

## Portrait with Landscape

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### Abstract:

Discussing the historical commonalities of portrait and landscape, this paper analyses how the cross-cultural and multi-sensory aspects, which Mitchell developed in his nine theses on landscape, applies to the portrait. Suggesting a stronger inclusion of different cultural practices/traditions and artistic positions in the discourse on landscape, I present my own practice-based research on portraiture as a possibility of how landscape could open up new perspectives in the light of other cultural practices and artistic expressions to deepen and expand Mitchell's intercultural and multisensory perspective on landscape. In particular, I argue that the combination of portrait and landscape through the positions of contemporary artists can make a significant contribution to the discourse on landscape. I therefore conclude my contribution by presenting the work of other contemporary artists who have combined aspects of portrait and landscape in their work, providing opportunities for both reflection and social change.

**Keywords:** Art Practice-Based Research, Landscape, Portrait, Multi-sensory, Social Change.

### Introduction

In his work *Imperial Landscape* (2002[1994]), art historian William John Thomas Mitchell interrogated and redefined “landscape”, a multi-faceted term which, according to cultural geographer Denis Edmund Cosgrove, “emerged in the Renaissance” denoting “a new relationship between humans and their environment” (Cosgrove 1989, 122). The advent of the “inception of ‘landscape’ in the world of art” was attributed to the appearance of window in Jan van Eyck's and Robert Campin's paintings, connected to both the linear perspective and the principles of modern geometry as a result of “the distinction between the world of subject and the world of object”, brought forth by “the changes in the western worldviews” (Alehashemi and Mansouri 2018, 35, 34).<sup>1</sup> Whereas for the art historian Sir Kenneth Clark landscape painting represented “the chief artistic creation of the nineteenth century” (Clark 1961, xvii), Cosgrove understood it as a “way of seeing” (Cosgrove 1989, 121), referring to art critic John Berger's seminal book and TV-series *Ways of Seeing* (2008[1972]), which he created in response to Clark's book (1970) and 1969 TV-series *Civilization*. Berger's perspective contrasted Clark's traditionalist view of the dominant artistic and cultural canon.

In this text, I will counterpose Mitchell's extended theory of landscape with my own art practice-based research entitled *Portrait as Dialogue*, a work consisting of nine art projects

conducted for more than a decade across diverse cultural contexts, with which I sought to subvert the Western gaze to bolster alternative modes of perception and representation, together with a critical reflection of the ocularcentric approach of the representations of “otherness”, as argued in my PhD thesis (2019). Specifically, I will discuss how the cross-cultural and multi-sensory aspects, which Mitchell developed in his nine theses on landscape, applies to the portrait.

Just as Mitchell holds in terms of landscape, I view portrait as a culture specific form of representation, but not an exclusively European one. Like Mitchell, for whom landscape is a “multisensory medium” inscribed with “cultural meanings and values” (2002[1994], 14), I regard portrait as a cultural practice which resorts “to a multitude of human senses” (Boeck 2019, 18). Where for Mitchell landscape, a “visual term” (Cosgrove 1985, 46) enables “communication between persons” (2002[1994], 15), I mobilised portrait, a visual cultural technique, as a “vehicle for communication between people”, as suggested by Howard Morphy (2008, 104). This provided an opportunity to foreground non-Western and indigenous multi-sensory and relational ways of addressing, thereby contributing to and expanding on the visual practice of the Western portrait. Cross-fertilising and mediating “attitudes and transitions from the self to the other” (Boeck 2013, 507), this coincided with what Mitchell holds in regard to landscape, stressing that “is not a genre of art but a medium” (Mitchell 2002[1994], 5).

After briefly discussing the historical commonalities of portrait and landscape with regard to the power relations associated with both concepts, I describe two projects of my many years of practical art research. Subsequently, I give an outlook on how I could imagine a stronger inclusion of different cultural practices/traditions and artistic positions in the discourse on landscape. Specifically, I present my own work on portraiture as a possibility of how landscape could open up new perspectives in the light of other cultural practices and artistic expressions to deepen and expand Mitchell’s intercultural and multisensory perspective on landscape. In particular, I argue that the combination of portrait and landscape through the positions of contemporary artists can make a significant contribution to the discourse on landscape. I therefore conclude my contribution by presenting the work of other contemporary artists who have combined aspects of portrait and landscape in their work, providing opportunities for both reflection and social change. The examples relate directly to my exploration of the cultural practices of the indigenous Sami (Yoik, combining the sense of seeing with hearing) and of Aboriginal Australians (track-reading, concentrating on seeing in connection with the feeling of vibration).

