

**narratives of nature**

ANGELIKI AVGITIDOU

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### *Landscape and Body/Narratives of Nature*

Paper presented at the “Global Landscapes” day conference at Prespes, part of the Visual March, U.W.M.

#### Synopsis

In this presentation I will be showing student projects produced during the past two academic years on the elective course “Space /Time /Body”, which I teach at the School of Fine and Applied Arts, at the University of Western Macedonia. More specifically works presented will relate to the themes: “Body and Landscape” and “Narratives of Nature”, briefs respective introduced during the past two years. Works explore nature as the *topos* of the mythical and the supernatural and nature as paradise; they comment on nature’s exploitation from man and man’s exploration of the self within nature and observe the relationship of body and the landscape.

#### Films mentioned in the presentation

*Η ομίχλη* (The Mist) dir. Frank Darabont (2007)

*Το Χωριό* (The Village) dir. M. M. Night Shyamalan (2004)

*Η Γαλάζια Λίμνη* (Blue Lagoon) dir. Randal Kleiser (1980)

*Η Μυστηριώδης Νήσος* (Mysterious Island) dir. Cy Endfield (1961)

*Οικογένεια Ελβετών Ροβινσόνων* (Swiss Family Robinson) dir. Ken Annakin (1960)

*Το συμβάν* (The Happening) dir. M. Night Shyamalan (2008)

Students names:

Antoniou Nikolas,  
Bourdami Stella,  
Korbakis Giorgos,  
Korre Peny,  
Lianos Xristos,  
Pasalimaniotis Nikos,  
Stoumpou Kiki,  
Vernardakis Andreas.

The work shown is included in the online publication:

<http://issuu.com/artschool/docs/tsb> (in Greek).

Short CV of Angeliki Avgitidou

Born in Thessaloniki, in 1968, Angeliki studied architecture at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and initially worked as an architect, mainly in exhibition design. In 1988 Angeliki started exhibiting work in photography and video. She later continued her studies in London acquiring an MA in Fine Art and a [PhD](#) from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design. Angeliki has since exhibited internationally in venues such as the [ICA](#) (London) and [the French Museum of Photography](#). In her work she negotiates process, the everyday, the banal and what goes unnoticed or is considered not interesting. Recent work has focused more on issues of migration and belonging. Her work encompasses video, performance, interactive animation and installation.

She has presented papers at conferences such as *Computers in Art and Design Education* ([Glasgow, 2001](#)) and the *International Symposium on Electronic Arts* ([Japan, 2002](#)). In 2001 she co-organised the seminar «The Artist in Digital Art» at Tate Gallery and edited an issue of [Digital Creativity](#) on the same subject. Since 2006 she teaches at the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Western Macedonia, Greece. On the 28th of May 2009 Angeliki presented the performance “[Recitation](#)” at the [2nd Thessaloniki Biennale](#). She has recently co-authored the book “Memory Transference” ([cannot not design publications](#)).

|ANGELIKI AVGITIDOU | Web-site: <http://www.arealartist.com> | Contact: [arealartist@gmail.com](mailto:arealartist@gmail.com) |

[time] [space] [body]

**PARADISE**

# PARADISE

*[Extract from film/  
BLUE LAGOON]*

One of the narratives invested in nature is that of the idyllic paradise. In this film nature is presented as an earthly Garden of Eden, an affluent place, a place of joy and play. Nature is untouched by man and therefore innocent. The innocence as a romantic feature of this paradise is matched up with the innocence of children as non sexual playful beings, a notion deconstructed by Freud about a century ago.

## PARADISE

*[Extract from film/  
MYSTERIOUS ISLAND]*

During the US Civil War, Union POWs escape in a balloon and end up stranded on a South Pacific island, inhabited by giant plants and animals. They must use their ingenuity to survive the dangers, and to devise a way to return home. Sequel to '20,000 Leagues Under the Sea' .

As in the previous film, nature is portrayed in an island, a place “far away”, away from civilization, society and the known world. In this way it comes close with the portrayal of utopias and specifically “Utopias of Escape” as defined by Lewis Mumford with the prominent example of Thomas More’s *Utopia*.

