

Sydney College of the Arts  
The University of Sydney  
Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours)  
2016  
BACHELOR OF VISUAL ARTS  
RESEARCH PAPER

**Navigating the Void:**  
**Field observations from the space between**  
by  
**Georgia Alexis De Biasi**  
**Sculpture, Performance, Installation**

October 2016



**Declaration Relating to the Lodgement  
of the Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours)**

This is to certify that I *Georgia Alexis De Biasi*


Student ID No 440624361

being a candidate for the Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours), am fully aware of the policy of the University relating to the retention and use of Honours degree project reports and theses, namely, that if I am awarded the Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours), the Research Paper lodged with Sydney College of the Arts may be available for research purposes, subject to further confirmation my express written permission. I agree that, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act, the Dean may then supply an electronic copy of the Research Paper to an individual for research or study or to a library.

Signature.....

Witness.....

Date.....

  
26/10/16

## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Loss</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Navigation, Transit, Maps</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Experiencing and representing a landscape</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Landscape, but not as we know it</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Documenting the void</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Honours body of work</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>14</b>
	<b>Figures</b> .....	<b>15</b>
	<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>20</b>

# 1 Introduction

This paper and my Honours body of work addresses my response to grief and loss through the metaphor of navigation and transit through an open landscape. The emotional context of my work can be understood by considering ideas around trauma and affect in art. My research this year developed in reflecting upon the death of my father, in particular my subjective responses to this experience, and how to represent this. This process this year led to revisiting an inner state of disoriented perspectives and a sense of groundlessness. The emotions and sensations examined for the work, while subjective, are mediated by time and reflection.

The earth sciences demand a technical way of seeing, interpreting and representing the natural world. The habits engendered by the scientific practices of my former profession underpin my attempt to remain objective and empirical in the face of difficult personal experience, and the ultimate failure of this objectivity. Despite this failure, the natural world's presence during the personal experience of sorrow and confusion provided a starting point for ways to assimilate and represent the inner process of bereavement within an otherwise indifferent world.

In this paper and my body of work I situate my experiences between geography and metaphor, representing the landscape through concepts and forms found in landscape-oriented processes of navigation, transit and mapping. It could be summed up in the term *wayfinding*<sup>1</sup>, encompassing “all of the ways in which people (and animals) orient themselves in physical space and navigate from place to place.”<sup>2</sup> Informed in particular by artists from the conceptual Land Art movement in the 1960s, the paper then discusses certain formal and conceptual references that artists associated with this movement interrogated and represented through their direct, active engagement with the landscape. This was visually and conceptually developed in my work using performance-based practices, primarily land-based transit such as walking and driving, broadly accounting for the performative concept underlying my work.

The paper then discusses my aim to represent movement as a trajectory through a place and the notion of being in transit in a liminal, in-between zone, with reference to the

---

<sup>1</sup> *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, sixth edition, 2007, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, United Kingdom). The *New Shorter OED* does not list ‘wayfinding’, and an internet search reveals that the word while retaining a similar meaning is context-specific, mainly used in software development, architecture and urban design.

<sup>2</sup> “Wayfinding,” Wikipedia, last modified September 27, 2016, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wayfinding>

existential themes in films of Andrei Tarkovsky, and Yves Klein's commentary and performance addressing the immaterial. My response to presence and absence as a result of loss draws a connection between conceptual representations of landscape and the role that fictitious places and imagined performative acts can have in representing concepts of the immaterial as a way to address profound human experiences.

My body of work is presented as a documentation of a performative work, that of movement and transit through an imaginary landscape. Both the performance and the landscape are imagined, fictional, and the performance documentation alone constitutes the art work. An engagement between the imaginable, a landscape, with the unimaginable, death, is what permits me to encounter and express this existential experience.

## 2 Loss

As an affective experience beyond our control, the event of traumatic loss and its aftermath invokes its own kind of trauma. An apprehension of loss and its memory and existential processes takes place in real time. My experience as a witness to the death of my father made it clear that comprehending loss involves a coming-to-terms for which there is no clear end point to the process of memory and re-orientation. Jill Bennett writes that in the case of being at the centre of a traumatic event, one is unable to extricate oneself from the event in order to describe it from the perspective of an external observer.<sup>3</sup> This intense subjectivity makes formulating a critical distance from one's own state impossible, if nothing else, and potentially traumatising in itself.<sup>4</sup> She describes it as a 'continuous negotiation of the present', dealing with the 'lived process of memory', the experience and re-experience of which changes continuously after the primary experience.<sup>5</sup>

The affect of grief, as with most forms of trauma, can include a state or experience of post-traumatic memory and having significant somatic resonance.<sup>6</sup> Bennett contrasts experiences and expressions of psychological and physical pain in the context of trauma and affect. She makes this point in describing traumatic memory as 'non-declarative', involving 'bodily responses that lie outside verbal-semantic-linguistic representation.'<sup>7</sup> Elaine Scarry suggests that silence or at least unintelligibility is a consequence of the kind of suffering that

---

<sup>3</sup> Jill Bennett, *Empathic vision: affect, trauma and contemporary art*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 31

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 82

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 40

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 23

we associate with pain and death. While she is referring to physical pain, its ‘unshareability’ – and that of death itself – is ensured through its resistance to language, in that the extremes of such bodily experience form an ‘absolute limit to communication’.<sup>8</sup> Corporeal suffering, as Townsend identifies it, has no external referential object – nothing that can easily be used to represent our own pain.<sup>9</sup> Examining this in more detail allowed me to consider the register of articulation that would allow me to analyse my responses and myself as a contemporary subject influenced by modern and postmodern attitudes and belief structures about death and life. I have an ongoing encounter with death, as a living person coming up against that which is unintelligible. In this regard, Kevin Hart quotes Maurice Blanchot, “We enter with a leap into a situation that is no longer defined by useful operations or by knowing... but one that opens up onto a loss of knowledge.”<sup>10</sup> As someone who is still living, I can no more make sense of this encounter than someone who has died. This interface – although there is nothing to interface with, Georges Bataille’s ‘supplication without response’<sup>11</sup> – is the contact with the unknown described by Blanchot<sup>12</sup>, and that I consider in my body of work.

