(…) Perhaps this is due to nothing more than the simple association of landscape with a peaceful mental state even when the landscape referred to is one filled with industrial waste. Precisely this suspicious feature gives reason to consider the concept, metaphor, model ‘landscape’, just a little closer. Perhaps there is more to it.”

Jorgen Dehs.

‘Our phantasies around space and fiction, but also our phantasies of sincerity and virtue, or our mad dreams of technicity. Everything that has been dreamt on this side of the Atlantic has a chance of being realized on the other. They build the real out of ideas.’

‘SALT LAKE CITY: the world genealogical archives, presided over in the depths of the desert caves by those rich-living, puritanical conquistadors, the Mormons, and, alongside, the Bonneville track on the immaculate surface of the Great Salt Lake Desert, where prototype cars achieve the highest speeds in the world. Patronymic genesis as the depth of time, and the speed of sound as pure superficiality.

ALAMOGORDO: the first atomic-bomb test against the backdrop of White Sands, the pale blue backcloth of the mountains and hundreds of miles of white sand – the blinding artificial light of the bomb against the blinding light of the ground. Extraordinary sites, capitals of fiction become reality. Sublime, trans-political sites of extraterritoriality, combining as they do the earth’s undamaged geological grandeur with a sophisticated, nuclear, orbital, computer technology’

Jean Baudrillard.-America
Unit 5 is interested in the ‘Contemporary Landscape’ as a speculative terrain. ‘Speculation’ has a double connotation; one hand the term resonates to risky investments in financial markets, associated to ideas of exploitation and profit. On the other hand, it can suggest, vision and imagination and it is associated to practices of forecasting and projecting into the future. It is this second sense of the term that most interest the unit. ‘Speculation’ implies Risk, Conjecture and Imagination, which will be key notions for this year’s tasks.

The landscape has been primarily shaped by human exploitation in search for food, goods and resources but also by testing for technological progress. As our natural resources fade or economic and political shifts occur or the speed of technological change accelerates, these ‘manufactured landscape’ can become retired and available for a new cycle.

In this context, these sites can become a springboard for visionary and exciting architectural interventions and programs. What is the future of the contemporary landscape?

This becomes the setting for the projects this year. In order to narrow your research we will provide some pointer for some of the sites you will be exposed to in our trip to Utah and Arizona.

**Productive landscapes.**

- **Agriculture:** Arid natural terrains can be re-surfaced by irrigation and transformed into agricultural land. Will this be necessary in the near future as ‘precision agriculture’ allows crops to be no-longer dependent on weather or soil or to control their environment remotely from across the globe?

- **Farming:** What is the alternative of the extensive alteration of the land and environment produced by intense contemporary farming. We are now able to grow meet in the lab. Are we to re-calibrate the human diet? What would be the implied consequences on the landscape?

- **Mineral extraction:** The production of everyday consumer goods have large scale effects into the landscape. What are the hidden cause-effects networks that link the urban and the countryside?... The Coca-Cola you drank this afternoon in London contributed to a creation of an artificial lava hill in Idaho...

- **Mining:** The scale of the artificial alteration of the topography fights with the embedded natural forces or the terrain

  What is next for these sites ones the resources run out? What are the opportunities that they provide?

**Mechanical landscapes.**

We will look at Mechanical landscapes like these solar power plants, where the addition of the equipment (solar panels and mirrors in this case) create a technological veil over the terrain that enhances picturesque and aesthetic qualities of the natural conditions.

Energy will be an important consideration for the year. Emerging new technologies in mining are affecting the geo-politics of the land. Boom-towns created around new fracking reserves are good examples of that. Are we to envision new ways of energy, that might influence this?

**Repository landscapes.**

But these remote site, become repositories of the waste and derelict equipment from our industrial centers and cities, and also dangerous
by-products that threaten their immediate ecologies. How can you activate these otherwise inert terrains?

**Overexposed/Hidden landscapes.**

The Landscape is a heavily surveyed and overexposed terrain. Interestingly, the original eye-level one point perspective of the renaissance paintings has been replaced by a dynamic digital experience with an emphasis on the aerial view enabled by satellites and goggle earth. The overexposure and visibility of the earth’s surface is problematic and triggers censorship of sensitive sites, creating black dots or forbidden areas.

**Simulated landscapes.**

Sometimes these hiding techniques become physical structures rather than digital filters. In the WWII, entire military facilities were hidden under a nettings and fake follies that when seen from the air created the illusion of rolling hills and rural villages. We will be interested in simulates landscapes.

**Data/ Digital landscapes.**

Our ‘digital networks’ acquiring physical presence in the landscape. In our field trip we will encounter the central server’s facility for Ebay and also the NSA Governmental Intelligence data center, alleged to contain all the data resulting from eavesdropping on digital communication.

**Testing landscapes.**

But more importantly, the landscape has been traditionally the testing ground for technological advancement. From Speed tests, military technology, simulations and calibration of air and space equipment, etc.

We will come across Military testing sites that sometimes become abandoned and become built ruins, monuments to particular socio-political periods. These tests leave a significant mark, not only on the surface of the earth but on the collective memory. (Nuclear bomb crater)

**Future landscapes**

This testing extends beyond the earth surface to anticipate new frontiers. This is the new Virgin space port facility awaiting for the first tourist trip into space.

