

**New  
Eyes  
for  
New  
Spaces**



International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP)

# *New Eyes for New Spaces*

April 26 - May 24, 2013

Curated by Francesca Sonara and Jess Wilcox

Artists: Patricia Dauder, David Horvitz, Antonio Rovaldi, Austin Shull, and Hong-Kai Wang in collaboration with Anne Callahan, Brendan Dalton and Jordan Paul

## Foreword

The group exhibition *New Eyes for New Spaces*, curated by Francesca Sonara and Jess Wilcox, is part of ISCP's thematic exhibition series. Each year, this series considers a particular subject of critical value in contemporary art and the exhibitions share, in a way, a continuing narrative that facilitates ongoing discussion across the installments. The current cycle addresses research-based artistic practice and the complicated relationship between research and art.

Artists Patricia Dauder, David Horvitz, Antonio Rovaldi, Austin Shull, and Hong-Kai Wang in collaboration with Anne Callahan, Brendan Dalton and Jordan Paul are all interested in the kind of cultural, technological and scientific investigation that has pervaded recent art. Their included work prompts new modes of thinking about and being in a place, thus generating new knowledge through intuition.

I would like to thank Francesca and Jess for organizing this timely exhibition; Shinnie Kim, ISCP Programs Manager, for designing the catalog; Will Sieruta, ISCP Facilities Assistant, for installing the exhibition; Patricia Dauder and Antonio Rovaldi who are both ISCP alums; and all the artists, who have given us a conduit to experience places we likely have never visited.

Kari Conte, Director of Programs and Exhibitions



Austin Shull,  $38^{\circ}42'54.87''N$ ,  $103^{\circ}30'21.23''W$ , 2011 Still from Single-channel video, 13 min.

## New Eyes for New Spaces

Francesca Sonara and Jess Wilcox

As technology develops to increasingly mediate our relationships with place and site, our imagination of locations near and far diminishes. At first it was a plethora of guidebooks telling us where to go when we got somewhere. Then, it was a flood of photo-sharing websites and blogs offering visual dialogues from every angle. Now, it is Google Street View providing users with regularly updated imagery from the streets of cities worldwide—helping them navigate a new place with more ease than ever before. Today, as we search for photos of the places we plan to go or confirm exactly where it is we are, the opportunity for wonderment, disorientation and imagination is threatened.

As described by Walter Benjamin in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, the tension between place and image has existed since the advent of photography. However, digital technologies (digital photography in particular) extend the distance between viewer and site as the process itself fragments the original subject into discrete units of information before re-presenting it as a whole. Paradoxically, while digital technologies convey information with greater accuracy, the coding inherent in these processes puts us at just one more remove from that which we are trying to understand.

*New Eyes for New Spaces* explores the work of artists who investigate, abstract and fragment representations of place. As they intervene with information culled from photographs, video, or sound recordings, they focus viewers' attention on the gap between what is seen and what is imagined. At times puzzling, these works aim to enhance that endangered sense of not knowing what one is experiencing as it is