There are many ways to calibrate our existence in the world to make sense of suffering. By calibrate I mean an attunement, or a psychological re-adjustment to the outside world, through small ways that are only meaningful to or apprehended by the subject. Core to Bennett’s argument and to my own performative research is how one attends to the space between the registration of subjective experience and the realm of normative representation in an art work. It was necessary to answer a question of how to depict an experience that is personal and highly emotional, where there is limited evidence of this process to others. This non-declarative sense seeks contact without words, and does not wish to be directly articulated.<sup>13</sup>

Jorge Luis Borges writes in his poem, *Shinto*, of the infinitesimally small acts of salvation that the physical world offers, sustaining us via tiny sensory increments through times that otherwise offer nothing for comfort or respite.<sup>14</sup> Physical and material experiences can offer a kind of channel through which emotional memory can be transmuted. For me,

---

<sup>8</sup> Elaine Scarry in Chris Townsend, *Art and Death*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 7

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>10</sup> Kevin Hart, “The Counter-spiritual Life,” in *The Power of Contestation: Perspective on Maurice Blanchot*, eds. Kevin Hart and Geoffrey H. Hartman, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2004), 158

<sup>11</sup> Nick Land, *The Thirst for Annihilation – Georges Bataille and Virulent Nihilism*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 115

<sup>12</sup> Hart, *The Power of Contestation*, 158

<sup>13</sup> Bennett, *Empathic vision*, 23

<sup>14</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, *Selected Poems*, ed. Alexander Coleman (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc, 2000)

performative work can function as a means of comprehending the emotional or affective impact of profound experiences, in this case, loss. In my work this performance means an engagement or activity involving the natural world. For example in earlier work, (see Figure 1) I sought phenomenological engagement with my surroundings as a process of sensory re-integration, or what could be described as a rapprochement with the world around me from which I sought respite for so long and which loss had now reconfigured.

### 3 Navigation, Transit, Maps

Navigation is fundamentally a field of study that focuses on the process of monitoring and controlling the movement of a craft or vehicle from one place to another. More broadly, it refers to any skill or study that involves the determination of position and direction.<sup>15</sup> As this implies movement through space one can examine the idea of trajectories, and, extending this in my work, the notion of being in transit in a liminal, in-between zone; a transitional state. The movement is envisaged or imagined as physical, three-dimensional movement from one place to another as performance in a large unbounded space, directly implicating the body. By representing transition aesthetically and phenomenally as the experience of a landscape or territory, certain metaphors of place, distance, navigation and transit became available. This process allowed me to consider and represent the affect and sensations of wayfinding. Man-made symbols of navigation and orientation, such as maps, trig stations<sup>16</sup> or roadside guide poles, thus became part of a process of articulation, along with land-based analogues such as land marks and the horizon itself.

Transit embodies the idea of the process of movement, rather than specifically addressing a point of departure or an implied destination. To even refer to the act of transit implies that an artistic discourse has been “informed by engagement with crossing over territory, by passing through new contexts and environment(s)”<sup>17</sup>. Taking this further, being in transit can be its own state of existence. Miwon Kwon, writing about transience,

---

<sup>15</sup> “Navigation”, Wikipedia, last modified 18 October 2016, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Navigation>

<sup>16</sup> A trig station, also known as a Trigonometric Point or Station, is located on a hilltop. Trig stations are land survey marks and their name arises because trigonometry is used to calculate their positions. They are permanently marked on the ground and usually have a beacon (such as a marker atop a tripod) or cairn of rocks directly above them so they can be seen from a distance. Sometimes the trig station is an observation pillar on which a geodetic surveying instrument is placed. See “Fundamentals of mapping,” Intergovernmental Committee on Surveying and Mapping, last modified 29 June 2016, [http://www.icsm.gov.au/mapping/surveying1.html#jargon\\_trig](http://www.icsm.gov.au/mapping/surveying1.html#jargon_trig).

<sup>17</sup> *Meredith Brice: transit*, curated by Meredith Brice (Sydney: Macquarie University Art Gallery, 2013). Exhibition catalogue. 11

displacement and uncertainty, comments that “[i]t is not the place that is right or wrong, it is our relationship to it.”<sup>18</sup> Sometimes the experience of conditions of uncertainty and estrangement can form a basis for self-knowledge, and new forms of belonging. Kwon continues that such a precarious position is “the only place from which to face the challenges of the new orders of space and time.”<sup>19</sup> From her description, it could be considered that this liminal zone is a place that can be inhabited more than just incidentally.

Sometimes liminal zones have their own map. Maps and documents of the process of change and even death are relatively easy to find, as cartographies of transition<sup>20</sup>. Gilles Tiberghien describes a map as an operator of construction and a generator of forms, in that it “is open and connectable in all its dimensions. It constructs the real more than represents it; it does not indicate a reality, rather it causes meanings to circulate, becoming each artist’s medium for these meanings.”<sup>21</sup> This fluid interpretation of the map as a live document rather than statement of concrete fact supports the possibility that as an instrumental representation of transit or territory, or as a metaphor for clarity and knowledge, the map as document is fallible. Where the document fails is where there is sponginess, an impasse. The impossibility of perfecting the map-territory relation is the focus of a short story by Borges, *On Exactitude in Science*, which describes an idealistic king whose desire for cartographic perfection results in a 1:1 scale map of his empire that is by necessity the same size as the empire. This perfect representation is so unwieldy that it is ultimately deemed useless and its failure is evidenced in its subsequent neglect and decay.<sup>22</sup> It could be argued that any effort to represent a complex site beyond the site itself must allow for indeterminacy and failure.

#### **4 Experiencing and representing a landscape**

The engagement of my art practice with the processes of perceiving and documenting the physical landscape can be related to the practice of Land Art. Hanna Hölling describes Land Art as engaging with “the understanding of landscape not only as the earth’s physicality but also with the physiology and psychology of the viewer—a beholder and participant.”<sup>23</sup> My practice aligns with some work of the 1960s conceptual land artists where they engage

---

<sup>18</sup> Miwon Kwon, *The Wrong Place*. *Art Journal* 59(1) 2000: 42.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 43

<sup>20</sup> For example, the United Nations *Roadmap to Peace*, the Tibetan *Bardo*, a map for the soul’s journey to the next world.

<sup>21</sup> Gilles Tiberghien, *Land Art*, (UK: Art Data, 1995), 165

<sup>23</sup> Hanna Hölling, “Land Art,” accessed October 16, 2016, <http://artsafiental.ch/en/land-art/>.



with (among other things) terrain, site, and the relationship between the body and the landscape. The key difference is that I have chosen to examine a terrain that no one else can see.

