

2015

# Anti-Grand: Contemporary Perspectives on Landscape

N. Elizabeth Schlatter

*University of Richmond*, [eschlatt@richmond.edu](mailto:eschlatt@richmond.edu)

Kenta Murakami

*University of Richmond*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarship.richmond.edu/exhibition-catalogs>



Part of the [Contemporary Art Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Schlatter, N. Elizabeth and Murakami, Kenta, "Anti-Grand: Contemporary Perspectives on Landscape". Richmond, Virginia: Joel and Lila Harnett Museum of Art, University of Richmond Museums, 2015.

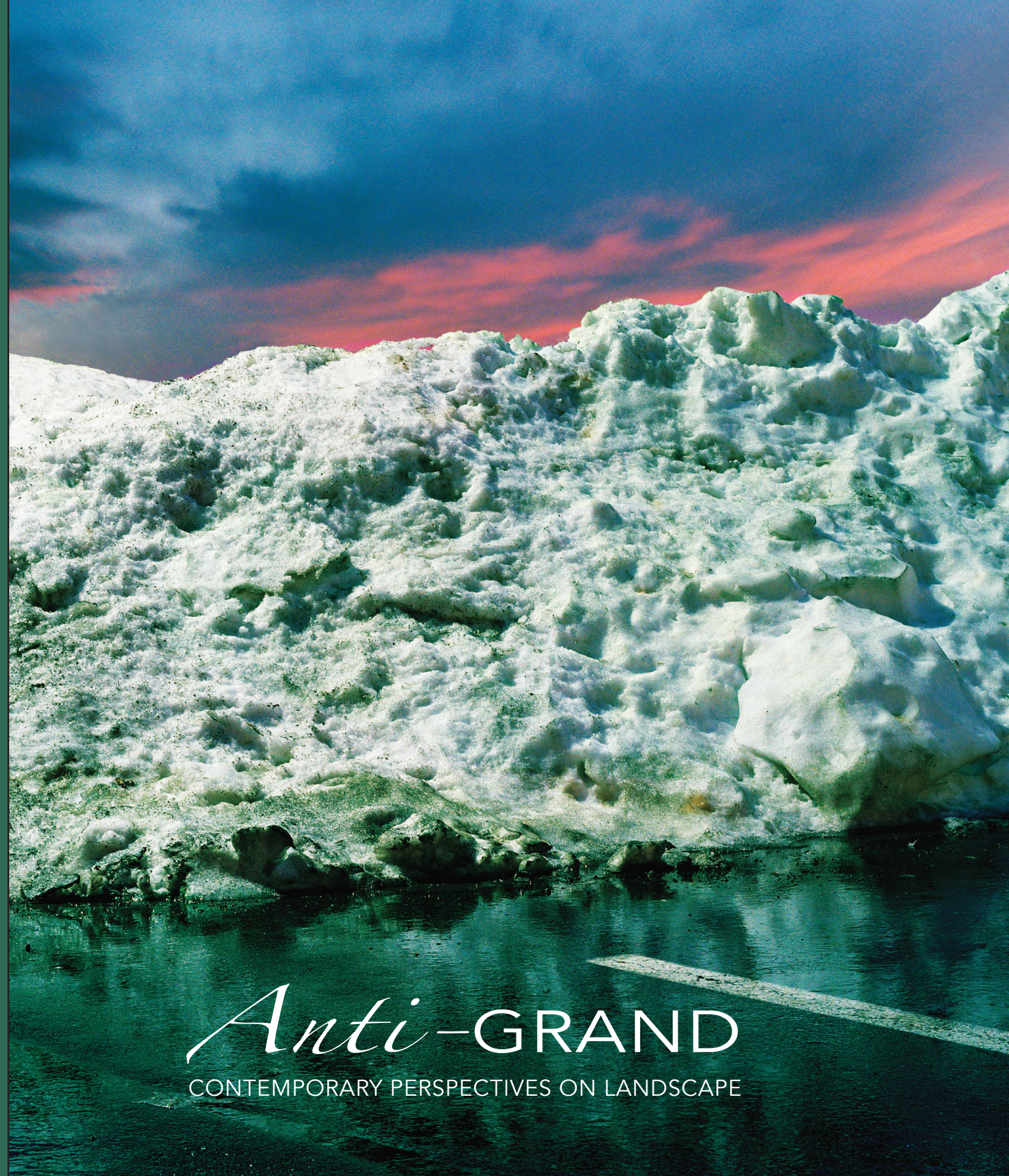
This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the University Museums at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Exhibition Catalogs by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact [scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu](mailto:scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu).



UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND MUSEUMS

ANTI-GRAND: CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON LANDSCAPE

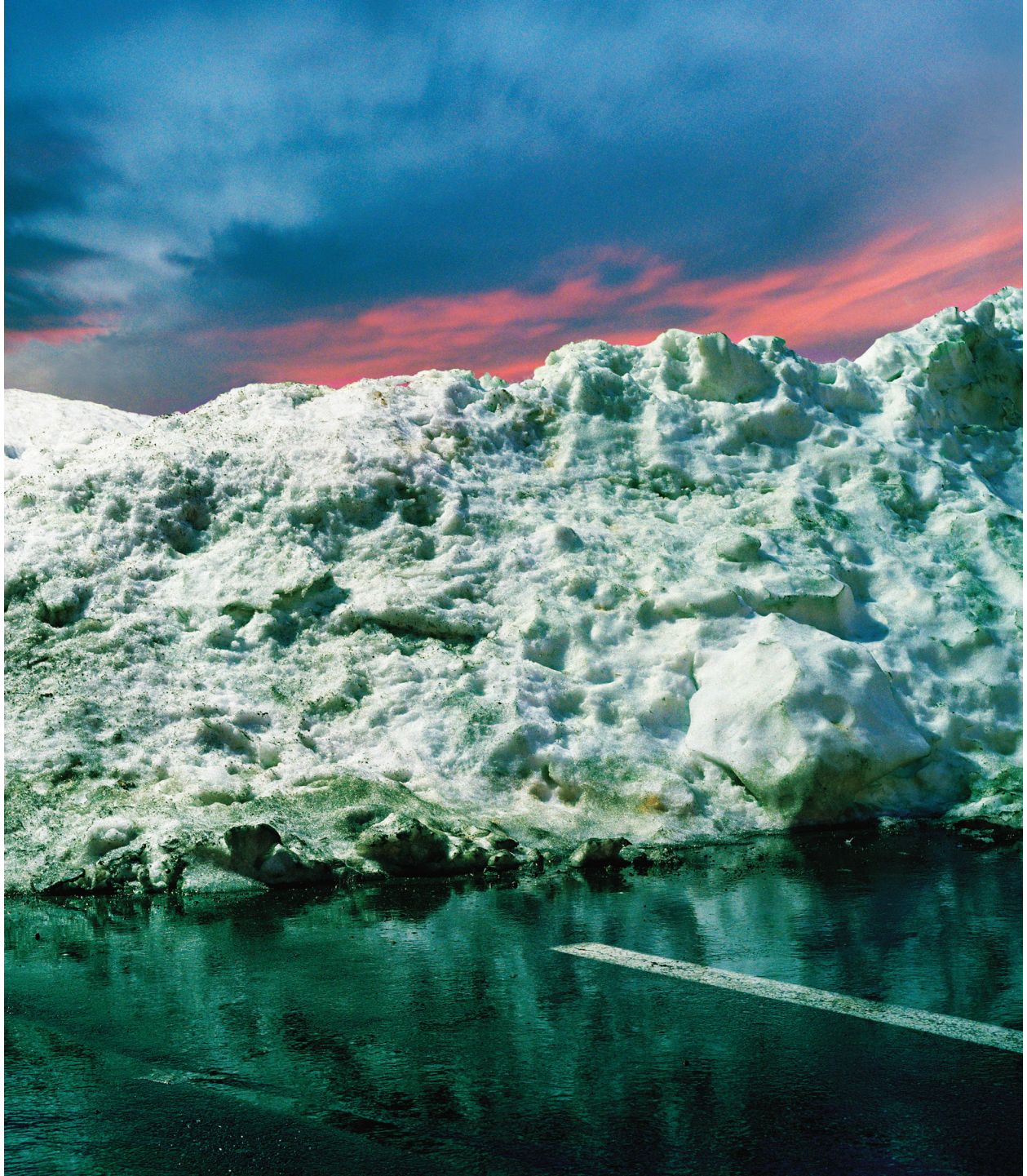
UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND MUSEUMS



# *Anti-GRAND*

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON LANDSCAPE

*Anti*-GRAND



*Anti*-GRAND  
CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON LANDSCAPE

JOEL AND LILA HARNETT MUSEUM OF ART  
UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND MUSEUMS

Published on the occasion of the exhibition  
*Anti-Grand: Contemporary Perspectives on Landscape*

Joel and Lila Harnett Museum of Art,  
University of Richmond Museums, Virginia  
January 15 to March 6, 2015

Organized by the University of Richmond Museums, the exhibition was curated  
by N. Elizabeth Schlatter, Deputy Director and Curator of Exhibitions, University of Richmond Museums,  
and Kenta Murakami, '15, art history major, University of Richmond, and  
2014-2015 Curatorial Assistant, University Museums.

The printed and online exhibition catalogues are made possible in part  
with support from the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation.

Online catalogue:  
[www.antigrand.com](http://www.antigrand.com)

Published by University of Richmond Museums,  
Richmond, Virginia 23173 804-289-8276

Printed by Worth Higgins & Associates Inc., Richmond, Virginia

Front cover (detail) and *frontispiece*:  
Jon-Phillip Sheridan (American, born 1977)  
*Residual #10, Winter*  
2003, chromogenic print on aluminum  
24 x 21 inches  
Courtesy of the artist  
(cat. no. 33)

All images © the artists

Photograph credits:

Vaughn Bell installation photograph by Kevin Kennefick, page 10;  
Matthew Brandt, cat. no. 9, image courtesy of the artist and M+B Gallery, Los Angeles, page 28;  
Platform, cat. no. 13, image courtesy of the Video Data Bank, [www.vdg.org](http://www.vdg.org), page 35;  
Kristin Holder, cat. no. 15, photograph by Ellen McDermott, page 37;  
Chun-yi Lee, cat. no. 23, photograph by Richard Goodbody, page 51;  
and Linda Lynch, cat. no. 25, photograph by Peter Muscato, page 53.

Copyright © 2015 University of Richmond Museums. All rights reserved.  
No part of this publication may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014955742  
ISBN 978-0-9889000-2-8

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD	6
Richard Waller, <i>Executive Director, University of Richmond Museums</i>	
CURATORS' PREFACE	8
N. Elizabeth Schlatter, <i>Deputy Director and Curator of Exhibitions, University of Richmond Museums</i> , and Kenta Murakami, '15, <i>art history major, University of Richmond, and 2014-2015 Curatorial Assistant, University Museums</i>	
ESSAYS AND INTERVIEWS WITH THE ARTISTS	10
N. Elizabeth Schlatter, Kenta Murakami, and Kelly Gordon, <i>Curator, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC</i>	
Vaughn Bell by Kenta Murakami	10
Justin Berry by Kenta Murakami	13
Doug Beube by N. Elizabeth Schlatter	17
Elisheva Biernoff by N. Elizabeth Schlatter	21
Martín Bonadeo by N. Elizabeth Schlatter	24
Matthew Brandt by Kenta Murakami	27
Adam Cvijanovic by N. Elizabeth Schlatter	30
Katrín Elvarsdóttir by Kenta Murakami	32
Flatform by Kelly Gordon	34
Kristin Holder by N. Elizabeth Schlatter	36
Institute of Critical Zoologists by N. Elizabeth Schlatter	38
Patrick Jacobs by N. Elizabeth Schlatter	41
Kim Keever by Kenta Murakami	43
Guy Laramée by N. Elizabeth Schlatter	46
Chun-yi Lee by Kenta Murakami	50
Linda Lynch by N. Elizabeth Schlatter	52
Tom McGrath by Kenta Murakami	55
Jesse McLean by Kenta Murakami	57
Jon Rafman by Kenta Murakami	60
Gerco de Ruijter by Kelly Gordon	63
Jon-Phillip Sheridan by Kenta Murakami	66
FIELDS OF PLAY: LANDSCAPES IN VIDEO GAMES	68
(Ezra Hanson-White, Ed Key, and Devine Lu Linvega)	
Will Blanton, <i>independent game developer and co-founder of RVA Game Jams</i>	
BIOGRAPHIES OF THE ARTISTS	72
CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION	77
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	80

## DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

*W*E ARE PLEASED TO PRESENT THIS exhibition, *Anti-Grand: Contemporary Perspectives on Landscape*, of work by twenty-four international artists, artist collectives, and game developers who examine, challenge, and re-define the concept of the landscape genre while simultaneously drawing attention to humanity's attempts to represent, preserve, and ultimately control the natural environment. Through abstraction and simulation, parody and pastiche, the artists explore the ways in which we relate to the land, working in video, installation, videogames, and traditional two- and three-dimensional work. The project features the exhibition, related programs and events including an artist's residency, a print and online catalogue, and a research and curatorial opportunity for an undergraduate at the University of Richmond.

Appreciation extends to all who have contributed both directly and indirectly to this exhibition, catalogue, and related programming. We thank the many artists, collectors, and gallery dealers and staff who not only lent the artwork for the exhibition but also assisted throughout in the formation

of the project. The exhibition's co-curator, N. Elizabeth Schlatter, Deputy Director and Curator of Exhibitions, University Museums, would especially like to thank the artists who participated in interviews for the catalogue. Extensive appreciation is also extended to Kenta Murakami, '15, art history major and the 2014-2015 Curatorial Assistant in the University Museums, who has been an invaluable contributor to the entire project by assisting with curating the exhibition, conducting several interviews and writing essays, designing the online catalogue, and helping with additional promotional and programmatic activities. Thanks is also given to Kelly Gordon, Curator, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC, for her interviews with individual artists, and to Will Blanton and Lauren Vincelli for curating the video game portion of the exhibition as well as authoring an essay and organizing programming. Many other people contributed to the formation and completion of *Anti-Grand*; please see the full list of acknowledgments on the last page of the catalogue.

The exhibition, programs, and the accompanying publication are made

possible in part with funding from the University of Richmond's Cultural Affairs Committee, the Dean's Office of the School of Arts and Sciences, the 2014-2015 Tucker-Boatwright Festival of Literature and the Arts, hosted by the Department of Art and Art History in collaboration with University Museums, and the Louis S. Booth Arts Fund. The printed and online exhibition catalogues are made possible in part with support from the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation. For the online catalogue, see [www.antigrand.com](http://www.antigrand.com)

At the University of Richmond, our special appreciation goes to Dr. Edward L. Ayers, President; Dr. Jacquelyn S. Fetrow, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs;

and Dr. Kathleen Roberts Skerrett, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, for their continuing guidance and support of the University Museums, comprising the Joel and Lila Harnett Museum of Art, the Joel and Lila Harnett Print Study Center, and the Lora Robins Gallery of Design from Nature.

As always, we give our thanks to the staff of the University Museums, each of whom has effortlessly and creatively mastered the logistical, technological, and communication challenges that this project required.

RICHARD WALLER

## CURATORS' PREFACE

AS THE OFTEN-QUOTED BRITISH cultural geographer and scholar Denis Cosgrove once declared, "Landscape is a way of seeing the world."<sup>1</sup> Twentieth-century developments in critical theory helped bring the concept of "landscape" as a social, political, economic, cultural, and gendered construct to the forefront. So much so that in the twenty-first century the genre comes pre-loaded in both meaning and intent, in both the choice and the depiction of what is being presented or "framed" as landscape. Landscapes are no longer, nor have they ever been, neutral — an idea succinctly defined by American philosopher Holmes Rolston, III: "Landscape is personal and cultural history made visible."<sup>2</sup> With this understanding, an exploration of the genre can be both highly problematic and incredibly liberating, as is evidenced by the range of artworks, media, and styles presented by the artists in *Anti-Grand*.

The title of the exhibition references these newer tendencies. *Anti-Grand* suggests an approach to the topic that is opposite one of awe and reverie of the past, approaches that are now difficult to consider without an implicit sense of irony. *Contemporary Perspectives on Landscape* emphasizes the role of the artist's and/or viewer's choice of framing device as applied to both the represented scenery and the genre at large. Engaging humor, tenderness, ambivalence, and respect, these artists look at many facets

of this subject. Unifying the exhibition are issues of representation that are inherent to the genre and the various ways in which artists have self-reflexively considered their relationship to the artistic subject.

As a starting point, the exhibition considers the idea of landscape as the "aesthetic category par excellence."<sup>3</sup> This notion is explored in Kim Keever's video and photographs of saccharinely sublime landscapes, constructed in 200-gallon tanks filled with water, the experimental prints of photographer Mathew Brandt, the voyeuristic dioramas of Patrick Jacobs, and the panoramic painting-within-a-painting in the work by Adam Cvijanovic. Kristin Holder and Linda Lynch address the ongoing conversation between artists and nature in their works that reference art from the past (Leonardo da Vinci and Robert Smithson, respectively). Katrín Elvarsdóttir, the artists collective Flatform, and Jon-Phillip Sheridan all explore how landscape is perceived and framed, both by the camera and the viewer. The landscape is alternatively considered as a conduit of information, as seen in Justin Berry's decontextualized fantasy-book covers, Doug Beube's and Guy Laramée's mixed-media works made from old maps and books, Chun-yi Lee's paintings of traditional-looking Chinese landscapes made by applying ink in visible grids upon paper with cork stamps, and the animated satellite imagery of Gerco de Ruijter which interprets the landscape as a vestige of time.

The landscape is simultaneously considered as both a lived and living space, as demonstrated in Martín Bonadeo's installation that synthesizes the visual and the olfactory, the large-scale terrariums of Vaughn Bell, Elisheva Biernoff's images of ecologically sensitive areas projected on mist, and the cinematic paintings of Tom McGrath, which inhabit the banal perspective of seeing the landscape through a car window. This phenomenological understanding of the landscape is then reconsidered from the perspective of digitally simulated environments, as through Jon Rafman's screen captures of Google Streetview's more decisive moments, the pseudo-documentary photographs of species and environments created by the Institute of Critical Zoologists, and Jesse McLean's never-ending scroll through a digital mountainscape. The exhibition also presents a small selection of the expansive worlds navigable in computer and videogames created by Ezra Hanson-White, Ed Key with David Kanaga, and Devine Lu Linvega.

All of the works selected for *Anti-Grand* were created since 2000, in order to focus on art made well after the initial developments of the modern and popular discourse on environmentalism and sustainability. Now that "going green" is as much a marketing tool as a call to action and the green industry has its own global platform, the artistic motivation to bring attention to travesties, abuses, and crises in the environment can seem somewhat remiss. Yet a contemporary exhibition on the theme of landscape is continuously relevant because the social and political discourse on nature, and the environment is constantly being reformatted and expanded, as recent natural disasters and escalated political

activism have demonstrated. Although there are innovative approaches to art focused on environmentalism involving current social practices such as crowdsourcing, documentation, and community education, one could argue that there is something of a crisis in terms of addressing the theme of landscape (as opposed to "nature" in general) without veering too closely to polemics or naïve sensualism. The artists in *Anti-Grand* are meeting this challenge in ways that directly engage the environment, but through highly personal investigations into the subject matter, grounded in knowledge of the landscape genre's rich history.

N. ELIZABETH SCHLATTER  
AND KENTA MURAKAMI, '15

#### Notes:

1. Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 19.
2. Holmes Rolston, III, "Does Aesthetic Appreciation of Landscapes Need to Be Science-Based?" *British Journal of Aesthetics*. Vol. 35, No. 5 (October 1995): 380.
3. Among the many philosophers and art historians who have suggested this concept, Jacob Wamberg notes Joachim Ritter as putting forth this idea in his 1963 essay "Landschaft: Zur Funktion des ästhetischen in der modernen Gesellschaft," as cited in "The Art Seminar" in *Landscape Theory*, ed. by Rachael Ziady DeLue and James Elkins (New York: Routledge, 2008), 95 and 151.



Vaughn Bell, installation photograph of *Village Green*, 2013, Plexiglas with natural materials, dimensions variable (cat. nos. 1 and 2)

VAUGHN BELL  
[Interview by Kenta Murakami]

**In your terrarium pieces you create micro-cosmic environments filled with plants and soil that feel at once tender and absurd. Like in much of your work, you employ tropes of stewardship for the land and for plants that poke humorously at the notion of domesticating nature. The result is a somewhat layered mix of earnestness, optimism, and critique. How do most people seem to react to your terrarium works?**

People find them humorous, yes, but I also get many people telling me that the experience is very transporting — it may involve nostalgia, a feeling of being refreshed, wonder. When you place your head inside, the smell of earth and growing plants is very strong. It's like being a kid and getting that close, intimate view of the earth.

