Site Re-visionings:
On Seeing Space

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The paintings of Canadian artist Eleanor Bond[1] challenge and alter perceptions of space and locale, and in so doing offer their audience an opportunity to ponder the nature of visual experience and its relationship to the social production of space. Not only does Bond's work create a frame for imaginary locales of work and leisure, it also creates visual tension by means of perspective and scale. Standing before one of her massive canvases can provoke the sensation of falling forward into illusory space. Bond intends this bodily experience to occur; she deliberately places the viewer as a disembodied observer who must resist the pull of their own physicality in order to remain "outside" the picture frame. The implications of this bodily experience, I will argue, suggest intriguing alternate ways of seeing for the ethnographer whose observing eye has been dislocated in recent revisionings of ethnographic practice (Clifford 1988).

In this paper, I analyze Bond's two painting-series, *Work Station* (1985-88) and *Social Centres* (1989-1991), and situate them in the broader social issues to which Bond is calling the attention of her audience. Following that, I take up the question of painterly space, its ideological prospects and bodily effects, in order to articulate the relationship between perception and image-making as it pertains to ethnographic representation.

Whereas emphasis has been placed of late on anthropology's textuality and reflexive rhetorics of description and narrative,[2] the actual processes of ethnographic vision — except when linked to film, video, and still photography — remain under-analyzed and subject to simplistic assessment. Critiques of the model of vision implicit to empiricism and positivism, a model based on a Cartesian logic of sight as purveyor of scientific truth, have had a salutary effect on extreme claims to anthropological authority. For example, ocularcentrism, modernity's ideology of sight, has been usefully analyzed as a mechanism of colonial control. Yet the opposite extreme, what Martin Jay (1995) describes as vision's denigration, has led to an overvaluation of verbal imagery together with a denial of knowledge's possibility outside reality-as-text.

In his discussion of the image, Mitchell articulates two possible responses to doubts about the foundations of knowledge such a denigration entails:

> This realization can lead us to a perception of the mise en abime, a nauseating void of signifiers in which a nihilistic abandonment to free play and arbitrary will seems the only appropriate strategy. Or it can lead to a sense that our signs, and thus our world, are a product of human action and understanding, that although our modes of knowledge and representation may be "arbitrary" and "conventional," they are the constituents of the forms of life, the practices and traditions within which we must make epistemological, ethical, and political choices (Mitchell 1986:29-30).

In order to move beyond the limits of reality-as-text, Fabian (1991) argues that concern with reflexivity and representation, anthropology's response to foundationalism's critique, must begin in the field, in lived experience, in how the ethnographer engages with the world and the people amongst whom s/he intends to live and work. Following on Haraway (1991), Jay (1993), and Mitchell (1986), I propose tempering the synedoche of the eye as masculine colonizer and to re-examine the complexities of embodied and dialogic seeing. This must begin with understanding and acting upon alternatives to how we engage visually with the world, particularly as they shape the ethnographic encounter. By virtue of its embodiment, a newly conceptualized ethnographic vision must acknowledge both its interconnections with other sensory knowledge, and with its own spatiality. Situated knowledge, as Haraway points out, is a view from somewhere.

In a recent articulation of my anthropological ontology (Brydon 1996), I propose considering anthropology as life skills for nomads. Approaching anthropological knowledge as life skills implies embodied engagement in life that moves away from objectification and toward an ethical practice coeval and copresent with one's others, however "other" is defined.[3] I see anthropology not as a science, but rather as a creative engagement with and opening up of the world, analogous to art-making. This requires rethinking visual perception inherent to ethnographic "participant observation" as creative, imaginative, and dialogic. The figuration of the nomad posits the ethnographer, not as a fixed eye gazing upon the world, but rather as a sensory being enmeshed in bodily and epistemic movement in the world. From minute flickers of the eye to geographical transits and cultural displacements, seeing is dialectical movement in the world, a reflexive awareness laden with knowledge and experience inevitably caught in a myriad of existential tensions.

1. Eleanor Bond was born, raised, and continues to live in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She has studied art, interior design, English literature, and religion at the University of Manitoba, a background knowledge which informs her art. Her extensive travels through Asia, Europe, and North America are also evident in her work, in the diversity of built forms she depicts. The paintings discussed in this article have been shown in galleries across Canada, as well as in England, the Netherlands, and at the 1987 Sao Paulo Biennale. Curator Grace Thomson has written an expository catalogue on the paintings of *Work Station* (1988), while the more recent *Social Centres* are discussed in four essays compiled in catalogue form by the Winnipeg Art Gallery (1993). Her more recent Cosmoville (Rotterdam 1995) is discussed by Robert Enright (1996). My thanks to Eleanor Bond for our many splendid conversations.

2. Clifford and Marcus (1986) is the benchmark, but see also Behar and Gordon (1995) for a salutary critique of the former's particular blindness toward women's writing.

