

REVIEW REPORT

This is the review of the doctoral thesis written by J. Ivan Juarez Bolaños under the supervision of Dr. hab. Dominika Sobolewska, prof. ASP presented to the Doctoral School of The Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław, Poland.

COMMENTS ON STRUCTURE

The title

The title is clear and explains what to expect from the content of the work.

The content

The titles of the chapters are well-defined.

Having Chapter 1 dedicated to a personal journey based on the inspirations and influences provides the reader with a factual background for the final phase that the author proceeds to.

Chapter 2 pictures the geographical concept that he focuses but he goes well beyond geography in accordance with his conceptual framework.

In Chapter 3 the author establishes his theoretical framework based on the literature review.

He goes through landscape and senses. After discussing the landscape, he widens the topic towards senses, which starts with the concept of senses in general, then carries on with sound (7 pages), smell (3 pages), tactile (9 pages), visual (6 pages) and taste (12 pages).

In Chapter 4, the author explains the artistic process he has been involved in, and only by reading the titles of the subchapters can the reader reach a conclusion about the methods applied by the author.

In Chapter 5, the author presents the artworks he has produced focusing on the working area (Lower Silesia) as defined in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 6, the author shares the projects he has realized in different geographies on Earth.

In Chapter 7, the author explains didactic practices he has realized in which he underlines educational methods related to environmental issues, which also covers the dissemination aspect that he has been interested in.

The chapter entitled Final Thoughts covers his conclusion.

COMMENTS ON THE THESIS

ABSTRACT

The abstract text is clear, wraps the framework, and defines author's approach very well.

INTRODUCTION

The author clearly defines his aim as research on shaping conceptual insights toward landscapes based on theory, site-experience, and praxis. He also gives a hint that his research that sensitive explorations would shape.

The main phases are well explained and they are indicators of scholarly potential of the author as an artist. Including "dissemination and sharing" is also an essential element that goes along perfectly well with the general scope of the author.

The framework of the study is well established (p. 12) as "With these perspectives, the main field and interest of the present research focus on the relationship between ecological mindset and sensitive cognition towards artistic practice, and how this connection can be a medium to establish sensitive dialogues towards our landscapes."

The author explains the main framework of his study as well as the primary goal of his journey as "searching creative processes and sensitive ways to coexist with our cultural, geographical, and biological world." (p. 19)

While he underlines his main field of interest as "artistic design practices" (p. 19), he also links his approach to the promotion of "positive approximations in communities by integrating social, spatial, ecological, and nature-based strategies."

The content (both textual and practical) is in harmony with his statement that he favors experimentation and continuous learning.

The multitudinous of questions is justified with the statement, "One of the main goals of this research is to incorporate significant concepts, case studies, and explorations into an integrated framework" (p. 21).

The roadmap of the study is well explained under the titles of "questions", "main goals and outcomes", "Contextual Approach and Landscape Awareness", and "Conceptualization" (p. 21-22). Especially selection of the verbs shows a good command of the author in preparing didactical content as well.

The description of Phases provides a clear guideline to the reader about the process.

- Theoretical and Conceptual Framework
- Identify and Scope Natural and Cultural Landscapes
- Sensory Approach | Experience Specific Locations through Sensorial Perceptions and Site Approaching
- Interpret the Concepts that have been Experienced and Identified through

Sensory Art-Design Projects, Actions, and Collective Artworks

"Through my research-practice, I propose new narratives to relate to our landscapes, exploring new ways to redraw the borderlines between natural habitats and human beings by creating sensitive interventions that leave spaces for new interactions. In this way, I seek to provide a different point of view on the existing relationship of nature and human beings from diverse angles: research, praxis, dissemination, academia" (p. 19)

This is an elegant way of putting the author/artist's approach. Being aware of his limits for any intervention for his research area (human and nature), he does not come up with solid messages or breaking proposals; he humbly outlines his approach leaving space for the onlooker/viewer to self-interpretation.