**A lot of people talk about your work as being quite funny, perhaps drawing upon the absurd yet believable notion of an apartment-ready, personal terrarium. To what degree do you see your work functioning satirically?**

My work does have a sort of prankster feeling at times. The work is satirical, yes, but not only. Because the experience really is immersive and multi-sensory, my hope is that it is not simply a deadpan kind of take on the environment. At first, the image is dystopic, but then you enter the space and feel the moisture, breathe the air that the plants have made fresh, and instead it's about an inescapable symbiotic relationship that we have with the land.

**There can be an awkward predicament when thinking about the future of sustainable living**

**since urban centers are significantly more efficient than suburban areas, yet, with this efficiency comes an increased detachment from the natural world. Do you see your installations or performance work engaging with this dialogue?**

This is one of the topics that is very interesting to me. We have a disconnect in which we feel that "wildness" and "nature" can only exist outside of human influence. It's a paradox that I'm hoping to point out through some of the absurd images in my work. I live in the city. I feel that it's absolutely essential for us to connect with the nature that we are in, that's all around us even in urban places. We are still part of watersheds, microorganisms inhabit every aspect of our bodies — ecology is not separate from human forms.

**Because the terrariums are built out of Plexiglas, there's both the experience of seeing the work from within and the perspective of seeing the work with people inside. Interaction is central to all of your work; are you interested in the effect of the outsider's gaze and the way in which interacting with the terrariums becomes a sort of performance?**

Yes, it's always a performance. Seeing other people interact invites people to participate as well. In addition I have made some forms in which multiple people can be inside at once, so there is a relationship between people, each other, plants, soil, insects, all at once inside the space — a forced intimacy. Also, people love to take pictures of themselves in the work. In this way the work kind of perpetuates itself, but at the same time these images are not the full experience of the work.

**Your project *Thinking Caps* (2010) plays with scale in a way that renders the contemplative aspects of the sublime accessible, a very noble feat! In what ways does scale play into your work and do you intend for your terrarium pieces to similarly isolate an experience from nature?**

*Thinking Caps* developed from the ideas I worked on in the biosphere works. I wanted to think about scale and space in more ways. When you place your head under the paper form of the mountain, you are surrounded by the sound of water from streams that I recorded on the slopes of the Cascade Mountains. To me it was another way of thinking about this paradox of how we can pay attention to our surroundings closely. When you are on the mountain, you cannot see the mountain itself — it surrounds you, and you are not separate from it. It's only when you are far away that you begin to conceptualize it as a mountain.

**You come from a family working in landscaping, an art form that you have, in a way, continued. The terrariums are certainly on a different scale, however, and you've gone even smaller with your pocket biospheres; how do you see your practice relating to landscaping as both an art and a profession?**

My parents and my brother are all landscape architects, and their careers have involved the design of landscapes at all different scales from residential spaces to master planning for whole towns. I was immersed in these topics from a young age. Of course I learned to love plants. On a deeper level though I think that being part of this conversation for me has been a constant inquiry into how humans have changed and continue to change our environment, and how the aesthetics that we apply to the landscape reflect deep-seated ideas about our responsibilities and place in that landscape. I'm working in a different context (museums, galleries, public art) than my family members but we are still dealing with essentially the same questions.

JUSTIN BERRY  
[Interview by Kenta Murakami]

**Decontextualization is an essential strategy employed in your work. Through digitally removing the titles, names of authors, reviews, and accolades in photographs of book covers, the viewer is invited to project a broad range of potential narratives upon the depicted landscapes. How far do you think one can relinquish authorship and still tell a story?**

Pretty far. I think we see stories in everything that we look at, as one of our essential strategies for coping with the world. We put every object, person, or place into a narrative framework instinctively and immediately. In some ways, I am less invested in removing authorship and more interested in clarification.

I am most interested in the images that we take for granted, the things we are not supposed to see because they are merely the background or the context. I think people see what I do as erasure, but I am much more interested in bringing forward the stuff that was hidden. I am not erasing what was in front, I am revealing what was behind.

It is the empty image, the backdrop, the stage set, the noise underneath the surface, that reveals the real intent and goal of the picture. With the landscapes that I reveal I am not showing a particular fantasy world, but rather the foundation of fantasy, the world of infinite potential and unlimited possibility. In each image the specific mythos depicted on top of the background is almost arbitrary, whether it is a wizard shooting lightning or a robot farting thunder, the real goal of the picture is to create an escape from the mundane. These images are about the freedom to imagine, something ever more

precious in a world where our imaginations have become incorporated into increasingly sophisticated branding campaigns.

**In your recent series of images pulled from *Skyrim* you sit, within the game, completely inactive. The idea that freedom creates an obligation for action is incredibly descriptive of our day and age, an obligation you actively defy in this series. In eliminating the commercial texts found in book covers you similarly reconsider the parameters of a type of narrative convention. In what ways do you see these series relating?**

I am interested in agency, or the power of an individual to make choices regarding their own destiny. With the book covers, it is about giving agency to the viewer, making what was a specific and organized fantasy space into one that is open and unaligned, allowing them to fill it with their own imagination. For the *Skyrim* piece, it is more about me claiming my own agency, choosing to play the game by my own terms and on my own level, rather than according to the expectations of the designers.

**You've also recently been making ASCII art on Microsoft Word (images made purely from text), a form that's markedly reminiscent of early net.art aesthetics. You've discussed the revitalization that occurs when a technology becomes obsolete because people suddenly don't take it for granted, viewing it more critically as an object of the past. Considering the rest of your work, your series of altered book covers seems similarly related to obsolescence. How do you think the book form has changed since the adoption of hypertext?**

I think that hypertext is a natural part of the book form, not a contemporary aberration. If you look at early books, such as *The Book of My Life* by Girolamo Cardano, many of them take on a non-linear, hypertextual, structure. The information is simply laid out in front of you and as a reader you skip from section to section as the whim takes you, navigating at your own pace. More contemporary is Charles Bowden's *Trinity*, an amazing book that weaves backwards and forwards in time telling the story, not of a person, but of a region. The idea of linearity is not inherent to the book format, it is just one of many options. Hypertext, in the form of the Internet, is not hurting books, it is exposing the weakness of relying on a single successful model for every venture, rather than pursuing an ongoing project of experimentation and innovation. The same way that organisms benefit from biological diversity, cultural endeavors are also enriched, being more able to survive changing conceptual and technological models. I think that eventually books will survive by being more interesting.

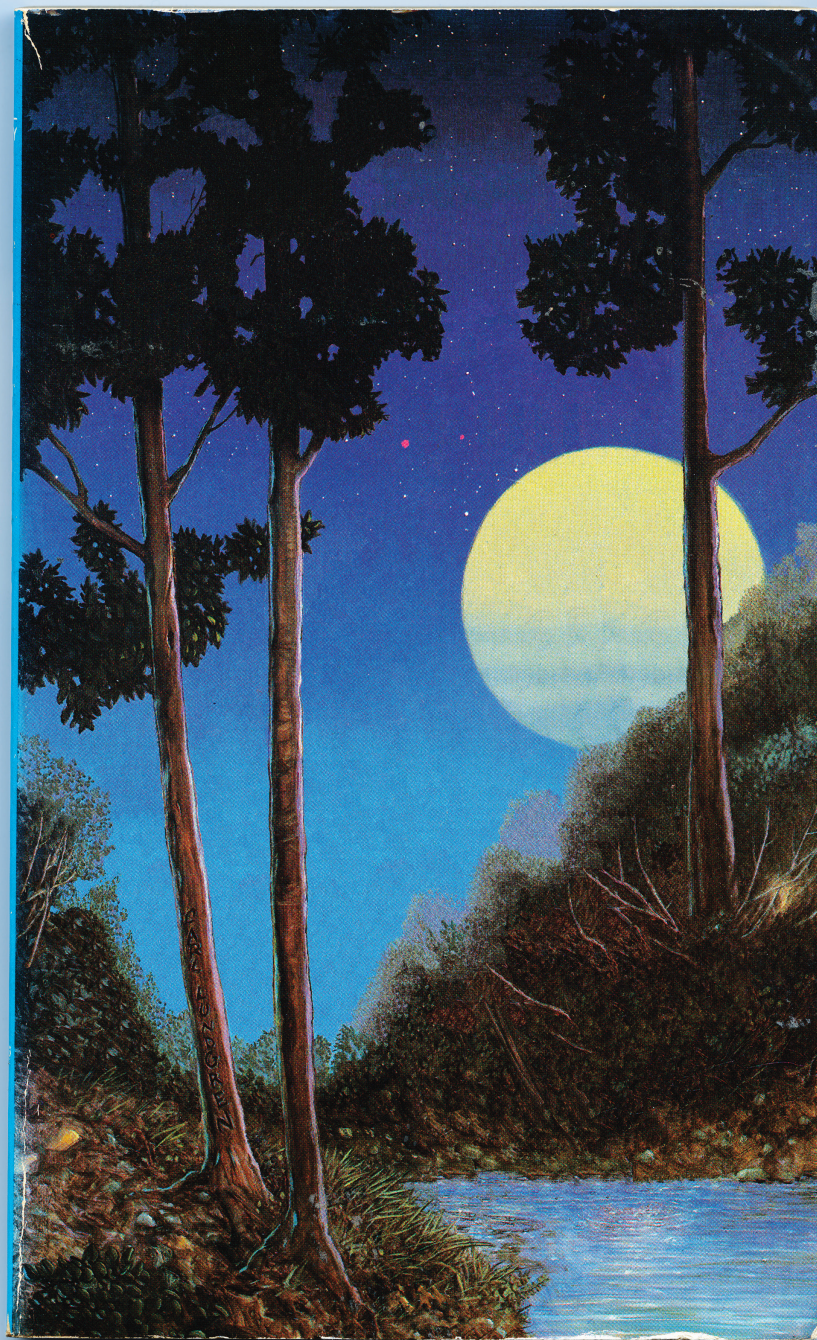
As far as the power of the obsolete, I think that older mediums are powerful because they mean something. New mediums are in a state of evolution, and when we comment on them or use them we are trying to guide their ultimate meaning to somewhere specific, but it is like riding lightning, you get to be a part of the experience and you can shift it left or right, but at the end of the day it is going to ground. With a medium that we have moved away from you have a certain amount of perspective, and you can begin doing things that are really interesting. I don't disparage use of new mediums, I use them all the time in my work, but I think we sometimes overlook the value of the outdated in our quest for relevance.

**In highlighting the potential narratives contained in cover art you seem to suggest that they serve as a substructure that informs the book's textual narrative. This is similar to issues raised in your work surrounding violent videogames in which you take screenshots of landscapes that are reminiscent of early survey photography. To what extent do you think the landscapes depicted in cover art influence the reading of their corresponding texts?**

Maybe not at all. One of the amazing things about book covers is that we are, literally, trained at a young age to completely disregard them. "Don't judge a book by its cover!" This makes book covers a unique kind of image that is meant to be forgotten almost immediately. The image of a character on a book cover is not what the character actually looks like, it is a singular interpretation that is often inconsistent even within books of the same series or in multiple editions of the same book. A reader will imagine the character or landscape in their own way, inflecting the imagery with aspects of their own life or experience. This makes the book cover into an image that you are supposed to see but not look at too closely, they are more like mirages of content rather than content itself. With my work, you are asked not to forget the image, but rather to acknowledge it. I think I use book covers partly because they are benign. If I did the same project with advertisements or propaganda the work becomes something sinister and specific and I am not interested in creating something so reductive.

With the video games it is something different. I was looking at those early survey photographs, such as by Ansel Adams, but also at the Hudson River Valley School painters. There is a long tradition of glamourizing the landscape, Ansel

Justin Berry,  
*Brook*, 2012,  
digital C-print,  
72 x 48 inches  
(cat. no. 3)



Adams made the land seem like something fragile and yet powerful that needed to be protected, while the Hudson River Valley School painters made the landscape feel like a remarkable fruit, ripe for the plucking, just waiting to be claimed. I wanted to engage the virtual landscape as a site of promise or potential.

**In addition to being a practicing artist, you also run The Waymaker Gallery, an imaginary gallery located in the fictional town of Yorkton, New Caladon. In making an imagined gallery you're creating a space in which exhibiting artists are not bound by time or money, creating a venue for artists to indulge artistic fantasies. In what ways does the construction of such an open-ended space relate to your erasure of existing spaces' limitations?**

Notably, the Waymaker Gallery is not an aside to my art practice, it is part of it. I wanted to use the structure of the gallery website as my medium, especially since it seemed that so much art was being seen in that context anyways. I feel that the structure of such a website shapes and distorts the way we relate to the art presented there. By turning the website into the medium, I was able to make work that was not distorted by that context but rather enriched by it.

I am not actually interested in erasure, if that makes sense. Erasure implies the taking away of things. That makes the removed subject matter of primary importance. In other words, it becomes a picture of that absence and about that absence. I am interested in revealing, in opening up pictures to see the space that is behind the subject.

**In speaking on this project you've expressed an interest in the ways imagined spaces interact with real space, such as nationalist narratives informing architecture and then in turn effecting society. Through using imagery from book covers you give the power to imagine back to the viewer. Is subversion of hegemonic discourses something you're pursuing in your work?**

Totally. I think that we take too many things for granted; we inherit discourses and assume their logic. To me that is what I think of as hegemonic, not the ideas that are forced on us from the present power structures, but the ones that are so ingrained with our thinking that they become invisible. One generation's notion of the obvious is the prior generation's great discovery, arrived at through rigorous effort and calculated study. It is important to recognize the limitations and tendencies of your own social and cultural perspective. When I think of subversion though, I think of active re-direction, turning a movement in one direction into movement in another. With my work I am more interested, usually, in creating a kind of stillness, or inaction, from which the viewer can move in any direction they choose. It comes back to agency. I feel that there is a profound lack of it in the world today, and that it is exacerbated by the technologies and ideas we take for granted. If my art practice was a political slogan it would not tell people to vote for the left or the right, it would just tell people to vote, period.

## DOUG BEUBE

[Interview by N. Elizabeth Schlatter]

**In this exhibition, we are including two works from your *Erosion* series (#03 and #06), which feature collages made of altered pages from world atlases. Regarding this series you've said, "Using a belt sander on the surface of the paper, the holes with gouged out areas of the maps appear as if insects have randomly eaten through topographic sections, resulting in a veil-like fabric, eroding the landscape of numerous countries while forging new lakes, river beds, and islands." Why did you want the effect of the layering of these pages and images to seem to have occurred via natural processes (i.e. erosion or insect burrowing)?**

Every organism, a forest, or atlas, for example, is layered. Maps are layered, even though they're abstractions that allude to natural phenomena such as, bodies of water, elevation levels, landmasses and roads. If traveling, they guide us through these passages and we trust the 'truth' of printed matter. When the physical paper of a map is unreadable, it brings into question whether we can believe the accuracy of its contents. Metaphorically, disintegration of the paper shows that the physical aspects of an atlas or representation of the world is not immune to the political changes of maps being drawn. Maps are vulnerable, just as a region of trees might be threatened due to deforestation or the natural elements. The effects of erosion as an organism deteriorates, is applied to the various layers of my map collages.

**What first inspired you to work with atlases and did you find anything surprising about using them as your medium?**

One of my first map work pieces was in 1991, it was entitled *Invisible Cities*, inspired by

Italo Calvino's book with the same title. I folded each page of an atlas in on itself, placed metallic springs between a number of pages, incorporated light finials and a chain, resting the altered book on a blue velvet cloth making it appear as if it was a reliquary or woman's handbag. Altering an atlas was similar to transforming found books with text or imagery that I began in 1989. What I appreciate about working with maps is the abstract nature of the colors and lines. They have a powerful graphic element but they also have significant implications for content.

**Did you intentionally gravitate towards recognizable landmasses and oceans when making these? Do you want viewers to be able to recognize certain locations or do you want to keep the works familiar but not specific?**

I'm quoting myself here,

"Current political and social issues such as alliances, colonization and globalization, are used as themes in these altered pages from world atlases. With this idea as my inspiration, I also work formally, intuitively finding color field relationships seen in the series entitled, *Erosion*. Using a belt sander on the surface of the paper, the holes with gouged out areas of the maps appear as if insects have randomly eaten through topographic sections, resulting in a veil-like fabric, eroding the landscape of numerous countries while forging new lakes, river beds, and islands. Blue seas and oceans are spotted with yellow, green and orange landmasses from several pages below through serendipitous encounters. With each revision, our assumed perception of the



map, representing world alliances and power struggles, alters the ability of the reader to navigate comfortably through a country as its shifting borders are re-aligned with other countries that have been radically altered."

The hint of recognition of a referenced country forces the eye and brain to fluctuate between abstraction and figuration. The later maps from the *Erosion* series almost eliminate recognizable landmasses, so the maps could read as anywhere on the planet. By doing this I'm saying, as specific as maps are, they're unreliable just as a GPS device portends to its accuracy but it could just as easily be inaccurate. "Be very wary," is my caution, roads may change; detours are prevalent; a country may have colonized another and its borderlines may have shifted.

**The series pokes holes (literally and figuratively) in the idea that the entire world can be captured, illustrated, and communicated by humans in a hand-held, linear, and textual form. Is your work a critique of this potential hubris or need for controlling knowledge?**

I agree with your insight about the assumed confidence we have using a technology, either analog or digital. We experience the world as a specific time and place on the globe. Maps give a false sense of being in control in either a goal driven assumption such as arriving at a specific time, "Are we there yet?" or having control over a region. The amazing notion that our brains comprehend the physical space while viewing a map is pure fantasy. We really only know the terrain if we walk border to border. We've

all experienced or have heard someone say, "I didn't realize the area was so big, on the map it looks tiny." We go outside our comfort zone of being in control to out of control and threatened, even fooled by this abstraction of a map in hand either printed or electronic. Yes, I'm poking holes.

**There are a number of artists in this exhibition who subvert the landscape tradition by creating work that is several times removed from its original source (i.e. the map is already an abstraction of the original landscape, which you further abstract in your collages). Along those lines, your work essentially foregrounds how maps, which by their design are intended to appear as impartial topographical descriptions, are actually anything but neutral. Is that a concept or approach that you find especially relevant to contemporary times?**

Growing up for some of us, it's a generational phenomenon, we never thought countries would change their borders. It was incredulous to think that in our lifetime new borderlines would be drawn that spawned an industry of remaking maps, atlases, and globes. Redrawing frontiers was an idea from the gold rush era or the sixties when the Berlin Wall, built in 1961, split Germany into East and West. Each time a country transforms their borders, under oppression or by choice, it's reflected on paper (or digitally) that mirrors the change. With powerful countries colonizing weaker ones their sovereignty is usurped and a new map of the region is fabricated, not just for that location but collectively, every map on the planet is updated. I've not researched whether there's more stability in borders being fixed today in contrast to one hundred years ago. With countries struggling to maintain their identity there's always the threat of the cartographer readying themself to put ink to the page or click the mouse to extend or contract a line.

facing page: Doug Beube, *Erosion* #03, 2004, collage, 13 x 9 inches (cat. no. 5)

### **Is there also a sense of nostalgia in your work?**

Any artist using a book in their artwork, collage, map-work, or sculpture, for example, their work might be seen as “nostalgic”. The book was invented hundreds of years ago, inherent in the material is an archaic quality compared to some of the technological inventions made after the mid-twentieth century. However, you could say the same for someone using paint, steel and wood; these materials have also been available for centuries. It’s not the material that makes artwork romantic, nostalgic or sentimental. Rather, it’s the use of those materials, whether the artist is referencing social, political or contemporary events. In the digital age, the book is an outdated modality and by its very nature may appear to be “nostalgic”. Personally, I have no interest in sentimentality, I am not a luddite and will use whatever materials necessary to express an idea based on my perceptions and feelings, to make a piece of art.

## ELISHEVA BIERNOFF

[Interview by N. Elizabeth Schlatter]

**On your website you state, “my work investigates myths, fictions, and fantasies, and how we encounter and interpret them.” Your piece *Inheritance* features images of landscapes from governmental and tourism websites, travel blogs, Flickr, etc., projected onto mist. What sort of myths or fictions are you addressing in this work?**

The slides all depict very real, quickly-vanishing wilderness areas from around the world — Patagonia, Antarctica, The Congo Forest — threatened by devastation from logging, damming, resort development, global warming. I’ve never been to the remote places pictured in the slides, and have only encountered them indirectly, in newspaper

articles, documentaries, and books. I know what they look like from other people’s pictures. So while *Inheritance* is about real places, it is also about our conception of places most of us will never experience first hand. It’s about how we apprehend unseen wilderness, and how imagination, hearsay, and myth shape our understanding.

