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# Under construction: viewing manipulated space

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UNDER CONSTRUCTION: VIEWS INTO MANIPULATED SPACE

By

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BA, University of South Carolina, 2009

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Masters of Fine Arts

Department of Mass Communication and Media Arts  
In the Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University

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THESIS APPROVAL

UNDER CONSTRUCTION: VIEWS INTO MANIPULATED SPACE

By

M. David Farrell, Jr.

A thesis submitted in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
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in the field of interdisciplinary media arts.

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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North America, the United States in particular, has established an unique and distinct connection to the the wildspaces outside of urban environments. The two spaces, urban and wilderness, are placed in opposition to one another in a sliding valuation scale that is based on the degradation experienced in these urban areas, due to industrialized capitalist means of production, by the inhabitants. These effects are the source of both literary and visual art protests that originate in the 19th century in both generations of the Hudson River School painters, American pastoral writing, philosophy, and photographs. These romanticized views of natural space and out interactions with natural spaces create a deeply sentimental and mythic connection to America's wilderness. This spurs the creation of the National and State Parks and Forests systems that preserve and embalm the idealistic settings for industrialized man to commune with wilderness. These spaces, however, are inherently flawed in their construction and execution. This fact began my investigation into what American society presents as natural, or in some cases, more natural, in the Parks and public lands systems and natural history museums. I argue that the three works presented in my thesis are linked to the greater American pastoral art tradition, but engage wild spaces as a means to create a critical discourse into the authenticity of the ideals established by previous authors and artists. This claim is supported historically through links in methodology and subject matter, but depart from the Romantic and Modernist systems of representation in that my work reveals the manipulated structures that construct both the parks systems and the natural history museums.

DEDICATION

For

Michael and Brenda Farrell

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Technology is inescapable in the 21st century...or is it? Are there spaces left in the United States that have had no exposure to a cell phone? The internet? Automobiles? Where the mere idea of a city seems foreign? Instinctive responses may include some famous vistas in the west, the great redwood forests, the Bad Lands of South Dakota, Mojave Desert, or the far off Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in northern Alaska. What all these spaces have in common is that they are all managed by the United States government. The National Parks system, the State Park system, federal wildlife refuge, preserve, and reserve properties dot the United States creating a matrix of public lands that constitute 655 million acres(Coggins, et al, 1982, p. 535-621). Socially and politically, certain spaces in the the country are valued higher than others. As idealized spaces the parks systems become distanced from and unaffected by the mercurial and evolving industrialized capitalist landscape. This ineffable quality is what reinvigorates the hiker, inspires the poet wandering the woods, and surges the vitality of all who come to visit the wild places.

Wild spaces, or Wilderness, is established in contrast to the alienation experienced in the industrialized capitalist urban setting. Wilderness compensates for the alienation inherent in this structure. This valuation is inversely proportional; a space becomes wilder the further removed from the urban experience it geographically and ideologically is located. The wilder a space, the more it is distanced and proportionally valued in comparison to the woes of its urban alternative. These Wilderness spaces inspired a generation of artists like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, literary icons of 19th century America, Henry David Church and Thomas Cole, the founders and influential painters of the first and second generations of the Hudson River School, and the photographs of Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, and Imogen Cunningham, photorealists of the 20th century. These artists, through their own mediums, have created artworks, like those of the Romantics, that respond in protest to the detriments that capitalism takes on the urban inhabitant, or like the modernists of the 20th century, they create photographs

glorifying these coveted spaces. The relationship between American culture and the country's land is mythologized heavily in the 19th century into an American Wilderness myth; this myth continues to be integrated into the 20th and the 21st century, as well. The myth's genesis and integration into visual and literary art is observable in three distinct movements: 1. The Industrialization of America; 2. Modernism's reification of 19th century ideology; 3. The post-modern re evaluation and critique

Throughout the 19th century, America saw an increase in the level and complexity of technologies being implemented in urban and industrial areas, which triggered the original flight and undocumented Wilderness of the American frontier. In response to the threat of industrialized life encroaching and spoiling the havens that balance the more modern mechanized life, in the late 19th and early 20th century, these coveted tracts of land are formed into the parks and wildlife preserves across the country. The parks become the easiest access to natural space, and are a central location for the modernist art that reifies the altruistic attributes of nature. The ways the parks and natural lands are depicted in art change throughout each of these three periods of change.

A similar institution that engages natural processes and history is the museum structure. The parks mimic the unfettered exposure to the natural, whereas the museum, a constructed and curated experience, requires the recreation of the natural to best articulate history, events, and entities. The constructed format and the reliance on simulacra in lieu of the natural engage the analytic but not the holistic experience of the individual; this nonetheless manipulates the individual in similar ways to the natural parks visitor in that the spaces and objects being engaged are not in-fact natural, but purposefully shaped and molded to appear or feel natural.

The resulting spaces and objects created in both the museum and the parks spaces all fall within a continuum of reality. At one extreme of the continuum are objects, that because of their construction and visual similarity representation and the original are indiscernible. The other extreme of this scale are objects so far removed from their referred object that they appear as if parody, satire, or caricature.

This continuum of realness, shown in both the museum and the parks systems became a

point of interest for my research and a central theme to my thesis work. My creative investigation into these spaces resulted in the creation of the three bodies of work. The first is situated within the museum environment; a collection of photographs showing various views of natural history exhibits, historic recreations of everyday life, and constructed tableaus that are used by museums to demonstrate and recreate the natural for their visitorship. In this work the emphasis is on the objects displayed in the museum and where upon the continuum of realness these objects are located. The second body of work is a collection of four museum-like desert environment tableaus that were constructed from non-natural objects, photographed and presented as picture postcards of nearly completed exhibits and readymade sculptures. The materials chosen in these scenes are constructed and manipulated in similar ways to the methods used by actual museum model makers and curators to convey naturalness through artifice, and the animals chosen to populate these scenes are all readymade sculptures repurposed for the tableaus. The third body of work addresses the parks systems and where artifice is manifest in purportedly natural spaces. This work uses photography as a means to envision the mapped paths visitors choose to navigate through a specific area of constructed space, if they challenged the boundaries they are presented with in the space, and how those challenges are expressed. The mapping process creates a humanless landscape where light trails hover and appear transposed onto a scene.