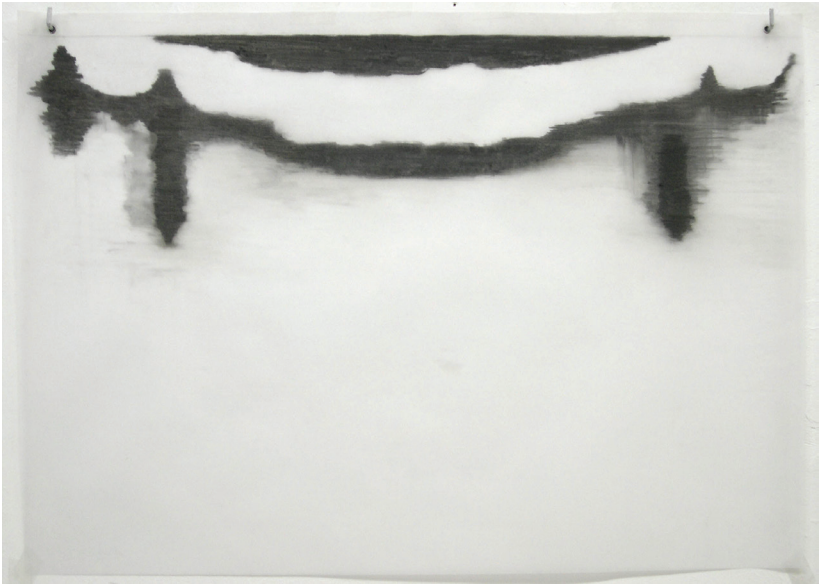
happening. The exhibition wrestles with the idea of displacement, a literal displacement of individuals traveling among remote locations and a psychological displacement of our notion of "site." A subtle paradigm shift has occurred before our very eyes as the saturation of new imaging technologies has effectively warped our understanding of spatial relationships. Or, in other words, the technological advances of the last ten years changed not only how we conceive of site but also how we perceive it.

*Les Maliens (a script)*, (2006) by Patricia Dauder reveals the very real human desire to imagine. Consisting of 62 drawings grouped into 20 connected sequences, the film describes Dauder's visual renderings of Mali—before she ever set foot in the country. Without constructing a narrative, the film presents a series of fragmented atmospheres, landscapes, unknown figures and aerial views, a compendium of dreamlike and dreamed up images. Cinematic in their quality, most images in the film are static, devoid of motion except the occasional camera movement, light change or time lapse. In this way, they imitate so many photographs taken by tourists: fixed representations of an unfamiliar place, bereft of context.

Denying any resemblance to the reality of Mali, Dauder has said that the film offers "a subjective vision of a non-visited place, based only on memories from visual, documentary or literary references." In fact, the artist actively avoided conducting any visual research on Mali before creating the drawings for the film. In this way, she produced a visual sequence drawn only from imagination, highlighting her instinct to fantasize and envision the world for herself.

David Horvitz's *Public Access*, (2013) began as and continues to be a real time intervention into the virtual common space of Wikipedia, resulting in multiple forms of documentation. Between December 2010 and January 2011, Horvitz charted California's west coast from the Mexican border up through Oregon, capturing fifty seascapes in

digital images, which he later uploaded onto the Wikipedia entries for these locations. Horvitz's images only differ from those typical of Wikipedia in that he inserted himself into the image, with his back to the camera, looking out onto the sea. The resultant images simultaneously disrupted the entry's supposed objectivity while imbuing it with a romantic sentiment reminiscent of the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich or the melancholy of Bas Jan Ader's photographs and video. The image uploads provoked a spate of communication from other Wikipedia users about whether this was proper use of the commons and resulted in the removal of many of the artist's entries. In this way, *Public Access* not only ruminates on the ideal of remote landscapes untainted by human presence, but also reveals the omnipresence of internet communications.



Patricia Dauder, *Les Maliens (Ascript)*, 2006, Still from 16 mm animation film transferred to DV-CAM digital, color/no sound, 3 min. 49 sec. (loop), Edition 3, Courtesy ProjecteSD, Barcelona.



Aligned with the dynamic nature of the internet, *Public Access* continually evolves. Horvitz has reloaded back online many of the original images that were taken down, and has also virtually “faked” stops on the journey by later uploading images from places that he had not initially visited. The work’s display takes multiple forms: two books, the live Wikipedia entries, and printouts of the entries stamped with the date and time of printing. *New Eyes for New Spaces* presents a series of postcards from Horvitz’s stops along the 2010-2011 trip, bringing Horvitz’s images into dialogue with the tourist industry and the quintessential example of mass-produced photography. The latest addition is a set of beach towels printed with the oceanscapes—bringing the project full circle and returning the images to sea.

