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Mixed Motives: Hegemony in Landscape

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MIXED MOTIVES: HEGEMONY IN LANDSCAPE

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Master of Fine Arts

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My work considers landscape more than a physical place but as a cultural construct that can be decoded to inform our understanding of cultural identity. The term landscape has a variety of meanings and connotations. By presenting the viewer with surreal skin-like environments that have suffered the affects of human exploit, I hope to inspire empathy for our world and the fragile systems therein. I look to the Romantic period's fascination with sublime natural wonders and compare this experience to industrial hubris and the human desire for control over nature. While we look to landscape for a sense of identity and belonging our insatiable appetite to subjugate the land may ultimately lead to our demise. My work attempts to illustrate human assertion becoming a force of nature reshaping human identity.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Art from the Romantic period depicts nature as an uncontrollable power with the potential for cataclysmic extremes. A common romantic theme acknowledges the limits of human power over nature. My research explores Romantic notions of sublime beauty capable of generating awe and terror in the beholder. I observe how this experience and relationship has changed with the advancement of technology and human progress. Romantic artists viewed landscape as a source of inspiration and wonder, but contemporary society has become detached and view nature as a resource to be consumed. The sublime experience can now be identified in massive land excavation and extraction projects that provoke a new sense of awe and danger from our insatiable collective appetite:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.... When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and [yet] with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we every day experience. (Burke 34)

A modern interpretation of landscape emphasizes how landscape can be an expression of cultural development and an insight into the foundation of human identity. The historian Simon Schama asserts that landscape is a cultural construct, a mirror of memories or myths that can be decoded (Schama 14). The landscape in which we live

contains a collection of ordinary features that are inseparable from the course and character of society. Through variable textures and topography, my work individualizes the character of each landscape and emphasizes the connection between identity and land.

I compare the unique qualities of human skin to the topography of our world to reveal our inherent connection to the earth. These surreal landscapes internalize an external occurrence and personalize our role and impact within our ecological system. Geometric shapes cut out of the flesh or land represent human expansion and progress. These scarred sites expose current contemporary society's disinterest and distance from an engaged relationship with the natural world. Key influential artists, Bernd and Hilla Becher, record the impact of human industry with a straightforward objective point of view employing deadpan photography (Lange 32). Implementing this deadpan aesthetic, my drawings are monochromatic, evenly toned, calm, and devoid of subjective emotion or effect to communicate our distance and indifference toward the natural world.

The landscape of our time is the one we change and disrupt in the pursuit of progress. In the context of romanticism, the fear that was once found in the power of nature now belongs to the potential of human impact. Advanced technologies enable humans to modify the landscape and fuel the arrogant misconception that we can control nature. I hope to promote awareness to the unsettling transfigurations affecting the landscapes that define us. By combining Romantic concepts with a contradictory Deadpan aesthetic, I create a contemporary hybrid revealing the need for environmental awareness.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL CONTEXT/ ROMANTICISM

The extreme power found in the natural world can be best observed in the work of the Romantics. It is therefore necessary to reflect on the Romantic Landscapes that explore the sublime power of nature.

Romanticism first appeared after the French Revolution of 1789 as an alternative to the ordered world of Enlightenment thought and the Neoclassical emphasis on the ideal. Neoclassicists placed great importance on the power of reason as a way of discovering truth and shared an interest in classical styles, which severely limited the stylistic and thematic options for artists. Jacques Louis David was a Neoclassicist but trained and influenced many of the first Romantic artists such as Antoine-Jean Gros, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, and Eugene Delacroix. These artist's works subvert the Davidian model and assert their own originality with free handling of paint and an expanded selection of subject matter. The Romantics valued creativity and expression over logical thinking. The Enlightenment of the 18th century was a time of scientific progress that acknowledged the limits of human power. Romantics used feelings and emotions to understand the world rather than scientific thought. They sought freedom through nature, time, space, and their own minds (Ball 45).