It is in this context that the perception of painting raises similar kinds of epistemic and ideological problems as does the activity of ethnography. Seeing a work of art (as opposed to passively looking at it) involves an intricate process of engagement of the viewer with the viewed. The painter's arranging of pigment on the two-dimensional surface of a canvas is not simply decorative or aesthetic. Rather, it is a deliberate act intended to situate the viewer within the dialectics of seeing, an act which calls forth specific cognitive strategies for its comprehension. The art viewer who "enters into" the art work must do so according to its produced visual properties.

Fisher's explication of modernist painting is relevant to this discussion of visuality and space. He speaks of the "continuous interplay between habits and expectations that are residues from ordinary spatial experience" (1977: 96) and the placement of paint on the canvas. Visual tension results when the material facts of a painting (in his terms, its "flatness, edge, and opticality") are in some manner acknowledged, denied, or complicated in the act of viewing:

> that colour relations define forward and back, far or near; that sharpness, colour saturation, blur, and blending are distance clues; that edges like those of buildings or a horizon are not ends but only temporary impediments to our desire to see the rest of the car or boat — these experiential facts are the implicit poles of reference. In fact, this means that the subject of the painting must be stated as both that the canvas has an edge and that the world does not; that the canvas is flat and the world is not. Banished as a content, the world hovers as a spiteful secondary presence (1977:96).

The parallel to cultural analysis is beguiling: the ethnographer learns to sustain consciousness of his or her historical and ideological position vis-a-vis a defined focus of study, and of the ways in which that position itself constructs how the subject may be understood. Everyday ways of seeing are insufficient to enter into unfamiliar worlds: ethnographic seeing involves tension, when the ethnographer's own habits and expectations react with the socio-spatial codes inherent to his or her field situation. Space is not just a backdrop for action; it is implicated in and built through human experience and knowledge. Seeing space as such thus becomes active rather than passive, determinate rather than casual. Visually surveying space, and entering into it both knowingly and experientially become the poles of ethnographic practice.

3. Historically, within anthropology, the Other has been defined as the colonial Other, conceptualized in 19th-century evolutionary terms as the primitive, the savage, or, more recently but still problematically, as the disappearing world. This historical definition of "other" still operates within anthropology, most notably in funding and hiring practices, but increasingly anthropologists strive to neutralize the inherent colonialism in this self-other modeling, and broaden the notion of other to include fieldwork studies conducted much nearer to home, as close as the street corner in their own neighbourhoods, as close as one's own sense of self. Self and other thus become defined not in cultural or geographical terms, but rather as mutable positions in an intersubjective relationship, a movement back and forth between closeness and distance, sameness and difference. After all, in psychoanalytic terms, self-estrangement is the most fundamental othering in which we engage, which when denied can lead to all manner of negative projections and social marginalizations.

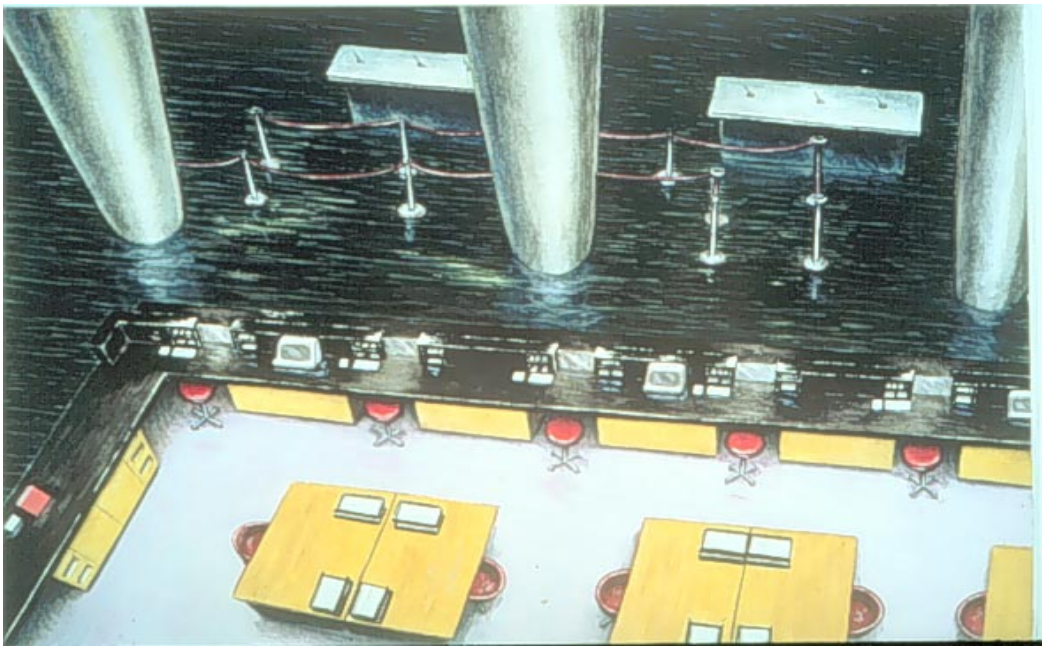
Representing Space

The Italian architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri writes of what he terms the "two roads of modern art and architecture" as being inherently opposed, and their followers of two kinds: those who search into the very bowels of reality in order to know and assimilate its values and wretchedness; and those who desire to go beyond reality, who want to construct ex novo new realities, new values, and new public symbols. (1976: 24)

