

Isle of Islay - Nature Observatory

Remembrance of a Forgotten Treaty between Man and Nature

PROTAGONIST

The project is about the protagonist going on a voyage to an oceanic island. The protagonist HOMO NOVUS is a future metropolitan 50 years from now. He lives in an entirely urban environment, with all symptoms of being "blasé" [1]. With highly developed technology, he hardly needs to use his own eyes, ears, and body; his senses become rusty.

The good part is, high level of automation brings about abundant free time. Finally, human beings can „play“ as the Situationists favor. However, to be a ludic Dadaist in the banal urban environment is no longer possible. In order to play at all, the protagonist needs to re-establish the connection to his biological being. He goes on exile, to a faraway land, for a surrealistic psycho-geographical therapy.

PLACE

Isle of Islay is an oceanic island, documented in the 1654 Blaeu Atlas as "INSULA ILA" of Inner Hebrides in Scotland. Away from the center of the world and dominated by sublime natural landscape, the island has a long tradition of clans, pagan rituals, and nature worship. In an age when awe of nature is conquered by all-round science, when human life is increasingly artificial, the Scottish oceanic island and its historical roots could help reestablish the broken ties.

Travel logs as well as tales and folklores present ancient everyday rituals. [2] They provide great source for understanding an earlier relationship between man and nature. Parallel to written records are ancient built structures like Stonehenge, menhir (men:stone, hir:long, long stone), and holed stones. They are built manifests of an earlier relationship between man and nature.

CONCEPT: DRIFT + STOPS

On the one-week voyage, the protagonist drifts and stops. Dérive, he experiences a dream-like subconscious drift in the landscape. The island becomes a single huge labyrinth. Every day he makes a stop at a building or object. The concept of the stops originates from Stonehenge, holed stones, menhir. Like the menhir, the structures are primitive, bodily and substantial, as minimal man-made markings in the landscape. Like the menhir being the center of pagan worships, the structures give a body for stories and rituals. Through the structures, the protagonist experiences the unique natural phenomenon of each place with its unique astronomical geographical conditions: the darkness, the sun, the loch, the variety of lives, atmosphere, wave, the wind, moon and stars. Typologies and instruments for observing nature are explored as references. [3] Like in the holed stones, at certain moments the sun would appear exactly in the hole, these structures give intangible natural phenomena a temporary abode or body. They trace nature's movement and make nature's presence visible. They enable the protagonist to capture nature. Nature is suddenly apprehensible for man, not in the way of science but lived experience. This experience is gained only through bodily work and sensual interaction with nature. In this process, the protagonist sharpens his senses and rediscovers his origin that is deeply rooted in nature.

ARCHETYPE: WAY + MENHIR

The prehistoric nomadic life means being on the way and making stops in between. Menhir is such a stop. Perpendicular to the horizontal spread of landscape, menhir is the first substantial marking of human race in nature. In a nomadic culture, it marks concave and convex of a drift. It is the threshold between nomadism and settlement, being one step before the interiorized way. Its minimal formal existence is what Hegel describes as "inorganic sculpture", "a pure presentation of itself, the gift of naked presence". It is sculpture and architecture at once. As astronomical observation stations, menhir is also the site of worship, rituals and games. [4]

FORM OF WORK

The voyage is documented as a combination of linguistic narrative and architectural spatial design. Writing inscribed in space makes an intimate link between space and time, between architecture and lived experience.

The core of a voyage is being on the move. Time and space are inscribed at the same time. [5] In the form of space inscribed with text, the documentation is therefore not a representation of the voyage but the voyage itself.

[1] Simmel, George: *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, 1903

[2] See travel logs from 18th Century English scholars such as Martin Martin, Thomas Pennant, Samuel Johnson, James Boswell, James Hall; tales and folklore collected in the 19th Century by J.F. Campbell, James M. Mackinlay

[3] Sun dial from Vitruvius, machines by Leonardo da Vinci, Aeolian wind harp by Athanasius Kircher, parabolic mirrors, greek hydraulic organ, Jantar Manta, Ulugh Beg, indian step well; Land art from Dani Karavan, Robert Morris, Hannsjoerg Voth, Olafur Eliasson

[4] Careri, Francesco: *Walkscapes*, 2002, Barcelona

[5] Stenton, Alison Mary: *Late Eighteenth-Century Home Tours and Travel Narratives: Genre, Culture and Space*, 2003