### **Common Ground**

In terms of “landscape” Mitchell (2002[1994]) noted the central role of the viewer, whose body becomes the medium of perception and interpretation. This, Cosgrove previously argued, is connected to linear perspective invented during the Renaissance. The importance given to the visible world through linear perspective, “the guarantor of pictorial realism” (Cosgrove 1985, 49), resulted in the “distinction between viewing and painting” (Mitchell 2002 [1994], 8) connected to the

subject-object divide. Closely linked to the ideas of modern Western consciousness, this new approach was related to optical projections known as *camera obscura* as precursor of photography (Hockney 2001), as much as it depended on a “gridded square placed on the ground when viewed along the horizontal axis”, allowing the painter to “reproduce in pictorial form its appearance to the eye” (Cosgrove 1985, 48).

Located in the spatial center of linear perspective, was the “distant”, “commanding” and “uninvolved” (male European) “human body”, created “in the image and likeness of God” (ibid., 51); the ideal viewer’s gaze originating from outside the picture. Placed in a “predatory” situation, he was oblivious of other perspectives, such as “the observer as woman” (ibid., 16), or the cultural other. The “individual-who-watches-and-creates-the-landscape”, Claudio Minca explained, “disappears from landscape painting” as well as from “the scientific understanding of landscape” (Minca 2013, 56), as did the (male and superior) European subject, which remained hidden behind the camera in colonial photography. In this respect portrait in “its employment as a technique of colonial representation” (Mitchell 2002[1994], 3) is as much as landscape “a particular formation associated with European imperialism” (ibid., 5).

Realistic scenic paintings were often commissioned to enjoy aesthetic and material control (Rose 2008 [1993]) serving as symbolic tools for the legitimization of a capitalist land market through which landowners made their ownership “visible to themselves as well as to others” and classed themselves “among those who enjoyed social status”, as John Tagg (1988) remarked in relation to portrait. In accordance with Cosgrove, who stated that “the visual power given by the landscape way of seeing complements the real power humans exert over land as property” (Cosgrove 1985, 45) and Mitchell, who stressed that “the gazing eye” is “inextricably connected with imperialism and nationalism” (Mitchell 2002[1994], 29-30), as Donna Haraway (1988), John Tagg (1988) and Christopher Pinney (2007), among others, argued in regard to the representation of alterity, that visibility led to a hierarchical understanding of race, gender, sexuality, etc; the “gaze” postulating social power relations in Western Europe and in colonialist cultures (Tagg 2009).

Like the landscape, the portrait is also connected with the undertakings of geography and anthropology in the colonial project. Both genres can be traced back to the objectification of European and American women by male (artistic) subjects (Berger 2008 [1972]; Rosler 2006). Like in regard to the depictions of women, in landscape painting the viewer was positioned as a spectator and nature as a spectacle (Czesniak 1997). Women can be considered the “first victims of Western colonization and industrialization” (Nader 2018, 71) according to whose pattern the cultural other was conceived and depicted as “passive” or “feminized” object of knowledge (Tagg 1988, 11). Thus, the act of power that gave control to the country it gazed upon also subjected people to a scrutinizing male Western gaze, neglecting that the anthropological gaze has “generally travelled in only one direction” (from the West to the East) (Bandyopadhyay and Ganguly 2015, 598) and that this could depend on a human spectrum of senses that exceeds attention given to the five senses going back to Aristotle (Howes 2017).

Just as there is a connection in the way landscape is seen and how society is structured, as Cosgrove argued in his groundbreaking work *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (1984), namely a correlation “how we depict space” and “how we behave in space” (Hockney cited in Saloojee 2010, 216), John Berger, aware of a comparative approach, remarked that “we always look at the relationship between things and ourselves” (Berger 2008[1972]). At the examples of Holbein’s painting *The Ambassadors* (1533) and the portrait of Admiral de Ruyter by Elmina de Witte (1617), he noted an emerging trend of representing individuality by postulating an inequality in the relationship of conqueror and colonized. Following Berger’s perspective, a significant number of feminist and postcolonial scholars observed that colonial photography was constructing an image of the conquerable subaltern as much as it was shaping European identity (Fabian 1983; Spivak 1985; Clifford 1986; Lydon and Rizvi 2016 [2010]).