Once far-flung destinations for explorers, these places are exceptional in that they are defined more by the elements than by humankind. We call them unknowable or sublime, and they figure in our stories and poetry and art. They are important regardless of human interests, but are also important culturally and spiritually; they fuel the



Elisheva Biernoff, Still from *Inheritance*, 2010, slide projector, humidifier, acrylic on plywood, and 80 slides, 120 x 144 x 72 inches (cat. no. 7)

imagination and inform our sense of self and our perspective about our role in the world. We need mysterious, hard-to-reach places, even if we only see them in photographs and pixels, and in our mind's eye.

**Immateriality seems to be an important component of *Inheritance* — the images are comprised of light emitted through slides in a slide projector, and they exist ephemerally on waving veils of vapor. How important is the quality of intangibility in this piece and how did that lead you to the materials that you ultimately employed in the work?**

In order to describe how I came to make *Inheritance*, I should mention the piece I made immediately prior, an 8' x 16' painting of a fictional island, called *They Were Here*. The painting, populated by a hodgepodge of extinct and invasive species, dealt with landscape and loss. It was accompanied by a sculpture of mounted scenic binoculars that, when looked through, showed a stereoscopic photograph of open ocean rather than a magnified portion of the painting. The discrepancy was meant to trigger questions about the fate of the island, whether it had been submerged or was a mirage; in effect, the binoculars "undid" the painting. The idea of effacing the image in front of you, of manifesting the disappearance of a landscape, began with *They Were Here*, and was further developed in *Inheritance*. Having made a dense and physical installation about vanishing wilderness, I wanted to make something evanescent. Wilderness loss made me think of the phrase "going up in smoke," and I began to wonder how I could actualize the metaphor. *Inheritance* is an enactment of loss — the images projected onto mist are recognizable as landscapes, but they quickly waver and dissipate. The mist provides a swirling, billowy projection surface, and gives the images a haloed, fugitive quality,

while the slides advance automatically, never lingering too long on any one image.

**The title *Inheritance* could refer to the impending loss of environmental diversity and plentitude, or to the burden of choices and expectations that humans face in terms of what species and lands will be valued in the future (for example, see Jim Robbins "Building an Ark for the Anthropocene," *The New York Times*, September 28, 2014, or other interpretations as well). How did you come about that title and how do you think viewers might interpret the work?**

I was thinking of these places quite literally going up in smoke, and how we are leaving future generations only memories, or ghosts, of the natural world.

My father is a skilled and conscientious travel photographer, and when I was a child, we always had a slide show upon returning from a trip. He would frame his compositions carefully (excruciatingly if my brother and I were the subjects, eyes squinting into the sun, under the command to "look natural!"), and later would pore over the slides to carefully select those for inclusion in the show. The slides were a record, and their editing would shape the memory of the trip. In the case of *Inheritance*, the slides are both a record and a memorial. This is a slide show from a trip not taken, of places on the verge of vanishing.

This past summer, my boyfriend and I drove from San Francisco to Albuquerque, where I grew up. We stopped at a bleak rest stop in the oven of the Mojave Desert. A small platform had educational material describing how the thirsty, dusty ground was once filled with lakes and swamps and teeming life, during the Pleistocene era. Nature passes through monumental cycles, land rises and falls, soaks and dries, but this is the first time human action has brought

about such rapid and alarming change.

Our shortsightedness makes me scared for the future. Will we turn the world into a desert? Will we bring about our own extinction? What if our sole inheritor is that consummate survivor, the cockroach? What if I went through the old family vacation slides, and saw only dodoes? Or worse, what if I lifted the slide trays and found nothing but blanks?

**The term “landscape” typically refers to both a physical place, as in a region, or a view of that place. *Inheritance* presents images that are far removed from their original source (from physical site to photograph to website to projection). Do you consider this a commentary on how we “see” landscapes today?**

Initially, I just wanted to find pictures of these places, and an Internet image search was the simplest way to get them. I had intended to use the images as reference material for paintings on glass slides, but then realized commercially developed slides arrayed in a carousel would be better and more direct. The piece is about my own and our collective displacement from the natural world, and so the layers of translation and mediation and abstraction certainly are relevant. But despite my disconnection from the wild, despite having to rely on interpreters and middlemen to experience a place like the Arctic, it still has power over me.

**The act of viewing seems to be a common emphasis in your work, as in the projected images with this piece, or other works that actually incorporate a landscape viewing telescope, like those found at popular tourist sites. Do you incorporate this function into your work as a way to address issues of perception? Or of illusion?**

Yes. In both instances, vantage point matters; stand in one place and you see one thing,

take a step left or right, and the view changes. *Inheritance* is very much about point of view — the image is clearest when the viewer is aligned with the projector. At that moment, the image coalesces into a recognizable landscape. As the viewer moves about the room, the image falls apart, shattering into impressionistic shafts of light.

The humidifier is housed in a box with a rectangular cut-out the size of the projections, so the mist fills the empty rectangle and creates a screen. The screen is theatrical, or television-like, but the border is porous and the mist cascades into the space where viewers are standing. This permeability serves to question our own role in the unfolding disaster; are we observers coolly watching footage of a dissolution, or are we closer to the action than we like to think?

**You’ve said regarding your work that you explore the intersection of the spectacular and the everyday. How does this work bridge those two opposite characteristics?**

I attempt to give visibility to things we overlook. I think we are collectively superintending an enormous environmental catastrophe, in part because its effects are so far from daily experience. Our lifestyles, our everyday actions, have devastating effects on spectacular valleys, mountains, forests and rivers that we never see. In many ways, the piece is a spectacle — it’s a proscenium that fills with mist and shows wavering fantastical scenes, but it relies on mundane Internet searches and the familiar (though now obsolete) format of the slide show. Rather than presenting the expected travelogue, this slide show presents the strange phenomenon of landscapes coming in and out of focus, and dissolving.

MARTÍN BONADEO  
[Interview by N. Elizabeth Schlatter]

**For this exhibition we're including your work *Two Suns (Beach)*. Why is this piece called "Two Suns"?**

First of all there is an ancient alchemical concept about two suns. I was always curious about it. One of my favorite Argentine artists named Xul Solar (as *lux solar*, solar light) is always playing with astrology and the idea of many suns and moons in his small paintings. Going to my piece, ten years ago, I was playing with a screen and a retro projection of an image of a sun shining. The screen was a translucent piece of cloth in which the projector halo worked as another sun in the image. I used this concept to show, three different times, "two suns." In one of those opportunities I also used scent in the installation and people travelled in an episodic memory. This time, the beach smell plus the sand will add a complete immersive experience.

**Our installation of *Two Suns* will feature the projected image of the sun on the scrim, the sand on the floor, and a "boardwalk" for the visitor to walk on. And it incorporates smell, via a scent applied to the sand and floorboards of the boardwalk. Many of your works incorporate various senses, but how do you think scent in particular affects your art and the visitor's experience?**

My Ph.D was in olfactory communication. I've always had a deep connection with the sense of smell, and with this research I had the chance to explore the theories about olfaction. I found that science is so deeply related with the eye that it is very difficult to

study just fragrance. So I started to play with the poetics of this sense. First in installations as a background, never telling people about it. I found that people could travel through time with a whiff of some specific aromas. During 2014, I was working with many fragrance companies and perfumists developing scent pieces and this is a result of all that background.

**So much of your work also seems to be about perception and about what is seen and what is hidden right in front of us (e.g. the colors of the spectrum within a ray of white light). Do you have something in mind in particular with this work that you hope to reveal?**

I believe that technology like mobile phones is paradoxically disconnecting people with the environment. People want to take selfies and to share that experience, but this is not the same as spending time and energy connecting themselves with reality. This piece is an absurd, fake landscape, and a really bucolic one. When I am at the beach with the sun rising or setting there is something strong happening in my soul. I feel that the technology that we are using everyday is making this simple connection more and more difficult. *Two Suns* is a failed attempt to use artificial-technology to reconnect people with nature and with their own soul.

**Regarding the work *Two Suns* and just the sun in general, you've talked about how visitors can be blinded by the light of the sun, but ultimately "the pupil will adapt to the new light and the eye will regain its power." [from the catalogue *Alba Mágica MMX*, 2010] What do you mean by the "power" of the eye, and**



Martín Bonadeo, Photograph of previous installation of *Two Suns (Beach)*, 2015, digital projector, cloth, sand, scent, and mixed media, dimensions variable (cat. no. 8)

**is this something you are trying to manipulate specifically?**

I love the experience of being blinded by the sun. For a moment sight is not the principal sense and so you start exploring other sensory channels. A projector lens is not as powerful as the sun, but it makes an effect where the viewer will have to change his experience and try connecting with olfaction, touch, and sound.

***Two Suns* evokes a natural setting but is pretty much an artificial installation aside from the sand. Even the scent is synthetic, correct? Are you interested in ideas of authentic versus inauthentic experiences? Or perhaps the slippery connection from one to another?**

This is an interesting question. I'm always thinking about the relationship of natural/artificial. Art in galleries is always trying to re-present sensations from other places. In our contemporary cities we are more connected with synthetic stuff (food, drinks, perfumes, landscapes) than with nature. This tension is present in this piece, and the idea of having two sun-like images and no real suns in it is a first clue to this un-real world.

**For *Anti-Grand* we are focusing on work that challenges the age-old genre of landscape through irony, appropriation, and interrogation. *Two Suns* seems to both deconstruct the elements of "landscape" and question how we construct a landscape both through our senses and through our memories. Do you think of this work, or your work in general, as contributing to the history of landscape as depicted in both art and literature?**

As human beings we are always using languages to re-present our world, to understand it and to make theories about how it works. I believe that we are born and we die with more questions than answers and all my work is the way I found to deal with these issues. Landscape and its construction was a theme from my first piece called *locked up landscapes*, and I'm usually coming back to my first approach to art. I will probably be all my life searching for impossible, complete answers in this direction.

# MATTHEW BRANDT

[Interview by Kenta Murakami]

**Your *Lakes and Reservoirs* series begins with calendar-esque photos of beautiful landscapes that are then degraded and deconstructed during the chromogenic printing process by submerging the prints in the water of the lakes they depict. What is it about the conventional landscape genre that interests you as a starting point?**

A small clarification, they are soaked after the chromogenic printing process and not during. In other words, they are printed as c-prints then soaked in the lake or reservoir water. I only reiterate this because they are two separate stages in the process rather than one blended process. This is important only because it partitions the photographic printing process from the lake soaking process, which isolates the two distinct stages, from that of the "image" and that of the "real."

But back to landscapes, I have always loved the idea of attempting to recreate a sublime landscape experience for a viewer. The images act as a kind of portal. And this portal speaks to a primitive compulsion to share an experience, which has inevitably become a wide-open genre. I like tapping into this genre because of its omnipresence and hence neutrality. And with this neutrality, it lends my work with a clearer view on the process.

**In your photos of lakes there's something poetic about emulsion eroding away to create such stunning colors. The resulting prints have a similar sense of temporality, as many are susceptible to fading, flaking, or otherwise morphing overtime. Is this something that interests you because of the**

**subject depicted or is it simply a byproduct of your experimentation?**

It is the fragility of both subject and material and the synergy between the two in relation to one another that interests me.

**By creating your images with the water of your subjects, there's an interesting exploration of indexicality — on one hand there's the index of the landscape on the film, with its complicated claims to truth, and on the other, the index the lake water leaves on the final work as it is printed, which, ironically, disrupts and obscures the original registered image. Is "truth" something you're exploring with this series?**

When making photographs, this "truth" always felt like a bit of weight on my shoulders. How does one represent a subject "truthfully"? A way to alleviate some of the weight was to literally put the subject into the image making process by blending the visual (photographic) with the actual physical material. This ended up feeling more like a collaboration with a subject, rather than a simple record.

**Because your printing process is determined by the composition of the lake water used, the final result is largely determined by chance. But you've also worked as an assistant to Robert Polidori, a photographer known for his hermetic compositions and images that evoke a certain contemplative stillness. How do you see your work relating to more straight photography?**

I obviously learned so much working with Robert, and also my father is a commercial



Matthew Brandt, *Mono Lake CA B4*, 2012, C-print soaked in Mono Lake water, 72 x 105 inches (cat. no. 9)

photographer. So I have an enormous amount of respect in making "straight" photographs. When I make a straight photograph, I put a lot of emphasis on making a "good" image. I use large formats, wait for light, and build a composition, etc. I very much relish in this process. Though in the end, it is perhaps strange that I have gratification to subvert and let go of my previous efforts. It is always a strange moment to witness your hard work literally fade away.

**Born and raised in LA, you went to undergrad at Cooper Union (NY) then returned home to do your MFA at UCLA. How do you think your work was shaped by the different landscapes and cultures of the two coasts? Do you try to evoke any aspects of the Western landscape tradition in art and photography?**

I am fortunate to have studied at Cooper because it gave me a more conceptual approach to making things. I was making things with a feeling towards a kind of greater responsibility. There is less space in New York and I was frugal with my work. I was making smaller things and thinking intensely about what was made. After moving back to LA, the UCLA program was more experimental, or at least it felt that way. And I had more studio space to work in. I have been stretching out my arms since. In regards to Western landscape traditions, I am very interested in photographers like O'Sullivan and Watkins who dragged around their chemistry kits into Western landscapes. There is something great about exploring new lands with a new uncharted medium.

**Your work is often described as alchemical because of your return to the fundamentals of the photographic process and an aversion to accepted printing methods. Many of your works are also unique prints, a somewhat rare occurrence in the photographic world. What is the appeal in 2015 of a more involved image-making process?**

This relates to the previous question. When I moved back to Los Angeles for UCLA, it was my first time officially studying photography. I wanted to start from its very beginning. I began looking into its earliest and most basic forms in order to have a foundation of the medium. This dig into photo history also coincided with my own personal excavating. I was back in my hometown of Los Angeles and reacquainting with a lot of family and friends that I have missed while in New York. So I think it was this combination of personal and academic mining that encouraged me to work with photography's technical dustbins. And it was very easy to find out how to use antiquated photo techniques through the Internet. It's all there.

ADAM CVIJANOVIC  
[Interview by N. Elizabeth Schlatter]

**For this exhibition we're including your work *All the Wine I Ever Drank I Drank at Sea* (2010), which is a large painting of an ocean panorama that is pulling apart and stained, located within a similarly decrepit warehouse. In front of the painting-within-a-painting is a mattress with a white sheet, dozens of green and brown wine bottles, and what seems to be a stack of wood or some sort of broken structures. The imagery and the title suggest a narrative reading, perhaps something folkloric or mythical (or maritime?), but did you have a specific story in mind when you made this work? Is the setting meant to suggest an artist's studio?**

The space in the painting is not necessarily an artist studio, it's more of a failed apartment — although I wouldn't mind having a studio like this. The debris in the mid ground of the image is composed of metal studs and broken wallboard, with a cheep doorframe in the middle. It suggests the partitions of contemporary residential construction. The painting itself is being supported by the same reused material; there is an unmade bed but no evidence of paint or any other material of a studio. There are a lot of empty bottles. I guess if there is an implied narrative it's that there was a bedroom in an apartment, very real, very confining. It was destroyed but not cleared away as the room was turned into a metaphorical space. The painting is a snapshot of that transition with the detritus of birth still in evidence. As to the ocean, it is an unconfined space, the exact opposite of the destroyed room.

**The inclusion of the panorama within your painting as well as the artwork's large size recall the popular panoramic paintings from the**

**nineteenth century that gave the viewer the illusion of being surrounded by the depicted landscape. And throughout history artists have created interior designs intended to evoke the feeling of being outdoors, through completely artificial means. Does this painting relate to these ideas of life-size, false enclosures and the dichotomy of interior/exterior or natural/manmade? And is there an intended mood of nostalgia in this piece?**

Nineteenth-century panoramas and cycloramas were one of the departure points for these paintings. Such a strange moment, an analog groundwork for the birth of cinema. A perfection of technical expression that was by the logic of that perfection begging for its own obsolescence. As a painter who has always been interested in narrative it is tempting to dwell on that moment, when painting was systematically stripped of most of its functions, first by photography and later by cinema, mediums that were not only far cheaper and easier to distribute — but held to be far more reliable representations of the "truth."

Yes, the painting is very steampunk, looking back and out at the same time, it's about a lost cause, a dying language. The romanticism that tints this vision is apparent in the title and the hundreds of wine bottles the title refers to. The obvious implication is judgment — my judgment — that is not based on sober thought, but based on the sloppy sentimentality of too much drink. Of being compelled to do something — narrative painting — that doesn't really fit in the world anymore. Or does it? I'm doing it and you are showing it, there is something about ignoring accepted facts in favor of belief that



Adam Cvijanovic, *All the Wine I Ever Drank I Drank at Sea*, 2010, acrylic on Tyvek on panel, 48 x 96 inches (cat. no. 10)

— 31 —

is deeply human — extremely dangerous — but also essential to ourselves. It is about the act of painting, because as much as it's a landscape it is a self-portrait of me trying to paint a landscape. It is an interior-exterior landscape in that sense. It is an emotional landscape of process, accomplishment and self-justification — with a good shot of self-delusion and willful illusion.

**This is a freestanding painting (acrylic on Tyvek on panel), but you often create paintings on Tyvek that are installed directly on walls and then removable and reusable. Is the portable nature of your landscapes an important feature of your work?**

Back when a gangster prince of the Renaissance commissioned a set of murals for his palace, they were permanent. Now,

and particularly in America, space is much more fluid — provisional, I am simply trying to accommodate that fact. As an interesting byproduct of this, my portable frescos in effect become quantum paintings — existing abstractly until installed — observed in a particular space. Then perhaps existing in a different space, each time specific to the space, each time given different meaning by different context.

**Do you consider any of your work to be a critique of today's societal attitudes toward the environment? Or perhaps a contribution to the general discourse on nature?**

They are. Starting with the supposition that all landscape is political, any depiction of landscape is a political-social commentary.

# KATRÍN ELVARSDÓTTIR

[Interview by Kenta Murakami]

**In the series *Vanished Summer* you photographed mobile homes, summer cabins, and greenhouses throughout the Icelandic countryside, often returning to structures across seasons. The manmade places, as well as the landscapes in which they are embedded, feel at once familiar and uncanny, creating a tension between the manmade and the natural. Is there something that interests you in humans imitating or attempting to simulate a life within nature?**

Absolutely. The interplay between the natural and the man-made interests me tremendously, and I'm fascinated by the methods that people use in trying to improve upon nature. Sometimes I stumble upon expressions of the absurdity of it; sometimes it's the beauty that captures me. It's really a mixture of things.

**You were born in the Westfjords of Iceland, and have lived in Reykjavik, Sweden, and the U.S.; how have these different cultures and landscapes affected your practice?**

These cultures have their differences. I started to photograph Icelandic deserted man-made structures while living in New York, and at the time that gave me a certain perspective on the subject that I think helped me experience the country in a more mysterious way.

**A lot of your work seems to deal with the domestic tourist industry in Iceland and a temporary escape into nature through things like summer cabins. Are you interested in the ways the island has changed over the last century with increasing urbanization?**

I'm interested in spontaneous communities

— how people produce what sometimes seem like "fringe cultures" through their escape from their everyday living — and how this everyday living may be gradually transformed through the influence of various factors. That's one of the reasons why I keep coming back to the same places over periods of several years — to document the changes.

**Your photographs are often discussed in terms of memory and a tension between the familiar and the fantastic. Are you trying to evoke particular narratives or folklore? Or is your work meant to be more personal for each viewer?**

Often I work from a particular narrative, but that is not ultimately the main point, because I do want the viewer to bring their own knowledge and interpretation to the viewing experience.

**Swimming pools and natural hot springs are a huge part of Icelandic culture, yet the two images of pools we've included in the exhibition have a dark, mysterious quality to them. Both feature artificial pools as well, acting as framing devices for the reflection of the landscapes around them. Can you elaborate on the appeal of pools as a subject in your work?**

Swimming pools are a huge part of the Icelandic culture and my upbringing as well — many of my very early memories from childhood are of swimming pools. Perhaps because of this I'm interested in both natural and artificial pools, and they tend to capture my attention and imagination whenever I run across them.

**Icelandic history is deeply embedded in the country's landscape, yet most of your images focus on temporary structures. With your recurring motifs of seasonal changes and the weather, in what ways is your work dealing with different conceptions of time?**

I like to return to the same places and observe the changes — from the very obvious to some very subtle ones — which gives me an insight into the process of transformation, of aging and degradation — or just the progression of time and the beauty of the seasons.



