

# **Stony Brook University**



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**Moving Mountains, Desert Sea**

A Thesis Presented

by

**Victoria Hortensia Febrer**

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

for the Degree of

**Master of Fine Arts**

in

**Studio Art**

Stony Brook University

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Abstract of the Thesis  
**Moving Mountains, Desert Sea**

by

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**Master of Fine Arts**

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**2016**

I consider the role of not just the act of painting and the act of remembering, but the sea, the desert, the wind, the salt, the earth, and the light in this process—the way that non-human elements exert their existence and connect us to history, time, and geography. I use the term “painting” broadly here, to consider any act of placing color onto a surface, which in my case includes the use of acrylic, red wine (vinography), and projected light. The primary manifestation of this investigation is a still ongoing series of over 400 paintings and vinographs of landmasses seen from the sea, *The Untitled Marine Vistas*, which I began in 2010. These works are produced using a strict set of instructions that govern their elaboration. Reviews of the works en masse disclosed the fluidity of these coastlines, including the realization that these marine vistas sometimes revealed a desert. A digital slideshow of the works provided further insight into the movement of the forms from painting to painting, and prompted new sub-series of works employing projections of colored light to create iterations of landscape. This paper explores the primary facets of my artistic research.

## Dedication Page

To Peter Cooper and his vision to achieve justice and equality by eliminating barriers to education.

And to John Hejduk, whose words continually inspire me to work to realize Peter Cooper's vision:

*I don't think there are many things more important than being a teacher and being a student. That, to me, is the deepest social contract, to understand the idea that individual creativity within a willing community is a profound social act. The privilege of being teachers and students within this remarkable place—to be teachers in a place of spirit, to be teachers of spirit, and to be with spirited students.*

*All one can do is to celebrate one's discipline.*

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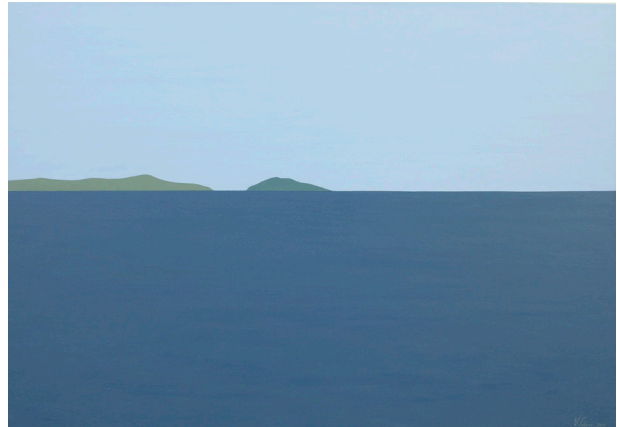
## INTRODUCTION

*The ecological time of the contemporary is shaped by the propagation of material histories that extend into the present day. It is not formed all at once. Before developing hybrid ‘-scapes,’ the earth was seen only as landscape.*

—James Nisbet (*Ecologies, Environments, and Energy Systems*, p. 12)

My production of visual images emerges from an inquiry into how common repeated forms influence our understanding of our place and position geographically, chronologically, and historically.

My work probes this idea in various ways, but my principal interest begins with meditations on the mechanism of memory and its parallels to the production of images. I investigate how memory behaves as the mechanism for storing and recalling the significance of common and abundant images by utilizing simplified, familiar and repeated elements to act as a stimulus for recollection and contemplation—fixating primarily on the human relationship to the horizon.



Victoria Febrer (b. 1985). *Untitled Marine Vista #5*, 2010. Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 50 in. Private collection.



Victoria Febrer (b. 1985). *Untitled Marine Vista #10*, 2010. Red wine (vinography) on handmade Japanese paper, 10.2 x 12.6 in. Artist's collection.

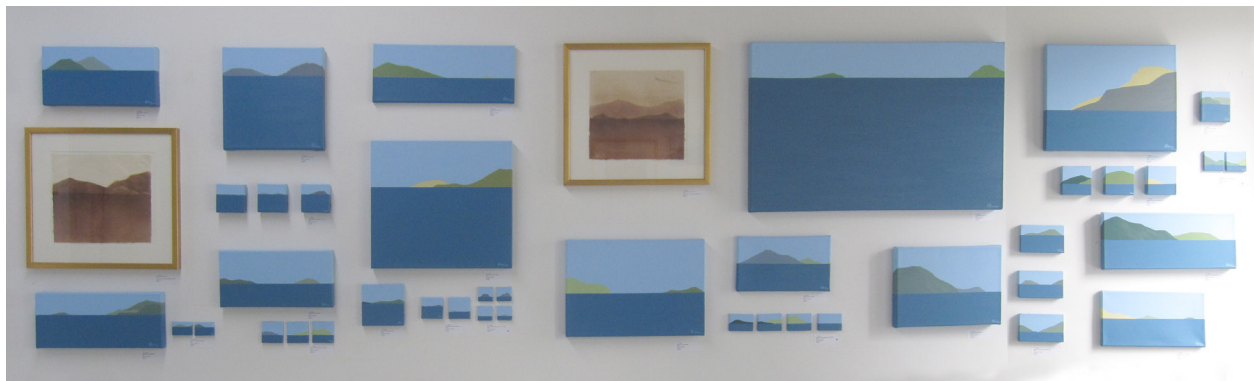
Since I was a child, I have been drawn to images that repeatedly manifest themselves throughout history and geography. For years, I have fixated obsessively on remembered images of the sea, in search of the painting of the place that everyone would remember. Perhaps, simplifying an image by reducing it to only its most essential shapes, colors and composition, would ensure each individual witnessed just enough information to catalyze the process of filling in a complete picture. Focusing on the mechanism of memory, I perform an abstracted analogue of the act of recollection by

exploring how memory reduces the features of a landscape to their most basic elements and how these simplified elements act as a stimulus for recalling places both visited and imagined. Approximately 400 works are a part of the ongoing series *Untitled Marine Vistas* and its variants.

