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The Great Inside: Anthropocentric Transformation of Earth Surfaces

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Abstract

The main focus of this work is the elusive boundaries of human civilization. Images investigate human marks on various landscapes and transformative characteristics of cultural and natural areas. Anthropocentric revolution of landscapes, as a contemporary discourse, motivates the subject matter of my current holistic approach to photographic practice; strongly highlighting a visual transformative story of nature which every species belongs. Dictated compositions, geometrical arrangements and over controlled landscapes are depicted to visualize the aspects of human mark. Manifestation of decreed compositions indicates imperious identity of humans and objectification process of other species. These landscape images also induce questioning notions of domesticated and wild and relationship between these concepts and human intersubjectivity. Influenced by Crutzen's term of 'Anthropocene' in different dimensions and Humboldt's approach towards hybrid identities of landscapes shape the research. Humboldt scientifically asserted the components of the heat an association of four different species; erica tetralix, vulgaris and two lichens¹. Pointing out an association and hybrid identity of beings in light of Crutzen's and Humboldt's findings there is no singularity on the planet as such the photographs are visual narratives about complex associations.

It seems as though now, in the 21st century, all species carry the human mark. This is indicative of humanities increasingly affective relationship toward plant species. Composite identity of beings necessitate abandoning the idea of untouched nature. A result of the idea of the Great Inside comes up as accepted today's point of view. The engagement of beings in various stages is visual narrative of the images. Moreover, landscapes depicted in the photographs are minor examples of the human mark which are easy to notice on the outskirts of urban areas. Generally projects on human mark show vast and pessimistic environmental devastations. Conversely, I show minor and plenary influences of human on other species; photographs portray early stages of land colonization.

Key words

ecological art, land, land art, anthropocene, landscape, domestication, nature, human influence, anthropocentrism, land colonization, transformation, human mark, species

1 Kwa, C. 2005. Alexander von Humboldt's invention of the natural landscape, P154, The European Legacy

1. Introduction

“The rise of human civilization is a transformative event in planetary history. For the first time a single species dominates the entire surface, sits at the top of all terrestrial and oceanic food chains, and has taken over much of the biosphere for its own purposes²”

C. Langmuir and W. Breaker

In today's world, human presence on landscapes spreads irrevocably. From Japanese *nihon teien** to western geometrical garden practices, humans seem motivated to domesticate and transform other beings. My subject matter is the visual human presence in various landscapes and extending boundaries of engagement with different natural elements. In fact, the term landscape itself defines unnatural characteristics. It refers to fabricated, human-made space which serves to benefit civilization. It is conceived not according to natural systems, but rather to expedite or impede natural processes. In other words, landscape is a reorganized piece of land for human needs, according to Jackson³. The project investigates transformative power of human actions rather than alienation of humans from other beings. Human actions, as the main force of

2 Charles H. Langmuir and Wally Broecker, *How to Build a habitable Planet*, P 597, Princeton University Press, 2012

* <http://onlynativejapan.com/2012/12/22/nihon-teien-the-traditional-japanese-garden/579>

3 J.B. Jackson, *Discovering the vernacular landscape*, P3-8, Yale University Press, 1984

change, have shaped ecosystems of the earth for their own purposes. Consumer society, with help of science, have transformed the planet earth into a new version of The Garden of Eden. I hold this opinion because the planet earth seems far from being wild today due to the globalization of human impact. It is important to bare in mind that humanity is an integral component of nature and belongs to earthlings, which is why this series represents a holistic point of view. It elaborates on the ongoing engagement between culture and nature, rather than investigating beings separately. According to Richard Gallagher and Betsy Carpenter there is no landscape on earth that does not carry human mark/impact⁴. This is result of hundreds of years of industrial and agricultural endeavors and human efforts to create a new world for their own needs. Unfortunately, the result is not favorable for all earthlings, namely, natural systems of the planet were interrupted and food chains seems almost collapsed, as a result the world became less able to feed species naturally. This is why GM agricultural production and introduced plants are becoming more popular today⁵. A human ordered environment is safe, pleasurable and also sufficient to fulfill human needs and desires, but it is neither nature nor culture. It is inseparable coalition of them, claiming 83% of the earths surface⁶. The whole planet can be thought of as located under the virtual dome of the great inside. Many humans conceptualize non-humans as products or prospective products of civilization. This subtle struggle is happening all around us. However, I do not deny existence of wilderness, but this does not falsify human being's revolutionary power status and dominance. Humans decide to preserve certain territories as wild areas. These areas can still be considered wild, despite its the fact that it's wildness depends on human permission.

