a set of beliefs regarding spiritual relationships binding organic and inorganic matter, and thus these images were also believed to hold a certain spiritual potency depicted in the images. Additionally, images accumulate as nomadic travel occurs through these landscapes – these accretions occur over each other in the same area over a long period of time by different artists. Past and present are seen in one view as these painted figures collect on the surface of the landscape.

the artists who made them, the natural species projected in the totemic designs, and the topographic features of the landscape. Landscape features themselves are the marks made by the Dreaming Beings, elements of a larger system of meaning...The single most common subject matter of Aboriginal art is landscape-based myth." (Sutton 1989:16)

Chapter Three

'here and there'

Introduction

After reviewing three different traditions of relating to the landscape in the previous chapters I would like to now focus on moments where the British settler confronts a 'strange' land. Specifically, the strategies used to make the strange land, an Imperial possession, bear some relationship to the settler's 'home' which now exists far away.

Settlers like S. T. Gill and Thomas Baines acquired their art training in Britain and then moved to the colonies in South Africa and Australia. Their artistic work was illustrative of colonial everyday life and the expeditions they participated in were funded by scientific and governmental institutions. Their images furnished proof of the becoming of the British Empire: the images executed during their explorations and which were later translated into paintings offer insights into how moments of encounter in these strange lands are brought into British forms of landscape representation.

THE IMAGE OF ARRIVAL



Figure 3.1

S.T. Gill, *Country North-west of Tableland 1846* (watercolour, 19.1 x 30.7 cm) Canberra, National Library of Australia

Roslynn Haynes, the cross-disciplinary academic notes that landscape, whether real or imagined, is configured as a “...vertical slice of space” (Haynes 1998:89). A high viewpoint as that of in figure 3.1 affords the eye movement from an elevated foreground to the background: sky, the line of the horizon and a vast area of land are all visible in the same moment; in one view (Haynes 1998:89). The activity depicted in this scene – surveying the land – is synonymous in its viewing action with that of the telescope. Another dimension of the optical disembodiment afforded the view by an elevated vantage point is articulated. Land is objectified and externalized by the lens of the telescope and an element of precision is attached to the kind of viewing that occurs in relationship to this instrument – a certain credibility of this kind of view is enhanced which is now not plagued with imprecision or personal vision – that is, it suggests that it is not a carnal eye that views. The viewer gains a

sense of the totality of the terrain viewed. Consequently, a ‘here-there’⁷ relationship is made apparent: the viewer is able to anticipate the possibilities of the featureless landscape as the explorers in the foreground with their map and rifle are related to the vast empty region displayed before them. These are images of arrival from which future communities mark their origins.

The image of arrival intimates the possibility for making place. The historian Paul Carter notes that the hilltop situation is a place where the sense of “...space congregates” (Carter 1987:288). There is a phenomenological distance between the figures in the painting and the landscape in front of them that also exists between the viewer and the painting: landscape becomes an image by its flattening into a plane displayed for the viewer (Coetzee 1988:48). Landscape exists for the viewer or traveler as a solely visual experience. Figure 3.2 is a fantastic image of the Victoria Falls in that it articulates a longing for height which reflects the “...awareness of place as the correspondence between view and viewpoint...” and is dependent on “...visual and conceptual distinctness...” and on “...its suggestiveness as a site of reverie...”, a zone to dream (Carter 1987:288).

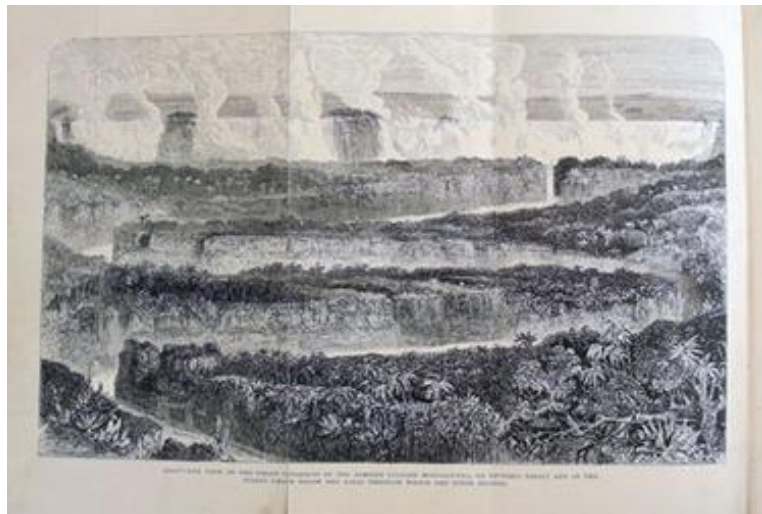


Figure 3.2
Victoria Falls, Frontispiece of David Livingstone’s *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi*, 1865

⁷ ‘Here-there’ is a term I use to explore multiple moments of bifurcation: I am mostly concerned with diasporic or settler bodies that ‘exist’ in two places – physically trying to adapt or transplant itself into its present location while also occupying a disembodiment that allows connections, however imaginary, to the home-country to be sustained despite the almost-impossible physiological demands of adapting to ‘here’, a maybe new home.

This term is also employed to consider several contexts this dissertation extrapolates upon – chiefly, moments where some form of the body has to be ‘left behind’ in order to fully experience an event, object, image or place. That is, moments of contact requiring kinds of disembodiment. One example which has been discussed earlier has been access occurring through the sense of sight alone via the microscope to a world imperceptible to the unaided body.

By contrast, the desert and the forest – the wild places - are where the traveller’s height and the “...the tallness of the world...” are diminished (Carter 1987:288). The traveller is forced to inhabit and navigate through a space of utter materiality without a view of the broader space it is rooted in. The horror of being absorbed into the environment connoting associations of death and decay become lived experience – this differs immensely from the intimacy and comfort of British landscapes. The blinded traveller having no view of a ‘beginning’ or an ‘ending’ of his immediate space experiences direction as unplottable - space itself becomes material as it now registers as an obstacle. He is forced to confront the very space that he is in which holds no vectors of direction to outside of itself and to other places.



Figure 3.3

J. M. W. Turner, *The Vale of Ashburnham* 1816 (watercolour, 37.8 x 56.4 cm) London, British Museum



Figure 3.4

Ludwig Becker, *Border of the Mud-desert near Desolation Camp* 1861 (watercolour, 14 x 22.8 cm)
La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria

The landscape – land as image – implicitly offers unencumbered movement to those who are privy to what the view affords. In this space certain lines constitute trajectories that appear to be filled with movement which is realized in immobility and not as an inert residue of some movement (Dufrenne 1973: 277-8). That is, these lines themselves are not meant to express motion nor are they traces of gestural marks made on the surface of the image by the artist. Instead, they induce the eye to move along their positioned lengths through the depicted space. These immobile lines Dufrenne speaks of heralds a convention requiring ambulatory viewing and not one that is receptive to more overt presentations of ‘personal touch’ or effect or even style that gestural marks seem to suggest. Horizontal lines, with their quality of placelessness, provide vectors along which the eye moves across the surface of the image to their destination. Roughness and intersections localize or focus the gaze onto an area while vertical elements section off spaces. These pictured spaces do not resist spatial progression and are distinct from inhabited actual spaces with their polymorphous trajectories of unrelated and shifting patterns of convergences and divergences.

The image of arrival requires that landscape ‘meet’ the travelers, that it be complicit with their desires for their presence to be acknowledged - the landscape in figure 3.3 encompasses this expectation that the one depicted in figure 3.4 lacks. In *The Vale of Ashburnham* (figure 3.3), from a position of a raised vantage point, the gently rolling hills convey an embracing and openly unfolding landscape dotted with elements connoting domesticity or distinct markers of ‘this place’. *Border of the Mud-desert near Desolation Camp* (figure 3.4) recruits signs of

domesticity – dogs in particular – to intimate the possibility of permanent settlement. However, the confident progression towards the horizon in *The Vale of Ashburnham* becomes in figure 3.4's blank, sparse terrain an unsure, anxious set of meanderings where survival in the land referenced remains a troubling question. Space, in its image, should be complicit with directionality and provide an encounter with the totality of a landscape. 'Here' and 'there' are realised and are made to affect each other solely thereby allowing a mythical tension between rootedness and mobility to develop.

The Boundary and aesthetic experience

“...country is...nearly level and it is difficult to ascertain the limits of the valley.”
(Carter 1987:53)



Figure 3.5
S.T. Gill, *Invalid's tent, Salt Lake, 75 miles north-west of Mount Arden* 1846
(watercolour on paper, 21.4 x 34.2 cm) Adelaide, Art Gallery of South Australia.

The invalid referred to in fig. 3.5 above is shown with his body on the ground and his location is described as far off from a prominent landmark. However, the domestic comforts displayed like the dog and a temporary home also extends to the spatial arrangement of the landscape in this scene. The anxiety that limitless monotonous spaces provoke as Carter's observation above infers is somewhat suppressed in this painting. A strong delineation occurs separating quite starkly the domestic space of the explorer's camp which is filled with nourishing greenery for his camel from the vast barren salt lake that extends from the edge of the campsite almost to

the horizon. The making of place in the colony depended on a specific articulation of boundaries that becomes increasingly perceptible and clear.

The concept of a boundary is an integral part of how 'here', 'there' and the relationships between these two states are established. Boundaries demarcate the limits of 'something' thereby defining and differentiating areas of land. Carter notes that when these boundaries take the form of intermediate spaces – as zones of unspoken for or unoccupied land or as an interval between spaces - they function to communicate a limited independence. The settler's isolation is established thereby but the traveller's sense of complete desolation, of placelessness, was exacerbated. (Carter 1987:227) The rhetoric of place which would otherwise have connected travelling and settling with notions of 'here', where the traveler is presently, and 'there', a destination, remained absent. Although there is a destination, the area surrounding it remains undefined – space doesn't flow to the destination. That is, the destination or place exists as an island amidst terrain that is neither country nor wilderness nor 'claimed' yet. This situation is altered when distinctive features or places are named and relationships are established between them which then allows the traveler to grasp the nature of a territory as a whole.

However, when the boundary takes the form of a frontier, it signifies the expanse beyond itself as an exclusion of all that is not culturally familiar and so marks that which will eventually be named, claimed and 'othered'. The act of selectively incorporating 'the familiar' involves a complete silencing of what made the frontier necessary initially – it hides the intentions underpinning its origins. The aim of the frontier was to satisfy the need of the newcomer for a bounded place of his own: the boundless extents of the terrain that surrounds him (and from which he initially 'came' visually speaking) are transformed into an attraction. The colonist feels suitably distanced from the new land that surrounds him as the new origins established in the colony bear a very close relation to those 'older origins' of home. How the 'here' of the colony and the 'there' of the Imperial home country is established through an increasing clarity of the boundary: from the rough edge of the frontier to the line of the fence (Carter 1987:158, 147). In contrast to Western notions of an exchangeable ownership of land, Aboriginal boundaries – which can be multiple and overlapping – are sites of land-myth articulations from which non-exchangeable rights to land are derived.

Finally, when the boundary becomes a fence, land becomes subject to enclosure and is made to harmonise with the newcomer's term of relating to the 'outside' or that which not home. The boundary is framed as a neutral line that borders territories or as a veil or barrier to knowledge (Carter 1987:155,163). The newcomer assumes then that what goes on over on the other side of the fence is different but *comparable* to what goes on within it – it differs on the either side of the line or fence (Carter 1987:161, my emphasis). The space beyond the fence, being seen,

can be inhabited by the newcomer without his body moving beyond the fence. A separation of lived space 'here' and dream space 'there' occurs. 'There' – outside - becomes a site of reverie, a place of wildness. In the colony, the garden between the fence and the home is where the world can be brought in. In places like the desert that can't be a garden or can't be differentiated, the straight line offers a hurried exit from an unnameable vastness.

Furthermore, Dugald Stewart, the Enlightenment philosopher and mathematician, stated that the understanding of sublime and picturesque landscapes was based on a linguistic relationship dealing with qualities of similarity and difference and not on an essential relationship between what is represented visually and the 'feelings' evoked (Klonk 1996:25). Alison notes that a stimulus sets a train of associations in motion and it is these associations that produce aesthetic emotions and excite the imagination into emotions of sublimity or beauty that is felt (Klonk 1996:23). These emotions foreground the experience of 'having been there' – the viewer being in two places simultaneously. Here and there become linguistically articulated – here and there never replace each other. Rather a relationship of spatial similarity is established, despite one being seen the other being felt and occupying different physical locations. The land on the other side of the fence, the sight of which is sifted through the vegetal details of the garden, is contained by the fence but is also framed by the orthogonals of windows and doors of the settler's home. In this way, the image of the land beyond the fence and the potential experiences it offers is brought into a community – an intimacy and supposed immediacy of contact occurs through an 'expository straightforwardness' that a linguistic-based relationship necessitates (Carter 1987: 221). On the boundary the explicitness of here and there abut, their continuity and discontinuity is supposedly fully articulated. And so, the settler's position is understood by this kind of 'contact'. It is the associations and related emotions that register the 'here' and the sensation of 'there' in relation to one another.

Alison notes that the aesthetic experience of land is relocated in the free play of the mind and not in the correspondence between qualities of mind and matter i.e. aesthetic emotions are not initiated by what is innate in the object (Klonk 1996:23). Consequently, the land beyond the fence, in becoming an image where reverie, recreation, view and viewpoint merge, also becomes a state of mind to be inhabited.

As a result of Alison's assertions, the viewer, in no longer having to be physically present in the land viewed in order to experience something of it, encounters this landscape as 'immaterial' – in that the material aspects of the landscape itself are no longer the source or cause of the experience. As Stewart explains, Beauty is no longer an 'objective correlative' of the human world because beautiful objects do not resemble each other and have no characteristics in common at all (Klonk 1996: 26). It is the viewer's mind that experiences the landscape scene as 'beautiful' since objects deemed beautiful fail to share a resemblance or common

characteristics that would prove beauty being inherent in an object's form. As a result, the visual becomes a mode through which qualities 'become apparent' in that a kind of relational viewing occurs – in this way objects and land-as-object in the scene viewed gain their significance through 'transitive inference' (i.e. where deductive reasoning is employed to derive a relation between objects which have not overtly been compared to each other before). In colonial landscape representation, that which is depicted is placed in comparison with Imperial Britain.

Enclosure thereby extended and ensured the settler's grasp on the landscape before him. As Knight outlines, aesthetic experience is a kind of perception in which the mind plays an active, judging role fed by but independent from sense data – a perception that enables enclosure and an ineffectiveness of the sensuality of the land viewed (Klonk 1996:30). The traveller 'locates' himself in a landscape by possessing the view – by looking his curiosity is assuaged without physically exploring those spaces (Carter 1987:147). For the settler, possessing the view allowed him to grasp the totality of the terrain he found himself in – so much so that certain vantage points become emblematic of certain places, for example, a flat-topped mountain near an ocean is symbolic of Cape Town. In contrast, an Aboriginal sense of the totality of a terrain may be attained through a certain knowing of place via land-based myths and traversing the land in a way that 'follows' the narrative-spatial trajectories of these myths.

