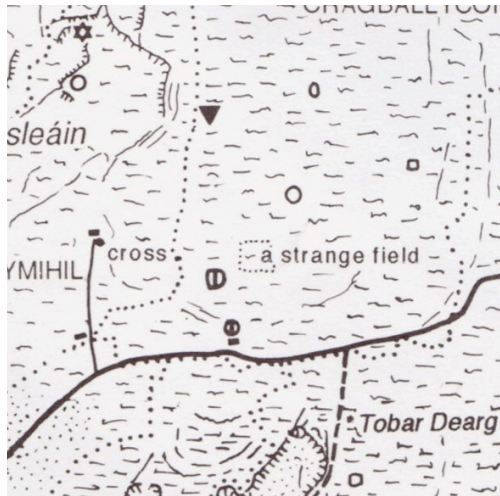# Screen as Landscape

Dan Hays
Fine Art PhD Thesis
Centre for Useless Splendour
Contemporary Art Research Centre
Kingston University
2008-2012

Guide Book

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1) **Abstract**

People have become accustomed to living with – and inside of – the media screen. Not just in the cinema or living room, but more pervasively with mobile telephones, advertising hoardings, and computer interfaces. It has infiltrated the art gallery, its high definition, contrast ratio and immersive scale tending to blind the audience to its mediating presence.

And what about the genre of landscape today, beyond the latest BBC wildlife spectacular, computer simulated Hollywood blockbuster, video game or Google Earth? As the screen populates the cultural landscape, and increasingly mediates between the actual landscape and humanity, where are the points of contemporary artistic reflection on – or resistance to – the screen's increasing ubiquity and transparency?

The thesis comprises three components to be taken as a whole: Screen as Landscape, an exhibition of seven paintings; Touch Screen, documenting the development of practical research; and Screen as Landscape, a dissertation examining contemporary artworks across a diversity of media, including film, photography, printmaking, painting, and computer-generated imagery. Supplementing these, a Guide Book offers an overview of the thesis: its origins in an established practice; its developing themes and research methods, emerging out of making and writing; its resolution into three interrelated parts; and its distinctiveness within a range of recent curatorial projects.

Echoing the landscape theme, the thesis takes a journeying form rather than being fixed in a specific geographic, art-historical, or theoretical situation. Landscape is salvaged as a live genre for visual art, as a web of interrelated perceptual and symbolic forms that are insistently present. This is despite landscape's annexation as an art-historical anachronism after Post-Impressionism, ripe for nostalgia and

parody; its default appearance as seamless photographed or simulated backdrop to fantasies of wilderness and escape; or as a cartographic plane for the projection of information and ideas of control, containment, or exploitation.

Landscape is an idea born of familiarity and estrangement, with which artistic interventions with screen technology can actually offer insights. Through its apparatuses – its obtrusive lenses and artificial surfaces – the screen can reveal forms of imaging analogous to – yet not identical with – the perceptual and cultural formation of landscape, between experiences of nearness and distance, presence and absence, discovery and loss.

Screen as Landscape proposes an inter-medial approach, describing a field of contemporary concerns with potent art-historical resonances, harbouring essential questions about human subjectivity in the face of the screen's replacement of landscape with depthless surfaces. For the screen interface threatens subjectivity through the fluid integration of perspectival viewpoints, textual or graphical information, and networked interconnectivity. Through the immediacy of spatial and temporal proximities, and the replacement of physical location by virtual access points, the dimension of depth is increasingly lost to perception. The screen must be landscaped to counter the screening of landscape – the supplanting of atmospheric, ambiguous, and multisensory encounter.

Against the backdrop of cyberspace, its fathomless depths and infinity of virtual frames, Screen as Landscape performs a bold or foolhardy attempt on the sheer, inhuman edifice of the screen.
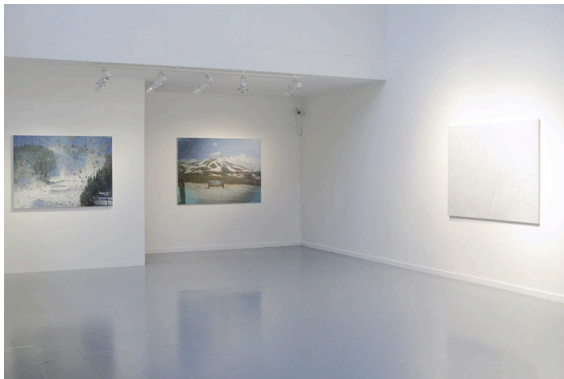
2) **Inventory**