People often spend time in nature without questioning the notion of nature. Nature is commonly thought of as a concept that excludes the human-made. According to scientists, with the 21st century is a beginning of an unofficial human era, a century of anthropogenic revolution. This is the century that every single species has its own human impression on it⁷. Evolutionary historiography of the planet Earth will likely not be finalized soon, but the sphere of human influence is already extremely visible. These endless cycles of transformative practices become visible with a different geometrical reality, dictated compositions, construction areas and carved

4 Western, D., 2001, Human-modified ecosystems and future evolution, PNAS

5 James, C. 2014. Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/GM Crops: 2014. ISAAA Brief No. 49. ISAAA: Ithaca, NY

6 Roger LeB. Hooke, José F. Martín-Duque, 2012, GSA Today, Volume 22 Issue 12

7 Schwagerl, C. 2014. the Anthropocene, Synergetic Press, London

caves which do not belong to the wilderness. Strict lines, circular plant arrangements, ordered and uniform trees are main elements of the anthropogenic restructuring. Images of locations are collected where the earth has been geometrically modified to question. Landscapes as new products of human imagination and strict hierarchical dominance of humans in landscapes motivate the photographic series. The photographs show human-made modifications to convey transformative characteristics of the planet earth and result, a planet that is ruled by humans to serve their desires and needs.

1.1. Formation of Surfaces and Holistic Gaze

The natural history of earth is a complex topic, but knowledge of the components of earth and its evolutionary past is growing. Geological forces, which have been at work for billions of years, have created numerous different landscapes. All surfaces of the planet have been shaped by millions of different bacterias and molecules over billions of years of blending of the Earth's evolutionary forces including plants, mammals, amphibians, reptiles which have spread across the earth's surface. In this respect, it is important to remember that there is no singularity on surfaces, which relates to subject matter of my project. Humboldt scientifically asserted this notion for the first time, he defined land as an ecological whole, without separation between beings (he did not use the word landscape, as the term belonged to the painting genre in his time.) Previously, botanists and florists were classifying plants as individual species, an approach aimed to find the respective specimen accurately. He identified 'heath' as an example profoundly different then his ancestors. He supported 'heath' as association of four different species; erica tetralix, vulgaris and two lichens. In this example, the determining factor is association. Humboldt's holistic gaze changed the perspective of single species into landscapes, associated territories. Association of species as a modern and ecological perspective proves that there is no singularity in the planet Earth⁸. According to ecological unity, it is absurd to think that humanity is separate from geological layers and other species. According to aforementioned scientific approaches, humanity as one of the life forms of the planet is not only component of this association, it becomes the most dominant force of change. This transition to the rule of humans, a human era, is called anthropocene. In the beginning of the 20th century, increasing human influence on earth's natural landscapes became radically visible because of industrial production and the population boom. According to human-generated transformations on every layer of nature, humans are a new evolutionary force. This affect is not just visible in satellite and aerial

8 Kwa, C. 2005. Alexander von Humboldt's invention of the natural landscape, P154, The European Legacy

photographs. Transformation is all around us, it is plenary and very easy to notice. For this reason, my photographs question minor influences and blurry results of handling it as a plenary and dispersed concept. Transformation is not limited to construction and agricultural areas. It is also important and visible in Beltra's aerial photographs⁹, but my practice investigates daily life observations of this association.

