

**School of Humanities
Department of Art**

**Internet Explorer: The Creative Administration of
Digital Geography**

Sheridan Coleman

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Doctor of Philosophy
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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.



Sheridan Coleman
10th January 2016

Abstract

The recent advent of Google's Earth, Maps and Street View geolocation interfaces, and their widespread uptake around the world (in mostly urban, Western contexts), has caused shifts in the cultural concept of landscape. This thesis takes stock of these shifts and creatively responds to the contemporary expansiveness and adaptability of 'landscape' and its newer, digital iterations.

'Creative administration' is introduced as an over-arching methodology for the collection and interpretation of ideas about landscape in this study. Creative administration is a romanticised and idiosyncratic system, which makes use of techniques co-opted from archiving and the natural science disciplines. The researcher's use of an antique catalogue box for the collection and interpretation of ideas about landscape is an emblematic and a core feature of creative administration. These methods are used to manage the expansive nature of digital world geography and landscape subjects, but also to ensure that their colour, diversity and scale are expressed and venerated. They both shape and partly constitute the artistic endeavour of this study. Across all aspects of this thesis, creative administration results in a plurality of concise engagements with landscape: episodic written chapters and numerous miniature paintings.

Virtual journeying and the rituals of creative administration are presented as artistic activities that underpin the development of a substantial corpus of intimate, detailed paintings. These paintings, created over the course of three exhibitions, reveal digital encounters with coastal, wilderness and remote island locations drawn from the often-unrealistic digital fabric of Google's constructed landscapes. Small in scale and generous in number and detail, the paintings provide a personal and sometimes light-hearted account of the complexities and richness at play in contemporary landscape culture.

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A fellow in many things, Dr Ann Schilo has been, frankly, my saviour from postgraduate misadventure. I admire so much about Ann: her breadth of knowledge, her joyful, shoeless good humour, and her exceptional judgment of what’s important. She immediately ‘got’ what I hadn’t yet articulated and modelled for me something rare: a collegiate spirit, whose warmth and intellect radiated through handwritten notes and supervision meetings and who never let the world beyond the office dampen the magnitude or subtlety of the work within.

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Episode One

Introduction

Preface

This morning I woke up, put the kettle on and stood in the kitchen, faffing about on my smartphone. My friend Luke had posted a spectacular clip to Instagram from our recent trip through Iceland: a towering geyser eruption, filmed using a digital drone (Fig. 1.1). I spotted our group, reduced to tiny silhouettes beneath the aerial camera and titanic waterworks. Luke is a marvellous filmmaker and I'd been avidly anticipating having my journey retold through his (camera's) eyes.



Fig. 1.1 Luke McAdam, still from an aerial film of Strokkur Geyser erupting in Geysir, Southern Iceland. Reproduced with permission of the artist

After tea, I fetched a potted rosemary from my shaded balcony to the sunny back steps and fed it some water (Fig. 1.2). It had been struggling lately, which made me feel bucolically inept and cruel, though I'd been meaning to move it for some time.



Fig. 1.2 My relocated rosemary shrub

At my study desk, I opened Google Maps and queried how long it would take to walk the outer path of Karrakatta Cemetery (Fig. 1.3). I have to finish the walk before sunset, as pedestrians are prohibited after dark. In that place, the change from day to night turns visitors from respectful strollers into antisocial loiterers.

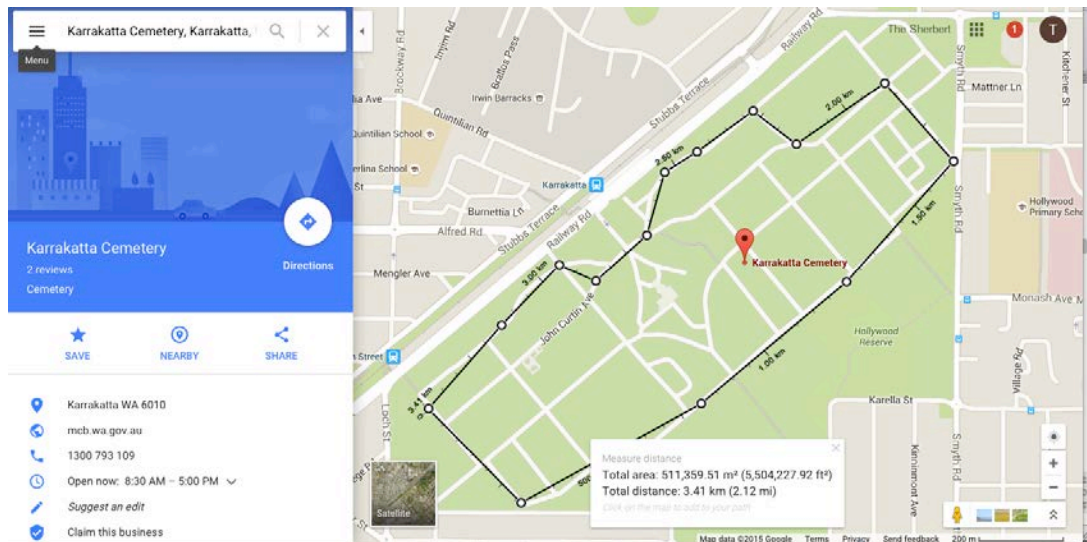


Fig. 1.3 A screenshot of a planned walk around Karrakatta Cemetery in Perth, W.A.

Now, as I write, three books are stacked by my laptop, texts I have used in this study: *Landscape* by the geographer John Wylie, a bible in this field; the essay collection *Wild Ideas* edited by cultural geographer David Rothenberg; and new media theorist Catherine Summerhayes' *Google Earth: Outreach and Activism*. The spines of all three are green, the symbolic colour of nature, which is not unusual for books about land, environment or site (Fig. 1.4). Most of the texts I have used in this study are virescent.



Fig. 1.4 Three texts that discuss landscape issues, all with green covers.

Landscape penetrates this most average of mornings not just by populating it with images of physical places, but by conveying the symbols, customs, subtexts and processes that tell me what certain landscapes mean, what landscape can be. This exegesis presents that territory of landscape study which can be triangulated between contemporary art, digital landscapes and cultural geography, a vast field of enquiry within which computer screens, gardens, TV shows, postcards, travel souvenirs, artworks, news articles and countless other forms of landscape representation are implicated.

Introduction

Landscape—the result of the interpretation and representation that occurs whenever a person encounters the natural or the outside world—is an unshakable component of life in even the most cosmopolitan, contemporary and digitally embellished circumstances. Though I am an artist living and working in urban, Western, first world Perth, Western Australia, I have built a path of inquiry, art making and critique from the innumerable ways that landscape penetrates and filters into my practice every day.

In this exegesis, I look to Google Maps, Google Earth and Google Street View—three digital geolocation interfaces that together comprise today’s most comprehensive and continuous landscape project—for insight on the ways that contemporary landscape art and landscape viewing practices have evolved alongside an ever-expanding, multi-disciplinary definition of what constitutes ‘landscape’ itself. The explosive success of Google’s geolocation services, coupled with the enormous global uptake of the Internet as an everyday personal tool, constitutes a meaningful new subject in the continuing cross-disciplinary study of landscape. This research project provides a timely elucidation of a new period of interaction between art, digital technology and landscape theory, calling upon all three fields to develop strategies for engaging with the digital world landscape critically and artistically.

Since the release of Google Maps in 2005, followed by Earth in the same year and Street View in 2007, a period of rapid and experimental cross-pollination has occurred between digital landscape technologies and global arts practice. This interaction represents a significant and fecund new chapter in landscape art history, one marked by reflexivity between disciplines, and by project-driven artistic engagement with digital landscapes.

Herein, I present a unique artistic engagement with Google’s geolocation interfaces, which have been harnessed as both art making tools and artistic subjects. The organisation of these interfaces, as well as their emergent, globally recognisable visual languages and functionalities, have been chronicled, played with, and critiqued. To this end I propose a series of artistic strategies for the incisive

navigation of digital landscapes. These strategies make use of non-traditional techniques such as collecting, archiving and categorising whilst also spanning artistic methods such as painting, collage, installation and exhibition.

Creative Administration

The representation of landscape is an operation that has no fixed character, nor any absolute exhaustibility: the outside world is large, intricate, variable and dynamic. On top of this, individual landscapes are defined, seen, interpreted and built into existence in different ways by every culture, person and moment in history. Add to this the vastness of Earth, Maps and Street View (though immaterial, Google's digital landscapes are literally their own worlds), and the artistic and academic possibilities within this field are a proverbial bottomless well.

It is to this very expansiveness that my practice responds. The growth and adaptability of the subject of landscape today is one of its foremost defining characteristics. The substance of my work throughout this study has been to address the question of how to move through the field in a manner that celebrates its sheer scale and diversity without signing myself (or my audience) up to a [Sisyphean task](#)¹. The solution I have developed is to explore digital landscape using a process that I call 'creative administration'. This process seeks to provide a microcosmic view of a large field, not by summarising it, but by amassing a great and variegated number of concise engagements which, when taken together, attest to the qualities and complexity of the subject. Instead of long, synoptic chapters, this exegesis consists of many short Episodes; my tiny painted artworks number in the hundreds; my epigrammatic research notes in the thousands. These vignettes or fragments allow me to give form to a kaleidoscopic field without losing its colour.

Painting is the medium through which I express creative administration in this study. I see it rather like a butterfly net: my painting captures moments of artistic labour and cultural moments extracted from my lived experience, journeying through the

¹ Fuller definitions of all terms printed in [green](#) can be located in *Appendix II: Glossary of Interesting Concepts Mentioned in the Exegesis*.

digital landscape. Painting is romantic, and has a long history of its own which is brought to bear upon each subject, forming a continuum between antiquated landscape art traditions and contemporary non-art landscape representation online. The medium is also highly intimate, recording my time, attention to detail, artistic approach and the movements of my hand in the studio.

In the studio, creative administration precipitated a series of project-based creative engagements with Maps, Earth and Street View, encapsulated in three exhibitions—*Midnight*, *Forecastle*, *Wilderness User*, and *Internet Explorer*. Numerous paintings and other objects were exhibited in each as the collected relics of periods of journeying in the digital landscape. Each will be presented in later Episodes.

Writing—and the way I write—is an important part of creative administration. My artistic practice is a continuum, which is seeded and maintained with research, flowers into painting and is steeped with written articulation, in my own timbre. Painting and writing are not in spirit separate to me. The singular, written voice within these pages is as much an artistic endeavour as my painting is an artistic expression of scholarly research.

The Catalogue Box

While compiling my reading and research for this exegesis, I acquired an antique catalogue box (Fig. 1.5). It determined the way that I recorded my research and became an integral foundation for the work that was to issue from the studio. Inside the catalogue box, all relevant quotes, historical notes and sketches were handwritten on index cards and filed under subheadings.



Fig. 1.5 The Catalogue Box

In using the catalogue box, all new research was made tangible—handmade and itemised—before being categorized according to my own judgment. I did not simply amass information, but organised it creatively: information was stored as a set of handmade objects, and the classification of each card required deliberation, interpretation and the creation of meaning. This creative administration strategy generated both material and conceptual relationships between units of information.

The catalogue box is emblematic of this entire research project. The Episodes of this exegesis are a textual rendition of its contents, and every reference herein is the result of manually thumbing through the worn, palm-sized cards. Eighteen Episodes will partition the key concerns of this exegesis, theorists' commentary, art practices and studio work, in mimicry of index card dividers².

Cultural Geography

² Each Episode title reflects a subheading used in my catalogue box, including subjects such as *Landscape as a Cultural Process*, *Getting to Know Google* and *Remote Sensing*.

The theoretical framework I have chosen for this study is the cross-disciplinary field of cultural geography. My preference for cultural geography stems from the way that its authors bring together case studies from many disciplines, art among them, expanding and relishing the nuances and difference within topics such as boundaries, mapping, wilderness and the subject of this exegesis, landscape³. I found cultural geography to be responsive to the plastic, broadening discourse of landscape globally. By identifying art as one of many ways that landscape manifests in society (alongside advertising, agriculture, city design and so on), cultural geography provides an arena in which I can plot art's reflexive interactions with digital technology, new media and history across many academic fields and cultural structures. It helps me to conceptualise landscape as a vein of thought, or as a cultural mechanism, rather than a subtopic, tradition or genre of art study.

In the past, art theory has never been as pressing an influence on my research as literature, cultural studies and the natural sciences. Cultural geography works for my studio practice because it guides me to think about *how* landscape manifests outside of art, helping me to integrate methods from other disciplines and from history, such as collecting, miscellany, biography, archiving and labelling, yoking them to my creative administration process⁴. Cultural geography motivated me to inhabit not only the role of an artist, but of a writer, researcher, collector, explorer and user⁵. As a result, I write this exegesis as a specialist in landscape, rather than a specialist in landscape art. Specifically, this study charts how and why shifts in cultural conceptions of landscape are reflected and responded to by artists (rather than a study of the history or formal features of landscape artworks)⁶.

³ A good example is the book *Envisioning Landscapes, Making Worlds: Geography and the Humanities* (Daniels et al., 2011), which brings together essays about how place is constructed in diverse cultural contexts, including 18th Century French courtly life, 20th Century Japanese film, war zones and evolutionary science.

⁴ 'Landscape' as an art genre and as a gardening term were first written about in Europe. From these origins broader definitions and broader usage of landscape have developed (Andrews 1999; Wamberg 1999). The history and etymology of landscape is expanded upon in *Appendix I: Landscape from Landschaft: The Emergence of an Art Genre*.

⁵ "User" is written throughout this document in reference to the role of a user of a computer, smartphone or piece of software such as Google Maps.

⁶ Geographer Brian Lorch's division of landscape into a) landscape content, b) landscape as a cultural medium that can be decoded, and c) landscape as a social practice, is helpful here (Lorch 2002). Landscape art is expressed mostly in the first category, drawing upon and impacting the latter two.

Within cultural geography, landscaping is understood as a fundamental cultural process (Cosgrove 2008; Wylie 2007; Bell & Lyall 2002). It exists wherever and whenever nature or the environment is shaped, interpreted, constructed or represented and always imparts or reflects cultural and individual subjectivity upon nature (Wilson 1992; Bell & Lyall 2002). Cultural Geographer Denis Cosgrove remarked that, “landscape is not merely the world as we see it. It is a construction, a composition of that world. Landscape is a way of seeing the world” (Cosgrove 1984, 13). Art historian Malcolm Andrews applies this thinking directly to art: “A ‘landscape’, cultivated or wild, is already artifice before it has become the subject of a work of art. Even when we simply *look* we are already shaping and interpreting” (Andrews 1999, I; orig. italics). This exegesis embraces the expanded, contemporary understanding of landscape provided by cultural geography, calling upon theorists such as Stephen Daniels (2011), John Wylie (2007), Jay Appleton (1990; 1996) and Denis Cosgrove (1984; 1993; 2008; 2009; 2010).

From its conception as a term to describe a European painting genre in the 15th Century (Andrews 1999), ‘landscape’ has germinated, becoming an indispensable concept in gardening, city planning, geography, biology, cartography, anthropology, virtual reality and new media studies, literature, politics, and even psychology. As a flexible, cross-disciplinary term, landscape is a banner under which diverse operations can comfortably fit: pruning roses, sewing rotation crops, declaring national borders, sketching a mountain range or Photoshopping weeds out of a wilderness picture. This exegesis traces the artistic lineage of landscape as it converges with so many sibling fields, each of which has something to offer to the creation and interpretation of artistic landscape representations.

Both landscape art and digital landscapes figure into important cultural geography texts (Cosgrove & Fox 2010; Daniels et al., 2011; Wilkins 2010), often as evidence of the cultural status attributed to sites in the way that they are represented in art or online (as imbued with territorial, agricultural, military, moral, religious, or narrative—and so on—values and attitudes). This exegesis considers both the shifts and continuity of the expression of landscape as it adapts to a constant revolution in landscape viewing technologies, drawing upon art, geography, the sciences and

humanities more widely, as well as more popular and globally widespread visual history and visual culture.

A history of the **Western** concept of landscape was prepared for this exegesis as a topical addendum addressing the etymology of the term landscape, and to demonstrate the astounding variety of ways in which land and nature have been represented through history. This essay can be found in *Appendix I: Landscape from Landschaft: The Emergence of an Art Genre*⁷.

Google Maps, Google Earth & Google Street View

In software engineering terms, the first fifteen years of the 21st Century has been a vast age. Since the release of Maps in 2005, Google's geolocation interfaces have evolved and expanded unrelentingly, incorporating new features, information, imagery; cornering existing and emerging markets; integrating user customisation; and innovating new digital services. In daily use by a substantial worldwide public, Google has introduced a series of landscape viewing practices that are internationally legible and familiar: zooming, aerial perspective, pixilation, clicking, pinning and searching are increasingly counted among the modes with which many people experience landscapes on a regular basis.

The uses for Google's digital landscapes have also expanded. No longer confined to navigational applications or geographical curiosity, Maps, Earth and Street View offer vast databases of raw landscape imagery and information, which have been successfully exploited by artists, hobbyists, cartographers, governments, vandals, marketing teams, ecologists and archaeologists, among others.

This exegesis takes stock of a maturing field of discourse surrounding the use and cultural impacts of Google's geographical trifecta of landscape imaging technologies, at a point after which significant artistic engagement has occurred with the interfaces, and widespread global familiarity with the interfaces is irrefutable. In

⁷ These addenda are an early example of the breadth of my field, and they help me to manage it without clogging the construction of my thesis. Given the abundance of material that might relate to my subject (contemporary landscape art, landscape as a cultural concept and Google Earth), I have delimited this wealth of histories and issues to an explicit field, as revealed in the following Episodes.

developed, urban centres where Internet usage saturates daily life, the impact of Maps, Earth and Street View is colossal. San Franciscan artist Jenny Odell's wry Street View re-enactments (Fig. 1.6) demonstrate the visual currency of Google's digital landscapes, and the increasing pertinence of the chronicling and critiquing of its impact, by both artists and other practitioners.

Fig. 1.6 Jenny Odell, 2009, *Re-enactments*, Google Street View screenshots (left) and performance documentation (right)

Image: <http://www.jennyodell.com/reenactments-series.html>

That these interfaces are the subject of artistic engagement in my research project speaks both to their significance in the cultural environs of my art practice (an urban, Western, first world context), and to their inherent value as systems which help users to effectively navigate great quantities of landscape data, to create meaning, artwork and to contemplate or participate in visual culture. I have selected Google due to its global focus, its overwhelmingly dominant market share, and its potency⁸. It is a paragon of the way that visual management of physical sites can produce landscapes amenable to countless uses, and though it is in a state of constant amendment, can be read as a significant historical, visual and cultural text on the nature of landscape in the 21st Century. As the author and cyberpunk pioneer William Gibson described it, "Google is a distributed entity, a two-way membrane, a game-changing tool on the order of the equally handy flint hand ax [sic], with which we chop our way through the densest thickets of information" (Gibson 2010, 1).

Contemporary Landscape Art Practice

The evolution of contemporary landscape art practice in the first two decades of the 21st Century has been characterised by a refocus upon process over observation

⁸ Though Google's geolocation interfaces do have some competitors, none are as culturally transferable or as popular as Google Earth. This is indicated perhaps most acutely by the official inclusion of the word 'google' (in verb form) in the Merriam-Webster and Oxford English Dictionaries in 2006 (Lombardi 2006; Schwartz 2006).

(Cunnane 2012; Kwon 2004)⁹. This has been in part due to the continuing expansion of landscape study across non-art disciplines. In *Nature*, art theorist Jeffrey Kastner writes: “the spaces between (or overlap among) different concepts of the natural and the artistic continue to offer productive sites for creative activity” (Kastner 2012, 13). He goes on: “Art that is engaged with [nature]... has been uniquely positioned to benefit from the dislocation of disciplinary specificities” (Kastner 2012, 17). Landscape artwork increasingly embraces methods borrowed from other disciplines in which landscape has recently gained currency, such as the sciences, geography and sociology¹⁰. Collecting, archiving, sampling, travelling, note-taking, planting, building and measuring have become essential components of the landscape artist’s arsenal, as they consider the expanded nature of landscape as a concept (Entrikin 2011; Reichle 2009). In his essay *Art in the Age of Technoscience*, Ingeborg Reichle states: “Today art is readily seen as an independent form of epistemic practice... to break science’s monopoly on scientific research methods” (Reichle 2009, 119). In making the artworks presented herein, I have adapted scientific methods in this epistemically creative manner. The insights I have gained about landscape and digital representation have come from the artistic repurposing of scientific methods as much as experimentation with artistic materials, techniques and styles. All of these activities are conducted under the banner of creative administration, where my research, writing and artwork evolve as one practice.

New media theorist Gretchen Wilkins has observed that virtual movement inside digital space in programs like Google Earth has been useful across many disciplines, including geography, archaeology, design, philosophy and art (Wilkins 2010). Virtual journeying and the documenting of digital landscapes figure heavily into the practices of contemporary artists such as Clement Valla (Fig. 1.7), Jon Rafman and Emilio Vavarella.

⁹ This exegesis was developed and written between 2012 and 2017 and speaks for the cultural impact of Google Maps, Earth and Street View between the time of their launch in 2005 and the completion of this study in early 2017.

¹⁰ I write “recently” to invoke the heritage of the word ‘landscape’, which was located within art before it ever entered the other humanities or the sciences of which it is now a part. For an account of this early history of ‘landscape’ as a word, art genre, and its movement into wider use, please see *Appendix I: Landscape from Landschaft: The Emergence of an Art Genre*.

Fig. 1.7 Clement Valla, 2010, *Postcards from Google Earth: Switzerland 3*, digital screenshot

Image: <http://clementvalla.com/work/postcards-from-google-earth/>

Others, such as the oil painters Jeremy Miranda and Ian Williams (American and Australian respectively) integrate the processes, symbols and formats of digital landscapes into their landscape depictions. Their works suggest that the viewing modes characteristic of digital landscapes are impacting upon the way that landscapes are conceived of, even when one is completely offline (Fig. 1.8). The approach of these artists speaks to their enduring role as landscape-makers, as suggested by arts writer Abby Cunnane: “This expanded definition of site could be read in parallel with technological developments: there is an obvious link to be made here with the navigation of virtual space, through which one travels transitively, site after site, and self-directed” (Cunnane 2012, 5). This exegesis will elucidate the generative relationship between cultural shifts in how landscape, site or place are experienced digitally and the way that artists interpret, analyse and give meaning to such shifts.



Fig. 1.8 Ian Williams, 2013, *Bad Overlay*, oil on board, 21 x 30 cm
Reproduced with permission of the artist

In the following Episodes, these artists' practices and others will be examined in order to chronicle a new period of artistic engagement with digital landscape and to situate my practice within a field of contemporary landscape art that is already flourishing in response to new technologies and contemporary concerns surrounding landscape.

Landscape and Privilege

In this exegesis, my discussion of landscape will brush up against some pre-existing histories, theories and traditions that sideline certain groups of people. I will explain the position of my practice with regards to these biases here, and will also use footnotes throughout each Episode where more specific clarification is needed.

The field in which this study takes place is populated by a lot of **Western** traditions. Landscape art originated in the West¹¹; Google's geolocation interfaces were developed, are administered, and are used most in the West; and terrestrial exploration was once narrated vividly within Western culture as an expression of Western civilisation. Each of these traditions contains a rhetoric describing the worldwide or the universal, yet they frequently neglect non-Western perspectives on that seemingly global picture, bringing problematic biases into play.

The concept of exploration as it is used in this study must be foregrounded here¹². Before the 21st Century, Western terrestrial exploration was predominantly carried out within the context of imperialism. Operating under this paradigm, Western countries explored and territorialised non-Western countries, pre-supposing their inferiority and causing horrendous and lasting cultural, environmental, economic and physical trauma among the cultures they encountered there. Today, imperialism is acknowledged as a dark and regretted part of Western history (Hamadi 2014; Loar 2007; Kennedy 2010). Still, there is more to the Western **Age of Exploration**. As a practice, it generated meritorious artistic and scientific work, and contributed to a vision of landscape as a source of wonder, spiritual and intellectual enrichment, challenge, knowledge and excitement (Frost 2004; Kleiner & Mamiya 2005; Macfarlane 2003).

These latter qualities are an ambient presence in my practice, in which virtual exploration is a prominent methodology. I do not parody imperial exploration in my artwork, nor do I directly critique its undeniable history of violence and ignorance. Instead, exploration is a scaffold through which I narrate and celebrate my personal discovery of the ontological difference present in world geography. It leads to surprise and joy, and I indulge in the romance of its antiquated occupations, such as note taking, sketching and collecting knowledge. These sentiments harmonise with those aspects of exploration that are imaginative, gentle and appreciative of the scale and richness of the world.

¹¹ Please see *Appendix I: Landscape from Landschaft: The Emergence of an Art Genre* for this history.

¹² The traumatic legacy of Western imperialism is also acknowledged in more detail in *Episode Seventeen: Oh! To be an Explorer!*

An echo of imperialism is also present in the Western, corporate structure of the technologies dealt with herein. Several commentators have touted the global scope of Google's geolocation interfaces (Chivers 2013; Masters Jach 2011). Cursorily considered by its regular users, Google Earth might seem like a software with which anybody in the world can see anywhere in the world, yet in practice many people don't know about it, don't use it or can't access it¹³. Some lack the infrastructure, resources or skills necessary; others live where other alternatives predominate, the technology sparks no demand, or governments have censored it (Zolfagharifard 2014). Google Earth is only available alongside electricity, digital devices, the Internet, computer literacy and other accoutrements of urban, first world, capitalist life. The user cohort of this new and excitingly comprehensive landscape vision is skewed towards Western culture and the implications of this privilege must be taken into account¹⁴. Further, people who don't use this technology are subject to the viewership of those who do use it through a passive kind of visual imperialism upon their persons, homes and environs¹⁵. My practice cannot speak for those who are not Google Earth users, and is necessarily biographical, tied to my practice, location and cultural background.

Lastly, a brief note on the heritage of 'landscape' as a concept that first appeared in the West: as outlined above¹⁶, I deploy 'landscape' with its contemporary, inclusive meaning, to describe non-Western, pre-Western, non-art, cross-cultural expressions of landscape as much as Western landscape art. As I will explain further later, I regard landscape as any point of interaction between culture and nature. The contemporary flexibility of 'landscape' enlivens and underpins this study.

¹³ Two-thirds of the global population does not have access to the Internet. In seeking to ameliorate this figure, Google has made various efforts to improve connectivity, for example with its Project Loon (short for 'balloon') scheme and a \$1 billion fleet of 180 low-orbit satellites launched in 2014 (Nirmalathas 2014; Zolfagharifard 2014). Facebook's OpenCellular initiative also seeks to improve access in remote areas using an open source wireless Internet platform.

¹⁴ Further discussion of censorship, privacy and the reflexivity between Google satellite cameras and private citizens will be mounted in *Episode Sixteen: Dialoguing with Satellites*, and an examination of Google's political and corporate motives can be found in *Episode Seven: Getting to Know Google*.

¹⁵ Sites with their own unique identities, inhabitants, and/or serious humanitarian issues might all have their individuality unfairly voided by the scenic qualities of Google Maps: "the bewitching thing about these photos was that *everything* looks beautiful, be it a vacation hub in the Bahamas, a slum in São Paulo or a refugee camp in central Africa" (Ruby & Ruby 2010, 8).

¹⁶ Under the subheading *Cultural Geography*.

A Note on Whimsy

To expand upon my remarks on exploration above, I wish here to preface the tone of my practice. In drawing upon history, theory and the practices and methods of other disciplines, my studio work and artwork provides a rather personal and poetic imagining of these structures within the context of art. At all times, I pursue threads of landscape inquiry that echo earlier traditions, in which art and the natural sciences were not so separate, but each endowed the other with greater meaning. Art brought life, colour and significance to natural science, and in return art could shed any association with frivolity or self-indulgence, to participate in the spirit of the **Enlightenment**. This is a tradition in which Robert Hooke (1635-1703) illustrated the wonders he viewed through his microscope in his paradigm-shifting *Micrographia* (Fig. 1.9); in which the Venetian monk Fra' Mauro (?-1459) formed his radiant cartographic vision of the Earth, the *Mappa Mundi* (Fig. 1.10); and in which Mary Anning (1799-1847) tenderly illustrated the fossils she excavated with her brother (Fig. 1.11) (Pugliese 2006; Torrens 2004; *World Map* n.d.). These are landscape-makers and travellers who, in the words of cultural scholar Umberto Eco, were “anxious to get to know new landscapes... in order to savour new pleasures and new emotions” (Eco 2004, 282)¹⁷.

¹⁷ Eco here is referring to the zeitgeist around world travel of the 18th Century, which was no longer driven by a “desire for conquest”, yet I feel it describes all three practitioners, and is certainly a sentiment with a longer history (Eco 2004, 282).

Fig 1.9 An illustration from Robert Hooke's book *Micrographia* (1665) showing a microscopic view of a stone quarried from Kettering in the U.K.

Full text facsimiles: <https://archive.org/details/micrographiaorso1670hook>
http://lhldigital.lindahall.org/cdm/ref/collection/nat_hist/id/

Fig 1.10 Fra' Mauro, *Mappa Mundi*, 1457-1459, pigment paint on vellum, gilded wooden frame, 223 x 223 cm

Image: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fra_Mauro_map#/media/File:FraMauroDetailedMap.jpg

Fig 1.11 Mary Anning, a sketch showing mollusc fossils from the Mesozoic period, called Belemnites c1800-1820, pen and ink

Image:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/famouspeople/mary_anning/images/anning_sketch_belemnites.jpg

In this spirit, I endeavour to submit insights on contemporary landscape and digital landscape for my viewer's consideration with light-heartedness, my wholly sincere enthusiasm and a sense of open-handedness¹⁸. The development of creative administration in my practice comes as a result of this poetic character, and of the desire to capture and give cultural meaning to fragments of landscape with a bit of levity and éclat.

Notes on Terminology

In common parlance, the word 'landscape' is often used to describe a physical site (e.g., "I walked in an autumn landscape"). However, in this exegesis 'landscape' will exclusively be employed to describe subjective views of nature, including representations, constructions and subjectively felt experiences informed by cultural factors; never physical sites¹⁹.

¹⁸ By open-handedness I mean that I wish to give of the field of landscape and of my work generously, using artwork as a way to share and elucidate landscape for the viewer, and never to encrypt or enclose my subjects or insights within anything that requires specialist art (or other) knowledge.

¹⁹ The contemporary definition of landscape as described by art theorists and cultural geographers will be considered more fully in *Episode Three: Landscape as a Cultural Process*.

Though many contemporary landscapes, even digital ones, depict pastoral or wilderness scenes, they also are just as likely to contain skyscrapers, roads and suburbs. The landscapes examined herein are of an extended, contemporary definition of landscape, which includes seascapes, deserts, and urban landscapes (Lorch 2002; Wells 2011). In short, not all landscapes discussed in this exegesis will be ‘green’. This is not just because the meaning of the term ‘landscape’ has expanded into numerous disciplines, but because a more generous picture of landscape images is more appropriate for a discussion of digital landscape: when using Earth, Maps or Street View, landscape imagery is constituted by whatever is *out there* (that is, in the browser window), entailing, equally, the surface of the whole world, whether civilised, wild or otherwise.

Where a word is printed in **green letters** in my writing, I have supplied a fuller explanation of its history and meaning in *Appendix II: Glossary of Interesting Concepts Mentioned in the Exegesis*.

Lastly, it should be noted that due to their loaded ties to theoretical discourses outside of the scope of the theses herein, the terms ‘environment’ and ‘countryside’ will be avoided in this exegesis.

Episode Two

Multiplicity & Creative Administration

The Catalogue Box

The Museum

The Artist's Collection

Search terms, Subheadings and Labels

Multiplicity and Creative Administration

As its title indicates, this exegesis attests to the value of creative administration as an original methodology for processing vast amounts of data and imagery, such as digital landscapes, libraries or online data. In this Episode, I will consider how collecting and archiving can be artistic acts, whereby data is contextualised and attributed meaning through the use of creative arrangement and classification. These processes underpin a pluralist approach in my study of geolocation interfaces and the field of cultural geography. This Episode will examine historical examples of aestheticised archiving systems, look to theorists from the field of network aesthetics, and survey art practices which embrace collection and categorisation. These references will foreground a discussion on my use of creative administration.

“This tool – which is supposed to be comforting in its delivery of everything and anything – actually plunges us into great confusion,” says novelist and filmmaker Jean-Claude Carrière of the overwhelming heft of the [Internet](#) (Carrière & Eco 2011, 68). Carrière is critical of the disorganisation and inconsistent reliability of the Internet. He goes on: “What the Internet provides is gross information, with almost no sense of order or hierarchy, and with the sources unchecked. So each of us needs not only to check facts, but also to create meaning, by which I mean to organize and position our learning within an argument” (Carrière & Eco 2011, 81).

My practice draws upon several corpora of information and imagery which are too vast to comprehensively surmount as a single researcher: the physical world is too large to traverse in my lifetime; the digital landscape of Google Earth, in reflection of geography, is hardly simpler to digest; the literature of cultural geography is bigger than I can personally read. These are temporal tragedies – too much to experience to be had and too little time to have it in, leading to the familiar contemporary anxiety of being overwhelmed by possibility. Carrière laments: “The terrible grief of the dying as they realize their last hour is upon them and they still haven’t read Proust” (Carrière & Eco 2011, 272-273).

The cost of these lost opportunities is exacerbated by the daily presence of the Internet, which multiplies the number of necessarily forgone experiences. Many solutions exist to cut through the data and help accurately retrieve the desired datum. Libraries have the Dewey Decimal system; the Internet has Google and Yahoo!; Google Maps has a search bar. These tools take what seems like immutable variety and break it up into manageable pieces, helping their users to build what Carrière would call an “argument” (Carrière & Eco 2011, 81). In *Global Imagination and Visual Rhetoric in Google Earth*, language and media theorist Christine Masters Jach describes how Google Earth’s navigation tools enable the construction of arguments about landscape: “*Google Earth* bewilders users in the jumble of geographic images it presents. Yet, at the same time, [it] affords users the opportunity to perceptually manage and navigate its images... cognitively mapping our positions...” (Masters Jach 2011, 37; orig. italics).

Data administration helps us to cope with informational glut, navigate it, and through the development of a potentially infinite system of categories, give definition to and provide understanding of its trends, cultures or landscapes. American Geographer Donald W. Meinig, writing on the legibility of landscape, states that such systems of organisation and interpretation are made essential by the complexity of landscape: “Any landscape is so dense with evidence and so complex and cryptic that we can never be assured that we have read it all or read it aright. Anyone can look, but we all need help to see that it is at once a panorama, a composition, a palimpsest, a microcosm; that in every prospect there can be more and more that meets the eye” (Meinig 1979, 6).

Though they evolved in the archives of museums, libraries, and legal and scientific institutions, data administration processes are particularly conceptually congruent with art practices that undertake *artistic research*. In *Nature*, Ingeborg Reichle identifies some of the organisational activities to be increasingly found in common between the arts and sciences: “collecting, archiving, observing, speculating, abstracting, modelling, experimentally examining and using analogies and metaphors” (Reichle 2009, 120). When applied outside of [the scientific method](#), these activities can support artistic reconnaissance, forming a structured sample of a research topic, for later development in the studio. In my practice, I have collapsed

the concept of artistic research and the processes of collection, categorisation, organisation and labelling (of artworks and ideas alike) into the methodology of creative administration.

Creative Administration in the Catalogue Box

According to Meinig, “those interested in [landscape and] particular localities share a belief that one of the greatest riches of the Earth is its immense variety of places” (Meinig 1979, 45). The catalogue box I used in this study (Fig. 2.1), like the archive or library, is a system deployed to accommodate, and exalt, the multiplicity and complexity of online landscape images. Just as natural historians, biologists and geologists have utilized categorisation, labelling, sampling and collecting, the landscape artist, whether working with physical or digital geographies, can use the same techniques to identify a huge range of structures, sites, systems and species in any given landscape.



Fig. 2.1 Index cards from the catalogue box.

My use of this catalogue box begets the nature of my entire study; in its simultaneous presentation of a variety of issues, concerns, images and ideas which belong together in one field but which are not separated or distilled into an essential summary. In research, in writing, and in the studio, creative administration clarified a complex field, presenting selected fragments on little pedestals for individual contemplation.

Visual art theorist Lev Manovich describes the value of systems like creative administration¹: "...you don't want to divide culture into a few small categories," he said. "What's interesting about culture is that the categories are continuous. Instead of using these techniques to reduce complexity, to divide data into a few categories, I want to map the complexity" (Manovich, in Williford 2011, 1-2). Creative administration is a way of receiving complexity, of mapping it out under potentially endless categories.

The antiquated nature of working with the catalogue box cannot be ignored. Why use a pen instead of a keyboard? Why decline the unlimited digital filing system of my laptop? Why paint, when I could simply collect **screenshots** from Google Earth?² I conduct these tasks in a physical, somewhat laborious and old-fashioned manner because I wish to extend creative administration beyond the studio into all aspects of my practice. In this way, reading, browsing online or searching for a reference all became aesthetically anachronistic activities. The nostalgia or romance evoked by the performance of such tasks attributed a sense of value to the processes of collecting and categorising: an ennoblement of the quest to manage a vast world of information and imagery³.

Creative Administration and the Museum

Another trope in which plurality and categorisation were similarly exalted is the early natural history museum. Unlike many contemporary museums, which provide fulsome interpretive and reconstructive material, antique museum displays are reliquaries, in which the wonders of nature's infinite variety are celebrated, through the display of vast, itemised and annotated collections (Stocking 1985). They were

¹ Manovich's own system, cultural analytics, involves displaying hundreds or even thousands of related images in a single compiled grid, arranged according to parameters like time or nationality in order to identify patterns in visual representation. Manovich has used this technique to analyse, for example, the impact of international political tensions on the use of certain colours in Time Magazine covers (Williford 2011).

² A full consideration of the use and historical value of the medium of paint in my practice can be found in *Episode Ten: Landscape and the Brush*.

³ Historian and archivist Caroline Steedman thoroughly romanticises such organisational processes: "an Archive may indeed take in study, heterogeneous, undifferentiated stuff... texts, documents, data... and order them by the principles of unification and classification. This stuff, reordered, remade, then emerges – some would say like a memory – when someone needs to find it, or just simply needs it, for new and current purposes" (Steedman 1998, 66).

thought of as **cabinets of curiosities**⁴ and were supplied by the contemporaneous age of world exploration (Stocking 1985). Such collections are founded upon their very expansiveness, allowing for perpetual enlargement and the addition of new categories.

Creative administration processes can be observed at the Museo di Storia Naturale dell'Accademia dei Fisiocritici in Siena. This antiquated museum houses a remarkable collection of artefacts crafted by **mycologist** Francesco Valenti Serini (1795-1872): a staggering 1,800 hand-built, hand-painted terracotta models of blooming fungi (Figs. 2.2-3). Each is beautifully crafted and intended for display and public viewership, as a guide to the edibility and morphology of Italian mushrooms (*Collezione di Funghi...* 2001; Barluzzi, et al. 2016). The ceramic collection might be called an artistic as well as a scientific exercise. Each model is an expertly fashioned sculpture, and an archetypal delegate for its species. The installation is rhythmic, the equidistance between models enabling visual comparison. Viewers are induced to notice pattern, similarities, differences, and to appreciate the overall size, scope and marvellousness of the collection. “The collection is both beautiful artistically and important scientifically”, remark Serini’s biographers (Barluzzi, et al., 2016).



Fig. 2.2 A case of Serini’s hand-sculptured ceramic models on display in Siena, Italy in 2014

Fig. 2.3 Valenti Serini, model of *Amanita proxima*, painted terracotta, 20 x 20 cm (approx.), c1550

Image: <http://www.apsnet.org/publications/apsnetfeatures/Pages/TerraCotta.aspx>

⁴ ‘Cabinet’ is used here in its earlier sense, to mean a room for storage or display, rather than a piece of furniture.

The Istituto delle Scienze in the Palazzo Poggi in Bologna, Italy provides a further example of the heritage of my creative administration techniques. Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522-1605) is widely considered the “founder of modern natural history”, and his collection of rare natural specimens is an artfully curated display (*The Ulisse Aldrovandi Museum* n.d.). Every item is preserved, presented on a decorative pedestal, box or case, and labelled by hand, with much ornamentation (Figs. 2.4-6)⁵. Perhaps pre-empting the deterioration and patination of preserved biological specimens, Aldrovandi carved woodblock prints of each specimen at the time of their collection, to accompany the specimen itself.



Fig. 2.4 The highly decorative main hall of the Aldrovandi Collection in Bologna, seen in 2016, furnished with custom gilded display cases.

This manner of installation imparts equal importance to the scientific value of each specimen and to its artistic manner of display. Every specimen is attended by artistic, scientific, observational, cultural and personal material that reveals how it was interpreted, categorised and given value by its collector. The decoration of the calligraphic labels and gilded cases (the *Pinachoteche*) dramatically pronounce the

⁵ For, as photography theorist Liz Wells puts it, “the act of naming is an act of taming”. Within a museum collection, labelling is an induction process whereby a specimen leaves the wild outside and enters the static and unchanging archive as a definitive artifact. Once labelled, objects can be collected, listed, grouped and indexed (Wells 2011, 3).

wonder of the items they designate, and in turn the fabulous variety and number of the specimens lends the collection, as a creatively curated corpus and a scientific-artistic project, great stateliness.



Fig. 2.5 A fabricated chimaera, built of various animal parts, on display at the Aldrovandi collection in Bologna in 2016. The specimen is labelled twice, mounted on a pedestal, and shown in its original state in a coloured woodblock print. Even the original hand-carved wooden printing block is displayed.

While the labels and furnishings of Aldrovandi's hall of curiosities serve practical scientific purposes (to name each specimen for future reference; to record the specimen's original condition), they also describe the character of their collector. We witness Aldrovandi's handwriting, how he observed and lavished attention to detail on each specimen, the central role art and illustration played in his idea of scientific work, and his sense that his collection should be preserved for posterity, to be

explored anew by others. His collection is an intimate masterwork of creative administration.



Fig. 2.6 A display demonstrating the variety of decorative labels used throughout the Aldrovandi collection, 2016.

These pre-digital archives and collections have enkindled the research methodologies of this doctoral study. I collect the issues and ideas at play within this field like specimens, each of which I mark with personal, artistic categorisation, labelling and interpretation⁶. Like Serini, I have made my specimens by hand, reconstructing what is most wondrous and wacky from the digital landscape (Fig. 2.7). A collection is the result of collecting, and is necessarily autobiographical. Like Aldrovandi, I present the fruit of my online journeying as a glimpse into my personal collection. Meaning is not only derived from each individual item, but their relationship to one another. Caroline Steedman identifies this as the difference between “*stuff* (content; historical description, historical information) and... *process* (of ideation, of imagining, of remembering)” (Steedman 1998, 66; orig. italics). These approaches breed stimulating, rich and comprehensive viewer experiences, that like the

⁶ In this exegesis, I do not delve into the discourse that issues from museology and archiving as academic disciplines. These fields are of great value, however those museum displays that are important to my work are those dictated by the sensibility and character of their collectors – personal collections, which express the passions and intellectual pursuits of their owners.

Wunderkammer of old, can be delved into deeply, and (I keenly hope), with some sense of excitement⁷.

The Artist's Collection

A museological approach to collecting and display is particularly conducive to artists who specialise in installation and arrangement. This is evident in the work of American artist Mark Dion, whose practice hybridises installation art and natural history. Dion uses collection and categorisation techniques to interpret the nuances of natural environments, including human ecosystems. His example is particularly valuable to my research for its focus on overlooked or underappreciated sites. I admire Dion's sensibility. His arrangements are simultaneously poetic and diagrammatic, often organised on furniture or in false rooms to imply that they are domestic or private collections: curated by the character or personage of the artist.

Dion's object catalogues are amassed according to pre-determined typologies, but their narrow scope actually brightens the particularities and variegations of any given category, like discarded New England glassware (Fig. 2.7) or *oceanology* texts (Fig. 2.8). Dion's methods are not aimed at locating some underlying explanation or theory, but capturing a diverse sample.

Fig. 2.7 Mark Dion, *New England Digs Shelf*, 2001, found materials, shelf, 68 x 104 x 10 cm
Image: <http://www.tanyabonakdargallery.com/artists/mark-dion/series-sculpture-and-installation/21>

Fig. 2.8 Mark Dion, *Sea Life*, 2013, found materials, cabinet, 200 x 93 x 198 cm
Image: <http://www.tanyabonakdargallery.com/artists/mark-dion/series-sculpture-and-installation/>

⁷ The German word *Wunderkammer* denotes a place where a collection of curiosities, or rare and valuable items is exhibited. In German, it means 'wonder chamber' (*Language Matters: Wunderkammer* 2016).

Underpinning this structure is the biographical nature of Dion's collection practices: the displayed items are the result of physical journeying, ideas about what's interesting and what ought to be gathered up. During my virtual expeditions, my aesthetic tastes, interests and sense of what constitutes notable material determines the corpus of artworks shown in the gallery, its character and humour. Personal but not self-regarding, Dion's collections are also shared with viewers generously. Welcoming viewers into my collection without obstructing their experience of its contents with diatribes from 'The Artist' is my goal too. I presume that Dion and I both observe a similar kind of hospitality, of warmly inviting viewers in.

Similarly, Australian artist Deidre Brollo's *Field Kit for a Narrow Escape* is a collection of objects assembled by and belonging to the artist (Fig. 2.9). Found objects and printed booklets masquerading as genuine souvenirs fill a wooden display case. All items appear to commemorate the eruption of an unnamed volcano. The display case itself is purpose-built to snugly cradle each object, permanently cementing their relationship to one another according to Brollo's curatorship and to the sensational narrative that insists on their togetherness. The collection provides "a vicarious engagement with catastrophe," Brollo explains. "The terrifying scale of nature here becomes contained within these small souvenirs, all now subject to the control of the collector" (Brollo 2015, n.p.).

Fig. 2.9 Deidre Brollo, *Field Kit for a Narrow Escape (souvenirs for the unwitting)*, 2015, archival pigment prints, photopolymer intaglio and chine colle, snowglobe, wooden case and found objects, 11 x 44 x 39 cm

Image: <http://deidrebrollo.com/field-kit/>

In displaying items that might otherwise seem private (each related to being held or touched in different ways), Brollo translates her process of collection and her personal enthusiasm for her subject into a tenderly built object. In experiencing a collection like this, viewers may delight in reconstructing the narrative space between each item. Each object illuminates one small aspect of a greater and more complex idea or history. In artistic collections, meaning is formed as much by the

arrangement and imaginative spaces between items as by the evidence tendered by the items individually.

Installation artist Mariele Neudecker frequently uses display cases, terrariums, plinths and other typical gallery and museum furniture as a way to contain and control landscape images. In *Stimmung*⁸, (Fig 2.10) Neudecker has collapsed a vast mountain range (a normally panoramic, horizontal view) into a pokey telescope slide case. The pieces of landscape are made to overlap, and their storage implies they can be rearranged or sought out individually not according to some natural order determined by their geographical nature, but to the desires of the person browsing through them (who seeks out nature as a detached, aestheticised and intimate micro version of geography). In this work, Neudecker mirrors the assertion I have made in this Episode: that artistic collections, though perhaps small and marked by the idiosyncrasies of their collectors, can contain artefacts that indicate narratives and histories that are complex and immense. Such systems can simultaneously evoke humour or delight, whilst also demonstrating the profundity of their power to designate order and meaning upon landscapes and landscape concepts. With *Stimmung*, Neudecker asserts that though there are different types, locations, representations and histories of mountains, they nonetheless are all one kind of thing ontologically and, if you will, the box can be shut on that definition. While this proposition is more finite than my own, I have also used the physical and visual containment of art objects (in cases, frames or displays) as a technique to express the way that I have managed or made sense of immense landscapes.

Fig. 2.10 Mariele Neudecker, *Stimmung*, 2012, wood, card, paper, 22 x 25 x 32 cm

Image: <http://www.marieleneudecker.co.uk/marieleneudec-18.html>

Perth artist Danni McGrath adopts a different method of organisation, directly utilising an activity usually only found online: scrolling. In *Tumblr Roll*, McGrath emulates the bottomless ‘thread’ of image-sharing website Tumblr, which

⁸ *Stimmung* translates from German to ‘humour’, presumably at the idea of stuffing world geography into a handy, portable valise.

bottlenecks an always-updating stream of data into a narrow, manageable flow (Fig. 2.11). The informal sculpture eschews any culling of information, playing instead upon comprehensiveness, and parodying mindless, endless browsing. Art Historian Mary Warner Marien attributes gratuitous scrolling to a wider cultural dislike for editing by deletion and omission. “Where photo-sharing in the past involved choice and rejection, today it encourages abundance. Witness the popularity of the digital frame, which means that those who cannot make up their mind... can remain irresolute while hundreds of pictures cycle through on the screen” (Warner Marien 2012, 86)⁹.

⁹ Conversely, the term *scrolling* would seem less to suggest superfluity than to remind us of the ancient origin of scrolls and rolled manuscripts, which were read linearly, one piece at a time, undistracted by the information read previously or yet to come.



Fig. 2.11 Danni McGrath, *Tumblr Likes 2011 to Present*, 2014, screenprint and pen on paper. Reproduced with permission of the artist. Photograph by Melissa McGrath.

I adopted a similar technique for a work entitled *Western Australia, Straightened*. To make it, I carefully collected screenshots of the entire Western Australian coastline, as it appeared on Google Maps. These images were joined end-to-end in Photoshop, so that the irregular contour of WA obeyed a straight, linear path (Fig. 2.12). A chaotic, vast tract of land was reconfigured through an act of creative administration so that it could be considered in an orderly, controlled manner.



Fig. 2.12 Sheridan Coleman, *Western Australia, Straightened*, (detail), 2013, digital collage, 30 x 3000 cm

Search Terms, Subheadings and Labels

In this study, the delegation of subheadings or labels within the catalogue box was a generative act, designating significance to a theme or topic, and demonstrating the numerous categories into which landscapes might fit. In my exhibition *Internet Explorer*, for example, the gigantic category of ‘islands in the world’ was carved up into superlatives (biggest, smallest, remotest), or by population (human, animal, desertedness), temporality (newest, most precarious) or geology (volcanic, glacial, eroding), and so on¹⁰. I impose such filters for two reasons. Firstly to demonstrate the breathtaking variety present in digital geography and articulate this as a thing of delight and value. Secondly, naming and categorising geographical space (or images of it) in this practice is an enactment of a wider, older cultural practice: the designation of the meaning of landscapes. To call a place ‘Dead Man’s Island’ is to do more than simply give it a label to help people find it again later; it *says something* – about the name-giver and the thing being named, something that comes from culture, rather than nature.

Similarly, when retrieving information from an archive, the use of an unusual or incorrect search term can skew the results, changing their content and meaning. When I typed “biggest mountain” into Google Maps, it was not Mt Everest that appeared, but an image of Double Mountain in California. To consider how this happened, one must ask cultural questions, not geographical ones: does the system locate the grammatically closest place name instead of *reading* the words typed? Should I have typed *tallest* or *highest* instead of “biggest”? Will I get the same result if I try again tomorrow? (Interestingly, no.¹¹) This example highlights the interpretative frameworks that are inherent in even the most mechanical or objective archives. “It doesn’t matter how much [search engines and geolocation interfaces] try to perfect these systems, they only offer the illusion of total control,” says artist Emilio Vavarella, who explores Google Maps for his artwork (Vanhemert 2013, 3).

¹⁰ For further discussion of this exhibition, one of three mounted for this study, see *Episode Six: Internet Explorer*.

¹¹ The GPS settings of a digital device, a user’s search history and their location can all impact on the results displayed from one search to the next. I have many times in this study been foiled in my attempts to ‘get back to’ a location I’d seen once before online, due to a change in search terminology, a change in the system or simply my changed location. Google weighs variables such as proximity and text matching against one another to provide customised results (Graham & Zook 2007; Groys 2012). For example, a search for “Perth” made in Australia never conjures Perth, Scotland.

In the studio, I have been able to creatively apply language-based categorisation in a way that almost usurps visual information. In *Eight Deadman's Islands in Canada* (Fig. 2.13), I referenced archiving according to name. Eight paintings, each showing a different island location on Google Maps, were collected together because they all have the same name: Dead Man's Island (with some slight variations). Viewers can observe the various iterations of this sombre moniker applied to diverse sites, whose only commonality is this name category, which unlike geographical categories such as 'island' has a more imaginative, artistic origin.



Fig. 2.13 Sheridan Coleman, two details from *Eight Deadman's Islands in Canada*, 2016, acrylic on board, 9 x 9 cm

The importance of terminology is played out in a scene from the 2014 film *Paddington*, in which Paddington and Mr Brown visit the “Geographer’s Guild” to request information on an explorer who once visited “Darkest Peru” (*Paddington* 2014). The receptionist types in these keywords, setting off an elaborate mechanical retrieval system, yet the result, delivered by pneumatic tube on a square of parchment, is distinctly inconclusive (Fig. 2.14). The receptionist reminds them, “There are over two million letters, diaries and artefacts up in our archive, meticulously filed, and they don't stay that way by letting strange men and their bears rummage around” (*Paddington* 2014).

Fig. 2.14 A scene from *Paddington*, 2014, written by P. King, showing a receptionist using a glass and brass pneumatic tube archive retrieval system

Video clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXnw22TktOs>

This caricatured and aestheticised archiving scene illustrates that it is not just the integrity of the archived material that allows the system to operate, but fluency in search terminology: categories, keywords and tags. Without these, meaning cannot be extracted. In turn, *artistically* applied subheadings and *creative* categorisation are what allows research to be transformed into culturally relevant artworks and also allows new meaning to be configured from dry data, objects or images.

Using categorisation to determine geographical typology is the focus of a large-scale work by Australian printmaker Susanna Castleden. In *Remaking the Map of the World, Dubai*, Castleden manipulates commercial maps to pictorially grapple with the subcategory of *island* (Fig. 2.15). By assembling cartographic images of disparate islands into one print, she reorders a vast world topology according to a single search term. This work visualises islands as a large but distinct category. A similar imagining of the largeness and wholeness of island geography is also the starting point of my exhibition *Internet Explorer*, into which I have made targeted forays.

Fig. 2.15 Susanna Castleden, *Remaking the Map of the World, Dubai*, 2011, screen print, cut map and gesso on paper, 150 x 210 cm

Image: <http://susannacastleden.com/artwork/2328661-Remaking-the-Map-of-the-World-Dubai.html>

Such arbitration plays into many of Castleden's works. For example, in *Alphabetical Itinerary*, the artist wrangles with a list of the names of all the world's countries over time (charting both stable and changed geopolitical changes in borders, representation and identity of countries). Castleden places all countries into a sequence of her devising, charting a hypothetical journey in which each would be visited in alphabetical order (Fig. 2.16). This is a great example of the cultural nature of landscape. Though no land or greenery is shown figuratively, the countries Castleden represents are linked by politics, location and language (naming) to *place*, and so the print vividly express a familiar world map shape, a sense of the surface of the Earth, and distance. Landscape can be expressed in language, diagram, lists, data and objects that do not have to also contain imagery of trees, rivers and mountains.

Fig. 2.16 Susanna Castleden, *Alphabetical Itinerary Drawing – Afghanistan to Zimbabwe*, 2008, graphite on drafting film, 56 x 108 cm

Image: <http://susannacastleden.com/artwork/2323446-Alphabetical-Itinerary-Drawing-Afghanistan-to-Zimbabwe.html>

I advanced the value of sub-categorisation through installation with a work called *Wilderness User Dissambiguation* (Fig. 2.17). Disambiguation is not only a fantastic simile for creative administration; it is well-known Internet jargon (particularly on Wikipedia), referring to the moment when a single thread of enquiry splits into different categories. Google Earth is made of composite parts, writes Masters Jach. It's a "post-postmodernist avatar of modernist collage¹²" (Masters Jach, 2011, p2). My intention was for the disambiguation structure to be so yielding and modular that it can accommodate any new research and even changes to Google Earth itself. This

¹² Avatar is used here to mean a rendition or version (and also might be a reference by Masters Jach to Internet culture, in which avatar refers to a digital image, name or symbol that represents a person in online applications). Collage is an artistic technique that developed during the mid-20th Century (the Modernist era) in which found and created images were composited together into one greater image.

is not a case of a picture painting a thousand words, but a thousand images articulating a complex cultural nexus between art, technology and landscape.



Fig. 2.17 Sheridan Coleman, *Wilderness User Disambiguation* (detail), mixed media, 2015

Conclusion

World geography cannot be hierarchised, or navigated in an order that can be considered definitive. Rather, countless unique geographies exist simultaneously, in varying levels of relatedness to one another and to anybody interested in viewing them. These geographies are multiplied by the creation of countless cultural and artistic landscapes. Despite this, I have not sought to narrow my research, and this has been a decision based largely on the nature of landscape as a concept: as encompassing and validating countless interpretations of the natural world.

“When every acre on Earth is catalogued for us to see, where will all the mysteries hide?” asks technology journalist Kyle Vanhemert of the perceived totality of landscape information available online (Vanhemert 2013, 2). My answer is: buried in the archive, unnoticeable due to their proximity to louder data. Carrière remembers a pertinent example of this: “When Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie was running the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, he commissioned a remarkable study, which found that more than two million of the library’s books hadn’t been requested since... the Revolution. Not even once” (Carrière & Eco 2011, 275). Google Earth is subject to this very conundrum: it makes world landscape imagery available, yet much of what might be fascinating, culturally relevant or beautiful about it can easily go unnoticed. This is partly due to its vastness, but is also a symptom of its format – sites can be searched

for without viewing the surrounding terrain, and only one screen-full of data can be seen at once.