— 33 —

Katrín Elvarsdóttir, *Vanished Summer 32*, 2013, archival pigment print on paper, 19 1/2 x 29 1/2 inches (cat. no. 12)

## PLATFORM

[Interview by Kelly Gordon]

**In your various earlier works you have used an aerial perspective, lyrical nineteenth-century type vistas, spectacular mountainscapes — Do you view your work as a continuation of conventional landscape tradition?**

For us, landscape offers a meeting with nature, its plurality and differentiation, its intersection between natural and historic time, its expression of atmosphere and the atmospheric, as a place where living is not confined or constrained. We are fascinated by the transformation of nature through art.

Landscape is all these and much more besides. It is a place where from time to time one of these aspects prevails whilst coexisting with the others. These determinants are neither exclusive nor do they preclude the existence of others. Divisibility, instability and tension towards the internal structure characterize our intervention in the landscape.

We like to define our work on landscape as "spectral landscape." Through this is meant, as with the spectre of sound in music, or the spectre of a vibration in physics, that the landscape becomes a collection of the elements and their essential components. Here landscape is seen not only as a superimposition of completely imaginary possibilities, but also the superimposition of the natural components that constitute the given landscape.

When, for example, we show the emergence of an intricate and potential meteorological entity, such as a storm which unites in unison rain, snow, wind and fog, we have to start with the single atmospheric agent to harmonically compose, precisely as the spectre does in physics, an extraordinary

variation of time, which is the landscape as we intend it. For these reasons our work isn't a continuation of conventional landscape tradition.

**Are ecological or environmental issues at all informing your aesthetic considerations and choices?**

Our aesthetic considerations and choices confront and reconfigure, through differing processes, the principle elements of landscape such as the passage of time, sound, space, disassociation, meteorology and insertion or intervention. We are very much sensitive to ecological issues, but it's not the main one in our work.

**What other art works, images or issues beyond art most inspire you?**

It depends from project to project. For instance, in *Sunday 6th April, 11:42 am* it has been fundamental for us to rethink the landscape inside the Lorenzo Lotto painting. For the last three videos, to work on some pieces of symphonic music has been the departure point. For many reasons, we are also drawn toward taking up the challenges of scientific thought and discoveries, in an artistic way.

**What are the challenges of working outside?**

Each project provides for different challenges. The strongest one concerning *Cannot be anything against the wind* was to identify every landscape to shoot, by trying to imagine the most useful portion of it for the

Flatform, Still from  
*Cannot be anything  
 against the wind*,  
 2010, video, 6:20  
 minutes (cat. no. 13)



kind of editing we had in mind. We worked within a 60 km radius which incorporated various kind of terrain and we shot and re-shot over fifteen times.

**How did you meet and please explain how the members of the collective expand or contract according to each project.**

Flatform was founded in 2006 when three artists met when they were included in a group show. After two years of working together, one member decided to leave the group, but those of us remaining decided that, for each project we would expand or contract to suit the number of associates required. Since 2011, one of the interim collaborators joined Flatform permanently.

**What are the advantages and disadvantages to working as a collective?**

In a collective there isn't a single point of

view. Rather a plurality of artist's viewpoints, permitting theoretical affirmation and daily testing of the veracity of every assertion or idea about projects. Each artist becomes the litmus test of everyone else. In a way, this is the advantage and the disadvantage at the same time.

**I noticed generally you allow installations to be "dimensions variable" but how does this work differ as seen larger or smaller? Is it more painting-like when smaller? More cinematic when enlarged?**

We agree with your comment. It's a very smart remark. In many of our works (such as *Sunday. . .*, *Cannot be. . .*, *A place to . . .*) the smaller dimension creates a painting-like situation for the observer. And when it's screened enlarged, the cinematic potential of each work comes out and involves the viewer in a completely different way.

KRISTIN HOLDER  
[Interview by N. Elizabeth Schlatter]

**Can you describe how this drawing came about and why you chose this work by Leonardo to trace?**

This work is one of many tracings I made of Leonardo's drawings during a period of transition in my work. Prior to these tracings I had been making casein paintings, medium sized (3 x 4 feet), of the landscape. These paintings were line "drawings" of trees, executed in stretches of 12, 14, 17, and 23 days, with very subtle transitions in hue. The results looked like shaggy floating masses, oftentimes flesh-colored! In tracing Leonardo's drawing I was seeking clarity of line. I was definitely yearning for black and white, no middle values, no subtlety, and I suppose I was attracted to Leonardo's drawings because of their composition (central masses) and their depictions of events occurring over time (storm, sea, season). The materials I used to make them were normal household objects: a Sharpie and unbleached wax paper. With these tracings I could work for hours, walk away, and return to them seamlessly, the way you can put down and pick up sewing. Yet they required concentration and close observation.

As an artist, I almost always reach back into art history, mythology, and poetry for sources and processes. I gravitate to Durer's engravings, Goya's etchings, Twombly's paintings, Leonardo's drawings, Keat's and Tagore's poems, and Ovid's and Archimedes's writings. My processes and the resulting objects vary widely, but I think the impulse is the same: first to follow the path of others who have grappled with how to

transform an idea into an object, an object of beauty, and then to feel out what I can make within those boundaries.

**Why have you been drawn to the topic of landscape in this work as well as your earlier paintings?**

I have been drawn to the natural world more than the landscape in particular. Nature is an inimitable mirror through which anyone can study germination, growth, evolution, and decay. In this way I think that natural processes run parallel to the artistic process.

**Your drawing seems like an abstracted version of the original, focused more on the composition and formal elements than the original depicted imagery (although Leonardo's work certainly verged on abstraction). So it suggests more of homage — to the artist and the artwork — than an appropriation. Do you think your tracings could also be considered a comment on the grand tradition of landscape in art history?**

I agree that the tracings are an homage to Leonardo's intensive and all-consuming drive to understand, examine, record, and re-invent the world around him through drawing and painting. In my work from the landscape, I believe there is a continuity of interest in capturing the character of light, pictorial unity, free execution, and calculation that motivated artists such as Claude Lorrain, Joseph William Mallord Turner, and Claude Monet. On the other hand, I continue to struggle with the conventions of figure and ground, atmospheric perspective, and

painterly bravado that are characteristic of western European art.

**You describe making this work almost as a problem-solving step for your artistic process, like a bridge during this transition in your work. Is it the case of sometimes applying artificial structure (tracings) that ends up leading to more freedom?**

Yes. A shift in process like this helps me get out from under old rules or habits.

**Where did your work take you after making these tracings?**

I made a portfolio of thirty-five monotypes with drawings that borrowed elements from Cy Twombly's drawings and paintings. Currently I am working on drawings and paintings that reflect a range of interests in perspective theory, mathematics, the history of drawing and printmaking processes, and mythology.



Kristin Holder, *Tracing (Leonardo, "Wind Storm and Flood Over a Bay with Castle and Viaduct")*, 2011, Sharpie pen on wax paper, 6 5/8 x 8 1/2 inches (cat. no. 15)

INSTITUTE OF CRITICAL ZOOLOGISTS  
(ROBERT ZHAO RENHUI)

[Interview by N. Elizabeth Schlatter]

**The term "parafiction," (an artistic genre that sits between both fact and fiction) has been applied to your work in part for its documentary appearance despite some reworking of the imagery, the didactic-toned text that accompanies your projects, and also because of your travel and research to the regions and of the species that are depicted in your images. Is there an intended critique in your art of how contemporary ideas about nature could also be conceived of as parafiction?**

Most of our relationship with nature is deeply rooted in fiction. The reality of nature can mean very different things for different people. Nature is also something that can be represented and controlled. When representation occurs, it is always just a slight version of the actual experience. I think the way I work is very much the same as most other photographers; I present a view that I feel makes the most sense to me at that point of time. This may not necessarily be real. Much of my observations show that we are really conflicted about what nature is really about. Nature is fine if we can romanticize her. Romanticizing is a form of control and also a very fictional view of nature.

**Your website states that the Institute for Critical Zoologists "aims to develop a critical approach to the zoological gaze, or how humans view animals." For this exhibition we're focused more on landscape, which is sometimes included and even foregrounded in your work and sometimes left out completely. How do you think landscape (as a constructed idea) plays into or affects the zoological gaze?**

My experience with nature is rather unique because I grew up in Singapore. Singapore

is a city in a garden. We probably have the highest number of trees per capita in the world. Beneath this ghillie net of evergreen trees and plants in Singapore, there is a huge effort involved to maintain this illusion. We are a country that grows trees based on the way we can maintain them. Nature is treated on a very utilitarian level. I believe this is true for most cities. In San Francisco, I just saw a row of 18 trees that got replaced because it was costing the estate too much to 'maintain' the trees. They would be replaced with a more economical tree. When we talk about landscapes and animals, most of the time we are really talking about human concerns and human perspectives. Our interactions with nature shapes the way we approach these subjects.

**Do you consider the images from the *The Glacial Study Group*, made during the Institute's residency in the Arctic in 2011, as both a response to and an addition to the visual and photographic tradition of representing this region throughout history? And is your imagery predicated on the viewer having a basic visual vocabulary (possibly informed by popular culture) of how the Arctic is "supposed" to look within the conversation of global warming?**

The series is basically about a group of artists doing their projects in the Arctic Circle. The Arctic is really like a blank white canvas. The same landscape was repeated over and over again during the days I was there. After a while I realized there isn't really anything much I can do with the landscape. I was completely overwhelmed by the stillness of this massive white landscape. I wasn't really trying to



— 39 —

Institute of Critical Zoologists, *Expedition #10*, from the series *Some Kind of Expedition*, 2011, inkjet print on vinyl on aluminum, 43 3/4 x 29 inches (cat. no. 16)

document the Arctic in my work but I was trying to talk about how we make meaning of the Arctic with art. I don't think a visit to the Arctic Circle can help me understand the conversation of global warming at all. I was hesitant to try to associate any sense of loss with all the melting glaciers we saw.

**Did your reaction to the landscape of the region surprise you, or did that banality end up being a better stimulus than you might have expected?**

I spent a long time just looking at the landscape and experiencing what it was like to be in a landscape like this. It was really still and I knew for once as an artist I didn't need to do anything. There is just no way I can do a work translating this experience. Any representation of the Arctic I attempt to create will really be a poor rendition of what it actually is. I didn't do anything for the first few days of the residency. Slowly I started looking at what the other artists were doing and that was really interesting for me.

**A number of images from this series show animals or humans engaged in a landscape comprised of both ice and water, often transitioning from one state to another. Is there a possible connection between the instability represented in your photographs and the crisis of melting ice caps and glaciers?**

The polar bear on a melting ice cap image used by Al Gore in his global warming presentations is a fictional image. I get extremely disturbed when nature is presented to dramatize certain agendas. Polar bears are alive and well. They are currently enjoying a population explosion. They are also often seen on icebergs, ice floes and ice caps during the summer. I first found out about this during the extended expedition to the Arctic. The only polar bears I saw were too

far away to be seen distinctly. I only knew I was looking at polar bears because the ship's captain pointed them out to me. In the Arctic, polar bears are a real human threat and we have to be escorted by armed guards all the time. There is a real possibility that one will be killed and mauled to death by a polar bear when out walking. This was interesting because I would never have thought I would ever be in a position that is potentially dangerous with a polar bear when all I ever see are images of polar bears stranded by global warming

**What is the role of or your motivation for including a sense of absurdity in your work?**

I am mainly inspired by the absurdity of everyday life, especially with nature, we are always making do and coping. Nature is a rather violent force that is unpredictable but this doesn't stop us from controlling nature. It becomes absurd when we start believing that nature can be controlled via various systems. The absurd part of the story is what completes the story for me. A lot of ideas we discuss about nature are absurd but at the same time they come from a good place as well. Most of us love nature but we just can't seem to find the right way to show it.

PATRICK JACOBS  
[Interview by N. Elizabeth Schlatter]

**The American philosopher Holmes Rolston III wrote, "The 'land' exists, but the 'scape' comes with human perspective." Much of the art in *Anti-Grand* examines the act of viewing as a critical component in the definition of landscape. The round lenses through which visitors see your meticulously handcrafted dioramas seem to foreground the act of vision through an artificial but necessary apparatus. How important is the element of the lens in your works and how did you come about to including it?**

I once built a scale maquette of a gallery in order to understand how a very large sculpture I was proposing would look and feel in the space. I then created a miniature version of the sculpture and placed it in the model of the gallery. Dissatisfied with

the result, I grabbed a small concave lens I happened to have in my studio, cut a hole in the wall and inserted it. I was no longer gazing down on just another architectural model, but peering into it with an altered sense of space and scale. This experience led to a body of work I have been pursuing for more than a decade.

The lens acts as a framed point of view like a window. It directs our gaze and mirrors the mind's eye in the act of looking intently at a specific object. Practically, it bends light, condensing space giving the object a vivid and tactile reality. Since I create the landscapes while viewing them through the lens, they are both intrinsically linked together, forming a sort of hybrid

Patrick Jacobs, *Parasitic Bolete with Pine Cones*, 2014, styrene, acrylic, cast neoprene, paper, ash, talc, starch, polyurethane foam, acrylite, vinyl film, wood, steel, lighting, and BK7 glass, 12 3/4 x 18 1/2 x 11 1/2 inches (cat. no. 17)



image suspended between two and three dimensions. If you were to remove the lens, the experience would be entirely different.

**Your work *Parasitic Bolete with Pine Cones* (2014) is one of many that features mushrooms. What is it about these various fungi that you find so fascinating?**

Mushrooms, like the weeds, dandelions, and tree stumps defy our notion of an ideal landscape. Fungi spoil the flawless green lawn we're so fond of and they're also fraught with all kinds of curious contradictions, including being hallucinatory, poisonous, and a delicacy. But, they're the perfect anti-heroes in a kind of existential drama enacted in very slow motion. Their presence in the landscape becomes a manifestation of our desires to transcend our own reality.

**Your work has been compared to Renaissance landscapes (such as by Jan van Eyck, Leonardo da Vinci, and Raphael), which might be due in part to not just the content but the vast jump in depth (a lack of middle ground) created largely by the spatial and size relationships between the individual components in your compositions. Do you seek to emulate the style of the Renaissance masters in terms of how distance is conveyed?**

Renaissance painters, especially from the Netherlandish tradition, often employed an Edenic setting for their subjects. A distorted or foreshortened pictorial space and the miraculous showing of what we cannot see at once allows for an immediate traveling of distance. A developed middle ground would slow down the viewer and occupy too much of the image with rational space for this to happen. The subjects in the foreground appropriately appear super-sized for a supernatural journey. For the artist of the Renaissance, the question was one of paradise and salvation. For me, the human

impulse for the journey is more interesting and the answer more or less ambiguous if not an illusion.

**You've mentioned in interviews that you'd like viewers to initially think that they are looking at either a real landscape or a very faithful recreation of one. But you also include elements that are intended to negate truly faithful reproductions. Why is it important that the viewer see these dioramas as fictive?**

I've sought to make the viewer complicit in a nonsensical proposition. Because no real landscape can be shrunk down and fit within a given wall, I try to win back the viewer's trust. But even at this level, gradually the colors become saturated, the positioning of the flora artificial, even anthropomorphic, the composition emotional. So, there is a kind of unreal reality, a kind of seesawing back and forth between naturalism and artifice. Bridget Brophy wrote that art should not be taken naturalistically but as a conceit, a metaphor. If I can hold your attention even briefly and gull you into believing the absurd, then I think I've succeeded.

**Your art could be viewed as something of a visual foil to Wallace Stevens' poem "Anecdote of the Jar," from 1919. Instead of placing a jar on a hill that divides and asserts the manmade within the natural, you've inserted the natural into the manmade (a gallery wall) albeit with largely artificial materials. Could you talk about the role of containment and interruption in terms of the importance of the installation of your works within gallery spaces?**

I thought of these works as vanishing within the architecture of a given space. They hover at the limits of perception, ungraspable, both transparent and opaque, without a clear answer for why or where they are. . . much like life.

## KIM KEEVER

### [Interview by Kenta Murakami]

**Alternately frightening or awe-inspiring as well as seductive and alluring, your landscapes are essentially dioramas set up within water-filled glass tanks that are then photographed. What about the sublime interests you at such a scale?**

I think of the sublime in my landscapes as visual poetry about the magnificence of nature. The scale is where the magic is. It's the look into a small but "suggested" sublime world, the contrast between the micro and the macro. There is also a fractal connection between the two worlds as the ever changing paint clouds disperse through the water. I've seen lenticular clouds (of paint) over my little plaster mountains in the tank. After all, you could say that water is condensed atmosphere in the sense that the water vapor in the atmosphere disperses light the same way it does in the two feet of water (front to back) in the tank. For me, conceptual art is about contrast in all its forms. That is to say, about the contrast of shock value, scale, irony, etc. The greater the contrasts and the more numerous, the more conceptual.

The landscape photos are meant to be big and most of the prints have at least one rather large size. This way there is the small scale of the tank which is reproduced much larger to approach the natural scale of the real landscape.

**Although there are connections between your work and that of nineteenth-century landscape painting (such as William Turner, the Hudson River school, or Caspar David Friedrich), central to these earlier works was the presence (depicted or implied) of man, an aspect that's lacking in your images. Why might you prefer images of unadulterated landscapes?**

One of my favorite quotes from a review of my work by Kit White was, "There were mountains, forests and ocean shores before there were eyes to see them." This is what I have been trying to accomplish in a poetic way. Ultimately, I have always been amazed by the sheer beauty of the landscape. Occasionally I am asked if I am a misanthrope. This question always takes me by surprise until I realize that the reason for the question is related to the assumption that something happened to the people. Nothing happened to the people, it's just that my landscapes don't need people. Since most of us live in cities, I want the photographs to imply a place where you can let your imagination wander off just as my mind used to wander off as a child viewing dioramas.

**Why does time (sometimes geologic) play such an essential role in your exploration of the landscape?**

No one has ever accused me of being fashionable and that is true of my life as an artist. Fashion is a distinct marker of a time and place. I have always tried to avoid the crowds of artists trying to capture the latest art fashion. I decided to go my own way until I found how to make a more distinct mark. In my case, art made in water and recorded by photography. The results have mainly unintentional references. I am not trying to portray any particular period of art history. I make work that makes me feel good. I try to make my work about the eternal and not the ephemeral. As an artist, I like to see the world in great generalities unrelated to the present time or any other time. The

landscapes could be of the present day, a million years into the past or future or even of another planet. At one point I read a number of geology books. It's probably the best way to understand great periods of time, at least on earth. Through the fossil record they spell out endless geologic upheavals in tandem with the beginning of life and its continuation to the present day. For me, this is all very fascinating.

**In some of your images the materiality of your constructions is allowed to be seen more transparently than in others. Manmade materials clump like dredged waste to form mountains and the forms of animals; is there something about these materials that interest you on a conceptual level?**

Though many people think I spend endless hours making little trees and plaster mountains, it's not really true. They are almost thrown together (as you suggest) and most sets rarely take more than a few days to construct. This is part of the concept, in the sense of fooling the eye with "suggestions" of more serious work by way of creating what looks like a finished landscape. By using materials I find on the street or the Internet or the hardware store with a couple hundred gallons of water, it feels like a metaphysical accomplishment in the power of suggestion. The diffusive nature of light through the water is key.

In terms of the materiality showing through now and then, I'm not trying to make a perfect landscape. It's more akin to an expressive painting versus a photorealistic painting.

**You're very open about your working methods, sharing videos of your process on YouTube and talking about its complexities in interviews. Do you think an understanding of your work's creation is important for its viewing?**

My first major show in New York of the landscapes included two complete setups (including a water filled tank and trash on the floor) in one room along with prints in the other room. I didn't want people to come in and think, "Oh, it's just another landscape show." I wanted the viewer to know just how different the process was and that this was definitely not a typical landscape exhibition. The criticism was very surprising. I was amazed at how strongly people felt. About half the viewers that mentioned it were very pleased that I showed the process. The other half seemed almost mad that I would give away the mystery.

**As your work has progressed you seem to increasingly engage abstraction. Does this direction stem from an exploration of your process or is it a conceptual continuation of your landscape work?**

For two years I thought about simplifying my process of representation of the real world by removing the landscape and just adding color to the water. I knew that I could use a full range of color versus the limited palate of the landscape color. You could compare this idea with music by using the full range of notes when playing the piano versus playing the trumpet with its limited range of notes.

