



# metalandscapes

Revisiting Landscape from the Perspective of digital Art

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Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró a Mallorca (Spain)

October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007 – January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Curator: Pau Waelder

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The landscape is not just the natural environment or its representation. It is in itself a cultural construct, subject to the codes and beliefs of those who have configured it, be it physically (determining its shape by the arrangement of gardens, plantations, roads, bridges and constructions) or as an image (choosing the point of view and the elements that will be included). The representation of landscape, in painting, photography or other media, is thus not just the plain reproduction of the environment. It becomes a selected vision, a whole *Weltanschauung* summarized in one image. When naturalist painters in the XVII century used the camera obscura to reproduce the landscape, they fixed their gaze in a single spot and abstracted themselves from the rest. They made a portion of reality representative of the whole. And in the same way, photographers have always directed the lens of their camera to that fragment that would later on be assumed as the “truth” of a particular space and time.

Landscape painting brought the concept of mimesis to its extreme by pretending to be a real window at which the viewer can stare. But also, as an abstraction of reality, it incorporates several codes of the cultural environment in which it has been created: landscape can also mean social status, ownership or identity of a particular territory. It is also the result of the encounter of culture and natural environment, and thus depending on how the relation between these two elements evolves, the representation of landscape will change. Mankind has been afraid of nature, has then tried to understand it, label it, domesticate it, later on despise it and finally, on the fringe of extinction, recuperate it with a rather unrealistic nostalgia. All of these transformations are reflected in the representations of landscape that have been made during the last centuries.

Today, globalization offers us a repeated landscape all over the world: the horizon of a vast city or a never ending freeway flanked by signs displaying always the same advertisements. Landscape thus acquires a new signification. The so-called “urban landscape” finds its own sense and form; the natural landscape turns into either a fiction or a denunciation; the virtual landscape, finally, appears in the screen of the computer to offer us a new space at which we will stare. In any of its forms, the landscape is necessary to us because it represents our environment, and as it is embedded with our own cultural codes, it gives us an image of our place in the world.

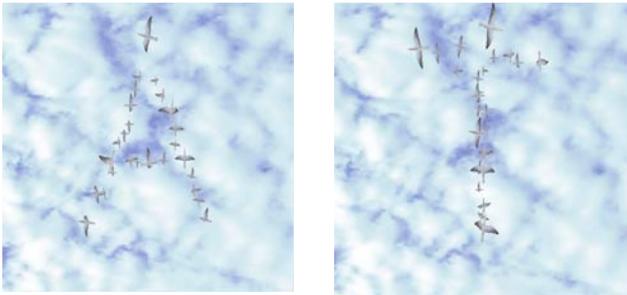
**metalandscapes** proposes a revision of the concept of landscape from the perspective of digital art. Digital art incorporates the codes and themes of our contemporary society, which is dominated by technological processes and scientific research, and thus can bring a suggestive approach to the model of *world view* that is the representation of landscape. Due to the processes they generate and the forms they create, the artworks presented in this exhibition are, more than landscapes, *metalandscapes*. By using the greek prefix that means “beyond”, I designate these pieces as “landscapes after landscape”, which create an abstraction that is both a landscape and an analysis (or critique) of landscape.

With support from:



# artists and artworks

## Adam Chapman | Legible Nature



*Legible Nature* is a generative video in which a flock of birds fly around the screen and create, for a second, the shape of a letter. One after another, the words of the *Manyoshu* poems are created at a pace that is almost impossible for

a person to follow. This work reminds us of the idea of nature as something that is presenting us with a message that we are unable to read. This video will be projected on the ceiling of the Espai Cubic of the Pilar i Joan Miró Foundation.

**Adam Chapman** is a professor at the Design and Technology Department of Parsons New School of Design. His work has been exhibited in many museums, festivals and galleries worldwide, among which the American Museum of Moving Image, the Whitney Museum's Artport and SIGGRAPH.

## Mauro Ceolin | Landscape Series



In his *Landscape Series*, Mauro Ceolin explores the different aspects of landscape in our globalized, capitalist, contaminated, digital era. Drawing with a digital pen and tablet, he recreates the images he collects from different sources: landscapes from commercial videogames, the buildings of the

main companies in the market of technology and the many natural disasters caused by man. His work involves an exploration of the digital with a very traditional, manual process.

**Mauro Ceolin (Milano, 1963)** has exhibited his work in many art centers and galleries in Italy and worldwide, as well as in the art fairs Artissima, MiArt, Flash Art and FIAC, and several digital art festivals. Johan&Levi has recently published a book about his work.

## Joan Fontcuberta | Orogénesis

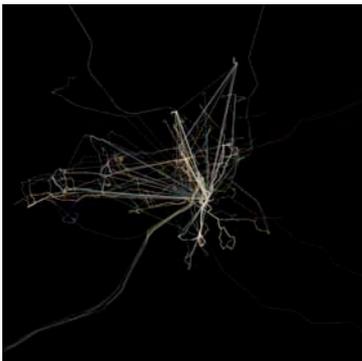


*Orogénesis* is an exploration of artificial landscape, in which Fontcuberta plays with a map rendering software to achieve unexpected results. Instead of scanning a map, the artist used a landscape painting, the shades of gray being interpreted by the computer as different levels of elevation. The result is a (sur)realistic landscape that Fontcuberta explores in order to choose the perfect spot for a snapshot.