These two roads, as it were, generate part of the tension in Eleanor Bond's paintings and drawings. The places she depicts refer to present social concerns, using an iconography of architectural styles taken from various eras and locations. In turn, the works' narrative content posits a near-future scenario of collapsing economies and societies attempting to save themselves. The settings she invents to ease the effects of unemployment and to include the socially marginalized within public spaces direct the viewer's attention to how built environments shape the trajectory of human existence.

Bond approaches the content of her work much as a scholar would: she reads a range of social and cultural analyses and architectural texts in order to clarify issues and establish a framework for generating visual imagery. She travels extensively, photo-documenting distinctive built forms to

Figure 1. Eleanor Bond: 'Bank Teller'. Courtesy, the artist.



compile an image archive. She delves into the bowels of which Tafuri writes, in order to bring into the full view of her mind's eye the look of social processes of crisis and reform. She thus grounds her art in social critique as well as utopian social movements such as ecofeminism and environmentalism. Her work envisions and questions; it wavers between modernist longing for renewal and progress, and a postmodern denial of any possibility for redemption.

Places Of Work

Two distinct series comprise Work Station. In the first, *Job Series*,[4] individual titles specify a particular occupation: secretary, research scientist, nurse, auto worker, lawyer, bank teller (Figure 1), waiter, interior decorator, sales clerk. In contrast to these labels, human figures are absent. Instead, Bond portrays nine interiors devoid of human presence yet charged with the evidence of human activity. These locales perform as stage sets which, together with the title, describe the extensions of job identity. With the second series (not separately named) Bond shifts to a surface physically larger than the viewer.[5] The elaborate titles are numbered and, together with the paintings, form a narrative about post-industrial collapse and struggle for social survival. Work Station highlights how cities and specific settings, as a consequence of rational management and functional segregation, act as strategies for control. Urban layout has metamorphosed time and again to accommodate changing technologies of capitalist production. As Bond portrays it, the collapse of capitalism will require radically new strategies of occupying the ruins of industrialism.

When Bond painted *Job Series*, she was responding to the effects on Canadian society of an economic recession during the early 1980s. Many of her friends had lost jobs or were unable to find work after graduating from university. She had recently quit part-time teaching at the University of Manitoba in order to devote herself fully to painting. She experienced first-hand the risks of an unconventional and financially-unstable approach to earning, and also the significance of work for providing an identity and sense of self-worth. As she observed, widespread unemployment during the 1980s did not provoke rebellion against the societal structures which prompted it. Instead, alienation and powerlessness continued to grind down the self-esteem of the unemployed throughout the country.

Job Series comments on the crisis of late capitalism and its possible effects on the experience of self. Reading Studs Terkel's (1974) interviews with workers and the unemployed underlined Bond's own observations regarding

4. *Job Series* (1984-85) consists of nine gouache paintings on paper, each measuring 28 cm by 43 cm.

5. The second part of *Work Station* is comprised of eight paper or canvas panels, finished with oil, charcoal and cont,, or mixed media. The large paintings vary in size from 240 cm X 320 cm, to 240 cm X 450 cm.

the centrality of "the job" to self-identity. According to Bond, "in this commodity intensive society, jobs have become the ultimate commodity. Jobs can no longer be considered synonymous with 'work,' the latter being the creation of a value perceived by the worker" (quoted in Thomson 1988: 42). For Bond, jobs are fetishized in modernity as objects of desire, made visible to us by the commodified forms in which they are set. In order to make a visual image of this attitude, Bond's intentional avoidance of depicting human figures prevents the observer from fully identifying with elements inside the painting, or focusing too closely on the figures' activities. Instead, the viewer's attention is directed to the surroundings, to contemplation of their capacity to define and control the identities of their absent occupants.

Bond represents capitalism's threat to personal well-being in two ways. First, flames appear in four of the nine drawings, leaping from a waste basket, searing laboratory stools, engulfing starched white nurses' caps, threatening an auto assembly line. Fire signals and symbolizes danger, while visually punning on the act of being fired. Second, a sense of threat also prevails when viewing the drawings in terms of social power. The technologically-determined factory setting of the auto-worker contrasts with the plush presentation of power in the lawyer's office. Whereas the auto worker must merge his or her body with a machine to operate as a single unit of production, the lawyer is able to determine and manipulate his or her setting to a far greater degree. The auto worker tactically asserts power in conflicts on the job floor; the lawyer's office is itself the site for communicating and negotiating power. Expanding on Goffman's (1959) analysis of social behaviour, cultural analysts need to consider elements of place as part of the technique of self-presentation. The question of control over these elements of setting will then become relevant to analysis, raising questions as to who or what controls presentation of self and bodily movement.