Romanticism was not just confined to visual art but also influenced literature and music across many cultures. Common romantic themes deal with the supernatural, elements of death and love, and humanity's inability to deal with the natural world through science. During the time of Enlightenment, reason and logic were thought to offer a resolution to any problem. Romantics rejected the Enlightenment's reduction of nature to a mechanistic worldview and sought to restore spiritual meaning to the world by depicting supernatural forces such as time,

decay, and the unpredictable powers of nature.

These characteristics can be seen in Casper David Friedrich's *Cloister Cemetery in the Snow*. The painting depicts a barren winter scene that is similar to imagery seen in a contemporary horror film. Friedrich is examining these forces of nature that humans cannot control, and uses nature as a literal depiction of a supernatural force on earth. He employs a new vocabulary to create an image that is hauntingly beautiful, changing our sense of beauty. The Romantics found beauty in the immense uncontrollable power of nature that inspired wonder and horror simultaneously. This concept was known as the sublime and is at the heart of Romanticism.

THE PASSION caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that, far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasoning, and hurries us on by an irresistible force. (Ashfield 132)

The Romantics critiqued the arrogant notion that scientific discovery provided any sort of human control over nature. They inspired this feeling of the sublime by depicting nature's ability to stun the soul and imprint a feeling of terror through violent and terrifying images. Shipwrecks and other human struggles against nature were commonly seen and were usually based from contemporary events, such as *The Raft of the Medusa* by Theodore Gericault.

Today humans are changing the definition of the sublime by exerting greater control over nature as seen in Edward Burtynsky's terrifying images of today's contemporary events. According to Dr. Bob Zunjic,

We experience the sublime when our imagination fails to comprehend the greatness of natural events by means of determinate concepts of the understanding but supplants this failure with a delight stemming from its ability to grasp these aspects of nature by virtue of an idea of reason.
(Zunjic)

CHAPTER III

CONTEMPORARY USE OF LANDSCAPE

Stephen Hannock

I investigate how Romantic principles are being utilized in the contemporary paintings of Stephen Hannock and the contemporary works of Christopher Orr. In a modern art world where traditional landscape painting is thought to be irrelevant, Stephen Hannock brings an updated contemporary approach while still incorporating the Romantic luminosity seen from the Hudson River School. Overlaying his paintings with personalized text, Hannock is able to bridge the 19th century traditional landscape with the contemporary landscapes of the 21st century. Suspicion usually surrounds contemporary art that is too accessible and derivative, yet Hannock finds profundity in what is simply beautiful.

Christopher Orr

Artist Christopher Orr deliberately manipulates placement and the scale of figures within vast, awe-inspiring landscapes to create a sense of unease. Characterized by elements of Romanticism and the Sublime, Orr creates small but intricately detailed figures and objects within deceptively large and ethereal landscapes. This juxtaposition of scale is a direct reference to the grandiose scale inherent in the work of the Romantic masters. Figures and objects within Orr's work suggest the overwhelming power and magnitude of nature like his predecessor, Caspar David Friedrich in *Monk by the Sea*.

Orr represents nature in a condensed way with a supernatural light source and a common presence of a mysterious haze. These dramatic lost worlds inspire a feeling of uncertainty and the unknown. My work also depicts a place that inspires a feeling of uncertainty, in an effort to

retain the viewer's attention, but also to imply a world with a questionable future. Orr gathers images from old books and magazines to assemble them into his compositions. My compositions are produced in a comparable manner, compiling all of my own reference imagery from different sources and initially assembling them as a collage. Orr uses different sized figures, ignoring formal perspective and image consistency. This reveals his collage process but also fragments the image and identifies a romantic detached sensation.