Each body of work is linked because of a common conceptual thread. All three types of work consider the artifice of each scenario, the artificiality, and even the authorial force that drives the construction of these spaces. They are also linked to the longer lineage of the American Pastoral Aesthetic by depicting historically similar spaces, through their thematic composition, and through the depiction of human interaction in the context of nature.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE INDUSTRIALIZATION OF AMERICA

To understand how the wilderness mythology of the 19th century influences period modes of thought it is necessary to have an understanding of the wilderness myth in a broader sense.

In its simplest forms it is an elevation of wild spaces over their non-wild counterpart. This value assessment is not derived from any use value or market value, but something *praeter natura*, beyond natural. The wilderness myth dictates that a dichotomy exists between two ideologically different spaces: urban, or man inhabited, and completely natural, or wild spaces. The wilderness myth ascribes certain benefits to occupying wild spaces. These benefits counteract the woes that befall man whilst he is in man-dominant space. By living and working in an urban setting and engaging the industrial demands of day to day life, man is engaging a space that is intrinsically detrimental to his well being; seeking out a space in which those stimuli do not exist alleviates these stresses. If this thought experiment is continued further, the greater the severity and influence that industrialized urban life has on its human inhabitants, the wilder the space needed to remedy the proportionally detrimental effects inflicted; the less cultivated and touched by people a space is, the greater the benefit experienced by the urban escapee.

The concept that the wilder a space, the more intrinsic value to mankind is contained therein has fueled an era of philosophical thought that influenced society and culture, visual art, and American literature of the 19th century. Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was heavily influenced by William Wordsworth, and the philosophies of transcendentalism, inspired the writings of authors Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau. Emerson, transcendentalism and the escape to wilderness that transcendentalism prescribes influenced the major artistic movement in the North Eastern United States, the Hudson River School. Visual artists like Thomas Cole, the founder of the Hudson River School and Fredric Edwin Church a prominent figure within the second generation of the Hudson River School, took the writings of Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau and translated them into visually stunning painting portraying the Hudson River Valley and the



American interior.

William Wordsworth (1898), an influence on Emerson, creates optimistic relationships between Nature and his characters. These relationships can result in the gaining of knowledge otherwise unattainable. In *The table turned; an evening*, on the same subject Wordsworth names Nature as the place for revelation.

Let nature be your teacher...  
We murder to dissect...  
Enough of science and art;  
Close up those barren leaves;  
Come forth, and bring your heart  
That watches and receives.(p. 274-275)

Wordsworth blatantly denigrates the faith in science and art that the Age of Enlightenment characteristically endorses. Instead of the adherence to the tangible and empirical, Wordsworth instructs us to forge an emotional and mythical bond to Nature that would permit us to learn all that science and art could not discover. The speaker, too, points an accusatory finger at the emotionless attitudes that science takes toward Nature and implicates it in not only the killing of natural things for the sake of scientific knowledge, but the moral crime of murder, as well. The romantic poet's moral and emotional relationship to nature is presented as the remedy.

The ideals of the modern museum structure can be traced back to and rely on the those set forth by Wordsworth. If, according to Wordsworth, the authentic sensuous experience of natural space forges the bond that permits nature to be our teacher. By the museum actively creating simulated nature, theoretically, a similar bond can be forged between a museum goer and an exhibit. Both the museum photographs and the constructed tableaux photographs within my thesis critically engage this aspect of the museum's creation and recreation process.

The concepts of the museum changed dramatically during Wordsworth's time. It experienced an ideological shift and began to concentrate on historical artifacts; the museum began to emphasize the objects associated with history and not the individuals that influenced it. (Foster, 2000, p. 112). This prioritization of the materiality of history is a side effect of the materialistic reductionist attitudes of the Enlightenment period. By describing nature through an

exacting and detailed study and categorizing those elements into discrete attributes, hypothetically, all knowable information from these materials can be physically reproduced. The secularization of knowledge in this way contradicts the deified natural space and spiritual relationship described by Wordsworth, in Europe, and Emerson, in the North America.

Emerson's Transcendentalism glorified natural space and encouraged idealyc relationships between people and nature similar to those Wordsworth writes about. Instead of the benevolent Nature that bestows gifts of knowledge, God provides for his faithful through nature. In his 1836 essay Nature (2001), Emerson lays the foundations of transcendentalism. He elevates Nature as not only beneficial to man, but the divine space in which man can witness the charity of God unfold before his eyes.

In the presence of Nature a wild delight  
runs through the man, in spite of real sorrows.  
Nature says, – he is my creature, and maugre  
all his impertinent griefs, he shall be glad with me.  
...In the woods too, a man cast off his years, as the  
snake his slough, and at what period soever of life  
is always a child. In the woods, is perpetual youth.  
Within these plantation of God, a decorum  
and sanctity rein, a perpetual festival is dressed (p. 38-39)

Nature, for Emerson is benevolent and charitable; it is always good because of its manifestation through God. Transcendentalist views maintain that Nature is by its very nature a deified space. Nature can seemingly navigate the qualities that describe God, infinite forgiveness and mercy on line three and four, and be entirely separate from from God simultaneously, as in line eight, describing a plantation of God in which Nature exists. Emerson's maxim that Nature is ameliorable to man in all its forms is supported by the connections he makes between natural spaces and God. Left to his innate proclivities, man is seen as a source for sinful perversion, concupiscence, and deviance according to the church; man is flawed and wrought with sin, that which is devoid of man is free from similar faults, and by extension, is constitutionally better than man.

The other half of the equation in formulating the American pastoral mode is the classic

pastoral genre. Historically pastoral literature and visual arts describe aspects of rural life with recurring themes like those of shepherds, a benevolent Nature or God acting through nature, coping with death and mortality, love, and its loss. The pastoral mode has its origins in the the works of the Roman poet Virgil.

In Eclogue I Virgil creates a character Tityrus, a former shepherd who has moved into the city and who is bemoaning the confiscation of his earthly possessions by the Roman government. Tityrus has resolved, however, that his life has actually been much improved because of this loss of property. Tityrus is now free to roam the countryside, raise a family in a healthful environment free the filth and disgust of Roman urban life. Opposed to Tityrus is Meliboeus, who, in a similar situation to Tityrus, is not as optimistic. Meliboeus cannot comprehend Tityrus' conclusions and has linked his future happiness to the confiscated possessions (Marx, 2000, p. 20-43)

Eclogue I creates a new genre for literature and writing, the pastoral. Much of Emerson's sentiments along with those of Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau fall within tradition of the pastoral style.

