

(B.A Telling)

Etienne de France

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Visual Arts
Listaháskóli Íslands

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
METHODS.....	2
Technical Approach.....	2
Conceptual Approach.....	9
CIRCLES.....	13
EYMA.....	15
Nature.....	15
Landscape.....	18
METROPOLIS.....	21
Virtual worlds.....	21
Religion.....	24
Conclusion.....	27
Bibliography.....	28
Appendix.....	30

INTRODUCTION

Considering that art is a dialog within the society, and the artist therefore responsible for his acts and productions, but also for his behavior towards the ones who are going to experience his work, I see art as a sort of reflection and as a continuation of the basic story-telling tradition. I mean that art is an exchange, which is expressed through an infinite range of different languages or medias. This does not mean that art should please society, as a passive entertainment does. It should speak, ask questions and grow prolific dialogs. Despite the usual assimilation of the word applying to new media works, I would chose the term “inter-active media” to describe the essence of an artwork.

As an artist, I would insist on the idea of sharing and responsibility, but also on the importance of having humor, to make fun of myself. There are many ways of being and living as an artist. They are not good and bad choices, they all call for respect. My only concern is to avoid as much as we can what we call frustration.

Strongly concerned by defining my work as a will of saying and sharing through an exchange, a fundamental part of my work is to think about how to use the different structures and methods, which constitute the process of story telling.

In order to speak about my work, I will try to explain it by referring it to the history of various arts, literature and philosophy. Using a thematic approach that could be also interpreted as another example of the story telling process, I would like, first, to explain my methods of working, including some type of media I use and conceptual approaches. In a second part, I will present a first side of my work, which deals with the notions of nature and landscape. Then, I will speak about another theme, which focus on a questioning of diverse systems and structures constituting the society, such as virtual worlds or religion.

METHODS

As a start in this essay, I would like to explain the techniques and the media that I use in my work.

I would like, to begin with, to mention that my first skill is writing. My readings, my classical literature background, and my former studies in art history and archeology have allowed me to enlarge my inspirations and to strengthen my ability of writing. Poetry has played a key-role in my work. I would say that I use poetry for playing with the rhythm and sounds in order to get a fluid, or a flowing feeling. I am not really attracted by a systematical use of rimes; therefore in that technical matter, I would rather link my work to slam-poetry. Texts may be read, but are obviously revealed while they are spoken.¹ I see poetry as a complex narration, where references and metaphors build a sort of sense that each one is able to reach in his own way. It allows the reader to find him/herself in the words, instead of following a determined rigid narrative path.

The Russian film director Andrey Tarkovsky (1932-1986) says about poetry:

He [the spectator] becomes a participant in the process of discovering life, unsupported by ready-made deductions from the plot or ineluctable pointers by the author. He has at his disposal only what helps to penetrate to the deeper meaning of complex phenomena represented in front of him.²

We understand here how poetry can create a different relationship between a work and the reader: it lets the reader involve him/herself more in the work, thus he/her is becoming more responsible of its own interpretation, and therefore less passive. Hence

¹ We could enlarge the discussion about spoken-poetry or flow and rhythm in writing by referring to the hip-hop culture and precisely to the slam-poetry, with artists such as Saul Williams.

² Tarkovsky, Andrey, 1986, *Sculpting In Time, Reflections on the Cinema*, The Bodley Head, London, p. 20.

the use of poetry allows an active participation, which might be altered when using a very linear-narration, which would keep the reader in a determined and unsurprising state.

I think that writing and poetry have led me to visual arts, because of seeing a text as creating landscape, or reflecting sequences, sort of cinematographic experience. Using words to describe a landscape or a situation has pushed me to experience visual arts as an extension of my possibilities in order to tell something.

Photography came as a complementary element to my writings, through, for example, my interest in composition in landscape and architecture. After having tried first with small photography books, I now feel strongly concerned with the presentation of photography, and the techniques of mounting and exhibiting. Influenced by Italian and Flemish painting and contemporary artists like Sam Taylor Wood³, I am trying alternative forms of presentation such as triptych, altars, “predella” in order to experiment other compositions, and to build a different narration, while keeping in mind the importance of a single picture, mounted in a more formal way, such as frames techniques or light-boxes.⁴ One example of these trials is the altar *Tribute to Karahnjukar* (figure 4). This work speaks about this controversial hydro-electrical dam, which has been built in Iceland. Rather than entering in a political debate that I am not able to handle, I choose here to say in a very symbolic way that this building will decay and maybe one day become a part of nature in the same way that human do. The different parts of the altar, including the lowest part, a sort of “predella”, are building a composition of “fragmented narration” or episodes made of abstract and figurative images, which try to tell this message.

After speaking about these different ways of presentation, we should also say that photographs are often part of series. If one work should stand for itself, meaning that it can have a dialog alone, it can also be part of a wider research or on-going questioning.

Through photography and its narrative and visual language, I have felt the need to use it in installation where I would incorporate others medias. Hence, in this research of telling a message, a situation or a story, the use of video and sound has become a natural step.

³ We could think about the photography series *Soliloquy*, which is displaying photography in an Italian Renaissance style. See figures 1 to 3.

⁴ We should add that in Renaissance painting, the opposition between depicting a scene or a narration in a single image or in fragmented images (multiple episodes: the predella) stands as a difference between the Flemish (single image) and the Italian (episodes) traditions.

Producing movement, space and time, video and sound allow me to work in more wider projects, mixing medias as layers, in order to produce one work that can be shown in different ways. The use of video and sound as complementary medias to photography and writing participate also to my use of the story-telling process. Through video and sound, as with the use of triptychs, altars, and “predella” in photography, I am experimenting with the narration. By breaking or avoiding the linear and fixed narration, I try, by a more poetic approach, to reach a more participating relationship between viewer and author.

As we saw earlier with photography and the importance of experimenting with different presentations of the media itself, it is here necessary to understand and interrogate the temporal structures of the video, in order to think about the diverse processes of story-telling or to question the use of narration.⁵ Hence, thinking about the ways of showing video, which influences then the process of story telling, we could start by thinking about the different possibilities of its presentation: installation, loop, screening, VJing performance, the use of multiple screens.⁶

By using these different medias to challenge the use of narration, I think that it is crucial to start with asking myself the interests and possibilities of such combinations: how to find, for example a harmony between writing, visual, and sound? How can we tell an idea, a story using those “three layers” in order to produce a work, where each media is necessary, where they all participate in a same dialog with the audience? This question might be over-answered, or totally out of context nowadays, we could think about all the writings, scientific researches, experiments revolving around color theories, synaesthesia or abstraction, often focusing on the following relationships: visual-music, writing-music, writing-visual.⁷

Through art history and theories concerning these questions, the discovering of the German artist Philipp Otto Runge has been a major step on the development of my ideas and my work.

⁵ About the ideas of questioning the narration in video and visual arts through the use of a fragmented or non linear narration and a challenging presentation the work, we should refer to this important book, which refers to visual art, cinema or architecture: Doug Aitken, 2006, *Broken Screen Expanding the Image, Breaking the Narrative, 26 Conversations with Doug Aitken*, D.A.P Publishers, New York.

⁶ We could for example refer to the work of the Finnish artist Eija-Liisa Ahtila, which is fragmenting the structure of narration by using multiple-screens to show her films.

⁷ This question would need to be developed with, first, a rigorous study through diverse color theories, and then through abundant writings about the relationship between color and music. We could think for instance about the writings from Wassily Kandinsky, 1911 and 1977 (translation), *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Dover Publications, New York.

Philipp Otto Runge, (1777-1810), is German painter and thinker. He is famous for his theories about landscape and color, but he is also one of the early-romantics, who started to write about the relationships between visual arts and music, slowly sketching the first ideas of an “art total” (Gesamkunstwerk). He wrote in 1801:

It will be an abstract poetry, pictorial, fantastic, musical with choirs, one composition for the three joined arts, which for the architecture should erect a particular building.⁸

This project, which was supposed to be built in Poland, has never been achieved, and stands finally as a sort of “temple” of the Romantic ideal, a temple for a “new religion”, which would have found a sublime expression in this unification of arts. Besides these symbolic considerations, I am interested in the project itself, which I see as sort of powerful and early manifesto in art history of a will to mix media, here writing, music and visuals.

