Art and Nature

The Pontes academici book series

Edited by:

Marina Vicelja-Matijašić

Tine Germ

Ivana Prijatelj-Pavičić

Jelena Erdeljan

Rijeka, 2022.

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Published by
Center for Iconographic Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka

Co-published by
Ljubljana University Press, Faculty of Arts / Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split / Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade

For the publisher
Aleksandar Mijatović, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka

Editors
Marina Vicelja-Matijašić, Tine Germ, Ivana Prijatelj-Pavičić, Jelena Erdeljan

Reviewers
Rebeka Vidrih, Saša Brajović

Proofreading for English
Joseph Molitorisz

Graphic design and layout
Antonia Žurga

ISBN: 978-953-361-072-6 (e-publication)

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Foreword

Art and Nature is an edited collection of papers presented at the *6th International Conference for Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Students in Humanities and Social Sciences* held online on 8 October 2021. The conference was organized by University of Rijeka (Center for Iconographic Studies and Department of Art History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences) and University of Ljubljana (Department of Art History, Faculty of Arts) and co-organized by University of Split (Department of Art History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences) and University of Belgrade (Department of Art History, Faculty of Philosophy). The essays in this volume present various methodologies and ways that visual artists have used throughout centuries to represent, reflect and interact with the natural world. The papers discuss diverse topics such as the pragmatic view of the natural world in the interpretation of nature in various historical periods, artistic contexts and individual artistic opuses. Several texts examine the idea of natural phenomena as allegories and symbols used to illustrate morality tales or aesthetic principles, which were perceived with as much importance as scientific information. Specific focus is put on the modern technologies and media, as well as the artists' addressing social and political issues relating to the natural environment, climate changes and ecological problems through various artistic movements such as biotechnological arts (BioArt), EcoArt or Sustainable art. They tackle some problems related to art as an elusive discipline between fine art, architectural design, found art and landscaping that creates multimedia art-works using available elements such as mud, soil, water and processes like decomposition, oxidation, weather, growth patterns and fertility cycles. The papers also confronted two main discourses: the historical connection between art and landscape as mythic, irrational, with popular image of rural life and harmonious human settlements and therefore imbedded in national stories, with post-modern and post-industrial critical approach that made audience think actively of the landscape and many contemporary problems related to it.

Cover:
Peter and Sue Hill, *Mud Maid, 1998*
Sculpture made out of tree, moss, grass
The Lost Gardens of Heligan, Mevagissey, Cornwall
www.heligan.com

Julia Czapla

A Virtual Menagerie Fit for a Ruler
Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen's Brazilian Images and Their Role in Dutch Colonial Propaganda

Julia Czapla
Pontifical University of John Paul II, Cracow
julia.czapla@upjp2.edu.pl

This article discusses materials brought by Count Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen from Dutch Brazil and their role in the West India Company's (WIC) colonial propaganda as well as in the count's self-promotion. During his governorship (1637-1644), Maurits employed several painters and encouraged artistic observations of Dutch Brazil's inhabitants and nature, as well as scientific expeditions. Researchers and artists created numerous maps, landscapes, portraits, still lives and depictions of flora and fauna. In this article, two sets of botanical and zoological illustrations, currently held in the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow (Poland) are described in details: Albert Eckhout's *Theatrum Rerum Naturalium Brasiliae* and Georg Marggraf's *Handbooks* (BJ, Libri Picturati A32-35 and A36-37, respectively). Both albums were created in Brazil with different purposes: Eckhout's oil sketches were the artist's model book while Marggraf's watercolours are a typical example of the 17th-century "virtual menagerie" that Maurits showed to his guests. Although WIC lost Dutch Brazil in 1654, these images were used as proof of Dutchmen's success in conquering the new land. The WIC financed publishing the history of the colonisation and a compendium of natural history that presented Maurits as a successful administrator who ensured not only economic prosperity but also scientific research that would help maximise profits. Johan Maurits used these materials to further his political career.

Keywords: Dutch Brazil, Johan Maurits van Nassau Siegen, *Libri Principis*, *Theatrum Rerum Naturalium Braziliae*, 17th-century colonial propaganda, Dutch colonial propaganda, 17th-century zoological illustration, 17th-century scientific illustration

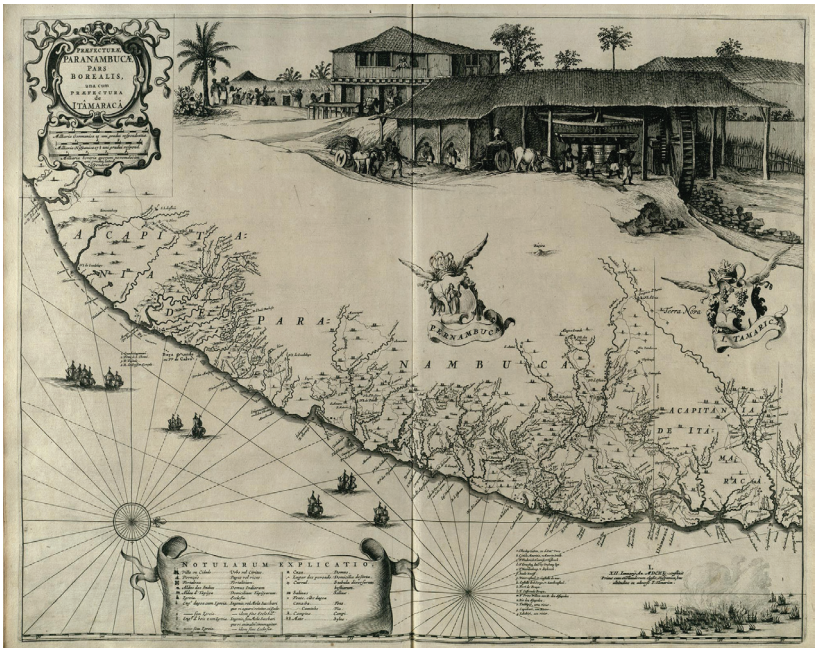
Among the treasures kept in the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow (Poland) there is a brilliant collection of 16th-18th-century albums of illustrations called *Libri Picturati*. Botanical and zoological images are probably the best-known part of

this set (Whitehead, Vliet, and Stearn, 1989). In this article, 17th-century depictions of Brazilian plants and animals from the *Libri Picturati* are presented as well as their role in Dutch colonial propaganda.

The Dutch in South America

In 1630 a Dutch fleet led by admiral Hendrick Corneliszoon Lonck conquered Olinda and Recife – two major towns in Pernambuco. The Portuguese captaincy was then famous for its sugar production. The Dutch took control over the whole territory during the following seven years (fig. 1). This new colony was promptly named Nieuw-Holland or Nederlands-Brazilië.[1] In 1637 count Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen (fig. 2) became its governor on behalf of the West India Company (WIC) (see e.g. Whitehead and Boeseman, 1989; more recently Mello, 2006). With some luck, he tried to keep control of Pernambuco and profit from the colony's farming. However, it required an increasing military presence, and by 1644 the WIC officials deemed it cost-ineffective. Johan Maurits was summoned back to the Netherlands. In 1654 the Portuguese were again in complete control of Pernambuco.

These twenty-five years of Dutch governorship of this colony would have probably been forgotten like many other failed projects if not for the propaganda actions both by the WIC and Johan Maurits himself (Sutton, 2013). In the 17th century, the Dutch usually possessed factories and Dutch Brazil was one of their few colonies. Therefore, they wanted to prove they could profit from the production of goods. Moreover, it was also a place of exploration and research. That was in line with the concept that colonisation should improve life both for the indigenous people (by implementing European innovations) and for the settlers (by fully utilising what the new land could offer). Johan Maurits brought a group of researchers to Brazil to explore Brazilian nature and culture. He employed physicians, pharmacists, natural historians, geographers and ethnographers to study and document the land, its inhabitants and history, as well as local flora and fauna. As the Dutch of the 17th century believed that descriptions of the world weren't sufficient information, depictions were an essential part of research. Thus, Johan Maurits's entourage included professional painters, illustrators and cartographers.



1 Georg Marggraf (del.), Salomon Savery (sc.), *Map of the Northern part of Pernambuco*, 1647

2 Frans Post (pinx.), Theodoor Matham (sc.), *Portrait of Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen*, 1647

Painters Albert Eckhout and Frans Post, their workshop assistants, cartographer and miniaturist Georg Marggraf, writer and amateur illustrator Zacharias Wagener created maps, panoramas, portraits of indigenous people and descendants of Portuguese settlers, images of customs, and botanical and zoological illustrations. Eckhout, Post and Marggraf documented Brazilian fauna. They made excursions to the interior but mainly worked in a menagerie Johan Maurits established in the gardens of the gubernatorial palace in Vrijburg (Almeida, Oliveira, and Meunier, 2011). They observed captured animals, as well as recently deceased and preserved specimens, and made numerous sketches.

Brazilian Images in the Netherlands, Prussia, and Poland

Their work is currently in Jagiellonian Library in Cracow and Haarlem's Noord Hollands Archief (Inv. Nos 53004648-53004672; Bruin, 2016). The Haarlem's set of 34 drawings extracted from a larger album is currently attributed to Frans Post, who prepared two images (linear and coloured) of each specimen. The Cracow collection is far larger with over 800 images of Brazilian animals and plants in six volumes. Four volumes make up one set (A32-35, *Theatrum Rerum Naturalium Brasiliae*, figs. 3-4) and two make up another (A36-37, *Handbooks* or *Libri Principis*, figs. 5-6).[2] An additional 32 images are in another *Libri Picturati* album dated ca. 1750 (A38, *Miscellanea Cleyeri*).

These volumes were brought to Johan Maurits's house in The Hague in 1644. They left the town after 1647 when the count moved to Cleve. Later, in 1652 he sold them for 50000 talers to his sovereign and friend, Elector Frederic William of Brandenburg (Ehrenpreis, 2015, 85). In Berlin, they were bound (A32-35) and re-bound (A36-37). The elector's physician Christian Mentzel catalogued them in 1662 and included them in the Elector's special collection known as *Libri Picturati*. He also gave these volumes titles that we know and use today. For the next 279 years, they were in the Elector's library and later in the State Library in Berlin. They were well-known and studied by German scholars (Wegener, 1938). Their fate changed during the bombardment of Berlin in 1940. As a result, in 1941, the Nazis evacuated their most valuable works of art and books. *Libri Picturati* were hidden in Silesia – then part of Germany – at first in Schloss Fürstenstein (Książ)

and from 1943 in a Benedictine monastery in Grüssau (Krzeszów). After the war, in 1946, they were transported to Cracow. They were first held in the monasteries of Missionaries and Dominicans to be moved around 1947 to the Jagiellonian Library. However, the circumstances of this relocation were somewhat clandestine. Therefore, the Polish United Workers' Party's (PZPR) representatives decided to keep these books hidden and forbade their new custodians from mentioning them. Thus, the last information on these materials came from pre-1939 articles and catalogues. Historians generally believed these materials perished in Berlin. Only thirty years later, several western scholars found traces of their journey from Berlin to Cracow. As they started pursuing information, the PZPR's Committee decided to "discover" these materials in the Jagiellonian Library. In 1977 the first researchers saw them. Polish acknowledgement of this deposit sparked the discussion of whether these materials should return to Berlin. It is ongoing, and for the time being, they remain in the Jagiellonian Library (Pietrzyk, 2005). Since the 1970s, they have been catalogued, partially renovated, and digitised. Currently, they are available to researchers.

Zoological Images and Their Authors

The Brazilian albums were one of the first described (Whitehead, 1976; 1979a; Whitehead and Boeseman, 1989; Teixeira, Soares, and Soares, 1995). *Theatrum Rerum Naturalium Brasiliae* (A32-35) were only bound in 1662, when already in Berlin. At that time, Mentzel glued 418 oil sketches on new pages and added a dedication describing these images to the first volume.

These images are generally attributed to Albert Eckhout (ca. 1607-1665). Most of our knowledge about his career and personal life is guesswork based on limited archival information (Brienen, 2006). He most likely was born in Groningen and probably studied in his uncle's Gheert Roeloffs workshop and later in Amersfoort, where he might have been in Jacob van Campen's circle. Thanks to this acquaintance, Eckhout could have met with Johan Maurits, as van Campen was one of the leading decorators of Mauritshuis in the Hague (Brienen, 2006, 30-31). However, Eckhout and Johan Maurits could have met *via* one of the prefects of the WIC, Johannes de Laet. De Laet published a description of the New World (Laet, 1625)

3 Albert Eckhout, Guara (scarlet ibis, Eudocimus ruber), from *Theatrum Rerum Naturalium Brasiliae*, f. 85

4 Albert Eckhout, Coati (ring-tailed coati, Nasua nasua), from *Theatrum Rerum Naturalium Brasiliae*, f. 87

5 Georg Marggraf (?), Coati (ring-tailed coati, Nasua nasua), from *Handbooks*, vol. 1, p. 38

6 Georg Marggraf (?), Ĭbĭjaû (potoo, Nyctibius), from *Handbooks*, vol. 2, p. 97

and later edited the compendium of the natural history of Dutch Brazil (Piso and Marggraf, 1648; fig. 7).

No matter how Eckhout made acquaintance with Johan Maurits, he and Post arrived with the new governor to Dutch Brazil in January 1637. Unfortunately, there is no contract, account, or correspondence regarding in what capacity he employed them. Based on their remaining artwork, we can assume that Post worked mainly as a landscapist, and Eckhout was responsible for documenting Brazil's inhabitants, animals, and plants. In fact, he is best remembered as the portraitist of indigenous people (Whitehead and Boeseman, 1989, 168-177; Brienen, 2006, 228-231). However, as we can see in the Cracovian albums, he was well skilled in creating natural history images as well.

Eckhout stayed in Brazil until the end of Johan Maurits's term. After their return, he no longer worked as the count's court painter. However, he continued to monetise his Brazilian experience. Although practically none of his works are signed, it seems he kept creating various versions of his ethnographical genre scenes and portraits, as well as still lives with fruits and vegetables.[3] Moreover, Eckhout never entirely cut ties with the count. He created (or, at least, designed) frescoes and tapestries for Mauritshuis. Johan Maurits also recommended him to the Elector Frederic Wilhelm of Brandenburg and Elector Johann Georg II of Saxony. Although Eckhout seems to have been a very active painter, we don't have much evidence of his work. Besides an indisputably attributed series of ethnographic paintings from Vrijburg (currently in Copenhagen), portraits of European officials, native Brazilians and Africans, his most significant works are natural history oil sketches that make up *Theatrum Rerum Naturalium Brasiliae*.

Up until 1662, Eckhout's Brazilian sketches remained on loose sheets, so they should be described as one set. There are over 170 images of various plants and over 220 zoological paintings. Birds must have been particularly interesting to Eckhout as he painted over a hundred of them. It is partially due to the abundance of Brazilian avifauna and a relative effortlessness in their capture and care. Besides them in *Theatrum* there are over sixty water creatures (fish, crustaceans and cephalopods). Paradoxically, quadrupeds (both vertebrates and invertebrates) are the least represented group. There were definitely more images in this set. However, they weren't identified in other collections (Whitehead, 1979a, 455-457).

In four volumes of *Theatrum Rerum Naturalium Brasiliae* animals are depicted against a painted, empty background, without even an outline of the ground. In the headlines, there are local names of animals.[4] However, these images cannot be considered scientific, either by current or by the 17th-century standards. For that, the images are too lively. Animals were clearly drawn *ad vivum* during the observations in the Vrijburg menagerie or the count's cabinet of curiosities in the official governor's residence Boa Vista. They seem to be caught in certain pose, ready to interact. While this provides entertaining imagery for casual viewers, scientific study is nearly impossible. Natural historians of that time claimed that reliable illustrations must fulfil several criteria to ensure they could be analysed and compared. In order to achieve the expected scientific objectiveness, the animals needed to be posed unmoving, preferably seen from a profile, in even light and against a neutral background. Otherwise, proper observation was impossible. The animals in *Theatrum* are in a variety of poses, in a different light, sometimes, they are partially hidden in shadows. It suggests that these oil paintings weren't prepared for a natural historian but were a sort of model book, Eckhout's reference work created in Brazil and later, in the Netherlands, used for further purposes (Brienen, 2007). They were probably used separately and exchanged among Johan Maurits's artists. Images from *Theatrum* appear on Eckhout's own paintings. There are similar motifs in Jacob van Campen's paintings and supposedly in wall decorations in Mauritshuis. Unfortunately, the fire that damaged the palace in 1704 destroyed these frescoes.

Theatrum has never been the only collection of Brazilian zoological images in Johan Maurits's possession. Even to this day, it is accompanied by the second set. *Handbooks* (A36-37) are two albums of ca. 350 watercolour sketches. They are folio volumes of 485 and 487 numbered pages. *Handbooks* were most likely made and already bound in Brazil. Each specimen is depicted on a separate leaf or sporadically on a separate page. Above most images, local names of animals are noted. Most are contemporary to the images and written in Marggraf's hand, but some were added later. The depictions take up only a third of the page, leaving plenty of space for notes. The majority of images are annotated with animals' size or specific characteristics. They are in Johan Maurits's hand, so we know he actively used these albums.

Handbooks are an extraordinarily well-organised and well-planned set of images. The first volume (A36) is purely zoological. Depicted animals can be divided into four groups. The album begins with thirty seven mammals. Although *Handbooks* are said to show Brazilian fauna, there are also four non-American animals: the African civet, two horses from Johan Maurits's stables and a bull. Most animals are native to Brazil and probably lived in a menagerie in Vrijburg. Typically, animals are shown in profile, although horses and the bull are seen in three-quarters from the rear. Most of them stand on the ground. There are few juvenile specimens, like a jaguar. Several animals, like coati (fig. 5) or anteater, are eating. In a few cases, depicted animals were definitely held in captivity, e.g. Diana monkey is collared and chained. However, others are shown in semi-natural habitat – monkeys and sloths are on or near trees, one anteater stands near an anthill. The second part of the first *Handbook* is devoted to birds. They are shown either from profile or in three-quarters. Some stand on the ground, others sit on branches or decorative rods. Unlike mammals, birds are often depicted in pairs, so there are eighty four animals on sixty six pages. Most of the birds are Brazilian (fig. 6), but there is also a bird of paradise and an African grey parrot. The third part is devoted to water animals: forty two fish, crustaceans, molluscs, and three water turtles. Most of them are in profile, some from above, showing their most distinctive traits. The final section of the first volume is devoted to insects, arachnids and reptiles. Although in contemporary zoology this classification seems odd, in the 17th c. all three groups were still one as per Aristotelian classification. There are eighteen insects in various stages (larvae, pupae and imagines), three spiders, four lizards and two snakes. Unlike miniaturised mammals, birds and fish, many animals in this section are in life-size. Most of them are drawn in three-quarters from above so as to see both their profiles and backs.

The second *Handbook* (A37) is equally well-organised, although clearly unfinished. It begins with thirty four botanical images. While the tradition of plant illustration demanded depicting the whole plant, including roots and often simultaneously various moments of the vegetation cycle, here we can see only a short branch with leaves and flowers, occasionally a fruit or a nut are shown separately. These are American plants used in medicine and the kitchen. The second section is devoted to birds. Fifteen images show sixteen birds. Unlike in the A36, there

are only American animals in the A37. They usually stand on a piece of land, but some birds are depicted against a neutral background. All of the animals are in profile. The largest and most finished section is the water creatures. There are forty seven fish and a crustacean. They are depicted similarly to animals in A36: on one side, clearly caught and lying on a flat surface. Most of them are on a blank page, although under some there is a shadow that gives the illusion of depth. Interestingly, they are usually either reduced or life-size. Some of the smallest specimens must have been drawn with the aid of a magnifying glass. The final part of this volume is dedicated to insects, amphibians and reptiles. Fifty-three animals are shown much like in the previous volume. However, this is the only part of these two albums where we can occasionally find more than two animals on the page. Insects are sometimes in groups of fours, like specimens in glass cases. They are drawn with a similar level of precision, and clearly after observation through some lens, as are the smallest water creatures. There is a "West Indian swine" (probably a peccary) and a civet on the last two pages. It is also possible that this volume included a treatise on horse medicine (Brienen, 2001, 126).

Both these albums are unfinished. There are empty pages that cannot be explained by leaving the planned space for notes. Many illustrations are only pen or pencil sketches. In a few cases, we have partially coloured drawings. The first volume seems to be more finished, and there are hardly any extra empty pages. The second volume is much less polished. The botanical part is not (under) signed and is bereft of notes. There are numerous blank pages, both at the end of the sections and often in the middle. The ichthyological part is the only one that appears to be complete. It seems that the albums were a work in progress that was interrupted. This may be explained by the future fate of their presumed author. Traditionally, these two albums were attributed to Georg Marggraf (1610-1644).[5] Currently, four other hands are distinguished in A37, but he is still considered their primary author (Brienen, 2001, 106-107). Born in Saxony, he studied astronomy, geography, natural history, mathematics and medicine at various universities. However, it is not certain where (and if ever) he graduated. In ca. 1636, he moved to Leiden, where he met both Piso and de Laet. As the prefect of the WIC, the latter hired Marggraf as the Company's astronomer and used his connections to introduce Marggraf to Johan Maurits. In January 1638, Marggraf arrived in Bra-

zil. At first, he worked under Willem Piso (chief physician in Dutch Brazil) and from 1640 independently (Meijer, 1972, 68-69). He was employed as a cartographer who drew maps and panoramas. Marggraf was also a skilled miniaturist, and in 1639 or 1640, he replaced recently deceased Heinrich Cralitz, Piso's assistant responsible for compiling zoological information (Brienen, 2001, 93). He joined several military expeditions to the interior, which allowed him to observe various animals in the wild. He also worked in Vrijburg menagerie. It is possible that in this role, he began preparing *Handbooks*. Unfortunately, Marggraf's stay in Dutch Brazil was cut short before he finished his work. In 1643 or 1644,[6] he was sent to Angola. In Luanda, he was supposed to create a map of Dutch territories in Africa. Unfortunately, he died in 1644, mere weeks after his arrival. Marggraf left his zoological observations and images in Brazil. They were brought back to the Netherlands in 1644 along with the rest of the colony's archival and research material (Brienen, 2001, 91, notes 25-26).

Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen – The Ideal Governor, According to His Propaganda

Johan Maurits passed the majority of the archives brought from Brazil (including Marggraf's personal notes and drawings) to the WIC so that they could be published.[7] Still, numerous illustrations remained in his possession until 1652, when he sold them. Eckhout's images were used by the count's court painters who adapted them for frescoes, paintings and tapestries (Whitehead and Boeseman, 1989, 90-140; on the tapestries, see Schmidt-Loske, Klatte, and Prüssmann-Zemper, 2016). *Handbooks* however were part of the count's personal library. While we don't know whether Johan Maurits commissioned them or if they were Marggraf's idea, it is evident that they were created with the count in mind. It seems they primarily documented the Vrijburg menagerie and the count's natural history collection. Depicted animals and plants are mainly examples of local fauna and flora, but there are a few animals imported from Africa and the Pacific Islands, as well as two horses and a bull that Johan Maurits sent from Brazil for Stadtholder Frederic Henry, Prince of Orange and his son, William (Brienen, 2001, 105).

Johan Maurits's enterprise in Brazil was abruptly cut short in 1644. He left behind palaces and the majority of his collections. Transporting plants, animals,

and various *naturalia* across the Atlantic would have been highly impractical, if not – given their size – almost impossible. The animals were set free, and the menageries and gardens were eventually destroyed (Costa, 1952, 150-157).

However, Johan Maurits was only forty and nowhere near the end of his career. He mainly served in the army but also aspired to a governmental position. He brought to Mauritshuis various Brazilian memorabilia to show his organisational and administrative skills. As he intended to prove he brought order to the prosperous country, he needed visual documentation to illustrate his stories. Mauritshuis was decorated with views of Brazil and portraits of Brazilians. Frescoes, tapestries and paintings were full of depictions of lush plants and exotic animals. Two volumes of *Libri Principis* were most handy to prove how he studied the nature of the colony for which he was responsible.

Johan Maurits also supported the publication of two treatises about Dutch Brazil (Dams, 2012). Thanks to the WIC's encouragement and financial support, three years after they returned to the Netherlands, in 1647, Caspar Barlaeus issued the history of the colony (Baerle, 1647; for the English version, see Baerle, 2011). Barlaeus, who was an historian and poet, earlier translated into Latin *Descripción de las Indias Occidentales* (Herrera y Tordesillas, 1622). He heard stories brought by Johan Maurits and his entourage from Brazil. Inspired by them, he wrote a treatise that ostensibly described the circumstances of the Dutch takeover of the Portuguese colony and the WIC's activity in this new territory. However, the actual function of *Rerum per Octennium in Brasilia* wasn't educational. It is full of factual information, but the narrative isn't objective. It is a blatant commendation to the governor and the WIC. Barlaeus quoted various texts from the archives brought by Johan Maurits as well as earlier descriptions of Brazil (Dams, 2012, 335-339). It is also richly illustrated with the governor's portrait, numerous maps by Marggraf, and town views and landscapes adapted from Post's paintings (figs. 1-2). Just as the text is based mainly on primary sources from Brazil, engravings are reproductions of images created *in situ*. While it is uncertain whether Johan Maurits financed this publication, he evidently helped with its creation. At the very least, he gave Barlaeus access to his archives and visual documentation.

He was also involved in the second publication on Dutch Brazil, *Historia naturalis Brasiliae* that was published in 1648 (Piso and Marggraf, 1648; fig. 7). This

7 Willem Piso and Georg Marggraf, *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, 1648, frontispiece

compendium of natural history consists of treatises by two authors. Piso edited his Brazilian notes in four, multi-chaptered parts concerning the medicinal properties of plants and animals.[8] Johan Maurits gave Marggraf's notes to the WIC. De Laet deciphered them and adapted them into eight parts about plants, animals and inhabitants of Dutch Brazil. The compendium is richly illustrated. The publishers chose source images from Johan Maurits's archives. There are portraits of Brazilians, depictions of their occupations (e.g. sugar production) and, most notably, images of local plants and animals (figs. 8-9). The zoological and botanical illustrations are very similar to Marggraf's drawings in *Handbooks*.

8 Ĭbĭjaû (potoo, Nyctibius), bottom illustration, from *Piso and Marggraf, Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, 1648, p. 195

9 Coati (ring-tailed coati, Nasua nasua), bottom illustration, from *Piso and Marggraf, Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, 1648, p. 228

It would be tempting to assume one was a source for another. *Handbooks* came from Brazil, so it would be possible to treat them as the originals later reproduced in *Historia naturalis Brasiliae*. However, the comparison of these two sets proves that *Handbooks* cannot be model books for the woodcuts. The images are similar, but not identical. What's more, there are more illustrations in *Historia naturalis Brasiliae* than in *Handbooks*. It suggests the existence of the another set of images, an actual model book, perhaps the already mentioned lost sketchbook of Marggraf (Bruin, 2016, 343-349). Johan Maurits probably wasn't directly involved in the publication of this treatise either. Nevertheless, he made all his resources available and probably added some comments. Dedication and commendatory remarks scattered throughout *Historia naturalis Brasiliae* describe him as a governor who brought order to both the inhabitants and nature of Dutch Brazil. The very existence of this publication was proof of his scientific interests extending beyond financing research.

By the time these texts were in print, Johan Maurits had already left The Hague. His collection remained for the time being in Mauritshuis, where the court and visiting diplomats could see Brazilian memorabilia in his absence (Whitehead and Boeseman, 1989, 94-96; Van Groesen 2017, 159-160). In the meantime, Johan Maurits, as a leader of the Dutch cavalry, participated in several campaigns of the Thirty Years War. Despite this military career, he aspired to a governmental position. In 1647, he left the Netherlands as Frederick William of Brandenburg appointed him as a stadholder (governor) of Cleve, Mark and Ravensburg. Johan Maurits soon moved to Castle Schwanenburg. He remained in this position until 1664, when he was appointed commander-in-chief of the Dutch army. He retired in 1675 and spent the remaining four years of his life in Cleve. During his term as a stadholder, he hoped to prove himself as an effective administrator who encouraged economic and scientific progress.

Still, he hasn't forgotten about the renown he owed to his work in Dutch Brazil. His manuscripts, albums of illustrations, and some paintings from Brazil were most likely transferred from The Hague to Schwanenburg. Johan Maurits used them to promote himself further. He showed and discussed his Brazilian memorabilia, including *Handbooks*, to his visitors. What's more, in the 1650s, he initiated a gift-giving campaign (Van Groesen, 2017, 158-160). Naturally, Frederick William was his most important and most lucrative patron. Eckhout's oil sketches

and Marggraf's watercolours ended in the Elector's library in Berlin. But he wasn't Johan Maurits's only benefactor. In 1654 the count offered several ethnographical paintings and still lives to Frederick III of Denmark (Whitehead and Boeseman, 1989, 65-85). This gift was clearly intended as a provision in case of falling out of the Elector's favour. Shortly before his death, he gave Louis XIV of France over 40 paintings that were later adapted into several series of tapestries (Whitehead and Boeseman, 1989, 109-140).

Due to these actions, as well as to how much of Johan Maurits's Brazilian memorabilia is still preserved, it seems the scientific research conducted in Dutch Brazil was far more important than the economic profit from the colony. Johan Maurits was not only an avid collector (in Vrijburg, he kept a menagerie and in Boa Vista had a cabinet of curiosities and a natural history museum) but also an educated one. He imported African animals to Brazil (that explains how the image of the civet ended in *Handbooks*). His collections weren't meant to show a macrocosm but reflected both his and WIC's primary interests: Brazil and West Africa. He knew what animals, objects and depictions he had, and he could easily discuss them. The notes in *Handbooks* prove that besides hiring scientists, he also made his own observations and personally wrote them down on these pages. It seems safe to assume that Johan Maurits used his Brazilian collection and documentation as a topic of discussion with his visitors. As he didn't bring his menagerie nor botanical garden, *Handbooks* served as the perfect means to comfortably show and describe animals and plants he had in Brazil. They were specimens he had in captivity and ones he personally observed. The images confirm it further. Mammals wear chains or leashes, most birds are stuffed, and the fish are dried.

The watercolours in *Handbooks* show a very particular part of the world, namely Dutch Brazil. In the 1630s and 1640s, WIC focused on this colony. Johan Maurits, who was there on the Company's behalf, clearly intended to prove that his governorship was fruitful. Unlike most of the aristocratic collections of the 16th and 17th centuries, he must have seen his collection of zoological and botanical images as something more than just a fashionable paper museum created under his patronage. He was involved in their creation and used them in Brazil and the Netherlands. They were proof of his knowledge and organisational skills. Therefore, these images were intended as means to further his political standing.

Endnotes

1 The colony was officially called Nieuw Holland, however, generally is referred to as Nederlands-Brazilië. In this article the anglicised form 'Dutch Brazil' is used.

2 A36-37 are available online: jbc.bj.uj.edu.pl/publication/193889. I wish to thank Ms Izabela Korczyńska, the Head of Jagiellonian Library's Special Collections Department, for showing me partially digitised A32-35.

3 Despite the fact that most of them are dated "1641", it has been disputed that this date may refer to the original drawings instead of the finished paintings (e.g. Egmond and Mason, 2004, 121). Brienen believes these painting were created already in Brazil (Brienen, 2006, 36-37)

4 They're often repeated by Mentzel above cut-outs. Sometimes, he also added further information, e.g., citations in *Historia naturalis Brasiliae*.

5 Primary source on Marggraf's life – if extremely biased – is a biography written by his brother (Marggraf, 1685). His life and work have been studied since the early 20th c. (Gudger, 1912). More recently it was analysed by Brienen (Brienen, 2001). It's also worth noting that Whitehead contested the attribution of *Handbooks* to Marggraf (Whitehead and Boeseman, 1989, 40–42, 194). There are several versions of Marggraf's surname, e.g. Marggraf, Markgraf, Marcgraf, Marcgrave; in this text the form used by the German National Biography is used (Lindgren, 1990).

6 Dates of Marggraf's departure from Brazil, arrival in Angola, and his death are uncertain (Whitehead, 1979b, 303).

7 Other observations were given to Adolf Vorstius – Leiden botanist and Johan Maurits's friend, mathematician Jacob Gool and others (Brienen, 2001, 90–91).

8 In 1658 Piso republished the treatise, attributing the whole text to himself (Piso, 1658).

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Illustrations

Fig. 1 Georg Marggraf (del.), Salomon Savery (sc.), Map of the Northern part of Pernambuco, from Caspar van Baerle, *Rerum per Octennium in Brasilia et Alibi Nuper Gestarum*, Amsterdam, 1647, Rijksmuseum, BI-1892-3415-5, public domain.

Fig. 2 Frans Post (pinx.), Theodoor Matham (sc.), Portrait of Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, published in Caspar van Baerle, *Rerum per Octennium in Brasilia et Alibi Nuper Gestarum*, Amsterdam, 1647, Rijksmuseum, BI-1892-3415-2, public domain.

Fig. 3 Albert Eckhout, Guara (scarlet ibis, Eudocimus ruber), from *Theatrum Rerum Naturalium Brasiliae*, 1637-1644, vol. 2, f. 85, ©Jagiellonian Library, Libri Picturati A 33.

Fig. 4 Albert Eckhout, Coati (ring-tailed coati, Nasua nasua), from *Theatrum Rerum Naturalium Brasiliae*, 1637-1644, vol. 3, f. 87, ©Jagiellonian Library, Libri Picturati A 34.

Fig. 5 Georg Marggraf (?), Coati (ring-tailed coati, Nasua nasua), from *Handbooks*, 1637-1644, vol. 1, p. 38, Jagiellonian Library, Libri Picturati A 36, public domain.

Fig. 6 Georg Marggraf (?), Ĭbĭjaû (potoo, Nyctibius), from *Handbooks*, 1637-1644, vol. 2, p. 97, Jagiellonian Library, Libri Picturati A 37, public domain.

Fig. 7 Frontispiece, from Willem Piso and Georg Marggraf, *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, Leiden-Amsterdam, 1648, Missouri Botanical Garden, QH117. P57 1648, public domain.

Fig. 8 Ĭbĭjaû (potoo, Nyctibius), bottom illustration, from Willem Piso and Georg Marggraf, *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, Leiden-Amsterdam, 1648, p. 195, Missouri Botanical Garden, QH117.P57 1648, public domain.

Fig. 9 Coati (ring-tailed coati, Nasua nasua), bottom illustration, from Willem Piso and Georg Marggraf, *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, Leiden-Amsterdam, 1648, p. 228, Missouri Botanical Garden, QH117.P57 1648, public domain.

Jakov Đorđević

Taming the (Super)Natural
Negotiating and Appropriating the Powers of Heaven and Hades in Late Medieval Eastern Christian Monasticism

Jakov Đorđević
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade
jakovdj@gmail.com

Medieval Christian monasticism cultivated a particular kind of environmental imagination. The monastic vocation being devised as a spiritual path of redemption and inner cleansing often referenced the fall of Adam and Eve and the loss of the Garden of Eden. Therefore, nature was conceptually framed between the tamed habitation and the hostile wilderness. This paper discusses monastic environmental engagement in the context of the creation of a sacred place. Special attention is devoted to the relations between humans and nature as seen from the perspective of post-humanism and ecocritical theory. Hence, the paper is concerned with three particular issues: 1) the cleansing and sacralization of the landscape by ascetic endeavors; 2) the reaffirmation of the harmonious order; 3) the monastic attitude toward carnivorous beasts.

Keywords: sacred landscape, monastic environmental imagination, animals, post-humanism, queer ecocriticism, Peter of Koriša, Dečani Monastery

Introduction

According to numerous medieval accounts, contact with the locus of sacred power provided miraculous outcomes and transformative experiences. While certainly desirable, approaching sacredness was also a serious affair that demanded the right attitude and spiritual readiness. One prominent example is found in the Old Testament when Moses encountered the burning bush and had to take his sandals off while stepping on the holy ground (Exodus 3:5). On the other hand, Mary of Egypt was prevented by an invisible force from entering the church where the relic of the True Cross was displayed because of her sins (*Life of St. Mary of Egypt*, 1996, 82).

Acts of human creativity in the form of erecting particular structures or monuments at places potent with power were done in an attempt to frame that power, making it more approachable and easier to channel in the desired manner. Medieval reliquaries represent a perfect example if they are perceived not only as the containers of the relics but also the vehicles for wielding their "abilities". Particularly telling are those shaped in the form of a hand since the gestures they were displaying made it possible to perform specific functions in the ritual encounter with the faithful (Hahn, 1997). The whole sacred building with its gradation of sanctity distributed through its various parts enabled gradual access to holiness, orchestrating a person's attitude while inviting reassessment of one's own inner state. In essence, the church was a "controlled environment" where everyone had to abide by the rules of right positioning in proper veneration. Moreover, the church was imagined as a microcosm encompassing within it the harmony between the created world and the heavenly realm.