Much after Virgil the pastoral style of writing became an outlet for critique against the aristocratic royal courts in Europe (Payne & Gaylord, 2012, p. 1004-1008). In a continuation of that critical capacity later pastoral art was used as a means of backlash against the increased presence of mechanization and industrialization in everyday life in America and in Europe. The urban was vilified and hard judgments were passed concerning the place of man in the battle between urban and rural.

In Leaves of Grass, Walt Whitman's poems vacillate in their opinions of whether urban or natural space was the place for man. This conflict between the urban and the natural that affected Whitman's opinions on his, and man's place in either of the spaces is seen in the 1881 poem Give me the splendid silent sun (2002). Whitman begins with typified pastoral subject matter by celebrating the beauty and peace found in nature. He writes in the beginning line of the poem, "Give me the splendid silent sun/ Give me juicy autumn fruit red and ripe." He continues in the fashion for the first 25 lines of the poem. Whitman is wishing for the open road, for the ability to

“love a sweet-breathed woman,” raise a family and enjoy the blissful solitude of the space devoid of the demoralizing facets of city life. In the midst of this prophesying the greatness of Nature Whitman reverses course with the line, “While incessantly asking, still I adhere to my city.” Despite the long list of joys and benefits that the author previously pined for the city is the place that he wished to be. He wants to embrace “lovers by the thousand,” see the lights of Manhattan, and listen to its “endless and noisy chorus”(Whitman, 2002, p. 262).

Whitman, openly conflicted about how he regards the relationship between technology, nature, and man, tries to spell out the pros and the cons of each space. In the rural he can have the healthy life with a wife and children, but in the urban he is able to embrace “lovers by the thousand.” This conflict would not exist if Whitman's choice of the city was not in conflict to Thoreau's doctrine that the role of Nature, the product of God, is to provide for and better man; this is not the role of urban space, the product of imperfect man.

This more modern conflict between industrial urban space versus natural space is shown in the visual art of the period, as well. The Hudson River School founder and painter Thomas Cole, in his painting *River in the Catskills*, shows a visual version of Whitman's conflict between technology and the rural. In the bottom of the canvas is a heroic white masculine figure, standing, resting in a patch of freshly felled trees, and is contemplatively staring off into the distance. In the distance the rolling green hills of the Catskill mountain range, dotted with cottages and small homesteads, are disrupted by the billowing smoke stack of a locomotive barreling through the countryside. Cole traces the technological status of the idealized countryside in similar ways that Whitman attempts to trace the technological sentiments of the nation in his poetry. Cole shows a very bucolic and chimerical scene that matches the aesthetics to be associated with a utopian vista and the non-organic interruption of the train and trestle cutting through the background. This chimerical embodiment is seen as showing the benefits technology seen in railway travel, mobility, and ability to shape and manipulate land, but not the detriments of such technologies and a harmonious and tranquil existence between the characters and the space they inhabit. The inclusion of both the utopian existence and the presence of the train contradict classic pastoral frameworks that shun all non-natural interactions.

The train cutting through the landscape is minuscule compared to the largess of the rolling mountain and the lofty vantage point of the characters nearest to the viewer. Technology and mobility in the later 19th century take on a much more important role as they become increasingly more essential American life. Goods are shipped too and fro markets over great distances as cross country commerce become a common and expected practice. The influence of industrialization in 1843, the year of the painting, only increases over time. Its growing prevalence is seen in the visual examples of artists within the first generation of the Hudson River School.

Visually, the first generation of the Hudson River School incorporates elements of technology more frequently and with more prominence as technology becomes more integrated into the American existence and into the landscape of the Hudson River Valley itself. References to technology in their work increase until the means to explore the interior of the United States become easily accessible and the second generation of Hudson River School painters turn their gaze to the undocumented interior of the nation. The artists' flight from the populated areas to a purer form of wildspace, one even further removed from human influence, correlates to a period of time in the 19th century when industrialization was in full swing and is interpreted as a proportional backlash to industrialization.

Artists and Photographers like famed Civil War and New York portraitist, Mathew Brady, and photographer Carlton Watkins, whose career aspirations were to known as a photographer of the American interior, packed their bags and headed west to bring back photographs of the frontier spaces. Without the integration of any major technological symbolism, these artists were creating aesthetic views of the nation that were totally devoid of the shaping influences of civilized urban life, and by extension, scenes that presented the ultimate escape from the harms of modernity. By the second half of the 19th century the urban centers of the United States had changed substantially from the era of Thoreau's first prescriptions for a retreat to nature, and the degree of removal from these spaces seen in artwork from the latter half of the century reflects that fact.

This mode of progression continues on into the 20th century. Modernist photographers working under the ideology of photo-realism glorify and elevate natural space with their work. The original backlash of the second generation of Hudson River School painters continues until the post-modern perspective disrupts traditional structures and interpretations of natural space. The post-modern aesthetic incorporates technology much differently than artists in the previous industrialization and modernist movements. Its inclusion of technology reveals the purposeful exclusion or obfuscation of technology that modernism attempts, and uses this revelation as a nodal point for critical discourse between technology and the idealized spaces.

The conclusions reached through this post-modern approach reveal that all elements involved in the photograph are inauthentic and an authentic interaction cannot be created, or recreated. My thesis, however, is structured to create critique about these spaces similar strategies of the post-modern artist, but does so to elucidate the mythology and ideology created by the 19th century Romantics, refined through the 20th century in modernism, and how it is manifest in the constructed parks spaces today. The detailed exploration and mapping of these spaces not only concedes, but accentuates the presence of technology and manipulation in spaces that ideally contain none. The ideological conflict between what a space or object is ideally supposed to be and how it is observably depicted establishes a foundational theme to this and the other two bodies of work in my thesis.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE REIFYING EFFECTS OF MODERNISM

As the interest in the interior of the nation grew through exposure to 19th century artists so did the sentiment that these spaces evoked. The emotional tie created between the citizenry and these western places was palpable. Activists, environmentalists, and conservators begin to voice concerns for the unabated urban expansion and requisitioning of lands for development that was being observed in or near these American wild spaces. These concerns were popular causes. They were backed by environmentalist such as John Muir and Yosemite developer James Mason Hutchings who “preached [the] gospel of Nature” while promoting the wild spaces of California's Yosemite Valley (“John Muir: 1838-1914,” n.d.). The gospel of Nature finally fell on the ears of the federal government and in 1864 Yosemite Valley was given to the state of California for preservation. This first act created a snowball effect in terms of action on the part of the US Government. Eight years after giving Yosemite Valley to the state of California Yellowstone and its surrounding areas were set aside for preservation. In the article, *The National Parks Service: a brief history*, author Barry Mackintosh (1999) describes the quick succession of parks that were created in this time period.