Influenced by this statement, I have been focusing on the different ways that could allow me to mix these different media. Trying to find an equal level between these various “layers”, and willing to avoid the predominance of a media over another one, I have been working more in the sense of this “composition for the three joined arts”. It would be also interesting to understand the value of the heritage of Runge’s project on the development of the media in arts.⁹ Are these ideas of Philipp Otto Runge finding a sort of extension in the development of the so-called “interactive” art (interactive video, interactive installation, use of the audience, or the performer as a part of the work)? Could we find for example a sort of extension of these ideas through the contemporary multimedia project (films, CD-Rom, Website, online game) of the English film director Peter Greenaway (born in 1942) *Tulse Luper’s Suitcases* (2000)? In some parts of the films, which are part of this multimedia “ensemble”, Peter Greenaway uses the image, the writings¹⁰ (subtitles, or others writings interacting in and with the composition of the video) and the sound in such way that it creates a sort of dialog: it is a strange harmony

⁸ Philipp Otto Runge, 1840-41, *Hinterlassene Schriften von Philipp Otto Runge, Mahler: Herausgegeben von dessen ältestem Bruder*, ed. Daniel Runge, 2 vols, Hamburg.

⁹ What is the influence of Runge ideas on the development of the “Art Total” (Gesamkunstwerk), through, for example, the opera of Wagner, and later on the emergence of silent cinema?

¹⁰ We should say that the experimentations of Peter Greenaway with the mix of writing with a visual environment (video, cinema) are also reflected in earlier films such as *The Prospero’s Book* (1991), *The Pillow Book* (1995).

made of a dissonance of visual, sounds and signs, which builds an interesting experiment that could maybe stand as a sort of echo to the ideas of Runge.

These thoughts and works are influencing my approach to produce a work that I like to constitute as a multimedia pieces including visual, writing and sound.

For example, working with these different media allows me the presentation of the work through various forms: a book, a video or photography installation and a performance, each of the three modes of presentation containing elements of writing, visuals and sound.

One example is my project *Tales of a Sea Cow*, a work observing and criticizing the proliferation and the structures of the virtual worlds on Internet, which includes writing, digital images, video and soundtrack. The structure of *Tales of a Sea Cow* is based on a written piece, a sort of “book”, mixing poems and essays. Besides, a soundtrack is available, as well as a video, which “translates” the song into narrative visuals. To avoid the rigid and over-used format of a book including a DVD or CD-ROM, which would contain video and sound, the content will be stored and displayed in a program that can be installed with a USB key. The USB key contains the installation of an application, which allows reading the writings, watching the video, listening to the sound, printing the “book” with cover and illustrations. The user can access a website where he can update the application: additional texts, studies, visuals and sounds, access to links (references, others works). Through a forum, the user can react and send comments, texts or diverse materials in order to slowly share ideas, projects and create a sort of network. The “book” and the audiovisual materials become a work that can evolve, allowing the work to stay away from making statements, and thus to stand more as an interactive work.

Concerning the video, it can be shown, besides screenings and installation, in the context of a performance. The sound and the video are played live during a 40 minutes set. The video is controlled live and offers structures that can also be improvised: these different structures –video sequences-which can be considered as “loops”¹¹(if they are repeated) are building different narrations, which are interacting with the sound. Several projections would display the video sources. Trying to mix abstract patterns, writings,

¹¹ We should refer here to the seminal book *The Language of New Media* from the Russian author and professor Lev Manovich. We could develop this notion of “loop” by reading the chapter New Language of Cinema, where he questions the “Loop as Narrative Engine”, showing how the loop in cinema and new media could constitute new narrative forms and challenge the temporal aesthetics. Lev Manovich, 2001, *Language of New media*, MIT Press, Cambridge.

or visualization with a more “narrative” video, the interest of a live performance is to present *Tales of a Sea Cow* in a more challenging way, whether for the visual presentation, the interaction of visuals, sound and writing and again for experimenting with the question of the story-telling process. Using loop-generators, bass and synthesizer for the sound, midi controllers, turntables or instruments for the video, computer-based algorithms for the abstract bass visualization, the performance could be described as “Veejaying”.

I would like here to refer to the American digital artist Mark Amerika, who gives a definition of “what a VJ could be”: “ a hyper-improvisational narrative artist who uses banks of Quicktime movies clips to construct on-the-fly stories”, and “a Vj could be a creative writer who manipulates matter and memory by composing live-acts of image *écriture* repositioning the movie loop as the primary semantic unit of energy”.¹²

Through these definitions, we understand more how Veejaying could represent an alternative in the story-telling tradition. The possibility of building a story by “playing” and improvising with video sequences and loops opens new horizons for the use of a more “interactive” narration, in the sense that the fragmentation, the repetitions, the process of live-improvising establish a different dialog, offering perhaps more choices and freedom to a viewer which is not determined by a rigid and linear narrative structure.¹³ Hence could we compare the Veejaying to a sort of poetry (the poetry as we tried to define it earlier in this essay)?

Using Veejaying as a new tool for a multimedia story-telling mixing video, sound, writing is a practice I am experimenting in this on-going project *Tales of a Sea Cow* and aim to develop further in parallel with my questions about challenging narration through the others media I choose in my work. Using all these medias might be naïve, pretentious, or too structured ways of explaining my learning process in choosing what could fit best to the presentations of ideas, but I m aware of the risks of being confused and aim to work in that form by also multiplying collaboration, and keeping a constant state of open-mind on more “centralized” works, such as photography series, books, brochures, or public art.

¹² Mark Amerika, 2007, *Meta/Data: a digital poetics*, MIT Press, Cambrige, p. 56.

¹³ We could enlarge the discussion by reading further the writings of Peter Greenaway and Lev Manovich, speaking about the transformation of cinema. We could add that the loop, or the video sequence in Veejaying could constitute a narrative element, which could be compared in cinema as repetitions that act as “narrative keys”: for example “the chess game” in movies such as *The Seventh Seal* (1957) from Igmar Bergman and the *Life is Miracle* (2004), from Emir Kusturica.

I have tried here to develop the methods I use through a technical approach in order to build a “story”, a work. Besides the description of the technical tools, which allows me to build a “story”, I find it also important to think about the type or the style of story-telling that I am using, a conceptual approach that I will develop now.

CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

In this part, I will continue to underline the importance of the use story-telling as a method in my work, but rather by questioning not anymore its forms (the technical methods), but more its content (conceptual methods).¹⁴ As a start, I would say that I often base a project on a story, which I would define as a parable or myth.

Here, I would refer to an example, which has influenced me a lot in the development of the use this type of narration, an example, which will also help me to define this term of parable or myth. The publication between 1761 and 1765 of the translations by the Scottish writer James MacPherson (1736-1796) after old Gaelic poems and legends composed by Ossian during the third century deeply influenced the imaginary of the Romantic Movement, mostly in literature and painting. As an alternative source of inspiration for the artist and nations, which would feel the will to escape and stand against the Greek-Roman mythology heritage and the Italian and French academic influence, the figure of Ossian, sort of “Orpheus from the north” and its poems containing epics battles, but also long descriptions of northern landscape, would also play a key role in the development and the artistic and national identity of art in Germany and northern countries, while becoming a model for many “romantic” artists in all Europe.¹⁵ The poems were translated in different languages, gaining many admirers, such as Napoleon Bonaparte. Some decades later, we would realize that the translations of Ossian poems are the result of collected fragments and ancient poems, which James McPherson had mixed with a romance of its own composition.¹⁶

Beyond the vain talks about an immoral act, it is striking to realize how a publication, which is finally more a story than a true translation, has been a great source for

¹⁴ By differencing form and content about my work, which is based on the question of story-telling, I mean the differences that exist between *with what* (the forms, the techniques and medias used) and *how* (the type of story: a parable, a lullaby).

