

Saltlands abstract for New Creative Praxis conference

Inspired by split estates and the separation of above and below ground, the immersive three channel video installation Saltlands addresses the visible and invisible components of topographies and landscapes as disconnected layered places with distinct stories, bodies, and values contained within, and imposed upon, them. It scrapes the surface of a focused look on strata (both geological and otherwise) as place defining and history holding and as an audiovisual artistic narrative, or expressive, structuring device.

This video work is a layered, atemporal, speculative experience of the Permian Basin which has several underground "lives". Oil drilling and fracking, underground nuclear waste storage, and a vast and protected cavern system all exist and occur next to each other under the area around Carlsbad, NM. The ecological richness that was the aboveground Permian Basin has transferred to an underground richness in minerals, materials, and formations, serving a variety of cultural, economic, and political interests. The surface which has covered the Permian Basin, on the other hand, has been considered desolate and expendable, with its value situated beneath the top layer of earth. The result of this, is the destruction of the aboveground ecosystem via the underground through more intense and frequent earthquakes, worsening drought, contaminated water and soil, and the looming threat of escaping radioactive material.

This installation is the first of what will be a trilogy of video-based artistic productions exploring expressions of depth and surface within context of relationships to place (in reference to both the human and non-human). The work explores colonial histories, current realities, and speculative futures of nature and land use, value definitions, and politics of extraction through experimental landscape filmmaking and approaches to audiovisual translations of embodiment of place in attempting to subvert patriarchal expressions and interpretations of land, bodies, and systems of value.

This is an advanced work in progress that is undergoing formal edits and would be ready to screen by early April or could be discussed as a work in progress.

The presentation is a single-channel triptych for review (and potentially conference screening) purposes but would ideally exhibit as a large multi-screen installation.

Bibliography

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Steyerl, Hito. "In defense of the poor image." *e-flux journal* 10, no. 11 (2009).

Creator Bio

Nena Hedrick is a non-fiction filmmaker, video artist, and visual anthropologist with a focus on experimental film, performance, place, landscape, topographies, and embodied narratives. Her work has screened and exhibited across Europe and the Americas.

She is currently a student in the practice-based PhD program in Film and Digital Media at the University of California Santa Cruz.