In the Christian imagination, the natural world could have been invested with powers including those instigated by the evil spirits. The monastic cultural context developed an especially elaborate conceptual system reconsidering the relationship between nature and humans in creating, i.e. "framing", the sacred places. The aim of this paper is to discuss this complex process of accomplishing the harmonious order.

Nature and the Monastic Self

Medieval Christian monasticism cultivated a particular kind of environmental imagination. The monastic vocation being devised as a spiritual path of redemption and inner cleansing often referenced the fall of Adam and Eve and the loss of the Garden of Eden. Therefore, nature was conceptually framed between the tamed habitation and the hostile wilderness (Della Dora, 2016, 144). To take the monastic habit meant to embark on a journey of retrieving the earthly paradise together with the human state lost through original sin. To observe this environmental imagination, it is useful to engage with the narratives presented in the monastic vitae, particularly those recounting the stories of dedicated hermits who devoted their lives to the pursuit of ascetic ideals in the desert.

The Christian desert is synonymous with the wilderness. Its scenery goes beyond the rocky terrain surrounded by dunes. The spreading of monasticism together with its extreme form of eremitism across Europe added to the desert landscape wild forests and high mountains (see Della Dora, 2016, 118-175). The vita of St. Peter of Ko-

riša, a hagiography written by the monk Teodosije of Hilandar at the beginning of the 14th century is very illustrative in the context of ascetic environmental engagement because it tells the story of one celebrated Balkan hermit by employing some of the most prominent topoi found in the lives of saintly recluses in the East. According to the narrative, Peter wanted to devote his life to God from his early youth. After receiving his monastic habit and making a firm decision to pursue his childhood dream, he found a cave among many caverns in a rocky scenery at the foot of Mt Rusenica in the gorge of the River Koriša. After his death, a monastery was erected around his hermitage and it still exists today, though in ruins. During the Ottoman period, monks had to leave the monastery taking with them the relics of St. Peter of Koriša in order to preserve them (Popović, 1997).

The choice to settle in a cave as the perfect dwelling place for his purpose is particularly revealing. In Byzantine visual culture caves often alluded to entombment, enabling the sight of the body as though it was buried inside the earth (Talbot, 2016, 712-713; Đorđević, 2018, 21-24). This connection provided the opportunity for the poetic association between cradle and sepulcher in Nativity scenes, insinuating Christ's future suffering and death for humankind. This also might be the reason why the cavern as the place of Christ's birth was never substituted with the image of a stable in Byzantine art. Eremitic cells were often represented as gloomy gaps in stony surroundings where their inhabitants were preoccupied with prayer and penance. In one interesting illumination from a manuscript of *The Heavenly Ladder* (Vat. gr. 394, fol. 46r), a popular monastic manual on attaining spiritual perfection, the conscious association with the tomb can be perceived by observing the anchorites engaged in severe bodily mortifications (fig. 1). They are depicted as skeletal apparitions, almost as reanimated corpses (Đorđević, 2019, 32). This same notion is present in the vita of St. Peter of Koriša. The hermit is described as "the enemy to his body" (Teodosije, 1988, 272). There are several instances in the text that mention his harsh transformation into a slender figure of darkened skin, deprived of food and sleep. He is even addressed by demons with the following words: "Burned by the sun, by wind and rain being racked, in the stony cave your body is frizzing and rotting; and because of the nudity your flesh has darkened like earth, and inside it, like in a sack, your bones resemble dried hay that barely holds on" (Teodosije, 1988, 280). The natural environment of St. Peter's abode is purposefully displayed as unwelcoming and uninhabitable. It is an untamed wilderness that constantly challenges the basic needs of a peaceful life.

On the other hand, caves are fraught with chthonic symbolism. They are loci that connect earth with the underworld (Talbot, 2016, 717) and many of the late Byzantine representations of Hades are envisioned as gloomy caves with souls trapped inside (Đorđević, 2018, 21-24). The belief that caves are the potential entrances to the underworld is reinforced by the presence of evil spirits in the vita. The reason for the animosity of demons toward Peter of Koriša is directly addressed: "Among other humans, you haven't found your place, so you came to our dwellings to banish us and unrightfully seize our cliffs and our caverns for yourself" (Teodosije, 1988, 277). Their many attacks on the recluse resemble the beatings of souls in Hades before the future resurrection. The process of monastic penance was imagined as a posthumous experience. Since the person was conceived to be a psychosomatic unity, the ultimate cleansing of the whole being had to include both body and soul. While inner experiences in monastic imagination emulated the hardships of the imprisoned soul in Hades, the physical sufferings closely corresponded to the sufferings the buried body was subjected to in the grave. Thus, a monk was conceptually reliving the fates of the condemned soul and the buried body simultaneously as part of the penitent process of cleansing oneself (see Đorđević, 2019, 32).

Taking this perspective into consideration, the monastic advancement up "the ladder of divine ascent" meant physical transfiguration as well as the practice of mental will. To put it differently, those devoted to asceticism were determined to tame and transform their human nature, transcending the outcomes of the fall of Adam and Eve. The ideal and desired body in this context is the one devoid of its carnal vitality which conceptually equates it with the angelic state (Đorđević, 2022). In the vita of St. Peter of Koriša, the hagiographer most directly praises the "bodilessness" achieved by the saint, linking it to that of the angels (Teodosije, 1988, 265, 284).

It is convenient to reconsider this "enhancement of the body" through the prism of post-humanism because the eremitic body is the product of hybridization with the non-human, i.e. the environment.[1] The formidable natural surroundings confronts the (fallen) human condition of the recluse's body. The wilderness of the desert participates in its transformational process, transfiguring it into a spectacle that perfectly fits the scenery. That is why descriptions of the landscape so often reflect the inner struggles of saintly hermits in their vitae while simultaneously presenting the challenge. The hermit becomes part of the landscape. At the end of those narratives, when anchorites attain the "bodiless state", the natural world is changed. The wilderness is tamed just

like the human body of a saint. They both become sanctified and continue in peaceful coexistence. However, what is interesting is that, while the ontological nature of the environment is changed, its outer appearance stays the same. For example, after he had achieved spiritual perfection, St. Peter of Koriša was delighted with his caverns as though with the "splendid palaces" and bitter oak nuts and raw wild plants changed their tastes into a sweetness that cannot be experienced even "at the tables of the richest" (Teodosije, 1988, 282). Maybe the best visualization of this discourse is expressed by the sixteenth-century fresco of Nativity Troparion at the Docheiariou Monastery where the personification of the Desert is painted identical to the figure of St. Mary of Egypt (fig. 2). This renowned female saint, with her sunken body and intentionally unflattering features, was the paradigmatic image of a repentant sinner and ascetic endeavorer. Hence, the given personification of the Desert is imbued with positive connotations, having the same image of the body as her monastic inhabitants (Della Dora, 2016, 130-133).

Still, from the point of view of the presence of the mysterious power instilled in the desert's wilderness, one has to acknowledge its association with the evil spirits. The vita of St. Peter of Koriša offers a multitude of stirring episodes where demons attack the hermit trying to harm him and drive him away from their realm. They sometimes present themselves in the shape of predatory animals or in the guise of soldiers with frightening beastly hamlets. On some occasions, St. Peter is accompanied by Archangel Michael to withstand their attacks, while other times he is almost beaten to death by them. However, the process of his spiritual ascent is simultaneously the act of taming (cleansing) and appropriating the evil powers. The landscape becomes the hallowed scenery of a new sacred place (Talbot, 2016, 713-714). Particularly telling is the episode after the demons had made a deal with a terrible serpent living in a cave below the saint. The slithering predator was supposed to incite fear in St. Peter. Nevertheless, after the ritual preparation of forty days, the hermit went to the beast's lair and, with the help of Archangel Michael, cast it out. Afterward, "he venerated the serpent's cave as God's church and the holy place" (Teodosije, 1988, 275). In some surviving medieval hermitages, we find devotional fresco paintings that testify to the ritual practices performed in caves by the recluses (Popović et al., 2011; Velmans, 1965). They are testimonies of the tamed environment and its powers. In the realm of cultural imagination, this process of appropriating the abode of evil spirits consciously alluded to the harrowing of Hades that followed Christ's death on the cross (Talbot, 2016, 718).

1 The Ascetic Penance, Vat. gr. 394, fol. 46r, 11th c.

2 Representation of Nativity Troparion, fresco, Church of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel (central vault), Docheiariou Monastery, 16th c.

As a rule, the newly established sacred place with its sublime natural scenery would present a tamed environment similar in essence to the lost earthly paradise, attracting new potential monastic dwellers and even pilgrims (Della Dora, 2016, 170-175). Usually, an eremitic settlement or a proper monastery would have been built in its proximity (Della Dora, 2016, 161). Therefore, compositions that show almost bare stony landscapes populated with hermits, like in the case of the Dormition of St. Ephraim the Syrian (fig. 3),[2] actually represent sanctified natural surroundings, the tamed desert or *desertum-civitas* (Bartelink, 1973), a *topos* that implies a heavenly abode where its inhabitants live in harmonious order with their environment just as the first humans did before the fall. Similar allusions are encountered in accounts that describe visits to such places. Nature is often presented there as sublime and awe-inspiring and yet in harmony with its inhabitants that attained the angelic likeness (Della Dora, 2016, 147-175; Talbot, 2001).

Gaining the Sense of the Harmonious Order

Medieval monasteries were sometimes erected within city walls. Nevertheless, they were always envisioned as the manifestations of earthly paradise. While planting a garden had its practical purpose connected to the daily monastic diet, its domesticated space was also useful for contemplation, enhancing the notion of the Garden of Eden (Della Dora, 2016, 110-113). On the other hand, monasteries built outside the cities often embraced their natural surroundings in the construction of the image of the heavenly abode. They were striving toward the utopic vision that referenced the golden age – the primordial period before the human fall.

The Dečani Monastery (14th century) can provide an insightful case study for the notion of monastic environmental engagement. In Dečani chrysobull, King Stefan Dečanski, the founder of the monastery, directly addressed the sacrality of the place he had chosen to erect his endowment. In the words of this charter, St. Sava, the celebrated forebear of the Serbian king, "marked it and blessed it with his holy hands that it might be a holy shrine". Since the saint did not manage to build the "place of worship", St. Sava kept the location hidden for a century so that it could be revealed to Stefan Dečanski (Translation of the First Dečani Charter in English, 2004, 88). The very motif of concealment alludes to the association of the place with the earthly paradise. Moreover, in the hagiography of Stefan Dečanski, written by Gregory Tsamblak, the monastery's landscape is described by way of the deliberate employment of verbal imagery that references the Garden of Eden (Camblak, 1989, 65-66).

Ritual practices were able to enhance the sense of the achieved harmonious order in the monastic inhabitants. In the case of the Dečani Monastery, it is useful to observe one peculiar image in its performative context – the relief of Christ's baptism set in the lunette above the south portal of the narthex (fig. 4).[3]

The scene bears unusual iconography. The waters of the River Jordan are rendered as forming an open sarcophagus flanked by two flowers on its sides. Hence, the standing figure of Christ echoes depictions of the resurrected dead who are rising from their tombs. However, the true peculiarity of the relief lies in the too-familiar gesture of St. John the Baptist who is holding Christ's arm. It is almost as though St. John is resurrecting Christ by pulling him out of the sarcophagus while pouring water on his head. Of course, such an insinuation would have been perceived as heretical. Still, there must be a reason why this daring visual element was included in the representation.

The answer can be grasped if one considers the image in connection with the specific service during which the relief was encountered by the monks. It was the Great Blessing of Waters. There were two Great Blessings of Waters – one was officiated on the eve of Epiphany, taking place in the narthex, while the other was performed in the morning by a spring or a river (Kandić, 1998-1999, 61-64; Mirković, 1983, 151-157). The latter rite was introduced in medieval Serbia at the beginning of the 14th century by the general acceptance of provisions taken from the Typikon of Jerusalem (Kandić, 1998-1999, 64), allowing monasteries to ritualistically transfigure their surroundings into the symbolic landscape of the Holy Land. In the case of the Dečani Monastery, the local Bistrica River was appropriating the identity of the River Jordan. The presence of the scene of Christ's baptism indicates that the returning procession would have entered the main church through the south portal of the narthex. It staged the liminal point that was meant to finally define the overtone of the performed service. Since the south portal contains the inscription as well, it is highly plausible that monks would have gathered in front of the doorway to hear the inscribed words read aloud.[4] This was the perfect opportunity to gaze at the unusual image. The fact that St. John is shown as "preoccupied" with the performance, in sharp contrast to the very static figure of Christ, suggests that he was the mirror image of the monks who were involved in the ritualistic recreation of the same event. Thus, they would have been able to perceive the illustration of the immediate outcomes of their work – namely the cleansing of the environment. It is true that the service of Great Blessing relates to water, however, the atypical abundance of vegetable elements in this relief induces the

3 *Dormition of St. Ephraim the Syrian*, icon, Crete, 15th c.

4 Baptism of Christ, *relief in the lunette of the south portal of the Church of Christ Pantocrator*, Dečani Monastery, 14th c.

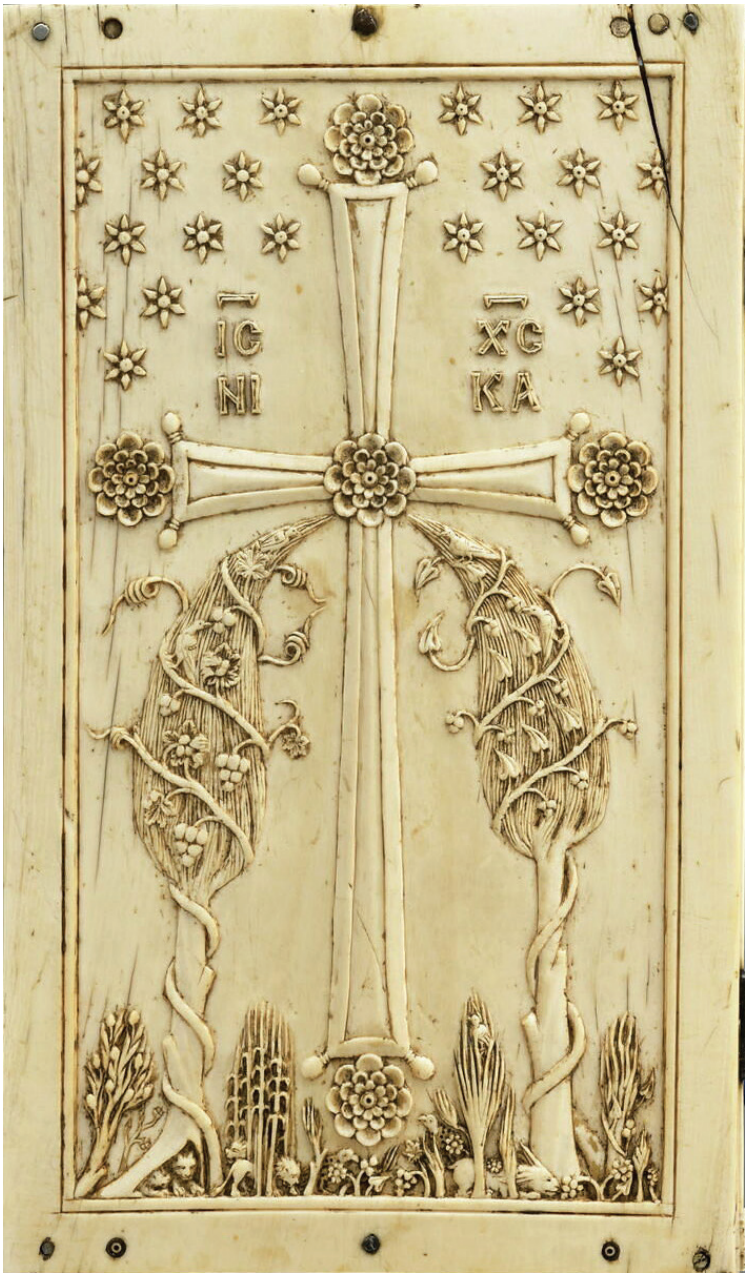
sense of awakening of the natural world by Christ's baptism, or, to put it more directly, by baptizing Christ. It is the agency of monks that is underlined here. It is also worthwhile to remember that the feast of Epiphany is celebrated on January 6th. Therefore, the contrast of the once brightly colored relief with its emphasized vegetable forms to the winter reality of the actual landscape must have been striking, enhancing further the sense of the importance of the performed service. Hence, the monks of the Dečani Monastery were annually provided with the impression of reaffirming the harmonious order with their environment in a meaningful way.

Monks and Carnivores

The natural world includes animals as well. Just like humans, they were also the original inhabitants of the earthly paradise. Moreover, their way of living in this Edenic utopia was different than the one after the expulsion too. The central panel of the tenth-century Harbaville triptych illustrates the peaceful cohabitation between lions and rabbits in the same space under the blooming cross (fig. 5). The paradisiac vision in ivory denotes, among other things, a place where carnivorous instinct does not exist (Maguire, 2002, 29).

Yet, this is a rare example of post-iconoclastic art that shows animals in connection to the depiction of the heavenly abode (Maguire, 2012, 92-98). One does not find animals in the late Byzantine compositions of paradise (fig. 6). When it comes to the representations of the afterlife, their images are mostly limited to the scene of the General resurrection, where they regurgitate eaten human bodies that are coming back to life (fig. 7). The animals are not the recipients of resurrection because, according to the official theological teachings, they do not have a rational soul. After the iconoclasm, the depictions of animals in religious visual culture predominantly performed apotropaic/magical or symbolic functions (Maguire and Maguire, 2007, 58-96; Erdeljan, 2000).

If one wants to observe the placement of animals in the monastic imagination beyond symbolism and, for lack of a better phrase, magical practices, it is useful to turn once again to the vitae of the celebrated hermits. Ecocritical theory may be of use in that regard. Ecocriticism invites interrogation of the power dynamics intending to expose the power hierarchy that determines relations between human and nonhuman subjectivities (Goldwyn, 2018, 1-33). The basic premise of intersectional subfields such as postcolonial ecocriticism, ecofeminism, and queer ecocriticism is that the ideology which authorizes marginalization or oppression toward particular groups in



5 *Harbaville Triptych*, central panel (verso), ivory, 10th c.

6 Paradise, fresco, narthex of the Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin (west wall), Gračanica Monastery, 14th c.

human societies is the same ideology which sanctions similar relationship to nature (Goldwyn, 2018, 7-19).

Therefore, if we go back to the vita of St. Peter of Koriša, from the point of view of ecocritical theory, it is useful to look for relations between the saint and other humans in the vita. The most prominent one is certainly the relationship he had with his sister at the beginning of the narrative. After the death of their parents, Peter, as a young man, wanted to pursue his ascetic dream. However, he was left with his sister who begged him not to arrange a marriage for her, nor to leave her. She was willing to follow him wherever he decided to go and obey his way of life. Thus, when Peter of Koriša received his monastic habit, they were living for some time in two simple huts near one church outside the village. However, because he wanted to distance himself from the people completely, one day they went into the wilderness. During their journey, Peter pronounced the following words to himself: "O, how great a nuisance is this woman that happened to me" (Teodosije, 1988, 269). Though the hagiographer tries to emphasize that he had a great love for his sister, his love for God was greater. Therefore, Peter of Koriša decided to abandon her in the forest while she was still asleep,

7 General Resurrection, fresco, detail, narthex of the Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin (west wall), Gračanica Monastery, 14th c.

leaving his blessing upon her. What follows when his sister wakes up is a heart-breaking scene of her lament over her fate and the loss of her brother (Teodosije, 1988, 270). Should we consider the actions of Peter of Koriša from the perspective of ecofeminism? As a matter of fact, this would be deceiving. His actions, though certainly harsh and disagreeable from the point of view of today's reader, actually fall outside the patriarchal norms. His role as a brother in medieval society prescribed that he should either arrange a marriage for his sister or look after her himself. However, Peter of Koriša decided to do neither.

One prominent feature of the monastic vitae is the emphasis on the monk's overcoming of all human passions and emotions in order to attain the passionless state – *apatheia*. This pursuit usually starts with leaving dear family members in an emotionally charged episode. The *apatheia* is actually the angelic state (Maguire, 1996, 66, 68, 72-73). While angels are capable of expressing the full spectrum of emotions, both stereotypically male and female as defined in the medieval culture, they are affected to do so by different circumstances other than the humans of either gender (Maguire, 2017). Moreover, the *apatheia* is connected to angelic gender, i.e. to their lack of gender, for they are imagined as both bodiless and genderless beings (Đorđević, 2022). As was mentioned before, the monastic life was conceptualized as a path toward achieving the angelic likeness. Since the monastic experience of the world is tied to this particular sort of (culturally constructed) embodiment/identity, the queer ecocriticism is of help in analyzing the actions of St. Peter of Koriša, as well as of the other saintly recluses.[5] The ascetic activities and emotional states are the product of identity performance which diverts from the norms of lay society.

Angels do not cry over mere human misfortunes. They lament the sinful deeds that people carry out, which in turn leads to their condemnation in the afterlife. On the other hand, the angelic interference and help with human struggles are granted when there is a potential for spiritual advancement. The monastic engagement with animals might seem ambivalent when we consider numerous stories from various vitae. Some appear harsh, while others present affectionate relationships. However, if they are looked at through the "queer" prism of the "angelic mode", they do share some common ground.

The vita of Peter of Koriša does not discuss at length the "animal affairs" aside from the troubles with the serpent. It is only mentioned briefly that when the saint came to his cave, he lived in peace with wild beasts as their neighbor until eventual-

ly they all left their natural habitat (Teodosije, 1988, 272). This piece of information, though delivered in passing, is actually quite telling for a few reasons. Firstly, the emphasis on the harmonious cohabitation with the carnivores suggests the special spiritual advancement of St. Peter that is already present at the beginning of his ascetic endeavors. It is a well-established *topos* that predators reject attacking holy anchorites. On the other hand, there are monastic tales that recount unfortunate events when a monk is eaten by a beast because of unrepentant sin (Ševčenko, 2000, 78). Secondly, "neighborly living" implies the harmonious order associated with the Garden of Eden – the time when Adam lived in peace with all God's creation. Thirdly, and perhaps most interestingly, the fact that all beasts finally decided to leave the surroundings of St. Peter's cave simultaneously implies the advancing process of sanctification of the landscape as well as their inability to adjust to the paradisiac environment and its demands. The prolonged lingering of the serpent is supported by demonic interference and, therefore, its forceful expulsion is the important "milestone" in the sacralization of the scenery. However, the willing departure of carnivorous animals indicates that Peter of Koriša had already started to tame the natural world together with his own human nature. For the flesh-eating animals to live in the hallowed place meant to renounce their urge to devour meat. Early monastic vitae are filled with stories of lions that become monastic companions, leaving their "post-garden-of-Eden" nature behind (Ševčenko, 2000; Miller, 2018, 119-154).

On the other hand, if this adjusted diet is violated, the beast is punished by the hermit or harshly chased away. The modest narrative cycle in the fourteenth-century Church of Nicholas Orphanos in Thessalonike illustrates the story of St. Gerasimos and the lion (fig. 8).[6] The lion in a sense became part of the eremitic community after the saint had removed the thorn from its paw. According to the written version of the tale in *The Spiritual Meadow* by John Moschos, the lion was being fed with bread and boiled vegetables and had the daily responsibility of pasturing the donkey that fetched water from the river. When the lion was wrongly accused of eating the animal, it had to endure "penance" despite the affectionate relationship that developed between the saint and the beast (Miller, 2018, 130-131). *The Spiritual Meadow* also tells of Abba Paul who banished a lion with three blows and a stern rebuke for not foregoing eating meat after they had the agreement (Ševčenko, 2000, 83-84).

In yet another particularly reviling monastic tale of desert fathers, Flavius, a disciple of a monk named Sabas, used to place his donkey in the care of a lion of

8 *Life of St. Gerasimos*, fresco, Church of Nicholas Orphanos, Thessaloniki, 14th c.

his elder. However, the story tells us that on the day that Flavius deviated from his angelic path and fell into fornication, the lion devoured the other animal (Miller, 2018, 153-154). Because the unwanted body's vitality was the true locus of sexual potency, giving in to fornication (the sin of the flesh) for monk Flavius meant the regaining of his "bodilessness" and, hence, the loss of the harmonious order. Therefore, while the carnivore could have been chased away from the consecrated environment if it had not abided by the Edenic diet, the monk's corruption meant the reenactment of the original sin and its consequences, including those relating to nature.

The hollowed landscape of the desert was the utopic abode of the earthly paradise retrieved from the wilderness and the monastic task was to obtain it and sustain it. The emotional engagement was governed by this goal. The sister of Peter of Koriša, whom he loved dearly, is presented in his vita as an obstacle toward spiritual advancement. Her abandonment is the marker of the saint's determination to achieve angelic likeness and perform *apathia*. If the spiritual state of his sister had been at stake, the narrative would have been different, since angelic protection is present whenever the potential for redemption is involved. However, the mention of the blessing he left her with is enough to denote his care to the medieval reader. Similarly, the indication that St. Peter settled in a cave as a "neighbor" to the beasts that were living

in its vicinity also implies care. Nevertheless, because they were unable to forsake their "post-Edenic" ways, the animals had to leave, insinuating the process of sanctification of the landscape surrounding the newly established sacred place. The expulsion from the earthly paradise happened once and it could happen again, whether to a sinful human or a meat-eating animal.

Endnotes

1 Cfr. Goldwyn (2018, 191-203) for the post-human discourse and the environmental engagement in relation to the Byzantine romances.
2 On the iconography of the Dormition of St. Ephraim the Syrian, see Martin (1951).
3 For the general iconographic analysis of this relief, see Maglovski (1989, 199-203).
4 On the performative aspect of church inscriptions, see Papalexandrou (2007).
5 On the notion of "queerness" and its applicability in the research of the premodern epochs, see Kruger (2009).
6 On the church and its frescoes, see Bakirtzis (2003). A particular contextualized interpretation of this cycle is presented in Schroeder (2010, 262-264).

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Illustrations

Fig. 1 *The Ascetic Penance*, Vat. gr. 394, fol. 46r, 11th century, Vatican Library, from: J. R. Martin, *The Illustration of the Heavenly Ladder of John Climacus*, Princeton, 1954, fig. 91.

Fig. 2 *Representation of Nativity Troparion*, fresco, narthex of the Church of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel (central vault), Docheiariou Monastery, 16th century, from: V. Della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred in Byzantium*, Cambridge, 2016, fig. 25.

Fig. 3 *Dormition of St. Ephraim the Syrian*, icon, 15th century, Crete, 51.5x69 cm, Athens, Byzantine and Christian Museum, Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

Fig. 4 *Baptism of Christ,* relief in the lunette of the south portal of the Church of Christ Pantocrator, Dečani Monastery, 14th century, photo: Jakov Đorđević.

Fig. 5 *Harbaville Triptych*, central panel (verso), ivory, 10th century, © 2021 RMN-Grand Palais, Louvre Museum, photo: Adrien Didierjean.

Fig. 6 Paradise, fresco, narthex of the Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin (west wall), Gračanica Monastery, 14th century, photo: Jakov Đorđević.

Fig. 7 General Resurrection, fresco, detail, narthex of the Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin (west wall), Gračanica Monastery, 14th century, photo: Jakov Đorđević.

Fig. 8 *Life of St. Gerasimos*, fresco, Church of Nicholas Orphanos in Thessaloniki, 14th century, from: Ayios Nikolaos Orphanos: The Wall Paintings, Ch. Bakirtzis (ed.), Athens, 2003, figs. 78, 79.

Irene Gilodi

Birds, Flowers and Crocodiles
The Nilotic Pavement in the House of Leontis

Irene Gilodi
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
gilodire@hu-berlin.de

In remarkable continuity with popular artistic practices in Roman imperial times, the plentiful Nilotic landscape, with its wildlife of aquatic birds, fishes and other animals, continued to adorn both walls and floors of churches and private houses in the Byzantine provinces of Palestine and Arabia. How can we account for this continuity, equally present in Christian and Jewish environments? What specific decorations can evoke an 'idea of Egypt' and what meaning could this iconography carry in a late antique context? This article answers these questions by examining in particular the iconography of the crocodile, from Ancient Egyptian devotional practices to Roman symbolic associations. The mosaic in the great hall of the so-called House of Leontis features this animal as part of its Nilotic repertoire, and couples this decoration with a visual rendering of the Homeric tale of Odysseus. Indeed, Nilotic elements, long-time carriers of augural meaning were often associated with mythology, history, literature, and the theater. Thus, this floor offers the perfect opportunity to illustrate how the refined visual language adopted by the Jewish elite of Scythopolis embraced its Hellenistic and Roman cultural origins.

Keywords: Nilotic, Nile, Egypt, Odyssey, crocodile, Scythopolis, Jewish profane buildings, floor mosaic

"Alas, alas the brutal outrage with which, you crocodile,
you boast arrogantly, bellowing on the sea.
May the mighty Nile, who watches you,
overwhelm your arrogance and destroy you".

Aeschylus, *Suppliant Women*, 876-881

A paddling of ducks glides with the current on a river stream; the water's surface and the surrounding meadow are dotted with floating leaves and lotus flowers; the river is ripe with fish and a couple of ibises is traversing its course. This is the figuration on the rectangular mosaic (fig. 1) decorating the intercolumn of the Christian church of Sts. Lot and Procopius (ca. 550), located at Khirbet Mukhayyat (in modern-day Jordan), not far from Moses' burial place at Mount Nebo. The use of this specific flora and fauna evokes an 'idea of Egypt and the Nile' and situates this artefact within a longstanding tradition of Nilotic motifs that were used to adorn all kinds of artistic productions. The depiction on floors of water ponds, surrounded by vegetation and inhabited by animals, was a decorative technique implemented already in ancient Egypt, as attested by the stucco pavement fragment with a duck and marsh plants (fig. 2) now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City (ca. 1390-1353 BCE).[1] Nilotic ornamentation enjoyed great popularity in Roman art and was replicated in multiple mediums and techniques throughout its history (Versluys, 2002). It adorned silver cups, textiles, frescoes, terracotta wall panels and mosaic pavements: from the famous Republican-era mosaic of Palestrina, formerly Praeneste (Meyboom, 1995), to the many depictions attested from Pompeii, and throughout the age of Imperial Rome in every province.[2] Its popularity never waned and numerous examples of Nilotic decoration are attested in late antique Levant as well (Balty, 1995; Maguire, 1998; Hachlili, 1998; Maguire, 2007; Hachlili, 2009; Talgam, 2014; Britt, 2019).

Shortly before the mosaic of Sts. Lot and Procopius was laid, a similar Nilotic landscape was used to decorate the walls of the aisles in the church of St. Stephen in Gaza (again a Christian building). This artwork did not survive the test of time but we have, as precious evidence of its appearance and significance, the description provided in the *ekphrasis* of the church by the Greek rhetorician Choricius of Gaza. Near the end of his speech, almost as an after-thought, Choricius mentions the 'charming' decoration of the Nile: "The river itself is nowhere portrayed in the way painters portray rivers, but is suggested by means of distinctive currents and symbols, as well as by the meadows along its banks. Various kinds of birds that often wash in that river's streams dwell in the meadows" (Choricius, Laudatio Marciani II). While the depiction of the personified Nile ("the way paint-

1 Floor mosaic, detail of the Nilotic landscape, Sts. Lot and Procopius, Khirbet Mukhayyat (Jordan), ca. 550 CE

2 Painted plaster pavement fragment, ca. 1390-1353 BCE, from Egypt

ers portray rivers") had become somewhat problematic in a Christian religious context, the Nile iconography could still be suggested through the use of specific vegetation and animals. But why do specific animals and vegetation evoke the idea of Egypt and the Nile? And what remains of the Roman cultural background when we talk about the implementation of Nilotic iconography in Late Antiquity?

In delineating what Late Antiquity meant for him, Peter Brown borrowed from the field of crystallography an expression that had already been used by Henri Irénée Marrou to photograph the relationship of this period with the preceding Roman era (Brown, 2012, 90): the word is *pseudomorphosis*. That means that the surface appears the same, but the inner structure that supports that surface has drastically changed. I argue that this idea of pseudomorphosis is a good theoretical lens to look at Nilotic decorations in Christian and Jewish context in the centuries preceding the Islamic conquest of the Levant. By looking at the Nilotic decoration of the House of Leontis in Scythopolis, and by concentrating in particular on the iconography of the crocodile, depicted in the mosaic, this contribution aims to show how the Hellenistic tradition, filtered through the experience of the Imperial Roman past, continued to be an important part of late antique Palestinian cultural and artistic life.

Egypt and the Nile

An immediate mental association between the river Nile and the land of Egypt lives on to this day and was certainly present in late antique Palestine. Indeed, at that time mosaics with Nilotic landscapes often featured city-portraits of Egyptian towns, sometimes accompanied by the inscription ΕΓΥΠΤΟΣ (Egyptos), such as in the Haditha chapel (excavated near Lod, Israel).[3] According to the common perception, Egypt itself was a 'gift' from the Nile (Herodotus, II, 5) and its legendary affluence was mentioned already by Homer, both in the Iliad (IX, 379-384) and the Odyssey (IV, 125). Egypt's prosperity always depended on the river flooding pattern and the particularity of the Nile River that carries and deposits silt instead of eroding land. Herodotus remarks on the connection between the river and food resources, not just in the form of fertile soil but also of fishes and lotuses.[4] Ancient Greek authors debated the borders of Egypt by taking the Nile

as the main reference point: Egypt was either only its delta or it extended all the way to the first cataract at Aswan (Herodotus, II, 15-17). Egypt was neither Libya (Africa) nor Asia, but straddled in-between, just like the course of the river marking this geographical boundary. Herodotus reports the words of the oracle of Ammon as following: "All the land, he said, watered by the Nile in its course was Egypt, and all who dwelt lower than the city Elephantine and drank of that river's water were Egyptians" (Herodotus, II, 18).

In the profane context, alongside evoking the land of Egypt by means of its flora and fauna or through the use of geographic inscriptions, patrons and artists also opted for visual renderings of the Nile River "the way painters portray rivers". A representation of the personified Nile and its flooding can be found in the House of Leontis within the ancient town of Scythopolis, in the Jordan River valley (modern-day Beit She'an, Israel). In late antiquity, Scythopolis, the capital of the Roman province Palaestina Secunda, was a multicultural-interfaith town, where Jews, Samaritans, Christians and pagans coexisted.[5] Here a large architectural complex, known as the House of Leontis, dated to the mid-5th or early 6th century, was brought to light in 1964. Part of the complex is still to be excavated, but of the uncovered buildings we have a small prayer room (probably a synagogue), a courtyard and a long reception hall. Zori, who conducted the first excavation, believed the complex to be a private mansion (Zori, 1966, 124), while other scholars subsequently believed it to be a synagogue-with-annex-complex (Hüttenmeister and Reeg, 1977, 62-64) or an inn (Sivan, 2008, 159-160).[6] According to Ze'ev Safrai it could have functioned as a basilica for communal use, perhaps a common place of worship, shared by (both) Jews and Christians alike (Safrai, 2003).