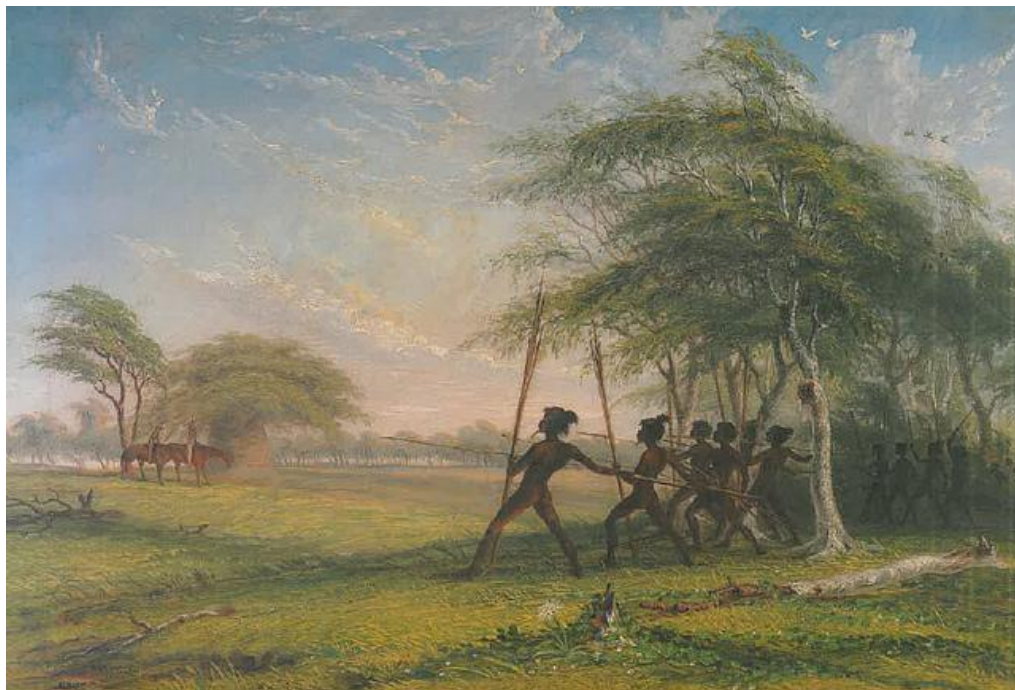


Figure 3.6

Thomas Baines, *Baines and Bowman meeting a hostile tribe, on the banks of the Baines River* 1855 (Australia) (oil, 66cm x 45.8cm) Collection of the Royal Geographic Society

Baines and Bowman meeting a hostile tribe, on the banks of the Baines River demonstrates how hostile contact is articulated. The sense of a boundary is used to effect a particularly British understanding of differentiation: the prominently dark Aborigine figures are placed along a line as though hovering at an edge whereas the 'just out of reach' benign presence of the explorers seem to recede harmoniously into the naturalistic tones of the landscape. The boundary essentially serves to facilitate communication by enabling place to appear and be named (Carter 1987:158). Once place appears and is named, an area could be linked to other 'places' via travelling. The boundary could also serve a symbolic function: that of communicating a network of places which balanced travelling with settlement such that the settler no longer had to contend with the prospect of a static existence in an isolated outstation. Travelling became bound to reaching a destination as opposed to exploring an unknown terrain. For the settler, the boundary is framed as a neutral line that borders territories separating what is known from what isn't (Carter 1987:155, 163). Aborigine communities articulate boundaries as 'tracks' – corridors of legitimate intertribal communication where differences could be negotiated (Carter 1987:165). These themselves were debatable places – they became features of the terrain, where the movement of human and ancestral bodies occur, in distinction to the West where boundaries served as sites for constituting separate and separating spatial relations in terms of 'here' and 'there'. Whereas the boundary assisted the colonial expropriation of land, the Aboriginal populating of place occurs through embodiment.

THE GRID

The grid and its arrangement of space presents an opportunity to explore the conditions in which objective measuring instruments are forefronted. Spaces can be compared, connected or separated. Distance, size and movement become objects of measurement and are used to disguise the makings of 'here' and 'there': they are used as legitimation for spaces that are incomparable as well as understanding the continuity and discontinuity of spaces. Scale offers features up for comparison, of reading one space into another. In contrast, Aboriginal 'mapping' identifies a particular area or feature through a set of qualitative aspects that are significant in mythical narratives pertaining to that location.

The theoretical aspects of the grid

In theory, the grid is a strategy to transform space into a document and an object of measurement. It is the space on the page that becomes representative of the actual landscape and on which the grid appears geographically characterless (Carter 1987:204). The grid is not subject to the features of the landscape - it negates the spatial properties of direction, nearness, here and there as all parts are equalized: everywhere is rendered the same (Carter 1987:204). This quality of placelessness characteristic of the grid is accompanied by the elimination of viewpoints, comings and goings - its sense of 'neutrality' makes it possible for it

to 'contain' historical events in that those events are associated with, located within and confined to a particular region.

The grid is no different to the spatial logic of the map in that it connects up everything: in advance it assumes the unity of space that it covers even though the map supposedly describes space or ground (Carter 1987:204). The manner in which those connections are made determines and controls movement through space and even movement itself. As a consequence the grid and map are associated with authority (Carter 1987:204).

Maps also function to make objects of historical desire explicit and visible: place inspires possession and once possessed it becomes invisible (Carter 1987:35). Over time, as places become more embedded in the landscape, they form an experience of the land they're situated in. Place and landscape enter into circulation, into a network of destinations – no longer are they questioned as they become part of and determine 'movement' through space.

The grid in practice: places

The grid that constitutes city-places, that gives it its cohesion, also connects it, in its similar spatial arrangement, to other city-places around the world. It is experienced as a "...network instinct with qualities of convergence, divergence, centre, edge, direction and promise" (Carter 1987:219). Desire being visualized in these spaces, in that the fulfillment of desire is adjoined to a place, the grid channels the intentional gaze to wherever something needed to be done - the gaze derives its movement through desire (Carter 1987:219). The standardization of physical direction, movement and to some extent activity within the presumed unity of city-space suggests but not necessarily manifests 'place' as being featureful in terms of community: a consensus of spatial experience. Place becomes complicit to movement and features become functions of the inhabitants' desires. Living 'there' suggests that place becomes the space for the imaginary re-enactment of its own origins: that of the dual imperative of the visualized 'impressions' of territorial possession and desire – an Oxford Street in London which has its name copied in the colonies i.e. Oxford Street in Johannesburg and in Sydney. The grid enables a mental grasping of a location not in view yet.

Generally, Aboriginal land-based myths constituted places, pathways and their particular connections to each other and to other myths – the remembering of these myths is generative for the community in that experiences of that area that the myths hold sustains and determines social ties and identity. The narratives of these myths gives all these connections their flexible web of relations – what is communicated is a particular experience of the land which the 'holder' of the story follows when travelling his/her route and by saying his/her story. The story-route reveals the land to the teller/walker and the community he/she is connected to by

it. The landscape is narrated, not just named and claimed but passed through without an attachment to a fixed destination.

The grid in practice: the map

The map's construction of space depends on a working relationship between the imaginary centres of the map and its scale which articulate what registers as a feature and how features are inscribed (Carter 1987:113). Features enable the differentiation of space and boundary: space being that which room has been made for and boundary as being that from which something begins its presencing (Carter 1987:113). Although both types of features introduce directionality into space, the river which is usually depicted in the centre of the map becomes an object of movement and direction through space (Carter 1987:113). The surveyor Major Thomas Livingstone Mitchell stated that mountains in contrast are favoured for constructing boundaries both on the page, by joining two plans together, and in real space as it sectionalizes space (Mitchell in Carter 1987:108). They are the source of rivers, which function as trajectories of direction linking itself, the mountain, to the horizon (Carter 1987:49).

What is articulated as 'space' and 'boundary' shifts according to the dual complementary imperatives of travelling and stasis thereby influencing how landscape is read (Carter 1987:138). Features, such as rivers, that during travelling functioned as routes describing trajectories through space also become boundaries when these same spaces are treated as settlement areas, marking enclosures and authority in expressing social difference and bound the traveler (Carter 1987:222).

Against this ordering of the landscape, the desert increasingly comes to be regarded as a 'no place': confrontation with the materiality of the desert environment that would usually intensify the awareness of a destination still yet to come is thereby minimized (Carter 1987:247). During colonial travels, monotony is usually associated with the desert and operated as a means of maintaining the incentive to travel and settle down. Monotonous space, when traversed through for days failing to show asymmetry in depth, doesn't share the traveller's need for a sense of direction and rate of progress (Kant in Carter 1987:52). This contributes materially to his sense of repetition without change (Carter 1987:247). The lack of significant visual difference results in this land being charged with being unnamed and uninhabitable. This lack of the featureful results in a failure of land to register as a place or destination.

The relationship of the British colonial settler-traveller to the 'materiality' of spaces and objects in the colony is governed by an anxiety around the body and its possible death away from

home.⁸ This fear of an end in a place that is ‘not home’ frames the settler-body as needing to be kept apart from erosive and transformative contact with this new environment. A slippage occurs of the naturalist image that manifested the colonial desires for this new environment into the reality of the colonial environment. That is, the British settler-traveller is searching for what is habitable and ‘familiar’. Once established, place asserts a particular independence from the space that it is situated in: the orientation of the traveler is determined as the ‘here’ of the colony and the ‘there’ of the imperial home is now spatially enacted. It is the material reality of the desert that renders this dynamic of the British settler-traveller’s journey visible. The desert forces a form of nomadism which is contrary to his need for settlement: he desires a familiar image of land to do so and one that won’t bring his attention to the precarious material vulnerability of his own body.

Travelling is a practice framed as being independent of local roots - a mastery over land and circumstance when it is defined as a continuous motion through the landscape (Foster in Marx 2008:68-9,80). The traveler hopes to encounter the landscape as ideally containing features that shape the land providing it with somewhat familiar limits, edges and directions that define the experiential parameters of the journey. Movement resolves “...boundaries into paths, converts limits into avenues...” and makes thresholds into “...perceptual tunnels of continually evolving appearances...”(Leed in Marx 2008:68). The latter is partly enacted in the structure of the wagon – each open side provides a framed visual image of the point of departure and the expected destination – a ‘beginning’ and an ‘end’ are forced into difference and palpability so that the immense distance can be endured.

The progress of travel is ‘felt’ through the visual differentiation of land, an apparent change which is then made measurable by naming and mapping. The concept of travel implies that locating oneself depended on a reading of space that was informed by specific atmospheric and environmental contexts. For example, the moist climate of Britain is where atmospheric

⁸ The transportation of Dr. David Livingstone’s body illustrates this anxiety:

David Livingstone, the famous Scottish missionary and explorer, was born on 19 March 1813 and died at Ilala in the centre of Africa in May 1873. On hearing of his death A. P. Stanley, Dean of Westminster (no relation to Henry Morton Stanley who "found" Livingstone) wrote to the President of the (Royal) Geographical Society offering burial in Westminster Abbey. Livingstone's heart had been buried under a mpundu tree but his faithful attendants enclosed his embalmed body in a cylinder of bark which was wrapped in sailcloth and carried it to the coast and then sailed to London, arriving the following year. As the Doctor had been away from England for so long a correct identification of the remains was required and this was verified by the badly set broken arm which had been crushed by a lion. There was also the fact that only Dr Livingstone could have inspired the Africans to overcome their natural superstition of carrying a dead body for so many months in order to reach the African coast with all the dangers that journey entailed.

<http://www.westminster-abbey.org/our-history/people/david-livingstone>

‘David Livingstone’ accessed 16 October 2014

recession creates a sense of distance, of land projecting outwards from the viewer and dissipating at the horizon.

In the desert, it was realized that observations of latitude were conditional on certain atmospheric conditions and that tools for measuring 'location' were compatible to certain climates – that of home. Even the photographic medium of representation⁹ shows its material incompatibility in a different atmospheric context as Baines explains:

...the impossibility of procuring clean water – the different conditions of atmosphere and intensity of the sun – the constant dust raised either by our people or the wind – the whirlwinds upsetting the camera, and no end of other causes – combine to frustrate the efforts of the operator, and oblige us...to condemn many and many a picture...

(Baines 1864:148)

Peculiar to the desert is the clarity of vision it affords: as a result of its dry air, all objects within this environment are sharply defined and consequently distance is difficult to judge (Haynes 1998:164). Since no vast atmospheric differences between immediate space and the horizon occur, a different sense of infinity is experienced: where the viewer can see all the way to the 'edge', to infinity. The horizon is not a dissipation of materiality and so all of the land is 'present' to the view at the same time. Additionally, the sense of perspective is thwarted due to the paucity of objects in close relation to each other that would have constructed a familiar progression into space to the 'vanishing point'. Travelling in the desert is no longer an anticipation of a far-off destination located somewhere on the horizon where it will eventually come into view, but rather one characterized by a strange closeness with the horizon.

The grid of the map promises communication beyond the horizon, to 'see' what is beyond the space currently present to the viewer (Carter 1987:228). The experience of the grid serves as a geometric ideal with which the traveller-settler tries to balance nearness with distance (Carter 1987:228). Within the experience of travelling, destination is referred to spatially and imaginatively as functioning to bring far things near, which allows an inhabitable relation for the settler to his present location to be possible (Carter 1987:228). This efficient visual communication of 'here', the colony, and 'there', the imperial centre, is dependent on the concept of the unity of space that the grid affords.

The grid with its rectilinearity becomes a spatial metaphor which speeds up the appearances of features by hastening the nearness of distant objects. Socially and spatially this rectilinearity is

⁹ It is interesting to consider why Baines chose to paint when photography was available to him.

a most efficient medium of exchange through which the anticipation of a destination is articulated in order to exceed the material limits of travelling and to manage the intense desire for a destination or an end-point that is 'like home' (Carter 1987:221). The straight lines of the grid promote difference upon which communication depends - this necessitates that place be 'featureful'.

The colony, like a garden, shows the world to the Imperial home – it is through this that the world is constituted and gauged. The colony as the garden of the imperial home ensures that isolation is transferred into seclusion: what lay beyond the imperial home resembled precisely what was already familiar (Carter 1987:228). The grid ensured that difference did not become opposition and that seclusion did not mean segregation within the same political group of people (Carter 1987:228). As a result travel is constructed as a transcendence of the fence – that marker of settlement space and living which opens up the spaces in which travelling occurs to holiday and recreation discourses. This familiarizing of space serves to create the assumption that 'wilderness' is inhabitable albeit in relation to settlement spaces: the colony is a space of the holiday. The end point of travelling is settlement and the end point of settlement is travelling which ensures a continued circulation of here into there, there into here. Travelling as it is described here is different from the nomadic migrations that the San and most Aborigine groups practice in that *temporary* homes are created as the availability of resources allow.

Framing the colony as a garden enables many strategies for declaring particular forms of presence through landscape representation and through the reorganization of space as what is evoked here are the spatial forms and desires through which a culture declares its presence. Presence is declared through allying land to culture, and in the case of British Imperial expansion, declarations of presence were also statements of ownership.

DESERT SPACE: ILLUSION AND RUPTURED SPACE

Thomas Baines' description of his travel through the Namib desert serves to illustrate how the desert exemplifies placelessness and dislocation.

About 10 a.m. we were on the road again, crossing another plain more undulating, and, though not so heavy in sand as the last, more thickly strewn with pebbles and quartz – fragments hard and sharp to the feet of the poor

oxen. Vegetation, it may be said there was still none, for the bare grey leafless shrubs rather suggested the idea of birchbrooms that had gone adrift than anything else, and the greenish-grey patches, few and far between, frequently turned out to be merely stones of that colour...This absence of vegetation, combined with the neutral yellow of the sand and rock, renders it very difficult to judge of distance, and during the morning I could hardly persuade myself that a bottle set up as a mark at 100 yards was not more than three feet high, and ever so far distant.

(Baines 1973:25-6)

The above description focuses largely on the lack of vegetation. Baines' search for vegetation aims to provide relief from the desolation of being unable to measure or sense distance. Furthermore, the need to judge distance depends on the landscape's objects being large enough and arranged with perspectival regularity for the 'here' of the observer to be connected to the 'there' of the far distance. However, as is described by Baines, what is read in the far distance is not actual and the explorer is therefore to rely on a heavily material apprehending of space, that is, an apprehension of the material characteristics of the close space he finds himself in, as opposed to a relatively more conceptual reading of what appears in the distance.