Both photography and the metrological grid used by artists and geographers alike for the “projection of the globe and its regions onto map graticules by cosmographers and chorographers” (Cosgrove 1985, 46) are interrelated with the 19th century anthropological project of racial comparison and regional body morphology. The goal of this comparative project was to portray members of various groups of people in the newly discovered and appropriated regions of the world naked and in full length in frontal and profile poses. Often individuals were placed in front of a wooden frame in which horizontal and vertical silk threads formed two-inch squares (Brown 2005), accompanied by a measurement scale placed at a fixed distance from the camera. Stripped of the effects of civilisation, the cultural other served as a contrasting foil in a cultural process of “self-fashioning” (Edwards 2015, 242). While in the nineteenth century these photographs symbolized “truth”, as painting did in the past, today they are seen as “central and complicitous” in the “articulation of race and racial differences” (Green 1984, 31) and stand for the “insidious unequal relationships which permeated all facets of cultural confrontation” (Edwards 1992, 6).

### **Portrait and Landscape**

My dialogical art practice, which defines the portrait as one of many culturally specific forms of representation, coincided with Mitchell’s conception of landscape as “medium of exchange” (Mitchell 2002 [1994], 2). As Mitchell suggests in terms of landscape, my research is a critical exploration of the historical “visual appropriation” (ibid.) of non-Western people with a “focus for the formation of identity”, considering the historical praxis as a “phenomenon” concerned with “the natural histories’ of its own beholders” (ibid.). Like Mitchell, who, given the “overwhelming richness, complexity, and antiquity of Chinese landscape painting” (ibid, 9), rejects the Eurocentric tendency to claim that landscape is a “uniquely Western European art” (ibid.), refuting the “claim that “we moderns” are somehow “different from and essentially superior to everything that preceded us” (ibid., 13), I have dealt, in regard to the portrait, with my own cultural conditioning and historical sensory distortion (vision) to foreground alternative ways of relating and addressing. I argued that there are non-Western and indigenous practices which have the potential “to contribute to and expand upon the Western view of what constitutes a portrait” (Boeck 2013; 2019), even though these practices have

not always be “seen as a method of ‘portraying’ a human being” (Boeck 2013, 498) – neither by practitioners themselves or by anthropologists who studied their cultures. I am well aware that my perspective – based on identification and memory as a central concern of Western portraits – can be considered an inappropriate attribution and “misinterpretation” (ibid., 507). I, nevertheless, have experienced alternative modes of perception and aesthetic forms of presentation, with the aim to mediate the experience of myself being assessed by different cultural perspectives and modes of perception, arguably inaccessible for Westerners, to a Western audience.

To explore how we are embedded in the representations of others, I have invited a number of participants, “who have been historically overtly constructed as ‘other’ to my Western ‘self’” (ibid., 491), to direct their “gaze” on me. To do so I developed an innovative methodology which overturned the “role of the artist as the sole performer and the status of the researcher as an outside observer” (Boeck 2015, 1; 2019), positioning both sides similarly as subject and object, as researcher and researched at the same time. By positioning my own vulnerable self at the center of research (Lather 2004; Behar 1996), I challenged the historical refusal of mutuality (Pinney 2007) represented by this gaze, aiming to reverse the “political axis of representation” (Tagg 1988, 7), further addressing the position of the observer who has been historically “disembodied” and reduced to a single “point of view” (Jay 1988, 7). By turning my own white female body into the subject of comparison for the revaluation of non-Western people and their practices as opposed to the historical anthropological project of racial comparison, I also challenged the historical hegemony of the colonial gaze from a gendered positionality.

However, I not only invited the other to reverse the historical anthropological gaze, but also “to pose before the lens of my camera, thereby invoking and problematising anthropological surveys of the past”, as noted earlier (Boeck 2019, 109). Whatever our intentions may be, as researchers we are often “entangled in layers of returns and reversals” (Lather 2015, 7). In my own research I did exactly what I originally set out to criticize – I controlled representation of the Other, thereby confirming Patti Lather’s perspective that practices which seek to “give voice to the voiceless” cannot be considered an “innocent counter-practice” (ibid.). In selecting, reinterpreting and recombining the material co-produced in the field during post-production in my studio in Munich (Germany), I adopted of a sole artistic decision-making position, something which I had sought to avoid by inviting participants to assess and represent me. At the same time, I had only little influence on how the participants interpreted me during the intersubjective encounters in the field. Thus, the works resulting from the intersubjective encounters simultaneously reinforce and undermine the dominant regime of the representation of otherness. Although it could be argued that my “instrumentalization of the dominant perspective” is a clear weakness of my art practice, “placing myself in the frame (together with the Western gaze)” constitutes a relevant provocation, “enabling a productive critical discourse surrounding the entanglements of ‘self’ and ‘other’” (Boeck 2019, 112).