Catherine Opie

Catherine Opie harnesses the power of photography to investigate and document the relationship Americans have with members of their community and the way they occupy the landscape. Using typical genres such as portraiture, landscape, and studio photography, in combination with radically different subject matter and unexpected compositions, Opie is able to load her documentary images with conceptual meaning. She reveals a part of her own biography by capturing the identity of individuals through examining associations people create with others. Through the process of capturing urban transformation, political movements, subcultures and our contemporary life, Opie hopes to comprise a current portrait of America.

Opie's ability to capture individual identities in association to place inspires my work and is something I hope to reference in general. Her photographs capture a multifaceted contemporary identity that is only temporary and always changing. Her appeal to the viewer and use of entrapment as a method is a device that I hope to employ within my own work to start a conversation about a sensitive subject.

Opie first gained attention in the early 1990's with her portraits that challenge "typical" gender identity. Utilizing visual seduction, she is able to capture her audience's

attention long enough to show them unexpectedly attractive visual moments. Her work shifted directions and she began working on the series *Freeways*, which depicts an abstract visual representation of social and psychological constructs that divide communities. In the place of a congested highway, *Untitled # 11* reveals the absence of people, hinting at the ruins of a vanished civilization.

It can be challenging to find the connecting themes within Opie's various series of work. The retrospective of her work at the Guggenheim in 2008 revealed the common thread that links all of her very diverse strategies together. Whether documenting political movements, queer subcultures, or urban transformation, Opie's images of contemporary life comprise a portrait of our time in America. Her work resonates with formal ideas that convey the relationship of identity with place.

I am especially interested in the specific series that borrow the typological approaches of Bernd and Hilla Becher. The Bechers are postwar German deadpan photographers who document the industrial landscape. Their work has been characterized as conceptual, typological study, and topological documentation that captures the imposition industrial structures have on our consciousness and the role they play in shaping our perceptions.

Deadpan photography encompasses within itself the realm of the factual, and that it raises, rather than merely reflects, the possibility that 'our' failures of sensibility and responsiveness to how factuality might relate to facticity can manifest in a form of 'coldness' towards the world. (*Costello* 40-41)

The Catherine Opie series *Houses, Domestic, American Cities, and Mini-Malls* utilizes a similar deadpan aesthetic that directly speak to photography's status of unbiased reportage. Photography reveals an insight into history and time unlike any other medium. *Mini-Malls* communicates the complexity of a built environment by documenting the constant transformation of a specific place.

Edward Burtynsky

Looking to industrial landscapes to understand our contemporary human identity, Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky documents the changing relationship of humankind to nature. Scarred landscapes such as quarries, recycling depots, oil fields, refineries, and shipbreaking yards, are documented to portray the vast extent of nature's transformation at the hands of industry. He does not celebrate or condemn these actions but mediates between the life we lead and the places we create as a result of this life.

My work is influenced by his images recording the extent of human initiated transformation on nature. A landscape more affected by human modification is incomprehensible reaching the point of astonishment and fear, rousing a sublime experience and reaction.

Similarly to my own work, Burtynsky defines the landscape of our time as the one we change or interrupt in the pursuit of progress. China's recent efforts to provide a "better life" for its citizens attracted Burtynsky to that country's manufacturing heart. Here, he has photographed impressive sites such as Three Gorges Dam, Bao Steel, Qiligang, Cankun, Yu Yuan, among others. These sites show the staggering impact humans have had on the land. As humanity's footprint continues to expand, we are reshaping the earth's surface at an accelerating rate.

In a TEDTalk presentation, Burtynsky reveals his desire to encourage a massive and productive worldwide conversation about sustainable living. He does not condemn industry or

humanity's collective appetite, but hopes to engage his audience by simulating a forbidden pleasure. He challenges the viewer with the beauty of these sites while simultaneously showing the impending demise of our way of life (*Tedtalks: Edward Burtynsky*).