Screen as Landscape

Exhibition at the Stanley Picker Gallery, 7th-17th December 2011

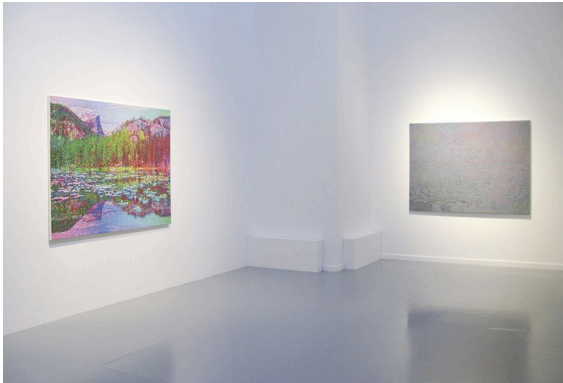*Colorado Impression 16c* (2006), oil on canvas, 122 x 163cm
Colorado Impression 16b (2006), oil on canvas, 137 x 183cm

Colorado Snow Effect 9 (2010), oil on canvas, 107 x 142cm
Colorado Snow Effect 14 (2011), oil on canvas, 122 x 163cm
Late Snow (2011), oil on canvas, 122 x 163cm

Nymph Lake (2010), oil on canvas, 137 x 183cm
Giverny (2011), oil on canvas, 137 x 183cm

An accompanying statement booklet Screen as Landscape visually documents the genesis and development of the painting *Colorado Snow Effect 9* – the imagined return of the image to its source location in Colorado, and the impossibility of representing a painting in printed form.

A screen-printed poster was also commissioned for the exhibition, reproduced in the document Touch Screen.

As a supplement to the exhibition, three printmaking works will be displayed at the PhD viva: *Spring Snow*, *Future Capital* and *Colorado Winter Wonderland*.

Touch Screen
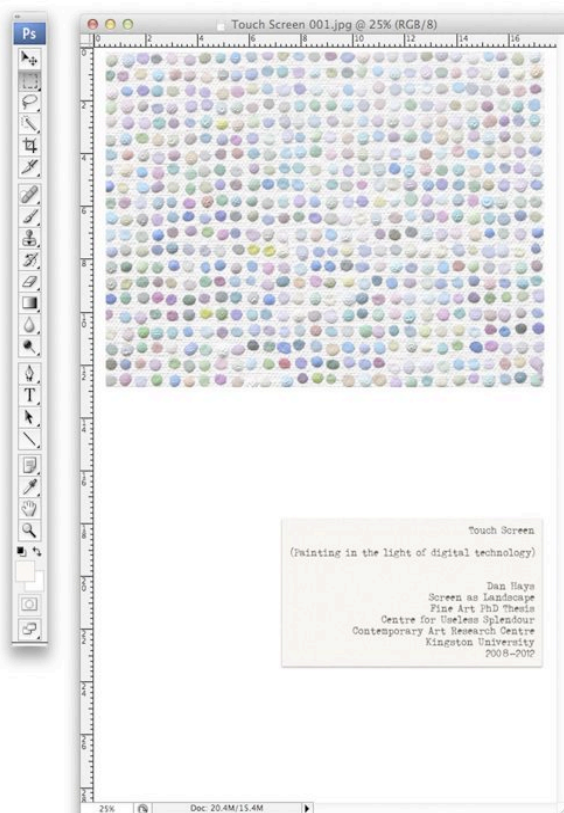
A chronological and simulated scrapbook of source images, art works, exhibitions, texts, events, technical processes, accidents and discoveries. In documenting most of the work produced since 2008, and a selection from before, it provides in printed form an impression of creative processes, and many of the developing thoughts around, and connections between, various projects as reported at www.danhays.org and other websites over the course of the PhD. Visual documentation of the exhibition Screen as Landscape is included in its pages.

Screen as Landscape

A dissertation comprising nineteen chapters, examining works by twelve contemporary artists: Marion Coutts, Emma Hart, Guy Sherwin, Niamh O'Malley, Helen Sear, Allan Otte, Mark Lewis, John Gerard, Christiane Baumgartner, Susan Collins, Andy Harper, and Tim Head.