My use of the term “dialogue” occurred in sympathy with Grant Kester’s understanding of a “dialogical aesthetic” (Kester 1999) and responds to a “relational art” (Bourriaud et al 2002)

approach. It highlights the crucial aspect of my methodology: the co-creative, intercultural and interpersonal relationships in which “we perceived each other and expressed these momentary perceptions in different ways, defining ourselves by interpreting the other” (Boeck 2019, 45). Negotiated through my vulnerable research position, my artworks enable a dialogue between various culture-specific favored multi-sensory methods of perception and related representation systems (e.g. the Sámi’s yoik) with vision-based forms (photography/video). Moreover, as they are presented at controversial sites of representation (e.g. the Anthropological Museum) they show a white, European woman who is not typically represented in European anthropological collections, especially not as “seen” from a non-Western perspective. This is in line with the endeavor of “mental decolonization” as it is increasingly demanded by theorists and curators such as Kebede (2004) and Hansen and Nielsen (2011).

### **Seek Me – the Sami’s yoik**

The project *Seek Me* (2005) explored yoik, one of the oldest musical styles in Europe (Plantenga 2004), a kind of yodelling practiced exclusively by the Sámi, an indigenous population of circumpolar Fennoscandia (Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Russian Kola Peninsula) in both spiritual and everyday life (Moore 2004). The cultural technique acts as an instrument of “identity-ascription”, the “referenced object” being “focused through this referencing function” (Ola Graff, cited in Hanssen 2011). As a textless, mnemonic technique for recognizing and remembering people, certain places (landscape) and special animals, yoik is characterized by improvisation, usually in solo performances. Moreover, a yoik recalling a person, a so-called “person-yoik” (Hanssen 2011), can be used as a form of “introduction” (Sara, cited in Boeck 2013).

In 2005 I spent a week each week with five Sámi singers (Ole Larsen Gaino, Lars Henrik Blind, Anna Berit Peltopera, Ásá Margget Anti Holm and Johan Sara, Jr), in Arctic Norway (Maze, Kautokeino) and Finland (Utsjoki). While, in reference to anthropological surveys of the past, I depicted participants photographically, each in front of a white backdrop (Figures 1.1, 1.3 – 1.6), participants “captured” my persona by focusing on my sound and rhythm related expressions (for example, sound of voice, laughter, speed of talking and walking), resulting in five individual yoiks (Figures 1.2, 1.7 – 1.10). Compared to the Sámi’s yoik, which was created in a reciprocal and co-productive process, expressing invisible aspects of me within a melodic and rhythmic organization (Hämäläinen et al. 2017), my counterportraits in the resulting sound installation *Seek Me* (2005), showed only participants outward appearance.



Fig. 1.1: Ole Larsen Gaino, *Seek Me* (2005). Photograph: Angelika Boeck.



Fig. 1.2: Sound diagram Ole Larsen Gaino, *Seek Me* (2005).



Fig. 1.3: Lars Henrik Blind



Fig. 1.4: Anna Berit Peltopera



Fig. 1.5: Ásá Margget Anti Holm.



Fig. 1.6: Johan Sara Jr. *Seek Me* (2005).  
Photographs: Angelika Boeck.



Fig. 1.7: Sound diagram Lars Henrik Blind, *Seek Me* (2005).



Fig. 1.8: Sound diagram Anna Berit Peltopera, *Seek Me* (2005).



Fig. 1.9: Sound diagram Ásá Mårgget Anti Holm, *Seek Me* (2005).

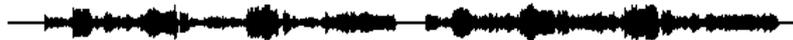


Fig. 1.10: Sound diagram Johan Sara Jr., *Seek Me* (2005).