My solution, creative administration, has led me to discover and extract sites, glitches and views from Google Earth, and after Aldrovandi or Serini, reorganise them into idiosyncratic, artistic collections. Archiving (both artistic and otherwise) collapses a rich landscape into a collection of samples, allowing endless connections and comparisons to be made between each item, determined by a collector whose character and methods colour and give colour to every aspect of the collection.

Creative administration is not employed simply to be more efficient or better organise the world landscape: it actually gives a field of data meaning, sorts it into little pieces, and celebrates its internal diversity. According to Australian new media theorist Anna Munster, art has gained and repurposed these techniques from outside: “Both art and science have sent out feelers towards each other’s cultures. This has produced an overlapping sphere of cultural and intellectual activity often focused upon new imaging technologies... and frameworks for dealing with information accumulation and saturation... We might tentatively call this the ‘art/science’ intersection” (Munster 2001, 19). With its methodologies mostly pilfered from the sciences and from history, creative administration has transformed a potentially problematic overload of digital landscape imagery into a carefully aestheticised, meaning-endowed, annotated and individual account of digital world landscape.

Episode Three

Landscape as a cultural process

Cultural geography

Landscaping

Landscapes needn't refer to land

Seeing from a distance

Nature with Culture

Seeing landscapes differently

Landscape as a Cultural Process

When you hear the word “landscape”, what sort of terrain immediately appears before your inner eye? My guess is that most modern Western people visualize something like the picture typically found on certain supermarket food wrappings. That is, a basically green and grassy terrain of mildly curving hills, interspersed with meadows, living hedges, grain fields and some not too obtrusive roads and houses, all of it unfolding under a blue and sunny sky. (Wamberg 1999, 69)

Despite the historical breadth of the artistic, geographical and cultural meanings that it has come to represent, ‘landscape’ is a relatively young word. After emerging as an urban planning term in the Netherlands in the 17th Century, it was taken up across the **Western** world as the name for a genre of paintings that depicted nature and views (Lorch 2002; Nye 1999; Andrews 1999). In the last century, landscape has developed into a subject for philosophical and academic interrogation; concerning the ways people interact with nature visually, psychologically, culturally, artistically and scientifically.

This Episode will assemble a definition of landscape as it is used in this exegesis, and introduce the discourse around landscape presented within cultural geography (and more widely): as a fluid, cross-disciplinary process or method for understanding and conceptualising the natural world. These ideas will provide a context within which to consider the ways that landscape images can be created and appreciated in the 21st Century, given that new ways of interacting with land and landscape are constantly being developed. The theoretical foundation herewith constitutes the principle theory to which I respond, react and refer in all Episodes of this exegesis.

Landscape in Cultural Geography

First, I turn to the ongoing development of the term *landscape* as it is used in academic discourse today and in particular, as a concept that has been interrogated and cultivated within the field of cultural geography, my chosen homeland for theory.

The field of cultural geography is relatively new, having developed from a merging of interests between contemporary social geographers and cultural-historical geographers into an independent field of enquiry (Jackson 2016). Today, topics of the discipline continue to emanate from wherever culture interacts with nature, and has grown to include contemporary landscape issues like satellite photography, remote archaeology, geospatial imaging, virtual travel and ecological time-lapse analysis.

Simply put, cultural geography is the study of the way in which human experience, culture, works and psychology are shaped by physical land and reflexively produce human-made landscapes of all kinds. Cultural geography assumes that fluctuations and changes in human history and behaviour are captured within representations, understandings of, interactions with and attitudes towards landscapes, and can be read there. Studies in this mammoth field vary widely, explaining anything from the aesthetics of bombed German towns during WWII (Gregory 2011); to the visual symbology of New England villages (Meinig 1979); the depiction of sand dunes in Japanese cinema (Gandy 2011); and the evolution of aerial photography in the popular imagination (Cosgrove & Della Dora 2009).

An understanding of landscape as a visual and cultural mode of looking has become central to the discussions taking place within cultural geography. In fact, the American theorist and geographer Carl Sauer claimed in 1925 that landscape constituted the basic disciplinary unit of cultural geography (Briney n.d.)¹. One need only scan the titles in any library's cultural geography section to be impressed by the prevalence of 'landscape'; *Landscape and Western Art* (Andrews 1999); *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives* (Cosgrove 1993); *Reading Landscapes and Telling Stories* (Davis 2011); *Envisioning Landscapes, Making Worlds* (Daniels, et al. 2011); *Technologies of Landscape* (Nye 1999); *Landscape, Memory & History* (Stewart & Strathorn 2003); *Thought & Landscape* (Tuan 1979); and perhaps the most definitive

¹ At the time Sauer was writing, cultural geography had not yet solidified into a distinct academic field, and his use of the phrase here is more indicative of his interest in the reactive relationships between history, culture and landscape. Early in his career, Sauer expounded theories of environmental determinism, however later he vehemently opposed its tenets and wrote in a manner that largely synchronised with and anteceded today's field of cultural geography (Briney n.d.).

of them all: *Landscape* (Wylie 2007). Understanding landscapes, their formation and societal impact, is the bread and butter of the cultural geographer.

There are a number of specific claims adduced by cultural geographers about the nature of landscape and the flexible way the term should be understood, particularly in regards to the way it might respond to cultural and technological developments in the 21st Century. Some of these claims are laid out below, as an introduction to the way in which landscape and landscape art is conceived of in this exegesis.

Landscape is not the world itself, but a way of seeing the world

In common vernacular, ‘landscape’ can indicate a physical area (e.g. ‘walking in the snowy landscape’)². Not so in cultural geography, where ‘landscape’ is almost never used to denote actual land. After all, the term is rooted in the representative arts, not ecology or geography. “Landscape is not merely the world as we see it”, explains prolific cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove, “It is a construction, a composition of that world. Landscape is a way of seeing the world” (Cosgrove 1984, 13).

The perception of a physical place is influenced by so many factors exterior to physical geography that it cannot be considered synonymous with a place itself. When a person stands on a lookout over a valley, the landscape they see is influenced by the direction they are facing, who they are with, a memory of the place from the last time they visited, their understanding of land ownership, their knowledge of plant varieties, sensitivity to pollen, an expectation of what the place would look like, subjective ideas about what is beautiful and what is not, books they’ve read, art they’ve seen and so on, as suggested in Martin Brown’s cartoon about the influence of literature on the appreciation of topography of Scotland (Fig 3.1)³. All such

² French Philosopher Jean-François Lyotard wryly notes that this physical, actual land exists irrespective of one’s attention: “Whether or not you ‘like’ a landscape is unimportant. It does not ask you for your opinion. If it is there, your opinion counts for nothing” (Lyotard 1988, 38).

³ In his book *The Open Work*, cultural historian and author Umberto Eco asserts that poetic descriptions or propositions mean the most to those who understand the historical context of the terms used (‘rugged’, for example), and thus the most popular adjective descriptions of nature often result in the perpetuation of a canonical set of expectations that people bring to bear when they experience nature (Eco 1989).

personal and cultural filters contribute to what a person perceives when they are viewing the natural world⁴.

Fig. 3.1 A Martin Brown cartoon illustrating how even the atmospheric poetry of Sir Walter Scott is an interpretive process that has constructed a new landscape from an old one

Image:

<https://books.google.com.au/books?id=IWekDAAAQBAJ&lpg=PT164&ots=syuh1pDIu4&dq=before%20sir%20walter%20scott%20miserable%20cold%20bleak%20wilderness&pg=PT164#v=onepage&q=before%20sir%20walter%20scott%20miserable%20cold%20bleak%20wilderness&f=false>

Therefore, land is not landscape, but is made *into* landscape by being subjected to culture (whether in the form of a realistic or imaginative painting; a digitally enhanced photo; or simply someone remembering and describing their impression of a place). Landscape emanates from cultural and perceptual processes at work on a person, who both defines and experiences landscape, and may relate it to others, artistically or otherwise.

Elsewhere in my studies I have observed this turbulence in ‘landscape’ meanings, encapsulated in terminology:

Through history, there has been no definitive term to describe that green, natural place outside the city, which has outlasted the time it was created in. We have variously called it nature, the outdoors, the countryside, the pastoral plain, arcadia, the environment, the biosphere, the view and the landscape. As time grinds on, these terms have been picked up, used energetically, and then gotten snagged on some distinct cultural movement, perhaps imperialism, the rise of outdoor culture, tourism, geography or eco-protest. (Coleman 2014, 2)

⁴ ‘The natural world’ is a phrase that has been used to store a multitude of different concepts including ecological purity, spirituality, environmentalism and so on. My use of this term throughout this exegesis, and its use by the writers in cultural geography I mention herein is largely as shorthand for physical sites (which might be referred to in landscape representations.)

Art Historian Malcolm Andrews describes this translation patently: “the process might, therefore, be formulated as twofold: land into landscape, landscape into art” (Andrews 1999, 3). Here, “art” can be replaced with any form of landscape representation, be it verbal, artistic or documentary. Conversions from land into landscape are performed by people, and it follows that landscapes are in fact, always man-made. Cultural geographer John Wylie contends, “clearly, landscapes are human, cultural and creative domains as well as, *or even rather than*, natural or physical phenomenon” (Wylie 2007, 8; orig. italics).

Landscaping

Landscapes can take so many forms that it is useful to define landscape as something that results from an act of *landscaping*:

As a common verb, “to landscape” means “to prettify”. If a suburban lot is advertised as “landscaped”, it is generally understood that somebody has fussed with the shrubbery on a small bit of ground, perhaps planted a few trees, and has manicured the bushes – more or less artfully. (Lewis 1979, 11)

The augmentation of *landscape* from a noun into the verb form *to landscape* came about in the West largely due to the 18th Century development and popularity of landscape gardening in Europe. Whilst the practice of creating gardens had existed for thousands of years, and in many other cultures, European landscape gardening responded almost directly to the **picturesque** movement within landscape painting. Celebrated landscapists such as Humphrey Repton and Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown were inspired by the romantic license taken by landscape painters: they inserted follies (artificial ruins, grottos, even resident hermits), physically reshaped the terrain’s undulations and relocated trees to more picturesque positions, until their parks took on the faux-naturalism of their sketches (Fig. 3.2) (Schama 1999, Macfarlane 2003). “To ‘landscape’ is to impose a certain order,” explains photography theorist Liz Wells (Wells 2011, 2). In general, landscaping means the shaping, taming and controlling of nature so that it has enough aesthetic cohesion to approach the kind of landscapes represented in art. Like a landscape painting,

landscaped green spaces were appreciated holistically. “A landscape park is more palpable, but no more real, nor less imaginary, than a landscape painting or poem” (Cosgrove & Daniels 1988, 1).

Fig. 3.2 Humphrey Repton, two views "*from my cottage in Essex*" from Repton's book *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, 1816

Image 1

https://www.rc.umd.edu/sites/default/files/styles/gallery_zoom/public/galleryOriginals/bd574fa8791134fb89f9eadebdf8bd4.jpg?itok=Tg3MHhtG

Image 2

https://www.rc.umd.edu/sites/default/files/styles/gallery_zoom/public/galleryOriginals/f60e580ef5d131653313bc5af072d4c7.jpg?itok=ugXJk_g5

From garden design, *landscaping* soon developed into a broader idea. Today it is understood as any human manipulation of nature. Cultural geographers and art historians like Liz Wells, Malcolm Andrews, John Wylie and Denis Cosgrove have commented that works of landscape art, laws, writings, attitudes and rituals are also ways for people to manipulate nature and can therefore constitute acts of landscaping. Landscape “results from human action... from exploring how land might be represented” (Wells 2011, 2). Landscaping activities might include clearing a forest to plant a field of barley, painting a planter box green, starting a community garden, installing a sculpture in a field, photographing a riverbank, demarcating a property's boundary, erecting a billboard poster of a tropical island, building a forest for a model railway, trimming a hedge, using a telescope to espy islands, sketching orchids on a walk, or sketching orchids from memory. As diverse as these activities are, each is a curation of nature, translating land into a form that can be understood as landscape⁵.

⁵ When brandished in art discourse, curation and curatorship denote the creative interpretation, arrangement and presentation of artworks to beget a particular viewer experience in a gallery (*Curate* n.d.). The work of a landscaper is not altogether different in the way that manipulation of space is used to extract certain responses, thoughts, feelings and experiences from those occupying that space.

As indicated by these examples, the idea of *landscaping* is particularly helpful in the discourse of cultural geography because it supports a working definition of landscape: that which is produced by an act of landscaping.

Landscape influences the ways we inhabit space

Relationships between people, landscapes and land are reflexive. “[Landscape] represents a way in which certain classes of people have signified themselves and their world through their imagined relationship with nature” (Cosgrove 1984, 15). A painting of a family’s favourite holiday destination may be interpreted as an indication of many cultural factors. It might reinstate family ties; affirm the importance of nature and the outdoors in the family’s private culture; signal the financial security of the family, who can afford art *and* holidays; and it might indicate artistic tastes and trends or prevailing fashions in leisure travel. The presence of the picture in the family home may even influence its occupants to revisit that location over others. “Whether the landscapes are real or imaginary, they help organize religious, political and familial spaces,” write cartography historians Caroline and Martine Laffon (Laffon & Laffon 2008, 22-24)⁶. Landscape images do more than simply evoke a location. They play an active role as indicators of various cultural attitudes and meanings about nature that determine the different ways people inhabit the world (Laffon & Laffon 2008)⁷. Landscape representations influence the way people mark out land into territories, travel across land, utilise it or understand concepts such as home and distance.

A good example of this influence is the advent of a nature/people dichotomy in the later half of the 20th Century that determined the value of wilderness landscapes by their level of perceived purity. That is, how separate land remained from human influence (Grumbine 1995). If all human influence was “despoliation”, then pristine

⁶ Incidentally, a 2015 spatial econometric study found that in regions with mild climates and great (perceived) natural beauty, populations showed a lower adherence to traditional religion: in this instance scenic environments appear to *compete* with theism (Ferguson & Tamburello 2015). I’d be stepping into a minefield to speculate exactly why, however the fact that the researchers hypothesised that landscape impacts upon belief is alone fascinating.

⁷ Further, a research group in America recently completed five studies into the relationship between personality types and landscape preferences, and found that ‘introverts’ overwhelmingly preferred to spend time in mountain landscapes and ‘extroverts’ preferred locations with beach or ocean views (Jacobs 2015a; Lee, Oishi & Talhelm 2015).

wilderness was “a baseline from which to measure corruption” (Meinig 1979, 35). This attitude occasioned wilderness advocacy which attempted to “stop time” by instating reserves, opposing development and discouraging disruptive levels of tourism (Rothenberg 1995, xvi). Art theorists Tacita Dean and Jeremy Millar have argued that the barring of visitors from wilderness areas does not inhibit their cultural value (Dean & Millar 2005, 36). Rather, wilderness is a physical incarnation of a cultural ideal, and its representation in the arts and media can influence the way in which remote natural areas are managed. Artistic, literary and popular renditions of wilderness have dictated the treatment of real locations, by virtue of their ability to generate values, ideas and expectations.

Some landscapes may be imagined, symbolic or artificial – Landscapes needn’t refer to land

“A landscape painting is rarely purely symbolic and never purely factual”, said art historian David Wade Chambers of the way that artistic flourish, subjective aesthetics and simple manual handling make it impossible to create a landscape image that is tantamount to the land it represents (Wade Chambers 1982, 1). More than that, “landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads”: it is possible for landscapes to be created with only the vaguest reference or adherence to the order of the natural world, and still be recognised as landscapes (Meinig 1979, 33). Landscapes can be fictitious, in that they represent no real place; anonymous or unnamed; symbolic, imagined or conjectured. A painting of a mountain under a red sky is still a landscape, as is a painting of a mountain dreamt up without reference to any real place.

Joseph Wright of Derby’s paintings of Vesuvius erupting, made after his 1774 visit to the volcano, are a classic illustration of this (Fig. 3.3). Historian Jane Messenger pointed out that the “sensational eruptions” Wright painted were completely “imagined”. Wright only saw minor volcanic activity during his visit: he missed the great eruption he seeks to depict below by some weeks (Messenger 2009, 166). The geographical or ecological plausibility of a landscape representation is always secondary to its ability to indicate itself a landscape.

Fig. 3.3 Joseph Wright of Derby, *Vesuvius from Portici*, 1774-1776, oil on canvas, 101 x 127 cm

Image: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/00/Joseph_Wright_of_Derby_-_Vesuvius_from_Portici.jpg/736px-Joseph_Wright_of_Derby_-_Vesuvius_from_Portici.jpg

Landscape is a way of seeing from a distance

Contemporary definitions of landscape remain strongly tied to its origins as an artistic genre, in which a landscape was a representation of natural scenery with no or scarce imagery of humans or manmade works. For a landscape to be a landscape, neither the viewer nor the creator can really be *in it*. Rather, the landscape is viewed from a position exterior to the landscape's contents. Liz Wells describes this as **Cartesian perspective**, in which "man [sic] becomes centred as spectator of a scene organized around a single point of view" (Wells 2011, 40). This distance between land and the person who creates a landscape from it is inherent (e.g. a forest and a photographer), as is that between a landscape and the person who consumes it (e.g. a landscape photograph and a gallery patron). "Landscape is defined by our vision and interpreted by our minds... Strictly speaking, we are never in it..." says geographer Donald W. Meinig (Meinig 1979, 3). Only the eye of the artist or viewer can explore the represented landscape. Their other senses uncouple, remaining behind in the gallery or studio. The distance between here and there does not preclude a landscape image from providing a rich experience of the world it conveys, but rather creates a tension "between proximity and distance, sensuous immersion and detached observation" (Wylie 2007, 1).

Two *Seascapes* by artist Hermann Zscheigner impose a gulf of sensory distance between viewer and represented ocean (Fig. 3.4). Both are **screenshots** sourced from Google Earth, presenting views only available to the naked eye of air passengers or parachutists. They portray lonely tracts of open ocean, cut off from anything like a normal human viewing position, instating a remote, unengaged experience upon the

viewer, one devoid of whipping winds, briny spray or chill of the open sea⁸. This is a single-sensory experience, like looking through a window.

Fig. 3.4 Hermann Zscheigner, *Seascapes*, 2009, C-Print, 40 x 50 cm

Images: <http://www.follow-ed.com/seascapes/>

Nature cannot be experienced without the influence of culture

Our experience of the natural world is always mediated. It is always shaped by rhetorical constructs like photography, industry, advertising, and aesthetics, as well as by institutions like religion, tourism and education. (Wilson 1992, 12)

There are many arguments that claim that the breadth of human impact upon the natural world is total, that climate change has resulted in shifts in temperature, industry has reshaped countless natural settings and world population is higher than ever, and therefore no place on Earth exists which hasn't been altered by the presence of people. Such is the penetration of human life into the natural world, that many cultural geographers further claim that there is no real way of interacting with or considering nature that does not bring with it some cultural influence (Nye 1999; Bell & Lyall 2002; Rothenberg 1995). "Nature has, and always will be, mediated by culture," explains Australian art writer Rebecca Coates. "It is impossible to experience it outside the constraints of the human lens. It is an unreliable and unstable human construction, and one that through our very involvement, continues to shift beyond our true comprehension and desire to pin down, quantify and control" (Coates 2006, 3).

⁸ The detachment of viewer from landscape is exacerbated in this example by the unusual viewer position, both in the air, and out to sea, far flung from everyday, terrestrial human experiences of landscape. As Liz Wells says, "landscape includes water: rain, river, coast, canal, stream or waterfall, but seascape as a genre has remained slightly apart, perhaps because the ocean is less fully charted than the land" (Wells 2011, 23).

This is a theoretical argument, which some may construe as an unfair objection to the idea that people might be able to have wholesome, unmediated or authentic experiences in or with nature⁹. Rather, it asserts that people and nature, though they may be thought of as belonging to the same natural continuum, cannot interact with each other without the influence or production of culture, which humans cannot eschew. Cultural geographer Jay Appleton has extended this relationship to its extreme, positing: “landscape is a kind of backcloth to the whole stage of human activity” (Appleton 1996, 2). Sometimes, landscapes may even be described as purpose-built vessels or historical capsules for human activity. Sports writer Chris Sidwells, for example, remarked of the annual cycling race *le Tour de France* that “the mountains of France have been the Tour’s theatre – where its dramas, its successes, failures and tragedies have all been played out” (Sidwells 2009, 23)¹⁰.

It is with the advent of photography that the inability to separate nature from culture is made most clear. Soon after the invention of the camera, photography was “ordained as an objective witness of phenomena” (Warner Marien 2012, 72). In reality, all photographic images are subject to human preference and alteration, through movement, position, handling, framing and location selection, and also to the interference of light or moisture. It is impossible to prevent a photograph from veering away, in meaning and aesthetic, from the thing it represents, and from later developing meaning and aesthetics of their own, when curated or viewed elsewhere (Masters Jach 2011). The failure of photography to objectively represent nature is compelling evidence that land is always being mediated by culture.

⁹ Certainly, during the presentation of my research in public talks, I have once or twice encountered stern disagreement from parties who believe they have in some way communed or harmonised with nature while hiking, or at the beach (or what have you), and felt maligned by the idea that their experience was informed by culture and not by nature (in some pure or unmediated sense). While I in no way wish to devalue or critique these reported experiences, I must observe that the ‘getting back to nature’ perspective is simply one among many regarding how landscapes can be appreciated or perceived and is no less human or cultural than any other way of being in nature.

¹⁰ I must warn against veering off into an ontological discussion about what the nature of land can be if people aren’t in it (does a falling tree make a sound... you know the one): let me simply reiterate that when landscape is understood as defined above, we can know that landscapes are always influenced by culture, and land is always being digested into landscape by those present in it.

We all see landscapes differently

It will soon become apparent that even though we gather together and look in the same direction at the same instant, we will not – we cannot – see the same landscape (Meinig 1979, 33).

There are many factors at work upon a person who is creating a representation of landscape. They might be influenced by places they have visited, landscape images they have seen, and their own set of personal preferences (in turn informed by prevailing cultural attitudes and tastes in landscape). Memories and imaginings of landscape can differ dramatically. In a project by German artist Mariele Neudecker, several non-artist participants drafted world maps from memory. The results were both varied and entirely formed by the individual's personal experience (Fig. 3.5)¹¹.

Fig. 3.5 Mariele Neudecker, *Never Eat Shredded Wheat*, German, male, 37, acrylic and felt pen on paper, encapsulated in plastic, 122 x 222 cm

Image: <http://www.marieleneudecker.co.uk/marieleneudeck-3.html>

Cultural geographers such as Paul Brassley have noted the possibility that our tastes for particular kinds of landscapes might result from survival instincts that help us to select the best places to inhabit. “Thus a landscape that affords a good view over a wide area from a hidden vantage point and contains no potential hazards is preferred to a landscape in which it is difficult to detect the approach of a threat and there are no potential hiding places” (Brassley 1999, 29).

Charles O’Rear’s *Bliss* is possibly the world’s best-known landscape photograph (Fig. 3.6). It is estimated that over a billion people have seen it (*The story behind...* 2014). Since 2001, it has been the standard, iconic Microsoft XP desktop background (Anthony 2014). It has been suggested that the image was selected for its innocuousness: for being pleasant and “totally generic” (Beltrone 2014). Its success

¹¹ In this series, variations in each map could be attributed to biographical factors revealed in the titles, where Neudecker recorded the age and nationality of each participant (Neudecker n.d.). One notes a looseness of detail and shrinkage of countries the further one gets from the participant’s home.

supports survival arguments like Brassley's, which state that its general appeal comes from its iteration of good vantage, calm weather, no predators and fertile soil.

Fig. 3.6 Charles O'Rear, *Bliss*, 1996, digital screensaver (from photograph)

Image: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bliss_\(image\)#/media/File:Bliss.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bliss_(image)#/media/File:Bliss.png)

Landscape images may also reveal ideas, values and attitudes about ownership, politics, economy, environmentalism, psychology and science. It is possible for someone who lives in a city, in which food comes from a supermarket, to view a bushland setting and perceive barrenness. In exactly the same place, someone aware of traditional nomadic practices may identify a wealth of food, water and shelter opportunities (Wade Chambers 1982). Jay Appleton put forth the concept of the "prospect-refuge" theory, inferring that not only do we prefer to look at landscapes depicting comfortable habitats, but that our idea of what *constitutes* a comfortable habitat relies on our received cultural knowledge (Appleton 1990).

Conclusion

'Landscape' can be adapted to describe almost any of the intersections between people and nature. After originating from European thought, and art theory, the discussion around landscape has broadened beyond both. Today's 'landscape' can be retrofitted to the way that landscaping practices have evolved in non-Western cultures and to depictions and understandings of nature that pre-date the historical formalisation landscape painting. 'Landscape' can also be bestowed upon completely new landscaping practices as they emerge, such as GPS, satellite photography and digital galleries.

Landscape is not passive, it is given a constitutive role as the stage set for the human drama itself. (Cosgrove 1993, 282)

In this Episode, landscape has been demonstrated as a persistent yet ever-changing system that produces and encapsulates humanity's relationship with nature. The discourse of cultural geography (and the humanities more widely) provides a context within which to discuss the possibilities of what landscape could be and might become in the 21st Century. The importance of landscape ranges beyond aesthetic pleasure and genre-bound tropes: it is a forum for investigating cultural attitudes towards nature, technological developments in the way people interact with nature, and understandings about the way landscape representations might be produced. The role of art in mediating between culture and nature has a long and robust history: "all meaning is always already representational. Epistemology (knowledge of the world) and ontology (the world itself) are thus conflated together, the 'world itself' thus being constituted through images of the world" (Wylie 2007, 80). It is within this tradition that this exegesis and artistic practice carries out its research into contemporary technologies for landscape viewing, and into the philosophical implications of creating and consuming landscapes that are new, digital, global, huge, and always changing.

Episode Four

Midnight, Forecastle
Hunting Whales
Exhibition

Midnight, Forecastle

Midnight, Forecastle was the first of three exhibitions mounted during the term of this doctoral study¹. I produced over 80 works for it, and these were installed in the domestic gallery space The Daphne Collection in North Perth, WA, in January 2014.

The exhibition's premise was a contrived narrative task. I, the artist, would undertake an online exploratory journey using Google Maps, working my way along the Western Australian coastline, scouring its liminal, aerial imagery for evidence of a whale². This task was inspired by my concurrent reading of Herman Melville's eponymous *Moby Dick, or The Whale*, which ignited my interest in the coastline as a landscape in which a hunted quarry could only be identified when it breached the flat surface of the ocean. It struck me that the linearity (of the coast) and the flatness (of the ocean) mirrored the flatness of imagery and linear, screen-by-screen experience of viewing Google Maps. This digital landscape, most of which I hadn't seen and couldn't anticipate, would become an arena in which to perform a search. This quest created a context for an enactment of the relationship between the digital landscape and its user, and an investigation into methods for using creative administration to interpret the viewing methods embedded in or suggested by Google Maps.

In weighing the success of this exhibition as a creative response to digital landscapes it became clear that the figure of the 'user' was a valuable device. It functioned to extend a continuum between artistic and non-artistic uses of geolocation interfaces, allowing my artistic responses to resonate with 'everyday' Google users (who might have clicked the same buttons as I had). It also enabled me to insert humour, narrative and my personal aesthetic sensibilities into the artwork. I realised how powerful it was to be a user of digital landscapes, how lonely and lofty the gaze of

¹ Two exhibitions were mounted as part of my studio research practice: *Midnight, Forecastle* and *Wilderness User*. These exhibitions functioned to develop and focus my ideas in the studio, alongside my exegetical work. The final exhibition *Internet Explorer* was mounted in 2017 as the landing point of this doctoral study. Works shown in all three exhibitions are documented in this exegesis.

² The journey began from my residential location in Perth, Western Australia and proceeded past the border of the Northern Territory, in mimicry of maritime voyage. Though this might seem a small feat for somebody who is not *actually* moving, I used a Google zoom resolution level of 50m, and the journey took me over 6 months. The journey was inspired by the novel *Moby Dick*, and more about this connection is considered in *Episode Seventeen: Oh! To be an Explorer!*

the user could be, and began to think about the potential for the user to wield some narrative authority as an ‘explorer’: trekking further, to wilder or less familiar locations.³

The landscapes illustrated in the exhibition were developed using the viewing practices that characterise digital landscape interfaces, such as clicking, dragging, navigating, noticing, selecting and route plotting. Google Maps responds to the will of the user, who summons and peruses the locations of their choice, in an order and timeframe not contingent upon the climate, ecology or location of the site represented. The user might add notes, drop pins and their viewership of the landscape imagery might shift between purposeful reconnaissance, aesthetic appreciation and curious wandering.

As the first exhibition towards this thesis, the body of artwork I had created was quite materially diverse. In some sense, I’d tried to express the ins and outs of my journey using all of the media that I was equipped to expertly deploy: acrylic and watercolour painting, photographic collage, pencil drawing and some small-scale resin sculptures. There was some interesting visual cohesion across each of these object types (they were all small in scale, for example). However, it was clear that the acrylic paintings, colourful and figuratively detailed, emerged as the liveliest engagement with not only with digital landscape, but also the narration of a journey through digital landscape. In colour, and painted on flat, prefabricated boards, these works also resembled more closely the digital images I was working with. I worked directly from screenshots opened on my laptop display. This resulted in meticulously copied paintings, containing details that the eye couldn’t help but gloss over when using Google Maps, and details that pointed to their digital, photographic provenance, like pixilation.

The paintings also required a longer, closer encounter from me as their maker. This lent gravitas to the more atmospheric or ‘scenic’ of the subjects I painted, demonstrating that beauty and grandeur might be extracted from the apparent functional banality of a way-finding software program like Google Maps. It also

³ A theme I developed further in my second exhibition *Wilderness User*.

meant that when I lavished painterly attention upon subjects others might overlook (errors or ambiguities), I invoked some beguiling incongruity between the presumed meaninglessness or imperfection of the imagery and the focus I paid it through painting. This meant I could have a bit of fun with describing the foibles of the digital landscape, but also argue for the significance of the way that landscape was represented or misrepresented online (as much as the content of that imagery). For these reasons, painting would become my primary medium moving forward.

As The Daphne Collection is a private home, made public only during select opening hours, it was important to consider the impact of the domesticity of the setting on the works. These were grouped into seven clusters, dotted around an open-plan living area. Visitors walked past furniture, a kitchen and pot plants to observe each cluster one at a time. Immediately, this made the work appear like a personal collection, as though it had been amassed and installed in a biographical sense, perhaps as souvenirs. This sense of a collection's singularity, and it's belonging to one person really appealed to me, however if I was to pursue it, I did not want it to be dependant on the work being shown in a house. *Midnight, Forecastle* became the first of three stages of installation that would play out over the course of my study. In my next exhibition, *Wilderness User*, I would trial the display of all paintings in the gallery as a single corpus, which demanded viewers to walk alongside or through its internal narrative. In *Internet Explorer*, my last exhibition, I would materialise the accoutrements of collecting, encasing my paintings in specialised cabinets, shelves and felt-lined drawers to ram home this sense of their preciousness as specimens or items in a larger, personal collection.

Google Maps is an interface that can be used for all kinds of purposes, be they creative, academic or otherwise. The works in *Midnight, Forecastle* attest to these possibilities, as they document the natural beauty captured in the digital landscape imagery, alongside glitches, imaging errors, obscured details and Google's well-known brand components. As the outcome of a project aiming to find a whale and novel ways of understanding and representing landscape, *Midnight Forecastle* was a testament to the diverse, overlapping meanings that a landscape can convey as it begins to be expressed through new technologies as they arise.

A facsimile of the catalogue that originally accompanied this exhibition can be read in *Appendix V: Catalogues from exhibition staged for this PhD.*

Exhibition Documentation



Fig. 4.1 Documentation from the installation of *Midnight, Forecastle* showing all the works for the exhibition before they were hung.



Fig. 4.2 Sheridan Coleman, *Midnight, Forecastle* exhibition installation view, 2014



Fig. 4.3 Sheridan Coleman, *Midnight, Forecastle* exhibition installation view, 2014

Selected Works



Fig 4.4 Sheridan Coleman, *Patch Error: Jacuzzi Test Strip*, 2013,
acrylic on board, 19 x 19 cm



Fig. 4.5 Sheridan Coleman, *Patch Error: Slope Island*, 2013, acrylic on board, 19 x 19 cm



Fig. 4.6 Sheridan Coleman, *Patch Error: Salt Flats*, 2013, acrylic on board, 19 x 19 cm



Fig. 4.7 Sheridan Coleman, *Patch Error: Seasonal Swell*, 2013, acrylic on board, 19 x 19 cm



Fig. 4.8 Sheridan Coleman, *Patch Error: Wandering Clud*, 2013, acrylic on board, 19 x 19 cm



Fig. 4.9 Sheridan Coleman, *Conglomerate Measurement Glitch*, 2013, photographic collage, 15.5 x 15.5 cm



Fig 4.10 Sheridan Coleman, *Patch Error: Pier Near Cape Cuvier*, 2012, acrylic on board, 9 x 9 cm



Fig 4.11 Sheridan Coleman, *Conglomerate Whale Sighting Ripples*, 2013, photographic collage, 15 x 15 cm



Fig. 4.12 Sheridan Coleman, *Aerial Relief 1*, 2013, acrylic, resin, foamcore, 15.5. x 15.5 cm



Fig. 4.13 Sheridan Coleman, *Conglomerate Whale Sighting: Whitewash*, 2013, photographic collage, 14 x 14 cm

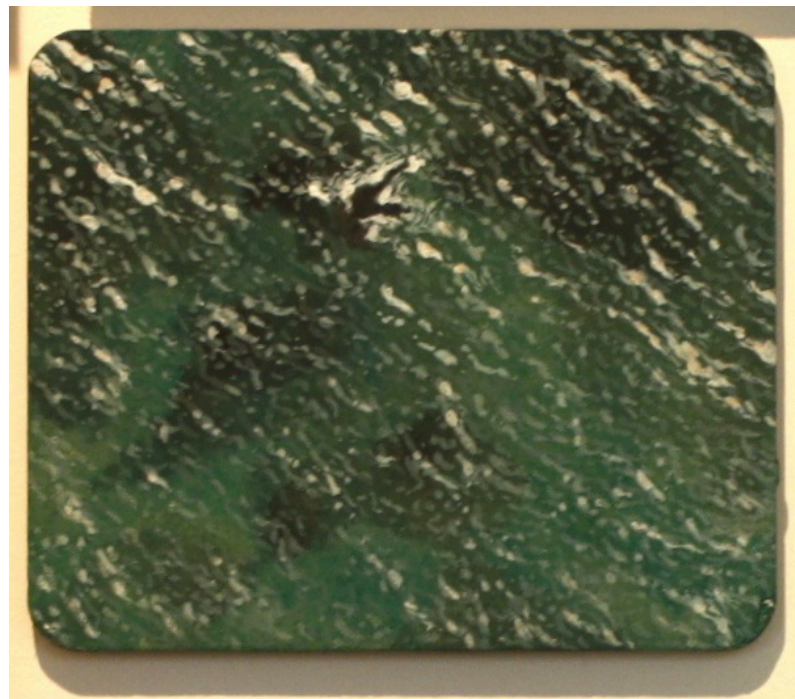


Fig. 4.14 Sheridan Coleman, *False Alarm off Dirk Hartog Island*, 2013, gouache on board, 11.3 x 9.4cm



Fig. 4.15 Sheridan Coleman, *Loading Error over Learmonth Minilya Road*, 2013, acrylic on board and glass, 15 x 15 cm



Fig. 4.16 Sheridan Coleman, *Unnamed Location: Floating Litter Catchment*, 2013, acrylic on board, 9 x 9 cm



Fig. 4.17 Sheridan Coleman, *Loading Error West of Exmouth*, 2013,
acrylic on board and glass, 15 x 15 cm

Episode Five

Wilderness User
Six places I'll never visit
Exhibition

Wilderness User

Wilderness User was an exhibition of over 100 small artworks, held at Paper Mountain gallery in Northbridge, W.A., in June 2015. The exhibition was developed from the hypothesis that a worthwhile test of the viewing power and fullness of the digital landscape would be to use it to explore areas of true wilderness. I selected six locations that were inaccessible to me, and using Google Maps, attempted to see, understand, record and experience them¹.

The sites I chose were: Bouvet Island, an uninhabited volcanic island in the South Atlantic Ocean, mostly covered with glacial ice and too vertiginous to safely land a boat or helicopter on; Macquarie Island, between New Zealand and Antarctica, home only to a small itinerant scientific population from the Australian Antarctic Division, and a population of Royal Penguins; Gangkhar Peunsum, a Himalayan mountain on the border of Bhutan and China, which the Bhutanese government has protected against climbing due to its spiritual significance to the local Buddhist population; The Antarctic Pole of Inaccessibility, which is the most interior and least accessible point of inland Antarctica, marked by an abandoned Soviet research station which is now mostly interred beneath snow and ice; Barrow, a small town on the Northern coast of Alaska, surrounded on three sides by frozen plains and on one by frozen ocean, where snow falls year-round; The Moon, Earth's only natural orbiting satellite, formed around 4.5 billion years ago, which only 12 humans have ever set foot on.

I chose these locations after researching hard-to-access sites. I used superlative search terms such as 'least populated', 'most isolated' and 'uninhabited' and found a great many lists of remote locations as well as a deep well of discussion about what wilderness is. My selection of sites was a personal one (I picked places that appealed to me²). It also resulted from the use of creative administration, by which

¹ I chose these locations for their lack of viable accessibility (some can be accessed but only with extreme difficulty). None will ever be accessed by me. All can still be seen in proxy using Google's geolocation interfaces.

² For example, Bouvet Island is highly mysterious. It cannot be properly seen on Google Maps: one glimpses a tiny shred of cliff: clouds shroud the rest. Only a handful of people have been there, and then only for a few hours, because the climactic conditions make arriving and departing (by boat or

information on a wealth of sites was gathered, and six sites emerged as representative of that bigger whole: they were far flung from one another, diverse in climate and ecology, represented online with varying levels of clarity, and tapped into different aspects of the history of world exploration and wilderness preservation (the Space Race, mountain spiritualism, the study of biology and Communism³). This process allowed me to flesh out, or define the perimeter of wilderness (as seen online) using six examples.

Wilderness is a rich concept. It is often described as a Western idea, which defines the absence of civilisation in natural sites as a form of purity, which can be culturally enriching to distant populations and should be preserved. In this paradigm, wilderness endows intrepid adventurers with some heroism or even spiritual elevation, whilst dissolving its own status as wilderness as they move through the land (see Bell & Lyall 2002; Blessing 2008; Nye 1999; or Rothenberg 1995 for some interesting commentary on these ideas). Distant and untamed land has historically been a cornerstone subject of the landscape art genre, and the ambitious comprehensiveness of Google extends this trope into the digital age⁴. By including sites that are hostile to human occupation, Google transcends functionality, instead fulfilling the visionary objective of a complete global picture. *Wilderness User* is conceptually situated wherever the reach of digital viewership supersedes the possibility or value of *in situ* experience.

Wilderness User tested the extent to which a proliferation of partial views might reconstitute the experience of a landscape, revealing an unknown location without ever providing a panoramic or comprehensive image of it. Cultural geographers Bell and Lyall believe that an amassment of cultural artefacts can add up to a rich experience of a landscape, supplementing or even surrogating for in-person travel.

helicopter) terribly perilous. There is also a wonderful story about an explorer spotting a small wooden boat on the island, which no later party has been able to relocate.

³ There is a bust of Lenin on top of the snow-covered and abandoned Soviet research station at the Antarctic Pole of Inaccessibility.

⁴ The subject or motif of wilderness and exotic landscapes was particularly important in the post-industrialisation Romantic Movement, during colonial expansion, and during the Land Art movement of the mid-20th Century (Rothenberg 1995; Andrews 1999).

When the mountains are not visible, [postcards] still line the streets... Mountains in Winter, mountains in Summer, mountains at dawn, the individual iconic peak, the railways leading up to them, the strongly coloured filter-enhanced image of the mountains as never seen in real life: these depictions convince the visitor that indeed there really is a mountain. (Bell & Lyall 2002, 37)

Wilderness User represented a step forward in my practice: focussing on sites that none of my audience was likely to attempt visiting meant that they shared my inability to see these places anywhere but online. It made them just as curious as I was, just as inclined to look on Google Maps instead of buying a plane ticket. It beat back any impulse for viewers to ask ‘why don’t you go just go there to make the painting?’: a question I suspect is tied to some popular understanding that landscape artists want to seek out authentic experiences with nature, which ignored what I had thought (in *Midnight, Forecastle*) was a patent statement that I was investigating representation and not experience. I was able to argue quite successfully that the wonders and diversity of the world could be learnt about, in a not inauthentic manner, from online exploration. Further, this proposition demands that Google’s geolocation interfaces are understood as culturally significant arenas for the development of landscape as a concept, able to be used for a variety of artistic and non-artistic purposes.

While preparing *Wilderness User* I became fascinated by the accumulative nature of online research. I included works that referred outside of Google’s digital landscape, to the game *Solitaire*, search bar queries, and text from Wikipedia pages. These works supplemented the landscape paintings with information and developed some warmly received humour that revealed the distractions, indulgences and frustrations that characterise online research. Despite this, they obscured the narrative of creative administration and borrowed focus from the discussion of digital landscapes. I knew that in moving forward, it would be the process of creative administration as my personal framework for online research, rather than the character of online research as a whole, that would be afforded greater prominence.

The *Wilderness User* works were hung in a long cluster that expanded into the gallery space. This arrangement almost diagrammatically reflected the expansive nature of online research, which can begin with simple enquiries and gradually snowball to include a myriad of tangentially related subtopics. As an illustration of a commonly-experienced practice, this arrangement was easily understood by viewers, however it meant that all of the works were part of a single arrangement: paintings which merited some space to be appreciated more deeply were surrounded by those which perhaps deserved less attention (paintings which were a bit like ‘one-liners’).

Reflecting upon *Wilderness User*, I decided to create a similar number of small works for my next exhibition, but I would impose a different kind of order onto their arrangement. I wanted to flex my voice as the artistic arbiter of my research, arranging the works according to my own set of categories and aesthetic sensibility, making the labels, headings or criteria for my arrangements explicit to the viewer. This way, if there were a wonderful narrative or interesting image that informed my choice of a particular location, that information would accompany my painting, making clear the importance of the selection and interpretation of that site to the viewer. This new step was not merely about being in control, but offering a richer experience of the collection assembled through creative administration.

A facsimile of the catalogue that originally accompanied this exhibition can be read in *Appendix V: Catalogues from exhibition staged for this PhD*.

Exhibition Documentation



Fig. 5.1 Sheridan Coleman, *Wilderness User*, (detail of far left of installation), 2015, mixed media



Fig. 5.2 Sheridan Coleman, *Wilderness User* (installation view), 2015, mixed media



Fig. 5.3 People visiting the exhibition on opening night.

Selected Works



Fig. 5.4 Sheridan Coleman, *PAC-MAN Can't Play Here: Bouvet Island*, 2015, acrylic on MDF, 12.5 x 8 cm



Fig. 5.5 Sheridan Coleman, *Hand Pixelated Bouvet Island*, 2015, photograph, acrylic, MDF, 21.2 x 15.3 cm

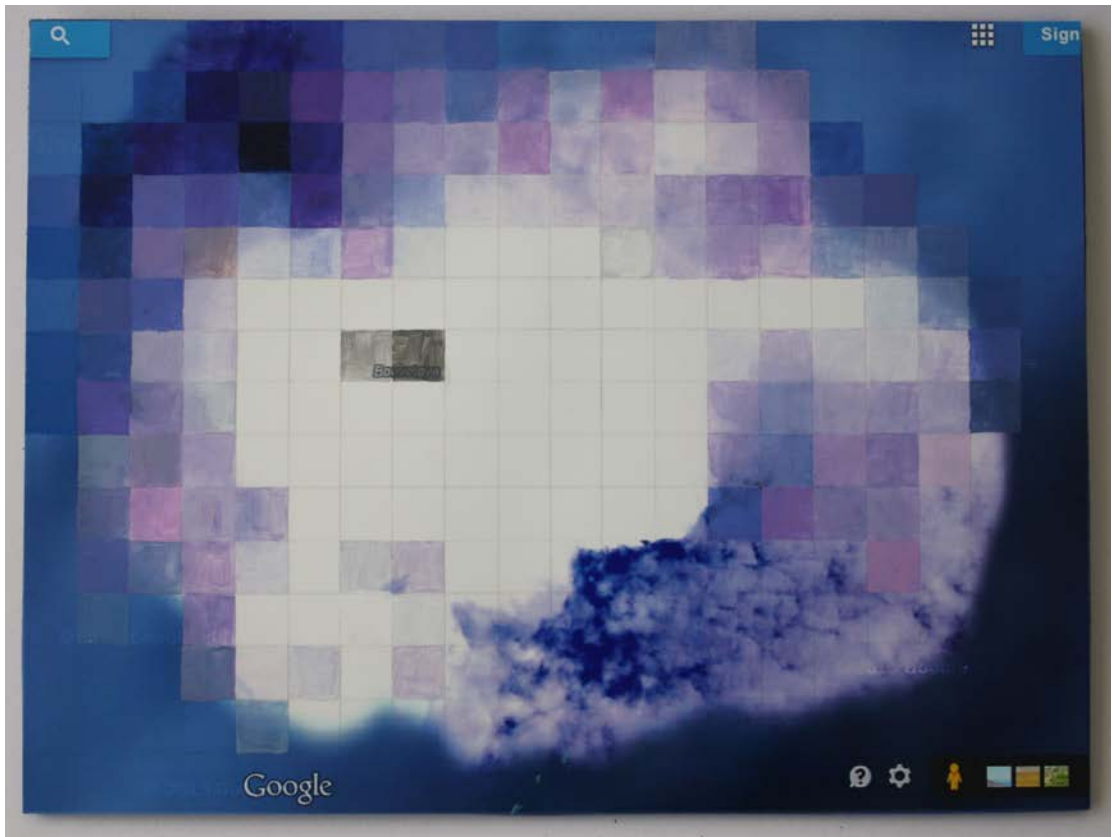


Fig. 5.6 Sheridan Coleman, *Hand-Pixelated Bouvet Island*, 2015, photograph, acrylic, MDF, 15.5 x 20.2 cm



Fig. 5.7 Sheridan Coleman, *Anchor Rock, off Macquarie Island*, 2015, acrylic on MDF, 11.3 x 9.4 cm



Fig. 5.8 Sheridan Coleman, *Gratitude, Cursor, Macquarie Island*, 2015, acrylic on MDF, 9 x 9 cm



Fig. 5.9 Sheridan Coleman, *Barrow © 2015 Google Inc.*, 2015, acrylic on MDF, 14.5 x 13.2 cm



Fig. 5.10 Sheridan Coleman, *Gangkhar Peunsum Low Battery*,
2015, acrylic on MDF, 12.9 x 12.9 cm



Fig. 5.11 Sheridan Coleman, *Top of the World Bar Low Battery*, 2015, acrylic on MDF, 13.1 x 13.1 cm



Fig. 5.12 Sheridan Coleman, *Reserve Battery Power*, 2015, acrylic on MDF, 12 x 8 cm



Fig. 5.13 Sheridan Coleman, *Bouvet Digital Imaging Perimeter*, 2015, acrylic on MDF, 12.2 x 13 cm



Fig. 5.14 Sheridan Coleman, *Major Lake All Windows Open*, 2015, photographs, acrylic, foamcore, 18 x 21 cm

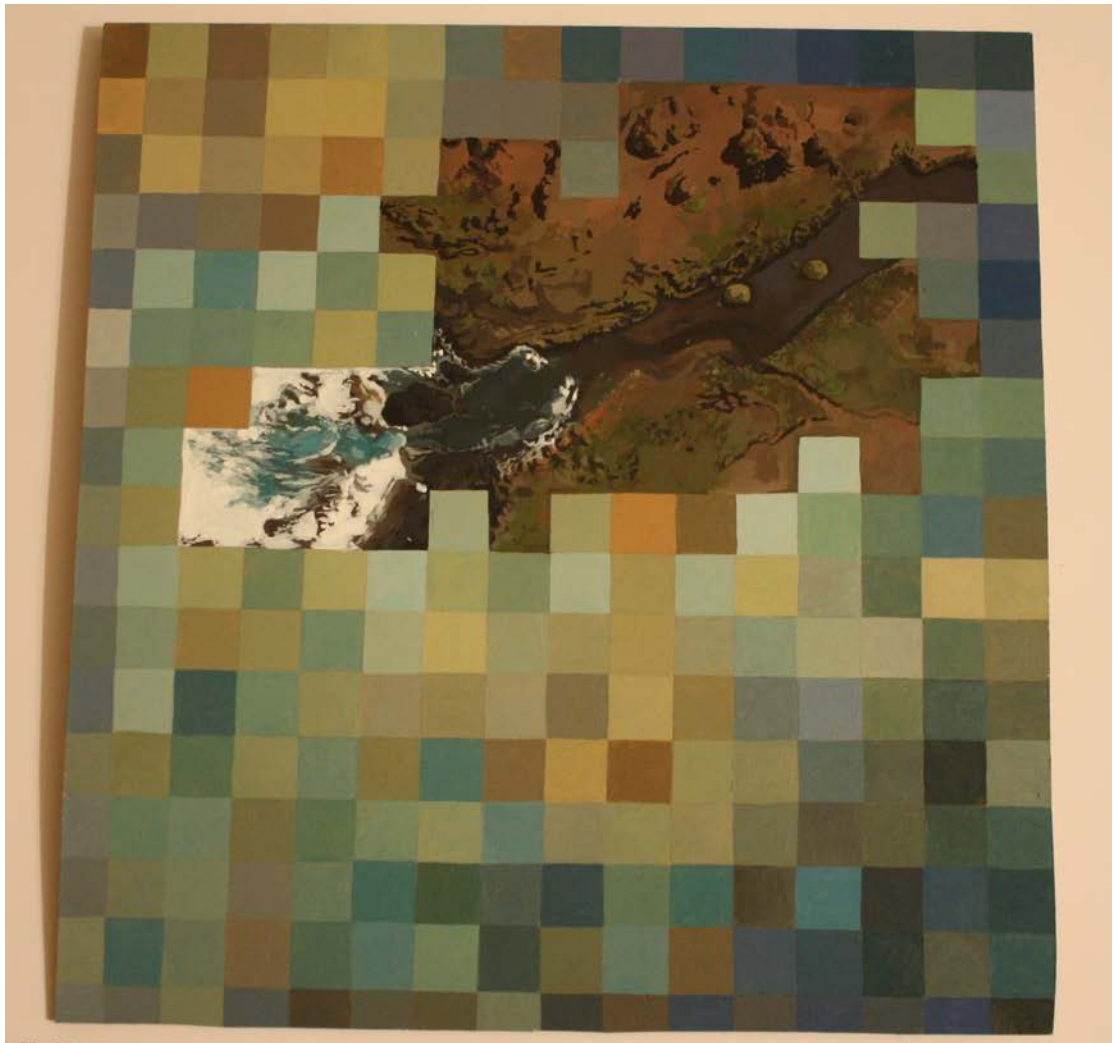


Fig. 5.15 Sheridan Coleman, *Macquarie River Mouth*, 2015, acrylic on MDF, 26 x 24 cm

Episode Six

Internet Explorer
The Creative Administration of Islands
Exhibition

Internet Explorer

Internet Explorer was the final exhibition of this doctoral study, held at The Engine Room, Turner Galleries, Northbridge, in February 2017. The exhibition was the most explicit yet expression of the process of creative administration: a way of collecting and interpreting landscape imagery that used an antique, handmade aesthetic and which was deeply engaged with themes of digital viewership and digital landscape.

The exhibition focused on islands, a motif that had already arisen in the previous two exhibitions. Geographically speaking, an island is any landmass surrounded by water on all sides (*islands* n.d.). This simple definition was my starting category, providing a fixed border within which I sought to unearth as much difference and vibrancy as I could. I explored a number of subcategories, looking for islands that represented extremes of climate, supported unique populations, were used for unusual purposes; islands that were manmade, temporary, new or had gone missing.

As discreet entities, islands could be collected, and stored in a series. In *Internet Explorer*, I used pre-cut circular boards to do the same task as uniform glass specimen jars perform in museum collections. A butterfly collection assembles many individuals from a species, all pinned and presented in the same way, to make evident the differences between them. Similarly, the invariability of my little wooden supports, paired with the regularity of the blueness of the water painted around each island, accentuated the variegations between islands in each group of paintings. The unpainted discs could perhaps be regarded as empty, until an island was painted onto its surface, collected, creating a permanent impression of the changing digital landscape at one point in time.

As a specimen, unit or item within a broader collection, islands have been ideal. There are hundreds of thousands of them (Hyderabad 2006), making islands a category as overwhelming as digital landscape, and thus a well-suited candidate for creative administration. They are also small compared to other landforms, with fewer characterising features, creating a more nuanced spectrum between islands. Ecologically isolated, islands support the accelerated evolution of plant and animal species, and often have a much shorter geological lifespan (Attenborough 2014).

Meaning can be extracted or drawn out in any number of directions to give a lively demonstration of the wonders, oddities and complexity of islands.

For *Internet Explorer*, all paintings were contained within cabinets, shelves and other small furnishings, to make manifest my process of categorisation. Each group of works was installed in a slightly different way, the subject or theme of each group dictating the kind of encasement surrounding it (perhaps a tiered shelf, a set of drawers, a wooden tray). All the cabinets and shelves were built from wood, stained dark brown, lined with green felt and decoratively labelled, extending the aesthetics at play in my use of the catalogue box and in antique museum collections such as Ulisse Aldrovandi's¹. They also reiterated the vignette-like form my writing has taken on as a result of creative administration, as ten or more groupings organised under subcategories.

Like Diedre Brollo's assemblage of volcano memorabilia², the paintings in *Internet Explorer* can be read as a settled or permanent arrangement of ideas because of their purpose-built display cases. The cases act as a solidification of the creative administration process (collection, selection, interpretation), giving a physical and aesthetic form to what would otherwise be an invisible and esoteric aspect of the work that I do in the studio. This solidification through display also fixes the works to a moment in time, evident in the concurrent digital imagery in each painting, and also indicative of a period of artistic work, now over, in which the works were created and brought together.

The development of this installation was also informed by the personal and tactile qualities of my work. Viewers and visitors to my studio have often instinctively responded to the small and intimate quality of my painting by touching or holding the paintings in their hands. The installation of *Internet Explorer* allowed viewers to engage in a tactile exploration of selected works, opening drawers and flicking through stacked paintings as though they had entered a library or archive (where the objects are precious and valuable but designed for use and enjoyment by visitors).

¹ See *Episode Two: Multiplicity and Creative Administration*

² See *Episode Two: Multiplicity and Creative Administration*

Internet Explorer was a cohesive amalgamation of the cornerstones of my studio work as it has developed towards the end of this doctoral study: the search for virtual islands, the generous and historical medium of paint, and the romance of creative administration (embodied in the objects of display).

