

INDEPENDENT CURATORS INTERNATIONAL (ICI) PRESENTS

EXPERIMENTAL GEOGRAPHY



Ilana Halberin. *Boiling Milk (Solfataras)*. 2000. Chromogenic print

A traveling exhibition that explores the intersection of geographical study and artistic experience of the earth Curated by Nato Thompson and organized by Independent Curators International (ICI), New York

ICI's critically-acclaimed exhibition *Experimental Geography* debuts in New York this summer at a moment when human engagement with geographic phenomena – from earthquakes to oil spills - are markedly on our minds. The exhibition is curated by Creative Time's Nato Thompson and opens on June 24 at the James Gallery at the CUNY Graduate Center, where The Center for Place, Culture, and Politics has established a forum for scholarship and activism that has informed the foundational methodologies behind this exhibition. *Experimental Geography* explores the distinctions between geographical study and artistic experience of the earth, as well as the junctures where the two realms collide. The exhibition presents a new practice through a wide range of mediums including sound and video installations, photography, sculpture, and experimental cartography created by nineteen artists or artist teams from seven countries including the United States. As Thompson states, "*Experimental Geography considers numerous aesthetic approaches that emerge from interpreting space as a cultural phenomenon. As the artists and researchers in this exhibition comfortably move*

between discursive territory from geography, to urban planning, to cartography to art, so too should the audiences.”

The task of the geographer is to alert us to what is directly in front of us, while the task of the experimental geographer—an amalgam of scientist, artist, and explorer—is to do so in a manner that deploys aesthetics, ambiguity, diverse cultural landscapes, and a dash of empiricism. These manifestations of “experimental geography” (a term coined by geographer Trevor Paglen in 2002) run the gamut of contemporary art practice, ranging from a poetic conflation of humanity and the earth to socio-cultural and scientific studies of our planet. The Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI), a research organization, will often use a bus tour as a way to introduce their guests to the uses of the land around them, re-familiarizing the viewers with the overlooked American landscape. The collective Multiplicity presents a provocative look at the territory that defines Israel and Palestine in a work that resonates with contemporary headlines. Their project *The Road Map*, 2003, uses a simple empirical formula that ties the land to the life it underpins, comparing the time it took for a person holding an Israeli passport and a resident of Palestine to go the same distance. Artist Ilana Halperin fuses the geologic with the domestic, attempting to boil milk in a hot spring in *Boiling Milk (Solfataras)*, 2000. Lize Mogel, concurrently participating in *Greater New York* at MoMA’s PS1, challenges familiar mapped boundaries in favor of associative and globalized geographies in *Mappa Mundi*, 2008. Other works in the exhibition include sewn cloth cities that spill out of suitcases, bus tours that weave through water treatment centers, performers climbing up the sides of buildings, and sound art made from the breaths exhaled in running Boston’s evacuation route. As Thompson concludes, *“this project has no intention of being seen from the tired lens of removed art practice, but instead as a laboratory to consider the aesthetic and political engagement with the spaces that shape who we are.”*

Panel Discussion

Tuesday, July 20, 2010 from 6-7:15 pm at The Graduate Center, CUNY, 365 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10016.

Issues of artistic engagement with the earth’s surface will be explored in this panel discussion with Experimental Geography exhibition curator Nato Thompson, artists Lize Mogel and Trevor Paglen, and David Harvey, social theorist and Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at The Graduate Center, CUNY. The exhibition and related panel discussion are part of a year-long exploration of “place” in public programming at The CUNY Graduate Center in 2010-2011.

About the Curator

Nato Thompson is chief curator at Creative Time, as well as a writer and activist. Among his public projects for Creative Time are *Waiting for Godot in New Orleans*, a project by Paul Chan in collaboration with The Classical Theatre of Harlem, and *Mike Nelson: A Psychic Vacuum*. Thompson was formerly a curator at MASS MoCA, where his exhibitions included *The Interventionists: Art in the Social Sphere* and *Ahistoric Occasion: Artists Making History*.

Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue co-published by ICI and Melville House Publishing. The catalogue includes essays by curator Nato Thompson, art historian Jeffrey Kastner, and artist Trevor Paglen; artist's statements; and brief texts on forms of artistic practice.

"Living in cities, we need a new way to think about how we move and what we notice... This strange, exciting book offers just that—a new way to notice public space. It is the brainchild of Nato Thompson: the results of his fascinations with urban planning post-Katrina, abandoned or unnoticed urban landscapes and public art."
—Susan Salter Reynold, Los Angeles Times

Artists In the Exhibition

Francis Alÿs
AREA Chicago
The Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI)
the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP)
kanarinka (Catherine D'Ignazio)
e-Xplo
Ilana Halperin
Julia Meltzer and David Thorne
Lize Mogel
Multiplicity
Trevor Paglen
Raqs Media Collective
Ellen Rothenberg
Spurse
Deborah Stratman
Daniel Tucker, The We Are Here Map Archive
Alex Villar
Yin Xiuzhen

Exhibition Itinerary

Richard E. Peeler Art Center

DePauw University
Greencastle, Indiana
September 19 – December 12, 2008

Rochester Art Center

Rochester, Minnesota
February 7 – April 18, 2009

The Albuquerque Museum

Albuquerque, New Mexico
June 28 – September 20, 2009

Miller Gallery

Carnegie Mellon University

Pittsburg, PA
October 10, 2009 – January 31, 2010

The Colby College Museum of Art
Colby College
Waterville, Maine
February 21 – May 30, 2010

The James Gallery
The Graduate Center, CUNY
New York
June 24 - August 27, 2010

Museum London
London, Ontario
October 9, 2010 – January 2, 2011

Foreman Art Gallery
Bishop's University
Sherbrooke, Canada
January 21 – April 1, 2011

Credit Line

Experimental Geography is a traveling exhibition organized and circulated by Independent Curators International (ICI), New York. The guest curator for the exhibition is Nato Thompson. The exhibition, tour, and catalogue are made possible, in part, by the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, the ICI Advocates, the ICI Partners, Gerrit L. and Sydnie Lansing, and Barbara and John Robinson.

About ICI



□ Founded in 1975, ICI (Independent Curators International) produces exhibitions, events, publications, and training opportunities for diverse audiences around the world. A catalyst for independent thinking, ICI connects emerging and established curators, artists, and institutions, to forge international networks and generate new forms of collaboration.

Working across disciplines and historical precedents, the organization is a hub that provides access to the people, ideas, and practices that are key to current developments in the field, inspiring fresh ways of seeing and contextualizing contemporary art.

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For additional information or visual materials, contact Michelle Jubin at 212.254.8200 x 27 or jubin@ici-exhibitions.org. Visit ICI's website: www.ici-exhibitions.org