# **TROUBLE IN PARADISE**



## TROUBLE IN PARADISE

But all is not well in paradise. During one night the only adult in the party of survivors hears the beating of drums and the next day in his walk in the other side of the island discovers what look like the remains of human sacrifice.

*Extract from film/  
BLUE LAGOON*

Nature is “the Other”, the unknown and the dangerous a glimpse of Freud’s *uncanny*.

Nature here is closer to the idea of the primitive state as defined by Hobbes in “hard primitivism”: life in a state of Nature as “a war of all against all”.

*Extract from film/  
MYSTERIOUS ISLAND*

Narrations as such often end up with an affirmation of man’s supremacy over nature.

**CONTROL**

# CONTROL

Man strives to tame nature, own it and control it. Let's start with an extract from the film *Suisse family Robinson*.

Capture of a baby-elephant and the building of a tree house.

*Extract from film/*

***SUISSE FAMILY ROBINSON 2***

A family in route to New Guinea is shipwrecked on a deserted tropical island. They are forced to remain on the island because of the damage to the ship and the pirates that are roaming the islands. They create a home on the island (centering around a huge tree house) and explore the island and its wildlife. Plenty of adventure ensues as the family deals with issues of survival, pirates, and the brothers must learn how to live on the island with an uncertain future.

Nature is there to be tamed and to serve.

Jean-Jacque Rousseau in his *Discourse on Inequality (1754)* quoted that "The first man who, having fenced in a piece of land, said "This is mine" and found people naive enough to believe him, that man was the true founder of civil society."

In this film the taming of nature includes a transformation of a piece of nature into a place of one's own, an environment of rustic domesticity.

# THE SUPERNATURAL

# THE SUPERNATURAL

But nature as the “unknown”, the force of nature and its power over man needs to be comprehended and has lead to its investment with all sorts of myths and tales. In the film “The Village” an isolated religious community is surrounded by a forest that is supposedly inhabited by demons, a tale invented by the village’s elderly in order to “protect” the people of the village and to contain them within the borders of the community. In this scene from the film a blind girl crosses the forest into civilization in order to obtain drugs for a dying relative.

*Extract from film/  
THE VILLAGE*

# **ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS**

# ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS

Nature's exploitation and subsequent revenge.  
In this category it's usually nature invading civilization, a safe and controlled place that we have created to remind us of its power potentially catastrophic to man and its unpredictability.

*Extract from film/  
THE HAPPENING*

**Student projects**





**ΑΠΟ ΠΑΝΩ ΜΟΥ ΕΙΧΑ ΑΥΤΟΝ ΤΟΝ ΟΥΡΑΝΟ**

**ΤΩΡΑ ΕΜΕΙΝΕ ΜΟΝΑΧΑ ΣΕ ΦΩΤΟΓΡΑΦΙΑ**



**ΒΡΙΣΚΟΜΟΥΝΑ ΜΑΚΡΙΑ ΑΠΟ ΤΗΝ ΠΟΛΗ  
ΤΩΡΑ ΑΥΤΟ ΦΑΙΝΕΤΑΙ ΜΟΝΑΧΑ ΣΕ ΦΩΤΟΓΡΑΦΙΑ**



**ΑΥΤΟ ΤΟ ΛΟΥΛΟΥΔΑΚΙ ΕΙΧΑ ΒΡΕΙ ΔΙΠΛΑ  
ΣΤΑ ΠΟΔΙΑ ΜΟΥ**

**ΤΩΡΑ ΜΕΝΕΙ ΑΠΛΑ ΜΙΑ ΦΩΤΟΓΡΑΦΙΑ ΤΟΥ**



**ΜΠΡΟΣΤΑ ΜΟΥ ΕΙΧΑ ΟΛΟΚΛΗΡΟ ΔΑΣΟΣ**  
**ΤΩΡΑ ΕΧΩ ΜΟΝΑΧΑ ΚΑΠΟΙΕΣ ΦΩΤΟΓΡΑΦΙΕΣ**



































