



Christi Belcourt, *This Painting is a Mirror* (detail)– 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 206 x 256 cm, Collection of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada

Art & The Environment

Part 2: Landscape and Environment

Participants examine environmental art and visual culture through a close analysis of the landscape genre, installation and intervention, and film. Students differentiate notions of space and place as they relate to particular geographical, topographical, colonial, and national constructs concerning the environment. Topics may include the role of environmental representation in filmic discourse, visual art and environmental modification, Indigenous land ownership, and the wider philosophical and cultural associations of the environment. In Part 2, we survey some of the world's major landscape traditions, including contemporary Land Art, regional traditions in both east and west, the colonial dimensions of the settler landscape (especially in Canada), and the emancipatory potential of landscape in film and popular culture.

Week 1

Contemporary Art & the Environment: Earth Art

Robert Smithson's *The Spiral Jetty* of 1970 is perhaps the most famous exemplar of Land Art or Earth Art: site-specific installations, often made of natural materials, which encourage a re-visitation or meditation on remote wilderness environments. If Isamu Noguchi's design for *Contoured Playground* (1941) is one of the earliest works in the genre, Ana Mendieta's embodied practice of hollowing, feathering and performance insisted on second-wave feminist leadership in Land Art. "My work, as a dialogue between nature and the mythical female body, has evolved dialectically in response to diverse landscapes as an emotional, sexual, biological affirmation of being," wrote Mendieta. "My art is grounded on the primordial accumulations, the unconscious urges that animate the world, not in an attempt to redeem the past, but rather in confrontation with the void, the orphanhood, the unbaptised earth of the beginning, the time that from within the earth looks upon us." These urges are similarly present in the breathtakingly lovely *Green River Project* by Olafur Eliasson (2000): his latest piece, *Life*

(2021), in which the artist removed a wall of the Fondation Beyeler, Basel, Switzerland, is meant as an “invitation to the planet”.

- England, Elizabeth. "The Archive of Place and Land Art as Archive: A Case Study of "Spiral Jetty"." *The American Archivist* 80, no. 2 (2017): 336-54. Accessed July 20, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44784344>.

Week 2

Between East and West: Traditions and Conventions

Chinese & Japanese landscape painting: the Northern and Southern Schools of painting with Fan Kuan's *Travellers among Mountains and Streams*, c. 1030, compared to Dong Qichang's *Eight Views of Autumn Moods* (1620). Su Shi and the literati landscape, Ren Bonian and the Shanghai school of the late 19th century: ex. *Court Lady performing a Sword Dance*, c. 1860. The Italianate/Arcadian schools – Poussin's *Et in Arcadia Ego*, 1638; Claude Lorrain's *The Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba*, 1648, Jan Both's *Landscape with the Ponte Lucano and the Tomb of the Plautii*, c. 1652 . Dutch landscape from Patinir to Cuyp. The English country house under Capability Brown, and the rise of the Hudson River school: Thomas Cole's *the Oxbow*, 1836, compared to the Barbizon School of Corot, Rousseau, & Daubigny. The Impressionist and Symbolist landscapes: Renoir & Monet's consumable nostalgia and the primitivist eccentricities of Henri Rousseau.

- Auricchio, Laura. "The Transformation of Landscape Painting in France." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/lafr/hd_lafr.htm
- Amory, Dita. "The Barbizon School: French Painters of Nature." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/bfnp/hd_bfnp.htm

Week 3

Deadly Paradise: Colonization & Resistance

Tropical Landscapes – Brazil, India, Africa, Polynesia. Victor Meirelles' *The First Mass in Brazil* and *Moema* : fantasies of state conquest and the “Vanishing Indian” (1860, 1868). Cultural hybridity and ethnic blending in Indonesia, such as in the famous portrait by Jacob Jansz Coeman, *Dutch family in Batavia* (1672). Early photography in West Africa: painted settings for distinctive portraits from Alphonso Lisk-Carew (1887–1969), such as his *Bundoo Girls*, 1905. Gauguin's primitivism, Clarissa Chapman Armstrong's *verisimilitude*, bark cloth (tana) as a collaborative process by Polynesian women. Veranoa Hetet, weaver from Waiwhetu Marae, New Zealand, as a particularly compelling case study of the lived vibrancy of Maori weaving traditions in a feminist context.

- Claudia Mattos, 'WHITHER ART HISTORY?: Geography, Art Theory, and New Perspectives for an Inclusive Art History', *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 96, No. 3 (September 2014) (pp. 259-264).