Since the relation of what is in the distance to what is in Baines' immediate space is difficult to see, the mirage further complicates this relation.

...found that the mirage, which had created an illusive sheet of water between us and the house, had entirely disappeared. The difficulty of representing this phenomenon in a painting is that, supposing the artist to succeed perfectly, he cannot convey to the beholder of the picture the absolute knowledge that it is not intended for water; if there is wind, the mirage ripples like a sunny lake, and the only test by which to judge of it on the spot is, that it never rises into breakers, and that it exaggerates excessively the height of objects within its influence

(Baines 1973:4)

By exaggerating excessively the height of objects within its influence, the mirage intensifies the sense of closeness, in that objects in the distance appear taller and so they seem closer.

Describing the mirage as entirely disappearing, Baines displays the expectation of the party that there be some 'remains' of the image, or something that would account for the source of the

image. Additionally Baines deals with the problem of representing that which itself is mimicry in this case land which mimics another phenomenon - water. The fact that land is itself mimetic of some other land aspect parallels exactly what 'place' does i.e. mimics its lack or its double like the desert mimics another wilderness – the sea. The mimicry of space is supposedly a cultural act, supposedly to be enacted by the colonial traveller. To know that it is a mirage requires for it to be visually experienced yet there is no visual evidence of its cause – the traveller has no way of rationalizing the image he sees.

The mirage is also described as between objects as though it occupied or had distance. The mirage begins to change the appearance of the environment specifically its relationship to objects 'on its edge'; changing their visual appearance and proximity. The traveller's understanding of his own presence there changes and becomes unstable. The barrenness of the desert is a foil for the mirage's presentation of an experience that is so convincing, yet intangible making the subject feel doubly ambiguous. The mirage occupies the appearance of a real object – a relation that is difficult to concede to.

Everything looks cold and hard, the salt plain sometimes appearing as ice, and at others like a shallow muddy sea, with none of the mirage which yesterday so perfectly and beautifully simulated long vistas of water between the distant islands, and tempted away our thirsty dogs in hot pursuit of the deceitful vision, which, as they advanced, led them away and away, till their arrival at the opposite shore dispelled the illusion, only to show them the watery cheat upon the plain they had just crossed

(Baines 1973:415)

Does the mirage make the desert a place for hyper vision? To travel through the desert, the path travelled on is the only land travelled through since vision is unreliable in giving a sense of the land that is literally untouchable even by the eyes.

The mirage is still read experientially as spatial – 'destination' is never reached through space yet a more realistic experience of that space is gained by going 'through' the mirage. The destination that the mirage suggests is perpetually postponed and eventually de-realized – it will only be a 'constantly there', constantly in a state of becoming until it is 'passed through' - having never actually gone through it only the idea of doing so remains.

On Saturday the 11th, the rising sun showed us that the soil was now scantily clothed with a small, narrow-leafed grass, which... nearly invisible when the eye glanced upon the distant plain

(Baines 1973:26)

An inversion is necessary in the desert: 'there' is read in terms of 'here' - what is in the distance becomes impossible to guess from sight and so the materiality of the terrain 'close-by' is used to explain what's in the distance. The indistinctness of the ground 'there' makes locating it futile as ground perspectively is supposed to mark a sense of distance, a progression of here into there. Instead, the edge of the foreground marks the beginning of 'there', where invisibility begins. Figure and ground collapse into each other because there is too much of one thing - it becomes indistinct in the distance as a shape or form can't be clearly detected.

The mirage, much like the telescope, engenders a sense of closeness to what is viewed from a considerable distance. A dislocation occurs in that the eye and mind knows that what it is seeing is a mirage and the physical body's present experience of its location in the desert does not match the optical data the mirage presents. Still, the ambiguity of bodily experience persists as the effect of the mirage's 'objects' is still felt in some way. It is impossible what to make of these sensible objects – although clear it's difficult to figure out what they are and as the eye can't be trusted for evidentiary vision, the possible overtakes the sensible.

In apprehending a mirage, distance is sensed but can't be immediately and accurately judged or experienced. This realizes the desire implicit in a search for destination – wanting to inhabit a space or place that as yet only exists as a picture or in the imagination. The thirsty traveller, his unsettled body, on viewing the mirage believes his thirst about to be quenched, seeming to promise something of his wishes: a fruitful end to the arduous journey. An 'end' that will 'agree' with his intentions and expectations and that would also signal his freedom to pursue other adventures. His own adventure story would end successfully – the spaces he visited and endured during his journey could then 'accurately' exist in memory, in his journals and in his images.

The mirage registers as the absence of sound and being completely separated thus from the immediate space of the traveller, it becomes a solely visual experience. Its existence as pure image incites insecurity as its relation to the actual desert land is tenuous at best. The mirage is ultimately something, intimately sensed but unseen, in front of phenomena. The mirage results in the subject vacillating between doubting what lies beyond his sensory borders and doubting the senses themselves – what writer Hans-Goran Erikson calls a derangement of the senses (Ekman in Howes 2005:362).

The desert contains very sparsely scattered detail or heavily compacted grains leaving the gaze to focus on tiny events, parts so small that they become homogenized into or become part of the field of vision. Against this occurs the mirage with its dazzling potentiality which defies the imperialistic propensity for grasping, holding and colonizing the terrain – its equivocating non-tangibility/tangibility and its inchoateness registers the desert as a ‘moving’ field that cannot be petrified into a representative image of places to be taken home.

NARRATIVE

Narrative structures regarding land serve to maintain the integrity of the subject and his links to home. The journey that the settler-traveller embarks on is tempered by these structures – the journey should lead to an appropriate end, an ideal destination that supports a viewpoint connected to home.

German philosopher Dieter Henrich outlines how the process of living is structured as a pursuit of a sense of subjectivity. To be provided meaningful experiences, the presence of human living and one’s own life requires an involvement in two alternating dispositions – a detachment from the world and seeing the self as part of the world – through which subjectivity is revealed and concealed (Of Henrich in Rush 2007:288). Narrative becomes propelled by a direct and clear ‘reaching for’ – the idea of agency becomes manifest in terms of the exercise of subjectivity (Of Henrich in Rush 2007:288). The naming of features during exploratory colonial travelling is a case in point. Through the recognition of salient, named features that mark his journey, self-realisation in a strange land supposedly occurs – a completion that quells anxieties around the integrity of the traveller’s own presence there. These are the conditions under which materialisation of the self is felt to occur in the world.

The philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard notes that the story neglects links to the disparate – getting lost (as figure 3.7 indicates the horror of), and ‘going native’ serve as examples of being absorbed by the environment. Sidney Nolan’s *Burke* of 1962 (fig. 3.7) refers to the explorer Robert O’Hara Burke who perished along with many others during an expedition into the Australian interior in 1860. In the painting, Burke’s vulnerable and naked body seems to barely keep his head above the horizon line of a landscape that seems ready to overwhelm and bury him with its confusing and volatile mass.

Instead the story resurrects those experiences that enable it to obey its own finality: its beginnings and endings are in ‘agreement’ (Lyotard 1991:19). This logic of the story becomes literalised in the journey – space and the experience of space is thereby ordered. The journey’s destination is ‘the beginning’s double’ – the settler looks for in the colony a place that is like the home from which he started his journey. An end beyond which no continuity is to be found – where travelling is separated from settlement. Throughout the journey and in its ending the

tension between the 'here' of the new land and the 'there' of home is continually articulated and finally collapse into each other at the destination. Making the colony more like 'home' is to put 'here' and 'there' in a relationship of finality where they serve each other only: a closed circuit in which this reciprocal relationship is expressed by the flow of trade, power and ideas between these two spaces.



Figure 3.7

Sidney Nolan, *Burke* 1962 (synthetic polymer on hardboard, 122 x 122 cm) Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Gift of Godfrey Phillips 1968

The sketches and writings of Thomas Baines articulate what is involved in recording within the expedition. In his journals, he creates the impression that he allowed circumstances to dictate to him as it is usually impressed upon the reader: the inevitability of events while on the road. However, he also played an active role as an agent of change or 'progress' in that he sought to administer, study and reconstruct along Western lines through description what he 'found' thereby legitimising British hegemony (Carruthers and Arnold 1996:29). The name 'Curiosity Peak' referring to a mountain in the background of Baines' Flats, near Curiosity Peak (fig. 3.8) further illustrates how the naming of geographic markers served to present the natural landscape of the colony as complicit with the aims of the explorer's journey. The viewer empathises with the figure defending himself against a ferocious crocodile in figure 3.8 and is titillated by the storming wildness of a black rhinoceros across the image in figure 3.9. These images depicting episodes of the expedition create an image of this new strange land – wildness remains in the journey while the familiar is to be found in the destination.



Figure 3.8

Thomas Baines, *Flats, near Curiosity Peak, Victoria River* 1857 (oil, 45.7 x 66 cm)
Collection of the Royal Geographic Society



Figure 3.9
Thomas Baines, *The Black Rhinoceros* 1874 (oil, 51.3 x 66.7 cm) Sanlam Art Collection

Expedition narratives, in particular, trade in the expectations they kindle - the reader is made to 'wait' as he reads for a resolution that might or might not realize his own expectations. Expectation is the faculty of desire which to some degree anticipates a particular presence, destination and plot (Lyotard 1991:24). The story's momentum is gained through how characters navigate or cope with the materiality of the issues, obstacles and the reality of their lives in this story in order to reach the end. The 'end' and the story itself direct the manner of enduring the materiality of travelling and the land travelled through.

"Getting to know the country"

The explorer used narrative and the organization of colonial spaces as a way to fulfill his "imperial responsibility to organise the scattered appearance of phenomena into a series of logically related cause-and-effect facts [which] was completely at odds with the explorer's habitual experience" (Carter 1987:58).

The problem emerged that practically what was attractive on the map and in narrative doesn't necessarily result in land being inhabitable. Carter notes that a rectilinear grid, although a useful geometrical accessory to taxation, doesn't require anyone oversee the actual subdivision of land. Rather, Mitchell's trigonometrical method which serves as a survey of features is a preferred method in 'getting to know the country' (Carter 1987: 112). However, an articulation

and disarticulation of the actual land occurs in travels of exploration. The explorer differentiates geographical objects thereby separating the cultural from the natural. The surveyor who follows the explorer then arranges these geographical objects by way of significant viewpoints - picturesque devices are adapted to order and articulate the geographical features made available by the explorer (Carter 1987: 128). The arrangement of geographical features into picturesque viewpoints links these geographical objects together in a defining relationship to the terrain – in that what is defined is *how* the terrain is to be distinctive for the viewer-traveller. In this way, routes through vast territories are established and the experiences of land they deliver to the viewer-traveller are determined. Having secured the view in this manner, a move to a centre-less plan of settlement occurs. It is the settler's gaze that becomes the centre when he inhabits cities and towns structured according to a grid: despite his movement his relationship with the spatial features around him and the kind of experiences they support remains unchanged.

NATURALISM

An 'accurate' view of land



Figure 3.10

Thomas Girtin *Kirkstall Abbey* 1802 (watercolour, 290 x 537cm) London, British Museum

Author John Gage defined naturalism, by referring to domestic views of the English countryside between 1810 and 1820, as being concerned with locale and local effects of atmosphere. This placed emphasis on representing naturalistic effects with light and colour over the quality of design and drawing. Epistemologically, naturalism is grounded in an 'English or British' empiricism (Kriz 1997:78). The sense and experience of nature was constructed in terms of 'British' light and colour. Naturalism, in being associated with empiricism, is evident in the requirement for a precision of vision - vision is described as the sense which is already knowledge (Klonk 1996:22).

Sociologist and philosopher Theodor Adorno notes that mimesis constitutes the self as an agent which takes control of other than itself in order to come to terms with itself (Klonk 1996:5). While for philosopher Walter Benjamin, mimetic capacity is one in which modes of experiences are identified which would seek a relationship with what lies outside of the subject without thereby subordinating it (Klonk 1996:5). How identity is understood in the colony is dependent on what would be sought a relationship with, and what needs to be controlled.

However, whereas mimesis is described as the power of replication in which representation shares in or takes power from the represented, iconicity offers a particular awareness of empathetic-like contact (Feld, Jackson, Ohnuki-Tierney in Feld in Howes 2005:181). Iconicity refers

...to [the] ways perceiver and perceived blur and merge through sensuous contact, experiencing inner resemblances that echo, vibrate and linger as traces from one sensory modality to another, present at one level while absent at others, continually linking bodily experience to action.

(Feld, Jackson, Ohnuki-Tierney in Feld in Howes 2005: 181)

The replication of landscape images operates to materialize what is out of reach or felt subtly in spaces designated as home and as new or strange. These images have the capacity to both distance contact with the sensuous, the kind described by the term iconicity, when that contact is deemed suspect or dangerous, and to also allow an immersion into the experience held by the image.

As mentioned before, the picture of place is also where view and viewpoint correspond. As Klonk elucidates, the ideal of the British 'translucent' artist-subject tries to balance the need for the observing subject to be absent so that an objective transcription of what's observed at any particular moment is made *with* the presence of the observing subject making possible the production of a successful pictorial conception. He's not seeking nature but its representation (Klonk 1996:130). This objective transcription requires the British viewer to participate with a

disembodied optical disposition: he engages the scene using his sentiment and sensibility which are described as mental faculties. In this way sensuous contact is distanced and his separateness from the scene he experiences is maintained at the moment his memories of the place depicted and their accompanying sentiments are prompted by the *visual* effects of the domestic landscape scene.

Naturalistic representations of a natural scene search for an icon of nature in nature itself. The art historian W.J.T. Mitchell notes that attention is thereby brought to nature imprinting and encoding its essential structures on our perceptual apparatus (Mitchell 1994:15). Preserving the trace of 'encountering' nature allows its effect on the viewer to be grasped. However Hazlitt protested against separating the imitation from the thing imitated not because there was a need to repeat the same idea but because of a desire to suggest new ideas and to detect new properties and endless shades of difference (Kriz 1997:125, 127). The replication of landscape, its image, is never quite the same each time and provides a way to explore the contemporary context that the process finds itself situated in, but its intense repetition can also render a specific location irrelevant or trivialized into the ordinary and banal.

Resemblance and Complicit Recognition

The philosopher David Hume stated that it was resemblance that marked what was comparable (Carter 1987:44). The settler's alienated state in the colony, or what will become the colony, provokes him to make this strange land a parallel to the home country – a Garden where the alien is placed in a comparable relation to the familiar. He enters a different world still connected to a world he thinks he knows – 'home'. He is compelled by his state of alienation towards recognizable traces and echoes that abound and confound (Bennet in Luthi 1993:85). The resemblances are surprising – what he knows, where he comes from, is confronted by the persistent image of what he sees in front of him. This, in turn, precipitates a desire in him to orient his direction back 'home' – to make conspicuous and complete what he only now experiences as fragments.

In the colony, the settler-traveller is an unstable subject – in order to make the colonial land surrounding him a parallel to the home country he knows, into a Garden, representational strategies are used to shift the 'alien' into a relationship with the familiar within representation. Composition was used to invoke familiar frames of reference. The experience of colonial real space, where the banal and the tragic were uncomfortably close, induces the colonial settler, like a figure in the landscape scene, to follow acts that the compositions of landscape representation gives him. Within the colony, living is about making the story, the image real or else is characterised as a difficulty in searching for a meta-narrative (Puff 2008:56-9). Land is made to follow a particular order where the banal serves to help the settler forget his distance from home.

In *Durban from Mr. Currie's Residence* for example (fig. 1.6 on p.36), the banal and benign domesticity that the aestheticism of the garden presents sifts the wildness of the colonial environment for the settler. The wild is tamed sufficiently so that it can be integrated into the world of the colonist allowing the view to extend from the garden into the world that lies from its edges outwards. The familiar arrangement of foliage 'follows' the view, softening the ferocity presented by strange non-British animal and 'native' bodies. The need to make the colonial landscape more accessible to the British settler is balanced with the need to register its difference from home so that a continuation of British power is articulated as an 'expansion'.

