

SUPERPOSITION: Equilibrium & Engagement

Anya Gallaccio

Beautiful Minds, 2015/2018 on Cockatoo Island

21st Biennale

of Sydney



Beautiful Minds, 2015–17

aluminium, clay, pump, computer, software

5 x 5 x 5 m

Courtesy the artist; Thomas Dane Gallery, London; and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles

Photograph: Luke Walker

Beautiful Minds is an ongoing work that uses a 3D printer to generate a clay mountainscape. A temporal process that 'prints' clay, the work is open to material and technical variation: it is impermanent and process-driven. Once the mountainscapes are complete and the exhibition is over, the clay can be reclaimed for other purposes.

We can look at *Beautiful Minds* as a new way to think about landscape, but also about art as something made by hand, by machine, or by technology. In this way, the work reflects on some of the core concerns of art history and practice. We could look at the history of the sublime in painting; references to nature and its representation historically; the idea of the permanence of the art object; and the idea of meaning that resides in the object. The way Gallaccio employs deterioration, decay and unpredictability in her practice challenges the historical value that the mark of the artist's hand has been given in making and authoring work. Gallaccio works with the impossibility of predicting exactly what the materials will do.

By calling the work *Beautiful Minds*, she points to the idea that the meaning of the work exists in the experience of the viewer, rather than within the work itself. The title also implies the satisfaction that society receives from its technological achievements.

Questions for Discussion

1. How do we see the landscape in a technology-driven world?
2. Do you live near a park? A national park? A beach?
3. Do you think the mountains in this artwork are a representation of a specific mountain range, or are they about the idea of a mountain landscape? Does this make a difference to what you think or how you feel about the work?
4. Look at some maps – perhaps of the east coast of Australia. How do we represent mountains on different kinds of maps? How do we make sense of topographical or contour maps?

Reference Points

We can see *Beautiful Minds* as it is being produced; the machine and the clay it delivers combine to become a kinetic sculpture, making a temporary artwork that references both the landscape and 3D-printing technology. This work asks us to think about how we understand our ideas about nature, and the ways we interpret, frame and represent nature as an image. This leads us to think more carefully about our own point of view. The landscape has been a central subject of art practice, and more recently a concern of artist activists in the context of climate crisis.

Other artists to look at in this context, listed alongside the years of their participation in Biennale of Sydney editions, could include: Janet Laurence (1992, 2010), Hiroshi Sugimoto (1996, 2010), Fred Williams (1973, 1988), Kader Attia (2010), Subhankar Banerjee (2012), Rosalie Gascoigne (1979, 1988, 1990, 2000), Robert Smithson (1976, 2008), Tacita Dean (2006, 2014) and Joyce Hinterding and David Haines (1992, 2002).

Practices and Processes

Rather than respond to this work by experimenting with its materials, we can look at the work as a process and an image and use these aspects of the work as starting points for practice. By drawing the work, we take the combination of abstraction and representation it presents to a new level, making another more abstract version of the landscape.

To make a drawing machine, all you need are some battery-operated toys that move, some string, rubber bands or other fixtures, or some twigs or kitchen utensils that you can put together to create movement. Once you have something that moves in a way that can be repeated, you can attach a graphite stick, or dip the utensil or twig in ink to make marks on paper. The more you repeat the movement and add ink, the more your drawing will develop. See also drawingmachines.org.

Making a sculpture that responds to your ideas about landscape, or to a

feature of your local area, makes the work personal to you. It is also an opportunity to discuss how and why we make work about the land.

Drawing

If you can visit Cockatoo Island, draw the mountains that the clay machine produces. Experiment with scale and materials. Draw on 'unconventional' paper, such as brown paper, newsprint, or paper that is not a standard size (i.e. not A4, A3 or A2).

Drawing

Build a drawing machine that can generate images of a mountain. Art history is full of mechanical and kinetic 'drawing machines' that use movement to control a stylus (or drawing implement) to generate imagery. Imagine how you could create a machine that extends your ability to draw, with a mountain range or horizon as the end point of the machine movement.

Sculpture

Get together with a group from your class and build a mountain range. Decide beforehand what you want your landscape to communicate and choose materials that will add to what you want to say about nature.

Alternate drawing

Draw a contour map of your local area.

Cultural frame:
representation of the environment, social and cultural meaning, digital media

Structural frame:
art histories, visual language, meaning and communication