Congress followed the Yellowstone precedent with other national parks in the 1890s and early 1900s, including Sequoia, Yosemite (to which California returned Yosemite Valley), Mount Rainier, Crater Lake, and Glacier.

A major shift in how these spaces were valued had to occur to qualify them for such special preservation. Historically, one of the criterion used to evaluate the worth of land is based upon its use value within the capitalist context of the US. Their individual values are a derivative of how useful the land can be in producing capital; how much potential a specific parcel of land has to produce viable market goods. Instead these spaces gain value because of their similarity to the mythic ideal natural space entirely devoid of human influence. The purer the space, or closer to the mythic idea, the higher it was valued.

The parks did not, however, resemble the idealistic sanctuary free from human influence.

The intention is that the park would become a time capsule of sorts, a window into the past, before or without human involvement in a space. They are meant to show a pure form of nature, one held in stasis and protected from outside influences. This, sadly, is no more the reality than it is now. Solving pragmatic hurdles that permit the continued day to day operation of these spaces like the creation and maintenance of roads, pathways, cottages, hotels, lodges, and other buildings dotted the early landscapes of the first parks and undercut the conservator's intentionality.

At its core the parks try to exist in an optimistic paradox and convince us to ignore or suppress signs of its attempted paradoxical existence. The parks employ several strategies to soften their unnaturalness in the landscape. They include creating winding trails because it reflects a more organic construction, or covering buildings with natural materials to appear better integrated into the surrounding natural space. These aesthetic choices in how parks are created try to shift visitor's perception of the park's authenticity within the continuum of realness.

The evolution of our perception of the park system can be seen in three stages, industrialization leading up to the founding of the park system, the modern era of the late 19th and 20th century that solidified these spaces within the context of the ideal natural space, and a post-modern era in which we become divorced from the ideology of the 19th century and are allowed to deconstruct the illusion of pure natural space the parks attempt to provide.

Modernist art about these natural spaces acted in no way to challenge the ideology that founded the park system; it supported and reified the mythic and beatific status of the untouched wild space. Specifically, artists in the west coast photography group, Group f/64, realized the camera's ability to render excruciating mimetic detail in the photographic print. This group of California photographers strove for sharp focus and high amounts of descriptive detail in their work. Their constituents included Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, John Paul Edwards, Preston Holder, Consuelo Kanaga, Alma Lavenson, Sonya Noskowiak, Henry Swift, Willard Van Dyke, Brett Weston, and Edward Weston. Many members turned their lenses to the California landscape that surrounded them. Notably, photographs made by Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, and Imogen Cunningham of the California countryside, deserts, and forests were popular enough



to enter the visual vernacular of society and the fine art world not only during the artists' times, but remain there still, today. These photographs establish a photographic, and more attainable, idealized nature.

Their approach to rendering wildspace is not a revolutionary departure from the artists who had visited these spaces previous to them. Their approach was predominantly an evolution. Yosemite, Yellowstone, and other spaces were still being idealized through dramatic aesthetic choices, composition, and subject choices. Adams is one of the most iconic photographers from this group and he is an apt example of why his approach was an evolution of the pastoral mode in America. Both Adams and his predecessors used contrast and light in an image to dramatize the subject matter, darkened and manipulated the skies, and pristine focus throughout the frame to best accentuate the aesthetic presence of Nature.

In many ways these photo-realists relied on the technological capabilities of the medium to communicate detailed conceptual ideas in their work. The works presented in my thesis are equally dependant on the technological choice of specific medium and method of presentation to communicate with the viewer. Capturing the images on large detailed negatives that can be printed to a large scale with high levels of detail were necessary for amplifying details and establishing relationships between different elements within the images. The amount of observable detail in the large 30x40" prints in my thesis act to accentuate normally unobservable, or suppressed aspects of the spaces and objects photographed. The museum photographs utilize this quality to reveal flaws in authenticity and the National/State Parks/forests works are contingent on the manifestation of suppressed signs of manipulated space within each scene. The methodological and conceptual considerations in my thesis work create a patent link to modernist image making of the 20th century in this genre.

Through the 20th century the parks saw an ever increasing amount of tourists visiting and venturing out into the wilderness. With all the efforts of the artists that promoted and popularized the parks and the efforts of the government in creating and maintaining of the parks, what a visitor interacts with is not actually the idealic spaces seen in the sweeping views of Adams,

Weston, and others. What they actually interact with are concrete pathways leading to visitor's centers, asphalt roads that winded through the mountains, and clear-cut patches of land made barren so the a better view could be had from a roadside scenic pull-off. There is a disparity between the idealistic goals of the park system and the product that was actually presented. Buildings are made from regional organic materials to make them appear more organic in nature and less like buildings. Pathways are made to wind and twist as if natural forces had carved them and not a construction crew. What we are presented with is a simulacrum of a space. The parks represent a culmination of the American romance with wilderness mythology and the belief that through active participation we can create a facsimile of that ideal.

CHAPTER 4  
IN RESPONSE: THREE CASE STUDIES

1: CONSTRUCTED TABLEAUX/READYMADES

The seeds of an idea can often be traced back to very abstract origins. I can trace the influences for the tableaux created in my thesis work back to my childhood. As an elementary school child on a field trip I had a revelation while visiting the South Carolina State Museum. The class had stopped in front of a wall of palmetto tree logs that had been hune and fashioned into a battlement of a fort. This was in homage to the historic palmetto log fort of Ft. Moultrie that repelled British aggressors during the United States revolutionary war. The detail was exquisite. Textures from the bark, the coloration of the structure, and the realness it exuded was wholly convincing for me as a young visitor to the museum. Rather easily, I was enraptured in the idea of defending my home in a make shift fort made of tree logs, imagining myself upon the ramparts, and manning the cannon that lined the wall of the museum. This dreamy imagination was soon shattered with the jarring revelation that everything was fake. "Fake?!?" I remember thinking, "How could this be fake? It looks so real."

My moment of revelation occurred when our guide told the story behind the fort and the recently completed exhibit. He told us he was certain the trees and cannon were real as well until one of the exhibit designers/curators was walking toward him with a full cannon hoisted over one shoulder. The curator showed no signs of strain and no discomfort in supporting hundred of pounds of brass on only one shoulder. The tour guide tell this story and emphasized the question "How can this be?!" As he continued explaining this situation to us it is revealed that the cannon, palmetto trees, dirt, sand, bullet holes, cannon balls, and all of the exhibit had all been faked; the were all made from foam and paper maché. The battlements and artillery looked authentic, but only weighed a few pounds.