Selected Artwork Documentation



Fig. 6.1 Sheridan Coleman, close-up of *Four moments of volcanic activity on Krakatoa*, 2010-2015, 2016, acrylic on board in felt-lined display boxes, 9 x 9 cm each



Fig. 6.2 Sheridan Coleman, two details from *Ten Islands Gravely Threatened by Rising Sea Levels*, 2016, acrylic on board, 9 x 9 cm each

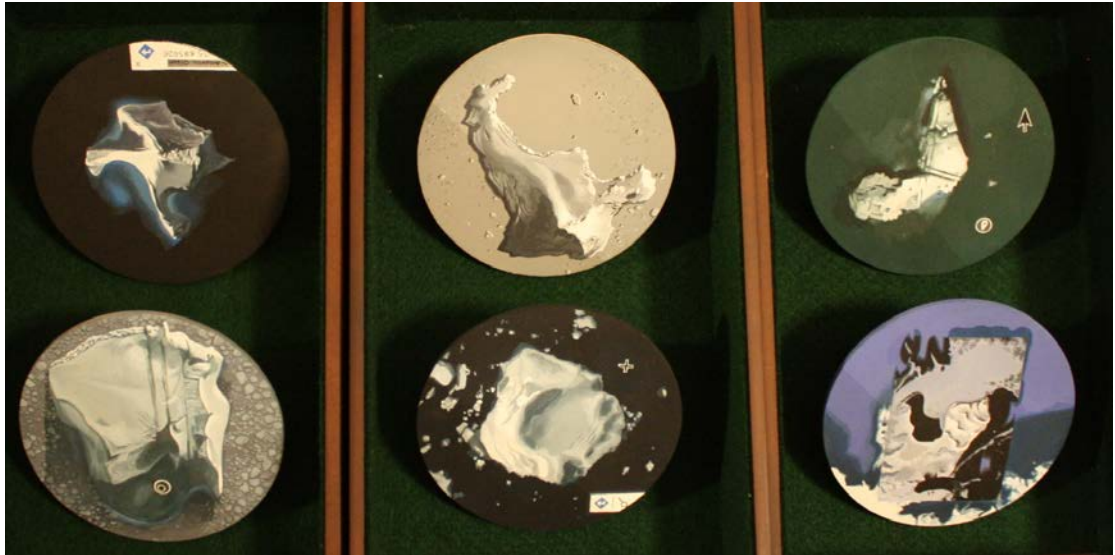


Fig. 6.3 Sheridan Coleman, close up of *Temporary Islands (Icebergs)*, 2016, acrylic on board in felt-lined display drawers, 9 x 9 cm each

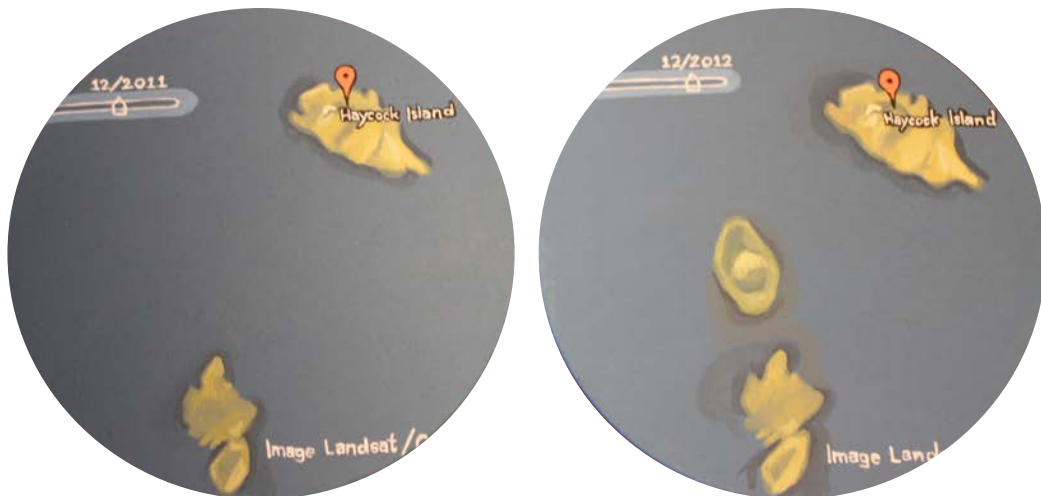


Fig. 6.4 Sheridan Coleman, two details from *The Emergence of Principato di San Bernardino*, 2016, acrylic on board, 9 x 9 cm each



Fig. 6.5 Sheridan Coleman, studio documentation of *Five Former Lunatic Asylum Islands*, 2016, acrylic on board, 9 x 9 cm each



Fig. 6.6 Sheridan Coleman, studio documentation of *Twenty-nine Lighthouse Islands, Co-ordinates Given*, 2016, acrylic on foam board in felt-lined display box, 4 x 4 cm each



Fig. 6.6 Sheridan Coleman, studio documentation of *Eight Deadman's Islands in Canada*, 2016, acrylic on board in felt-lined display box, 9 x 9 cm each

Episode Seven

Getting to know Google

Features and Functions

Street View

Realism

Whole Earth Representation

A World Coverage Manifesto

The Impact of Google Software

Getting to Know Google

Google Maps offers live, shifting representations of a complex interplay between utility and constantly changing contexts, content and commercial ambitions in one of the world's fastest growing, most lucrative markets. More than a map, it is a kind of 'macroscope'; a tool set that makes sense of a system we are using on the outside while changing from within... the largest machine humans have ever built. (Schulze 2010, 3)

This exegesis proposes that landscape art in the West is a cultural expression of predominant attitudes, values and interactions with the natural world. Such interactions between culture and nature are not only determined by historic traditions, cultural practices, economics and politics, but by technologies that enhance, guide and give meaning to interaction with nature. I argue that Google Earth, Maps and Street View have had a great influence on the cultural expression of landscape in the West, penetrating art, culture, environmentalism, social interactions and travel (among much else). This breadth of reverberation is described by geographer Brian Lorch: “Technology is intimately tied to the subject of landscape as mechanism of the mediations that play a role in the perception of the scene and its resultant representations in a variety of formats (pictures, photographs, digital media etc.)” (Lorch 2002, n.p.). Technology both enables and extends interaction with landscape and nature, and is also a communicative medium for the experiences thusly generated¹.

If landscape is a cultural practice², then Google Earth is perhaps the most important landscape project of the early 21st Century, reflecting historical ideas and assumptions about how landscape images should be organised, as well as significantly impacting on how users conceive of their relationship to place, and their conceptions of the Earth as a continuous totality; a single world landscape. This

¹ My favourite example from historical landscape art is the simultaneous invention in newly industrialised France of the cross-country steam train, which got cosmopolitan painters out to the countryside, alongside the development of squeezable tin paint tubes, allowing for *in situ* outdoor painting (Hurt 2013). New technology underpins the way that nature is accessed as well as the way it is represented.

² As was contended in *Episode Three: Landscape as a Cultural Process*.

Episode will outline some of the history of the development and mass uptake of Google Earth, and examine some of the reasons for attributing it such significance within the trajectory of Western landscape culture.

Features & Functions: A History

Google Earth was initially developed by a California-based geospatial technology company named Keyhole, Inc., whose comprehensive geolocation product, then called Earth Viewer, was bought by Google in 2004³ and re-released as Google Earth in 2005 (Scott 2010; McClendon 2011; *Google Acquired Keyhole* 2004). Upon its release, Google's vice president of product management, Jonathan Rosenberg, foretold the rise of a "powerful new search tool, enabling users to view 3-D images of any place on Earth as well as tap a rich database of roads, businesses and many other points of interest" (*Google Acquired Keyhole* 2004). The technology has since become the most widespread, accessible and frequently used geolocation and geographic visualisation tool in the world (Cosgrove & Fox 2010).

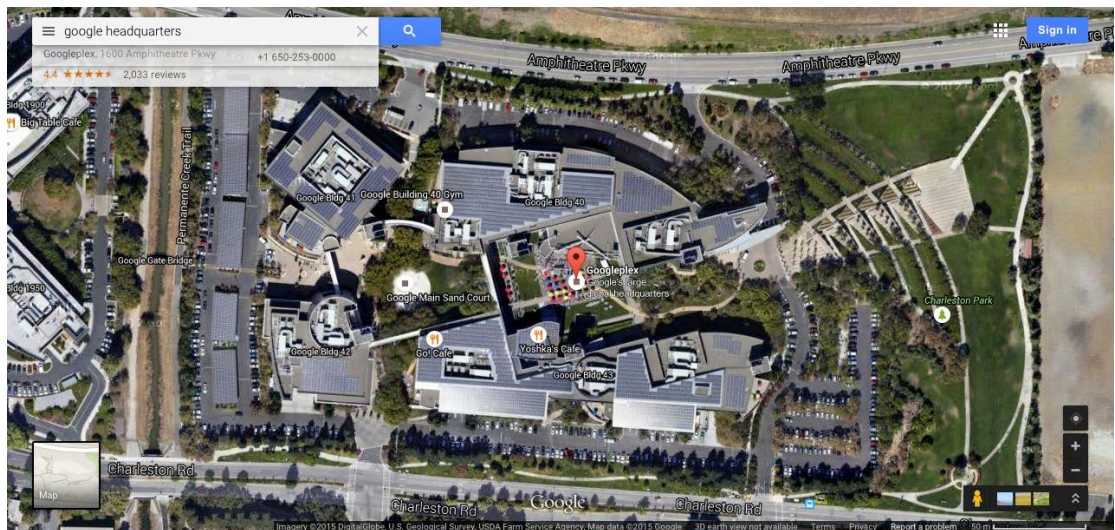


Fig. 7.1 Google Inc.'s global headquarters, the **Googleplex**, in California, U.S.A., as seen on Google Maps in 2015. Map data: DigitalGlobe, US Geological Survey, USDA Farm Service Agency, Google

Both the browser-based Google Maps interface, and its iteration as a downloadable application—Google Earth—are configured as virtual windows, through which users

³ The sale price remains undisclosed.

navigate a continuous, digitally constructed, photographic representation of Earth's surface. The interfaces offer "the conceit of flying over the Earth at altitudes ranging from outer space (nearly 16,000 miles), down to less than 100 feet" (Cosgrove & Fox 2010, 77; Graham & Zook 2007). The simulative, narrative-like format of this interface means that Maps and Earth users experience more than a utilitarian resource, interacting with a culturally significant, global landscape visualisation.

The geographical imagery of Earth and Maps is embellished with information points, markers and labels, which indicate roads, cities, businesses and land formations. A suite of animated functions furnish users with the ability to zoom in and out to focus on a landscape's details or take in the bigger picture, and to 'click and drag' over the landscape, screen by screen. Though the interfaces were initially pegged as journey planning tools, they have grown rapidly in complexity and functionality to enable users to access supplementary information such as links to other websites, live public transport timetables, location searches by typology (café, park, pool etc.), coordinates, travel itineraries, traffic and construction reports and business reviews. Users can create annotated map layers, use archived imagery to measure change in urban environments (such as gentrification and urban decay) and natural environments (such as erosion and deforestation⁴), look up their homes and even check live traffic density⁵. This astounding arsenal of tools means that Maps and Earth are far more than simply cartographic resources, but generate, and equip users to generate, representations of landscapes that bear cultural, aesthetic and narrative meaning. It is surely an understatement to say that Google is not just a map – it is a forum for experiencing, constructing and sharing innumerable overlapping, concurrent and changing visions of landscape.

⁴ As of 2007, a number of areas, landmarks and attractions have been appended in the digital landscape with Google's Time Machine function, allowing users to peruse the chronology of images of particular sites from its archive, enabling them to "observe changes in satellite images, such as the 2006 World Cup stadium or the desertification of Africa's Lake Chad" (Earle 2009, 1; Gibbs 2014). In 2015, map layers were also made available which visualised projected sea level rise over time in major American metropolitan areas (Smith 2015).

⁵ Google uses its ability to capture the locations of the vast network of smartphones on the road to interpolate and relay data that anticipates traffic movement. Users who are using the 'Get Directions' function of Maps will see each leg of their journey rendered in orange, red or green, to convey the relative speed and flow of traffic in those areas). This information is live, and "crowdsourced" (*How Google Tracks Traffic* 2013, 1; Wang 2007)

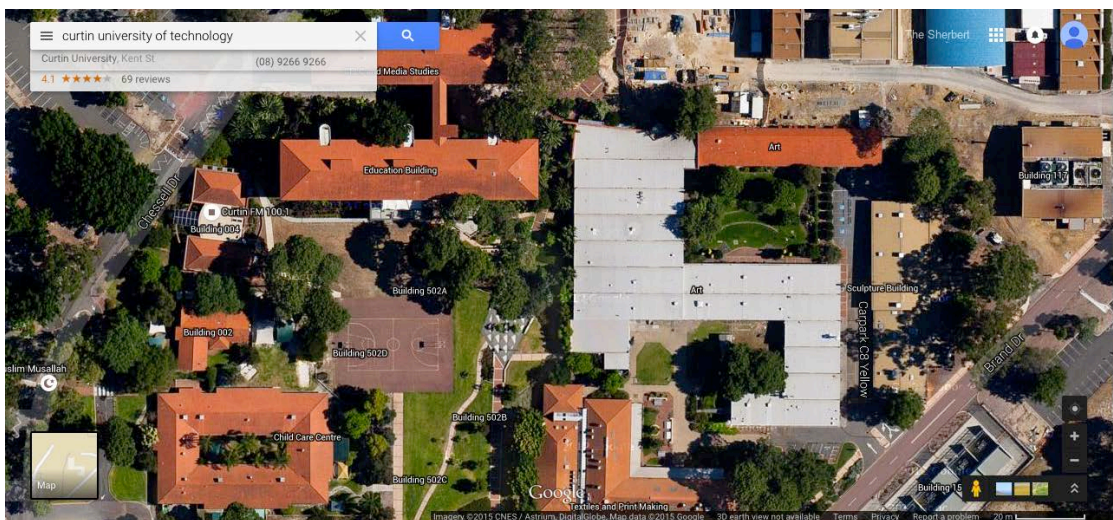
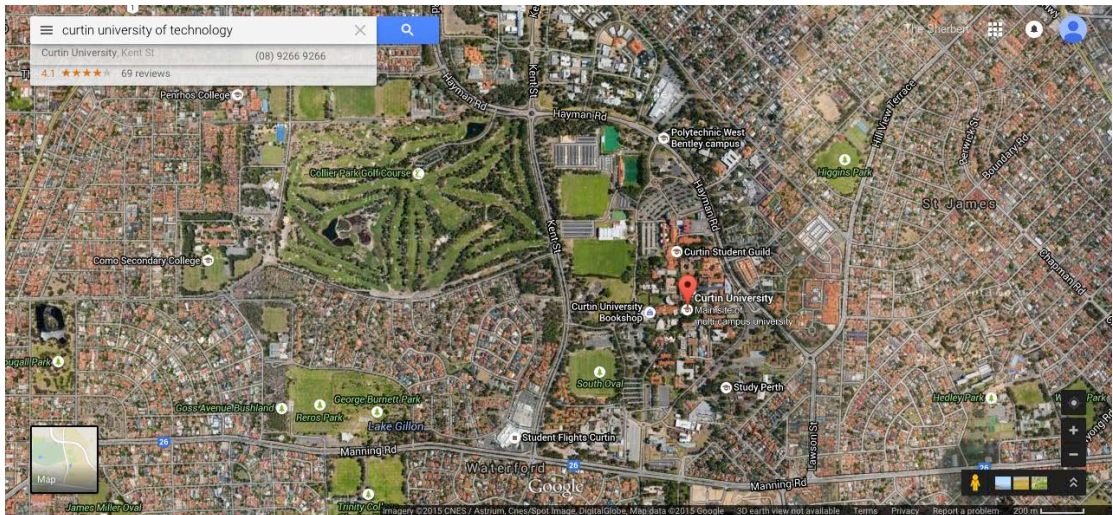


Fig. 7.2 Curtin University of Technology in Bentley, Perth, Western Australia, with a zoomed in detail of Curtin’s Art Department buildings, as seen on Google Maps in 2015. Map data: CNES, Astrium, DigitalGlobe, Google

Google’s virtual landscape surface is known technically as the **Universal Texture** (Valla 2012b). It is a single layer of imagery, compiled from innumerable individual photographs taken from over 1000 sources, including satellites and low-flying aircraft (MacMillan 2014). The photographs, all taken at different times, are updated sporadically according to demand and availability⁶, and are quilted together to form a single, continuous visualisation of the Earth’s surface (Wilkins 2010, 4). This

⁶ “Google claims that most of the images in Google Maps and Google earth are no more than 3 years old”, except where censorship requires that the images are old enough or of low enough resolution to protect particular sites such as military installations or government buildings from public gaze (Anderson 2011, 2). In 2012, a news report cited that Google Street View updates its imagery roughly once a fortnight, but that update regularity is always subject to weather, driving conditions, etc. (Petronzio 2012, 1).

imagery is passed through algorithms that ready it for display, resulting in a “smooth and continuous 24-hour, cloudless, daylight world, increasingly free of jarring anomalies, outliers and statistical inconsistency” (Valla 2012b, 3).

Google Earth and Google Maps share an underlying core of photographic imagery, coding and cartographic information, referred to by Google as the “Ground Truth”⁷ (Madrigal, 2012, p1). Reporter Jack Schulze conflates the interfaces, saying, “it would be a mistake to see Maps as distinct from Earth; it is a single graphic representation, shaped around the value of a solution to a wayfinding problem” (Schulze, 2010, p1).

Google Street View

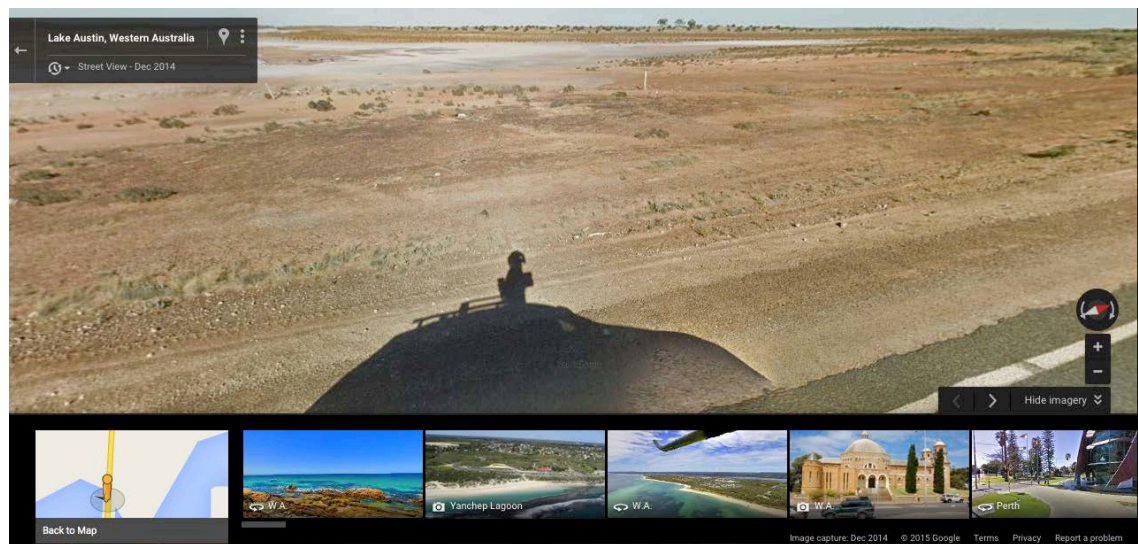


Fig. 7.3 A screenshot of a Google Street View perspective from the Great Northern Highway in Western Australia, showing a desiccated Lake Austin, and capturing the shadow of the Google vehicle and camera, 2014. Map data: Google

⁷ The Ground Truth is a “deep map” which contains the “logic of places: their no-left-turns and freeway on-ramps, speed limits and traffic conditions” (Madrigal 2012, 1). It uses machine learning and computer vision to extract data from existing photographic imagery, and is manually double-checked by a “small army” of Google staff using a program called Atlas (Miller 2014).

Launched in 2007⁸, Google Street View was a natural augmentation of the Maps and Earth duet, providing a pedestrian's-eye view of roads and paths, as well as business interiors and public spaces (Miller 2014). Street View imagery also consists of collaged photographs to provide the conceit of a three-dimensional, walk-through terrain (Fig. 7.3) down footpaths, highways and any other thoroughfare.

Fig. 7.4 A typical Google Street View vehicle with mounted camera, 2015

Image: <https://www.google.com/streetview/images/understand/device-car.jpg>

The photographs that comprise the Street View environment are taken using multi-lens cameras atop tall, stabilized tripods (Petronzio 2012). Some of these are mounted onto Google fleet vehicles and driven along roads in urban, rural and remote locations (Fig 7.4). Other cameras are fastened to balloons and kites, or bolted to low-flying drones (Anderson 2011, 2). The 15-lens 'Trekker' is a backpack camera worn by Google employees as they traverse pedestrian-only areas (Fig. 7.5), and even scale the slopes of Mt Kilimanjaro and Mt Everest Base Camp (Fredinburg 2013; Spoonaeuer 2013).

Fig. 7.5 A Google Street View employee wearing a Trekker camera pack walks through St Mark's Square in Venice, a city with no terrestrial vehicle access.

Image: <https://i.guim.co.uk/img/static/sys-images/Guardian/About/General/2013/7/15/1373905737748/Google-Street-View-Venice-010.jpg?w=700&q=55&auto=format&usm=12&fit=max&s=ef0ec106ca9d1a8f0f6f503e24d500b6>

As Street View photographs are collected, they are matched to GPS data about the route of the Google camera, before being passed through algorithms that collate them into a seamless 3D model, blurring the faces of pedestrians⁹, and creating smooth

⁸ When Google Street View was first launched it contained only isolated coverage of discreet American cities including Denver, Las Vegas, Miami, New York and San Francisco, using existing imagery provided by Immersive Media, which was passed through Google's imaging algorithms and manipulated into 3D move-through streetscapes. Google's amassment of comprehensive and global street-level imagery has since been incredibly rapid (see Fig.7.6) (Blumenthal 2007).

⁹ Google's image processing technology uses an "algorithm to scour Google's image databases for faces", as well as vehicle license plates and company logos (for example, a 'Chanel' logo on a pedestrian's T-shirt), and blurs them out (Shankland 2008, 1; Petronzio 2012).

transitions from one photograph to the next (*Ground-level view* 2015; Vavarella 2012a-d).

Street View's coverage is already extensive. Reporter Tom Chivers cited that in 2013, Google had mapped "28 million miles of road in 194 countries" (Chivers 2013, 1). However, Google Street View's visual reach is not yet total or global (Fig 7.6). Uncovered regions include those with tricky access issues: areas without roads, uninhabited places, impoverished regions and politically unstable or conflict zones. Unsurprisingly, Street View's first inclusions were cities in the U.S., Google's home country, which today has total coverage (*Ground-level view* 2015).

Fig. 7.6 A Google graphic illustrating the locations around the world for which Google provides Street View imagery

Image: <https://tctechcrunch2011.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/screen-shot-2013-11-16-at-11-06-23.png?w=1279&h=615&crop=1>

Street View, like Maps and Earth, has had a significant cultural impact as an aide for the visualisation and conceptualisation of landscape. It provides on-the-ground perspectives of both familiar and previously unimagined sites. Users view their backyard using the same tools and techniques, and the same visual framework, that they view landscapes they'd never seen or heard of before. This arrangement is levelling, correlating previously unrelated sites in the mind of the user, who begins to see them as a larger network of landscape, or indeed a single world landscape, each part of which is equally visible. Though this spatial relationship exists only in simulation in Street View, it informs the construction of each user's own ideas and feelings about the structure of landscapes, space, proximity, environment and home.

Realism

While its contents are accurately located and detailed, Google's virtual landscapes are far from naturalistic. It is this state of simulation, of being designed for viewership, that helped to first capture my critical attention. Features such as consistent daylight, minimal long shadows and an absence of clouds support my

conviction that Google's landscapes are as simulative as any landscape artwork. Earth, Maps and Street View refer to actual topography, yet they offer a rendition of landscape that is entirely manipulated around human viewership, and all the cultural expectations about landscape that that entails.

Others have also been captivated by Google's departure from realism. "The sun shines eternal on Google Earth... It is permanent, worldwide midday," observes art and culture academic Joanna Fiduccia, in fascination with this mix of occultish unreality and immutable usefulness (Fiduccia 2012, 73). Artist Clement Valla, who collects snapshots of Google Earth, has also noticed something peculiar: "the clouds are disappearing from Google Earth" (Valla 2012a, 3).

Certainly, the Universal Texture is constructed to be useful to its users, rather than a figurative or plausible landscape representation. But of course: maps have been decorated and annotated for hundreds of years to make them more meaningful or user-friendly. Similarly, artists invent landscapes for pleasure, or to support great narratives, or inspire contemplation. In doing away with an obstructive cloudbank or dusk lighting, it seems to me that Google is performing a creative act of landscape production, participating in a long history of narrating and representing land so that it has greater cultural value, reflecting the relationship between people and land. It is difficult not to see this as a romantic, or at least a deeply utopian endeavour: *a world landscape for the people of the world*, perhaps.

Yet despite its myriad, inbuilt contrivances, language and media theorist Christine Masters Jach observes that Google might still be taken for a real and reliable chronicle of site "[Google Earth offers] a non-allegorical model of global and ecological interconnectedness because its photographs act as documentary" (Masters Jach 2011, 3). Although photographs are often relied upon for their objectivity (Wells 2011), when collated and combined using arbitrary digital image processing techniques, they constitute a ficto-realistic landscape document. The resulting hybridity and indeed confusion between facsimile and construction has caused new media theorist Leon Gurevitch to conceptualise Google's geolocation interfaces as new and powerful media formats that impact upon our conceptions of geographical ontology: "Neither entirely virtual not entirely indexical, Google Earth operates as a

machinic hybrid in which the **panoptical** power of satellite imaging is combined with the simulative capacities of the product design-engineered object” (Gurevitch, 2014, 88). Earth and Maps can certainly provide practicable information, however they do so through a simulative virtual composite that is no more real than the most fantastic of ancient maps or poetically realised landscape paintings.

Whole Earth Representation: Cultural and Conceptual Precursors

Another remarkable aspect of the Universal Texture is that it is unabridged¹⁰, quite unlike the cropped images that constitute maps, guidebooks and other wayfinding media. Valla observes that Google is “thinking in continuity... [promising an] uninterrupted navigation of our planet – not a tiled series of discreet maps, but a flowing and fluid experience” (Valla 2012b, 2) a perspective that is unmistakable in Google Earth’s homepage visualisation, which gestures towards totality and uninhibited viewership (Fig. 7.7) (Gurevitch 2014).

Fig. 7.7 A screenshot of Google Earth’s homepage

Image: <http://media.web.britannica.com/eb-media/48/147648-004-6EEB782B.jpg>

Keyhole, Inc.’s initial conception of the Earth Viewer as a global landscape representation application had a number of significant cultural precursors – literary and technological examples of other projects where world geography was represented with the same kind of visual totality, which Gurevitch calls a “whole earth representation” (Gurevitch 2014, 100; Masters Jach 2011).

One developer who worked on Earth Viewer claims that a tract in the Neal Stephenson science fiction novel *Snow Crash* heavily influenced the concept behind

¹⁰ The Universal Texture accounts for 100% of the Earth’s surface in some way. This is not to say that every part of the world is represented photographically or with a consistent quality of imagery: many tracts of land are shown in very low resolution and large swathes of the ocean are illustrated with ‘place-holding’ areas rendered in cerulean. Other omissions or obstructions are due to the censure of particular sites by governments or private entities. More on this in *Episode Sixteen: Dialoguing with Satellites*.

the software (Masters Jach 2011, 5-6). Stephenson’s writing foregrounds a number of the functionalities of Google Maps:

A globe about the size of a grapefruit, a perfectly detailed rendition of Planet Earth, hanging in space at arm's length in front of his eyes. Hiro has heard about this but never seen it. It is a piece of CIC software called, simply, *Earth*. It is the user interface that CIC uses to keep track of every bit of spatial information that it owns — all the maps, weather data, architectural plans, and satellite surveillance stuff. (Stephenson 1992)

An earlier ancestor was the explosion of extra-terrestrial photography of Earth in the 1960s, flowing from the launch of Sputnik and subsequent Apollo missions, when the Earth “became a global theatre” (McLuhan 1974, 501; Cosgrove & Fox 2010). In 1968, Apollo 8 astronaut William Anders photographed *Earthrise*, a view of the Earth from the moon, half sunlit and half shadowed (Fig. 7.8). The image became iconic, as one of the first documentary photographs (rather than imaginative illustrations) to show the Earth as a whole (*Apollo 8: Earthrise* 2013; Scott 2010). Later, in 1972, the equally eponymous *Blue Marble* photograph provided an even more acute view of the planet as a single world geography, capturing the largest portion of Earth that it is possible to see at one time (Fig. 7.9) (*The Blue Marble from Apollo 17* 2015). Gurevitch measured the cultural response to this image, with its connotations of world landscape, world ecology and super-atmospheric, almost celestial vision, as nothing less than “paradigm shifting” (Gurevitch 2014, 87; Cosgrove & Fox 2010).

Fig. 7.8 William Anders, *Earthrise*, 1968, photograph, dimensions variable

Image: https://www.nasa.gov/multimedia/imagegallery/image_feature_1249.html

Fig. 7.9 The Johnson Space Centre, NASA, *Blue Marble*, 1972, photograph, dimensions variable

Image:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Blue_Marble#/media/File:The_Earth_seen_from_Apollo_17.jpg

Part of the power of *Earthrise*, *Blue Marble* and Google Earth, is that they lend a sense of gravitas or reality to an idea that is difficult to visualise from an everyday perspective: the continuity, or totality of a global landscape. This is because such images are photographic, and can be read as empirical evidence. Photography-based visualisations reinforce extant imaginative visual practices like picturing the world from above, or depicting more land in one view than can be seen physically (e.g. Renaissance mapping, Australian Indigenous painting and medieval European *papier-mâché* globes). It is the perceived objectivity of the camera lens that appeared to finally confirm and replace these widespread cultural imaginings of the earth as a whole that caused such sensation in the wake of the astronauts' images, and which gives incredible cultural potency to Google's geolocation imagery today.

The 1977 short film *Powers of Ten* by Charles and Ray Eames was another early example of geospatial imagination projecting itself beyond first-hand perspective (Fig. 7.10). It opens with two picnickers beside Lake Michigan, before zooming out to show Chicago, America, Earth, the Solar System and then zooming back down, inside one of the picnicker's hands, at sub-nucleic level. The video foregrounds not only the geographical usage of zoom functions in geolocation software, but proposes that all landscapes are united by their common composition (atomically), and their continuity as spatially adjacent sites.

Fig. 7.10 Three stills from the film *Powers of Ten* by Charles and Ray Eames, 1977

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8SOKmh_Fmc

A wonderfully lyrical example which anticipates the detail required of whole earth representation is found in Jorge Luis Borges' 1946 prose vignette *On Exactitude in Science*, which plays on cartographic scale¹¹:

In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that that vast Map was Useless, and not without some Pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in all the Land there is no other Relic of the Disciplines of Geography.” (Borges 1946)

Borges' vision of a map so detailed that it was projected at a 1:1 ratio is a lively and perhaps canny overture to the solution of collapsibility in the Google Earth interface. Today, Google can append, extend and interpolate new data, because the system exists in the infinitely expansive virtual realm, where users manage its sheer scale using targeted search terms and zoom. Borges' "Map of the Empire" fuses to the Empire itself, littering the physical geography of the land that it depicts, just as Google's influence has been distributed throughout the landscape it represents, evidenced in Google cars and backpack-lugging 'Googlers' on the streets, in the increased patronage of some businesses and not others on the basis of superimposed review information on Google Maps and in the routes that motorists select as a result of Google's directions (Borges 1946).

¹¹ Cartographic Scale refers to the ratio between the size of a map and the size of the land it represents. For example, a map with a 1:10 ratio is a tenth of the length and height of the site it depicts (Miller n.d.).

When everything becomes visible, equally¹², landscapes become less subject to privileging on the basis of visual appeal, function or proximity to settlement. In fact, Google Earth can be discussed in terms of its democracy, providing visual penetration of as many sites as possible, regardless of politics, climate or scenic beauty. Gary Dufour claims that familiarity with multiple kinds of landscapes on a daily basis, whether through TV, media, art, or the Internet, is “transforming perceptions of the familiar and the foreign, and turning self-re-imagining into an everyday event” (Dufour 2000, 10-11). From this I bear out that through whole earth representation, the barriers between *here* and *there* (which provide individuals with a sense of belonging to a particular place) are breached, and replaced with a sense of belonging to a vast and varied world landscape.

A World Coverage Manifesto

As Google’s geolocation interfaces are relentlessly expanded, overhauled and improved, the company’s intentions and rationale have been heavily scrutinised. Built by a private company, the capitalist and industrialised construction of Google products has been clearly identified, but so have Google’s idealistic and thoroughly social goals of efficiency, uninhibited access and internationally unbiased information delivery¹³. Reporter Jack Schulze has observed that the company’s broader mission is “to resolve all information into a form it can deliver to you in the

¹² Google represents all sites equally in that they are all viewable on Google Earth. Yet, as mentioned before, some sites deemed scenic or interesting are available in more clarity. Others are censored or only shown with graphics, not photography. However, all are given the appropriately proportioned geographical representation in the virtual space of Google Earth. Open ocean is not represented photographically. Rather it is the terrestrial world that has become “visible, equally” (ibid.).

¹³ These dichotomous alleged agendas have manifested in Google’s policy and examples can be located of both the company’s partiality and their political neutrality. In 2007, all searches for the phrase ‘Tiananmen Square’ requested by Chinese users summoned a host of images of smiling political leaders and buildings in the square. When this phrase is Googled in any other country, one receives photographic imagery of the historical 1989 democratic demonstrations (Graham & Zook 2007). In this instance, Google yielded to Chinese governmental information control and censorship. A Palestinian newspaper reported in 2015 its outrage that Google had removed the label ‘Palestine’ and replaced it with ‘Israel’, revealing Google’s partisanship in international politics (*Google Removing Palestine...* 2016). Indeed, the word ‘Palestine’ did not appear when I searched it in 2016. In contrast, BBC News reported in 2015 that Google had removed itself from a fierce geopolitical argument between China and the Philippines over a rich fishing shoal in the South China Sea. Rather than continue to use the shoal’s Chinese name, Huangyan, in its cartographic labels, Google deferred to the reef’s “international” name, Scarborough Shoal, thereby appeasing the numerous Filipino complainants and not taking the side of either of the parties with a stake in the dispute (*Google Maps alters...* 2015, 1).

shortest possible time [which is a task] of unparalleled technical complexity” (Schulze 2010, 1).

In pursuit of their enormous, almost utopian aims, Google has implemented a raft of major upgrades. It has made some of its once-pricey products, like Earth Pro and Earth Plus, free to use (*Google Discontinues...* 2001; Knibbs 2015). In 2014, Google internationally rolled out a new and improved user interface for Maps and Earth¹⁴. It bought Skybox Imaging, whose satellite technology looked to outstrip Google’s intermittent (monthly or yearly) updates, providing fresh imagery “daily, supplemented by software that can, for example, estimate how full oil containers are at a Saudi Arabian oilfield, or the number of planes flying in and out of a Beijing airport” (Macmillan 2014, 1-2). From 2013, Google introduced its Time Machine function, making available 25 years’ worth of images from the archives of Google, TIME, NASA and The US Geological Survey, enabling visualisations of geography over time (Sawers 2013, 1).

These developments are consistent with my conclusion that Google’s ultimate goal is to synchronise physical geography with its digital representation: creating a real-time, high-definition visualisation studded with up-to-date, reliable information about every site shown. Certainly this is the sentiment conveyed by Manik Gupta, senior product manager at Google Maps. He says incoming data helps to “bridge that gap between what we see in the real world [and the online world]” (Madrigal 2012, 2)¹⁵.

Of course, Google’s activities and innovations have attracted serious criticism, with all three of its geolocation interfaces receiving extensive alteration in light of national security concerns, legislation, court cases, private objections and negative media commentary. Privacy, accuracy, uneven accessibility and the built-in potential

¹⁴ This upgrade was to remedy the “accumulated cruft of almost a decade of development [which had] resulted in a design that was cluttered and obtuse, with countless Google services layered over one another” (Brownlee 2014, 1).

¹⁵ One way users can report inaccuracies in the imagery, or invasions of privacy or the publishing of inappropriate material in Google’s imagery (e.g. images that show nudity or violence), is by clicking on the ‘report a problem’ feature available in Maps, Earth and Street View. A huge team of Google staff take on average 2-3 weeks to manually address the hundreds of thousands of user reports and complaints received daily, and their updates are consistent across all three geolocation interfaces (Anderson 2011; Petronzio 2012; Miller 2014)

for Google to rank, arrange and label sites and landscapes according to their own interests as a private company are issues which, given Google's dominance, have been labelled potentially disastrous in their influence, and in the event of misuse (Graham & Zook 2007; Gurevitch 2014). Each improvement and new release from Google is attended by renewed attention upon these characteristics, which simultaneously further the visionary goals of Google whilst enhancing the potency of any instance of misuse or bias. Google's trajectory towards "total coverage" remains unswayed by these concerns, and indeed the company's response to complaints over security and information manipulation appears rather nonpartisan, simply invoking the American constitutional trope of freedom of press (or here, freedom to publish imagery) (*Google Earth Dives* 2009, 1). In the end, observes journalist Stefan Geens, it's just landscape pictures: "unlike other content deemed subversive online, Google Earth can only ever be faulted for portraying reality accurately. There are no incitements to violence, nor tendentious arguments, no blasphemies, no racist or bigoted polemics, no slander, no hate speech. Just images. Governments wanting to repress access to the information in Google Earth's databases cannot credibly justify doing so with the usual pretext of protecting the populace from moral turpitude" (Geens 2006, 1)¹⁶.

Whilst Geens exacts a pointed defence of Google's moral fibre, he neglects to acknowledge the power of the company's ability to hierarchise search results, or to note the impact of its geographical organisation. The "rationalization of the earth's systems under the auspices of digital media's simulative effects"—that is, *how* Google presents its world landscape—can impart as much influence as *what* its contents are (Gurevitch 2014, 103).

Whilst not inherently dangerous, the organisation of geographical data within interfaces like Earth and Maps can appear sinister when the processes and algorithms used to build it are withheld from public information. "It is essential to the operators of search engines that the users perceive the resulting structure as a *natural* outcome of a *rational* process that produces *unbiased* results" (Graham & Zook 2007, 1323;

¹⁶ Google's potential as an eerily impassive spectator on the Earth was brought into focus in 2015 when the body of an elderly man who'd been missing for 9 years was found inside a vehicle submerged in a suburban pond. The sunken car's murky outline had been clearly visible on Google Maps the whole time (Lohr 2015, 1).

orig. italics). Google itself has stated that its geolocation graphics should “provide an intuitive view of the world from above” rather than be structured in a perceptibly arbitrary or formal way (*Ground-level view* 2015, 1). Google makes few of these processes transparent, stating only that over 100 factors determine the construction of its imagery, to maintain their “private and opaque” operation (Graham & Zook 2007, 1326; Madrigal 2012).

It has been claimed that a combination of emphasis on user convenience and market dominance have placed Google in a position of unparalleled power when it comes to defining how people see the world: “The specific presences and absences in any [digital landscape] influence users’ geographic cognition and shade users’ interactions and uses of places” (Graham & Zook 2007, 1330). Though Google’s public persona is that of “an operation that promotes perfectionism”, Maps, Earth and Street View are by nature merely illustrations of “physical reality in a less than perfect, corporately owned interface” (Madrigal 2012, 3; Gurevitch 2014, 100). As such, Gurevitch claims, they are more akin to an emergent form of environmental art than they are to the physicality of the earth they seek to reproduce (Gurevitch 2014).

With virtual journeying as a core method, my practice is dependent on the ability to view distant landscapes online, the more numerous and farther flung, the better. As Google expands its digital territory, the conceptual and practical scope of my project expands with it. If Google becomes a project of global proportions, so too does my work. The sites I paint are sourced from a broad vision of geography that many people already assume is more or less global¹⁷. This is a reflexive state: to paint Google Maps is to paint the concept of global vision; and to paint global vision, what better place to source images of any and all sites than Google Maps?

Any discussion of power, bias or motivation must take history into account. Earth, Maps and Street View are recently sprung from the same Western landscape trajectory in which my practice operates. It’s a history laden with imperialism,

¹⁷ A visitor to the gallery where I work made such an assumption. Having only used Google Maps to navigate to locations within metropolitan Perth, she believed that Google Maps had already represented the whole world in full detail, and was surprised to hear that inaccuracies and omissions were commonplace. Far from feeling that this was commensurate to the large task of world coverage, she suggested that out of date or incorrect imagery represented malignant misinformation and negligence.

insistent subjectivity, mythologies about artists in nature and wildly inconsistent attitudes about the value of nature and land. Though it attempts to be a global vision, I believe that Google's digital landscape has arisen from a Western landscape history that is notoriously ambivalent about the distribution of power between those who ascribe meaning to landscapes and those who receive that meaning.

I am aware of what it means to operate in a genre whose roots are problematic. Landscape artists likewise retain dominion over content and dictate much about viewer experience. Yet I aim to provide balanced work for a broad audience with the promise that I care deeply about the richness, difference and scale of the world landscape. Google's secrecy around their methods is not malicious by itself, and it's possible the company does work actively to neutralise biases within its own frameworks. Perhaps it is wishful thinking, but I hope that my practice is a micro-version of Google's publicised condition: arising from a historically problematic past, acknowledging the problems with the remaining vestiges of unevenly distributed power and subjectivity, and attempting to achieve a meaningfully inclusive geographical resource.

The Impact of Google Software

The figures involved are bordering on silly. About a billion people use Google Maps every month, working out at about a billion searches a day. One hundred and ninety-four countries have been at least partially mapped, with a total of 28 million miles of road. (Google will tell you that its ability to warn you of heavy traffic on the roads saves humanity two years of frustration each day, across 600 cities worldwide). Street View [is] expanding at an intimidating rate: its jaunty, ubiquitous little electric cars have driven down more than five million miles of road, across 50 countries, their camera-turrets recording all the way. (Chivers 2013, 2)

The worldwide uptake of Google's geolocation software has been remarkable. Between 2005 and 2011, Google Earth was downloaded more than one billion times, and Google Maps boasts some 150 million users, who are guided 19 billion

kilometres each year (McClendon 2011; Sheffer 2011). Several rival mapping interfaces enjoyed extensive usage in the early years of Google Maps' release, however have become increasingly sidelined as Google has consolidated its place as the dominant interface, with a clear majority market share¹⁸ (Sheffer 2011).

Much of this success is due to an exponential uptake in those Internet-enabled devices which are designed to be portable and personal: smartphones, tablets, laptops, BlackBerrys and so on, and designed to be carried on one's person, accessed intermittently throughout the day through an increasing web of high-speed wireless Internet networks, both public and private. These platforms, across which Google is universally translatable, enables Google's status as an indispensable *in situ* search and navigation tool. A 2013 analysis found that more than 54% of smartphone users across the globe use Google Maps at least once a month (Brownlee 2014; Smith 2013). A 2014 report estimated that smartphone ownership would reach 1.75 billion in that year (*Smartphone Users...* 2014): Google is figuring into the lives of well over a billion people, many on an increasingly regular basis.

These figures are certainly impressive, but do not simply indicate market dominance: they bespeak a series of powerful cultural shifts. The broad uptake of these tools means that more people than ever before share a common method for wayfinding, and are generating the same kind of geographical visualisations. Google's iconographic symbols and gestural processes (zooming, clicking, dragging) have become integrated into the everyday way that millions of people all around the world imagine and anticipate land, geography and landscape, regardless of differences in language, nationality, means (to some extent) and travel experience¹⁹.

¹⁸ Google's principal geolocation competitors have struggled to catch up with Google's head start in the marketplace, with which it secured a user familiarity that has only been diversified towards other applications gradually. Yahoo! Maps failed to do this effectively and was taken offline in July 2015 to allow Yahoo! to refocus on its more competitive products, Flickr and Yahoo Search (Nieva 2015; Richardson 2015). Microsoft's Bing Maps was launched in late 2010, and is on the back foot, providing significantly less global coverage than Google Maps, and its Microsoft Virtual Earth product also lagged behind because it required users to download the self-contained program, (whereas Google Earth ran on Adobe Flash, which is "already installed in some form on 99% of browsers" (Arthur 2009, 2)); Nokia Maps was rereleased in 2011 as HERE, which has a lower resolution and lacks a street level feature, but boasts comparably clear cartographic layers (Trenholm 2011).

¹⁹ It is of course important to note that "economic barriers to owning the necessary hardware and access rights, as well as individual cognitive and technical skills, render [digital landscapes like Google Earth] invisible for many people" (Graham & Zook 2007, 1329). A 2015 UN report

Many commentators have attested to the power of Earth, Maps and Street View to engender a widespread culture of imagining the world as an interconnected global landscape. In turn, many hope that ecological concerns and economic disparities might be more readily addressed by businesses and governments with the power to affect change, as users begin to see themselves as implicated in a shared global community and responsible for change further afield than their own locality (Gurevitch 2014; Gustaf Lundin, in BBC News 2009). Leon Gurevitch anticipates that Google's inbuilt global perspective will have "far-reaching consequences for the relationships between representation of the earth, its ecology and cultural responses to climate change" (Gurevitch 2014, 85). Geographers Mark Graham and Matthew Zook appreciate that Google allows both personal and global narratives and objectives to play out in the same, continuous landscape: "[Maps and Earth] provide the means for the individual exploration of geographic space ranging from searching for nearby pizza restaurants to identifying the location of bombing in downtown Baghdad" (Graham & Zook 2007, 1326). Virtual travel between local and remote—from home to a coral atoll, from work to Monte Vesuvio²⁰—might provide a convincing case for global interconnectedness and a kind of global civic awareness and citizenship.

Created by software designer Aton Wallén, the web-based game Geoguessr is a clever demonstration of how digital representations of the world as a single, sprawling landscape might affect users (Fig. 7.11). Geoguessr reconfigures Google's enormous reservoir of imagery into a game of recognition. *Boston Globe* reporter Kevin Hartnett describes that it "drops you into a scene from Google Street View somewhere in the world, and asks to you guess where you are. You can zoom in on your surroundings, spin around, and walk down the street to look for clues. The game yields an enjoyably vertiginous sense of global travel" (Hartnett 2013, 1). Therein the geographical literacy and travel history of each player is rendered competitive, asserting that familiarity with disparate global locations is of distinct

concluded that the lack of online material in endemic languages deters many third-world populations from bothering to access the Internet (Merrett 2015). In UN-designated 'least developed' countries, such as Burundi, Guinea and Somalia, the proportion of those without adequate Internet access tops 90% (Merrett 2015).

²⁰ Charles Arthur suggests that Google's satellite imagery creates the compulsion to recreationally search for sites of immediate personal significance—"Can I see my house from here? And after that, can I see the house where I grew up?"—before looking further afield into ever more distant locations (Arthur 2009, 1).

value, and generating feelings of “shame” about incorrect guesses (Hartnett 2013, 1). The pleasure of the game belies a pointed argument for a global attitude to geography which does not privilege one site over another and which protests against habitual ignorance or undervaluing of distant sites compared to one’s local surroundings. Geoguessr is also indicative of a new era in which Google’s geographic construction has become further distributed through creative interventions by third parties, as “a rich canvas on which entire new applications could be built” (Rademacher 2008, 1).

Fig. 7.11 A screenshot showing a user guessing a location in Geoguessr, 2015

Website: <https://geoguessr.com/>

Google’s geolocation interfaces, and the enormous wealth of natural, cultural and ecological data they provide have become irrevocably embedded in the daily lives of their Internet-connected users. “When people are asked to believe only what they see, visual texts such as *Google Earth* are powerful,” Masters Jach reminds us (Masters Jach 2011, 36; orig. italics). Certainly blind faith in the software has proven occasionally problematic for users, who have variously been led off course²¹, had their vision delimited by blind spots in Google’s coverage, or had their experience enclosed or dictated in response to politics, legal restrictions and public outcry in ways they might never become aware of. “Whatever the risks and benefits,” muses journalist Tom Chivers, “there’s no going back to a pre-Google Maps time” (Chivers 2013, 5).

²¹ Examples of travellers being led off course by digital geolocation interfaces are particularly popular in light-news articles, perhaps due to the humour of a subject being so obedient to their phone’s instructions that they do not notice or question how long a journey might take or how far outside of a particular (urban or rural) environment they had expected to be led: “Last year, when Apple’s iPhones stopped using Google Maps, people were forced briefly to use Apple’s (at the time) unreliable own-brand equivalent. Within days, six motorists in Australia had to be rescued from a remote forest, after being directed 64km off target. One of them had been stranded for 24 hours without food or water. This is an extreme example, but “large sections of our species have forgotten how to get from A to B unless their phone points the way” (Chivers 2013, 5).

Conclusion

Whatever the ontological status of Google Earth, Maps and Street View—as generators of meaning, cultural repositories or mediums between the virtual and physical worlds—the impact of the interface upon psychology, travel, art and the shape of world geography is tangible. The latest in a long heritage of whole-earth representations, Google Earth places the viewer “in the omniscient position”, and organises every unit of geographical data in a manner that “cannot help but feed into wider public attitudes and discourse regarding the cultural object, that is, ‘the earth’” (Gurevitch 2014, 97).

In a world where the meaning given to physical land is determined so vigorously by landscape representations, it is all the more prudent to pay attention when a juggernaut as loud, global and well-used as Google comes along, not least because all of the changes it has inspired have taken place within a relative heartbeat: *twelve years* at the time of this writing. “Google Maps is now so ubiquitous, such a vital part of so many of our lives, that it feels odd to think it didn’t exist until 2005,” says Chivers. “Of all the search giant’s many tentacles reaching octopus-like into every area of our existence, Maps, together with its partner Google Earth and their various offspring, can probably claim to [have] changed our day-to-day life the most” (Chivers 2013, 2).

Episode Eight

The Iconography of Google's Symbology

The Pin

The Pegman

Stealth Icon Status

The Iconography of Google's Symbology

The vast databanks of Google Maps, Earth and Street View can be penetrated with their inbuilt search and retrieval systems, which generate unique experiences of geographical information, determined by user commands. The symbols that appear throughout its landscape, designating points of value, have become powerful cultural symbols of both the personal viewing practises of the user, and of the system's user-oriented organisation of landscape imagery. New media theorist Leon Gurevitch remarks, "the contemporary Google Earth interface user is granted a new and extensive host of **scopic powers** that reconfirm the apparent primacy of our command over the world" (Gurevitch 2014, 101)¹. Google's pink Pin and orange Pegman² graphics are the lynchpins between a vast and complex world geography, and the ascendancy of the user experience³.

"At the heart of the Google Maps' visual language is the Pin, which works as both logo and function," journalist Jack Schulze explains of the ubiquitous pink teardrop marker (Fig. 8.1) which Google introduced into Maps in 2005 (Schulze 2010, 1). Designed by Jens Eilstrup Rasmussen, a senior software engineer at Google (and Keyhole, Inc. co-founder), the Pin functions either as a location device, illustrating that users have arrived at their requested destination, or provides a selection of alphabetised options to queries (such as 'café' or 'park') (Greenbaum 2011, 2). The Pin has become one of the most recognisable non-linguistic devices in the world, a status recognised in 2014, when New York's Museum of Modern Art included it in the *A Collection of Ideas* exhibition of culturally interruptive design, alongside the "@" symbol and the arcade game *Pong* (Kastrenakes 2014).

¹ Of course, this user centrality is in spite of the natural world's total disinterest in the plight of the human animal – Google Earth implies that nature revolves around people, and should be experienced according to a cultural paradigm in which the customer comes first, rather than constructing its geographical imagery in an ecologically sympathetic (or any other) framework.

² The 'Pegman' name was penned by Google to designate the orange character shown in Fig. 8.2. While the graphic is intended to be non-specific in its gender or race, it nonetheless carries "man" in its title (not surprising when one considers its form resembles a gentlemen's toilet symbol). Please take this footnote in lieu of a liberal peppering of [sic]s throughout this Episode.

³ Please see *Episode Nine: The Ascendancy of the User* for further discussion of these ideas.

Fig. 8.1 Jens Eilstrup Rasmussen’s original designs for the Google Maps Pin graphics, 2005

Image 1: <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/B-ETO9bCAAARElw.jpg>

Image 2: <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/236x/31/df/86/31df86b0716f75142dd2cc6b3c03bf7f.jpg>

Street View’s equivalent *you are here* graphic, the Pegman, is just as popularly familiar (Fig. 8.2). Introduced in 2007 and periodically revamped, the Pegman is stationed in the Street View toolbar, and can be dropped onto a stretch of road, summoning a wealth of ground-level visual data (Delbridge 2013; Brownlee 2014). The graphic’s orange colour gives it a non-specific ‘personality’, inviting users to project their own sense of personal location onto it (Sharrock 2013)⁴. Journalist Justine Sharrock points out that the confusion of shifting from aerial to ground level simulation has necessitated its presence: “[The Pegman with arrow] is meant to solve what’s called the **Subway Effect** – that jarring disorientation you feel when you emerge from a station not knowing where you are or what direction you are facing” (Sharrock 2013, 1). These iconic graphics are indicative of an increasingly intuitive interface, in which users interact more directly with content, as touch-screens and handheld technology becomes increasingly prevalent (Brownlee 2014).

Fig. 8.2 Various iterations of the Google Pegman graphic, including its Google Moon version (far right) and its latest iteration, designed by Matthew Delbridge in 2013 (centre right and left)

Image 1: <https://cdn01.vulcanpost.com/wp-uploads/2015/08/google-just-brought-back-its-iconic-pegman-the-little-yellow-character-in-street-view.png>

Image 2: <http://www.prodigitaltips.com/wp-content/uploads/google-moon-apollo-landing-1.jpg>

⁴ “...Orange could be anybody,” writes journalist Justine Sharrock of the intended non-specificity of the humanoid’s race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nationality, ability and so on (Sharrock 2013, 2). This was not always the case, however. During its preliminary product development phases, Google also “toyed with the idea of using an icon of an eyeball”, but soon realised this was “neither aesthetically pleasing nor particularly effective”, and also trialled a female graphic, robots, block-shaped ‘tofu men’ and a Pegman wearing a three-piece suit (Bishop 2013). The Pegman’s orange colour nonetheless falls short of neutrality, given the use of full orange attire in prison and detention centres, in various religious groups and for professions such as traffic control, space travel and stunt work.

Both the Pin and Pegman have achieved what design theorist Rob Walker terms “stealth-icon status”: a widespread cultural currency not originally intended or foreseen by its creators or first generation users. He goes on, “One way to judge [this] is to note when a graphic object is borrowed by unaffiliated third parties, who evidently feel certain enough it will carry visual meaning right into whatever idea they are looking to express” (Walker 2011, 1). Two cartoons by designer Christoph Niemann (Fig. 8.3) are a clear example of how the visual language of Google Maps has been creatively repurposed (in this case for humour).

Fig. 8.3 Christoph Niemann, *Google Maps Manipulations*, 2010, digital images

Images: <http://abduzeedo.com/node/24787>

Certainly, many artists have harnessed the cross-cultural user familiarity with Google Earth to construct artistic critiques and pastiches on contemporary geolocation culture. This is possible because the meaning of these graphics is no longer particular to Google. To elaborate, the Pin (for example) does not simply indicate *this is the location you have searched for on Google Maps*, but more broadly, as journalist Hilary Greenbaum states, “outfitted with its own drop shadow, the small, red bubble with a pointed end not only tells us where we want to be, but what exists in the world around us” (Greenbaum 2011, 1). With a more generalised meaning about location, place, belonging, and destination, the Pin has become a pliable symbol outside of Google’s interfaces⁵.

A rather literal example of this is German artist Aram Bartholl’s series of large-scale public installations *Map*, which correlate physical sites with the virtual Google landscape by erecting huge Pin sculptures in parks and galleries around the world

⁵ Google’s ‘stealth icon status’ is so advanced that it is often used as a wholesale aesthetic template: in 2015, an American designer called MongoLife created a map of the fictional land of Westeros from the book series *Game of Thrones*, in the style of Google Maps, presumably using its pragmatic cartographic style to lend a sense of reality or plausibility to the well-loved fictional realm (McKinnon 2015, 1). The genre of fantasy has long been a tinderbox for some of the most elaborate fictional maps, including J. R. R. Tolkien’s maps of Middle Earth from the *Lord of the Rings* series; C. S. Lewis’ maps of *Narnia* and John Lawrence’s maps of cities from Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* novels.

(Fig. 8.4). The uncanny superimposition of a normally immaterial graphic into physical space shows just how deeply our dependence and engrossment with digital geolocation interfaces have become. Greenbaum states: “Google’s maps have revolutionized how we interact with the world, how we perceive space and even how we navigate through it” (Greenbaum 2011, 1). In materialising this process, Bartholl playfully turns the whole world into an enormous Google Earth – acknowledging the predominance of the pin as a cultural marker both within and without the digital realm.

Fig. 8.4 Aram Bartholl, *Map*, (two installation views at Kasseler Kunstverein, Germany), 2013

Images: <http://www.datenform.de/mapeng.html>

Google’s ubiquitous graphics are ever-present in my artwork. In *Study in Teardrop*, (Fig. 8.5) the Pin is identifiable despite its varying, inaccurate depictions, illustrating how even its approximation has cultural meaning. This catalogue of studies references the *in situ* sketching techniques of *en plein air* landscape painters, where details of flora and fauna are practiced and perfected from life. This work evidences, through the implied narrative of the landscape artists’ careful attention, the importance of this symbol to contemporary landscape construction, and its natural place amongst the traditional motifs of landscape art (trees, rivers, etc.)



Fig. 8.5 Sheridan Coleman, *Study in Teardrop*, 2015, watercolour, paper, frame, 16 x 11 cm

To Gurevitch, the use of Google Earth as a “**machinic** canvas or theatre set” by artists and other creative landscape projects is unsurprising (Gurevitch 2014, 99). By plucking the Pin or Pegman off the screen and recreating the graphics as material artworks, each artist tests the extent to which the symbols are meaningful outside the digital realm. Whether installed on a street corner or painted in watercolour, these graphics have the capacity to designate their surroundings, as landscapes, as destinations and as geographies that have been organised around a user, viewer or constructed interface.

Episode Nine

The Ascendency of the User

A geography that bends to the user

The User/Navigator

The User Aloft

The Lonely User

The Ascendency of the User

Within cultural geography, landscape is described as a physical location or site to which the lens of culture has been applied. Land is unresponsive to the immaterial culture of the human animal, and humans construct landscape representations as receptacles for human values of aesthetics, biography, politics, morality and so on. Artists and historians alike have described landscape images variously as the “backcloth to the whole stage of human activity” (Appleton 1996, 2); as “the stage set for the human drama itself” (Cosgrove 1993, 282); and as “human, cultural and creative domains as well as, or *even rather than*, natural or physical phenomena” (Wylie 2007, 8; orig. italics).

Landscape images can tell us about what an individual artist, directed by particular cultural influences, values within nature, how they wish nature to be structured or how they are used to interacting with the natural world. *The Sea of Ice* by German painter Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) (Fig. 9.1) for example, is a landscape which communicates the supremacy of natural forces over human endeavour (note the wrecked galleon among the ice shards), the age and complexity of nature’s natural processes, (revealed by the coloured strata and formations of the ice rift), and delivers a romanticised vision of the concept of wilderness. It is an image of a specific site, but it also gives a cultural account of what this landscape, and others like it, can mean.