Besides the yoik of the Sami, in my eyes, I explored the Aboriginal Australian track reading practice for its potential to contribute to and expand upon the Western notion of the portrait. In his work *Voices of the First Day* (1993), Robert Lawlor described the ability of indigenous Australians to recognize the footprints of a large number of clan members. According to Lawlor (interview, 22 May 2016), this particular ability, based on the capacity to sense the imprint that every

event left in the earth, including the vibrations emitted by footprints, is linked to the complicated protocol of Aboriginal traditional life. This required recognising what is going on in one's own territory at all times, especially who is there with what kind of intention. Lawlor's description of the extraordinary abilities of the Australian Aborigines in reading tracks has been confirmed by several other reports, such as by Alice Monkton Duncan-Kemp (1901–88, who grew up as the daughter of a cattle station manager) in her memoir *Where Strange Paths Go Down* (1964), and Pat Lowe (British wife of Aboriginal artist Jimmy Pike) in *Hunters and Trackers of the Australian Desert* (2002).

Vibrations, which are also responsible for the production of words, sounds or songs, are of enormous importance in the culture of the Australian Aborigines (Berndt 1974; Munn 1986). Whereas in the West vibrational phenomena “normally escape consciousness”, including “light, heat, electricity, X-rays and nerve impulses in the body” (Trower 2012, 4), in Warlpiri conceptualization, “the object world” is both “verbally” and “visually” constituted. Visual marks are believed to contain sonic “information”– the same word meaning “marks”, “names”, or “songs” (Watson 1999). The connection between vibration (as an expression of creative energy) and its physical result (such as natural phenomena, earth formations or the existence of plants, animals and humans), which is also expressed in Aboriginal Australian dot paintings (similar to Chladni figures that visualize sound), is exemplified by the ban on using human names after the death of their bearers, including all other words with a similar sound (Kendon 1989). It is also worth noting that human traces in Aboriginal culture could stand in for the person, just as a signifier can in contemporary artists' “faceless” portraits (Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Hans-Peter Feldmann). Ronald and Catherine Berndt, for example, observed that a naughty child can be punished by beating his footprints with a branch (Lawlor 1993); footprints were wiped off the ground after a person died (Musharbash 2008) and Kaidatcha slippers, made from emu feathers and strands of hair, were used to hide the wearers identity (Akerman 2005).

Like many other indigenous cultures, Australians, in the past, have not portrayed individuals visually, but identified them through several interconnected forms. In addition to her own footprints (*Track Me*) and name (Lawlor 1993), a person could be represented by a totem (eg, the rainbow snake, bush tomato, wallaby or water), and associated design. The individual totem, in a larger framework, connected all members of a group of people according to a matrilineal or patrilineal system (Morphy 2008). The totem, which was believed to reside in a person's chest (Howitt 1996[1904]), was applied in the form of body painting to the upper body of a person during initiation or in the event of death (Berndt 1974; Lawlor 1993). It marked the person with the power of this particular mythological ancestor, connecting him/her with a particular area (Morphy 2008).

The relationship between individual, totem, and land, so important in Australian culture, is linked to the belief that children were not conceived through sexual intercourse alone, but also because the spirit of the man “found” the spirit of a child and directed it to his wife (Stanner 2009). The place where the mother perceived her pregnancy for the first time was understood as the place of spiritual conception, creating an inseparable connection between child, land and the

ancestor/totem. If the conception totem differed from the totem of a child's homeland, it became associated with both (Munn 1986) and assumed the ritual responsibilities that these areas entailed. Aboriginal Australian painting, originally a purely ephemeral and ceremonial act, must therefore be understood as a meditation on the aspects of ancestral creativity, presenting mythological maps associated with a particular place (Morphy 2008). In such paintings, land is not represented as landscape (as in Euro-American paintings), but as a series of circles and lines depicting the traces of the ancestors who shaped the country (Jones 1985). In fact, the entire phenomenon of "Aboriginal Australian Art" exists only because of the demand for it on the part of a white audience (Butler 2002).

