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Mapping Appalachia

Jennifer Hall Boggess
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Mapping Appalachia

Jennifer Hall Boggess

Thesis submitted to the
College of Creative Arts
West Virginia University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Painting

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ABSTRACT

Mapping Appalachia

Jennifer Hall Boggess

The complexities of natural and human events that make up the history of a place also create components of its image. Images, even those that are meant to describe limited, specific information, often reveal more than that which they were designed to tell. The maps that have been used in conjunction with traditional notions of landscape painting suggest that there is no single way to understand a place. They also hint of something ineffable but true emerging from their forms. The history of movement of people and natural forces, the arriving and leaving of individuals and cultures change the landscape. Their stories are evident in their forms. The paintings in this series are both physical and conceptual ideas of the place in which I live. The manipulation of paint, the rubbing, digging, and extraction of surface areas are not meant to imitate the landscape, but instead, to infer it.

To Lynn Boggess

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Land, the properties of earth, and the division of physical spaces by abstract means have been the predominate themes in my work. Thinking about the land began as an appreciation for what was in view. Much of my early work was done in plein air with subject matter coming from local, primarily natural scenes. Painting on location poses some unique problems. Time is always an issue: daylight changes, clouds pass, it gets colder or hotter as the day progresses. Yet probably because of that, the observation is more organic and intimate. Space and time become interwoven. The acceptance of time in landscape painting is the beginning of this current body of work.

Memory, as a component of time, was integral in a series of garden based landscapes in which thoughts intermingled and became layered. Surface also became important, and it was in that work that I explored ways in which paint became earth by troweling, scratching, and digging. In that series, there was a development of a personal mythology about my relationship with the spaces around me and a growing appreciation for place.

Gradually issues of memory became more linked to history, and I became interested in specific locations and the sense of history their forms conveyed. Rather than seeking a view, my intent was to look down or in or back. Standing in a certain place infers standing in human history and in time: the building up and tearing down of the earth by natural forces, human organization and destruction, the stories of individuals and cultures as they inhabit and fade into the land. These are the concerns of my most recent body of work.

My choice of the Appalachian region as the source for this work is a product of years of studying it externally, as a view. My familiarity with the geography of the place and a sense of internal history provided a framework for exploration. The Appalachian

landscape is in many ways like any other. Surfaces create possibilities for functions — some natural, some distinctly human. Yet living in the Appalachian landscape means living in that which is unavoidable. The hills are both obstacles and scenery. They shape and isolate communities. They frame the view.

In addition, what is beneath the surface is also crucially important. The paths of activity on the land have little to do with the direction of those below. Mines meander beneath cities and farms and highways. While on occasion they abruptly impact property above — when old walls collapse and cause roads to sink or houses to buckle — generally their influence is more internal. The movement of people and economies vertically as well as horizontally is unique among mining communities.

The landscape, then, is what is seen, and implicitly, what is unseen. It is the impact of all of the directions and paths of natural and human history. Within these contexts, we seek to determine our place. The orientation of oneself in a particular place calls upon factors that are constantly in flux. Yet the desire to understand the nature of one's community and the place that is home is even more urgent as the natural world gives way to a conceptual one. Because much of the world now dwells in two realities — natural space and cyberspace — the tactile and visual properties of the physical world are even more relevant. For although the obstacles of landscape can be circumvented by circuits and signals, communities and people are still shaped by the landscape around us. It carries our histories and our psyches, it colors our plans for the future and creates longings for what has been.

The use of maps as a reference to the form of these works was part of the progression from change in point of view. Earlier landscape paintings gradually shifted to garden diagrams, then site development plans, and finally to maps of communities. The result of this final phase entailed an element that was both unexpected and welcome. The images I was using told more than I thought they could. The configuration of communities revealed something of their growth and purpose. The observation was more

intuitive initially, but it led to an investigation of the ways in which visual images are perceived. Because I was still thinking of these paintings as landscapes, I also wanted to know what is about maps that enables them to register as both diagram and landscape.

My physical approach to painting continued throughout the exploration of new forms. The beauty of marks and their tactile presence on the surface became even more important as the themes of the paintings moved from internal impulses related to gardens to more external references. It remained necessary for me to retain evidence of human contact with the form. The process involved laying down a white field, troweling on a heavy layer of opaque gel medium, and allowing it to dry. Then a thin layer of oil paint was rubbed into the surface in the same manner as wiping an etching plate.

Forms emerged as the surface was wiped. The shapes were similar to the irregular shapes of towns and, in an odd way, to internal organs and systems of the body. The connection between geography and anatomy was in the irregular contour, the contrast of areas of compression and expansion, and in the linear aspects of the roads/arteries. That connection between land and body allowed me to think of the paintings as living or dying organisms. The maps, then, became anthropomorphic diagrams.