An exploration of art-historical landscape subgenres, such as the Picturesque or Impressionism, provides a context for the introduction of ideas drawn from art theory, perceptual phenomenology, digital aesthetics, the philosophy of technology, and landscape theory. Through a staged procession through fourteen chapters, individual works or projects are treated in isolation, each introducing a new or different approach to the subject of landscape mediation and visual perception. Amidst this building picture, six contextualising chapters, Prospect, Foreground, Screen, Landscape, Estrangement, and Background, offer deeper reflection on the relationship between landscape and the screen, between human perception and imaging technology.
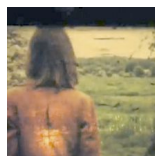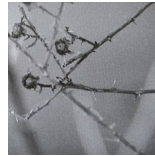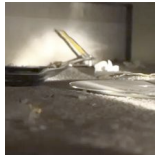
3) **Journey**

a) *Origins*

Since the late nineties my work has almost exclusively been oriented towards the genre of landscape, increasingly through the agency of online-sourced digital photography and video. Broadly speaking, the paintings attempt to reconcile the contrasting visual qualities of viscous paint on canvas and the televisual image, representing in oily pigmented mud the screen's interior light. Initially the works were redolent of noisy analogue video, then later the compressed or corrupted low-resolution digital image. Technical and thematic developments were incremental, often due to chance discoveries, and informed by the increasing use of photo-manipulation software.

In 1999 the website of another Dan Hays living in Colorado was discovered. His 'Galleria' pages were posted with numerous low-resolution, data-compressed images of the Rocky Mountain landscape where he lives, alongside biographical information about his life and family, and his work in Internet publishing.[1] Amazingly, his pictures exhibited exactly the kind of expressive quasi-impressionist digital effects that I was already drawn to, and with his permission an extensive series of paintings using these pictorial ready-mades was embarked on. Later on, trawls of websites across the whole state of Colorado expanded the range of source material, including web-cameras situated in scenic locations such as ski resorts.

Although largely confined to the rigid matrix of the digital raster, experiments with various painting techniques have served to offer the sheer surface of the screen tangible form. A combination of preparatory digital manipulations and painting processes have

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[1] Dan's website is still up and running: www.countertrade.com/dan/frame.htm. A few pages are reproduced in the volume Touch Screen.

explored many things in combination: mirroring and repetition; colour modulation, exaggeration, divisionism, and inversion; image compression and corruption; thresholds of recognition and noise.

Over many years I have been invited to account for my practice in artist's talks, encouraging clarifications of its conceptual bases. Early on these included links between impressionist technique and image compression, and some thinking around symbolist or romantic conceptions of the genre of landscape, as well as developing ideas about the Internet being a 'parallel wilderness.'

In 2006 my touring exhibition Impressions of Colorado, organised by Southampton City Art Gallery, marked an important moment for reflection on the Colorado project, the catalogue including an extensive interview.[2] Following this, three writing commissions for Culture Machine, /Seconds, and the Journal of the New Media Caucus, helped to consolidate thinking around my work, and its relationship to digital media and the genre of landscape.[3]

b) *Arrival*

In 2007 the Fine Art PhD course at Kingston came to my attention and the opportunity was seized upon as a chance to produce work in a research setting alongside other artist practitioners, all inhabiting various rooms within the virtual Centre for Useless Splendour – a playful architectural metaphor that might provide refuge from the alienating context of the commercial art world, or simply an escape

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[2] The interview with Ben Tufnell is on my website: www.danhays. org/Coloradodistance.html. It appears in edited form in Touch Screen.

[3] www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/view/86/63, www.slashseconds.org /issues/003/001/articles/dhays/index.php, www.newmediacaucus.org/html/journal/issues. php?f=papers&time=2008. Excerpts from the last two can be found in Touch Screen.

from the solitary confinement of my studio. Most importantly, it had become clear over several years that although my work had found some curatorial correspondences with other artists, I had a developing sense of a related field of contemporary art practice, which had not been recognised. It was thus on a platform of wanting to reflect more deeply on my own work, alongside discovering a context for it amongst work by other artists, that I worked on a research proposal. Painting in the Light of Digital Technology, as it was titled, included a list of eleven 'interrelated conceptual frameworks, with the history of landscape painting as the common thread,'[4] including such diverse and unwieldy themes as: 'Web-cameras, surveillance and the aesthetics of functionality,' 'Iconography, spectacle, romanticism and the digital sublime,' and 'Data corruption, noise, thresholds of recognition, memory failure and loss' – to mention just three.