My work begins with the establishment of a conceptual and procedural framework for this exploration into our experience of perceiving and understanding images and the memories that they recall. I investigate the anomalies that emerge from the repetition of archetypal elements through the use of materials and methods where there exists both a cooperation with and an opposition to the generation of repeated forms. Using structured and iterated combinations of paint, red wine (vinography), video, and projected light, I explore our relationship to representations of place and position. It is a process of bringing together separately insignificant parts to create a whole with meaning. Independently, none of the elements mean anything, but through their combination, they can say everything. Merleau-Ponty writes:

If the painter is to express the world, the arrangement of his colors must carry with it this indivisible whole, or else his picture will only hint at things and will not give them in the imperious unity, the presence, the insurpassable plenitude which is for us the definition of the real. That is why each brushstroke must satisfy an infinite number of conditions...Expressing what exists is an endless task. (Sense & Non-Sense, p. 15)

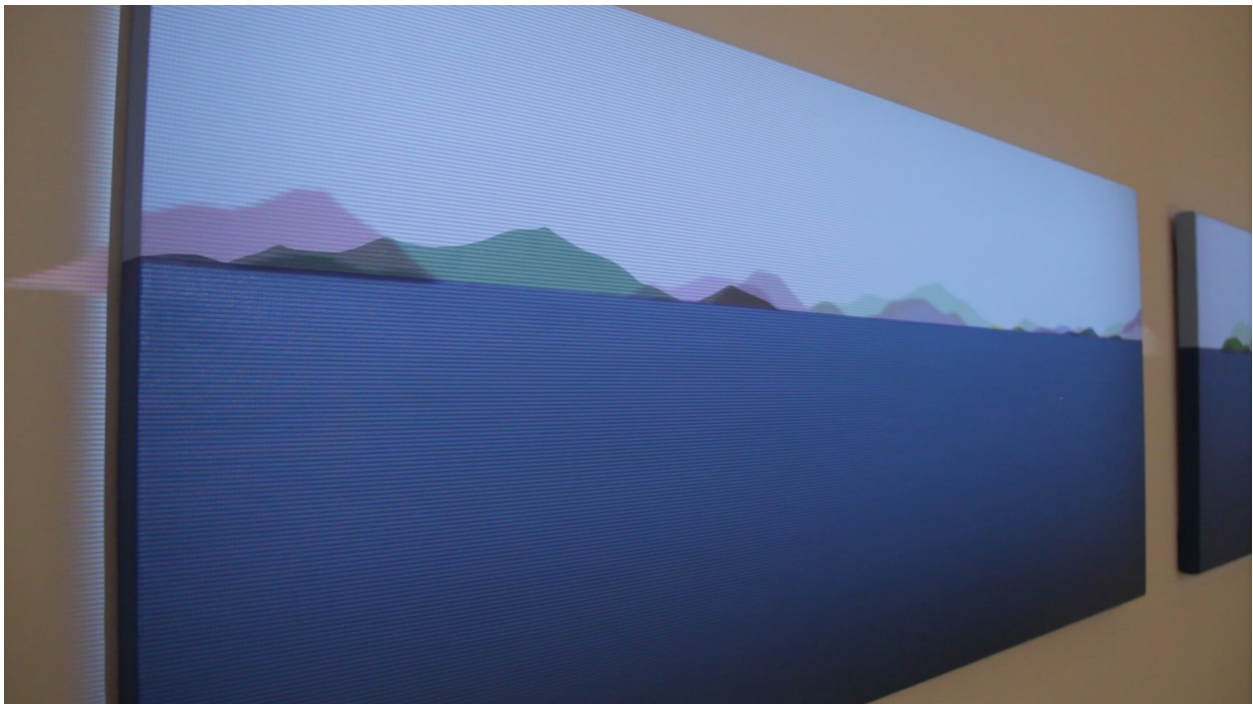
The artistic production of a series of this volume in numbers and span of time uniquely reveals insight into the subject matter and process that would not be possible through more contained and finite research. Reviews of the works en masse disclosed the fluidity of their coastlines, including the realization that the marine vistas sometimes revealed a desert. Displaying large groups of *Untitled Marine Vistas* on my studio walls in a salon style hanging resulted in an assortment of shapes and sizes of



Victoria Febrer's artist studio wall, Greenwich St, New York City, 2012.

paintings, including some existing in triptychs, some in grids, and others in strands of multiples. What materialized was a fragmented array of landscapes, with horizons and borders attempting to organize themselves into the logic of the room's walls.

A digital slideshow of the works provided further insight into the movement of the forms from painting to painting, across the space of each canvas and also across time. This movement took place between each act of painting, but also between the time lapsed in viewing each. Many of the paintings had since been dispersed across the world, and to review them digitally gave them a strange new sense of being. This prompted me to explore the possibilities of employing digitally reproduced projections of colored light to create iterations of landscape.