Formally, the process created a rich variety of tone — deep blacks and a range of grays at first. Later, as I became curious about the impact of color, I tinted the gel medium with acrylic paint and rubbed a mixture of naphthol red and zinc yellow into the surface.

The physical process relates to the shaping of land. Just as the digging and etching of the garden series referred to planting and plowing, the use of the trowel to move paint infers the impact of floods, bulldozers, and landslides. In addition, this approach also suggests the forms of mountains and rivers. Sticks and screwdrivers were utilized to shape the smaller lines of roads/arteries/creeks. The painterliness of traditional landscape is utilized to infuse human touch into notational images.

Mapping Landscape

Imagery

map

A composite *notation* comprised of (a) a metaphorical schema such as an *egg*, or a mathematically determined *net*, or a mixture of both, and (b) a palimpsest of superimposed writing, pictures, and other notations.¹

James Elkins, in his book *The Domain of the Images*, proposes taking a fresh look at the images that influence us. In an analysis of Wittgenstein's positivist theory of pictures and Nelson Goodman's more negative assessment of the way pictures work, Elkins discusses the dual nature of pictures. He asserts the similarities in the arguments, most notably that "notation and proposition" play a role in the perception of pictures.

Pictures are those images taken to be constituted by the built-in vacillation, contradiction, paradox, or uncertainty of "saying" and "showing." Something in them is linguistic, propositional, systematic, or otherwise semiotic. The rest, as Wittgenstein famously said, is "silence." Almost anything can be taken as a picture — a graph, a chart, a painting — and it might or might not resemble the world. But once it is so taken, it becomes the subject of conflicting interpretations, as viewers try to decide between seeing and interpreting.²

Elkins refers to "density" when discussing the nature of pictures. Pictures necessarily contain components that are not specifiable (either/or components). He uses an example of a symbol for an unknown quantity that resembles both numbers 6 and 9. It looks like it could be a number, but it has no specific quantitative value. Therefore, the possibilities for its quantity become greater than those for the two "real" numbers. It is seen as both number (because it looks like a number when put in the context of real numbers) and as an ineffable quantity. Because they both point to meaning (quantifiable meaning) and confound it, Elkins says that it is this perplexing dualism that makes pictures so insistent to our attention.

¹ James Elkins, *The Domain of Images*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), 257.

² Ibid, 81.

He asserts that nonart images, images which take up most of the space in the visual world, while serving the function of organizing data and information, are also pictures because they serve aesthetic functions as well — sometimes even metaphoric ones. Graphs, charts, diagrams, typography and maps fall into this category. He explores the notational aspect of non-art images and discovers the futility of avoiding the pictorial. For regardless of the way that information is fed into these images, many nevertheless reveal something more than that which they were designed to explain.

For example, he explains a graph that plotted sunlight throughout the summer in Yorkshire, England. The shape of the data created a vase-like image that was indicative of the shorter days at the beginning and end of the year, and the longer days of June.

The sonar chart that formed the first example of simultaneous “routes of reference” is a graph, and it is also unmistakably a naturalistic landscape and a conglomerate of several notational schemata. The plot of sunshine at Withernwick is a panoramic picture, and a memory, of a summer.³

The possibility that maps and charts have multiple facets creates the possibility for the form of a thing (even if it is data) to reveal something about its character. Intuitively we know that. Yet the dual nature of images is something that is too rarely discussed because we distrust a science which aligns itself with the intangible and we find ourselves in uncharted territory with an art history that is connected with nonart images.

Elkins’ arguments are directed toward the reconsideration of what is regarded as art history. He challenges us to allow for the idea that images which have not been codified as art can nonetheless reveal information in aesthetic ways. He argues that while nonart images and scientific notation have been used by artists (such as Seurat’s use of color). “It does not explain periods when influence was indirect, and it does not account for the more pervasive influences of science and technology on modern art in

³ Ibid., 231.

general”.⁴ Moreover, his object is to ask us to consider the possibility of a “history of images rather than that of art”.⁵

My interest in Elkins’ work originates from my own fascination with nonart images. Charts and graphs from medical texts, astronomy books, and encyclopedias have captured my attention for years. More recently I have been drawn to site plans, garden diagrams, and maps. These are of particular use because they relate to landscape. My painterly interest in surface draws me to traditional landscape, but the wealth of information, the fact that our age is filled with notational imagery, and the ability of maps in particular to orient individuals in a unique way draw me to them as well. A merging of the histories of the exterior view with the interior placement/location of maps provides areas of consideration for the imagery of my work.

