

*On Landscape
The Archive
And Escape*

by Klaus Hu

On landscape, the archive and escape. by Klaus Hu.

(Klaus Hu is an artist / researcher working within studio based practice and for site-specific concepts and currently researches maps and cartographies, invited for Santa Fe Art Institute Residency Feb/April 2013)

I

What is landscape today?

What is an archive?

Close to my eyes and far away in the distance, I see a void, a horizon of infinite stories, zooming back and forth like a flickering whirlwind.

The archive [16] and its multiple references are at one point static, from another perspective, begin to move and linger in the back of my mind.

This static and at the same time revolving memory provides source and inspiration and expects to be fed like a hungry child.

Handling the archive as an experiential container, selecting and judging, re-orchestrating its elements into unexpected relational nodes, rendering its 'facts' and 'objective truths' into fictitious elements to construct another reality.

This reenactment of archival research and recombination provides the same joy, as dealing with color on the canvas.

The topic 'landscape' used in painting for several hundred years, whether as historical, political, social, economic, cultural or as romantic topic has failed for today's global unrest and unease.

The topic has to be emptied out like a void. While I research the database of NASA's martian rover "Spirit", landscape as data transfer and as uninhibited territory becomes a projection either as fictive or as real vision of how the future may interact with its presence.

Looking at martian landscape evolves an escapist attitude, echoing back Robert Smithson's land art projects and his sci-fi obsessions. It distances its metaphor as untouchable realm for today's human visions and clings to a near future that may be out of touch or in touch.

And this touch of a 'may be' near future of uninhibited landscape, implies a subjective view on territory seemingly erased of psychological conflicts.

This opens a critical approach towards landscape, echoing multiple references from "Space, Site Intervention", by Erika Sunderborg [1], across "The Beaten Track" by Lucy Lippard [2], "Site-specificity, The Ethnographic Turn" by Alex Coles [3], across Michel Foucault "Les Hétérotopies" [4] towards "Rethinking The Map" by Dennis Wood [5], from Alighiero Boetti "Mappa" [6] project towards Irit Rogoff "Terra Infirma" [7] and re-combinations, that combine artistic practice with research inside the global forum and inside the archive.

The martian landscape opens a possible spiritual projection, which artistic practice and critical discourse has neglected and forbidden for almost 50 years, since Greenbergs evaluation of modernism.

The emptied landscape (of identity and of national heritages) denies any colonial interest (but admits, that the search for resources may play an essential part in current space missions). It thus presents a multiple fold of phenomenological views, and connects Merleau Ponty's [8] "The Visible and the Invisible" with Henry Bergson's "Matter and Memory" [9] as a model of escapist notion, of projection, of memory and of phenomenology.

Intuition and Instinct, landscape and projection, the void and the single self are possible recombinations as outcome of looking at martian landscape and as possible interior screen.

II

TURTLE ISLANDs.

A SHIP NAMED ODYSSEUS.

Fiction and science-fiction have been capable of envisioning worlds, with the negative effect, that some have drawn an apocalyptic or technoid scenario.

Robert Smithson [10] had a deep interest in science-fiction. He connected it with site, territory and images, that drew a future impact for possible alien visitors. He also had an idea of how to juxtapose the american industrial landscape with his vision of territory and fiction.

In "Hotel Palenque", not only the decaying hotel is playing a role model and delivers a scenario, but also the turtles, he found at the entrance of this unfinished building are metaphors of a n-dimensional timeframe. It is comparable to a search for traces. His anarchic sci-fi also constructs a prenatal condition inside mythical time for himself and the viewer.

Other artists, like Jan Bas Ader [12] choosed voluntarily or involuntarily to disappear during a sailing trip.

Sonic Youth proclaimed "The Disappearer" [11] 1990.

Aboriginal artists were dreaming their honey ant dream [13] dOCUMENTA 13.

For all of them (except Sonic Youth), territory and land speaks and spoke for itself. And that may be the vision. Choosing a territory, that is outside of ones own. Or inside a dream. Dreaming the land.

III

MAPS

On symbolic language.

What is a map?

The american universe [14], the european universe. Two different perspectives. Two different representations. While Center for Landuse (<http://clui.org>) [15] offers an alternative view and interaction on mapping, models of the laboratory in Europe are either linked to city-planning and corporate needs (Guggenheim Lab), or are experimenting with collective models (<http://raumlabor.net>), that are dependent on public funding.

On the one hand, artists like Andrea Zittel connect collective living and production with the gallery system, to gain financial support (<http://highdeserttestsite.org>). On the other side, most of the models of collective living and production or research are excluded from the gallery system, compensated and positioned via extensive online media presentation and social networks.

What is the symbolic language? What are the visions, that connect these singular and collective models for the future?

MAPS and cartographies

While "the process of globalization results in a diversification and multiplication of spaces, that are subject to new configurations and specific expansion and contraction processes, the rise of inequalities, consequently, the linear and serial space that determines our imagination as the basis of traditional map work melts away. This (also) requires new forms of symbolic representation." "Nations states appear as a type of container,...., reflecting a 19th century constellation of states" [17] ,while lines of trade are being made visible.

What is the weather Forecast transgressing Rivers and Borders? There are some examples of this analysis provided by Antonia Hirschs works, e.g. "Average Country" of 2006, "Forecast" 2005 and "Blot" 2000, working with processes of erasure, but remaining defiantly impersonal in displacing the familiar "world as map". In other works like "Artnews Top 200", she only shows these countries, that according to Artnews magazine are home to influential art collectors. [18]

Artists having worked in the 70s and 80s, like Marcel Broodthaers and Alighiero Boetti have shown earlier the unease of upcoming globalization (see: Alighiero Boetti / Mappa del Mondo and M. Broodthaers / The Conquest of Space: Atlas for the Use of Artists and the military 1975). Whereas these historical lines inform current debate and irritation, more and more fostered by social networks online, few archives remain as searchable databases eg.www.clui.org / Center for Landuse Interpretation, offering an alternative view on geographical and historical mapping and access. Newer databases, like the NASA's image database on Space missions provide an escapist and distancing beauty, compensating the lack of differentiation needed on earthly and human matters, opening a narrow black hole (of escapism) on neoliberal globalization, Fordist capitalism and Taylorist mass production.

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via <http://nbk.org>
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"The world map project" / <http://antoniahirsch.com/projects/maps/1>
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contact KLAUS HU
Studio Berlin: Wildenbruch 77
12045 Berlin
tel 49.(0)30.68081524
klaushu@yahoo.de
mobile: 49.(0)176.87577269
Skype: skypeklaushu

BLOG: <http://klaushu.blogspot.com>

MARS c/o ArtistsSpace NY: <http://local-artists.org/users/klaus-hu>

CV c/o ARTNEWS: <http://artnews.org/klaushu>