The artist turns the representation of landscape onto itself, engaging the viewer into thinking what is actually “real”.

**Joan Fontcuberta (Barcelona, 1955)** has developed a multidisciplinary activity in the arts as artist, teacher, critic and curator. Co-founder of *Photovision* magazine, he is since 1996 Professor of Media Studies at the Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona.

## Thorsten Knaub | GPSdiary



In *GPSdiary*, Knaub creates a representation of the territory by actually perambulating it. Using a GPS locating device, the artist kept a record of his movements during a whole year. The result of the project can be seen in the form of a large print and a website in which the viewer can track the path for each day of that year. Knaub’s project extracts an aesthetic form and a work of art out of everyday activity, taking us into a reflection of the way our

activities affect the space we are living in.

Knaub has developed two site-specific interventions for this exhibition in Mallorca.



In *GPS Erasure (Sa Dragonera)*, the artist spent six days on the island of Sa Dragonera, hiking across the nature reserve equipped with a GPS device. His movements were then transferred to a digital animation in which we can see the shape of the island being “erased” by his steps. This project conceptually relates to the idea of the negative effect of human activities on the natural environment.



In *GPS Miró*, Knaub has created an intervention that pays homage to Joan Miró and his relation with the city of Palma. Using the same GPS tracking system, the artist has performed several walks on different parts of the city, drawing with his movements several characters and elements inspired by Miró's sketchbooks, particularly those he did in Palma. This work reminds us of

the art of Joan Miró, and establishes as well a link between everyday life and artistic practice.

**Thorsten Knaub** has exhibited his work in several art galleries, festivals and art spaces in London and around Europe, the United States and Canada.

## **Scott Snibbe** | Boundary Functions

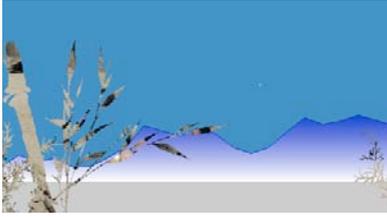


The concept of landscape implies territory: in *Boundary Functions*, the user explores the boundaries of his or her personal space by interacting with others in an area in which a camera detects the position of each user and draws an area around them according to the Dirichlet diagrams, a geometrical shape that generates spontaneously in nature. The

landscape is here to only contemplated but also experimented in a group interaction.

**Scott Snibe (Nova York, 1969)** has worked as a research engineer for Adobe Systems and holds several patents. As an artist, he has focused his work on the development of interactive installations in which the user's presence and actions activate the work. His work has been exhibited, among others, at the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), Eyebeam (New York) and Ars Electronica (Austria). He has been awarded with the Golden Nica at Ars Electronica.

## Carlo Zanni | eBay Landscape



*eBay Landscape* is an online landscape painting that constantly regenerates itself. Its shapes are dynamically created by data from several resources: the shape of the mountains is obtained from eBay.com's stock market charts, the texture in the bamboo tree is "stolen" from CNN's home page and the color of the sky and the presence of stars are generated by the users themselves. With this work, Zanni continues his exploration of what he calls *off-keyboard interaction*, the idea that our private and social behaviour influence the world we live in (and thus, the artwork).

**Carlo Zanni (La Spezia, 1975)** works in the intersection between programming and representation, blending painting and the data flux on the web. His work has been exhibited in several galleries and museums worldwide, among which: the PS1 Museum, the Bitforms art gallery in New York, the III Biennial of Montreal, the Analix Forever gallery in Geneva and the Borusan art centre in Istanbul. In 2005 he presented his first retrospective at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London. He has published a book about his work under the title "Vitalogy".

# Pilar and Joan Miró Foundation

## Palma de Mallorca, Spain

**Joan Miró** one of the world's most influential surrealist painters, settled in Mallorca in 1956, where he acquired Son Abrines, a large country house in the outskirts of the city of Palma. In the rooms of the big house and in an atelier that Josep Lluís Sert designed for him, he developed his work until his death, in 1983.

The Pilar i Joan Miró a Mallorca Foundation was formed in 1981, the year in which Joan Miró and his wife Pilar Juncosa donated the four workshops in which the artist had carried out his creative work, as well as the large number of works they contained.

In 1986, five years after the Foundation was established, and three after the death of Joan Miró, on becoming aware that it was essential to build a headquarters for the Foundation, and one which would be in keeping with the spirit of its Charter, Pilar Juncosa, Miró's widow, announced her donation of the property as its perfect location. Rafael Moneo, the well-known architect, Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Design, at that time, and a disciple of Josep Lluís Sert, was commissioned to design and plan the new headquarters for the Pilar i Joan Miró a Mallorca Foundation, in the setting of the grounds of Son Boter and Son Abrines where the painter had lived.

Moneo designed a building made of two main bodies, a star-shaped space ("espai estrella") that hosts the permanent collection, and two rooms linked by a long corridor, that are the space dedicated to temporary exhibitions. Of these rooms, the most outstanding is the "espai cubic", a cube-shaped room that was specially conceived to host site-specific installations. Around the main building, a large area is covered by the gardens of the Foundation, in which Miro's original atelier can be visited, and which offer many possibilities for specific interventions and open-air exhibitions and events.

The Pilar and Joan Miró Foundation is supported by the Town Hall of Palma de Mallorca. Technical support for this exhibition will be provided by the city's institute of computing.