Meanwhile, he undertakes his didactic role in his artistic creation, aiming to lead to an understanding through the dialogue between artistic practice, critical thinking, and ecological mindset.

Although the primary goal of the thesis is defined within the axis of human-nature co-existence, a clearly defined series of sub-questions help deepen the research path and analyze the outcomes of the artistic projects thoroughly (p. 20).

CHAPTER 1 LANDSCAPE AS A PERSONAL JOURNEY INSPIRATION SOURCES & INFLUENCES

Artistic sources and their justification of inspiration are well presented, and their richness in variety also indicates the author's inner journey showing the interrelation he has established with them. The examples discussed are well balanced with nature, human intervention, and the harmonies between the manufactured and the natural.

There is a great variety of sources for inspiration.

Although the author names Latin American and Spanish writers, he justifies two of them (Jorge Luis Borges and Federico Garcia Lorca).

For visual art, justifications of inspiration are better presented for Caravaggio, Mark Rothko, Francisco Toledo, Manuel Álvarez Bravo, and William Turner.

For Cinematography, justifications are given for Wim Wenders, Wong Kar Wai, Andriej Tarkowski, and Abbas Kiarostami.

The section dedicated to spatial, public, and environmental art includes several examples such as The Sculptural Space at UNAM (Mexico City), Arte Sella: The Contemporary Mountain (Trentino, Italy), Parthenon (Rome, Italy), Pergamon, Ephesus (Turkey), Mesoamerican Sites (Mexico), The Alhambra (Granada, Spain), Japanese gardens and temples and 20th and 21st century examples of architecture.

Those examples present human intervention and co-existence throughout history, which also includes an essential element of spiritual experiences of the past.

The majority of the examples are architectural spaces, and the author was able to explain why. For instance, the explanation he wrote in Jorn Utzon "Spaces, where each daily activity related to the domestic sphere -sleeping, cooking, reading, eating, walking- evokes an event of great depth as a sensorial experience" (p. 49) does not leave any question behind why he included this example into the list of inspirations.

CHAPTER 2 SITE CONTEXT: NATURAL & CULTURAL LANDSCAPE Poland | Lower Silesia | Wrocław

Justification for the selection of the area in which the project was carried out is explained in the first paragraph.

This chapter provides a good base for the reader to conceptualize the content in chapters 4 and 5.

Along with the general framework, the author resented the city through its natural environments and human intervention.

CHAPTER 3 THINKING LANDSCAPES | THINKING SENSES LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Leopold Staff is quite an interesting example to provide the possibility of combining different art disciplines. This is also important for the author/artist how broad approach he brought into his theoretical framework.

It is important for the author to extend the horizon of his research, which is quite evident in the chapter related to soundscapes in which, in addition to the literary research, and artistic practices, he was able to interview with Thomas Tajo (p. 87-90), Jasmin Schaitl (p.96-99) and Kinga Bartniak (p. 103- 105). It could have been better to have the interview transcription as an annex and to have his ideas excerpted by the author in his own writing rather than a direct quotation.

On the other hand, those interviews provide the thesis with remarkable added value. Justifications for the selection of those interviewees are given, and explanations like "The conversation becomes relevant because it took place at the time of the Coronavirus pandemic when touch and physical contact in social relationships was the sense most affected" (p. 95) put them into context.

The chapter entitled VISUAL LANDSCAPES | Scenery & Time (p. 106-112) combines landscape (both natural and urban), its visual dimension and time dimension, and walking as a method.

In the sub-chapter Landscape and the Visual Aesthetic Experience, finely selected examples (Caspar David Friedrich, Jon Schueler and César Manrique) bring a meaningful contribution. He also enriches the content with a sub-chapter Visual Sense | Nature, Timescapes & Seasonality in which he discusses Gilles Clément and Piet Oudolf.

