

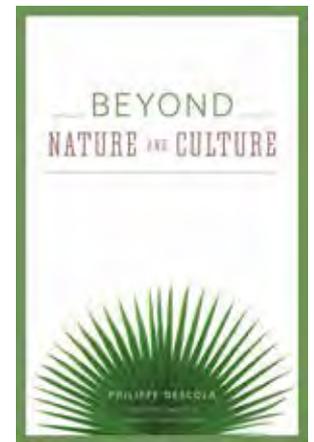
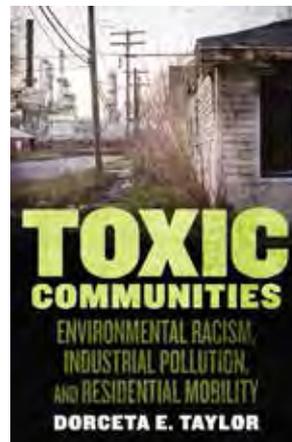
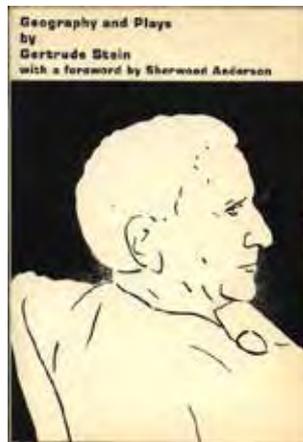
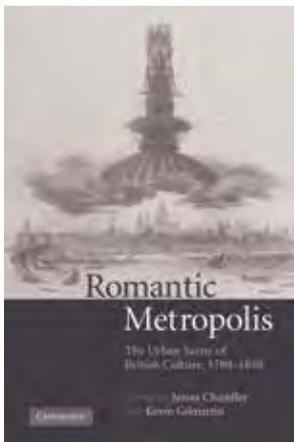
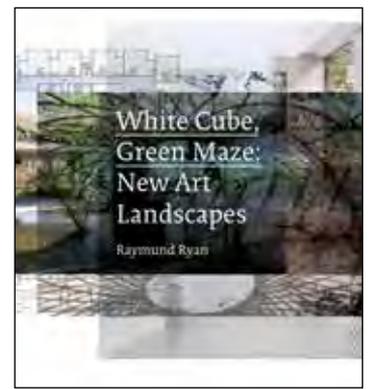
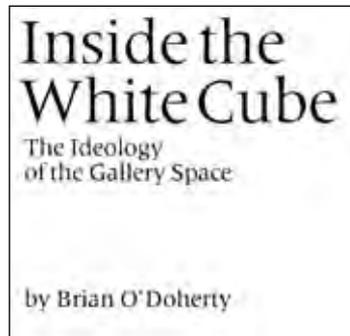
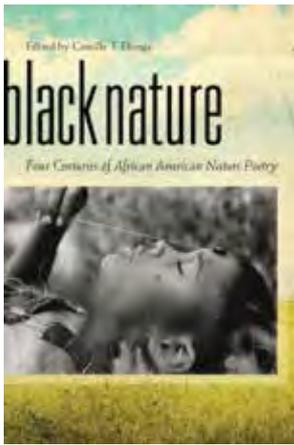
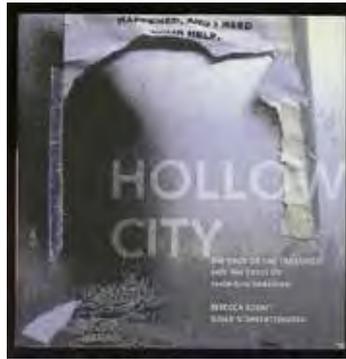
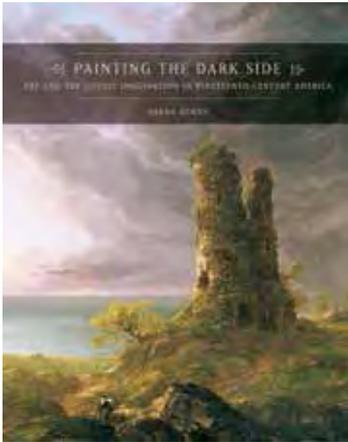
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## Critical Bibliographies