¹⁵ There are many references treating this subject. We could start a larger discussion by referring to this study for example: Howard Gaskill, December 1994, Ossian in Europe, *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, Alberta, p. 643-75.

¹⁶ James McPherson and Ossian, 2004, *Poems of Ossian*, Kessinger Publications, Whitefish.

inspiration and identity. By playing with reality and fiction, James McPherson built what we could call a “modern myth”. The content of Ossian poems, the affects but also the process itself of the publication participate in this construction of a myth. The myth, as a parable does, tells a story, which has a part of reality, in order to multiply the levels of interpretation, then being able to build meanings or criticisms, which could not be done in the same interesting way with a classical narrative story-telling process.

We could explain the conception of parable or modern myth, by comparing these types of narrations with more contemporary examples, such as the fantasy and science fiction literature. Today, the thin border often blurring reality and fiction is also a part of science fiction and fantasy literature, which is able to tell something crucial through a story, and imaginary elements that always contains reality. For instance, we could think about the role of the books *Snowcrash* (1992) from Neal Stephenson (born in 1959) and *Neuromancer* (1984) from William Gibson (born in 1948), which constitute breathtaking looks on a near future, announcing both the cyber culture and the development of virtual worlds. The role of these books as criticisms of the society, could show how fiction, which could be here considered as a look into a reality of a probable future or a warning for some elements that we are developing in the present, constitute a precious type of story-telling.

Could I also add the fact the role of fiction, myth or parable could stand as a sort of extension of my ideas on poetry that I developed before? Poetry, myth, parable could share the same abilities to leave a “space” of interpretation to the reader, a opened door to its imagination, and a bridge to more creative involvement towards the work itself? Therefore, in my work, I’m interested to play with reality and fiction, to approach a content and an esthetic that would approach the style of myth or parable, allowing me to take distance with a subject and to place it in a other context, in order to ask questions, to criticize, and set a dialog.

In that sense, my two works, *Archeology of Tourism* (figure 5 and 6), and *Tales of a Sea Cow*, a project that I will develop again later on in this essay, plays between reality and fiction and use the style of a “modern myth” or parable to reach a more subtle criticism. *Archeology of Tourism* is a project, which is inspired by the forms of presentation used in tourism (brochures, information signs, guides) in order to explain the history of different places in Reykjavik. One piece, part of this project, is called *Perlan, History of A Symbol* (figure 5 and 6).

It is an archeological brochure, which is designed for both the visitors and the tourists. The brochure displays informations about the history, the architecture, and the symbolic meanings of the Perlan, a building which stands as a monumental landmark of the city of Reykjavik.

In this brochure, the facts and the illustrations are all based on a real documentations, but they take slowly some distance with reality, to finally reflect the point of view of an archeologist, which would have written this brochure in a future¹⁷. By mixing reality and fiction, *Perlan, History of Symbol* and the project *Archeology of Tourism* are telling stories, playing with distorted informations, in order to question the passive behavior occuring inside tourism, but also the risk of reaching an essential non-existence of real references, a immersion in an oriented and determined path.

Here, we could draw a parallel with the notion of “hyperrealism” developed by the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1927-2007). Hyperrealism would mean the experience of an exploding rupture in the notion of real. Mass reproduction techniques, mass media, technologies are creating images and signs (the “simulacra”), which don’t refer anymore to a natural world, but only to a reality that they are artificially reproducing, that they are simulating. The real object is outdated and effaced by these signs of its existence.

Baudrillard says about the simulated (“the simulacra”): “It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal”¹⁸.

In that sense, we understand that we are facing endless reproductions of self-referencing signs, which become a massive flux of informations. As information and mass-media, tourism often stands as a confusing entertainment, keeping people in a passive state. In this project I am asking if the consumerist values of tourism (very similar to the features of advertising), that we could describe with these words : desire-speed-possession-digesting, are a threat for fact and history in the sense that it is mostly simulating repetitive symbols and a ready-made and marketed reality.

Standing one small step away from a reality (the official history), *Perlan, History of Symbol* is presented (the brochure) as an official (real) information. In fact, *Perlan, History of Symbol* and the project *Archeology of Tourism*, are not a mirror only

¹⁷ I have been inspired in this project by the book *Motel of Mysteries* (1979) written by David Macaulay (born 1946), who underlines in a very humoristic way the consequences and the absurdity of some archeological interpretations, and in a wider sense the question of the value of informations, while criticizing our consumer society.

¹⁸ Jean Baudrillard, 1988, *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster, Stanford University Press, Stanford, p. 166.

reflecting an obvious loss of references; by using the same methods of a simulation or a simulacra, to reflect its real emptiness, these works are trying to question the phenomenon of mass-tourism and again, the role and value of information, while building also a more subtle and interesting political and social criticism about a location.

By explaining this project, I have tried to show how I could use the idea of parable or modern myth, a type of story-telling that reveals itself as a crucial counterpoint tool in a society where we are being surrounded by massive and so various informations, which contain most of the time no connections with a natural real, our natural world.¹⁹

These reasons make me believe that the myth or parable are sort of poetic “détournements” of these informations, standing as a challenge to its language, a determined and short-circuited narration; but also more simply, I see in the use of myth or parable a more subtle way to share ideas and stories, standing therefore as an essence of my work, which is based anyway on the use and the questioning of the story telling tradition.

Having tried to show different technical and conceptual methods of working, I would like now to develop more the content of my work, by presenting, describing, explaining, and discussing it.

¹⁹ Anticipating also in a way a part of this essay about a the challenge of nature by society, we could enlarge the discussion by referring to the definitions of a cyborg given by the Australian artist Stelarc in the sense that the cyborg-body would be an alternative solution for a world ruled by the surrounding information and its “movement”. See the text: *From Psycho-Body to Cyber-Systems: Images as Post-Human Entities*, 1998, in *Virtual Futures*, Edited by Joan Broadhurst Dixon and Eric J. Cassidy, Routledge, New York.

CIRCLES

Instead of speaking of my work through classification made after the different techniques used or after a chronological order, I would rather explain in a thematic way. Is it again a storytelling obsession? Probably.

I think first of all that each of my work are connected to each other, not only because I value so much each of them, or that I think them as a whole that can be divided, but more because I work more or less with the same approach in all of my project. My methods of work that I have explained before are also rooted in the fact that I am influenced by fantasy and science-fiction writers like J.R.R Tolkien, David Eddings, Tad Williams, Ursula Le Guin or Orson Scott Card. I am fascinated by the complexity of their imagination, which is expressed through the building of a whole world, including studies on geography, history, culture, language, characters, art, myth and legends.

I started some years ago to write a fantasy book with a friend. We spent two years on drawing maps, writing a chronology, imagining different cultures and stories. This preparation-work is necessary to install a background, where a storyline can be then set up. Even though the main lines of the story or “saga” were decided, only one chapter was written. This background work remains a important source for the structure and the names of my works. I would say that each of my work might be a part of this imaginary world. Having created a historical and geographical frame, I could relate my different works to this world. This idea of my work floating in a sort of universe or imaginary space would help me to describe them.

I am interested in signs and symbols, in the way that they are used in alchemy or “hermetic works” as a code, a secret language, an idea represented by an image, a sign. Hence, in this essay, I would use a symbol, or a geometrical form to speak about the content of my work.

It is also method of presentation, which could be related to my will to use storytelling in the sense of poetic parable or myth.

I would like to use the forms of concentric circles, which could represent a moving macro-cosmogony of my works. The concentric circles would also be a symbol for this imaginary world. One circle could represent one part of my work. My work could be like these circles, which multiply and expand; in the same way that the forms created by a drop falling on still water. The different circles or different themes are growing, moved by the same forces, and belonging to each other, part of a universe. One could argue that these circles might not touch each other and that they are divided and lonely, but we could also think about the image of circles inside a tree trunk, multiplying as time goes. Through these metaphors, I want to draw a way to explain my work. In this essay I would like to present some of those circles. First I would like to speak about nature, a circle that would include all the following themes, beginning first with landscape.