Visual recognition and verification of the “real” object is critical in museum displays. We rely, as sighted individuals, heavily on our ability to discern the authenticity, or realness of an object. This evaluation is compared to a continuum of realness; on one pole of the continuum is the affirmation that what is being compared is valid, and the other a total and unmistakable denial of authenticity. Evolutionarily, we needed to distinguish edible food stuffs from poison food stuffs, and as citizens of modernity we need this same ability only brought into a more modern context.

Having this ability of recognition, or lack thereof, is not necessarily a game of life or death whilst in a museum enjoying the exhibits and displays. It is, however, crucial to how those exhibits and displays work. As an exhibit or piece of artifice reaches levels of recognition so high that the original and the artifice are visually indistinguishable the qualities of authenticity and credibility are often associated with them. Plato's allegory of the cave is an apt example. What we view in a museum are the shadows of the objects cast onto the wall. They can look like the objects, but they are not. We strive to create the objects themselves, even though this is impossible. We are the prisoners of the museum instead of the cave; we observe and learn from the shadows presented to us under the guise of authenticity; when in reality we are viewing the mediated and abstracted forms of the actual objects.

The Plato allegory can be continued to describe work produced in the thesis, too. The rise of industrialization in the US leads to the creation of the wilderness myth, the modern era solidifies and accepts these ideas, and the post-modern challenges them by taking a step back and looking at them for what they are. The post-modern interpretation of these spaces is Plato's act of revelation as a philosopher, or his escaping the cave of shadows. Post modern artworks dealing with the landscape, space, and how we interact with them attempt to reveal the “real” and the “unreal” qualities of a place. They are made from outside the cave, looking inward.

An example of which is Yeondoo Jung in his work “Documentary Nostalgia.” In Jung's 84 minute video piece “Documentary Nostalgia” he opens with an interior shot of a room decorated with patterned pink wall paper, a chandelier, lamp, table, and framed artwork on the walls. A male character enters from off camera-right in an orange jump suit to turn off the lamp and a wall sconce. He opens the door at the far end of the square pink room to a blank gray

expanse, steps out the door as a light, brighter and whiter than any light previously seen in the shot, floods into the room from the outside. As the scene progresses the action in the frame halts and the screen is filled with this still room. This continues until the environment shakes as if in an earthquake; the chandelier shakes and rattles and the walls jerkily sway too and fro. The room spins out of frame to reveal that the entire reality given to the viewer was only a set piece and it is being rolled out of frame by stage hands and grips in orange jump suits. Revealing the studio the room is placed in removes the wool over our eyes as viewers to show us the falsity of the environment. Every construction that Jung creates he reveals as simulated scenarios and how that simulation is created. For example, the reveal in the opening scene shows the entire room being wheeled away, the arc lighting and light stands that provided the white light flooding into the room and other mechanisms that created the formerly convincing scene.

Jung's orange jump suit clad characters are the only characters that interact with the scenes. They construct, move, rearrange, and deconstruct different tableaux throughout the piece. In a street scene two of these characters begin spray painting a graffiti tag on a retailer's pull-down security door, pull up the Duvateen fabric that's painted to resemble a black-top roadway, and push an unrealistic car across the set. Each scene depicts the falsity and levels of construction involved in the portrayal of a visually convincing space.

Jung's "Documentary Nostalgia" relates closely to the tableaux and ready-made sculptures of animals that I've included in my thesis because of the purposeful act of creating and then revealing the falsity of their construction. Each of the tableaux is created to show a museum-like display in the act of being made. Unpainted splotches on the walls of the exhibit, uneven lighting, cataloging tags still on figures and props, and tools and ephemera littered throughout the frame are a few of the cues within this set of photographs that bely the authenticity of other museum displays. In one particular image (fig 1) the main figure is a realistic diamond back rattle snake coiled underneath a desert rock ledge. The large reddish desert stones in these photographs are carved from closed cell foam insulation used to insulate homes and other structures and the animals are created from resin casts. The only natural objects in the frames that are actually what they appear to depict are the sand and a few smaller rocks mixed in the

sand. In the foreground, rocks recede toward the viewer and an iPad is leveled on a nearby rock. The iPad displays an eHow.com article, "How to Paint Southwestern Desert Scenes." The floor of the tableaux is covered in red coarse sand; a black pair of ear-bud style headphones lay strune on the right of the frame partially obscured by a rock as if they were dropped or discarded. The walls are a rich goldenrod yellow with a small collection of paint swatches hanging from a push pin and a large paint brush the color of the exhibit's walls lay on top of the large rock structure.

This image in particular is saturated with visual evidence that the exhibit is under construction and not complete. With the inclusion of the iPad, a particularly overt symbol of the exhibit's incomplete nature, the author and creator of this space is referenced. Even though that person is not present in the photograph, his impact on the space, earbuds, paint brush, and iPad all support the idea they have just left the space, or stepped out of frame. To some degree, a critical stance is being made, too indicting not only the individual constructing the scene, but the institution that the individual represents lacks the ability or knowledge to adequately construct these recreations without the aid of an eHow.com article.

The construction of the rocks and choice of animals used reflect an ambiguity similar to that found in the eHow.com article. The animal sculptures and foam rocks are collections of attributes that are associated with the natural objects and entities they resemble, not any one particular individual creature, rock, or, in the case of the eHow.com article, any specific veiw of the southwestern desert. Rocks that are found in the American southwestern desert typically manifest in recognizable shapes and stay within a predictable color pallet so that specific examples were not used as a model for construction. The selection of animals shown in the photographs are cataloged and described in great detail by zoologists and the natural sciences and are formed from those details, not the details of any one specific one individual animal. Each are just collections of details that have been arranged in such a way that they appear, for the most part, authentic until close inspection. Even the colors that were chosen to paint the walls and rocks made for the tableaux were not based on any one specific example. They were based solely on previous exposure to the subject matter and not specifically researched. Memories of scenic painted views in western genre films, advertising imagery, and any other personal

experience that was relevant to that particular geography were the only criteria for the color choices. This was carried on to the choosing of the ready-made sculptures that populate the scenes.