Landscape

The conflation of landscape — that quintessential artistic genre — and the non or low art form of mapping has certainly been explored. Jane Hammond and Joyce Kozloff have recently used recognizable maps as foundations for contemporary works. Joyce Kozloff’s work of the mid-1990’s, in particular, explores overt and subtle functions of maps and ancient charts. They are frequently exhibited with Max Kozloff’s travel oriented photographs. Anselm Kieffer creates almost-maps from his landscapes. It has been said that many 16th and 17th Century Dutch landscapes are both maps and landscapes. So there is a history of artists from the 16th century to the present who attempt to merge the diagram with the view.

Because my experience with landscape has been so influenced by my own culture, my questions have been primarily directed toward Western landscape. The

⁴ Ibid, 45.

⁵ Ibid, 46.

whole notion of Western landscape is deeply rooted in history and politics, especially European history. The ways in which humans interact with the land is the foundation of landscape, and the European propensity for boundaries and walls as well as for the acquisition of space is revealed throughout the history of landscapes of Western culture.

Like Western History, Western Space is a very special space, not simply one space among others. For as long as Western thought has been alive it has provided the terms of a metaphysical background for time and space, a horizon of possibility which has always projected itself, transferred itself, transmitted itself across this planet, determining not only the Western concept of space but also the space of Western concepts. Thus the history of Europe, of this place is intimately bound to the history of place in general, of place as place, place as a determination of space, of a certain space.⁶

For some indigenous people, those who live close to the land, the idea of Western landscape is an odd one. Landscape for them is more about directional mapping — it relates to location within rather than exterior view.

Western landscape conveys implications of appropriation. It is in a sense related to souvenir shopping or hunting. A thing is collected or captured and brought home. Additionally, landscape is not only a perceived view but a projected one as well. The artist's attachment to a place or to the land in general is revealed in the choices that he or she makes regarding the composition of the view, scale, emphasis, color, and overall mood or formal analysis. It also elucidates the political and cultural influences and preferences of the artist's time.

Pre-twentieth century European landscape was primarily concerned with the placement of humans on the land. In other words, hills and rivers acted as backdrops for villages and towns.

⁶ J. Peter Burgess, "European Borders: History of Space/Space of History", *CTHEORY*5 (1994): 6.

Historically, landscape has had a range of meanings, some quite unrelated to art. One such meaning applies to civic classification of territory. It has been argued that the German *Landschaft* or *Lantschaft* was not originally a view of nature but rather a geographic area defined by political boundaries. In the late fifteenth century, the land around a town was referred to as its landscape, a meaning that still survives in some places...⁷

Additionally, nature became part of a metaphor for narratives of human industry, piety and folly.

While the vestiges of the European view of the land remained in America, the 18th century American landscape broke with European preferences for interaction of humans and land and focused on the frontier. The viewer/window remained, but humans were removed from the landscape so that the viewer could imagine being the first (of European extraction) to take it in. Vastness became the focus, and awe, the goal.

The Picturesque had employed a vocabulary of appropriation and commercial transformation in negotiating its relationship with the natural world: natural materials were processed into aesthetic commodities — 'landscapes'. The Sublime eludes the impulse to consume in the sense just described: it is pictorially unframeable, and it cannot be framed in words. The Sublime is that which we cannot appropriate, if only because we cannot discern any boundaries. If anything, it appropriates us.⁸

Yet if only in the sense that the view *was* framed, diminished in scale and portable, landscape continued to suggest some sense of control.

Anything, including the thing-in-itself, the thing as absolute, universal object, is accessible to knowledge only through its determinations, through the dispersion of its being into its particular manifestations in space and time. And yet this dispersion is precisely what precludes its universality.⁹

The separation of the view from its place and its secondary decorative function distinguished it as an object and therefore, a commodity. Regardless of the emotions

⁷ Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 28-29.

⁸ *Ibid*, 142.

⁹ J. Peter Burgess, 4.

aroused in these landscapes, they are inevitably safe. Their contrast to the domestic world is palpable, but the landscapes are, after all, views through a window.

Contemporary landscape often embraces the limitations of its history but also attempts to shed light on earlier attitudes . Photography has served a unique function in the documentation and illumination of the effects of acquisition, manifest destiny, and boundary-making. Land art, site installations, and performance art, working outside the traditional format of landscape, have provided new perspectives on those attitudes as well.

Maps

Today, construction of a map may not even demand the cartographer's presence on the land. The narrative that leads from the concentric circles rippling out from "around here" to the rectilinear lines of official surveys, to photographs taken by machines from high above the earth is a story that begins here at "home" and ends out there in "space".¹⁰

Nearly every culture maps its land. The configurations are as diverse as the belief systems of each group. For some, a map is committed to memory and discarded. For others, a map is physical, three-dimensional and anthropomorphic. Western cultures tend to see maps as indicators of boundaries and gridded locators. Western geographers have "persistently ignored the graphic image. In the early 1970's there was a call for the development of an "image geography," which would include ambiance, meaning, and the likes and dislikes of people living in a place."¹¹ Yet the traditional thinking about separation of diagram and place remain for the most part, intact.