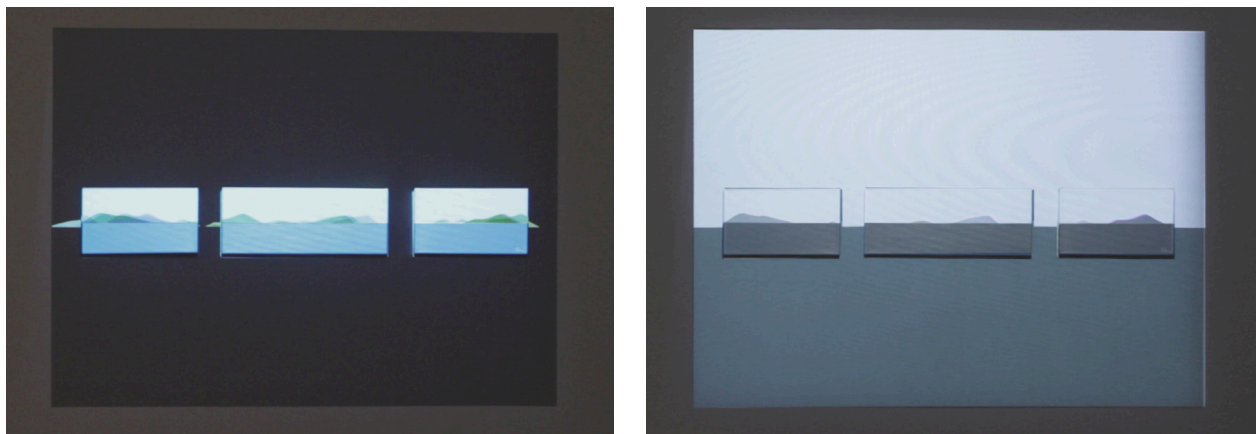


Victoria Febrer (b. 1985). *Moving Mountains #2 (Untitled Marine Vistas #173, 174, 175, 176, 177)*, 2016. Acrylic and multi-channel mapped light projection on wall and 5 canvases. (24 x 38, 42, 56, 42 & 38 in | 09:30 looping projection). Installation detail, Paul W. Zuccaire Gallery, Staller Center, Stony Brook University. (detail) (<https://vimeo.com/166133852>)

## MOVING MOUNTAINS

In the Moving Mountains series, I use projection to selectively map fields of colored light onto *Untitled Marine Vistas* in order to change our perception of the landscape and draw attention to the relativity of color, using material and media as metaphors, proxies and surrogates to explore issues of permanence and impermanence. In the *Interaction of Color*, Josef Albers writes: “This way of searching will lead from a visual realization of the interaction between color and color to an awareness of the interdependence of color with form and placement; with quantity (which measures amount, respectively extension and/or number, including recurrence); with quality (intensity of light and/or hue); and with pronouncement (by separating or connecting boundaries).” (p. 2).

Multi-channel mapped projections layered onto canvases supporting stratified paint and pigment allow me to experiment with the registration of various colors and images in space and time. I use digital video projection as a source for colored light, which through its interaction with other elements changes the image perceived by the viewer. Precise and specific manipulations of the color and intensity of projected light can change the appearance of select areas of paint and even desaturate the color of pigment entirely.



Victoria Febrer (b. 1985). *Moving Mountains #1 (Untitled Marine Vistas 99, 100, 101)*, 2015. Acrylic and single-channel mapped light projection on wall and 3 canvases (8 x 14, 20 & 14in | 06:19 looping projection). Installation photographs, Paul W. Zuccaire Gallery, Staller Center, Stony Brook University. (<https://vimeo.com/166133851>)

In speaking of his piece *77 Million Paintings*, which uses a computer algorithm to generate an ever changing painting on a series of wall-mounted screens, Brian Eno describes a similar relationship to



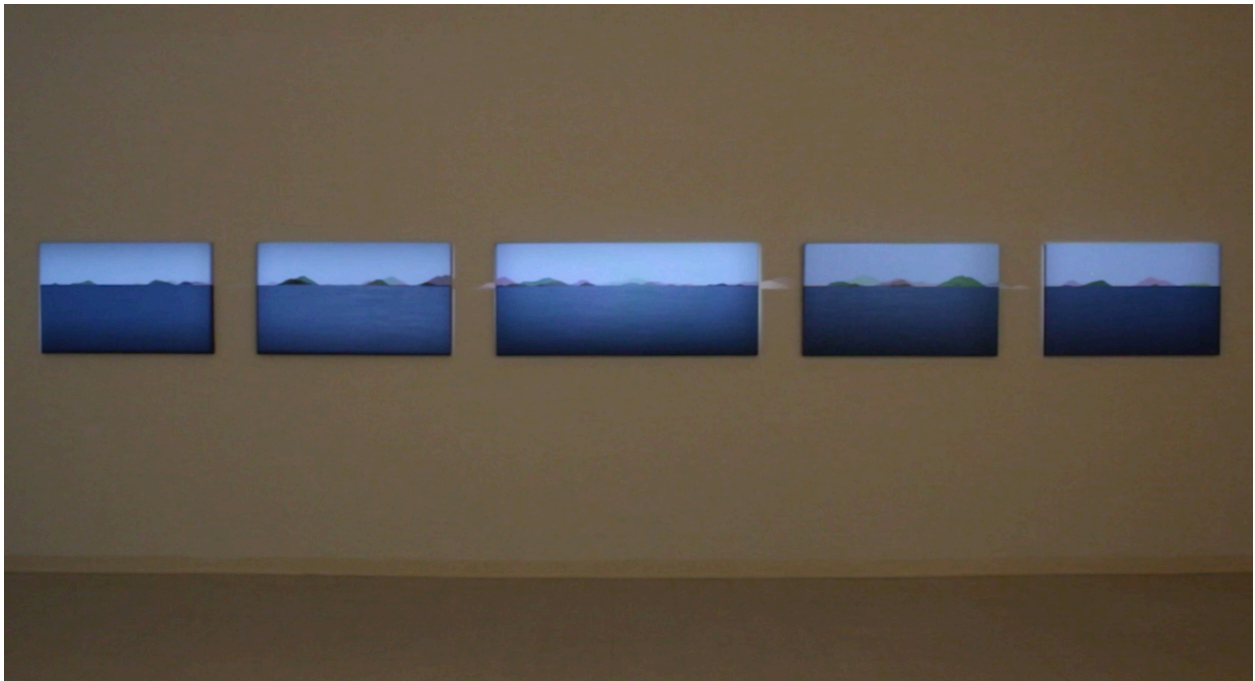
Brian Eno (b. 1948). *77 Million Paintings*, 2013. Sala de Alcala, Madrid. (docenotas.com)