Clearly, the proposal hardly lacked ambition, and I blithely suggested that material would be 'sourced from philosophical, art historical and fictional texts, and a close reading of the work of a broad range of artists, both contemporary and modern. The ambit of the research will not be restricted to painting – a look at artists working with digital media will be essential.' However, I didn't name any contemporary artists, my attention drawn more alarmingly to an already burgeoning pile of landscape, digital aesthetics, and philosophy books. Indeed, it was evident that I only had vague ideas about contemporary artists through which the list of themes above might be inflected – Guy Sherwin, Helen Sear, and Tim Head perhaps being the only candidates.

In the proposal (and in interview), specific ideas or directions that practical work might take were not made clear, beyond continuing with 'more technical possibilities for exploring painting's

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⁴ From my initial monitoring report: www.danhays.org/initial monitoringreport2.html

poetic and expressive qualities within the confines of the grid.' The proposal suggested a discursive approach, open to chance discoveries and tangential lines of enquiry. How the thesis might be honed to form a coherent unity between practical experiments and writing was necessarily left open.

c)   *Practicalities*

Preparatory work and painting are predominantly visual processes, following hunches, likes and dislikes, in an absorbed flow of nebulous mental abstractions. Explaining prosaic technical micro-decisions, musings on why I was drawn to a particular image, or tentative excitement over possible meanings and relationships to contemporary art would have confounded the creative process entirely. When in production mode, it is barely possible to take notes or read, for successive working days, usually over many weeks, average 12 hours – necessary to complete what can seem an interminable, Sisyphean task. Fortunately, in the process of making work, large archives of computer files are accumulated, through which it is possible to revisit the making of works and associated sources of inspiration. A photographic record of works in progress was kept, to facilitate the recollection of the making of works in future documentation within the PhD thesis.

In December 2008, I designed and launched a website, www.danhays.org. Firstly, work going back fifteen years or more was documented with extensive notes, in order to bring conceptualisations of my practice up to the present. Following this, the slow accumulation of work produced through the PhD was recorded, with retrospective descriptions of thinking around it.

Very soon it became clear that my research had a methodology entirely split between making and writing, and that the writing itself would be divided between several areas: responding to the need to

account for the developing project within PhD progress reports and presentations, which were posted on the website as they occurred (www.danhays.org/uselesssplendour.html); invitations to give artist's talks at several art colleges, which began to be scripted; lectures and a published essay documenting experiments with lenticular printmaking as an artist case study with the Fine Art Digital Environment (FADE) research project at Chelsea College of Art & Design (2008-2009); and invitations to write about a work by Roderick Harris for Turps Banana magazine (2008),[5] and a catalogue essay for the painter Allan Otte (2010).[6] All of these activities contributed to the development of the thesis through its early and middle stages.

From commencement of the PhD, my antennae were out for possible artist case studies through which ideas might be tested and elaborated upon. Some fortuitous encounters, such as seeing Niamh O'Malley's work *Torch* by chance in her studio in Dublin when I was exhibiting there, or first encountering Susan Collins's and Christiane Baumgartner's work in a print exhibition alongside Tim Head in 2009, supplemented a growing list of art works through which close analysis might open up a novel approach to contemporary art practice, pertinent to the PhD project.

In July 2010, fellow doctoral student Emma Hart and I organised a two-day symposium titled Present Technology, hosted by the Contemporary Art Research Centre at Kingston University.[7] This provided an opportunity to invite some of the artists I was considering writing about to come and show work. They were Lizzie

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[5] Turps Banana, isuue 5.

[6] Allan Otte, *Efterbilleder/After-images* (gl Holtegaard, 2010). In adapted form, the essay appears in the chapter Verge of Screen as Landscape.

[7] The introduction to my day of the symposium is reproduced in Touch Screen.

