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Nika Meyers

May 18, 2011
(Date)

ABSTRACT

I visually explore landscape as inspired by looking through the lens of sustainability. This exploration considers a landscape in terms of systems and substances. Through papermaking, printmaking, mixed media assemblage and collage, drawing, and burning, layered images draw on multiple places and perspectives. The pieces represent “landscape” as the spatial entity of area that integrates the environment, living systems, and the human-made.

A place is not limited to a visual interpretation in terms of form, light, and relationships. I create maps, but unlike a cartographer I am free to disobey rules in order to build maps of collective knowledge that do not lead or point to a specific location. These maps become objects that challenge reality, orientation, time, and identity.

Space is a web of interconnectedness; matter, energy, and patterns combine into networks of infrastructure in the form of roads, electrical currents, sewage pipes, pathways, internet, and ecosystems. Climatic changes are altering the world, and the identity of places is shifting. Artistic actions are captured through regenerative combinations, movements, lines, and planes. I carve away at surfaces, reshaping and determining form and distance. Drawn and sewn vectors articulate the way mass moves through an area, forming linear and non-linear pathways and connections.

Uncertainty and unpredictability are part of my decision-making process, as I work through scenarios rather than executing a piece with a foreseen concrete outcome. Materials—such as found objects, landscaping materials, fire, and natural dyes—are challenged to play a large role in the work by becoming engaged with time, pressure, and heat.

My work explores a question: How do we form a relationship to the changing landscape? Rebecca Solnit writes, “How we inhabit the landscape is determined by our metaphors for how we live on earth.” Through both indoor artwork for gallery settings and outdoor environmental pieces this question is explored. I learn by experimenting, thereby becoming part of the conversation of urban and ecological landscapes.

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Interconnectedness: Changing Landscapes

Nika Meyers
Department of Art and Art History
Mount Holyoke College

Art Studio Honors Thesis
2011

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the following for their incredible support, knowledge encouragement, and generosity. The work that I did would not have been possible without them.

*Mama and Papa
Phebe Meyers
Tatiana Ginsberg
Rie Hachiyangi
Lauret Savoy
Joe Smith
Marion Miller
Nancy Friese
Nancy Campbell
Sarah Oforiwa Obuobi
Sarah Coates
Caterina “Fran” Bozzelli
Lauren Ricke
Allie Miller
Rebecca Jackson
Amanda Nunally
Michelle Kroll
Diana León
Maliko Kubota
Ariel Kagan
Jim Arata
Nina Joly
Madeline Divillers
Luna Frith
Charles (Chuck) Hommes
Lani Meyers
Michelle Markley
Bryan Goodwin
Bob Riddle
Russ Billings
Rose Ryan
Mount Holyoke College Art Museum staff
The Gould Fund Scholarship*

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Landscape is ubiquitous—as the environment, a landscape that includes the microcosmic as well as the macrocosmic, economies as well as ecologies, the cultural as an extension of the natural, our bodies as themselves natural systems that pattern our thoughts, and our thoughts as structured around metaphors drawn from nature.

—R. Solnit (in *As Eve Said to the Serpent*)

As a spatial concept, landscape integrates living systems, the natural and the human-made, the physical and the intangible, the permanent and the ephemeral. Prints, assemblages, collages, and drawings that speak of place, materials, experience, substance, infrastructure and systems articulate these concepts of a changing perception of landscapes. In this body of work, large multi-layered pieces bridge the gap between abstraction and realism through line, image, and color. As a gardener, environmentalist, and creator, my understanding and view of place are shaped by my surroundings and interactions.

American society is at a pivotal time in understanding our environment and incorporating an ecological perspective into our personal and critical ideas. A place is not limited to a visual interpretation in terms of form, light, and visual relationships. Material, scale, and process capture the essence of a conceptual shift of reality. I investigate a location as a state of mind or a set of web-like relationships. Through taking photographs of places, collecting found objects, and studying maps, conceptual layers of visually rendered material can merge together to make a statement. Unlike a traditional

cartographer, I form pieces that challenge reality, orientation, and time through unspecified distance, place, and era. To comprehend a place is to understand the interconnectedness of the planet—the relationships between things, places in time, and how they affect each other.