Fig. 9.1 Caspar David Friedrich, *The Sea of Ice*, 1823-1824, oil on canvas, 126.9 x 96.7 cm

Image: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Sea_of_Ice#/media/File:Caspar_David_Friedrich_-_Das_Eismeer_-_Hamburger_Kunsthalle_-_02.jpg

Acknowledgment of the individual’s role in shaping landscape representation has been enshrined within recent academic discourse. In his essay on the intersection of geography and the humanities, *The World in Plain View*, J. Nicholas Entrikin observes:

Despite entrenched opposition, the emergence of widespread concerns with the ‘self’ or ‘subject’ in geographical inquiry has allowed for a greater opening to the humanities. Such “subjects”... are reflexive, fully dimensional geographical agents... (Entrikin 2011, 90)

This combination of subjective narration with the science of geography is not confined to academic enquiry, but is evidenced in contemporary landscape art making, and in the personalised and user-focused structure of digital interfaces such as Google Earth, Maps and Street View.

In my practice, landscapes are not simply formed through visual representation but through an artistic narration that describes the experience of being a *user*, browsing landscapes online, researching near and distant sites, and interpreting representations of nature. The somewhat frustrated and flamboyant activities of my virtual journeying, represented through paintings and collages (e.g. Fig. 9.2), provide an often-amusing account of both the potential value and the pitfalls of interacting with the natural world through a digital medium.

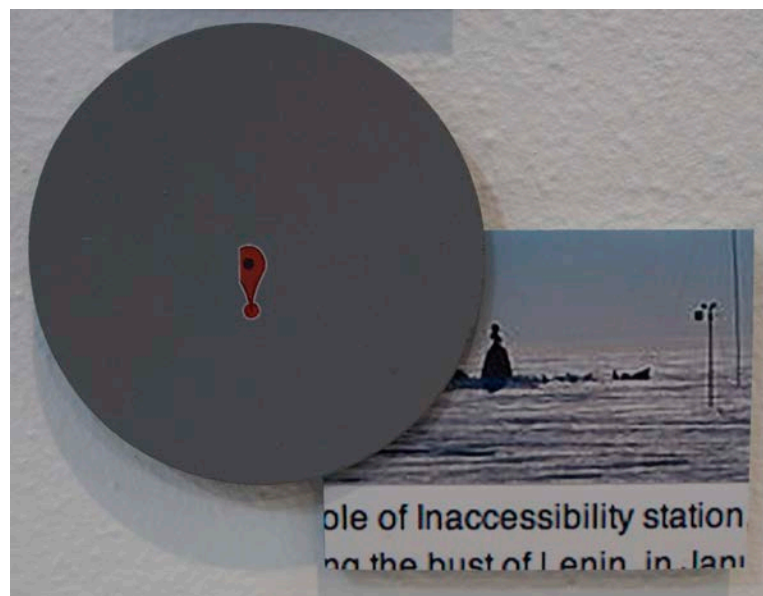


Fig. 9.2 Sheridan Coleman, *Lenin's Bust*, 2015, photograph, acrylic, MDF, Foamcore, 16 x 12 cm

This Episode will critically examine the centrality of the user within Google's geolocation technology and engage with writing by theorists who have analysed the biographical potential of landscape image making.

A Geography that Bends to the User

Google Earth, Maps and Street View form a unique landscape, whose geographical data responds to and revolves around the requests of the person using it.

Conventionally, a landscape painting is enjoyed by a *viewer*, who is passive and cognisant of the autonomy of the image from their input. In contrast, Google's landscape images turn viewers into *users*, who customise, navigate and curate their own experiences of the landscape according not only to their immediate practical needs, but also to their aesthetic preferences, curiosity or accident. As new media theorist Alexander Galloway says of virtual terrains, "[on the computer] the world no longer indicates to us what it is. We indicate ourselves to it, and in doing so the world materializes in our image" (Galloway 2010, 278). Google confirms the user's sensation of dominion over the digital landscape through the provision of navigation tools; the dislocation of the viewer from the landscape viewed; the omniscient, aerial perspective of the viewer; and the segregation of users from one another.

Dan Sieborg, a Google executive and "self described evangelist for the Google Maps revolution" remarked that Google's "goal is to put together a sort of digital mirror of the world" (Chivers 2013, 1). Perhaps Sieborg did not realise how apt his analogy was: like Google Maps, mirrors are manmade tools which frame an ersatz world picture according to each user's movement and viewpoint. In this sense, the constructed geography of the [Universal Texture](#)¹ is not a perfect copy of the Earth, but a reflection of physical geography which is emphatically cultural; a world landscape that aids and responds to aesthetics, user demands and functionality. The Google Maps user experiences a landscape representation whose geography yields fully to their own needs and interests: "In the contemporary context... the automated rendering of perspective and the visual automobility it affords, turns the programme user from secular humanist to deified consumer," says new media theorist Leon

¹ The Universal Texture is the name for the world image provided in Google Earth and Maps, and is described in more detail in *Episode Fifteen: The Landscape Portal*.

Gurevitch (Gurevitch 2014, 88-89). Theological imagery seems to accompany many descriptions of the Google user's experience. This is largely due to the user's lofty viewing position and the total ease and superhuman speed with which they glide across digital geographies; it also arises from the perception that visual information endows an individual with knowledge and power.

New media theorists Graham & Zook have termed the digital spaces that are based on physical geography such as Google Earth, "DigiPlace", and propose that they are receptacles not of the immaterial components of a landscape (its history, names and attendant cultural accessories), but rather constitute a kind of mental arena in which people can partake of "imagining the interdependencies of physical and virtual places and processes" (Graham & Zook 2007, 1329). They see Earth, Maps and Street View as a landscape playground, where users indulge in a digital geography arranged to their own preferences, explore landscapes and plan journeys, in anticipation or theorisation of how they might interact with physical geography².

The User/Navigator

Users of Google's geolocation interfaces enjoy the ability to move freely throughout the digital landscape without the expenditure of money or effort, and without inhibition by law, culture or other obstacles like national borders, geographical impasses, and private property³. The suspension of boundaries and prohibition enables users to visually penetrate all parts of the digital world landscape with equal ease and without consequence. In stark contrast to the myriad access issues of physical journeying, Google structures geography in a manner that encourages and privileges unlimited virtual travel, and implicitly promotes the values of freedom of travel and internationality⁴. Navigation tools that allow users to zoom, fly over and

² Artists have long used cartographic formats in this way, to reveal the subjective experiences viewers have while immersed in landscape representations, or in constructing their own maps, which declare: "this is my vision, and I encourage you to construct your own" (Harmon 2009, 11).

³ Again, here I refer primarily to frequent users of Google's geolocation interfaces, who by and large hail from Western, **first world** and urban backgrounds.

⁴ Arts writer Jane Button has suggested that such values are indicative of today's global, cosmopolitan culture. She says, "departing, commuting, veering and living between places – countries, metropolises and homelands – [constitute a continuous] (re)negotiation and consciousness of the meaning and embodiment of place and 'home'" (Button 2014, 81). In Button's interpretation, freedom of travel and access are values symptomatic of a gradually more accessible world (though her comments principally

search for sites make the world seem “handleable”, as it is controlled “with a finger touch” (Radice 2012, 1). While the user is not able to effect any alteration of the look of the world image itself, they possess an open-ended ability to design their own virtual journeys (Figs 9.3-4). Galloway posits that these “virulent ways of looking at the world” coalesce around the “neoliberal impulse to open source everything” (Galloway 2011, 377).

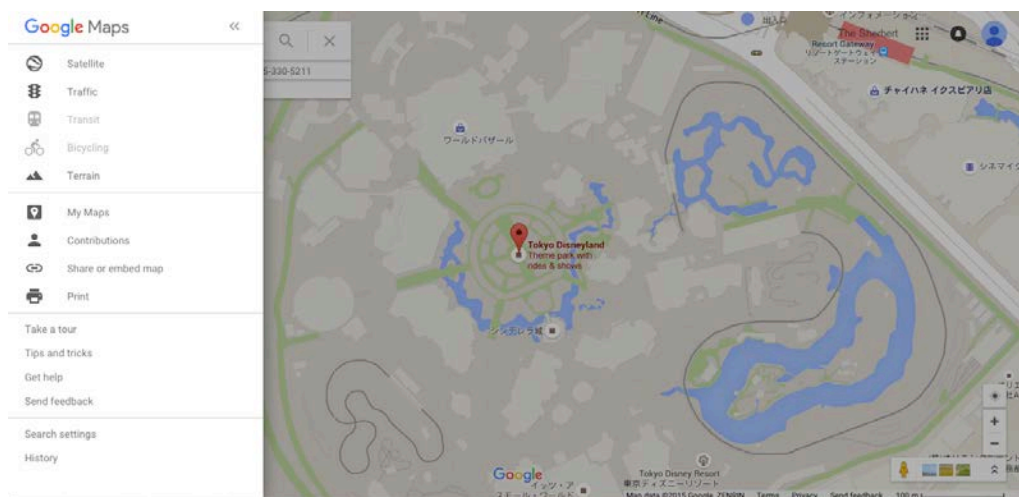


Fig. 9.3 A screenshot of a search for Tokyo Disneyland on Google Maps showing a panel of navigational tools and functions of the left, 2015. Map data: Google, ZENRIN

The User Aloft

The aerial orientation of a Google user over the digital landscape further reconfirms their primacy. The aerial perspective has been regarded as a privileged position in which the airborne user’s visual powers lead to greater powers: it has been referred to as a “bird’s-eye-view”, which insinuates exemption from political and cultural restrictions on movement (Warner Marien 2012, 114); “drone-like”, which insinuates uninhibited access to others’ private information and the unqualified ability to harm others remotely, (Valla 2012b, 2); and as a “God’s Eye View”, which describes omnipotence via vision (Cosgrove & Fox 2010, 8). That this function of international and cultural power has been furnished to users free of charge⁵ is a cultural endowment of huge significance, not merely in the increased visual capabilities of

describe the wealthy, mobile [first world](#)).

⁵ Notwithstanding the cost and infrastructure required to connect to the Internet and to use or to own an Internet-enabled device.

everyday users, but in the manner in which individuals consume landscapes from on high, gaining some increased dominion over what they are seeing.⁶

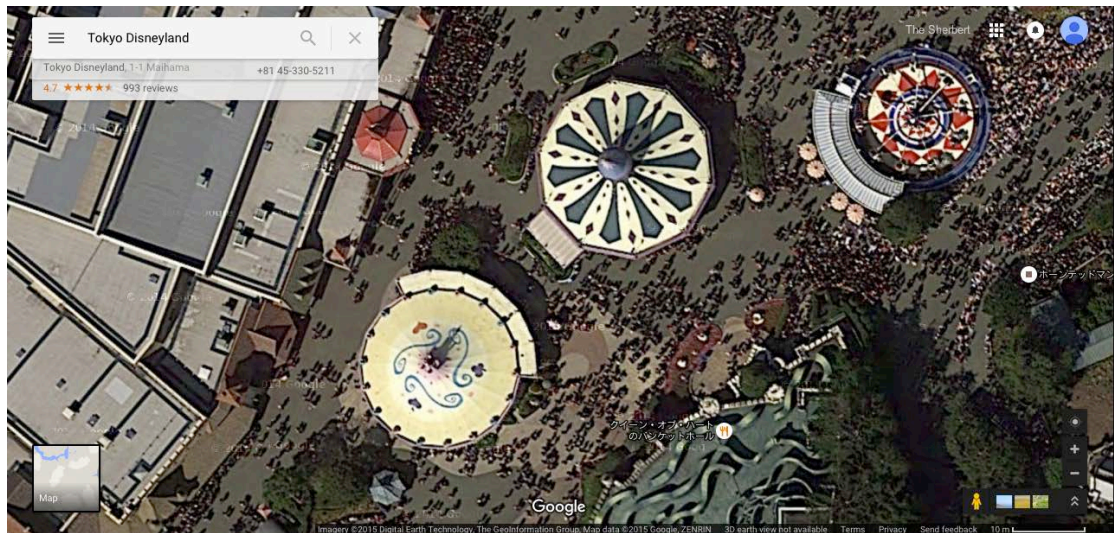


Fig. 9.4 A screenshot of visitors enjoying Tokyo Disneyland on Google Maps, 2015. Map data: Digital Earth Technology, The GeoInformation Group, ZENRIN, Google

The Lonely User

Google further privileges the individual user by disconnecting them from other users. Language and media writer Christine Masters Jach observes that Google Earth “is not a collaborative online space – individuals are never online together” (Masters Jach 2011, 7). Certainly, a user has no conception of whether other users are looking at the same images simultaneously or how many others have seen what they are seeing. Training one’s screen upon the landscape “is pleasurable in part because the centrality of the spectator is reaffirmed perspectively” (Wells 2011, 24).

The user feels alone in the landscape, and in this state they may develop the unrealistic conception that they are discovering previously unseen sites or appreciating repeatedly overlooked details. Photography historian Mary Warner Marien has claimed that the absence of human figures in travel photographs or postcards is a “visual conceit” that annuls “time and made the scene appear primordial, as if the tourist were the first person to see it” (Warner Marien 2012, 82).

⁶ As noted in the *Episode One: Introduction*, this gaze is not universally afforded. There is one group who possess the privilege of looking at the world through Google’s lens, and another group who cannot use that lens, but whose lands, homes and even bodies can be seen online by the first group.

The effect of the absence of other users in the digital landscape was demonstrated after the 2014 disappearance of Malaysian Airlines flight MH370, when “several concerned citizens” called *The Star* newspaper in Malaysia to report that they had “discovered the missing airplane after scrolling through Google Maps satellite images” (Surach 2014, n.p.)⁷. These misguided users believed that their personal looking and interpreting practices might offer new information to the search (Fig. 9.5). After all, they lacked any evidence to suggest that they were not the first users to endeavour to find the wreckage⁸. When users are invisible to one another, they appear artificially to have the world to themselves.

Fig 9.5 Courtney Love's Facebook post showing her Tomnod geolocation interface search, marked with her personal notes

Image: <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/Bi6mCbxCIAAbJo7.png>

When a user opens up an Earth, Maps or Street View window to view and navigate the digital landscape, that landscape reacts, instantaneously, to their will, command and whim. In being organised according to each unique usage, digital visions of geography and land encourage a sense of mastery over land, through their perspectival, self-guided and open-ended structure. Though the relationship between the user and digital landscape does not resemble that between a person and nature, Google’s geolocation software has had a significant impact on the way that its users conceive of land and nature (according to their own needs, desires and subjectivity), and provides powerful evidence for its status as an artefact of cultural landscape.

⁷ The “concerned citizens” of the article did not know that the wreckage would more than likely be too indistinct for an untrained searcher to distinguish it from the abundant other flotsam visible in the area, nor that Google Maps’ visual imagery is not updated in real time – they were actually looking at images that had been captured before the crash had even taken place (Surach 2014, n.p.).

⁸ Similarly, after the disappearance of an Air France passenger flight 447 in 2009, Alain Bouillard, leader of the French investigation, wrote: “The seas and oceans are real dustbins in which we find loads of things. We found wooden crates and fragments on beachers that had nothing to do with the crash.” (Bouillard 2014, 1).

Episode Ten

Landscape and the Brush
Paint and History
From the Screen, by hand
A Painter's Peculiarity
The Generosity of Painting

Landscape and the Brush

In recent years, I have been an eager pilgrim of antique museums, libraries and galleries in Europe and America, foraging for memorable examples of creative administration. Therein, I have seen the brilliance of painting writ large. By this I do not mean that I have appreciated the best painting¹, or the best examples of certain types of painting. I mean that painting has affected and transported me.

Paint is a substance that records a moment in time, the movement of the hand of the artist, their style, attention and care. Transcending time and distance, a painted artwork brings me within proximity of a moment of craftsmanship, when the artist arrested and made precious an idea, story or feeling, proffering their painting for the consideration of others, perhaps well into the future (Figs 10.1-2). I needn't know the identity of the artist or the date of a work to know that I am close to something that was brought into existence by another person, and can read on its surface the marks and residues of that labour.



Fig 10.1 A 2014 visit to the corridor of watercolour paintings by Albrecht Dürer in the Albertina gallery in Vienna, Austria to see *Wing of a Roller*, 1512, watercolour, gouache on vellum, 20 x 20 cm.

¹ For this is a hokum idea.



Fig 10.2 A 2014 visit to Museo Palatino in Rome, where I saw *Apollo with a Lyre*, an unattributed fresco discovered at the excavation site of the *Scalae Caci* (the stairway between the palaces of Palatine Hill and the Forum Boarium) in Rome.

My use of paint is deeply related to my experience of paint’s evocativeness in these historical galleries and museums, where paint speaks across time and distance. In these institutions painted artefacts are brought into a shared context: both into the physical space of the gallery and into the conceptual or interpretive context that caused them to sit together. When I create paintings for a project, collection or exhibition, I am constructing a similar imaginative space, which viewers can inhabit and explore, and into which they are welcomed by the intimate scale and detail of my painting.

I am interested in the way that painting—as an artistic repository of moments and memories—behaves in a museological context, where paintings exist as units or specimens within a collection. Contained within such a context, whose structure is (something like) creatively administrated, groups of paintings vividly flesh out a commentary upon their subject matter. Consider a collection of theological paintings by Pelagio Palagi (1775-1860), hung together at the *Collezioni Comunali d’Arte di Bologna*, none of which were completed (Fig. 10.3)². Each painting brings the viewer imaginatively into an unfinished moment of workmanship; Together, the

² Palagi’s paintings were another *in situ* gallery discovery from my travels.

collection speaks of a painter who is serially ill disposed towards attending to his backgrounds and garments compared to painting expressive figures. This is discernable from the *way* his works were painted, and *that* they were painted³.



Fig. 10.3 Several unfinished oil paintings by Italian painter Pelagio Palagi, hung together in the Bologna Municipal Art Collection Galleries in 2016

My paintings are the artefacts or specimens of the collections and exhibitions I assemble through creative administration. Taken together, their task is to expand a moment of painterly presence into a broader story (Fig. 10.4). Viewers may imaginatively inhabit and navigate the collection as a painterly terrain of thought and image, distinguishing pattern, narrative and history, and should they lean in to any one painting, they'll encounter the tender, painterly moment therein, witnessing a history of technology, landscape and culture captured personally and by hand.

³ Another truly wonderful example of the way that artwork accumulates into a subjective collection in the museum or gallery are the woodcut prints of natural historian Ulisse Aldrovandi, which I discussed in *Episode Two: Multiplicity and Creative Administration*.



Fig 10.4 Sheridan Coleman, detail of *Five Former Lunatic Asylum Islands*, 2016, acrylic on board in felt-lined display case

Paint and History

The use of a medium with such a profound and innate history is a conceptual choice. The weight of painting is lent to the artwork at hand: the seriousness of the medium insists upon the seriousness of the painted subject. I certainly regard the prodigious scale of digital geolocation software as worthy of being realised in paint and set alongside historical painting subjects as a testament of the nature of its own era.

Historically, landscape art favours the medium of paint⁴, and the use of painting in my practice aligns it with some of the traditional concerns of the genre. Landscape art in the West is and has always been the artistic manifestation of cultural attitudes towards land, and a record of the impact of new technologies and cultural phenomena on the way land was seen and understood⁵. In sharing a material language with historical landscape art (Figs. 10.5-6), the subject matter of my work can be more acutely compared with earlier landscape art themes and subjects.

Though my work uses aerial perspective, software motifs and cropped composition, it maintains the extant functions of landscape art, characterising the nexus of culture and nature. The use of paint helps to avoid any triviality that might be attributed to the subject of Google Earth, which without scrutiny might be dismissed as a handy utility, and not a cultural entity or the instigator of cultural change. When looked at in a certain light (that is, in paint), my digital subject may be more readily

⁴ In more contemporary times, photography has also become a very prominent medium in the genre of landscape art.

⁵ As explained in the *Episode Three: Landscape as a Cultural Process*.

understood as an interaction between culture and nature, and my representation of digital landscapes as landscape art.



Fig. 10.5 Sheridan Coleman, 9 x 9 cm, *Gratitude, Cursor, Macquarie Island*, 2014, acrylic on MDF, 9 x 9 cm

Fig. 10.6 J. M. W. Turner, *Buttermere Lake, with Part of Cromackwater, Cumberland, a Shower*, 1798, oil on canvas, 889 x 1194 cm

Image: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-buttermere-lake-with-part-of-cromackwater-cumberland-a-shower-n00460>

Landscapes are always constructed through a myriad of cultural and personal influences, and prominent amongst these in the West is the archetype of the romantic landscape painting. "...Floating about in people's heads are all the images of extreme, wild, rugged, beautiful landscape that they have been exposed to by paintings, photographs and television" (Bell & Lyall 2002, 6). Certainly, paint is an evocative medium, and has been instrumental during movements when **picturesque**, **sublime** and scenic approaches have been central in landscape art⁶ (e.g. Fig. 10.6).

⁶ This tendency can be observed throughout Australian and European Impressionism, which heavily favoured painting, and many other historical landscape art movements. Simon Schama, Umberto Eco

The use of paint in depicting digital imagery calls up these aesthetic histories, kindling the detection of beauty in a digital subject usually regarded as informational. To be clear, I do not claim that paint *transforms* the imagery of Google Earth into something worthy of cultural and aesthetic contemplation; it is clear to me that these digital landscape visualisations *already* constitute a large-scale cultural (and aesthetic) project. The evidence for this is significant: Google's visualisations include sites that are impenetrable, such as Bouvet Island (Fig. 10.7), sites that are uninhabited, sites that are obscured by cloudbanks, thick jungle canopies and even low-flying aircraft, and sites like deserts, ocean or tundra, whose surfaces are seemingly flat, monochrome and undifferentiated for kilometres at a time. This tells us that Google is idealistic, proffering the world as a totality, including hostile or uninhabited regions, regardless of their lack of practical value. The use of paint underscores this focus on the scenic, cultural and even moral value of digital landscape imagery, allowing it to be appreciated well beyond its cartographic, navigational or scientific value.



Fig. 10.7 Sheridan Coleman, *Clouded Bouvet Island* (detail), 2015, acrylic on MDF, 11.3 x 9.4 cm

and Malcolm Andrews have all commented on the way that paint appears as a principal expressive medium during historical periods of romance and enthusiasm for nature (Andrews 1999; Eco 2004; Schama 1999).

Media theorist Alexander Galloway describes painting, among other artforms, as a way to fulfil “the desire that the world be brought near to us” (Galloway 2010, 276). The concept of the artist as an intermediary between the *outside world* and the viewer in the gallery (or home) is already firmly attached to the genre of landscape art due to the fame of *en plein air* painters like the French Impressionists, Barbizon and Heidelberg Schools (Andrews 1999; Kleiner & Mamiya 2005). These movements popularised the figure of the intrepid painter-cum-journeyman, searching for the best views rather than designing a composition in the studio. Though my artistic forays occur indoors, and in a digitalised rather than a living nature, I welcome the way that my paintings, carefully detailed and small (one fancies they are in some way *in situ* studies), can emphasise my agency as an artist who connects the source landscape with the viewer.

Of course, in my work the number of portals through which land is conveyed to the viewer is greater than in the 17th Century. My *paintings* are based on *screenshots* that I find in a *digital interface*, made up of *aerial photographs* of a *physical site*. I see this (some might say ironically, but I assure you I am quite sincere) as a kind of convoluted *en plein air*⁷. Paint emphasises the location of the artist in regards to the land, and the role of landscape as an imaginary window allowing viewers to look onto a vast world, regardless of where they are. And so, painting, which dominates my practice, reveals the various cultural layers and technological transformations that produce my many-times-removed landscape observations.

From the Screen, by Hand

Google Maps imagery is immaterial, designed for online access only. Like digital photographs, which are increasingly consumed online and printed out less, digital landscapes are purpose-built for the pixelated screen of an *Internet-enabled device* (Warner Marien 2012). These images are shareable across networks via hyperlinks, keywords and screenshots, taking up no physical space but rather proliferating in a

⁷ In the long-romanticised practice of *en plein air* painting, artists venture outdoors where the light, colour and textures of the natural sites they are rendering are immediate and unveiled by distraction. In representing digital landscape, I too venture to where that landscape is most palpable and close, drawing near to my computer screen in a shuttered room. Though I am not situated within the sites shown on my computer screen, I can see the various layers of alteration, nuance and meaning that comprise digital landscapes, uniquely, from my position at home.

virtual environment, where they “simulate... the ability to create space itself in the binary circuitry of computer-animated devices” (Halley 1983, 102). Today, a whole class of landscape photography exists specifically to create scenic imagery that is to be viewed on digital devices, as screensavers, wallpapers and desktop backgrounds (Fig. 10.8).

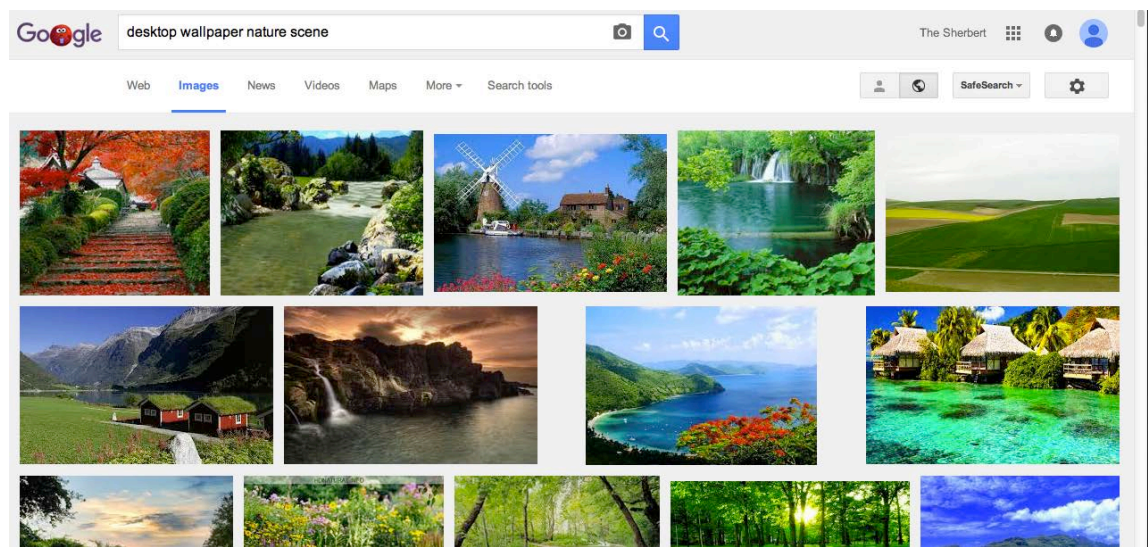


Fig. 10.8 Google Image Search results for the inquiry “desktop wallpaper nature scene”, 2015. Image: Google

To paint from digital landscape imagery is a rare approach among artists for whom Google Maps is a subject. Jon Rafman (Fig. 14.1), Emilio Vavarella (Fig. 11.10) and Clement Valla (Fig. 11.10) all work extensively with Google Earth, yet none takes up the brush. Rather, these artists re-present their digital landscapes as un-retouched prints or website content. In their work, the methodology of selecting and sharing particular digital scenes is itself the artistic outcome⁸. I share with these artists an initial, exploratory methodology, and a foregrounding of the artists’ intrinsic role as a mediator of landscape art. However I also paint my findings, translating my collected documentation into a corpus of objects, actualised using paint and painting skills.

When I paint from the screen, I take immaterial digital images, made of 0’s and 1’s, and give them a definitive, material form that does not vary according to screen size,

⁸ Artistic methods in which the artist’s interaction with and interpretation of digital landscape imagery is a central focus are more fully discussed in *Episode Fourteen: The Agency of the Artist in the Digital Landscape*.

brightness, resolution, print quality or cropping. Painting enables me to extract digital experiences from their immaterial, sharable, emailable, flat, backlit format and turn them into solid, singular, art objects. The images were materialised, not by having been *printed out* but, if you like, *painted* out. In painting from photographic screen shots, the “revelatory capacity” of photography provides me with detail that the human observer would be unable to notice or retain when using Google Maps. This process ensures that the digital provenance of the landscape imagery is communicated through painting. Blurriness, pixilation, cursors and map pins are recreated in paint, turning the paintings into artefacts of a digital viewership that gallery viewers are able to retrace themselves online.

The translation of a digital image (such as Fig. 10.9) into a painting (Fig. 10.10) means that whilst the figurative content might be equivalent, the work now speaks in a different visual language: that of paint and painting. Whether the painted image is a hyper-realistic copy of the digital image or completely abstracted, paint brings with it cultural understandings about the authorship of the image, the presence of the artist, and is endowed with the history of landscape painting.



Fig. 10.9 A screenshot from Google Maps depicting a lake near the East coast of Macquarie island in the Pacific Ocean (left), 2015. Map data: Google



Fig. 10.10 Sheridan Coleman, *Macquarie Coast*, 2015, acrylic on MDF, 19.5 x 19.5 cm (right).

Unlike artists such as Valla and Rafman who often present their work online, it is important in my practice for my works to take a material form as art objects where they cannot be altered, lost or crowded by other media. My paintings demand not only the careful scrutiny of the viewer, but their presence in the gallery, elevating the subject of Google Earth beyond the perfunctory viewership that many daily-use online formats receive⁹. Once within proximity with my crafted objects, the viewer may be susceptible to an intimate encounter with the artwork, its detail, intricacy, and material presence.

A Painter's Peculiarity

The individualities of the artist are of as much influence upon the painted image as any prevailing cultural paradigm. The artist's skill, methods, mark making and attention or inattention to particular details, colours and proportions all have an impact on the final painting, whether or not it is intended as a faithful recreation of a physical site. Though I claim not to cosmetically tinker with the digital landscape imagery I work with, I cannot prove that I am not unconsciously modifying, simplifying or embellishing the sites I paint. Whatever the case, painting results from personal, gestural, manual touch, as a human or biographical layer upon the landscape (Fig. 10.11). It is also the result of my inherent preference for or interest in particular features of the digital landscape, which is so rich that it cannot be read or understood in the same way by all onlookers. Paint is the evidence and affirmation of my presence as a conduit between digital landscape and artwork, recording the centrality of my hand and eye in creating the work.

⁹ The gallery itself is a controlled space that must be travelled to: a destination. It helps to construct an experience of artwork, to frame it and guide it. The gallery, as a purpose-built art-experiencing arena, may work to authenticate the artwork within, requiring viewers to encounter its material qualities and view the work deliberately (not as part of a web-surfing session, by accident, or whilst also doing something else), to travel there and put aside time specially. These conceptions of the gallery as a site of appreciation which makes special demands on the viewer and which may impart moral or cultural value upon the experience are absolutely at play in my use and understanding of painting.



Fig. 10.11 Sheridan Coleman, *Anchor Rock, off Macquarie Island*, 2015, acrylic on MDF, 11.3 x 9.4 cm

The inherent value of the painter's handiwork is well demonstrated by my *Hand-pixelated* series. These artworks testify that painting enhances a digital subject, even if it makes the subject less distinguishable. Anyone who has used Google Maps knows that pixilation is a common attendant of loading imagery, creating a momentary grid of 'landscapey' colours. Though heralding a sub-optimum loading time, the grids disappear too quickly to photograph.

I printed out distinct sites, like a rocky islet (Fig. 10.12) or uninhabited island (Fig. 10.13), and using acrylic over a scored grid, manually re-introduced pixilation. This technique required my specialist judgment as a painter to select the colour I deemed representative of the land within the square I had marked out, and an *awfully* steady hand. These works isolated the application of paint as constituting the act of creating a landscape, and asserted that it was the interpretative presence of the artist that determined the landscape, even if it became less detailed in the process.



Fig. 10.12 Sheridan Coleman, *Hand Pixelated Anchor Rock*, 2015, acrylic, photograph, MDF, 21 x 15.5 cm

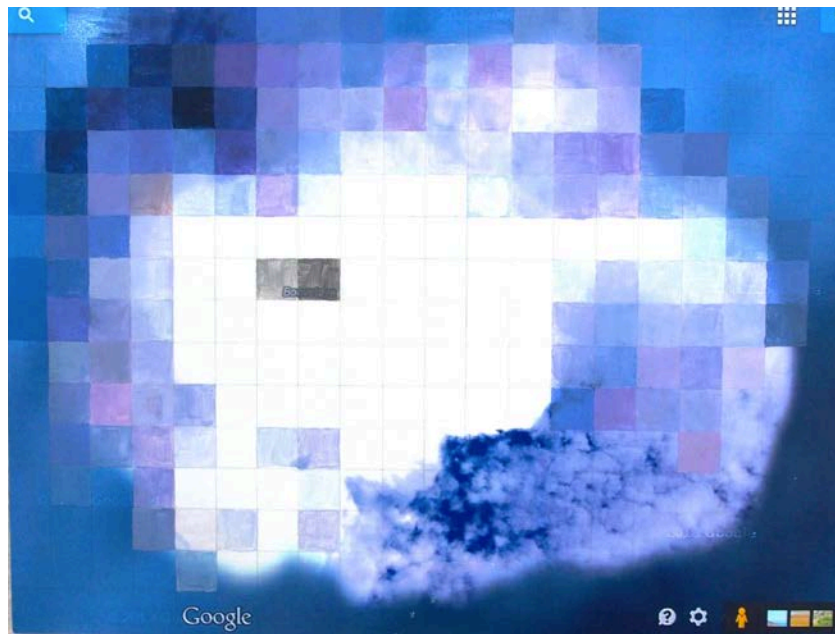


Fig. 10.13 Sheridan Coleman, *Hand-Pixelated Bouvet Island*, 2015, acrylic, photograph and MDF, 21 x 16 cm

The Generosity of Painting

Paint is a medium with an established culturally perceived value. Painting requires observational and manual skill, takes time, and requires patience, knowledge of colour mixing, brushwork, media and tools. Monetary value aside, painting is an artisanal activity that results in rarefied, expert-made objects. Painting invites the artist to more carefully consider a landscape subject than if the same subject was presented in a format where the image was not so diligently and wholly constructed, (such as a photo or sketch), and in turn the viewer must also pause with the work.

In my practice, painting constitutes an act of generosity. By this I do not imply that audiences should be grateful for my magnanimity in deigning to create paintings, but that I have the experience of my audience in mind while I paint – I am thinking of how my paintings speak, how I can ensure they are not dull, simplistic, impenetrably encoded or irrelevant to my audience. Hence, I form images in vivid colour; with liberal and minute detail; with care for visual clarity and faithfulness to the source imagery; and to seek out humour, beauty and absurdity in my subject matter. My paintings are plentiful in number (Fig. 10.14), and intimate in scale¹⁰. All this is to share something of the field I am deeply buried in; delivering part of the excitement and intellectual pleasure I myself draw from it.



Fig. 10.14 Sheridan Coleman, *Wilderness User Disambiguation*, 2015, mixed media

¹⁰ A fuller discussion of the small scale of my work can be found in *Episode Fifteen: The Landscape Portal*.

Painting might seem like a foibled, human medium to represent Google Maps with. My use of this canonical medium in contemporary practice is not arbitrary, nor a subversive **culture jamming** exercise¹¹. Rather, it is a tender and expressive way for me to distil my thinking about the culture of contemporary, digital landscape. The use of paint also introduces questions about the value of the artists' presence, the influence of the artists' personal touch, the weight of landscape art history, the stylistic expression of particular cultural values and the chronicling of new technologies for engagement with landscape. Paint carries a history which allows an artistic subject to be contemplated in terms of its cultural, aesthetic and artistic value, regardless of how utilitarian, technological or everyday it might appear to the casual observer. Paint is the vehicle I use to affix digital landscapes to a centuries-old discussion about the cultural significance of landscape, demonstrating the flexibility of 'landscape' as a modern cultural concept that includes romance, pixilation, and everything in between.

¹¹ I wish here to make a point of distancing myself from the remote possibility that my work might be read as having rebellious or glib undertones: I have not chosen to use paint simply because it seemed like an unexpected medium to depict digital subjects with, or that it in some way undermines, parodies or opposes digital imagery. (I'm quite sure this is nonetheless evident in my work).

Episode Eleven

A Parade of Errors

A truncated housecat

Patch Errors

Broken Patterns

A Parade of Errors

The uploading of the image of Earth's surface into a digital meta-landscape is a gargantuan project, requiring the transformation of 510,072,000 square kilometres of physical land into 20 Petabytes (21.5 million megabytes) of visual data (Coffey 2009; McKenna 2013). When something as varied and complex as world geography is delivered as visual data, however, it must pass through a bottleneck of digital algorithms, becoming "ones and zeros" that can be measured and manipulated (Cosgrove & Fox 2010, 70). Like any translation, the conversion of land into data results in a collateral loss of subtlety: in error.

Unlike a blog or online encyclopaedia, which are digital artefacts, Google Maps is a continually changing representational system. Land is photographed, conglomerated, superimposed with cartographic markings, uploaded, and thereafter frequently amended and updated. Small amounts of erroneous interference, such as pixilation, blurring and discolouration are introduced at every stage (Fig. 11.1). Errata detract from the functional-cartographic uses of Google's geolocation sites and instead create anomalies, which range between the scenic, absurd, humorous, uncanny, or simply inconvenient¹. As geography becomes digitised, it is fused with the maladies and foibles of digital systems. The resultant landscape images of Google Earth, Maps and Street View are a conflation of nature with system, of referent with medium.

¹ "The use of Google Earth can also impart error. Our most recent work with the Department of Sustainability (Barcelona School of Architecture, International University to Catalonia)... the result was that part of the investigation worked for months on a site that according to Google Earth was there but actually wasn't..." (Pérez Arnal 2010, 160).



Fig. 11.1 A view of Cathy Terrace, Englewood Cliffs in New Jersey, U.S.A., as seen on Google Earth in 2013. Map data: Google

I regard the spontaneity of error in Google Earth as equivalent to the idiosyncrasy of mark making, form, colour and line which has so pervaded the history of painting (Berger 1972; Kleiner & Mamiya 2005). Automated digital processes and an artist's idiomatic processes may both introduce visual detail that diverges pictorially from the land it means to represent. When adopted as a point of departure for art practice, error can be deployed for humour, or critique. As a subject, error can reveal the complex shades of difference between reality and representation that are present in mimetic environments like Google Earth and landscape art².

² For example, American artist Dan Hays selects unclear digital images as a subject, painting in real time from the webcam of a second person named Dan Hays, who he'd met online. The artist says, "The immaterial and instantaneous digital information is given material and temporal existence in fleshy brushstrokes and daubs. These processes serve to highlight painting's imperfect physicality and to subvert the mechanics of illusionism... to generate simultaneous, ambiguous and three-dimensional convergences of the represented scene and the physical surface, or immaterial screen" (Hays n.d.).

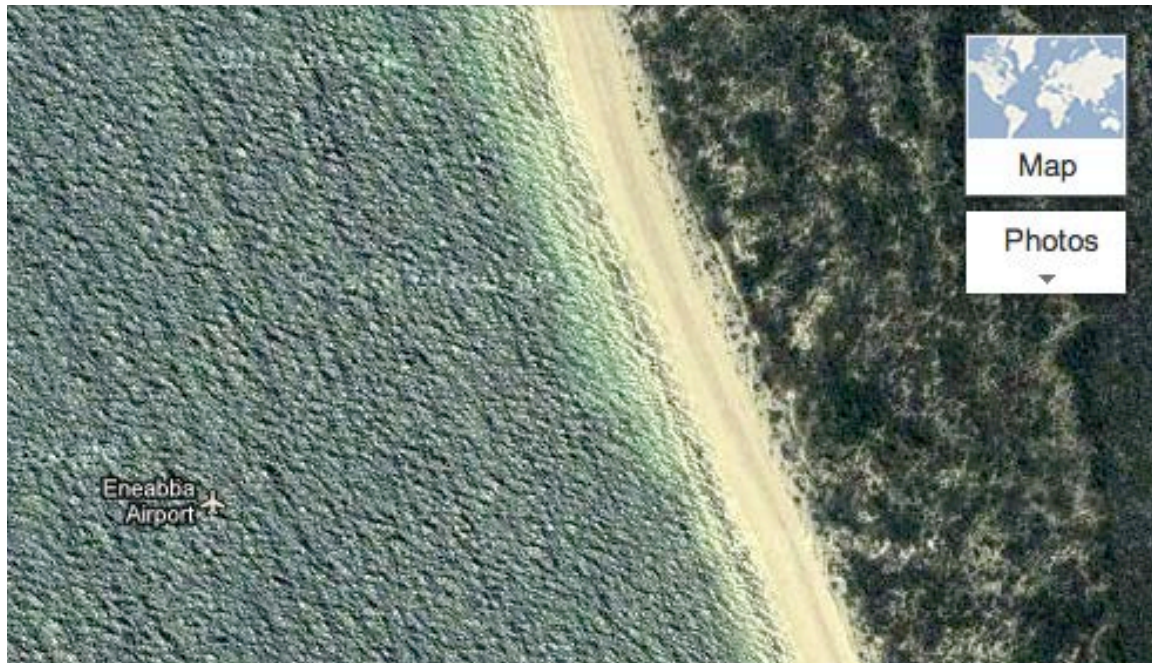


Fig. 11.2 Eneabba Airport (Western Australia) erroneously marked in the Indian Ocean on Google Maps in 2014. Map data: Google

Google's digital landscapes are strewn with errors, the residues of system working upon image. Nonetheless, digital landscapes represent an increasingly dominant and influential media for the everyday consumption of landscape images³ (of both artistic and other kinds). Proverbially, one cannot divorce the impact of a media's idiosyncrasies from the meaning of that which it describes (McLuhan 1967; Barthes 1967). With this in mind, error should be regarded as more than a series of mistakes to be ignored, but a family of visual phenomena with the potential to influence the way landscapes are visualised and understood in cultures where online geographical visualisation is a prominent method of consuming landscape imagery.

A photographer can look past a chipped camera lens; mispronounced words still convey meaning. In the same way: though error peppers Google's landscapes, users can nonetheless comprehend the landscape it intrudes upon. In this way the pathology of error has been integrated into landscape representation without transfiguring it into something else.

³ I refer here to places in which personal Internet connectivity is commonplace, and part of a typical urban lifestyle that includes the frequent accessing of geolocation interfaces like Google Maps.

Brooklyn-based artist and software programmer Clement Valla refuses to equate Google's bifurcation from reality with out-and-out error. The artist has been collecting **screenshots** of Google Earth in which photographic imagery is rendered (think 'digital decoupage'), onto an undulating digital scaffold, resulting in warped, buckled images (see Figs 11.3-4). To Valla, these extraordinary rarities are to be appreciated:

I discovered strange moments where the illusion of a seamless representation of the Earth's surface seems to break down. At first, I thought they were glitches, or errors in the algorithm, but looking close I realized the situation was actually more interesting - these images are not glitches. They are the absolute logical result of the system. They are an edge condition - an anomaly within the system, a nonstandard, an outlier, even, but not an error. These jarring moments expose how Google Earth works, focusing our attention on the software. They reveal a new model of representation: not through indexical photographs but through automated data collection from a myriad of different sources constantly updated and endlessly combined to create a seamless illusion; Google Earth is a database disguised as a photographic representation. These uncanny images focus our attention on that process itself, and the network of algorithms, computers, storage systems, automated cameras, maps, pilots, engineers, photographers, surveyors and map-makers that generate them. (Valla 2010, 1)

Fig. 11.3 Clement Valla, *Postcards from Google Earth: LA*, 2010, digital screenshot collected from Google Earth

Image gallery: <http://www.postcards-from-google-earth.com/>

Fig. 11.4 Clement Valla, *Postcards from Google Earth: Whirlpool*, 2010,
Digital screenshot collected from Google Earth

Image gallery: <http://www.postcards-from-google-earth.com/>

To Valla, the possibility that such imagery might be considered wrong is a tragedy, because although geographically implausible or uncanny, it reveals the mechanisms of an accepted cultural practice for understanding landscape: using Google Earth. While usually photographic material can “substitute for direct encounter” as a “surrogate” (Wells 2011, 6), quirks like those identified by Valla interrupt the suspension of disbelief, confirming the voyeuristic, ersatz nature of a world seen through a screen.

Google’s unmanned cameras are rigged to collect images at regular, timed intervals. This indiscriminate method is another wellspring of error. Instead of undertaking the zooming, focusing or framing that a human photographer might use to create an aesthetic, clearer or more meaningful image (that is, an affected image⁴), unmanned cameras take pictures with objectivity: they *see*, but are blind to visual information that might render the picture incomprehensible, unrealistic, uncanny, obscene, or unclear. Such images, which might be defined by their lack of (conventional) value to a viewer, litter the digital landscape. The famously truncated white housecat from Street View resulted from a system ineluctably prone to error and insensitive to unreality (Fig. 11.5).

Fig. 11.5 A Google Street View image of a cat, truncated due to an imaging error in the interface, became known as the ‘half-cat’, and went viral in 2013

Image: <https://static.independent.co.uk/s3fs-public/thumbnails/image/2013/05/08/11/half-cat-2048.jpg>

⁴ I use the phrase “affected image” in its psychological sense, to mean an imposed or expressed state. Much like an event might a person *affect* their anger or happiness through expressed behaviours, glitch here *affects* an image, altering its character and meaning (ibid; Pederson 2016).

The lion's share of error on Google Earth results from the merging of photographic imagery into a single, navigable plane. Each screen's worth of landscape imagery might be provided by up to eight different sources. The 'seams' between adjacent photographs are magnets for continuity errors, which I refer to as *patch errors* due to their resemblance to patchwork (Fig. 11.6). Often, abutting imagery will reflect the correct *slice* of landscape, locationally, but will depict it at a different time of day, season, year, or in different weather conditions to its neighbour. Some landforms are continuous between these different images; others terminate at the boundary, signifying ephemeral natural forms, or changes in the land (like icecaps). One can only guess at the tense of one image in relation to the next.

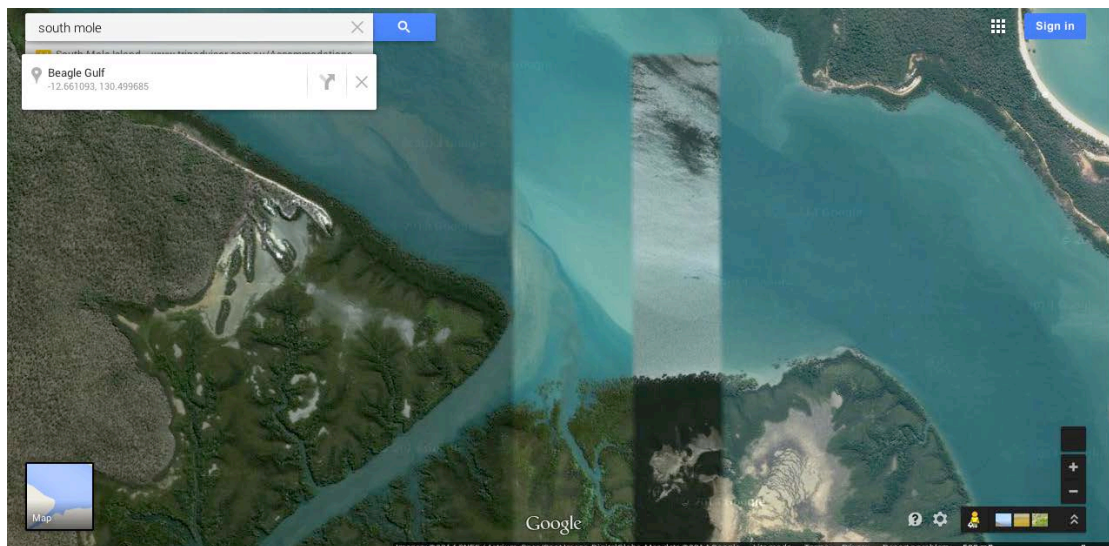


Fig. 11.6 Evidence of photo-stitching on Google Maps, near Darwin in the Northern Territory, Australia, in 2014. Map data: CNES, Astrium Cnes, Spot Image, DigitalGlobe, Google

Patch errors, with their striking contrast and regular shape⁵, not only provide points of visual interest, but record ecological variation. Users can simultaneously view a landscape's most opposite annual climactic conditions. Milan-based artist Elena Radice has been collecting these displays of seasonal difference since 2012 (Fig. 11.7). Her images document climactic polarity and the idiosyncrasies of Google Earth, as well as visual assonance, colour and pattern. Radice archives her screen shots on blogging platform Tumblr, freezing moments of glitch, perhaps in pre-

⁵ The regularity of each patchwork piece of the total image is due to its being constructed from rectangular satellite photographs.

emptive counterpoint to Google Earth's dynamic amendment and progress towards complete pictorial cohesion.

Fig. 11.7 Elena Radice, from the series *Abstract Season Changes*, 2012,
digital screenshot collected from Google Earth

Image gallery: <http://abstractseasonchanges.tumblr.com/>

My painting series *Patch Errors* overlaps with Radice's work, while also expanding upon the likenesses between painterliness and variable digital resolution. I painted each fragment of the landscape in a slightly different manner, making use of different gestures and marks according to the inconsistent qualities of the source material (Fig. 11.8). Google's virtual landscape is not only far from seamless but unapologetic about its juxtaposition of unlike images. Perhaps this is because its conglomerate format *works*; sites shown half in snow and half in drought can certainly still be interpreted as single landscapes. The viewer reads *through* the difference, locating patterns in fences, tree lines, cliffs etc.

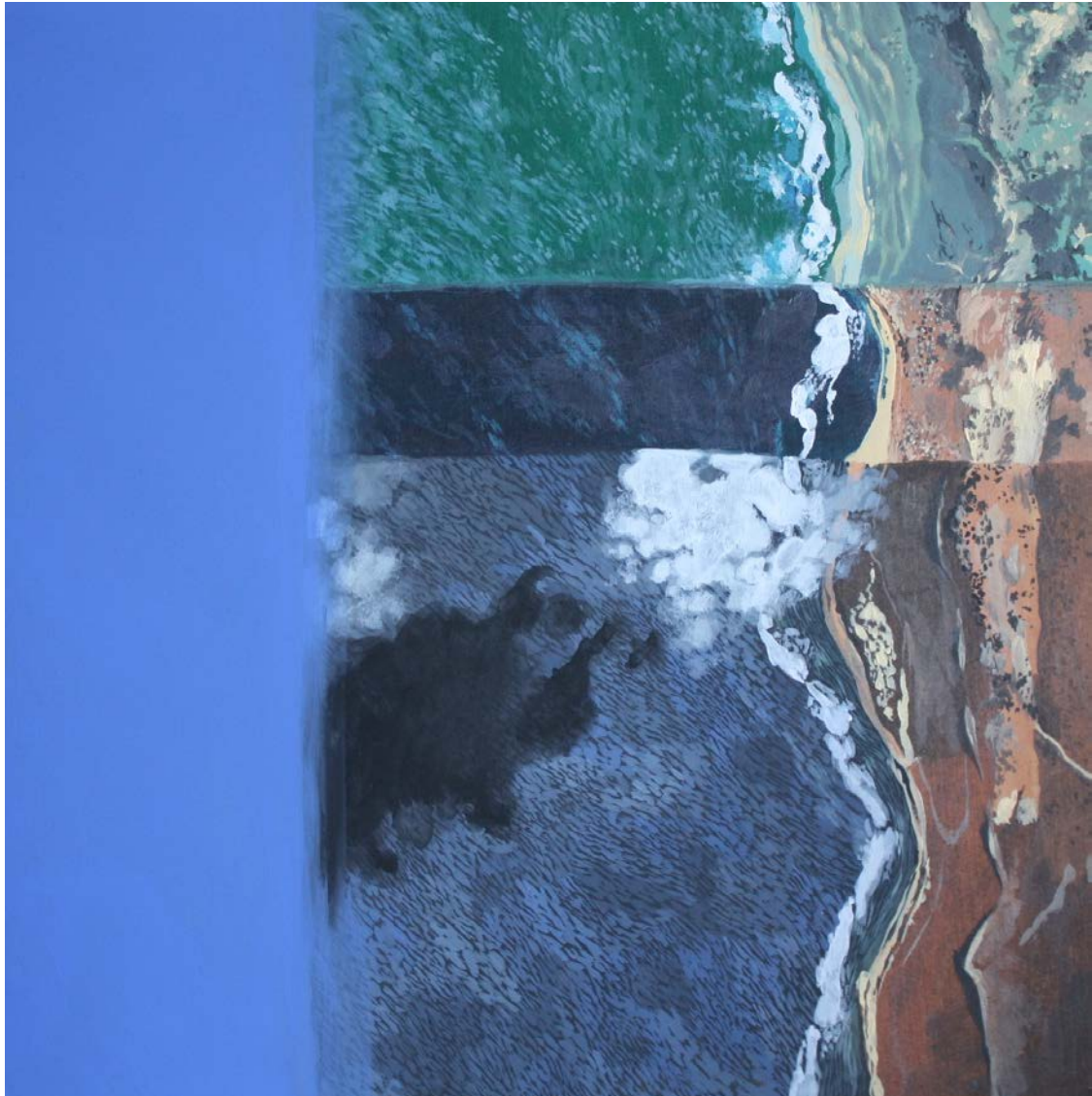


Fig. 11.8 Sheridan Coleman, *Patch Error: Adjacent Times of Day*, 2013, acrylic on board, 20 x 20 cm

Other digital interference results from the standardised format and cartographic tools of the Google Earth interface. The window through which viewers gaze is populated with mapping and measurement features, icons and animated symbols. Built from 1cm squares of photographic prints, my collage work *Conglomerate Measurement Glitch* is a nonsensical schematic, parodying the task of interpreting a huge bank of geographical data using limited and simplistic tools: Google's four-pronged navigator, unmarked kilometric scale and Pegman [sic] (Fig. 11.9). The collage is instantly recognisable as a reconfiguration of Google Maps: even when scrambled, its components are familiar. After all, they regularly assist in making sense of sites that might otherwise appear unrecognisable or unremarkable, lost in a literal world of

geographical imagery. New media theorist Alexander Galloway describes representation as having an entropic effect on the referent. “The promise is not one of revealing something as it is, but in simulating a thing so effectively that “what it is” becomes less and less necessary to speak about, not because it is gone for good, but because we have perfected a language for it” (Galloway 2010, 278). Just like the genre of landscape painting is signified by symbols of nature, colours and characteristic brushstrokes, Google Maps conveys landscape using a family of devices and imagery which are now so embedded in the way digital landscapes are seen that they can signify it even when disrupted.



Fig. 11.9 Sheridan Coleman, *Conglomerate Measurement Glitch*, 2013, photographic collage, 18 x 18 cm

Several times during my research, the functions and design of Google Maps have been altered, permanently, and without fanfare. Already, much of my work signifies defunct versions of the system, part of an archaeology of Google Maps. According to Geographer Marc Antrop, this is the nature of evolving landscape-viewing modes. “The main difference between traditional and new landscapes resides in their dynamics, both in speed, and scale, as well as the changing perceptions, values and behaviour of their users... never before in history has such an amount of data recording existed as today” (Antrop 2003, 5).

The speed of systemic change in Google Street View is an urgent concern to Italian artist Emilio Vavarella, whose series *Report a Problem* catalogues 100 errors from the interface’s past incarnations (Fig. 11.10). The artist feverishly collected the errors, salvaging them from being lost or forgotten after removal. Like Valla, Vavarella is loath to dub them errors, because of their beauty and absurdity. ““Report a Problem” is the message that appears at the bottom of the Google Street View screen, which allows viewers to report a problem during the viewing of the place they are virtually visiting. “I travelled on Google Street View photographing all the “wrong landscapes” I encountered before others could report the problems and prompt the company to adjust the images” (Vavarella 2012b, 1).

Fig. 11.10 Emilio Vavarella, two images from the series *Report a Problem*, 2012, 100 digital photographs collected from Google Street View

Image gallery: <http://emiliovavarella.com/archive/google-trilogy/report-a-problem/>

Google Maps is a system in a state of continual update. Errors such as the Hobson Bay Walkway cat (Fig. 11.11), (which are prodigiously easy to locate on website [listicles](#) citing Google’s various absurdities (e.g. Cahill 2014)), have been swiftly removed and replaced with more visually intelligible imagery. While Google Earth might be *the* world landscape image, it is also an image in constant flux. Like Heraclitus’ timeworn dictum “δὶς ἐς τὸν αὐτὸν ποταμὸν οὐκ ἂν ἐμβαίης” (roughly: you cannot step into the same river twice), no user is ever navigating quite the same Google world image as the previous time they logged on (Harris, n.d.).

Fig. 11.11 A false marking on Google Maps of a cat-shaped walk trail, by the time of writing (2015), the cat-shaped trail has been removed

Before:

<https://resources.stuff.co.nz/content/dam/images/1/1/c/9/5/b/image.related.StuffLandscapeSixteenByNine.620x349.11c95g.png/1414377501855.jpg>

After: <https://www.google.com.au/maps/place/Parnell+Cricket+Club+Inc/@-36.8640874,174.7888987,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x6d0d485edfdb81b1:0xe63f7ba68a3ea5e4!8m2!3d-36.8640917!4d174.7910874>

The infringement of digital visualisation upon physical place is a central concern in the practice of Western Australian artist Ian Williams. The painter's works, rendered in sumptuously applied oil and acrylic, depict rather classical landscape scenes, strewn with moments of glitch that are simultaneously painterly and digital (Fig. 11.12). In works such as *Illegal Operation* (a borrowed error-notification term), the viewer's ability to be imaginatively drawn in to the landscape depicted is debarred by painted rectangles, which swarm over the landscape at surface level, reordering it. *Illegal Operation* refers to the immaterial, coded colour grid of digital images.