Figure 2. Eleanor Bond: Converting the Powell River Mill to a Recreation and Retirement Centre'. Courtesy the artist.

Capitalism's failures have already created a sizable underclass in North America. Their traces on the actual landscape, when not erased by selective vision (e.g., demolishing "outmoded" structures, or hiding slums behind billboards), knock abruptly

against the utopian ideology of the modernist city. Bond draws on this cycle of destruction and renewal for the larger canvases of the second series, wherein she uses recognizable architectural forms as narrative elements. These paintings convey cold terror not by means of intimate details of human expression, but rather through the dwarfing by scale of the human drama unfolding invisibly on the streets below. The buildings stand as stark monuments to the triumph of capitalist architecture, and the failure of social planning. The office towers and factories are darkly shadowed tombstones compressed against the shore, depicted with hard-edged lines and shocks of colours. The styles and condition of buildings speak of a society whose values are in conflict and whose stability is threatened. The signs of decay and threat suggest conflicts between technology and its products on the one hand, and human needs on the other. They form critical commentaries on the social values underlying the design of modern cities. The paintings' imposing scale and disorienting attitude, and the absence of human figures challenge any utopic notions of urban existence.

Depicting older styles of buildings familiar to the viewer in order to relate a story located in the near future sets up a friction between the present and the outdated past. The details of human activity — for example, gas barbecues and sienna-stained picnic tables — locate scenes solidly in the present. Neither another place nor another time, Bond's pictorial reality is a dystopian vision of North America's lived reality. As the narrative of evacuation and relocation unfolds, the paintings envision tactics for group survival. No longer sites of progress and production, factories become holding tanks for displaced thousands. Images of alternative communities suggest a mood of ambiguity and threat. Against an environment of decay and collapse people appear pushed to the margins in their search for survival. Yet the whimsy of the titles and the mundane elements (mobile homes and striped caf, awnings) provide a sense of hope and familiarity.

The visual imagery in 'IV. Converting the Powell River Mill to a Recreation and Retirement Centre' (Figure 2) derives from Bond's visit to Powell River, a coastal town in British Columbia dependent on the manufacture of pulp and paper. In reality, the landscape of the town is dominated by the giant MacMillan-Bloedel plant and its many steam-emitting stacks. Significantly, a four-lane highway stretches from the factory's front entrance to the local hospital. The scenic lookout allows a view of the sewage lagoon, while in the distance another lagoon is formed by the half-sunk, rusted hulks of Second World War ships. Oddly enough, the British Columbian government promotes Powell River as a tourist site.

In Bond's imagined renewal of the town, factory blocks become the backdrop for shuffleboard courts and a swimming pool with a water slide. The tiny details of decay which reveal themselves on closer inspection — a crumbling dock on the waterfront, a roof collapsing into a half-standing structure — prevent any naive romanticization of these humanizing gestures. The weight of the buildings overshadow the interspersed attempts to re-occupy the site in terms more suited to emotional needs, rendering their effect tenuous at best.

Throughout the series the workers themselves remain invisible except for the material remains of their actions. Yet the magnitude of their numbers is visible in the scale of the buildings. The enormity of the crisis hits home: the apocalyptic vision of the 20th century predicts the evacuation of the cities. But the vantage point of the viewer, high above the drama on the streets, allows a distanced reflection on this horror. The raised perspective in these works erases the horizon, allowing Bond to fill most of the pictorial space with structure after structure in a visual style reminiscent of 18th-century town plans. The absence of horizon effectively removes visual cues for positioning the viewer's body. Although rendered in an illusory three dimensions, the depicted space is compressed and threatening because of its suffocating crush and absence of visible ground.

In *Work Station*, Bond frequently situates the eye of the viewer above the scene. Not only does the point of view deny bodily experience (the eye, in effect, becomes dis-embodied), it suggests the personal distancing evoked by acts of observation and surveillance. In Nurse, the vantage point above a nursing station reveals the technologies of surveillance tucked beneath the raised counter: monitor screens, intercom, telephone. In The Waiter, the viewer is facing directly into the setting rather than situated above it looking down. Rows of white linen-clad tables, set in anticipation of clientele, recede into the background. The image is ambiguous: the viewer is uncertain if the restaurant extends to a distant wall, or if, in fact, a mirror behind the first row of tables is reflecting what is behind the viewer. Yet in that mirror, no being's image is reproduced, returning the gaze. The absence of reflection erases the audience's existence, thereby refusing a figurative entry into the picture. Furthermore, it re-emphasizes the disembodied eye of the observer, not locatable within the setting.

What occurs to me when considering Bond's work, is how the viewer's perspective is similar, in a sense, to the eye of the television news camera located in a hovering helicopter. The images of the 1992 Los Angeles riots sparked by the Rodney King trial verdict, provoked profoundly emotional and disturbing reactions across the United States. Yet what was the space of the audience's view of the riots? They were at once above it, in it by virtue of the telephoto lens, yet hundreds or thousands of miles away in their living rooms.

