

## Gap Filler



Dance-O-Mat

**Christchurch has been hit by a number of earthquakes and aftershocks since 2010, and much of the City centre is still classified as a Red Zone. Please describe what is happening now in Christchurch to make it a “transitional” city?**

We've lost 70-80% of the buildings in the central city. Christchurch is a post-city, the ruins of what it once was. It is also a pre-city, which exists only as a grand series of master plans for what's to come. In between, in the present tense, is what matters to us. And we're trying to show that the transitional is not just biding time until the new permanent is built, but can be a time to experiment and inform thinking about the future of the city.

**How has the work of Gap Filler evolved as an organization and over time?**

We began as enforced bricolage: scrounging, salvaging and recontextualising whatever we could of necessity, because we were entirely self-funded. As our funding has grown, what was once a requirement has become a principle.

**What do you think is the power in temporality and temporary architectures for cities like Christchurch?**

Without it, everyone will rebuild the same old stuff. We find rebuilding boring. Reimagining and reinventing is far more interesting.

**What is the relationship between the top down planning of government strategies and your own bottom-up initiative? Has the grand master plans for the future involved much community participation and consultancy?**

Initially, of course, there was no relationship. Then we got some Council support. Now, we are sanctioned by central government. Effectively, the government approach remains very much top-down, and they outsource a bit of bottom-up to a few select initiatives such as ourselves. We still don't quite know what to make of it.

**Is your work and ideas getting easier to achieve, or harder as the initial, urgent disaster response has ended?**

It's getting easier as our support network keeps growing. But then we keep taking on more ambitious projects to keep things difficult. It will certainly be interesting to see if and when the goodwill runs out.

**I admire how you encourage self initiated projects through the open sourcing of your own research. In legal terms, is this a time that you could advocate for future land use reforms for Christchurch?**

Mostly, we advocate through doing projects and (we hope) changing the way people think about their right to space in the city. We also do some direct lobbying, for instance (successfully) pushing for relaxed resource consent regulations on temporary activities and (unsuccessfully) pushing for property owners to get rates rebates if they let their vacant land be used for temporary creative projects.

**Has there been any resistance to your work?**

Worryingly, not that we know of!

**You mention the amount of demolition being undertaken — are there any moves to retain a sense of ruin? How can you continue to encourage spaces for the creativity and experimentation that often occurs only in post-traumatic “gaps”.**

We've heard a few people suggest that some buildings should be left in a state of ruin. We ourselves have stressed the need for long term low-rent spaces in the central city, though realistically will be at least 5 years until this starts to become a problem, and likely longer. We've just launched a new brokering entity called Life in Vacant Spaces based much more on the Renew Newcastle model.

## The Third Landscape

THE THIRD LANDSCAPE FORUM  
OCTOBER 27, 2012

2pm-6pm

A public forum will focus on the changing face of Sydney's watery edges, from the warehouses and industrial ruins of the working harbour to new urban planning developments in the margins.

Speakers include Kate Clark (Historic Houses Trust), Blair French (Artspace), Richard Goodwin (artist/architect), Helen Armstrong (landscape architect), Tom Rivard (Lean Productions), Robert Gasparini (Design 5), Alex Ritchie (E-2), Peter Nelson (artist), Lena Obergefell (artist — Wasteland Twinning) and Joni Taylor (curator).

Supported by the Faculty of Architecture, Design & Planning, University of Sydney.

### Bios

**Joni Taylor** is a researcher, writer and curator focusing on the transformation of the urban environment. Her projects have included Urban Wildlife Safari (MCA, 2010), DIY Urbanism (Tin Sheds Gallery, 2011) and Beyond the Master Plan (COFA 2011). She is currently completing a Masters of Research on dystopian city design and urban provocation at COFA, UNSW.

**Helen Armstrong** is an Adjunct Professor and associate member at the Centre for Cultural Research. She held the inaugural Chair of Landscape Architecture, QUT (1997-2003) and is now Professor-Emeritus. Her current research is focussed on the value of urban marginal landscapes and she recently completed a book, *Disturbing Landscapes: Re-enchanting the Industrial*, pending publication.

**Gap Filler** is a creative urban regeneration initiative started in response to the September 4, 2010 Canterbury earthquake, and revised and expanded in light of the more destructive February 22, 2011 quake. Gap Filler aims to temporarily activate vacant sites within Christchurch with creative projects, to make for a more interesting, dynamic and vibrant city.