1.2. Born and Made

Life forms depicted in my photographs reveal a kind of a geometrical reality that is not found in the wilderness. These forms remind me of symmetrical, rectilinear garden designs and human control over the natural environment. Uniform trees, human-carved caves, introduced species, landscape arrangements and, in other words, ephemeral colonizations are some of my main clues. I ponder nature production and its consequences. K. V. Mensvoort questions the differentiation between *born* and *made*. In sum, only natural species are born, the rest are made by humans and these belong to culture¹⁰. The aim of genetically modifying species is not important, it can be for pleasure, agriculture or energy. The important thing is that we live in a planet which is shaped and cultivated by us. Goudie also shared a similar concern. According to him, humans have a greater influence on plant life than any other species. The same can be said for, processes of genetic modification in agriculture, global warming, affected geomorphic processes and quantity of natural waters¹¹. Genetic modification and introduction of species to other lands (such as coffee, cacao, rose, banana, tomato, potato etc.) are also examples for this issue. Frankel and Westhoff name these cultivated areas as *artificial* and *cultural habitats*¹². Moreover, both rose and carnation were introduced by muslims to medieval Europe. Therefore, an English gardening book in the early 15th century names 97 plant species of which 26 were actually alien introductions¹³. These findings and *Nature on Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* (1864) can provide insight into the persistence of the human-based transformation of the landscape.

1.3. Anthropocene

My photographic practice aims at re-presenting and re-thinking human interventions on our surroundings. The purpose of this is to explore the blurry borders between what is disparately called nature and human. According to theories of the anthropocene, there is no border between

9 http://danielbeltra.photoshelter.com/#!/portfolio/G0000cCvaCbx6ioo/I0000_37AjoGr2_g

10 Koert Van Mensvoort' TEDx lecture on the Nature Caused by People, Next Nature, <https://www.nextnature.net/people/koert-van-mensvoort/>

11 Andrew Goudie, *The Human Impact on the Natural Environment*, P 23, Blackwell Publishing, Padstow, 2006

12 Andrew Goudie, *The Human Impact on the Natural Environment*, P 24, Blackwell Publishing, Padstow, 2006

13 I. G. Simmons, *Changing the Face of the Earth*, Second Edition, P 164, Blackwell Publishers, Leicester, 1996

culture and nature anymore, and human is the single species that have transformed every single ecosystem. One of the motivations of the series is subjects of early landscape paintings. Difference is closeness to the subject matter, but there is no absolute transformation but there is an engagement. The project also refers to terminology of landscape. The word landscape was first used in Holland to identify administrative divisions, then in England as pictorial representation of land with human dwellers. The genre of English landscape painting is strongly motivated by the human influence on natural spaces such as paths, fields, fences etc. There is definitely a direct relation between the transformation of surface and landscape painting tradition. The term landscape directly highlights our entity and influence. One of the most significant British landscape designers, William Kent, started his career as a landscape painter. This example shows an influential relationship between view and view itself¹⁴. Emergence of landscape as a term and landscape as a painting tradition have influential role in evolutionary process of land transformation. If we have a closer look toward landscapes through a photographic lens, human influence is clearly visible. My photographs document this era as the first era that there is no untouched nature. Even in the deep forests people come face to face with the remnants of previous civilizations. Moreover, even the molecules in the air, minerals in soil and life in water are transformed by humans because of industrial energy production techniques. That is why the idea of untouched nature, which refers to separation between natural and cultural spaces, is abandoned. In this respect the statement of “the big world out there” seems outdated and unrealistic. We live in the era of anthropocene and there is no big world out there, there is just a great inside as Rachel Carson said¹⁵.

If there is no outside anymore, it means everything is domestic and photographs are reflections of the earth shaped by human. Now water reflects the silhouettes of cityscapes and carries toxic liquids. Soil carries asphalt, concrete and so many different inorganic components. Figures that are depicted in the photographs argue that natural and cultural forces are joined. The photographs convey the anthropogenic revolution and how human activities have completely replaced nature. I call this phenomenon the “domestication of landscapes” which is inspired by Rachel Carson’s term of “the great inside”¹⁶. On the other hand, the artist Ilkke Halso points to the same concept in his work; *Cultural Landscape*. In his vision, the countryside is a thousand-year old remnant of battle and co-operation between human and nature. Human-beings shape the

14 Kwa, C. 2005. Alexander von Humboldt's invention of the natural landscape, P151, The European Legacy

15 Schwagerl, C. 2014. the Anthropocene, Chapter 3; the End of the Holocene, Synergetic Press, London

16 Schwagerl, C. 2014. the Anthropocene, Chapter 3; the End of the Holocene, Synergetic Press, London

land with mechanical devices to serve their own purposes and aim to create an order based on their utilitarian tendencies. Only gradually does nature, in all its diversity, repossess the temporary order governed by humanity¹⁷.