Then I would describe another circle: Metropolis, in which we will also discover concentric forms or ideas about the virtual worlds or religion.

EYMA

The first circle, which embraces all the others, would answer to the name of the Eyma, or nature. Eyma is a reference to this unfinished fantasy book project I mentioned before, a word that means nature in the language of a group of people that I created in this world. In this part, I am trying to understand how we could approach of a definition of nature distinct from the notion of landscape, and thus how we could speak about nature through visual arts.

In the development of my ideas about nature I am influenced by early-Romantic writers such as the German poet and writer Novalis (1772-1801), who was part of the University of Jena among others figures as the brothers Schlegel and Ludwig Tiecke. The first page of *The Novices of Sais from Novalis*, has helped me to consider nature more as a sort of complex pattern that can not really be categorized, organized or constructed, leading me to slowly draws differences between the ideas of nature and landscape:

He who follows and compares them will see strange figures emerge, figures which seem to belong to that great cipher which we discern everywhere, in wings, eggshells, clouds and snow, in crystals and in stone formations, on ice-covered waters, on the inside and outside of mountains, of plants, beasts and men, in the light of heaven, on scored disks of pitch or glass or in iron filings round a magnet, and in strange conjunctures of chance.²⁰

By using this reference, I want to underline the possibilities to consider nature not only as inspiration source, but also as an embracing living organism, which indeed includes us “humans”, but also an inner process made of cycles, in which we are constantly evolving, sharing and creating. Even though we should remember the context

²⁰ Novalis, *The Novices of Sais*, translated by Ralph Mannheim, Curt Valentin, New York, 1949, p.3.

of the an early German Romanticism, seeking for a “new religion” inspired partly by Christian mystics, such as Jakob Böhme,²¹ we can not concede the fact that these artist have open in radical ways an original approach of the relationship man-nature.

With artists like Novalis and Philipp Otto Runge we understand that all we have built, thought, created is inspired by all these surrounding elements, which compose what we call nature. These creations are reflection of the surrounding where we find inspiration and resources. During all periods, humans have always expressed their surrounding. At this subject, we could quote the painter and thinker Philipp Otto Runge who wrote:

Just as the philosophers have come to realize that everything is a projection of their imagination we see, or should see, that the living spirit in every flower is put there by man; it is from there that the landscape arises.²²

Saying that the emergence of landscape comes from a human projection on nature, Runge might allow us to realize that there is a difference between nature and landscape.

To understand this idea, we could use the famous classification made by Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) in *Birth of a Tragedy* (1872), which concerns the difference between an Apollonian and a Dionysian art. Nietzsche says that they are two main forms of art: the Apollonian and Dionysian. Apollo is the Greek god representing self-control, common sense, harmony, while his opposite is Dionysus, the god of wine, orgy, wildness and passion. The depictive art, and especially sculpture would share the same features with Apollo, while Nietzsche considers music as the essence of Dionysus. By using this reference, we could then oppose an art based on an ideal and human geometry to an art dealing more with the notion of chaotic elements and trance. Telling that this division rules visual art or music would be easy, there will be always work on the edge or in between.²³ But here we could use and apply these difference between an Apollonian and Dionysian art to the differences existing between landscape and nature. Understanding that human work, for economical, practical and aesthetical reasons, has

²¹ About the influence of Jakob Böhme on Early-Romanticism, we could enlarge the discussion by referring to this book: Paola Mayer.1999. *Jena Romanticism and its Appropriation of Jakob Böhme. Theosophy, Hagiography, Literature*. Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press.

²² Philipp Otto Runge, *Hinterlassene Schriften von Philipp Otto Runge, Mahler: Herausgegeben von dessen ältestem Bruder*, 1840-41, ed. Daniel Runge, 2 vols, Hamburg,p.16.

²³ We could develop this question by studying for example the *Bacchus* (1496-98) from Michelangelo.

contributed on creating landscape by organizing nature into a harmonic place, we can say that nature has been slowly changed into landscape. Hence, we can assume that, as being a self-minded human construction based on rules and culture, landscape could correspond to this apollonian art. A landscape is also a sort of frame, a logical point of view on the surrounding: a window opened on nature.

If we stand out of this frame, we might now be able to ask what is nature? Is nature a movement, an infinite repetition of cycles we can't understand?

Nature can be seen more as a multiplication of complex process, which moves, slows down and accelerates. Defining nature as chaotic would be still and again a human idea characterizing the opposite of men's order. In visual arts, dealing with nature joins more the idea of a Dionysian art, not anymore an apollonian art.²⁴ How could we express nature in visual art?

Escaping this human landscape, we can try to reach this silent and blank feeling we have now in front of nature. It is not anymore about putting personal, human feelings and ideas into nature, but more a research of sharing this complex process made of motion, colors and forms.²⁵ This approach of nature, standing in an opposite direction of a geometrical based landscape, can reach an idea of trance. Trance as a state of mind, including the presence of cycles and pattern, repetition and evolution of elements, is not here the shamanist trance, but more a sort of meditation: a way also to express that nature and human is a whole movement, ideas that I wanted to illustrate with the installation *Osla-Vena* (figure 7), mixing light box, video and sound.

There I would like to refer to the works of the Japanese photographer Taiji Matsue (born in 1963) whose photographs are showing distanced points of views on mountains, deserts forests (figures 8 and 9). These elements become from the distance sort of abstracts forms, or pattern, which for me are close to my approach of nature. On another level, the Icelandic painter Georg Gudni (born in 1961) shows parts of nature (mountains, plains) by dissipating and dissolving its forms (figure 10). With both artists, nature is not really categorized neither organized. The nature is expressed with a sort of humility that I would find close to my ideas of expressing nature.

Through my photographs, as in the series *Orga* (figure 11) and *Osla-Vena* (figure 12), focusing on elements such trees, earth, water, sky and other elements, I want to reach

²⁴ Stretching out this formal division between Dyonisiac and Apollonian art, we could enlarge the discussion by starting to say that landscape is like language, a beautified idea of nature.

²⁵ In that case, could we say that we would then try to express nature, rather than understanding it?

this expression of nature. Using double exposure (a technique which consist of combining several views by stopping the rolling of the film) while shooting the picture, in order to escape vanishing point and classical perspective, and to multiply spaces, I create those “all over”, reaching this feeling of trance, trying to leave away notions of time.

Through this sort of chaotic feeling, complex patterns of forms and colors, but referring to a known element like a tree, and despite the fact I m still “framing” my view, using a construction or deconstruction by double-exposing which could be seen as an obvious organized point of view, these photographs are another way to try to express nature and it creations-destructions, cycling motion, “free” from our time. I have then tried to express these ideas with a video called *Eyma* (figure 13 and 14), which mixes writing, visuals and sound. *Eyma* emphasizes the relationships between the visual forms and the rhythm or nuances of the sound. It intends to express nature and man as a whole, cycles and growing elements: life.²⁶

I will place inside this first circle a sort of revolving element, another circle where I focus on a more classical idea of depicting landscape.

Landscapes are human constructions full of codes and signs, which are able to reveal many messages: relationship man-nature, harmony, religion, mythology, narrations, but also political messages. We could think for example about this painting from the German artist Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) *Chausser in the Forest* (1813), (figure 15), depicting a French soldier lost in a forest, which has become a symbol for the German nationalism. By mentioning this example, we understand how landscape contains many layers of potential dialogs, which evolve through history.

Landscape being a construction of nature as we explained before, I would also refer to the work of the German contemporary photographer Andreas Gursky (born in 1955). Showing crowd, empty architecture and surroundings, scenery at the edge of a visual abstraction, Gursky’s photographs (figures 16 and 17) build landscapes, which reflect a society based on consumerism. His composition and the emptiness of his photographs evoke certainly the esthetic from German romantic artists like Friedrich²⁷. With Gursky,

²⁶ This is paradox in the sense that editing, post-production in video or sound is of course a very logical process.