**Professor Richard Goodwin** is an award winning artist and architect with an extensive history in public sculpture and performance work. His work has been exhibited worldwide and Goodwin was the 2011 recipient of the Wynne Prize. His book "Performance to Porosity" was published in 2006.

**Peter Nelson** is an artist and researcher, who works in drawing, sculpture, video, 3D modeling and text. He holds a BFA (First Class Honours and the University Medal for Fine Arts) and a MFA (Research) from the UNSW. In 2013 he will be a resident at Treasure Hill Artist Village in Taipei and Organhaus Art Space, Chongqing.

**raumlaborberlin** is a Berlin based network-collective founded in 1999. They work at the intersection of architecture, city planning, art and urban intervention. In their work they address city and urban renewal as a process. For them architecture is a tool, in the search for a city.

**Izabela Pluta** is a Sydney-based, Polish-born artist who's practice examines the various ways that place is manifested or experienced. Pluta's works have often comprised of photographs, found ephemera and photomurals to explore the artist's interest in serendipitous encounters, the effects of time and how the photographic image operates as a vehicle for witnessing various states of ruin.

### A Sydney Architecture Festival event

Thanks to Zanny Begg, Jack Jeweller, W.T Norbert, Craig Brown, Lee Stickells, Wade Marynowsky, Michael Leslie — co-performer in "Exoskeleton Monument to Nomadism 2012", Samaneh Moafi, Joshua Lynch, Evette Salmon, Henry Goodwin, Michael Snape, Anthony Browell, Andy Jeffrey, Heath Franco, Sherna Teperson, Joni Taylor, Lizzie Parker, Camia Young, Andrew Just, Jenni Hagedorn, Nik Sargent, David Ossher, Julian Raxworthy & Matthias Rick.

Izabela Pluta's work has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, and supported by a Qantas Foundation Encouragement of Australian Contemporary Art Award. Works courtesy the artist, Galerie Pompom Sydney and Dianne Tanzer Gallery + Projects Melbourne.



## The Third Landscape

TIN SHEDS GALLERY

OCTOBER 18-NOVEMBER 17, 2012

Curated by Joni Taylor  
Helen Armstrong, Gap Filler, Richard Goodwin,  
Peter Nelson, Izabela Pluta, raumlabor

### The Third Landscape

*From this point of view the Third Landscape can be considered as the genetic reservoir of the planet, the space of the future.....*

Gilles Clément \*

Esteemed landscape architect Gilles Clément, who prefers to be called just a gardener, describes *the Third Landscape* as the abandoned and derelict spaces where human intervention has ceased. Here, on the sides of freeways and along the railroad tracks he discovered that the spontaneous wildlife that had settled was more diverse than that of cultivated and preserved landscapes.

It is no accident then that this exhibition takes its title from the field of nature rather than architecture. Instead of presenting more optimistic solutions for the built environment, it brings together work which suggests new life is flowing amongst the ruins. *The Third Landscape* exhibition and forum presents ideas for spaces that have undergone some form of destruction yet are on the brink of transformation. It presents artists, architects and designers whose work is situated in the murky spaces of the marginal — the anti-Utopia of the unknown that is still open to change and adaptation. The works present not just the wild spaces of which Clément enthuses, but also the social and cultural forces at play.

Importantly it is in these seemingly Dystopian landscapes of entropy and dereliction that regeneration is found. In the constantly shifting terrains, new life is allowed to spread unhindered. The exhibition takes 6 locations that are in flux — urban spaces in a heightened state of transition and where opportunities for activation are ripe. From the tabula rasa of a post-earthquake city of Christchurch, to the shifting borders of the former Soviet Union, the seemingly solid city is in fact mercurial and dynamic. In Sydney, the construction zone presents a site of immediate ruin, the newly dug soil revealing fresh wounds that are quickly disguised. In the no-place of Utopia, imaginary and personal landscapes of the mind can be mapped, re-used and recycled. And on a hilltop in Austria, a forest is left scarred and modified by the hurricane that tore through it.