Tracing a journey across a surface develops a greater understanding of these elements. I print patterns onto different substrates and draw through the printed shapes and layers with pen, marker, and paint. Our daily routines erode landscapes in loving and hateful, constructive and destructive, and forgiving and unforgiving ways. Charles Waldheim works with a focus of landscape architecture in relation to contemporary urbanism. He states that, “We are human only in contact, and conviviality, with what is not human” (Waldheim, 22). My mark-making enhances the perception of the ongoing erosion and creation of landscape.

A landscape is a conceptual framework. It is an accumulation of systems, sensations, resources and perceptions that change and synthesize in space. Americans, as a society, live in a world of predominantly gray infrastructure transgressing over space. Rebecca Solnit writes in As Eve Said to the Serpent, “How we inhabit the landscape is determined by our metaphors for how we live on earth.” Horizontal and vertical perspectives seen simultaneously are prevalent in the installation entitled *gray infrastructure*.

Gray infrastructure is built from materials such as landscaping weed fabrics that reference landscape. Staples are used to reference construction

and building as they become a dominant way of attaching materials and images within the work. Fragmented pieces of maps are stapled to the back of the collage of gray landscaping weed guard and handmade paper to form an atmospheric covering. Detailed lines and marks are created through the addition of screen-printing, burning, retracing details with markers, and drawing. The collage is suspended six inches away from a wall, allowing areas of translucent material to be affected by the surface behind them, and allowing light to penetrate and illuminate the image from the back. As a whole the piece creates a space of collective dimensions made of webs of interconnected matter, experience, energy and patterns.

Blank space becomes a dominant color integral to understanding atmospheric space. By leaving large amounts of open space, the marks breathe and integrate with the material. Diane Ackerman, in [A Natural History of the Senses](#), writes that,

...there is no stillness in the sky, or anywhere else where life and matter meet. The air is always vibrant and aglow, full of volatile gases, staggering spores, dust, viruses, fungi, and animals....

Blank space expresses the significance of the choice of materials and the roles they play in the work. Papermaking is a process that shows the step-by-step transformation of a material through complex different states. Each state or part of the process can change a desired outcome in positive or negative ways, making the procedure specific and dependent on the condition that precedes it. Beating, cooking, and drying for different lengths of time

demonstrate the tremendous diversity of expression fibers are capable of becoming. The combination of natural and human-made fibers makes paper referencing regeneration, change, incorporation, and material consciousness. These concepts integrate the current vocabulary of sustainability.

Installation entitled *shortening of ocean current* a serpentine structure of wire and handmade paper forms a vertical stream of movement intertwined together from floor to ceiling. Gleanings from the Mount Holyoke student garden, discarded cigarettes found on the ground, and natural dye from Dominican logwood bark become samples from original locations. A cyclical process of change is revealed through these materials in three ways: The metamorphosis from seeds to plants to substances makes dark, crunchy and cockled surfaces, discarded trash transforms into translucent fragile paper, and reddish bark creates a royal purple.

The use of an installation piece creates a different conversation with material and blank space. This piece hangs and moves with the air currents and changing humidity. The use of strategic lighting creates shadows enhancing vibrations and contours articulated by the material. It allows the wires to become drawn lines acting on the adjacent planes as well as three-dimensional objects activating space. The characteristics of wind and water are captured engaging the elements through observation.

The laws of thermodynamics demonstrate the conservation of energy through the flow of heat and explain interactions between isolated systems

and elements (NASA). The first law states that energy can be neither created nor destroyed, it can only change forms, and the second law elaborates on how two isolated physical systems in proximity to each other will affect one another through differences in temperature, pressure, and chemical properties (NASA). I use fire as a way to become involved with these ideas as a spontaneous self-organizing turbulence. Burning old t-shirts that once clothed individuals in dimensional space, newspapers as a metaphor for past and current events, and dried leaves as symbols of nature, generate marks through their remains. In the drawing entitled *aerial space* vectors of handmade charcoal and pencil connect islands of these marks.