Sercan Gundogar, The Great Inside, 2016 Tryptic 1

My photographs question the union of cultural and natural spaces. Cultural and direct human influences question human patronage on nature. This reminds me of the natural history of the earth and revolutionary power of human. Human is positioned as the only subject in the planet and the rest -non-humans- are its own products/objects. The consumption and production habits of human-beings might support this statement. In sum, humanity with the instruments of civilization seem to consume and transform the planet into domestic nature. Liz Wells also points out this phenomenon and explains Valley of the Connecticut as dictated composition because of the existence of triangular haystacks, roadway, fences and wooden pylons¹⁸. Moreover, life forms will be the products of human imagination in the future. Even natural disasters, such as storms and floods, will be caused by human beings and will be called cultural calamities¹⁹.

1.4. Environmental History

My educational background in history is one of the significant shapers of this perspective, and especially the environmental history courses I took helped me to specify my focus. Reading environmental historian McNail's *Something New Under the Sun* was a kind of practice to ponder human interventions in nature. The author explains how even minor interventions can cause vast environmental disasters that are impossible to prevent. McNail argues that in the 20th century, more people died because of wrong environmental policies than those killed in wars. Environmental policies are highly important, and the earth is not an

17 ilkka.halso.net

18 Wells, L., 2011. Land Matters: Landscape Photography, Culture and Identity, P91, I. B. Tauris, New York

19 Schwagerl, C., 2014, the Anthropocene, P 46, Synergetic Press, London

exclusive domain of concern to humanity. Human-beings, however, assume that the earth only concerns themselves. The main motivations of this general delusion are monotheist beliefs (the god centred world) and its successor: anthropocentrism (human supremacy), I believe. The following can be a good example of the relation between nature and monotheist world view: the medieval European practice of clearing forests and its replacement, by agriculture, was regarded as a kind of religious duty because the visage of forests represents wilderness, and destroying it was to extend God's domain²⁰.

1.5. Emergence of Domestic Garden Idea and the Garden of Eden

Human domination over nature is rooted in Western thought. The Book of Genesis seems to be one of the first written texts in this context. Moreover, Francis Bacon points to the emergence of the human image in nature. The image of human over nature became visual with 17th century France garden designs. As previously mentioned, these landscapes are examples of human-made, which included geometrical spaces, triangular, spherical, conical and pyramidal formed bushes and plants. The symmetrical sections, geometrical patterns, equal fountain designs were the main features of these types of gardens. This geometrical landscape design concept was inspired by French gardener Andre Le Norte²¹. This perfectly balanced gardening manner aimed to provide a pleasurable taste. This tendency is still obvious in current landscape designs. Order, taste and symmetry is not natural and the manner seems to be motivated by different approaches, but strong sense of human control still exists and the continuity of this phenomenon motivates the subject matter of the photographs.

In Judo-Christian texts nature is characterized as domesticated space, as an ordered and pleasurable garden. For example, the concept of The Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve were expelled, is portrayed as a controlled landscape. According to the text, Adam and Eve have found themselves in a wild nature, and after that they had to dominate the wilderness in order to live. Their survival seems to be a result of their harsh struggle within wild nature. This text portrays domestication as a kind of endless goal of humans. In other words, the mission of the superior being is to conquer wilderness and to domesticate it. E. Montuschi points out that human-beings, with the help of science, try to transform the planet earth into a new Garden of Eden²². The Garden of Eden is a kind of metaphorical ideal of the prospective earth order, I believe.