The photographic series, *Paesaggi Strappati (Torn Landscapes)* (2009), by Antonio Rovaldi underscores the contradictory forces that photography’s inherent reproducibility creates for its value. Rovaldi tears out the photographic representations of landscapes found on two-page spreads from magazines such as National Geographic. The artist then re-photographs these mass-circulated images, capturing the rough and jagged edges unique to each glossy sheet. The torn edges literalize the typically latent rupture between picture and reality. Rovaldi re-endows the photographic image with the aura of a temporal and singular object at a moment when digital processes are further dematerializing photography and distancing viewers from the content of the recorded landscape.

In the video *38° 42' 54.87" N, 103° 30' 21.23" W* (2011), Austin Shull explores the rituals, passion and scrupulous extremism associated with scientific research. The work follows a geographer through his processes of inquiry and data collection, deconstructing conventional notions of the scientific process. While set in the vast terrain of the West so familiar and historically loaded in the American imagination, the artist only reveals glimpses of this environment. Instead, site is represented through satellite-recorded maps and images flickering



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## El Segundo, California

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Coordinates: 33°55′17″N 118°24′22″W﻿ / ﻿

*For the champion Australian racehorse, see [El Segundo \(horse\)](#).*

**El Segundo** is a city in Los Angeles County, California, United States. El Segundo, from Spanish, means **The Second** in English.<sup>[6]</sup> Located on the Santa Monica Bay, it was incorporated on January 18, 1917, and is one of the Beach Cities of Los Angeles County and part of the South Bay Cities Council of Governments. The population was 16,654 at the 2010 census, up from 16,033 at the 2000 census.

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**City of El Segundo**

— City —



Sunset on El Segundo Beach.



David Horvitz, *Public Access*, 2013, Variable dimensions

on computer screens. The focus on the banalities and exactitudes of scientific procedures obscures the link between cause and effect, undermining the common assumption that greater information begets greater clarity, thus restoring mysticism to the unknown location.

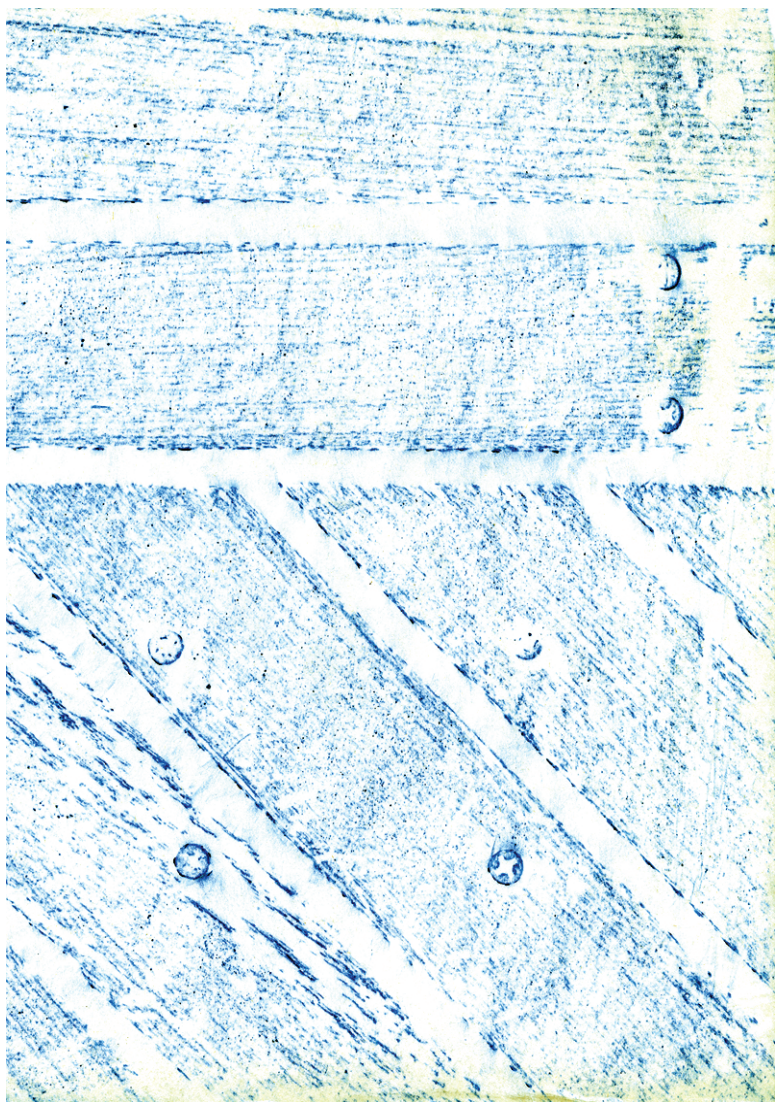
*Coney Island of the Mind* is a radio and sound installation by Hong-Kai Wang in collaboration with Anne Callahan, Brendan Dalton, and Jordan Paul. The installation emits sounds recorded by microphones that were placed on the body of the iconic rides in Astroland Amusement Park in the summer of 2007, when the park was slated to close. The clanking and whirring of the machinery is captured as well as the ocean waves, children laughing, and the music of arcade games. For *New Eyes for New Spaces*, a radio transmitter is installed in a remote location within the ISCP building, with portable transistor radios available for loan. Visitors are welcome to tune in and mobilize the transmitted sound throughout the gallery. The various sound sources will function as boundaries of an aural map in the ISCP