My earlier training in physical earth sciences influenced the research direction for my work. Working in the earth sciences entails making empirical assessments of a particular landscape or site. Perceiving and interpreting the physical world through an objective approach means being seen to remove oneself from what is being observed in order to evaluate it. Engaging with a landscape using an empirical methodology was a process that involved, for example, making measurements of distance and area, and applying given systems of classification to elements of the landscape (such as land form, or soil classification). Often these landscapes were in remote areas and working relied on maps, artificial and natural landmarks, and a compass or GPS instruments, as well as straightforward observation. Different kinds of maps were used such as geological, hand drawn, and marked up (drawn-on) aerial photographs, and the process invariably involved a great deal of walking. This entailed actions such as finding a route through unmarked landscape and making a GPS trace; looking for boundaries, markers and waypoints or making my own; and documenting specific details of the area. This is how scientific training shapes perception and interpretation of the physical world.

As well as the observational habits described above, walking itself became a common activity between a scientific practice and an artistic practice. While there are well known groups historically who used walking as a critical spatial practice such as the Situationist International *dérive*<sup>24</sup>, Tim Edensor asserts that the metaphor of walking as narrative inscription can have its own politics in that accounts of walking in exotic spaces – walking as a narration – has at its heart colonising manoeuvres. One way this takes place is in asserting an authoritative understanding of the land.<sup>25</sup> In this approach, Edensor includes the practice of mapping routes through which walkers may orient themselves to their surroundings, as he describes it, “[p]referred ways of understanding space in the realm of the other.”<sup>26</sup> This presumes that the visitor to the place has privileged knowledge or returns with it, or presumes the status of expert. In a similar vein but dealing with the totalising effect of the aerial view

---

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Hodge and Kathy Turner, *Site: between ground and groundlessness* 96

<sup>25</sup> Tim Edensor, “Walking Through Ruins”, in *Ways of Walking: Ethnography and Practice on Foot*, eds. Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 136. Accessed October 3, 2016. [https://books.google.com.au/books?id=AzYHWx-3FZkC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com.au/books?id=AzYHWx-3FZkC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 136.

or photograph, Michael Heizer refers to his earth-work *Double Negative* (1970) (Figure 2) to take up the idea of ownership in the context of the art object and the conceptual orientation of his land art works at that time. He draws the distinction between being bodily present within the work and being physically removed from the work in order to perceive it as a whole. Heizer comments that the aerial view or an aerial photograph of a work such as *Double Negative* turns the work into an object, implying that when something can be taken in in its totality, it is able to be perceived as an object, and therefore in some way to be possessed: “The aerial view makes it an object. But being within it means that the work controls you, not the other way around.”<sup>27</sup> Asserting – or not asserting – a claim to knowledge or ownership of a place applies to my body of work this year in that I am not seeking to objectively describe or claim special knowledge of my imaginary landscape through images or maps; if anything, it is a place that controls me.

An interest in maps is specific to the Land Art artists because for them, art is conceptual as well as real. Maps themselves can be considered strictly conceptual entities with no intrinsic value.<sup>28</sup> As an authentication of travel, Stephen Bann approaches maps as an ‘index of the real’<sup>29</sup>. An artist who uses maps to document his extensive outdoor activity is Richard Long, whose work is centred around very long or constructed walks in a specific landscape, often in an isolated location. Long sees it as “a means to explore relationships between time, distance, geography and measurement.”<sup>30</sup> To record and exhibit his landscape-based efforts to a gallery audience, Long’s exhibited art works are largely documents that present the walking event itself as marked maps, photographs and occasionally other mediums such as stone or mud sculptures<sup>31</sup>. Long’s documentation uses an array of mediums to relay his investigation of site, his trajectory, and presence within, but separate from, the landscape. In doing so his exhibits selectively represent and simplify these long and sometimes complex journeys.<sup>32</sup> Long’s approach to his work, use of photographic imagery, and methods of documentation contributed further to my development of a performance that took place in imagination only as a means of addressing the subjective experiences of change and its uncertainties. It seems reasonable to suggest, however, that if maps are more

---

<sup>27</sup> Michael Heizer, in *Troublemakers*, directed by James Crump (2015; USA: First Run Features), film screening.

<sup>28</sup> Tiberghien, *Land Art*, 171, 174

<sup>29</sup> Stephen Bann, “The Map as Index of the Real: Land Art and the Authentication of Travel,” in *Imago Mundi*, 46 (1994): 9

<sup>30</sup> O’Rourke, *Walking and Mapping*, 49

<sup>31</sup> Tiberghien, *Land Art* 176

<sup>32</sup> Stephen Hodge and Kathy Turner *Site: between ground and groundlessness* 97

constructions than representations of anything in particular, a trace or a mark on my fabricated landscape to denote presence in a psychologically real place is as believable as Richard Long's ruler-straight pencil line drawn to represent one hundred miles of walking in his work *A Hundred Mile Walk Along a Line in County Mayo, Ireland* (1974) (Figures 3 and 4).

In contrast with Richard Long, Dennis Oppenheim's direct, sometimes full-body physical engagement with and conceptual approach to landform provided me with a wider and more action-oriented perspective on the individual in the landscape. Oppenheim describes his approach as a matter of not dealing with a material but the action that is taking place more or less irrespective of it. "You are operating on the operation, not the thing. When you are operating on the operation you have found a way to separate yourself from the things and you operate in a more intangible way."<sup>33</sup> Often he presented objects as residue or a trace of sites and activities elsewhere.<sup>34</sup> Of particular relevance to my work were his pieces that seemed to interrogate the medium of land itself and how humans can act within it.<sup>35</sup> For example, *One Hour Run* (1968) (Figure 5) was a line made in snow by driving a snowmobile around in random directions for one hour, and the result was photographed. This record of Oppenheim's physical activity is positioned as a map and memory of a particular place, and the trace made by his actions at one site is necessarily recorded and presented elsewhere.<sup>36</sup>

Forms of mapping and navigating can be a starting point to present immaterial conditions. D'Ignazio refers to 'symbol saboteurs'<sup>37</sup>, artists who use the visual iconography of the map, or the language of maps, to depict imaginary terrain as personal, fictional, or metaphorical places.<sup>38</sup> Robert Smithson's methods of documenting and commenting on his conceived "Non Sites" offered some helpful perspectives in considering how to represent a site that did not exist. Initially his concern with the materials fundamental to a landscape engaged my attention from the perspective of the earth sciences themselves: "I am for an art that takes into account the direct effect of the elements as they exist from day to day apart from representation"<sup>39</sup>. This spoke to my broader research interests about the specific features

---

<sup>33</sup> Dennis Oppenheim biography, <http://www.dennis-oppenheim.com/biography>

