

Project Plan / Jair Tapia

Art project:

Working title: Microscopic Environments

Detailed description (300+ words) of your art project including expected output.

Be specific as to media, size, quantities:

I will create an installation composed of several microscopes (4 to 6) displayed in tables, slightly resembling an area from a science lab. Here, viewers will be able to comfortably seat in front of each microscope so they can see through them. At first glance, the images will show what will appear to be expected microscopic imagery from different common studied elements such as blood. It will take some time and closer observation to see what the images actually are. Slowly, each image will show movement, a gradual change of colour tones and image contrast, and the presence of human beings interacting with the environment seen. These elements will reveal that the apparent microbiology imagery is actually video of a natural place in loop. These videos are being shot from an above “bird’s eye” static point of view and carefully altered in editing so they look like images from microbiology without visually hiding what they are. There will be completely different from each other, each depicting a unique desert area.

This project will represent a continuation from my recent work related to place attachment and the use of natural spaces. It is also an attempt to bring these ideas into mediums that I have yet to explore such as video. This work intends to offer the viewer a more personal and direct way to perceive a natural landscape that changes the common perception of them, to stimulate closer observation and reflection as they gradually recognize them. Having the places seen through microscopes invites viewers to find parallels between landscapes and this kind of microscopic imagery, as well as recognize their opposite qualities. This artwork not only intends to be an unusual representation of space and to visually relate it to microbiology elements. It is also intended to a certain extent, to visually signify a process similar to exploring natural space physically where there are moments of aesthetic appreciation and change of perceptions (disorientation and recognition, stability and change, etc.). At the same time, this project addresses the idea of finding relationships between everything perceived in space and that at some point, all kinds of connections can be made. Following is a personal statement where I try to explain an attachment to a particular desert area, one that will be represented in this project. This text might help to understand the project in terms of what it tries to achieve, since it subjectively explains some of the reactions that are trying to be translated into the artwork.

“My attraction to the desert starts with the simple beauty of its landscape. It is visually very sensual. Even by looking at it from a distance, I start getting a psychological feeling of peace. Once inside this desert, as I start walking and exploring it, I feel grateful for the quietness as I compare it with the stressful noise and visual contamination of the city. I can't help myself from just picking a spot and contemplate for a long time. Here, there is no sense of time, no sign of the civilized world. This can be millions of years ago or the future. The size and beauty of this place impose respect from you. I do admit that sometimes I feel a little scared and even lonely, but I like to confront that because if I do, eventually I feel stronger. If I let go of the fear or the anxious temptation of not being just by myself, I will be rewarded by this environment. I can be seduced by the openness and its relation to freedom and possibility and I would start getting excited about walking, running, screaming, playing or observing that there is always something new going on that I haven't perceived before. Exploring the desert would eventually lead me to focus on specific things like its insects, vegetation or the way the sand looks at the top of the dunes as it's moved with the air. It can even reward me by stimulating my imagination to a point where I can recognize the sea in the dunes or imagine myself as a tiny micro-organism that interacts with an environment where there is no beginning or end. In my mind, I can reconcile all of these opposite extreme forces of scale and perception. I can find everything and imagine anything without any kind of distraction that I would get in any other place. I then realize how these places can fulfil not only our desire for escapism but also that they reveal in them, the sense of everything being related. And, it is with this realization that we can achieve an experience of interconnectedness and oneness with our surroundings.”

Detailed production schedule:

First semester:

September:

During this period I will concentrate on researching microscopic imagery as well as scouting for natural locations.

October-November:

This period will be used to sketch and plan the ideal chosen place as well as deciding exactly how the arrangement of the natural material will be displayed.

December-January:

By the end of the semester I will have the place ready to shot and also some initial video.

I will also solve the technical problems of running the video inside the microscope and find a way that looks as if it is magnified.

Second semester

January-February:

I will continue shooting the actual video to be used.

March-April:

I will edit the video and build all the microscopes with their technical specifications for the video players.

May-June:

I will complete and refine the final installation.

2. Research project:

Working title:

Perception of Open Space

Formulate the working hypothesis or topic of inquiry in one or two sentence:

Connecting elements from diverse fields of study (psychology and cultural studies) that compose topophilia (love of place or place attachment).

Detailed description (300+ words) of your research project:

In detail, this essay will carefully explain the process of developing a special connection and attachment to a specific place, what Yi-Fu Tuan defines as *Topophilia*. It is intended to borrow from all fields of study that have researched this area. Connections between all these areas will be made in order to have a better understanding of the topic instead of explaining them separately, since these areas influence each other and are intertwined in the examination of place. The essay will start introducing all the terminology and paying special attention to all of the psychological components involved in the interaction of space. The concepts of phenomenology, perception (Ponty, Ortega and Gasset, etc.), and each one of the senses will be discussed. Gradually, other more subjective (Bachelard) and cultural (Tuan, Lippard, etc.) elements will start to intervene in the study.

The paper will not become a general way of explaining the way in which all kinds of space affect individuals. It will focus more exclusively on open natural spaces. Studying cities and other urban settings in depth would demand attention to other social implications that are of no interest for this research. Also, it will not describe the collective perception of space from specific cultures or groups of people, but it will focus on the individual instead.

Once explained how this attachment to place is generated in the individual, the study will consider different ways in which this kind of attachment is now expressed in art and other cultural manifestations.

Outline:

- I. Introduction
- II. The Psychology of Perception
- III. The Meaning of Topophilia
- IV. Sensorial Experiences of Place
- V. Perception of Landscapes in Nature
- VI. Cultural Influence on the Idea of Place
- VII. Topophilia in Art and other Applications
- VIII. Possible Conclusions

Bibliography:

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Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of perception*. (Humanities Press, 1989, c1962)

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Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. (Beacon Press, 1969, c1964.)

Lippard, Lucy R. *On the beaten track : tourism, art and place* (New Press, 1999)

Tuan, Yi-fu. *Escapism* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998)

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Olafur Eliasson. *Olafur Eliasson : surroundings surrounded : essays on space and science* / edited by Peter Weibel. (MIT Press, c2001)

Ortega y Gasset, José. *Phenomenology and Art* (Norton, 1975)

Massey B, Doreen. *For Space* (Sage Publications, 2005)

Gallagher, Winifred. *The Power of Place: How Our Surroundings Shape Our Thoughts, Emotions, and Actions* (Harper Perennial, 2007)

Malpas, Jeff. *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Dean, Tacita & Millar, Jeremy. *Art Works: Place* (Thames & Hudson, 2005)

3. Art and Research Projects:

Paragraph connecting the projects:

The research will benefit the creation of the artwork, simply in that a better understanding of the subject of space will be applied to it.

Criteria you will use to evaluate the success of the art project:

Obviously, this work does not intend to recreate or simulate the physical experience of being in a natural setting. But it does intend to have a response in the viewer that is somehow related or similar to the way in which open space is explored, valued and appreciated. If the viewers respond that way to the work, then I think that the work would be successful.

Connect past and future projects:

This represents a continuation of my last project who's intention was to use signifiers of a place within a different place. This project will investigate how to change the common perception of a natural landscape to obtain a better appreciation of it. Both projects have to do with perceptions of place and a personal attachment to them.

Formulate entire project plan in one or two meaningful sentences:

This project comes from the interest of studying alternative ways of perceiving the idea of a personal place. It might help people have a better appreciation of the environment as well as have a different perception of the idea of the landscape.