And even beyond the limits of our planet as we prepare to colonize and alter other terrains in neighboring planets.

**Celebratory/ Social Landscapes**

But the landscape is also the place for social Milieu. The landscape can be a place for free gathering and celebration, outside the constraints of the decor and conventions of the city and society.

These sites will be the focus of your investigations and you will be invited to speculate on the future of the landscape through your proposals. In researching the sites, You will consider not only the physical, (Topography, composition, hystory) but its ecosystems and more intangible qualities that might lay behind the surface. We will also consider the cultural in the terrains, the legends and myths associated with the land, and their manifestation through artefacts and rituals associated with particular places.

We will be in contact with the ‘Centre for Land use interpretation’ with a branch in Utah. Its webpage can be a good source of information (see references at the end of this brief)
BRIEF
The initial steps will be targeted to gather research data and analytical drawings that aim to ‘de-code’ the landscape in the site of your interests. What are its environmental characteristics, it’s the spatial and temporal patterns, what is its genetic code, and more importantly its potential?

With this understanding, you will propose a small architectural intervention in this terrain, with a program derived by the research, that has the potential, like a seed, to precipitate a sequential transformation of the site’s environment, its entropy.

The concept of entropy is related to the transfer of energy and carries the consequence of an increase in disorder or new order. How can a small architectural intervention embrace entropic tendencies and act as a catalyst for change on a much larger scale? What are the consequences of energetic exchange such as material, moisture, light, heat etc. have on your chosen landscape? Does the shift you proposal influences affect any network of systems that operates in a bigger sphere?

Project 1 will ask you to abandon conventions and will invite you to speculate about the future of the landscape. We will be more concerned with the ‘what if’s’ that what the ‘Therefore’s’

OUTCOME
The outcome of term 1 will be the production of a site specific physical model or carefully assembled ‘extended’ animated drawing to test and experiment how through your intervention the qualities of the site chosen could be enhanced, augmented, para-sited, or forming a symbiosis; exposing its inherent qualities and at the same time speculating about its possible future.

The genius loci of the site will be the point of departure for the project and therefore the siting of the project and a thorough understanding will become vastly important. In all cases, the approach should be experimental. This is a test ground for the main building project and to make full advantage of it, you should take creative and intellectual risks. We invite you to challenge conventions of representation and experiment with different techniques and media to derive a novel and personal design language. The workshop

WEEK 1. You will spend the first week of the year researching Landscape sites in search of ‘altered natural states’ in and around Salt lake city, Utah and Arizona. The output of the first week exercise should be a considered documentation/mapping, a propositional description of condition that interests you.

For a group pin-up at the end of week two you are asked to develop a series of drawing/collage, manipulated photography and/or an assembly of manipulated objects or model. Your work should reveal your interpretation and vision of the place and program and encapsulate different aspects of the site and condition that you find interesting.

WEEKS 2–8. The first weeks’ quest has provided you with a site of interest and hopefully a personal take on the theme of the unit, which can continue for the rest of the term. In the second stage your exploration will be workshop-based. Your analysis will conclude in a model, a ‘surrogate landscape’ in miniature, which could be abstract or to scale, but that critically responds to the original super nature condition by either substituting it, augmenting it or altering it. The architectural agendas for the project will be individual and based in your findings from the site and program research.
General Drawing References:

- ‘Flesh’ by Diller and Scofidio
- ‘Temple Island’ by Michael Webb
  - http://archigram.westminster.ac.uk
- ‘Drawing architecture’
  - http://drawingarchitecture.tumblr.com/
- ‘RIBA President’s medals’
  - http://www.presidentsmedals.com/

General Architectural Online references and Blogs:

- The Building Blog
  - http://bldgblog.blogspot.com/
- VENUE
  - http://v-e-n-u-e.com/
- Prune
  - http://pruned.blogspot.com/
- The centre for Landuse Interpretation
  - http://www.clui.org/
- ‘Atlas Obscura’
  - http://www.atlasobscura.com/
- ‘Edible geography’
  - http://www.ediblegeography.com/

General Suggested Readings

- ‘America’ by Jean Baudrillard
- ‘Taking Measures Across the American Landscape’ by James Corner, 2000
- Bldgblog Book: Architectural Conjecture, Urban Speculation, Landscape Futures by Geoff Manaugh
- ‘Landscape Futures’ by Geoff Manaugh
- ‘Pamphlet Architecture 34: Fathoming the Unfathomable’ by Perry Kulper/Nat Chard
- ‘Pamphlet Architecture Augmented Landscapes’ by Smout/Allen
- ‘Visionary Architecture: Blueprints of the Modern Imagination’ by Neil Spiller
- ‘Arcadia Revisited: The place of Landscape’ by Ilka and Adreas Ruby

Suggested Viewings (films)

- Paris/ Texas, Wim Wenders
- Fountainhead, 1949, Dir. King Vidor
- Thelma and Louise, 1991 Dir Ridley Scott
- Empire, 2011, Dir. David Lynch
- Lost Highway, David Lynch
- Giant, 1956, Dir George Stevens
- Cremaster 2, 2005, Dir Mathew Barney

Your portfolio starts now! There will be no drawing up time for this project and all your work should be carried out in a standard that can be easily included in your portfolio. As you go along think about a coherent paper size and record the interim stages of your work as careful as your final product. For this project it is vital that you do not miss your workshop introduction.

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