

Thuy Nguyen

Resolved

What is a landscape? What kind of landscape is visualised in my paintings? ‘Landscape’ is a stunning term that attracted me to participate in LiLa Landscape this year. More than once, people asked me where I had painted my landscape. I always smile and answer, “I do not remember”, or I just simply smile. My mountains could come from a place I have been to, or they could be a visual land from my childhood when I read a book.

I was touched when I read the term “temporarily landscape” by Ingold: “The landscape is not ‘land’, it is not ‘nature’, and it is not ‘space’” (Ingold, 1993) He also argued, “Landscape is not something you can see, any more than you can see the weight of physical objects. All objects of the most diverse kinds have weight, and it is possible to express how much anything weighs relative to any other thing”. In a sense, I agree with his definitions; however, you can feel the landscape in terms of volume or territory. I did not see a real mountain until I was 15 years old. In the imagination of my childhood, there is no boundary to a landscape; the imagination goes with me through time. Later, I visualise my art as existing in physical forms. Regarding art, location and space, Lisa Torell (2017) has introduced the concept that she and other artists are still working on: “What is space? What is connectivity and context? For me, space is something in relation to something else. It is a delimitation in something bigger.”

itation in something bigger.”

For me, a landscape or a space does not merely exist in the physical realm; it is founded and exists in the conscious mind; it also has a spiritual dimension or cultural relation. When something appears in art, it consists of different fragments of our lives. Sometimes, it is specific; sometimes, it is abstract. A symbol is constituted from culture, and Mary Lecron Fosster (1994) defined it as follows: “The abstract system that is culture is founded on, and held together by, the human capacity to operate analogically. Networks of meaning constrain change in any part.”

If researchers and theorists theorise by language, the artist is defined by colours and brush strokes. They are both connected in the brain. In visual art, you can feel the landscape and might connect with your inner world or your own experiences. Standing in front of a painting, you cannot weigh or estimate how heavy a mountain is; nevertheless, you feel from other dimensions: happy, calm or stable. You can feel the changes in the season. Visual association is one of the methods that audiences perceive when they see an artwork.

The year 2023 is a special one; I dove into the term ‘landscape’, and I visited four different mountain regions: Hà Giang, Vietnam; Bastej, Germany; Höga Kusten, Sweden; and Monserrat, Spain. Each place brings a spe-



Figure 1. Four landscapes. Image: Thuy Nguyen 2023.

cial narration that enriches my experiences. In Bastej, there is a story of love between a king and his beloved queen. In Monserrat, at the top of the mountain, I felt like I was talked to and whispered to by Saints in the sound of the wind. It is a spiritual land. At the end of the horizon are cities and the Mediterranean.

The Dong Van plateau in Hà Giang, Vietnam, Cliff Plateau, known as the rocky plateau or rugged mountain, is the northernmost point of Vietnam where ethnic people grow corn between cliffs. There, the children bask in the sun and wind on the high mountains from an early age. Interspersed among the soaring mountains is a river in which the water looks like the Mediterranean Sea. The river is also the border that divides Vietnam and China. The border lines along the river, crawls up the mountains and witnesses the ups and downs of the histories of the two countries.

Höga Kusten in Sweden, which is located inland, is on the coast of mid-Sweden, overlooking the sea. Rivers run around the foot of the mountains. A rocky field lies halfway up the mountain due to the rising sea in the Ice Age. I suddenly saw the pattern of algae moss on large and small rocks. They look exactly like a lacquer painting I painted in 2002 titled “Sunshine Garden”, where



Figure 2. Stones in Höga Kusten. Image: Thuy Nguyen 2023

bright and shiny dots are scattered between green and yellow. I had the feeling that I had visited that mountain in the past. The image stays deep in my subconsciousness. We see the moose have been at the mountain, rounded piles of faeces scattered all over the road, traces of their presence.

To me, nature is a human being, and a human being has the shadow of nature, which is harmonious and indispensable. The landscapes or mountains in my paintings are human silhouettes. And, within every person, there are silhouettes of nature.

References

- Ingold, T. (1993). The Temporality of the Landscape. *World Archaeology*, 25(2), 152–174. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/124811>
- Foster, M. LC, (1994). Symbolism: The foundation of culture. In T. Ingold (Ed.), *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. Routledge.
- Torell, L. (2017). *Place to place. Environment, Location, Site, Spot, Space, Room*. Dissertation. Folkrörelsernas Konstfrämjandet.

Figure 3. Unidentified landscape. Watercolor, 24x32 cm.
Thuy Nguyen, 2023

Figure 4. The vein of the stone. Watercolor, 60x120cm.
Thuy Nguyen, 2023

Figure 5. The flow. Watercolor, 60x120cm Thuy Nguyen, 2023.

Figure 6. The Harmony. Watercolor, 60x120cm. Thuy Nguyen, 2023

Figure 7. The mind map. Watercolor, 60x120cm. Thuy Nguyen 2023

