INTRODUCTION

> We are surrounded with things which we have not made and which have a life and structure different from our own: trees, flowers, grasses, rivers, hills, clouds. For centuries they have inspired us with curiosity and awe. They have been objects of delight. We have recreated them in our imaginations to reflect our moods. And we have come to think of them as contributing to an idea which we have called nature. Landscape painting marks the stages in our conception of nature. Its rise and development since the Middle Ages is part of a cycle in which the human spirit attempted once more to create a harmony with its environment.[1]

We have come a long way since art historian Kenneth Clark wrote this often-quoted passage to open the first chapter of his seminal work *Landscape Into Art* seventy years ago. Today, the breadth of research conducted on and through landscape signals that it is much more than an artistic genre reflecting the attempt to create harmony with the natural world. "Landscape," to quote a recent publication from Werner Bigell and Cheng Chang, "is more than a projection onto nature or the environment: it is a multivalent frame — territorial, political, aesthetic, etc. — determining how the environment is perceived and shaped".[2] The articles collected in our second issue on landscape show that this framing can also work the other way around: the landscape, too, can become a prism, even a critical tool for researchers to analyse, and possibly disrupt, the ways in which we perceive society and culture.

This second issue of the *JLGC* on landscape draws from the wealth of contributions to the fourth biennial LUCAS Graduate Conference that took place at the end of January 2017. The theme, *Landscape: Interpretations, Relations,*

1 Kenneth Clark, *Landscape Into Art* (London: John Murray, 1949), 1.

2 Werner Bigell and Cheng Chang, "The Meanings of Landscape: Historical Development, Cultural Frames, Linguistic Variation, and Antonyms," *Ecozon@* 5.1 (2014), 86.

and Representations, was chosen for its inherently interdisciplinary character. When analysed as a theoretical concept, landscape evokes strong spatial connotations and vivid imagery by means of our perceptions of the world. However, as the world undergoes impactful developments — often discussed with buzzwords such as industrialization, globalization, and digitization — the very notion of what defines, arranges, informs, and changes a landscape has altered in accordance with these dynamic processes. The conference aimed to interrogate the shifts in the conception of and approach to landscape throughout history and across disciplines. It attracted more than fifty scholars from nineteen countries considering landscape, and its cultural meaning, from different perspectives, eras, and regions.

Three public lectures set the tone for this academic exchange. The first by Dr Anja Novak (University of Amsterdam) on land art in the Netherlands drew connections between seventeenth-century Dutch landscape painting and the recent, mostly state-commissioned, monumental works of land art in the polder landscape of Flevoland within the contexts of identity, modernism, and gender. Keynote speaker Prof. Dr David E. Nye (University of Southern Denmark) illuminated the history of the American electric grid in his lecture. He focused on capitalism's production of heterotopic spaces and their ability to reveal as much as they conceal poverty and industrial landscapes. Another keynote speaker, Dr Elizabeth Losh (William & Mary, Williamstown, VA, USA), discussed the timely subject of place-making in digital activism and the forms of solidarity that emerge from this practice. She presented new research and addressed recent events including Trump's into White House inauguration and the subsequent Women's Marches held around the world. To her we extend our special thanks: she kindly agreed to give a lecture on very short notice after she had just arrived as a Guest Lecturer at Leiden University.

In addition to scholarly contributions, artists were explicitly encouraged to present their work at the conference, which led to sometimes surprising takes

on the subject. One example is the project MANUFACTUUR 3.0 in which Belgian artist **Kristof Vrancken** created light-sensitive and drinkable emulsions using local plants to produce photographs of the land from which they grow to address environmental pollution. Thus, the landscape is not only pictured, but also materially embedded in the final print. The test tubes that adorn this issue's front cover contain the plant-based ingredients for his emulsions; they are, in a sense, a material interpretation of the landscape from which they were taken. Further details on this innovative project can be found in this issue in a two-page statement written by the artist.

While the *JLGC*'s first issue featured a selection of six articles exploring the links between *landscape and identity*, this issue's contributions converge around the theme of *projections and transformations*. Projection and transformation are common terms of inquiry in current academic debates surrounding landscape. As emphasized in the inherent nature of the terms themselves, the study of landscape as a dynamic concept is subject to constant revision, just as our relationship with land perpetually transforms. The articles collected in this issue offer a glimpse into the variety of research currently performed on and through landscape in the Humanities. Out of a number of applications, we selected the six articles that best approach landscape as a projection screen for nationalist sentiments and (post)colonial narratives, or as a site of transformation.