### **Track Me**

The project *Track Me* (2006) was developed over a period of six weeks in and around Alice Springs (Northern Territories, Central Australia) in collaboration with four female Aboriginal (Pintupi and Walpiri) track-reading experts: Mitjili Napanangka Gibson, Judy Nampijinpa Granites, Ida Nangala Granites, Noreen Nampijinpa Robertson, and Peter Bartlett, a non-Aboriginal Australian and of Mitjili's son-in-law, who worked as my mediator and translator during this project. Unlike the project *Seek Me*, where all parties were aware of the process of mutual perception and interpretation, participants were not informed that the spoor they were investigating was my own. The day before the joint interview, in which the experts could demonstrate their tracking skills by expressing how they perceived the person who had left the track, I was walking barefoot in the desert sands, informing Peter where to find my trail (Figures 1.11 – 1.13). While I appeared to participants in the position of a researcher (operating the video camera and instructing the research assistant), Peter, replacing the abstract expressions in the questionnaire I had given him (such as "portrait" or "character") asked the women about perceivable physical aspects, characteristic features and actions. He later transcribed and translated the participant's responses, which I had recorded on video. The women had expressed themselves both through spoken language and gestures, as still used by many Australian groups, in their most detailed form, by the Walpiri (Kendon 2015).

In my journal contribution "Track Me – A Portrait as Dialogue" (2013a), I described this encounter:

Mitjili, Ida, Judy and Noreen were asked to follow and read a track I laid out by walking barefoot in the Central Australian desert. The field interviewer, Peter Bartlett[t], challenged the respondents to say what they perceived through the traces while I portrayed them on video. (Boeck 2013a, 4)

While the Samis had direct access to me for the process of evaluation and representation of my person, this was communicated to the experts in Australia via my footprint. In addition, the research assistant was positioned as a mediator between us, adding another level of interpretation and mediation.



Fig. 1.11: Angelika's track, *Track Me* (2006). Video still: Angelika Boeck.



Fig. 1.12: Noreen Nampijinpa Robertson, Judy Nampijinpa Granites and Ida Nangala Granites discussing Angelika's track, *Track Me* (2006). Video still: Angelika Boeck.



Fig. 1.13: Ida Nangala Granites, Mitjili Napanangka Gibson, Judy Nampijinpa Granites and Noreen Nampijinpa Robertson during the collective interview, *Track Me* (2006). Video still: Angelika Boeck.

On several other days I documented how participants hunted/collected food and drew tracks in the sand so as to teach their children (Figures 1.14 – 1.15).



Fig. 1.14: Judy Nampijinpa Granites digging for a lizard, *Track Me* (2006).  
Video still: Angelika Boeck.



Fig. 1.15: Ida Nangala Granites drawing an emu's track into the sand, *Track Me* (2006).  
Video still: Angelika Boeck.

In consent, the four women named the exact day and time I had been walking around the desert and agreed that the “strange” and “unmotivated” footprints probably came from a “woman without evil intentions”. They agreed that she was neither familiar with the area nor of Aboriginal origin, explaining that “real people”, as they call themselves, “press their heels harder” (Boeck 2019, 62). They correctly concluded that the footprints came from a thin European woman whose breasts had not yet sagged, meaning that she had not born a child.

Just as *Track Me* presented me with a personal problem (my childlessness) at the age of 38, the previous project, *Seek Me*, brought me into contact with my childhood memories. This enabled me to understand a central aspect of Yoik formulated by Doris Stockmann: “To sing yoik means deeply identifying yourself with someone or something” (Plantenga 2004, 103). I experienced this resonance when I heard one of the singers singing my Yoik for the first time in the studio, which immediately made me so sad that my tears came. When I later asked the singer (although I already knew it) what aspect of me he was singing about, he replied that he had perceived in me something he profoundly knew himself, adding that the composition of my yoik had been the hardest work he

had ever done. My disabled twin sister must have completely absorbed my mother's attention, he said, as much as his drowned little brother had occupied his own mother's. I concluded that his Yoik about me was his expression of our shared experience of "not being seen" (Boeck 2019, 54). Together, these events led me to assign more relational potential to the cultural practices I was investigating than the visual practice (photography/video) I employed in the process of mutual portrayal.

For a long time, the concept of modern individualism has been situated by traditional Renaissance research in "portraiture and biography and, even more strongly, in self-portraiture and autobiography" (Martin 2004, 10). John Jeffries Martin, who admits that it was possible to reflect in a new way on the "self" in the Renaissance, believes that the birth of the individual at the end of the European Middle Ages must be regarded as a myth. Therefore, he proposed the notion of the "relational self" (Martin 2004).<sup>2</sup> His view corresponds to that of many indigenous peoples, for whom individual identity is inextricably linked to the community to which they belong (United Nations 2017). While Western individuality, one of the central concepts of modern thought, is only one of three basic components of self-representation, other components (the relational self and the collective self), which together form the self-concept (Sedikides and Brewer 2016) remaining relatively unconsidered. In contrast, indigenous and non-Western cultures seem to prefer these components of fundamental self-representation while suppressing the individual self. This, I suspect, finds expression in aesthetic forms of representation. The emphasis on the Western autonomous individual and not on relations between individuals (i.e. kinship, as in so-called traditional societies) could be associated with "the separation of the senses" rather than their "conjunction or interaction" (Howes 2017, 163), as previously argued (Boeck 2019).