Hughes, Andy Harper, Beth Harland, Malcolm Le Grice and Guy Sherwin, and their generous contributions greatly helped in the formulation of the developing thesis. Finding links and associations with other artist's work, highlighted by the enthusiastic responses of the participants in the symposium, offered a huge confidence boost to the project, whilst encouraging conceptualisations of a territory, newly named Screen as Landscape, with which my day of the symposium was titled.

It was clear that a shift in direction had happened, moving away from the medium-specific title Painting in the Light of Digital Technology to a genre-specific one, which could, perhaps less elusively than Screen as Landscape, be titled Landscape in the Light of Imaging Technology. The specifically digital was now considered as part of a technological continuum, reaching back through film, photography and the lens to the invention of linear perspective.

Over the next six months, Screen as Landscape was also the title for three artist's talks given to MA students at Wimbledon, Camberwell, and the RCA. Through these hour-long scripted lectures themes around landscape, perception and technology were increasingly transferred across from discussing my own work to the growing selection of artist case studies. Instead of using my own work to illustrate ideas drawn from art theory or perceptual phenomenology, works by others presented more definitive exemplars for analysis.

In a period exclusively writing through the spring of 2011 the written part of the thesis began to take shape, incorporating and expanding on the scripted lectures, which had examined works by Helen Sear, Allan Otte, Guy Sherwin and Christiane Baumgartner, slowly introducing others into the mix. The process was one of discussing works in isolation, in each case the intention being to introduce a new approach to ideas around screen and surface,

obtrusive imaging technology and depth perception, all against the backdrop of various landscape subgenres and scopic regimes.

Several ideas were found to re-emerge through the case studies, such as Romanticism's *rückenfigur* (the pictured transposition of the viewer), through works by Helen Sear, Mark Lewis, John Gerard, and Guy Sherwin. But more importantly, in terms of the coherence of the thesis as a whole, all the works offer perceptual challenges to the viewer. It was towards charting an interrelated field of aesthetic and phenomenological questions surrounding perception and landscape, highlighted, rather than subsumed, by imaging technology, that the thesis began to make an approach. And, in turn, some of my paintings were influenced by the writing: *Returning Wanderer*, which incorporates a hidden version of Friedrich's *rückenfigur*, and *Vail Pass*, which channels Christiane Baumgartner's and Allan Otte's depiction of highways through a malfunctioning webcam image, perhaps being the clearest examples.

At an early stage in the writing it became clear that links and contrasts, either between case studies or my own work, would not be made explicit in the final thesis. Connections are designed to accumulate and interweave for the reader/viewer in a manner similar to the process by which the thesis was constructed, which is linked to the perceptual ambiguities offered by all the works discussed, and the desire to maintain or salvage landscape as a complex phenomenon – as a fragile, yet live, contemporary subject, resistant to any simple definition or categorisation, and open to continuing explorations.

Through the PhD, paintings and prints were made in a free-ranging manner, with several exhibitions or commissions influencing choices of subject, medium and scale. These included the following: a solo exhibition at Zürcher Studio, New York (March 2009); a commission to produce a screen print for the Multiple Store, London (May 2009); group shows at Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin (July 2009), Tom Christoffersen Gallery, Copenhagen (November 2009), Payne

Shurvell Gallery, London (June 2010); and being invited to curate an exhibition at Charlie Dutton Gallery, London (October 2010).

Due to the specificities of these widely varying contexts, both architecturally and thematically, work had, to some extent, been made with these spaces in mind – not the abstract notion of an empty white box in which to house the products of three or more years' worth of un-exhibited practice. Saying this, all of my work is made to function in any context, even if it might be partly inspired by a particular exhibition theme or interior space. I always have just a handful of ideas for possible works to do next, and if a particular outside influence steers production in one direction, the likelihood is that previously conceived projects will be revisited with added urgency, and often with more certainty about their relevance, or lack of it, to a cumulative whole – by which my work is mentally pictured as it recedes into the past.

d)   *Destinations*

i)   Exhibition

By the spring of 2011, before the first intensive period of writing, a large body of work had been amassed, including fourteen paintings and several printmaking projects. As a body of work that might provide a coherent selection for a PhD exhibition at the Stanley Picker Gallery, I had some misgivings when returning to making work in the summer. There seemed to be several missing links in the diversity of its range, although difficult to describe beyond technical unfinished businesses, and subjective notions of narrative mood, tone or atmosphere. Happily, in the few months leading up to the show, three works were produced that would form the skeletal basis for the Screen as Landscape exhibition: *Giverny*, *Colorado Snow Effect 14*, and *Late Snow*.