The hall mosaic (fig. 3), divided in three sections, mentions in a dedicatory Greek inscription in the central panel a certain Leontis Kloubas (hence the name of the site). This inscription is coupled with a menorah, visually identifying the patron as a member of the Jewish community. The field around the inscription is adorned with a pattern of stylized birds that must have featured in mosaicists' pattern books, because we find similar examples in several contemporary floors (Habas, 2021, 172-173). On the other two extremities of the long hall are two panels: one Nilotic, the other mythological, representing episodes from the Homeric tale of Odysseus.[7] The

3 Drawing of the floor mosaic in the hall of the House of Leontis Kloubas in Beit She'an, Israel, from N. Zori, *The House of Kyrios Leontis at Beth Shean*, 1966

4 Floor mosaic, Nilotic panel from the House of Leontis Kloubas, mid-5th-early 6th c., CE

Nilotic panel (fig. 4) features the above mentioned personification of the Nile, reclining on what is probably a strange-looking hippo (or a crocodile following Zori, 1966, 131) and resting his elbow on a round vase that marks the river's source; the water flows from the vase all the way to the river delta and the Mediterranean Sea with its ships; around the Nile is the typical vegetation of lotus flowers and other plants, and a fauna made of ibis birds and hunting beasts. The Nile holds in his right hand a duck, symbolic of plenty, and raises it toward the top left corner, where an obelisk (a nilometer for measuring the rising of the flood) and a simple building stand for the city-portrait of Alexandria (as clarified by an inscription).[8]

Underneath the city, a savage beast is attempting to eat a cow or an ox. This could be a peculiar rendering of the long-established iconography of a crocodile eating an ass. In his Natural History, Pliny reports that the famous painter Nealkes (3rd c. BCE), when tasked with depicting the naval battle between Egyptians and Persians on the river Nile, inserted the detail of a crocodile assaulting from the river an ass standing on the bank (Pliny, *N. H.*, XXXV, 141-142). This detail was precisely intended to show that the depicted waters were those of the Nile and not of the sea nor any other river (Aföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins, 1980, 46). The fact that a crocodile was present, was enough for identification.[9] Moreover, both crocodiles and hippos were enormous animals that instilled fear and awe and contributed to the idea that, if such animals lived there, the Nile must be a great and important river.[10]

Crocodiles and the Idea of Egypt

Hippos and crocodiles have a long history of being portrayed both figuratively and in geographical texts as curiosities from the exotic South, a trend that only intensified in Roman republican and imperial times. Pliny informs us that a hippo and five crocodiles were exhibited for the first time in Rome during the Aedilician Games of Marcus Scaurus in 58 BCE (Pliny, *N. H.*, VIII, 40). Crocodiles regularly appeared on artefacts with Nilotic decorations and in Roman Egypt their bodies were also used to create luxurious objects of prestige, such as the parade armor (3rd-4th c. CE), made of sewn crocodile skin and used by a Roman soldier during cult processions, now in the British Museum.[11] Crocodiles were dangerous

and it was hard to hunt and kill them, as such they were perceived as devious, malicious beasts, infesting both land and water (Pliny, *N. H.*, VIII, 37-38). In Roman Egypt crocodiles could stand in place for demonic forces, defeated by the protecting deities of the land. In a window frame with an apotropaic function (now in the Louvre), the falcon-headed god Horus, avenger of Osiris and destroyer of demonic animals, is depicted as a mounted Roman soldier in the act of spearing an evil crocodile.[12] David Frankfurter notes that the connection between this image and its Christian parallels (such as St. George against the dragon) is not simply a formal one but it involves "what the images conveyed in the cosmos: *apotropeia*, repulsion, victory over chaos and misfortune" (Frankfurter, 1998, 3). This identification of crocodiles with evil forces and devils continued throughout the Byzantine and Western Middle Ages, all the way to the crocodile-shaped dragon under St. Theodorus' feet, in the hybrid statue in the Piazzetta di San Marco in Venice and the embalmed crocodiles in Italian Marian churches.[13]

Crocodiles appear in ancient Egyptian devotion also in the so-called *Horus cippi*, healing stelae with a standard iconography of the god Horus standing victorious on two crocodiles, while holding snakes and other dangerous animals.[14] The act of pouring water on the stelae and then drinking it was believed to be curative and the Horus cippi were used to heal afflictions by snake and scorpion venom.[15] The fight of Horus against the crocodile as symbolic of the fight against evil, in the specific context of amulets and talismans, migrated to a Christian context. In fact, a 6th-century Christian amulet with Greek inscriptions (fig. 5), now in the British Museum, visually combined elements from the Horus cippi and Jewish-Christian symbolism and iconography (Barb, 1964, 10-17; Lidova, 2017, 46).[16]

While for the ancient Egyptians hippos were animals of rebirth, the much more ambivalent crocodile was called "wrinkle face" (Arnold, 1995, 32) and, because of the danger it posed, it was given a prominent role in magic rituals and folklore. The crocodile-god Sobek, particularly venerated near Fayum, received regular offerings to protect the farmland and at his temples, pet crocodiles were kept and fed (Aelian, *De Natura Animalium*, VIII, 4.ii), and preserved through embalming after death.[17] The sacred crocodiles of Sobek were a sort of 'tourist attraction' in Roman times (Draycott, 2010, 213-214), and the sanctuary of Sobek at

5 Christian amulet with Greek inscriptions, 6th c. CE (electrotype replica of a Byzantine original?)

Fayum continued to be the center of active devotion throughout Ptolemaic Egypt and Roman Egypt. The association of the Ptolemaic dynasty with this animal was strengthened by a legend, according to which Perdiccas' troops were annihilated by the waters of the Nile and by crocodiles while trying to cross the river to attack Ptolemy I (Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*, XVIII, 34-35). In helping Ptolemy defeat his enemy and start his dynasty, the crocodile thus becomes an instrument of divine justice and vengeance. It repelled Perdiccas, like it had punished before the cruel king Achtoes who had brought woes to the people of Egypt, according to the Ptolemaic historian Manetho (Fragment 27, in Bianchi, 2021, 124).

6 Denarius of Octavian, silver, 28 BCE

7 Sestertius of Caracalla, copper alloy, 215 CE

Given the association between Ptolemy and the crocodile, it is not surprising that, when Mark Anthony restored to Cleopatra VII and their children several lands formerly part of the Ptolemaic empire, the event was commemorated by a provincial governor by the name of Crassus with the issue of a series of coins that prominently feature a crocodile.[18] By the time the Roman battle at Actium was

fought (31 BCE) the crocodile had become a symbol of Egypt as a whole and of Cleopatra and her dynasty in particular. It is for this reason that the coin minted by Augustus to celebrate the Actium victory has his portrait on the obverse and a crocodile with the words AEGVPTO CAPTA on the reverse (fig. 6).[19] Other coins issued by Augustus and Agrippa memorialized the event by showing a crocodile chained to a palm tree,[20] a motif similar to the one of the chained prisoners in the IVDEA CAPTA coins, commemorating the conquest of Judea under Vespasian in 71 CE.[21]

Imperial Rome continued to use the crocodile as a symbol for Egypt, as testified by the coin minted in 215 CE to commemorate Caracalla's 'visit' to Alexandria, and the brutal repression of riots in that city by Roman imperial troops (fig. 7).[22] On the reverse of this coin, Caracalla, wearing military attire, crushes a crocodile with his foot, a symbol of the submission of Egypt to Roman imperialism, while the goddess Isis rushes toward him, to extend the gifts of the land to the emperor. The gifts consist primarily of Egyptian grain, on which Rome was utterly dependent (Hackworth Petersen, 2016). Interestingly, the coin minted by Caracalla is remarkably reminiscent of a coin issued three decades earlier by the emperor Commodus.[23] In Commodus' coin, the emperor stands as a naked Heracles, with a foot on the prow of a boat (exactly in the same position as Caracalla's crocodile), while a personified Africa, holding the attributes of Isis, offers him grain. This coin can be understood as a commemoration of the auxiliary fleet instituted by Commodus to remedy the dependence of Rome on Egyptian grain by improving trade with other African regions, a dependence that had already been the cause of famines, plagues, and much unrest. Thus, it seems that by substituting (in the exact same place and manner) the prow of the boat from Commodus' coin with a crocodile, symbolic of the land of Egypt, and by having Isis offer him all the grains of this land, Caracalla is remarking on the fact that, due to his strong military control of the region, Rome no longer needs to look elsewhere for grain, like in the days of the 'weak' Commodus.

By the time crocodiles are portrayed in the mosaics of late antique Palestine, like in the House of Leontis, they have lost most of the original religious significance attributed to them by Ancient Egyptians. However, they still carried a stratified and deep-rooted symbolism, as well as being clear visual markers for the land of Egypt, its prosperity and economic importance.

8 Floor mosaic, mythological panel from the House of Leontis Kloubas, mid-5th – early 6th c. CE

Seafaring and Trade with Egypt

The presence of a Nilotic landscape in the House of Leontis can be best understood in relation to the other mosaic panel in the same floor, the one depicting scenes from the Odyssey (fig. 8). The composition of this panel is divided into two registers, connected and separated through a complex pattern of curvy lines, depicting sea waves. On the top left side of the upper register (under a lacuna), a Nereid is riding an Ichthyocentaur;[24] in front of her, on the right, is a ship with

a man tied to its mast. The man tied to the mast is clearly Odysseus, as described by Homer (Odyssey, Book XII), passing beyond earshot of the Sirens. One siren is depicted below Odysseus, as she attempts to lead astray another boat (the one in the lower register). The lower register is thus constructed as the reverse composition of the one above: with a ship on the left and a mythological creature (in this case, a flute-playing siren, half woman/half bird) on the right. The boat on the left carries two large jugs, or amphorae, and one man, who's battling another sea monster with the help of a trident. Traditionally, this scene has been interpreted by scholars as a representation of the passage of the Odyssey in which the hero fights against Scylla, a passage that immediately follows the episode of the sirens (Hachlili, 2009, 97; Talgam, 2014, 376-377). However, it is my contention that this interpretation does not consider the fact that, in Scythopolis, the siren is luring into danger the boat in the lower level, not the one with Ulysses tied to the mast; moreover, this happens *while* the man onboard this second ship is battling the sea-monster. Additionally, the small rendering of the two amphorae seems particularly relevant, considering the scarcity of any other detail in the composition, and it identifies this ship as a merchant vessel. If indeed this were a depiction of Ulysses fighting Scylla, how can we account for this discrepancy?

I propose a different reading, based on the Greek inscription, situated between the man on the boat and the siren. This inscription reads: Κ(ύρι)ε β(ο)ήθ(ει) Λεοντί/ου κλουβ(α) / Lord, help Leontis Kloubas, a common formula (Zori, 1966, 132-133; Habas, 2021, 171). Here, it seems, Leontis Kloubas is invoking divine protection against the many dangers involved in seafaring: the merchant ship in the lower register, battling against such dangers, is a mirror image of the perilous journey of Odysseus (above), and hoping for an equally happy ending. As already mentioned, Leontis Kloubas is credited in the inscription in the middle panel of the hall with having commissioned and paid for the entire mosaic pavement, in order to be remembered and to secure salvation for himself and his brother Jonathan (Habas, 2021, 173). While it is not possible to ascertain for certain who Leontis Kloubas was (Zori, 1966, 133-134; Safrai, 2003, 248), we can assume that he was a rich and powerful man of Jewish faith. Some scholars have suggested that Leontis Kloubas or his family might have been originally from Alexandria, which would

account for the second panel, the Nilotic one with the Egyptian town explicitly mentioned (Sivan, 2008, 160). But, instead, could he not have been a merchant involved in commerce with Alexandria in Egypt?

Alexandria was a very important harbor, shipping grains around the Mediterranean and importing/exporting textiles all the way to central Asia (Pritchard, 2006; Williams, 2012). In a town like Scythopolis, a famous weaving center (Sivan 2008, 163), where commercial activities were flourishing in the 5th and 6th centuries, it would certainly have been possible for Leontis Kloubas and his brother to be rich merchants, perhaps involved in long-distance seafaring trade and commanding a few *naukleroi*. If this reading is correct, it would imply that, if indeed the building was a secular basilica for public use, it served more likely a function related to local and long-distance trade. If it was an inn (as favored by some authors), it seems its proprietor was both an inn-keeper *and* a merchant, hosting other merchants in his hall.

After all, this was an epoch of unprecedented economic boom in the area, mirrored by a construction boom as well. Toward the end of the Roman era, the Jezreel Valley swamps dried up and in the following centuries large portions of land near Scythopolis became available for settlement and agriculture (Bar, 2004, 312). Additionally, according to new paleoclimatic evidence, after the period of drought that took place between ca. 350-470 CE in the Eastern Mediterranean, a drastic shift in climate resulted in much wetter conditions for the following two centuries (Izdebski et al., 2015). This shift, together with complex water management systems, enabled extensive agricultural practices, such as wine making, that became of fundamental importance for the economic prosperity of the region.[25]

I argue that it is this sudden shift toward a less arid climate, and the fecundity and material prosperity it brought that are mirrored in the joyous depiction of river waters in the Nilotic panel at Scythopolis. The fecundity brought onto Egypt by the Nile was a powerful visual herald of prosperity for the region of Scythopolis. While Safrai convincingly made the case for a public use of this complex (Safrai, 2003, 246), I disagree with its characterization as a prayer hall. Indeed, a profane function relating to trade and the economy seems more likely. This would account

9 Floor mosaic, detail of the Nilotic decoration, Hippolitus Hall, Madaba (Jordan), early 6th c. CE

10 Floor mosaic, detail with a crocodile, House of Dionysus, Sepphoris (Israel), 3rd c. CE

for the patron being a member of the merchant class and the iconography of plenty implied in the Nilotic scene.

A Shared Cultural Heritage – Some Conclusions

What seems apparent in the House of Leontis is that the Hellenistic culture was an important part of the common cultural heritage of late antique Palestine, in a Jewish and Christian milieu alike. Or, in other words, as Hagigh Sivan has suggested, a shared appreciation of aesthetics, both intellectual and artistic, was what nurtured a sense of citizenship in the Palestinian town (Sivan, 2008, 14). As part of the shared cultural heritage of the Mediterranean *koiné*, classical mythology had lost all religious dimensions and was set firmly in the realm of artistic tradition and poetic invention, as well as that of symbolic representation.

In Madaba (east of the Jordan river) we find a Christian parallel to the Jewish context of the Scythopolis floor and another example of Nilotic elements intermingling with visual renderings of poetry and mythology. The so-called Hippolitus hall (fig. 9), early 6th century, derives its name from the central representation in two registers of the myth of Phaedra and Hippolitus (or the tragedy by Euripides). A separate portion of mosaic, adjacent to the mythological one, is decorated with refined elements of Nilotica, showing a marked appreciation for the visual language of naturalistic Roman art.

A bridge between the earlier imperial past and these late antique examples is the Roman villa dated to the end of the 3rd century in Sepphoris, in the Lower Galilee. This villa belonged most likely to a Jew of prestige, and it had a triclinium decorated with scenes from the life of Dionysus, depicted with marked naturalism (Talgam and Weiss, 2004). A section in the southern border of the mosaic was at some point replaced with a Nilotic landscape, showing naked putti (possibly pygmies) fighting a crocodile and hunting birds (fig. 10). Once more we find in the same floor, and treated with apparently the same attitude, Nilotic imagery and mythological themes.

The appreciation for mythological themes and ancient theater was clearly shared by both Jewish and Christian communities of Palestine.[26] The Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE-50 CE) describes the acts of devotions

of Egyptian Jews toward the Nile, while making clear that they were carried out without compromise to Jewish law. Similarly, he saw no problem in Jewish participation in theater performances and athletic games (Kerkeslage, 1998, 215). In Scythopolis the Jewish religious festival of Purim, with all its drinking and merry making, provided a link with the city's pagan past and its titular divinity (and legendary founder) Dionysus (Sivan, 2008, 159). While in Gaza, the Christian fest of St Stephen consisted not only of a religious procession, but also of theatrical performances and night spectacles of mimes (Sivan, 2008, 152).

As Bowersock suggests, mythological mosaics could also be associated to the immensely popular mime-theater of late antiquity (Bowersock, 2006, 54). This form of entertainment was clearly a subject of debate: contested by some early Christian authors, such as Jacob of Serugh (451-521) (Talgam, 2010, 54), it was defended by others, such as the above mentioned Choricius in a speech known as *Apologia mimorum*. The connection to theatrical performance seems to be very suggestive when speaking of the tragedy of Phaedra, or of other mosaics of the region featuring Dionysus, Achilles and Odysseus.[27]

To conclude, while in a religious context (such as in the Christian churches of Gaza and Khirbet Mukhayyat) artists had to carefully evoke the Nile without depicting it, in the private hall in Scythopolis they could freely express all their appreciation (and that of their patron) for the Hellenistic artistic tradition. The Nilotic iconography, acceptable in a profane environment for both Jews and Christians, had well-established precursors in Hellenistic and Roman art and went hand in hand with episodes from the Odyssey and with myths and stories often represented on stage.

Moreover, the positive augural meaning of the Nile and the land of plenty (Egypt) was in harmony with the wish for protection expressed elsewhere in the House of Leontis. The iconography of the Nile, with its associations with fertility, abundance and good fortune would have been well suited to a building dedicated to commerce and trade, a building offered to the community by a rich citizen in search of social recognition.

Endnotes

1 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/548432 (accessed 31 May 2022).

2 Including Cyrenaica, where there are also prominent examples from late antiquity (Aföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins, 1980).

3 Conversely, M. Avi-Yonah identifies this inscription not with the land of Egypt but with the city of Memphis (Avi-Yonah, 1972, 121).

4 "When the river is in flood and flows over the plains, many lilies, which the Egyptians call lotus, grow in the water" (Herodotus, II, 92).

5 The Christian community of Scythopolis was traditionally composed of different sects: at least until the end of the 3rd century there was a large Arian community. Additionally, the Jewish-Christian sect of the Ebionites also had a presence in the city in the 4th century, if Epiphanius' *Panarion* is to be believed.

6 For a brief review of these positions see Habas (2021, 192).

7 The three sections of the hall mosaic are now preserved (as separate panels) in the Israel Museum of Jerusalem.

8 Whether Alexandria was technically a part of Egypt or *near* Egypt, for the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine mindset is a complex matter (see MacDonald, 2021).

9 According to Herodotus, Etearchus king of the Ammonians was told by certain young Nasamonians that after a long journey through the desert they arrived by a large river with crocodiles and hippos (probably the Niger). Indeed, no North-Africans nor Greek knew exactly where the source of the Nile was, nor what shape its course took passed the first few cataracts, but based on the account of the animals described by the young men, Etearchus presumed this river to be the Nile, and Herodotus agrees with him (Herodotus, II, 32-33).

10 Following Seneca's reflections in a passage dedicated to the Nile, one may judge the greatness of a river by the size of the animals, that can live off the river's offerings (Seneca, *Naturales Quaestiones*, IV, 171).

11 British Museum, museum no. EA5473: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA5473 (accessed 31 May 2022).

12 Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes, Numéro principal: E 4850: https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010050476 (accessed 31 May 2022).

13 This interesting phenomenon sees the presence of embalmed crocodiles in some early modern churches devoted to the cult of Mary, for example the Santuario Madonna delle Lacrime in Ponte Nossa by Bergamo or the Santuario di Santa Maria delle Grazie near Mantua.

14 The most majestic example of these stelae, known to scholars also as "Horus on the Crocodiles", is the Metternich Stela, now in the MET: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/546037 (accessed 31 May 2022).

15 See for example: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/545766 (accessed 31 May 2022).

16 The amulet is perhaps an early 20th-century electrotype of a Byzantine original. British Museum, museum number: 1938,1010.1 https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_1938-1010-1 (accessed 31 May 2022).

17 An entire museum dedicated to mummified crocodiles and their relation to the god Sobek opened by the temple of Kom Ombo (near Aswan) in 2012.

18 It is unclear if this Crassus is Marcus Licinius Crassus, grandson of the triumvir by the same name, or Publius Canidius Crassus, who campaigned with Mark Anthony in the East (Draycott, 2012, 51)

19 British Museum, no. 1866,1201.4189: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1866-1201-4189 (accessed 31 May 2022). Cleopatra's daughter, Cleopatra Selene, then reappropriated this symbology for herself and a coin issued by her husband, Juba II, king of Mauretania, shows the monarch on one side and a crocodile with the Greek inscription BASILISSA CLEOPATRA, on the other: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1908-0404-65 (accessed 31 May 2022).

20 British Museum, no. 1935,1102.9: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1935-1102-9 (accessed 31 May 2022).

21 British Museum, no. R.10656: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_R-10656 (accessed 31 May 2022).

22 British Museum, no. 1872,0709.786: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1872-0709-786 (accessed 31 May 2022).

23 See exemplar on the site of the Classical Numismatic Group: https://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=165019 (accessed 31 May 2022).

24 A similar motive in mosaic can be found in the so-called mosaic of Amphitrite in the Villa Selene, in Leptis Magna (2nd century CE), a villa famous also for its humorous Nilotic mosaic band featuring fighting pygmies.

25 A mosaic from Kissufim (near Gaza, today in the Israel Museum of Jerusalem), depicting a wine merchant holding a grape in his right hand and leading a camel carrying long, thin amphorae, stands testament to the importance of Palestinian wine trade.

26 On Jewish exposure to Greco-Roman culture and its absorption into Jewish tradition see Weiss (2010).

27 In Madaba, archeologists also uncovered a mosaic (5^{th}-6^{th} c. CE) featuring Patroclus and Achilles playing the cythara and one depicting a Bacchic procession with dancing maenad and satyr.

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Illustrations

Fig. 1 Floor mosaic, detail of the Nilotic landscape, Sts. Lot and Procopius, Khirbet Mukhayyat (Jordan), ca. 550, photo: Helen Miles.

Fig. 2 Painted plaster pavement fragment, ca. 1390-1353 BCE, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, www.metmuseum.org., public domain.

Fig. 3 Drawing of the floor mosaic in the hall of the House of Leontis Kloubas, Beit She'an, Israel, from N. Zori, "The House of Kyrios Leontis at Beth Shean", *Israel Exploration Journal*, 16/2, 1966, p. 128, fig. 4.

Fig. 4 Floor mosaic, Nilotic panel with Odysseus and the Nile from the House of Leontis Kloubas, Beit She'an, Israel, mid-5th-early 6th c. CE, Israel Museum, Jerusalem, photo: Gary Todd, Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

Fig. 5 Christian amulet with Greek inscriptions, 6th c. (electrotype replica of a Byzantine original?), British Museum, London, © The Trustees of the British Museum, www.britishmuseum.org.

Fig. 6 Denarius of Octavian, silver, 28 BCE, British Museum, London, © The Trustees of the British Museum, www.britishmuseum.org.

Fig. 7 Sestertius of Caracalla, copper alloy, 215 CE, British Museum, London, © The Trustees of the British Museum, www.britishmuseum.org.

Fig. 8 Floor mosaic, mythological panel with Odysseus and the Sirens from the House of Leontis Kloubas, mid-5th-early 6th c. CE, Israel Museum, Jerusalem, photo: Gary Todd, Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

Fig. 9 Floor mosaic, detail of the Nilotic decoration, Hippolitus Hall, Madaba (Jordan), early 6th c. CE, photo: Elias Rovielo.

Fig. 10 Floor mosaic, detail with a crocodile, House of Dionysus, Sepphoris (Israel), 3rd c. CE, photo: Marco Prins, www.livius.org, public domain.

Carla Hermann

Johann Moritz Rugendas' Brazil and American Landscapes and Humboldt's Idea of Nature

Carla Hermann
Cultural Heritage and Archeology Department
City Hall of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
carla.hermann@gmail.com

Prussian geographer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt believed that the painting of landscape was essential for scientific research as well as being an educational tool. Considering nature-landscape as a whole, his writings revealed his travels abroad in order to see and understand nature. Mediated through the aesthetics, the landscape seemed like a living unity, while his empirical observations and contemplation aimed at converting the aesthetic spectacle into scientific knowledge. Johann Moritz Rugendas was among the artists clearly under Humboldt's influence. Rugendas first travelled to Brazil in the years 1821-1825, after an invitation to take part in the Langsdorff Expedition, an official project that happened with the support of Brazil's young emperor Dom Pedro I. After meeting von Humboldt in Paris and showing him his drawings, the naturalist convinced him to publish a travel book, helping him to publish with the important Engelmann Publishing House. Between 1827 and 1835 the lithographs that resulted from his sketches were published in Germany and in France under the title "Malerische Reise in Brazilien von Moritz Rugendas", with compositions that informed the European public about the details of nature and the characteristics of the Brazilian landscape and people. Humboldt and Rugendas became acquaintances, and the naturalist fed the painter with new information during the time they spent in Paris. Between 1831 and 1837 Rugendas travelled for the second time to America, and the works that he produced during these trips are somehow different from the ones originated on the first travel. This time he produced larger oil paintings, oscillating between wide Mexican landscapes and scenes that depicted people from Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay.

Keywords: Landscape painting, Alexander von Humboldt, Johann Moritz Rugendas, Latin America landscape, 19th century, Brazil, Chile, Argentina

Foreign authors and artists wrote an important part of Brazilian art history, relying on the pictorial gaze of painters that we nowadays call "travelling artists". They were people who travelled to different parts of the world on diplomatic or scientific expeditions and missions. In the Brazilian case, except for the two decades that the Dutch occupied the city of Recife in the north-eastern region of the country in the 17th century, most travellers arrived after the transfer of the Portuguese Court to Rio in 1808. When King John VI fled from the Napoleon troops, he brought to Rio the royal family and his court, and he modernized the city that was considered modest and colonial. The first transformation was the opening of the ports of the Kingdom in Brazil to the friendly nations of Portugal in 1810, which stimulated the influx of foreign artists, so that in the following decades, the city received many travellers from Europe, predominantly British.

Before the opening of the ports Portugal was very conscientious about the Brazilian territory and its boundless natural wealth and possibilities for commercial exploitation. It was difficult to visit Brazil before Britain forced the opening of the Portuguese colony to the world, and many times the Portuguese Crown denied passage to explorers and scientists. The geographer Alexander von Humboldt was among those who were not granted passage to Brazil in the first years of the 19th century.

Alexander von Humboldt was born in 1769 and died in 1859 in Berlin. He was not only the most successful explorer-scientist of the 18th and early 19th centuries but was also the most famous and influential German-speaking private traveller. His expeditions depended on his inherited fortune and on the permission of other European colonial forces to explore. In 1798, during his stay in Paris, von Humboldt met Aimé Bonpland, a young doctor and botanist. Together they obtained the permission of the King Charles IV of Spain to depart in 1799 in a self-funded expedition to the Americas. However, as already stated, the Portuguese Kingdom did not grant them the permission. Therefore, they visited the United States and the Spanish colonial territories of Mexico, Cuba, and other parts of South America, but not Brazil. The long travel through the Americas allowed him to acquire enough material for three decades of publishing. Moreover, the five-year journeying helped him to visualise the theory he would develop in the

following decades and, in the end, helped him to consolidate his understanding of nature through data gathering and specimen collections and observation. The process of editing his memoirs and travel accounts for publishing started as soon as they returned in Europe in 1804.

A famous portrait of von Humboldt by Friedrich Georg Weitsch, that captures the scientist in the outdoors and in the natural environment, was painted shortly after his return to Europe from the United States, the last stop of his American journey (fig. 1). The painting – now part of the collection of the Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin – has a series of references to his life and work. The pale but bright background in which Weitsch sets the geographer reveals a perfect connection between the human mind and nature. Von Humboldt sits on bare land. On his left and in the back, there is a tree with large, dark green leaves, probably a banana tree, and behind it we see the shadow of a different plant, resembling a palm tree. Both species are related to the tropical climate, mementos of the travels that he had just concluded. In the background we see the distant sea with two islands, marking his thirst for voyaging and discovering faraway places. The geographer sits with crafted objects: his favorite barometer, his leather bound book for recounting his activities, a hat, and a coat with golden buttons to underscore that he is a distinguished and well-educated man. Weitsch substituted some of these material things for parts of nature, and these details are not only innovative but complement von Humboldt´s theories. First, he depicts him holding a branch with a light pink flower in his right hand. This branch is cut at the bottom with the skill of a botanist for the research, meaning von Humboldt could have collected such a specimen. Additionally, he holds it like a pen, to write down on the blank paper the records of his journey. Portraying the flower branch as a pen and using plant leaves as bookmarkers, Weitsch found a sensitive manner of suggesting that von Humboldt wrote about nature and built knowledge *from* nature.

Since his first major publication *Essai sur la geographie de plants* (1805) one image, entitled *Naturgemälde*[1] (fig. 2), occupied a prominent position in his opus. It is not a simple drawing meant to communicate to people what von Humboldt saw on a trip, nor an illustration of anything written in the text. It is rather a system of geographic data, which combines scientific information with observa-

1 Friedrich Georg Weitsch, Portrait of Alexander von Humboldt, 1806

2 Alexander von Humboldt, *Geography of plants in tropical countries*, print, from A. von Humboldt, *Ideen zu einer Geographie der Pflanzen*, 1807

tion drawing. Different from what other scientists had done so far while classifying the natural world into taxonomic unities under a strict hierarchy, always in the form of tables, von Humboldt produced a drawing. As he would claim later, it is a "microcosm on one page" (Wulf, 2016, 139). It depicts the Chimborazo volcano in Ecuador and the plant species living at different elevations. It resulted from the expedition von Humboldt and Bonpland undertook in 1802 ascending the Chimborazo, believed at the time to be the highest mountain in the world.[2] The pair documented the mountain's plant life, from the tropical rainforest at the bottom to the lichen clinging to rocks above the treeline. The *Naturgemälde* organizes these observations in an intuitively visual way, showing Chimborazo in cross-section, with text indicating which species lived at different elevations on the mountain.

Von Humboldt believed that such paintings should address the spirit and the imagination, and he stated: "I thought that if my *tableau* were capable of suggesting unexpected analogies to those who will study its details, it would also be capable of speaking to the imagination and providing the pleasure that comes from contemplating a beneficial as well as majestic nature" (Humboldt, 2008, 79). He believed that this form of expression was able to sensitize and awaken the readers' interest in the natural qualities of what was depicted or described. The idea that the simple contemplation of the spectacle of nature could give pleasure is the echo of German Romantism that found major inspiration in the grandeur of the natural world. We can find the advocation for the power of images to understand nature in Prussian philosopher Johann Georg Hamann's (1730-1788) writings. When Hamann criticized Kant´s separation between sensible intuition and knowledge, he asserted that "The senses and passions speak and understand nothing but images. The entire store of human knowledge and happiness consists in images" (Hamann apud Sallas, 2013, 38).

Von Humboldt wrote *Voyage aux régions* équinoxiales *du nouveau continent fait en 1799, 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803 et 1804* in French between 1807 and 1834. In 1860, his travel diary was translated into German and subsequently to other languages, engaging a broad readership. Through this narrative, von Humboldt became a sort of intellectual godfather to many travellers and explorers (Giggs, 2008, 17), setting various standards and manners for travel writing and travelling itself.

The first edition of *Anschiten der Natur* (Views of Nature) was published in German in 1808, four years after von Humboldt´s return to Europe from his iconic and seminal journey through American lands. It brought to the public the results of the investigations made during the trip between 1799 and 1804. However, this book became more successful after its second edition in 1826, with equal content but with von Humboldt's personal supervision of the translation to French. This was essential for the popularization of the work outside the German-speaking world. Von Humboldt would also supervise the third corrected edition of *Anschiten der Natur* in 1849 in German and the translation to French a year later, naming it *Tableaux de la nature*. In addition, in the following years many versions in other languages came out, including the one in English in 1850. The text suggested that natural scenes should be appreciated both aesthetically and scientifically, through the *Naturgemälde*, or "paintings of nature". Considered the philosophical synthesis of his experience, of the intersection between literature and science, feeling and idea, this work described landscapes with words, in order to create mental images for readers. The result was "a vision at once total and synthetic (*Totaleindruck*), resulting from the detailed analysis of the multiple local phenomena that made up the physiognomies (*Phisionogmie*) of specific segments of the great living body of our planet, which also included the human dimension" (Mattos, 2004, 153).

Indeed, Alexander von Humboldt was a pioneer in seeing the world as a whole, a living organism in which everything is connected. He conceived a bold vision of wholeness that still nowadays influences the way we perceive the world. Von Humboldt believed that the painting of landscape was essential for scientific research as well as an educational tool. Considering nature-landscape as a whole, his writings encouraged the activity of traveling abroad to see and understand nature. Mediated through (the) aesthetics, the landscape was perceived as a living unity, while the empirical observation and contemplation of it could convert the aesthetic spectacle into scientific knowledge. Influenced by Kant's ideas in *Critique of judgment* and by the writings of Goethe and Schelling, von Humboldt devised a new interpretation and representation of the nature on Earth's surface, wherein the concept of space is essential to explaining natural phenomena.

Thus, *Views of Nature* was an attempt to understand to what extent scenes of nature, meaning landscapes, from different continents could be described with-

out losing the effect of the natural, of reality. This is especially interesting since it is considered the direct connection between the Prussian naturalists and the works of the so-called traveler-artists, men and some women who, as *Views of Nature* displayed, tried to make the reader see what was narrated, through meticulous visual descriptions. Literary persuasion that tried to transport readers to the natural world, was the essence of the creation of the sublime, impression of respect and awe for nature. It had the power to illustrate unfamiliar scenes because it was anchored in the detailing, in descriptions that convinced readers that the author had actually been there, bringing them novelties and knowledge firsthand. So, nature´s magnitude needed to be accompanied by information and description of the scientific illustrations.

Andrea Wulf, the latest biographer of von Humboldt, recently wrote that von Humboldt constructed the concept of nature. Wulf advocates that the irony is that his concepts "became so widely evident that we forgot the man behind them" (Wulf, 2016, 32). We could say that von Humboldt embodied the idea of modern experience of nature even if he was not the only one to write it down and spread it. After all, in a moment in which scientists were in search of universal laws, von Humboldt wrote that nature should be known firsthand and experienced through the feelings (Wulf, 2016, 27).

Many foreign artists that set foot on Brazilian lands were influenced by the readings of Alexander von Humboldt. The Prussian artist Johann Moritz Rugendas (1802-1858) was one of them. Rugendas first travelled to Brazil in 1821-1825, on the occasion of an invitation to take part of the Langsdorff expedition, an official project supported by Brazil's young emperor Dom Pedro I. The expedition was organized by Georg Heinrich Langsdorff, a naturalist who arrived in Brazil for the first time in 1813 as the General Consul for Russia in Rio de Janeiro. He was a member of the Imperial Sciences Academy of Saint Petersburg and defended the idea of a scientific exploratory expedition through Brazil strongly enough to get financing from the Russian Government. Along with Rugendas, Langsdorff invited the botanical scientist Ludwig Riedel, the astronomer Néster Rubtsov and the zoologist and linguist Édouard Ménétries. This group searched the interior of the state of Minas Gerais in the first part of the expedition, in 1824-1825. However, after dis-

agreements between Langsdorff and Rugendas, the latter decided to leave the expedition and Brazil, and travelled back to Europe.

The choice for Rugendas to generate the connection between a traveller-artist and von Humboldt is not accidental. Rugendas and von Humboldt were acquaintances and exchanged ideas. When Rugendas returned to Europe, he met von Humboldt in Paris with his drawings in hands. The naturalist convinced him to publish a travel book, helping him to publish with the important Engelmann Publishing House. And so *Malerisch Reise in Bresilien* (Picturesque Travel to Brazil) was published between 1827 and 1835, in German and in French, with one hundred prints and explanations of the time he spent in Brazil. Von Humboldt considered landscape painting of vital importance, since he believed it was landscape painting that allowed the invisible and the visible worlds to be united (von Humboldt, 1848, II, 100). Being descriptive and at the same time being perceived as a whole, landscape painting could directly affect the sensitivity of the observer. Therefore, it is not surprising that von Humboldt was interested in and encouraged the publication of Rugendas' records, believing also in the pedagogical character of his creations.

Rugendas' publication describes several landscapes. However, besides the detailed attention the artist gives to fauna and flora, such landscapes are never unattended, and there is always some human presence for the viewer to see. Nature – in the sense of the natural world – usually has a prominent role in such representations and it happens through the physical description of the surroundings in detail, to the point that when the drawings become prints, they appear almost solid, as if they were pictures containing multiple layers of scientific information. We can see this in *Enterrement d'un nègre à Bahia* (Burrial of a Negro in Bahia; fig. 3). Here, a procession of black people carrying the dead body of a black man is depicted. Three men kneel in front of the priest, the only white person in the composition. There is this picturesque quality that Rugendas implies when he decides to document a cultural trace of the people of Bahia. This is about Catholicism being imposed to the enslaved Africans forced to come to Brazil during the colonial period, with a message of triumph of the Portuguese over African culture and religion. It is a trace of violence and cultural dominance that happened in Brazil and that probably appeared as exotic to the Prussian artist, who documented it in detail well enough to allow us to describe such ritual centuries later. It is so

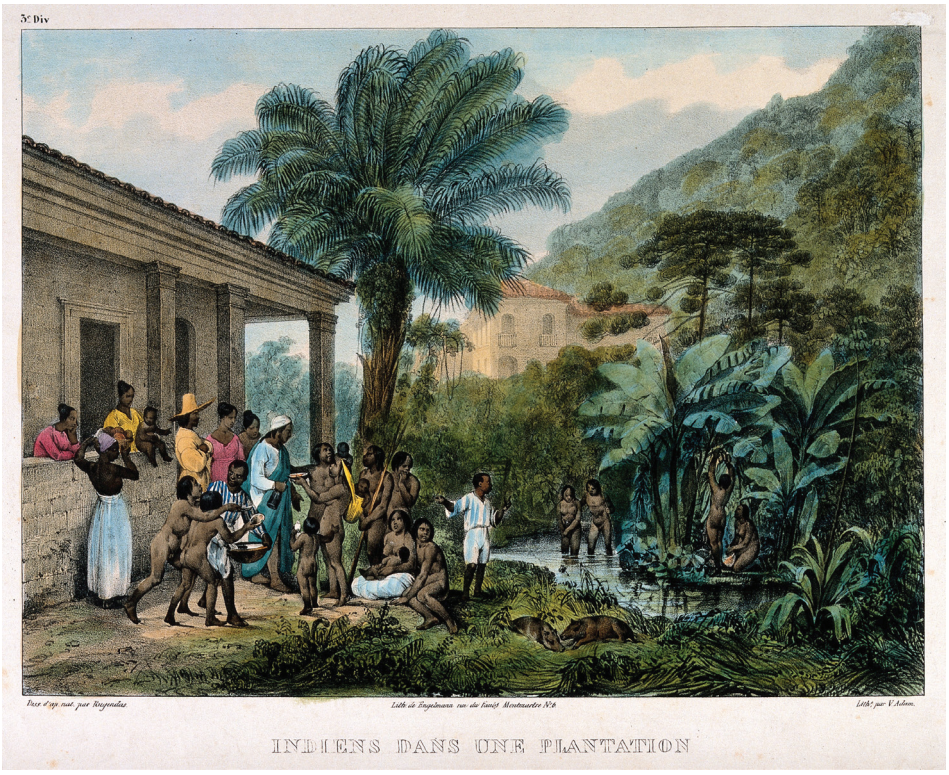
3 Johann Moritz Rugendas, *Burrial of a Negro in Bahia*, 1827-1835, print, from J. M. Rugendas, *Viagem Pitoresca Através do Brasil*, 1998

descriptive that it is possible to distinguish thick bushes and more than ten different species of plants, with obvious palm trees against the sky and large trees on the right of the composition. The architecture in the background is fairly detailed, and we can grasp the floorplan of the church and convent of Nossa Senhora da Piedade in the back, with its dome and steeples. The human figures appear to serve as scale for nature with their outfits well documented and we understand what kind of garment might be used, the volume of the clothes and the hierarchy of the church staff by their clothes.

