

Storytelling

Galleri Charlotte Lund, 29 Aug- 12 Oct, 2013

Artist's statement by Sean Micka

Storytelling is structured like suite of vignettes. The paintings are portraits of landscapes, and are conceived as the central protagonists. The drawings outline the narratives form and content and the printed-matter are artifacts and are the establishing scenes in for which the story begins.

Storytelling is a multi-disciplinary project composed of a series of interrelated paintings, drawings and printed-matter about the landscape and it's geology (mineral-deposits), and its transformation into an economic resource (a commodity). As such, the exhibition collectively structures a non-linear narrative regarding images of "nature" through the idea of the landscape in the United States.

The paintings portray the landscape as a geographic-site and geological-formation, and as diptychs unite two shared-modes of picturing the landscape, simultaneously: once as a mode of representation and once as a mode of abstraction. For example, the gridded color-chart is an index (matrix) of the landscapes chromatic-structure, an abstraction of the representation (and vice-versa, as each mode oscillates back and forth). In short, like the atom's that compose a particle, or the crystalline-structure that gives form to a mineral-ore, these are the chroma (colors) that compose an image and construct a picture.

The ribbons that tether the diptychs together are visual-designs that employ the color-charts grid as a method by which to organize information about the mineral-deposits buried below the landscape. They are data-streams created to make visible what is invisible: raw earth, its deep temporal layers of stratification and sedimentation. For example, each color's unique grid-pattern is assigned the name of a specific mineral-ore that is discoverable in the landscape, and simultaneously corresponds, to the information contained in the topographic maps. These "topological" ribbons are accompanied with metallic-mylar and translucent vinyl representing the color and visual-characteristics of the periodic element that the mineral-ore bears (i.e., gold and silver).

The contour-drawings outline each landscapes narrative as well as the pictorial (and/or graphic) structure of the image. Situated below the drawing is handwritten text that maps together meaningful information about the landscapes geography, geology, mineralogy and periodic elements, and the cultural, and socio-economic and political events that have occurred there. A state-outline of the territories shape ends the text with a dot designating the sites coordinates in latitude and longitude. Like the strata buried deep within the Earths crust, the text is like a geological formation, it is the support system, structuring the many layers of meaning that has crystallized through temporal-processes and historical accumulations.

The printed-matter are physical pages from publications. They are paper artifacts made obsolete by our techno-digital-age. They are cultural documents tied to social-institutions: the periodical (National Geographic Society) and the library book (Readers Digest, serial book-club). The story begins here, in other words, from a picture-photograph in a publication to a worldview that

structures a historical background of meaning and constructs ideological positions and political consensus about the meaning(s) of nature.

Through these seemingly disparate geographic sites -from Mt. Whitney in the Sierra Nevada, Parker Peak of Yosemite, Mt. Shasta of the Cascade Range, and Shiprock in the Colorado Plateaus- one can begin to see, from the *particular-to-the-general*, that the project is intentionally structured by a specific thread. It weaves together the social and political struggles that arrive out of the capitalist mode of production. Where, for example, raw-materials of the earth are transformed into commodities; sovereign territory dispossessed and then appropriated into private-property for resale, lease or rent (prospecting and mine-claims); mineral-ore transformed into a currency (rocks into gold); time and temporality into a financial credit-debt system (gold-bonds and certificates). In short, through the continual dispossession of these landscapes, from their indigenous populations there is peculiar kind of accumulation of wealth (or what Marx describes as "primitive accumulation" in Vol. 1 of *Capital*. See my text in "Shiprock"). And one that at great cost, not only gives rise to precariously uneven socio-economic development and environmental destruction, additionally gives rise to terminal attitudes toward our planet. What is at stake here is this: It's important to remind ourselves of the fact that the earth is a physical body, and one with metabolic systems much like our own, and it isn't, nor are we, disposable subjects ("natural resources" can and will be depleted). Lastly, in terms of geological-time, it precedes us by billions of years and will inevitably proceed us by billions of years.