Effects

Initially, the intention to capture naturalistic atmosphere required painting to be technically consistent so that specificity of effect and intention is communicated (Harrison 1994:207). Within painting effect is materialised and comes to characterise the experience of both the painting and that which is represented.

The inexact picture is what Mitchell describes when he suggests that the picture occupies a multiple status that is one of imprecision. Its imprecision points to a hypersensitivity as a medium – full of potentiality in the following descriptors:

In an age of pervasive image-making, it is still unsure as to what pictures are, what their relation to language is, how they operate on observers and the world, how their history is to be understood and what is to be done with and about them.

(Mitchell 1992: 90)

Harrison's description of the technical demands required of 'effect' together with Mitchell's observation of the 'imprecision' of the image highlights how pictures serve to make creative intention, the manipulation of materials, conspicuous – which implied claims of neutrality in naturalistic landscape representation aim to hide.

Ideological approaches to the senses

The aesthetic experience of space is also its social experience: in a liberal paradigm, the feelings of a private individual are important for forming political assent – feelings associated with self-esteem and self-interest and the stakes thereof are redirected – the viewer becomes part of the state which is expressed as a particular idea of 'home' (Kriz 1997:88).

Central to this experience is the regulated artist as the ideal public-private individual who performs his interiority in public (Kriz 1997: 135-6). The danger of imaginative visions, beyond the production of eccentric individuals, is that the unconstrained imagination represents mental powers that threaten the hegemonic process that positions individuals within the social order (Kriz 1997: 135-6).



Figure 3.11
Ludwig Becker, *Crossing the Terrick-Terrick Plains, August 29, 1860* 1860 (watercolour and pen-and-ink, 12.5 x 17.7 cm) La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria

The colonial viewpoint as exhibited in figure 3.11 above aims to epitomize a vision that is directed towards the horizon and allows a spatialization of progress and self consciousness to occur (Stewart in Howes 2005:62) (Carter 1987:49). This vision, like the hierarchy utilized in taxonomy, overestimates the role of human will and assumes that man's relation to the non-human is analogous not contiguous (Stewart in Howes 2005:62). The bodies of the marching settlers are arranged in a perspective procession to create a sense of space in the barren terrain – it is their bodies that provide an indication of the vastness of the landscape.

The operation of the senses

When do sense impressions need external stimulants?

What is the status of memory/ hallucination/ dream of sense experience?

Are our sense impressions private or more or less public?

(Stewart in Howes 2005:60)

The above quote highlights how the cultural mediation of nature is bound up with how we orient ourselves inevitably resulting in an ordering of the senses (Classen in Howes 2005:160).

When considering how immersion in a particular landscape is achieved, do contemporary experiences of spaces offer an explanation of how the senses are understood to operate? The body and its senses operated in a spatial relationship to each other when notions of 'home' and the 'wild' are reinforced. By locating these domains the body can enact its separateness or attachment to the world. For example, the poet and critic Susan Stewart notes that in the Medieval tradition the body conceived of as a fort relied on the senses as sentinels against the excesses of the external world presented to the body's 'interiority'. The body and its interiority both become inexact when sense organs are framed as components of the body's general and synthesising "openness" to the world (Stewart in Howes 2005:60).

Consciousness, described as a self-organising interiority, regulates the degree of this 'openness' to the world by modulating and opening the senses. Subjectivity is registered through the senses, by how the boundaries between need and desire, biology and culture are blurred (Stewart in Howes 2005:60). Anxieties around the body, especially its capacity to meld and notice, are reflected in the need to divide and contain various sensual experiences. The senses are made to implicate the body to such an extent in that they bring the person's interiority to the body's surface and conversely to the surface of the world.

British landscape representation, through the particular form of optical mimesis that it employs, positions the viewer as an objective observer. The objective view derives its viewing strategies from the action of lenses: the telescope, for example, has the capacity to condense and objectify that which is viewed. A kind of distance occurs that is specific to the fixed singular viewpoint – one that prevents a sensual body from engaging. The observed human figures in these representations have their ascribed visibility participate in the operations of measurement: as signifying the distance and scale of the natural scene depicted or by articulating the kind of inhabitation that is permitted to occur in the world that is presented by the image. In contrast, Aborigine art that manifests to some degree land-based myths in particular articulates human presence through a strong set of varied identifications with animals, plants, ancestral beings and phenomena. These flat-patterned images, bearing no reference to a horizon, evoke aspects of land-based myths which rely on the embeddedness of the artist and an internalized empathy with that which is depicted for their 'expression'. San rock art, especially those depicting healing and/or therianthropes, are drawn by shaman-artists from their experiences of the trance where their own bodies were used as healing mechanisms and 'bore' the changes depicted on therianthrope figures. The strong emphasis on empathetic embodiment in these images/experiences where potency is transformed into power, frames the shaman as seeing beyond visible appearance, and at times beyond visible distance.

The danger of Touch

The representation of space is entrenched in a sense of intangibility – whole, intact and detached from the complexities of touch (Mazzio in Howes 2005:94).

Mazzio notes that locating the perceptiveness of touch in the body is fraught with imprecision. Its perception straddles several senses and as a result is sensitive across different tangibles at once or in succession. Various contraries - like hot and cold, wet and dry, hard and soft, inside and outside/surface - form the range along which different sensations are registered. The tongue, for example, may perceive flavor while simultaneously assessing the texture, temperature and malleability of the object – a condition in which distinctions are momentarily conflated thereby undermining all categorization (Mazzio in Howes 2005:91,94). The nature of the things themselves are made palpable as materialities are felt in terms of what each of these entities can perceive, possibly absorbing something of each other and a sense of their inner qualities is experienced. Touch affords the experience of concrete contact where the tangible within and behind appearances can be felt – an event of the solely tangible is made possible and that is where the touching body comes to co-exist momentarily. Simultaneously, each is ‘aware’ of the other or is briefly shaped by the other on surface contact points like a handshake or as a more internalized perception like that of food being swallowed into the throat. Also, the perception of touch may occur in a localised area or felt generally everywhere. (Mazzio in Howes 2005:102)

Touch being described as only perceptive of direct contact is a result of the body being a product of the domain of medicine – the body is instrumentalised as organs, objects and media where ‘feeling’, ‘sensing’ and ‘functioning’ are separated and located (Mazzio in Howes 2005:91). The epistemological complexity of touch is ultimately contained by its materialization in the domain of hurt or violence where touch is reduced to sheer reactivity to the physical force of the world (Mazzio in Howes 2005:100-1). But what are the effects of touch within a feeling, but not always violated body? Touch can also be that which is not registered on the skin. When touch is located onto the skin, links to affectivity and more furtive experiences of existence become somewhat muted. The linking of touch with skin attaches this sense to marking borders joining ‘interior’ and ‘exterior’ events that presuppose an intact integrity of the body. Placing touch as occurring on a skin surface which operates as a container of the body in this context belies the dominance of the visual in this particular consideration of touch.

The domain of the tactile is often stretched in literature beyond the bounds of the body itself implying conditions of hyperawareness and cognitive sensitivity (Mazzio in Howes 2005:96). The ‘emptiness’ of the desert, due to its apparent lack of sensual stimulation, becomes a space for the feeling body to emerge intensifying the materiality of the land itself – it comes closer to

you, as something to be felt. The lack of objects, that the presence of which would have resulted in sufficient visual satiety, requires the materiality of the desert to be exacerbated by the senses becoming more sensitive to the surroundings.

When travelling through land, body and geography share in their materiality: physicality is deliberated at the edges of inside and outside (Marx 2008:101). With an activity like hiking through to more significant passages through borders, a negotiation between the physical and the emotional occurs: the body's safety and survival is registered intellectually and emotionally. But in the image, haptic vision transforms the illusion of the image into an object to be inhabited. Riegl notes that looking also becomes yielding in that the materiality of the image, its sensuousness and the sensuousness of what is represented, is felt (Marx 2008:98)¹⁰. This body, no longer being unified as it seeks an interaction that is not confined to its own physical edges but rather with qualities in the world of the image, is made possible by the apprehension of the sensuous in the image. The management of this orientation determines what becomes proximate, intimate and immediate. The image is no longer a solely optical experience – that is, it is no longer a mind-artifact: the feeling body is implicated and the image shifts from being illustrative of experience to becoming part of an integrated experience that compels the body to participate in the perception of the image.

By contrast, vision and hearing gain their legibility by an abstract logics of mediation and objectification. Superseding the direct they operate across distance thereby becoming metaphorical tools for philosophical contemplation, abstraction and categorization. The paragraph above leads me to question the nature of the objectivity that is attached to an optical view of the landscape, the rendering of which requires style to be subjugated to the conventions established for that form of representation. This notion of an objective view of the land, supported by the imaging technology of instruments like the camera, comes under significant pressure when experiences of 'home' and 'strange lands' are in themselves not body-less, not un-subjective, and not only confined to labour or nationhood. Inevitably, one confronts this established view that 'irrefutably' guarantees that the comparable relation of what occurs or is in the field of vision is possible and exists. Instead, I believe the claim to 'objectivity' as described above, serves to preserve a particular ordering of the senses that the conventions and language of British landscape representation promulgated.

¹⁰ For a brief introduction to how haptic visuality operates in representation addressing intercultural contexts, please see offscreen.com/view/skin_of_film

CONCLUSION

The settler-traveller has his engagement with colonial land defined by vectoral vision – one that is on the move and excursive, gauging possible paths and directions (Of Serres in Howes 2005:328). He aims to experience something of the reciprocity with the landscape that he enjoyed at 'home'. Reciprocity or the reciprocal effect, as sociologist Georg Simmel notes, expected to establish mutual subjective and social reconstruction (Rush 2007:287) – this shifts and is overdetermined in colonial landscape representation in the hopes of attaining some measure of subjectivity, as cultural historian Peter De Bolla notes:

The viewing subject is no longer subjected to representation but becomes the master of it, master of subjection, and master of itself. Such mastery implies that nothing is hidden from the spectator by the artist.

(Kriz 1997:128)

These colonial landscape paintings offered a form of initiating place-making in various locations around the world and actualized through symbolic means the colonization of terrain by the artist as a viewer, explorer and artist.

PRACTICAL COMPONENT



Dreaming places . Untitled . Desert visit . Dune



Untitled . Dune . Desert visit . Arrival

Smearing narrative



Dune . Arrival . Desert visit

Smearing narrative . Desert states



Smear narrative . Desert states . Desert visit

Hotel painting . Visit painting



Desert states . Hotel painting . Visit painting

Desert visit . Composite landscape . City collage



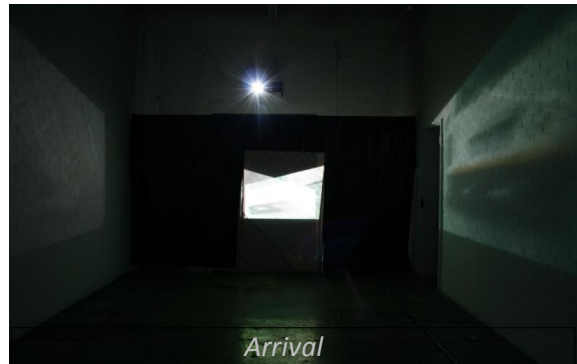
Hotel painting . Visit painting . Composite landscape

City collage . Desert visit . Desert painting . Desert smear



Desert smear . Dreaming places . Untitled

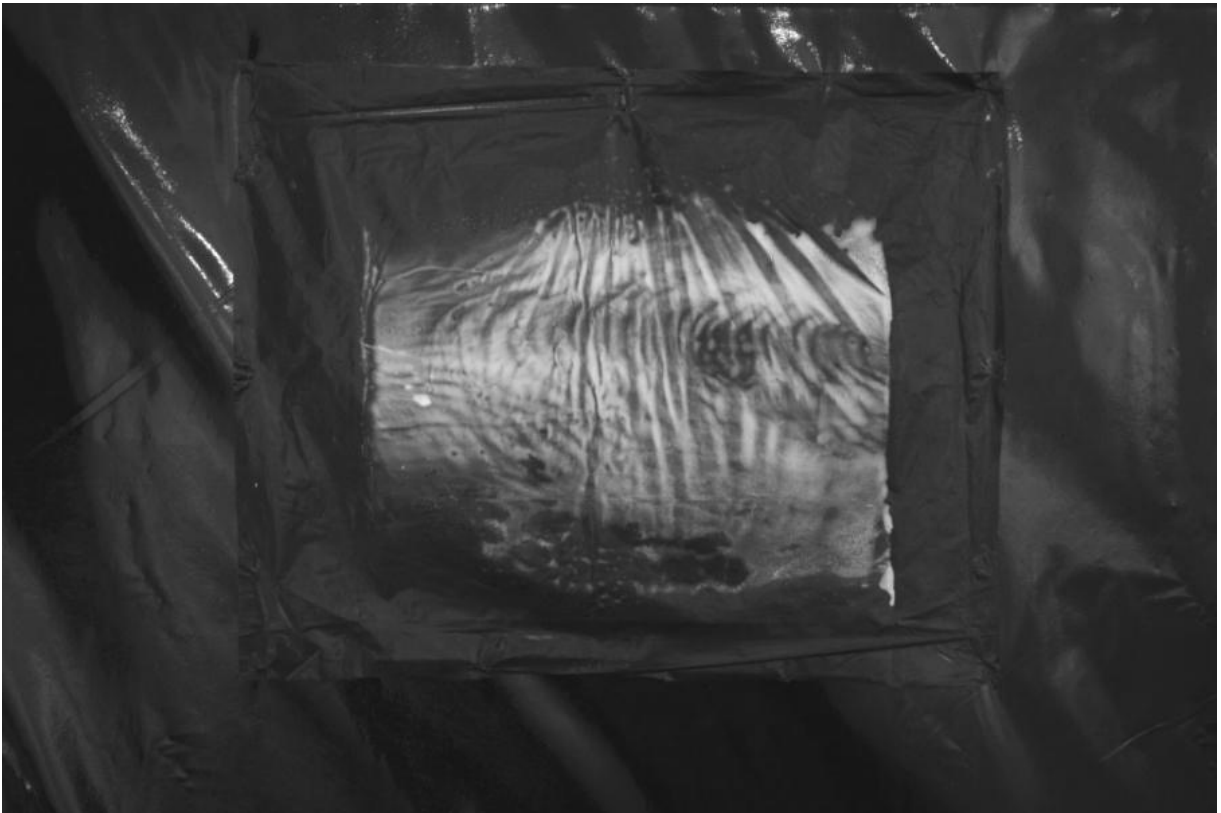
Desert visit



Arrival

Introduction

The works discussed in this chapter were exhibited at the Substation Gallery at Wits University in Johannesburg from the 25th of January 2011 to the 28th of January 2011. The title of the exhibition, *Mirage*, was chosen for its suggestion of an uneasy relationship of landscape and its images. That is, the mirage problematizes the relationship between sight and touch, as well as disembodied and embedded dispositions to experiencing the landscape.



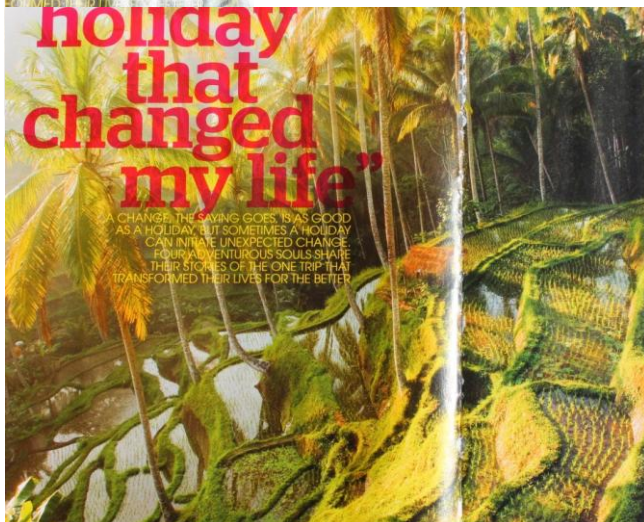
The desert areas occur where the borders have straight lines.