Many works including prints were brought to the hang, and it was a process of trying things out in the space, finding what felt right – what might cover the range of my work, and suggestive associations with the artist case studies, without attempting the impossibility (and undesirability) of a definitive retrospective statement of the achievements of the PhD in visual form. This is not mystification, but merely an obvious statement about what exceeds verbal explication – the reason for producing visual work, and having a continuing reverence for its evocative possibilities, both singularly and in combination. All of my paintings function independently, entirely born of attentive, myopic involvement with the source image at hand and the technique being used. Each work is a response to previous experiments, both successes and failures. In this sense the exhibition includes the many works not presented in the final show.

By the time of selecting works for exhibition, the written component of the thesis had become a defocused memory, a potent semi-conscious influence, after six months away from it. Thus it is impossible to explain in any systematic way how the seven paintings relate to the writing and each other, beyond an intuited sense of their individual presences; their formal, expressive, and thematic differences within a collective whole. By this token, the exhibition fulfilled its purpose of visually complementing the textual analyses of the dissertation – different registers of communication intended to mutually augment each other.

ii)   Touch Screen

Documentation of the development of my work and thinking around it is to be found in the volume titled Touch Screen.

I had written at length about my work for the aforementioned artist's talks, monitoring reports, and published articles – provisionally considering that in adapted form they could function as

the basis for presenting my own work within the thesis. These included references to some of the artists I was writing about, along with many of the theoretical ways into the subject being developed. Partly to avoid repetition of ideas around screen technology, landscape and perception tackled by the dissertation Screen as Landscape, but more so, to offer a more accurate portrayal of how work actually comes into being, Touch Screen tries to explain the relatively simple, yet barely explicable, reasons for some strange decisions as work progressed.

It takes the form of a picture book, a roughly chronological and simulated scrapbook of source images, texts, music, events, accidents and discoveries that influenced my work over the last few years. In documenting most of the work undertaken through the PhD since 2008, and a selection from before, it provides in printed form an impression of my creative processes, which are for the most part are screen-based, whether *within* the digital one or *upon* the canvas one. Paper and ink were recruited to help reconcile these incongruities.

Touch Screen presents a retrospective travelogue of the recent past. Its indulgences portray the climate of eclectic inspirations and flights of fancy that have steered its production, including printed web pages and computer desktop folders of images. For rather than theoretical or art historical research being a direct influence on the work, it is more a case of it percolating through, held as mental pictures or abstractions that subliminally influence my choices of subject, medium or technique. A selection of pages from my website are reproduced, along with contributions to several online journals. Even if my thinking may have diverged or deepened since being posted, there is a connection to the theme of the collapsing of distance and time through the screen: of the apparent digitised permanency of the voice of a previous incarnation of myself, who seems to be speaking now.

A written explanation of the exhibition Screen as Landscape is not provided, beyond what has been outlined above, the intention being that an appreciation of the development of singular works and their close or contrasting relationships will offer visual and thematic clues to the selection of seven paintings for the exhibition component of the thesis, out of all the possible works and configurations that might have found ascendency in December 2011.

iii) Screen as Landscape

Returning to writing after the exhibition, the case studies found an arrangement that presents a journey – a building picture of a territory within which all the works share a relationship. To imagine this as a developmental process, where works discussed later in the dissertation might be considered to have more sophisticated responses to the complex themes of the thesis would be incorrect. Their order has changed substantially over time through attention to their distinct narrative styles and themes. If there is a structural logic then it might be one of a move from investigating perception of landscape at distance or proximity, through the formation of depth perception, spatially ambiguous screens and veils, disembodied viewing, virtual abstraction, and back to a pastoral scene – the subject with which the dissertation commences. But this description is hardly adequate to encompass a territory that necessarily remains hazy: as nebulous, ambiguous, and plural as the idea of landscape and the vagaries of human perception.

In order to offer a context for the individual chapters, which are designed to function in isolation from each other – like scenic vantage points or clearings on a forested mountain trail – a series of six contextualising chapters were developed, functioning as orientation boards. Having the titles Prospect, Foreground, Screen, Landscape, Estrangement, and Background, they explore the intertwined themes

of screen and landscape in detail, feeding back in to an appreciation of all the works discussed and their collective coherency.