20 Simmons, I.G., 1996, *Changing the Face of the Earth*, Second Edition, P 172-173, Blackwell Publishers, Leicester

21 Montuschi, E., 2010 *Order of Man, Order of Nature*, Francis Bacon's idea of a Dominion over Nature, LSE

22 Montuschi, E., 2010 *Order of Man, Order of Nature*, Francis Bacon's idea of a Dominion over Nature, LSE

1.6. Denoted and Connoted message

According to Roland Barthes, there are two different photographic messages: denoted and connoted. The denoted message means the literal reality, which the photograph portrays²³. In this project the literal reality refers to natural and cultural elements. At this point, we can call the natural elements neonature because of nature's human-based evolution. The connoted message is the inferred message, it is symbolic. This message is visible with the interaction of the nature and cultural influence. These elements show how nature transforms human production and how the dominance of humans is visible in the photographs. While the aim of my project is not to criticize these aspects directly, I would like to show and question this interaction. Rapid population growth, endless consumption habits and my daily life observations have helped me to specify my intended focus. Flowers in pots, as one of my main clues, always reminded me of human supremacy on nature. It acts like a metaphoric expression and motivates me to observe borders or borderlessness between human and nature.

2. Methodology

I was raised as an only-child, which drew me into a closer relationship with materials, materials and natural elements. I always respected nonhuman beings and put them at the centre of my life to understand and identify with them as a kind of friend. In that time I also victimized myself because of my loneliness, one of the commonalities between me and nonhuman species. They were also victims of thoughtless and ignorant aspects of human civilization, in my eye. I conceptualized nature (plants and animals) as my new friends and tried to understand their existence and ecological relationship with other species, especially humans. This process helped me to have more emotional focus and empathy towards nature. It also helped me to understand unequal and wild relationships between beings. The base of the project is my overdeveloped sympathy and empathy concerning nature. The photographic series investigates the human factor in different natural environments exhaustively. These places include parks, botanical gardens, fields, construction sites and greenhouses. These environments operate as five main categories to assiduously observe the concept of domestication.

²³ Wells, L., 1997, *Photography a Critical Introduction*, P 158, Routledge, London



Sercan Gundogar, The Great Inside, 2016 Tryptic 2

The Great Inside is a series of photographs exhibited as tryptics. In order to show the complete status of domestication. The tryptic of images are collected from different landscapes, in order to convey the persuasiveness of the domestication otherwise one case may be seen as an exception. Images from different landscapes can change understandings of the spectator and persuade similar approaches are happened various landscapes. Moreover, each tryptic image focus on different transformation practices because, as I mentioned before, my aim is to visualize the human factor in all dimensions. It is plenary and it is not possible to explain the whole system with a single series that belongs to a field or a site specific construction area. In addition to that, geometrical arrangements in tryptic images make it hard to inspect them for a long time. While the spectator look into the photographs, perspective technique always tilt spectator's gaze out according to the direction of the lines. It represents systematical continuity of geometrical arrangements. In sum continuity of human made arrangements are much more than ones inside of the frames and this refers to boundlessness of the domestication.

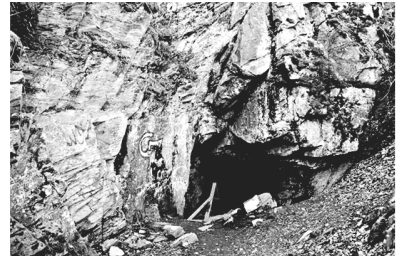


Sercan Gundogar, The Great Inside, 2016 Tryptic 3



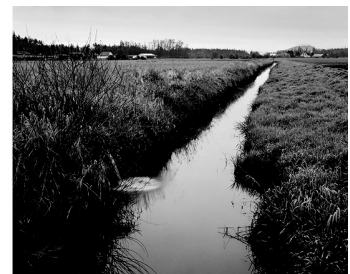
Sercan Gundogar, *The Great Inside*, 2016 Tryptic 4