Fig. 11.12 Ian Williams, *Illegal Operation*, 2013, acrylic and oil on board, 40 x 70 cm. Reproduced with permission of the artist.

According to art theorist Siân Ede, our capacity to recognise visual error can be a source of great aesthetic pleasure. “A great deal of naturalistic depiction in art is

intended to look convincing, but unless it is a particularly contrived (though wholly short-lived) *trompe l'oeil*, our pleasure really comes from comparing the synthetic with the real” (Ede 2005, 110). Regarding works like Williams’, one enjoys recognising a landscape, in spite of, or especially because of, its lack of figurative detail. The painting is not a destroyed landscape, but a landscape constructed from painting techniques that are unorthodox in the landscape tradition.

From here one might ask, what constitutes erroneous data in the fabric of Google Earth? How can mistakes like Eneabba’s mismarked Airport (Fig. 11.2) be labelled accurate or erroneous? And must they be? Aren’t these images artefacts in their own right, beyond mimesis? To identify the inaccuracy of Google Earth compared to the land that inspired it, is to conclude that the point of landscape is to capture some essential, accurate or authentic sense of nature. Google Earth is incapable of this, as language and media theorist Christine Masters Jach makes clear in her dissertation *Global Imagination and Visual Rhetoric in Google Earth*. “Its documentary function remains saturated with cultural messages that attempt to render, but are never fully capable of providing an accurate picture of a complex totality” (Masters Jach 2011, 38-39).

The proclamation that human representational mediums fall short of the complexity and wonder of nature has dogged Western landscape art from the start, as described by art writer Jeffrey Kastner. “For enormous stretches of human history, the contingency of civilisation, and in particular its cultural products, was read in contradistinction to the supposed integral essentialism of the natural world. From Socrates, Plato and Aristotle forward, art was understood, for ill (or good) to be merely mimetic; forever attempting, and failing, to replicate the wonders of nature” (Kastner 2012, 14). The minutest aesthetic alterations by an artist might completely uncouple a landscape image from the land it represents. WA art historian Ted Snell recognises this phenomenon throughout art history, saying, “Even the most accurate representation of the observed world is a series of fictions. The conversion from the three dimensional to two is the most obvious, but a glacier moved inches on the page to make a better composition that would require a geological shift of hundreds of kilometres, or a slightly bluer hue to secure a more pleasing tonal balance that

suggests a time shift of hours or months, are corrections made by artists frequently and without compunction” (Snell 2007, 18).

Online geographical imaging platforms, unlike landscape artwork, bear the burden of being practical tools, which people rely on to make decisions about the way that they move through physical sites: *where am I, and where do I go?* we ask of it. Countless users have been inconvenienced or led off course by mismarked destinations, wrong directions and other inaccuracies (Olycato 2013; *Apple Maps* 2012). While error can be amusing, it inhibits the functionality of geographical visualisation, and adds a sinister undertone to its inability to fulfil its advertised duties.

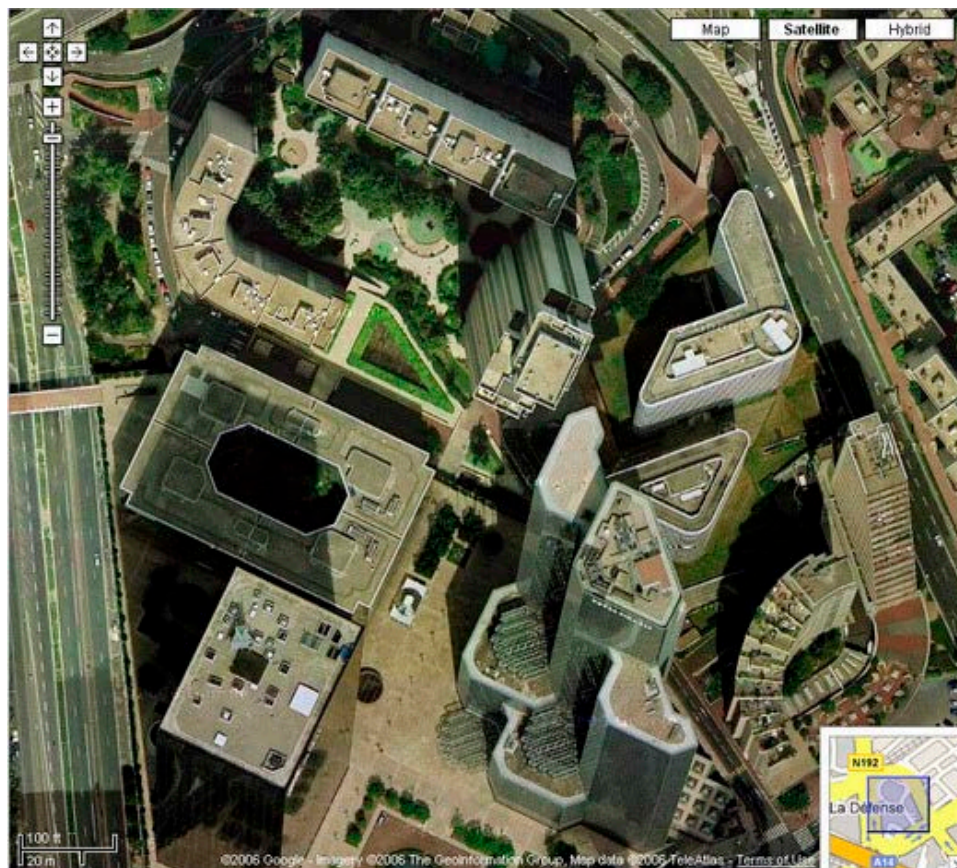


Fig. 11.13 An Escher-esque perspective error seen on Google Earth in 2006. Map data: The GeoInformation Group, TeleAtlas, Google

In the field of new media, theorists like Jacob Lillemose have identified an “aesthetics of systematization”, or network aesthetics, wherein the organisation and visualisation of data achieves an elegance that can be appreciated for its flow, pattern

or structure—all terms that might be used just as comfortably to describe artwork—(Lillemose 2006, 124). Within network aesthetics, difference as well as uniformity has a part to play in the appreciation of systems, their ingenuity, or perhaps even their humanness. “Humans are... pattern-fixated and take great aesthetic pleasure from discerning pattern, seeing it stretched and broken and reformed” (Cosgrove & Fox 2010, 99). Error might be defined as a departure from the expected, or a break from an established system. It arises from *process*, and therefore can be present in both digital systems and artistic methodology; both can be calibrated to make room for it, just as either might seek to mitigate it: “in postmodern times, with all truths suspect, artists have found in cartography a rich vein of concept and imagery to mine. Cartographic rules give artists whole networks of assumptions to exploit and upend,” explains art historian Katharine Harmon (Harmon 2009, 9).

As a greater than ever range of data is collected and uploaded to Google Earth, new errors and systemic insufficiencies will be discovered by users, appropriated by artists, and ameliorated by Google. Whether or not the unreality of a landscape image constitutes error to bemoan, glitch to be amused by, flourish to be celebrated or a new visual language to become conversant in, is a matter of context and perspective. However, none of these appraisals is indelible, and each will shift alongside the viewing practices and representational modes of the artist, user or viewer over time.

Episode Twelve

Remote Sensing
On not being there
Romance vs. Inertia

Remote Sensing: Looking through the Unmanned Lens

It is through seeing that we come to know and understand the world. Human eyesight is a measurement tool with which one can make judgments about the surrounding environment¹. Sight is used to gauge depth, colour, weight, size, and speed of movement, which in turn reveal the suitability of locations for habitation; the approach of predators and bad weather; the quality of food; and the stability of the land underfoot. It is with eyesight that we anticipate the land ahead.

Not everything falls within optical range: danger and opportunity may lie outside of the visible. To overcome this, humans have long relied upon on techniques and technologies that augment their visual capabilities: from posting sentries on hilltops, to telescopes and lately, Skype, GPS and satellite photography. “Technological developments allow us to reach beyond our own human capabilities, amplifying and extending our bodies, and radically changing the way we live in the world,” explain Australian art writers Liz Hughes & Emma McRae (Hughes & McRae 2005, 8).

Such mechanisms have steadily rendered more and more of Earth’s geography visible, overcoming the distance between the viewer and the world viewed. It is now possible to see into impenetrable wilderness areas; to observe the streets of a city one has never visited (Fig. 12.1); and to converse with friends who are hundreds of kilometres away.

Fig. 12.1 Timbuktu as seen on Google Maps, 2015

Map: <https://www.google.com.au/maps/place/Timbuktu,+Mali/@16.7713828,-3.025489,5602m/data=!3m2!1e3!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0xe17ce977cbc8733:0x546f01bc8958b7c618m2!3d16.7665887!4d-3.0025615>

¹ During the Western **Enlightenment** in the 17th Century, sight came to be regarded as the principal sense for understanding and acting in the world, as it was closely linked to the scientific value of empirical observation (Appleton 1990; Cosgrove & Fox 2010).

Evelyn Pruitt, a geographer at the US Office of Naval Research in Washington D.C., was the first to refer to the practice of using satellite cameras to view distant landscapes as **remote sensing** (Cosgrove & Fox 2010). Today, remote sensing is an everyday activity, in which innumerable users simultaneously access collated landscape imagery to inspect locations as familiar as their street or as alien as the Moon. Google Earth is today's most exhaustive project in remote sensing. Its comprehensiveness makes it a significant, even democratic form of vision: “[Google]... constitutes a single multiplex eye for the entire human species”, explained William Gibson: a unifying, omnivorous viewpoint (Gibson 2010, 18).

Remote cameras harvest a preponderance of the photographs used to construct Earth and Maps, before Google's software “edits, re-assembles, processes and packages reality in order to form a very specific and useful model” (Valla 2012b, 2). These processes ensure that limitations on physical travel or terrestrial networks are not obstacles to revealing as much of the world landscape for view as possible (Macmillan 2014).

On Not Being There

The impacts of remote sensing on the way we visualise, or expect to visualise the world are wide-ranging. The practice of remote sensing extends the visual power of the viewer, while muting their **haptic** perception². Cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan distinguishes between the proximal and exterior senses: “proximate senses are those of taste, touch and smell; distant senses are those of hearing and sight. Proximate senses yield a diffuse, unstructured reality close to the body that is charged with emotion; distant senses yield a composed world that is less emotional, more coldly aesthetic, and intellectual” (Tuan 2011, 129). As a primarily visual and unphysical kind of experience, remote sensing has been called both a valuable and an inauthentic way of seeing the world, and has been thought to both induce and preclude physical travel (Wylie 2007).

² Oxford Dictionaries defines the technical term ‘haptic’ thus: “Relating to the sense of touch, in particular relating to the perception and manipulation of objects using the senses of touch and **proprioception**” (*Definition: Haptic* 2016).

For artists, remote sensing tools like Google Earth do not just represent a boosted optical reach, but open up a discussion about how landscapes are seen, accessed and approached in digital formats. The nature of seeing, perspective and place are ongoing concerns of the landscape art genre, concerns that overlap with the remote sensing technologies that operate within these same conceptual terms. Part of the appeal of remote sensing (as a replacement for physical encounters with nature) comes from its riddance of the need to spend money and time, travel or exert oneself physically, in order to see land. It's a safer, less involved and more anonymous way of looking: "With Google Maps you can instantly transport yourself to the top of these peaks and enjoy the sights without the avalanches, rock slides, crevasses and dangers from altitude and the weather that mountaineers face," says reporter Dan Fredinburg of Google Earth's imagery of Mount Everest (Fredinburg 2013, 1)³.

The desire to overcome distance through extended vision might seem like simple *wanderlust*: a yearning for the distant, exotic, or undiscovered. As art historian Malcolm Andrews hints, landscapes are often the greener grass of the far side, eliciting "longing to escape confinement, the inducement to liberate the imagination..." (Andrews 1999, 111). To do this using digital technology, however, is to forgo the feeling of being on the edge of a possible journey into real space. One is simply looking. As new media theorist Alexander Galloway puts it: "Thus it is a desire to be brought near, but one already afflicted with a specific neurosis, that of the rejection of the self. With each attempt to array the world in proximal relation to us, we must at the same time make ourselves disappear" (Galloway 2010, 276-277). As an abridged form of vision, remote sensing detaches spectator from landscape. This is not a new phenomenon in the tradition of landscape art, but rather a defining characteristic. According to cultural geographer John Wylie, "The very idea of landscape implies separation and observation... Landscapes turn us precisely into detached spectators, and the world into distant scenery to be visually observed" (Wylie 2007, 3). Google Earth is a contemporary format for this relationship.

³ The mountaineers who captured this imagery by wearing camera packs during their ascents were subject to *all* the dangers Fredinburg glosses over.

As a tool that wields daily influence on the production of landscape imagery and attitudes to multifarious natural sites, the potential of Google Earth as an artmaking tool, and its potential for artistic consideration and critique have become imperative pursuits in my practice. “The explosive growth of new geographical technologies also has brought elements of geography into direct interaction with the humanities and the creative arts, as well as within society more broadly,” writes geographer Douglas Richardson (Richardson 2011, ix). In my art practice (Fig. 12.2), the exploration of contemporary viewership modes is not only a driving force but almost unavoidable. Geolocation technology is *so* present, accessible and useable, that derailment from its conventional use seems inevitable. The exploration of Google Earth has become as much a crucial enterprise within landscape art as landscape exploration, botanical studies or spiritual representations of nature.



Fig. 12.2 Sheridan Coleman, detail from *Eight Deadman's Islands in Canada*, 2016, acrylic on board, 9 x 9 cm

One typical quandary brought about by remote sensing, as put by essayist Richard Light, is “can a person visit a country yet never set foot upon it? Does an airplane journey across a territory entitle the traveller to claim that “he [sic] has been there”?” (Light 1944, 35). The answer to this question depends on the value placed upon multi-sensory experience (rather than sight alone), and whichever definition of authentic experience is adopted.

It's a question of authenticity, purity of experience or intent. As an inherently cultural question, there can be no consensus. As works of my own clearly describe (Fig. 12.3), I see remote sensing as a deeply bipolar activity. The inertia of a user coexists alongside the simulated dynamism of the software, a symbiosis that seems to herald both laziness *and* fervour; a thirst to know and see more of the world coupled with a reluctance or inability to travel. I am won by the idea that I might represent remote sensing (a principal method in my practice) as a noble, romantic or imaginative activity, akin to the way that great stories are realised by the mind during reading, or the way a mathematician might unravel some numerical truth with only a blackboard and stick of chalk.



Fig. 12.3 Sheridan Coleman, two stills from *The Artist on Google Earth Developing Motion Sickness*, 2013-2015, low-resolution QuickTime Movie

Thinking on the sedentary realities of remote sensing, I remember downloading software to prevent my bright laptop screen from interrupting my sleep cycle; the listlessness engendered by scrolling over endless digital maps; discomfort from sitting for long periods; the heater; tea; bad posture. In my mind, such realities do not undercut, but *coexist with* the romances of remote sensing, and may in some sense be the key to building a relationship between my work and its viewers, beginning with the proposition of *Google Maps The Familiar*, or *The Funny*, and ending with *Google Maps The Great Realm of Digital Adventure*. How can a technology so rich and complex have fewer than *innumerable* meanings and associations?

Some commentators, like the artist John McCormack, suggest that in a broad, popular sense, landscape imagery, whether delivered via photograph or digital image, satisfies some need to see nature: “We desperately need this thing that some biologists call *biophilia*, [and] a mediated, virtual, terrifying, but ultimately safe representation of nature is to the majority of our society, an acceptable and palatable replacement” (McCormack 1998, 26; orig. italics). The difference between seeing and experiencing is emphasised here, and whilst McCormack does not answer the numerous writers who would argue that being in the landscape constitutes an experience that cannot be recreated purely through imagery (Macfarlane 2014; *Obsessed with Walking* (Self) 2011; Solnit 2014), we might agree that visual information, however stripped back, still provides enough understanding of a distant location to be satisfying and valuable to the person viewing it. “We know that photographic vision is highly constructed,” remarks photography theorist Liz Wells. “Nonetheless, photography significantly contributes to our sense of knowledge, perception and experience, and to (trans)forming our feelings about our relation to history and geography and, by extension, to our sense of ourselves” (Wells 2011, 56). With the increasing prevalence of detached viewing practices, we might assume that the passive viewing experience, via an objective, unmanned or remote sensed medium, is gaining traction as a viable, respected and valuable alternative to seeing landscapes in person.

When enlisted as an artmaking tool, remote sensing can be expanded from an exercise in visual projection, into an exploration of the way that views are found and collated, and of how remotely sensed images might accord or clash with the sites

they represent. “Contemporary artists have eagerly exploited the new remote sensing technologies that have complemented conventional aerial photography in shaping the aerial image of the earth,” remark Denis Cosgrove and William Fox in their book *Photography and Flight* (Cosgrove & Fox 2010, 137). Remote sensing, whether used within the terms of artmaking or not, can be understood as a creative process. It is an anticipatory form of vision, requiring imaginative effort, the discovery and appreciation of landscape forms, and the construction of mental geographies *in absentia*. Landscapes are increasingly perceived from this estranged perspective. As Google Earth grows in scope, clarity and popular usage, artists will be increasingly drawn to remote sensing as a viewing and artmaking process that represents a growing fraction of the way that landscapes are consumed and experienced in everyday culture in places with widespread Internet usage.

Episode Thirteen

Around the World in 20 Marvellous Screenshots

Around The World in Twenty Marvellous Screenshots

In this photo-essay, I have collected together a selection of some of the most remarkable, scenic, beautiful and strange images of my research. All are extracted from Google Earth, Maps or Street View. Most have been found and shared online many times over. Some are still visible in the fabric of Google's current digital landscapes, while others have long been archived, salvaged for remembrance by popular culture.

Fig. 13.1

A Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) image generated by NASA (who provide much of Google's aerial landscape imagery). Red markings indicate high surface temperatures (2014 bushfires, South Australia).

Image: <https://www.nasa.gov/sites/default/files/20140116-australia.jpg>

Fig 13.2

The markings of a motorcyclists' training track in Norwich, England becomes a rather abstract visual pattern, reminiscent of the paintings of Kandinsky or Sol LeWitt, when seen from the air on Google Earth in 2008.

Image: <http://www.lifedaily.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/UFO-Landing-Pads-outside-Norwich-google-earth.jpg>

Fig 13.4

These two images show Potash Ponds owned by Texas Gulf Potash in Utah's Moab Desert, in which a combination of fluctuating chemical composition and different lighting gives a different vibrant set of colours each time the ponds are photographed. In 2016, its ponds are a lovely lavender colour and they change every time I look them up.

Image 1: <http://all-that-is-interesting.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/potash-evaporation-ponds-google-earth.jpg>

Image 2: <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/2e/f6/39/2ef63924680a1a9b2e0947e8913e4efa.jpg>

Fig 13.5

An aeroplane 'boneyard' or storage facility for decommissioned air vehicles in Tuscon, Arizona, visible online since the launch of Google's geolocation interfaces and still available.

Image: <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/4d/b1/45/4db145fe39160330ecf6349d61e005d6.jpg>

Fig. 13.6

Many shipwrecks can be seen on Google Earth. This one shows the C. S. S. Jassim, a Bolivian cargo ferry that ran around and sank in the Wingate Reef (off the coast of Sudan) in 2003.

Image: http://www.infobarrel.com/media/image/90913_max.jpg

Fig. 13.7

Google Earth allows people to write messages to be seen from the sky, effectively sharing them with the whole world. This ‘JESUS LOVES YOU’ message was written in a field of the Boise National Forest, in Idaho, USA in 2013.

Image: http://cdn.lifebuzz.com/images/6131/lifebuzz-ac3eba9094bd004e56280184ad564237-thumb_400.jpg

Fig 13.8

The family members of the passengers who perished when a hidden bomb in passenger flight UTA 772 exploded over the Saharan desert travelled to the remote crash site to construct this memorial in 2007. It is made of fragments of plane wreckage, black stones and one cracked mirror to represent each victim. The memorial took six weeks to build by hand, and can only be distinguished from the air.

Image: <http://static.deathandtaxesmag.com/uploads/2013/11/Screen-Shot-2013-11-04-at-10.10.48-AM-640x394.png>

Fig 13.9

A facility in Yong Ning Xian in China, which contains a 1:20 (900 x 700m) scale model of the disputed border area between India and China. This facility’s online representation may reveal as much about China’s strategy for this issue as it does the character of China’s interest in it. The facility has been available to view since 2005 when Earth was launched.

Image: <https://twistedgifter.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/mini-border-replica-china.jpg?w=800&h=444>

Fig 13.10

Sandy Island appeared on Google Earth, as well as many other earlier maps, since it was first described cartographically in the late 18th Century. It is, however a phantom. A group of Australian scientists disproved its existence in 2012 when they sailed through the site (in the Coral Sea, West of New Caledonia), where it was meant to be. The team confirmed, "Sandy Island was indeed an island of the mind, and in doing so, ushered in a brave new era of undiscovery (MacKinnon 2012, 1). I have not been able to find an explanation of why Google Earth shows a black mass at this site (MacKinnon 2012).

Image: <http://cdn.isciencetimes.com/data/images/full/2012/11/23/2863-sandy-island-gets-un-discovered.jpg>

Fig 13.11

A large sculpture of a plucked chicken installed stands at the corner of Sampsonia and Arch Streets in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania can be seen on Google Street View in May 2008 (the lot appears chickenless on the 2016 Street View imagery).

Image: <http://i.amz.mshcdn.com/bl8Ga6x2nLbUN-d67yUEahemYSc=/fit-in/850x850/http%3A%2F%2Fmashable.com%2Fwp-content%2Fgallery%2Fgoogle-streetview%2Fgiant%2520turkey.png>

Fig 13.12

A view of hippopotamuses wallowing in a muddy pool in Kativi National Park in Tanzania in 2016. The surrounding imagery of the park (without hippos) is shown in comparatively low resolution.

Image 1: <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/77/5b/6a/775b6a18a4affa27483ca744ad8470fa.jpg>

Image: <http://google-street-view.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/google-street-view-run-over-donkey.jpg>

Fig 13.13

In 2013, images from Google Street View showing a donkey laying in a road in Botswana were used to accuse a Google company vehicle driver of having hit and killed the animal. Google denies the allegations, saying that after an internal review of all pictures taken at the site, the donkey had already been lying down and simply got up and moved as the car approached (suggesting their accusers 'read' the images back to front) (Amir 2013).

Fig 13.14

A private island off Abu Dhabi in the UAE owned by Sheikh Hamad Bin Hamdan Al Nahyan was terraformed so that 'Hamad' is written in canals, visible from the sky. The canals were filled in and the project abandoned in 2013, and no reason has been given (Brass 2013).

Image: https://blogs-images.forbes.com/christopherhelman/files/2012/07/0720_hamad-abu-dhabi-space-close-up_650x455.jpg?width=960

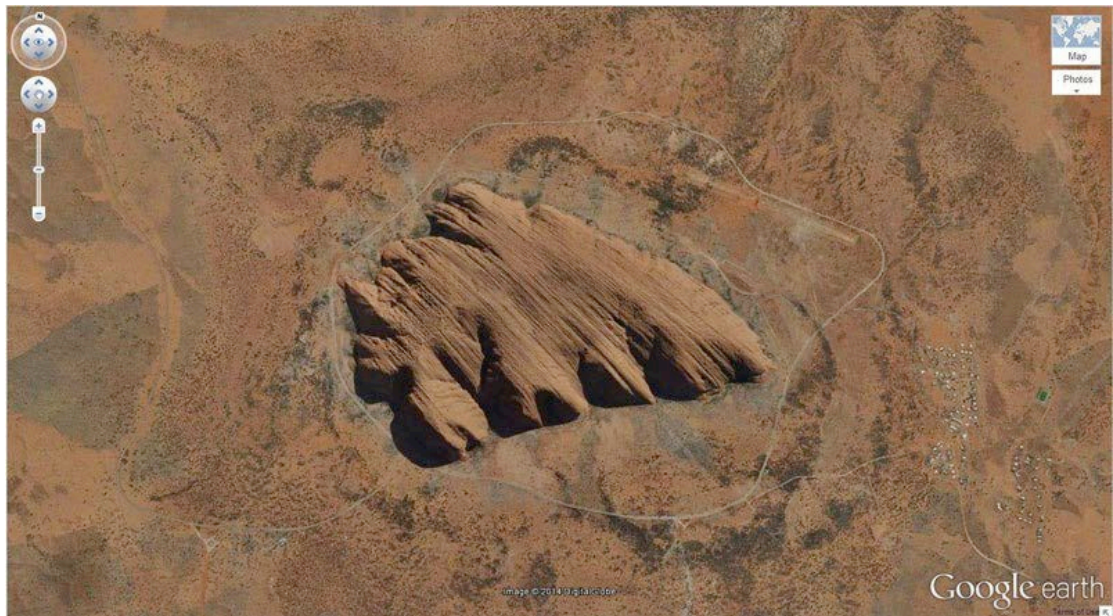


Fig 13.15

An aerial view of Uluru, in Australia's Northern Territory, provide a surprising picture of its depth and scale, compared to the much more popular lateral view of the ancient rock formation (2016).

Image: <http://traveloutbackaustralia.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/uluru-place-names.jpg>

Fig 13.16

Google Street View often circumvents realistic representation to include paeans to popular cultural icons or ideas. Here, the Stig character from popular TV show *Top Gear* appears at the side of the road next to Loch Ness in 2013.

Image: http://digitalspyuk.cdnds.net/13/51/768x442/gallery_tech-the-stig-google-maps-screenshot.jpg

Fig 13.17

A Google Maps view of Stone Henge in 2016, revealing its proximity to tourist facilities, car parks and conveniences (none of which are usually shown in tourist photos of the site).

Image: <https://www.google.com.au/maps/place/Stonehenge/@51.1796521,-1.8288007,426m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m5!3m4!1s0x4873e63b850af611:0x979170e2bcd3d2dd!8m2!3d51.178882!4d-1.826215>

Fig. 13.18

Closer to home, this photograph of a man riding a penny-farthing bicycle with a stuffed platypus in the back tray has gone viral. It was taken by a Street View Vehicle on Marine Parade in Perth, Western Australia in 2009.

Image: http://prod.static9.net.au/_media/images/2012/2/2/sbk-article-8412605-0202-bikestreetview-sp.ashx?mw=640&mh=360&bg=black

Fig 13.19

The Viennese art collective Gelitin spent five years fabricating a pink woollen stuffed rabbit, 200 ft long and 20 ft tall. The gigantic child's toy was placed on top of a hill called Colletto Fava in the Piedmont region of Italy in 2005, where it is slowly deteriorating from exposure (Stephen 2014). When seen on Google Earth or Maps, the rabbit appears almost to have been dropped and forgotten by some giant. These images show the installation in 2008 and 2016 respectively, and reveal the extent of its deterioration.

2008 Image: http://www.gelitin.net/mambo/images/stories/diverses/hase_digi.jpg

2016 Image: <http://s1.dmcdn.net/E4LJz/x240-epV.jpg>

Fig 13.20

A Google Street View screenshot of Prada Marfa, a permanent art installation by Elmgreen and Dragset which simulates a Prada couture boutique on the side of a remote highway in Texas, U.S.A. (north of the city of Marfa). The edifice was installed in 2005 and has been left to deteriorate ever since (this image is from 2013).

Images: <http://www.atlasobscura.com/places/prada-marfa>

Episode Fourteen

The Agency of the Artist in the Digital Landscape
Artistic Selection

Appropriation

Journeying

Notes from the Artist

The Agency of the Artist in the Digital Landscape

Google Earth, Maps and Street View equip users with an unprecedented ability to observe and traverse the world in digital proxy, while simultaneously subjected to its limitations on editing, removing, altering and generating any of its imagery. Artists working in this digital arena distinguish their activities from those of other, non-artist users by developing their artistic role as an agent of selection. Artists co-opt the processes of cropping, framing and searching the digital landscape as their methodology, and present documentation and narration of their virtual journeys as artwork. Cultural geographer J. Nicholas Entrikin describes this model using the term “geographical agent”. He says: “human geographies... examine the role and position of the active subject who interprets the world through narrative, performances, and graphical representation” (Entrikin 2011, 91).

Artists working in this manner exercise their geographical agency by employing techniques such as selection, omission, appropriation, collection, collage, simulation and virtual exploration. In her book on site-specific art, Miwon Kwon writes that such methods respond to a contemporary, digitally enhanced world in which artists “*provide... rather than produce... aesthetic, often “critical-artistic” services*” (Kwon 2004, 50; orig. italics). Below I will discuss artists who use the vast digital landscape as source material for creating collections of found images; and others who use it as a virtual arena within which to play out constructed, part-serendipitous narratives of their own devising. In each of these practices, the artist appropriates the *user* role as a way to develop artwork.

Artistic Selection

The ability to select particular views from within sprawling landscapes is often regarded as a skill particular to artists: “when aerial photographers deliberately seek out, frame and create pattern rather than seeing their work as serving purely documentary purposes, they approach the conventional realms of art,” relate cultural geographers Denis Cosgrove and William Fox (Cosgrove & Fox 2010,100). In this stereotype, nature is a “ready reservoir” containing both interesting and uninteresting

views, which artists are uniquely able to distinguish from one another (Kwon 2004, 55).

Montreal-based artist John Rafman asserts his abilities as a practitioner trained in the art of locating and curating found images. Rafman has spent years trawling Google Street View for his ongoing blog and photographic project *9-eyes*. Virtually traversing this vast network of imagery, the artist flexes his subjective artistic judgment to collect scenes for the series, which often tend towards dramatic or absurd subjects¹. The selected scenes, showing sites Rafman hasn't visited, and moments long past, are printed without further alteration (Figs. 14.1-2).

Fig. 14.1 Jon Rafman, A screenshot from the artist's online, ongoing *9-Eyes* project.

Image: http://25.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_lvb6cuRL8e1qzun8oo1_1280.jpg

Rafman's technique of distilling a vast landscape into several unrelated pictures resonates with earlier, offline landscape art traditions, in which artists would conceptualise the natural world as a wealth of potential images². Art historian David Wade Chambers writes "We often choose to focus on those aspects of the view we deem 'picturesque', a word which originally referred to a fit subject for painting... but which has come to mean simply 'pretty as a picture'" (Wade Chambers 1982, 24). This account of viewership would suggest that Google users are perpetually framing and discarding potential pictures, adjusting the frame and zoom to encapsulate everything required to satisfy their viewing needs.

"The part of the process that makes it my work is in training and reframing the images," Rafman says. "By reintroducing the human gaze, I reassert the importance, the aqueous of the individual" (Rafman 2010, 17). The worthiness of any particular scene wholly depends on the artist; art historian Malcolm Andrews describes how

¹ Rafman's collected imagery is certainly comparable to the collections of natural historians before 1900, such as Aldrovandi or Serini (see *Episode Two: Multiplicity and Creative Administration*) whose specimens were appreciated for the way that they represented and evoke the novelty, danger or wonder of the natural world.

² That is, rather than their ontological statuses as ecosystem, site, place, home, resource and so on.

each artist passes judgement on what constitutes a “good view” by “preferring one aspect of the countryside to another... selecting and editing, suppressing or subordinating some visual information in favour of promoting other features” (Andrews 1999, 3). The documentation of online activity (like *9-Eyes*) can reveal otherwise invisible artistic choices, tastes and objectives (Fig. 14.3). Screenshots, which function as documentary photographs of digital experiences, “expose the inner eye” of the artist because they “mirror not the world so much as our way of seeing it,” says photography theorist Liz Wells (Wells 2011, 51).

Fig. 14.3 Jon Rafman, *A858, Eilean Siar, United Kingdom*, 2011, archival pigment print, 101.6 x 162.6 cm

Image gallery: <http://9-eyes.com/>

Appropriation

Artists who work with geolocation imagery may collect, omit and include images according to their own desire to build a narrative, appropriating a vast, unruly geographical database to their own end. While their screenshots may seem to be repurposed slices of objectively documented geography, new media theorist Leon Gurevitch suspects rather that they merely document the artist’s own “curated encounter with Google Earth” (Gurevitch 2014, 100). Such projects constitute a new kind of appropriation art, in which portions of Google’s visual landscape can be exhibited as original artworks. “With this new evolutionary stage comes a new crop of thorny intellectual-property issues,” observes reporter Scott Indrisek. “Since the artists using Google technology have obviously not produced the digital source material they’re employing, how can they claim the work they make is their own?” (Indrisek 2010, 17).

Appropriation, however, implies a re-contextualisation of source material, of making an image one’s own by presenting it in such a way that other meanings are suggested. In my work, Google’s digital landscape is transformed by being noticed, selected and painted by me and nobody else: by being subject to my artistic focus and shown in the context of a gallery, a collection of paintings and a miscellany of

interesting images. In this manner, I can appropriate geolocation imagery to play out my own artistic construction of world landscape.

The Milanese new media artist Elena Radice addressed this concern when describing her series *Abstract Season Changes* (Fig. 14.4), in which she located juxtaposition errors on Google Earth and exhibited them as enlarged prints³. She disambiguates between the content of the artworks, and the artistic process by which they arrived in a gallery, saying “I’m not trying to affirm my authorship over the pictures I shot around Google Maps in themselves. Authorship is in the complete process, from the shot to the installation view” (Radice 2012, 1).

Fig. 14.4 Elena Radice, *Abstract Season Changes*, 2012, digital print, installation view

Image gallery: <http://abstractseasonchanges.tumblr.com/>

Radice’s disinterest in claiming Google’s content as her own is even more compelling when one discovers she is not alone: Berlin-based artist Daniel Schwarz created an almost identical series entitled *Juxtapose*, also in 2012 (Fig. 14.5).

Fig. 14.5 Daniel Schwarz, an image from the series *Juxtapose*, 2012, digital print

Image gallery: <https://danielschwarz.cc/works/juxtapose>

Neither Radice nor Schwarz appear concerned that this substantial overlap might jeopardise the value or originality of their work, as Radice describes:

I wasn’t so surprised to discover the artwork of Daniel Schwarz who is working, more or less at the same time, on the same type of issues... We were born in the same year, and I guess that the approach of our generation will be one that is not too scared to lose copyrights over artworks, working

³ See *Episode Eleven: A Parade of Errors* for an in-depth description of the kind of imaging inconsistency in the Google Earth landscape that Radice focuses on.

with digital tools and mediums in the same natural way we handle a spoon to eat soup. (Radice 2012, 2)⁴

Though their methods and exhibitions are almost identical, Radice and Schwarz each see their work as the product of unique biographical selection processes, fundamentally defined by personal variations in aesthetic taste and observational habits. Though the work I exhibit in the gallery is painted, I too perform this process of artistic agency during my virtual explorations of Google Maps, balancing serendipitous wayfinding with a careful application of aesthetic judgement, framing, and the slow building of a collection of images that together might tell my viewers something about the wonders of world geography as it is reflected in the digital landscape.

Journeying

When artists working with geolocation imagery posture themselves as artist-explorers, documentation of their virtual exploration often becomes a core component of the artwork viewers encounter. I too adopted documentation methods associated with *actual* geographical exploration, such as “preliminary sketches and drawings, field notes, instructions on installation procedures” (Kwon 2004, 33). In this way, my personal routes through a highly impersonal digital geography were plotted and retold as unique phenomenological experiences.

Reflecting on his series of discovered screenshots (Fig. 14.6), artist Clement Valla regards his online travels as inimitable: “[I] cast myself as a tourist in the temporal and virtual space – a space that exists digitally for a moment, and may perhaps never be reconstituted again by any computer” (Valla 2012b, 3). Virtual journeying evokes many aspects of physical journeying, and for artists, the latter is an ample reservoir of techniques and tradition that can be applied online.

⁴ English is Radice’s second language. This citation has not been edited from its original form on Radice’s website.

Fig. 14.6 Clement Valla, *Switzerland 3*, 2010, Google Earth screenshot

Image gallery: <http://www.postcards-from-google-earth.com/>

The gap between a journey enacted online and one made in nature is a topic I have received questions about on multiple occasions during this study: public talk attendees have wondered aloud how it is that I can be interested enough in a distant location to research and make artwork about it, yet haven't felt the impetus to *just go there* (these comments usually insinuate that my work is unfinished because I did not *resolve* my curiosity about a site with an *actual* visit)⁵. In fact, there are several artists who have created work thusly, whose projects begin by describing some *wanderlust*, before either disproving or confirming their suspicions and imaginings with travel⁶.

The series *Virtually There* by Andreas Ruthauskas is a forthright test of the difference between seeing online and seeing in person. The artist captured a series of images from Google Earth that depicted views of hiking trails in Alberta and the Rocky Mountains (Fig. 14.7), before setting off to complete residencies at each site. Ruthauskas hiked into the mountains and recreated each screenshot in person, using a medium-format camera (Fig. 14.8). Though *Virtually There* would likely have nullified those questions I so often receive about the comparative value of actual versus virtual experiences, Ruthauskas infers an experiential equivalence between his online and physical journeys, describing his second, physical journeys as “re-enactments” (Ruthauskas 2009, 1). He does not claim that they are qualitatively the

⁵ There is a strong academic discourse surrounding the impact of digital technologies on actual tourism, its trends and progress. The reporter Tom Chivers has been critical of the impact Google and Yelp have had on driving all online researchers to the same information, and therefore the same locations, and of the tendency for online research to “take away the magic of seeing it for real for the first time” (Chivers 2013, 4). Conversely, cultural geographer John Wylie argues, “landscape provokes travel” (Wylie 2007, 1330). These travel-related commentaries, dealing predominantly with issues of the authenticity of travel experiences and scenic wonder, provide an interesting parallel field to this exegesis, but will not be dealt with further herein.

⁶ For her 2013 project *Round-the-world Print* Perth-based printmaker Susanna Castleden went on a three-week international journey via Bermuda, recording frottage impressions of textured surfaces in her surroundings along the way (Castleden 2013). Perth-based collaborative duo Shannon Calcott and Carly Lynch based their 2014 exhibition *Hope & Mirage* on a field trip to Esperance, W.A., which neither had visited and both felt frustrated by not being able to explore and experience while there (they got lost and were unable to find a boat to get out to an island they'd thoroughly romanticised before they arrived) (Lynch 2014).

same, but that they are both able to provide similarly valuable insights into the way that landscapes are sought out, seen and interpreted.

Fig. 14.7 Andreas Ruthauskas, *Virtually There*, N 45° 28' 34" W 73° 37' 18", 2009, C-Print, 76 x 114

Fig. 14.8 Andreas Ruthauskas, *Virtually There*, N 51° 20' 54" W 116° 12' 26", 2009, C-Print, 76 x 114

Image gallery: <http://www.andreasrutkauskas.com/virtually-there/>

My thesis is not concerned with whether digital journeying can teach one about the outside world or whether it might seem paltry when compared with the scenic wonders of the great outdoors. My thesis seeks to know the impact of seeing digital landscapes regularly in everyday life, and how they, not physical sites, might impact upon artmaking. This is how I came to develop the underscoring premise of my exhibition *Wilderness User*. For this exhibition, I ensured that any inclination to *live out* my online research in the physical world was foiled: I only researched locations that were practicably inaccessible to me. These were wilderness areas that I would not, for a variety of reasons, be able to travel to in person: my *only* access to them would be digital⁷. Similarly, in the exhibition *Internet Explorer*, I depict a large number of islands, many of which are private, uninhabited or unconnected to any commercial transportation. Using inaccessible locations as a subject effectively enclosed my field of research around the digital landscape, affirming the importance of critically engaging with digital geography and simulated journeys. Artist and writer Peter Halley describes an artistic purpose very similar to that which I adopted for these exhibitions:

If indeed the post-industrialist world is characterized by signs that simulate rather than represent, how can an artist communicate this situation? Is it possible to represent a simulation? If not, it only remains for the artist to engage in the practice of simulation himself or herself... the practice of simulation by the artist can be seen as an endorsement of the culture of simulacra. (Halley 1983, 102)

⁷ See *Episode Five: Wilderness User* for a full description of these wilderness locations.

In my practice, the “endorsement” Halley describes is not an unconditional promotion of Google’s interfaces over physical travel, but an assertion that their impact is of such significance as to warrant an undistracted critical and artistic evaluation (one that doesn’t require validation by physical travel) (Halley 1983, 102). I thereby promote the cultural value of Google’s geolocation interfaces for developing a sense of global connectedness, appreciation of geographical difference and for creative, original manipulation by artists as an arena to test out narratives about landscape, globalism, ecology, and many other ideas.

Notes from the Artist

Thus, we move towards the landscape picture to begin to explore, and there, just on the far side of the threshold, tucked into the foreground inside the frame, the artist may be sitting, absorbed in recording the scene that is being revealed to us for the first time, and we move past him [sic] into new country. (Andrews 1999, 77)

The intermediary role of a landscape artist as Malcolm Andrews describes it above is a characterisation with lasting popular currency. In this model, artwork is not simply the result of the artist’s handiwork, but of their observational and interpretive abilities, and prefigures art historian Jane Harmon’s description of the “artist/cartographer [who] is the enabler, subverter, and documenter of experience” (Harmon 2009, 16). My practice is patently mono-perspectival, as I share my experience of the digital landscape with viewers, via artworks marked by my singular preferences (for the antique, novel, plural, etc.).

By translating processed-based studio work into the subject of an artistic narrative, artists like myself can present their *research* as *artwork*. Andrews ponders, “The ‘art’ issues from the ‘work’, so why not concentrate on the work processes themselves?” (Andrews 1999, 204). My visible “work processes” include repurposed scientific research processes, such as taking documentary screenshots, making sketches, collecting imagery and going on virtual expeditions (Andrews 1999, 204).

My art objects are relics or remembrances of artistic fieldwork (Fig. 14.11), which render my methodology visible in the gallery, and my commentary accompanies it, as explanatory (and occasionally prescriptive) captions, titles or found text. This narration is not simply descriptive, but attempts to reveal something of the cultural context and significance of the landscapes presented, to label and critically engage with the digital processes at work upon them. Arts writer Abby Cunnane has argued that the artistic construction of “site” as a subject in landscape art has recently come to involve research, exchange and “narrative”: “this expanded definition of site could be read in parallel with technological developments: there is an obvious link to be made here with the navigation of virtual space, through which one travels transitively, site after site, and self-directed” (Cunnane 2012, 5).

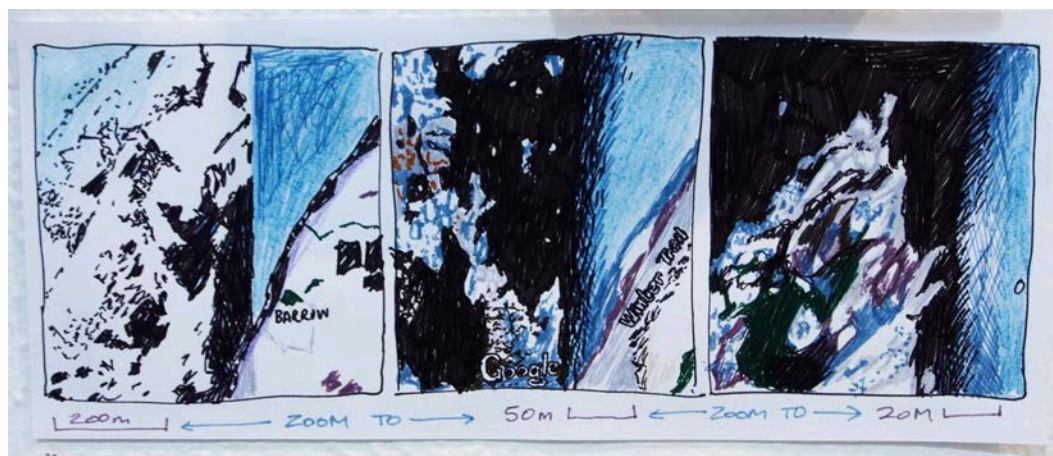


Fig. 14.9 Sheridan Coleman, *Barrow Zoom Study*, 2014, marker on paper, 20 x 8.5 cm

Narration in my practice takes an overt, textual form. Many works incorporate labels or notes in my own words (as in Fig. 14.9), while others quote the language of geolocation interfaces to describe the written commands, place names, search commands and cartographic terminology which rules the navigation and codification of Google’s geolocation interfaces (e.g. Fig. 14.10).



Fig. 14.10 Sheridan Coleman, *Predictive Bouve...*, 2015, acrylic on MDF, 13 x 7 cm

Narration can function to label a process or part of the visual landscape, providing it with a provenance that might be of interest to the viewer; however just as often it also helps to identify the wide gap between expectation and online results. Narration in this sense is a form of textual mapping not simply of site but of the sometimes-flawed process of trying to connect with and explore site⁸.

To ascribe notes and labels to artwork is to give narrative precedence to creative processes such as “visualizing, abstracting, imagining, inventing, pretending, storytelling, re-presenting and ceaselessly reinterpreting things” (Ede, 2005, p2). To make these processes visible to viewers (revealing how a painting’s subject was located, or what category determined a set of paintings (Fig. 14.11)) is to chronicle the impact and integration of geolocation interfaces on art production.

⁸ The cultural theorist Meike Bal has discussed narrative as a cross-disciplinary tool, not confined to the telling of fictional stories. Central to her definition is the presence of the voice of the narrative agent, of a fabula (set of essential ingredients for the story to function, eg. *Cinderella* might work without a pumpkin, but slippers of some kind are essential), and a chronological sequence. By satisfying these core concepts yet narrating popular online experiences, my work can recount a specific narrative about online journeying as part of a wide and shared cultural phenomenon (Bal 1999).



Fig 14.11 Sheridan Coleman, studio documentation: paintings of small islands with lighthouses on them, painted from Google Maps, 2016, Acrylic on foam, 4 x 4 cm eac

Google Earth exemplifies the contemporary theory that landscape is culturally determined by its viewers. Google centralises the user, affording them a personalised kind of interactivity, perspectival centrality and extended vision. Artists piggyback upon these subjective structures, in order to emphasise their agency as skilled practitioners, narrators and virtual explorers; who select, edit, collect, and build narratives; criticise breakdowns in the system; and interpret landscape imagery for the viewership of ordinary (non-artist) users. This account of subjectivity aligns with new media theorist Alexander Galloway’s assertion that new media, particularly landscape technologies, creates a new ontological model in which neither the individual (or user, or artist) nor the landscape can be separated from the condition of viewership: “the self becomes a viewing self, and the world becomes a world viewed” (Galloway 2010, 277).

Episode Fifteen

The Landscape Portal

Ann Friedberg & the Virtual Window

Trompe l'oeil

Landscapes on Screen

Hand-held

Artist Interventions

The Browser Window

Miniature

The Landscape Portal

With land, nature and *the view* as subjects, the genre of Western landscape art offers the simulation of a portal onto another (whether derivative or imagined) place, from an interior setting (a gallery, home, etc.). It follows to bisect landscape representations into two components: landscape imagery, and the format that contains it. Thus defined, landscape binary pairs are evident everywhere: a painted waterfall in a frame; a nature documentary on TV; a map on a smartphone; moss in a terrarium. Landscape paintings, windows and Google Earth are all combinations of imagery and format, offering a gateway to an alternative landscape, whilst also delimiting and containing its visible features.

In this Episode, I will examine the way that the format or framing of a landscape image influences the viewing practices it engenders and the values and attitudes it might invite. This will be followed by a discussion of the viewing practices engendered by contemporary Internet-enabled devices that support Google Earth, and some artists who contemplate these effects.

Ann Friedberg & *The Virtual Window*

We know the world by what we see: through a window, a frame, on a screen. As we spend more of our time staring into the frames of movies, television, computers, hand-held displays – “windows” full of moving images, text, icons and 3-D graphics – how the world is framed may be as important as what is contained within that frame. (Friedberg 2006, 1)

In 2006, a year after the launch of Google Maps, visual culture historian and author Ann Friedberg anticipated a surge in the use of Internet-enabled, screen-faced devices in the urban West. Her book *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft* charts the ongoing human impulse to create simulative representations of nature and landscape, through which viewers might visually penetrate beyond their immediate surroundings. Friedberg does not distinguish between a browser window, cinema screen, landscape painting or windowpane – all are predicated on the desire to be *here*

whilst enjoying the view of *there*. “The window is also a frame, a proscenium: its edges hold a view in place. The window reduced the outside to a two-dimensional surface; the window becomes a screen” (Friedberg 2006, 1).

The influence of format or medium on how we access and understand the content of a landscape image, Friedberg contends, is immutable (Friedberg 2006). Some of the concepts she introduces are; the way that format imposes itself upon the meaning of an image; the way that format informs or invites particular viewing practices; and the difference between looking at or looking through an image’s surface.

The term *virtual window* is useful for this Episode, in which I will discuss historical landscape, my landscape artworks and Google’s geolocation interfaces as equivalent in their roles as landscape portals, but different in how they invite contextually different viewing practices.

A favourite illustration of these issues, trotted out in not a few landscape art texts, is Rene Magritte’s *La Condition Humaine* (Fig. 15.1). Magritte painted sundry images of this sort, in which the boundaries between representation, reality and construction deliberately overlap: both the landscape, and the landscape painting, are painted.

Fig. 15.1 Rene Magritte, *La Condition Humaine*, 1933, oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm

Image:

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/1/1f/Ren%C3%A9_Magritte_The_Human_Condition.jpg

Borders of all kinds are described by cultural geographer Edward S. Casey as “two-dimensional [margins] that surround the primary image, the boundary of a concept [which] concerns its limit of meaning or use” (Casey 2011, 72). Magritte’s painting and most other landscape representations (including the Google Earth interface) are configured to suggest that the landscape shown is continuous and vast, as though it persists unseen beyond the edges of the canvas, frame or browser. “Art here prevents us from seeing nature: it physically impedes our view of what the window allows us

to glimpse,” explains art historian Malcolm Andrews (Andrews 1999, 127). This is a truism. Only the imagination can fill in what has been cut off by edge of the image.

The oil paintings of New Hampshire artist Jeremy Miranda constitute a playful, contemporary narration of these ideas, better serving a GPS, Wi-Fi and 5G reliant culture. Like Magritte, Miranda inserts rather traditional landscape art scenery into complex spatial constructions in which rooms, wilderness and perspective are uncannily interwoven. Digital screens populate his paintings (Figs. 15.2-4), providing novel portals from one world into another and integrating landscape imagery into still life arrangements. The ocean landscape in *Vista*, (Fig. 15.2), might be seen through a window, cinema screen or mural. There’s no one answer, and viewers might consider all three, yet it’s *all* part of the painting.

Fig. 15.2 Jeremy Miranda, *Vista*, 2012, oil on canvas, dimensions n.a.

Image: <http://jeremymiranda.com/2012/>

Miranda chronicles the multiplication of screen-like formats in common use, each with its own characteristics and conventions, but all potential landscape portals. He reminds us that regardless of whether an island landscape appears in an artwork, on a computer or on TV, we are always looking *through* to another place as much as we are looking *at* a representation, with all that its format implies. Language and media theorist Christine Masters Jach echoes this line of thinking: “digital art is no more virtual than painting is” (Masters Jach 2011, 62).

Fig. 15.3 Jeremy Miranda, *Untitled*, 2013, oil on canvas, dimensions n.a.

Image: <http://jeremymiranda.com/2013/>

Fig. 15.4 Jeremy Miranda, *Contact*, 2011, oil on canvas, dimensions n.a.

Image: <http://jeremymiranda.com/2011/>

Much landscape artwork can be described as *trompe l'oeil*: figurative images that beguile viewers to look *through* the picture plane (Fig. 15.5). What does it mean to look at landscape in this way? Immediately, the tactile senses of taste, touch, smell and sound are disengaged, and experience is narrowed to sight alone. Staring into landscape portals is a cerebral, contemplative practice. Providing “insight into another world, time, place or way of thinking” (Dempsey 2006, 8) as much as a reverie of distant lands. Today, this kind of synthetic, illusory landscape is realised voluptuously by Google Earth, a massive *trompe l'oeil* construction which casts one’s mind upon other civilisations, lands and times.

Fig. 15.5 Paolo Veronese, fresco in Villa Barbaro, Maser, Italy, 1560-1561, fresco

Image: <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/99/35/b3/9935b388bf3e8515c6a423f836467294.jpg>

The breadth of this range of viewing modes is amplified by the inconsistent functionality of Google Maps: it is designed to convey useful information in a simple and convenient format, yet it is strewn with imperfections and errors. Users develop the ability to read this visual language, distinguishing landscape imagery from the system of representation itself (whether it is performing as intended or not). Just like hand-painted landscapes might show us a new site whilst also obscuring some of its details behind the artist’s painterly expression, so too does Google simultaneously reveal and obscure the world outside the screen.

Art historian Joan Schwartz describes the possibility of movement between both states of viewership:

Are we wearing the hat of a Ruskinian art critic looking *at* the surface of the canvas, primarily interested in this painted landscape as a visual image, a form with an emphasis on pictorial qualities? Or shall we don the cap of Ruskin’s geographer to look *through* the painting on the easel to the scene beyond, using it as a record of landscape elements, a surrogate for first-hand observation to study the nature of field and forest? (Schwartz 2011, 229)

Whether one is more likely to approach a landscape image as a constructed artefact, or to fix the imagination upon the image's contents often depends on framing (in both senses). My series *The Virtual Window* (Fig. 15.6) measured the impact of stereotypically decorative gilt frames on the landscapes they presented. Each work was a scale model of a domestic interior, decked with miniature furniture and working light fittings. Inside these small rooms, I hung my tiny landscape paintings in ornate frames.



Fig. 15.6 Sheridan Coleman, *The Virtual Window (1-5)*, 2012, mixed media and electrics on wooden mounts, dimensions variable

This work was conceived in reply to a scene from *Wallace and Gromit*, an animation filmed on handmade miniature sets. The show's dioramic sets require the signification of objects, rather than their perfect, scaled-down incarnations. For example, hair might be made of cotton wool; fencing constructed from pop-sticks. The show's sets were littered with objects that *signified* landscape paintings, rather than constituted landscape artworks (Fig. 15.7). These landscapes appeared incorporated with the frames that contained them, constituting a landscape art *object* rather than a simulative portal to a distant site.

Fig. 15.7 A landscape painting in the background in *Wallace & Gromit: The Wrong Trousers*

Image: <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/45/56/ef/4556effe1e5dcdd853c07ea83bea58ad.jpg>

The Virtual Window foregrounded this mergence of painting with frame, using hand-painted, figurative landscapes, each barely spanning five centimetres (Fig. 15.8). Though my paintings were 1:1 in scale (in that they were original, full-sized objects and not reproductions of larger originals), their bulky frames rendered them the *accoutrements* of domestic spaces, hardly inspiring imagined travel into far-off places. One might even, as Andrews has, suggest that: “The frame literally defines the landscape, both in the sense of determining its outer limits and in the sense that landscape is constituted by its frame: it wouldn’t be a landscape without that frame” (Andrews 1999, 5).

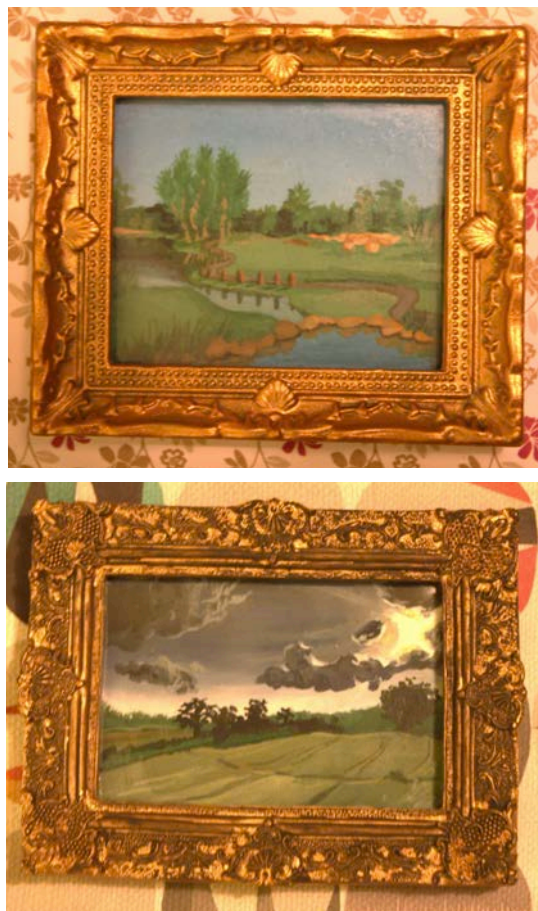


Fig. 15.8 Sheridan Coleman, *The Virtual Window* (two details), 2012, mixed media and electrics on wooden mounts

Landscapes on Screen

Being interfaces that must be accessed via the Internet, Google Earth, Maps and Street View are tethered to their electronic formats. These digital points of access to landscape imagery represent an increasing share of the way that landscape images are consumed on a daily basis (Fig. 15.9). Certainly it would not be unfair to claim that the smartphone has supplanted the landscape painting as the primary means for consuming landscape images in the urban West¹. New media artist and writer Jan McCormack even goes so far as to lament that “mediated [that is, simulated or constructed] experiences of nature are, for many people, their *only* experience of a wild and uncontrolled from of natural environment” (McCormack 2001, 26).