<sup>34</sup> Nick Kaye, *Site Specific Art – Performance, Place and Documentation*, (London: Routledge, 2010), accessed September 23, 2016, [https://monoskop.org/images/8/8d/Kaye\\_Nick\\_Site-Specific\\_Art\\_Performance\\_Place\\_and\\_Documentation.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/8/8d/Kaye_Nick_Site-Specific_Art_Performance_Place_and_Documentation.pdf) 151

<sup>35</sup> Dennis Oppenheim, "Biography," <http://www.dennis-oppenheim.com/biography>

<sup>36</sup> Kaye, *Site Specific Art*, 153

<sup>37</sup> d'Ignazio, *Art and Cartography*, 190

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 192

<sup>39</sup> Robert Smithson, quoted in William Malpas, *Land Art – A Complete Guide to Landscape, Environmental, Earthworks, Nature, Sculpture and Installation Art*, (Kent: Crescent Moon, 2004), 159

of a body of land in itself. Smithson's attention to a dialectic between absence and presence describes a polarity between a distant, nonspecific location (the site) and its material or conceptual proxy in a gallery space (the non site):

Recovery from the outer fringes brings one back to the central point... the scale between indoors and outdoors, and how the two are impossible to bridge... what you are really confronted with in a non-site is the absence of the site. It is a contraction rather than an expansion of scale. One is confronted with a very ponderous, weighty absence... There is this dialectic between inner and outer, closed and open, center and peripheral.<sup>40</sup>

Smithson's approach to the non site as a place where one is physically engulfed is to recall the sense of the encounter, rather than referring to its geography. As he says, to 'give evidence of this experience through a limited (mapped) revision of the original unbounded state'.<sup>41</sup> In my intention to represent a site that does not exist in the physical world at all via the gallery space, I considered Smithson's approach to manipulating maps so that they represent no place in particular and instead the notion of displacement<sup>42</sup>. For example, his *Ruin of Map Hipparchus* (1967) dislocates the romantic-geographic notion of the unique, specific place evoked by a modern topographic map by integrating two sites and eras within the same image. Figure 6 shows this work which is a map of a rural area of New Jersey, in the United States, and a depiction on a map grid of an ancient Middle Eastern site<sup>43</sup>. In doing so the audience must simultaneously envision 'there' – a known, comprehensible place, and 'not there' – a site that is by definition unknowable – at the same time.

The multitude of ways that the land artists choose to depict their concept of landscape, using different mediums and specifically alluding to transit and engagement with an open landscape, strongly informs the mode of presentation of my work. The three artists discussed above do not rely on any one mode of transcribing the landscape but often use several different mediums simultaneously, particularly Long. The documentation itself varies from Oppenheim's technical approach using documentary photographs with notes and dimensions of work, to Richard Long's neatly inscribed maps and text arrangements, and Smithson's doctored maps and his conceptualisation of a site that can only be somewhere else. Bann calls this the 'semiotic dimension', meaning that the representation draws attention to its

---

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* 160

<sup>41</sup> Robert Smithson quoted in Kaye, *Site Specific Art*, 93

<sup>42</sup> Robert Smithson, *Mapping Dislocations* (New York: James Cohan Gallery, 2001). Accessed September 30, 2016. [http://www.robertsmithson.com/ex\\_events/mapping\\_dislocations01.htm](http://www.robertsmithson.com/ex_events/mapping_dislocations01.htm). Press Release.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

signifying level at the same time as it offers an icon or prospect of the real world.<sup>44</sup> Unlike Holman Hunt, I am not trying to charge the material world with sublime meaning.<sup>45</sup> It is not that nature itself is overwhelming, it is that an objective language of the natural world, and my experience of it, offers respite and a way to describe and mediate inner experience.

## 5 Landscape, but not as we know it

The films *Solaris* (1972) and *Stalker* (1979) by Andrei Tarkovsky offered ways to consider processes inherent within the act of transit, the affective power of landscapes, and dealing with existential emotional complexity. Tarkovsky uses modified conceptions of travel and landscape to create visual representations of the subconscious and the vulnerabilities inherent in the simple act of being human. The protagonists in these two films are compelled to visit unusual terrains. These places, as well as being perilous to reach, have a profound and transformative effect on those who reach their destination. In the films the landscapes themselves are said to be sentient with an invisible but pervasive agency, acting upon the visitors in ways that expose and question their deepest fears and hopes. The film title *Solaris* also denotes a planet with a sentient ocean that can read and re-create emotions and scenes that linger in the subconscious of the visitors. In a similar way, my imaginary documented landscape as the site of my imagined performance is also a place in which I have had to confront myself in the process of coming to terms with the existential issues associated with death. Tarkovsky uses dreamlike landscape imagery in the film *Stalker* – for example, as colour-saturated sequences in nature where the viewer (and the protagonists) encounter the unexpected – as a metaphoric embodiment of the journey to the centre of the self<sup>46</sup>.

Tarkovsky's films influence my Honours work at a conceptual and visual level. Both films involve encountering exotic or un-real lands, places that exert an invisible force upon or reflect the visitor's innermost feelings. The themes in these films link to the overall approach to my broader studio practice of using ways of negotiating the physical landscape as a backdrop to examine more profound experiences. Depending on one's state of mind, having to navigate through an imaginary or internal landscape can be chaotic as there are no pre-

---

<sup>44</sup> Bann, *Index of the Real*, 14

<sup>45</sup> Alison Smith, 'The Sublime in Crisis: Landscape Painting after Turner', in Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding (eds.), *The Art of the Sublime*, (Tate Research Publication, January 2013), accessed October 19, 2016, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/alison-smith-the-sublime-in-crisis-landscape-painting-after-turner-r1109220>.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Tucker, *Dreaming With Open Eyes: The Shamanic Spirit in Twentieth Century Art and Culture*, (HarperCollins, 1992), 255

defined or easily understood signs to negotiate existential conditions given in the general process of living in the quotidian world.