Compared to other chapters related to senses, the taste covers the longest sub-chapter, which is explained as an "essential value" for humans. Although the author puts it as "fundamental good for the health and the well-being of body and mind," it is the primary vital activity of the human species to survive. So, it is understandable why this sub-chapter covers more compared to those related to other senses.

Gleaners by Millet is a good example (p. 121), especially its connection with Agnès Varda and the examples in the following paragraph.

The sub-chapter entitled Taste & Artistic Thinking discusses the topic from contemporary artistic practices point of view, where those practices are combined with activism. This goes along with the approach of the author.

The sub-chapter entitled The Politics of Food discusses Delfina Foundation, which is contextualized through its foundation motive as "artistic initiative" (p. 123). However, one

expects to learn more about it or some more references within the text, especially to the book they published.

Taste & Artistic Thinking is a good chapter involving the artist dealing with the matter. Svalbard, Mestiza de Indias, Milpa Collaboratory are good examples.

The quotation was left in Polish (p. 84).

CHAPTER 4 SITE APPROXIMATIONS & LANDSCAPE CONCERNS TOWARDS THE ARTISTIC DESIGN PROCESS

This chapter is where we read about the methods used by the author. He starts by asking questions on his concerns within the framework of this thesis, and yet gives clear hints for the formation of his artistic practices. (p. 127)

His questions, "Every question becomes an open search, Each new approximation becomes a window to discover and experience new possibilities" (p. 128), clearly indicate his personal approach into his practice.

The statement below sounds like the author's outcry that he gives nature the role of the wholeness in which human takes part.

"When thinking how to interact and coexist with nature and how to intervene in a particular landscape, it is essential to perceive and understand the natural environment from a holistic sense. To be emphatic to its natural dynamics and being sensitive to the tangible and intangible factors that are part of its essence. To learn from its biological and physical processes as the best medium to dialogue with it, without trying to modify or control its biological dynamics or spontaneity. On the contrary, try to let nature perform its own role, as a living and interconnected organism in constant evolution in which the human being is only a part."

The methodology is well explained: "One of the main issues addressed by the research is to examine a wide-ranging scale and a multi-scope approximation that goes from particular to complex, from micro to macro, from local to global, from intangible to tangible." (p. 132)

As he clearly defined that his approach in due course of his research is not linear, he undertook a vast and challenging mass on his shoulders, which he successfully overcame in creating a multi-layered three-dimensional network of relations.

CHAPTER 5 ON-SITE EXPLORATIONS Artworks, Site-Specific Interventions & Actions

The statement "The research approach has been developed both individually and collectively, focusing on naturalistic and humanistic aspects, based on an interdisciplinary and practical investigation where complementary knowledge of ecology, sociology, biology, art, phenomenology or agriculture is connected" (p. 140) explains the methodological approach of the author. Furthermore, the author was able to expand the outcomes of his research (both individually and collectively as stated by him) to other geographies, which are explained in detail in Chapter 6 provided him with the possibility of implementing of his theoretical background and applications he materialized in Lower Silesia through new artworks and designs.

In the course of researching, creating, and implementing, the author underlines how he has paid attention to complementing and disseminating the process (p. 140) via different kinds of activities and involvements. Having read all of his activities once can understand that he has been well beyond the trap of artistic egoism, but just a humble member of life on Earth, which he wants to contribute by his means (art and design) the best way possible.

This chapter (p. 137-252) presents an overwhelming list of artworks, site-specific interventions, and actions (as stated in the sub-title). They are arranged according to the senses as Visualscapes, Soundscapes, Scentscapes, Hapticscapes, and Tastescapes. The works present a detailed and well-programmed timeline organized by the author, which is proof of a highly disciplined work ethic.

In his works, one can easily observe a balance between pre-programming and randomness and transforming that randomness (both in a natural and urban context) into meaningful presentations of the senses.