I lack any background in model making, a fact I originally thought was inconsequential to my goals of making a convincing tableaux. I could not have been further from the truth; the possible interpretation of these pieces are enhanced by a lack of skill in their execution. There seems to be a magic line along the continuum of realness for works like these. On one end of this imaginary continuum are objects that look uncannily real. These are the object that convince anyone and everyone that they are necessarily real because of how easily the simulacrum could stand in for the actual object within our mind's eye. Complex criteria must be fulfilled so that when compared to a mental example there is no discernible difference and the simulacrum passes as authentic. On the other end are works that are obviously false objects that have only an inkling of detail that the uncanny examples require. Somewhere between these two poles is the point where a tableaux or object is neither so attuned to the referential "real" object that it is convincing substitute, nor so false that they resemble an neophytic rendering, but rather are just poor or even bad attempts at recreating an object. This is the line my thesis tableaux navigate. The scenes contain an unseen element of potential that is unresolved because of unfinished condition. As unfinished exhibits their end level of realism is unknown. They contain the very potential to become something that is uncannily realistic and at the same moment, however, they exhibit such obvious flaws in their repetitive construction, color choice, and unrealistic subjects that a finished kitsch-like resolution is easily imaginable.

These images are printed onto one side of a 5x7" post card. The reverse is stamped with a postal postcard template. The unfinished state of the postcard images, combined with the commodification of the museum exhibits through the creation of souvenirs and other representations of the exhibits sold to museum visitors, parodies the false representations sold in the museum and their status as contrived objects.

## 2. NATIONAL/STATE PARKS/FORESTS

Similar to the way the idea of the tableaux that were made can be traced back to a previous personal experience, the first seed for the idea of mapping national and public lands with trails of light can be traced back to the research methods course I took taught by Michele Torre. One of the final and largest assignments for the course was to prepare materials for the application of a grant, a job call, or position as an artists in residence. Because the artist residency was the only option of the three that I was qualified for, my choice of the residency was a pragmatic one. I wanted my efforts in preparing my application materials to be a viable and valid submission at the end of the semester, and not completely for naught because I was not a qualified applicant. I researched opportunities and decided to apply to a national parks residency program at Grand Canyon National Park. My personal interests in wild spaces and the interactions between people and wild spaces led me to choose this particular position. The work that I proposed in my application materials was a photographic project that would record blurred ghostlike images of the park's visitors as they passed through the walkways and trails that were clearly marked and constructed for the purpose of observing the scenic views. The blurred people-like figures would be juxtaposed against a still and idealized landscape. I arrived at the project idea by wanting to address the park space directly with my work. I wanted to recognize the park constructs visitors centers, sidewalks, and other structures and was curious to how people visiting the park respond to these structures in relation to the surrounding landscape.

It seems an easy visual leap from the proposed artist in residency project to the works exhibited in my thesis. They both are ways of mapping the interactions with natural or wild spaces, and they both occur on public lands within the national/state park system or federal/state protected forests, but the mapping processes used in my thesis depicts pedestrian movement in a much more abstract way; this gives prominence to the interaction between the construction of the space depicted and the specific paths chosen to navigate the space. By calling attention to the structures inherent in these constructed wild spaces my work deviated from the Romantic agenda that obscures and disassociates human interaction within preserved wilderness space.



This departure is observable in comparing the works of notable photo-realist artist Ansel Adams, whose works feature the National Parks and public lands prominently, to those created in my thesis work, most clearly articulated in the photograph “Main Road 6-9pm, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Gatlinburg, TN,” fig 2. This image, taken from an scenic vista pull off along the main thoroughfare that bisects the park, shows an orange and fire colored sky resting atop a bucolic view of green, tree covered mountains and serpentine valley receding into the distance. This aesthetic landscape is interrupted by patches of concrete road and streaks of passing cars’ tail and headlights peering between the foliage on the valley floor. Compared to the large bodies of work produced by Adams containing similar subject matter, examples of which include fig 3, “Mount Williamson,” fig 4, “Clearing Winter Storm,” and fig 5, “Maroon Bells,” the Adam’s images lack any reference to human interaction with the depicted space. The consistent exclusion of the colonizing human presence in Adams scenic photographs purposefully omit elements that undermine the sublime aesthetics of his works. The “Mount Williamson” photograph is a particular point of interest in this comparison. It was taken from the Manzanar internment camp in 1945 showing a field of textured rocks and boulders giving way to gracefully sweeping peaks of the Sierra mountains. Heavenly shafts of light illuminating the mountainsides and the preceding rocks reach down from the sky mimicking the aesthetics of historic American landscape painters. The direct opposite view of the “Mount Williamson” photograph would be that of the internment camp, itself. The Manzanar camp is an extraordinary example of the spatial colonization of nature, but it also represents the racial and ethnic colonization of the Japanese people in the US during World War Two. This fact is made inconsequential presence of the majestic mountain range and the internment camp’s omission.

This assessment does not diminish the quality of the Adams photograph nor the resonance it has in the American visual lexicon. The public lands images from my thesis emblemize the reorientation of the ideological perspective that constructs the human-wildspace relationship used in the post-modern aesthetic. A reflexive or meta-view of processes and space that is outside the historic ideology inherent in the Romantic and Modernist structures is a common attribute in the post-modern discourse. Similar methodologies in revealing these

influences on public space are seen in the “Museum Photographs” of Thomas Struth.

Struth's work shifts the priorities of the viewer's gaze from the objects hanging on the walls of a museum gallery to a more macro view of the museum goer interacting with the environment itself. He achieves this using a straight documentary aesthetic that shows a milieu of peoples, expressions, groups, and individuals, some squinting and leaning forward, and others staring meditatively at a piece of art hang on the wall. Thomas Struth's work engages the very large and small spaces in art museums. In “Galleria dell'Accademia Venice 1992,” fig 5, the blurred images of people passing in front of the camera's lens, the bustle and commotion of people walking and interacting with each other, the museum employees at an information desk, and the wide perspective that does not emphasize any specific piece or pieces of art, but the space as a whole shifts the critical focus of the photograph not to the art hanging on the walls, but the interaction between people and the museum space. Planting characters within these spaces, Struth constructs varied scenarios examining the interplay between people and the spaces they choose to navigate.

In “Galleria dell'Accademia Venice 1992” Struth undermines the intentionality of the gallery institution by focusing on the interpersonal relationships of the museum goers and the spatial relationships between people and the space they occupy or navigate. The ways that Struth establishes a critical stance from within an institutional space is congruent with the approaches utilized in this and other portions of my thesis works.