Anthropogenic acts create domestic landscapes. and they are not subjects of their lives anymore. In my opinion, it is like the objectification of nonhumans. Objectification of beings was my subject matter when I started to collect visual elements from landscapes. Anthropocene, as a scientific approach to the subject and landscape transformation practices, motivated my intended focus. The name is *The Great Inside* because all natural beings which are depicted in the photographs belong inside of the civilization. Accordingly, it is possible to think the whole planet is under a virtual human-made dome, as I mentioned. My photographic series does not dramatize the situation, but rather visualize it in different and unexpected ways. Basically, this project does not directly criticize human actions and, moreover, does not split species as human and nature. It addresses a holistic point of view (it is impossible to exclude humans from nature) and aims to highlight rational engagement by using different semiotics, such as carved caves and doors, dark inside areas, introduced species, dictated landscapes etc. My photographs never show the presence of species and their behavioral communication negatively; they aim to visualize coalescing by using my own visual storytelling. Incomprehensible and blurry human presence in various landscapes is documented in my photographs. Carved cave entrances (WWII bunkers) and closed doors are the most common symbols I use to signify the obscurity of humans impression on nature. It is impossible to imagine the depth of the inside areas that lay behind of the doors and darkness. This ambiguous obscurity refers to the unmeasurable and unexpected boundaries of civilization.



Sercan Gundogar, The Great Inside, 2016 Tryptic 5

Therefore, as another dimension human-made, geometrical shapes within nature are clearly visible in the photographs. Geometrical forms, dictated compositions and over-controlled plants address the notion of domestication. Continuity and the absence of borders are also provided by the framing technique. Flatness, straight lines and plants that are growing only the organized areas are some of the common traits of the technique which is also used in Phil Underdown's Grassland series²⁴. The aim of the continuous dictated compositions is to ensure a strong feeling of perspective and eternity sensation, for me. Underdown defines his visual practice as "depicting archeology of present, time-managed but wild and planned yet unpredictable" (2011). Strict orders, clear balance and geometrical forms in the photographs aim to represent today's over-controlled topographies. It is impossible to see something unpredictable in my series because the strict hierarchical order does not allow the spectator to think of the possibility of wilderness. Also, I do not split human and nature into two different subgroups. I point out active and passive relationships between them, and their inseparable engagement. Also, as a parallel project, David Pollock ponders the place of humanity in the natural world in his *Fertile Geometry* series. He identifies anthropogenic landscapes as reminders of our constant interaction with the natural world, and points to human actions that shape the landscape²⁵.



David Pollock, Fertile Geometry, 2011

24 <http://www.landscapistories.net/issue-04/007-phil-underdown?lang=it>

25 <http://www.landscapistories.net/issue-04/009-david-pollock?lang=it>



Phil Underdown, Grassland, 2009



Sercan Gundogar, The Great Inside, 2016 Tryptic 6

Conversely, the different landscapes depicted in my images are not site specific. Moreover, my images do not specifically focus on a single issue, but a shape of domestication that seems quite similar, even though the curatorial idea is different.