To my surprise and delight, I hadn't thought of the random results that I continue to achieve. The paint or ink falls in an almost predictable fashion for a limited time and after that, it's anybody's guess what will happen next in terms of the color and forms that materialize out of nowhere. When the paint initially falls through the water there is laminar flow (flow without chaos) and after that, turbulent flow (chaotic flow). So in that sense, you could call it a continued exploration of my process. Oddly enough, many of the photos look like landscapes so



Kim Kever, *West 153e*, 2009, archival pigment print, 32 x 45 inches (cat. no. 19)

by accident I am continuing with the concept of my landscape work. This idea of the paint going its own way fits nicely into Sol LeWitt's analysis of conceptual art, "The idea becomes a machine that makes the work." The machine part being the dropping of the paint into the water and the work being what happens after that. . . the random or chaotic event which I have no control over.

**You've talked about Cindy Sherman being an instrumental influence in the development of your landscape work. In what ways do you see your work functioning similarly conceptually?**

I've always thought of Cindy Sherman's work as very personal, beyond the idea of the exaggerated self portrait. I would

say that I see my "self portrait" as my own reflection surrounded by the natural world. As a child of five, I remember the joy of watching the sunset views standing alone outside my father's house on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. It was an overwhelming experience of being surrounded by nature without any other elements to distract from the experience. There were marshes and pine trees across the estuary and beyond and with the setting sun, no sign of man. . . until I was called back into the house and had to turn around. And now, though I live in a crowded city, I create my own little landscapes, my own self portraits as I view my own reflection on the outside of the glass of the aquarium.

GUY LARAMÉE  
[Interview by N. Elizabeth Schlatter]

**Our exhibition title, *Anti-Grand*, is meant to evoke the simultaneous rejection, embrace, and critique by contemporary artists of the long history of the landscape genre, which was often accompanied by a potent dose of nationalistic propaganda. Is this work, the *The Grand Library* which features a set of eighty books from the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, laid on their side in columns and carved to resemble a canyon of sorts, also a comment on Western grandiosity, both in terms of cultural and intellectual history?**

Certainly. But it is first and foremost a window<sup>1</sup> on our cult for the accumulation of knowledge — which is to me the real core of the Western self-professed "grandeur."

I got the idea for that piece when in Montreal they were starting the construction of the Grande Bibliothèque, which was to gather all the holdings of all the libraries in the province of Quebec. So I thought: even if the book is dying, even if the paper encyclopedia is gone, the myth of knowledge as an accumulation, the Encyclopedic myth if you like, that myth is far from being dead. We still dream the fiction that knowledge is forever and we dream of keeping it all, all at the same place (be it the web) — and forever.

Periodically, various cultures become fascinated by the content of consciousness and thus forget about the fact of consciousness. We value 'what we think' and forget 'that we think.' This seems to have been the case in most literate societies and now it has become the plague of what we call 'the West'. 'Landscapes' are first and foremost 'mindscapes' as I will explain later and yes, I agree with you that certain mindscapes become so ideological that they verge on

propaganda. The Religions of Objectivity — Science — have now indoctrinated us so much that we have come to think that there is a world 'out there', outside us, independent from us. This can even be seen as the main divide between East and West — since the East never abandoned the sciences of the Subjective.

So we have now a culture that has completely forgotten that the possibility of standing 'outside' our thoughts — so to speak. We are totally hypnotized by the creation of our minds, imprisoned in our minds if you like. We forgot that there is a world outside the intellect, outside the emotions, we forgot all about contemplation. We forgot the transcendent altogether.

So this is why it was so interesting to me to "portray," so to speak, knowledge as an erosion instead of an accumulation. Knowledge is a creation, as much as it is a discovery, and to create, one has to destroy — a fact that artists know too well. What we destroy when we create new world views are cultures. And when we destroy pre-existing cultures, we destroy people.

But there is another side — more interesting — to this depiction of knowledge as an erosion. When we fix the flow of knowing into hard facts, do we ever consider that something might be lost in the process? I do not think here so much of the points of view that we lose — or even people — as much as certain ways of being-to-the-world. Non-reflexive awareness, the non-discursive, intuition, these are all things that might be lost in our veneration for "facts." And maybe that is where lies my critique of this

Western myth (knowing = adding instead of subtracting). Because that might very well be the case: real knowledge might be more a process of subtraction than one of accumulation. Of loss rather than gain.

It is interesting that the geologists who discovered and mapped the Grand Canyon gave the first and most ancient layers of the canyon the name of Shiva. As you may know, Shiva is the great destroyer in the Hindu trinity (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva).

So maybe we can think of a future time when our cult for the accumulation of knowledge will eventually erode itself and lay bare what Buddhist call "our true nature," i.e. a non-dual state where language no longer has the first place?

That would be the Anti-Grand state par excellence!

**Anti-Grand also suggests a play on scale, which is evident in much of your work as you often present vast spaces or majestic forms (mountains, cliffs, oceans, etc.) in miniature. Why are you drawn in particular to these subjects and this smaller scale?**

I think the best answer to your question is a small text I wrote a while ago:

Small worlds are no smaller than the big ones. Levi-Strauss thought that artworks were always miniatures,

That even the paintings of the Sistine Chapel are small compared to what they depict. He was partly mistaken, because,

You cannot put feelings on a physical scale, or try to measure them.

And we live in feelings more than in the "physical" — which is but another name for "feeling."

What is the size of your feeling for life?  
What is the size of the word "size"?

Small worlds are about reintroducing consciousness into the world.

Small worlds are about reaffirming the

Subjective — the other half,  
As an answer to the Religion of the Objective — science,

Hoping that someday we transcend both the Objective and the Subjective.

Small worlds are not fake worlds, because:  
We are not in the world,  
The world is in us.

**You use only manual electric tools to create these works, as opposed to laser cutting. And the pages of the book are not glued together, that is, a visitor could, in theory, walk right up to one of your pieces, open up a book, and begin reading. Why is it important to you that the hand of the artist and the hand of the viewer remain a part of the artwork's creation and existence?**

Well, this is THE question that we should ask ourselves today, both as artists and human beings.

We go to art to feel how another consciousness made its way through perception. The world is not "out there," however hard scientific religiologists try to convince us — well. . . maybe it's too late. . . Maybe they won (laughter).

What we call "the world" is a feeling. It is a viewpoint, it is a decoding of impressions, or rather: impressions, feelings ARE this decoding process. Or encoding is you wish.

So the point is not so much to preserve the trace of manual work as to preserve the stamp of this consciousness, who tried to express "the world" as relations, proportions, colors. And when you get to feel another consciousness, you are actually given the keys to your own consciousness. You get to see your role in show: there is nothing outside you. Nothing.

And this gives you a great advantage: it is a first ticket to transcendence.

"Machines" are nothing but pre-packaged

viewpoints. So when you ask a machine to "assist" you, what you do in fact is that you rely on someone else's decoding — the more sophisticated the machine, the more rigid will be that preforming of your mind. I want to see the world through my own eyes, and I would like everybody to do the same. So I try to dispense as much as I can from using the pre-ordained cognitive units that we call "machines."

Of course the techies would reply that machines give MUCH MORE possibilities. That's the problem: this is the conception of freedom that we inherited from this very ideological tech-age. I don't want more possibilities, I want LESS!! To me freedom lies in going the only thing that can be done in a given situation. And to work with machines, I would think through the pieces in advance, plan them, design them, the total opposite of what I'm into. I'm into revelations, oracles, the last thing I want is to know before hand what the piece will look like! I want to be surprised at every step. I want the piece to tell me where to go, not me imposing my will to it. Simone Weil said something like "when technology takes over, the devil is in."

Another factor that explains my bias towards poverty of materials and processes is that I am pretty much drawn to the Wabi-Sabi esthetic.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the fact that the pages are never glued together — nor the covers in multiple book pieces, I often say that it is against my religion (laughter). I often try to explain to myself why I developed this mystique and why I feel it would be a sacrilege to render the remaining of the book "non-functional." I think it has to do with the power of the metaphor and the phenomenon of "Limen" or liminal zone (Turner). One of the reasons the pieces have such an impact is because they are no-longer-books / not-yet-landscape. Or said otherwise: they are

both and none. If I were to transform them in lumps of wood, then the magic, part of the magic would be gone. There is a mystery in these things that stand in betwixt / in between. The artist's work is to keep that liminal space active as much as possible.

**Is your work meant to engage with the environmental dialogue? Perhaps not necessarily the environmental crisis per se but how humans experience nature today?**

We no longer commune with nature and perhaps we never really did. We commune with our ideas regarding nature, landscape, etc.

What I do is very simple: I try to find my way back to contemplation, that is: a state of being where we experience things first hand, where we become one with the object contemplation. I define Contemplation as a state where the duality between observer/observed is reduced and eventually abolished. And I think that the response of the viewer goes in the same way: a work where the artist lost his/her self in the process is a work that provokes — or has better chances to provoke — the same response in viewers.

It just happened to me that this process of return occurred through landscape. There is no statement there, although experience proved me that if we would dare really looking, I mean REALLY looking around us, whatever the setting in which we happen to find ourselves, we could no longer pursue the process of destruction that has now become the trademark of humankind.

**In your artist's statement you said, "So I carve landscapes out of books and I paint romantic landscapes. Mountains of disused knowledge return to what they really are: mountains." Do you think people might respond to your work differently now than if you had made similar art twenty or thirty years ago, before**

**the Internet made knowledge/information so abundantly available? And what do you mean by "disused knowledge"?**

Your last question first: I used disused knowledge to nail my view about the impermanence of mindscapes. No knowledge is forever, cognitive units become "obsolete" to a process akin to the rise and fall of empires.

Now your first question: do I think that the relevance of my work is related to the zeitgeist? Yes of course, one of the symbolic prongs of my work has to do with the death of the book, the overabundance of information, etc. People now come to realize that "So abundantly available," as you say, means a loss in value.

Just imagine what it meant for a scholar in the nineteenth century, to travel to a distant library — maybe by boat — in order to consult maybe just one book, one rare exemplary of that one book. Imagine the level of attention that that person would get to when she would finally let her hands turn the pages and read the lines. Just imagine!

Last summer I read the autobiography of Benjamin Franklin. Knowledge MEANT something to him because it was so rare. He was the founder of the first public libraries in America, because this is something he and his fellow amateur erudites would do: they would exchange books. It did not really matter what they could get their hand onto. They were curious. And as a consequence, they were true interdisciplinarians. They were making links between very distant cognitive units, links that did not exist in places where knowledge was more abundant and therefore more classified. They invented things because their level of attention was immense!

Abundance lulls, scarcity stimulates. Thoreau knew it, Gandhi knew it, but before

them every mystic did!

So let's watch all this Internet world implode unto itself so that we can start anew (laughter).

Notes:

1. I use the word "window" instead of "comment" on purpose, because I am one of those who do not believe that art is exactly the right tool to comment, to communicate ideas, and so on. To me art is more a communion than a communication.

2. For a description of wabi-sabi, go to <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wabi-sabi>



Guy Laramée, *The Grand Library*, 2012, altered books, pigment, and metal stand, 44 x 21 x 96 inches (cat. no. 22)

CHUN-YI LEE  
[Essay by Kenta Murakami]

*Immense Vista from the Perilous Peak* is a work that sits uncomfortably between Western and Chinese art, unfamiliar yet rational enough within both worlds to feel both conventional and revolutionary. Working in the tradition of Chinese *literati* painters, Chun-yi Lee creates large ink paintings by applying a small cork stamp across a grid. Giving up the brush early in his training, Lee developed this approach to create works that resemble as much the seals affixed to colophons (or commentary) added to traditional Chinese paintings as the actual paintings themselves. From afar the work seems to show traditional subject matter, rendered in respect to convention in a way that might border on the nationalistic, but when viewed up close, the sweeping landscapes dissolve into a fragmented array of meticulous abstraction.

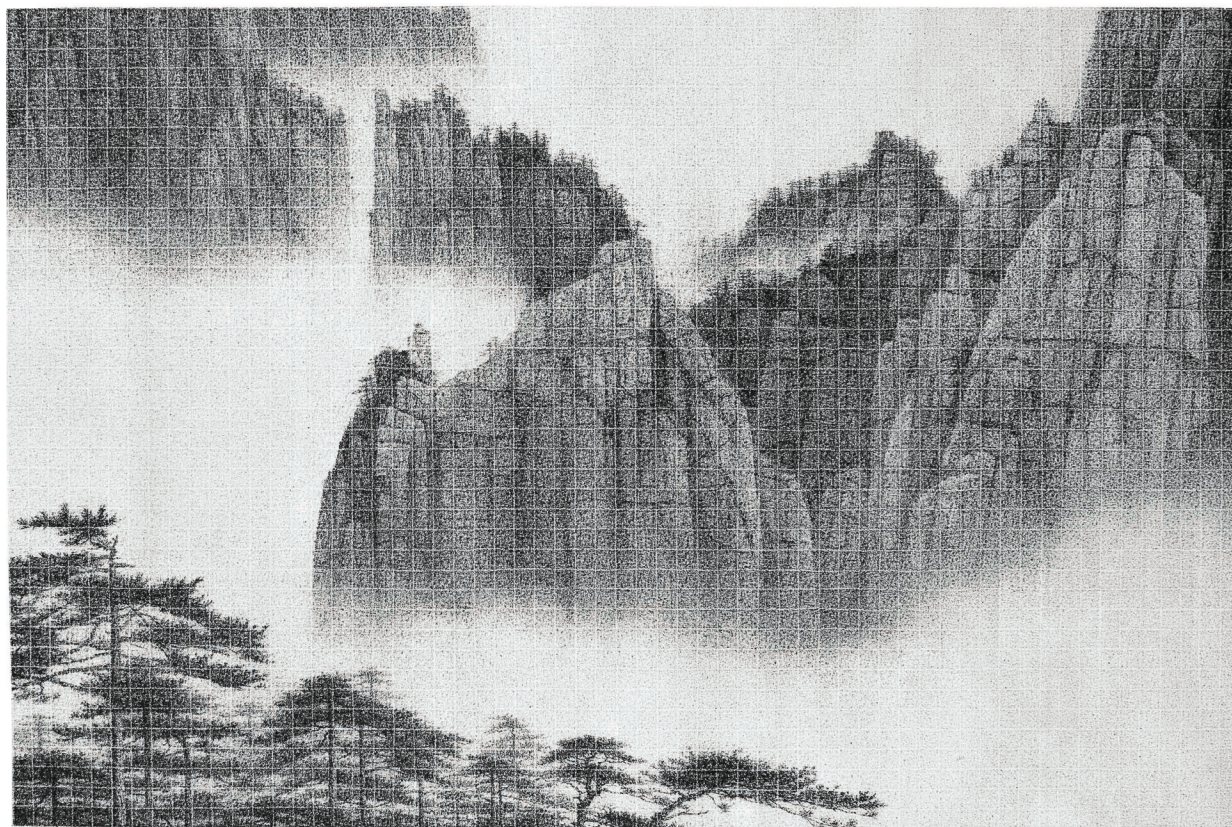
Working with ink and paper, the Chinese *literati*, or scholar-artist, worked outside the established system of patronage to create works that ranged from the subversive to the personal. Their independence from the courts allowed an emphasis on amateurism, creating an environment that valued expression both visually and politically. Working both as painters and scholars simultaneously, the distinction between writing and painting became less and less relevant. Lee's use of the stamp is reminiscent of the seals used by the *literati* to sign commentary or mark ownership on the surface of paintings. The colophons affixed to works were seen as important enough in their later interpretation that they became an essential part of the works themselves. The works are thus seen as a sort of dialogue between multiple authors,

often within both a circle of contemporary scholars and across generations.

With varying levels of opacity, some *literati* were able to conceal criticism of government policies or actions in seemingly innocuous paintings through the subtle use of symbolic representation. Lee's use of the stamp can be seen as alluding to the multi-generational dialogue that exists within traditional paintings, concentrated to the point that the landscape is entirely composed of this history. This connotation is also present in his style's formal similarity to the practice of ink rubbing, which has been used since at least the seventh century to preserve and disseminate historical inscriptions.

Lee's depiction of the landscape is at once ominous and sublime. The work isn't sublime in its expanse, however, but in its detail. The viewer can scan each square of separately applied ink, surveying the variety of tones across rock, mist, and pine trees in a way that is reminiscent of the Western expression "can't see the forest for the trees." Despite functioning within the larger composition, each square retains its individuality, perhaps symbolizing the tension within Chinese society between cultural identity and limitations on free expression.

Within this interpretation the viewer can speculate on the influence of Lee's mentor Liu Guosong, one of the founders of the Fifth Moon Group. Rising to international prominence in the 1960s, the Fifth Moon Group combined Chinese materials and subject matter with a Western mentality towards expression. Like Lee, Liu similarly abandoned the limitations of the brush,



— 51 —

Chun-yi Lee, *Immense Vista from the Perilous Peak*, 2010, ink on paper, 34 x 36 1/2 inches (cat. no. 23)

developing unprecedented methods for applying ink to paper. However, Lee's work does not have the characteristic dynamism of his mentor's abstract expressionist-like works, forgoing the brush for yet another apparatus of tradition. The result is a tight grid that disallows flowing, expressive lines, instead resulting in an additive method of applying ink that creates varying patterns of rich tonality across the page.

In viewing Lee's work I'm reminded of the American artist Chuck Close, whose photorealistic paintings are similarly divided along a tight grid of squares. The American artist's approach has been explained as resulting from an interest in self-imposed limitations, creating a tension between

representation and abstraction, faithfulness to the image and individual creativity. Like Close, Lee's grid both creates and deconstructs his larger images, serving as a site for experimentation as well as organizing the composition as a whole. In *Immense Vista from the Perilous Peak* the grid similarly dissolves the depicted landscape, suggesting a rupture in the perceived unity of China as well as his departure from the history of ink painting.

Note: This essay was informed in part by Chun-yi Lee's Ph.D. dissertation, "The Immortal Brush: Daoism and the Art of Shen Zhou (1427-1509)" (Arizona State University, 2009). Accessed October 30, 2014. <http://gradworks.umi.com/33/85/3385220.html>.

## LINDA LYNCH

[Interview by N. Elizabeth Schlatter]

**Your two drawings in this exhibition refer to Robert Smithson's major Earthwork, *Spiral Jetty* from 1970, in Utah. But whereas Smithson's work appears massive and bound to the earth and sky, your drawings are comprised of line, tone, and the blankness of the page, as if floating. What inspired you to make these drawings?**

Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* has always held a fascination for me, for its perhaps inadvertent beauty. I began doing drawings from it as a meditation, to try to comprehend why I find it compelling.

**These drawings seem very different than some of the other work featured on your website, especially in terms of tonal intensity and contrast. Was there something about the subject matter that engendered a different approach?**

Contemplating the jetty was an entirely different creative process than what normally transpires when I make drawings. The exercise of specifically investigating an existing form, and though monumental, reconsidering it pared down to ink and paper, required a visual intimacy that was a quiet process. I was interested in the spiral as an experience of line, both of the spiral itself and my own line. Because I was referencing photographs and not standing at the jetty, a level of abstraction was more at hand and the conceptual aspect of the work more apparent, yielding a more ephemeral experience of it.

**One of the themes of *Anti-Grand* is considering how the concept of "landscape" is continually re-constructed by artists. With *Spiral Jetty*, Smithson melded the landscape with his art.**

**Your drawings are once-removed from the original source (the jetty), which is likewise a manipulation of its original content and context (the Great Salt Lake). Do you perceive your works as contributing another variation on the long history of landscape in art?**

Yes, landscape and drawing are in a lifelong conversation in my studio. And one has to consider the broad definition of landscape now versus centuries ago. It can hold so many things; for instance, it can be as polarized as the urban to the natural world, or viewed at either the micro or macro level. Landscape holds a defining place as source for my drawings rather than, say, the human figure, or the purely conceptual or purely political. Yet, landscape has shaped human existence — and the human figure — from the beginning on the most material of levels, and does not escape a relationship with concept or politics. I am particularly interested in landscape as identity, how it defines who we are, how the mistaken possession of a given place can form us, and then how our identity can be threatened or destroyed when we lose the landscape that defines us.

**You're from El Paso, Texas, and live in southern New Mexico; are there aspects of the Southwestern landscape that have formed your aesthetic? If so, how do your surroundings affect your work and/or your creative process?**

I was raised on isolated, open rangeland, 90 miles east of El Paso. It is high Chihuahuan desert, austere and arid. A minimal palette occurs under a huge volume of space. The quality of natural silence in this landscape, both auditory and visual, carries over to



Linda Lynch, *Untitled (From Smithson's Jetty)*, 2009,  
ink and gouache on paper, 5 x 21 inches (cat. no. 25)

where I work now in southern New Mexico and engenders a spare view of the world. As a younger artist I found a comfortable home among the Minimalists under whose shadow I studied, but eventually the issues that engaged me required a more specific dialogue with the land, with nature. I became enmeshed in environmental conservation efforts unique to this landscape, including advocating for the protection of ancient playas, salt flats, similar to those in and around *Spiral Jetty*. Sensitivity to the human imprint that can mar and permanently alter the character of such a spare place remains a primary presence in my studio, as well as investigating the definition of beauty and value in relation to landscapes commonly dismissed.