The artists in the exhibition all work with these distinct sites — each holding remnants of a ruined past yet linked with another future. Peter Nelson's installations are situated in the no-place of Utopia's neologism, bringing together imaginary elements of his personal world. His installations are multilayered, built up from ancient Chinese landscapes, 60's utopian architecture and the virtual gaming environments of Starcraft. In *Extensions of a No-Place* Nelson has re-used the ruins of his own history by assembling new structures from past assemblages and the crates they were packaged in. Helens Armstrong's homage *Re-enchanting the Industrial* evokes the spirit of Clément by creating a Third Landscape of Sydney, with its seeping and leaking sandstone surfaces. Armstrong's interest lies in the alchemy of Sydney's industrial past, and the sublime beauty that the dark and marginal spaces have to offer, forming a kind of transmutation, where toxic sites can be remediated into experimental and sustainable habitats while still retaining their mysteries. For *The Third Landscape* Richard Goodwin revisits his historic work *Exoskeleton Monument to Nomadism* from 1981 in a provocative performance. While previously he pushed his friend and collaborator the performer Michael Leslie through Hyde Park atop a self-made industrial burial tower, now it is along The Hungry Mile with the chaotic activity of the contentious construction site behind him. Goodwin once again brings to the surface fresh wounds, transplanting the trauma of indigenous displacement onto the seismic shift created by new urban planning.

The twinning of Izabela Pluta's wallpaper image of a small ruin *House (on the frontier)* on a shifting border zone with film of her picking 3 leaf clovers hints at the hope inherent in redundant and uncanny structures. For Pluta, the photographic image operates as a vehicle for witnessing landscapes in transition, and herself as a drifter though these strange places. The tactical work of the New Zealand charitable trust Gap Filler takes a hands-on approach in regenerating post-ruined sites in Christchurch. Already more than 20 vacant sites have been activated with bottom-up projects, including a coin operated Dance-O-Mat, cycle powered cinemas, a temporary sweat lodge and crosscity mini-golf! Finally the future glows in the gallery window by Berlin collective raumlabor. In 2012 they constructed an illuminated sign ZUKUNFT (FUTURE) on a hurricane-scarred hill above the small town of Murau. Just as it created a new mythical addition for their town, so too does it re-invigorate a new nighttime feature for City Road.

*The Third Landscape* is not a "waste" land. These places are shimmering with activity and transformation. And it is in the spirit of these new lands that this exhibition has been imagined and created.

By Joni Taylor

*\*Manifeste du Tiers-Paysage (The Third Landscape Manifesto), 2003*

## Markus Bader (raumlabor berlin)

The work of raumlabor often involves creating new mythologies and histories for a place. Please talk a bit about why this could be necessary.

I am not sure if you can really say it's necessary. Maybe it can help. My work is usually placed in a dense context, spatially as well as socially. Quite often spaces run out of hope, out of imagination, out of inspiration. In situations like these new narratives can help open up the mind to re-read the existing in terms of its potential rather than it's problems. Programmatic narratives are sometimes used to create links between people, places and activities. It is fascinating to re-load places with a fictitious narrative and infect the way meaning is associated to a place. These works can act like brain-viruses that infect the thinking.

**The actual FUTURE (Zukunft) sign was created for the small, mountainous Austrian town of Murau. It now shines in a window on City Road in the inner west suburb of Darlington, Sydney. What could be the connection?**

It can feel like an echo to a distant event, like a flickering afterimage of something where you are not entirely sure if it is your imagination that made it up or if it was a real perceived visual impression, and where you just forgot the context. I am fascinated by this displacement and the recontextualising of a work, when it's first appearance is so deeply connected with the local conditions. It was important then, that the mayor was a total fan, and the politicians loved it while the youngsters were attracted and appalled at the same time, building their interpretation through a functionalist narrative that ended up — that it's useless. Nevertheless it was an amazing site to be in the landscape, where all the questions of human versus nature, small versus big, light versus dark were mixed in an unsolvable sauce of perception.

**Gilles Clément writes how *The Third Landscape* lies between the forest and the field. That is just where the FUTURE sign sits, in the gap between the trees. What is raumlabor's relationship to landscape in this work?**

I was fascinated by the razed condition of the "lärchberg", the mountain where "zukunft" was placed. It is an integral part of the panorama of the small town, but not really of the local narrative. It is read as "outside", while it really forms the "inside" of the room in the landscape that the town inhabits. A few years ago the hill was still forest, when a hurricane ended this suddenly. Our installation takes advantage of the result of this interaction between nature with nature. On top of that, it completes the picture of Murau with a touch up — one more step towards the perfect.