## 6 Documenting the void

Yves Klein created the collaged photograph depicting his work *Saut dans le vide* (1960) (Leap into the Void), where the image depicts a performative event that never took place.<sup>47</sup> Klein also issued a series of small pastel monochromes, *Yves Peintures*, reproductions of paintings of his that never existed, which he described as creating out of a “desire for weightlessness.”<sup>48</sup> Andria Hickey writes that these works are based on what could be described as a fiction but sought to represent a reality that was, to Klein, essentially true, even though it was not actually true. She proposes that the fictional photo-documentation of *Saut dans le Vide* expanded the boundaries between performance, documentation and art object.<sup>49</sup> Philip Auslander argues that the audience response to such a work, or any performance work which can only be viewed through its documentation, may not even depend on whether the event actually happened. He adds that the reception of such pieces derives not from “treating the documentation as an indexical access point”, but rather that the documentation itself is the work, “perceiving the document itself *as a performance* that directly reflects an artist’s aesthetic project or sensibility and for which we are the present audience.”<sup>50</sup> Where the documentary medium has been manipulated, the performance is no longer the referent and the image refers only to itself.<sup>51</sup> Phillip Vergne adds “[t]he space that truly interested Klein was ... experiential space. ... The body for Klein was a permanent condition for the experience of sensory space, an essential manifestation of one’s perceptual openness to the world.”<sup>52</sup> While Klein’s ‘document’ transcended the materiality of the object,<sup>53</sup> in my case I am attempting to convey, like Klein’s experiential space, immateriality and a subjective experience. Unlike Klein, however, I am not attempting to represent the immaterial as a concept, but instead time spent in a psychological place that is impossible to photograph or where it is impossible to trace a path in an empirical way. The documentation

---

<sup>47</sup> Andria Hickey, *Yves Klein – With the void, full powers*, 321

<sup>48</sup> Kerry Brougher, *Yves Klein* 39

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Philip Auslander, “The Performativity of Performance Documentation,” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, 84 (2006): 9, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4140006>

<sup>51</sup> Hickey, *Yves Klein* 321

<sup>52</sup> Phillip Vergne, *Yves Klein* 50

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* 321

of my imaginary trip through the unknown is, as Auslander would put it, constative of the performance itself: “the act of documenting an event as a performance is what constitutes it as such”.<sup>54</sup>

My work differs where I have chosen to document this experience from a first-person perspective – for example, taking a photo of something I observed, or footage from a moving car. This first-person style of documentation is more similar to that adopted by Richard Long, discussed previously; as a solitary person in place where the only person who can document her works is the artist herself.

## **7 Honours body of work**

My studio research is process-oriented and often initiated through observing the natural world, and physical or performative investigations, including walking. It is a recursive approach that engages with looping back to revisit a physical place or experience (Figure 7). Using collage with found images, moving image and formal references to navigation, my practice developed to investigate ways of performing and representing landscape as discontinuous scenes and mixed perspectives (Figure 8). The images were appropriated from social media, paper magazines and my own photographs. Developing a sense of disorientation, or a disjointed imaginary landscape, became important to this process. The results suggested ways to represent a ‘non-place’, a site or area that did not physically exist.

Consequently my body of work documents an imaginary performance of a journey through a landscape made up of fabricated and found imagery. The process of repetition and the results of my experiments developed into a series of formal and conceptual experiments with the themes of navigation and perception that most strongly engaged with my intention to depict transit in an immaterial landscape. The outcome of my work is a collection of non-photographs, un-maps and other forms that constitute documentation of an imaginary performative work.

The images of my work demonstrate the outcome of material processes used to develop the textile pieces that comprise part of this work. These were mostly developed by translating a textile technique to a photographic process. This meant using surface techniques of resist-dyeing common to, for example, shibori or tie-dyeing processes, but using the photo-sensitive process of cyanotype. Resist-dyeing uses a physical obstruction to prevent a liquid

---

<sup>54</sup> Auslander, *Performance Documentation*, 5

dye from penetrating the material, so that the resisted portion retains its original colour to create the finished surface pattern or trace of the process (Figure 9). The cyanotype process uses a UV-sensitive liquid mixture applied to an absorbent surface, with shadow or light obstruction itself, such as a film negative, as the resist. When the treated surface is exposed to ultraviolet light, the exposed areas turn blue and an image forms.

A second component of the work uses onboard video footage from World Rally Cross motorsports events appropriated from Youtube. These are time-trial car races whose routes are set out along back roads in rural areas in countries around the world. The rough driving course is taken at very high speeds and to crash or veer off-course is very common<sup>55</sup>. The onboard rally-cam is positioned in the car's interior where the dashboard, the driver's actions and the road ahead can be recorded on camera. There is also a co-driver or navigator, who has the important role of reading out the immediately upcoming course hazards to the driver using a written and verbal shorthand of navigational codes known as pace notes. The online footage often includes these communications. Like some map symbols, the pace notes seem mysterious and incomprehensible unless the time is taken to learn them.

I work with this type of footage for several reasons. This component of my body of work examines what disorientation might feel and look like using the representation and phenomenology of real-time navigation moving at reckless speeds at the edge of control. In the original footage it is possible to perceive the intensity of focus of the driver and co-driver on keeping to the road while navigating the route as fast as possible. This focus represents to me the effort that is required to make progress under intensely challenging conditions, and also the necessity of focusing on this route to the exclusion of all else, common to many sporting efforts<sup>56</sup>. This footage is both disorienting and a little transfixing, because the fixed interior camera offers the sensation and vision of being in the fast-moving car. In the process of editing using post-production techniques including overlaying two videos, the results appeared to achieve the effect of a sense of groundlessness or floating as the cars' trajectories in the two sets of footage merged and split apart again (Figure 10). At the same time the

---

<sup>55</sup> As a spectator motor sport with international coverage WRC promoters use glamour, spectacle, the cult of personality and a branded media and marketing output to maintain and grow its following. A general survey of WRC videos and promotional stills available online show that almost all competitive rally drivers are male. Despite this, the spectacle, gender representations and hypermasculinity associated with this motor sport are less relevant to my ideas for this work.

<sup>56</sup> Josh Roiland, "Getting away from it all: The Literary Journalism of David Foster Wallace and Nietzsche's Concept of Oblivion," In *The Legacy of David Foster Wallace*, ed. Lee Konstantinou and Samuel Cohen. (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2012), 33.



doubled footage made it difficult to focus on just one road, creating a phenomenological affect that applies to my concept of directional movement and a representation of disorientation.

## **8 Conclusion**

In this paper I have attempted to describe the inter-relationship between the experience of grief and loss and its mediation through physical encounters with the outside world.

The paper discussed the affect of trauma and ways to document such experiences aesthetically, where ways must be found to represent an outwardly imperceptible experience. I set out to describe why and how I have chosen to use the concepts of transit and navigation in an open landscape to represent this.

The paper developed the discussion from simple geographic ideas and extended to ways of experiencing and representing the landscape from an empirical perspective. This is followed with an examination of the ability of an objective approach and direct representation to successfully depict experiences that are not easily expressed or communicated.