²⁷ About this subject, we could refer to this publication about Andreas Gurski: Galassi, Peter, 2001, *Andreas Gursky, The Museum of Modern Art, New York*, Museum of Modern Art Books, Harry N. Abrams.

the idea of landscape is developed and adapted to the present of a post-industrial society.

The works of Gursky or Friedrich, but also the artists like Frederick Catherwood (1799-1854), (figure 18) or Piranesi (1720-1778), (figure 19), who show in different ways the ineluctable action of nature on human achievements and the stimulation of an imaginary universe, interest me in the process of showing landscape.

The series of landscape *Untitled* (figures 20 to 25), which are photographs taken in Iceland and France, try to reveal this subtle relationship of human traces with nature. Traces evoke the idea of time passing, as the esthetic of ruins recalls history and the past. It might be first simple traces (figures 22 and 23), where the boundaries between the action of man and surrounding are almost invisible, establishing a complex games of inner relationship, asking for a more attentive and detailed look.

But there is also this esthetic about a nature, which is recovering the urban places, the buildings. Maybe we also do think the other way around: it is an esthetic about the buildings, which have gained a new dimension, a new aura? This esthetic of ruins can be a glorified fantasy of the past and the history. Source of inspiration, allegories, contemplation, ruins become part of a landscape which may build a poetic dimension that I would find expressed in the movies of Andrey Tarkovsky, such as *Stalker* (1979) or *Nostalgia* (1983), works, which as stand as a major influence of my photographs. In those movies, the photography, which reveals landscape and ruins contributing to establish a dimension of fantastic and contemplation, leaves us the possibilities to meditate on the value and the means of a society confronting nature.

Through landscape and its poetic dimension, there are infinite resources for the imaginary.

Therefore, some photographs of this series *Untitled* also present ruins or places, which don't belong anymore to a name, a specific place. They become landscape about we can dream, draw an imaginary history: a starting point for the transformation of the unknown or a forgotten reality.²⁸

If landscape is an interpretation of nature, creating landscape is a way to use nature in order to reflect questions emerging within a society, but also to express messages, ideologies, religion, philosophy or politics, and question the relationship and actions of

²⁸ A landscape is also a garden, a sort of ideal space, which refers to our own experience and tastes. Is landscape creating a kind of utopia, meaning that it symbolizes also a place, which is not, a place which would project our vision of a world, rather than an ideal and ideological world?

man towards nature; nevertheless a landscape is also a mirror of our imagination, an infinite source of dreams and fantasies. If nature, by its “silent” unreachable presence, can’t be translated but more expressed or shared,²⁹ we would here find an impossibility to use our narrative methods. But landscape, the consequence of a human projection on nature, could stand therefore as one of the primary elements of story-telling, and an infinite source for poetry.

Landscape reflects also obviously the will of our society to organize, classify, challenge and control nature. These questions lead us to question more the society itself, and maybe to understand more its mechanisms and systems, a subject that we will develop now.

²⁹ Could we use the word “sharing” to define the work of Land Artists such as Andy Goldsworthy?

METROPOLIS

Inside the circles of nature and landscape comes “naturally” another concentric element, which speaks more about society itself, as sort of search for questioning and critics of its inner systems. I would call this circle “Metropolis”. The term is inspired by different works, which have led me to these questions and to the need to express it in my work. In literature, works such as *The Trial* (1925) and *The Castle* (1926) by Franz Kafka (1883-1924) or *The Tatar Steppe* (1940) by Dino Buzzati (1906-1972) are introducing this notion of absurdity of a system, the vain human dimension in the industrial society. Such dystopia and science-fiction works as the *Metropolis* (1927) by Fritz Lang (1890-1976), *1984* (1949) by Georges Orwell (1903-1950), *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) or the movie *Brazil* (1985) by Terry Gilliam (born in 1940), which show the evolution and oppressive presence of urbanity, also inspire the name of this circle and are references for the content and the questions of my work. The Metropolis circle is focusing on a trial of understanding and interrogating some mechanisms of society through different concentric circles of interests: the virtual worlds, religion or tourism. It is an extension and a multiplication of the first part Eyma, in the sense that the circle Metropolis is showing how nature is challenged by society and its technologies, that make people tend to escape and divide themselves totally from nature, to reach a sort of immersion in a self-contemplation.

The questions about the relationships between nature and society are obviously very important, as I will start to speak about a work that concerns virtual worlds. *Tales of a Sea Cow* is a multimedia work that describes recent scientific research which reveal new discoveries made after the first ever translation of animal thought: that of the now extinct Steller Sea Cow. The first decoding of animal communication, that of a 22 minutes extract of sub-aquatic songs into words and visuals has revealed an astonishing analysis of human society through our technological evolution. Observing the expansion of both the real and virtual worlds, the sea cow’s song is presented as a testimony, a critique of the ineluctable human desire for a true separation of the body

and mind. The proliferation of virtual or “meta-worlds” or the larger, more all-encompassing “Metavers” are all variants of three-dimensional digital environments where humans interact as “avatars” without relying on physical interactions. Being on-line worlds, the virtual space may be considered as a utopia, a true “non-space”.

Combining many of the possibilities offered by existing web-based modalities (chat, meeting, friend networks, economy, culture, sex, education, art, politics, religion...) these virtual worlds promise to answer the inherent human desires for freedom and success.

Since the introduction of digital “property”, the use of virtual worlds as a marketing device necessarily required the presence of a company (the virtual governments) which rules the meta-world, showing a tendency to simply extend the institutions of the real world into that of the virtual. This is not a true utopia or even a dystopia, but an eternal reproduction of the real; a true “replica”.

Could we use the term from Baudrillard “simulacra” to enlarge the meaning of the word “replica”? If virtual worlds could be defined in these words “It is hyperreal: the product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere”,³⁰ we would see in these meta-worlds an example of the achievement of the simulacra by the replacement, or the superseding of a world by a simulated copy? Nevertheless, it would be maybe early to assume now such a statement about virtual worlds, in the sense that the popularity and the accessibility of these interfaces are still not surrounding us as much as do for example mass media, information, or advertising: in our world owning of a computer and then having a permanent access to the Internet is still not so generalized or common for everyone.

Hence I would prefer for now to use the term of “replica”, which I think reveals more the essence of virtual worlds (a copy of the real world systems very distinct from the notions of utopia and dystopia), referring also to the crucial effect of virtual worlds on the body (a self-reproduction, a duplication), a point that we will develop now.

The existence as an avatar obviously excludes physical interaction, we understand that intentions, actions, wishes, strategies, desires, ideas and constructions are created by a physical being who is representing him/herself through this online ‘screen’. Virtual influences real as real influences virtual, creating an infinite game of inner relationship.

³⁰ Jean Baudrillard, 1988, *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster, Stanford University Press, Stanford, p. 167.

Influenced by the idea of virtual world as a “perfect Panopticon”³¹ (a place where we don’t know when and by who we are being watched), my project is mainly focusing on the effects of virtual worlds on the body-mind (distinct from the idea of the separate body and mind).