video: “Because of the history of cinema, and its carry-forward into TV, we expect screens to show us images, and tell us stories. In doing so we overlook the meta-description of video—a technology for controlling light. Images and stories are subsets of that. I am trying to work from the supposition that video is a light source, not necessarily an image source.” (p. 51)

Manipulation of the light illuminating the pigments on the painting allows not only for the combinations produced by the programmed sequence I’ve created, but also by the intervention of viewers in the space and the change of lighting conditions in the environment of their display. Landmasses move freely across horizons not only along the x axis of the canvas, but also spanning time and three-dimensional space. They emerge from traditional points of painted perspective within the canvas, and from pinpoint sources of digital projection. The projection isolates the role of light from that of the physical substance of paint and draws attention to the viewer’s role in the existence and understanding of a piece “seen from without, such as another would see me, installed in the midst of the visible, occupied in considering it from a certain spot.” (Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 134).

The movement of these masses of colored light is slow and meditative, predictable yet unexpected. Because of the expectations associated with painting and moving image, this deliberate speed disrupts

a viewer's sense of time and provokes a state of contemplation. "Visitors enter with the idea they are going to see a painting which is an activity they are prepared for: we know how to look at paintings. At first it is not apparent that what they are looking at is changing since it moves very slowly, but once the viewer understands this, they slow down from a 'gallery' pace to an immersive state in which time seems elongated." (Eno, p. 53)



Victoria Febrer (b. 1985). *Moving Mountains #2 (Untitled Marine Vistas #173, 174, 175, 176, 177)*, 2016. Acrylic and multi-channel mapped light projection on wall and 5 canvases. (24 x 38, 42, 56, 42 & 38 in | 09:30 looping projection). Paul W. Zuccaire Gallery, Staller Center, Stony Brook University. (<https://vimeo.com/166133852>)



## DESERT SEA

A painting is not of the past, the present or the future, but instead contains within it all of time, and no time at all. The painting's sense of history is alien to us; it is something that we cannot describe because we cannot experience it. St. Augustine describes a similarly foreign experience as he attempts to describe time itself.

If future and past events exist, I want to know where they are. If I have not the strength to discover the answer, at least I know that wherever they are, they are not there as future or past, but as present. For if there also they are future, they will not yet be there. If there also they are past, they are no longer there. Therefore, wherever they are, whatever they are, they do not exist except in the present. When a true narrative of the past is related, the memory produces not the actual events which have passed but words conceived from images of them, which they fixed in the mind like imprints as they passed through the senses. (pp. 233-234)

The sea also embodies this mysterious characteristic. As viewers, we name the sea and assign it a history, a geographic position, and a color. In his work *Watercolor*, Francis Alÿs questions the reality of naming a body of water and assigning it fixed borders.

Using a red bucket, he picks up water from the Black Sea in Trabzon, Turkey on December 18th. He makes an 8-day journey to Aqaba, Jordan and on December 26th throws the bucket of Black Sea water into the Red Sea. The images at both locations show a horizon with a calm sea below. The sea is not black, or red, (or even blue). "Practical exercises demonstrate through color deception



Francis Alÿs (b. 1959), *Watercolor*, 2010. Trabzon, Turkey – Aqaba. (<http://francisalys.com/watercolor/>)

(illusion) the relativity and instability of color. And experience teaches that in visual perception there is a discrepancy between physical fact and psychic effect." (Albers, p.2)

In *MarDesierto/DesertSea*, I create an infinitely variable *Untitled Marine Vista* using four mapped projections that come together in the shape of a grand altarpiece. An image of a vast desert scrolls along endlessly at a snail's pace. Completely visible in the side panels, it only sometimes appears above the horizon of a vast sea in the center. Here, three separate projections of the sea combine as they are

mapped onto each other. Each is composed of only one of the primary colors of digitally projected light. The three projections are registered spatially but not temporally. The result is a hyper-real image moving at a hypnotic pace, where bright white crests are produced when the three moments of waves coincide at specific points. The rest of the image is composed of partial exposures of the full spectrum of visible light, revealed in the many points of rhythmic discord.