Week 4

"It's a great life in the far West if you don't weaken": Nostalgia, Settler-Colonialism, and the Bourgeois Canadian Landscape

Group of Seven as central to the nation's narrative of itself: Jin-Me Yoon's *Group of Sixty-Seven* (1996, 1997). Lawren Harris's masculinized version of de-peopled north: *Icebergs, Davis Strait* (1930) compared to Albert Bierstadt's *Rocky Mountain Landscape*, of 1880; both implicitly glorify colonization through nostalgia & the sublime. Emily Carr's *Scorned of Timber, Beloved of Sky*, 1935, makes full use of precedents established in settler painting far earlier: for example, Homer Watson's *The Last Day of the Drought*, 1880, or Lucien O'Brien's *Sunrise on the Saguenay, Cape Trinity* (1880), a work that would become formative to the discipline of art history in Canada. 20th-century Quebecois painting also highly invested in nostalgia: Clarence Gagnon's *A Laurentian Homestead* (1919), Anne Savage's *The Plow* (1931), or the monumental black-and-white canvases of the Arctic by Jean-Paul Riopelle, recently on view in Montreal, reiterate canonical reifications of settler-colonial privilege via nostalgia. Kent Monkman, Lawrence Paul & Christi Belcourt are just three compelling case studies of thousands of indigenous artists who rework landscape conventions as political criticism of the bourgeois settler state.

- ANGEL, SARA J. "Two Patrons, An Exhibition, and a Scrapbook The Lawren Harris-Georgia O'Keeffe Connection, 1925-1926." *Journal of Canadian Art History / Annales D'histoire De L'art Canadien* 32, no. 2 (2011): 108-37. Accessed July 20, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42616568>.

Week 5

Filmscape: Land, Art & Film

For Italian auteur Michelangelo Antonioni, characters in his films are meant to "suggest the background in themselves, even when it is not visible. I want them to be so powerfully realized that we cannot imagine them apart from their physical and social context even when we see them in empty space." *L'Avventura* (1960), *L'Eclisse* (1962), *Red Desert* (1964), *Zabriskie Point* (1970). Landscape as a (racist) character itself in the famous westerns by John Ford (*Stagecoach*, 1939), or Anthony Mann (*The Far Country*, 1954). Jacques Demy's *The Demoiselles of Rochefort* (1967) uses innovative camerawork to suggest a bubbly, effervescent environment, while Federico Fellini's *8 1/2* deploys montage and compositional framing to insinuate a psychologically liminal, fantastical experience of space. Luca Guadagnino, in *I am Love* (2009), *A Bigger Splash* (2015) and *Call Me By Your Name* (2017), explores the sensual dimensions of food, scent, music, sex and literature to pay tribute to a beloved Mediterranean world. In contrast, Deepa Mehta's

Fire (1996), *Earth* (1998), and *Water* (2005) insist on place as a point of critical departure, emphasizing the role of both natural and built environments in propagating misogyny or classism. *The Black Panther*, by Ryan Coogler (2018), recapitulates traditional narratives of Africa – such as those deployed in the famously non-linear *Qatsi* trilogy by Godfrey Reggio (1982 – 2002) or in Ron Fricke's *Baraka* (1992) or *Samsara* (2011) – to suggest the liberatory, emancipatory potential of Afrofuturism. Sofia Coppola's use of setting to suggest nostalgia, loss and terror in the *Virgin Suicides* (2000) is widely lauded as the hallmark of a proper auteur, but how will the future judge Chloe Zhao's filmscapes in *Nomadland*: are the twinned corporate and natural environments here critical, or crypto-celebratory?

- Hoskin, Bree. "Playground Love: Landscape and Longing in Sofia Coppola's 'The Virgin Suicides'." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (2007): 214-21. Accessed July 20, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43782749>.

Week 6

"Wild Horses Couldn't Drag Me": Animals, Magic, & Danger

Gobekli Tepe, Ainu bear cults, apotropaic Egypt, Ramayana tiger, Chinese tiger, William Blake, Gerome Tiger, Jasmine Tiger, heraldic lion, symbols of the evangelists, nagas, Gerome lion, Ghibli wolf/Boar, Little Red Riding Hood, Beatrix Potter, Roger Tory Peterson (domestication of the wild through identification and analysis, specification, connoisseurship), Aztec Hummingbird God, ID apps? Cartoons – cereal, pink panther, raccoons, Rufus the naked mole rat (Wiarthon Willie!), Polkaroo, Disney's The Lion King, wolf & fox furies, pup subculture.

- Mayako Murai. "'Domesticating' Nature: Amy Stein's Photographic Restaging of Human–Animal Encounters." *Narrative Culture* 4, no. 2 (2017): 153-68. Accessed July 20, 2021. doi:10.13110/narrcult.4.2.0153.



Robert Smithson, Spiral Jetty (1970), Great Salt Lake, Utah