Thus far, this dissertation has briefly presented three divergent artistic traditions and their articulations of their own relationships to landscapes variously designated as 'home'. I attempted to explore each culture's organization of the senses through which landscapes are both inhabited and represented. A significant portion of this investigation considered the representation of British colonial landscapes: the translation of the experience of exploration into portable two-dimensional images which necessitated developing conventions of translation served as a way for me to question and present how a terrain is colonized and owned by fictitious means. My own body of work stems from similar concerns engaging contemporary processes of experiencing that landscape and the desert in particular to interrogate 'excursions' and notions of the embedded or the superficial experiencing of topography. In the context of my own work I look at the phenomena of glossy magazines as expressed by tourist brochures in relation to the experience of place that is declared through particular linkages of the sensual with consumption. Many of my photographs, collages and constructions take an ironic view of contemporary presentations of landscapes that travel brochures furnish: their public offerings of the world as a series of landscapes to would-be consumers bear in some respects similarities to colonial relationships to land, specifically regarding sensual engagements with land thereby determining what forms our inhabitation of the landscape take. The tourist advertisement re-colonises far off and exotic environments as landscapes to be viewed or experienced from the vantage point of the luxury hotel: 'your home' to a 'proxy home' accommodation with panoramically framed views.

'The holiday that changed my life', *Discovery* Winter 2014, Issue 51; p. 66-67.



The pages of the magazine bear and deliver the pictures and text printed on them to such an extent that they, in my experience of them, *are* the images and text, so wanting of the experiences they promise to deliver am I made to feel. My closest interaction with these images and texts occurs with the glossy surface of the material that bears them. I find this association of the image for the material very interesting.



The magazine image bears a 'promise' that the desire it instigates can be satiated once it is directed elsewhere, possibly into action. Image and text share the same substrate – the glossy magazine page – which marks their portability and capacity to be highly circulated. I'm seduced by the resulting loss of the image's distinct objectness. The magazine image has no 'substance of its own' – it merely appears, it also has

no physical tangibility registered on the surface of the magazine page that would differentiate it from text or graphics. And the smoothness of the substrate's surface that the images are printed on doesn't interfere with their reading – instead, it facilitates the clarity of viewing the objects in the image or 'through' the page into visually tangible depth. The glossy surface also bounces the viewer out – though it reveals this created world of objects and desire, it also prevents the viewer from partaking simultaneously. One is left with the superficiality of touch across the glossy surface, the image itself isn't 'touchable' and so bifurcation of sensual experience happens at the moment of physically touching the magazine image. When the magazine image is viewed, there exists a promise of embodiment; when that same image is touched, particularly as a result of desire being stimulated, disembodiment is delivered.

Magazine pages exist almost purely as surfaces but also mark my distance from those images and their promises. The act of touching these pages brings about a moment where the experience of touching and seeing split – the image itself has no texture, instead any texture felt belongs to the magazine page. The magazine page is an example of a situation where sensual experiences split, disintegrate or bifurcate along designations of 'here' and 'there'.



On the way back to Johannesburg from Luderitz. Author's photograph.

While navigating terrain and so attaching our expectations to reaching a destination, our bodies funnel through spaces, our sensuous bodies (i.e. the senses inhabiting the body) move along

the surfaces and edges of the transitional spaces we pass through to a 'final' location where the landscape is eventually entered into. In the photograph above, my eye scans the horizon, trying to connect to some marker of the destination that may appear.

In the descriptions above regarding magazine reading and of navigation, my interest lies in exploring how the 'featureful' is positioned as objects to be desired and experienced both in landscape images and in the process of orienting oneself in a landscape.

Disintegration

My artistic practice is informed by two interests. One uses touch as a guiding concept to explore ways in which the sensual presence of the body is activated. The other interest considers the 'unstable' image: where an image's capacity to visually represent a scene is compromised because the material comprising the image has become 'excessive'. The image's own objectness becomes palpable and an evocation of a scene is experienced through this palpability.

The works that make use of magazine pages as their material most succinctly articulate these concerns. I cut magazine pages by hand into a pre-determined unit – some of which were as small as approximately 3mm by 3mm squares. These units of disintegrated magazine images and texts, transformed into raw material, become the 'grain' of my collage-type images. By these grains resembling desiccated material – that is, of parts liberated of their relation to wholeness by their transformation into units – the prominent impression being made is that of the micro-parts of what were previously unbroken images and texts intermingling.

Magazine pages that previously operated as surfaces to be looked into, with their pervasive conspicuity that secured a precision of knowing what is being looked at, become conspicuous in a different way, as a confetti-like material. The iconophyllic nature of magazines is destroyed when they are decimated into small visual grains creating drifts that form the field of the *Dune* (2011) work for example. This is one of the ways in which I challenge the role of easily-grasped magazine images of provoking consumption that is free of complication.

The desert informs my interest in how the disintegration of the material is followed by the destruction of surfaces and their images. The image of the desert is not one of locatedness (that is, in bearing distinctive landmarks) since its instability as an image derives from the desert's rapidly changing forms. This instability is only possible because of the dissipation and re-collection of fine sand grains. The supposedly clear and absolute line of the horizon in this

context is invested with hopes of containing both instability and vastness. The uninterrupted horizon implied by the persistent line of sky and desert that one is completely surrounded by helps initially to understand the spatiality of the terrain – it performs an edge, it signals an end, it keeps an end in view that helps the traveler to cope with the vastness. Yet, it is an unattainable horizon – nothing lies on its edge to hope for or to bear a promise of an end or at least a change. In the progress of travelling, the ever-receding horizon seems to make distance impossible to estimate. The features, in being too subdued and/or too sparse to link together a path to a horizon, fail to communicate distance – sometimes the dunes themselves obliterate the horizon, become the horizon and once overtaken gives way to more of the same. In this sense, the horizon becomes ‘lost’ because of the sheer immensity of the undifferentiated terrain.

The desert, in not being visually ‘featureful’ in the way the colonial traveler expects, provokes an overdetermination in both establishing distinct ‘limits’, as evidenced by the straight line borders of desert countries or provinces, and in entrenching fixed relationships to those ‘limits’ as demonstrated by the rigid perspective employed in Becker’s image *Crossing the Terrick-Terrick Plains, August 29, 1860*.



Ludwig Becker, *Crossing the Terrick-Terrick Plains, August 29, 1860* 1860



Still image from *Lawrence of Arabia*

In contrast, the still image taken from the critically acclaimed 1962 film *Lawrence of Arabia* demonstrates the enigma the desert presents: a dissolving of a disconcertingly unrecognizable dark form, the horizon and the terrain. With no route to the horizon and so a ‘failed’ horizon, it becomes impossible to imagine how ‘here’ in the desert could have any link to other places beyond the horizon. This accounts for the anxiety that drives attempts like that in *Crossing the Terrick-Terrick Plains, August 29, 1860* to establish a stable image of an area in order to imbue it with a recognizable sense of location where one could travel to and safely return from either imaginatively or physically.



View of Cape Town's Table Mountain. Stock image



Dunes outside Luderitz, author's photograph

The iconic imperative that would find its triumph in features like Table Mountain in Cape Town is further complicated in the desert by its failure to petrify the migrating features of the no-named dunes: the ground moves. My photograph of the dunes outside Luderitz battles with the inability to create a particular landscape image of the desert that would suitably communicate a specific and recognizable location which prevents the viewer or visitor from adopting a position of optical disembodiment in relation to the desert. That is, the desert terrain cannot be experienced or located merely by looking at it.

However, the desert's image – what one sees when one is standing in the desert – dune and sky – is so clear and stark: it bears or delivers little; its sparseness propels the sensuous body to 'come out'. A greater sensitivity is required to experience whatever is there.

I'd like to explore further the context in which this particular perceptual experience of the landscape occurs.

The dunes are made up of a volatile disintegrated substance that renders the image of this place temporary and weak in its power to petrify a distinctive sense of location. However, the conditions of the desert produce moments of viewing that are like a super-image: one can see everything at once, distance is squashed and not seen, in the place I'm standing in I can see clearly all the way to the edge and I believe I can see where the edge meets the sky. What's in front of me has such clarity and stillness that it looks like an image. The almost perfect clarity the desert presents of sky and dune or sky and desert floor superficially fulfills the need for a stable image. But in order to grasp a sense of the general terrain, a certain distance is required that results in the desert's sand grains becoming indistinguishable in this view. That is, what makes up the sparsely populated terrain and the image of the terrain can't co-exist in the same view – the distance between noticing detail and seeing the general desert terrain are too far to

bridge within one view. One is left with a significantly intolerable 'blank' of smooth desert meeting the horizon.

That stark image of desert and sky, together with a failure to communicate distance implies that by seeing all the way to the edge of the terrain, one is also seeing all at once. However, the edges of here and there in this view are difficult to locate such that considerable vacillation occurs between considering the desert as an image to be viewed and the desert as a space to be inhabited. This situation is exaggerated by the mirage which renders what is in the distance unrecognizable from what one knows to occur in one's immediate space. The conventions of landscape imagery that allows a viewer to feel invited into the world of the picture – that is, the inclusion of figures and perspective to communicate scale and orientation – do not adequately articulate the spatial experience of the desert where there are no figures and perspective fails.

The measure used to articulate "here" and "there" when standing in a desert space fails at times. My treatment of what is in front of me blurs and vacillates between "as a surface of an image" or "as space".

Reading and apprehension

I want to explore a momentary distinction of viewing processes when looking at images, looking at spaces as though they were images and inhabiting those spaces.

Reading can be described as the eye scanning the surface of the image searching for clues to guide the viewer to where the event of the image is supposed to be i.e. what experience the image is to deliver us. Substances are treated as information in that attitudes similar to knowledge – type, kind, position, accuracy – allows the vision the viewer has been accustomed to, to remain unchanged i.e. it does not adjust to the thing viewed. For example, picturesque landscape paintings usually depict idealized rural settings with a strong emphasis on environmental weather conditions and chiaroscuro to deliver a scene that is persuasive of its palpability to such an extent that the viewer could entertain his being there.

Apprehending on the other hand is more focused on 'what it is' and 'what the image is'. This particularly happens when reading fails – it is persistently unclear or unsure as to what's happening – one looks to the materials making up the image, how the image is made – the viewer is compelled to readjust her/his vision.

In the viewing of landscape images, when the event of the image remains undelivered and so fails to be complicit with the view held by the viewer, a shift is precipitated from an optical disembodied disposition to a more 'embedded' one. The kind of viewing that is informed by an

optical disembodied disposition has a strong connection to 'capturing' into a particular knowledge structure and employs 'reading' to activate that viewing-knowing relationship. This applies to the case of viewing landscape images and the resulting implications regarding how these images are to be imaginatively inhabited, as well as the further ramifications concerning the physical inhabitation of land.

Thomas Baines, *The Black Rhinoceros* 1874 (oil, 51.3 x 66.7 cm) Sanlam Art Collection



Sindra Da Corte, 'Chance landscape', smearing from *Desert smear* 2011 (black tempera paint on photo paper, 10.5 x 14.8cm)



For example, Baines' *The Black Rhinoceros* reads as a momentary visual impression of a safely contained and maintained experience of 'wildness' in the colony in a manner much like reportage considering his broader role of documenting the colonial landscape for a readership back home in Britain. My 'chance landscapes', however, require the viewer to be sensitive to the touch impressions used to create an image that evokes imaginary landscapes or weather phenomena thereby inviting a personalized and exploratory kind of viewing that is not attached to notions of ownership.

Dune



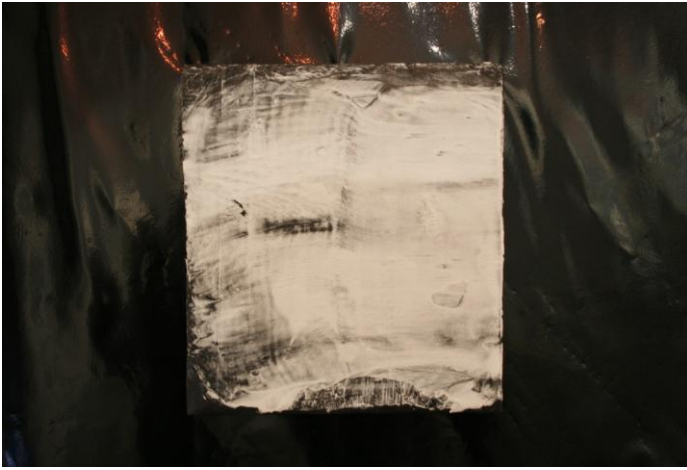
In my works such as *Dune*, *Hotel painting* and *Visit painting*, emphasis is placed on what they are not instead of what they are – a departure is registered from ‘what it should be’ either as a coherent image or as touristy landscapes. *Dune* confronts the viewer with an unintelligible mass of disintegrated magazine pages to form an unresolved image that doesn’t quite ‘cohere’. *Hotel painting* and *Visit painting* both depict upside down tourist images onto which are placed Perspex and cellophane veils coloured with tints reminiscent of rose-tinted glasses, summer clouds or the anti-glare glass film on luxury car windows.

Hotel painting



Visit painting

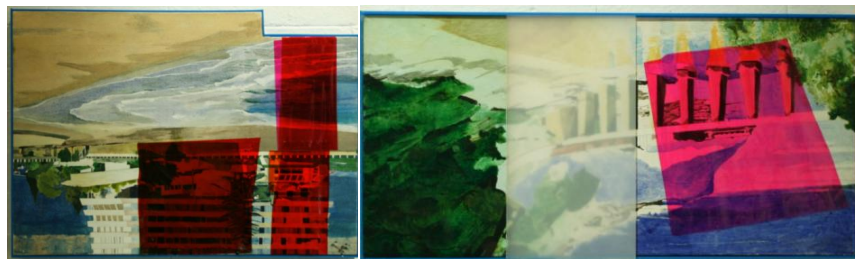
smearing, part of *Desert smear*



'Here' as the materials that make up the works in the exhibition signal, is placed in tension with 'there', in this case, the world of the landscape image. At times that relationship is thwarted. There is an obtuseness in the works – a certain 'failure' in the experience of these images in that the support material is not entirely complicit with the image. The resulting indeterminacy provokes a

'difference' between 'looking at' and 'looking into' being made conspicuous in works like the *Desert smear* and their rendition on black plastic. Attendant is a disbelief in the image which allows for a consideration of how the images in the exhibition communicate experiences of landscape through their materials.

Against this tension between image and process and through differing the relationship of the viewer to the location viewed in the image, an experience of landscape in these works emerges.



The landscape smears and the hotel images are marked by the absence of figures that would otherwise secure particular imaginings of presence. The figure's absence remains as the hotel remains – *Hotel painting* and *Visit painting* are upside down tourist images and so the surroundings in these images become threateningly conspicuous, displacing the prominence of the hotel or the bridge as the subject of the painting. Instead they seem barely tethered to the landscape: an almost death, a swallowing into the land occurs.

That is, what would operate as the 'figure' in figure-ground relationships in these and other landscape images in the exhibition is de-prioritised sometimes to the point of dissolving into a

field. This de-prioritising of the 'figure' informs what I call 'de-iconising' which problematises the desire to 'complete the image' prevalent in mass media images of (tourist) landscapes.