**Your work straddles both art and architecture. Do you think that is why you are able to build in strange and unexpected places? Would a building be too permanent?**

There is some freedom allocated to fine art that helps to do things in unusual ways. In the end, it is not so much about the labeling of a work — architecture or art — but about it's implications. We are working on gradually completing the range of our works concerning their life-spans. We do this by approaching the center from two ends: one is to work on urban frameworks through planning and the other is to intervene in the urban everyday with fast 1:1 actions. Architecture in the traditional sense happens just in the middle.

**What are your thoughts on ruins and re-use?**

I love re-using things, as they contain traces of previous interaction. This is true for building with used materials as well as transforming urban spaces or landscapes. It's then just a matter of scale.

**I enjoy how you continue to use the ideas of Utopia as being a good and better place in your work. How can we keep this spirit alive in architecture?**

You have to keep it alive in people to keep it alive in architecture. In the end — we go with Lefebvre's understanding of space as a product of social (inter)actions, space is coded, charged, read, understood not so much as a thing, but through it's software side, the programs the freedoms it allows for, the opportunities. It's a spirit.

**What is the raumlabor vision of the perfect (or near to it) future city?**

It's a heterogeneous place, where the human struggle for inspiration and happiness happens in many different ways, diverse models for living are lived and new ones tested. All this happening in exciting and boring spaces — nothing is neutral.



# Helen Armstrong

**As a landscape architect, how do your ideas relate to the spaces of ruin and dereliction?**

I am drawn to intriguing designs, layered and mysterious; similar to the ideas of Ignasi de Sola Morales about terrains vagues which suggest cities' landscapes should include complex, undefined, even anarchic places. De Sola-Morales urged us to treat marginal landscapes in ways that maintain their enigmatic messages about time and space; however when designers work with derelict sites, it seems that they are compelled to change them radically to overpower these sites' estrangement, creating ordered designs with familiar tropes.



**Why do we have such an uncomfortable relationship with marginal urban spaces?**

Marginal urban spaces are heavy with uncomfortable meaning. It is not just that abandoned areas are seen as wild and ugly; there is something else. Our need for optimism requires selective amnesia which can be unsettling by these places, because a minor detail can appear both strange and yet disturbingly familiar. There is something vague that we remember. Such a trigger can open up a fragment of lost time, however it is not the place itself, but how we experience it. Freud's notion of the uncanny suggests that it arose from the transformation of something comforting and homely; say a busy local service station, into something decidedly unhomey; fenced-off, abandoned and derelict. The sense of uncanny comes about when we project both the familiar — the friendly welcoming petrol station — and the unfamiliar — the broken windows and disfigured petrol bowzers — onto the same space so that they overlap. This overlaying or doubling within such spaces provokes a disturbing ambiguity. But replacing the abandoned petrol station with new shops does not necessarily mean it has gone away; a strange elusive presence remains. The Sydney that once had meaning for me had such an elusive presence. It included a web of left-over spaces, now gone, that were layered with meanings. However with increasing urban development, these residual spaces have been subsumed by new places, mostly for living and shopping. I particularly mourn the loss of untidy indeterminate areas; but for many people, the more pervasive the erasure of these apparent waste-lands, the stronger the sense of unease about those few that remain. It would seem that we are compelled to remove all traces of derelict sites. They hint at failed enterprises and interfere with society's story of an untroubled recent urban history. Colluding with this version of history leaves us ungrounded and disconnected.

**What is particular about Sydney's Third Landscape?**

Sydney's Third Landscape is made up of a complex web of marginal spaces. It includes the dry grasslands under electricity easements which range over the rolling shale landscapes of Western Sydney as well as the forbidding sandstone quarry faces carved out of Eastern Sydney's ridges. The magic of seeping Sydney — the trickles, the moss-thickened quarry cuts, the iridescent oozing of old industrial areas, the dripping ropes of twisted roots — make up part of Sydney's Third Landscape. Enigmatic, obscure and tantalizing, these deliquescent descriptions convey a potent alchemy within Sydney's abandoned quarries.