Gavin Kroeber

### Art, Urbanism, and Landscape: An Annotated Bibliography

My work, which has for some time operated at the confluence of art and urbanism, has recently begun to embrace landscape. What follows are a series of readings that tease out the imbrication of these three figures (and, by extension, of their defining conceptual objects: art, the city, and nature.) This is not, however, a “greatest hits” so much as a sketch of my ongoing thinking. While I’ve come to most of these readings by a long march through more canonical texts, the scholarly figures and theoretical celebrities you might expect to see will for the most part not be found here. Instead, this list samples my idiosyncratic research paths beyond those foundations—explorations-in-process of more diffuse or oblique approaches to the spaces where art, urbanism, and landscape overlap.

#### Charles Waldheim, “Detroit, *Disabitato*, and the Origins of Landscape,”

in *Formerly Urban: Projecting Rust Belt Futures*, ed. Julia Czerniak (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2013).

The braid of art, urbanism, and landscape is longstanding: the rise of the European city and its unprecedented division of labor was a prerequisite for the emergence of modern art as an undertaking apart from the cultural conventions of religious or clan life. The city’s overtly fabricated character is often enlisted to prop up belief in an untouched, outside nature; landscape painting—art representing nature—emerged specifically in some of Europe’s most urbanized areas. Waldheim, the scholar who coined the term “landscape urbanism” and remains that design philosophy’s leading proponent, recently made a welcome and poetic contribution to this history of categorical entanglement. In “Detroit, *Disabitato*, and the Origins of Landscape” he reframes seventeenth-century Rome as the Detroit of its day—a “shrinking city” that had lost most of its population, a dense but residual

civic core surrounded by an abandoned ring of previously urban pastures and ruins. That evocative peripheral space—the *disabitato*—provided a key subject for the painters then establishing landscape as a cultural category, and Waldheim, looking in particular at Claude Lorrain’s genre-defining work, argues that the *disabitato*’s distinctively posturban texture is fundamental to the European landscape idea. One implication is that we might temper the tendency to emphasize the urgent novelty of today’s postindustrial cities, with their “urban prairies” and other rewilding voids in the built environment, with the acknowledgement that they likewise represent a persistence or return: they are places where old (colonial, exploitative) ways of seeing historically identified with landscape painting are resurgent.

Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (1976; Santa Monica, CA: Lapis Press, 1986) and

Raymund Ryan, ed., *White Cube, Green Maze: New Art Landscapes*, exh. cat. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

I recently returned to O’Doherty’s classic text, originally published in 1976 as a series of three articles in *Artforum*, in hopes of poaching a few ideas to support my own intuitions. In a moment when urban spaces are being converted into art venues at a fever pitch and arts industries are more and more often leaving their conventional architectures for the streets and new festival parks, it seems possible to argue that the city—the broader built environment that the word signals, organizing multiple sites—is today best understood as a spectatorial architecture, a paradigm for cultural experience that is as important (and as determined) as the white cube of the gallery or the black box of the theater were in their heyday. O’Doherty himself recently revisited his opus in a brief contribution to the catalogue for Raymund Ryan’s 2012 exhibition *White Cube, Green Maze: New Art Landscapes* (Heinz Architectural Center, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh), which, as its title suggests, surveyed an emergent breed of landscape-art institutions that include Brazil’s Instituto Inhotim and Japan’s Benesse Art Site Naoshima. Among the things these readings inspire for me is a growing conviction not only that today we would do

well to avoid the widely criticized mistake of approaching the city or the landscape as simple physical sites, but also that these categories’ conventional critical reframing as constructed concepts or “ways of seeing” leaves out a crucial emphasis: the city and landscape are behavioral modalities of place that are performed—and often according to institutional choreography.

## Reviews

Martha Rosler, *Culture Class* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013) and

James Trainor, “The Hinterlands: Can Artists and Dealers Change the Creative and Economic Landscape of Upstate New York?” October 1, 2014, at [www.artsy.net/article/james-trainor-the-hinterlands-can-artists-and-dealers-change#!](http://www.artsy.net/article/james-trainor-the-hinterlands-can-artists-and-dealers-change#!), as of September 28, 2015.

