

Broken Ground New Directions in Land Art Students Question Students

Created by: Stephanie Antonijuan, Annette Bohn, Kathryn Floyd, Mya Frieze, Nicole Hu, Sophie Le Nevue, Samantha Miker

Postcommodity

Postcommodity is an interdisciplinary arts collective who uses multimedia to create Land Art pieces which encourage thought-provoking perceptions on present-day social/political issues. Due to their own indigenous heritages, the artists of Postcommodity often use their art to create a dialogue on issues concerning the indigenous peoples of America. One of their most well-known pieces is titled *Repellent Fence*. Created in 2015, *Repellent Fence* consists of 26 tethered balloons that stretch along a two-mile path, bisecting the U.S./Mexico border. The installation was designed to combat oversimplified border rhetoric, while also sparking a conversation about the interconnectedness of all people throughout our continent.

The balloons used for *Repellent Fence* were large versions of “scare-eye balloons,” ineffective objects used to hang in trees to scare away birds. The commercial scare-eye balloons also featured colors important to indigenous people. While looking at the *Repellent Fence* balloon, answer the following questions. Art is often used to make political statements. What is the message conveyed by the balloon itself? Does this contrast with the conveyed message of its placement within the larger context of the *Repellent Fence*? How might art be a more effective vehicle for promoting awareness or conveying an opinion on an issue in contrast to simply telling people about it? What might museums and galleries face when displaying politically driven art?



Repellent Fence (2015)

Victoria Sambunaris

Since October 2009, Victoria Sambunaris has photographed the American West, attempting to convey the way human intervention has changed the landscape and aura of the geographic area. At one time, the West symbolized the promise of independence and freedom in America, but today the mythology of the “Wild West” has been paved over. In this photograph, Sambunaris captures the trade infrastructure of the region.

How did you originally view the photograph without context about its geographic location? Think about the reasons the artist would use this specific view of the train: how would the meaning be changed if Sambunaris used an aerial shot, capturing the criss-crossing transportation systems that mark the landscape? How successful do you think this work is at capturing the tenor of intervention in this region?



Untitled (night train) (2010)



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Todd Anderson, Bruce Crownover, & Ian van Coller

The Last Glacier is a project that began in 2010 as a response to the rapid decline of glaciers in Glacier National Park in Montana, USA. Todd Anderson, Bruce Crownover, and Ian van Coller documented the glaciers over the course of four years and produced an artist's book containing artworks of the glaciers. Their purpose is to present today's wilderness in documented form while informing viewers of rapid climate change.

Is this message clearly conveyed in the image of the Chaney Glacier from *The Last Glacier Project*? Does knowing the collaborators' interest in documenting glaciers and their changes due to global warming affect the subsequent interpretation of the image? Does the story behind the image change the viewer's perspective of the image itself? Why or why not? With only the images of these glaciers being preserved, is *The Last Glacier Project* an adequate motivation for wilderness conservation?



The Last Glacier (2010)

Lucy Raven

Lucy Raven's film project titled *China Town* will be shown Tuesday, February 21st at 4pm and Tuesday, February 28th at 7pm in FAB room 249.

China Town follows the process of mining and producing copper, which starts in an open pit mine in Nevada. The material moves to the smelter in China where it is refined. Raven edits her still photographs to depict the animation of detailed production that turns raw ore into copper wire while also focusing on the "generation of waste and power" that exists in both countries because of this process. In addition, Raven uses her project to analyze the global economy and specifically the links between America and China. She conveys her narrative of labor and industry while simultaneously presenting political commentary on environmental issues and the economic relationship between two countries.

In what ways does Raven blend political, societal, and environmental issues? Why did Raven choose visual art over other media to highlight these problems? Raven's work depicts the "generation of waste" associated with the copper mining process; to use the phrase as a pun, do you feel we are a "generation of waste?" Give reasons for your answer.



China Town (2009)



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Without soil there is no color (2013) - installation and video clip

Jeanette Hart-Mann

The installation *Without soil there is no color* began in 2013 when artist Jeanette Hart-Mann trekked over 30 miles of a nearby ranch and collected twenty-one samples of soil from different areas. She created a black and white video of her evidence retrieval process. She labeled each soil with a different color showing this strip of color as the video showed footage of each place where she extracted soil. In the installation of this piece she places twenty-one shelves around a room and displays the twenty-one samples of soil. Sounds in the background of the gallery consist of birds chirping, wind rushing through the grass, and dogs crying. Hart-Mann wants to create a relationship between the importance of soil and the aesthetic and sensorial effect of her polychromatic video.

What message does Hart-Mann convey through her pairing of samples of soil with various colors? Do you think the artist disrupted the environment by retrieving the samples of soil? Was it necessary for the artist to make the video black and white instead of in color? How might the viewer's perception of the art piece be different if the video were in color? Is this installation more art, cartography, or science?

Bill Gilbert

Terrestrial/Celestial Navigations is a project completed by Bill Gilbert from 2011-2014. During this project Gilbert explored the relationships between constellations and earth's geography. In this series Gilbert chooses a constellation and superimposes it on a landscape. He then walks the path of the constellation on the landscape to honor the relationship between desert peoples and the sky. Gilbert analyzes the landscape he encounters on his path and thinks about the relationship between the stars and his environment. He says his project "weaves together heaven and earth."

If you were to pick a constellation and walk its path in Tallahassee, FL, what do you think you would see? What kind of topography and geographic characteristics would you encounter? Is the environment the same the entire walk, or does it change? How do you think this landscape has changed over time? Do you think it always looked the way it does today? What created change? Why do you think the connections between humans and the stars are important?



Terrestrial/Celestial (2014)



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Erika Osborne

As an artist, Erika Osborne has devoted herself to the investigation of contemporary notions of environment and place. Most recently, she has been creating paintings based on the iconic visual language of the American Sublime landscape painters who traveled to the western United States and abroad. The paintings in this series address the weight of human impact on what might otherwise be considered pristine or sublime landscapes. They drive home the point that there is no corner on earth left untouched by humans.

When Thomas Moran, an American painter, journeyed West for the first time in 1871, his sights were set on Yellowstone, but the trails leading to the geysers passed through another remarkable landscape. Once the site of the fur trappers' annual rendezvous, Green River had more recently served as the western terminus for the Union Pacific Railroad. The dazzling colors of the sculpted cliffs and the equally colorful entourage are the focus of this stunning painting. Moran erased the reality of advancing civilization, conjuring instead an imagined scene of a pre-Industrial West that he wouldn't have seen in 1871.

Erika Osborne's *Searching for Moran* is inspired by the work of Thomas Moran. While both artists focus on landscape painting, compare and contrast the two paintings. Consider the artist's intention. What is the function of Moran purposefully reimagining a landscape to be devoid of human interaction? What does Osborne do to counter this? Compare and contrast the composition, color, medium, and subject.

If the audience viewing *Searching for Moran* did not see it in context with works by Thomas Moran, would that change their view of the artwork? Does looking at the Moran work deepen the meaning of Osborne's painting?

Thomas Moran, *Green River Cliffs, Wyoming* (1881)



Erika Osborne, *Looking for Moran* (2012)