Because maps function as locators, they have the potential to become more than landscapes. Whereas landscapes show "there", maps designate "here" and "there". That dialectic creates a heightened awareness of one's place.

¹⁰ Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*, (New York: The New Press, 1997), 77-78.

¹¹ Ibid, 82.

Returning to the points raised by James Elkins, nonart images can be laden with poetic overtones. For example, if a map designates one's location as being a great distance from another, perhaps over the span of a sea, there is inherently a reaction — wistfulness, relief, longing, even suspicion. A landscape on the other hand, can only designate the distance of what is in sight to the horizon, so the range of possibilities is different. Additionally the placement of figures in a landscape specifies and therefore it becomes less universal. A map allows the viewer to insert any information that seems relevant. It is therefore more flexible in its ability to suggest implications.

The aerial perspective of maps, regardless of whether they originated from satellites or from walking the landscape, is also of interest. The suggestion of omniscience is inherent precisely because of our inability to see beyond the horizon without sophisticated equipment. Thus there is in maps a sense of extraordinary knowing, even if the information they display is functionally unreliable.

The problem with maps is that they are unreliable. They fail to give salient information about the places they describe.

“The map is not the terrain... What your map does not show” the skinny black man told her, “is that the floods in December washed away a part of the road. I see the floods didn’t affect your map.”¹²

While the form of the map often gives clues to the history of a place, landscape is capable of bringing to the audience those intimate details concerning an individual's feeling about and experience in a certain place. Mapping deals primarily (at least in theory) with fact.

¹² Donald Westlake as quoted in Lucy Lippard, 78.

Mapping coordinates cities with the rural environment; pastoral detaches the two. Mapping relishes topographical specificity and documentary record; pastoral idealizes and generalizes its subjects and settings. Mapping emphasizes the continuities of history; pastoral arrests history and mythologizes it: the 'Fair Golden Age' is sharply opposed to the 'Base present age'.¹³

Ironically, the utility of a map may be negated by the cartographer's insistence in recording political details which will inevitably change while neglecting facts that have real bearing on the people who may use their maps. For instance, maps made by children of their own neighborhoods give rich information about secret places and interesting functions for known places.¹⁴

The assumption that maps somehow give an unbiased view about an area has been the focus of recent discussion. Maps, like landscapes, are constructs of the cultures that produce them. Western maps, because of their reliance on data and their dependence on technology, tend to be given credibility. Yet documentation can be fallible in as much as it frequently overlooks the obvious — "No map can read itself".¹⁵ Visual information is filtered through perception — so that if one looks at a map where, for instance, the family farm once stood, but the map shows a housing development, the viewer may see the streets and houses as errors in the landscape. The juxtaposition of memory and the present may make a map incomprehensible.

Cartographer Mark Monmonier opens his book *How to Lie with Maps* with the confession, "Not only is it easy to lie with maps, it's essential".¹⁶ He outlines the formal, political, and contextual problems that are inherent in mapmaking. Sometimes biases are latent, sometimes there is an overt objective to deceive. He points to maps which obscure key military locations as well as maps which give information about

¹³ Malcolm Andrews, 93.

¹⁴ Lucy Lippard, 79.

¹⁵ Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, *Meaning*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 30.

¹⁶ Mark Monmonier, *How to Lie with Maps*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 1.

inconsequential attributes to neighborhoods, but leave out unpleasant but important aspects such as industrial polluters, toxic sites and landfills.

The question then becomes, how is it that maps seem so truthful? Could there be something besides documentation going on in these images? The implication that James Elkins leaves us with is that the image itself may go beyond what the data tells us. There is the possibility that even remote Western maps can reveal truths about a place in a unique way.

Mapping Appalachia

Configuration

Recalling Elkins' example of the graph of sunshine, the form of the image carried a memory of a specific time and place. Certainly old maps carry a sense of time in the record of the journey of the cartographer. Yet new maps created by remote sensing — images made by satellite or some other non-local source — also convey history and memory.

A map of the Ohio River town of Wheeling, West Virginia shows a tangle of streets and houses pushed against the river. The compression of habitation relaxes as the streets move into the neighboring hills and those eventually unravel into strands of single roads and highways. The record of habitation forms a picture that is also a history of a town. The configuration becomes like a funnel, or a figure at the prow of a ship with a force at the river which resists free movement across it. It establishes a visual record which corresponds with the historical one. Wheeling was one of the first gateways across the Ohio River. The suspension bridge there allowed access to territories beyond. Those who crossed generally did not stop on the other side, but continued toward the frontier. Maps of river towns in America typically show similar exaggerated areas of compression to expansion. The point of compression tells much about the nature of the surrounding land, the history of the movement of people, and the character of the river. The painting, *Nike* (page 14), is an example of the exaggerated areas of compression and unraveling to which I am referring. The two obstacles, river and mountains, contain and shape the community in two distinct ways. The thickly troweled medium on the left creates obstacles. The resistance of the heavy medium to additional working -- digging or drawing --parallels the difficulty of developing a rugged landscape.