The drawings entitled *aerial view of city* and *aerial view of coast* use carbon to create both land and atmosphere. The material relates to natural resources and the concentration of atmospheric gasses within a landscape. The pieces expose a form of renewal and connection. My hands respond to the heat underneath the surface of the paper as I smolder the flame, absorbing the combustion passing through the smoke, mark and paper. By applying varying amounts of water to the surface area, it increases the engagement of pigment and protection of the paper. Burn marks are the results of an action rising up from a surface against gravity.

The dialogue between material, gravity, and space can be seen through spills and stains. The concept behind a spill can be applied to mental articulations of situations, all of which raise the following questions: Is the

action intentional? What is the outcome? How permanent is “it”? Will “it” change over time? Fresh dyes from blueberries, tea, and coffee start off as pools of colorful liquid, changing to puddles of varying browns, and eventually mold on the paper over time. They are records of time, improbability, experience, interaction, activity, and change.

Time, location, and connections combine into unseen systems that allow an individual to experience multiple places at once. The vision of the world through satellite imagery, GPS, cartography, microscopes, and the Internet gives access to many scales of observation and orientation. Close attention to surface characteristics, not only in terms of configuration, but also in terms of materiality reveal spaces full of imagination and detail. Places of high activity and mobility, such as roads or pathways, are areas of inspiration. They mediate movement and speed across planes. Landscape tends to be remembered as a space represented at eye level; the line of sight creates a perceptual experience that does not fully represent a place. Layering levels through the visual spectrum from both macro and micro drawings and prints conveys a unique relationship to an area.

Generations of ancient material create landscapes as they constantly pass through various phases and form new relationships to other materials. I print and assemble unrelated found objects that are not likely to connect in reality. The objects and elements within a place are characters that make and

show lines, marks, and textures rendered with perfection. Such prints are not only about observation but also about conversation and intimacy.

Found objects act as modes of intelligence, as masses of information that can be dissected and used to enhance a greater understanding of matter and its correlation to other materials. In the print entitled *natural progression*, six cross-sections of a purple cabbage are printed in order to form a sequential progression of information about the object. Delicate folds created by the layers of vegetable matter form areas of imagination, depth, and softness. By abstracting the subject matter the question of how objects are identified within a landscape is exposed.

Much of the urban ground is impervious, decreasing drainage efficiency and challenging the hydrology of areas (Adhern, 2010). In the prints entitled *Impervious Footprint I & II* pieces of asphalt generate a pattern onto handmade paper. Using natural and manmade materials, I work on both sides of the paper to create an abstract patterned landscape by drawing marks above and below the paper surface. The pavement acts as a footprint while transferring its imprint onto the fragile surface of paper.

An increase in scale seen in the mixed media collage entitled *landscape interactions* facilitates larger marks made through a faster process of motion. Tent rods dipped in gray and black paint are forcefully whipped against a white surface, generating marks with a history of aggressive movement. The process seems at times out of control, yet through direction

and the flexibility of the object a sense of stability decreases the chaos. This repetitive movement begins to carve away lines, exposing preexisting layers.

What is underneath a surface shapes and creates its orientation, functional systems, and appearance. Carving surfaces of material with an old Dremel rotary tool uses force and motion to explore created landscapes out of paper and wood. History becomes important as layers of color are exposed to form an image. Such marks can be seen in the painting entitled *falling layers*. Direct contact with a motorized tool creates permanent marks and indentations, incorporating unintentional marks and mistakes into the illustration. Movement over actual landscapes is fast and energy intensive, shaping space through travel.

I use sewing as a metaphor for driving through landscapes, marking a specific path of experience generated by a pedal. Speed and direction determine the gracefulness and control of the sewn line. By joining images and materials through sewing, a metaphor of the threadlike connections memory forms over time is articulated. It allows different places and scales of observation to be combined into one entity. In the series of collages entitled *Place I—VII*, maps from a 2003 United States atlas are stitched behind cut-out open spaces in old architectural drawings. These pieces articulate entrances and exits into different physical locations, indicating connectivity between the home and its surrounds, as well as expressing disorientation, mobility, and migration.