A distinction needs to be made regarding how the viewer 'completes the experience of the image'. With the smearing images and the collage works in the exhibition, the viewer engages an internalized participation in the presence of the image viewed *in the moment of viewing*. In contrast, with magazine images, the viewer satiates the desire stimulated, which is often fueled by imagining himself/herself 'there', by going 'there' and comparing his/her experience with that of the magazine image. This actualizing, which I understand to be a response to prompts from magazine images for literal and explicit embodiment and inhabitation, is felt to occur when the experience and the magazine image are brought into a comparison forming a level of resolution that operates and exists solely on the visual.

The body of the traveler makes the desires linked to a landscape real within this iconising imperative.

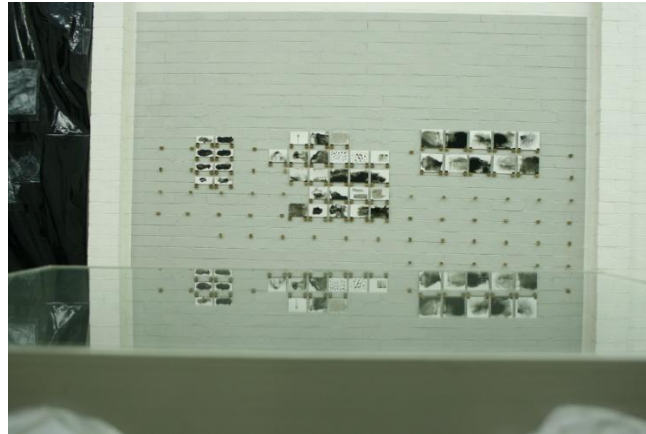
Magazine images and the relationship between ownership and desire they establish, set up clear, distinct and crisp images of landscape as an experience that the view delivers. A view that allows the body to be distanced until it can enter the land safely at which point the body remains protected from the demands of the terrain. The hotel allows this to occur alongside one of the most prevalent activities of travel – photographing. At these destinations, a common view of the land attaches a shared experience of a landscape to a set of images that are easily recognized and circulated. These kinds of images are characterized by their bearing distinct, known, stable or fixed, and possibly historic markers of 'that place'.

Alternatively, the 'smearing works' in the exhibition occur through dab and touch – chance elements are allowed to create a topography that is not connected to a specific location and that is not mapped since it doesn't exist. An objective observation of the land pictured is resisted and instead a personal projected perception is invited.

Having found the view that matches his expectations and now standing on its ground, the land in front of the traveler becomes an embodiment of the image to which his desires had been attached: by the way the landscape is read, by how the viewer is present to it and by how his own body is inhabited in relation to this land. Touch continues to be treated as 'invasive' in these instances: as blemishing as the residual traces of fatty fingers on glossy magazine pages, on computer screens, on photographs, on windows, on camera lenses.

Desert visit

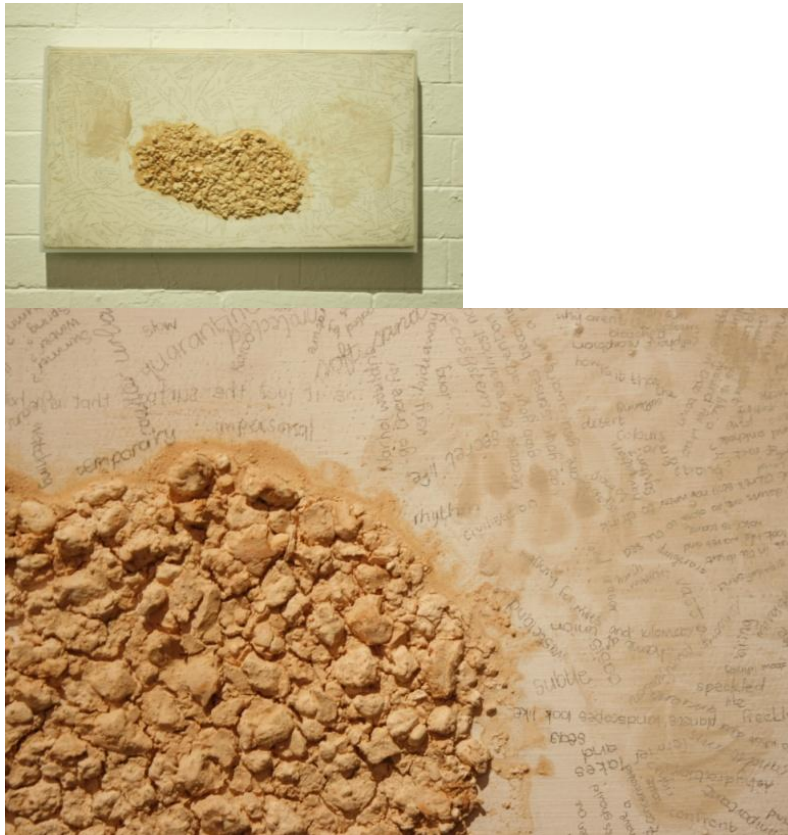
Photographs, display case and stand, gloves; (2011)



The photographs of my visit to the desert near Luderitz, Namibia, which are displayed in a case in the centre of the gallery, form the 'event' of the exhibition. These images of the desert, presented in an urban environment, rest in a sealed off glass display case. Gloves awkwardly allow viewing of the photographs without leaving greasy marks but also doubly distances the touch from the actual image viewed.

Desert piece *Desert painting*

Desiccated acrylic paint and penciled writing on canvas
(2008); 51.2cm x 29.5cm



A penciled commentary imagining the desert is written across the surface of the primed canvas.

Desert painting sets the tone for much of the trajectory within which the remaining artworks in the exhibition are situated: that of a sympathetic relationship of materials to what the artwork is aimed 'to be like'. That is, the parched paint itself recalls a stereotypical image of surface desiccation of the ground.

The scale of the image allows one to see both the image and the materials that make it up so there is a conflation of what the image describes and how the material has been processed to produce the image. The materials literalise the qualities the image describes. The physicality of the dried paint that registers so palpably as terrain, the absence of a horizon line, the scale of the work and the paint embodying dehydration lends the work characteristics reminiscent of samples – as a result one is compelled to run one's fingers over the surface of the dried-out paint. In contrast, the writing on the surface of the painted canvas references my own many divergent imaginings of the desert, for example, from a place of silence to one of quarantine.

HOTEL PAINTINGS

Hotel painting

Image of the Beacon Isle hotel painted and displayed upside down
Acrylic, watercolour and gouache on canvas
Perspex panels of differing colours and thicknesses as well as cellophane sheets are attached to the
paintings' surfaces; Perspex frames
(2008-2009); 44/48.5cm x 63cm





The images in the Hotel Paintings series are sourced from South African travel brochures and advertisements. There was something enigmatic and intriguing when these images of tourist places were turned upside down. The ambiguous middle ground makes the reversal of background and foreground possible. The resulting 'background' seems closer, more comforting and so creates a sense of detached closeness. The eye's entry into the landscape is subverted, and attention is brought to the natural areas these hotels are implanted in: the holiday destination is seen in terms of the natural landscapes they are situated in. I feel curious about these spaces that are made into destinations and are prepared for our 'interaction'.

These celebratory holiday spaces, hotels, require the surrounding landscape to be 'ceremonial'. They mediate between the spaces visited and living spaces or 'home' of the tourist. The landscape surrounding is marked by the hotel and is made to function solely as 'part of the destination' that is, the point where land is entered as opposed to passed by, and these 'surroundings' together with the hotel, although in different ways, serve to engender the proliferation of landscape images which are, as Keith Erikson astutely puts it, 'talismans of original 'experience'' (Bright 1996:335).

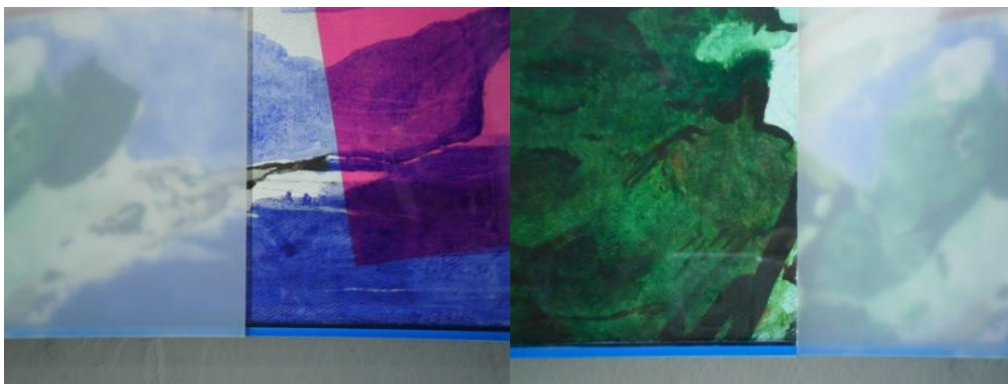
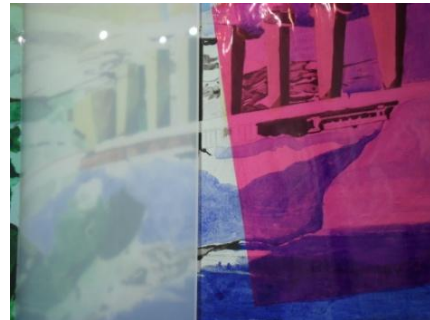
Holiday destinations are one of the few instances where prevailing interactions with the landscape are made explicit. They do not offer a semblance of a 'reunion' with the 'natural landscape' but rather the landscape edits out that which we are escaping from, to have the irrefutable presence of home spaces momentarily suspended by a space that supposedly serves our own choices, supposedly completely, to escape from the places where we feel we don't have full choice and to return with something energized with that power.

The hotel allows a form of domesticity to be introduced into the landscape and is primarily activated and articulated through a specific visual disposition towards land – one that employs a linguistic mode of comparison which ensures that effect occurs without the physical involvement of the viewer. For example, the physical structure of the hotel, like that in *Hotel painting*, offers a sufficiently elevated 'distance' such that from this position of detachment, a sense of place is heightened as both land and the horizon line are in sight.

In *Hotel painting*, the hotel-landscape image is turned upside down and cellophane coloured filters are attached to its surface – the detached closeness that would have occurred with a horizon line anchoring the view becomes disassociated. In re-negotiating the image, the eye-mind becomes active as it tries to orient its view in relation to an image that now asks it to place its head on the ground and look into now unsettlingly prominent promised land. This orientation of the view to the landscape image, the persistence of its operations in this way being forefronted, brings to awareness the specific here-there relationships in this viewing that allow the body to be 'there' in the world of the image, and by extension, in the land itself 'safely'. A visitation occurs that compels a reconsideration of one's presence 'there'.

Visit painting

Image of the Paul Sauer bridge over Storm River painted and displayed upside down
Acrylic, watercolour and gouache on canvas
Perspex panels of differing colours and thicknesses as well as cellophane sheets are attached to the
paintings' surfaces, Perspex frames
(2008-2009); 56cm x 27.2cm





Conventional holiday spaces seem to be characterized by a certain senselessness, which is achieved by artificiality and detachment and is then premised on stimulation, not sensing. They are places where the body can be in a way that's linked to satiating desire. The hotel and destinations, in being reduced solely to the view, offer the promise of inhabiting that view in which all aspirations attached to it will be attained. They seem to be the urban dream of an 'outside' or 'beyond the city' space. I wanted to make the landscapes of these destinations prominent.

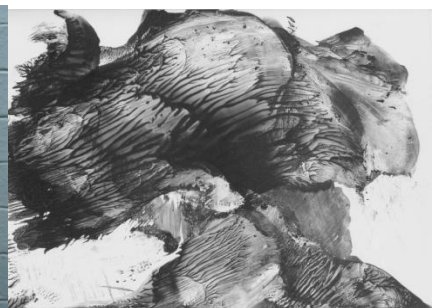
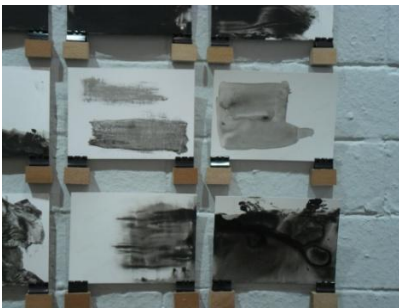
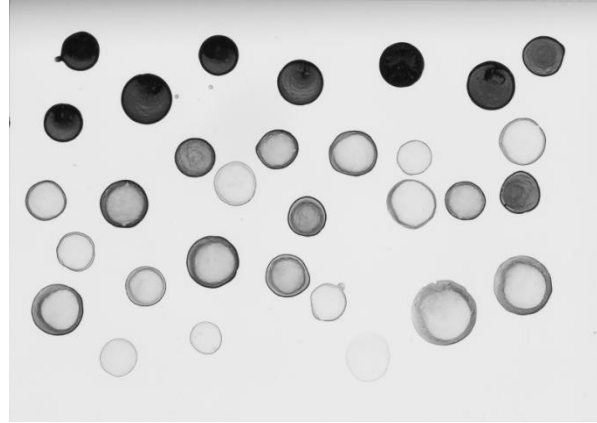
These non-urban spaces, cast as points of recreation and to which are attached the promise of desires being fulfilled, echo British imperial strategies that structured the colony as a Garden. The continued treatment of natural landscapes as a linkage of places which deliver leisure to the traveler deflects scrutiny of how those points of leisure originated and how they institute particular engagements with the territory surrounding these destination points.

What holidays become and promise to make happen is materialized through stimulation, not apprehension. The 'make it happen' impulse of destination-oriented thinking and the quiet belief that 'things only happen at destinations' focuses and prepares our vision for the feature and the 'featureful' thereby preventing it from spreading out across the landscape. The vision that searches for the featureful employs a kind of motion where the landscape is skimmed through or tunneled past and only eventually 'entered' at the destination point – we rest at this point where the landscape is made to meet us. This I believe contributes to the sense of landscape being delivered to us.

SMEARS

Photo smears *Dreaming places*





SMEARS

In contrast to the works made from landscape imagery sourced from tourist advertisements, the 'smearings' are products of a process that explores the interaction of materials by touch. 'Time' is made explicit in the process and the surface of these 'smearings' which is unlike the immediacy that a photograph implies. The images are not seen in the process of their making. Instead two surfaces are used to spread paint across each other's faces. Usually this process has attendant connotations of the inappropriateness of one or both materials used in relation to each other, for example, paint and photographic paper. The word, smearing, refers to both the product and the process; much like how the word landscape refers to both the image on canvas of land and the land itself. What continues through this double reference present in the word landscape is the view. However, the word 'smearing' instigates a bifurcation of interest regarding product and process: this allows for a consideration of what persists in this vacillation across a shared edge of 'looking at' primarily focused at the level of the materials on the surface of the paper and of 'looking through' into the world of the image.