Nike. 2000. Acrylic gel medium and oil on canvas, 72"x 72".

Surface

Elkins describes maps as palimpsests, which in the original meaning of the word, referred to manuscripts which were recycled for use by rubbing out earlier writing and rewriting at a different angle. More recently they are defined by less specific criteria. "The metaphors of effacement have changed from washing and rubbing to collaging, tearing, dissecting, and deconstructing; a palimpsest is any imbrication, overlaying, or bricolage of words, images, or notation."¹⁷ Traditional Western maps then serve as good

¹⁷ Elkins, 236.

examples of the term. Process in these forms is fundamental to their ultimate development. Alternately building on (superimposing writing and symbols) and tearing down (folding, marking on to obscure) the surface corresponds to building and rebuilding or destroying meaning.

The action of forces on the earth also correspond to the map as palimpsest. Layers of soil and rock, ruins of architecture, upheavals, excavations and floods are part of the history of the landscape. The natural and human covering and uncovering is part of our understanding of the land. It is appropriate then to think of palimpsests as they refer to both literal and conceptual mapping.

Process and time are inextricably linked. Palimpsests, especially the previously mentioned manuscripts, carry in their forms the record of their making. Yet of equal value is the conception of time as it relates to configuration. The inference of time is present in the journey of by-gone cartographers and in the feeling of immediacy of contemporary distance imaging. Mapmaking is about “making” and that sense of time can be carried over into the process of painting as well.

Painting Maps

Configuration

The map as an iconic image in the context of information about travel or location affords both explicit and ineffable information. It can even reveal the political, scientific, and aesthetic tendencies of the cartographer. However, a map as a nonart image has a range of quantitative and dense information that is not identical to that of a painting. A map as a painting tilts the scale in the other direction and provides another set of information, in particular, about specific ideas and feelings about a certain place or region.

Painting maps is part of my progression from plein air landscape painting to aerial views, garden schemes, and site plans. My recent work utilizes local road maps as the point of reference. A large portion of Western maps consists of both documentary and popular images (in the sense that they serve commercial purposes) and their aesthetics are geared toward clarity and attractiveness. They provide a simple framework for an exploration of the locations they suggest and because they are part of popular visual language, they may also form connections more readily than maps that are used for scientific research.

I am primarily concerned with the configuration of the shape of a city or town — its relationship to rivers and land and its history of growth. Since I have been dealing with maps of Appalachia, the influences of geography bear greatly on the form. There is a strong tendency toward organic borders so that the images seem to have aspects of living things. The painting *Leviathan* (page 17) is taken from the shape of a local community. The iconic image appears to be something in addition to a town. The implication of both internal and external movement suggests something that could have once been or has the potential to be alive. Although cities outside this region may also take

on this kind of configuration, there is an acknowledgment that something external has disrupted a logical static geometric layout.

Leviathan. 2000. Acrylic gel medium and oil on canvas, 92"x 96".

Surface

A history of a place can be told in its surface as well as its form. One of the failings of maps is that they generally neglect to tell something about the way the earth looks or feels. Topographical maps incorporate linear marks which suggest a three-dimensional configuration to the land, but they only hint at whether the land eroded,

slipped, was excavated, buckled, or was washed away. Direction, configuration, and force are linked. The history of this region in particular is both vertical and horizontal.

Borrowing heavy texture from landscape painting, using opaque gel medium to build and carve, rubbing paint into the surface instead of laying it on top, permitted me to experiment with the idea of land in depth, not just as political border. This comes closer to developing images which suggest and ask questions about this place.

Place

The study of Elkins' work has provided insight into why images of towns and cities seem to be loaded with information that is apart from practical application. Looking at maps as political indicators, locators, and palimpsests has caused me to question what it is about maps of the region in which I live, Appalachia, that hints at time, and not just location. It has also encouraged me to appreciate the relationship between time and place.

Much has been said in recent years about place, perhaps because of the unequivocal placelessness of cyberspace, or because of the remnant values of the industrial era which demanded that individuals move from their families to find work, or just as likely, because of a curiosity to see what is around the bend. Yet the loss of the feeling that one has a place has begun to be of concern. Paul Virilio speaks of the post-modern world's loss of the knowledge of the local. "Action-at-a-distance is a phenomenon of absolute disorientation. We now have the possibility of seeing at a distance, of hearing at a distance, and of acting at a distance, and this results in a process of de-localization, of the up-rooting of the being".¹⁸ The purpose of this body of work is to examine the facets of a particular place, to attempt to understand in conceptual, kinesthetic, and

¹⁸ Paul Virilio quoted in Carlos Oliveira, "Global Algorithm 1.7: The Silence of the Lambs: Paul Virilio in Conversation", CTHEORY, (1996), 2.

visual terms what it means to be in Appalachia. Orienting oneself in a place requires an understanding of paths that extend and intersect. It demands an awareness of not just what lies on top, but what is buried beneath.