Through this installation, I expand upon the ideas about vision and the body expressed by Merleau-



Victoria Febrer (b. 1985). *MarDesierto/DesertSea*, 2015. Interactive multi-channel mapped projection, (approx. 10 x 20 ft. | 6:00, 2:05, 2:05 & 2:05 looping projections). Alloway Gallery, Stony Brook University. (<https://vimeo.com/166086349>)

Ponty in the fourth chapter of *The Visible and the Invisible*. The refracted shadows caused by the interference of a viewer's body in the piece draw attention to the position of the spectator:

He who looks must not himself be foreign to the world that he looks at. As soon as I see, it is necessary that the vision (as is so well indicated by the double meaning of the word) be doubled with a complementary vision: myself seen from without, such as another would see me, installed in the midst of the visible, occupied in considering it from a certain spot. (p. 134)

When a viewer enters the space, he or she disrupts the path of light, obscuring portions of the spectrum to reveal the component colors of white light and also to simplify the multi-layered image of the sea by subtracting time, space, and light. In *MarDesierto/DesertSea*, the image of this desert moves at



Victoria Febrer (b. 1985). *MarDesierto/DesertSea*, 2015. Interactive multi-channel mapped projection, (approx. 10 x 20 ft. | 6:00, 2:05, 2:05 & 2:05 looping projections). Alloway Gallery, Stony Brook University. (detail) (<https://vimeo.com/166086349>)

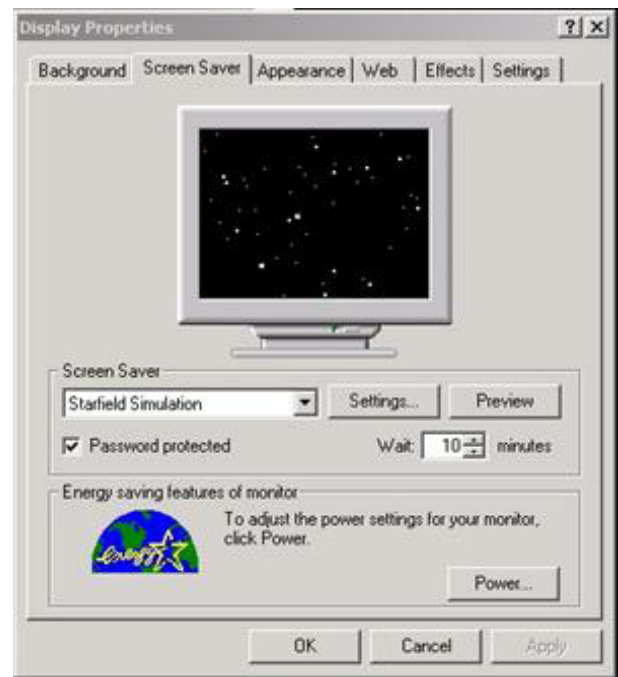
a pace that references a geological time, while the layered images of the sea reference an unreal speed that is the result of attempting to process multiple times at once—superimposed on each other. In this way, the water echoes the multiple time zones that converge in the digital world and can't be defined by human experience.

While what has always drawn me to paintings is the timelessness of their existence, the fact that a painting is not of the past, the present or the future, but instead contains within it all of time, a projection or a film has a different hold on history. Its movement is time, but it also references specific times. The movement of the landmarks along a horizon and the hyperreal superimposition of projections of waves upon one another draw the viewer into a contemplative space. Rather than expecting the next action, as one would while watching a narrative film sequence, the viewer is immersed in the reliable system of the piece that despite its obvious logic produces infinitely variable results. The hand of a human being is evident as well in the artist's execution and the viewer's interaction. Yet, the level of control is direct while remaining mysterious. It is in some ways like a digital screensaver with user controls. The *Windows Starfield Simulator Screensaver* creates a construct that draws attention to humans' limited access to broad expanses of space and time, while at the same time allowing them to exercise control over an infinite possibility.

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Configurations for the Starfield Simulator Screensaver in Windows 95.

## PRINTING PLACES

My artistic process requires the elaboration of systematic frameworks that allow for controlled experimentation into endless possibilities. The layering process that exists at the core of my systems of rules for image making was greatly influenced by Goya and Whistler's prints. Goya's complex use of aquatints and Whistler's atmospheric wiping technique serve to selectively obscure or expose the information on the printing plate which, in



Francisco de Goya (1746-1828). *Les Ensachés*, 1815-1824. Etching with aquatint. 13.6 x 19.8 in. New York Public Library Print Collection, New York.

turn, has been reduced to only the most necessary elements. The discrepancies that occur between prints from the same plate through not just intentional variations in the application of the ink but also through chance variations in the conditions of the plate and paper at the time of each printing parallel the way in which our memories transform as we travel through time and space.

Both Goya and Whistler's bodies of work appear to have been influenced by the practice of printmaking, and the practice of remembering. They simultaneously worked in painting and printmaking, repeating themes, landscapes, and characters, while observing the changes which occurred through their repetition and simplification.



James A. McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). *Nocturne*, 1879-1880. Etching with drypoint, 7.875 x 11.625 in. New York Public Library Print Collection, New York.



James A. McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). *Nocturne: Blue and Silver—Battersea Reach*, 1870-1878. Oil on canvas, 19.6 x 28.5 in. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

## RULES & PAINTS

Like Goya and Whistler, I began this investigation with two bodies of work—one using paint and the other using red wine. In order to create both, I established a framework of rules that would allow me to mimic the mechanism of memory. This process may be seen as not only analogous to human memory, but to digital processes analyzing massive amounts of data. However, I am interested in not only performing the act of recording and storing a memory, but also of recalling and accessing one. Through a process of reconstruction, I produce scenes that not only have been enriched by all places remembered but also simplified by memory’s removal of extraneous details—leaving only the most necessary elements so that these may provoke the viewer into adding additional detail.



Victoria Febrer (b. 1985). *Untitled Marine Vista #169*, 2012. Acrylic on canvas. 36 x 42 in. Private collection.