Von Humboldt considered the Brazilian artwork of Rugendas a model for "a new epoch of landscape painting" (Catlin, 1989, 49). The "new epoch" to which von Humboldt referred is that Rugendas was able to capture the substance of modern landscape, the substitution of the ideal landscape of pictorial Academic conventions for works based on a more precise observation of nature. Von Hum-

boldt also understood that nature was a complex net of relationships, including the human one. The interest that the young Rugendas had for the different aspects of culture he encountered in Brazil and his decisions to document them, probably sparked von Humboldt's fondness for his sketches, leading to the encouragement for the artist to publish them.[3]

The *Indiens dans une Plantation* (Indians on a Plantation; fig. 4) is a composition of a group of indigenous people on, what is supposed to be, a coffee farm in the lands of Minas Gerais, Brazil. Some of the indigenous bathe in the waters of a shallow creek, and most of them seek food. A couple harvests fruit from the trees: one picks from the banana tree and the other holds a large piece of a jackfruit. A group asks people on the farm for food, and we see children with bowls in their



4 Johann Moritz Rugendas, *Indians on a Plantation*, 1827-1835, print, from J. M. Rugendas, *Viagem Pitoresca Através do Brasil*, 1998

hands approaching a black man with a striped shirt with a larger bowl with white content – probably manioc. Another black man with the same clothing welcomes the indigenous people in the little river and points towards the distribution of food. A line is formed before a man with a turban on his head, who holds a bottle in his right hand and seems to ask for patience with the gesture of his left one. A group of adults stands behind him: another man in a yellow shirt and hat and three women with their hair in buns. One woman holds a baby on the balcony and a black woman carries a basket full of fruits. They all stare at the arriving group with unease. Rugendas depicts this group of indigenous people without giving details of their ethnicity, suggesting that they are dislocated from their usual environment. Rugendas writes in his book that such scenes were common and that farmers would feed the hungry indigenous people to try to lure them into working for them. His view on the scene and his attempt to register in detail what he assumed was a custom, something that happened regularly at that time, reflects his commitment in documenting everything that passed before his eyes. We see in these images, all the way up to today, notes of prejudice and we are aware of the need to think about it critically. It also demonstrates his scientific spirit, with an almost anthropological look on the people he met in Brazil.

Like other German thinkers, Rugendas interpreted indigenous peoples as another element of nature, emphasizing the absence of history of these people, due to the lack of physical evidence – ruins, monuments or written records (Roca, 2017, 38). Additionally, given the difficulty in collecting skulls to constitute collections to study, physical anthropologists stimulated travellers to make scientific illustrations of heads and faces. Rugendas' thirst for documenting the local population – especially the indigenous ethnicities and black enslaved people – resulted in a series of prints that bring them against natural backgrounds. However, there are also several portraits of people that Rugendas encountered, unnamed, and identified only by their ethnicity. In the lithograph *Coroatos and Coropos* (fig. 5), a Coroado woman and man are depicted in the upper, and a Koropó woman and man in the lower part. With their hair arranged in the Western fashion and their fine-tuned facial features to appeal to European audiences, they are naked, except for the Koropó woman, with a beaded necklace and a striped cloth. From the contemporary, decolonialized perspective, this is not only problematic but also

5 Johann Moritz Rugendas, *Coroatos and Coropos*, 1827-1835, print, from J. M. Rugendas, *Viagem Pitoresca Através do Brasil*, 1998

dehumanizing. Rugendas was a man of his time and considered indigenous people as savages and was more interested in their *natural* aspect, as if within the opposition men vs. nature, the non-Europeans were part of the second realm. Additionally, the author separates indigenous people into angry and meek ones (Roca, 2010, 153), which creates another problematic and dehumanizing categorization.

Perhaps the contact with von Humboldt in the "Old World" between 1835 and 1830, made Rugendas see the first people of America with different eyes. During the five years he spent between Paris and Rome, the painter acquired technical painting knowledge, meeting standards in colour and pictorial tendencies. The proximity to von Humboldt enabled information on the American continent, turning this into a period of planning for his next trip. Following von Humboldt's step, Rugendas wished to gather material for publishing an artistic and encyclopaedia-like work. Between 1831 and 1837, Rugendas travelled for the second time to America, and the works that he produced on these trips are somehow different from the ones originated in his first journey, leaving aside his attempts at topographical views. On the second trip, Rugendas seemed to have absorbed some of von Humboldt's reflections on humankind-inflicted action over nature, being interested not only in the natural but also in the political and historical spheres of life. The outcomes were the images that represent the relationship between man and nature, history and the conflicts between original people and European invaders. His series generates a discourse about the constitution of American people from the clash of different cultures and racial issues, following von Humboldt's vision on this matter (Mattos, 2010, 308).

Rugendas arrived in the Veracruz port in Mexico in 1831. He spent several years in the country, dedicating himself specifically to the natural views and landscapes, following von Humboldt's recommendations. From the encyclopedic understanding of nature, he created views that are the physiognomic representation of the landscape, with topographical and botanical precision, placing the human presence in tiny figures, in harmony with nature, reminding us more of serenity and sublime. *View of the Valley of Mexico with Volcanoes and the Texcoco Lake* (fig. 6), painted around 1833, embodies the unity feeling that von Humboldt praised so much. Like in the engravings from his first visit, Rugendas pays attention to details, to the point that we can distinguish agaves, nopal, sisal and other cacti species.

6 Johann Moritz Rugendas, *View of the Valley of Mexico with Volcanoes and the Texcoco Lake*, oil on canvas, ca. 1833

People and their clothing are richly represented, with drapery that allows for the identification of the modeling of clothes typical of the Mexican indigenous people in stripes, shawls, hats, ties, and props. The whole landscape is descriptive, with plan after plan. In the foreground we see people and vegetation, then architecture and the lake, and the hills and volcanoes in the background enhance the depth. At the same time, the whole picture is airy and is lit up in the morning light, attained with broad loose brush strokes.

However, after the Mexican period, Rugendas gradually moved away from his master's advice: "Avoid the temperate zones, Buenos Aires and Chile [...]. Go where there are many palm trees, ferns, cacti, where there are snow-capped mountains and volcanoes, go to the Andes Mountains [...]. A great artist like you should go in search of the monumental" (Ades, 1989, 50). The artist did travel through the Andes and captured its monumentality but decided to stay for eight

years in Chile. There, he dedicated himself to depicting the indigenous population far from the naturalistic interest and travel registers that marked his Brazilian years in the 1820s and got the impulse from romantic and nationalist novels.

The *Kidnapping of Trinidad Salcedo*, also known as *El Malon* (fig. 7), has a clear literary inclination, made after oral and written accounts of indigenous conflicts in frontier regions. The abduction of a woman by the Araucanians is a recurrent theme in his work in Chile. The painting depicts a surprise attack from the Mapuches or Araucanians against their enemies, with the aim of obtaining cattle, provisions and kidnapping young women. These attacks were known as *malones*. Rugendas' literary approach emphasizes the drama and incorporates elements of Romantism in the images. The theme of the indigenous people abducting white Christian ladies became a favorite for Rugendas, and his contact with Chilean and Argentinean novels gave him the inspiration for such subjects. More than just painting Otherness, the artist provided the imagery of the founding myths of Chile and Argentina, and in 1835 he even spent the night with the Mapuches by the Bio River, close to the Andean mountains. This romantically based narrative implied the idea of the triumph of civilization over barbarism. In the painting, we see the exact moment of the Mapuche attack, and the menace that the brutal and wild indigenous people represented to the evolved and rational Western values. The need to establish order anticipates the modernizing project of the Criolla elites of the late 19th century (Souza, 2014, 8) and the images that Rugendas composes about the *malones* serve as metaphors for the conquest of the desert landscapes of the pampas as the places to be dominated and the barbarism of the *mapuches* to be combated.

Rugendas' scientific observation drawings that von Humboldt praised could have served as the basis for more narrative paintings when the artist returned to America. The way that von Humboldt perceived the indigenous peoples was filled with Romantic principles without succumbing to a reductive notion of the "noble savage" (Schweninger, 2016, 89), in the sense that the first people in Americas inherited the goodness and the innocence that existed in nature, in opposition to the corruption of the unnatural world. In opposition to that, von Humboldt perceived a unity between environment and humankind, and understood that each civilization had its own pace of development. From extensive observation, he managed to make way for changing prejudicial ideas that Europe had

7 Johann Moritz Rugendas, *The kidnapping of Trinidad Saledo (El Malon)*, oil on canvas, 1845

8 Johann Moritz Rugendas, *Night rest on the rocks near the Casucha de las Vacas*, oil on canvas, 1838

about the first people of America in the 18th century. His ideas pointed towards the ethnic specificities and the notion that although men were related to nature, they were not necessarily submitted to environmental laws (Sallas, 2010, 150). Possibly the intense dialogue between the scientist and Rugendas influenced the latter into stepping into the Romantism field in a broader sense, making Rugendas' search for "typical" types of people in America.

The types became a direction in Rugendas works in the 1840s. His interests for *costumbrismo* (from Spanish *costumbre*, meaning custom) guided a substantial part of his work in Chile, Uruguay and Argentina. The life of the *gauchos*, inhabitants of the Plata River and the flatlands of the *pampas,* caught his attention in Uruguay and Argentina, as well as the Chilean countrymen *huasos*. These figures of the countrymen are central to Romantic American narratives in the search of the genuine and typical of each place. This search for the essence of the land, transfigured into human types was common at this time, and authors and artists aimed to capture this. If first people are seen as wild and untamed (as in the *malones* paintings), the countrymen were the men who constructed fields and the nation. Whether indigenous or racial mixed men, they were considered skilled, fearless and were still feared, for being unruly. In *Night Rest on the Rocks near the Casucha de las Vacas* (1838; fig. 8), we see *gauchos* resting at night by the fire. Surrounded by bare rocks, they are in the middle of a hostile landscape in the Andes. The nothingness that surrounds them reinforces the mythical romantic freedom of the *gauchos*, with descriptive details regarding their traditional clothing, manners and transports.

Finally, Rugendas finished his journey in Rio de Janeiro, where he barely produced any new paintings. During his one-year stay, Rugendas devoted himself to the unfinished paintings of the previous years, and to a few new works. Rugendas returned to Europe in 1837 full of hope for publishing his new material. However, his plans to publish a comprehensive travel book never came through, despite his attempts in Paris and Prussia, and he ended selling his three thousand works: drawings, watercolours and sketches for oil paintings. Therefore, his impressions of America could not be gathered like in his first book, making the comparison more difficult between his two sets of views on the American continent and the assessment of understanding von Humboldt´s influence sparse.

Endnotes

- According to Humboldt himself, it translates as *tableau physique* in French, and it could be understood as "a painting of nature" in English. The German term also carries that meaning of unity – "the whole".
- We know today that Chimborazo is 6268 meters high, which is more than 2500 meters lower than Mount Everest, with 8848 meters.
- Humboldt probably said this looking at the original drawings. The printed final product definitely changed in the hands of engravers and printers that were part of the process, mostly trying to adequate Rugendas' impressions (that were barely sketches) to a more adequate language for the European public. For more information see Diener, P. O Catálogo Fundamentado da Obra de J. M. Rugendas. *Revista USP O Brasil dos Viajantes*, 1996, pp. 46-57.

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Illustrations

Fig. 1 Friedrich Georg Weitsch, Portrait of Alexander von Humboldt, 1806, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

Fig. 2 Alexander von Humboldt, *Geographie der Pfanzen in der Tropen Ländern*, print, from A. von Humboldt, *Ideen zu einer Geographie der Pflanzen*, Tübingen, 1807, Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde, Leipzig, Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

Fig. 3 Johann Moritz Rugendas, *Enterrement d'un nègre à Bahia* (Burrial of a Negro in Bahia), 1827-1835, print, from J. M. Rugendas, *Viagem Pitoresca Através do Brasil*, Belo Horizonte, 1998, 4 Div. pl. 20.

Fig. 4 Johann Moritz Rugendas, *Indiens dans une Plantation* (Indians on a Plantation), 1827-1835, print, from J. M. Rugendas, *Viagem Pitoresca Através do Brasil*, Belo Horizonte, 1998, 3 Div. pl. 9.

Fig. 5 Johann Moritz Rugendas, *Coroatos and Coropos*, 1827-1835, print, from J. M. Rugendas, *Viagem Pitoresca Através do Brasil*, Belo Horizonte, 1998, 2 Div. pl. 5.

Fig. 6 Johann Moritz Rugendas, *View of the Valley of Mexico with Volcanoes and the Texcoco Lake*, oil on canvas, ca. 1833, Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, Mexico City, Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

Fig. 7 Johann Moritz Rugendas, *The kidnapping of Trinidad Saledo* (El Malon), oil on canvas, 1845, private collection, Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

Fig. 8 Johann Moritz Rugendas, *Descanso nocturno en las rocas cerca de la Casucha de las Vacas* (Night rest on the rocks near the Casucha de las Vacas), oil on canvas, 1838, Collection of the Academia Nacional de la Historia de la República Argentina, Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

Hee Sook Lee-Niinioja

Landscapes in Shaping Nordic National Identity through Ephemeral-Perpetual Green Midsummer and White Winter in Romantic Art

Hee Sook Lee-Niinioja
Independent Scholar/Finland-Helsinki
leeheesook@hotmail.com

The Romantic view posits the object-subject theory of creation whose form is discovered in the inner insight of the individual ability, inspiration, and genius. It returns to the eternal world and celebrates the expression of inner ideas and cultivates personal resources. Mythic nature and winter landscape in the light-darkness of the infinite space became the agency of spiritual, existential, or emotional notions. Nordic art welcomed long snowy winters with the sparkling light of shifting colours and emotions. Norway's national poet Bjørnson was enchanted by spectacular winters as an attribute, through which Romantic painters could reveal a national awareness in art. Midsummer celebrates spirit nights when fairies, magic, and mischief abound on a bewitching night, and the future can be disclosed for enchantment. Nordic artists borrowed this festivity to find their identity of National Romanticism and were encouraged to depict local native landscapes. Urban internationalism and Realism in Europe led to a focus on the characteristics of the Nordic, enforcing its nationalism. Skagen, Denmark's fishing village, turned into a haven for isolated life, facilitating new attention to indigenous traditions after homecoming. The phenomenal landscape was ephemeral yet perpetual, depending on tradition, culture, and emotions. The Nordic landscape was validated with the blue forest mood and nocturnal water. The Midsummer's overtone symbolism invited the white winter to connect human's inner psychology through the landscape, shifting the self and nation towards Nordic art. Bergh revealed the mystical power of light and landscape to heighten reality, while Zorn created a Midsummer festival as a tradition for villagers' dance around the maypoles. Munch used this mood to symbolize the eternal cycle of life and love. Sohlberg and Krøyer were not exceptional. This paper introduces the Nordic summer and winter landscapes and related theories to enhance our understanding of the topic.

Keywords: Nordic landscape, national Romanticism, Midsummer, winter, cultural identity, collective memory, Edvard Munch

Nordic Summer

Richard Bergh (1858-1919) grew up in an artistic milieu under the influence of his father, Edvard Bergh, a distinguished landscape painter and professor at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm. Bergh studied at Edvard Perseus' art school and the Academy, and then, he divided his time between Sweden and France. After receiving a medal at his debut at the Salon (1883), he was commissioner of Sweden's participation in the Paris World Fair (1889). His early work depicts Nordic historical scenes or local legend in a German academic style. During his residence in Paris (1881-1888), Bergh was influenced by Impressionism. However, his work at Paris Salon and the World's Fair brought him an international reputation as a portraitist. As a critic, author, and organizer, he set up the Artists' Union against the Swedish Royal Academy. His efforts to cooperate with the artists' association in politics and fundraising reflected the social art theories of the 19th-century's Victorian thinkers. Bergh defined his art as the Swedish National Romantic style. Despite the French influence, Nordic art was independent, derived from an affinity with the native landscape. To exploit Nordic nature, he moved to the isolated town of Varberg in western Sweden and created a new style of landscape painting. After 1900, his ideas were accepted by the Swedish art establishment, leading the director of the National Museum to become a more democratic, modern and dynamic institution.

The painting *Nordic Summer Evening* (fig. 1) was started in Assisi (Italy) in 1899 when Bergh made an oil sketch of the singer Karin Pyk. Later that same year, he sketched his friend Prins Eugen on the second-floor veranda house on the Lidingö Island. Prins Eugen recalled the day of discovering Bergh's breakthrough in painting with clarity and naturalism. Bergh incorporated both studies into this canvas of 1900. *Nordic Summer Evening* reveals the spiritual power of natural phenomena, light, and landscape to intensify actuality. During his stay in Italy (1897-1898), Bergh developed a new appreciation for the Swedish landscape of Midsummer nights and winters, which generated primitive responses in its people. This emotional experience also contains a sexual awakening by the female's conscious attitude yet the vague psychological tension in a diffused scene. In the picture, the lack of interaction exists between man and woman, and figures and

1 Richard Bergh, *Nordic Summer Evening*, oil on canvas, 1899-1900

landscape. The veranda is an analogy of windows to the outdoors, where the couple meditates in the nearer and far space. For Bergh, the Nordic world is here and now, pointing to Swedish and foreign nationalism and internationalism through *Nordic Summer Evening*.

Anders Zorn (1860-1920) spent his childhood on his grandparents' farm in Mora, Dalarna. He attended the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm (1875-1881) and developed his style by imitating the watercolours of Egron Landgren. He travelled to Europe for new subjects, lighting effects, and studies of the old masters. After his marriage with Emma Lamm, the couple spent the winter in the artists' colony of St. Ives, France (1887-1888), switching his interest to oil painting. They settled in Paris, and his studio was a gathering place for influential Scandinavians. From this point onwards, he restricted himself to three themes of portraits,

nudes and genre scenes set in his home province. Zorn moved back to Mora (1896) and was involved in the community and indigenous art. He built a house (now the Zornmuseet) in the old style and encouraged the revival of local customs. That summer, Prins Eugen attended the local Midsummer festival and suggested Zorn depict this subject. Zorn's reaction was a rapid oil sketch of horizontal format, but he executed this version the following year, bringing him the Medal of Honour at the 1900 World Exposition in Paris.

The subject of *Midsummer Dance* (fig. 2) is a Nordic cultural tradition. Therefore, on presenting a May tree to the Morkarlby village, Zorn succeeded in reviving a tradition from pagan times. Around June 23, the longest days of the year, people flocked to the villages in rural areas to dance around the maypoles under the bewitching light of the summer night. At midnight, the peasants erected a tall pole decorated with flowers and greenery and danced under the stars until the sun came up. For the opalescent light without shadows and the atmosphere of the summer nights, Zorn captured the charm of a cheerful night of enjoying the return of light after the long winter.

Despite careful attention to details of costumes, foliages, and buildings, Zorn was captivated by native peasant costumes and their local variations. Moreover, the dancing position of the couple in the centre harbours a hidden aim. In the 1890s, a concern for safeguarding the peasant culture appeared in industrialization and in dislocating the population to the cities. As the Dalarna region remained most affected by its history and traditions, Zorn's embedded awareness in his native culture prolonged encouragement, support, and management of the local arts and folk actions. *Midsummer Dance* is an expression of Sweden's National Romanticism. Zorn contributed an evocation of Nordic magical summer nights to the Paris World Fair (1900).

Edvard Munch (1863-1944) was born in the rural Løten at Hedmark, but his family moved to Christiania (Oslo). Despite his entering engineering school, Munch decided to paint. In 1881 he enrolled at the Christiania Royal School of Drawing and continued at the Pultosten studio under Christian Krohg's supervision. After a debut at the Christiania Autumn Exhibition (1883) and attendance at Frits Thaulow's Open Air Academy at Modum, his first scholarship enabled Munch to visit Antwerp and Paris and contact Christiania bohemian avant-garde

2 Anders Zorn, *Midsummer Dance*, oil on canvas, 1897

naturalists. These formative years witnessed Munch's lifelong preoccupations with human biological and physical patterns. With his solo exhibition in Christiania, Munch revisited the tiny town of Åsgårdstrand before travelling to Paris to study at Léon Bonnat's studio. In 1890, the news of his father's death made him physically collapse, and he moved away from Naturalism to be more resonant with the inner life of Synthetic art. After his solo exhibition, the Berlin artists' circle invited Munch, whose paintings scandalized the city. Munch continued to visit Paris and spend summers in Norway, but he remained in Berlin with bohemian intellectuals in order to publish the periodical Pan. He began to assemble his ambitious group painting, *The Frieze of Life*.

Munch experimented with colour lithography and the graphic technique of woodcut, exploring the psychological potentiality of colours and lines. By the turn of the century, he was mentally exhausted and suffered from alcoholism. Nevertheless, *The Frieze of Life* was finally exhibited at the Berlin Secession (1902), and Munch won the commission of the Oslo University Festival Hall murals, which was infused with the bright northern sunlight and muscular health of the country's philosophy. In 1916, on unveiling his murals, Munch purchased a house at Ekely and isolated himself and yet stayed productive until his death. His art was exhibited in every major city in Europe and revered by the German Expressionist painters.

The Frieze of Life composes several psychological levels, connecting to the mysteries of life, love, and death. *The Voice, Summer Night* (fig. 3) was the first painting of the series displayed in Christiania (1893). The painting treats the blue twilight of the Åsgårdstrand shore on the Christiania fjord, which Munch took as a unifying element in his series. The theme is associated with the Midsummer night and the Nordic festivity foretelling the homecoming of summer and light. It is a moment of celebration and denial of social norms and behaviour. The wooded beaches of the fjords were encountering places for lovers on this night, while boats accommodating celebrants filled the water. The poet Franz Servaes described the setting in 1894: "Here the sexual will rise stiffly for the first time during a pale moonlit night near the sea, the girl roams among the trees, her hands cramped together behind her, her head tossed back and her eyes staring wide and vampire-like. But the world is a mixture of the misty and the glaring, of sexual fantasy and revulsion" (cited by Heller, 1973, 46).

The theme is taken from Munch's momentary experience of his first kiss when he stared at his partner's beckoning eyes. The picture expresses the tension between the background and the woman in the foreground. It assumes a keen pose of the virginal figure of sexual longing. She looms in the foreground and demands a personal reaction, such as awakening, expectation, reaction, fear and repulsion. The geometrical trees and the beam of the moon's reflection on the water resonate with her rigid dominance. She is integrated into the fixed landscape, partaking in the joyous, erotic mood of the summer night.

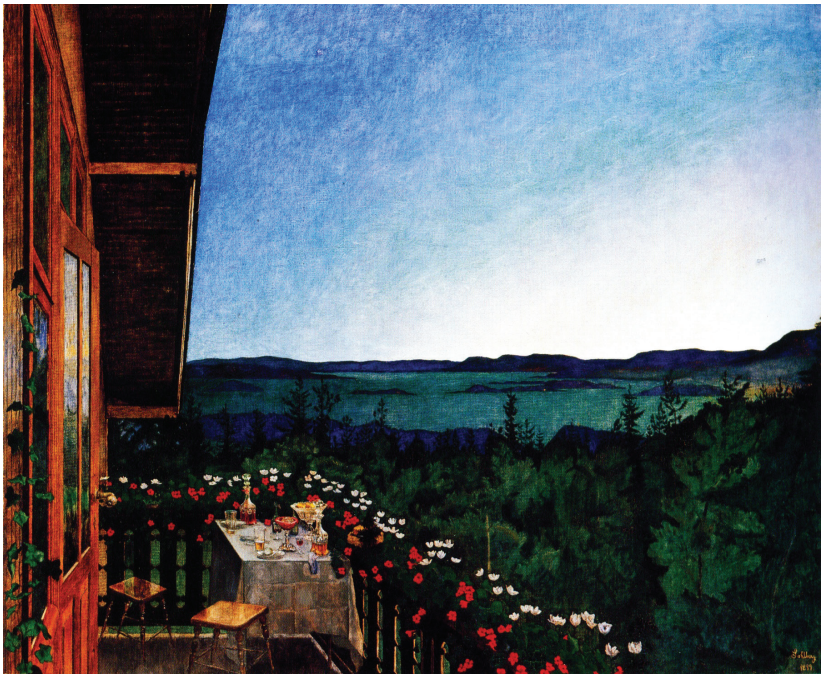
Born in Christiania, Harald Sohlberg (1869-1935) apprenticed to a decorative painter at his father's request. In 1890 he became the pupil of Sven Jørgensen, an eminent painter of rustic scenes. From the start, Sohlberg revealed a feeling for landscape and worked alone in nature, first at Nittedal, a rural retreat north of Christiania. The following year, he joined a group of young painters, and the

3 Edvard Munch, *The Voice, Summer Night*, oil on canvas, 1896

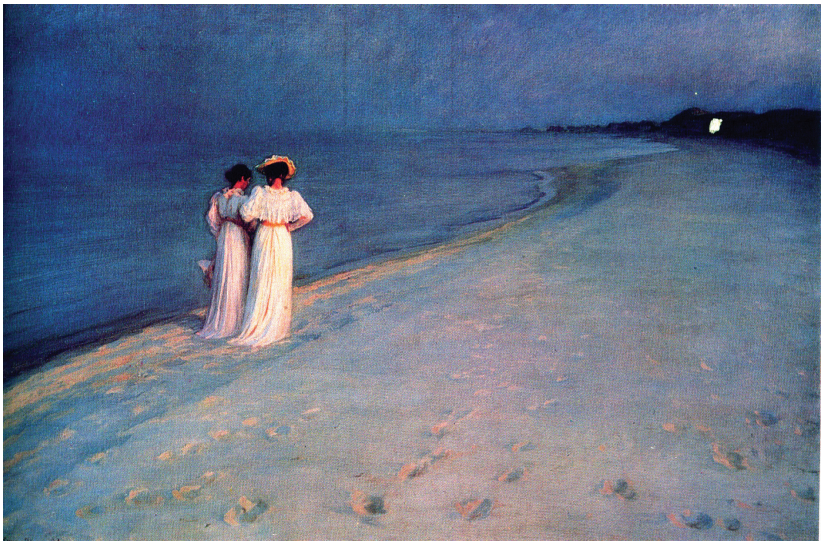
symbolic power of landscape began to mature in him. After studying at Kristian Zahrtmann's school in Copenhagen, he returned to Christiania and attended the Royal Academy of Drawing and Harriet Backer's school. In 1893 Sohlberg painted his first picture, *Night Glow*, which received praise at the official exhibition in Christiania. His travel grants allowed him to visit Paris and Weimar. After his marriage (1901), the couple went to the highlands near the Rondane mountain range and then the mining town of Røros. He finally settled in Christiania with the completion of *Winter Night in the Rondane Mountains* for the Norwegian Jubilee Exhibition (1914) and San Francisco's Panama Pacific Exhibition (1915).

In the 1890s, a silent landscape painting from the house balcony on the Nordstrand ridge to the south-eastern Christiania peaked Sohlberg's dream – *Summer Night* (fig. 4) describes the power and intensity of the Nordic summer night, hidden worlds, and unfolding mysteries. The empty party table for the couple is laid within a frame of flowers, and the opened veranda door invites the infinite panorama of forest, fjord, island, and hills. The tension between the detailed foreground and the broad landscape generates the primary division between two different realms of experience - the intimate and the ethereal. Despite the absence of human presence, the table set for the couple and a woman's deserted hat and gloves facilitate a quiet ambience, which echoes the departed lovers' presence. The picture resounds with a solemn ritual and a festive evening of Sohlberg's engagement. Moreover, the hat and gloves intensify the summer night's mystic sense and association with love, courtship, and sexual awakening, while their leaving suggests the end of the evening and an unforgettable feeling of transience.

Peder Severin Krøyer (1851-1909) was born in Norway but was raised in Copenhagen by his foster father, Hendrik N. Krøyer. At ten, he made scientific illustrations for his father's book. He entered the Royal Academy and travelled to Germany and the Swiss Tyrol (1875). After he visited the Netherlands and Belgium two years later, he entered the Paris studio of Léon Bonnat, who advised him to see the work of the Spanish masters in Madrid. In 1882, Krøyer went to Skagen at Michael Ancher's invitation. His frequent travels made him a cosmopolitan artist, but he always returned to Skagen. He was named a member of the Danish Academy and married Marie Triepcke. During the 1880s, Krøyer was established as Denmark's foremost plein-air artist and portraitist of international reputation with honorary



4 Harald Sohlberg, *Summer Night*, oil on canvas, 1899



5 Peder Severin Krøyer, *Summer Evening on the South Beach at Skagen*, oil on canvas, 1893

medals at the Paris World Expositions (1889, 1900). However, his manic-depressive disorder prevented him from working toward the end of his life.

His painting *Summer Evening on the South Beach at Skagen* (fig. 5) is representative of landscape painting in vogue between the late 1880s and early 1890s. Named "Blue Painting", this genre is characterized by its illusory mauve-blue palette and sinuous composition. The style was based on James Whistler and the French Synthetists and encouraged by the specific atmosphere in the painting. In the long Midsummer evenings, the twilight forms are the blue hour around 10 p.m. when the low sun dissolves the surroundings into a blue mist.

Krøyer painted several similar scenes to join the cosmopolitan trend, and his favourite outdoor painting was from Skagen. In the picture, the models are his wife Marie Krøyer and the painter Anna Ancher. The women dominate a scene with elegant white draped summer dresses and elongated, delicate figures. Krøyer photographed their pose on the beach and copied it in the studio. The artistic paintings were modern techniques, and photography could aid his memory of the painting composition because Nordic summers were too short to devote to colour and light studies. Skagen artists copied Krøyer; the overall luminous tones of paintings supplanted the rustic images of the village fishers for mood, nuance, and decoration. With the place, its people and the intense light, Krøyer discovered the bluish twilight poetry of the white nights. It was the start of the school of atmosphere and light.

Nordic Winter

Munch's landscape painting belongs to a tradition where nature is a sounding board for the human state of mind. In the 19th century, nature frequently functioned as an eternal, significant framework of fateful actions. Later, Munch broke away from a symbolic, psychological painting of the human spirit. Instead, a pure landscape without human figures started to emerge. *White Night* (fig. 6) demonstrates a winter landscape disguised in the half-light of the moon. The spectator's eyes are invited to a trail down a tree-clad hill and farther across the frozen façade of the fjord. The bold difference between foreground and background generates an illusory depth, signified as a sign of seclusion, apprehension, and loneliness.

The secret magic of the landscape is transmuted to the celestial synchronization of the background. It is reminiscent of an essay by Nordberg-Schultz in

Winter Land (1994, 37) about snowing in the courtyard: "The wind blew, and the drifting snow blurred every line and contour. 'This weather is just what I like', you said; I felt a stab of joy; for I like this sort of weather too. I can still feel it; this is how it was when I was a child, and I've never felt any differently".

The Rondane Mountains are lifted above the trees in the foreground, towering upwards to the starry sky, representing the sublime in the Norwegian landscape. Two big trees formulate a gateway into the mountain regions. Sohlberg painted the first sketches of *Winter Night in the Rondane Mountains* (fig. 7) in oil on his charcoal studies. He wrote to his mother about the effect of nature (8 December 1901): "Mountains in the winter compel one to silence. One is overwhelmed in much the same way as beneath the vast vault of a church, only a thousand times stronger".

The intensity of the dramatic mountain is Sohlberg's ambition to paint. A spontaneous decision to join a ski trip in the winter of 1899 allured his confrontation with the Rondane, and at first sight, he was fascinated to make its nine versions and many sketches. His focused on-site study was in the winter of 1900-1901, and his painting was assisted by an acetylene torch, with the cold hindering his watercolours and hands. He prepared his final version for the 1915 Norwegian Jubilee exhibition. Sohlberg traced the motif's progress from Naturalism to Symbolism in interpretation. As he worked on-site, he had powerful impulses of the mystical revelation from the Rondane. To express this experience, he broke with a representational approach to the mountains, working his compositions into the symmetrical mass of the mountains and others around them. The colour reflects a moody night as a pulsating field of blue. Sohlberg returned to the Northern Romantic tradition to formulate mystic nature and indigenous Nordic nation.

Regarding the examples above, a question arises: What was the cause or motivation(s) of the Midsummer and winter paintings? It is cultural identity, and collective memories with emotions shared among Nordic artists.

Cultural Identity

Culture composes explicit and implicit behavioural patterns, constituting the human group's distinct achievement. The core of culture has traditional ideas and their attached values, and its system is the production of action. Culture as a

6 Edvard Munch, *White Night*, oil on canvas, 1901

7 Harald Sohlberg, *Winter Night in the Rondane Mountains*, watercolour and pastel, 1911

visual language involves embodiments in artefacts such as the landscape (Geertz, 1973). Moreover, the notion of culture generates several meanings due to its relation to daily life. According to Barthes (1972, 9), culture displays "all the apparently spontaneous forms and rituals of contemporary bourgeois societies, which are subject to a systematic distortion, liable at any moment to be dehistoricized, 'naturalized', converted into myth". Identities related to culture are a heritage character and the combined elements of the locality. Pritchard and Morgan (2001) saw the relationship between culture, place identity and participants' representation to sustain the local identity as a combination of historical, social, economic and political processes. Identity bears multiple levels and changes with the environment (Hall, 1997).

Identity is a production constituted in representation; thus, this production continues as a life process without completion. Identity is unstable, changeable and arises from a place that has a history. People categorize identity to stand in a position by the past narratives. This identity generated in the past comes under the influence of place, time, history and culture (Hall, 2003). Cultural identity highlights the similarities to be shared.

The memory of the past is the core of the present. It ties to the sense of identity and is an innate part (Walker, 1996). Without memory, a sense of identity and culture is lost. People create and hold back cultures and traditions through remembering, as memories are conflated and embellished. Identities are validated and contested, and the adoption and cultivation of the past strengthen belongingness, purpose and place (Lowenthal, 1985). The meaning of individual or collective identity across time and space is continued by recalling the past. "What is remembered is defined by the assumed identity" (Connerton, 1989, 3).

Collective Memories

The idea of collective memory can be found in debates by Carl Jung, Emile Durkheim and Maurice Halbwachs in the 19th century. Jung (1912) theorizes that universal leanings to fear or desire for social status came from a collective unconscious within the human. It accompanies memories of life from past generations. Durkheim (1912; 1995) observed the relation of a new generation to the past to carry forward their memories. Within social memory, the human connects

to prior generations and seeks repeating actions to associate with the past. Religious rituals are a repetitive social practice due to the same beliefs and worship in similar ways. They transfer traditional beliefs, values, norms, and shared rituals to create the collective transcendence of the profane individual into a united religious group. Individuals' collective thoughts must participate for the universal experience of sharing within the group. As this collective experience requires physical gatherings, groups must extend the unity if demolished. Durkheim's theory was the transmittal of the past to the present, but his argument was grounded on individual memory, and the ritual celebrations triggered those memories.

The term "collective memory" appeared in the second half of the 19th century. Halbwachs coined the term as a basic framework to study social remembrance. His analysis (1925; 1992) proposes an option of construction, sharing, and passing on by social groups, communities, nations, and generations. All individual memories are recorded by filtering their collective memories within social structures. Individual memory is understood through a group context: collective memory develops as people keep their history.

Cultural symbols are references for uniting people to past generations and influencing their memory. Every collective memory relies on specific groups described by space and time; the group constructs the memory, and the individuals do the work of remembering.

Halbwachs's concept, "the present," in collective memory was elaborated because the necessity for the present would influence social constructions of memory. Current issues and understandings can shape collective memory, and groups take different memories to explain them. To illuminate the present, groups reconstruct a past in choosing events to remember through rationalization. Once done, they rearrange events to conform to the social narrative (Hakokõngäs, 2017). The deliverance of various forms of collective remembering and commemoration to a shared past is voiced (Connerton, 1989), or collective memory has a fragmented, collected, and individual character (Young, 1993).

Halbwachs raises two issues. (1) Collective memories rely on the context of remembering. In dealing with this, a group must reaffirm their decisions from the past. Then, collective remembering brings a selection of narratives responding to present and future needs. (2) Collective memory paves a group's way to the

future. Instead, people have a history of collective memory as a fabricated narrative in social-ideological needs or a creative impulse of a particular historian (Gedi and Elam, 1996).