The house is one of the most recognizable features of a landscape. Its structure is connected to many processes allowing it to function as an ecosystem. In the painting entitled *transition in transparent activity* paint, pastel, and charcoal drawing represent the outside structure of a house. By surrounding it with planes of activity and varying transparency, invisible and active elements form layers referencing those of cyber technology. Alternative dimensions and amounts of information passing through space vary depending on global usage and availability that fluctuate constantly. How this is visually represented depends on imagination and recognition of dimensional space.

Electricity penetrates this space as one of the most prevalent invisible connections networking our world. Power lines are important elements of the landscape that represent lines of connectivity and electricity as an essential energy. They symbolize society's dependence on fuel in the past, present, and future, and our ever rising demand. The painting entitled *Power* represents a transformer connected to a sketch of a home through abstract thin lines. There is no area grounding them, but rather by floating in space they become objects connected by process. Connecting elements through lines and figurative distances references mapping.

The process of mapping draws on physical and collective knowledge, which represents place at a given time and interprets relationships between locations. Physical maps convey the choices of the cartographer and the

availability of technology and data at a specific time. Over time maps, as objects of information that accurately measured distance and space within a locality, become inaccurate. They outline borders of political separation, spatial relationships based on mileage, and the names and titles identified with a location and these elements change. Do we understand space based on naming? Is location determined by an address? Do we forget to learn from experience and change over time? Is it important to associate a name with a place for a collective understanding?

The concept of regeneration, growth, and decay combined with maps challenges the concept of naming. Landscape is temporary, always changing, and developing. Names of places are based on experience, and only through those experiences will one relate to a specific place based on that name. I work to abstract maps by placing them in an informal orientation, crossing out names and cutting out sections. The specificity of naming a place or thing helps to chronologically place it in a phase of a cycle. Technology creates the opportunity to associate places with names and images using maps that are interactive, immediate, and connected. The meanings of names are changed through the context in which they are displayed, to whom they are shown, and where they are presented. My work suggests change, open-endedness, and spatial negotiation in order to understand these questions.

The importance of thinking at a national scale about the relationships between human-made and natural infrastructures and landscape is imperative

to form a relationship with the local environment. The installation entitled *rethink USA* expresses a two-sided image in terms of material relationships. The shape of the United States of America is cut out of gray landscaping weed guard and collaged to fragments of old architectural drawings. The drawings lie under the existing borders created by the overlapping country cutouts. Grid-like structures symbolize urban road systems and windows suggest different scales of space and similar patterns. Dried gampi fiber is stitched and intertwined with the human-made materials to create a metaphor of blending multiple realms of the country into one entity. Urban landscapes and natural space and material become integrated into one form.

Landscapes are never static. The idea that a landscape is constantly changing is illustrated in *rethink USA* through its suspension five inches away from a window. This incorporates the movement from inside and outside actions through the translucent qualities of lightweight garden fabric. As the daylight and weather change the contrast between materials, a continuously morphing image is created. Because the image is viewed from two sides, the process of its creation and what lies beneath creates a desired image which is revealed. The window captures reflections, changing the texture of the image.

Landscapes are not all about reality. Part of the joy of living and experiencing place is about imagination, dreaming, and thinking about the unknown in relation to realism. In *The Spell of the Sensuous* David Abram describes how spirits take non-human forms as complex matrixes of

intelligences and experiences that filter through matter. An untitled drawing (image 15) speaks to a dream narrative. A large map of the Adirondack state park was reconfigured into three sections to act as the surface of my drawing. Through charcoal and collage of handmade paper an illustrative narrative speaks about electricity, fantasy, and reality. Marker was used to outline the coasts of bodies of water in landscapes calling attention to the pattern and significance of these geographic features and referencing power derived from water. Tan thread denotes lines of electricity, creating movement and a three-dimensional quality to the two-dimensional surface. The fragility of the material line elaborates on a dream-like state or fantasy.