Physical Appalachia

Topography: Over and Around

There are few areas in Appalachia, especially in West Virginia, where one can drive for more than a mile without making a sharp turn or crossing a bridge. The topography of the region is relentless. It is beautiful. But it is not easy. Geography is a primary factor in the psyches of people of the Appalachian region. The land physically isolates and insulates. It is steep and unpredictable. It is a demanding landscape. Lucy Lippard notes in her book, *The Lure of the Local*, "The degree to which the places where individuals and groups interact are culturally and naturally constructed is one of the foremost debates at the end of the twentieth century".¹⁹ In Appalachia, people and landscape are connected in complex ways and in multiple directions. The dialogue between them is riddled with passions and accusations. The land is at once romanticized and brutalized by its inhabitants, and it in turn feeds and obliterates.

The consideration of land is apart from traditional notions of landscape. Landscape is a term that implies that one is outside the view.

For the insider there is no clear separation of self from scene, subject from object. There is, rather, a fused, unsophisticated and social meaning embodied in the milieu. The insider does not enjoy the privilege of being able to walk away from the scene as we can walk away from a framed picture or from a tourist viewpoint.²⁰

To be at once inside and outside a place is to be in an odd position. Those who live in Appalachia today cannot understand what it means to be "of a place" in the way that those who lived here one hundred years before us did. There are so many things that call us out of the land. Twentieth century codification has done much to separate the view and the inhabitant. The fact that we even consider landscape and place is

¹⁹ Lucy Lippard, 11.

²⁰ Denis Cosgrove, quoted in Malcolm Andrews, 20.

evidence that they are drawing away from us. Yet as Lucy Lippard notes, there is still the pull of the familiar.

If one has been raised in a place, its textures and sensations, its smells and sounds, are recalled as they felt to a child's, adolescent's, adult's body. Even if one's history there is short, a place can still be felt as an extension of the body, especially the walking body, passing through and becoming part of the landscape.²¹

The greater the integration of the body and a place, (whether positive or negative), the closer one is to home.

Surface Paths: To and From

The roads that join isolated communities are significant in their ability to unite and divide. Fragile economies are shaken by the building of new highways — because self-sufficiency and the fear of leaving may be the only way a small town survives. John Brinckerhoff Jackson, in his book about the changing roles of roads states:

One of the least investigated aspects of our European-American culture is our ambivalent attitude toward the road or the street. In their infrequent mention of roads, historians and even geographers tend to adopt the establishment point of view that roads are essentially for the maintenance of order and for commerce (or warfare) with neighboring states. Nevertheless there has always been and probably will always be a widespread distrust among average men and women of all roads which come from the outside world, bringing strangers and strange ideas... there seems to be a basic human response: the road is a very powerful space; and unless it is watched, it can undermine and destroy the existing order.²²

Entrances to and exits from towns and cities are areas of anxiety. The place where a single highway becomes a community contains its own history of finding and losing.

²¹ Lucy Lippard, 34.

²² John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 5-6.

In *Raid*, the red line which is understood as a road tugs against the green mass. The configuration is a relatively faithful depiction of the pattern of an actual community — the site of abolitionist John Brown's capture of the armory — Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. The town's configuration becomes a matrix for both history and the complexities of human behavior: it is the figure of the ultimate importance of seemingly minor events in equally insignificant places, and it is the image of resistance to change.

Raid. 2000. Acrylic gel medium and oil on canvas, 92"x 96".

Subterranean Paths

The network of tunnels that runs through the coalfields of Appalachia bears no resemblance to the grids of streets and roads above. The directions of their paths are based on two distinct criteria. Yet occasionally, those two systems impact each other. Several years ago, barriers were placed on Interstate 470, just west of the Ohio River. Traffic was detoured to another road. The mine beneath the highway had collapsed.

The interaction and layering of unrelated systems has been explored extensively in the post-modern era. The architect Bernard Tschumi's elaborate, superimposed grids, such as those for the plan for Park de La Villette in Paris, are little match for the tangle of dual systems that exist in the Appalachian region. While Tschumi's grids play off one another in relatively shallow space, the landscape of the coalfields is about depth, height, and extraction. The movement is both lateral and vertical.

Surface and depth are relative concepts here. For example, when one is in a basement, there is the possibility that far below, in another system, other people may be working. Mineral rights are an important bargaining point in this region. One may own the surface of the land, but only so far down. Someone else may own the land below.