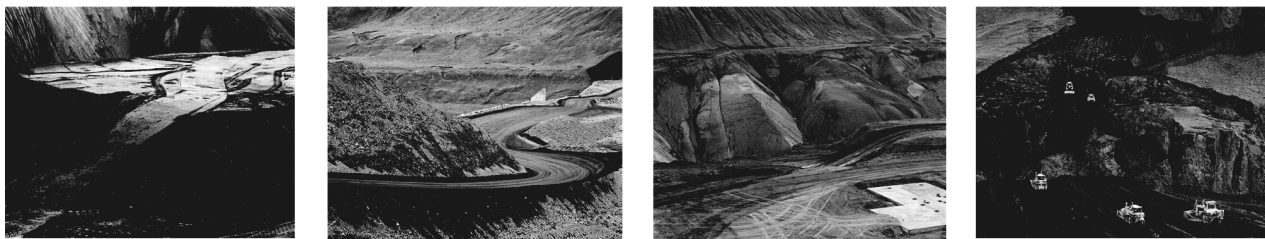


Sercan Gundogar, The Great Inside, 2016 Tryptic 7



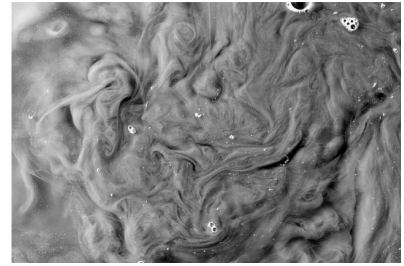
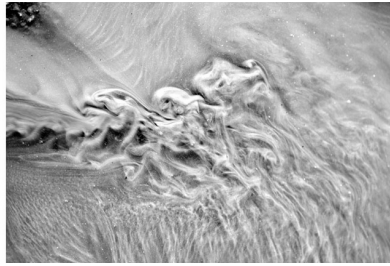
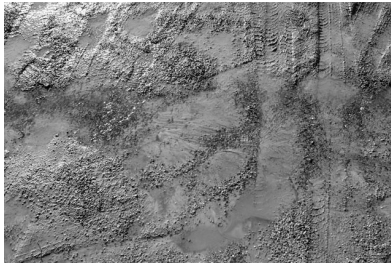
Sercan Gundogar, *The Great Inside*, 2016 Tryptic 8

The engagement of the cultural and natural is visible in various ways. Another way to focus on *The Great Inside* is blending process between construction materials and soil. Blue and Brown colors investigate the transformation from natural to industrial or cultural material. Two colors: blue and brown, are used to highlight the regeneration of landscapes. Blue, as color of construction material, and brown, as the predominant color of nature, blend in different ways in the photographs and constitute a new view of contemporary land evolution. Stream visuals are depicted to show the blending process, because fluid dynamics transform two different colors into a one. That is why fluid dynamics is a good way to express the engagements of *The Great Inside*. In this context, Icelandic photographer Petur Thomsen's *Imported Landscape* is of great relevance. He documents the construction of The Kárahnjúkar project and explains the process as capitalizing the power of nature. Also, Sigrún Sigurðardóttir says this conquest is like a transformative event that is depicted in his photographs, domesticating the nature and turning nature into a humble servant²⁶. There are some similarities between my and Thomsen's work. Both projects question the consequences of human activities and visually identify humanity as the dominant power of change. Conquest, like destruction processes, are visible in both series. But distinctively, my project is not site specific and represents minor influences as melting points of transformation. Moreover, I use two colors dominantly: blue and brown, and these are represented together in each frame to highlight the elusive engagement of human and nature.

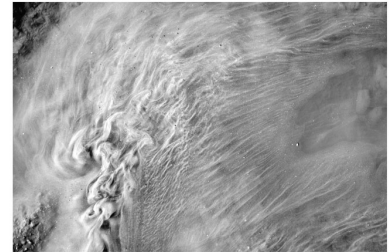
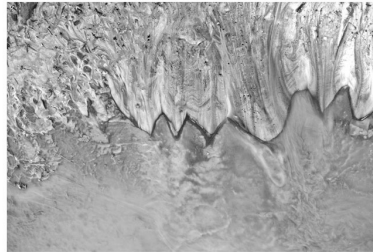


Sigrún Sigurðardóttir, *Imported Landscapes*, 2011

²⁶ <http://www.peturthomsen.is/imported-landscape/>



Sercan Gundogar, The Great Inside, 2016 Tryptic 9



Sercan Gundogar, The Great Inside, 2016 Tryptic 10

2.1. Relevant Art Practices

My project is strongly connected to all environmental devastation and transformation practices. The three largest environmental devastations in Istanbul have particularly inspired my focus. Firstly, the canal project (the second Bosphorus of Istanbul). Secondly, construction of the third airport in Istanbul, and finally the road annexes to the Bosphorus bridge, were my main inspirations. These vast ongoing constructions caused huge environmental devastations and divided forests and lakes into multiple parts. Therefore, my approach is related to the works of Daniel Oppenheim and Robert Smithson. Some of their works also inspired me with constructive visual clues about this project, such as Oppenheim's *Ground Mutations* in 1968, *Gallery Decomposition* in 1968 and Smithson's *Monuments of Passaic 1967*²⁷. These photographic documentations of the human factor in the evolution of nature helped me to develop my own narrative. Both of these land artists seem to question the construction of inorganic spaces and human-based traces by using their own visual story telling. Also, visible boundaries of the cities and lines in Nazca desert (it is also great inspiration for the land art artists) in the aerial photographs were engrossing images for me to rethink the earth's surface.