"Communicative memory" – a variety of collective memory on everyday communication – resembles the exchanges in the memories collected through oral history. With this activity, each memory makes up itself in communication with other groups, who formulate their unity and characteristic through a universal image of their past. Every individual is the property of such groups and treats collective self-images and memories (Assmann, 2008).

Conclusion

The word "emotion" (Latin *exmovere*) defines "move out", "agitate", or "excite." In moral behaviour, three theories exist. According to Plato and Kant, emotions hamper good behaviour, while Aristotle and Smith viewed emotions as vital elements generating ethical conduct. For Hume (1751), all moral judgments express the speaker's emotions. In the 20th century, emotions define neural impulses due to their psycho-physiological state, moving from organism to action with short-lived phenomena (Goleman, 1995). They are a fused phenomenal cluster and a crucial point in personality, offending the senses to prepare feelings or evoke reactions (Griffiths, 1997). Of three categorical theories of emotions (evolutionary, social, internal), evolutionary theories facilitate a historical analysis of emotions. Social theories consider emotions to be cultural or social products; internal emotions describe the process of the emotion.

In this regard, a question pursues collective memories-emotions among National Romanticism and its cultural identity of Nordic countries. Why so? The Midsummer celebration exemplifies an emotional tradition and custom arising from each culture's collective memory. For example, pagans – the Celts, Norse, and Slavs – believed it as the annual spirit nights of magic's wandering and the other world's opening. Shakespeare captured this mood in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (ca. 1590-1596) with fairies, magic, and mischief on a magical night in the forest (Franklin, 2002).

Moreover, bonfires meant defeating darkness, and circle dances worshipped the sun god until St. John the Baptist's feast took over in Christianization

in the 10th century. It was a time for collecting plants, searching for healing, or practising divination. The collected herbs and plants made maidens see their future mates, while farmers observed their abundant harvest and fertility. The Midsummer celebration has been directed toward the past and the future through the present. Nordic winters have their celebrations too.

With the adoption of Nature as part of daily life, Nordic artists turned their eyes to green summers and white winters to establish National Romanticism and shape Nordic cultural identity. Summers and winters are integrated with Nordic souls, minds and hearts. Remarkably, Nordic artists searched for their ephemeral-perpetual collective memories and emotions. Nature has been a universal mediator between tradition and the future. At the dawn of the Romantic era, Bergh, Zorn, Munch, Sohlberg, and Krøyer fulfilled tangible yet intangible mediation through their artwork.

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Illustrations

Fig. 1 Richard Bergh, *Nordic Summer Evening*, oil on canvas, 1899-1900, 170x223.5 cm, Art Museum, Göteborg, Wikimedia Commons, sandstead.com, public domain.

Fig. 2 Anders Zorn, *Midsummer Dance*, oil on canvas, 1897, 140x98 cm, National Museum, Stockholm, Wikimedia Commons, www.nationalmuseum.se, public domain.

Fig. 3 Edvard Munch, *The Voice*, *Summer Night,* oil on canvas, 1896, 90x119 cm, Munch Museum, Oslo, Wikimedia Commons, Google Art Project: pic, public domain.

Fig. 4 Harald Sohlberg, *Summer Night*, oil on canvas, 1899, 114x136 cm, National Gallery, Oslo, Wikimedia Commons, fwFhWhw8IK_4JQ at Google Cultural Institute, public domain.

Fig. 5 Peder Severin Krøyer, *Summer Evening on the South Beach at Skagen*, oil on canvas, 1893, 100x150 cm, Museum, Skagen, Wikimedia Commons, gEOHIMEsC_EQg at Google Cultural Institute, public domain.

Fig. 6 Edvard Munch, *White Night*, oil on canvas, 1901, 115.5x111 cm, National Gallery, Oslo, from The XVII Lillehammer Winter Olympic Games, 1994, p. 121.

Fig. 7 Harald Sohlberg, *Winter Night in the Rondane Mountains*, watercolour and pastel, 1911, 56.5x64 cm, The Rasmus Meyer Collection, Bergen, from The XVII Lillehammer Winter Olympic Games, 1994, p. 105.

Julia Modes

Toxic Beauty: Contemporary Art Responding to Industrial Disaster

Julia Modes
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
julia.modes@hu-berlin.de

In this paper, sculptural works by the two contemporary artists, Saskia Krafft and Silvia Noronha, will be described and discussed in detail. In their works *Salton Sea* (Krafft, 2018), *The Future of Stones* (Noronha, 2017) and *Shifting Geologies* (Noronha, 2021–ongoing) both artists address human-caused environmental catastrophes. However, at first glance, their works, often a result from an in-depth engagement with the areas of interest, appear fragile and beautiful. This tension between aesthetic appearance, heavy content and even toxic materials constitutes the fertility of the works. A comparison with Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970) maps out the lineage in which Krafft and Noronha stand. However, no monumental *Sites* were built with heavy machinery, nor travel encouraged. Instead, objects of poetic beauty were created to enchant the viewer, while offering a critical reflection. Since the works do not only address but are built from materials gathered at sites of environmental destruction, they offer the viewers an experience of intellectual realization through aesthetic fascination.

Keywords: contemporary art, anthropocene, sculpture, Land Art, industrial disaster, environmental destruction, toxic materials

I.

In 2018 the German artist Saskia Krafft executed a sculpture entitled *Salton Sea* (fig. 1). Several flat sheet metal stripes are mounted together to form a long, convex band, tilting slightly forward, as if it were a waterfall. On the frontal half, narrow iron bands are screwed to the central stripe, fanning out to the sides, pointing their sharp tips to the ground. The silver, gold and bronze colored screw heads in the central axis appear as lively water bubbles, while the white and brownish attachments of the side branches look like frothy spray. Maybe one can see little copper wires, like fine hairs, blurring the borders of the object, and creat-

1 Saskia Krafft, *Salton Sea*, barnacles from Salton Sea, sheet metal, metal hardware, copper wire, chain, 2018

ing a tingling appearance. Dangling from the ceiling, on a small metal chain, the sculpture appears fragile and poetic. Moving closer, this impression changes. The sharpness of the metal's edges becomes apparent. The central dots are no longer lively bubbles, but screw heads with defined center notches. The pointed ends of the thin metal stripes seem poised as if to cause harm. And the loose ends of the copper wire feel suddenly discomforting – almost itchy – pointing in all directions, as if to ensure one does not come too close, or dare to touch them. What they affix to the iron structure now becomes visible and gives a clue to the work's riddle. Dead barnacles, their color shades range from rosy white to dull grey–brown, are mounted to the iron branches (fig. 2). These once living lake dwellers, hundreds of them, are tied to the steel lifelessly.

2 Saskia Krafft, *Salton Sea* (detail), barnacles from Salton Sea, sheet metal, metal hardware, copper wire, chain, 2018

As the title suggests, the sculpture is a product of the artist's in-depth study of the nature reserve where Krafft collected these barnacles: Salton Sea, in the desert of southeastern California, the once fresh-water terminal lake formed in 1905 after accidental flooding from the Colorado River.[1] It is maintained by water runoff from the agricultural irrigation system fed by the river. An island of water in the arid American West, the lake became an important stopover for millions of migratory birds.[2] Recognizing its ecological importance, in 1930 the State of California set aside 32,766 acres on the southern end of the lake as the Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge.[3] Humans too learned to enjoy the lake and in the 1950s created a State Recreation Area on the northern shore, increasing its appeal as a tourist attraction. To this day postcards attest to its former popularity. However, industrial agriculture gradually turned the lake into a toxic landscape, the site of massive fish and bird die-offs. Agricultural runoff, laced with fertilizers and pesticides used in the valley's date plantations, flow into the terminal lake. As the lake water evaporates in the desert heat, it leaves behind an increasingly potent, high-saline, toxic brew.[4]

3 Saskia Krafft, *Field Trip* (Salton Sea Sketchbook), colored pencil on paper, 2018

In 2018, Krafft went on a field expedition to the lake after her residency at Andrea Zittel's *A-Z West – Institute of Investigative Living* in Joshua Tree, California.[5] On site, she learned about the devastating effects industrial agriculture had on the lake and its wildlife. She took photographs of dead fish and birds, which she then drew in blue colored pencil on the white paper of her field sketchbook. Further, she made drawings of the area's geography and the endangered bird species, which once had found refuge near the lake. This collection of drawings and photographs is part of Krafft's larger body of work entitled *Salton Sea*. In one drawing she depicts her own research activity, like the act of note taking, sketching and collecting materials in labeled bags (fig. 3). On the same drawing, next to a sectional view of a barnacle, the shape of a date palm tree is depicted and leads towards the sculpture's shape and material: it is the fruit bunch of the palm tree, hanging from the top of the plant and shaded by the leaves. The dead barnacles are tied to the iron skeleton structure as if they were juicy dates ready to be harvested. It is this contrast between fertility and toxicity, between the living and the dead, between light beauty and heavy content that constitutes the complexity of Krafft's work. Most often, solely the sculpture is exhibited, hanging from the ceiling, fragile and poetic as well as sharp-edged – janiform like the beautiful but toxic Salton Sea.

II.

A similar tension between a poetic aesthetic and the brutality of the object's origin can be found in the works of the Brazilian artist Silvia Noronha. On 5 November 2015, the dam of an open-pit iron mine's retaining basin in southeastern Brazil collapsed, flooding Bento Rodriguez and downstream villages with a cascade of mud and toxic mining waste.[6] Three months after this human-caused environmental catastrophe, Noronha, who was living and working in Berlin, flew to Brazil to collect contaminated soil from the site. A seven-minute video, usually exhibited alongside the sculptural works that resulted from this visit, shows the material's origin. Noronha walks through a wasteland of mostly dried mud, collecting soil at a river bed. Here and there remnants of the former human life of the area emerges from the ground: a car-wreck, some wires, a plastic canister or the remaining structure of a house. And among it all walks Noronha, dressed in

black, testing the solidity of the mud around a river bed and shuffling soil with her gloved hands into mason jars.

With this raw material, she simulated geologic processes to create *Future Stones*.[7] Using equipment provided by the Institute of Applied Geoscience and the Geochemical Laboratory of the Technische Universität of Berlin, Noronha analyzed the soil samples and learned about artificial stone creation through the application of high pressure and temperature. This acquired knowledge she then applied to her collected soils, essentially fast-forwarding the natural process of rock formation.[8] The result is a pseudo-alchemistic, speculative prediction of a post-human geology. Rock can be understood as a medium that preserves information about the moment of its creation and subsequent existence, thus, future stones will testify to the present-day interactions between humans and the environment. With her 2017 work *The Future of Stones. A Speculative Analysis of Contaminated Material*,[9] Noronha points towards the increasingly precarious interferences between natural ecology and human impact, as well as the development of a man-made *next nature*.[10]

Looking at Noronha's stones, similarly to Krafft's *Salton Sea*, one is first struck by the object's aesthetic grace (fig. 4). The matte black texture, sometimes laced with shades of dark red, is reminiscent of volcanic stones. The irregular surface cracks open at times to expose segments of shiny blue or green, sparkling in the sunlight. Little shiny colorful speckles sit on the surface like magical pearls. These objects, no larger than an open palm, look like remnants from a fairyland – playful and poetic – ready to take us to an imaginary world. However, the knowledge of their origin gives this excited wonder a bitter aftertaste and poses the question, how can beauty emerge from a moment of natural destruction?

Silvia Noronha has continued her artistic and geologic task of stone making. In her latest project, *Shifting Geologies*,[11] she moved the focus away from environmental catastrophe to the status quo – or does she attest to the status quo as environmental catastrophe? That might remain in question. Using her knowledge on simulated geologic processes from her previous project, she applied high temperatures and pressures to a collection of assembled materials in order to create a new form of conglomerate rock. This time her raw materials were objects found during her day-to-day life, often from the streets of Berlin. Despite their more mun-

4 Silvia Noronha, *Untitled*, 18 stones made from soil samples taken after the 2015 Mariana Dam disaster in Brazil, 2017

dane ingredients, the outcome is more colorful and extravagant, larger and materially complex. In one piece a cobblestone serves as plinth and object body at the same time. On it, bright yellow material is melted, blurring into purple on the left corner, pink in the middle and light blue in the right bottom corner of one side (fig. 5). Above it, a mix of materials is mounted, ranging from plastic to glass, from metal and concrete to leaves and soil clumps. It is difficult to make out each distinct material; it appears as if Noronha had put a garbage incinerator on pause, scooped out a clump of its contents, and slammed it on the cobblestone. The mixed media mush takes on the shape of a bowtie and, in its colorful appearance it could very well serve as the eccentric and extravagant decoration of a birthday present (fig. 6). Another stone, with its black and reddish-brown base, shows at first glance similarities to the *Future Stones* from 2017 (fig. 7). However, taking a closer look, red, yellow and purple colors swirl on its surface, reminiscent of visual hallucinations as imagined by Terry Gilliam in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*.[12] This impression is reinforced by a varnish of silver glitter poured over sections of the stone. A dirty, white scrap of fabric, perhaps a piece of a gauze bandage, breaks the playful color

5 Silvia Noronha, *Untitled*, from the series *Shifting Geologies*, 2020 - ongoing, mixed media

6 Silvia Noronha, *Untitled*, from the series *Shifting Geologies*, 2020 - ongoing, mixed media

7 Silvia Noronha, *Untitled*, from the series *Shifting Geologies*, 2020 - ongoing, mixed media, installation view (detail), 2021

associations. This dirty white fabric, so clearly a part of our everyday life, functions as a *repoussoir* that throws us back into the close examination of the object because it gives us a clue and tells us that these materials that invited us to innocently admire them, entranced by the object's varying textures and colors, are in fact pollutants that we bring into our own habitat.

III.

The works of Saskia Krafft and Silvia Noronha are to be regarded in the lineage of the Land Artists, such as Robert Smithson. Also, Smithson was concerned with natural and industrial processes, while creating several works including materials taken form nature that he had collected at specific locations.[13] These pieces, made to be exhibited in galleries, he called *Nonsites*.[14] However, similar to his colleagues, such as Michael Heizer, Smithson is predominantly known for his

8 Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, mud, precipitated salt crystals, rocks, water, Great Salt Lake, Utah, 1970

large-scale site-specific works, which he called *Sites*. In his *Spiral Jetty* from 1970 he amassed 6000 tons of basalt rocks to form an almost 5-meter-wide and 460-meter-long jetty in the form of a counterclockwise spiral (fig. 8).[15] The jetty protrudes at Rozel Point into Utah's Great Salt Lake near an industrial ruin of oil works from the 1920s.[16] It is located about 1000 kilometers north-east of Salton Sea. Just like Krafft's lake of interest, the Great Salt Lake is also a terminal lake with high salinity. A high presence of microbial life caused the reddish coloration of the water that initially attracted the artist to this specific site (Smithson, 1996, 142-145). The presence of a nearby industrial ruin also caught the artist's attention, since he claimed: "the best sites for 'earth art' are sites that have been disrupted by industry, reckless urbanization, or nature's own devastation." (Smithson, 1973, 65)[17] Therefore, the location of *Spiral Jetty* seems to constitute a perfect site with its nearby industrial ruin, as a remainder of reckless industrialization, as well as the salt lake as a natural yet inhospitable habitat. Constructed at a time when the water level was particularly low, the jetty submerged in 1972, two years after its creation. However, due to droughts that caused the lake to recede, the sculpture reappeared in 1993 (Ursprung, 2003, 323).[18] Ever since another period of submersion from 1997 till 2002 the jetty has remained visible.[19] While *Spiral Jetty*, as a site-specific and

therefore immobile work still can be visited in Utah, Smithson also created a series of *Nonsites* that are shown in galleries worldwide. For *Spiral Jetty* this includes several photographs and a 35-minute 16mm color film, which documented its formation and allowed Smithson to communicate further thoughts and ideas about the piece.[20] As a record of the physical but stationary and relatively inaccessible work, the film was considered "a work of art in itself – since it is about light, color, scale, etc." (Smithson quoted in Ursprung, 2003, 317). In November of 1970 the film was shown simultaneously at Dwan Gallery in New York and Ace Gallery in Vancouver, which had jointly provided the funds for the work and film (Ursprung, 2003, 317). This concept of *Sites* and *Nonsites* was a common phenomenon in Land Art and, in the case of Smithson, often contained both documentary materials, such as aerial photographs and films, and geological artifacts displaced from the sites.

Unlike Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, the works of Saskia Krafft and Silvia Noronha do not have a *Site* one could travel to and examine. No monumental rock formation was created at the area of study. Even though their materials were taken from a specific place at a specific time, and the catastrophic histories of those places play crucial roles in the works, no pilgrimage is encouraged. Instead, their works, refraining from the grand gestures of moving soil and rocks with heavy machinery, address a more general and less site-specific problem. Even though derived from a particular incident, they point towards larger issues that play out on a global scale, such as the hazards of industrialization, the lack of protection for nature, or the deadly consequence of overusing chemical fertilizers. By collecting materials, but not making the location the focal point of their art, Krafft and Noronha enable their works to transcend the local sites of their genesis and encourage a general reflection on the relationship between humans and nature. The natural matter is the work's material foundation, but solely serves the poetic meditations on the permanent rearrangement of the planet's ecology in the age of the Anthropocene.[21]

While Krafft's and Noronha's artistic processes are guided by similar intentions, they differ in their methods. Krafft nearly adopts the role of a scientific researcher, operating as collector, documenting the state of existence with the camera, taking notes, and retrieving samples. The final sculpture fuses her re-

search and gathered materials into an aesthetic object that communicates her acquired knowledge through an artistic gesture towards beauty. Noronha, on the other hand, takes on the role of an oracle. By collaborating with scientists, she foresees the future, and offers the beholder a glimpse of that vision with her geological artifacts. The beauty of her objects is not a result of active manipulation, as she hardly interferes in the artificial process of accelerated rock formation. Thus, in a magical way, her work articulates nature's cunning ability to produce beauty, even if its components are highly toxic. In this way Noronha's work holds us in the tension between the beauty produced by natural, at times simulated processes and confronts us with the specter of destruction.

In 2016, the professor of History of Consciousness Donna Haraway attested in the introduction of her book *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene* that we "live in disturbing times, mixed-up times, troubling and turbid times" (Haraway, 2016, 1) marked by a simultaneous appearance of "vastly unjust patterns of pain and joy" (Haraway, 2016, 1). She continues claiming: "The task is to become capable [...] of response. [...] Our task is to make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places" (Haraway, 2016, 1). It feels as if Haraway had Krafft's and Noronha's works in mind while writing. By addressing two human caused natural catastrophes in their artistic practice, Krafft and Noronha are responding to human caused natural destruction and thus embrace the dialectic of painful destruction and joyful beauty. At the same time their artworks with discomfort-stirring contents are aesthetically calm and poetic, shown in literally quiet exhibition spaces. Therefore, one can conclude in Haraway's terminology, that through their artistic practice Krafft and Noronha are staying with the trouble.

Endnotes

1 John Stafford Brown published on the region of Salton Sea as early as 1923 (Brown, 1923).

2 On birds at Salton Sea, see Patten et al., 2003.

3 On the Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge, see: https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Sonny_Bono_Salton_Sea/about.html (accessed 25 January 2022).

4 On the chemical evolution of the Salton Sea, see Schroeder et al., 2002.

5 Conversation with the artist. For further biographical information, see: https://www.saskiakrafft.com/.

6 An article in *The Guardian* from 25 November 2015 gives an impression of the disaster: https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2015/nov/25/brazils-mining-tragedy-dam-preventable-disaster-samarco-vale-bhp-billiton (accessed 25 January 2022).

7 In the following, objects from Silvia Noronha's series *The Future of Stones. A Speculative Analysis of Contaminated Material* (2017) will be called *Future Stones*.

8 Conversation with the artist.

9 For further pictures and information, see https://silvianoronha.com/future-of-stones/ (accessed 25 January 2022).

10 On the discourse on the so-called *next nature,* see van Mensvoort, 2020; https://nextnature.net/ (accessed 25 January 2022).

11 For further pictures and information, see https://silvianoronha.com/shifting-geologies-2021/ (accessed 25 January 2022).

12 Terry Gilliam: *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, 1998, 1h 58m.

13 For Smithson's sculptures, see Hobbs, 1981.

14 On the dialectic of *Sites* and *Nonsites,* see Alloway, 1981.

15 The exact data of the jetty varies in different publications. The website of the Dia Art Foundation states the measurements 18.000'x180', Hobbs states 6,650 tons of material and on the measurements of the coil: 1.500' long and 15' wide, Ursprung mentions almost 7.000 tons of material with a width of about 5m and a length of about 500m (Hobbs, 1981, 191; Ursprung, 2003, 317; https://www.diaart.org/exhibition/exhibitions-projects/robert-smithson-spiral-jetty-site (accessed 25 January 2022).

16 On *Spiral Jetty,* see: Smithson, 1972, 222-232; Hobbs, 1981, 191-197; Ursprung, 2003, 316-325; Cooke et al. 2005, passim; Ehninger, 2013, 315-319; Schramm, 2014, 13-19; Dwan, 2016, 265-267.

17 Reprinted in Smithson, 1996, 157-171, 165. Also Smithson's text *The Monuments of Passaic*, 1967 published in *Artforum* shows the artist's interest in industrial sites or remnants (Smithson, 1967).

18 Smithson himself had witnessed the jetty submerging in June and July 1971 and reappearing in August the same year. See Ursprung, 2003, 323-324. Hobbs and Shapiro mention that just before his accidental death in 1973 Smithson considered building the *Spiral Jetty* up, for it to be visible again (Hobbs, 1981, 196-197; Shapiro, 1995, 196).

19 On the reemergence of *Spiral Jetty,* see: Ehninger, 2013, 315-316, fn. 95; Schramm, 2014, 19.

20 On the film *Spiral Jetty,* see: Childs, 1981, 68-81; Shapiro, 1995, 5-20; Smithson, 1996, 138-142; Baker, 2005; Ehninger, 2013, 319-325; Schramm, 2014, 170-189. Serge Paul has transcribed and annotated the spoken word in the film (published in Loe, 2017, 23-25).

21 Also, Smithson created works in which he addressed human caused natural destruction. In his work series *Upside Down Tree*, he planted trees upside down, which James Meyer calls "a violent reversal of its natural state" (Meyer, 2016, 18). *First Upside Down Tree*, (date unknown) Alfred, New York (Meyer, 2016, 377, fn 7); *Second Upside Down Tree* (1969) Captiva Island, Florida (Hobbs, 1981, 149, cat. no. 41); *Third Upside Down Tree* (1969) Yucatan, Mexico (Hobbs, 1981, 164, cat. no. 45).

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Illustrations

Fig. 1 Saskia Krafft, *Salton Sea*, barnacles from Salton Sea, sheet metal, metal hardware, copper wire, chain, 2018, photo: Saskia Krafft.

Fig. 2 Saskia Krafft, *Salton Sea* (detail), barnacles from Salton Sea, sheet metal, metal hardware, copper wire, chain, 2018, photo: Saskia Krafft.

Fig. 3 Saskia Krafft, *Field Trip* (Salton Sea Sketchbook), colored pencil on paper, 2018, photo: Saskia Krafft.

Fig. 4 Silvia Noronha, *Untitled*, from the series *The Future of Stones – A Speculative Analysis of Contaminated Material*, 18 stones made from soil samples taken after the 2015 Mariana Dam disaster in Brazil, after a simulation of the rock formation process, 2017, photo: Silivia Noronha.

Fig. 5 Silvia Noronha, *Untitled*, from the series *Shifting Geologies*, 2020-ongoing, mixed media, photo: Brisa Noronha.

Fig. 6 Silvia Noronha, *Untitled*, from the series *Shifting Geologies*, 2020-ongoing, mixed media, photo: Brisa Noronha.

Fig. 7 Silvia Noronha, *Untitled*, from the series *Shifting Geologies*, 2020-ongoing, mixed media, installation view (detail), Kunsthaus Dresden, Städtische Galerie für Gegenwartskunst, Dresden, 2021, photo: Anja Schneider.

Fig. 8 Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, mud, precipitated salt crystals, rocks, water, Great Salt Lake, Utah, 1970, photo: Jacob Rak, taken in 2016, Wikimedia Commons.

Hauke Ohls

Capitalocene
Artistic Reflections on Corporate Responsibility for Climate Change

Hauke Ohls
University Duisburg-Essen
hauke.ohls@uni-due.de

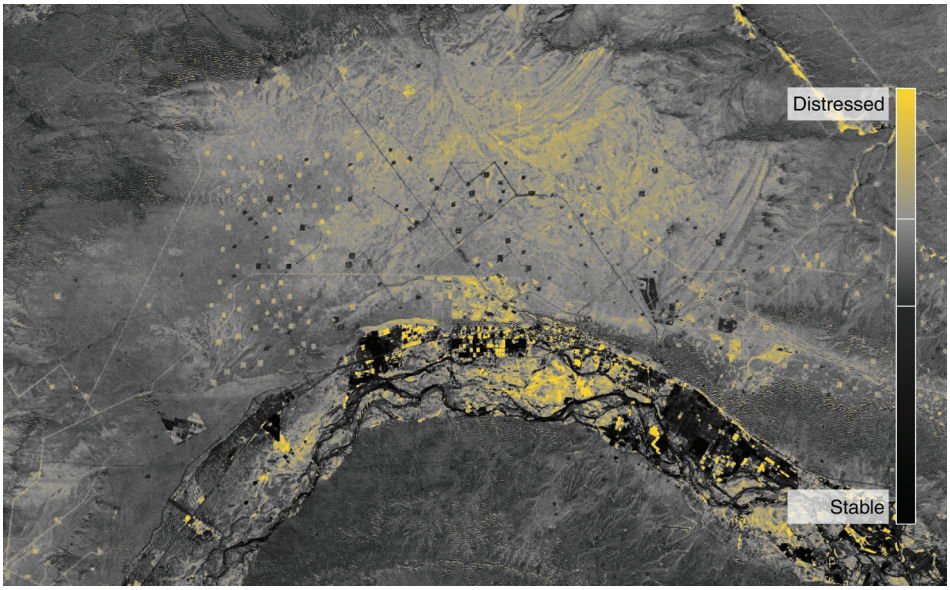
It is widely believed nowadays that we live in a new era called the Anthropocene, in which mankind is a climatic force. That this understanding contains a historical injustice becomes clear from the fact that the very abstract "whole of mankind" was never in a position to initiate processes of worldwide geological change or emit a significant amount of greenhouse gases, but only a small part of the Global North. The name Capitalocene is therefore more correct when the notion of responsibility is taken into account. Artists have addressed this imbalance of responsibility in various ways, as they tried to make the processes behind the structures of the global activity of multinational corporates visible. For this purpose, this essay investigates a work by Forensic Architecture that examines the extraction of shale oil and gas in Vaca Muerta, Argentina, looking at the environmental damage and impact on the indigenous population. By means of the artwork, reflexive knowledge is conveyed, which includes the consideration of neoliberal strategies of new extractivism in South America.

Keywords: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, (new) extractivism, Forensic Architecture, artistic activism

Introduction

The artwork *Oil and Gas Pollution in Vaca Muerta* by the British research group Forensic Architecture was published on their website on 14 October 2019. During five minutes and two seconds, the video covers the economic interests and their associated environmental and social abuses in Vaca Muerta, Argentina. Forensic Architecture investigated the period from 2013 to 2019 (fig. 1). Vaca Muerta is a geological formation in the province of Neuquén, located in northern Patagonia, where massive deposits of shale oil and gas were found in 2011. Esti-

mates are that it is the second largest deposit of shale gas and the fourth largest of shale oil worldwide (Di Risio, 2017, 5). This discovery created an immense flood of investments first from initially domestic oil companies and later from international ones. This process had been supported and expanded as a growth model by the alternately left-wing and conservative governments during the previous decade (Gudynas, 2019, 19-38).



1 Forensic Architecture, *Oil and Gas Pollution in Vaca Muerta*, Normalised Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) analysis, 2019

However, the activities of governments and provincial councils, as well as the freedom of action large corporations have, must be seen in a much broader context, ranging from imperialist methods to neoliberal reforms, foreign direct investment (FDI), debt crises, price developments on the commodity market, and the model of new extractivism, which is supposed to be linked to a decidedly post-neoliberal policy. These, sometimes very contradictory developments, will be contextualized in this text within the discourse of the Capitalocene, in order to be able to give a contextual background with which the work *Oil and Gas Pollution*

in Vaca Muerta can be understood more holistically. Research-based and critical art does not work within theoretical frames, but rather advances its own theorizing, so that these observations not only provide insights beyond disciplinary boundaries but also explore blind spots, causing a mode of knowledge of its own emergence (Henke, Mersch, van der Meulen, Strässle and Wiesel, 2020).

This video is just a glimpse into the various examples and incidents that Forensic Architecture investigates in a region that at first seems distant from the residents of the Global North but is, in fact, very closely linked to it as it directly affects the politics of free markets and their energy needs. The visualization of processes in the periphery and among marginalized population groups, as in this case of the indigenous Mapuche, is a core concern of Forensic Architecture.

Forensic Architecture's *Oil and Gas Pollution in Vaca Muerta*

Founded in 2011, Forensic Architecture is a research group based at Goldsmiths, University of London that aims to promote forensic science as an emerging academic field in the humanities. Therefore, the group uses the forensic methods in their research: inscriptions in architectures are used to critically examine official – state, military, and corporate – statements. The term "architecture" can here be understood broadly since it generally refers solely to something constructed by humans. The rainforests, a landscape, nature in general, or something transient like a cloud can also be "architectural". What they have in common is that they possess a shape over a certain period of time that at some point begins to look different, which means that something must have occurred in the meantime that changed it. These events, mostly not explicitly visible but noticeable in their before-and-after comparison, are the forensically undeniable, architectural evidence. In the case of *Oil and Gas Pollution in Vaca Muerta*, they include the rapid expansion of the concession sites, the growth of the waste-storage facilities, the oil spill in La Caverna in 2018, as well as the rapid loss of vegetation.

Forensic Architecture draws on a variety of interdisciplinary methods. For *Oil and Gas Pollution in Vaca Muerta*, these include 3D modeling, geolocation, image complexes such as mobile phone videos by workers, activists, or environmental organizations, and remote sensing, as applied here for vegetation loss. Satellite

imagery is a mainstay of their work, as it provides access to often remote areas, enables topographical comparisons to be made most precisely, and makes "previously imperceptible aspects of the earth" visible (Forensic Architecture, 2014, 746). As a result, an ensemble appears as an audiovisual event, which can be classified with the help of a voiceover. Forensic Architecture describes this as an "evidence assemblage," and it is intended to counteract sovereign strategies as "counter-forensic" (Weizman, 2018, 58). For the agency, the circulation of their research is crucial, and the art context in which they are widely exhibited and received is only one possibility; political, journalistic, and legal forums should also be involved. Therefore, they also frequently collaborate with other cooperatives or accept commissions from non-profit institutions, human rights or environmental organizations. In the case of *Oil and Gas Pollution in Vaca Muerta,* however, it was the British newspaper *The Guardian* and its *Polluters Series,* that published an article as well as a video. Forensic Architecture is thus located on the threshold of a conventional concept of art and at the same time prototypical for contemporary, critical research-based strategies that use very different methods to convey knowledge and to create an aesthetic experience.

New Extractivism and Neoliberal Capital

The events uncovered by Forensic Architecture in Vaca Muerta are all related to so-called "new extractivism". It is an economic model based on the exploitation of natural resources, in which primary commodities are made available to the world market or, through "rentier capitalism", values are created via concessions to international corporations (Christophers, 2020). In contrast to the concept of extractivism, which was developed by mining and oil companies in the 1970s, the new extractivism or *neo-extractivismo* stands for the massive extraction and export of raw materials (Gudynas, 2019, 19-20), linked to the exponential price increase of primary commodities in the early 2000s (prices for primary goods increased by 185 % between 2004 and 2014; Schmalz, 2019, 39). The United Nations Statistic Division defines an economic activity as extractivism if it involves natural resources that are extracted on a significant scale and at least half of which are exported as commodities without further industrial processing (Gudynas, 2019, 22).

The term "new extractivism" links this strategy to a development model in which revenues are used to fund social security. The term is used for the Latin American continent, where center-left governments have been pursuing a massive expansion of exports since the beginning of the 2000s and combine this with the promise of social redistribution.

However, such an economic model is not so much based on "progressive capitalism", which is a primary argument in defense of this course, but rather on the reactivation of the economic approach of the turn from the 19th to the 20th century, with its focus on import-export capitalism (Schmalz, 2019, 41). The reasons for this reorientation can be found in market dynamics that were explicitly promoted by politics. Here, only a brief sketch is possible: with the slowdown of economic growth in the Western industrialized countries in the 1970s at the latest there was a conservatively propagated decision in the direction of the economic model of neoliberalism, a view in which state interventions in market-economy processes are generally to be prevented and social redistribution efforts should be restricted. In addition, far-reaching privatizations have been carried out at the level of the nation state and trade agreements have been enforced worldwide to reduce import and export duties (Harvey, 2005). If these developments, which became known as the Washington Consensus, are initially associated with Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom and Ronald Reagan in the United States, they follow a discourse that has been vociferous since the end of World War II, linking neoliberalism to human rights (Whyte, 2019). Although there is clear statistical evidence that neoliberal reforms have created a massive imbalance in income distribution, this economic model is still dominant today (Harvey, 2007). Institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization also enforced the opening of markets in South America, especially after the Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) caused an "external debt crisis" in the 1990s. This determines the course up until today as Latin American countries are still dependent on FDIs and provide their access to raw materials accordingly in order to attract transnational corporations (Veltmeyer and Petras, 2014a, 2-3).

The opening of Vaca Muerta to the petro-giants after 2013 and the associated expansion of concession sites are made comprehensible by Forensic Ar-

chitecture on a satellite-imaged map. The artwork also shows the protest against this opening by the indigenous Mapuche, who evidently inhabited the region before the first colonizers arrived. The Mapuche began to organize resistance in the 1990s, seeking court cases that would officially grant them their settlement areas (Giarracca and Teubal, 2014, 72). Forensic Architecture demonstrates that even these judicial decisions do not lead to a secure claim to their land, for example, with the conflict that occurred in Campo Maripe and Chevron's Loma Campana oil field, where the community house of activists disappeared due to arson.

Another politically charged aspect in the case of Vaca Muerta is that a highly controversial method is used to extract shale oil and gas: hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. It involves a mixture of vertical and horizontally drilling, and then pumping frac fluid under high pressure into the boreholes in order to fracture the rock strata and transport the trapped oil and gas to the surface (Zittel, 2016, 34). The frac fluid consists of water with as many as 200 different chemicals added (Zittel, 2016, 42). Fracking is a technically complex method, with significant additional costs compared to conventional oil production. Moreover, it is associated with immense environmental risks – not only during the process, but also while storing the toxic waste. In Vaca Muerta, 20 companies are working on a total of 36 concessions covering an area of 8,500 square kilometers; since the discovery of shale oil and gas, around 2,000 fracking wells have been drilled (Goñi, 2019).

In the new extractivism, the ecological and social consequences for certain population groups are accepted because the (supposed) economic successes justify this. The reference to social programs is used as legitimation, although according to expert observations this mostly remains lip service (Veltmeyer and Petras, 2014b, 39). The overriding problem, however, is that Argentina's path of "post-neoliberal developmentalism" does not produce surplus value by means of industrial processing, but on the contrary, results in a net drain of natural resources, which can be described as an "appropriation of extraordinary profits in the form of monopoly ground rent" (Veltmeyer and Petras, 2014c, 123-125). Argentina is a particularly striking example of the neoliberal debt trap of foreign direct investments and mining of raw materials: The country has the largest imbalance in South America: it has to export the equivalent of three tons for every imported

ton of goods and 70 % of the exports are not industrially processed thus producing only minimal wage income (Gudynas, 2019, 32; Giarracca and Teubal, 2014, 78-79). Dependence on foreign direct investments is causing a rapid increase in ecological devastation throughout the country, as the world's largest investments are in mining, petroleum extracting, and land-grabbing (Veltmeyer and Petras, 2014b, 33-35). The Argentine government's commitment to resource extraction and export as an economic model, and especially the promotion of fracking, has come at a high cost in terms of subsidies. For example, in 2018 the government guaranteed a fixed rate to international corporations involved in fracking, and had to pay 340 billion dollars in subsidies that year alone (Cunningham, 2020).

Anthropocene vs. Capitalocene

In general, a closely intertwined relationship among overall economies of the states in the Global North, multinational mega-corporations, and the government of the resource-providing states, stand against the social and environmental interests, not only by the local Mapuche, but in the Anthropocene era by a multitude of human and non-human actors. The term Anthropocene is understood as a new Earth epoch in which humans act as a geological force, and are equivalent to meteorite impacts, volcanic eruptions, or ice ages, as they are a global and measurable force on our planet. Climate change is a sign of the Anthropocene, but not synonymous with it (Thomas, Williams and Zalasiewicz, 2020). Various starting points for the Anthropocene have been discussed, recently the so-called great acceleration, in the middle of the twentieth century, seems to be have become a consensus (McNeill and Engelke, 2014).