In "Literary landscapes in the Castilian Middle Ages: Allegorical construction as a feature of textual landscapes", **Natacha Crocoll** argues that literary landscapes existed prior to the Renaissance, despite their lack of acknowledgement especially in French and Spanish historiography. The Middle Ages are a particularly delicate point of scholarly dissension, due to the era's perceived theological relationship between humans and nature. Crocoll focuses on the particular case of thirteenth-century Castilian literature, and explores texts from the same period but across different genres, including *Cantar de Mío Cid*. According to Crocoll, medieval landscapes are characterized by symbolism, frequent

religious interpretation, and traditional constructions that rely on literary topoi. These characteristics should not be seen as obstacles between humankind and nature; rather, they offer another interpretation where transcendence adds meaning to the beauty of the world. Through this, the medieval perception of landscape demonstrates its earlier representation in literature.

Carolin Görgen examines how California Camera Club practices around 1900, which have often been neglected in the sociocultural studies of the United States, utilized the landscape to construct a triumphant history of national expansion. She argues that the California Camera Club contributed to an imagined history of the Western landscape. To illustrate this argument, Görgen looks at how magazines like *Camera Craft*, published between 1900 and 1942, lent themselves to the formulation of a dominating Americanized narrative reinforced by the massive influence exerted by Eastman Kodak over the perception of popular photography since the 1890s. Thus, Görgen suggests how the collectively produced images of the local environment in the early 1900s sought to articulate a selective, nationalistic portrayal of the American West.

Timea Andrea Lelik's essay focuses on the intricate entanglement between landscapes and depicted figures in Edvard Munch's paintings and the impact this effect has on viewers. Landscape, as Lelik explains, is an essential part of Munch's compositions. Nevertheless, many of these compositions exhibit features that resist a neat categorization into painting genres. Through a close reading of Munch's paintings, including *Melancholy* (1892), *The Scream* (1893), and *Red Virginia Creeper* (1898-1900), Lelik argues that neither portraiture nor landscape stand out to enforce compliance with the conventional canons of certain art genres. Instead, figures and backgrounds are often absorbed into each other, creating a viewing experience that is direct and confrontational, as if the viewer is being framed within the ongoing moment that the paintings suggest. Lelik's article enriches the understanding of landscape in Munch's paintings, both as a genre rule that needs be broken and as a compositional device that engages the viewer.

Kyveli Mavrokordopoulou investigates the treatment of landscape in the video work *The Wave* (2011) by Sarah Vanagt and Katrien Vermeire depicting the excavation of a mass grave from the Spanish Civil War era. Mavrokordopoulou interprets this video's examination of landscape and past violence by means of Fernand Braudel's concept of '*longue durée*' and Rob Nixon's 'slow violence'. By bringing the notion of temporality into their work Vanagt and Vermeire appear to explore a past that lacks resolution, and to extend this lack of resolution into the present. In this way, Mavrokordopoulou argues, this video work challenges traditional landscape aesthetics.

Tessa de Zeeuw's article analyses the architectural design of the newly constructed International Criminal Court (ICC) complex and specifically focuses on its defining element: a hanging garden containing seedlings from each of the Court's member states. She interrogates both the form and function of the hanging garden and poses the question: How does the ICC's courthouse garden and landscape design reflect on the problem of sovereignty that constitutes the institution as a court of international criminal law? De Zeeuw argues that the garden acts as a critical space that vests a powerful and paradoxical relationship between nature and culture and helps to shed a critical light on the constitution of the ICC.

In **Maxime Decaudin**'s article, he explores the role of nature in the process of Hong Kong's colonization through landscape descriptions produced by nineteenth-century visitors, travellers, and settlers. Decaudin traces the origin of the expression "barren rock", which was used to refer to the island's supposed lack of vegetation, discusses its implications, and uses it as the starting point for his contribution to the history of environmental changes in Hong Kong. From a viewpoint that avoids simplistic oppositions between nature and culture, the article studies the first encounters between colonists and natural environment, and how landscape descriptions could play distinct roles in the construction of colonial narratives used as a mechanism of legitimization for

the British colonial project, and their implications for land appropriation and dispossession. Decaudin also presents cases of cultural encounters that provide hybrid landscape interpretations, and questions simplistic assumptions of European cultural imposition on Hong Kong.

We, as the editorial board, hope that this issue contributes to interdisciplinary discussions on landscape and its capacity for political and aesthetic transformation. Landscape and the myriad projections related to it are far from being just a way of achieving harmony with our environment. These topics will continue to be debated in future scholarship, and we aim to spark fruitful discussions through the contributions offered by this issue's authors.

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