Below are some remarks on specific works:

- Eco-Acoustic Violin Composition is an excellent example of an interdisciplinary approach and application (p.191)
- Scentscapes practice of focusing on the natural olfactory is also interesting since it emerges the scent of nature and brings them into the human environment (p. 199).
- Winter Timescapes /Snow Ephemeral Sculpture is a pleasant surprise that it resembles the graphic work of the author for the conceptual diagram (p. 216).

Almost every practice could have become an independent project, but the author could successfully merge them, forming detailed branches feeding the primary approach of his thesis.

CHAPTER 6 EXPANDED GEOGRAPHIES | ON SITE-WORKS

The author expanded his practices to various geographies such as Austria, Italy, and Mexico. The presented works show the author's flexibility in forming a theoretical base on which he produces his art and design works. Being on the creative side, he brought a new visual language to scientific knowledge, mingling non-human elements of nature and the human species together.

Sensory Garden/Children-Lab (p. 273) is an outstanding practice for dissemination and educational value, transferring the knowledge to future generations.

CHAPTER 7 SEEDING & GERMINATION SOIL-DIDACTIC PRACTICES

It is interesting to see that the author raised questions within the framework of his thesis and developed practices related to educational and pedagogical practices (p. 290).

Using seeds and germination in relation to education is a perfect metaphor (p. 291).

FINAL THOUGHTS

The conclusion chapter is also arranged as questions and answers. The author re-formulated the questions he has been asking since the Introduction to reflect the experience (both theoretical and practical) he has been through in the process of his dissertation, and they give a clear resume his this very intensive period of research and artistic activities.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The overwhelming list of achievements of the author is quite impressive. The list also provides valuable information on his productivity in different fields (exhibitions, publications, being a jury member, workshops, lectures etc.). Awards and distinctions he has received in recent years are also clear indications of his acceptance by the international society of art and design.

FINAL EVALUATION

I agree with the statement of Dr. hab. Dominika Sobolewska, prof. ASP, the advisor, that the primary goal of Juarez's research and his practices is "the search for balance in the dialogue between the human individual and the qualities of nature."

The author starts with serious questions within a clearly defined framework of "sensitive approaches to the environment", "interconnection of bodily experience," and "landscape awareness".

Ivan Juarez has been in search for dynamics defining the very existence on Earth, not necessarily self but from the holistic point of view. In his journey, he dismantles all possible elements of this inter-relation with infinite possibilities. Even though the title "sensory landscapes" sound anthropocentric, he dissolves the sensory components towards his nature-based approximations.

It is surprising to see that instead of creating a single graduation project, the author turned this three-year Ph.D. educational process into a series of exhibitions and all kinds of solo or collaborative activities. This was due to the vastness of the framework he has chosen, but still, he could have chosen a specific path to achieve his intellectual and artistic aim but instead, he has chosen a more complex way to achieve his goals.

Due to the multitude of questions asked by the author throughout the thesis, it becomes impossible to remember them individually but still, they have been the vital element in the formation all his research and practices to which each practice provides answers and still manage to remain in the central spine of the research.

Instead of the numeration of the sub-chapters, using sub-titles within a typographical system defined by the author makes it difficult to comprehend the text at the beginning, but once you get used to it, it becomes easier to put any sub (or sub-sub) chapter within the context. In the end, one sees a very well-structured text picturing the author's self-journey and extensive accumulated knowledge of his topic, both from theoretical and global practices points of view.

Even though he does not put himself boldly as an activist, the questions spread throughout the thesis; the author puts forward the question of "being" both from natural and human

perspectives giving a significant role to nature. There are still beats of survival as a human species, which he belongs to, but trying to establish a dialogue with nature (p. 129) and "to let it to perform its own role" is outstanding.

As conclusion, Mr. J. Ivan Juarez Bolaños has done great work under the supervision of Dr. hab. Dominika Sobolewska. I turn to the Council of the Art Discipline of the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art & Design in Wroclaw to confer on Mr. Ing. Ivan Juarez the degree of Doctor in the field of art in the discipline of fine arts and art conservation. I also highly recommend this doctoral dissertation for the honorable distinction.

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