Fig. 1.16: *Track Me* (2006), Exhibition view Schafthof Freising (2017).  
Photograph: Eike Berg.

Unlike the juxtaposition of photography and sound in *Seek Me*, the three-channel video installation *Track Me* (Figure 1.16) combined both perspectives on one and the same plane, the video interview. To the left and right of the central screen, on two separate monitors, the additional

material I had spontaneously recorded, is being shown. Although this material is unrelated to the process of mutual representation, central to my research, I had recorded these sequences to reinforce participants' assessment of my persona. Since I wanted to bring into representation what the woman's attention had been directed at in their analysis, I had also filmed my own footprints (Figure 1.11), thereby integrating an element of self-representation, an element which I realized I had also included in *Seek Me* in a different way, using depictions of the singers in their everyday attires instead of in their traditional costumes as they had suggested. In doing so, I worked against the musicians' expectations of me as a researcher, which would portray them as typically Sami, and the associated control of their self-representations.

Together, the projects of my comparative cross-cultural art practice, *Portrait as Dialogue*, draw attention to the circumstance that the Western gaze results in a mere physiognomic representation, especially as it is counterposed with "a rich trove of cultural practices existent outside the Western tradition of 'portrayal' – a 'potential resource', previously 'largely unperceived and therefore unexplored and theorized" (Boeck 2019, 74). By focusing on different aspects of sensory perception, connected to alternative modes of aesthetic representation, each project provided an ever more complete portrait of myself. Moreover, "participants" interpretations of myself were "constructed in dialogue and conjunction with me, much more so than my visual representations of them were" (ibid., 74). This directly points to what was at stake: a provocation directed at an "unsettling" and "piercing [of] the gaze", as Margaret Kovach demanded from research with decolonising aspirations (Kovach 2018, 217).

### **Combining Landscape and Portrait**

A Similar intention can be, for example, observed in Jorma Puranen's landscape installation *Imaginary Homecoming* (1991-1996), which is related to the artists discovery of a large number of depictions of Sámi individuals (taken by the photographer G. Roche, who had accompanied a French expedition led by Prince Roland Bonaparte in 1882) in the Musée de L'Homme in Paris. Critically addressing the common history of anthropology and colonial photography, Puranen first photographed the portraits of the Sámi individuals in the anthropological museum; he then developed them on graphic film, mounted each portrait on a clear acrylic plate and brought all to Finnmark. After returning and installing the images in the landscape where they were originally taken, he photographed them again for his picture series. As motivation for *Imaginary Homecoming*, he said:

...[T]he idea was to metaphorically return people who had been buried in archives back to the landscape from which they had been separated. (Puranen, quoted in Mercer 2006, 3).

Similarly, to Puranen, Kathleen Petyarre (1935-2018), like many other Australian Aboriginal artists, combines in her work what, from a Western point of view, could be interpreted as landscape and portrait. Petyarre's paintings revolve around the "epic journeys of her dreaming ancestor", the "Thorny Devil Lizard", a tiny desert creature "believed to have created the area where the people of

East Anmatjerre lived” (Indigenous Fine Art Gallery, 2001). In demonstrating connection to land with her paintings, Petyarre played “an instrumental role in winning the 1980 land claim that returned the land around Utopia to its traditional owners” (ibid.) as a result of the 1976 federal parliament Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act, which enabled Indigenous people to claim land rights for country where traditional ownership could be proven (Wildburger 2014, 75).<sup>3</sup> A comparable, even more spectacular earlier case is related to the Ngurrara Canvas II (1996), a 8x10 meter large painting, which the Ngurrara used as evidence of their claim in 1997. Forty applicants, artists and non-artists jointly created a “politically and culturally charged map of their traditional land” (Smith 2017), with the help of which they established the claim to property from the delegates who had to decide on the case through their respective segments of the painting. The canvas became the central success factor of the Ngurrara claim, which was officially recognized ten years later (ibid.).