I first read many of the essays in Martha Rosler’s *Culture Class* as articles in *e-flux journal*, where they appeared between 2010 and 2012. They present a magisterial synthesis of key literature on urban change, mobilizing an influential body of scholarship to critically reframe the much-celebrated “creative class”—arguably an actual demographic identified by the sociologist Richard Florida but assuredly an imagined public and cultural model that is shaping the ways cities are planned, built, and inhabited. It was a real pleasure to revisit these essays in their newly compiled form, in particular because I happened to read them alongside James Trainor’s essay on [artsy.net](http://www.artsy.net), which maps some of the key points in a burgeoning network of creative class outposts in the deindustrialized mill towns of New York’s Hudson River Valley. As a coincidental pairing, the two texts elegantly illustrate a shared crisis tightening the braid of art, urbanism, and landscape: historically celebrated as spaces of freedom, embraced for the possibility each held of escaping social determination, in the contemporary milieu art, nature, and the city are all luxury items. They are all mobilized within one of the defining aspirational-authoritarian images of this age of inequality: the twenty-first-century variation on the ideal city, both “green” and “creative.” In this regard, it seems to me that the emerging generation of would-be “hickster” utopias like Beacon or Hudson are not so much

secondary colonies of “the New Brooklyn,” derivative enclaves dotting the city’s northern periphery, but rather that they have surpassed the inner neighborhoods as urban models—we might think of them as living blueprints that the center aspires to.

**Rebecca Solnit, *Hollow City: The Siege of San Francisco and the Crisis of American Urbanism*** (London: Verso, 2000), and

**Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron, “The Californian Ideology,”** *Science as Culture* 6, no. 1 (1996): 44–72.

Another particular geography has my attention right now: the Bay Area, which has recently stolen the spotlight from New York as the national poster child for gentrification (that inescapable issue marking the boundary of art and urbanism). I grew up in Northern California, and I am interested in the ways the region’s distinct breed of green urbanism—celebrated for its remarkable weave of cosmopolitan density and picturesque landscape—might have prepared the ground for the mounting spatial struggle now playing out there. It’s this curiosity that’s brought these two texts to the top of my reading list. In 2013, Solnit lit something of a firestorm with an attack on San Francisco’s Google buses in the pages of *The London Review of Books*, but that article was in many ways an update of arguments she had made a decade before, tracing relationships between real estate development and the tech industry during its first, millennial bubble in *Hollow City*. The same transformative era also inspired Barbrook and Cameron’s essay, “The Californian Ideology” (1995, rev. 1996), a polemical assessment of Bay Area culture—a bizarre fusion of the cultural bohemianism of San Francisco with the hi-tech industries of Silicon Valley” that “combines the free-wheeling spirit of the hippies and the entrepreneurial zeal of the yuppies” in “an impeccably libertarian form of politics.” I think of this pithy screed as the anticipatory first volume in a trilogy that also includes Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello’s *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (1996; London: Verso, 2006) and B. Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore’s *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre and Every Business a Stage* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 1999)—two influential books that have in many ways come to epitomize the art world’s primary approaches to a fin

de siècle social reality in which corporate culture has adaptively incorporated the “artistic critique” once leveled at capitalism into ostensibly creative work structures and consumer experiences. (Those approaches would be critical observation and competitive embrace, respectively.) The prescience of the instinct to interrogate Bay Area culture has of course been borne out in the years since these texts came out, as the then-nascent “new faith” Barbrook and Cameron explored established itself as today’s reigning innovation-disruption orthodoxy. What attracts me to these two texts, however, is the geographic question they point to. Specific places often act as genealogical forces in the consolidation of worldviews, and these pieces seem to offer starting points for a further exploration of the Bay Area—not of how the national ascent of the region’s creative-libertarian culture has shaped its urban fabric, but the reverse. At risk of slipping into some sort of topographic determinism, I am curious about how the Bay Area’s green urbanism—not just a physical intermingling of city and landscape, but also a particular set of local traditions for understanding and experiencing that texture of place—may have provided key models for today’s discourses of experience and creativity (and, as such, for cities eager to remake themselves according to those formulas.)