### UNTITLED MARINE VISTA RULES (PAINT)

- I pre-mix the colors for the sky and the sea and store in containers.
- I pre-mix and place in little tupperwares all of the possible colors for mountains.
- I use only four colored pigments plus white.
- I never allow colors to mix on the canvas.
- I have a pre-made “alphabet of mountain shapes” consisting of hand-cut mylar stencils.
- I must make all mountains solely from a combination of these shapes.
- I follow an established order for carefully applying paint in multiple successive layers such that every painting has a physical perspective on its surface where the sea is always physically closest to the viewer.

Following these rules, I proceed with a painting only when the vista in front of me is clearly something that I remembered. I accept and embrace the truth that the sources of these memories may

be places I have been, places I have seen in travel magazines or in movies, or places I have merely imagined—and usually a mysterious combination of these sources. I only proceed with a painting when the vista is definitely familiar.

The rules are for me. The work requires my hands and my memories to come into being. The system I've created allows for the interaction between my hand, my soul, my intellect, and the earth's materials and the sun's light to explore what connects us, and how our position relative to one another changes those connections. Unlike Sol LeWitt's instructions, my rules are not themselves the work, but rather a scaffolding that allows the work to be built.

~~To work with a plan that is preset is one way of avoiding subjectivity. It also obviates the necessity of designing each work in turn. The plan would design the work. Some plans would require millions of variations, and some a limited number, but both are finite. Other plans imply infinity. In each case, however, the artist would select the basic form and rules that would govern the solution of the problem. After that the fewer decisions made in the course of completing the work, the better. This eliminates the arbitrary, the capricious, and the subjective as much as possible. This is the reason for using this method.~~

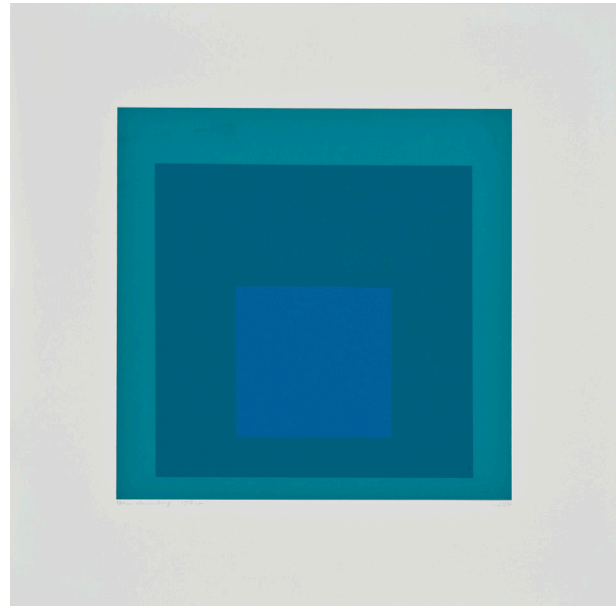
~~When an artist uses a multiple modular method he usually chooses a simple and readily available form. The form itself is of very limited importance; it becomes the grammar for the total work. In fact, it is best that the basic unit be deliberately uninteresting so that it may more easily become an intrinsic part of the entire work. Using complex basic forms only disrupts the unity of the whole. Using a simple form repeatedly narrows the field of the work and concentrates the intensity to the arrangement of the form. This arrangement becomes the end while the form becomes the means.~~

~~Conceptual art doesn't really have much to do with mathematics, philosophy, or any other mental discipline. The mathematics used by most artists is simple arithmetic or simple number systems. The philosophy of the work is implicit in the work and it is not an illustration of any system of philosophy.~~

Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art". *Artforum*, June, 1967.

Edited by Victoria Febrer

Each of the paintings results from a process of reconstruction of memory, with paint as building block. Through this method, the paint becomes a uniquely structural vehicle; it is paint as substance, not as trickery. The sky is the only constant, always applied as a flat plane of color, it reacts to the influence of those colors around it and responds—yet remains physically unchanged, always resilient. Each color exists only in relation to those colors immediately around it and by its distance to the viewer through the texture of the surface. “The atmospheric perspective is achieved by lightening the value and desaturating the chroma of the forms seen in profile across the water. The result is a highly condensed, reduced essence of illusion, almost telegraphic in its concision, but intending to distill the memory of actual motifs experienced by the artist.” (Burke, p.13) Acrylic paint allows me to physically layer the compositional elements, additionally defining space by the variation in thickness resulting from the layering process, while colors remain materially pure. “In visual perception a color is almost never seen as it really is—as it physically is.” (Albers, p. 1). I draw on the work of Josef Albers to question what is “real” in our understanding of time and place when viewing a painting—when confronted with a physical object that contains within it an understanding of position that is completely unlike our own.



Josef Albers (1888-1976). *Homage to the Square: Blue Reminding*, 1966. Screenprint, 11 x 11 in. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

## RULES & WINES

The vinographic *Untitled Marine Vistas* at times appear to be all red. One would assume that as such they would be very different from the blue acrylic *Vistas*. However, the difference between the appearance of the vinographs and the paintings has never seemed vast. In fact, I often refer to the wine as “blue” while working. The pieces made in red wine inhabit a different space of time than the ones in acrylic. They are somehow older, more ancient, more knowing. They are Homer’s Mediterranean, “the wine-dark sea”. In *The Visible*



Victoria Febrer (b. 1985), *Untitled Marine Vista #46*, 2010. Red wine (vinography) on handmade Japanese paper. 11.75 x 13.75 in. Artist’s collection.