In the series of small squares, *Shaft/Road*, the physicality of the surface plays out in a complex snarl of lines and troweled medium. They are intentionally ambiguous. They can be read as aerial views, cross-sections, or both.

Shaft/Road. 2000. Acrylic gel medium and oil on canvas, 22 16"x 16" squares.

Flash Floods: Across

A consequence of an erratic landscape is that catastrophic events happen more rapidly. The inability to see beyond affords no warning, and verticality increases velocity. Flash floods are common and dangerous. A flood in 1985 sent a wall of water down the

south fork of the Potomac river. The force altered the river bed and blew apart homes. Yet in this region, the interaction of human negligence and natural power can have especially disastrous effects. In February of 1972, after several days of heavy rain, a series of debris dams created by a coal company broke into the Buffalo Creek valley in Logan County, West Virginia.

Water began to pour over the top of Dam No. 3, as it began to slump. At 7:59 A.M. it collapsed, probably in the same place it had collapsed one year earlier. Within seconds, the turbulent waters rushed against the second dam and broke through into the clear pool impounded behind the first and oldest dam. As the moving waters hit pockets of burning coal waste in the first dam, they set off explosions... Moments later, at about 8:01 a.m., the torrent of water entered Buffalo Creek, having carried away about 100 feet of the burning coal-waste bank and cut a canyon 45 feet deep and 500 feet long. By the time the miners were coming off the midnight shift on the tippie, the water had already cut deep into the dam, and the explosions were throwing mud and rocks 300 feet up into the air.... A wave of black water between 20 and 30 feet high, filled with thousands of tons of sludge and coal waste, poured down over the 16 coal mining towns moving at about 30 miles per hour.²³

That event altered the courses of the lives of thousands of people. Landscapes rarely include such unsavory information, and yet for those who are part of the landscape, these events encapsulate a pivotal place and time. The literal reorienting of the land parallels the displacement of those left in the wake of all kinds of upheaval.

Prehistoric to Historic: Back and Forth

Under this great load, the earth's crust first warped downward and eventually, under huge lateral pressures, buckled, thrusting the accumulated mass of sediment deep into the earth and upward toward the sky. The enormous thickness of the sedimentary strata in the Appalachian Mountains — in some places six or seven miles thick — indicates that the great inland sea which once extended from Newfoundland to the Gulf of Mexico must have been collecting sediment for 300 million years before the final great upheaval that brought the Appalachians into being.²⁴

²³ Paul J. Nyden, *Voices of Buffalo Creek*, 1974.

²⁴ *The World We Live In*, (New York: Time Incorporated, 1955), 46.

Those who have spent some time in the region get a sense of the push and pull of time. High on mountain ridges are boulders embedded with sea shells and marked with the motion of waves. There are still stands of trees which have not been cut by human hands. The punctuated passing of the seasons with distinctive colors generates exquisite anticipation for what is next. There is a sense of the ancient. It is felt, not recorded.

Land history is also about the industry of humans and our desire to be part of the landscape. The obstacles faced by communities in Appalachia must include the rugged topography high on the list. Building in this region is organic, not geometric. It is achieved through sheer determination : working around steep hillsides, narrow valleys, numerous creeks and rivers. As previously discussed, the natural forms dictate the configuration of streets and towns, and are influences on their success or demise.

Political Appalachia: Inside and Outside

The history of the land is the most interesting part of the history of the region — not because of a lack of significant events, but because those events are so colored by stereotypes, faulty information, and nostalgia. History is a difficult concept when discussing the Appalachian culture. European roots cause us to think about history in European terms. “The universalizing machinery of the Enlightenment is based on ideologies of opposition, delimitation and exclusion: nature/culture, society/politics, human/institutional, public/private.”²⁵ Burgess proposes that within the European concept of history, we understand ourselves by “who we are not”²⁶. But by doing so, we incorporate that alter-image into ourselves. The image constantly changes because that re-definition occurs continually. The conundrum is that to be Appalachian is to be both

²⁵ J. Peter Burgess, 3-4.

²⁶ Ibid, 2.

outside and inside the larger culture. Definitions of self are comprised of popular media images (so that one is either fighting against or running with those images), and personal/family histories.

The politics of Appalachia is tied to that inside/outside concept. The sense that one is in a sub-culture (regardless of whether that notion is real or imagined) often plays out in a kind of wariness to the new or unfamiliar. The motives of those who would bring about change tend to be carefully scrutinized.

The inclusion of iconic images in my work parallels these ideas. Floating an image on a plain white field, as in *Organ / Ism*, creates a neutral environment for the imagery of human development, and heightens the feelings of isolation or protection that the geography of the region provides.