I advocate for a new relationship to the abundance of places, landscapes, materials, and processes that will ensure a healthy future. Elements, materials, flora, and fauna will begin to merge into my future installation pieces, prints, and collages. The importance of accessibility and the human component of landscape will drive the location for the display of my work toward the public realm and collaborative projects. Local and global concerns will continue to inspire me to create works of art as educational objects and agents for change. Could the globe literally act as the substrate for a piece both in terms of location and population? I learn by experimenting, working in terms of material, and being surprised, ultimately becoming part of the conversation of merging urban and ecological landscapes.

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CD-ROM INFORMATION

1. *gray infrastructure*
2011 installation collage 48 x 96"
Landscaping weed guard, found maps,
Prismacolor marker drawing, photo-emulsion screen print, staples,
fishing line
- 1a. *gray infrastructure*
2011 installation collage 48 x 96"
Landscaping weed guard, found maps,
Prismacolor marker drawing, photo-emulsion screen print, staples,
fishing line
Detail #1
2. *shortening of ocean current*
2011 installation 1080 x 60 x 84"
Handmade paper, wire, landscaping weed guard
- 2a. *shortening of ocean current*
2011 installation 1080 x 60 x 84"
Handmade paper, wire, landscaping weed guard
Detail #1
3. *aerial view of city*
2010 mixed media drawing 5 x 12"
Charcoal and smoke from old newspapers
- 3a. *aerial view of city*
2010 mixed media drawing 5 x 12"
Charcoal and smoke from old newspapers
Detail #1
4. *aerial view of coast*
2010 mixed media drawing 4 x 12"
Charcoal and smoke from old t-shirts
- 4a. *aerial view of coast*
2010 mixed media drawing 4 x 12"
Charcoal and smoke from old t-shirts
Detail #1

5. *natural progression*
2010 monoprint drawing 50 x 12"
Cabbage, acrylic paint, Prismacolor markers
6. *Impervious Footprint I*
2010 monoprint drawing 5 x 12"
Asphalt, handmade kozo paper, pen drawing, acrylic paint
7. *Impervious Footprint II*
2010 monoprint drawing 5 x 12"
Asphalt, handmade kozo paper, pen drawing, acrylic paint
- 7a. *Impervious Footprint II*
2010 monoprint drawing 5 x 12"
Asphalt, handmade kozo paper, pen drawing, acrylic paint
Detail #1
8. *landscape interactions*
2011 mixed media collage 18 x 24"
Handmade kozo paper, mono-print, acrylic paint
9. *aerial space*
2010 drawing 5 x 6"
Handmade charcoal, ink drawing, handmade paper
10. *power*
2010 painting 12 x 24"
Oil paint, vegetable oil, pen drawing
11. *Place I*
2011 mixed media collage 6 x 8"
Found maps, found 1920s architectural drawings, sewing,
Micron pen drawing
12. *Place II*
2011 mixed media collage 4 x 8"
Found maps, found 1920s architectural drawings, sewing,
Micron pen drawing
13. *falling layers*
2010 painting 24 x 48"
Acrylic paint, Dremel rotary tool, wooden board

- 13a. *falling layers*
2010 painting 24 x 48"
Acrylic paint, Dremel rotary tool, wooden board
Detail #1
14. *transition in transparent activity*
2010 painting 72 x 144"
House paint, oil pastel, charcoal
- 14a. *transition in transparent activity*
2010 painting 72 x 144"
House paint, oil pastel, charcoal
Detail #1
15. *rethink USA*
2011 mixed media collage 48 x 96"
Landscaping weed guard, light weight garden fabric, found maps,
found 1920s architectural drawings, sewing, Micron pen drawing,
gampi fiber, fishing line
- 15a. *rethink USA*
2011 mixed media collage 48 x 96"
Landscaping weed guard, light weight garden fabric, found maps,
found 1920s architectural drawings, sewing, Micron pen drawing,
gampi fiber, fishing line
Detail #1
16. *untitled*
2011 mixed media assemblage 32 x 64"
Found maps, charcoal, handmade paper, thread
- 16a. *untitled*
2011 mixed media assemblage 32 x 64"
Found maps, charcoal, handmade paper, thread
Detail #1