In this context, it is important to note that, in my view, the discourse on the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene do not mutually exclude one another; rather, it is a reciprocal supplementation. Depending on the context of consideration, aspects of one or the other are decisive, whereby the work *Oil and Gas Pollution in Vaca Muerta* only unfolds its full force through contextualization with the Capitalocene. According to T. J. Demos: "[The Capitalocene] has the advantage of naming the culprit, sourcing climate change not in species being, but within the complex and interrelated processes of the global-scale, world-historical, and politico-economic organization of modern capitalism stretched over centuries of

enclosures, colonialisms, industrializations, and globalizations" (Demos, 2017, 86). With these lines, Demos turns against the Anthropocene discourse, since for him and other theorists an equation of historically divergent possibilities of influence is transported by the word alone. "The Anthropos", "the human", and thus a generalization to humanity as an abstract whole, never had an equal share in, for example, the emission of greenhouse gases. This would equate the Mapuche and their way of life with the actions of oil multinationals or state subsidies. From this point of view, the Capitalocene is clearly the more appropriate term.

Nonetheless, the major dangers of the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene are roughly comparable. Human activity has led to situations of immense ecological damage and thus threatening the (human) future, for instance, leading the planet into the sixth mass extinction in its history (Dasgupta, Raven and McIvor, 2019). The difference is that with the Capitalocene one looks at the underlying structures with a decolonialized eye. The current state of the planet was initially brought about by a vanishingly small part of humanity, which has, moreover, built an asymmetrical web of opportunities to influence. Jason Moore therefore accuses the discourse concerning the Anthropocene of not productively explaining the current crisis, since the thought structures to which it is attached continue to belong to the paradigm that brought about this situation in the first place (Moore, 2016, 84). For Moore, the Capitalocene, and with it modern capitalism, emerges in the "long sixteenth century" (roughly from 1450 to 1640). He opposes the periodization of industrial capitalism as the decisive epochal change that starts in England in the late 18th century. Moore describes the structures as essential in which "Nature" is externalized and appropriated as cheap labor by capital, whereby human labor must also be counted in this newly emerged "Cheap Nature", when, for example, in the form of slave labor, the recognition as human is refused (Moore, 2015, 175). With "Cheap Nature", work or energy is produced and fed directly into the commodity cycle without the capitalist profiteers having to pay wages for it, this subtractive procedure to the disadvantage of nature and the majority of humanity characterizes the Capitalocene (Moore, 2016, 99). The fact that not only the corporate practices but also the states are decisive is made clear by Christian Parenti: "Managing, mediating, producing, and delivering nonhuman nature to ac-

cumulation is a core function of the modern, territorially defined, capitalist state" (Parenti, 2016, 182). For Moore, the problem humanity is currently experiencing is the end of the Capitalocene, and not that a new epoch, the Anthropocene, is beginning (Moore, 2016, 113). This is a proposition that has to be contradicted. The Capitalocene is an extremely useful theory because it shows that the current ecological situation emerges from the nexus of capital, military, and states with politically indoctrinated economic models, and transnational corporations. Further it shows the historical line of development which lies behind it, and how this continues to maintain imperialisms. Whether this status is currently actually coming to an end and we are already in transition to a "post-capitalism" and "post-growth" society, or it should only come to an end as the earth's resources are exhausted, is another question (Mason, 2016; Jackson, 2021). With the Capitalocene, the Anthropocene argument with its intrinsic non-hierarchy can be challenged. The unequal distribution of responsibility and the mechanisms that lead to it become much clearer. Nevertheless, the implications that come with the Anthropocene are immensely important: humanity is a measurable geological actor. Both lines of argumentation, when synthesized, would lead to an Anthropocene that is just with regard to climate, history, and society.

An artwork like *Oil and Gas Pollution in Vaca Muerta* cannot be said to give these discourses a visible form, but it is a reflection of the intertwined structures in an aesthetic format that produces knowledge and insights, even though none of these theories are obviously elaborated. If the link between artwork and theory is severed, however, dimensions are also lost. Forensic Architecture rather sensitizes the recipients to an experience that is "thought provoking". Direct structures become visible, which are neither individual stories nor remain in something abstract. Art shows here one of its traditional tasks: it reveals connections in our widely ramified present that would otherwise remain hidden, thereby giving rise to insight.

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Illustration

Fig. 1 *Oil and Gas Pollution in Vaca Muerta*, Normalised Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) analysis of the region surrounding the town of Añelo, in Vaca Muerta, 2013-2019, Forensic Architecture, publication date: 14.10.2019, video: 05:02 min, © FORENSIC ARCHITECTURE, 2022, https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/oil-and-gas-pollution-in-vaca-muerta.

Silvia Papini

Breeding and Depicting Chameleons between the Court of Louis XIV and the Port of Livorno

Silvia Papini
University of Pisa
silvia.papini@cfs.unipi.it

During the second half of the 17th century scientists tried to better understand the nature of chameleons, with the aim of refuting ancient tales that described the animal as fed only by air and capable of blending into the environment. Two attempts in breeding and studying chameleons are noteworthy. The first was made at the court of Louis XIV by Claude Perrault, the other, which is the topic of this contribution, was led in the Tuscan port of Livorno by the naturalist Giacinto Cestoni. Cestoni's studies on chameleons, published in 1715 by Antonio Vallisneri, were a direct response to the earlier French publication. He tried to differentiate his work by highlighting his care for the animals and the constant search for good and precise illustrations. While the relationship between text and images in the French volume has been extensively studied, Cestoni's research has never been assessed from an art historical perspective. Cestoni relied on draughtsmen whom he named in his private correspondence with Vallisneri; however, only one of them was a professional artist specialized in still-life painting, while the other two – both belonging to the Jewish community in Livorno – were respectively a goldsmith and a naval insurer. In outlining the different approaches towards naturalistic research, this contribution aims to cast further light on the collaboration between scientists and draughtsmen at the end of the 17th century focusing on the underestimated importance of Livorno in the exchange of ideas on flora and fauna across Europe.

Keywords: drawing, painting, animal, science, chameleon, Cestoni, Perrault, Nicola van Houbraken

In his *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* or *Vulgar Errors*, Sir Thomas Browne began describing the chameleon by reinforcing the common but erroneous opinion that "it liveth only upon air" (Browne, 1646, 157). The animal, widespread on the African

continent, was little known in 17th-century Europe, where the discipline of natural philosophy increasingly aimed at a systematic study of nature under the influence of the scientific method. The studies published in this period had the common aim of investigating the truth behind the popular myths that surrounded the animal, most notably that of chameleons' diet based on air, and that of the ability to change color in order to blend into the environment, two long-standing beliefs first described by Pliny in his *Naturalis Historia* (8.51.122). However, the depictions of the animal, included in these earliest studies, were often still based on Pliny's erroneous description. To the contrary, two investigations conducted in the second half of the century are interesting for the relation between natural science and art: the one led by the physician Claude Perrault (1613-1688) in 1669 at the *Académie Royal des Science* in France – which has already been extensively studied by scholars –, and the less known research conducted by the naturalist Giacinto Cestoni (1637-1718) in the port of Livorno towards the end of the century.[1] Despite dealing with the same topic, the two investigations differ in many respects due to the different environments in which they were conducted.

The French study on chameleons, together with those on other animals, was published in 1671 in a large volume entitled *Memoire pour server à l'histoire naturelle des animaux* (henceforth cited as *Histoire des animaux*). The volume was printed by the Royal Printing Office, and it was intended not only as a scientific work but also as an artistic one, with full-page illustrations that cost over 4000 livres. The *Histoire des Animaux* represented a powerful propaganda tool for Louis XIV's patronage of the sciences and arts. The exclusivity and rarity of the book that had a print run of only 200 copies also clarified why its influence on other centers of research came later during the century (Guerrini, 2010, 383-404).

After more than 40 years since the printing of the *Histoire des Animaux*, Cestoni and his illustrious collaborator Antonio Vallisneri (1661-1730) published in Venice the *Istoria del Camaleonte Affricano* (1715), a book that devotes its first 160 pages to chameleons, before moving on to other topics.[2] This long essay consists of a first part that outlines the new investigations conducted on the animal, and of a second part that integrates the diary of first-hand observations made by Cestoni while breeding his chameleons. Cestoni's and Vallisneri's attempts to breed and

study the animal were a clear response to the earlier French treatise, which is in fact often negatively quoted in the Italian printed volume. More than the actual published research, above all, is the private epistolary correspondence between the two authors that casts further light on Cestoni's work, revealing how by 1697 he had already been studying chameleons for almost thirty years, making the beginning of his interest almost coincide with that of Perrault (Cestoni, 1940, 51).[3] Nevertheless, Cestoni's one was based on a completely different approach towards the animal that characterized every aspect of his research, including the visual one.

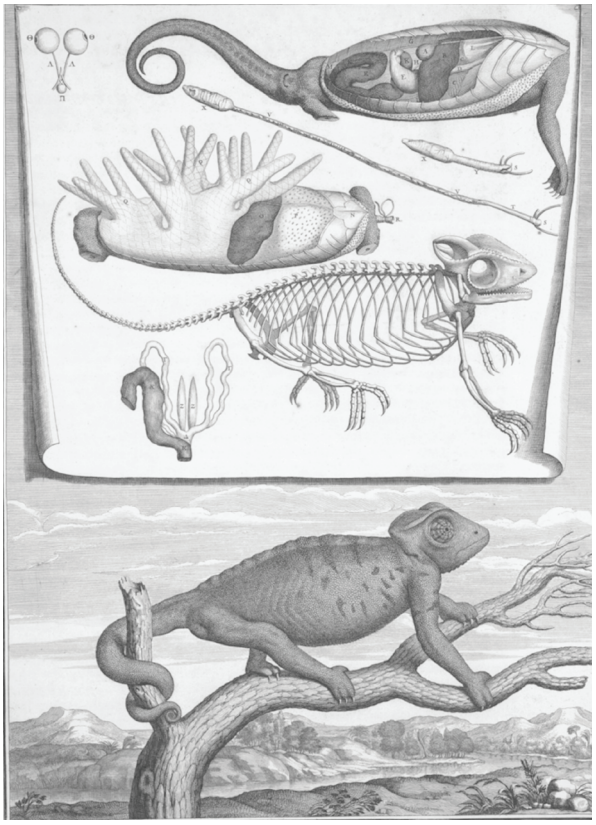
The time spent in observing the life and behavior of the specimen is thus the first difference between the two case studies. Perrault made his observation and drawings after having seen just one chameleon, presented to Louis XIV by a Capuchin father who had returned from Egypt in 1668. The "French" chameleon died almost immediately, and Perrault worked mostly on the dissected body of the animal (Sahlins, 2015, 15-30). Cestoni's approach was totally different, probably because he was not part of an academy or of a royal scientific institution, implying that he did not have external pressure on deadlines. He examined chameleon specimens for over forty years, surely inspired by the admonition of his teacher, the Tuscan court physician Francesco Redi, who used to say: "do not trust one nor two or three or ten experiences. Let them be twelve and all of them must coincide, otherwise do not trust them, as they will deceive you" (Cestoni, 1940, 688).[4]

Given the small distance and the established commercial networks between Livorno and the African continent, every few months Cestoni received new chameleons from Tunis, where he could count on the friendship with several people, including some Italian artists (the painter Bartolomeo Bianchini and the goldsmith Sebastiano Fucini). Yet, his main contact in Tunis was a local powerful figure, who had been previously detained as a slave in Livorno, Husayn bin Ali (named in the letters as "Ussein Coggia"). Husayin was an administrator at the Muradid court between 1694 and 1699 and then, from 1705, he became the ruler of the country. Because of this material exchange between Tunis and Livorno, Cestoni's small apothecary shop, filled with chameleons and with other curiosities sent by Husayn, soon became an attraction for both local visitors and illustrious tourists, such as Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici and Frederick IV, King of Denmark.

Taking into consideration the second main difference, which is the care and the attachment towards the animal, Perrault's description of chameleons stresses a negative view rooted in the moral symbology attached to the animal for centuries. He reports it all along the first page, then reflecting on the contrast between the beautiful name and the "vile and ugly beast" (Perrault, 1671, 13). In comparison, Cestoni's affection for these animals is perceptible in a long letter where he recounts the loss of one, probably caught by a cat, stating in conclusion: "I have this misfortune: having to grieve for chameleons since I have no children of mine" (Cestoni, 1940, 213).[5] This stark difference ended up being reflected also in the approach to the visual representations that were created during the scientific investigations, which is the next subject of my discussion.

In the French volume a full illustrated plate is devoted to each animal, with the anatomical depictions in the upper half of the page and the representation of the live animal in the lower half (fig. 1). Despite the efforts and the expensiveness of this artistic program, the engraving of the live chameleon drew upon examples published more than a century before, with general differences in the more realistic appearance. The idealized natural background is one of the main features linking the image to the tradition of emblem books (fig. 2) rather than to scientific illustrations. The choice of including a landscape in the background could have been useful for comparing the animal's proportions with the surrounding elements; however, the perspective from below makes it difficult to understand the distance between foreground and background, making the actual size of the chameleon unclear.

The analysis of the French illustrated plate, especially the anatomical figures, played an important role in the critical review done by Cestoni and Vallisneri. For example, the French depiction of the uterus is described by them as a "faithful image as much as the same organ of a frog resembles that of a woman" (Vallisneri, 1715, 77). This harsh judgement denotes how visual depictions, far from being only an aesthetic medium, were essential for the credibility of a study based on the Galilean empirical scientific method. Indeed, if something was wrongly or incorrectly depicted, it was not possible to prove whether the scientific analysis was based on solid grounds or if it had been misled by an incorrect visual observation.



1 Claude Perrault, Caméléon, from *Memoires pour servir à l'histoire naturelle des animaux*, 1676

2 Marcus Gheeraerts, Chameleon, from *Eduard de Dene, De warachtighe fabulen der dieren […]*, 1567

The Italian anatomical plates were commissioned by Antonio Vallisneri, however this essay seeks to look more closely at the engravings pertaining to the live animals and to their external form, all of which were based on drawings created in Livorno under the careful supervision of Cestoni.

Unlike many men of science, who could count on basic drawing training, Cestoni was incapable of making a visual record of what he was observing, hence his reliance on the help of a draughtsman, who thus was a truly important figure for him. The artist who worked with Cestoni for the longest time was Isaque Coronel, a goldsmith and a member of the Jewish community of Livorno. Before his death in 1698, Coronel had already produced drawings for over thirty investigations conducted by Cestoni, including a first one on chameleons. Unfortunately, these earliest drawings were all lost after being shipped to Germany to another scholar and Cestoni had therefore to commission again all the visual illustrations on chameleons to a new draughtsman (Cestoni, 1940, 48-49).

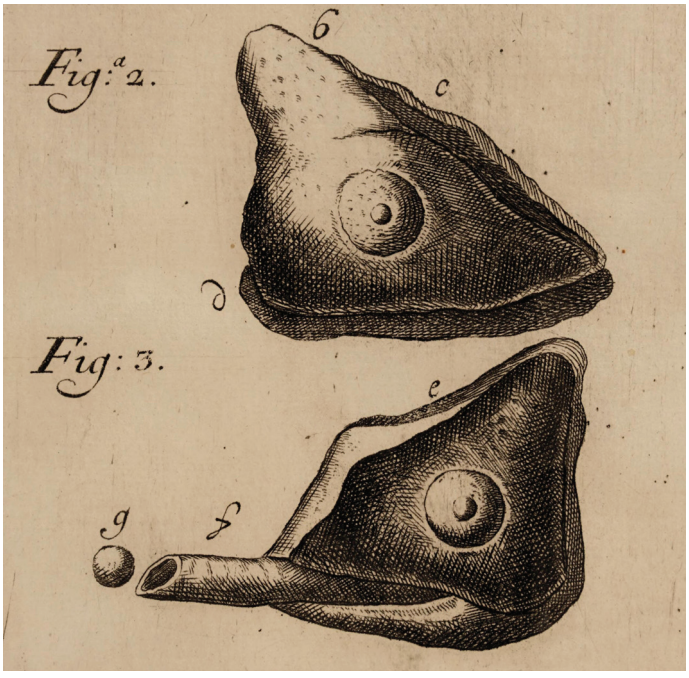
This time, he chose a prominent figure in the artistic community, Nicola van Houbraken (1668-1723), a still-life painter of Flemish descent who worked for his entire career in Livorno and was much esteemed at the Florentine court (Gori Sassoli, 2006, 78-99; Lazzarini, 1993, 89-105).[6] Despite van Houbraken's talent at drawing small things pertaining to the natural world, several letters show Cestoni's disappointment with the new collaboration, since the painter was not able to draw using the microscope (Cestoni, 1940, 207).[7] Indeed, this could be a challenging task even for an experienced artist, as the draughtsman had to simultaneously observe a very small detail through a lens and use the pen with the other hand. In observing living organisms, he had also to be extremely alert to any transformation in what he was looking at, thus acting as a true observer of nature, a nature that did not have to be embellished but only had to be true and exact. Based on that, it is not surprising that Isaque Coronel, a goldsmith probably accustomed to working with lenses, was also quite skilled in the field of scientific drawing.

Even the draughtsman who later replaced van Houbraken did not have a traditional artistic training: Moisè Aghib was a sixty-year old man born in North Africa and working in Livorno as a naval insurer. In this case too we are faced with a self-taught Sephardic Jewish draughtsman, whom Cestoni introduced to the

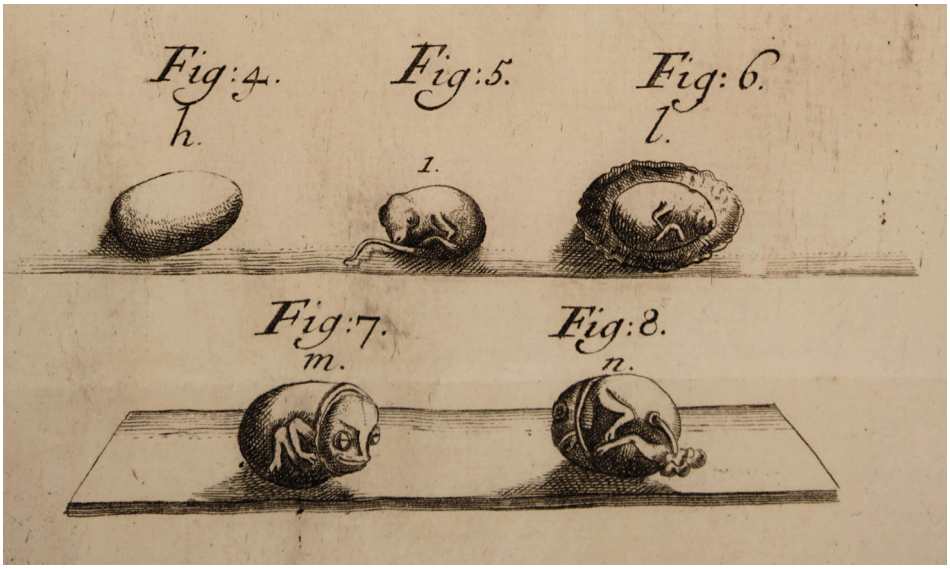
Grand Prince of Tuscany by saying, as he later wrote to Vallisneri, "[...] Serene Highness, he is a Jew that is I believe a second Galileo" (Cestoni, 1940, 394).[8] Pondering this sentence, it is probable that an actual interest in the field of natural science accompanied that of visual practices in both Isaque Coronel's and Moisè Aghib's case. The image of a mantis (fig. 3) – included in plate V as an illustration of chameleons' favorite food – was the first drawing made by this new collaborator. Taking that approved, Cestoni commissioned him to do the more crucial drawings of a chameleon's head, eggs, and embryos. Despite receiving them with a certain delay caused by some Jewish religious celebrations, he was totally satisfied with the results, describing the figures as "wonderfully made" (Cestoni, 1940, 392).[9] The depiction of the head, from two different perspectives (fig. 4), and that of the eggs and embryos (fig. 5), captured from different angles and through different stages with the help of the microscope, could show the natural development of something alive and reminds us of today's scientific images of fetuses.

The full-length representation of the animal (fig. 6) – which is, instead, just one from a single perspective – did not meet with Cestoni's approval. The engraving was based on a depiction made by an excellent artist, the court painter Bartolomeo Bimbi (1648-1729), when Cestoni was invited by Grand Prince Ferdinando to his Villa di Pratolino (Cestoni, 1940, 288; Vallisneri, 1715, 845).[10] While the Grand Prince kept the original by Bimbi for his collection, a copy by one of Bimbi's pupils (probably Benedetto Fortini) was made during the same evening for Cestoni. The engraved figures in the volume, especially the full-length representation, should have proved the authors' decades of experience on chameleons. However, the evidence of this knowledge got lost when Bimbi, or his pupil, made the depiction of a specimen after having seen it for the first time and without paying attention to small anatomical details such as the two outer toes and three inner toes that chameleons have on their feet. On that occasion, in front of the Prince, Cestoni could not have warned or reprehended an artist working after a royal commission, and the final illustration testifies to the lack of communication between naturalist and draughtsman. A long and extensive collaboration between the two thus proved indispensable to mirror empirical observations in the image.

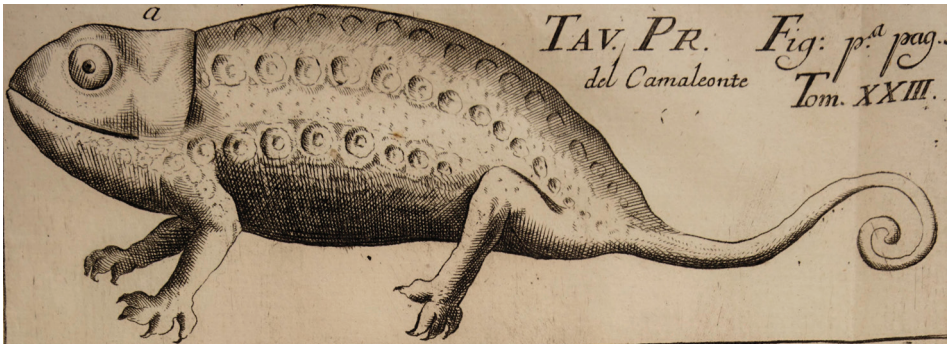
3 Moisè Aghib, Mantis, from Antonio Vallisneri, *Istoria del camaleonte Affricano*, 1715



4 Moisè Aghib, Head of a chameleon, from Antonio Vallisneri, *Istoria del camaleonte Affricano*, 1715



5 Moisè Aghib, Eggs of a chameleon, from Antonio Vallisneri, *Istoria del camaleonte Affricano*, 1715



6 Benedetto Fortini (?), Chameleon, from Antonio Vallisneri, *Istoria del camaleonte Affricano*, 1715

In his letters to Vallisneri, Cestoni repeatedly stressed the importance of copper engraved figures, good pictures being the "soul of the work" (Cestoni, 1940, 407).[11] Although the plates were eventually made using the copper technique instead of the less precise wooden one, it must be acknowledged that the result, from a graphic and visual point of view, was surely of less impact than that of the previous French volume. Nevertheless, neither in the French nor in the Italian case did the engravings fulfill their functions and purpose. In both cases, the depiction of the legs is incorrect but the more evident limitation they had was the absence of colors, which was the main point of interest regarding the animal. However, this new scientific enthusiasm ended up being reflected also in the artistic sphere, especially in the pictorial one.

Older pictorial depictions of chameleons were usually based on the *Emblemata model* (fig. 7), which – carrying over Pliny's ancient description – was quite misleading from the real appearance of the animal. In the *Earthly Paradise* of Jan Brueghel the Younger in the Museo de Bellas Artes, Seville, while most animals are perfectly recognizable, the chameleon – depicted near the boar, almost blended with the surrounding environment – demonstrates how vague the common knowledge about the animal was in Europe at the beginning of the century.[12] After Perrault's work, chameleons started to be depicted in a much more detailed way by artists working under royal patronage, as it is possible to see in the sculpture of *Air* by Etienne Le Hongre in Versailles or in the portrait from life made by Peter Beol, the painter of animals of Louis XIV, in 1668 (Sahlins, 2015, 19).

The translation of a subject from the field of natural science (and scientific illustration) to art took place in Livorno too. After having failed as a scientific draughtsman for Cestoni, Nicola van Houbraken began to paint chameleons in many of his canvases, which were shipped to various places in Italy and in Europe through the network of merchants active in the port (Gori Sassoli, 2006, 78-99). Heretofore no clear connection was made between the visible subjects in van Houbraken's paintings and the surrounding mercantile and scientific environment of the port. The presence of chameleons in his artworks, together with other exotic animals and plants, such as aloe vera, *pittosforo* and *amaranthus*, exhibits the importance that the Mediterranean harbor had for a still-life painter, with a continuous stream of *naturalia*.

7 Chameleon, from Andrea Alciati, *Omnia Andreae Alciati V.C. Emblemata*, […], 1589

Furthermore, as several letters testify, Nicola van Houbraken kept attending Cestoni's workshop. The naturalist had understood the limited nature of engravings in depicting the real behavior and appearance of animals and commissioned to the painter a canvas where he wanted to have portrayed from life twenty-five or thirty chameleons (Cestoni, 1940, 209).[13] Probably dreaming of an illustration program as richly elaborated as the French one, Cestoni was planning to add a reproduction of the painting in the final printed volume. The main point,

as he wrote to Vallisneri, was to depict the wide range of positions, colors, and habits, since "no one was able to keep these animals alive for as long as to be able to see and observe all the different movements, effects, etc." (Cestoni, 1940, 224).[14] Cestoni's description of the final artwork – which had only eight chameleons – resembles the painting *Chameleons in a rocky landscape* (fig. 8) which, after being auctioned in 1981 by Christie's and in 1990 by Sotheby's, has recently appeared on the Italian art market and in an exhibition curated by the gallery Caretto&Occhinegro (Milano, Spazio Big Santa Marta, 15th May 2015-23rd June 2015): "One has a lizard in his mouth, one that shows his tongue, another with a mantis in his mouth. One again with his tongue out cathing a butterfly, another drinking, one in anger, two doing nothing, and all in different colors." (Cestoni, 1940, 296) [15]

8 Nicola van Houbraken, *Chameleons on a rocky landscape*, oil on canvas, 1699, private collection

The painting has been previously attributed to different painters – Otto Marseus, Isaac Vroomans, and Karel Wilhelm de Hamilton –, but I believe there should be no doubt in identifying Nicola van Houbraken as the creator of the chameleons' piece (agreeing in this with Caretto&Occhinegro) considering the subject matter, the description given by Cestoni, and the striking similarities with other paintings by the same artist.[16] From other letters, it seems that Nicola van Houbraken depicted the same high number of chameleons in another painting that was sent to Antonio Vallisneri in Bologna (Cestoni, 1940, 510-511). His example therefore reveals how attending the world of scientific and naturalistic research could be an excellent way for painters specialized in still-life paintings to expand their repertoire of subjects and to acquire new commissions, counting not only on the free market but also on a small circle of connoisseurs. Even from a contemporary perspective, the connection between the development of scientific knowledge and the making of van Houbraken's "chameleons' pieces" could probably increase their value or arouse more interest around them.

As this essay has shown, Cestoni's letters to Vallisneri not only describe the lively natural science environment in Europe between the seventeenth and the eighteenth century; the letters also reveal names of draughtsmen and descriptions of visual artworks that would otherwise be unknown to us. The study of chameleons, for the long span of time it covered, represents a perfect episode for investigating these elements and, especially when compared to the French one, it raises some interesting closing thoughts. The choice to rely on non-professional draughtsmen instead of skilled artists may seem odd, considering the process of specialization in the arts that took place during the seventeenth century, with painters who dedicated almost their entire careers to the illustration of *flora* and *fauna* volumes. However, still in 1781, the Spanish naturalist José Celestino Mutis described how he preferred to work with "amateur" draughtsmen rather than with academically trained painters: in his view, both categories were quite unprepared to work in the scientific field, but those with a professional training tended more not to follow his instructions (Bruquetas, 2015, 367-387). Isaque Coronel and Moisè Aghib were thus probably more inclined to actively collaborate with Cestoni, following his directives without imposing previous artistic knowledge. Nevertheless, the example of cha-

meleons also expresses the limits of this type of approach for the representation of live animals. For Cestoni the precise and true image was not enough: he sought to have translated into a visual representation also the habits, the different shades of color and the temper of each specimen, a liveliness that only a painting could probably capture. The points of connection and the differences between a scientific type and an artistic type of representation of natural data emerge strongly from Giacinto Cestoni's correspondence with Antonio Vallisneri. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, a new balance between the two types of images was needed and the two Italian scientists tried, but eventually were not able to reach it.

Endnotes

1 On Claude Perrault and the French Royal Academy see: Guerrini (2010, pp. 383-404), Rabinovitch (2013, pp. 33-62) and Sahlins (2015, pp. 15-30).

2 For biographical remarks on Antonio Vallinseri cfr. Generali (2007).

3 When quoted in the text, the letters are translated into English. The original text is supplied in the footnotes.

4 "Diceva questo Grand'uomo non vi fidate ne d'una, ne di 2, ne di 3, ne di X esperienze; fate, che siano 12, e che tutte tornino a capello; altrimenti non ve ne fidate, poiché v'inganneranno" (without date).

5 "Io ho questa disgrazia d'avere a tribolare per i Camaleonti, giacche sono esente da figlioli" (26th December 1698).

6 The collaboration between Nicola van Houbraken and Giacinto Cestoni, together with newly discovered documents, will be discussed more extensively in my forthcoming PhD dissertation.

7 "Veda qui in questo foglio come me li ha fatti un disegnatore, che per altro disegna a meraviglia le cose, che non bisogna veder con microscopio" (5th December 1698).

8 "*Serenissimo: è un Ebreo, che io lo stimo un secondo Galileo*, e tanto dico a V.S. Ill.ma con questa distinzione, che il Galileo diventò grande con li studij, e questo con il suo cervello naturale" (15th October 1700).

9 "Il nostro M. Aghib ha disegnato il Camaleontino, ma non l'ha finite perché sono state le feste degli Ebrei, e così è restate addietro, lo finirà e nella prossima settimana spero doverglielo trasmettere; perché è necessario all'istoria" (8th October 1700).

10 The small description by Cestoni is a wonderful evidence of Bartolomeo Bimbi's work under the Medici Prince that has not been taken into consideration by scholars so far. It clarifies how Bimbi used to be call on special occasions in order to make depictions from life and that he was accompanied by one or more pupils that worked for the other guests.

11 "V.S. abbia premura alle figure in rame, perché sono l'anima dell'opera, mentre in oggi così si costuma" (27th January 1701).

12 Jan Brueghel The Younger, *The Earthly Paradise*, 1615/1625. Museo de Bellas Artes, Seville. Online access: https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/the-earthly-paradise/zQHK2w_x-XKtmg (accessed 10 May 2022).

13 "Io ho fatto accomodare una tela dove voglio farmi dipingere 25, o 30 camaleonti […]. Qui vi è un Pittore messinese, che fa bene d'erbe di fiori e di piccoli animaletti, ma non con microscopi" (12th December 1698).

14 "Si son principate le pitture de Camaleonti, e questo Giovane Messinese, che li dipinge fa bene, che mi contento. Se però non gli anderà a noia, perche doveranno esser tutti in differenti positure, e di differenti colori, quali saranno di molti. E questo servirà per aggiungere all'Istoria, quale molto mi preme, perche in effetti nessuno ha mai saputo tener essi Animali tanto tempo vivi da poter vedere, et osservare tutti i loro movimenti, effetti, ecc." (2nd January 1699).

15 "Uno con una lucertolina in bocca, uno con una mantes in bocca, uno con la medesima lingua fuora, che piglia una farfalla, uno che beve, uno in collera, due che non fanno nulla, e tutti di colori diversi" (9th October 1699).

16 I would like to thank Caretto and Occhinegro for the information about the painting that they kindly shared with me.

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Illustrations

Fig. 1 Claude Perrault, Caméléon, from *Memoires pour servir à l'histoire naturelle des animaux*, Paris, 1676, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département Réserve des livres rares, Rés.S.1.

Fig. 2 Marcus Gheeraerts, Chameleon, from *Eduard de Dene, De warachtighe fabulen der dieren […]*, Bruges, 1567, p. 72, De Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren (KB, Nationale bibliothek), open access, https//www.dbnl.org/tekst/dene001wara01_01/dene001wara01_01_0038. php (accessed 10 July 2022).

Fig. 3 Moisè Aghib, Mantis, from Antonio Vallisneri, *Istoria del camaleonte Affricano*, Venice, 1715, p. 37, Wellcome Collection, open access, https://wellcomecollection.org/works/avu929n7/items?canvas=37 (accessed 10 July 2022).

Fig. 4 Moisè Aghib, Head of a chameleon, from Antonio Vallisneri, *Istoria del camaleonte Affricano*, Venice, 1715, p. 31, Wellcome Collection, open access, https://wellcomecollection.org/works/avu929n7/items?canvas=31 (accessed 10 July 2022).

Fig. 5 Moisè Aghib, Eggs of a chameleon, from Antonio Vallisneri, *Istoria del camaleonte Affricano*, Venice, 1715, p. 31, Wellcome Collection, open access, https://wellcomecollection.org/works/avu929n7/items?canvas=31 (accessed 10 July 2022).

Fig. 6 Benedetto Fortini (?), Chameleon, from Antonio Vallisneri, *Istoria del camaleonte Affricano*, Venice, 1715, p. 31, Wellcome Collection, open access, https://wellcomecollection.org/works/avu929n7/items?canvas=31 (accessed 10 July 2022).

Fig. 7 Chameleon, from Andrea Alciati, *Omnia Andreae Alciati V.C. Emblemata*, […], Paris, 1589, p. 217, Internet Archive Digital Library, open access, https//archive.org/details/omniaandreaeand00alci/page/217/mode/1up (accessed 10 July 2022).

Fig. 8 Nicola van Houbraken, *Chameleons on a rocky landscape*, oil on canvas, 1699, private collection, photograph courtesy of Caretto&Occhinegro.

Senne Schraeyen

Roger Raveel: Providing a New Vision of the Complex Rural Landscape

Senne Schraeyen
Vrije Universiteit Brussel
senne.schraeyen@vub.be

Roger Raveel is considered one of Belgium's major artists after World War II. Mainly studied as the founder of de Nieuwe Visie (the New Vision), a stylistic movement adjacent to pop art, or as the artist who was only interested in depicting his rural birthplace, Raveel's environmentalist approach, however, is still insufficiently recognized in contemporary art studies. It is crucial to not separate Raveel's *oeuvre* from the period in which Belgium was falling victim to the chaotic suburbanization of the landscape. Inspired by the slow modernization of his homeland, Raveel depicted modernizing changes with great interest. Yet, he detested them when they were implemented with an unthoughtful, consumerist driven speed because this resulted in the reduction of the rural complexity to a monoculture. I, therefore, argue that Raveel's practices lean towards what scholars define as sustainable or environmental art. In this text, I firstly elaborate on these interpretations of art which contribute to experiencing being a part of the transdisciplinary networks of nonhuman and human actors that perpetually form our environment. Secondly, I focus on the ecological awareness that typified the timeframe when the New Vision was developed. Thirdly, I discuss how Raveel disseminated environmental aspects, sometimes intentionally, sometimes rather subconsciously, through selected case studies. By using bright colors, incorporating mirrors and organic materials and honing a painting style, switching from hyperrealist to abstract, the artist disseminated the ungraspable, complex constitution of an everyday environment through the interactions between natural and cultural things. Through this heightened awareness of all things and depicting their "cosmic charge" Raveel managed to both infuse the mundane into his art and highlighted the infinite aesthetic pleasures that result from observing the complex rural village. This is space which his modern peers neglected because they thought they control it and perceived it as artistically redundant or insignificant.

Keywords: Roger Raveel, de Nieuwe Visie, the New Vision, environmental art, sustainable art, environmentalism, modernism, post-war art

Introduction

This paper will discuss parts of the *oeuvre* of the renowned Belgian artist Roger Raveel, produced between the mid-1960s and early 1980s. Roger Raveel (1921-2013) is a very well-known artist mostly in Belgium. Next to his quintessential position in Belgium's art historical canon, Raveel is readily recognized for his very distinct and accessible visual style, which got dubbed de Nieuwe Visie (the New Vision). This helped him to create a consistent work that spans around fifty years. Roger Raveel created the New Vision during the 1960s to return to a more figurative style after his abstract expressionist phase (1956-1962). Notably, the New Vision was a stylistic movement as well as a temporary group of artists who centred around Raveel. The group consisted, amongst others, of painters Etienne Elias, Raoul De Keyser and Reinier Lucassen and poet Roland Jooris. This last one coined the term in one of his art criticism of 1965 (De Geest and Van Evenepoel, 1992, 29). Whilst most of these artists developed their own artistic style during the 1970s, Raveel stayed loyal to this artistic vision.