I have turned then to more complex and immaterial ways of depicting presence and absence and my response to this, drawing a connection between conceptual representations of landscape and the role that fictitious places and imagined acts can have in representing concepts of the immaterial as a way to address my experiences.

Ultimately, it is this engagement with fictional places and the imagination that leads to the work as a documentation of an imaginary act. The body of work is the only material manifestation of my effort to encounter and process this existential experience: that of bearing witness to the death of the other.

## Figures

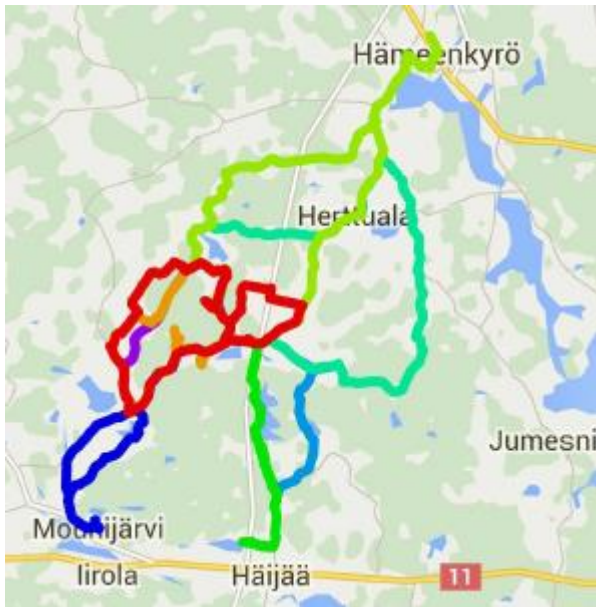


Figure 1. Giorgia de Biasi, *Walking Loops*, 2015. GPS trace on Google map, 8cm x 8.5cm.

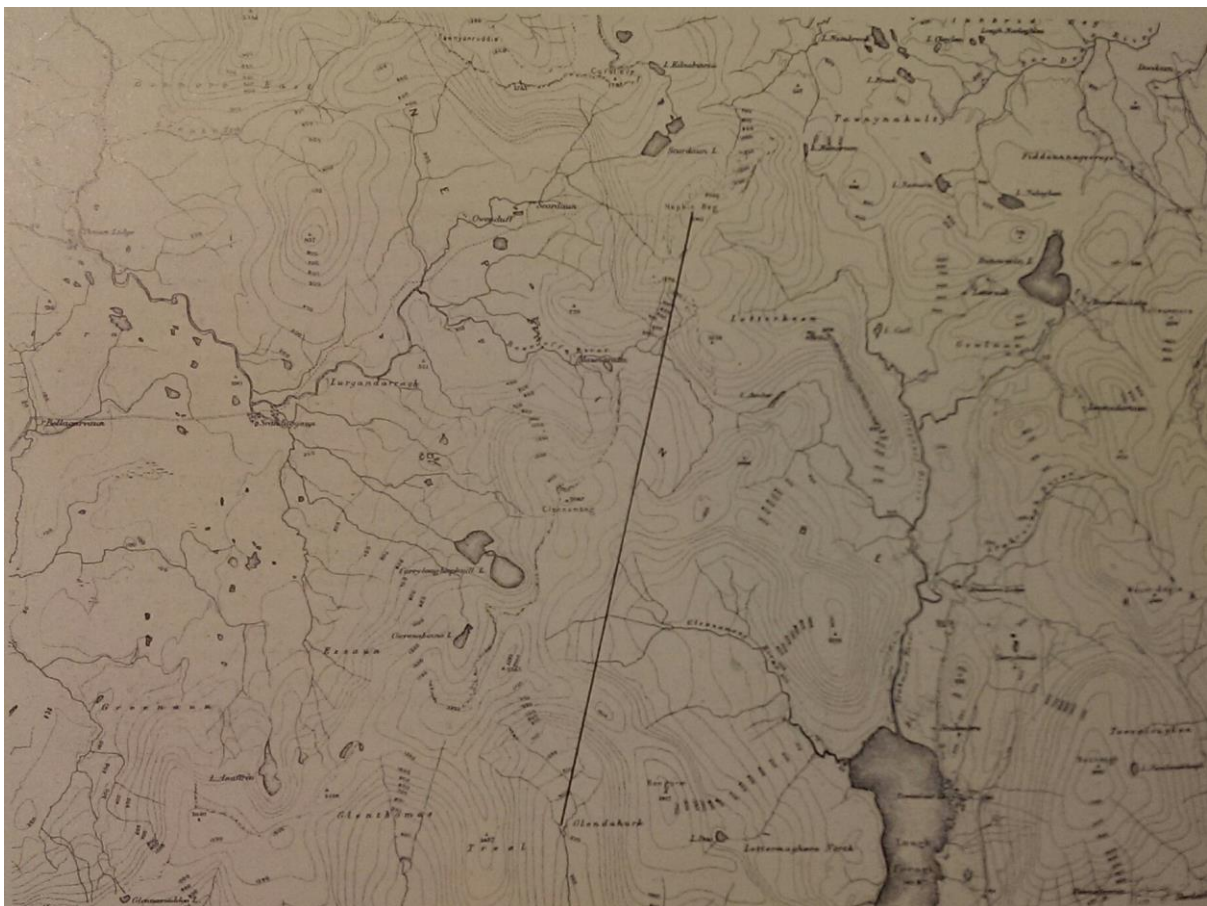


Figure 2. Richard Long, *A Hundred Mile Walk Along a Line in County Mayo, Ireland*, 1974. The Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, New York.





Figure 3. Richard Long, *A Hundred Mile Walk Along a Line in County Mayo, Ireland*, 1974. The Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, New York.



Figure 4. Michael Heizer, *Double Negative*, 1969-70, Nevada, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.