For these effects on the body-mind, the project is partly inspired by the ideas of the Canadian thinker Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980), a figure who, we should remember, stands as an influence for the philosopher Jean Baudrillard, if we think of the relationships that exist between the seminal studies of McLuhan on the proliferation and the structures of media, the influence of media on society and the ideas developed by Baudrillard through the notion of simulacra and hyperrealism. Here we will focus on the interpretation that McLuhan writes in *Understanding Media* (1964), of the Narcissus myth, which is describing the basic effects of a media:

The Greek myth of Narcissus is directly concerned with a fact of human experience, as the word Narcissus indicates. It is from the Greek word *narcosis*, or numbness. The youth Narcissus mistook his own reflection in the water for another person. This extension of himself by mirror numbed his perceptions until he became the servomechanism of his own extended or repeated image. The nymph Echo tried to win his love with fragments of his own speech, but in vain. He was numb. He had adapted to his extension of himself and had become a closed system.³²

³¹The chapter *Panopticism* by the French philosopher Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), where he shows how the architectural figure invented by Jeremy Bentham, the “Panopticon” reflects the emergence of the discipline’s structures in the history of our society, help us here to develop this idea of “perfect panopticon”. The virtual world would achieve the form of the Panopticon itself, by creating an interface, where we don’t know when and by who we are being watched. Foucault says that the Panopticon even allows the one who observe to be observed by others observers: “an observer may observe, at a glance, so many different individuals, also enables everyone to come and observe anyone”. We might not follow this remark completely in the sense that the company, which created the world, controls the virtual world. Nevertheless the company belongs to the laws of the state where its corporate buildings are constructed, thus we would understand that virtual worlds could be then considered as a “perfect panopticon”. Virtual worlds would, in any case, allow multiplying this secret and anonymous gaze, and therefore create a context where everybody is being watched (even the company, by the government). This situation of a constant watching results in that everybody is watched and therefore controlled. This process of watching becomes naturally a sort of surveillance, a fact which is perfect for a silent and irresistible discipline, Foucault says: “It has become a transparent building in which the exercise of power may be supervised by society as a whole”. We could also refer to the Panopticon and this sentence from Foucault to describe the actual impressive and increasing tendency of friend-networks such as Facebook and MySpace, who reflect this process: watching-survey-discipline. For further readings and developments about this very contemporary subject, we should refer to this precious essay: Magali Uhl, *Intimité panoptique. Internet ou la communication absente*, *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* 2002/1, n° 112, p. 151-168.

³² McLuhan Marshall, 1964, 2003, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*; 1st Ed. McGraw Hill, NY; reissued by Gingko Press, Corte Madera, p. 63.

With this extract from *Understanding Media*, we could use the metaphor of the duplication of Narcissus by the mirror (the reflection in the water) as an example of explaining the basic system of virtual world that we defined before as a “replica”. But through this text, we understand how human, through media and virtual worlds, is more and more duplicating him/herself, creating several digital extensions of him/herself, which can be understood as real illusions of consideration-recognition, or artificial dialogs. The duplication is virtual, but the consequence are real in the sense that we are facing a dead-end paved of mirrors: we don’t realize that we’re increasingly watching ourselves, spending time in a passive self-contemplation, which is nowadays becoming a repetitive, compulsive and addictive behavior. It is interesting here, as an echo to this growing ubiquitous and gigantic behavior, to note what Peter Greenaway said about narcissism: “Narcissim, our 20th century disease.”³³

Through these different ideas, we have to understand that my work about virtual worlds is not meant to bring a final judgment about a phenomenon that is constantly evolving. It is rather a way to observe that virtual worlds are an interface, an alternate view of those crucial elements, which combine to create our society based on consumerism, advertising, mass media, social security and self-improvement. If the study of virtual worlds allows us to understand and question some mechanisms of our society, it will be interesting to develop this criticism on others sides of society.

By showing how we challenge nature and our will in to escape nature by finally replicating over and over our projections, the Metropolis circle speaks also about another interpretation of nature, which influences and determines our behavior and social activity: a concentric circle which would revolve around certain sides of religion. We could draw a parallel between the ideas of the French philosopher, Guy Debord (1931-1994), leader of the Situationist International and film director, and certain characters of religion that we would like to discuss here. Sharing a similar questioning³⁴ with Marshall McLuhan, in the sense that they both develop ideas about how the nature of social relations is determined by the forms of communications, Guy Debord is known for his term of “Spectacle”, which is defined in the *Society of Spectacle* (1967). We could try to explain this notion by saying that the spectacle refers to a media and

³³ Peter Greenaway, 2000, *Interviews*, Edited by Vernon Gtas and Marguerite Gras, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, p. 89.

³⁴ This is the subject also of a late and debated affirmation by Guy Debord himself in his *Commentaires sur la Societé du Spectacle* (1988), XII, p. 51-52.

consumer society, organized around the consumption of images, commodities and spectacle. The concept of spectacle refers also to the vast apparatus of capitalism, to all the different elements and means of the power except direct forces, which are used to relegate the subjects to a social manipulation and to hide to nature and effects of the capitalism's power and deprivations. We understand this definition through Guy Debord words: "The spectacle is the moment when the commodity has attained the total occupation of social life".³⁵

We should here mention that Baudrillard's simulacra and hyperrealism are partly influenced by Debord's spectacle: both of them theorized the radical influence operated by the development of the consumer and media society, and that media were a new step in that transformation of relationships (abstraction), where people are technologically mediated, the result being the reducing of the audience to passive spectators.³⁶ In that sense we understand how people are "mediated" and controlled by the consumer power, which consist in commodities and its advertising: the images: "The spectacle is not a collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images".³⁷ We understand with this quote how it is crucial to try to understand that there are overwhelming images constructing a network that either divides or links people in a society, which becomes an extension of a power, an illustrated "spectacle".

Here we could find a parallel action in the presentation of religion. For example, in the religious iconology, the Christian episodes of the New Testament contain some universal codes expressed through the composition, the figures and the action, which are building a pattern of recognition in the sense that each could relate to it. Therefore the episodes can gather people in a whole ensemble, a belief, which is in the same time have also been able to create a social security through certain dogma, the fears of the Last Judgment and the political and economical use of the notion of sin.

My photography project *The Bible* explores these different ideas, by exploring the translations from the presentation of religion to advertising. This on going series containing so far two episodes, *The Announcement* (figure 26) and *Resurrection* (figure 27) asks questions about the importance and the value of religious codes and symbols. It presents the famous scenes in a surrealistic and humoristic ways, playing with the

³⁵ Guy Debord, 1967, *La Société du Spectacle*, Buchet-Chastel, Paris.

³⁶ We could enlarge the discussion by understand the differences between spectacle and simulacra. A first idea would be to consider that from Debord thinks mainly in terms of commodity or images while Baudrillard think more in terms of self-referential signs.

³⁷ Guy Debord, 1967, *La Société du Spectacle*, Buchet-Chastel, Paris.

classic models of representations of the episodes in Italian or Flemish painting. Without wanting to insult, attack or not respect the personal beliefs, it tries to draw the translation of an illusion to another one.

Could we say that the power of dividing, gathering and controlling, which is sometimes contained in the presentation of the Bible episodes, has found new display-spaces with the emergence of advertising, even though religion is also using a mutation of itself in an advertising machine? I use the example of the Easter egg (figure 27), which is connected to the episode of the Resurrection, to show how the product has replaced the content or message: the essential spectacle of an ideology has evolved through new forms, creating multiple social networks through the marketing and the advertising of its ideologies.

The Bible series tries to play with some of those “mediated images” in order to divert them from the logic of a “spectacle” based on ideology, advertising and power, trying to play also with the rigidity of the religious dogmas. By comparing the presentation of religion with the effects of consumer society, I want, as earlier with the question of tourism, to try to ask if illusion, simulation, entertainment, advertising, information or mass-media are in a constant state of replication, a sort of complex metamorphosis which can not stop to extend itself, growing everywhere as new multiple body-interfaces which are permanently looking at each other; a phenomenon that virtual world reflect perfectly.

These are ideas that I want to discuss in my work, through a use of story-telling who plays with the mechanisms of mass-media, trying to divert its methods, in order to reach a more pertinent criticism.

Through these different concentric avatars of Metropolis : virtual worlds, religion, I try to question these systems and mechanisms of our society, to understand and criticize the effects of these elements on the person and by extension on nature (Eyma) ; showing again how all these themes or circles are linked, correlated and constantly influencing each other, building this cycle of narration, a poetry of story-telling.

CONCLUSION: THE END OF THE BEGINNING

Through these different but concentric circles from nature to virtual worlds, I have tried to sketch diverse roads I would like to explore as an artist.

Creating a corpus of works, which are part of a whole ensemble that I described as an imaginary world, is not a way of isolating my work from conjectural debates, neither a trial to stand as a pseudo mystic-creator of dreams. It is more an attempt to create a micro-cosmogony where fiction meets real, to reflect questions, issues, and feelings about a world and humanity I am fascinated by.