**You write “the alchemy in these places can transmute their abjection into elusive and mysterious gardens — re-enchanted places, rich in secrets”. Please elaborate.**

Many of the plants that grow in derelict sites are indeed rich in secrets. They live in mysterious gardens of biodiversity, growing and reproducing rapidly. They are also rich in adaptations to drought, nutrient deficiency and toxicities; but most particularly transmutation occurs because they are left alone. They have been recognized by UK's English Nature as 'Post-industrial Sites of High Ecological Quality', which are ranked as 'High Priority Habitats'. Not only are these elusive gardens biologically rich, they are alchemically capable of accumulating toxic metals from the soil into their wiry stems and leaves. The sites of former industry are particularly rich in possibilities for the future; but we do not see this and so scrape away evidence of our soiled city body. Like the philosopher Julia Kristeva's abject menstruating woman, we see these sites as contaminated instead of fertile with opportunities for creative and innovative ways to transform cities.

**Sydney is redeveloping much of its former working waterfront eg Barangaroo and The Bays Precinct. Is it possible to incorporate marginal areas into this new urban plan?**

Yes, they are rich in potential! If they were understood and not removed, their very indeterminacy could allow for temporary uses, including creative experiments designed for a future beyond current unsustainable cities. More importantly these experimental uses could keep the areas as industrial sites with innovative adaptive reuses of old infrastructure. In the Bays Precinct, it is possible to reactivate the old powerhouse to produce clean energy from biofuels, grown as algae and phyto-remediating hemp and bamboo. Temporary uses are much more valuable in these areas than the inflexible, brittle high-rise towers proposed for Sydney's waterfronts.

# Richard Goodwin

**For *The Third Landscape*, you have revisited your work *Exoskeleton Monument to Nomadism* from 1981. Please explain why you have chosen to return to this.**

*Exoskeleton Monument to Nomadism* was a seminal work for me. It combines performance and an exoskeleton machine to form a relationship between the descendants of European migrants and the indigenous people of this continent. The work doesn't seek to solve the problems associated with this relationship, but rather to expose the wound and to work through it. I push the industrial burial tower "exoskeleton", involved physically and mentally in the act, while Michael Leslie lies horizontally above me in a state of meditation, which denotes the spiritual. The machine is pushed along creating and interrogating that relationship. Little has changed over the years in terms of that relationship, and to revisit it in public space again questions unfinished business. Perhaps Barangaroo, with its convenient Aboriginal name, needs to address these structural problems before creating new structures. It is also a great opportunity to re-connect with Michael Leslie, creating a symmetry, which is reinforced by the changing face of Sydney.

**It has been 31 years between performances — what are the new points of tension and conflict you are presenting and the wounds that you ultimately want to reveal?**

There are no new points of tension — that the same tension remains is the point. The same question is posed by the performance today as it was in 1981. How do we work through the trauma which exists between us and which is amplified by the discord of a culture which is essentially spiritual clashing with a base culture which is trapped in the "now"? Performance art exposes the wound only to ask questions about our trajectories into the future. What would they do?

**Porosity is your research into future urbanism based on the adaptation of existing structures. The curatorial concept for *The Third Landscape* implies that the vacant is full of potential. What part could wastelands and derelict spaces play for porosity?**

Porosity seeks to find new public space types within private space. The idea is that these "Chiastic" spaces tell us where we might make connections between buildings which three dimensionalise public space and which lead to the transformation of existing structure. Vacant sites and derelict spaces are already in transition. We need to occupy them and claim them as public spaces, even during their short transitional lives. Artists always lead the way in this process of transformation.

***Exoskeleton Monument to Nomadism 2012* is specific to the site along Hickson Road and Barangaroo. What are the resulting implications for Sydney from this development?**

Barangaroo is to become a place of fake landscapes and re-bottled dockland histories. To develop this area with high-rise housing, offices and parks is fine by me, however without the necessary infrastructure — underground metro system and rail, the city continues to make basic urban planning mistakes. Deeper than these planning problems are questions relating to our relationship with the original inhabitants of this land. These are our real foundations and today they remain unformed. Public art asks questions.

**Sydney is a city intent on rapid urban growth and a shiny sparkling exterior, reluctant to let spaces erode or develop over time. As an architect, how can one resist extreme expansion, and what can be learned from the practice of adaptive re-use?**

The pressures of sustainable design will eventually lead to an acceptance of radical transformation of existing buildings as the new frontier. As previously stated it will lead to new and dynamic geometries, structures and technologies, which are not slavish to historic restoration. Instead we will look at the bones of the modernist city and ask it what it might become.

**Your work often involves a point of disaster or collapse. How could this be a starting point?**

We live in the "age of contingency" to use Jeremy Till's term. In this age we are beset with catastrophes, which are ever increasing. This is the new landscape and although threatening is also filled with the possibility for invention. As things break and open they suggest new geometries and possibilities for transformation.