Electronic media and the technologies of surveillance encourage disembodied perceptions of locales. In this sense, space can no longer be considered as geographically contained. In hypermodernity, people inhabit locales which are also nodes on communication networks (Sorkin 1992). Detachment and engagement thus become alternate positions not just for ethnography, but also for lived experience. The television eye provides an imagined mastery over the scene before it. Simultaneously, however, it simulates an intimate involvement (or voyeuristic complicity) which allows for a-geographic communities to form.

The aerial positioning of the eye has a direct counterpart in ethnography. The French anthropologist Marcel Griaule used an aerial viewpoint to detect the large-scale patterns and layout of Dogon communities in West Africa. Drawing on his own experience as an observer during the

First World War, Griaule maintained a fascination for the seeming omniscience the elevated eye provided his ethnographic practice: “Man is silly: he suspects his neighbour, never the sky....” As James Clifford (1983) describes, Griaule would peer down from nearby cliff tops (an assistant firmly grasping his ankles) to imitate the perspective afforded by the airplane: “With an airplane, one fixes the underlying structure of both topography and of minds.” He then presumed to read secrets in the convergence of paths, the exposed interiors of courtyards, in sanctuaries hidden behind rises in the land. Yet his grand search for the “true” African essence foundered on his repression of the individual minute of everyday life in favour of the distant and general (Brydon 1993).

At one level, *Work Station* is a moral narrative. Unlike landscape art of the 18th and 19th centuries which twinned visions of truth and control (an issue taken up below), it is a troubling reminder of both the consequences of modernity and the power of the observer’s gaze. Its utopian/dystopian ambiguity unsettle any attempts by the viewer to enact closure, to make easy judgements about social and urban planning. Homelessness, dislocation, and alienation are endemic to modernity, but so too is a nostalgic striving for safety and authentic community. Herein lies the utopian/dystopian ambiguity: how is the audience intended to understand these attempts to rebuild society? Bond’s near-future world may contain hope, but it also illustrates the continuing insecurity of human existence.

Reclaiming Public Space

Life in modernity can entail loss of coherent identity and the loss of a sense of place (Papastergiadis 1993). Place gives way to the alienation of placelessness, whereby people can no longer situate themselves in the urban settings they occupy. Interchangeable sites — airports are archetypical — dot the globe. Strip malls, office towers, and suburban tracts are numbingly similar, displaying more attention to the vagaries of style than the lives of their inhabitants. The landscapes of modernity are alternately disneyfied, commodified, gentrified, and museumized.

Social Centres addresses the predicament of contemporary Western public space. In conversation about her work, Bond considered the modern splitting of experience into realms of private and public, as well as modern valuations of knowledge and “expertise.” In practice, she noted, public and private are reversed: public spheres such as television broadcasting and shopping malls are in the hands of private interests, thus granting to the latter social legitimacy. In turn, these public places become the means of socializing the populace and rendering social divisions “natural.” Public spaces are the place where we learn the world as we know it. That some North American universities have set up shopping malls in their midst is a visual reminder of the increasing corporate domination of the production and legitimation of knowledge.

The concern of *Social Centres* with social justice and ecological harmony subsumes the individuating tendencies of modernity into planned utopias, at once rationalized and humanized. Their contrast to the real world of state-planned grids and social services barely enmeshed in the

Figure 3. Eleanor Bond: 'The Centre for Fertility and Ecology is Subsidized by Visitors to the Waterslide Area'. Courtesy the artist.

real lives of their recipients renders the utopian element of these depicted sites apparent and beguiling. Bond invents a world in which hierarchy appears to be at least neutralized, and where community is apparently shaped by and for its members. Efficient space is transformed into nurturing place.

The eight canvases in *Social Centres* are of roughly the same grand dimensions as the large works in Work Station. Unlike Work Station, the paintings and titles do not comprise episodes in an unfolding narrative. Rather, they describe fictional, therapeutic places which critique contemporary relationships with nature and the built environment. Similar to the project of *Work Station*, *Social Centres* postulates a world both familiar and foreign where public urban spaces are reimagined as strategies for social revitalization. Following on Work Station, the work of *Social Centres* uses the same aerial perspective. The painterly technique, however, is more blurred and suggestive, and the colours intensified with a switch to oil paints. The lush, vibrant greens and blues of these fictional worlds' natural settings suggest a progression away from the city portrayed in *Work Station* into dispersed, local settlements more conducive to rest and relaxation. This park-like nature is devoid of the harsh and unforgiving, suggesting the sculpted nature of English coun-

try and city parks. Invented since the 18th century, these parks are in fact the urban bourgeois revisionings of the countryside, devoid of the "messy" detritus of peasant and working-class life. Parks render nature picturesque, a place of repose and reflection rather than labour and possible danger. The nature of utopian longings appears as a projection of middle-class urban dreams.