The essential discovery has been a novel approach to a selection of contemporary art practice, finding links and associations across different media between perceptions and conceptions of landscape and the screen image, amidst the all-consuming tide of information technology.

e)   Field

The components of the thesis form parts of a whole. They are mutually dependent in the sense that the reasons behind their coming into existence were associative and cross-referencing, even if they are designed to function successfully on their own (with the exception of this supplementary guide book). This apparent autonomy can be read down to the level of individual paintings or chapters of the dissertation. Their grouping together within a thesis implies an open field of relationships, rather than the conceptual mapping of a bounded territory – not to say that an approach towards this outcome has been eschewed.

The text Screen as Landscape, and the choice of artists it engages, arose from attentive involvement with landscape imagery and themes through perceptual observation, practical work, writing, and encountering artworks in exhibitions over many years. The works produced through the PhD were affected, rather than directly informed, by writing. The selection of works for exhibition harbour associations with all the ideas explored through the dissertation.

The form of the thesis echoes its slow formation as a territory, between different modes of communication. The separate components are designed to augment each other, rather than to contest for primacy in an evaluation of its achievements.

4) **Departure**

Landscape mediation, in general terms, is a generative space that several recent exhibitions serve to highlight. My research paid passing regard to these shows and their catalogues in its development, and outlining their different approaches to the subject here indicates the distinctive aims of Screen as Landscape as both a conceptual and curatorial framework, by which it has been imagined as a constructive form for a thesis to take.

Badlands: New Horizons in Landscape, at Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (2008), presented a large survey of works across many media, in which each artist 'reinvents the genre to produce works that look beyond vast beauty to address current environmental issues.'[8] With contextualizing chapters, discussing the genre of landscape and the history of national parks and environmentalism, along with many informative interviews with artist participants, the catalogue's focus is predominantly on disappearing landscapes, pollution, collective memory and, more pervasively, an overriding sense of a romantic longing for a lost wilderness or Arcadia. Through painting, sculpture, photography, and film, the exhibition seems to take landscape as an iconic given, rather than a perceptual and philosophical conundrum, it being presented as pastoral idyll, sublime wilderness, or exploited natural resource. The range of twenty artists, from Robert Adams to the Boyle Family, from Alexis Rockman to Marine Hugonnier, present an unwieldy circumnavigation of a genre, so formally and thematically dispersed that it is surprising that the curator, Denise Markonish, is able to contain the show's aims within statements such as: '*Badlands* serves as an extension of an art historic lineage, but also as a document of the current ecological crisis and how, as a culture, we are dealing with the

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[8] www.massmoca.org/event_details.php?id=369

decline of our natural environment.'[9] To engage with environmentalist issues is a commendable purpose, which the show traversed through extreme literalism in the aerial photographs of polluted landscapes by J Henry Fair, for example, to the semiotic confusions of Ed Ruscha's *Country Cityscapes* (2001).

Ruscha's work indicates that 'the decline of our natural environment' is not simply a physical reality, but a mental one, concerned with fractured, displaced and mediated subjectivities. Landscape retreats ever further into the background as it is overlaid by text, by human narratives and empirical information. The intrusion of information technology and the screening of landscape would seem to be an omission in the exhibition's ambit of a contemporary take on landscape, to which Ruscha's work subtly points.

Ed Ruscha, *Do as Told or Suffer*, from *Country Cityscapes* (2001), photogravure with screen printed text, 34 x 44 cm.

[9] Denise Markonish, *Badlands: New Horizons in Landscape* (MIT Press & MASS MoCA, 2008), p. 13.