This current relationship humans have with the landscape suggests an interesting insignificance humans once experienced in the face of the awe inspiring power of nature. Modern technology and the human way of life provide the ability to completely manipulate the world. Fear that was once found in the subliminal power of nature now belongs to the potential ability humans possess in transforming nature. Not only is the unnatural rate at which humans can transform the landscape terrifying, so is the unintended consequences of this manipulation. Climate change, erosion, and natural disasters are just a hint of nature's impending response.

CHAPTER IV

OVERVIEW

Conceptual Description

I specifically explore the Romantic concept of the sublime; beauty found in nature's capability of generating the sensations of awe and terror in the beholder. I observe how this experience and relationship has changed with the advancement of technology and human progress. Landscape was once viewed as a source of inspiration and wonder, but recent generations have become detached and see it as a resource to be consumed. The proportion and rate at which we are able to excavate and modify our landscape provides a new subliminal experience, one that provokes a new sense of awe and terror from our insatiable collective appetite.

American studies author Leo Marx uses the physical landscape as a metaphor for the human psyche. The historian Simon Schama asserts that landscape is a cultural construct, a mirror of memories or myths that can be decoded (Schama 14). The landscape in which we live contains a collection of ordinary features that are inseparable from the course and character of society.

Identity in relation to place allows people to develop effective attachments to a location as well as a sense of belonging. Place identity brings people together around shared values, issues and localities and contributes to forge the image of civilization and humanity. As a result, very complex built environments are created but remain under constant transformation. I am interested in this constant transformation and observe the way Catherine Opie is able to comprise a current portrait of American landscape by documenting the way in which Americans occupy the landscape.

The physical landscape has played a large role in shaping human history. From the beginnings of humanity, geology has dictated the location of settlements, their way of life, the evolution of life style, and nearly every aspect of identity. Primitive mankind was at the mercy of the wild natural world but ideal geographical locations provided means for human development. Irregular occurrences of flint, obsidian, clay and building stone gave tribes controlling these resources a competitive advantage. Towards the end of the Stone Age, the innovation of farming placed great significance on large, fertile river flood plains. Six ideal locations positioned in temperate climate zones provided means for large scale farming and created the world's earliest civilizations. Geologist Donald Beaumont has identified these six locations as the Nile River, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the Indus River in Pakistan-India, the Ganges River in India-Bangladesh, and the Yellow River and the Yagnzi River in China (Beaumont 25). Clearly geography and human society have been connected throughout history.

Access to an abundant food supply, water, and resources afforded additional time to develop better tools and weapons. The invention of metal tools created a demand for deposits of ores, leading to the Copper and Bronze ages. The previously stated locations, however, were without ore deposits, requiring these civilizations to develop trade routes along west-to-east waterways to remote lands. The dawn of the Iron Age brought advanced weapons, which provided the position for those with iron ore resources to subjugate those without. The struggle to control this resource shaped early human civilization and is a pattern that still defines human progress today, seen in strip mines and oil fields for example.

Prime geographical locations led to ideal areas of cultivation, trade, transport, and commerce. A new local identity is created within the inhabitants as a result but not without a mutual exchange. The development of civilization and human activity leaves behind obvious evidence of human existence within the landscape (Beaumont).

Ecologist Eric Sanderson painstakingly investigates and re-envision what Manhattan looked like as Henry Hudson first laid eyes on it from the harbor in 1609. Using geomapping and the 3D programming of Mark Boyer, Sanderson is able to completely reconstruct the original habitat of the island of Mannahatta. Comparing the geo referenced images of 400 years ago next to the downtown district of New York City today, Sanderson and Boyer are able to create an image of a landscape presenting an overwhelming amount of transformation.

After viewing Sanderson's Ted Talk presentation, I became aware of the change occurring in my surrounding landscape. Frequent travel across Pennsylvania and neighboring states via Interstate 81 and the Pennsylvania Turnpike provide a personal source of interest in human ecology. I have become quite familiar with my local geography consisting of the rolling hills of the Appalachian Mountains and the small farms nestled in the valleys between. While documenting, I have realized my deep connection to my local environment.