building, heightening the audience's awareness of the relationship between sound and space. The reach of the radio waves will extend the exhibition beyond the confines of the gallery. In addition to the sound recording, a series of rubbings carrying traces of the whorling wood grain of the beach's famous boardwalk is on display.

*Coney Island of the Mind* responds to the tension between stories of extinction and the revival of Coney Island, as well as the historical, social, and political issues that are symbolically embodied in the site within the broader context of the recent economic downturn and its consequences on the City of New York. The old narratives and fraught politics of the location fall away with a rejection of the figurative in the rubbings and a withdrawal of the visual in the sound loop.

A thematic underlying all works in *New Eyes for New Spaces* is a discussion of research and exploration as artistic process. Despite their disparate methodologies and mediums, this group of artists exemplifies how the artistic profession has evolved into a role characterized by reconnaissance and analysis. They travel near and far, collecting imagery or sound, offering it back to the viewers for even further inspection.

Apple's branding of their latest imaging improvement Retina Display, claiming its screen clarity is equivalent to the human eye, points to the paradigm we describe. In this moment when the mechanics of the eye are replicated and surpassed and no corner of the globe has gone undiscovered, art can play a special role in assisting us to see how these technologies have changed the way we perceive. It's as if art can give us a new set of eyes with which to see.



Anne Callahan and Brendan Dalton, *Coney Island boardwalk*, 2009, Transference with yellow artifacts, 17 x 11 in.

Francesca Sonara's curatorial practice is marked by her interest in contemporary art in Southeast Asia. This year she completed work on the independent documentary *The lotus that went to the sea*, a film centered on Phnom Penh-based art collective Stiev Selapak (Art Rebels). Her essay "Stiev Selapak: Retelling Cambodia's Story" was recently published in the exhibition catalogue *connect: Phnom Penh: Rescue Archaeology*, IFA Gallery, Berlin. She currently lives in San Francisco, California.

Jess Wilcox is a curator, currently the Programs Coordinator at the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum, where she organizes the lectures, film screenings, performances, and symposia. Previous to the Brooklyn Museum she worked on the curatorial teams for the exhibitions *100 Years* (MoMA PS1), *PERFORMA 11*, and *The View from Here: Storm King at Fifty* (Storm King Art Center). She has organized the exhibitions *How to do Things with Words* at the CCS Bard Hessel Museum, *Encounters with Objects* at the Wassail Project 2009, and *Working Alternatives: Breaking Bread, Art Broadcasting, and Collective Action* at Franklin Street Works, in Stamford CT.

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Front: Antonio Rovaldi, *Torn Landscapes (America)*, 2009, Black and white print on baritate paper, 12 3/4 x 17 3/4 in.