These seemingly utopian locales attempt to accommodate human needs, particularly those of the socially- and spatially-marginalized. In *Of Other Spaces*, Michel Foucault (1986) defines utopias (which are literally "no place") as direct or inverted analogies to the real space of society. Literary utopias created by, for example, Thomas More and Samuel Butler are as much imaginary ideal societies as criticisms of contemporary conditions. Utopian literature exploits the tension between the impossibility of the ideal and the implication that it might be put in place. Utopian movements of the 19th century led to experiments in communal settlement and were a factor in, amongst other phenomena, the frontier expansion of western Canada and the United States. Settlements secluded themselves both behind the geographically-defined boundaries of reserves, and by means of social exclusion. They survived as distinct entities, however briefly, by opposing themselves to the values and characteristics of mainstream society.

In modern society, places of seclusion are defined by their deviance from a conventionalized norm: asylums, old folk's homes, shelters for battered women. Seclusion equals marginalization for their inmates. *Social Centres* challenges the norm by placing the marginalized fully in the centre and providing them with locales to transform their so-called deformity into gift. Women are given a place in 'The Centre for Fertility and Ecology is Subsidized by Visitors to the Waterslide Area' (Figure 3). In this setting, the tightly spiraled buildings become symbols of fertility in what is intended by Bond to be a nurturing locale for women. The spiral form, repeated on several canvases, refers both to its use by environmental artist Robert Smithson, and to its symbolic reference to fertility and birth found in several societies historically and cross-culturally. Smithson's Spiral Jetty expressed an optimistic renewal of land laid waste by industry; in Bond's usage thirty years later, the

Figure 4. Eleanor Bond: 'Rock Climbers meet with Naturalists on the Residential Parkade'. Courtesy the artist.

spiral's potential for healing is viewed cautiously and ironically, tempered by awareness of the dark side of utopian dreams.

Imaginings of nature disclose tacit understandings of identity and appropriate behaviour. In modernity, nature is defined as opposite to culture. Nature is known as law-governed rather than Deity-shaped, as an object of bio-technological manipulation, as open to examination and dissection. Such attitudes direct the actions of industrial capital toward a destructive use of the environment which belies the integration of human life with its place. According to Bond, the necessity for radically altering human relationships with nature is increasingly necessary, and her paintings create an imaginary space for this rethinking.

Bond is aware that space is both a material and metaphorical structuring mechanism, that it orients people bodily and cognitively within their world. Her paintings suggeset imagined strategies for social and spatial differentiation which counter the effects of modernity's technologies on the trajectories of existence. Assuming that the structure of communities and how they fit into their environment influence moral, emotional, and social selves, *Social Centres* proposes a re-animation of nature in order to link identity more closely with a naturalized setting. It accomplishes this by drawing upon the healing potential of poetic metaphor. The paintings' content breaks down the arbitrary distinction between nature and culture by interlinking visual imagery with visualized metaphors that anthropomorphize nature in seemingly material ways. Representations of the human body and animals are intended to embed human experience in place. For example, in Wisdom Lake is the Site of the Elder's Park and Communication Centre, Bond acknowledges the elderly as the bearers of life's wisdom (a position rarely accorded them in Western society) with a symbol of nurturance: in a hand-shaped lake floats an island in the shape of an eye. It resembles the right hand of Buddha making the protective, instructional mudra-gesture. She uses the image of the eye to refer to its symbolizing of the gods' all-seeing, all-knowing powers.

Social Centres suggests reversal of a European historical trend separating self from place. Transformations in place from feudal to modern times trace a movement from emplacement, to extension, to site (Foucault 1986). Emplacement describes the intertwined realities of place and cosmology extant in the Middle Ages, whereas extension refers to the global spread of European institutional and military power during the colonial and post-colonial eras. In contrast, sites are linked by high-speed transportation and communication arteries, and are barely distinguishable one from another. *Social Centres* plots a return to emplacement, although one still located in a spatially-segregated modernity and its concomitant requirements for care of the socially marginalized. Sites of seclusion are positively transformed when empowerment is enacted through emplacement. Yet the place of these centres remains elusive: why must a society capable of producing such nurturing locales, still be so unequal as to require their existence?

Bond's utopian landscapes force the viewer to reflect upon the illusory manner in which human life is partitioned. Their radical revisionings of place draw attention to the ways in which social, economic, and political power are inscribed on actual landscapes. The paintings provide a referen-

tial dimension for envisioning the utopian visions of ecofeminism and deep ecology. The imagined places of *Social Centres* attempt to correct or compensate for the exclusionary forces operating through the built structures of public spaces. Technology, media, and their effects achieve a socially-friendly presence. In 'Rock Climbers Meet with Naturalists in the Residential Parkade' (Figure 4), for example, the city emerges out of the landscape like a rock formation. Inside a mountain level-parking lot reminiscent of a Mesopotamian ziggurat sit box-shaped mobile homes which provide housing while leaving the exterior free for the exercises of rock climbers.