My family's origins were deeply rooted in small farming communities. I am the first generation not to be raised on a farm but my local environment still consists of small towns surrounded by forests and farms. I instinctively imagine how this landscape looked before inhabitants settled and envision the original appeal of this location. However, this rural landscape is quickly changing due to the intersection of heavily traveled interstates.

These veins of transportation supply goods up and down the east coast. An area that was once dominated by coal industry and agriculture is now quickly transforming into warehouses that go on for miles. These once forested areas that were cultivated for agriculture long ago, were slowly modified for mining natural resources, and are quickly becoming centers of supply depots, transport and housing projects.

The rate of transformation is not quite as terrifying as Burtynsky's landscapes in China, but still exhibits the human ability to completely alter an environment.

The changing rolling hills of Pennsylvania provide the starting point for my work. I sketch and take pictures of these vast but intimate landscapes while documenting the people that inhabit them. Instead of photographing faces, I take portraits of their hands. Daily human interaction with the physical world transpires on the surface of our hands.

Human skin is a living organism that is always changing on the surface. Similar to the skin, a deeply carved canyon is the only inscribed proof that a river once flowed through a valley. Likewise, the various qualities of the hand, including the shapes and lines of the palm and fingers; the color and texture of the skin and fingernails; the relative sizes of the palm and fingers; the prominence of the knuckles; scars and calluses, and numerous other attributes of the hands, are engraved evidence of a life and past experiences.

Humans leave their mark by digging, gouging, building, and shaping the land and environment to fit their desires, but not without a mutual alteration. In my drawings, I attempt to construct a world from forms that resemble human skin to metaphorically symbolize the simultaneous influence we have with our world. As we labor with our hands to change or build our surroundings, we are in return molded and shaped. Our

journey through life and this physical world is fundamental in our development.

I create landscapes by drawing intimate views of human hands and skin in ways that resemble the surrounding environment. Aristotle stated that, "Lines are not written into the human hand without reason. They emanate from heavenly influences and man's own individuality." I investigate the transformation that occurs to human identity and the physical landscape as a result of accelerating human development.

My surreal skin landscapes internalize an external occurrence and personalize our role and impact within our ecological system. This is necessary due to the extreme detachment between current civilization and landscape. Most people are a part of a consumer economy where they know little about producing their own food and energy, let alone the impact they have on the planet. The modern way of life enables current generations to live completely removed from the natural world.

An extensive gap exists between where goods originate and the journey they take to our home. "Farm-to-table" is a coined term that signifies all the stages of the production of food: harvesting, storage, processing, packaging, sales, and consumption. The distance food and other products are transported, from the time of their production until it reaches the consumer, is only growing. Increasing "Food miles" generates more carbon emissions but also cultivates an unhealthy relationship of under-appreciation and lack of respect for our environment. Not only does our carbon footprint expand but it also fuels the indifferent attitude we have toward our landscape.

The relationship of indifference or detachment can be seen in my work through the flattening of expression, the evenness of effect, monotone color, and the apparent disinterest and distance from any engaged relationship to the landscape. The subject is in

the center of the image, and is presented just as it would be if you walked up to it. It offers an unbiased view of the world that would often go unnoticed. All of these characteristics describe an aesthetic in photography known as Deadpan.

In deadpan photography the subject is not dressed up or posed, but rather seems honest and emotionless. Employing the deadpan aesthetic allows me to engage controversial subjects, yet my personal sentiments remain separate from functioning as a guide to understanding the meaning of the artwork. The images are presented as fact without the distraction of mood. Creating landscapes at the mercy of human alteration in a deadpan aesthetic communicates modern human indifference toward nature.

German philosopher Martin Heidegger examines the human experience of being, which he titles, "Dasein." "He characterizes this condition as a leveling down in which we are caught up in what he calls the 'everydayness' of the 'they'-which is 'us' in our supposedly inauthentic way of being-in-the-world" (Costello 40). To be human is to be fixed, embedded and immersed in the physical, literal, tangible day-to-day world (Steiner 1978).