### **A Stack of Alternative Landscapes**

At this point in a bibliography that has emphasized the centrality of institutions, the creative class, and other powerful established actors, perhaps it is time to turn to a large stack of books that has pride of place in my office: a messy, vertical library of what we might call alternative landscapes. These include Camille T. Dungy’s *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009), an edited anthology of poetry by African Americans that variously appropriates, redirects, and challenges Anglo-American traditions of nature writing; Gertrude Stein’s lecture “Plays,” (in *Last Operas and Plays*, Baltimore: PAJ Books/Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) which asserts landscape as a literary form largely free from any mandate to represent land; Philippe Descola’s *Beyond Nature and Culture*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), which attempts to mobilize ethnographic research to articulate cultural worldviews without concepts of “nature” (flirting

all the while with anthropology’s cardinal sins of colonialism and structuralism); Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s magnum opus *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New York: Humanities Press, 1962), which offers tools for loosening the embodied perceptual modalities conventionally associated with landscape from their received cultural connotations; and Dorceta E. Taylor’s *Toxic Communities: Environmental Racism, Industrial Pollution, and Residential Mobility* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), a survey of the environmental justice movement which has so crucially challenged white traditions of conservation and the pastoral images of land and ecology that dominate it. As my work on landscape emerges from a period of research and incubation, moving toward artistic and curatorial projects, I have become interested in the ways that landscape, as a spatial and behavioral modality, might be unmoored from the exploitative traditions that produced it. These texts and others in the stack punctuate my research with promising ideas that seem capable, in one way or another, of destabilizing the dominant landscape canon—a canon that includes not only the classic works of the genre (key paintings, gardens, and so forth), but also the classic critiques, interrogations of the Western landscape idea on the grounds of its imperialist, racist, sexist, and environmentally unsustainable premises that have become so well-rehearsed as to be canonical themselves. A crucial tradition, this breed of ideological critique nonetheless reinforces the primacy of the traditions it focuses on. These alternative texts offer other starting points, a vocabulary for articulating a conjunctural version of landscape that better embodies the sense of radical possibility that the word, against all odds, still seems to evoke for so many.

### **Romanticisms, Dark and Urban**

Finally (and at risk of sounding like a hoarder) there is another pile of texts I’m working my way through right now. It’s full of indulgent reads like William Blake’s “London,” Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, her husband Percy’s “Ozymandias,” Charles Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal*, and monographs on Caspar David Friedrich, as well as recent scholarship like Sarah Burns’s *Painting the Dark Side: Art and the Gothic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), and James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin’s edited volume *Romantic*

*Metropolis: The Urban Scene of British Culture, 1780–1840* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Weaving together the speculations of the so-called Dark Romantics on the collapse of civilization with emergent, revisionist readings of Romanticism in which the figure of the city is as essential as that of nature, this small mountain of texts constellates a Romantic tradition of apocalyptic urbanism.

Perhaps unexpectedly, it was a growing fascination with Phoenix, Arizona, that brought me to these readings. A city where ecological crisis, resource overuse, sprawl, deregulation, immigration, labor rights, policing, and other issues are taking on unprecedented urban form, Phoenix (now the fifth-largest city in the United States) represents an emergent paradigm and a mounting crisis in North American urbanism. Despite this, Phoenix and other cities like it have predominantly been ignored by visionary art and design, which instead seem enamored of the entropic postindustrial spaces of Detroit and other “ruin porn” utopias or the spectacular architectural arms race escalating in the exoticized cityscapes of the Gulf states and China. The attraction to these cities—the art world’s favored urban canon—can perhaps be explained away by the very real resources they offer practitioners (cheap space in the Rust Belt, a flood of investment overseas), but I cannot help but wonder how much the inability to engage the urgent crisis of growth in places like Phoenix has to do with a persistent Romantic bias—a failure of imagination, a reflexive adherence to old models that leaves these inarguably apocalyptic yet prosaic urbanisms mistaken for their public image: a banal succession of box stores, cul-de-sacs, and retirement communities, too dull and too manicured for intervention.