**The context of *Anti-Grand* and the subject of these two drawings lend a topographical slant to your work, a view from above so to speak, much like how *Spiral Jetty* is depicted in photography. Have you ever considered your drawings to have a map-like quality?**

The view from above is the perspective of my drawings related to *Spiral Jetty* because I was contemplating the jetty as line, as human mark in a plane of salt and water. But this is unique to these studies principally because it is the photographs from above the jetty that reveal its drawn, linear character, its line and plane. More typically I consider my drawings suggesting an anthropomorphic relationship, referring to a view from the verticality of a person standing next to or looking across at landscape or elements of landscape. But "map-like" is yet another way we experience landscape because of the age of flight and the commonness of viewing the earth from above. Abstracted as they are, it is conceivable to experience my drawings either from the ground or above, and both would be correct.

**Your drawings possess an incredible, almost calligraphic and narrative use of line and tone, with an amazing interplay of weight and light, form and void, with some resonances with depictions of nature in Chinese art (e.g. *Fish and Rocks* by Bada Shanren, 1699, collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art). But like this seventeenth-century example, your forms are far from descriptive. Do you seek out a similar tension between representation and abstraction in your art?**

This perfect drawing, Bada Shanren's *Fish and Rocks*, is what I would consider a teaching drawing, one that displays a profound understanding of mark and space and the skill to set it down. I consult works like this often for guidance and you have selected one that particularly resonates. He knows that what is commonly referred to as negative space, is not negative. I consider space in drawing a positive element of great importance, of equal import as the mark, that is: positive space. There is no hierarchy between mark and space, nor mark and plane. As the accompanying text suggests [on The Metropolitan Museum's website], Bada Shanren's drawing undermines our mundane orientation to landscape, placing us through displacement. We experience his work as drawing, but also with a vague recognition of landscape. Likewise for me drawing's primacy occurs first, but by way of an echo of its source.

With little to anchor us but just enough reference, drawing can lead us to experience landscape, and therefore ourselves, with unveiled eyes. This is the tension I consider valuable in a given work, my own and others. Rather than seeking narrative or representation, it is to rely on genetic memory.

## TOM McGRATH

[Essay by Kenta Murakami]

Despite the cold wonder found in Tom McGrath's painting of a nondescript roadway, the viewer can't help but feel a sense of *deja vu*. The darkened roads illuminated by headlights, the tired-eyed awe of purple-tinged mountains and rows of trees colored by autumn leaves: these are sights and feelings familiar to anyone who's been on a road trip in the United States. But decontextualized and devoid of cultural landmarks, these random glimpses of unknown cities and towns conjure a liminal non-space in which McGrath captures an uncanny view of the modern landscape.

McGrath's work blends a photorealistic sense of naturalism with a collage-like sensibility for distortion. Using the windshield as a screen, the artist pours water across the glass, allowing the liquid to blur and refract the landscapes behind it. Then, working from photographic sketches, McGrath paints large-scale images that, while appearing to be realistic, actually depict a distortion, and as such, are more accurate in their evocation of memory than in their photographic verity. Taken as a whole, the series *Rain on Windshield* is as much a representation of the landscape as it is a rumination on the way our experience of the landscape is mediated.

Instead of the Hudson River School's sweeping pastorals of agrarian coexistence, McGrath's paintings place the viewer along the inexhaustible grid of freeways and rural roads. Limited to the domesticated space of the car and its immediate peripheries, these landscapes have lost the romanticism evoked by the notion of wilderness, and in their place the viewer finds landscapes that are startling

in their banal familiarity. McGrath is aware of his genre's baggage; the painter-explorer has been replaced with a settler that has settled, and his touristic wanderings have left an array of rest stops and fast food in his wake. Instead of a unique or regional experience, the viewer takes away the quotidian occurrence of being in a car and being on the road. Regarding this series McGrath has said,

*The trope of the road trip provides the notion of driving as a transformative experience, the patronizing conflict with local cultures, the oppositional construction of regional identities and the excitement of not having to commit to local cultures... [Road trips allow the] possibility to play different roles, be different people, shift identities between towns.*<sup>1</sup>

Yet instead of distinct pluralities, both McGrath's viewer-subject and landscapes appear homogenized.

Unlike his series *The High View*, in which the viewer sees the perfectly ordered urban grid from a lookout, in these images the viewer is in the midst of the landscape itself. The perspectival grid is compromised by the rain that pools and streaks across the surface of the painting, emphasizing the way the car window acts as a screen for its occupants. The work is as much about the architecture of our road system as it is about paint, phenomenology, or the weather, but the relationship of the image to the viewer remains fixed and the windshield itself becomes a stand-in for both the viewer and the images viewed through it. Although



Tom McGrath, *Untitled*, 2005, oil on canvas over panel, 56 x 96 inches (cat. no. 27)

physically located at the site (the roadside house, the parking lot, the freeway, etc.), McGrath's implied subjects are removed from their location due to the enclosure of the car, the separation supplied by the windshield, and the suggested movement of being situated within an automobile. The glass of the windshield acts as a rigid skin around the viewer and the exterior of the car clings to it, amorphous and indistinct.

Although McGrath's conflation of the human subject and automobile takes a decisively cooler tone than say that of Filippo Marinetti's *Futurist Manifesto* of 1909, his images do possess a futuristic undertone that is perhaps closer to J.G.

Ballard's infamous novel *Crash*. Although the fetishistic elements are lacking, the distortion rendered on the surface of the paintings creates a similar semiotic slippage between man and machine, the viewer unaware of the cold air just beyond the glass of the car windshield. The painting thus engages the viewer in an unfamiliar way, and despite the sense of immersion found in McGrath's large canvases, the passing landscapes remain purely optical.

1. Tom McGrath as quoted in Robert Hobbs, "Tom McGrath: Landscape Redux," in *Tom McGrath: Paintings 2002-2007* (New York: Zach Feuer Gallery, 2007), 4.

## JESSE McLEAN

[Interview by Kenta Murakami]

**People often talk about the Internet's ambivalence to geography as fulfilling Marshall McLuhan's prophesy of a Global Village. Yet in the video *Climbing*, a hand-shaped cursor pulls itself through a mountain range of seemingly infinite expanse. Also, the flattened perspective of the digitally collaged mountain range creates a persistent anticipation that the cursor's destination is just beyond the screen. Do you think there is a kind of fatigue and banality found in traversing digital spaces?**

I think people can travel quickly on the Internet and consequently get lost easily. You begin with a simple quest or search and end up in the rabbit's rabbit hole, and an hour or more has passed and all you meant to do was respond to an email. The Internet offers so much and I'm happy it exists, but I constantly question the effect it, along with portable technology, is having on people, including myself. It enables a kind of relentless curiosity that is occasionally useful but often meaningless. There is always somewhere to go, something to take in. The endlessness is fantastic and tiring. There is no end, you can just keep going and going, scrolling and clicking. I have an admiration for those people who search deliberately and don't just wander around. But I might be romanticizing a bit, I imagine most people can't help but scroll, the graphic interfaces encourage this kind of experience.

**Cultural theorist Sianne Ngai coined the term "stuplimity," an affect similar to the sublime that is experienced in interaction with finite bits of information in repetition. She suggests that the "stuplime," in confounding our ability to comprehend a vastly extended form, results**

**in a mix of both awe and boredom. Do you think our perception of the world through technological mediation has affected our scope of vision?**

I'm new to the term "stuplimity" but a mix of awe and boredom seems about right for the majority of Internet experience (I write this as someone who is online most of the time). The sublime creates awe and fear because there is this compelling threat of the great unknown. But, despite its endlessness and vast quantities of data, the Internet experience is mostly known, mostly risk-free and readily available. Perhaps more importantly, the design of most web browsers enables a multi-perspective kind of vision that enables an inattentiveness (it also levels banality and extraordinary media). How can I look here and become overtaken by this article/image/whatever when the link for "Child Stars that Grew Up to be Unattractive" is blinking at me on the left? How can I look forward when all the time I'm being tempted to look left, right, up, down, everywhere at once.

**In much of your work text plays an important role. In *Climbing*, however, any sort of narrator is foregone, as if to suggest the perspective in the video is that of the viewer. What led you to leave this particular video narrator-less?**

I tested out different iterations, never with text or voice-over narration, but other audio sources that guided the piece in other directions. Everything seemed to bring the piece down. I work often with collaged sources and concepts, and when you have an idea like this, that is so simple and effective,



Jesse McLean, Still from *Climbing*, 2009, video, 6 minutes (cat. no. 28)

it's hard to just let it be. Not to imply that it wasn't work to put it together, etc. but I had to allow the piece to breath on its own. This piece seems to be one of my more popular ones and I think that is because viewers relate so easily, to the interface, the concept, the little hand striving upwards. If I made it more specific, forced the work to carry more, I believe it would lose that accessibility, which I embraced. This isn't to say I'm not thrilled that you are relating it to the sublime, because I was thinking about strategies used in German Romanticism when I made this piece, so it's nice when that content carries through, too. I do like to play with viewer involvement, often the text is a narrator that is never seen, so the viewer can become that narrator, too. We are watching the hand but we are also the hand. German painters like Caspar David Friedrich did this kind of role-doubling all the time (*rückenfigur* is the painting term, for the compositional device of including a figure with their back facing the viewer) and I am still influenced by this strategy.

**Creating empathy between the viewer and seemingly unrelatable figures is a common theme in your work, and yet in *Climbing* there is no identified figure with which to relate. In your video *Somewhere only we know* you create a sense of empathy between various figures on reality TV and the news through the shared experience of an earthquake. Do you find that the shared experience of navigating interfaces creates a similar sense of empathy?**

I think it creates a bond, something to relate to but I'm not sure empathy is generated by the shared experience of web-surfing. My interest in empathy coincidences with my interest in spectatorship and my work is often navigating the slippery line between the two kinds of responses to media. The difference can be slight and is often poorly delineated

in vast areas such as the Internet and most of mainstream media culture, where you can both participate and observe in equal measure. Commenting on social media sites could possibly be indicative of empathy, though this is not navigating but more of a landing point.

**Throughout *Anti-Grand* is a theme of how artists relate to the landscape as both an experienced space and as a tradition of viewing. The idea of viewership is different in your work since most of your sources are appropriated from mass media. Within this context of digital culture, how do you think viewership of the landscape has changed?**

I think viewership has changed in that everyone is looking down at their portable device and scrolling or clicking and posting immediately into the world. This is one of the more massive changes; people don't look around as much because they have a phone or whatever to look into. You can be somewhere else more easily and always. This ties into the idea that both experienced space and a tradition of viewership has been radically altered. Then again, we've been bringing cameras along for a while to spectacular vistas, and the need to document these places had, arguably, already become paramount to the experience of the present, of being in the place and looking without aid of any device. It's the shareability that is really novel, because now you can see it, too. Right away. And we may never even meet.

JON RAFMAN  
[Essay by Kenta Murakami]

In this image of Potchefstroom, South Africa, the viewer finds him/herself along a long road that stretches towards the horizon with a lone wanderer silhouetted at its side. The sun flares down the center of the frame, the dry heat of the landscape evident; rows of dead grasses and a telephone wire parallel the distance still to be travelled. Despite being pulled from Google Street View, the image has a poetic sensibility that is characteristic of Jon Rafman's work.

Exploring the transitions between haptic and virtual spaces and the intuitiveness with which his viewers move between the two, Rafman's work often begins with ready-made images or 3D-rendered forms that are sourced from the Internet. For the series *9-Eyes*, Rafman and his assistants work in their studio, acting as street photographers but with their content derived from the images found on Google Street View. Despite the unaesthetic gaze of Google's cameras, the artist has amassed a collection of screen captures that are striking in their composition, ephemerality, and poignancy.

Rafman's wanderings, not unlike the wanderings of the Parisian *flâneur* described by Walter Benjamin, present a world littered with people on the margins.<sup>1</sup> Prostitutes, gangsters, and panhandlers find themselves scattered throughout the world's streets while the wealthy are hidden away in office buildings and suburban homes. The subjects Rafman chooses to document are intentional, for he believes that "the more marginal, the more ephemeral the culture is, the more fleeting the object[.]. . . the more it can actually reflect and reveal 'culture at large.'" <sup>2</sup>

In the case of Google this seems to hold true, for the "fleeting" moments of accident, death, and destitution are rendered truly momentary by censorship. Rafman's virtual excursions typically follow the paths of the Street View cars' images as they are posted online, meaning he or his assistants are often the first to see the images (as the photographs are taken by a robotic camera); and, as Google takes down any image that might distract from its product's use, Rafman and his assistants are often of the few that see the images within their original context at all. In this sense Rafman's work functions as a sort of archive, a documentation of hyper-temporal privately produced cultural objects that are valued for their rapid obsolescence.<sup>3</sup>

Not unlike the tradition of street photographers before him, Rafman seeks what Henri Cartier-Bresson titled the "decisive moment." But unlike the "father of photojournalism," the compositions Rafman captures don't exist for a fraction of a second.<sup>4</sup> They exist in a slowly refreshed world of mechanically captured still images, a seamlessly stitched panorama that exists publically for anyone with Internet access to utilize. The actual "photographer" of the images was not directed by an artistic gaze, creating a sense of happenstance to the images Rafman archives that only elevates their aesthetic aura.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps it is this contrast between Google's indifferent gaze and the gaze of Rafman that is most striking about this image. At once we find three different kinds of wanderers: the very human figure in the frame, moving humbly through the landscape; the



Jon Rafman, *Potchefstroom* South Africa, 2012, archival pigment print mounted on dibond, 40 x 64 inches (cat. no. 29)

cold, apathetic eye of the Google camera, tirelessly mapping the world over infinitely; and Rafman, who moves through this virtual realm with an empathetic gaze. The long, unbending road acts as a Romantic trope; yet, how quickly it is traversed by automobile. How quickly this figure is left behind, his face captured and blurred just moments later as he looks up, perhaps imagining how nice it'd be to get a ride. The disparity between Google and those being mapped is made evident, problematizing the amount of power that has been concentrated in one hand.

In speaking of his series, Rafman has said that the "Street View" collections represent our experience of the modern world, and in particular, the tension they express between our uncaring, indifferent universe and our search for connectedness and significance."<sup>6</sup> From the set positioning of the Google camera each image has the feeling of a memory. As the viewer we become entangled in the virtual realm before us, wondering if we've stumbled upon this image before, or if it perhaps looks like a space we've been to in real life. Regardless, Rafman's images situate us both within this world and without, our perspective becoming confused between that of our own and that of Google's all-seeing eye.

Note: This essay has been adapted from an expanded version by Kenta Murakami, "Jon Rafman: Experiencing the Sublime in Google Street View," originally published by the online journal *Digital America*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Fall 2014).

#### Notes:

1. Maren Harmann, *Technologies and Utopias: The Cyberflauner and the Experience of "Being Online"* (Berlin: Nomos Publishers, 2001).
2. Stephen Froese and Jon Rafman, "Jon Rafman." *Pin-UP: Magazine for Architectural Entertainment: Pin-Up* (2014): 84-95.
3. Mana, Galit. "Jon Rafman." Review of *Jon Rafman* at Seventeen Gallery, London. *Frieze Magazine*, September 2013. Accessed October 29, 2014. <http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/jon-rafman/>
4. Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment: Photography by Henri Cartier-Bresson* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952).
5. Willy Staley, "Poaching Memories from Google's Wandering Eye." *The 6th Floor: Eavesdropping on the Times Magazine Blog*, December 16, 2013, [http://6thfloor.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/12/16/poaching-memories-from-googles-wandering-eye/?\\_php=true&\\_type=blogs&\\_r=0](http://6thfloor.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/12/16/poaching-memories-from-googles-wandering-eye/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0)
6. Jon Rafman, "IMG MGMT: The Nine Eyes of Google Street View." *ArtFCity Blog*, August 12, 2009, <http://artfcity.com/2009/08/12/img-mgmt-the-nine-eyes-of-google-street-view/>

## GERCO DE RUIJTER

[Interview by Kelly Gordon]

**When I came across *CROPS* at the Rotterdam International Film Festival, I immediately scrambled to track down the director. This work has an abstract discipline that links it to Constructivist strategies, as well as wondrous tonalities that make it impossible to grasp exactly how it was created. Moreover it evoked a compulsion to watch it again and again. Whether as an installation or theatre-shown film, Gerco de Ruijter's short is a masterwork that proves the continuing power of landscape to inspire artistic invention. What follows is an exchange with the artist.**

**How did you first discover the look and location of these circular, auto-irrigated American agricultural techniques?**

This was on my first visit to the U.S. in 1993. I must have seen these circular pivot fields before, as photographs in books, but in 1993 I saw them with my own eyes in Farmington, New Mexico.

**Were you drawn to the abstraction created by the bird's eye viewpoint? Or the phenomenon of scale and proliferation? Or the technology for making arid land useful for cultivation?**

I was drawn to them by their minimal, yet, hard edged abstraction: the brown desert landscape and floating in it these bright green color "patches."

**What surprised you most when you visited the locations and what surprised you most when you collected the images and saw them all together?**

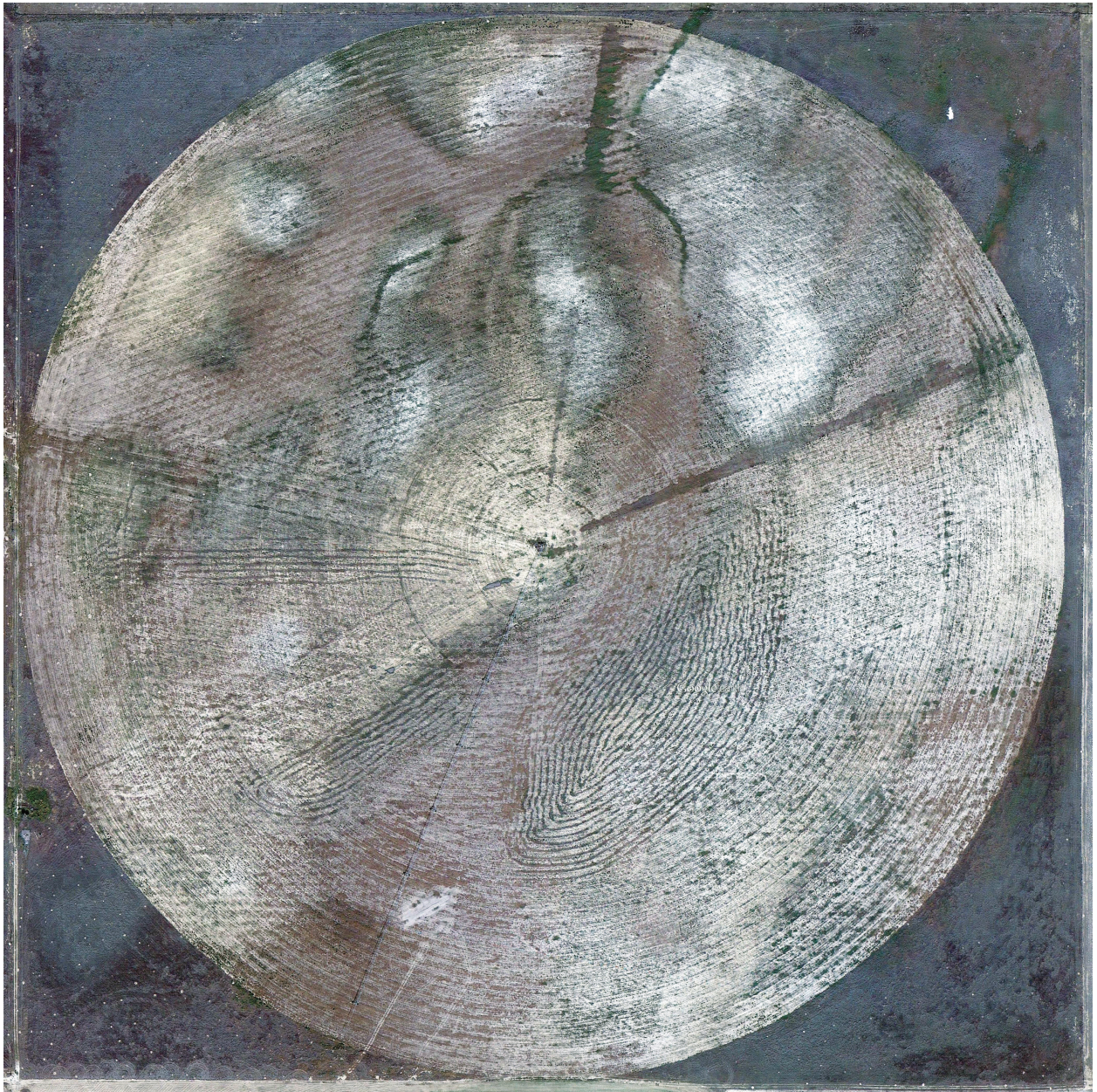
From the ground, standing between these circles, you barely notice the circular shape. They are just too big. It looks like boring

agricultural land, the same as the rectangular wheat and potato fields elsewhere in Europe, only bigger. The surprise is that the "magic" only happens while seeing them from space. From Google Earth the scale of the fields has been brought down and at the same time the human remnants, the "John Deere" machinery is erased in this (perspective-driven) quantum leap. . .