As fantastical as her rebuilt natural settings appear, they do nonetheless have their real-world analogues. The organic form of a housing development at Cocoa Isles, Florida (pictured in Jellicoe and Jellicoe 1975) resulted from the builders' goal to offer beach-front lots to as many property buyers as possible. And lest the idea of a hand-shaped lake sounds unlikely, consider how the hunters' conservationist organisation Ducks Unlimited built a waterfowl habitat in the shape of a duck, complete with an island for an eye.

The irony inherent to this latter example (the lake's construction destroys the idea of a truly natural setting, not to mention the destruction of actual vegetation and habitat) points to the dystopian element in Bond's utopias. Whereas all utopias are conceived as expressions of human artifice in so far as they are attempts to reconstruct the world as it is found, some reconstructions may have unintended and inimical consequences. The technological intervention required to sculpt the mountain parkade contradicts the suggestion that nature can provide a reprieve from a spatially-controlling industrial capitalism. In the narrative content of Bond's paintings, a heavy underpinning of irony points at the presumptions of reform.

The locales of *Social Centres* begin to resemble theme parks, and produce for me the uneasiness of such artificial sites. Bukatman (1991) notes in his discussion of Disney World that theme parks exist in juxtaposition to hostile environments and require constant infusions of cash for their maintenance. He argues that theme parks present technology with a friendly face, to compensate for its de-humanizing effects without transforming the social and economic inequities it enacts. At Disney World, technology is reconstituted in narrational form, evoking a "totalizing and benevolent urban experience" (1991:78). Space is regulated and community is utopic, but for social critics, Disney World's presentations of a sanitized past, present, and future are sinister.

The transformation of space into nurturing place raises other troubling questions regarding the idealized alternatives to social problems. The Disneyfication of the urban environment is already underway in shopping malls and gentrified sections of inner cities. Bond demands that the viewer reflect on the implicit assumptions behind reform movements. Can totalizing strategies, despite their good intentions, achieve social reform without in the process becoming overly controlling and inflexible?

The Language Of Paint

Bond produced *Work Station* and *Social Centres* during the height of the critique of landscape painting, as well as at the "end" of abstract art. Using the terms of Mitchell's analysis of this period, Bond's work responds to the two phases of the study of landscape. The first, modernist phase sought to demonstrate a continuous history of landscape painting narrativized as "a progressive movement toward purification of the visual field" (Mitchell 1994:1). Abstract painting, its culmination, became purely ocular — or at least, that was its aim, to be entirely non-mimetic. But Fisher's comment, cited earlier, belies this ideal, by pointing out that abstract painting was nonetheless read for any visual cues suggesting spatial representation: the world hovering at the edge of the painting is the fact of embodied, experiential perception. The second, postmodernist phase of landscape's study has been strongly interpretive and textual, striving to decode the signs of its representation in terms of allegories of the psychological, ideological, or political. Mitchell proposes a third synthesizing phase which recognizes that:

> Landscape as a cultural medium ... has a double role with respect to something like ideology: it naturalizes a cultural and social construction, representing an artificial world as if it were simply given and inevitable, and it also makes that representation operational by interpellating its beholder in some more or less determinate relation to its givenness as sight and site. (1994: 2)

Critical viewing of landscape would then be aware not only of the painting's content, but also of how that painting positions its viewer cognitively and physically. It would recognize that landscape is not simply a genre of painting, but as well a form of cultural expression (which is Mitchell's argument). Eleanor Bond has in a sense anticipated Mitchell, in that she uses her viewer's knowledge of landscape's conventions, manipulating them in order to comment upon the genre's ideological load. This load legitimates modernity, its conquest of rural and foreign spaces, its urban grids and commodification of nature. Landscape in this sense is the "dreamwork" of imperialism (1994:10); Bond uses its representational modes with a hallucinatory twist to darken our perceptions of modernity's landscapes.

Bond's paintings are as much felt viscerally as they are perceived visually. The towering dimensions of eight Work Station canvases, and the work of *Social Centres*, and their dizzying perspectival tilt compel the viewer to enter into their space both intellectually and emotionally. This effect is achieved in various ways. When discussing the paintings, I referred to the positioning of the viewer above the scene rendered. These landscapes are without prospect, allowing only the possibility of descent to the ground. When combined with the paintings' size, the net effect is unbalancing, creating the illusion of a forward fall into the scene. In *Social Centres*, the intense colours and dispersed patterns of light and dark, produce a sense of forward movement. So, too, do the spiralling lines generate a feeling of dynamic motion. In all the works, the shifting angle of foreshortening together with the absence of pictorial depth create a horizon which looms rather than recedes. This contrasts markedly with conventional landscape painting, in which the horizon provides the viewer with a sense of stability, of rest and detachment.