**What are your thoughts about this performance?**

Michael and I have not seen or spoken to each other since the last performance in 1981. Our reconnection in middle age is quite profound. The silent relationship, which the original performance in Hyde Park Sydney created, is now more complex. The proposed action is relatively short — maybe 15 minutes. Michael will again enter a state of meditation before being placed onto the platform of the machine by 6 men. We are repeating our own history and reflecting on the current political and social climate. The action asks its own questions.



# Izabela Pluta

**Do you see the architectures that you portray as ruins or do they hold something else for you?**

For me, they suggest something of the human condition and of our current state of flux — that is, migratory shifts and the resulting psyche that might develop as a result of moving between places. As subjects, yes, they are literally 'in ruin', yet that physicality might transcend the physical space in the image and hopefully talk about broader issues. For example, the site of *House (on the frontier)*, 2012 is near the border of Russia and Finland, a constantly shifting line that has had a very turbulent history.

**You have chosen to pair the works *House (on the frontier)* and *Clovers*. Was this a response to the exhibition and what is their relationship?**

These two works have come out of a project titled *Reservoir*. This body of work has evolved gradually since 2011, the catalyst for this project centred on the reservoir as a place where anything can be collected and stored — more commonly referring to an artificial lake. If the reservoir bursts, the spillage may lead to a condition of ruin. It is within this metaphoric space that I am attempting to visually explore the psychological resonances implicit in particular spaces and objects. As a response to *The Third Landscape*, I considered the ways in which a space may change through cycles; of movement/time, and thereby resulting in ruination/decay and sites evoking entropy, but also an optimism. The photomural of the unpacked house [*House (on the frontier)*] and the act of collecting three-leaf clovers was apparent for me in reflecting on the ideas discussed in the exhibition. I respond to sites that evoke a longing for place—redundant urban landscapes and dilapidated buildings—sites that appear universal and evoke temporality. These two components in the exhibition each play with the visual syntax of photography and objects: they may evoke dualities of loss and enthusiasm, failure and achievement.

In this work, I am concerned with how a sense of history can be revealed in a landscape/site that has endured time. The space that is reinvented to prepare itself for a new life, and the photomural wallpaper that becomes a metaphor for the optimism inherent is such an undertaking. Similarly, in the *Clovers* video, the act of searching for four-leaf clovers, yet picking only three-leaf ones implies an optimism yet failure to do so. Importantly, the site in both the image and the video remains universal.

**Your photos are like uncanny architectural archives, devoid of human life. Do the buildings speak of a time without people?**

I am interested in these unspecified and quotidian sites, with their lack of human presence, alluding to a suspension of time and reality and perhaps offering only fragmentary glimpses into seemingly distant narratives. In some cases, the image possesses a sense of loss for the place it represents, it reiterates solitude, an image empty of the people and activity which would otherwise situate that locale within the world. Images can by their very nature be suffused with traces of the people who inhabit the places in the photographs. My images, through their emptiness and void of human presence, might create a slippage between two realities, of a present longing for a past. They might become triggers for a memory from the people viewing the work, rather than expressing something about the people *within* the work.

**You write “Using the medium of photography I explore a site through my own experience and intervention within the space”. How do you work with the camera to capture the potentialities of a site?**

My methodology as an image maker explores reality through universal sites and my personal experiences of them. I am concerned with the non-specific relationship between various sites, and the connection that may result from a particular reading or evocation of that physical place or psychological space. My process incorporates the desire to connect with a non-specific location, a need to form a sense of belonging to a place that, perhaps, exists in all of us. My approach reflects what Lucy Lippard, in *The lure of the local: senses of place in a multicentered society*, refers to as the spontaneous attraction to place through an emotional response to the landscape. Landscape seems to me to have an immutable history that mediates a sense of permanence and belonging. Perhaps that is why I am drawn to landscape, as it is a *place*. I choose sites to photograph premised on a degree of serendipity, as well as an interest in sites displaying aspects of what our culture no longer presents.

I am interested in psycho-geography rather than *actual* geography, placeless-ness and the anonymity inherent in the image as a result. The intention is to move freely through a landscape (to travel) or drift: an aimless wandering through the world with the awareness of new experiences and possibilities — one of the basic Situationist practices being the *dérive*. This mode of 'drifting' may ask me to rethink my understanding of home and the destination; of the place and the possible journey to/through it, unhindered by preconception. This method of simply moving and *being* in a space, as a way of collecting images is fluid and transient, and I feel that this method for me echoes a number of ideas that I want the work to engage with.