**Was *CROPS* constructed with a kind of stop-motion animation process? Had you worked this way before? The still-frame contact sheet that is the "key" to the project reveals the course of the clock-like movement of the irrigation "arms." Since it is both an actual and analogous reference to time, what are you suggesting — something specific or open ended?**

Yes, the film is made with stop-motion animation software. I was collecting the images in Google Earth and made screenshots. The image quality of these screenshots looks great on a computer screen but if you want to print it they lack a lot of information. I knew that for a HD-film you only need 1080 x 720 pixels and the screenshots were very close to that pixel ratio. That's why I decided to use film instead of still photography.

*CROPS* is my first stop-motion film. The clock-like movement was made as a formal sequence of images, relating to the movement of a "real" circular irrigation arm. Once I had a collection of 2000 images I started to make sub-collections in shifting colors (from dry to wet) or recently harvested fields. These sub-collections ended up as parts of the animation in the film. The clockwise movement marks my control as an



Gerco de Ruijter, Still from *CROPS*, 2012, video, 3:30 minutes (cat. no. 30)

editor of all the imagery — it is not a random collection after all.

**Is, then, this clock-like movement mostly an aesthetic device to add a different dimension of movement and an allusion to the passage of time inherent in moving image art work?**

Yes! *CROPS* is an abstract film without a narrative, so, in showing the passage of time (which is inherent to film) I made an edit choice without getting into story telling.

**At what point in the project did you determine the background should be dark and the circle would "sit" in a kind of square?**

I started out having the circles cropped into the square grid. After I saved all the images as screenshots in G.E. I selected a square-cropping tool in Photoshop and centered it in the middle of each circle. That is why all the circles are exactly placed in the middle. The square grid is a fact. It is the grid made by the public land survey system to make the land accessible.

In my photography I have been using this square format regularly: It has no up or down, there is no portrait or landscape "position." It gives you the opportunity to rotate and mirror an image in steps of 90 degrees (which I did for *CROPS* as well: I could re-use one image two or three times).

**What were your concerns in determining the work should not be silent and what did you want the score to underscore?**

On a previous film (*Letting Go*, a film made from the vantage point of a flying pigeon) I had worked with Michel Banabila. At that time I was also working on *CROPS* and I showed him some of the sequences. He got very excited and said he wanted to work on *CROPS* as well. It is the mix of the natural born sounds — dripping water, folding

newspapers. The electronic "space" sounds highlight the abstraction of the film. With the sound added you just HAVE to look, there is no escape.

**You have a body of signature work in photography that is well known for sky views that abstract the earth below. Could you describe the devices you have used to get these images?**

I have been using kites, balloons, and fishing rods. I think I like the simplicity of these things.

**Should we assume you are updating the tradition of experimentation and innovation that has been central in Dutch landscape since the 17th century OR should we consider your work in the context of a Citizen of the World with a perspective, widening daily thanks to Internet connectivity? Or both?**

Oef, difficult question Kelly! I think the rigid framework for *CROPS* is part of a Dutch tradition. Making new land, Polders, making it accessible — that is also part of the Mid-West "grid" history. Perhaps that is why these center pivots got my attention in the first place.

**What is the relationship of *CROPS* to what you are working on now?**

I am still working on *Center Pivots* because I want to add another work to it (*CROPS*). There is the film, there are some "stills" from the different sequences, and now I want to add a three-dimensional work to it. It is supposed to be a Zoetrope-like installation of a 360 degree rotation. A circle of images covering a whole day, from dusk till dawn, hanging from the ceiling in an exhibition space.

[Note: This interview is presented in edited form, see the online catalogue at [www.antigrand.com](http://www.antigrand.com) for the full version.]

## JON-PHILLIP SHERIDAN

[Interview by Kenta Murakami]

**The works in *Anti-Grand* are from your series *Residual*, which is comprised of various photographs of landscapes taken at night. Through using a long exposure you're able to photograph the night in a very ambient way, allowing both natural and artificial light to mix, capturing something the human eye is incapable of seeing. What drew you to using this technique while photographing landscapes?**

I hate these kind of answers, but it really goes back to childhood and staring out the window on long night drives and watching the spaces between the highways and the world beyond, or train trips, trains go through these kind of strange non-spaces. There has always been a fascination to be in spaces that are outside of normal space, outside of a normal sense of time, or some sense of being in a different dimension of reality. Outside looking in. . . like being on a space station (or more being in your space suit floating) in the quiet void looking down on earth, or living inside of a mirror looking into the real world. Also, the aesthetics of science fiction movies like "2001," "Blade Runner," and the first two "Alien" movies had a huge impact on my early aesthetics. I still love science fiction, the best sci-fi for me always has components of speculative architecture. But in general the aesthetics of cinema is a huge influence on this work. I talk about these pictures being empty sound stages, or the light being readymade cinematic light.

**Much of your work deals with the illusionism of photography and an interest in the surface of an image. Is there something about the illusionism found in representations of landscapes that interests you?**

Yes, I am completely fascinated with the granular detail captured by large format photo. . . that you can dwell on a picture over an extend time and take in much more "facts" than you could if you were experiencing it directly. But the paradox is that photography, even large format, always obscures way more than it reveals. Just the nature of framing, of cropping with the camera, you are taking your subject out of its larger context, you are also taking away sound, smell, the feeling of humidity. Then there is time of exposure. I tell my students that photography is rooted in fact but it is like looking at the world through a slit that is as thin as a strand of hair. . . it's hard to tell what is really happening when your perspective is that thin. Because of this, photography is innately strange, I obviously leverage that strangeness. I also love that strange effect of the photographic print; the illusion of depth that is embedded in the surface of paper, so you shift between looking at to looking in. Talbot called the photograph the mirror with memory. But this question was really about all of this in relation to landscape. So, the short answer is that most of my landscapes are created to give the impression of an interior space (echoing the function of pictures), that you are looking into an environment. I usually do not do expansive space, I do framed space, and the formal elements of the picture are structured from the frame inward. So, I am thinking about picture space.

**Although this series sits comfortably in the landscape genre, some of your other work blurs the line between landscape and still life photography. Do you think about the two**

**genres separately, and if so, how do they function for you differently?**

Well, I love that the early modernists were able to use still life as a site for their explorations because it was a low genre at that time — it didn't have the weight and import of history painting, which I believe included epic landscapes — the stakes were low, so they could totally mess up painting! Of course the later modernists returned back to epic form. . . there's a lot to talk about there. . . but once I started working in the studio I was immediately and instinctually creating things that looked like topographies or landscapes. So in a way they are dioramas, I suppose. . . there's the connection! I don't know if I ever think of things separately in the way this question is framed. I get really excited when I can say, "thing A looks completely different than thing B, but look it's actually connected!"

**Last spring, photographer Latoya Ruby Frazier gave a lecture at VCU in which she talked about the ways landscapes, still lifes, and portraits can all act as stand-ins for one another. Do you think that there is a form of a portrait found in an image of a man-altered landscape (or vice versa)?**

Yes, I agree with all of that. I mean it's by no means one to one, so it's subject to interpretation and contemplation. But behavior scientists are also proving it. They can go into someone's house and tell their political leanings, granular details about personality type by how a person's living space is organized, by the clutter or lack of clutter. The way we organize the spaces around us, be they interior spaces, bookshelves, or landscapes are indexes — these things are our shadows. Shadows are actually a great metaphor for this, because shadows also get distorted by what they are

cast onto, the size and intensity of the light source. So though a shadow gives us a good idea of the nature of a thing, we should be careful to interpret too much from it.

**In almost all your work you transform familiar, even banal materials or spaces into abstract or surreal images. Is familiarity something you seek in your subjects?**

Making normal things strange and uncanny is photography's main jam, so I think those who want to do that are attracted to the many types of photography. Imbuing something banal with the force of catching someone's imagination is an obvious goal.

**In much of your work the folds and creases made in paper and the shattered shards of broken mirrors create abstract landscapes when captured by a large-format camera. The marks made on these objects suggest a sort of visible history present within the objects photographed. Do you think history is similarly visible within the landscape?**

Yes. Here Robert Smithson is a huge influence. He used the process of erosion and sedimentation as a metaphor for memory and the growth of the subjective. When I first read him as an undergrad, light bulbs were turned on like fireworks. But I also am very attracted to landscapes that have eradicated the histories before them. This is suburban sprawl, right? But as Smithson pointed out entropy happens. So, these smooth concrete spaces start to break down and record their own histories, Smithson called this the ruins in reverse.

Note: See cover and *frontispiece* for illustration of Jon-Phillip Sheridan, *Residual #10, Winter*, 2003, chromogenic print on aluminum, 24 x 21 inches

# FIELDS OF PLAY: LANDSCAPES IN VIDEO GAMES

[Essay by Will Blanton]

The backgrounds and landscapes of video games have been of varied detail and importance since the inception of video games. In the beginning, black and white graphics and limited technology allowed our imaginations to run wild with fantasies of space battles near the end of the space age by adding a few white pixels to a black screen. Since then, these backdrops have fulfilled many roles — vivid decorations, silent storytellers, and with the advent of 3D gaming, alluring destinations that incite adventure. The landscapes in video games are so ubiquitous and assumed that the omission or obfuscation of them can craft a tantalizing atmosphere for players.

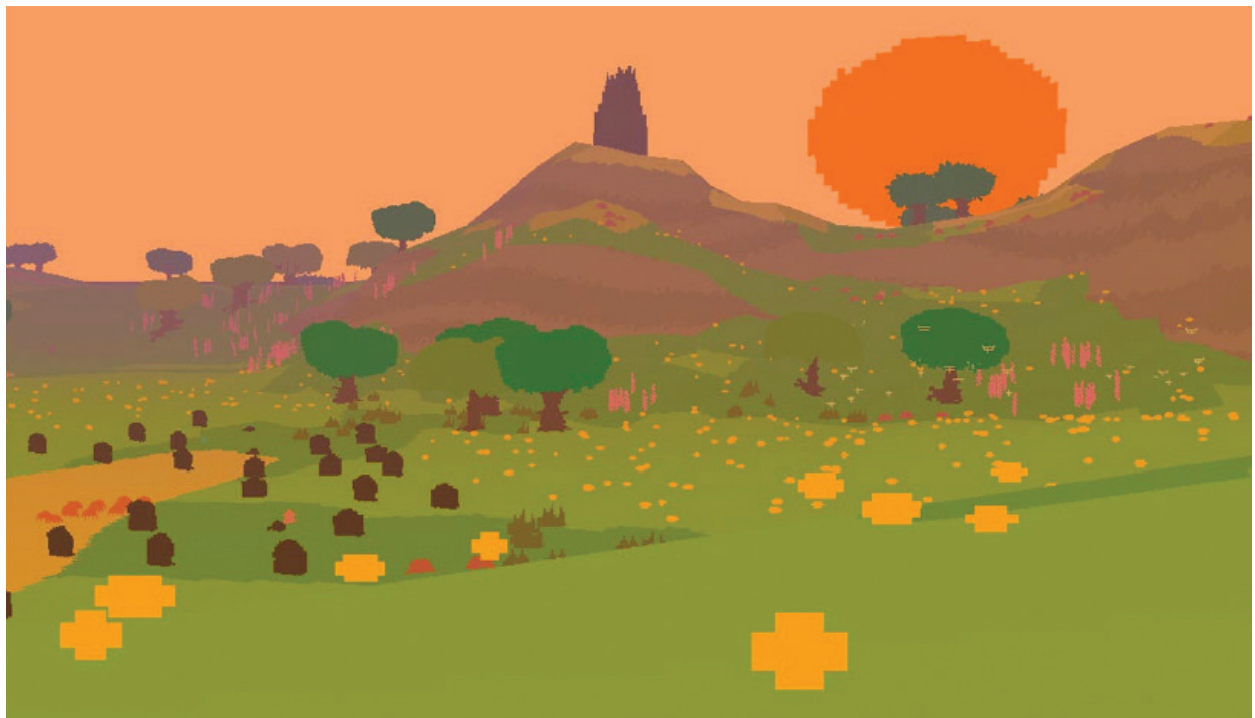
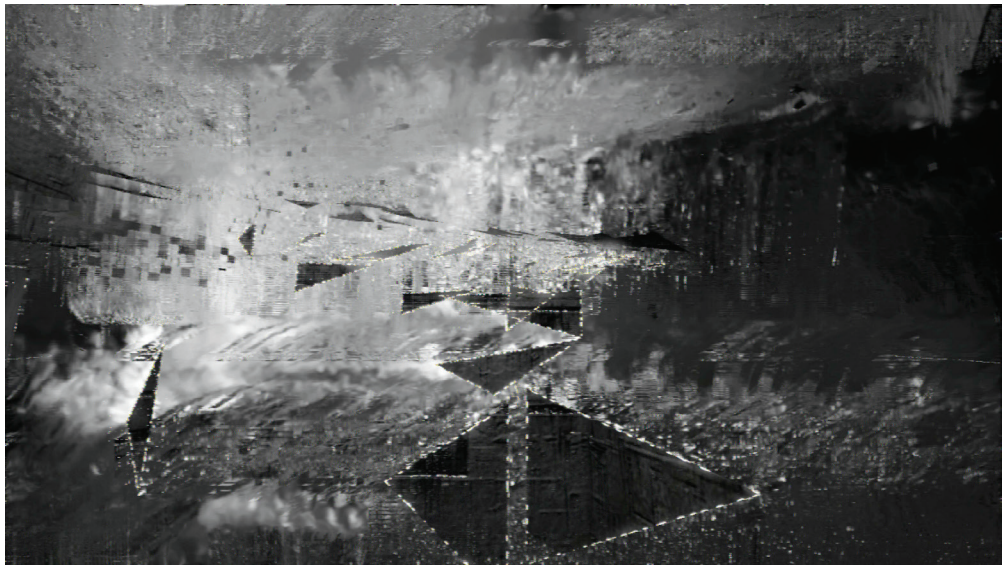
Game developers work with artists to create backgrounds that interact with the gameplay, herding the player to the next objective with carefully crafted topology. Different backgrounds can be contrasted with one another in different stages of the game to provoke emotions and agency in a player, or can utilize sameness to clue players into using tricks and items learned and procured in a similar area previously. Developers can create maps using procedural rules and algorithms that produce varying worlds to explore with every playthrough, giving players entirely unique but relatable experiences.

Video games as an artistic medium are home to several unique characteristics. The inclusion of the player alone gives a game developer an interesting challenge: What can we do to subvert player expectations to make a game unique while also accommodating their predilections established by experiences in other games to make a game accessible

and engaging? A certain language of play has evolved in video games, a commonality shared between popular games and their predecessors that allow more experienced gamers to pick up a controller and already understand what to expect from a game. Gameplay is also tested by hundreds of corporations on thousands of people to maximize accessibility to new players. These established memes can be exploited or subverted by developers to craft new experiences. For example, a game might disrupt a player's expectations with an unfamiliar environment, but compliment their experience by adopting a more ordinary control scheme. The games chosen for *Anti-Grand* create enticing experiences for seasoned players as well as novice audiences by using commonalities expected by the player along with innovative mechanics and graphics that might topple their presumptions.

Video games will usually present a static environment to explore intuitively, where the rules of the game are predicated on the playfield remaining still and solid. *Memory of a Broken Dimension* (MOABD) by developer Ezra Hanson-White features landscapes that appear fractured and distorted. The shifting walls and crackling digital landscapes present a dynamic, disorienting, and fluid environment. The player investigates these unnerving digital landscapes in what Hanson-White describes as an aesthetic exploration, reaching nodes and aligning the camera to recover the environment to a more friendly, traversable one. This process is one that most players are familiar with: engaging the game world, looking for clues, items,

Ezra Hanson-White  
(XRA), Still from  
*Memory of a Broken  
Dimension*, 2014,  
computer game  
(cat. no. 14)



Ed Key, with David Kanaga, composer, Still from  
*Proteus*, 2013, videogame (cat. no. 21)

and doorways to progress in the game, but the game communicates with players in an almost completely unintelligible dialect. The playfield seems menacing, unwelcoming, and hostile; there doesn't seem to be anything the player is capable of aside from wandering lost in a deteriorated digital environment. In fact, Hanson-White wants the levels to reflect data transmissions that have been corrupted, and the player's goal is to restore the data. He lists things like deteriorated copy-of-a-copy VHS cassettes, hyper-compressed audio and video, and buffering artifacts on streaming video as inspirations for the game's peculiar aesthetic, and likens the experience to learning DOS and using old computers as a child.

Many video games create player agency by telling a story, giving instructions, and rewarding player actions with in-game items or a progression of levels or goals. In *Proteus*, by developer Ed Key, the player must create their own agency within a serene landscape saturated with vivid colors and a lush soundscape by composer David Kanaga. The pace of player exploration is set by a movement speed that could be compared to a brisk walk. This is in contrast with many other 3D games in which the player is usually in a state of either running or sprinting. Visiting *Proteus* feels like a dream state: hills and mountains rise up above groves of unknown trees, small animals of unknown origin skitter about and flee from the player, and strange structures and humanoid figures dot the landscape, adding an ominous presence to the captivating world that surrounds the player. More interestingly, the world is generated procedurally, using a set of rules to propagate the playfield with unique topography, flora, fauna, and other intriguing objects. This method of level generation, popularized by recent popular games such as *Minecraft* and *The Binding*

*of Isaac*, allows for an unlimited amount of content to be created by an individual artist or small team of creators. Once created, the world is set in motion — trees shed their leaves, storm clouds creep over the land pouring rain, the sun and moon rise and set in procession, stars and meteors decorate the night sky. It's a calming and enchanted experience in a medium that is pervaded by sensory overload, violence, and immediacy.

*Proteus'* rich and warm landscapes are turned into a more eerie setting in *Purgateus*, a mod of *Proteus* by Devine Lu Linvega. Modding is an extension of remix culture, which has existed in gaming for decades and is comparable to the remixing of pre-existing pieces of music. Modders take games and modify them, completely overhauling the assets of the game, changing the gameplay of the game, or any combination of the two. Many of today's most popular games began life as mods — Valve's *Team Fortress* franchise began as a mod of *Quake*, a zombie survival game *DayZ* began as a mod of the military simulation game *Arma II*. Spurred by a conversation about a dark *Proteus*, Devine replaced many of the assets of the original game with more sinister ones to create *Purgateus*. The gameplay and pacing are still very similar to *Proteus*, but the effect of the menacing atmosphere shifts the experience into one of dread and apprehension. The player feels like they're no longer exploring a dream world, but trespassing in some forbidden space.

In third-person and 2D video games, all of the gameplay, characters, and objects in the game are presented in the context that the background provides. In first-person video games in which the player shares the same viewpoint as the main character, the background is given more screentime than any other entity in the game. Considering the omnipresence of backgrounds in video

games, it is refreshing to enjoy worlds where landscapes not only provide the boundaries of play, but engage the player in meaningful ways. With increasing computer power available to developers and players, the ways backgrounds are created and the ways they interact with the player are becoming as rich and varied as the imaginations of both artist and audience.