Fig. 15.9 Google Earth app version 7.1 on an HTC android mobile phone

Image: <http://www.droid-life.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/DSC05904.jpg>

Eminent cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove has indicated that landscape images may have become more popular as cities grew, became industrialised, and the countryside became less a feature of urban life than an occasional indulgence or holiday destination (Cosgrove 1984). These circumstances have come to define the role of landscape art as it is popularly understood in cities, as: “an image of the outside world adorning the walls of our indoor world. Those whose rooms do not allow window views of rural distances can acquire printed or photographic versions to supply what is missing: arguably, the more we live in towns, the higher the value of such artificial views of what we can no longer see through our windows” (Andrews 1999, 107).

Home desktop computers, laptops, tablets and smartphones are the primary access points for Google’s geolocation software. These objects represent continuations of some characteristics of historical landscape art such as a consistent use of rectangular supports (familarly, ‘landscape’ rather than ‘portrait’ orientation), and being

¹ Indeed, it would hardly be the case that landscape painting even directly preceded digital geolocation interfaces as the foremost access point to landscape imagery.

surrounded by borders or frames. The interior, sedentary and urban viewing practices encouraged by digital frames inform the construction of contemporary attitudes about landscape. I argue that nature and landscape are considered scenic, exterior sites, whose aesthetic beauty and natural wholesomeness (*à la* ‘getting back to nature’) is widely believed to be a valuable antidote to busy, urban lifestyles. The more the urban individual connects to and identifies with landscape via digital technology, the less corrupted they might feel, or appear, by their distance from nature. And so nature today is, as it has been for so long, stuffed into a rectangle and regarded from a distance (Fig 15.10).

Fig. 15.10 A graphic illustrating the rectangular formats of five Apple products

Image: <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/96/74/80/96748021ef7a72e76c734f778dbee5f5.jpg>

Hand-held

Both Google Maps and the Claude glass² before it (Fig. 11-12) enable the user to adjust the viewing angle, to frame up the landscape by hand, directly manoeuvring the landscape image by coming into contact with the screen³. Today’s smartphones require familiarity with a sizeable vocabulary of gestures (Fig. 13): tap, double tap, swipe, pinch, rotate, slide, and so on (Windows, 2015). Semiotic theorist Alois Riegl writes of *Nahsicht*, or ‘haptic vision’: a viewing condition in which an image is so close to the viewer that they cannot help but begin to engage their tactile senses (Araujo 2014). When Google Maps is accessed using a touchscreen, this state of haptic vision is fully realised. The viewer/user is implicated in a close and physical viewing relationship with the landscape imagery, a state of intimacy that would be

² Named after the French picturesque landscape painter Claude Lorrain, a Claude glass is a device that was popular in the 18th Century. It was most often a small, convex, dark coloured and oval-shaped piece of glass, which was designed to be carried on walks or whilst sitting near a garden or field. “The convex nature of the mirror shaped a large scene into a neat view” and the tinted glass would produce a painterly, or a historical appearance (not unlike today’s image-editing filters on Instagram or PhotoShop, which add false dust marks, sepia colouring, dog ears or vignette edges to contemporary photographs) (*Drawing Techniques* 2015, 1).

³ Even Google Earth, which beyond its tiny, ratio-locked screen appears to be continuous and unlimited, is at all times facilitating the framing and “perceptual management” of its landscape images (Masters Jach 2011, 37).

unthinkable if the same image were presented in a gallery, where passivity and not touching are more often the rule.

Fig. 15.11 A Claude glass in use by artist Ingrid Pollard, 2013

Image: <http://varc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/WALK-ON-Framing-1.jpg>

Fig. 15.12 Google Maps in use on a mobile

Image: http://www.technologynewsextra.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/google-maps-iphone-theverge-1_2040.jpg

Fig. 15.13 Microsoft Windows instructions for using a touchscreen

Image:

https://msdnshared.blob.core.windows.net/media/MSDNBlogsFS/prod.evol.blogs.msdn.com/CommunityServer.Blogs.Components.WeblogFiles/00/00/01/29/43/metablogapi/8407.Touch-gestures_66B138A4.jpg

Artistic Interventions on the Landscape Portal

Many artists have sought to play with and challenge what they perceive as an arbitrary or a perfunctory acceptance of the limits of format and framing. “...Since our cell phones now double as compasses, and the most advanced cartographers are Google Cars, digitally-generated maps provide excellent material for artistic manipulation,” says arts reporter Megan Youngblood (Youngblood 2013, 2). As visual theorist Jacob Lillemose has said, “today, the computer is a common artistic medium, both as a tool and as an artistic medium in itself. As such, immateriality [software and digitized data] are evidently a relevant notion” (Lillemose 2006, 117).

Brooklyn-based new media artist Clement Valla's artwork challenges the underlying algorithms that construct digital landscape imagery. In his series, *The Universal Texture* (Figs. 15.14-15), Valla looks to Google Earth, and the processes that the interface employs to render its landscape three-dimensional. The artist explains,

3D images like those in Google Earth are generated through a process called texture mapping... a texture map is a flat image that gets applied to the surface of a 3D model, like a label on a can or a bottle of soda... we see *through* a photograph, we look *at* a texture. (Valla 2012b, 1)

Having identified the simulative purpose of the texture mapping technique, Valla breaks it down, testing our ability to look both at and through a landscape image once it has been distorted. Valla applied his prints to the corners and protrusions of the gallery, not the undulations or prominences of the hills and towers shown in the landscapes. "We are looking at two spaces simultaneously," he says (Valla 2012b, 2).

Fig. 15.14 Clement Valla, *The Universal Texture*, 2012,
inkjet print on canvas, 111 x 233 cm

Image: <http://clementvalla.com/work/the-universal-texture/>

Fig. 15.15 Clement Valla, *The Universal Texture*, 2012,
inkjet print on canvas, 111 x 233 cm

Image: <http://clementvalla.com/work/the-universal-texture/>

The Browser Window

Google Earth is a continuous whole earth representation⁴, yet it can only depict one 'screenful' of imagery at a time, effectively dividing the world landscape up into tiny, rectangular pieces. One can zoom in or out on a view to include more or less

⁴ 'Whole earth representation' is a trope described in greater detail in *Episode Seven: Getting to know Google*.

information, but even these activities are limited by the size of the screen and device being used.

Breaking large geographies up into small pieces in order to visually process them is a strategy at the heart of creative administration. I see this process as having an acute visual relationship to the way that Internet browsers are structured, allowing for multiple overlapping windows to be open at the same time. In works such as *Bouvet Island Homepage* (Fig. 15.16), I translate the structure of an Internet search visually, showing overlapping fields of content, each containing a different visual language (map, photo, diagram, text) to composite together the disparate entities which may be in play simultaneously inside the digital frame of a computer. Characterising the online search by its multiplicity, this work steps out of the format of a bounded screen, allowing all windows to be visible at once and collaging together disparate viewing practices.



Fig. 15.16 Sheridan Coleman, *Bouvet Island Homepage*, 2015, foam core, acrylic, photographs, 22 x 14 cm

The French new media artist Camille Henrot used a similar approach in her video work *Grosse Fatigue* (Fig. 15.17), a far-reaching treatise on the recording and interpretation of natural history. The frenetic video depicts window after window being opened on a computer screen, each containing video footage relating to the study of natural history and the storage of specimens and archival information. As each new window appears, it partly obscures the previous one, yet all the information is ‘open’ at once, coexisting and instantly retrievable from virtual space behind the screen.

Fig. 15.17 Camille Henrot, *Grosse Fatigue*, 2013, video, colour, sound, 13 minutes

Video: <https://vimeo.com/86174818>

The 17th Century split-view painting of Jacob van der Croos indicates that this practice of simultaneously viewed images predates the digital. The Dutch painter has toyed with the rectangularity and single-point perspective of a conventional landscape painting by multiplying the number of views seen at once. His *View of the Hague* (Fig. 15.18), (like this exegesis) gives the viewer a full and rich picture of a whole area through its division into small pieces, whilst also presenting a compelling visual rhythm of their own. This structure defines the meaning and impact of the artwork as much as the quality of painting or choice of subject.

Fig. 15.18 Jacob van der Croos, *View of the Hague Surrounded by Twenty Spots in the Surroundings*, 1663, oil on board, 87.5 x 160 cm

Image:

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ea/Jacob_van_der_Croos%2C_Gezicht_op_Den_Haag_omgeven_door_twintig_gezichten_in_de_omgeving.jpg

As they zoom in to the digital landscape on Google Earth, “viewers lose sight of Earth as a “whole” and see limited areas” (Masters Jach 2011, 4). The screen limits the field of vision such that one must employ one level of magnification at a time: the bigger picture, or the finer details. My work *Macquarie Island Zoom* (Fig. 15.19)⁵, literally

⁵ Shown here installed among other works for the exhibition *Wilderness User*.

projects itself away from the format of the screen to circumvent this limitation. The subject of Macquarie Island can be seen in twelve different levels of resolution at the same time, each view printed on glossy photographic paper to recreate the sheen of a computer screen, and stacked so as to protrude into the gallery space. This landscape image cascades from one screenful to the next, not limited to one field, but seen as a sequence of impressions that together provide an overall understanding of Macquarie Island.

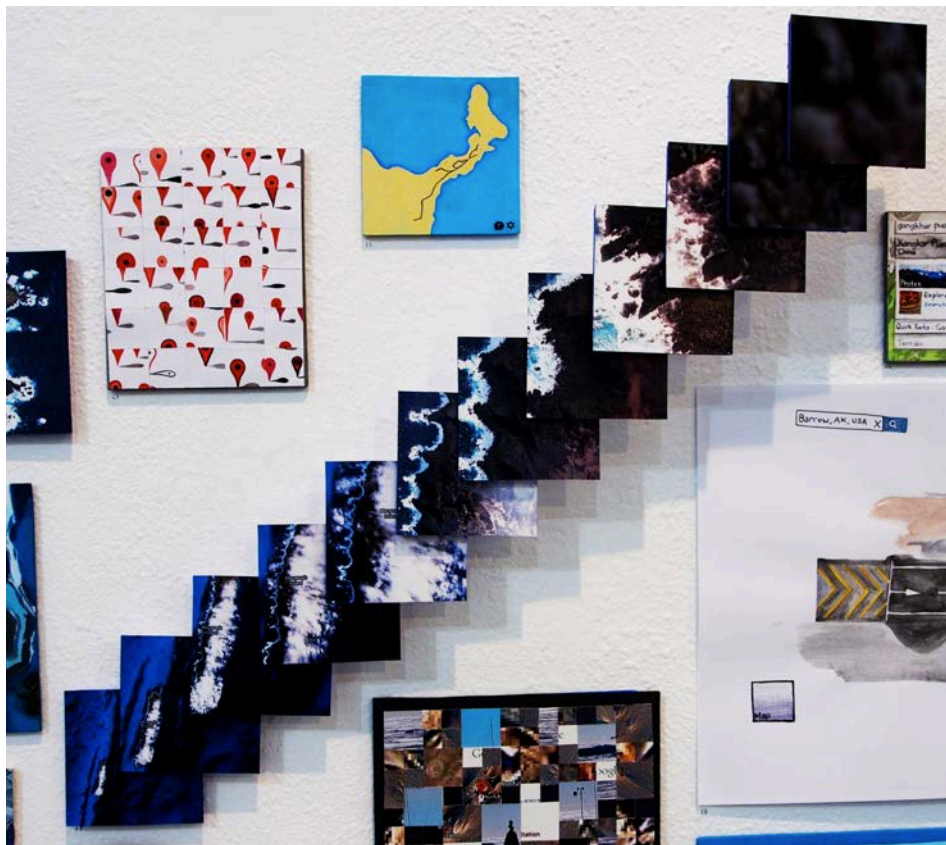


Fig. 15.19 Sheridan Coleman, *Macquarie Island Zoom*, 2015, photographs, acrylic, foamcore (install view)

Miniature

A great deal of my artwork is small in scale. This allows me to produce large quantities of brief engagements with particular digital landscape subjects, and to produce collections of work that can be presented as a rich and complex installation⁶.

⁶ This characteristic of my practice is developed in *Episode Two: Multiplicity and Creative Administration*.

Scale in my work is also in part a response to the manner in which contemporary landscape imaging media has become scaled-down, so that users must always select between viewing “the whole versus the details” (Harmon 2009, 15).

In her writing on the miniature in *On Longing*, literary and cultural theorist Susan Stewart regards miniature objects as encyclopaedic, in that they concentrate large realities into much smaller models. “This is the daydream of the microscope,” she writes. “The daydream of life inside life, of significance multiplied infinitely *within* significance” (Stewart 1993, 54; orig. italics). Miniaturisation is not diminishment, but intensification, and in my practice it allows small paintings to stand in for world geography, natural history and the narrative of virtual journeying, without losing the ability to express the scale or complexity of these subjects.

Complexity in my artwork is expressed in the subdivision of categories, and in ever-finer brushwork and close attention between my eye and hand at my studio table as I paint. In Steven Millhauser’s short story *In the Reign of Harad IV*, a court miniature maker carves artworks that resemble the infinite complexity of the universe:

From the pit of a cherry he carved a ring of thirty-six elephants, each holding in its trunk the tail of the elephant before it. Every elephant possessed a pair of nearly invisible tusks carved out of ivory. One day, the Master presented to the King a saucer on which stood an inverted ebony thimble. When the King picked up the thimble, he discovered beneath it a meticulous reproduction of the northwest wing of his toy palace, with twenty-six rooms fully furnished, including a writing table with ostrich-claw legs and a gold birdcage containing a nightingale. (Millhauser 2006, n.p.)

In Millhauser’s vision, artwork becomes *better* able to represent the world—reality—as it gets smaller. In both Stewart and Millhauser’s words, there is a centralisation of the issue of information overload, and both offer the solution of subdivision and organisation. These things are deep at the heart of creative administration. My choice to work in miniature is an expression of the desire (or the inability to relinquish the

daydream) of representing the whole world at once. Creative administration is a framework that works best when its contents are small, and painting (as a medium fundamentally workable at almost any scale) is the miniaturisation tool. It's about fitting in as much as possible.

Small or miniature artworks are evocative. As manually driven animals, humans maintain a state of constant estimation of the objects around them: are they heavy, light, warm, cold, rough, soft? Small artworks invite the contemplation of a physical relationship between viewer and object. Even if a miniature artwork is hung on a wall beside a 'no touching' label, it is possible to imagine how it might feel to handle, touch, carry or pocket it: a thought unlikely to occur to someone viewing a painting that towers over them. Large artworks often impel viewers to step back, distancing themselves so as to view the work in its entirety. Small works foster intimacy; one must lean in, entering an engaged physical proximity in order to begin to see the work (Fig. 15.20). One cannot discern them at any distance.



Fig. 15.20 Installation documentation from the exhibitions *Wilderness User*, 2015 (Left), and *Midnight, Forecastle*, 2016 (right)

Small items also may also evoke a sense of preciousness. Their littleness makes them easily lost among larger or multiple things: they must be conveyed, stored and protected in casings, boxes and pouches. Value can be derived from the difficulty of constructing small objects, their fiddly-ness, complexity or fragility. They are often harder to make, and they represent a mode of production that Susan Stewart calls

“antithetical” to industrial labour: “production by the hand, a production that is unique and authentic” (Stewart 1993, 68).

Further, many small objects derive value from the possibility of their having been carried and treasured by another person (e.g. a ring, letter or flask). Perhaps it is no coincidence that many are able to fit their most valued tokens of significant personal experiences in as small a space as a shoebox or desk drawer: it is easy to interpret small objects as the keepsakes or emblems of large and complex histories or narratives⁷.

At the same time, small items are made using minimal materials and might often be associated with affordability or disposability. This is whence the link between the miniature and the multiple in my practice appears. Little things can be collected: they cost less money and occupy less space; and might therefore be proliferated according to the preferences or aims of the owner. All of these emotive qualities are present and keen within my artworks and in the way I install them in a gallery.

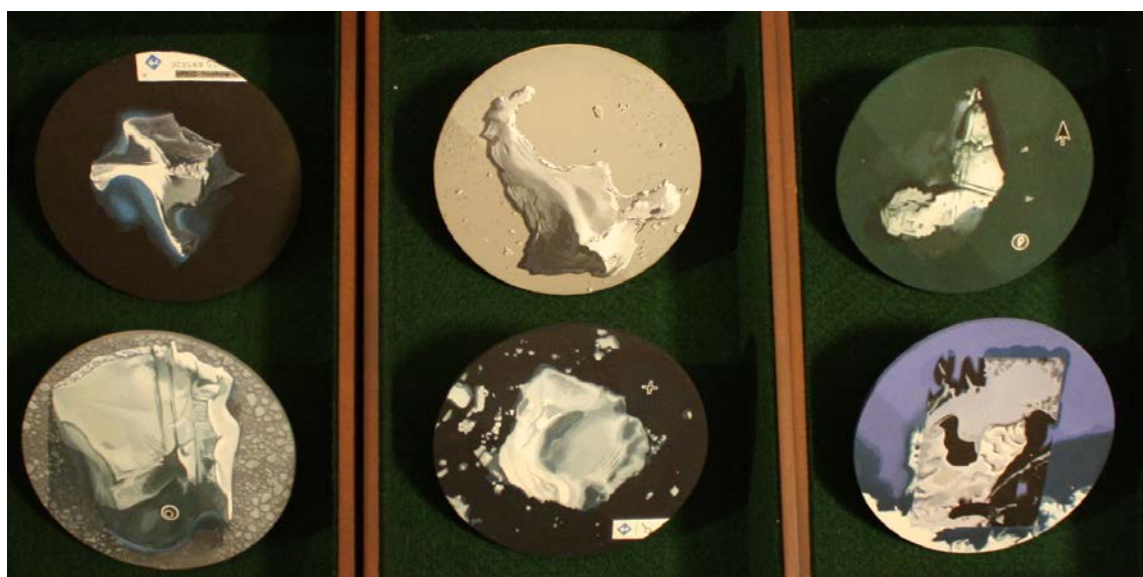


Fig. 15.21 Sheridan Coleman, detail of *Temporary Islands (Icebergs)*, 2016, acrylic on board, felt-lined display drawers

⁷ “A bundle of your own love letters, a record sleeve, and the bus ticket that took you to the first, momentous, encounter, all make up your own, personal archive” (Steedman 2008, n.p.).

An abiding resolve in my practice is to provide an experience for my audience which is intimate, generous and which feels precious. With miniaturisation, I coax certain viewing practices from my audience: they must draw in close, becoming physically implicated in viewing and exploring the work; viewing the pieces one at a time as though unpacking a box of keepsakes. I eschew any semblance of a ‘conventional’, institutional gallery installation (big works; huge spaces between them; bright lights; monumentality)⁸ and instead cultivate a warm and rich experience, providing extensive detail, evoking preciousness, and allowing for an almost unlimited array of viewer experiences according to the different rhythms or narratives or threads viewers might develop as they (actually or imaginatively) handle all the tiny objects. I wish my audience to feel they have been rifling through a personal collection, each object proffering its own little history⁹.

Conclusion

In *Art, Emergence and the Computational Sublime*, Jan McCormack observes, “most visual images since the Renaissance have been surrounded by frames” of some description—whether a gilt baroque contrivance or the slick black border of an iPad—which exercises “its own aesthetic devices over the image that it contains” (McCormack 2001, 27). The format and framing of landscape images play a crucial role in determining how landscape images are accessed, and influences the manner in which they are interpreted.

Format can regulate the permeability of the image surface for the viewer, whether one looks at or through the image. This is a powerful effect, as it balances the meaning of the artwork with its subject; and understanding of its meaning with appreciation of its artifice. The ascendant popularity of digital devices in recent decades has continued to iterate the viewing modes of historical landscape painting, such as rectangularity and interiority; as well as introduced a set of newer viewing practices unique to the digital screen, such as tactility and overlapping windows.

⁸ My words.

⁹ This discussion is utterly intertwined with some of the cultural practices already discussed in this Episode, such as archives, museological displays, and the intimacy of painting. See *Episode Two: Multiplicity and Creative Administration*, and *Episode Ten: Landscape and the Brush* for more.

The viewing practices engendered by these formats have become influential upon artists who investigate the nature of contemporary landscape imagery, and for those wishing to disrupt the hold that digital formats have on broader cultural behaviours. Artworks that critique the viewing practices instated by digital viewing formats are "re-complicating our view of [the world], but always making us consider the everyday ways in which we relate to it" (Cosgrove & Fox 2010, 138).

Format cannot be muted, and so it has been carefully adapted in my practice, to evaluate the particular viewing practices associated with geolocation interfaces. Like Jeremy Miranda's work transposes an age-old discussion about artifice and painting for a time of newer media, my work also aims to expound the contemporary state of landscape viewership—speaking its visual language, sensitive to the new viewing habits it encourages and looking as far afield in its subjects as such digital connectivity and technology allows.

Episode Sixteen

Dialogues with Satellites

Privacy

My Grandparents' House

My Celebrity Encounter

Dialogues with Satellites

In a 2013 episode of Universal TV show *Parks and Recreation*, the protagonist, councilwoman Leslie Knope, poses boldly during a publicity stunt in a street in her electorate. A nearby journalist asks why she is putting on airs when there is no attending photographer to take her picture. Knope points at the sky, explaining, “Google Earth. Always taking pics [sic]” (*Women in Garbage* 2013). Whilst a quip, this dialogue reveals the widespread cultural assumption that what happens on street level might be captured photographically from above by the constant yet disinterested gaze of Google satellite cameras.

Indeed, as flight and aerial photography have extended their reach, there are increased instances of the Earth’s surface being altered in order to engage an aerial gaze. Since the annual cycling race *le Tour de France* was first filmed by helicopter, it has become a tradition for trackside villagers to construct decorative displays and messages along the race route to be discerned from aerial cameras (Fig. 16.2). With less propriety, Rory McInnes, an English schoolboy, painted a 60-foot-long phallus on the roof of his parents’ house in Hungerford (Fig. 16.1). Reportedly, a documentary about Google Earth had inspired his understanding that his rooftop could have a potentially worldwide audience. The graffiti became a brief light news sensation, although despite the viewing power of Google Earth, it took a whole year for the painting to be discovered and popularised (Weaver 2009, 1).

Fig. 16.1 A roadside display by French farmers using moving tractors and words spelled out with bales of hay, during the 2011 *le Tour de France*

Image: <https://i.ytimg.com/vi/XCXqyrZcUWQ/maxresdefault.jpg>

Fig. 16.2 Schoolboy Rory McInnes’ rooftop painting on his parents’ roof, near Hungerford in the U.K.

Image: http://i.telegraph.co.uk/multimedia/archive/01371/house3_1371584a.jpg

One persistent claim made by those commenting upon the cultural impact of Google's geolocation tools is that its wide use has caused a conceptual interaction, or porousness, between physical sites and digital landscape. This can be seen in the way that the relationship between the digital world and the land it represents has become increasingly self-referential. Leon Gurevitch analyses the example of a group of students carving (yet another) phallus into their school soccer pitch:

[The phallus constitutes] a literal action performed upon the world for the specific reason that it will appear behind the screen and within the computer-generated composite model. Here action is driven by representation at the same time as representation is the result of action... The school sports ground cases (there are now many) recall the aerial artwork created for the Gods by the Nazca people (in what is now Southern Peru) that could not be seen from ground level. In these instances, however, the **scopic capabilities** of Google Earth allow the viewer to become the very gods that look down on their own creations. (Gurevitch 2014, 93)

Gurevitch's example of land being altered in order to affect its corresponding image in Google's digital landscape has been replicated many times over in various formats, ranging from a crop circle shaped like the Mozilla Firefox web browser logo (Fig 16.3) (Fletcher 2009); to the theft of valuable lead from church roofs in the UK¹ (Cosgrove & Fox 2010; Ormsby 2010); or the dramatic axe murder tableau impersonated by a pair of Edinburgh mechanics in 2012 (Fig 16.4) (which police investigated) (Willis 2014).

Fig. 16.3 Oregon State University Linux Users group created this Mozilla Firefox Internet browser logo in a corn field near Salem, U.S.A. in 2006 to celebrate the browser's 50 millionth download

Image: http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2009/09/photogalleries/crop-circles-pictures/images/primary/090915-05-firefox-crop-circle_big.jpg

¹ Church of England officials claimed that they witnessed a spike in the number of burglaries of expensive metals (like lead and copper) from historic church roofs after the release of Google Earth, according to Commissioner of church estates Tony Baldry (Collins 2010).

Fig 16.4 Mechanics Dan Thomson and Gary Kerr staging an axe murder scene on Google Street View's imagery of Giles Street in Edinburgh, in August 2012

Image: http://i.telegraph.co.uk/multimedia/archive/02928/GOOGLEMURDER_2928333b.jpg

These examples indicate a reciprocal cultural dialogue between Google's digital landscape and the landscaping activities of individuals on the ground, which Gurevitch calls "ecology as media" (Gurevitch 2014, 103), proving that the way in which we represent and visualise landscapes can determine how we shape the natural world. In many cases, Google Maps, Earth and Street View are the primary resource for those seeking to research, visualise and even alter the Earth's surface, as well as those seeking to find evidence of that alteration.

Examples are commonplace: my friend Tony, an avid fisherman, recently described to me his preference for an uncommon type of yacht hull manufactured in the 1980s. A hundred or so exist in Perth and many are stored in suburban yards, where they are often underused and deteriorating. Tony uses Google Earth to pinpoint the boats from the air, and then Google Maps to plot a route to the residences, where he (politely) enquires whether the owners might be interested in selling. "The ability to view, manipulate, travel through and generally interact with this digital representation of three-dimensional space proved broadly relevant and triggered a series of adaptations and alternative uses" says sociologist Gretchen Wilkins of the adaptability of geolocation databases for anything from research, to navigation, armchair tourism and even espionage (Wilkins 2010, 2)².

Privacy

It is here important to note that Google does not have *carte blanche* on collecting and presenting imagery: certain content must be redacted or obscured to align with privacy regulation (Fig. 16.5). Concerns over the security of military, government, infrastructure or utilities sites have led to widespread censorship (Henner 2011, 1).

² In their cultural study *Photography and Flight*, Denis Cosgrove and William Fox argue that aerial perspectives on land also generate interest in the aesthetic alteration of previously overlooked surfaces, such as domestic rooftops, just as "companies near airfields used their roofs as advertising signs in the early days of flight" (Cosgrove & Fox 2010, 77-78).

As a result, some sites appear in low resolution or are effaced from the digital landscape, and in countries like Germany, Google only shows out-of-date images and offers private citizens the option to blur out their property (Deshpande 2007; Ho 2011)³.

Fig 16.5 A Google Maps images showing censorship of part of Girona, a popular holiday destination for the wealthy and well-known, in Spain, in 2016.

Image:

<http://4.darkroom.shortlist.com/980/dfa3c57c7d2cbc0408ca0818de62a6b7:b15d5d1d1f2f0390b765e2ce8dfb8595/roses-valley>

Google Earth’s mechanical, but conceivably malicious gaze inspired artist Mishka Henner’s screenshot series *Dutch Landscapes*: “[Governments] exerted considerable influence on suppliers of this imagery to censor sites deemed vital to national security” (Henner 2011, 1). *Dutch Landscapes* documents the unexpectedly attractive polygon-patterned censorship of various depots and barracks in the Netherlands (Fig. 16.6). Already known for environmental interventions like dykes and canals, the Dutch had progressed to *digital* alteration of the fabric of their national landscape, controlling the visibility of its online counterpart. Henner examines not just the privacy anxieties at play, but the aesthetically crafted landscapes they produce, pondering censorship as a creative act.

Fig. 16.6 Mishka Henner, *Staphorst Ammunition Depot* from the series *Dutch Landscapes*, 2011, Digital image captured through Google Earth.

Image gallery: <http://www.mishkahenner.com/>

For some, the difference between **remote sensing** and surveillance is immaterial, and a number of privacy issues have been raised since Google Earth’s launch. “[With] Google, we are at once the surveilled and the individual retinal cells of the

³ Security and censorship measures differ from site to site. The White House rooftop is digitally erased so that security and defence infrastructure is not visible. France’s Reims Air Base is blurred out. Other obscured sites include the homes of actor William Hurt and U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, The European Space Agency headquarters, Shoreham Nuclear Power Plant in New York and The Royal Stables at The Hague in the Netherlands (*Blurred Out* 2008).

surveillant... We are part of a post-geographical, post-national super state... We're citizens, but without rights", writes William Gibson, describing the uninhibited penetration of satellite cameras (Gibson 2010, 2). Private citizens, **uncontacted peoples** of the Arctic and Amazon and high-security military facilities are all equally subject to this gaze, which is reneged only under legal pressure⁴ (*Google Launches* 2013, 2). In 2006, the Quickbird satellite, which supplies images to Google Earth, captured a newly built ballistic missile submarine in Chinese waters (Fig. 16.7), inviting hot debate on the value of geolocation imagery as intelligence and its threat to national security (Kristensen 2007, 1).

Fig. 16.7 Google Earth captured a view of China's new ballistic missile submarine at dock in 2007.

Image: http://images.dailytech.com/nimage/5313_large_ssbm.jpg

More domestically, Google was sued in 2008 by a Pennsylvania couple wishing to establish that the Street View picture of their home was a reckless invasion of their privacy. Language and media theorist Christine Masters Jach explains the cultural paradigm that allowed their case to be thrown out of court: "Google argued that "privacy no longer exists in this age of satellite and aerial imagery." Free access to satellite imagery can be liberating or threatening" (Masters Jach 2011, ii).

A search for my grandparents' house in Street View served to enkindle my own uncertainties. The shadow of a camera-mounted car looms into the otherwise familiar view, evidence of a corporate presence harvesting images of private property (Figs. 16.8-9). My elderly, offline grandparents were not complicit in this, nor likely understood the scope or function of Street View. Google's photographic undertakings invoke the kind of implicit consent at the core of **Social Contract theory**, which states that by living in a society one tacitly agrees to its laws and

⁴ Here one may think of social and utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham's unrealised *Panopticon* project, a proposed penal facility in which all inmates would be kept under equal and constant surveillance. Bentham saw surveillance as a route to convict reform (rather than punishment) and more broadly as a way to motivate people to do the right thing. Bentham acknowledged that privacy must be waived for it to work, and also pre-empted the problem of assigning and regulating the powers of the parties doing the surveillance (which is of even more concern today when surveillance can be recorded) (Bragg et al. 2015; Foucault 1977).

structures⁵ (Brownson 1866). In collecting images, Google asserts its right to pursue photographic representation of the whole planet: by living on Earth, under its cameras, you agree to be photographed⁶. As Jane Harmon points out, “we are thrilled to zoom in on our streets, cities, neighbourhoods and homes, even as we feel disquiet at the power of surveillance systems’ omniscience” (Harmon 2009, 16).

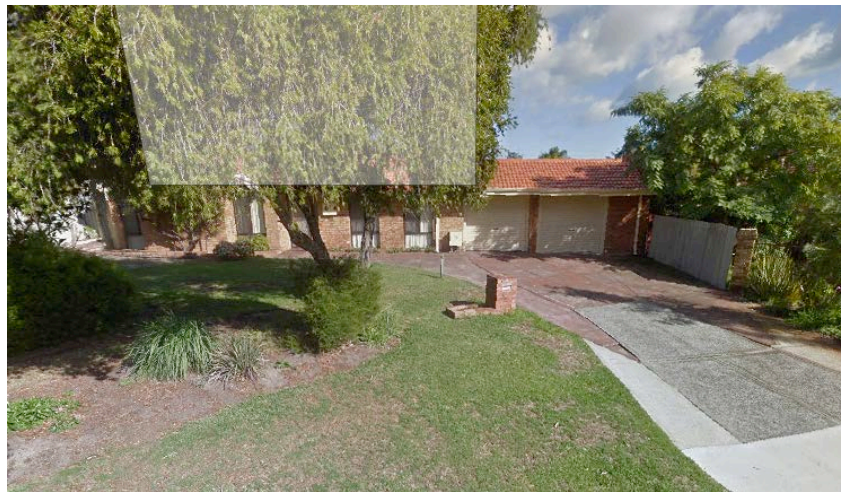


Fig. 16.8 The author’s grandparents’ house caught on Google Street View. Map data: Google



Fig 16.9 The Street View vehicle’s shadow outside my grandparents’ house. Map data: Google

⁵ Social Contract Theory (in brief) implies that from the moment people are born into societies they are party to a reciprocity between society and individual, in which the individual works, pays taxes and is obedient to law and social structures (*et cetera*), and in turn is governed and recipient of services like law enforcement and representation (of the type present in their home society). The system is inherited. Roughly speaking, Social Contract Theory is something of a dampening weapon against arguments such as ‘I do not recognise your authority’. As a corporation, Google does not in essence fit this model, and their interest in some sort of tacitly understood right to create imagery of people and their homes will no doubt be fiercely opposed (Friend n.d.; *Hobbes*’ 2014).

⁶ I have laid out my position on these matters and a fuller description of the implications of Google’s power as a corporate entity and moral responsibilities as a corporate citizen in *Episode Seven: Getting to Know Google*.

Private property is not a focus of my painting, yet the homes, bodies and sacred or private sites of others are embedded in the digital terrain I traverse in my research. I do not intend to be intrusive or disrespectful, yet digital world exploration is a key trope in my practice. I balance this tension by employing an artistic gaze, creatively interpreting the imagery so that it no longer principally narrates the site it represents, but contributes to a wider thesis about the splendour of world geography and the wonder of being able to explore it from afar.

In February 2015, I had my own encounter with Google's physical presence in my local environs. Leaving a workshop on William Street in Northbridge, W.A., I spotted a Google vehicle turning a corner ahead of me, and managed to photograph it (Fig. 16.10). Some months later, I located my likeness on Google Street View, captured on the street corner even as I rushed to record my own evidence of Google's presence (Fig 16.11). I had become part of the visual landscape of Google Maps. Though perhaps the image of my person in my home city is unremarkable, William Street is only one point within a huge network of geographical documentation, linked, if even distantly, to any other street in the world⁷.

⁷ In case you are wondering, spotting and photographing a Google Street View car when you have been researching Google technology for half a decade is more or less equivalent to meeting and getting an autograph from your favourite author or film star. I felt I had chanced upon the tangible agent of some corporate celebrity aura.



Fig. 16.10 A photograph I took of the Google Street View vehicle in Francis Street in Northbridge, W.A. in February 2015

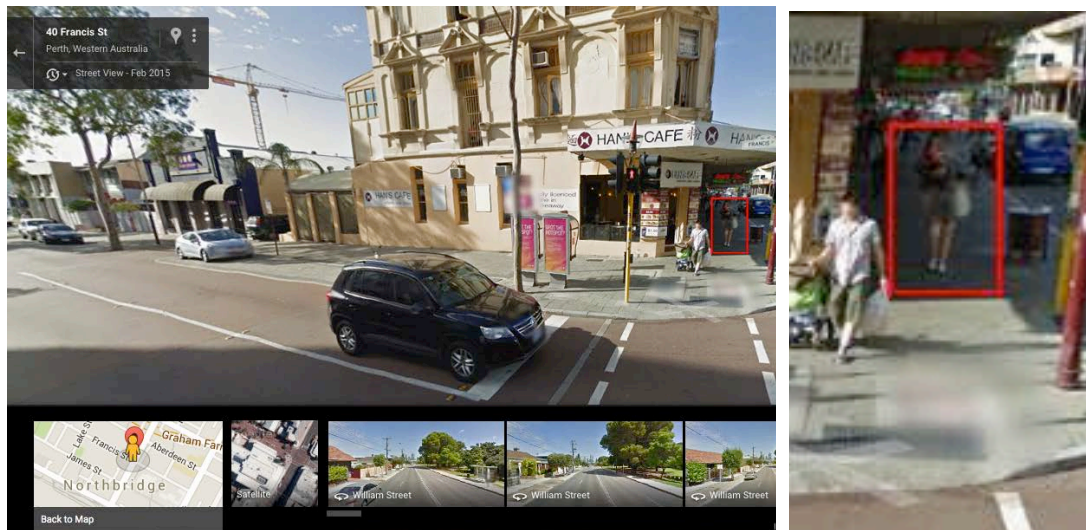


Fig. 16.11 A screenshot of Google Street View imagery of the corner of William and Francis Streets in Northbridge, W.A. - the red box marks my position. Map data: Google

Conclusion

[Developments in Google Maps and Earth] have considerable implications for the way in which we approach, interact with and construe the earth as both a ‘virtual’ object and simultaneously a complex ‘physical’ entity. Notably, notions of the ‘virtual’ earth are not separate and distinct in this account from a ‘physical’ counterpart but instead are increasingly inseparable. (Gurevitch 2014, 89)

Leon Gurevitch has here foretold a relationship between Earth and *Google’s* Earth that was not at first anticipated. Where initially, developers, users and commentators alike thought of Google Earth as a kind of pocket-sized model of the world, today the increasingly reflexive development of landscape culture, processes, representations and land-shaping activities describe a more integrated relationship. Gurevitch seems to suggest that Google Earth is now *part of* world geography. It is unclear whether Gurevitch is describing something similar to [Plato’s realm of perfect forms](#)⁸ or simply describing a fading ability for Google users to see the world *as it is* (uninfluenced by the cultural residue of landscape projects like Google). Either way, his conclusions foreground a massive trend towards understanding world geography in terms of what it means to the individual, just as we already design landscape artworks around a viewer, Google Maps around a user, brochures around a tourist, parks around strollers, or a map around a traveller.

⁸ Inasmuch as Google Earth might be called a ‘meta’ version of the Earth, which in its immateriality embodies high ideals or concepts that the physical Earth cannot due to its turbulence and chaos.

Episode Seventeen

Oh! To be an Explorer!

Preface

An Increasingly Known World

Waterfalls, Swastikas & Guardians

Combing the Coastlines

Oh, To Be An Explorer!

Preface

As this exegesis deals with the legacy and future of landscape art as a genre that was founded and developed in the West, it is important to acknowledge that the cartographic artworks and landscape works which foreground this Episode on exploration and discovery are similarly rooted in a Western tradition: imperialism. Exploration and discovery, as it was undertaken prior to the 19th Century, by Holland, Great Britain, France, Portugal and Spain in particular, is a complex and problematic history. Colonial and imperial narratives too often involve the displacement of Indigenous peoples and cultures, violence and the apprehension of lands and resources. Much of the *discovery* of this time hinged upon a Western cultural attitude that saw non-Western cultures as part of the landscape, rather than civilisations alternative to their own, and the settlement and discovery of new lands was predicated on a blurring of the definition of *discovery*: conflating finding a land previously unknown to humans, with finding a land previously unknown to the West.

In Australia, the misuse of *terra nullius* by the British Crown (to claim land that was inhabited by diverse and numerous Aboriginal populations) is a well-known and deeply regretted example of this kind of self-entitlement¹. Colonial artefacts, artworks and archives have therefore “been much scrutinized as a source of *imperial power*” (Steedman 2008; orig. italics). This is a contested history, and while I cannot recount it fully here, I wish to acknowledge the cultural and political issues at play. My interest in antiquated expeditions is confined to the practice of cartographic imaging: of turning land into landscape using artistic, scientific or other disciplinary methodologies. This approach, in line with the subject of the exegesis, centres on studying and representing the landscape, rather than conquering, inhabiting or claiming land. I consider exploration here only in its capacity as a route to

¹ Academic accounts of the conflicts which so often occur at sites of Western settlement in already occupied lands are widespread, and well-known examples from Australian history, such as the incarceration of Indigenous prisoners on Wadjemup (Rottnest Island) in W.A. and the Tasmanian genocide are particularly poignant in my immediate context. Particularly acute insights into these histories can be found in Bain & Rogers’ *Genocide and frontier violence in Australia*; in essays from Griffiths & Trigger’s collection *Disputed Territories*; and in the video work of artist Kate McMillan, which deals with contested W.A. histories (Bain & Rogers 2016; Griffiths & Trigger 2003).

conceptualisation and representation of land and landscape, and not to the historical use of exploration as a way to increase trade, expand empires, claim resources and take enjoyment from exoticism.

An Increasingly Known World

Cartography, the science and practice of creating maps, is a discipline whose foremost pursuits are accuracy and comprehensiveness. The advent and proliferation of satellite aerial photography has sured up the shape of the world, as cartographers converge upon the same world image. Google Earth is the most international (in contribution, availability and representation) version of today's world map. The expansion of Google's various landscape visualisation interfaces is symptomatic of a rapid reduction in uncharted and unphotographed land².

Fig. 17.1 Olaus Magnus, *Carta Marina*, 1572, coloured copper engraving, 52 x 79 cm

Image: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carta_marina#/media/File:Carta_Marina.jpeg

Fig. 17.2 Scandinavia and the Norwegian Sea seen on Google Maps

Image:

https://www.google.com.au/maps?q=norway+maps&rlz=1C5CHFA_enAU709AU709&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj6p6Ox4NPTAhXDIZQKHRkLC3MQ_AUICigB

The development of this stable, digital world map not only signals a peak of globalised, unified science, but I argue, a new cultural era: today, people inhabit a world that they conceive of as thoroughly deciphered. “[Now], no one is going to turn a corner and confront novelty. In the flat landscape there is no place for the undiscovered,” explains historian Lucy Frost (Frost 2004, 54). This is not to say that the world is a wholly known or static entity, but that the days of discovering new continents, undiscovered countries or **uncontacted peoples** are probably over³.

² Today, even the moon, ocean floor and inhospitable mountaintops are becoming digitally visible (Earle 2009; Chivers 2013; Krajick et al. 2011). In 2009, the BBC reported: “Google hopes [the launch of Google Ocean will] take its mapping software a step closer to total coverage of the entire globe” (*Google dives under the sea* 2009, n.p.).

³ This is to say that the terrestrial world has been fundamentally mapped, and new changes are instantly recorded through the practices of remote sensing and satellite photography. The ocean floor

And what a pity that is! Historically, exploration has been a cause for national excitement, giving rise to Eurocentric romances, as heroic individuals surpassed the frontiers of civilisation, sharing their discoveries through photographs, letters, sketches and afterwards, reports and presentations (Macfarlane 2014)⁴. “In the explorer’s journals, landscape was written within a paradigm which embraced a novelty and the experience of surprise in the presence of the unknown, the unmapped” (Frost 2004, 54). Artists too, were routinely employed on voyages at this time, to give vibrant depiction of the lands, flora and fauna being encountered (Bragg *et al.* 2009; Bragg *et al.* 2015). Long has artistic interpretation, narrative and unbridled curiosity about the world been wedded to exploration. In this Episode, I examine the veritable heft of solid knowledge that Google Earth is composed of and ask whether new knowledge, exploration and discovery cannot be drawn from it. Further, I chronicle some of my own forays into this deep geographical archive.

It is difficult to imagine how an exploratory expedition might be carried out in the 21st Century⁵. Yet, as a practice, geographical exploration presents a model for navigating land, and landscape systems, in a meaningful way. This model can be co-opted as an artistic methodology, to create ways through the glut of landscape data on Google Earth.

The championing of **remote sensing** as a path to discovery may appear rather naïve in an age of such freely available information and academic specialisation. And yet, remote sensing has, even recently, proven to be a highly valuable in discovering

and Earth’s core are still very unknown areas of geography, and the land may change due to human construction and environmental fluctuation. It is the era of exploratory voyaging that is over.

⁴ Notwithstanding the havoc visited on local cultures and environments by violence, displacement, land clearing, theft, disease introduction and many other consequences of imperial expansion. It is only the romance of exploration, its production of sentimental and creative artefacts and artworks, and the joy of exploring lands for the first time (for that individual) that is my focus here.

⁵ That is, a terrestrial expedition. The frontiers of extra-terrestrial research, such as the remote robotic journeys of the Mars Rovers and deep-sea unmanned submarines represent today’s shifted and expanded exploratory frontier – one perhaps characterised by the pursuit of understanding humanity’s place on Earth and in the Universe better, as opposed to breaking ground for mass resettlement (having said that, I have no doubt that Elon Musk and SpaceX will establish some kind of Martian residential population in my lifetime).

previously unknown forms and features of many locations. In a post on Google's blog⁶, staff writer Brian McClendon wrote the following:

Professor David Kennedy of the University of Western Australia, [has] used Google Earth to scan thousands of square kilometres in Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Professor Kennedy has discovered ancient tombs and **geoglyphs** dating back at least 2,000 years, all without leaving his desk in Perth. (McClendon 2011, 2)

Kennedy's research is part of a wider project run jointly with Dr. Robert Bewley, called the APAAME, or the Aerial Photographic Archive for Archeology in the Middle East (Fig. 17.3). The project has generated over 70,000 images and maps of areas of architectural interest: known or suspected sites of ancient settlement, travel, trade or activity. Where archaeological discovery was once defined by hands-on work, digging, marking, arranging and dusting, it can now be pursued without coming into direct contact with a site. The instant digital has replaced the laborious disinterring of history, allowing the public to "participate in the excitement" in real time (Warner Marien 2012, 18).

Fig. 17.3 Antiquated constructions in Umm el-Jimal, near Al Mafraq in Jordan, revealed from the air with satellite photography by APAAME in 2009

Image gallery: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/apaame/sets/72157622892717917/>

As a digital mirror reflecting the world, Google Maps integrates shifts and changes in world geography (almost) as they happen. The eruption of volcanoes, erosion of islands, languorous flow of glaciers and oceanic drift of enormous icebergs represent very real and monumental changes to the shape of the Earth, which when photographed arbitrarily by Google and located and viewed by users, can be a source of novelty, discovery and new knowledge. In a series of paintings for my exhibition

⁶ Google's blog is a helpful starting point when looking for information about Google's various interfaces, however it must be noted that its purpose is to celebrate and diarise its own successes. In this instance, the APAAME work described in this article was widely celebrated outside of the blog and its importance was not over-exaggerated therein.

Internet Explorer, I have homed in on several of the world's most recently surfaced islands, which have burst above sea level as a result of submerged volcanic activity in the last century. As seen in Fig. 17.4, I have sorted through the imagery available on Google Maps to find three views of Nishi-no-Shima island: before, during and after its appearance as a significant volcanic island in the Philippine sea, south of Japan.



Fig. 17.4 Sheridan Coleman, *Nishi-no-Shima was born in 1974*, 2016, acrylic on board, 9 x 9 cm each

Not only does this series of paintings celebrate the changing and unpredictable nature of world geography (there will always be something new to explore and learn about), but it also reveals an inbuilt hierarchy of digital landscapes. Google Maps attributes higher or lower value to a segment of imagery by rendering it in higher or lower resolution, allowing closer inspection of its features. High resolution attends an active volcano, more so than a dormant one, which is clearer still than a tract of ocean with a visible seamount beneath the surface⁷. This hierarchy of resolution privileges moments of transformation, activity and phenomena. This allows me to artistically play out a narrative search for the new in the digital landscape, and it also reveals Google's nature as a project invested in presenting parts of the world that are visually impressive or phenomenologically rare. I could venture to infer here that Google desires to present the Earth as awe-inspiring and worthy of preservation; yet

⁷ See *Episode Thirteen: Around the World in Twenty Marvellous Screen Shots* to see other examples of the differing clarity of imagery on Google Maps according to what seems more subjectively notable to whomever (or whatever) sorts each particular tract of imagery.

what I can be *certain* about is that Google Maps informs and responds to shifting cultural projections of the value of different landscapes.

Google Earth is particularly amenable to giving the user a sense of having discovered something for the first time⁸, providing the illusion (or perhaps hope) that other human eyes may have never yet visited parts of the digital landscape. This sensation is certainly borne out by the presence of countless errors and glitches in the fabric of its landscape, which are yet to be located by users or corrected by Google staff.

Digital anomalies are the treasures which artist Emilio Vavarella searches for online. “The places where [the system] breaks down have a mystery all their own,” he says (Vanhemert 2013, 1). They can be uncovered for the first time in Google’s landscape, as they erupt their first and do not exist in the physical world. Digital glitch is unsignposted and can only be discovered by chance. One cannot, for example, type *black hole in Main Street*, and be directed to the image below (Fig. 17.5). Artists like Vavarella discover and collect newly emerging errors in a manner reminiscent of the way an ornithologist might discover and classify new avian subspecies. With each new update of Google Earth, new errors arise and are identified, continuing the promise of discovery in the landscape.

Fig. 17.5 Emilio Vavarella, an image from the series *Report A Problem*, 2013, 100 digital screenshots of errors found in the imagery of Google Street View

Image: <https://i2.wp.com/emiliovavarella.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/n-023.jpg?fit=800%2C500>

Google Earth also makes possible the discovery of new perspectives on known landscapes. Patterns, landforms and phenomena that aren’t perceptible at ground level may be identified for the first time from the air. Google Earth represents a second, aerial perspective from which virtual explorers may discover the Earth anew. In 2007, the US Navy was forced to undertake a US\$600,000 upgrade of one of its

⁸ For more on this concept, see *Episode Nine: The Ascendancy of the User*

buildings after the aerial view of the base, which was available to the public on Google Maps, after it was revealed that the compound was actually shaped like a swastika (Fig. 17.6) (Cosgrove & Fox 2010).

Fig. 17.6 Coronado Naval Amphibious Base in San Diego, USA, as seen on Google Earth

Image: <http://www.micahhanks.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Navy-Base.png>

The movement of ocean currents around the south western point of Mauritius Island has caused the migration of seafloor sands via a channel in the island's sea trough (Mellan 2013). When made visible from the air on Google Earth, it creates an optical illusion: the "underwater waterfall" caused an online sensation on soft news websites and blogs dedicated to natural scenery (e.g. placestoseeinyourlifetime.com; earthporn.com) (Fig. 17.7). Similarly, an unassuming hill formation in Alberta, Canada has earned the moniker 'The Badlands Guardian' in the popular media due to its resemblance to a face in profile (Fig. 17.8) (Griffiths 2014). These views are enabled only recently, since the advent of manned flight, revealing "wholly new perspectives on familiar objects, revealing forms and patterns impossible to see from the ground" (Cosgrove & Fox 2010, 99).

Fig. 17.7 The 'underwater waterfall' at the south western point of Mauritius Island, Moka, Mauritius, 2013

Image: <http://cdn.earthporn.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Absolutely-Stunning-Illusion-of-an-Underwater-Waterfall-in-Mauritius.jpg>

Fig. 17.8 'The Badlands Guardian' as seen on Google Maps, 2014

Image: http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-s377Bs8Jg9w/UGr4m6uskaI/AAAAAAAAADMY/dTIVmi_DiuQ/s1600/IndianHead.gif

Discovery is a slippery concept. It refers at once to personal discoveries (when navigating Google Maps, I discovered a swirl-shape in the ocean: Fig. 17.9), and to instances when an individual finds something previously unknown to humanity. Geographer and historian Tadeusz Rachwal describes the expansive nature of the

concept of discovery: “Discoverers are mapmakers, regardless of whether they discover and name new worlds; new objects; or, like botanists, new species. Certain mental landscapes are also quite evidently areas of discovery” (Rachwal 1999, 89). My discoveries in the digital landscape, new to many and myself, are brought into the gallery as rarefied or novel subjects. As cultural geographer J. Nicholas Entrikin says, this kind of discovery is about finding new meaning as much as finding new sites: “[the] geographical agent acts in the world, either individually or collectively, as a placemaker and transformer of landscapes. Each role draws together subject and object, culture and nature; each transforms space into place and nature into human landscapes” (Entrikin 2011, 91).



Fig. 17.9 Sheridan Coleman, *False Alarm: Boat Wake (?)*, 2013, gouache on MDF, 9 x 9cm

In order to undertake virtual travel, a user must conceptualise the Google Earth interface as a landscape with depth and proportion. The new media theorist Lev Manovich has claimed that navigable space, whether virtual, textual or in a model, exists as a media type and cultural form in its own right (Masters Jach 2011). Interfaces like Google Earth induce users to suspend their doubts about the reality and complexity of navigable space within. It is no coincidence that most users search their own address when first using Google Earth – their conception of the map’s dimensionality and relationship to real space is immediate and almost total (Nuwar 2014).

As BBC reporter Jerry Brotton says, “Maps address an existential question as much as one that’s about orientation and coordinates. We want to find ourselves on the map, but at the same time, we are also outside of the map, rising above the world and looking down” (Brotton 2014). Like the map or diagram, the digital landscape substantiates the human ability to attribute geographical spatiality to 2D images, through an act of imaginative projection. Mapping, contend cultural geographers Denis Cosgrove and William Fox, underpins many non-cartographic processes: “This capacity to picture places might be called the ‘geographical imagination’, and it finds its most immediate graphic expression in maps, plans and architectural drawings” (Cosgrove & Fox 2010, 10).

Combing The Coastlines

Early in my study, I conceived of Google’s digital landscape as analogous in complexity and enormity to the physical geography of the world, to be navigated and made sense of through targeted artistic exercises. With this in mind, I began a project:

This month, I re-read Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*. Melville gives a portrait of 19th Century Nantucket, Massachusetts, in the prime years of its prodigious whaling industry: the water was thick with whales, and ships would effortlessly and regularly come across them (Melville 1851). The density of the sperm whale population therein seems absurd to me, as someone living in 21st Century Australia, when most whale species are critically endangered, and whale hunting is an emotionally charged, political issue (*Status of Whales* 2015; *Whale Species Overview* 2015). The difference between these two paradigms is striking. Where once whales were abundant commodities, today they are rarefied, regarded as jewels of the biological world. (Coleman, unpub. journal entry, 2013)

Unlike the world’s landforms, which had come into sharp focus by the end of the 20th Century, whales had become more elusive, rare and mysterious. I wondered whether this contemporary scarcity was reflected in the digital imagery of Google

Earth, which documents some of the longest whale migration routes (or part thereof)⁹. With no knowledge of whether whales were present in Google Maps imagery, or whether it would be possible to positively identify one, I embarked upon a virtual expedition, with the goal of documenting a whale.

I clicked and dragged myself up the coast at a resolution of 50 to 100 metres; zooming in on and recording shapes in the water that I suspected might be whales or other sea life (though it was largely impossible to know, as in Fig. 17.10). I kept notes, made sketches and collected screenshots, building a collection of images of splashes, reef formations and glitches.



Fig. 17.10 Sheridan Coleman, *Strange Splash North of Geraldton, 4th June, 2013, 7:17pm, 2013*, digital screenshot. Map data: DigitalGlobe, Google

The journeying was undertaken intermittently, my everyday life punctuated by stints of looking, noticing, zooming and moving on. If zoomed in too far, shapes would break up; too close, and they lost all detail. The process was tedious, depending upon marathon-like repetition of computational gestures, documentation and gazing at undifferentiated blue sea. As (then) London Mayor Boris Johnson remarked during the MH370 search in 2014, “it is still a world so vast that an object as unmistakable

⁹ Only the coastal areas of the ocean are represented on Google Maps, and so if whales were to be located, they would be found only in the stretch of water depicted photographically near the shoreline.

as a Boeing 777 – 200 foot long, 200 foot broad and six storeys high can vanish” (Johnson 2014, 1). It became clear that I might never find a whale, or be certain about finding one.

During the course of my search, I came across news that the British Antarctic Survey had espied a pod of Southern Right whales in its satellite imagery of the shallows off Argentina (Fig. 17.11). The article confirmed the gradual decline of whale species since Melville’s time, and the trickiness of positively identifying them from an aerial perspective. The scientists interpreting the imagery used terms like “whale shapes” and “possible whales”, due to the satellite imagery being “far from crystal clear... the satellite system is not perfect. After all, it is possible that a flock of birds or a large rock could be mistaken for a whale” (Netburn 2014, 2).

Fig. 17.11 Photographs of right whales seen from space in 2014

Image:

<http://www.smh.com.au/content/dam/images/3/2/q/q/2/image.related.articleLeadwide.620x349.hvcbj.png/1392353649043.jpg>

Along the way I developed artworks, including a series of paintings entitled *False Alarms*, which focused on the non-whale objects that had attracted my attention. Each was copied from a screenshot in which the water surface seemed disturbed, but could not be clearly identified as a whale, or anything else (Figs. 17.12-13). Recreating the screenshots in paint was in part a way of clarifying their contents, as though translation from pixel to paint would reveal something more patently whale-like. No such clarification occurred, however the artworks testified to the search itself, as images *produced by* exploration.



Fig. 17.12 Sheridan Coleman, *False Alarm along Geraldton Bay*, 2013, gouache on MDF, 11.3 x 9.4 cm



Fig. 17.13 Sheridan Coleman, *False Alarm off Dirk Hartog Island*, 2013, gouache on MDF, 11.3 x 9.4 cm

Eventually, the leviathan emerged, in waters off the coast of Bookara, a small hamlet halfway up the coast of Western Australia (Fig. 17.14).



Fig. 17.14 Sheridan Coleman, *Whale North of Bookara*, 4th June 2013, 7:29pm, 2013, digital screenshot. Map data: DigitalGlobe, Google

Exploration proved to be an effective strategy to managing the glut of visual information on Google Earth, prioritising its forms and features in order of most to least mysterious. I did not merely search for whales or islands, but for experiences of uncertainty and the unknown, within and despite an interface that seemed dedicated to knowing, certainty and definitiveness.

“There has always been art in cartography,” remarked Katherine Harmon in her book *The Map as Art*. Harmon describes the practical methods of mapmakers as analogous to those of landscape artists. Both navigate through the unknown, whether online or in the wilderness, making representations that serve as a passage through an overwhelming and mysterious world geography, giving it meaning and a place

within culture. “Maps by definition are utilitarian, of course; they bear implicit promises of routes into and out of the unknown” (Harmon 2009, 9).