*and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty captures this unique sense of time contained within the red:

Claudel has a phrase saying that a certain blue of the sea is so blue that only blood would be more red. The color is yet a variant in another dimension of variation, that from its place with other reds about it, with which it forms a constellation, or with other colors it dominates or that dominate it, that it attracts or that attract it, that it repels or that repel it. In short, it is a certain node in the woof of the simultaneous and the successive. It is a concretion of visibility, it is not an atom. The red dress a fortiori holds with all its fibers onto the fabric of the visible, and thereby onto a fabric of invisible being. A punctuation in the field of red things, which includes the tiles of roof tops, the flags of gatekeepers and of the Revolution, certain terrains near Aix or in Madagascar, it is also a punctuation in the field of red garments, which includes, along with the dresses of women, robes of professors, bishops, and advocate generals, and also in the field of adornments and that of uniforms. And its red literally is not the same as it appears in one constellation or in the other, as the pure essence of the Revolution of 1917 precipitates in it, or that of the eternal feminine, or that of the public prosecutor, or that of the gypsies dressed like hussars who reigned twenty-five years ago over an inn on the Champs-Élysées. A certain red is also a fossil drawn up from the depths of imaginary worlds. (p. 132)

The wine carries within it and around it all of these associations and memories in its red color, and also in the symbolic content of the substance of wine as blood and its role in thousands of years of ritual in and around the Mediterranean.



### UNTITLED MARINE VISTA RULES (VINOGRAPHY)

- I manipulate different wines to change their concentration and consistency without additives
- I use only one wine for each color, and do not mix different wines when preparing the colors.
- I store the colors in little tupperwares.
- I have a pre-made “alphabet of mountain shapes” consisting of hand-cut mylar stencils.
- I must make all mountains solely from a combination of these shapes.
- I follow an established order for carefully applying the wine in multiple successive layers. I allow the wines to mix and layer on the surface.

The vinograph *Untitled Marine Vistas* use the same stencils and follow almost the same rules with exceptions specific to the material. The red wine offers a contrast to the precision which I can achieve with paint. While I attempt to control this capricious medium through the adaptation of various printmaking and painting methods (vinography), I also allow its mercurial nature to inform the works I create. I make use of this ubiquitous but symbolically rich material to explore our relationship not only to geography, but also to history.



Victoria Febrer (b. 1985), *Untitled Marine Vista #30*, 2010. Red wine (vinography) on handmade Japanese paper, 10.8 x 23.8 in. Private collection.

## HANDS & PLANTS

In a series of vinographs called *Vigilia*, I also utilize three prehistoric images of women, which are repeated (like the mountain shapes) in vinographic landscapes. I arrange the female figures in different groupings to explore their relationships to each other and to the landscape. “Febrer’s ancient figures wander wine stained landscapes, some vast and deserted and others crowded and claustrophobic. Iconic images of ancient women are transformed into solitary individuals, angry crowds, geological formations, vegetation, atmosphere, and fire.” (Bell, p. 6). The serial nature of these pieces, and the movement of time and space between them investigates not only how the landscape affects our sense of place and position, but how we affect the landscape—the connections through vast expanses of time that constitute our relationship to the environment and its relationship to us.

In addition to the figures of the Venus of Willendorf (28,000–26,000 bc), a Cycladic figurine (2600–2400 bc), and a cave painting of two women from Cogul in Catalunya (5,000 bc), I also include



Victoria Febrer (b. 1985), *Untitled Vigil #8*, 2013. Red wine (vinography) on handmade Nepalese paper. 6.4 x 10.5 in. Private collection.



Victoria Febrer (b. 1985), *Untitled Vigil #2*, 2013. Red wine (vinography) on several layers of handmade Japanese and Ecuadorian paper with botanical inclusions. Coated in beeswax. 15.5 x 18.75 in. Artist’s collection.

printed and stenciled images of poppies and wheat, and actual inclusions of botanical elements in the paper. These elements confuse the reality of what is printed and what is preserved. Actual pressed plants and flowers are encased in the fibers of the paper alongside, and indistinguishable from naturally sized prints and imprints of botanical elements.

Images of isolated foliage against an expanse of sky had appeared frequently in my paintings prior to the *Untitled Marine Vistas* series. These images are longing gazes into an open space above, detached from the ground and the horizon. Beginning with a flat blue plane, I carefully and precisely created a portrait of branches entering the space from beyond the field of view. Though compositionally unlike the *Untitled Marine Vistas*,



Victoria Febrer (b. 1985), *Untitled Vista #6*, 2010. Acrylic on canvas, 28 x 38 in. On loan to the IESE International Business School, Manhattan Campus.

these works similarly focused on the non-human actors in our existence while exposing the role of our gaze and memory in our understanding of place and position. A time-based digital medium allowed for the repetition of the act of human interference into these spaces.

In the piece *Untitled Decision*, a woman ponders whether or not to take a ripe apple from a tree. The image recalls episodes in religion and mythology where a woman was given a choice without full understanding of the personal and global consequences of her decision. The video is filmed in front of a wall painted the color of the sky from the *Untitled Marine Vistas*. Removed from a real life context, it can inhabit a place and time outside of history. It loops infinitely as a hand (my hand) tries to decide whether or not to remove the apple from the branch.



Victoria Febrer (b. 1985), *Untitled Decision*, 2014. Single-channel projection (2:19). Projected in the Toride Subway Station, Japan. (screen image simulated) (<https://vimeo.com/84091939>)

*Vivarium*, which was projected onto the Organization of American States by the Art Museum of the Americas in Washington DC in August, 2015, further explored human connection to the landscape. In this piece, diverse hands and branches come together cooperatively to populate a new place of life. The piece was created using a conceptual framework not unlike that which I used in the *Untitled Marine Vistas* and in the *Vigilia* series. The video consists of 64 layers, each one containing a hand rising upward holding a branch collected from my garden. The piece was composed like a carefully planned print. Each of the layers is meticulously timed and performed separately for the camera before a blue screen. The only variations permitted by the rules of this piece are the type of foliage and the posture of the hand holding it. The hands express a range of attitudes towards their role, some stoically perform their function, others do so defiantly, some seem to lead the crowd or inspire, others languish and tire from the weight of their actions. Ultimately, the hands choose to exit the environment and leave behind a projected forest of diverse leaves and light.