We do not just inhabit our landscape; we are a part of it. We are a part of a very dense network within a large natural habitat. No matter the level of personal interaction, we are connected to a diverse environment that endures the impact of every action or inaction. Naturalist John Muir said, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find that it is bound fast by a thousand invisible cords that cannot be broken, to everything in the universe" (Muir 179). This can be visualized by observing a "Muir Web" which diagrams habitat relationships from Manhattan Island in 1609.

Nature is often studied in isolation from the human world with humans as mere observers. We are not on the outside of that web looking in, however, but all of humankind is represented by one of those dots within a web of millions. Each dot signifies an element that is connected or affiliated to the other elements. Change cannot occur without creating a domino effect reaching all other components. Transformation and change are expected but the enormous effect that just one species has produced in such a short period is unnatural.

The Economist published an article that reveals a very alarming perspective on human scale in relation to the planet.

THE Earth is a big thing; if you divided it up evenly among its 7 billion inhabitants, they would get almost 1 trillion tones each. To think that the workings of so vast an entity could be lastingly changed by a species that has been scampering across its surface for less than 1% of 1% of its history seems, on the face of it, absurd. But it is not. Humans have become a force of nature reshaping the planet on a geological scale—but at a far-faster-than-geological speed (Welcome to the Anthropocene).

I aim to draw attention to the subliminal dilemma of humanity's modern existence within our environment, in a manner similar to Edward Burtynsky. Geometric shapes cut out of the flesh or landscape represent human development and progress. As we modify our world to fit our desires, it is as if we are shearing infinitely joined cords from Muir's Web. The landscape of our time is the one we change and disrupt in the pursuit of progress. In the context of romanticism, the fear that was once found in the power of nature now belongs to the potential of human impact. Humans' inability to control nature

reveals the hubris in our willingness to modify the landscape. Western industrialized countries produce a significantly larger carbon footprint to enjoy luxuries at nature's expense. We currently live an unsustainable lifestyle without taking responsibility for the consequences. I do not pretend to have an answer for sustainable living, just another perspective to stimulate the conversation. How does the landscape currently define our modern identity? Whatever the answer may be is the connection between landscape and identity enough to change the growing apathy we have for our landscape?

Technical Description

Deanna Petherbridge, an artist, curator, and known scholar, has shed much light on my artistic practice and how I view drawing. According to Petherbridge, drawing provides the foundation for all art and visual thinking (1-5). Petherbridge separates drawing into parts that constitute a continuum that ranges from a loose sketch, to highly deductive scientific explorations.

Petherbridge emphasizes that drawing has played a significant role in humanity's way of generating ideas, solving problems, understanding life, and the production of independent drawings for pleasure or other purposes. She suggests that "drawing constitutes a discrete, if engaged, discourse within visual practice, with its own internal economy, its own typologies, codes, systems, materials and strategies of making; its own markets and collectors, its own power relations and self-representations" (The Primacy of Drawing 3).

Drawing allows for direct rendering of thought, aiding comprehension of our own ideas. It is not only a medium to create visual artworks but a vital tool in the way humans think and communicate. This interpretation of drawing has allowed me to understand my own ideas and develop them into a logical concept. It is the foundation and condition in which my ideas manifest into reality.

Along the way we eventually form and choose an opinion and stance on issues. Through the process of drawing I have come to the realization of my personal relationship to my environment and a reflection of my own identity. I have developed a sincere concern from the growing apprehension I have for the future of my local landscape. From a negative perception, it is easy to form false assumptions that all environmental affairs involve radicals groups like Green anarchists and Eco-terrorists. Negative stereotypes were only part of my hesitation about

an environmental label.