Using writing, photography, sound and video, allows to me challenge the presentation of my “poetic-myths”. I want to experiment further on with photographic altars, digital or interactive books and veejaying, which I see as complementary compositions and narrative forms that could connect and join in a sort of expanded form of “cinema” evolving under the influences of new media.

In my work, I would like with the help of the interaction of these different media, to understand, ask questions and raise multiple dialogs in order to put my work in the paths of a sharing context, in close connection to this essential organic storytelling tradition we should always try to challenge, to express a poetic narration, a secretive instant dream.

As a conclusion for this academic cycle, I would say that I have to start to learn. And, after all, but before a last footnote: is this essay finally a post-modern myth?³⁸

³⁸ Chip Morningstar, 1993, *How to Deconstruct Almost Anything-My Post Modern Adventure*, <http://www.fudco.com/chip/deconstr.html>.

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APPENDIX

Sam Taylor Wood, Series *Soliloquy*, 1998-1999.



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

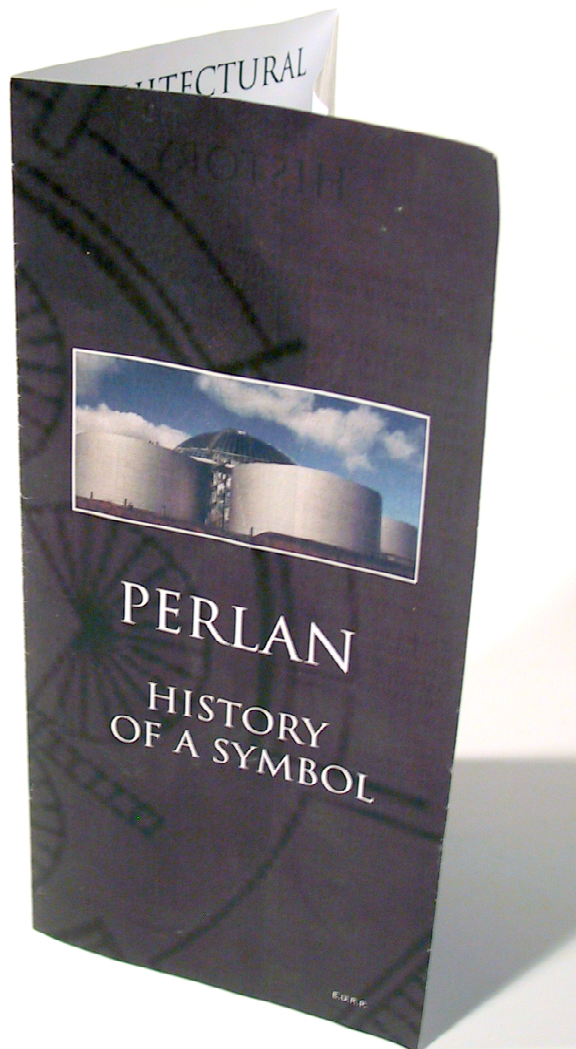


Figure 3.



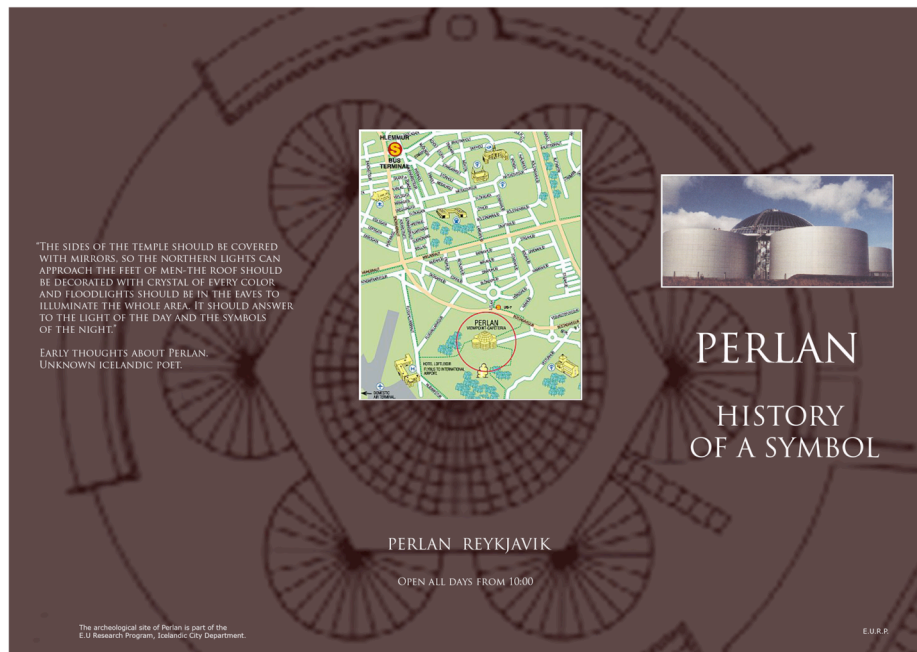
"Tribute to Karahnjukar", 2006.
Details.

Figure 4.



"Perlan, History of a symbol", 2007
Touristic brochure.
Open : 21 cm x 29,7 cm. Closed : 21 cm x 10 cm.

Figure 5.



HISTORY

BUILT AROUND 1985-1991 ON A HILL CALLED OSKUHILLI, THE "PERLAN" IS MADE OF SIX ALUMINUM CYLINDRICAL STRUCTURES SUPPORTING A DOME MADE OF STEEL AND GLASS.

THIS SPECTACULAR BUILDING, DESIGNED BY INGIMUNDUR SVEINSSON, IS 25.7 METRES HIGH COMBINING UTILITY AND SYMBOLISM. THE CYLINDRICAL PARTS WERE ORIGINALLY TANKS SERVING THE FAMOUS WATER SYSTEM ESTABLISHED IN ICELAND. AS A STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION CENTRE, IT WAS A KEY-ELEMENT IN THE ORGANIZATION OF RESOURCES FOR THE OLD CITY OF REYKJAVIK.

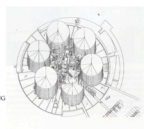
BUILT DURING THE TIME OF PRIME MINISTER DAVID ODDSSON, PERLAN IS ALSO KNOWN AS AN IMPORTANT NATIONAL LANDMARK AND A POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENT. PERLAN WAS CERTAINLY A SOCIAL PLACE FOR GATHERINGS, AND PROBABLY A CRUCIAL ELEMENT IN THE INSTITUTE OF TOURISTIC STRATEGY.

RISE ON THE TOP OF THE CITY, PERLAN WAS CALLED "THE TEMPLE OF DREAMS", STANDING AS A POWERFUL SYMBOL OF ICELANDIC SOCIETY AND ITS UNIQUE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES.

A SYMBOL OF RESISTANCE DURING THE EU INVASION LED BY THE FRENCH FORCES, PERLAN HAD BEEN USED FOR A SHORT PERIOD AS A STRATEGIC CENTER FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, AS A RESULT OF THE DAMAGES CAUSED BY THE HYDROGEN WAR, THE INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE AND ITS UTILITY HAVE BEEN ABANDONED.

RECENTLY, PRIVATE FUNDS HAVE HELPED TO RESTORE THE DOME AND RENOVATE THE STRUCTURES, TO REVIVE THE "NORTHERN JEWEL" IN HARMONY WITH ITS ORIGINAL ARCHITECTURE. RECENT RESEARCHES HAVE SHOWN THAT PERLAN HAD BEEN USED IN THE LAST PERIOD BEFORE THE ERA OF ICELANDIC CITY AS A TRADING OR MARKET PLACE. SOME OLD RUINS DATING BACK TO THE FIRST WORLD WARS HAVE BEEN ALSO RECENTLY DISCOVERED AROUND THE SITE OF PERLAN.

THIS PLAN SHOWS THE PLACE WHERE THE SOCIAL AND TRADING ACTIVITY PROBABLY TOOK PLACE DURING THE ERA OF REYKJAVIK CITY.