Figure 5. Dennis Oppenheim, *One Hour Run*, 1968. 6-mile continuous track cut with a 10 h.p. snowmobile repeating the continuous route for an hour, 1' x 3' x 6 miles. St Francis, Maine, U.S.A. Accessed October 12, 2016, <http://www.dennis-oppenheim.com/works/1968/139>

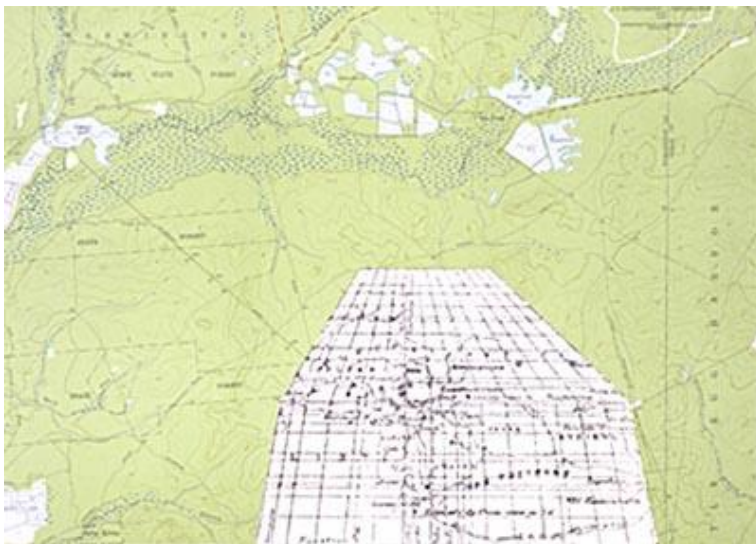


Figure 6. Robert Smithson, *Ruin of Map Hipparchus (100 B.C.)* in Oswego Lake Quadrangle (1954-55), 1967. Map collage, 13 x 18 inches. Accessed October 12, 2016, [www.robertsmithson.com](http://www.robertsmithson.com)





Figure 7. Giorgia De Biasi. Studio study / development of visual depictions of discontinuous landscape. 2016

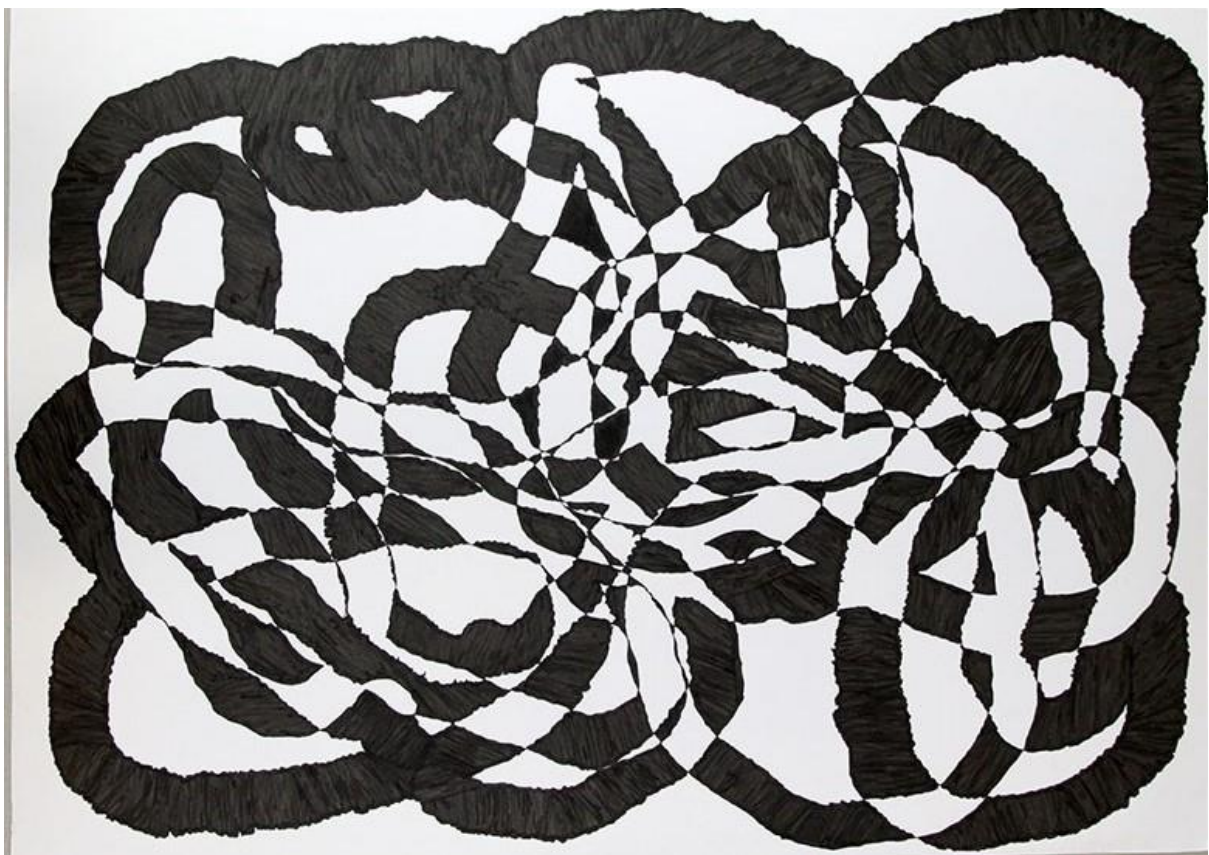


Figure 8. Giorgia de Biasi, *Trace Track*, 2015. 42cm x 59.4cm, Ink on paper.