Just as Petherbridge suggests the significance drawing plays on humanity, my drawing process has led to recently acquired knowledge and understanding. As concern for my environment matures, I am increasingly apprehensive of becoming hypocritical in my own conduct. However I have realized that this process is not about finding absolute resolution but being aware and a responsible cohabitant.

In a subliminal context, extreme environmentalists would say that humanity is a natural force, the next natural disaster reeking havoc on everything in its path. To be an un-hypocritical environmentalist would be to relinquish your own life. However, I am somewhat of a Romantic because I believe there is beauty to be found in this awe-inspiring power.

With drawing, I am able to realistically render these surreal landscapes. By keeping them monochromatic and utilizing a deadpan aesthetic, I am able to suggest the detached relationship many have with the land. My work is presented as an indifferent documented image to reflect current disinterest, and unconcerned attitudes toward nature.

My process begins with sketching local landscapes and documenting the people that inhabit these places. Instead of photographing the inhabitant's faces, I photograph a portrait of their hands. Like Christopher Orr, I compile these reference images to create a composition out of collaged photographs of skin to resemble landscapes. This preliminary process creates the references for my large-scale charcoal drawings. Formal elements allow me to use traditional drawing to create a seamless image and convincingly apply geometric intrusions into the landscape. Physically drawing these places provides me the artistic liberty to explore new forms and manipulate them to the desired effect.

Formal Description

Mixed Motives: Hegemony in Landscape was on display in the Annex Gallery at Indiana University of Pennsylvania from Feb 7th- March 5th, 2015. It consisted of four large works on paper that extended the four walls of the gallery enveloping the viewer.

Upon entering the gallery, the viewer was immediately confronted by *Untitled 2* the largest of the drawings spanning 192” x 57”. This landscape displayed a vast amount of area and depth within the composition, drawing spectators into the space. Once inside the gallery, viewers were completely surrounded and confronted by a vast black and white landscape. At first glance, the drawings are intended to seem as genuine black and white photographs of actual landscapes containing hills and mountains with excavated areas. A brief closer look reveals that these places are comprised of what seems to be human hands and skin. Sections of human flesh are strategically cut into and removed.

All four drawings exist as separate pieces but work together to create one experience. The size of each drawing encompasses the viewer and their peripheral vision. Surrounding the viewer on all sides with a 360-degree panoramic acts to inspire awe and inferiority in the beholder, referencing the Romantic sublime.



Fig. 1. *Mixed Motives: Hegemony in Landscape*, image one. Annex Gallery, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA.



Fig. 2. *Mixed Motives: Hegemony in Landscape*, image two. Annex Gallery, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA.

Each drawing is created with charcoal and pastel on Yuppo paper, enabling a smooth photo-like finish. The geometric intrusions increase and become more evasive as the compositions progress from left to right. All four drawings remain untitled to appear unbiased, true to a deadpan aesthetic. Titles would only project my subjective interpretation on the viewer.



Fig. 3. *Untitled #1*. 2014. Charcoal and Pastel on Paper, 168 x 57 in.



Fig. 4. *Untitled #2*. 2014. Charcoal and Pastel on Paper, 192 x 57 in.



Fig 5. *Untitled #3*. 2015. Charcoal and Pastel on Paper, 168 x 57 in.



Fig. 6. *Untitled #4*. 2015. Charcoal and Pastel on Paper, 120 x 57 in.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Modern humans are largely ignorant to the importance of landscape as a contribution to our identity. Burtynsky says, “we come from nature. . . . There is an importance to having a certain reverence for what nature is because we are connected to it. . . . If we destroy nature, we destroy ourselves” (Burtynsky). The insignificance humanity faced in the Romantic sublime power of nature is shifting with the assertion of human power. Advancing technology and human development facilitates an enormous and accelerating change to the world that enters the qualifications of a new subliminal experience. As we consume our world and life source at an accelerating rate, it calls into question the indifference that infects our way of life. I have recognized my own indifference through the process of drawing and hope to relay my growing awareness through my work.

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