The artist's vibrant style and implementation of daily objects into art were comparable with the practises of the then-popular American pop-art and the French nouveau réalisme. Yet, Raveel was never really content with these comparisons. They were mostly the writings of art critics and curators who aimed to contextualize the practises in the international art world and, therefore, barely highlighted the differences (Raveel, 1968, 152; Ruyters, 2006, 60; Sizoo, 2003, 39). Nevertheless, it was due to these comparisons that the New Vision gained short term international recognition. Raveel was selected to exhibit in prestigious shows such as the Venice Biennial (1968), the São Paulo Biennial (1971) and Documenta 4 in Kassel (1968). Although interested in his international peers, Raveel, however, was rather apathetic towards promoting himself to international actors, making his international career a short one. Moreover, he found the inspiration and the core meaning of the New Vision in his rural hometown, Machelen-aan-de-Leie, where he resided almost his entire life (Ruyters, 2006, 26-28).

By mainly depicting the life of this rural area, Raveel was called the "Master of Machelen". Raveel's legacy, therefore, is also that of a painter obsessed with de-

picting the life of a typical Belgian village. After a while, his art became criticized by some as too local, outdated or as the navel-gazing of a repetitive artist (Spillemaeckers et al., 1978, 36). On the contrary, I would argue that the "world view" Raveel disseminated with the New Vision has actually a very broad societal message and has a lot in common with what scholars define as "sustainable or environmental art". With his lifestyle, recently emphasized as ecological before it was fashionable (Demets, 2021, 27), I argue that Raveel's artist practices still teach us more about how to intensely experience the constitution of our close environment, which we often neglect as too ordinary. Therefore, the research question proposed here is: which aspects of sustainable or environmental art are disseminated through Roger Raveel's New Vision?

How to Define Environmental and Sustainable Art

With the terms "environmental" and "sustainable" art, I refer to interpretations of art that contribute to experiencing the intertwined, transdisciplinary networks that constitute our environment. Environmental art, in recent scholarly studies – among others those by Bruno Latour – is exemplified by artists who integrate their scientific and sociological knowledge of natural elements in their practises. They illustrate how our living environment is formed by and is dependent on the interaction among different human and nonhuman organisms and materials. But apart from depicting these intertwined networks, some artists are also conscious of how human acts can deplete the intrinsic qualities of nature in favour of a human controlled monoculture. Environmental artists accordingly create proposals for a reconsideration of humanity's hierarchical position in the complex networks that perpetually create our environment (Latour B. et al., 2020). Some scholars define these practices also as aesthetics of sustainability.

Without falling into the trap of closed cybernetics, sustainable artists propose to counter modernist or reductionist world views where humans tend to control and know everything about their environment by dissecting every phenomenon or situation in an enclosed, artificially re-created network. In such a controllable network, natural actors that are not deemed necessary for the infinite economic growth of society will be neglected. This overtly modernist world view

tends to estrange humans from the poetic, mental and corporal beneficial qualities of experiencing a diverse natural landscape. Therefore, sustainable art should help us to re-experience our different connections with diverse nonhuman actors within complex, ungraspable and mobile systems. This art could demonstrate the importance of sustaining and fostering this natural diversity in a cultural setting (Kagan, 2011, 232-240). Importantly, the environmental and sustainable artists of today have much in common with the iconic political, scientific and system-like environmental artworks from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.[1] This is also the period in which Roger Raveel became the most intensely engaged with the New Vision.

The Time Frame wherein the New Vision Blossomed

It should come as no surprise that environmental and sustainable art was created in this time frame. Already from the mid-1960s onwards, a consciousness of the world as an intertwined, material, network grew. Manmade catastrophes in the natural world, such as oil leaks or the exposure of the poisoning effects of pesticides, made people realize that technological and economic growth had a destructive side effect on the diversity of the living environment. But more importantly, studies such as the 1972 rapport *Limits to Growth,* which warned that the material capacities of the world would not be able to support Western lifestyles and population growth, made it obvious that the natural world influences our lifestyle and that a reconsideration of our relationship with the environment was necessary.

These environmentalist studies and disasters also mobilized different countercultures within the western middle class. During the mid-sixties, protest groups, who acted against the reductionist and modernist growth-oriented lifestyle, grew in Belgium. People started to realize that the toll of (seemingly) infinite economic growth and the controllability of their life and the environment by technological and economic models are troubling. They concluded that the landscape is being cultivated to a facilitator of wealth for their State or for an enclosed nuclear family. They noticed this in the destruction of their local environment (e.g. waste disposals and traffic increase) but also in its suburbanization to concrete and scattered settlements (Florizoone, 1985, 102; Van der Windt and Bogaert,

2007, 7). Some activists claimed that this modernist ideology caused humans to become estranged from each other, from their close environmental and from the interwoven, holistic, composition of the world (Braem, 1968, 18-19, 24, 36). Working as a vicious circle, the estrangement from their landscape would, of course, make people less resistant to its extensive cultivation.

It is crucial not to separate Raveel's works from a period in which Belgium was falling victim to chaotic suburbanization of the landscape. To this day, Belgium is typified by a very allotted and concrete-filled landscape. The saying that Belgians are born with "a brick in their stomach", is partly based on Belgium's unregulated suburbanization during the 1950s and 1960s. In order to both stimulate economic activity and to keep people close to their rural hometown, Christian Democratic governments provided grants to build (nearly unrestricted) in rural municipalities. This policy resulted in chaotic ribbon development and traffic roads that cut through rural areas and historic city centres. It also implemented modern lifestyles in these rural municipalities, which became akin to suburban areas (Vanhole, 2007, 60, 64). However, policies for safeguarding the environment in these newly cultivated landscapes were nearly non-existent (Van der Windt and Bogaert, 2007, 7), which resulted in the pollution of the living environment and a seeming disregard for the unique natural components of the landscape. Raveel's hometown was not left untouched by this modernization.

The New Vision, or How to Picture the Rural Nature-Culture Intertwining

The way in which the new materials of modern life appeared in Machelen contributed to the creation of the New Vision. Notably, Raveel's figurative practices from the fifties already show that he was very sensitive to all things that happened in his modernizing environment. Originally, Raveel meant to contest his academic teachers. They namely focused on bourgeois imagery, on overtly romantic aesthetics to paint rural life as a premodern space and shunned any form of kitsch or "low culture". By contrast, Raveel searched for a visual style that portrayed how new modern lifestyles influenced contemporary life, both mentally and materialistically (Raveel, 1968, 150). Raveel, therefore, became interested in how modern, manmade objects infiltrated rural life and how, at the start, nature and culture

were dialoguing with each other. Both the billboard and the car as well as the cattle and the wheat are worthy of observation according to him. Raveel took inspiration for his art from his fellow villagers around the Leie River because they still had this "holistic" view of things and living. They did not interact with materials solely due to their aesthetic value (like artists did) but also due to their usefulness (Raveel, 1968, 150-152). Gradually, the artist became more interested in discussing the interactions between "the things" in his surroundings ("*human-things, human-animal, plants-things"*) than in disseminating his inner psyche (Alleene, 2006b, 672).

Moreover, the New Vision's vibrant aesthetics and keen interest in the interconnectedness of materials also come from Raveel's interest in scientific advancements around the 1960s. His acquaintance with radar studies that proclaim that all materials radiate certain wavelengths, convinced the artist that all nonhuman things have more capacities than what most people thought: they actually play a significant role in influencing the character of a space. In 1963, the artist claimed he experienced a sort of force, unnoticed by his peers, that radiates from all things and so generated the unique atmosphere of a specific environment as they intermingle with the wavelengths of other things: "if a human would enter my room the things then change because there is an extra presence […] then there is a spirit (to say it traditionally) which causes a tension in the room between the things" (Jooris, 1975, 47-48).[2] Raveel also states for example how he was inspired by the way chickens ran in front of a concrete pole (Alleene, 2006a, 188). The stillness of the grey pole in contrast to the active chickens gave both things a specific meaning in the environment. If there was a flower or a person in front of the concrete, the concrete would dialogue totally differently with the rest of the environment for Raveel. Hence, Raveel is aware that all environments should be deemed distinct and dynamic. Because as one observes them, they start to focus on the interactions between all unique natural and cultural materials that constitute it. The artists of the New Vision thus took their inspiration from the manner in which different things appeared to them as thing *an sich*, but also in correlation to other things and in the environment they appeared in (Sizoo, 1982, 5).

In order to discover what constitutes life and what it means, Raveel claims that he has to intensely observe all the things that surround him (Klasters, 1974). Even the seemingly negligible and mundane. Therefore, Raveel declares his practises as cosmically charged ("kosmisch geladen" in Dutch): everything that constitutes life should be participating in his works (De Man, 1974, 60-61). To register the cosmic charge of the things, Raveel started to make assemblages of everyday objects (a cart wheel, barbed wire, a pitchfork, etc.) and integrate them into his poetic, painterly vision on the rural life to highlight their contribution in constituting daily life with other things. Together with bright, radiant colors and a painting style switching from realist to abstract to cartoonish, sometimes all in one work, the lively contemporary rural village is perpetually captured in his art. In this way, he highlights its infinite, surprising, aesthetic pleasures which sprang from observing what constitutes its environmental complexities.

Moreover, in his search for the cosmic aspects of things, Raveel is conscious that all things that constitute and influence an environment are so diverse and expanded that one could never capture them all in an enclosed or immobile art product. Hence, he also uses floating squares, which seem to interrupt, hide and mystify, and mirrors, which incorporate the mundane and elevate it to art or elevate art to the qualities of daily life (Raveel, 1968, 152; Jooris, 1975, 59-61). The composition of the artwork is malleable and ungraspable just as the world it is inspired upon, as the sustainable artists would proclaim. Clear examples of these ideas are in the painting *De muur* (The Wall, 1966), where two white spaces cover parts of a realistically painted grey wall and an abstract, vibrant shrub, and in his assemblage works like *Neerhof met levende duif* (*Farmyard with living pigeon,* 1964), where a moving pigeon is just as important as the other aspects of the painting it is dialoguing with (Spillemaeckers, 1970), *Het Venster* (*The window,* 1962), where the window of an old farmhouse is mounted before an abstracted orchard (De Man, 1974, 61) or his *Karrertje om de hemel te vervoeren* (*Bicycle cart to carry the sky,* 1968) where a small bicycle trailer is painted and a mirror is mounted on top.

Raveel, just as the environmental or sustainable artists, does not condemn technology or manmade culture an sich. He is interested in how the modernization of his Heimat benefits his artistic vision and influences local lives. Through his

(the New) vision, which focuses on the intertwining of subjects that constitute the daily environment (natural and cultural), Raveel wants his audience to rediscover and to intensely experience their not-so-simple mundane environment. However, what the artists also have in common is a sceptical turn to modernization when they notice that a holistic and open-minded vision of the world is threatened due to modernist values such as fragmentation, artificiality and reductionism. Ecological degeneration caused by the modernist ideology of infinite growth increasingly concerned Raveel as he got older (Alleene, 2006b, 636).

Raveel's Subdued Ecological Critique

From the 1970s onwards, the artist was more explicitly troubled by how a complex environment is threatened to be reduced to an artificial monoculture. Unsurprisingly, Raveel lived a very holistic lifestyle. To safeguard his health throughout his life, his first wife cultivated a vegetable and fruit garden where every kind of pesticide was banned and they bought only organic products. The artist also placed great importance on experiencing his close, natural surroundings, as he took early morning walks barefooted in his garden (Demets, 2021, 27; Schraeyen, 2021a; Schraeyen, 2021b).[3] With these anecdotal details on what we could consider an "alternative" lifestyle, Raveel could not be left untouched by the earlier discussed environmental and social degeneration caused by modernization.

One of the few moments where Raveel publicly called out an unthoughtful modernization was during his inauguration speech as honorary citizen of Machelen in 1979. Here, Raveel saluted the artist and people who "fight against […] the idiotic and reckless ways in which we are destroying nature only for short term profit [and against] the spiritual enslavement of men to make them solely a useful element in our technological society" (Raveel, 1980, 99). This is a critique of the negligence towards the environment which is comparable with the countercultures discussed above. Notably, two years before, he also participated in a caravan protest to prevent the transfer of 330 hectare of Machelen's natural landscape to the neighbouring city that planned to construct a ring road (Schraeyen, 2021a).

Ironically, Raveel said in 1970: "Does the artist have a calling like a missionary [to be socially engaged]? No." But when asked if one should react to abuses,

he responds: "If [an artist] senses them, he will respond automatically" (Uytterhoeven, 1970, 61). Raveel rarely, if ever, tried to persuade his audience with programmatic slogans or images in his art but rather by using his visual language to intensely experience the unique environment. The painter was convinced that art could influence people more effectively by providing a new, challenging, visual language as a tool to look at the world than by depicting a contesting theme (Uytterhoeven, 1970, 62).

The work *Protest* (1964) (fig. 1) is a clear example of how the New Vision can provide a change in attitude towards the perception of the mundane environment. We see a painting halved by a vertical line. One side shows a typical Raveel-like space, a paved backyard with an abstracted shrub, yet the shrub is

1 Roger Raveel, *Protest*, oil on canvas and mirror, 1964

covered by a black smudge with a white center. On the other side, we see a white space with a real mirror. On the lower side of the mirror there is an abstracted arm and fist painted on it. Originally called *Koer met spiegel* (*Courtyard with mirror*), the buyer (Belgian diplomat Georges vander Espt, a close friend of the artist) thought that the right side symbolized nature (the shrub) obstructed and pushed back by pollution (the black smudge). The fist on the mirror, then, is a protest sign to halt pollution by human interventions. When Raveel was confronted with this thesis, he allowed the title change (Schraeyen, 2021b; Vander Espt, 2017, 18). The work thus caused one to contemplate humanity's position in a modern environment and make them conscious of its precarity. However, Raveel is hesitant to call his artworks "protest" or "environmental" works because he does not want them to be reduced to solely that. The aspects of environmental art are thus only a part of his practices. Only in a few artworks does Raveel provide an ecological criticism of landscape management, but always in a more subdued manner. In the remainder of this article, a selection will be discussed.

The work *Schilderij met cactus maar zonder titel* (*Painting with cactus but without title,* 1983) (fig.2) depicts three humans kneeling before a wide oval space. Mounted on this white space is a plank with a real cactus on it. The painted figures thus seem to be worshipping a real cactus. Raveel gave strict instructions that the plant could only be a cactus. It would depict a dystopian world where most of nature is destroyed and earth is so polluted that only cacti could survive (Schraeyen, 2021b). In this depiction, the humans thus seemed to be worshipping the last species of flora left. The painting *Bouwgrond te koop* (*Construction ground for sale*, precise date unknown, 1970 or older) is also worth mentioning. We see a floating square billboard presenting a construction ground in front of an abstract forest and paved road. This is a recognizable theme from a Belgian landscape. However, when asked if the work represents a protest, Raveel reacts lukewarm: "It was indeed something like that, but it was almost meant as a joke. I never had the pretence that it would change something" (Uytterhoeven, 1970, 61). However, five years after this interview, Raveel made the silkscreen *Kom in het bos wonen* (*Come live in the forest,* 1975). Here, we see a vibrant shrub before a realistically, geometrically drawn brick wall. An ironic remark can be read on

2 Roger Raveel, *Schilderij met cactus maar zonder titel (Painting with cactus but without a title)*, acrylic paint on canvas and mixed media, 1983

the billboard on the wall: "Construction ground for sale. Permission to cut all trees". This makes a clear reference to the Belgian mismanagement of natural open spaces.

Lastly, I will focus on two installations of Raveel in the public space, both from 1971. Here, Raveel tried to disseminate his artistic vision towards a wider audience but the precarity of an environment also was emphasized. The first public practice to be discussed is the protest happening *Raveel op de Leie* (*Raveel on the Leie,* 1971). Around 1970, Raveel joined a protest against the plans of local policy makers to straighten a part of the Leie River to facilitate water transport. The highly polluted meander that could then be circumvented, was proposed to be reclaimed as developing grounds. Whilst adversaries admitted that the straightening was a legitimate idea, they opposed the reclamation of the meander and instead wanted it cleaned.

The event consisted of an artwork of Raveel sailing down the meander. The painting depicted a vibrant version of the Leie's riparian zone as well as a red flag that boats were required to have to sail the local waters. The raft was enclosed by blue plastic sacks. One could compare the painting to both a sort of magic looking glass that captures the surrounding and turns it into art, or as a painting that disappears in reality. Moreover, by including a small mirror in the painting, the real environment is also included in the art work and not a romanticized version, as Raveel's academic peers would depict. The mirror highlighted the polluted water of the Leie, in contrast to the painted clear water.

During the protest, Roland Jooris recited poems about the Leie from a boat that accompanied the work. He also redacted a pamphlet that was handed out during the manifestation. Here different protesters (fisher guilds, water sports groups, artists but also a biologist) emphasized the importance of the meander and the landscape it was part of (Jooris, 1971). It signified the unique biological, communal and art historical aspects of the Leie landscape and how it is thus more than an economic actor.

The idea to create a raft artwork, was actually a concept that Raveel wanted to execute already in 1969. Originally without the painting of the flag, a giant blown-up blue sack with two painted blue squares was supposed to drift on the Leie between two blue poles mounted on each side of the riverbank. A picture

of this moment was supposed to represent a new contemporary artistic vision to observe the water of the Leie and thus redeem the Leie from the faux romantic view that Raveel's artistic predecessor attributed to it (Raveel, 1971). The eventual artwork raft also represented a contemporary vision on the landscape but got an additional social meaning in the context of the happening (Holsbeke, 1971). The audiences were thus meant to experience the Leie almost as a contemporary artwork, as one of the things that co-constitute their unique daily environment as the New Vision likes to emphasize. If fellow villagers experienced the different benefits of the meander for their living space, they would prefer to save it instead of cultivate it into a concrete space. Even here, Raveel tried to persuade his audience not with programmatic slogans or images but by using his visual language to intensely experience the unique environment. Although Raveel would later claim that "people were flustered [by the happening]. Thousands of people. Never had an artwork dialogued in that manner with the people" (Klasters, 1974), the advocates of the reclamation were not convinced. It was also through the lobbying of the protest group that the meander was eventually saved and cleaned (Alleene, 2006c)

The last example that needs to be discussed in detail is the public installation: *Zwanen van Brugge* (*Swans of Bruges,* 1971). This installation was part of an art exposition which was hosted in Bruges, both in a museum as in the public space. Bruges is one of Belgium's most popular tourist destinations because of its well conserved medieval city scape. Swans represent important historical actors there as they live on the Minnewater. They have been present there since medieval times and have been assessed as the symbols of several historic events and city legends. They are thus important *things* that shape the unique environment in Bruges. For his work, Raveel made four wooden swans with a small square hole in them. The idea was to let the wooden ones drift between the real ones. With the hole in the swans the water would be visible and thus incorporate the artwork in real life and vice versa. This also happens with the blending of the real and 'artful' swans ("Zwanen", 1971). Here again, Raveel highlights the unique things that give shape to the unique environment and "elevate" the daily to something artful.

What is important here is that there were no real swans for the work to integrate. Due to pollution and neglect, the Minnewater became uninhabitable for the animals and a stinking stream in the city. The wooden swans, now, highlighted the absence of the real ones and, in turn, highlighted the polluted waters. The artwork, unplanned, showed that the unique environment was disrupted by the absence of one of its defining things, the swans. When the work was presented, the city council was confronted by an increase of complaints about the pollution. Instead of acting on these complaints, they decided to remove "the swans" because "the contemporary works harmed the historical character of the city" ("Zwanen", 1971). However, Raveel swiftly reintroduced them when he reclaimed the confiscated work, but they were removed once again because "they fulfilled their promotional function for the art event and should thus now be better exhibited in the museum" (Raveels zwanen, 1971). The whole dispute attracted media attention, which highlighted the polluted state of Bruges even more. Under continuing pressure, the city council cleaned the Minnewater to host the 'real' swans again (Alleene, 2006b, 376-377).

Comparable to the work *Protest, Swans of Bruges* managed to disseminate (subconsciously) a sustainable vision. We can compare the *Swans of Bruges* in particular with the sustainable artist's practice of using mundane and natural objects and showing how all actors (natural and cultural) interact in a network to constitute a specific environment and give a more-than-economic-meaning to it. Moreover, they also coincide by showing how the constitution of a unique environment is disrupted if one of more actors are not sustained (here the polluted water causing the swans to disappear) and to incite the agency of the audience to influence this constitution.

Conclusion

Although some critics proclaimed that Raveel's aesthetics are too inward, local and behindhand, the contrary was augmented here. I would like to conclude that the oeuvre of Roger Raveel should thus not be read separately from the social and political context it was made in. Just as environmental and sustainable art is defined today, Roger Raveel tried to disseminate with his accessible aesthetics a

heightened awareness that a contemporary environment is a complex interplay of unique natural and cultural actors.

However, the main difference with most environmental and sustainable artists is that Raveel stays true to an idea that art should keep an aesthetic and painterly feeling whilst they mostly opt for more conceptual and installation methodologies (Ruyters, 2006, 62). When Raveel thought that an art critic who prefers more conceptual approaches accused him of embellishing reality, he responded: "I believe that I always tried to stay as close as possible to reality by constantly letting it decide the form of my paintings as well as trying to let my paintings flood over in reality. Through my art practice, I want to make reality more present" (Spillemaeckers, 1970). The artist disseminates an observant and holistic view of the mundane environment through his plastic or visual art.

Ultimately, the New Vision still manages to facilitate sustainable attitudes. Firstly, we should never stop with intensely observing the precarious, ungraspable complexity of our mundane contemporary environment, which goes beyond solely human centered interactions that constitutes its unique qualities. Secondly, this complexity should be sustained in order to prevent it from becoming a rationalized, manmade and dull monoculture due to unthoughtful modernization. This is clear in Raveel's 'protesting' works but also in his seemingly apolitical works where he highlights the cosmic charge of the things.

Endnotes

* This text is a result of my research on the fundamental research project supported by the Research Foundation - Flanders (project 1138321N). This doctoral project is conducted within the research group *Histories of Art, Architecture and Visual Culture (VISU)* of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

1 See for example the works of Hans Haacke (such as Bowery Seeds from 1970 or Rhinewater Purification Plant from 1972) or from Agnes Denes (such as Wheatfield from 1981).
2 All quotes in this text are translated from Dutch by the author.
3 A Flemish and Dutch tradition called "dauwtrappen" which is comparable to "earthing" or "grounding".

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Illustrations

Fig. 1 Roger Raveel, *Protest*, oil on canvas and mirror, 1964, 120x150 cm, private collection, foto-archive: Atelier Roger Raveel, © RAVEEL - MDM / SABAM, Belgium, 2022.

Fig. 2 Roger Raveel, *Schilderij met cactus maar zonder titel (Painting with cactus but without a title)*, acrylic paint on canvas and mixed media, 1983, 195x145 cm, private collection, foto-archive: Atelier Roger Raveel, © RAVEEL - MDM / SABAM, Belgium, 2022.

Roberta Serra

"Sacra Natura": the Representation of Mediterranean Nature in Italian Contemporary Sacred Art Sculptures of Pericle Fazzini (1913-1987)

Roberta Serra
Fondazione Pericle Fazzini, Rome, Italy
roberta.serra3@gmail.com

The sculptures of Pericle Fazzini offer a rich repertoire of images inspired by nature. These creations are profoundly connected to the Italian sacred art context of the 20th century, characterized by an oscillation between religious and profane forms. This aesthetic and moral dynamics in art might represent a reaction to a seemingly irremediable fracture between the Church and contemporary artists, following the historical perspectives opened by the Lateran Treaty and the rise of the avant-garde movements on the Italian artistic scene. The work of the sculptor Pericle Fazzini is an example of artistic and spiritual interrogations arising from this cleavage: the artist seeks to reconcile art and sacred models through the celebration of nature. Besides his numerous works that directly reference religious themes, Fazzini honors the Mediterranean fauna and flora in all its forms, perceiving nature as the place of God. Although Roman by adoption, the artist never ceases in his career to pay homage to his native land, the Marche, through subjects that become archetypes of an ideal rural and maritime civilization suspended in time: peasant women, fishermen, fauns and "Mediterranean idols". In the field of animal sculpture, Fazzini, in accordance with his Franciscan sensibility, elevates the animal to the rank of the privileged vehicle of the divine.

Keywords: Pericle Fazzini, sculpture, 20th century Italian art, nature, sacred, Vatican, Resurrection, the Marche, Roman School

Pericle Fazzini, the Landscape of the Marche, the Myth

The life and work of Pericle Fazzini is an emblematic example of the transformations of what is commonly referred to as "sacred art" in Italy, during the 20th century. Born in 1913 in the village of Grottammare, in the Marche region, the

artist remains deeply attached to this land during his long and intense career. The Marche's landscape, located in central Italy, bordering the Adriatic Sea, offered him the opportunity to observe a variegated nature, composed by hills overlooking the beach, where Fazzini collects shells, stones rounded by water, debris and pieces of wood, carried by the waves. During his childhood and adolescence, the artist could study the Mediterranean vegetation, embellished by the spread of olive and orange trees, which became over time the symbol of his hometown. From these elements Fazzini draws inspiration for his art, noting the repertoire of shapes, colors and atmospheres that he discovers during long walks along the coast. "I made sculpture with the Adriatic Sea on my shoulders" (Rivosecchi, 1996, 13) the artist notes, referring to his constant emotional relationship with his native land and its landscapes.

Despite leaving Grottammare for Rome at a young age, in 1929, the artist constantly returned to his native village: a small town located in the North of the Tesino River, formerly populated, at the beginning of the century, by fishermen and farmers.[1] Another element that deeply marked the territorial identity of this place was the rural community, which organized many activities in contact with the sea and the fields and, at the beginning of the 20th century, gradually faced the mass tourism on the coast (Rivosecchi et al., 1994). From the daily experience of the maritime nature arose one of the most representative sculptures of Fazzini's art, realized between 1940 and 1946, *The boy with seagulls* (fig. 1). The artist described the genesis of the work in an interview with Franco Simongini in 1977: "One day I was walking along the sea and there were seagulls, flying close by, and I was picking up stones, shells along the beach, which I drew, and that's how I got the idea of the boy walking and picking up something on the sand and the seagulls flying around him, over his head" (Fazzini in Rivosecchi, 1996, 7, 82). *The boy with seagulls* might represent as well an ideal alter-ego of the artist, as it emblematically brings together the most intimate elements of Fazzini's sculpture, reaching the dimension of the *myth*, while drawing its inspiration from everyday reality (Serra in Masi, 2021, 37).

As Mariano Apa points out, Fazzini's work is also culturally and geographically embedded in a territory deeply marked by eminent artists from the past, such as Carlo and Vittore Crivelli, Gentile da Fabriano and the Old Masters of the

International Gothic style and Renaissance, such as Lorenzo and Jacopo Salimbeni. But it also embodies the great tradition of Raphael in Urbino, and of the modern and contemporary artists Giacomo Leopardi and Osvaldo Licini. Apa adds that, in this rich and complex cultural panorama, Fazzini's "naturalism" tempered the influences of late Gothic and courtly tradition: at the same time his inspiration remains deeply rooted – through his references, iconography, motifs and intentions – in the cultural and artistic heritage of his homeland (Apa, Rivosecchi, Falconi, 2005, 27). At the beginning of the 20th century, this homeland also represented the space that still hosted an ideal civilization from which Fazzini draws his figures in wood, seeking to capture its primordial essence, and infusing it into statues that incarnate the ideal of the "Mediterranean idol". For instance, inspired by a peasant woman walking the streets of Grottammare, the artist composed the *Figure walking* (fig. 2). The genesis of this wooden work, sculpted in 1933, is described as follows: "I got the idea in Grottammare when I saw a peasant woman walking up a street path with a jug on her head, walking almost on her tiptoes. Then I was interested in rediscovering the spirit of the great archaic sculpture, the creation of a *Mediterranean idol*".

While exploiting humble subjects, the fundamental question for Fazzini remained the quest for memory and the spiritual essence of nature. In this regard, the sculptor stated in 1933: "By exalting the strange memories of a woman who was carrying an amphora on her head, I want her to become a God. So now my sculpture is based on the humblest subjects of life, which I want to endlessly exalt" (Pericle Fazzini Historical Archives). These concerns are shared by other artists in this period, outside the Roman School, and from other regions of Italy. We can compare Fazzini's *Figure walking*, for example, to Marino Marini's *Ersilia* (1931-1949): in this work we find the same solid and archaic character of Fazzini's sculpture. Its forms describe a comfortable cultural environment, profoundly linked to nature and its changing character, but devoid of the "strictly human classical 'stillness'" cherished by Marini (De Feo in Teshigawara, 1990, 30). This theme gave Fazzini the possibility of glimpsing, through the popular and peasant dimension, a naturalist utopia, referring to the mythical origins of humanity, and to men in constant dialogue with the nature that surrounds them, in which the artist finds the presence of God.

1 Pericle Fazzini, *The boy with seagulls*, polychrome wood, 1940-1944

2 Pericle Fazzini, *Figure walking*, wood, 1933

"Shaped by Nature": The Sources of Fazzini's Synthetic Vision

We can observe that the theme of nature is not only one of the artist's favorite subjects, but it also embodies a source of inspiration for his work from a formal and stylistic point of view. The plastic rhythm of the hills in the Marche, the sea, the landscapes shaped by the wind, penetrate, according to the artist, into his works, conferring them an ascending character and harmonizing his compositions: "Harmony is like the sense of hills in the endless valley when the sun has recently set and for a moment everything is sharper and more restful. Harmony is also the wind when it violently or gently shaves the sea and sand and shapes them functionally and consequently harmoniously through infinite, smaller, larger and tinier commas. Even a pile of stones has its own harmonic sense" (Rivosecchi, 1996, 14).

Fazzini seems to glimpse, throughout the purification of the organic forms by way of the effect of the water, wind and time, the intervention of the divine genius: for the sculptor the notion of divinity is indissolubly linked to Nature. The presence of the *sacred* in his art is, for this reason, a fundamental issue, as well as the relation between humans and nature. Fortunato Bellonzi points out in this regard: "the organicity of nature, conceived as part of man's inseparable relationship with that nature, governs all of the sculptor's art: even when he invents simplified forms seemingly unrelated to sensitive experience; and you would argue that then his language tends toward the rejection of the naturalness and of the history that is characteristic of certain aesthetic positions of our time" (Bellonzi, 1987, 6).

Therefore, beyond the artistic and historical vicissitudes of the 20th century and the tight succession of avant-garde movements, Fazzini oriented his art towards a more synthetic vision of the subject, thanks to the direct and attentive observation of nature, and the natural processes of decomposition of organic forms (Appella, 2005, XVI). For this reason, we propose to study the tendencies towards abstraction in Fazzini's work in the light of these reflections.

As observed in the catalog of the exhibition *Fazzini e Grottammare*, in his personal annotations, written in 1951, Fazzini celebrated the cyclical character of artistic matter and, at the same time, the demolishing and renewing power of Nature: "Perhaps we will find again in sculpture the stones left in the riverbeds of riv-

ers that dried up in ancient times. In those stones there are extraordinary shapes surviving from the battles with water" (Rivosecchi, 1996, 8). Following these inspirations, Fazzini's synthetic *vision* reached its peak in the 1970s, with the realization of numerous pastels as well as the series of three wooden *Waves* (fig. 3). After the Second World War the debate between figuration and abstraction became particularly heated in Italy, as well as in the rest of the Western art. Fazzini reaffirmed in this context his creative individuality: the simplification of forms in the *Waves* was combined to the twirling dynamic of the wood, echoing the Baroque sculptural plastique and its ascensional aspiration to God.

The theme of a transcendent nature had flowed in the artist's works since 1947, when Fazzini conceives the *Sybil* (fig. 4): a sylvan and oracular image of a priestess, casted into bronze, living between the profane and the sacred world, carrying with her the prophecies on human destiny. This time, the artist realized a sharp, geometric and androgynous sculpture with simplified features, gathered in meditation. On this particular occasion Fazzini also revealed his interest in the new artistic visions that were circulating in Italy and Europe during the post-World War II, such as Neo-Cubism, joining episodically the "Fronte Nuovo delle Arti" group.[2]

We might observe that, when Fazzini spoke about his works before 1935, he considered the theme of nature's intervention into artistic creation as a metaphor of the sculptor's labor, conceiving it as: "[…] the laborious evolution of this world of mine: as if I have placed in the river some piece of sharp-edged stone, which, when arrived at the river mouth, has been made round by the water. And coming back to the comparison with the river, making of a splinter a smooth pebble, in the same way I would like to be able to give harmony to the matter I sculpt. And, as the water flow gives the splinter always purer and purer natural values, so my idea may make the stone become human" (Teshigawara, 1990, 200).

The Context of the Roman School: Fazzini's Sacred Animals and the "Mediterranean Idol"

After leaving Grottammare for Rome, where he settled permanently in 1930, Fazzini quickly became part of the capital's intellectual and artistic scene. Here, at first with poet Mario Rivosecchi, he discovered the Roman Baroque, ad-

3 Pericle Fazzini, *Wave*, wood, 1968

4 Pericle Fazzini, *Sybil*, bronze (casted in 1956), 1947

mired the ancient monuments and became imbued with city's lively cultural life (Masi, 2001, 69-70). Art historians have often associated Fazzini's work with the dynamics of what was called by Waldemar-George the "Roman School" (the critic defined it more precisely "*Jeune École de Rome*" in the catalog of the first exhibition of the group, organized in 1933 at the Galerie Bonjean in Paris). This group of artists was born in the wake of the "Via Cavour School", originally identified by Roberto Longhi as the Mafai-Raphaël-Scipione trio of painters, who shared a rather expressionistic approach to subjects. Between the 1920s and 1940s, the Fazzini's life is often connected with some of these artists, who were intent to react to the conventionalism of the Novecento movement, such as Alberto Ziveri, Emanuele Cavalli, Giuseppe Capogrossi, Corrado Cagli.

However, it is necessary to emphasize the heterogeneous and disparate character of this group, which gathers different sensibilities and approaches to figurative culture. Therefore, at the same time, this "School" was indissolubly linked to the Roman territory and its elements (Masi and Barbato, 2007, 183). Like other artists in this period, Fazzini always cultivated a marked independence from the Roman group and developed a personal creative language, not only attached, from the point of view of his subjects, to the landscape of the capital, but always inextricably turned to the Marche lands and the nature of his childhood. What may distinguish Fazzini's art is the particular focus on a conception of the sacred that surpasses the canons of the religious, or a vision tied to a purely traditional biblical narrative. The numerous texts, interviews and annotations written by the artist during his career represent Fazzini's art and life as imbued with a sincere Christian religiosity: the traces of the divinity can be found, for the sculptor, in the contemplation of the majesty of the Creation and creatures. Fazzini pays homage to it through his works, sometimes in a universalist vision of nature, other times through the study of isolated subjects.

This is the case, for example, of his animal sculpture. The animal theme is, in fact, one of Fazzini's favorite subjects: the artist aimed to elevate the beast to the rank of protagonist of his works, as he does in the series of *Cats* (*Cat with a long tail*, 1947), or with the *Doves* (1971), destined to be placed above the tomb of Raphael in the Pantheon in Rome. In other circumstances, the animal is integrated

into more complex compositions, contributing to the narrative and formal construction of the work (*The fields*, 1955).

Among the forms of the fauna, Fazzini focused on the horse: an ancient subject that was very successful in the sculpture of his companions, such as Marino Marini. In Marini's famous series about *Horse and knight*, the human figure becomes a symbol of reason and intellect, while the horse, on the other hand, embodies the vital energy of nature. From his first sculptures, imbued with classical reminiscences and naturalism, Marini proceeds, after the war, to an anti-classical and primordial idea inspired by Etruscan statuary, and to an expressionist vision of his works. These images offer an interpretation of the trauma of war, as well as a new point of view upon art and humanity, marked by tragedy.

In the same war and post-war context, Fazzini exalts the dynamism of the animal, especially in his *bronzetti*: this term describes the numerous little sculptures he created, particularly during his military service in Zara, after 1941, where he realized little figures of acrobats, horses, dancers, with the ancient *lost wax* technique (Appella, 2006, 7-8).

Fazzini's inspirations went beyond the Italian example: he turned to French art and seized the repertoire of the moderns, like Rodin, Bourdelle and Maillol. The sculptor thus broke away from the national tradition, not only in terms of form and style, but also by attributing a new conceptual status to his work. Again, this is particularly visible in his small-scale production. In the *bronzetti* Fazzini does not chisel the form, leaving the subject at the mercy of movement and achieving effects of "heroic monumentality" on a small surface. Rodolfo Pallucchini emphasized this concept in 1965: "Fazzini, however, breaks away from the classical Italian tradition of the *bronzetto* -a sculpture finished in every detail, yet in minimal dimensions; relating rather to the modern use favored in France by Daumier and developed above all by '*peintres-sculpteurs*' such as Renoir and Matisse, for whom the *bronzetto* is the living core of a plastic idea, the fulcrum of a stylistic synthesis" (Pallucchini, 1965). At the same time, the desiccated matter of Fazzini's horses places these figures into a contemporary dimension, evoking Giacometti's animals.