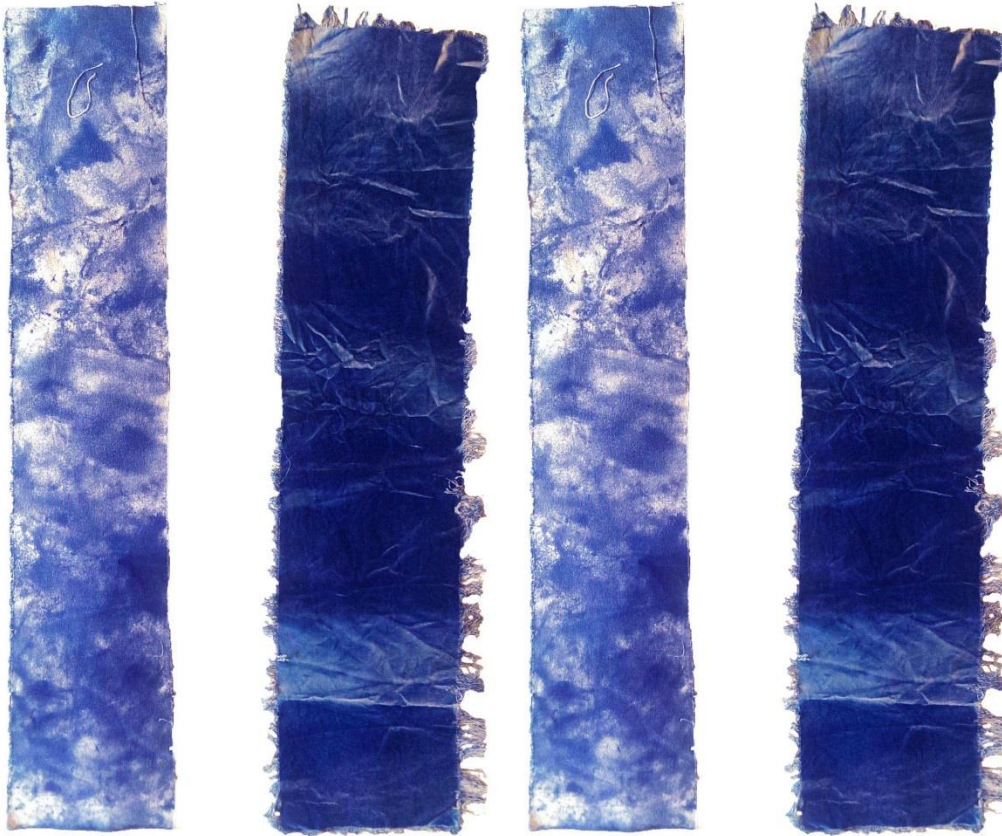


Figure 9. Mock-up arrangement of cyanotype-treated textile pieces for Honours art work



Figure 10. Video still from *Blue Rally*, Honours art work

## Bibliography

- Auslander, Philip. "The Performativity of Performance Documentation." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 84, 28:3 (2006): <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4140006>, 1-10.
- Bann, Stephen. The Map as Index of the Real: Land Art and the Authentication of Travel. In: *Imago Mundi*, 46 (1994), 9-18.
- Bennett, Jill. *Empathic vision: affect, trauma and contemporary art*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. *Selected Poems*. Edited by Alexander Coleman. London: Cape, 1988.
- Brice, Meredith. Meredith Brice: transit. Curated by Meredith Brice. Sydney: Macquarie University Art Gallery, 2013 and Qatar: The Gallery - Virginia Commonwealth University, 2009. Exhibition catalogue.
- Brougher, Kerry. "Involuntary Painting." In *Yves Klein: With the void, full powers*, organised by Kerry Brougher and Philip Vergne, 16-41. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden/ Walker Art Center, 2010
- Dennis Oppenheim. "Biography." Accessed September 18, 2016. <http://www.dennis-oppenheim.com/biography>
- D'Ignazio, C. "Art and Cartography." In *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography. Volume 1*. Edited by R Kitchin, N Thrift, 190–206. Oxford: Elsevier, 2009. Science Direct. doi: 10.1016/B978-008044910-4.00004-3
- Edensor, Tim. Walking through Ruins. In *Ways of Walking: Ethnography and Practice on Foot*. Eds. Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst, 123-142. Ashgate Publishing Limited, United Kingdom, 2008. Accessed October 3, 2016. [https://books.google.com.au/books?id=AzYHWx-3FZkC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com.au/books?id=AzYHWx-3FZkC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)
- Fuchs, R.H. *Richard Long*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 1986.
- Gaston Bachelard. *The Poetics of Space*. 1958. Trans Maria Jolas 1964. Beacon Press, Boston USA.
- Hart, Kevin. "The Counter-spiritual Life." In *The Power of Contestation: Perspective on Maurice Blanchot*, edited by Kevin Hart and Geoffrey H. Hartman, 156-177. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2004.
- Hickey, Andria. "Man, Myth and Magic: Yves Klein and Photography." In *Yves Klein: With the void, full powers*, organised by Kerry Brougher and Philip Vergne, 287-332. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden/ Walker Art Center, 2010.
- Hodge, Steven and Turner, Kathy. "Site: Between Ground and Groundlessness." In: *Histories and Practices of Live Art*. Edited by Deirdre Heddon and Jennie Klein, 90-120. Palgrave MacMillan, 2012.



Hölling, Hanna. "Land Art." Accessed October 16, 2016. <http://artsafiental.ch/en/land-art/>.

Karen O'Rourke. *Walking and Mapping – Artists as Cartographers*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2013.

Kaye, Nick. *Site Specific Art – Performance, Place and Documentation*. London: Routledge, 2010. Accessed September 23, 2016. [https://monoskop.org/images/8/8d/Kaye\\_Nick\\_Site-Specific\\_Art\\_Performance\\_Place\\_and\\_Documentation.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/8/8d/Kaye_Nick_Site-Specific_Art_Performance_Place_and_Documentation.pdf)

Kwon, Miwon. The Wrong Place. *Art Journal* 59(1), 2000, 33-43.

Land, Nick. *The Thirst for Annihilation – Georges Bataille and Virulent Nihilism*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Malpas, William. *Land Art – A Complete Guide to Landscape, Environmental, Earthworks, Nature, Sculpture and Installation Art*. Kent: Crescent Moon, 2004.

*New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. Sixth edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Roiland, Josh. "Getting away from it all: The Literary Journalism of David Foster Wallace and Nietzsche's Concept of Oblivion." In *The Legacy of David Foster Wallace*. Edited by Lee Konstantinou and Samuel Cohen. University of Iowa Press, 2012. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Smithson, Robert. *Robert Smithson, Mapping Dislocations*. New York: James Cohan Gallery, 2001. Press Release. Accessed September 30, 2016. [http://www.robertsmithson.com/ex\\_events/mapping\\_dislocations01.htm](http://www.robertsmithson.com/ex_events/mapping_dislocations01.htm)

Smith, Alison. 'The Sublime in Crisis: Landscape Painting after Turner'. In *The Art of the Sublime*. Edited by Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding. Tate Research Publication, January 2013. Accessed October 19, 2016. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/alison-smith-the-sublime-in-crisis-landscape-painting-after-turner-r1109220>.

Tiberghien, Gilles A. *Land Art*. United Kingdom: Art Data, 1995.

Townsend, Chris. *Art and Death*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2008.

*Troublemakers*. Directed by James Crump. USA: First Run Features, 2015. Film Screening.

Tucker, Michael. *Dreaming With Open Eyes: The Shamanic Spirit in Twentieth Century Art and Culture*. HarperCollins, 1992.

Vergne, Phillipe. "Earth, wind and fire or to overcome the paradox of Yves Klein, the molecular child who wrote to Fidel Castro on his way to Disneyland." In *Yves Klein: With the void, full powers*, organised by Kerry Brougher and Philip Vergne, 44-66. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden/ Walker Art Center, 2010.