## Conclusion

Using my own work on portrait as an example, I have shown how valuable it can be to look at portrait in the light of other cultural practices and traditions, taking into account the entire spectrum of our human senses (Howes 1991; Stoller 1997; Pink 2009; Ingold 2011; Arantes and Rieger 2014), with a particular emphasis on indigenous theories of perception, which David Howes described as “the most elucidating cultural studies of the senses” (Howes 2005, 6). I argued that, by adopting a vulnerable position as a researcher, I was able to explore alternative visual and multisensory methodological and analytical frameworks for the representation of otherness. I further argued that the simultaneously reinforcing and challenging dominant Western regimes of representation provided me with the opportunity to foreground indigenous and non-Western practices, while at the same time mediating to a Western audience what it feels like to be evaluated and represented according to different cultural modalities and criteria. This has enabled me to achieve in the field of “art as anthropology”, a “form of art” in which artists engage “with ideas and questions that anthropology has also been interested in” (Sansi 2015: 20), what anthropologists Stoller (1997, 1989), Schneider and Wright (2006) and Pink (2009) demand of anthropological research, namely to question our own sensual prejudices and systems of representation more critically, thus contributing to a better understanding of cultural practices and human experiences in general.

Hanna Mcpherson suggested moving “beyond landscape’s ocular-centrism” (Mcpherson 2006, 95) since the “relationship between perception, the senses and landscape is not fixed, but geographically, historically and culturally contingent” (ibid., 97). An exploration of landscape as “a site on which we project different ideas, fantasies, and perspectives” (Brown 2014, 110) and as *Ways of Sensing* (Howes and Classen 2013) which takes into account alternative systems of representation in contrast to the “primarily visual construct” (ibid.) and product of Western thought could be a valuable approach and a way to continue Mitchell’s cause. Just as I have taken an intercultural and multisensory perspective on the portrait, I suggest that a juxtaposition of a scientific approach to landscape with other cultural practices and different cultural perspectives by taking into consideration contemporary landscape-related artistic positions, can contribute to and expand on the notion of landscape.

For example, in their summary overview of the development of the term “landscape” as a changing concept from the Renaissance, Ayda Alehashemi and Sayedamir Mansouri (2018) explain the phenomenon of landscape as an aesthetic reference to nature with the distinction between the world of the subject and the world of the object. With the introduction of Augustin Berque’s work, who proposed the landscape as “a series of relations between human and land” that refer to our “memories” and our “historical, cultural and biological mentality” (ibid., 39) and with reference to Alain Rogers, they stress that the mediation between inside and outside can only be mediated through art (ibid., 40). By welcoming landscape as a new discipline for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they hope to overcome the traditional dualism between object and subject that has dominated science for centuries (ibid., 42). In my opinion, the Aboriginal Australians achieved this a long time ago.

Corresponding with the concerns of “relational art” or “relational aesthetics”, which “takes as [its] theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context”, rather than an “independent and private space” (Bourriaud et al. 2002, 113), the works of Puranen and Peytarre seem to take Cosgrove’s observation of “a new relationship between humans and their environment” (Cosgrove 1989, 122) literally, formulating, from a contemporary point of view, a new consciousness through the joint contemplation of portrait and landscape, as opposed to the practices developed during the Renaissance. While Puranen’s work appears as a symbolic gesture of healing past injustices, Peytarre and her colleagues showed how landscape can counteract the effects of colonial power. The combination of portrait and landscape can provide an opportunity to reflect on past and present things and bring about change. As these artists have shown, Mitchell’s assessment that landscape is “an exhausted medium, no longer viable as a mode of artistic expression” (Mitchell 2002[1994], 5) is untenable.

### **Endnotes:**

1. Ayda Alehashemi and Sayedamir Mansouri give a detailed report of the changes of the “landscape” concept from the Renaissance until today in their paper *Landscape; a Shifting Concept. The Evolution of the Concept of Landscape from Renaissance*. However, to go into this in more detail would exceed the scope of my contribution.
2. Peter Chametzky argued that this is due to the fact that the influential art and cultural historian Jakob Burckhardt projected romantic notions of individualism onto Italian Renaissance artists, thus creating a paradigm for art historical studies (Chametzky 2014).
3. Information on the Aboriginal Land Rights Act is available at: <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/aboriginal-land-rights-act>.

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