Gavin Kroeber is a cultural producer whose work poaches in equal measure from visual art, performance, urban theory, and cultural studies. His curatorial projects, performance lectures, and writings are concerned broadly with dynamics of power in America and in particular with redirectively contesting their expression in the poetics of place. Recent work that engages this bibliography’s themes includes *Not Objects in the Landscape, but a Landscape of Objects*, performed as a part of Storm King Art Center’s *Wanderings and Wonderings* series, and *Experience Economies: Landscape Experience*, co-organized with Rebecca Uchill at Mildred’s Lane, a ninety-three-acre art complex overseen by the artists Mark Dion and J. Morgan Puett.

## William Cole Privileged Access, Judiciously Shared

**Matthew Kentridge. *The Soho Chronicles: 10 Films by William Kentridge*.** 438 pp., 1,178 ill., many color. London: Seagull Books, dist. University of Chicago Press, 2015. £105 or \$150

Over a quarter century has passed since William Kentridge (b. Johannesburg, 1955) completed the first of the ten Soho Eckstein films (officially called *Drawings for Projection*) he has released to date. Yet somehow, despite the decades-long torrent of publications devoted to various aspects of the artist’s work, nobody had managed to publish a substantial monograph on this series of animated shorts until now.

To produce these masterpieces Kentridge employs what he calls “stone-age filmmaking”: rather than create a new image for each frame, as traditional animators do, he stays with the same drawing for several seconds, conjuring the illusion of movement with countless minute additions and deletions. A consequence of this technique is the vestigial visibility of imperfect erasures; although Kentridge did not initially intend to leave these traces, he came to welcome their ghostly presence—perhaps as a reminder of the gap between reality and memory, long a major theme in his art.

His first film appeared in 1989, and by the end of 1991 he had finished three more. Accompanied by music but no speech, the movies follow a small cohort of enigmatic central characters on oneiric journeys—in a world timeless and universal, yet at the same time distinctly contemporary and South African—complete with surreal juxtapositions and transformations. Kentridge commingles reality, memory, and imagination, leaving us to sort it all out. From the start, these highly original works captivated audiences at both film festivals and museums, and helped to quickly establish Kentridge’s international renown. Since the films made him famous, most of his admirers—scholars and critics included—think of them as his earliest work, or at any rate his earliest work worth considering. In fact, by 1989 Kentridge had been coming up with brilliant ideas for two decades, bringing them to fruition with inspired and painstaking

labor. We can see the residue of these early creations in the films, and indeed in all of the artist’s work to the present. Kentridge’s mother, an amateur painter, began encouraging his artistic proclivities early on, drawing with him and enrolling him in children’s classes.<sup>1</sup> Even the pictures he created before adolescence display an impressive command of technique and a wide array of styles, yet—although they may fascinate us, in light of his later work—hardly indicate prodigious talent. Then suddenly, in 1970, the year he turned fifteen, Kentridge produced some large gouaches, of which at least two survive, in which he infused African motifs and coloring with his incipient expressionism. They are loud, raw, and shocking, the way Jean-Michel Basquiat’s best pictures (painted years later) are loud, raw, and shocking. But Kentridge’s works display superior technique and control, ultimately attaining not only vastly greater beauty, but also a far more subtle and profound expressivity. In interviews and lectures, Kentridge habitually asserts that he focused on drawings and prints because he realized early on that he had no talent for painting. He owes us an explanation.

During the mid-1970s Kentridge studied at the University of the Witwatersrand, a hotbed of activism even under apartheid. As the son of two leading civil rights lawyers, he felt destined to participate in the struggle for racial equality.<sup>2</sup> Starting in 1975 he immersed himself in printmaking and theater, eventually learning to use both for political ends without shortchanging aesthetic considerations. Two works from that year exemplify his versatility and promise: his design for the “souvenir programme” for *The Goat That Sneezed*, a play for children; and *Muizenberg 1933*, one of his earliest known prints.<sup>3</sup> The former is an utterly charming double-sided India ink drawing, complete with an exuberantly leafy forest, recalling fin-de-siècle illustrations of fairy tales. The latter is a brutal linocut (based on an old family photo) in which we see Kentridge’s grandfather enthroned in a deck chair at a South African beach resort, incongruously dressed in a three-piece suit.<sup>4</sup> His wife and young sons (including the artist’s father) sit at his feet. One of the sons regards us with burning anger, while the other—apparently overcome with shame—averts his glance. The imperious patriarch looks at us with a certain melancholy or disdain, making no effort to display emotional