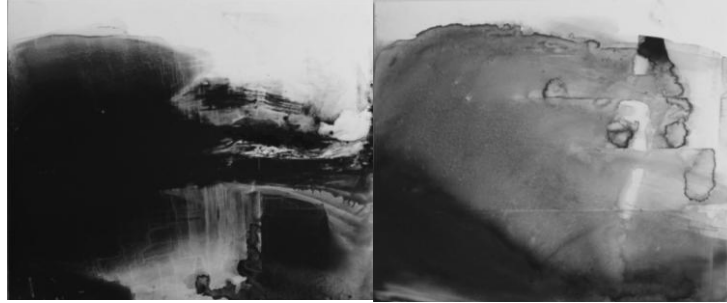
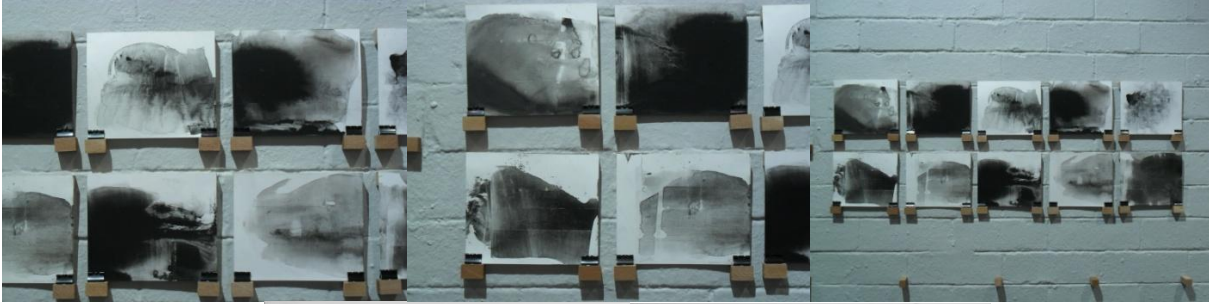


Photo smears *Dreaming places*

Black acrylic paint on white unexposed developed photographic paper (2008); 3 sizes: 12.5cm x 5.2cm, 12.6cm x 9cm, 15cm x 12.5cm

Images are executed with paint on 'blacked out' photographic paper: the photographic sheets are developed and fixed without their having been exposed to light thereby, ironically, rendering them inert.

The images were selected because of their strong evocation of anonymous places: these places do not exist and these images do not call up from my memory places that I know despite their almost photographic quality. They elicit the unknown and the ability of the mind to recognize the inchoate.

The evocation for the eye to 'travel', in the photosmear works, is stimulated by viewing places that exist in image only – they are never visited and are impossible to visit. And yet the compulsion remains that at some level travel must occur in some form.

Photo smear narrative 'Smear narrative'



Photo smear narrative

'Photo smears' placed on A4 paper with stamp and typed commentary
(2008-2009); 123.5cm x 37.7cm

The commentary that is placed near each image in this series threads together a travel narrative whose fabrication is determined by these images. That is, the logic of a supposedly mythical exploration of a land 'visited' is drawn from the concocted world these images may refer to. The images cease to be illustrative (as is usually the case in colonial travel literature) because they determine the narrative of exploration. The stamps were placed at my request – their presence in relation to the images and the commentary imbues the work with a reversal of practices ensuring verification, authentication and certification.

Smears and photograph *Desert smear*



Desert smear

White paint or plaster onto black plastic stretched over a support; Black-and-white photograph (2009); 335cm x 486cm

The plastic smear is exhibited with a photograph of it, that is, the original and its document are exhibited together. The image and the 'image of an image' displayed together put into question the 'original', the process of documentation and what that level of translation reveals. They don't quite collapse into each other, which is what I expected - that the copy would obliterate the uniqueness of the original. Instead, an awareness of the environment in which the viewing of these images takes place becomes prominent in the viewer's field of awareness. The lighting conditions captured by the photograph are almost invisible to the viewer's focus in the gallery who looks at what the original image contains. This is because the documenting photograph registers the sensuality of the black plastic far more explicitly than is seemingly present on the original's surface.



The copper colour of the gallery's lighting, the blue ambient light outside coming through an open door and the comparatively less brighter reflection of the gallery walls present on the black enameled surface of the hanging plastic are automatically edited out by the viewer in his/her engagement with the image attached to this hanging plastic. The photographic 'document' of one of the smear works refers to the presence of these kinds of reflections and so a sharedness of the works' plastic substrate and that of the hanging plastic is primarily situated around bearing a mutual existence of the image and the reflected space in which the work is exhibited in.

Why is the document so visually seductive and so easily assimilated by the view and how does the original require a more direct viewing, a confrontation with the 'rawness' of the materials present? Running through these questions is an interest in how the image of the desert persists from its fragile and contemporary nature on the plastic to its petrification, consolidation and boldness as an image by the photographic process.

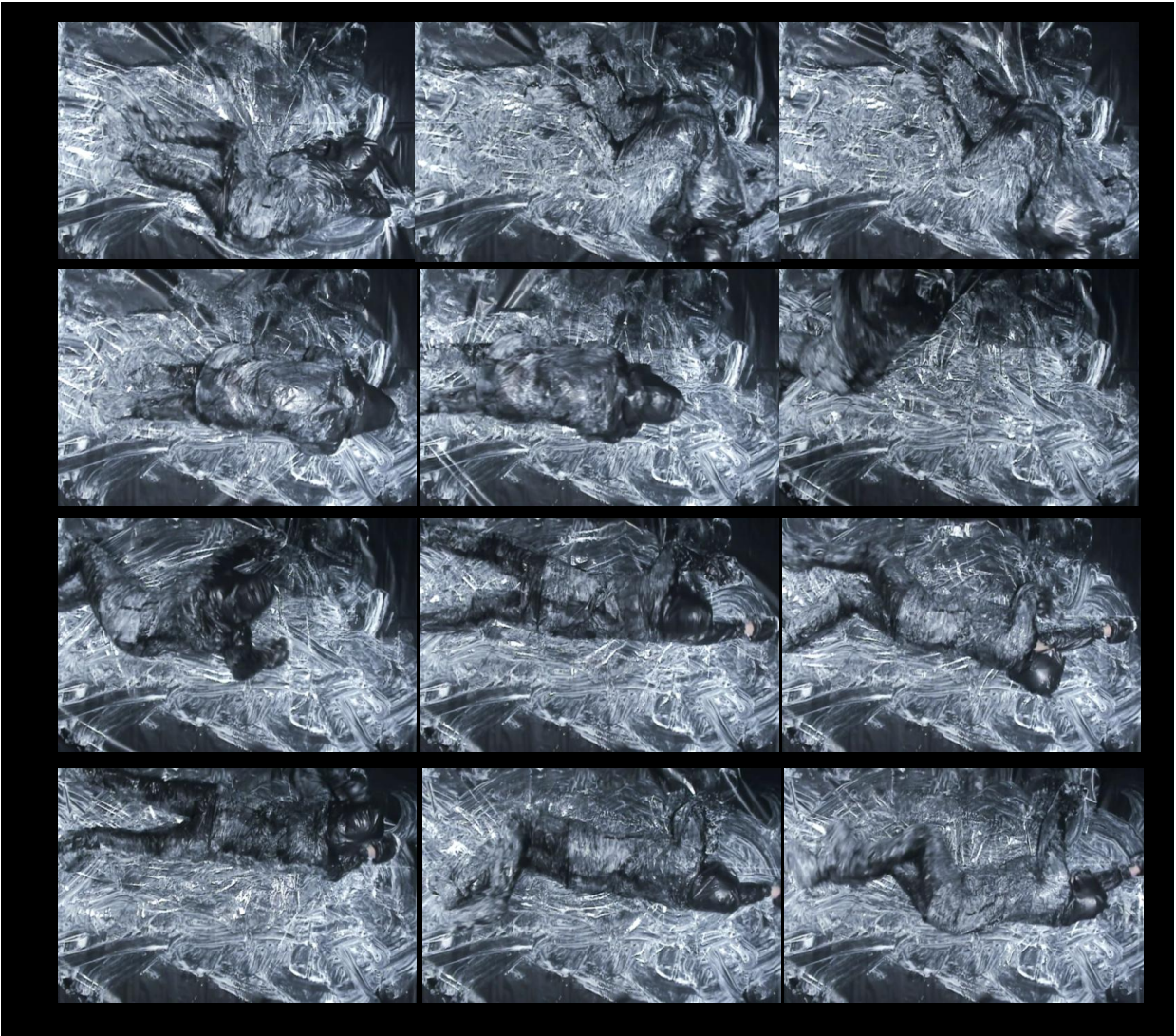
These images continue to remind me of the desert-like spaces that I visited near Luderitz in Namibia with their evocation of a surface that moves and is unstable.

My preoccupation with having the original and its document viewed in the same context is partly derived from Rosalind Krauss's analysis of doubling in the photographic tendencies in surrealism, particularly,

...in being seen in conjunction with the original, the double destroys the pure singularity of the first. (Krauss 1996:86)



Video smear, video projection (2010); 8min. 13s



Before this work was made, the smears were processes and products that I could handle. *Video smear* became an attempt to register the kind of contact/touch typical of the smearing with surfaces that were far larger than my body. Would it be possible for my body to fully disappear? After all, the large surface size would be overwhelming and I would be too close to the surface to see what's happening or to see what the image looks like.

As my body engages in mediated touching it momentarily disappears, in parts, until the gaze catches up or catches on. At moments in the video sequence, while I'm 'making' the image, I disappear into it. Sometimes my body seems to experience violation: it is tracked visually through my movement, it seems broken up at times, is mistaken for being contorted and is even difficult to locate.



As my body moves, the 'background' space changes and the viewer's own position in relation to the evoked spaces is at times difficult to account for.

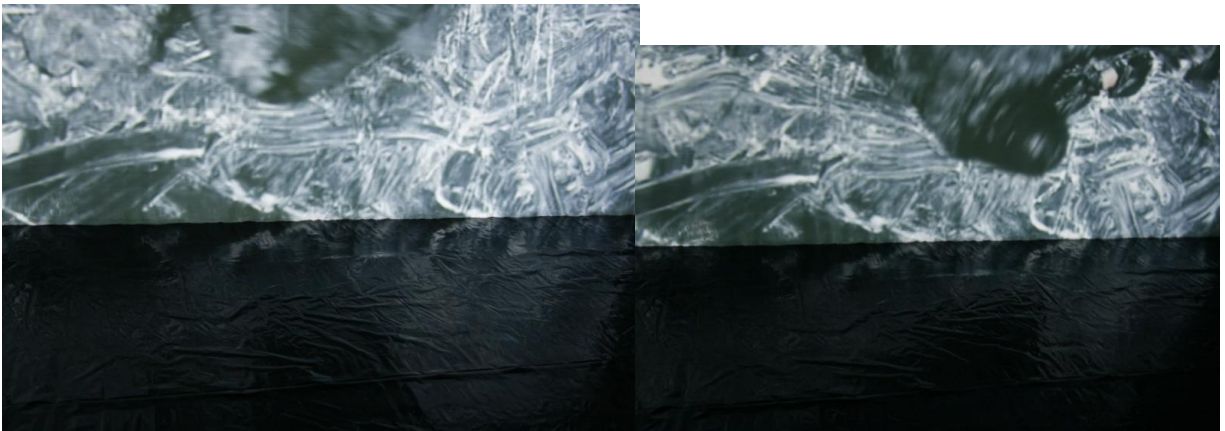
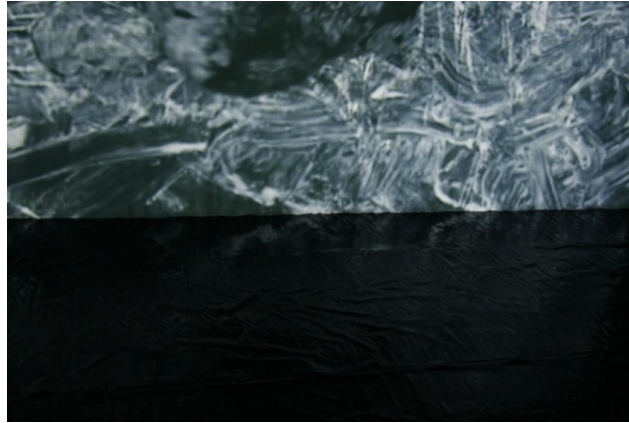
The collapse of a bodied presence and an evocation of landscape into each other is suggested by this active smearing.

The figure-ground confusion or slippages provoke a kind of looking akin to surveillance. A 'cladding' of the body and ground impels an anxiety that comes to exist around the kind of engagement needed for this work: the furtive mobile body and the undisclosed ground, in experiencing unpredictable and threatening 'disappearings' into each other, averts the primacy of sight in both the making and experiencing of the work which occurs almost simultaneously.

The intermediary irritation or clumsiness of the black plastic covering in *Video smear* as well as the gloves in *Desert visit* mark a cladding of the body where borders denoting 'what is out there' and what is happening 'inside' shift; are not always straight; are not always legibly communicated; and are unpredictable in what is let through.

The body which inhabits a plastic 'suit' effects through its movement and positioning creases in the suit that when in contact with the covered floor channels and presses the white paint across the texture of the floor which is partially transferred through the plastic covering. In all this, the visual appearances of floor and body are not conveyed.

The white paint tracks contact rather than touch for the viewer – this action references an experience of tangibility privy to the 'unknown' body and inaccessible to the gaze – there is a landscape, a body on the floor viewed from above: this body feels the non-visible vibrations passed on by the floor of actions occurring beyond the frame and the view and so is impossible to see in this context. The gaze only locates where touching is happening.



..

The smears invoke the syntax of black-and-white photography and the smoothness of its images' surfaces. There is the excess of material on surfaces similar to plastic coated photographic paper and yet our habit of looking at photographs requires us to specifically look through that plastic coating, into the paper that supposedly holds the image.

The smears allude to both looking initially at and then through the surface *and* to looking at actual spaces and images of spaces which serves as an opportunity to explore that difference between 'here' and 'there'.

DISPERSAL

Dune

Magazine paper 'grains', glue, glaze, on plastic backing
(2010); 330cm x 203cm





Dune is made up of successive layers of 'grains' which are pages from local magazines cut up into roughly 3mm x 3mm squares. I wanted to make an image that couldn't cohere even though each grain has a sharp edge and is easily differentiated either by colour or colour and text.

I think of 'grain' in this way: as the distinctive trace of the original material and because of its diminished corporeality, it seems to bear something of this material quite preciously and in such a way that its difference is imprinted onto the surface of an object other than itself that it is formed into.

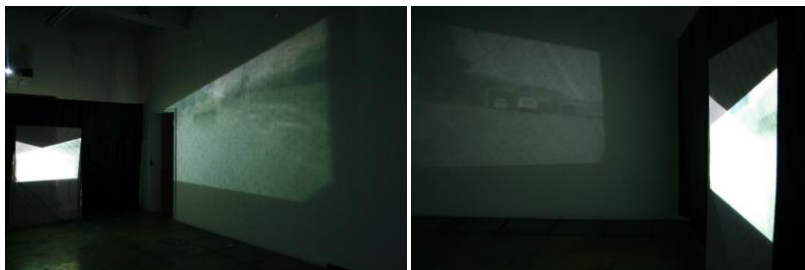
This amalgam of tiny, volatile particles that seem to be in flux disrupts a particular relation between image, text and place. The surface of coloured static is comprised of the illegible collision of fragments or fine 'sand' grains that are barely perceptible at the distance required to get a view of distinct landmarks and of the horizon which marks a totality of landscape to be viewed. In this work, no horizon line or distinctive features that would indicate a landscape are represented. The failure in delivering a view of these spatial qualities allows for a form of landscape perception that is characterized by a lack of acquisitiveness in that the integrity of the icon that existed on the magazine page is not maintained nor is one created to take its place in the forming of *Dune*. Landscape imagery is de-iconised and the cues enabling what has become a consumerist reading of these images are negated.