# Peter Nelson

***The Third Landscape* looks at spaces in-between and what remains for the future. Your work contains many in-betweens — can you describe some of the places that come together in your work and your real life experiences of them?**



The places I create within *Extensions of a No-Place* are all based on a recycling of numerous landscape images, historical conventions and personal memories. It's important to see how cultural histories of landscape imaging determine how we perceive the physical environment. I consider experiences of physical space and landscape images as being co-dependent (viewing a place is mediated through our experience of images, and vice-a-versa). My new body of work is based on a painting by an anonymous Sung dynasty artist, my own experience of Chinese geomorphology, and the recent destruction of my own sculpture, which was based on a Chinese mountain. By recreating three-dimensional forms from historical paintings, by disassembling my own sculptures and by creating digital places to house my own stories, I am seeking to rearrange notions of time, location and representation.

**What role does memory and nostalgia play in your work?**

Memory and history both play a large role. My constructed landscapes are based on the premise that any experience of place is defined by the history of the person experiencing it. It's hard to say what role nostalgia plays, as I don't know what relationship I am forming with the past. I am fascinated by the history of landscape images, but I hope that my skepticism might somehow inoculate me from nostalgia. So many beautiful images use aesthetic strategies to either document or obscure brutal times. In the same way, all of these works are based on personal narratives, and it's very hard to say when you are being nostalgic about your own history.

**In your work the Utopian and Dystopian seem to merge, an ongoing reference for this show. You work with the “no-place” of Utopia — is there any space left for the “good place” of Utopia?**

My understanding of the term Utopia was it's fusing 'no place' and 'good place' such that the 'good place' was necessarily hypothetical. The inseparable nature of Utopia and Dystopia, and the totalitarian aspect of so many Utopian schemes, infers that they are not to be taken literally — as good, bad, possible or impossible. The status of the 'other' in Utopia is my real interest — the qualitative 'good place' seems less attractive. To judge a Utopia as 'good' seems to imply that it's historical reference point is somehow less good. In my use of 'no-place' as an imaginary other, I am not evaluating our lived reality, or promoting the quality of my alternative universe.

**You write of “mines and chasms”. While not overtly speaking of the post-industrial how do ruins fit into your work?**

The hanging sculptures are built out of the ruins of a monumental Perspex sculpture I made, and it's associated plywood-packing crates. The physical structure of the sculpture cracked and fell apart. Living with the ruins of my own work, and not having the space to store them forced me to confront the consequences of my past ambition. They were deliberately built to evidence my process of decommissioning. Sawing up my packing crates and chipping apart my Perspex sculpture was admitting defeat. Making something out of the fragments interrupted the destruction with another act of creation. Whilst they might continue to descend from hardware to refuse, interrupting the process is a utopian act. It's not the grid and the clean slate — these works are Utopian architecture where the construction site and the demolition are the same thing.

**As a painter, do you see the picturesque in new landscapes such as the gaming engine *Starcraft*?**

I study the picturesque as a structure that underlies our perception of the physical environment, which we then conceptualise into 'landscape'. In Australia's exportation of 18th century English culture, the picturesque has a huge deal to tell, including how our conception of natural beauty relates to our property laws, how council housing relates to rustic watercolours, and how we photograph our travel holidays. *Starcraft* is a great example of a new landscape that is a hotchpotch of many old ones. It is a space opera strategy game made up of a patchwork of characters, creatures and technologies lifted from science fiction culture, which themselves lifted from fantasy and folk sagas. Like the picturesque, it uses ruins as follies, but it also derives perspectival structures from Chinese scroll painting. It uses views and terrain in a military function similar to picturesque architecture, but like a dystopian sci-fi classic, it uses aliens and spaceships to retell old mythologies.

**How has the utopian architecture of Superstudio and Archigram influenced your work?**

Superstudio was an important pisstake of Utopian architects, and of the machismo of the visionary planner. What amazed me was their ability to point out the messianic foolishness of monolithic visions, whilst still celebrating one's ability to dream. To me, Archigram were the exemplar of those dreams — an exhilarating glimpse at another way of living, but also a myopic monoculture built on Enlightenment conformity.