Victoria Febrer (b. 1985), *Vivarium*, 2015. Single-channel projection (dimensions variable | 06:32 looping video). Art Museum of the Americas, Organization of American States, Washington DC. (<https://vimeo.com/166084526>)



Victoria Febrer (b. 1985), *Vivarium*, 2015. Single-channel projection (06:32 looping video). (<https://vimeo.com/166084536>)

## BORDERS & BOUNDARIES

In the *Viridis* series, digitally collaged images of lush green landscapes are projected onto seemingly deserted vinograph *Untitled Marine Vistas*, questioning the geographical, temporal, and historical border between good lands and bad. The viewer's intervention in the projected light reveals the impermanence and malleability of both of these constructs. By obscuring parts of the projected green landscape through his or her presence, the viewer possesses the agency to reveal the landscape according to his or her own desires and curiosity. The images in *Viridis* again question our relationship to the landscapes we inhabit, and compel us to reflect on our role in these spaces of geography and history.

The digitally collaged projected images in *Viridis* are created using stock footage of landscapes. In *MarDesierto/DesertSea*, the representation of desert was also a digital collage created from ubiquitous images of the Desert of Tabernas in Southern Spain. In the history of cinema, this desert is the



Victoria Febrer (b. 1985), *Viridis #1 (Untitled Marine Vistas #171, 172)*, 2016. Red wine (vinography) and mapped light projection on 2 canvases (18 x 20 in. each | 03:25 looping projection). Paul W. Zuccaire Gallery, Staller Center, Stony Brook University. (detail) (<https://vimeo.com/166133849>)



Victoria Febrer (b. 1985), *Viridis #1 (Untitled Marine Vistas #171, 172)*, 2016. Red wine (vinography) and mapped light projection on 2 canvases (18 x 20 in. each | 03:25 looping projection). Paul W. Zuccaire Gallery, Staller Center, Stony Brook University. (<https://vimeo.com/166133849>)

American Wild West, the site of the filming of dozens of Spaghetti Westerns. It has also been the kingdom of Egypt in *Cleopatra*, and countless other foreign locations during its 60-year history as a site for film production. Like the images of the Desert of Tabernas in internationally screened films, the stock images of landscapes available for purchase online are rendered ahistorical and stripped of specificity when they are captured and commodified, to be traded digitally on marketplaces for high definition generic images. By cutting apart and reconfiguring these images into a collage of light mapped to a painting, I imbue them with a sense of spatial specificity generally reserved for two-dimensional images. The moving images in *Viridis* exist only in reference to and in combination with the colors contained in the paintings they are projected onto. While produced through an act of “mapping”, this is wholly unlike a map, which typically seeks to define immovable and permanent borders through an abstract representation that supersedes our human experience of the landscape.

At the site where the siege of Aqaba in the film *Lawrence of Arabia* was filmed, the desert meets the Mediterranean, or rather the sea and the desert become one at this fluid point where the boundary between them changes over millennia and also in minutes with the changing tides. The area is a national reserve, with borders meant to protect it from human intervention. However, ten years ago an illegal hotel was constructed scarcely 14 meters from the waterline. Deliberations on the fate of the hotel concluded in March of 2016, and now the complicated process of determining how to deconstruct the macro hotel complex to restore the natural environment will begin. (González García).



Algorribico Beach, Almeria, Spain.  
 Top: Still image from *Lawrence of Arabia*. Bottom: The same site with an illegal hotel in the background, currently slated for demolition by the Spanish Government. (almeriafilms.blogspot.com/)

Historically, the Mediterranean in this area is an immutable border, drawn across maps and seen as a fixed boundary. In *Don't Cross the Bridge Until You Get to the River*, Francis Alÿs explores the

malleability of this boundary when subject to human vision. “The Strait of Gibraltar is 7.7 nautical miles wide (13 km) and separates Africa from Europe. If a line of kids leaves Europe towards Morocco, and a line of kids leaves Africa towards Spain, will the 2 lines meet in the chimera of the horizon?” (Alÿs, *Don't Cross the Bridge Until you get to the River*).



Francis Alÿs (b. 1959). *Don't Cross the Bridge Until You Get to the River*, 2008. Tarifa, Spain and Tangier, Morocco. (<http://francisalys.com/dont-cross-the-bridge-before-you-get-to-the-river/>)

## CONCLUSION

An investigation into the mechanism of memory necessitates an exploration of the nature of borders between the real and the imagined, the physical and the perceived. These borders, separating what is within from what is without, what is physically accessible from that which exists only within memory or imagination, serve as a point of departure for considering the role of not just the act of painting and the act of remembering, but the sea, the desert, the wind, the salt, the earth, and the light in this process—the way that the non-human elements exert their existence and connect us to history, time, and geography. Constructing systems of rules to govern the elaboration of my works allows me to repeatedly perform the act of recording and storing memory, and of accessing and recollecting in a process of investigation that may be seen as not only analogous to human memory, but to the digital. It allows for an isolation of the material, energetic, psychological and spiritual elements that constitute our vision and understanding of the landscape through an “insurpassable plenitude” of iterations.



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