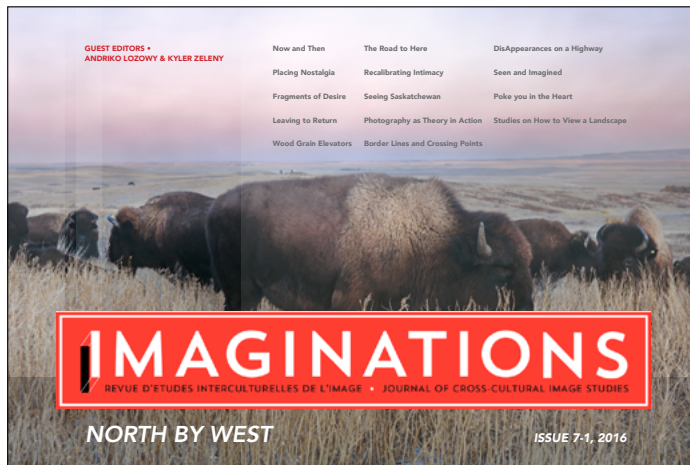


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STUDIES ON HOW TO VIEW LANDSCAPE

JESSICA AUER

Résumé

Les photos de Jessica Auer montrent souvent l'impact du tourisme sur certains des lieux les plus populaires au monde, en particulier la manière dont les paysages sont préservés, modifiés ou transformés par le tourisme. Sa série Comment observer un paysage propose que nous projetions nos propres mythes et perceptions sur la nature. Dans ce projet, nous voyons le paysage en relation avec nous-mêmes, la vue un arrière-plan sur lequel nous projetons notre curiosité et nos désirs. Après avoir quitté ces lieux nous laisserons peut-être une trace mais d'une certaine manière nous faisons partie de l'image dans son ensemble.

Abstract

Jessica Auer's photographs often depict the impact of tourism on some of the world's most popular places, showing how landscape has been preserved, altered, or commodified for sightseeing. Her series On How to View Landscape proposes that we also project our own mythologies and perceptions onto nature. In this project, we see the landscape in relation to ourselves, the view to a degree still a backdrop onto which we project our curiosities and desires. Upon leaving these viewpoints we may or may not leave a trace, but we somehow become part of the overall image.

The pleasures of photography and landscape came together for me at the same time. Shortly after I turned 10 years old, my parents divorced and, as a consolation, my father bought me a 35mm Nikon camera. He also told me to pack a bag and be ready to leave the next day—that all I needed was a small bag of clothes, a book, and the camera—as I would be travelling with him throughout the summer. Thus began my first road trip and my first photographic mission. Day after day, I experienced a cinematic view of the Canadian landscape from the passenger seat, witnessing subtle changes as we traversed the geography of a diverse country, snapping photos of everything from roadside attractions to black spruce forests and the trains that often glided alongside the Trans Canada Highway. Our arrival in Banff National Park was the most striking experience of the journey. The Rockies were rich in photographic content: colorful lakes, precipitous mountains, spiraling railways,

and lots of other people. It was during this first National Park experience that I learned that the significance of landscape was not just about natural vistas but also the culture of nature.

Twelve years later, I found myself once again at the edge of Moraine Lake. As a recent University graduate with a BFA in photography, I looked at the view before me with scrutinizing eyes and a curious mind. The signature mountains of the Valley of Ten Peaks stood in front of me as they had before, but somehow the scene felt unfamiliar. There were certainly signs of cultural development, yet I still questioned how much the landscape had actually changed. On the other hand, how much had I changed?

Over the next decade I returned to Rockies several times, as a retreat from the routine of my predominantly urban life in Montreal, but also to make photographs. Since my student days, my research-based photographic work has been largely concerned with the study of cultural sites, leading me to photograph the impact of tourism on some of the world's significant places, showing how landscape has been preserved, altered, or commodified for sightseeing. After several years of examining the topic from a photographically objective

perspective, I began to understand that the collectivity of my experiences has informed my perspective much more than the viewpoints to which I struggled to hike. Growing weary of repeating the same images I had already produced, I chose to take a few steps back from the traditional viewpoint, to look at the sightseeing phenomenon from a more anthropological perspective.

In his seminal book *Landscape and Memory*, Simon Schama argues that landscape cannot be free of culture and that as viewers we project our own mythologies and perceptions onto nature. During the summer of 2012, I participated in a two-month artist residency at The Banff Centre on Tunnel Mountain. Using photo and video cameras to passively record the gestures and actions of sightseeing tourists, I shifted my focus to the space of the viewer rather than the space being viewed, observing from a human perspective and on a human scale. "Studies on How to View Landscape" shows the landscape in relation to ourselves, the view to a degree still a backdrop onto which we project our curiosities and desires and, to some extent, our inadequacies. Upon leaving these viewpoints we may or may not leave a trace, but we somehow become part of the overall image.

Fig. 1. 'Lake Louise #1,' 2010, CHprint, 40"x50"

opposite, counterclockwise from top left :

Fig. 2. 'Glacier Experience,' 2012, CHprint, 40"x50"

Fig. 3. 'Lake Louise #2,' 2012, CHprint, 40"x50"

Fig. 4. 'Hiking the Plain of Six Glaciers,' 2012,
CHprint, 40"x50"





Fig. 5. 'Lunch at Sentinel Pass,' 2012,
Inkjet Print, 60"x75"





Fig. 6. 'Moraine Lake,' 2012, HD Video Still



Fig. 7. 'Sulphur Mountain,' 2012, HD Video Still

STUDIES ON HOW TO VIEW LANDSCAPE



opposite, clockwise from top left

Fig. 8. 'Johnson Canyon,' 2012, HD Video Still

Fig. 9. 'Tunnel Mountain,' 2012, HD Video Still

Fig. 10. 'Paradise Valley,' 2012, HD Video Still

Fig. 11. 'Peyto Lake,' 2012, HD Video Still

Works Cited

Schama, Simon. *Landscape and Memory*. New York: Vintage Books, 1996. Print.