²⁷ Gilles A. Tiberghien, *Land Art*, P 53-107, Art Data, London, 1993

2.2. Plastiglomerate



Kelly Jazvac, collaboration with Corcoran and Charles Moore (Photograph by Jeff Elstone), 2013, *Plastiglomerate, the Anthropocene's New Stone*, Ben Valentine, *Hyperallergic*, 2015

Plastiglomerate is another influential project. It is a collection of the Anthropocene's new stones, which contain basalt, rock, wood and molten plastic. The stones were collected and conceptualized by artist Kelly Jazvac, geologist Patricia Corcoran and oceanographer Charles Moore. The project questions Anthropocene and human influence by using this new kind of stone type. K. Jazvac defines the stone series as both toxic waste, sculpture and, most importantly, proof of the new geological epoch; Anthropocene. Parallel to my project, *Plastiglomerate* captures the blurring of natural and cultural elements embodied in new stone forms. Moreover, art works assert that there is no division between nature and culture anymore²⁸. This is also relevant for my statement, but my works do not convey this context directly, unlike *Plastiglomerate*. Still, it succeeds in questioning, the (blurring) mixed forces of our age. My aim is to collect embedded and unclear figures. For example, in the first photograph the audience can assume it is a natural landscape, but it is absolutely not. All trees are the same size and were planted as a resource of wood. Secondly, my photographs focus on the landscapes that are shaped by us, but in this project stones seem to be shaped by the ocean.

28 Valentine, B., 2015, *Plastiglomerate, the Anthropocene's New Stone*, *Hyperallergic*



Sercan Gundogar, *The Great Inside*, 2016, Triptyc 11

2.3. Works of Halso

Finnish photographer Ilkka Halso's *The Museum of Nature* and *Naturele* projects are other relevant works in this context. In his *Museum of Nature* project the shelters, massive buildings and natural details are main elements. He identifies the massive buildings work as protective systems of forests, lakes and rivers from human actions, such as pollution. In this work he succeeds in representing the complexed relationship between human and nature²⁹. According to me, he highlights human actions that damage nature, the environmental retaliation and the irony between these two reactions. In the *Naturele* project he questions human control over nature. He places the whole of nature in a huge warehouse complex. His absurd image making style invites the audience to ponder futuristic possibilities of nature³⁰. An over-controlled image of nature depicted in the photographs negative predictions in the spectator. Moreover, ruled natural elements in the depth of the warehouse express their materiality because a warehouse is a place where materials accumulate.



Ilkka Halso, *Naturele*, 2011



Ilkka Halso, *Museum of Nature*, 2003

29 Alter, L., 2008 *Tree Museum* by Ilkka Halso, Treehugher

30 <http://ilkka.halso.net/>

3. Conclusion

Like the link between landscape as a painting genre, as territory on the Earth's surface both of them remarks human presence. Today land itself seems like a painter's canvas with various brush strokes. These strokes are domesticated surfaces and visual signs of engagement. Like a disperse dye on canvas, human influence is expanding inexplicably. *The Great Inside* investigates the influential engagement of all beings by using inherent visual categories and does not separate beings but aims to focus on their union with a holistic gaze. Moreover, my images are not wide angle because each image questions different unions, which could be seen as lesser in relation to other popular images of natural disasters. These disasters are my clues but not my subject matter in the photographic practice. My approach is to visualize domestication and engagement between beings, rather than criticizing the dominant power of human-beings.

Aerial and satellite photographs show how humans impact nature, as I likewise do in my practice. I started to think of minor and major transformations at the same time. Minor ones may seem not so serious, but they are also important, because they are a part of the whole puzzle. Then I started to collect different footprints of human-beings on landscapes in order to show how the human imprint changes our understanding. In this respect, I portrayed human-shaped trees sculpted rocks that interrupt the understanding of the audience. The images depicted in the photographs can be seen as ordinary images from daily life. But if we take a closer look, all figures in the photographs are strongly connected to each other. They express their own, as well as others', evolutionary history on the surface of the Earth.

4. Triptychs













5. Exhibition documentation:



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