Arrival, video projection through grid-patterned cloth (2010); 4min. 13s

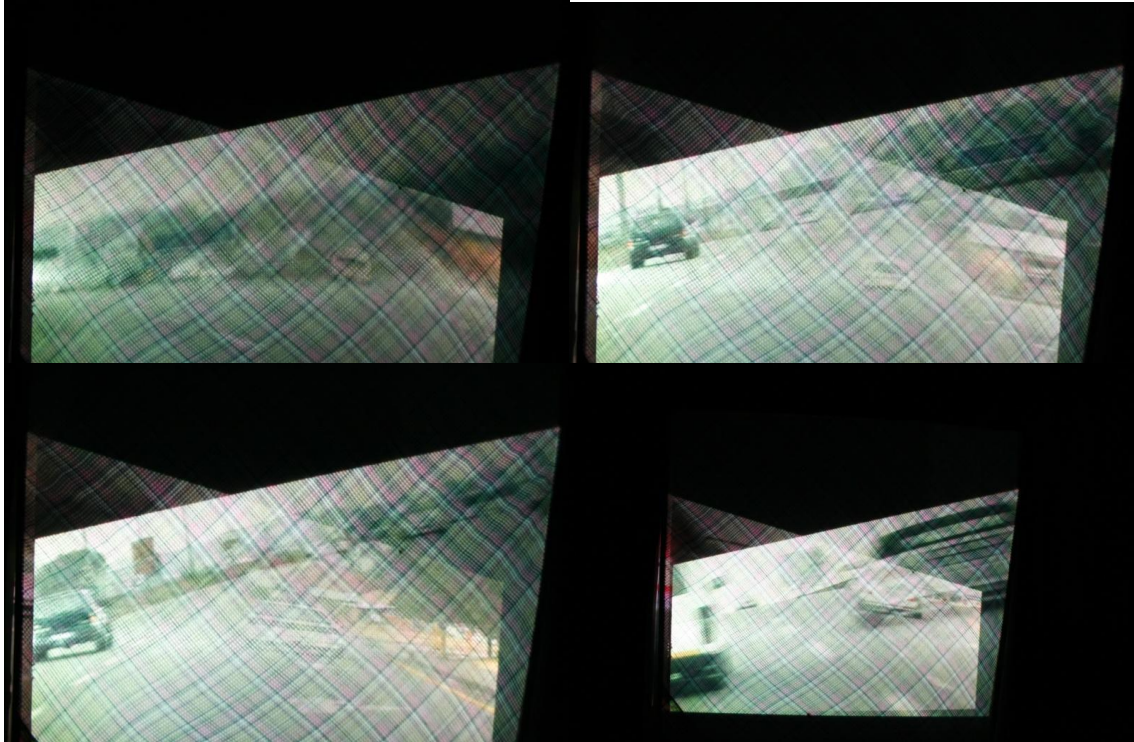


I was imagining an immigrant/foreign vision especially the moment where the new space lived in now and the space that one is 'from' collapses into each other due to some spatial similarity.

In creating that experience through video, I was curious to see at what points these spaces would interrupt each other. I imagined that in experiencing two distant places simultaneously the body was also tearing itself in two and then adhering along those points of tearing. I imagine a foreign or immigrant body as being split in two: connected to an origin-home which exists 'there' and yet having to exist in a new place 'here' which is not home yet.



The highway I travel very often between home and Johannesburg, in their separate directions, are generally similar to each other in spatial terms: each had the same number of turns approaching each city, in a sense mirroring each other – one turning left, the other right, with both journeys 'ending' in a rise.



The two projections both start from the midpoint of the journey, but each follows opposite directions, i.e. one going home, one to Johannesburg. As the video plays, the images depict spaces increasingly distant from each other, almost pulling apart from each other, as the action moves to their respective destinations.

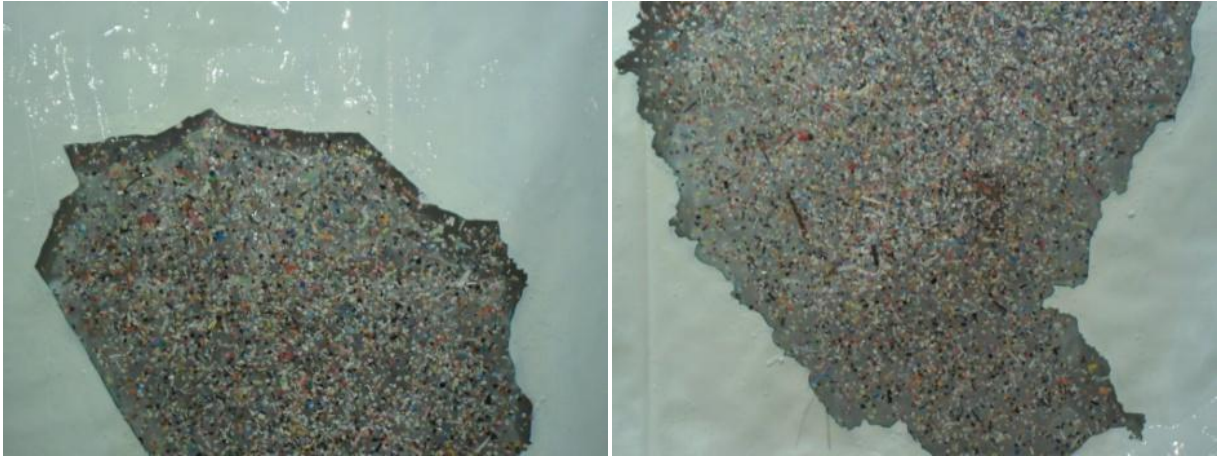
In repeating these journeys as a loop, I was hoping that video would help me to gauge what effect these similar arrivals would have on me when they occur at the same time, something which is impossible for me to do in reality. I decided to have these two video sequences intersect each other in the screening to focus attention to points at which they share similarity.



Desert states

Magazine paper, plastic, glaze/glue, enamel paint, wooden blocks
(2009-2010); 335cm x 238cm





As in my initial theoretical writings around the lack of graspable features within the landscape in deserts, this is a concern in the making of a number of works. These blob-like images are the outlines that denote the borders of African and Middle Eastern countries that had significant parts of their land masses comprised of desert or that existed partly on the peripheries of deserts. The desert areas occur where the borders have straight lines. A line is drawn straight through these desert areas explicitly signaling them as the least differentiated and as incapable of delivering points at which to 'enter' this land communicatively and safely.

The desire is for a line that one can move swiftly along to somewhere else. In the desert one is potentially surrounded by an unbroken horizon line – what is behind looks the same as what is ahead and a different sense of being engulfed results due to directionality being difficult to maintain.





The terrain, in parts, varies from being highly visible to being seen through as the different-sized multi-coloured grains are scattered in a way that ensures an 'unreadability'. Although the grains individually are highly legible in themselves, the relationship of grains to the area of land as well as the relationship of grains to each other are left disregarded. There's an element of hyperbole in how the details of different-coloured grains overtake the area of land. The grains' legibility is further hampered in places where fragments are heavily compacted onto each other, when they are amassed together to form terrain.





These skins of fragmented



and at times invisible terrain



alongside



and over each other.



Dispersal and Breaking the image

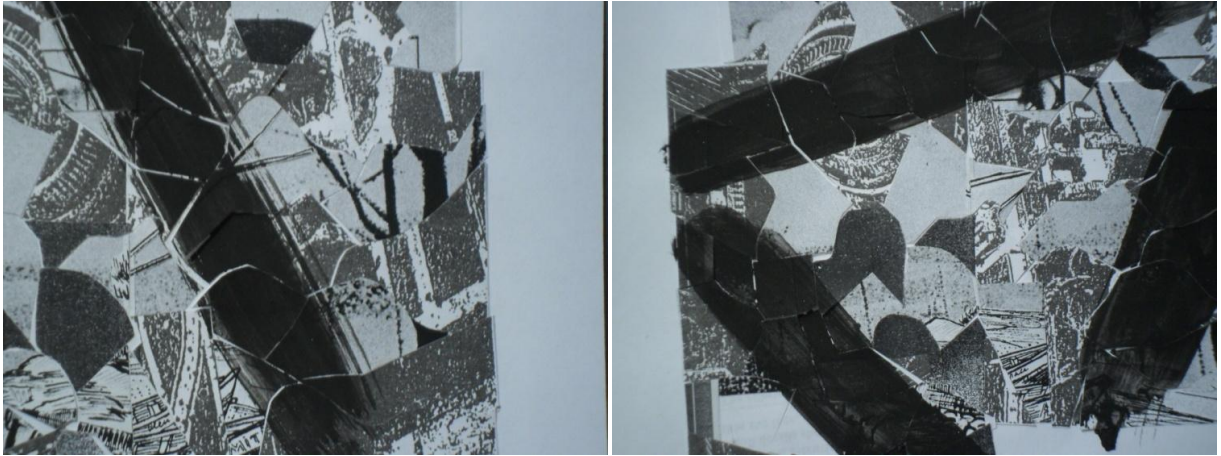
My interest in 'breaking the image' and in the idea of dispersal comes out of a frustration with a situation that Auslander so aptly describes. He notes that traditional mass media creates kinds of collectives, audiences and groups where the relation of the individual to the collective is one of absence. (Auslander 1994:79)

Being receptive to mass media's capacity to form groups involves the individual submitting himself to an illusory consensus of desire. Individuals do not know each other because it isn't necessary to do so and their individuality takes the form of being 'a part of a collective', not as themselves. The individual can never speak to the audience as himself since the audience isn't present to him in the same way as it is to the media that form it. In order to speak a common membership has to be heralded, its speaking has to remain an expression of common membership. In other words, mass media through which images of tourist landscapes are circulated seems to provide an anti-communicative meeting place and to furnish cues in how to get to know **of** each other. Through this arrangement, an image of the world is gained.

COLLAGE

City collage

Photocopied images, glue, A4 white paper, binder, grey painted plastic backing
(2009); 75.1 cm x 37.7cm



City collage is made up of interlocking fragments sourced from images of places to be seen, places for viewing and visitation but not for living in, specifically the Colosseum in Rome and the seaside. The view of places, in being cut up, forces viewers to attune their looking to that of the partial.

City collage itself seems like a close-up shot of a map with fragments having their existence or completion straddling borders. A deranged relationship between the fragments' internal arrangement/logic of visual content and the spatial arrangement of the collage's own picture surface occurs. At what point does the memory needed to piece the images together fail? Is it possible for the mind to hold these fragments even though it has to step over the thick black border-like lines and the eyes have to flit from one page to the other?

The last image in the series is an off-cut of one of the source-images – it shows the 'end' of a drawing and its caption indicates where this drawing of the seaside is located.

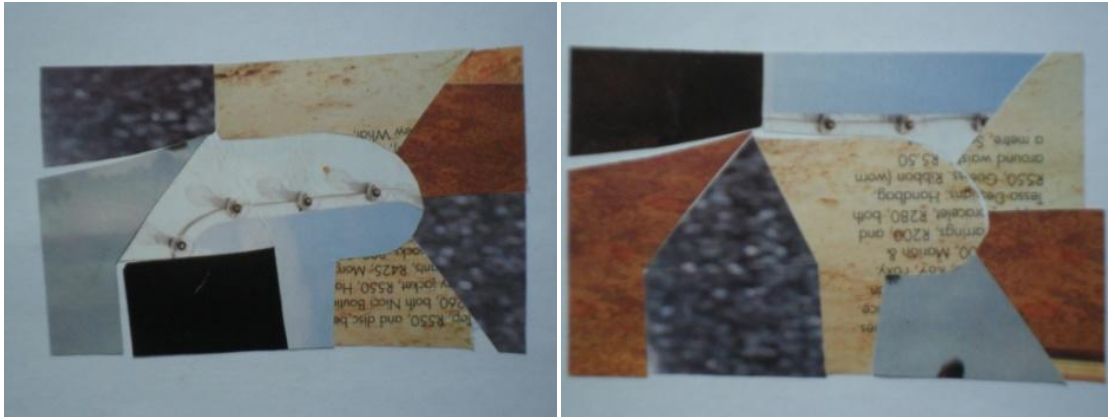
There's an irreverent treatment of the source images' content. The viewer focuses on the sensuousness of the fragments' details in order to extrapolate where these fragments came from or of what they were meant to show in terms of a 'larger image', in this case, the 'map'.

As in *Composite landscape* further below, none of the fragments are thrown away. The two images are made with equal areas of alternating patterns of fragments – sometimes they are read as cells pressing onto each other's image spaces, sometimes as quite decorative, sometimes as a clash of surface and a distance viewed.

The fragments are small enough for the viewer to mentally piece the two images together to figure out what each total original image looked like. The black stripes reference a larger whole which is absent so that the relation of the black stripes to the fragments is difficult to make. Instead a kind of view is afforded between what is so large and what is so small: that one can't be seen in totality, the other not close enough. As a result, the effect of each on the other is made prominent. The viewer, alienated from accessing a totality of the terrain that *City collage* may hold, instead adopts a 'closeness' where details of the fragments are used to map together a possible mental image of the terrain.

Composite landscape

Magazine fragments, glue, A4 paper, binder, blue-grey plastic backing
(2010); 96.5cm x 26.7cm



Fragments of six cropped images of various urban spaces sourced from local magazines were combined to create six composite landscapes. Each of the source images can be inferred from through partial or disintegrated looking – by mentally adding the relevant fragments that are dispersed through the six composite images.

The compositional focus of each composite landscape shifts according to the colour, tonal and textural values that each fragment contains despite the same pattern of arrangement being used.

I wanted to know what it would be like for spaces, or their images at least, to interfere with each other while existing partially in multiple frames together; the way our bodies do over time. The viewer is required to use memory to piece the images before him/her together.

A closed system is employed – all fragments are used, no fragments from other images outside the original six are present in the composite landscapes, no parts of the original images are lost. Also, the material and/ or content of the images are rigidly subsumed to the pattern of arrangement.

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“BREAKING THE IMAGE”

The two collage projects, *Composite landscape* and *City collage*, draw on the potential for actualization that mass media images of urban or holiday spaces suggest. *City collage* references places that are visited – photocopied images of the very ‘touristy’ Colosseum in Rome and a personal image of visitation, Van Gogh’s drawing of the seaside. *Composite landscape* is comprised of the background spaces that appear in several magazine editorials.

My intention was to break the image’s self-containment: images of places, being fragmented, interfere with each other. Pressure is placed on the viewer’s capacity for holding residual memory as his gaze flits across the borders of the images in an effort to mentally piece together particular fragments scattered across the images. The legibility of both the individual fragments and the images they were originally drawn from are not completely compromised and so it is at points of discontinuity that the eye-mind becomes active in re-negotiating these images as part of a broader consideration of the relationship between these various intermingling pictured spaces. All together they read as something else – not becoming a new image but rather the interruptedness brings about a different quality to what any of the fragments alone could bring.

Untitled

Black enamel paint on black plastic
(2010-2011); 91.5cm x 63cm



This work is quiet and recessive: the shiny black enamel refracts light that picks up every mark of the substrate's surface. Since it has no image to bear other than itself, this surface is looked at instead of looked into. Attention is brought to the substrate's material – black plastic – which has associations with protection from and containment of the undesired or the once desired and now used up empty remains; and with trash where mostly broken, dirty forms mix into each other decaying, no longer necessary to be kept apart or distinct. The viewer sees their own presence on this glossy surface as a vague shadow and questions his/her presence or the work's own presence there in the moment of interaction.



I had noticed in my viewing of landscape paintings and photographs from various contexts ranging from personal photographs to highly circulated historical images of famous destinations that the conventions employed by these images were drawn from the British landscape painting tradition which emerged as British Imperial expansion was becoming part of British identity. I experienced this explicitly as a feeling of inheriting a separation of 'here' and 'there' which ensured a disconnection from the land I found myself situated in. Also, I felt worn out by the flood of tourist-like images that required my sensual engagement with the landscapes they presented to carry on the detachment initially formulated in British landscape representation. The forms of sensual engagement left to me regarding landscape images were oppressively pivoted on viewing these locations as places to 'view and visit'. That is, my participation in an unbalanced over-reliance on sight to experience, or more accurately, consume a landscape also resulted in an impoverishment of the other senses in this 'interaction'. I was left wondering 'what of the body – of its capacity to touch, smell, taste and hear? Could not other dispositions to the land be developed through calling on these senses in moments of contact with the land?' The desert presented a failure through which I could wring the representational strategies employed in landscape painting and opened up an exploration of place-making and a questioning of how 'embeddedness' in contemporary landscapes and cityscapes occur, fall apart, are attached to or detached from a developing understanding of my own subjectivity in relation to environments I find myself momentarily a part of.

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