Organ / Ism. 2000. Acrylic gel medium and oil on canvas, 72"x 72"

Conclusion: Place, Time, and Image

The complexities of natural and human events that make up the history of a place also create components of its image. Images, even those which are meant to describe limited, specific information, often reveal more than that which they were designed to tell. The maps that have been used in conjunction with landscape suggest that there is no single way to understand a place, yet also hint of something ineffable but true emerging from their forms. The history of movement of people and natural forces, the arriving and leaving of individuals and cultures change the landscape. The stories of their ebb and flow are evident in their forms. The paintings in this series are both physical and conceptual ideas of the place in which I live. The push and pull of paint, the rubbing, digging, and extraction of areas of the surface are not meant to imitate the landscape, but instead, to sense it. The works infer departing, wandering, and staying. They explore identity of what we call home, and the perpetual desire to be simultaneously in a place and removed from it.

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W O R K H I S T O R Y

Assistant Professor, Alderson-Broaddus College August, 1999 to present
Philippi, West Virginia

Responsibilities include teaching all painting, drawing, foundations, art education, art history and art appreciation courses as well as conducting senior seminars and directing at least six exhibitions per year at Daywood Gallery. Developed curriculum for a new offering of a Bachelor of Arts degree in Painting which was approved by governing board in my first year.

Director, Innovation Gallery January, 1999 to June, 1999
Fairmont, West Virginia

Internship at the West Virginia High Tech Consortium Foundation. Responsibilities included making artist contacts, advertising, striking exhibitions, arrangements for opening receptions, and upkeep of the gallery.

Adjunct Faculty, Fairmont State College 1994-1998
Fairmont, West Virginia

Classes taught include Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Art History, Art Appreciation, Painting I-IV, Fundamentals of Art, and Art Education.

Master Teacher, West Virginia Governor's School for the Arts 1998
Fairmont, West Virginia

Painting instructor to gifted high school students in a competitive summer arts program sponsored by the State of West Virginia.

Adjunct Faculty, Alderson-Broaddus College 1997
Instructor for Elementary Art Education class.

Elementary Art Teacher 1982-1984, 1987-1992
Berkeley and Mineral Counties, West Virginia.

E D U C A T I O N

Master of Fine Arts Degree Candidate Specializing in Painting
West Virginia University. Projected date of graduation: December of 2000.
Recipient of Mesauros Scholarship and Assistantship/Internship.

Master of Arts Degree in Art Education. West Virginia University, 1996.

Bachelor of Arts Degree in Art Education. West Virginia University, 1979.
Magna Cum Laude graduate, recipient of Board of Regents Scholarship for studio art work.

EXHIBITIONS AND COLLECTIONS

Solo Exhibitions: *Recent Paintings*, Daywood Gallery, Alderson-Broaddus College, Summer, 2000; *New Work*, James D. Brooks Gallery, Fairmont State College, 1996; *Paintings by Jennifer Boggess*, Marion County Public Library, 1992; *Works by Jennifer Hall Boggess*, Boreman Art Gallery, Martinsburg, WV, 1987.

Group Exhibitions: West Virginia University Graduate Exhibitions, 1999, 2000; *The Best of West Virginia* Invitational Traveling Exhibition, 1997-1999; *Master Teachers' Exhibition*, James D. Brooks Gallery, Fairmont State College, , 1998; *Mountains of Hope*, Mary Babb Randolph Cancer Center Opening Invitational (Purchase Award), 1991.

Awards: *Award of Merit*, West Virginia Juried Exhibition, West Virginia Center for Culture and History, 1997; *Governor's Award*, (Purchase Award) West Virginia Watercolor Society Juried Exhibition, 1987.

Exhibitions Curated/Directed: Young Kim, *salt/earth*, 2000, Alderson-Broaddus Juried Student Exhibition, 2000; Barbour County Public Schools Juried Exhibition, 2000; Works by Carol Pelletier, 2000; Ruth Blackwell Rogers, *Fable*, 2000; Naijun Zhang, *Paintings*, 1999; Claudia Giannini, 1999; Cynthia Myerberg, *Kitschen Help*, 1999; Lynn Boggess, *Text in Context*, 1999; Christopher Hocking, *Paintings by Christopher Hocking*, 1999.

Juror: Fairmont State College (Fairmont, West Virginia) Juried Student Exhibitions, 1999, 1997; Frostburg State College (Frostburg, Maryland) Juried Student Exhibition, 1998; Alderson-Broaddus Student Exhibition, 1997.

Flood 1. 2000. Acrylic gel medium and oil on canvas, 72"x 76".

Flood 2. 2000. Acrylic gel medium and oil on canvas, 72"x 76".

Nike (detail). 2000. Acrylic gel medium and oil on canvas, 72"x 72".

Then. Here. 2000. Acrylic gel medium and oil on canvas, 89"x 96".