In *Simulacra and Simulation*, French philosopher Jean Baudrillard declares that “territory no longer precedes the maps, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory” (Baudrillard 1981). In my practice, exploration in the digital landscape holds as much possibility of novelty as land exploration does. This is partly due to the context in which my practice operates, in which Google is the most trusted resource for accurate landscape representation. Indeed, “large sections of our species have forgotten how to get from A to B unless their phone points the way” (Chivers 2013, 5)¹⁰. In a culture where novel geographies are discovered online and shared every day (and are just as easily lost or forgotten in the cacophony of the Internet), it is more than possible to have a **neotonous** experience as a virtual explorer.

¹⁰ Counterpoint to any prevalence of cartographic and pinpointing data (be it a street map or the Google Maps app installed on a smartphone), ‘going off route’ is manifest in the practices of artists whose art activities foreground walking, such as the **Situationist** artists who wandered without maps through Paris to force novel experiences; Rebecca Solnit, who purposefully gets herself lost; and Hamish Fulton, whose patterned walking routes defy conventional (A to B) function.

Episode Eighteen

The Landscape of Landscape
Parting Remarks

The Landscape of Landscape

Landscape is a story describing the marks that nature and people make upon one another. It takes place within a terrain that is expanding, rich and continuous. On its surface exist an array of imaginative sites. The cartographic visions of Google Maps, Mercator, and Anaximander are layered one over the other on the ground, in ink and in pixels. Expanses are marked out as wildernesses, private property, frontiers, no-man's lands, nations, warzones, oases and biospheres, their boundaries delimited with firebreaks, dotted lines, impassable cliffs, gilded frames and rabbit proof fences. The place where I live is here, so is the place where you live, and the place you used to live, and the places you will live, alongside Lassiter's Reef, El Dorado and Avalon. It's a fertile place, where vineyards produce wine, oil derricks extract thick grease, waterways are commanded in aqueducts and plastic bags biodegrade underground. Its ice flows reveal deep time, Ötzi and the migration of seashells to mountaintops. Its forests shiver with the laughter of witches, the drone of chainsaws, the silence of poisonous fungi and the noises made by trees falling unwitnessed. Wetlands titter, swamps pulse, deserts whisper, waterfalls purge, glaciers croak. The air is thick with ball lightning, prevailing winds, fruit fly and o-zone holes, but one can find shelter in a cave, seed library, aquarium, physic garden or grotto. The landscape's phenomena can be measured with telescopes, Cyanometers, Claude Glasses, satellite cameras, dowsing rods and the passage of the stars. Flowerbeds photosynthesise, volcanoes erupt, poets stroll, children go missing, ground is consecrated, wells are cursed, seasons pass, mountains erode and figs taste marvellous. Some provinces are painted in oils, other regions are drawn in notebooks, beamed through cathode rays, printed in brochures, learned by heart or shelved in the Dewey System under .900 Geography & Travel or .710 Area Planning & Landscape Architecture. Here, one can salute the frozen ghost of George Mallory, glimpse Humphrey Repton raking leaves, sniff blood-and-bone with Peter Cundall, high five Captain Planet or take a turn with Caspar David Friedrich, Robert Macfarlane, Mary Anning or Denis Cosgrove. The landscape is criss-crossed with footpaths, flight paths, ley lines, intertextual references, centuries, borders, high roads and 4WD tracks leading over the edge of the Earth. One is subject to climate change, sea change, squatter's rights, colonisation, replanting, the sublime, customs inspectors and dieback. Though one never departs the landscape of landscape, do visit the gift shop, which is stocked with souvenir postcards, computer screenshots, holiday anecdotes, David Attenborough documentaries, sunburn, all-natural green smoothies, bird whistles, safari tickets, bonsai and noxious weeds.

Parting Remarks

Dear Reader,

In retiring from this exegesis, or rather, having thumbed through the innards of an old catalogue box, I have traversed a wide and fertile cultural field. I began by chipping into the word landscape and very soon found myself amidst an avalanche of material, into which almost anything, it seemed, could topple. I have drawn an equivalence, or more precisely, found a common value and sense of imagining, between the various *things* contained within—books, ideas, technologies, artworks (mine and others'), traditions, histories and fictions, which together form that green, outside-y thing: landscape. My catalogue box, this exegesis, the many little paintings—this *work*—is an assemblage of things, like a list or an index, that when opened, points outside itself, in a great many directions, somewhat explosively.

Creative administration, as a way of collecting research material and interpreting it into artwork and writing, has been my way of accommodating the diversity and expansiveness of landscape in all its forms. It has allowed me to speak about Google Maps and Ulisse Aldrovandi in the same context; to harmonise between paint and pixels; to consider satellite technology and contemporary art as equal contributors to the culture of landscape. Under the banner of creative administration, painting, reading, writing and virtual journeying form a continuous artistic engagement.

This is a way of working which issues from a certain temperament: a tendency to want to exhaust a thread of enquiry (yet seeming always to select threads which branch out exponentially); of cultivating a ballooning archive; of inventing rituals (handwriting labels, painting in miniature, wrapping works for transport in brown paper) which insist on the preciousness, excitement and intimacy in receiving and making sense of all this, *this landscape stuff*.

The condition that allows me to venture so far and wide is in part that of being an artist: of stepping into other disciplines in pursuit of a complex artistic subject. It is also the multifarious nature of landscape, and the lifestyle I've been living for the last fifteen years (the age of Google Maps): mapping my movements from a

rectangle in my pocket, peeking into uninhabited islands late at night, and being so aware of, and able to find out about, the oddities, rarities and superlatives that world geography has to offer.

I'm not alone either. In working exegetically, I have encountered those artists who are my neighbours in this borderland between digital geolocation technology and landscape art. They haven't always been there. When I began this study I was more solitary than I expected to be. I was reading articles that suggested that definitive statements about the impact of Google's geolocation interfaces were imminent, being observed and articulated at that moment. Artwork, articles and commentary then came into view as I worked, situating my practice alongside and within a prolonged initial wave of creative response to the presence of this digital way of seeing and understanding land.

This early inquiry into how digital landscapes influence conceptualisations of Earth and of nature will only proliferate. Already it is clear that Google Maps and similar tools have advanced landscape as an experience subjugated by the will and convenience of a user (more often than a patron or viewer); this kind of landscape is liberally supplemented by links to commerce or comment; they are searchable; semi-photographic; touchable and zoomable; they hybridise aerial and simulative perspectives; and perhaps most profoundly, they accompany device owners constantly. Perhaps Borges' 1 to 1 map is already realised if I can watch myself (represented by a blue dot) coast down the highway in real time, knowing that the pale green triangle on the screen ahead will (if I look up), soon manifest as a suburban parklet.

These shifts are colossal, such that they reach beyond the screen, beyond the field of technology and new media. The thing is, I once grew tired of Dropbox and sent a draft to my supervisors through Australia Post, I listen to Classic FM 2 while I work and I didn't own a smartphone until more than a year into this research project. I'm not sure that I am what anybody has in mind when envisaging an artist working with digital material, but the reality is that as a youngish person, living in an Australian city, at this moment; digital landscape is a part of my everyday life. It colours the way I see, understand and interpret landscape, and this will only become true of more

and more people in the future. Thus, in mapping out the landscape of landscape for this study, I found that my penchant for dusty museums, natural history and armchair travel were thrillingly interrelated with Google Maps, the Universal Texture, Whole Earth Representation and The Ground Truth.

This study gazettes the capacity for digital technology to be poetic, and describes how the Google geolocation phenomenon brims over with idealism, global vision and imaginative representation. It is as much a contemporary landscape (creating meaning, representing land, signifying nature), as a cultural geography text or one of my paintings. This is evident in Google's evolution from an interface which served limited, explicit functions into an entity of its own, with countless and accumulating uses: archaeological surveys, rescue missions, climate change studies, journey planning, surveillance operations, political billboarding and artistic manipulation. What Google Maps *is*, is produced by the desires of its users, the history of landscape, concurrent landscape narratives and the interpretation of artists and others who expand upon its conventional purposes. As cultural theorist Catherine Summerhayes puts it:

One of the major challenges that society faces at this current historical moment is to understand how we embody our perception of the world via digital technologies. Actual people and places populate this world that is represented to us as existing in a new kind of communicative space. (Summerhayes 2015)

Alongside the grand proportions of digital landscape is something else, something offbeat. It's a vein of absurdity, frustration and glitch. It's the sheer comedy of virtual travel, nature on a screen, of venturing into wilderness from the couch, while waiting for laundry. The digital landscape is strewn with quirks and errors, evidence of both imperfect design and machine indifference. These moments lend a kind of foibled humanity to the interface, and consign Google Maps to a long world history of mapping projects that integrate fact and fiction. These idiosyncrasies charmed me, and moved me to establish a light-hearted voice (in writing and in the studio). Dead laptop batteries, phallic rooftop graffiti, digitally induced motion sickness and pedestrians mooning the Street View car are important harbingers of a new, digital

way of connecting with the world; *as well as* being funny. Duly, I have promoted the light and illogical as a real and impactful part of the digital landscape, and this is reflected in the varying formality of the artworks, sources and examples I've considered.

In the studio I have fashioned my reading, writing, thinking and virtual journeying into the objects that speak for me in the gallery. The production of each little painting is a solitary, quiet and delicate operation. I paint at a brown table in the back room of my house, where I instinctively lean into the task, my head hung low over the fine movements required to handle slender brushes and thin layers of acrylic paint. The paintings themselves are the culmination and materialisation of this time spent in the studio, scrutinising and converting my gathered images of elusive whales or melting icebergs into fixed, palm-sized artworks. The apotheosis of creative administration into painting is a kind of slow-burn attempt to paint a world landscape: a constellation of map-points that can be added to and added to.



Fig. 18.2 Working in the studio on miniature paintings for the exhibition *Internet Explorer* in 2016

Three exhibitions have split my doctoral study into three acts, each a prolonged virtual foray, along the coast, into the wilderness and hopping between islands. Each time, the gallery has been filled by a hundred tiny, careful paintings, which together form an intimate, personal collection. Those who enter are navigating a space determined by my desire to demonstrate the polychromatism of world landscape. A hopeless admirer of those whose collections have been posthumously turned into museums (such as J. Pierpont Morgan or Sir John Soane), I have created exhibitions which in one space cry out ‘*This is my inner world*’, but also ‘*Please come in! Let me show you everything!*’ I want to be Virgil, showing Dante around, watching his face for the tics that indicate wonder or delight.



Fig. 18.1 Sheridan (right) accompanies a visitor along the line of painting at the *Wilderness User* exhibition in 2015

These Episodes, index cards and little artworks have been established as an open-ended archival work. Creative administration will find room for new categories and ideas, adapting to the onward march of digital technology, history and culture. The catalogue box will receive more index cards; perhaps it will become two boxes, or a whole library. Piece by piece, I will uncover new terrains, cultures and aetiologies of landscape, expanding my collection of paintings with new islands, atolls, volcanoes, icebergs, loading errors, search bars and green pixels. Books, apps, traditions,

artworks, podcasts and stories will continue to nestle into this creative administration system, giving shape to landscape: a big, green imagining within which technology and romance need never be held asunder.

Yours Sincerely,

Sheridan Coleman

Appendices

- I. Landscape from Landschaft: The Emergence of an Art Genre
- II. Glossary of Interesting Concepts Mentioned in the Exegesis
- III. Catalogues from exhibitions staged for this PhD
- IV. Curriculum Vitae

Appendix I: *Landscape from Landschaft: The Emergence of an Art Genre*

The word landscape, it could be argued, arose out of necessity. Before it existed, there was simply no need to describe the way that an area of natural scenery could be regarded from a single viewpoint (Wamberg 1999). When that need occurred, an existing, related word was repurposed to provide a way to describe the acts of looking at and representing the natural world (Wells 2011; Cosgrove 1984).

The German word *Landschaft* and its Dutch equivalent *Landschap* had been in usage as early as the 12th Century as terms which were used in the governance of land holdings (Nye 1999, 13). The legally determined area surrounding an estate, or the **hinterland** of a town, was known as the *landschaft* of that place (Andrews 1999). The *landschaft* acted as a kind of agrarian annex that supported the centre whilst remaining secondary and exterior to it. Already, the word contained spatial and visual implications, in that it referred to what could be seen in the ‘background’ or distance, behind the everyday activities of a settlement. It was a “periphery” place, a “setting” for human life (Andrews 1999, 29).

At this time, the natural world was not appreciated for its aesthetic value in the same way as it is today extolled as a source of beauty and inspiration for visual or poetic creativity. Up until a few hundred years ago, the natural world was viewed in the West with fear and disgust. As a place that was exterior to civilisation, it was considered wild, dangerous, difficult to work with, hard to travel through, and hideous, having no visual or narrative order (Macfarlane 2003).

In his 1689 volume on the natural history of the planet, *Sacred Theory of the Earth*, the Christian philosopher Thomas Burnet declared that the Earth’s topography—it’s mountains, valleys and waterways—consists of colossal ruptures, created during the biblical flood. Burnet believed the Earth had once been smooth and spherical, but now was no more than a “mighty ruin, a damaged paradise” (Burnet 1689, 5). Religious explanations for the Earth’s seemingly disordered forms encouraged attitudes of distrust and revulsion towards nature. Structures like mountains were no more than “giant souvenirs of humanity’s sinfulness” (Macfarlane 2003) and even

when much later the Edwardian European crossed them, he or she was wont to request a blindfold (Milne & Milne 1963).

This climate of disinterest in nature led to the development of mythologies describing uninhabited land as magical and evil. The bucolic plain represented what little of the landscape could be tamed, and the wilderness that could not remained largely uninhabited, save by the bandits, outcasts and hermits who befit an uncivilised setting. Folklore found homes for giants, ghouls, witches and dragons in the unpopulated wilderness, and krakens, chimaera and sirens in its as-yet uncharted seas. With scant travel, trade or mental projection taking a medieval European's imagination beyond the realm in which they lived, untamed nature remained unfamiliar and 'other', "the habitat of the supernatural and the hostile" (Macfarlane 2003).

These at-best ambivalent attitudes towards the natural world were reflected in the way that nature was represented in art. Limited to the place of a secondary feature to subjects such as religious narratives, motifs like rocks or foliage were primarily included as symbolic features only, to indicate that the setting of a story was earthly (rather than heavenly or mythological), or as a disengaged attempt at providing pictorial perspective (to make a background, like theatre staging) (Wells 2011, 25). In general, the vastness of the natural world, its undomesticated wildlife, superlative heights and depths, were seen as aesthetically offensive.

Land could nonetheless be valued as a source of income and sustenance in Medieval European thought. Agrarian labour was considered an unappealing duty and certainly the ruling classes who could afford to own art found no reason to focus on the landscape as an object of admiration outside of controlled garden scenes (Wamberg 1999). After all, the fields and woods harboured the impoverished, were rampant with poor sanitation and the plague, and were intermittently given over to battle, after which they became trampled swamps of carnage and terror (Wamberg 1999). It has been argued that the peasants themselves had little cause to conceive of landscape or make landscape art, due to their continuous existence in nature. They barely conceived of distinct landscapes, because they were always in them (Wamberg 1999).

The shift in attitudes that allowed landscape to flourish as a genre of art and as a subject fit for an admiring gaze came about as the result of a many-pronged shift in culture, economy and moral paradigm.

In antiquity and partly into the Middle Ages, physical work was considered a debased activity that distracted the mind from spiritual insight and whose traces therefore were seen as alien to the pictorial nature. However, during the Middle Ages, work was gradually transformed into first a penitential activity and after, with the advent of capitalism, a necessary duty, a common calling for everyone, regardless of social level. Instead of pointing toward a debased drudgery, grain fields now became morally uplifting, if not idyllic, and consequently also became a respectable part of the pictorial repertoire. (Wamberg 1999, 71)

Celebrated Italian diarist and letter writer Petrarch gave an account of what he saw whilst atop Mount Ventoux in April 1336, which is often earmarked as the first description of the aesthetic experience of viewing land (Eco 2004). However, his reason for ascending the mountain derived from the religious idea that exertion and isolation would result in spiritual insight, and indeed the writer went on to admonish himself for being guilty of having enjoyed the view. “I was angry with myself for admiring the things of this world” (Petrarch c1330s, 45). In 18th Century Britain, writers like Sir Walter Scott and William Wordsworth also helped to establish an appreciation of the wilderness areas that had previously represented danger and barrenness (Bell & Lyall 2002). It was the poets who began to re-shape the language of wilderness, replacing words like “bleak” and “perilous” with “rugged” and “pristine” (Brown 1998). As cities expanded and become devoid of vegetation and wildlife, and cultivation overtook more and more wilderness, untouched nature eventually acquired value. As an artform that appreciates and marks out the value of land, landscape “arises increasingly as land acquires capital value” (Andrews 1999, 8), in counterpoint to any diminishment in unpopulated, un-owned or un-utilised land.

There are many claims upon how the term landscape came to enter artistic terminology. In one possible etymology the artist Albrecht Durer described Joachim Patinir as a “good landscape painter” (Kleiner & Mamiya 2005, 682). The increasing privilege given to natural imagery in painting was gradual: the depiction of religious episodes such as the hermitage of Saint Jerome in the wilderness (Andrews 1999, 30), and the increasing commission of “prospect” paintings of private holdings by Renaissance landowners like the Medici (Wells 2011, 25), contributed to the development of strategies and techniques for depicting the land itself. Between 1450 and 1550, at first mostly in the Netherlands, artists such as Joachim Patinir, Giovanni Bellini and Peter Breugel the Elder began producing images that contained few architectural details, human figures or narratives, and instead focused on *the view* as a dominant “argument” of the artwork (Cosgrove 2008; Nye 1999). It was at this point that the term ‘landscape’ left the urban planning sphere and entered the vernacular of the art world as a “technical term for painters” (Stewart & Strathorn 2003, 1). As previous natural motifs in painting often acted as a “backcloth” (Appleton 1996, 2) to some human action, the new landscapes of the 16th Century onward can be characterised by their lack of foreground action and their expansiveness.

“We could describe the movement from the pre-modern to the modern landscape paradigm as a movement from hard mountains, which block land surveying as well as gaze, to a soft plain that can be measured, plowed and overlooked” (Wamberg 1999, 74-75). The best views depicted the most visual information, to provide a clearer picture of the possible value of the land as a resource, refuge or source of visual pleasure (Tuan 1979, 89). Landscape views conveyed the value of landscape by two “major perspectives – functional and moral-aesthetic” (Tuan 1979, 89). Through these perspectives land was seen as a precious resource that could offer profitable agriculture, moral enjoyment of the beauty of nature, social status through ownership, and a setting for outdoor leisure activities like walking, riding and boating. These perspectives placed adequate importance in the natural world for it to become an established and recognised subject for painting.

Though landscape had been established as a genre in its own right, paintings of figures, portraits, narrative scenes and allegorical still life arrangements continued to be regarded as superior genres for many centuries (Wells 2011, 25). It wasn't until the 19th Century that landscape painting gained enough momentum to be seen as a “fully independent and respected genre” (Kleiner & Mamiya 2005, 838) as it “acquired more and more of an aesthetic meaning” in both England and the Netherlands before being taken up more widely across Europe (Tuan 1979, 90).

This change was influenced by the development of a tourism industry in the West; the heroic narratives of imperial exploration and settlement; expanding railway systems that familiarised the urban public with the countryside, and the new industry of souvenir depictions of exotic landscapes. Such developments facilitated more regular encounters with nature, and contributed to the popularity of landscape art (Kleiner & Mamiya 2005, 838). Arguably, all of these influences provided a context for people to feel an attachment or connection to particular landscapes, and helped to develop a culture of regarding nature as beautiful, a source of creative inspiration and a moral, healthful influence which remedied sundry kinds of urban malady.

This engaged and appreciative attitude towards nature coincided with a “distinctive worldview” that erupted at a “moment of secularization and expansion” in agriculture, revived classical learning, urban growth and imperial foray (Nye 1999, 9). The participation of everyday people in the appreciation of the landscape was not only possible, but also fashionable, and many people, whether wealthy commissioning patrons or post card collectors were able to indicate their appreciation of landscape and knowledge of natural phenomena through the ownership of landscape imagery in their homes (Eco 2004). This was a wide trend, which did not simply involve interest in land and nature, but in ‘outdoorsiness’, knowledge of natural history, and adventure narratives. In particular, the artists of the 19th Century Romantic Movement who depicted impressive landscapes in pursuit of the Sublime, “no longer merely beheld a landscape, but participated in its spirit” (Kleiner & Mamiya 2005).

“Three hundred years ago, landscapes were paintings rather than terrain, representations of countryside rather than the countryside itself,” wrote art historian David Wade Chambers (Wade Chambers 1982, 1). In today’s English, the word landscape is used interchangeably: it can refer to a natural site, and it can also refer to the representation of a natural site. Cultural geographer John Wylie entitles each ‘landscape’ in common usage thus: “Landscape-vista, landscape-image, landscape-verb” (Wylie 2007, 6). It must be noted that in the West, the concept of landscape as an artform *preceded* the concept of landscape as a place. That is not to say that nature and land as concepts have not always existed within the Western paradigm, but to make clear that the visual tradition of a landscape as a viewed expanse that has been selected and is appreciated for its forms and perspectival framing, was articulated first by artists and only then by everyday people who might use the word ‘landscape’ to identify physical tracts of land.

To use the word landscape over any other word, such as environment, or land, or terrain, or site, or nature, is to give privilege to the centrality of an individual view, and to see an area of land as *one whole picture*, despite its being made up of innumerable components (flora, fauna, sounds, climates, histories, habitation, ownership and so on). As inheritors of the history of painting, “its norms still affect the way we see subjects as landscapes.” (Berger 1972, 84) That is, we make a “cultural assumption” that what we are seeing is a landscape, above all else.

The Western history and etymology of landscape as a word and as an idea remained a discreet tradition up until some time in the last century. Complex other histories concerning the depiction of nature in art have existed prior and parallel to this Western history, and have been carefully studied in the West as alternative cultural portraits of the interaction between humanity and nature. Such traditions include Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints, Indigenous Australian painting and Islamic arabesque patterns featuring plant forms. These traditions of nature depiction also fit under today’s expanded definition of landscape as outlined in the exegesis.

It’s clear to see that landscape is a more historically loaded term than it first appears. Though today we might “think of landscapes as slices of the real world” whether we encounter them in person or in paintings (Wade Chambers 1982, 1), they also

represent a mode of looking and seeing that is informed by centuries of artistic representations, economic, social and religious influences and contemporary academic and philosophical interrogations into the psychology of how people understand, project onto and interact with natural settings. As Meinig eloquently puts it, “Landscape is an attractive, important and ambiguous term” (Meinig 1979, 1).

Appendix II: Glossary of Interesting Concepts Mentioned in the Exegesis

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The Age of Exploration

The Age of Exploration (sometimes also called the Age of Discovery) was a cultural wave in European culture from roughly 1400 to 1600. During this time, the great Imperial countries of Europe (such as Spain, Portugal, England and France) set out to establish trade routes, to create a clear, navigable picture of the world with cartography and to subjugate and colonise foreign states. The prominent events associated with this culture of trade and conquer were the establishment of the Silk Road trading thoroughfares that guided spices and textiles across the northern continents, and the European invasion and settlement of the Americas. The era's exploratory protagonists include Columbus, Drake, Magellan, Raleigh and Cortes. Piracy, botany, cartography, trade, navigation, shipbuilding and travel all saw rapid development and flourished in the European public imagination during this era. The Age of Exploration coincides with the first 200-250 years of the development of landscape as a Western artistic genre, which often helped to narrate themes of colonial endeavour, the perils of encountering the power of nature, and the bounty of the earth.

Sources: *Age of Exploration* 2015; *Age of Exploration* n.d.; *The Age of Exploration* n.d.; Briney n.d.

Anthropocene

The word *anthropocene* (from the Greek for 'human' and 'new') refers to an epoch marked by the global impact of humans upon the natural environment. It is the successor of the *holocene* (from the Greek 'whole'), and "interglacial" period in which humans got their foothold (Crastee 2016, 1). These are terms describing epochs of global environmental continuity or stability, and have in the past been based upon data gleaned from geological strata showing climactic changes such as the Ice Age or the rise and fall of species preserved as fossils. The *holocene* began roughly 12,000 years ago and many commentators, including the significant Anthropocene Working Party geologists, have retrospectively declared its replacement by the *anthropocene* as having taken place between 65 and 200 years ago (*anthropocene* first started appearing in academic literature around 2000).

The basis for naming this new epoch is the exhaustive impact that humanity has had upon the various systems of the world: it's atmosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere, cryosphere and lithosphere, and more broadly, the future of the "Earth system" (Crastee, 2016; Zalaziewicz 2016). In the geological record, markers that will indicate the presence of the *anthropocene* for millions of years to come will include traces of carbon emissions, nuclear bomb tests, concrete, plastic pollution and even domesticated chicken bones. As this epoch has only just begun, its formal naming has caused some controversy among stratigraphers, who insist that the geological record of the last 200 years is so infantile that it can't yet be determined that it will look different enough to that of the *holocene* to merit demarcation, but may rather be an 'Age', within the *holocene*.

Sources: Carrington 2016; Crastee 2016; Zalaziewicz 2016

Biophilia

From the Greek for 'life' and 'love', *biophilia* is a term describing the desire for close contact with nature or natural elements such as plants and animals. The *biophilia hypothesis* concept was developed by the American biologist Edward O. Wilson in his 1984 text *Biophilia*. Wilson asserted that humans have an innate bond with or longing for unimpeded experiences in nature, and indulging this desire generates wellbeing and enhanced mental and emotional acuity. Wilson stated that these experiences are the expression of a genetic propensity towards nature (though an exact genetic location for *biophilia* has not yet been identified). *Biophilia* has become a prominent term in design, architecture, psychology, public planning, sociology and other fields in which the ability to create beneficial spaces or observes the impact of space upon people are central. Many commentators have asserted that *biophilia* has become of more acute concern since the industrial revolution, when the segregation of natural and urban environments began to accelerate. This state of separation from nature in everyday life can be both quenched and exacerbated by the use of digital technologies.

Sources: S. A. 2013; Rogers 2016

Cabinet of Curiosity

Cabinets of Curiosity, or *Wunderkammern*, were small rooms, cupboards or display cases which contained collections, usually private and/or collected by a single person, which were novel, exotic and demonstrative of the oddity and variety of the natural world. They usually included *naturalia*, *arteficialia*, and *scientifica*: that is, historical artefacts, preserved fauna, geological rarities and clever instruments or inventions. Such collections became explosively popular in Europe between the 17th and 19th Centuries, however earlier examples and contemporary versions of the concept also exist (see Mark Dion's artwork in *Episode Two: Multiplicity and Creative Administration*). The purpose of these collections was to astound, but also to provide a site for reflection. It was believed that in examining the difference and colour of the specimens, one would understand them as part of the same world system, and consider humanity's place in that system. Many *Wunderkammern* were laid out in a particular order, to tell a story or narrative or be used as visual markers during a presentation (something like today's PowerPoint presentations, perhaps). Often little care was taken to maintain the integrity of the object (in the sense of today's scientific or archival work), and often specimens and objects would be presented in whatever way made them seem most interesting or impressive: animal specimens might be spliced together, dressed up or evocatively posed; geological samples might be decoratively carved. Such collections are of particular appeal in this study as their purpose is a hybridisation of scientific, artistic and entertainment.

Sources: *Cabinet of Curiosities* n.d.; *History of the Wunderkammern...* 2003; Koeppe 2002.

Cartesian Perspective

Named for French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650), *Cartesian perspective* refers to the way that images, including artworks, are organised around single-point perspective, which centralises visual content around the viewer. Descartes promoted the primacy of the first-person perspective in his writings, as the basis for understanding of both the metaphysical and epistemic

world. Through consciousness and interrogation of the self, he claimed, one could come to knowledge about existence, purpose and nature. *Cartesian perspective* is a defining feature of traditional landscape art from the 15th Century and continues as a prevalent format in the genre today.

Source: Borghini n.d.

Culture Jamming

Culture Jamming is an artistic and aesthetic term borne of the 20th Century; it denotes the irreverent appropriation, reworking and subversion of the iconography of commercialism to make a statement about the power structures and cultures at play in society. This often takes the form of artistic parodies and manipulations of product logos, slogans and branding systems so that they proclaim provocative messages that invert their original, commercial purpose. Artists such as graffiti artist Banksy and Barbara Kruger, who works with collage and print media, are prominent examples of artists who use culture jamming to critique the prevalence and inhumanity of consumerism, consumption and the lack of community and empathy these structures generate. Culture Jamming also include activities less closely tied to art, such as “hacktivism”, performance, “brandalism” and other guerrilla interventions into public space and public advertising.

Sources: *Culture Jamming* n.d.; Marshall 2004

En Plein Air

En plein air is a painting technique in which the artist takes their materials outside and renders their subject based on what they see first-hand, in natural daylight, both as a sketching or study-making exercise, and as a way to make a complete painting. Taken from the French “in the open air”, the technique was developed chiefly in 19th Century France. *En plein air* was central to the French Impressionist movement (and various forms of Impressionist thereafter, such as the Australian Heidelberg School), which celebrated the vivid colours and energetic brushstrokes that outdoor painting could engender, and focussing on the

ephemerality of the various stages of the day, climate and seasons. *En plein air* remains popular today, and though it was revolutionary in its early years, the technique has lately become somewhat associated with the amateur, mannered work of Sunday painters and makers of tourist souvenirs.

Sources: Boddy-Evans 2016; Jordan 2015

The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment (also known as the Age of Reason) was a European cultural and philosophical movement that took place over the 17th and 18th Centuries, which brought together new scientific perspectives, reason and logic, reformed religious theory, humanism and aesthetic theory. Central to the movement was the development of some cornerstone ideals of the state of being human, such as justice, truth, knowledge and freedom. The pursuit of these ideals helped to overhaul both practice and theory within diverse disciplines, reforms that were universally underpinned by a focus on rationality, empiricism, objectivity and an increase in the fervour academic and public discourse. The Enlightenment era revived the long-dormant discourse of the ancient Greek and Arabic thinkers, in the wake of the general cultural (and actual) poverty of the Middle Ages, and leapt forward with new scientific and conceptual material of its own. Thomas Aquinas, Kant, Jeremy Bentham, Thomas Jefferson, John Locke, Galileo, Ptolemy, Newton, Bacon and Martin Luther are all thinkers associated with the reform and revolutionary thinking of the Enlightenment Era.

Sources: Duignan 2015; Szalay 2016

First World

The terms *First World* and *Third World* have been in use since the 1950s, as a way of designating the level of economic development of a particular country or region, and/or their geopolitical position and power. When the term was first popularised after the Cold War, it was more often used to denote those nations who were non-Communist, mostly Western and industrialised, such as Canada,

France, Japan and Australia. Today, the term has taken on connotations of digital connectivity, global political participation, affluence and Western-ness, often being used to identify a state of privilege or a lack of poverty, disease, violence, hunger or under-education.

Sources: *First World n.d.*; Pennington 2013

Geoglyphs

A *geoglyph* is any large-scale marking made on the ground in the shape of a symbol or pictogram, most of which are best seen from an elevated perspective. Some *geoglyphs* are made by carving into the earth, making crop circles or laying out arrangements of stones. Many of the oldest *geoglyphs* endure from pre-historic eras and depict ‘drawings’ of gods, animals or symbols relating to the religions and mythologies of the time. Well-known examples include the stylised figure of a running horse in Oxfordshire, England, created around 1000 B.C., and the Atacama Giant in Chile, which depicts a standing figure carved into 86 metres of hillside and may be up to 10,000 years old. There are numerous contemporary examples of *geoglyphs*, many of which were produced during the prolonged Land Art movement of the 20th Century, such as Robert Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty*.

Sources: Akintola 2014; *The Top Ten* 2015

Googleplex

The Googleplex is the name of the 22-acre campus of buildings that comprise Google’s company headquarters in Mountain View, California. It is the central workplace of Google’s executive body and some 8,000 members of its workforce.

Sources: Kifer 2016; Strickland 2008

The Ground Truth

The Ground Truth is the name of the software that operates an unseen network of data ‘beneath’ the visible imagery that users navigate on Google Maps and Street View. Launched in 2008, it contains centralised information about one- and two-way streets, traffic speed, car parks, traffic lights and street front signage for businesses. This data is largely sourced from government and council bodies, map providers and postal services to ensure its accuracy. The Ground Truth is supplemented with data collected by algorithms that can ‘read’ photographic information like stop signs or business signage, as well as the tens of thousands of daily corrections suggested through its public Report a Problem feature. The Ground Truth informs the suggested routes and times estimates generated for users of the Google Maps journey-planning feature.

Sources: Brasuell 2014; *The Ground Truth Project* 2014; Lardinois 2014

Haptic

Haptic is an adjective used to denote the tactile senses, in particular the way that touch is used to inform the perception of objects and their manipulation by a person. It comes from the Greek ‘to grasp’ and appears often as a technical term in psychology, medicine, computing and the sciences. Though it can be applied to all kinds of tactile senses, it is often evoked to describe manual touch, and close proximity to the body.

Sources: *Haptic* n.d.; Rouse 2016

Hinterland

A geographical term used to describe the region or area surrounding a town, city or urban centre. Generally speaking, a hinterland is an area of some cultural remove from the centre, sparsely populated, and also supporting some of the agricultural or industrial needs of the centre. It is often characterised as less ‘built-up’, remote or having a great presence of natural flora and fauna than the densely populated centre, i.e. the ‘countryside’. The term comes from the German for ‘land behind’.

Sources: *Hinterland* n.d.; *Hinterland – Geography* n.d.

Imperialism

In political theory, imperialism is the term for a policy and/or practice whereby a country or city-state will seek to expand the territories under their control, through military force and threat, economic coercion or other machinations of power. The word imperialism is also used to describe an *attitude or paradigm* in which a subject feels entitled and obliged to expand their territory and resources through the colonisation and subjugation of other nations or individuals. This usage is often polemical when used contemporaneously. Examples of nations with an imperial policy which gave rise to an expanded empire (the original nation plus the other lands they control) include Great Britain, Ancient Rome, Ancient Persian, Portugal and the Netherlands.

Sources: *Imperialism* n.d.; *Imperialism...* 2007

Internet

The Internet is a global, decentralised digital network linking millions of individual computers to a vast array of digital information stored in websites. It is not centrally owned or regulated, but rather exists as an intangible, distributed entity, across the hardware and physical infrastructure in some 190 connected countries. In 2016, the Internet consists of over 4 billion websites, to which users

upload and download content constantly, and which they find using search engines. The ‘size’ of the Internet is increasing, though it is in a state of flux as websites are created and decommissioned. Some researchers have estimated that the Internet stores 10^{24} Bytes of data (a Byte being the size of one single character in a word document), or as another commentator put it: 305.5 billion printed A4 pages of text. Almost 40% of the world’s population are Internet users (as of August 2016).

Sources: Beal 2016; Pappas 2016

Listicle

A recent online zeitgeist, the *listicle* is a brief, informal and often quickly researched article that take the form of a list, often a ‘Top Ten’ or compilation of tips, insights or ephemera that characterise a cultural phenomenon. These are often given a descriptive, attention-grabbing title, for example, *10 holiday resort swimming pools to make your jaw drop; 9 signs you got up before 5am today*. While not inherently lowbrow, the *listicle* has become common currency in online media formats where it is used as a form of entertainment, or on social media where its appeal as ‘*clickbait*’ supports ‘hits’ on websites which charge their advertisers on an eyeball-on-page basis. They are often also too short to be comprehensive, lack an explicitly articulated thesis or argument, and in many cases consist of primarily images. The Huffington Post and The Conversation are great examples of more thoroughly researched and journalistic *listicle* publishers.

Sources: Okrent 2014; Poole 2013

Machinima

A conjugation of ‘machine’ and ‘cinema’, *Machinima* is a technical term used in computing, game design and new media that describes the use of a pre-existing 3D virtual environment, particularly those that respond and react in real time to the user’s commands, to create a film or video. *Machinima* ‘engines’ include ‘first person’ video games, Google Street View and interactive maps. The subcultural

wave of *machinima* has led to a series of full-length feature films and plenty of online discussion of its merits as a genre of category of filmmaking.

Sources: Kirschner 2005; *Machinima* n.d.

Mycology

Mycology, a branch of biology, concerns itself with the study of all kinds of mushrooms and fungi. Themes of research include the pharmaceutical properties of mushrooms, their edibility, cultivation, role in ecosystems, how they effect human health, and their potential uses as organisms that can organically digest a wide array of materials and compounds.

Sources: Black 2016; *What is Mycology* 2010

Nahsicht

From the German for ‘near-sight’, *nahsicht* is a term that was developed by xxx to describe a state of close-up vision in which objects and images appear so proximate to the body and/or eye of the viewer that their haptic senses become engaged in anticipation of touch, or their tactile memories become implicated in their perception of the image. This in turn has been used in art to discuss an ‘aesthetics of proximity’, in which artists manufacture viewing experiences which deliberately blur the boundaries between visual and tactile perception.

Sources: Araujo 2014; Hubert n.d.

Neotonous (Neotony)

A term heard mostly in psychology, *neotony* refers to an individual’s perception of situations, environments and systems with a sense of wonder or excitement, as though for the first time, or as a child would. The state can be characterised by increased plasticity to new situations, a high level of curiosity and resilience. (In

biology, neotony can also refer to an organism's suspended maturation during a pre-reproductive or larval phase.)

Source: Risen 2006

Oceanology

A discipline within the Earth Sciences, Oceanology is the study of oceans, their systems, flora, fauna and interactions with terrestrial ecology. (Oceanology does take into account the role of fauna in the ocean's systems however the discreet study of those fauna falls under the category of marine biology.)

Sources: Summers 2014; *What does an oceanographer do?* 2014

Painterliness

Painterliness is a style or characteristic of painting in which the practice of painting is expressively manifest in the artwork. This is usually through the visibility or even dominance of distinct brush strokes on the artwork's surface (as opposed to non-painterly painting, when brushstrokes are blended down so that they are not so visible), and can also include the bold mixing of colour and textural painted surfaces. A painterly painting tends to expose the materials, tools and 'underpainting' of an artwork, revealing the artists' methods or even intentions. Painterliness is a characteristic that is associated strongly with movements such as Expressionism and Fauvism, yet pervades countless eras, cultures and artists' work, and does not represent a distinct or formal style, genre, category or technique, but rather a sensibility or mode of image construction.

Sources: Finkelstein 2011; Volpe 2012.

Panoptical (Panoptic)

From the Greek for 'seen by all', Panopticism is a state of being able to view all units within a given category at one time, from a single viewer perspective point.

It moved into general use after the 1791 publication of Jeremy Bentham's proposed prison building the *Panopticon*, in which a warden could view all prisoners at once from a tower in the middle of a surrounding cylindrical block of window-ended cells. Today it is often used as a way of describing far-reaching methods or technologies for surveillance or information gathering, such as meta data collection and satellite photography, or any state in which supervision is constant and imposed. The term usually implies a lack of privacy or means of resistance on the part of the person/s supervised.

Sources: Foucault 1975; *Panoptic/Panopticon* n.d.

Picturesque

In general usage, the word picturesque refers to an image or scene that is charming or pleasing, and might also have aesthetic qualities suggestive of painting. It comes from the Italian *pittresco*, or 'from a picture' and was developed into a cultural trend in 18th Century Britain. In art, the term identified landscapes that appeared fit for painting, as well as those paintings whose subjects were of particular beauty or comeliness. Around this time, artists like Claude Lorrain and J.M.W. Turner who painted images in which nature appeared whimsical, tranquil or scenic often attracted the descriptor. Writers John Ruskin and William Gilpin helped to further formulate the idea (or ideal) and landscape gardeners like Humphrey Repton and Lancelot 'Capability' Brown also became associated with the picturesque. Picturesque images are often identifiable by the balance of their composition, glowing colours, inviting scenes (such as fields, woodlands, small waterfalls and idealised ruins) and romance.

Sources: *Full Definition of Picturesque* n.d.; Gurney 2014; *The Picturesque* n.d.

Plato's Realm of Perfect Forms

Plato's theory of forms is described as the first great metaphysical proposal in Western history. Plato lived in Athens in the 4th to 5th Century B.C., where he

developed his theory of a division between perceptible, or tangible reality, and conceptual yet graspable ideals: he described the world as divided into a physical reality, in which objects, people and systems were characterised by tumult and imperfection; and a metaphysical realm of perfect forms, such as justice, knowledge, freedom, piety, courage and truth as well as states like redness or squareness. These forms may be the objects of knowledge in the physical world, and indeed the physical world may approach and be influenced by them, but it cannot express any whole or perfect iteration of any of the forms.

Sources: Macintosh 2012; *Plato's Middle Period Metaphysics* 2014; Zaykova 2014

Proprioception

Proprioception is the biological feedback system that the body uses to carry out muscular movements: the musculature performs movements based on signals sent from the brain, and in turn that movement is physically sensed by the nervous system and the movement is relayed to the brain. Proprioception is the system that allows one to detect, or rather 'know' that you are opening or closing your hand into a fist, even if you have your eyes closed and can't see it happening. Proprioception makes use of information about muscle contraction, density and length to help the brain sub-cognitively calculate the angle, position and movement of any part of the body, informing sitting, standing and walking postures among other movements.

Sources: Johnson & Soucacos 2010; *The Proprioceptive System* n.d.

Remote Sensing

Remote sensing is the science and practice of collecting imagery or information about expanses of land and ocean from above, from aircraft, balloons, satellites or space shuttles. Remote sensing technologies make use of photography, radiated or reflected energy and other measurements to detect the shape and characteristics of the land below. Most remote sensing devices are able to relay this information

back to operators without leaving their elevated position, and this information then undergoes interpretation. Remote sensing has been in use as a technical term since the middle of last century, however in a broad sense, optical vision, telescopes and even echo sounding are all forms of remote sensing.

Sources: Cosgrove & Fox 2010; Liew 2001; *What is remote sensing?* n.d.

Screenshot

A screenshot is an image that records everything visible on a computer screen at the time that the shot is taken (a bit like a photograph but taken by the computer rather than an external camera and therefore a more accurate copy). It is a tool that allows computer users to record an image file which reveals not just the contents of a particular browser, window or file, but also the configuration of the programs, tools and systems that contains them. Screenshots can also be used to record moving data and imagery or that which is online and not already saved on the computer (such as Google Maps imagery).

Source: Chastain 2016

The Scientific Method

Scientific methodology was greatly advanced by natural philosopher and lawyer Francis Bacon during the Renaissance. Bacon built upon earlier writing on reason and observation by Aristotle, Plato, Copernicus and Gaileo among others. These works coalesced into today's Scientific Method, which is a system of enquiry and criteria for establishing truthful facts (or at least working knowledge) about the world. The Method begins with a hypothesis, which is developed into a theory through the performance of repeatable experiments and observations. The Method is the keystone upon which today's scientific standards are built and its canonical emphasis on reason, integrity of objectivity, rigour and adaptability to new findings permeates the scientific community even today.

Sources: Harris 2008; *Scientific Method* 2015

Scopic Powers

From the Latin for ‘to examine’, a scopic field is the view or perspective of an individual, and their scopic powers are the extent, range or potency of this vision or visual capability. One’s scopic powers are informed by, but not limited to what can be seen from the eye. For example, individuals might witness systems and time passing with their scopic powers, and perceive realities only visible to themselves. Theorists such as Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek expand upon this idea by stating that individuals always include themselves or a sense of self into their scopic field, despite not being able to see themselves.

Source: Tunis 2007

Sisyphean Task

A Sisyphean Task is any work that appears, or even is, practicably unfinishable, and often repetitive, tedious and laborious in nature. The phrase is based on the ancient Greek myth of Sisyphus, which has been relayed to modern times in Homer’s *Iliad*. Sisyphus, the King of Corinth and an interminable trickster, cheated mortality by trapping Hades on Earth, and later escape from the Underworld after his first death to live out a second chapter of life. Sisyphus was punished for this insult to natural order and the will of the gods. Hades placed him in the underworld realm of Tartarus, where he had to push a boulder uphill, only to have it roll back to the bottom, over and over again for eternity.

Source: *Sisyphus* n.d.

Situationist International

The Situationist International was a group of anti-establishmentarian, *avant-garde* artists, writers and poets who operated from the 1950s to 1970s, primarily in Paris, blending together the concurrent Surrealist sensibility with a political agenda of Marxism. The group’s activities included the publishing of manifestos and critiques of society such as Guy Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle*,

unstructured walks through Paris called *derives*, and the production of non-narrative films which incorporated poetry, dance, music and spontaneous performance.

Sources: Matthews 2005; *Situationist International* n.d.

Social Contract Theory

The Social Contract Theory was developed by philosopher Thomas Hobbes in the 17th Century, and was refined by later thinkers such as John Locke, Henri Rousseau and John Rawls. It outlines the reciprocal arrangement between an individual and the extant power structures of the society they are born into. For example, individuals submit to the legal and punitive authority of their government, while receiving the enforced protection of their civil liberties such as freedom of speech and assembly. This view was underpinned by the idea that humanity universally sought peace and protection from the destruction of life, livelihood and property. To achieve this, individuals would relinquish some rights, capabilities or activities to their governing body in exchange their personal comfort and security. This exchange is tacit. Social Contract Theory has been heavily critiqued for its one-size-fits all approach to the entitlements of individuals, particularly those of marginalised or minority groups.

Sources: Friend n.d.; *Hobbes' Moral and Political Philosophy* 2014

The Sublime

The sublime refers to an emotional state brought about by particular kinds of aesthetic experiences, most often in response to nature or natural imagery. Experience of the sublime is popularly understood to refer to a sudden and overwhelming feelings of wonder and sensations of having glimpsed an infinity or an expansiveness of scale, time, power or beauty, which renders the subject awe-struck or feeling insignificant and powerless. The profundity of this kind of emotion makes the sublime somewhat difficult to describe, and many adjectives employed are necessarily hyperbolic: lofty, deep, reverence, grandeur, might and so on. One of the

earliest attempts to pin it down was the 1756 treatise *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* by the Irish philosopher Edmund Burke. Experience of the sublime generally falls into two categories – firstly, as a response to an aesthetic experience (like nature or art), and secondly as a response to a concept (for example, mulling over the number of planets in the universe (there is such a term as the mathematical sublime)). In art, the ability to induce the sublime experience has been chased down in particular by landscape artists. Particularly breathtaking landscapes from history include those by Caspar David Friedrich, Salvator Rosa, J. M. W. Turner and Albert Bierstadt.

Sources: Burke 1756; Llewellyn & Riding 2013

The Subway Effect

This term describes the sense of disorientation and inability to correctly determine compass direction that occurs after one exits an underground subway station.

Sources: Gan 2015; Sharrock 2013

trompe l'oeil

Coming from the French for ‘deceives the eye’, *trompe l'oeil* is any kind of painting, drawing or image which pictorially represents a subject or scene which has a sense of depth, but which is painted on to a flat surface. The technique generates the illusion of objects or spaces overlapping or extending from the space occupied by the viewer. In short, they are paintings with the look of three-dimensionality. *Trompe l'oeil* painting has been in use since antiquity, and most often appears in the form of a mural or wall decoration on both interior and exterior architectural spaces.

Sources: Craven n.d.; Esaak n.d.; *Trompe l'oeil* 2014

Uncontacted Peoples

Uncontacted peoples is the term for tribes or communities of humans who are living in such isolation that they have limited or inconsequential contact with outside cultures, and maintain their own discreet culture and way of life.

(Uncontacted peoples, perhaps counterintuitive to the terminology, always have at least some awareness or knowledge of peoples and cultures other than their own).

There are few remaining uncontacted peoples left in the world, and these are the subject of fervent debate around the ethics of disturbing, influencing or aiding them. 'Uncontacted peoples' is an inherently biased term, which connotes the communities in question as lacking civilisation and frames them according to how like or aware they are of global, urban or Western culture. Urbanisation, logging, tribal infighting, lack of immunity to outside diseases and remote drug trafficking are among the many factors which make the futures of uncontacted peoples so precarious. Well over 100 tribes are known to exist in the Amazon in South America, and there are also communities of uncontacted peoples in Papua New Guinea, the Andaman Islands.

Sources: Kluger 2015; Nuwer 2014; Wallace 2014

The Universal Texture

The Universal Texture is the name of the photographic collage depicting the Earth's surface that appears on Google Earth's digital world map. It consists of countless aerial photographs taken from satellites and aeroplanes, which are compiled together into one large, continuous image, parts of which are regularly updated to reflect changes on land. The Universal Texture is rendered onto a computer generated 3-dimensional model in a process called texture mapping in order to give the semblance of the undulations and forms of the landscape.

Sources: Horne 2012; Valla 2012

Wanderlust

Wanderlust describes a strong or passionate longing to travel, wander or experience new places and cultures. It comes from the German for ‘wander’ and ‘desire’. The term first appeared at the turn of the 20th Century, as intercity and international travel were expanded and popularised as a result of industrialisation. The word often connotes a desire for the sensation of newness and movement, more than the need to travel in a particular direction or with a destination in mind.

Sources: McBide 2013; *Wanderlust* n.d.

Western

Terms like Western culture, Western civilisation and the West refer to a group of countries with a common or related culture and history derived from classical or continental Western Europe. There is no formal list of such countries, but they are popularly understood to include Western Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, Scandinavia and some parts of South America. Western countries (generally speaking) can be identified by the dominance of English and classical-derivative languages, liberal democracy, cultural pluralism and multiculturalism, and a comparatively high (or ‘first-world’) level of economic development.

Sources: Birken 1992; Trubetskoy 2016

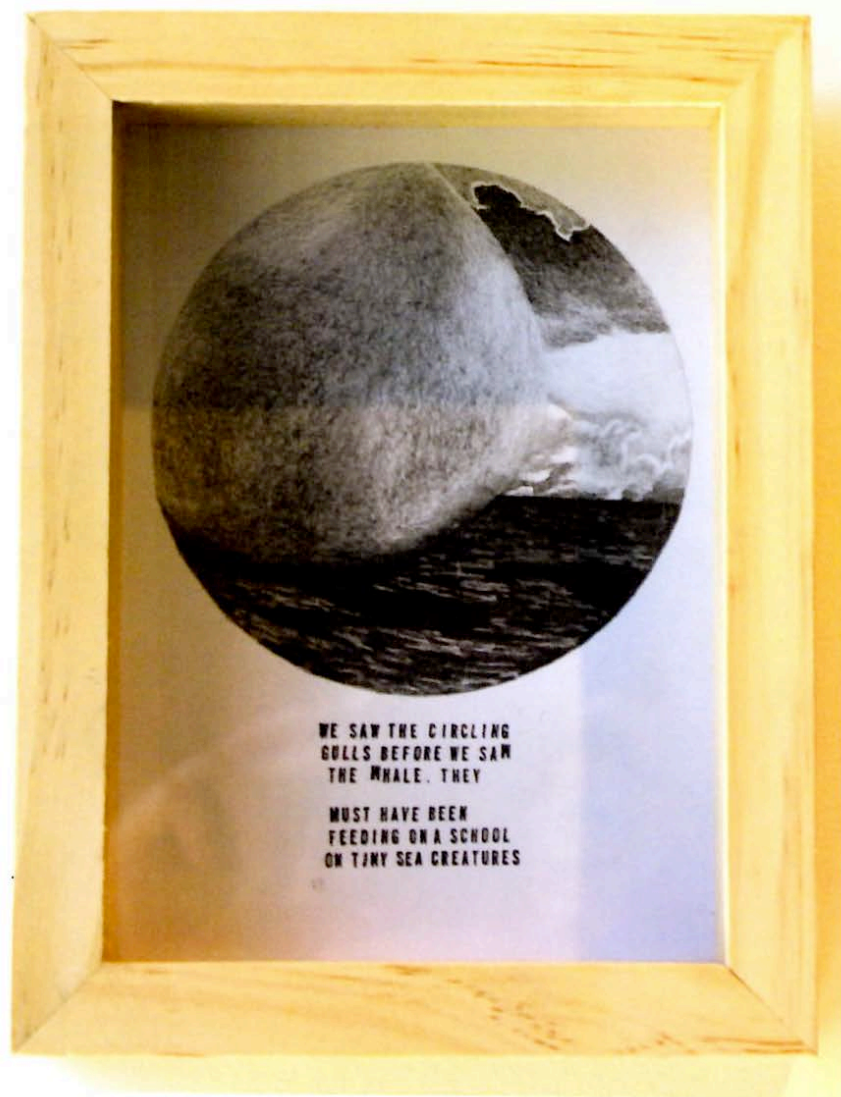
Wunderkammern

Please see *Cabinets of Curiosity* above.

Appendix III: Catalogues from exhibitions staged for this PhD

Midnight, Forecastle

Below is a facsimile of the catalogue for my exhibition *Midnight, Forecastle*, held at The Daphne Collection in North Perth, in January of 2014.



MIDNIGHT, FORECASTLE
SHERIDAN COLEMAN

Aboard the Pequod, Ahab's search for the White Whale falls to tedium in *Midnight, Forecastle*, the 40th chapter of Herman Melville's account of their epic journey. The crew and mates sing, jest and roughhouse. Then, their whale-less night of sentry is interrupted, by a blackout storm. Their search for Moby Dick is frustrated at every turn by being afforded clear views whenever the whale is distant, and blindness at the hands of climactic phenomena when it seems that he is near.



MIDNIGHT, FORECASTLE

Under the latent, yet all-seeing eye of Google Maps (a fictionally-correct patchwork photograph conglomerated by GeoEye, Digitalglobe and countless other satellites), we can picture, but not see, the world.

For most of 2013, WA artist Sheridan Coleman has been imagining and imaging coastal landscapes on a long journey along the edge of Western Australia. Like Humboldt and Ahab before her, the purpose of this journey is to locate a flyover glimpse of that beastly, irrepressibly corporeal fish, The Whale.

This exercise in both Cetology and Geography was not only frequently abridged, but took place in its entirety within the screen-wide frame of the Google Maps interface, at a zoom-level of 50m.

In bed, late at night, during lunch hour: remote groynes, oceanic whirlpools, salt beds and kayak races are happened upon, the landscape is flattened into a pixelated and cartographically erroneous screen grab, and the search for that first whale throws up a hoard of indistinct shapes, false alarms, blurry buoys, obscured boats, foam-licked islets, and those other, (for Coleman) unwanted animals: dolphins, sharks, swimmers.

The technological confusion of these mapping interfaces shields from view any real certainty of what the distant, unvisited landscapes they represent really look like or feel like. They do not account for weather, heat, taste, smell or texture. The map-point misnomers, zoom-in blurs, patch errors, discoloured filters, loading glitches, and out-of-date photographism, therefore become the focal point, as a humorous proxy, placeholder, parody and poor imitation of the grandness of the WA coastal landscape itself.

The whole journey is encased by Google's arbitrary perimeter, which is blue in colour, specifically a Pantone 18-3946, or in acrylic paint to Pacific Blue. The thrill of the search is framed by the size of the laptop screen, and the process of clicking, dragging and hoping goes on.

