

Investigations of Place

a curatorial project by Natalie McKeever

Author and theorist Lucy Lippard defines “place” as “space plus memory.” Separate from landscape art, investigations of place explore how the landscapes of personal places such as homelands, childhood homes, ancestral spaces, and places of exile take on new forms when combined with memories and individual experiences. The videos selected for *Investigations of Place* exceptionally visualize how landscapes and locations evolve once they are taken in through an individual’s experience and become personalized.

In this video exhibition, the sounds of Barcelona are expertly integrated with a continuous parade of textures in Matt Ortega’s *Horizons*. The unexpected juxtapositions of sound and image evoke the visual surprise and hyper-stimulation of a big city. Ortega’s video explores the hidden

details of the city that we notice when we are truly discovering a place and claiming it in our memory.

In *Shelter*, Brian Gibson overlays the tumbling facades of houses in an aesthetic that recalls the faded colors and jumping frames of an 8mm film. With this poetic connection between dwellings and the nostalgia and delicacy of a filmstrip, he examines the fragility and ethereal nature of place and memory.

The abstraction of landscape through travel accentuates the mood of a place. As we are fed rapidly streaming glimpses of a location, we are left with impressions, as if the process of remembering is sped up. In *Horizon (Suspension)*, Sean Capone presents this feeling in a uniquely sized format filled with saturated hues.

In Karl J. Mendonca’s *Bombay_RGB*, we are guided through the chaotic nature of the city of Bombay by the

» small screens

pulsing sound of a train as it navigates the digitally processed images. We see the old city simultaneously existing with new buildings and developments.

Mendonca’s work beautifully portrays the atmosphere of the city, while the quick splices and overlaid images jumble together to give us a true sense of place.

A strong sense of mood and atmosphere populates Amy Ho’s *Untitled/Rain*. Though the location is somewhat unclear, the feeling of this rainy, melancholic place is palpable, and we find ourselves effortlessly hypnotized into Amy’s perception of it.

Wim Wenders’ film *Paris, Texas* explores the lonely modern West as it follows the return of a man who has abandoned his life. In a conceptually re-edited version of *Paris, Texas*, Jeff Thompson includes only the scenes of landscape and place, removing all





people from the finished product. The majestic shots of canyons and the open road, already a prominent character in Wenders' film, take first billing in Thompson's *Paris With No People*, as he further meditates on loneliness and isolation in landscape.

Natalie McKeever's *My California* explores place as an heirloom and the physical manifestation of nostalgia and ancestry. We are shown the artist's Grandmother's olive ranch in Porterville, California as it exists as memory. It is a solitary walk through one's memories. Images are softened and blurred, and exist simultaneously on screen in a three channel video.

Trina Rodriguez's *Those Old Creaky Boards* muses about "home" as place. She presents surreally staged

photographs of her childhood house, narrated by a low-fi recording of a dialogue between the artist and her family. As she examines a home existing in the past, we realize that what we selectively remember is equally as influential as what is lost to time when immortalizing a place in our minds.

A *Conversation* between the artist and her Grandmother is the root from which Priya Nadkarni examines the concept of connecting to a place through a person. Her Ammama is a living connection to India. Tradition and stories from our relatives are often our only connection to a place of ancestry. Though they are displaced from each other, the performance of shared daily rituals connects the

two women over generational and physical spaces.

Wade Tillet vertically places images of his narrators to resemble a filmstrip, as they are simultaneously prompted to remember a family vacation-spot by watching a family film in *Remembering Home Movies*. At times their commentary synchs, and at others they drift apart to separate ideas. It subtly brings about the idea that even though we can be in the same space as someone, when the experience is translated through our unique perception, we can be in a completely different place.

The personal narrative of Adebukola Bodunrin tells a story of identity that is tied to place. She examines the strange notion of being culturally identified and defined by one's accent and way of speaking. *It's Hard to Wreck a Nice Beach/ It's Hard to Recognize Speech* is a mix of live video and animation, with Adebukola's voice-over narrating us through her somewhat nomadic life story.

— Natalie McKeever

Rob Carter: **Metropolis**

M*etropolis* is a quirky and very abridged narrative history of the city of Charlotte, North Carolina. It uses stop motion video animation to physically manipulate aerial still images of the city (both real and

fictional), creating a landscape in constant motion. Starting around 1755 on a Native American trading path, the viewer is presented with the building of the first house in Charlotte. From there we see the town develop

» large screen

through the historic dismissal of the English, to the prosperity made by the discovery of gold and the subsequent roots of the building of the multitude of churches for which the city is famous. Now the landscape turns