### 3. MUSEUM PHOTOGRAPHS

In my first year of graduate school at Southern Illinois University Carbondale I built a six-foot long, three foot tall lighted wooden display case that was designed to resemble and operate similar to a museum case. This piece engages the viewer in a similar way that an actual museum exhibit does, by using neatly cordoned and confined boundaries that contain all pertinent information. The use of this method shifts the attention of the viewer to specific ideas, connections, or conclusions because of the object's design and the arrangement of the objects within that design. The case held two 2x2' photographs, one, a tightly cropped head and shoulders portrait similar to ID and driver's license photos, complete with emotionless stare, the other, an enlarged view of an object from which the subject derives sentimental value, and an object chosen by the subject of the photographs, to which they ascribe a use-value, is displayed in a smaller inset display box.

With the intention of establishing an identity for the subject photographed, through cataloguing different objects a subject interacts with, the connotative meanings created by the viewer were directly influenced by the piece's construction and spacial arrangement of objects. Even though the work was marginally successful as a finished piece, the idea of the museum's ability to narrow the gaze of an onlooker and force a more intensive scrutiny or investigation endured.

The manipulation of the viewer's gaze is a feature of all museum displays. The museum structure is sterile and non-dynamic in that the information presented to museum goers is structured and predetermined. This creates finite boundaries and confines the museum goer to a near homogeneous experience. The boundaries present in the museum structure are not all too dissimilar from the boundaries seen in the public lands photographs that in other parts of the thesis. The presence of a managed and manipulated structure, mirrored in both spaces links their shared intentionality of preservation and segregation. This mirroring is most easily observable in the photograph "Backyard Exhibit, South Carolina State Museum, Columbia, SC," fig# , an exhibit depicting a typical suburban backyard and the environment it creates, and the photograph titled

“Large Trailhead, 2-5pm, Heron Pond.....,” fig#. Fig # depicts the trail head of a pathway at Heron Pond nature reserve in the Shawnee National Forest, an abstract mapping of light trails depicting paths traversed by park visitors during the time of observation, and the information kiosk by which every visitor and hiker must pass. The presence of clearly marked boundaries in both photographs, the white picket fence in fig# and the boundaries of the hiking trail in fig#, direct the museum goer and the hiker along a specific pathway and prevent or discourage deviance from that path. The large wooden kiosk shown at Heron Pond operates very similarly to the two white signs of text that flank the backyard display. They educate a visitor through the use of text and language.

Just as the Heron Pond kiosk provides opportunities for educating a hiker, so too does the museum exhibit provide opportunities to educate. Museums are constructed for a specific purpose; they are repositories of historic and scientific knowledge. Museum displays, at their core, are intended to teach this knowledge to the museum visitor. This is accomplished through detailed recreations of past events in the form of tableaux or dioramas, taxidermied creatures, and informational text near the displays. Instead of using the museum style of presentation to engage a new concept, I wanted to engage and better understand the museum exhibits themselves. I began my investigation by asking What level of authenticity, when we investigate these exhibits, is manifested, and can these exhibits convey a full and accurate experience of processes and entities they display?

One artist who has approached these questions with a camera is Japanese photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto. In his series Portraits, photographs of the wax exhibits of Madame Tussauds museum in London, and a second body of work, Dioramas, in which he photographed the natural history exhibits of New York's Natural History Museum. Mr. Sugimoto utilizes the powerful illusion that can be created in a two-dimensional print when simulacrum are at such a quality of construction that they can embody their original reference within a photograph. In portraits, Sugimoto lights the wax figures and composes the image just as a photographer might if they were photographing the actual person. He references the ability of not only the model makers, but the inherent ability of the camera to mediate and create a false reality. The mannequins

appear as if they a direct likeness of their subjects, not a likeness twice removed. In Dioramas he creates photographs of natural history dioramas as if they were sets for a narrative. The images are devoid of contextual indications that the museum is the actual location for the photographs. His Diorama images rely on the craft and skill of the dioramas' creators and the two-dimensionality of the camera's monocular eye to articulate a contrived but convincing reality.

In the museum photographs of this thesis the camera is not only used to create a false sense of reality, such as Sugimoto does in his work, but it is also used to breakdown that reality through exploiting the lack of detail in the museum's recreations and the inclusion of elements outside of the exhibit and on the edges of the frame. Even in the photographs that omit the obvious symbols of the museum, informational signage or other non-diegetic elements to the display, the figures themselves are of such a quality that their falsity is plain, unlike Sugimotos' where that line of distinction is blurred.

Sugimoto's work represents the degree of accuracy attainable when objects that rate high on the continuum of realness are paired with a medium that can capture such a high degree of detail. The series of museum photographs in the thesis utilize the photographic medium to call attention to the unrealistic elements of each exhibit instead of reifying the credibility of content as being linked to the accuracy of portrayal.

The degree of visual scrutiny available to the viewer through the photographic medium is extremely high. In the photograph titled, "Split Pond Environment, South Carolina State Museum, Columbia, SC," a cross-section, or cut-away, of an ideal pond environment found in temperate climates throughout North America is constructed within a Plexiglas front and eggshell colored museum walls. The image, fig 3, shows painted models of a frog catching supper, a dragonfly, with its tongue, and a black snake slipping off the bank of the pond and into the water. When we follow the snake under the surface of the water, which is represented by a textured sheet of acrylic covered in years of dust, the underwater aquatic environment is observable. A snapping turtle rests on the bottom of the pond and fish suspended by rods protruding from the display's floor hold them frozen in mid-swim as they passed through the cut-away's frame. The dragonflies that appear to hover over the diorama's pond grasses are given similar treatments, obvious metal

rods protruding from their undersides connecting them to the display's floor. This photograph utilizes the intrinsic mimetic capabilities of the photographic medium to reveal the flaws and unreality of the display. The unrealistic scale of the image (30x40") helps in the revelation. Seeing the model animals and environment larger than normal enhances the contrast between the environment we are presented with and the idyllic representations that are identical in every way to what could be found in nature. The success of this, and other images in this vein of the thesis work relies on a mental dialogue of comparison between what is being presented and the intuitive judgments of the viewer on an exhibit's realness. The viewer is presented with a privileged perspective to view this displays. It is one that enhances not only the level of realness is imbued to the objects, but also the signs of unrealness that contravene that level of realness.

