

ART, ECOLOGY, AND THE POLITICS OF LAND USE

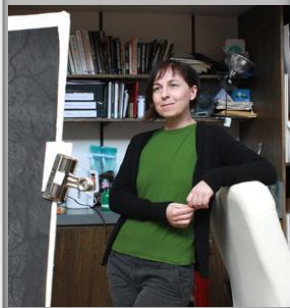
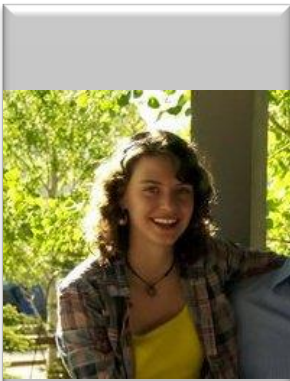
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Since the 1990's the politics of land use have become a major theme in contemporary art and theory, and as we acknowledge an age in which humans have shaped the earth's surface on a planetary scale artworks have set out to address the enduring impact of humanity's land use practices.

My research is deeply engaged with this contemporary theory, and consists of a body of artwork that serves to investigate the landscape as a cultural artifact and to illustrate the conflicts, histories, and ideologies that have structured our everyday lives. The goal of this creative work was to offer a viable questioning of land use practices in the Salt Lake Valley by excavating sites and stories of ecological impact or crisis through objective documentation in photographs, maps, and site visits, as well as subjective creations in painting, drawing, photography, mapping and installation.

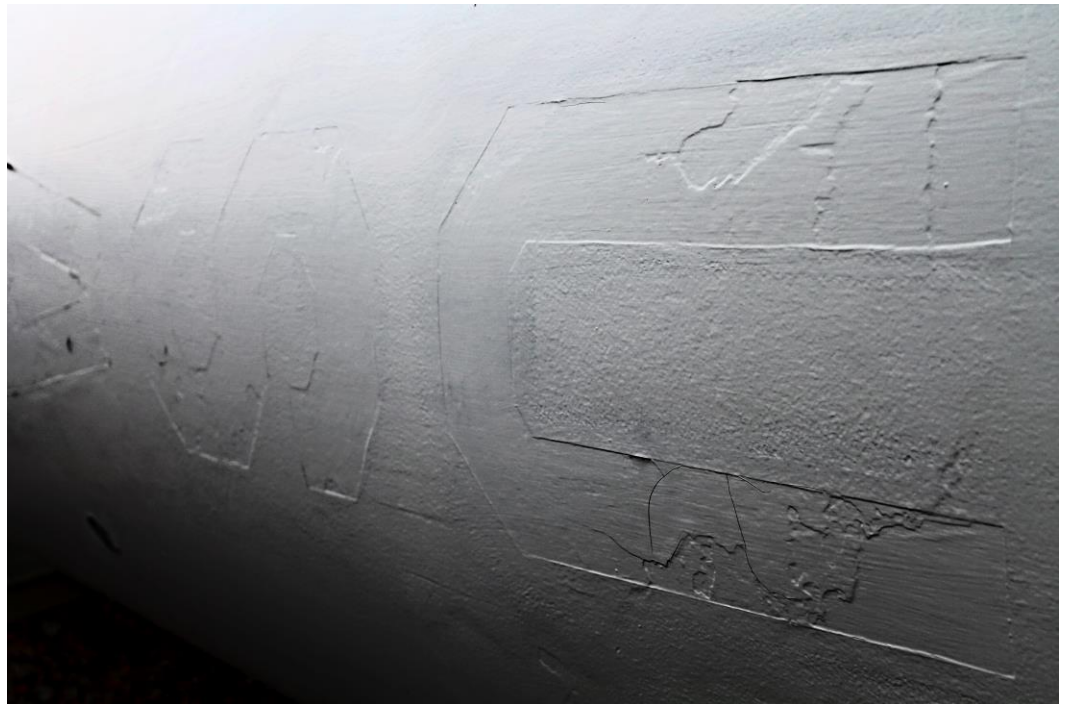
I focused my gaze at sites of military and toxic industry in the Greater Salt Lake area, including Hill Air Force Base and the Utah Test and Training Range, Dugway Proving grounds, Clive Nuclear Repository, the Bingham Canyon Copper Pit and Kennecott Smelter Stack, ATK Ortbals Rocket Garden, and the Skull Valley Goshute Reservation. Along with these sites, I studied the origins of the landscape by coupling modern satellite mapping technologies with historic maps of Salt Lake City. I oriented these maps by studying and writing about the influence of the religious ideologies of Mormon settlers, who understood Salt Lake City to be sacred land and built the city around their temple. I followed these ideologies into a present day understanding of sacred landscape and how these ideas influence land use politics in many of the surrounding military and toxic industry sites.

My research displays the importance of culture on our land use practices by illustrating and visualizing the influence of ideologies, specifically of Capitalism and Christianity, in forming the Salt Lake Valley and surrounding industries. It attempts to uncover the 'what' and 'why' of the ecological problems we face by understanding both ecological crisis as well as the solutions to these crises through the lens of cultural studies. I also assert that the use of artworks and visualizations of land use politics are integral to influencing the cultural change necessary to attempt to deal with climate change and the ecological crisis that confront our community.





Ali Mitchell, "Untitled (Wester Landscape Series)" 2015.



Ali Mitchell, "USA" 2015. Minuteman Intercontinental Ballistic Missile System at ATK's Rocket Garden located in Promontory, Utah.