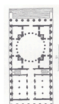


ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

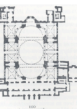
THE PLAN OF PERLAN: THE DOME AND THE CYLINDRICAL STRUCTURES COMPARED TO MORE ANCIENT BUILDINGS SHOWS THE INTEREST AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NORTHERN JEWEL IN THE HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE.



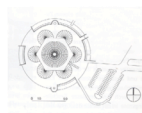
PANTHEON, ROMA, 118-126 AC.



HAGIA SOPHIA, ISTANBUL, 532-537 AC.



UNITED STATE SUBTREASURY, NEW YORK, 1842 AC.



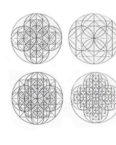
AN ARCHITECTURAL ACHIEVEMENT OF PERLAN ARCHITECTURE COMBINING SYMBOL AND UTILITY: PERLAN, REYKJAVIK CITY, 1985-1991.



SYMBOL

STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT PERLAN BELONGED TO AN ENSEMBLE OF STRATEGIC PLACES, SUCH AS BUILDINGS LIKE ORKOVITA, "REYKJAVIK ENERGY HEADQUARTERS" AND THE ARCHITECTURAL ENSEMBLE OF KRINGLAN INCLUDING ITS THEATER. THESE BUILDINGS WERE ALSO PART OF A COMPLICATED GEOGRAPHICAL SYMBOLISM REVEALING A COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MYSTICS OF POWER, ENERGY AND TRADING.

THE GEOMETRY OF THE ARCHITECTURAL PLAN OF PERLAN REVEALS A COMPLICATED PATTERN OF CODES AND SYMBOLS THAT REFERS TO A VERY LONG HERITAGE AND UNIVERSAL TRADITION OF MYSTICISM.



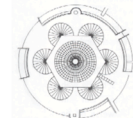
THE 14 KEYS OF SEMIOTIC OF STONE-BUILDERS, IN: OUI STEINMETZ, HALLEIN, 1980.



D.A. FREIER, IN WORKS OF J. BEHMAN, 1764.



ROBERT FLUIDO, UTRUSQUE COSMOS, 1617.



PERLAN PLAN, 1985-1991.

"Perlan, History of a symbol", 2007
Details.

Figure 6.



" Osla Vena ", detail.



" Osla Vena ", detail.

Figure 7.

Taiji Matsue, *Iran*, 1996



Figure 8.

Australia, 1996.



Figure 9.

Georg Gudni, *Untitled*.



Figure 10.

Series : *Osla Vena, Orga*



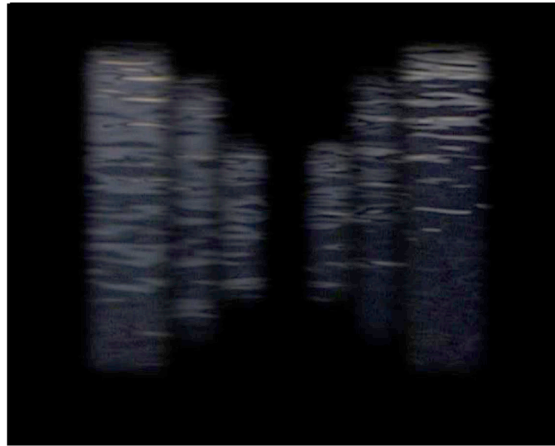
" Orga IV ", 2006.
Chromogenic print mounted between plexiglass sheets.
32,2 cm x 47,7 cm.

Figure 11.



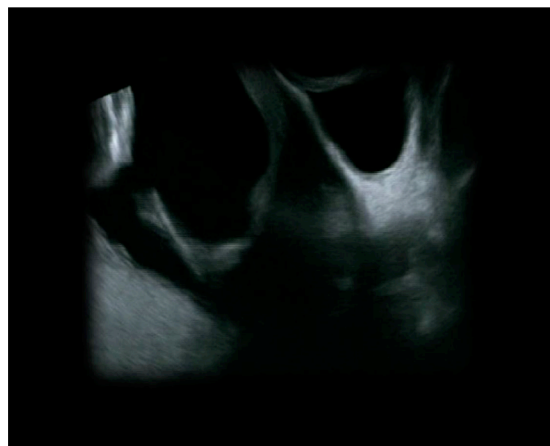
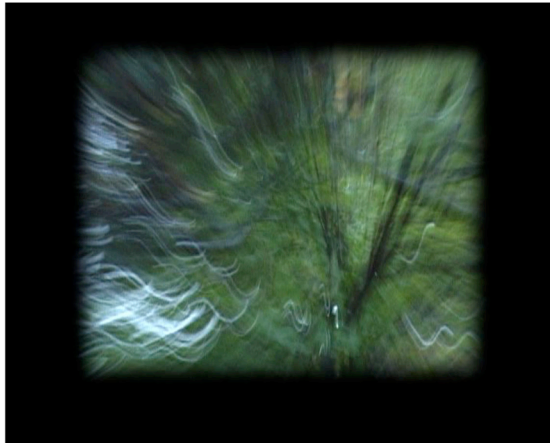
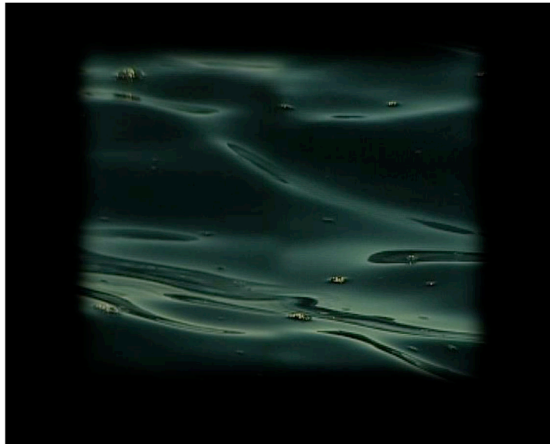
" Osla-Vena ", 2004.
Chromogenic print mounted on aluminium plate.
75 cm x 122 cm.

Figure 12.



Stills from " Eyma ".
14mn 44.
2006.

Figure 13.



Stills from " Eyma ".
14mn 44.
2006.

Figure 14.

Caspar David Friedrich, *Chausser in the Forest*, 1813.



Figure 15.

Andreas Gurski, *Rhin.*



Figure 16.

Schiphol, 1994.



Figure 17.

Frederick Catherwood



Figure 18.

Piranesi

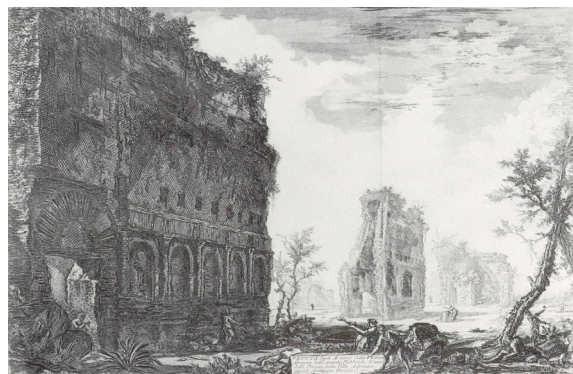


Figure 19.

Series: "Untitled".



"Untitled", 2006.
Chromogenic print.
76 cm x 122 cm.

Figure 20.



"Untitled", 2006.
Chromogenic print.
76 cm x 122 cm.

Figure 21.



"Untitled", 2007.
Chromogenic print.
76 cm x 122 cm.

Figure 22.



"Untitled", 2007.
Chromogenic print.
76 cm x 122 cm.

Figure 23.



"Untitled", 2006.
Chromogenic print.
76 cm x 122 cm.

Figure 24.



" A Last Subway Ticket Before We Melt ", 2006.
Chromogenic print.
76 cm x 122 cm.

Figure 25.

Series *Bible*.



" The Announcement ", 2006.
Inkjet print and wooden-frame.
52 cm x 66,5 cm.

Figure 26.



" The Resurrection ", 2006.
Inkjet print and wooden-frame.
40 cm x 47 cm.

Figure 27.