These photographs are asking questions and commenting on the current and most recent ways museums present the public with knowledge. The structure of the museum shifted dramatically in the 19th and 20th century. The rise of industrialized economies and a mechanized labor force, according to Karl Marx, causes a shift in society's relationship to history. Because industrialized economies have reoriented our perspective to focus on the means of production inherent in society, a shift is seen in even the museum structure when retelling past histories and events. Museums' shift from retelling stories of individuals and their deeds to a more macro view emphasizing the praxis of daily life and their tools and methods. (Foster, 2000, p. 230). In this way, and the museums' reliance on the physical reproduction of nature, the museum mediates and controls the experience of being within the museum space.

This is important to the photographs of the museum exhibits because it elevates the importance of their physicality. An increase in the authenticity of object directly correlates to the perceived credibility of the information presented. If, in one example, an exhibit disclaims the objects on display are reproductions of historic objects versus another exhibit that does not, intuition suggests the openly admitted reproductions rate lower on a sliding scale of credibility than those that were not labeled as reproductions. If, in another example, there is no signage or disclaimers present in the exhibit to signify reproduction, how then, when a viewer passes personal judgment of authenticity over an object, is that conclusion reached? By comparing the

observable qualities of the objects presented against our personal continuum of acceptable realness can we reach our judgments.

The viewer is making active comparisons and establishing a reciprocal relationship between the exhibit and the context in which it was built. The exhibit's context should not be an influencing factor in judgment if they are exact recreations of the past, but since perfect exactitude is unattainable the level of stylistic interpretation, materials available, and technological sophistication of an exhibit create a reference to a specific time the exhibit was produced. In this way exhibits tell their age and act as time capsules to the ways information was once best represented in a museum. The link between visual realness and credibility has the potential to dislodge past exhibits' acceptance as newer technologies and techniques rewrite the standards of reproduction.

## CHAPTER 5

### EXHIBITION, CONCLUSIONS, AND FUTURE WORK

Until this exhibition I have not had to plan every aspect of a show from conception to execution. In the past I have always been one of many who had worked together to put together a large show. There are also aspects to the show that changed over time. Aspects that were planned one way and ended up resembling something entirely different. Originally, I had intended on displaying 30x40 inch photographs of the museum tableaux along side the tableaux themselves. The scenes in the gallery were to represent those depicted in the photographs. I had envisioned the two pieces working in conjunction with one another in a comparison between the two. The photographs of the tableaux do not work in a similar fashion to the finished museum photographs; they have a linked, but very separate way of creating a critical statement. It was feared that by presenting these photographs in the same format, framed, 30x40 inch prints, hanging on the wall, they would be too closely associated with the other printed images in the show.

To remedy this the photographs were printed onto five-by-seven-inch postcards. One side was was the photograph, the other was stamped with a postcard with stylized lettering, labels for where to place postage, address lines, and a box to write your correspondence. The cards were arranged in stacks of one-hundred on the top of wooden sculpture pedestals. Viewers were encouraged to take the postcards from the exhibit as a souvenir. This was seen as a way to incorporate the third body of work in context different enough to ensure a proper conceptual distancing between the individual bodies of work in the thesis.

Because the photographs were repurposed as postcards I connected the commodification of natural history to the tableaux photographs with this work. It also speaks to the museum's attempt at recreating the real through the exhibits and failing, and how with a decrease in realism, so too does the credibility and assumed authenticity of an exhibit or institution.

Other aspects of the show changed as well. The original order for curation was



revamped once in the gallery space. The works had been pre-arranged before the show with the advisement of my committee chair, Robert Spahr. They were grouped according to visual readability, connections through subject matter, color, texture, etc. The original groupings were 5 groups of three that would create an easily and dynamic gallery environment. The resulting arrangement is three groups of horizontal photographs along the west, south, and east walls, and a group of six vertical photographs on the north wall of the space. The dimensions of the gallery, a subterranean basement that has been converted and modified into a gallery space, were such that the available hanging surfaces for work would not allow the original design for curation.

This change, although unforeseen, originally, resulting in creating a pattern of curation that was equally as engaging as the original. The space chosen for the gallery exhibition was the Douglass School Art Place in Murphysboro, IL offered an unfinished aesthetic to the sterile environments of the museum photographs and an advantageous juxtaposition between the space and photographs depicting the mostly natural parks spaces.

Hanging and arranging this size of a show, dealing with multiple types of art in sizes large and small, presents a challenge for anyone who undertakes it. The amount of effort and time invested in the production and the academic research is staggering when it is all tallied. This body of work had its first test photograph made on January of 2012 and the final exhibition opened March 16, 2013. In Between those two dates almost 10,000 miles were traveled, ten states were visited, over a hundred-and-fifty photographs were made, and numerous National, State, and local museums parks and spaces were visited.

The goals that I established in my proposal have been met; the photographs of the parks and natural spaces engage an American visual lineage that includes the Hudson River School painters and 20th century modernist artists like Ansel Adams and Imogen Cunningham, the critical difference between the work in my thesis and that made these previous generations of artists is the deconstructed view of the aestheticized places depicted, and both bodies of the museum centric works, the museum tableaus created and the photographs of finished museum exhibits, connect the museum institution with the recreation of the natural. The conclusions reached in the course of performing the production and scholastic research have yielded a clear

articulated critique of the ideals set forth by Romantic artists and authors of the 19th century and the endeavors of Modernist artists to obfuscate the presence of manipulation in wilderness spaces.

Although not formulated as a post-modern evaluation of the institutions which shape our interactions with natural space, the artistic investigations of my thesis lead the way toward future works that will continue to engage similar concepts of authenticity and simulacrum. In the future, not only will this body of work continue to expand, but other projects concentrated on human interactions with natural processes and created spaces are already in production. One such project looks to the ways in which death and decay are represented in American culture in, both human, and non-human forms through evaluating the spaces and rituals formed by society to mitigate loss and the angst of human existence. Another body of work, in the early stages of production, questions the place of humanity in the presence of overwhelming influences of digital media and the technologies that have become indissoluble from modern means of production and daily life.

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## APPENDICES

Fig 1



Fig 2





Fig 3





Fig 4



Fig 5



Fig 6





Fig 7



Fig 8



Fig 9



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Group Show, The Southern Illinois University Carbondale Doctoral Symposium, Carbondale, IL, 2011

Group Show, Columbia Museum of Art, Columbia, SC, 2009 Group Exhibition, "Happy Fun Time Picture Show" City Art Gallery, Columbia, SC, 2009

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