Devine Lu Linvega, Still from *Purgateus*, 2014, videogame (cat. no. 24)

## BIOGRAPHIES OF THE ARTISTS

**Vaughn Bell** (American, born 1978) creates interactive projects and immersive environments that deal with how we relate to our environment. She has exhibited her sculpture, installation, performance, video, and public projects internationally. Recently she has created commissions for the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art and for the Edith Russ Site for new Media Art in Oldenburg, Germany. Her work has been featured in *Artnews*, *Afterimage*, and *Arcade Journal*, among others. She received her M.F.A. from the Studio for Inter-related Media at Massachusetts College of Art in Boston, her M.A. and her undergraduate degree from Boston University. She is currently based in Seattle. <http://www.vaughnbell.net/>

**Justin Berry** (American, born 1980) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. His work has been exhibited at Interstate Projects in New York, The Pigeon Wing and the Deptford X festival in London, G-Module in Paris, Devening Projects and Rowland Contemporary in Chicago, Barbara Davis Gallery in Houston, and various other venues. From 2007-2008 he was the co-director of the artist-run curatorial space Alogon, in Chicago, IL. Currently he is also a member of gallery collective Essex Flowers. <http://thisisntme.com/>

**Doug Beube** (Canadian, born 1950) is a mixed-media artist who works in collage, installation, sculpture and photography. His monograph about his artwork, *Doug Beube: Breaking the Codex* was published in 2011 under his imprint, Etc. Etc. The Iconoclastic

Museum. He is an independent curator as well as curator of a private collection entitled, *The Book Under Pressure*, for Allan Chasanoff in New York City. His collection of bookwork is now part of the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven, CT. Doug teaches classes in artists' books, mixed media, and photography and is invited to lecture at universities and art programs around the world. He exhibits both nationally and internationally and his bookwork and photographs are in numerous private and public collections. <http://dougbeube.com/> and <http://www.jhbgallery.com/>

**Elisheva Biernoff** (American, born 1980) creates work that is about searching and paying attention to things that escape notice. She employs many media — small paintings, collages, sculptures and large-scale installations — to register things that are lost, distant, or overlooked. She received her B.A. in Art from Yale University and her M.F.A. from California College of the Arts. A recipient of the Murphy and Cadogan Fellowship and the Kala Art Institute Fellowship, Biernoff has shown in California at the Contemporary Jewish Museum, Asian Art Museum, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, and di Rosa, and is currently included in an exhibition at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, AR. She lives and works in San Francisco. <http://elishevabiernoff.com/>

**Martín Bonadeo** (Argentinian, born 1975) is a professor in the Latin American Studies Program at the Universidad Católica

de Argentina in Buenos Aires. He has a doctorate in Social Communication, and his thesis was on the topic of human olfactory communication. From 2000 he started developing art projects and studying art theory with Fabiana Barreda and Mónica Girón. Since 2001 he exhibited more than 30 site-specific installations for different galleries and cultural centers of several cities around the world. During 2004 he won a one-year grant for a post-doc visiting scholar position at the Hypermedia Studio, UCLA, U.S.A. where he studied relations between art, science, and technology. <http://www.martinbonadeo.com.ar/>

**Matthew Brandt** (American, born 1982) received his B.F.A. from Cooper Union and M.F.A. from UCLA. He's had several one-person exhibitions, including most recently at the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art, Virginia Beach; SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA; and M+B Gallery, Los Angeles. His work has been included in numerous national and international exhibitions and in the permanent collections of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; and the Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen, Denmark, among many others. <http://www.matthewbrandt.com/>

**Adam Cvijanovic** (American, born 1960) has had one-person exhibitions at the UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA; Postmasters, New York, NY; and Buffalo Art Gallery Center for the Arts, NY, among others. His work has been included in numerous group exhibitions, including Prospect.1, New Orleans Biennial; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Tate Liverpool, UK; and Mass MOCA, North

Adams, MA. He has received a fellowship from the Art Production Fund and The Lawrence Rockefeller Foundation, as well as a grant from the Fondation Claude Monet, Giverny, France. <http://www.postmastersart.com/>

**Katrín Elvarsdóttir** (Icelandic, born 1964) received a B.F.A. from the Art Institute of Boston, Massachusetts, in 1993. She also holds a B.A. in French from the University of Iceland. Her photographs have been shown in group exhibitions around the world and she has held one-person exhibitions in Iceland, Denmark, and the U.S.A. Her monographs *Equivocal* and *Vanished Summer* were published in 2011 and 2013, respectively, by Iceland's foremost art book publisher, Crymogea. <http://www.katrinelvarsdottir.com/>

Founded in 2006 and based in Berlin and Milan, **Flatform** is a media arts collective that creates time-based works, film events, and installations, much of which revolve around landscape and biopolitics. Their work has been shown in many exhibitions at museums and institutions including, among others, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio; the Centre Pompidou in Paris, France; the Garage Center for Contemporary Culture in Moscow, Russia; and Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB), Spain. <http://www.vdb.org/artists/flatform>

**Ezra Hanson-White (XRA)** (American, born 1982) is an artist / game designer who resides in Seattle, Washington. After a decade working in the commercial video game industry, he has since splintered off to help further map the unexplored niches beyond the borders of mass-appeal. Focusing on

crafting heavily atmospheric and abrasive interactive experiences, he is inspired by the heaps of information transferred in this digital age. His current project presents disjointed landscapes and nonsensical megastructures, built from fragments of compressed sensory information, like wandering through a heavy data stream downpour. <http://www.brokendimension.com/>

Born in Los Angeles, **Kristin Holder** (American, born 1973) grew up in rural northeastern Washington state. In 1991 she briefly lived and worked in Alaska before moving to Seattle to attend the University of Washington to study medicine and art. In the late 1990s, Holder moved to the East coast. She received an M.F.A. from The American University, taught at the University of Maryland at College Park, and continues to exhibit at Gallery Joe in Philadelphia. Her drawings are included in several public and private collections. She lives and works in Austin, TX. <http://www.galleryjoe.com/artists/holderk>

The **Institute of Critical Zoologists** (ICZ) aims to develop a critical approach to the zoological gaze, or how humans view animals. Robert Zhao Renhui (Singaporean, born 1983) has tied much of his work to the Institute. He received a B.A. in Photography from Camberwell College of Arts in London, and an M.A. in Photography from London College of Communication. He has exhibited internationally in one-person and group exhibitions, including at the *Busan Biennale* (2014), the *Daegu Photo Biennale* (2014), the *Singapore Biennale* (2013), the Centre for Contemporary Art, Singapore (2013), *Format Festival* (Derby, UK, 2013), GoEun Museum of Photography (Busan, Korea, 2013), Zabłudowicz Collection (London, 2012), *Shanghart* (Shanghai, 2012), and PPOW (New

York, 2012). <http://www.criticalzoologists.org/>

**Patrick Jacobs** (American, born 1971) received a B.F.A./B.A. from the University of West Florida and an M.F.A. from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His work has been included in numerous one-person and group exhibitions including at Pierogi Gallery, Brooklyn, NY; The Centro di Cultura Contemporanea Strozzi, Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, Italy; MEM Gallery, Osaka, Japan; White Columns, New York, NY; Wave Hill, Bronx, NY, among others. He has been the recipient of several grants and residencies, including the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and Bad Wiessee, Munich, Germany. <http://www.patrickjacobs.info>

**David Kanaga** (American) is a composer and improviser of linear and interactive music, interested in game systems as musical play spaces. He created the music for the acclaimed DYAD, a psychedelic tunnel-racing game for PS3 and is collaborating with Fernando Ramallo on the music-and-landscape exploration Panoramic. He lives in Oakland, CA. <http://davidkanaga.bandcamp.com/>

**Kim Kever** (American, born 1955) creates otherworldly, landscape photographs by meticulously constructing miniature topographies submerged in water, within a 200-gallon aquarium. His dioramas of fabricated environments are brought to life with colored lights and the dispersal of liquid pigment, producing ephemeral atmospheres that Kever must quickly capture with his large-format camera. His work is included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, NY, and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC, among

others. Kever lives in New York City, and has exhibited extensively throughout the United States and abroad. <http://kimkeever.com/> and <http://www.adamsongallery.com/>

**Ed Key** (British, born 1977) worked in the commercial games industry for several years before quitting due to a mixture of circumstance and mild disillusionment. *Proteus* is his first released independent game. Growing up looking out on the hills of the English Lake District, wandering comes naturally to him. *Proteus* was written while living away from the Lake District, perhaps as a manifestation of those memories. <http://www.visitproteus.com>

In the course of the past thirty years of practice, interdisciplinary artist **Guy Laramée** (Canadian, born 1957) has created in such varied and numerous disciplines as theatre writing and directing, contemporary music composition, musical instrument design and building, singing, video, scenography, sculpture, installation, painting, and literature. He has received more than thirty arts grants and was awarded the Canada Council's Joseph S. Stauffer award for musical composition. His work has been presented in the United States, Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, Japan, and Latin America. <http://www.guylaramée.com/> and <http://www.jhbgallery.com/> and <http://anobiumlit.com/2012/04/18/interview-with-guy-laramée-artist-part-1/>

**Chun-yi Lee** (Chinese, born Taiwan, 1965) graduated from the Chinese University of Hong Kong with first class honors and obtained his M.F.A. from the Graduate School of Fine Arts of Tunghai University and his Ph.D. in Chinese art history from the Arizona State University. His work has been exhibited in over 100 group exhibitions

locally and internationally, and his works are in the collections of the Hong Kong Museum of Art, Jiangsu Art Museum, Qingdao Art Museum, Ashmolean Museum of Oxford University, Arthur M. Sackler Museum of Harvard University, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, and Phoenix Art Museum, AZ. As an academic he has been invited to deliver papers at various symposia on modern Chinese art, including at Cornell University, Harvard University, and Phoenix Art Museum.

**Devine Lu Linvega** originally started the Aliceffekt project to create soundscapes to complement his illustrations and games. He has since then produced a wide variety of tracks, ranging from IDM, noise, industrial, and ambient — as well as music for interactive installations. <http://wiki.xxiivv.com/>

**Linda Lynch** (American, born 1958) lives and works in southern New Mexico on the US/Mexico border. She received her B.F.A. from the San Francisco Art Institute and subsequently spent years in New York City and Africa. Her work is in numerous private and public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art and the Brooklyn Museum, both in New York; Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, MA; the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, TX, and The Menil Collection, also in Houston, TX. She has exhibited widely including, most recently, The Columbus Museum, Columbus, GA; the Katonah Museum of Art, NY; Betty Moody Gallery, Houston, TX; and the El Paso Museum of Art, El Paso, TX.

**Tom McGrath** (American, born 1978) is a New York artist who paints a transient image. He has exhibited in New York and internationally since 2002. Recent one-person exhibitions have been organized by

Sue Scott Gallery, New York; the Maruani-Noirhomme, Knokke, Belgium; and Lia Rumma, Naples, Italy. His work is in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Yale University Art Gallery, and The Wadsworth Atheneum, among others. McGrath holds degrees from Cooper Union and Columbia University School of the Arts. [www.tom-mcgrath.com](http://www.tom-mcgrath.com)

**Jesse McLean** (American, born 1975) is a media artist whose research is motivated by a deep curiosity about human behavior and relationships, and is concerned with both the power and the failure of the mediated experience to bring people together. She has presented her work at museums, galleries, and film festivals worldwide, including the International Film Festival Rotterdam, the Netherlands; Rome Film Festival and Venice Film Festival, both Italy; *Transmediale*, Berlin; Garage Center for Contemporary Culture, Moscow; Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis; Interstate Projects, PPOW Gallery, both New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit; Gallery 400, Three Walls, both Chicago; and Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, among others. <http://jessemclean.com/>

**Jon Rafman** (Canadian, born 1981) is an artist and filmmaker whose work examines the effects of contemporary technology, particularly on interpersonal relationships. Recent one-person exhibitions were organized by the Contemporary Art Museum St Louis, Saatchi Gallery, London, the New Museum, NY, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, and Zach Feuer Gallery, New York. He received his B.A. from McGill University and M.F.A. from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. <http://jonrafman.com/> and <http://www.zachfeuer.com/artists/jon-rafman/>

**Gerco de Ruijter** (Dutch, born 1961) is a landscape photographer. In his photography and films he explores the boundaries of the recognizable and the reducible presentation of the landscape. De Ruijter studied at the Willem de Kooning Academie in Rotterdam and graduated Cum Laude in 1993. Since 1993 he had numerous one-person and group exhibitions in and outside the Netherlands. His work is represented in diverse important public and private collections. <http://www.gercoderuijter.com> and <http://vimeo.com/36777982> [video of *CROPS*]

**Jon-Phillip Sheridan** (American, born 1977) received his B.F.A. in photography from the Maryland Institute College of Art and his M.F.A. from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2011. He has had one-person exhibitions at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Reynolds Gallery, Richmond, VA, and Heiner Contemporary, Washington, DC. He has been featured in many group exhibitions including *Photography Now*, which was curated by Natasha Egan, Look 3's Shots and has had work in the U.S. State Department's Art in Embassies program. His work is included in the collections of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Markel Corporation, Capital One, and the Federal Reserve Bank. Sheridan lives in Richmond, VA, where he is the Administrative Director and Assistant Professor at VCU School of Arts Department of Photography and Film. <http://www.jonphillipsheridan.com/>

## CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

The checklist is arranged by artist, and the dimensions are in inches, height precedes width precedes depth.

### Vaughn Bell

1. *Village Green*  
2013, Plexiglas with steel support  
(plus natural materials), 31 3/16 x 30 x 36  
Courtesy of the artist
  2. *Village Green*  
2013, Plexiglas with steel support  
(plus natural materials), 31 3/16 x 30 x 36  
Courtesy of the artist
- (previous installation illustrated, page 10)

### Justin Berry

3. *Brook*  
2012, digital C-print, 72 x 48  
Courtesy of the artist  
(illustrated, page 15)
4. *Lapse*  
2012, archival inkjet print, 36 x 44  
Courtesy of the artist

### Doug Beube

5. *Erosion #03*  
2004, collage, 13 x 9  
Courtesy of JHB Gallery, New York  
(illustrated, page 18)

6. *Erosion #06*  
2004, collage, 13 x 9  
Courtesy of JHB Gallery, New York

### Elisheva Biernoff

7. *Inheritance*  
2010, slide projector, humidifier, acrylic  
on plywood, 80 slides of endangered  
wilderness areas, 120 x 144 x 72  
Courtesy of the artist  
(illustrated, page 21)

### Martín Bonadeo

8. *Two Suns (Beach)*  
2015, digital projector, cloth, sand,  
scent, and mixed media  
Courtesy of the artist  
(illustrated, page 25)

### Matthew Brandt

9. *Mono Lake CA B4*  
2012, C-print soaked in Mono Lake  
water, 72 x 105  
Courtesy of Meredith and Brother Rutter  
(illustrated, page 28)

### Adam Cvijanovic

10. *All the Wine I Ever Drank I Drank  
at Sea*  
2010, acrylic on Tyvek on panel, 48 x 96  
Courtesy of Art Pension Trust and  
Postmasters Gallery, New York  
(illustrated, page 31)

## Katrín Elvarsdóttir

11. *Vanished Summer 2*  
2013, archival pigment print on paper,  
19 1/2 x 29 1/2  
Courtesy of the artist
12. *Vanished Summer 32*  
2013, archival pigment print on paper,  
19 1/2 x 29 1/2  
Courtesy of the artist  
(illustrated, page 33)

## Flatform

13. *Cannot be anything against the wind*  
2010, video, 6:20 minutes  
Courtesy of Video Data Bank  
(illustrated, page 35)

## Ezra Hanson-White (XRA)

14. *Memory of a Broken Dimension*  
2014, computer game  
Courtesy of the artist  
(illustrated, page 69)

## Kristin Holder

15. *Tracing (Leonardo, "Wind Storm and Flood Over a Bay with Castle and Viaduct")*  
2011, Sharpie pen on wax paper,  
6 5/8 x 8 1/2  
Courtesy of the Sally & Wynn Kramarsky  
Collection  
(illustrated, page 37)

## Institute of Critical Zoologists

16. *Expedition #10*, from the series  
*Some Kind of Expedition*

2011, inkjet print on vinyl on aluminum,  
43 3/4 x 29

Courtesy of the artist  
(illustrated, page 39)

## Patrick Jacobs

17. *Parasitic Bolete with Pine Cones*  
2014, styrene, acrylic, cast neoprene,  
paper, ash, talc, starch, polyurethane  
foam, acrylite, vinyl film, wood, steel,  
lighting, and BK7 glass,  
12 3/4 x 18 1/2 x 11 1/2  
Courtesy of the artist  
(illustrated, page 41)

## Kim Keever

18. *Hawaii 0983c*  
2013, archival pigment print, 30 x 43  
Courtesy of the artist and Adamson  
Gallery, Washington, DC
19. *West 153e*  
2009, archival pigment print, 32 x 45  
Courtesy of the artist and Adamson  
Gallery, Washington, DC  
(illustrated, page 45)
20. *Small Mountains 03*  
2009, video, 2:17 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist and Adamson  
Gallery, Washington, DC

## Ed Key, with David Kanaga, composer

21. *Proteus*  
2013, videogame  
Courtesy of the artist  
(illustrated, page 69)

## Guy Laramée

22. *The Grand Library*  
2012, altered books, pigment, and  
metal stand, 44 x 21 x 96  
Courtesy of JHB Gallery, New York  
(illustrated, page 49)

## Chun-yi Lee

23. *Immense Vista from the Perilous Peak*  
2010, ink on paper, 34 x 36 1/2  
Courtesy of the Chinese Porcelain  
Company, New York  
(illustrated, page 51)

## Devine Lu Linvega

24. *Purgateus*  
2014, videogame  
Courtesy of the artist  
(illustrated, page 71)

## Linda Lynch

25. *Untitled (From Smithsonian's Jetty)*  
2009, ink and gouache on paper, 5 x 21  
Courtesy of the Sally & Wynn Kramarsky  
Collection  
(illustrated, page 53)
26. *Untitled (From Smithsonian's Jetty)*  
2009, ink and gouache on paper  
8 x 23 3/4  
Courtesy of Rachel Nackman

## Tom McGrath

27. *Untitled*  
2005, oil on canvas over panel, 56 x 96  
Courtesy of Sue Scott and Mike Stanley  
(illustrated, page 56)

## Jesse McLean

28. *Climbing*  
2009, video, 6 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist  
(illustrated, page 58)

## Jon Rafman

29. *Potchefstroom South Africa*  
2012, archival pigment print mounted  
on dibond, 40 x 64  
Courtesy of Zach Feuer Gallery,  
New York  
(illustrated, page 61)

## Gerco de Ruijter

30. *CROPS*  
2012, video, 3:30 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist  
(illustrated, page 64)

31. *Time*  
2012, Ultrachrome print on dibond,  
68 x 40  
Courtesy of the artist

## Jon-Phillip Sheridan

32. *Residual #34, Summer*  
2005, chromogenic print on aluminum,  
30 x 40  
Courtesy of the artist
33. *Residual #10, Winter*  
2003, chromogenic print on aluminum,  
24 x 21  
Courtesy of the artist  
(illustrated, front cover [detail] and  
frontispiece)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The exhibition, programs, and publications are made possible in part with funding from the University of Richmond's Cultural Affairs Committee, the Dean's Office of the School of Arts and Sciences, the 2014-2015 Tucker-Boatwright Festival of Literature and the Arts, hosted by the Department of Art and Art History in collaboration with the University Museums, and with funds from the Louis S. Booth Arts Fund. The printed and online exhibition catalogues are made possible in part with support from the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation.

We are grateful for the assistance of the artists, collectors, dealers, and distributors who kindly offered their services to bring this project to fruition. We also would like to specifically thank the following people for their support throughout the development of the project:

Laurie Adamson and Sila Dizdar, Adamson Gallery, Washington, DC  
Jayne H. Baum and Peter Lyon, Jayne H. Baum Gallery, NY  
Will Blanton and Lauren Vincelli, RVA Game Jams, Richmond, VA  
Elizabeth Bolka and Sue Stocks, Worth Higgins & Associates Inc., Richmond, VA  
Rachael Z. DeLue, Princeton University, NJ  
Carl Elsaesser, Video Data Bank, Chicago, IL  
Kelly Gordon, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC  
Heather Hakimzadeh, Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art, Virginia Beach, VA  
Wynn Kramarsky, Rachel Nackman, and Julie Reiter, New York, NY  
Lauren Marinaro, Zach Feuer Gallery, New York, NY  
Shannon Richardson and Jeanie Choi, M+B Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
Meredith and C. Arthur "Brother" Rutter, L'94, Virginia Beach, VA  
Magdalena Sawon, Postmasters, New York, NY  
Sue Scott and Mike Stanley, New York, NY  
Audrey Yoshiko Seo, Richmond, VA  
Liz Sheehan, Doylestown, PA  
Jon-Phillip Sheridan, Richmond, VA  
Ólöf K. Sigurðardóttir, Hafnarborg, Iceland  
Stephanie Teo, Chinese Porcelain Company, New York, NY

And at the University of Richmond:

Lisa Frye Ashe, Visiting Lecturer of Art  
Elena Markell Calvillo, Associate Professor of Art History  
Bryan O. Gallagher, Senior Multimedia Specialist  
Pam Harper, Manager, Telecom & Media Support  
John Hayden, Professor of Biology  
Joseph Hoff, Interim Dean of International Education  
Lázaro Lima, Professor of Latin American and Iberian Studies  
Erling Sjøvold, Associate Professor of Art  
Cindy Stubbe, Associate Director, Annual Giving  
Diana Vincelli, Director of Grant Support, Foundation, Corporation, and Government Relations