Fazzini identifies in the animal, whether domestic or wild, the reflection of the divinity that permeates Nature. We should add that Fazzini's oscillations in the

formal field of sculpture, sometimes calling on Baroque plasticity, sometimes researching the contemporary synthesis of shapes, translate the struggle between immanence and transcendence of matter, and an awareness of the historical and artistic vagaries of the 20th century. Bruno Mohr underlines the duality of the Fazzinian spirit, thus divided between: […] two elements -feeling and reason, romantic aspiration and classical will [...]. I would rather say that they summarily represent two aspects, two ways of proceeding, which alternate, sometimes with one or the other prevailing. His aesthetic itinerary is much to be sought in the intimate and constant drama of these two opposite and natural tendencies – measure and momentum – never completely separated in that imaginative and severe temperament. It is clear that one cannot aesthetically establish a qualitative discrimination between these two terms, the end being always the same: the overcoming of empirical reality" (Mohr, 1969, 9-10).

In light of these considerations, we can finally build a comparison between Fazzini's archaic and sacred representation of nature and the totemic sculpture of Mirko Basaldella, within the framework of the animal creation that emerged from the artistic groups close to the Roman School. Following the plastic of Basaldella's sculpture of the 1930s – although oriented towards the human figure and linked to biblical subjects – in the post-war period Balsaldella created artworks charged with cultural stratifications and references to Aztec, Phoenician, Assyrian and Mesopotamian cultures, as well as works that drew on Jewish iconography. During the 1950s, the artist systematized the use of materials as copper and brass, creating works such as the series on the theme of the *Lions of Damascus*.

Between Holy and Profane Forms: A Renewed Aesthetic in Sacred Art

Fazzini's animal representations give us several clues for the study of his work and his conception of the *sacred*, as well as about the changing perception of the sacred in the art of post-war Italy. We could, for example, identify Fazzini's animals – using the words of Mircea Eliade and following the phenomenological tradition – as "hierophanies": in the formal simplification of the cats, a primitivist spirit sometimes resonates, echoing a premodern and archaic natural state of creation and humanity. Through his animals, Fazzini seems to suggest that the great-

ness of God is reflected in the humility of each creature, culminating in the Incarnation and the Resurrection of the Christ: a philosophy close to the Franciscan Christian vision, according to which the Creation represents a way to God, passing through an itinerary of the senses, rather than of the intellect. This conception is expressed in the verses of St Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures*.

This alliance is made explicit in the bas-relief by Fazzini named *Exit from the Ark* (fig. 5), inspired by the sculpture of Rodin and Michelangelo. The artist immortalized the biblical episode of Noah's Ark into bronze. The man with raised arms emerging from the Ark and receiving salvation, prefigures the position of the Christ in the Passion: "I designed a well measured bas-relief with a *chiaroscuro* effect, while maintaining a mystical air, so that the expression was given by the linear and harmonious form of the volumes. The man covered by the drapery and raising his arms to the sky gives a sense of infinity, while the camel moving in the background gives depth and space to the whole bas-relief" (Fazzini in Lucchese, 1952, 67-68). The *Exit from the Ark* represents the artist's meditation on a religious subject belonging to the Christian iconographic heritage, transposed into tormented volumes, which ensure the dramatic tension of the sculpture. Thus, critics and historians were quick to recognize a mystical character in Fazzini's production, describing it as a piece of "sacred art". In Giuseppe Ungaretti's preface to the

5 Pericle Fazzini, *Exit from the Ark*, bronze, 1932 (casted in 1976 ca.)

catalogue of the first retrospective on Fazzini's work in 1951, we find the following words about his sculpture: "[…] Now I know well why I uttered such a terrible word as the adjective "sacred," now I know what meaning Fazzini's work intended to have, from the *Exit from the Ark* that was its beginning: it is a song of creatures, grateful and glad for the gift that propagates them and makes their spirit fruitful of generous undertakings. It is the canticle of a spring nature, almost Edenic, grateful and glad for the beauty of its sinewy limbs, and if, sometimes, the summer hell upsets it, now I know why its voice at that moment, becomes atrocious and bewildered" (Ungaretti in Lucchese, 1951).

So, we can observe that this elementariness of Fazzinian images might adhere to the Franciscan moral and spiritual dynamic, throughout the artist's tendency to constrain form in the strict environment of the visible. Fazzini's fascination with the philosophy and figure of St Francis is evident in his attachment to the Franciscan *milieu* of Assisi: the artist created a tribute to St Francis in *St Francis caressing the wolf,* a sculpture in wood realized in 1939. The resonance with Arturo Martini's archaism is combined, in this work, as Chiara Barbato points out, with an intimate "Christian classicism", whose formal purity is "totally devoid of sensuality" (Barbato, 2012, 17).

It also appears that, through the Franciscan paradigm, the artist was able to express his meditations on the dualism between spirit and matter, which occupied his thoughts when he was creating the *Monument to St Francis.* This monument was never realized, but the Fazzini Foundation still preserves the preparatory drawings and the study in silver (fig. 6), conceived in 1982. It represents a medallion where the features of the Saint appear between the voids of the matter: "The Saint who conversed with brother wind, sister water, with birds, would have a more meaningful memory in this image of him made of air, of clouds, of wings, thought by Pericle" (Buy in Teshigawara, 1990, 19). The artist says about this sculpture: "The idea was immediately clear to me because it is my own desire: to renounce the body. This saint has renounced everything, he has forgotten his body, the needs of the body, his body has become air, he is part of Creation but not of flesh, not with the limitations of the flesh. A goal for me [...] to give stone, bronze the insubstantiality of matter, to raise in purity my statues to God" (Masi, 1992, 148).

6 Pericle Fazzini, *Study for "Monument to St. Francis"*, bronze, 1981

The *Resurrection* of Christ and Nature

Since the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church inaugurated a lively debate on the need for a rapprochement between religious institutiones and artists. The possibility of renewing this dialogue presented itself as an urgency for the Church in regard to the artistic scene of the 20th century, particularly marked by the incursion of the avant-garde movements and the affirmation of post-modern thinking in a world moving toward secularization. In this context, the commissioning of the Audience Hall in Vatican, entrusted in 1963 by Pope Paul VI to architect Pier Luigi Nervi (Cossa, 2010), is emblematic of the cultural-historical changes highlighted during the meeting with artists in the Sistine Chapel in 1964, and by the *Message to artists* of December 8, 1965, in which the pontiff urged creators toward reconciliation with the Church: "[...] do not let such a fruitful alliance to be broken!".[3] Inside Nervi's Hall is placed Pericle Fazzini's monumental sculpture, the *Resurrection* (fig. 7), which recalls the religious theme of the renewing of Christ and the Catholic Church. It is a twenty-meter long by seven-meter high sculpture located behind the papal chair, facing the assembly of people who gather in the Sala Nervi during Papal audiences (Pezzella, 2012). The space of the hall and Fazzini's *Resurrection* are, in this regard, connected to a larger pastoral program, engaging the masses of the Christian and secular community through aesthetic experience.

Fazzini displayed his penchant for monumental sculpture in the 1960s. It was during this period that the artist was commissioned by Pope Paul VI to create a majestic work for the Vatican Audience Hall, which the architect Nervi had just designed. The sculpture, in bronze and brass, is created between 1970 and 1975, and inaugurated in 1977. The profoundly human dimension of the *Resurrection* is thus linked to the artist's reflections on war: against an exploded vegetal backdrop, recalling the olive trees of the Marche landscape but also those of the Garden of Gethsemane, stands a monumental Christ. The latter rises out of the crater left by the explosion of a nuclear bomb, as Fazzini states himself, in memory of the recent tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which painfully affected post-war humanity.

At the same time, Fazzini elaborated a reflection on the relationship between abstraction and figuration in postwar art, reaffirming, through the monumental figure of the Savior, the importance of the human figure in 20th century

7 Pericle Fazzini, *Resurrection*, bronze and brass, 1970-1975

sculpture. By the circumstances of its realization, its plastic composition and its message, the sculpture embodies not only a meditation on the place of nature and the sacred in contemporary art, but also the culmination of a long creative and human journey, as well as the true spiritual and artistic testament of Fazzini. This project, as its author confirmed, was led by the desire to celebrate the divine through matter: "I realized the resurrection which already lived in me".

Conclusion: "The Sculptor of the Wind"

The poet Ungaretti created the evocative expression "sculptor of the wind" to describe Fazzini, his art and its relation with the idea of nature. This concept is all the more significant when we observe the plastic dynamics of the wind deployed by the sculptor in his works that reach an increasingly strong symbolic dimension, supporting the sacred identity of Fazzini's creations.

In the Bible, several atmospheric events announced the death of Christ. The Gospel of Matthew reports that a violent wind blew during the tragic moment of the Crucifixion: "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent" (Matthew 27:51). It appears that wind represents an emblematic element which, as we observed, may explain Fazzini's relationship with the concept of nature and the sacred. The wind is omnipresent in Fazzini's art: it encourages the upward movement of Christ's body in the *Resurrection* and animates some figures in his *Deposition* (1946), accentuating plastic tensions, favoring the elevation of the forms towards the sky. Such sculptural dynamics also correspond to Fazzini's spiritual aspirations, as well as his constant preoccupation with evoking the invisible divine nature of Creation.

At the same time, some of his works are characterized by "profane" themes – such as *Dancer* (1956-1960) and *Woman in the Wind* –, where the presence of wind becomes more explicit: the subject of the nude and the human body thus appears to be placed in the background, offering the artist the possibility of depicting anatomical deformations under the impulse of the air.

The study of Fazzini's creations discloses that the artist attributes multiple connotations to the notion of "nature": it represents the invisible link with the land of the Marche and the dynamizing element of his sculptures, the driving force behind his creativity as an artist, or the symbol of contact between man and God. The wind shapes matter and at the same time embodies the mythical identity of the Adriatic landscape, participating in the phenomenological manifestations of the divine on Earth. It is therefore important to emphasize that in Fazzini's work all subjects are animated by the same impulses: animals, human figures, as well as religious themes.

One of the most particularly relevant aspect of Fazzini's production corresponds to an aesthetic fluctuation – between figuration and abstraction – that incarnates the moral, artistic and spiritual imperatives of a century that is on the way to secularization, and attempts through the naturalistic theme to reconnect art and the *sacred*.

Endnotes

1 The present-day city center is the result of intensive urban development that began in the 1960s, but the medieval village still overlooks the river Tesino, the surrounding countryside and the beach. The Grottammare's urbanism is based on the ancient Roman town, but the presence of fortified walls from the 16th century also refer to the times when the town was the object of disputes from the surrounding communities, and of violent attacks by hordes of pirates.

2 In 1947 Fazzini participated to the first exhibition of the group at the Galleria della Spiga in Milan, with Leoncillo, Franchina, Vedova, Corpora and Guttuso.

3 Pope Paul VI, *Message to artists,* Piazza San Pietro, Vatican City, 8.12.1965.

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Illustrations

Fig. 1 Pericle Fazzini, *The boy with seagulls*, polychrome wood, 143.5x51x120 cm, 1940-1944, Collection Fazzini, Rome, © Massimo Napoli, Fondazione Pericle Fazzini.

Fig. 2 Pericle Fazzini, *Figure walking*, wood, 191x67x74 cm, 1933, Collection Fazzini, Rome, © Massimo Napoli, Fondazione Pericle Fazzini.

Fig. 3 Pericle Fazzini, *Wave*, wood, 114x23.5x23 cm, 1968, Collection Fazzini, Rome, © Massimo Napoli, Fondazione Pericle Fazzini.

Fig. 4 Pericle Fazzini, *Sybil*, bronze (casted in 1956), 97x44x68 cm, 1947, Hannelore B. et Rudolph B. Schulhof Collection, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, © Massimo Napoli, Fondazione Pericle Fazzini.

Fig. 5 Pericle Fazzini, *Exit from the Ark*, bronze, 120x240x8 cm, 1932 (casted in 1976 ca.), Collection Fazzini, Rome, © Massimo Napoli, Fondazione Pericle Fazzini.

Fig. 6 Pericle Fazzini, Study for *"Monument to St. Francis"*, bronze, 21 cm, 1981, Collection Fazzini, Rome, © Massimo Napoli, Fondazione Pericle Fazzini.

Fig. 7 Pericle Fazzini, *Resurrection*, bronze and brass, 700x2000x300 cm, 1970-1975, Paul VI Audience Hall, Vatican City, © Fondazione Pericle Fazzini.

Cybill Whalley

The Material and Symbolic Potential of Nature in Britain since the 1960s

Cybill Whalley
Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne
cybillw@hotmail.fr

Since 1960, in Great Britain, the relationship to nature has been manifested in the work of artists, sculptors and photographers who survey the wildest or least urbanized parts of the island. They do not appropriate the representations of the landscape through classical topography, they do not change the terrain through the same processes as American land art, but they experiment with the island's natural space according to a *genius loci*. If the artists intervene directly in natural space with the help of plant elements, they do not refuse to transpose their experiences and display in galleries and museums which allow them to extend the visibility of their creation. The British natural space became an everyday environment, a physical space, a site, and a tool in the English landscape tradition, the rise of sculpture and the development of conceptual practices. Since the 1960s, we have seen the development of artistic practices linked to nature. Ian Hamilton Finlay developed his *Little Sparta Garden* near Edinburgh, Richard Long surveys the paths of southwest England, David Nash rarely leaves Blaenau Ffestiniog, in North Wales, Chris Drury works close to home in Sussex and Andy Goldsworthy nurtures his work in Penpont, in the south of Scotland.

Keywords: Land art, Earth Art, Earthworks, Environmental Art, Great Britain, nature, British territory, walk, sculpture

Importance of British Places

Since the 1960s, we have seen the development of artistic practices in Britain linked to island nature and referring to the importance of place.[1] Ian Hamilton Finlay delved into the garden tradition and developed a kind of remote land art laboratory, entitled *Little Sparta*, near Pentland Hills, Stonypath Farm (1966)

in the south-west of Edinburgh in Scotland. He makes the viewer aware of the natural space by referring to neo-classicism through a revival of the garden tradition in a contemporary environment. The references to neo-classicism are visible in the cohabitation with modernity that he developed in *Little Sparta,* his true Arcadian laboratory, referring to Sparta and showing the rigors of Sparta as the values of Arcadia as set out by Ovid. Started in 1966, and of course often returned to as an experienced Arcadia, *Little Sparta* is known now as the garden of his life. He worked with stone breakers, men of letters, artists and poets to deal with different themes such as the relationship with nature, antiquity, neo-classicism, the French Revolution and the Second World War through no less than 270 works. He revisited the art of the gardens of Ermenonville in France reknown thanks to the 18th-century author Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Leasowes, the English historic landscape. *Little Sparta* involves a relationship to poetry but also to neo-classical philosophical thought around poem-objects, aphorisms, fragments perceived in the form of inscriptions that come to cohabit with the plantings of the garden. The garden was built on the model by the English poet and landscape gardener William Shenstone and his *Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening,* published in 1764, who offered a new picturesque division on landscape gardening.[2] Ian Hamilton Finlay also demonstrated an interest in the 17th-century landscape painting of Nicolas Poussin and Claude Gellée in *See Poussin, Hear Lorrain*. This stone panel allows one to appreciate the landscape of pool, trees and grasses. It is referring to Claude Lorrain's paintings that delivered the rustling of leaves, while Nicolas Poussin's landscape paintings accentuated the tranquility.

Richard Long's art has been a physical experience of natural space that he has been experimenting with since 1967. He does not feel close to the monumental practices of American Land Art, even though in 1969 he took part in the Earth Art exhibition organised at the Dwan Gallery[3] he admitted valuing a more modest practice close to Italian Arte Povera. He was an actor in his approach and was not satisfied with the aesthetic reception of his work. In 1981, he went to Bolivia with the artist Hamish Fulton, but he has mainly travelled to places he knows best, such as Dartmoor in south of England, which is an hour's train ride from Bristol, where he was born and where he still lives today. Richard Long is always on the move

1 Ian Hamilton Finlay (with John Andrew), *See Poussin, Hear Lorrain*, ground plaque, Portland stone, 1975

but is not a nomad. For him, Dartmoor is a prototype landscape "or an archetypal place: on a larger scale landscape in Scotland, Lappland, Alaska, the American prairies and treeless mountain areas have similar characteristic" (Fuchs, 1986, 75). The presence of Dartmoor in his work has been recurrent since the beginning of his work such as in *A Snowball Track, Bristol*, 1964. Place names recur such as Great Gnat's Head, West Dart River, Longfor Tor, River Tavy. We see the places the artist loves, it is a rather empty area and not very attractive, that appeals to him because of its remoteness from urban life. Dartmoor is, of course, an area rich in history, with human artefacts such as cairns, quarries, old roads, etc., and it is this presence that he celebrates in his work of mud, water and stone.

David Nash has his studio in Ffestiniog, in the heart of Snowdonia, Wales, which he discovered and visited in his youth. In the late 1960s, he moved into a former Methodist chapel in Blaenau, Wales, in the heart of the Snowdonia mountains to show how his art is close to nature. In his early years, it was essential for

David Nash to get out into nature, which he did not perceive as an idyllic aspect of the countryside, but as a harsh environment. He has conceived nature as neither beautiful nor pastoral, and he is still seeking to explore the darker side of the plant world. One of his first experiments was to follow a wooden boulder, a spherical shape made of oak *Wooden Boulder,* 1978, which he threw into a stream near his workshop: "Suddenly we were in the presence of this 'existing' boulder. It was my first experience of sculpture through the experience of an inanimate object asserting its presence. I went back to see it for 50 years, taking curators and art critics who wrote about my work. To me it is perfect in its simplicity, size, environment and location. It is the 'touchstone' of my journey as a sculptor" (Melvin, 2018, 6).

He wanted the ball as a sculpture to reach the ocean on its own. That's what the work was all about. In the end, the ball never reached its destination and remained in a pond. It is now interacting with the environment. *Wooden Boulder* made a surprise reappearance in 2013, a decade after its disappearance. But it didn't stay for long. In 2015, after a summer storm and a high tide, it was gone again – and has not been seen since. David Nash also worked on the growth of trees in *Ash Dome*, planted in 1977 in Cae'n-y-Coed. In the open countryside, on the perimeter of a nine-meter diameter circle of flat land, Nash planted twenty-two young ash trees, like promises of pillars. This living sculpture took him forty years to create – the plant dome he aimed for by planting some twenty ash trees in a circle sixty meters in diameter, supposed to evoke a volcano of rising energy. In the troubled times of the United Kingdom (Cold War, political and economic gloom, nuclear threat), the artist's project was a signal to the 21st century, to a future when the present seemed to be preoccupied only with the short term.

In January 1987, Andy Goldsworthy wrote in his sketchbook number 15: "It is as if all my previous work had been a preparation for my coming here" (Goldsworthy, 1993, 143). While he has worked in Japan, Canada, Australia, North America and France, his work in Penpont, Scotland, remains the core of his work and has been since 1986. Even today, it is true that his work is mostly near to where he lives and does not seem to be attached to travel and distant places. Dumfriesshire, in Scotland, is known for its prehistoric artefacts, which Andy Goldsworthy used in numerous references. It shows his attachment to his Scottish home and the impos-

sibility of understanding his work without insisting on the natural environment of its creation. It is here that Scotland is a specific and unique place for his sculptures and it is here that he observes the changes: "When I travel," he writes, "I regret the loss of a sense of change. I see differences, not changes. Change is best experienced by staying put" (Goldsworthy, 1993, 19). The varieties of the Scottish natural environment around the River Scaur, Stone Wood and Townhead Burn are all anchor points that allow Goldsworthy to demonstrate the originality of his sculptures on Scottish soil. He works with the River Scaur Water, especially in winter to create ice sculptures for example in *Icicles, Scaur Water, Dumfriesshire*, 1987 and then *The Wall, Stonewood, Dumfriesshire*, 1988-1989 to remind us of the extensive sheep farming during the industrial revolution in the 19th century. Goldsworthy was interested in making the wall communicate with nature and the current landscape and appeared to show that man is part of nature. Goldsworthy created numerous ephemeral sculptures over a period of twenty years from a dead elm tree that had fallen into a ditch near his home at *Townhed Burn in Dumfriesshire*. By including the dead elm in his work, he gave it new life: "This is the source that feeds everything else. This is the place with the most learning opportunities. I know it best. I know what's under the snow, I know the soil underneath, I know where the most colorful cherry tree grows, where to find the longest stems of chestnut leaves, the black thorns" (Goldsworthy, 1993, 17). Goldworthy is interested in the creative process rather than the finished product perceived as a work of art. Here we see senses develop through contact with the work, the land, and the territory. British places have been part of intellectual experiences and not only objects of contemplation. Penpont has become the artist's workshop for an in-situ experience that characterizes that type of contemporary sculpture. Although these works are different, these artists have in common the transition from the visible representation of the natural world to the presentation of the objects that make up nature. Their experiences and interventions are an integral part of their work.

Walking on the British Soil

Richard Long and Hamish Fulton, both from Saint Martin's School of Art in London, experiment with the English landscape, but without the same sensibility as the American Land Art artists, and since they do not modify the landscape, they index their sculptures on their walking ritual (Malpas, 2013, 209-223).

For Richard Long, walking is both a representation and a means of marking, as shown in *A Snowball Track, Bristol*, 1964, which shows a path formed by the rolling of a snowball. He photographed the track and not the snowball as in *Ben Nevis Hitch-hike*, 1967, where he photographed his route from London to Ben Nevis, Scotland in six days. In the same year he photographed the best-known *A Line Made by Walking, England*, 1967. This photograph shows the trace on a lawn of his trampling as he walked back and forth, causing the grass to disappear. It questions our relationship to the world and to ecology since it has left no lasting trace in nature. The art emphasizes the experience of natural space without emphasizing man and a form of domination over nature. Through a meditation this photograph reclaims the links with nature in a primitivist way of thinking and the line of the walk replaces the line of the drawing. Long did not work on the surface of the paper but rather with the surface of the earth. He becomes part of it and can appear as the fourth dimension. It is this inclusion that he emphasizes in his walks, which are organized according to a precise itinerary based on a geometric shape, a concept, a landscape, the link between different elements such as coasts, mountains, rivers, and natural phenomena. Richard Long does not recognize a hierarchy but he knows that places differ in their approach to walking. In diverse cultures, the path is both physical and symbolic, something that is seen and not seen. It is a pilgrimage, a search for truth. For Long, walking is a universal activity that allows us to interact with the world and puts the body in the spotlight.

For his part, Hamish Fulton has defined his unique work by walking and he almost never intervenes in the landscape (Malpas, 2013, 228). He leaves no trace of his walks except through photography. For him, walking has a cultural history. It is an individual activity that allows us to interact with the world. Walking leads to new perceptions, new experiences. Hamish Fulton takes a picture or writes a text as he did with *Boulder Shadows, 1995*. Emerging in the late 1960s

alongside artists including Richard Long and Gilbert and George, Hamish Fulton's work began to explore new possibilities for sculpture and for a direct relationship between landscape and art, shifting the focus on to the experience of the landscape. With influences ranging from American Indian culture to the subject of the environment itself, Fulton began to take short walks and take photographs to document the experiences of these walks. The perishable value of the artwork is part of the work, of its rarity, while at the same time using the materials of the natural world make the work alive and assumes its finitude. In the case of plant art or Earth art, the materials used are entirely natural (branches, rocks, foliage, hay, mud, etc.) and perishable.

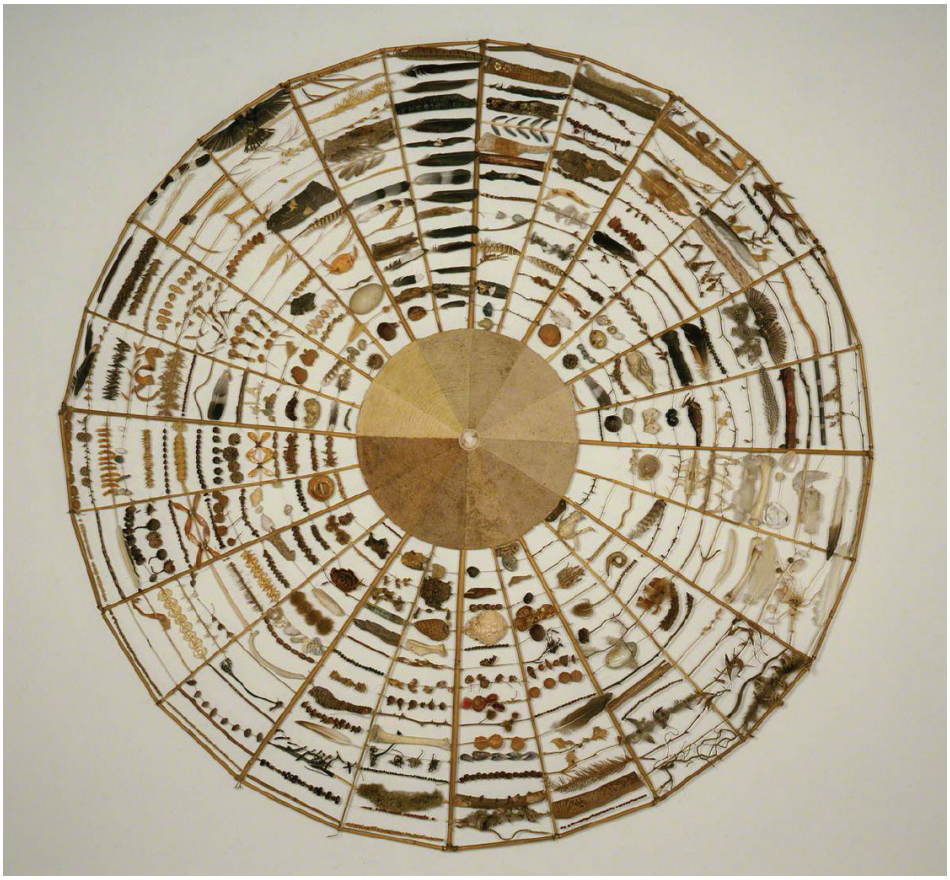
These installations then evolve over time until they decay, which often makes it an ephemeral work. These installations do not depend on the primacy of form, as is the case in the tradition of monumental sculpture but they leave a large part to organic materials.

Goldsworthy's works try to re-establish the link between nature and art by showing us almost materially the elements that constitute it. Nature goes beyond the landscape and the countryside. Everything comes from the Earth, from the soil. He does not add anything that is not already present on the ground and uses either what he finds in nature or in the green spaces of cities. From 1994 to 1996 he worked with and on an oak tree near his home *Capenoch Tree*, 1996. It was an oak tree with one of its branches growing parallel to the ground, which he used to make sculptures. During these two years he photographed his work from the same angle because he was especially interested in changes. The meaning conveys that the tree is a bridge between earth and sky and participates in death and regeneration. This is a kind of mediation that puts the links with nature back in the spotlight, because since ancient times trees have been perceived as having a soul. In fact, we know that Celtic and Germanic tribes venerated trees. The French historian Alain Corbin explains that: "The plant is more persistent than the ruin, because it is alive. The tree is then the symbol of longevity; it is the witness of history, and by its form it possesses a vertical energy which interests the sculptor" (Corbin, 2013, 28). In a more varied way, Goldsworthy is also interested in its leaves, whose colors, from green to orange to bright yellow, serve as a colorama. He can animate them in different forms. Andy Goldsworthy uses shapes such as the serpentine line and

the black hole to capture our imagination with forms that suggest a vital energy. In *Low wall highlighted* with snow in winter and wool in summer Scaur glen, Dumfriesshire (January and July 1996), the wool is displayed on a stone wall in reference to late 18th-century enclosures. Aesthetically, the wool somehow illuminates the verdant nature. But Goldworthy works with wool as a material, reminding the viewer of the animal and the history of its introduction to Scotland during the Highlands Clearences from the 18th century in Scotland.[4] David Nash chose the tree, the wood as his material of predilection. He began burning wood in 1983, charring it to preserve it. In such manner, the plant becomes by way of a chemical reaction mineral, carbon. At the same time, he highlights both the form and the material. His tools are water, fire, axe, auger, chainsaw, pencil, chalk, and camera. He also created *Vessel and Volume, Variation of tones*. In another way, Chris Drury is also interested in basketry. In *Medicine Wheel*, 1983, he created a calendar collecting 365 found objects such as feathers, corn, beans, pebbles, and rabbit skin presented in a circle in the shape of a mushroom. It has at its very core twelve segments of paper, one to represent each month, made of mushroom spores created as a print from their pulp (Dury, 2004, 17-19). Mushrooms can feed you, kill you, cure you, or even make you see visions and as such they are also a human metaphor for life and death and regeneration. Drury's first main venture into environmental art, *Medicine Wheel,* took a year to make: 365 items collected, one a day, by him or friends collated and threaded like a fine spool, became a tangible record of the changing seasons in the English countryside and emotionally difficult times within Drury's year, as his wife and children separated from him (but did return) and his father died. The wheel is 230 centimeters in a circular diameter and eight centimeters deep, divided into twenty-four segments, with approximately fifteen pieces contained in each section to offer a meditative view. There are driftwood, feather, bones, willows, skulls, seeds, pebbles, fur, flowers, wool and berries amongst many other natural ethereal items.

Reception of Nature

Some sculptures still exist today only through photography and not through the object itself; this pushes the viewer to enjoy a new experience. Exhibition spaces are challenged as these artists choose to intervene directly in a natural space.



2 Chris Drury, *Medicine Wheel*, mixed media, 1983

For Ian Hamilton Finlay, the garden cannot tell a story without the words of concrete poetry that appeal to the visitor. These sentences make the place even more mysterious because the walk is not easy to get to and nature changes with the seasons. An admirer of the 18th century, he often referred to the French revolution and especially to the way it changed our way of seeing the world. The English landscape historian Dixon Hunt recalled that in Finlay's dictionary published in 1986, we read: "Revolution, n.a, scheme for the improving of a country; a scheme for realizing the capabilities of a country. A return. A restoration. A renewal" (Hunt,

2008, 114). His garden studies the lessons of history and the need to reinterpret history. As the natural garden is constantly reinvented and reworked, it is the ideal place to study the past. Destructive forces can give birth to better things.

Goldsworthy uses only photography without a filter – indeed he uses analog film. An everyday object is used to describe and record his ephemeral creations. Photography is for him an instinctive medium. This technique, whose process has become routine, allows the work to remain alive, while the sculpture implicitly degrades according to the weather and the seasons. The artist captures the brevity of his action to bear witness to the harmony experienced. *Shap Beck Quarry Fold,* 2001, was part of the *Arch in Transhumance* project conceived between 1997 and 2007 to retrace the transhumance route between the south of Scotland and Cambria in the north of England (Goldsworthy, Craig, 1999). At each stage, the arch was rebuilt, using red Locharbriggs sandstone from Dumfriesshire, photographed and dismantled to be built again in another location. The aim was to achieve the construction of the lost folds. The arch marked the point where the enclosure was found to be. In Richard Long's work we see that art becomes a series of words and a series of maps that allow him to make walking an art. His works are structured by relationships and have a purpose. Since the 1970s, these descriptive processes have fed the viewer's imagination on a different level from the contemplation of the photographic image (Tiberghien, 2012, 230). He notes his observations, his feelings, the names of places, the duration, and the distance. In *A Walk by all Roads and Lanes touching of crossing an imaginary circle, Somerset England*, 1977, he recorded the roads he had taken and inscribed them on a map produced by the British Ordnance Survey (ed. Wallis, 2009, 43-47). The works show time, space, distances, routes, etc. and describe his walk in a pictorial way. His acts become symbolized by a geometric form and shows the difference with his experience of walking. The walks change dimension and appear as a cursor moving on the paper. Some of his works are simple writings, and texts summarizing his walk: the place, the day, the duration, even the winds. This is what we call concrete poetry that he articulates in different forms, in lines or in circles. The articulated words become a sculpture as they have turned into an experience in themselves in the way they are handled. Chris Drury is also using vellum paper cards that he sews

together because of his interest in basketry making. He interweaves the maps and links two territories together *Tuscany and East Sussex*, 2019, woven maps and watercolor.

Some of these artists do not refuse to transport their experiences through their works in galleries and museums that allow them to extend their visibility and the reception of their conceptual ideas. They try to escape the museum, the gallery, the traditional exhibition environment as an opposition to the commercial role of art, especially through the lack of durability of the work and a questioning of the academic value, and how to judge the passage of time and the duration. Their works emphasize a timeless value of art that we can see in the exhibition of piles of stones, earth, materials that often degrade or change. Richard Long creates circles or lines made of mud, pine needles, stones, or twigs in the galleries. He combines the conceptual with his attraction to the materiality of the natural world. He makes no distinction between his engagement with natural space and the works he installs in a gallery. He uses natural materials, energy and spatiality that he had in the field. They have a link with primitivism since the circle is the symbol of eternity, of rebirth and an organic form that we find in the work of other contemporary artists. These creations cannot be preserved, so only the photograph remains as a testimony of the exhibition. He takes advantage of the exhibition space to present more concrete works and he says he appreciates both ways of working, outdoors and indoors. There is a non-commercial orientation, but photography brings the place to the viewers (Malpas, 2013, 216-217). In this respect Chris Drury has built cairns and shelters since the 1980s. He is not romanticizing nature, he has no political or moral commitment, nor does he have a religious commitment. He is mainly interested in inner nature, Zen Buddhism, meditation and the consciousness that we can find in outer nature. The cairn marks the human presence, a relationship to a specific territory. It is a fullstop while the cairn is a comma in the journey. While the walk is meditative, the cairn highlights a moment in the walk. He encourages the public to go and see his creations.

Since the 1960s, new studies have been released in the wake of minimalism, conceptual art, arte povera and the reflections produced on the museum, the place of the viewer and the physical engagement of the artist, favoring the rise of

sculpture and working with the land. Artists propose environmental and performance alternatives. They return to the basis of aesthetic experience, namely the link between their bodies and nature.

Unlike land art created in North America, the British terrain has no untouched territory, so artists must work from a natural space full of history. Therefore, in Britain, plant art and its derivatives are not created by bulldozers, but through the medium of the walking artist, and Britain plays a significant role due to its richness in natural spaces. The environmental aesthetic of Anglo-Saxon origin advocates: "The defense and enhancement of natural beauty in the face of the destruction to which it is subjected through industrialisation" (Milani, 2005, 42). This aesthetic separates itself from philosophical literature, the philosophy of art, beauty and the theory of taste and tends towards an aesthetic of the environment. This is obviously connected with English sculpture from Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, and its connection with the landscape tradition.

These works, which are neither rituals nor performances, show how close British artists are to the landscape tradition and the land itself when David Nash said: "I think, Andy Goldsworthy and I, and Richard Long, and most of the British artists' collectives associated with land art would have been landscape painters a hundred years ago. But we don't want to make portraits of the landscape. A landscape picture is a portrait. We don't want that. We want to be in the land" (Grande, 2004, 13).

Since the 1970s, we have seen the appearance of sculpture parks. The English natural space was invested, like the forest of Grizedale (1977), the Forest of Dean (1986) and King's Wood (1993). The link could also be related to the Cold War or the economic downturn where nature here appeared as an escape. We could also see that from a national point of view, these artists were the counterpart of the Young British Artists such as Tracy Emin, Damien Hirst, Sarah Lucas, and to the capitalist art that appeared in Great Britain in the 1980s.

Endnotes

1 We have seen the appearance of new expressions: Land art, Earth Art, Earthworks, Environmental Art and their use is not always very precise. Today, Land Art is American and Earth Art European, but the two are used side by side. But Earth Art refers to the earth as a material.

2 William Shemstone experimented with gardening at his farm in The Leasowes, Shropshire. He divided the garden into three categories: Kitchen gardening, Parterre gardening and Landscape or Picturesque gardening. He stated that the last category appeals to the imagination in scenes of grandeur, beauty and variety (Shenstone, 1764, 125-147).

3 The *Earth Art* exhibition was held at the Johnson's predecessor, the Andrew Dickson White Museum of Art, in 196. It was the first American museum exhibition dedicated to this new artworks. Conceived by Willoughby Sharp, an independent curator, publisher, and artist, the exhibition presented installations by nine artists: Jan Dibbets (Netherlands), Hans Haacke and Günther Uecker (Germany), Richard Long (Great Britain), David Medalla (Philippines), and Neil Jenny, Robert Morris, Dennis Oppenheim, and Robert Smithson (United States).

4 Evictions of the Highland population from the end of the 18th century (Mackenzie, 1991).

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Illustrations

Fig. 1 Ian Hamilton Finlay (with John Andrew), *See Poussin, Hear Lorrain*, ground plaque, Portland stone, 1975, photo: Robin Gillanders, National Gallery of Scotland

Fig. 2 Chris Drury, *Medicine Wheel*, mixed media, 221.5 cm, 1983, Leeds, © Leeds Museums and Art Galleries

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,
University of Rijeka

Ljubljana University Press,
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Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,
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