The exhibition Post-Nature, staged at the Dutch pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 2001, provided a very different take on the influence of landscape and landscaping with a selection of nine Dutch artists. In a representational sense, landscape overtly featured in works by five of the artists, yet the show was framed by an introductory text explaining the historical formation of landscape in the Netherlands, both as a product of engineering and a distinct genre, as the curators explain: 'At the same time as the commencement of the first large-scale land reclamation projects in the 16th century, landscape became a separate genre in Dutch painting. While previously the painted landscape had served as a backdrop for biblical, historical or mythological scenes, from then on it was the landscape itself that was the theme for the proud Dutch,'[10] As opposed to the transcendentalist, New World longings for wilderness implied by the Badlands exhibition, Post-Nature locates the creation of the genre of landscape in the same period of its destruction as untouched nature, arguing that the intertwined relationship between nature and culture, through engineering and imaging technologies, has informed the Dutch collective unconscious over centuries: 'Dutch culture and thus the national character too are inextricably linked with how the landscape was formed and the fight against water associated with it.'[11] Thankfully, the text eventually opens up the inextricable links between landscape and technology to the contemporary transnational situation: 'In this day and age, it is no longer possible to maintain the belief that nature and culture are opposites. Landscape features such as woodlands, heathland, fauna, flora and water can be used freely in the

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[10] Jaap Guldemond and Marente Bloemheuvel, *Post-Nature* (Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, 2001), p. 11.

[11] Ibid., p. 12.

design of the manmade environment. The terms 'naturalness' and 'artificiality' have largely lost their original meaning.'[12]

Post-Nature comes closer to the themes explored through Screen as Landscape, yet the focus on a dialectic between nature and artificiality is extended to works that encompass the built architectural environment, such as Frank van der Salm and Mark Manders, and the manipulation of human behaviour patterns in the work of Aernout Mik. The perceptual subjectivities between actual and representational encounters with landscape as a genre are only specifically portrayed in works by Marijke van Warmerdam and Rob Johannesma – who zooms into features of a picturesque landscape printed onto a series of transparent layers in his video installation *Untitled* (1998).

Rob Johannesma, *Untitled* (1998), video installation.

Tacita Dean's and Jeremy Millar's 'exhibition in a book,' Place (2005), explores the elusive phenomena of formation, identification, and dissolution of a sense of place through a wide diversity of contemporary art. The chapters journey through the following headings: urban, nature, fantastic, myth/history, politics/control, territories, itinerancy, heterotopias and non-places. 'Place is something

[12] Ibid., p. 15.

known to us, somewhere that belongs to us in a spiritual, if not possessive, sense and to which we belong,'[13] the authors state in their introduction. As the book examines, in the contemporary situation senses of place are constructed and challenged through modernity and globalisation, territorial disputes and collective fictions.

As a broad grouping of dozens of art works, the virtual exhibition would fill a large museum, offering the audience a panoply of ways into the heterogeneous subject of place, described as 'a confusing place in which to find oneself, an uncertain place to explore, even with someone to guide us.'[14] Place is a valiant attempt at containing the uncontainable, akin to the tangential approaches of Screen as Landscape, where the writing has equally been envisaged as an 'exhibition in a book,' functioning as an extensive catalogue essay (a reason for citing Place here, as a related project that tries to frame a range of contemporary practice in a novel way). The authors suggest that "place' is to landscape as 'identity' is to portraiture, a useful (but perhaps misused) critical term that can add distinction.'[15] But is this really true? Landscape is a source of spatial, natural and elemental metaphors that add distinction to a psychological or cultural sense of place. The distinctions between senses of place and landscape are perhaps ones between the projection of identity and virtual abstraction, between familiarity and estrangement. The intentions of Place and Screen as Landscape mirror each other, in the sense that Place documents the particularities of places and artistic deconstructions of a human urge towards a sense of identity, whilst Screen as Landscape documents the particularities of screen technologies and the vagaries of perception, their disassembly and

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[13] Tacita Dean & Jeremy Millar, *Place* (Thames & Hudson, 2005), p. 14.

[14] Ibid., p. 11.

[15] Ibid., p. 12.

reconfiguration, in the formation of human subjectivity – a sense of separateness. Screen as Landscape's place is the perceptual apparatus and artwork, not imaginative projection or identification with a social situation or evocative location. Through painting, printmaking and writing, the thesis strives towards a sense of perceptual identification with imaging technologies, not the loss of identity amidst their psychologically alienating power. Screen as Landscape dwells between the screened landscape and the landscaped screen.

This Guide Book was written after returning from the journey. It provides both a protracted introduction and a distanced conclusion to the ambit of the thesis and its place in the contemporary setting. It has speedily passed by works and ideas as if seen through a train or car window. The reader is delivered to a starting point where progress on foot is now the only option.

Trail sign in Colorado – source photograph by Doug Knighton. www.everytrail.com/guide/horsethief-falls-amp-pancake-rocks