WORKS



Whale Waiting: Out of Season
2013
2B on Paper
21 x 29 cm



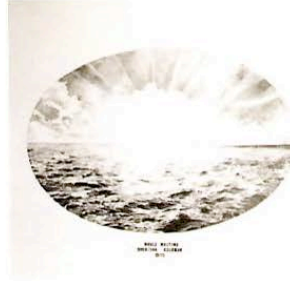
Whale Waiting: Maybe Next Year
2013
2B on Paper
21 x 29 cm



Whale Waiting: No, It's Nothing
2013
2B on Paper
21 x 29 cm



Whale Waiting: Nothing Yet
2013
2B on Paper
21 x 29 cm



Whale Waiting: Not Today
2013
2B on Paper
21 x 29 cm



False Alarm: Odd Wake near
Boullanger Island
2013
Goauche on Board
9 cm diameter



False Alarm: Freak Wave Crest
in Geraldton Bay
2013
Goauche on Board
11.3 x 9.4 cm



False Alarm: School Fishes, or
Something Else Perhaps
2013
Goauche on Board
9 cm diameter



Patch Error: Pier Near Cape
Cuvier
2013
Acrylic on Board
9 cm diameter



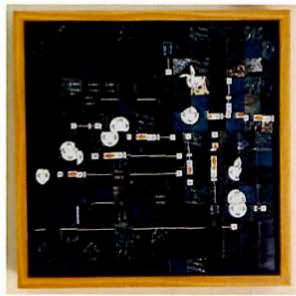
Aerial Relief 2
2013
Acrylic, Resin, Foamcore
23.5 x 23.5 cm



Conglomerate Whale Sighting:
Adult and Calf
2013
Photographic Collage
14 x 14 cm



Conglomerate Whale Sighting:
Whitewash
2013
Photographic Collage
14 x 14 cm



Conglomerate Measurement
Glitch
2013
Photographic Collage
15.5 x 15.5 cm



Conglomerate Whale Sighting:
Ripples
2013
Photographic Collage
15 x 15 cm



Conglomerate Whale Sighting:
Breach
2013
Photographic Collage
15 x 15 cm



Conglomerate Whale Sighting:
Interspecial Summit
2013
Photographic Collage
12.5 x 12.5 cm



Conglomerate Whale Sighting:
Almost Nothing
2013
Photographic Collage
15 x 15 cm



False Alarm off Dirk Hartog
Island
2013
Goauche on Board
11.3 x 9.4 cm



Patch Error: Seasonal Swell
2013
Acrylic on Board
19 x 19 cm



Patch Error: Wandering Clud
2013
Acrylic on Board
19 x 19 cm



Patch Error: Salt Flats
2013
Acrylic on Board
19 x 19 cm



Patch Error: Jacuzzi Test Strip
2013
Acrylic on Board
19 x 19 cm



Patch Error: Slope Island
2013
Acrylic on Board
19 x 19 cm



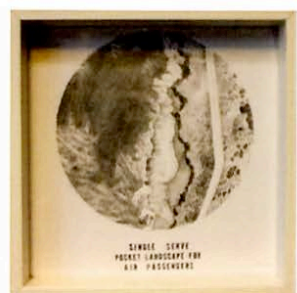
Single Serve Pocket Landscape
For Air Passengers
2013
2B on Paper
12.5 x 12.5 cm



Single Serve Pocket Landscape
For Air Passengers 4
2013
2B on Paper
10.8 x 10.8 cm



Single Serve Pocket Landscape
For Air Passengers 3
2013
2B on Paper
10.8 x 10.8 cm



Single Serve Pocket Landscape
For Air Passengers 2
2013
2B on Paper
12.5 x 12.5 cm



Loading Error over Learmonth
Minilya Road
2013
Acrylic on Board and Glass
15 x 15 cm



Click to Zoom Map
2013
Acrylic on Photograph
16 x 11 cm



Aerial Relief 1
2013
Acrylic, Resin, Foamcore
15.5 x 15.5 cm

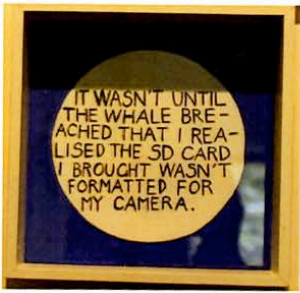


Image Not Found 1
2013
Acrylic on Paper
15.5 x 15.5 cm



Patch Error: Seasonal Abutmnt
Southwest of Exmouth
2013
Acrylic on Board
17.3 x 13 cm

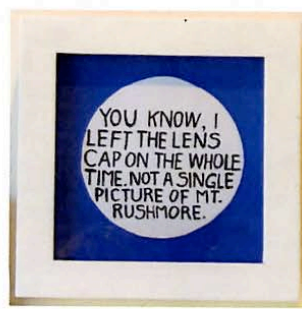
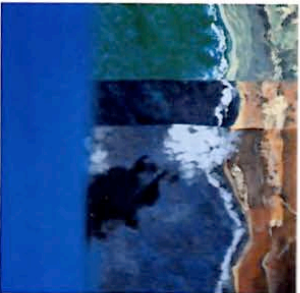


Image Not Found 3
2013
Acrylic on Board
15.5 x 15.5 cm



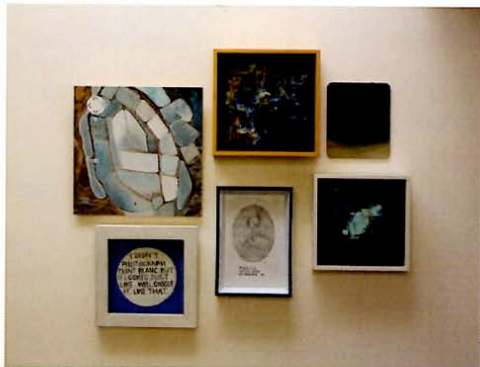
Patch Error: Adjacent Times
of Day
2013
Acrylic on Board
19 x 19 cm



Image Not Found 2
2013
Acrylic on Board
15 x 15 cm



Loading Error West of Exmouth
2013
Acrylic on Board and Glass
15 x 15 cm



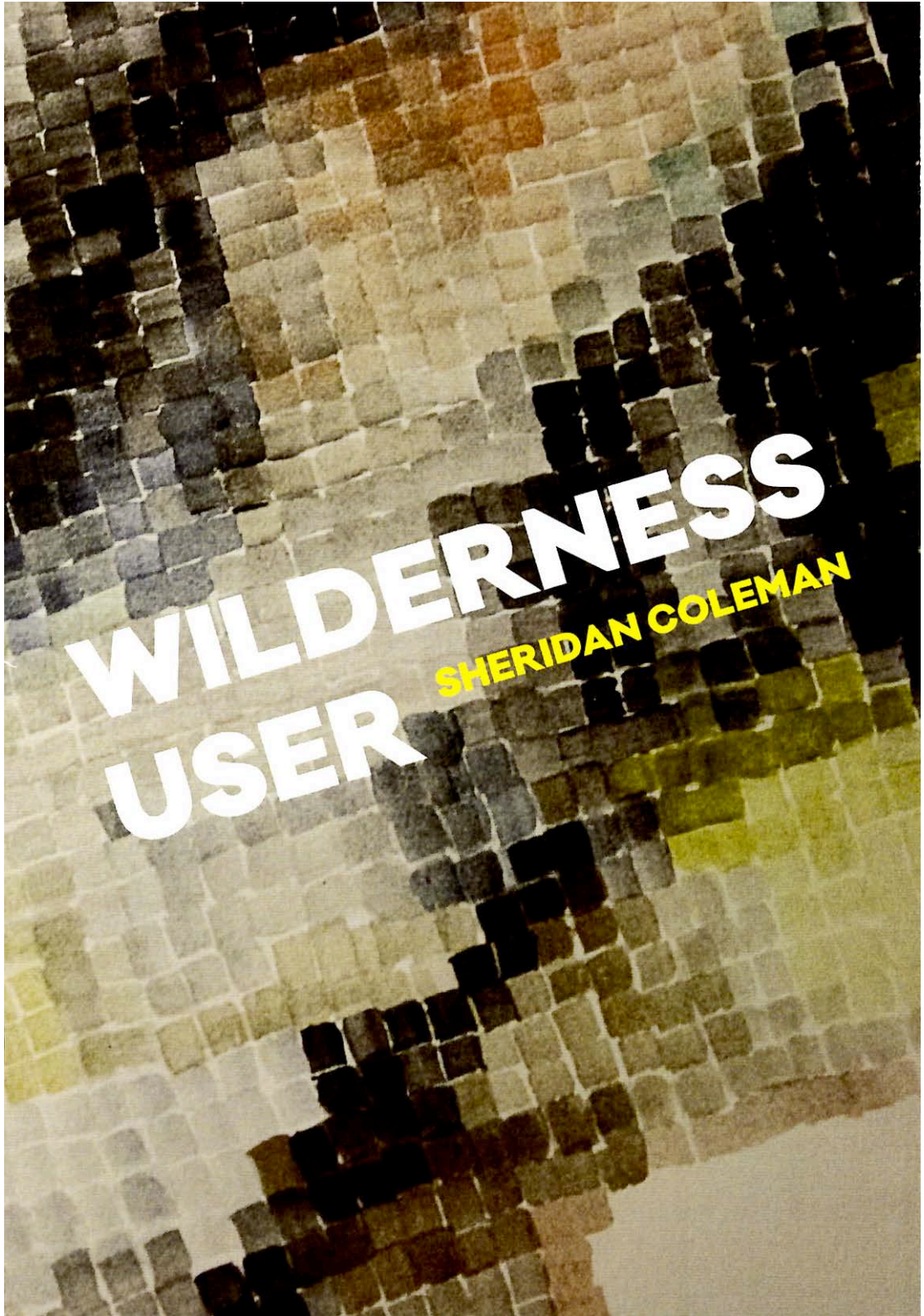
Midnight, Forecastle was shown at The Daphne Collection, North Perth, WA from 10th January to 2nd February 2014.

Sheridan Coleman is an artist and arts writer based in Fremantle, Western Australia. She is currently completing an APA and CUPSA supported PhD at Curtin University of Technology, focussing on the future of landscape art in an age of Google Maps and ficto-factual geographical visibility. This body of work supports that PhD.

More information about Sheridan's practice and writing can be found at sheridancoleman.com

Wilderness User

Below is a facsimile of the catalogue for my exhibition *Wilderness User*, held at Paper Mountain Studios in Northbridge, in June of 2015. The document was designed by Mark Wahlsten, and features an essay about my work by Perth writer Emma Hussein.



SHERIDAN
COLEMAN

WILDER-
NESS
USER

6 - 21
JUNE
2015

Cover:
Sheridan Coleman
Online Barrow Island Wilderness
Expedition Notes (detail), 2015
watercolour on paper

Curiosity is an insatiable and uniquely human thirst.

It has been the catalyst for feats of impossibility and will define us for as long as we survive on this little planet. We want to know the world and how it works, to pursue knowledge until every last stone has been upturned. It's a curious thing, then, to think that there are landscapes we will simply never visit, at least not in our lifetime. The world is more interconnected than ever before, and yet there remain places so desolate, so isolated and so treacherous, that even time, exertion and money seem unlikely to allow us access. Curiosity alone is no ticket to the wilderness.

It is rare to meet a person who claims not to like travel—the spirit of exploration hasn't deserted us just yet. However I doubt that those who espouse a love of travel would describe the physical act of *travelling* as enjoyable. Nobody likes airport queues, endless customs checks, waiting, the excruciatingly long time it takes to actually get anywhere. Cramped and uncomfortable, flying brings out the worst in otherwise reasonable people. No, it isn't the travelling, but the destination that inspires a love of travel. So – what if you could 'travel' without ever leaving your bedroom? What if all you need to see the world was a reasonable Internet connection?

You can, of course. Enter Google Earth: *climate and comfort controlled travel*, allowing us to peer into places we could never see in reality. The stoic and harsh landscapes we cannot master will continue to evade us physically, yet as modern travellers, we can see them from the vantage point of our computer screens.

The number of people who can describe seeing the moon up close with their own eyes is few. The fact that anybody has done so has come to symbolize the pinnacles of human achievement. Perhaps it would be an insult to the achievements of Neil and Buzz to mention our own explorations, but now we too can explore the moon's surface in close detail using Google Moon. We can pinpoint the exact locations of significant research expeditions, follow the trails of the rovers, see the landing sites, and imagine ourselves making the same journey. We can almost consider our online lunar sojourn as a pilgrimage in veneration to human progress and the wonders of the universe.



Sheridan Coleman, *The Curator Sophie Bower-Johnston as the Artist on Google Earth* (detail), 2015, photograph

Few journeys are as grand and humbling as the Apollo missions, and yet we might simulate these journeys in introspection, dressed in pyjamas, in our living rooms, on our phones.

Then there are the sacred landscapes, which explorers are forbidden to traverse. We now have the ability to take a peek at places like the holy mountain Gangkhar Peunsum, which were once unseeable. As anonymous virtual onlookers, we might irreverently transcend these written and unwritten barriers, with no earthly repercussions (other than the weight of our own morality). Online, the world holds few such boundaries, and we are masters of our own journeys, deciding when and where we go.

While Google might be the ultimate labour-saving device, it isn't without its flaws. Bouvet Island, a volcanic glacial landmass and dependency of Norway, is a place that just isn't feasible for humans

to visit. It's out of the way and extremely expensive to reach, and even though it might just be a pile of rock, volcanic sediment and glacial ice, it's mystery is enough to seek it out. The island's harshness and isolation is reflected in its appearance on Google Satellite: all that is visible is a pixelated mass of cloud hovering over the sea, shrouding the land. Bouvet Island seems tantalisingly close, but the glitches and imperfections that are an inevitable symptom of the virtual landscape prevent us from getting any closer. How can we know what is hidden under that menacing mass of cloud when it is so difficult to distinguish between what is really there, and what is an electronic mistake?

The truth is, digital journeying requires imagination. The process of seeing digital landscapes is appended by gathering information on the climate, ecosystems and history through online research.

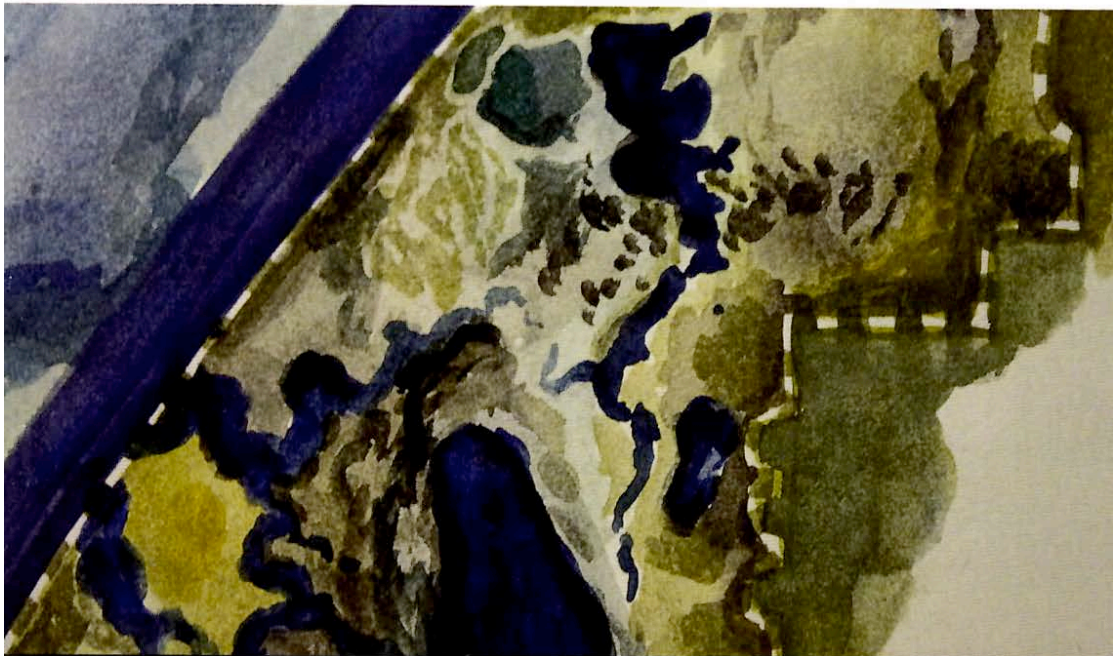
With this knowledge, we can create our own imagined experience of a place—reconstructing how it would feel, sound, and smell. Online, we are unlimited overseers, creating worlds from afar, each of which is unique to the person creating it. We become explorers of the mind.

Though as modernistic travellers we possess enriched potential for imagination, vision and projection, our sight is limited to the fabric of the online world. We see only what we are allowed to see, our access provided by the providers. Some places must remain invisible, omitted from the digital landscape because of algorithmic error, political censorship, delay in visual updates, and gaps in infrastructure. This begs the question: how much of what we see is a true reflection of what is *really* there? Perhaps in our virtual wanderlust, we are getting ahead of ourselves.

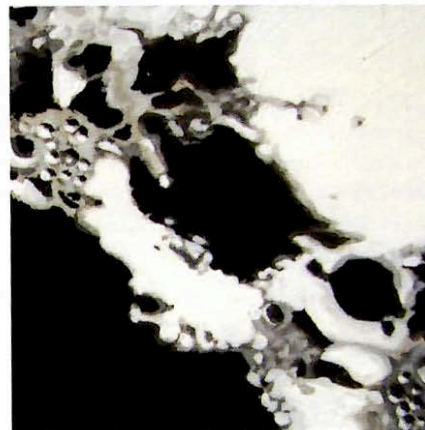
After all, this digital landscape is merely a construction, a tool that informs us about the world, whilst nonetheless mediated by the ability of companies, governments and algorithms to release or withhold clear pictures of the earth. Though remoteness or climactic inhospitality may no longer limit what we can see, Google Earth is not an electronic key to all the mysteries of the world. For the time being, all we can hope for is to satiate some of that innate curiosity. Comfortably.

Emma Hussein


Sheridan Coleman, *Online Barrow Island Wilderness Expedition Notes* (detail), 2015, watercolour on paper

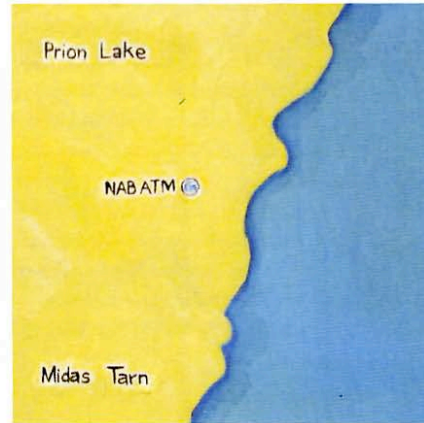


Wilderness User is a visual chronicle and disambiguation of six wholly online exploratory expeditions into wilderness landscape:




Sheridan Coleman, detail, *Online Bouvet Island*
Wilderness Expedition Notes, 2015, acrylic on board

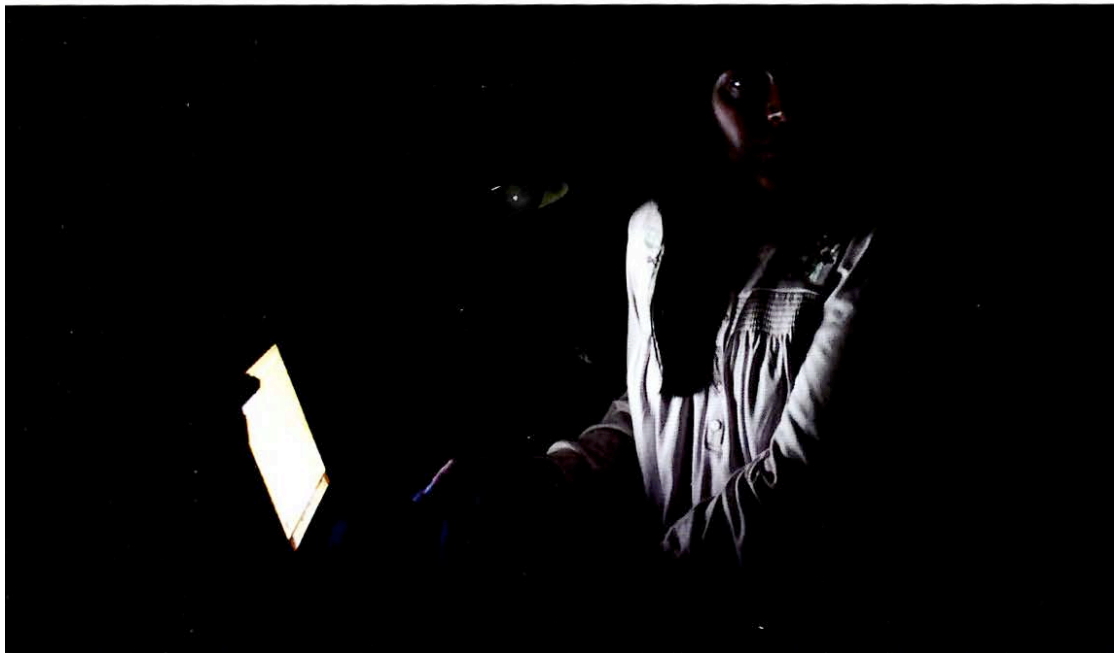
 **Bouvet Island** (54°25.8'S, 3°22.8'E) is an uninhabited volcanic island located in the South Atlantic Ocean. It is the world's most isolated island, comprised of volcanic basalt. More than 90% of its surface is encrusted by glacial ice. The island is outside of trade routes by many hundreds of kilometres and its almost-vertical shores and vertiginous peaks make landing by boat or plane more or less impossible. After a minor volcanic eruption in 1955 created a minor level promontory, a 1964 party managed to land a helicopter for a 45-minute expedition, during a brief drop in the surrounding 50-knot winds.




Sheridan Coleman *Online Macquarie Island Wilderness Expedition Notes (detail)*, 2015, acrylic on board

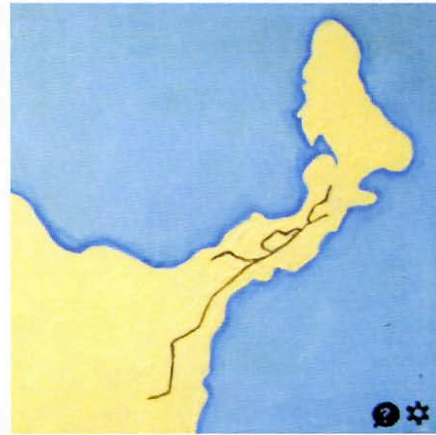
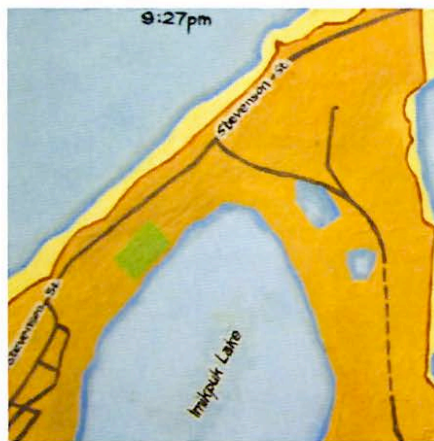
 **Macquarie Island** (54°30'S, 158°57'E) is a small island located between New Zealand and Antarctica. The entirety of the world's Royal Penguin population nests on Macquarie Island as part of its annual migration. The island is a world heritage site and its only human population is an itinerant group of AAD (Australian Antarctic Division) researchers, numbering between 20 and 40, in a research station on the northern tip of the island.

Sheridan Coleman, *The Artist Lauren Cowdrey as the Artist on Google Earth*, 2015, photograph

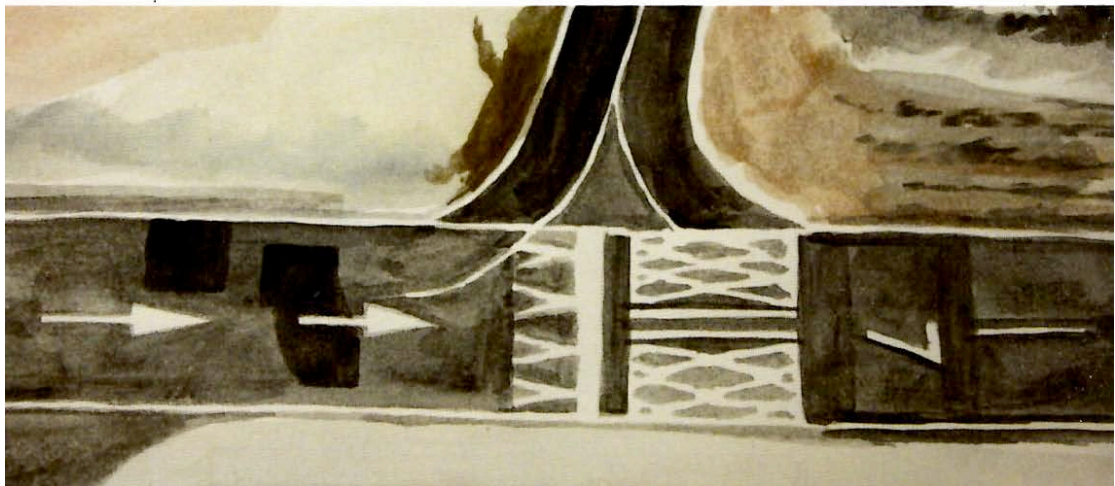


 **Barrow** (71°17'44"N, 156°45'59"W) is a remote community situated on the northernmost tip of the United States, in Alaska. Barrow is inside the Arctic Circle, and due to being surrounded by ocean and frozen plains, it has an extreme wind chill and frequent white outs. Barrow's small population annually experience a high temperature above freezing on around 120 days each year and below 18°C on over 160 days a year. Snow falls year round.

Sheridan Coleman, detail, *Online Barrow, Alaska Wilderness Expedition Notes*, 2015, acrylic on board



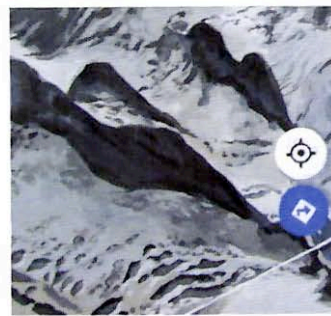
Sheridan Coleman, *Online Barrow Island Wilderness Expedition Notes* (detail), 2015, watercolour on paper





Sheridan Coleman, *Online Lunar Wilderness Expedition Notes (detail)*, 2015, acrylic on board

The Moon is a natural satellite orbiting the Earth, formed around 4.5 billion years ago. Its orbit speed is roughly 1km per second, and it makes one full orbit of the earth every 27.3 days. In a 1967 treatise, Russia and the US declared the moon to be the "province of all mankind", however only 12 humans have walked on its surface, over the course of five Apollo shuttle voyages between 1969 and 1972.



Sheridan Coleman, *Online Lunar Wilderness Expedition Notes (detail)*, 2015, acrylic on board

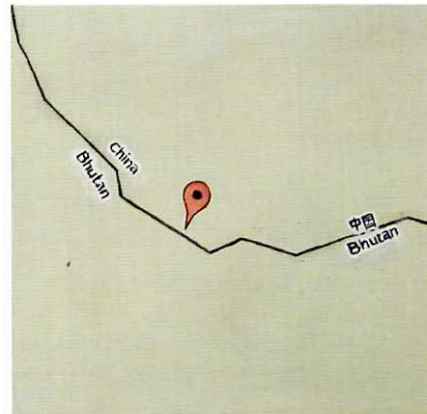
The Antarctic Pole of Inaccessibility (82°06'S, 54°58'E) is the name of the point on the Antarctic continent that is the most interior and furthest from all surrounding shoreline access points. Vostok, a Soviet research station, was erected at this location in 1958, and was in use for less than a year. The now-defunct station has the world's coldest year-round temperatures (averaging -58.2°C), and today the station is almost entirely submerged beneath accumulating banks of snow, however a bust of Lenin that was mounted on the roof can still be seen.




Sheridan Coleman, detail, *Online Gangkar Peunsum Wilderness Expedition Notes* (detail), 2015, acrylic on board



Sheridan Coleman, detail, *Online Gangkar Peunsum Wilderness Expedition Notes*, 2015, acrylic on board



 **Gangkar Peunsum** (28°02'54"N, 90°27'15"E) is a mountain that constitutes a significant peak in the Himalayan ranges, located on the border of Bhutan and China. The region has been poorly mapped and the mountain's summit has never been climbed. In 1994, all mountaineers were officially prohibited from attempting the climb out of respect for its role as a sacred spiritual site in the local Vajrayana Buddhist religion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Paper Mountain would like to thank their magnificent Gallery Attendants:

Lily Bennion, Danielle Blackwell, Natasha Bloomfield, Ashley Bonser, Caroline Dale, Laura Folan, Caroline Forsberg, Jenni Gray, Karl Halliday, Karolina Koszelski, Mei Leong, Alice Lynch, Grace McKie, Bronwyn Mory, Holly O'Meehan, Jill O'Meehan, Annie McLoughlan, Phoebe Mulcahy, Amy Perejuan-Capone, Ashley Ramsey, Indi Ranson, Kat Scarff, Mathew Siddall, Jasmine Uitermark-Thaung and Mark Wahlsten

Our Creative Associates:

Elizabeth Bills (Media Liaison)
Claire Bushby (Volunteer Coordinator)
Rachel Ciesla (Special Projects)
Johnson Doan (Marketing Officer)
Matthew Giles (Media Liaison)
Alison Hayles (Special Projects)
Zoe Swainston (Marketing Officer)
Vynka Topham (Studio Co-ordinator)
Mark Wahlsten (Graphic Design)
Henry Whitehead (Photographer)

Paper Mountain is an artist run initiative co-directed by:

Alisa Blakeney
Minaxi May
Kali Norman
Desmond Tan
Alina Tang
Emiko Watanabe

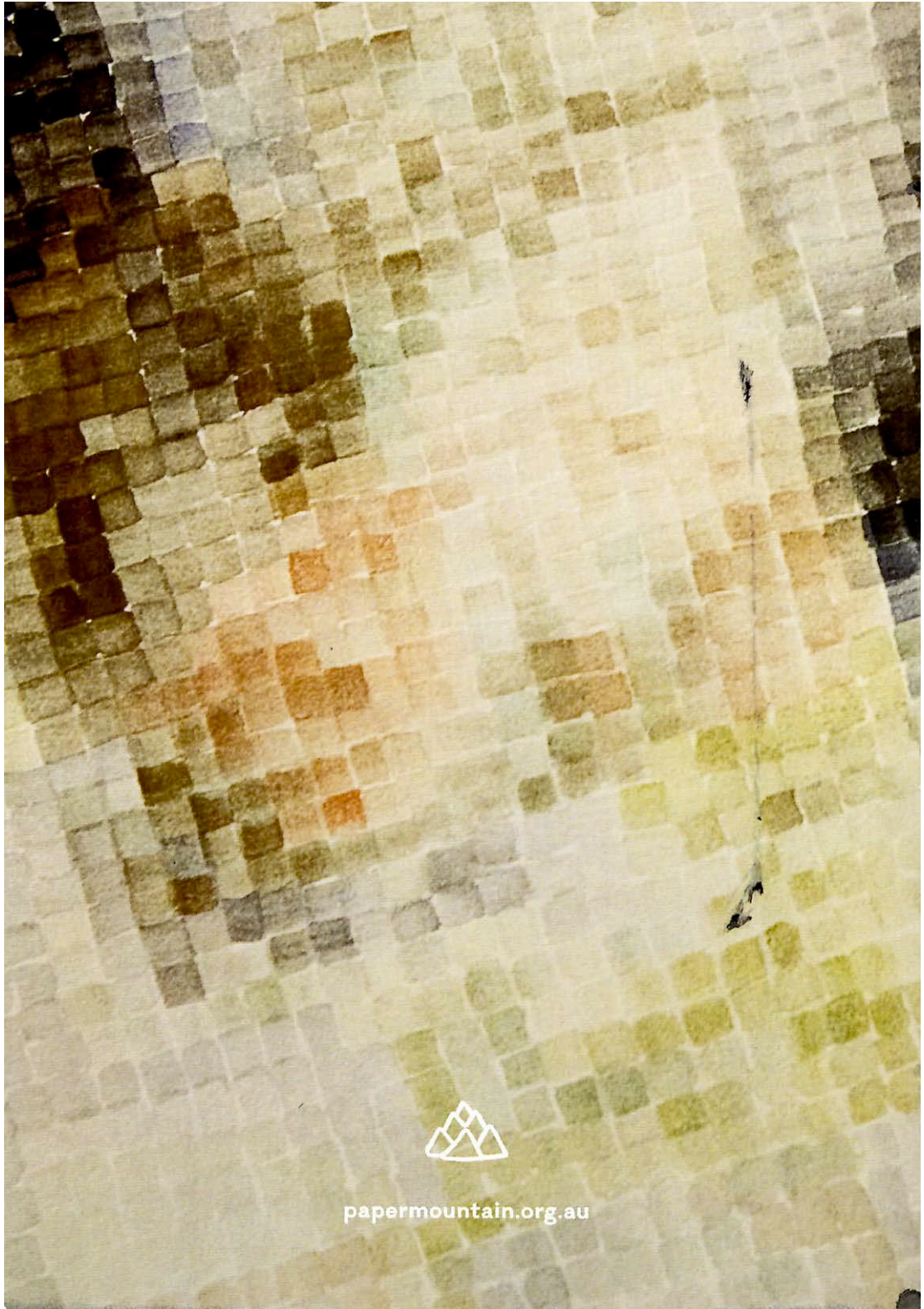
Design by Mark Wahlsten
Printed by Graphic Source

All photos courtesy of the artists, unless otherwise stated.

Paper Mountain is on Noongar land.

Upstairs, 267 William St, Northbridge
info@papermountain.org.au
papermountain.org.au





Appendix IV: Curriculum Vitae of PhD-Related Activities Undertaken

Research & Scholarly Activities

PhD Candidacy submitted and approved

Assembly of a library of key texts

Establishment a blog for communication of ideas, artworks and information with supervisors and other peers and mentors

<http://sheridancoleman.wordpress.com/>

Establishment a professional website for formal record of portfolio and exhibitions

<http://sheridancoleman.com/>

Completion of six-week online Queensland University of Technology course *Practice-led Research in Creative Arts, Media & Design*

Participated in four HDR Workshops

Presented in two academic conferences, listed below under *Presentations*

Mounted three professional art exhibitions at independent galleries around Perth, listed below under *Exhibitions Undertaken for PhD Study*

Production of a significant body of original artworks developed over five years of studio work

Production of a significant catalogue of manually recorded and indexed research material in support of this exegesis (and future work)

Exhibitions Undertaken for PhD Study

2017 *Internet Explorer*

A major solo exhibition of sculptural works containing over 110 paintings, held at the Engine Room space at Turner Galleries in Northbridge, W.A. Accompanied by a floorsheet.

2015 *Wilderness User*

A major solo exhibition of over 100 artworks, including video, photography, collage and painting, held at Paper Mountain gallery in Northbridge, W.A., accompanied by a catalogue and an artist talk

2014 *Midnight, Forecastle*

A major solo exhibition of over 45 paintings and drawings, held at The Daphne Collection gallery in North Perth, W.A., accompanied by a catalogue and an artist talk. Co-curated by Sophie Bower-Johnson.

Other Selected Exhibitions

2016 *Words Beyond Grammar*

A group exhibition about how language has changed due to the presence of search engines and digital communication, to which I contributed over 50 miniature paintings. Accompanied by a catalogue. Curated by Claire Bushby and Steven J. Finch.

2014 *Paper Mountain Auction*

An annual survey and fundraiser exhibition of Perth artists, held at Paper Mountain Gallery, Northbridge, W.A. Curated by Minaxi May.

2013 *Cropped Open Ocean*

The exhibition of a single resin-pour artwork depicting the ocean as seen from Google Maps, in the outdoor, 24-hour Light Locker Art Space in Grand Theatre Lane, Perth, W.A. Curated by Katie Lenanton.

2012 *How to Talk with a Mountain*

A group exhibition about varying representations of mountains in culture, to which I contributed a substantial series of drawings and collages. Held as a part of the 2012 Awesome Arts Festival, at Paper Mountain gallery in Northbridge, W.A. Accompanied by a catalogue. Curated by Renae Coles and Anna Dunnill.

2012 *Conservatorium*

A survey exhibition about artwork contained in jars or vessels, to which I contributed three miniature landscape sculptures, held at Paper

Mountain gallery in Northbridge, W.A. Curated by Renae Coles and Anna Dunnill.

2012 *International Summit*

A graduate exhibition of paintings drawn from my Masters degree and early PhD research, themed around digital representations of mountain

landscapes, held at John Curtin Gallery, Bentley, W.A. as part of the annual SODA School of Art and Design exhibition series.

Accompanied by a catalogue and artist talks.

Residencies

2013 *Fremantle Arts Centre*

A one-month residency in Studio One at Fremantle Arts Centre.

Residency program curated by Bevan Honey.

Presentations

2015 *Wilderness User and a Digital Tour of the World with Google Maps*

A 1-hour public artist talk to accompany the PhD exhibition *Wilderness User* held at Paper Mountain Gallery in Northbridge, W.A. Chaired by Desmond Tan.

- 2015** *The Australian Ocean as an Agent of Gothic Disappearance*
 A 20-minute invited conference presentation at the 2nd Biennial 2015
 GANZA (Gothic Association of Australian and New Zealand)
 Conference: Boundaries, Mergence, Liminalities, held at the Darling
 Harbour Novotel, Sydney, N.S.W. Convened by Dr. Lorna Piatti-
 Farnell.
- 2014** *Seeing, Imaging and Imagining Unvisited Lands*
 A 20-minute invited conference presentation at the annual AAANZ
 (Art Association of Australia and New Zealand) Conference:
 Geocritical, held at the Tasmanian College of the Arts, Launceston,
 TAS. Panel convened by Dr. Martin Walch, University of Tasmania.
- 2014** *The Australian Ocean and Disappearance*
 A 30-minute public art lecture as part of the public program
 accompanying the exhibition *Horizon: Exploring the West Coast with
 the Clipperton Project*, held at Fremantle Arts Centre, Fremantle,
 W.A. Chaired by Julia Remmert.
- 2014** *The Pencil Marks, The Past Moment*
 Exhibition opening address for *Tears/Other Worlds* by Perth artist
 Lauren Cowdrey, held at The Daphne Collection, North Perth, W.A.
- 2014** *Worldwide Backyard*
 1-hour public art talk, in conversation with curator Gemma Weston, to
 accompany the Cruthers Collection of Women's Art exhibition
Worldwide Backyard, held at Lawrence Wilson Gallery, Crawley,
 W.A. Chaired by Janice Lally.
- 2014** *Here I Am at the Grand Canyon*
 Illustrated spoken word performance at the Ships in the Night spoken
 word event series, held at Bar 459, North Perth, W.A. Curated by
 Simon Cox and Zoe Barron.

- 2014** *Internetting*
Book launch address for *Shareparty* artists' monograph by Perth artist Kieron Broadhurst, held at Fremantle Arts Centre, Fremantle, W.A.
- 2013** *The Perth Eye*
Opening night address for *Bright Lights, Big City* group exhibition, curated by Karys McEwen, held at Buratti Fine Art, North Fremantle, W.A.
- 2013** *Big Ass Shed*
Art talk on the practice of and in collaboration with Perth artist Bevan Honey, as a part of the Maylands Studio Night series, held at Miik Green Studio, Maylands, W.A.
- 2012** *SoDA Pop Talks*
Art talks and gallery tour accompanying my exhibition *International Summit*, held at John Curtin Gallery, Bentley, W.A. Chaired by Andrew Purvis.

Publications

- 2016** *As Long as the Night is Dark*
Preview of *As Long as the Night is Dark* group exhibition curated by Simon Pericich at Wagga Wagga Art Centre in N.S.W., for Art Guide Australia, Issue Jan/Feb. Edited by Varia Karipov.
- 2016** *Candy Land*
Preview of Pip & Pop (Tanya Schultz) exhibition *When Happiness Ruled* at Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts for Art Guide Australia, Issue Nov/Dec, page 72-75. Edited by Varia Karipov.
- 2016** *Unknown Land pictures country Indigenous Australians already knew well*
Preview of *Unknown Land* exhibition of colonial artwork at the Art

Gallery of Western Australian for Art Guide Australia Online. Edited by Tracey Clement.

2016 *Bella Kelly*

Preview of Bella Kelly retrospective exhibition and John Curtin Gallery for Art Guide Australia, Issue May/June 2016, page 51. Edited by Toby Fehily.

2016 *Chronicle*

Preview of Sioux Tempestt exhibition *Chronicle* at the Museum of Perth for Art Guide Australia Online. Edited by Tracey Clement.

2016 *Theo Koning*

Preview of Theo Koning Exhibition *Fragments of Language* at Turner Galleries for Art Guide Australia Online. Edited by Tracey Clement.

2016 *Resistance*

Preview of Indigenous art exhibition *Resistance* at the Art Gallery of Western Australia for Art Guide Australia, Issue Jan/Feb 2016, page 52. Edited by Toby Fehily.

2015 *Jacobus Capone*

Artist profile about Perth Artist Jacobus Capone (Damien Capone) for Art Collector, issue 71, Jan/Feb 2015. Edited by Camilla Wagstaff.

2015 *Derek Kreckler*

Preview of *Accident & Process* exhibition by Derek Kreckler at Perth Institute of Contemporary Art for Art Guide Online. Edited by Toby Fehily.

2015 *Afronauts*

Preview of *Afronauts* exhibition by Christina de Middel at Perth Centre for Photography for Art Guide Online. Edited by Tracey Clement.

- 2015** *Of Earmice and Men*
 Preview of related exhibitions *Futile Labor* at Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, Crawley, W.A. and *DeMonstrable* at John Curtin Gallery, Bentley, W.A., published in Art Guide Australia, Issue Sep/Oct 2015 page 87-90. Edited by Toby Fehily.
- 2015** *The Artist as Landscape User*
 Essay in art criticism journal *Dissect Journal*, issue 2, page 203-221. Edited by Chloe Sugden and Christopher Williams-Wynn.
- 2015** *Wilderness User*
 Artist statement in catalogue accompanying *Wilderness User* exhibition at Paper Mountain Gallery, page 6-8.
- 2015** *Fertile Soil*
 Preview of Thea Costantino exhibition *Fertile Soil* at John Curtin Gallery for Art Guide Australia Online. Edited by Toby Fehily.
- 2014** *Midnight, Forecastle*
 12-page catalogue accompanying *Midnight, Forecastle* exhibition at The Daphne Collection.
- 2014** *Erin Coates / George Egerton Warburton*
 Review of *Kinesphere* exhibition by Erin Coates and *Adminsitration is Just Oulipian Poetry* by George Egerton-Warburton at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, for Artlink, Vol 34 No 4, page 72-73. Edited by Stephanie Radok.
- 2014** *Shared Skies*
 Preview of exhibition of Indigenous Australian and South African artworks, *Shared Skies*, at John Curtin Gallery, for Art Guide Australia Online. Edited by Dylan Rainforth.

- 2014** *New Passports, New Photography*
Preview of photographic exhibition *New Passports, New Photography* at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, for Art Guide Australia, Issue Nov/Dec 2014, page 51-52. Edited by Dylan Rainforth.
- 2014** *Hatched*
Review of *Hatched* national graduate survey exhibition at Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts for Art Guide Australia Online. Edited by Dylan Rainforth.
- 2014** *Worldwide Backyard*
Exhibition catalogue essay for Cruthers Collection of Women's Art exhibition *Worldwide Backyard*, curated by Gemma Weston at Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery. Edited by Gemma Weston.
- 2014** *Shadowlands*
Features article about Anne Ferran exhibition *Shadowlands* at Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery for Art Guide Australia Online. Edited by Kim Butterworth.
- 2014** *William Kentridge*
Exhibition preview of William Kentridge exhibition *The Refusal of Time* at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, for Art Guide Australia Online, Issue Mar/Apr 2014, page 45-46. Edited by Dylan Rainforth.
- 2014** *Ambitious for the Audience*
Artist feature about Perth-based Tom Muller for Artsource WA Quarterly, Issue Apr/Jul 2014, page 14-15. Edited by June Moorhouse.

- 2014** *Paramodel & The Tenth Sentiment*
Exhibition preview of two PIAF exhibitions at John Curtin Gallery, *Paramodel* and *The Tenth Sentiment* by Ryota Kuwakubo for Art Guide Australia Online. Edited by Dylan Rainforth.
- 2013** *Moment Fixation*
Catalogue essay for Perth artist Tim Carter's exhibition *Test Screen* at Paper Mountain Gallery.
- 2013** *Thank Christ the Visitors Have Gone*
Catalogue essay for Melbourne artist Richard Lewer's exhibition *The Ten Commandments* at Hugo Michel Gallery. Edited by Hugo Michel.
- 2013** *The Art of the Long Conversation*
Artist profile about Perth-based Antony Muia for Artsource WA Quarterly, Issue Dec 2013-Mar 2014, page 18-19. Edited by June Moorhouse.
- 2013** *Tom Price: A Company Town*
Feature article about US artist Daniel Peltz' residency with SPACED at the mining town of Tom Price in WA, for Artlink, Vol 33 No 4, page 64-66: Mining, edited by Stephanie Britton.
- 2013** *Destination Art*
Feature article about Dr. Stefano Carboni's direction of the Art Gallery of Western Australia, for ARTiFacts AGWA members' magazine, issue Dec 2013-Mar 2014, page 11-12. Edited by Carola Akindele-Obe.
- 2013** *Bankwest Art Prize*
Review of the Annual Bankwest Art Prize at Bankwest Place Gallery, for Art Guide Australian Online. Edited by Dylan Rainforth.

- 2013** *Dark Portals: Sera Waters*
Feature article about Sera Waters exhibition *Dark Portals* at Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, for Art Monthly, Issue 264, October 2013, page 39-42. Edited by Maurice O’Riordan.
- 2013** *Lunatics, Artists & Submariners*
Historical essay on the Fremantle Arts Centre building and site, published by the City of Fremantle. Edited by Maria Noakes.
- 2012** *Flash of Brilliance*
Artist profile about photographer David Collins for Fudd. Online magazine. Edited by Nick Smith.
- 2012** *Here&Now12*
Review of annual emerging artist survey *Here&Now12* at Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, for Artlink, Vol 32 No 4, page 90. Edited by Stephanie Britton.
- 2012** *Emma McPike: Suburban Paradise*
Artist profile of printmaker Emma McPike, for Imprint magazine, vol 47 no 4, Summer 2012, page 19. Edited by Sue Forster.
- 2012** *In the Shadow of the Past, this World Knots Tight*
Review of Kate McMillan exhibition *In the Shadow of the Past, this World Knots Tight* at Venn Gallery, for Artlink, Vol 33 No 2, page 136. Edited by Stephanie Britton.
- 2012** *A museum of one’s own: Look. Look Again.*
Feature Article about Cruthers Collection retrospective *Look. Look Again.* held at Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, for Art Guide Australia, Issue Sep/Oct 2012, page 70-74. Edited by Dylan Rainforth.

- 2012** *Thomas Rentmeister, Between Filth and Sterility*
Feature article about exhibition *Objects. Food. Rooms.* by Thomas Rentmeister, held at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, for Art Guide Australia, Issue Jul/Aug 2012, page 48-49. Edited by Dylan Rainforth.
- 2012** *The Embassy will be Open*
Feature Article about exhibition *The Greater Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere* project by Abdul Abdullah, Casey Ayres and Nathan Beard, for RealTime Arts, Issue 108, Apr/May 2012, page 15. Edited by Keith Gallasch.
- 2012** *I Got 99 Virtues and a Fridge is One*
Review of Abdul-Rahman Abdullah exhibition *Inside the Little Kingdom* at Kurb Gallery, for Colosoul Magazine Online. Edited by Graham Hansen.
- 2012** *Plastic Eden*
Preview of David Collins photography exhibition *Plastic Eden* at Venn Gallery, for Art Guide Australia Online. Edited by Dylan Rainforth.
- 2012** *Picasso to Warhol: Fourteen Modern Masters*
Preview of MoMA Series exhibition *Picasso to Warhol: Fourteen Modern Masters* at The Art Gallery of Western Australia, for Art Guide Australia, Issue May/Jun 2012, page 41-42. Edited by Dylan Rainforth.
- 2012** *The Men in Gold: Politics, Fashion, Art and Asian Kitsch*
Artist profile about exhibition *The Greater Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere* collaboration between artists Abdul Abdullah, Casey Ayres and Nathan Beard, for Frankie Magazine, Issue 44, Mar/Apr 2012, page 36. Edited by Jo Walker.

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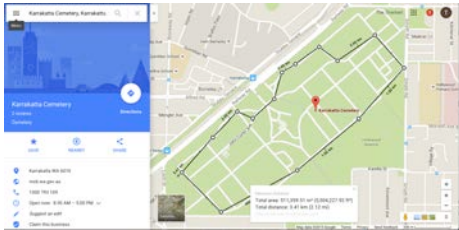


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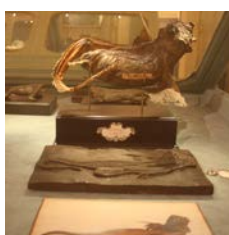


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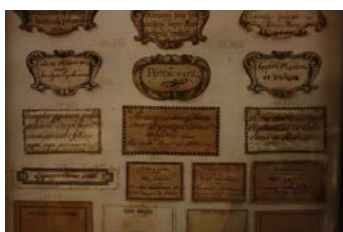


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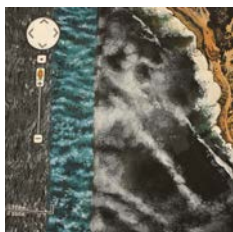


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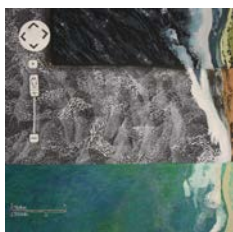


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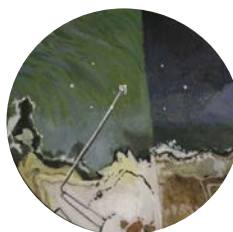


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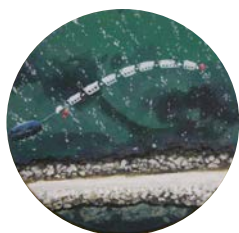


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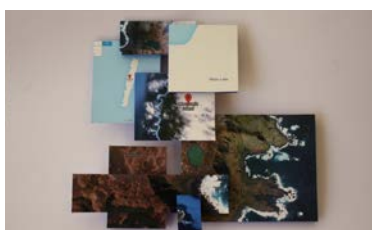


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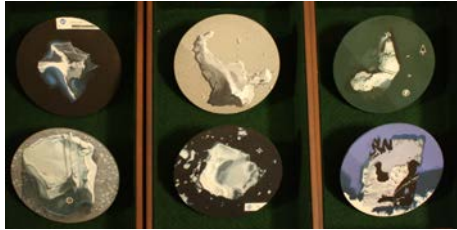


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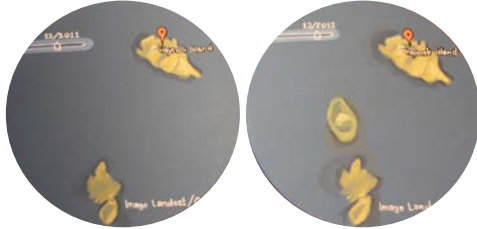


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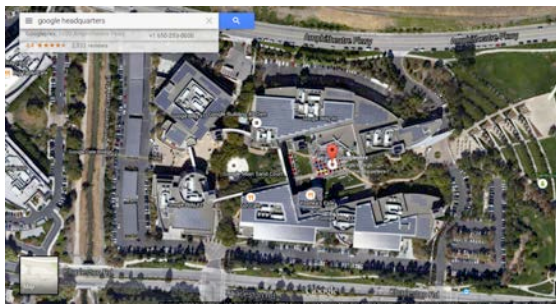


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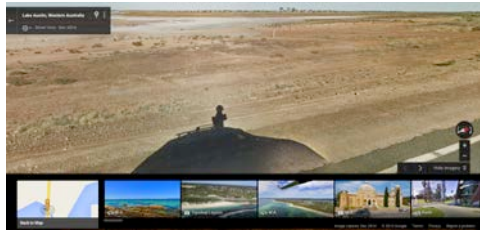


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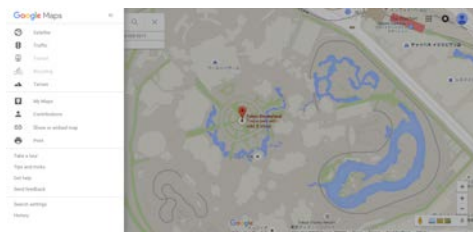


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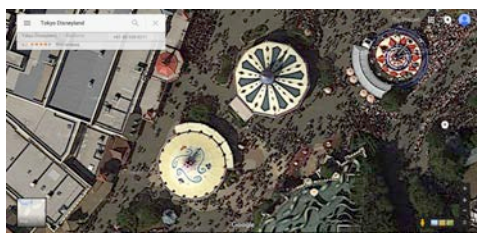


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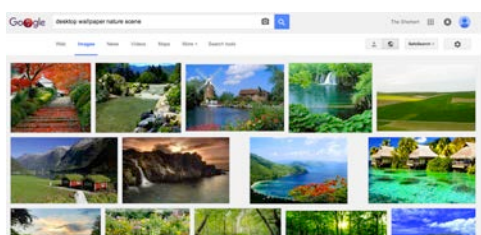


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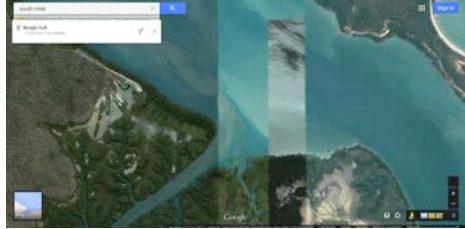


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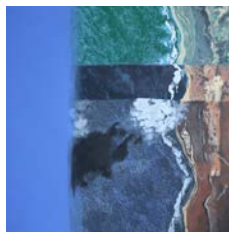


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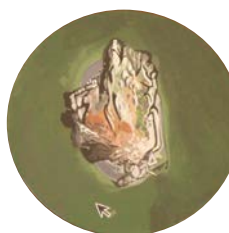


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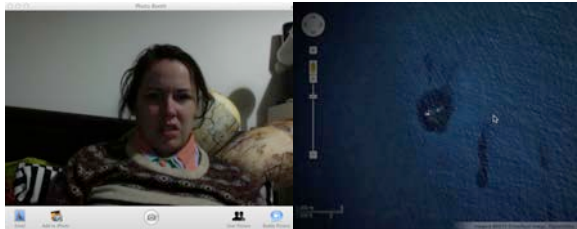


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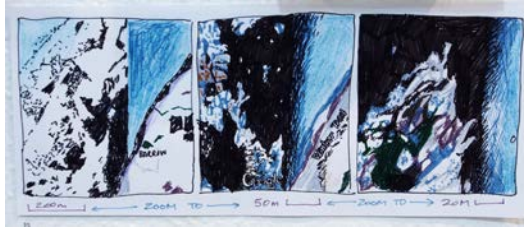


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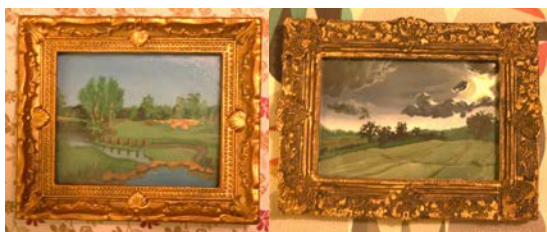


Fig. 15.8
 Sheridan Coleman, *The Virtual Window (two details)*, 2012, mixed media and electrics on wooden mounts
 Image: Sheridan Coleman



Fig. 15.16
 Sheridan Coleman, *Bouvet Island Homepage*, 2015, foam core, acrylic, photographs, 22 x 14 cm
 Image: Adam Mitchell



Fig. 15.19
 Sheridan Coleman, *Macquarie Island Zoom*, 2015,
 photographs, acrylic, foamcore (install view)
 Image: Adam Mitchell

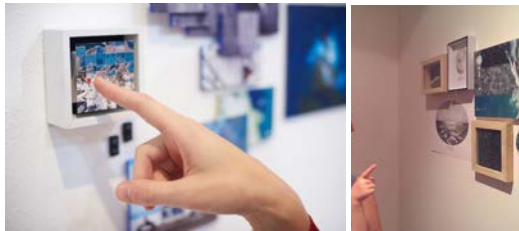


Fig. 15.20
 Installation documentation from
Wilderness User, 2015 (L), and *Midnight,*
Forecastle, 2014 (R)
 Left image: Henry Whitehead
 Right image: Piers McCarney



Fig. 15.21
 Sheridan Coleman, detail of *Temporary Islands*
(Icebergs), 2016, acrylic on board, felt-lined
 display drawers
 Image: Sheridan Coleman



Fig. 16.8
 The author's grandparents' house as seen on Google
 Street View, in 2015
 Image: Google Street View
<http://maps.google.com.au/>
 (accessed February 11, 2015)



Fig. 16.9
 A Google Street View vehicle seen outside the
 author's grandparents' house as seen on Google
 Street View in 2015 Image: Google Inc.
<http://maps.google.com.au/>
 (accessed February 11, 2015)



Fig. 16.10
 A photograph I took of the Google Street View vehicle in
 Francis Street in Northbridge, W.A. in February 2015
 Image: Sheridan Coleman

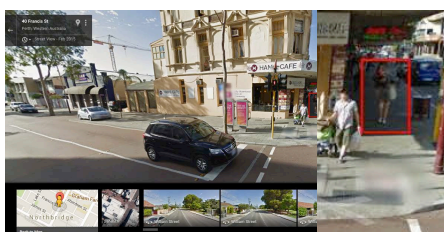


Fig. 16.11
 A Google Street View screenshot of the corner of
 William and Francis Streets in Northbridge,
 W.A., with a red box indicating where I am
 Image: Google. <http://google.com.au/maps/>
 (accessed August 4, 2015)



Fig. 17.4
 Sheridan Coleman, *Nishi-no-Shima was born in 1974*, 2016, acrylic on board, 9 x 9 cm
 Image: Sheridan Coleman



Fig. 17.9
 Sheridan Coleman, *False Alarm: Boat Wake (?)*, 2013, gouache on MDF, 9 x 9cm
 Image: Sophie Bower-Johnson



Fig. 17.10
 Sheridan Coleman, *Strange Splash North of Geraldton, 4th June, 2013, 7:17pm*, 2013, digital screenshot
 Image: Sheridan Coleman/Google



Fig. 17.12
 Sheridan Coleman, *False Alarm along Geraldton Bay*, 2013, gouache on MDF, 11.3 x 9.4cm
 Image: Sheridan Coleman

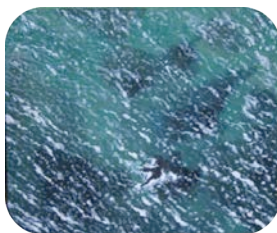


Fig. 17.13
 Sheridan Coleman, *False Alarm of Dirk Hartog Island*, 2013, gouache on MDF, 11.3 x 9.4cm
 Image: Sheridan Coleman



Fig. 17.14
 Sheridan Coleman, *Whale North of Bookara, 4th June 2013, 7:29pm*, 2013, digital screenshot
 Image: Sheridan Coleman/Google



Fig. 18.1
 Sheridan (right) accompanies a visitor along the line of painting at the *Wilderness User* exhibition in 2015
 Image courtesy: Brittney Tyrell



Fig. 18.2
 Working in the studio on miniature paintings for the exhibition *Internet Explorer* in 2016
 Image: Sheridan Coleman

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