Landscape painting of the 18th and 19th centuries is characterised by control of visual space through use of single-point perspective. Developed during the Renaissance, this style of perspectival depiction allows the artist to simulate an illusory deep space on a two-dimensional plane. Use of single-point perspective could yield — or so it was thought by theorists such as Alberti — the truth of vision: reality portrayed as it is. The rational, geometric logic of single-point perspective (the location of the mastering eye outside the picture frame) was all the more valorized at the time since it coincided with a new conception of truth bearing "the attributes of abstraction, of neutrality, of impersonality" (Steiner 1974: 52).

Landscape's historical rise parallels that of the natural sciences, overseas exploration and domination, as well as the emergence of anthropology from the practices of natural history and travel writing. A new conception of the ideal individual also emerged as someone who could reason, and act upon reason alone, to transcend the effects of emotional dependence and primordial loyalties. The individual became conceptualized as separate from and opposed to the social, rather than as formed in and through social relationships. Against this ideology of self, the irrationality of the Other - women, the colonized, the poor - was measured by their apparent inability to think abstractly. Concrete, metaphorical thought was the Other's prisonhouse. Such us-versus-them thinking is tenacious; it defines the ground on which current battles within the philosophy and sociology of science occur, where traditionalists refuse to acknowledge the role that metaphor and social relations play in the production of scientific knowledge (Pickering 1992).

The ideal of detached vision has not only formed Western cognitive structures; it has effected the layout of cities and towns. For example, constructed vistas in Paris and Washington use single-point perspective to create positions for admiring significant (to the State) monuments. Landscaped parks such as those designed by Olmsted and his followers also plan vistas for passive observation and nostalgic pastoral contemplation. In this way, the urban designer creates a space for seeing as well as for living. The viewer is positioned within the landscape, and is guided to look at it in a detached, disembodied manner. The figures of the voyeur and the flâneur become ideal types. De Certeau (1984) describes the type of bodily movement such urban vistas dictate to the individual; he also describes the tactics of transgression to which such controlling grids give rise.

Analysis of art, and space, requires more than attention to form and content. It must also include awareness of the bodily act of perceiving, and how the body is positioned and the senses invoked. Artists themselves operate within specific practices and realms of creative possibility, and choice of technique is not a neutral act. Against a backdrop of one hundred years of abstract, expressionist, impressionist, and cubist art, tha act of creating perspectival painting (or, conversely, playing with its elements) becomes a deliberate gesture. The compression of space and pulling of the viewer's body into the painting is a deliberate strategy on Bond's part. I consider the interplay of intimacy and distance in her paintings as suggestive of the problem of situating oneself as ethnographic observer. No act of vision, no utopian perfection of sight exists. There can only be, as Mitchell suggests, an awareness of making choices.

Discussion

The scenarios into which Eleanor Bond plunges her audience are peculiarly Western, and tacitly assume the normalcy of planning and rationalizing social sites with the intent to design living. The paintings do not provide answers to current social problems; instead they raise uneasy questions about not only modernity but as well its idealized alternatives. As the audience traces the playing out of hyper-modernity through its visual narration in Work Station and *Social Centres*, it must negotiate its place both in relation to the art and to the socio-spatial context which informs it. All the while, the act of viewing these imaginary places is laden with apprehension arising from actual experiences with failed urban plans and bureaucratically-created ghettos, and underscored by the paintings' physicality. The world, as Fisher notes, is hovering as a secondary presence.

Bond's radical revisionings of place draw attention to the way in which social, economic, and political power are inscribed on actual landscapes. Rather than mere setting existing prior to human experience in the world, space is continually produced as the extension of human action. In turn, space produces society in its myriad forms, regulating the possible outcomes of human action. For a spatially-informed cultural analysis, Bond's paintings illustrate the implications of viewing place in terms of an intellectual act of surveillance. The viewer of art can only remain outside the picture frame by resisting the palpable pull of bodily experience. Similarly, the ethnographer retains that analytical frame which turns experienced place into object of examination through disregard of his or her own accumulation of bodily knowledge. As in all sciences of observation, this vision is an act of will rife with socio-historical and political implications.

I do not advocate the complete abandonment of such a frame; rather I suggest that it too be located and attended to as an aspect of analytic practice. The objectifying eye is a powerful visual tool to be used knowingly and ethically. The dialectics of seeing requires nomadic movement between modes of vision, which can then view in multiple ways movement between self and other, between the situated body of the observer and the space and place of the observed. Art exists in that tension which arises when a painted surface "acts" to implicate the viewer in its illusory space. Seeing Bond's process of art-making demands awareness of that tension. Similarly, doing cultural analysis necessitates a continual movement, an active and conscious refusal to occupy a single point of view. Rather, the ethnographer is obligated to examine the positions he or she occupies — regardless if those positions are metaphorical, political, physical, social — within the context of the people whose lives are examined. No safe observation post exists: now more than ever before, ethnography must acknowledge and address its act of producing a space for seeing.

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Acknowledgements

The author and editors would like to thank Eleanor Bond for her help and generousity in supplying the images for this article. Images copyright Eleanor Bond.

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